

Parish Nursing

In the fall of 2008 St Mary's Cathedral and St Joseph's church launched one of the first church based parish nurse programs in Wyoming. Parish nursing is a new specialized practice of nursing that is a health promotion, disease prevention program based on the total health healing of a person-body-mind and spirit. Parish nursing is based on old traditions of the church to care for the sick and those in need. Parish nursing also reflects the core philosophy of nursing to care for others via teaching, counseling, advocating, referring and including others in the provision of care. The parish nurse works under the guidance of a church based health ministry team. We do education via 1:1 conferences, education classes, presentations, as well as general education for all parishioners via weekly Sunday bulletin articles. As an advocate we help parishioners understand and navigate the complex health care system. We also help those in need access a health care provider and health care services when requested. We will also speak on behalf of those who cannot speak for themselves. As referral agents we help parishioners find resources for insurance, medications, home services, health care providers and community services. I also make hospital rounds once a week to visit all hospitalized Catholic patients to educate, counsel and pray with them. Eighteen months ago we started a bereavement program using the Steven ministry booklets that are given out periodically over a year's period and visit with parishioners as requested. We also have a yearly remembrance services that was started several years ago and is presented on All Souls day.

Eighteen months ago Father Gary Ruzicka asked us if we would like to expand our services to include some Pastoral care services. With this service we added 7 wonderful volunteers to our group. This soon expanded to 13. These Extraordinary Eucharistic Minister's services are to bring communion daily to all catholic patients in the hospital, to provide weekly communion services in 3 retirement/ assisted living facilities, and assist our priest at monthly masses at these facilities. Two of us also take communion to our home bound parishioners four to five days a week. In addition to this we are also working with community agencies on several programs. Through the maternal/child department of public health we are working with the Parent leadership Training Institute to educate parents and those working with children in leadership and civic skills to help them become more knowledgeable advocates for the children. We also worked with this same department to present a pilot "Woman Together for Health Class" which ran for ten weeks and was well received. I also worked with the community to further develop our Cheyenne Health and Wellness Clinic, which has expanded to include some dental and eye care.

The ultimate goal of parish nursing is improving the whole person health of the parish and community and strengthening awareness of the connection between faith and health.F