

# 2015 PUBLIC OUTCOME REPORT

## Colon Cancer Awareness Campaign

Most colon cancers occur in men and women who are 50 or older. Aitkin County has a rapidly growing aging population, so there are a large number of individuals 50 or older in need of colon cancer screening. In the past year, we observed a large number of Riverwood patients had no record of having their colon cancer screenings. We sent 648 eligible patients who had no record of having a screening colonoscopy reminder letters. Of these, 53 patients have had a colonoscopy in 2015 and 25 of those patients have a record of receiving the reminder letter.

Riverwood launched a communitywide Colon Cancer Awareness campaign in March 2015, using newspaper, radio, Facebook and other communication channels to share personal stories from colon cancer survivors and offer educational information on when and why individuals should be screened for this disease. Riverwood also partnered with Aitkin County Public Health and the Aitkin Chamber to get the message out more broadly during the third week in March. Sixteen downtown Aitkin businesses decorated their windows with colon cancer screening messages. The local newspaper, *Aitkin Independent Age*, ran a series of four weekly articles submitted by Riverwood on local colon cancer survivors, plus an ad series.

### **Effectiveness:**

Riverwood saw a 5% increase in colonoscopy screenings in fiscal year 2014-2015 with 762 screening colonoscopies in 2014 to 801 in 2015.

One of the cancer survivors (Loren Larson) featured in our ads and newspaper article reported that two of his friends have told him they had colonoscopy screenings in the last month as a result of reading his personal story. John Newstrom of Aitkin, commented: *“Although I have read frequent articles in various local and national publications advocating the benefits of colon screening, they were rather impersonal and fail to hit home. However, when I read detailed feature articles about three persons whom I know quite well, they really made an impact and drove me to action. Personal testimonials from Loren, Kristine and Don made the lesson become much more extremely vivid and powerful. I appreciated their willingness to openly share their stories, and I trust them in their recommendations to be screened. I had my colonoscopy screening on April 1, 2015.”*

### **Prevention steps:**

Riverwood’s community health seminars, newsletter articles, newspaper articles, news releases, Facebook and website posts and mailed publications have been effective methods for informing individuals about cancer awareness and prevention. We will continue to focus on raising awareness among our patients and the communities we serve about the potentially life-saving outcomes of colon cancer screening.