



Vol. 17, No. 4 / Fall 2021

Heart to Heart

A publication of St. Tammany Health System



A THANKFUL HEART

'Last resort' TAVR procedure leaves patient happy, healthy and grateful

One doctor's COVID-19 story, p. 4

Weathering Hurricane Ida, p. 6

After 55 years, an STHS legend says goodbye, p. 10

Fore!, p. 14

AMERICA'S TOP 100 HOSPITALS



ST. TAMMANY MANY REASONS

What was founded in 1954 as a small, rural hospital has grown to become a regional health system with talented and experienced specialists, world-class technology and all the accolades that go with it. This year alone, St. Tammany Health System has received a raft of recognitions, including Women's Choice Awards for cancer care, breast care, heart care, stroke care, orthopedics, minimally invasive surgery and obstetrics. What's more, we're the only hospital in the Greater New Orleans area to receive a five-star rating from the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services.

MANY stars. MANY innovations. MANY reasons to choose St. Tammany.



St. TammanySM
HEALTH SYSTEM

WORLD-CLASS HEALTHCARE CLOSE TO HOME

*Among the Best 100 Hospitals for Patient Experience in 2021 for medium-sized hospitals, as ranked by Women's Choice Award.

MISSION

We are the heartbeat of our community, caring for our patients and their families with excellence, compassion and teamwork.

VISION

We will strengthen the health of our community with compassion, innovation and partnership.

VALUES

Teamwork. Trust. Compassion. Quality. Innovation.

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(985)898-4000 | StTammany.health
1202 S. Tyler St., Covington, LA 70433

St. Tammany Hospital Foundation

(985)898-4171 | STHFoundation.org

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Melissa Hodgson, executive editor
Mike Scott, editor and senior writer
Tim San Fillippo, cover design and art direction
Jan Budenz, editorial assistant



Gratefully Yours

In appreciation of fall, a season of hope

For me, fall is a time of hopefulness and optimism at St. Tammany Health System.

This issue of Heart to Heart magazine introduces you to Irvin Keller and his wife, Janet, who love horses as much as I do. They are also grateful for the care Irvin received here at St. Tammany, replacing his heart valve in a same-day, minimally invasive procedure called TAVR.

We also want to share our Hurricane Ida experience and some uplifting tales and statistics all related to the COVID-19 pandemic, which blessedly shows signs of improvement. We have now seen our community through four COVID-19 surges, treating more than 2,000 patients for this disease. And we have been part of some of the most promising treatments and tools to prevail over it.

St. Tammany Health System has administered more than 30,000 COVID vaccines. We have been involved in several clinical trials and other cutting-edge, approved therapies including monoclonal antibody treatment. New ways to ventilate fragile intensive care patients, such as proning and alternative oxygenation administration, have been employed. Our critical care physicians have used newly developed techniques to support patients who must be placed on ventilators.

We hope you enjoy our magazine. We see it as our opportunity to share with you the world-class healthcare we deliver here close to home.

Gratefully,



Joan M. Coffman, FACHE
STHS President and CEO



Joan M. Coffman, FACHE

COVID-19 BY THE NUMBERS

Key COVID-19 figures as of
October 11, 2021

86.09%

The percentage of COVID patients admitted to St. Tammany Health System between July 1 and Oct. 10, 2021, who were unvaccinated.

46.1%

The percentage of people in Louisiana who are fully vaccinated.

50.3%

The percentage of people in St. Tammany Parish who are fully vaccinated.

40.2%

The percentage of people in Tangipahoa Parish who are fully vaccinated.

36.3%

The percentage of people in Washington Parish who are fully vaccinated.

714,000

The total number of COVID deaths in the United States since the start of the pandemic.

675,000

The total number of Americans who died in the Spanish flu outbreak of 1918-1919.

Sources:
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention,
COVID Act Now,
St. Tammany Health System



Dr. Mark James of the St. Tammany Physicians Network's Folsom clinic was still feeling the ill effects of COVID-19 two months after contracting a 'breakthrough' case of the virus despite having been previously vaccinated. (Photo by Tim San Fillippo / STHS)

One doctor's COVID story

'I fear what it would have been like had I not had a vaccine'

BY MIKE SCOTT, MSCOTT@STPH.ORG

For Dr. Mark James, the calculus wasn't that difficult. He's older. He's got underlying health conditions. He was basically a COVID statistic waiting to happen.

So, when Pfizer's two-shot COVID-19 vaccine was made available to him in December, the family physician at the St. Tammany Physicians Network's Folsom clinic rolled up his sleeve and took it.

Some six months later, Dr. James became one of the fewer 15% to 20% of fully vaccinated people to contract a so-called "breakthrough case" of COVID-19.

Rather than shaking his fist at the cosmos, however, he's thankful for what protection the vaccine provided him. He's also sharing his story in hopes it serves as a cautionary tale to those who have yet to get their shot.

"I fear what it would have been like had I not had a vaccine," Dr. James said. "I'm 65, overweight, high blood pressure, so I have some risks. I'm afraid if I hadn't had the vaccine, I wouldn't be having this conversation."

While news of vaccinated people contracting COVID has raised eyebrows in some quarters, health experts say the vaccines are doing their job and they're doing it well.

"The important thing to remember here is that the vaccine isn't necessarily designed solely to stop infections entirely," said Dr. Mike Hill, infectious disease specialist at St. Tammany Health System. "If it does, that's great. But first and foremost, it's intended to prevent serious

illness, hospitalization and death from the virus. By and large, it's doing that."

The numbers back up that statement. Statewide figures show that, of those hospitalized for COVID-19, 18% have been vaccinated and 82% have been unvaccinated. At St. Tammany Health System, those figures since July 1 are more like 14% vaccinated and 86% unvaccinated.

Either way, they paint a clear picture: If you've been vaccinated, you are much more protected against contracting a case of COVID serious enough to land you in a hospital bed.

"I like those odds," Dr. Hill said. "I'll take those odds any day."

For Dr. James, it all started on the July 4th weekend when his daughter, then in the middle of a move, came to stay with him and his wife for a few days. Not long into her visit, his daughter developed a fever. A test confirmed it was COVID.

As has become common since the emergence of the delta variant of the virus, which is estimated to be 250 times more contagious than the previous variant, it went through his household like wildfire.

"Eight days later, I had fever, cough, headache, muscle aches. I just felt terrible," Dr. James said.

He got tested. It was COVID. His wife got tested. She had it, too.

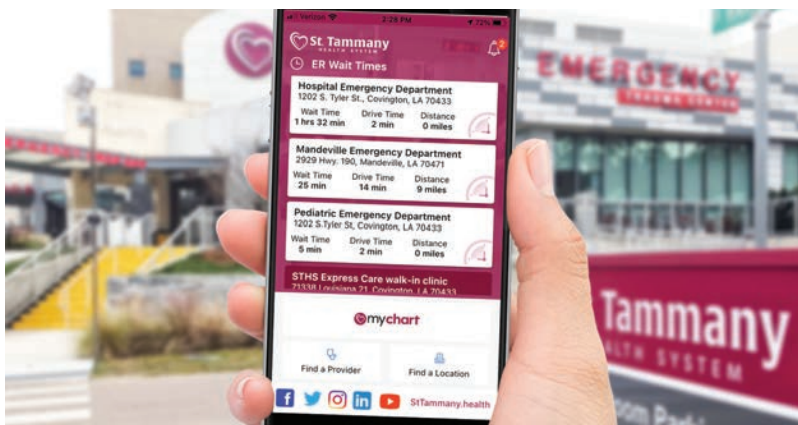
"She had no symptoms at all," he said. "It took me about two weeks at home to get to where I would be able to even think about going back to work."

continued on next page

Still need your COVID-19 vaccine? Use the MyChart app or call (985) 898-4001 to schedule your appointment with St. Tammany Health System.

Introducing the free STHS mobile app

Need to see a local doctor? There's an app for that.



The new St. Tammany Health System mobile app is available for free for both Apple and Android devices. (STHS photo illustration)

By STHS Communication Department

Want to know how long the wait is at St. Tammany Health System's ER? Need to find a local physician? Want to catch up the latest news from STHS?

Now, there's an app for that.

A few months after launching its new website, the health system has gone live with its companion app, which is available free for both Apple and Android devices. Simply search "St. Tammany Health System" in the respective app store, then download and install it.

Among other things, the new app helps patients to:

♥ **Find wait times** for the health system's main campus ER, its Pediatric ER, its standalone ER across from the Mandeville Post Office and its ExpressCare walk-in clinic.

♥ **Find a care provider** in the western St. Tammany area, searchable by name, specialty or keyword.

♥ **Find information** on all St. Tammany Health System facilities, including driving directions.

♥ **Link to the free MyChart app**, where you can find your latest health information, including test results.

♥ **Peruse a news feed** of the latest announcements and events at St. Tammany Health System.

"One of the main goals, both with the new website and the new app, is to help patients more easily harness all the exciting new digital health tools that are changing the face of healthcare," said Craig Doyle, the health system's VP/CIO Information Systems. "And I think we've done that."

He added: "St. Tammany Health System has long prided itself on its ability to deliver world-class health care close to home. Now, particularly with the new STHS app, we're putting world-class healthcare into the palm of your hand." ■

COVID continued.

He's COVID-free now and has returned to work. Still, even two months later, he didn't quite feel like his old self yet.

"This stuff is real," Dr. James said in August. "I'm still a month out and I'm not well at this point. I'm still coughing and fatigued."

Asked what he would say to those concerned about the vaccine's safety, he pointed out that more than 180 million Americans have been fully vaccinated since

December and that serious side effects – that is, those more severe than a sore arm and other temporary discomforts that indicate the vaccine is working – are exceedingly rare.

"Folks need to rethink this and do something that's not only good for themselves but also for the community and their family.

"The risks of the vaccine are so miniscule compared to the risks of the illness. We all need to get vaccinated." ■

STAT!

Quick hits from the STHS newsroom

By STHS Communication Department

Congratulations to **Dr. Angela Buonagura** and **Dr. Gabrielle Givens**, who received the **St. Tammany Quality Network Medical Director's Awards** for the second and third quarter of 2021, respectively. ... St. Tammany Health System infectious disease guru **Dr. Mike Hill** was named a **2021 Health Care Hero** by New Orleans CityBusiness for his work during the COVID-19 pandemic. ... STHS has once more earned the attention of **U.S. News & World Report**, being named among high performing hospitals for 2021-22 for back surgery, as well as treatment of COPD, heart attack, heart failure and kidney failure ... **Fitch Ratings** has upgraded STHS's issuer default rating, bumping it to 'AA-' from 'A+'. ... STHS's New Family Center has once more earned **The Gift Shining Star** designation from the Louisiana Department of Health in recognition of the quality of its maternity services. ... STHS's Emergency Department is now a **Geriatric Emergency Department**, as designated by the American College of Emergency Physicians. ... The **American Association of Cardiovascular and Pulmonary Rehabilitation** has renewed accreditation of the cardiac and pulmonary rehab program at STHS. ... The health system said goodbye recently to longtime colleagues including **Charlotte Chauvin** (retired after 20 years), **Helen Ruberts** (retired after 42 years) and **Pat Pope** (retired after 55 years). ■



Unlike its neighbors, a billboard for St. Tammany Health System's New Family Center along North Causeway Boulevard in Mandeville was no worse for wear after Hurricane Ida. (Photo by Mike Scott / STHS)



The staff at the health system's Mandeville Emergency Department, shown here hunkering down during the storm, and at the main hospital Emergency Department didn't stop working during Ida or its aftermath. (Photo by Rebecca Wood / STHS)

WEATHERPROOF

A hurricane on top of a pandemic is no match for STHS team

St. Tammany Health System has weathered its share of storms, so of course it was ready for Hurricane Ida, which slammed south Louisiana on Aug. 29, the 16th anniversary of Hurricane Katrina.

Throughout the storm and its aftermath, the health system's two emergency rooms remained open, as did the rest of its Covington hospital. That's just what locals have come to expect.

The key to it all? To St. Tammany Health System President and CEO Joan Coffman, that's simple. It's the all-hands-on-deck mentality of the health system's staff, many of whom assumed duties far outside their normal postings to make sure things ran smoothly.

"We were running on generator power for four days after the storm, and two of our facilities received significant damage – to say nothing of the personal losses so many of our staff experienced," Coffman said. "But they didn't miss a beat. They were laser-focused on our mission of caring for our family, friends and neighbors in our community. Colleagues slept on cots in conference rooms. They pumped gas into other colleagues' cars. Members of our leadership team stepped up to work shifts in our cafeteria's food service line.

"There are a lot of reasons St. Tammany Health System is No. 1, but without question, the dedication and doggedness of our care team is at the top. They *are* St. Tammany, and they never stop inspiring me." ■



STHS's Home Health and Hospice building was destroyed by a tree during the storm. After working out of a conference room in Ida's immediate aftermath, the operation has since been temporarily relocated to the STHS Palliative Care office at 1010 S. Polk St. (Photo by Melissa Hodgson / STHS)



Ida's winds ripped a portion of the roof from the Covington building housing STHS's Express Care walk-in clinic and St. Tammany Pediatrics, which is temporarily operating out of the St. Tammany Physicians Network clinics in Mandeville and Madisonville. (Photo by Mike Scott / STHS)



STHS colleagues await vittles from a food truck visiting the health system's Covington hospital post-Ida at the invitation of St. Tammany Hospital Foundation. Those colleagues who were essentially living at the hospital for the week after the storm were also given complimentary meals daily by the cafeteria team. (Photo by Mike Scott / STHS)



STHS Administrative Fellow Joe Schonacher mans the ice trailer after Ida. With electricity not restored to many colleagues' homes for a week or more, the health system arranged for a free ice giveaway. (Photo by Mike Scott / STHS)



With gas lines impossibly long after the storm, STHS arranged for a fuel delivery from Lavigne Oil of Baton Rouge to help keep colleagues' tanks full. (Photo by Mike Scott / STHS)



STHS colleagues operated a complimentary laundry service at the Covington hospital to help keep their co-workers fresh and clean in the days after Hurricane Ida. (Photo by Mike Scott / STHS)



In addition to converting the hospital's conference rooms into makeshift barracks, the Southern Hotel housed members of the STHS team in its ballroom for days after the storm. (Photo by Joan Coffman/STHS)



A tribute by St. Tammany Hospital Foundation to the work of STHS colleagues managed to survive the storm, if barely. (Photo by Mike Scott / STHS)

'I was blessed'

Irvin Keller was dying. Then he learned about TAVR.



Janet and Irvin Keller enjoy the morning on their spread off Lee Road. Just weeks before this photo was taken, Mr. Keller underwent a TAVR procedure, a minimally invasive surgery to replace a faulty heart valve. The procedure, his doctors say, saved his life. (Photo by Tim San Fillippo / STHS)

BY MIKE SCOTT, MSCOTT@STPH.ORG

Irvin Keller had been there before.

The retired New Orleans firefighter, now living on a 51-acre spread off Lee Road, had gone through open-heart surgery in 2004 for a double bypass. He did it again in 2014 for another bypass and an aortic valve replacement.

But when he was wheeled into the St. Tammany Health System Emergency Department in April, it was different. This time, it was dire.

“He was in bad shape,” his wife, Janet Keller, said. “He couldn’t breathe, and he was so fatigued. He couldn’t eat. ... He was rapidly declining at home.”

So, the Kellers headed to the hospital. It was a decision that would end up with Mr. Keller undergoing a relatively new, minimally invasive heart valve replacement surgery that he described as “night and day” when compared to open-heart surgery.

“The results were almost immediate,” he said. “When I woke up, I could feel the difference immediately.”

It also, according to his doctors, saved his life.

“He was going to die,” said Dr. Smita Patel, an Ochsner physician and one of Mr. Keller’s army of care providers dating to his bout with kidney failure in 2018. “If he would have been sent home, he would have gone back into failure. I think he would have died in maybe a couple of months. It was getting too far gone.”

Like many people, the Kellers had never heard of Transcatheter Aortic Valve Replacement, or TAVR, as the procedure Mr. Keller would undergo is more commonly called. They know all about it now, though. They’re big fans of it, too.

Unlike conventional heart surgery, a TAVR procedure doesn’t require the opening of a patient’s chest. Rather, surgeons perform their work through small incisions in the groin, neck or between the ribs, threading a catheter through the arteries to place a new heart valve where a diseased valve exists.

Usually, that means a much, much faster recovery time.

According to Karolina Ruthner, coordinator of the valve replacement program at St. Tammany Health System – or “the orchestra conductor,” as Mrs. Keller fondly describes her – the process requires the involvement of a whole team of surgeons, nurses and medical technicians.

That said, the procedure itself takes only a couple of hours to complete. What’s more, an estimated 95% of those patients who undergo TAVR surgery are sent home the next day, where they can usually resume many of their normal, day-to-day activities.

“Coming home, you don’t have to limit yourself to bed or getting up and shuffling around when you can,” Mr. Keller said. “I brought my appetite home. My appetite was good within 12 hours.”

He’s in good company. Since late 2019, when St. Tammany Health System became the first to offer TAVR surgery on the Northshore, more than 100 TAVR procedures have been performed at the Covington hospital.

It wasn’t long after Mr. Keller’s arrival at

the hospital that he was identified as a candidate for the surgery.

“He’s one of those cases where it was a live-or-die situation. It was kind of a last resort,” said Ruthner, who was called in with Ochsner cardiologist Dr. Ali Amkieh to consult on Mr. Keller’s case that first day. “We knew he was not going to go home. We had to work him up real fast and get him done.”

One of the first calls was to Ochsner cardiologist Dr. George Isa of Ochsner Health. He would be the lead surgeon in Mr. Keller’s case, working alongside Drs. Samy Abdelghani and Gregory Eckholdt, Ochsner specialists.

“I know they say, ‘We’re just doing our job,’ but the way that they do it makes a big difference. They do it with great love.”

- Janet Keller, wife of St. Tammany Health System heart patient Irvin Keller

Because he was in such bad shape, Mr. Keller had to stay in the hospital for several days to get his body ready for surgery, under the supervision of Dr. Patel and others. But once the day arrived and the surgery was completed, things improved with remarkable speed.

“When Dr. Isa came out to talk to me after the procedure, he said, ‘The moment I got the stent and the new valve in place, his blood pressure immediately resumed to be normal,’” Mrs. Keller remembered. “That’s how quick this works. Now, the heart was in bad shape for being in that state that it was in for the months that he was suffering, but all it’s doing now is healing.”

On a recent July day, Mr. Keller was enjoying his spread off Lee Road, communing with Beaux, one of the Kellers’ horses, as well as a family of chattering woodpeckers that has adopted

them. Both he and Mrs. Keller had nothing but praise for their doctors, nurses and everyone else at St. Tammany Health System and its partner since 2014, Ochsner Health.

“Man, I was blessed, there’s no doubt about that - blessed with the right people,” Mr. Keller said. “It’s so much like a family at that hospital. It’s a family atmosphere, but also extremely technically competent.”

Mrs. Keller feels the same way.

“I could leave the hospital at night and know he would be well cared for,” she said.

When asked two months after her husband’s surgery what she’d say to his care team if given the chance, she responded: “I’d give them all a hug, which I do if I ever see them. Our hearts will be forever grateful to Dr. Patel, Karolina, Dr. Isa and his team.”

Both of the Kellers went on to rattle off a list of others to whom they feel indebted: Dr. Eckholt, Dr. Libeau Berthelot, Dr. John Angelo, nurse Brittany. The list goes on.

“The entire care team was phenomenal,” Mrs. Keller said. “They worked together with no egos. If one of them had a suggestion, they listened and they evaluated it for the best care of the patient. And that’s what makes you walk away happy and smiling and owing a debt of gratitude to these people. I know they say, ‘We’re just doing our job,’ but the way that they do it makes a big difference. They do it with great love. They do. ... I thank everybody from the food team to the nurses to the cleanup team, people taking your temperature – everyone was so kind.”

That’s music to the ears of Dr. Patel, who said compassion and respect for patients has always been at the core of her practice – and who is proud of her association with St. Tammany Health System and its TAVR program.

“Mr. Keller has been a true success story. I think this gave him 10 to 20 more years,” Dr. Patel said. “And it’s right here at St. Tammany Health System. I’ve been in this community for 20 years, and nobody else is doing TAVR the way they are.” ■

WHAT IS TAVR?

TAVR, or Transcatheter Aortic Valve Replacement, is a minimally invasive procedure in which a malfunctioning heart valve is replaced without requiring open heart surgery. Since introducing it to the Northshore in 2019, St. Tammany Health System has performed well over 100 TAVR procedures.

How does it work?

With TAVR, a new valve is inserted without removing the old, damaged valve, somewhat similar to placing a stent in an artery.

The TAVR approach delivers a fully collapsible replacement valve to the valve site through a catheter. Once the new valve is expanded, it pushes the old valve leaflets out of the way and the tissue in the replacement valve takes over the job of regulating blood flow.

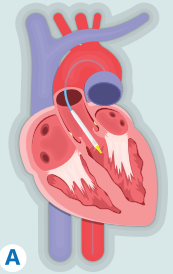
What are the benefits?

Because a TAVR procedure sees a surgeon access a malfunctioning heart valve through a small incision in the chest or groin, the recovery time is usually dramatically shorter than for those patients requiring open heart surgery.

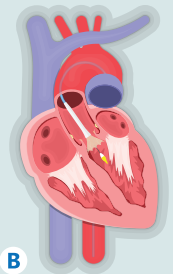
Because it is available to patients in all risk categories, TAVR can be an effective option to improve quality of life in patients who otherwise have limited choices for repair of their aortic valve.

What are the risks?

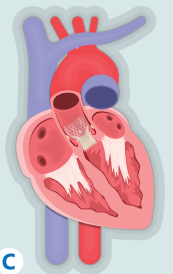
As with any surgical procedure, there can be complications. If you think TAVR might be an option for you, contact St. Tammany Health System Structural Heart Clinical Coordinator Karolina Ruthner at (985) 871-5826 or kruthner@stph.org.



A Catheter is inserted through aorta and into heart valve



B Transcatheter valve placed into position over the malfunctioning aortic valve



C Transcatheter valve in place, procedure completed

55 years later, an STHS legend retires

By STHS Communication Department

September 17th marked the end of an era at St. Tammany Health System.

Fifty-five years to the day of her hiring, STHS Benefits Coordinator Pat Pope retired, ending a career she started as a 17-year-old business office clerk in September 1966.

She leaves as the longest-tenured employee in the health system's 67-year history.

"I suspect we may never experience such a half century of individual service again," St. Tammany Health System President and CEO Joan Coffman told Pope in a midday celebration of what has been a legendary run.

"When you began your career in September 1966 at what was then St. Tammany Parish Hospital, we were a small, community hospital with just 45 beds to serve the citizens of St. Tammany Parish," Coffman added. "You have witnessed the transformation of that small facility into the health system we are today. Your servant heart has been there, supporting our colleagues in their administrative and personnel needs, all this time."



Fifty-five year St. Tammany Health System employee Pat Pope listens as STHS President and CEO Joan Coffman pays tribute to her upon Pat's retirement on Friday, Sept. 17, 2021. (Photos by Tim San Fillippo / STHS)

Coffman was just one of a number of well-wishers attending Friday's sendoff, which was marked by a lot of laughter and hugs, a few tears, a lunch of steak and potatoes – Pope's preferred menu – as well as a cake boasting purple icing. ("My favorite color," Pope said.)

STHS Director of Compensation and Benefits Michelle Chaix noted that when Pope started her St. Tammany career – during the administration of President Lyndon Johnson, incidentally – she earned \$1 an hour and had to have her parents sign a form allowing her to take the job.

Over the decades that followed, she would make a name for herself as the go-to person for questions about employee benefits – and one who wasn't above hand-holding to make sure her colleagues were properly taken care of, a characteristic that earned her widespread esteem.

It also earned her a dedicated parking spot in 2011 to mark her 45th work anniversary. On Friday, the sign that once adorned that spot – now framed – was presented to her, along with a handful of other gifts and a 55-year service trophy.

"I thank all of you," Pope said. "I've enjoyed my time here, I really have. I grew up here."

Although the sign for her parking space is gone, Pope won't go unremembered.

Shortly before Friday's ceremony, a tree was planted in her honor just outside the Human Resources building in which she worked along 8th Avenue.

"It is a Japanese magnolia – strong and hardy," STHS Director of Employment and Employee Relations Amy Gowland said. "As it grows, we'll think of you." ■



A friend in need

On Sept. 23, the Vizient Foundation presented a check for \$10,000 to the nonprofit St. Tammany Hospital Foundation for distribution to St. Tammany Health System colleagues affected by Hurricane Ida. The money will be distributed through the health system's Colleague Benevolent Fund, which was started in 1991. "If our colleagues are in crisis, they can't help *in* the crisis," foundation Executive Director Nicole Suhre said, explaining the thought behind the Ida assistance program. Pictured, from left, are STHS President and CEO Joan Coffman, the Vizient Foundation's Michael McLemore and St. Tammany Hospital Foundation's Nicole Suhre. (Photo by Mike Scott / STHS)

5 tips to make your year-end holidays healthier, happier

This year, give yourself the gift of wellness

BY JULIE FORTENBERRY RDN,
JFORTENBERRY@STPH.ORG

The holiday season is a time to celebrate with family and friends. Unfortunately, for many, it also becomes a time for overeating, guilt and weight gain. By implementing a few simple tips, you can stay healthy through the holiday season.

Let's start by saying it's a good idea to prepare ourselves for dealing with possible setbacks, as they are an inevitable part of life (especially this time of year). No matter how hard we try, the reality is that we are not perfect, and nor should we try to be.

With this in mind, have a plan so if you do slip, you are able to get back on track without sliding so far down that slope. Know yourself and your limits. Give yourself some (but not unlimited) slack this time of year. The key is finding the balance. Ask yourself, "Would I be OK with gaining one pound after the holidays?" "How about 10 pounds?" Only you will know the answer, and that will help mold your behaviors during this long holiday season.

Whether you are looking to just maintain weight or have hopes to continue with your weight-loss journey, planning ahead is essential during the next few weeks. Here are five tips to make your wellness a priority during this busy time of year:

♥ **Bring a healthy dish to share.** You may be surprised at how many people are appreciative and very interested in trying a healthy dish at holiday gatherings. This also ensures there will be something there that is on your plan. This may be as simple as a beautiful winter salad or a bag of local satsumas (a great hostess gift, by the way).

♥ **Remember the importance of protein, fiber and quality fats.** We tend to overdo the sugar during the holidays while skimping on foods that will actually keep us satisfied. Pile your plate with meats and any vegetables available. This will help regulate your blood sugars and keep you feeling fuller longer. It also helps to have a clearer mind when passing the dessert table, as opposed to feeling desperate, hungry and impulsive.

♥ **Determine your limits and set realistic expectations for yourself.** If you are someone who will fall off the deep end after a single bite of pecan pie, then maybe you shouldn't take that bite. If you are someone who finds great pleasure in having a piece of pecan pie on a holiday, and you are confident it won't throw you off into the vicious cycle of out-of-control eating, then maybe you should embrace it. Know yourself and determine what is acceptable for you and what is not. Thinking about this early on will help prepare you for in-the-moment decisions.

♥ **Don't try to "makeover" your favorite holiday dish.** If there is a dish you wait for every single year because you love it so much (think Mama's oyster dressing or Grandma's green bean casserole), let's just go with the original. Sure, there are plenty of ways to make it healthier, but the original version will make you so very happy. Enjoy a small serving of the real deal and make nutritional changes to other dishes.

♥ **Take the focus off food when possible.** It's amazing how much of what we love this time of year is centered around food. Start new family traditions that don't involve creating lingering food habits. Turn candy- and cookie-making time into non-edible projects like making wreaths, art decorations for the family or making an ornament. You can also try playing games or going on a walking tour of decorated homes. ■

Julie Fortenberry is a wellness and lifestyle nutritionist at St. Tammany Health System.



SAUTÉED EGGPLANT

This dish is perfect for fall, when all the vegetables you need are in season and can be found at your local farmers market! It also freezes well for the busy school nights that often happen this time of year.

Ingredients

- ½ cup water
- 2 onions, chopped
- 3 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 large eggplant, diced
- 1 15-ounce can crushed tomatoes
- ½ teaspoon dried basil
- ½ teaspoon dried oregano
- ½ teaspoon dried thyme
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon black pepper
- 1 bell pepper, seeded and diced
- 2 medium zucchini, sliced

Heat the water in a large pot, and add onions and garlic. Cook over medium heat, stirring often, until onions are soft, about 5 minutes.

Stir in eggplant, tomatoes, basil, oregano, thyme, salt and black pepper. Cover and simmer, stirring frequently, until eggplant is just tender when pierced with a fork, about 15 minutes.

Stir in bell pepper and zucchini. Cover and cook until tender, about 5 minutes.

Serve hot with fresh basil and, if desired, mozzarella cheese. This dish pairs nicely with baked chicken or grilled shrimp.

United in Pink

Foundation raises the bar on Breast Cancer Awareness Month

BY MIKE SCOTT, MSCOTT@STPH.ORG

Every October brings Breast Cancer Awareness Month, but things were a little different this October – and even a little pinker – at St. Tammany Health System.

All month long, St. Tammany Hospital Foundation rallied local organizations and businesses around its inaugural “United in Pink” initiative, a community-wide, multi-faceted effort to raise awareness and money to fuel the local fight against breast cancer.

“From mammograms on the Be Well Bus to pink-wrapped cruisers in the Sheriff’s Department, we are all united together in a great big pink effort to make sure every woman across the Northshore knows that early detection of breast cancer could save their life,” said Jack Khashou, administrator of St. Tammany Cancer Center, a campus of Ochsner Medical Center. “We have this broad coalition of organizations all focused together on the goal of saving local lives, United in Pink.”

The campaign kicked off on Oct. 1 in the parking lot of the cancer center, at 900 Ochsner Blvd. in Covington, with an event that included music, food trucks and mammogram opportunities aboard St. Tammany Health System’s new Be Well Bus, a 40-foot mobile health unit equipped with mammography and other health screening equipment.

Attendees at the kickoff and subsequent public events throughout the month were also invited to show their support to the cause by donating \$5 to write their name on one of two St. Tammany Parish Sheriff’s Office vehicles that were wrapped in pink.



Visitors stroll past St. Tammany Health System’s Be Well Bus at a United in Pink launch event on Oct. 1 at St. Tammany Cancer Center, a campus of Ochsner Medical Center. Throughout October, the bus – a mobile health unit equipped with mammography equipment – will be rolled through the parish for the convenience of local women who have yet to get their annual mammogram. (Photo by Mike Scott / STHS)



St. Tammany Health System Chief Nursing Officer and cancer survivor Kerry Milton signs one of two pink-wrapped Sheriff’s Office vehicles as part of United in Pink, a monthlong effort by St. Tammany Hospital Foundation to rally the community around the fight against breast cancer. (Photo by Melissa Hodgson / STHS)



Visitors get an up-close look at one of the pink-wrapped St. Tammany Parish Sheriff’s Office vehicles at a launch event for United in Pink, a monthlong effort in recognition of October as Breast Cancer Awareness Month. (Photo by Mike Scott / STHS)

Proceeds have been earmarked for education, screening and early detection initiatives of St. Tammany Health System and patient care at the cancer center.

But as the calendar changes, the health system’s dedication to the cause hasn’t.

“Breast Cancer Awareness Month is almost over for another year, but the fight continues,” said Anne Pablovich, community outreach coordinator at St. Tammany Health System. “We’ll be out in our community with the Be Well Bus all year round, because we know that early detection is just that important.”

Citing American Cancer Society figures, Pablovich said that when breast cancer is detected early, and is in the localized stage, the five-year relative survival rate is 99%.

“That’s a big number,” Pablovich said, “and getting regular mammograms can make a big difference, no matter what month it is.” ■

United in Pink 2021 is a fundraising effort of St. Tammany Hospital Foundation in partnership with the St. Tammany Parish Sheriff’s Office and the Mauti Cancer Fund / Be A Saint.

For more information on how to support cancer care at St. Tammany Health System, contact Jennifer Garrard at (985) 338-5328.

Technology grant to help heart patients amid pandemic

BY MIKE SCOTT, MSCOTT@STPH.ORG

A St. Tammany Health System program to monitor the vital signs of heart patients remotely from the patients' home is about to double, thanks to a grant from the LWCC Foundation.

The \$30,600 grant is part of an effort by the foundation – the philanthropic arm of the Louisiana Workers' Compensation Corp. – to address the state's most pressing healthcare needs in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In this case, it will allow St. Tammany's Home Health Department to purchase an estimated 17 additional wireless monitoring devices designed to keep daily tabs on the weight, blood pressure and other vital signs of congestive heart failure patients, but without requiring a daily office visit.

According to Paula Toups, assistant vice president of STHS's Home Health and Hospice programs, the additional machines will enable the health system to monitor



STHS's new wireless telehealth devices allow patients to take their blood pressure and other vital signs at home, then transmit them to the health system's Home Health office for evaluation by a nurse seven days a week. (Stock image)

some of its most vulnerable patients but without the COVID risk presented by going into public.

But that, she said, is just one benefit of what she describes as a multi-faceted, seven-day-a-week program in which a dedicated nurse reviews vital signs of all of the program's patients and then follows up when necessary.

"One of the important pieces of managing heart failure is being proactive and looking for subtle changes," Toups said. "For example, if their weight starts to creep up, we can intervene early and find out if it's medication or diet or something else and keep them from having an exacerbation of disease."

Another added value is that the STHS Home Health team doesn't train just the patient in how to use the device. They also train their family members about the monitors as well as providing dietary tips.

"Hopefully," Toups said, "that teaches future generations."

The grant, made to St. Tammany Hospital Foundation on behalf of the STHS Home Health program, isn't the first COVID grant made by the LWCC Foundation to the health system. In late 2020, it was the recipient of a \$15,000 grant to establish a permanent "Recharge Room" at STHS's Covington hospital to serve as an oasis of calm for frontline caregivers.

"St. Tammany Health System is truly grateful for its partnership with the LWCC Foundation," St. Tammany Hospital Foundation Executive Director Nicole Suhre said. "Now more than ever, it is important for our community to achieve and maintain their best level of health, and this program directly impacts this need. We appreciate the LWCC Foundation's vision for improving the overall well-being of Louisiana residents, especially those susceptible to COVID-19." ■

Hospital initiative aims to enhance workplace safety

By STHS Communication Department

As part of a broad emphasis on workplace safety amid an industrywide rise in violence against healthcare workers, St. Tammany Health System will soon equip some colleagues with personal panic buttons designed to alert security in the event of a threatening situation.

The alert devices, to be attached to colleagues' ID badges, will be paid for partly with money raised through the health system's annual Employee Giving Campaign, which this year saw 818 colleagues pledge a total of \$114,225 to St. Tammany Hospital Foundation.

Of that, \$7,000 was designated by donating colleagues to support the Colleague Safety Initiative after the idea was first raised

by Director of Security Kenny Norris.

The foundation is contributing another \$20,000 for the initiative through its Little Grant Big Impact program, bringing the total to \$27,000.

That money will finance a pilot program to be implemented initially in select areas of concern identified by health system leadership. If deemed effective, it could be implemented in other parts of the health system.

According to STHS Chief Operating Officer Sharon Toups, the panic buttons are an outgrowth of a larger workplace safety program at the health system that includes creation of a workplace violence committee chaired by Norris. Additionally, STHS participates in a workplace violence

collaborative organized by Vizient to share ideas with other hospitals and health systems.

Workplace violence in medical facilities has been called a quiet, growing epidemic. A recent story published by USA Today cited Bureau of Labor Statistics numbers that showed healthcare workers are at five times greater risk of being injured by violence than employees in any other private-sector industry.

Additionally, since 2011, hospitals have seen the rate of attacks reported against healthcare workers grow by about 60%.

"That's unacceptable," Norris said. "With this program, our goal is to keep our colleagues safer while on the job so they can focus on their heroic work to save lives and keep our community healthy." ■

Get Lucky! Golf Tournament tees off Nov. 18

Annual benefit celebrates its 10th anniversary

By STHS Communication Department

Ten years ago, St. Tammany Hospital Foundation got a good idea: Why not combine golf and generosity by holding an annual golf tournament to benefit the foundation's support of the healing work done by St. Tammany Health System?

The annual Get Lucky! Golf Tournament was born, with its first-ever edition defiantly taking place on Friday the 13th back in April 2012.

A decade later, it's still proving lucky.

To-date, the tournament has raised nearly a half-million dollars for the work of the physicians and staff at St. Tammany Health System – and counting.

The tournament will celebrate its 10th anniversary on Nov. 18 when it tees off its 2021 edition at Beau Chene Country Club in Mandeville.

Once more, it will be a four-man scramble with a shotgun start. Also once more, it will feature a range of tournament gifts, food



A scene from the 2020 Get Lucky! Golf Tournament. This year's tourney, scheduled for Nov. 18, will mark the event's 10th anniversary. (Photo by Chuck Billiot)

and beverage all along the course, and a fully catered afterparty for participating golfers.

"You want to talk about lucky? We're lucky to have such an enthusiastic and supportive community that has kept this event going for the past decade," said St. Tammany Hospital Foundation's Melanie Rudolph. "We're also excited to once more tee off what we know from past experience will be a fun day out on the course, all to make our community the healthiest it can be."

St. Tammany Hospital Foundation's 2021 Get Lucky! Golf Tournament is presented by Refreshments Solutions, with sponsors including Trane, Humana, Horne LLP, Liberty Self Storage, Mele Print Regional Radiology, Will Trist CFP/Merrill Lynch, Ochsner Health and St. Tammany Health System. ■

For more information, including sponsorship opportunities and registration details, visit STHfoundation.org/GolfTournament.

Angels of Light again to brighten the holiday season

By STHS Communication Department

As the year-end holidays draw near, it's a time of tradition but also a time for reflection.

The two combine with the upcoming 2021 Angels of Light, an annual tree-lighting event held by St. Tammany Hospital Foundation to memorialize friends, neighbors and members of the community while also benefitting St. Tammany Hospice.

This year's event is scheduled to take place at 5:30 p.m., Dec. 8, in the main lobby of St. Tammany Health System's Covington hospital.

This year's Tree for Life is dedicated by



The 2020 Tree for Life, as photographed in December in the lobby of St. Tammany Health System's Covington hospital. This year's Tree for Life is dedicated by the Maloney family in loving memory of Bobby and Bonny Maloney. (Photo by Tim San Fillippo / STHS)

the Maloney family in loving memory of Bobby and Bonny Maloney. As in years past, members of the community are invited to purchase "tribute angels" in the name of their loved ones to adorn the Tree for Life, which will stand in the hospital lobby throughout the holiday season.

"The Hospice Tree for Life is a long-standing, beloved tradition of St. Tammany Hospital Foundation and Hospice. Our community honors and remembers

loved ones who may not be with us this holiday season," the foundation's Melanie Rudolph said. "In turn, the foundation can provide much-needed support to the hospice program, providing palliative and supportive care to terminally ill patients and their families."

While every angel on the tree represents a special person being remembered by a friend or family member, each light symbolizes the extraordinary care and comfort provide to all hospice patients, Rudolph explained.

"The annual tree-lighting really is a beautiful event, filled with meaning that makes the holiday season just that much more special for those who participate," Rudolph said. ■

For more information on Angels of Light, including how you can purchase a tribute angel, visit STHfoundation.org/Angels or contact Rudolph at (985) 898-4141 or mrudolph@stph.org.

Falling for fall

Now's the perfect time to begin planning year-end giving



STHF Executive Director Nicole Suhre

Your generosity helps sustain the healing work of the physicians and staff of St. Tammany Health System and ensures the foundation can impact those we serve well into the future.

It's fall, y'all! I will admit to being a full-fledged fall fanatic. I was born in October, and the love of fall is just in my blood. It is my favorite season for so many reasons: the change in weather, Saints football, Halloween and the beginning of the holiday season, to name a few.

At St. Tammany Hospital Foundation, fall means gearing up for special event season. There's THE Gala presented by HUB International benefitting cancer care. There's the 33rd annual Monster Mash presented by Metairie Bank benefitting our incredible Parenting Center. There's the Get Lucky! Golf Tournament, which is celebrating its 10-year anniversary supporting the work of our foundation.

I invite you to visit www.STHfoundation.org/SpecialEvents to learn more about our fall events and sign up for the one that is the best fit for you, your business or your family. There is something for everyone!

This is also the time of the year we begin planning for year-end. Many donors use this time to consider cash gifts to the nonprofits they support. But did you know there are a variety of non-cash options that offer the same or greater tax benefits? Non-cash gifts are a smart way to maximize your philanthropy. These giving methods include gifts of appreciated stock

and securities, real estate and planned gifts of charitable remainder trusts, annuities, bequests or insurance beneficiary designations. Visit sthfoundation.planmygift.org to learn more about our non-cash giving options and to use our unique Gift Illustrator. Your generosity helps sustain the healing work of the physicians and staff of St. Tammany Health System and ensures the foundation can impact those we serve well into the future.

The next few years will see even more growth at St. Tammany Health System. We recognize that the hospital would not be the heartbeat of the community if not for the support of our residents and businesses. We thank you for being part of our journey over the years and invite you to continue your support by making a gift in 2021. Your donation can and WILL make a difference in the lives of you, your family, friends and neighbors.

Happy fall!

Nicole Suhre CFRE
STHF executive director



FOUNDATION CALENDAR

Save the dates!

Nov. 4

THE Gala 2021: Step into your Dancing Shoes
What: St. Tammany Hospital Foundation's signature annual fundraiser, presented by HUB, to support cancer care at St. Tammany Cancer Center, a campus of Ochsner Medical Center. This year's theme is "Step into Your Dancing Shoes," and the event will feature live and silent auctions, live music by Four Unplugged and more.

Where:

Tchefuncta Country Club

More:

thegalannorthshore.org
(985) 898-4141

Nov. 18

**Get Lucky!
Golf Tournament**
What: The foundation's 10th anniversary golf tournament, presented by Refreshment Solutions.

Where:

Beau Chene
Country Club

More:

[STHfoundation.org/
GolfTournament](http://STHfoundation.org/GolfTournament)
(985) 898-4141

Dec. 8

Angels of Light
What: Annual tree-lighting and program of tribute and remembrance benefiting St. Tammany Hospice

Where:

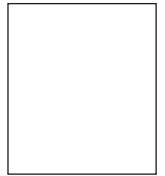
St. Tammany Parish Hospital
front lobby

More:

STHfoundation.org/angels
(985) 898-4141



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Search STHS job openings and apply today.

StTammany.health/Recruitment