



# 2013 ANNUAL REPORT

Supporting patient-centered programs and services at Great Plains Health.

 **Great Plains**  
Health Care Foundation

### **Mission**

Great Plains Health Care Foundation exists to inspire philanthropy that will enhance the quality and availability of healthcare services for the patients and communities served by Great Plains Health.

[gphealth.org/foundation](http://gphealth.org/foundation)

# Staff receives special training in perinatal bereavement care

The death of an infant happens more often than anyone cares to think about. The infant mortality rate for 2011—the most recent year for which data is available—was 6.05 deaths per 1,000 live births. That's more than 29,000 children who died before their first birthday.

The loss can be from a miscarriage, a stillbirth, sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS), or an illness. Whatever the cause, it's an excruciating experience. How these situations are handled in the hospital can make a big difference for parents' grieving and memories.

Great Plains Health recognized the need for a comprehensive approach to caring for families experiencing an infant death. So in 2013, with funding from the Great Plains Health Care Foundation, they sent two nurses to training through an organization called Resolve Through Sharing® (RTS) Bereavement Services.

## Teaching critical skills

This two-day training session teaches skills needed to provide perinatal bereavement care—that is, care delivered to a family when there is a death during pregnancy or shortly after a child's birth. The course covers education such as how individuals grieve differently, the effect of an infant death on parents and family members, and self-care strategies for caregivers.

"The concept behind this is how can we take care of these patients to the best of our ability, and give them the best experience we possibly can through the worst tragic moments of their life right now," says Beth Clair, RNC, one of the two nurses first trained as an RTS Coordinator. Kelsey Oosting, RN, BSN, also went through the training.

Great Plains elected to have these nurses attend an additional day of training so they could become trainers themselves. Now, Clair and Oosting provide in-services and bereavement training to others at the hospital. As a result, Great Plains now has 12 trained RTS Coordinators, with plans to hold five more training sessions in 2014.

## Reaching even more

"Our original goal was to have someone on duty in the OB unit who was RTS-trained at any given time," says Mike Harris, MAM, BSN, RN, director of Women's and Children's Services at Great Plains. "But now we've expanded that because people in other departments frequently come in contact with someone experiencing a loss." Harris aims to have RTS Coordinators not only in women's and children's services, but also in the emergency department, diagnostic imaging, chaplain services, case management, and same day surgery.

Previously at the hospital, various staff would handle these situations, but without the guidance of evidence-based research and without a coordinated effort.

Darrel and Melissa Bowers know what it feels like to experience an infant death. They lost their daughter Emma to a stillbirth one day before Melissa's planned C-section. What had been a healthy pregnancy ended in total shock and devastation.

## Helping others

In memory of Emma, Melissa and Darrel began donating bereavement kits to Great Plains for parents who experience a perinatal death. Melissa got further involved in this care when she went through the RTS training at Great Plains. She now serves as a volunteer resource for families in need of support.

"If your baby is stillborn, you have to say hello and good-bye at the same time," Melissa says. "It's an uncomfortable experience for everyone. This class is about what to say and how to say it."

Harris points to the challenge for both staff and parents throughout these losses. "As nurses, we want to make everything better. We can't make this better," he says. "The best we can do is make sure parents can have the best experience going through this process." That's exactly what this training is meant for.



Melissa Bowers

# A time for grieving:

## Footsteps camp connects families coping with loss

On July 20, Suzie Scholl and her two sons left their home in Norfolk and drove four hours to North Platte. They were headed to an event called Footsteps, a camp run by Great Plains Health for children who have lost a loved one. It's a long drive, but it's one Suzie and her boys look forward to every year as they work through the grief of losing their beloved husband and father, Jeff.

In the summer of 2010, Jeff Scholl was killed in a tragic accident when a railroad bridge he was inspecting suddenly collapsed. Suzie and her two young sons, Ryan, who was 6, and Brendan, 3, were left to cope with a mixture of shock and grief as everything in their lives had suddenly and permanently changed. "Jeff was such a great father, very hands-on, and involved with everything in their lives," explains Suzie. "That's what made it even more difficult. He was such a big part of our lives."

Adding to the emotional whirlwind, Suzie discovered she was pregnant one week after Jeff's funeral. She gave birth to a daughter, Allie, in February of 2011.



Suzie Scholl and boys

The loss of a loved one is difficult for anyone at any age, but it presents a unique set of challenges to kids. Great Plains started Footsteps to address these challenges. Now in its sixth year, the one-day program helps children ages 5-18 learn about their grief by connecting them with other kids who have experienced a loss.

Adult caregivers also meet during the camp to discuss ways to help their children and themselves through the intense and sometimes confusing emotions that grief can cause.

People like the Scholls come from all over Nebraska to attend Footsteps. "This camp is so important because there aren't many opportunities for kids to express their grief," says Renee Callaghan, a Great Plains employee who co-leads the camp along with hospice social worker Lisa Bocott. "It meets a need that isn't served anywhere else in the area."

Footsteps is free for attendees, thanks to generous gifts made to the Great Plains Health Care Foundation Hospice Fund. Donations to that fund also support hospice volunteer training and a memorial ceremony each May.

Suzie Scholl says the camp is vital to her kids' healing process. "Their friends at home haven't experienced anything like this," she says. "Being with other kids who have gone through a similar experience helps them express themselves in a way they normally can't. They don't feel uncomfortable talking about their feelings, so they're more apt to open up and get in touch with their emotions."

The Scholls have been coming to Footsteps for three years and plan to return as many years as they can. Allie will join her mom and brothers as soon as she's old enough. "It's a very good program," says Scholl. "We spend the drive there preparing for the camp, and the drive back talking about the experience." That, she says, makes the eight hours spent getting to and from the camp more than worth the time.

## 2013 Great Plains Health Care Foundation year in review

The Foundation received just over \$915,000 in cash gifts.

- An additional \$268,095 was pledged to the Foundation in support of the Great Plains Gardens.
- 472 new donors gave to the Foundation for the first time in 2013.
- A total of 2,658 gifts were made, including cash gifts, pledges and gifts in kind.



## Foundation funded projects – Making a difference every day

- Cardiac screenings
- Patient assistance
- Elliptical machine in Behavioral Health Services
- Treadmill for cardiac rehab
- Upgrades to private surgical family waiting rooms
- Scales for congestive heart failure patients
- Sleep medicine equipment
- Support groups and events
  - Cancer Survivors' Day
  - Grief classes
  - A Time to Heal
  - Hospice memorial service
  - Cancer painting group



# Great Plains gardens

Join the transformation as we turn a dream into reality

The Great Plains Garden is a Foundation funded project and part of the health care transformation taking place at Great Plains Health. Fundraising kicked off in August 2013 with an employee campaign, the first since 2001. Through generous donations and payroll deductions, the Great Plains family has raised over \$161,000. Furthermore, physicians, businesses, and private donors have committed an additional \$556,000 through personal gifts and support at the 2012 and 2013 Galas.

Great Plains Health Care Foundation invites you to be a part of the transformation and leave a legacy in the garden. Our goal is to raise an additional \$100,000 to build the garden as designed. Features include a 10,000-square foot Healing Garden with walking paths, a beautiful waterfall, and seating areas to be used as an extension of the hospital. Patients and family members will find beauty, peace and comfort in a safe and private place created just for them. The 25,000-square foot Gathering Garden will provide all visitors to the hospital a place to dine outdoors, gather, and celebrate health and wellness.

The Foundation needs your help to make this project a reality for patients at Great Plains Health and for our region. Every gift makes a difference, no matter the size. We invite you to participate at any level. Please note that recognition in the garden begins at the \$1,000 level and additional recognition is offered as gifts increase. Pledges payable through 2015 are also welcome. Please contact the Foundation office at 308.696.7411 for more information.

Leave a legacy in the garden for generations to enjoy.



# Small idea leads to big benefit for diabetes patients

“Diabetic education is my passion,” says Diane Tobin, RD, LMNT, CDE, a diabetes educator and clinical dietitian with Great Plains Regional Medical Center. It was this passion that led her to think creatively about how to use funding from the Great Plains Health Care Foundation to help her diabetes patients.

When approached by the Foundation, Tobin knew she didn’t need more education materials to teach her patients about living with diabetes. She suggested, instead, that the funds be used on blood sugar testing supplies for newly diagnosed diabetes patients. That idea sparked Tobin and the Foundation to create the Great Plains Diabetes Patient Assistance Fund.

“At Great Plains we have a medication assistance program for people without insurance,” Tobin explains. “But it’s much more difficult to find help getting diabetes testing supplies such as glucometers and testing strips.”



Melissa and Season Wagner

## A complex disease

Diabetes is a disease in which blood sugar levels are too high. Having high levels of blood sugar over time can lead to serious problems including heart disease, stroke, and blindness. Diabetes patients can test their blood sugar to help manage the disease and stay healthy. They do this using a medical device called a glucometer and blood sugar testing strips.

A glucometer typically costs \$20-30. Testing strips—a one-time-use-only product—can run \$1 each or more. When patients are first diagnosed with diabetes, they often must test their blood sugar levels several times a day as they work to get their disease under control. That could mean spending anywhere from \$30-80 on testing strips in one week alone.

Tobin has seen many patients unable to afford diabetes testing supplies, so their disease goes unmanaged. The Diabetes Patient Assistance Fund was set up with those patients in mind: the uninsured and underinsured. It is available for people of all ages. Since 2013, Tobin has recommended some 35 patients for referral to the program.

## In need of help

Season Wagner was one of those patients. Season was 14 years old when she was diagnosed with type 1 diabetes in October 2013. At the time, she and her mother Melissa were uninsured. Season needed to start tracking her blood sugars daily, but money was tight. Tobin referred them to the assistance program.

“Having that assistance meant everything to us,” Melissa says. “It made it possible to get through a difficult diagnosis at a really difficult time.”

On top of helping diabetics stay healthy, this program also ultimately affects ER visits and hospital admissions. Says Tobin, “When diabetes goes unmanaged, people will eventually have a complication related to high blood sugars, such as a wound not healing properly. When the sugars aren’t controlled, patients will eventually be back in the ER and readmitted.”

The Wagners are now insured and no longer need the Diabetes Patient Assistance Fund. But what it did for her daughter will stay with Melissa forever. “We are grateful for it every day,” she says. “The testing strips are Season’s lifeline in knowing how she’s doing controlling her diabetes.”