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Stop teen vaping before it starts

BY HANNA CHRISTENSEN
Scireporter@sewardindependent.com

On Aug. 30, Nebraska Attorney General Mike Hilgers joined a bipartisan group of 32 other attorney generals across the country in sending a letter to the United States Food and Drug Administration and its Center for Tobacco Products.

He and the others are encouraging the FDA to do more to protect kids from e-cigarettes/vapes.

E-cigarettes and vapes have grown tremendously in popularity over the last several years. According to the Nebraska Attorney General's office, teen nicotine use is linked to nicotine poisoning, mental health and behavioral problems, academic issues and future addiction to other substances.

The attorneys general recommended the FDA prohibit all non-tobacco flavors

in e-cigarettes, enact limits on nicotine levels in e-cigarettes, restrict youth-focused marketing strategies and enforce the same FDA guidelines on disposable e-cigarettes as on cartridge-based e-cigarettes.

On an individual level, there are steps parents can take to protect their kids and teens from e-cigarettes and vapes.

Educate teens about the dangers of vaping.

Vaping is linked to a multitude of physical and mental health problems. Make sure your child is aware of these consequences. Websites such as thetruth.com, truthinitiative.org and teen.smokefree.gov can help you find more information.

Try to limit the time youth spend around people who vape or use e-cigarettes.

Being exposed to vaping can make a youth feel as though it is normal and OK. Limiting



exposure will reduce the likelihood they will partake.

Help kids develop healthy coping mechanisms.

Some teens use vaping and e-cigarettes as coping mechanisms,

but they can actually lead to more anxiety and depression. Focusing on positive coping skills and emotional expression can help reduce the chances someone will turn to using e-cigarettes and vapes.

Encourage teens to recognize and resist social pressure.

Many youths begin vaping because they are around friends who vape. Make sure your child knows "fitting in" is not worth the danger of being addicted to e-cigarettes.

Teach teens positive spending habits.

Vapes and e-cigarettes are expensive. Just like with cigarettes, consistent spending for the products can quickly drain a bank account. Remind your teen that buying one vape is an investment that can lead to much more spending in the future.

Reach out to a doctor or family care provider for more resources.

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From left: Leota Schutte, Ashley Robeson, Lisa Pomajzl, Daniel Pomajzl

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Crete Youth Cabin opens trails

BY KEATON BURGESS
reporter@sewardindependent.com

People who like to get outside and go for walks will now have another option in Crete as the Crete Youth Cabin is planning to open its walking trails.

According to the Crete Youth Cabin website, the trail is roughly a mile long and takes you across two, sturdy wood and steel trestle bridges, through wooded forest, along the bank of the Big Blue River, and provides access to a remote meadow where a hike-in campground awaits. With careful observation while walking, one can frequently observe nearly all types of wildlife common to this area. Benches and seating are placed along the trail for rest and relaxation along the way.

Jacob Bspalec with the Crete Youth Cabin said they have wanted to open the trails and decided to because they want to have better access to the public not only for the trails but the cabin itself.

“The big thing we are going through is that we have the availability to purchase the land,” he said.

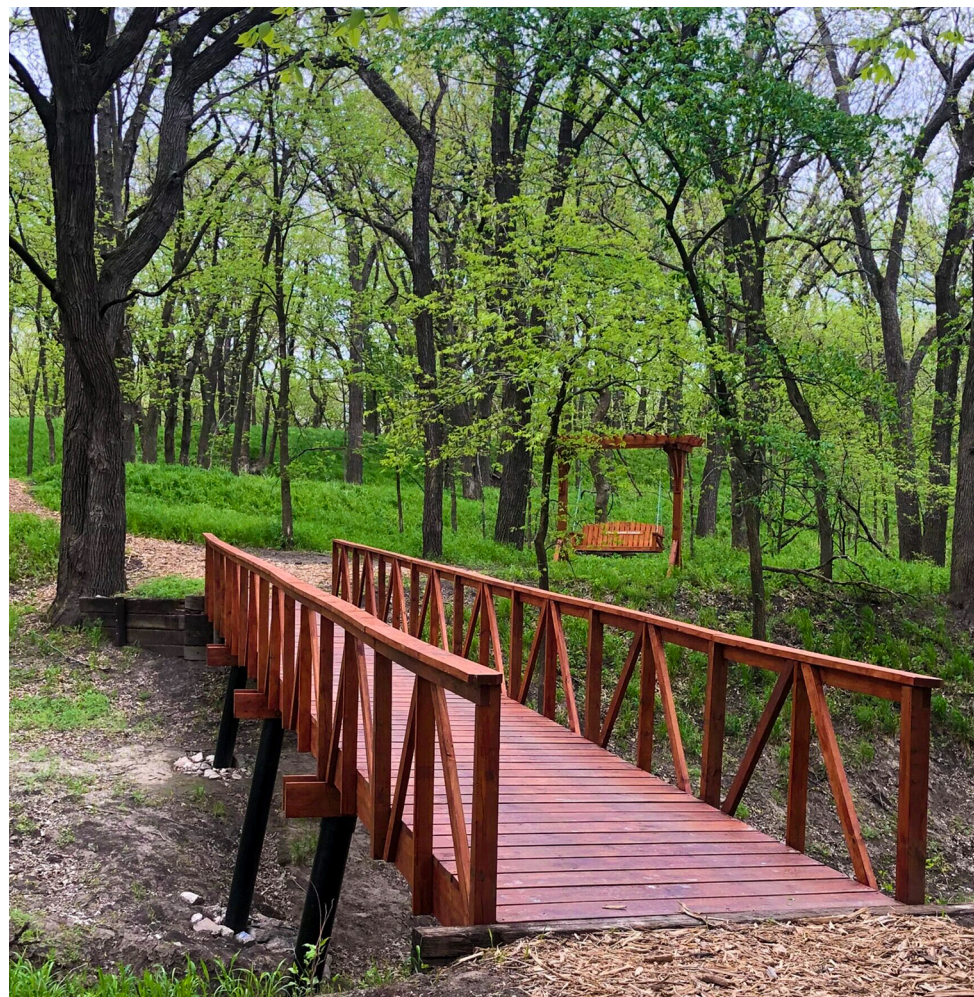
The cabin has been on leased land up to this point. Bspalec said they want to utilize the resources they have in some capacity, which includes opening the trails.

Bspalec said the trails were open during Covid-19, but have been closed to the public since.

People can use the trail to walk, jog, run and do anything they can do with their feet, according to Bspalec.

“A stroller doesn’t usually go well unless you have an all-terrain one,” he said.

Bspalec said no power sports vehicles, mountain bikes or horses are allowed on the trails, although they might be opening a special use event where people can use those things.



COURTESY OF CRETE YOUTH CABIN

The Crete Youth Cabin trail is roughly a mile long and takes you across two, sturdy wood and steel trestle bridges, through wooded forest, along the bank of the Big Blue River, and provides access to a remote meadow where a hike-in campground awaits. The trail will be open soon.

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Tumbles, trips, falls prevention program

BY KEATON BURGESS
reporter@sewardindependent.com

Seward is adding a program to help senior citizens prevent falls and build their confidence in avoiding falls.

The Stepping On program will be hosted by Four Corners Health Department starting Tuesday, Oct. 3, from 1-3 p.m. at the Seward County Extension office and will be held every Tuesday.

Stepping On is a seven-week program designed for people who are living at home and have experienced a fall or are concerned about falling.

Created by the Wisconsin Institute for Healthy Aging, Stepping On is an evidence-based program that is effective in reducing falls by more than 30%. The program incorporates strategies to implement positive lifestyle changes to keep seniors independent, upright and active.

Simera Reynolds with Four Corners Health Department said the program helps try to reduce falls in different ways including building confidence and assessing the home.

"Seeing if you have the right lighting, too much clutter, things being too high and having to use a ladder, those can all cause falls," she said. "Even outdoors, knowing where your hose is, who is doing your sidewalks, stuff like that."

Reynolds said the program hopes to prevent injuries to the elderly so that there are fewer emergency room visits and they can stay in their homes

longer.

"When they (seniors) are fall-free, they usually get to stay in their homes longer," she said.

Although the program hasn't been in Seward, Reynolds said they held it in Utica in June of 2023. She said there was interest in them coming to Seward when she visited a health fair at St. John Lutheran Church.

Stepping On is a seven-session course that offers classes such as exercises and moving, assessing footwear and vision, managing home fall hazards, medication management, travel safety, community safety and a three-month booster session.

Reynolds said the sessions are two hours long and include going over information and exercises and checking homework in the first hour, and enjoying a healthy snack and telling fall stories and asking what could have been done in the second hour.

Reynolds said the program has always been well-received.

"Everybody gets to network and they're with other people," she said. "There's a lot to be said about affirming and having a neutral party look at your home."

Reynolds said she would recommend the class and she thinks people will enjoy the opportunity.

"Everybody takes away a little bit of a new outlook," she said. "Every week we bring them different tips and other things."

Anyone interested in signing up for the Stepping On program can call Four Corners at (402) 362-2621 or email info@fourcorners.ne.gov.

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Morning meal debate: Breakfast vs. intermittent fasting

BY HANNA CHRISTENSEN
Scireporter@sewardindependent.com



Last month, the Four Corners Health Department released a statement encouraging people to start their days off with breakfast.

Breakfast promotes sustained energy and lets the body know at the beginning of the day that it does not need to be worried about sustenance.

FCHD said eating breakfast can help people think better at work and school, manage their weight, keep their blood sugar more stable and ingest more vitamins and minerals. According to Better Health Channel, breakfast may also reduce the likelihood of

heart disease and type two diabetes.

This advice differs from a diet that has grown in popularity

over the past 10 years known as intermittent fasting. According to Johns Hopkins Medicine, intermittent fast-

ing is an eating plan that switches between eating normally and fasting.

Some people do this

by fasting for a certain amount of time each day, and others choose a couple days out of the week to only eat one meal.

Matt Mattson, a Johns Hopkins neuroscientist, reported that this method of dieting works because when the body goes several hours without food, it runs out of sugar stores and begins burning fat. He said research indicates that intermittent fasting can improve tissue health, heart health, thinking, memory and physical performance and prevent type 2 diabetes and obesity.

However, the diet is not recommended for pregnant or breastfeeding women, people un-

der 18, people with type 1 diabetes or people with a history of eating disorders.

According to the Mayo Clinic, intermittent fasters may experience hunger, fatigue, nausea, headaches and insomnia in their first month of the diet.

Unlike eating breakfast, intermittent fasting does not show the body that it will be getting a steady supply of food. Johns Hopkins Medicine suggests people talk to their doctor before beginning the diet.

Everyone's body is different. Whether it's breakfast or intermittent fasting, each person can decide what works best for their body and lifestyle.



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Music impacts life, like it or not

BY STEPHANIE CROSTON
scroston@sewardindependent.com

We've heard the cliché "music soothes the savage beast." We know that music is good for the soul and can pump us up or calm us down.

We know "I love that song" or "I can't stand that piece."

But why is that?

According to the National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health, music

does affect the brain. It can release neurotransmitters and hormones that can bring back memories and impact emotions.

The center found music can even affect the brain's structure.

A relatively new field, music therapy, uses music as part of treatment prescriptions. The NCCIH said music therapy doesn't describe an intervention, instead focusing

on the person conducting the treatment.

Most of the studies done so far have been limited in scope, the center said.

An article from Talahassee Memorial Healthcare, described the iso-principle, which matches a listening experience to moods or emotions. A playlist that moves a person's music from negative

(CONTINUED ON 9)

STEPHANIE CROSTON



LEFT: Studies have shown that both listening to and playing music can help a person's mental health.



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AMY HAUSMAN

Leslie Wanek of Wilber walks along Highway 41 in Wilber, making a looped route to the post office. Walking daily each morning has allowed Wanek has been free of diabetes medication for four years.

Morning saunter makes strides against diabetes

BY AMY HAUSMAN
amy@friendsentinel.com

It is 9 a.m. in Wilber, and you can set your clock by Leslie Wanek. The gentleman will be out for his daily walk with his wooden cane, sunnies and cap. Do not let Wanek's appearance fool you; he is quick and gets 18,000 steps in a day.

Wanek has lived in Wilber since September 2019 and leaves his home at 9 a.m. Monday

through Friday. He walks north in mornings and south in the afternoons, taking the same route each business day.

"I do not walk if there is snow on the sidewalk or if it is below 10 degrees," Wanek said. "If I fell, I would have a heck of time getting back up."

On the weekends, Wanek gets wild and wanders through Wilber leaving the house 90 minutes earlier to give himself some

extra time.

Wanek retired in 2005 after working in the vice grip factory. He was diagnosed with diabetes in the early 2000's and was put on medication.

"Since walking, I have been off medication for four years now," Wanek said. "I still have to take some medications but my diabetes is under control."

The American Diabetes Association's website affirms what

Wanek is living day in and day out.

"The more you walk - especially at a more intense, faster pace - the lower your diabetes risk. The higher daily step counts make it more likely to reach glucose (blood sugar) targets, making it a good reason to make walking part of your daily routine," the website said.

Wanek plans to continue his routine for as long as he can.



AMY HAUSMAN

Public Health Solutions in Crete has created a bilingual walking club that meets weekly at Crete Carrier Trail.

Need a change of pace?
Check out these walking locations

Wilber Lake and Arboretum

This nature nook offers a picnic shelter, walking trails and will showcase fall colors soon.

Seward's Plum Creek Hiking & Biking Trail

A winding concrete trail that spans 2.7 miles on the east side of Seward, lined with two water features, shrubs, bulbs, perennials and trees. Take a breather at one of the two arbors. Listen and watch for cyclists along the trail.

Friend Pond Area

The sidewalk around this pond is extra wide and offers lamps for early morning strolls. The pond features memorial benches and gardens that are maintained by volunteers.

Milford High School Track

Relive your glory days on the Milford High School Track. Use of the track is open to the public when student athletes and classes are not present.

Concordia University's Indoor Track in Seward

The public hours for the indoor track will be 6 a.m. to 2 p.m. Additional facilities information is available here: <https://www.cune.edu/athletics/facilities-hours>.

Friend Public School

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Crete Carrier Trail

Located on the northside of Crete Area Medical Center, the choose your own adventure trail has a map posted near the pavilion. The outside loop is 0.77 miles long, with two, connected inside loops of 0.55 miles and 0.52 miles each.

(CONTINUED FROM 7)

associations to positive ones “can be a healthy coping strategy and facilitate a positive mood change,” the article said.

Dopamine and serotonin are neurotransmitters that affect a person’s mood. Being active in making music, like singing or playing an instrument, helps produce oxytocin, which helps people feel connected. Breathing patterns used in singing reduce the stress hormone, cortisol, and promote relaxation.

No song affects every person the same way. For example, songs we played when I was in high school pep band always make me smile. They bring back memories of hanging out on the stage during basketball games, joking around with others in my section. Other people without the same experience might associate those songs with other incidents.

The song “We Are the Champions” by Queen makes me think of the state wrestling finals. It’s the song that’s played as the finalists walk in during the Parade of Champions.

While I associate it in a general sense with state wrestling, the wrestlers more than likely associate it with specific experiences – a state championship or a disappointing finals loss.

There’s a reason stadium playlists don’t include ballads. Slow music makes us slow down. It lowers our pulse and blood pressure, which can be good in some cases, but is not so good if you’re trying to get psyched up for a game.

Think of “Sirius,” the song Nebraska football fans simply call “The Tun-

nel Walk.” No matter where you are, as soon as that initial low note sounds, you know what’s coming. Your pulse increases, your breathing gets faster – you’re ready for some football.

An article from Harvard Medical School reported that “the use of music interventions (listening to music, singing, and music therapy) can create significant improvements in mental health, and smaller improvements in physical health–related quality of life.”

But there’s no one answer, no one song or genre of music, that we all react the same way to.

I know a lot of people who enjoy jazz music, for example. I don’t. The repetitive nature of it, the continued syncopation and off-beats get under my skin and make me cranky.

I do enjoy instrumental music. My collection includes plenty of Beethoven and Mozart, as well as the Piano Guys and 2Cellos.

There are vocalists I like and whose recordings fill my library. There are others you won’t find anywhere near my playlists.

Even my family has a wide variety of tastes. One of my brothers and my sister, at least for awhile, were big into country music. Not my favorite. We listened to a lot of easy listening, instrumental versions of pop songs, in the car when I was growing up. That wasn’t too bad because it could fade into the background.

There’s music composed specifically for funerals, weddings, coronations and parties. There are songs designed for certain dances and longer works to provide a backdrop for movies and TV shows.

It’s all a matter of preference, I guess. And therein lies the beauty of music. It truly has something for everyone and every moment.



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What to know about CBD oil, drug testing

BY HANNA CHRISTENSEN
scireporter@sewardindependent.com

This school year, Crete Public Schools began drug testing its students who participate in extracurricular activities via the company Sports Safe Testing Service. With the rising popularity of products such as CBD oil, it is important to be aware of what will or will not show up on a test.

Sports Safe Testing Service Director Chris Franz said true CBD oil should not contain THC that would show up on a drug test. However, CBD oils are not regulated by the United States Food and Drug Administration, so some brands of CBD oil will still screen positive for marijuana. This is even more common with oils bought from unknown manufacturers online.

“It’s not a regulated item, so you don’t have the protections of the FDA going out and testing these products



DOUG CARROLL

Smoke shops offering CBD products are located in both Crete and Seward. CBD may appear on a drug test.

and seeing how they come back,” he said.

When a test comes back positive for marijuana,

Franz said it is not possible to determine whether it popped for actual marijuana or CBD oil. He said this is

the case regardless of the type of test used.

Franz said there have been some incidents in

which Sports Safe, which conducts drug tests for schools across the country, has had positive tests from people who cited CBD oil as the only possible cause. However, there is no way to verify those claims.

“We don’t know if that’s a true story or a false story because it’s the same THC-positive molecular identification,” Franz said.

At that point, it becomes up to the school to determine the next course of action. Sports Safe simply lets the school know the results and the administrators will move forward as they see fit given the circumstances.

In order to avoid a negative consequence from a positive drug test, Franz said he suggests everyone make their choices with caution.

“Whatever you put in your body, you’re responsible for,” he said. “You’re using it at your own risk.”

Seward senior center stays busy

BY STEPHANIE CROSTON
scroston@sewardindependent.com

The Lied Senior Center of Seward offers a variety of events and activities for Seward-area residents.

The second Wednesday of each month, Katrina Goldsmith brings in entertainment for the birthdays and anniversaries celebration.

Goldsmith, the Aging Services Commission assistant at the senior center, said she usually has

to book the acts nine months to a year in advance.

In October, the center will host Billy Troy, a musician who sings songs from the 1950s to the 1970s and shares stories behind them. November’s performer is Kim Eames, a vocalist and guitar player.

Goldsmith brings in Humanities Nebraska speakers when she can, but the Senior Center only qualified for two a year, she said.

Most of the senior center’s patrons enjoy the concerts, and Goldsmith tries to find a variety of performers to satisfy every taste.

“Not everyone likes polka. Not everyone likes western,” she said.

The senior center also offers daily exercise classes including tai chi and yoga and social opportunities like cards and other games. The event calendar can be found at cityofsewardne.gov/senior-center.

Lunch is served daily Monday through Friday, as well. Reservations are required the day before.

For more information, call the senior center at (402) 643-4466.

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Out of ashes

90-day transformation program

BY AMY HAUSMAN
 editor@friendsentinel.com

I am working on my comeback story.

Within the last year, my entire life has flipped upside down. My two adult children moved to Lincoln, making Charlotte by default an only child and 6-year-old diva. I took on a new and challenging position that is a rollercoaster. I adopted a new puppy who is highly emotional and cries from heartbreak if she is more than 10 feet from my side.

That is a lot, but nothing compared to losing our home to a fire and moving to Crete. Completely starting over.

Grief is a hard thing to tackle when it feels like nothing in your life is recognizable. I felt leveled. The usual method of a long soak in the tub to relieve stress just was not cutting it. I found myself binge-eating all of my feelings, drinking more wine than ever and sleeping a couple of hours a night for months. I was a mom-bie (a cross between a zombie and mom) and anxiety-ridden. I'd cover it up with bright lipstick, big wild hair, obnoxious jewelry and even taller heels. But it was a mask. I was a complete mess.

I finally decided that I needed to consider going in and getting something to help me sleep and manage my anxiety. In looking at the Crete Area Medical

Center website, I found the key to my recovery and comeback story. It was not Wellbutrin.

Stephanie Roth, health and wellness coach, has created a 90-day transformation program for health and wellness in Crete. Yes, you read that correctly. In Crete Roth has been with CAMC for over 25 years but in her role since 2018. The program does talk about weight loss but truly is about setting yourself up for joy and having a fulfilling life.

Bonus: this woman is in-freaking-credible. She is funny, honest and wicked smart. And the program is beyond reasonably priced. I am sure that many of us (finger to nose) have spent more money at Costco on a single run.

The program starts with labs to measure glucose, cholesterol, BMI, blood pressure and body measurements. But also a self-evaluation about my actual life. It asked about my home life, my relationship with work, my attitude, my relationships with people, my exercise habits and my stress level. On the last visit, you see your end result changes and it is worth it.

The answers were dark. Roth pushed and encouraged me to think about what I want long-term and helped me to set goals. Goals that are not measured on a bathroom scale or in dress sizes. Roth helped me to reflect on my life and determine the



DOUG CARROLL

Part of Steph Roth's job entails taking body measurements to help track people's progress in their weight loss program.

times I was the happiest and healthiest.

The truth is although I was obviously in a better place before my life went up in

flames, I was not the best version of myself even then. The truth is I have not prioritized myself ever. I had my first baby at 20 years

old and from that moment on, I put myself last as so many mothers do.

So together, Roth helped me to decide what happens from here forward and set me up with the tools to make it happen. The good thing about starting from a pile of ashes is I now get to focus on what I want. How I want to live. How I spend my time. What my home looks like. The foods I eat. How I manage my stress.

We met weekly for 12 weeks, each week with a new tool to learn. This program is not easy. It took me time to learn what I should have been doing

all along. The truth is for me, it took me 90 days to wrap my mind around how to have a new life with more energy, better relationships and how to get a smoking hot body while embracing my natural sparkle (those are gray hairs for those of you that do not know).

I am ready to move into phase two and achieve those things. I got a handle on my pain, so I invite you to join me as I journey the next 90 days of change. I am going to get vulnerable and share a weekly column on what is happening on this road.



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Crete Area Medical Center celebrates 20th anniversary at current location

BY DOUG CARROLL

doug@sewardindependent.com

The Crete Area Medical Center celebrated 20 years at its current location this past summer with some recently completed renovations and new equipment.

Formerly known as Crete Municipal Hospital, the current hospital located at 2910 Betten Drive finished construction under its new name and opened to the public in 2003 when it became part of the Bryan Health system.

While the hospital's exterior has remained largely unchanged over the years, its interior has seen several renovations and improvements.

Some of the recent improvements

include new labor and delivery suites, a new operating room and the purchase of a new ultrasound machine.

On Sept. 14, the Crete Area Health Care Foundation Board of Directors presented a check of \$33,332.50 to the Crete Area Medical Center for a new ultrasound machine that will be used throughout multiple areas of the hospital.

The funding came from a combination of money raised during this year's campaign and excess funds from previous care and share campaigns.

"This generous gift will have a lasting impact on how we serve our patients and provide lifesaving care," said Stephanie Boldt, CAMC President and CEO. C President

and CEO. "The community and the Foundation's support is greatly appreciated."

Ultrasound machines use sound waves to produce images of structures within the patient's body to aid in diagnosing and directing treatment for a variety of diseases and conditions.

The new state-of-the-art ultrasound machine will be used in the hospital's new Lambert L. Zoubek Surgery Wing operating rooms, the emergency department, the new labor and delivery suites and throughout the outpatient specialty clinic.

"Ultrasound technology is a vital tool in clinical spaces, providing valuable real-time imaging aid in the diagnosis and treatment of emergency department patients and ob-

stetric patients," said April Gaines, CAMC Chief Nursing Officer. "Our anesthesia department also uses this equipment to aid in the process of providing nerve blocks for patients. Most recently we have been training some of our nursing staff in ultrasound-guided IV placement, and they will also be able to take advantage of the use of this device."

Mitch Ebke, Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetist at CAMC, said the new ultrasound machine ensures that surgical patients are able to receive regional anesthesia, leading to decreased post-operative pain.

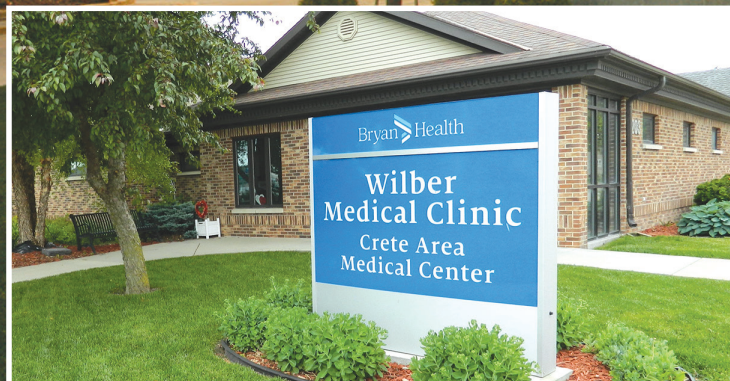
"This will help contribute to a great surgical experience for the patients at Crete Area Medical Center," Ebke said.

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