

Mackinac Straits Hospital To Be Smoke Free by Sept. 1

By Ryan Schlehner

Patients and staff will soon breathe a little easier at clinics in St. Ignace, Mackinac Island, and Naubinway as Mackinac Straits Hospital and Health Center plans to implement a tobacco-free policy Saturday, September 1. The plan coincides with a new state law to make all hospitals in Michigan tobacco-free by January 1.

Hospital employees have been participating in smoking cessation classes since June.

The hospital has provided a room where Long Term Care patients can smoke, however, only the handful of current resident patients at the hospital's existing long term care patients will be allowed to smoke on the premises. New patients admitted to long term care will be required to follow the new policy, explained Amy Dodds, co-manager of the hospital's radiology department and head of the tobacco-free awareness program for employees.

A requirement that long term care patients be assisted by a nurse or aide during a smoke break met on a voluntary basis.

Come September 1, outdoor ashtrays at the service entrance will be removed, and a storage barn, known as the employee "smoking shed," will be off limits, said Karen Cheeseman, the hospital's

Human Resources Department director.

Nicotine gum, which helps smokers cope with breaking the habit, and information on smoking from Luce-Mackinac-Alger-Schoolcraft Health Department, will be available at the hospital for employees.

The policy will include strict enforcement, said Mrs. Cheeseman, but she noted that other hospitals in northern Michigan have made smooth transitions.

War Memorial in Sault Ste. Marie is now smoke-free and Helen Newberry Joy Hospital in Newberry will be an official tobacco-free zone Monday, August 6.

"This facility," said Mrs. Cheeseman, "is providing smoking cessation assistance to those employees who use tobacco products. Some employees are using the opportunity to quit smoking altogether, while others are preparing to get through their workday within the parameters of the hospital's new policy.

"Everyone," she said, "is adjusting to the fact that change is coming."

Mrs. Dodds said the change is for the better.

"This is a great opportunity for our health care organization to promote healthy living throughout the community," she said.

Abramson Enjoys Teaching Youngsters To Swim

By Eric Fish

Ashley Abramson is the head lifeguard at Grand Hotel's swimming pool, in her second season of teaching swimming lessons to Island children.

"It's a lot of fun," she said of giving lessons. "I like to do them for the Island kids because they don't have an opportunity to learn swimming anywhere. The lake is cold, and not really a good place to learn to swim, and there are not many pools on the Island. I really like giving those kids that live here year-around the opportunity to get to swim and learn how to swim, and see them swim safely."

Miss Abramson has been a lifeguard for the past five summers, beginning in her hometown of St. Clair, where she swam competitively in high school. Here, she teaches morning sessions with children from age two to 12.

"With my younger kids, I just teach them about getting used to the water, getting their face wet, being able to be more comfortable in it," she said.

Older children learn more advanced swimming strokes, like the breast stroke and butterfly.

"I always like to start off with a little safety thing," she said. "Water safety is important, along with how to swim."

The children enjoy the classes, which include games, and she encourages them to come to the pool often and practice what they have been taught.

She enjoys the lessons, too, and finds they are a nice break from her daily routine, which mostly involves monitoring and working with adults.

With the children, she said, "I get to have fun and goof around. I'm still really a big kid, too."



Amelia Musser (left) and Grand Hotel lifeguard Ashley Abramson take a break from a Tuesday, July 31, lesson to play a game of Marco Polo.

"Kids are just funny," she said. "I just find them so entertaining."

Later this month, she will return to her studies at Michigan State University.

Two Free Concerts Are Offered Each Week at St. Ignace Marina

Send Help will be featured in a Locals on the Bay concert Wednesday, August 8, at 7 p.m. at St. Ignace Marina. Local musicians Randy Binger, Mike Pierron, and Mike Welch formed the band about a year ago. They play a mixture of hard rock and classic rock.

Also at the marina, Boogie 2 Shoos will perform for Bayside

Live! Thursday, August 9, at 7 p.m. The duo of Patti-Jean Cousens and Pamela Jenkins features soulful renditions of the blues, funk-flavored rhythm and blues, and lush jazz.

Next week, Gene Perry will perform for Locals on the Bay and Chasin' Steel for Bayside Live! The concerts are free of charge.

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