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Department's outreach focuses on concussions

Along with all the good work going on inside the Rehab Department, Director Jill Ehlen and the entire staff believe in the importance of community involvement and outreach. An important initiative this fall has been pre-concussion cognitive testing for all middle and high school athletes. "Every athlete takes a 30-minute cognitive test to get a baseline," explained Nate Greisen, PTA. "If they get a concussion, they take the test again, so we can compare the results."

The team is hitting it hard and educating both students and their parents to make them aware of the protocols for getting back into the game. The high school's athletic director has made the testing mandatory for all athletes. Nate adds that, "People are finally understanding that concussions are traumatic head injuries."

Self-Defense Training for Teens

November 14, 6-9 p.m.
Ringgold County Hospital
Call 505-212-5287 for details

Rehab department is top notch



Front row, from left: Jill Johnson, Nate Greisen. Back row, from left: Ruth Smith, Jill Ehlen, Shyanne Allen, Virginia Greubel

There aren't many places in a hospital where former patients drop by just to say "hello." But it happens all the time in the Physical Therapy Department at Ringgold County Hospital. The team prides themselves in building relationships while they care for their patients.

Jill Ehlen is the Rehab Director and a Physical Therapy Assistant. She oversees the day-to-day management of the department, including staffing and ensuring that all policies and procedures are being followed. She splits her time between seeing patients and managing the department, however she says, "I do more patient care than anything."

Jill was named the director in 2016. Since then, the department has grown and now includes three full-time physical therapists (PT) and two physical therapy assistants (PTA). "One of the biggest accomplishments for me as a department head has been putting together a great team," she said. "Everyone brings their individual strengths and talents, but we all have the same approach to patient care. They're all great therapists with great hands-on skills, and they're so compassionate. It helps that we do not have one bad grape in the bunch!"

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RINGGOLD COUNTY HOSPITAL

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CONTINUED FROM FRONT

All the team members feel the same way about their co-workers and the department. Shyanne Allen, PT, remarked that, "It's really fun. It's such a positive work environment." She especially enjoys the variety in her work. "My interests are in orthopedics, sports injuries, and rehab. It never gets boring!"

In a way, Shyanne is responsible for bringing Nate and Jill to Mt. Ayr. When she had a baby last January, (a perfect baby girl named Ada) the two therapists were hired for the short term to cover her maternity leave. They fit so well in the department and the community, that they were hired permanently in April.

"It's going great!" says Nate Greisen, PTA. "I couldn't ask for anything more. The team is fun and easy to work with. It's really comfortable." Along with physical therapy, Nate splits his time between cardiac rehab and helping patients with peripheral arterial disease. "The patient load is increasing every month. And because we've grown as a staff, we can help even more people."

As an extension of cardiac rehab, Nate's added a new program called Functional Fitness. It's designed for anyone in the community who wants to be active but needs some supervision. "They get a consent form from their doctor and then participate in a monitored exercise program. We have six people right now, coming two-three times a week," he says.

Jill Johnson, PT, is also happy with her decision to live and work in Mt. Ayr. "I really enjoy a smaller, rural health care setting. We get so much variety. I like the idea that I'm still challenged regularly." She's noticed that the number of patients coming to the department have grown exponentially since she arrived. "Things are being said about us. We're getting referrals from outside our community. Which is great because we want to help everyone we can."

After seven years as a physical therapist at RCH, Ruth Smith echoes the sentiments of her co-workers. "I'm thrilled with the new staff," she said. "They're young and progressive. They focus a lot on relationships with the patients. They build confidence and trust while they're very concerned about the quality of the therapy. There's a genuine openness, and a willingness to learn." Ruth is no stranger to learning new approaches to therapy, having recently become certified in hypnotherapy. She helps patients with smoking cessation, weight loss, managing anxiety, and pain management. "It's definitely not a magical cure, but it's a kick start – to get the ball moving in the right direction."

With all the good work going on both inside and outside the Physical Therapy Department, the team is being talked about, and their reputation is growing. Stop by during October, National Physical Therapy Month and say hello!

3D Mammography can detect cancer earlier

If it's October, it's Breast Cancer Awareness Month, and once again the health care professionals at Ringgold County Hospital are strongly encouraging all women over the age of 40 to have an annual mammogram. It's a simple, non-invasive procedure. "It's only 10 minutes," said Shelly Shields, medical imaging manager. "But those 10 minutes can save your life."

The big news in breast cancer detection is the 3D Mammography machine. Ringgold County Hospital acquired one earlier this year. "We decided the benefits far outweighed the costs. We really wanted to get it for our community."

The 3D Mammography machine brings the most advanced imaging available today to the area. Patients don't have to travel to get the best of the best. "The convenience of it being right here means we're detecting more breast cancers, earlier," said Shelly. "Early detection is what saves lives." The machine's sophistication also means fewer women need to come back for a second set of images. "It's low-dose radiation, and it reduces call-backs by 40%."

At Ringgold County Hospital, the benefits of high-tech imaging come with outstanding patient care. Shelly has been doing mammograms and other imaging for 30 years. Her patients are her friends, neighbors and family. "I want to take care of my patients," said Shelly. "I want to help them be comfortable. Their experience is so important to me."

To learn more or schedule an appointment, call 641-464-4400.

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