Blood flows through our veins and arteries like rush-hour traffic. Just like traffic, when a problem arises, blood flow can slow until it stops. The resulting clog can lead to stroke, which can in turn result in serious injury or death.

For Joyce Bochetti, the blockage came as a complete surprise. After a busy day and a trip to the store, she returned home, and as she approached the elevator in the building where she lives, she felt something was wrong. “I thought, ‘Why am I so tired?’” Joyce says. She began what she calls a “soft fall” in front of the elevator, and although she was cognizant, she could not get up.

Another tenant in the building found her several minutes later and phoned 911. “I was really scared,” Joyce says. After a trip to Lee Memorial Hospital, tests revealed she had a transischemic stroke (TIA), caused by a blocked carotid artery.

While in the hospital, Joyce met with vascular surgeon Russell Becker, D.O., who used a catheter in her groin to relieve the blockage in her neck. “We went up through the vessels into her chest, as well as into her neck, and deployed the stent,” Dr. Becker says. “The stent holds open the vessel wall.”

Because this technique is less invasive than cutting directly into the artery in the neck, patients recover quicker. “One of the main advantages to this type of surgery is less pain and time patients spend recovering,” Dr. Becker says. “Our goal is to get people back to their normal activities as soon as possible. This type of surgery allows us to do that more efficiently.”

Joyce’s type of clogged artery is among the most common. “Clogged carotid vessels are the cause of stroke about 80 percent of the time,” Dr. Becker says. “Clearing the blockage is important to prevent future problems. If the vessels are not cleared, another stroke could occur and lead to more severe consequences, including death.”

With this procedure, patients rebound quickly. “Most people go home the next day,” Dr. Becker says. “They’re back to usual activities in two to three days.” Dr. Becker helped Joyce before she had a severe stroke. Six months after her TIA, she has recovered.

“I feel healthy as a horse,” she says. “When people talk to me, if they don’t know me, they have no idea what I’ve been through.”
SanCap Cares Event Breaks All Records

The stars shone brightly at South Seas Island Resort on March 4 as hundreds of Sanibel and Captiva Island residents, joined by scores of friends and supporters, took part in the 15th annual SanCap Cares event to raise funds for Golisano Children’s Hospital of Southwest Florida. By the end of the evening, the SanCap Cares event had reached its five-year, $10 million commitment to help construct the new children’s hospital building at HealthPark Medical Center, set to open in spring 2017. In the two months leading up to SanCap Cares, sponsors, capital campaign gifts and event proceeds combined to raise a total of $4 million. Those dollars, combined with the $6 million previously raised on the islands allowed the group to fulfill their generous $10 million pledge. The new pediatric emergency department at Golisano Children’s Hospital will be named after the Sanibel and Captiva communities.

Celebrating another successful SanCap Cares event are committee members, from left to right: Marty Harrity, Dawn Montecalvo, Amanda Cross, Allie Fitzgerald, Cannella Mullins, Mike Mullins, Mary Clare Lyons, Sue Peitman, Linda Essig, Paula Benthinck-Smith, Melissa Congress, Linda Mondello, Julie O’Neill, Holice Hall, Jan Hammond, Cindy Brown, Sue Ellen Cutler, Melissa Rice, Lynn Noon, Diane Silhavy, Julie Smith, Brenda Harrity and Diana Day.

Join us in honoring Ryan McCleskey, who lost his personal battle with cancer but whose legacy lives on through those young patients who are touched by this wonderful event each year. Please visit www.LeeMemorial.org/go/miracle for complete information or contact Nicki McIver of Lee Memorial Health System Foundation at 239-434-6106 or Nicole.McTeague@LeeMemorial.org.

Chick-fil-A in Cypress Lake Plaza Helps Young Cancer Patients

Gift Made in Memory of Wendy Kay Romeis

In a true gesture of caring, Steve and Wanda Bishop, owners of the Chick-fil-A restaurant in the Costco/Cypress Lake Plaza (corner of Cypress Lake Drive and South Tamiami Trail in Fort Myers) recently donated almost $5,000 to the Golisano Children’s Hospital of Southwest Florida pediatric oncology programs in honor and memory of former employee Wendy Kay Romeis. The total donated represents 20 percent of restaurant sales for one day, along with proceeds from other fundraisers managed by the caring Chick-fil-A team. Mr. Romeis lost his own battle with cancer and Mr. and Mrs. Bishop chose to honor her spirit by making a gift to help others currently battling the disease.

Chick-fil-A team members honored Wendy Kay Romeis with a generous donation to Golisano Children’s Hospital of Southwest Florida. Pictured from left to right: Joan Ragusa, Darla Nielander, store owners Wanda and Steve Bishop, Jimmy Milce and Andrea Aguilar.

There’s still time…

Come out and enjoy great golf and more on May 16 at Teeing Up Fore Kids at The Club at Olde Cypress in Naples. Proceeds from this charity benefit will help Colliver County kids who receive care from Golisano Children’s Hospital of Southwest Florida. Please visit www.LeeMemorial.org/teeming for complete details and to register online or contact Matt Sellick at MSellick@StockDevelopment.com or 239-825-9499 for more information.

All Hands on Deck to Fight Pediatric Cancer

Join us as newly-remodeled Hammond Stadium and enjoy great baseball on Saturday, June 6 as the Fort Myers Miracle host the 6th Annual Breast Cancer Awareness Night to benefit our Regional Cancer Center. Along with enjoying the game, you will have a chance to participate in a pre-game survivor walk, place your bids on wonderful items during the silent auction—which includes special game-worn Miracle player jerseys—enter to win great chance drawing prizes, and then sit back and watch a spectacular fireworks show following the game. Breast cancer survivors receive free admission. Please visit www.LeeMemorial.org/go/miracle for complete information or contact Nicki McIver of Lee Memorial Health System Foundation at 239-434-6106 or Nicole.McTeague@LeeMemorial.org.
Abnormal sounds when blood flows across valves, heart murmurs can be harmless or more serious, and may indicate an underlying heart problem. Cardiologist Roshan Vatthyam, M.D., says murmurs can be divided into two categories: systolic and diastolic murmurs.

“Heart murmurs are classified based on the timing of the murmur,” Dr. Vatthyam explains. “Systole is a phase in the cardiac cycle associated with ventricular contraction—or the movement of blood to the aorta and body extremities, and from the right ventricle to the lungs. Systolic murmurs occur between the first and second heart sounds. Diastole is the period of time when the heart relaxes after contraction in preparation for refilling and circulating blood. Therefore, diastolic murmurs occur when the heart muscle relaxes between beats. Heart murmurs generally occur from either obstruction to flow or valvular leakage.”

Diagnosing a heart murmur often is done during a physical examination in the hospital or in the primary care physician’s office. “The next step should be a transthoracic echo-cardiogram, which allows real-time visualization of cardiac structures, including heart valves, cardiac chambers and heart pump function,” Dr. Vatthyam says. “Another essential variable for diagnosis is a detailed history and physical to see if other underlying conditions may be contributing to and/or causing the murmur. For example, anemia, hyperthyroid states and pregnancy often are accompanied by systolic flow murmurs.”

There also is a scale from 1-6 for defining a murmur:
1. Faint
2. Faint, but identified immediately
3. Moderate
4. Loud with palpable thrill—can feel vibration with touch
5. Very loud, but cannot be heard without stethoscope
6. Loudest and can be heard without stethoscope

People with heart murmurs may also experience symptoms, which generally dictate whether a heart murmur is serious or not. Though variable, some symptoms may include:
- Angina, or chest pain
- Shortness of breath
- Leg swelling
- Fatigue
- Orthopnea, or difficulty breathing when lying down
- Dyspnea on exertion, or shortness of breath during exercise, effort or on exertion

Lisa Joseph was busy raising children, attending graduate school and working part time as an intensive care unit nurse when she felt a lump in her breast. Unconcerned, she attributed the tender, mobile lump to fibrocystic tissue. As the days passed, the lump didn’t go away; it grew and started getting harder and less mobile.

“I already had a prescription for a mammogram from my annual appointment with Dr. [Deidre] Fish [obstetrician/gynecologist],” Lisa says. “I knew I needed to go, but as a single mom without insurance and living on financial aid, I didn’t want to spend the money.”

Lisa received assistance for the mammogram, which led to another mammogram with ultrasound. The radiologist reported the lump benign and recommended another mammogram in six months. “Dr. Fish wasn’t comfortable with that—she was adamant that I needed a biopsy,” Lisa says.

Aware of Lisa’s financial situation, Dr. Fish put her in contact with other specialists, including William Kokal, M.D., general and oncologic surgeon. “Dr. Kokal agreed that I needed further care and he referred me to the United Way House [now known as Lee Community Healthcare, Inc.],” says Lisa. “I was able to get to the biopsy, which confirmed the diagnosis: stage 4 triple negative breast cancer.”

In the meantime, with graduation on the horizon, Lisa continued to work with no signs of cancer. “I’m cured in a few years, as long as my scans continue to show no evidence of disease,” says Lisa. “I’m still getting my MBA. My research is on the psychosocial and economic costs of breast cancer.”

For more information or to register to attend, call 239-343-9557. Reservations are required, and box lunch provided.

For Local Woman, Life Goes On After Breast Cancer Diagnosis

Lisa’s treatment required chemotherapy, radiation and a double mastectomy.

“The treatment was painful, but I learned the patterns of the pain and nausea and worked around it,” she says. “I walked through the pain. Losing my hair was not traumatic, though, because I’ve had long hair all my life. I identified myself by my long hair—it made me feel beautiful and sexy. So, when I lost it, I had to find new ways to feel feminine and beautiful. I bought a wig from Cookie’s Place [at the Regional Cancer Center], I went online and bought all of the sequined turbans that I could find, and I took a free makeup class to learn how to do makeup so it looked like I had eyebrows and eye lashes. I figured if I was going to have to go through treatment, I wanted to sparkle.”

Post-treatment scans are clear, and her oncologist, Lowell Hart, M.D., is optimistic that he can consider her cured in a few years, as long as her scans continue to show no signs of cancer.

In the meantime, with graduation on the horizon, Lisa is excited about the future. She started salsa dancing and slow movement yoga. She hopes to date again, and understands that there are differences in her body that she will deal with, but believes that the right man will understand all of that.

“It is crazy to think about what I’ve been through in one year,” she says. “But, I know that I can get through anything now.”

For Local Woman, Life Goes On After Breast Cancer Diagnosis

Lisa Joseph, Breast Cancer Survivor
BrainFIT: Valuable Brain and Body Exercises

Exercising is good for the body, mind and spirit, and a regular routine is beneficial for people of all ages. BrainFIT, a new 8-week class at the Lee Memorial Health System Wellness Centers, is helping members perform better, think more clearly and enjoy improved moods. The class is based on the idea of neuroplasticity—or the brain’s ability to change and adapt as a result of experience.

“By combining movement and brain exercises, we are training our brain like the other muscles in our body,” explains Sarah Mitchell, health and wellness coordinator. “Because, like all of our muscles, the more we use them, the better the results we get.”

The 30-minute class involves easy-to-follow movements and brain exercises, like remembering and repeating jingles. “It is a challenge to use the left and right side of the brain at the same time,” says Shirley Jimmerson, 86. “But, our group really enjoyed the challenge and it brought out a lot of laughter and camaraderie. More than that, the class really helps because we worked short- and long-term memory in each session.”

Sarah says a popular exercise that builds on itself involves making a grocery list using the letters of the alphabet and remembering each item from week to week.

While there isn’t a method to formally track progress, Sarah leads the group through memory drills—like the grocery lists—that continually challenge participants every week by referring back to activities and information from previous sessions. “I give the group information and ask them questions while keeping a certain fitness pattern going—like four steps to the right, four V-steps, four big reaches to the ceiling with the arms, hold four seconds and then repeat it on the left side,” Sarah says. “Each participant has to retain the pattern while listening to other information or answering questions. Everyone is aware of his or her personal progress each week.”

Working construction requires long days, lifting heavy loads. It’s a job James “JD” Williams has done for decades. He still does, but late last year, he was forced to take a break.

“Really, it started in 2012 when my legs really started to hurt,” JD says. For more than two years he tried to combat the pain, which he thought was a back injury, with medication. Finally, he made an appointment with a physician who specialized in back issues. After taking a series of X-rays, the doctor quickly determined that JD’s problem was his hips. He had worn away the cartilage and his bones were rubbing together.

“I asked my wife to schedule an appointment with an orthopedic doctor” JD says. He met orthopedic surgeon David Eichten, D.O., who quickly determined that JD had no other option but a hip replacement in both hips. JD’s heavy use of his legs for his job most likely contributed to his hip woes. He was eager to have the surgery but made an unusual request of Dr. Eichten. “I’m not in a position to take three months off work, which is what I would have had to do if I went the traditional route and had the surgeries several weeks apart,” JD says. “I wanted him to operate on both hips the same day.”

Dr. Eichten normally discourages such strain on the body but knew that JD was in a unique position.

“Normally, I try to stage joint replacement surgery for at least six weeks apart, to allow adequate healing and give the patient a good extremity to stand on to help with physical therapy,” he says. “The surgical technique and doing the procedure does not take long and is the easy part. The concern comes in post-surgery with medical complications that are rare, but can be more of an issue with bilateral surgery. Complications can include infection, blood clots in the extremities (patients are not as mobile with bilateral surgery) and the risk of falling when walking and therapy after surgery. We also worry about medical issues with heart attacks, strokes and blood clots in the lungs.”

Because JD had no other medical issues, Dr. Eichten agreed to do the surgery. JD had the surgery—double hip replacement—in November 2014. “It was painful at first, but each day I felt a little better,” he says. At first he used a walker to help him move around his house, followed by his neighborhood, then throughout the city.

“Today, JD works a full-time job and no longer worries about losing balance when he is fishing on his boat. ‘I was ready to retire,’ he says. ‘Now, I’m a productive citizen.”

Dr. Eichten is not surprised at how well his patient has recovered. “Total hip replacement has been performed since the 1960s and is one of the most successful procedures we do as orthopedic surgeons,” he says. “Patient satisfaction is very high. New materials and designs make the surgery more successful and the implants are lasting longer. Also, accessing the hip joint from the anterior (front) prevents most dislocations that we saw with the standard posterior approach.”

James “JD” Williams,
Double Hip Replacement Patient

The goal of this annual event is to inspire and help keep older Americans healthy and fit. Organizations throughout the country host a variety of health and fitness related activities, like free exercise classes, health screenings, workshops and more.

Lee Memorial Health System is proud to join the celebration with the following events:

Wellness Center – Cape Coral
Free fitness testing, including:
• Step up fit test (cardiovascular)
• Chair sit and reach test (flexibility)
• Agility and balance (sensory, motor and cognitive)
• Cardio Dance demonstration
• Pickleball demonstration
• FIT classes highlighted all day
• Members are invited to bring guests free of charge

SHARE Club at the North Fort Myers Recreation Center
Special presentations, including:
• 11:30 a.m., The Wonders of Walking presented by LINDY SMITH, Pole Proprietor, Inc.
• Noon, The Basics of Balance and Fall Prevention presented by Nathalie Grondin, physical therapist
• 12:45, Complimentary exercise class with sandy Kerr, group exercise instructor

Other reasons for total hip replacement include:
• Rheumatoid arthritis (inflammatory disease)
• Avascular necrosis (bone underneath the cartilage dies, usually from long-term steroid use or alcohol use)
• Childhood or developmental deformities that may cause arthritis when a patient is older

When grocery shopping, challenge yourself to remember items rather than using a written list.
Exercise Benefits Children of All Ages

With school, homework and extra-curricular activities, many students and their parents forget the importance of regular exercise. Many children and teens need 1-2 hours of physical activity every day.

“Exercise in children and teens helps to promote a healthy lifestyle and a healthy weight, but it also helps improve children’s self-esteem, relieve stress and (especially with team sports), promote friendships and social interaction,” says pediatrician Denise Drago, M.D. “It gives children another area in their lives to challenge themselves and excel.”

Even young children benefit from moving, and parents can make it fun. Toddlers naturally exercise as they walk, run and explore the world. At this age they enjoy moving their bodies in different ways and parents should encourage this. “Children around 4-5 years old are able to understand the basic rules of team sports and so this is a good age to start these activities,” Dr Drago says. “Exercise can be organized activity or just running around outside skipping or playing tag.”

As children get older and are able to understand the rules of organized sports, they may transition to playing on a sports team. The key is to limit the amount of inactive time children have, such as watching television or sitting for long periods. Children should move instead of sitting stationary in front of the TV.

The best way to incorporate exercise into a daily routine is to make sure it is a family activity. “Having the family take a walk after dinner, or play basketball on a weekend helps children to see that exercise is important for everyone and helps them develop life-long exercise habits,” Dr. Drago says. “The most important key is to make exercise something that everyone in the family enjoys, instead of a chore. This way, children grow up viewing exercise and fitness as a rewarding, enjoyable experience instead of something they dread. By encouraging kids to pursue activities they enjoy, parents can help accomplish this.”

Construction Continues at Golisano Children’s Hospital of Southwest Florida

This aerial view looks west at the new Golisano Children’s Hospital and HealthPark Medical Center. Eric Anderson, senior project manager, Lee Memorial Health System Facilities Management, says the construction of the picture is the future floor of the 64-bed neonatal intensive care unit. The bottom left of the picture shows where a new parking lot and garden will be and the bottom right of the picture shows the expansion of the energy plant that will serve the new Golisano Children’s Hospital facility.

To see a new time-lapse video of the construction, visit www.tinyurl.com/GCHupdate

Pediatric Sleep Medicine Now Available in Charlotte County

Sleep is a vital component for our health and well-being. For children and teens, it is crucial, as sleep supports brain and physical growth and development. Recognizing sleep issues early and seeking treatment and support helps ensure every family member gets the sleep he or she needs to thrive.

For families in Charlotte County, the Golisano Children’s Hospital of Southwest Florida Pediatric Specialty Clinic in Port Charlotte now sees women and children who are experiencing sleep issues. Debra Peck, ARNP will be in the clinic once a month.

Debra earned her Bachelor of Science in Nursing at the University of Louisville in Louisville, Ky. She earned her Masters of Science in Nursing at Indiana Wesleyan University in Marion, Ind. Debra has experience as a nurse practitioner in a family practice and sleep medicine.

Debra Peck, ARNP will be in the Pediatric Specialty Clinic once a month.

Common sleep disorders include:

- Snoring
- Sleep apnea
- Insomnia
- Behavioral insomnia of childhood
- Restless leg syndrome
- Sleep walking/talking
- Narcolepsy

Pediatric Specialty Clinic
18316 Murdock Circle
Suite 106
Port Charlotte, FL 33948
941-235-4900
The red walls of Reggie Lamour’s bedroom might steal the scene if not for the big-screen television on the wall facing his bed. His room is typical for a young man in his late teens and early 20s, complete with a bulletin board full of photos. Reggie is not like most others of his generation. His bed is a hospital bed, and the television was a gift from a high school coach. Reggie spends a great deal of time watching television because he spends a lot of time in bed. The victim of a rugby accident more than two years ago, he is quadriplegic. His brain is fully intact, but he is unable to use his arms or legs.

“I was running,” Reggie says of the day in January 2013 when he was injured during his first rugby practice. “They passed me the ball. Someone ran toward me and his knee hit my neck. I fell down and tried to get up. I couldn’t move.”

A trip to the Trauma Center at Lee Memorial Hospital and hours later, Reggie learned that the injury broke his neck, causing paralysis. “I was confused,” he says. In an instant his life went from that of a physically fit high school student to someone who had to rely on other people for everything, from eating to adjusting his glasses.

“It was hard, very hard,” Reggie says. “The most difficult part was people shunning me.” There was nothing easy about his new lifestyle, but Reggie has learned to live within the confines of his own body. He attends physical therapy regularly and still trades barbs with his older brother Jhamson Lamour, who helps take care of him.

“It’s not easy living life this way but I’m thankful every day for being here,” Reggie says. “It’s not easy living life this way but I’m thankful every day for being here,” Reggie says. “It’s not easy living life this way but I’m thankful every day for being here,”

Reggie’s mother, three brothers, a sister and a certified nursing assistant help with his daily needs and a special van the family acquired after the accident is large enough to accommodate his wheelchair.

“After this happened, we all had to make adjustments,” Jhamson says. “We all looked out for each other, even before the accident, but now even more and our schedule revolves around him.”

Reggie’s survival is part miracle, part hard work. After he was flown to the Trauma Center, physicians, nurses and staff worked around the clock to ensure his recovery. “A trauma center is not the same as a hospital emergency department,” says Kathy Wecher, MSW, Trauma Center social worker. “Trauma centers are required to have a certain number of trauma-certified physicians and surgeons on staff and on-site 24 hours a day. Trauma centers must also have specific specialists on-call at all times and these specialists must be able to respond to the trauma center within minutes of an alert.”

In addition to specialized staff, trauma centers must have equipment specifically designed to care for trauma victims. Trauma victims are those patients who have received an injury that must be treated in a very narrow window of time in order to be given the best chance at recovery and survival. For the greatest chances of survival, trauma victims must receive treatment within the “golden hour,” or the first 60 minutes after receiving the injury.

“When a trauma happens it affects more than the patient in the bed,” Kathy says. “An entire family is involved in that trauma. The more you can keep a family together within an area they know, are comfortable and have supports (family, friends and co-workers) in, the easier it will be to manage all of the emotional and financial stress on the family unit. Generally speaking, the more familiar you are with the services (a trauma center near your home), the more confident you are with those caring for your loved one.”

Reggie just graduated from high school and would like to work as a public speaker, sharing his story and encouraging others to reach out to people in need. He tries to write poetry every day. “I don’t know yet what I will do, but I want to help other people,” he says.

“People who laugh more seem to have higher levels of energy,” says Dr. Concepcion.

Laughter: The Best Medicine

Does laughter affect your health? Laughter changes us, psychologically and physically. When we laugh our bodies release endorphins (natural “feel good” hormones), we stretch and use muscles, raise our pulse and breathe faster.

“Laughter circulates more oxygen into our system and helps to clear our airways,” says internal medicine physician Alberto Concepcion, M.D. “These effects are similar to what we get from a good workout, but more importantly they lift our spirits.”

A University of Virginia study found that adults laugh about 15 times per day; children laugh as many as 500 times per day. The reasons those numbers fall as we get older may be the stresses of adult life.

“Our everyday routine and our ability to cope emotionally can really run us down,” Dr. Concepcion says. “In a busy world where life can become routinized and stressful, it’s important we take time to enjoy a moment with friends or co-workers. It’s rejuvenating.”

High levels of stress can lower our immunity, so laughter may also help to prevent disease. Healthy people have more to be happy about. Laughter also creates a positive attitude and lifts our mood, which is especially beneficial for those in pain.

“People who laugh more seem to have higher levels of energy,” Dr. Concepcion says. “This can also be the result of having a personality that copes better emotionally. These people tend to make the best of difficult situations and connect well with others because laughter cuts tension, and reduces anxiety and stress.”

Though there is no scientific proof that laughter itself boosts your health, it certainly can improve your quality of life. Laugh a little. What’s the harm?
Older Americans Month Urges Seniors to Get Into the Act

Aging is inevitable, but there is a lot we can do to stay active—both physically and mentally.

Maintaining personal connections, socializing and exercising can help our memory, emotional and physical health, and our longevity. Some older adults may not know where to start to get more active and involved. That is where Lee Memorial Health System’s SHARE Club comes in to help Southwest Florida’s older residents stay healthier, more active, happier and more engaged.

SHARE Club offers so many options and opportunities for seniors to get involved,” explains Paula Short, assistant program coordinator. “The first step for our members is just walking through the door; then I help guide them to the programs, classes and social activities that best meet their needs—whether they want to get back into shape or find something to do outside of their house.”

Paula says she notices changes in people as they become more involved. “You can see our members start to relax more, they feel better about themselves and their outlook on life is more positive,” she says. “They create new relationships and routines that really enrich their lives.”

SHARE Club makes building relationships with other people as easy as possible. “Our events are a great way to meet people,” says Dena Kilgus, assistant program coordinator. “Our Dine & Discover New Friends program offers the chance to try a new restaurant and meet other members at the same time. I encourage everyone to participate, and, for our single members, I find the right mix of people at a table to ensure everyone is comfortable. The lectures are another great way to meet people.”

Dena and Paula say that it is wonderful to watch the relationships form between members, and with the volunteers and staff. “Our members really look out for one another,” Dena says. “If someone is missing from a regular class, other members will call or ask us to reach out to make sure everything is OK. Or, we’ll have members call us to let us know that they won’t be in just to save us and the others from worrying. It is very encouraging for us to see how important SHARE Club is to our members.”

Along with providing social, exercise and educational opportunities, SHARE Club also serves as a resource for Lee Memorial Health System—connecting members to the various programs and services created to enhance their health and well-being.

May is Older Americans Month and is an opportunity to raise awareness of the importance of older adults maintaining a healthy lifestyle by learning new things, staying socially active and keeping up with their physical fitness. SHARE Club can help seniors get into the act, one step at a time.

To learn more about SHARE Club, call 239-424-3765 or email SHARE-Club@LeeMemorial.org

Caring Nurses, Volunteers and Spiritual Services Bring Personal Touch to Healing

The woman had received a cancer diagnosis and was not doing well. As a hospital patient she was getting the medical care that she required, but Rev. Denise Sawyer, Cape Coral Hospital chaplain, saw a greater need.

She slipped away from the patient and went to the closet where she stores the “compassion shawls” that are crocheted by volunteers. “I always say, ‘Lord, please help me choose the right one,’” she says. She selected a turquoise shawl and brought it back to the patient, both as a way to stay warm and as a source of comfort. “Her daughter said, ‘Mom—this is the same color as the pillows you have at home.’ It turned out it was her favorite color.”

Patients, family members or anyone who Rev. Sawyer sees in need can receive a shawl. She relies on an army of volunteers to make the garments by hand. Yarn for the project is supplied by the Cape Coral Auxiliary, RX Games (employee fundraising program) funds and private donors.

The project is just one of several that Lee Memorial Health System employees have initiated without prompting, simply because they care.

“At first I thought I could crochet the shawls,” Rev. Sawyer says. “But I saw very quickly that I would need more than I could make.”

Rev. Sawyer’s program is exclusive to Cape Coral Hospital, because that is where she serves as chaplain. A similar endeavor, the Compassionate Blanket Program began in 2009 and has grown to include all intensive care units throughout Lee Memorial Health System. “The response from patient families, as well as staff, has been overwhelmingly positive,” Nancy says. “Many of the ICU and palliative care teams are also using the blankets for comfort when a family member is in crisis during a critical situation or in shock over an unexpected outcome.”

Financial support to purchase the fabric for the Compassionate Blankets has come from private donations, to the Lee Memorial Auxiliary and the Cape Coral Hospital Auxiliary: Sewing groups who attend churches where the parish nurses practice sew and assemble the blankets.

Demand for the blankets has increased, Nancy says. “As I walked down the Gulf Coast Medical Center intensive care unit hallway a few weeks ago with arms full of blankets, a nurse stopped me mid-hallway and said, ‘Thank you for bringing more blankets. We used our last one yesterday, took one out of my hand and disappeared into a room.’”

For HealthPark Medical Center certified radiology nurse Jeanne Wang Faubion, RN, the calling to give more than one yesterday, took one out of my hand and disappeared into a room.’”

Numerous volunteers help Rev. Denise Sawyer crochet the shawls she donates to patients.

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Numerous volunteers help Rev. Denise Sawyer crochet the shawls she donates to patients.
Mindfulness Focuses on the Here and Now

The concept is about living in the moment, but mindfulness is easier said than done. The idea is to pay attention, without judgment, to what is happening only right now.

“The majority of people are thinking of events that occurred in the past, or things that they have to do, of which that moment has not occurred yet,” says Jose Colon, M.D., sleep medicine physician. “That’s not ‘now’. That is not the present moment that we are in. I frequently say, ‘Anytime you look at your clock, the time is now.’”

Dr. Colon, who specializes in sleep medicine for children and adults, began paying attention to his own thoughts and started to explore ways he could slow down and enjoy each moment as it occurs. He started by reading material presented by Dr. Jon Kabat-Zinn, a physician who developed a Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) program for the University of Massachusetts Medical Center. MBSR marries mindful meditation and yoga, two practices that reduce stress and slow the heart rate.

“MBSR leads to decreased anxiety, improvements in depression and pain scores, and aids in sleep,” Dr. Colon says. “One of the main reasons we need to focus on this now is because the rates of stress are increasing. Consider this: Some estimates indicate that by 2020 chronic stress will be the leading cause of disability!”

Taking the time to sit still for a period of time may initially seem uncomfortable. “This practice is an exercise,” Dr. Colon says. “It’s like asking someone who has never been to a gym to go, and run 10 miles. When I first tried mindful meditation, I had a hard time doing it for one minute. It took me almost a year to do 20 minutes. But now, it’s an everyday part of my life, and I do it with my children, as well.”

Dr. Colon did not learn about MBSR in his medical education. He did self-learning through books, webinars, and completed an 8-week MBSR course through the University of Massachusetts Medical School, Center for Mindfulness. Now he helps introduce these concepts to his patients and reaches out to the community through lectures in stress management. And the work with his pediatric patients and his own children has influenced him to write children’s books about mindfulness and sleep.

Dr. Colon has noticed a difference in how his mindfulness practice has affected his life. “I feel mentally healthy and my concentration has improved,” he says. Dr. Colon has noticed that this practice conveys to his patients, as well. “Many of the patients I see have anxiety or chronic stress that makes them irritable,” he says. “I’ve noticed that many of them walk out calmer than when they came in.”

Don’t Deal with Depression Alone

At some points in life, we all experience bouts of the blues, moodiness, sadness, worry, fear and anxiety. For many people, the feelings are temporary. For others, the feelings persist and affect day-to-day life. When this happens, it is important to seek help from a mental health professional, as depression often gets worse if left untreated.

“Depression is very common—1 in 6 adults may be depressed,” explains Daryl Tanski, M.D., psychiatrist. “There isn’t one specific cause of depression; it can be a combination of genetics and stressors, like traumatic or stressful events, the death of a loved one or even going to college or starting a new job.”

Dr. Tanski says that depression often manifests in the late teenage years or early 20s, but, because of social stigmas or cultural bias, it may be years later that a person seeks treatment. “Unfortunately, there are still misunderstandings about depression, and people feel ashamed,” he says. “But, just like a heart problem or other physical condition, depression and mental illness require medical intervention, which, depending on the severity, may involve medication, psychotherapy—also known as talk therapy—or both.”

The treatment plan is highly individualized. “For most people, depression doesn’t just happen once, it is reoccurring,” he says. “It is very important that we provide education so the patient recognizes when he or she should reach out for help.”

Dr. Tanski reminds you that short bouts of sadness or anxiety don’t constitute depression. Instead, symptoms of depression last most of the day, nearly every day for more than two weeks. These symptoms can include:

- Loss of pleasure/joy, withdrawing from family and friends
- Feelings or a sense of sadness, emptiness, unhappiness
- Changes in appetite – either loss of or increase in appetite
- Altered sleep patterns – either insomnia or sleeping too much
- Concentration problems, trouble thinking
- Negative thoughts – feelings of worthlessness or guilt
- Anxiety – 50 percent of patients with depression will have significant anxiety
- Thoughts of suicide*

“Depression is highly treatable, and there shouldn’t be shame or discomfort in seeking help,” Dr. Tanski says. “Untreated depression can lead to other issues, like substance abuse if someone is self-medicating with alcohol or drugs, for example. We are here to help determine the best plan of care in order to restore each patient’s quality of life.”

*If you are having suicidal thoughts, get help right away from a close friend or loved one, or call the National Suicide Prevention Hotline at 800-273-TALK.

Daryl Tanski, M.D. Psychiatry Lee Physician Group 12550 New Brittany Blvd. Suite 100 Fort Myers, FL 33907 239-343-9180 www.tinyurl.com/DrTanski
Age-related macular degeneration (ARMD) is a leading cause of irreversible vision loss in older adults. In fact, there are more than 5 million new cases diagnosed each year in Europe and North America alone; and it is estimated that 30 percent of Americans 55 years of age and older have ARMD. There are two types of ARMD—dry and wet.

“Dry ARMD accounts for 85 percent of cases,” explains Claudio Ferreira, M.D., ophthalmologist and retinal surgery specialist. “An accumulation of yellow deposits on the macula—which is the most sensitive part of the retina and the part responsible for central vision—dry ARMD causes a slow, but progressive loss of central vision. The other 15 percent of cases are wet ARMD, which is the main cause of rapid central vision loss. The dry form can turn into the wet form, which results in leakage, bleeding, and lipid and pigment accumulation.”

Dr. Ferreira says the disease often starts at the age of 55 and most patients are unaware of the condition. “Many patients with dry ARMD are asymptomatic,” he says. But, others may experience the following symptoms:

- Decreased vision
- A gray spot in the center of vision
- Visual distortion
- Loss of contrast sensitivity

Along with age, there are other risk factors for ARMD, including those that can be changed and those that cannot. Modifiable risk factors include:

- Smoking
- Nutritional factors
- Heavy alcohol use
- Obesity
- Lack of exercise
- Hypertension
- Exposure to sunlight (whether you wear sunglasses)

Non-modifiable risk factors for ARMD include:

- Gender - ARMD is more common in females
- Race – ARMD is more common in Caucasians
- Family history
- Genetic factors
- Cardiovascular disease
- Diabetes

Treatment is available and differs depending on the form of ARMD. For dry ARMD, Dr. Ferreira says treatment involves:

- Close observation
- Genetic testing, which helps determine individualized eye vitamins needed to slow the progression of the disease
- Increased intake of green leafy vegetables, such as spinach, broccoli and kale
- Smoking cessation
- Control of hypertension
- Home monitoring using the Amsler Grid to detect sudden changes in vision, such as distortion or wavy lines

“For wet ARMD, the current standard of care is a painless intraocular injection of medication to control the leaking or bleeding blood vessel,” Dr. Ferreira says. “I have performed more than 20,000 intraocular injections with an outstanding success rate. But, in rare occasions, if intraocular injections fail, we can use a laser to treat the source of the leakage.”

Age-Related Macular Degeneration is Common, Treatable

Stop in the Lee Memorial Health System Wellness Center near you and get a free week pass. Join in the month of May and receive a free ½-hour lifestyle coaching session.
Call Center available evenings and week ends to make physician appointments.

7 a.m.-7 p.m., 7 days a week. 239-481-4111
Multiple Myeloma Support Group
GCMC, Women’s Services Entrance, 3rd Floor
Time and Date: 3rd & 5th Tuesday of each month
Location: GCMC Medical Office, 1865 Doctor's Way, Suite 108, Fort Myers
Registration and for More Information: Call Stacey Brill at 239-343-3443

Hyperhidrosis Support Group
Time and Date: Third Wednesday of each month
Location: 19200 Bay, Fort Myers
Registration and for More Information: Call Sally Fontaine at 239-590-0797 or toadstool@comcast.net

Mastectomy / Post-Surgical Education
Receives hand-containing information and regarding your surgical procedure. Also includes valuable take-home aids to aid you during your recovery.
Time and Date: 1st, 3rd, 5th Tuesday of each month
Location: 239-939-2808

Blood Cancer Support Group
kgod@comcast.net
3-5 p.m., first Wednesday of each month
Cancer Suckers Cafe, Circle, Fort Myers
Call 239-418-2000

Image 342x79 to 791x382

Multiple Sclerosis Society.
Gentle Yoga – Multiple Sclerosis Society
Time and Date: 10:30 a.m., Tuesday
Location: Faith Presbyterian Fellowship Hall, 454 Creekside Lane, Suite 7, Fort Myers
Registration and for More Information: Call 239-424-3122

Lifestyle Coaching
This is what lifestyle coaching session can do for you.
Time and Date: 10 a.m., every Wednesday
Location: GCMC Medical Offices, 13685 Doctor’s Circle, Fort Myers
Registration and for More Information: Call Sally Mitchell at 239-424-3231 or Sarah Mitchell@LeeMemorial.org

Oral, Head and Neck Cancer Support Group
registered and for More Information:
Time and Date: 1st, 3rd, 5th Tuesday of each month
Location: GCMC Medical Offices, 13685 Doctor’s Circle, Fort Myers
Registration and for More Information: Call Sally Mitchell at 239-424-3231 or Sarah Mitchell@LeeMemorial.org

Healthy Living Lecture Series at Estero
The Healthy Living Lecture Series is aOnce a month program to cover a variety of health topics.
Theme: Women’s Health
Time and Date: 3rd Monday of each month
Location: Estero Boulevard Healthpark Medical Center
Registration and for More Information: Call Lora Williams at 239-418-2000

Healthy Living Lecture Series at Lee
A healthy living lecture for the first time ever presented by experts in Southern Florida.
Theme: Women’s Health
Time and Date: Last Monday of each month
Location: Estero Boulevard Healthpark Medical Center
Registration and for More Information: Call Lora Williams at 239-418-2000

Healthy Living Lecture Series at Fort Myers
A healthy living lecture series is available in Fort Myers.
Theme: Women’s Health
Time and Date: 3rd Monday of each month
Location: Estero Boulevard Healthpark Medical Center
Registration and for More Information: Call Lora Williams at 239-418-2000

Healthy Living Lecture Series at Cape Coral
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