

## **Wisconsin women get medical 'yellow pages' State groups release health care guide for females**

**By Molly Gamble**

Information on health care services and programs in each of Wisconsin's 72 counties is detailed in the state's first guide specifically for women, which was released Friday.

Provided by the Wisconsin Women's Health Foundation and the Wisconsin Alliance for Women's Health, the Wisconsin Women's Health Guide features 44 categories of services, including domestic violence resources, hospitals, dental care and community centers.

"Think of our guide as the health care Yellow Pages," said Sue Anne Thompson, founder and president of the Wisconsin Women's Health Foundation.

The concept behind the guide emerged when Hurricane Katrina victims were relocated to Milwaukee in 2005.

"The biggest problem when taking in people from New Orleans was the lack of one document that delineated health care services in Wisconsin," said Sheila Ashley, deputy director of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. "This is the type of generic resource document that anyone can use to navigate bureaucracies."

Individuals can find contact information in the guide for a variety of services ranging from transportation providers to translation assistance and from childcare assistance to long-term care. Also listed are public libraries in Wisconsin.

"Libraries, as you know, are not just for books anymore," Thompson said, referring to the availability of Internet and e-mail access.

Sara Finger, director of the Wisconsin Alliance for Women's Health, said the WWHF and the WAWH are looking for funding to print a Spanish version of the guide by the fall of 2007.

"We don't want any cultural barriers to this guide," Finger said.

Kay McKenzie, director of adult education for the Council for the Spanish Speaking in Milwaukee, said limited English increases chances that Spanish-speaking women and families will not receive the care they need.

"We definitely have a lot of people in the community who are not proficient enough in English to navigate the system," McKenzie said. A centralized resource will help women lead more fulfilling lives by providing comprehensive health care information, she said.

Other problems relate to economic levels of families.

"I think a lack of good info is one problem, and a lack of services for people with lower income is also problematic," McKenzie said.

The guide was designed for everyone, regardless of economic class, ethnic group or location, she said.

The free guides are available in centers and community service providers which are listed in it, as well as online for download through the WAWH Web site. There is also a mail form online to order guides through the mail.

Updated online files of the guide will prevent outdated information and can be found at <http://wiawh.org>.

"By the time we were wrapping up the guide, we were already seeing changes," Finger said. "If it proves to be beneficial maybe we can make a 2010 version."

The slogan of the Women's Health Foundation, "It all begins with a healthy woman," is supported by the statistic that women make more than 85 percent to 90 percent of all household health care decisions, according to Thompson.

"This guide truly encompasses the spirit of why we're here," Thompson said.