

Hospitals trying to keep kids away

Facilities hope to slow spread of swine flu

By Blythe Wachter
Leader-Telegram staff

To help prevent the spread of swine flu, area hospitals are requesting children under age 16 not visit patients at this time.

That unusual action is in response to increasing cases of the swine flu in the younger population, said Dawn Garcia, director of medical staff and quality at Sacred Heart Hospital in Eau Claire and St. Joseph's Hospital in Chippewa Falls.

Separating a population identified as posing a risk and a population at risk is a "basic infection control premise," Garcia said.

Luther Midelfort in Eau Claire and its regional sites in Barron,



Garcia

Bloomer and Osseo, and Red Cedar Medical Center in Menomonie, also have requested that age group not visit patients. Hospital also are encouraging limiting hospital visitors to immediate family members. The swine flu, otherwise known as the H1N1 virus, is occurring in all age groups, although predominantly in younger people, Garcia said.

Based on what area hospitals are seeing in the community, "we feel this is a reasonable approach

Stop the Flu

To prevent spreading the flu, stay home when you are sick, cover your mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing, wash your hands often and avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth.

to preserve the patients' safety," she said.

Many hospitals across the nation are restricting visitors beyond what is being done locally, Garcia said, but Chippewa Valley hospitals are taking "reasonable" precautions given what is happening in the community.

The younger population tends to be most affected by the swine flu because of children's close

proximity in schools and community events, so the virus is more easily spread, Garcia said.

Sacred Heart and St. Joseph's hospitals have not noticed enough difference in the virus' prevalence between 16- to 18-year-olds and the adult population to ask that older youth not visit patients.

"This was a difficult decision. We certainly do not want to limit visitors if we do not need to do so," Garcia said.

Neither Luther Midelfort nor Red Cedar Medical Center had anyone available to comment.

For patients' safety, the hospitals say, people displaying cold or flu-like symptoms such as fever, sore throat, coughing, nausea, runny nose and diarrhea are asked to refrain from visiting

patients until they are symptom-free for at least 24 hours without fever-reducing medication.

The hospitals' precautions are "entirely appropriate," said Richard Thoune, director of the Eau Claire City-County Health Department.

Influenza-like illness levels are well above normal for this time of year in western Wisconsin and across the nation, Thoune said.

Normally at this time in western Wisconsin, about 6 percent of outpatient visits in the health care system are reported as influenza-like illness, but this fall it's about 9 percent, he said.

Thoune encouraged people to monitor media reports and watch for availability of seasonal influenza and H1N1 vaccines, or check online at bereadyec.com.

LEINIE'S TOUR



At 100, Leinenkugel's beer fan Alma Cass finally got to visit the Leinie Lodge on Friday. She drinks one Leinie's every day.

Staff photo by Shane Opatz

Chance of a lifetime

Facility fulfills centenarian's desire to visit Leinie Lodge, tour brewery

By Chris Vetter
Chippewa Falls News Bureau

CHIPPEWA FALLS — When Rick Schulner visits 100-year-old Alma Cass at Dove Healthcare West in Eau Claire, he brings a 12-pack of Leinenkugel's beer.

Schulner said that Cass drinks a full can of beer every day.

"There's some kind of secret to the beer," Schulner joked. "It's what keeps her going."

One time, Schulner brought a different brand. Cass wasn't amused.

"She called it tap water," Schulner said.

Schulner, 41, was on hand Friday to see his elderly friend get her first experience with learning more about her favorite drink.

Cass and seven other Dove Healthcare West residents visited the Leinie Lodge in Chippewa Falls on Friday. Cass has always wanted to go to the lodge, but had never been there before.

Cass showed up in her wheelchair, clutching a Leinenkugel's canoe paddle, and ready for a tour of the shop and the beer production area. She sipped a beer while chatting with friends, but she was a bit camera-

shy around reporters.

Kris Metcalf, Dove's recreation director, said the facility has been planning the trip since August, after hearing about Cass' desire to visit the lodge.

"We just made it happen, and we made it more than just an outing for her," Metcalf said. "We'll probably be out here again. You never know what (outing) will be popular or a hit."

Each of the Dove residents attending the lodge got doctor's permission to drink alcohol, she said.

Metcalf said that Cass is allowed to drink a beer daily.

"She has a doctor's order — it's OK for her to have one every day, and it's always Leinie's," Metcalf said.

Mary Schnobrich, lodge director, said she was thrilled to have Cass attend the lodge.

"It's been her wish," Schnobrich said. "It's a great experience. This place is for fun."

Schnobrich said that Leinenkugel's Brewing Company provides 60,000 tours of the production plant every year. Schnobrich doesn't recall anyone older than Cass ever taking the tour.

Vetter can be reached at 723-0303 or chris.vetter@ecpc.com.

Flight's detour raises concern

By Leader-Telegram staff and wire services

MINNEAPOLIS — Lonnie Heidtke of the town of Wheaton wasn't paying much attention to the time as he worked on his laptop computer while returning home from a business trip Wednesday night on Northwest Airlines Flight 188 to the Twin Cities from San Diego.

"I didn't notice anything until I looked at my watch, and it was 8 p.m., and they told us we'd be landing at 8:15, and we weren't descending," Heidtke said.

Heidtke, 61, and the other 143 passengers on the jetliner later found out the reason for the delay was that the plane overshot its destination and was still headed east over the Eau Claire area when the crew realized what happened.

"We were flying in circles somewhere," Heidtke said.

Later, the FBI and airport police interviewed the crew. That's when crew members told of a "heated discussion" over airline policy that caused them to lose "situational awareness," according to a spokesperson for the National Transportation Safety Board.

The plane landed safely at about 9:10 p.m. in the Twin Cities. When it pulled up to the gate, "everybody stood up and got ready to exit," Heidtke said. "The flight attendant said, 'Everybody sit back down please.'"

Heidtke was surprised when police boarded the plane. A seasoned flyer, Heidtke makes the trip from San Diego to Minneapolis every other week for his work with Bloomington-based Instrumental Inc. He had never seen police enter a plane before.

"I called my wife (to tell her) that I was finally home," he said. "I told her they were going to arrest the pilots for being late."

Airport police boarded the plane to make sure the loss of radio contact wasn't the result of criminal activity, said Patrick Hogan, an airport spokesman.

Heidtke said he didn't have an inkling anything was wrong during the flight, other than it running nearly an hour longer than expected. He didn't learn about the problems until Thursday.

Author examines origins of tall tale

By Rob Hanson
Leader-Telegram staff

The identity of the person who told the first tall tale of Paul Bunyan may never be known.

According to author Michael Edmonds, one thing is certain, though, and that is the stories were dreamt up in the early 1880s in the logging camps of northern Wisconsin — a few miles north of Tomahawk to be exact.

Edmonds, the head of digital collections and Web services at the Wisconsin Historical Society in Madison, released his book "Out of the Northwoods: The Many Lives of Paul Bunyan" in early October, a book he said is meant to dispel any common misconceptions about the origins of Bunyan.

"Some people will say 'Oh, Paul Bunyan, that started in Minnesota,'" said Edmonds. "But, it didn't."

"(The tales) are not tied to any particular location, but Paul Bunyan as a character, I'm confident, was invented in the Wisconsin River Valley in the 1880s and quickly spread



Edmonds

from there elsewhere."

Eau Claire and Chippewa Falls are recognized on one of the book's maps as two of 15 important places in the birth of Bunyan tales.

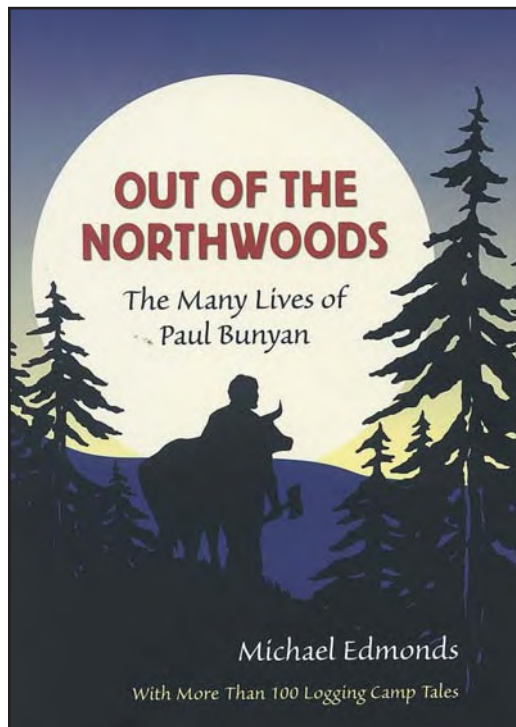
"Out of the Northwoods" explores not only where the tales originated, but also how the private jokes of lumberjacks made their way out of the woods and into mainstream media.

Edmonds said the catalyst for his interest in the Bunyan tales and also the cornerstone of his reporting methodology started with a UW-Madison undergraduate from the WWI era named Bernice Stewart.

The 18-year-old Stewart, Edmonds said, travelled to various logging camps to interview loggers and record their yarns.

"I thought, boy, this is funny," said Edmonds. "What 18-year-old woman goes out to hang out with lumberjacks to record their folklore?"

Instead of pursuing mainstream media accounts of the Bunyan tales, Edmonds went after unpublished first-hand interviews with loggers of the early 20th century.



Contributed photo

In Michael Edmonds' book, Eau Claire and Chippewa Falls are located on maps as places important in the tales of Paul Bunyan.