

*Help stop
the spread of
COVID-19*

protect your community.

**WEAR A
MASK**

#wearamask

*Protect yourself and
others by following
these guidelines:*

- Wear a cloth face mask covering over your nose and mouth when you're in public.
- Stay at least six feet away from others.
- Wash your hands frequently.
- Cover your nose and mouth when you sneeze or cough.
- If you feel sick, stay at home.



Mental health in a pandemic

Not many of us have lived through times like these before. Cathy Snead, counselor for Ringgold County Hospital, outlined some strategies for keeping you and your family mentally strong.

Children

Children have become isolated from some friends and family. Routines have changed, they're fearful of the virus, and are often spending too much time in front of a computer. Parents can start with the basics and provide a healthy diet and time for exercise and play.

Also, "Parents should watch for behavior changes like wanting more time alone, acting out verbally, or behavioral outbursts," said Cathy. "If you are aware of these kinds of changes, seek out expert help as early as possible. Ask a counselor for advice on how to speak with your child. It's important to listen openly and to encourage them to feel safe asking for and accepting help."

Parents

Children are not the only ones affected. Parents are being pulled in many directions as they try to work from home while they tend to children and perhaps elderly parents as well.

If you or your spouse are experiencing mood changes, wanting to isolate, having crying spells, or are having difficulty concentrating, it's most likely stress related. Along with counseling, Cathy recommends self-care. "Self-care is being aware of your personal needs," she explains. "It's important to make time for yourself to prevent burnout and fatigue during stressful times." She adds that it's normal to feel depressed occasionally, but if it continues for extended periods of time, seeking professional help is a good plan.

"I suggest they start with their primary care physician to rule out a medical complication," advised Cathy. "If there are no medical concerns, a mental health professional can help identify techniques and strategies that will work best for the individual."

Seniors

Seniors are being isolated for the sake of their own physical health, whether they're in assisted living or in their own homes. They're missing church, social activities, family visits, and regular meals and routines. According to Cathy, depression in seniors can be mild, evidenced by a low mood, lack of interest in activities they used to enjoy, or insomnia. Major depression affects a person's thinking and can have them overstressing the negative, having inflexible rules, and taking responsibility for bad events.

"Seniors may also experience generalized anxiety, chronic worry, while feeling uptight and restless," she added. "These are all symptoms that can be exasperated by experiencing

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*Cathy Snead, RCH Senior Life
Solutions Therapist*

RINGGOLD COUNTY HOSPITAL

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the current pandemic." Friends and family members can offer emotional support and encouragement by listening with intent, offering to take the depressed person to the doctor or medical provider, and sharing validation for their feelings. It's clear that

mental health is as important as physical health. During these trying times, it's critical that we keep our eyes on each other and watch for signs of stress and anxiety. If you or an older adult need help, or to speak to a professional, contact Senior Life Solutions at 641-464-4468.

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 more outstanding nurses for their contributions.



Lori Mercer

Lori Mercer grew up on a farm in Ringgold County and has built her life here. She met her husband in high school and raised four sons in the county. It's easy to see that her passion is helping people, especially the underdogs who may need a

little extra care. "I've just always enjoyed taking care of people," she said. Before nursing, she raised her family and worked as a special education teacher's aide at Mount Ayr High School.

She became interested in nursing at age 16 but didn't pursue it. In her 30s and 40s, Lori believes God had given her several signs that He wanted her to go back to college and become a nurse. So, at age 43, terrified, she went back to school. "Two of her sons were going to other colleges at the same time as Lori was heading off to college!"

After she graduated with her LPN degree, she was hired at Ringgold County Hospital's new facility. She began in surgery and then moved to acute care. All in all, she worked on the hospital side for six years. "I always had a passion to work in the Mt. Ayr Medical Clinic," she said. "I prayed that a position would open up someday." Lori hoped when the timing was right, something would work out.

Sure enough, when an opening for the Health Coach assistant came available, Lori was offered the job. For four years she's been caring for patients on an individual level. "It's a little slower pace. I have several responsibilities in the clinic, including annual wellness visits and keeping track of our patient's health care needs" This summer, she's spent a lot of time outside of the clinic screening patients for COVID-19 before they enter the building. "I really enjoy it because I get to spend even more time visiting with our patients. I know 90% of our patients. I'm a hometown girl!"



Tim Boswell

Even as a child growing up in Independence, MO, Tim Boswell spent a lot of time on farms in Iowa. "Every weekend we'd drive to my grandparents' farms," said Tim. "Every single weekend." Those trips created a love for the outdoors that's still

with him today. Bow hunting, fishing, swimming, and gardening keep him busy when he's not at Ringgold County Hospital. He laughs, "My wife actually likes it on days that I work, because she knows that I'll come inside for dinner!"

Becoming a nurse has allowed him to live in the country while providing for himself and his family. He enrolled in nursing school in the early 90s at the age of 28. "There were 77 students, and only seven were men."

Since his graduation almost 28 years ago, Tim worked in several long-term care facilities in Bedford and Leon. He specialized in Alzheimer's care and served as Director of Nursing for Alzheimer's units. Although the work was rewarding, it was also challenging. "I needed a break. I wanted to work with patients who weren't terminal, and who were going to get better," he said. "At RCH I've worked in acute care and covered the ER. I've been in surgery for 13 years and do total patient care from pre-op to post-op follow up."

The work can get stressful very quickly and the team of surgical nurses depend on each other. "I've never worked with a group that has meshed as well as this one," said Tim. "It's easier to work together when you like one another. We're in constant communication and handle things really well. We truly get along and are each other's best friends."

Even outside of surgery, Tim is confident in the entire RCH staff. "I can walk over to the lab or radiology and trust that the people in every department can take care of any situation."