

HealthLINK

SUMMER 2024

YOUR CONNECTION TO HEALTH & WELLNESS

QUALITY CARE FOR MOMS AND BABIES

VALLEY HEALTH'S
COMPREHENSIVE MATERNITY
SERVICES EARN NATIONAL
ACCLAIM

INSIDE:

Living seizure-free:
one epilepsy patient's
story / Advances in
cardiovascular care /
How to prevent,
diagnose and treat
skin cancer



ValleyHealth
Healthier, together.

WELCOME

EXCEPTIONAL CARE

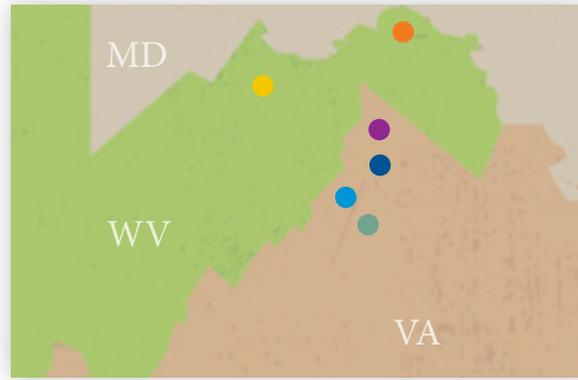
To best reflect what Valley Health aspires to achieve, we have updated our vision: a healthy community where care is accessible, affordable and exceptional for all. In this issue of *HealthLINK*, we highlight some of this outstanding care, from cardiology to neurology.

Recently, Valley Health was recognized as a top maternity hospital in the country. Our compassionate healthcare professionals treat mothers holistically while minimizing early scheduled deliveries, avoidable C-sections and newborn complications. Our neurosurgeons also continue their state-of-the-art surgical care for patients who do not respond to medications. One patient is seven years seizure-free because of the expertise of our epilepsy program team members, who were able to identify and surgically remove a mass of seizure-causing blood vessels in his brain.

This issue also includes information on identifying and preventing skin cancer and the success of our cardiothoracic surgeons in treating mitral valve disease.

As always, we hope this magazine supports you and your family on your well-being journey. We also hope you will consider us as your trusted provider of accessible, affordable and exceptional care for all.

On the cover: Maternity patient Jessica Myers and son Waylin.



Valley Health is a not-for-profit system of hospitals, services and providers. For more information about the many ways we serve the health and wellness needs of the community, visit valleyhealthlink.com/community.

Valley Health System includes:

- Winchester Medical Center (Winchester, VA)
- Hampshire Memorial Hospital (Romney, WV)
- Page Memorial Hospital (Luray, VA)
- Shenandoah Memorial Hospital (Woodstock, VA)
- War Memorial Hospital (Berkeley Springs, WV)
- Warren Memorial Hospital (Front Royal, VA)

Additional locations and services:

- Employer Health
- Outreach Lab Services
- Rehabilitation Services (Inpatient and Outpatient)
- Urgent Care and Urgent Care Express
- Valley Health Home Health | West Virginia
- Valley Health Medical Group
- Valley Health | Spring Mills
- Valley Health Surgery Center
- Valley Medical Transport
- Valley Pharmacy
- Wellness & Fitness Centers

For more information, visit valleyhealthlink.com/locations.



Valley Health System

Serving Our Community by Improving Health

HealthLINK

The magazine of Valley Health System

Serving the Northern Shenandoah Valley, the Eastern Panhandle of West Virginia and the surrounding areas

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The information contained in *HealthLINK* is not a substitute for professional medical care or counsel. If you have medical concerns, consult a medical professional. A list of physicians, specialists and other care providers is found at valleyhealthlink.com/physicians.

HealthLINK magazine is published three times a year. Its purpose is to provide health and wellness information to the community and to connect area residents with healthcare experts within Valley Health System.

Contact marketingmail@valleyhealthlink.com or 540-536-5325 to be added to our mailing list; view *HealthLINK* online at valleyhealthlink.com/news.

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VALLEY HEALTH WELCOMES UROLOGY CLINIC OF WINCHESTER

Valley Health welcomed its newest practice, Urology Clinic of Winchester | Valley Health, in January. The practice, which will become Valley Health Urology, has been providing high-quality urology care for patients in our community since 1985 and is the largest urology practice in the Northern Shenandoah Valley. Their care team develops treatment plans tailored to each patient's needs. They also offer advanced medical and surgical treatment options and use minimally invasive techniques that have transformed care. The comfort and trust of their patients is their top priority. The team at Urology Clinic of Winchester | Valley Health includes:

- Megan T. Bing, MD
- Michael A. Hoffman, MD
- Jeremy C. Kelley, DO
- Mark E. Levinson, MD
- John W. Warner, MD
- Michelle O. D'Alessio, PA
- Tara E. Holmes, NP
- Katlyn Shepley, PA



Jeremy C. Kelley, DO.



HAMPSHIRE MEMORIAL HOSPITAL EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT EARNS AWARD FOR PATIENT EXPERIENCE

Hampshire Memorial Hospital's Emergency Department (ED) was the recent recipient of Press Ganey's 2023 Human Experience Guardian of Excellence Award.

Press Ganey is a healthcare company that measures patient satisfaction in healthcare settings.

The award was earned based on results from patient surveys returned between July 2022 and April 2023. Patients completing the satisfaction survey were asked to rate the ED in a variety of areas, including the staff's ability to care for the patient as a team and the overall level of care received. Of the more than 3,200 emergency services sites reviewed nationwide, Hampshire's Emergency Department ranks in the top five percent of healthcare providers.

"I could not be prouder of our ED team and everyone who supports their efforts each and every day," says Heather Sigel, vice president of operations at both Hampshire Memorial Hospital and War Memorial Hospital. "Several years ago, the providers from Winchester Emergency Physicians began offering expert, highly skilled emergency medicine here at Hampshire. We have a very low turnover rate among our clinical staff, and clearly having consistency and continuity of care has made a significant impact on our outcomes and patient experience."

Hampshire's Emergency Department provided care to 10,252 patients in 2023, which is an all-time high for the hospital.



Shenandoah Memorial Hospital has been ranked as one of the top 100 Critical Access Hospitals for three consecutive years.

VALLEY HEALTH'S RURAL HOSPITALS EARN NATIONAL RECOGNITION

Five Valley Health hospitals were recognized in February as top 100 hospitals in the country by the Chartis Center for Rural Health.

Page Memorial, Shenandoah Memorial, War Memorial and Hampshire Memorial hospitals all made the Top 100 Critical Access Hospitals lists. (Hampshire and War Memorial hospitals have the added distinction of being named two of the Top 20 Critical Access Hospitals in the country by the National Rural Health Association.) Critical Access Hospital is a designation given to eligible rural hospitals based on their number of inpatient beds and their rural location, among other criteria. Warren Memorial Hospital also earned a spot on the Top 100 Rural & Community Hospitals list.

Hospitals were selected for serving as benchmarks for other rural facilities, according to the Chartis website. "Amidst uncertainty, transition and strain, these top performers are excelling in managing risk, achieving higher quality, securing better outcomes, increasing patient satisfaction, and operating at a lower cost than their peers."

"This recognition is a testament to the high level of care provided by our caregivers every day," says Mark Nantz, President and CEO. "Patient care and patient safety are a top priority at Valley Health, and we are proud that all of our eligible hospitals have received this recognition from the Chartis Group. It really speaks to the dedication of our healthcare teams to deliver safe, effective, patient-centered care."

VIRTUAL VISITS, PAPERLESS BILLING MAKE HEALTHCARE EASIER

Valley Health Urgent Care is now offering virtual visits with one of our many trusted local providers. Virtual visits are a convenient way to see a provider from home when you have minor symptoms or an illness. These visits are a self-pay service, and all visits are a flat fee of \$59. *To learn more or to schedule a virtual visit, go to vhurgentcare.com.*

Starting in June, Valley Health will make billing more convenient with paperless billing for patients who have a Valley Health MyChart account. All patients who have a MyChart account will receive their bills via MyChart and can also sign up for text updates. Patients will be able to view their account balances and pay their bills directly from their MyChart or from a text. If you wish to opt out of paperless billing, you can follow the prompts to do so once you receive your bill. *To learn more, visit valleyhealthlink.com/billpay.*



EXPERT ADVICE



ADVANCED TREATMENTS FOR MITRAL VALVE DISEASE

Cardiothoracic surgeon Ernesto Jimenez, MD, explains how state-of-the-art repair and replacement options improve recovery and quality of life.

Inside your heart, your mitral valve opens and closes like French doors, coordinating the flow of blood to your body. But everything from aging and infections to a heart attack and chronic diseases can prevent this important valve from working properly, leading to mitral valve disease.

Often, mitral valve disease is mild and causes no symptoms. But moderate to severe disease can leave you breathless and lead to fluid buildup in your feet, legs and around your heart. Valley Health's structural heart program offers minimally invasive repair and replacement treatments for quick recovery and long-term benefits, says Ernesto Jimenez, MD, a cardiothoracic surgeon and surgical director of the advanced valve program at Valley Health Winchester Medical Center's Heart & Vascular Center.

Mitral valve disease happens in several ways, and Valley Health offers treatments customized for each one, Dr. Jimenez says. The leaflets of the mitral valve may become thick and rigid, impeding blood flow. They may get big and stretchy, so they leak; or they may pull apart if the heart becomes enlarged and can no longer control blood flow. Some mitral valve issues affect nearly one in 10 adults; others are less common. Mitral valve disease affects a wide age range, from newborns with valve defects to adults. Importantly, mitral valve disease contributes to congestive heart failure. "If you have blood flowing back to the lungs, the lungs become full of fluid and you get heart failure as a result, with fatigue, shortness of breath, and swelling of

the feet and lower extremities," Dr. Jimenez says.

In the past, surgical treatment for a thickened, stiff valve often involved valve replacement and open-heart surgery. "But Valley Health is one of just seven percent of medical centers in the nation performing minimally invasive mitral valve-repair procedures," Dr. Jimenez says. "Repairing the thickened valve allows for better heart function and long-term survival than valve replacement."

The procedure is usually performed through a small incision between the ribs on the right side of the chest. "Patients go home in five days and are back to doing the things they enjoy within four weeks," he says.

When the flaps of the mitral valve cannot close due to an enlarged heart, it is repaired through a minimally invasive procedure that installs a clip, such as the MitraClip™, to



Ernesto Jimenez, MD

pull the sides together. "We make an incision in the leg and send the clip through the blood vessels up to the heart," Dr. Jimenez says. "Most patients go home the next day. It's outstanding."

Approximately 98 percent of Dr. Jimenez's mitral repairs result in long-term success based on postoperative echocardiograms, with no significant mitral regurgitation, or backward flow of blood to the heart, after surgery. "This rate is among the best in the nation," he says.

Some people who've had replacement mitral valves installed find the valves fail over time and symptoms return. For them, a technique called valve-in-valve replacement allows surgeons to put a new valve in place by threading it up through blood vessels from the leg. The old valve doesn't need to be removed and there's no open-heart surgery. "They are home in two days and back to activities in two weeks," Dr. Jimenez notes.

"There's a dramatic change in your life after mitral valve repair or replacement," he says. "With minimally invasive techniques, recovery is faster and pain is less. You feel markedly better, and quality of life is greatly improved."

EXCELLENCE IN CARE OUTSIDE OUR HOSPITALS

→ AT VALLEY HEALTH, OUR AMBULATORY, POST-ACUTE SERVICES HELP PATIENTS RECEIVE THE CARE THEY NEED OUTSIDE OF THE HOSPITAL SETTING. THESE SERVICES INCLUDE URGENT CARE, EMPLOYER HEALTH, MEDICAL TRANSPORT, RETAIL PHARMACY, REHABILITATION AND HOME HEALTH. THESE ENTITIES PLAY A VITAL ROLE FOR THE COMMUNITY IN PROVIDING HEALTHCARE BOTH BEFORE AND AFTER A PATIENT'S HOSPITAL STAY OR DOCTOR'S OFFICE VISIT. HERE IS A BY-THE-NUMBERS SNAPSHOT OF THE IMPACT OF THESE SERVICES IN 2023.

OUR 10 URGENT CARE LOCATIONS TREAT MINOR INJURIES AND AILMENTS WHILE ALSO HOUSING VALLEY HEALTH'S EMPLOYER HEALTH SERVICES, WHICH PROVIDE VACCINATIONS, DRUG SCREENS, PHYSICALS AND MORE TO REGIONAL EMPLOYERS. IN 2023, URGENT CARE IN COMBINATION WITH EMPLOYER HEALTH PROVIDED CARE TO 170,445 PATIENTS.



1.4 MILLION

THE MILES VALLEY MEDICAL TRANSPORT (VMT) SAFELY TRAVELED AS IT COMPLETED **21,400 PATIENT TRANSPORTS**, INCLUDING **226 HELICOPTER FLIGHTS**. AS PART OF VMT, THE COMMUNITY PARAMEDICINE PROGRAM MADE **527 VISITS TO PATIENTS' HOMES** TO PROVIDE FOLLOW-UP CARE, POST HOSPITAL DISCHARGE.

PATIENTS WHO ARE HOMEBOUND AND UNABLE TO MAKE IT TO A DOCTOR'S APPOINTMENT CAN RECEIVE CARE FROM HOME HEALTH NURSES AND THERAPISTS. IN 2023, VALLEY HEALTH HOME HEALTH TEAM MEMBERS TRAVELED 928,000 MILES TO COMPLETE 87,853 PATIENT VISITS.

140,590

PRESCRIPTIONS VALLEY PHARMACY
FILLED FOR ITS PATIENTS

117,158

PATIENT VISITS
COMPLETED BY
VALLEY HEALTH
OUTPATIENT
REHABILITATION

ALL ABOUT SKIN CANCER

How to prevent, diagnose and treat melanoma and other forms of skin cancer

Skin cancer can be highly treatable, especially if detected early. The key, says Maureen V. Hill, MD, a board-certified surgical oncologist with Valley Health, is avoiding harmful sun exposure, knowing the warning signs and seeking prompt care.

Q: WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENT TYPES OF SKIN CANCER?

A: The most common types are basal cell carcinoma and squamous cell carcinoma. They are slow-growing and are easily treated with small procedures, like excision or ablation. Melanoma, however, is the type of skin cancer with the greatest likelihood of spreading. It can be curable if caught early, but it is very important to know the risk factors, signs and symptoms.

Q: WHAT ARE THE CAUSES OF SKIN CANCER?

A: Sun damage is the most common cause of skin cancer. Sun damage accumulates over time, so the more sunburns you've had in your life the greater your risk. Fairer-skinned people are more likely to get sunburns, increasing their risk of skin cancer. There are also genetic predispositions for melanoma, and certain medications can put you at higher risk for skin cancer, including immunosuppressive medications.

Q: WHAT ARE THE SIGNS OF SKIN CANCER TO LOOK FOR?

A: Check for new moles or growths that are changing in appearance. One way to remember the warning signs of melanoma is to know the ABCDEs:

- **A** is for asymmetrical growths or moles.
- **B** is for irregular borders.
- **C** is for changes in color.
- **D** is for growing diameter.
- **E** is for evolution or changes over time.

THE ABCDEs OF SKIN CANCER



Q: WHAT CAN YOU DO TO PREVENT SKIN CANCER?

A: Avoid harmful exposure to UV radiation, whether from the sun or tanning beds. The safest thing is to wear sunscreen with a minimum SPF of 30. Remember to reapply it frequently. Wide-brimmed hats are also great, as is clothing treated with SPF.

Q: WHAT SHOULD YOU DO IF YOU ARE CONCERNED ABOUT A MOLE OR GROWTH?

A: Contact your primary care physician or dermatologist promptly. Either provider can do a skin biopsy to evaluate whether the mole is cancerous. If the diagnosis is melanoma, the lesion will be removed surgically; you may also need a lymph node biopsy to see if it has spread. In the event it has spread, we refer patients to medical oncology to discuss treatment options, which can include immunotherapy. We offer the full breadth of surgical and medical treatments to patients with both early and late-stage skin cancer.

Q: WHAT IF I DON'T HAVE AN ESTABLISHED DOCTOR?

A: Valley Health, in conjunction with Premier Dermatology providers Adil Usman, MD; Darci Barger, PA; and Sarah Cabrisses, PA, will hold a screening event on May 18 from 10 A.M. to noon at the Cancer Center, Suite 210, Surgical Oncology, on the Winchester Medical Center campus. The event is intended for patients who are uninsured, or who are not established with a dermatologist or checked regularly by their primary care physician.

To register, call **540-536-4055**.

FINDING SEIZURE

For more than a decade, Eric Bivens had seizures that struck with little warning—once, twice, up to 10 times a day. “The world started spinning,” says Bivens, 43, a graphic designer, guitarist and former youth pastor. “My mind turned upside down.”

Bivens even had a seizure while leading a worship band at church. Suddenly, he couldn’t sing. But somehow he kept strumming the chords “as drool ran down my shirt onto my guitar.” The symptoms faded in less than a minute, but Bivens never knew when his next seizure was going to happen.

Now that’s all in his past. Bivens has been seizure-free since 2016, when neurosurgeon Lee Selznick, MD, of Valley Health Virginia Brain and Spine, carefully removed the cause—a popcorn-shaped clump of abnormal blood vessels in his brain called a cavernoma, along with the thin margin of irritated tissue around it.

“Eric was tough and determined,” Dr. Selznick says. “He’s a role model

→ FORMER MARTINSBURG, WEST VIRGINIA, PATIENT ERIC BIVENS RECEIVED LIFE-CHANGING SURGERY AT VALLEY HEALTH FOR EPILEPSY—AND NOW HE INSPIRES OTHERS FACING SIMILAR CHALLENGES



Now seizure-free, Eric Bivens has formed a one-man band called My Cavernoma.

FREE

for patients with seizures. That anyone can be empowered to find seizure freedom and take paths they haven’t envisioned before.”

Bivens’ journey illustrates the challenges faced by the 3 million Americans with epilepsy. And it highlights the effectiveness of surgery, a research-proven treatment with a long track record that’s often overlooked for the one in three people whose seizures are not controlled with medication. “When medications are no longer working, 50 to 70 percent of epileptic seizures can be cured with surgery, with minimal risk,” says neurologist Paul D. Lyons, MD, PhD, an epilepsy specialist at Winchester Neurological Consultants | Valley Health and co-founder and co-director,



RE

Neurosurgeon Lee Selznick, MD, and neurologist Paul D. Lyons, MD, PhD, cared for patient Eric Bivens.

DOM

with Dr. Selznick, of the Virginia Comprehensive Epilepsy Program at Winchester Medical Center. “There are decades of research demonstrating safety, yet there’s hesitancy from many doctors about taking patients to the operating room.”

HOPE FOR EPILEPSY

Epilepsy can have many causes, including genetics, infections, autoimmune reactions, metabolism issues, a brain injury or, as in Bivens’ case, an abnormal blood vessel in the brain. Epilepsy is the fourth most common brain disorder in the world, yet people with the disorder can wait months or years before receiving an accurate diagnosis and treatment. Even then, many live with ineffective treatments and ongoing seizures.

“Epilepsy can impact your whole life,” Dr. Lyons says. “Seizures are

frightening, but epilepsy is more than seizures. It can mean problems with mood, attention, concentration, personality, and information processing, like memory and recall. A third of all patients with epilepsy can have depression.”

Drs. Lyons and Selznick started the Virginia Comprehensive Epilepsy Program and work alongside neurologist and epilepsy specialist J. Craig Henry, MD, to address the needs of people with this seizure disorder. The program is one of just five epilepsy centers in Virginia to achieve the National Association of Epilepsy Centers’ highest designation—Level 4—for evaluation and treatment. “Epilepsy can impact your whole life,” Dr. Lyons says. “I was drawn to it because it’s one of the fields in neurology where we can

NEUROSURGERY

make a difference. There are treatment options to help people achieve their greatest capacity.”

The Virginia Comprehensive Epilepsy Program uses advanced techniques for evaluating and treating epilepsy—including medications, vagus nerve stimulation (VNS), responsive neurostimulation (NeuroPace), diet modifications and surgery. “We remain in contact with all our patients,” Dr. Selznick says. “The vast majority of our patients have remained seizure-free, and all have had significant reduction in their seizures. We’ve had people take new jobs, go to college, have a baby for the first time. It can be transformative. One recent patient had surgery after more than 40 years of drug-resistant epilepsy. He was able to get a driver’s license for the first time in decades.”

Dr. Lyons notes that patients should not expect to come off all anti-seizure medications after surgery. “Our success rate is based upon patients remaining on some anti-seizure medication,” he says. “Certainly, we can reduce the number and doses of medications, but the goal is not



Patient Eric Bivens soon after he had successful neurosurgery at Winchester Medical Center to remove his cavernoma.

“The vast majority of our patients have remained seizure-free ... We’ve had people take new jobs, go to college, have a baby for the first time. It can be transformative.”

—LEE SELZNICK, MD

medication freedom but rather seizure freedom.”

Less-invasive surgical options for treating epilepsy are also improving and expanding as the technology evolves, notes Dr. Selznick.

“The newer options are allowing smaller surgeries and more targets such that we will be able to offer a surgical option for almost everyone with poorly controlled seizures,” he says.

A LIFESAVING MOVE

Bivens had his first seizure in 2005 when he was working as a youth pastor in his hometown of Owensboro, Kentucky. A few months after contracting an infection on a mission trip to Central America, he blacked out during a meeting at church. “I was stuttering,” he says. “I couldn’t get the words out of my mouth.” After several more seizures, he had a brain MRI. A neurologist in Kentucky told Bivens the scan was normal and suggested the problem might be low blood sugar. Seizures continued. When Bivens and his family moved to Georgia a few years later, Bivens consulted with another physician and began taking an anti-seizure medication. But the dose was too low. “I had seizures continually for the next five and a half years,” he says.

Then a childhood friend asked him to come work at a small church in Martinsburg, West Virginia. A new family doctor ordered another brain scan, spotted a dime-sized abnormality and referred Bivens to Dr. Lyons. “If we had not moved to Martinsburg, I don’t know that I would have had another MRI,” Bivens says. “I don’t know that I would have discovered that 30 minutes away in Winchester there was a Level 4 epilepsy center.”

Dr. Lyons identified the malformation in Bivens’ brain as a cavernoma. The abnormal cluster of bulging blood vessels was irritating brain tissue in his left temporal lobe, triggering seizures. Bivens tried several anti-seizure drugs at different doses. “Dr. Lyons was confident we were going to figure out what we could do,” Bivens says. “That’s what I loved about him.”

But seizures continued once or twice a month despite drug treatment. In consultation with Drs. Lyons and Selznick, Bivens decided to have surgery. “Joy and expectation, the possibility I may never have to deal with seizures again, came to life,” he says.



Dr. Paul D. Lyons and
Dr. Lee Selznick review
brain imagery.

A TWO-PART PROCESS

Epilepsy surgery is a two-step process. First, Dr. Selznick needed to confirm that Bivens' cavernoma and the tissue around it were really the culprit behind his seizures. So, Bivens spent nearly a week in the intensive care unit at Winchester Medical Center (WMC) with dozens of electrical contacts attached to his brain. He stopped his seizure medications in order for the epilepsy program team to determine where his seizures emanated from and if they came from one location or several. "We wanted to see three to six seizures, to make sure they were coming from the area of the cavernoma," Dr. Selznick explains.

They were. Bivens returned to WMC in July 2016. "The cavernoma was sitting deep in the left temporal lobe, two to three inches from the surface," Dr. Selznick says. Bivens received anesthesia but was awake for part of the operation so Dr. Selznick could identify areas to avoid—such as nearby memory and language pathways—before removing brain tissue. Using a probe with a mild electric current, he stimulated spots near the cavernoma while a nurse asked Bivens questions to test his language and memory skills. "We map all those functions to make sure surgery is as safe as possible with extremely low risk for complications," Dr. Selznick says.

LIVING SEIZURE-FREE

The procedure was a success. Bivens returned home a few days later. "After six to eight weeks, I felt like myself again," he says. "My hair grew back, and the swelling [of the brain] went down."

The seizures have never returned. "That sparked my creativity," says Bivens, who has since moved back to Owensboro, Kentucky. He's active in his church, works as a senior communications designer at an online mental health website for virtual psychiatry, and formed a one-man band called My Cavernoma. His first project: an album of songs about overcoming life's toughest challenges. "I have a wife and family who supported me through it all," he says. "And I give credit to God, the healthcare system and my doctors. Now I want to tell people about it."

To learn more, visit valleyhealthlink.com/epilepsy.

SPOTLIGHT

COMPREHENSIVE MATERNITY CARE

Winchester Medical Center's compassionate, state-of-the-art care for moms and babies earns national acclaim

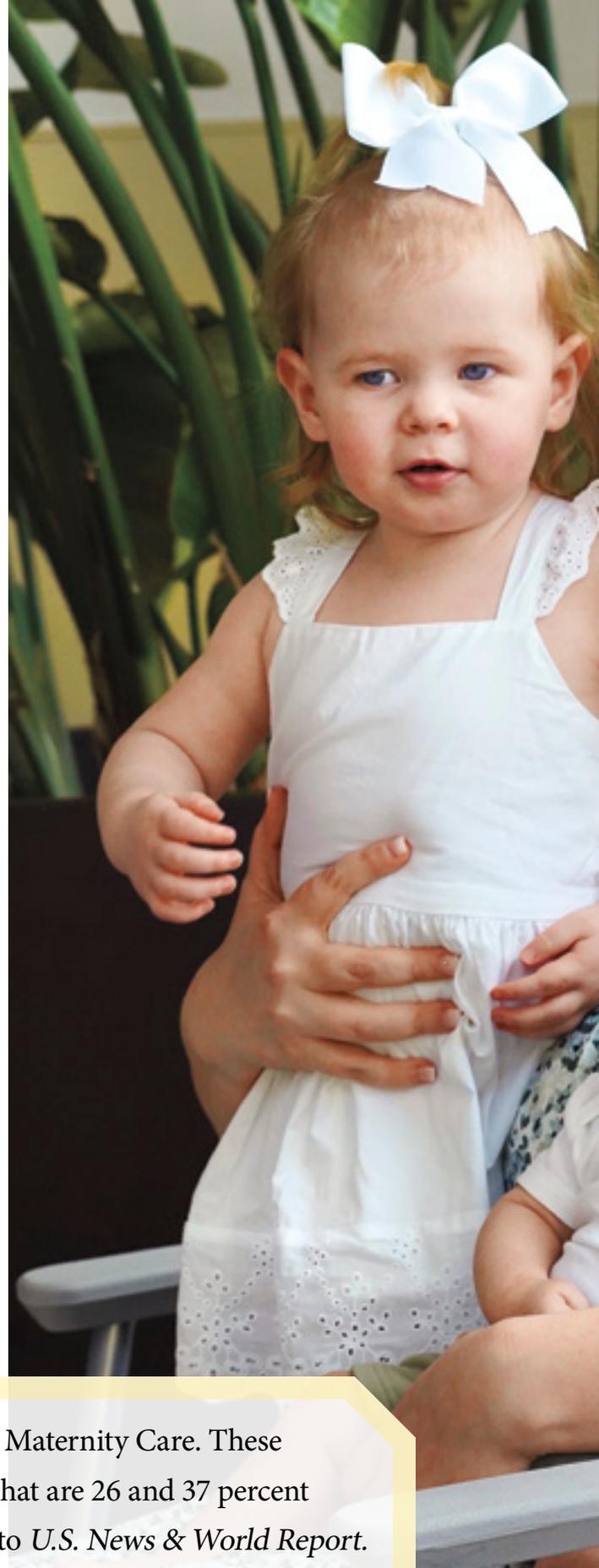
With only six pushes, Jessica Myers gave birth to her son, Waylin Sherman, at Winchester Medical Center (WMC) on December 8, 2023—with help and support from her obstetrician Namita Kattal, MD, as well as her boyfriend, Aldin Sherman, and both of the couple's mothers. "Waylin came into the world with a full head of hair," says Jessica, a resident of Martinsburg, West Virginia. "He passed all his health checks with flying colors. It was the fastest day of my life!"

For both of their children, Myers and Sherman chose WMC for labor and delivery. (Daughter Oaklin was born at the medical center on July 1, 2022.) The couple wouldn't have it any other way. "I love their bedside manner," says Myers, 24, who with her doctors' care was able to have normal, healthy pregnancies despite late-stage swelling with Oaklin and gestational diabetes with Waylin. (Both issues resolved after birth.) "The doctors were so respectful of me and my pregnancies."

HIGH PERFORMANCE, FAMILY-FRIENDLY

WMC and its affiliated gynecologists and obstetricians are proud to offer compassionate care that focuses on the health and well-being of the women, mothers and babies they see. This emphasis on maternity care has garnered national recognition. In December, WMC achieved *U.S. News & World Report's* 2023–2024 designation as one of the nation's Best Hospitals for Maternity Care for uncomplicated pregnancies.

"We provide the full range of care for any issue pregnant women and their newborns might face, including high-risk pregnancies and expectant mothers with diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease and other health conditions, as well as mothers and babies in a medical crisis," says Leslie S. Kidd, MD, chair of Obstetrics and Gynecology at Winchester Medical Center and a physician at Winchester Obstetrics & Gynecology. Kidd notes that WMC obstetricians refer women with significantly high-risk pregnancies, as well as newborns who need surgery, to specialists at other centers. Additionally, Shenandoah Valley Maternal Fetal Medicine, located on the WMC campus, is a practice dedicated



WMC is designated as one of the nation's Best Hospitals for Maternity Care. These hospitals have caesarean rates and newborn complications that are 26 and 37 percent lower, respectively, than unrecognized hospitals, according to *U.S. News & World Report*.

Jessica Myers with her daughter, Oaklin, and son, Waylin.



to offering comprehensive care for women experiencing complicated and high-risk pregnancies.

WMC met certain standards to earn the Best Hospitals for Maternity Care distinction. These include a breastfeeding rate higher than the regional average, as well as rates for caesarean sections and newborn complications that are 26 and 37 percent lower, respectively, than unrecognized hospitals, according to *U.S. News & World Report*. Just as important is WMC's wide range of maternity services, including childbirth classes, midwives who can attend births, and private labor and delivery rooms and suites where a birth partner may stay overnight.

Labor and delivery care also reflects research-based standards for optimal outcomes. "No pregnancy is induced before 39 weeks unless there is a high-risk indication," Dr. Kidd says. "This contributes to a low rate of neonatal complications. We also offer vaginal birth after C-section and have a high rate of success

with this, eliminating a major surgery for women that leads to a better recovery after birth for mothers and for babies.

We also rarely perform episiotomies [a surgical incision in a woman's perineum during labor]. For most women, the perineum stretches naturally and the incision is not necessary. When we feel it is needed, we only proceed with the mother's permission. It is always her choice."

During labor and delivery, WMC's well-appointed birthing rooms and suites provide a comfortable, private setting with full medical support.

A birth partner can stay overnight, for example, and moms can move around during labor. "We use portable baby

monitors so a mother can get up and move as she likes," Dr. Kidd says. "We try to let mothers have the birth they desire without a lot of medical intervention, while at the same time monitoring the health of mother and baby and having a safety net of medical services immediately available if needed."

CARE AFTER BIRTH

For newborns with medical needs, WMC has the region's only Level III Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU). For new moms, there's help with breastfeeding and much more. "We help new mothers prepare themselves for life with a new baby," says Mark Leonard, MD, an obstetrician at WMC who is a partner at



Leslie S. Kidd, MD



OB-GYN Namita Kattal, MD, cared for Jessica Myers throughout her pregnancy and beyond.

Valley Health Women's Specialists. "They are not on their own."

"All of our labor and delivery and mother-baby nurses are highly trained to help mom be successful with breastfeeding from the beginning," Dr. Kidd says. "Not every new mom and baby can breastfeed, of course. But lactation consultants see every mother and are available once a mom and baby go back home. Breastfeeding is not always easy at first. We may encourage a new mom to stay an extra night in the hospital to get more support, and the staff helps new moms find the right position and identify when their baby is latched on properly to prevent soreness."

Obstetricians keep tabs on the mental health and coping skills of women before and after delivery. A social worker is available to coordinate care if needed for issues like postpartum depression. "We've built trust and a rapport with our patients, so they are willing to tell us if they're facing challenges after giving birth," says Dr. Kattal, an obstetrician at WMC who partners with Dr. Leonard at Valley Health Women's Specialists. "We can help."

VALLEY HEALTH WELCOMES NEW PRACTICE

Before and after giving birth at Winchester Medical Center, Myers received care at Winchester Women's Specialists, which in the spring became Valley Health Women's Specialists after joining the Valley Health System. Located on the WMC campus, the practice provides the full spectrum of gynecological and obstetrical

services for women of all ages.

Patients will see minimal change now that the practice is part of Valley Health. Dr. Leonard and Dr. Kattal will continue to offer state-of-the-art services with compassionate care. "We care for women at all life stages," says Dr. Leonard. "This includes everyone from teens with menstrual period concerns to women seeking preconception care and counseling, or help with infertility, contraception, pregnancy, labor and delivery, menopause and postmenopausal care."

As Jessica experienced, her care at both Valley Health Women's Specialists and WMC has always been family-friendly. "My doctors treat me as part of the family," she says. "Even for a checkup, I'll bring my children in. Dr. Kattal and Dr. Leonard love to see them, to see how they've grown and how well they're doing. They brought them into life. They continue to care about them."

To learn more about maternity care at Valley Health, visit valleyhealthlink.com/maternal-services.



Local leaders visit the WMC OR as part of the CONNECT program.

VITAL CONNECTIONS

VALLEY HEALTH FOUNDATIONS ENGAGES COMMUNITY LEADERS WITH THEIR LOCAL HEALTHCARE SYSTEM

Now in its second year, Valley Health CONNECT is a program that invites select leaders in our community to share in an exclusive deep dive into Valley Health.

This behind-the-scenes program highlights medical advances, examines community health needs and challenges, and explores opportunities for enhancing healthcare for our region. Each year, a group of key leaders across Valley Health's communities is invited to participate.

Valley Health CONNECT participants gain a deeper understanding of changes in healthcare and the impact these changes have on individuals, families and the workplace. In addition, participants engage in discussions surrounding the ongoing needs of the region and Valley Health's role in making our community healthier, together.

The program, managed by Valley Health Foundations, fosters networking among leaders through various opportunities such as operating one of Valley Health's surgical robots and participating in Q&As with executive leadership.

The seven monthly sessions cover topics including clinical excellence, the importance of community hospitals and access to care, the patient experience, technology's role in healthcare, population health, community health and philanthropy, and healthcare finance.

Learn more about Valley Health Foundations at valleyhealthlink.com/giving.

PARTNERS IN COMMUNITY HEALTH

Valley Health's Community Partnership Grant program provides one-year grants totaling \$200,000 to area nonprofit organizations that address critical health needs. This year, Horizon Goodwill Industries is the recipient of Valley Health's top grant award of \$100,000.

"We understand that the health of the community is determined by much more than what goes on inside our hospitals and medical offices," says Jeff Feit, MD, MS, Valley Health's Chief Population and Community Health Officer. "We're excited to partner with community organizations that work together to improve the overall health and well-being of our region."

Horizon Goodwill Industries proposes a mobile Community Health Hub in Winchester to improve health outcomes and access to care. The Community Health Hub's comprehensive approach will emphasize case management, housing support, workforce development, connection to health services and access to basic needs like food and clothing.

"Horizon Goodwill's mission is to remove barriers to social mobility so that everyone has the same chances to attain their desired outcomes no matter where they begin," says David Shuster, president and CEO. "We believe that through this new initiative and the generosity of Valley Health, we move one step closer to making this a reality for many in our community."

Adds Chief Mission Officer Brooke Grossman, "We are excited to bring this proven model of service to Winchester that has been transformative for participants across our four-state territory."

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP GRANT RECIPIENTS

\$100,000

- Horizon Goodwill Industries, Inc. (Winchester)

\$25,000

- Mountaineer Community Health Center, Inc. (Paw Paw)
- Winchester Area Temporary Thermal Shelter

\$10,000

- Concern Hotline (Winchester)
- Hampshire County Pathways

\$2,500

- Page One of Page County
- Wheels for Wellness (Winchester)
- Bread of Life Food Pantry (Woodstock)
- Innovative Community Solutions (Martinsburg)
- Literacy Volunteers Winchester Area
- Strength in Peers (New Market)



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- Check in online or schedule a virtual visit with Urgent Care
- Learn about visitation information and updates

To download, visit the app store on your iPhone or Android and search for "My Valley Health"

You don't need MyChart to download the app, but you get the most out of the app if you have a MyChart account. Signing up is easy. Just visit valleyhealthlink.com/mychart.



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