

A publication of
B *BLESSING*
Health System

Personal BLESSING

OUR PATIENTS. THEIR STORIES.

FALL/WINTER 2023



MEET GIANNA

and find out how a special Blessing Health team is playing a role in her future

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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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Delivering the exceptional care you expect and deserve

By Brian Canfield, President/Chief Executive Officer,
Blessing Health



Welcome to this issue of *PERSONAL BLESSING*. It is an honor and privilege to be on the team working to fulfill the health system mission to improve the health of our communities and strive to meet our vision—to be exceptional.

The Blessing Health team is proud to bring you and your loved ones quality care and compassionate service every day, night, weekend and holiday. Following are a few examples of the nationally recognized care available:

This past spring, for the sixth consecutive survey period, the independent national health care watchdog organization Leapfrog gave Blessing Hospital a grade of “A” for patient safety. It is the only hospital ratings program based exclusively on hospital prevention of medical errors and patient harm. Typically, only one-third of hospitals surveyed receive an “A” grade.

The grading system is based on over 30 performance measures reflecting errors, injuries, accidents, infections and the systems hospitals have in place to prevent harm.

U.S. News & World Report, known for its annual hospital ratings and rankings, has named Blessing Hospital as a 2023-2024 High Performing Hospital in the following care areas:

- Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD)
- Colon cancer surgery
- Diabetes
- Heart attack
- Heart failure
- Stroke

This is the fifth year Blessing Hospital has been recognized as a High Performing Hospital, the highest recognition in *U.S. News & World Report's* annual Procedural & Conditions rankings. The recognition reflects delivery of care determined to be significantly better than the national average, as measured by factors such as patient outcomes and patient experience.

Fewer than half of the 4,500 hospitals evaluated across 15 specialties and 20 procedures and conditions received a High Performing rating.

The American Heart Association recognized Blessing Hospital among the nation's leading providers of stroke care. For the third consecutive year, the hospital earned the AHA's Get With the Guidelines Gold-level recognition for meeting or exceeding national core standard levels of care in the treatment of stroke patients for two consecutive calendar years or more.

Please enjoy the stories on the following pages reflecting the nationally recognized level of care delivered by your Blessing Health team. ■

Lymphe-what?

One woman's story of a side effect of breast cancer

Being diagnosed with breast cancer was a shock, and surviving it has been brutal for **April Folweiler** of New London, Missouri. She remains positive and is managing her condition with the help of the Blessing Breast Center team.

"I was at my yearly check-up, and my doctor suggested I get a mammogram," the 43-year-old wife, mother and grandmother recalled. "I wondered if I was old enough because I thought the age was 50."

For women at a normal risk level for breast cancer, a baseline mammogram is recommended between the ages of 35 to 40. If no concerns are identified at that time, a woman should have a mammogram every year starting at age 40, in consultation with their primary care provider.

"He told me I was old enough and might as well get it done that day," April continued. "I had the mammogram. The next day I got a call that I needed to come back."

April would be diagnosed with breast cancer that had spread to other parts of her body. She underwent a double mastectomy, the removal of 12 lymph nodes, radiation therapy, chemotherapy, immunotherapy and a total hysterectomy to lower the level of the type of hormone in her body on which the cancer was feeding, growing and spreading.

Fate wasn't through with April. A year out from her surgery, she showed signs of lymphedema, a condition

that affects 1 in 3 at-risk cancer patients.

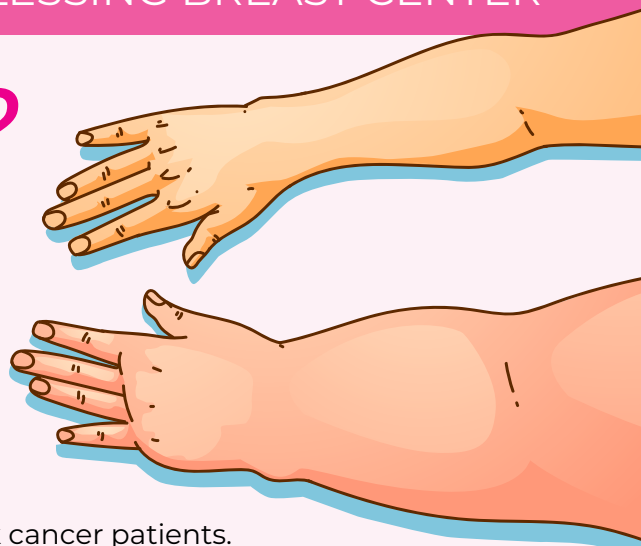
"That never crossed my mind," April said. "I really didn't know anything about it. I had seen people who had the sleeve but I didn't know what it was for."

The sleeve to which April refers is a compression sleeve for lymphedema. In breast cancer patients, lymphedema commonly affects one or both arms by retaining fluid and swelling greatly in size. The sleeve helps reduce the symptoms by moving accumulated fluids away from the affected area. April would become very familiar with and grateful for the compression sleeve.

What causes lymphedema?

Lymph nodes are part of the body's lymphatic system that carry fluid from tissues back to the bloodstream. The lymphatic system can also spread cancer cells through the body. When surgeons remove cancer from where it started, they often remove nearby lymph nodes too, either for biopsy, to make sure they do not contain cancer, or to reduce the risk of the cancer returning.

When lymph nodes are removed, as were 12 of April's, it can leave the affected area without a way to drain off fluid, because lymph vessels run into a dead end where the node used to be, causing fluid to collect in an extremity. And that is lymphedema. [Continued on next page.](#)



"A breast cancer survivor's arm can get very big and swollen due to lymphedema," said **Jessica Nuebel, BSN, RNC-OB**, nationally accredited patient navigator, Blessing Cancer Center. "It's disfiguring and can be embarrassing for body image."

How the Blessing Breast Center detects lymphedema

For many years using a tape measure to determine the size of a person's extremities and detect lymphedema was the gold standard across the country. But there is an element of human error in this process. Not every time is the tape measure going to be placed in the exact same spot for re-measurement.

The Blessing Breast Center replaced the tape measure with technology called SOZO® to detect lymphedema. The SOZO® machine looks like a high-tech bathroom scale, but instead of weight, it measures the body's fluid and tissue status over time to help identify lymphedema earlier in the disease process when it can be successfully treated and possibly reversed.

Patient's whose cancer treatment qualifies for SOZO® scanning, as did April's, receive their first scan before treatment begins, before the lymphatic system would have an interruption in its drainage. This provides a baseline fluid and tissue measurement. Following scans look for changes in the baseline measurement. The patient is screened every three months for the first three years,

then every six months for up to two years, and then annually thereafter.

April meets and deals with another challenge

After a year of SOZO® testing, April's reading suddenly shot up. She was not too surprised as she had been having pain in one of her arms.

"I'm thinking, 'Here we go! I am going to have that big arm,'" April said.

Jessica calmed April's fears, telling her Blessing offered therapies for lymphedema. They started with the least invasive, a trip to Denman Medical Equipment and Supply to purchase a compression sleeve. Jessica told her to wear the sleeve every day for one month, removing it only to sleep.

April did that. Her next SOZO® reading fell by nearly 83%.

"I was like, 'Are you kidding me? How in the world did it go down so fast,'" April exclaimed.

"A lot of people think, 'Oh my gosh, I don't want to wear that sleeve,'" she continued. "I thought it was going to be the most uncomfortable thing ever. It didn't bother me a bit. That sleeve is like a lifesaver. It works magic."

Blessing also offers physical therapy for patients with lymphedema. Whichever treatment is appropriate, the magic begins with SOZO® scanning at the Blessing Breast Center.

"I can't imagine how painful it would have been had it got out of control," April said. "Now, I have no pain. My arm feels absolutely normal again." ■



SOZO® (pictured above) is capable of detecting excess fluid at a level where lymphedema is still reversible.



For more information about SOZO® scanning, scan this code or go to **blessinghealth.org/sozo**

BLESSING HEALTH HANNIBAL CANCER PATIENTS HAVE A NEW CARE HOME



Blessing Health Hannibal has provided cancer care to northeast Missouri residents for 20 years, most recently from leased space in an off-campus facility. With rearrangement of departments inside the main Blessing Health Hannibal building, space opened and was renovated into an on-site cancer center.



Members of the Blessing Cancer Center Hannibal care team

Dr. Arif Bari in the new 18-bay chemotherapy and infusion area

“We are committed to our tradition of the past 20 years, providing exceptional care to our patients.”

In addition to Dr. Bari, the care team includes Blessing Health medical oncologist **Dr. M. Ishaq Memon**, and **Amanda Jennings, FNP-BC**, who collaborates with the physicians to provide care and chemotherapy education. The team also includes chemotherapy certified registered nurses, patient navigators, dietitian services, a licensed clinical social worker, a clinical research team and clinical office staff.

Blessing’s cancer program is recognized by the American College of Surgeons Commission on Cancer as a Comprehensive Community Cancer Program (CCCP). This recognition means the program meets or exceeds the highest, most rigorous criteria for cancer centers in the country. ■

The opening of the Blessing Cancer Center Hannibal in September eliminated having to lease space and offers a number of other benefits, including enhanced patient privacy, greater comfort and climate control for those in the infusion area. The new center also has the space to offer additional services such as palliative care, dietitian services and care coordination.

The Center includes eight examination rooms, an 18-bay chemotherapy/infusion area and a lab draw area for the center’s patients. It also situates cancer patients inside the Blessing Health Hannibal main building, where they have convenient access to other providers and health care services they use.

“It is an excellent facility,” said board-certified medical oncologist, **Arif Bari, MD**, of the Blessing Cancer Center Hannibal. Dr. Bari has cared for Blessing Health Hannibal cancer patients for 20 years. “It is brand new, with the most modern equipment in a patient-friendly environment.”

Dr. Bari said care is provided by the team patients have come to know.

For more information on Blessing Health’s cancer services, go to blessinghealth.org/cancer



Retail pharmacy coming soon!

A retail pharmacy will open by the end of the year inside Blessing Health Hannibal to benefit all patients. The pharmacy will allow patients to pick up medications prescribed during their appointments before leaving the building. The goal is for the increased convenience to encourage patients to fill their prescriptions. National statistics show as many as 30% of medication prescriptions are never filled. The Blessing Health Hannibal Retail Pharmacy will offer market-based pricing and accept all insurances after an initial contracting period. It will be open Monday – Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.



Gianna is on the right path thanks to the love and care of her parents and her Blessing Health team.

FACING A MOTHER'S WORST FEAR WITH A STRONG WILL AND GREAT TEAM

Grandparents. Aunts and uncles. Friends of the family. Newborns get many visitors. But **Gianna Capaccioli's** parents were surprised by one person who came to their hospital room in the hours after their daughter's birth—**Arshad R. Muzaffar, MD, FACS, FAAP**, Blessing Health's board-certified plastic and reconstructive surgeon. He was referred to the family by Gianna's board-certified pediatrician, **Dr. Pierre Raad** of Blessing Health.

"Dr. Muzaffar really wanted us not to panic about everything, and to know that we were in good hands with him," said Gianna's mother, **Natasha Miller**.

Gianna was born with a cleft palate.

What is a cleft palate?

The palate is the roof of the mouth. A cleft palate happens if the tissue making up that area does not join together completely during pregnancy. In Gianna's case, she had a cleft soft palate. That is the back, non-bony, muscular part of the roof of the mouth. It is essential for talking, eating and breathing.

Complications can include difficulties feeding and with speech development, ear infections and related hearing problems and dental issues.

The Centers for Disease Control reports that about 1 in every 1,700 babies is born with a cleft palate in the United States.

Surgery can reduce a child's chances for cleft palate complications. Dr. Muzaffar received training in cleft lip and palate repair, in addition to other pediatric reconstructive surgical needs, during his fellowship at the University of Washington and Seattle Children's Hospital.

But most new parents are not prepared.

"It was a really big shock," Natasha said of being told her daughter had a cleft palate. "A mother's worst fear is her baby having surgery. We figured we'd have to go to St. Louis or Columbia, somewhere bigger for the care. But Dr. Muzaffar made us feel comfortable. We were very thankful we did not have to travel."

"That was a big thing for us, to make sure she was taken care of the best she could be," added Gianna's father, **Kyle Capaccioli**.

It takes a team

In addition to his exceptional education, training and skill, Dr. Muzaffar formed an equally talented team who join him in the care of his young patients, like Gianna. In addition to the doctor,

members of the Blessing Health Craniofacial Anomalies Clinic include **Darren Wittenberger, DDS**, orthodontist; **Gale Rice**, speech language pathologist and **Jennifer Hermann, RN**, plastic surgery coordinator.

“Members of this team have been doing cleft care for many, many years,” the doctor said. “Parents and guardians want their children cared for by a team who has done this for a long time and has demonstrated excellent results.”

Gianna does her part

Dr. Muzaffar saw Gianna regularly for the first nine months of her life and was able to perform surgery to repair her palate in September 2022. At that time, Gianna also received ear tubes to reduce her risk of hearing complications from board-certified ear, nose and throat specialist, Dr. Mark Mount of Blessing Health.

“At this point, we wait for Gianna to develop

enough speech for us to determine whether she will have any problems with the function of her soft palate and throat in speech,” explained Dr. Muzaffar. “Additional surgery is needed in a small percentage of patients to correct speech.”

Blessing Health Craniofacial Anomalies Clinic team members will follow Gianna, as they do all their young patients, until she has finished growing to ensure all medical needs related to her formerly cleft palate are met.

In the meantime, Gianna is enjoying life with her mom, dad, two brothers, nine cats, four dogs and a hamster.

“She’s been doing phenomenally well, clearing every hurdle in leaps and bounds,” Natasha said.

“I knew if she was going to be like me, this was just a tiny little speed bump she would get over,” Kyle concluded. “She’s like me – very hard-headed, stubborn and strong-willed.” ■



Dr. Muzaffar also provides plastic and reconstructive surgery for adults. Scan this code or go to blessinghealth.org/plasticsurgery for more information on all care available.

MICRONEEDLING

Microneedling is an in-office treatment that uses a multi-needle tip to produce controlled inductions of the skin. This results in activating the skin’s self-repair mechanism by creating micro injuries to the skin, which trigger new collagen syntheses however not imposing the risk of permanent scarring. The result is smoother, finer, and younger looking skin! Microneedling can be used for:

- Acne scars
- Fine lines and wrinkles
- Large pores
- Age spots
- Uneven skin tones
- Skin laxity
- Stretch marks
- Scars



After Care Treatment Kit



Before Treatment



Immediately After Treatment



1 Week After Treatment

Helping people rediscover joy their “never-ever-in-a-million-

While they do not know each other, **Ashley Cawthon** and **Meredith Humphrey** share a significant bond aside from the fact that they are both proud Blessing Health employees; both women wanted to change their lives, and the nationally accredited Blessing Bariatric Center helped them do just that in slightly different ways.

Ashley's story

Ashley wrestled with weight issues for 18 years. Dieting and exercise did not help. Eventually, she reached 378 pounds.

“I didn’t like the person that I saw in the mirror,” the mother of two said. “I didn’t love myself. I didn’t get to enjoy doing things with my children because my weight did not allow me to.”

“I wanted to be healthy, and I wanted to be able to be active for my kids, and I wanted to be able to look into the mirror every day and love myself.”

To change her life, Ashley underwent a vertical sleeve gastrectomy (VSG) in November 2021. VSG is a procedure during which the size of the stomach is reduced and

safely limits the amount of food a person can eat.

“I told myself I wanted to lose 200 pounds,” she said. “I never, ever in a million years thought I would do it. But on July 12, 2023, I weighed 177.8 pounds. I did it. I am so incredibly proud of myself. It has been a very long journey but it has been worth every single bit of it.”

The Blessing Bariatric Center provides three surgical procedures. Each is explained on the Blessing Health website. Surgery is not always required in the treatment plan for obese patients. However, once a patient has reached a certain weight—typically 100 pounds overweight—surgery can be the only treatment that works long term.

“The care I received at the Blessing Bariatric Institute was fabulous,” Ashley said. “Every single person I encountered was an exceptional advocate, people who support you during your journey.”

“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,” said **Fernando Bonanni, Jr., MD, MBA, FACS, FASMBS**, board-certified bariatric surgeon and medical director of the Blessing Bariatric Institute. “Patients find the Blessing Bariatric Institute is committed to helping them succeed.”



The Blessing Bariatric Institute also offers surgical weight loss procedures. For more information on the care team and all the services they provide, scan the code or go to blessinghealth.org/bariatric

by reaching years” dream

The American Medical Association recognized obesity as a disease process in 2013, a major contributor to diabetes, heart disease, stroke and kidney disease.

Meredith's story

Meredith Humphrey experienced a realization similar to Ashley's.

“When you look in the mirror, and you are disgusted with what you see, it's time for a change,” Meredith said. “It got to the point where I was at my heaviest—252 pounds—and realized I needed help.”

Help came from the Blessing Bariatric Institute's Medically-Managed Weight Loss program.

“I was hopeful that it would work,” she said. “I knew a lot of diets fall by the wayside. The thing with this is, it is not a diet. It's a program in which you have the support of your provider team. You are not alone.”

“I have some patients who want a medication that will magically fix the problem,” said **Veronica Roth Phillips, APRN-FNP**, the program's bariatric nurse practitioner. “We live in that type of society. We want instant results.”

“Our team advises against extreme measures,” she continued. “Because over the long term, when a diet is too restrictive, people tend to regain weight lost. Our program takes time, and sometimes medical adjustments. You have to switch things up as your body adapts. It's constant reassessment.”

With the help of individually selected medications – that can either manage hunger,

address cravings, or both—and carefully crafted goals, the Medically-Managed Weight Loss team of a nurse practitioner, dietitian and counselor help people discover what success in weight loss means to them.

“Success is personal,” Veronica said. “We are trying to help people reach the healthiest version of themselves that they can be. If you continue to do that, you are a success, whether the scale goes up or down, continuing to work on your health is success.”

Meredith's weight loss journey was not a straight line. It was more like a zig-zag, as she and her Medically-Managed Weight Loss team worked to find the right combination of medications to address her eating habits, and then adjusted medications as Meredith's body responded to her treatment plan.

Between February 2021 and the end of March 2023, Meredith lost 104 pounds.

“I really noticed a change in energy and confidence,” she said as a result of shedding her excess weight. “I have more confidence now than I have had in a long time. I feel good about myself. I feel better when I look in the mirror, I hold up clothes and I think, ‘That looks really small.’ But then it fits. That brings a happiness, a joy that I was missing,” Meredith said. ■



It seems like everyone loves **Tammy Haggerty**. A member of the Blessing Hospital Food & Nutrition team, she staffs the cafeteria cash register with quick fingers, an even quicker smile and a heartfelt welcome for everyone. Her customers say Tammy has a “contagiously positive attitude,” “beautiful smile,” is a giver of “great hugs,” and someone that “makes every day a little brighter.”

Looks can be deceiving. Underneath the smile, Tammy wanted to die.

“I didn’t want to get up,” she said. “I just wanted to be gone. I felt lost, like no one cared. I hid it very well.”

The roots of Tammy’s pain reached back to her childhood, one filled with abuse and terror, including witnessing a suicide attempt by her father. He eventually took his own life.

Due to issues flaring up in her life recently, the agony of her childhood flooded back into Tammy’s memory, leading to depression and anxiety – but also to a commitment to get help and to live.

“I have two daughters and two grandsons. Because of what my dad did, I promised I would never do anything like that. I would never want to put them through what I went through.”

She found help and hope through the Blessing Empowerment Self Transformation Center, or B.E.S.T. Self Center.

About the Center

In medical terms, the B.E.S.T. Self Center offers partial hospitalization and intensive outpatient programs, known as PHP and IOP services. In more common terms, the Center offers care more comprehensive than an outpatient office visit, but less intensive than inpatient behavioral health care.

Patients of the B.E.S.T. Self Center meet with a team of behavioral therapists, nurses, a nurse practitioner, medical director, caseworkers and occupational therapists. Care includes individual and group therapy, mindfulness, enrichment and medication management. Patients receive treatment for four to six hours a day, two to five days a week, Monday through Friday, and go home at night.

Those treated could include patients with depression, anxiety and other conditions that impact their daily living.

The B.E.S.T. Self Center opened at Blessing Hospital in May 2021.

“It has blown away all of my expectations,” said the Center’s attending provider, Olivia Patterson, APRN-PMHNP (psychiatric mental health nurse practitioner). “We’ve tripled in size, and we hear so many amazing stories when patients graduate from the program.”

“We are open, warm, inviting and nonjudgmental,” she continued. “We want everyone to feel comfortable coming into the program, knowing that we are here for their best interest and

that behavioral conditions are just as important as any other medical condition in life.”

How the B.E.S.T. Self Center helped Tammy

By learning coping skills and making them part of her everyday life, and talking with others in group therapy, life changed for Tammy.

“They gave me a voice,” she said of her experience in group therapy. “They give you strength. They don’t judge you. The greatest program ever.”

B.E.S.T. Self Center patients must be 18 years or older. Referrals to the B.E.S.T. Self Center can be made by any physician, health care professional, social service agency, family member or by the person who needs care. ■



Scan the code for more information on the B.E.S.T. Self Center, or go to blessinghealth.org/bestselfcenter

Area residents in need of magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) and their health care providers now have a new option for this body-scanning technology that helps to diagnose illness and injury. Blessing Health has received a new 3T MRI.

MRI uses magnets and radio waves instead of radiation to create images of structures inside the body including the brain, spine, soft tissue of joints, musculoskeletal and small bones and the vascular system.

Blessing's 3T MRI technology offers speed, improved patient comfort and experience, as well as energy efficiency.

Speed

The "T" in the name stands for Tesla, a unit of measurement used to denote the strength of the magnetic field used to capture the image. With a magnetic field strength that is twice as powerful as conventional 1.5T MRI systems, 3T MRI provides extremely clear and vivid images during a shorter scanning time for patients.

Using 3T MRI imaging, Blessing captures images of smaller organs such as the prostate, that were previously unable to be imaged as clearly.

"Prostate cancer is among the top five cancers diagnosed and treated at Blessing Health," said **David Lieber, MD**, board-certified urologist, Blessing Health. "Having this convenient access to 3T MRI technology gives the Blessing urology team the information needed to develop the patient's treatment plan and implement that plan as quickly as possible."

The addition of the 3T MRI brings the number of MRIs available within the Blessing Health system to five, enhancing patient and provider access to care. The other four units are 1.5T technology.

*For MRIs
and anxiety,
there's a need
for SPEED*

"Not all MRI examinations require 3T technology," said **Christopher Solaro, MD, PhD, CPE**, chief medical officer, Blessing Health.

"In many situations, a 1.5T MRI scan is preferred. Having both 1.5 and 3T options available allows patients to undergo the type of testing their provider needs to make a diagnosis without having to leave the community."

Patient comfort and experience

Blessing's 3T MRI is a "wide bore."

That means the opening through which a patient passes during the imaging process is larger, and patients can be scanned in the feet-first position rather than head-first only. Both the size of the opening and patient positioning can help reduce anxiety during an MRI scan.

The coils required to be placed on a patient's body that emit the signal to the MRI to produce the image, are a new technology called "Air Coils." They are inside a blanket that lies across the patient, rather than being attached to the patient's body. Air coil technology increases comfort and helps deliver a better image.

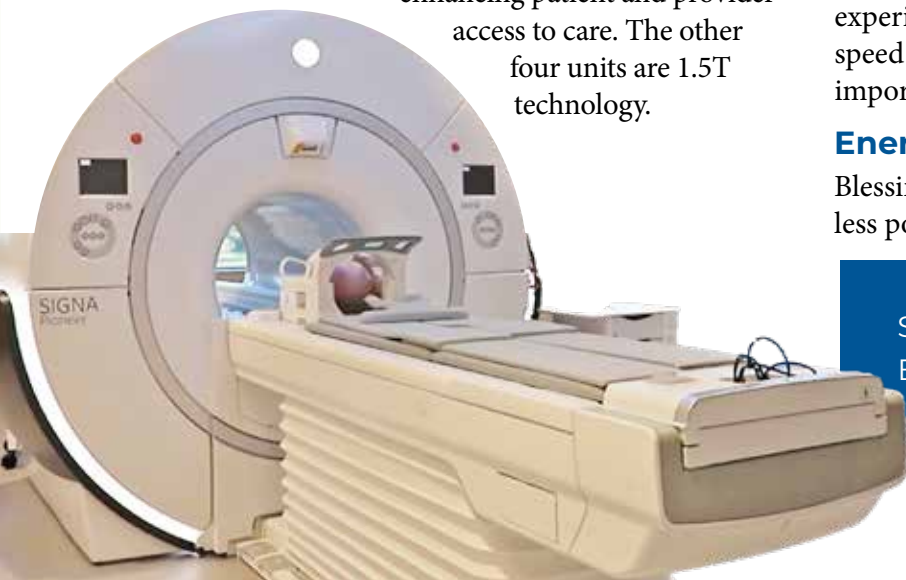
The table on which patients lie during imaging sits lower to the ground, making it easier for patients to get on and off.

The room housing the MRI features floor-to-ceiling windows contributing to a more natural environment, and its design features the latest advances in MRI safety.

"Any person who has had an MRI and felt some anxiety will know how important these comfort measures are to an exceptional patient experience," said **Britni Skirvin, MBA**, administrative director, Ancillary Services, Blessing Health. "The patient comfort and experience available with this system, in addition to the speed of scanning and quality of the images, makes it an important addition to Blessing and the region."

Energy efficiency

Blessing's 3T MRI is designed to use approximately 50% less power than conventional designs. ■



Scan the code for more on
Blessing's MRI imaging services



New procedure is like a breath of fresh air for this grandmother

A minimally invasive lung procedure performed at Blessing Hospital, called BLVR, has given a 70-year-old grandmother her quality of life back.

Nancy Knight used to be easy to find.

“For three years, I stayed at home. I was not able to go to any of my grandkids’ events. I have granddaughters who play soccer and are on the swim team. And when the family went to my grandson’s baseball games, which I love to attend, I could not go with them. I did not have enough energy to walk from the parking lot to the baseball diamond.”

Decades of smoking damaged the 70-year-old Pittsfield resident and Illini Community Hospital employee’s lungs, causing severe COPD/emphysema. The disease restricts the ability to obtain oxygen, thereby reducing oxygen flow in the blood. Low blood oxygen levels damage tissues and organs, including the heart and brain, over time.

Nancy began smoking in high school. While she quit in her 60s, the damage was done. Nancy struggled for every breath. For years she used an oxygen tank around the clock every day.

“Going from one room to another took my breath away. I could hardly do it,” she recalls.

After years of being tied to an oxygen tank, Nancy had enough. She took to the internet to research treatment options. That is where Nancy learned about the Bronchoscopic Lung Volume Reduction (BLVR) procedure.

How BLVR helps

BLVR is a minimally invasive option compared to the incisions and cutting required with traditional



Nancy Knight is again able to enjoy attending the baseball games of grandson Zayn Knight



Umama Adil, MD

lung volume reduction surgery in the treatment of the symptoms of COPD. COPD cannot be cured, but its life-limiting and life-threatening symptoms can be reduced with BLVR.

For patients who qualify, based on their anatomy and level of inability to expel air from their lungs, one-way valves are placed in the diseased parts of the lung, allowing the healthier parts of the lung to function better. The valves are placed using a machine called a bronchoscope, usually inserted through the nose or mouth. The procedure typically takes under an hour.

Blessing Health board-certified, fellowship-trained pulmonologist, **Umama Adil, MD**, performs the BLVR procedure.

“BLVR can significantly improve breathing and quality of life for most patients who suffer with a high level of air trapped in their lungs due to COPD,” she said. “For these patients the procedure is now the recognized gold standard of care for COPD.”

Where’s Nancy?

Since February 20, 2023, it’s been a bit harder to track down Nancy. Dr. Adil placed three valves in Nancy’s right lung through BLVR, and her life changed. She was again able to attend her grandchildren’s sporting events.

“The two key measures of the intensity of Nancy’s COPD symptoms have improved—she can expel more air and that leads to less air trapped in the lungs,” Dr. Adil concluded. “BLVR has reduced the severity of Nancy’s symptoms. That was our goal.”

“My experience has been good,” she said. “I am not off oxygen completely. But I can honestly say that I don’t get that shortness of breath that I used to get.”

By early next year, Nancy will be eligible to have the BLVR procedure on her left lung. She looks forward to it, and to breathing even easier. ■



Scan the code for more information, or go to [blessinghealth.org/blvr](https://www.blessinghealth.org/blvr)



Innovative lung technology takes center stage at Blessing Hospital

Patients undergoing a lung biopsy for possible cancer at Blessing Hospital are benefitting from the latest technological advancement.

Blessing is the only hospital in the region offering the Ion robotic-assisted bronchoscopy system, made by the same company that developed the renowned da Vinci robotic surgery system.

Before an Ion lung biopsy begins, a 3D map of the patient's lungs is created using a CT scan. Using that map, the Ion software generates the safest and most efficient route through the lung to the nodule or mass. No matter where the nodule or mass is in the lung, the Ion makes reaching it easier than has been possible previously, through the use of an ultra-thin catheter that can reach all 18 segments of the lung and move 180 degrees in all directions.

"Ion represents an advancement in the existing approaches to lung biopsy by enabling us to obtain tissue samples from deep within the lung, addressing a challenging aspect of lung biopsy," said **Nanjappa Somanna, MD**, board-certified and fellowship-trained pulmonologist, Blessing Health. "This increases the chances the patient can receive a clear diagnosis and begin treatment more quickly, if needed, by decreasing the need for additional biopsies."

When a lung cancer diagnosis can be made in the earliest stages of the disease, the average 5-year survival rate is 92%. Lung cancer is the leading cancer diagnosed and treated at Blessing Hospital.

When a lung cancer diagnosis can be made in the earliest stages of the disease, the average 5-year survival rate is 92%

Once at the location of the nodule or mass to be biopsied, the Ion system's catheter locks in place for precise placement of biopsy tools.

"In addition to providing greater reach into the lung, the Ion system provides greater stability during the biopsy process than any other alternative available today, and allows us to know exactly where the catheter is in the patient's

lungs at all times," said **Umama Adil, MD**, board-certified and fellowship-trained pulmonologist, Blessing Health.

In addition to Drs. Adil and Somanna, Quincy Medical Group physicians and Blessing Hospital Medical Staff members **Drs. Elie Chbeir and Miguel Pardinias** use the Ion robotic-assisted bronchoscopy system at Blessing Hospital. ■

Scan this code for more on the Ion system or go to blessinghealth.org/robotics



Recognizing extraordinary care

Since the last issue of *Personal Blessing*, the following Blessing registered nurses joined the ranks of international DAISY award winners for delivery of extraordinary care, based on the nominations submitted by patients and their loved ones. The nurses work at Blessing Hospital unless otherwise indicated:



Katelin Robertson, Inpatient Care Coordination, was nominated by the daughter of a patient for arranging a visit between the woman's father and his longtime love, who also happened to be a patient at Blessing and who he had not seen in more than a year as they live in different long-term care facilities. *"Not only did she get the visit arranged, she stayed after her shift was over to accompany us. I guess the hospital is named Blessing for a very good reason."*

Tana Logue, Intensive Care Unit, was nominated by the daughter of a patient who was suffering from double pneumonia, a blockage in her left kidney, atrial fibrillation (an irregular heartbeat) and sepsis (a potentially fatal infection). *"Tana barely left my mom's side. She was there to care for her and save her life. Tana cared for my mom as if she was her own family member."*



Cassie King, Outpatient Care Coordinator, was nominated by a cancer patient for whom she helped arrange care. *"Thank you for replacing my overwhelmed feeling with that of confidence in the future. Thank you for helping to save my life."*

Phil Renner, Illini Community Hospital Emergency Room, Pittsfield, received two nominations, including one from the mother of a young patient. *"Phil was continuously attentive to our needs. He showed much compassion to my daughter and also to my husband and me."*



Kalli Goewey, Progressive Care Unit, was recognized for the high-quality medical and exceptional supportive care she delivered to a terminally ill patient with cancer who was experiencing pain. *"Kalli is one of the most genuine and compassionate nurses I know. She stayed with that patient the entire time, held his hand, and reassured him in such a kind and loving way."*

Robin Litt, Labor and Delivery, was nominated by a patient she cared for. *"Robin held me while I cried and didn't leave until I was doing better. It is a moment that I will cherish forever."*



Meredith Hyer, Centralized Staffing, was nominated by a doctor for her assistance in facilitating communication with a family regarding an urgent decision on a surgical procedure. *"She called me on her personal phone to talk to the family so a decision could be made whether or not to go forward with surgery. After speaking with the family, the decision was for surgery. Meredith was very proactive to go ahead and get a consent for surgery at that time."*

**Catherine Baker, MD**

Dr. Baker has joined family medicine. The Quincy native earned her medical degree from Southern Illinois University School of Medicine Springfield and completed her residency at Mercy Hospital in St. Louis, Missouri.

Dr. Baker's areas of medical interest include obesity medicine and weight management and women's and rural health.

Welcome

**Gregory Krivonyak, MD**

Dr. Krivonyak has joined occupational medicine. He earned his medical degree from Joan C. Edwards School of Medicine, Marshall University, Huntington, West Virginia and holds a Master of Science in Public

Health from University of South Florida, College of Public Health, in Tampa, Florida.

Dr. Krivonyak completed his internship and residency at the University of South Florida.

His areas of medical interest include sleep medicine.

**Thejeswi Pujar, MD, MBA**

Dr. Pujar has joined the department of nephrology (kidney care). He earned his medical degree from Rajiv Gandhi University in India, and Master of Business Administration degree from Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis, in Indiana.

Dr. Pujar completed his residency in internal medicine at Kern Medical Center, in Bakersfield, California, where he was Chief Resident.

His areas of medical interest include hypertension and kidney stones, chronic kidney disease and end stage renal disease.

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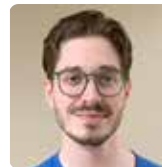
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STAFF



Sarah Buck, BSN, RN, and **Scott Uhlott, RN** (*not pictured*) each earned certified emergency nurse (CEN) status from the Board of Certification for Emergency Nursing. Both Buck and Uhlott are also certified trauma nurse specialists (TNSs).



Taylor Ramey and **Lincoln Smith, LPNs**, Non-Invasive Cardiology, passed the national examination and are registered cardiac sonographers (RCSs).



Ashley Chbeir, BSN, Clinical Research Coordinator-RN, has earned the status of certified clinical research professional (CCRP). Clinical research professionals are responsible for the planning, coordination and management of clinical trials and other research projects that result in products of therapeutic value for the benefit of patients.



Olivia Rabe, registered cardiovascular specialist assistant on Blessing's Cardiac Catheterization team, earned national certification as a registered cardiovascular invasive specialist (RCIS). With the certification, Rabe is qualified to assist cardiologists with cardiac catheterization procedures.



Michelle D. Combs, PhD, MB(ASCP)cm, laboratory manager, Rivercross Diagnostics, received a Career Ambassador Award from the American Society of Clinical Pathology for helping young people understand and appreciate the medical laboratory's role in patient care and inspiring them to pursue a career in the medical laboratory and pathology fields.



Reggie Suhling, manager, Cardiac Catheterization and Electrophysiology Labs, earned national certification of registered cardiac electrophysiology specialist (RCES). With the certification, Suhling is qualified to perform diagnostic and therapeutic studies of the heart and assist doctors in the electrophysiology lab by performing preprocedural, intraprocedural and postprocedural activities.



Justin Hale was promoted to vice president of finance for Blessing Health. He joined Blessing in November 2003 and has held various leadership positions.



Melinda Thompson, BSN, RN, Blessing Hospice, earned certified hospice & palliative care nurse (CHPN) status. Fewer than 1% of the nation's nearly 1.6 million hospice registered nurses currently employed hold certification.

PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

Blessing-Rieman College of Nursing & Health Sciences is the first Bachelor of Science nursing program in the county to offer students the LPN Ladder Option. It allows them to be eligible to take the practical nursing licensure exam after completion of their junior year and an additional summer bridge course. It benefits their earning potential while in school and enhances their clinical experience and assists with workforce needs in the region.

Blessing Hospital's Cardiac Rehabilitation program has earned three-year accreditation from the American Association of Cardiovascular and Pulmonary Rehabilitation (AACVPR).

Blessing Hospice has advanced to a Level 3 Partner in the "We Honor Veterans" program of the National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization in collaboration with the Department of Veterans Affairs. We Honor Veterans provides tiered recognition to organizations, known as partners, that demonstrate a systematic commitment to improving end-of-life care for veterans by integrating best practices from around the country.

The Blessing Hospital Laboratory has earned re-accreditation from the College of American Pathologists (CAP). Blessing has been CAP accredited since 1980. Accreditation ensures the highest standard of care for all laboratory patients. The Blessing Hospital Laboratory team performs over 3 million tests a year.

Imaging services

Magnetic resonance imaging and computed tomography available at the Blessing Health Center 4800 Maine, Quincy; computed tomography, magnetic resonance imaging, nuclear medicine, positron emission tomography, mammography and ultrasound imaging at Blessing Health Hannibal, Missouri; and mammography at Illini Community Hospital, Pittsfield, Illinois, have been awarded accreditation review by the American College of Radiology (ACR) for meeting or exceeding national image quality standards and patient safety.

The Blessing Health Hannibal Sleep Disorders Center recently received program accreditation from the American Academy of Sleep Medicine (AASM).

Programs, services and new technology featured in this issue of Personal Blessing are made possible in part by donations to Blessing Hospital and the Blessing Foundation. The Giving Society is an honor roll of those showing love through charitable giving of \$100 and above. Gifts below were received for the following services: 4th Floor Pediatrics, Behavioral Health Services, Blessed Beginnings, Blessed Beginnings Karter K Fund, Blessing Employee Crisis Fund, Blessing Hospice, Blessing Hospice - Pike County, Blessing Hospital, Blessing Nurses Alumni Association Scholarship, Blessing-Rieman College of Nursing & Health Sciences General Endowment, Breast Services, Cancer Center & Radiation Services, Caring Club Fund, Critical Care Fund PCU-IMC/ICU, Diabetes Patient Care Fund, EMS Office, Hannibal Clinic Medical Oncology, Health Sciences Programs Crisis & Scholarship Fund, Heart & Vascular Center, Illini - Child Care, Illini - Oncology Department, Laretta M. Eno Early Learning Center, Nurse Education Fund, Rehabilitation Services, Respiratory Services, Ten Year Plus Club, Teresa Adams House, Teresa Adams House Building Fund, Blessing Foundation Unrestricted Fund.

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