

# Insight

**WOMEN'S  
HEALTH –  
A Continuum  
of Care**

**Ortho Team  
Gets Valentine  
Back on the Field**

***'They Care So Much'*  
Beating Prostate  
Cancer at FHN**

**Help Stop the  
Spread of COVID-19**



*We're here, for you.*

**FHN**



MARK GRIDLEY, PRESIDENT AND CEO

## Moving Forward Together

It's certainly been an eventful summer, both socially and for healthcare. As we watched people around the country proclaiming the vital importance of equality for all, I continue to be proud that from the way we train staff to the fact that

our doors are always open for everyone, equality is one of our most important community commitments. On the healthcare front, there still are many unanswered COVID-19 questions about how schools reopen, how vaccines and treatments are progressing, and what could happen with the virus when it collides with the flu season.

In our last issue, you learned about the many ways we prepared for COVID-19 patients as well as patients seeking routine care or elective procedures. As just a few examples of how we've re-opened our doors once the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) removed initial restrictions for healthcare organizations, you'll read here about FHN's Women's Services, including an interview with the new director there. There's a testimonial from a patient served by the Leonard C. Ferguson Cancer Center at FHN Memorial Hospital, and another from a young area athlete who

needed surgery and follow-up care from our orthopaedics and physical therapy departments. Throughout, you'll find references to the ways we've modified processes or practices to allow us to safely provide care for all.

Looking ahead, we know things will be different for quite some time, or at least until they inevitably change again. Our Festival of Trees events, for example, will change to ensure that everyone can stay safe while enjoying the holiday season. The Gala this year will be virtual, but I'm looking forward to what we have planned! We'll celebrate in a new way while we raise funds to ensure that FHN has whatever is needed for the next emergency, be that another medical disaster or a seasonal flood. In full disclosure, I will miss seeing and speaking with so many of you in person and hearing about your experiences and support for FHN. It will be an adventure trying something very different.

As we all keep moving forward together, we will continue to keep you informed on everything associated with COVID-19 as well as the many activities and new projects that lie ahead at FHN. We are continually grateful for the privilege of serving as your healthcare provider – please stay safe, and **thank you for choosing FHN!**

## We're Dreaming of a ... Virtual Festival of Trees Gala!

We've all had to adapt to a lot of changes this year, and FHN's Festival of Trees events will be no different. There are a few we may not be able to do at all but there are others we can modify and have a lot of fun. It's always refreshing to change things up a bit, and you may find some of our ideas even more fun than you'd ever expect!

We'll be publishing our plans and a calendar this fall. For now, be sure to keep the evening of Friday 20 November open for our first-ever virtual Festival of Trees Gala! We'll be raising funds this year to ensure that FHN is fully prepared for whatever regional or national emergency comes next. We learned a lot with this pandemic about how to ensure that we're always here to provide healthcare excellence for our communities, and the equipment and training we'll be telling you about in connection with the Gala are some of the most important things for which we've ever raised funds. While we learned fast and made good decisions, we want to be sure that we're ready to always be here, for you – and with your help, we can do just that.



We're looking forward to keeping up with as many great Festival of Trees activities as possible, offering something in these wonderful events for everyone. It will be a different holiday season, to be sure, but as always it will also be a great time to enjoy these traditions with friends and family!

FHN is an award-winning regional healthcare system committed to the health and well-being of the people of northwest Illinois and southern Wisconsin. Organized in 1995, non-profit FHN is comprised of FHN Memorial Hospital, the Leonard C. Ferguson Cancer Center at FHN Memorial Hospital, and 13 family healthcare centers in 5 counties spanning northwest Illinois offering primary and specialty medical care, hospice, and outpatient mental health services. For more information about us please visit [www.fhn.org](http://www.fhn.org).

# FHN Orthopaedics Team Sends a Valentine to Football History



Shaw Media photo by Kaleb Carter



A hand injury could have ended Ronnell Valentine's season, but thanks to FHN's orthopaedic team and a determined attitude, he was able to play in the Le-Win Panthers' historic championship run. Ronnell (number 4 in white) defends against a pass while wearing his "club" for protection, which proved effective.

He helped the Le-Win Panthers bring home the IHSA 1A football championship trophy in 2019, but one attempted fumble recovery almost ended play for then-senior Ronnell Valentine. "I thought my high school career might be over," he explains.

The running back and defensive end's hand got caught under him as he tried to gain control of the ball in the second-to-last game of the regular season. "It was Senior Night," he explains, "and we were having a great year. State was our goal, so this injury was pretty disappointing. I was upset and in terrible pain, hoping it was just jammed. I had to sit out the rest of the game and my hand was throbbing. But we won, and I could only hope I could keep playing."

## Sports Medicine Specialty Was a Draw

Ronnell knew that FHN orthopaedic physician Greg Dammann, MD, specializes in sports medicine, and turned to him for help. As a former Panther player himself, Dr. Dammann understands an athlete's drive to play and appreciates Ronnell's competitive spirit. After a thorough examination, he told Ronnell the bad news: His pain was caused by a broken bone in his left hand. With the playoffs coming up and high hopes for a state run, Ronnell scheduled hand surgery at FHN on a Tuesday, just four days after his injury under the Friday night lights.

The surgery went well. According to Ronnell, "I was scared, but Dr. Dammann did everything he could do to help and all the people at FHN made me feel comfortable. I had great care.

"Although he couldn't promise, the doctor said he would try to have me ready to play by the second round of the



FHN's Dr. Greg Dammann and Mary Price, pose with Le-Win Head Coach Ric Arand and the 2019 IHSA Class 1A championship trophy.

playoffs. With his help, and injury support from FHN Rehab, I played just two weeks after my surgery." Normal recovery is considered four to six weeks, but Ronnell defied the odds.

## Physical and Emotional Support Gets Him Back on the Field

Mary Price, certified medical assistant in Orthopaedics, was key to helping Ronnell in his quest to get back on the field. "Mary was awesome," exclaims Ronnell, "and gave me great care.

"She came right to my school and showed the coaching staff how to tape my injury and put on a 'club' — a cast-

— Continued on page 16

## 'FHN Put Me in the Driver's Seat'

# Radiation Therapy Helps Delbert Bunker

Delbert Bunker, Jr., has been a farm worker, a custodian, a maintenance man, and a courtesy driver, but one thing he never expected to be was a cancer patient. When a test reported that his prostate-specific antigen (PSA) numbers were elevated to 6 and an exam by his FHN physician showed a potential problem, Delbert was scheduled for a biopsy.

"I was in no pain or discomfort, and had no family history of the disease," he shares, "so I was a bit surprised when the results were positive." A typical red flag for a PSA count is 4, though the numbers can vary based on age, weight, ethnicity, and other factors.

An FHN consulting urologist explained that such patients are no longer considered immediate candidates for procedures, and often choose "watchful waiting" before getting additional treatment. Many prostate cancers fall into this category for numerous different reasons, and may never progress to a point where action is necessary. Delbert and his wife, Sally, chose this option, knowing that he would need to be evaluated every six months.

## Getting All the Facts

Three years passed with only slight changes in Delbert's situation, but the day came when his counts and digital exam raised concerns. His tumor had grown and his PSA was elevated to 10.

Delbert, Sally, and their son, Delbert III, met with the consulting urologist to discuss multiple options: Watching it as they had been; radiation; surgery; and even "letting it go." According to Delbert, "Everybody at FHN was so patient and thorough. They held my hand and told me I didn't need to rush into anything."

Delbert ultimately opted for radiation treatment at the Leonard C. Ferguson



Delbert and Sally Bunker pose next to their 1952 Farmall Super M after Delbert completed radiation therapy at FHN. The couple look forward to celebrating their 50th wedding anniversary soon, after it was postponed by radiation therapy for prostate cancer and COVID-19.

Cancer Center at FHN Memorial Hospital in Freeport. He explains, "Sally was pro-action and encouraged me to get it taken care of. Even though I was scared, I eventually decided that radiation was the best choice for me. I really do hate going to the doctor, so that was a big move. Now I am happy we went that route."

## Getting Ready for Radiation

FHN has been a regional leader in the treatment of prostate cancer, with significant technological improvements over the past few years. According to Bobby Koneru, MD, a radiation oncologist who provides services at the cancer center, "These advancements allow us to deliver radiation therapy faster, more accurately, and with fewer side effects."

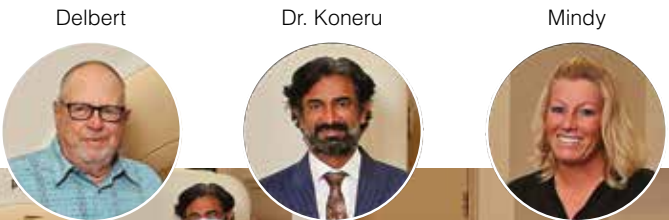
Delbert says, "The staff at FHN's Ferguson Cancer Center handled

everything and helped me prepare for radiation. They gave me three 'tattoos' as markers to help guide the process. I felt so overwhelmed and was losing sleep, but Dr. Bobby Koneru, and my nurse, Mindy, were a blessing. They helped me and my family through every hurdle, and I can't say enough about Mindy – she was my guardian angel. I don't think I would have gotten through it all without her kindness and professional care. Everything ended up going quite smoothly!"

Delbert also was grateful to have Sally and other family members on his recovery team. "My wife kept me on a strict diet and precisely followed the nutrition directions provided by my care team," Delbert declares.

"We paid attention to every rule we were given. I had 44 radiation treatments – nearly every weekday for nine weeks – and it really wasn't too

# Beat Prostate Cancer



bad. Our son, Dayne, went out for breakfast with me after my sessions, Delbert III called regularly offering assistance, and my daughter, Amanda, sent weekly presents to give me a boost. I have never been more thankful for my support network."

The Bunker family also documented their situation to help them cope. Both Delbert and Sally kept personal journals, and say that capturing their feelings and day-to-day experiences proved to be beneficial. "It takes an emotional toll on you," stresses Delbert, "and writing it down had a calming effect. It was also helpful to be able to go back in time and see what happened in the past, and how things had progressed." Healthcare professionals often recommend this activity to their patients as a way to manage complicated feelings and keep an ongoing record of a stressful situation.

## Getting Back to Normal

Now, with radiation behind him, Delbert's PSA count is down to 0.06. "It felt great to get that good report," he exclaims, "and when Mindy told me my number, her face brightened up just like she was a family member. I get regular checkups, but I am pretty much back to normal. I mow and do projects around the house, and look forward to finally celebrating my 50th wedding anniversary in a big way when we can stop social distancing.

"I even got to take a roundtrip tractor ride for an event that went from Freeport to Oregon, Illinois, and back. I rode my 1952 Farmall Super M that has been in my family since day one. It was a good time, and I was happy to be able to participate. It was only possible because of all the help I got from the good people at FHN's Ferguson Cancer Center. They care so much."



**Above:** Delbert says the cancer center staff, including Bobby Koneru, MD and Mindy Lindsay, RN, helped him overcome every hurdle.



**Left:** Writing down their thoughts was a helpful exercise for Delbert and Sally Bunker during Delbert's radiation therapy. Healthcare professionals often recommend this activity to their patients as a way to manage complicated feelings and keep an ongoing record. Here, they pose with their journals and their cocker spaniel, Sadie.

SEPTEMBER IS  
**National Prostate Cancer Awareness Month**  
*Do You Need to Talk to Your Provider?*

Have you wondered whether you should be worried about prostate cancer? Age is the main risk factor, and all men should talk with their healthcare provider about their risk and whether prostate cancer screening is right for them.

This 'talk about testing' should take place at age 50 for men who are at average risk for prostate cancer ... and even younger if they are African-American or have a family history. (Having a father or brother with prostate cancer more than doubles a man's risk of developing the disease.)

This September, resolve to make prostate health a priority!

50

Age most men should get tested for prostate cancer

# You Can Help **Stop the Spread** of COVID-19

July's dramatic recent increase of COVID-19 cases in some states isn't the "second wave" experts warned Americans about, says FHN President and CEO Mark Gridley. Rather, it's a surge that can, in most cases, be attributed to people relaxing their adherence to safety guidelines.

It's important to remain diligent about following the safety guidelines. The simple recommendations shown below have proven to be effective in slowing the spread of COVID-19.

Wearing a mask is an important part of these precautions, says FHN Chief Hospitalist Clarence Parks, MD. They also are a way to help protect the most at-risk people in our community.

"When a person infected with the COVID-19 virus or any other virus breathes out – or coughs, shouts, sings or talks – he or she expels tiny particles of virus along with their breath," Dr. Parks says. This is called aerosolized virus, and it's one of the main ways COVID-19 is spread.



Clarence Parks, MD

"The virus gets in through the nasal passageway, and then replicates and attacks lung tissue. That sets off a cascade of events starting with inflammation of the lung tissues."

That inflammation can physically reduce a person's airway, and make the lung tissue less elastic, which makes it even harder to breathe.

COVID-19 and its inflammatory process can damage other organs, too: "Healthcare providers are seeing strokes and renal (kidney) failure," Dr. Parks says. "The disease can attack the kidneys, the liver, the heart, and even the blood vessels."

## Stopping the Process

If the person with coronavirus is wearing a mask, that aerosolized virus doesn't get out into the air; the virus particles are physically caught in his or her mask. This is true with both cloth masks and the disposable type.

New research also shows that not only do you protect others by wearing a mask to protect them from your breath, wearing one also provides you a degree of protection from their breath. Just be sure that your mask is clean (wash cloth masks after wearing) or new (disposable masks are intended to be just that: disposed of after wearing).

## No Symptoms Doesn't Mean No COVID-19

Remember, not everyone who has COVID-19 experiences symptoms. You might feel absolutely fine, but the virus is living in your respiratory tract, and when you have a chat with your neighbor or talk to your grandmother, you can be breathing out aerosolized virus that could make the other person very sick.

When you wear a face mask, you are protecting the people around you. It's a sign of respect and caring, and it's a safe and easy way to slow the spread of COVID-19.

## Mask Myths

You may have seen posts on social media or heard rumors about face masks being harmful to your health. This is not true. When it comes to your health and the health of others, make sure you are getting your information from a good source.

**WEAR  
A MASK**



**WASH  
YOUR  
HANDS**



**MAINTAIN  
SOCIAL  
DISTANCING**

– stay 6 feet away from other people when it's possible



**AVOID  
LARGE  
CROWDS**



*'I Felt Nurtured!'*

## Having a Baby During COVID-19

COVID-19 or not, babies are still being born—and FHN is working hard to keep the experience safe and exciting for new parents. Take Amy and Scott Trimble, for example.

The couple tried for six years to give their daughter, Charli, a brother or sister. When it didn't happen, even after taking fertility drugs, they decided it wasn't meant to be. Two years later, Amy got pregnant. Thrilled but nervous because she was considered high-risk at age 42, her pregnancy was pretty normal until about halfway through, when a global pandemic turned her world upside down.

"Here I was, five months pregnant, and suddenly a whole lot changed. I was asked to do my job from home, I didn't know how COVID-19 might impact our baby, and perhaps hardest of all for me," she exclaims, "I had to limit my interaction with my entire support system. It wasn't easy!"

### Doctor Visits From Home

FHN did a lot to ease the couple's anxiety. Because of Amy's age, she needed to be checked frequently. To simplify appointments, FHN suggested they use telehealth visits—and even Zoom appointments—to supplement her in-clinic schedule, where she met with her providers Dr. Keith Martin and OB nurse practitioners Danielle Siedschlag and Sara Smith, all wearing masks as mandated. As her pregnancy progressed, she needed non-stress tests two times a week at the Harlem Avenue clinic, where Amy says, "The nurses were amazing. Ashton, who cared for me frequently, was pregnant at the same time and I feel like we went through it all together. It was nice to have that special bond. I felt so nurtured by everybody there." When it came time to deliver, baby Trimble did not cooperate. "I needed to be induced," explains Amy. "Let's just say that things went slowly."

Scott was allowed to join Amy for the experience, but he was the only visitor allowed and he couldn't leave after entering the birthing center, due to restrictions brought on by the pandemic. "We started at 7:30 a.m.," he explains, "and our baby was born at 1:48 a.m. the next morning. During those 18 hours, we were fully supported by everyone at FHN. When Charli was born, we could walk in the halls and wait on ourselves, but this time we had to stay in our room. The nurses anticipated all our needs, even setting a timer to bring us ice and water

**Amy and Scott Trimble pose in an FHN birthing room with their newborn son. When they started their pregnancy journey, they couldn't anticipate the curveball that COVID-19 would be throwing their way.**



**ABOVE:** Cole Eric Trimble will always have a tale to tell about his birth. He was a big baby, weighing in at 10 lbs., 4 oz. He met his sister and maternal grandparents for the first time over the Apple FaceTime app. Cole was born during a scary pandemic that made his birth at FHN more challenging...but perhaps even more special. At least his sister Charli thinks so. "I have been wishing for this since I was five!" she exclaims.

refills every few hours because we are such big water drinkers. Jordan, Danielle, and Robin helped Amy change positions, brought a peanut ball for exercise, and rooted us on the entire time. I appreciate how our delivery team, including (hospitalist/laborist) Dr. Simons, took care of Amy and me, and how excited they were for us when it came time to deliver. Even wearing their masks and other PPE, they were screaming 'it's a boy!' when Cole was born, and really shared in our excitement and relief. They were remarkable."

### FHN – Dedicated to Safety

The Trimbles appreciated all the stringent safety guidelines implemented at both the clinic and hospital to ease patients' minds. According to Keith Martin, MD, FACOG, and Chief Medical Officer, "We put incredible planning into making sure our obstetric offices, birthing center, and all facilities are clean, efficient, and safe for everyone. Moms are brought in a special entrance, visitors have been limited to only significant others, and there is a laser-like focus on following protocol – it is a complex approach unlike anything I have ever seen. I am very proud of our staff for their dedication to excellence and their commitment to making sure that COVID-19 does not detract from this special event. It has been some real work to go the extra mile, but with every new baby born, we are reminded that our efforts are well worth it."

'I Can Feel the Heart  
Here at FHN'

## Meet New FHN Women's Services Director Linnette Carter

Though she started her college career studying to be a radiographer, FHN's new Women's Health Service Line Director Linnette Carter, MSN, APN/CNS-BC, NEA-BC, wasn't satisfied with spending just a short time with each of her patients.

"After completing one year, I changed to nursing because I wanted to know more about the patients I was caring for so briefly," she says. "I fell in love with OB (obstetrics) while in school and have been caring for pregnant and laboring mothers and their babies my entire career."

Linnette joined FHN at the beginning of June from Mercyhealth (the former Rockford Health System) in Rockford, where she served as System Director of Women and Children's Services.

A Rockford native, she has spent her whole career in northwest Illinois, first as a labor and delivery/postpartum



nurse at OSF St. Anthony Medical Center, then moving from a perinatal clinical nurse specialist to the director of the department at Mercyhealth.

She earned a master's degree in nursing and certification as a Perinatal Clinical Nurse Specialist (CNS-BC) from the University of Illinois at Chicago. She holds a bachelor's degree in nursing and her RN designation from St. Anthony College of Nursing in Rockford.

### **Making a Difference**

Though caring for patients brought Linnette to nursing, she is proud to be a leader making a difference for nurses and their patients. She's excited to be leading FHN's women's care team.

"I wanted to work for a health system that values their community, excellence in patient care, and most importantly, has a culture of caring. From my first conversation with (FHN Executive Vice President, Chief Operating Officer and Chief Nursing Officer) Kathy Martinez to everyone I have met since, I can feel the heart of those here at FHN. This is a place where people are truly living your mission. I wanted to be a part of this family of caregivers."





Linnette works with FHN Chief Medical Officer and Ob/Gyn physician Keith Martin, MD to lead her team as they enhance and enrich women's healthcare throughout FHN. "I look forward to working with Dr. Martin and the entire team to grow this program."

**"I wanted to work for a health system that values their community, excellence in patient care, and most importantly, has a culture of caring."**

"We already have a team of highly skilled and caring individuals and the excellent foundation and legacy of the FHN Women's Healthcare team," Linnette says. "I am so impressed by the initiatives this team is working on and has been involved in. There is so much to be proud of in our OB service line!"

### Continuum of Care

FHN Women's Healthcare team is bigger than the Harlem Avenue office in Freeport. It includes the providers and caregivers there, of course, but also encompasses the caring teams at the Family Birthing Center and the Women's Diagnostic Center at FHN Memorial Hospital.

That includes working with FHN's OB Hospitalist team, the physicians who care for laboring moms at the Family Birthing Center. Although they see many of FHN's moms-to-be, as with

regular hospitalist providers, they don't make appointments like non-hospitalist providers do; they have devoted their practice to hospitalized patients only.

"As we grow FHN's Ob/Gyn program, we'll be assessing the whole patient experience, from office visits for routine testing or pregnancy check-ins to how we care for women at the Family Birthing Center and how we handle the transition back to routine care for new moms and their babies," says Linnette.

One of the reasons Linnette liked FHN is that, though we're a relatively small healthcare system, we've got big plans. "I am so impressed with the quality work that is being done here at FHN. The fact that we are a smaller health system only amplifies the amazing care and work that is being done here."

This summer, Linnette is looking at life with a brand-new perspective: She and her husband recently became grandparents to a beautiful little girl.

Linnette brings that joy and pride to work every day as she works with her team, striving to offer the highest quality healthcare to women and new families in northwest Illinois.



#### FHN SPECIALTY CARE – HARLEM AVENUE 815-599-7750

#### OB/GYN HOSPITALISTS AT FHN MEMORIAL HOSPITAL (Aids in labor and delivery)



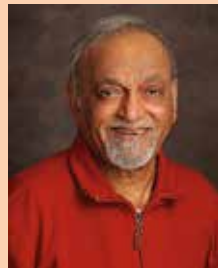
**Keith Martin**  
MD, FACOG  
FHN Chief  
Medical Officer



**Danielle Siedschlag,**  
WHNP-BC



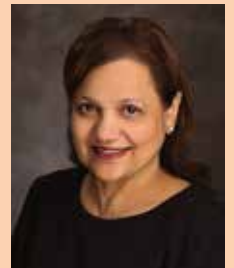
**Sara Smith,**  
WHNP-BC



**Kumud Shah,**  
MD



**Ruhee Sidhu,**  
MD



**Rashmi Tomur,**  
MD

# Genetic Testing Helps Empower Katie Alvarado



When FHN started to offer genetic screening, Katie Alvarado, FHN's Director of Imaging Services, did not realize it would change her life in a monumental way.

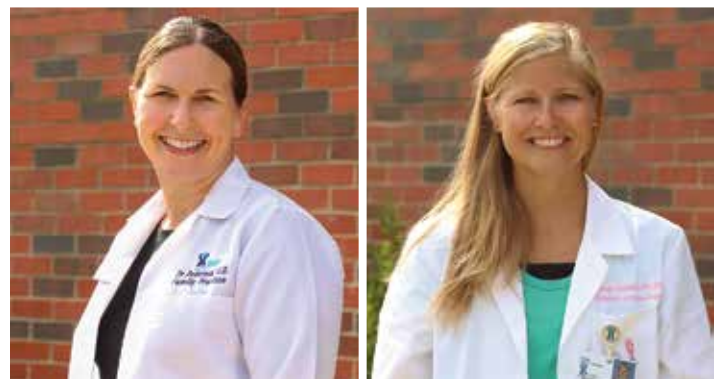
Due to a family history of both

breast and colon cancer, Katie considered genetic testing after a written assessment raised red flags at her annual exam. At age 31, she decided to wait – although she was concerned. She feared she may be especially predisposed to colon cancer, which she has on both sides of her family.

About a year after she first considered the testing, Katie received training on it with her colleagues. As a result, she decided to volunteer for the imaging department's first *myRisk Hereditary Cancer Panel*. It looks at 28 genes that impact inherited risks for colorectal as well as seven other cancers: breast, ovarian, gastric, pancreatic, melanoma, prostate, and endometrial. She thought having this information might help her better understand her own risks and be more empowered when making healthcare decisions. A simple blood draw started the process.

## Some Shocking News

When her results came back, she met with the Imaging Nurse Navigator to discuss an unexpected outcome: Katie had the BRCA gene (sometimes called "braca"), which meant she had a much higher risk of developing breast cancer or ovarian cancer compared with someone who doesn't have



Katie works closely with Dr. Rebecca Pedersen (bottom left) and Nurse Practitioner Danielle Siedschlag (bottom right) to manage symptoms of medically induced menopause, which was prompted by her proactive surgeries. She is impressed by the providers' accessibility and responsiveness.

the mutation. "My colon cancer risk came back A-OK," she explained. Both her paternal aunt and great grandmother had breast cancer, but Katie was nonetheless surprised.

She says, "I was scared at first, especially when I found out I had an 87 percent chance of getting cancer by age 70. But then I took it in stride. Now, with perspective, I feel like I won the lottery. I became aware of a major risk that I would not have known about, and had the chance to take pre-emptive action."

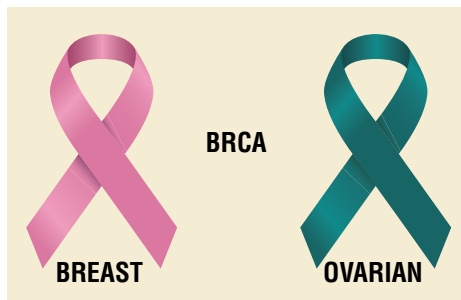


## PHYSICALS AND IMMUNIZATIONS ARE IMPORTANT

Whether your child is physically attending school this fall or not, **Illinois students entering kindergarten, sixth, and ninth grades (or if you've moved from out of state) must have a school physical and immunizations before the first day of classes.** In addition to being required for school, a physical and immunizations help ensure a safer childhood overall, as well as keeping your entire family healthier by keeping infectious diseases at bay.

Call your child's healthcare provider today to book a physical that fits your schedule. If your child doesn't have a provider, call us toll-free at 1-877-600-0346 ext. 965 and have an appointment before you get off the phone.

After telling her sister that she also had a 50/50 chance of sharing the same gene, Katie's sibling tested positive, too. They received counseling to review their options, which included preventive interventions, like surgery, as well as intensive lifelong screening options. Both of them opted to have a double mastectomy in their 30s, and Katie also had her ovaries and uterus removed.



Katie Alvarado found out she carries the BRCA breast cancer gene after completing genetic testing at FHN.

Making the decision as a team made it reassuring for both women. They followed a similar timeline and went to all their appointments together at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, where they had

their surgeries, including breast reconstruction. (FHN did not offer this capability at the time, but it is now available here.)

## Reducing Risk, Appreciating Options

Although it was a painstaking decision, Katie feels confident in her choice. "My husband, Jason, and I already have a wonderful daughter, Presley, but we had to be confident we were content with one child. We waited several months before making a final decision and also received genetic counseling through UW-Madison. Even though medically-induced menopause has created some challenges for me, I am happy I proceeded with the surgeries. I avoided possible chemotherapy and radiation, frequent and intensive screenings, and the nagging stress that comes with such a high risk of being diagnosed with cancer. Now my risks are down to below 'normal' levels."

Katie credits Rebecca Pedersen, MD, and Danielle Siedschlag, WHNP-BC, for helping her deal with health issues related to medically-induced menopause.

"I have some challenges that most women my age do not have to face quite yet, but Dr. Pedersen and Danielle have been so helpful and encouraging. Their support has been key to my peace of mind, and they are both extremely accessible and responsive. They are wonderful!" she exclaims.

"I know genetic testing and bold action might not be for everyone," Katie says, "but it was the best decision for me and my family. I am grateful I had this knowledge. It gave me choices and the chance to be proactive. I feel empowered. And I feel lucky."

If you have a strong personal or family history of cancer and are interested in finding out more about your genetic risks, talk to your provider or **call the Women's Diagnostic Center at 815-599-6421.**

# DON'T DELAY YOUR MAMMOGRAM



Early detection saves lives

**W**omen who are overdue for a mammogram due to COVID-19 safety concerns should not hesitate to get one scheduled soon. FHN has implemented extra precautions to give you confidence in proceeding with this important test for preventive health. You can schedule a no-wait appointment with just one call to 815-599-6860 during business hours.

"Our scheduling experts have made it easier than ever to get this important screening done at our patients' convenience," says FHN Director of Imaging Services Katie Alvarado (featured on p. 10). "They'll get your mammogram scheduled on **your** timetable, and eliminate any need for you to wait."

Mammogram appointments are available every weekday and some evening hours, and the staff of the Women's Diagnostic Center at FHN Memorial Hospital follow rigorous cleaning and safety protocols to help prevent the spread of COVID-19 and keep patients safe. For example, extra time is allotted between each appointment so our staff can thoroughly sanitize after working with every single patient. Masks are worn by all hospital employees and facial coverings are required for all patients, as well.

Remember, October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month. According to the American Cancer Society, regular mammograms can help find breast cancer at an early stage, when treatment is most successful. A mammogram often can find breast changes that could be cancer years before physical symptoms develop.

October is  
**BREAST CANCER Awareness Month**



## Imaging Nurse Navigator Helps Guide Patients through Procedures



Mother and daughter team Kami Robinson and Margie Kochsmier are proud to work in the nursing field together at FHN.

**Imaging Nurse Navigator Kami Robinson, BSN**, considers her job a calling. She helps guide patients who are having MRIs, CTs, ultrasounds, and biopsies, and works closely with radiologists to assist them throughout these procedures.

Kami sums it up: “I am there for my patients, providing encouragement, education, and support. I help them prepare for what to expect, answer their questions, and ease their fears of the unknown.” She works with the entire imaging department, and spends a significant amount of time guiding women who need breast biopsies to check for cancer.

Kami wanted to be a nurse since she was in pre-school. Some of her earliest memories are “helping” her mom, FHN Infection Preventionist Margie Kochsmier, MSN, study when she decided to go back to school to follow her dreams.

“I always wanted stories from my mom about what she did at work, and even enjoyed her dissecting projects ... not something many kids would want to watch. From the time I was a little girl, I knew I would go to nursing school. There was no doubt.”

Now, both of these nursing professionals work at FHN and are dedicated to their vocation, their patients, and each other. “My mom is a really good role model,” declares Kami, “and I am proud we are in this field together!”



Letter From Tonya Thayer,  
FHN Foundation Executive Director

[fhn.org/foundation](http://fhn.org/foundation)  
815-599-6900



## The FHN COVID-19 Response Fund – You’ve Responded

Once again, we are grateful and humbled by the support FHN has received from the communities that we serve. In the last issue of *Insight*, we asked that those who could support the FHN COVID-19 Response Fund please consider doing so. And you responded. Thank you for your generosity!

With those generous gifts, we have purchased six Controlled Air Purifying Respirators (CAPRs). CAPRs are one of the tools hospitals use to protect their team members from not only coronaviruses but other contaminants in the air. Each CAPR includes a face shield, cap, extra masking around the chin and neck along with a portable respirator. You have most likely seen photos or news clips of hospital clinical professionals wearing them in emergency departments or intensive care units.

Providing our clinical team members with this extra layer of protection to keep them safe while they care for your loved ones is just one of the many examples of how you and the rest of our Foundation donors are truly standing by our theme — “We are in this together.” Thank you for making our FHN Healthcare Heroes a top priority by assisting us in providing them with the personal protective equipment that helps keep them safe.

We continue to grow our COVID-19 Response Fund as we anticipate the likelihood of an increase in cases this fall and winter. If you are interested in supporting the Fund, please visit [FHN.org](http://FHN.org) and click on the Donate button. And thank you for all you have done and continue to do to help keep your families, friends and neighbors safe during this pandemic.

## Crisis Stabilization Center Set to Open October 1



**FHN**  
*Family Counseling Center*  
Dr. Ravi and Mrs. Minu Vyas  
Crisis Stabilization Center

Thanks to the generosity of nearly 600 community members—including patients, staff, physicians, and local employers—who pledged more than \$800,000 through the FHN Foundation, people facing a severe behavioral health crisis will have a much-needed, innovative option for receiving care:

**The Dr. Ravi and Mrs. Minu Vyas Crisis Stabilization Center at the FHN Family Counseling Center** is slated to begin caring for patients on October 1, 2020.

Located just blocks from FHN Memorial Hospital in Freeport, this new resource will provide therapeutic care in a more appropriate setting than the typical emergency room or local law enforcement facility.

A renovation of much of the first floor housing the FHN Family Counseling Center is well under way, transforming the facility into one that will include eight sophisticated sleeper chairs in an open area that will resemble a living room. There will be private rooms for meetings with caregivers.

The open floor plan will allow staff to monitor patients in a home-like setting where they are free to read, watch TV, sleep, or talk. Patients will benefit from a multidisciplinary team that will include a psychiatric provider, nurses, and mental health therapists; all dedicated to helping them cope.

# Career Opportunities for Respiratory Therapists at FHN

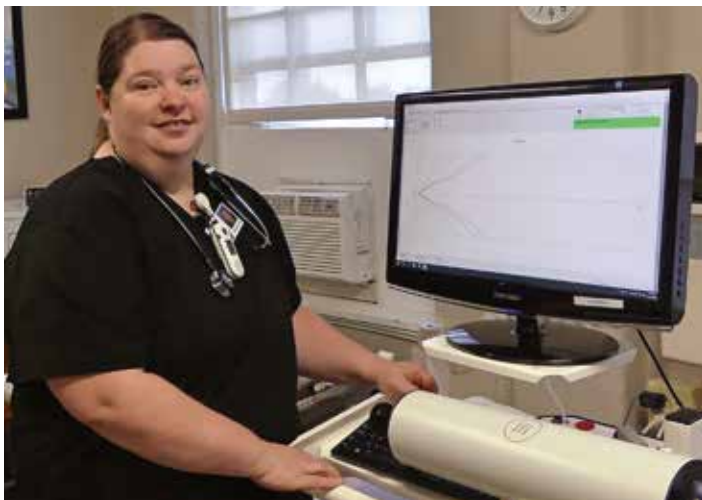


Though they've known one another for much longer, Teri and Stephanie have worked together in FHN's respiratory therapy department for 16 years.

In our last issue of Insight, we highlighted the importance of respiratory therapists in the treatment of COVID-19 and to the healthcare system overall. In general, respiratory therapists assist patients with their breathing, whether that is with the help of oxygen, medications, or ventilators.

FHN has 17 respiratory therapists on staff who treat patients with a wide range of respiratory illnesses from asthma to chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) to COVID-19. They are also trained to perform specialized breathing tests, procedures, and therapies pertaining to the lungs and breathing.

Respiratory Therapists like 16-year veteran Stephanie Swalve are proud to work at FHN. "We are a smaller, community-based hospital. At some of the bigger healthcare organizations, you start feeling like just a number and that you don't get a personal experience," Stephanie says. "We truly care about our patients and take the time to help them in any way we can. We see our regular respiratory patients frequently and bond with them so they know what to expect and feel more comfortable."



Stephanie Swalve appreciates the close-knit, family atmosphere of the respiratory therapy department at FHN.



Twenty-one-year veteran Teri Bland likes how FHN provides therapists the opportunity to develop skills beyond typical floor care duties.

Teri Bland has been treating FHN patients as a respiratory therapist for 21 years. "I'm proud to work at FHN because I work with staff members who truly care about the patient and aren't just showing up for paychecks. We all pitch in and work together to provide excellent care to our patients, whether it be environmental services, radiology techs, or nursing staff. We are there for each other."

FHN is always on the lookout for healthcare professionals who are passionate about providing high quality care. Whether you are new to the field or a seasoned respiratory therapist, and you share our commitment to providing personal and professional growth in healthcare (or you know someone who might), check out the career opportunities available at FHN.

For more information about career opportunities at FHN, visit [www.fhn.org/careers](http://www.fhn.org/careers) or call FHN Human Resources at 815-599-6706.



# May 2020 Daisy and Bee Recipients

## Lifetime Achievement Award

**Kathryn Martinez, MSN, RN, FACHE**

Executive Vice President, Chief Operating Officer, and Chief Nursing Officer



### The DAISY Lifetime Achievement Award

was created to recognize nurses who have devoted their life's work to the compassionate care of others. They serve as a beacon of inspiration to those at all stages of their career and in the various and important roles of nursing.

Kathryn (Kathy) was nominated by the members of the FHN Nursing Care Council, who celebrate her impact as a mentor, role model, advocate and promoter of a positive image for hundreds of nurses during her 28 years of service at FHN. Kathy has served in a variety of roles including staff nurse, nursing supervisor, director of professional development, chief nursing officer, vice president of patient services, and now chief operating officer.

Medical-surgical RN Megan Loomis sums up her appreciation for Kathy's leadership, "not only was she a great mentor throughout my time in leadership, she became someone who

**Above, from left to right:** FHN President & CEO Mark Gridley, Dr. Lucio Martinez (Kathryn's husband), Matt Martinez (Kathryn's son), Kathryn, and FHN's Supervisor of Clinical Resources, Jessica Larson.

offered great advice for challenges, even beyond work. Because of Kathy, I became a better leader, and now am a better nurse and person thanks to her guidance and support."

Brenda Offermann, a clinical resource team leader, describes Kathy's empathetic leadership, "First and foremost, she models compassion for her FHN team. During emotional times when the nursing team had lost one of their own, she was present to provide a shoulder and prayer for the hurting staff. During times of heightened anxiety and uncertainty, Kathy has been a calming influence. She models this with her choice of words and confident delivery. Also, we can glean wisdom and insight from Kathy's example of strong leadership."

**Below:** Kathryn Martinez poses with her husband and son while holding her DAISY Lifetime Achievement Award certificate and specially designed Unique Healer's Touch sculpture.



## May 2020 Bee Recipient Lilly Curtiss, CNA



**Lilly's nominator writes:** Lilly was such a breath of fresh air. Her delight and joy were contagious. She was 100 percent interested in me and my comfort. Her sweet attitude was such a boost for my mental state. She is exactly who should be with patients, calming their fears and making them comfortable. There is an amazing nursing staff team at FHN. She is a valuable member of that team.

## May 2020 Daisy Recipient Stacey Winter, RN



**Stacey's nominator writes:** I have had Stacey as my nurse on two different occasions, as I have obtained both inpatient and outpatient services at FHN. I've seen her grow and develop professionally and as a nurse over the years and have always been impressed with her skill (perfect IV starts), compassion and her development in the Art of Nursing.

My wife came in for her first post-cancer surgery scope. She was very anxious, as anyone could imagine. Stacey's communications approach with my wife, patting her shoulder and getting her a warm blanket, almost instantly put her at ease. I walked into the GI Lab exactly when Stacey was wheeling her out of the procedure room. Stacey was talking to her, assessing the situation and explaining next steps. She brought my wife a special tea requested and graham crackers. My wife didn't eat or drink as she was in and out of sleep. But it seemed every time she woke up, Stacey was there checking on her.

I can tell you from experience that my wife has shared her special hug with three providers and one nurse in the time I have known her. That nurse is Stacey. To me, it reinforced the belief I had in Stacey as a role model in the nursing profession and exemplifies the nursing qualities specified in the DAISY Award.

# MORE IMPORTANT THAN EVER



# GET YOUR FLU SHOT THIS FALL

This year has been drastically different in so many ways, but one thing remains the same: It is important that you and your loved ones get influenza vaccinations (flu shots).

### **Actually, this year, it's more important than ever to get a flu shot.**

The COVID-19 pandemic has been pushing our country's healthcare system to its limits since March, and shows no real signs of stopping. Add the effects of a typical\* flu season—35.5 million people ill, 16.5 million medical visits, 490,600 hospitalizations, and 34,200 deaths—and you get some pretty scary numbers that could overwhelm hospitals and healthcare systems across the country.

### **Protecting Our Loved Ones**

Many of us have been washing our hands, keeping our distance and wearing masks for a while now in an effort to protect ourselves and the people around us from COVID-19. These simple precautions help to keep you safe and healthy, and we're asking you to take just one more very important step and get your flu shot.

"We hope that because of the increased awareness of health precautions this year due to COVID, people will make getting their flu shot a priority," says FHN Infection Preventionist Margie Kochsmier, MSN, RN, CMSRN, CIC. "You don't ever want to get the flu, but this year, people are really working hard to stay healthy, and a flu shot is a great tool to help accomplish that."

While flu shots do not protect against coronavirus, medical experts say that increasing the number of people who get flu shots this year will help in two ways: It will be an important step to build the infrastructure that will be needed to inoculate people against COVID-19 once that vaccine becomes available, and will let the country's healthcare system continue to focus on caring for COVID-19 patients.

For the 2020-2021 flu season, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that all people over the age of 6 months get a flu shot. This year's high-dose flu shot, available to persons over the age of 65, will contain protection against two "A" and two "B" strains of flu virus. (The previous dose protected against two "A" strains and one "B" strain.) The high-dose version will contain four times as much antigen as the regular flu shot, as it has in the past.

FHN is planning a number of convenient, COVID-precaution compliant flu shot clinics—including drive-through clinics—throughout northwest Illinois. (You can find more information and a schedule online at [www.fhn.org/flu2020](http://www.fhn.org/flu2020).) These flu shot clinics are for adults over the age of 18 only; children must get their flu shot at their healthcare provider's office. Grown-ups can get their shot at their provider's office, too—just call to make an appointment that's convenient for you.

\* Centers for Disease Control and Prevention figures for the 2018-2019 flu season.



to our team of talented staff committed to delivering healthcare excellence in our community!

## Orthopaedics Team Sends a Valentine to Football History — Continued from page 3

like device slipped over my hand for protection,” he says. “She took all the time we needed to get it just right. It gave me confidence. During games, I experienced no pain and felt safe. Plus, we had lots of laughs. We became friends.”

Mary says, “It was a pleasure working with the coaching staff to keep Ronnell protected. He healed so quickly that by the final game, no wrap was required. He was a model patient.”

In the end, Ronnell needed no physical therapy and Lena-Winslow won its last game of the year, an honor reserved for

only one team—state champions.

“I am elated that I got to take part in that unique experience,” stresses Ronnell. “I have loved football since third grade. My brothers and I, well, it is a big part of our lives, and our parents have always been very supportive. I am really grateful to FHN for helping to save my season, which led to a championship! Now I am looking forward to a new challenge at the University of Dubuque.”

Everyone at FHN wishes Ronnell much success as a Spartan, where he hopes to start on special teams.

## Stop the Spread of Covid-19 — Continued from page 6

Wearing a face mask will not cause you to have low oxygen levels or high carbon dioxide levels. They are completely safe for most people to wear; your healthcare provider can confirm this for you if you have questions. In fact, many of the people who work in healthcare or other professions like construction wear masks all day, every day, and have done so for years.

Here are some recent references to the safety of wearing a mask from health professionals:

The American Lung Association addresses the safety of wearing a mask in a recent blog entry:

<https://www.lung.org/blog/covid-masks>.

The Cleveland Clinic, one of the largest and most respected healthcare systems in the United States, talks about wearing a facemask: <https://health.clevelandclinic.org/5-myths-about-coronavirus-and-face-masks-debunked/>

## Still Learning About COVID-19

Dr. Parks is a part of FHN's advisory team, which meets often to share new medical information. “We read every article, every piece of information, every scholarly article, and the information about COVID-19 is coming through at lightning speed,” Dr. Parks says. “We bring all that information to the team, and that affects how we treat patients going forward.”

It's important to remember that COVID-19 is an entirely new situation, not just for the community, but for medical experts and researchers.



Entire families came out for COVID-19 testing during one of four community mobile testing events held at various locations in Freeport.

“Because experts are learning new things about COVID-19 every day, the guidance those experts give will change over time—it's to be expected as we learn more,” Gridley says.

Gridley asks that people “think like a scientist” when seeking information on COVID-19. “Validate your information. Is it coming from a reliable source?” Some of the websites providing reliable, up-to-date information on the virus are:

[dph.illinois.gov](https://dph.illinois.gov)

[www.cdc.gov](https://www.cdc.gov)

Gridley and Dr. Parks agree that the very best way that each of us together can help to slow the spread of COVID-19 are the precautions we all know: Social distancing; avoid large crowds; wear a mask; and wash your hands often.

# Insight



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