

# Healthy Living



**Orthopaedics:  
Hip replacement reduces  
friction, restores life**

Life-changing weight loss surgery | Peer recovery lends a hand  
Interventional Radiology treats fibroids | Auxiliary leaves lasting legacy

**Summer 2023**



**Mimi Novello, MD, MBA, FACEP**  
President and Chief Medical Officer  
MedStar St. Mary's Hospital

**Holly Bond Meyer**  
Healthy Living Editor

**Ruby Hawks**  
Assistant Editor & Photographer

**Deborah Gross**  
Writer

**Megan Johnson**  
Writer

**Sandy Ondrejcek**  
Designer & Photographer

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## Letter from the president

Dear friends,

Summertime often provides a moment to breathe—a slower pace of life that, for many of us, is most welcome. I hope this finds you all well and looking forward to the warm months to come.

Now halfway through the year, it's also a good time to look at progress toward our annual goals—and for us, that continues to be bringing high-quality care and new services to our community. We recently welcomed MedStar Physical Therapy, a new practice, to the neighborhood, conveniently located beside MedStar Orthopaedic Institute at Leonardtown. As so many patients benefit from these services as a way of improving their quality of life, this is a perfect connection for our community. Learn more about MedStar Physical Therapy after you meet Tom, featured on the cover, who underwent a successful total hip replacement at MedStar St. Mary's Hospital this spring.

Speaking of community, this year marks the 10th anniversary of the Healthy St. Mary's Partnership—a community-driven coalition of public and private partners working to address priority health issues for St. Mary's County. The current Community Health Improvement Plan, called Healthy St. Mary's 2026, aims to address our greatest health needs. Community partners continuously evaluate the work being done to ensure outcomes are achieved. We are excited for this continuing opportunity to work together with our local partners to provide the roadmap for a healthier future for St. Mary's. Learn more on page 8.

In this issue you'll also find a fond farewell to our Hospital Auxiliary, which lives on through the many lives its members have touched. We're pleased to introduce you to Mercy, a patient who underwent a life-changing procedure with our Interventional Radiology (IR) team earlier this year, as well as Eric and Jessica, peer recovery coaches, who make a difference for those with substance use disorders. And I must mention our extraordinary Nurse of the Year and Associate of the Year—two individuals who go above and beyond every day at MedStar St. Mary's Hospital. They are featured on page 9.

Wherever your adventures take you this summer, I wish you good health!

Mimi Novello, MD, MBA, FACEP

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## Orthopaedics

# Reducing friction, restoring life.

## Hip replacement gives Mechanicsville man back his days of 'zero pain'

The hip joint is the largest joint in the body, helping you perform most movements necessary for day-to-day life. When it's damaged or compromised, even ordinary tasks become challenging—and your quality of life can suffer tremendously.

"There isn't much we can do without our hips—walking, balancing, standing," said **Emmanuel Atiemo, MD**, board-certified orthopaedic surgeon and sports medicine specialist with MedStar Orthopaedic Institute at Leonardtown. "It's a ball-and-socket joint that, over time, becomes susceptible to breakdown. We see this frequently in older patients and those in physically demanding jobs—the cartilage cushioning the bones of the hip erodes, causing the patient stiffness and pain."

The resulting bone-on-bone grind is very familiar to 68-year-old Thomas Hektoen, who came to Dr. Atiemo in search of relief in 2022. Tom spent his career in heating and air conditioning, frequently folding into crawl spaces and spending long hours on his feet through decades of hands-on work. Last year, he said, it caught up with him.

"My right hip hurt all the time. I was in terrible pain—terrible.



**Tom Hektoen of Mechanicsville is grateful to return to his daily activities without pain following a total hip replacement with Dr. Emmanuel Atiemo, pictured here at a follow-up appointment with MedStar Orthopaedic Institute.**

I had no energy, couldn't walk around or do anything without pain," Tom said.

A family member recommended that Tom see Dr. Atiemo, who quickly put him

at ease. "He's truly a professional," Tom shared. "He let me know straight off that I had options, but they were basically to come back every three months, every six

months [for cortisone injections], or just get it done—take care of the problem.”

Tom’s right hip, deteriorated by osteoarthritis, needed replacing. Dr. Atiemo and the Institute team could administer cortisone injections to temporarily lubricate the joint, buying him time, but the pain would not be fully resolved without surgery.

In a total hip replacement, damaged portions of the hip are removed and replaced with prosthetic—or artificial—components. The prosthesis consists of a socket, ball, and joint. The outer shell of the socket is usually made of metal, joining an inner shell of plastic. When the ceramic ball is joined with the socket, the new hip allows for smooth, nearly frictionless movement.

“The goal is to help relieve pain, restore function, and improve

patients’ quality of life,” Dr. Atiemo said. “For patients who have been living with debilitating hip pain, this is a life-changing procedure.”

Tom’s surgery was scheduled for early March. Dr. Atiemo’s mission—restoring function, greatly reducing pain—was accomplished almost immediately, Tom said. “Within a matter of days—zero pain,” he shared. “I can’t tell you the relief. To go from having to stay home all day, watching TV, to being able to get out again ...”

Physical therapy started two days after his hip replacement, and continues three days a week with stretches and light exercise to increase Tom’s mobility. “I’ve come a long way in a short time,” he said, praising Dr. Atiemo and sharing his gratitude.

What can he do now, post-surgery, that he couldn’t do before?

Tom hesitates just a moment. Then: “Everything.”



### What is osteoarthritis?

Osteoarthritis, sometimes called “wear-and-tear arthritis,” is a common condition that many people develop as they age. It can occur in any joint in the body, but most often develops in weight-bearing joints, such as the hip.

Osteoarthritis of the hip causes pain and stiffness. It can make it hard to do everyday activities like bending over to tie a shoe, rising from a chair, or taking a short walk.

Because osteoarthritis gradually worsens over time, the sooner you start treatment, the more likely it is that you can lessen its impact on your life. Although there is no cure for osteoarthritis, there are many treatment options to help you manage pain and stay active.

Source: American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons

### Assess your joint risk at home

If you’re challenged by chronic hip pain, it could be time to take the first step to better joint strength. MedStar Health’s free joint risk assessment provides a personalized report on medical and lifestyle risk factors that may be contributing to your hip pain, and more.



Joint pain doesn’t have to be your new norm. With 50 orthopaedic surgeons and 17 locations throughout Maryland, Washington, D.C. and Virginia, the MedStar Orthopaedic Institute serves patients with a wide array of orthopaedic needs.



**Emmanuel Atiemo, MD**  
Sports medicine



**John A. Kuri II, MD**  
Sports medicine  
Special interest in shoulder & elbow

**MedStar Orthopaedic Institute at Leonardtown**  
Davis Office Park  
23503 Hollywood Road,  
Suite 1  
Leonardtown, Maryland  
P 240-434-7483

[MedStarOrthopaedicInstitute.org](http://MedStarOrthopaedicInstitute.org)

Why should kids have all the fun?

**Physical therapy can help get you moving, grooving—even hula-hooping.**



Our experienced physical therapists offer innovative techniques for reducing pain, improving function, and getting you back to the activities you enjoy.

#### New location!

**MedStar Health Physical Therapy at Leonardtown**

23511 Hollywood Road  
Leonardtown, Maryland  
P 240-577-6433

**Rehabilitation Medicine at MedStar St. Mary’s Hospital**

25500 Point Lookout Road  
Leonardtown, Maryland  
P 301-475-6062



**It’s how we treat people.**

  
**MedStar Health**



# Spot a Stroke, Stop a Stroke, and Save a Life

During Stroke Awareness Month in May 2022, former Gov. Larry Hogan declared Maryland a Stroke Smart state committing to community education around the signs of stroke and the actions needed to help save a life. MedStar St. Mary's Hospital Stroke Coordinator, **Jennifer Sams BSN, RN**, requested the St. Mary's County Commissioners issue a proclamation declaring the county a Stroke Smart Community. The proclamation was presented this spring during the May 23 Commissioner's Meeting and encourages citizens to Spot a Stroke, Stop a Stroke, and Save a Life.

**The facts are alarming.**

- One in six people will have a stroke in their lifetime
- 80% of families are affected by stroke
- Stroke is the leading cause of long-term disability, causing physical, psychosocial, and financial burdens on individuals, families, and society



**Floyd Howell, MD**

"Early intervention can help save the life of someone having a stroke and can minimize the damage to their brain," said **Floyd Howell, MD**, stroke director at MedStar St. Mary's Hospital. "Stroke treatment is time sensitive so, recognizing symptoms and calling 911 immediately is critical."

MedStar St. Mary's Hospital is recognized as a primary stroke center by the Maryland Institute for Emergency Medical Services Systems (MIEMSS). A primary stroke center has the resources and processes in place to care

for acute stroke patients. Additionally, MedStar St. Mary's Hospital received the Gold Plus award from the Get with the Guidelines Stroke program in 2021.

"Time is of the essence if you suspect someone is having a stroke," said Dr. Howell. "Millions of brain cells die every minute during stroke, so it is important the patient is taken to a facility with the ability to offer the correct treatment as quickly as possible."

Dr. Howell said many strokes could also be prevented through lifestyle changes.

"There are many stroke risk factors that can be modified: obesity, hypertension, diabetes, high cholesterol, and smoking are just a few," said Dr. Howell. "Making these changes could save a life."

## Signs of stroke: BE-FAST

**B - Balance:** Sudden loss of balance or coordination

**E - Eyes:** Sudden vision changes, loss of vision, blurry vision

**F - Face:** Does one side of the face droop when smiling?

**A - Arms:** Does one arm drift downward when raising both arms?

**S - Speech:** Is speech slurred or strange?

**T - Time:** If you observe any of these symptoms, **CALL 911** immediately.

## Get with the Guidelines Stroke Gold Plus Award

Gold Plus Quality Award is an advanced level of recognition acknowledging hospitals for consistent compliance with Achievement and Quality Measures set forth by the Get With the Guidelines Stroke program.

Get With The Guidelines® is the American Heart Association/American Stroke Association's hospital-based quality improvement program that provides hospitals with tools and resources to increase adherence to the latest research-based guidelines. Visit **Heart.org** for more information.



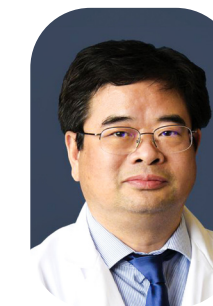
## Support following a stroke

Caregivers and stroke survivors can learn more about causes of stroke, recovery, and how to prevent future problems at our Stroke Survivor's Support Group, held the second Tuesday of each month at 1 p.m. in Health Connections, located in the Outpatient Pavilion behind the hospital. Speak with experts in rehabilitation, enjoy light refreshments, and the friendship of other stroke survivors and their families. Call **301-475-6019** for more information.



Visit **MIEMSS.org/Home/Stay-Stroke-Smart** to learn more about how to recognize and respond to a stroke.

## Let our expert neurologist and neurosurgeon help you recover from a stroke



**Yongxing Zhou, MD, neurologist**

Yongxing Zhou, MD, (pronounced "Joe") cares for patients with a wide range of neurological

needs including stroke. His subspecialty is epilepsy. Dr. Zhou is board-certified and completed his medical residency and internship at Florida State University, the University of Florida, and Howard University Hospital. Following those programs, Dr. Zhou conducted his fellowship training in epilepsy at George Washington University Hospital. He joined the medical staff at MedStar St. Mary's Hospital in 2018.

Call **240-434-7929** to make an appointment with Dr. Zhou.



**Amjad Nasr Anazi, MD, neurosurgeon**

Dr. Anazi is an associate professor of Neurosurgery at MedStar Georgetown University

Hospital, a member of the multidisciplinary skull base surgery team, and a specialist in minimally invasive neurosurgery.

He has advance training in minimally invasive treatment of a variety of brain conditions, including the full spectrum of brain tumors. Dr. Anazi is now seeing patients in the Outpatient Pavilion at MedStar St. Mary's Hospital.

Call **301-856-2323** to make an appointment.



## World-class cancer care right next door.

MedStar Georgetown Cancer Institute (MGCI) at MedStar St. Mary's Hospital offers patients enhanced access to the latest therapies, research, and clinical trials powered by Georgetown Lombardi Comprehensive Cancer Center. The physician below cares for patients at MGCI at MedStar St. Mary's, located in the Outpatient Pavilion behind the main hospital.



### Mahsa Mohebtash, MD Oncology

Dr. Mohebtash serves as chief of the MedStar Franklin Square Cancer Center at Loch Raven and as medical director of MedStar Health Community Oncology. She is a board-certified medical oncologist and hematologist who provides care

for patients diagnosed with all types of cancers, and has a specialized interest in treatment of breast, lung, and colorectal malignancies.

Dr. Mohebtash leads a variety of clinical trials for several tumor types and collaborates with a multidisciplinary team of surgical oncologists and radiation oncologists at MedStar Health. Her goal is to ensure every patient's plan of care is built to optimize their quality of life and long-term clinical outcomes.

## Healthy St. Mary's Partnership marks 10 years of collaboration to improve community health

The Healthy St. Mary's Partnership (HSMP) is marking 10 years advocating for the health of St. Mary's County residents. Established in 2013, HSMP serves as the Local Health Improvement Coalition (LHIC) which is part of the Maryland State Improvement Plan (SHIP). MedStar St. Mary's Hospital has been an active participant in HSMP since its beginning in 2013.

Using data collected from the MedStar St. Mary's Hospital Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA) and HSMP's St. Mary's County Health Assessment, HSMP works to advance community health by establishing action teams to address issues identified in the surveys. The HSMP Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP)'s current initiatives include Chronic Disease, Behavioral Health, Environmental Health, and Violence, Injury Trauma. Action teams comprised of local organizations and community members, including representatives from MedStar St. Mary's Hospital, work to breakdown the barriers to health addressed in these areas.

"We are proud to take part in the Healthy St. Mary's Partnership," said **Mimi Novello, MD, MBA, FACEP**, president and chief medical officer, MedStar St. Mary's Hospital. "We recognize that by working together we can have an incredible impact on our community and build a healthier future for everyone."

During the past decade, HSMP action teams have implemented a variety of programs, interventions, and events, including healthy food drives and healthy lifestyle tool kits; developing food and exercise connector maps; hosting town halls and panel discussions on dating violence, tobacco 21, and suicide risk; distributing food security surveys, walking maps, and more. Additionally, in 2022 HSMP was also awarded funding for overweight, obesity, and diabetes strategies which resulted in HSMP hosting a Community Baby Shower, and funding for addressing food security.

Visit [HealthyStMarys.com](https://www.healthystmarys.com) to learn more about the partnership or to become involved.

# Associates making a difference every day.

MedStar St. Mary's Hospital recently honored two individuals with top honors during **National Nurses' Week (May 6-12)** and **National Hospital Week (May 7-13)**. The hospital marks both occasions with special events annually in celebration of our outstanding team!

## 2023 Associate of the Year

**Lindy Forrest, RDMS, RVT**, ultrasonographer in the Imaging, Cardiology & Neurology department, was recently named the Elinor Peabody Associate of the Year. Lindy was praised for her outstanding commitment and dependability as a member of the MedStar St. Mary's team. Among many examples of her quick thinking, she made an exceptional delivery—literally—while assisting a patient in labor last year. Instead of a routine ultrasound, Lindy unexpectedly delivered a newborn. Her calm demeanor and swift actions were key to a successful outcome.

Lindy began her career at MedStar St. Mary's in 2016, quickly gaining a reputation for being conscientious and reliable. She is a welcoming member of the Imaging team, frequently acting as a mentor and working to show new staff members the ropes during the course of her work in obstetrics/gynecology and vascular imaging.

Lindy's top honors were announced as a surprise from President and Chief Medical Officer **Mimi Novello, MD, FACEP**, and Lindy's teammates during Hospital Week.



## 2023 Nurse of the Year

**Erin Balderson, BSN, RN** was named MedStar St. Mary's Hospital's Nurse of the Year. In her nominations, colleagues praised her attention to detail, expertise, compassion, and innovative approaches to delivering quality care on the Telemetry unit.

Among her accolades, Erin was nominated for recognition at the MedStar Health system level for a good catch in 2022. While completing a thorough head-to-toe patient assessment, she realized the patient's limb had no pulse. She immediately escalated her concerns, and the patient's doctor validated that the individual needed immediate intervention. Erin's focus and swift action likely saved the patient's limb.

Erin and fellow nurse **Rudi Adriani, RN** recently led a study of the initiation of a nurse-driven sleep protocol to prevent hospital delirium—a potentially dangerous condition that primarily affects seniors. Their project was awarded the NICHE Choosing Wisely Trailblazer Award in 2022.

**Dawn Yeitakis, MS, BSN, RN, NEA-BC, CEN**, vice president and chief nursing officer, MedStar St. Mary's Hospital, colleagues, and members of nursing leadership surprised Erin with her Nurse of the Year award in early May.



# A brighter future ahead



Sarah Thompson, 32, of Hollywood, Maryland, is finding new joys after bariatric surgery, including being able to sit with her legs crossed.

## For Sarah Thompson, bariatric surgery is first step on journey to a healthier life

Watching former colleagues lose weight following bariatric surgery is what finally made Sarah Thompson decide to make the call to the Bariatric Surgery Program at MedStar St. Mary's Hospital.

"I had been interested in the surgery for a while," said Sarah. "When I first started looking into it, the surgery wasn't covered by my insurance. Once I heard my friends going through the process, I reached back out to my insurance to verify that it was covered and indeed it was."

Sarah placed a call to the office of **Sameer Alrefai, MD, FACS**, minimally invasive and bariatric surgeon who performs gastric bypass and sleeve gastrectomy procedures utilizing the da Vinci robotic surgical system.

"Many insurance companies require patients to have bariatric surgery through an accredited center," said Dr. Alrefai. "Our recent accreditation through the Metabolic and Bariatric Surgery Accreditation and Quality Improvement Program has opened up more opportunities for patients in our area to undergo bariatric surgery at our hospital instead of having to leave the county for the procedure to be performed."

Sarah's first visit with Dr. Alrefai was on July 21, 2022. During the initial visit, they discussed her various health concerns and which procedure would be best for Sarah.

"I was on the fence about the gastric sleeve, like my former coworkers had, or the gastric bypass," said Sarah. "When I was talking with Dr. Alrefai, I mentioned that I had heartburn and he told me the gastric sleeve can actually worsen acid reflux and heartburn, so that was going to be a no-go for me."

Sarah and Dr. Alrefai decided the best option for her would be the gastric bypass, a procedure in which a small part of the stomach is used to create a new pouch about the size of a golf ball which is reattached to a section of the small intestine.

"The gastric bypass is one of the most common types of bariatric surgeries and is safe and effective for those who have struggled with weight loss," said Dr. Alrefai.

Insurance companies have different requirements for patients undergoing bariatric surgery. Prior to surgery, most patients must complete dietary counseling with a dietitian, a psychiatric evaluation, a sleep study, an EKG with a cardiologist, and an endoscopy performed by a gastroenterologist.

"When I got in my car after the first appointment, I was calling and making appointments," said Sarah.

"It typically takes three to six



Sarah before bariatric surgery.

months to complete the necessary appointments prior to the surgery," said Dr. Alrefai, "but our office is well aware of what is needed and helps the patient through the process every step of the way."

Sarah had her surgery on Dec. 19, 2022. Because the procedure is minimally invasive, she only had several small incisions and was amazed that she had little pain following the procedure.

"I can honestly say I was never in any real pain," said Sarah, who

was given Tylenol once during her hospital stay. She was excited to leave the hospital and start the next chapter in her journey—adapting to a new way of eating.

"Post-operative patients start on a liquid diet and progress to more solid foods as they continue to heal," said Dr. Alrefai.

Sarah admits that the post-operative diet was a little difficult to follow, but not because she was hungry.

"By day 14 to 21 you could have soft foods such as a hard-boiled egg or tuna fish," Sarah said. "I was never so happy to have tuna fish in my life! I just wanted a taste of something that was not soup."

Sarah quickly adapted to her new way of eating, tracking what she eats to ensure she gets the recommended amount of protein each day, and the effort has paid off, in more ways than just smaller pant sizes.

"I feel really good," said Sarah. "I am sleeping better, my back pain has gotten better, I am not as anxious as I used to be, and my mobility is better. I can do my set of stairs at my house without getting winded, even carrying a full load of laundry. I go to the gym three to four times a week and enjoy it. I never thought I would say that."

## Take the first step, we'll help with the rest.

Our team is ready to support you on your journey toward better health. The Bariatric Surgery Center at MedStar St. Mary's Hospital is accredited as a Comprehensive Center from the Metabolic and Bariatric Surgery Accreditation and Quality Improvement Program and offers minimally invasive bariatric surgery and revisional procedures. We are the only nationally accredited center in the Southern Maryland region.

### Is bariatric surgery right for you?

Visit [MedStarHealth.org/WeightLoss](https://www.MedStarHealth.org/WeightLoss) to watch a short informational video and take our bariatric seminar to help you get acquainted with our process and answer some frequently asked questions.

### Ready for a consultation?

Call **240-847-5861** to make an appointment in our Leonardtown office.





## ‘Here when you’re ready’

Peer recovery specialists lend a hand, and an ear

**Jessica Bamberger** and **Eric Slankard** are no strangers to recovery. Being 17 years and six years substance-free, respectively, the Certified Peer Recovery Specialists bring their personal stories and commitment to helping others to their work at MedStar St. Mary’s Hospital.

“We can say we’ve been there, because we’ve been there,” said Eric.

Eric became dependent on opioids after high school. Deeper

into his addiction, the need for higher doses and rising costs led him to heroin. While there were “many times” he felt he’d hit rock bottom, Eric recalls a particular instance during a snowstorm.

“I was brought to the ER after going on a bender, being up for three days straight,” he said. “There was a foot of snow on the ground, and I eloped out the back of the ER and ran a half mile down the road in just my hospital gown. The police brought me

back, and I spent a few extra days in the hospital. Seeing how this was affecting my family, my mental health, I finally accepted help from my parents and went to rehab.”

Jessica’s story also involves a helping hand from family, many of whom work in public service roles themselves. For her, “once was all it took” to get hooked on crack cocaine. Her background in culinary arts, her career—“nothing mattered but the drug,” Jessica said.

The path to recovery started “after being sick and tired of being sick and tired,” Jessica recalled. “I was out one night and thought, either I drive myself into this tree or I go get help. I was fortunate to have a family that cared enough to send me to rehab in Arizona. I didn’t know anyone out there, and I was able to fully engage in my own recovery.”

Years later, Jessica was with her ailing father at the hospital where she now works when she heard about the job posting. “The timing just felt right,” she said. “I wanted to give back what was given to me, once I realized I couldn’t save my dad.”

Since the peer recovery specialist position in the Emergency Department was created by a grant in March 2020, the pair estimate they’ve met with thousands of people in our community—200 or more a month, often for dependence on alcohol. Their conversations take them to every unit of the hospital. Jessica also leads the Overdose Survivors Outpatient Program at MedStar St. Mary’s.

“We meet you where you’re at, no judgment,” said Eric. “We’re here to share our own lived experiences and give support. It’s about getting the word out, and helping people understand that help is available.”

Recovery could even start during that patient’s visit. Providers at MedStar St. Mary’s follow the Screening, Brief Intervention, and Referral to Treatment (SBIRT) model, which means that every patient who comes to the hospital—regardless of the reason for their visit—will receive a substance use screening. Patients who score highly on the SBIRT or acknowledge their drug or alcohol misuse will be connected to the peer recovery team.

If patients choose, they can begin recovery immediately with a dose of suboxone: a prescription medication that helps reduce withdrawal symptoms. Jess and Eric will leverage community connections to find open spots for rehabilitation and detoxification, help with harm reduction, refer patients to support groups and meetings, and/or generally check in as a guide throughout the process.

Frequently, that all starts with a compassionate ear.

“Maybe they’re not open to the message now, but that could change. We always share our contact information,” said Jessica. “Sometimes we’re able to connect them to services right then. Sometimes they’re not prepared to get clean at that time. Either way, we’ve planted a seed.”

It’s work that is beneficial to them, too. Helping others feels good, and the knowledge that he’s serving as a role model helps keep Eric sober. “It puts into perspective how lucky I really am to maintain sobriety for six years now,” he said.

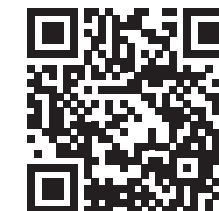
“I know that doing this work helps me stay in recovery,” agreed Jessica. “I’d be OK if not, but it makes me even more grateful to not be ‘out there’ running the streets anymore. I’m sure I would be dead by now.”

It could be days, weeks—months, even. But eventually, the peer recovery team hopes the seeds they’ve planted in their daily conversations sprout into a desire to confront substance misuse.

“We’ll get a phone call [from a past patient], and that will ring right here,” said Eric, patting the cordless phone at his hip. “We’re here when you’re ready.”

### Stop stigma to support recovery.

Our words have the power to help or hurt. Learn more about the preferred language for talking about substance use disorder and Go Purple with the St. Mary’s County Health Department.



## Emergency services: What our community is sharing

**Sarah T.** ★★★★★

From the time we walked into the ER until the time we left (2-1/2 hours later), the rock star staff did a wonderful job meeting the needs of my son. The front desk team, Amanda in Triage, Melissa the PA, and Stephanie the respiratory therapist all took great care of my asthmatic kiddo and saw him quickly, so that he left breathing much easier than he had coming in!

**Lori R. recommends MedStar St. Mary’s Hospital.**

Hubby was sent to hospital for COVID positive and low oxygen levels...the staff in the Emergency Department could not have been any nicer. First time there and I felt we were treated more like people and not just a patient.

**Beth T.** ★★★★★

I had to come to the emergency room unexpectedly. The staff was exceptional. They were compassionate, patient, and friendly. ... The nurses were so friendly and made me feel so safe and at ease. I have a condition that has landed me in the hospital 4 times in 10 years. And this is by far the best that I’ve had.

# News briefs



## Congressman Hoyer makes visit

**Rep. Steny Hoyer** visited MedStar St. Mary's Hospital on April 3—a stop planned following the approval of federal funding to renovate a portion of the Emergency Department and Behavioral Health units, modernizing these spaces to safely meet the mental health needs of our community. The hospital initiative was chosen as one of 15 community funding projects in Maryland's Fifth District successfully introduced by Rep. Hoyer last year.



## Maryland Medicaid changes

Heads up: Medicaid renewals won't be automatic this year. Participants, be sure to check in and make sure your contact information is up to date so you can receive important notices on any changes to your health insurance. Visit [MarylandHealthConnection.gov/Checkin](https://MarylandHealthConnection.gov/Checkin) or call **855-642-8572** to learn more.



## Wound Healing earns Center of Distinction

The Wound Healing Center at MedStar St. Mary's Hospital was recently recognized as a 2022 Healogics Center of Distinction. The team earned honors by achieving or exceeding outstanding clinical and operational results in 2022, including reaching a patient satisfaction rate of 92% or higher.

## Arnold honored for expertise, advocacy for sexual assault victims

**Dara Arnold, BSN, RN, FNE-A/P**, forensic nurse examiner and assistant director of nursing (Emergency Department), MedStar St. Mary's Hospital, recently received a letter of commendation from **Capt. D. W. Kingsley**, commanding officer, Naval Air Station (NAS) Patuxent River. Dara was honored for serving as the point of contact for the Sexual Assault Prevention and Response (SAPR) program of NAS Patuxent River. "Her expertise was key to identifying local resources for forensic examinations and medical care in a safe, trauma-informed, and victim-centered space," the letter of commendation reads. Dara is pictured on right with Capt. Kingsley, center, and **Jennifer Alvey, MS, BSN, RN, NE-BC**, interim director of nursing (Emergency Department).



## A legacy of giving

### Hospital Auxiliary celebrated for outstanding contributions to hospital, community

After 106 years of service, members of the MedStar St. Mary's Hospital Auxiliary gathered in April to celebrate all the group has accomplished—closing one chapter while opening another. The Auxiliary dissolved as a separate entity last December, with its members now becoming general hospital volunteers.

The Auxiliary raised more than \$5 million for the hospital and provided extensive support since its inception, with its most recent contribution helping to seed the hospital's Scholarship Endowment. The Auxiliary's \$455,000 donation to the fund benefits students pursuing healthcare careers, ensuring volunteers' efforts live on through future healthcare workers aiding the community.

Founded in 1916 as the Ladies Auxiliary, its original members were physicians' wives and local women who pitched in wherever needed as part of day-to-day operations at the early St. Mary's Hospital—then housed in a wood-frame building on Point Lookout Road. Daily roles included preparing meals, washing laundry, and keeping the patients company.

Time saw the volunteers' roles expand, along with their fund raising

efforts. Society dinners and hats left out at dinner parties to encourage hospital donations—a bold move by the late **Elinor Peabody**—gave way to bake sales, shifts in a new hospital gift shop, and annual events such as a golf tournament.

New Auxilians were welcomed when the organization became coed in 1977. In the intervening years, the group has continued to fund medical equipment and capital improvements, including recent gifts of \$100,000 toward the renovation of the hospital's cafeteria and dining space, The Blue Heron Café; new rocking chairs for the Women's Health & Family Birthing Center; a portable ultrasound machine for the Intensive Care Center; and automatic bariatric doors for physicians' offices in the Outpatient Pavilion, among other projects.

The hospital welcomed Auxilians for a final celebration on April 18, unveiling a surprise new exhibit highlighting their contributions in Reflections, the hospital's history room. Past president **Dolores Kalnasy** was also honored as the 2020 Auxilian of the Year—an honor delayed by the pandemic.

"The Auxiliary's legacy and their influence in making hospital improvements cannot be overstated,"



**Auxilian of the Year Dolores Kalnasy, pictured right, with Holly Meyer**

said **Holly Meyer**, director of Marketing, Public Relations & Philanthropy at MedStar St. Mary's Hospital, and an Auxilian herself.

"We are so grateful for all the time and enthusiasm these volunteers have devoted to making our hospital special and successful," said **Mimi Novello, MD, FACEP**, president and chief medical officer, MedStar St. Mary's. "We hope we'll continue to see them in new roles in the next chapter."

## See the new exhibit in Reflections

Learn more about the Auxiliary's impact in a special exhibit within Reflections, MedStar St. Mary's Hospital's history room. Reflections is located on the first floor near The Blue Heron Café and open to visitors 24 hours a day.



# Minimally invasive procedure, major pain relief



Members of the Interventional Radiology team include, from left, Erica Buckler, Matt Morton, Lena Hover, Noelle Mast, Olga de los Reyes, Lorie Campbell, Angie Campbell, Katy Goss, Dr. Moutasem Aljundi, and Amy Magyar.

## Interventional Radiology treats fibroids with life-changing results

Menstrual bleeding is different for everyone, and will often change throughout the course of women's lives. But when that monthly bleeding becomes heavy and affects our daily routines, what options do we have?

Mercy Amedu sought that answer after she began experiencing very heavy periods, accompanied by pain and cramping. When medication management didn't help, she visited her obstetrician/gynecologist, who mentioned undergoing a hysterectomy as a treatment option.

"Though I was done having children, I wasn't sure I wanted to do that," shared Mercy, of California, Md. "I was thinking I wanted a second opinion."

Mercy consulted with **Moutasem Aljundi, MD**, and **Amy Magyar, MSN, AGNP-C** with the Interventional Radiology (IR) department at MedStar St. Mary's Hospital.



Taking a look using magnetic resonance imaging (MRI), the IR team soon determined that Mercy, pictured left, had several large uterine fibroids—a common type of noncancerous tumor that can grow in and on the uterus. Not all fibroids cause issues, but when they do, symptoms typically include heavy menstrual bleeding, back pain, frequent urination, constipation, and pain during sexual

intercourse. Black women are 3-4 times more likely to experience these types of significant symptoms.

A hysterectomy to remove the uterus partially or completely is perhaps the most drastic treatment for fibroids—and Mercy was interested in less invasive measures first. Among the treatment options is a procedure called **uterine artery embolization (UAE)**.

"In a uterine artery embolization, small particles are used to block the flow of blood to the fibroids," explained Dr. Aljundi. "Without this steady supply of blood, which effectively feeds the tumors, the masses will shrink. Symptoms often ease significantly or clear completely."

With her teenage daughter by her side and her son—away at medical school himself—supporting from afar, Mercy opted to undergo the UAE last December. Her procedure went smoothly in late 2022, especially because Amy had prepared her so well.

"Sometimes in life, you just meet people that bless you," said Mercy. "For me, this was Amy. She explained everything to me, made me feel so secure."

Mercy felt well enough that, after undergoing the procedure, she bounced back quickly. "I was lucky—I didn't even have to stay over at the hospital," Mercy shared. "It depends on your body, I am sure. But I felt so good."

"Our hospital is now offering procedures that were once only available to patients able to make a long drive into the city. These have a major impact on the quality of life for many."  
-Dr. Moutasem Aljundi

Since undergoing the UAE, Mercy's cycles and symptoms have eased significantly. She will return to MedStar St. Mary's for follow-ups with Dr. Aljundi and Amy and complete more imaging to check in on the fibroids, ensuring they shrank significantly. Additional procedures may be needed to ensure her symptoms don't return.

For Mercy, it's all worth it. She's pleased, too, that her daughter has been with her to witness her mom taking charge of her health. Hopefully, she will never have to deal with these issues—but if she does, Mercy is glad her daughter has more knowledge about reproductive health to help inform her future decisions.

"I will be that voice to women: your life is not over with fibroids," said Mercy. "You don't have to live this way. I would definitely recommend the UAE procedure. I'm living testimony, especially for women of color—don't be afraid."

## What could IR do for you?

Vascular and Interventional Radiology (IR) offers alternatives to traditional surgery for a variety of medical conditions. The team uses the least invasive techniques possible, making only small incisions—which often results in safer outcomes.

### Interventional Radiology at MedStar St. Mary's Hospital offers:

- Treatment for deep vein thrombosis and pulmonary embolism
- Kyphoplasty for spine compression fractures
- Cooled radio frequency ablations for knee, hip, shoulder, and back pain
- Cryoablation/microwave ablation as part of certain cancer treatments (i.e. kidney, liver)
- Men's health: Prostate artery embolization, testicular varicocele embolization
- Women's health: chronic pelvic pain, pelvic congestion syndrome

Call 301-475-6399 to reach our team. Scan this QR code to learn more:





# Summer 2023 calendar

**A fresh perspective on end-of-life care.**  
Your loved one deserves the very best care. Don't delay.

For more information, call **301-448-3863** or visit **MedStarHealth.org/Hospice**

At **Hospice of St. Mary's**, we're redefining how to provide better care for end-of-life patients.

**Our hospice team provides and helps manage:**

- Medications
- In-home visits with RNs and licensed practitioners
- Medical equipment
- Advanced care planning
- And more

**Don't wait to get in touch.** Our hospice team will guide you through your options and help your loved one live every day fully and comfortably.



## Summer 2023 calendar

Class availability is subject to change. After enrolling, you will be notified should a session need to be rescheduled. Because no registration is required for most support groups, please reach out using the phone numbers below to verify if meetings are scheduled as planned.

### Support groups

Health Connections at MedStar St. Mary's Hospital hosts support groups including:

- **Bariatrics** (virtual, second Saturday of each month, 10 a.m.; initial registration required)
- **Lactation** (every Wednesday, 10 a.m. to noon; no registration required)
- **Parkinson's** (second Tuesday of each month, 4:30 p.m.)
- **Stroke Survivors** (second Tuesday of each month, 1 p.m.)

Call 301-475-6019 to learn more or to register.

### Cancer care

**Cancer care support group**  
Meetings held the first and third Wednesday of each month. Call 240-434-7241 to register, or search and join "MedStar St. Mary's Hospital Cancer Support Group" on Facebook.

**Breast cancer support group**  
Held virtually through Microsoft Teams. Upcoming dates include June 5, June 20, July 17, and Aug. 14, all at 6 p.m. To receive an email invite or learn more, please call 301-877-4673.

Visit **Facebook.com/groups/MedStarBreastHealthProgram** for support.

### Diabetes education

**Diabetes Self-Management**  
Four-week class with sessions beginning Sept. 11 and Nov. 6. Classes are held at 5:30 p.m. In this diabetes self-management program, participants can engage in conversations about their experience with diabetes, blood sugar monitoring, healthy eating and activity, and long-term disease management. Call 301-475-6019 to register or learn more.

**Take Control of Diabetes**  
Appointments are offered to meet one-on-one with a registered dietitian. A provider's order for diabetes education is required. Services may be covered by Medicare, Medicaid, and most private insurance plans. Call 301-475-6019 for more information.

**Simple Changes (Pre-diabetes)**  
Begins at 5:30 p.m. Oct. 4. Participate in our free, year-long class designed to eliminate possible diabetes risk factors by making simple, healthier changes in your life. Program includes free body composition screenings, handouts, giveaways, and support between sessions. This one-year program is a combination of weekly and monthly sessions. Call 301-475-6019 to register.

### Childbirth & family education

**Parents-to-Be Workshop**  
Offered monthly: June 3, July 1, and Aug. 5, 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.,

Health Connections, \$100/couple. Combines four traditional parenting classes into a one-day overview. Topics include childbirth, breastfeeding, infant CPR, and practical baby care skills. In-person sessions and online options available. Call 301-475-6019 to sign up.

Please note: some classes require a minimum number of participants to hold the course. If the need arises to cancel a class, we will make every effort to accommodate you on an alternate date.

### Safe Sitter

July 14 and Aug. 11, 8:45 a.m. to 4 p.m., Health Connections, Outpatient Pavilion, \$65 Adolescents 12-14 learn babysitting tips, basic first aid, and CPR. In-person session. Call 301-475-6019 to sign up.

### Pulmonary

**Tobacco Cessation Program**  
Virtual program to help participants quit using tobacco products through behavioral modifications, stress management, and other techniques. Visit **SMCHD.org/Tobacco** to learn more. Visit **MedStarHealth.org/Classes** to learn more about community classes and support groups.

### Juneteeth coming to Lexington Park June 17

The annual St. Mary's County Juneteenth Celebration will be held Saturday, June 17, from noon to 6 p.m. at Lexington Manor Park.

Visit **ucaconline.org** for more information.

25500 Point Lookout Rd.  
Leonardtown, MD 20650

**MedStar St. Mary's Hospital**



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to be removed from future mailings.

## Value-based estate planning with **Jeremy Pharr, J.D.**

Value-based estate planning allows you to leave a lasting impact on the world that reflects who you are and what you stand for. Jeremy Pharr, J.D., of Thompson Associates, works exclusively with nonprofit organizations like MedStar Health to offer value-based estate planning services to individuals who want to make a lasting impact on the world by giving back.

### **What is value-based estate planning?**

Value-based estate planning aligns your personal values and beliefs with your estate planning goals. It requires careful consideration of your legacy and how you want to be remembered, as well as your goals for your loved ones and the causes you care about. The objective is for the culmination of your financial life to become a reflection of your values.

### **What does this type of estate planning look like?**

This type of planning goes beyond simply distributing assets and can involve charitable giving, creating a family legacy, and ensuring that your assets are used in ways that align with your values.

### **How do taxes affect estate planning?**

Many people believe 100% of their estate will go to their heirs, however, the reality is without the proper planning a significant portion can be lost in taxes. The question becomes would you like to shift some of those tax dollars to charities you choose to support.

### **What is a meeting with you like?**

Once a month, I meet with friends and supporters of MedStar Health to develop and complete an estate plan. My job is to answer your questions; I do not draft documents, manage money, sell services or products, or ask you to make a gift. I simply educate and plan. MedStar has paid my entire fee so that they can offer this service to you free of charge. We will meet privately and confidentially through a virtual meeting space to discuss your planning goals as many times as you would like.



**Gratitude matters to you and to us.** Donations made from our community and grateful patients to our non-profit hospital provide additional funding for medical equipment, research, patient care programs, and other essential services that improve the health and well-being of the community. To learn more about value-based estate planning, contact Holly Meyer, director of Marketing, Public Relations & Philanthropy, at **301-475-6010** or email [holly.b.meyer@medstar.net](mailto:holly.b.meyer@medstar.net).