

Wellness HUB

SUMMER 2025

8

PHYSICAL & OCCUPATIONAL
THERAPY DEPARTMENT: BUILDING
STRENGTH AND COMMUNITY



A LETTER FROM THE CEO



Summer greetings from your Community Hospital!

Summertime offers the chance to work and play outdoors. If you are like me, there is a sense of urgency to schedule as many outdoor activities as possible, which is a welcome change of pace from the long winter months in Northern Illinois.

Our current issue of Wellness Hub provides our community with a glimpse into our important services outside of the usual list of general care offerings. As your local hospital, we are a vital center of wellness and healing, providing services that improve your daily activities and keep you functioning at your highest, healthiest self.

One of the highlights of RCH is our people. When we hire staff, whether they are in a clinical or non-clinical department, we hire for the right fit. Having employees who demonstrate care and compassion are of utmost importance to us because the patient is always the focus of our care. You will see that Tracey Busby, Outpatient Services Manager, is just that kind of leader. Her years of experience as a nurse compliment her decision-making and leadership style, creating a welcome atmosphere in the departments she oversees.

An example of personalized care is XCEL Orthopedics. Dr. Gadini Delisca and his team focus on what is best for each patient, whether that is outpatient care or surgical intervention. As demonstrated by the personal testimonial in this issue, the XCEL team of professionals offer the best treatment and outcomes for your unique situation. We are lucky to have exceptional orthopedic care to enhance our primary care clinic.

Another transformative service is our Rehabilitation and Therapy Clinic. There is no need to travel outside the community: our clinic offers comprehensive,

personalized physical and occupational therapy for all ages, including strengthening, balance training, acute and post-surgical joint care, and sports injuries. Our clinic is a friendly, caring atmosphere in which to reach your optimum rehab potential.

An exciting program that leads to overall wellbeing is our Diabetes Prevention program. Many people know diet plays a key role in diabetes management, but what if you could delay its onset? Our 12-week program, based on the Center for Disease Control's Prevent T2 program, provides nutritional training to help patients with food choices and improved lifestyle habits to maintain healthy blood sugar levels. Led by Janelle Stein, RDN, our own RCH Registered Dietician, this program offers a supportive environment for maintaining health.

In this issue, we also focus on what it means to provide services in a rural community. In the ever-changing landscape of healthcare, it is increasingly more difficult to be all things to all people. Rochelle Community Hospital is dedicated to focusing on the services that are most vital to immediate health and wellness. We focus on providing access to primary care services, high quality outpatient services, and emergency care that bring comfort to you during your time of greatest need.

As your local community hospital, RCH is a leader in health and wellness services focused on the needs of our friends and neighbors. Whether your experience is a planned event or an unexpected health emergency, we remain dedicated to providing exemplary services with care and compassion.

Karen Tracy, RN, Chief Executive Officer

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RCH EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT: TRACEY BUSBY LEADING WITH CARE AND COMPASSION

As the Outpatient Services Manager at Rochelle Community Hospital, Tracey Busby, MSN, MS Ed, RN, oversees several departments, including Convenient Care, Multi-Specialty Services, Infusion Services, Stress Lab, Diabetes Education, and our newest service, Behavioral Health. She also serves on various committees, including Chair of the Service Recovery Team, and subcommittees.

Tracey has over 20 years of experience in the field of nursing. Eleven years ago, she started at the hospital as a PRN (pro re nata) nurse, working as-needed in Infusion and Convenient Care. Prior to joining RCH, she held nursing positions in home health care, school settings, government agencies, and larger hospital systems.

At Rochelle Community Hospital, Tracey is inspired every day by her colleagues and a shared sense of purpose: “There are a lot of really smart people who

work here—passionate, insightful. Every person who works here genuinely wants to do whatever we can for each other and our patients.”

Dedicated Leadership

Transitioning into a leadership role gave Tracey the opportunity to take care of people on a larger scale: “I love patient care, but I feel that leadership is really my niche because I can make an impact. We need to care not only for patients but for each other, too. We can’t forget the people who do those jobs.”

Tracey still utilizes her extensive nursing background in her managerial position, something not often possible in large-scale healthcare networks. As an RN who also is the Outpatient Services Manager, she has the unique opportunity to step in to provide direct patient care at RCH when the need arises.

“In a critical access hospital, we’re all working managers, no matter what your role is at the hospital,” she explains. “We take care of our patients and each other. If Convenient Care is very busy, I’ll help with patient care. I’ll help with an IV in the Infusion department. It’s the idea of community that’s so important. It is a true family, where everybody works together, from the top down and the bottom up.”

A natural team leader, Tracey shares her people skills beyond the hospital. For 10 years, she was the Director of the CCT Penguin Project, a theatre program for children living with disabilities. She has a true passion for helping others.

As Tracey emphasizes, “My people are always my priority over everything. I care about their wellbeing. I care about their growth. Rochelle Community Hospital is the perfect place for me—a close knit community of people.”

For her dedication, teamwork, and exceptional contributions to Rochelle Community Hospital, Tracey was named May High Performer in 2021.

Collaborative Impact

Familiar with almost everyone at RCH, including the managers and teams in other departments and ancillary services, Tracey shares that if she needs help, she can easily call or walk over to talk things through. This kind of close connection isn’t something you typically find in larger healthcare facilities.



Personally, Tracey has experience with the hospital’s services. When her brother was undergoing cancer treatment, he traveled from another county to receive chemotherapy at RCH’s Infusion Services because he felt so comfortable with the department staff. During his treatments, when he couldn’t tolerate much food, he craved a Coca-Cola. An Infusion staff member called Food Services to see if they had Coke products, and when she found out they didn’t, she collaborated with them and drove to the store to purchase bottles of Coca-Cola so that they would be on hand every time Tracey’s brother came to his appointments. This seemingly small gesture amplifies the strong impact that staff has on patients.

“What other hospital is going to do that?” reflects Tracey. “They listened to their patient, picked up on his needs, and made it happen.”

With a dedication to serve that inspires others, Tracey cites RCH as having “the best culture” of any healthcare facility at which she’s worked because of the strong relationships between staff and administrators, all of whom work toward the same goal of providing exceptional care for the community.

“What inspires me every day is that we genuinely want to do good—for each other and our patients,” shares Tracey. “We may not always be able to do everything we’d like, but we never stop trying.”



PATIENT TESTIMONIAL: XCEL ORTHOPEDICS

When Noah Millard, Lieutenant and Paramedic with the City of DeKalb Fire Department, injured his knee during an emergency response, he reached out to the trusted team at XCEL Orthopedics at Rochelle Community Hospital.

"I had heard good things about Dr. Delisca and Hank Swalla at XCEL Orthopedics," says Noah. "I know Hank through our local wrestling club, so I asked his thoughts about my injury. Hank's immediate reaction was to see how I was doing personally, then he reassured me that the XCEL team could help."

Hank Swalla, MPAS, PA-C, is a Physician Assistant at XCEL, part of the team led by Dr. Gadini O. Delisca, MD. A regular volunteer with the Rochelle Wrestling Club,

he also works closely with the Rochelle Township High School wrestling program.

Although Noah initially chose XCEL because of his personal connection with Hank, he shares that his first consultation with Dr. Delisca confirmed that it was the right decision: "After meeting with Dr. Delisca, I felt that he truly cared, not just about the surgical procedure but about my recovery and well-being. His attentiveness made me feel like my situation mattered and was not just another case."

Personalized Treatment & Support

Noah was diagnosed with a meniscus tear and required surgery. From the initial consultation to recovery, he felt supported at every stage:

"The personal touch at XCEL can't be overstated. The clerical staff, operating team, and doctors were highly responsive to my questions and concerns. They navigated me through the process, including physical therapy, and ultimately helped me return to my normal function."

As a first responder and an assistant coach for the Rochelle Wrestling Club, Noah was eager to get back to his active lifestyle; however, the XCEL team made sure he healed properly first.



"I was trying to push the pace of recovery," says Noah. "They were receptive but consistently professional. After about six months, Noah was able to return to what he describes as his "baseline activity level."

Noah's experience reflects the compassionate, community-minded care that defines XCEL Orthopedics, a team committed to expertly caring for the people in our community.

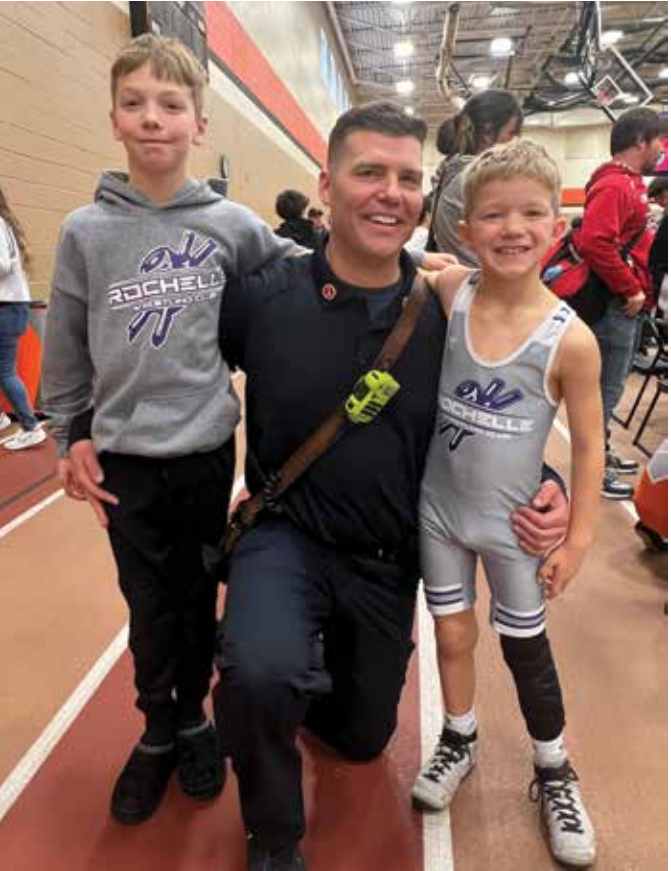
Specialized Orthopedic Care

Whether you're recovering from a sports injury, managing chronic joint pain, or preparing for a joint replacement procedure, XCEL Orthopedics at Rochelle Community Hospital has the expertise, technology, and personalized approach to help you heal and regain function.

XCEL Orthopedics offers a full range of orthopedic services, including:

- **Joint Replacement**
 - Total hip replacement
 - Partial hip replacement
 - Total knee replacement
 - VELYS robotic-assisted solutions for knee replacement
 - Shoulder joint replacement
- **General Orthopedics**
 - Fracture care
 - Bursitis
 - Tendonitis
 - Carpal tunnel release
 - Achilles tendon repair
- **Sports Medicine**
 - ACL reconstruction
 - Golfer's elbow
 - Tennis elbow
 - Throwing injuries of the shoulder
- **Related Services**
 - X-ray studies
 - MRI
 - Physical therapy
 - Occupational therapy

To speak with our XCEL team or make an appointment, please call (815) 561-2774. Visit our website for more information: [xcelorthopedics.com](https://www.xcelorthopedics.com).



PHYSICAL & OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY DEPARTMENT: BUILDING STRENGTH AND COMMUNITY



When patients arrive at RCH's Rehabilitation & Therapy center, they're stepping into a compassionate, state-of-the-art facility designed for healing and support. The dedicated staff of four physical therapists and two occupational therapists provides individualized care with a collaborative approach to patient recovery and well-being.

"An important aspect of our facility," emphasizes Evan Tracy, PTA, RCH Rehabilitation Manager, "is that we are a rehabilitation services department with two scopes of practice, physical therapy and occupational therapy, to treat the whole person, resulting in a better patient experience and rehabilitation outcome."

Our highly-trained staff of physical and occupational therapists work closely with patients of all ages, from infants to elderly, during their rehabilitation journey, whether someone is recovering from surgery, managing a chronic condition, or healing from a sports injury. Our services include orthopedic rehabilitation, pain management, preventative care, and neurological and vestibular rehab therapy.

Physical & Occupational Therapy Services

What makes RCH unique among other facilities in the area is that we are a complete rehabilitation clinic, offering both physical therapy and occupational therapy services. This allows patients to be treated in one facility, eliminating the need to travel between different locations in or out of town.

As Evan explains, a physical therapist (PT) is a "head-to-toe" expert in mobility, focusing on safely



performing large ranges of movement in areas where patients have limitations, pain, or dysfunction. An occupational therapist (OT) focuses on fine motor skills with the goal of gaining independence.

Our Physical Therapy services include:

- Sports medicine
- Orthopedics
- Acute and post-surgical (total joint, back surgery)
- Neurological
- Dry needling
- Balance
- Fall prevention
- Strengthening and core stabilization
- Skilled hands-on manual therapy
- Relax muscles (therapeutic heat & ice treatments, electrical stimulation, ultrasound)
- Vestibular rehabilitation (balance disorders, vertigo)

We offer the following Occupational Therapy Services:

- Orthopedics (shoulder, elbow, wrist, hands)
- Activity modification (adapting to new daily routines and environments)
- Acute care
- Physical, neurological, or cognitive challenges
- Chronic diseases (Parkinson's, MS)
- On-set injuries (work, sports)
- Post-surgical and post-stroke rehabilitation
- Post-breast cancer rehab
- ADL retraining

Many patients benefit from the combination of services, says Evan, sometimes working with a PT and an OT on the same skill, such as standing balance: "Our team of physical and occupational therapists work together to promote independence and quality of life for all of our patients."



Athletics

Rochelle and surrounding communities deeply value athletics, and RCH’s rehabilitation staff understands the urgency athletes feel to return to their sport. They work with each patient to develop recovery strategies that prioritize both performance and long-term wellness, ensuring athletes receive the attention and expertise they need to heal and return to their physical activities.

An athlete himself, Evan emphasizes that “many athletes only recognize big-name physical therapy brands, but we want them to know that we at RCH understand their needs because we’ve been in their shoes. We come from the same place.”

Another advantage of RCH’s Rehabilitation & Therapy clinic is its close coordination with XCEL Orthopedics, a division of Rochelle Community Hospital. After Dr. Gadini Delisca and his team treat patients for orthopedic injuries, our PTs and OTs step in to guide their recovery. If questions about a treatment plan come up, Evan points out that he can reach Dr. Delisca and his staff “in a snap of a finger”—even during a session. This kind of direct, real-time communication with a patient’s medical team sets our care apart from other local clinics.

“The communication between our care teams is essential,” emphasizes Evan.

Pelvic Floor Therapy

We are excited to announce a new service at our Rehabilitation & Therapy Clinic: pelvic floor therapy. Now, clients no longer have to travel to an out-of-town specialty clinic to receive this specialized treatment, making it easier and more convenient for our community members to receive the care they need close to home.

Beneficial for women, men, and children, pelvic floor therapy addresses a wide range of issues, including pelvic pain, incontinence, postpartum recovery, and core stabilization. Our trained team of therapists create a personalized program for clients designed to strengthen and retain pelvic muscle.



The soft open for our pelvic floor therapy program was highly successful, and we look forward to expanding the program!

Collaboration Enhances Care

Because the Rehabilitation & Therapy clinic is part of RCH hospital, our PTs and OTs often start working with patients while they’re still in the hospital recovering from surgery.

As Evan notes, the staff support each other like a family, creating a sense of community that’s not often found in larger healthcare systems.

When patients think of rehabilitation, they often gravitate toward standalone clinics that advertise only physical therapy in their name. But at Rochelle Community Hospital, rehabilitation is so much more than that. Our collaborative approach allows us to customize care based on each patient’s specific needs and goals.

Safety & Support

For our team, safety is our number one priority as patients navigate the rehabilitation transition. For patients who receive total joint replacements, for example, physical therapists teach them how to walk, maneuver around the room, and use stairs safely so that they can get back home as soon as possible. Occupational therapists help patients improve daily functions such as putting on socks, brushing teeth, and preparing food.

Unlike other clinics where therapists rotate between multiple clients at a time, we offer one-on-one care. At RCH Rehabilitation & Therapy, every patient receives the full attention of their therapist for the entire duration of their session, guiding and supporting you during your recovery.

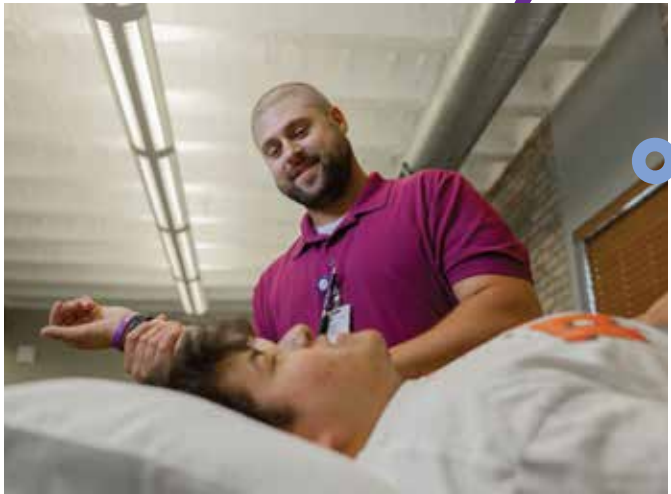
Investing in the Future of Rehabilitation

As RCH undergoes a transition during construction, the rehabilitation and therapy center will continue to offer high-quality care. The new building will feature state-of-the art facilities and equipment, allowing for an expansion of services. Providing a wide range of specialty services is so important in rural health care, and we’re proud to offer them to our community.

Choosing RCH’s Rehabilitation & Therapy Clinic means choosing a team that works together daily, sharing insights, offering support, and ensuring each patient receives comprehensive, individualized care. With a variety of specialties and certifications across the team, we’re able to provide a level of service that single-focus physical therapy clinics can’t match.

Our clinic’s hours of operation are Monday - Thursday 7:00 - 6:30 and Friday 7:00 - 5:30. To make an appointment or speak with our staff at the RCH Rehabilitation & Therapy center, please give us a call!

Physical, occupational, orthopedic, pelvic floor, and vestibular therapies and treatments
815-562-2181, ext. 1140





RCH IN THE COMMUNITY PREDIABETES SERIES: A LIFESTYLE BALANCE PROGRAM

Rochelle Community Hospital's popular Diabetes Prevention program is back—and free of charge! Prediabetes Series: A Lifestyle Balance Program was initiated nearly 10 years ago at RCH, then was paused during COVID protocols. We are thrilled to offer this revitalized program and provide our community with free, research-based support to help stop diabetes before it starts.

Based on the Center for Disease Control's Prevent T2 series, the program benefits individuals at high risk of developing type 2 diabetes. According to the CDC, over 38 million people in the United States (roughly 1 in 10) are living with diabetes, and between 90%

and 95% of these cases are type 2 diabetes, a chronic condition in which the body cannot use insulin properly. While it typically occurs in adults over 45, an increasing number of children, teenagers, and young adults also are being diagnosed.

During the twelve-week program, participants meet in person at RCH once a week to discuss lifestyle topics. Currently, the meetings take place during the day, and organizers are exploring ways to schedule evening sessions to accommodate a variety of schedules.

A Judgment-Free Community

Because making dietary changes can be very difficult, our Diabetes Prevention program looks at ways to incorporate family-favorites and cultural foods so participants don't have to give up the foods they love.

Similarly, talking about eating habits and having weekly weigh-ins can be sensitive subjects. Janelle Stein, RDN, LDN, program leader and RCH Registered Dietician,

emphasizes that the program is a judgement-free zone with all participants coming together in a safe space for encouragement and growth. This "buddy system" structure gives participants inspiration to stay active, eat well, and stay accountable.

More than a nutrition class, the Prediabetes program is an ongoing, evolving group experience. Although the series framework is based on CDC research, participants also share information they find online, on social media, or hear from friends and family. The group then reviews it together alongside the research to make informed, healthy decisions.

"My favorite part of this program is the coming together, learning from each other," says Janelle. "Being together in person builds a community with similar struggles and similar goals. We also share recipes and support each other when we fall off the wagon with healthy eating, such as when we celebrate a holiday or just don't want to exercise."



Program Offerings

The overall goal of our Prediabetes program is to provide support and education for the community to help prevent or delay the onset of type 2 diabetes. Because prevention is more cost-effective and can be more beneficial than treatment after diagnosis, our program focuses on practical lifestyle changes in a judgement-free, supportive environment.

"We work on manageable changes such as improving eating habits, increasing physical activity, practicing good sleep habits, and managing stress," Janelle explains.

If a participant is referred by their primary care physician, the facilitators give detailed feedback to the participant's healthcare team in order to retain a continuity of care.

In addition to weekly meetings, participants receive the following benefits:

- Free hemoglobin A1c testing before and after the 12 weeks
- Weekly weigh-ins to track progress in a private and supportive environment
- Handouts, recipes, and discussion guides to encourage healthy choices (written materials are available in English and Spanish)

Blood sugar testing, in particular, is one aspect that sets our program apart. As the diagnostic criteria for diabetes or prediabetes, the A1C test measures an

individual's blood sugar levels on average for the prior 2 to 3 months. A glucose test measures a person's current blood sugar level. In addition to healthier habits, this lab work done at the start and at the end helps participants track progress through diagnostic tests, motivating changes that reduce the risk of developing diabetes.

"Diabetes is a leading cause of preventable blindness, kidney failure, stroke, heart attack, neuropathy, and loss of limb," explains Janelle, "and if we can delay or prevent that, or even if folks go on to develop type 2 diabetes, our program provides a foundation for diabetes management and helps control the long-term negative consequences of high blood sugar."

Investing in Wellness

Janelle Stein and her colleague, Luis Cano, RDN, RCH Registered Dietician, align the program with RCH's mission and vision to care for the whole person, which is also why RCH offers it free of charge. "So many people have prediabetes, but it's not well covered by insurance. It's not covered by Medicare or Medicaid," Janelle explains. "Prevention enhances wellness and health better than waiting until there's a problem that then has to be fixed. Let's course-correct now to try to maintain and improve the health of our community."

The Prediabetes Series: A Lifestyle Balance program at Rochelle Community Hospital is open to anyone in the community looking to make lifestyle changes and prevent type 2 diabetes, including RCH employees! The convenient day-time scheduling allows staff to attend the program during their shift at the hospital.

There are no prerequisites, no costs, and no pressure—just a supportive group working together toward better health.

Try these delicious,
nutritious recipes
and take a step
toward better health!



Peanut Butter Pumpkin Dip (serves 12)

Serving suggestions: graham crackers, apple slices, or celery sticks.

Ingredients

- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup creamy peanut butter
- 1 tbsp brown sugar
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup canned pumpkin puree
- 1 tsp vanilla extract

Directions

1. Mix peanut butter and brown sugar in a medium bowl.
2. Add pumpkin and vanilla and stir until well blended.
3. Serve immediately or refrigerate until serving. If kept at room temperature, throw out after 2 hours.



Nutritional analysis per serving: 110 calories, 8g fat, 70mg sodium, 6g carbohydrate, 1g fiber, 4g protein.

Adapted from: Illinois Nutrition Education Programs. Accessed on 4/29/25: <https://extension.illinois.edu/blogs/know-how-know-more/2017-12-05-take-holiday-dip>

Stuffed Peppers (serves 4)

Ingredients

- 4 bell peppers (any color)
- $\frac{3}{4}$ lb. lean ground turkey
- $\frac{1}{2}$ medium onion (chopped)
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup uncooked brown rice
- 14.5 oz. canned, no-salt-added diced tomatoes
- 1 clove fresh, minced garlic (or 1 teaspoon minced garlic from jar)
- 1 tsp. reduced-sodium Italian seasoning (lowest sodium available)
- $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp. crushed red pepper flakes (optional for spiciness)
- 8 oz. canned, no-salt-added tomato sauce

Directions

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees.
2. Cook rice according to package instructions (omit the salt).
3. While the rice is cooking, brown the turkey in a skillet over medium heat.
4. Add the onion and cook for 3 minutes more (until onion becomes translucent).
5. Wash the bell peppers and remove the tops, seeds, and membranes.
6. Set peppers in a 9x9 baking dish or line them up in a loaf pan so they stand upright.



7. In a medium mixing bowl, mix turkey, rice, tomato, garlic, Italian seasoning, and pepper.
8. Spoon mixture into each pepper. Spoon tomato sauce evenly over the top of the 4 peppers.
9. Bake 1 hour in the oven, until peppers are tender.

Nutritional analysis per serving: 1 stuffed pepper per serving, 252 calories, 1.5g total fat, 0.5g saturated fat, 0.0g trans fat, 0.5g polyunsaturated fat, 0.5g monounsaturated fat, 53mg cholesterol, 68mg sodium, 34g total carbohydrate, 6g dietary fiber, 10g sugars, 26g protein.

Dietary exchanges: 3 vegetable, 3 lean meat, 1 starch

From the American Heart Association. Accessed on 4/29/25: <https://recipes.heart.org/en/recipes/stuffed-peppers>



RURAL HEALTH CARE: MAKING A DIFFERENCE IN OUR COMMUNITY

“Small and rural hospitals are indispensable to the health and well-being of their communities. They ensure that rural residents have access to essential medical services, reduce the strain of travel for healthcare, and support the local economy and social fabric. Their presence is crucial for maintaining public health.” — Illinois Health and Hospital Association (IHA), August 2024

As an independent rural health facility, Rochelle Community Hospital is proud to continue providing care to our rural community at a time when many similar hospitals are either closing their doors or having to join larger health systems just to stay open.

We serve the community in ways that major healthcare organizations cannot, explains Tracey Busby, MSN, MS Ed, RN, Outpatient Services Manager at RCH, where “people are numbers, and the departments are very isolated from each other. We aren’t like that. We work together and recognize that patients are people—they are our friends and neighbors. This isn’t just a workplace: it’s home.”

Our Patients: The Heart of Rural Health

Rural health care facilities play a fundamental role in the health and stability of their communities. According to the IHA, more than 1.6 million people (about 13% of the state’s population) live in rural areas, where the local hospital often serves as more than just a place to receive quality, affordable care close to home.

With a focus on patient care, shorter wait times, and strong community connections, RCH provides essential and specialty services close to home while also prioritizing our patients.

Having spent the past 20 years in rural health care, five being at RCH, Zac Heward, BA, Patient Financial Services Manager, understands the importance of quality health care in a close-knit, rural community. He manages Patient Access and Patient Financial Services, giving him a “big picture” perspective of RCH, and sees “everything throughout the whole

patient experience” from the moment people walk through the door to the billing and payment processes. As Zac emphasizes,

“One of the main differences between a rural health care facility like us and a larger hospital is that you receive individualized care. We partner with larger health care systems, including OSF, for services such as trauma. We can provide 99% of those services right here without patients having to travel out of town.”

With major health networks, you also lose the “personal touch” that comes with a rural health facility. RCH is a very accessible hospital, says Zac: “When you’re a patient in a large health system, it can feel like a maze: you’re passed from person to person. In a small, independent hospital like ours, it’s different because we all wear many hats and work closely together. We know exactly who can help, and we make sure you get to them.” He emphasizes that these types of “face-to-face interactions are only possible in a community hospital, and that’s what makes our work so meaningful.”

This personal service extends toward the often frustrating process of billing and insurance, adds Zac. At RCH, patients can call our Business Office directly rather than wait in line with a call center: “At Rochelle Community Hospital, patients work with the same representative from start to finish, ensuring consistency and a smoother experience.”

As Lab Manager Karen Ravnika, MLS (Medical Laboratory Scientist), ASCP (American Society for Clinical Pathology certified) explains, having local access to care is the key to a healthy, vital community: “If you don’t have medical access, your care is not as good as it could be. You’re avoiding your preventive exams. Conditions can worsen. This is the most important aspect of providing care to our community. We have a lot of elderly members in our community, and having our hospital close to home makes a difference in their quality of life.”

RCH also recognizes and accommodates the large Spanish-speaking community in Rochelle, as Karen shares:

“It can be a little frightening to access care when you don’t speak the language. We have staff in almost every department who can speak Spanish, which helps to break down potential barriers.



RCH celebrates National Rural Health Day to share the power and importance of rural health care and to honor those who dedicate themselves to making exceptional health care accessible to smaller communities.

It's so important to have the personal touch of communicating with someone who can speak quickly and understand the language nuances."

Another benefit of remaining independent is that RCH has a microbiology lab on site, which is unusual even for bigger hospitals. Karen points out that patients can come to RCH, have their testing done, and get treated, all without travel: "We have medical lab scientists who read cultures and set up antibiotic panels right away. Keeping this onsite shortens the time to results, and ultimately, the time to treatment."

The Challenges We Face

As noted by the IHA, small and rural hospitals like RCH have a greater risk of financial hardships due to rural areas' higher Medicare and Medicaid populations. These programs typically offer lower reimbursement rates and less coverage than commercial insurance plans.

This financial pressure highlights the need for thoughtful policy decisions to help ensure these hospitals remain capable of delivering care to rural communities.

The IHA also points out that as healthcare changes, small hospitals that see fewer patients often feel the impact the most. With limited budgets, it can be difficult for them to adjust quickly to new ways of delivering care. That's why it's so important for policymakers to consider long-term strategies to



Members of AAHAM who participated in Legislative "Leg" Day in support of the 340B Program pictured with Jordan Powell, IHA Senior Vice President, Health Policy & Finance.



help keep the critical services that RCH provides, such as outpatient care, available in our community.

However, across the country, including in the State of Illinois, many new proposed bills regarding insurance reimbursement, coverage, and policies rarely consider how rural healthcare will be affected, explains Kirby Heward, Marketing and Public Relations Specialist at RCH. Because of this, Rochelle Community Hospital constantly has to vouch for itself to remain recognized and supported so that we can maintain our quality care services and expand our services to meet the growing needs in our community.

In April 2025, Kirby and Zac participated in the Illinois Chapter of the American Association of Healthcare Administrative Management's (AAHAM) Legislative "Leg" Day at the Illinois State Capitol. Attendees engaged with their State Representatives and Senators to advocate for a State Bill designed to safeguard 340b. This refers to Section 340b of the Public Health Service Act, a drug discount that plays an important role in giving people access to affordable medications.

"I recently spoke with some state representatives about the 340b Drug Pricing Program, a federal initiative that allows hospitals to receive reduced pricing on medicine in the form of rebates with the major pharmaceutical manufacturers" shares Zac. "We urged our state representatives and senators to

move forward with this bill to help protect pharmacy prices in Illinois. Our savings allows us to stretch our scarce federal resources further by allocating much-needed resources to the community, such as offering additional services or continuing services we currently provide." With these savings, RCH is able to invest in the hospital expansion.

Our Commitment to Staying Independent in Our Community

Ongoing updates to RCH's facilities are essential to remaining a trusted source of care for our community. These improvements and expansions help us continue to provide high-quality care right here at home, giving everyone in our community access to modernized, compassionate, and reliable healthcare with the latest medical technology and services.

Certified as a Six Sigma Black Belt through the American Society for Quality, Zac uses his expertise to make meaningful process improvements in healthcare and the revenue cycle. As he notes, this has been especially important in helping RCH stay strong and make the most of the resources we have: "One of the ways in which we stay competitive is by having clean and efficient processes. I am passionate about helping support critical access and rural hospitals through the billing and revenue cycle and making sure that we're doing things at the top level."

One new service offered by RCH is Behavioral Health, a recently launched department in Outpatient Services. This new mental health counseling service was developed in response to community needs, explains Tracey Busby, who oversees the department: "We listen to what our community tells us they need, and we act on it. We send out patient surveys to elicit feedback, and our staff is always out and about in the community. We are always available and accessible."

Emphasizing the hospital's commitment to increasing multi-specialty physician services and other initiatives, Tracey explains,

"As an independent hospital, we make our own decisions as an organization. Our supportive Board of Directors is made up of long-standing community members who care about the people they serve. Their choices reflect our values, which may be different from those of a larger facility. We make decisions that are good for our own community. Because we don't have a lot of red tape, our goals are attainable, which shortens the time it takes to accomplish things."

Remaining independent and locally-owned allows Rochelle Community Hospital to make patient-centered decisions that lead to more effective treatment and better care for our community.



AAHAM group (including two RCH employees) pictured with Representative Ryan Spain (73rd District) in support of the 340B Program.



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We Have

Heart



No Place Like It



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