

# foundation focus

VOLUME 41 | FALL 2023

## FROM DISCOVERY TO RECOVERY IN ONE SUMMER

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UPMC **LIFE  
CHANGING  
MEDICINE**

SUSQUEHANNA  
HEALTH FOUNDATION



## LETTER FROM

# Melissa Davis, MHA

It's an exciting time to be a part of UPMC in North Central Pa. We continue to provide patient-focused, comprehensive health care experiences (once only considered possible in big city health networks) right here in our 12-county region. Most importantly, we are doing so while still providing the personal touch our community has always deserved and our health care providers at every level have always valued.

Personalized care is offered in north central Pennsylvania with a laser focus on access and safety. By focusing our programs on providing the right level of care at the right time, we have maintained the ability to have strong patient outcomes while continuing to advance the services offered.

This is done through a strong primary care network of health care quarterbacks to support each patient through the continuum of care. This "patient-centered medical home" model (which you will read more about in this issue) plays a big role in our success as the primary care team partners with patients in a shared-ownership approach.

We offer the medical home to our patients in a variety of ways, including in-person appointments, televisit or communication options, virtual appointments, or by using the tools in the MyUPMC app. Furthermore, we have a Nurse Triage Nurse Navigator program as an extension of the practice to be sure that our community members have access to live human support 24/7/365.

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Using this system of virtual appointments, in-person office visits, MyUPMC app tools, and nurse triage phone check-ins, we are able to interact with patients in ways that work best for them, at the time that they prefer, with the resource that is the most appropriate for the need. Using this multiplatform approach means we have real-time access to their health needs, and many times we can treat a symptom or diagnose an underlying condition before an emergency occurs.

The various ways in which our patients communicate become the foundation for our specialists and surgeons to gather key insight into how to approach the next level of care, potentially avoiding an emergency room visit. Shared medical records, timely access to results, and key insight from the medical home provider and nurse navigation team will ensure that our patients have the access they deserve, with shared decision making among the entire care team for the safest plan.

To further exemplify our focus on patient safety and the right level of access, always, we want our community members to take advantage of our increased subspecialized care offerings and the MyUPMC patient portal as often as needed. Reducing wait times in health care benefits patients at every level but particularly children, seniors, and home-bound individuals. We are connected to UPMC colleagues and programs across Pennsylvania using sophisticated technology and human resources on-site in north central Pennsylvania. to bring more rotating specialists to our local market. Local subspecialists, new to our market, now save patients long trips to other cities to receive specialty care, and they allow patients to continue their overall treatment plan within the local health network that

they know and trust. Our newest rotating specialties offering local appointments in person include urologic gynecology, gynecologic oncology, surgical oncology, maternal-fetal medicine, and several pediatric subspecialties such as pediatric general surgery, and pediatric urology. We continue to seek feedback from our patients and their patient-centered medical home providers to learn what subspecialists should be next in our local network, with plans to grow through 2024 as much as we've grown services in the past 18 months.

Our hope as a medical group is that patients continue to feel that they made the right choice with us as partners in care. Moreover, we feel the generosity of the community donors and the selfless acts of our volunteers are other facets of our success. We appreciate the various donors in our communities who continue to invest in our programs and resources; we could not continue to grow and build upon our quality offerings without the donations that are routinely received from such philanthropic contributions. Also, we are grateful for the many community volunteers who give so much of their time to be an extension of our programs and help patients often. Together with the support of the donors and volunteers, our health care team is proud to know that we are making a difference in the well-being of the communities we serve.

#### **Melissa Davis, MHA**

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# From Discovery to Recovery in One Summer

Network of specialists helps teen recover from a brain tumor in time for family vacation





This past July, at just 17 years old, **Ella Gerst**'s seemingly normal teenage life was suddenly turned upside down. She found herself in the UPMC Williamsport Emergency Department, diagnosed with a brain tumor. The emergency services team assessed Ella's symptoms and medical history and then ordered tests that uncovered the tumor in the left temporal lobe.

And in the blink of an eye, Ella's future was uncertain.

Prior to this, Ella was having a normal summer break from Jersey Shore Area Senior High School, where she was on the honor roll and played tennis. She led an active lifestyle, including skiing in the winter and having fun with friends. Seemingly out of the blue, Ella began to have mild episodes of what she described as feeling "a little off," and on occasion, she would catch herself suddenly staring off momentarily at odd times. Her family noticed it, too, and she was seen and treated for what was believed to be seizures.

Not long after, Ella felt an episode coming on while exercising on a treadmill. She remembers sensing that something was different this time — the seizure was stronger than anything she had experienced before. Thankfully, she stepped off the treadmill moments before she lost consciousness and was taken to the Emergency Department (ED) at UPMC Williamsport.

In the ED, **Josh Morley, MD**, and **Joe Mileto, PA-C**, were the first to see Ella. The team started from scratch as they looked at all the symptoms Ella had been dealing with prior to being taken to the ED. Her whole history was examined, including existing symptoms that had led to a past diagnosis and treatment for a seizure disorder. Blood work, an EEG, and a CT scan were ordered. When the CT scan came back with something suspicious on it, the ED team ordered an MRI, and the films were sent through the UPMC network to be read that day by a neurosurgeon at the Neurovascular Center of Excellence at UPMC Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh. It used to take hours, days, or even weeks to get MRI films to the out-of-town specialists who could read them, but today these files can be accessed almost instantaneously via UPMC's coordinated electronic imaging review network. Sharing imaging results like this is now possible among almost all UPMC facilities throughout the health network's large geographic service area.

The MRI of Ella's brain showed a left temporal lobe tumor. The source of the seizures had been determined. "When they told me what the MRI found, I was in shock. I was scared about my future and worried if I was even going to have a future," says Ella. "I really needed answers about what was going to happen next."

## Some Good News

While still in the ED, Ella and her parents, **John and Jill Gerst**, were able to speak directly with **Stephanie Greene, MD**, pediatric neurosurgeon at UPMC Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh, and director of Vascular Neurosurgery and co-director of the Neurovascular Center of Excellence, UPMC. Dr. Greene spoke directly with the family to share that the tumor was not life-threatening. But while it didn't need to be removed that day in Williamsport, it was important to remove it soon. Dr. Greene's team arranged to do the surgery the following week in Pittsburgh. The Gersts had time to go home, digest all they had just learned, and make plans for the journey ahead of them.

"What helped me so much while I waited for the surgery and then waited for the results was my faith. Prayer kept me sane. It helped keep me going," remembers Ella. She never gave up, either. Senior year of high school, college, her future career, her adult life in the years ahead — she was going to keep positively focused on these goals, too.

A week and a three-and-a-half-hour drive later, the Gersts met Dr. Greene face-to-face on the day of surgery in Pittsburgh, at one of the top 10 children's hospitals in the country. By then they were hardly strangers. "I cannot say enough about Dr. Greene and all the medical teams that treated and took care of Ella," says Jill. "They were beyond available to us. They were so kind and caring, and as a parent, I really needed that."

This was true on every level, she says. Dr. Greene was able to perform Ella's brain surgery while needing to shave only a minimum of her hair — a thoughtful act that let the teenager keep her beautiful long locks for the coming school year.



— Josh Morley, MD, and Joe Mileto, PA-C

## Profound Perspective

**Michael Gerst, DO, FACEP**, is UPMC in North Central Pa.'s Chief Medical Officer of Emergency Services, and he's also Ella's uncle. Dr. Gerst knew from his work experience that ED patients often need thorough detective-level evaluation and diagnostics to figure out what is going on and to treat them properly. But now it was his niece who was having a medical emergency, and he found himself looking at the experience from a patient's vantage point. It was, in his words, "most profound."

Dr. Gerst traveled with the family to Pittsburgh for Ella's surgery. "Seeing my niece and family's journey from the local emergency room with an unknown medical emergency to a neurosurgery center in Pittsburgh gave me a new perspective," he said. "Ella's access to top medical care and diagnostics within our network saved her life."


"Maybe the most profound moment of my professional career came late in the night after Ella's surgery. My brother turned to me and said that this experience has changed his mind on health care completely," says Dr. Gerst. "John told me, 'It's not about the easiest way to do things in medicine, it's really about the best way.'"

Dr. Gerst agrees with his brother. He says being able to see firsthand that the best way for Ella to get the procedure she needed was to have UPMC Williamsport's ED refer her to UPMC Children's for the surgery the following week. The experience has inspired him to work toward finding even more ways to collaborate for ED follow-up care. For starters, he is taking his leadership team out to meet the UPMC Children's leadership, so they can learn from each other to improve patient outcomes.

Improving patient outcomes is always a focus. "One of the unique things that makes us experts in rural health care is that we offer a world-class network of specialists who can connect with our communities through technologies that close the gaps that traditionally have posed obstacles to advanced care," says **Patti Jackson-Gehris**, president of UPMC in North Central Pa. Far from lessening the patient experience, telemedicine can bring so much more to rural patients who might otherwise have long travel times to see their health care providers. If a specialist was needed for a consultation, or to read an imaging film, it created a very difficult hurdle in the past.

"Properly used, as we do here, technology can elevate the coordination and quality of the health care experience for rural patients in ways that really matter," Jackson-Gehris added.





*“Her [Dr. Stephanie Greene’s] calm demeanor and intelligent explanation of how the surgery would go immediately made me less stressed. I felt like she had my back, and I was ready to do this.”*

— Ella





— Ella and her sisters

## A New Outlook on Life

Ella's tumor pathology came back benign. Thankfully, the type of tumor she had did not require chemotherapy or radiation, and Ella has been seizure- and symptom-free since the surgery. The family was able to go on their end-of-summer vacation in August, which felt like a fitting celebration after the tumultuous July they had. Her future follow-up care includes visits to Dr. Greene for MRIs every three months in her first post-surgery year, every six months the year after that, and then once yearly over the next 10 years.

When asked what she would tell other children faced with a similar medical emergency, Ella thinks a moment and offers this sage advice: "Never take anything or anyone for granted in life. You just never know when it might all change in a heartbeat. I'm really grateful for my family and faith, and also for all the kind and caring doctors, nurses, and staff who helped me when I needed it the most."

## Expert's Advice for When You Find Yourself in the Emergency Department

According to the most recent *National Hospital Ambulatory Medical Care Survey* from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), there were 131.3 million emergency department (ED) visits in 2020. While we always hope that an emergency room visit isn't in the cards for us, here are a few tips from Dr. Gerst on what to do if you do find yourself in that position:

- Know what medications you are allergic to so you can tell the ED medical team.
- Know your medication names and dosages.
- Do not be afraid to ask questions. If you still don't understand, ask again. You need and deserve to have an understanding of your health when you leave the ED.
- Know your child's medications, allergies, and medical history — don't rely on another parent or guardian to keep all that information on them, because you might be the only one in the ED with that child.
- Always be honest with the ED team when discussing your physical and mental health symptoms, because they need all the clues you can give them in order to help you.
- Impress upon children and teenagers that, even if it feels embarrassing to talk about it, they need to be honest with ED doctors and nurses about what's going on with their health and bodies.



# Donate to Make a Wish Come True

Susquehanna Health Foundation asked our department leaders to share their wish lists — items that operational funding cannot cover this year. The Foundation is asking the community to provide the necessary funds, or a portion of the funds, to purchase the items below. If you would like to make a gift to purchase one or more wish list items, please enclose your check in the magazine's attached envelope and note which item(s) you wish to fund. You also can make a gift at [SusquehannaHealthFoundation.org/Donate](https://SusquehannaHealthFoundation.org/Donate) and note in the comments section which item(s) you would like to fund.



\$25

## **Inpatient Activity Cart**

### ***2 Main at UPMC Muncy***

Patients on 2 Main at UPMC Muncy often have lengthy hospital stays. The activity cart available there helps patients stay upbeat and pass the time, especially when visitors cannot be present. Your gift will keep the activity cart stocked with adult coloring books, colored pencils, playing cards, and more to promote emotional and mental well-being.



\$33

## **Healthy Cooking Class for Cancer Survivors**

### ***UPMC Hillman Cancer Center in Williamsport***

In January 2024, the Cancer Center is launching a brand-new Healthy Cooking Class for cancer survivors. A donation of \$33 will provide the ingredients, equipment, tools, and cookbook for one participant. A gift of \$500 would fund one quarterly session for 15 patients.



\$100

## **Baby Swing and Highchair**

### ***Inpatient Pediatrics***

When a young child is hospitalized, it is difficult for the whole family. That's why the UPMC Pediatric team seeks to better support families and patients by providing baby swings and highchairs for the inpatient unit. A gift of \$100 will provide an easier stay for babies, toddlers, and their care providers.



\$450

## **Noise Machines**

### ***The Birthplace***

More than 1,000 babies are delivered each year at The Birthplace. Creating a peaceful environment for both mom and baby to comfortably rest is essential. Sound machines will block out unwelcome noise for new parents while providing natural, familiar sounds to help babies feel at ease. Your gift will provide The Birthplace with 17 noise machines, one for each patient room. A gift of \$27 would purchase one noise machine and make an impact.



\$800

## **AeroGarden and Baking Equipment**

### ***Inpatient Rehabilitation***

Patients in our inpatient rehabilitation unit are often anxious to return home and worry about their ability to function and navigate safely once there. Many others miss gardening and spending time in nature. Your gift will purchase baking tools and equipment to help patients practice life skills to return home safely. An AeroGarden will give patients a touch of nature while inside during their recovery.

# THE DONOR REPORT

A note to our donors: If your name has been omitted or misprinted, please notify us and accept our sincere apology.

## SIGNATURE GIFTS

**Signature Gifts** recognizes individuals and organizations

who made a commitment to Susquehanna Health Foundation with a contribution of \$100,000 or greater. Donors are listed through **June 30, 2023**.

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## Books to Help Children Navigate Life's Challenges

Our clinical teams see the struggles and barriers children frequently face — from enforcing personal boundaries and understanding their own changing bodies to mental health concerns and grief at the loss of a loved one. The Foundation recently asked nurses and leaders to identify books for a wish list that would enhance the patient experience and meet the needs of the children they serve. Thank you to **Davie Jane Gilmour** for partnering on this initiative — matching every book donated over a two-week period in August.

The book drive led to 184 books purchased and another 184 matched! Thank you to everyone who fulfilled the wish list. Your generosity will help children find joy and hope as they navigate challenges in life.

"My great nieces and nephews love books. In their honor, I asked for people to join me in providing books that help UPMC children as they face challenges, sadness, and the unknown," shared Davie Jane.

Our employees will use the books as needed in the cancer center, family medicine offices, pediatrician offices, emergency department, inpatient pediatrics, family medicine residency, Heartworks, and more.

"Dr. Seuss said, 'Sometimes the questions are complicated, and the answers are simple.' When a child has a loved one with cancer, the questions are very hard. But the answers can often be found in the books read on the lap of a trusted adult," shared **Laurie King**, patient navigator at UPMC Hillman Cancer Center in Williamsport.



\*deceased donor

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The Cornerstone Society recognizes

individuals who supported Susquehanna Health Foundation with a contribution of \$10,000–\$99,999. Donors are listed through **June 30, 2023.**

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\*Garth and Sue Everett

Jo-Anne Fawcett Estate

Chaplain Dave and Carol Fishel

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*In Memory of Ethel L. Chambers*

\*Joseph B. and \*Lillian M. Gehret

David Lee Gemberling

\*Evelyn Lunt Gephart, Norma Lunt

Mullen, and E. LaRue Lunt

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**The Ronald Insinger Family**

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\*Maralyn E. and Richard H. Lloyd

Gloria M. Lundy and Heather L.  
Macdonald

*In Memory of Richard H. Lundy Jr.*

Pamela J. Lundy

Samuel R. Lush

Erin Mincemoyer Martinko

William J. and Peggy McClain

Robert K. and Dorothy White Mertz

**Barbara J. Michael**

Richard and Gina Michael

C. Edward S. and Karen D. Mitchell

James E. and Elizabeth Mothersbaugh

Andy and Brenda Nichols

\*Bill and \*Pat Nichols

G. Douglas and Marlene C. Parsell

Harry Plankenhorn Foundation

Alicia and Eric D. Pohjala

Florence Putterman Foundation

**Brenda L. and Barry K. Rake**

Joseph and Barbara Reynolds

**Ronald and Lisa Reynolds**

Joyce Lundy Rhodes

Paul H. and Tacie E. Rooney Jr.

Elva M. Schmidt, RN

James and Debra Schneider

Peter and Linda Schultz

Jeri Sims

Abram M. and Dorothy M. Snyder  
Foundation, Inc.

Rita and John Spangler

Stony Fork Mennonite Church

Carolyn and Elliott Strickland

*In Memory of Jennifer Hammond*

Gertrude Strunk Estate

\*Robert Schell Ulrich

*In Memory of Rita C. Ulrich*

**The Eila Elizabeth Umstead  
Foundation**

Anthony H. Visco Jr.

Luigi Vittorio Estate

Bob and Irenay Weaver

Marion Calvert Wright Estate

Jun Yang

Karen and David Young



# Giving Back. Paying it Forward.

Neurosurgeon and wife donate to make a new procedure possible



**N**eurosurgeon **Fadi Sweiss, MD**, has been with the UPMC Neurological Institute in Williamsport for three years. It was a busy summer for him and his wife, **Jessica**, as they welcomed their first child in June. In addition to finding the joy of becoming new parents, the Sweisses are also spreading joy with their recent generous donation of \$25,000 to Susquehanna Health Foundation. Their gift made possible the purchase of a new specialized ultrasound device that guides minimally invasive carpal tunnel procedures previously unavailable in the region.

When they were first looking for a place to settle down and raise a family, Dr. Sweiss and Jessica were looking for a location that was centered between both sides of the family, and the Williamsport area really felt like a great fit. Everyone was very welcoming in this calm, peaceful, rural community, making it an easy choice to relocate here. “We have had a great experience in the community,” says Dr. Sweiss. “I have personally met a lot of wonderful people during my time here.”



Another factor in their decision to move to the area was that Dr. Sweiss saw great opportunities to bring more complex and advanced procedures to the neurosurgery specialists and their patients at the UPMC Neurological Institute. Dr. Sweiss has always found great satisfaction in providing superior patient care and ways to improve patients' quality of life. “People within the community here have significant problems, which at times require complex procedures,” says Dr. Sweiss. “The most rewarding thing is getting them through these procedures and watching them advance and recover, allowing them to return to what they love to do.”

Carpal tunnel syndrome is one health issue Dr. Sweiss sees negatively impacting many patients in the region. It is often linked to repetitive motion, including excessive technology use. Patients usually experience it in their thumbs and in their index and middle fingers. The tingling feeling and/or numbness is caused by the squeezing of the median nerve and tendons in your wrist that are used to bend some of your fingers. They are located in the space between the wrist bones called the carpal tunnel. These symptoms occur when the tissue around this tunnel swells or thickens. In addition to the repetitive motion, diabetes, rheumatoid arthritis, and pregnancy can increase the risk for the condition. The risk also increases with age.

Other factors that can play into a person getting carpal tunnel syndrome include:

- Fluid retention
- Trauma near the hands
- Underactive thyroid
- Overactive pituitary gland
- Being born with narrow carpal tunnels
- Family history of carpal tunnel syndrome

The first line of treatment for carpal tunnel syndrome usually includes changes in lifestyle, hand exercises, wrist braces, medicine, and steroid injections. If these don't work, surgery is often recommended. Traditionally, carpal tunnel surgery meant open surgery with large incisions and weeks of recovery time.

*Continue Reading →*

With their generous donation, Dr. Sweiss and Jessica helped bring ultrasound-guided carpal tunnel release surgery as a treatment option to local patients. Their gift made possible the purchase of a specially programmed ultrasound machine that assists in the newer, minimally invasive carpal tunnel procedure. The ultrasound machine allows the medical team to help confirm the diagnosis of carpal tunnel syndrome. It also decreases the need for more invasive diagnostic electromyograms (EMGs), which require a specialist to place small electrode needles into muscle tissue to record and study muscle activity. During the procedure, the ultrasound device then helps guide the use of a special needle and thread while identifying and protecting important structures. The ultrasound device is used to confirm successful carpal tunnel release as well.

Dr. Sweiss recalls that it was two years ago when he was first introduced to this new procedure. He immediately saw the potential to radically change treatment for patients with carpal tunnel syndrome in north central Pennsylvania. As the neurosciences team gradually incorporated a trial of the procedure, they found overwhelming success with it. "Interest in the procedure took off, and in order to keep up, we required more equipment in order to continue to provide timely care," he says. Patients had a very positive experience with this procedure, as well as a high overall satisfaction in the postoperative period. Dr. Sweiss knew it was important to be able to expand access across the community, and the region sooner, rather than later.

The specialized device is designed to perform the procedure through a three-to-five-millimeter incision. It is done in the office with only local anesthesia. Although times vary because each patient's case is unique to them, the average time to perform the procedure is less than five minutes. "This procedure is suited for anyone who has carpal tunnel syndrome. And while it can be done on patients of all ages, it is an especially important advancement for the elderly or those with significant medical problems," says Dr. Sweiss.

Dr. Sweiss has seen great success, with almost all patients being able to return to work after the shortened recovery time offered by this new procedure. The recovery time is usually between three to six days, compared to two weeks or more with traditional open carpal tunnel release surgery methods. "Symptom recovery can vary from patient to patient. Numbness and tingling can take months to fully



recover, but we have noticed significant and near resolution of symptoms within a few weeks in a majority of patients having this procedure," he notes.

So, why does Dr. Sweiss give back to the UPMC Neurological Institute in Williamsport? "I strongly believe in UPMC in the region and the opportunity we have to provide our communities we serve with phenomenal and complete neurosurgical care," he says. "I want the best for my patients, as well as this community. I believe this procedure allows them to experience the highest quality care locally."

In this case, carpal tunnel syndrome is a condition Dr. Sweiss and his colleagues see regularly in their patients, and his gift reflects his thoughtful, deep commitment to providing the medical care his patients need in the community he now calls home.

Dr. Sweiss is grateful as a physician to have the support provided by UPMC, the community, and his patients. He is inspired by this support and the generosity around him. For Dr. Sweiss, donating funding for better neurosurgical treatments is a welcome opportunity for him to give back and pay it forward all at once.

To those considering a gift to neurosurgery, Dr. Sweiss says, "We have many goals to continue to expand and provide the best possible care. This procedure is a great example with outstanding results. Donations will help continue to allow us to increase access and the ability to provide excellent care with the most advanced technology to our community."



# 41<sup>st</sup> ANNUAL



The 41st Annual Susquehanna Health Foundation Invitational Golf Tournament teed off August 14 at the Williamsport Country Club. This year's tournament raised more than **\$131,000 to purchase a SimBaby Mannequin with Tracheostomy.**

This year's total, combined with 40 years of individual and corporate sponsorships, brings the cumulative impact of the tournament to more than \$2.7 million.

To start the day, four sponsors were recognized for their generosity since the tournament's earliest years: **Larry Allison Jr.** of Allison Crane & Rigging, **Mike Bastian** of Bastian Tire & Auto Centers, **Bill Manos** of Fairfield Auto Group, and **Al Styrcula**.

## SimBaby Mannequin

When it comes to treating critically ill infants, an educated and prepared medical team is the most effective resource. And nothing prepares nurses and doctors for real-life scenarios like hands-on education and the opportunity to debrief and problem solve.

The SimBaby Mannequin with Tracheostomy will educate clinicians to enhance pediatric care in north central Pennsylvania. Our goal is to:

- Educate clinicians in the emergency department, respiratory therapy, inpatient pediatrics, and The Birthplace with hands-on, real-time scenarios.
- Ensure providers can effectively recognize and respond to critically ill children to care for higher acuity pediatric patients close to home.
- Provide valuable debriefing and problem-solving opportunities in a controlled environment for staff to develop skills, confidence, and competence.

Nurses in The Birthplace at UPMC Williamsport who have trained on similar equipment — our birthing mannequin, Victoria — are adamant that real-time, hands-on scenarios and post-simulation debriefing have, without question, saved lives.

**Thank you** to all the sponsors, players, volunteers, and committee members for making this year's tournament another success. We would like to extend a special thanks to our platinum sponsors: Allison Crane & Rigging, Ausley Construction/The Liberty Group, Blaise Alexander Family Dealerships, UPMC City Medical Staff, and UPMC Health Plan and UPMC.



# ENDOWMENT GIFTS

**Endowment Gifts** recognizes individuals and

businesses who supported Susquehanna Health Foundation with a contribution of \$25,000 or greater to establish an endowment. Donors are listed from **January 1, 2019, to present**. All donations, including endowments, continue to remain local and benefit our region. For more information, or to donate, contact Susquehanna Health Foundation at 570-320-7460.

## **Benevolent Care**

### **\$250,000–\$499,999 Level**

**Karen Steinbacher Endowment**  
Dave Steinbacher

## **Cancer**

### **\$100,000–\$249,999 Level**

**Joe and Carolyn Hume Endowment**  
Joe and Carolyn Hume Estate

### **\$25,000–\$49,999 Level**

**Ausley Construction Co., Inc. Endowment**  
Ausley Construction Co., Inc.

**Dr. William J. and Laura H. Martin Endowment**  
Dr. William J. and Laura H. Martin

**Christopher M. and Denise M. Plankenhorn Endowment**  
Chris and Denise Plankenhorn

## **Cardiac**

### **\$50,000–\$74,999 Level**

**John and Anne Rich Endowment**  
John W. and Anne Rich

## **Cardiac Rehabilitation**

### **\$100,000–\$249,999 Level**

**Edward and Sherry McCabe Endowment**  
Edward and Sherry McCabe  
*In Memory of Michael McCabe*

### **\$25,000–\$49,999 Level**

**Patricia J. Rambo Endowment**  
Patricia J. Rambo

## **Clinical Excellence**

### **\$100,000–\$249,999 Level**

**George and Shirley Durrwachter Endowment**  
George and Shirley Durrwachter

**Margaret Benner Reese and Charles L. Reese Endowment**

\*Mike and Barbara B. Hudock

### **\$75,000–\$99,999 Level**

**Sue Young Endowment**  
Friends of Sue Young

### **\$50,000–\$74,999 Level**

**C&N Endowment**  
C&N

## **Sisters of Christian Charity Endowment**

Frank G. Pellegrino

*In Honor of Sister Judith Blair*

*In Memory of Sister Mary Stephen Christian*

*In Memory of Sister Felice Donelin*

*In Honor of Sister Rosamund Eibach*

## **Dr. Hani J. Tuffaha and Family Endowment**

### **\$25,000–\$49,999 Level**

**R. Edward and Linda Alberts Endowment**  
R. Edward and Linda Alberts

**Birch and Annmarie Phillips Endowment**  
Annmarie Phillips

**Kenneth and Kathryn A. Smith Endowment**  
Robert P. and Kathleen R. Walker

**Susquehanna Community Bank Endowment**  
Susquehanna Community Bank

**Paul H. and Margaret M. Walker Endowment**  
Robert P. and Kathleen R. Walker

## **Colorectal and General Surgery**

### **\$25,000–\$49,999 Level**

**William P. and Lorraine Manos Endowment**  
William P. and Lorraine A. Manos Foundation

## **Emergency Medical Services**

### **\$25,000–\$49,999 Level**

**Dr. Gregory and Mrs. Marilyn Frailey Endowment**  
Greg and \*Marilyn Frailey

**Robert and Lanea Ruffaner Endowment**  
Robert E. Ruffaner  
*In Memory of Lanea Ruffaner*

## **Kathryn Candor Lundy Breast Health Center**

### **\$100,000–\$249,999 Level**

**Edward and Sherry McCabe Endowment**  
Edward and Sherry McCabe  
*In Memory of Michael McCabe*

### **\$75,000–\$99,999 Level**

**John C. Lundy and Family Endowment**  
John C. Lundy and Family  
*In Memory of Peggy Lundy*

### **\$25,000–\$49,999 Level**

**Kuzio Family Endowment**  
Keith and Jennifer Kuzio  
*In Honor of Janice D. Kuzio*



# ENDOWMENT GIFTS

## **Laboratory and Pathology**

### **\$25,000–\$49,999 Level**

#### **Dr. Donald J. Leathers Endowment**

Dr. and Mrs. Donald J. Leathers

#### **Dr. Sheldon M. Schwartz Endowment**

Dr. and Mrs. Sheldon M. Schwartz

## **Pediatric Rehab**

### **\$25,000–\$49,999 Level**

#### **Dr. and Mrs. Albert G. Liddell Endowment**

Mary Fran Liddell

## **Radiology**

### **\$25,000–\$49,999 Level**

#### **Dr. and Mrs. Chan Yoon Family Endowment**

Dr. Chan Yoon

*In Memory of Karen Yoon*

## **Scholarships**

### **\$100,000–\$249,999 Level**

#### **Rosalie Kaleda Scholarship Endowment**

Rosalie F. Kaleda

## **Special Purpose**

### **\$25,000–\$49,999 Level**

#### **Dr. Robert and Phyllis Yasui Endowment**

Anonymous

## **Trauma and Acute Care**

### **\$25,000–\$49,999 Level**

#### **The Elephant Family Endowment**

Dr. and Mrs. Elephant

*In Memory of Reuven Elephant*

#### **William P. and Lorraine Manos Endowment**

William P. and Lorraine A. Manos Foundation

## **Unrestricted**

### **\$25,000–\$49,999 Level**

#### **Charles and Donna Johnson Endowment**

Steve and Mary Ann Johnson

#### **John and Jean McDermott Endowment**

Steve and Mary Ann Johnson

## **UPMC Muncy and Muncy Place**

### **\$25,000–\$49,999 Level**

#### **Daniel C. Berninger Endowment**

The Muncy Bank & Trust Company

## **UPMC Wellsboro**

### **\$25,000–\$49,999 Level**

#### **Bill and Shirley Hebe Endowment**

Bill and Shirley Hebe

## **Urology**

### **\$25,000–\$49,999 Level**

#### **Dr. and Mrs. David Kurz Endowment**

Dr. David and Meghan Kurz

## **Women's Health Needs**

### **\$25,000–\$49,999 Level**

#### **The Manchester Family Endowment**

George Manchester, Brenda Terry-Manchester, Josh and Morgan Rogers, Meredith Manchester, & Alec and Maggie Fantaskey

## **Donors' Impact on Patients in Need**

The Benevolent Care Fund offers emergency, short-term financial assistance to patients of UPMC in North Central Pa. who would otherwise have no source of payment for physician-prescribed medications, transportation, infant care necessities, medical equipment, medical supplies, or co-pays. Our goal is to ensure patients do not delay necessary care and can follow through with their treatment plan.

**This is where you come in!** In 2020, you and other donors helped us grow this new fund.

Your support allowed us to be ready when our social workers and care managers saw immense growth in patient need from 2020 to 2022. In 2023, the need continues to grow, and because of you, we can help the projected **200 patients with more than \$10,000 in need.**

To support the Benevolent Care Fund and continue to help patients like Rick, use the magazine envelope or visit [SusquehannaHealthFoundation.org/Donate](https://SusquehannaHealthFoundation.org/Donate) today.

“Thank you for helping me get to my treatments. Your kindness and generosity are much appreciated. People like you that support people like me tell me that I will be a survivor. **Thank you.**”

— Rick Miller, Wellsboro

# BUSINESS & INDUSTRY GIFTS

## Business & Industry Gifts

recognizes businesses that supported Susquehanna Health Foundation with a contribution of \$5,000 or greater. Donors are listed through **June 30, 2023**.

### \$1,000,000 +

Anonymous  
Ward Manufacturing LLC

### \$250,000–\$999,999

McCormick Law Firm  
The Muncy Bank & Trust Company  
The Park Home, Inc.  
Verizon Wireless

### \$100,000–\$249,999

AutoTrakk, LLC  
C&N  
Dominion Foundation  
EuroOptic Ltd.  
Hudock Capital Group, LLC  
iHeartMedia  
Jersey Shore State Bank  
Lamar Advertising of Williamsport  
M&T Bank  
PPL Foundation  
PRIMUS Technologies Corp.  
Reynolds Iron Works, Inc.  
Shell Exploration & Production Company  
Silvertip, Inc.  
Welliver McGuire Inc.  
Wolyniec Construction, Inc.  
*In Memory of James T. Wolyniec Sr.*

### \$50,000–\$99,999

ABS Building Systems Integrators, LLC  
Alexander Building Construction Co.  
Anadarko Petroleum Corporation  
Bayard Printing Group  
Ciocca Toyota of Williamsport  
First Quality, Inc.  
George E. Logue LLC  
Gift Box at Muncy Valley Hospital  
Glenn O. Hawbaker Inc. Charity Golf Outing  
**John Savoy & Son, Inc.**  
Larson Design Group  
**Lycoming Engines**  
Pennsylvania College of Technology  
PPL Electric Utilities

Quandel Construction Group, Inc.  
Ronald McDonald House Charities of N.E.P.A., Inc.  
Susquehanna Community Bank  
Weis Markets, Inc.  
Woodlands Bank

### \$25,000–\$49,999

Anonymous  
**AllOne Foundation**  
ARAMARK Healthcare  
Ausley Construction Co., Inc.  
Baker Tilly Virchow Krause, LLP  
BB&T  
Beiter's Home Center  
Construction Specialties, Inc.  
*In Honor of Construction Specialties, Inc. Staff and Families*  
Data Papers/KBF Print Technology  
Evergreen Wealth Solutions  
Fairfield Auto Group  
First Citizens Community Bank  
Forrester Environmental, Inc.  
Fry's Plastic  
Gilmour Arts  
Glenn O. Hawbaker, Inc.  
Interior Construction Specialists, Inc.  
L.F. Driscoll Company, LLC  
Lundy Construction Co., Inc.  
Martin Rogers Engineering Consultants  
Mattel Children's Foundation  
McCarty-Thomas Funeral Home, Inc.  
*In Memory of Richard G. Thomas*  
McNerney, Page, Vanderlin & Hall  
National Fuel Gas Company Foundation  
Repsol Oil & Gas USA, LLC  
Santander Bank  
Shell Appalachia Charity Golf Tournament  
Stantec  
Tura L.P.

### \$15,000–\$24,999

BDA Healthcare Architects  
Deerfield Charitable Trust  
Lezzer Lumber

Lundy Industrial Realty, L.P.  
McDonald's – \*Doug and Frani Doherty  
Muncy Self Storage  
Murray Motors – Brian Peace and Bill Brown  
Norcen Industries Inc.  
Pennram Diversified Mfg. Corp., Andrew and Karen Hooker  
Pittsburgh Penguins Organization  
Steinbacher Enterprises, Inc. – Dave and \*Karen Steinbacher  
*In Memory of Mr. and Mrs. James Steinbacher*  
*In Memory of Karen Steinbacher*  
Steinbacher Enterprises, Inc. – Matt and Joslyn Dougherty  
*In Honor of Dave and \*Karen Steinbacher*  
Trojan Tube Sales and Fabrications, Inc.  
*In Memory of Jack Decker*  
Williamsport Moving Company  
Wm. L. Robinson Concrete

### \$5,000–\$14,999

Anonymous  
Anthony Visco Jr. Architects  
Axeman-Anderson Company  
Bennardi Barberio Dentistry  
*In Memory of Dr. Rudolph Bennardi*  
Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices  
Hodrick Realty  
Billtown Mechanical Corp.  
Blair Brothers Goldsmiths  
The Blessing Insurance Agency, Inc.  
Brodart Co.  
Central Equipment Company  
Clinton County Commissioners  
Ruth Croyle and East End Lumber Company  
Elite Feet, Inc. – Bonnie Dodge  
EmCare, Inc.  
Fraternal Order of Eagles – Williamsport Aerie #970  
G.R. Noto Electrical Construction, Inc.  
Herman and Luther's  
The Herman O. West Foundation  
Hermance Machine Company

## BUSINESS & INDUSTRY GIFTS

Houseknecht's Machine & Tool Co., Inc.  
J and M Construction Specialty, Inc.  
Keystone Bingo Supply, Inc.  
Keystone Data Systems, Inc.  
L3Harris Electron Devices  
The Liberty Group  
M & R Contracting, Inc.  
Marcellus Shale Coalition  
MetalKraft Industries, Inc.  
Mid-State Beverage Co. – Don and Betty Jo Heim  
Montgomery Plumbing Supply Company  
Pappy Jack's Winery  
PATHS, LLC  
Patterson-Brandt, Inc.

Penn Cabling Services, Inc.  
Penn Recycling, Inc.  
Pine Ridge Construction Management  
PMG Advisors, LLC  
R&L Housing Associates, Inc.  
***Sanders Mortuary Ltd.***  
Schneider Valley Farms Dairy  
*In Honor of Schneider Valley Farms Dairy Employees*  
Gene and Mary Ann Schurer & Pam Keefer – Aquarius Pool & Patio, Inc.  
SelectTrim Corporation, James Wood and Marcus Annicelli  
SERVPRO of Broome County  
Shaylor's Ponds & Patios

Sher Properties, Inc.  
Stanley Black & Decker  
State Farm  
Steinbacher, Goodall & Yurchak  
Stevens & Lee, P.C.  
Sunbury Motors  
Susquehanna Oral & Facial Surgery and Dental Implant Center  
Susquehanna Paper & Sanitary Supply Corporation  
Tory Leather  
Wayne Township Landfill  
Wellsboro Electric  
Wellsboro Rotary Club  
West Pharmaceutical Services

## Designated Space for the Next Generation of Health Care Workers

UPMC Williamsport held a ribbon-cutting ceremony over the summer to commemorate the opening of its new student lounge. The lounge — which was renovated with monetary, furniture, and electronic contributions from **Pennsylvania College of Technology**, **Savoy Contract Furniture**, **the Beiter Family**, and **Target** — will serve as a space for students to study, eat, or relax.

Nearly 1,000 students spend time at UPMC Williamsport over the course of a year. Thank you to our donors for ensuring the ongoing needs of not just our staff but the needs of the next generation and possibly future staff are met.

UPMC in North Central Pa. leaders **Patti Jackson-Gehris**, president; **Sue Duchman**, vice president and chief nursing officer; along with **Steve Johnson**, former president; and **Dr. Michael Reed**, president, Pennsylvania College of Technology, were on hand to cut the ribbon and thank all staff who made the upgraded space possible, including maintenance, environmental services, and IT.







# 2023 Lifetime Achievement Awards

**S**usquehanna Health Foundation's 8th Annual Lifetime Achievement Awards Celebration recognized major donors, individuals, and groups who significantly impact UPMC in North Central Pa. and the patient care provided every day.

The event, sponsored by UPMC and UPMC Health Plan, was held at DiSalvo's Restaurant in Williamsport on May 19. The evening's entertainment was sponsored by C&N.

The night started by recognizing new major donors of \$10,000 or more and major donors who reached a new giving level or made an additional major gift. More than 65 donors were recognized. The community's ongoing support

continues to bring life-changing medicine to north central Pennsylvania. Patient **Joyce Way** spoke at the event about her gratitude for the life-saving care she received from **Dr. Kashif Chaudhry** and his team, and the quality of life she got back after treatment.

Following dinner, **Steven P. Johnson** received the President's Lifetime Achievement Award for his years of service, leadership, and commitment to health care. **Patti Jackson-Gehris**, president of UPMC in North Central Pa., presented the award and shared comments from Steve's colleagues and peers.







# CADUCEUS SOCIETY

The Caduceus Society recognizes physicians who made a commitment of \$2,500 or greater to Susquehanna Health Foundation. Donors are listed through **June 30, 2023**.

## \$500,000+

Dr. and Mrs. Francis M. Powers Jr.

## \$100,000–\$499,999

Anesthesia Associates of Williamsport  
Dr. and Mrs. Rodwan and Zokaa Rajjoub  
Dr. Hani and Eiman Tuffaha

## \$50,000–\$99,999

Jean and John Burks

*In Memory of Joseph R. Calder, MD*

**Dr. Barbara Heere and \*Dr. Bernard Butkiewicz**

\*Dr. and Mrs. Albert G. Liddell

**Dr. and Mrs. David J. Lopatofsky**

Dr. and Mrs. George A. Manchester

## \$25,000–\$49,999

Dr. John and Donna Becker  
Dr. and Mrs. E. Lee Bellinger  
Dr. Jill A. Burns

Dr. and Mrs. Scott D. Croll  
Dr. Ronald E. DiSimone

**Dr. and Mrs. Elephant**

Greg and \*Marilyn Frailey  
Dr. and Mrs. Daniel R. Gandy  
Dr. Michael C. and Dr. Heather J. Gerst  
Dr. David and Meghan Kurz  
\*Dr. Ted and Jane Larson Jr.  
Dr. and Mrs. Donald J. Leathers  
Dr. William C. and Beverly H. McCauley

Dr. and Mrs. Alexander R. Nesbitt  
Drs. Timothy and Kathleen Pagana

Dr. and Mrs. Sheldon M. Schwartz  
Dr. and Mrs. Donald D. Shaw

\*Dr. and Mrs. Gordon A. Shaw

*In Memory of Joseph R. Calder, MD*

Susquehanna Urologic Associates

**Dr. Fadi and Jessica Sweiss**

Dr. and \*Mrs. Lawrence Tama  
Dr. Chan Yoon

## \$15,000–\$24,999

Anonymous

Darius Abadi, DO

Dr. and Mrs. Victor P. Becker

Dr. and Mrs. William R. Beltz

Dr. and Mrs. Mark D. Beyer

Christopher and Susan Branton

Drs. Brian and Jenny Broadus

Dr. Michael and Lydia Busada

Michael Desiderio, DO, and Darcie Desiderio, DNP, CRNP

Dr. Perry W. Doan

Dr. Matthew and Ashley McClain  
Cheryl Marceau and Dr. Michael Marceau

Dr. and Mrs. Anthony M. Nespola

Dr. Timothy and Debbie Pastore

Dr. Shailesh and Deanna Patel

Jim and Peg Redka

Dr. and Mrs. Zachary Ritter

Dr. and Mrs. Warren L. Robinson

Dr. and Mrs. Sandeep and Maria Sagar

Dr. Phyllis Scott

Dr. Mohammad and Mrs. Margaret Shafique

Dr. Robert and Sandy Silberg

Dr. Donald J. and Susan Sweeney  
Williamsport Pathology Association

## \$10,000–\$14,999

Anonymous (3)

Thomas R. and Keri L. Albright

Karen and Michael Belenko

Drs. David and Susan Borys

Dr. and Mrs. Paul W. Braunneg Jr.

Dr. Tom and Rebecca Burke

Dr. and Mrs. Leonard R. Collins

Daniel J. Glunk and Margrit M. Shoemaker

Dr. and Mrs. Edmund P. Guelig

Dr. and Mrs. Timothy Heilmann

Dr. and Mrs. Michael V. Hoffman

Dr. Renuka Kakarala and Dr. Sai B. Sajja

Dr. Charles D. Lamade

Dr. and Mrs. David B. Nagel

Drs. \*Naresh C. and Anita Nagpal

Donald and Diane Nardone

Dr. Christine K. Nolan

Dr. and Mrs. Harshad Patel

Dr. Christopher Reilly and Dr. Teresa Bianco

Dr. René and Diana Rigal

Josh and Morgan Rogers

Keith and Pam Shenberger

*In Memory of Lynn A. Overdorff Jr.*

*In Memory of Ann L. Shenberger*

Dr. Thomas C. Smith and Suzanne Dively-Smith

## Dr. Mohammad Tahir

Dr. and Mrs. F. Ardell Thomas

Dr. Richard and Mrs. Sharon Walter

Dr. and Mrs. Stephen Weber

## \$2,500–\$9,999

Anonymous (5)

Bharat G. Adroja, MD

Dr. and Mrs. Carl R. Albright

Dr. and \*Mrs. David N. Ambrose

Charles and Karla Anderson

*In Memory of Albert Confer*

Dr. Elizabeth and \*Eric Anderson

Shrilkumer Bhatt, MD

Jasneet Bhullar, MD, and Suman Bhullar, MD

James Bland, MD

Dr. Karen M. Brady

Dr. and Mrs. John V. Calce

Dr. William Cicio

Cornerstone Family Health, P.C.

Dr. T.E. Cullen and Bronwen Cullen

Dr. and Mrs. Gary M. Dincher

Drs. Dilip Elangbam and Subadani Angom

Dr. and Mrs. Joseph G. English

Durriya S. Esaa, MD

Dr. and Mrs. Todd W. Fausnaught

James R. Fick, MD

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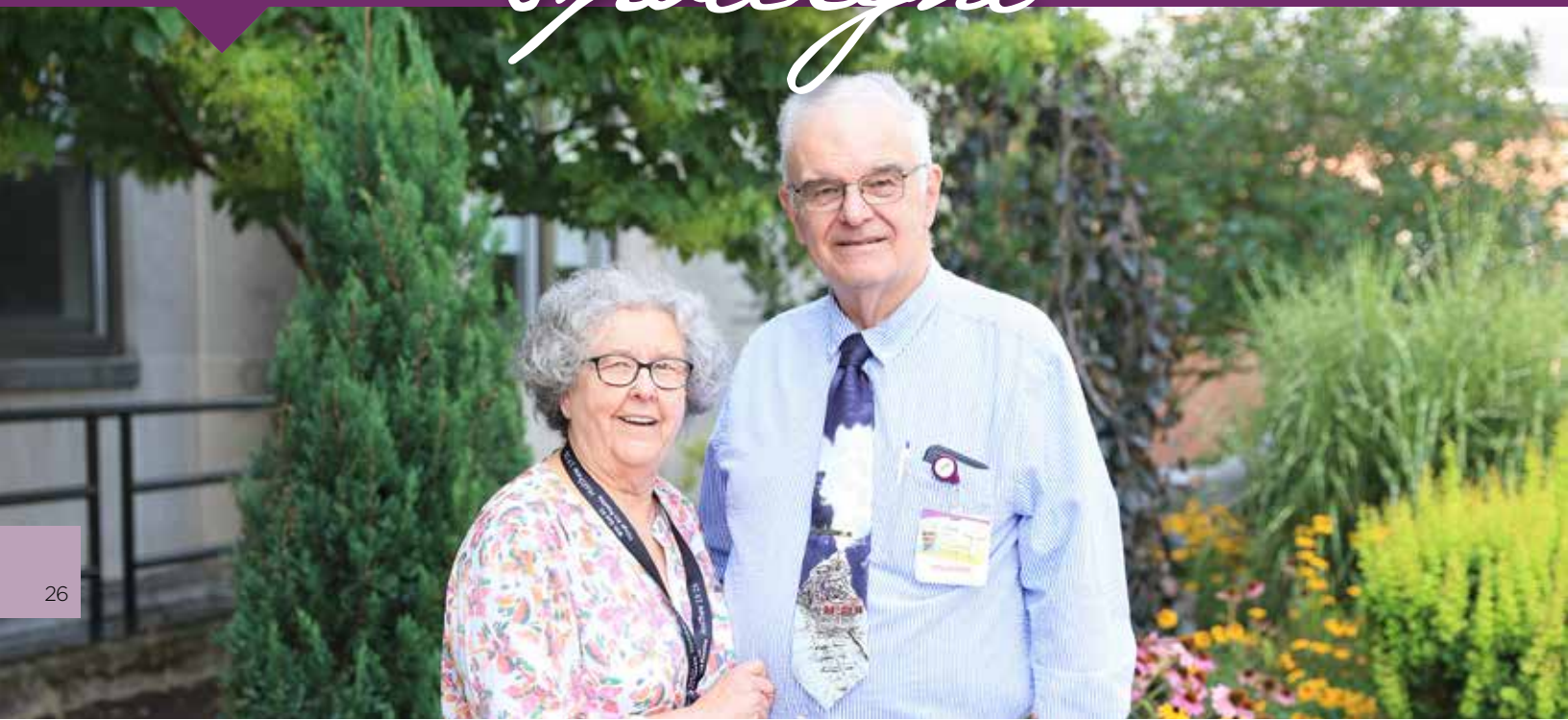
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## Young Philanthropists: Girl Scouts Sweetening the Experience

Girl Scout Troop 60271, based in Montoursville, sold more than 2,700 boxes of cookies this year. To share their blessing and pay it forward, they donated dozens of boxes of cookies to the UPMC Muncy frontline health care workers. Troops 61238 and 62019 also delivered cookies to UPMC Hillman Cancer Center in Williamsport to share with patients and their caregivers. Thank you, Girl Scouts, for sharing cookies and smiles!



## A Pair of Helping Hands

Volunteers draw on personal experiences to provide support.

**T**wice a week, **Carl and Andrea Sutton** drive 35 miles each way to volunteer with UPMC Williamsport and the UPMC Williamsport Divine Providence Campus. Andrea helps patients in the Infusion Center, and Carl is Volunteer Chaplain Assistant (VCA) at the Infusion and Cancer Centers and at UPMC Williamsport. When asked if the commute is inconvenient, they reply in unison: “No, it’s worth it.”

Carl has been volunteering since 2014, when he got his start in the emergency department. A retired Canton High School business teacher, he spends most of his volunteer time offering support and prayer for patients, their families, and caregivers. “I had back surgery and a stent a few years ago, and I draw from those experiences to better understand what

patients and their families are going through,” he says. “During those tough and lonely times, I want to make a difference for people when they need it most.”

As a mother, grandmother, and retired editor from the *Canton Independent-Sentinel*, Andrea has always been a people person. “Retirement for me meant looking for ways to stay connected with people in the community in meaningful ways,” she says. Andrea began volunteering not too long after Carl did, beginning at the Cancer Center. These days, as a heart-attack survivor with some lingering cardiovascular issues, she has altered the type of support she does, but her volunteering is still going strong. Whether she is chatting reassuringly with patients, bringing them a drink of water, or helping them find assistance from a nurse or staff member, Andrea is a constant and reassuring face at the Infusion Center, which patients, medical staff, and fellow volunteers truly appreciate.

The couple is part of a group of about 300 volunteers serving at UPMC in North Central Pa. facilities. The Suttons will tell you that volunteering has many rewards. They are part of the volunteer program family at UPMC in North Central Pa., and they have met many wonderful people from all walks of life. They consider their patients, the nurses, the other volunteers, and the staff at both hospitals their second family.





“One thing I have learned from volunteering here is that cancer, heart disease, and illnesses in general are great equalizers. Grave illness does not care who you are or where you come from,” says Carl. “But, kindness, compassion, comfort, hope, those are also things that can be given universally. When we volunteer, we get to put something good out into the world. It is very rewarding.”

UPMC volunteers certainly do put a lot of good out in the world, and they do so in so many ways. For example, volunteers may be out on the floor helping transport patients in wheelchairs or offering other types of support, in offices helping with administrative tasks, or at home knitting caps for infants and making prayer cards. There are volunteer opportunities for teenagers as well.

“Our volunteers do a lot!” says **Holly Edkin**, volunteer coordinator for UPMC Williamsport and UPMC facilities in Lock Haven. “Carl and Andrea are wonderful examples of how our volunteers can find a good fit for themselves that is really rewarding. Sometimes, there is a patient-to-volunteer journey with UPMC volunteers who wish to give back. Many people just simply want to help. One volunteer comes in to play soothing piano music in the lobby. And the pet therapy volunteers always seem to bring a bit of magic with them when they come through the halls,” says Holly.

“Susquehanna Health Foundation has a wonderful partnership with the volunteer program,” says Holly, who notes that many donors are among the volunteers. “We share a common cause in our respective goals to improve patient lives and outcomes.”

“Our volunteers are so critical in the work we do here,” says **Melissa Davis**, vice president and COO of employed medical groups at UPMC in North Central Pa. “Their time and kindness positively impact not just the patients and their families but our health care teams, too. Volunteers help our medical teams have more time to focus on the treatment and care of our patients. They are such a blessing.”

Carl, Andrea, and their volunteer peers make a huge difference to so many in our community. Their kindness, assistance, and support are a testament to how UPMC in North Central Pa. provides the best for every patient, every day.



## Want to Volunteer Like Carl and Andrea?

For more information about the wide variety of volunteer opportunities with UPMC in North Central Pa., contact one of the volunteer coordinators:

### Holly Edkin

UPMC Williamsport and  
UPMC facilities in Lock  
Haven  
570-321-2433  
smeltzerh@UPMC.edu

### Faith Preston

UPMC Wellsboro  
570-723-0191  
prestonf@UPMC.edu

### Monica Sosu

UPMC Williamsport Divine  
Providence Campus and  
UPMC Muncy  
570-321-2435  
sosumi@UPMC.edu

### Andrea Streich

UPMC Cole  
814-274-5520  
streichaf@upmc.edu



# KEYSTONE SOCIETY

The **Keystone Society** lists those who make a commitment to contribute \$250 or more annually to Susquehanna Health Foundation. Listed below are all Keystone Society members through **June 30, 2023**.

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## **Jon P. Conklin**

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# Knowing Who You Are

Caring for patients and donating are second nature for this physician assistant.

**W**orking the overnight shift as an observation unit physician assistant (PA) is the perfect fit for **Robert Ross, PA-C**. He enjoys the quiet and appreciates the relaxed atmosphere. They allow him to focus on monitoring his patients to see if they need to be put into inpatient care. Hospital patients on observation status differ from those on inpatient status. With observation patients, it is still unclear if they need longer hospital care or if they can be discharged. Observation time is often less than 24 hours, but it is time filled with careful monitoring.

Rob finds joy in observation work. It requires attention to detail and nuance, as well as providing care and comfort, during this transitional time in a patient's hospital stay. When your work involves keeping careful watch over patients in this way, you gain a deep appreciation for what it takes to provide quality health care. For Rob, it is important to give back to his community hospital network in order to help sustain this valuable resource now and into the future.



“My wife and I are proud to support the patients and health care teams at UPMC Williamsport. We live here and work here. These are our people,” says Rob.

The road that led Rob to his role in UPMC Williamsport’s Emergency Department Observation Unit was not a direct path. Rob and his wife, **Susan Ross**, moved to Williamsport in 1998 after she took a job as a professor at Lycoming College, where she currently serves as Dean of the College. Rob worked in IT as a software engineer, even briefly working for Susquehanna Health in that capacity. In 1999, Rob became a hospice volunteer. That is when he says his passion for patient care grew into a decision to change careers.

“Volunteering in hospice care is where I found my calling. The patient interaction and connection were so rewarding to me. It was a life-altering experience,” says Rob. “I just knew that my life’s work was to care for patients.”

Rob went back to school to become a PA, first doing his prerequisites at Lycoming College, then finishing his studies in the Physician Assistant Program at Commonwealth University - Lock Haven in 2012. His first PA job was working in a nursing home, and in 2018 Rob joined the UPMC in North Central Pa. team full time. He is now a critical part of the Emergency Department Observation Unit team.

“Joining UPMC was the best career decision I could have made,” says Rob. “There is such a positive vibe here. And working in my community, with the people who live in my community, makes a huge difference.”

Rob is the current president of the Pennsylvania Society of Physician Assistants. He recently partnered with **Erin Holmes, PA-C**, of Acute Care Surgery in Williamsport and other area PAs to help form the Advanced Practice Professionals (APP) Council at UPMC in North Central Pa. The APP Council is growing and gaining traction, which is rewarding for Rob and his colleagues.

When asked why he decided to donate to Susquehanna Health Foundation, Rob seemed surprised and simply replied, “Why wouldn’t I?”

“Becoming a physician assistant has been so rewarding and life-affirming. So much so that I am moved to donate where I know so much good is being done,” says Rob. It’s the positive, caring environment that he values, and that makes him want to give back. “I know the great work being done here, firsthand. Of course I want to support that.”



*We are blessed and immensely appreciative of UPMC in North Central Pa. employees like Rob, who believe in the work they are doing and see the needs within our community firsthand. Their giving inspires others to donate, which is helping transform health care in our region. UPMC in North Central Pa. employees have donated more than \$6 million to support patients and health care in their local communities. The iGIVE employee giving campaign recognizes the generosity of dedicated team members providing care for our patients every day.*

Giving back is at the core of who Rob and Susan Ross are, and they both love helping people. They see the value in their donations and see how the Foundation’s support really has had a positive impact on patients. They also donate to other organizations that are close to their hearts, including Lycoming College, Central Pennsylvania Food Bank, and the Lycoming County SPCA, where Rob walks dogs every week.

“Donating to local causes and institutions is something I plan to always do. Places like this are so special. I want to help keep it that way, and supporting UPMC in North Central Pa. is a big part of that. We all owe it to each other to do what we can when we can.”

# KEYSTONE SOCIETY

*continued from page 29*

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# Patients Front and Center

A behind-the-scenes program improves health care quality and patient outcomes.

In 2011, a quiet revolution in primary care medicine was beginning at UPMC in North Central Pa. It was spearheaded by a forward-thinking group of physicians, including **Timothy Heilmann, MD, FAAFP, ABFM, MHA**, associate medical director for UPMC Williamsport Family Medicine Residency and chief medical information officer for the employed medical group at UPMC in North Central Pa. They enrolled in a pilot program to earn the coveted Patient-Centered Medical Home (PCMH) Recognition for Family Medicine from the National Committee for Quality Assurance (NCQA).

Patients experienced the change in expanded practice hours into the evenings and weekends, and overall increased outreach and support. Then came regular requests for feedback on their experience. Although these were seemingly simple improvements to the health care experience, it was the start of something big for the community.

Dr. Heilmann is certified in clinical informatics and family medicine by the American Board of Preventive Medicine. He led the charge for creating systems in the PCMH model that could collect data and provide reporting. Patient data, quality indicators, wait-time statistics, and more had to be gathered to get the ball rolling. "It was challenging to collect the data

at first because we are a small hospital network. We didn't have the types of standardizations or technology systems at that point that were required," he says. Collaboration with other practices and residencies that had achieved PCMH recognition or were also in the process of obtaining it was beneficial. Participants from UPMC in North Central Pa. learned a lot. Even the referral process with specialists needed to be monitored.

"It was a lot of work to build a PCMH model and be officially recognized, but the results have been phenomenal," says family physician **Matthew Meeker, DO**, UPMC Primary Care. "For instance, when we started this process our patient experience scores averaged in the 40th percentile, but with expanded hours and easier methods of communication, our offices are at the 75th percentile, with many consistently performing above the 95th percentile."

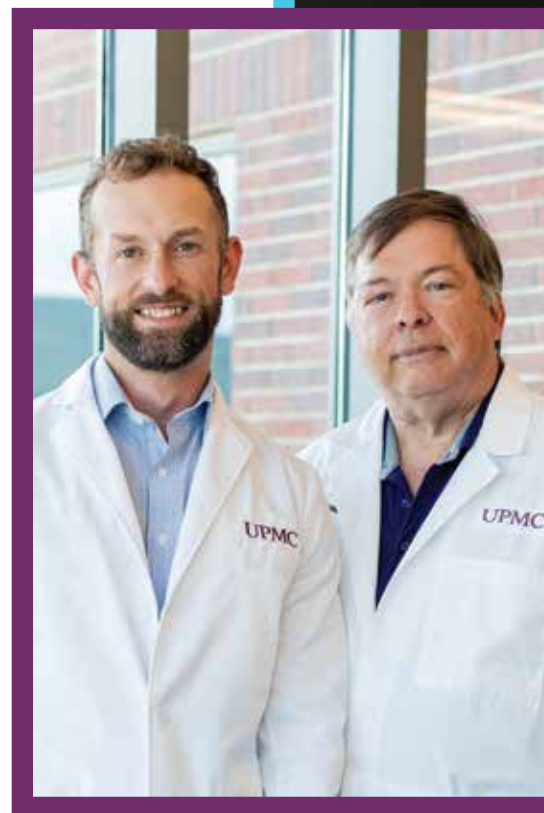
Oddly enough, this very successful program to improve patient experience and outcomes largely runs behind the scenes. "Patients really appreciate the personal touch and trust how their health is managed, but they don't know there is a highly coordinated system in place making it all happen," says Dr. Meeker.

## What is a Patient-Centered Medical Home Model?

The PCMH model focuses on improving health care quality and patient outcomes. According to the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ), a federal agency charged with improving health care safety and quality, this model is designed to improve how the core functions of health care are delivered through more comprehensive, coordinated, accessible, and careful approaches.

To meet the needs of patients first and foremost, there are six pillars of PCMH:

- 1. Team-based care.** A high level of practice organization and structure must be in place to achieve successful team-based care. Teams must be agile enough to continuously partner with patients, families, and caregivers.
- 2. Knowing and managing patients.** Dr. Heilmann says putting systems and standards into place for things like data collection, medication reconciliation, patient support, specialist referrals, and evidence-based clinical decision making took some time to do, but in doing so the bigger picture came into focus.
- 3. Patient-centered access and continuity.** “Phone calls, telemedicine, email, MyUPMC app and portal — these are all tools we have to offer patients so that they can stay aware and invested in their health,” says **Debbie Fontaine**, director of Nursing and Clinical Services for UPMC in North Central Pa.’s employed medical groups. “We use them because we need to meet patients where they are.”
- 4. Care management and support.** Practices have procedures in place and excellent verbal communication to identify patients who need more closely managed care, or extra assistance to work out logistical and quality-of-life concerns. “It’s how we can provide care, comfort, hope, but it’s also how we can spot clues to underlying conditions or complications that can lead to emergency situations,” says Debbie.
- 5. Care coordination and care transitions.** Effective information sharing and patient referral management minimize costs, confusion, and inappropriate care. Better communication with patients, among staff, and with specialists leads to fewer mistakes and faster care. “One of the benefits of being a smaller community is that we know the lay of the land. We know the people here, so we are better equipped to design a program that works for our patients. The PCMH model lets us do that and includes methods to measure outcomes to make sure we are more successful at treating our patients,” says Dr. Meeker.
- 6. Performance measurement and quality improvement.** “Using data, practices can objectively see what is working, as well as come up with ways to measure performance, set goals, and develop improvement plans,” says Dr. Heilmann. This can help health care teams find ways to reduce costs to both the patients and themselves too, with programs that allow patients to talk to a triage nurse about the symptoms they are experiencing before coming into the office. Research has backed up this notion.





## What Having NCQA Recognition for Our Patient-Centered Medical Home Model Means

Health care networks and practices that earn the National Committee for Quality Assurance's (NCQA) Patient-Centered Medical Home (PCMH) Recognition status have demonstrated that they have made a commitment to continuous quality improvement and a patient-centered approach to care. The NCQA is the gold standard: it has the most widely adopted PCMH evaluation program in the country, with more than 10,000 practices and more than 50,000 clinicians recognized. UPMC in North Central Pa. is proud to have had this recognition since 2016.

### Elevated Nursing Care Options Making An Impact

PCMH systems would not be the success they are without the very targeted, coordinated efforts of a robust nurse-care program. "UPMC in North Central Pa. has an exceptional network of nurse care in its PCMH model," says **Billie Houtz, RN**, supervisor of the Nurse Triage Program. In addition to traditional nursing professionals, the PCMH model makes these services available to patients:

- **Nurse Triage Team:** Nurses are available around the clock to answer questions via telephone, MyUPMC portal messages, or via telemed. "It's like a nurse hotline for patients," says Billie.
- **Nurse Navigators:** After a hospital stay, outpatient surgery, or emergency room visit, these nurses help patients remotely with the after care and follow-up during the healing and recovery phases. They can identify issues and concerns and offer suggestions and support.
- **Nurse Care Managers:** For patients who need more services and preventive measures, these nurses provide added support and care. "These patients can have better outcomes when their special needs are addressed from the start," says Billie.





### An Added Bonus: Improved Medical Staff Satisfaction

Research also shows that incorporating a PCMH model increases staff satisfaction, according to the National Committee for Quality Assurance. Dr. Meeker can see that every day at work, because practices within the model encourage professional growth and reward patient-centered achievement. “We have to align with the best in current health care practices to keep our recognition status, which means we are continuously offering our staff opportunities to grow,” he says. That means supporting professional education, maintaining licenses, and encouraging high performance as a group. This all leads to medical staff satisfaction, which in turn leads to less employee turnover and more consistent patient care.

“I feel very lucky that I work in an environment that always encourages me to put patients first. I can see how much it benefits them,” says Billie. “It’s something that creates a genuine bond among all our practice staff, and it’s a great source of pride for all of us.”

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1. Locate your U.S. Savings Bonds and determine if they have matured. Most savings bonds mature after 30 years and stop earning interest.
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3. Bring the proceeds of the bonds to the Foundation or make an online donation, supporting an area you are passionate about.
4. Provide your letter of donation to your tax preparer.

Thank you for making a difference in our community through your generous giving.



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<sup>1</sup> <https://treasury.ms.gov/2023/03/03/mcrae-unclaimed-savings-bond-act-will-unleash-billions-for-americans/>

<sup>2</sup> Redeeming U.S. Savings bonds is a taxable event, and you should consult your tax accountant or CPA before redeeming bonds to determine if you can take advantage of a tax deduction

<sup>3</sup> This message does not constitute both legal and tax advice, and you should consult both your attorney and tax accountant or CPA before making charitable contributions

# new doctors



## **Peter Andolina, MD**

***Plastics and Reconstructive Surgery | 570-326-8005***

Dr. Peter Andolina received his medical degree from New York College of Osteopathic Medicine, Glen Head. He completed his residency training in general surgery and fellowship training in trauma and critical care and plastic, hand, and reconstructive surgery at St. Barnabas Hospital, Bronx, N.Y. Dr. Andolina is board-certified in plastic and reconstructive surgery by the American Osteopathic Board of Surgery. Dr. Andolina sees patients at UPMC Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery, 1100 Grampian Blvd., Williamsport.

## **Steven Caruso, MD**

***Orthopaedic Trauma | 570-321-2020***

Dr. Steven Caruso received his medical degree from New York Medical College, Valhalla. He completed his residency training in orthopaedic surgery with SUNY Downstate Medical Center, Brooklyn, and New Jersey Medical School, Newark, and his fellowship training in orthopaedic trauma at Grant Medical Center, Columbus, Ohio. Dr. Caruso sees patients at UPMC Orthopaedic Trauma, 1705 Warren Ave., Suite 101, Williamsport.



## **Nancy Grauso-Eby, DO**

***Pediatrics | 570-326-2447***

Dr. Nancy Grauso-Eby received her medical degree from Rowan University School of Osteopathic Medicine, Sewell, N.J., and completed her residency training at Geisinger Medical Center, Danville. She is board-certified in pediatrics by the American Board of Pediatrics. Dr. Grauso-Eby sees patients at UPMC Primary Care, 175 Pine St., Suite 200, Williamsport.

By bringing the best physicians and advanced medical treatments to our region, UPMC delivers on its promise to provide high-quality, patient-centered care.

**Shawn Safford, MD**

***Pediatric General Surgery | 570-321-2810***

Dr. Shawn Safford received his medical degree from the University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine, Philadelphia. He completed his residency in general surgery at Duke University, Durham, N.C., and fellowship training in pediatric general and thoracic surgery at Children's Hospital of Philadelphia. Dr. Safford is board-certified in both pediatric general and thoracic surgery and general surgery by the American Board of Surgery. Dr. Safford sees patients at UPMC Williamsport, 700 High St., Williamsport.



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**Amy Sudol, MD**

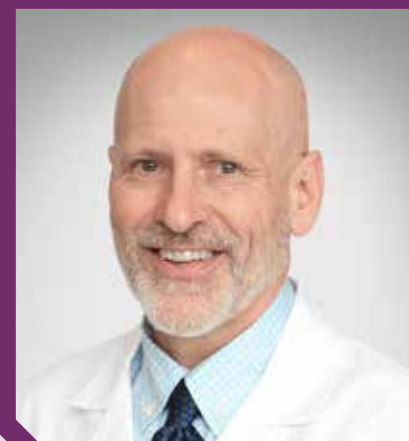
***Internal Medicine | 570-515-0952***

Dr. Amy Sudol received her medical degree from Geisinger Commonwealth School of Medicine in Scranton, Pa., and completed her residency in internal medicine with Geisinger Medical Center, Danville. Dr. Sudol sees patients at UPMC Primary Care, 45 Park Dr., Rt. 405, Montgomery.

**Kevin Welch, DPM**

***Foot and Ankle | 570-321-2020***

Dr. Kevin Welch received his medical degree from Temple University School of Podiatric Medicine, Philadelphia. He completed his residency in podiatric medicine and surgery at Rolling Hill Hospital, Elkins Park, Pa. Dr. Welch is board-certified by the American Board of Foot and Ankle Surgery. He sees patients at UPMC Foot and Ankle, 215 E. Water St., Muncy; 1201 Grampian Blvd., Suite 2F, Williamsport; and 1001 E. 2nd St., Suite C, Coudersport.







## Artwork Lives on to Brighten Children's Inpatient Stays

As longtime donors to Susquehanna Health Foundation, **John Lundy and Family** have made an immense impact on the Kathryn Candor Lundy Breast Health Center and health care in our region. This Marguerite Bierman hand-painted mural was commissioned in 1999 by John C. Lundy to honor his deceased wife, Margaret Keliher Lundy. Originally this mural spanned the entire wall in the pediatric playroom for all children to enjoy.

When the pediatric department was relocated, thanks to technology, we were able to capture a high-resolution photo of the mural and place it in the new playroom. The gift lives on, as does the work of a late, local artist who made her own impact on the community. The healing benefit of artwork in the hospital setting will continue to help children for years to come.



*Love, Laughter, Hope for the  
Children in Loving Memory of  
Margaret Keliher Lundy*

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**JOINTS REPLACED,**  
but I did choose UPMC.

- Patricia H.  
Hughesville, Pa.

Patty has had many joint surgeries in her life, including having both hips and knees replaced, and her shoulder replaced three times. She trusted Ronald DiSimone, MD, and UPMC's team of orthopaedic experts with her surgeries. "I'm still going," Patty said. "I'm 65 and able to walk because of the care I've had." Today Patty's active life includes going on trips with her husband and spending time with her grandchildren. **To learn more, visit [UPMC.com/ChooseNCPA](http://UPMC.com/ChooseNCPA).**

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