

April 12, 2010

¿Hablas español? ¿Entiende usted español?

(Do you speak Spanish? Do you understand Spanish?)

Because of an idea Dr. Sylvia Mustonen presented to hospital administration, many associates of South Haven Community Hospital (SHCH) will soon be able to answer “sí ” to those questions. Members of the Board of Trustees, Physicians, and staff members of various departments comprise the 59 members of the newly formed Spanish Club at SHCH.

“At SHCH we understand that doctor and hospital visits can be stressful. If you don’t speak English, you may worry you won’t be able to communicate clearly and get the help you need. When Dr. Mustonen suggested we offer hospital employees the opportunity to learn Spanish to improve communication, we formed a Spanish Club. In addition to the interpretation services we have available to all patients day or night, because of the Spanish Club, more employees will be able to understand and speak Spanish, with a focus on medical terminology,” states Joanne Urbanski, SHCH President/CEO. “Effective communication and the ability to understand our patients’ language is crucial to providing the best care.”

The Spanish Club participants are utilizing the Rosetta Stone language program for study at their own pace in their home. In addition to this program, they meet once a week for group sessions. The sessions are facilitated by Alex De La Cruz, Medical Interpreter and husband of Dr. Cheshier-Alvarado, an Obstetrician – Gynecologist at the Shoreline Women’s Center, and offer a fun way to reinforce what the students are learning at home. “Some of the activities planned for the club include role playing of everyday and medical scenarios, potlucks, movie nights, and field trips to assist them in learning the Spanish language,” De La Cruz states. “Embracing the various cultures of our community will allow them all to become better caregivers. In health care there are a lot of technical terms that are used with which many people may not be familiar. This knowledge and fluency will help us describe these terms to Spanish-speaking patients or those who are just beginning to learn the English language.”