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Lakewood Health System Announces Sugary Beverage Phase-out

In Central Minnesota first, Lakewood Health System announces new beverage policy building statewide momentum for healthy hospital food environments.

(Duluth, MN) - Lakewood Health System announced a new beverage policy which includes the phase-out of soft drinks, energy and sports drinks and other sugary beverage sales and distribution. This important announcement is consistent with a national trend in leading healthcare institutions including the Cleveland Clinic, Packard Children's Hospital, Chicago based Vanguard System, Baylor Health and many more. It is the first hospital in Central Minnesota to implement a beverage policy, adding to the significant momentum by out-state Minnesota hospitals in implementing important health creation models.

This wellness initiative was initiated in spring, 2014 with an effective implementation date of October 1st, 2014. By announcing this initiative, Lakewood Health System adds to the expanding leadership of outstate hospitals in modeling healthy food environments.

"By phasing out these sugary beverages, Lakewood Health System demonstrates further statewide leadership by our healthcare community in supporting healthy food and beverage environments", stated Jamie Harvie, Executive Director of the Institute for a Sustainable Future and coordinator of the Commons Health Hospital Challenge. "Lakewood Health System's leadership is an essential health creation model, and provides yet another example by outstate hospitals, for patients, employees, businesses and communities", he added.

In a 2012, Resolution 205 by the Minnesota Medical Association (MMA) states that the MMA should support efforts to encourage Minnesota physicians to use "5-2-1-0" as a guide to discuss healthy weight at every well visit. The numbers stand for five fruits and vegetables per day; two hours or fewer of

computer or television time (no screen time for children under age 2); one hour of physical activity per day; **and zero sugary beverages**. In a statement of support for the Hospital Challenge the Minnesota Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics states, "We believe it is easier for providers to encourage better nutrition when these choices are being modeled by the local clinics and hospitals in which we serve".

"In the region we serve, adult obesity and childhood obesity are two of the top community health issues we are focused on. While sugary drinks are only one of the many factors contributing to obesity and other diseases, they play a significant role. We believe that as a health system, it is our role to lead through the establishment of healthy food and beverage models for our community, and implementing a beverage policy is one thing we could do to make an impact. Additional health-focused initiatives are being planned," stated Lakewood Health System President & CEO, Tim Rice. "And while we understand that it is our role to lead, hospitals cannot create healthy communities by themselves; it takes a community. We hope that through our example we can encourage other employers and community organizations across our region to join with us. Ultimately, when our community is healthy, we all benefit".

As part of Lakewood Health System's commitment to promoting good health and wellness in the community, sugar-sweetened beverages such as soft drinks, sweetened coffee drinks, sweetened tea and energy and sports drinks will no longer be available for purchase at Lakewood facilities. These beverages are associated with many adverse health effects and increase the risk of obesity, diabetes, heart attacks, metabolic syndrome and dental problems. This decision was made to promote and encourage healthier choices and prevent some of the adverse health effects associated with sugary beverages. Though Lakewood Health System will no longer sell sugary beverages, employees continue to have option to bring their beverage of choice to work, and patients will be able to receive sugar-sweetened beverages if prescribed for a medical condition.

Lakewood Health System's new alternative beverage menu will include flavored and infused water, sugar-alternative soda, and low calorie sports drinks.

Sugar sweetened beverages, few of which have any nutritional value, account for half of all added sugars in the average American diet. Studies overwhelmingly show that consumption of sugar-sweetened beverages (SSBs) leads to weight gain and obesity which in turn promote diabetes, heart disease, stroke, and many other health problems. The American Academy of Pediatrics, American Medical Association, American Heart Association and others have called for a sharp reduction and/or limits in the consumption of sugar sweetened beverages, the largest contributing dietary source of added sugar. In a **recent study, one third of hospital stays were attributed to diabetes**. In addition to weight gain, higher consumption of SSBs is associated with development of metabolic syndrome and type 2 diabetes.

Lakewood Health System operates a 25-bed Critical Access Hospital in Staples, Minnesota, five primary care clinics and a wide variety of senior housing and service options. Lakewood is the recipient of numerous awards including:

- Minnesota Hospital Association (MHA) Innovation of the Year in Patient Care – Small Hospitals Category
- Minnesota Psychological Association Psychologically Healthy Workplace Award
- Minnesota Department of Health Rural Health Hero Award

The Commons Health Hospital Challenge goals are supported by the American Heart Association, the Minnesota Academy of Family Physicians, the Minnesota Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics, the Minnesota Cancer Alliance and more. A variety of tools and resources for hospitals and communities are available on the [Commons Health Hospital Challenge website](#).

ISF is a not-for-profit organization working to support and improve ecological health, through advocacy, research, consultation and education. ISF provides expertise on environmental toxins, health care design and healthy food systems and has presented and consulted internationally.

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