

SLICE OF LIFE



THE Healthiest County IN IDAHO

By McKenzie Kraemer

While the McCall area attracts a lot of visitors looking for fun, healthy activities, access to healthcare probably isn't among the top reasons tourists decide to visit here. Still, it's nice to know that if an illness or accident strikes, there is a facility in this small town poised to deliver the best care and service available. That's just one of the reasons that Valley County has been named the "Healthiest County in Idaho" for the second consecutive year.

Sean McCallister, the site administrator for St. Luke's McCall, has a unique perspective on the level of care available in the McCall area. "I came from Alaska and worked in remote, small communities throughout the state," he says. "The quality and scope of services offered in McCall is second to none. I have never seen anything quite like it."

That uniqueness is exemplified in "Strategy 20/20," St. Luke's vision for the future of healthcare in all the communities they serve. The strategy aims to achieve the best healthcare outcomes at the lowest possible cost. That means emphasizing preventative services, primary care and partnering on health initiatives in the community spearheaded by groups outside of the St. Luke's system.



Programs like the Youth Advocacy Coalition, the Valley-Adams Health Improvement Coalition, local food pantries, community garden projects, a shuttle service between Riggins and McCall, nutrition in schools and providing free bike and ski helmets are just a few of the community projects St. Luke's McCall supports. "In small communities, you see a lot of teamwork and partnerships," says McCallister. "This is a really powerful way to engage the community...instead of asking people to come to us, we are bringing health education to them."

St. Luke's McCall also tries to lead by example. "We want to set the tone for what health and wellness is on a personal level," says McCallister.

Employees of St. Luke's participate in a "Know Your Numbers" program that sets a baseline for things like cholesterol, blood glucose, body mass index, blood pressure and lifestyle choices. Once the baseline is set, each employee is given tools and resources to take charge of their own health. In addition, St. Luke's McCall started a bike share program in 2017. Any employee is welcome to check a bike out before or after work or on their lunch break. This program has been so successful, some departments actually use them for meetings and take a ride down to Legacy Park rather than gathering in a conference room.

These community efforts are paying off. For the second year in a row, Valley County earned the top spot as Idaho's Healthiest County. Valley County also ranks first in the nation for longevity. "With more than 3,000 counties nationwide, this designation is really quite phenomenal," says McCallister. These recognitions are a result of a study conducted by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation comparing 35 physical health, mental health and social factors. "St. Luke's, in collaboration with our schools, local government, and non-profit community partners continues to build a culture of health," says Lyle Nelson, St. Luke's McCall community relations and health promotion director.



Looking to the future, St. Luke's will not only continue building on the area's culture of health, they will be building a new facility. The project aims to expand the hospital from 47,000 square feet to nearly 80,000 square feet. Most departments will double or triple in size. This major structure replacement is currently in the planning and design phase and if all funding goals are met, site preparation will begin in summer 2018. "The combination of infrastructure, technology, a highly skilled and compassionate care team, and relentless focus on community health will ensure we meet the health needs of people in our region now and in the future," says McCallister. ■



How do you define health? Physical? Mental? Social?

Health goes beyond medical care. It's how we take care of ourselves, how we interact with our communities, how we take care of each other.

Let St. Luke's support your health however you define it.

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