A new day dawns in health care

Introducing your patient navigator

‘The experience of a lifetime’

Why the Sullivans chose to have their baby at new west Wichita hospital

Continuum of care
Via Christi offers comprehensive services for every stage of life

Renaissance man
Chief medical officer passionate about family, history, quality, animals and adventure

...because your life matters
Dear readers:

Ashli Benjamin is one of Via Christi’s health care pioneers. Ashli, a physician assistant pictured on the cover of this issue of Via Christi Life, is helping pioneer a new model of care through her work as a patient navigator. Navigators are a central element in many new patient-centered care models because they help make sure all of us receive the right care in the right setting at the right time.

Ashli helps to coordinate the care received by patients of Via Christi Clinic and Via Christi Medical Associates in one of several new models of care we are developing to better serve your needs. This issue of Via Christi Life also showcases the continuum of care that distinguishes Via Christi from most other health care providers. We provide care for every stage of your life, from prenatal and childbirth care to preventive care, a vast array of medical and surgical services, and a variety of senior living services.

By offering such a broad range of services, we make it easier for mothers like Jane Brand to manage their family’s health care needs. Jane is a member of the so-called “sandwich generation” — baby boomers who are simultaneously caring for their children and their parents.

Jane’s story about the difference Via Christi’s comprehensive services makes in her family’s life is one of several we are sharing to highlight the value of the breadth of our services. Via Christi also is blessed by the excellent work of dedicated physicians, nurses and other clinicians striving every day to provide the best possible care and services. In this issue, we share with you the work of pediatrician Philip Newlin, MD; Noel Sanchez, MD, one of many physicians using Via Christi’s robotic surgery services to help our patients; and Chief Medical Officer Steve Nesbit, DO, on the role of clinical leadership at Via Christi.

But perhaps the most touching story in this issue is about Patrick Bruce, a teenager who lost his ability to speak for two years until Renee Berggren, a speech therapist at Via Christi Rehabilitation Hospital, helped him. Patrick is now talking again, a powerful testament to the dedication of Via Christi’s clinicians to making a difference in the lives of all we serve.

I am honored to work with these wonderful people who care for you and your families, and all of us at Via Christi are honored to serve you, guided by our Mission to serve as “a healing presence with special concern for our neighbors who are vulnerable.”

Sincerely,

Jeff Korsmo
President and CEO, Via Christi Health

Our Mission
Inspired by the Gospel and our Catholic tradition, we serve as a healing presence with special concern for our neighbors who are vulnerable.

Our Core Values
Human Dignity
We recognize and respect the sacredness of each person.

Stewardship
We responsibly care for all resources entrusted to us.

Excellence
We extend ourselves in outstanding service.

Our Vision
We will boldly lead the transformation of health care to enhance the health of the individuals and communities we serve for generations to come.
Outdoor fun can wreak havoc on your skin in the summertime.

**Protect the skin you’re in**

Studies indicate that about 80% of one’s lifetime exposure to the sun will happen before age 18.

**Sunshine** It’s well known that sun exposure can take its toll on skin — from aging it prematurely to increasing one’s risk to the most common form of cancer. More than 2 million cases of skin cancer are diagnosed each year, and about 75,000 of those are melanoma, the most deadly, according to the American Cancer Society.

Repeated exposure — and particularly unprotected exposure — from the sun’s ultraviolet rays breaks down the skin, causing such things as sagging, stretching, discoloration, dry and scaly patches and, of course, precancerous and cancerous conditions.

Studies show most of one’s lifetime sun exposure happens before age 18.

That’s why it’s important for an adult or caretaker to model good skin care habits. Children probably aren’t going to apply sunscreen and aren’t going to reapply it as needed when swimming or being out in the sun. It’s up to the caretaker or adult to do this.

**Harmful plants** Protective clothing, including gloves — preferably vinyl — can help minimize the risk of reactions to certain plants, says the American Academy of Dermatology (AAD). Avoid poisonous plants — remember the phrase, “leaves of three, let it be.” Also avoid plants with sharp hairs, spines or short prickles that can cause rashes and even infections.

You should seek treatment if any of the following are present: fever, chills, night sweats, excessive pain, swelling, redness, discolored drainage or any dark red/black discoloration at the bite.

**New sunscreen labeling** rules by the FDA, which take effect this summer, will make it easier for consumers to understand the protection offered by those products. Labels will no longer bear claims of “waterproof,” “sweatproof” or “sun block.” Sunscreens can claim to provide water resistant and must tell how much time — with “sweatproof” or “sun block.” Sunscreens can claim to provide water resistant and must tell how much time — with “water resistant” or “sun block.” Sunscreens can claim to provide water resistant and must tell how much time — with “sun block.”

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**Expert advice** by Soony Hall PA-C Dermatology, Via Christi Clinic

**Summer pests** Mosquitoes, rampant in the summer, can be the worst bugs for carrying diseases, according to the AAD.

Use repellents containing DEET to protect yourself from mosquitoes, ticks and other insects. Look for specially formulated repellents with a lower percentage of DEET for children. Clothing, such as long-sleeved shirts and pants, can offer further protection.

Always check for ticks when coming indoors, even from your own backyard.

To relieve itching and redness from bug bites, use hydrocortisone cream, calamine lotion or antihistamines. Check with a physician before using with children.

Seek treatment if any of the following are present: fever, chills, night sweats, excessive pain, swelling, redness, discolored drainage or any dark red/black discoloration at the bite.

When Wichita residents Saxony and Kevin Sullivan learned they were expecting, they made their first decisions as parents-to-be — choosing a physician for prenatal care and a hospital for delivery.

Saxony, 26, a personal trainer at the Northwest YMCA, says choosing maternity services at Via Christi Clinic’s west OB/GYN office and Via Christi Hospital on St. Teresa was simple.

“It wasn’t really a question for us, because we live four minutes from the hospital and I work next door — only one minute away,” she says.


“It was the experience of a lifetime.”

Via Christi’s west Wichita OB services deliver for Sullivan family

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Via Christi offers a continuum of care from the birth of a child to enhancing the lives of older adults.
Pregnancy myth busters

Featuring Via Christi Clinic OBs who deliver at Via Christi NewLife Center in Wichita

Teresa Craddock, MD
Andrea Fullerton, MD
Janey Maki, MD
Elda Perales, MD
Matthew Voth, MD

Myth: You shouldn’t eat fish or seafood.
Fact: Most cooked fish and seafood including canned light tuna, shrimp, salmon, pollock, cod, haddock and catfish are safe. Omega-3 fatty acids in fish help baby’s brain development. Unless cooked, sushi isn’t safe because it may contain illness-inducing parasites.

Myth: You can tell if you are having a boy or girl by how you carry the baby during your pregnancy. Example: Carrying low = boy and carrying high = girl.
Fact: The best way to predict the sex of your baby is amniocentesis.

Myth: You shouldn’t consume caffeinated beverages.
Fact: Because the incidence of miscarriage is highest during the first trimester, unless you’re considered high risk by your doctor, the second trimester is prime for travel. It’s best not to travel in the last month of pregnancy because of the unpredictability of labor.

Myth: You should avoid exercise.
Fact: Research indicates that fetuses of pregnant women who are physically active show signs of good cardiovascular health. Babies of exercisers have healthier birth weights and may even become more intelligent adults because of their bigger brains.

(Continued from page 5)

After watching physician profile videos online, they chose Shara Young, MD, for prenatal care. When Young changed to providing in-hospital laborist care only, the transition to Teresa Craddock, MD, was “seamless,” says Kevin.

As is typical, Saxony had regular OB visits with increasing frequency as she approached her Nov. 2 due date.

“What I loved most was that I was able to get in and out quickly for appointments,” says Saxony. “That made it so I didn’t have to miss a lot of work.”

A family affair
Touring the NewLife Center was “great,” Saxony recalls.

“Everyone was so helpful,” she says. “The front desk volunteers were phenomenal. They took us up and introduced us.”

They were impressed by the quiet atmosphere, as well as how the mom and baby suites with modern furnishings were spacious enough for visitors.

“Saxony got upset and Dr. Craddock immediately began to comfort her, which really calmed my nerves,” he says. “When we got into the operating room and all the doctors and nurses started their specific duties during the delivery, I began to relax because watching them work was like watching the gears of a clock. It was all so intricate and they performed it so smoothly.”

Leighton Ann Sullivan was born at 6:40 p.m. on Monday, Oct. 31, 2011 — a Halloween treat for her parents.

“Our little girl greeted us with a loud cry,” says Kevin. “I looked at Sax and we lost it. We were both so happy.”

Kevin adds, “Our stay before and after was excellent, but the excitement and the way the doctors and nurses worked together are what I remember most.

“It was the experience of a lifetime.”

What to pack for the hospital

- Insurance card & photo ID
- Hospital registration forms
- Birth plan
- Cameras
- iPod
- Cell phone and charger
- Contact information of family and friends
- Magazines and books
- Baby book
- Notebooks/journals/pens
- Gifts for siblings
- Medications
- Eyeglasses, cases, contacts, solution
- Lip balm and lotion
- Toiletries
- Sleepwear
- Nursing bras and pads
- Several pairs of underwear
- Sweater or housecoat
- Going home outfit for you and baby
- Receiving blanket for baby
- Installed infant car seat
While 75 percent of American mothers start out breastfeeding, only 15 percent of babies are exclusively breastfed through six months, according to Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s 2011 Breastfeeding Report Card. That’s why Via Christi offers resources to help Mom be successful at breastfeeding.

New mom Leslie Broadhead, of Wichita, says Via Christi’s lactation experts have supported her when she’s needed it most. They were there for her daughter Ella’s first feeding, and throughout her stay at Via Christi Hospital on St. Teresa.

When Ella was 6 days old, Leslie went to Via Christi Breastfeeding Clinic and returned as often as three times a week for two months. She sought help boosting Ella’s weight and for other concerns. She says the lactation nurses provided emotional support and education, and also helped her understand that her struggle to provide enough nourishment for Ella did not mean she was a failure. “They encouraged me not to give up,” says Leslie. “They told me, ‘We can overcome this. She can be a breastfed baby.’ They reassured me that I’m a good mother.”

The walk-in clinic inside the hospital on Harry is open weekdays 10 a.m.-2 p.m. Lactation consultants can be reached at 316-689-5426.

Expert breastfeeding support available
Via Christi Breastfeeding Clinic in Wichita opened in 2008 to help breastfeeding mothers with a variety of challenges including: breast engorgement; milk supply; preparing to return to work; and babies who have difficulty latching on, are jaundiced or have weight gain issues. A monthly support group also is held.

For more information visit viachristi.org/newparents and viachristi.org/breastfeeding

Benefits to moms
Develops a special emotional relationship and bond with child
Breast milk is free, reducing or eliminating the cost of formula
Helps mother’s body return to prepregnancy state faster
Reduces risk of disease later in life

Benefits to babies
Builds bonding and emotional relationship with mother
Higher IQs and better brain and nervous system development
Reduces the risk of disease now and later in life
Provides optimal nutrients and antibodies

Benefits to society
Physically and emotionally healthier mothers and their babies
Reduces the negative impact on our environment by eliminating waste

Let’s get physical(s)
If your child plans to participate in fall sports, it’s not too early to schedule his or her sports physical. During the July and August scheduling frenzy, some parents opt for the convenience of a physical at a school-sponsored clinic or walk-in location with a health care provider they have never met. These evaluations fulfill requirements for the Kansas State High School Activities Association (KSHSAA), but they may not ensure the complete screening and care your child needs.

A thorough annual physical conducted by the primary care physician who knows your child, has access to his or her medical history and has a rapport with your family not only fulfills the requirements but may reveal underlying health issues, says Philip Newlin, MD, a Via Christi Clinic pediatrician.

“It’s an opportunity for someone who knows you to look over things that may have been shoved under the rug; things that may be missed during a quick school physical,” Newlin says. At age 16, Andrew Harms came to Newlin, his primary care physician, for a routine physical. Newlin saw something suspicious in Andrew’s throat and referred him to an ear, nose and throat specialist. A CAT scan revealed a tumor. Andrew’s mother, Kathy, believes the benign tumor — removed before it grew large enough to restrict Andrew’s airway — would have gone unnoticed and may have resulted in a much more serious surgery had it not been for the thorough exam.

“Walk-in physicals may be more convenient and less expensive, but the child gets so much more out of an exam with his own provider.”
— Kathy Harms, parent

Brett Blackman’s hydrocephalus was discovered through routine examination with his primary care physician at age 1. Today, he’s a healthy 12-year-old athlete.
“Our sport physicals are all full checkups. It’s all part of the health of a child who happens to play sports.”
— Philip Newlin, MD, pictured here with Brett Blackman

“A sports physical is equivalent to lifting the hood of a car and checking the oil. An annual exam is equivalent to a full 21-point inspection.”
— Audrey Roberts, MD

In a full-screening physical evaluation, your child’s physician:
- Reviews full medical history
- Evaluates overall physical condition
- Tracks growth and development progression, including puberty and social and emotional issues
- Verifies current immunizations
- Screens for potential problems such as cardiovascular issues and familial conditions such as high cholesterol and high blood pressure
- Checks lymph nodes, organs, vision, posture, skin and genitals
- Can assess behaviors such as eating disorders
- Can arrange for follow-up care
- Typically has access to on-site lab testing and vaccines

The benefits

For screening guidelines to check for cardiac risks and for more information, visit viachristi.org/school-physical
"Sandwich generation' facing challenge of caring for aging parents, growing children

Jane Brand considers herself to be a classic member of the "sandwich generation" — baby boomers who are simultaneously caring for their children and their parents.

She directs and manages the health care needs of her husband Tony, their six children and her elderly parents.

"It’s a challenge fitting everything in — from working to helping my kids at home to taking care of my parents’ health necessities," she says.

For Jane and her family, Via Christi meets all of their health care needs — and has for three generations.

Jane’s parents, Joan and Elmer Sigg of Andale, delivered all of their children at Via Christi Hospital on St. Francis — Jane and her seven siblings. Via Christi has continued to take care of her parents’ health care needs as they’ve grown older.

Jane delivered four of her six children at Via Christi and now one of her daughters, Kathryn, and her husband Matt Eck, are expecting their first child and are planning on delivering at Via Christi Hospital on Harry.

Your family may face many health decisions, too, as the years go by. At Via Christi, our full continuum of care allows for seamless transitions as your needs change. Follow the adventures of Sally and Jack to learn more.
Deborah Ziegler comes into Via Christi Village on Broadmoor in Wichita with her grandson on her hip, a Dalmatian puppy on a leash and her smiling granddaughter in tow.

“Hi Mom,” she says to Maxine Poole. Maxine smiles at Deborah when she sees her daughter and her face lights up when her eyes rest on 10-year-old Kelsey, her great-granddaughter, and Shane, her 9-month-old great-grandson.

Deborah says her family couldn’t be happier with the care they have found for Maxine at Via Christi Village on Broadmoor. Deborah and her husband previously had determined that, if the time ever arose when her mother needed extra help, Maxine would go into a senior community best suited to care for her.

“We couldn’t have received better care anywhere,” she says. “The hospital on St. Teresa is a very beautiful and efficient facility. I was shocked at how fast we got through the ER. They assessed him very quickly and knew just what to do.”

Deborah Ziegler

Bishop Eugene Gerber, on the opening of Catholic Care Center, co-sponsored by the Catholic Diocese of Wichita and Via Christi Villages

“We cannot care for all the elderly, but we should be able to demonstrate how all the elderly should be cared for.”

— Bishop Eugene Gerber

Jane recently persuaded her mother, 79, and father, 86, to become patients of Petrakis because of the high quality of the care she provides. This transition has made it easier for Jane to help her parents manage their health care needs.

“Dr. Petrakis is very, very thorough. It is so convenient to have the whole family under the care of one physician rather than traveling to various facilities,” Jane explains.

Jane and her husband Tony, 49, a part owner of Brand Plumbing and a custom homebuilder as well, have used Via Christi Clinic for a variety of health care needs — from daughter Elizabeth’s torn meniscus tendon in her left knee four years ago to son Chase’s heart problems.

Chase was initially treated by Steve W. Allen, MD, a pediatric cardiologist with Via Christi Clinic, who in turn referred the family to Children’s Mercy Hospital in Kansas City for additional treatment.

Chase’s condition is under control, but Jane had to take him in January to the Emergency Room at Via Christi Hospital on St. Teresa when they thought he had a relapse.

“We couldn’t have received better care anywhere,” she says. “The hospital on St. Teresa is a very beautiful and efficient facility. I was shocked at how fast we got through the ER. They assessed him very quickly and knew just what to do.”

For a video of Jane Brand’s family, visit viachristi.org/sandwich-generation
Or visit viachristi.org/meet-our-docs to view videos of Via Christi physicians.

Jane, 49, and her family, who live in Colwich, have been patients of Via Christi Clinic for more than a quarter century and Patricia Petrakis, MD, has been their family physician for the past several years.

“Taking care of my family’s health and my parents’ health is top priority,” Jane says. “If you don’t have doctors with whom you feel comfortable, then that’s a huge problem.

“I’ve had such good relationships with our family physicians that they have felt like members of the family,” she says. “If you have a great relationship with your physician, everything else falls into place.”

Patricia Petrakis, MD
Deborah found herself confronting a similar challenge after Maxine, who had shown signs of dementia, suffered a stroke and went to Via Christi Rehabilitation Hospital as part of her recovery.

For eight months after her mother went home from the rehabilitation hospital, Deborah, her uncle and a family friend who is a certified nurse’s aide took shifts day and night to provide Maxine the support she needed to stay in the comfort of her home. But, during a rare 15- to 20-minute gap between caregivers, Maxine walked outdoors, fell and broke her back.

“She went through rehab again and, at that point, we decided that it was time for us to look for someplace that could watch her 24/7,” Deborah explains. “We just couldn’t keep up the pace.”

Her mother’s new living arrangement at Via Christi Village, which is only five miles from Deborah’s home, not only provides Maxine with terrific care, it also has improved Deborah’s quality of life. Now, she has the time to enjoy both her mother — and her grandchildren.

Deborah helps out her adult children by regularly looking after her grandchildren, often bringing them for visits to see their great-grandmother. “All the things I missed out on when my kids were growing up and I was working, I get to do now. It’s been good. It really has.”

Today, visits from her great-grandchildren are a joy for Maxine. Kelsey reminisces about her favorite game of “chef” with her great-grandmother. Maxine would proudly order up a plate full of spaghetti and potato cake, and Kelsey would carefully shape the beautiful Play-Doh “meat” for her.

“Grandma always said, ‘They are delicious,’” laughs Kelsey.

Kelsey also remembers enjoying her great-grandmother’s homemade banana bread right as it came out of the oven and going to the park where Maxine would push her on the swings.

Deborah is grateful for the care her mother receives at Via Christi Village on Broadmoor, knows firsthand what it’s like to spend time with residents who choose to live at Via Christi.

“The people who live here come here for a certain sense of security,” Wills says. “That safety may involve their medications and making sure they can get three meals a day. If they need assistance with bathing or dressing, we provide that. We encourage them to do as much for themselves as they can.”

Besides caring for basic needs, staff respond to any change in a resident’s condition. If anything out of the ordinary comes up, staff will check the resident’s vital signs and call the doctor, if needed.

“This is a generation of people who have a lot to offer,” says Wills. “They have stories to tell. They can tell us about things in history that they lived through. They have a sense of humor. They have a sense of dignity and they are a precious, precious group of people. We enjoy working with them because they’re so appreciative of everything we do. Too, there’s not a one in here who doesn’t say ‘Thank you, thank you for helping me.’

To view a video and for more information on how to select an assisted living facility, visit viachristi.org/senior-care
Gettin’ a kick out of her new knee

90-year-old orthopedic patient not slowing down

In her 60s and 70s, Wanda Groves set statewide running records for her age group, 11 of which still stand. When she turned 80, she and her friends rode 80 miles on their bikes to mark the occasion. At 89, the retired physical education and music teacher continued to be active, riding 18-plus miles every other week with a local cycling group.

“but it got to where my knees were hurting all the time,” says Groves, who recently celebrated her 90th birthday. “I couldn’t even mow my own lawn.” Her family physician referred her for further evaluation by a sports medicine specialist and the news wasn’t good.

“They told me both knees were gone,” says Wanda. So in October, she got a new left knee at her hospital of choice: Via Christi Hospital on St. Teresa.

She returned home three days later and within a couple of weeks was back on the recumbent bicycles at the YMCA just down the road from her new hospital.

An avid Wichita State University volleyball and women’s basketball fan, Wanda also was back at Koch Arena cheering on both teams. By the time her January birthday rolled around, she was handling the stairs at the arena with ease.

“This is my life and I don’t like to have it interrupted,” says Wanda.

“I really appreciated the care, the nurses, how well you are taken care of and how interested everyone is in what you have to say,” says Wanda.

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Just for kicks: Shocker fan Wanda with WSU cheerleaders.
Patients may never see Ashli Benjamin, a physician assistant, yet she plays a critical role in a new model of health care. She’s a patient navigator — a term we’ll hear much more about in the future.

Over the past 20 months, Benjamin and her assistant have learned some important things about how patients interact with the health care system and how to improve their care and outcomes.

“In general, everybody wants to be a good patient, but sometimes real life doesn’t allow that to happen,” she says.

This is why the pair daily covers a list of items they do for patients enrolled in the Coventry Advantra® Total Care program. The Medicare Advantage product focuses on caring for patients in a primary care medical home where chronic conditions such as diabetes are identified early and managed to reduce avoidable emergency room visits and hospitalizations. Via Christi Family physicians provide the medical homes for the program.

“It doesn’t take preventing many unnecessary hospitalizations to save thousands and thousands and thousands of dollars,” says Jacques Blackman, MD, a family physician with Via Christi Clinic and a prime proponent of Total Care.

In short, a patient navigator makes sure that patients are where they are supposed to be, their medical records are there when they arrive and the doctor is prepared to see the patient. Sounds simple, but it isn’t, as Blackman explained to those attending the recent Wichita Business Coalition on Health Care’s Innovation Summit.

“This morning, I got two emails from Ashli about two of my patients who had been in the hospital,” he explained. “I can’t do much to care for patients if I don’t know they are there.”

Nor can he do much if the patients are discharged from the hospital with instructions to see their family physician, but never make an appointment. On average, only 44 percent of patients see their doctor after a hospital stay. By contrast, 67 percent of Benjamin’s patients make follow-up appointments with their physicians.

The Total Care program began as a pilot and has since grown to cover 1,000 Medicare patients. The use of navigators such as Benjamin is a central element of new care models being designed by Via Christi to provide patients higher-quality, better-coordinated care at a lower cost.

**Patient Navigation**

Better patient care

Better outcomes

Lower costs

**Navigators help patients’ care plans stay on course**

In the early days of aviation, pilots also served as their own navigators. In this photo illustration, Ashli Benjamin, a Via Christi health care navigator, dons the garb of a swashbuckling aviator and poses next to Dwayne Clemens’ vintage Stearman biplane at Stearman Field in Benton, Kan.
Patient navigators function like the hub of a wheel to coordinate the flow of important medical information.

Helping patients make and keep appointments is the greatest success Benjamin has had as a navigator, whether it is for a regular doctor’s visit or to see their family physician after a hospital stay or emergency room visit. Benjamin’s work has paid off in reduced hospitalizations and ER visits for patients in the Total Care program.

“We go through and check out all appointments for our patient group, those that have been completed and those that have been cancelled,” she says. “We figure out why and whether they need to be rescheduled.”

They track patients’ future needs for lab work, mammograms and just regular appointments. They even have a file for patients who are supposed to return to the doctor in three months.

They also track quality improvement measures, many of which involve whether patients have had screenings such as mammograms or spirometry for chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, and which patients still need a screening every few years. Then they set up the appointments.

All of this is done through the family physician’s office so the medical home is aware of what they are doing for patients.

“Patients probably aren’t aware of everything that we do,” says Benjamin. “We try really hard not to have navigation be a different resource. We want it to be an extension of the patient’s doctor’s office.”

Even when a patient has been to the ER, Benjamin and her assistant are aware and let the doctor know within 24 hours.

“At least within our Total Care population, there’s none of this, ‘the patient shows up and the doctor has no idea why you’re here’ because you were in the ER,” she says. “The doctor already has those ER records available. It saves doctor time and patient time as well.”

Total Care helps with more than just scheduling appointments and health screenings.

“I’ve learned that there are a lot of nonmedical barriers that keep patients from getting good medical treatment,” says Benjamin. “Sometimes it’s transportation. Sometimes it’s a financial barrier. Sometimes it’s a safety barrier in the home.”

It can be a medical barrier, such as depression, that ultimately affects the outcome of treatment for diabetes or other chronic conditions. Having Benjamin and her assistant get to know patients on an individual level, and learn about and help remove barriers, has improved patient outcomes.

For more information about the Coventry Advanta® Total Care program, visit viachristi.org/total-care

Jacques Blackman, MD, updates fellow clinicians at Via Christi Clinic on how navigation works.

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“Every job I’ve had, I’ve been concerned with quality. That’s my area of expertise, my passion.”

— Stephen Nesbit, DO, MBA

Claudio Ferraro, president of Via Christi Hospital on Harry, says he appreciates Nesbit’s focus and his experience.

“He’s had his own practice and worked in large organizations as a physician and as CMO in other parts of the country,” says Ferraro. “He has a deep understanding of real physician issues and how we can navigate to find solutions that are very patient-centered.” Although he was inspired by his mother, a nurse for 45 years, Nesbit’s first degree was a Bachelor of Business Administration in Marketing that led to two years as a pharmaceutical sales representative.

“Then I met two doctors in Hamilton, Texas — both DOs — and I liked their philosophy and what they were doing,” says Nesbit. “It was almost a missionary practice, out there so far. I knew that was what I wanted to do.” He went back to school to fulfill medical school requirements and in 1981 received his medical degree from the University of Health Sciences College of Osteopathic Medicine in Kansas City, Mo. A one-year internship at Riverside Hospital in Wichita followed, including rotations at Via Christi Hospital on St. Francis. “I interned here and became a Catholic here,” Nesbit says.

His first private practice was in Quanah, Texas, a town of about 2,500 named for Quanah Parker, the last Comanche chief. In 1875, after the US Army destroyed their winter camp, killing their horses, a government envoy was sent to ask Quanah to bring his followers to the reservation. He did, and then, observing how business was done by non-Indians, went on to become a successful rancher and cattleman. He traded his Comanche dress for a traditional suit but never cut his braids.

He was a Geronimo-type leader, raiding and fighting,” Nesbit says. “Then he went on to become a success in a whole new way, hunting with Teddy Roosevelt and even lobbying Congress for his people.”

Nesbit’s focus and his experience. Although others may think he and Suzie are “too easy” when it comes to taking in animals, Nesbit is not at all apologetic.

“Each animal has its own story, so the reason is different for each one. I think for the most part they find us; they choose us, we don’t choose them. If you focus and really pay attention, animals have a great deal to say. Their unconditional love is overwhelming.”

— Stephen Nesbit, DO, MBA

Nesbit says he came to Via Christi Health because he was impressed with Via Christi President and CEO Jeff Korsmo’s focus on physicians and patient-centered care, and his efforts to integrate and redesign health care in preparation for the inevitable changes ahead.

Ferraro says those who have worked with Nesbit appreciate his ability to see every side of any question.

“He has a real calmness — and a good sense of humor,” says Ferraro. “He is as genuine with Jeff Korsmo as he is with any member of our staff.

“He can work with anybody, and everybody feels valued by him.”

Chief Medical Officer Stephen Nesbit, DO, MBA, stands before walls of messages of appreciation posted recently for Doctors Day at Via Christi Hospitals in Wichita.

“I’ve kept his picture on my desk everywhere I’ve worked since, to remind me of how you can change your life if you want to. His life changed so dramatically — and mine did, too.”

An east Texas native, Nesbit has ridden horses most of his life.

“I bought my first horse when I was 14, with money I saved from my paper route,” he says. These days, Nesbit rides an Arabian stallion, Rio, in long distance endurance races. Rio is stabled in Aces High Stables in Derby, home of Flint Hills Therapeutic Riding Center. The center provides hippotherapy to its clients, using horseback riding to provide carefully graded motor and sensory input. Nesbit is a member of the center’s board.

Nesbit took up sailing when he lived in central Texas and later had a sailboat in Houston. His love of flying developed when he lived in west Texas.

Although he no longer sings with his country western band, Classified Country, he still plays the guitar and

1860: Orphaned when Cynthia and a daughter are recaptured on a raid in northwest Texas, Quanah grows up to lead the Quahadi tribe skillfully, a fierce warrior who never lost a battle to white men or was captured by soldiers.

1876: Refuses to sign the Treaty of Medicine Lodge, which confined southern Plains Indians to a reservation.

1850: Born to Comanche Chief Peta Nocona and Cynthia Ann Parker, a white girl taken captive in 1836 during a raid on Parker’s Fort, Texas.

1815: Dues after 36 years as a cattleman and rancher, with numerous white friends and partners, considered the richest Native American of his time.

1875: Quanah to bring his followers to the reservation. He did, and then, observing how business was done by non-Indians, went on to become a successful rancher and cattleman. He traded his Comanche dress for a traditional suit but never cut his braids.

“...they choose us, we don’t choose them. If you focus and really pay attention, animals have a great deal to say. Their unconditional love is overwhelming.”

— Stephen Nesbit, DO, MBA

Sits in with other bands — like Shifting Dullness, whose other members are Via Christi Family Medicine faculty. The Nesbits also save, rehabilitate and find homes for horses and dogs. Besides Rio, he can list their “menagerie” with ease: Two miniature horses and two donkeys, a blind, pregnant mare and several other horses, six dogs — a three-legged Australian Shepherd, two Labs, an English Springer Spaniel, a Jack Russell terrier (“terrorist is more accurate”), a beagle — and “Oh yeah, two barn cats.”

Via Christi Life
HEALTH NEW TECHNOLOGY

Rapid Recovery
How robotic surgery is making life easier for surgical patients

New technology

Bob Schen Jr. was taken by surprise when his physician told him he had colon cancer and part of his colon would have to be removed along with the cancer.

“I was really hit hard by it at first,” Bob says. “I thought, 'Cancer? This is it. If I don’t do something now, I’m going to die. Not today or next month, maybe, but eventually.”

When he learned Noel Sanchez, MD, would be performing the colon resection using da Vinci® Surgical System at Via Christi Hospital on Harry, Bob’s interest in the procedure came to the forefront, bypassing anxiety.

“I wanted to know all about it, and was intrigued by everything I heard,” says Bob. “The robot was the only thing about the procedure itself that didn't scare me. This is something I understood.”

After years as an engineer with aviation companies Boeing and Spirit AeroSystems, he has experience working with robots and programming control systems. He’s also very familiar with change of scale, as when a pilot makes a small move with an instrument in the cockpit that moves a big part of the exterior of the plane. With da Vinci, change of scale goes the other way, Bob says.

“The surgeon’s hands work in a macro world, but the tiny da Vinci instruments allow for very fine work, more accurate,” Bob says. For him, the colon resection procedure turned out even better than he’d been told to expect.

“I got out of the hospital in two days, instead of the four to seven days they’d told me to expect. And I was back at work in two weeks.”

Surprisingly little discomfort
Bob had his surgery in the afternoon and awoke in mid-evening with “surprisingly little discomfort. I had a little trouble sleeping that night because I was ‘all slept out’ from the surgery. I was sore after surgery, but not in pain.” He didn’t take pain pills afterward.

Sanchez says he chose to work with the new technology of robotics because it “offers the promise for a more precise, detailed surgery.”

“Our intention is to provide better outcomes for patients, especially those with cancers of the colon and rectum,” the surgeon says. “We hope that some of that will translate into better oncologic outcomes, but that will take some time to prove.”

Since Via Christi first brought the robotics system to this area in 2007, more than 2,580 da Vinci surgeries have been performed at its Wichita hospitals. Two specialties that have seen great increases in use of it are gynecology (79 percent of the hysterectomies performed at Via Christi are done robotically) and urology (98 percent of prostatectomies are done robotically).

Ask your doctor about robotic surgery
If you have been told you need surgery, ask if your doctor can perform the procedure robotically — or to be referred to one who can. If there is a reason not to do the procedure robotically, ask to have it explained.

At davincisurgery.com you can find names of physicians in your area listed by specialty.

Noel Sanchez, MD

“da Vinci Surgical System has provided a scarless approach to remove tongue tumors,” says Philip Harris, MD. “Now we can take away the cancer through the mouth without cutting the lip, as we used to do.”

A tongue tumor typically cannot be seen or detected, so it is found after a patient complains of trouble swallowing or speaking, a chronic sore throat or even unexplained ear pain. In more advanced cases, the patient may cough up blood or have unexplained weight loss “because the tumor is eating up their nutrition,” Harris says.

“There are several advantages for the patient,” he says. “First, they have a better cosmetic appearance after robotic surgery because the surgeon has better margins for being able to see things. There is less invasion of the body and less time away from work because they don’t need as much healing.”

For cancer patients, that also means getting to other treatments sooner and possibly with treatments that are less toxic for them.

da Vinci robotics enhances procedures on the tonsils, upper airway, epiglottis, sinus, head and neck.

Surgeries of the ear, nose and throat also have benefited from da Vinci Surgical System.

ENT

Noel Sanchez, MD

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da Vinci robotics enhances procedures on the tonsils, upper airway, epiglottis, sinus, head and neck.

“New technology”
Why da Vinci?

Surgery isn’t performed by a “robot,” in the most popular sense, but by a surgeon seated at a console across the room from the anesthetized patient, looking at a highly magnified 3-D image. Nothing is programmable and the robot does nothing on its own, but translates the movements of the surgeon’s hands to instruments that can flex and rotate like wrists. While looking at the 3-D image of the operative field, the physician

image of the surgical site, the physician

How it works

A surgery using the robot begins with the physician making several small incisions and inserting the tubes that will carry the instruments and a high-definition camera into the surgical site. As is the practice with other types of abdominal surgery, carbon dioxide gas expands the cavity to allow a better view of the work area. Once all is ready, the 1,200-pound robot is rolled to the operating table, and the instruments and camera are attached to its arms and inserted through the tubes. When all are in place and the robot is positioned precisely, a light signal that it is “docked” and will not move until the surgery is over and the process is reversed.

Not all automated

Assistants at the patient’s side follow the procedure on (continued on page 30).

Open hysterectomy incisions

Da Vinci hysterectomy incisions

patients are the next morning and how good they’re feeling, compared to other surgeries they’ve had in the past. It’s been wonderful to see them doing so well the next day.”

Surgeons have had tremendous success using da Vinci Surgical System for medically necessary hysterectomies and removal of ovaries, Fullerton says.

“Often with da Vinci, patients have less pain at the incision site and a relatively quicker recovery. It surprised me at first, how happy my patients are in their return to normal activities.”

Andrea Fullerton, MD

“This past year it got really bad,” Rebecca says. “Mainly it was the pain. I just wanted the pain to stop.” Being on her feet a lot as a medical assistant for Via Christi Medical Associates made it worse. Quick had considered either ablation, a procedure that destroys the lining of the uterus, or a robotic hysterectomy. She chose to have the hysterectomy, during which it was discovered she also had a cyst on an ovary and a fibroid on the large upper end of her uterus, either of which could have contributed to her pain.

A robotic procedure isn’t faster than a traditional surgery for the surgeon, but physicians say that isn’t the point.

“Often with da Vinci, patients have less pain at the incision site and a relatively quicker recovery. It surprised me at first, how happy my patients are in their return to normal activities.”

— Andrea Fullerton, MD

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— Andrea Fullerton, MD
UROLOGY

Surgical System after a software upgrade.
The port holds da Vinci instruments and a navel. One specialized port that is inserted in the Single-Site™ Instrumentation requires only urological, colorectal and other surgeries, four or five tiny incisions for gynecological, made it possible for surgeons to make only while earlier da Vinci® Surgical Systems incision gall bladder removal procedure.

Via Christi Hospital on Harry is adding a one-da Vinci capability in June

Looking forward

Via Christi Hospital expanding da Vinci capability in June

Via Christi Hospital on Harry is adding a one-incision gall bladder removal procedure. While earlier da Vinci® Surgical Systems made it possible for surgeons to make only four or five tiny incisions for gynecological, urological, colorectal and other surgeries. Single-Site™ Instrumentation requires only one specialized port that is inserted in the navel. The port holds da Vinci instruments and a 3-D endoscope specially designed to be compatible with Via Christi’s da Vinci® Surgical System after a software upgrade.

Urologist Sanford Fitzig, MD, can quickly list procedures da Vinci® Surgical System has improved for him and his patients. “Radical prostatectomy is what we do most,” says Fitzig. Ninety percent of the prostate surgeries done in the United States are done robotically. Other surgeries for which he uses robotics include removal of adrenal tumors, kidney tumors and part of the kidney, if needed, repair obstructions to the kidney and reimplant ureters into bladders. Patients can go home in a day or two, Fitzig says, compared with the weeklong hospital stay after open surgery. Robotics also makes the procedure easier than open surgery when operating on obese patients. “The surgeon can’t feel anything in robotics surgery, of course, but you go by visual cues — where things are, how they move, and how instruments work,” Fitzig says. “Inflicting the abdomen with carbon dioxide gives you space where you can operate. It doesn’t make it less complicated, but the recovery is much easier on the patient.” da Vinci also has a flexibility that laparoscopic instruments cannot provide, says Fitzig.

98% of prostatectomies at Via Christi performed with da Vinci

“Wealth with da Vinci instruments you have a wrist, so you can move things far better than in laparoscopic surgery. You can move one back and forth, rotate it, bend it and do things more delicately — such as the knots when you tie sutures — than in other surgeries.”

NEW

to view a video of Chef Linda preparing the Chicken Scaloppine recipe, visit viachristi.org/nutrition- articles or scan the QR code.

Recipe from Chef Linda Weenan, manager executive chef at Via Christi Hospital on St. Francis, Via Christi Hospital on Harry and Via Christi Behavioral Health Center. She is a former hotel chef who takes pride in bringing restaurant style to hospital cuisine.

Sanford Fitzig, MD

Chicken Scaloppine
An easier, healthier take on this popular Italian dish

Served over whole wheat couscous and paired with a snappy spring salad

Cook couscous in water as directed on package, omitting oil. Cover to keep warm.

In 1 quart sauce pan mix flour, thyme and milk until smooth. Cook over medium-high heat, stirring constantly until bubbly and thickened. Remove from heat. Stir in butter-flavor granules and lemon peel until well blended. Cover to keep warm.

Sprinkle both sides of chicken breast with no-salt seasoning and pepper. In 10-inch nonstick skillet, melt butter over medium-high heat, stirring constantly until bubbly. Place chicken on one side and heat until it is brown. Turn chicken breast over, add sauce and let simmer until chicken is cooked through.

For the salad, in a medium bowl, toss ingredients with your choice of low-fat salad dressing.

Couscous
1 cup uncooked whole wheat couscous
1½ cups water

Sauce
2 teaspoons all purpose flour
¾ teaspoon dried thyme leaves
1 cup skim milk
1 teaspoon all natural butter-flavor granules (such as Molly McButter)
¾ teaspoon fresh grated lemon peel

Chicken
6 uncooked, boneless chicken breasts (about 1 lb)
½ teaspoon no-salt seasoning
¼ teaspoon pepper
1 tablespoon butter
2 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley

Salad
Romaine lettuce
Edamame (shelled soybeans, frozen)
Fresh sugar snap peas
Grape tomatoes
Seedless cucumbers, sliced

NUTRITIONAL INFORMATION (1 CHICKEN BREAST, ½ CUP COUSCOUS AND 2½ TABLESPOONS SAUCE):
230 CALORIES, 3G FAT, 27G CARBOHYDRATES

(1 CUP SALAD — HALF LETTUCE/HALF VEGETABLES — WITHOUT DRESSING): UNDER 50 CALORIES

To a healthy quantity for you is based on your age and gender. Women generally need about 2½ cups of vegetables daily, men about 3 cups, and children 2-3 cups. But be sure to double those amounts if your daily vegetables are largely light and airy salad greens, such as lettuce and spinach.

Looking forward

For more information on Via Christi’s robotic surgery using da Vinci Surgical System, go to viachristi.org/robotic-surgery

EATING

Are you eating your daily requirement of vegetables? A healthy quantity for you is based on your age and gender. Women generally need about 2½ cups of vegetables daily, men about 3 cups, and children 2-3 cups. But be sure to double those amounts if your daily vegetables are largely light and airy salad greens, such as lettuce and spinach.

Recipe from Chef Linda Weenan, manager executive chef at Via Christi Hospital on St. Francis, Via Christi Hospital on Harry and Via Christi Behavioral Health Center. She is a former hotel chef who takes pride in bringing restaurant style to hospital cuisine.

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Recipe from Chef Linda Weenan, manager executive chef at Via Christi Hospital on St. Francis, Via Christi Hospital on Harry and Via Christi Behavioral Health Center. She is a former hotel chef who takes pride in bringing restaurant style to hospital cuisine.
After two painfully silent years, Augusta teen recovers ability to speak

**Joyful noise**

Three years ago, Patrick Bruce was a shy and quiet 13-year-old who, in a matter of days, inexplicably lost his ability to utter a word.

Without a voice, he would later express himself through his saxophone as a member of the Augusta High School jazz band.

This caught the attention of Renee Berggren, a speech therapist for Via Christi Rehabilitation Hospital in Wichita who also serves as the band’s color guard instructor.

He could coordinate respiration and articulation to play the sax, which uses all the same muscles and systems as speaking, Berggren thought. “There must be hope for anyone who can play that well.”

Berggren remembered Patrick when nearly a year later he walked into her office at Via Christi for speech therapy. She incorporated Patrick’s sax-playing abilities to help him fully regain his voice.

“God places you where you need to be placed,” Berggren concludes.

*What God has given*

For two years, no one could identify what was wrong with Patrick — which meant no one knew how to bring back his ability to speak.

“Everything came out as a babbling sound,” recalls his mother, Laurie Bruce.

Patrick visited a number of hospitals and specialists, undergoing multiple tests; a psychiatric evaluation was ordered. Patrick knew the problem wasn’t in his head and the tests confirmed that. Patrick was deemed mentally, psychologically and physically intact.

Laurie homeschooled him when it first happened, but after a month she sent him back to school.

“You’re not going to sit around feeling sorry for yourself. This is what God has given you and you have to deal with it,” she told him.

Patrick took her words to heart.

He communicated via text messaging and a voice application on his iPod — although both were slow and difficult processes for sharing what he had to say.

He continued to play soccer, though it meant he had to wave at teammates to pass the ball and couldn’t yell for help when he fell injured on the field. He occasionally gave off strange gurgling noises that startled his classmates and drew teasing, causing him to withdraw and he quit band.

But in ninth grade, Patrick decided to give band another try.

“He was making noise and making music,” says band director Todd Hollis, who noted Patrick’s joyful expression when he was playing.

**Answered prayers**

Finally, medical tests ordered by a specialist detected the presence of a latent strep infection, a possible indicator of a pediatric autoimmune disease associated with strep, or PANDAS. Patrick was started on penicillin.

“We saw a fairly marked improvement,” said Kay Womack, MD, Patrick’s pediatrician at Via Christi Clinic.

Within weeks, Patrick was whispering.

When he met Berggren for therapy in February, he no longer strained to make words, but worked on such refinements as voice inflection, body posture, eye contact and smiling while speaking.

Today, the smiles come easily for Patrick, who as a sophomore joined Skills USA, a scholastic leadership development group, and was elected to serve as a statewide officer.

“Before I lost my voice I was super-shy,” he says. “Now I can look people in the eye and say what I want to say.”

And while the two years of being unable to talk were painful, Patrick never lost hope.

“I just knew God had a plan for me.”

To encourage those “automatic patterns,” Berggren had Patrick position his hands as if holding his saxophone and asked him to “play” the sound by imitating the tonguing and rhythm patterns used when blowing his horn.

Within months, he was back in full voice.

Berggren, whose family owns Apple Jack Pumpkin Patch, hired Patrick to work there through the fall, knowing that interacting with customers and co-workers would require him to use what he was learning in therapy and overcome his shyness.
Pittsburg Women’s Services Center opens

In 1971, Via Christi Hospital in Pittsburg had delivered its first baby born in the new center. Since then, the hospital has seen a steady increase in the number of babies being born there, and it was time to update the space, the look and the technology.

"The space is great, the rooms are beautiful and there are such wide open areas," Kendra says. "I delivered Baron on the second floor, and while it was nice, this new third floor is fantastic."

Kendra still had three weeks before the due date of their second son, Strauss. But Baron was born a month early, and Kendra had a feeling that Strauss would arrive early too, and may even be the first baby born in the new center.

Since 1971, Via Christi Hospital in Pittsburg had delivered babies on one wing of the second floor of the hospital. With the increasing number of babies being born there, it was time to update the space, the look and the technology.

When we opened in 1971, we had three labor/delivery rooms and eight semiprivate postpartum rooms," says Director of Women's Services Janelle Wade, RN, MSN. "Since 2004, we've seen a 65 percent increase in births. Now that the Women's Center is finished, we're more than tripled the amount of space we have for our patients, families and visitors."

"We now have five labor/delivery rooms and two triage rooms that we did not have before," says Lynda Back, RN. "The triage rooms are important for mothers who may not be exactly sure if they are going into labor. Our physicians and nurses can assess the situation and health needs of both mother and baby in the triage rooms, and when the time comes they move into a labor/ delivery room."

The additional space also means added privacy for mothers and families. The labor/delivery rooms and 15 postpartum rooms are all large, private rooms, designed with hotel-style amenities.

"We created an atmosphere that is warm and inviting," Wade says. "That’s not only for our new mothers, but also the fathers and family members, with additional furniture and sleeper-recliners. All rooms are temperature controlled, meaning our mothers can adjust it to their preference and not have to worry about being too hot or too cold at any point during their stay."

The Women’s Center also made significant technological upgrades, including an infant security system, central fetal monitoring system and new baby warmers.

"The renovations and changes are extremely beneficial to our patients," says Gary Grimaldi, MD. "We have committed to new mothers to make sure they, and their newborns, have everything they need."

Once staff started moving patients to the floor, the anticipation about the first baby to be born there grew by the hour. Several mothers went into labor that day, and the Women’s Center was under construction and then completed," Wade says. "This is all about caring for the women of our community, and taking care of our future generations that someday will see their own families born at Via Christi Hospital."

West Via Christi Hospital to offer inpatient rehab care

Patients and families living in and around west Wichita soon won't have to go far to access inpatient rehabilitation services from Via Christi Health.

"Since the opening of our hospital in August 2010, we’ve been hearing from physicians, patients and their families requesting that we expand our services to include close-to-home rehabilitation care," says Kevin Strecker, president of the city’s only full-service hospital in west Wichita.

In response to that call, space originally intended for a medical/surgical unit will be dedicated for use as an 18-bed inpatient rehabilitation unit primarily benefiting patients who have had a stroke, joint replacement or spinal cord injury.

Most of the project’s cost for equipment and minor remodeling was provided through the more than $300,000 in donations to Via Christi Foundation for use at the hospital.

"We’ve been anticipating being able to deliver babies in the new Women’s Center for some time," says Angela Shaw, DO. "The first day it was open was an extremely busy and exciting time. Our new mothers are very impressed with the features we offer."

At 7:12 p.m. on the initial day of patient care in the new center, the first baby was born. Strauss Julian Kunshak, a healthy 6 pounds, 14 ounces, arrived three weeks early to become a part of Via Christi Women’s Services Center history.

"We were thrilled to have the first baby there," Kendra Kunshak says. "After he was born, we didn’t know for sure he was the first since there were other expecting mothers on the floor. We found out later that night that exactly what we talked about Sunday during the open house had actually happened."

While Strauss can always stake his claim to being the first baby born in the new Women’s Center, it did not take long for the bassinets in the nursery to quickly fill. By the next day, seven babies had already been born.

"This is exactly what we had in mind when the Women’s Center was under construction and then completed," Wade says. "This is all about caring for the women of our community, and taking care of our future generations that someday will see their own families born at Via Christi Hospital."

Q&A

What are the features of the new Women’s Services Center?

• An enhanced Level II nursery provides a more intense level of service for sick babies closer to home
• Three times more space for Women’s Services, moving from one wing to an entire floor
• Almost double the rooms for mothers
• All private rooms
• Enhanced central fetal monitoring
• Two new triage rooms
• Expanded designated waiting area, providing families with more comfort and privacy

Why was the project needed?

• The original unit opened in 1971 with only 3 labor/delivery rooms and 8 semiprivate postpartum/recovery rooms
• Number of babies born had increased by 65 percent since 2004
• Advances in technology required updated facilities and infrastructure

What did project cost?

• $8.2 million

Who paid for it?

• Mount Carmel Foundation conducted a $1.2 million fundraising campaign
• Via Christi Health contributed $7 million

Who was the first baby born in the new center?

Kendra Kunshak — holding her newborn son, Strauss Julian, and pictured with Gary Grimaldi, MD — is the first mother to deliver at the new Women’s Center at Via Christi Hospital in Pittsburg.

Visit viachristi.org/womens-services-pittsburg to learn more and watch a video of the new Women’s Center’s blessing and dedication.
Service dog communicates what Brianna cannot

"Are you okay?" asks 8-year-old Brianna Bertrand, offering a sweet smile. "How are you doing?"

Brianna, who has autism, asks these questions, but ironically is unable to answer them because she can say little else.

This became a life-threatening problem a year ago when she was diagnosed with Type I diabetes, requiring her parents, Dana and Joe Bertrand, to monitor her blood sugar levels around the clock.

"She's unable to have a conversation with you or to tell you how she feels when she's sick," says Dana.

With the assistance of Children's Miracle Network Hospitals at Via Christi Health, the Bertrands, whose 11-year-old son Kenneth also has autism, now have some four-legged help: Cyrus, a medic alert service dog specially trained to detect changes in their daughter's blood sugar.

Cyrus goes everywhere with Brianna, who is home-schooled but goes out several times a week for speech and occupational therapy sessions and swim lessons. Cyrus stays at her side during the day and sleeps in her room at night. When Brianna doesn't smell right, he goes to Dana to alert her.

"He doesn't bark," says Dana. "He just comes to my bedside at night and stares at me until his presence wakes me up."

Brianna's pediatrician considers the dog a valuable contributor to Brianna's care — and not just because Cyrus can communicate changes in her blood sugar.

"In Brianna's case, the dog provides a calming effect much like carrying around a teddy bear," says Elaine Harrington, MD, a pediatrician at Via Christi Clinic. "This is valuable to a child with autism."

He also could help Brianna become more independent as she grows, she says.
AARP Driver Safety Program
For motorists age 50+, participants may be eligible for auto insurance discounts. Make check payable to AARP-DSP or bring correct cash.
Register: 316-689-5700
Cost: $24 — members (w/ID) 
$29 — nonmembers
Where: Via Christi Rehab-Hospital, 1151 N. Rock Road

Cardiac nutrition
Attend one or all sessions.
Register: 316-689-5700
Cost: $5 per person/per class
Where: Via Christi Hospital
929 N. St. Francis
2nd floor, Room 2039

Heart-healthy nutrition: Understand cholesterol, fiber and healthy oils.
When: June 6
11:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.
Shaking it up and splitting out the facts: Learn to include flavorful low-sodium options, increase whole grains and understand food labels.
When: June 13
11:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.
Cooking up a healthy heart: Learn low-fat cooking techniques, healthy cooking substitutions and recipe modification tips. A cookbook will be available for $6.
When: June 20
11:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.
Survival skills for dining out: Learn to make the best choices for your heart when eating at restaurants.
When: July 27
11:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

Diabetes education classes
Group education classes provide information about diabetes care and how blood glucose testing, meal planning and daily activities can improve your health. Insurance usually covers the cost of class.
Register: 316-689-9989
Cost: Call for information
When: Call for information
Where: Via Christi Clinic
3311 E. Murdock
Endocrinology Department, 4th floor

You’ve got a lot to gain by losing weight
Learn about the HMB Program for Medical Weight Management offered by Via Christi Weight Management.
Register: 316-689-6082
Cost: Free
Where: Via Christi Weight Management
6100 E. Central (NW corner of Genesis)

Evening classes
Dates: June 11, 18 or 25
July 2, 9, 16, 23 or 30
Time: 5:20 p.m.

Luncheon classes
Dates: June 12, 19 or 26
July 3, 10, 17, 24 or 31
Time: Noon

Surgical weight loss session
Learn ways to treat severe obesity, including surgical options available through Via Christi.
Register: 316-689-6082
Cost: Free
Where: Via Christi Clinic
707 N. Emporia
(Emporia & Murdock — enter south side of building only)
Dates: June 12 or 28, July 10 or 26
Time: Check in: 6:30 p.m.
Class: 6 p.m.

Look good... feel better™
Ladies, learn how to cope with the appearance-related side effects cancer treatment can cause.
Register: 316-616-6500
Cost: Free
Where: June 18 or July 16
10 a.m.-Noon
Where: Via Christi Cancer Resource Center
817 N. Emporia

Introduction to lymphedema
The manual lymphatic drainage system treatment can cause.
Register: 316-609-4448
Cost: Call for information
Where: Sept. 6 or Jan. 10
Via Christi Clinic
9211 E. 21st St.

For information about Community Health Education classes in Pittsburg, call:

Support Groups
Support groups meet at:
Via Christi Rehabilitation Hospital
1151 N. Rock Road
For more info: 316-634-3400

Ampuets support group
Brain injury support group
CVA/Stroke support group
Music therapy ministry

Amputee support group
2nd Tuesday of each month
6:45 p.m.
1st Thursday of each month
4-6 p.m.
1st Tuesday of each month
3-5 p.m.
Every Sunday
6:30 p.m.
“I really love the free lunch and learn events,” Hodges says of the program, previously named Senior Connection. “Not only do I get to meet great people, but the health education topics covered have been very beneficial to me and my husband, James.”

Via Christi 50+ is open to anyone age 50 and over. Individual memberships are just $25 per year, or $40 per couple. Members can enjoy free health luncheons, join their fellow members for special social events, take advantage of discounts on health screenings and other perks.

Join the fun today!
For more information and a complete list of benefits, call Tanya Merritt at 316.719.3354, or email tanya.merritt@viachristi.org

Some membership benefits:
- Via Christi 50+ newsletter
- Social activities
- Free luncheons
- Household membership discount
- Discounted health screenings
- Free notary service
- Village Tours and travel events
- Free oil change
- Room upgrades for Via Christi hospital stays

Dorothy Hodges is a big fan of Via Christi 50+