FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

New Help for Asthma Suffers in the Flathead Valley

WHITEFISH, MT – April 6, 2015: North Valley Hospital is pleased to announce that it has launched a patient education program focusing on delivering asthma self-management education to patients who come to the hospital with a primary or secondary diagnosis of asthma. Funding for the program was provided in part by the Montana Asthma Control Program’s “Asthma Hospital Patient Education, Action Plan, and Discharge Protocol,” or the “AHEAD Protocol.”

The NVH program is led by Carrie Bates, a Registered Respiratory Therapist and manager of the Respiratory Therapy Department. When an individual enters the hospital and is identified with asthma or the potential for asthma, they receive personalized education on asthma causes, triggers, symptoms, and signs to recognize an oncoming attack. Staff explains to the patient how specific changes in their home environment can decrease triggers, and they help develop a personalized home management care plan that includes ways to continue the conversation with the patient’s primary provider. There are also initiatives in the works for out-patient educational programs and support groups, and taking the program to the NVH primary care clinics.

“Our goal is to educate our patients about asthma to give them a better quality of life,” said Carrie Bates. “By learning how to recognize what may trigger an asthma attack and modifying their environment, we ultimately hope that it will reduce asthma-related readmissions for people living with the disease.”

The $5,000 AHEAD Protocol grant was awarded for use in 2015 for the development of a guidelines-based asthma program in the emergency department that focuses on delivering asthma self-management education to patients upon discharge. Along with receiving the grant, health care providers are participating in educational opportunities regarding up-to-date recommended care guidelines for patients with asthma. North Valley Hospital is currently one of twelve Montana hospitals to implement the program and the first to apply for and receive this grant in the state. Requirements included obtaining support from hospital administration and developing an idea for a quality improvement project to be implemented over the course of the year. The goal of the AHEAD Protocol is to improve health outcomes for asthma patients who visit the emergency department and reduce overall asthma-related health care costs over time.
Asthma affected an estimated 90,600 Montana residents in 2012. Every year, nearly 2,500 emergency department visits with a primary diagnosis of asthma occur in the state. The highest rates occur with children ages 0-17 and seniors 65 years and over. Asthma leads to significant cost, personal limitations, and occasionally death, but it can be controlled with regular outpatient care, self-management, and medication.

Know the signs and symptoms of an asthma exacerbation. They can include, but are not limited to:

- Severe shortness of breath
- Chest tightness or pain
- Coughing
- Wheezing

For more information about asthma in Montana, please visit: dphhs.mt.gov/asthma. For more information on the Asthma Prevention Program at North Valley Hospital contact Carrie Bates at 406-863-3570 or visit the website at www.nvhosp.org.

About North Valley Hospital:

North Valley Hospital is a private 501©(3), non-profit community Critical Access hospital governed by a Volunteer Board of Directors from the North Valley area. North Valley Hospital is the first hospital in Montana to be affiliated with Planetree. Planetree is a non-profit organization that provides education and information in a collaborative community of healthcare organizations, facilitating efforts to create patient centered care in healing environments. North Valley Hospital receives no tax support for its services. The hospital and its affiliate clinics serve Flathead and Lincoln counties.

About the Montana Asthma Control Program:

The Asthma Control Program at the Montana Department of Public Health and Human services is committed to improving the quality of life for all Montanans with asthma. It is affiliated with the University of Washington School of Medicine. The Montana Asthma Control Program supports:

- Surveillance of asthma and related risk factors in Montana
- Partnerships to increase the reach and efficacy of asthma control efforts statewide
- Quality improvement measures that increase the level of asthma-related health care in the state
- School and workplace interventions that create asthma friendly spaces and support the unique needs of persons with asthma
- Environmental interventions that reduce asthma triggers such as tobacco smoke, mold and pests
- Self-management education that empowers patients to take control of their disease
- Policy development related to asthma in Montana

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