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Erie's Running Club Takes Full Swing



While the school year provides opportunities for children to remain active every day, summer time can often cut their physical activity by more than half. With little supervision from working parents or

a lack of safe play areas in their neighborhoods, children often turn to television or the computer for entertainment. Nationally, more than 30% of children and adolescents are overweight or obese, resulting in part from lack of physical activity.

Pediatrician Dr. Angkana Roy started Erie's Running Club in the summer of 2013 in response to the rising trend of childhood obesity. "It's hard to find a good option that everyone can participate in, but with running everyone works at their own pace," said Roy. "It's a great way for kids to remain active when they're out of school."

Unlike other Chicago groups where participants may be limited by an age group or gender, Erie's Running Club is open to patients, families, Erie staff, and community members of any exercise level. The club meets on week day evenings after the typical work day ends, so the whole family can come together to run. Erie West Town, Erie Humboldt Park, Erie Division Street, Erie Helping Hands, and Erie Foster Avenue all host separate running groups. Members also have the opportunity to participate in the Humboldt Park 5K, which will take place this year on Sunday, August 14th.

Andrea Fragoso, Erie's Asthma Intervention Coordinator and Asthma Educator, coordinates the coaches and groups for this year's Running Club. "A lot of families are excited that it's happening again this year," said Fragoso.

For members who have never completed a 5K before, the three-mile run at the end of the season might seem like an unattainable goal. Some individuals who joined have health conditions or other physical issues that may discourage them from running. But it is the group's positivity and encouragement that keeps members coming back every week. "Once the group begins, everyone is dedicated to finish together," said Roy.

Roy remembers one particular patient who wasn't the most enthusiastic when he first joined the club. "There was a pediatric patient who had obesity and asthma problems, so he had difficulty in the beginning," stated Roy. "But despite his struggles, he kept coming back! Every week he got stronger and stronger. It was amazing to see his transformation with his resilient mindset and not giving up."

Interested in running with Erie staff and patients at the upcoming Humboldt Park 5K? Contact Andrea Fragoso at afragoso@eriefamilyhealth.org

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Wellness Every Step of the Way: Expanded Behavioral Health Services at Erie



Depression, anxiety, and situational or chronic stress can all affect physical health – and one’s physical health can also have a great impact on mental or emotional well-being. Understanding this critical connection, Erie Family Health Center takes a comprehensive and coordinated team approach to support the patient as a whole person.

With this goal in mind, in 2013 Erie began to pilot a new integrated behavioral health care model at four of our health centers. After the pilot’s resounding success, Erie has extended this model across the entire organization, and brought psychiatric care in-house to address the needs of our most complex patients.

The first line of care starts during a patient’s visit with their primary care doctor, when all medical providers screen patients for their behavioral health needs. The doctor may ask how a patient copes with stress, if they have trouble relaxing, or about their sleep patterns and habits.

Those patients who require behavioral health services receive immediate attention from a behavioral health clinician (BHC) during their visit. The BHC is a licensed clinical social worker (LCSW) or licensed clinical professional counselor (LCPC). The BHC ensures that the patient leaves their appointment with coping tools or affirmations that they can use right away. If necessary, the patient may continue to see the same BHC for brief consultations or long-term therapy.

Because of the negative stigma surrounding mental health, having a warm handoff from doctor to behavioral health clinician

within a familiar setting is crucial for successful treatment. “If a patient sees a behavioral health clinician when they are in the clinic for medical care, they are 80% more likely to come back for therapy,” said Robin Varnado, Erie’s Director of Adolescent and Behavioral Health. “If he is in an exam room where he is comfortable with his provider, and he sees the behavioral health clinician in the exam room, he realizes seeing a BHC isn’t scary. It’s no big deal to him.”

In addition to stationing behavioral health clinicians across Erie, beginning July 2016 all Erie patients have access to and can be scheduled with a staff psychiatrist or psychiatric nurse practitioner. Previously, patients needing psychiatric care would have to be referred to an off-site specialist.

Bringing psychiatric expertise right into Erie’s health centers not only helps patients feel more at ease with receiving treatment for mental health, but also enables our doctors to receive further training and consultation from the psychiatrist on addressing behavioral health needs that may arise over the course of the medical visit.

Last year, Erie clinicians provided over 2,100 patients with integrated behavioral and medical care. This year, we plan to help over 4,800 children, teens, and adults feel better – whether that’s at work, at school, or within their relationships.

Doctor Spotlight: Dr. Frances Baxley

Doctor Spotlight



Dr. Frances Baxley’s desire to become a physician began early, through encounters with her own pediatrician. He

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wore silly shirts that made her laugh, and he instantly put her at ease. “I enjoy connecting with people,” she said. “And I saw how he interacted with me and I thought, yeah—that’s something I’d like to do.”

Soon she was on her way to forging a career in medicine. Dr. Baxley graduated from Dartmouth College with her bachelor’s degree in 1999 and went on to study as a Fulbright Scholar at Essen University in Germany. In 2005 she received her medical degree from Harvard Medical School and completed her residency in family and community medicine at San Francisco General Hospital, where she first began working with diverse and underserved populations.

She then moved to rural New Mexico for three years, providing full-spectrum care at the Crownpoint Health Care Facility, a small Indian Health Service hospital on the Navajo Reservation. The town of Crownpoint is small and impoverished – no more than 2,000 people, no traffic lights, the nearest McDonald’s located more than an hour away. Many of her patients there lacked running water. “If you ever meet a recruiter for the Indian Health Service, they’ll tell you that working for the Indian Health Service offers a chance to practice international medicine within the borders of the US,” said Dr. Baxley. “This is their way of saying that the patients are in dire need.”

Though many on the reservation led traditional lives, Dr. Baxley said she was most surprised by how negatively certain aspects of modern life had affected the community.

“It was all the parts of our lifestyle that make us unhealthy. Their diets now include a lot of processed foods, which contributes to high rates of diabetes and obesity,” she said. “There were also high rates of alcoholism and suicide on the reservation, which had a ripple effect on whole families.”

In 2012, Dr. Baxley moved to Illinois to provide care at NorthShore University HealthSystem. The difference between caring for patients on the reservation versus caring for patients at NorthShore, situated in the middle-to-upper class suburbs of Chicago, was like night and day. Instead

of crisis intervention, her role in private practice afforded more opportunity to discuss prevention and wellness with patients. “Everyone is entitled to holistic health care. My experience in private practice enhanced my skills in guiding patients toward healthy lifestyle choices,” she said.

But she missed working in community health, and soon began to seek a new position. In January of 2015, she stepped into her role as Site Medical Director at Erie HealthReach Waukegan Health Center. In just a year and a half, Dr. Baxley has already contributed much to Erie’s newest health center. Erie HealthReach Waukegan opened in July 2014 to serve patients in Lake County who, similar to the patients Dr. Baxley served on the Navajo reservation, struggle to make ends meet.

She has made it her personal mission to improve the wellbeing of her patients by creating an ongoing series of wellness classes. Patients are regularly invited to the health center for classes led by Dr. Baxley about common health topics, from how to sleep better, improve digestion, or even decrease joint pain to practicing yoga. “Enthusiasm for the class has been great,” she said. “It’s about teaching people lifestyle approaches to getting well. Patients have a lot of wisdom about how their bodies work, and they eagerly accept advice that includes body movement practices and healthy food choices.”

She also has developed partnerships to bring valuable services and resources to patients. In collaboration with Youth & Family Counseling (YFC), an organization committed to providing affordable psychotherapy options, she arranged for a YFC therapist to provide counseling to patients at Erie HealthReach Waukegan. She also forged a partnership with Top Box Foods to improve the nutrition of those living in the area; once a month, Waukegan residents are able to purchase high quality foods from Top Box right at Erie HealthReach Waukegan for about 40% less than the usual retail price.

Erie, as well as the patients Erie serves, are truly grateful to have Dr. Baxley as a doctor and as a leader. Her positive energy, friendly demeanor, and commitment to providing quality care not only inspire her colleagues, but also inspire her patients to better manage their own health.

She, however, has a different opinion.

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“It’s the patients here who inspire me,” she said. “With every expression of gratitude I receive from them, it reaffirms that this is the work I’m meant to do.”

Your contribution ensures that Erie’s services will remain accessible and affordable for anyone who needs them. Thank you for giving our patients hope for a healthier future.

Donate Now!

If you have a question about donating to Erie or the programs your support helps make possible, please contact Kate Birdwell at 312.432.7440 or e-mail her at kbirdwell@eriefamilyhealth.org.