

Health Matters

GREEN AWARD: Sacred Heart Hospital recently was awarded a 2009 Environmental Leadership Award at CleanMed, the sixth international conference on environmentally sustainable health care held in Chicago. The award was given by Practice Greenhealth for demonstrating “the highest degree of commitment to environmental sustainability.”

As an ELA recipient, Sacred Heart Hospital has been inducted into Practice Greenhealth's Environmental Leadership Circle — an honor that recognizes hospitals in the vanguard of environmental progress in health care for creating a healthy environment for patients, employees, physicians and their communities.

“At Sacred Heart Hospital, protecting our environment is a part of our Franciscan commitment to the people of our community and their environment,” said Rick Beckler, director of hospitality services and chair of the hospital's Green Team.



NATIONAL HONOR: Luther Midelfort Northland, Mayo Health System's nursing home, recently received My InnerView's Excellence in Action award, a national honor recognizing exemplary nursing home quality care and service. The award, which is presented annually, recognizes nursing homes that have made a commitment to continuous quality improvement and successfully made quality a priority to better serve their customers' needs.

This year's award was presented to nursing homes whose resident or family satisfaction surveys in 2008 had a minimum 30 percent response rate and scored in the top 10 percent of qualifying facilities on the question, “What is your recommendation of this facility to others?” in terms of the percent of respondents rating the nursing home as “excellent.”

“We are pleased with the responses from our residents and family. Their survey participation and feedback is extremely valuable for us to continue to improve our residents' care and quality of life,” said Kelli Helgoe, assistant administrator at Luther Midelfort Northland in Barron.



SAFETY CAMP: At the upcoming Safety Camp '09 in Eau Claire and Chippewa Falls, participants will learn from Luther Midelfort health care providers and other local experts about many safety topics, including boating, fire, first aid, seat belts and weather.

The camps are scheduled at the following:

Eau Claire: Children entering fourth grade will attend from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Tuesday, June 16, and Wednesday, June 17, at Carson Park in the main pavilions.

The event is organized by Luther Midelfort. To register, call 838-3676 or e-mail sylla.anna@mayo.edu by Monday, June 8. Registration also is available online at www.luthermidelfort.org.

Chippewa Falls: Children entering fourth and fifth grades will attend from 8 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Monday, June 22, at Irvine Park.

The event is organized by Luther Midelfort Chippewa Valley. To register, call 720-4400, e-mail grunewald.vicki@mayo.edu or go to www.luthermidelfortchippewavalley.org by Friday, June 12.



Staff photo by Shane Opatz

Gary Sandvig of Cadott worked with the Pleo Dinosaur, a baby robotic dinosaur, before his release last week from Sacred Heart Hospital. The robot is the hospital's second. The da Vinci robot — a surgical system used for robotics-assisted surgery — was added in fall 2006. The robotic dinosaur's lifelike sounds and movements have proven to be beneficial in the emotional and physical rehabilitation of patients.

PREHISTORIC THERAPY

Lifelike robot earns praise for rehabilitation at Sacred Heart

By Christena T. O'Brien
Leader-Telegram staff

Gary Sandvig reached over to stroke the neck of the newest member of Sacred Heart Hospital's Rehabilitation Center — a robotic baby dinosaur.

Like a real animal, the blue-eyed, green-and-tan Pleo Dinosaur lifted its head and stretched its neck to take advantage of each caress of Sandvig's fingers.

“He really likes this,” Sandvig said as the dinosaur purred.

Hospitalized last month after a motorcycle crash, the 48-year-old Cadott man broke a leg and suffered a spinal cord injury that affected the use of his hands — until he began working with the robotic dinosaur.

“When they handed him to me the first time, I couldn't even really move my left arm,” said Sandvig, who worked with the dinosaur for several weeks before his release

from the hospital last week. “It seemed like within a day of playing around with him I was getting more use out of my one hand and arm. And I'm now getting to the point where I can almost make a fist.”

Sandvig would watch the dinosaur walk around, talk to it, pet it and hold on to it much like he would do with his own pet — a pit bull named Diesel.

“One of the neat things about the robot is a patient ends up having fun while completing therapy at the same time,” said Ben Johnson, a recreation therapist at Sacred Heart Hospital.

The dinosaur, manufactured by now-defunct Ugobe, was donated to Sacred Heart.

“It's just a new tool for us,” Johnson said of the dinosaur as it made its way across the table in front of him, stopping periodically to “look” around. “Everybody responds to him, and he is curious, so he's very good at breaking the ice.”

The 3.5-pound, battery-operated robotic dinosaur, which stands about 7.5 inches tall, explores; expresses emotion, such as fear and happiness; interacts with people by cooing, growling, purring and wagging its tail; and reacts to its environ-

Dinosaur Data

Here is a look at what makes the Pleo Dinosaur tick:

- More than 100 custom-designed gears and 14 motors for highly articulated movement.
- A color camera with a white-light sensor that allows it to detect bright light from darkness, see colors, detect motion, track a moving object and

perceive objects in front of it.

- Microphones on the left and right side of its head that give it stereophonic hearing, allowing it to detect sound direction and loudness through both “ears.”
- Eight sensors on its back, chin, legs and shoulder that are triggered by touch and allow it to “feel.”

ment. When Johnson's plastic name badge was placed in its mouth, the dinosaur bit down, wanting to play tug of war.

A study by Saint Louis University has demonstrated the connection between companion robotics and the alleviation of loneliness in those in contact with the machines, Johnson said. Companion robots have the unique ability to engage patients through physical and emotional interactions. This connection not only leads to increased cognitive responses but the establishment of physical engagement can enhance motor skills, strength and dexterity in people with reduced capacities.

“Our staff is very excited about the array of treatment

options made possible with this innovative tool, and we look forward to developing new treatments to better serve our community,” said Johnson, who had two other people working with the dinosaur.

“I know it might seem strange, ... but after awhile, it doesn't seem like a robot anymore. It seems like a pet, and I think it's going to be helpful,” said Johnson, who would like to see the hospital get another, but softer, robot.

“In a way, he kind of took the place of my dog,” Sandvig said of the dinosaur. “I will miss him to some extent, but I'm ready to go home and get back to Diesel.”

O'Brien can be reached at 830-5838, 800-236-7077 or christena.obrien@ecpc.com.

Get Moving

Independence Days Run/Walk

Time: 8:15 a.m., 5K and 10K.

Date: Saturday, June 6.
Place: Rave Fitness, 23686 Washington St., Independence.

Registration: www.needtorace.com. Registration runs from 7:30 to 8 a.m. on race day.

Cost: \$20. Checks can be made payable to Independence Days.

Information: Tami Keenan at 715-985-3733.



Thorp Fun Run/Walk

Time: 9 a.m., 5K and 10K
Date: Saturday, June 6

Place: Thorp Elementary School, 605 S. Clark St.

Registration: www.indianheadtc.org. Registration runs from 7:30 to 8:40 a.m. on race day.

Cost: \$15 until noon June 5; \$18 on race day.

Information: Margaret at Thorp Fitness & Personal Training at 715-669-5944.



Relay for Life

Relay For Life is an over-

night event designed to celebrate surviving cancer and to raise money for research and American Cancer Society programs.

During the event, teams of people gather at schools, fairgrounds or parks and take turns walking or running laps. Each team tries to keep at least one team member on the track at all times.

The following Relay for Life events are scheduled for west-central Wisconsin, according to www.cancer.org:

■ **Relay for Life of Eau Claire County,** 6 p.m. Friday, June 5, Carson Park.

■ **Relay for Life of Rusk County,** 6 p.m. Friday, June 5, Ladysmith High School, 1700 Edgewood Ave. E.

■ **Relay for Life of Arcadia,** 6 p.m. Friday, June 12, Arcadia High School, 756 Raider Drive.

■ **Relay for Life of New Richmond,** 6 p.m. Friday, June 12, New Richmond High School, 920 Riley Ave.

■ **Relay for Life of Stanley-Boyd,** 6 p.m. Friday, June 12, Chapman Park, 450 Fourth Ave., Stanley.

■ **Relay for Life of Buffalo and Pepin counties,** 6 p.m. Friday, June 19, Mondovi High

School, 337 N. Jackson St.

■ **Relay for Life of Dunn County,** 6 p.m. Friday, June 19, UW-Stout, Nelson Fieldhouse, 712 S. Broadway St., Menomonie.

■ **Relay for Life of Trempealeau County,** 6 p.m. Friday, June 26, Sunset Elementary School, 18935 Hobson St., Whitehall.

■ **Relay for Life of Barron County,** 6 p.m. Friday, July 31, Barron High School, 1050 E. Woodland Ave.

■ **Relay for Life of Chippewa County,** 6 p.m. Friday, July 31, Chippewa Falls Middle School, 750 Tropicana Blvd.

Meetings & More

Notices of health-related special events that are open to the public should be sent to Christena O'Brien at the Leader-Telegram, P.O. Box 570, Eau Claire, WI 54702-0570 or christena.obrien@ecpc.com.

Special events

■ **Blood pressure/blood sugar clinics,** 7 to 9 a.m. Monday, Red Cedar Medical Center, Education Center, 2321 Stout Road, Menomonie; 7 to 8:30 a.m. Tuesday,

RCMC-Elmwood Clinic, 236 E. Springer Ave.; and 7 to 8:30 a.m. Wednesday, June 3, RCMC-Glenwood City Clinic, 219 E. Oak Ave. Free.

■ **Blood pressure screening,** 7 to 9 a.m. Thursdays, June 4, 11, 18 and 25, Luther Midelfort kiosk near the Oakwood Forest play area at Oakwood Mall, 4800 Golf Road. Free. Information: 838-3014.

■ **Baby-sitting class,** aimed at ages 10 through

12, 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. Tuesday, June 9 or Wednesday, June 10, Center for Healthy Living, 2103 Heights Drive. Cost: \$20. Information, registration: 717-1600.

■ **“Stride and Stroll” walking class,** a class for parents, grandparents and caregivers with one small child who will tolerate a stroller for 30 to 45 minutes, 10 to 10:45 a.m. Tuesdays, June 9-July 14, Luther Midelfort Northland, 331 S.

Main St., Rice Lake. Cost: \$25. Registration: 715-537-9905 by Monday, June 8.

■ **Cardiovascular screenings,** 8 a.m. to noon Thursdays, June 11 and 25, Luther Midelfort Cardiac Center, third floor, 1400 Bellinger St. Free. The screening includes blood pressure, body mass index, cholesterol, circulation, glucose and waist-hip ratio tests along with an exercise evaluation. To schedule an

appointment call 838-5672 no later than two days before screenings.

■ **Mammography screenings,** 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Thursdays, June 11, Marshfield Clinic Bloomer Center, 1711 York St. Mammograms will be free to patients who qualify. To see if you qualify, call 715-389-7759. For others, the cost will be billed to their health insurance provider. To schedule an appointment: 715-568-6220.