



# Heart to Heart

A publication of St. Tammany Health System



## A NEW HOPE

After a difficult 2020,  
the new year dawns  
with promise

Dr. Mike Hill answers COVID-19 vaccine questions, P.4  
Teamwork, technology give heart patient a new lease on life, P.6  
The new year brings a new STHS website, P.8  
Fitness tips for those turning over a new leaf, P.10

# ST. TAMMANY MANY REASONS

## WE'RE #1 IN ORTHO CARE.

On the Northshore, we have more than azaleas and camellias in our backyards. We have world-class ortho care. St. Tammany Health System has been listed among America's Top Hospitals for Spine Surgery and we're Ranked #1 in Louisiana for Orthopedic Patient Safety. We are also the First Hospital on the Northshore to offer less invasive robotic procedures.

MANY firsts.

MANY happy patients.

MANY reasons to choose

ST. TAMMANY HEALTH SYSTEM.



WORLD-CLASS HEALTHCARE. CLOSE TO HOME.

# Gratefully Yours

Moving onward and upward in a year of infinite possibilities



STHS President and CEO Joan Coffman

We stand as the most equipped and experienced health system on the Northshore, and when you couple that with our compassion, empathy and care, we cannot be surpassed.

As we embark on a new year, we are excited about new beginnings. We celebrate new birth, new growth and new successes. We see light up ahead as the world makes progress fighting the COVID-19 pandemic, especially in the promise of widespread vaccine success.

We are grateful for the spiritual, emotional and empathic support of our community faith leaders, mental health professionals and peer support as we advance science and medicine each day.

We were founded to ensure the families of west St. Tammany and surrounding areas did not have to travel for care. Nothing about the COVID-19 pandemic can disrupt that commitment. Today, our board of commissioners, executive team, medical staff and our partner Ochsner Health collaborate to ensure we grow strategically to support the needs of our local population and deliver on the promise of world-class healthcare, close to home.

Our health system's partnership with Ochsner has helped improve our community's overall health and quality of life, today and for the future. Together, we represent the most complete system of care, aligning west St. Tammany's top two independent health leaders in lockstep with the common goals of improving access, expanding specialty care and making care affordable.

As we employ national best practices in our own daily operations, we are proud to see national agencies award our sustained performance over time. Most recently, Leapfrog, CareChex and Women's Choice recognized our quality, safety and service excellence for yet another year. We believe our unique combination of innovation, compassion and hometown approach to patient care are the secret to our success.

Please enjoy 2021's first issue of Heart to Heart magazine, an opportunity for us as your community health system to connect with you our neighbors, family and friends. We hope to welcome you into our new addition later this year, but in the meantime, here's our latest news for you.

Gratefully,



Joan Coffman, FACHE, STHS President / CEO



St. Tammany Health System's 'Team Vaccine' - which consists of, from left, Leslie Kelt, Elaina Schexnayder, Jo Watkins and Jena Sharp - pause from administering the COVID-19 vaccine to STHS colleagues to pose for a group photo. (Photo by Mike Scott/STHS)

## COVID-19 BY THE NUMBERS

Key COVID-19  
figures from  
March 10, 2020  
to Jan. 4, 2021

**322,181**

The total number of COVID-  
positive or probable positive  
cases reported in Louisiana

**15,838**

The total number of COVID-  
positive or probable positive  
cases in all of St. Tammany Parish

**3,206**

The total number of COVID-  
positive or probable positive  
cases in Washington Parish

**24,050+**

The total number of COVID-19  
tests performed at  
St. Tammany Health  
System facilities

**2,233**

The number of COVID-19  
positive cases, inpatient and  
outpatient, treated at STHS

**744**

The number of COVID-19  
inpatient cases discharged  
from the hospital

**55**

The total number of  
inpatients receiving COVID  
care at STHS on Jan. 4, 2021

Visit [STPH.org/COVID-19](http://STPH.org/COVID-19)  
for the latest information  
on coronavirus in  
St. Tammany Parish.

On Dec. 16, St. Tammany Health System infectious disease expert Dr. Mike Hill became the first member of the health system's staff to receive the COVID vaccine. Even with COVID vaccines now being distributed, Dr. Hill said it will be important for us to continue to wear masks and socially distance well into 2021.  
(Photo by Tim San Filippo/STHS)

# A New Hope

COVID vaccines are coming,  
but then what?

BY MIKE SCOTT, [MSCOTT@STPH.ORG](mailto:MSCOTT@STPH.ORG)

The COVID-19 vaccines are here. After a decidedly difficult 2020, St. Tammany Health System began vaccinating its front-line caregivers against the deadly coronavirus in December, with availability for the general public on the horizon.

But given how new they are, there are still more questions than answers in the minds of many people about the new vaccines. To help answer them, we sat down for a conversation with Dr. Mike Hill, STHS's infectious disease expert.

Here's what we learned:

## Are the COVID vaccines safe?

The answer here is simple: "Yes. I would take the vaccine," Dr. Hill said. "I believe they're safe."

In fact, he was the first person at St. Tammany Health System to receive Pfizer's vaccine, the first such vaccine on the market, on Dec. 16.

That being said, some people have expressed concern that its quick development could mean the vaccines haven't been adequately studied. That's not the case, experts say. For starters, the Trump Administration's Operation Warp Speed was designed specifically to provide the money and resources needed to develop a vaccine as soon as possible.

In addition, researchers weren't working from scratch. The new vaccine is built on science from work with previous coronaviruses, such as MERS.

Also, while the approval process has been expedited, the CDC and the FDA – which grants final vaccine approval – insist that science and data have been driving the approval process.



## Is it safe for children?

The answer here is unclear. Not enough research has been done on how the vaccine affects children, although research is currently underway, including by our partners at Ochsner Health.

Until that research is complete, the CDC recommends children who are 16 or younger not get the vaccine.

## Can I catch COVID from the new vaccines?

No. Because there's no live virus in the COVID vaccine, there's no chance of contracting the disease from it.

Unlike vaccines for measles, mumps and other conditions that include live virus, the most promising COVID vaccines use a portion of the virus' messenger RNA, or mRNA, Dr. Hill said.

## When can we put our masks away?

Well, that'll require patience.

There's still a lot we don't know, such as how long the vaccine provides protection. There's also the fact that we need somewhere near 70% of the population to achieve immunity before we can consider the coronavirus defeated.

So even if you've been vaccinated, we'll all need to wear masks, practice social distancing and wash our hands well into 2021, Dr. Hill predicted.

"The good news is, we're making extraordinary progress," he said. "I think by fall 2021, we'll finally be able to loosen things up again."



In addition to blessing their hands, the STHS Hospice team invited the health system's caregivers to choose a stone printed with one of several inspirational words such as 'strength,' 'trust,' 'honor' and 'love.' (Photo by Tim San Fillippo/STHS)

# Blessing of the Hands

As COVID-19 cases continue to surge in what has become a historic pandemic, members of the St. Tammany Hospice team made rounds at St. Tammany Health System's Covington hospital recently to bless the hands of the caregivers, administrators and support staff there, and to pray for their continued strength. "You have and continue to dedicate yourselves to your role as caregivers," St. Tammany Hospice Bereavement Coordinator Stephanie Atwood said. "It does not go unnoticed."



Members of St. Tammany Health System's team of caregivers raise their hands as Hospice Chaplain Lonnie Thompson confers a blessing on them. (Photo by Mike Scott / STHS)



Members of the St. Tammany Health System administrative team have their hands blessed by St. Tammany Hospice representatives. (Photo by Tim San Fillippo / STHS)



St. Tammany Hospice Chaplain Lonnie Thompson, foreground, blesses the hands of St. Tammany Health System Nurse Practitioner Anne Thiel on Nov. 16, 2020. (Photo by Mike Scott / STHS)



St. Tammany Hospice Social Worker Tamara Richardson anoints the hands of Health System President and CEO Joan Coffman with scented oil as part of a blessing of the hands ceremony. (Photo by Tim San Fillippo / STHS)



Sheila and Tony Magee, center, reunite virtually with representatives from St. Tammany Health System and Ochsner Health, including the surgical team that saved Magee's life. They are, clockwise from upper left, Dr. Hamid Salam, director of Cardiovascular Services at St. Tammany Health System; Ochsner nurse Desiree Hyver RFNA and Ochsner surgeon Dr. Gregory Eckholdt; St. Tammany Health System Chief Operating Officer Sharon Toups; STHS Intensive Care Nurse Jennifer Yaeger and STHS Critical Care RN Supervisor Jennifer Corcoran; Adam Cantrelle, a clinical consultant with medical device manufacturer Abiomed; STHS Assistant Vice President of Communication Melissa Hodgson; Abiomed Patient Advocacy Specialist Jamie Perna; and STHS Cath Lab Nurse Jenn Collins and STHS Cath Lab Nurse Practitioner Karolina Ruthner. (STHS photo illustration)

# Against All Odds

How talent, teamwork and technology gave one patient a new lease on life

BY MIKE SCOTT, MSCOTT@STPH.ORG

Tony Magee is a thankful man, although the list of things for which he's thankful is a little different than those of most other people.

As exhausting as it is, he's thankful that he gets pressed into babysitting duty for his two energetic grandchildren three days a week. He's thankful for being able to mow his lawn. He's thankful for a lot of things – a lot of little things.

That's because, above all, he's thankful to be alive – and for the surgical team at St. Tammany Health System and its partners at Ochsner Health that, through a marathon display of planning, skill and deployment of technology, rebuffed a cascading list of worst-case scenarios to make sure that he is.

"There's a lot of this I don't remember," Magee said during a recent reunion with his St. Tammany and Ochsner care team, held virtually in deference to the COVID-19 pandemic. "... But I'm thankful I'm here now. I'm thankful that I'm able to carry on my life."

Even if Magee doesn't remember much, Dr. Hamid Salam sure does. As the medical director of Cardiovascular Services at St. Tammany

Health System, he remembers every minute of it, and vividly.

"I feel like this is a celebration of life," Dr. Salam said to Magee and wife Sheila during the reunion. "We are so excited, because at one point we thought we were not going to pull through this situation. But we are so excited to see both of you sitting here."

Magee's story started in early 2020 when, like so many others around the world, he contracted the COVID-19 coronavirus. Although he had a pre-existing heart condition, including having undergone a heart valve replacement in 2011, he survived his bout with COVID, but his cardiologist detected what Dr. Salam called "significant dysfunction" in his old valve.

Although Magee was considered a high-risk candidate for another valve replacement, the alternative – to leave the old valve in place – was a non-starter.

Rather than replacing his old valve through a traditional open-heart procedure, the decision was made to go with a transcatheter aortic valve replacement – or TAVR – a relatively new, minimally invasive procedure being performed at St. Tammany Health System that, barring

unforeseen complications, doesn't require a patient's chest to be opened. That means generally quicker recovery times.

As with all TAVR patients, a full battery of diagnostic tests was conducted to identify possible complications that might crop up during surgery. Plans were put in place for the procedure, as were backup plans.

On the day of Magee's surgery, a small army of about 20 surgeons, nurses, surgical techs and others stood at the ready to address any problems, along with an array of high-tech tools. Anticipating the possibility that Magee's coronary could become blocked – or “occluded,” in medical parlance – by his old surgical valve, Dr. Salam and his colleagues inserted a series of wires and balloons so they would be prepared should things go sideways.

All those precautions proved to be prescient – and lifesaving.

“The valve comes in. We deliver the valve as planned,” Dr. Salam explained. “Then, suddenly, things did not go as planned. The coronary was occluded. Suddenly, the rhythm went off.”

In layman's terms: Magee's heart had stopped functioning.

Dr. Gregory Eckholdt, a cardiothoracic surgeon with Ochsner Health System who was part of the surgical team, remembers the room, as crowded as it was, falling silent. He's not sure who said it, but he remembers somebody saying, “I think we need to start CPR.”

“It was almost a slow-motion kind of thing, where everybody was deciding, ‘Well, what's up?’”

Dr. Eckholdt said. “And obviously, the guys at the table – including Dr. Salam, of course – knew this was bad.”

But as bad as it was, it wasn't game over. Not yet.

“Now, this is really (where) the teamwork and the efficiency of this team played a major role in saving the life of Mr. Magee,” Dr. Salam said.

Thanks to the balloons that Dr. Salam and his team had the foresight to put in place earlier, they were able to re-establish blood flow to Magee's heart quickly. The only problem was that it wasn't enough blood flow.

After four or five minutes, another critical decision was made, Dr. Salam said.

He and his team stepped back, and Dr. Eckholdt stepped in to put Magee on a heart-lung bypass machine. The bypass machine would do the pumping for Magee's heart, maintaining the circulation of blood and oxygen in his body.

“After that, our surgical team did their part and then the interventional cardiology team jumped in and worked on establishing the flow back in,” Dr. Salam said. “(It was) extremely difficult, but we were able to get a stent in the left coronary artery, and then we reinforced it with another stent inside that stent to get

radial strength to keep the artery open.”

That took care of the left side of Magee's heart. A transesophageal echocardiogram, however, showed that the right side was distended and not functioning properly. Turns out, there was almost no blood flow at all to that side of the heart.

“So, we worked hard to open up the right coronary and, with some of my other colleagues' help, we were able to deliver a stent and re-establish blood flow in the right coronary,” Dr. Salam said.

Ochsner surgeon Dr. Charles Dicorte then took over to remove Magee from the bypass pump. A balloon pump was inserted to support the left side of the heart, and an Abiomed Impella device – another kind of pump – was inserted into the right ventricle, essentially bypassing the function of the heart until it could recover.

“The right-side Impella device really did the trick, and the recovery process had started and we were able to take him off the table and take him to the ICU,” Dr. Salam said.

From start to finish, the entire procedure had taken some eight hours, which Dr. Salam said speaks volumes about the dedication and tenacity of his team and his colleagues.

“I think this case would not have had the same outcome without the relentless effort and teamwork,” he said.

After about 48 hours, Magee went back into surgery to have the Impella device removed. His heart, having been given enough time to

recover, began working on its own. It still is.

As with any serious heart procedure, recovery has been slow – but it has been happening, and that's what's important.

“Since all this, we've been to the beach, we've been able to take the kids to the state fair in Jackson, Mississippi,” Sheila Magee said. “We went trick-or-treating with them, Tony's been back hunting once or twice. ... He's up and at it again.”

And that, according to Dr. Eckholdt, is no small thing considering all the challenges that played out – and were ultimately overcome – on that particularly long day in the operating room.

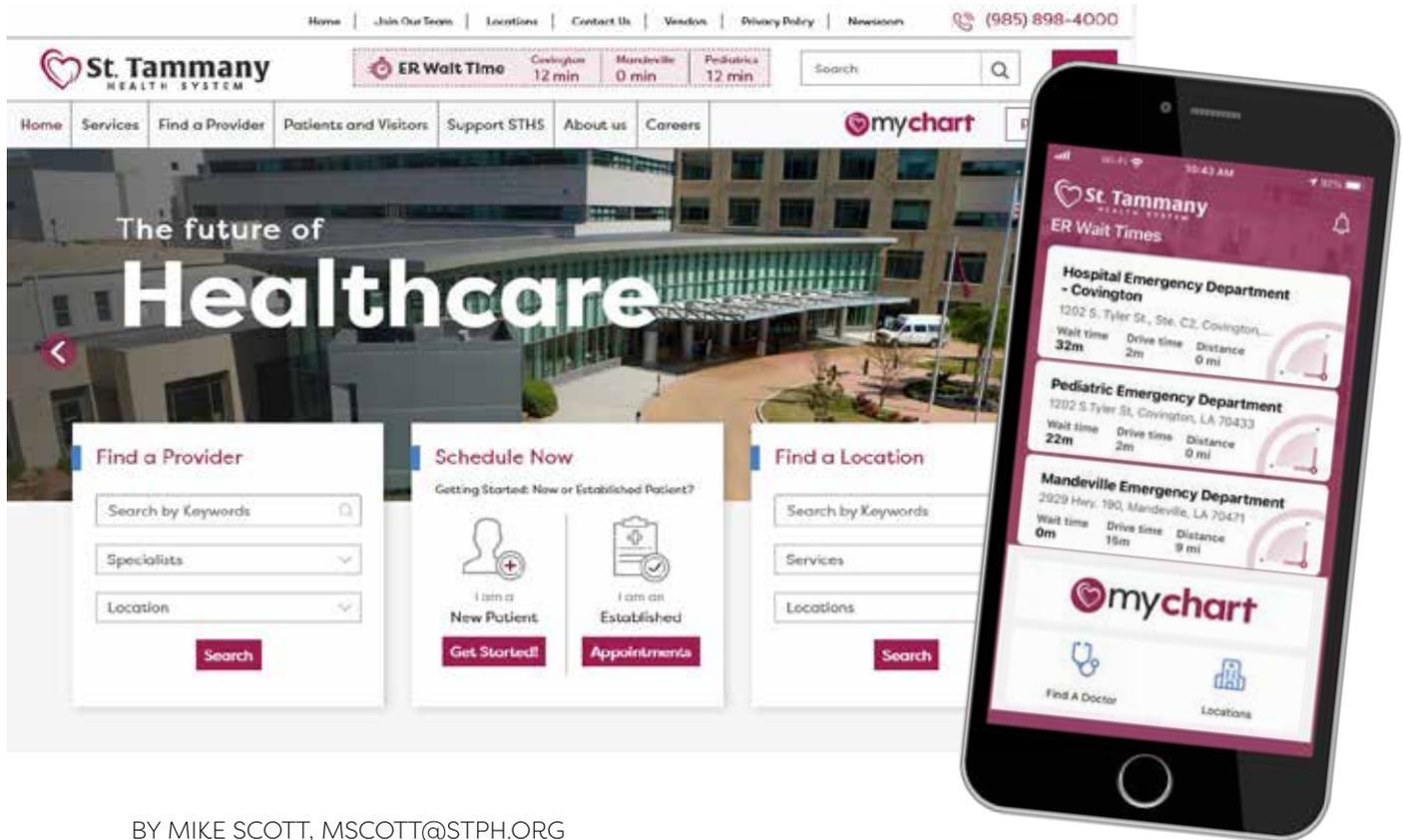
In fact, although Magee's case is an undeniable testament to the talent and training of all of those present, as well as to the value to the community of the partnership between St. Tammany Health System and Ochsner, Dr. Eckholdt suggested that maybe something else was at work that day.

“I've been doing this for about 25 years, and I've seen some amazing things, and this ranks in the top three maybe. Maybe one,” he said. “It's a real tribute to all the people involved – the preparation, planning and then performance. ... We see some amazing things, and I think it was truly a miracle, and I don't say that lightly.”

“I think this case would not have had the same outcome without the relentless effort and teamwork.”  
– Dr. Hamid Salam

# A New Digital Home

STHS rolls out new website, web address and mobile app



BY MIKE SCOTT, MSCOTT@STPH.ORG

A building boom has come to St. Tammany Health System, but it's not all bricks and mortar.

Sure, a new four-story patient tower is nearing completion at the health system's hospital campus in Covington. Work also continues on a new cancer center near Interstate 12 and Highway 22, a joint venture of STHS and partner Ochsner Health. And construction was recently completed on an expansion of our St. Tammany Physician's Network Clinic in Mandeville.

But behind the scenes, a team of techies has been building out the health system's new digital home, in the form of a new website and web address, which launched January 1, and a new mobile app, which will soon be available for free download on both Apple and Android devices.

"The new URL, StTammany.Health, reflects our new name, launched this time last year to better convey the scope and breadth of care available to our patients and their families throughout our service district," AVP/Communication Melissa Hodgson said. "We will always be this community's hospital, but we're so much more than that, with national recognition for quality, safety and patient experience from the latest robotic surgical technology to our family practices in every corner of west St. Tammany."

The most obvious change to the website is its cleaner, more modern look and feel. Even more significantly, however, is that it was designed

Between St. Tammany Health System's new website (above) and mobile app (inset), Northshore residents are more connected than ever to their healthcare providers.

with the patient experience in mind. That means more intuitive navigation and a more robust search function, both of which are intended to help patients and visitors find the information they need more easily, Hodgson said.

The new site also includes a more robust Newsroom section, to help health system leadership connect more quickly and efficiently with the Northshore community.

Together, it and the new STHS app — along with a similarly redesigned website for St. Tammany Hospital Foundation to help it better connect and engage with supporters — are helping to usher in a new age of healthcare in St. Tammany Parish, according to Craig Doyle, the health system's VP/CIO Information Systems.

"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," Doyle said. "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."

# New Faces

Meet some of the Northshore's newest care providers

St. Tammany Health System's continued dedication to expanding the healthcare options for our Northshore neighbors is probably most evident in our new patient tower nearing completion on our hospital campus and our new cancer center venture with Ochsner Health set to come online this summer. But our physical footprint isn't all that's expanding. So is our team of care providers. Allow us to introduce four of our newest colleagues, all added in past few months – and all of whom are accepting new patients.

CALL 985-898-4001 TO SCHEDULE AN APPOINTMENT WITH ANY OF OUR PROVIDERS.



**GABRIELLE GIVENS MD**  
**Primary office:**  
St. Tammany Physicians Network – Mandeville  
(201 St. Ann Drive, Mandeville)  
**Professional interests/specialties:**  
Family medicine.  
**Education:** University of Medicine and Health Sciences St. Kitts.  
"With family medicine, I get to take care of everyone and everything, really. It's such a variety," Dr. Givens said. "Every day is different. It brings its own challenges. That's what I enjoy: Not knowing what the day will bring."



**CHRISTEN SHEA FNP**  
**Primary office:**  
St. Tammany Physicians Network – Covington  
(80 Gardenia Drive, Covington)  
**Professional interests/specialties:**  
Family medicine, gerontology  
**Education:** LSU School of Nursing, SLU  
"People interest me. I like interactions with people. It's always different and new, and everyone's story is so interesting," she said.

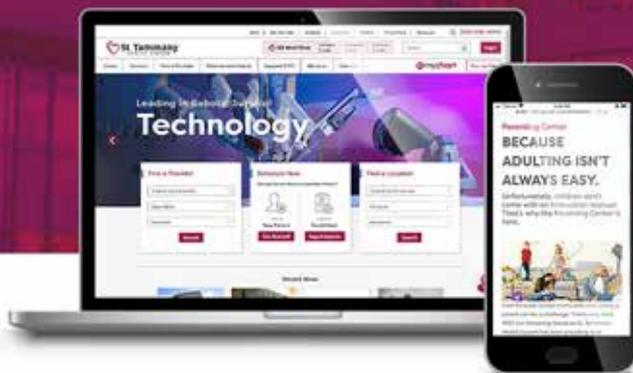


**KIRA SMITH APRN, FNP-C**  
**Primary office:**  
STHS Express Care walk-in clinic  
(71338 Louisiana 21, Covington)  
**Professional interests/specialties:**  
Family medicine.  
**Education:** LSU School of Nursing, SLU  
"I grew up in St. Tammany Parish. My parents moved over here when I was about 5. I grew up in Slidell, graduated from Northshore High School. ... I think that when you grow up in the South, you're kind of bonded to your family, and my family's all here."



**CHRISTINE W. THURSTON DO**  
**Primary office:**  
St. Tammany Physicians Network – Mandeville  
(201 St. Ann Drive, Mandeville)  
**Professional interests/specialties:**  
Family medicine.  
**Education:** American University, Edward Via College of Osteopathic Medicine, Virginia  
"I'm a military brat, so we moved every two years of my life when I was a kid, and we actually lived in Mandeville and New Orleans for a while, so I always knew I wanted to come back here."

OUR NEW WEBSITE IS LIVE



visit us now at  
[StTammany.Health](http://StTammany.Health)

# New Year, New You

Determined to get into better shape in 2021? Walk this way ...



A couple strolls with their dog on the Mandeville lakefront. Walking can be a great form of exercise, helping you lose weight without the drawbacks of high-impact workouts. (Stock image)

BY JULIE FORTENBERRY, JJFORTENBERRY@STPH.ORG

It is no secret that exercise is a necessary part of being healthy, which is why so many of us make New Year's resolutions to get into better shape. What may come as a surprise is that you don't need to go to the gym every day, run for miles or lift an assortment of weights to attain good health.

When most individuals decide to make a conscious effort to improve their health, they typically think they need to take on one of the more "intense exercises" such as running or swimming to see results. The truth is these high-intensity programs typically appeal only to individuals who are already fitness buffs.

For the majority of Americans who are not getting enough exercise and will not stick to a high-intensity training program, walking just might offer many of the same benefits. So, if you have wanted to do something good for your health, consider lacing up your tennis shoes, hitting the pavement, and simply putting one foot in front of the other.

Many healthcare professionals favor walking over running due to the fact that it is a low-impact exercise, making it easier on the joints and heart. In addition to being a free exercise, walking has various health benefits. Here are six of the best benefits that you can gain just by walking more.

**Improves Heart Health.** Many studies suggest that walking reduces the risk of cardiovascular events. As per the American Heart Association/American College of Sports Medicine guidelines, every adult should do moderate-intensity exercise (like brisk walking) for at least 30 minutes a day, five days a week.

**Aids Weight Loss.** Walking is an effective way to burn calories and lose weight. American Heart Association/American College of Sports Medicine guidelines recommend vigorous- intensity exercise for 75 minutes or more a week to aid in weight loss.

**Improves Mood.** Like other types of aerobic exercise, walking (especially out in nature) stimulates the production of neurotransmitters in the brain (such as endorphins) that help improve your mental state and mood.

**Aids Digestion.** After eating, our natural inclination is to sit down and rest after satisfying our hunger. However, you will probably get better digestive benefits if you decide to take a walk instead. Many people make the mistake of overeating with their meals, and this takes a toll on our digestive tract. Planning to go for a walk after meals will ensure that you are not consuming large portions, and it will encourage you to stay moving instead of being inactive.

**Strengthens Bones.** The low-impact exercise you get when you walk will ensure that your bones retain their healthy density even as you age. If you retain your bone density, you'll significantly lower the odds of developing osteoporosis in your older age.

**Reduces Risk of Diabetes.** Walking can prevent diabetes for healthy people and slow the progression of the disease for those who already have it. Walking daily regulates the glucose levels in your blood which can help you lower the odds of developing Type 2 diabetes throughout the course of your life.

Don't forget to check with your physician before starting any new exercise routine.

*Julie Fortenberry is a registered dietitian in the Diabetes Educational Department at St. Tammany Health System.*



A plaque affixed to the top of an STHS Nursing time capsule explains its purpose and states that it shouldn't be opened until 2070. (Photo by Tim San Fillippo / STHS)

# A Year to Remember

## Nursing time capsule to preserve the present

BY MIKE SCOTT, MSCOTT@STPH.ORG

Fifty years from now, when the nurses of 2070 reflect on the history of their profession, they won't have to work hard to find out what things were like in 2020.

They'll just have to pop open a time capsule being prepared by the St. Tammany Health System Nursing Department that is being stashed for safe keeping in a glassed-in enclosure being built into the health system's nearly complete new patient tower.

"We don't know what nursing is going to look like in 50 years," STHS Chief Nursing Officer Kerry Milton said, "but we want to send a message to our future colleagues and we want to remind them to take care of each other. We particularly hope they, too, will be able to give back to this community the way care was provided in 2020."

Although the time capsule will include such COVID-related items as an N95 mask, a face shield and possibly an empty vaccine vial, Milton stressed that it isn't intended to be a memorial to the COVID-19 pandemic.

In fact, the idea was dreamed up long before the coronavirus reared its head, as a way to acknowledge 2020 as the year of the nurse, as designated by the World Health

Organization in recognition of the 200th anniversary of the birth of Florence Nightingale.

And so, among the items in the capsule will be an STHS nursing residency lapel pin, a copy of the nursing pay scale from 2020, photos and a letter to the nurses of the future penned by Nursing Supervisor LeeAnn Prisk, who was tasked with spearheading the logistics of the project with input from the health system's entire nursing team.

After more than a year of planning, the items will be placed in the sealed, stainless-steel capsule – which is really more of a trunk, measuring roughly 2 feet long, 1.5 feet high and 1.5 feet deep. On the top of the box is a plaque, which will be visible to visitors and which explains it isn't to be opened until 2070.

In addition to connecting to her future colleagues, Prisk said she hopes as much as anything else that the time capsule serves as a touchstone for the tradition of quality care at St. Tammany Health System.

"I want them to be proud of where they work," Prisk said of her future colleagues. "The quality of care here at St. Tammany Health System really is something to be proud of – and I don't see those standards changing."

# New Rules

The COVID pandemic meant St. Tammany Hospital Foundation had to get creative for its annual events, but where there's a will, there's a socially responsible way.



On Oct. 1, friends and supporters of the patients and families at St. Tammany Cancer Center joined together for an intimate and whimsical evening at the 10th anniversary of THE Gala presented by HUB International. Guests enjoyed a three-course meal by Chef Jeffrey Hansell of Ox Lot 9 and wine by Adam Acquistapace while stepping “Into the Woods” for a truly transformed fairytale wonderland at the Southern Hotel. Major sponsors for the soiree included Kevin

and Mary Gardner, Blue Cross Blue Shield of Louisiana, Hancock Whitney, Humana, Ochsner Health, St. Tammany Health System and United Healthcare. Fewer tickets were made available this year out of social distancing concerns, and face coverings were the accessory du jour. But together with sponsors, donors and guests, the Gala raised more than \$155,000 in support of the vital programs and services of St. Tammany Cancer Center. (Photos by Chuck Billiot)



## TAKING A MULLIGAN



The third time was the charm for the 9th annual Get Lucky! Golf Tournament presented by Refreshment Solutions, which was held Nov. 19 at Money Hill Golf Course after twice being delayed due to COVID. It turned out to be a beautiful day on the links in support of Integrative Medicine at St. Tammany Health System, with our sponsors and golfers helping raise more than \$58,000. Players enjoyed a fully-catered lunch by Copeland's of New Orleans and delicious food and beverage on the course by Bosco's Italian Café, the Louisiana Seafood Board, Nothing Bundt Cakes and Pyre Provisions. A special thank you to all major sponsors: Refreshment Solutions, fl+WB Architects, Oschner Health, Bradley Murchison Kelly & Shea, Majestic Medical Solutions, St. Tammany Health System and Trane Technologies. (Photos by Chuck Billiot)



## IT WAS A GRAVEYARD SMASH

The STHS Parenting Center had a spooktacular time at the first-ever drive-through production of the community-beloved Monster Mash. Presented by Metairie Bank Northshore at Bogue Falaya Park on Oct. 17, it raised more than \$58,000 to support the work of the Parenting Center on the Northshore. Although socially distanced, those in attendance enjoyed all we've come to love about Monster Mash, with drive-through trick-or-treating and take-home cookie decorating and craft kits by Home Depot. Major sponsors also included Community Coffee, Ochsner Hospital for Children and St. Tammany Health System Hospice.



(Photo by DM Trace Photography)

## ANGELS OF LIGHT

Out of an abundance of caution, this year's Angels of Light holiday tree-lighting ceremony supporting St. Tammany Health System Hospice was held virtually, with guests witnessing the symbolic lighting of the tree and reading the names of their angel(s) from the safety and comfort of their own home. The Hospice Tree for Life, dedicated in loving memory of Richard and Sally Knight by their children and grandchildren, stood tall in the lobby of St. Tammany Parish Hospital, adorned with the hundreds of beautiful tribute angels representing the loved ones of those making a gift. To view the virtual event, visit [www.sthfoundation.org/angels](http://www.sthfoundation.org/angels).



(Photo by Tim San Fillippo / STHS)



'I just love the thought that something that is ordinarily discarded after birth ... can provide healing benefits which may give someone a better quality of life,' New Family Center Director Jamie Romage said of STHS's new placenta donation program. (Photo by Tim San Fillippo/STHS)

# A Win-Win-Win Situation

## Placenta donation program has multiple benefits

BY MIKE SCOTT, MSCOTT@STPH.ORG

The happiest place at St. Tammany Health System's Covington hospital just got a little happier.

The STHS New Family Center – where babies are born, families are forged and smiles are plentiful – has launched a placenta donation program in which new mothers, in addition to welcoming their new bundles of joy, can both change the lives of others for the better and raise money for charity all at once.

“It's really amazing,” said New Family Center Director Jamie Orr Romage MSN RN. “I just love the thought that something that is ordinarily discarded after birth, that is considered medical waste – but which is a part of bringing a life into this world – can provide healing benefits which may give someone a better quality of life.”

Operated in cooperation with the Florida-based firm TelaGen, the program gives expectant mothers who are scheduled to deliver their baby via Caesarean section the option of donating their placenta and the attached amniotic membrane (or water bag).

The tissue from the donation is then processed and used to stimulate cell growth in a variety of reconstructive procedures, including the healing of wounds and burns, spinal procedures and eye procedures, according to TelaGen.

The donation process is purely optional and doesn't affect the delivery of the baby in any way, Romage said. The placenta is simply

collected and preserved afterward instead of being discarded.

Additionally, it doesn't cost the new mother anything. In fact, as part of St. Tammany Health System's agreement with TelaGen, for each placenta donated at the hospital, the company will make a \$25 donation to a charity chosen by the delivering doctor and another \$25 donation to a charity chosen by the New Family Center.

That might not sound like a lot, but with somewhere in the neighborhood of 700 babies delivered via C-section at the Covington hospital in the past year, it can add up quickly.

“We've chosen the St. Tammany Hospital Foundation as our charity of choice,” Romage said. “That way, we know the donation isn't just staying here in our community but it also will help to continue the healing work we perform at the hospital.”

According to foundation Executive Director Nicole Suhre, that donated money will be earmarked for needs identified by the New Family Center team.

That makes it a win-win-win situation, with the new mom, the recipient of the donated placenta and the community all benefitting.

“What a beautiful complement to ushering in new life – by improving the life of others,” Suhre said.

Learn more about the work of St. Tammany Hospital Foundation at [STHfoundation.org](http://STHfoundation.org).

# Rising to the Challenge

With the new year come new opportunities to make a difference



STHF Executive Director Nicole Suhre

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The permanent Recharge Room was made possible with a \$15,000 grant to St. Tammany Hospital Foundation from the LWCC Foundation.

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## HAPPY NEW YEAR!

I don't know about you, but I have never been more excited to hang up a new calendar. Of course, while many of the challenges of 2020 will linger for some time to come, the ushering in of 2021 gives us all a renewed sense of hope and energy as we continue to face down the COVID-19 pandemic and navigate our new normal.

But even beyond that, we at St. Tammany Hospital Foundation have much to look forward to in 2021.

The growth of St. Tammany Health System has given us a variety of new ways for donors to make a difference. We are proud to offer support opportunities for initiatives such as our growing robotics program and other technology advancements, expanded pediatric offerings, healing arts in our new expansion and, of course, our evolving cancer program.

As the new cancer center we're building with our partners at Ochsner Health comes online this summer, donors will be able to make a direct impact on patient care through initiatives such as mobile mammography, community outreach and cancer screenings, the Therapeutic Food Pantry, mental health services, transportation grants, music therapy, Integrative Medicine and much more. In fact, the foundation is hiring a new team member dedicated to philanthropic support of our cancer program, and we can't wait to introduce you!

Under the leadership of our chairman, Will Trist, our Board of Trustees and staff are embarking on a journey this year to create a strategic plan for our organization that will provide a blueprint for our future growth. It is time to look back on our history with gratitude and take steps to bring our foundation and the support we can offer STHS to the next level.

COVID-19 has become part of our daily lives, but it is important to remember that our remarkable healthcare system continues to care for our community day in and day out. Our healthcare heroes have met the challenge of the pandemic head-on, while not missing a step in our routine care in birthing babies; administering infusions; performing surgeries; providing cardiac, cancer, neurological and hospice care; meeting the emergency needs of both children and the elderly alike; and so much more.

St. Tammany Health System is here for us, and it is the foundation's role to be here for it. Our foundation has always believed that Keeping St. Tammany Health System Healthy Keeps our Community Healthy, and we hope you join us in meeting that challenge in 2021.

Onward,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nicole', written in a cursive style.

Nicole Suhre, STHF executive director



From left, Sarah Shinn and Donna Saurage of the LWCC Foundation cut the ribbon on St. Tammany Health System's new, permanent Recharge Room on Dec. 1. (Photo Tim San Fillippo / STHS)



**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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STHS complies with applicable federal civil rights laws and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability or sex. STPH does not exclude people or treat them differently because of race, color, national origin, age, disability or sex. STPH provides free aids and services to people with disabilities to communicate effectively with us. If you need these services, contact the Patient Relations Department at 985-898-4669.



**MISSION**

St. Tammany Hospital Foundation is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization established to sustain the healing work of the physicians and staff of St. Tammany Health System.

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**UPCOMING EVENTS**

The St. Tammany Hospital Foundation hosts events in support of its philanthropic goals for St. Tammany Health System. Please check [STHfoundation.org](http://STHfoundation.org) and the foundation Facebook page for opportunities to support the foundation and health system.

St. Tammany Parish Hospital | 985-898-4000 | [stph.org](http://stph.org)  
St. Tammany Hospital Foundation | 985-898-4171 | [sthfoundation.org](http://sthfoundation.org)  
1202 S.Tyler St., Covington, LA 70433



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Cover photo by Tim San Fillippo/STHS



(STHS image)

# Top of the Class

## STHS named a Top Teaching Hospital

St. Tammany Health System’s Covington hospital has been named a Top Teaching Hospital nationally by The Leapfrog Group. The hospital is the only one in Louisiana to be named a Leapfrog Top Teaching Hospital for 2020. It was recognized in the small hospital category, which is for those with 500 or fewer beds.



“Being recognized as a Top Hospital is an extraordinary feat and we are honored to recognize St. Tammany Health System this year,” said Leah Binder, president and CEO of The Leapfrog Group. “Despite the extraordinary pressure and strain of the COVID-19 pandemic, St. Tammany Health System has demonstrated an unwavering dedication to patients and to the Northshore community. We congratulate the board, staff and clinicians whose efforts made this honor possible.”

To qualify for the Top Hospitals distinction, a healthcare institution must rank top among peers on the Leapfrog Hospital Survey, which assesses performance on the highest standards for quality and patient safety, and achieve top performance in its category.

The Leapfrog recognition is the latest in a string of recent honors bestowed upon St. Tammany Health System for general excellence, patient safety and in other areas. They include nine Women’s Choice awards, eight CareChex recognitions and a Care Continuum Center of Excellence designation by the GO2 Foundation for Lung Cancer.