

## *Ophthalmologist joins clinic*

Des Moines Eye Surgeons has partnered with Ringgold County Hospital to offer cornea and comprehensive ophthalmology with a focus on treating cataracts. Matthew Raecker, MD will be available at Ringgold County Hospital the first Wednesday of every month. Dr. Raecker studied biology and earned his BA at St. Olaf College in Northfield, MN and went on to earn his medical degree at the University of Iowa in 2010. He completed his residency in Ophthalmology at the Casey Eye Institute, Oregon Health and Science University in Portland, OR in 2014. Dr. Raecker then returned to the University of Iowa where he completed his fellowship in Cornea, External Disease, and Refractive Surgery in 2015. Dr. Raecker is board certified by the American Board of Ophthalmology and is also VISX Laser Certified.



*To schedule an appointment, call 641-464-4409.*



## Vaccinations prevent disease

Since the COVID-19 pandemic hit the United States earlier this year, it's been easy to dismiss the other illnesses that can affect ourselves and our children. Because of vaccines, diseases like polio, measles, mumps, and chickenpox are no longer the health threats they once were. But the reason they've been almost eradicated is because parents have made sure to vaccinate their children and prevent them from getting sick.

According to Katie Willcox, D.O., both the Centers for Disease Control and the World Health Organization have noticed a decline in vaccinations this year, primarily due to fears of COVID-19. "It's understandable. Parents don't want to bring their children into a doctor's office or clinic. But it's critical that we stick to the recommended immunization schedule," she said. Dr. Willcox explained that the schedules are set so the immunizations are received when they are most effective. "It's really important not to delay."

Newborn babies get the Hepatitis B vaccine at birth. Then, beginning at two months old, they start getting routine vaccines including: Hib (Hemophilus influenza), Measles, Mumps, Rubella (MMR); chicken pox, tetanus, pertussis (whooping cough), polio, among others. "Some parents worry that we give their babies too many vaccines at once," said Dr. Willcox. "But there is no data to support any issues related to giving multiple vaccines at one time, and in fact it has been shown to improve immunity when certain vaccines are administered together."

Most children receive their vaccines in the first year of life and continue through preschool at the age of four or five. At that point, they're all set until they reach the age of 11 or 12. "We've started recommending Gardasil to prevent the Human Papillomavirus and the meningococcal vaccine for meningitis, with a booster again at age 16," she said. "Our nurses here at the Mount Ayr Medical Clinic do a good job of keeping up with our patients' immunizations. As children get older, they often get the vaccines during sports physicals when they're needed."

Dr. Willcox emphasized the importance of 100% participation in a community when it comes to vaccinating children. "We have a way to prevent these communicable diseases that are transmitted from person to person. If we don't have enough people participating, it doesn't work. Vaccines protect our children."

For more information, contact your medical professional, or schedule an appointment at the Mount Ayr Medical Clinic: 641-464-4470.



## RINGGOLD COUNTY HOSPITAL

## We appreciate our nurses!

*We are celebrating the hard work, compassion, and dedication of nurses everywhere. Here at Ringgold County Hospital, our thanks go out to all the nurses in our hospital and clinic who care for our community every day. In this month's newsletter, we're profiling two outstanding Ringgold County Hospital nurses for their contributions.*



### **Ben Brightwell**

Not everyone is born knowing exactly what their career path will be. Acute care nurse Ben Brightwell took some time figuring it out. A native of Creston, IA, she set out to become a high school English teacher and earned an associate's degree

in junior college. After that, she decided physical therapy was for her. But in the end, she landed on nursing and completed her training at Mercy Hospital in Des Moines.

After nursing school, she returned to Creston and worked simultaneously in the ICU and the Emergency Room there. "I really liked the challenge of the ICU," she said. "Also, I knew I wanted to work in an ER eventually, and many places require you to have ICU experience."

As a young nurse, she decided to spread her wings and have an adventure. Along with her best friend, she left Iowa for Duke Hospital in Durham, NC. "I wanted to see other places in the world. We'd gone on vacation to the Blue Ridge Mountains and the Smoky Mountains. I wanted to live in that part of the country," said Ben.

At Duke, she worked in the ER and as a flight nurse on a helicopter. The crew served critically ill patients in North Carolina, and occasionally as far as Virginia and South Carolina. "It was fun! I really liked flying in the helicopter."

But after a couple of years, Ben was ready to come home to be with friends and family. Her father had become ill as well, so she headed back to Creston. For years, she split her time between Greater Regional Hospital and Ringgold County Hospital, working several 12-hour shifts at each every week. But when it was time to retire, she cut back and now works at RCH two days a week. Her schedule allows her time to care for her 92-year old mother and enjoy

her two young grandchildren who live in Prescott.

"Everyone is really friendly, and we know everyone by name," she said when asked about working at Ringgold County Hospital. "I really enjoy it here."



### **Joyce Lee**

Joyce Lee has been a nurse at Ringgold County Hospital for 12 years. A native of Prescott, IA, she grew up on a farm with four brothers and three sisters. "I always wanted to be a doctor," she said. "I had a lot of ear infections as a child and went to a lot

of doctor's appointments." During her childhood she also remembers loving school. She was good in all her classes and cried in the summers when it wasn't open. One year, her mother got her a doctor's set with a stethoscope, and it seemed her future career path was decided.

After marrying early, she started out as a nurse's aide. It was after she had two young children that she decided to go to nursing school at Southwestern Community College. Right out of nursing school, Joyce worked in Corning for two years. "It was very small. I did a little of everything," she explained. From there, she moved on to Creston where she was in "med surg" for four years and obstetrics for 20 years. "I've worked in all areas, and I've always been a working mom!"

At RCH, she works the night shift in acute care where she likes the variety. "It's never boring. Sometimes there's a patient with a broken hip. Sometimes they're very sick. But my favorite part of being a nurse is the interaction with the people," she adds. And at Ringgold County Hospital, she likes the people she works with as much as the people she cares for. "Everyone works well together. This is a very caring atmosphere."