

A publication of FHN

Volume 12, Issue 3

Insight

WELCOME!
FHN Opens
New Healthcare
Home in Jo
Davie County

**Caring for
Your Health;
Caring for Your
Community**



We're here, for you.

FHN

A New Location for Your FHN Healthcare!

I'm delighted to share some really positive news with you in this issue of INSIGHT: We just opened the brand-new FHN Jo Daviess Family Healthcare Center! This beautiful new facility offers expanded healthcare services for

all in the region, and we're very proud to be able to provide healthcare excellence there through the great team serving you in that office, just as we do throughout northwest Illinois. Please be sure to read all about it, and take a few moments also to go on a virtual tour at our website, www.fhn.org.

Very much connected to the concept of providing local healthcare excellence, we've included an article with some important numbers on how supporting locally owned and operated healthcare contributes a great deal to our regional economy, just like supporting all of our other wonderful local businesses. FHN is committed to continuing to be an anchor business here, as well as utilizing local establishments for our purchases whenever we possibly can.

We've got a great story about our cardiopulmonary rehab group making it easier for a kayaker to enjoy his sport and another about our Infectious Disease Specialist Dr. Robert Geller diagnosing a rare – and scary – fungal infection. We're certainly fortunate to have skills like these available right here in our community. They're just a few

members of our highly talented team, many of whom have been here for many years! I'm happy to recognize and thank them in publishing service anniversaries in this issue, as well as **all** of the dedicated people at FHN.

You'll see something a little different in this INSIGHT, too – it's a letter to you from our Chief Quality Officer Dr. Rebecca Pedersen, and our Chief Medical Officer Dr. Keith Martin. They are sharing a reminder about the need to keep yourself and your family healthy through screenings, treatments, and regular conversations with your primary care provider. FHN has nearly 30 primary care providers who act as the "coach" of your personal healthcare team to connect you to many other specialized professional team members. We know that some people have been postponing important care during the past 18 months, and Dr. Pedersen and Dr. Martin – as well as all of us at FHN – don't want to see appointments and treatments fall behind.

Finally, we provide an update on the COVID-19 pandemic and vaccines, including tips for everyone getting back to school safely. This information was accurate at the time we went to print, but it certainly may have changed since then – we are truly in a battle right now between the virus and vaccines. I urge everyone to stay up to date on the facts regarding the virus and its variants – we are definitely not out of the woods yet. Please be safe and help keep those around you safe, as well. **Thank you for choosing FHN!**



Walk with a Doc is more than "just a walk" – it's a prescription for a healthy life!

Our 35–40-minute walks are led by providers and professionals who care about you and your health. They are a safe, fun, family and pet-friendly, and FREE way to get some steps, learn about health, and meet new friends.

SATURDAYS • 8 A.M. • KRAPE PARK (Meet by the concession stand)

Visit fhn.org/wwad for more information.



Save the Date for Some Out of This World Entertainment
FHN Virtual Festival of Trees Gala
Friday, November 19



FHN's Obstetrics and Gynecology team is now becoming **FHN WOMEN'S HEALTH** and is located on the second floor of the FHN Family Healthcare Center – Burchard Hills in Freeport

Cover Photo (left to right): Cathy Magee, RN; Terri Groezinger, PA-C; Brenda Baltierra, RN; Michael McFadden, MD; and Staci Lehman, CMA. All individuals pictured have been fully vaccinated for COVID-19 and were not required to wear masks for this photograph.

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 12 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.

Note: Photographs taken during the pandemic have followed proper safety protocols.



Local Healthcare is an Economic Anchor for Our Region

We all know it's good to support our local businesses and services because when we do so, we **all** benefit. In addition to the personal touch that local businesses can bring to customers who are their neighbors and friends, thriving local businesses mean a stronger tax base, which translates to better schools, utilities, emergency responders, streets and roads, parks, and other services we all use. Local businesses are the largest employers nationally, whether they are branches of larger companies or entrepreneurial ventures.

Local healthcare is a big factor not only in patients' individual health, but the health of the community overall. FHN is proud to be locally owned and operated, making decisions about how we deliver healthcare with the benefit of being tightly connected with the communities we serve through relationships established with many local organizations. This insight allows us to really understand what's important here ... and now. Local decision-making also helps us be agile when we need to be, such as in determining how best to address the COVID-19 care challenges we have all faced together.

As a not-for-profit organization, our mission is to provide for a societal good. Our economic advantage at FHN is reinvested into enhancing and improving our communities' healthcare **directly**, not sent to a headquarters or parent company outside our region. We are not bound by stockholders, either, who often have shareholder returns (dividends) as a top financial priority.

FHN believes strongly that decisions about and for our communities are best made by people who live and work there – and receive their healthcare there. Once any business is headquartered somewhere else, major decisions are made far away from where they will have an impact – we have seen that impact in recent years right here in northwest Illinois as major manufacturers, for example, have reduced their ranks here.

LEVERAGE IN THE NUMBERS

Did you know that the Illinois Hospital Association (IHA) has calculated that each healthcare job in the state creates an additional **1.4 jobs** in other sectors?* FHN's total payroll for approximately **1,243 team members** – from FHN Memorial Hospital to the employees of our regional offices in communities throughout northern Illinois – is approximately **\$85.9 million**, so when the two employment figures are combined, **1,243 FHN jobs**

and **1,740 other jobs** created as a result, FHN can be credited with securing at least **2,983 jobs** in northwest Illinois and southwest Wisconsin.

We also contribute to the local economy through our purchases. When we buy medical supplies, pay for utilities in our buildings, update our facilities or build new ones like the FHN Jo Daviess Family Healthcare Center which just opened, contract for cleaning and other business services, and purchase food or equipment for our staff and patients, we choose local suppliers whenever possible so that these purchases can ripple throughout our economy. The IHA has determined that each dollar spent by FHN generates an additional \$1.40 in spending to state and local economies. FHN annually spends almost **\$70 million** on goods and services, so that translates into **\$98 million** in additional spending.

The COVID-19 pandemic presented a new challenge in reaching out and connecting with the people in our communities in 2020. While some of the events we offer were cut short, like our many public educational programs, we still continued all of these that we could. For example, the Mobile Rx Pantry Program, a partnership between FHN and the Northern Illinois Food Bank, helped to **feed 3,450 families** in northwest Illinois last year with pandemic-safe distribution events every two weeks, continuing on this year as well. During 2020, FHN updated the public **24 times** with bi-weekly COVID-19 videos featuring FHN experts in addition to dozens of articles, social media posts, radio interviews, and other public messages. We also brought families, friends, and neighbors together **11 times** – most virtually – for a variety of family-focused area events, including Festival of Trees, Get Fit, Family Bingo, and other fun, healthy activities.

WE'RE HERE, FOR YOU!

So, while you may not think of this very often, your trip to an FHN location for your own health is an important part of your community's health, too. We are working hard to be proud of every interaction with our customers and patients, as well as committing to being a good neighbor, the best locally owned healthcare organization you'll ever experience, and the people you trust every day with your family's health and well-being.

Thank you for keeping it local ... and for choosing FHN!

**Formulas provided by the Illinois Hospital Association*



TAKE A VIRTUAL TOUR
OF THE NEW CENTER AT
[WWW.FHN.COM/
JODAVIESS](http://WWW.FHN.COM/JODAVIESS)

Dedicated to You

FHN's New Jo Daviess Facility Offers Expanded, State-of-the-Art Care

We were proud to open our newest facility, the FHN Jo Daviess Family Healthcare Center, early this summer.

The Jo Daviess FHC was conceived as a place to bring high-tech medicine, paired with FHN's commitment to personal, compassionate healthcare, to our patients in Jo Daviess and surrounding counties.

Located at 600 N. Rush Street just off U.S. Route 20 in Stockton, the new office was designed to take advantage of natural light to create a comforting, healing atmosphere. The spacious new building also makes it possible to offer expanded services to area residents, including all-digital imaging (coming soon) on site.

“We're proud and excited to make this investment in this region. And even more, our team members are excited to add some state-of-the-art capabilities to the personal, individual care we've always offered to the residents of Jo Daviess County and surrounding communities here.”

FHN President and CEO Mark Gridley, MBA, FACHE

“This facility was built with patients in mind,” says FHN Chief Medical Officer Keith Martin, MD, FACOG. “Larger patient areas don't just make it more pleasant, they give us space to bring in FHN's specialists if they're needed. A patient can have an appointment with their specialist and primary healthcare provider right here, closer to home.”

The building is furnished with the advanced equipment and information technology used by FHN specialty providers, so it's easier to bring in additional expertise on patients' cases when it is needed. FHN providers offer care in 39 specialized areas of medicine, including cardiology, orthopaedics, obstetrics and gynecology, and behavioral health.

“The space and functionality of the new facility allow us to offer our patients team-based care, which is a relationship-based approach to healthcare,” Dr. Martin says. “It's more personal, and puts the patient at the center of the team.”

Our Healthcare Team

FHN Family Medicine Physician Michael McFadden, MD and Family Medicine Physician Assistant Terri Groezinger, PA-C head up the



team of caring professionals at the new facility. Dr. McFadden has been caring for FHN patients for 19 years, and Terri, who was born and raised in Stockton, has 10 years of caring for urgent care and occupational patients and has been caring for patients of all ages as a primary care provider for more than two years. As a board-certified physician assistant, she is trained and accredited to conduct physical exams, treat patients' illnesses and injuries, order and interpret lab tests, and write prescriptions.

The team is eager to put the new building's space to work. "Dr. McFadden and I, and other FHN providers, take care of many patients with complex medical needs," Terri says. "At the top of that list is people with diabetes."

"It can be difficult to cover all the many details patients need to keep track of to control their diabetes, and our new Community Room was designed with educational services like that in mind," Terri says. "The room also gives us space to offer support groups for behavioral health patients and others."

The new facility's all-digital imaging capabilities (coming soon) will allow providers to get a "quick look" at injuries and patients' healing progress. The high-quality images captured in the Jo Daviess lab are available quickly to providers on site and integrated with each patient's electronic medical record to make follow-up appointments easier at any FHN location.

Pandemic safety precautions ruled out a big open house, so we celebrated the opening of the FHN Jo Daviess Family Healthcare Center with a virtual tour. You can take the tour, meet some of our team members and learn more about the new facility at www.fhn.org/jodavieess.

We're enjoying being able to welcome our patients to our new "home," and our providers are accepting new patients, too. Call our office at 815-947-3211 to make an appointment! ■



▲ Left to right: Cathy Magee, RN; Terri Groezinger, PA-C; Brenda Baltierra, RN; Michael McFadden, MD; and Staci Lehman, CMA. All individuals pictured have been fully vaccinated for COVID-19 and were not required to wear masks for this photograph.

CNAs: You'll Love FHN's Rewarding CNA Advancement Program!

Certified Nursing Assistants (CNAs) are an important part of our healthcare team. The care they deliver to patients and the help they provide are the foundation that helps all of us at FHN fulfill our mission of providing superior, quality healthcare services with respect, dignity, and compassion.

We believe in building up and rewarding these important FHN healthcare team members, so CNAs at FHN have nearly unlimited potential to advance their careers and grow professionally.

Some of our current nursing leaders, in fact, began their careers as CNAs, including Team Leader of Resource Management Wendy Maurer and Telemetry/Intensive Care Unit Nursing Operations Leader Michelle Queckboerner.

The CNA certification also can be a springboard to many other healthcare careers, including but not limited to: Medical Laboratory Technician • Registered Respiratory Therapist • Imaging Technician • Certified Medical Assistant • Physical Therapist Assistant • Occupational Therapist Assistant • Registered Nurse

We're proud to offer our exclusive new **CNA Advancement Program** with great present-day benefits along with professional development opportunities and recognition based on experience, performance, professional growth, and engagement.

CNAs begin their careers at FHN with:
A \$2,000 2-year sign-on commitment award • First-day benefits • Competitive wages • Stipends for advancement • Educational assistance • Scholarship opportunities

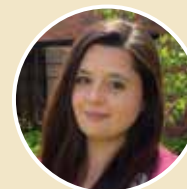
If you are interested in joining FHN's CNA team, request information online at www.fhn.org/cna-advancement-program. You can also learn more about nursing careers at FHN at www.fhn.org/careers-nursing.



Hannah Alber
of Dakota has found her real-world learning experiences helpful with her nursing education.



Amelia Huizenga
of Freeport says the nurses she works with and learns from at FHN are helpful, kind and great mentors.



Noelle Maher
of Freeport says she has benefited from the professional development she has had at FHN.



Heart Attack Patient Conquers Concerns

FHN CARDIAC REHABILITATION 'ONE OF THE BEST THINGS I EVER DID'

Dan Malin's work trip to Michigan in January took an unexpected detour – one he would have preferred to avoid. He started to feel ill before departing, and then feared he was having a heart attack while he was driving in Indiana. He rushed to a local hospital and his instincts proved correct. An angiogram

◀ Dan Malin enjoys both pedaling his bike and paddling a kayak near his Lake Carroll home after his 'graduation' from FHN cardiac rehab.

showed he had a 99 percent blockage that required a stent to help keep his artery open. After having that procedure in the Hoosier state, Dan's physicians there also recommended cardiac rehabilitation.

Wanting to find a program close to home, Dan conferred with his primary care provider Lucio Martinez, MD, and cardiologist Madhu R. Malladi, MD, FACC, FASE, both chosen after he moved to Lake Carroll from Bartlett, Ill. They strongly suggested he attend FHN's cardiac rehab program. According to Dan, "It was one of the best things I ever did."

TREATMENT GOES BEYOND JUST EXERCISE

"FHN's cardiac rehab was absolutely fantastic," he exclaims, "and I have the utmost respect for rehab nurse LeAnne Raders and their entire team. The staff knows their stuff and does a great job creating a positive environment. They were welcoming, inviting, and encouraging to our entire class of participants and gave each patient lots of individual attention. We exercised on the treadmill, did stretching and chair yoga, practiced meditation, and learned about nutrition, all under their careful monitoring."

Dan was particularly impressed with the team's emphasis on the psychological aspects of recovering from a heart attack. He says, "At age 54, I was in pretty good shape until recently, but my family history has the cards stacked against me. This incident really shook my confidence. LeAnne, my case manager, along with Molly, the exercise physiologist, and Krista, a cardiac nurse, all helped me understand my limitations while encouraging me to push myself – just not too much. They tailored a program specific to my needs



◀ Gradually increasing his exercise regimen gave Dan confidence he could pursue an active lifestyle again. Here, he turns up the treadmill speed under the watchful eye of LeAnne Raders, RN, who helps him monitor his exertion levels.

▼ Dan talks to Dr. Martinez, his primary care provider, who strongly recommended he attend cardiac rehabilitation at FHN Memorial Hospital. “My wife and I love him,” says Dan. “He is awesome. For a while, I will see him for a follow-up every three months.”



that included gradually increasing my workout. I exceeded my goals and actually ‘graduated’ five weeks early.”

INCREASING THE CHANCE FOR A POSITIVE OUTCOME

Statistics show that heart patients who go through cardiac rehab have better outcomes than those who do not participate, says LeAnne Raders, BSN, RNBC, who is certified in cardiovascular nursing.

“Implementing cardiac rehabilitation in patients with coronary heart disease reduces cardiovascular mortality and hospital re-admission rates,” LeAnne shares. “It also improves exercise tolerance and reduces anxiety, stress, and depression, which are prevalent in patients with heart problems. Our program focuses on small class

sizes and giving each patient an individual plan based on their unique circumstances. We end up forming some lasting friendships, too!”

Now Dan is starting to feel like himself again. “I recently did a bunch of yard work on a hot day and it was great. I felt like a whole person for the first time in a while. My wife kept coming to check on me to make sure I was doing OK, but I assured her I felt fine. Without FHN cardiac rehab, I would not have had the confidence to get out there and work so hard. That was the best part of the program: The mental reinforcement backed up by the physical conditioning to help me achieve maximum functionality. Thanks to FHN, my wife and I are looking forward to all the fun activities we moved here to enjoy: Bike rides, kayaking, walking, and fishing.” ■

Nurse Practitioner Joins FHN Behavioral Health Team

FHN is proud to welcome board-certified psychiatric mental health nurse practitioner **Lynne Schweppe, MSN, APN, PMHNP-BC** to the caring team at the FHN Family Counseling Center.



Lynne began her nursing career at FHN as a Student Nurse Tech and RN in the Ortho-Surgical and Medical-Surgical units. She went on to earn a bachelor’s degree in business administration from Elmhurst College in Elmhurst, Ill. and in nursing from OSF Saint Anthony College of Nursing in Rockford. She also has earned a master’s degree in nursing and advanced community health nursing from the University of Illinois Chicago College of Nursing – Quad Cities in Moline, Ill. She earned her post-graduate certification as a psychiatric mental health nurse practitioner across the lifespan at Allen College in Waterloo, Iowa.

Lynne has cared for behavioral health patients as an RN for the inpatient and Emergency Department Crisis Stabilization units, then served as a nurse practitioner for outpatient clinic and detox/inpatient substance abuse services at Robert Young Mental Health Center in Moline, Ill. She also served as a public health RN, clinic director, and clinical nurse specialist for more than 15 years in Mercer and Whiteside counties.

She is a member of the American Nurses Association and the Illinois chapter of the ANA and of the Sigma Theta Tau International Honor Society.



Congratulations to Those FHN Team Members

5 YEARS

Tonya Alt	FCC Business Office
Amber Ammons	Rheumatology
Wendy Barr	Quality
Rachel Bennett	Admitting
Amanda Bradbury	Quality
Stephen Copeland	Pharmacy
Gregory Dammann, MD	Orthopaedics
Timothy Deets	Op. Finance
Tamara Diddens	Medical Records
Renu Dosi, MD	Internal Med
Laura Earlywine	Admitting
Maajid Ekkiswala, MD	Hospitalist
Miranda Frazier	Med Surg Peds
Samantha Garrie	Family Counseling Center
Virginia Gill	Admitting
Alicia Gray	Ambulatory Care
Terri Groezinger	Jo Daviess
Danielle Hartman	C.T. Scan
Stephen Hasenyager	Materials Management
Krista Kane-Boop	Savanna
Karin Kortemeier	PT, Burchard Hills
Angela Ladow	Acute Respiratory Clinic
Joani Linthakhanh	Medical Records
Kelli Marcum	Gastroenterology
Lori McGuire	Pharmacy
Krista Montgomery	Telemetry
Susan Rednour	Med Surg Peds
Katelyn Reynolds	Medical Records
Theresa Richardson	Medical Staff
Jennifer Robinson	Family Counseling Center
Kami Robinson	Radiology
Dana Rowe	ICU
Amy Rungren	Op. Finance
Hannah Sandell	G.I. Lab
Courtney Schultz	Med Surg Peds
Autumn Seidemann	Med Surg Peds
Elizabeth Smith	Speech Therapy
Stephanie Snider	PT, Burchard Hills
Steve Stadermann	Maintenance
Ledarius Stewart	Security
Elias Tzelepis, MD	Hospitalist
Rachel Walker	Med Surg Peds

Tawney Winter
Ashley Wire
Ashley Woodruff
Elisha Yount
Min Yu, MD
Noralyn Zier

Environmental Services
Urology
Jo Daviess
Med Surg Peds
Pathology
Central Scheduling

10 YEARS

Adam Angelilli, MD
Laurie Bloom
Amy Bratrud
Laurie Debehne
Aurora Engebretson
Llyod Evans
Mark Gridley
Hannah Jansen
Farhan Khan, MD
Christina Knoup
Douglas Kohn
Shelby Logemann
Beth Martin
Brittney Mordini
Eric Muder
Richard Peterson
Genevieve Schlichting
Tiffani Schoonhoven
Emily Sisson
Tamen Squire
Kimberly Zink
Whittney Zumdahl

Pediatrics
Radiology
Family Counseling Center
Environmental Services
Telemetry
Maintenance
Administration
Ambulatory Care
Nephrology
Pharmacy
Respiratory
Hospitalist Program
Cardiac Services
Orthopaedics
Security
Food & Nutrition
Medical Records
NIHP
Respiratory
Echo
Cardiac Services
Physical Therapy

15 YEARS

Stephanie Baker
Mary Edler
Lisa Farrar
Benjamin Fellows
Mary Freidag
Dianne Freier
Kelly Geiseman
Cheryl Gertsch
Teresa Gibbs
Crystal Hamilton

Food & Nutrition
Business Office
Environmental Services
Radiation Oncology
Podiatry
Ambulatory Care
IS Applications
Supportive Care
Medical Records
Med Surg Peds



Who Celebrated Service Anniversaries in 2020!

Tracy Love
Sarah Marsh
Keri Penticoff
Tammie Rogers
Debra Schopf
Jennifer Thompson
Sara Upmann

Emergency Room
Hospitalist
Business Office
Lab, Burchard Hills
Hospice
Rehab Services
Medical Records

Vicki Monigold
Pamela Neels
Jane OConnor
Victoria Perkins
Kirby Price
Tammy Wichman
Teri Williams

Cancer Admin
Internal Med
Telemetry
Medical Records
OT, Burchard Hills
Op. Finance
Physical Therapy

20 YEARS

Natalie Althoff
Barry Barnes, MD
Brian Bennett, MD
Allissa Bruning
Tara Burris
Yolanda Gray
Sarah Jo Graybill
Lori Lawler
Barbara Lloyd
Diana McNulty, MD
Lauralee Oppold
Pamela (Jill) Otte
Alicia Pals
Amy Rapp
Linda Rapp
Holli Sanders
Barbara Schubert
Amanda Stocks
Trista Timpe
Margo Trimble
Lisa Vendel
Jenna Venson
Leslie Winker

Cancer Admin
Surgery
Highland View
Obstetrics
Gastroenterology
Hospice
Admitting
Family Practice, Burchard Hills
Med Surg Peds
Internal Med
Medical Records
Quality
Operating Room
Hospice
Operating Room
Operating Room
Ambulatory Care
Laboratory
Health Management
Business Office
Emergency Room
G.I. Lab
NIHP

25 YEARS

Christopher Beeler
Teri Bland
Carol Boeke
Terri Holland
Timothy Jessen, MD
Peggy Kohn
Ellyn Lutzenkirchen
Wendy Maurer

Finance (Retired)
Respiratory
Human Resources
Nursing Admin
Allergy
Highland View
Emergency Room
Health Management

30 YEARS

Holly Funk
Andi Gastel
Michelle Gravert
Lucy Roloff
Lorna Schindler
Kay Schlichting
Pamela Staver
Nancy Terhark

Allergy
Food & Nutrition
C.T. Scan
Rheumatology
Business Office
Emergency Room
Jo Daviess
Hospice

35 YEARS

Rebecca Beyer-Laman
Toni Erickson
Brenda Hass
Robin Mueller
Teresa Muggler
Carolyn Reeser
Ravishanker Vyas MD

Food & Nutrition
Highland View
Ambulatory Care
Nursing Admin
Ob/Gyn
Operating Room
Gastroenterology

40 YEARS

Jeanne Almasy
Pamela Busker
Fawn Gray
Cynthia Homan
Pamela Meier
Bhadresh Patel, MD
Michael Perry, MD
Lori Scibona

Hospice
Medical Records
Medical Oncology
Highland View (Retired)
Food & Nutrition
Cardiology
Community Clinic
Internal Medicine

45 YEARS

Theresa Albers

Laboratory (Retired)

60 YEARS

Lavonne Wichman

Materials Management



Hello!

What a year this has been! None of us are likely to forget the COVID-19 pandemic and how it has changed many aspects of our lives. Who would have thought that masks would become an everyday thing or that our kids would be attending school from home? The word “virtual” has taken on a much bigger meaning, and we’ve all been deluged with words like “variant” and “hospitalization rate” and “vaccine effectiveness” that weren’t much a part of our vocabulary before the pandemic.

One thing that hasn’t changed is the significance that good healthcare plays in our lives – if anything, we’ve learned that taking care of ourselves is more important than ever. As vaccinations and new treatments help slow the spread of COVID-19, we welcome everyone to our safe, friendly hospital and offices. If you’ve already come back for care, thank you! Please call when there are other appointments for family members or routine checkups that are coming due. If you haven’t been back, know that we continue to maintain strict standards of cleanliness and safety measures recommended by the CDC to keep you safe while providing the personal, compassionate care you expect from FHN.

Your well-being and quality of life is our priority. Whether it’s time for a wellness screening, a school physical for your student family members, or treatments to improve your lifestyle – like a joint replacement or help in keeping diabetes in check – your health is as important to us as it is to you. If you don’t already have an FHN primary care provider, we can match you with someone who will quickly become an important member of your personal health and wellness team.

So don’t delay ... call your provider today or reach us at 815-599-6860 to schedule your next visit. We’ll find a time that fits your schedule, and help keep you on the path to your best health. Thank you for choosing FHN!

Rebecca L. Pedersen, MD, CPE, FAAFP
Chief Quality Officer

Keith R. Martin MD FACOG
Chief Medical Officer



Lucio Martinez, MD



Diana C. McNulty, MD

It's Time to Take Care of You Your Primary Care Provider Can Help

Many people have decided to treat the pandemic precautions of the past year as kind of a reset: "Once things are back to normal, I'm going to eat healthier/enjoy my hobby/spend more time with my family." It's like a New Year's resolution, but without the cold and snow.

One of the best resolutions you can make any time of year is to take charge of your health. No, not a diet or exercise plan, we're talking "big picture" – are you working toward your best health?

That journey starts with your primary care provider. He or she may be a physician, a nurse practitioner, a physician assistant, or even a specialty care provider with whom you interact frequently. Like an old-fashioned "family doctor," your primary care provider is the person whose office you call when you think you might have strep throat or come down with another illness or minor injury.

You don't have to be sick or injured to see your provider. In fact, you should schedule a checkup with your provider once a year, even if you're in good health.

At your checkup visit, we'll measure your height, weight, and blood pressure, and your provider will do a brief exam, which gives him or her important information about your health. We'll also get you scheduled for any routine screenings you may need.

Your checkup is a good time to bring up any concerns or questions you might have, too: Would a certain vitamin or supplement be

good for me? Is it OK to take acetaminophen every day for my back pain?

Even when you're not in your provider's office, he or she is still a good resource. As an FHN patient, you have access to your health records, appointments, and more through our online patient portal, MyFHN. If you have a non-emergency question, send a secure message to your provider through MyFHN and you'll hear back within a business day or two.

'Big Picture' Care

If you should need them, your primary care provider gives you quick access to FHN's specialty care providers. We have providers in more than 39 specialties, from Allergy, Asthma and Immunology to Wound Care, and we work with hospitals and health systems in Rockford, the Chicago area, and the University of Wisconsin – Madison to make sure our patients have access to the specialty care they need.

You can take the first step in working toward your best health today – call your provider's office and schedule a checkup.

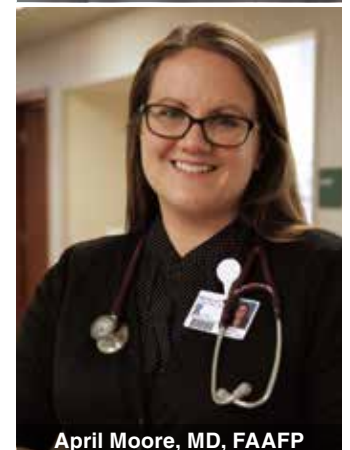
If you don't have a primary care provider, FHN's physician referral specialists can help you find a provider who's right for you. Call us toll-free Mondays – Thursdays from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. and on Fridays from 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. at **1-877-6000-FHN (1-877-600-0346) ext. 965**, and you'll have an appointment before you hang up the phone. ■



Jeffrey P. Schleich, MD



Rebecca L. Pedersen, MD, CPE, FAAFP



April Moore, MD, FAAFP



Heading Back to School as COVID Enters New Phase Health and Safety Suggestions for Parents

Shopping for school supplies, filling student backpacks, and planning that first-day outfit all will help make the fall of 2021 seem more like a normal back-to-school experience for parents, students, and teachers. However, COVID-19 is far from gone and still looms over the classroom as vaccinations lag and variants continue to emerge. If you feel a tad uncertain, you are not alone!

The bottom line? Schools that are carefully implementing prevention strategies will likely be safe for in-person instruction. However, returning to school still may look and feel different from when your children were last in the classroom.

Here are some tips from the Centers for Disease Control and FHN Infection Preventionist Margie Kochsmier to help you feel more confident about starting the school year:

COVID Safety Tips and Trends for Back to School 2021

- **Vaccinate!** Strongly consider vaccinating any child who is age 12+ to keep them safe and help reduce the chance of another outbreak. Find a vaccination location near you at www.vaccines.gov.
- **Wear a mask.** The current Illinois mask mandate for schools requires that all students, staff, and teachers at K-12 schools wear masks while indoors regardless of vaccination status. Be sure to follow prevention strategies to reduce transmission of the virus.
 - Wear masks correctly, covering the mouth and nose; clean and launder masks regularly; send children with backup masks; and stay up-to-date on school communications, such as wearing masks for sports or on buses.
- **Keep it local.** Realize there may be significant differences between regional schools. Each school district will be following a plan in conjunction with their local health department.
- **Get flu shots** for your family members. Remember, influenza season is coming, too.
- **Keep following the CDC and Illinois Department of Public Health guidelines:**
 - Wash hands with soap and water for 20 seconds before eating, after using the restroom, or if hands are visibly soiled; use hand sanitizer frequently; cough or sneeze into the elbow; discard used tissues in the trash; keep children home when they feel sick or have a fever.

Local school districts are working hard to keep students safe and are excited to get back to in-school learning. To get more detailed information about specific policies at your school, be sure to attend any orientation meetings planned for the fall semester and check the school's website for updates. As always, feel free to access expert advice from your FHN pediatrician or primary care provider! ■

Check out FHN's Dial-a-Doc radio broadcasts for more information on kids, COVID, and back-to-school issues, including a focus on mental health. Go to www.FHN.org/newsradio.



HEALTHCARE SCHOLARSHIPS AVAILABLE

FHN is offering as many as five (5) \$1,000 scholarships to college students pursuing careers in healthcare this year. There's still time to apply! Learn more at www.fhn.org/scholarships.

YOU CAN HELP WIN THE RACE AGAINST COVID-19

Way back in early 2020 when the COVID-19 pandemic began, the only way we could stop (or even slow down) the virus was to basically stop everything and encourage people to stay at home.

As businesses and schools were forced to close, scientists behind the scenes were racing to develop effective treatments and, more importantly, a vaccine that could help us all stop the virus. It was literally a race against time.

A number of different vaccines were developed relatively quickly, and by the end of 2020, the first American had received the first dose of her COVID-19 vaccine. The race had shifted – now it was the vaccine against the virus. Could we manufacture enough vaccine to stop the virus?

IT TAKES ALL OF US

This summer, the COVID-19 vaccine is widely available. Many retail pharmacies like CVS, Walgreens, and Walmart offer the shots on a walk-in basis; no appointment is needed and there is no cost to receive the vaccine. Contact your local health department or visit www.vaccines.gov to find a convenient location and time for you and your family members above the age of 12.

The race has changed again, however. You're probably hearing the word variant quite a bit these days. What is a variant? According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), viruses constantly change through mutation, and new variants of a

virus are expected to occur over time. The different variants of COVID-19 are basically new strains of the COVID-19 virus.

“This has developed into a ‘vaccine versus variant’ race,” says FHN President and CEO Mark Gridley, MBA, FACHE. Getting as many people vaccinated as soon as possible is the key to stopping the pandemic and keeping businesses and schools open.

VACCINES VS. VARIANTS

As the nation opens up after the pandemic, recent COVID-19 outbreaks in states like Mississippi, Florida, and Missouri have health officials worried. Most of the cases involve younger, healthier patients infected with the Delta variant, one of the new COVID-19 variants.

The Delta variant, which originated in India, makes people sicker more quickly and they suffer more severe symptoms, including death. Nearly all of the American patients with the Delta variant have not been vaccinated against COVID-19.

“When the COVID-19 virus spreads, it has more opportunities to undergo changes. The virus makes a copy of itself and changes (mutates), to create these new strains like the Delta variant,” says FHN Infection Preventionist Margie Kochsmier, MSN, RN, CMSRN, CIC. “Getting more people vaccinated against COVID-19 gives the virus less ‘room’ to spread and create these variants.”

People who have had COVID-19 still need to be vaccinated, too, because any antibodies they have developed may not protect them fully, if at all, against the new, more contagious strains of the virus.

There are at least four variants of the COVID-19 virus circulating, Margie says, including the Delta variant, which has become the dominant strain of COVID-19 in the United States.

“The Delta variant is 90 percent more transmissible than ‘regular’ COVID-19,” Margie says. “And experts are reporting that Delta is causing more severe

symptoms and more hospitalizations. It’s very dangerous, very contagious, and its rapid spread among people who haven’t been vaccinated could cause a widespread resurgence.”

Another variant that originated in the United Kingdom could prove dangerous, because it, too, is more transmissible than the original virus. Scientists have found that the UK variant carries a higher viral load and puts patients at an increased risk for severe illness and death.

Less worrisome but still dangerous are variant strains from South Africa and Brazil. Both variants seem to be more transmissible than the original strain, but early cases haven’t made patients as sick as the Delta and UK variants.

Will a vaccine you get this week in northwest Illinois protect you against new variants of the virus? **Yes**, Margie says. “All of the currently available COVID-19 vaccines provide some protection against the new variants. But if you don’t have a vaccine or are relying on antibodies from having COVID-19 earlier, you don’t have protection.”

Those who only got one of their shots for a two-shot type vaccination aren’t protected, either, Margie says. “You need to have both shots to be protected, and remember, you won’t be fully protected until two weeks after your second shot.”

We may be fighting the COVID-19 virus for years, like we do the influenza virus, Margie says. Though we may eventually need to get a booster shot or even get an annual COVID-19 shot like we do for the flu, experts are not yet calling for people to receive booster COVID-19 shots.

“Right now, the best way to fight COVID-19 is to do what you can to stay healthy,” Margie says. “Take precautions when it’s necessary, and protect your family and community by getting your COVID-19 vaccination now. We can reduce the spread of COVID-19 and its variants by getting vaccinated and stopping the virus from circulating.”

VACCINES ARE SAFE – AND WORTH THE RISK

Pharmaceutical companies and the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) didn’t skip any steps in developing, testing, and approving the COVID-19 vaccines now available. Though the vaccines were developed in record time, they have gone through the same rigorous FDA process as all other vaccines.

But what about the Johnson & Johnson vaccine? The FDA has issued a number of precautions for the Johnson & Johnson one-dose vaccine. Women younger than 50 should be aware that there is a risk for rare but serious blood clots with low platelets, called thrombosis with thrombocytopenia syndrome or TTS. The vaccine also may lead to an increased risk of a rare neurological condition called Guillain-Barre Syndrome.

Any vaccine can cause side effects. “The reported conditions from the Johnson & Johnson vaccine are very rare side effects and researchers are still investigating the link between them and the Johnson & Johnson vaccine,” Margie says. **“Those very small risks – fewer than 150 adverse events among more than 12 million people vaccinated – are still far outweighed by the risk of getting COVID-19 by not being vaccinated.”**

“Everything has risks,” Daniel Salmon, the director of the Institute for Vaccine Safety at Johns Hopkins University in Maryland, recently told the New York Times. “And the key to decision-making is to optimize the benefits and reduce the risks. COVID-19 is a pretty nasty disease that’s killed 600,000 people.”

Information in this article was accurate as of press time.

FHN Infectious Disease Specialist Spots Uncommon Illness

‘It’s a rare fungal disease, but he suspected it and ran the right tests.’

It never crossed her mind that she might have blastomycosis. She had never even heard of it! But when Michele Davis got sicker and sicker in April, she and her family were very grateful that FHN Infectious Disease Specialist Robert Geller, MD, MS, FACP, FIDSA, connected the dots, ran the tests, and made the diagnosis.

Blastomycosis is rare and can be fatal. It is a fungal infection that initially causes lung problems, but can spread to other parts of the body. It is usually acquired by breathing in the

spores of the fungi *Blastomyces dermatitidis* or *Blastomyces gilchristii*. These fungi are found in moist soils, particularly in wooded areas and along waterways. According to the American Thoracic Society, blastomycosis case numbers have increased in North America in the past 10 years.

Symptoms Similar to COVID-19

Michele started feeling ill in April, and thought at first her asthma was acting up. A couple weeks later, she started to cough, feel lightheaded, and suffer from body aches. Her family feared she might have COVID-19 even though she had been fully vaccinated. A drive-through test said otherwise.

Since Michele’s provider had recently retired, she had yet to find a new primary care provider and didn’t feel like she had a healthcare “home.” After getting a call about rescheduling a mammogram that was cancelled during the pandemic, Michele explained her illness to Breast Care Nurse Navigator Jess Harweger, BSN, RN, who quickly booked an appointment for her at FHN’s Acute Respiratory Clinic.

“She was an angel,” says Michele’s daughter, Kelley Davis Haubach. “She got Mom in that same afternoon and it was just in time. They took several tests and x-rays, and called that same evening to tell us that mom should promptly get to the ER. She was pretty sick – struggling to breathe and very weak. She could barely walk and was starting to get confused.”

Testing Regimen Plays Important Role

The family quickly transported Michele to FHN Memorial Hospital in Freeport. “FHN’s ER staff was very attentive,” Kelley explains. “They ran another COVID test just to be sure it wasn’t the coronavirus, along with several other tests. I was so thankful for the nurse practitioner, Sarah Marsh*. She gave me regular updates and clearly communicated when I could expect to get more information. Her follow up was extremely helpful and very much appreciated.”

Michele’s test results showed several irregularities. Heart problems, pneumonia, and hypoxia were potential diagnoses. However, Dr. Geller also was quick to request the blastomycosis test, which takes several days to process, thinking that perhaps this unusual fungus could be the cause of Michele’s problems. Her medical team also diagnosed her with shingles, another complicating factor. Very ill and in need of constant care, she was admitted to the hospital and started receiving breathing treatments and broad-spectrum antibiotics.

*This provider is not an employee or agent of FHN.



▲ Michele Davis (right) enjoys visits from her daughter, Kelley (kneeling), and granddaughter, Jordan (standing), as she recovers from a rare fungal disease. Her sweet companion, Casey, gets in on the conversation, too. Bi-weekly blood tests help confirm that her condition continues to improve.

The Shocking Diagnosis

When the blastomycosis test came back positive, Dr. Geller discussed the surprising news with both Kelley and her mom. “He called to let us know what it was and got Mom promptly started on itraconazole, an anti-fungal medication. I researched online and joined a Facebook group, and saw that this disease can scar patients’ lungs and compromise quality of life if not caught quickly, so I was thankful that he tested her right away and we got a fast diagnosis. Most people can breathe in the fungi spores and tolerate them just fine, but Mom was not so lucky. We have no idea when or how she got infected.”

Happily, Michele is recovering well, though it could take up to a year on the medication for her to be completely cured. “I feel good now ... much more like myself,” she says.

Kelley agrees. “Mom is doing so much better and enjoying her summer with friends and family. We are grateful to FHN for her care. The nurses on 3 East were wonderful, the ER staff was professional and attentive, and Dr. Geller was just great – we are incredibly fortunate to have him at FHN. I have no doubt her life is improved due to his prompt actions.”



▲ Now that she is feeling better, Michele has the energy to pursue two of her passions: Gardening and selling collectibles on eBay.



▲ Dr. Robert Geller played a pivotal role in Michele’s recovery, diagnosing the rare fungal disease that was making her so sick and setting up her treatment regimen. Jess Harweger was instrumental in getting her an initial appointment at FHN’s Acute Respiratory Clinic.

Welcome Back to FHN’s Wellness Calendar!

FHN is proud to again offer many opportunities for you to learn about health and wellness – from informational programs and events to free screenings. **All events will follow IDPH safety guidelines at the time of the event, and details may change as the area’s pandemic status changes.** We are still scheduling events, so check out our calendar at www.fhn.org for the latest updates!

Community Programs

PROGRAM	TIME	DATE	DETAILS
Walk with a Doc	8 a.m.	Aug. 21	<i>Krape Park, 1799 S. Park Boulevard, Freeport</i> Free family- and pet-friendly walk and chat led by FHN providers and health professionals. Meet the group by the concession stand for this safe, fun, and FREE way to spend 45-60 minutes as you get some steps, learn about health, and meet new friends. Visit fhn.org/wwad for more information. August 21 – FHN Podiatrist and Wound Care Provider Ronald Tolliver, DPM, FACFAS August 28 – FHN Stroke Program Coordinator Tracy Love, RN September 4 – FHN Surgeon Javeria Qureshi, MD, MPH, FACS
		Aug. 28	
		Sept. 4	
Mobile Rx Pantry Program Pickup & Blood Pressure Screening	11:30 a.m. <i>until food is gone</i>	Aug. 25	<i>Lincoln Mall, 1255 W. Galena Avenue, Freeport</i> Participants can pick up their supply of produce, milk, eggs, and frozen and canned meats from the Mobile Rx Pantry program, a partnership between FHN’s Connect the D.O.T.S. (Doors of Team Support) and the Northern Illinois Food Bank. Free blood pressure screenings are available inside the mall from 10 a.m. – 1 p.m. during each event. Social distancing will be practiced. Volunteers will prepare baskets and deliver directly to participant vehicle trunks. No vouchers will be needed. For more information, call 815-599-6317.
		Sept. 8	
		Sept. 22	
		Oct. 13	
		Oct. 27	

*No cost or registration required; open to the public.

Support Groups

GROUP	TIME	DATE	DETAILS
Living Through Grief	6 – 7:30 p.m.	Aug. 23	<i>FHN Memorial Hospital Cafeteria Dining Rooms – Lower Level</i> No cost or registration required; open to the public. For more information, call 815-599-7240.
		Sept. 13	
		Oct. 25	
The First Steps Grief Support Group	10 – 11:30 a.m.	Sept. 21	<i>FHN Memorial Hospital cafeteria meeting rooms – Lower Level</i> No cost or registration required; open to the public. For more information, call FHN Pastoral Care at 815-599-7240.
		Sept. 27	
		Oct. 11	
		Oct. 19	

Calendar continued on back cover

FHN's Wellness Calendar

Blood Pressure Screenings



LOCATION	TIME	DATE	DETAILS
Lincoln Mall <i>1255 W. Galena Avenue, Freeport</i>	10 a.m. – 1 p.m.	Aug. 25 • Sept. 8 Sept. 22 • Oct. 13 Oct. 27	Open to the public; no cost or registration required.
Gospel Outreach Food Pantry <i>211 W. Spring Street, Freeport</i>	9 – 11 a.m.	Sept. 4	Open to the public; no cost or registration required.
Salvation Army <i>106 W. Exchange Street, Freeport</i>	10:30 a.m. – 12: 30 p.m.	Sept. 9	Open to the public; no cost or registration required.
New Jerusalem Church of God <i>4. E. Iroquois Street, Freeport</i>	11 a.m. – 1 p.m.	Sept. 16	Open to the public; no cost or registration required.
Joseph's Pantry <i>406 S. Adams, Freeport</i>	3 – 5 p.m.	Sept. 28	Open to the public; no cost or registration required.

Training and Education



CLASS	TIME	DATE	DETAILS
Small Steps Big Rewards	5:30 – 6:30 p.m.	Aug. 24	<i>FHN Family Healthcare Center – Burchard Hills, 1010 W. Fairway Drive, Freeport</i> There are no clear symptoms of pre-diabetes, a condition that puts you at a higher risk for developing type 2 diabetes. So, you could have pre-diabetes and not know it. Get all the facts on diabetes and how to prevent or delay it. Register for this FREE class.
Sibling Class	6:30 – 7:30 p.m.	Sept. 8	<i>FHN Memorial Hospital, 1045 W. Stephenson Street, Freeport – Conference Dining Room</i> Designed to help siblings adjust to a new baby in the family. Instructor is Danielle Wittig. Registration required; for more information or to register, call 815-599-6221.
Prenatal Class (two sessions)	6 – 8:30 p.m.	Sept. 14 & 21 Oct. 12 & 19	<i>FHN Memorial Hospital, 1045 W. Stephenson Street, Freeport – Conference Dining Room</i> This class provides information about pregnancy, labor, delivery, cesarean sections and postpartum recovery. Register at fhn.org/ob , or for more information, call 815-599-6221.
Safe Sitter Essentials® with CPR	9 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.	Sept. 25	<i>FHN Memorial Hospital, 1045 W. Stephenson Street, Freeport</i> Class designed to prepare students in grades 6 – 8 to be safe when they're home alone or babysitting. Class size is limited to 8 to accommodate COVID-19 safety precautions. Full-day course is \$50, which includes the Safe Sitter Essentials Student Handbook and completion card and basic CPR skill practice. (Class does not qualify for CPR certification.) Financial assistance is available for eligible students; call 815-599-6707 for more information about eligibility. Register online at www.fhn.org/safesittercpr .
Breastfeeding Class	7 – 9 p.m.	Oct. 5	<i>FHN Family Healthcare Center – Burchard Hills, 1010 W. Fairway Drive, Freeport</i> Instructor is Annette Gielenfeldt. For more information or to register, visit fhn.org/ob or call 815-599-6221.

THANK YOU!

TO OUR TEAM OF TALENTED STAFF COMMITTED TO DELIVERING HEALTHCARE EXCELLENCE IN OUR COMMUNITY

Insight



Insight is published by **FHN**
1045 West Stephenson Street • Freeport, IL 61032 • (815) 599-6000 • www.fhn.org

Editor: Sarah Rogers
Contributors: Andrea Barthel, Julie Beach, Mindy Becker, Tara Hagemann, Barb Lessman, Marilyn Smit, Pete Willging

Send your contributions, story ideas or comments for Insight to Sarah Rogers at rogers3@fhn.org or call 1-877-6000-FHN (1-877-600-0346) ext. 901.

©2021 All rights reserved

