

A publication of
B *BLESSING*
Health System

Personal BLESSING

OUR PATIENTS. THEIR STORIES.

FALL/WINTER 2022



REMARKABLE
PEOPLE.

FASCINATING
STORIES.

Learn about
surviving breast
and prostate
cancers

How surgery
restored a
woman's energy
and pride

Find out what type
of care is drawing
people from long
distances to Blessing

Champion athlete
and surgeon
develop a
special bond

Published by the Marketing, Communications & Community Relations staff of Blessing Health, *Personal Blessing* provides general information on health-related topics. It is not intended to be a substitute for professional medical advice, which should always be obtained from your physician.

The Blessing Health System Mission Statement:

To improve the health of our communities

The Blessing Health System Vision Statement:

Blessing Health System will be exceptional

- in providing a safe, high-quality healthcare experience;
- in being the best place for providers to practice;
- in being a place where employees want to work and students want to learn; and
- in partnering with our communities.

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Quality. Convenience. Blessing.

By Maureen Kahn, RN, MHA, MSN, president/chief executive officer, Blessing Health System



Nothing is more important than a patient's trust. In addition to demonstrating exceptional compassion, trust can be earned by demonstrating and delivering quality care. Here is how Blessing caregivers are doing that:

After a two-year application and review process, the American Nurses Credentialing Center awarded Magnet status to the Blessing Hospital nursing team. Magnet is the highest level of recognition a hospital can achieve for excellence in nursing and is considered the gold standard in the nursing world. Of the more than 6,300 hospitals in the country, fewer than 600, or 9.4%, hold Magnet recognition.

U.S. News & World Report named Blessing Hospital a 2022-23 High Performing Hospital in heart, kidney and stroke care and colon cancer surgery. Recognition is based on care outcomes determined to be significantly better than the national average. Fewer than half of the 4,500 hospitals evaluated received a High Performing rating. This marked Blessing's fourth straight appearance on the High Performing Hospital list.

The Leapfrog Group, an independent national health care watchdog organization, gave Blessing Hospital

a grade of "A" for patient safety as the result of its spring and fall 2022 surveys. These are Blessing's fourth and fifth straight patient safety grades of "A". Grades are based on over 30 performance measures. Typically, only around one-third of 2,900 hospitals surveyed receive a grade of "A".

Convenience—just what the doctor ordered

Blessing Hospital has opened a retail pharmacy inside the hospital to increase patient convenience and help them comply with their treatment plan, of which prescription medications are often key components. Increased medication compliance can decrease hospital admissions and readmissions. Yet, national statistics show as many as 30% of medication prescriptions are never filled.

The Blessing Retail Pharmacy allows Emergency Center patients, inpatients being discharged from the hospital and Blessing outpatients to fill a new prescription before leaving the building if they choose. It offers market-based pricing and accepts all insurances.

Patients who wish to use the retail pharmacy should tell that to their nurse. *Thank you.* ■

A brighter future for detecting lung cancer earlier



Blessing Health is among the first providers in the country using a new device to detect lung cancer.

Monarch™, by Auris Health, allows doctors to conduct robotic bronchoscopy. This advanced lung examination can lead to earlier and more accurate diagnoses of small and hard-to-reach tumors near the edges of the lungs. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) recently cleared the technology for use.

More than 90% of people diagnosed with lung cancer do not survive the disease, partly because it is often found at an advanced stage.

“Lung cancer is the leading cause of cancer deaths worldwide, in part because it has no symptoms in its early stages,” said **Umama Adil, MD**, board-certified and fellowship-trained Blessing Health pulmonologist. “Because robotic bronchoscopy provides improved reach, vision and control, it holds potential to help us to make a diagnosis earlier.”



UMAMA ADIL, MD

During robotic bronchoscopy, doctors use a hand-held controller to direct an endoscope – a flexible tube with a light and camera attached to it – throughout the lungs, guided by computer-assisted navigation based on 3D models of the patient’s own lung anatomy. Robotic bronchoscopy delivers improved reach, vision and control when compared to the non-robotic method.

Dr. Adil explains other diagnostic options currently available for lung cancer have limitations in accuracy, safety or invasiveness that can lead to false positives, false negatives or side effects such as a collapsed lung and hemorrhage, which may increase health care costs and extend hospital stays.

“We are excited about the promise of robotic bronchoscopy to offer a more hopeful future for our patients with lung cancer,” she concluded. ■

Mammogram becomes life-saving birthday “gift”

1 in 8 women in the U.S.
will develop breast
cancer over the
course of her lifetime



April Friye's 40th birthday celebration included scheduling her first-ever mammogram with the Blessing Breast Center.

"I've always been very concerned about my own health, making sure I stay healthy," the mother of two pre-teen boys said. "My maternal grandmother had breast cancer. I know the importance of finding it early."

Today she not only knows it, April is a living, breathing example of the importance of early cancer detection. Her first mammogram helped discover breast cancer.

"Initially, the emotions were all over the place," April said. "When I found out, I let myself absorb it, get all my crying out, and then it was, 'be strong for the kids.'"

"I became strong for my boys and for myself, and just wanted to hit it head on. After that I had a very positive attitude because I had so many people helping me on the journey."

In addition to her children and husband of 17 years, Trevor, April's Blessing health care team included **Dr. Jonathan Wilford**, her primary care provider; **Dr. Emmanuel Bessay**, surgeon; **Dr. Kellie Flippin**, Blessing Cancer Center oncologist; **Dr. Arshad Muzaffar**, plastic and reconstructive surgeon; and **Jessica Nuebel, MSN, RN**, nationally certified Blessing Breast Center patient navigator.

Jessica is a consistent point of contact for any breast cancer patient who requests her assistance. She is available to attend medical appointments to take notes and ensure the patient understands the information shared during the appointments, and to help address any barriers the patient may experience in complying with their plan of care throughout their treatment. There is no cost for Jessica's services.

"She was a godsend," April said of Jessica. "She helped us with every stage of the process."

"I am a person the patient can contact at any time with questions, big or small, for guidance,"

Jessica said. “I have access to resources to help them through any challenges or difficulties they may have.”

In consultation with Dr. Bessay, April chose to have a double mastectomy.

“I did not want to have to think about it anymore,” she said about the potential for recurrence of cancer. “I chose to have both breasts removed and not have to second-guess myself constantly.”

After surgery with Dr. Bessay in spring of 2022, April had breast reconstruction surgery with Dr. Muzaffar in August.

“I cannot say enough about Dr. Muzaffar,” April said. “If I had to go out of town for this care, it would have cost me a lot of time and money. We are fortunate to have such an experienced plastic surgeon here at home.”

“Drs. Muzaffar and Bessay worked so great together and I am extremely happy with the results,” she added.

While April required no chemotherapy or radiation therapy, hormones fuel the growth of the type of breast cancer she had. April will be on a medication to address that risk for at least five years, when Dr. Flippin will reassess the situation.

April looks forward to attending many more of her sons’ baseball games and golf tournaments, and encourages all women to take care of their health for the people in their lives.

“Get your regular mammograms,” she said. “You have to be on top of your own health.”

“Ask a lot of questions, too,” April added. “I have learned each person’s experience with breast cancer is unique. It’s your own journey. You can listen to advice, but the decisions are yours ultimately.” ■

For more information on Blessing’s nationally certified breast cancer-related services and the skilled, compassionate team of providers that delivers those services, visit the following online locations:

blessinghealth.org/breastcenter
blessinghealth.org/cancer
blessinghealth.org/plasticsurgery

**“Get your regular
mammograms—you
have to be on top of
your own health.”**

**APRIL FRIYE
BREAST CANCER SURVIVOR**

ABOUT SCREENING MAMMOGRAMS

The American College of Radiology and the Society of Breast Imaging recommend that women undergo a risk assessment at age 30 with their primary care provider to see if screening prior to age 40 is needed. Women at average breast cancer risk should begin screening at age 40. The organizations also recommend women continue screening past age 74, unless their primary care provider recommends otherwise.

**Screening mammograms
are available at the following
Blessing locations:**

**Blessing Breast Center
Quincy, IL**

(217) 223-8400, ext. 4300

**Illini Community Hospital
Pittsfield, IL**

(217) 285-2113, ext. 3100

**Hannibal Clinic
Hannibal, MO**

(573) 231-3252

A lesson from Leland: Surviving prostate cancer



“Some guys tell me they are scared to death about screening. I tell them I was, too. But had I not caught this, in two or three years, it could have spread and been much, much harder to deal with.”

**LELAND CRANE
PROSTATE CANCER SURVIVOR**

Leland Crane is a man of many talents and passions. The 55-year-old Philadelphia, Missouri resident is a farmer, seed salesman and machinist. He is passionate about exercise (Leland enjoys his morning walks) and restoring or modifying old tractors.

Leland owns one tractor that is very special to him. It is a 1946 International WD-9 with a Cummins 4BT engine (*seen in the photo above*). Don't worry if you don't understand any of that because what makes the tractor special is the light blue ribbon it now carries. The ribbon signifies Leland is a prostate cancer survivor, and he uses it as an icebreaker to share his message with others about the importance of prostate cancer screening.

“Some guys tell me they are scared to death about screening,” he said. “I tell them I was, too. But had I not caught this, in two or three years, it could have spread and been much, much harder to deal with.”

About 1 in 8 men will be diagnosed with prostate cancer during his lifetime and about 1 in 41 men will

die from the disease, making it the second leading cause of cancer death in American men. Prostate cancer can often be treated successfully when caught early.

It all started with a routine visit to the clinic

A visit to his primary care provider may well have saved Leland's life.

In fall of 2021 he visited nurse practitioner **Traci Kline** at Blessing's Palmyra, Missouri clinic to check on his blood pressure. Traci noticed Leland was due for a PSA blood test, so she ordered it. The test detects an increased risk for prostate cancer.

Leland's test showed an elevated level of PSA. Traci suggested he see a urologist.

A long-time Blessing Health patient, Leland made an appointment with urologist **Dr. Bradley Holland**.

After tracking Leland's condition for several weeks and redoing the PSA test twice, Dr. Holland performed a biopsy that confirmed a diagnosis of prostate cancer.

“I want this thing fixed like that,” Leland said as he

snapped his fingers.

He researched treatment options thoroughly and chose to have surgery to remove his cancerous prostate. Dr. Holland referred Leland to fellow Blessing urologist **Dr. David Lieber**.

“We all do things similarly in terms of disease management,” Dr. Holland said about the teamwork among members of the Blessing Health urology team. “But we all have our own strengths. We refer back and forth between each other if there is a patient need for which one of us is more suited to treat.”

Dr. Holland referred Leland to Dr. Lieber because of his extensive experience in robotic surgery. Robotic surgery requires smaller incisions than “open” surgery, leading to less blood loss, shorter hospital stays and quicker recovery. Dr. Holland assisted with the surgery.

After earning his medical degree from Southern Illinois University School of Medicine, Dr. Lieber completed a residency at the school in urology and a fellowship in endourology, a subspecialty focused on laparoscopic techniques to address urological cancers and reconstruction. He has also taught robotic techniques to new urologists for the past 15 years, in addition to seeing his own patients. Dr. Lieber is certified by the American Board of Urology.

Nothing is ever easy

Leland needed all of Dr. Lieber’s skill and experience because of a complex and life-saving abdominal surgery he had at Blessing in 2014. The emergency left him scarred internally, posing a challenge to removal of his prostate.

“Leland had a significant previous surgical history making his current need higher risk and more complicated,” Dr. Lieber said. “Leland’s thought process was very rational about why he wanted the procedure even with the risk. So, we went ahead with it.”

Although Leland was very knowledgeable about his

past health issues, Dr. Lieber’s thorough research of his medical history reassured Leland his care was in the right hands.

“I found it comforting and refreshing. I trusted him.”

The day comes and so does recovery

On February 1, 2022, Leland had robotic surgery to remove his prostate and 13 lymph nodes. He went home the same day to start his recovery. Just over a month after his surgery, Leland and his wife hit the road for a trip to Branson, Missouri.

“I had some hiking trails down there that I wanted to do,” he said. “We went eight miles one afternoon. That was six weeks to the day after my surgery.”

Leland is back living each day to its fullest thanks to his faith, the power of positive thinking and his Blessing Health team.

Dr. Lieber credits every member of the surgical team for extensive preparation that contributed to the success of Leland’s surgery.

Even though she was not in the operating room, Traci Kline shares in the success.

“It is extremely rewarding as a primary care provider to know that because of the open dialogue and trusting relationship I have with my patients, diseases can be caught early, and patient outcomes are improved,” she said.

Men between the ages of 55 and 69 should talk with their doctor to see if a prostate cancer screening is right for them. Men younger than 55 who have a family history, a relative who had cancer at a younger age, have other health conditions, or are African-American are at higher risk for early onset prostate cancer and should have that conversation earlier. ■

For more on Blessing’s urology team, go to blessinghealth.org/urology. For more information on Blessing primary care, go to blessinghealth.org/familymedicine.



DAVID LIEBER, MD

Woman finds renewed energy and pride after surgery



Andrea Turek is half the woman she used to be and could not be happier about it.

"It's a whole new life," said the mother of three—10, 5 and 3 years old. "I am so happy, so confident. I feel good. I didn't know how bad I felt until I felt good."

For much of her life, Andrea was overweight; at times she was medically obese.

"I was miserable," she explained. "I didn't feel good. I didn't look good. I didn't want to keep living that way."

An employee of Blessing Hospital for 19 years—the last 14 years as a registered nurse—Andrea decided to change her life when the nationally accredited Blessing Bariatric Institute opened. The Institute offers surgical and medically managed weight loss options.

The option Andrea needed to reach and maintain a healthy weight was surgery. She began the program in January 2020; learning

about her relationship with food, how to change that relationship, the lifestyle changes she would need to make after surgery to maintain a healthy weight and how to make those changes successfully. Seven months later, Andrea was prepared physically and mentally for the responsibilities of her new life and had surgery, the duodenal switch procedure.

Andrea's path to a new life

The duodenal switch procedure makes the stomach smaller through use of a sleeve and re-routes the path food takes through the digestive system to bypass three-quarters of the small intestine so the body absorbs fewer calories.

Fernando Bonanni, Jr., MD, MBA, FACS, FASMBs, board certified bariatric surgeon and medical director of the Blessing Bariatric Institute, performed Andrea's surgery.

"The duodenal switch is the most effective surgery for weight loss—contributing to 70-85%

excess weight loss—and diabetes—with 95% of Type 2 diabetes patients able to stop taking diabetes medication within 12 hours of surgery,” Dr. Bonanni said. “To achieve those benefits, patients must commit to a regimented diet and supplement program, and to lifelong follow-up.”

As a result of her surgery, Andrea lost 175 pounds, no longer needs to take high blood pressure medication and her heart beat, which was too fast when she was obese, has returned to normal.

“Success after bariatric surgery depends on a patient’s commitment to understanding the disease of morbid obesity and taking an active role in achieving long term health and happiness,” Dr. Bonanni concluded. “Patients find the Blessing Bariatric Institute is committed to helping them succeed.”

Andrea agrees. “They want you to be healthy and successful,” she said.

The Blessing Bariatric Institute team includes surgeons, internal medicine specialists, dietitians, social workers and support staff.

Shedding pounds and shame

After years of physical and psychological suffering, Andrea now enjoys a life more fulfilling than she had known.

“I didn’t realize the things I was missing out on as a mom,” she said. “I didn’t want to go on walks with my kids, for example, because I had no energy. I felt miserable. Now, I am the one who says, ‘Let’s go!’ because I feel better and I want to do more.”

“Then there is the body self-consciousness,” she continued. “I remember being embarrassed at my daughter’s softball games and at other public gatherings. Now, I am not. It’s very freeing.”

Patients interested in surgical or medically managed weight reduction can make appointments in Quincy or at Hannibal Clinic.

For more information—including several videos, frequently asked questions and an online process to begin your bariatric journey, go to blessinghealth.org/bariatric.



**FERNANDO BONANNI,
JR., MD, MBA, FACS,
FASMBS**

“I didn’t realize the things I was missing out on as a mom,” she said. “I didn’t want to go on walks with my kids, for example, because I had no energy. I felt miserable. Now, I am the one who says, ‘Let’s go!’ because I feel better and I want to do more.”

ANDREA TUREK

Shon Stark is a winner.

"I always try to be the best at everything I do," the 18-year-old said.

That includes athletics.

"It's the reason he wakes up," Shon, Sr., said of his son's love of sports.

The La Grange, Missouri resident is a member of the Highland High School track and field team where he set school and conference records, and earned the Class 2 State Championship in discus in May 2022 with a throw of 165 feet and 11 inches.

As a tackle and defensive tackle on the Cougar football team, Shon earned All-District honors twice, as well as All State Academic and All Conference.

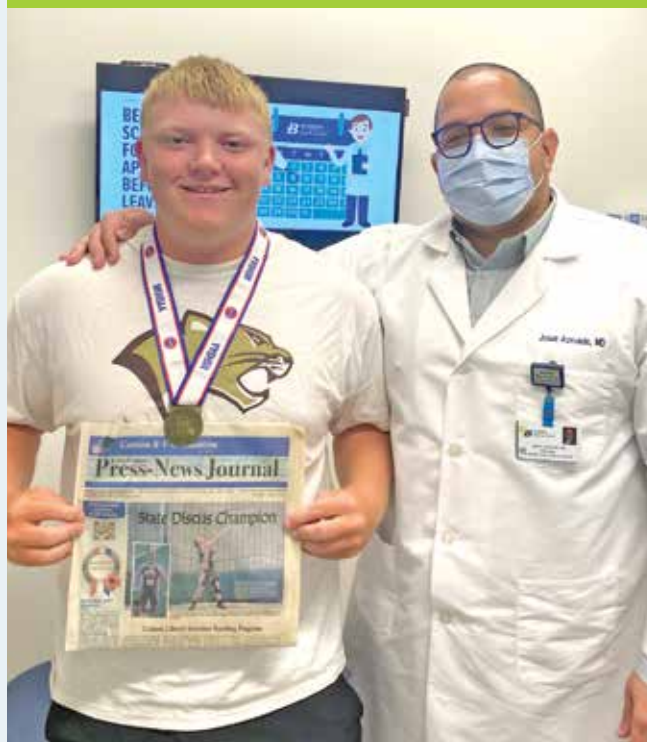
But then came summer vacation.

Shon feared he was going to lose it all when he dislocated his knee cap during a family vacation, damaging a piece of bone and some cartilage from the bottom of the outside of his femur during the knee cap dislocation. The femur is the thigh bone. It's the longest, strongest bone in the body. It's a critical part of the ability to stand and move.

"It was the worst pain I ever felt," Shon said. "I was devastated, almost depressed. I had made a promise at our track banquet that I was going to win state."

Makenzie Little, PTS, ATC, trainer, Highland High School football team and member of the Advance

CHAMPION CARE — *for a* — CHAMPION ATHLETE



Shon Stark with Dr. Josue Acevedo

Physical Therapy staff, recommended Shon see Blessing Health orthopedic surgeon, **Dr. Josue Acevedo**.

"Makenzie talked to Shon at practice on a Monday. We saw Dr. Acevedo on Tuesday. Shon was in surgery Wednesday morning," Shon's dad stated.

Dr. Acevedo is certified by the American Board of Orthopedic Surgeons. He completed a sports medicine fellowship at the University of Miami/Jackson Health System in Florida and trained with the University of Miami Hurricanes football team as part of his fellowship.

Dr. Acevedo's examination of Shon determined there was no evidence of long-term damage to the knee because of the knee cap dislocation—no ligaments or tendons were involved.

"Because Shon is an athlete, we decided to go with the more conservative procedure and take the piece of bone that had come off

during the dislocation and remove it," Dr. Acevedo said. "Then we would trim some of the cartilage. It would allow Shon to rehab more quickly."

"I trusted his word," Shon's father said of Dr. Acevedo. "I felt like he was really on Shon's side. When you have someone that cares about the kid, more than just the injury, that means a lot. As a father, you don't look for anybody other than that to take care of your kid."

“It was just a different level of care once we met with Dr. Acevedo. Definitely an uplifting experience emotionally for Shon.”

Shon's medical team helps him excel again

After surgery, Shon worked with Zach Kinscherf, DPT, Advance Physical Therapy. After eight weeks, Shon was back on the football field, able to play the final six games of his junior season as a starter. The team went 8 and 4 and reached the district championship game for the first time in more than 20 years. Shon was named All District and All State Academic after a six-game season.

Later in his junior year, Shon fulfilled the promise he made at the track banquet and brought home the state discus championship.

“He is a strong person,” Dr. Acevedo said of Shon. “His strength and range of motion came back quickly, and you can see the results,” he added, pointing to a newspaper headline about Shon winning the state championship in discus.

“He’s a good kid, and I am proud of him,” the doctor concluded.

“I feel great. I am back to 100%,” Shon said.

College recruiters, listen up—Shon is now a senior. This All State, All District, All Conference and state champion wants to study engineering and participate in track. ■

For more information on the care provided by Dr. Acevedo and the Blessing Health orthopedics team, go to blessinghealth.org/orthopedics.

STAFF ACCOMPLISHMENTS



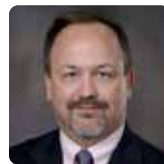
Ethan Boren, registered and licensed occupational therapist (OTR/L), Rehabilitation Services,

has earned the status of Certified Lymphedema Therapist through the Lymphology Association of North America (CLT-LANA). To earn certification, Ethan completed a 135-hour educational course and passed the Lymphology Association of North America examination.



Sarah Crane, registered radiology technologist, special procedures technologist, Radiology department, Blessing Hospital,

recently earned a Master of Healthcare Administration degree from William Woods University, Fulton, Missouri. A 25-year member of the Blessing Hospital Radiology staff, Sarah also holds a Bachelor of Healthcare Administration degree from Ottawa University, Ottawa, Kansas, and is a graduate of the Blessing Hospital School of Radiologic Technology.



Kurt Ebers, administrative director, Business Development, has

earned the status of Fellow in the American College of Medical Practice Executives (FACMPE). ACMPE is the certification entity of the Medical Group Management Association. Kurt successfully completed a minimum of 50 continuing education credit hours and passed a rigorous examination that assesses understanding of the broad scope of medical practice management.



Ann St. Clair, RN, BSN, CAPA, One Day Surgery, has met the

requirements of the American Board of Perianesthesia Nursing and earned recertification as a Certified Ambulatory Perianesthesia Nurse (CAPA). Ann has been CAPA-certified continuously since 2013. The CAPA nurse has received extra training and completed the examination to be certified in the care of patients both before and after the administration of anesthesia, sedation or analgesia.



Surgeon draws families from near and far for life-changing pediatric care

Moms are particular and passionate about the provider they pick when their children need reconstructive surgery.

"I cried when I found out he was leaving Columbia," said Kaitlin Wilcox of Unionville, Missouri. She was speaking of Blessing Health plastic and reconstructive surgeon **Arshad Muzaffar, MD**. Dr. Muzaffar moved his practice recently from Columbia, Missouri to Quincy and Blessing Health. He has and will continue to care for two of Kaitlin's sons who have cleft lips and palates.

"It was such a relief to us when we found out that insurance would allow us to continue to follow Dr. Muzaffar to Quincy," she continued. "We were not interested in finding another surgeon."

Kaitlin was initially impressed with seeing before and after pictures of Dr. Muzaffar's cleft lip and palate patients. Upon meeting him, she was equally as impressed with his knowledge and the way he shares it and educates the families in his care. Kaitlin willingly makes the more than 240-mile roundtrip to Quincy for her sons' appointments with Dr. Muzaffar.

Treatment of cleft lip and palate generally requires a series of procedures as the young patient grows and develops. The complexity of this care creates a strong and deep bond between provider, patient and family.

"He's wonderful, kind, and good at what

he does," Kaitlin said of Dr. Muzaffar. "I have confidence in him and give him a 10-out-of-10 recommendation."

Dr. Muzaffar is quick to share that the care he provides is team-based. "We have an established team that has been doing cleft care for many, many years," he said.

The team includes a speech language pathologist and orthodontist with whom Dr. Muzaffar has worked for nearly 20 years.

Dr. Muzaffar is a graduate of Yale University Medical School. He completed a fellowship at the University of Washington and Seattle Children's Hospital in Craniofacial and Pediatric Plastic Surgery. He then completed a fellowship in Hand/Pediatric Hand Surgery and Microsurgery at the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center and Texas Scottish Rite Hospital for Children. Dr. Muzaffar is American Board of Plastic Surgery certified.

His interest in pediatric reconstructive surgery is a passion. As the son of a surgeon and a track and cross-country athlete in college, Dr. Muzaffar thought he would be an orthopedic surgeon as a way to combine his interests in sports and surgery.

However, an experience in medical school changed his life.

"I saw a photograph of a child with cleft lip and palate—before and after surgery. It captured my imagination," Dr. Muzaffar said. "The more I learned about plastic and reconstructive surgery the more I

found it interested, excited and stimulated me.”

Dr. Muzaffar performs a number of craniofacial (head and face) procedures for children. To see a list of those procedures, go to blessinghealth.org/plasticsurgery. One of the conditions you will find there is Pierre Robin sequence, in which the lower jaw is smaller than normal and positioned further back in the mouth than normal. Pierre Robin sequence causes breathing and feeding difficulties.

Brenda Wood watched her newborn granddaughter Faith suffer with this condition, struggling to eat and unable to breathe when lying on her back.

“It was heartbreaking,” Brenda said of little Faith’s struggles.

Today, almost a year after her birth and surgery by Dr. Muzaffar in Columbia, Faith thrives.

“You wouldn’t even know she had the condition if you saw her today,” Brenda exclaimed. “She looks perfect.”

Soon, Brenda and Faith will make the nearly 340-mile round trip from their home in Iberia, Missouri, to Quincy so Dr. Muzaffar can repair Faith’s cleft palate.

“We would travel wherever we had to travel to see Dr. Muzaffar,” Brenda said. “That’s how much we think of him.”

Dr. Muzaffar is grateful for these strong and deep relationships and welcomes new pediatric patients and their families from everywhere and anywhere who are in need of reconstructive surgery for head and facial issues.

“Parents and guardians want their children cared for by a team who has done this for a long time and has demonstrated excellent results,” he concluded. ■

Dr. Muzaffar also provides plastic and reconstructive surgery for adults. Go to blessinghealth.org/plasticsurgery for more information on all the care he provides.



Meet one of Dr. Muzaffar’s newest patients

The Diehl family of Novinger, Missouri has put a lot of miles on their vehicle over the summer of 2022. It wasn’t a fancy vacation. The miles came from the three-hour round-trip from their home to see a Columbia, Missouri orthodontist. The orthodontist, **Dr. Darren Wittenberger**, is part of the team with whom Dr. Muzaffar works to meet the needs of pediatric patients. Dr. Wittenberger is preparing the Diehl’s youngest son, three-month-old Ezekiel (*seen in photo above*), for surgery by Dr. Muzaffar.

Dr. Wittenberger fitted Ezekiel, born with a cleft lip, with a special device to stretch the muscles of his mouth and face to prepare him for surgery that will take place before he is six months old. The orthodontist sees Ezekiel weekly to adjust the device so his muscles continue to stretch properly.

The Diehls are on the road a lot for Ezekiel’s care. In addition to traveling for orthodontic visits, the distance between Novinger, Missouri and Quincy, Illinois to see Dr. Muzaffar is more than 180 miles round-trip. But parents Rachel and Michael are confident in the skills of the surgeon they selected for their son’s care. Dr. Muzaffar was recommended by the Diehl’s pediatrician. Rachel and Michael also did their own research and were impressed with the doctor’s commitment to and experience with helping children with cleft lips and palates.

“I’m very optimistic,” Rachel said. “Dr. Muzaffar has made it so easy. He answers all of our questions. I feel extremely confident that Ezekiel’s first surgery will go really well.”

Ezekiel may need another surgery or two before he is 10 years old for minor refinements to his lip and nose. ■

Recognizing extraordinary care

Since the last issue of *Personal Blessing*, the following Blessing Hospital nurses and one Illini Community Hospital of Pittsfield nurse joined the ranks of international DAISY award winners for delivery of extraordinary care, based on the nominations submitted by patients and their loved ones.



Lexi Michl Orr, Women and Children Unit, was nominated by a patient.

"I was amazed by Lexi's ability to calm me down and help me to refocus as my labor intensified. As a registered nurse, I can honestly say I walked away from my experience at Blessing Hospital with Lexy as my nurse, with notes on how to improve myself as a nurse."



Ashley Bilgri, Cardiovascular Unit, was nominated by a patient.

"Ashley has a very bubbly personality and goes out of her way to give her patients exceptional care. Ashley made my hospital visit the best it could be."



Kristen Inman, 2 North, was nominated by a student nurse with whom she was working. *"Kristen was a great nurse, educator and role model."*

She showed compassion for the patients she cared for and for me."



Julia Sutter, GI Center, was nominated by a patient.

"I know I wasn't an easy case. My medications, health history and age only increased her workload. I can't remember when I have had such exceptional care. Julia left no stone unturned—everything was done with exactness and extreme care."



Tamara Scott, Inpatient Care Coordination, was nominated by a co-worker.

"Tamara is the glue that holds our unit together. She is fondly known as the 'Mother' of our unit. Tamara plans the day for the nurses and patients by notifying us of our potential transfers. She has stayed late to assist nurses and CNAs on the unit."



Josh Culp, Behavioral Medicine, was nominated by a patient.

"Mother's Day was my most difficult day here. Josh wanted to be at home, but he chose to work—the night I needed kindness the most. He saw me at my worst and had compassion for me. I will be forever grateful to Josh for taking the time to listen and understand. He was just being himself."



Morgan Sealock, Surgical Services, Illini Community Hospital, was nominated by the sister of a patient.

"My sister was very scared to have surgery. Morgan addressed my sister's anxiety just as much as she addressed her medical needs. My sister talked about the care that Morgan provided her and will never forget how much safer she made her feel."

Unless otherwise noted, the physicians listed below practice at Blessing in Quincy.



Arthur Ankeney, MD, is an emergency medicine physician. Dr. Ankeney earned his medical degree from the University of Kansas School of Medicine and completed residency at Prisma Health, Richland Emergency Medicine, Columbia, South Carolina. He is a native of Columbia, Missouri.



Misty Bowen, DO, is an immediate care provider at Hannibal Clinic. A graduate of the Kirksville College of Osteopathic Medicine, Dr. Bowen is board-certified in family medicine and following in the footsteps of her mother, a nurse. She began her journey working as a certified nurse assistant at the age of 14 and began medical school at the age of 33 and the mother to two children, to realize her dream.



Alborz Javadzadeh, MD, is a psychiatrist seeing patients at Illini Rural Health Clinic in Pittsfield. Dr. Javadzadeh completed a psychiatric residency at Southern Illinois University School of Medicine, Springfield, after earning his medical degree from Ross University School of Medicine in the West Indies.



Maggie Lamborn, MD, is a psychiatrist certified by the American Board of Psychiatry and Neurology. Dr. Lamborn earned her medical degree from the University of Kansas School of Medicine in Wichita. She completed her residency and a fellowship at the Maine Medical Center in Portland.



Dakota Lammy, MD, is a family medicine provider seeing patients at Illini Rural Health Clinic in Pittsfield. Born in Alton and raised in Calhoun County, Illinois, Dr. Lammy earned his medical degree from the University of Illinois College of Medicine, Rockford, and completed a three-year family medicine residency with Franciscan Health Indianapolis.



Brett McGowan, MD, is an obstetrician/gynecologist. Certified by the American Board of Obstetrics and Gynecology, Dr. McGowan earned his medical degree from the University of Rochester School of Medicine, Rochester, New York. A veteran, he completed residency at Madigan Army Medical Center, located on Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Lakewood, Washington. It is one of the largest military hospitals on the west coast.



Brittney Moore, PhD, LP, is a neuropsychologist. Neuropsychology focuses on the behavioral aspects of brain function, relating what the patient is experiencing behaviorally to how their brain is functioning, leading to diagnosis and treatment. A Quincy native, Dr. Moore earned her Doctor of Philosophy and Master of Arts in Psychology degrees from Ball State University, Muncie, Indiana.



Surya Polavarapu, MD, is a family medicine provider. Dr. Surya, as her patients call her, completed a family medicine residency with SIU Center for Family Medicine in Quincy. She earned degrees in medicine and surgery from GSL Medical College in India.



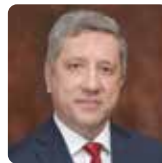
Christina Remmert, DO, is an internal medicine specialist at Hannibal Clinic. Certified by the American Board of Internal Medicine, Dr. Remmert earned her medical degree from Rocky Vista College of Osteopathic Medicine, Parker, Colorado. She earned her undergraduate degree in aerospace engineering and served as an intercontinental ballistic missile propulsion engineer in the Air Force. When Dr. Remmert completed her Air Force service, she joined the Army and became a doctor. After residency training, she spent four years on the medical staff of an Army hospital in Alaska, earning the rank of major.



Christopher Trammell, MD, is a psychiatrist. Certified by the American Board of Psychiatry and Neurology, Dr. Trammell earned his medical degree from and completed his residency at Southern Illinois University School of Medicine, Carbondale, Illinois. He is a native of southern Illinois.



Justo Gonzalez-Trapaga, MD, is a nephrologist (kidney specialist). He holds American Board of Internal Medicine certification in nephrology. Dr. Gonzalez completed two fellowships: one at the University of California in general nephrology and one at the University of Miami School of Medicine in interventional nephrology. He earned his medical degree from the University of Puerto Rico School of Medicine.



Oleg Yurevich, MD, is a cardiac electrophysiologist. Electrophysiology (EP) treats heart rhythm disorders. Certified by the American Board of Internal Medicine, with additional certification in cardiovascular disease, Dr. Yurevich completed an internal medicine residency and a general cardiology fellowship at SUNY Downstate Health Science University, Brooklyn, New York and a clinical cardiac electrophysiology fellowship at the University of Illinois at Chicago. Dr. Yurevich also completed a general surgery internship at Nassau University Medical Center, East Meadow, New York and an internal medicine internship at Brookdale University Hospital Medical Center, Brooklyn, New York. He earned his medical degree from Belarusian State Medical University in Belarus.

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