

Member Newsletter

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Member Advisory Committee

How We Celebrate the Holidays

Just like our MCW membership, the team on the Member Advisory Committee has many different family, cultural, and religious holiday traditions. We would like to share some of them here with you.

Duazong is Hmong and the Hmong New Year is an important festival during this season. Hmong New Year celebrations frequently occur in November and December (historically at the end of the harvest season when all work is done). Hmong people will dress in special clothing and enjoy traditional Hmong food, dance, music, stories, and poetry.

Patrick is Catholic and Advent is a meaningful time for his family. Advent is a four-week period leading up to Christmas during which Christians prepare and remember the real meaning of this holiday. Patrick's family also has a unique tradition of drinking hot Coca-Cola with lemon during this time.

Melissa loves the food of the holiday season. She is especially fond of eating

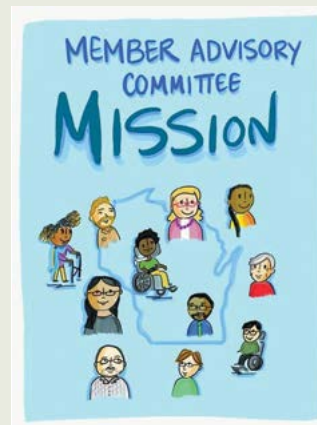
Christmas cookies and pumpkin pie and drinking eggnog.

Nealy's family loves to gather and play games together during the holiday season. Nealy's favorite game is Mexican Train Dominoes.

90-year old Arlyn has fond childhood memories of baking spritz Christmas cookies with her German grandmother.

Chad is Norwegian and making lefse, a soft flatbread, is a holiday tradition. It is often made with potatoes, flour, butter, and milk or cream then cooked on a large, flat griddle. Chad loves topping his lefse with butter and cinnamon.

When King thinks of the holidays, he remembers special times with his Puerto Rican grandmother, Mami. She would always make her Puerto Rican rice and beans, as well as flan, a rich sweet custard baked with caramelized sugar.



Barry is Jewish, so the celebration of Hanukkah is at the center of his holiday traditions. Also called the Festival of Lights, the lighting of the candles on the menorah and making potato pancakes, or latkes, are hallmarks of this time of year.

Savanna loves baking, so the tradition of making Christmas cookies is almost as important to her as going to Mass during the Advent and Christmas season. Savanna can't name just one favorite treat, she loves them all: decorated sugar cookies, ginger molasses cookies, peanut butter kiss cookies, pizzelles, and fudge!

Lynn fondly remembers the Christmases when her son Charlie was a small boy and his father, Alberto, would make them traditional Mexican foods like tamales, tortillas, conchitas, and bunuelos on Christmas morning.

Letter from the CEO

Live your best life in 2022

My Choice Wisconsin is dedicated to helping you live life to the fullest. Heading into 2022, I wanted to take a moment to think about how much we have overcome these past 18 months.

As our country faced the COVID-19 pandemic, My Choice Wisconsin focused on making sure our members stayed safe. We moved in-person visits to virtual visits and encouraged members and staff to get the COVID-19 vaccine. Because of you and your efforts, we have a very successful member vaccination rate! If you haven't scheduled your vaccination yet or are due for your booster, please do it for yourself, your loved ones, and your community. If you need help accessing the COVID-19 vaccine, please don't hesitate to contact your care team.

Even as cooler weather keeps us inside more often, please continue to stay safe by washing your hands frequently, wearing your mask in public, and maintaining distance from others. Also, don't forget to get your flu shot! As always, your care team is here for you to assist.

Lastly, membership at MCW is like any relationship – the more you put into it, the more you will get out of it. As we start a new year, here are a few ways you can get the most out of your MCW membership:



Talk to your care team. Your Care Manager, Registered Nurse, and/or Care Coordinator are here to help you achieve your goals and live your life safely and independently. Take advantage of their skills and support by touching base regularly. If there's something we can do to serve you better, tell us!

Explore job or volunteer opportunities. A person's feelings of self-worth can be strengthened by their ability to earn money or contribute to society. At MCW, we believe working, paid or unpaid, is a positive option for many of our members, helping them to stay active and productive, and providing meaningful connections in the community. We encourage all our members to work or volunteer, and we partner with employers and agencies to help you find activities that match your interests and abilities. We can help you explore opportunities for personal growth!

Follow us on social media.

You can find us on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. We share inspiring stories about our members and people with disabilities, as well as community news and information about upcoming events.

Visit our website. Our website, www.mychoicewi.org, has tons of information about all the programs we offer, services available to you, community events, member stories, Provider Directories, and other member resources. You can also keep up with the Member Advisory Committee at www.mychoicewi.org/about/member-advisory/.

Open lines of communication will help our relationship with you to thrive. If you have questions or concerns, please ask your care team for help. If you would prefer to reach out to someone else, you can email member.experience@mychoicewi.org and a MCW representative will get back to you as soon as possible.



Let's work together to make sure 2022 is the best year yet!

Sincerely,
Maria Ledger
CEO
My Choice
Wisconsin

Featured Article

Energy Assistance this Winter

As winter creeps in, it can be a stressful time of year budgeting between food, medicine, and heating your home. Older heating systems and windows, as well as poor insulation can drive up the cost of your monthly energy bill. Home Energy Plus helps qualified residents statewide reduce their energy use, and therefore their bill, through two programs: Wisconsin Home Energy Assistance Program (WHEAP) and Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP).

- WHEAP provides financial assistance to reduce home heating costs. Assistance is available for most types of fuel, including wood, propane, natural gas, electricity, and oil. This program also helps in emergency situations when your furnace stops working during the winter.
- WAP offers services that help you lessen how much energy you use, like weatherstripping, wall and attic insulation, and furnace tune-ups. These energy-saving measures help people lower their electric bills and save money.

These programs are funded by the Wisconsin Department of Administration's Division of Energy, Housing and Community Resources. They contract with community action agencies, housing authorities, local governments, and other non-profit organizations to



provide services to eligible households.

To learn more about these programs or to submit a Home Energy Plus application, call 1-866-HEATWIS (432-8947) or visit www.homeenergyplus.wi.gov and click on "Where to Apply." Your local agency will determine if you qualify and will forward approved applications to the local weatherization agency.

Here are some tips to make the most of your energy and stay warm this winter:

- Set your thermostat to 68° or lower. Lower your thermostat a few degrees at night or when you are not at home. (Keep temps above 55° so you don't risk freezing your water pipes!)

- Never use an oven or stove to heat your home to avoid carbon monoxide poisoning.
- Make sure air vents, radiators, and air returns are not covered by furniture or curtains.
- Close air vents and doors of rooms you don't use. Keep closets and cupboards closed too. Put a blanket or towel along the bottom of exterior doors to block drafts.
- Keep curtains and blinds open during the day to allow sun in and close them at night.
- If you have a ceiling fan, make sure it's set to run clockwise. Turning it on low will push the warm air that rises back toward the floor.

Seasonal Affective Disorder: Not Just the “Winter Blues”



Dr. Eric Quivers
Medical Director

It is not uncommon for us to feel down or not like our usual selves from time to time.

Most often, we're able to pull out of it. Seasonal Affective Disorder, or “SAD” as it is known, is quite different. It is a change in mood that happens during a certain time each year. It's most common in fall when there's less sunlight but, though rare, can happen in the summer. Lasting for about 4 months, it is usually worse in January and February.

Millions of people experience SAD. It is more common the

further you are from the equator where the days are much shorter in the fall and winter. Its onset happens between ages of 18 to 30 years and is more common among women.

What are the symptoms?

- Feeling sad or depressed
- Loss of interest in normal activities
- Changes in appetite; usually eating more, craving carbohydrates
- Change in sleep; usually sleeping too much
- Being tired despite increased sleep hours
- Increase in purposeless physical activity (e.g., inability to sit still, pacing, hand

fidgiting) or noticeable slowed movements/speech

- Feeling worthless or guilty
- Difficulty thinking, concentrating, or making decisions
- Thoughts of death or suicide

How is it treated?

The cause of SAD is due to a decrease in the body's hormone serotonin. With less sunlight, the brain makes less of it. The treatments for SAD focus on raising the level of serotonin, including:

- **Light therapy** - a very bright light box (minus the UV rays) mimics the sun to encourage serotonin production
- **Psychotherapy/Cognitive Behavioral Therapy** - talk therapy discusses coping techniques, like planning things that make you happy during this season
- **Antidepressant medications** - these block the body from absorbing serotonin
- **Vitamin D**

If you are having any of these symptoms or think you may have SAD, tell your care team so you can seek out professional help.





Quality Update

Have You Gotten Your Flu Vaccine?

By Lindsey Marschke
MCW Quality Specialist

The seasonal influenza vaccine, or flu shot, has many benefits and plays an important role in staying healthy and preventing the flu. The flu shot can reduce flu-related illnesses, visits to the doctor, and missed work or activities due to flu, as well as prevent flu-related hospitalizations and even death. In recent years, flu vaccines have lowered the risk of flu-associated hospitalizations among older adults by about 40% (<https://www.cdc.gov/flu/vaccines-work/vaccineeffect.htm>). The flu shot works with our body's natural

defenses to lower your risk of getting sick. Getting the vaccine also lowers your chance of spreading the flu to other people. The flu vaccine is not always a perfect match with the season's virus types, but it is the best way to protect against flu infection and its effects. Any flu vaccination is better than none!

The best time to get the flu shot is before the end of October, however, as long as the flu virus is going around, you can still get vaccinated. Getting the flu shot can be easy and convenient. Adults can get it at their doctors' office, local phar-

macies, workplace, community health clinics, and health departments.

Vaccination resources can be found online. The Center for Disease Control (CDC) has helpful flu vaccine information on their website at www.cdc.gov/flu/prevent/vaccinations.htm. If you have any questions or need help finding where and how to get the flu shot, please reach out to your doctor or your My Choice Wisconsin Registered Nurse or Care Coordinator.

Let's stay healthy together this winter!

Care Team **Shout Out**

"Shout out to my son's Care Manager Jessica - thank you for ALL you do and the time you give. Our son Sam began therapy appointments with Leslie through ABG Wellness and the first impression [of the counseling service provider] put me at ease and Sam has someone to talk to besides Mom and Dad. Jessica reaching out and helping make this happen seems second nature to her. She is a thoughtful, informed and most of ALL a kind individual who CARES. We would like to shout out... thank you Jessica!"

Sam, Sandie, & Mike



My Choice Wisconsin Health Plan 5 Star Rating

By MCW Health Plan Quality Department

Every year, Medicare evaluates plans based on a 5-star rating system. My Choice Wisconsin Health Plan just received our Health Plan Quality Star Rating from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services and it is with great pride that we announce a 5 out of 5 star rating for the Partnership and Medicare Dual Advantage plans (<https://www.medicare.gov/plan-compare/#/?lang=en&year=2022>)!

What does this mean?

Medicare uses a Star Rating System to measure how well Medicare Advantage and Part D plans perform across the country. Medicare scores plans on categories including quality of care, pharmacy, member complaints, and customer service. Information from member satisfaction surveys, plans, and health care providers is used to give overall performance star ratings to plans. A 5-star rating is the highest distinction

and is considered excellent.

(<https://www.cms.gov/files/document/2022-star-ratings-fact-sheet1082021.pdf>)

Why is this important?

By rating certain performance measures of Medicare Advantage plans (like Partnership and Dual Advantage), potential members can compare plans available in their area. Star ratings also encourage plans to compete based on quality. The My Choice Wisconsin Health Plan 5-star rating means it has the highest overall score for how well it offers members access to healthcare and provides a positive customer service experience (<https://www.cms.gov/files/document/2021technotes20201001.pdf-0>)

This makes it a favorable choice for potential members and current members alike!



What is Medicare Dual Advantage HMO SNP

By Lisa Morse-Heinz
MCW Medicare Advisor

For people who have both Medicare and Medicaid, there is a special type of Medicare Advantage plan made just for them – it's called a Dual-Eligible Special Needs Plan, or DSNP. In 2020, more than 2.6 million people were enrolled in a DSNP (CMS, 2020). This type of plan is not new - in fact, DSNPs have been available since 2006. So, what exactly is a DSNP and what makes it attractive?

Dual-Eligible Special Needs plans are available to people who qualify for Medicaid and Medicare (Parts A and B). People with both these benefits are considered “dual-eligible.” They must also live in a plan's service area.

The benefits provided by Medicare and Medicaid are important to those who receive them. However, understanding which program covers what services at what time or for how long can be complicated! Add to that, dual-eligible individuals often have a separate prescription drug plan. With a DSNP plan, all the benefit providers are wrapped up into one neat package.

The advantage of a DSNP is that individuals can gain access to more benefits; often with little to no monthly cost. Members of this type of plan

have the same benefits provided directly through Medicare (hospital and physician coverage) but might also get additional benefits not typically covered by Original Medicare.

These benefits are usually designed for someone with specialized medical needs or limited income in mind. Added benefits often include coverage for over-the-counter and personal care items like vitamins, cold remedies, pain relievers, toothpaste, skin lotion, incontinence supplies, first aid supplies and many other products. There are often benefits for dental coverage (crowns, cleanings, x-rays, fillings, and extractions), eyeglasses or contacts, and emergency response buttons.

Dual-Eligible Special Needs Plans available in Wisconsin do not have monthly premiums. DSNPs include prescription drug coverage (Medicare Part D), allowing the member to receive all Medicare benefits through one plan.

A DSNP includes some level of care coordination. The plan's coordinator may help a member access their providers, schedule appointments, answer questions about bills, and provide reminders about prevention services such as flu shots. The goal of care coordination is to help members maintain their



health by having routine health visits and make sure they are using their benefits to their greatest advantage.

Those who qualify for a Dual-Eligible Special Needs plan may not need to wait until the annual enrollment period to join. If you are new to Medicare or Medicaid, you may enroll any time of the year. You can learn if you are eligible for a DSNP by contacting My Choice Wisconsin at 800-963-0035 or www.mychoicewi.org. You may also contact a State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP) advisor or check the Medicare.gov Plan Finder for plans in your area.

Citation: 2020 CMS enrollment data



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Member Spotlight

Meet Barry

A longtime Milwaukee resident and MCW member of 10 years, Barry loves helping people and sharing his knowledge with others. "I love Paleontology and Microbiology science. I knew how to spell Tyrannosaurus Rex before I could spell my own name!" he says. MCW helps Barry to live his best life by encouraging him to make his own decisions about his care and the services that are most important to him. MCW helps Barry stay connected socially: being active at the St Ann's Day program and volunteering at Milwaukee Public Museum are among his favorite passions. He also finds fulfillment on the MCW Member Advisory Committee (MAC) because he knows they're helping to make a difference in the lives of all MCW members.

If you stop by the Milwaukee Public Museum on a Saturday, you might just find Barry doing what he loves; he encourages you to say hi!



Barry, left, at an event for People First Wisconsin, a disability advocacy organization.