

Western Pennsylvania

Guide to Good Health

Health News You and Your Family Can Use



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2022 Annual Healthcare Guide

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Management Program
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Silent Stroke?**

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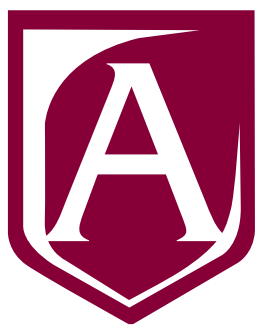


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WHS' Cameron Wellness Center Offers Medical Memberships for Community Health

By Andrew Wilson

Every January, people join a gym because they make resolutions to get in shape, eat right, and lose weight. Statistics show that fewer than one in ten will keep their resolution past February.

"We don't want to focus on resolutions," said Debbie Roytas, executive director of Washington Health System's (WHS) Wilfred R. Cameron Wellness Center. "We focus on lifestyle changes for the long-term."

WHS' Wilfred R. Cameron Wellness Center is all about their members' health and fitness. As a center that takes a comprehensive approach to health and fitness, classes are offered in cardio, strength, aquatics, yoga, and meditation, as well as programs designed for specific groups, like a fit and flex class for seniors and a Parkinson specific exercise program, to name just a few.

"We are passionate about helping people get healthier," said Roytas. "We take a holistic approach to good health."

One of the ways the Wellness Center helps people get healthier is through medical memberships, which are offered to people who need to continue to practice healthy habits following an illness or injury or to people who have been newly diagnosed with a condition like type 2 diabetes, where losing weight and getting fit can improve their prognosis.

"It's important for people to stay on the path to good health and not slide backwards," said Roytas, who explained that this affects people who go through physical therapy, cardiac rehabilitation, pulmonary therapy, as well as people who have gone through a knee or hip replacement, where it is important to continue to strengthen the joint and improve flexibility.

The first step when someone comes to the Wilfred R. Cameron Wellness Center is for the staff to provide a clinical assessment to see what the person's needs are, guidance in setting some short-term and longer-term goals for good health and make recommendations of the best course of exercise and fitness. This usually includes meetings with an exercise physiologist, a dietitian, and even a personal trainer. Through it all, the staff understand that some people will be more independent while others may need more help.

"We are ready to hold their hand through the process, if need be," said Roytas. "We want to help you get integrated into the services that the center provides, so we can have a healthier community."

To help with the integration period, the wellness center offers all new members four free visits to get them on the path to a healthier lifestyle. At the end of three months of the medical membership, the person goes



Sami, personal trainer, works with Mary Jo on the TRX to strengthen her core.

through another clinical assessment to determine how they have met their short-term goals. The hope is that if short-term success is realized, it will help a person stay with a healthy lifestyle in the long run.

"The studies show it takes 21 days to establish a new habit, and we're seeking to help people establish good, healthy habits," said Roytas.

Best of all, the Wellness Center is affordable. Once the medical membership has concluded, people can maintain a personal membership and continue to visit the wellness center for exercise, classes, and specialized regimens or services like acupuncture or the day spa.

"We have it all under one roof. You can come in to use the fitness center every day," said Roytas, who added that their oldest member is 102 and there are 28 members in their 90s. "Our average age is 48, but on any given day, you may see people from 12 to 102 using our facility."

One of the ways the Wellness Center helps people get healthier is through medical memberships, which are offered to people who need to continue to practice healthy habits following an illness or injury or to people who have been newly diagnosed with a condition like type 2 diabetes, where losing weight and getting fit can improve their prognosis.

> The Wilfred R. Cameron Wellness Center, part of the Washington Health System, is a community wellness center that takes a comprehensive approach to healthy living and fitness. For more information, visit www.wrcameronwellness.org or call (724) 225-WELL (9355).

A Healthy Lifestyle Takes Work, But It's Worth the Effort

Although medical science has made amazing advances over the years, the best medicine may not come in a pill, but in putting in the effort to live a healthy life.

"Living a healthy lifestyle does take work," said Kate Stache, the fitness, aquatics, sports, and recreation manager at Washington Health System's (WHS) Wilfred R. Cameron Wellness Center. "It's easy to become discouraged because you feel being healthy is unattainable."

Someone who is focused on losing 30 pounds can get discouraged when substantial progress isn't achieved immediately, but while carrying 30 extra pounds is unhealthy, so is quickly losing such a substantial amount of weight. The solution? Be realistic.

"Start by setting a goal that is realistic for each week," Stache said. "Focus on setting attainable goals and working up to the greater goal. You also need to celebrate the small milestones."

At the Cameron Wellness Center, Stache says they take a multi-pronged approach where advice about exercise and good nutrition go hand-in-hand. To lose one pound, a person must burn 3,500 calories, which means that it usually means both that it takes both exercise and diet to achieve one's goals. Staff are available to teach the benefits of exercise and demonstrate proper techniques.

"We also have found that it can be beneficial to find a partner or group to exercise with," Stache said. "Groups create feelings of camaraderie and accountability. If you know someone is waiting for you, you are more likely to stick with it."

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St. Clair Health Expands in Robinson Township



By Kevin Brown

St. Clair Health is expanding its award-winning care in Robinson Township with the opening of a new multispecialty suite located at 1 Robinson Plaza.

According to Elizabeth Pittman, Vice President and Chief Operating Officer of St. Clair Medical Group, the office will enable the expansion of St. Clair Medical Group Internal Medicine, formerly known as Fatigati-Nalin & Associates and West Hills Medical. Plans include the consolidation of these medical practices and other services to the new Robinson office in addition to Internal Medicine.

“We are going to have a total of three physicians and one nurse practitioner providing primary care and internal medicine services. The office will also have six providers from St. Clair Medical Group OB/GYN, formerly known as Zubritzky & Christy OB/GYN Associates, who have had an office in that area for years,” Elizabeth explains. “This new location is

important because it's so convenient, not only to patients living in the Robinson communities, but really anyone in neighboring communities.”

St. Clair Medical Group, a subsidiary of St. Clair Health, comprises seven primary care practices and 15 specialty practices encompassing more than 150 physicians, surgeons, and advanced care providers. It includes a wide network of neighborhood-based primary care offices, tertiary-level medical and surgical sub-specialists, and a division of hospital-based physicians that includes adult medicine, psychiatry, pediatrics and critical care.

The 22 medical practices that operate under the St. Clair Medical Group brand have offices throughout western Pennsylvania. The new multispecialty suite will provide an opportunity to locate more of these medical practices in Robinson Township, bringing the one-to-one, expert-level care St. Clair Health is known for to Robinson area residents.

Patients of the new office, as well as other St. Clair Medical Group practices, benefit from more sophisticated information technology; enhanced coordination of care between the physicians, the outpatient centers, and the hospital; and access to an interdisciplinary team of clinicians.

“Of the new services we are planning for the office, an outpatient laboratory will be among the first,” Elizabeth says. “Our physicians want their patients to be able to get their lab draws at the time of their appointments. We also plan to have our specialists cycle through the office so patients in the Robinson area will have that convenient access point for a variety of health care services.”

While flex space was built to enable St. Clair Health to expand and adapt services to meet the community's needs, Mario J. Fatigati, M.D., FACP, CMD, Associate Chief Medical Officer of St. Clair Medical Group, stresses that primary care is a top priority at the multispecialty suite.

“The goal with the new office is to provide comprehensive primary care services with a focus on preventive medicine, including diet, exercise, appropriate health screenings, immunizations, and all the key elements of good primary care services, as well as caring for patients with active or chronic medical conditions,” he says. “The providers on-site are experienced, well-trained physicians whose goals are to help you with preventive health issues and any medical problems you might have.”

The multispecialty suite was created with the idea of meeting people where they are and going directly into their community in service of their health care needs. The office was designed to bring people together in an intimate setting where doctors know patients by name and build personalized medicine around their needs—all in the heart of Robinson Township.

“The Robinson market is an important area of growth for St. Clair Health to provide more comprehensive services to that area, including OB/GYN and expanded primary care. And, it's a wonderful community,” Dr. Fatigati says.



Dr. Mario J. Fatigati



Elizabeth Pittman

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For more information about the new St. Clair Health Robinson Township Multispecialty Suite, or the St. Clair Medical Group practices, visit www.stclair.org or call St. Clair Health at (412) 942-4000.

Rametta Audiology & Hearing Treats Patients Like Family

By Lois Thomson

Michael J. Rametta, MS, explained how clients are treated from the very beginning at Rametta Audiology & Hearing Center – like family. He said that when meeting with a customer, "I pretend I'm talking with a family member. The first half hour you're with us has nothing to do with hearing aids. First we do a hearing test to check your ears, your hearing, your ear drums. We want to make sure there's not a reason to send you to a doctor for some problem."

If the preliminaries determine a hearing aid is needed, the client can be assured of receiving products using the latest technology. Rametta said one of the latest advances is the ability to recharge batteries, which can be especially beneficial for people who have poor dexterity. "Now they can just remove the hearing aids and put them in the charger, and the next day they're ready to go."

From a technology standpoint, hearing aids are helping people hear better than ever when there's background noise. "We don't eliminate all the noise, but we found a way to filter the environment properly." Rametta said our ears don't have noise-filtering technology, but a younger person having a conversation in a bar or restaurant can hear sounds the right way because the brain is able to filter what we want to hear from what we don't. "So if we get today's hearing aids programmed correctly, we can put them in the ear in the manner that the brain can do what it's supposed to do – filter out the noise you don't want to hear. We've been working on it for years but we finally have fast-enough processors built into the hearing aids to make them successful."

All of this is done with personalized care. Rametta said, "I'm the third generation in my family (his grandfather founded in the company in 1958) so there's a lot of experience learning how to care for people with hearing aids. New technology comes every year and you go to classes for that, but learning how to look for what the person needs and them not knowing how to say it – you get that from watching the previous generation."

He said learning about a person's



Michael J. Rametta

Rametta Audiology & Hearing Aid Center, serving the Alle-Kiski Valley area for more than 60 years, has offices in Squirrel Hill, Tarentum, and Vandergrift. Michael Rametta, who joined the practice in 1997 and became the owner in 2003, said he "came into this industry at absolutely the perfect time. We weren't using computers yet, so I've seen us going from using little eyeglass screwdrivers to make an adjustment, to literally making changes on the computer. We can make the changes on the computer and send them to the person's smartphone, and the smartphone will upload them to the hearing aid."

environment and everyday life is also important. "Almost any hearing aid can meet your hearing needs, but we have to pick the one that meets your social, economic and dexterity needs. Not everybody needs those super-expensive hearing aids and all that technology. They're great for the right person, but some people just need simple, high-quality, good functionality, without all the bells and whistles."

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St. Clair Health Introduces Innovative Medication Program

By Kevin Brown

Many patients are prescribed medications to take following discharge from the hospital. Surprisingly, as many as 30 percent of those patients never stop at the pharmacy on the way home to get the prescriptions filled. Of course, patients can have serious medical consequences when they delay taking their medications.

St. Clair Health recently began offering a new medication delivery program called MedsInHand™ through the Walgreens Specialty Pharmacy located within Dunlap Family Outpatient Center, which provides patients with their medications before they leave the St. Clair Health main campus.

According to Robert B. Reynolds, PharmD, Director of Pharmacy at St. Clair Health, the majority of patients take up to 72 hours to get their prescriptions filled after being dis-



Robert B. Reynolds



Ashley M. Blazewick

charged from the hospital. “For 24 to 48 hours, that patient might not begin their anticoagulant or antibiotic. Those are huge issues that cause readmissions and problems with care. By providing those medications before the patient leaves the hospital, they have everything they need to go straight home,” he says.

Patients who are scheduled for hospital admission or same-day surgery are contacted by phone ahead of time to see if they want to participate in the program. If they do not choose to participate at that time, they can reconsider upon admission to the hospital. Patients who enroll in the program have their medications filled by the Walgreens Specialty Pharmacy located in Dunlap Family Outpatient Center. Just before patients are discharged, Walgreens pharmacists fill the prescriptions and deliver the medications to the patients.

“We’ll go over the prescriptions the patient is receiving, how they should take it, and any questions they might have in real time before they are discharged,” says Ashley M. Blazewick, PharmD, Manager of the Walgreens Specialty Pharmacy. “Our team also follows up with patients the next day to address any questions or concerns they may have once they make it home. We know leaving the hospital can be an overwhelming experience for patients, and we want to help ease that transition as much as possible,” Ashley explains.

Some patients may not be able to accept the filled prescriptions due to dementia or other medical conditions. In those cases, pharmacists deliver the medications to family members or caregivers on behalf of the patient.

Robert is very pleased with the early success of MedsInHand. “The collaboration between St. Clair Health and Walgreens Specialty Pharmacy is unique in southwestern Pennsylvania and is one that provides a level of service you can’t get other places.”

He notes that the concept of providing medications before patients leave the hospital has been around for 10 to 15 years. “What’s unique to MedsInHand is the customer service that comes from the collaboration with Walgreens, particularly their assistance with insurance and payments,” he says.

Some medications can be expensive with high copays, and the pharmacists and pharmacy technicians at the Walgreens Specialty Pharmacy can help patients navigate insurance claims and payments. The highly-trained team works diligently to identify any barriers to patient access and speaks with prescribers to ensure patients receive their prescriptions in a timely manner. Additionally, the team has knowledge and access to various patient financial assistance platforms to ensure eligible patients can get the help they need.

“We have an innovative tool that allows us to search each drug to see what payment programs are out there,” Ashley says. “Whether that is a copay assistance card through the manufacturer, or a foundation for a disease that has funding assistance for eligible patients. When we receive prescriptions, our team is constantly looking to see how we can get those copays as low as possible, if not to zero,” she says.

Continuity of care is another valuable benefit of the MedsInHand program. “Walgreens has locations across the country and we share the same computer system,” Ashley notes. “Let’s say a patient uses the MedsInHand program through the Walgreens Specialty Pharmacy at Dunlap Family Outpatient Center, then they use another Walgreens in the Pittsburgh area or maybe they live in Florida for half a year. All their prescriptions are linked in the Walgreens system and available wherever they go,” she says.

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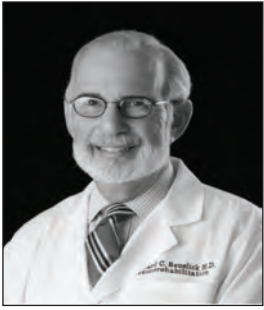


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What is a Silent Stroke?



By **Richard C. Senelick, MD**

A silent stroke or whispering stroke sounds mysterious and in some ways they are. They can sneak up on you, go ignored or be happening without you feeling a thing. The medical community has spent a great deal of time teaching people the warning signs of the 800,000 strokes that

occur each year. The most common is the F.A.S.T. acronym as described by the American Heart Association.

F.A.S.T. Warning Signs

Use the letters in F.A.S.T to spot a Stroke:

- **F = Face Drooping** – Does one side of the face droop or is it numb? Ask the person to smile. Is the person's smile uneven?
- **A = Arm Weakness** – Is one arm weak or numb? Ask the person to raise both arms. Does one arm drift downward?
- **S = Speech Difficulty** – Is speech slurred?
- **T = Time to call 911**

However, with a whispering or silent stroke, we are referring to something much more subtle or even invisible. Silent strokes are common; it is estimated there are 8 to 11 million silent strokes

each year and that 50% of people over the age of 85 years have had a silent stroke. They are much more common in high-risk groups with hypertension being the greatest risk factor.

What is a Silent Stroke?

Silent strokes are exactly what they sound like. They are found coincidentally when the person is sent for a brain (CT or MRI) scan for another reason. Their doctor may have ordered a brain scan because of headaches, dizziness, memory problems or Parkinson's Disease. The scan reveals that the person, even on careful questioning, never had any symptoms of a stroke. However, their brain scan shows multiple strokes. These are usually small lesions that may be seen on both sides of the brain. Over time and with increasing numbers they can cause cognitive problems and even vascular dementia. The associated danger is that a silent stroke puts you at increased risk for a full-blown stroke. They need our full attention to prevent another stroke.

What are Whispering Strokes?

I like this term which was coined in a recent article. These are the people who have the F.A.S.T. warning or mild symptoms that may only last a few hours or days and are ignored. They do not go to the doctor or even if they do, their symptoms disappeared and are ignored. Just a "whisper." These people need a detailed evaluation because they have had a stroke. A recent editorial suggested that we should eliminate the use of the term, "Transient Ischemic Attack," because if an MRI is performed, these people

have had a stroke. The "whisper" needs to become a "shout" and call to action.

What Should You Do?

Whether it is a silent stroke or a whispering stroke, a full stroke workup is in order. Do not delay going to the doctor. First, your doctor needs to review all of your risk factors with you and make sure everything is being done to get them under control.

- Hypertension
- Diabetes Mellitus
- Cholesterol level
- Smoking cessation
- Diet
- Stroke prophylaxis

One of the most important steps is to screen for atrial fibrillation. One third of atrial fibrillation patients reported stroke symptoms without a stroke diagnosis. The most common symptom is sudden numbness or painless weakness, which is easy to ignore. We go to the doctor, and they make certain we have had our pneumonia or flu shot but a short questionnaire would be a welcome addition to screen for symptoms of a stroke. It is an opportunity to prevent a major stroke.

> **Dr. Richard C. Senelick** is a Neurologist. He has served as the Medical Director of **Encompass Rehabilitation Hospital** in San Antonio for 30 years. For more information about **Encompass Health Harmarville**, visit www.encompasshealth.com/harmarvillerehab. For information about **Encompass Health Sewickley**, visit www.encompasshealth.com/sewickleyrehab.

Rehabilitation, like dancing, works best when you choose the right partner.

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Summer Programs

WHS' Cameron Wellness Center Offers Summer Camp for Kids in Grades 1-8

By Andrew Wilson

Healthy habits that begin early can last a lifetime, which makes finding a fitness center that has programs for the entire family invaluable.

"We consider ourselves to be a center for the whole family," said Kate Stache, the fitness, aquatics, sports, and recreation manager at Washington Health System's (WHS) Wilfred R. Cameron Wellness Center. "Some of our programs – like our swim lessons – start with children as young as six months."

One of the most popular programs at the Wellness Center is the Summer Camp for kids in grades 1-8. Set up in either a half-day or full-day formats, the camp runs from June 13 through August 19, integrates play with sports performance, and teaches fitness-as-fun principles, which give kids the basics of being active and healthy for a lifetime.

"We have themes throughout the camp and focus on a different sport each week," said Stache, adding that the atmosphere for the camp is non-competitive. "It is not an athletics-based camp. We want them to have an educational, but fun, experience."

Campers participate in a variety of activities during the day. There is a period of swimming each day, but there is also time for crafts, fitness tests, hiking the outdoor trail, and general physical education, as well as participation in whichever sport is featured that week. In previous years, there have been guest instructors from the Washington Wild Things, Wheeling Nailers, the Pittsburgh Zoo, the Carnegie Science Center, and the Washington Drug and Alcohol Commission.

The children are separated into age groups and then get broken into teams, but Stache emphasizes that this is not for competition, but



rather to keep each group small and easy for the leader to provide instruction when needed. In addition to all the activities, there is also a rewards program where campers can earn prizes by demonstrating good sportsmanship or behaviors throughout the day. Three good reports qualify them to win a prize.

"We practice open communication with all the parents. We let them know where their child excels and where they may need help," she said, adding that the staff is very much aware that not every child will excel at every activity, but that's okay. "We focus on where they do excel and always want to make them feel included."

To illustrate this, Stache relates the story of one child who really excelled at running, and the staff complimented him on his efforts, which encouraged him to continue to do well.

"It was obvious that he liked receiving the praise, and we told his mother, who is also a runner, and that became an activity that they were able to do together," she said.

The goal is to help everyone find a healthy activity that can be enjoyed for a lifetime.

"If they find an activity that they enjoy, they will stay with it," said Stache.



Register Today! Registration for Summer Camp at WHS' Wilfred R. Cameron Wellness Center begins April 1. For more information or to register, please call (724) 225-WELL (9355) or you can register online at <https://wrcameronwellness.org/kids-family/campsandclinics/>.

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Summer Programs

Summer Programs at Upper St. Clair Community & Recreation Center

By Kevin Brown

It's not too early to start thinking about summer at the Upper St. Clair Community & Recreation Center (C&RC) at Boyce Mayview Park. Registration is now open for summer camps for kids from age four through teenage. Camps start the week of June 6 and run through the week of August 15.

The C&RC has lifted most of the COVID-19 restrictions under which it has operated during the past two years, according to Melissa Lindberg, the Center's Marketing/Membership Services supervisor.

"We're fortunate that, going into this summer, we seem to be in a much better place than what we've been in years past regarding COVID, Melissa says. "We are running our camps as typical as what a normal summer should feel like. If children want to wear masks, they're certainly welcome to wear masks when they're inside or outside, totally up to parents, whatever they feel is the safest choice for their children," she notes.

Melissa says that memberships are booming again. "We've seen a lot of interest in membership from youth, to families to seniors. I think people are just ready to move on, they're ready to get back to a normal routine. They want to be active and socialize."

There are many different options for kids' camps offering everything from physical activities to art camps to STEM camps. STEM camps engage critical thinking and problem-solving skills through hands-on experiments. Topics include Wilderness Medicine, Eco Explorers Space Lab, and Mad Science Red Hot Robots. Art camps include Kids in the Kitchen, Gemini Theater Workshop, and Cartooning.

Pre-school kids ages four to six can attend camps such as Olympics Camp where they will learn and engage in Olympic sports, or the Red, White and Blue Camp where kids play traditional American sports. Other pre-school camps include Fun in the Sun, Fairytale Adventures, Superhero Training, and Animal Adventures.

A new and unique camp not offered many other places is the Junior Lifeguard Camp. This two-week camp is designed to give 11 to 14-year-olds a fun sneak peek into what it takes to become a lifeguard. Participants do not get lifeguard



certification, but learn all the basics to enter the American Red Cross lifeguarding course at age 15. Also new this year at the C&RC is Weird Eric's Magic Camp.

Of course, the popular Camp St. Clair will return to the C&RC. Offered by grade levels from Grade 1 through Grade 7, kids can attend for a half-day morning or afternoon session, or a full-day session.

"Camp St. Clair counselors create a welcoming environment by encouraging each child to be themselves and explore their interests through a variety of activities each day," notes Melissa. "Camp counselors are college and high school students who model positive behaviors such as teamwork, enthusiasm, and confidence," she says.

Melissa notes that summer camp registration is open and those interested in the camps should not delay in registering. "All the programs will stay open until they are full. Even if the camp does fill up, we strongly recommend they go on a waitlist. People will register in multiple camps and then will have a conflict with their schedule and they'll withdraw," she explains.

Adult and senior summer programming will continue to be offered at the C&RC. "A lot of our adult programming is specifically geared towards fitness, but we do offer a variety of social activities for our seniors. We will be doing our Friday Afternoons in the Park where there's a theme and scheduled activities," Melissa says.

Melissa notes that, even though the C&RC is a membership-facility, their doors are open to anyone. "You do not have to live in Upper St. Clair. Participation in the programs and camps is open to non-Upper St. Clair residents," she says.

Register Today! The best way to check out all the camp offerings at the C&RC is to visit their Summer Camps webpage at www.twpusc.org/recreationcenter. You can see all the camps, register and even pay for the camps through the webpage.

Located at 1551 Mayview Road in Upper St. Clair's Boyce Mayview Park, the C&RC hours are Monday through Friday from 5:30 a.m. to 9 p.m., Saturday from 6 a.m. to 5 p.m., and Sunday from noon to 5 p.m. The C&RC can be reached at (412) 221-1099.



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New TEMP Program at The Children's Home Gives Parents Peace of Mind

Caring for Children With Complex Medical Needs In An Emergency

By Lois Thomson

The Children's Home of Pittsburgh and Lemieux Family Center is home to the Pediatric Specialty Hospital, which is a 30-bed acute care hospital and can care for children from birth to the age of 21. The Children's Home is different from other facilities because the staff here are focused on what the patients need and what the families need, says Lisa Houlihan, Director of Nursing. To further meet those needs, The Children's Home has added a new program – TEMP (Temporary Emergent Medical Pediatric) – to help ensure the safety of children.

As Houlihan explained, when an unexpected issue arises and no one is available to care for a child with medical complexities, TEMP can help the family to make certain the child receives the proper medical care for a temporary period of time. She gave examples of a caregiver becoming ill and having to go to the hospital; a funeral being set in another state and the family not being able to take care of the child. Even something as unforeseen as a loss of electricity that could interrupt the child's care until it can be restored is a circumstance that would qualify for a TEMP stay.

The TEMP program was designed to care for children with complex medical needs when there is a disruption in their everyday routine. Houlihan explained that a TEMP stay could be anywhere from one to two days or a few weeks. "We've always been open to helping families in any way we can, and there's such a need when a child is at home and the family needs some help. Our team identified the need for a program like this to support families so that they can continue to be successful in the home."

The program involves working closely with the insurance companies, and Houlihan said, "We let them know what's going on and they determine how long the stay will be, and then we work to obtain an authorization for the stay." In this way, TEMP is good for both the families and the insurance companies. "It's enabled us to work closely with each insurance

company, to prevent an unnecessary Emergency Department visit or an inpatient hospital stay; they can come to The Children's Home instead."

When families need it most, The Children's Home provides an option for their child's care through the TEMP program. "We can give them peace of mind that the child can come here, we'll take care of them, and when they're ready, the child will go back home and they're not going to get a bill in the mail."

Those seeking help can call the admissions case manager, who would determine if the child would be an appropriate admission to the facility. "We've done a lot through direct parent referrals. We also take admissions from physician office referrals, and outside hospitals. We realize that to parents, there is nothing more important than caring for their child. We hope that the TEMP program can serve as a resource to families when unforeseen circumstances arise."

"It's such a great opportunity for families."



"We realize that to parents, there is nothing more important than caring for their child. We hope that the TEMP program can serve as a resource to families when unforeseen circumstances arise."

*Lisa Houlihan,
Director of Nursing*

➤ For more information, call the admissions case manager at (412) 345-7983, email admit@chomepgh.org, or visit www.childrenshomepgh.org.



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'We Have a Noah'

By Lois Thomson

Michaela Robbins and her husband Dave had been on a long journey searching for a child to adopt. After working with two agencies with no results, Robbins said, "We really felt we needed a pick-me-up." They turned to The Children's Home of Pittsburgh and Lemieux Family Center, looking to volunteer by doing baby rocking.

"We went to every unit but the babies were either sleeping or with their parents. I couldn't believe it, we had been so beaten down prior to volunteering, and this was not working out. We went to the last unit and the nurse, Jake, said, 'We don't have any babies here, but we have 'a Noah' if you would like to play with him.'"

As Robbins described the situation, "We had an amazing time with Noah, he's a sassy, funny, clever kid. Every time we went back we would make a beeline for Noah instead of for the babies." She continued, "Eventually it came to light that Noah was in foster care, and it was a no-brainer that he was ours. It was so serendipitous, seeing how it all unfolded."

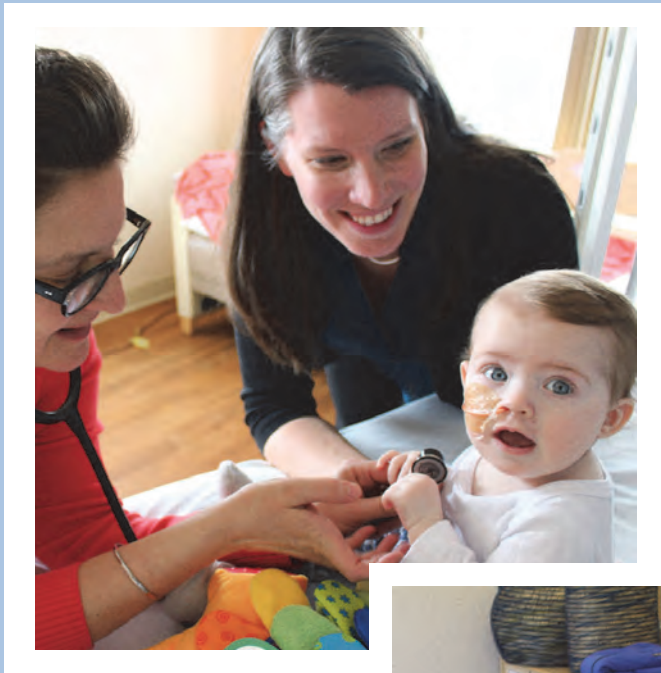
She said they initially went as volunteers, but once they were identified as a potential family resource for Noah, The Children's Home taught them how to care for him. "We had no medical background, but The Children's Home does a beautiful job of teaching families how to care for their medically complex kids. We left feeling confident."

Noah's adoption went through in December 2020,



and Robbins described her son, now 7, as a really determined child. He has a symptom of the Escobar syndrome called arthrogyryposis, which caused all of his limbs to be permanently bent. "We were told he would never walk on his feet, but this little 4-year-old looked at us like he was saying, 'I am going to walk. We'll find someone who's going to get me there.' He is not going to take no for an answer." Through telehealth appointments, they found a team in Wilmington, Del. Noah had surgery this past summer and is now walking and taking dancing lessons.

"When Dave and I started looking for a child through foster care, what we were originally looking for and who we got in Noah are two different things. Having a child with special needs has been so deeply rewarding. I can't imagine not having this special child in our life."



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Weight Loss & Diet Plans

Eat Smart Why Choose? Eat Smart, Move More, Weigh Less

Eat Smart, Move More, Weigh Less (ESMMWL) is an online weight management program offered through the Southwestern PA Area Agency on Aging (SWPA AAA) Health & Wellness program. The goal of this 15-week online program is not only weight loss and activity; it is also to learn about mindful eating and nutrition, about being conscious of what you put on your plate and in your body.

Research shows if we take the time to live mindfully, we can be healthier and happier as a result. Eating mindfully can include the following:

- Make meals an “event,” even an informal one. If you are eating, don’t engage in other activities. Simply have your breakfast, lunch, dinner or snack!

- Appreciate and enjoy your food! What are you eating? How does it look, taste, and feel? By actually acknowledging our food, we become more aware of what we eat and can make better decisions.

(<https://www.thecenterformindfuleating.org/research>)

Developed by professionals from North Carolina State University and the NC Division of Public Health, ESMMWL is based on the theory of planned behavior. It is an online weight management program that uses strategies proven to work for weight loss and maintenance. Each lesson informs, empowers and motivates participants to live mindfully as they make choices about eating and physical activity.

ESMMWL is delivered in an interactive real-time online format with a live instructor. Classes begin soon. There is no cost for those age 60+ who live in Fayette, Greene, or Washington Counties.



For more information, or to register, please call the SWPA AAA at (724) 489-8080, ext. 4433 or email ryouger@swpa-aaa.org

Get Informed, Empowered and Motivated!

To try recipes offered by Eat Smart, Move More, Weigh Less visit <https://esmmweighless.com/recipes/>. Here are two examples:

Muffin Pan Vegetable Quiche

- 5 eggs
- 3 egg whites
- 8 ounces mushrooms, sliced
- 1 cup fresh spinach
- 1 cup 1% or skim milk
- 1/4 cup shredded cheese
- 1/4 cup sliced scallions (optional)

Directions

- Position a rack in the center of the oven; preheat to 325 degrees. Coat a nonstick muffin tin generously with cooking spray or line with foil baking cups.

- Whisk eggs, egg whites, and milk in a medium bowl. Divide egg mixture evenly among the prepared muffin cups. Sprinkle the vegetables and cheese into each cup.

- Bake until tops are just beginning to brown, 25 minutes. Let cool for 5 minutes. Flip the quiches out of pan and let cool completely.

Tip: Can use any preferred vegetable combination. Try red peppers, broccoli, or tomatoes.

Nutrition Information:

Serves: 12
Serving Size: 2 quiches
Using skim milk: Calories: 121; Total Fat: 5g; Saturated Fat: 2g; Cholesterol: 160 mg; Sodium: 189 mg; Potassium: 162 mg; Total Carbohydrate: 4g; Dietary Fiber: 1 g; Sugar: 3g; Protein: 14g.



Mississippi Spiced Pecans

Pecans make for a great appetizer or for something to snack on throughout the day. This recipe is incredibly simple and takes little time to prepare!

Ingredients

- 1 tablespoon packed dark brown sugar
- 1 pound pecan halves
- 1 1/2 teaspoons kosher salt
- 1 teaspoon chopped fresh thyme
- 1 teaspoon chopped fresh rosemary
- 1/2 teaspoon freshly ground pepper
- 1/2 teaspoon piment d'Espelette, (see Tip) or a pinch of cayenne pepper
- 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil

Instructions:

- Preheat oven to 350 °F.
- Combine brown sugar, salt, thyme, rosemary, pepper and piment d'Espelette (or cayenne) in a small bowl. Transfer the roasted pecans to a large bowl, drizzle with oil and toss well to coat completely. Sprinkle with the spice mixture and toss again. Serve warm or let cool completely and store in an airtight container.
- Make Ahead Tip: Store in an airtight container for up to 2 weeks.

Tip: Piment d'Espelette is a sweet, mildly spicy chile pepper from the Basque region of France, ground into a powder. Find it online at spanishtable.com.

Nutritional Information

Serving size: 2 tablespoons; 107 calories; 11 g fat (1 g sat); 1 g fiber; 2 g carbohydrates; 1 g protein; 3 mcg folate; 0 mg cholesterol; 1 g sugars; 0 g added sugars; 11 IU vitamin A; 0 mg vitamin C; 10 mg calcium; 0 mg iron; 53 mg sodium; 59 mg potassium



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More than 14,000 people in Allegheny County are currently living in poverty, a rate of 12%. That means one in eight of our neighbors are facing deep hardship and may not know where their next meal is coming from. As the pandemic grinds on causing inflation to rise, many more of us are barely getting by.

Disabled veteran Mike Hughes knew what it meant to struggle. He had one knee replaced already – a surgery which allowed him to keep working but did not take away the chronic pain that he has lived with for years. For many of those years he worked double shifts on a regular basis, working long days and graveyard shifts in order to feed his family. But the rising cost of living outstripped all that hard work. His employers weren't raising his wages to cover his increasing rent, food, and transportation costs.

Despite his family's strict budgeting, the Hughes lost

their house, their car, and the ability to buy healthy food. Mike called Just Harvest for help with his Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) application. SNAP benefits (or "food stamps") is this country's first line of defense against hunger.

Like most of those who are working who apply for food stamps, SNAP allowed Mike to move through a difficult period and back to self-sufficiency. Within a couple of months, he found a better job with better wages and no longer needed food stamps, although he continued to work many hours of overtime.

For seniors and people unable to work, SNAP helps them eat more healthfully and prevent the meal gaps that can arise when living on Social Security. It also helps feed the children in struggling households.

Everyone who is eligible should be aware of SNAP and able to access these benefits. Just Harvest works with applicants to overcome any barriers that may prevent them from receiving this Federal entitlement.

Just Harvest has expert Food Stamp specialists that help those who contact us with screenings and applications. These can be done over the phone and transmitted electronically from our office directly to the PA Dept. of Human Services, which administers the SNAP program. For those who experience an unfair termination or denial of benefits, we answer their questions and provide advocacy so they get what they are owed.

There's no shame in getting help when you need it – that's what SNAP is for. We all fund this safety net program with the taxes we pay throughout our lifetimes so that when we fall it catches us. SNAP helps us stay fed, stay healthy, and able to live our lives.

For more information, contact **Just Harvest** at (412) 431-8960 (option 3) or visit justharvest.org/FoodStamps.



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*Images taken prior to mask requirements.

Retirement Planning

Before You Retire, Explore Health Insurance Options

By Crystal Manning

Finding affordable medical insurance is a critical part of your retirement planning.



Crystal Manning

Once you're eligible for Medicare at age 65, insurance becomes more affordable, and you cannot be denied coverage for pre-existing conditions. Despite these benefits, managing your insurance can still be complicated, and you'll need to plan carefully to make every dollar count.

In some cases, you may save money by delaying your enrollment in Medicare Part B. For example, if you currently have employer-sponsored group coverage - either through your or your spouse's employment - you may delay enrollment in Part B and sign up later during the Special Enrollment Period (SEP) when you stop working or that health coverage ends (whichever happens first). This would allow you to save money on Part B monthly premiums. However, special rules may apply. For example, employer coverage for retirees or through COBRA doesn't count as current employment, so these individuals do not qualify for a SEP to enroll in Medicare later, you may incur the 10% penalty each year. A different set of rules apply if the person has Medicare based on disability or ESRD.

If you're becoming eligible for Medicare but you already have insurance, learn whether/how your current plan coordinates with Medicare and whether/how you can delay Medicare enrollment. There are several different kinds of health insurance.

1. Job-based insurance:

Insurance offered by an employer or union for current employees. If you are covered by your or your spouse's insurance, it may work with Medicare to cover your health care costs and may also allow you to delay Medicare enrollment.

2. Retiree insurance:

Insurance plans that employers may provide to former employees who have retired. Retiree insurance always pays secondary to Medicare.

3. Federal Employee Health Benefits (FEHB):

Insurance for current and former government employees and their family members. FEHB is either pri-

mary or secondary, depending on whether you are enrolled in Part B.

4. TRICARE:

Insurance provided by the federal government to active duty and retired military personnel and their family members. There are many different TRICARE programs.

5. Veterans Affairs (VA) benefits: Insurance provided by the federal government to veterans. Benefits include pensions, educational stipends, and health care, among others. VA benefits do not coordinate with Medicare

Important note: if you enroll in Medicare Part A and/or B, you can no longer contribute pre-tax dollars to your HSA. To contribute pre-tax dollars to an HSA you cannot have any health insurance other than a High Deductible Health Plan (HDHP). However, you may continue to withdraw money from your HSA after you enroll in Medicare to help pay for medical expenses, such as deductibles, premiums, copayments, and coinsurances. If you use the account for qualified medical expenses, its funds will continue to be tax-free. Finally, if you decide to delay enrolling in Medicare, make sure to stop contributing to your HSA at least six months before you do plan to enroll in Medicare. If you do not stop HSA contributions at least six months before Medicare enrollment, you may incur a tax penalty.

Considering the Medicare premium penalties and additional health-care costs you may incur if you don't have adequate health insurance coverage, it is essential to enroll in Medicare at the right time. Avoiding extra costs may help you better plan your healthcare costs for retirement. Sometimes it's easiest to talk with an expert. As an independent Licensed Medicare Advisor, I work to help you and not an insurance company and I am happy to address any specific questions or concerns.



Contact **Crystal Manning**, Licensed Medicare Advisor at
(412) 716-4942 or email crystalmanning33@gmail.com.



Bone and Joint Guide

Biologics Are the Future for Treatment of Knee Arthritis

By Nancy Kennedy

If you are one of the 60 million American adults who have arthritic knee pain, you may assume that the ordeal of total knee replacement looms in your future.

Maybe, maybe not. The future of arthritic knee treatment now includes innovative alternatives, and that future is happening right now. At Sports Medicine and Joint Replacement Specialists, a promising new treatment called Bone Marrow Aspiration Stem Cells (BMA) is being offered by Derrick J. Fluhme, M.D., a board certified orthopedic surgeon and sports medicine specialist. BMA therapy is available for patients who have joint pain, but are not in need of joint replacement; the treatment uses the body's own natural healing capacity to repair the tissues in knees that are damaged by osteoarthritis.

"I have been treating knee arthritis for nearly 20 years," Dr. Fluhme explains. "I realized years ago that we were simply chasing our patient's symptoms with conservative management such as ice, NSAIDs, bracing, physical therapy, and injections. Injections primarily consisted of corticosteroids which simply masked their discomfort while adding to the deterioration of their cartilage, thus making the arthritis worse. Viscosupplementation was another treatment, a simple lubricant that rarely was effective enough on its own. While total knee replacement remains a very effective way of treating patients with severe



"This treatment offers the most prolonged pain relief for those with mild to moderate pain and can delay the need for surgery."

-Derrick J. Fluhme, MD

bone on bone knee arthritis, nine out of 10 patients that present to me do not yet require surgery. Thus, we were simply chasing symptoms until that patient's knee cartilage was so worn out that they needed a knee replacement."

In 2015 Dr. Fluhme began searching for an alternative for those patients stuck in what he calls the "purgatory" of knee pain: enough arthritis to cause pain and bother them, but not enough to warrant total knee replacement. Instead of administering injections that were ineffective, and potentially adding to their problem, he began using biologic-based injections and has had excellent outcomes.

Bone marrow, the soft spongy tissue which is found in the center of the bones, is the dynamic manufacturing site where the human body produces red blood cells, white blood cells and plasma components. Stem cells, the immature form of these cells, are also found in bone marrow. These have the potential to develop into mature cells that form the muscles, blood vessels, cartilage or bones. Certain stem cells drive tissue regeneration and have the capacity to reduce pain and inflammation and repair damaged cells, naturally and biologically.

According to Dr. Fluhme, the biologic injection process involves a safe, minimally invasive procedure performed in his office. Bone marrow is aspirated from the pelvis, with a local numbing medication, yielding a rich supply of cells. The extraction takes about ten minutes, and the cells are injected into the knee right away. The patient can expect to resume normal activity with minimal discomfort. Results may take four to six weeks to take effect, and at that time a booster injection of platelet rich plasma (PRP) will be given.

Continued on page 19

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Addiction and Rehab

Recognizing and Responding to Opioid Overdose: Gateway Experts Help You Prepare

By Nancy Kennedy

If you encounter or witness a loved one, friend, co-worker or even a stranger having a substance use emergency such as opioid overdose, will you recognize what is happening? Will you know what to do? Do you have the essential knowledge, skills, and tools to save that person's life? Do you have naloxone, otherwise known as Narcan, the opioid overdose reversal medicine, and do you know how to use it?

The expert professionals at Gateway Rehabilitation Center encourage everyone to learn how to prevent, recognize and manage a substance use disorder emergency, including opioid overdose. "Be prepared. Everyone should know how to help a person who has overdosed," says Julia D'Alo, MD, a board-certified Addiction Medicine and Emergency Medicine specialist and Chief Medical Officer at Gateway. Substance use disorders (SUD) occur when the recurrent use of alcohol and/or drugs causes clinically significant impairment, including health problems, disability, and failure to meet major responsibilities at work, school, or home.

SUD is so widespread across all levels of the US population that it is the leading cause of death and affects nearly every American family in some way. Over 500,000 Americans have died of opioid overdose since the opioid epidemic began during the 90's, and it continues to be a major public health crisis.

"If you know a person who is struggling with opioids, or is taking

a prescription opioid for pain management, or if you are a user and use with others – you may need to intervene one day to keep someone alive," Dr. D'Alo says. "You never know who may need help; you can come across an unresponsive person anywhere, at home, at work or in public.

"Opioids include heroin and prescription medications such as Fentanyl, Vicodin, OxyContin, Percocet, Morphine, Dilaudid and Tramadol to name a few. If you are using an opioid or have a loved one who is, you need to obtain Narcan and know the signs of overdose. Narcan is easy to get, easy to use and it works quickly. It's a nasal spray that reverses the effect of opioids within minutes."

Laura Bisbey, CAADC, LPC, Regional Director of Inpatient Services at Gateway, describes both early and later signs of overdose: "Early symptoms of overdose include falling asleep, coming in and out of consciousness, and becoming limp. The breathing may be slow and shallow, and eventually absent. There may be gurgling noises or choking. The pupils may



Julia D'Alo, MD and Laura Bisbey

be pinpoint. The skin and nails develop a bluish discoloration. The person does not respond to their name or to pain."

Bisbey says that if Narcan is available, give it immediately and call 911. "It's easy to give – put it in the nostril and push the button. Wait two to three minutes and if there's no response, give it again. Sometimes a person needs multiple doses until they respond. If it does not work, it's not an opioid overdose. However, there is no risk to giving Narcan if it is not an opioid overdose. If you do not have naloxone and the person does not have a pulse, start CPR, if you are qualified, until the EMS arrives."

D'Alo says that persons with SUD are frequent visitors to the Emergency Department. "We see many patients with SUD. It may be that they are experiencing a medical problem that the SUD is the cause of or contributing to. While opioid overdose is the most common SUD emergency, there are additional critical substance-related situations that require immediate emergency care. These include complications

of withdrawal or detoxification, suicide threat or attempt, alcohol poisoning or medical problems due to substance use, such as infections and injuries."

Narcan is not a substitute for the ER, says Laura Bisbey. "You still have to receive medical care. After Narcan, your system has been cleared of the opioid; you go into immediate withdrawal and will need to be connected to recovery resources. Gateway provides a Certified Recovery Specialist, available 24/7, in St. Clair Health's ER to discuss options with the person. They are peers who have lived experience in recovery themselves."

Beyond the immediate medical treatment, the ER is a window of opportunity, uniquely positioned to help a person with SUD, adds Dr. D'Alo. "There is a period of vulnerability following overdose, and you will be treated with care, dignity and respect. Recovery is always possible and emergency care can be a very effective pathway to recovery."

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PAStart
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Commonwealth Prevention Alliance Launches 2022 Prevention Happens Here Campaign

Materials for prevention professionals to raise awareness about substance use prevention and positive mental health

The Commonwealth Prevention Alliance (CPA), a private non-profit whose mission is to support prevention professionals in PA in eliminating substance misuse and risk-related behaviors, is proud to launch its 2022 Prevention Happens Here campaign.

Created during Pennsylvania's Prevention Week 2021 celebration to raise awareness about the importance of substance use prevention and positive mental health, CPA is encouraging the use of the Prevention Happens Here campaign with organizations, coalitions, and communities across Pennsylvania to highlight the effectiveness of preventing substance use and mental health issues.

"Our hope with this campaign is to rally everyone to the cause to promote prevention efforts year-round by offering support and recognition to community prevention partners who work tirelessly towards building healthier kids, families and adults all across the commonwealth," says Jeff Hanley, CPA Executive Director. "Prevention efforts happen in many settings, and now, more than ever, we want to support our partners in their efforts to raise awareness for prevention and early intervention strategies that can reduce the impact of substance use and mental health issues."

The campaign will aid prevention professionals in their efforts to reach parents, educators, doctors, law enforcement, faith-based and policy-makers, and raise awareness of the resources that are available to help them understand the role they can play in amplifying prevention efforts.

Prevention Happens Here campaign goals aim to:

1. Promote and highlight local prevention programming and initiatives
2. Support and recognize local, county, or state prevention partners
3. Involve communities and schools to raise awareness of effective programs that prevent substance use disorder and mental health issues

"We hope prevention partners across Pennsylvania will utilize the ideas, capacity building, tools, and resources to help individuals and communities make substance use prevention happen every day," says Hanley.

"Nurturing public awareness of ways to avoid problems with alcohol, tobacco, marijuana and other drugs, racism, LGBTQ+ prejudices, and mental health is a constant challenge. We need all the help we can get."

To participate in the Prevention Happens Here Campaign, prevention professionals can download brandable materials, and disseminate posters and other items throughout the community by visiting <https://PAStart.org>

Mark Your Calendar -

Pennsylvania's Prevention Week 2022 - May 8-14

Annual Prevention Conference - June 21-24, 2022,

Pennsylvania's Prevention Week 2022 will take place on May 8-14 coinciding with National Prevention Week. CPA's Annual Prevention Conference will take place June 21-24, 2022, hosting both in person and virtual sessions at the Penn Stater Hotel in State College.

For more information, visit the website:

<https://commonwealthpreventionalliance.org/aboutconference/>

Biologics are the Future for Treatment of Knee Arthritis, *Continued from page 17*

Bone marrow aspiration offers many benefits to the patient. It uses natural, organic tissue from your own body; it has fewer side effects than steroid injections; it accelerates healing and there is minimal down time involved in the procedure. BMA treatment is not yet covered by health insurance, but Sports Medicine and Joint Replacement Specialists keep costs to a minimum and offer payment plans. Dr. Fluhme encourages patients to seek this treatment from orthopedic surgeons. "People with knee pain deserve to be seen by an experienced joint specialist whose treatment includes surgery. Only an orthopedic surgeon who knows the full spectrum of joint disease and treatment can tell you if you need joint surgery."

Treatment with bone marrow stem cells is not an alternative to surgery, but to steroid injections, Dr. Fluhme says. "This treatment offers the most

prolonged pain relief for those with mild to moderate pain and can delay the need for surgery. It can reduce pain and improve functioning, helping people achieve a higher quality of life: they will be better able to walk, socialize and enjoy activities, all of which improve general health. There is nothing we can offer that is protective or reparative, other than biologic injections."



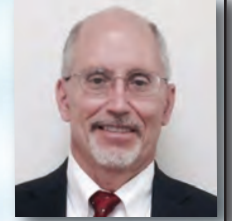
To learn more about stem cell therapy, visit www.Drfluhme.com.

To learn more about Dr. Fluhme's practice, or to make an appointment, visit www.DrDerrickfluhme.com. To learn more about Sports Medicine and Joint Replacement Specialists, visit www.Drgreghabib.com.

To make an appointment for the Mt. Lebanon or Greensburg location, call (412) 207-9780.



Valley Brook Dental Provides Advanced Dental Implant Treatment



What is PRF and PRP?

PRF and PRP are buzz words you may have heard of from influencers promoting having some of these procedures on social media platforms. We've recently heard of people mentioning it on Instagram for cosmetic procedures such as a natural alternative for fillers to "vampire" facials and it can be used to treat bald spots. This is a new trend on social media but PRF and PRP have been around in the medical world for years.



So what is PRF and PRP?

PRF is Platelet Rich Fibrin and PRP is Platelet Rich Plasma and are used in the field of regenerative medicine. Both products require a blood draw from the patient. The whole blood sample is then placed into a centrifuge, where blood is spun and processed and separated into layers. Why do this? Harvested PRP has growth factors and stem cells along with platelets, fibrin, and white blood cells. Why would a dentist use this procedure?

In the dental field PRF is used for use in extraction and implant procedures use the body's own growth factors and stem cells to provide the following benefits:

- Reduced swelling and inflammation.
- Less pain reported.
- Faster healing of surgical sites.
- Lower incidence of dry socket after tooth extraction.
- Better healing after bone grafts and dental implants.

How does Valley Brook Dental use PRF and PRP? Dr. Joseph Gurecka

utilizes some of the most advanced techniques for dental implant placement and bone regeneration to achieve lasting results. Significant changes have occurred in both these areas over the last 5 years allowing dentists to greatly simplify the surgical procedures while increasing the reliability of the outcomes. In many cases, it is now possible for the patient with a broken tooth or a fractured root to have the tooth removed and the implant placed the same day, even leaving the office with a temporary crown and a normal smile. This has been made possible by improved extraction techniques which preserve bone at the extraction site and newer implant designs that have led to improved initial stability.

Dr. Gurecka uses state of the art MEDCO centrifuge system, (which is based on the work of Dr. Joseph Choukroun who invented and pioneered the use of PRF in France) to prepare a variety of Platelet Rich Fractions (PRF) from a small sample of the patient's own blood as we've been talking about. These fractions and the growth factors they contain accelerate the healing process and reduce infection. The I-PRF is combined with bone

Continued on following page

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Greenbriar Treatment Center to Join Gateway Rehabilitation Center

Officials from Washington Health System (WHS) announced that they have entered into an agreement with Gateway Rehabilitation Center for purchase of the health system owned drug and alcohol rehabilitation locations known as the Greenbriar Treatment Centers. Under this agreement, all Greenbriar Treatment Center services will become a part of the Gateway Rehab addiction treatment network. It is anticipated this transaction will be completed by June 30, 2022.



Brook Ward, President and CEO of Washington Health System said, "Greenbriar and Gateway have historically been the leading providers of drug and alcohol related health services in the Pittsburgh market and beyond. The proposed merger will enable the community, family members of those seeking treatment, and our referring healthcare professionals, to have a centralized and streamlined system to coordinated care for patients."

Benefits from the proposed agreement will keep the focus on the patient(s) that need help during their road to recovery. This includes a financially sustainable model for drug and alcohol services within our communities and continuing to provide the highest quality addiction and recovery treatments to the local members of our community while also managing costs. As the health care industry continues to evolve, providers and consumers are both seeking solutions that meet public demands for coordinated care, at a reasonable cost.

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PUBLISHER
Nancy Carroll Lammie

ACCOUNT EXECUTIVE
Paul Crowe

DESIGN & LAYOUT
JMC Graphics
(412) 877-5321

EDITORIAL MANAGER
Judy Gramm

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS
Kevin Brown
Ron Cichowicz
Daniel Casciato
Vanessa Orr
Nancy Kennedy
Lois Thomson
Andrew Wilson

WEB SITE DESIGNER
Keith Trageser
keith.trageser@gmail.com

PRINTER
Gazette Printers

HOW TO REACH US:
ADVERTISE / SUBSCRIBE
goodhealthmag@aol.com
(412) 877-5321
2574 Oldfield Ave,
Bethel Park, PA 15102



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What is PRF and PRP? *Continued from page 20*

graft material prior to placement to use the patient's own stem cells to ensure rapid replacement by the body in forming new bone. The A-PRF is used to create Bone Regeneration Membranes to cover the bone graft and release natural growth factors to promote healing, especially in areas like vertical sinus lift procedures for implant placement in the upper molar region.

Years ago PRP and then PRF was cutting edge technology. This field is always evolving and being used in new ways all the time. Valley Brook Dental has been using these methods since 2017 and is on top of all the new advances.

> We would love to help you with your smile. If you are looking for dental implants or want to switch to a dentist who uses the latest technology, look no further than **Dr. Gurecka** located at Valley Brook Dental in McMurray PA. Call **(724) 942-8982** or visit valleybrookdental.com.



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Hearing Loss and Dementia

By Megan Myers-Auria, Au.D., CCC-A

Many older adults show signs of dementia: not responding, not remembering, and inappropriate responding. But some of these signs are signs of hearing loss as well. Worldwide, there are 55 million people living with dementia. That number is projected to grow to 78 million in 2030, and by 2050; 139 million. There are 430 million people worldwide experiencing moderate and greater hearing loss. This number is projected to grow to 700 by 2050. By then 1 in 14 people will require some type of hearing care. So, what do these two health issues have in common?

Both hearing loss and dementia symptoms run hand in hand. Does the person have untreated hearing loss that mimics dementia? Since we hear with our brain and dementia is a loss of a brain function the differential diagnosis will help to decipher. In 2020 the Lancet Commission on Dementia Prevention, Intervention, and Care specified 12 modifiable risk factors for Dementia. One of the risk factors is hearing loss.

The National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders (NIDCD) states that in the U.S., 8.5% of adults ages 55-64, 25% of older adults 65-74, and 50% of adults older than 75 have a hearing loss of 35 dB or greater. A study conducted by Mahmoudi et al, in Michigan, showed that hearing aid use in the first three years of hearing loss diagnosis can reduce the risk of dementia, depression, and injurious falls.

Johns Hopkins recently published an article with an updated study on the effects of hearing loss and dementia. Frank Lin, M.D., Ph.D., has been on the study since the beginning. Researchers have questioned that: Can hearing aids reduce the risk of a person developing dementia? Lin explains the connection between the two conditions and where the science is headed. Lin

states that with the connection between the brain and hearing loss, when you are unable to hear correctly - the brain works harder and it is more difficult to fill in the gaps and having more strain. This strain could cause a lot of mental and physical exhaustion. This would also come at the expense of working memory. Lin also mentioned another possibility that untreated hearing loss can cause the aging brain to shrink more quickly. This can lead to isolation. Fewer social engagements can lead to the brain being engaged less and less active.

Lin's study is also looking at the efficacy of hearing aids and reducing the risk of dementia. These studies are becoming more prevalent in our everyday life. We are learning more about how we actually hear with our brain and not our ears. These studies are showing that there are treatable options if caught and treated early enough.



Megan Myers-Auria is Doctor of Audiology at Swift Audiology. The practice provides hearing loss services, hearing protection, and medical hearing aid devices. For more information, visit swiftaudiology.com or call (412) 274-7285.



If you or a loved one is experiencing signs of difficulty in hearing the TV, in groups, on the phone, hearing and communicating with masks, or understanding conversations in general; contact **Swift Audiology** today at **(724) 222-9010** for an evaluation at one of our four locations.

Dona MP Jayakody (November/ December 2021) Hearing Loss and Dementia, Audiology Today, 12-15 Frank R. Lin, MD, PhD, (November 2021) Hearing Loss and the Dementia Connection.

Can hearing aids reduce the risk of a person developing dementia?

News Briefs... News Briefs... [E-mail your news items, events to guidetogoodhealthmag@gmail.com](mailto:guidetogoodhealthmag@gmail.com)

Publisher's Note: Inflation Impacts Western Pennsylvania Guide to Good Health Paper Stock

It is no surprise to the business community and consumers, the impact inflation is having on our businesses and personal lives. As a result of substantial increases in the printing world, we have had to change the paper stock used in printing the *Western Pennsylvania Guide to Good Health*. As always, we will continue to provide our readers with quality content and serve as a resource for them in making health care choices for themselves and family members. We appreciate your support!

Work from Home By Becoming a Dom Care Provider

The Southwestern Pennsylvania Area Agency on Aging's Domiciliary Care Program (Dom Care) is seeking individuals to open their homes to become a Dom Care provider in Fayette, Greene, and Washington counties. Dom Care is a unique program through the Area Agency on Aging that may offer job seekers a full-time, work-from-home position with monthly compensation. The 2022 monthly stipend rate for a Dom Care provider is \$1,047.10 per individual. Providers may become certified through the Area Agency on Aging to house up to three individuals in their home. Anyone who has a caring heart and the desire to help others in need by opening their home should contact the Agency for more information.

Dom Care is a community living, family style, housing program. Dom Care Providers open their homes to people aged 18 and older who cannot live independently due to physical, mental, or age-related impairments. Dom Care Providers are responsible for transportation to and from appointments, set up/ supervision of medications, laundry, preparation of healthy meals, and making sure individuals needs are met.

To apply to become a Dom Care provider, or for more information on the Dom Care Program, contact the Domiciliary Care Program at (724) 489-8083, ext. 4612, or call 1-800-411-5655.

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Life After Caregiving - In-person 2nd Thursday of every month, 1:00 pm to 2:00 pm, Hope Grows, 183 Shafer Road, Moon Township. Virtual 4th Thursday of every month. 1:00 pm to 2:00 pm. A monthly peer support group for those struggling with grief and loss. Registration required for in-person and virtual: email info@hopegrows.net or call (412) 369-4673.

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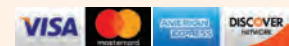


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Coffee Break with Judy's Java Joint

So what do you know about coffee?



By Lois Thomson

Millions of people start (and continue) their day with a cup of coffee. In fact, the world currently consumes more than 100 million, 132-lb. bags of coffee every year. But have you ever thought about its origins?

What we refer to as coffee beans are actually the seeds of a fruit, which are processed and roasted, then ground to make coffee. The first recorded evidence of coffee growing may date back as early as the 6th century when, as the story goes, a goatherd in Ethiopia discovered the effects of coffee when he noticed his goats acting strangely. Coffee is native to Ethiopia and grows wild, so the goats possibly ate the berries while grazing, and the caffeine did indeed alter their behavior.

The first known consumption of coffee beans as a food was by an Ethiopian tribe. They took raw beans, cooked them in fat, shaped them into baseball-sized balls, and chewed them as a snack. The beans were transferred across the Red Sea to Yemen – likely through slave trade – which is less than 200 miles from Ethiopia. There, coffee trees were first cultivated on plantations in the 15th century. From Yemen, coffee-drinking spread throughout the Arab world.

During the 1600s, the world's coffee supply came almost entirely from Yemen. But with the world's shipping trade, some seedlings were transported to areas in the Orient, and plantations opened in Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) in 1658 and Java in 1699. During that time, in 1672, the first coffee house opened in Paris.

Nine years later, a French naval officer took a seedling from Paris to the island of Martinique in the Caribbean, and most of the coffee now grown in Central and South America originated from that single plant. However, a few of those plants found their way to Hawaii when the governor of Oahu stopped in Brazil on his way back from a voyage to London. Seedlings were planted in Kona on the Big Island in 1828, thus beginning Hawaii's coffee industry. With its ideal climate and rich volcanic soil, Hawaii is the only coffee-producing state in America, and the Kona district now turns out some of the world's most expensive coffee beans.

So the next time you reach for your morning brew, you might pause for a moment to think about the history of what's in your cup.

Judy's Java Joint is a family-owned local coffee shop located in the Ruthfred Shopping Center, 3400 South Park Rd., Bethel Park. Enjoy our cozy shop to do work (free wi-fi), meet with friends or just relax with a great cup of coffee. We have everything you might be craving: gourmet coffee and tea, espresso drinks, smoothies, frappes, hot chocolate, chai tea, protein frappes, pastries and more! Mon-Fri 6:30 a.m.–2 p.m., Sat 8 a.m.–2 p.m.; 412-833-5282; judysjava.com

Can I Get a "Woo Woo!" for Alternative Medicine?

By Nick Jacobs

A pulled muscle courtesy of helping a neighbor move some concrete slabs "cemented" my interest in what has commonly come to be called, among other things, "Integrative Medicine."

I'll spare you the painful details. Suffice to say that what was supposed to be a couple of hours helping a friend repair a walkway led me to the hospital where x-rays convinced the physician that I could spend the night in traction or go home with a bottle of muscle relaxants. The pills did nothing for the pinched nerve in my back that caused my excruciating pain.

After a few days of obvious agony, a friend coaxed me into his car and drove me to a stately home where we were greeted by a man in a white coat. He led me to a room where he took my blood pressure, asked a few questions and instructed me to lie back on an exam table. Then he lightly pulled on my ankle. I felt something move in my back and, when I sat up, the pain, somewhat miraculously, was gone.

I wish I could tell you that I

shouted "Woo Woo!" But I didn't. (I'll explain in a moment.)

When I asked the gentleman why the doctors at the hospital hadn't simply performed this procedure, he explained, "I'm a doctor of osteopathic medicine. Today, in 1977, they still won't allow me to practice in their facility." (Simply put, those trained in osteopathic medicine also study physical manipulation of the body's muscle tissue and bones.)

Flash forward 20 years, after I traveled a circuitous route from directing teenage musicians to running a small hospital in Windber, PA. There I adopted a mantra that said, "I don't care what it is that makes a patient feel better, just as long as it does."

During my tenure, I introduced what at the time seemed radical to some in my rural community, such as pet, massage, music and aroma therapies. I hired a former chiropractor turned MD and a DO, sent them for acupuncture training and opened the doors to reiki, yoga, psychologists, music throughout the hospital and much, more.

My guiding principal was that I just wanted people to get better while following the health care dictum to "first, do no harm." If it didn't hurt, why not let people choose to try other non-invasive treat-

ments to compliment (and not replace) those prescribed by their physician?

Sounds sensible, right? In fact, the way some in the local medical community reacted, you would have thought we were in league with the devil! While some simply patronized our efforts, dismissing these alternative disciplines as "Woo Woo" medicine, others were a bit more combative, accusing these efforts as undermining "real" medicine.

Regarding either camp, I would direct them to the thousands of scientific papers providing evidence-based proof that many of these disciplines are effective.

Did it work at our facility? All I can share is that of our 13 peer hospitals, we had the lowest restraint levels, lowest lengths of stay, lowest readmission rates and—at a whopping one percent—the lowest infection rate. Also, even with a hospice, we had the lowest death rates among our peers.

Let its detractors call it "Woo Woo" medicine. I prefer to call it patient-centered care. Maybe if more folks—including members of the medical community—studied what hundreds of integrative medical centers are doing across the world and the positive results they are seeing, they'd embrace these



disciplines to improve prevention and treatment efforts.

I never have set this up as an "either-or" choice by saying healthcare providers or patients should choose integrative medicine disciplines instead of more traditional treatments. Neither area can promise 100 percent success.

But more and more evidence is confirming that when integrative medicine disciplines are offered in conjunction with traditional treatments, more people benefit. And where's the harm in that?

Nick Jacobs is a partner with Senior Management Resources, LLC. He is a founder of the Academy of Integrative Health and Medicine, former board member and officer of the American Board of Integrative Holistic Medicine and served on the Executive Committee of the Integrative Health Policy Consortium. A former hospital CEO and founder of two genetic research institutes, Jacobs maintains a website, Healinghospitals.com.



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Waynesburg

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COMMUNITY LIVING CARE

Community Living Care Earning Rave Reviews from Family of Their Residents

By Andrew Wilson

There are rites of passage of varying degrees of difficulty for everyone as they make the transition to adulthood. For a child with intellectual disabilities, the challenges can be more profound as they age, which, in turn, creates additional concerns for the parents.

Until 2017, Father Anthony Yazge, an Orthodox Christian priest who now lives in the state of Indiana, and his wife were caring for their middle son, Mark, now 31 years of age, at their home in Greensburg, PA. “We were hoping to get some measure of independence for Mark,” said Yazge, who acknowledged that he and his wife had begun discussing the best course for Mark when the day came that they could no longer care for him. “But we couldn’t afford a group home.”

Plans changed quickly for Mark when his mother passed away in June 2017. With the responsibility for Mark’s daily care resting solely on his shoulders, Yazge found it nearly impossible to perform both his duties as a priest and being the sole caretaker for his son. In the fall of that year, Mark’s case worker found an opening in a home run by Community Living Care (CLC). That has made all the difference.

“I’ve found Community Living Care to be well-organized and caring about their clients,” he said. “Mark has developed close relationships with the staff at his home, and I’ve seen a great advancement in his independence.”

CLC provides care for people who were diagnosed with intellectual disabilities before the age of

21, although CLC’s care may extend to people well beyond that age. Intellectual disabilities, which can be classified into four degrees – mild, moderate, severe, and profound – may include people with autism or Down syndrome, but not necessarily. How advanced the disability is will determine the level of care needed.

Barb Ramsey, a Pittsburgh attorney, has had a similar experience with her 52-year-old sister, Diana, who has been a resident in a CLC group home for the past four years. Their mother, who is 90, was unable to care for Diana, but fortunately, CLC had an opening in a residence home.

“CLC has been fantastic. We love her placement. We love her staff,” said Ramsey “CLC makes it a priority that the residents in the home mesh well. They have done a remarkable job of matching the residents at Diana’s home, and they make sure the family is kept abreast of everything.”

As their mother aged, Ramsey began transporting Diana to various appointments. That burden has been lifted, too. “CLC provides transportation to and from all of her doctor appointments, hair cut appointments, and takes her for things like a manicure and pedicure.”

“We maintain a person-centered focus,” said Eric Noel, the chief operating officer for CLC. He explained that individual goals are not just expected but encouraged. “Everyone is different. We always do what we can to make sure each person gets what they want and need.”

For Diana, Ramsey says, they don’t just provide for her daily needs, but also safeguard her in cyberspace.



Diana and Barb (along with Barb’s daughter, Elizabeth Atkin) with their mother, Dorothy Gaydos



Father Anthony Yazge

“Diana is constantly downloading questionable apps onto her tablet, and when she does, the staff quickly intervene,” she said. “I absolutely trust the staff that CLC has hired. They are very vigilant about who they hire.”

For Mark, who has grown fond of the staff at his home, they understand that he was very close to his mother who provided most of his care while his father was working as a parish priest, and they will take him to the cemetery where his mother is buried so he can place flowers on her grave.

“I believe for the people in Mark’s house and those in the office at CLC that they are not just picking up a paycheck,” said Yazge. “They have a genuine love for the people they care for, and I can see that reflected in how joyously Mark reacts to them.”

That level of caring begins with the philosophy established by CLC’s founder, the late Hayes Treasure, who started the company in 1987 with a simple creed: “You can’t give care without caring.”

Ramsey confesses that she was initially skeptical of such a small, local organization providing the level of services and care that CLC routinely gives to its clients, but that skepticism quickly dissipated.

“They are the best organization I ever worked with – personally or professionally – in 30 years,” she said. “I would recommend CLC to anybody. I just love them.”

> For more information about **Community Living Care, Inc.**, visit www.communitylivingcare.com or call (724) 836-8747.

accessAbilities Supports Children's Early Development

By Lois Thomson

Early identification and intervention is an important step to give a young child the best start in life. When a parent/caregiver sees their child not speaking based on their developmental stage or acting badly by frequent outbursts or temper tantrums, for example, they worry how these will affect their child's future life.



At accessAbilities, licensed, skilled and dedicated professionals provide children to age three with services that will address identified needs to create a solid foundation for early learning. Early intervention services are free of charge to any child who is identified as "at risk," or who has a developmental delay.

Therapists and Early Education Specialists work with the family and child, in the comfort of their home or a location chosen by the child's parent/caregiver, to develop an individualized service plan. accessAbilities First Steps Early Intervention program encourages parents to take part in their child's therapy sessions to learn basic techniques and treatment for continual reinforcement. Learned skills can be incorporated into everyday activities and routines.

accessAbilities First Steps Early Intervention Services include:

- **Physical Therapy** – Physical Therapists focus on large muscle development that will assist a child to learn how to roll over, sit, crawl, and eventually to walk.

Early Childhood milestones matter. Below are ages that children generally meet milestones:

- Roll from back to stomach by 7-1/2 months
 - Sit without support for 10 minutes by 9 months
 - Crawl by 9-1/2 months
 - Walk without support by 15 months
 - Correctly place shapes in a shape sorter by 24 months
 - Snip with scissors by 25 months
 - Start to string 1/2-inch beads by 34 months
 - Begin to enjoy tactile books by 29 months
 - Match similar pictures of objects by 36 months
 - Point to colors when named by 33 months
 - Sort shapes (circles, squares, triangles) by 36 months
 - Be able to count orally to three by 36 months
 - Walk downstairs (alternating feet) starting around 34 months
- If you have concerns about your child's development, accessAbilities may be able to help.

- **Occupational Therapy** – Occupational Therapists focus on small muscle development helping a child to learn how to reach, grasp, and play in a purposeful way.
- **Speech/Language Therapy** – Speech/Language Pathologists help to build an early foundation for language development and communication. Feeding and swallowing therapies can be provided.
- **Nutrition Therapy** – Registered dietitians address feeding issues and dietary intake, and offer consultation with parents regarding special dietary needs for the child.
- **Vision Therapy** – Certified teachers of the visually impaired are available to help children work toward independence.
- **Special Instruction** – An experienced team of Early Childhood Teachers provides strategies to assist the child with key developmental skills such as problem solving and social skills, while working to increase the child's ability to think and communicate.
- **Toy Lending Library** – Play is an important activity for a child's development. accessAbilities First Steps Early Intervention Services offers a lending library of toys and assistive technology for family to borrow for skill reinforcement.

> For more information, call (724) 832-8272 or visit www.accessabilities.org.



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VOICES FOR INDEPENDENCE/TRPIL

Voices for Independence/TRPIL Collaborate on Services

By Lois Thomson

Transitional Paths to Independent Living (TRPIL) is an affiliate of Voices for Independence (VFI), both of which are Centers for Independent Living (CILs). VFI has its headquarters in Erie, with satellite offices in Seneca and St. Marys, and also shares office space with TRPIL's headquarters in Washington, Pa.

TRPIL provides the five core CIL services, which include information & referral, advocacy, skills training, peer support, and transition services. VFI provides services beyond those, such as personal assistance, home modifications, and health & wellness, among others.

Steve Johnson, director of marketing for both VFI and TRPIL, talked about some of VFI's additional services, specifically health & wellness. He said the program provides training to individuals with disabilities through healthy lifestyle plans and behavioral change ideas that can impact all phases of living independently. Some of the assistance offered includes free personal training, both in-person and virtual; fitness assessments; hands-on, individualized support; wellness at-home visits; healthy lifestyle education; small group classes; community outreach; and specialized programs to meet the individual's goals.

"With mentoring, resources, and education, our program is a launching pad for those who are looking to gain a greater sense of independence. By taking part in physical activity and adopting better nutrition habits, benefits can



include improvement in strength, along with prevention of secondary conditions, certain fall risks, and more."

In addition, there is an accessible fitness center, where people with disabilities can have an adaptive workout with dedicated staff, at the former TRPIL facility at 69 E. Beau St. in Washington. VFI/TRPIL's home at 42 W. Maiden St. is being renovated, but until work is completed, the fitness center is still up-and-running at its current location. Johnson said because of the new facility, a lot of people may not be aware of the fact that the fitness program is still operating.

"We're in this new building, but we haven't been able to move the fitness center to the new building because we don't have room yet – that's part of the final phase of the construction. They're still offering fitness to individuals (at E. Beau St.), like free one-on-one training – the same longstanding, trustworthy staff are still providing these services. We hope to move

these programs and the adaptive equipment over to the new VFI/TRPIL program and community center at W. Maiden St. by the end of 2022."

Johnson explained how the two organizations came together: "VFI became involved with TRPIL when the former TRPIL CEO, Kathleen Kleinmann, reached out to VFI CEO, Shona Eakin. Kathleen was a mentor to Shona many years ago, and asked her to take on the CEO position at TRPIL, upon Kathleen's retirement in 2019. We're looking to replicate what Shona has done for Voices for Independence down here (in Washington). Shona has a disability herself and also uses

Ray Pittman, left, is a fitness coordinator at Voices for Independence. For more than 10 years, Ray has used his extensive experience to train aging adults and people with disabilities. Matt Sabatini, right, is also a fitness coordinator at VFI and holds a Master's degree in Health & Fitness. In addition to personal training, Matt specializes in program development.

attendant care, so she is very much in tune with consumers' needs." Always looking to help more people, Eakin accepted the position.

Johnson explained, "VFI and TRPIL provide a variety of services to the disability community across 27 counties in Western Pennsylvania. As a result, we need every bit of funding and assistance we can get to continue serving as many in the community as possible, at an exceptional level." Both organizations will continue to move forward trying to help the greatest number of people possible.

➤ For more information, call (724) 223-5115 or visit www.vficil.org.

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HONOR YOUR BODY WELLNESS

'Honor Your Body' with Massage Therapy

By Lois Thomson

When Carrie Shaley's mom, Carol, encouraged her to open a massage business, Carrie insisted she didn't know how to go about it. Carol got the idea because her daughter had suffered from chronic migraines since she was 10 years old, and eventually tried massage therapy. "I had to take a break from college because the migraines were so bad I couldn't focus," Carrie recalled. "Someone told me to check into massage therapy, that it might help. I took a non-credit introduction to massage and fell in love with it, and I applied to the massage therapy program at CCAC."

Carrie explained that during this time, her mom was working at CCAC as the director of child care development. "But the school was closing all child care centers and she was going to be without a job. She wanted her own business and said we should open a massage business." Even after Carrie graduated and was licensed for a year she was hesitant, but added, "I opened

it for her because that's what she wanted to do, and it flourished from there."

Located in Dormont, Honor Your Body – an LGBTQIA+ small business – opened in 2015. It offers a variety of massage therapies such as deep tissue, to remove severe tension; Swedish, the classic massage; oncology, for people with cancer histories; and medical massage, to address muscle and skeletal issues as diagnosed by a doctor.

The Honor Your Body therapists also do couples massages, as well as prenatal massage, which can be done throughout the pregnancy. "We have ways of positioning clients to make them comfortable, because their body is going through quite an ordeal," Carrie said, but added the people who would most benefit from massage therapy are those dealing with chronic pain or who suffered an injury. "The main thing we've dealt with over the past few years is insurance work, including auto and workers' compensation claims. We're one of very few that contract for services with the VA for massage for veterans.

They've gone through a lot and are still trying to acclimate to civilian life. Helping them manage pain and stress is a good part of what we're doing with them."

One special feature of Honor Your Body is the various products the business offers. Carrie said, "We wanted to use massage lotions for the sessions, but the products from other companies didn't feel good to me. My mom was always crafty – for example, she makes her own soap. So I asked her, 'Can you make massage lotion?'" Carol tweaked a recipe she found online, and Carrie said the company started adding a variety of products including soaps, candles, essential oils, lip balms, scrubs, lotions.

> For more information, call (412) 212-0231 or visit www.honoryourbodywellness.com.



Carrie Shaley said the massage therapy at Honor Your Body is customized to each individual's needs. When clients come in the therapists focus on their particular injury, and as they are healed they can end the sessions or come in for maintenance. "It depends on their schedule and what their body needs. That's how we came up with the business name 'Honor Your Body,' because you're honoring what your body is telling you. If your body is saying 'I need this, the massage is helping me,' you're honoring your body by coming in and doing what you can."



Health and Healing through Massage Therapy

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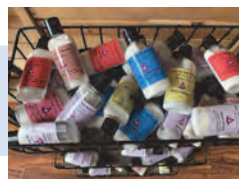
- Deep Tissue Massage
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ADDITIONAL SERVICES

- Hot Stone Aromatherapy
- Cupping Therapy
- Scalp Massage with Essential Oils
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- Hot and Cold Therapy
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Couples Massage Workshop

In this massage therapy workshop, couples will learn several therapeutic massage techniques that they can utilize at home with their partner.

Techniques learned in this fun, hands-on workshop will cover massage of the face/ scalp, hands, neck/shoulders, and feet (includes foot scrub and foot massage).

At the end of class, each couple will receive a basket of products for a Date Night at Home.

Special pricing for this workshop is \$150 per couple.



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Therapy Dog, Angus, Brings Joy to LIFE Pittsburgh Participants

Over the past several years, the LIFE Pittsburgh centers have been enjoying visits from an incredibly special visitor, Angus, a seven-and-a-half-year-old English Mastiff. When Angus arrives at the centers, he is greeted with smiles and excitement (as well as treats from some eager participants). We would like to spotlight our friend, Angus, and his human companion, Dana, in this issue of the *Western Pennsylvania Guide to Good Health*.

Angus was certified as a therapy dog through Therapy Dog International (TDI) in August of 2016. He had to pass a test through TDI that evaluated several things, including his ability to follow commands, his temperament, and that he was able to remain calm in somewhat chaotic situations. When Dana became aware of TDI's mission, she knew she wanted to participate and knew that Angus would be a perfect fit for this type of work since he has always been a calm and loving dog.

Dana and Angus coincidentally met LIFE Pittsburgh's Outreach Supervisor Deanna, at an "Open Streets" event in Market Square in 2017. When Deanna learned that Angus was a therapy dog, she quickly suggested that he would be a perfect fit as a guest at LIFE Pittsburgh. Angus and Dana were introduced to the LIFE Pittsburgh program shortly after that and have been providing therapeutic visits ever since. He has visited several of LIFE Pittsburgh's Adult Day Health Centers – starting with the Greentree Center, then Allegheny Centers, and then McKees Rocks.

According to Dana, "Angus has personal relationships with so many of the participants." She notices that our participant's faces light up when he arrives at the center. It is very apparent that their moods brighten during their visits. Angus makes his rounds while at the center, visiting each of the participants who express an interest in him (and staff, too). Dana has seen participants become more alert and engaged when Angus spends time with them. Many of the participants at LIFE Pittsburgh are animal lovers at heart, but do not have the opportunity to interact with pets any longer, for various reasons. The time that they get to spend with Angus is



precious and may be the only pet that they get to spend time with.

When asked how Angus feels about his visits to LIFE Pittsburgh, Dana said, "Angus LOVES his people! There is no doubt that he enjoys the interactions, there is a bounce in his step and a smile on his face. Plus, he really loves the belly rubs." Angus is a laid-back dog, but once he realizes he is at LIFE Pittsburgh, he is excited and ready to go. Dana enjoys talking with the participants and sharing Angus with others. She has often said that she and Angus gain as much from the visits as the participants do. Angus is an American Kennel Club (AKC) Grand Champion, now retired. When not at LIFE Pittsburgh, he does freelance therapy at many local Farmer's Markets and dog friendly businesses in Pittsburgh. He is the unofficial mascot for Lowe's in Scott Township.



For more information about LIFE Pittsburgh, call (412) 388-8050 TTY: 711 or visit www.lifepittsburgh.org.

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LIFE Pittsburgh is an all-inclusive program for individuals 55+ who want to stay in their home, but need supportive services to do so. Our coordinated plan of care includes medical, social and daily living support. At LIFE Pittsburgh, seniors are treated with the respect and dignity they deserve. LIFE Pittsburgh goes beyond simply "treating medical problems" to actually improving the quality of life for most of our Participants. There is no cost to receive LIFE Pittsburgh services for those who qualify.



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PathWays
Life Long Fulfillment

Fostering Independence and Fulfilling Dreams

By Kevin Brown

From its beginnings nearly 60 years ago in Washington County, PathWays today helps individuals in six southwestern Pennsylvania counties live independently and fulfill their dreams.

Originally chartered as United Cerebral Palsy (UCP) of Washington County in 1964, the organization now known as PathWays continued to grow over the years to serve a broad range of individuals with disabilities. In 2009, PathWays was formed from UCP and today serves 1,600 individuals in Allegheny, Fayette, Greene, Lawrence, Washington, and Westmoreland counties.

PathWays operates a number of distinct programs serving children and adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities and autism, along with their families. Their mission is summed up as lifelong fulfillment, helping individuals attain independence and reach their dreams.

Under its Children's Services, PathWays offers Early Intervention Services to help children with developmental delays or diagnosed conditions reach their fullest potential. These strategies, provided at no cost in the home, are highly individualized and designed to enhance each child's



An individual in the Residential Program and her caregiver are out for a coffee.

learning and growing experiences.

PathWays also operates Rainbow's End Learning Centers, which are full-service day care centers for children of all abilities, providing educational supports as well as social and emotional skill-building in a safe, secure, and welcoming environment. Over the past 28 years, Rainbow's End Learning Centers have grown from a one-room day care of mixed age groups to two locations with 11 different classrooms.

Your Child's Place, the third of the children's services offered by PathWays, is a specialized, pediatric child-care center for infants and children who need skilled nursing care while their parents or caregivers are at work or school. Staffed by registered nurses and child-care professionals, Your Child's Place is equipped to handle conditions that require constant or periodic medical treatment and the use of medical devices.

PathWays' adult services includes the Adult Training Facility (ATF). The ATF helps individuals with intellectual disabilities and autism contribute their talents to the community and enhance social, physical, emotional, and life skills. ATF offers a program called the Work of Heart where individuals learn job-related skills to help them build their employable skills, like problem solving.

Continued on following page

Every life has potential. We're dedicated to fulfilling it.

Since 1964, PathWays has continually innovated opportunities for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Through cutting-edge programs, life long services, and individual attention, we empower people of all ages and abilities to reach their full potential.

We offer child, adult, and community services in six Southwestern PA counties. Learn more about how to participate by visiting www.yourpathways.org.



PathWays
Life Long Fulfillment

Contact us today at 724-229-0851
or info@yourpathways.org.



A direct support professional from the Adult Training Facility interacts with one of PathWays' individuals.



A child-care professional from the Rainbow's End Learning Center plays with some of the children in her classroom.



A nurse from Your Child's Place works with one of the children they support.

Continued from previous page

Individuals at the Washington County ATF location volunteer for organizations such as the Meals-On-Wheels program, Washington County Food Bank, Christian Outreach, and others. At the Greene County ATF location, individuals volunteer for the Meals on Wheels program and Direct Results.

PathWays offers a residential program for adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities and autism to live a more fulfilling life. Its origin dates to 1975 with their first group home and now includes 11 homes in three counties. The residential program operates three distinct services: Licensed Community Homes, Supported Living and HUD Homes.

Licensed Community Homes allow individuals to live independently with 24-hour support staff who offer them a path toward what is essential and important in their life.

Supported Living offers a bridge between around-the-clock supports and independent

living. It is a choice for an individual who lives in their own home or apartment and desires some assistance in their life.

HUD Homes are fully handicapped-accessible homes that offer safety and comfort to people of all abilities.

Those in the residential homes are supported by professional staff who help them live independently.

Many residents not only receive housing services from PathWays, but also participate in PathWays' training programs during the day.

Rounding out PathWays' services, Agency With Choice offers several community-based services that allow individuals to achieve more independence and live fulfilling lives. This includes options such as companion services, in-home and community supports, homemak-

er/ chore services, supported employment opportunities, and more.

PathWays truly touches lives with their services and strives to help each individual live to their fullest potential. Their success is best described on their website: "At the end of the day, our true measure of success is seeing the pride and confidence we build in the people we serve."

> If you would like more information about PathWays' services, employment opportunities, or making a donation, please visit their website at www.yourpathways.org or call (724) 229-0851.



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VITAS HEALTHCARE



By *Evalisa McClure*

When a patient with an advanced illness is ready to start the conversation about hospice, some concerns inevitably arise: Where will I receive care? Can I stay on my current medications? Will all of my needs be met?

VITAS® Healthcare has over 40 years of experience providing hospice care that focuses on improving quality of life, and we've found that most patients fare best where they're already most at ease: in their home.

Choosing Home Over Hospital

Studies show that more than 70% of people would prefer to die at home, so it's easy to see why that's where most hospice happens.

Aside from the simple comfort of familiar faces and surroundings, many patients already will have spent days or weeks in the hospital by the time they're referred to hospice, and the experience can be tiring. Plus, hospitals are under increasing pressure to reduce both patient readmissions for the same symptoms and in-hospital deaths.

Receiving hospice care at home doesn't mean "giving up" or compromising on quality of care. As part of the Medicare Part A hospice benefit, VITAS patients are entitled to whatever their terminal diagnosis requires. This includes medications, home medical equipment, supplies, supportive services and clinical care from a team of experts.

Expert Care for the Patient - and Their Family

After a patient has been admitted to VITAS, an interdisciplinary hospice team steps in—nurse, hospice aide, social worker, physician, chaplain, bereavement specialist and volunteers. The team provides clinical, spiritual and psychosocial care to the patient and their family wherever



they call home.

The team will teach the designated family caregiver(s) how to manage symptoms and handle other routine tasks. Individual members of the team will coordinate and schedule regular visits. Ultimately, the patient and family are the core of the team, and their input is factored into an evolving care plan.

Our team supports the patient's family during the most difficult moments of their loved one's last days of life. After a patient dies, VITAS continues to provide bereavement support to the family for a minimum of 13 months.

For patients with advanced illness, hospice helps make the best of those final months, weeks and days. VITAS patients enjoy being home among loved ones, free of medical expenses, and in the care of a team dedicated to their comfort and dignity.

> Evalisa McClure is general manager for VITAS Healthcare in Pittsburgh. For more information about end-of-life care services, call the nation's leading provider at (866) 759-6695 or visit VITAS.com.

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EMERALD HOME HEALTH CARE

Emerald Home Health Care Offers Steps to Explore When Elderly May Need More Care

By Andrew Wilson

For many people, sometimes the anticipation of a joyful celebration turns instead to concerns about the well-being of elderly relatives or friends.

“Our elderly are precious and proud people from generations that were very strong and independent,” said Dana Derosky, R.N., the clinical director of Emerald Home Health Care. “They just don't like to ask for help because they don't want to inconvenience anyone.”

The difference can be particularly noticeable if it has been some time since the last visit with that person. While it may seem easy to dismiss those concerns as “just my imagination” or maybe not wanting to cause a fuss, it may be worth asking some additional questions.

Derosky says that there are subtle things that can alert you that there may be an issue like wearing the same clothes for several days, weight loss, and sudden confusion.

“With early onset of dementia, the obvious signs like forgetfulness are helpful, but sometimes they just don't connect body cues like hunger and thirst as a trigger to eat and drink,” Derosky explains. “This will often manifest in unexplained weight loss, even though they say they eat when they are hungry. They will not remember to keep water handy to sip on and will end up dehydrated, which can lead to physical problems with blood pressure and urination, but also confusion. Confusion is sometimes also an indicator of an infection.”

So what should you do if you find yourself believing that a loved one needs additional help to be healthy and safe? She recommends starting with the primary care physician (PCP). Most doctors have agencies that they have worked with and trust to do a thorough, comprehensive evaluation.

“It is a fine line to walk because you want them to have that right to self-determination, but you also want them safe and protected,” said Derosky. “Involve them in the decisions as early as you can even before they show any signs of needed help.”

She added that while home health agencies cannot self-refer, most are willing to answer your questions when you call and can point you in the right direction. All counties also have Area on Aging contacts that provide resources for our aging population such as transportation, in-home direct care workers through waiver services, and lists of Meals on Wheels providers, to name just a few of the available services.

Emerald Home Health Care, a small family-owned home health and home care company founded in 1996 by Bill and Margaret Erb, began business as a franchise of Nursefinders, a large, national company. The Erbs wanted a company with that family feel, and renamed it as Emerald Home Health, a nod toward the “Wizard of Oz” phrase that “there's no place like home.” In addition to the standard home health care, which is short-term nursing, physical therapy, occupational therapy, speech therapy, social work and home health aides, Emerald has private duty nursing services and home care direct care workers for longer term care and treatment.

If some sort of short-term or longer-term care is needed, Derosky recommends asking for recommendations from the PCP as well as friends and family who have been in a similar situation.

“The best thing to do first is the PCP as well as to ask friends and neighbors about their experiences with home health care, and home care,” she said. “A good clinician who gave exceptional care will be remembered.”

Emerald also encourages people to use “Home Health Compare” (www.medicare.gov), a website provided by Medicare, where you can compare agencies side by side for their scores in various categories, such as how well they heal wounds, how well they manage pain, how well they did at getting patients mobile again and other typical issues that may require special attention.

Because it can be tough to think of all the questions that one might want



So what should you do if you find yourself believing that a loved one needs additional help to be healthy and safe?

Dana Derosky recommends starting with the primary care physician (PCP).

to ask when looking for a home health agency, Derosky recommends starting with the following:

- Are you well staffed where I live?
- What services do you offer?
- Do you accept my insurance, and will there be a

copay?

- What do I do if I need help after business hours?

“The really great home health, and home care companies don't set out to be the leader, they set out to make a difference,” Derosky says. “It's never about the agency, it is about the patient. We want to be that kind of agency, patient first always. We listen to our patients' and clients' needs and adjust accordingly, we want them to be a part of their plan to get well and we want to make a difference in their lives.”



Emerald Home Health provides in-home personal care. Let us help you take care of the people you love. Emerald Home Health services Allegheny, Beaver, Butler, Washington, and Westmoreland counties. For more information, visit www.emeraldhomehealthofficial.com, email info@emeraldhomehealthcare.com, or call (412) 429-5880.

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SENIORS HELPING SENIORS

Seniors Helping Seniors Offers Unique Care Program for Seniors in Need

By Andrew Wilson

It can be difficult to know where to turn if an elderly loved one needs a helping hand. Seniors Helping Seniors® Southwestern PA has made the decision easier.

“Our agency is the only home care agency that focuses on hiring active seniors, a segment of our population that is often overlooked, to serve as companions and caregivers,” said C.J. Girod, the owner of Seniors Helping Seniors® Southwestern PA. “As a result, our employees are not only caring and compassionate, but mature, dependable, and attentive as well.”

Seniors Helping Seniors is new to southwestern Pennsylvania, but the company has been serving clients for almost 25 years and has more than 100 locations across the United States. The founder, Kiran Yocum, worked with Mother Teresa – honored by the Roman Catholic Church as Saint Teresa of Calcutta – for 14 years before establishing the first Seniors Helping Seniors location in 1998.

“As a result, Seniors Helping Seniors very much has a care-first mentality and approach engrained throughout the organization,” he said. “When I first heard about Seniors Helping Seniors, I felt an immediate connection and knew that I wanted to bring this service to southwestern Pennsylvania.”

The concept is a simple one. Most, if not all, seniors wish to remain independent as long as possible, but loneliness following the death of a spouse or the challenges of performing day-to-day tasks can create obstacles to independence. Who better to provide that needed companionship and assistance than someone who understands what they are going through?

“Our staff can better relate to the challenges our clients face in the aging process,” said Girod. “They often build genuine friendships with our clients, which are mutually beneficial, as many of our companions or caregivers are widows or widowers that sometimes may experience loneliness themselves. As we say, being a companion/caregiver with Seniors Helping Seniors is a way to give and to receive®.”

Seniors Helping Seniors is a home care agency, and most clients live in their own homes, but services are also provided to seniors in indepen-



C.J. Girod is the owner of Seniors Helping Seniors® Southwestern PA, and Barb (Girod) Green is the care manager for the agency. PHOTO COURTESY OF MT. LEBANON MAGAZINE

dent living, assisted living, and skilled nursing facilities. The range of services offered vary depending on individual needs, but can include companionship, personal care, light housekeeping, cooking, shopping, small repairs or yard work, or accompanying the client to medical appointments.

Seniors Helping Seniors also recently hired a dementia care and education specialist who is certified through Teepa Snow’s Positive Approach to Care (PAC) training program. “In addition to training our caregivers, the specialist will help assess our clients and develop their care plans, as well as educate their families on how to best serve those with Alzheimer’s and other forms of dementia with person-centered care,” Girod said.

While not a medical provider, Seniors Helping Seniors has a care manager, Barb (Girod) Green, who is a registered nurse with almost 50 years of nursing experience, including being the former executive director of nursing at a local hospital.

“Barb performs all of our client assessments, develops our care plans, oversees the implementation of our care plan/services, and orients and trains our staff,” said Girod.

Girod says the majority of the calls they receive come from family members who have identified a need for assistance for parents, but they also receive calls for respite care – relief for a family member who has become the primary caregiver for a loved one.

“We do everything possible to be flexible and meet our client’s needs and expectations,” said Girod. “We have a wonderful staff that truly

Continued on page 44



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CE2995

GALLAGHER HOME HEALTH SERVICES

Gallagher Recovering from COVID and Stronger Than Ever



By Nancy Kennedy

Diane L. Karcz, R.N., executive administrator and owner of Gallagher Home Health Services, has been a proud longtime member of the nursing profession, with a versatile background in critical care, trauma and home health nursing. But she has never felt greater pride in nurses than she does right now. She credits America's nurses with pulling the country through the COVID-19 pandemic.

"I believe that it was truly the nursing profession that pulled the entire country through the pandemic. Nurses were the foundation, in the hospital and community; nurses got the job done, at great cost to themselves. COVID nearly crushed the nursing profession. It was a nightmare in many respects: the logistics of the pandemic were mind boggling. Scheduling staff, finding adequate equipment and personal protective supplies, and caring for so many very ill patients. Everything had to be done differently. People forget that, in addition to the COVID patients, there were other patients that needed to be cared for – people with heart attacks, post-surgical needs, and cancer treatment."

Karcz says that the pandemic resulted in many nurses leaving their jobs,

to find work-at-home positions such as case management or to care for children who were out of school. "Pennsylvania already had a nursing shortage and recruitment became very difficult. Higher patient acuity made things worse. COVID was unpredictable; things changed often and rapidly. It exposed the healthcare system and revealed weaknesses and flaws."

For the past two years, Karcz says, the Gallagher staff was in COVID survival mode and are now in COVID recovery. "We are working to recreate our work culture, with a deliberate and creative effort. We have always had a family oriented culture and strong relationships with co-workers. We worked together and had in-person meetings, and that had to change during the pandemic. COVID pulled us apart. Nurses need each other. They need to have another nurse's opinion, and consult with each other. They need the emotional support of their peers. This is easier to find in the hospital but home health can be isolating."

To counteract that, Gallagher developed "pods" – teams of nurses and support staff to work together, caring for patients in small groups. This has been a success, Karcz says; it has increased patient and staff satisfac-

Continued on page 46


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Senior Living

Magic Comes to Providence Point

By Marilyn Walsh



From Utrecht in the Netherlands to Pittsburgh, the first Tovertafel arrived in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania about six months ago, and today is making a difference in the lives of older adults with dementia.

Tovertafel, which means “Magic Table” in Dutch, is an innovative electronic games system that uses light projections that respond to and challenge players to develop or maintain their skills in a fun and playful way. By using projections onto a table, people with dementia can interact with games and activities that use light and sound as stimulation. The Tovertafel promotes physical activity and mental stimulation that also improves relationships with care providers and residents as they “play” together. The different games can also help to evoke memories and stories from residents, which help to further build connection with caregivers and loved ones.




Baptist Homes Foundation received the table as a gift from a family who wishes to remain anonymous, but asked that it be called “Bob’s Magic Table” in memory of a loved one who had been a resident. The donor stated, “If the magic table helps one person, it will be worth it.”

Kim Salvio, Providence Point’s Director of Personal and Memory Care, reached out to the Tover® headquarters to bring the research-backed technology to the senior living community’s residents.

“The Tovertafel stimulates eye/hand coordination, social engagement, gross motor function and really helps to relax the residents and redirect them. Though the device is not listed as a clinical device, the results are very visible more of an activity device. We can see a definite improvement in a resident’s demeanor or mood.”

The founder of Tover®, Hester Le Riche says her research focused on equipment specifically made to for those with cognitive challenges, as well as their caregivers and family members. In Le Riche’s research, she found the effects from this stimulation could last for a few hours, up to a few days, consequently enabling people with dementia to be more alert and social.

Providence Point’s memory care residence is composed of 20 all private suites that are situated around a common area that includes a dining room, activity area, TV room, a secure outdoor garden area, and now an area for Bob’s Magic Table. It is the first Tovertafel system in Pennsylvania.

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Senior Living

Dementia Care:

A Positive Approach to Communication

Maintaining positive, loving communication in the midst of the daily stress of caring for a family member living with dementia can be challenging for everyone involved, but it is essential for the health and well-being of each member of the family.

How you talk with your family member, how much they understand, and how you make them feel when you are talking with them impacts your relationship, the overall vibe at home, and whether they are accepting of your help and guidance or refuse it.



Positive Communication Approaches:

Eliminate Distractions: Minimize extra noise (fans, radios, whistling hearing aids) and visual distractions (glasses on/clean, TV off). If the person is seated, sit down; connect with them at eye level. To get their attention, gesture, smile, offer your hand and make eye contact.

Avoid Conflicts: A person living with dementia will forget facts, but they will never forget how you make them feel. Rather than repeatedly arguing about tea kettles left on the stove, buy an electric kettle with an automatic off. Label cabinets with pictures to avoid frustrating searches and promote independence. When they talk about long-ago events as though they are currently happening, or refer to someone who has passed as alive, resist correcting them; join them in their world rather than forcing them into yours.

Keep it Simple: Break tasks down into simple steps; use five words or less in a sentence, visuals instead of words when possible, and non-verbal cues like pointing or showing. Be patient—wait at least 20-30 seconds for answers and offer a choice between two options rather than asking them an open-ended question or too many choices.

Be Calm: People living with dementia are highly empathetic, often mirroring the emotions—good and bad—of their caregivers. So, be aware of your body language, facial expressions and tone of voice. If you're becoming irritated or frustrated, walk away, take a deep breath, and try again when you are relaxed.

As a Dementia Care Center of Excellence, **Presbyterian SeniorCare Network** is committed to sharing our expertise and providing educational support to improve dementia care, especially for people living with dementia at home. To learn more about services for family caregivers visit PSCNDementia360.org.

Seniors Helping Seniors, *Continued from page 40*

enjoys helping others. They don't view this as just a job, but rather an opportunity to give back and be a part of the community."

He said that Seniors Helping Seniors is always hiring companions/caregivers, who are found through a variety of ways, including word of mouth, ads in local newspapers, magazines, and church bulletins, social media, and job boards to name just a few places. Positions are typically part-time and offer very flexible schedules. However, before someone is hired they go through face-to-face interviews, a criminal background check, motor vehicle records check, at least two professional/personal reference checks, a state-mandated health screening, and must pass a competency exam.

"We hire one in 20 to 25 of the people we interview who express interest in joining Seniors Helping Seniors," said Girod. "We are very selective. We are looking for people who are in this for the right reasons – the opportunity to do meaningful work."

For more information about **Seniors Helping Seniors® Southwestern PA** services, or to inquire about being a companion/caregiver, call (412) 944-2470, email Info@swpaSeniorCare.com, or fill out the contact form at <https://swpaseniorcare.com/contact>



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Senior Living

Gallagher, *Continued from page 42*

tion, and reduced re-hospitalizations. "It has made a big difference. The staff is happier; there is excellent information sharing and peer support."

In addition to work issues, there were personal challenges. "COVID brought much grief," Karcz says. "We had staff who lost family members and friends. We lost staff due to childcare and other family needs. We had to support patients and families who were facing a lot of loss and grief. The most difficult aspect of this was dealing with people dying alone, critically ill and isolated from family. I feel that a greater effort could have been made to bring families into the hospitals to say goodbye to loved ones. I think we could have found a way to do that, safely. We let this happen and it was a mistake."

Gallagher Home Health Services administrators were aware that everyone was suffering during the pandemic and they wanted to meet community needs. They developed a food pantry, Food for Families, stocked with the bounty of local restaurants and stores, to help neighbors and generate revenue for local businesses. "We view it as a

whole: the patients, the staff and the community. We wanted to care for everyone, keep the community whole and give everyone a role."

At Gallagher Home Health Services, the staff is again meeting in person and working as a team and family. "We didn't miss a beat," Says Karcz. "Nursing may be wounded but it is alive and well. Our entire organization learned a lot during the pandemic. We realized that a great deal can be accomplished remotely. We understood that our staff needed to include more tech-savvy people and more technology training. We gained a new appreciation for the value of teamwork. We learned that our greatest strength is our mission, and that no matter what, you never stray from your mission: patient first always, and treat people like family."

Karcz states that while it is always important to celebrate Nurses Week (May 6 – 12), it has never been more important than it is right now.

To learn more about **Gallagher Home Health Services**, call (412) 279-7800 or visit gallagherhomehealthservices.com.

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gatewayrehab.org

Commonwealth Prevention Alliance - Prevention Happens Here
PAStart.org

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monroevilleveinandlaser.com

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CAREERS IN HEALTHCARE

Health Care Careers Offer a Path to Job Security, Professional Advancement and Personal Reward

By Nancy Kennedy

Choosing to pursue a career in the healthcare industry is one of the best decisions a person can make in 2022. The healthcare industry offers an enormous range of careers, along with job security, opportunities for advancement, excellent pay potential and personal satisfaction. Whether one becomes a physician, therapist, nurse or healthcare administrator, there will be daily opportunities in the health care setting to make a positive difference in the lives of others.

Healthcare is the most in-demand employment sector in the United States today. Even in the face of an economic recession, fluctuating job market and the pandemic, the healthcare industry continues to grow and expand each year. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the healthcare sector is projected to add more jobs than any other occupational groups. Specifically, between the years 2020 and 2030, employment in healthcare careers is projected to grow 16%, adding an estimated 2.6 million new jobs to the healthcare field.

The demand for healthcare workers is increasing due to a combination of factors. Among the contributors is the nationwide shortage of healthcare professionals, the aging of the population and advances in medical technology and science. The COVID pandemic and the aging of the healthcare workforce took many experienced health care professionals into retirement in recent years, creating shortages.

Education for healthcare careers varies from the long path to a medical degree or advanced practice nursing role, to the fast-track options or certificate programs that prepare one for a technical position. Finding the right place is a matter of considering one's goals, interests, lifestyle and experience. Health care educational programs often include online or hybrid programs that are flexible and individualized. Furthermore, health care careers offer endless education. Whether one decides to seek an advanced degree in healthcare management or obtain certification, or change specialties entirely, opportunities abound.

Here is a listing of the top health care careers that are in high and

growing demand at the present time:

- Audiologist
- Lab technician
- Dental assistant /Dental hygienist
- Medical sonographer
- Dietitian
- Emergency medical technician
- Paramedic
- Exercise physiologist
- Home health aide
- Certified nursing assistant
- Licensed practical nurse
- Medical assistant
- Health information specialist
- Medical transcriptionist
- Nuclear medicine technician
- Occupational therapist
- Optician / Optometrist
- Pharmacist
- Pharmacy technician
- Physical therapist
- Physician/ surgeon
- Phlebotomist
- PT assistant
- Physician assistant
- Radiation therapist
- MRI technologist
- Respiratory therapist
- Registered nurse
- Speech and language pathologist
- Surgical technician

Within the nursing profession – there are countless opportunities for specialization. The traditional role of the nurse is the bedside nurse giving direct care to patients in the hospital setting. But nursing offers many opportunities beyond that – travel nurse, nurse practitioner, school nurse, nurse midwife, nurse educator, nurse researcher, legal nurse consultant, nurse educator, forensic nurse, nurse advocate and more. Nursing administration is a field of specialization with high demand in 2022: nurse administrators are executives who usually have a doctorate; they oversee all nursing operations and set the standards for quality of care. They recruit, hire, train and review performance; develop policies and procedures; manage budgets and finances; represent nursing to hospital administrators; and provide leadership.

A health care career is a long lasting career with an enormous selection of jobs in every specialty. For job security, great benefits, flexibility, and opportunities for growth and advancement, consider joining the nations #1 field.

Employment Opportunities



Looking for a “side gig”?

Why UnitedHealthcare

- Ranked #1 on Fortune’s 2021 “World’s Most Admired Companies” list in insurance and managed care for the 11th consecutive year
- Received a perfect score of 100 on the Human Rights Campaign Foundation’s Corporate Equality Index 2021
- Ranked #1 on all nine key attributes of reputation by Fortune in 2021
- Named one of America’s Most JUST Companies by JUST Capital and Forbes in 2020
- Awarded with the Frank C. Carr Award in 2019 by INROADS for a commitment to the diversity talent pipeline
- Ranked #7 as a Fortune 500 company in 2020
- Named to the “All-Star” list of Fortune’s top 50 most admired companies for 2021
- Ranked one of America’s 50 most community-minded companies in 2020 by The Civic 50 for the ninth consecutive year
- Ranked #15 in Fortune magazine’s 2020 Global 500 list

No matter your reason for wanting a side hustle, joining the UnitedHealthcare® A-team can be an excellent next step in your journey.

Why be a UnitedHealthcare Medicare Independent Career Agent?

As an Independent Career Agent with UnitedHealthcare, you set your own schedule, giving you the flexibility to build this job into your life. You are the determinant of your financial success – the harder you work the more success you can see in this commission-only role. And we work with you to set your business plan so that you can meet your financial and long-term goals.

Why Medicare?

The opportunity is great. Each day more than 10,000 individuals qualify for Medicare and need a health insurance plan. At UnitedHealthcare, you work with a company with brand name recognition and a reputation for integrity, hard work, compassion, innovation and performance. And you have access to the resources you need to help you be successful.

Benefits of working with UnitedHealthcare

- Offers the only Medicare plans that carry the AARP® name
- Individualized coaching & support
- Personalized website
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