



Fairfield Medical Center

# THE MONITOR

The  
**Climb**  
to Beat Cancer p. 8

**WATCHMAN**  
Guarding  
Against Stroke p. 4

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JULY 2025





# LETTER FROM THE **PRESIDENT & CEO**

Fairfield Medical Center has provided care for our community with a progressive yet servant-focused mindset since we first opened our doors in 1916. At FMC, we strive for continuous growth because we know if we are not progressing, we cannot provide the best care. Our intent for the next several years is to see our health system flourish to better serve our community in ways not yet conceived. As we march on toward our goal of expanding services and enhancing collaboration in the healthcare landscape, we recognize that to succeed, we must prioritize a culture of collaboration and teamwork. This guiding philosophy – that we can “go further” and achieve more when we work together – serves as the foundation of our strategic vision.

President Theodore Roosevelt once famously said, “Nothing worth having was ever achieved without effort,” and might I add agility in there as well. Every step we take is an investment in our community and advancement in care which brings us closer to achieving our strategic mission. Any bumps we encounter in the process only make us stronger as a result. In the spirit of leading positive changes and lifting others up, we must celebrate how far we have come.

FMC’s culture is something of which I am particularly proud. What makes our culture stand out is that it is relational, much like the special communities we serve. It relies on every single person’s unique ability to personally connect with patients; we form lifelong connections with patients who may coincidentally be friends, family or new acquaintances. The interactions between our staff and patients are far from transactional. Patients will never forget the care they received when they are at their most vulnerable and the way our people made them feel. Our amazing caregivers remember you and the trust that you placed in us to care for you. FMC is grateful to hold the distinct privilege of turning a dark situation into light and hope, and that is why our culture will always stick, no matter what change brings. Our common purpose is clear: We are here to make a difference for everyone by creating exceptional care and experiences from the heart, always.

Over FMC’s nearly 110-year history, much transformation has occurred. With each mile in our journey there have been moments that have required bold disruption to the status quo. This has allowed us to grow with purpose and with benefit to those we serve. The evidence to our community is clear: FMC has been able to attract top physicians and staff, expand services, embrace innovative technologies, and reach into surrounding communities. When our community benefits, FMC is better for it. We have not become the largest employer in Fairfield County and a growing health system with expansive services in over 40 locations by traveling the journey alone. There is strength and beauty in collaboration. There is strength and beauty in collaboration, and FMC will continue to keep that mindset as we clear a path for the next 100 years.



A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "Jack Janoso".

John R. “Jack” Janoso Jr.

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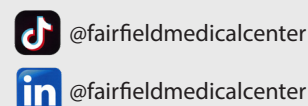
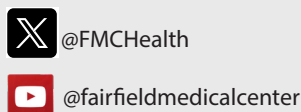
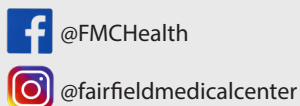
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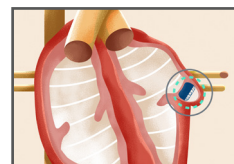
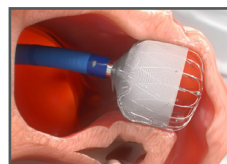




*Jerry Uhl stands in the lighting aisle at the Lancaster Menards – one of his favorite places to walk and shop.*

# WATCHMAN

## Guarding Against Stroke



*Example of a WATCHMAN device implanted in the opening of the left atrial appendage of the heart.*

Jerry Uhl sees the world through his own lens. The Lancaster native, 73, spent decades working as a portrait photographer in Southeast Ohio, using his camera to capture fleeting moments and preserving them for a lifetime. Over the years, he has traded the fast-paced demands of event photography for leisurely snapshots of landscapes and tranquil pictures of nature. When he's not working away at a local embroidery shop, he can be found repairing his summer house and fishing on the Muskingum River. These simple joys mean the world to Jerry, so when an unexpected hospital stay and subsequent diagnosis threatened to interrupt his peaceful lifestyle, Jerry turned to Fairfield Medical Center and a procedure known as WATCHMAN to help him overcome his health obstacles.

In November 2022, Jerry found himself in Fairfield Medical Center's intensive care unit with pneumonia. When the illness in his lungs later progressed to sepsis – a life-threatening complication of infection – he was in dire straits. Thankfully, with IV antibiotics and a lot of dedicated care, Jerry began to improve. But as his hospital stay continued, a new development in his health was discovered.

"I was in bed and a nurse came in acting very concerned," Jerry remembered. "She said my heart was in afib – I had never been told that before. I'm not sure when we would have caught it if I wasn't already in the hospital."

*People with afib are five times more likely than the general population to have a stroke.*



## The truth about afib

As the population ages, the American Heart Association estimates that more than 12 million people in the United States will have afib by 2030. The condition can come and go, lasting for



**American  
Heart  
Association®**

only a short time before the heart's rhythm returns to normal on its own, or it might be permanent. While some symptoms such as fatigue, shortness of breath and heart palpitations are commonly reported, many people – such as Jerry – are completely unaware of the arrhythmia.

Afib, or atrial fibrillation, is an abnormal rhythm that occurs when the heart beats in a rapid, uncoordinated way. Normally, the heart's chambers work together to fill and then pump blood to the body in a steady and predictable pattern. During afib, however, the upper chambers of the heart flutter instead of squeezing, weakening the heart's pumping power and causing blood to pool in the heart. When this happens, blood clots can form, and the risk of stroke rises dramatically.

"People with afib are five times more likely than the general population to have a stroke," said cardiologist and electrophysiologist Michael Reinig, DO, of Fairfield Healthcare Professionals Cardiology. "Unfortunately, strokes related to afib are often more damaging and can result in a high degree of disability or death, which means prevention is of the utmost importance."

Once recovered from his hospitalization, Jerry met with interventional cardiologist John Lazarus, MD, PhD, at FHP Cardiology to discuss a treatment plan. The first line of defense for decreasing stroke risk included daily blood thinners to prevent clots from forming. Doctors started Jerry on an oral anticoagulant, and the treatment seemed to work well for nearly two years. That is, until Jerry's blood work revealed an undeniable problem – his red blood cell count was dangerously low.

While blood thinners are incredibly effective at keeping blood cells from sticking together, they can lead to complications. For some, this might mean bleeding excessively from minor scrapes and scratches. For others, the bleeding might be internal, particularly in the stomach or urinary tract. If these bleeding problems are not addressed, they can result in anemia, or a low level of healthy red blood cells, which are responsible for carrying oxygen throughout the body. Jerry immediately began working with certified nurse practitioner Megan Brown of FHP Hematology/Oncology, to correct the problem through iron infusions. Next, he needed to find an alternative way to manage his stroke risk, which led him back to Dr. Lazarus.

"Blood thinners are not always the best choice for patients with afib who have a history of bleeding complications or who later develop them, like Jerry," Dr. Lazarus explained. "Fortunately, there is a procedure that can reduce the risk of stroke by up to 90 percent without the use of anticoagulants. It's called WATCHMAN, and we're able to perform it right here at FMC."

WATCHMAN focuses on closing the left atrial appendage, a section of the heart where nearly all afib-related blood clots form. During the minimally invasive procedure, a small incision is made in the



*Jerry Uhl threads a needle at the embroidery shop where he works as a textiles machinist.*

leg and a catheter is guided to the heart. The WATCHMAN device is then implanted within the opening of the left atrial appendage, where it acts as a plug. Eventually, tissue grows over the device, creating a permanent seal. Recovery is often quick and follow-up relatively painless.

"This past November, I had the procedure on a Thursday, and I was back to work by Monday," Jerry said. "It was as quick and easy as you can expect a surgery to be. Dr. Lazarus adjusted my medications, and then after 45 days, I was able to stop taking my blood thinners completely."

Now, more than two years after his initial afib diagnosis and a year since discovering his anemia, Jerry is living without fear of stroke – and without the limitations of blood thinners. As a self-proclaimed handyman and avid fisherman, Jerry doesn't think twice about the nicks and scrapes that come with the job of home repairs or reeling in a monster catfish. In fact, as the weather warms, he doesn't think about his afib at all. He's simply happy to return to the river, tick the maintenance projects off his to-do list and cast a line – with his camera nearby, of course.

## JERRY'S CARE TEAM



**John Lazarus, MD, PhD**  
FHP Cardiology  
740-689-4480



**Michael Reinig, DO**  
FHP Cardiology  
740-689-4480



**Megan Brown, CNP**  
FHP Hematology/  
Oncology  
740-687-4505



**Stephanie Hurst**  
WATCHMAN Coordinator  
FHP Cardiology



**Caitlin Ballinger**  
WATCHMAN Coordinator  
FHP Cardiology





Patients and caregivers pose for a group photo during the recent heart reunion.

# Surviving Cardiac Arrest

## THE BEAT GOES ON

The Beat Goes On is an event that connects survivors of major cardiac events with the first responders and the Fairfield Medical Center team members who cared for them in their time of critical need. This is the third year FMC has hosted this celebration, which highlights the gift of second chances, the joy of new milestones and the long-lasting bonds that caregivers form with patients and their families. On March 6, five cardiac arrest and critically ill heart patients – along with their biggest supporters – attended the reunion to reconnect with the people who were there for them at the worst time of their lives.

“Events like this are so special, not only for our staff and first responders, but for our patients as well,” said FMC STEMI Coordinator Des Belcher, who helps to coordinate the event. “Most times, our EMS professionals and some of our hospital staff do not know how their cardiac arrest patients do long-term or even if they survived after discharge. Providing a celebration to reunite these survivors with their healthcare heroes is very heartwarming. It reminds our healthcare workers and first responders just how important their roles are in our community and helps them ‘remember their why.’”

*It reminds our healthcare workers and first responders just how important their roles are in our community.*

Much like the heroes who helped them return to health, the event gives patients the opportunity to reflect on how far they’ve come since their harrowing experiences. Some, like **Kara Balsimo**, who suffered cardiac arrest after having a pulmonary embolism at age 23, are continuing their education and planning for the future. Kara is working toward earning a master’s degree and aspires to become a teacher – but not before walking down the aisle as a bridesmaid in her friend’s wedding this fall.

**Curtis Hinds**, who experienced cardiac arrest due to an irregular heart rhythm at age 58, is finding more time for creativity, reigniting his love for ceramics and restoring his ’73 Volkswagen. And **Paul Bishop**, who underwent open heart surgery after his heart stopped beating while working outside, is using his experience and his platform as a pastor to spread messages of faith and gratitude.





Cardiac arrest occurs when the heart stops beating without warning, a medical emergency that affects about 356,000 Americans each year. While the condition is fatal in 90 percent of out-of-hospital occurrences, all five of the patients who attended The Beat Goes On survived, not only because of the care they received at FMC, but because someone nearby recognized the signs of cardiac arrest and called 911 or started performing CPR.

"We take time at the event to honor and award individuals who perform bystander CPR," Belcher said. "Statistics show that early CPR and the use of an AED can up to triple the chances of survival for people suffering cardiac arrest. Without the bravery of the friends, coworkers and family members who jump into action, so many of the patients we celebrate at these events never would have made it through our doors."

FMC and Community Heart Watch – a committee formed by local healthcare professionals, educators and civic leaders – are committed to improving cardiac arrest survival in the region by increasing training, awareness and access to resources. To learn more about CPR training and AED accessibility, visit [fmchealth.org/community-heart-watch/](http://fmchealth.org/community-heart-watch/).

## *What the Reunion Means to Our Staff*

"This event truly allows you to feel all the gratitude of saving lives. My favorite part of the heart reunion is being able to see how far our patients have come. They come to us in the worst state, and we don't typically get any follow-up after that. So it's nice to see and talk to them! We can't thank Des Belcher enough for all she has done to help make this possible for us."

~ Brittney Cremeans, Special Procedure Tech, Cardiac Cath

"The highlight of the heart reunion for me is connecting with the patients and families we've assisted. It's an emotionally charged experience that's also incredibly fulfilling. The knowledge that my work has helped someone live another day serves as a powerful reminder of my motivation for becoming a cardiovascular X-ray tech. I'm more than just a tech; I'm a vital member of a team that saves lives."

~ Mady Wills, Special Procedure Tech, Cardiac Cath

"This event is healing for all involved. It allows patients to feel less isolated in their recovery, it helps bystanders process the traumatic experience of witnessing cardiac arrest, and it renews a sense of purpose for those of us in the field or at the bedside."

~ Des Belcher, STEMI Coordinator, Cardio Services Management

"This gathering demonstrates the power of personal stories and connection. As healthcare providers, there is nothing more rewarding than building relationships with our patients and knowing the work we do makes a difference in our community."

~ John Lazarus, MD, PhD, Interventional Cardiologist, FHP Cardiology

"I look forward to The Beat Goes On each year because when patients come into the Cath Lab, we are seeing them at their worst. There are times that we're lucky enough to see them before they go home, but most of the time, we don't get that opportunity, and hearing updates from the doctors isn't the same as getting the chance to see them, talk with them and hug them. Experiencing those moments at this event reaffirms that what we do truly matters. It's an awesome feeling."

~ Lindsey Miller, Staff RN, Cardiac Cath



Heart reunion patients pose for pictures with their caregivers and family during The Beat Goes On reunion.



# The Climb

## Rising Above a Cancer Diagnosis



Nicole Lobo enjoys the fresh air at Christmas Rocks State Nature Preserve near Lancaster.

Nicole Lobo has always been in tune with her body. Weightlifting, running, spending time outdoors and exercising are daily activities that help her stay healthy and energized. When she began to feel run-down and burnt-out in late 2023, she started to think something wasn't quite right.

In addition to feeling fatigued, Nicole, 44, had been experiencing pain in her upper back for about three weeks, but initially brushed it off as a pulled muscle from lifting weights. One morning close to Christmas, the pain migrated to her underarm and she discovered a lump. She immediately called her OB-GYN, who saw her the same day to order a diagnostic mammogram.

Unlike screening mammograms, which are recommended beginning at age 40, diagnostic mammograms provide a more detailed image of the breast and are often ordered for patients who have an abnormal screening or symptoms of breast cancer.

Two days after that initial call to her OB-GYN, Nicole underwent a diagnostic mammogram and ultrasound at Fairfield Medical Center's River Valley Campus. The radiologist told her the lump appeared to be a sunburst tumor, which is typically graded to be cancer.

"The night before my mammogram, I had a feeling that it was going to be cancer. I had a hunch something was wrong, and when I went in that morning, I felt numb," Nicole said.

After receiving her mammogram results, the FMC team moved quickly to offer Nicole reassurance and prepare a treatment plan. David Hasl, MD, of Fairfield Healthcare Professionals General Surgery, saw Nicole the same day to discuss a biopsy, and Roopa Srikantiah-Saha, MD, of Fairfield Healthcare Professionals Hematology/Oncology, contacted her to answer any initial questions and ease her fears.

"It was amazing they worked so fast to make sure I had peace of mind and a plan," Nicole said. "I don't think you would get that kind of care anywhere other than FMC."

*Cancer is a hard thing to manage, but I knew I was in good hands at Fairfield Medical Center.*



After Interventional Radiologist Anand Joshi, MD, performed an outpatient biopsy that confirmed the diagnosis of breast cancer, Nicole's strenuous treatment plan began with an eight-week cycle of chemotherapy, followed by a 12-week cycle of a different type of chemotherapy, guided by Dr. Saha and the team at FHP Hematology/Oncology.

"We administer chemotherapy in cycles because it allows the body to recover between treatments, giving healthy cells time to rebuild while still effectively targeting the cancer cells," Dr. Saha explained.

In July of 2024, just one month after finishing chemotherapy treatment, Nicole underwent a mastectomy at The Ohio State University Comprehensive Care Center – Arthur G. James Cancer Hospital and Richard J. Solove Research Institute to remove the tumor and reduce her risk of recurrence. She also had a lymphadenectomy to remove surrounding lymph nodes to determine if the cancer had spread.

In September, following her recovery from surgery, Nicole saw Mark Becker, MD, of Fairfield Healthcare Professionals Radiation Oncology, and began radiation therapy every weekday for five weeks, totaling 25 treatments with the linear accelerator. The linear accelerator is a machine that destroys cancer cells by delivering heightened doses of radiation therapy with exceptional accuracy.

"The dramatic improvement in radiation therapy in the past several years has led to more positive outcomes for patients," Dr. Becker said. "With new technology like the linear accelerator, we have more precise targeting of the radiation therapy, offering patients a shorter treatment time and fewer severe side-effects."

Upon completion of the radiation treatments, Nicole began an oral chemotherapy pill and hormone blocker that she will continue to take for several years to reduce the likelihood of the cancer returning. Dr. Saha monitors for cancer recurrence with ctDNA blood testing, a liquid biopsy that analyzes blood for DNA fragments from tumor cells.



Nicole with her mom, Vickie Dunfee, and coworker friends, Brad Rarick and Carrie Olive, who continue to provide support throughout her journey.

An FMC employee for 22 years, Nicole continued working full-time during her treatment. As an Information Systems Analyst, Nicole works with physicians to build their electronic health records and provide data-driven insights. After working with the medical staff on a professional level for several years, Nicole said it has been wonderful collaborating with them, this time as a patient.

"I've gone through treatment at FMC for over a year, and I've never had a situation where something was missed. Not a blip in scheduling, or a missed lab. I feel that my care team taking things off my plate led to a better medical outcome because I didn't have to stress or worry," she said. "They did everything for me so I could focus on healing."

Nicole said she is also grateful to her friends, family and coworkers for supporting her throughout her cancer journey and surrounding her with love and encouragement. Her mom, Vickie Dunfee, kept her company during each chemotherapy appointment, and her best friend, Carrie Olive, a nurse in the FMC Infusion Clinic, made sure to check in on Nicole during those long appointments.

## NICOLE'S CARE TEAM & SUPPORTERS



**Mark Becker, MD**  
FHP Radiation Oncology  
740-687-8550



**David Hasl, MD**  
FHP General Surgery  
740-687-5437



**Roopa Srikantiah-Saha, MD**  
FHP Hematology/Oncology  
740-687-4505

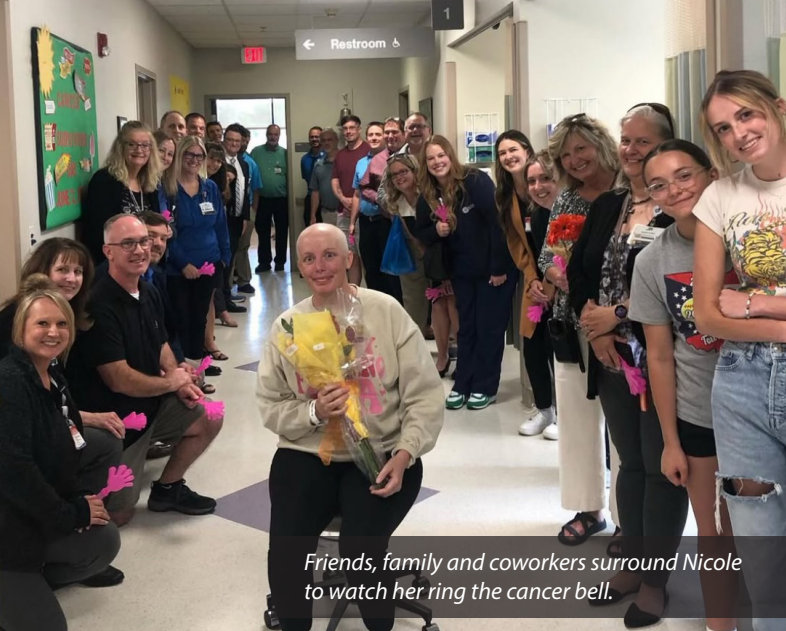


**Anand Joshi, MD**  
Interventional  
Radiologist



**Sarah Jones, RN, BSN**  
Nurse Navigator  
740-687-2727





Friends, family and coworkers surround Nicole to watch her ring the cancer bell.

On the day of Nicole's final chemotherapy treatment in May 2024, she was surprised when she came out of the infusion bay to ring the bell and was greeted by a large group of coworkers, friends and family who were there to celebrate with her.

"You don't always realize the impact you have on people until something happens," Nicole said of the support she received. "This is a horrible, sad and scary situation, but it helps to surround yourself with good people."

Looking back, she said the personal connection from each department at FMC made Nicole confident in her care team. Living just down the road in Amanda, she said she was glad to be close to home when coming in for several appointments every week.

"From the doctors reassuring me with their confidence and knowledge, to the angels that are the chemo infusion nurses and radiation oncology techs, to the chaplains coming to pray with me, everybody has been extremely supportive," Nicole said. "Cancer is a hard thing to manage, but I knew I was in good hands at Fairfield Medical Center."



Nicole Lobo stands at the top of Christmas Rocks in Lancaster.

## Breast Screening Knowledge is Power

***"Before this, I would not be someone that would understand the importance of getting your screenings done, and FMC offers a lot of those services," Nicole Lobo said. "Anyone, male or female, should make sure they're staying up to date."***

**The best way** to catch breast cancer in the early stages, when it is most treatable, is through routine mammograms in accordance with recommended screening guidelines. Early detection of breast cancer can lead to more effective treatment and better outcomes.

**One important factor** to determine is if you are at an average risk or above-average risk for breast cancer. Certain factors like family history or genetic mutations can determine your risk factor. Talk to your healthcare provider to determine the best options for you.

**Did you know** if you are age 40 or older you do not need a doctor's referral to schedule a mammogram? According to the American Cancer Society, women between 40 and 44 who are at an average risk have the option to start screening with a mammogram every year. Women 45 to 54 should get mammograms every year until age 55, when they have the option to switch to a mammogram every other year or continue yearly.

**Uninsured and underinsured women may qualify for a variety of financial assistance.** If you are ready to schedule your mammogram, call 740-687-8666.





# HEALTHY HABITS

Sharon Graff, MS, RD, LD, CDCES, BC-ADM, Diabetes Educator,  
Diabetes Education and Support Program, 740-687-8492

## Education & Support: A PATH TO SUCCESSFULLY LIVING WITH DIABETES

If you or a loved one has been diagnosed as prediabetic or diabetic, you aren't alone – it's estimated that 98 million Americans are prediabetic, and another 38 million live with diabetes.

You may have heard about diabetes-related blindness, amputations, kidney failure, neuropathy, and wounds that won't quickly heal. Poorly managed diabetes can contribute to these and other maladies, but they are not inevitable. The good news is that while diabetes is a serious disease, it is manageable. As Sharon Graff, FMC's Diabetes Care & Education Specialist, says, "Well-managed diabetes is the leading cause of nothing."

Whether you've recently been diagnosed or have lived with diabetes for years, you can learn to manage your condition to be free of complications. FMC's diabetes team tailors learning to your needs and circumstances. You'll learn about diabetes and best management practices. There's no shame or guilt associated with our program – just information and motivation that helps you make informed decisions that harmonize with your lifestyle and goals.

Your path to confidently living with diabetes begins with a private appointment with a Registered Dietician/Certified Diabetes Care and Education Specialist to learn facts and dispel myths about diabetes, discover what you'd like to know about managing your diabetes, and, depending on where you want to focus, schedule additional private or group appointments.

Three classes will follow, in which you'll acquire a deeper understanding of diabetes while learning about drugs, devices, diet, and lifestyle choices that can help manage it. You'll also learn how to make the most of your visits with your physician.

Following class instruction, you'll be invited to participate in monthly, one-hour support group sessions that are free. During these fun, informal gatherings, you'll have the opportunity to ask questions, share your story, and hear how others have navigated living with diabetes.

Sharon lost her grandparents to complications of diabetes and is passionate about helping you successfully manage your disease. She earned degrees at Penn State and Case Western Reserve, is board-certified in Advanced Diabetes Management, and worked as a diabetes educator with a major pharmaceutical company.



Sharon Graff explains the importance of a balanced diet to a diabetic patient.

## Diabetes Support The Right Plan For You

The Diabetes Self-Management Education/ Support program is designed to teach more about the healthy lifestyle skills that are required to manage blood sugar levels, from those recently diagnosed with diabetes to those who have been managing it for years. To participate in the program, get a referral from a physician to Fairfield Medical Center's Central Scheduling.

### Self-Management Education

#### What's involved?

- Meet individually with a registered, licensed dietitian
- Complete a series of three consecutive group classes
- Meet individually with a certified education nurse

#### Learn to:

- Create a meal plan
- Check and understand blood sugar readings
- Interpret food labels
- Determine appropriate portion sizes
- Make healthy choices while eating out
- Incorporate exercise into everyday life

Check with your insurance company regarding coverage.

### Diabetes Support Group

This group is open to any community members or their families who are affected by diabetes.

The group meets from 6 to 7 p.m. the fourth Monday of each month (excluding holidays) in the River Valley Campus conference rooms near the Columbus Street entrance.

A wide variety of diabetic topics are covered with different discussions planned for each month.

Diabetes Support Group classes are free.

For more information on our diabetes services, call 740-687-8492 or visit [fmchealth.org/services/diabetes-care/](http://fmchealth.org/services/diabetes-care/).





*It was hard for me to walk long distances, and I would struggle to stand for long periods of time. I would have to take breaks and sit.*

*Jennifer Mitchell writes an appointment card for a patient at FHP Orthopedics and Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation.*

# The Wear and Tear of Osteoarthritis

As a longtime registered nurse and office manager of a busy orthopedic office, the majority of Jennifer Mitchell's day is spent on her feet coordinating the daily needs of Fairfield Healthcare Professionals Orthopedics and Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation. Over time, the physical demands of Jennifer's job began to take a toll on her body, and she developed severe osteoarthritis in her knees, a common type of arthritis that causes joint pain and stiffness.

Jennifer's pain affected not only her ability to do her job, but also her hobbies. An avid gardener, she started having difficulty kneeling to take care of her flowerbeds. In the summer, her family's pool became inaccessible because she couldn't climb up or go down the ladder. Walking around at Walt Disney World, where her son works, and up the gymnasium bleachers to watch her daughter play volleyball were complicated by the discomfort and instability she was feeling.



*Jennifer and her kids pre-surgery on a trip to Walt Disney World.*



"It was hard for me to walk long distances, and I would struggle to stand for long periods of time," said Jennifer, 59, of Lancaster. "I would have to take breaks and sit."

Factors that might contribute to the development of the degenerative joint disease include age, joint injury, overuse of the joint and more. In 2023, Jennifer met with Nikki Sabatina, DO, of FHP Orthopedics and PMR, after her right knee started giving out from underneath her.

"After Dr. Sabatina examined my knee, she was shocked and couldn't believe that I was walking around and not complaining about the pain that I had suffered from for years," Jennifer said.

Dr. Sabatina performed X-rays on Jennifer's knees and recommended viscosupplementation injections, or gel shots, in both of her knees to alleviate the osteoarthritis pain. These shots work by injecting gel-like fluid called hyaluronic acid into the joint to act as a lubricant to restore smooth movement of the cartilage, reducing pain.

While the gel shots worked to ease the pain for about a year and a half, Jennifer started to notice less relief over time. Dr. Sabatina explained that when nonsurgical treatments do not work as well, it might be time to consider surgical options. This prompted Jennifer to discuss total joint replacement with orthopedic surgeon Juan Santiago, MD, of FHP Orthopedics and PMR.

"Jennifer came to see me with significant pain and limited range of motion in her knee, and I conducted a thorough physical examination and X-rays to assess the extent of the osteoarthritis," Dr. Santiago explained. "After we discussed the range of the non-operative care she had undergone previously, Jennifer decided the time was right to proceed with surgery."

Dr. Santiago performed Jennifer's total knee replacement on Dec. 10, 2024. The staff talked her through each step in the pre-operation process, ensuring she was informed and comfortable.

"A knee replacement surgery involves replacing the damaged joint surfaces with prosthetic components, and I focused on providing



Jennifer Mitchell gets an update on her knee replacement from Dr. Juan Santiago.

her with anatomic alignment and minimizing soft tissue damage to optimize the outcome," Dr. Santiago said.

After the surgery, FMC's physical and occupational therapy teams were at her bedside to provide guidance on post-operative exercises to kickstart her recovery. Just two days after post-op, after being discharged and spending one night at home, Jennifer began physical therapy at FMC's River Valley Campus. She credits the therapy team with giving her the confidence to push through any discomfort and continue to recover.

"My biggest advice is do what your doctor and your therapy team tell you to do. I followed exactly what they instructed me to do, even at home, and I've had such a successful outcome," said Jennifer, who was able to return to work in just six weeks.

Now well on her way through recovery of her right knee, Jennifer is preparing to have her left knee replaced within the next year. When that time comes, she knows the team at FHP Orthopedics and PMR will be the ones to care of her.

"I felt comfortable with Dr. Santiago doing my surgery. I see his caring demeanor and attention to detail with all his patients," Jennifer said. "The entire staff at FMC lives by the same culture and really care about their patients. You're never just a number when you receive care here."

## JENNIFER'S CARE TEAM



**Nikki Sabatina, DO**



**Juan Santiago, MD**



**Tim Norman, PA-C**

FHP Orthopedics and Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation  
River Valley Campus | 740-689-4935



**Outpatient Therapy Services**  
Fairfield Medical Center  
River Valley Campus  
740-687-2930



**6th Floor Ortho Unit**  
Fairfield Medical Center  
6th Floor – Orthopedics  
740-687-8000

## Total Joint Class FHP Ortho and PMR

As manager of FHP Orthopedics and PMR, Jennifer Mitchell assists with teaching Total Joint Class to surgical patients. When it came time for her own joint replacement surgery, she said the curriculum is invaluable.

### Topics covered:

- How to prepare for surgery
- What to expect during surgery
- What to expect post-operation
- Pain management
- Physical and occupational therapy
- Discharge planning
- Billing questions

**If you have questions about total joint class, call 740-687-8176.**



# FOUNDATION SPOTLIGHT: Being Grateful

## Grateful Patient & Family Program

Linda Sprague, Cancer Patient



At Linda Sprague's final radiation treatment for breast cancer, she had a special gift for the radiation oncology team who had been by her side from the very beginning – a guardian angel clip for their name badges. "I felt that was appropriate because that's what they were to me, guardian angels," said Linda, who was diagnosed with stage 2 breast cancer in June 2024 and had surgery and radiation treatment at FMC. "I can never forget or repay them for their caring, calming, trusting ways. They truly made my journey with cancer much more bearable."

Along with the pins, Linda also decided to recognize her guardian angels as Legendary Caregivers through the Fairfield Medical Center Foundation's Grateful Patient & Family program. This special recognition allows patients and their families to honor staff, providers and volunteers at FMC who went above and beyond to provide a positive experience. Now in remission, Linda returned to FMC in February to personally present her caregivers – Cathy Gaskill, Alexandra Phillips, Tammy Kraft, Tiffany Moody and Faith Evans – with their Legendary Caregiver certificates.



*Linda Sprague stands with the radiation oncology caregivers she recognized through the Grateful Patient Program.*

"The first time I did radiation was the scariest because I didn't know what to expect, but the staff made me feel completely comfortable," Linda said. "I would recommend FMC's cancer care services to anyone. The whole oncology and cancer center is above and beyond anything I could have ever imagined."



*Linda Sprague with the Grateful Patient & Family banner in the FMC Cancer Care and Infusion Center.*

In 2024, 60 staff members and providers were honored through the program, as well as 13 departments. Nominators can submit a recognition form online and even make a monetary donation to the FMC Foundation, with proceeds supporting the program.

*"The Grateful Patient & Family program celebrates the compassion shown every day by our FMC staff and reflects the shared values that make our health system truly special," said Tracy Kelly, director of the FMC Foundation. "These outstanding team members don't ask to be thanked for their tireless dedication. But we feel fortunate to recognize the exceptional care they provide, and to share their inspiring stories with the community we serve."*

If you or your loved one received exemplary care from Fairfield Medical Center and you would like to recognize their caregivers or care team, visit [fmchealth.org/foundation/grateful-patient/](https://fmchealth.org/foundation/grateful-patient/) or scan the QR code to fill out a recognition form.





VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT:

# Wishes Gift Shop

## FMC's Hidden Gem



Wishes Gift Shop is located in the south lobby of Fairfield Medical Center's main campus. Visitors, patients, and employees can browse a broad selection of unique gifts ranging from lotions, flowers (in-season), and plush animals to clothing, cards, candy, books, and more.

**Do you think you might like to volunteer at Wishes?** Volunteering at Wishes Gift Shop doesn't require unique skills, just a desire to connect with people, learn about products, and help customers find something to brighten their day or the day of someone in the hospital. Volunteers come from all ages, genders, and backgrounds.

Wishes is open from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Friday. Volunteer hours are flexible, allowing volunteers to tailor them to their schedules. All of Wishes' profits go to the FMC Foundation to support hospital equipment purchases and Foundation-sponsored healthcare outreach initiatives in the community.

It's a fun  
place to pick  
up something for  
a patient or yourself  
and a GREAT place  
to volunteer.

### Patty Reed Volunteering at Wishes Gift Shop



Patty Reed says she loves volunteering her time to help customers find the perfect gift for a hospitalized loved one or something to satisfy their sweet tooth or help while away the time while waiting for a procedure to be completed. Patty and her fellow volunteers assist Gift Shop Coordinator Lanie Ray in handling all facets of running the small boutique, from assisting customers to stocking shelves, decorating the store for special and seasonal events, and delivering gifts to patient rooms. Lanie assigns tasks to volunteers based on their skills, physical abilities, and comfort levels.

Patty and her fellow volunteers say they enjoy the daily variety involved in running a store, interacting with diverse people, and getting out of the house to do something that contributes to the overall well-being of the people in FMC's service area. Like most FMC volunteers, she says she gets more out of volunteering than she gives.

**To learn more about volunteering at Wishes, contact Heidi Reed at [heidre@fmchealth.org](mailto:heidre@fmchealth.org) or call Heidi at 740-687-8109. For a closer look at Wishes, go to [fmchealth.org/wishes/](http://fmchealth.org/wishes/).**





# ASK THE PROVIDER

Jill Rice, DO, Medical Director of Primary Care  
Fairfield Healthcare Professionals Internal Medicine  
740-689-4470

## Primary Care: CHOOSING THE RIGHT PROVIDER FOR YOU

When it comes to choosing a primary care provider, whether it's for yourself or your whole family, the process can feel overwhelming. There are many factors to take into consideration, including the provider's education, their personality and even the friendliness of their office staff. It's important to pick a provider you can work with and trust; after all, this is the person who will manage your health over the course of several years or even decades. Below are some common questions patients encounter when searching for a new provider.



Brandie Herdlitzka, CNP, of FHP Family Medicine of Amanda, chats with patient Kimberly Dum.

### Q. WHAT FACTORS SHOULD I CONSIDER WHEN SELECTING A PRIMARY CARE PROVIDER?

- Get a recommendation from a friend, family member, or someone else you trust. Keep in mind that no one provider is right for everyone.
- Consider the logistics. Are the office location and hours convenient? Do you need the office to be located close to work, home or your child's school? Do you need care on certain days of the week or during certain hours? Do you need virtual appointments?
- Does the provider communicate with you through email or a secured patient portal? Do they answer or return calls within a reasonable time?
- If cost is a factor, ask your insurance provider to give you a list of "preferred" or "in network" providers to help reduce your direct cost.

Once you find a provider that matches your needs, schedule an appointment. Your answers to the following three questions will likely determine whether you should go back for another visit or continue your search.



**Did you feel comfortable with the provider?**



**Did he or she answer your questions in a manner that you could understand?**



**Did you feel like the provider listened to you?**

### Q. WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN FAMILY MEDICINE, INTERNAL MEDICINE AND GENERAL PRACTICE?

Family medicine and internal medicine physicians (internists) are similar in many ways. They care for the patient's everyday health needs, address preventive care and collaborate with experts when specialized care is needed. Both are primary care specialists and receive subspecialty training in the areas of cardiology, pulmonology, gastroenterology, neurology and more. However, there are some key differences between the two:

- Family medicine physicians treat patients from **birth to death**. These providers complete a three-year family medicine residency that is focused on an outpatient setting with less time spent in the hospital. **Family physicians place emphasis on continuity of care, health maintenance and disease prevention.**
- Internal medicine physicians treat patients **18 years and older**, although an internist can elect to complete additional training in pediatrics. Internists complete a three-year internal medicine residency with an emphasis on inpatient or hospital settings. **Internists focus on preventing, diagnosing and treating illness in adults by paying close attention to organs and internal systems.**



Sang Kyune Lee, MD, of FHP Family Medicine of Millersport, with patient Austin George.

General practitioners care for patients of all ages and treat common medical conditions, providing acute, chronic and follow-up care to their patients. They are normally trained in non-U.S. medical schools and complete a one- to two-year hospital-based training program instead of a three-year residency. They also do not have American Board of Medical Specialties certification.



## Q. SOME PROVIDERS HAVE DIFFERENT CREDENTIALS THAN OTHERS. WHAT DOES THAT MEAN?

All primary care providers identify and treat common conditions, provide preventive care, order screening tests, offer guidance on healthy lifestyle choices, coordinate care with specialists, and treat acute illnesses. However, their education and credentials can look very different. Most of us are familiar with doctors who have DO (Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine) or MD (Medical Doctor) after their name, but during your search, you may also encounter CNPs (Certified Nurse Practitioners) or PAs (Physician Assistants). So what's the difference?

### MD/DO Education/Training



- Four-year undergraduate degree.
- Four years of medical school. DOs attend Osteopathic medical schools and MDs attend Allopathic medical schools, but the difference in care for patients is minimal.
- A three-year residency in a specialty of their choosing (pediatrics, family practice, internal medicine, etc.). This includes a year of internship. A residency is "on-the-job training" under direct supervision of experienced physicians.
- Following this extensive training, the physician completes testing to earn a board certification and applies for a state license.
- A physician specializing in primary care may elect to continue their training by completing a fellowship in specialized areas such as sports medicine, geriatric medicine, addiction medicine, urgent care, hospice/palliative care or others.
- Following fellowship training, the physician undergoes testing to earn board certification and apply for a state license.

### CNP Education/Training



- Generally complete a four-year bachelor's degree in nursing.
- Earn a Master of Science or Doctor of Nursing Practice while studying within a focused population such as pediatrics, family practice or geriatrics.
- Take a National Board Certification Exam, apply for licensure and provide care through a standard-of-care agreement with a collaborating physician in their focus population.

### PA Education/Training



- Four-year bachelor's degree.
- Two or three years of postgraduate education in a physician assistance program within a specific area before they take a national certifying exam and apply for licensure.
- Work under the supervision and direction of a physician.



**Fairfield**  
Healthcare Professionals  
An Affiliate of Fairfield Medical Center

**Fairfield Healthcare Professionals has primary care offices located in Amanda, Lancaster, Millersport and New Lexington.**

**If you have questions or want to schedule a new patient appointment, call 740-687-8886 or visit [fmchealth.org/services/primary-care/](http://fmchealth.org/services/primary-care/).**







*I want to continue to build the bridges and connections that make FMC services uniquely bonded to the everyday lives of those in our communities for as long as I can.*

## STAFF SPOTLIGHT: **Resa Tobin**

Why has Resa Tobin remained loyal to FMC for 44 years? Well, for starters, she was born at Fairfield Medical Center – both literally and professionally. Second, for the past 25 years, she has been living out her passion and purpose as a community educator.

From CPR to first aid to baby-sitting and child safety, Resa has offered a variety of community classes over the years, helping hundreds of residents earn certifications or learn new skills. Her classes also fulfill the need for clinical education via the Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP), which strives to identify and improve health needs in the community. In 2024 alone, Resa taught more than 150 classes and participated in 30 events, all while being an active member of 15 community initiative groups.

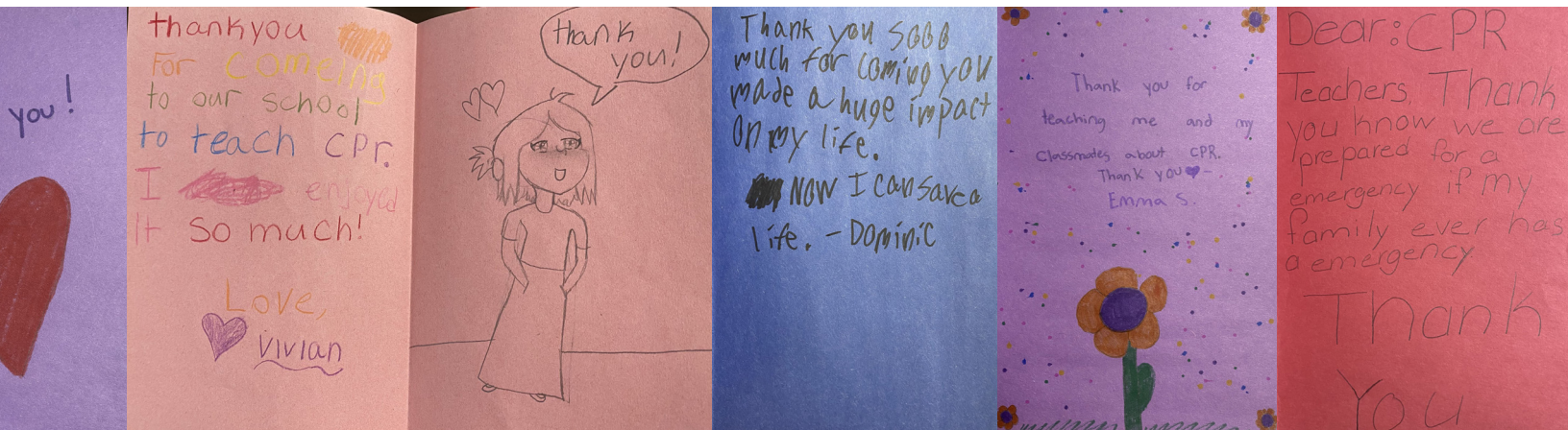
"I love spending time investing in others and giving them purpose to learning," Resa said. "No time spent teaching is ever lost! We are all teachers in some way. I, among others, have the cherished opportunity to encourage others to be the difference in someone's story."

Hired as a medical laboratory technician intern in 1981, Resa served in many roles at FMC before finding her niche as a community educator in 2000. While she works out of the Marketing & Community Services Department, you will rarely find Resa in her office. Instead, her time is spent in classrooms or civic meetings, always with a few CPR mannequins and AED units in hand. What makes Resa's classes unique, according to those who know her and work with her, is her energetic personality and her ability to create a safe space for her students to share their past experiences, ask questions and make mistakes.

"It's important to make time to provide answers and speak about actual issues so participants can truly become confident and prepared for when an emergency crashes into reality," Resa said. "Feedback is critical for improvement."

Over the years, Resa has received hundreds of cards from grateful students. "I heard remarkable things about how well you conducted the training and how upbeat you are. Thank you so much," wrote Mark Rager, marketing and community relationship coordinator at

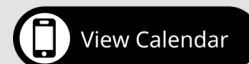




## Annual Community Classes From Support to Instruction

Fairfield Medical Center extends care beyond the doors of its facility and offers a variety of classes for free or at a minimal cost. These classes include Childbirth Education, Diabetic Education, Neuro Support, Clinical Symposiums, Nutritional Services, Special Health, Recognition and Awareness Events, CPR, First Aid, and CABS certifications. Also offered are noncertification trainings for diverse topics such as Hands-Only CPR and AED operation.

**For more information, sign up online at [fmchealth.org/calendar/](https://fmchealth.org/calendar/) or go to page 21 to view upcoming classes offered by FMC.**



Buckeye Toyota. Amanda Pell, a fourth-grade teacher at Fairfield Christian Academy, wrote this about Resa's CPR class: "Thank you so much for taking the time to teach my fourth-grade classes CPR. What an amazing experience for them. Your time and expertise are very much appreciated."

CPR is one skill in particular that Resa says she is very passionate about teaching in the community. Every minute a cardiac arrest victim is unattended, their chance of surviving decreases by 10 percent. CPR training empowers bystanders to be helpful and make a significant impact until medical professionals arrive on the scene. In 2011, Resa was among several FMC staff members who helped launch Community Heart Watch, which strives to improve survival from cardiac arrest in Fairfield, Hocking and Perry counties. In the past decade, Community Heart Watch has trained more than 20,000 people in CPR, placed more than 550 AEDs in the community and accredited 60 schools and businesses as Heart Safe. In addition, the committee created a mobile CPR training unit that attends various community events and has trained more than 4,000 residents in hands-only CPR and AED use. Resa said she is grateful to be a part of such a dynamic group of experienced clinical experts, donors and enthusiastic leaders who volunteer countless hours toward enhancing victim recovery outcomes.

Resa said that "creating a heart-safe community involves many hands working together with intentionality and purpose."

In all of her experiences at FMC, Resa said she has not only discovered a sense of purpose and fulfillment in serving the region to help save lives, but has also found love, expanded her

family and made long-lasting friendships. She met her husband, Mike, in the Laboratory, gave birth to her two sons in Maternity, and witnessed what she considers top-notch care from FMC's staff and physicians when Mike had a hip replacement and open-heart valve replacement.

"As the years progressed and peers would come and go, I stayed, and I have no regrets," Resa said. "No matter what my family and I were going through, FMC was here for me. I want to continue to build the bridges and connections that make FMC services uniquely bonded to the everyday lives of those in our communities for as long as I can."



CEO John R. "Jack" Janoso Jr., left, presents the Impact Award during 2023 Hospital Week to the Community Heart Watch Team, from left, Dr. John Lazarus, Resa Tobin, Teri Watson, Des Belcher, and Matt Wideman.



# EVENT Calendar

For an updated list of events,  
visit [fmchealth.org/calendar/](http://fmchealth.org/calendar/).

## HAND-MADE MARKET

The FMC Employee Hand-Made Market is open to the public. Get ready for the holiday season by purchasing hand-made items and baked goods from your fellow FMC employee crafters.

Free donuts provided, compliments of the EAC. And be sure to purchase raffle tickets for your chance to win in the silent auction from those vendors.

**Date & Time:** Nov. 7 from 7 a.m.- 3 p.m.

**Location:** FMC Main Campus  
401 N. Ewing St., Lancaster  
(2<sup>nd</sup> Floor Assembly Rooms)

## MOBILE UNIT WOMEN'S CANCER SCREENINGS

Uninsured, underinsured and insured women are eligible to receive these lifesaving screenings. Services include pap tests, pelvic and breast exams, same-day mammograms and breast health education.

**Dates & Times:** July 31 from 9:30 a.m.-3 p.m.  
Jan. 29, 2026 from 9:30 a.m.-3 p.m.

**Location:** FMC River Valley Campus  
2384 N. Memorial Dr., Lancaster  
(Columbus St. entrance)

**Registration:** Appointment required, call  
800-844-2654 or 740-593-2432

*The screenings are offered by Ohio University Heritage Community Clinic and funded by grants from the Breast and Cervical Cancer projects of Southeast Ohio and Ohio University Community Health Grant.*



## STRIKE OUT BREAST CANCER

The Southeastern Ohio USBC organization has held an annual bowling event to raise funds for cancer for a number of years. 2024 marked the 20th anniversary for the Strike Out Breast Cancer Bowling Event, and the organization raised \$20,000 for cancer patient care at FMC.

Since 2019, the organization has donated more than \$72,000 to the FMC Foundation, helping hundreds of cancer patients in our region.

**Date & Time:** Oct. 19, 2025 at 11 a.m. and 2 p.m.  
**Registration:** <https://seohusbc.com/calendar/>



## NEURO SUPPORT GROUP

For patients, family and caregivers, this support group is designed to provide connections and motivation to individuals who are going through rehabilitation from a neurological disorder or injury, with a focus on improving communication and access to resources.

**Date:** 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday of each month, 4:45-5:45 p.m.

**Location:** Conference Room A, FMC River Valley Campus  
2384 N. Memorial Dr., Lancaster  
(Columbus St. entrance)

**Questions:** Call 740-689-6328

# Support Groups

## DIABETES SUPPORT GROUP

A certified diabetes education nurse helps individuals with diabetes and their loved ones face the disease. A wide variety of diabetic topics are covered with different discussions planned for each month.

**Date:** 4<sup>th</sup> Monday of each month, 6-7 p.m. (except holidays)

**Location:** Conference Room A, FMC River Valley Campus  
2384 N. Memorial Dr., Lancaster  
(Columbus St. entrance)

**Questions:** Call 740-687-8492 for meeting dates



## Don't Miss the Upcoming Dates

**Aug. 14, Oct. 9, Dec. 11** - FMC Main Campus, 401 N. Ewing St., Lancaster

**Sept. 11, Nov. 13** - FMC River Valley Campus, 2384 N. Memorial Dr., Lancaster

*All proceeds benefit patient care at FMC*



Fairfield Medical Center  
FOUNDATION





### CHILDBIRTH EDUCATION SERIES

These education courses are free and should be completed four to six weeks before your due date. Registration is required, and space is limited. Scan the QR code or visit [fmchealth.org/services/maternity-care/classes/](http://fmchealth.org/services/maternity-care/classes/).



### CHILDBIRTH EDUCATION Sessions 1 & 2

Explore labor and birth, pain control options, relaxation techniques, childbirth recovery and cesarean birth.

Expectant mothers and one support person are welcome to sign up for classes at their convenience. It is recommended that Sessions 1 and 2 be taken in order. Session 2 includes a tour of Maternity Services.

### SIBLING CLASS

This class uses hands-on practice to focus on safety and the importance of being a sibling.

### GRANDPARENTING CLASS

Explore the latest trends in childbirth and safe practices in caring for newborns.

### MATERNITY TOUR

This tour is designed for expectant parents who desire more information about Maternity Services at Fairfield Medical Center.

Note: A tour is included as part of the Childbirth class (session 2) for those who are enrolled in Childbirth Education Classes.



### NEWBORN CARE Session 3

Learn more about infant characteristics during the first weeks of life and beyond. Topics include when to call a pediatrician, how to soothe a crying/fussy infant, feeding recommendations and a hands-on bathing, dressing and diapering demonstration.

This class can be taken prior to attending Childbirth Education Sessions 1 and 2 and can also be taken as an individual class.

### BREASTFEEDING CLASS

This detailed information session for expectant parents is provided by lactation nurses to increase breastfeeding success.



**CALL.  
PUSH.  
SHOCK.**

CPR, AED, First Aid training offered through FMC

### CPR & AED TRAINING

Receive adult, child and infant CPR training and a certification card upon completion of a written exam.

**Dates:** Aug. 9  
Sept. 13, Oct. 11,  
Nov. 8, Dec. 6  
**Times:** 8:30 a.m.–noon  
**Locations:** To be determined  
**Price:** \$35/person

Registration is required. Call 740-687-8477 or email [resa@fmchealth.org](mailto:resa@fmchealth.org).

### FIRST AID TRAINING

Receive hands-on emergency training and a certification card upon completion of a written exam.

**Dates:** Aug. 9  
Sept. 13, Oct. 11,  
Nov. 8, Dec. 6  
**Times:** Noon-3:30 p.m.  
**Locations:** To be determined  
**Price:** \$35/person

Registration is required. Call 740-687-8477 or email [resa@fmchealth.org](mailto:resa@fmchealth.org).

### COMMUNITY HEART WATCH

Mobile CPR Training Unit Dates:

Pleasantville Music Festival, Aug 23,  
Bremen Oktoberfest, Sept. 27  
Fairfield County Fair, Oct. 5-10  
11 a.m.-5 p.m. near the Round Barn

For more information, call 740-687-6920 or email Mike Kallenberg at [mikeka@fmchealth.org](mailto:mikeka@fmchealth.org).



# MEET OUR **NEW PROVIDERS**

**Suveer Bagwe, MD**



Fairfield Healthcare Professionals  
Cardiology  
2405 N. Columbus St., Ste. 202  
Lancaster, Ohio 43130  
740-689-4480

**Sean Jerig, MD**



Now  
with FHP  
Fairfield Healthcare Professionals  
Obstetrics & Gynecology  
112 N. Ewing St.  
Lancaster, Ohio 43130  
740-689-6690

**Nahom Tecle, MD**



Fairfield Healthcare Professionals  
Orthopedics & Physical Med. Rehab.  
2384 N. Memorial Dr., 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor  
Lancaster, Ohio 43130  
740-689-4935

**Brennan Winkler, PA-C**



Fairfield Healthcare Professionals  
Hematology/Oncology  
135 N. Ewing St., Ste. 202  
Lancaster, Ohio 43130  
740-687-4505

The following providers recently joined Fairfield Healthcare Professionals. Looking for a provider?

**Go to [fmchealth.org](https://www.fmchealth.org) and click Find a Provider or scan this QR code.**



*Please call the office to inquire about an appointment. Some providers and offices are not currently accepting new patients. Referrals from a Primary Care Provider are needed for most specialties. If you are in need of a Primary Care Provider, call our referral line at 740-687-8687.*

**Jessica Bethel, CNP**



Fairfield Healthcare Professionals  
Vascular Surgery  
618 Pleasantville Rd., Ste. 302  
Lancaster, Ohio 43130  
740-687-6910

**Kathryn Bland, CNP**



Fairfield Healthcare Professionals  
Pulmonology & Critical Care  
618 Pleasantville Rd., Ste. 303  
Lancaster, Ohio 43130  
740-689-6833

**Tyler Johnoff, CNP**



Fairfield Healthcare Professionals  
Continuity of Care Clinic  
131 N. Ewing St., Ste. A  
Lancaster, Ohio 43130  
740-689-6605

**Kristin Pearce, CNP**



Fairfield Healthcare Professionals  
Urology  
618 Pleasantville Rd., Ste. 203  
Lancaster, Ohio 43130  
740-689-4945

## THE **MONITOR**

To receive an electronic version of *The Monitor* directly to your inbox, fill out the form at: <https://www.fmchealth.org/the-monitor/>

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*Photographer:* Jill Henwood

*Contributing Writers and Editors:*

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Reese Campbell  
Mike Kallenberg  
Maggie Keener  
Jason Maddux  
Phil Settecase  
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Teri Watson

Fairfield Medical Center provides healthcare services to more than 250,000 residents in Southeastern Ohio. FMC is a nonprofit health system that strives to provide outstanding care to its patients, their families and visitors.

*The Monitor*, produced by the Marketing & Community Services Department, is published to share health information and updates with members of the communities we serve. All material is property of FMC and may not be reproduced without permission.





## Do You Need a Digital Detox?



***Is your phone the first thing you pick up in the morning and the last thing you look at before going to sleep? Do you feel panicked if you misplace it? Are your friends and family accusing you of always being distracted by your device?***

If so, you may be due for a digital detox – and you're not alone. According to Consumer Affairs, the average cell phone user spends more than four hours on their phone every day and checks it 144 times a day. Even more concerning, of the 98 percent of Americans who own a mobile phone, 57 percent admit that they are addicted to their device.

### ***Why are cell phones so addictive?***

The desire to constantly check or scroll your phone is fueled by dopamine, a feel-good hormone that surges straight to your brain every time you experience pleasure. Cell phones are masters at generating dopamine – who doesn't love a hilarious TikTok video, a text from a close friend or a "like" on their most recent Facebook post? Your brain quickly becomes hooked on the dopamine rush and wants it more and more. Unfortunately, as with most addictions, excessive cell phone use can negatively affect your mental and physical well-being over time and distract you from the people and things that matter most. Lack of exercise, sleep problems, weight gain, low self-esteem and social isolation are all problems that have all been linked to cell phone addiction.

### ***How can I detox from my phone?***

Taking a short break from your cell phone, commonly called a "digital detox," has been shown to help lower stress levels, increase productivity and eliminate back and neck problems, among other benefits. But before diving into a digital detox, it's important to remain realistic: Taking gradual steps to decrease the time you spend on your phone each day is much more effective than quitting cold turkey. After all, you still need your phone for some things – you just don't need it as much as you think! Here are some tips to decrease cell phone usage:

- » **Do your research:** What hours of the day do you use your phone the most and what are you doing on your phone during that time? This information will give you good insight into the relationship you have with your phone and the areas where you can cut back.
- » **Designate certain times of the day, such as mealtimes, working hours and right before bed, as cell phone-free.** To resist temptation, silence your phone, turn off notifications and put it somewhere out of reach.
- » **Aim to start and end your day without your cell phone.** Many people use their phone as an alarm clock but reaching for your device first thing in the morning isn't a good start during a detox. At night, put the phone away about an hour before bedtime. Cell phone screens emit blue light, which can trick your brain into thinking it's daytime.
- » **Purge your phone of anything that decreases your joy.** The person on your friend list who is always complaining. The business that sends multiple marketing emails every day. The influencer who is constantly pushing expensive products that you don't need. Find what triggers you and delete, block, unfriend or unfollow.

### ***How long should a digital detox last?***

The length of time is up to you and varies from person to person, but several days to two weeks is often a good starting point to help you evaluate your relationship with your phone and lay the groundwork for some new habits to take form. Remember that most digital detoxes aren't a "one and done" approach; if you start to slip back into your old habits, simply take another break. Chances are, you'll notice some positive changes in your mental and physical health that will stick with you after the detox and spur you down the path to progress.