



CalvertHealth

HOPE & HEALING

Four inspiring survivors
share life lessons from their
breast cancer journey.

*Their stories begin
on page 14.*



A Message from the President

In This Issue

*Stay the Course*

The relief and excitement we felt as the COVID vaccines became readily available has begun to fade in the face of the rising positivity rate in our community. CalvertHealth remains committed to ensuring the health and wellbeing of our patients.

At CalvertHealth Medical Center, we are doing all we can to protect everyone who walks through our doors, including mandating that all employees are vaccinated or submitting to weekly COVID testing. At the same time, we are urging residents not to delay seeking care and run the risk of more serious complications. *(See story page 3).*

We are especially concerned when we see stroke victims not coming to our ER fast enough. Please read the back cover and learn how to recognize the warning signs. Getting timely help might just save a life from stroke or prevent permanent disability.

If we are to be successful in building a healthy community, we know we need to come together to not only identify the priorities but to overcome the obstacles that impede our progress. As with any change, awareness is a good first step. Then we must provide education to reduce risk factors and prevent problems.

This issue of CalvertHealth offers many helpful insights and practical tips about what each of us can do to live our healthiest life. There are many serious healthcare challenges ahead. It will take all of us standing shoulder to shoulder pushing forward if we are to turn the tide. It will take time and it will take persistence.

But I believe we will reach our destination - if we stay the course.

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El Centro Médico de CalvertHealth no discrimina con respecto a admisiones de pacientes, asignaciones de habitaciones, servicios al paciente o empleo sobre la base de raza, color, origen nacional, religión, discapacidad, edad, sexo, incapacidad, identificación de género o sexual orientación.

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Breast cancer survivor Tonya Calacino of Chesapeake Beach loves spending time outdoors with her husband, Damon, and daughter, Kaleesi.

See story page 14.



CalvertHealth Garners 4-Star Rating from Centers for Medicare & Medicaid *Ranked Among Top 12 Hospitals in Maryland*

CalvertHealth Medical Center (CHMC) has achieved a 4-star overall hospital quality rating from the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid (CMS), placing it among the top 12 hospitals in the state. The CMS ratings are widely considered a key indicator of quality.

The CMS **Care Compare** (formerly *Hospital Compare*) website ranks quality of care at Medicare-certified hospitals across the country, only 455 of which received 5-star ratings. The website rates hospitals against 48 measures of quality including mortality, safety of care, readmission, patient experience and timely and effective care.

This national recognition comes at a time when many smaller hospital systems have been challenged by the pandemic, making this top ranking especially rewarding.

“At CalvertHealth, our team of physicians, nurses and other healthcare workers are dedicated to

providing exceptional, compassionate care to our patients and their families,” said **Dean Teague**, president and chief executive officer of CalvertHealth. “We are proud to receive this 4-star recognition and think it reflects the excellence we deliver in health care every day.”

Residents Urged Not to Delay Care

Teague says hospital administration is worried that many people with serious health conditions or symptoms may have been delaying or avoiding care, which can lead to serious complications and long-term health problems. “Now more than ever, we want to encourage our community to make sure they are taking care of themselves and getting those annual screenings or making an appointment for any check-ups they may have missed or put off due to the COVID-19 pandemic,” said Teague.

Chief Medical Officer **Dr. Ted Tsangaris** concurred saying, “Patients are waiting too long to seek the care they need. Our practices follow strict safety protocols, and our top priority is the health and safety of our patients at all times.” He went on to add, “I want residents to feel comfortable seeking the medical treatment they need. At the same time, I want to remind people that timeliness is important. Small issues can quickly become more serious if they are not addressed effectively.”

Precautions Reinforce Priority on Safety

CalvertHealth has taken every possible precaution to protect the community and the healthcare workers throughout our physician practices, outpatient clinics, services and surgery center. In addition to following all Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidance and using state-of-the-art UV disinfecting technology, the practices are also practicing social distancing by scheduling appointments to limit the number of patients and employees in an area and using telemedicine and other advances to provide access to care from the convenience of your home or office for those who are not yet vaccinated or still feel uncomfortable seeking care in person.

If you do not have a primary care provider, please call 410.535.8457 to get established with a provider at one of CalvertHealth Primary Care's three Calvert County locations or visit CalvertHealthMedicalGroup.org for more information.



Eating the Way Our Bodies were Designed

The Who, What and Why of Intermittent Fasting

Talk of intermittent fasting is making the rounds as a way to lose weight and stave off or alleviate chronic disease, but is it right for everyone or just a fad?

We've asked Calvert Internal Medicine Group Endocrinologist **Dr. Julie O'Keefe** to help readers understand what intermittent fasting is, who can benefit from it and why it can be effective.



“Losing weight in theory is very simple, but in practice is very difficult,” said Dr. O’Keefe. “Time-restricted eating is a strategy that designates periods of eating and periods of fasting. The periods of eating and fasting can vary but they have in common a period of time when there is no food consumption—usually eight or more hours.”

Availability of Food

The ability of humans to go without food for long periods of time is built into our body systems. Primitive people had to hunt, they had to gather, and they had to prepare and store food. Food was not available to consume 24/7.

Our bodies can go without food for several hours, for several days, and even longer because our bodies are developed to store fat. In other words, human bodies are equipped to encounter periods of fasting.

Humans evolved to be in sync with the day/night cycle, or a circadian rhythm. Our metabolism has adapted to daytime food and nighttime sleep. But what if due to technological advances, humans have the option to be alert and active during the night and have access to food at all hours?

How Human Bodies Process Food

Our bodies need nutrients from food and drink in order to work properly and keep us healthy. Proteins, fats, carbohydrates, vitamins, minerals and water are nutrients. The digestive system breaks these nutrients down into parts small enough for our bodies to absorb and use for energy, growth and cell repair.

The digestive process starts with the first bite of food but can take up to **eight hours** for food to pass through the stomach to the small intestine.

“Intermittent fasting designates a period of time, usually greater than eight hours, during which we do not take in calories,” said Dr. O’Keefe. “This fasting state allows our body time to process the nutrients we have eaten and to burn fat.”

Timing of Meals

There are two schedules of intermittent fasting that most people follow. The most common is the daily 16-hour-no-food/8-hour-food schedule. This means that if you normally eat your first meal at 8 a.m., you have your last meal eight hours later, at 4 p.m. You can change the time of consuming food according to a schedule that works best for you. So, if your family eats dinner at 6 p.m., then you adjust and don’t eat breakfast until 10 a.m. The idea is that you eat only during an 8-hour time period—and that’s it. No more food or snacking outside of that time period. You can drink water, but ideally you are not putting any calories in your body during that 16-hour time period of fasting.

Another intermittent fasting schedule is more restrictive. The 5-2 schedule follows that for five days out of the week you eat when you want and then two days out of the week you are just eating one meal a day, consisting from 500-600 calories and drinking water or black coffee for the remainder of the day.

Benefits of Intermittent Fasting

According to the National Institutes of Health (NIH), the majority of available research shows that intermittent fasting is effective at reducing body weight, decreasing fasting glucose, decreasing fasting insulin and reducing insulin resistance, which is the precursor of Type 2 Diabetes.

Just changing the timing of meals, by eating earlier in the day and extending the overnight fast, significantly benefited metabolism even in people who didn’t lose weight.

“Intermittent fasting is giving your body a period of time when you are not taking in calories, so your body can use that time of fasting to process nutrients and burn fat. It really boils down to eating the way our bodies were meant to process food and burn fat.”

- Dr. Julie A. O’Keefe



Nighttime eating is well associated with a higher risk of obesity, as well as diabetes, according to studies published through the Harvard Medical School.

Is Intermittent Fasting Right for Me?

As with starting any new diet or health regimen, people should consult their primary care doctor to ensure that intermittent fasting is safe for them.

“Adherence is a major factor in the success of any dietary intervention,” Dr. O’Keefe said. “Patients need to choose a dietary regimen that will work in their lifestyle. If someone is interested in intermittent fasting, I explain the process and let them decide what would work best for them.”

Foods Included in Intermittent Fasting Program

“There are no specific food restrictions with intermittent fasting. However, all prescribed diet programs should emphasize the intake of as many unprocessed foods as possible: fresh vegetables, lean meats and fruits. Though you may be following a restricted time period to eat, if you spend the time eating take-out and junk food, you will not have successful weight loss.” said Dr. O’Keefe.

WARNING

People with advanced diabetes or who are on medications for diabetes, people with a history of eating disorders like anorexia and bulimia, and pregnant or breastfeeding women **should not attempt intermittent fasting** unless under the close supervision of a physician who can monitor them.

MEET THE DOCTOR

Julie O’Keefe, MD is a board-certified endocrinologist with Calvert Internal Medicine Group in Prince Frederick. She has been in private practice 26 years and has a special interest in diabetes, thyroid and calcium issues and osteoporosis. To learn more about Dr. O’Keefe, visit CalvertHealthMedicine.org.



Healthy Gut, Healthy You.

Practical Tips for Making Your Gut Happier

Hippocrates, the father of modern medicine, wrote over 2,000 years ago: *All disease begins in the gut.* But what does “gut health” mean? How does it affect other parts of your body? And what can you do to improve your gut health if it’s out of balance?

Recently, we sat down with board-certified gastroenterologist Dr. Assaad Soweid of the CalvertHealth Medical Group to get his take on these questions; how to recognize when there’s a problem and get some practical tips for making your gut happier.

Q *Why is good gut health important?*

First of all, the gut is simply not a tube as we used to study where food goes in, gets absorbed and is excreted. It’s way beyond that. It’s a system where a lot of other

functions of the body are affected. Your digestive tract is home to some 500 different bacteria. This is called “*the microbiome*” and it plays an important role in things you wouldn’t imagine like the immune system, regulation of weight, obesity, skin diseases, even mood conditions and cancers. So, gut health is important because it can impact many other systems in the body.

In the gut, there are good bacteria, the beneficial ones and the not so good kind. If there’s an imbalance in favor of the not so good, at the expense of the beneficial bacteria, then you have diseases. Your immune system gets affected and you get lower immunity, inflammatory conditions and autoimmune diseases. You can have obesity, impairment in your metabolism and absorption of nutrients. So, basically bad things can happen.

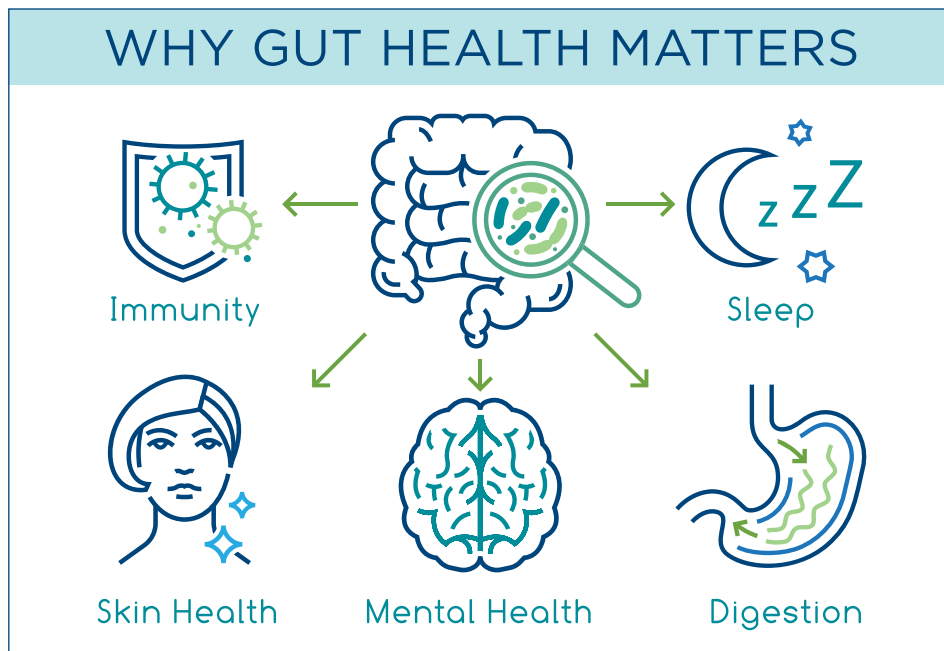
The good bacteria protect you from a lot of things, help you digest better, improve your immunity, help you combat depression, cancers and obesity. This, by and large, depends on the microbiome, what we eat and drink and how we treat our GI tract.

Q *What are the signs of an unhealthy gut?*

With an unhealthy gut, you can have excessive gas, which denotes maldigestion of foods. You can get bloating, constipation, diarrhea and heartburn. Obviously, in a healthy gut you are regular and you don’t have these symptoms.



But again, it's not only the gut symptoms. Signs of an unhealthy gut include other things – like depression, unintentional weight changes and sleep disturbances. (*More than 90 percent of serotonin, which is key to regulating sleep, is produced in the gut.*) It can also show up as chronic fatigue and eczema. Inflammation in the gut caused by poor diet or food allergies may cause increased “leaking” of certain proteins out into the body, which in turn can irritate the skin. So, it's not only the size of an unhealthy gut but also a lot of other ailments outside the GI tract that's important for people to understand. Of course, not all sleep problems are caused by the gut but it's definitely contributing to this.



Q *What causes poor gut health?*

While food has a big impact on your gut health, there are also a number of lifestyle factors to watch out for. These include: smoking, frequent antibiotic use, certain medications such as laxatives and chronic stress. I tell all my patients you need to reduce stress. As a matter of fact, I've done a study that is being published by one of my fellows looking at the value of “mindful meditation” in patients with IBS (irritable bowel syndrome). It's a form of breathing exercises you can do in bed in the morning and evening for 5-10 minutes a day. Our preliminary data in a small randomized study showed that when people do that, they feel better.

Q *How can I improve my gut health?*

Eating a variety of foods that are good for gut health is the best way to ensure our gut bacteria is diverse. In fact, research has shown that what you eat can change your gut microbiome within a week. A healthy diet should include a wide variety of fruits and vegetables, whole grains

Signs of an unhealthy gut include other things – like depression, unintentional weight changes and sleep disturbances.

and legumes. Fiber is the main fuel for good bacteria. Prebiotic foods such as apples, bananas, asparagus, artichokes, onions and garlic also help boost good bacteria. We also have to eat slowly, because when you eat slowly, regardless of everything, you digest better.

You can also look after your gut by making sure you exercise regularly, drink plenty of water and get a good night's sleep. While many studies have had positive results on the impact of probiotic supplements, more research is still needed. We have seen it can be helpful in certain diseases like Crohn's, ulcerative colitis and C. diff

(Clostridioides difficile) infections, which is the antibiotic-associated infection that comes with the use of antibiotics.

Q *When do I need to see a gastroenterologist?*

If you're having any symptoms that are outside the norm, especially if they're acute (severe and sudden onset). There are also what we call “alarm symptoms” that call for prompt attention. Red flag symptoms include seeing blood or black color in the stools, vomiting, severe abdominal pain, fever, weight loss and difficulty swallowing. You also need to consider other factors such as age. For example, if a young person in his or her 20s, has reflux, then it's probably a good idea to make some changes in diet and lifestyle. But if an older person has reflux, then it could be associated with certain diseases, so they should see a physician.

MEET THE SPECIALIST

Board-certified gastroenterologist **Dr. Assaad Soweid** provides comprehensive care for a broad range of GI issues. Dr. Soweid, who has been practicing for more than 24 years, specializes in advanced endoscopy and is regarded as a leading expert in endoscopic ultrasound (EUS). He has lectured extensively and has given numerous EUS workshops and live demonstrations worldwide.



Palliative Care Team eases burden for chronically ill

Personalized approach provides help with addressing complex needs

Living with chronic illness can be a stressful balancing act to deal with symptoms and maintain quality of life. There can be multiple specialists and differing priorities of the patient and family members. At CalvertHealth Medical Center, the Palliative Care team's mission is to ease those burdens.

"Palliative care is there to provide relief for patients suffering from a chronic illness. Different from hospice care, palliative care helps patients with serious illnesses manage their symptoms in a manner that brings them comfort and a quality of life that is meaningful to them. The team is also there to determine what a patient and their family's goals are and try to ensure the patient, family, and treatment team are all working together to achieve those goals," said **David Sacks, LCSW-C, ACHP-SW**, Palliative Care Coordinator at CalvertHealth Medical Center.

Unlike hospice care, palliative care is not end-of-life care. Hospice is care for patients who are not responding to treatment or have decided to discontinue current treatments. Hospice patients have a prognosis of six months or less. In contrast, palliative care is for patients at any stage of their illness and can be provided alongside curative treatments (*see sidebar at right*).

"Patients do not need to be terminally ill. Many of our palliative patients have normal life expectancies, but are wrestling with symptoms like pain, shortness of breath, or anxiety to name a few, or are simply overwhelmed by multiple illnesses or a complicated medical regimen," said **Dr. Stephanie Carpenter**, Director of Palliative Medicine of Southern Maryland.

Palliative care is provided both inside and outside the hospital setting. The interdisciplinary palliative care team consists of a provider (a physician or nurse practitioner), a social worker, a chaplain, and when necessary, a pharmacologist.



"Palliative care is better at seeing the bigger picture... and asks what matters most to the patient." - Marzi Viverette, CRNP, Palliative Medicine of Southern Maryland



THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN Palliative Care & Hospice

PALLIATIVE CARE

- Provided in conjunction with curative or life-prolonging treatment for people at any stage of illness. The illness is not required to be life-limiting.
- Begins at the discretion of the physician at any time and any stage of illness, serious to end-stage.
- Provides supportive care with or without curative intent.
- Offers consultations in Calvert County at CHMC, Calvert Internal Medicine Group, Calvert County Nursing Center, Asbury Solomons Nursing Center and Solomons Nursing Center.
- Covered by Medicare and most private insurance companies - from office visits to prescription charges. Co-pays may apply.
- Does not provide aides, volunteers, medication or durable medical equipment.
- Offers appointments M-F from 9 am-5 pm.

HOSPICE

- Begins when two physicians certify that the patient has less than six months to live if the disease follows its usual course.
- Offers comfort care without curative intent; patient is no longer responding to curative treatment or has elected not to further pursue such treatments.
- Delivered wherever the patient calls home.
- Covered by Medicare, VA benefits, Medicare Advantage, Medicaid and most private insurance plans. Services related to the life-limiting illness, such as medication, equipment and supplies, are covered with few or no out-of-pocket expenses.
- Provides aides, volunteers, medication and durable medical equipment.
- Provides hospice staff 24/7.

Focusing on Quality of Life

Palliative care is highly individualized for the patients and their families. Palliative visits allow more time than a typical doctor's office visit to work through complex issues and for patients and loved ones to ask questions.

For example, a patient with advanced cancer may have failed first- or second-line treatment and may need to make a decision to pursue third-line treatment, which will increase symptoms and risks or adverse outcomes with less of a benefit. Or, a patient with dementia may not be eating and is getting weaker and the family has to make a decision whether or not to place a feeding tube. Palliative care helps patients and families such as these explore what quality of life looks like for them.

Palliative care also helps to fill the gaps that patients frequently find themselves in when they have several different specialists who focus on one specific part or system of the body. Palliative care focuses on the person and coordinates care between those specialists and manages symptoms.

"Palliative care is better at seeing the bigger picture, seeing how things impact people emotionally, physically and spiritually. Palliative care takes that step back and asks what matters to the patient...there is no one size fits all. Each patient is different. Each patient dynamic is different," said **Marzi Viverette, CRNP**, Palliative Care Nurse Practitioner.

The palliative care team can adjust medications, have a family meeting about goals of care, address the psychosocial needs and challenges of the patient, address spiritual needs, determine if the patient requires more follow-ups or referrals to other providers, assist in decision-making for current and future treatment options, manage symptoms and more.

Advocating for What's Important to Patients

Viverette said it's important for her to help patients and families feel at peace with their decisions and to advocate for what is important to them. This takes extra time and an interdisciplinary team. Visits with patients usually last much longer than a typical 15-minute doctor's office visit. This time is needed to gain the trust of the patients and their families to find out what they need and their motivations in order to help everyone.

"Palliative care is not hospice. It can be done alongside active treatments like chemotherapy, with progressive illnesses like heart failure and dementia. It's not end-of-life care. What provides me the most joy in being able to do this is to bring to light and advocate for patients what's most important to them," said Viverette.

The process to receive palliative care depends on the location of the individual and whether or not they are in the hospital. In the hospital, usually, the treating provider places a referral for palliative care services or a referral is entered through a screening tool. However, individual patients may request a consult on their own. Patients in a nursing home are identified by a screening tool, provider assessment, RN observation or family request. If at home, the patient may be referred by their treating provider or self-referred.

Patients receiving palliative care while in the hospital meet with their palliative care team initially for an evaluation and then follow up as needed. Outside the hospital, the frequency is determined based on the patient's specific needs. In Calvert County, palliative care is provided at CHMC, local nursing homes and in partnership with physician offices.

If you or a loved one would benefit from palliative care, contact 410.535.0412 or request a referral from your physician.

CalvertHealth is proud to bring you classes, wellness programs, health screenings and events to help you live a healthier life. Many classes and events are offered virtually so you can explore from the comfort of your home! For more information about the events listed here, please contact the CalvertHealth Community Wellness Office at 410.535.8233.

DIABETES EDUCATION

Diabetes Self-Management Class

Taught by certified diabetic educators, this comprehensive three-part series includes individual meal planning, meter training, health assessment and goal setting by a registered nurse and diabetic educator. Physician referral required, covered by most insurance plans.

To register, call 410.414.2778.

CCHD Living Well With Diabetes

This six-week interactive workshop for adults with type 2 diabetes is discussion based and covers a variety of topics such as how to deal with changes in your blood sugar, nutrition planning, label reading, depression and more. For more information, call 410.535.5400 x 459.

HEALTH & WELLNESS

Weight Loss for Life

This six-week session blends nutritional education with a registered dietitian and group fitness instruction to help you learn how to lose weight and be healthy.

Rock Steady Boxing for Parkinson's

This 12-session course helps fight Parkinson's through non-contact boxing exercises focusing on gross motor movement, balance, core strength, rhythm and hand-eye coordination. This type of exercise favorably impacts range of motion, flexibility, posture, gait and activities of daily living. *This class is offered virtually and in person.*

Early Riser Fit for Life & Fit for Life

This virtual class meets twice per week for 6 weeks and is designed for all fitness levels. The exercises are focused on functional training to help you perform everyday activities safely and efficiently. The classes include low-impact cardio, strength training, balance, agility and more! Choose from early or afternoon sessions.

ABC Wellness Coaching

Virtual 8-week program designed to provide accountability, behavioral changes and consistency to your health and wellness regimen.

Yoga

A class to learn yoga postures while practicing relaxation and breathing techniques to enhance wellness. Taught by a certified yoga instructor. All levels such as Chair Yoga, Yoga for Everyone and Gentle Yoga are offered. *Register online.*

Tai Chi

A beginner's class to incorporate flowing qigong (life energy enhancement) movement with an easy flow of 5 tai chi moves to foster strength and balance. *Register online.*

HEALTHWISE

Personal Nutrition Counseling

A one-on-one appointment for all ages focusing on a healthier lifestyle by addressing barriers to healthy eating, food allergies, healthy weight loss and much more. *Call 410.535.8233 to register.* Specialized nutrition services are also offered for oncology patients and medical nutrition therapy.

Calvert Community Dental Care

Residents of Calvert County who are uninsured or underserved can receive general dental care and screenings. Potential patients are able to fill out a Sliding Fee Scale application to see if they qualify for low-cost general dentistry. *Call 410.535.8402 for more information.*

NEW! CPR Classes

CPR, AED and First Aid and the BLS for healthcare providers will be offered in person! Courses are offered regularly but space is limited. *Fees apply and advance online registration is required.*

FREE Quit Tobacco Classes

The classes will be offered in person and virtually at CCHD. Class is one hour a week for 8-weeks. *Call 410.535.5400 x 359 for more information or to register.* Paid for by MD Cigarette Restitution Fund.

MATERNITY & FAMILY EDUCATION

Baby Care Basics

This class for new and expectant parents offers a comprehensive overview of baby care basics (*grandparents are invited, too*).

Understanding Childbirth

This interactive online course covers essential information on labor and highlights ways partners can help throughout the process. You'll also get a sense of what labor is really like as you watch several birth stories. You'll even have an opportunity to create your own birth plan! Allow 4-6 hours to complete.

Understanding Breastfeeding

This interactive online course covers the essentials of breastfeeding, including clear animation and plenty of video examples. It lets you know when to call for help and includes partner tips. You will also have the opportunity to track feedings with an easy-to-use tracker! Allow 2-3 hours to complete.

Infant Massage

Research shows there are many benefits to infant massage including improved sleep quality, improved short-term and long-term development outcomes and stress reduction for parents, caregivers and babies.

People, Programs and Services in Our Community

CANCER SCREENINGS

CCHD Colorectal Cancer Screenings

You may be eligible for no-cost screenings if: You are age 45 or older, you have no health insurance, your health insurance does not fully cover the cost of the screening or if you are under 45 with a family history or symptoms. Call the Calvert County Health Department at 410.535.5400 x 343 to determine eligibility. *Program funded by the Maryland Cigarette Restitution Fund Program.*

CCHD Breast and Cervical Cancer Screenings - You may be eligible for no-cost screenings if:

You are a woman age 40-64, 65 and older with Medicare Part A only, you have no health insurance, your health insurance doesn't fully cover the cost of screening or you are under 40 with an abnormal exam. Call the Calvert County Health Department at 410.535.5400 x 343 to determine eligibility. *Program funded by Maryland Department of Health and CDC.*



Red Cross Blood Drives

CalvertHealth Medical Center continues to sponsor blood drives at St. Nicholas Lutheran Church in Huntingtown.

We would like to thank St. Nicholas Lutheran Church for hosting all our blood drives since the onset of the COVID pandemic.

The need for blood in our community is always there. Thank you for helping your local, community hospital realize our vision of making a difference in every life we touch. The next CHMC-sponsored blood drives, hosted by St. Nicholas Lutheran Church are on Oct. 1, Nov. 26 and Dec. 3. Visit redcrossblood.org to make an appointment.

SUPPORT GROUPS

Lactation Services

Lactation services for pre and postnatal mothers with one-on-one instruction is available. **Call 410.414.4819 to schedule.**

Breast Cancer Support Group

This group meets every 3rd Thursday of the month. For more information email megan.hance@calverthealthmed.org. **There is no fee for this group.**

Cancer Support Group

A group that meets every 1st Tuesday of the month where patients and loved ones can gain support as they go through their healing journey. ALL cancer types are welcome. Registration is required. **Please call 410.535.8233 for more information.**

Diabetes Support Group

A FREE support group that meets the 2nd Thursday of the month from 7-8 p.m. This is a great opportunity to ask questions, share your journey and offer support to fellow diabetics. **Register online.**

Parkinson's Lunch Bunch Group

This group of Parkinson patients, family members and caregivers meet the 1st Monday of the month for people struggling or have a loved one struggling with Parkinson's disease. Registration is free and required. **Call to register.**

Stroke Support Group

This group meets every 1st Wednesday of the month for people who have suffered a stroke, are survivors of a stroke and for those caring for someone who has suffered and survived a stroke. Various topics are presented by healthcare professionals. This is time to share and learn from other's experiences. **Registration is free and required. Call 410.414.4759 for more information.**

SAVE THE DATE

PINK & BLUE TOURNAMENT



Help Us Celebrate our 11th Year!

Enjoy the day and help a worthy cause. Your contribution will support cancer care at Anne Arundel Medical Center and CalvertHealth Medical Center.

DATE: Monday, October 11

PLACE: The Cannon Club

Call 410.414.4570 for more information.

CALVERTHEALTH

Diabetes Expo

Helping People with Diabetes Live Well

DATE: Wednesday, Oct. 27

TIME: 3:30 – 6:30 p.m.

This outdoor, open-air event is free and open to the community. Educational speakers, screenings, displays, healthy food samples, giveaways and more! **Masks required.**

Call 410.535.8233 for more information.

CALVERTHEALTH Breast Cancer

5K Run/Walk

Saturday, October 2

Support the Breast Cancer 5K as more than 700 friends and survivors run or walk around beautiful Solomons Island.

> WAYS TO REGISTER:

Scan the QR code or in person at the CalvertHealth Foundation Office



CalvertHealth Primary Care Adds Provider

Certified Family Nurse Practitioner **Tina Atkins, CRNP** has joined CalvertHealth Primary Care in Twin Beaches.



The practice, which also includes

Dr. Melissa Stoner, provides personalized health care for the whole family including health screenings, preventive medicine, complete physicals and well woman exams.

The providers are specialists in family medicine and trained to diagnose, treat and manage a wide range of medical conditions from acute to chronic disease for all ages – including babies, children, adolescents, adults and the elderly.

Atkins is a strong advocate for empowering patients. “I understand the patient is in control of their health,” she said, “and I want to work with them according to what they want to achieve.”

She is someone who enjoys and is good at interacting with others. Atkins describes her philosophy of care this way, “My job is to listen to patient’s concerns and to meet them where they are in their life to improve their health and overall well-being.” She recently moved here from Columbia, MD and is married with two children.

Atkins, who is fluent in Spanish, has 13 years of nursing experience in diverse clinical settings. “I chose CalvertHealth because it’s about community and because of their focus on teamwork for excellent patient care.”

She obtained her bachelor’s in nursing in 2013 from the University of Central Florida and went on to obtain her master’s in nursing at The George Washington University in 2018.

CalvertHealth Board Welcomes New Community Members

The Calvert Health System Board of Directors is pleased to announce the appointment of retired attorney **Malcolm Funn** of Solomons and Chesapeake Beach resident **Gail Donovan Harkins**, who has more than 24 years of experience in healthcare public relations and marketing. Composed of volunteers from the community and the medical staff, the board is responsible for ensuring the health system meets the needs of the community.

“Malcolm and Gail both bring substantial experience in their respective fields as well as extensive community service,” said CalvertHealth System President and CEO **Dean Teague**. “I am confident they will make important contributions as we expand to provide new advanced services and technological capabilities to enhance health care for our residents.”

Harkins, who retired from CalvertHealth Medical Center in 2016, currently chairs the 250-member auxiliary. Her roots at CalvertHealth run deep. Her father, **Frederick J. Donovan**, served two terms on the hospital board and was instrumental in securing the funds to build the new hospital in 1978.

Her sister, **Joan Kilmon**, followed in his footsteps and helped create the KeepWell Center. Donations after the death of her grandfather, **Wesley Stinnett**, provided the foundation of the hospital’s scholarship fund.

Harkins said she is proud to continue this legacy. “When you support the hospital, you’re helping everyone in our community,” she said. “Calvert Memorial was my work home for 13 years. I know how hard they work every day, 365 days a year. This was never more evidenced than during the COVID crisis.”

Harkins is the voice of the volunteers on the board. “I have spent most of my career working in a hospital,” she added, “and it has given me a unique perspective of the contributions that volunteers make. Their work has true impact.” In the decade leading up to the pandemic, the CalvertHealth auxiliary had



Malcolm Funn



Gail Harkins

volunteered 228,000 hours representing a huge savings to the organization.

Funn’s commitment to community service is underscored by his favorite quote by Winston Churchill: “*You make a living by what you get. You make a life by what you give.*” He has served in many leadership roles from the Calvert County Historical Society and Strong Schools Maryland to the Calvert County NAACP and the Calvert County Citizens Advisory Committee.

Funn said he joined the CalvertHealth Board of Directors to be a personal bridge and to develop bridges between the hospital and the community. “Both have to understand each other, both have to be better informed about each other and their respective needs.”

Funn added, “I believe the connections, alliances and contacts I have established and nurtured over the years equips me to construct these bridges and to urge and encourage others to build bridges, as well.”

Funn said he believes it is essential for CalvertHealth and the community to function not just as partners but as one united community together. He and his late wife, Annette, frequently attended the hospital galas. After her passing, he and his son, Kelby, continued to attend the galas with Funn talking about the importance of private rooms during his late wife’s time in the hospital.

Gloggner named VP for Human Resources

Calvert Health System (CHS) has named **Peter Gloggner, SHRM-SCP** as vice president for human resources. He comes to CHS – the county's largest private employer, after an impressive 26-year career in health care.



Most recently, he served as vice president and chief human resources officer at Jupiter Medical Center in Florida. While there, Gloggner played a key role in creating a positive workplace culture, which in turn translated into high employee engagement, high patient satisfaction and high quality scores.

Upon joining CalvertHealth, Gloggner said he felt a good connection with the executive team. "It's a great organization with a family feel among the employees and a tremendous asset to the community. I am happy to be joining the family."

He went on to add, "The fact that Calvert is independent is very appealing to me. I believe decisions made locally are the best for the organization and the community. The leadership at CalvertHealth has tremendous longevity, which demonstrates stability for the community and the organization.

"Their commitment to providing great patient care and the care and kindness shown to the staff are admirable and attracted me to the organization," said Gloggner.

He will be responsible for the day-to-day HR operations, HR strategic direction, organizational development and training and employee relations for the health system, which includes CalvertHealth Medical Center and its subsidiaries. He has a master's degree in business administration. Additionally, he is a certified Senior Certified Professional by the Society for Human Resources Management, which recognizes the extensive knowledge he has attained during his career.

"Peter has a keen understanding of the critical importance of all our employees to our mission of providing top quality health care," said CalvertHealth Chief Operating Officer **Tony Bladen**. "Our strongest asset is our nearly 1,200 employees who help us deliver the best care possible for our patients."

Soweid Joins CalvertHealth Surgical Specialists

Board-certified gastroenterologist, **Dr. Assaad Soweid** has joined CalvertHealth Surgical Specialists. He provides comprehensive care for a broad range of GI issues. Dr. Soweid specializes in advanced endoscopy and is regarded as a leading expert in endoscopic ultrasound (EUS), which is important in diagnosing, staging and treating many cancers and diseases of the digestive system.

Dr. Soweid, who has been practicing for more than 24 years, completed his fellowship at the prestigious Case Western Reserve University advanced endoscopy program under Dr. Michael Sivak. "I had the honor of being trained by one of the giants in gastroenterology of the 20th century and am very happy to be bringing this expertise to CalvertHealth." (See related story on page 17).

His philosophy of care is patient-focused. "First of all, I want our patients to feel they are respected and they are given the time they deserve ... that all of their health concerns are taken very seriously and that they're going to be offered nothing less than the best standard of care."

At 16, he decided to become a gastroenterologist after watching his mother suffer in agony from peptic ulcers. "I wanted to do something to cure her." The cause of her condition wasn't determined until years later when an Australian doctor discovered the *Helicobacter pylori* bacterium and developed an effective treatment protocol.

"Today, I am happy to say she is 78 and doing well," he said. "She's healthy, independent and pain-free."

He received the American Digestive Health Foundation advanced therapeutic endoscopy award for his endoscopic-based research. Dr. Soweid joined the American University of Beirut Medical Center (AUBMC) as an assistant professor in 2001 and went on to become the director of the Endoscopy & Bronchoscopy Unit in 2009.

He has lectured extensively and given numerous therapeutic endoscopy and EUS workshops and live demonstrations worldwide. Dr. Soweid has also helped develop many EUS programs in the Middle East and Africa. Additionally, he has published numerous articles and book chapters and currently serves on the editorial board and is a reviewer in several distinguished journals including *The Lancet*, *Gastrointestinal Endoscopy* and the *Scandinavian Journal of Gastroenterology*.

After receiving his medical degree at the American University of Beirut, he completed his internal medicine residency at Emory University affiliated hospitals in Atlanta, GA and his gastroenterology fellowship at St. Louis University affiliated hospitals. He is a fellow of the American College of Gastroenterology and the American Society of Gastrointestinal Endoscopy.



Earlier this summer, we spoke with four breast cancer survivors who walked us through their greatest challenges, the lessons they'd like to share with other women battling breast cancer, what helped get them through treatment, and the biggest changes they've made since being diagnosed.



Hope & Healing



Four inspiring survivors share life lessons from their breast cancer journey.

About one in eight women will develop breast cancer in her lifetime. Behind each of those numbers is a face and a family and a story about how the journey shaped them in so many unique ways – from reflecting on their experience to realizing what really matters.

Lesson: *You have to take care of yourself before you can take care of others.*

– Sherron Jernigan



Because breast cancer runs in Sherron Jernigan's family, she had always been vigilant about getting her mammogram every year. But it was the changes she noticed in her left breast that would ultimately lead to a biopsy and a diagnosis of stage 3 breast cancer in Jan. 2020.

"I was really impressed with how seriously the breast team at CalvertHealth took my concerns," said the 58-year-old Huntingtown resident. "You know when something is wrong with your body," even though a second mammogram and ultrasound did not detect a mass.

Based on her consult with breast imager **Dr. Chandra Baker** and breast surgical oncologist **Dr. Theodore Tsangaris**, an MRI was ordered that revealed something suspicious, which was enough to raise a flag. A biopsy was performed and it confirmed she had breast cancer.

"When Dr. Baker told me, it was almost somewhat of a relief," said the mother of four. "I thought: OK, now I know what this is." Her persistence in pursuing answers is what



LESSON:
*It's OK to ask
for help.*
- Gail Gross

medical oncologist **Dr. Arati Patel** says all women need to do. “Changes like lumps, bumps, skin thickening, redness, swelling, pain, nipple discharges, etc. should be reported to your healthcare provider immediately,” said Dr. Patel.

Jernigan, who was treated during the height of the pandemic, said she was especially grateful for the personalized care she received at the breast center. “They were so caring and willing to take the time to treat me as an individual and to understand and address my individual needs,” she said.

When asked to describe her experience at the Sheldon E. Goldberg Center for Breast Care at CalvertHealth, Jernigan used three words – supportive, blessing and informative. “They would tell me certain things to watch for. So, when they happened, it didn’t catch me off guard,” she said. “For me, the more informed I am, the more I feel I can deal with this.”

Early in her treatment, Jernigan said she remembers thinking, “I can do this and still remain at work. But Dr. Patel was very honest to say with your high stress job, if you can take off, you may need to consider taking some leave. That was some really good advice.

“This experience has taught me it’s okay to be selfish,” she said. “And it’s okay for me to do self-love and self-care. As women, we forget to take care of us. It’s okay to say: I need to do this for me.”

It’s been two years. That’s how long Gail Gross has been on her breast cancer journey. It has taught her a lot about her own strength and the power of staying positive. Most importantly, it’s taught her how important a good support team can be.

“I never gave up. I kept fighting and smiling and saying: I’m going to get through this. The Lord is with me. I’m not going to let this get me down,” said the 58-year-old Owings resident, who was diagnosed in September 2019.

She said CalvertHealth’s breast center team was a great source of encouragement. “I can truly say I don’t think I would have been as strong and as faithful as I was without them,” she said. “They were always calling and checking on me... explaining everything and asking me if I had any questions.”

She remembers the night before her double mastectomy vividly. “I was sitting on the couch and saying my prayers. I just broke down and cried. My daughter said: ‘Mom, you’ve been so strong ... just let it go. Get it all out. I’m here with you.’ Once I got it all out, I felt like it was a lot of pressure off of me.”

As a home health aide, Gross was the one who always took care of others. During her breast cancer treatment, she learned to lean on her family. “I have one sister and two brothers. Whenever something goes down for one of us, we all come together for each other.”

They were by her side every step of the way. When her hair fell out from chemotherapy, her brother shaved her head. They sat with her during infusion therapy, made sure she had her medication and gas to go back and forth to the doctor. They bought her protein shakes and special cream for her skin when she started radiation therapy.

“After surgery, it took me a long time to look in the mirror,” said Gross. “I didn’t want to see both of my breasts gone. One day I said: It is what is. I’m still here. So, not having breasts doesn’t matter to me because I still have breath in my body.

“I lie to nobody. That was a long journey and it was tough,” said Gross. “But I’m glad I came here (to CalvertHealth). I would give them five stars. They make you feel so welcome and so special.”



LESSON: *Speaking up can be empowering.* – Tonya Calacino

A cancer diagnosis can transform how you see yourself.

Quiet and shy, Tonya Calacino was always a private person. Then the 50-year-old hair stylist from Chesapeake Beach decided to put her journey on Facebook to raise awareness about the importance of monthly breast self-exams.

After her mother's breast cancer diagnosis in 2017, Calacino started doing monthly breast self-exams. Three years later, she found a lump on her left side. "My cancer was aggressive," she explained. "When I found it on Nov. 6, 2020, it was the size of the tip of my pinky. By Jan. 6, when I had my first chemotherapy treatment, it had grown to the size of the middle of my thumb."

She went on to add, "If I had waited for the letter to get my annual mammogram in February, I would have been at least stage 3 or 4." Calacino had chemotherapy to shrink her tumor, followed by a lumpectomy and then radiation therapy, which lowers the risk of the breast cancer coming back.

Every two weeks, she would post a photo and add to her story. "I've learned to open up more," said the Calvert native, who has a 9-year-old daughter. "You never know how what you're saying could help somebody else."

When she reflects on her experience at CalvertHealth, Calacino said the quality of care and physician expertise were amazing but it was the "caring" that left the deepest impression. "When you talk to Dr. Patel, it's like she is your best friend or your sister or your mom," she recalls. "Dr. Tsangaris would always put his hand on my shoulder and ask: How are you today? Are you doing OK?"

"They were both so concerned about my life," she said, "and making sure they were going to do the best they could do to get me back to my lifestyle and be with my family."

Although neuropathy in her fingers and feet has prevented her from returning to work so far, Calacino enjoys planting in the yard, playing with her daughter outdoors or just listening to the wind in the trees while sitting on her deck.

A common side effect of chemotherapy, neuropathy can cause pain, weakness and balance issues. While Calacino has gradually improved, Dr. Patel said up to 50 percent of people can still have symptoms up to a year later.



LESSON: *The most important thing is to be self-aware.*
– Lisa Simmons

Lisa Simmons had just moved into a new house, adopted two puppies and gotten a promotion at work, when a breast cancer diagnosis last year turned her world upside down. "I was in shock," said the 42-year-old mother of two who lives in King George, VA with her husband.

"I had missed my routine screening mammogram the previous October," said Simmons. "But when my older sister found out she had a precancerous tumor in April 2020... that made me wake up and think I better go get checked out."

Initially, she came to Prince Frederick to have a biopsy with Dr. Baker. But her first impression of CalvertHealth's breast center was so positive, she opted to have all of her treatment there even though the drive is more than an hour each way. "I always felt like I was their only patient."

"Everything is so well coordinated," she said. "The Breast Nurse Navigator, **Megan Hance**, helped organize everything for me. It made the whole process 1,000 percent easier."

Simmons said she was also influenced by the qualifications of the breast center team. "Dr. Tsangaris has the best bedside manner of any doctor I have ever met," she said. "Even though I was panicking inside, his way of explaining things calmed me and reassured me."

She went on to add, "I trust Dr. Patel is going to help me make the right decisions for me. Between them, there is this world of experience and knowledge."

Simmons said she felt surrounded by support. "The infusion nurses were so comforting during what was a very scary time for me," she said. "The dietitian gave me some good advice and recipes for smoothies and fruit drinks that helped a lot. The physical therapist taught me massage techniques and stretching exercises that really made a difference."

For her, the biggest lesson is to be self-aware. "Even though technology is amazing and mammograms are beneficial, I learned that self-exams are the most important thing... to pay attention to changes in your breasts."

Dr. Patel agrees. "In general, mammogram screening guidelines are in place to identify early breast cancers that are not yet symptomatic... we rely on our patients to tell us when they notice any type of change in their breasts or armpits."



GIVING FOR

Gifted Hands



“Giving for Gifted Hands” Campaign Supports Surgical Expansion

New Additions Give Local Residents Access to More Advanced Options

“We’re committed to investing in the talent and technology to provide our patients and our community with access to advanced surgical options – including a new bariatrics program – close to home,” said CalvertHealth President & CEO **Dean Teague**, announcing the health system’s plan to spend \$2.5 million on upgrading surgical equipment in the year ahead.

The investment is the latest step in the medical center’s multi-faceted strategy to grow its surgical program to better meet community needs. It comes on the heels of a significant push to “recruit surgical specialists who bring an outstanding skill set to be able to apply the new technology,” said **Dr. Theodore Tsangaris**, who is chief medical officer and cancer program director at CalvertHealth.

Dr. Tsangaris, a renowned breast surgical oncologist, has extensive experience at the region’s top hospitals and is bringing that expertise to the development of the surgical service line at CalvertHealth.

“Patients can be assured they will be well treated by skilled specialists with the latest procedures.”

*- Dr. Theodore Tsangaris,
Chief Medical Officer*

Skilled Specialists Enhance Surgical Capability

Other key additions to CalvertHealth Surgical Specialists have been vascular surgeon **Dr. Joseph Wuamett**, who came on board in 2020. He has broad-based experience in diagnosing and treating a wide variety of vascular issues.

Earlier this year, **Dr. Ramzi Alami**, who is a leading authority in weight loss surgery, joined the group. He will serve as medical director of the new Metabolic and Bariatric Surgery Program at CalvertHealth Medical Center (CHMC).

“We have gifted hands at our surgery center – some of the best and brightest. Our goal is to invest in the resources they need to do the best for our community.”

*– Dean Teague,
CalvertHealth
President & CEO*



DID YOU KNOW?

CalvertHealth has
54 SURGEONS
on its active medical staff
who offer advanced surgical
care for a growing range of
options to meet community
needs, including:

- Bariatric Surgery
- Breast Surgery
- General Surgery
- Gynecologic Oncology Surgery
- Hand Surgery
- Neurospine
- Oral & Maxillofacial Surgery
- Orthopedic Surgery
- Plastic Surgery
- Reconstructive Surgery
- Urogynecology Surgery
- Urologic Surgery
- Vascular Surgery

**For a complete listing, go to
CalvertHealthMedicine.org.**

“Dr. Alami is one of those surgeons who enjoys and is skilled in doing other things like GI and colon surgery,” said Dr. Tsangaris. “This expands our cancer program because he will be doing some of our lower (colon and rectal) cancers, which are more complicated.”

More recently, the practice expanded to include **Dr. Assaad Soweid**, who is highly skilled in advanced therapeutic endoscopy and is regarded as a noted expert in endoscopic ultrasonography (EUS). (See article on page 13). The multidisciplinary surgical group also includes general surgeon **Dr. Ervind Bhogte** and plastic surgeon **Dr. Wilfred Ehrmantraut, Jr.**

Dr. Tsangaris also talked about the advantages of having a full-time vascular surgeon on staff. “Dr. Wuamett is a huge asset for us and our patients,” he said. “He oversees our wound center and has been doing carotid and peripheral vascular cases (to remove blockages caused by plaque buildup) that we haven’t done here in a long time.

“And he’s able to help us with other cases,” said Dr. Tsangaris. “I’ve used him for some challenging cases. OB/GYN has used him to make what they do safer and better.”

Health Priorities Guide Program Growth

“At the core of what is happening is how these surgical programs will impact the lives of the people who rely on us for their care,” said Dr. Tsangaris.



GIVING FOR

Gifted Hands

FOUNDATION LAUNCHES
“Giving for Gifted Hands” Campaign

The CalvertHealth Foundation recently announced the “Giving for Gifted Hands” campaign to enhance the medical center’s surgical program. The theme of the campaign reminds us that without gifted hands, a surgeon’s work goes undone.

According to Foundation Board Chair **Denise Bowman**, the campaign hopes to raise \$250,000 toward the \$2.5-million project to provide our surgeons with the cutting-edge resources needed to bring advanced surgical options – like the new bariatrics program – close to home.

“This is a very exciting time for CalvertHealth Medical Center with the recent completion of our private room expansion,” said CalvertHealth President and CEO **Dean Teague**. “Having state-of-the-art technology will allow us to continue attracting the highest caliber surgeons and advancing the level of care and services we offer for our patients.”

CalvertHealth Medical Center provides a robust array of surgical procedures across a wide variety of surgical specialties from complex breast cancer procedures to the latest minimally invasive options for vascular issues.

“The support of the community is critical to making this vision a reality,” said Bowman. “As a cancer survivor treated by Dr. Tsangaris at CalvertHealth’s Surgery Center, it is reassuring to know you can receive expert surgical care close to home. This is important.”

The funds raised will go toward services, resources and specialized surgical equipment including a new neurological microscope and endoscopic ultrasound (EUS) scopes along with instruments essential for bariatric surgery.

Bowman said the four-month campaign includes strategic events designed to engage major donors, a year-end appeal for prospective contributors and special outreach activities during Giving Tuesday (Nov. 30) to encourage community involvement.

Community members are invited to tune into the health system’s Facebook page on Giving Tuesday to see behind-the-scenes videos, enter drawings for raffles, prizes and more! There will also be several hour-long “Power Hours” where local businesses or organizations will match donations.

To learn more about how to support the campaign, contact the CalvertHealth philanthropy team at 410.414.4570 or via email to foundation@calverthealthmed.org.

“One of the largest healthcare issues we have in this county is obesity,” he said, “which in turn causes hypertension, cardiac disease, pulmonary disease, peripheral vascular disease, diabetes and the list goes on and on.”

According to the 2020 Community Health Needs Assessment, obesity was listed as one of the top health concerns for Calvert County residents. The survey showed the percent of local adults who are obese *is higher than state and national percentages* and is rising.

Teague said, “the new dedicated metabolic and bariatric surgery program is part of CalvertHealth’s steadfast commitment to reduce the community’s obesity rate and strengthen the health of this community. We are pleased to be able to offer exceptional surgical care close to home for those needing weight-loss management.”

DONATE TODAY!

Your gift will make a difference for an entire community.





CalvertHealth®

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RESIDENTIAL CUSTOMER

Stroke is an Emergency:

ACT

F

A

S

T

FACE DROOPING

Does one side of the face droop or is it numb? Ask the person to smile. Is the person's smile uneven?

ARM

WEAKNESS

Is one arm weak or numb? Ask the person to raise both arms. Does one arm drift downward?

SPEECH

Is speech slurred? Is the person unable to speak or hard to understand? Ask the person to repeat a simple sentence, like "The sky is blue."

TIME TO CALL

9-1-1

If the person shows any of these symptoms, even if the symptoms go away, call 9-1-1 and get them to the hospital immediately.

Acting Quickly May be the
Difference between Recovery and Disability

EVERY MINUTE COUNTS!