

Winter/Spring 2023

heart *to* heart

Your local guide to good health
from Samaritan Health Services



Radio host says, 'tune in to your body'



From the president

Doug Boysen, JD, MHA
President/Chief Executive Officer

As we step into 2023, it is that time of year when many people develop resolutions. If you count yourself among those making a commitment to change, I hope they include small — or large — steps to living a happier, healthier life. Throughout this issue, you will find tools and tips to help you define and pursue your goals, whatever they may be.

At Samaritan Health Services, our resolution remains the same. We are committed to working together to build healthier communities. No matter where you live, from the Cascades to the Coast, this is our commitment to you.

This year, Samaritan is building healthier communities in three distinct ways.

We're focusing on quality. We continue to welcome new skilled doctors and other clinicians who provide outstanding patient care and to work toward improving access to care when you need it. Our clinical teams are streamlining systems to ensure that the care you and your loved ones receive at Samaritan is the safest that we can deliver. In our hospitals, this means coordinated care from admission through discharge, so patients can focus on healing and feeling better.

We're increasing understanding. By supporting awareness and education in our communities, health issues may be prevented or caught early, giving each person the best chance for a healthy outcome. Look for information this winter centered on heart health as we recognize Heart Month in February.

We're encouraging holistic wellness. Research shows that activities that support body, mind and spirit, can help you stay healthy and heal faster. Learn about the power of pet therapy which is featured in this issue. Look for ArtsCare activities that provide a safe, structured space to express yourself through music, painting, photography and more. Do you spend time browsing health information online? You'll regularly find healthy recipes on Samaritan's website and social media pages so you can explore creative healthy eating in your own kitchen.

Together, we can ensure that each of us and our communities are thriving — whether through traditional or new and creative efforts. I'm looking forward to this new year as Samaritan's commitment to healthy communities continues to unfold.

To your health,

heart *to* heart

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Share your thoughts

Please send your questions and comments to feedback@samhealth.org or to:

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Samaritan Health Services

Good Samaritan Regional Medical Center
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Samaritan Lebanon Community Hospital
Samaritan Medical Group
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SamFit

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On the cover: *Scott and Angie Schuler walk their dog while enjoying a fall afternoon with their children. Learn why they no longer take these moments for granted on page 6.*

In this issue

Healthy habits

- 2 Healthy habits can help offset genetic risk
- 3 Make your resolutions stick with attainable goals
- 4 Kicking these habits packs a punch
- 5 Tools to keep your goals on track

Heart

- 6 Radio host says, 'tune in to your body'
- 8 Your heart is in good hands
- 9 Local woman benefits from advanced cardiac procedure close to home
- 10 Can you reverse heart disease?
- 12 Get key nutrients for optimal health
- 13 Amazing avocado salad with tasty tuna

Prevention

- 14 Shed layers this winter with a chemical peel
- 15 Caffeine – love it or leave it?
- 16 Coping with emotional distress
- 17 Pet therapy has healing power

Your health

- 18 Local cancer survivor is thriving, giving back
- 19 Breast cancer knowledge is power
- 20 Grandparenting is good for you
- 21 Nitrous oxide offered in-clinic for urology services
- 21 Join Samaritan's Patient and Family Advisory Council
- 22 Medicare tips for new enrollees
- 23 Passion for plants blooms on hospital campus

Building healthier communities together

- 24 Samaritan welcomes new health care providers
- 26 Expanded doula program improves birth outcomes and experiences
- 28 Endowments: A perpetual ripple of generosity

Keeping you healthy

- 29 Resources to help you be well



Scan me to learn more! Open the camera app on your smart phone or other device and scan the image to connect to more information on [samhealth.org](https://www.samhealth.org).



Connect with us on social media!

What does it mean to be healthy?

I'm delighted to have this opportunity as the new editor in chief of Heart to Heart to be a steward of Samaritan Health Services, delivering health tips and inspiring stories right to your mailbox.

After years of living during a global pandemic, I wonder just what does it mean to be healthy today?

For decades, people have discussed the importance of well-being in terms of mind, body and spirit. This holistic approach is being embraced more broadly as the pandemic undoubtedly made an impact on all three.

Body: Our bodies tell us when something is wrong through pain, discomfort or irritation. It is critical to listen to our bodies and seek care when needed. But sometimes those messages are not clear, making it crucial to regularly engage with a provider and complete screenings to prevent or detect problems early.

Mind: Across the country, the need for behavioral and mental health services is on the rise. If you want or need help, whether that is a shoulder to lean on or guidance from a medical professional, don't put it off.

Spirit: Identifying what brings you joy and doing it can make the difference between a sad day and a happy one. Feeding your spirit doesn't have to be complicated. It can be as simple as taking time to read a book or eat a meal with family.

For me, walking outside regularly helps in all three ways. Moving my body helps strengthen my heart and muscles. It helps clear my mind when I'm overthinking or experiencing stress. And being outside feeds my spirit.

No matter how you choose to support your health this year, Samaritan is here to support you.



To your health,

Kimberly Schauer
Vice President, Marketing
& Communications

Healthy habits can help offset genetic risk

If health were determined solely by genetics, then what you eat or if you exercise would not matter.

And wouldn't it be great if healthy habits alone could prevent diseases like cancer, heart disease and diabetes?

When it comes to staying healthy, lifestyle and genetics are both important factors.

However, recent studies have shown that lifestyle has an even bigger effect on our health than previously thought. Unlike genetics, habits are things you can change, so health care providers are talking to patients about healthy lifestyle improvements.

"Lifestyle changes can have a tremendous impact on our health," said Brandi Boller, DO, a family physician at Samaritan.

Even small steps can lead to lasting health results.

"Adding a few minutes of walking to your day, drinking more water and consuming less processed food can really add up," Dr. Boller said.

Dr. Boller often counsels patients about diet, sleep and exercise, as well as tobacco and alcohol use. These conversations are guided by a person's goals, circumstances and motivation.

"Some people want to feel better, or breathe better or have more strength, energy or endurance," she said. "Others want to take less medication or increase their longevity and quality of life."

Prevention and early detection are keys to maintaining health through regular checkups and health screenings. Because there is a hereditary component to conditions such as cancer, heart disease and diabetes, care providers pay attention to family health histories.

Having a genetic predisposition to a medical condition does not always mean you will develop that condition. It is often lifestyle that determines whether the illness will manifest. Many chronic, genetic conditions, including diabetes and hypertension, can be reversed with lifestyle changes.

Samaritan Endocrinologist Melanie Jackson, MD, focuses on lifestyle interventions first.

"We see where they are with their health now and help them to see what the next step might be," Dr. Jackson said.

There isn't one plan for ideal health.

"With managing conditions like diabetes, the work is on the patient and I'm giving them education and advice," she said.

Genes do play a role in the risk for many diseases, including heart disease, the leading cause of death for both men and women in the U.S. But research has shown that up to 80% of heart disease may be preventable through lifestyle changes.

Samaritan Cardiologist Tyler Earley, DO, chose his specialty to help people prevent heart disease. He assesses the risks of heart disease through a patient's personal risk factors or a cardiac CT. This scan can visualize plaque buildup in the heart, which is used to guide treatment options, such as lifestyle interventions and medicines when necessary.



“Exercise and nutrition are proven to help people live longer and better,” Dr. Earley said.

Samaritan Internist Stacy Braff, MD, transformed her life from “semi-couch potato” to triathlete and ultramarathon runner. She now helps patients address the root cause of many of their illnesses through lifestyle changes.

“I made some life changes that will likely keep me healthier and prolong my lifespan,” Dr. Braff said. “Whether your desire is to walk around the block without having to stop, improve chronic medical problems, be around to watch your grandchildren grow or even run a marathon, your doctor can help you achieve your goals.”

Make your resolutions stick with attainable goals

Almost half of Americans make an annual New Year’s resolution, yet far fewer meet their goals.

Only about 25% of resolutions are kept past the first week in January and just 8% are achieved long term.

Why don’t more resolutions stick?

Often, we overlook the steps that lead to the goal, according to Brady Vernon, a health and fitness trainer at SamFit. We also set ourselves up to fail with goals that are too hard, require too much sacrifice or are unrealistic.

“A goal should be made up of a several smaller goals,” Vernon said.

If you resolve to lose weight, include supporting goals, such as walking for 10 minutes after lunch. If you want to eat more whole foods, add broccoli to your takeout meal. If you want more physical exercise, add a walk around the block to your nighttime routine.

“The person you are today is because of practice,” Vernon said. “It’s going to take focus over a long period of time to meet your goal.”

Being able to pivot when circumstances change is also vital. Vernon recalled his career aspirations from middle school, with a laugh.

“I’m sure glad I didn’t keep trying to become a professional basketball player,” he said. “Revisit your goals often. Those that are most important will keep making their way to your list.”

Not all goals can be measured on a scale or in the mirror. If you’re struggling or not seeing results, think about all the other ways your efforts are benefitting you. People who make lasting changes are persistent and have a good attitude.

“Seeing the glass half full is a big advantage,” Vernon said. “Setbacks are inevitable. How you interpret them is up to you.”

To stay accountable, assemble supporters. Find a gym buddy, hire a trainer or invite a coworker or family member to join you.

“Let them know your intentions. Update them regularly and let them cheer you on!” Vernon said.

You also don’t need to wait for the new year to set a goal.

“Take action the moment you decide on a goal,” Vernon said. “Whatever it is, remember to accept yourself with compassion and self-love.”

Learn more about SamFit health and fitness centers, including classes and personal training at [SamFit.org](https://www.samfit.org).



Kicking these habits packs a punch



Drinking soda and sugary drinks

Soda consumption remains the leading source of sugar in American diets although it has decreased in the past few decades, replaced by sports drinks and coffee beverages. Choosing drinks without sugar and drinking soda and sugary drinks in moderation can reduce your chances of developing Type 2 diabetes, heart disease, kidney disease, liver disease, tooth decay, gout and arthritis. While switching to diet soda offers less or no sugar, it can affect digestion and activate sweet cravings. Drinking four to six, preferably up to eight, cups of water per day will keep your brain and body in peak performance.

Insufficient sleep

Sleep deprivation is one of the most common health problems. Most adults need seven to nine hours a night of uninterrupted sleep. Adequate sleep helps you feel more satisfied with life and has numerous health benefits. Sleep strengthens your heart, boosts your immune system, helps prevent weight gain, improves your mood and memory, and increases productivity and performance. Plus, it avoids the dangers caused by lack of sleep, including increased health risks and accidents.



Sedentary lifestyle

Physical inactivity poses one of the greatest health risks. In the U.S., about 25% of people are inactive. Engaging in moderate activity such as walking or strengthening exercises can improve health in many ways, including controlling weight, preventing diseases, boosting energy and promoting better sleep. People who exercise regularly are also happier and more satisfied with their lives because it improves mood and feelings of well-being.



Nicotine use

Quitting smoking is key to improving your health at any age. Even if you've smoked for many years, you will benefit from quitting. You'll also be protecting others from the risks associated with secondhand smoke. Quitting reduces the risk of disease and premature death from heart disease, stroke, cancer, emphysema and other health conditions. After quitting, the nicotine receptors in your brain return to a normal level in a few weeks, rewiring your brain and breaking the cycle of addiction. Plus, quitting minimizes vision complications, clears up skin blemishes, and strengthens your immune system among other numerous health benefits.





Tools to keep your goals on track

You can't improve what you don't measure, the saying goes.

One of the greatest predictors of achieving and maintaining a goal is if it is tracked. And whether you're recording with a pen and paper, an online program or an app, the important thing is to find what works for you.

While technology can't do all the work, these free smart phone or computer-based apps can keep you motivated and informed of your progress.

ATracker — This time tracker can help boost your productivity and achieve your goals. With minimal setup, the interface is customizable. With one tap, stop and start the tracker and organize your day.

Coach.me — Set targets and reminders for your habits with this productivity tracker. With external accountability supported by positive reinforcement, sustain personal, career and health goals.

Goals On Track — High achievers, this is your goal management program. Set SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound) goals with action plans and milestones. Supports personal and business goals.

HabitBull — Break bad habits or build positive ones with this productivity tool. Access forums and receive motivational images, quotes and advice. Create graphs from your data and explore analytic tools.

Habitica — Turn building habits into a game with rewards and consequences to motivate. A social network of more than 4 million Habitica users can help you improve health, fitness, school, work and more.

Habit Tracker — Get suggestions to help you reach your goals until you check off your to-do tasks. It's easy to set up and the charting feature helps you visualize your progress.

Notion — This flexible platform offers template options for you to customize and organize your goals. You can choose more or less guidance based on your needs.

Productive — Build healthy habits with weekly challenges tailored to help you improve your life. Fully customizable, this app tracks your tasks so you can achieve your goals.

Strides — Step-by-step goal setting helps to organize and track your habits in a flexible app. User-friendly with reminders to hold you accountable and charts to keep you motivated.

Today — If you're motivated by visuals, this simple and intuitive habit tracker helps you stay organized and build habits using behavioral science. Create a custom dashboard and measure your progress on a simple and intuitive platform.

Toodledo — Improve your productivity by organizing your to-do lists and notes while tracking your habits and setting goals. You can even collaborate with others and sync your data on all your devices.

Way of Life — This habit tracker was voted best Motivational App for changing habits. Features include challenges, reminders, charts and a scoreboard for feedback. Fast, efficient and intuitive, you will be able to see and act on lifestyle trends.

Radio host says, 'tune in to your body'

At their home outside of Lebanon, Angie Schuler leafed through a journal documenting the days her husband, Scott Schuler was in the hospital in late 2021. After several handwritten pages days turned into weeks and the entries gave way to cards sent from well-wishers.

"And there's more that I haven't put in here yet," said Angie. "One lady sent a card every day."

Angie and Scott, both local radio personalities, were overwhelmed by the generosity of strangers while Scott recovered from the effects of blood clots that caused him to stay 28 days at Good Samaritan Regional Medical Center in Corvallis.



Building
time
together

This journey began at home one evening after working his job at popular country music station KRKT, when Scott felt his heart beating very fast. Concerned, Scott drove himself to the hospital to get the irregular heartbeat checked out.

Scott texted his wife from Samaritan Lebanon Community Hospital that the doctor said his heart was in AFib, also known as atrial fibrillation. AFib is a type of arrhythmia, or fast and irregular beats from the upper chambers of the heart.

“I had never heard of that,” said Angie. “He said, ‘yeah, they’re going to shock my heart back into rhythm.’”

“It kind of worked for a few days and then the issue came back,” Scott said.

This prompted Scott to do his own research, leading him to suspect he had a blood clot.

After conferring with his doctor, Scott returned to the hospital for diagnostic imaging. The results confirmed his suspicion. He had a blood clot in his leg. Returning home was not an option as his care team was concerned about the blood clot moving.

Angie stopped by the hospital to see Scott before he was transported to Corvallis.

“I could tell he was scared,” said Angie. “He obviously had more information than I did, and I think he was not giving me all the information because he didn’t want me to be scared.”

Several days later, Angie and their five children were preparing for Scott’s homecoming and birthday celebration. Those plans came to a halt when she got a call that Scott was in the ICU.

“Thirty minutes after the first call, I got the second call, which was ... he coded, and they’re doing CPR,” said Angie. “I think I kind of went into shock.”

“It was the best place to be coding,” said Scott. “They performed CPR and got me back.”

“He got off life support on his birthday,” said Angie. “He was in the hospital through Christmas, which we kind of suspected he would be.”

Snow fell late Christmas evening. By morning valley areas were covered with several inches of snow, which prompted Angie to call Scott instead of visit. Angie’s calls to Scott’s cell phone went unanswered so she called the nurses station and learned that he had just been moved back to ICU.

Concerned about driving in the snow, Angie asked her sister-in-law who lived closer to check on Scott.

“That night at about 11, she called and said that he was having a stroke,” said Angie. “She noticed he started acting funny, she got the attention of the nurses. They treated him really fast.”

Throughout Scott’s stay Angie was by his side. For rest periods she would walk down the hill to an RV on the grounds of the Mario Pastega House. The hospitality house provides, at a nominal fee, RV hookups often for patients and families who live outside the Corvallis area.

“I did sleep in the RV the first night,” said Angie. “After that, it was a command center for family and friends who wanted to come but weren’t allowed to go to visit him due to COVID-19 restrictions.”

Eight months after coming home, Scott and Angie were out on the links golfing with friends during the annual KRKT golf tournament.

“I don’t have a limp. I don’t have a cane. I don’t have anything like that,” Scott said. “But there’s little things with my speech. I used to be able to just wing it, now I have to stop and figure out exactly what I’m going to say.”

Scott now walks daily with a goal of 8,000 to 9,000 steps. He has lost 70 pounds off his 6-foot-6-inch frame. He eats healthier and has eliminated alcohol and most caffeine from his diet.

Now on anticoagulants, which help prevent blood clots and strokes, Scott adds frequent blood checks to his routine.

Scott is grateful for the care he received. “I remember the faces and the people, and I got to know them pretty well, the nurses and staff were all awesome.”

Scott and Angie Schuler mic up to retell their journey through Scott’s health scare and recovery at samhealth.org/ScottS.

Your heart is in good hands

Outstanding cardiac care is what you'll receive at Samaritan Heart Center and cardiology clinics serving Benton, Lincoln and Linn counties.

The team of doctors, surgeons and other health care providers at Samaritan Heart Center are dedicated experts offering compassionate and state-of-the-art cardiac care.

Joining the cardiology team:



Tyler Earley, DO, is trained in cardiac CT, used to evaluate the risk of cardiovascular disease. He earned a bachelor's degree at Brigham Young University and a medical degree at Western University of Health Sciences College of Osteopathic Medicine of the Pacific-Northwest. He completed residency training at University of New Mexico School of Medicine and a fellowship at Good Samaritan Regional Medical Center, a three-year, post-graduate accredited program that prepares physicians to be outstanding clinical adult cardiologists.



Bryan Miller, PA-C, is a physician assistant specializing in cardiovascular disease. He earned a bachelor's degree at University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill and a master's degree in physician assistant studies at South College Knoxville. He completed a fellowship to become an advanced practice provider in pediatric and congenital heart disease at Duke University Medical Center.



Melissa Robinson, MD, is an electrophysiologist specializing in heart rhythm disorders. She provides pacemaker and defibrillator care. She earned a bachelor's degree at University of California Berkeley and a medical degree at University of California San Francisco. She completed residency training at University California Davis Medical Center, a fellowship

in cardiovascular medicine at University of California at Davis and a fellowship in cardiac electrophysiology at University of Pennsylvania Hospital.



William Stout, DO, is an interventional cardiologist. He performs non-surgical procedures to diagnose and treat heart conditions. He earned a bachelor's degree at University of Texas at Austin and a medical degree at University of North Texas Health Science Center. He completed residency training at Kent Hospital and fellowships in cardiology at Good Samaritan Regional Medical Center and in interventional cardiology at Oklahoma State University Center for Health Sciences.



Gregory Wood, MD, specializes in advanced heart failure and transplant cardiology. He manages all stages of heart failure, providing advanced therapies such as transplant and left ventricular assist devices and remote monitoring with pulmonary artery pressure sensor devices. He earned a degree at Gonzaga University and a master's degree and a medical degree at University of Washington. He completed residency training at University of California at Davis Medical Center and fellowships at University Washington Medical Center and University of Illinois at Chicago.

Samaritan Heart Center provides a wide range of advanced cardiology and cardiac surgery services. Our affiliation with Stanford Health Care provides access to even more life-saving cardiac procedures for local patients. For more information, visit samhealth.org/Heart.

Local woman benefits from advanced cardiac procedure close to home

Last winter, believing she had “long COVID,” Pamela Robinson of Newport struggled through months of feeling tired and out of breath. She had a hard time with normal activities such as going on walks or to the grocery store.

“I just wasn’t getting better,” Robinson said. “Then they started looking at my heart.”

Years ago, she’d had open-heart surgery to replace her mitral valve. An echocardiogram last spring showed the prosthetic valve had narrowed severely.

Fortunately, this time open-heart surgery was not her only option. With a special operating room constructed at Good Samaritan Regional Medical Center in 2019 and an interventional cardiologist with the necessary experience, Robinson became the hospital’s first patient to receive a valve-in-valve transcatheter mitral valve replacement.

The minimally invasive procedure was performed in May by Interventional Cardiologist Ashwat Dhillon, MD, of Samaritan Heart Center. The procedure is done with no incisions, rather a catheter is inserted percutaneously (meaning through the skin with a needle) into the femoral vein in the groin.

With the help of high-tech fluoroscopy imaging in the state-of-the-art operating room, Dr. Dhillon guided the transcatheter heart valve via a catheter to the defective mitral valve in Robinson’s heart. The new valve was deployed within the old, degenerated valve and immediately began to function normally.

Robinson was able to go home the next day.

“I felt better right away,” she said. “I was able to walk, I was able to sleep. I got my appetite back and just started enjoying life again.”



For Dr. Dhillon, it is gratifying to be able to offer advanced, minimally invasive heart procedures to patients in our region, including other life-saving procedures like transcatheter aortic valve replacement (commonly known as TAVR) at Good Samaritan Regional Medical Center.

“We have an excellent heart valve team consisting of general cardiologists, cardiac surgeons and interventional cardiologists,” said Dr. Dhillon. “The team reviewed all the clinical data for Pam and was able to provide her with treatment near her home, helped her avoid a long hospitalization and she was able to go home after an overnight stay.”

Robinson completed the cardiac rehabilitation program at Samaritan Pacific Communities Hospital and this summer she sold her house in Newport and is moving to the valley to be closer to her children and grandchildren who live in Corvallis and Albany. She is especially looking forward to being able to help her son and daughter-in-law with their young daughters, ages 2 and 4.

“Now I can pick them up and play with them and push them on the swing,” Robinson said. “It is just those little things that you take for granted that I am able to do now.”

Samaritan Heart Center provides a wide range of advanced cardiology and cardiac surgery services, serving Benton, Lincoln and Linn counties. Its affiliation with Stanford Health Care provides access to even more life-saving cardiac procedures for local patients. For more information, visit samhealth.org/Heart or call 888-263-6092.

Above: Pamela Robinson with granddaughters Presley (left) and Sarah Belle (right).



Can you re

Heart disease is the leading cause of death in the United States. We know that heart disease can be prevented, but can it also be reversed?

“A heart disease diagnosis is not a death sentence. Depending on the type of heart disease, some conditions — or at least symptoms — are reversible,” said Cardiologist Greg Wood, MD, from Samaritan Cardiology in Corvallis.

Coronary artery disease is common condition where the blood vessels that supply the heart are narrowed or hardened.

Symptoms:

- Angina or chest pain that spreads across the chest.
- Shortness of breath.
- Nausea.
- Sweating.
- Fatigue.
- Rapid heartbeat.
- Weakness or dizziness.
- Heart attack.

Is it reversible? Not entirely.

“Symptoms may be reversible with lifestyle changes, medications or revascularization (stents or bypass); but the disease itself is difficult to reverse,” said Dr. Wood. “If you smoke, stop. Keeping your cholesterol in check by lifestyle changes and medications can slow progression of coronary plaques or blockages. Treating other diseases which impact coronary artery disease, such as diabetes, can also help.”

Heart failure is a progressive form of heart disease that occurs when the heart muscle cannot pump enough blood to meet the blood and oxygen needs of the body.

Symptoms:

- Congested lungs.
- Fluid and water retention.
- Shortness of breath.
- Dizziness, tiredness, weakness, confusion and fainting.
- Rapid or irregular heartbeat.
- Weight gain.
- Chest pain.



Reversible heart disease?

Is it reversible? Yes, in some cases.

“If reversible causes of heart failure, such as thyroid disease or rhythm disorders, are treated, then it is possible for the heart to return to normal function,” said Dr. Wood. “Beta blockers can help to improve heart function, reduce mortality, improve symptoms of heart failure and improve quality of life.”

Heart rhythm disorders include bradycardia, atrial fibrillation and ventricular tachycardia and result in the feeling of a racing heart or the heart skipping a beat.

Symptoms:

- Irregular heartbeat.
- Fatigue.
- Shortness of breath.
- Dizziness.

Is it reversible? Yes.

“The good news is that while heart rhythm issues can impact quality of life, most are not life threatening,” said Dr. Wood. “Depending on type of rhythm disorder, cardioversion [a procedure for restoring regular heart rhythm] or medications can reduce or alleviate symptoms. In the past, surgeries were used to treat some rhythm disorders, but many can now be cured with catheter-based ablation procedures.”

Learn how to optimize your heart health

Join Samaritan Heart Center Cardiology Fellow Michael Chen, DO, for a webinar on heart-healthy living on Wednesday, Feb. 22, at noon. Learn time-tested ways to keep your heart healthy, as well as the latest in the science of heart health. Register at samhealth.org/BeHealthy.

Structural heart disease refers to abnormalities that have occurred in the heart’s structure, including the valves, walls, muscles or blood vessels.

Symptoms:

- Chest pain/tightening.
- Fatigue.
- Heart palpitations/irregular heartbeat.
- High blood pressure.
- Kidney dysfunction.

Is it reversible? Not entirely.

Treatment of structural heart disease depends on the symptoms and severity, and may include medications, such as blood thinners, valve repair or valve replacement.

“In the past, valve issues often meant open-heart surgery,” said Dr. Wood. “Today, less invasive procedures like transcatheter aortic valve replacement can alleviate symptoms and improve overall quality of life.”

Lifestyle changes such as improved diet and exercise can help to reduce the symptoms of structural heart disease.

Know your risk

Understanding the following risks for heart disease and making changes in your life to control those risks, are important steps to overall good heart health.

- High blood pressure.
- High cholesterol.
- Smoking.
- Diabetes.
- Being overweight/obese.
- Age.
- Poor diet and lack of physical activity.
- Excessive alcohol use.
- Family history.

“The more risk factors you have, the greater chance you have of heart-related problems,” said Dr. Wood. “While family history and age may be out of your control, there are steps you can take to stay out of the cardiologist office such as eating well, exercising regularly, not smoking and keeping cholesterol, stress and blood pressure low.”



Get key nutrients for optimal health

The typical American diet is laden with highly processed food with limited nutritional value. Getting your nutrients from a variety of food and supplement sources is key to staving off deficiencies.

Eat a diet rich in these top four nutrients:

Vitamin D — often called the sunshine vitamin. With the region's gray winters, it's nearly impossible to get adequate sunshine daily. Vitamin D is critical for healthy bones, and calcium can only be absorbed when vitamin D is present. It is also an anti-inflammatory, antioxidant, supports immune health, muscle function and brain cell activity. Your clinician can test your Vitamin D level and determine if you need supplementation. Vitamin D is found naturally in fatty fish (salmon, mackerel and sardines), beef liver, mushrooms, egg yolks and fortified dairy products.

Magnesium — a mineral that helps regulate protein synthesis, muscle and nerve function, blood glucose control, and blood pressure. Magnesium is found in plant and animal foods. The highest concentrations are in pumpkin seeds, chia seeds, roasted almonds and spinach.

Potassium — is needed for proper kidney and heart function, muscle contraction and nerve transmission. Potassium and sodium are closely interconnected but have opposite effects in the body. People who ate a high-sodium, low-potassium diets have a higher risk of dying from heart attack. By making key dietary changes you can lower your risk. Eat more fresh vegetables and fruits, which are naturally high in potassium and low in sodium, but eat less bread, cheese, processed meat and other processed foods.

Calcium — a mineral associated with healthy bones and teeth, also plays an important role in blood clotting, muscle contraction, and regulating normal heart rhythms and nerve functions. Calcium is not only found in dairy products but also in fruits, leafy greens, beans, nuts and some starchy vegetables.

If you're looking for a healthy diet that focuses on including these key vitamins and minerals, check out the DASH diet. Watch Samaritan dietitians explain the DASH diet at samhealth.org/HealthSeminars. Search for the video titled Lower Blood Pressure with the DASH Diet.





Amazing avocado salad

with tasty tuna

Yum, avocado! When just slightly ripe it has a light citrus taste. When perfectly ripe, avocado can go in and on just about any recipe. When a tad bit overripe, it can be mashed into other delectable dishes.

Be careful, though. Avocado is higher in calories than you may expect, with 50 calories per ounce. They are also high in fat, although it is the “good” monounsaturated kind that helps lower bad cholesterol.

“Along with healthy fat, avocados contain fiber, potassium, folate, vitamins C, E and K and phytonutrients called carotenoids, which benefit eye health,” said Becky Johnson, registered dietitian and Nutrition Services manager at Samaritan North Lincoln Hospital. “Research suggests that diets high in monounsaturated fats, including avocado, may help improve blood lipid profiles and maintain glycemic control.”

Visit samhealth.org/RecipeMinute for more healthy recipes.

Preparation time: 15 minutes | Servings: 4 | Nutrition information per 1 cup serving: 210 calories, 5g carbohydrates, 11g fat, 25g protein.

Here’s how to make this quick and easy recipe:

Ingredients

- ❑ 1 ripe, fresh avocado, halved, pitted, peeled and diced.
- ❑ 3 (5-ounce) cans of water-packed tuna, drained.
- ❑ 2 scallions, thinly sliced.
- ❑ 3 radishes, thinly sliced.
- ❑ 2 teaspoons capers.
- ❑ 2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice.
- ❑ 1 tablespoon olive oil.
- ❑ 1/3 cup fresh parsley leaves.

Directions

1. In a medium bowl, combine all ingredients and toss gently.
2. Enjoy with crackers or over mixed greens.

Shed layers this winter with a *chemical peel*

Winter is when we layer clothes to keep warm.

But it's also the perfect time to shed layers of dead skin with a chemical peel, according to Ashley Johnson, a licensed advanced aesthetician at Samaritan Plastic, Reconstructive & Hand Surgery.

During cooler weather, the skin becomes drier. Also, we typically have less exposure to the sun this time of year, which makes aftercare safer and easy.

“Skin’s metabolism slows as we age, and new skin cells do not regenerate as often,” said Johnson. “A chemical peel accelerates the skin’s natural cycle of regeneration, tricking it into acting younger, producing more collagen and elastin than it would otherwise.”

Peels work to slough off layers of dead, damaged skin cells, while boosting new cell regeneration. This in-office procedure takes about an hour with no downtime and is a great way to achieve healthier skin and a more youthful complexion.

“If you want to improve your skin’s overall appearance, soften fine lines, correct discoloration, tighten pores and achieve smoother texture, a chemical peel is a great option,” Johnson said.

Peels are done at different depths, from light to deep. A light or superficial peel removes the outermost layer of skin. Medium-depth peels are still superficial, but penetrate deeper into the layers of the skin, creating an increased cell turnover and a greater increase in collagen production.

Peels are a good option for pigmentation caused by hormones, such as pregnancy, birth control or menopause.

Clients as young as their teens can benefit from treatment of acne or acne scarring, and as early as their 20s for preventive, antiaging benefits. They are also a good way to stay ahead of brown spots.

To decide if a peel is right for you, discuss your medications, health history and expectations with your clinician.

Schedule a skin consultation or book a peel at Samaritan Plastic, Reconstructive & Hand Surgery, 541-768-4370.



Caffeine — love it or leave it?

Do you love the boost you get from your favorite beverage, but not sure it's good for you? Find out if you should caffeinate or not.

For most people, caffeine's effects can be felt about 15 minutes after consumption with blood levels peaking about one hour later, staying at this level for several hours. Six hours after consuming caffeine, half of it remains in your body — taking up to 10 hours to completely clear caffeine from your bloodstream.

The caffeine amounts in food and drink vary. For coffee and tea, the amount of caffeine per cup depends on the brand, the type of beans or leaves used, how it is prepared and how long it steeps. Coffee can have just 2 milligrams of caffeine (decaf coffee) per cup, and as much as 200 milligrams per cup. Tea ranges from 9 to 110 milligrams. Twelve ounces of soda usually has 30 to 60 milligrams, and eight ounces of an energy drink has between 50 and 160.

Good news for coffee drinkers, according to Physician Assistant Bryan Miller from Samaritan Heart Center: medical journals tout the antioxidant benefits of coffee. Recent studies found that female coffee drinkers are less likely to die from coronary artery disease, stroke, diabetes, Alzheimer's and kidney disease.

So, drink to your heart's content? Not exactly. Up to 400 milligrams of caffeine appears to be safe for most healthy adults. Excessive caffeine, however, can cause jitters, increase heart rate, raise blood pressure, cause anxiety, headaches, irritability and make falling asleep difficult. Remember too, sugar-laden drinks increase blood sugar, inflammation and are generally to be avoided.

If you chose to go decaf but still enjoy your coffee or tea, purchase those using Swiss water caffeine extraction. This eliminates exposure to chemicals used in the typical decaffeination process.

Do you really need caffeine? Try tapering off slowly and see how your body responds. You may just like the way you feel.



Coping with emotional distress



Everyone has moments where they feel sad or down. Emotional distress is generally a temporary and natural response to upsetting or stressful events. While causes and signs vary from person to person, symptoms commonly fall under the categories of depression and anxiety.

“A hallmark characteristic of depression is an inability to feel joy. If you’re depressed, you may no longer find happiness in things you enjoy,” said Helen Beaman, licensed clinical social worker with Samaritan’s coastal clinics. “Also, interacting with others can feel like a ton of work, so isolation is common. You may have a shorter fuse and get your feathers ruffled quickly over things that normally would not affect you.”

Apathy, loss of motivation, relationship problems and physical symptoms such as changes in sleep and eating habits are common signs of both depression and anxiety. Anxiety is often accompanied by feelings of uneasiness, being on edge or physical tension. Some may even feel jittery, get tingling sensations in a limb or have gastrointestinal issues.

How can you cope with emotional distress? Beaman recommends calling on skills that have worked for you in the past.

“All of us have tools to manage emotional distress, which can be empowering when we feel scared or sad,” said Beaman.

Some common coping mechanisms include:

- Listening to music.
- Being active.
- Journaling.
- Distractions like binge watching a TV show.
- Calling on your faith.
- Meditation.

“Do what works for you. For example, being active doesn’t mean beginning an intense exercise regimen,” said Beaman.

“Going bowling, taking a short walk, turning on music and dancing around the house – it’s whatever works to get you moving and helps you feel a little bit better each day.”

If symptoms of depression or anxiety linger, getting support can go a long way toward finding relief.

“There’s no need to let yourself suffer,” said Beaman. “If you know you need help, call your doctor or make an appointment with a mental health professional. We have interventions like short-term medication and behavioral strategies that can help you depending on what you are comfortable with.”

While mental health awareness has increased in recent years, Beaman points out that for some there is still a stigma attached to getting help.

“If someone has a physical ailment requiring medical care, it’s a no-brainer to see a doctor. If you’re diagnosed with Type 2 diabetes, for example, you wouldn’t think of not taking insulin or checking your blood glucose,” said Beaman. “The same is true for mental health. If you need care, it’s okay and important to go get the help you need.”

For some, emotional distress can become so overwhelming and extreme they may begin to dwell on suicide. If you find yourself losing control and feeling suicidal, talk with a loved one and tell them how you’re feeling, get emergency help or call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline 800-273-TALK or 988.

If you have concerns about a loved one being suicidal, Beaman stresses the importance of using direct language with them.

“If you ask someone if they are considering hurting themselves, that is not the same as directly asking if they are thinking about killing themselves. Hurting oneself can mean many different things,” said Beaman. “And, without directly asking the question if someone is suicidal, we may miss the mark in terms of getting someone to talk about where they’re really at mentally.”

To learn more about Samaritan’s behavioral health services at samhealth.org/MentalWellness.

Pet therapy has healing power



Pet therapy is present at most Samaritan-affiliated hospitals and for nearly two decades dogs have walked through the halls of Good Samaritan Regional Medical Center comforting patients and staff as part of a pet therapy program. Although the program took a hiatus during the COVID-19 pandemic, it is slowly coming back, starting with therapy for staff.

A recent study published in the journal *PLOS ONE* shows that a 10-minute visit from a therapy dog can help relieve patients' pain in the emergency room.

The University of Saskatchewan study looked at emergency room patients who were visited by a therapy dog. Those seen by the canines reported less pain than those who did not receive a therapy dog visit.

At Good Sam, the dogs currently visit staff weekly in the Elizabeth Starker Cameron Healing Garden.

"You feel the stress melt off," said Kiana Rust while visiting a whippet named Jackson. "I work in the video monitoring

Above: Samaritan staff take turns petting an eager therapy dog.
Right: Jackson, a whippet, makes a regular appearance at Good Samaritan with her handler Jacque Barrington.

department. We get a lot of interaction over the screen, but not a lot in person. I like being able to come say hello to some of the staff."

The program, which has been around since the mid-1990s, uses therapy dogs certified through the Alliance of Therapy Dogs. Over time, the program grew to include other patient care areas including the cancer center.

"I receive my therapy by looking out my window and seeing employees engaging with the pet therapy dogs," said Luanne Barnes, director of volunteer services. "It is really heartwarming as it benefits coworkers and the patients they care for."

Currently nine dogs and handlers participate in the program with at least two scheduled for each of the sessions with staff.

"You can just see the staff member relax," said Melinda Gibbins, volunteer coordinator. "You can see their mind empty and just focus on that immediate moment."

Staff members pet and snuggle with the dogs and engage in conversations with their handlers during the current lunch time sessions.

"Coming out, petting a dog and getting some love, reminds you that this is a loving environment," said Marissa Alger, clinic technician.



Local cancer survivor is thriving, *giving back*



From left: *Timothy Rodriguez, Georgiana Rodriguez and William Rodriguez.*

Mind over matter

Attitude is half the battle. That is the mindset Georgiana Rodriguez, 54, of Albany has as she celebrates her 11-year milestone as a breast cancer survivor.

“While I may still take pause and quietly remember July 17 with each passing year, I made the decision early on to not let cancer consume me or to let it have all the space,” Rodriguez said.

Over the course of two years after her diagnosis in 2011, Rodriguez underwent surgery, chemotherapy, radiation and a complete mastectomy followed by reconstructive surgery. With the cancer completely gone, follow-up treatment included regular visits with her oncologist and taking the estrogen modulator Tamoxifen every day for many years, which she completed just this year.

“I chose to embrace the beauty of life and celebrate the many other joyous milestones it has to offer,” she said.

Rodriguez shared, through tears of happiness, her gratitude for having the ability to hold tight to the many joys in her life — adventures with her husband Willie of 32 years, watching her son Timothy, now 25 years old, grow into an amazing human being and the many wet kisses from her puppy, River.

Music stirs the soul, helps others

With a passion for song, Rodriguez uses her talent for singing to benefit others struggling with cancer.

A few years back, she partnered with Nancy Higgins, a pianist who also experienced a loss to cancer. Together, the two women hosted a Christmas concert and released a CD.

All proceeds benefited the Samaritan Cancer Resource Center. The concert raised nearly \$10,000 that went directly to helping patients.

“Nobody deserves cancer, but everyone deserves to have the resources to help them beat it,” Rodriguez said.

Now part of a musical trio, the River City Chicks, Rodriguez and her partners Nancy Higgins and Cheryl Leckie recently dedicated one of their concerts to benefit cancer patients.

“We are so fortunate for the good people of the community that joined,” Rodriguez said. “By the looks of the contribution jar, it was apparent that many gave more than the suggested \$25!”

The trio have plans to hold similar concerts sometime in early 2023.

Value of the patient voice

When the Samaritan Cancer Program formed a Patient and Family Advisory Council for cancer care, Rodriguez was one of the first members to join.

“I’ve had the fortunate opportunity to serve as mentor to others who have been touched by cancer,” said Rodriguez. “So, when the advisory council was formed it seemed like a natural fit.”

Comprised of cancer survivors and caregivers, the cancer program’s advisory council, alongside staff from the Samaritan Cancer Program, discuss opportunities to improve the patient experience and ways to consistently achieve compassionate, patient-centered cancer care and improved outcomes.

“As a cancer survivor, I have firsthand experience,” Rodriguez said. “And it is hugely important to be able to speak up, be heard and share input from a patient perspective.”

Each Patient and Family Advisory Council member’s viewpoint is unique and having more perspectives is what makes the council so valuable.

Learn more about the Samaritan Cancer Program at samhealth.org/Cancer.

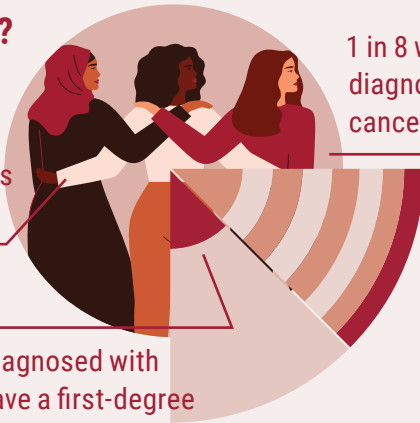
Interested in joining a Patient and Family Advisory Council? Send an email to SHSServiceExcellence@samhealth.org or scan the related QR code on page 21.

Breast cancer knowledge is power

Apart from skin cancer, breast cancer is the most common cancer among women in the U.S. This is what you need to know about breast cancer and what actions can you take to help reduce your risk of this disease.

Who is impacted?

Breast cancer affects women of all races.



1 in 8 women will be diagnosed with breast cancer in their lifetime.

15% of women diagnosed with breast cancer have a first-degree relative with breast cancer.

Why technology matters?

3D mammography improves accuracy and decreases the likelihood that you get called back unnecessarily for further examination.



How can risk be reduced?



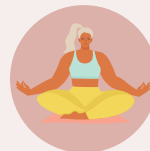
Exercise often.



Breastfeed.



Limit alcohol consumption.



Maintain a healthy weight.



Eat healthy and stick to a balanced diet.



Avoid smoking (or stop if you are a current smoker).

When to get screened?

Annual mammograms should start at age 40 (unless indicated otherwise by your provider).



Early detection leads to higher survival rate:

- 27% (advanced detection).
- 98% (early detection).

Current number of breast cancer survivors in the U.S.

3,500,000 (as of 2020).



It's never too late to take a proactive role in your breast health. Read more about the importance of a routine mammogram and early detection, from breast cancer survivors Sonia Graham and Jeanette Campagna, at samhealth.org/LivingProof.

Information sources: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, American College of Radiology, Society of Breast Imaging, American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists and American Cancer Society.

Grandparenting is good for you

Many older adults say grandchildren bring them joy. They're also good for your health.

“Studies show that when seniors spend regular time with children, they have less stress and improved mood, increased mental alertness and increased physical activity — all factors that improve health,” said Family Nurse Practitioner Somphone “Sam” Beasley with Samaritan Health Services.

Even if you're not a grandparent, interacting with children — from the neighborhood, your faith group or volunteer work — can reap similar benefits.

“Children give adults the opportunity to transfer their knowledge, to serve as role models and to learn new things. These are healthy ways to increase a sense of belonging and bolster self-esteem for both senior and child,” Beasley said.

Other benefits:

Boost your brain.

“Adults who engage with children strengthen their cognitive abilities of analysis, memory, paying attention, multitasking and more,” she said. From the imaginative play of toddlers to game strategies of teenagers, kids keep us mentally on our toes.

Get you moving.

Spend five minutes with a toddler and you're going to be on the move, walking, squatting and bending. “Exercise is important as we age to prevent disease, reduce falls, improve our cognitive function and increase a sense of well-being. Allow your grandchildren to show you how much fun it is to move again,” noted Beasley.

Lighten your mood.

“A significant issue affecting seniors is loneliness, which can negatively impact the immune system,” she said. “Having a moderate amount of responsibility with children and enjoying activities together can renew a sense of purpose and keep us emotionally engaged. What a wonderful way to lift our spirits.” Plus, it's hard to feel blue when entering fully into the pretend world of a child or laughing together at a funny story.

Share your legacy.

“Grandparents can offer so much to their grandchildren: unique life experiences, ancestral stories, patience, the ability to see the big picture, stability, security — so many things. But mostly, grandparents can give children loads of love, the best gift of all,” Beasley said.





Nitrous oxide offered in-clinic for urology services

The Samaritan Urology clinics in Albany and Corvallis now offer nitrous oxide for patients needing urology services, such as prostate biopsy, cystoscopy, vasectomy and minimally invasive prostate procedures.

“Many patients are worried about the discomfort they may have during procedures in the office,” said Robert Laciak, MD, with Samaritan Urology. “Nitrous oxide helps alleviate that stress and anxiety while helping with pain control.”

Nitrous oxide is a colorless and odorless gas that patients inhale to help relax. The benefit of using nitrous oxide over diazepam (Valium) is that when the procedure is completed, patients are almost instantly back to normal and can safely drive soon after.

“Having a 10-minute procedure in the office and then being able to drive yourself home afterwards is a great option for so many patients,” said Dr. Laciak.

When treatment is needed, don't delay care! Urologists Robert Laciak, MD; Layron Long, MD; and Ross Wopat, MD, offer nitrous oxide at Samaritan Urology clinics in Albany and Corvallis. Request a referral from your primary care provider.

Join Samaritan's Patient and Family Advisory Council

Patient advisors are part of Samaritan's ongoing efforts to improve patient satisfaction, provide feedback for health care providers and promote a better understanding of health care among patients and the community.



As a patient advisor, you will be able to:

- Represent patients and families.
- Provide honest feedback.
- Enhance the patient and family experience.
- Attend monthly meetings.

To learn more, email SHSServiceExcellence@samhealth.org or scan the QR code to fill out an application.



Medicare tips for new enrollees

Have you recently turned 65 or made the switch from your employer's health plan to Medicare or Medicare Advantage?

Your health insurance will be a little different now. Here are a couple important things you should know right from the start:

Make sure you understand your explanation of benefits

You receive a medical explanation of benefits each time your providers process claims for visits, labs or other services. It's an important reference for understanding your costs, those paid for by Medicare and those picked up by your insurance company if you joined a Medicare Advantage plan.

Each month, you also receive a pharmacy explanation of benefits. Even if you didn't fill any prescriptions during a particular month, you'll still receive this regular reminder of your annual out-of-pocket drug costs to date and how close you are to Medicare's coverage gap.

If you don't understand either of these documents – or have questions about the coverage gap – give your health plan's office a call.

Appoint an authorized representative

You have the right to name an authorized representative to make decisions regarding your Medicare benefits when you cannot do so. You can appoint one by having both you and your representative complete and sign an Authorized Representative Form, which is available on Medicare's or your Medicare Advantage plan's or by calling customer service.

Upon completion, the appointment and form are considered current only for a certain amount of time – in many cases, only one year. So mark this down as an important annual task.

Schedule your Annual Wellness Visit

Each year Medicare will pay for an Annual Wellness Visit. This is not an annual physical, but an opportunity for you and your physician to have an in-depth conversation about your current care plan and to answer any questions you have. It's an important visit that can help keep you and your doctor on the same page regarding your health.

Understanding your coverage and knowing your member rights will help you get the most out of your Medicare coverage now and in the years to come.

Are you approaching Medicare eligibility? Call Samaritan Health Plans' local Medicare experts at 866-747-5267. Learn how Medicare will affect you and get all your questions answered.

Passion for plants blooms on hospital campus



Above: Lidia Watrud takes pause to enjoy the blooms of her labor at the garden labyrinth.

Six years have passed since retired biologist and nature lover Lidia Watrud made her vision a reality for the garden labyrinth next to the Samaritan Pastega Regional Cancer Center.

“At the time, I was seeing a doctor at the cancer center. Rather than drive home between appointments, I would sit in the garden, have lunch and take in the space around me,” said Watrud. “Being a plant person, it was apparent the garden was in need of a refresh and a little love too.”

Watrud researched and then planted — with the help of many volunteers — more than 20 species of deer-resistant, drought-tolerant, medicinal plants — turning the garden into a place of education and healing. Nearby signs identify the plants and their historic uses in folk medicine.

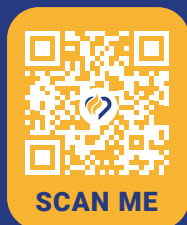
“It’s a pleasure to see that the garden is enjoyed by so many — patients, community members and even the staff working on the hospital’s campus,” Watrud said. “I too make a point to visit the garden frequently to ‘check on my babies’ and will often bring friends and family members.”

The garden can be found in full bloom during the months of May through July, with many color bursts from Shasta daisies, yarrow, coneflowers, milkweed, lavender, Saint John’s wort and many more.

“Make sure to take time to stop and smell the flowers — or — at least enjoy looking at them!” Watrud said.

Interested in helping out in the garden labyrinth? Contact Brad Betz at bbetz@samhealth.org or 541-768-5686.

Express your gratitude, *thank a health care worker*



Has a Samaritan employee left a lasting impression?

Express your gratitude for a Samaritan staff member who made an impact in your health care experience at samhealth.org/ShiningStar.

Samaritan welcomes new health care providers



Caitlyn Anglin, DO, has joined Samaritan Lincoln City Medical Center as a pediatrician. She earned a bachelor's degree at Georgetown College and a medical degree at Pikeville College of Osteopathic Medicine. She completed residency training at University of Kentucky Hospital. [Learn more at samhealth.org/bio/canglin](https://samhealth.org/bio/canglin).



Brandi Boller, DO, has joined Samaritan Medical Group Family Medicine – Ninth St. Dr. Boller earned a bachelor's degree at Wichita State University and a medical degree at Des Moines University – Osteopathic Medical Center. She completed residency training at University of Kansas School of Medicine (Wichita). [Learn more at samhealth.org/bio/boller](https://samhealth.org/bio/boller).



Steven Cathcart, DO, has joined Samaritan Endocrinology. He earned a bachelor's degree at University of Portland and a medical degree at Northwestern University. He completed residency training at Lutheran General Hospital – Advocate HealthCare and a fellowship in endocrinology at Oregon Health Sciences University School of Medicine. [Learn more at samhealth.org/bio/scathcart](https://samhealth.org/bio/scathcart).



Anne Christensen, MD, has joined Samaritan Occupational Medicine – Albany. She earned a bachelor's degree at Troy State University, a master's degree at Harvard School of Public Health and a medical degree at University of Alabama at Birmingham. She completed an internship at Naval Medical Center San Diego and residency training at Harvard School of Public Health. [Learn more at samhealth.org/bio/annec](https://samhealth.org/bio/annec).



Jacquelyn Corley, MD, has joined Samaritan Medical Group Brain & Spine Center – Corvallis. She earned a bachelor's degree at The College of William and Mary and a medical degree at Rush Medical College of Rush University. She completed residency training at Duke University Medical Center. [Learn more at samhealth.org/bio/jcorley](https://samhealth.org/bio/jcorley).



Alanna Didier, DO, has joined Samaritan Family Medicine – Geary Street. She earned a bachelor's degree at University of California, San Diego, a master's degree in medical science from Boston University School of Medicine and a medical degree at Northwestern University. She completed residency training at HonorHealth-Scottsdale Osborn Medical Center. [Learn more at samhealth.org/bio/adidier](https://samhealth.org/bio/adidier).



Justin Duke, MD, has joined Samaritan Orthopedics & Podiatry – Newport. He earned a bachelor's degree at Louisiana State University Baton Rouge and a medical degree at University of Alabama at Birmingham, where he completed residency training. He completed a fellowship in joint replacement at Colorado Joint Replacement. [Learn more at samhealth.org/bio/jduke](https://samhealth.org/bio/jduke).



Robert "Bob" Gleason, PA-C, has joined Main Street Family Medicine. He earned a bachelor's degree at California State University – Bakersfield and a master's in physician assistant studies at Southern California University of Health Sciences. [Learn more at samhealth.org/bio/rgleason](https://samhealth.org/bio/rgleason).



Danielle Hite, PA-C, has joined Samaritan Medical Group Hand to Shoulder Orthopedics – Corvallis. She earned a bachelor's degree at Oregon State University and a master's in physician assistant studies at Massachusetts College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences. [Learn more at samhealth.org/bio/danielleh](https://samhealth.org/bio/danielleh).



Erin Hoppin, DO, has joined Samaritan Medical Group Family Medicine – Ninth St. She earned a bachelor's degree at Yale University and a medical degree at Touro University College of Osteopathic Medicine. She completed residency training at Good Samaritan Regional Medical Center. [Learn more at samhealth.org/bio/erinl](https://samhealth.org/bio/erinl).



Sushanth Kakarla, MD, has joined Samaritan Hematology & Oncology Consultants. He sees patients with all types of cancer and blood disorders and uses novel targeted and immunotherapy options, in addition to conventional chemotherapy. He earned a

medical degree at Osmania Medical College. He completed residency training and a fellowship in hematology and oncology at University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio. [Learn more at samhealth.org/bio/skakarla](https://samhealth.org/bio/skakarla).



Deborah "Debbie" Litberg, LCSW, has joined Samaritan Lincoln City Medical Center. She earned a bachelor's degree at California State University, Northridge and a master's degree in social work at University of Southern California. [Learn more at samhealth.org/bio/dlitberg](https://samhealth.org/bio/dlitberg).



Austin Loranger, MD, has joined Samaritan Medical Group Pulmonology – Corvallis. He earned a bachelor's degree at University of Oregon and a medical degree at Medical College of Wisconsin. He completed residency training and a fellowship in pulmonary and critical care medicine at Creighton University School of Medicine. [Learn more at samhealth.org/bio/aloranger](https://samhealth.org/bio/aloranger).



Nada Mohamed, MD, has joined Samaritan Medical Group Pulmonology – Corvallis. She earned a bachelor's degree at Oregon State University and a medical degree at Trinity School of Medicine. She completed residency training at United Health Services Wilson Memorial Regional Medical Center and a fellowship in pulmonary medicine and critical care at West Virginia University. [Learn more at samhealth.org/bio/nmohamed](https://samhealth.org/bio/nmohamed).



Emma Murugaverl, DO, has joined Samaritan Family Medicine – Geary Street. She earned a bachelor's degree at University of Denver and a medical degree at Lake Erie College of Osteopathic Medicine. She completed residency training at Good Samaritan Regional Medical Center. [Learn more at samhealth.org/bio/emmam](https://samhealth.org/bio/emmam).



Naga Sai Krishna Patibandla, MD, has joined Samaritan Hematology & Oncology Consultants. He sees patients with all types of cancer and blood disorder and specializes in treating prostate, bladder, testicular and renal cancers. He earned a medical degree at Guntur Medical College. He completed residency training and a fellowship at Allegheny General Hospital. [Learn more at samhealth.org/bio/npatibandla](https://samhealth.org/bio/npatibandla).



Devin Petersen, PhD, has joined Samaritan Family Medicine Resident Clinic. He earned a bachelor's degree at Brigham Young University, as well as a master's degree and doctoral degree in clinical psychology at Southern Illinois University. He completed residency training at Good Samaritan Regional Medical Center. [Learn more at samhealth.org/bio/devinp](https://samhealth.org/bio/devinp).



Elizabeth Robb, DO, has joined Samaritan Family Medicine – Geary Street. She earned a bachelor's degree at Skidmore College and a medical degree at Western University of Health Sciences College of Osteopathic Medicine of the Pacific-Northwest. She completed residency training at Good Samaritan Regional Medical Center. [Learn more at samhealth.org/bio/elizabethr](https://samhealth.org/bio/elizabethr).



Emma Simpson, MD, has joined Samaritan Medical Group Pulmonology – Corvallis. She earned a bachelor's degree at Queen Mary University of London and a medical degree at Rush University Medical Center. She completed residency training and a fellowship in pulmonary and critical care medicine at University of Arizona College of Medicine – Phoenix. [Learn more at samhealth.org/bio/emmas](https://samhealth.org/bio/emmas).

Continued on page 27.

Looking for a health care provider? Call Samaritan's free Find-A-Doctor Line at 800-863-5241 or visit samhealth.org/FindADoc.

Expanded doula program improves

The birth of Sebastian Lechuga Ramirez was not the uncomplicated, on-time delivery that his mother Isabel Ramirez Lopez of Albany had hoped for.

When the due date passed and an induced labor stalled, doula Yesenia Sequera kept the first-time mom involved with making decisions about her labor and explained why the doctor was recommending a C-section.

“That has a big impact on a mom’s experience of birth,” Sequera said. “I make sure all of her questions are answered.”

The healthy arrival of a 9-pound, 7-ounce boy is one of the many successes of the expansion of the Community Doula Program, a 2022 Delivery System Transformation pilot project of InterCommunity Health Network Coordinated Care Organization serving Benton, Lincoln and Linn counties. Doulas provide emotional and physical support during pregnancy and childbirth.

“My role is to help the mother so that she has the best possible birth experience and is well set up for early parenting,” Sequera said.

Through the pilot project, the Community Doula Program was able to train and increase the number of Spanish-speaking doulas, particularly in east Linn County and Lincoln County, to serve as health care interpreters. The goal is to improve birth outcomes and reduce instances of prematurity, C-section and pain medication use.

The pilot project expanded doula services already available at hospitals in Albany and Corvallis, where Lopez gave birth, to Lebanon, Lincoln City and Newport. As a result, the region now boasts one-third of the total number of doulas working in Oregon. That ensures access for every pregnant member of the coordinated care organization.

Lopez chose to have a doula so that she could feel prepared for childbirth and being a mom. It was a comfort to her knowing that Sequera would be with her during labor. Relying on her doula’s experience made everything easier, Lopez said.

Sequera is bilingual and is often paired with Spanish-speaking moms. She meets with each expectant mom twice before birth to build a trusting relationship.



Above: Isabel Ramirez Lopez and Jesus Aldair Lechuga Soriano hold their newborn son Sebastian Lechuga Ramirez while his doula Yesenia Sequera looks on.

es birth outcomes and experiences

During labor, a doula can lead exercises to help things progress and provide massage for pain relief.

At hospitals, translation services through a tablet device are available for medical decisions. Doulas trained as medical interpreters can also interpret when a mother asks.

“No one wants to be talking through a tablet while they are pushing,” Sequera said.

Within a few weeks of a baby’s arrival, doulas meet one last time with the new mom and baby for a postpartum checkup.

Sequera became a doula after the birth of her daughter. She wanted to serve Hispanic women in the community to overcome barriers and reduce health inequities.

“For all moms, the support of a doula is important,” Sequera said. “It starts with having someone there who understands you and knows your culture and needs.”

Learn more about the Community Doula Program at communitydoulaprogram.org.



Continued from page 25.



Nicole Tucker, DO, has joined Samaritan Palliative Care. She earned a bachelor’s degree at University of San Diego and a medical degree at Rocky Vista University. She completed residency training in family medicine at Mountain Area Health Education Center and a fellowship in hospice and palliative medicine at Providence Alaska Medical Center. **Learn more at samhealth.org/bio/ntucker.**



Eleanor Wiggins, MD, has joined Samaritan Family Medicine Resident Clinic – Lebanon. She earned a bachelor’s degree at Millsaps College and a medical degree at Louisiana State University School of Medicine in Shreveport. She completed residency training at Cascade East Family Practice-OHSU. **Learn more at samhealth.org/bio/ewiggins.**



Morgan Wimmer, DO, has joined Samaritan Lebanon Health Center as a family physician. She earned a bachelor’s degree at State University of New York at Potsdam and a medical degree at Western University of Health Sciences College of Osteopathic Medicine of the Pacific-Northwest. She completed residency training at Good Samaritan Regional Medical Center in Corvallis. **Learn more at samhealth.org/bio/mwimmer.**

Endowments: *A perpetual ripple of generosity*

When a stone is tossed into a quiet pool, it creates circular ripples. These ripples grow and fill the pool with sparkles — making the stone's presence known.

The same ripple effect happens when donors give to endowments. When someone with a generous heart and a deeply held conviction for a particular cause makes a gift to an endowment, the principal funds are preserved, and the interest is used to generate perpetual funding to offer sustainable support for years to come.

One generous heart in the Albany community was Lorraine Carter. For decades, she and her husband, Ken, supported many of their favorite causes, including children, education and the Samaritan Evergreen Hospice House. In her last year of life, Lorraine returned to the hospice house — the place she and her husband helped to create to bring comfort to others. There, loving hands cared for her as she passed.

Although the Carters had no children of their own, their estate plans ensured that generations to come would benefit from their philanthropy. In 2022, Samaritan Evergreen Hospice House celebrated its 10th anniversary and the Ken and Lorraine Carter Hospice House Endowment as the Albany General Hospital Foundation reached \$1 million. This milestone is the result of the generosity of the Carters and many others who felt as deeply as they did about the need for a hospice house locally to serve patients at the end of their life.



“Samaritan Evergreen Hospice House exists because of the power of community and a clear vision for how to honor and care for friends and loved ones in their final days. The Carters’ legacy will live on through their support of the endowment,” said Jennifer Stanaway, executive director for the Albany-based foundation.

The five Samaritan foundations exist to support all the Samaritan hospitals and clinics and their surrounding communities in Benton, Lincoln and Linn counties.

More information about the foundations can be found online at samhealth.org/Giving. There, you can learn about the different ways to support local health care. You can read about priority initiatives and meet the people and businesses throughout the mid-Willamette Valley, central Oregon Coast and beyond who support the foundations. And, if you scroll to Legacy Giving, you can watch heart-warming videos about those who have chosen legacy giving as their way to make their local hospital and hometowns strong for years to come.

The Samaritan foundations are in the midst of a multi-year campaign to raise \$35 million by the year 2025. Funds will go toward specific local and regional initiatives that support Samaritan’s mission of building healthier communities together.

Learn more about the multi-year campaign and how to give at samhealth.org/StrongerTogether.



Resources to help you be well



Classes and support

Samaritan Health Services offers a wide variety of support groups, health education classes and seminars to help community members find the support and gain the knowledge they need to live a healthier life.



Health and wellness topics include: cancer, diabetes, heart health, childbirth, parenting, grief, living well with chronic conditions and more.

To see the most current list of events, visit samhealth.org/Classes.



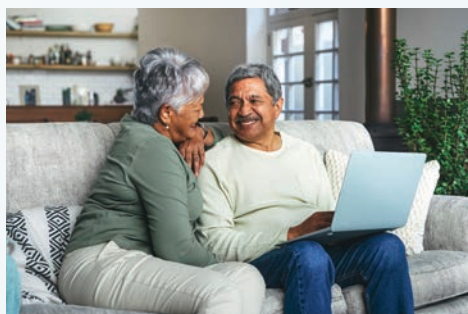
Keeping you informed

Sign up for Samaritan's e-newsletters by visiting samhealth.org/Subscribe.



To Your Health

Get monthly health and wellness tips and updates on classes and events.



Healthy Minds, Healthy Bodies seminars

Receive information on free health education seminars offered by Samaritan.



Samaritan Plastic, Reconstructive & Hand Surgery specials

Get beauty tips and learn about our cosmetic specials and events.



Isabel Ramirez Lopez and Jesus Aldair Lechuga Soriano found the pregnancy and birthing support they needed through the Community Doula Program. *Learn more on page 26.*



Samaritan
Health Services