

WINTER 2023



CalvertHealth

2012-2022: A Decade Defined by Quality, Service and Community

Leadership

CEO Leaves Enduring Legacy as He Bids Farewell

A Message from the President

In This Issue



The Next Chapter

An excerpt from one of my favorite quotes is, *“The greatest success anyone can have in their life is their ability to inspire and motivate someone to become the very best version of themselves.”* I hope that I have served as an inspiration to those around me, just as I know I have been inspired by so many here in the hospital and in our community.

As I prepare to start a new chapter in my life, I continue to be in awe of what an incredible organization CalvertHealth is. Day in and day out, this team has gone above and beyond to deliver exceptional care and service to our patients and their families. Every single member of our workforce plays a critical role within the organization and together, we have worked to ensure the health and safety of our community.

I am privileged to have had the opportunity to lead this organization through many of its most significant achievements, and I want to help usher in the next chapter for CalvertHealth by being among the first to welcome incoming President and CEO Jeremy Bradford. I know Jeremy will be successful in his new role because he will be surrounded by a team of talented and caring individuals working around-the-clock for the betterment of Southern Maryland.

Thank you, CalvertHealth, for all you have given me over the past 10 years. As we say in the Navy, fair winds and following seas.

Dean Teague, FACHE
President & CEO

Editor-In-Chief

Theresa Johnson

Managing Editor

Amy Lutz

Contributing Writers

Rebecca Burgess
Sarah Fallin
Judy Lundmark

Layout & Art Direction

Sue Dippel

Medical Editorial Director

Dr. Theodore Tsangaris

Medical Contributors

Renee Bright, MD
Kristina Comstock, EP-C
Amber Hamilton, RD, LDN
Dolores Rhodes-Height, MD

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A Look Back

At a Decade Defined by Quality, Service and Community

“Esprit de corps” is a fancy French term for plain old-fashioned teamwork. It is a feeling of pride, loyalty and family that permeates the culture at CalvertHealth Medical Center. In the words of former board chair Henry Trentman, it is the special sauce that makes the community hospital, well – special.

“I see it every day when I walk around the hospital and read the wonderful letters we get from families,” said CalvertHealth President and CEO **Dean Teague**, who announced last year he would be stepping down at the end of February.

“The power of teamwork was never more evident than during the COVID pandemic,” said Teague. “It has taken a team approach to overcome the hurdles that were placed in front of us. Without fail, everyone asked to do a new job, skill or work schedule said: ‘What can I do to help?... Where do you need me?... Tell me what I can do.’ ”



The team at CalvertHealth came together in extraordinary ways to prepare for – and respond to – the pandemic. They were on the front lines, ready to give their all to combat this deadly virus.

He readily admits it was the toughest challenge the health system faced during his 10-year tenure. Early on, there was a lot of uncertainty surrounding what to expect with this new virus but there was absolute clarity on the organization’s focus – to provide the best care for our community and to keep our employees safe.

Without a doubt, Teague said, it was the spirit of solidarity that sustained his determination to meet this challenge head-on. “I was sitting in my office, when I thought to myself: ‘Wait a minute, you are not in this alone. You have a great executive team. You have awesome providers and awesome nurses and techs... We will figure this out and we did.’ ”

Camaraderie Cultivates Collaboration

“So much has been accomplished in the last decade with the private rooms for patients, the new cancer affiliation with Duke Health and the expansion of mental health services but I am most proud that we have built a united medical staff and hospital administration,” said **Dr. Wilfred Ehrmantraut, Jr.**, who served as chief of the medical staff for the past six years.

“Because of the close relationship, we have been able to implement programs that are important for our community,” said Dr. Ehrmantraut. “But I think it all stems from being able to communicate positively with one another.”

He went on to add, “Everybody works together from nursing to environmental services to food and nutrition ... there isn’t a minute that goes by that someone doesn’t stop and talk to each other that an idea doesn’t come out that makes it stronger for our care of the community.”

Trentman points to “team building” as Teague’s most valuable quality as president and CEO. “Dean has been very successful at attracting, retaining and motivating the people who take the strategic decisions that are made and really make them work for Calvert County.

“Having people wanting to come to work is what makes everything tick in the end,” said Trentman, who served on

“We must always provide our patients with the same level of care we would want for our own family.”

- Dean Teague, President and CEO

the board from 2008-2018. “From day one, when he came in and decided to learn everyone’s name is indicative that he puts a very high premium on human talent and the nurturing of it.”

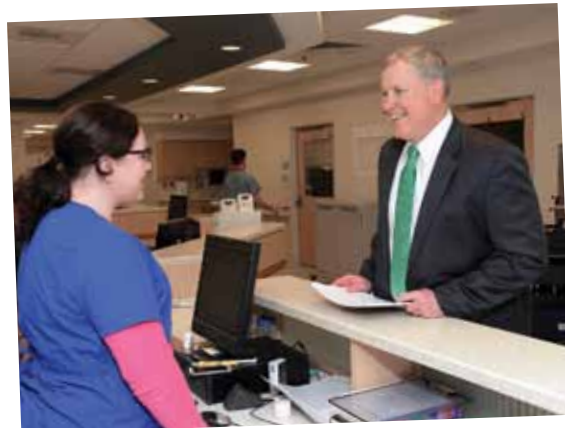
Chief Medical Officer **Dr. Theodore Tsangaris** concurs. “He has been an exceptional leader. I think it’s his connection to people. He’s transparent... he genuinely cares about them. I think it’s remarkable that he knows the name of almost everybody who works here.

“He gets out there... he’s visible and approachable and yet there is a serious side to him that reflects his military background. Let’s get the mission done and taken care of with quality and safety in mind. Care for people like family. He lives by that.”

A Laser Focus on Quality

“The safe, quality care provided by our organization is the foundation upon which all our values are based,” said Teague. This was put to the test with the advent of COVID-19. The CalvertHealth team responded with resilience and resolve, never losing sight of our mission: to ensure the safety and well-being of our community.

“Quality is always a top priority,” said Dr. Tsangaris. “I cannot think of any time I’ve seen Dean speak – whether it’s for an interview for a new



(Above) It’s not unusual to see Teague out and about at the hospital. At least once a day, he makes his rounds. “When you walk around, you learn a lot,” he said, shown here talking to an ER nurse in the Fast Track area.



The \$51-million private room expansion and renovation, completed in 2020, ushered in a new era of patient safety, comfort and privacy at CalvertHealth Medical Center.

provider, discussion in our executive team or planning a new program, when he doesn’t mention quality. One of the recruitment points he likes to make is that we are consistently a top performer within the state for many quality-based programs and metrics.

“He truly believes if you do what is right for the patient as reflected in quality and safety then you are doing what is right for this organization,” said Dr. Tsangaris.

Growing to Meet Community Needs

Even as we continue to navigate the unprecedented challenges caused by the pandemic, CalvertHealth continues to face forward and plan for the future

– from partnering with Sheppard Pratt Health to provide expanded behavioral health services to creating a bariatric surgery program that takes direct aim at the widespread obesity in our county and its toll in driving up the rates of heart disease, stroke and diabetes locally.

Long before COVID, CHMC took significant steps to address the community’s growing mental health needs – investing \$6.6 million to substantially renovate the behavioral health unit (*creating separate, secure spaces for youth and adults*).

The addition of Sheppard Pratt Health, a noted leader in providing mental health services, means more behavioral health needs can be managed locally while ensuring access

BIGGEST ACCOMPLISHMENTS 2012-2022 >



Implemented Smart IV Pumps throughout facility to enhance patient safety
2013



Spearheaded collaborative effort to reduce opioid addiction in community
2015



Launched Mobile Health Center to remove barriers to access in underserved areas
2016

2012

Introduced Transition to Home to help high-risk patients prevent readmission



2014

Invested \$11.9 million to keep CalvertHealth at forefront of diagnostic imaging





CalvertHealth invested \$11.9 million to keep the medical center at the forefront of diagnostic imaging for treating heart disease, neurovascular disorders, cancers and other conditions.

to specialized services in our community.

“Simply put, being your community hospital means we look out for you – from constantly improving our quality and safety to investing in programs and services that are important to those we serve,” said Teague.

In 2016, CalvertHealth announced converting to all private patient rooms by 2020. The massive project, which took four years to complete, included 43,575 square feet of new construction and 32,910 square feet of renovated space. “Every step we take, every decision we make is with the



RECOGNITION for QUALITY & SAFETY

2022 – Received the American Heart Association’s highest honor for outstanding stroke care, the *Gold Plus Achievement Award*, for 11 years in a row.

2021 – Earned a 4-star overall quality rating from the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid, placing CalvertHealth Medical Center among the top 12 hospitals in the state.

2020-21 – Ranked by *U.S. News* as high performing hospital for heart failure and COPD (chronic obstructive pulmonary disease).

2020 – Received once again a *Gold Seal of Approval™*, signifying “full accreditation” from The Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations

2020 – Achieved the highest performance among all Maryland hospitals for *clinical care, patient safety and patient perception* based on 2019 data released by the Hospital Services Cost Review Commission.

2019 – Attained accreditation with commendation from the *American College of Surgeons’ Commission on Cancer* placing us among the top community cancer programs in the country.

2018 – Won *Circle of Honor Award* by the Maryland Patient Safety Center for our Opioid Stewardship Task Force.

2017 – Garnered *Health Quality Innovator Award* for our collaborative approach to reduce opioid addiction and prevent opioid-related deaths in our community.

2017 – Recognized as a *leader in airway safety initiatives* by American Association of Respiratory Care.

“Quality of care and patient safety are paramount to our commitment to the community.”

*– Dr. Wilfred Ehrmantraut, Jr.,
Former Chief of the Medical Staff*

Started construction of \$51-million project to convert to private patient rooms

2017



Responded with courage to care for community during COVID pandemic

2020



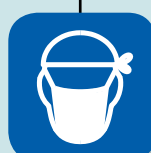
Affiliated with Duke Health to increase local access to advanced cancer care

2022



2019

Expanded behavioral health unit to meet growing community needs



2021

Created bariatric surgery program to target widespread obesity in county





The recent affiliation with Duke Health offers local patients access to cancer research, treatment advances and clinical trials only available at the best cancer hospitals in the country.

community in mind,” said Teague. “Private rooms offer numerous benefits from more privacy and better sleep to less risk of infection and improved outcomes.”

With the private room project nearing completion, CHMC moved forward with plans to expand its surgical services – investing \$2.5 million in sophisticated technology and recruiting additional specialists to provide more advanced surgical options – including a new bariatrics program – close to home.

Ensuring Access to Care

“Providing our community with the best health care is often based on access,” said Teague. “We’re working hard to ensure our community has access to the right care, at the right time, in the right place.” A large part of that is CalvertHealth’s employed provider network, which now has more than 30 board-certified primary care and specialty physicians, nurse practitioners and physician assistants.

It was the impetus for opening urgent care centers in Dunkirk, Prince Frederick and Solomons – to make it easier for residents to access these services. It was the motivation behind launching the mobile health center to remove barriers to access in underserved areas. And it was the driving force behind building a cutting-edge cancer program so far fewer patients will have to leave the region for outstanding care.

Caring People are the Heart

“It is the caring that defines the fundamental core of CHMC,” said **Marilyn Montgomery, RN**, who has 49 years of service. “It is the people who work here, who deliver the care every day ... their passion for what they do. That is what makes this a special place.” She oversees ordering all the supplies and equipment for surgical services.

It is people like **William Stepney** from environmental services who comes to work every day excited to make a difference in every life he touches. “It’s a good feeling to help people out. It’s the best feeling in the world.” On average, he thoroughly cleans and disinfects the operating rooms 20-plus times per day. “When a patient is brought to the OR, I wave at them and smile.”

Teague summed it up this way, “Not only are our employees loyal, they are extremely friendly.” The 2022 Employee Engagement Survey supports his assessment – 93 percent of respondents said they like the work they do and enjoy working with their co-workers. Teamwork among the work unit was the highest performing item when compared to the national average.

He concedes it will be hard to say goodbye. “I will miss coming in and saying hello to everybody in the morning.” For his part, he said, “I’d like to be remembered as a guy who cared.”

THE NEXT CHAPTER: BOARD NAMES BRADFORD NEW CEO



After a nationwide search, the CalvertHealth Board of Directors has unanimously selected **Jeremy Bradford** to become the next president and CEO of the health system. He comes to us from Good Samaritan Hospital in Illinois, a 134-bed regional referral center, where he was president. Bradford has more than 20 years of healthcare executive leadership experience.

He said, “It is an honor and privilege to be selected as CalvertHealth’s next president and CEO. I am grateful for the opportunity to serve the residents of Calvert County and recognize the importance of high-quality health care in a rural setting.”

Bradford went on to add, “My wife and I fell in love with the area when we came to visit, and we are looking forward to settling in and discovering all that Calvert has to offer.” He and his wife, Ginny, have two school-age children. He steps into his new role on March 1.

CalvertHealth Board Chair **Rev. David Showers**, who led the search effort, said, “We were able to attract an outstanding group of candidates due to CalvertHealth’s reputation. In addition to our state-of-the-art facilities, our physicians, staff, volunteers and the desirability of our community were also key in making this opportunity attractive.”

For more information about the events listed here, please contact the CalvertHealth Community Wellness Office at 410.535.8233 or visit CalvertHealthMedicine.org/Classes.

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.*

HEALTH & WELLNESS

Fitness Offerings

CalvertHealth offers a variety of fitness classes such as Rock Steady Boxing for Parkinson's, Gentle Yoga, Tia Chi and Early Riser Fit for Life and Fit for Life. *Go online to learn more and register.*

Dare to Care: Heart Healthy Maryland

Join us on February 4 for the most



important thing you will do this February. This FREE vascular screening is open to those 60+ or 50+ with health risks. *Call 410.535.8233 for more information.*

Medical Nutrition Therapy

Specialized one-on-one appointment for those in need of a personalized strategy for focusing on a healthier lifestyle by addressing barriers to healthy eating and much more. A physician referral is required.

HEALTHWISE

Cancer Screening Programs

Funding is available for colorectal, breast, cervical and lung screening and diagnostic testing for eligible residents. *Call Calvert County Health Department at 410-535-5400 x 343 to determine eligibility. Funded by the Maryland Cigarette Restitution Fund, Maryland Department of Health and CDC.*

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*).

Gestational Diabetes

A FREE virtual class for pregnant women that have been diagnosed with gestational diabetes and/or previously diagnosed and want to get pregnant again. *Register online.*

SUPPORT GROUPS/WELLNESS WORKSHOPS

Wellness Workshops and Support Groups are available for Breast Cancer, Breastfeeding, Cancer, Diabetes, Metabolic & Bariatric Weight Loss, Parkinson's and Stroke. *Register online.*

YOUR HEALTH IS Our Mission

CALENDAR 2023 COMMUNITY EVENTS

Please save these event dates for 2023:



Women's EXPO: May 9
(rain date May 16)

Men's EXPO: June 6
(rain date June 13)



Buy Local Challenge: July 24 - 31



Back to School Event: August 15



Support Small Business: Sept. 5
(rain date Sept. 12)



Diabetes EXPO: Oct. 24
(rain date Nov. 7)

National Doctors' Day

DOCTORS' DAY: March 30

In celebration of National Doctors' Day, we invite you to honor local doctors.



Let your doctor know what a difference he or she has made in your life. With your donation of \$5 or more, your doctor will receive a red carnation along with a personal note letting them know YOU are making a difference, in their honor, with your gift to the CalvertHealth Foundation. Your gift of thanks will be delivered March 30 to your chosen provider.

All gifts are tax deductible. You can make your Doctors' Day gift online at CalvertHealthFoundation.org/DoctorsDay or by calling 410.414.4570.

SAVE THE DATE Monday, MAY 15



UNSUNG HEROES

Teams work behind the scenes to ensure positive patient experience.

When you're a patient at the hospital or visiting a loved one, you likely have face-to-face contact with doctors, nurses and other medical professionals. But the clearly visible work performed at CalvertHealth is just the tip of the iceberg. Entire teams work to ensure daily operations at the hospital run smoothly and patients have a safe experience. Take a peek into the day-to-day lives of some of the hospital's unsung heroes – the people working diligently behind the scenes.

Infection Control Starts with Central Sterile Processing

Becki Jenkins, central sterile processing supervisor, manages a small but mighty team who are responsible for every instrument in the building that has to be used on a patient, ensuring supplies are sterilized. Central Sterile Processing is also involved in infection control processes, water quality processes and use instructions for equipment.

"Patients will never know your name and will never know what you did to make sure they had a safe experience," Jenkins said. "They appreciate you, but they don't know it's you they appreciate."

Infection control begins and ends with sterile processing. If an instrument is contaminated, everything is contaminated. It's a lot of responsibility to provide sterilized instruments across the entire hospital from the operating room to the emergency room one hundred percent of the time. In fact, the national average for central sterile errors is five percent. CalvertHealth's average is 0.01 percent – 98 to 99 percent lower than most other healthcare facilities in the country!

Sterilization isn't just pressing a button – there are five processes before equipment gets to the washers and four or five chemicals involved. Each piece of equipment has a different protocol. It takes five hours to sterilize a set of surgical instruments.

Jenkins said she is especially proud of her team during the height of COVID-19. Because of COVID, additional procedures had to be developed and additional chemicals used. During the shortages for masks and other protective equipment, the team had to process single-use masks. "Our little community hospital came up with a plan and did testing to make sure it was safe for our patients and our workforce. Our protocols ended up being utilized in other hospitals as far as New York City."



The Central Sterile Processing team oversees the meticulous processes to ensure every instrument in the entire facility is thoroughly sterilized.

Keeping the Lights On

A team of 13 individuals provide 24/7 service to maintain the physical environment of the hospital. If something needs fixed, this is the team that gets it done! The Plant Operations Department is responsible for all electrical services, HVAC, plumbing, power plant operation, fire and life safety and general maintenance of buildings and grounds. They make sure the lights are on, the water is running, the heat or air conditioning is functioning and the facilities at Calvert Health are maintained.

"We are the behind-the-scenes people who make sure the environment you stay in is like a four-star hotel," said **Stuart Simmons**, plant operations supervisor. It's crucial to ensure there's someone available to respond to every incident at all hours of the day or night.

Simmons' team must coordinate with other teams to ensure their work doesn't interfere with patient care. During the height of COVID-19, the medical staff and the plant operations staff worked to minimize the time Plant Operations' teams spent in rooms of COVID-positive patients when there were issues that needed attention in their rooms.

COVID also impacted how the team handles preventative maintenance of the heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) systems for the hospital. The team wears protective gloves and masks

when working on rooftop exhaust fans, for example.

“I feel very fortunate I can help the community this way,” Simmons said. The plant operations team prides itself on having a family-like atmosphere, where every one pitches in as needed and has each other’s backs.

Treating You Like Family

When a Patient Care Technician like **Brittney Johnson** enters a patient’s room for a routine vitals check, there’s a lot more happening in Johnson’s mind than patients know about. During that routine check, Johnson checks respiration and conducts a head-to-toe assessment to determine if there’s any changes which she needs to let the nurse know about.

“I do this because I love taking care of people,” Johnson said. “It’s not just a job to me, it’s my career; it’s my passion.”

Johnson helps patients with daily activities like bathing, taking them to the bathroom, taking vitals, checking blood sugars, taking them for tests, performing CPR when needed and is at the bedside to help nurses and doctors perform bedside procedures. A major distinction between a Patient Care Technician and a nurse is that Patient Care Technicians do not administer medication.

COVID-19 required Johnson to re-learn how to do her job since protocols were rapidly changing. She says she spent more time during COVID with patients – conversing with them and being present – to let them know they were loved and cared for while in the hospital. Johnson recalls a patient who hated being alone, so she would go in once an hour and watch TV and hold her hand. “I knew I had to make time to do that because if it was my family member in the hospital, I would hope and pray that someone would sit with them,” Johnson said. “I treat my patients as if they were my own family members.”



A Vital Link to Quality Outcomes

Sometimes referred to as housekeeping or janitorial services, environmental services (EVS) is a term used exclusively in healthcare to describe the process highly trained support service staff conduct to clean and disinfect medical equipment, patient rooms and other common areas within the hospital setting.

EVS technicians ensure a safe environment for everyone in the facility. They work closely with clinical staff and frequently interact with patients.

“We give it 100 percent every day. We do the work and make sure it’s done right,” said **William Stepney** who has been with the EVS team at CalvertHealth for almost 10 years. He added, “We take a lot of pride in keeping our hospital nice and clean for our patients and their families.” Primarily assigned to the OR, Stepney is one of the technicians trained to use the Surfacide UV disinfection system which uses three towers and laser mapping technology to ensure all surfaces have been effectively cleaned and sterilized. CalvertHealth has been utilizing the technology for more than eight years.

A detailed EVS training process, such as the one implemented at CalvertHealth, ensures the EVS staff knows the importance of their role and the established safety standards and regulations that should



William Stepney (top left) and other members of the Environmental Services team (top) are highly trained to clean and disinfect equipment, patient rooms and other common areas. Patient Care Technician Brittney Johnson (above) treats her patients like family. The Plant Operations team (below) plays an important role in patient care by making sure CalvertHealth facilities are well maintained.

be followed - whether it’s using cleaning products or handling body fluids/preventing infection transmission. And according to Stepney, the team at CalvertHealth is the best at what they do.

“I’ll brag just a little. I think we are the best in our area. Not only do we keep everything clean, we are courteous to patients and try to assist everyone we come in contact with. It’s a good feeling to help people,” said Stepney.



YEARLONG CHALLENGE: 1,000 Hours Outside

Spending more time outdoors is healthy for all ages

A new kind of New Year's resolution is gaining traction in recent years: to spend 1,000 hours outside in one year.

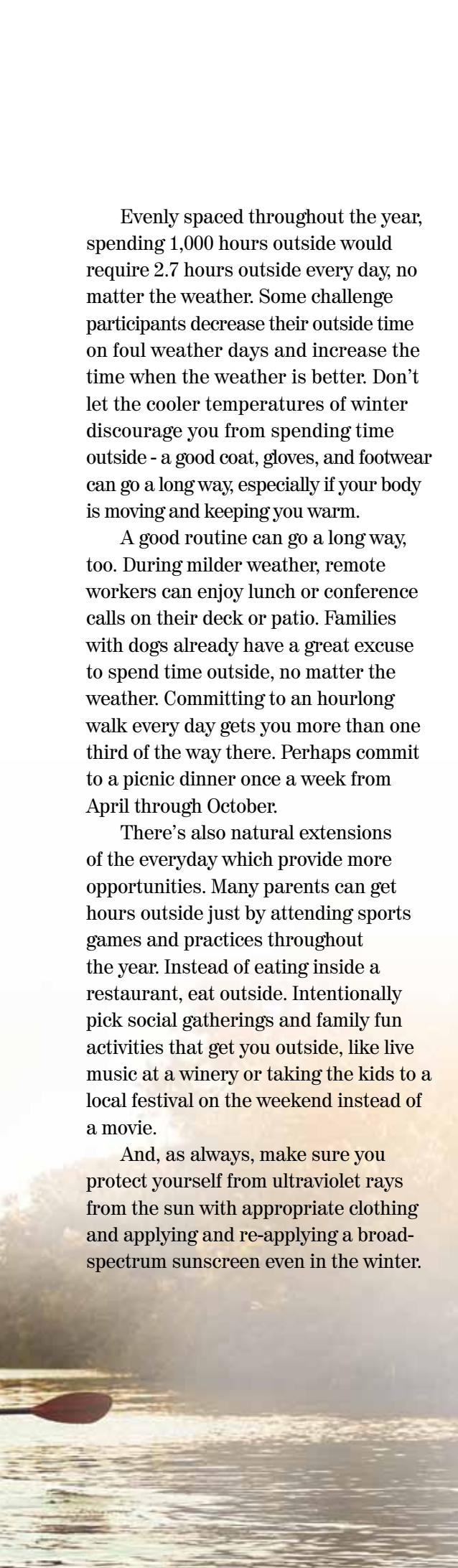
The challenge to spend 1,000 hours outside in a year was originally aimed at giving parents a solid goal to spend time with their children outside and to minimize screen time. But, spending more time outside can benefit kids and adults alike.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), spending time outdoors can improve overall health and wellness by promoting mental health and stress improvement and by providing opportunities for physical activity. Having little to no sun exposure may put a person at risk for low levels of vitamin D.

Studies have also shown that time in nature is relaxing, which reduces stress, cortisol levels, muscle tension, and heart rates.

Whether your goal is to improve your mental health, physical health, or to reduce your screen time, taking the 1,000 Hours Challenge can be a great way to facilitate meeting your health goals in a new way this year.





Evenly spaced throughout the year, spending 1,000 hours outside would require 2.7 hours outside every day, no matter the weather. Some challenge participants decrease their outside time on foul weather days and increase the time when the weather is better. Don't let the cooler temperatures of winter discourage you from spending time outside - a good coat, gloves, and footwear can go a long way, especially if your body is moving and keeping you warm.

A good routine can go a long way, too. During milder weather, remote workers can enjoy lunch or conference calls on their deck or patio. Families with dogs already have a great excuse to spend time outside, no matter the weather. Committing to an hourlong walk every day gets you more than one third of the way there. Perhaps commit to a picnic dinner once a week from April through October.

There's also natural extensions of the everyday which provide more opportunities. Many parents can get hours outside just by attending sports games and practices throughout the year. Instead of eating inside a restaurant, eat outside. Intentionally pick social gatherings and family fun activities that get you outside, like live music at a winery or taking the kids to a local festival on the weekend instead of a movie.

And, as always, make sure you protect yourself from ultraviolet rays from the sun with appropriate clothing and applying and re-applying a broad-spectrum sunscreen even in the winter.

25 WAYS To Get Outside In the Winter and Beyond



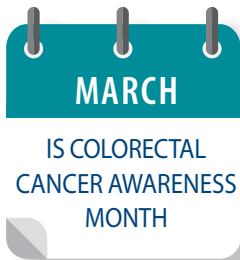
- 1 Take a winter hike at Calvert Cliffs State Park in Lusby or at American Chestnut Land Trust in Port Republic
- 2 Bundle up on a sunny winter day for walk with a travel mug of hot tea
- 3 Go sledding
- 4 Borrow a birdwatching guide from the library and go outside to discover what feathered friends you find
- 5 Visit a local park, which are still open in the winter - bring your own children to the playground or offer to help out a parent for an hour or two
- 6 Enjoy walking the trails or playing in the Fairy Lolly at Annmarie Gardens in Solomons
- 7 Attend one of many outdoor local events throughout the year, like the Calvert County Fair, various farmers markets, or enjoy the fireworks on the 4th of July
- 8 Be a fantastic cheerleader at the soccer game of a niece or nephew, or at a high school football, soccer, or baseball game
- 9 Spend a day splashing at Cove Point Pool, Kings Landing Pool, or Chesapeake Beach Water Park
- 10 Dine outdoors at one of the many locally owned restaurants
- 11 Pick a local landmark to visit in all four seasons and document it with a photo
- 12 Rent a kayak or canoe
- 13 Go fishing at a local pier or with a charter boat *(or a friend's boat if you're lucky!)*
- 14 Organize a backyard game of kickball
- 15 Mix up your neighborhood walks by offering to walk a friend's dog, inviting a neighbor along, or listening to an audiobook or podcast while you walk
- 16 Use technology to explore local plant life while you explore outdoors. Some smartphones have a built-in capability to identify plants. *There are several plant identification apps available as well.*
- 17 Join in on the fun with your children and purchase a bike or scooter for yourself to use for some outdoor fun that reminds you of childhood
- 18 Spend some time at a winery with an outdoor space
- 19 Take your lunch break or conference call outside
- 20 Pack a snack plate *(or pick up a pizza)* for dinner and head to a local beach or park for a picnic
- 21 Have a backyard campout
- 22 Walk around one of Southern Maryland's small towns - North Beach, Chesapeake Beach, Solomons or Leonardtown *(follow local events in the area)*
- 23 Hunt for fossils, shark teeth or sea glass at a local beach
- 24 Host an outdoor gathering
- 25 Start a garden

Join the CalvertHealth 1000 Hours CHALLENGE!

Scan the QR Code and sign up today.



Why Some People Avoid Colonoscopies – and **WHY** They **SHOULD NOT**



“The fact is, getting screened for colorectal cancer can save your life,” said board-certified gastroenterologist Dr. Renee Bright. “A colonoscopy allows your doctor to find polyps so they can be removed before they turn into cancer.”

The fear and myths associated with colonoscopies tend to shy people away from getting the very screening that could save their life. Colorectal cancer is the third most common cancer in both men and women. More than half of those cases could be prevented with proper screening.

Statistics tell us about three in 10 of eligible adults avoid or delay getting a colonoscopy for one reason or another. Recently, we sat down with board-certified gastroenterologists **Dr. Renee Bright** and **Dr. Dolores Rhodes-Height** of Calvert Digestive Diseases Associates to set the record straight about screening for colorectal cancer.

Q *How common is colorectal cancer?*

It is very common. Colorectal cancer is the third leading cause of cancer death in the U.S. More importantly, it is a cancer that is highly treatable if detected early and largely preventable, if you get screened regularly. Every year, there are about 150,000 new cases. Unfortunately, about a third of them will die because they often present late when the cancer is more advanced.

Q *Who is at risk for colorectal cancer?*

The reality is everyone is at risk regardless of ethnicity or gender. Everyone needs to get screened starting at age 45. Those with a personal or family history of polyps, colorectal cancer or inflammatory bowel disease need to be screened earlier. Do not wait until you have symptoms because many people do not have any. The goal with screening is to catch it before symptoms appear.

Q *Why is it important to know your family history?*

Family history is important because it determines how soon and how often you test for colorectal cancer. If you have a first-degree relative (mom, dad, brother or sister) that had colorectal cancer or polyps it puts you at a higher risk. So, you would start screening at age 40 and then every five years. Try to get a family history as best you can. It is especially helpful to find out whether they had any polyps or malignancies and at what age.

Q *How can I lower my risk?*

Well certainly, tobacco increases your risk of all malignancies, particularly pancreatic, colon and lung. Fiber is your friend – it’s great for the colon and it’s great for the heart. If you are

Board-certified gastroenterologists Dr. Renee Bright (far left) and Dr. Dolores Rhodes-Height are shown at the Calvert Digestive Diseases Associates Endoscopy and Surgery Center in Prince Frederick. The main focus of CDDA is screening and prevention of colorectal cancer.



? DID YOU KNOW?

Calvert County has a higher rate of colorectal cancer than both the statewide and national average, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Eating a diet high in fat and red meat certainly increases your risk. Obesity and sedentary lifestyle, too. Studies suggest increasing your physical activity and keeping a healthy weight can help reduce your risk of colorectal cancer.

Q Why is screening important?

This is a cancer where screening really matters – we can find and remove polyps before they turn cancerous in the first place. I tell people you cannot feel a polyp. Waiting until you have symptoms is not ideal. You can have a growth and it will not be obvious until it is very large or bleeds and by then it is probably malignant.

Q Which tests are used to screen for colorectal cancer?

A colonoscopy is the gold standard for a reason. It is the only test that allows your doctor to find and remove polyps during the same exam – before they grow into cancer. A “virtual” colonoscopy is a non-invasive option that uses computed tomography or CT scans to provide an in-depth view of the colon. However, it requires the same prep as a colonoscopy. And if polyps are found that need to be removed, a traditional colonoscopy is still required.

The same holds true for stool-based tests. There are some who prefer these alternative screening options because they are less invasive, but positive results often require a follow-up colonoscopy. Examples include FIT (fecal immunochemical test) that checks for hidden blood in the stool and FIT DNA (Cologuard®), which is intended for those who are at average risk and requires a prescription.

Q What is the purpose of the prep?

We know this is a big issue for some people and we have modified the prep to make it more tolerable. A lot depends on the individual’s bowel habits. We try to match the right prep for the right patient. What is important to understand is that your doctor needs a clear view of your colon during the procedure in order to find and remove polyps.

Q What are some common misconceptions about having a colonoscopy?

Some people think because they have no family history they are not at risk. About 85 percent of those who are diagnosed with colorectal cancer have no family history. Or they think screening is only for those with symptoms. The truth is most people do not have any. Some are fearful about the procedure itself because they heard it was uncomfortable. It is actually very short and you are sedated. Most people do not remember anything. Cost should not be an issue. Medicare and most insurance plans cover screening and there are grant programs for those without insurance.

MEET THE SPECIALISTS

Board-certified gastroenterologists **Dr. Renee Bright** and **Dr. Dolores Rhodes-Height** have practiced together since 2011. Together, they bring 38 years of medical experience to the Calvert Digestive Diseases Associates team. Annually, they conduct an estimated 2,500-3,000 GI procedures at the ambulatory center they opened in 2018.

Don't Sweat the Prep

Here are some tips for making the process more bearable:



- ✓ Adjusting your diet days before your colonoscopy by eating less and choosing low-fiber foods can make the prep go smoother and easier.
- ✓ Refrigerate the prep at least 24 hours ahead of time. A cold prep goes down much easier. Using a straw can help with the taste.
- ✓ On the day before your colonoscopy, you will have to stick to a liquid diet.
- ✓ What you choose to eat and drink can make or break your prep experience. Pick up some low-sodium broth, gelatin / frozen pops (no red, orange or purple), apple or white grape juice, flavored sparkling water, 7-UP® or Sprite®. Black coffee and tea (hot and iced) are okay.
- ✓ Keep yourself hydrated. Electrolyte drinks like Gatorade® may help (no red, orange or purple).
- ✓ Stretchy pants will be a lifesaver once the laxative begins working – you won't have time to mess with buttons!
- ✓ Stock up on soft toilet paper. And blot, rather than wiping too hard to reduce irritation.
- ✓ Use skin-soothing products such as baby wipes or baby rash ointment. Medicated pads and lidocaine cream can also help reduce discomfort.
- ✓ Whether you plan to be on your phone, laptop or tablet, find your chargers before your laxative kicks in.
- ✓ Read the prep directions well in advance and be sure to coordinate the prep with instructions from your doctor's office.

Everyday Strategies for Overcoming Common Weight Loss Barriers

Are you determined to keep your New Year’s resolution to lose weight? You are not alone. It is right up there with getting organized and saving more. What is getting in the way? There is no perfect time to lose weight. Decide the right time to be healthier is now.

Recently, we sat down with registered dietitian **Amber Hamilton, RD, LDN** and certified exercise physiologist **Kristina Comstock, EP-C** of CoreLife in Prince Frederick (*see box at right*) to get some practical tips for overcoming common barriers to losing weight.

Staying on Track

“Most people have a problem with consistency ... with staying on track with the right foods and making those healthy changes... and motivation. Those are the biggest challenges,” said Hamilton.

She suggests a good first step is to *take stock*. “Take the time to look at what you are truly eating. How many times are you eating out? Are you eating enough throughout the day. Sometimes, undereating will cause you to stick in the same place.”

Hamilton advises *making small changes* that are more attainable and set you up for success. “Like giving up those fancy coffee drinks or sodas that add to your caloric intake but do not really add any nutritional value. Or cutting out added sugar. A lot of times that will help with reducing inflammation caused by arthritis.”

Making the Time

“There are two things I hear from every single person – that time is an issue and their lack of knowledge is a barrier,” said Comstock. Her goal is to teach them how to make the time. “If I tell someone to do 80 squats, it feels out of reach. But if they break it up and do 10 squats per hour while at work, it seems more doable.

“It is about getting in more movement each day... building it into your already busy schedule,” she added. “Once you get into the habit, even if you feel you don’t have the time, you will find yourself making the time.”

Comstock tells her patients to *put it on the calendar*. “Literally, make it an

WEIGHT LOSS



BE KIND TO YOURSELF



BE REALISTIC



DO WHAT YOU ENJOY



SET A START DATE



MAKE SMALL CHANGES



PUT IT ON THE CALENDAR



TAKE STOCK



KNOW YOUR WHY



SET SPECIFIC GOALS



MAKE THE TIME

Impacting Lives. Every Day.

THE POWER OF COMMUNITY

CalvertHealth has continued to innovate while addressing growing and diverse healthcare needs. This would not be possible without the philanthropic spirit and advocacy of the community.



The CalvertHealth Foundation hosted two of its most successful events in 2022. The 33rd Annual Benefit Golf Classic engaged more than 150 individuals and raised \$107,000 in support of urologic services. The Breast Cancer 5K to benefit the Sheldon E. Goldberg Center for Breast Care raised nearly \$61,000 and had more than 700 participants!

Access to local health care has never been more important than it is today. The dedication of CalvertHealth's care team, physicians, community board members, Foundation supporters, health system leaders and more than 1,500 employees and volunteers have enabled us to remain independent and flexible in the midst of today's challenges.

We take pride in our commitment to responding to the healthcare needs of our community with services and resources that enable our patients to receive expert care close to home. We are committed to ensuring that we are here for you when you need us – just as we have been for more than a century.

We are honored to share with you how your 2022 support of the Foundation impacted CalvertHealth this past year. Throughout the ongoing pandemic, we have faced many challenges. We are so incredibly grateful to the following 2022 supporters for coming together to support our local community hospital.

The Foundation gratefully acknowledges the following individuals and organizations for their gifts in 2022. If there are any errors or omissions, please accept our apologies and contact the Foundation Office at foundation@calverthealthmed.org or by calling 410.414.4570.

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The CalvertHealth Foundation Scholarship Committee recently awarded the largest scholarship total in its history – providing \$170,231 to 35 award recipients. Since the scholarship program began in 1991, it has awarded more than 545 scholarships totaling \$925,000 in student assistance. The 2023-2024 scholarship application opened Jan. 1 with applications being due by Apr. 30, 2023. Visit the CalvertHealth Foundation website to learn more.

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