

HealthLINK

WINTER 2022

YOUR CONNECTION TO HEALTH & WELLNESS

A COVID-19 ODYSSEY

VALLEY HEALTH'S EXPERT CARE TEAM HELPED
PATIENT JON HOF COME BACK FROM THE BRINK

INSIDE:

The facts on COVID boosters and vaccines. / All about anesthesia. / Advanced care for COPD. / 2021 Community Benefit Report.

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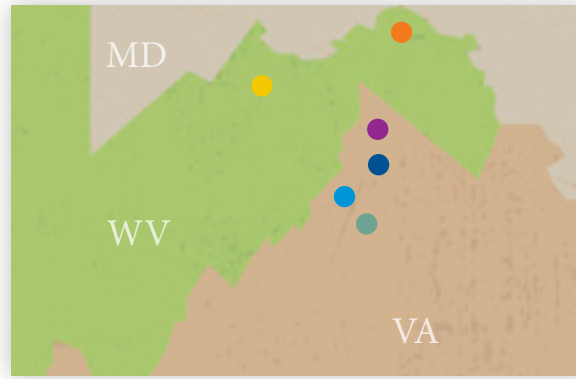
WELCOME

IT'S NOT OVER YET

COVID-19 continues to affect those in our community in varying ways. Some endure long-lasting health conditions caused by the virus. Some are hospitalized for weeks. Some experience grief and emotional distress. Some families have lost more than one loved one. Some are concerned that they may pass the virus on to children too young to be vaccinated.

In this issue, several survivors share how COVID affected them ... and they express their gratitude for the Valley Health team who cared for them. They hope readers will take steps, such as getting vaccinated, to keep others from having to go through what they did. The COVID pandemic is the worst public health crisis in our lifetime, and these patients' journeys are impactful reminders that "it's not over yet."

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Valley Health is a not-for-profit system of hospitals, services and providers. For more information about the many ways we serve the health and wellness needs of the community, visit valleyhealthlink.com.

Valley Health System includes:

- Winchester Medical Center (Winchester, VA)
- Hampshire Memorial Hospital (Romney, WV)
- Page Memorial Hospital (Luray, VA)
- Shenandoah Memorial Hospital (Woodstock, VA)
- War Memorial Hospital (Berkeley Springs, WV)
- Warren Memorial Hospital (Front Royal, VA)

Additional locations and services:

- Employer Health
- Outreach Lab Services
- Rehabilitation Services (Inpatient and Outpatient)
- Urgent Care and Urgent Care Express
- Valley Health Home Health | West Virginia
- Valley Health Medical Group
- Valley Health | Spring Mills
- Valley Health Surgery Center
- Valley Medical Transport
- Valley Pharmacy
- Wellness & Fitness Centers

For more information, visit valleyhealthlink.com/locations.



Valley Health System

Serving Our Community by Improving Health

HealthLINK

The magazine of Valley Health System
Serving the northern Shenandoah Valley and surrounding areas in Virginia, West Virginia and Maryland

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HealthLINK magazine is published three times a year. Its purpose is to provide health and wellness information to the community and to connect area residents with healthcare experts within Valley Health System.

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HONORS IN ABUNDANCE FOR THE WMC TEAM

Winchester Medical Center (WMC) was recently honored with multiple accolades:



- The hospital received its fourth consecutive “A” grade for patient safety from The Leapfrog Group, an independent, nonprofit national watchdog organization. This distinction recognizes the regional medical center’s achievements in protecting patients from harm in the hospital setting. The Leapfrog Hospital Safety Grade is the only hospital ratings program based exclusively on prevention of medical errors and harm to patients. The grading system is peer-reviewed, fully transparent and free to the public. Kudos to the WMC team for offering patients exceptionally safe care!
- The American Heart Association (AHA) recognized the WMC Heart & Vascular Center with a Silver Get With The Guidelines - AFIB Quality Achievement Award for the team’s commitment to managing atrial fibrillation (AFIB), ultimately helping reduce patients’ stroke risk. The Center also received the AHA Mission: Lifeline Gold Plus Quality

Achievement Award for 2021, earned by meeting specific criteria and performance standards for quick and appropriate treatment of STEMI patients. STEMI, or ST elevation myocardial infarction, is a type of heart attack caused by a complete blockage of blood flow to the heart.

- WMC was recertified as an Advanced Primary Stroke Center, marking the 15th year of certification for the hospital. This success is a result of innovations in care delivery and the multidisciplinary collaboration between professionals in a number of disciplines, including physicians and nursing staff from the Emergency Department; Neurosciences; Critical Care; CT/Imaging; Physical, Occupational and Speech Therapy; and others.
- WMC was also honored with a 2021 Best of the Best Readers’ Choice Award in the hospital category from *The Journal*, Martinsburg, West Virginia’s daily newspaper. This accomplishment reflects Valley Health’s commitment to providing convenient, high-quality care to those in the Eastern Panhandle. WMC serves as the region’s leader in Level II trauma care and comprehensive cardiac, stroke and cancer care.

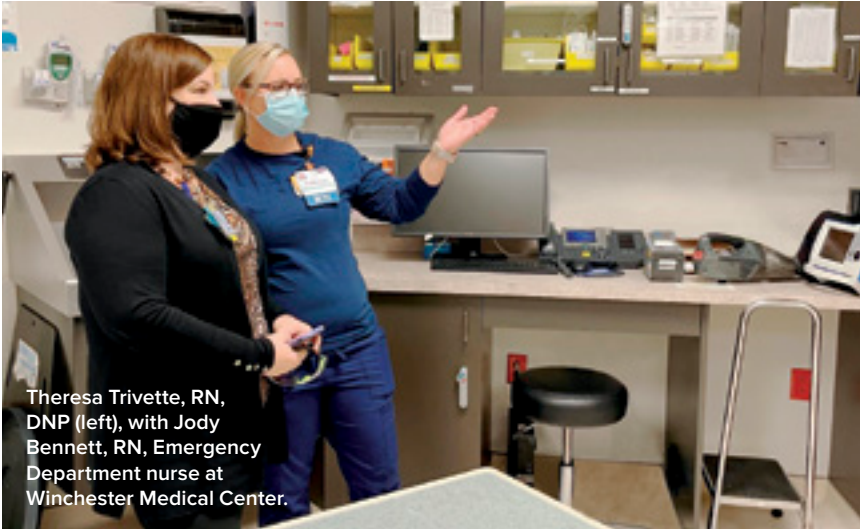


WMC nurses attended the VHHA event celebrating healthcare workers.

HEALTHCARE HEROES CELEBRATED

The Virginia Hospital and Healthcare Association (VHHA) team stopped at WMC in November as part of its visits to hospitals throughout the Commonwealth to thank healthcare employees for their commitment to their communities. As a statewide voice for the hospital community, the roadshow focused public attention on the critical work of front-line healthcare providers, reminding the public, patients and families to treat them with respect and kindness.

“We thank the VHHA team for reinforcing the message that our dedicated team works tirelessly to care for friends and strangers alike, working long hours, on weekends and holidays,” notes VHS President and CEO Mark Nantz. “The work of our professionals is invaluable, and I for one am grateful for the many ways they make our communities—and our lives—better.”



Theresa Trivette, RN, DNP (left), with Jody Bennett, RN, Emergency Department nurse at Winchester Medical Center.

VALLEY HEALTH WELCOMES ITS FIRST CHIEF NURSE EXECUTIVE

Theresa Trivette, RN, DNP, joined the Valley Health team as its first-ever chief nurse executive (CNE) in October, taking responsibility for leadership of all nursing functions across the health system. She serves as a member of the Executive Leadership Team and, in her role, will be the voice for nurses at the highest level of the organization.

Trivette's priorities include ensuring that nurses have the resources, training and support to provide exceptional patient care; growing relationships with educational partners to build a pipeline for the next generation of caregivers; and creating a nursing culture where colleagues find a lifelong professional home at Valley Health's hospitals, clinics and practices.

"One of the fundamental reasons patients require overnight hospital stays is to receive 24/7 nursing-specific care," says Trivette. "Without our extraordinary nurses, patients would not receive the essential care they require to move toward healing and wellness. Nurses work in physician practices, are oncology navigators, are in the field in Home Health, and are educators and administrators. I look forward to representing nurses in all critical functions at Valley Health."

Trivette earned a Bachelor of Science in management studies/healthcare from University of Maryland University College, a Master of Science in nursing from Gardner-Webb University and a Doctor of Nursing Practice from the Medical University of South Carolina. She has over 20 years of experience as a nurse and especially loved working as an Emergency Department nurse.

Welcome to the Valley Health team, Dr. Trivette!

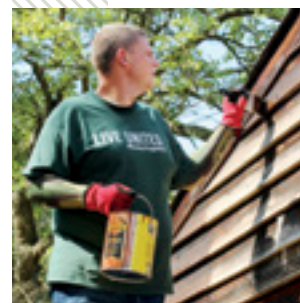
VALLEY PHARMACY SERVES COMMUNITY AT WARREN MEMORIAL HOSPITAL

Community members in the Front Royal area will now find expert pharmacy care at the new Valley Pharmacy located at Warren Memorial Hospital at 351 Valley Health Way, Front Royal, Virginia. Open Monday–Friday from 9 AM–6 PM and Saturdays from 9 AM–1 PM, the pharmacy offers convenient walk-in or curbside pickup, and delivery of prescriptions by mail. Call 540-635-0736 to have your prescriptions filled.

VHS STAFF 'LIVE UNITED'

For 14 years, Valley Health employees have volunteered for local United Way Day of Caring events. Recently, over 50 staff put "sweat equity" into their communities, scraping, painting, raking, and more at locations around the region.

Employees from Shenandoah Memorial Hospital assisted Shenandoah County SEARCH Inc. with landscaping at its group



home and window washing at its thrift shop, while a team from Page Memorial worked in the community garden of the Page Alliance for Community Action. VHS teams also worked at Winchester's Youth Development

Center, Boy Scout Camp Rock Enon and other sites.

Valley Health staff also contribute to an annual employee campaign, with the goal of raising funds for local United Way organizations. Thanks to the generosity of Valley Health employees, over \$125,000 in gifts support community partners every year.



FACTS ON VAX

Valley Health Community and Population Health Officer Jeffrey Feit, MD, advocates for widespread vaccination as the most effective way to keep families safe. He recently answered questions about COVID booster shots.

Q: WHAT IS A BOOSTER SHOT FOR COVID-19 AND WHY DO I NEED IT?

A: Studies show that after getting vaccinated against COVID-19, protection may decrease over time. Booster shots increase your body's immune response to COVID-19 and train your body to defend itself against it. Boosters developed in the future will likely target new variants, so keeping up to date will be key. Booster shots are nothing new. You have likely gotten them over the years for measles, mumps and rubella; shingles; pneumonia; and other illnesses.

Q: WHO IS ELIGIBLE FOR A BOOSTER SHOT?

A: There are booster recommendations for all three types of COVID vaccines offered in the United States. For individuals who received a Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine, boosters are recommended for those 16 years or older, six months or more after their initial vaccine series. For individuals who received a Moderna vaccine, boosters are recommended for those 18 years or older, at least six months after their initial vaccines. For individuals who received the Johnson & Johnson vaccine, boosters are recommended for those 18 and older who were vaccinated two or more months ago.

Q: CAN I MIX AND MATCH MY VACCINE BOOSTERS?

A: Guidelines from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) support individual choice to mix and match booster shots.

Q: DO THE BENEFITS OF VACCINATION AND BOOSTERS OUTWEIGH THE RISKS OF GETTING COVID?

A: Over 800,000 Americans have died from COVID since the pandemic began two years ago, and we are learning more every day about the long-term health impacts experienced by many who had the disease. Boosters are well tolerated, although some people have pain at the injection site, fatigue, muscle pain, headache, fever, chills, nausea, and other flu-like symptoms.

→ Visit valleyhealthlink.com/c19 to learn more about the benefits of COVID vaccination and check with your local pharmacy to arrange your vaccine and/or booster.



A NEW FRONT IN OUR COVID FIGHT: CHILDREN AGES 5 TO 11 ARE NOW ELIGIBLE FOR THE PFIZER VACCINE.

The CDC now recommends that children ages 5 years and older receive the Pfizer vaccine. Any COVID-19 vaccine for children is subject to the same multistep testing and approval process as other vaccines—including those routinely offered for measles, mumps, polio, and other childhood diseases, according to the CDC.

There are many reasons for wanting children to be vaccinated. While it is true that adults typically have more severe outcomes from COVID-19, there have been almost 1,000 children hospitalized with COVID and 11 pediatric deaths in the Commonwealth, per the Virginia Department of Health (VDH). Moreover, vaccinating our children reduces the chances that they'll pass along COVID to a vulnerable parent or grandparent. One in 500 American children has lost a parent or caregiver to COVID-19 since the beginning of the pandemic, and vaccinating children is an important step in preventing these tragedies moving forward.

The VDH holds pediatric COVID-19 vaccine clinics at various locations. The West Virginia Department of Health & Human Resources offers regular clinics for residents; visit vaccinate.wv.gov or call **833-734-0965** for details. In addition, parents are encouraged to check with their pediatrician and local pharmacy for information on access to pediatric vaccines.

A MAGNIFIED LOOK INTO MEDICAL IMAGING



→ ACROSS SEVEN LOCATIONS IN VIRGINIA AND WEST VIRGINIA, VALLEY HEALTH OFFERS STATE-OF-THE-ART MEDICAL IMAGING SERVICES—FROM MAMMOGRAMS FOR BREAST CANCER DETECTION TO DIAGNOSTIC ULTRASOUNDS THAT CAN ALERT PHYSICIANS TO CONDITIONS SUCH AS GALLBLADDER DISEASE. VALLEY HEALTH ALSO PERFORMS ADVANCED CARDIOVASCULAR IMAGING AT WINCHESTER MEDICAL CENTER AND WARREN MEMORIAL HOSPITAL.

1

THERE IS ONLY ONE HOSPITAL IN THE TRISTATE REGION WHERE MRIs ARE PERFORMED ON PATIENTS WITH PACEMAKERS AND THOSE WHO NEED SEDATION: WINCHESTER MEDICAL CENTER.

MAMMOGRAPHY

100% OF ALL VHS MAMMOGRAPHY IMAGING IS ACCREDITED BY THE AMERICAN COLLEGE OF RADIOLOGY.

THE ONLY BREAST CENTER OF EXCELLENCE IN THE TRISTATE REGION, WITH ACCREDITATION IN 4 CATEGORIES OF IMAGING—MAMMOGRAPHY, MRI, ULTRASOUND, AND BREAST BIOPSY—IS LOCATED AT WMC.

MORE THAN 50

CERTIFICATES OF ACCREDITATION HELD BY VHS IMAGING SERVICES

375,000

NUMBER OF EXAMS PERFORMED OVER 12 MONTHS IN 3D MAMMOGRAPHY, CT SCAN, DEXA SCAN, LOW-DOSE LUNG CT, MRI, NUCLEAR MEDICINE, ULTRASOUND, AND X-RAY, INCLUDING 36,000+ CARDIOVASCULAR IMAGING EXAMS

→ Visit valleyhealthlink.com/imaging for more information.

BREATHING EASIER

A new option for treating severe emphysema comes to Winchester Medical Center

Winchester Medical Center (WMC) has added a new minimally invasive treatment option that helps people with severe emphysema, which is a form of chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), breathe easier and get back to the activities they enjoy.

“With emphysema, the air sacs in the lungs become progressively more damaged,” says John Price, DO, pulmonologist at Valley Health Pulmonary and Sleep Specialists. “Those air sacs get bigger, combine together and become less functional. When that happens, air gets trapped and causes hyperinflation of the lungs, and this can lead to shortness of breath.”

The new endobronchial valve placement procedure requires no incisions and uses a flexible scope to guide several (usually three to seven) valves, called Zephyr valves, through a tube inserted into the mouth, down the windpipe, and into targeted areas of the lungs. The tiny devices block off the hyperinflated lobes, enhancing function of the healthy parts of the lungs.

“With this procedure, we reduce the volume of the lung and allow for improvement in respiratory mechanics,” says Dr. Price, who performed the first endobronchial Zephyr valve placement procedure at WMC in 2021.

The Zephyr valve, displayed here by Dr. Price, improves lung function in those with emphysema.



ARE YOU A CANDIDATE FOR ENDOBRONCHIAL VALVE PLACEMENT?

If you have severe emphysema and your doctor has detected hyperinflation or air trapping, you may be a candidate for endobronchial valve placement.

Dr. Price advocates that patients with COPD start with the simplest treatment strategies, beginning with smoking cessation, before recommending endobronchial valve placement. “We typically begin with medications, oxygen and pulmonary rehabilitation before recommending endobronchial valve placement,” he says. Even if these measures don’t relieve symptoms, they can help optimize outcomes when the time comes to place the Zephyr valves. “We want to get patients into the best shape before the procedure and maximize their benefits after.”

For more info, visit valleyhealthlink.com/zephyr.

“The purpose of the treatment is to get people breathing better so they can get back to doing what they want to do.”

Dr. Price likens the outcomes—which include improvements in lung function, walking distance and quality of life—to those experienced by patients who have lung volume reduction surgery, an open surgical procedure that involves removing damaged lung tissue. “Unlike that surgery, endobronchial valve placement is completely reversible if there are complications,” notes Dr. Price.

Placement of the valves usually takes about an hour. Patients stay in the hospital for three days so staff can watch for possible rare complications such as pneumothorax (collapsed lung). He adds, “We advise no exertion for the first week, and after that patients can resume activities as normal.”

The first patient to have the procedure at WMC noticed significant improvements within the first month. “She called to tell us she cleaned her house and didn’t have to stop and catch her breath—and that was the first time that happened in years,” says Dr. Price. “Now she’s walking 30 minutes at a time on the treadmill. It’s a great success story, and I’m glad we were able to help her.”

COVID-19 patient Jon Hof
with his wife, Sherri.



BACK FROM

→ A PATIENT'S JOURNEY OF
RECOVERY FROM COVID

THE

For 72 days, Jon Hof fought a battle with COVID-19 that drained his strength, stole his memory and almost took his life.

For those 72 days, Sherri, his wife of 18 years, remained by his side and encouraged him to pull through, all while documenting her husband's condition and his stay at Winchester Medical Center (WMC).

Because of the compassionate care the couple said they received from WMC nurses and physicians, accompanied by their strong faith, Jon, 75, beat the odds and survived his bout with COVID-19. Now he's slowly getting back on his feet and on with his life.

"I celebrate each little step," he says.

CONTRACTING THE VIRUS

By late 2020, COVID-19 had already killed more than 220,000 people in the United States. (Just 12 months later, by December 2021, deaths in the U.S. from COVID had skyrocketed to over 800,000.) Vaccines were not yet available to the public, which meant mask wearing and social distancing were the only measures that could stem the growing tide of illness and death.

The Wardensville, West Virginia, couple were aware of the dangers of being in public unmasked. Despite taking precautions and wearing masks outside their home, both contracted the virus. Sherri had a mild case, but Jon continued to spike a fever and had difficulty breathing. When the oxygen level in his blood dropped, Sherri rushed him to the hospital.

"A VIRUS THAT KNOWS NO BOUNDARIES"

When COVID patients are admitted to the Winchester Medical Center Intensive Care Unit, nurse practitioner Sarah Johnson always tells them that the path to recovery is a marathon, not a sprint. Care from a multidisciplinary team is required to treat COVID patients' needs.

A SYSTEM OF COVID CARE AT VALLEY HEALTH

Joyce Jamison of Great Cacapon, West Virginia, knows she's one of the lucky ones: The monoclonal antibody treatment she received kept her case of COVID-19 from worsening.

Jamison, who has a chronic health condition, got COVID even though she had been vaccinated. "I woke up with a sore throat, tightness in my chest, no sense of taste," she says. "I wasn't surprised when my COVID test came back positive."

While quarantining at home, her symptoms began to get worse. That's when she called War Memorial Hospital.

"I am so appreciative of the [outpatient] care I got there," Jamison says. "When I said I was having difficulty breathing, I got a referral for an infusion [of monoclonal antibodies]. I thought I had missed the window. I was afraid I might have to stay in the hospital."

Some COVID-19 patients benefit from an infusion of monoclonal antibodies to prevent progression to severe disease. The treatment mimics an antibody response in the unvaccinated or adds to the antibodies generated by an immune system previously exposed to the COVID virus or vaccine. It is administered intravenously or subcutaneously (under the skin) and is available for those who are in the early stages of COVID, or within 10 days of the first symptoms.

"For patients with comorbidities and mild to moderate symptoms, an infusion of monoclonal antibodies can keep COVID from becoming worse," says Leslie Ganoë, RN, MSN, clinical manager of War Memorial's MedSurg Unit. "Once the infusion is complete, patients are sent home to recover while quarantining."

Monoclonal antibody treatment is just one of the resources offered at Valley Health's community hospitals. Although severely ill patients are frequently transferred to Winchester Medical Center, when there is a surge in cases, the teams in our regional hospitals offer exceptional care for those who are seriously ill.

"The fall wave of COVID was hard because beds weren't always available when patients needed to be transferred," notes April McClain-Clower, RN, MSN, director of Acute Care at Shenandoah Memorial Hospital (SMH). "Just because a patient is at a local Valley Health hospital, it doesn't mean their condition is less acute. The staff here at SMH have been amazing in the level of care they provide."

Jamison endorses the value of treatment near her hometown. "[At War Memorial], I was in and out with the least amount of exposure to others," she says. "I was glad care was so convenient."

For more information on monoclonal antibody treatment, visit [page 11](#).

BRINK

BACK FROM THE BRINK

“Physicians, nurses, respiratory therapists, housekeepers, chaplains, palliative care staff, and others are part of the team,” Johnson says. “The staff treat patients not only medically but also emotionally and psychologically.”

Health is measured by hours and even minutes, when patients can go from “treading water” to taking a turn for the worse in a matter of moments. Johnson also acknowledges how closely her colleagues work with family members, too often having compassionate conversations with loved ones of the most severely ill patients concerning difficult choices about life support.

“It’s a virus that knows no boundaries,” she says. “It’s quite grueling.”

From March 2020 to late October 2021, more than 20,200 people tested positive for COVID at one of Valley Health’s clinics, hospitals or urgent care clinics. Some arrived at Valley Health hospitals with shortness of breath, low oxygen levels, fever, malaise, and other COVID symptoms, while others came in for unrelated treatments and only discovered they were positive after being tested. While hospitalized, many COVID patients are treated with oxygen through a nasal cannula, but if needed, they will receive higher-flow oxygen through a mask. If these aren’t sufficient, the next step is to place a breathing tube to support mechanical ventilation. Due to the contagious nature of COVID, contact with family members is limited, so patients often feel isolated and alone.

“COVID’s not limited to the elderly,” Johnson says.

“The majority of patients who have not fared well have been unvaccinated. Patients who are critically ill and not making it out of the hospital are the ones who are unvaccinated.”

—SARAH JOHNSON, NURSE PRACTITIONER



Jon worked with physical therapist Chris Snyder (right) to regain strength and stamina at Valley Health’s Rehabilitation Services.

“We’ve lost patients in their 30s and 40s.” Many of the seriously ill, Johnson says, also present with comorbidities such as obesity, hypertension and/or diabetes.

But much of it comes down to vaccination.

“The majority of patients who have not fared well have been unvaccinated,” Johnson says. “Patients who are critically ill and not making it out of the hospital are the ones who are unvaccinated.”

72 DAYS OF COVID

Jon was intubated early on in his stay at WMC and spent much of this time in and out of consciousness. Sherri wrote down details of Jon’s treatment and his condition, logging the countless interventions, the three intubations and the numerous IVs that kept her husband alive. She wrote about his pneumonia and his delirium. Through it all, she praised the doctors for answering her questions and the nurses, whom she considers “extremely compassionate,” for providing emotional support, acknowledging not only her husband’s pain but also her own.

Amna Sheikh, MD, intensivist in critical care medicine at WMC, says Hof is not alone among extremely ill COVID patients. Most, she says, are so sick they often spend two to three weeks—or more—in the ICU. She describes COVID as unlike any other disease she has seen based on how it wreaks havoc on every organ system.

“It causes blood clots in the brain and heart, kidney failure, stroke, and destruction of the lungs,” says Dr. Sheikh. “It impacts the entire body. Every organ gets affected by it.”

Sometime during his stay, Jon received a tracheotomy after doctors feared another intubation could cause injury or introduce unwanted bacteria into his lungs. The procedure was successful, and although Jon temporarily lost the ability to speak, he continued to show signs of improvement.

Sherri says her faith kept her going. “I was really scared, but I’m a woman of faith and I knew God would work it out and there were other things Jon needed to accomplish.”

THE RECOVERY

On Jan. 28, 2021, Jon rolled out of WMC in a wheelchair—45 pounds lighter and with little memory of his illness. He also couldn’t remember his address or his phone number. “I lost a lot of cognitive ability over COVID,” he

WHO IS ELIGIBLE FOR MONOCLONAL ANTIBODY TREATMENT?

COVID-positive patients 65 years or older and those over 12 years who meet one or more of the criteria below may be eligible to receive monoclonal antibody therapy at one of Valley Health’s hospitals or clinics. Patients must be within 10 days of the onset of symptoms and have a referral from a physician.

It is important to note that this therapy is not a replacement for vaccination, which is the best way to prevent hospitalization and death from COVID-19.

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA INCLUDE:

- Body mass index (BMI) over 25
- Coronary artery disease
- Chronic lung disease
- Chronic kidney disease
- Diabetes
- Hypertension
- Immunosuppression
- Neurodevelopmental disease
- Pregnancy
- Sickle cell disease
- Patients with medically related technology dependence (e.g., tracheostomy)

Visit valleyhealthlink.com/antibodytreatment for more information.

says, adding that it still negatively affects his memory.

COVID also left Jon physically weak. Over time, he graduated from his wheelchair to a walker and then to a cane. He can now walk without its support, but he keeps it close just in case. He can also put on his socks and go down the steps like he did pre-COVID—accomplishments he considers “a level of freedom.”

To regain strength, Jon required physical therapy. Physical therapist Chris Snyder at Rehabilitative Services at

BACK FROM THE BRINK

WMC worked with him to develop a routine, which included warm-up on the NuStep bike, followed by a combination of upper and lower extremity resistance exercises.

Snyder says that each patient with COVID exhibits different degrees of debilitation. A physical therapy evaluation and rehabilitation program take into consideration factors that include strength, endurance/fatigue, balance, migraines, respiration, and cognitive dysfunction. Patients participate in an exercise program two to three times a week for six to 12 weeks, and rehab usually involves strength, aerobic, balance and functional training; education; and sometimes diaphragmatic breathing techniques. The goal is to transition patients to an independent exercise program either at home or in a gym.

“Jon was very motivated with a lot of questions,” Snyder says. “He transitioned easily to independent exercise.”

GETTING THE VACCINE

Jon and Sherri both have received the COVID vaccination. Jon, who immunized his fair share of men and women as a medical corpsman in the Navy, knew he would get it the moment it became available.

“I don’t think twice when someone says you need to get a shot,” he says, adding that getting the vaccine is a much better experience than what he endured, including his tracheotomy.

“Getting a shot is a whole lot easier than having your throat opened up with a scalpel,” he says.

Prevention, notes Dr. Sheikh, is the best cure for COVID.

“The best way to go is not to get it,” she says. “Wear a mask and get a vaccine.”

“[COVID] causes blood clots in the brain and heart, kidney failure, stroke, and destruction of the lungs. It impacts the entire body.”

—AMNA SHEIKH, MD, INTENSIVIST IN CRITICAL CARE MEDICINE



Jon is once again able to enjoy walks with Sherri and the couple’s beloved dogs.



ON THE MEND

See a physical therapist—no referral needed—and let the healing begin

What do people with lower back pain, sports injuries, heart disease, and concussions have in common? They can all benefit from working with a physical therapist. These licensed movement experts develop a customized treatment plan to help improve function, manage pain, and possibly prevent the need for surgery or prescription drugs.

Now, the Valley Health community has direct access to physical therapy, without a physician's referral. "Instead of having to go to a family practice or an orthopedist, you can simply call a Valley Health Rehabilitation clinic in your community," says Mary Presley, director of Rehabilitation Services at Warren Memorial Hospital.

Patients are in good hands with Valley Health direct-access physical therapists, who have a doctorate degree in physical therapy and significant training in evaluation and diagnosis. These experts use various techniques depending on the patient's individual needs. They also use an evidence-based tool called FOTO (Focus on Therapeutic Outcomes), which generates real-time data to measure how well treatment is working.

Physical therapists specialize in areas such as orthopedics, sports medicine, wound care, pelvic health, and balance disturbances; they can also help with neurologic issues and frequently work with individuals recovering from stroke. (Patients who have been seen by a doctor for symptoms in the previous 30 days are not eligible for direct access. Instead, they should continue their physician-recommended course of treatment.)

Direct access isn't just more convenient—it's often less expensive. "It has significantly reduced the cost for patients coming to a physical therapist first, versus going through their physician, taking the medications, getting imaging, then being referred to a [physical] therapist," Presley says. The clinic will contact a patient's insurance company to obtain authorization, just like when a patient visits their doctor, and verify the copayment determined by the patient's health plan. (Medicare and Medicaid do not recognize direct-access physical therapy at this time.)

Valley Health launched direct access for physical therapy at its Warren Memorial Hospital location and recently rolled this service out to its other clinics. "By January 1, all Valley Health Outpatient Rehab locations were offering direct access," Presley adds.

Presley says that the program is designed to make life easier for patients. "Patients now have another point of access to care without having to wait for a referring appointment with their doctor," she continues. "We're big proponents of pain management that folks often overlook. They might want that quick fix with a pill, but we can help substantially with other modalities and functional movement to get them to their goal."

→ To learn more, call **540-536-8000** or visit valleyhealthlink.com/directaccess.

SPOTLIGHT

ALL ABOUT ANESTHESIA

Valley Health's expert anesthesiologists take care of the whole person—before, during and after surgery

If you've ever had surgery, an anesthesiologist likely provided pain medication and anesthesia to keep you comfortable and deeply relaxed—or even temporarily unconscious—during the procedure. But did you know that Valley Health's anesthesiologists do far more? From lifesaving emergency procedures and COVID care to monitoring your vital signs before, during and after surgery and providing postoperative pain control, anesthesiologists are “the ultimate behind-the-scenes players,” says anesthesiologist Bryan Currie, DO, of Winchester Anesthesiologists.

Trained in anesthesia delivery, pain management and critical care medicine, these specialists play important roles in every area of health care at Valley Health. “We take care of the whole person,” says Casey Dowling, DO, of Winchester Anesthesiologists and medical director of the START Clinic at Winchester Medical Center, where surgery patients meet with an anesthesiologist and receive pre- and post-op care.

Yet often, “people don't realize we were part of their care,” Dr. Currie notes. Read on to discover the many contributions anesthesiologists make to your well-being at Valley Health.

BEFORE, DURING AND AFTER SURGERY

Anesthesiologists do more than administer sedatives before an operation, says Elford Stephens, MD, associate director of Anesthesia Services at Warren Memorial Hospital. “We sit down with patients beforehand, introduce them to what anesthesia is, review their health history, the medications and supplements they're using, and discuss their concerns and anxieties,” he explains.

Anesthesiologists collaborate with surgeons and other healthcare practitioners on major surgeries and same-day procedures like joint replacement, during labor and the delivery of babies, and in minimally invasive procedures such as X-ray-guided heart valve replacement. They also provide pain control and anesthesia for medical imaging tests. And they work closely with physician specialists. “When a specialty in the hospital offers a new, cutting-edge procedure, which happens frequently at Valley Health, we rise to the occasion and train for it,” says Dr. Dowling.

Anesthesiologists tailor their approach to each procedure. Options include:



- **General anesthesia:** Used for most major surgeries, general anesthesia involves inhaled and intravenous drugs that lead to temporary loss of consciousness so you won't feel pain, move or be aware during the procedure. Afterward, “you won't remember what happened,” Dr. Stephens notes. Your breathing and other vitals are monitored by the anesthesiologist or a certified nurse anesthetist during the procedure.
- **Monitored anesthesia care (MAC):** Often combined with local or regional anesthesia to numb an area of the body, MAC usually makes you feel very relaxed. You may still be aware of your surroundings and able to answer questions or, with deeper anesthesia, you

Physicians from Winchester Anesthesiologists pose outside WMC.



may be unable to remember the procedure. “With MAC, most patients are breathing on their own,” Dr. Stephens says. “An anesthesiologist still watches closely during and after the procedure, making sure the patient is breathing well and monitoring and supporting blood pressure as necessary.” MAC is used for colonoscopies and eye surgeries, for example.

- **Regional anesthesia:** Often used for childbirth and surgeries of the arms, legs or abdomen, this type of anesthesia uses injections or a catheter (a hollow tube) to send anesthesia into nerves. This can be used to numb an arm, leg or large area of the body.
- **Local anesthesia:** Given by injection to numb a small

area, local anesthesia is often used for setting broken bones, removing skin growths and closing deep cuts in the skin. This is an injection that numbs the area of the body where the procedure is being performed. You will be awake and alert but feel no pain.

Anesthesia such as nerve blocks eases pain during recovery from illness or surgery. “Long-lasting pain management helps patients breathe without pain so they can take deep breaths, lowering risk for pneumonia,” Dr. Stephens says. Less pain also means you can get up and start moving around sooner, which can reduce risk of complications, he explains.

WHEN EMERGENCIES HAPPEN

Anesthesiologists are on call 24/7 at all Valley Health hospitals and are often called to Valley Health’s Emergency Departments to make an



Elford Stephens, MD;
Casey Dowling, DO; and
Bryan Currie, DO.

WHAT YOUR ANESTHESIOLOGIST NEEDS TO KNOW BEFORE SURGERY

“During surgery, an anesthesiologist is like the pilot of an airplane—they’re ensuring your safety,” says Elford Stephens, MD, associate director of Anesthesia Services at Warren Memorial Hospital. “So you want to be sure we have all the information we need that could affect anesthesia or pain management.” It’s important to share the following with your anesthesiologist before a surgical procedure:

- **Your health history and medications:** Your anesthesiologist will see your health records, but be sure they know about any chronic health conditions you have and about all the prescription and over-the-counter medications you take. Sometimes, medications must be stopped or carefully managed before, during and after surgery.
- **Use of supplements and history of substance abuse:** Some herbal supplements may raise blood pressure, increase bleeding risk or change the effects of anesthesia. Alcohol, marijuana, opioids, and other drugs may interfere with the effectiveness of anesthesia and pain medications.

evaluation and assist when lifesaving surgery is required. “When someone comes to the emergency room after a traffic accident or other trauma, our job is to ensure they have a safe airway,” Dr. Currie says. “We also assist with preparations before surgery. During surgery, we monitor blood pressure and heart rate and take care of pain management and sedation so that surgeons can perform lifesaving procedures.”

COVID-19 AND ANESTHESIOLOGISTS

Valley Health-affiliated anesthesiologists have stepped up during the COVID-19 pandemic, taking shifts on critical care units and providing valuable expertise on safety when people with severe COVID require breathing tubes and ventilators. Input from anesthesiologists was key to the development of COVID protocols in operating rooms. “Anesthesiologists also developed COVID containment techniques for use as patients were transferred to the OR,” Dr. Dowling says. “Our work is very important to the safety of patients and staff as the pandemic continues.”

HELP FOR HEARTBURN

YOUR MEALS DON'T HAVE TO END IN MISERY

There's nothing like warm conversation with friends or family over a tasty meal. That is, until you feel an unpleasant burning in your chest.

Heartburn occurs when the meal you just ate backs up from your stomach into your esophagus, causing a burning sensation in your chest, sometimes accompanied by a bitter taste in your mouth. Most people experience heartburn occasionally, but those who smoke or are overweight are more prone to frequent bouts. Women are more likely to get heartburn than men; it's especially common during pregnancy, particularly in the third trimester.

Normally, a little door called the esophageal sphincter blocks food from leaking back up into your esophagus. But if that door doesn't close properly, partially digested food and stomach acid sneak through. So when you feel the burn, try these simple steps to manage occasional heartburn discomfort:

- **Change into looser clothing and stand up straight to relieve pressure on your digestive system.**
- **Drink water mixed with a teaspoon of baking soda, and sip it slowly to neutralize the acid.**
- **Enjoy a cup of chamomile tea, which soothes the digestive tract.**

- **Take an over-the-counter antacid. But don't overdo it, since regular use can lead to side effects like muscle tenderness and respiratory issues.**

To prevent heartburn, try eating several small meals throughout the day, rather than three big meals, which can invite trouble. Certain foods and drinks, such as spicy foods, fatty and fried foods, citrus, peppermint, chocolate, tea, carbonated beverages, and alcohol, are more likely to cause heartburn, so avoiding these helps. If heartburn troubles you, experts suggest eliminating these foods from your diet and then introducing them back, one at a time, to pinpoint any culprits. It's also a good idea to avoid rigorous exercise a few hours after eating, and finish eating three hours before bedtime. Of course, losing excess weight or quitting smoking can also help.

Discuss regular bouts of heartburn with your primary care provider if you experience heartburn more than twice a week. Because symptoms of more serious problems can sometimes mimic heartburn, a specialized approach to this condition is important to receiving an accurate diagnosis. Troy Glembot, MD, Metabolic & Bariatric surgeon, explains that “your family physician or gastroenterologist can recommend lifestyle changes or medication—and review any medications you're taking to determine if they might be contributing.”

If stubborn heartburn causes your esophagus to become severely inflamed, surgery may be the best option. “One approach is a procedure called fundoplication, which tightens the esophagus to prevent stomach acid from backtracking into it,” Dr. Glembot continues. “There are several Valley Health physicians who perform this minimally invasive procedure that is incisionless and often done endoscopically [by accessing the esophageal sphincter through the throat].”

Heartburn is usually quelled with simple at-home steps. But if it's a regular occurrence, see your primary care provider.

→ To find a provider near you, visit valleyhealthlink.com/primarycare.





HEALTHIER

2021 COMMUNITY
BENEFIT REPORT

TOMORROWS

C COVID-19 has changed our community. Since the first case appeared in our region in March 2020, we have changed how we parent, how we work, how we learn, how we worship, how we shop, how we recreate, and much more.

While much has changed, some things have not: Many in our region still face challenges. Those who are homeless, hungry, lonely, unemployed, addicted, and abused experience the brunt of the upheavals caused by COVID—as well as by other long-standing social, financial and health conditions. Valley Health works 24/7 to meet the healthcare challenges of many of those in need. Fortunately, other dedicated community partners also offer resources and services, and we are honored to provide both financial and in-kind support to many of these organizations.

Amid the many ongoing changes in our region, one thing is constant: Valley Health’s commitment to Serving Our Community by Improving Health. We do this as we care for the ill and injured *and* as a community partner.

THE POWER OF PARTNERSHIPS

Valley Health is deeply proud of our collaborations with local organizations, which were especially vital during the challenges posed by COVID-19. Working with local health departments, educational institutions, nonprofits, and many others, Valley Health led efforts to inform the public about the disease, mitigate its spread, care for the ill, and set up testing sites and vaccination clinics. These efforts went beyond a “community benefit,” becoming instead heroic, lifesaving work.

Partnerships are also key to Valley Health’s mission to make quality care accessible to all. We support clinics that provide free or low-cost care to the underserved. We collaborate with nonprofits to address social welfare challenges that correlate with chronic health conditions. And we offer area residents health screenings and programs that advance overall health and wellness. These efforts, and more, reflect our commitment to Healthier Tomorrows. Learn more about our Community Benefit programs at valleyhealthlink.com/communitycommitment.

BY THE NUMBERS

CASH AND IN-KIND SUPPORT
FOR COMMUNITY BENEFIT
PROGRAMS TOTALED
\$76.7 MILLION

\$61 MILLION

For uncompensated healthcare services.
We assume the costs of care and treatment for those
who are unable to pay for care.

\$7.8 MILLION

For training healthcare professionals.
Every year hundreds of students in college-level
nursing, pharmacy, physical/occupational therapy
programs, and others enhance their educational
experience through preceptorship programs with
Valley Health's expert healthcare professionals.

\$7.9 MILLION

For health and prevention programs.
Thousands benefit from free screenings, preventive
care, wellness programming, and more.

COMPREHENSIVE
COMMUNITY CONTRIBUTION
IN 2020

MORE THAN \$159 MILLION

For Community Benefit programs plus unreimbursed
medical care provided to seniors and uncollected fees
for services provided to patients of all ages.

VALLEY HEALTH PARTNERSHIPS ADDRESS COMMUNITY NEEDS

Valley Health's Community Advisory Council (CAC), a group of community leaders and concerned residents appointed by the Valley Health Board of Trustees, oversees the system's Community Health Impact Grants program. The current three-year funding cycle for 2020-2022 provides over \$3.3 million to the following local nonprofits: AIDS Response Effort (ARE) / Child Safe Center / Concern Hotline / Daniel Morgan Intermediate School / Dental Clinic of Northern Shenandoah Valley / Edgehill Recovery Center / Girls on the Run / Good Samaritan Free Clinic / Healthy Families Northern Shenandoah Valley / Healthy Families Shenandoah County / The Laurel Center / Morgan County Partnership / NAMI Northern Shenandoah Valley / NSV Substance Abuse Coalition / Our Health / Page Alliance for Community Action / Page Free Clinic / RAPP Center for Education / Shenandoah Community Health Clinic / Shenandoah Dental Clinic / Sinclair Health Clinic / St. Luke Community Clinic / Wheels for Wellness





Healthier, together.

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When was your last checkup with your primary care provider?
Is your mammogram overdue?
Need a colorectal screening, pelvic exam or blood work?

It's time.

Make time in 2022 to get back to your medical routine and schedule needed screenings. Routine and preventive care can catch problems early ... and save lives!

In-person and telehealth appointments available.

Looking for a care provider or medical service?

Call 833-VHS-DOCS
or visit valleyhealthlink.com.



Healthier, together.