

HEALTH MATTERS

New Year. **New You** I S S U E

INSIDE:

Weighing In On Goals

Tips to Keep Lungs Healthy
Ohana Center Under Way
Grateful for Cancer Journey
Pandemic Pregnancy
& Much, Much More...



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Here's to an amazing, safe, and healthy 2021.



Community Hospital
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Montage Health

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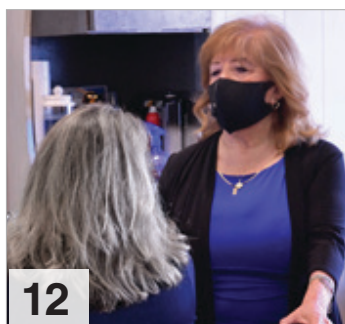
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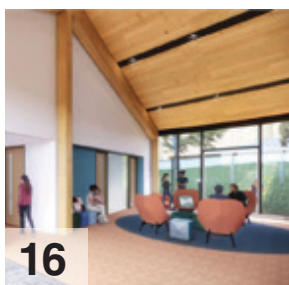
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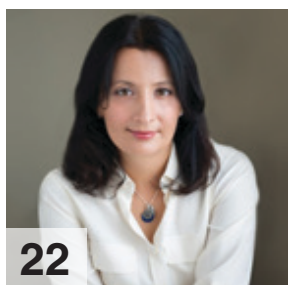
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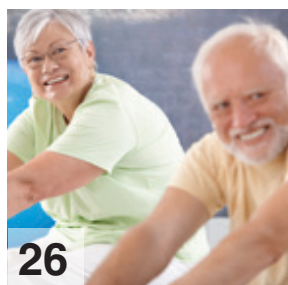
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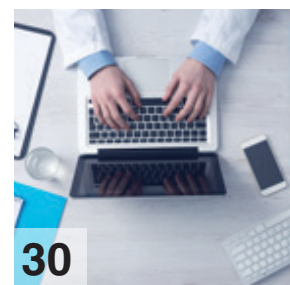
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Important Statistic

DID YOU KNOW?

- > An estimated 164 million adult Americans (64.6% of the population) say they're determined to learn something new, make a lifestyle change or set a personal goal in an effort to better themselves in the new year.

Reference: Finder.com

New Year, New You

I S S U E

Monterey County residents Victor Rey and Sandy Shore both achieved important health goals with significant weight loss and improved fitness in recent years.

Cover Photo by Randy Tunnell





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 Salinas Valley
Memorial
Healthcare System

Editor's Desk



Photo by Susan Gerbic

It's true, there is a certain amount of effort involved in leading a healthy life. But on the other hand, look at all you gain: less time at doctors' offices and hospitals, less money spent on medical procedures and prescriptions, and more time doing what you love to do, and being happy and pain-free while you do it (we hope).

The awesome thing about leading a healthy lifestyle is that you don't have to spend a lot of money or time on it, although it does take some planning and mindfulness. The good news is that there are many small steps you can take down the continuing path to wellness.

Some of these baby steps were outlined by Real Simple.com:

- Exercise for a few minutes. You can break down your exercise time into 10-minute segments and still get the benefits that you would from longer sessions.
- Walk to any destination within 1 mile rather than taking your car.
- Eat vegetables at breakfast (since 91 percent of us don't get enough of them). Try a serving of avocado toast, add baby spinach to scrambled eggs, stir grated zucchini into your pancakes.

There are lots more ideas like these out there; seek them out, and keep making those little changes that add up over time.

Stay strong —

Kathryn McKenzie

HEALTH+ MATTERS

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Director of Operations & Advertising

Dana Arvig

Circulation Director

Mardi Browning Shiver

Editor, Health Matters

Kathryn McKenzie

Design & Production

Rick Gebin, www.rickgebin.com

Contributors

Lisa Crawford Watson

Melanie Bretz

Barbara Quinn-Intermill

Tom Leyde

Sales Team

Mike O'Bleness

Rachel Martinez

Alyson Stockton

Danielle Landaker

Advertising Services Manager

Lorraine Roque

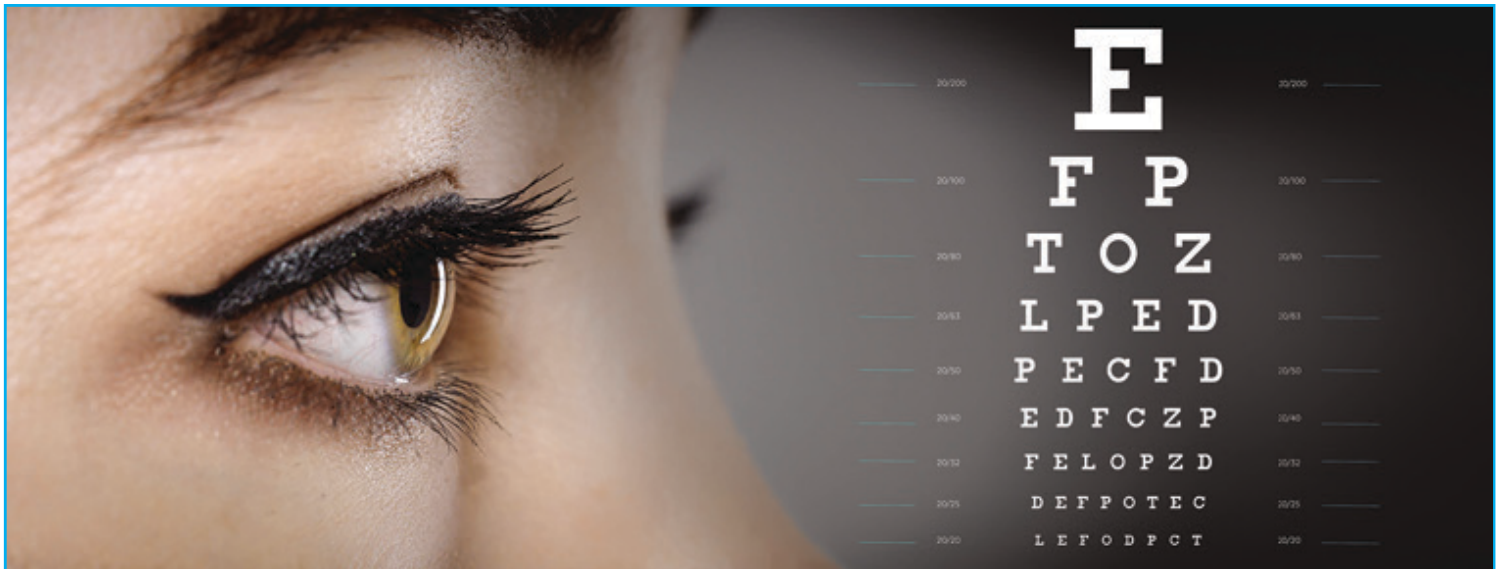
To contact Health Matters,
please email:
mh.healthmatters@gmail.com

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Eye M.D. Monterey welcomes Khanh-Ngoc Tran, O.D. to our practice as an Optometrist



KHANH-NGOC TRAN, O.D. joins the **Eye M.D. Monterey** team as an Optometrist, performing annual exams and treating general eye issues. She is also Glaucoma Certified and has a Bachelor of Science degree from U.C. San Diego and a Doctor of Optometry degree from Illinois College of Optometry. She comes to us with almost four years of clinical experience and is also fluent in Vietnamese. **Eye M.D. Monterey** carries a large selection of designer eyewear and sunglasses including Versace, Gucci, Tom Ford, Maui Jim, Michael Kors, Nine West, L.A.M.B., Tommy Hilfiger, Trina Turk, Vera Bradley, Coach, Ray-Ban, Kate Spade, Guess, Jimmy Choo, and Ted Baker. **Come see for yourself.**

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WEIGHING IN

Healthy lifestyle changes helped Salinas Valley residents lose pounds

BY KATHRYN MCKENZIE

TWO SALINAS VALLEY RESIDENTS who recently made the commitment to weight loss brought about remarkable transformations in their health and well-being.

For Victor Rey, the goal was to be able to enjoy activities with his wife and children. For Aranza Ortega, the unexpected news that she had Type 2 diabetes—after a scary trip to the emergency room—sparked a new direction in her eating habits.

Both have managed to lose 100 pounds, and to keep it off.

Rey, 40, says that he'd been an athlete in high school, but he fell into bad habits in college — “drinking, partying and all that” — and it became a way of life. He ate a lot of highly processed, carbohydrate- and fat-laden foods. By his 30s, he weighed 280 pounds.

Ironically, he worked in food production management in the Salinas Valley, known as the “Salad Bowl of the World,” and was surrounded by healthy produce every day. He just didn't take advantage of it. He had a busy life with his wife and children, and concentrated on advancing his education, earning a master's of business administration from the University of Phoenix as well as earning food safety certifications.

Although Rey hadn't yet been diagnosed with any serious health conditions, he began to worry about his risk of developing heart disease or diabetes.

“I knew I was significantly overweight and it scared me,” says Rey, a Salinas resident. “Everything was fine, only I was getting

“I KNEW I WAS
SIGNIFICANTLY
OVERWEIGHT
AND IT
SCARED ME”

— VICTOR REY

older, and I knew (the weight) could catch up with you and you could develop a chronic disease.”

In 2018, in what Rey calls “divine intervention,” he struck up a friendship on Facebook with a health coach. “I saw what he

was doing and it caught my attention,” says Rey, who realized that he could become healthier if he took the initiative to do it.

Rey then decided to go public with his quest on social media, posting about his weight loss journey, challenges and achievements, with plenty of photos to document the changes along the way. He now weighs 180 pounds, and has sustained his healthy, more plant-based lifestyle for more than a year.

Now, he loves to hike with his family and visit state and national parks, places that he didn't go to previously because he lacked the stamina to navigate them.

Greenfield resident Aranza Ortega knew that her father, uncles and grandfathers had Type 2 diabetes, but she was just 18 years old when she herself was diagnosed with the disease last January.

CONTINUE TO PAGE 18



PUT YOUR RIGHT HIP IN

Hip-replacement surgery puts patient back in the game

BY LISA CRAWFORD WATSON

MONTEREY PENINSULA RESIDENT Sandy Shore, 57, recently walked all the way from Asilomar to Pebble Beach and back. She remembers when she couldn't walk without falling, without crutches, without a limp.

When Shore was 8 years old, she was wandering down Carmel Beach, enjoying the legendary sandcastle contest, when she realized she absolutely couldn't walk any farther. Her parents, aware she had been falling frequently and that she walked with her right toe facing out, took her to one doctor after another.

Most doctors said her walking issues were a habit and instructed Shore to consciously straighten out her foot as she stepped. Ultimately, she was diagnosed with Legg-Calve-Perthes disease, a rare childhood condition that occurs when blood supply to the ball of the hip joint is interrupted and the bone begins to die.

From ages 8 to 11, Shore navigated her life on crutches. At 15, surgeons repositioned her hip joint ball so it fit better in the hip socket, stabilized by plates and pins, which were removed two years later.

In her younger days, Shore refused to see her disease as a handicap. She snow skied, entering downhill races. She played competitive tennis.

But by age 50, she began to develop bone spurs in her hip which felt like knives, stabbing with the slightest movement.

The pain meant she couldn't lean forward, couldn't bend at the waist. She couldn't tie her shoes. She lifted her plate to eat. She

took the stairs, one at a time, relying on handrails. She lived with a limp. She gained weight.

Submitting to Surgery

"Finally, I hit the tipping point. I didn't want to put up with the pain anymore, didn't want to get pain-management injections," she says. "Still, I was scared to go under the knife, until my sister said, 'Sometimes we need a helping hand.' I knew it was time for hip-replacement surgery."

But first, Shore wanted to do everything she could to ensure a successful outcome. She set a weight loss goal of 80 pounds and enlisted Weight Watchers as her partner in the process.

"WW can work for every lifestyle or food preference," Shore says. "You count points, and you stop when you've reached your limit. It teaches you how thin people eat. But I wasn't trying to be thin. I wanted to be healthy. So I really had to pay attention to the nutrition behind those points."

Shore began to remix foods and ingredients, seeking a balance of nutrition and taste, so she could eat healthy yet not feel deprived of favorite foods and flavors. She replaced oils and creams with broths, pureed vegetables or canned tomatoes. She baked brownies, ate enchiladas, created a brunch menu where only the taste was decadent.

Shore took her time, not following a diet, but instead creating a lifestyle. She began to lose weight.

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PANDEMIC PREGNANCY

Practices and protocols for a safe, special delivery

BY LISA CRAWFORD WATSON



ALLI MAYORGA

ALTHOUGH A NATURAL LIFE process, pregnancy is a condition that requires care for both mother and baby. During the time of COVID, that care is mingled with concern as parents and medical staff must navigate pandemic protocols to keep themselves safe.

On Jan. 2, 2020, when Pacific Grove resident Alli Mayorga learned she was expecting her first child, she couldn't have imagined the circumstances under which he would be born. During the first week of March, she flew to a conference attended by thousands of people and returned home just before the coronavirus closed down the country. A week later, she went to an OB-GYN appointment and went through her first of many COVID screenings to come.

"I was having a normal pregnancy, but COVID put me at high risk," Mayorga says. "I actually work from home so for three months, I became a hermit. My husband did all the grocery shopping and would come in and sanitize everything."

The Mayorgas feel fortunate they learned of her pregnancy in January so both could attend her initial doctor's appointments together. Yet, by April, she was required to go it alone. Although they never planned a "gender reveal" party, the couple had placed great import on learning the gender of their child, together.

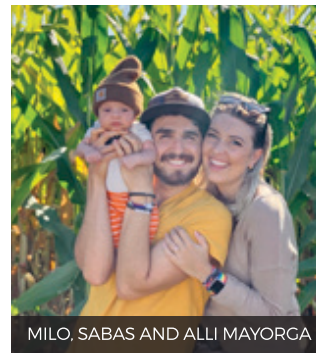
"When I learned we couldn't find out our baby's gender together," says Mayorga, "I cried all day. Thanks to a friend's advice, my husband and I Facetimed through the entire appointment, and then the doctor handed me an envelope. I took it out into the parking lot, so my husband and I could read it together."

Together, they read that Milo Jude Mayorga was arriving August 24. As the months went by, it became clear to Mayorga that more expectations were going to be ransomed by the pandemic. She and her husband had been planning on taking a babymoon. She was very much looking forward to a baby shower. But most disappointing was the realization that, while her husband would be at her side when she brought little Milo into the world—as long as he passed his COVID test—her mother, and her best girlfriend would have to wait at home to hear the good news.

Pandemic Protocols

Personnel throughout Community Hospital of the Monterey Peninsula are adhering to every protocol on behalf of all who come through the door during this pandemic. Yet staff in the Family Birth Center are keenly aware of the special concerns carried by an expectant mother when she comes in to deliver her baby.

"The transition from pregnancy to new parenthood is such an emotional and physical transition, and we are well equipped to support people through that process," says registered nurse Kelly Stephens, who works in labor and delivery. "Yet when balancing those emotions with fear and insecurities due to the pandemic, particularly when the mother can have only one support person at her bedside, our empathy is even greater."



MILO, SABAS AND ALLI MAYORGA

Limiting support to one person can be a positive thing, enabling the pair to interact more closely during the process, without the distraction of many excited people in the room, says Family Birth Center director Catherine Powers. "This changes the dynamic between the partner and the mom as she delivers the baby, and then holds her baby skin to skin. It gets to be a very intimate moment for mother and baby."

During the pandemic, staff and patients must wear a mask at all times. This conceals a lot of emotion staff is used to reading in their patients' faces as they tap into their needs during delivery.

"Pre-pandemic, a patient's emotions were right in front of our eyes," says Powers. "It's a hardship as we try to perceive needs and communicate. The support person has to wear a mask 100 percent of the time. We also ask the patient to wear a mask, unless she is in active labor and can't tolerate it. It's definitely a barrier to communication."

Alli Mayorga didn't mind wearing a mask, particularly since she got to take it off during delivery. She held her son right away, and he remained in her private room throughout her two-day hospital stay.

"After the baby is born," says Stephens, "the mother is given an hour of uninterrupted time with her baby before anything else takes place. Love, support, encouragement, and teaching are at the foundation of this experience, whether there is a pandemic or not." ■



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STAFF REPORT



CONNIE SAPIEN WITH CLIENT

LYING IN HER HOSPITAL bed before open-heart surgery, Connie Sapien recalled the inspirational words written long ago by German-born diarist Anne Frank.

"If God lets me live ... I shall not remain insignificant. I shall work in the world and for mankind."

Sapien made it through her surgery following a terrible stroke, and wanted to spend her time making life better for others.

"In no way do I put myself in the category of Anne Frank," Sapien says. "Her words are so powerful. They reminded me, though, that I needed to do whatever I could to make a bit of difference."

Sapien eventually became a volunteer at the Central Coast VNA & Hospice, helping the nonprofit achieve its ultimate goal—to provide care in an ethical, effective, compassionate and fiscally responsible manner.

Sapien's surgery became an important turning point in her life.

"I was so scared all I could do was pray," she says. "I asked God to help me make it through this, and I promised that I would find something I could do with my time to help or benefit others."

Although she recovered from the surgery in 2006, she suffered a stroke three years later, and her left hand was partially paralyzed. That forced her to give up her love of cutting hair as owner-stylist at Hair Unlimited in Salinas.

She found herself with lots of free time, joining various community service organizations in an attempt to find her niche.

Then her mother was diagnosed with cancer. She wanted to stay at home, and Connie and her sister were able to fulfill that wish for her, eventually turning to VNA & Hospice.

"I saw how great the nurses were at providing my mom with a service we couldn't provide," she says. "We were so thankful to VNA."

Because Sapien had never worked in the medical field, she had no idea she could volunteer her time for VNA. She quickly learned that VNA volunteers did a wide variety of tasks.

"I started by doing respite care, light housekeeping and companionship," she says.

Because of her hand paralysis, Sapien had not cut anyone else's hair besides her own since her retirement. "I wanted to try cutting someone else's hair but found it challenging because some of the patients could not get out of bed."

She worked with VNA nurses and caregivers to effectively prop up the patients into a sitting position, allowing her to work around her partial paralysis. "This took lots of pillows, but we managed," she says. "The easy ones were the patients who could sit in a wheelchair."

"I AM SO
PROUD TO
BE A MEMBER
OF THE
VOLUNTEER
TEAM"

Suddenly, Sapien had found the best of both worlds.

"I could continue to use my talent, also socializing with patients and their caregivers," she says. "I love making people feel good by looking good. That is the best medicine."

Sapien keeps busy in her life, especially when it comes to cooking, gardening and dancing. "I love any form of exercise, yoga and aerobics," she said. "Presently I practice Zumba."

For VNA, Sapien schedules as many patients in one day as possible, traveling all over Monterey County—from Carmel Valley to Hollister—to share her talents and compassion.

"Everyone I have met at VNA is a kind, loving caring human being," she says. "The patients, especially the elderly, are in so much need of a visit, a touch or companionship because a lot of them have no family close by."

VNA provides medical attention and the volunteers help with special tender loving care.

"I am so proud to be a member of the volunteer team," said Sapien, who encourages people she meets to try and find an area in VNA & Hospice where they can contribute to helping seniors.

"There are great rewards when you know you have made someone comfortable and happy," she says. "Their smiles are worth millions. I promise, your life will be enriched tremendously."

For more information about VNA, visit www.ccvna.com. ■

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516 West Remington Drive
Sunnyvale
GumsRusOffice@gmail.com

www.GumsRus.com

LIFE LESSONS

Salinas cancer survivor learned to live life to the fullest

BY LISA CRAWFORD WATSON

MERRI-JANE VIGLIZZO is grateful for many things in her life, among them family, yoga and cancer. It might sound strange to consider cancer a blessing, but Viglizzo—MJ to her friends—says it's taught her how to live.

Growing up in Fremont, among three siblings in a close family, Viglizzo always knew she wanted children. When she married into a large Italian family, she and her husband set their sights on raising a “basketball team,” until a diagnosis of endometriosis—a painful disorder in which tissue that normally lines the uterus grows outside the uterus—made it unlikely that she would ever sustain a pregnancy.

As Viglizzo's dream to have a family died, so did her marriage.

“Every fissure you have in a relationship,” she says, “either cements you together and you cleave to one another, or the gaps widen, and you get swallowed in.”

Viglizzo turned her attention to building a successful career in mortgage lending. She still remembers her father's words, “You are very successful at what you do, but work and money don't make a successful life. You need more.”

So she moved to Salinas, bought a house, met someone special, and began dating.

Soon after, she awoke to find a pain in her chest. Imagining she might have torn her pectoral muscle during exercise, she went to her doctor, who did a chest and breast exam. Something didn't feel right.

“My doctor ordered a mammogram,” Viglizzo says, “even though I'd had one six months prior. So, I went in for another one, followed by an ultrasound. The doctor was uncomfortable with that, so she scheduled a needle biopsy. I knew in my heart, when I left that biopsy appointment, what it would confirm.”

Viglizzo waited three days for the news. Although she had already surrendered to it in her heart, her mind continued the mantra, “You don't have cancer until they tell you, you do.”

When the doctor confirmed the diagnosis, Viglizzo didn't cry. She simply tried to absorb the circumstances of her life as she considered her father's words. She was 45, single, successful in business but had breast cancer.

Viglizzo considered how to tell her coworkers. She needed to make decisions about her dating life. Would the man she was seeing leave after eight dates? Would he help her? Was he in or out? She didn't think she could take a break-up during cancer.



“He was in,” she says, “the whole way. He said, ‘You're young, you're healthy, you're going to get through this.’ It meant so much to have support from someone outside my family.”

Viglizzo navigated her cancer journey by creating and committing to a daily routine. Moment by moment she did what she had to do.

“Routine has always been very important to me. My whole focus,” she says, “my whole goal, was to get healthy. It was like trying to get scattered cards organized into an even deck. I stayed in the moment and just took logical steps.”

Viglizzo also had just completed instructor training for karmic yoga, which teaches that the seeker should act without being attached to personal consequences. It is this practice, she believes, that helped move her up and out of her cancer experience while giving it meaning. *Chronicling the Cancer Journey*

MJ Viglizzo's surgeon said she was lucky. They had caught the cancer early, so she could undergo a lumpectomy rather than a mastectomy, followed by radiation. Was she available, in two days, for the surgery?

When she arrived at the hospital, her surgeon said he could not rule out a mastectomy until he got into the surgery. Once he did, he was able to do the lumpectomy and then schedule six weeks of radiation treatments.

As she went through her radiation treatments, Viglizzo thought about all the things she hadn't yet done, and all the places she hadn't been. She wondered who she wanted to be for the rest of her life and how long that might be.

“They said, with a lumpectomy, followed by radiation and oral therapies, I had a half percent of recurrence in five years. I'd never finished college,” she says, “but I realized I still could. I also thought I'd look cute driving a convertible. I wanted to feel free and alive. Very much alive.”

Viglizzo finished her cancer treatments on Cinco de Mayo. She quit her job, enrolled in St. Mary's College in Moraga, and then went out for margaritas. In 2006, she commenced with a bachelor's degree in business management.

Nearly 20 years after her cancer diagnosis, Viglizzo doesn't take her spiritual, mental, or physical health for granted. She cherishes her family, her business, and her yoga community, whom she learned to teach with a more open heart.

“Cancer,” says Viglizzo, “was a big hurdle with a big healing curve. I feel like we are there again, with COVID. Both are life-threatening. Cancer taught me patience and resilience.”

“When I had cancer, I read stories of people climbing Mount Everest, to inspire me to keep going. Cancer prepared me for where we are in the world today. My life is so much better because I had cancer.” ■

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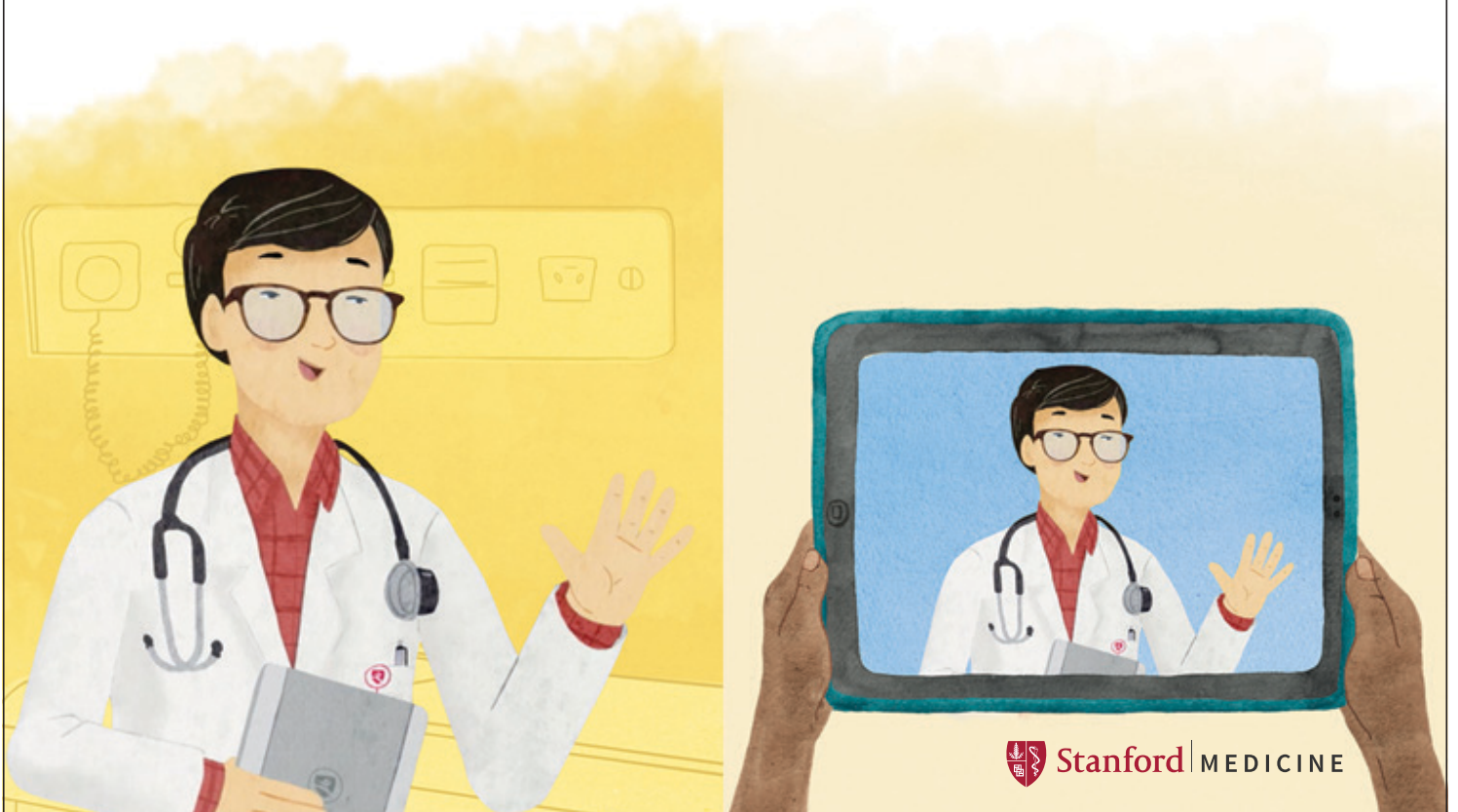


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GROUNDBREAKING FOR OHANA

Mental health center for youth set to open in 2023

BY KATHRYN MCKENZIE



Artist's rendering of the exterior of Ohana Center

AMONG THE NEW beginnings under way right now is the construction of Ohana, the new and innovative center for child and adolescent mental health in Monterey. A groundbreaking for the center was held Nov. 23 to mark the next stage in Ohana's expansion of services.

Present for the socially distanced event was Ohana's founding donor Bertie Bialek Elliott, who donated \$105.8 million to Montage Health Foundation for the project, the largest gift ever in Monterey County and one of the most significant philanthropic commitments in health care nationwide. Others speaking at the event included Montage Health president/CEO Dr. Steven Packer and Ohana physician-in-chief Dr. Susan Swick, who emphasized at the groundbreaking "the pressing community need for better access to effective treatment resources when young people develop psychiatric symptoms or problems."

As a part of Community Hospital of the Monterey Peninsula, Ohana will be equipped to treat most common psychiatric illnesses that affect youth and families, including anxiety disorders, obsessive-compulsive disorder and mood disorders such as depression. Ohana will also help address disruptive behavior issues that affect younger children such as ADHD and the rarer conditions that often start in adolescence, such as schizophrenia and bipolar disorder.

The idea for Ohana began in 2018, when Elliott wanted to make a substantial gift to the foundation for an area of great need in the region that might otherwise not get funded. She met with Dr. Steven Packer,

the president/CEO of Montage Health, who presented her with four ideas. The idea of providing services for young people in need caught her attention.

"Since I had money to give, I thought it was worthwhile," Elliott said in a previous interview. "If you can help young people early, rather than waiting to rescue them later, how great is that?"

Elliott also came up with the name Ohana, the Hawaiian word for family, but something even more encompassing than that.

"It's more than family," explained Bertie, who frequently travels to the islands. "It's friends who are like family. We don't have a word for it in English. It's about trying to make things work in the larger picture. It speaks to the cooperative nature of people, not the competitive nature. It's really a beautiful thing."

Anticipated to open in spring 2023, Ohana's 55,600 square-foot facility at Ryan Ranch will include an outpatient treatment wing, 16 inpatient beds, rooms for one-on-one and family counseling, indoor and outdoor recreational and quiet spaces, a kitchen and dining area, a family resource center, space for community activities, classrooms for inpatient youth, and space for training and workshops.

CONTINUE TO PAGE 28

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"It starts with willpower," she says. "Then, with time, the body starts to dictate its desires, asking for protein over carbohydrates. I filled my refrigerator with all the things I needed to make healthy, nutrient-rich meals, so I always had what I needed to eat the way my body wanted."

Over the course of four years, Shore lost 85 pounds, maybe more, as the exercise routine she implemented along the way began to build muscle and reduce her body mass index.

"My surgeon wanted my BMI to be under 40," says. "When he explained if I were lower in weight and higher in muscle mass, I would do much better in my recovery, I was on board."

New Lease on Life

On July 13, during a 90-minute surgery, Shore received a new right hip joint. Her surgeon leveled her leg a quarter inch, which fixed her limp. Just nine days later, she cautiously stepped down the back stairs of her home.

"During the last 10 years, I have traveled extensively, logging in thousands of miles on foot," says Shore, "and I did it all in pain. People have waited for me to catch up, all over the world. The level of joy I have from this new hip and how I am moving through my life is amazing. Even in the darkest days of this pandemic, I think, 'I have this new hip, this new lease on life.'"

Nearly six months after her surgery, Shore continues to adjust to her new hip, her new abilities, while conditioning her heart to keep up with how fast her body can now move.

"My body has to get used to my new hip and newly balanced height," she says. "The muscles throughout my body sometimes react with spasms, but I'm working with a soft tissue specialist, who uses the Graston method of tissue mobilization, commonly used on athletes, to stretch my scar tissue, making it healthy and soft."

For the first time in more than 10 years, Shore can tie her shoes, lean toward the dining table, walk uphill.

"If you wonder if you should have a hip replacement," she says, "you should do it. You have to do your work, commit to your exercises and be patient, but it's worth it. I want everyone to be able to walk, to participate in life, keep up." ■

Lisa Crawford Watson lives with her family on the Monterey Peninsula. She specializes in writing about art and architecture, health and lifestyle, and food and wine.

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She was admitted to the ICU at Salinas Valley Memorial Hospital with dangerously high blood sugar levels. After being discharged, she needed to take injectable insulin four times a day.

"In the beginning, my mom would inject the insulin because I was scared to do it by myself. She helped me a lot," says Ortega. At school, she needed to give herself insulin at scheduled times, even if she was in class.

But she and her mother decided to work together to combat her disease. "We didn't know anything about diabetes," Ortega says. "All I knew was that people could die from it." She began learning about Type 2 diabetes and how to control it with diet, exercise and insulin. "My mom and I were like, 'Okay, we have to do it. I want to be okay.'"

Ortega and her mother took on the challenge of Type 2 diabetes together. They learned which foods can help lower blood sugar and how to shop for healthier foods by reading the labels. Together, they enjoyed healthier meals.

With the support of friends and family, Ortega made steady progress. At her two-month check-up after being in the hospital, her doctor reduced her insulin from four injections a day to a single nighttime dose.

Seven months later, her A1C was 5.5 percent—well within normal ranges—and her doctor took Ortega off insulin completely.



ARANZA ORTEGA



VICTOR REY

"When that happened, my mom and I were so happy about it because we worked so hard to get it to that point," she says.

She is now speaking out about her experience as part of the "Don't Feed the Beast" diabetes education campaign that is under way, a joint project of SVMHS and Community Hospital of the Monterey Peninsula. More about that campaign can be viewed at www.dontfeedthediabetes.com.

Rey is also taking his message to others. His own experience motivated him to become a certified health coach, so he's now helping others get to their fitness goals one on one. In addition, he is currently serving as president of the Salinas Valley Memorial Healthcare System Board of Directors, and is involved with the Blue Zones Project Monterey County for creating healthy communities. Rey encourages everyone to learn about simple lifestyle changes that can make a big difference in health by going to info.bluezonesproject.com/montereycounty.

"In this new world of social distancing, staying connected is important to reach success," says Rey. "I'm a living example of what's possible." ■

Health Matters editor Kathryn McKenzie, a former Monterey Herald staff writer, contributes to a variety of print publications and websites. She is the co-author of the new book "Humbled: How California's Monterey Bay Escaped Industrial Ruin."

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REGENERATE A NEW YOU

Nutrition provides building blocks for healthy body

BY BARBARA QUINN-INTERMILL, MS, RDN, CDE



IF EVER a New Year held promise for the future, 2021 is certainly in the running. Challenges of this past year have been many, yet perhaps they have instilled a new resolve in us to better our-selves in the months ahead.

If ever a New Year held promise for the future, 2021 is certainly in the running. Challenges of this past year have been many, yet perhaps they have instilled a new resolve in us to better our-selves in the months ahead.

Unlike the days in a year that become brand-new with the flip of a calendar, a renewal of our mental and physical selves takes time.

Skin cells, for example, replace themselves every 27 days, about the time some experts say it takes to make a new habit permanent. Oxygen-carrying red blood cells regenerate every three to four months. And new infection-fighting white blood cells are formed every two to seven days.

Hair follicles, on the other hand, don't regenerate, says the American Academy of Dermatology. We are born with all the hair-growing follicles we will have for life. Neither does tooth enamel—the hard outer coating that protects our teeth from decay.

Like the remodeling of an old house, the regeneration that does take place in our bodies relies on a constant supply of building materials. Keep these goals in mind as you set out to re-make your healthiest self in 2021:

Dig away at old fat cells. As we know all too well, the cells in the body that store excess calories can hang around for a long time. Even with extreme dieting, our fat cells will shrink but rarely go away. When diets fail and we resume our usual eating habits, weight is easily regained.

So how do we lose weight and keep it off? Avoid unrealistic diets that don't last, say weight experts. Instead, keep a record of what prompts you to overeat. Then make a plan to eliminate those situations.

For example, a bag of potato chips may be a comfort at the end of a hectic day. If you want to avoid adding these empty calories to already

overflowing fat cells, make a plan to keep chips from finding their way into your grocery basket.

Preserve healthy hair. Protein from a variety of plant and animal sources is especially important for strong healthy hair. Weight loss diet plans that restrict protein and other essential nutrients can interfere with normal hair growth and speed up hair loss, say experts. And while

it's normal to lose some hair each day, we don't want to speed up the process with poor diet choices.

Brighten your smile. Besides daily brushing with a fluoride toothpaste and flossing our teeth, nutrition experts tell us to fortify our teeth and gums with nutrient-rich foods. That includes dairy foods, almonds and dark leafy vegetables that are rich in calcium. Eggs, fish, lean meats, nuts and beans contain tooth-strengthening phosphorus. And foods rich in vitamin C such as oranges, kiwi, tomatoes, peppers, broccoli and spinach are necessary for healthy gums.

Put some sparkle in your eyes. The clear outer layer on the front of the eye is the cornea, which can regenerate itself in as little as one day. Other parts of the eyes, such as the lens, don't have that capacity. Nutrients that encourage bright and healthy eyes include vitamin A found in orange-colored fruits and vegetables such as carrots and butternut squash, omega-3 fatty acids found in fish, vitamin E found in whole grains and avocados, and lutein and zeaxanthin, antioxidants that occur naturally in leafy greens.

Stand tall! Calcium is the main mineral needed to build strong bones. And calcium gets pumped into our bones when we do weight-bearing exercises like walking or hiking. Resistance exercise with weights or exercise bands also enhance the strength of bones.

Use your brain. Brain cells don't easily renew themselves. But we can fortify our thinking capacity with regular physical movement and a diet high in fruits, vegetables and fish.

And consider this: Whether or not we improve our health habits, our bodies will continue to change ... for better or worse.

Let's renew our commitment to nourish ourselves with essential nutrients and not overfeed our fat cells with excess calories. Instead, let's take the necessary steps to regenerate our bodies, minds and spirits in this New Year. ■

Barbara Quinn-Intermill is a registered dietitian nutritionist and certified diabetes educator. She is the author of "Quinn-Essential Nutrition: The Uncomplicated Science of Eating." Email her at barbara@quinessentialnutrition.com.

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MATTERS OF LIFE AND BREATH

Tips to guard lung health during the time of COVID

BY TOM LEYDE

DR. SHINKAI HAKIMI had just come off an overnight shift, caring for a COVID-19 patient in the intensive care unit at Community Hospital of the Monterey Peninsula.

Her male patient was doing well, she says.

Dr. Hakimi, a native of Afghanistan, specializes in critical care medicine, internal medicine and pulmonary disease. She is one of six critical care doctors at Community Hospital.

In the pulmonary clinic at the hospital, Dr. Hakimi sees patients with everything from a cough to lung cancer and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. She spends about 50 percent of her time in the clinic and 50 percent in the ICU.

Many people in Monterey County are at high risk from COVID-19 because of cardiovascular issues, diabetes, COPD, asthma and immunity issues. People age 65 and older are more at risk, as are people of color.

COVID-19 can be especially damaging to the lungs. So it is especially important these days to protect your lungs, Hakimi suggests.

The American Lung Association offers these tips for promoting lung health:

- Don't smoke, and encourage others in your household not to smoke. Smoking can cause lung cancer and COPD, which includes bronchitis and emphysema.
- Avoid exposure to indoor pollutants that can damage your lungs. Second-hand smoke, chemicals in the home and workplace and radon can cause or worsen lung disease.
- Minimize exposure to outdoor air pollution.
- Prevent infection: Wash your hands often with soap and water or alcohol-based cleaners; avoid crowds during cold and flu season; brush your teeth at least twice a day and see your dentist every six months; get an annual flu shot and talk with your physician about a pneumonia vaccine.
- Get regular health checkups. Lung disease sometimes goes undetected until it is serious.
- Being physically active can help keep your lungs healthy no matter what your age.

Dr. Hakimi says that the best way to deal with the pandemic is to wear a mask, social distance and wash and sanitize your hands.



DR. SHINKAI HAKIMI

"There's no magic pill, no major inhaler," she said. "We're in the middle of a pandemic and everyone needs to do their part."

Getting a flu shot now is especially critical, Dr. Hakimi says.

"I can't stress now more than ever to get a flu vaccine," she says. "To contract influenza and COVID, that's not a good combination."

You should continue to be active and not lock yourself in your house, she said. "Keep your physical health up and your emotional and mental health."

With cooler weather during winter months people will be gathering inside more, making becoming infected with COVID-19 more prevalent.

"Even if you are asymptomatic you can pass (COVID-19) on," Hakimi stresses. "It's very insidious."

"We're getting better at managing these patients," she says. "We have more tools under our belt. The science (of treating COVID-19 patients) is changing and we're learning new things ... In general, our patients are doing

better and we're able to manage them better ... We have to keep up with what the data shows."

Patients who are sick enough from COVID-19 to enter the hospital are placed in the ICU unit and placed on noninvasive positive pressure ventilation or high flow nasal oxygenation. This has been helpful in keeping patients off a ventilator, Hakimi says.

"In the beginning (of the pandemic) we would vent from the get-go," she said.

Hakimi, who has lost some patients to COVID-19, said the virus has led to a lot more stress for doctors and other health care workers.

"It's a lot more stressful in general," she said. "It feels like you're working harder and longer, and you also have that anxiety. 'Am I going to infect myself? Am I going to infect my family?'"

"It's harder because most hospitals around the country don't allow family members to come in," Hakimi said. "That's been hard on patients and family members themselves because they're not able to see what's going on. Being a critical care doctor, it comes as part of the job ... and a lot of the time, the outcome is not good." ■

Tom Leyde is a freelance writer and a veteran print journalist who lived for many years in Salinas, and now makes his home in Arizona.

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REHAB FOR LUNGS

Pulmonary program helps those with breathing issues

BY TOM LEYDE



Respiratory care provider Ida Corby

WHETHER THEY'RE in their 20s or their 90s, people with lung disease have benefited from pulmonary rehabilitation.

The only place in Monterey County that offers pulmonary rehab is the cardiopulmonary wellness program that is part of Community Hospital of the Monterey Peninsula.

The program helps people with such diseases as COPD (chronic obstructive pulmonary disease), emphysema, chronic bronchitis, pulmonary fibrosis and lung cancer. It also helps those who have had surgery for lung cancer.

Pulmonary rehabilitation is an eight-week-long, twice-a-week program. It includes exercise classes and education about lung disease as well as helping people participate in activities with less shortness of breath.

In March the program shut down for nine weeks because of the COVID-19 pandemic. In June it reopened, but made some adjustments. Instead of working with groups of eight or nine people, it now works with just two people in each class, says Deena Haynes, assistant director of Community Hospital's Tyler Heart Institute, which oversees pulmonary and cardiac rehabilitation.

The department has seen people who have survived COVID-19 and also had previous lung disorders, Haynes says.

Other services offered include psychological support, including a depression assessment, diet and nutrition education, weight management, medication education, breathing retraining and understanding and using oxygen therapy.

"We had one woman who had trouble expanding her lungs," says Ida Corby, a respiratory therapist. "We worked on her breathing technique and breathing exercise and she is much improved. She can move more air to expand her lungs."

The education component of pulmonary rehab is really effective, Corby says: "People aren't sure how to treat their lungs properly and how to take medication properly."

Pulmonary rehab started in hospitals in the 1970s with just education and no exercise. Because it is associated with cardiac rehabilitation, Corby says, it was determined that pulmonary rehabilitation patients should exercise as much as cardiac patients.

Cardiac and pulmonary rehab were added to Community Hospital in the 1980s, and those services moved in 2011 to the Montage Wellness Center complex in Marina.

The pulmonary rehab staff includes respiratory therapists, nurses, a dietitian and clinical exercise physiologists. Dr. John Koostra, a pulmonologist, is the pulmonary rehab medical director.

Haynes says patients are very supportive of each other, "because everybody here has lung disease, and it's great to see. And our multidisciplinary staff work together to be sure each patient is getting what they need."

More information is available at www.chomp.org/locations/location-profile/cardiopulmonary-wellness or by calling (831) 883-5660. ■



HEALTH MATTERS

Monterey County's Health Magazine

2021 Topic Schedule

January – New Year's Resolution

Publishes December 26th, 2020

Reserve by: November 30th, 2020

Final Art Deadline: December 4th, 2020

February – Heart Health

Publishes January 30th, 2021

Reserve by: December 28th, 2020

Final Art Deadline: January 4th, 2021

March – Beauty & Dental

Publishes February 27th, 2021

Reserve by: January 29th, 2021

Final Art Deadline: February 5th, 2021

April – Senior's Health

Publishes March 27th, 2021

Reserve by: February 26th, 2021

Final Art Deadline: March 5th, 2021

May – Women's Health

Publishes April 24th, 2021

Reserve by: April 2nd, 2021

Final Art Deadline: April 9th, 2021

June – Men's Health

Publishes May 29th, 2021

Reserve by: April 30th, 2021

Final Art Deadline: May 7th, 2021

July – Medical Profiles

Publishes June 26th, 2021

Reserve by: May 31st, 2021

Final Art Deadline: June 4th, 2021

August – Hearing/Vision/Back-to-School

Publishes July 31st, 2021

Reserve by: July 2nd, 2021

Final Art Deadline: July 9th, 2021

September – 2021/22 Medical Directory

Reservation by: July 9th, 2021

Publishes August 28th, 2021

Final Art Deadline: July 23rd, 2021

October – Cancer

Publishes September 25th, 2021

Reserve by: August 30th, 2021

Final Art Deadline: September 6th, 2021

November – Pediatrics/Beauty Inside & Out

Publishes October 30th, 2021

Reserve by: October 1st, 2021

Final Art Deadline: October 8th, 2021

December – Senior's Health

Publishes November 27th, 2021

Reserve by: October 29th, 2021

Final Art Deadline: November 5th, 2021

Health Matters is a regional magazine for Monterey County residents, offering information about local health care providers, hospitals, clinics, medical groups, and other matters relating to health and wellness on the Central Coast. Each issue details the latest news on the area's medical community, innovations in health care, and information on healthy lifestyles, fitness and nutrition. Written by experienced columnists and journalists, Health Matters makes it easy to find the health news you need to know.

For more information or to reserve space

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Ohana's programs will reach well beyond the mental health facility, and multiple programs have already begun:

- Evaluating and treating more than 500 children and young people
- Building a team that now includes three child psychiatrists, eight therapists, three family care managers, a psychiatric nurse practitioner, a clinical director, and a director of operations
- Launching services that include: family care management that connects parents seeking care with appropriate community or Ohana services, diagnostic evaluations with an Ohana child psychiatrist or nurse practitioner, evidence-based individual and group therapy for most common childhood psychiatric problems, and individual and group programs for parents. Additional programs and services will be added as the new facility is built.

Providing solutions for mental and behavioral issues of young people is important because, as Dr. Swick puts it, "Psychiatric illnesses are illnesses of youth. Fifty percent of all lifetime psychiatric illnesses have presented by the age of 15 and 75 percent by the age of 24. And they are common, affecting approximately 20 percent of all children by the time they turn 18."

The good news, says Dr. Swick, is that these disorders are treatable and often curable, but accessing effective and evidence-based care is difficult. "While most of these children will eventually recover, this

circumstance creates needless suffering for families, disrupts healthy development, and occasionally contributes to tragic outcomes," she says.



Ohana Center interior

Ohana's philosophy is to focus on not only the child but also the whole family, providing education, skill building, and support for parents and siblings that will complement and enhance any needed treatment. "We hope Ohana will be a trusted resource for all of the families in our community, offering education and programming that will help young people (and the caring adults around them) build mental fitness and health," says Dr. Swick.

More information is available at montagehealthohana.org. ■



HEALTH MATTERS

Monterey County's Health Magazine

Health Matters is a regional magazine for Monterey County residents offering information about local healthcare providers, hospitals, clinics, medical groups, and other matters relating to health and wellness on the Central Coast. Each issue of Health Matters details the latest news on the area's medical community, innovations in health care, and information on healthy lifestyles, fitness and nutrition. Written by experienced columnists and journalists, Health Matters make it easy to find the health news you need to know.

**Join us for the March issue:
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Balance Physical Therapy opens Prunedale office

Balance Physical Therapy, which currently has facilities in Salinas and Monterey, will add a Prunedale facility this month.

Based on its reputation as a result-oriented rehabilitation facility committed to helping patients return to an active lifestyle, BPT's newest location will be at 17760 Moro Road, Suite #120.

The new facility will serve North Monterey County, Castroville, Watsonville, Gilroy, San Benito County and South Monterey County.

"We are excited to become an integrated part of these communities," says Dr. John Farahmand. "We have a team of highly trained physical therapists and committed to helping our patients live a happy, healthy, and pain-free life."

A native of the Salinas Valley, Dr. John Farahmand founded Balance Physical Therapy and Human Performance Center in 2002, vowing to build the most patient-focused, result-oriented rehabilitation facility in Monterey County.

Using innovative exercise interventions, advanced rehabilitation techniques, and the latest in research and science, Farahmand and his team quickly expanded the practice, with offices in Monterey at 2260 N. Fremont St. and Salinas at 143 John St.

To better serve and connect with the region, BPT will join both North County Chamber of Commerce and Pajaro Chamber of Commerce. There is a planned joint virtual ribbon cutting ceremony on Thursday, Jan. 28 at 5 p.m. with those chambers, along with Salinas Valley Chamber of Commerce, with details pending.

For more information, visit www.balancept.com.

Key for a Cure Barrel Race raises more than \$34,000

Key for a Cure Foundation joined with "Chasing Dreams and Finding Cures" to host a barrel racing and tri-tip barbecue fundraiser for St. Jude Children's Hospital on Nov. 7-8, raising \$34,122.80. The event was held at the Rava Equestrian Center at the Salinas Valley Fair in King City.

A special shout-out goes to the Sun Street Center in King City for all the volunteer help with the fundraiser. Credit also goes to event leads Janel Flook, Jennifer Burke and Sheanna Hoskins.

Key for a Cure Foundation's first-ever golf tournament, will be held Oct. 4, 2021, at the Corral de Tierra Country Club. Details will be announced at the first of the year. To see how you can help Key for a Cure, call (831) 206-1357, email info@keyforcure.org or go to the website at www.keyforcure.org.

Natividad honored for surgical outcomes

Natividad has been recognized by the American College of Surgeons National Surgical Quality Improvement Program for meritorious surgical care outcomes for 2019. Natividad is one of only 89 health care organizations nationally to receive this honor and the only one within Monterey County.

"Our mission is to provide high-quality health care to all, and that includes making sure the patients who come to us for surgery are well cared for and their procedures are successful," said Dr. Alexander Di Stante, chief of surgery at Natividad. "This recognition is a true testament to our commitment to that mission."

ACS NSQIP is a major program of the American College of Surgeons and is currently used in nearly 850 adult and pediatric hospitals. Membership is voluntary and requires commitment from participating hospitals as well as their surgeons. Natividad joined the program in 2012.

As a participant, Natividad tracks the outcomes of surgical procedures and collects patient safety data. Results inform patient safety initiatives within the hospital and direct improvement in the quality of surgical care.

The ACS NSQIP recognition program looked at data from 2017, 2018 and 2019 and assigned composite scores to each hospital based on eight measures (mortality, unplanned intubation, ventilator use, renal failure, cardiac incidents, pneumonia, surgical site infections and urinary tract infections). Natividad received a meritorious designation in the "all cases" category based on its outstanding composite score across all eight areas. The hospital's outcomes in colorectal surgery, general surgery and gynecological surgery were listed as exemplary.

In 2019, Natividad performed 4,420 surgeries in the areas of trauma, general surgery and numerous other surgical specialties at its facilities in Salinas. For more information about surgical services at Natividad, please visit www.natividad.com/services/surgical-services.



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The American College of Surgeons is a scientific and educational organization of surgeons that was founded in 1913 to raise the standards of surgical practice and to improve the care of the surgical patient. The organization is dedicated to the ethical and competent practice of surgery. Its achievements have significantly influenced the course of scientific surgery in America and have established it as an important advocate for all surgical patients. The College has more than 82,000 members and it is the largest organization of surgeons in the world.

South County flu shot clinics announced

King City's Mee Memorial Healthcare System is offering flu shots by appointment for varying fees at its community clinics.

Vaccinations are available from 2-5 p.m. on Jan. 8, in King City, located at 210 Canal St. Vaccinations are also available on Jan. 8 in Greenfield at the Albert and Donna Oliveira Clinic, 467 El Camino Real, from 2-5 p.m.

It's likely that flu viruses and the coronavirus will both spread this fall and winter as people begin to move indoors. A flu vaccine will not protect against COVID-19, but there are many important benefits, such as:

- Reducing the risk of flu illness, hospitalization, and more
- Saving health care resources for patients with COVID-19

Of highest priority for the Mee Memorial Healthcare System is keeping the community healthy.

This includes offering an extensive array of medical and preventative services with a commitment to the highest possible standards, the best available technology, and the care of skilled professionals.

The Mee network includes a hospital in King City including emergency services, 25 acute care beds and 48 skilled nursing beds, and three comprehensive outpatient clinics; two adjacent to the hospital (Adult Medicine and the King City Clinic, for Internal, Pain and Family Medicine) and the Albert and Donna Oliveira Clinic, a full-service, primary care facility in the city of Greenfield.

MMHS is the primary health care organization serving the rural communities of South Monterey County, a population of nearly 80,000 within an area spanning over 55 miles from Soledad to Bradley.

For information about King City clinic hours, call (831) 385-7100. For Greenfield, call (831) 674-0112, or visit MeeMemorial.com. ■

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