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United Hospital District Introduces Vial of Life Program
Free Service Aids Both Participants and First Responders in Emergencies

Blue Earth, MN – Sept. 10, 2019 – United Hospital District (UHD) of Blue Earth has launched the Vial of Life program in Faribault and Martin Counties of southwestern Minnesota. The free service provides an easy way to store and retrieve medical information, while also aiding first responders during home emergencies by readily identifying where that medical information is located.

UHD's Vial of Life is a large, self-labeled orange prescription bottle (or vial) containing three items – a Health Information Form, a magnet and a sticker. Participants simply complete the Health Information Form and return it to the vial, which is then stored in the refrigerator. The magnet is placed on the refrigerator and the sticker is placed on the front door. First responders arriving during an emergency will see the Vial of Life sticker on the front door and immediately know the vial's location in the refrigerator, thus saving valuable time by gaining quicker access to a patient's medical history. A single UHD vial can hold up to 10 documents, thus allowing a health form for every member of a household. Participants are also encouraged to place additional documents in the vial that would be helpful to medical professionals, such as Living Wills, Powers of Attorney, Do Not Resuscitate orders, summaries of recent medical visits and a recent photo of themselves.

UHD rolled out the program during the recent Faribault and Martin County Fairs, where UHD Marketing Manager Suzanne Montanaro estimates nearly 1,000 free vials were distributed. "We had a tremendous response from the community, which was exciting," said Ms. Montanaro. "Many people took additional vials for relatives, elderly neighbors and friends who weren't at the fairs." The program now continues at all UHD clinic locations, which include Blue Earth, Fairmont, Wells and Winnebago.

The impetus to offer the program was the dual benefit to residents and first responders. “It aligns with our mission to serve our communities,” said CEO Rick Ash. “It was a natural fit for us.” Added UHD Safety Officer and Ambulance Director Adam Grant, “I reached out to several local ambulance crews to gauge their interest and received a lot of support for the idea. They all felt it would save time and eliminate confusion during emergencies.” UHD received permission from the Vial of Life organization and moved forward.

Vial of Life Project is a division of the Bridge Building Foundation, a 501 (c) 3 public charity based in Marina del Ray, CA. Organizations such as UHD participate by distributing vials or plastic baggies designed to hold a health form, a magnet and a sticker. UHD is believed to be the only distributor of the program in southern Minnesota. A partial list of participating organizations can be found on the company’s website, www.vialoflife.com, although A Vial of Life Project spokesperson confirmed the website has stopped updating the list.

United Hospital District is a 25-bed Critical Access Hospital in Blue Earth, MN. It is one of Faribault County’s largest employers and offers general surgery plus a full range of primary and specialty care services, including allergy & asthma, cardiology, ENT, ophthalmology, orthopedics, OB/GYN, rehab therapies (PT/OT/Speech Pathology) and urology. The hospital supports a patient-centered care philosophy and its network includes four clinic locations plus a Home Health and Hospice program, and the Adolescent Treatment Center, an inpatient recovery program providing substance use and mental health services.



Images of United Hospital District’s Vial of Life containers