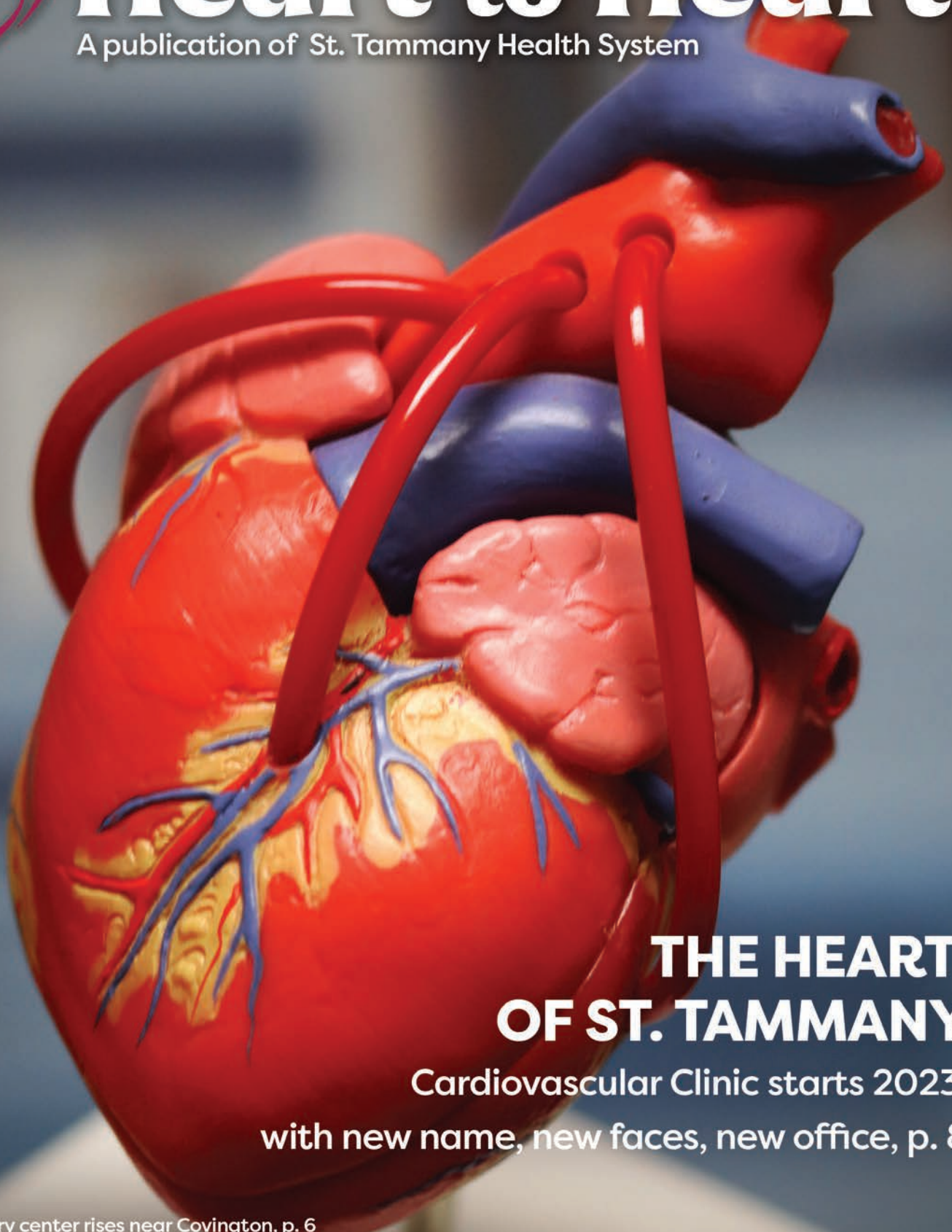


Vol. 19, No. 1 / Winter 2023



Heart to Heart

A publication of St. Tammany Health System



THE HEART OF ST. TAMMANY

Cardiovascular Clinic starts 2023
with new name, new faces, new office, p. 8

\$75M surgery center rises near Covington, p. 6

Bone & Joint Clinic leads way with robotic-assisted surgery, p. 7

St. Tammany Hospital Foundation reteams with NFL Player's Association, p. 13

Quilters craft an artful tribute to STHS caregivers, p. 14

NATIONALLY ACCREDITED CHEST PAIN CENTER

The cardiology team at St. Tammany Health System stays in rhythm with the community we love so much. Here on our high-tech campus, many talented specialists and subspecialists devote themselves to providing the latest advancements in cardiac disease prevention and minimally invasive cardiac surgery. Together with our partner Ochsner Health, we're making St. Tammany hearts beat stronger.

**WINNING
ST. TAMMANY
MANY HEARTS**



St. TammanySM
HEALTH SYSTEM

WORLD-CLASS HEALTHCARE CLOSE TO HOME

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.

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

- John A. Evans, Chairman
- James L. Core, Vice Chairman
- Thomas D. Davis, Secretary-Treasurer
- Wilson D. Bullock III
- Edgar J. Dillard CPA
- Merrill Laurent MD
- Sue Osbon PhD
- Kasey Hosch

EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP

- Joan M. Coffman FACHE, President and CEO
- Sharon Toups FACHE, SVP/Chief Operating Officer
- Kerry Milton BSN RN MSHA, SVP/Chief Nursing Officer
- Patrick J. Torcson MD MMM, SVP/Chief Medical Officer
- Sandra DiPietro MBA, SVP/Chief Financial Officer
- Christopher Ford SHRM-SCP, SVP/Human Resources
- Margaret Collett RN JD, VP/Chief Compliance Officer
- Craig Doyle, VP/Chief Information Officer
- Michael K. Hill MD, VP/Quality and Utilization Mgmt.
- Jack Khashou M.ED MS, VP/St. Tammany Quality Network
- Kelly Rabalais FACHE, AVP/Communication and Strategy

STHS complies with applicable federal civil rights laws and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability or sex. STHS does not exclude people or treat them differently because of race, color, national origin, age, disability or sex. STHS 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.

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



BOARD OF TRUSTEES

- Liz Healy, Chairman
- Kevin Gardner, Vice Chairman
- Laura Brown, Secretary-Treasurer
- Mary Grayson
- Joan Coffman, FACHE
- Penny Dastugue
- Paul Davis
- John A. Evans
- Chip Lavigne
- James L. Bradford, III
- Timothy A. Lentz
- Renee Maloney
- Sunny R. McDaniel, DNP, APRN
- Becky Carson Parks
- Kevin B. Mashburn
- Norma Richard
- Jim Woodard MD

St. Tammany Hospital Foundation
 (985) 898-4171 | STHFoundation.org

Heart to Heart magazine is a quarterly publication of St. Tammany Health System
 Vol. 19, No. 1; Winter 2023

Mike Scott, editor and senior writer
 Tory Mansfield, creative director
 Tim San Fillippo, cover design
 Jan Budenz, editorial assistant



Gratefully Yours

Nearly 70 years later, the beat goes on



Joan Coffman, FACHE

“For the past seven decades St. Tammany Parish has been experiencing explosive growth. And for the past seven decades St. Tammany Health System has been keeping pace.”

“We are the heartbeat of our community.”

Those are the first words of our St. Tammany Health System mission statement, so it’s only fitting that the cover of our first issue of 2023 features an image of a heart.

That photo was taken at our STHS Cardiovascular Clinic, which, like the health system as a whole, is in growth mode as we continue expanding to meet the needs of our friends, family and neighbors on the Northshore.

It’s also emblematic of the central role we’ve played in western St. Tammany Parish since our founding on Dec. 1, 1954. Since then, our community has experienced explosive growth. As we approach our 70th anniversary next year, we’ve been working hard to keep pace.

In fact, our continued growth to meet the needs of our community earned us a spot in The Times-Picayune’s year-end list of the Top 10 St. Tammany stories of 2022.

That growth will continue in 2023, and the expansion of the STHS Cardiovascular Clinic, which you can read about on pages 8 and 9, is just one part of it.

Honestly, we can’t wait to get going. Thanks, as always, for coming along with us on this journey – and thank you for trusting us to deliver world-class care close to home to you and your family.

Gratefully,



Joan M. Coffman, FACHE
 St. Tammany Health System president and CEO



An artful impact

Representatives of St. Tammany Health System and St. Tammany Hospital Foundation gathered Oct. 20 to accept the President’s Award at the St. Tammany Commission on Cultural Affairs’ 2022 President’s Arts Awards. The award was bestowed upon St. Tammany Hospital Foundation in recognition of the impact of its Healing Arts Initiative. Pictured are, from left, Healing Arts Committee members Catherine Cooper, Cindy Pulling, Mary Lee, Norma Richard and Becky Carson-Parks, foundation Executive Director Nicole Suhre, health system President and CEO Joan Coffman, and Healing Arts Committee members Jean-Marie Desrosiers and Carlos Sanchez. Learn more about the foundation’s Healing Arts Initiative at STHFoundation.org/HealingArts. (St. Tammany Hospital Foundation photo)

COVID, AT A GLANCE

A look at COVID-19 data, as of Jan. 11, 2023.



HIGH

The risk of COVID infection in St. Tammany Parish on the CDC's three-point community risk scale

6,849

New Louisiana cases reported in week ending Jan. 8

22

Current COVID hospitalizations at STHS

80.04%

Percent of unvaccinated COVID patients at STHS since July 2021



470,699

New cases reported nationally in week ending Jan. 10

1,091,184

Number of U.S. COVID deaths since start of pandemic.

Metro area vaccination rates

An up arrow (▲) indicates an increase since the previous reporting period. A down arrow (▼) indicates a decrease.

Parish	% vaccinated	Positive test rate
Jefferson	67.1%	17.8% ▲
Orleans	72.3%	14.0% ▲
St. John the Baptist	61.6%	16.3% ▲
St. Tammany	58.3%	17.9% ▼
St. James	52.9%	26.4% ▲
St. Bernard	50.5%	20.9% ▼
Tangipahoa	47.9%	17.0% ▲
Washington	43.1%	13.8% ▲

COVID-positive test rate and percent of those receiving 2+ doses or the one-shot J&J vaccine, by parish, as of Jan. 11, 2023. (Note: Positive test rate does not include results of at-home tests.)

Sources: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; Louisiana Department of Health; St. Tammany Health System

So this is what 'living with COVID' looks like

By Mike Scott, miscott@stph.org

So now we know.

Two years and 10 months after the pandemic started, this is what "living with COVID" looks like: the steady drumbeat of new variants and the ever-present specter of the arrival of yet another surge.

Welcome to the new normal.

To catch up on the latest COVID news, we visited recently with St. Tammany Health System infectious disease expert Dr. Mike Hill. Here's what he had to tell us:

Let's start with China, which seems to be dominating headlines right now. What's going on there?

On one level, it's hard to say, given that COVID data released by China isn't really reliable. But we do know this: It isn't pretty.

Local governments in China are reportedly logging hundreds of thousands of new cases every day, and videos of patients crowding hospitals suggest the healthcare infrastructure might be struggling to keep up.

Variant-wise, what's fueling that Chinese surge? Omicron? Delta? Something else?

Chinese health officials say it's BF.7, an omicron subvariant that seems to be better equipped to evade immunity. That being said, there's a fear a nasty new variant could emerge, which is one reason the U.S. government announced it is requiring a negative COVID test for all travelers arriving on U.S. shores from flights originating in China.

What does the COVID situation look like closer to home?

Well, it's better than what's happening in China, that's for sure. At St. Tammany Health System, our COVID numbers continue to be at manageable levels, and we

are fully equipped and prepared to care for our community.

It's worth noting that holiday gatherings certainly seemed to fuel an uptick in local cases. On Nov. 8, we had just two inpatients under COVID care at our Covington hospital. On the Monday after Thanksgiving, that jumped to 14 inpatients. On Jan. 4, it was at 25, surely a result of holiday gatherings.

And is that all because of omicron variants and subvariants?

For the most part, yes. Omicron is still the dominant strain in the United States, although BF.7 has been detected stateside.

Another omicron subvariant, XBB, is also causing problems in the Northeast part of the United States, with CDC data showing that it accounted for more than half of all new COVID cases in New England between Dec. 19 and 24.

So should we all be wearing masks right now?

You know me well enough to know my answer to that: If you're going to attend indoor gatherings, then yes, wear a mask, particularly if you're not vaccinated. You should also maintain social distance and practice good hand hygiene as well.

If you're feeling sick, stay home and away from work or family gatherings.

All that will help give you and those around you an added layer of protection not just against coronavirus – which loves the winter – but also from flu, which is still in season and which is still circulating, as well as RSV.

Even more importantly, get your flu shot and, if you still haven't gotten the bivalent COVID booster that came out in late 2022, now's the time for that, too. It is specifically formulated to fend off omicron, so it'll give you the best protection we have against the current variants and subvariants. ■

Coming up Daisies

Four more St. Tammany Health System nurses were honored this fall by the international Daisy Award program for their compassion, commitment and expertise. We thought you'd like to meet them.



Nurse Robin Wright reacts upon being informed by Chief Nursing Officer Kerry Milton that she was named a Daisy winner. Robin was nominated by Melissa Wilde, whose 85-year-old mother-in-law was hospitalized in the ICU. 'Robin always had a beautiful smile and asked often if there was anything we needed,' Melissa wrote. 'In one conversation Robin told us that she (previously) worked for an attorney and did well but she felt she wanted to give back so she became a nurse. She was God-sent to my family and we told her she is definitely giving back.'



leasha Ross, right, has been a nurse on the Telemetry Medicine unit of St. Tammany Health System's flagship St. Tammany Parish Hospital only since March, but she's made an immediate impact. 'When you first meet nurse leasha, you're greeted with her bright smile. The warmth you feel from her energy is just amazing,' wrote grateful patient Alysha Wimberly, left, who nominated leasha for her Daisy Award. 'She is singular in every area! There's never a moment to feel unimportant. No! You are always made to feel you are her primary interest.'



STHS veteran nurse Eloise Ward-Brumfield poses with her Daisy Award alongside grandson Michael and daughter Kyra Callahan, a fellow STHS nurse. Brumfield was nominated for her Daisy by another St. Tammany Health System nurse, Denise Hurstell, who was moved by the compassionate end-of-life care Eloise gave Denise's mother. 'To this day eight years later, every time I think of Ms. Eloise and the interactions with my mother it brings tears to my eyes, and every time I see her I give her a big hug,' Denise wrote. 'That is the impact she had on not only my mother and her care but myself as well. I strive to be that nurse - the nurse with compassion and kindness she displayed in a very difficult time.'



TOP: Daisy-winning nurse Barbara Tarjan, right, is embraced by colleague and former patient Megan Fussell at her Daisy ceremony. Barbara, also shown above with Megan, has long been a fixture in STHS's New Family Center, where she is a bereavement nurse - a job as difficult and as meaningful as it sounds. 'One thing that is unique about my relationship with Barb is that I have not only had the privilege to work alongside her, but I have been her patient, too,' Fussell wrote. 'I myself am a bereaved mother, and ... from the moment I received a terminal diagnosis for my son at 20 weeks, she was there for me.'

STAT!

Quick hits from the STHS newsroom

On Dec. 1, Women's Choice named St. Tammany Health System **among the country's Best 100 Hospitals for Patient Experience** for 2023. In addition, the Covington-based health system was singled out for distinction in nine areas. That includes being named a Best Hospital for **patient safety, obstetrics, heart care, cancer care, comprehensive breast care, stroke care, minimally invasive surgery, mammography and women's services.** ... In November, the Leapfrog Group awarded STHS its 14th consecutive **"A" grade for patient safety.** ... In October, STHS Trauma Services Manager **Bethany Monistere** was named one of the Great 100 Nurses of Louisiana for 2022. ... Also in October, STHS President and CEO **Joan Coffman** was named to New Orleans CityBusiness' Power 50 list, and Vice President and Chief Compliance Officer **Midge Collett** was named to CityBusiness' 18th Leadership in Law list. ... **Dr. Chris Foret** of the St. Tammany Physicians Network clinic in Folsom was named the recipient of the St. Tammany Quality Network Medical Director's Award for the third quarter of 2022. ... In September, St. Tammany Health System named **Christopher Ford** its senior vice president of Human Resources. In addition, it named **Kelly Rabalais** assistant vice president of Communication and Strategy. ... Congratulations and thanks go to longtime Nursing Assistant **Catherine Travis**, who retired in December after 41 years with STHS. ■

Is there a St. Tammany Health System nurse you'd like to nominate for a Daisy?
Find out how at StTammany.health/ThankYou.



(Photo by Tory Mansfield / STHS)

ABOVE: Members of St. Tammany Health System Board of Commissioners and executive team break ground Nov. 2 on the health system's new surgery center. The 126,000-square-foot building, which will boast 12 surgical suites, is expected to be ready for patients by late summer 2024. BELOW: An artist's rendering shows the new \$75 million same-day surgery center being built by St. Tammany Health System on Bootlegger Road south of Covington.

STHS breaks ground on \$75M surgery center

By Mike Scott, mccott@stph.org

The St. Tammany Health System Board of Commissioners and executive team broke ground Nov. 2 on the Northshore's newest healthcare facility, a \$75 million same-day surgical center adjacent to the existing Paul D. Cordes Outpatient Pavilion at 16300 Louisiana 1085 (Bootlegger Road) south of Covington.

The 126,000-square-foot building, which when complete will boast 12 surgical suites and an array of support services, is expected to be ready for patients by late summer 2024.

"Today, we're simply turning dirt," St. Tammany Health System President and CEO Joan Coffman said. "But when our construction team is finished on this state-of-the-art facility, it will stand as another fulfillment of our promise to deliver world-class healthcare close to home for residents of west St. Tammany Parish. We take that promise seriously."

Announced in October 2021, the new surgery center will mark the fulfillment of a strategic goal of the health system as recent advancements in technology and recruitment of highly skilled specialists have increased the volume



(Image courtesy fl+WB)

of surgeries that can be accomplished in a 23-hour stay.

"But it's not about just the bricks-and-mortar," health system Chief Operating Officer Sharon Toups said. "It is about the services that we will provide that represent the values we at St. Tammany Health System hold dear:

teamwork, trust, compassion, quality and innovation."

In addition to its 12 surgery suites, the new facility will host supporting departments and services including pre-operative and post-operative care, overnight stay beds, surgical sterilization, imaging, lab, pharmacy, rehabilitation, food service, environmental and other services.

It is the latest in a string of recent expansions for St. Tammany Health System, coming on the heels of completion of a new four-story patient tower on its main hospital campus in April 2021, as well as completion in June 2021 of the new St. Tammany Cancer Center, a campus of Ochsner Medical Center, at Louisiana 21 and Interstate 12. ■

Dedication to innovation

STHS becomes first in region to offer Velys robotic-assisted knee replacement

By Mike Scott, mscott@stph.org

St. Tammany Health System in October became the first in South Louisiana to conduct Velys robotic-assisted knee replacement, an innovative, second-generation procedure designed to get patients back on their feet sooner, with less



Dr. Mark Hontas

discomfort and more mobility.

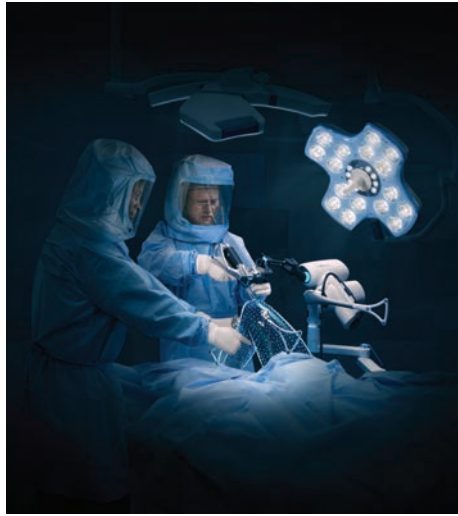
Dr. Mark Hontas, an orthopedic surgeon with St. Tammany Health System's Bone & Joint Clinic, has used the Velys system exclusively

since fall 2022. So far, he said, the technologically advanced system compares favorably to other knee-replacement systems.

"I'll tell you what, I am impressed with the immediate post-op patient experience," Dr. Hontas said. "They seem to have a wonderful range of motion."

While he noted that it will take a few more months to assess fully the success of those first-on-the-Northshore surgeries, Dr. Hontas said older, first-generation knee-replacement systems — which use more of a one-size-fits-all approach — often leave patients unconfident about their new knee's mid-range strength. That's particularly true when, for example, they are rising from a seated position or when in a crouched position.

DePuy's Velys device, which works in tandem with the Attune knee system, leverages an array of new technology — including high-speed cameras, precision robotics and lighter, more nimble



Velys robotic-assisted knee replacement, which works in tandem with the Attune knee system, is a second-generation system that leverages new technology to help surgeons perform highly precise procedures. St. Tammany Health System recently became the first in south Louisiana to introduce it. (Photo courtesy of DePuy Synthes)

core components — to help surgeons, starting with the development of a custom surgery plan based on each patient's unique anatomy.

The result, in theory, is a more precise surgery, which means less soft-tissue removal and, in the end, a more well-balanced knee.

Ideally, it will also mean less post-op discomfort and a quicker recovery time for patients.

According to DePuy Synthes, the orthopedics branch of Johnson & Johnson, a patient will typically be able to walk unaided and return to work and everyday activities just six weeks after Velys-assisted surgery. After 12 weeks, patients may even perform low-impact activities such as golfing, yoga and swimming

As an added bonus, Velys patients don't require a pre-operative CAT scan, which saves money, saves time and spares the patient unnecessary exposure to radiation.

"St. Tammany Health System has committed to embracing new technology to help us provide the best healthcare we can, and that's true across the board," Dr. Hontas said. "It's a very exciting time to be a part of St. Tammany Health System." ■

STHS's heart valve replacement team logs another first

There they go again.

St. Tammany Health System's heart valve replacement team, which in 2019 became the first on the Northshore to offer the game-changing, minimally invasive TAVR procedure, has introduced another innovation.

On Oct. 5, the team became the first in Louisiana to successfully implant in a patient the newest Edwards SAPIEN 3 Ultra RESILIA valve, which earned FDA approval in December.

This groundbreaking valve, which is the only dry storage transcatheter heart valve currently on the U.S. market, was engineered with anti-calcification technology to address one of the primary causes of reintervention following heart valve replacement, according to Edwards.

It's also another display of the spirit of teamwork and innovation on which the St. Tammany Health System Structural Heart Program prides itself, according to program Coordinator Karolina Ruthner, NP.

"This shows the tremendous difference we make in patient care, always offering the latest technology for best outcomes," Ruthner said.

In 2019, St. Tammany Health System introduced the Northshore to TAVR, or Transcatheter Aortic Valve Replacement, a minimally invasive procedure in which a malfunctioning heart valve is replaced without requiring open-heart surgery, resulting in dramatically shorter recovery times and fewer complications.

Since then, St. Tammany and its partner Ochsner Health have worked together to perform hundreds of TAVR procedures, getting patients back on their feet and living an active life quickly and safely. The program earned TAVR certification from the American College of Cardiology in 2021. ■

Visit StTammany.health/TAVR to learn more about the TAVR program at STHS.

Visit StTammany.health/Robotics to learn more about the robotics program at STHS.

ALL HEART

STHS's cardiology practice starts 2023 in growth mode

By Mike Scott, mscott@stph.org

What a difference a year makes. St. Tammany Health System's cardiovascular practice – one of the oldest and most respected heart and vascular clinics in western St. Tammany Parish – is starting 2023 with a new name, a number of new faces and the addition of a new clinic for the convenience of Mandeville patients.

Formerly known as Covington Cardiovascular Care, the practice has been rebranded STHS Cardiovascular Clinic, a reflection of its expansion beyond Covington and into Mandeville.

Patients may now see providers at the following locations:

- STHS Cardiovascular Clinic, Covington office: 1006 Harrison St., Covington, (985) 871-4140.
- STHS Cardiovascular Clinic, Mandeville office: 201 St. Ann Drive, Mandeville, (985) 871-4140.

"We are excited to bring cardiology access to our patients in Mandeville and look forward to adding diagnostic testing in this location in 2023," STHS Assistant Vice President Dionne Williams said.

In addition to the new clinic, the practice has added two new care providers to its team: cardiologists Dr. Stefan Sicinski and Dr. Hafiz Ghafoor.

They follow the addition in June of Dr. George Isa to the practice,



Longtime local cardiologist Dr. Paul Stahls discusses a case with Medical Assistant Kimberly Hopkins at St. Tammany Health System's Cardiovascular Clinic in Covington. With the practicing expanding, Dr. Stahls has shifted his focus exclusively to electrophysiology. (Photo by Tim San Filippo/STHS)



Nurse practitioner Mary Scheyd conducts an office visit recently at the STHS Cardiovascular Clinic in Covington. The growing practice also recently introduced office visits in Mandeville. (Photo by Tim San Filippo / STHS)

which also includes Dr. Georges Antoun, Dr. Bekir Melek, Dr. Russell Reed, Dr. Paul Stahls; and nurse practitioners Sarah Bourgeois, Nicole Sesser and Mary Scheyd.

All of the practice's care providers will see patients in the Covington clinic. Additionally, Drs. Isa, Stahls, Reed, Melek and Sicinski will see patients in Mandeville on a rotating basis.

With the changes, Dr. Stahls – a member of the practice since 2013 – will expand his focus on

electrophysiology, a specialty that, among other things, involves the assessment of the rhythm of the heart and, if needed, the correction of any irregularities, or arrhythmia.

"Our promise has for some time been to deliver world-class healthcare close to home for our Northshore neighbors, and for years our world-class cardio team has been delivering on that promise," health system President and CEO Joan Coffman said. "With these expansions and additions, they're poised to continue delivering peerless care for our community as it grows, and we couldn't be more excited about it."

Covington Cardiovascular Care was formed by a group of local cardiologists in 2009. Four years later, in 2013, the practice became part of St. Tammany Health System, then St. Tammany Parish Hospital. ■

Visit [StTammany.health/CardioCare](https://www.sttammany.health/CardioCare) to learn more about the health system's cardio services or make an appointment.

Visit [StTammany.health/CardioCare](https://www.sttammany.health/CardioCare) or call (985) 871-4140 to make an appointment.

For Dr. Hafiz Ghafoor, cardiology is where his heart is

By Mike Scott, miscott@stph.org

By most measures, Dr. Hafiz Ghafoor had it made, with a well-paying job in internal medicine that he enjoyed.

But sometimes you have to listen to your heart. For him, fittingly, that meant cardiology.

And so, after 10 years of training and practicing as an internist in Memphis, he embarked on a circuitous, five-year journey that this fall brought him to Covington, as a member of St. Tammany Health System's growing cardiovascular practice.

All for love of the heart.

"I was really passionate about this," Dr. Ghafoor said. "I spent extra time and effort, took time off a full-time job and moved my family to three different cities, just because I was so passionate about cardiology," Dr. Ghafoor said.

After earning his medical degree at Baqai Medical College in Pakistan, Dr. Ghafoor attended the University of Tennessee Health Science Center



"I spent extra time and effort, took time off a full-time job and moved my family to three different cities, just because I was so passionate about cardiology." – Dr. Hafiz Ghafoor

as a post-doctoral research scholar,

followed by residency training in internal medicine and a stint as an instructor in the university's Department of Pharmacology.

That's when he got the cardio itch.

"Because I wanted to focus on one field, it had to be either neuro or cardio, because they are the most important organs in the body," he said. "I was more inclined to cardiology because it is closer to internal medicine."

That meant trading Memphis for Hattiesburg, Mississippi, where he spent four years as an internist at Forest General Hospital, followed

by a fellowship in cardiovascular disease at St. Vincent Hospital in the Boston area.

After three years of harsh Boston winters, he was offered a

fellowship in interventional cardiology at Tulane University in New Orleans.

"I had an opportunity to stay in Boston or come back to the South, so I took that opportunity and came back to the South," he said.

Between the comparatively mild weather, the spicy food and the music, it started to feel like home. When St. Tammany Health System invited him to join its cardiovascular family, it made good sense.

"My wife is a dentist; she has a great job. We found a great school for our son; he made great friends. So we decided to stay here in the New Orleans area," he said. "And we're happy to be here." ■

For Dr. Stefan Sicinschi, new job is also a homecoming

By Mike Scott, miscott@stph.org

As a cardiologist, Dr. Stefan Sicinschi is used to treating complex conditions.

But, as the newest member of St. Tammany Health System's cardiology team, his message to potential patients is as simple as could be: Don't wait.

"I focus on the preventative screenings and lifestyle changes, so it's important for patients to know they don't have to wait until they're sick to see me," Dr. Sicinschi said. "They can come see a cardiologist for all sorts of screenings, and not just the heart. I screen the cardiovascular system in its entirety."

That focus on cardiovascular health wasn't always his professional goal. As the son of a cardiologist, he has long been interested in medicine but was determined to chart his own path.

Eventually, though, he couldn't



"It's important for patients to know they don't have to wait until they're sick to see me." – Dr. Stefan Sicinschi

deny the obvious: He loved the science and practice of cardiology.

"When I was doing

my rotations in internal medicine, I looked at every specialty, and no matter what I looked at, I couldn't find anything better than cardio," he said. "So I thought, you know what? I think I love cardiology."

Growing up in New Orleans, Dr. Sicinschi attended Grace King High School, although he didn't graduate from there due to 2005's Hurricane Katrina, which sent his family packing to Tennessee.

Following his high school graduation there, he returned home to earn an

undergraduate degree at the University of New Orleans, followed by a medical degree at LSU School of Medicine.

That was in turn followed

by a cardiovascular disease fellowship at LSU Shreveport, where he also did his internal medicine residency.

Along the way, he did a surgical rotation at St. Tammany Health System, so when it was time to find a professional home, it was only natural for him and his wife – who is also from New Orleans – to look to the Northshore.

"I remember I really liked that experience there," Dr. Sicinschi said. "It was a while ago – like 10 years ago – but I liked it, so when I was searching for a job, this was one of the hospitals that I had a good vibe with from the past. I knew this was where I wanted to be." ■

STHS unveils Virtual Care Now, offering same-day primary care from anywhere

By Mike Scott, msscott@stph.org

In an expansion of its digital health offerings, St. Tammany Health System has announced Virtual Care Now, a healthcare innovation in which patients can schedule same-day virtual visits with a healthcare provider dedicated solely to conducting such electronic visits.

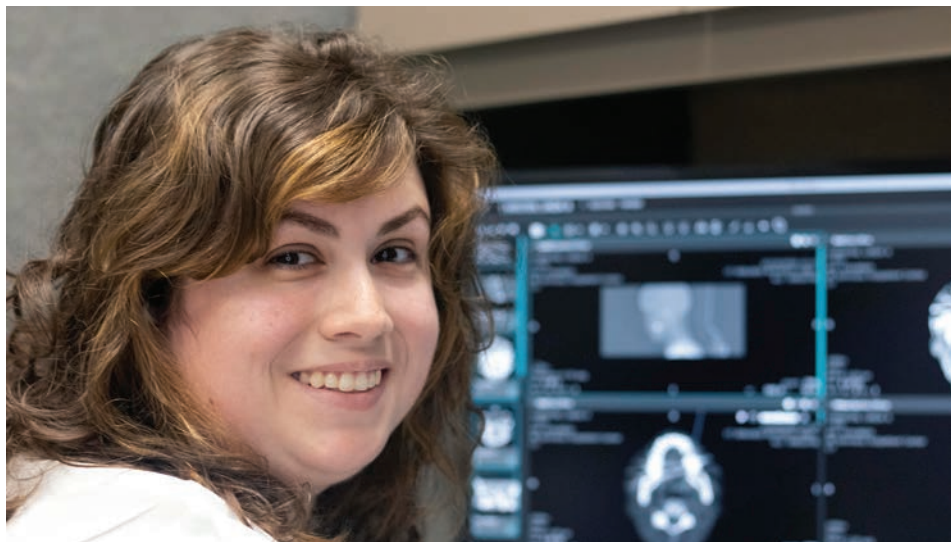
Designed with patient convenience in mind, Virtual Care Now provides patients with access to a healthcare provider from their smartphone, tablet or computer.

Virtual Care Now providers are available to assess and treat most acute conditions, including:

- Cold/flu and cough.
- Allergies and sinus issues.
- Urinary tract infections.
- Fever.
- Pink eye.
- Sore throat.
- Stomachache.
- Rashes.

Additionally, the Virtual Care Now service is available for depression/anxiety follow-ups, as well as for patients in need of a referral.

“We are very excited to expand our virtual visits with Virtual Care Now,” said Dionne Williams, assistant vice president in charge of the health



Nurse Practitioner Laura Read is among those STHS care providers conducting video visits as part of the health system’s Virtual Care Now program. (STHS image)

system’s St. Tammany Physicians Network primary care clinics. “Virtual Care Now provides an additional avenue for patients to connect with a provider immediately. One of the benefits is that it erases the time it takes for patients to commute to a clinic, by offering them the convenience of receiving care in their home, work or other setting of their choice.”

To participate in a Virtual Care Now visit, a patient must first download the MyChart app – which is available free for Apple and Android devices – and sign up for

the service. Step-by-step instructions on the sign-up process can be found at StTammany.health/MyChart.

Appointments for a Virtual Care Now visit can be made directly through the MyChart app, online at StTammany.health/VideoVisit or by calling (985) 898-4001.

“I am looking forward to providing same-day access that doesn’t disrupt your day and allows you to see a healthcare provider from home or work,” said Nurse Practitioner Laura Read, who will be conducting Virtual Care Now visits with patients. ■

Seasons greetings



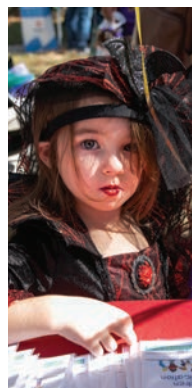
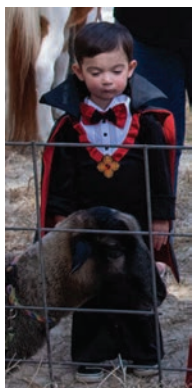
Ronnie Eastman, at center with staff at St. Tammany Cancer Center, a campus of Ochsner Medical Center, got the holidays off to a healthful start in November, thanks to a Thanksgiving food box distribution event. In all, 90 patients and their families received a gift card for the protein of choice, along with a box of all the fixings to a full Turkey Day spread, courtesy of Winn-Dixie, the Northshore Food Bank and donors to St. Tammany Hospital Foundation.



For more than 30 years, the Tree of Life has been adorned annually with hundreds of ‘tribute angels’ purchased by donors, with proceeds going to St. Tammany Hospice. This year’s tree was sponsored by Angel and Eric Dunavant and family, who dedicated the tree in memory of Kathleen Dunavant. Learn more about St. Tammany Hospice at StTammany.health/hospice, and learn how your generosity can support it by visiting STHfoundation.org.



They made a list. They checked it twice. And then, on Dec. 14, staff at St. Tammany Cancer Center, a campus of Ochsner Medical Center, kicked off their annual Christmas food box drive-through for invited cancer patients. In all, 90 patients and their families had their holidays brightened over the course of the three-day event, which was sponsored by Winn-Dixie, St. Tammany Hospital Foundation, Northshore Food Bank and St. Joseph Abbey.



The faces of MONSTER MASH

They were all dressed up but, unlike the old adage, they did indeed have somewhere to go: Bogue Falaya Park in Covington, for October's 34th annual Monster Mash, a family-friendly Northshore Halloween tradition. Featuring food, music, rides, games, crafts, trick-or-treating and more, the event drew more than 3,500 ghosts and goblins. In the process, it raised more than \$84,000 for the St. Tammany Health System Parenting Center. (Photos by Chuck Billiot for St. Tammany Hospital Foundation)



Captain America and the Metairie Bank team did their best to put smiles on the faces of Northshore trick-or-treaters, handing out helium balloons as guests arrived. Metairie Bank Northshore was the presenting sponsor of this year's Monster Mash.



St. Tammany Health System's Be Well Bus, a 40-foot mobile health clinic, was also in attendance at Monster Mash, helping spread the word about preventative health screenings, vaccinations and other public health topics.



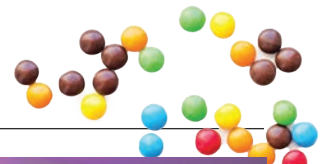
A T-rex with a sweet tooth indulges in a little trick-or-treating with her little monster.



Above left, Randy Ponthieux of Heritage Bank welcomes visitors to the Polar Express, which rolled into the cancer center parking lot in December – along with a certain fat man – to distribute gifts to the children of patients. Above right, two satisfied customers show off their gifts. (Photos by Tory Mansfield/STHS)

All aboard!

Santa paid a visit on Dec. 7 to St. Tammany Cancer Center, a campus of Ochsner Medical Center – but instead of eight tiny reindeer, he came with one big train: the Polar Express, a fun-filled version of which occupied the cancer center parking lot as part of the nonprofit Ruby's Kids' annual Christmas toy giveaway to the children of local cancer patients. In all, 63 kids walked away with holiday gifts at the event, which was made possible by Ruby's Kids and the generosity of donors to St. Tammany Hospital Foundation. ■



A pair of well-sugared Oompa Loompas unload a truckful of confections.



The man of the hour, Willy Wonka himself, was on-hand to make sure things ran sweetly.

Scumpdiddlyumptious!

With a little assistance from Willy Wonka, who helped transform Tchefuncta Country Club into a makeshift chocolate factory, St. Tammany Hospital Foundation and its supporters stepped into a world of pure imagination in October at THE Gala 2022. Sponsored by HUB International – and featuring food, music, an auction and LOTS of candies and confections – the event raised a record-breaking \$212,000 to support St. Tammany Cancer Center, a campus of Ochsner Medical Center. How sweet it is, indeed! (Photos by Chuck Billiot for St. Tammany Hospital Foundation)



St. Tammany Health System Vice President Christopher Ford, left, and Cancer Center Administrator Jack Khashou pause for a photo with HUB International Vice President Kevin Gardner, who with wife Mary is a longtime supporter of THE Gala.



From left, Sandra Dipietro, Sharon Toups, Emmett Dupas III, Michelle Davis and Joan Coffman.



Nat and Becky Parks.



What could be more Wonka-riffic than a golden ticket – that you can EAT?



A group of visitors from Willy Wonka's namesake Chocolate Factory greeted Gala attendees as they arrived.



Instant replay



Former NFL players re-teaming with STHS for celebrity waiter event to benefit cancer care

By Mike Scott, msscott@stph.org

Call it the ultimate of hurry-up offenses.

After teaming with St. Tammany Hospital Foundation last October for a celebrity waiter event benefiting St. Tammany Cancer Center, a campus of Ochsner Medical Center, a team of former NFL players is already game-planning for a repeat event to coincide with this year's NFL Draft in April.

"Philanthropy is every bit as much a team sport as football, so nobody should be surprised how these guys were able to pull together for such a successful event in October," said Melanie Rudolph of St. Tammany Hospital Foundation. "But for them to huddle up so quickly for what I'm sure will be another big win — let's just name all of them MVP's."



Matt Dorsett, president of the New Orleans Chapter of the NFL Player's Association, shares a laugh with those gathered for October's Celebrity Waiter Tailgate Soirée, hosted by St. Tammany Hospital Foundation. The event, which raised more than \$20,000 for Northshore cancer care, was such a success it will be repeated on the first night of the 2023 NFL Draft. (Photos by Chuck Billiot for STHS)



Among the former gridiron players to serve as celebrity waiters during the NFLPA event was Ron Krajewski, standing at left, a Tulane University standout who signed briefly with the New Orleans Saints during the team's inaugural season in 1967.

October's Celebrity Waiter Tailgate Soirée, hosted by St. Tammany Hospital Foundation, saw ticket-holders gather at the Lake Pontchartrain Maritime Museum in Madisonville to watch the Saints take on the Arizona Cardinals, to bid on Saints memorabilia in live and silent auctions, and to feast on catering by Mr. Mudbug.

During the game, members of the New Orleans chapter of the NFL Players Association serving as waiters circulated among attendees.

Among those players taking part: outgoing chapter President Matt Dorsett and event organizer Ron Krajewski, along with Eric Alexander, Curtis Baham, Gary Barbaro, Tom Broom, Chuck Commiskey, Dave Gerald, Norm Hodgins, Clarence Matthews, Mike McKenzie, David Pittman, Bernard Robertson, Eric Rouse, Lance Smith, Michael Strachan, Chaz Sutton and Herb Williams.

By the time the game was over, the event had raised more than \$20,000 for patient services at the cancer center.

"This was one of those events where everybody was a winner," said St. Tammany Hospital Foundation Specialist Doug Walker. "We can't wait to tee it up again."

The rematch is set for April 27 and will

once more see feature former players deliver tableside service, this time as attendees take in the first night of the 2023 NFL Draft. ■

Visit STHfoundation.org/CelebrityWaiter for more information on April's event, including ticket information.





ABOVE: St. Tammany Health System Chief Operating Officer Sharon Toups, far right, and Chief Nursing Officer Kerry Milton, second from right, admire the handwork on display in a hand-crafted quilt presented to the health system by Vizient in recognition of the dedication and sacrifice of the organization's frontline caregivers during the COVID-19 pandemic. (Photos by Tory Mansfield / STHS)

An artful tribute

Quilters offer thanks to St. Tammany Health System for work during pandemic

By Mike Scott, mScott@stph.org

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, the frontline caregivers at St. Tammany Health System and other healthcare organizations have had their communities covered. Now, Vizient is teaming with QUILTmania magazine and the Georgia-based Chatahoochee Evening Stars Quilt Guild to return the favor in their own special way.

On Nov. 1, Vizient Southern States President and CEO Bill Senneff paid a visit to St. Tammany Health System to present the organization with a unique, handmade expression of gratitude: an approximately 5-foot-square quilt handcrafted by an international team of quilters and embedded with healthcare imagery.

"QUILTmania wanted to do something to recognize caregiving during the pandemic," Senneff said. "So they came to us with the idea of quilting."

In all, 80 quilt designers answered the call, with another 1,000 quilters from around the world joining in to help stitch 10-inch blocks that would be assembled to form 18 quilts. In September, the final products were displayed as part of an exhibition at City Hall in Alpharetta, Georgia, before being distributed to specially chosen healthcare organizations.

The quilt presented to St. Tammany Health System, appropriately, incorporated deep red tones — matching the health system's signature color — and included quilted blocks made by quilters in California,



Texas, Illinois and Mexico.

The most dominant motif to appear is the iconic red cross symbol, which has become an emblem for medicine. Also present is a stethoscope and nursing hat, a stylized vase of flowers and the word "Love."

In many cases, the quilters who worked on the individual blocks signed their names, all of which are included in a panel stitched to the quilt's reverse explaining the sentiments behind the project, dubbed "Comforting Stitches: Quilters' Response to the Pandemic."

Their only requests, Senneff said, was that the quilt be displayed in a place where members of the caregiving team

at St. Tammany Health System can see it, as a reminder that their dedication during the pandemic has been recognized, and also that members of the public will be able to view it to remind them of those sacrifices.

According to Nicole Suhre, executive director of St. Tammany Hospital Foundation, which operates the health system's Healing Arts Initiative, it has yet to be determined where the quilt will hang.

But, she said, "I know our Healing Arts team will find an appropriate place — and it will be a place of honor." ■



You say you want a resolution?

Another new year brings a renewed commitment to the Northshore community



STHF Executive Director Nicole Suhre

“Have YOU decided on your resolution for the new year yet? ... Resolve to support St. Tammany Hospital Foundation in 2023!”

Happy New Year!

It is my sincerest hope that each of you had a happy and healthy 2022.

Every time January rolls around, there’s always talk of New Year’s resolutions. As long as there has been the celebration of a new year, there has been the human desire to take stock of our lives and set goals for a new beginning.

St. Tammany Hospital Foundation is no different. However, our goals for the new year are more about reconfirming our existing commitment to the health and well-being of this community through support of St. Tammany Health System. The start of the new year has energized our Board and our team. Our Board of Trustees welcomes three new members this year – Jim Bradford, Mark Grayson and Kevin Mashburn – and has formed a strategic planning committee to support further the growth of our health system.

Our resolution is to continue to build relationships and partnerships with the families, donors, supporters and businesses in this community in a shared belief: *Keeping St. Tammany Health System Healthy Keeps Our Community Healthy.*

Have YOU decided on your resolution for the new year yet? If you are looking for some ideas, our foundation has a suggestion: Resolve to support St. Tammany Hospital Foundation in 2023!

Let us help you make a lasting impact on your community with a donation in support of the healing work of St. Tammany Health System. Your gift can and will make a difference.

On behalf of our board, I thank you for the generosity you showed to us in 2022 and I look forward to partnering together in 2023.

Sincerely,

Nicole Suhre, CFRE
STHF executive director

Foundation calendar Save the dates!



Get Lucky! Golf Tournament March 16, 2023

St. Tammany Hospital Foundation’s 12th annual golf tournament offers locals a chance to get back into the swing with the return of spring. This year’s event, which promises food, fun and fellowship, will be held at Beau Chene Country Club in Mandeville.

Details: Call (985) 898-4141 or visit STHfoundation.org/golf

National Doctors Day March 30, 2023

National Doctors’ Day is a day to celebrate the contribution of physicians who serve our community. Our recognition of this special observance provides you the opportunity to make a donation to the foundation in honor of a physician of your choosing.

Details: Call (985) 898-4174 or visit STHfoundation.org/DoctorsDay.

Autism Awareness and Acceptance Month April 2023

The St. Tammany Hospital Foundation invites the community to join us as we shine a light on autism awareness. Proceeds raised through our awareness efforts will support St. Tammany Health System’s efforts to better care for those with autism.

Details: STHfoundation.org/autism

NFL Player’s Association Celebrity Waiter Event April 27, 2023

Watch the first night of the 2023 NFL Draft – and bid on a variety of sports memorabilia – all while former NFL players wait your table, all to raise money for local cancer care. Read more about this football-lovers dream on page 13.

Details: Call (985) 898-4174 or visit STHfoundation.org/celebritywaiter.



1202 S. Tyler St., Covington, LA 70433

NEW ORLEANS
City BUSINESS
2022 Best Places
to Work



YOUR FUTURE STARTS NOW.

World-Class Healthcare. Close to Home.



Ready to reach new heights?

At St. Tammany Health System, we work hard to provide nothing less than world-class healthcare close to home for our neighbors on the Northshore of Lake Pontchartrain. To deliver it, we are committed to attracting and retaining the very best professionals for every position in our health system.

Search STHS job openings and apply today.

StTammany.health/Recruitment