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## Hospitals Honored for Community Wellness Efforts

*Alpena, Dearborn, Fremont and Sault Ste. Marie Facilities Recognized*

**LANSING, Mich.** — The Michigan Health & Hospital Association (MHA) today announced the winners of its 2014 *Ludwig Community Benefit Award* during the MHA Annual Membership Meeting. **Honored were programs led by Alpena Regional Medical Center; Oakwood Healthcare, Dearborn; Spectrum Health Gerber Memorial, Fremont; and War Memorial Hospital, Sault Ste. Marie.** The award is named in memory of Patric E. Ludwig, a former MHA president who championed investing in the community's overall health, and is presented to member organizations integrally involved in collaborative programs to improve the health and well-being of area residents. Each winner will receive \$3,000 from the MHA Health Foundation to assist in its health improvement efforts.

Until **Alpena Regional Medical Center** and its partners opened the **Alpena Cancer Center** in June 2001, area cancer patients traveled at least 100 miles for radiation treatment. The community's decade-long quest for a center included support letters, financial backing, forums on building design and partnership with the University of Michigan Health System. The result was a comprehensive cancer program.

The center supports two of the MHA's four strategic platforms: quality care and patient access. Quality is demonstrated by accreditation from the Commission on Cancer, partnership with the University of Michigan, and designation as a Breast Imaging Center of Excellence. Access has improved with free cancer screenings, reduced travel for treatment, and facilitation of groups that offer transportation, support and education.

Program assessment includes accreditation from the Commission on Cancer and high patient satisfaction scores. But its true value is revealed in patients' improved long-term survival; Alpena's death rates for those with breast, colorectal and lung cancer are lower than in Michigan and the United States. For more information, contact Staci Chroninger, marketing manager at Alpena Regional Medical Center, at (989) 356-7504.

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Dearborn-based **Oakwood Healthcare** joined forces with YMCA of Metro Detroit and local schools to fight childhood obesity by implementing the **Coordinated Approach To Child Health (CATCH) Kids Club**. Abbreviated as CKC, this after-school program uses a hands-on approach to help children adopt exercise and healthy eating as lifelong habits, which clearly correlates with the MHA strategic platform of community health improvement.

YMCA staff implements the evidence-based CKC curriculum at most of the participating schools, reaching children “where they are.” Oakwood provides materials and equipment, trains after-school program staff, provides a registered dietitian for the nutrition component, and tracks outcomes.

Expanding from two schools to 18 since 2011, Oakwood has also added three summer programs. Quantitative pre- and post-program surveys evaluating changes in children’s physical activity, nutrition knowledge, perceived ability and intentions suggest CKC is making a difference in their healthy practices. Qualitative outcomes include children teaching learned skills to family members. For more information, contact Paula Rivera-Kerr, media relations manager, Oakwood Healthcare, at (313) 791-4817.

The leadership at Gerber Memorial Health Services in Fremont, now **Spectrum Health Gerber Memorial**, determined several years ago that the hospital would continue to care for ill community members, but would also lead in chronic disease prevention and guidance for residents’ well-being. That vision became reality when **Tamarac, The Center for Health and Well-being**, opened as a medical wellness center in December 2007.

Tamarac has become a critical point of entrance to the hospital’s services, and the 2010 merger of Gerber with Grand Rapids-based Spectrum Health brought new resources for the hospital. Tamarac’s mission directly correlates with the MHA community health improvement strategic platform.

Last year, Tamarac members collectively lost more than 21,000 pounds, and nearly 25,000 participated in group exercise classes. Many tell of becoming healthy enough to discontinue heart and diabetes medication, running their first 5K, playing with their children without physical stress, and creating a new life of wellness. For more information, contact Sandra Siegel, director, community & government relations, Spectrum Health Gerber Memorial, at (231) 924-1102.

**War Memorial Hospital** in Sault Ste. Marie conducts its ***Road to Recovery*** program to transport Eastern Upper Peninsula patients for radiation oncology treatment in Petoskey. Physical, financial and emotional obstacles prevent many patients from making the 180-mile round trip on their own.

Community donations, bolstered by some support from the American Cancer Society, fund the *Road to Recovery*. Volunteers drive patients in one of the program's two vans.

Beginning in October 2009, the program has provided free transportation for nearly 170 residents needing treatment five days a week for up to six weeks at a time. The vans travel down I-75, stopping at designated locations for residents from Chippewa, Luce and Mackinac counties.

This program reflects all four MHA strategic platforms: access to care, community health improvement, quality of care and mission-driven funding. The ultimate goal is to provide treatment locally, when the transportation program will continue within the region. For more information, contact Patrick Bray, community relations/development fund director, War Memorial Hospital, at (906) 635-4351.

Based in greater Lansing, the MHA advocates in Michigan and Washington, DC, on behalf of healthcare providers and the communities and patients they serve. The MHA is a nationally recognized leader on initiatives that protect and promote quality, cost-effective and accessible healthcare. To learn more, visit [www.mha.org](http://www.mha.org).

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