

A Publication of  
**NEWARK BETH ISRAEL MEDICAL  
CENTER AND CHILDREN'S  
HOSPITAL OF NEW JERSEY**

WINTER 2019

# healthy *together*

**LEARNING TO  
LOSE WEIGHT**

**PEDIATRIC CANCER:  
HELP AND HOPE**

**'A NEW HEART  
AND KIDNEY  
GAVE ME MY  
LIFE BACK'**

**EAT LIKE  
AN MVP!  
NJ DEVILS STAR  
TAYLOR HALL  
TELLS HOW**



## We're Focused on Community

Coretta Scott King once said that the greatness of a community is best measured by the compassionate actions of its members. At RWJBarnabas Health, we share King's belief in the power of compassionate action.

Each of our hospitals is actively engaged in making a difference on critical community issues, including housing, employment, food security and economic empowerment. That includes everything from hiring locally to helping make fresh, affordable produce widely available. System-wide, we've added RWJBarnabas Health TeleMed, a telemedicine service that improves access to care for people with transportation or scheduling challenges.

To expand our community reach, we partner with other organizations, like the New Jersey Devils, to bring about positive change. One example: Collaborating with the staff of the Barnabas Health Hockey House at Newark's Prudential Center, our specialty physicians and nutrition experts have developed a youth hockey program that promotes optimal performance and good health while building confidence, sportsmanship and life skills. It's now available at ice-hockey rinks throughout the state. The Devils organization and players, including NHL MVP Taylor Hall, also work closely with us to bring encouragement and moments of joy to hospitalized children.

At Newark Beth Israel Medical Center and Children's Hospital of New Jersey, our successful Hire Newark Employment Ready Boot Camp program prepares chronically unemployed Newark residents to reenter the workforce. This year, we launched the Career Ladder Program, a skills training program aimed at advancing the career trajectory of frontline employees at NBI. We are also addressing food insecurity through our "Food for Thought" documentary and community conversations about access to healthy food.

At RWJBarnabas Health, we believe in the greatness of the New Jersey community and are glad to help improve quality of life for everyone who, like us, calls the Garden State home.

Yours in good health,



**BARRY H. OSTROWSKY**  
PRESIDENT AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER  
RWJBARNABAS HEALTH




**DARRELL K. TERRY, SR.**  
PRESIDENT AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER  
NEWARK BETH ISRAEL MEDICAL CENTER  
AND CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL OF NEW JERSEY



## HEALTH NEWS

### A National Leader in Safety and Quality

Newark Beth Israel Medical Center and Children's Hospital of New Jersey has been named a 2018 Top Teaching Hospital and earned an "A" safety score from The Leapfrog Group, an independent nonprofit hospital watchdog organization.



The Leapfrog Top Hospital award is widely acknowledged as one of the most competitive honors American hospitals can receive. Among thousands of hospitals in the country, Newark Beth Israel Medical Center was one of only 53 hospitals recognized as a Top Teaching Hospital.




"Maintaining the highest standards of safety and quality are at the core of our clinical success," says Darrell K. Terry, Sr., MHA, MPH, FACHE, President and Chief Executive Officer of Newark Beth Israel Medical Center and Children's Hospital of New Jersey. "Receiving these recognitions from The Leapfrog Group is a testament to our leadership team, our staff and our physicians, who demonstrate an absolute dedication to our patients every day."

In recent years, Newark Beth Israel Medical Center and Children's Hospital of New Jersey has made notable improvements to patient care by cutting Emergency Department wait times in half, creating a completely private-room postpartum unit with more than a dozen renovated rooms, expanding its clinical offerings and embarking on successful patient safety campaigns. The hospital has also achieved enviable milestones, such as performing more than 1,000 heart transplants. Only 12 centers in the country have performed as many.

**Newark Beth Israel Medical Center** | **RWJBarnabas HEALTH**  
**Children's Hospital of New Jersey**

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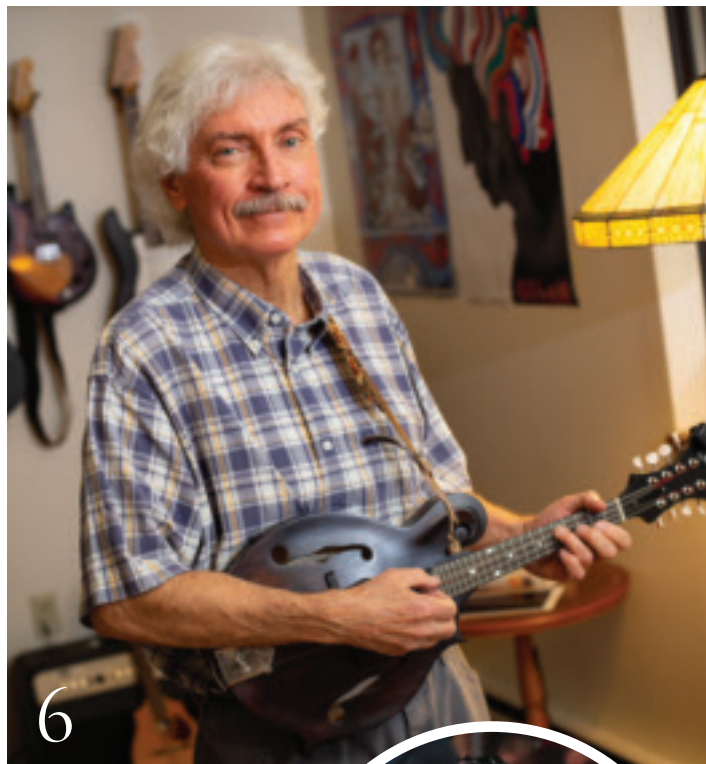
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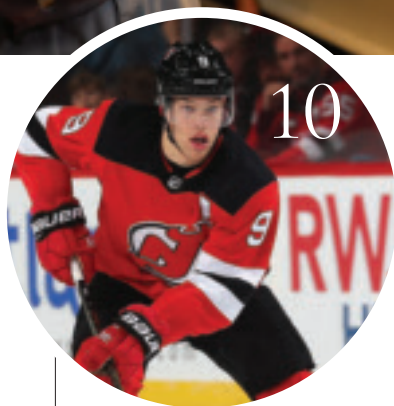
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# WHAT'S NEW AT NBI

**NEWARK BETH ISRAEL MEDICAL CENTER IS ALWAYS IMPROVING TO SERVE PATIENTS BETTER.**



## **NEW DENTAL CENTER**

On November 14, a dedication was held to celebrate the renaming of the Dental Health Center at Newark Beth Israel Medical Center (NBI) in honor of Noah Chivian, DDS, endodontist and former director of endodontics at NBI, and his father, Jacob Chivian, DDS. The new Chivian Dental Health Center was made possible by the generosity of Noah's sister, Simona Chivian Chazen, and her husband Jerome Chazen. The Dental Center sees close to 20,000 patients a year. It is New Jersey's largest hospital-based dental program, providing a full range of services for adults and children in the greater Newark region.

## **MRI BREAST IMAGING AT NBI**

This year, Newark Beth Israel Medical Center will begin using a new state-of-the-art MRI machine. The SIGNA Artist is General Electric's most advanced intuitive technology to date. In addition to the standard imaging performed at NBI—cardiac imaging, vascular imaging, brain imaging and fetal MRI—this new technology will allow physicians to perform breast imaging via MRI. According to the American Cancer Society, MRI screening is recommended for certain women at high risk for breast cancer.



## **MULTIDISCIPLINARY CATHETERIZATION AT NBI**

Multidisciplinary catheterization suites are coming to NBI. The hospital is planning to expand its current Cardiovascular Catheterization Laboratory (cath lab) to include multidisciplinary procedure rooms that will allow surgeons and cardiologists to work together to perform innovative minimally invasive procedures such as transcatheter aortic valve replacement and mitral and pulmonic valve replacement and repair. Currently, approximately 30 patients per day undergo minimally invasive procedures in NBI's cath lab.



# A BETTER WAY TO VIEW THE AIRWAY

FIBER OPTIC TECHNOLOGY ALLOWS A FAST, ACCURATE DIAGNOSIS IN AN EMERGENCY.

When patients come to an Emergency Department (ED) with breathing problems, the causes can run the gamut from asthma to allergies to blood clots to obstruction, and beyond.

But these disparate conditions have two things in common: They have to be taken seriously, and they must be diagnosed right away. At the Newark Beth Israel Medical Center (NBI) ED, sophisticated fiber optic airway equipment allows physicians to make better diagnoses, faster.

Fiber optics are long, thin, flexible strands of glass, arranged in bundles, that transmit light signals or images. This technology allows physicians to examine the airway on a screen instead of relying on direct visualization using



ERIC WASSERMAN, MD

a light or mirror at the end of a hand-held tool. In many cases, fiber optics are the reason physicians can visualize and even treat blockages without having to do a surgical procedure.

## A VIEW OF THE LARYNX

One such piece of equipment is the Storz C-MAC. The C-MAC consists of a laryngoscope, a small tool with a camera at the end that provides a view of the vocal cords and larynx, an organ at the top of the trachea. The C-MAC, which attaches directly to a portable LCD screen, allows physicians to intubate patients whose airways are narrowed or obstructed.

"Sometimes airways are difficult," says Eric Wasserman, MD, Chairman of Emergency Medicine at NBI. "Either the anatomy is difficult or there's swelling, scarring or something blocking the airway and you just can't get a good look with direct laryngoscopy.

"In the case of a failed airway, if you can't pass the tube or see anything with a regular laryngoscope, there's really no other

definitive option than cutting open the neck," he explains. "However, the C-MAC allows us to avoid conducting many surgical cricothyrotomies," which involve establishing an airway by placing a tube through a neck incision.

## INTO THE LUNGS

A much longer fiber optic scope than the C-MAC, the Ambu aScope 4 Broncho, allows ED physicians to travel through the mouth or nose to examine the lungs. Because it's a disposable device, it can be discarded after a single use. That's a plus for convenience as well as infection control because it's always available and is sterile right out of the package.

When a patient exhibits symptoms of an allergic reaction or has throat swelling, this fiber optic bronchoscope allows physicians to examine the trachea or detect foreign bodies in the bronchioles (tubes in the lungs), and oftentimes use suction to clear the obstruction on the spot. The device can also be used to pass a breathing tube into difficult airways.

The Emergency Department at NBI is staffed by board-certified emergency physicians and specialized emergency nurses to provide quality care to all ages from newborns to the elderly. To learn more, visit [www.rwjbh.org/newarkbeth](http://www.rwjbh.org/newarkbeth). In an emergency, dial **911**.



The art of the heal: Douglas Delahanty, 65, is back to work and to creative pursuits—like playing the mandolin in an Irish band—after a successful double transplant at Newark Beth Israel Medical Center.

# NEW HEART, NEW KIDNEY, NEW LIFE

**A MAN RECLAIMS HIS LOVE OF ART AND MUSIC FOLLOWING A DOUBLE ORGAN TRANSPLANT AT NEWARK BETH ISRAEL MEDICAL CENTER.**

To learn more about transplant services at Newark Beth Israel Medical Center, visit [www.rwjbh.org/transplant](http://www.rwjbh.org/transplant).

Thanks to an anonymous donor, Douglas Delahanty received two new organs—a heart and a kidney—one year ago. As a result of these gifts, the 65-year-old is loving life once more. He's painting canvases and writing songs again. He's playing the mandolin in a band called Mulligan Stew.

For many years, though, Douglas neglected his creative side as he battled medical issues. At the age of 45, he'd suffered a stroke and congestive heart failure. And though he recovered from the stroke, his cardiac function declined.

A normal ejection fraction—the measurement of blood flowing out of the heart's ventricles—is 60 percent. "Ten years ago, mine was 35," says Douglas. Blood tests revealed that his

level of creatinine, a marker of kidney function, was abnormally high, indicating kidney failure.

In 2016, medical issues forced Douglas to quit his job as a house painter. “I was short of breath and couldn’t do any physical labor,” he recalls.

## IT TAKES A TEAM

As his condition deteriorated, Douglas learned he would need a kidney transplant. He was happy to find that his sister was a perfect match.

Prior to scheduling surgery, however, he was referred for cardiac clearance to Mark J. Zucker, MD, Director of the Cardiothoracic Transplantation Program at Newark Beth Israel Medical Center (NBI).

The news wasn’t good. “An echocardiogram showed Douglas’s cardiac function at 10 percent. There were two leaky valves,” says Dr. Zucker. “Unfortunately, because of his renal failure, treatment options such as a mechanical pump or enrollment in a stem cell clinical trial were off the table.”

So Dr. Zucker and cardiologist Saurabh Kapoor, MD, recommended a double organ transplant: replacing the diseased heart and kidney with healthy ones from a single organ donor.

Why from a single donor? “After heart transplantation, the challenge is often post-operative issues associated with excess fluid,” Dr. Zucker explains. “This is much more difficult to manage in the absence of functioning kidneys. The best way to address this is to do both procedures together, which usually means using both organs from the same donor.”

Douglas was game. “The doctors felt confident about surgery, so I did too,” he says. First, he had to undergo medical and psychosocial screening tests. He became educated about financial considerations as well as the overall transplant process.

“The transplant team is a complex, multidisciplinary group,” says Margarita Camacho, MD, Surgical Director of the Heart Transplant Program. Nearly 70 specialists at NBI— from physicians and surgeons to nurses, social workers, therapists, pharmacists, dietitians and office staff—are required to assist patients pre-and post-surgery.

It’s not a common surgery. “About 50 to 60 heart-kidney transplants are done in the U.S. each year,” Dr. Camacho says. “Newark Beth Israel does three to six of those.”



## HOW (AND WHY) TO BECOME AN ORGAN DONOR

Approximately 115,000 people await organ transplants in the U.S, and more than 4,000 of them are from New Jersey. Only 58 percent of Americans are registered donors. If you’re considering becoming a donor, consider these facts:

- Transplantable organs include heart, kidneys, liver, lungs, pancreas and intestine.
- People of all ages and medical histories are potential donors.
- Your own medical care won’t be compromised because you’ve planned to be a donor.
- There is no cost to be an organ donor.
- Donor families are often comforted by knowing their loved one’s legacy lives on.

To learn more, visit [www.NJSharingNetwork.org](http://www.NJSharingNetwork.org). To register as an organ donor, visit your local Motor Vehicle Agency or [www.RegisterMe.org](http://www.RegisterMe.org).

## NEW HEART, NEW KIDNEY

Once Douglas was deemed a good candidate, he was placed on the New Jersey Sharing Network list (see sidebar, above right.). He was fortunate to receive a call about a match within months.

On August 6, 2017, Douglas received his heart and kidney transplants. Dr. Zucker says the heart surgery is done first, followed by kidney surgery. “The heart can be out of the donor’s body for four hours and the kidney for 24,” he explains.

When Douglas woke up in the Intensive Care Unit after the time-intensive surgery, his sister and friends were there waiting. He remained in the hospital for three and a half weeks, observed closely by his medical team, who monitored immunosuppressive drugs and possible complications. Today, he visits the transplant program for tests once a year.

“When I first got out of the hospital, I couldn’t even lift a gallon of milk. Now, I’m walking, doing yoga and playing in my band,” says Douglas, who is now 50 pounds lighter and working as a delivery van driver. He plans to keep working until he’s 70. Why? “Because I can.”

## MEET THE DOCTORS | NBI HAS A WORLD-CLASS TEAM OF TRANSPLANT EXPERTS.



MARK J.  
ZUCKER, MD



MARGARITA  
CAMACHO, MD



MARTIN  
STRUEBER, MD



NATALIA  
HOCHBAUM, MD



SAURABH  
KAPOOR, MD



LAURIE  
LETARTE, MD



DARKO  
VUCICEVIC, MD





## FOOD FOR THOUGHT

THE PATH TO FOOD SECURITY IN NEWARK, NJ

At left, browsing at The Beth Greenhouse.

# FRESH THINKING ON FRESH FOOD

**STUDENTS, GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS AND ENTREPRENEURS ARE LOOKING AT THE PROBLEM OF HUNGER IN NEWARK—AND FINDING INNOVATIVE WAYS TO SOLVE IT.**

Some people in urban areas are hungry for healthy food. Others want to help them.

Bridging that gap, and understanding the environmental and social factors that lead to hunger, was the motivation behind “Food for Thought: The Path to Food Security in Newark,” a documentary created by students from all five wards of the city. The hour-long film is a crash course on the local impact of food insecurity and “food deserts”—areas that are short on fresh food and vegetables, but long on fast and processed food.



**NATHALY AGOSTO FILIÓN**

“Food for Thought,” which debuted early last year, is being shown as a springboard for conversations throughout the city. It was produced by the Greater Newark Community Advisory Board (GNCAB) with

the support of Newark Beth Israel Medical Center, Children’s Hospital of New Jersey and RWJBarnabas Health.

Nearly 41 million people in the U.S. are food insecure, and 1 million of those live in New Jersey, the film reports. In Newark, 47 percent of children are obese, illustrating the hunger-obesity paradox: the easy availability of cheap, high-fat, low-nutrient food that leads to unhealthy weight in a low-income population. The powerful film explores these and other difficult issues.

### A GROWING MOVEMENT

“I loved the fact that youth were the creators of the film, because they see things with fresh eyes,” says Nathaly Agosto Filión, Chief Sustainability Officer of the City of Newark, who participated in a panel discussion at the film’s premiere. “They also dream up different kinds of solutions. I look forward to screening it at City Hall, to continue to catalyze the conversations we’re having about food and sustainability.”

As part of those conversations, Agosto

Filión’s office is in the process of creating the Newark City Food Policy Council. “We have three committees—Healthy Meals, Green Space Policy and Inventory and Buying Club,” she says. “We’re open to anyone who wants to bring their energy and expertise. It’s been a powerful way of bridging what everyday Newarkers are thinking about, and what policy wonks are thinking about.” (To learn more, visit [www.newarknj.gov/sustainability](http://www.newarknj.gov/sustainability).)

The city has also created the Adopt-a-Lot program, in which it leases vacant lots for \$1 a year to residents who want to grow flowers and organic produce. “We have between 80 and 90 lots currently in use, and the results are stunning,” Agosto Filión says. “These residents are beautifying the space, building community and giving food away to their neighbors.”

Some of those lots are featured in the “Food for Thought” documentary, as are innovative businesses like Radicle Farm Company, which runs a greenhouse in Branch Brook Park, and AeroFarms, which runs a hydroponic (growing without soil) vertical farm in a former factory. Other initiatives include the Newark Community Food System Task Force and the hydroponic The Beth Greenhouse at Newark Beth Israel Medical Center.

The energy and passion of these efforts justify the hopeful note on which the film ends. “If all the young people in Newark would stand up and join this movement of advocacy for a better life for us here,” says one young interviewee in the documentary, “we would definitely change the face of Newark—and gradually, the face of America.”

To learn more about The Beth Greenhouse at Newark Beth Israel, which donates thousands of pounds of fresh produce to Newark residents each year, visit [www.rwjbh.org/bethgreenhouse](http://www.rwjbh.org/bethgreenhouse). To see the “Food for Thought” documentary, visit [rwjbh.org/foodforthought](http://rwjbh.org/foodforthought). To learn about the RWJBarnabas Health commitment to food security, visit [www.rwjbh.org/socialimpact](http://www.rwjbh.org/socialimpact).



# THE DOCTOR IS IN ONLINE

WITH RWJBARNABAS  
HEALTH TELEMED,  
A DOCTOR CAN BE  
AVAILABLE 24/7.

Health needs have a way of happening at inconvenient times. You're on a business trip and forgot a prescription. It is after hours and your doctor's office is closed. Your family is on vacation and you have a sick child. Or you're simply too sick to get out of bed.

For those situations and more, RWJBarnabas Health TeleMed now offers telemedicine—medical care available through a smartphone, tablet or computer—for urgent needs, or for people who feel they just don't have time to visit a doctor.

"At RWJBarnabas Health, we've been doing telemedicine for a long time in specific specialty services," says Amy Mansue, President, Southern Region, RWJBH. "For example, when very fragile babies are sent home, telemedicine lets doctors and nurses see a baby in real time if parents have a concern."

The rollout of the broader RWJBarnabas Health TeleMed program to the general public follows a successful pilot program with the system's 30,000 employees. "We know that telemedicine is not a one-size-fits-all solution for every demographic,"

Mansue says. "But we also know that people's lives are increasingly time-pressed, and that we're in a world of one-click expectations when it comes to service."

"Our job is to find ways to get people access to the services they need, at the right level of care, at the time they need it."

## HOW IT WORKS

Once enrolled, patients can log in at any time of night or day for a videoconference with one of the on-call, U.S. board-certified physicians. There's a flat fee of \$45, payable by credit card at the time of service. (Many private insurance plans cover telemedicine, and in New Jersey, state-funded health insurance plans are required to, as long as certain standards are met.) RWJBarnabas Health TeleMed is secure and compliant with HIPAA, a federal law that sets standards for, among other things, the privacy of health information.

The doctor at the other end of the camera can assess symptoms, look at the area in question and make a judgment as to whether follow-up tests are needed. Though telemedicine is not meant to replace a patient's relationship with his or

her primary care doctor, "we do know that there are people who don't have access to primary care, or don't go routinely," Mansue says. "This is a way to connect them with healthcare."

Older patients may find telemedicine easier to adopt because long-distance healthcare has become common for chronic conditions, such as checking pacemakers or heart monitors over the phone. Younger patients, on the other hand, may actually prefer telemedicine to the in-person kind.

"One study showed that 70 percent of people under age 35 had accessed medical care through telemedicine," Mansue says. "They do everything through their phones—create relationships, order pizza—so it feels natural to do healthcare that way as well."

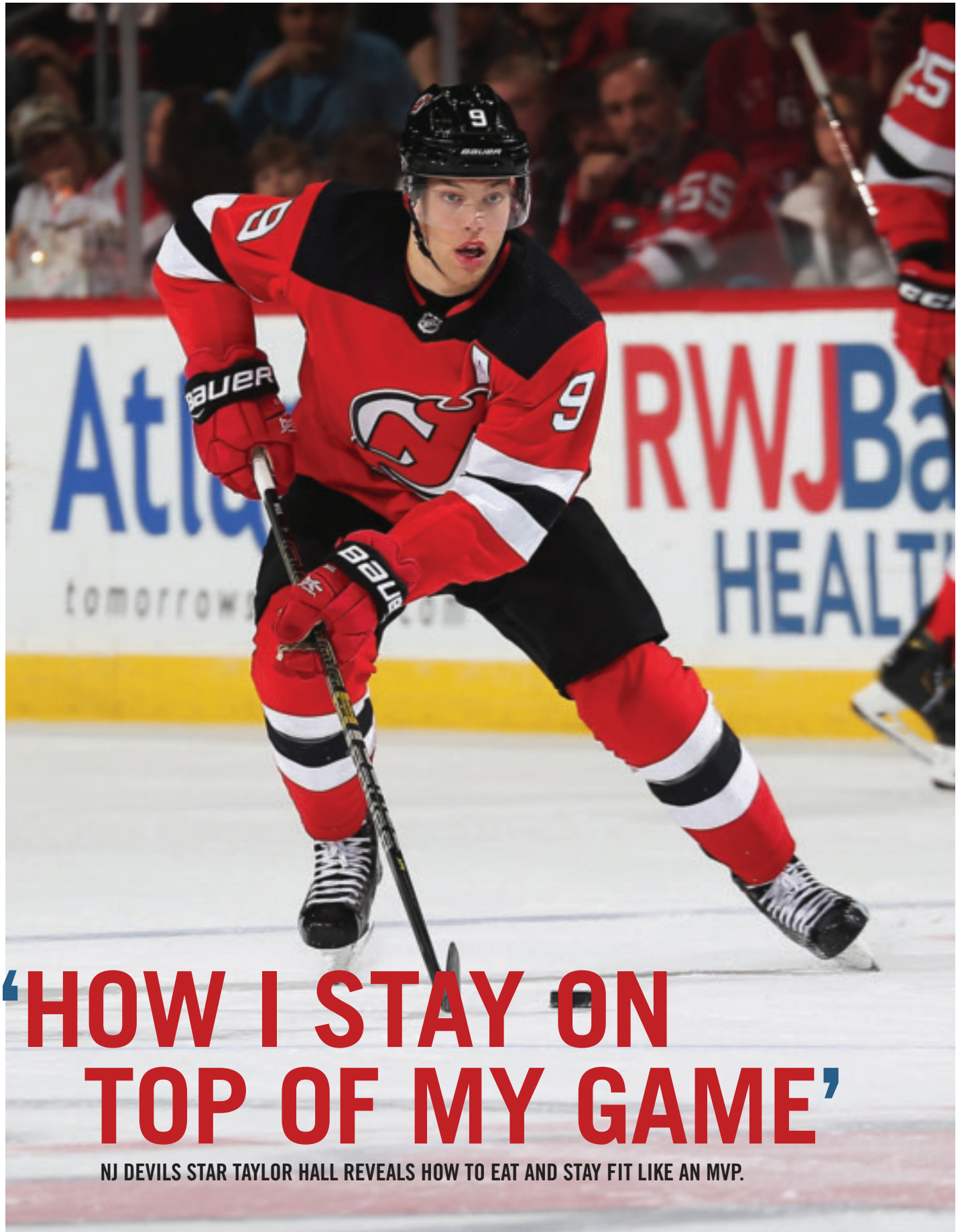
Ultimately, the goal for RWJBarnabas Health TeleMed is for physicians to be able to access, with patient permission, a patient's entire medical record in order to help make better diagnoses.

"That's an aspirational goal right now, because electronic medical record systems don't communicate between themselves as well as they need to yet," Mansue says. "But the technology improves every year."



AMY MANSUE

To enroll or learn more about RWJBarnabas Health TeleMed, powered by American Well, visit [www.rwjbh.org/telemed](http://www.rwjbh.org/telemed), or download the app at the App Store or Google Play.



# ‘HOW I STAY ON TOP OF MY GAME’

NJ DEVILS STAR TAYLOR HALL REVEALS HOW TO EAT AND STAY FIT LIKE AN MVP.

PHOTO CREDIT © JERSEY DEVILS/ANDY MARLIN



Taylor Hall's healthy eating habits started young. "I can remember being at tournaments with my parents. All the other kids would be having Slurpees and chocolate bars after the game, but my parents had oranges and granola bars ready for me," the 26-year-old New Jersey Devils left wing recalled during a post-practice interview at RWJBarnabas Health Hockey House in Newark. "Eating well was instilled in me at an early age and it's something I take pride in, for sure."

Those healthy habits—along with hard work and amazing talent—have paid off, for Hall's career as well as for his team. Last year, he scored a career-high 93 points and led the Devils to the Stanley Cup playoffs for the first time in five years. He also became the first-ever Devils player to win the Hart Trophy as the league's most valuable player.

What's his secret for staying at peak fitness? It turns out that Hall's regimen, while serious, is also simple, with principles that can be followed by athletes at any level.

## EATING TO WIN

Ask Hall to name a favorite food, and you won't hear anything about ice cream or cake. "I tend to avoid sugar," he says. "I'm lucky that I don't often have a craving for it. But with the calories we expend, it's very important for me to digest healthy carbohydrates and lots of protein."

"I keep my diet pretty simple. Protein, carbohydrates and then as much roughage as I can—a side dish like asparagus or sweet potatoes, and always a salad with dinner. Gluten-free pasta, rice and quinoa—those are really good for people like me who expend a lot of energy."

Hall sticks to snacks that are low in carbohydrates and high in fat, like nuts, or high in protein, like Greek yogurt. "That kind of snack is not going to give you a big burst of energy before bedtime, so it will allow you to rest properly," he says.

Less nutritionally worthy foods are limited, but not eliminated. "My cheat foods are cheeseburgers and pizza," Hall says. "Maybe once a week you have yourself a night where you have those things. Certainly, you've got to live your life."

Getting enough fluid takes on special urgency for professional athletes. "Staying as well-hydrated as possible is huge. You don't want cramps during the game," Hall says.

## HELPING KIDS GET HEALTHIER, TOGETHER

RWJBarnabas Health (RWJBH) and the New Jersey Devils have built a robust partnership focused on promoting health and good, clean hockey fun.

RWJBH is the official healthcare provider for the Devils and their home base, the Prudential Center, where healthy snacks are available at all events. With the help of its specialty physicians and experts in nutrition and wellness, RWJBH collaborates with the Devils to benefit pro players, young athletes and children in need. Some examples:

- A rink affiliate program brings youth hockey clinics and wellness and nutrition education to players and coaches at ice hockey rinks statewide.
- The two organizations partner each year on the Running With the Devils 5K Run and Walk, with proceeds benefiting RWJBH hospitals.
- Devils players visit RWJBH hospitals to participate in special events for children. "That's a huge part of being a hockey player," says Devils star Taylor Hall. "We have a platform to give back, whether with a smile or simple encouragement. And not only is it great for the patients, it's also good for us."



From top: practicing shots in the Little Devils zone; membership is free for ages 12 and under; healthy snack options for all Devils fans.

He starts each day with two 500-milliliter bottles of water as soon as he wakes up, to get his metabolism going. "All day, I drink a ton of water, and during games, as many fluids with electrolytes as possible."

## BODY AND MIND

During the 82-game season, players expend energy where it counts—on the ice. After the season, Hall takes up to a month off from any physical activity, to give his body a rest. From then on, he works out and skates three times a day, five days a week.

His advice for other athletes is to focus their workouts on what their weaknesses are. "Some athletes might already have a very strong core, but need to work on their foot speed," he says. "Overall, don't worry about what you're good at. Just try and correct stuff that might be hampering you a little bit."

To prepare mentally, Hall uses meditation and relaxation techniques. "When I have a calm brain and everything seems easy

to me, I seem to play my best," he says.

## A WORD TO YOUNG ATHLETES

Perhaps surprisingly, Hall's advice to aspiring young hockey stars is not necessarily to work harder, but to take a step back. "Some parents have their kids in hockey year-round," he says. "You see these kids who are amazing hockey players, but they just don't seem to have a passion for it. I would say that you have to try out different things and have some free time."

"You have to really love whatever you do," he says. "The thing that you have the most passion for in life is what you're going to be successful at."

To learn more about the RWJBarnabas Health/New Jersey Devils partnership, visit [www.rwjbh.org/devils](http://www.rwjbh.org/devils).



# GOOD FOOD FOR EVERY BODY

**WELLNESS ON WHEELS MOBILE EDUCATION VAN PROVIDES A HANDS-ON APPROACH TO HEALTHY EATING.**

When the big green van pulls up, the kids say “Wow!”—and that’s just the reaction RWJBarnabas Health healthcare providers and their partners are looking for.

The 35-foot vehicle, decorated with bright fruits and vegetables, is the hub of the Wellness on Wheels mobile education initiative, which launched in the fall of 2018. Equipped with a hydroponic and earth-box greenhouse and a full kitchen, the van travels to places like preschools, senior homes and houses of worship in areas where affordable, healthy food is hard to come by.



**BARBARA MINTZ**

It’s fun to see young kids marvel at what an herb’s root looks like, run their fingers through soil, sort plastic fruits and vegetables or smile as they taste-test healthy recipes. Behind those

hands-on activities is an overarching goal: to help communities get healthier.

“At RWJBarnabas Health, we embrace the concept of bringing health and wellness to communities by teaching people in places where they live, work, earn and learn,” says Barbara Mintz, Senior Vice President, Healthy Living and Community Engagement. “We want to make sure that people in underserved communities have a level playing field when it comes to being healthy.”

## HELP FOR HUNGER

More than 900,000 New Jersey residents face hunger every day, according to the Community Food Bank of New Jersey. Unemployment, low wages and high housing costs contribute to the problem. So does the prevalence of “food deserts,” areas where residents live more than one mile from a supermarket and, without a car, must depend on public transportation to get there. Too often, those residents resort to unhealthy packaged or fast foods.

Wellness on Wheels aims to change those patterns and, to increase its impact, partners with local community groups. At a recent event at a New Brunswick preschool, hosted in conjunction with the Puerto Rican Action Board, a dietitian fluent in conversational Spanish showed children how to fill a plate with colorful food and

The Wellness on Wheels van is rolling to communities throughout the state.

demonstrated a simple, healthy recipe. Says Mintz, “We partner with local food banks and farmers markets to distribute healthy foods at our events.” Simple, culturally appropriate recipes are also provided to further support the mission of helping good health begin at home.

## EATING WELL

### CORN AND BLACK BEAN SALSA

We can get protein from plants as well as animals. Corn and black bean salsa makes a protein-packed after-school snack, or the perfect side dish with dinner.

- 1½ cups frozen corn, thawed and drained
- 1 cup low-sodium black beans, drained and rinsed
- 1 tomato, diced
- ½ red bell pepper, diced
- ¼ red onion, diced
- ½ jalapeño pepper, minced (optional)
- 2 tablespoons chopped parsley (or 1 tablespoon dried)
- zest and juice of 1 lime
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1/8 teaspoon salt
- 1/8 teaspoon black pepper

In a large bowl, combine all the ingredients and stir. Set salsa aside to allow flavors to come together. Serve with tortilla chips or on top of your favorite Latin-inspired dishes.



To see a video of the Wellness on Wheels inaugural outing and to learn more, visit [www.rwjbh.org/WellnessWheels](http://www.rwjbh.org/WellnessWheels).



# GETTING OLDER, GETTING BETTER

**GERIATRIC PSYCHIATRY CAN HELP ADULTS NAVIGATE ALL THE TRANSITIONS THAT COME WITH AGING.**

**“I**mproving with Age” is the title of a presentation that Lina Shihabuddin, MD, Chief Medical Officer, Behavioral Health Network at RWJBarnabas Health (RWJBH), likes to give.

“A lot of things do get better with age,” says Dr. Shihabuddin, who is board-certified in adult and geriatric psychiatry as well as hospice and palliative medicine. “Growing older should not be thought of as a bad thing, but as a transition to a different phase of life.”

That’s a call not just to think positive, but also to think about aging and health in a new way. It’s the approach healthcare practitioners like those in the RWJBH Behavioral Health Network are taking when they proactively screen for depression and anxiety in primary care settings.

“It’s no longer ‘I have a disease, so I need to see a doctor,’” Dr. Shihabuddin explains. “It’s ‘I need to be well.’ Screening and early intervention helps patients of every age stay ahead of the game.”

## ISSUES OF AGING



LINA SHIHABUDDIN, MD

Geriatric psychiatry, also known as geropsychiatry, refers to mental health care of a person 65 years or older. “People seek out geriatric psychiatry for two reasons,”

Dr. Shihabuddin says. “One, they may be dealing with very normal life adjustments that come with aging, which may include retirement, loss of a partner or distance from family.

“A second level of the issue is the start of memory problems, erratic behavior, possibly unsafe driving,” Dr. Shihabuddin says. “Is this the beginning of dementia, or a reversible medical problem? That’s where the intersection of primary care, neurology and geriatric psychiatry really comes into play.” Anxiety, depression and other issues can be triggered by a wide range of conditions, such as thyroid dysfunction, vascular problems, obesity or untreated diabetes.

Once the problem is diagnosed, healthcare providers can come up with a treatment plan, which may include anything from treating a disease, to creating a safer environment at home, to finding ways to be sure the patient has activity during the day, to teaching family members how to minimize conflict.

“The last resort, for us, is to offer medications,” such as antidepressants or sleep aids, Dr. Shihabuddin says.

“Medications have more side effects for geriatric patients, and take longer to get out of the system. In treating geriatric patients, you have to start at very low dosages and slowly increase the dose if needed.”

## TAKING THE FIRST STEP

Dr. Shihabuddin urges older adults (or their loved ones) to speak with their primary care provider as soon as signs of depression or anxiety appear. “The earlier you detect and treat a disorder, the better off you are,” she says.

Getting older gets a bad rap, Dr. Shihabuddin believes. “Yes, as the body ages, the neurons in the brain cells get less flexible, so it may be harder to learn new things,” she says. “On the other hand, the mind is more mature, giving older people the ability to look more analytically at situations and take them in stride. That’s what we call wisdom.

“People think about aging and they tend to think about things falling apart,” Dr. Shihabuddin says. “If we do enough early detection and prevention, it does not have to be like that.”



To learn more about geriatric psychiatry services in the RWJBarnabas Health system, visit [www.rwjbh.org/geriatricpsych](http://www.rwjbh.org/geriatricpsych).

## EVALUATING HEART FAILURE

Determining the degree of a patient's heart failure allows doctors to make the best recommendations for preventing, delaying or treating the condition. Cardiologists put heart failure into one of four classes, starting with symptoms. Here is the New York Heart Association Classification:

- **CLASS I:** Ordinary physical activity does not cause undue fatigue or shortness of breath
- **CLASS II:** Comfortable at rest, excessive physical activity results in fatigue and shortness of breath
- **CLASS III:** Symptoms with non-excessive physical activity
- **CLASS IV:** Symptoms at rest

The cardiologist will then do an objective assessment of the degree of heart failure based on observations as well as tests such as a blood test, X-ray, electrocardiogram, stress test and echocardiogram.

# LIVING WELL WITH HEART FAILURE





## IT'S POSSIBLE TO FEEL GOOD AND STAY ACTIVE, EVEN WITH A DIAGNOSIS OF HEART FAILURE.

The term “heart failure” means that this vital organ is damaged in some way. Despite the dire-sounding nature of the term, however, a diagnosis of heart failure is far from a death sentence.

“Care for heart failure patients has improved so dramatically that, although this is a chronic problem, patients who have it can live long and productive lives,” says Gary Rogal, MD, Chief of Cardiology for RWJBarnabas Health and a member of Barnabas Health Medical Group.

The key to this positive outcome is simple—but not necessarily easy. The heart failure patient must take medicine as directed and make the recommended lifestyle changes.

“The patient who listens to the things their doctor recommends they do will do better in the long term,” Dr. Rogal says. “I always tell my patients, ‘50 percent of your outcome is based on what I do, and 50 percent is based on what you do.’”

### UNDERSTANDING THE TERMS

About 5.7 million U.S. adults have heart failure, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

“‘Heart failure’ is a generic, umbrella term that covers many different disease entities,” Dr. Rogal says. “In the simplest terms, the heart is a pump, and it is failing as a pump.” The failure can fall into two different categories that often exist together: left-sided and right-sided dysfunction. (See sidebar at right.)



GARY ROGAL, MD

“People

sometimes get confused when they hear ‘heart failure,’ and ask, ‘Am I going to have a heart attack?’” Dr. Rogal says. “The reality is that they’re two different types of pathologies.”

Heart failure does not lead to a heart attack, he explains. Also, heart failure develops gradually, but a heart attack happens suddenly, when blood flow to an artery leading to the heart is blocked.

In either case, patients will receive similar advice for a heart-healthy lifestyle.

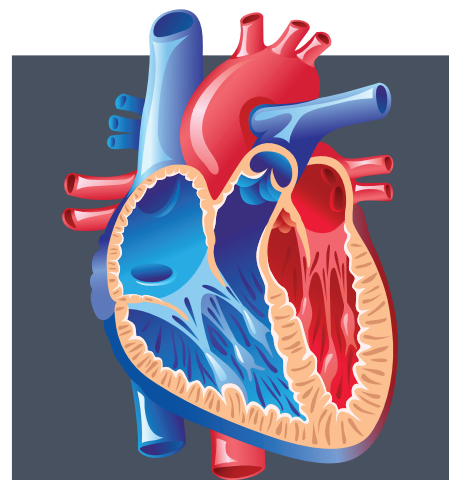
### GETTING TO GOOD HABITS

Those recommendations likely come as no surprise: Take medication as directed. Exercise. Eat a healthy, low-salt diet. Stop smoking. Get enough sleep. Manage stress. Still, many patients don’t follow doctors’ orders, Dr. Rogal says. “People’s lives are so busy, and this tends to be a problem that’s not an immediate issue staring them in the face,” he says. “They think they can pay attention to it tomorrow.”

At the first sign of weakening or abnormality of the heart muscle, “I tell patients they need to start medications to help their heart muscle and begin to exercise,” Dr. Rogal says. “Walking is the easiest way to begin. And over the years, the pharmacology for heart failure has dramatically improved, so that we have a broad spectrum of medicines we can use.”

Dr. Rogal also recommends that patients with heart failure stop drinking. “Alcohol is a direct toxin to the heart muscle,” he says. “It can also lead to other issues, such as excessive sodium intake and dietary indiscretion. In my view, once you’ve started to develop any sign of heart muscle impairment, it’s time to hang up the alcohol.”

The same caution does not hold true for sexual activity. “In most cases, patients



### TWO SIDES OF HEART FAILURE

**WITH LEFT-SIDED HEART FAILURE,** the muscle in the left side of the heart weakens so that the heart can’t pump enough blood properly (systolic dysfunction), or stiffens (diastolic dysfunction) so that the pressure in the heart goes up. Either case can result in fluid in the lungs and reduced heart output, resulting in marked reduction in exercise capacity, breathing difficulty and fatigue.

**IN RIGHT-SIDED, OR RIGHT VENTRICULAR (RV) HEART FAILURE,** the right side of the heart loses pumping power, leading to a backup of blood in the veins that results in swelling and congestion.

can remain sexually active,” Dr. Rogal says. “But be sure to discuss this with your doctor to ensure there are no limitations.”

Heart failure patients will find that the benefits of a heart-healthy lifestyle far outweigh the effort required to create new habits. Says Dr. Rogal, “You can live a very productive and positive life with heart failure—as long as you follow the guidelines shared by your doctor.”

### YOUR HEART DOESN'T BEAT JUST FOR YOU. GET IT CHECKED.

The cardiac specialists at RWJBarnabas Health care for approximately 20,000 heart failure patients in New Jersey each year. RWJBH provides cardiac care for patients of every age and every condition, from wellness programs to heart transplants. To schedule a checkup or to learn more about world-class heart care near you, visit [www.rwjbh.org/heart](http://www.rwjbh.org/heart).



Harley (third from right) came back to Children's Specialized Hospital for a visit with friends and fellow alumni of the Chronic Pain Management Program.

# WORKING THROUGH THE PAIN

HOW A BRAVE YOUNG WOMAN GOT HER LIFE BACK, WITH THE HELP OF CHILDREN'S SPECIALIZED HOSPITAL

When Katherine Bentley, MD, Director of the Pain Program at Children's Specialized Hospital, first met Harley Bourgeois, the 20-year-old had been confined to a wheelchair for more than a year.

Harley had traveled with her mother from their North Carolina home to New Brunswick so that the young woman could be evaluated for the hospital's Chronic Pain Management Program. It had been six years since Harley had been diagnosed with complex regional pain syndrome (CRPS), a chronic condition

that is thought to be caused by an injury to the nervous system, and that grows more excruciating over time.

"It was a long way to come just to be evaluated, but we had to



KATHERINE BENTLEY, MD

meet her, and she had to know what she would be getting into if she came back for the program," Dr. Bentley says. "It's a huge commitment. But she was ready for it."

## UNEXPLAINED ACHES

Harley's problem started when, as a healthy middle-schooler, she had an X-ray for a minor injury that caught a suspicious abnormality on her right femur. An oncologist removed the lump, and all seemed well—but the aching in Harley's right leg never went away.

One day, the horse she was riding bucked, shooting her into the air. She landed on the same aching femur. For many months thereafter, she and her parents traveled from doctor to doctor as the pain escalated. By the time Harley got to Children's Specialized Hospital, the slightest touch—even a breeze—sent pain shooting through her body.

"CRPS is a hard diagnosis because it's a diagnosis of exclusion. You rule out everything else, test by test," Dr. Bentley says. "While we don't know everything about why a youngster might be experiencing this chronic pain, we know that intensive therapies and multidisciplinary treatment plans can help them." Harley worked with a dedicated team of physical therapists, occupational therapists, psychologists, child life specialists and physician/advanced practice nurses.

The Chronic Pain Management Program is not for the faint of heart. "Harley was

weaned off her pain meds, and had hours of therapy every day, six days a week," Dr. Bentley says. The goal of therapy is to re-train the brain to decrease sensitivity to pain. Patients can take advantage of aqua therapy in the hospital's pool, as well as cutting-edge technology like the ZeroG, a dynamic support harness that helps people walk without using their full body weight.

The program also emphasizes mental preparation for reentering the normal life that so many have lost. A typical day would include meditation, individual and group psychology sessions, peer mentoring and evening recreation.

Over the course of eight demanding weeks, Harley made progress: mastering the parallel bars, walking up a stair, walking with a walker and the ZeroG harness. Finally, one day when her mother visited, Harley surprised her by walking to her without assistance, and giving her a big hug.

That was in March 2018. Harley is now a student at North Carolina State University, fulfilling her dream of studying livestock and poultry management. She still makes time to visit her friends and former therapists at Children's Specialized.

"The takeaway of this story is, 'never give up hope,'" Dr. Bentley says. "Harley had been in such pain and dysfunction for a long time, but she kept looking for a way to get better. And thanks to her perseverance and commitment, she did."



To learn more about the Chronic Pain Management Program and other services at Children's Specialized Hospital, visit [www.childrens-specialized.org](http://www.childrens-specialized.org).





Happy and healthy today, Daniel loves basketball and other sports.

## EXCELLENCE IN HEART CARE

The Children's Heart Center at Children's Hospital of New Jersey at Newark Beth Israel is the only center of its kind in the state of New Jersey, providing all forms of advanced imaging services for congenital heart disease in prenatal, pediatric and adult patients, and a complete array of transcatheter therapeutic interventions for all forms of congenital heart disease. The Center also offers the ECMO therapy program for children, as well as emergency transportation for critically ill infants and children throughout the region.

# THE BEAT GOES ON

**HE REQUIRED THREE HEART SURGERIES BY THE AGE OF 10, BUT THIS BOY'S FUTURE IS BRIGHT.**

**D**aniel Perry faced challenges from the very start, though to look at him today you'd never know it. Born with a complex form of congenital heart disease, he required intervention in the first few days of life, and was transported from the hospital where he was born to the Children's Heart Center at Children's Hospital of New Jersey at Newark Beth Israel Medical Center.



**RAJIV VERMA, MD**

His first operation, before he was one week old, required open-heart surgery, modified to minimize his risk. It was performed by a pediatric cardiac surgeon and pediatric interventional

cardiologist Rajiv Verma, MD, Director of the Children's Heart Center.

As is often the case with patients who have congenital heart disease, he later required additional surgeries—one when he was nearly 2 years old, and one when he was 9, performed by the cardiac surgical team at Children's Hospital.

### A MATTER OF TRUST

In addition to the three heart surgeries, Daniel required several minimally invasive procedures, known as transcatheter interventions, in the hospital's cardiac catheterization lab. Dr. Verma, the leader of New Jersey's most comprehensive pediatric interventional cardiology program, performed these. Over the years, the Perry family has developed an unshakeable bond with Dr. Verma and the hospital, says Daniel's mother, Darlene Meyers Perry.

"The doctors and nurses put us at ease

during very stressful procedures," Perry says. "Dr. Verma reviewed Daniel's case each time with great thought. He would draw a sketch and discuss with us in clear detail what procedure would be performed. He never looked for a quick fix for Daniel. He was always focused on his long-term health."

### A DOCTOR REFLECTS

"From the office to the cath lab to the operating room, we deliver a level of care that rivals any hospital in the region" Dr. Verma says. "There is no margin for error because every day, parents put their trust in us to save their children.

"I'm not sure that 20 or 25 years ago we could have improved Daniel's life to this level," he says. "It's rewarding to see how technology has evolved, allowing us to practice medicine with greater efficiency and dramatically improved outcomes.

"We have cared for children who have grown up to become adults and, in turn, parents. I am confident that one day I will see Daniel reach these same milestones."

"Daniel recently turned 12 and is a healthy young man, who loves soccer, basketball and riding bikes," Perry says. "You would never know what he has gone through medically. Thanks to Dr. Verma and Children's Hospital, our miracle has a full life ahead of him."

To learn more about the Children's Heart Center at Children's Hospital of New Jersey and other cardiac services at Newark Beth Israel Medical Center, visit [www.rwjbh.org/heart](http://www.rwjbh.org/heart).



1



RWJBarnabas Health and Newark Beth Israel Medical Center, in partnership with Rutgers Cancer Institute of New Jersey—the state's only NCI-designated Comprehensive Cancer Center—brings a world-class team of researchers and specialists to fight alongside you, providing close-to-home access to the latest treatment and clinical trials.

# PEDIATRIC CANCER: TREATING THE WHOLE CHILD



2

THE VALERIE FUND ENABLES THE CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL OF NEW JERSEY TO PROVIDE COMPREHENSIVE SUPPORT FOR KIDS WITH CANCER.

To learn more about the Valerie Fund Children's Center for Cancer and Blood Disorders at the Children's Hospital of New Jersey at Newark Beth Israel Medical Center, call **973.926.7161** or visit [www.rwjbh.org/ChildrensHospitalofNJ](http://www.rwjbh.org/ChildrensHospitalofNJ).



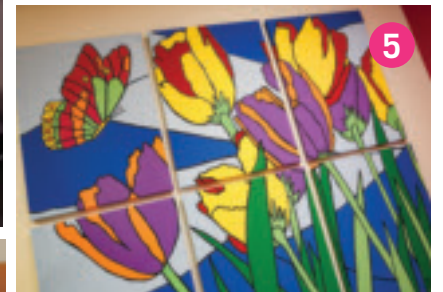
Children with cancer or blood disorders face treatment that may include chemotherapy, surgery, radiation therapy, immunotherapy and stem cell transplants.

In addition to care for their bodies, however, pediatric cancer patients need support for their mind and spirit, and help in navigating the fear and stress of their illness. Ed and Sue Goldstein learned this as their daughter Valerie battled cancer until her death at the age of 9.

Soon thereafter, in 1977, the Goldsteins created the Valerie Fund, which supports comprehensive care to children with cancer and blood disorders. Located in seven pediatric hospitals in New Jersey, New York and metro Philadelphia, the Valerie Fund Children's Centers for Cancer and Blood Disorders help ensure that families and children can receive world-class care without having to travel far from their homes.

One of those locations is the Children's Hospital of New Jersey (CHoNJ) at Newark Beth Israel Medical Center. "Because of the Valerie Fund, we can provide a whole range of psychosocial services to children in our care," says Suzanne Goldberg, educational liaison for the Valerie Fund at CHoNJ. "I provide educational support and services, and others provide services that help normalize a child's stay at or visit to a hospital, and help them understand their treatment."

The individualized services can encompass everything from providing dolls that help children "act out" treatment, to keeping them connected with school and classmates, to the kinds of therapy shown on these pages—and more. Said one young patient, "The child life specialist comes to play with me to distract me from getting chemo. I like that they treat me like a regular kid."



1. To help pass the time during treatment, children enjoy playing with an Xbox donated by the Gamers Outreach Foundation.

2. "When my parents had to tell my brother about my sickness, the social worker helped them find a good way to explain it," says Grace, 9, shown getting her vital signs checked at a recent visit.

3. The Valerie Fund Children's Transport, donated by the Schiller family, provides free transportation to and from treatment sessions for children and families who need it.

4. "Art encourages self-expression to help children deal with their thoughts and feelings about their illness," Goldberg says. Here, art therapist Esther Savetsky meets with a patient.

5. Colorful wall art throughout the Center creates a cheerful atmosphere.

6. Music therapist Deborah Rizzo uses music to help children cope with their illness. Research has shown that music—whether a patient is playing it or listening to it—helps improve mood, pain management and coping strategies.

## MEET THE DOCTORS

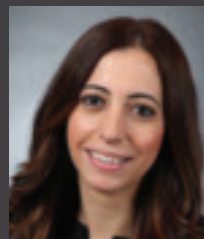
Board-certified pediatric oncology physicians work with a multidisciplinary team at the Valerie Fund Children's Center for Cancer and Blood Disorders.



**TEENA BHATLA, MD**  
Director, Division of Pediatric Hematology-Oncology



**SURABHI BATRA, MD**



**MARIANNA DE BENEDECTIS, MD**



**SHALU NARANG, MD**



**HARINI RAO, MD**



Powerful in pink:  
Elsie Best at  
the Frederick  
B. Cohen, MD,  
Comprehensive  
Cancer and Blood  
Disorders Center

**RWJBarnabas Health and Newark Beth Israel Medical Center, in partnership with Rutgers Cancer Institute of New Jersey—the state's only NCI-designated Comprehensive Cancer Center—brings a world-class team of researchers and specialists to fight alongside you, providing close-to-home access to the latest treatment and clinical trials.**

(NBI) under the care of oncologist Alice Cohen, MD, Director of the Frederick B. Cohen, MD, Comprehensive Cancer & Blood Disorders Center.

"I've always been a community person, so I wanted to go to my local hospital," Elsie says. "Dr. Cohen and I hit it off, and I felt like I could tell her about anything bothering me and she would take time to listen."

By 2010, Elsie was in remission.

Her experience inspired her to start a cancer support group called The Creators, which meets at Philemon Missionary Baptist Church and is open to men and women from Newark and surrounding areas.

"When I was diagnosed, I was scared to death," Elsie says. "A support group can really help a lot. Some people said they didn't have any place to express themselves. We talk about healthy eating and exercise and how to cope."

Unfortunately, Elsie's cancer came back in 2017, this time in her left breast. She underwent a mastectomy at NBI and is now once again in remission.

### REACHING OUT

These days, Elsie is busy visiting patients in hospitals and nursing homes with her church group, the Missionary Society. She also teaches Sunday school at her church and offers exercise instruction to senior citizens at Weequahic Park twice a week as part of "Café in the Park," an Essex County program. In addition, she serves as the vice president of the 34th District Renaissance Block Association.

Though she's not one to boast—"I like to let the work I've done speak for me," she says—Elsie's work has not gone unnoticed. She was named a Pacesetter (top fundraiser) by the American Cancer Society and a Community Trailblazer by NBI. "When you give back to the community, the community gives back to you," she reflects.

But what motivates Elsie is the chance to spread hope. "I love that word 'hope,' because if you don't have the belief that you'll get better, you won't," she says. "I've learned that people are stronger than they think they are."

# SPREADING HOPE

## A BREAST CANCER SURVIVOR GIVES BACK TO HER COMMUNITY.

Elsie Best, 81, has been serving her community for decades, from volunteering at her church to advocating for improved conditions in her neighborhood. It seems nothing can slow down the longtime resident of Newark's South Ward, not even battling breast cancer twice in the past decade.

In fact, her experience with cancer has given Elsie yet another mission, this one in support of other cancer survivors.

"Helping others doesn't give you a chance to feel sorry for yourself," Elsie

says. "At the end of each day it's good to ask yourself, 'What have I done to make a difference in someone else's life?'"

### FROM SCARED TO SUPPORTED

A retired social worker and mother of six (her husband Claude passed away in 2008), Elsie first encountered cancer in 2009, when a lump in her right breast turned out to be malignant. She underwent surgery at another hospital before opting to continue her treatment at Newark Beth Israel Medical Center

To learn more about the Frederick B. Cohen, MD, Comprehensive Cancer & Blood Disorders Center at NBI, call **973.926.7230** or visit [www.rwjbh.org/newarkbethcancer](http://www.rwjbh.org/newarkbethcancer).



Mother and daughter's day out: Ava and Sonia Dominguez at a local park



# BABY, HOLD ON

**LOVING AND EXPERT TREATMENT IN THE NEONATAL INTENSIVE CARE UNIT NURTURED A PREMATURE BABY—AND HER PARENTS.**

**S**onia Dominguez, 28, of Roselle was enjoying a healthy first pregnancy in November 2010. At 26 weeks into her pregnancy, “I had just hosted Thanksgiving for the first time as a married woman, and I was feeling great,” she remembers.

When she first noticed stomach pain a few days later, she thought it would pass, but it only got worse. Her doctor sent her to a local hospital, where she gave birth to daughter Ava. Weighing only 1 pound, 13 ounces, Ava was intubated, given an IV, and immediately transported to the neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) at Newark Beth Israel Medical Center (NBI), home to the state’s only Level IV NICU capable of caring for the most fragile newborns.

Sonia was discharged that same afternoon, allowing her and her husband to follow their daughter. The NBI NICU would become their home for the next four months as Ava gained strength and received treatment for the stage 2 brain bleed and the collapsed lung that developed after her premature birth.

## AT HOME IN THE NICU

“The NICU staff became our family,” Sonia recalls. “When we had rough nights

with Ava, they let us stay at her bedside as long as we wanted. And they involved us in her care as much as possible. We bathed her, fed her and changed her diapers and linens.”

In time, Ava’s lungs improved, with the help of a ventilator. The staff encouraged the family to do “kangaroo care,” which involves holding an unclothed baby on one’s bare chest. This skin-to-skin contact further strengthened bonding, while also helping to regulate Ava’s body temperature, heart rate and breathing. “My husband and I kangaroed Ava every day as long as we could,” Sonia recalls. “I believe that’s why Ava’s lung capacity developed as fast as it did.”

When they couldn’t be at the hospital, Sonia and her husband called regularly to inquire about Ava. “Once, I called 15 times overnight,” she remembers. The nurses on staff were always patient and helpful, she says, taking time to explain clinical details.

After discharge, Ava required frequent visits with her pediatrician, neurologist, physiatrist and ophthalmologist. Now, at nearly 8 years old, she continues to see these specialists and therapists for muscle weakness in her eyes, asthma, urticaria (skin reaction to cold temperatures), and cerebral palsy, a disability related to movement that is associated with premature birth.

“Educate yourself about your child’s conditions,” Sonia advises parents in similar situations. “Don’t wait for someone to explain things to you. Learn the language, learn your child and advocate for them.”

Sonia credits the NBI NICU for providing a strong foundation with which to approach the medical journey ahead. “This hospital was there for my husband and me—for my whole family—in a really dark time. We’ll never forget the love that we received there.”

To learn more about maternity services at Newark Beth Israel, including those for high-risk pregnancies and neonatal intensive care, call 973.926.7342 or visit [www.rwjbh.org/maternity](http://www.rwjbh.org/maternity).



# LESSONS LEARNED (AND POUNDS LOST)

## A HEALTHY LIFESTYLES CLASS CHANGED ONE WOMAN'S LIFE.

**T**'m always looking to learn something or meet some new people," says Newark resident Marisa Bell. More than three years ago, that urge took her to the Alma Beatty Health and Wellness Fair at Newark Beth Israel Medical Center (NBI), where she learned something that put her on the road to eating better, getting active and losing more than 30 pounds.

She learned that NBI sponsors a free class called Healthy Lifestyles that meets weekly to discuss a whole range of health topics. Marisa decided to go, and to participate in the class version of The Beth

Challenge, a weight-loss challenge that is also a sustainable nutrition and exercise program. The Beth Challenge, which began as an employee program in 2009, quickly evolved into a community program and has been taken to members of 12 local churches, to Newark City Hall, and to the State House in Trenton.

"The Healthy Lifestyles class doesn't require the Challenge, but we offer it on a voluntary basis for those who want guidance in making behavior changes, with group support," explains Karen Basedow, MS, RD, CDE, Wellness Nutritionist at Newark Beth

Israel Medical Center. "There are only two weigh-ins, one at the beginning and one at the end, with optional weekly weigh-ins."

That's because the point is not the pounds, but the overall pattern of living. "The Beth Challenge is our trademark way of encouraging people to make health changes," Basedow says. "Because obesity rates in New Jersey are so high—between 27 percent and 33 percent, depending on what stats you pull—we are focused on obesity. It's a disease that's linked to so many other diseases, such as type 2 diabetes, rheumatoid arthritis, cardiovascular disease and more.





Marisa Bell visits the fitness center at Newark Beth Israel

“Marisa is one of the people who attends regularly and has learned so much that she has incorporated into her own lifestyle,” Basedow says. “And she brings what she has learned into her community.”

### SPREADING THE WORD

So what has Marisa learned?

“I learned that healthy food can taste very good,” Marisa says. “We can eat well

without a lot of salt, fat or sugar.” For Marisa, that means making changes like using balsamic vinegar on vegetables, and having vegetables fill half her plate. It also means eating whole fruits instead of fruit juice and consuming lots of healthy grains.

“In Brazilian food, we eat a lot of rice and beans,” she says. “Now I buy dried beans and cook them in a pressure cooker, without salt. I almost never eat rice or bread anymore, because I’ve learned about quinoa and bulgur wheat, and I love those grains.”

She also learned to satisfy her sweet tooth with fruits. “Bananas, grapes, sometimes pineapple—whatever I can find in season and at a good price, because I like to save money, too.”

When she does have ice cream she has a small portion, maybe a quarter of a cup. She staves off overeating by reminding herself that the first taste is just like the tenth. “After the first few spoonfuls, I think to myself, Do you know the taste of it? Yes, I do. At some point, will you have to stop? Yes, I will. So stop now!”

Marisa also learned to be more active. “At first I didn’t walk much because it was cold out, so I would jog in front of the TV,” she says. “Now I have a treadmill at home. I also take Zumba classes.”

Over the course of the following year, almost without realizing it, Marisa began to shed pounds. “People at church started to notice and ask me if I was okay,” she says. “Then they wanted to know how I lost the weight.”

Marisa was happy to share her new wisdom. “If someone is really overweight or has prediabetes, doctors should be very strong with their words,” she says. “If they had cancer, they’d say, ‘Let’s fight it!’ Obesity can kill you just like cancer does.

“People feel overwhelmed if they think they have to make a lot of changes all at once,” she says. “If they’re hungry, they’ll feel deprived. I tell them to change one thing this month, and next week or next month change something else,” she says. “It took me one year to get rid of weight I gained over 35 years—a half pound this week, a whole pound the next. But always heading down.”



### EATING WELL

This recipe from the Reverend Dr. Ronald B. Christian Community Health & Wellness Center gives an idea for using eggs to experiment with dark greens that are rich in vitamin K.

#### FRITTATA WITH FETA & GREENS

Serves 8 (1 slice per serving)

- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 small yellow onion, diced
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 4 cups leafy greens like Swiss chard or kale, cut into thin ribbons
- 8 large eggs
- ¼ teaspoon black pepper
- ½ cup reduced fat feta cheese, crumbled
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley

Preheat oven to 350°. Heat a large, oven-proof skillet over medium high heat. Add onion and sauté for 3 to 4 minutes until softened. Add garlic and greens and cook 3 to 4 minutes until greens are wilted. Meanwhile, in a large bowl, whisk together eggs and black pepper. Transfer greens and onion mixture into bowl with eggs and stir to combine. Add feta to egg mixture. Transfer egg mixture back into oven-proof skillet, stirring to make sure the frittata doesn’t stick. Place skillet in oven for 15 to 18 minutes until eggs are set. Remove from oven, sprinkle with chopped parsley and allow to cool for 5 minutes before slicing into 8 servings. Serve and enjoy!

The Healthy Lifestyles class, and many other classes, take place at the Reverend Dr. Ronald B. Christian Community Health and Wellness Center at 208 Lyons Ave. in Newark. To learn more or to register, call **973.926.3312**.



## Getting Healthy Together!

**CHECK OUT OUR WELLNESS CLASSES AT THE REVEREND DR. RONALD B. CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY HEALTH AND WELLNESS CENTER**



Clockwise from top: Congressman Donald M. Payne, Jr. and Darrell K. Terry, Sr., President and Chief Executive Officer of Newark Beth Israel Medical Center, in the Center's kitchen; community members enjoy a cooking class; the Reverend Dr. Ronald B. Christian Community Health and Wellness Center.

**Tuesdays: 4:30 to 5:30 p.m.:**  
**Healthy Kids in Hannah's Kitchen**

Hands-on healthy cooking for kids ages 8-12

**Tuesdays: 6:30 to 8 p.m.:**  
**My Sister's Lighthouse Support Group**

Join fellow domestic violence survivors to share and heal.

**Wednesdays: 1:00 to 2 p.m.:**  
**Diabetes Prevention Program**

Work with our Certified Diabetes Educator to prevent or delay type 2 diabetes.

**Thursdays: 1:00 to 2 p.m.:**  
**Healthy Lifestyles**

Learn life skills to improve your overall health through nutrition and fitness.

**Thursdays: 6 to 6:45 p.m.:**  
**Zumba**

Dance fitness with easy moves to make you sweat!

All classes are located at the Rev. Dr. Ronald B. Christian Community Health & Wellness Center (208 Lyons Ave., Newark).

To register, contact Wellness Services at **973.926.7371** or visit [www.rwjbh.org/events](http://www.rwjbh.org/events).