



**Report to Donors  
2005**

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*Body, Mind, and Spirit*

*Health is a large word. It embraces not the  
body only, but the mind and spirit as well..."*

*~ James H. West*

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# *Body, Mind, and Spirit*

Few things in life are as basic as an individual's health. At MeritCare our mission is *to improve the health and quality of life of the people we serve.*

Our donors are partners in meeting this mission. With generous philanthropic support we strive to meet the needs of the whole person: body, mind, and spirit.

MeritCare's fiscal year ended in June with \$2,110,014 being donated from 7,589 donors. In this report we share some of the multiple ways that donations have made a difference.

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## *Body*

### **Cancer Risk Assessment**

*"The biggest reason I'm pursuing this (risk assessment) is my two daughters. If I have an inherited type of cancer, I want them to know so they can start getting checkups early and keep a close watch on this. Colorectal cancer, if caught early, is curable."*

*Earl Beckman*

The MeritCare Roger Maris Cancer Center staff works with individuals on assessing their risk of cancer. Currently, this personal assessment program is targeted to individuals with a family history of breast, ovarian or colorectal cancer. The program covers family history and a predisposition to cancer genes. Individuals are provided with options for risk management, recommendations for future exams, preventative steps, and referrals to a geneticist or other appropriate specialists. With funding from donations, the Cancer Center is able to provide timely risk assessment as the number of patients in this program increases. There is also an increased availability of this program for patients who live a distance away from the Fargo location of the clinic. The program continues to be an integral part of the comprehensive cancer care offered at MeritCare Roger Maris Cancer Center. All of the risk assessment program costs are paid through philanthropy.



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### **Children's oncology equipment**

With money from the children's cancer fund, the Roger Maris Cancer Center was able to purchase new equipment specifically designed for children. An infant scale and an Infantometer, or length board, were purchased to provide highly accurate data for assessment and treatment of the youngest patients.

### **Patient safety seminar**

Over the past year, MeritCare staff has seen the awareness of safety issues and the desire to engage in finding solutions. MeritCare sponsored a Patient Safety Seminar that was attended by healthcare professionals from throughout the state. Dr. Eric Knox, a practicing physician and a nationally known speaker in the patient safety arena, was the main presenter. Funds directed to staff education were utilized for this event. The Patient Safety Seminar has shown to be a key event in promoting the culture of safety at MeritCare and in facilitating safety education.

### **Neonatal Intensive Care Unit sleepers and t-shirts**

As infants in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit make progress toward going home, they are able to wear sleepers and t-shirts. This is important since parents can now hold their child and the infant's body learns to maintain a normal temperature out of the isolettes. Many sets of sleepers are required in one day and all are purchased with philanthropic dollars. Parents look forward to when their child wears "regular" baby clothes since it indicates the infant is one step closer to going home.

*"It was the best. The feeling you have when you finally get to hold your babies is something you just can't express. You've waited so long to be able to do it and when you finally can – it's indescribable."*

*Dani Stramer*

### **Nutrition supplement for kidney dialysis**

Patients at two MeritCare locations have benefited from a donation made by Dakota Medical Foundation. The grant provided funds to purchase nutritional supplements for outpatient dialysis units in Detroit Lakes and Fargo. The number of patients on dialysis is growing and the nutritional needs are becoming complex. New patient use is high since they usually have not been eating well prior to the start of dialysis. Two different products are used. One is a high-calorie and protein-rich supplement and the other a concentrated protein supplement. All patients with low albumin (protein sources) are offered supplements at no cost to them. Having these supplements available for patients has increased their quality of life by lessening nutritional complications.

### **Cancer Center research**

A clinical research study continues on the effectiveness of methadone and morphine in the relief of pain in cancer patients. This comparison will be important when physicians are providing cost-effective pain management. The cost of medication while the person is enrolled in the eight-week study is covered by research funding, assisting them in the financial burden of cancer treatment and care.



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### **Camera for better documentation**

MeritCare started its SANE program in January 2001. The goal of this program is to care for sexual assault victims with more immediate, compassionate, culturally sensitive, and comprehensive forensic evaluation and treatment. Specially trained nurses called Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners (SANEs) have received extensive education in the areas of medical examinations, evidence collection, and courtroom testimony. This year, funds donated to this program assisted in the purchase of a high resolution Polaroid camera. With a high quality camera MeritCare staff can provide better documentation of the injuries of victims of sexual assault and domestic violence. Improved photo documentation will assist law enforcement officers and prosecutors who investigate these crimes.



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### *Mind*

#### **Fetal monitoring course**

Funds given to the Nursing Continuing Education fund helped meet an unanticipated need for the Family Birth Center — an additional instructor certified to teach the AWONN Fetal Monitoring Course. AWHONN (Association of Women's Health, Obstetric and Neonatal Nurses) advances the nursing profession by providing nurses with critical information and support to help them deliver the highest quality care for women and newborns. This is the most extensive course that has been available to the Family Birth Center staff at MeritCare. As a result of adding an instructor, 90% of registered nurses in the birth center have now taken the course with plans for the rest to complete it this summer.

#### **Massage therapy**

Two part-time massage therapists, who are also registered nurses, were hired through Foundation funding. An average of 45 massages a month are provided for cancer patients. In November, scheduling was adjusted to give priority to hospitalized patients. Massage therapy has shown to relieve some stress and pain associated with oncology treatment. The technique is also prevalent for promoting relaxation and sleep.

*“Recently we had an elderly lady that came to the ER from the nursing home without her own belongings. When we wrapped her up in one of the 4-H sweat suits, she was all cozy warm and ready for the ride home.”*  
*Darlene Spooner, ER*

#### **Sew We Care**

Area 4-H groups make sweat suits and shirts and shorts that are used in the emergency room. Everyday, patients are brought to the ER without clothing, or clothing has to be cut for treatment. Depending on the weather, sweat suits or shorts and t-shirts are provided for patients. This learning service program gives the 4-H members sewing experience and the opportunity to help others.



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### **Psychiatry outcome measurement**

Foundation funds provided an opportunity for psychiatry clinicians to attend seminars in improving clinical skills for complex diagnosis and presentation. After training, clinicians started a quality management project to measure patient progress, engagement and effectiveness of the clinical approach. This approach uses the patient's input on how therapy is working. Another key aspect of this project includes access to services and success in improving access.

*“A measure of success in this approach is the ability to intensify treatment and improve levels of progress early on in the treatment process.”*

*Cyndy Skorick,  
Psychiatry*

### **Multiple Sclerosis Nurse Specialist**

MeritCare offers comprehensive, state-of-the-art treatment and care for Multiple sclerosis (MS), a disease of the central nervous system. MeritCare is one of 200 members of the Consortium of MS Centers in US, Canada and Europe. Funding made it possible for four MS team members to attend workshops at the MS Consortium in Florida. The new MeritCare MS Coordinator is now a MS nurse specialist, as she was able to take the certification exam while in Florida.. All gained additional valuable information that will be utilized when caring for the nearly 1,000 MS patients treated at MeritCare.

### **Improving coordination of care**

Funded by a Foundation Internal Grant, this project will train key leaders at MeritCare in the principles of *lean thinking*. “Lean thinking” is an intellectual and cultural framework that is rapidly being adopted in the health care environment. This approach consistently results in improved quality, productivity, decreased inventories, market share growth, and improved profits. At MeritCare, the project begins with education of key associates who will apply this approach to the coordination of care. One of the basic values of lean thinking in healthcare is putting the patient first.

### **Education for patients with lung disease**

With a grant from GlaxoSmithKline, Pulmonary Rehab has been providing education for patients with lung disease. Topics have included infection control, nutrition, and stress management. Over 160 patients and their families have attended education sessions since November. Patients also share their own experiences. Respiratory therapists lead the education sessions. Each session included a question and answer period so that topics most relevant to each group is discussed.

*“One woman told of how she was diagnosed more than 35 years ago with emphysema, how she quit smoking, and how she copes with her disease every day.”*

*Val Tomhave,  
Pulmonary Rehab*

### **Critical Care**

A multi-disciplinary team consisting of a physician, architect, hospital construction manager and nurses attended a workshop that will assist in the planning and design of a new Critical Care Unit. The workshop allowed the team to create a 3-D design and actual room mock-up that incorporates equipment and space for patients, families, and care-givers. Working together gave the team a greater understanding of each others space needs for patient care, building codes, and State health requirements.



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## **Nursing Scholarships**

These scholarships, created to promote the nursing and medical profession, are awarded in May of each year.

An Albert Ronice Scholarship is awarded annually to a nursing student entering their 4<sup>th</sup> year of training for a Bachelor's degree in nursing through the Tri-College Nursing Program.

The Alyce Ovidia Grangaard Memorial Scholarship was established for North Dakota High School Seniors accepted into North Dakota State University or Concordia College pre-nursing program.

The Carla Jean Holter Memorial Scholarship was set up for current MeritCare nurses with proven financial need entering their 4<sup>th</sup> year of training in the Tri-College Nursing Program.

The Mary Jo Langenwalter Scholarship is awarded to Clinical Laboratory Science students interning at MeritCare who have a great financial need.



## *Spirit*

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### **Memory Boxes**

Philanthropic dollars provide funding for the Memory Box Project for infants and children who have died. Each family is presented with a hand-made box filled with handcrafted and special items to commemorate and honor the life of their deceased child. Families have shared their appreciation for how the boxes have helped them during their grieving.

### **Holistic approach to care**

MeritCare hosts an annual nursing symposium. This year's committee chose one topic that would provide information for a broad nursing audience — healing music and holistic healing. The speaker presented holistic health care concepts and encouraged those attending to explore new ways to support patient's spiritual needs through non-traditional means.

### **Psychological intervention by telephone**

The phone is a well established medium for interventions including health assessment and crisis care. Published research (e.g., Sandgren et al., 1999, 2000, 2003) shows the phone is a viable intervention method for delivering psychological care and is rapid, efficient and cost-effective. This method is aimed at reaching people living in rural or small community settings where resources may be limited. It is especially helpful for patients too weak to travel, and for those at higher risk for worsening problems. Dr. Sandgren uses this method of intervention for such individuals only after they have been seen in person for assessment at Roger Maris Cancer Center. Typical follow up care focuses on unresolved serious depression, anxiety, and sleep problems; advice to parents about managing child behavior changes; encouragement to accept psychiatric medication referral; and swift intervention for individuals with suicidal ideation. Donations have made this support available through the Roger Maris Cancer Center.

*“Published research has shown the viability of mental health care by phone — an efficient, cost effective method of reaching vulnerable patients.”*  
*Ann Sandgren, PhD*



### **Guest Service's "Family and Friends Hour"**

Guest Services provides professional guest-centered services for patients and families with the goal of making the MeritCare experience as positive and stress free as possible. Patient family members brought the tremendous idea of a "Family and Friends Hour" to Guest Services staff. Many families are from out of town and wanted to stay near their loved ones during the patient's stay. These families created their own network system, showing how much people care and relate to each other in difficult times. These people had each other but not a place to gather with others that was still near their loved one. A conference room in the hospital provided the setting. For an hour each week these families have a special place to share stories and encourage each other. Philanthropic funds provide the refreshments and Guest Services staff provide the opportunity for families to share stories, laughter and tears.

*"I decided to give it a try, and I was glad I did. It was a chance to sit down and talk with people in similar circumstances. Nothing formal, just some nice conversation. I think we all enjoyed it."*

*Evelyn Pedersen*

### **Play and Distraction**

Located in the Pediatric Oncology department in the MeritCare Roger Maris Cancer Center is a playroom for activity and distraction. Treatment can take several hours and providing toys and other distraction are important for the care of young patients. Activities allow them to be kids and help the time pass more quickly during treatment. Distraction is a tool used to help patients focus on something more pleasant during a painful or stressful procedure. In the last year, funds have been used to purchase new items or replace worn or damaged toys and books.

### **Hand-made crib card**

Infants in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit are often critically ill. It is a very difficult time in the lives of the families. Each infant is given a handmade crib card, made with stickers and personalized information. This bright, colorful, laminated card is placed on every infant's bed. Parents tell the NICU staff that they take this keepsake home with them and put it in the infant's book along with all of the pictures and daily journal entries they make on their babies progress.

### **Advanced Care Team**

The Advanced Care Team (ACT) is an interdisciplinary service focusing on complex issues of life-limiting disease. This stage of a disease prompts a number of challenges for patients and caregivers. This team focuses on care that maximizes quality of life and coping resources by striving to reduce burdens of strain, pain and suffering for patients. Patients are often admitted to the Palliative Care Unit, located at MeritCare South University, which serves an average of 25 patients per week. Others receive hospice or nursing home care. The Advanced Care Team service began with a Foundation grant in 1998.

*"The care focuses not just on the patient, but the family, too. We want to provide a calm place where families can come together, hopefully gain some closure, and most importantly, know that their loved one is comfortable and getting the best possible care."*

*Preston Steen, MD*

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