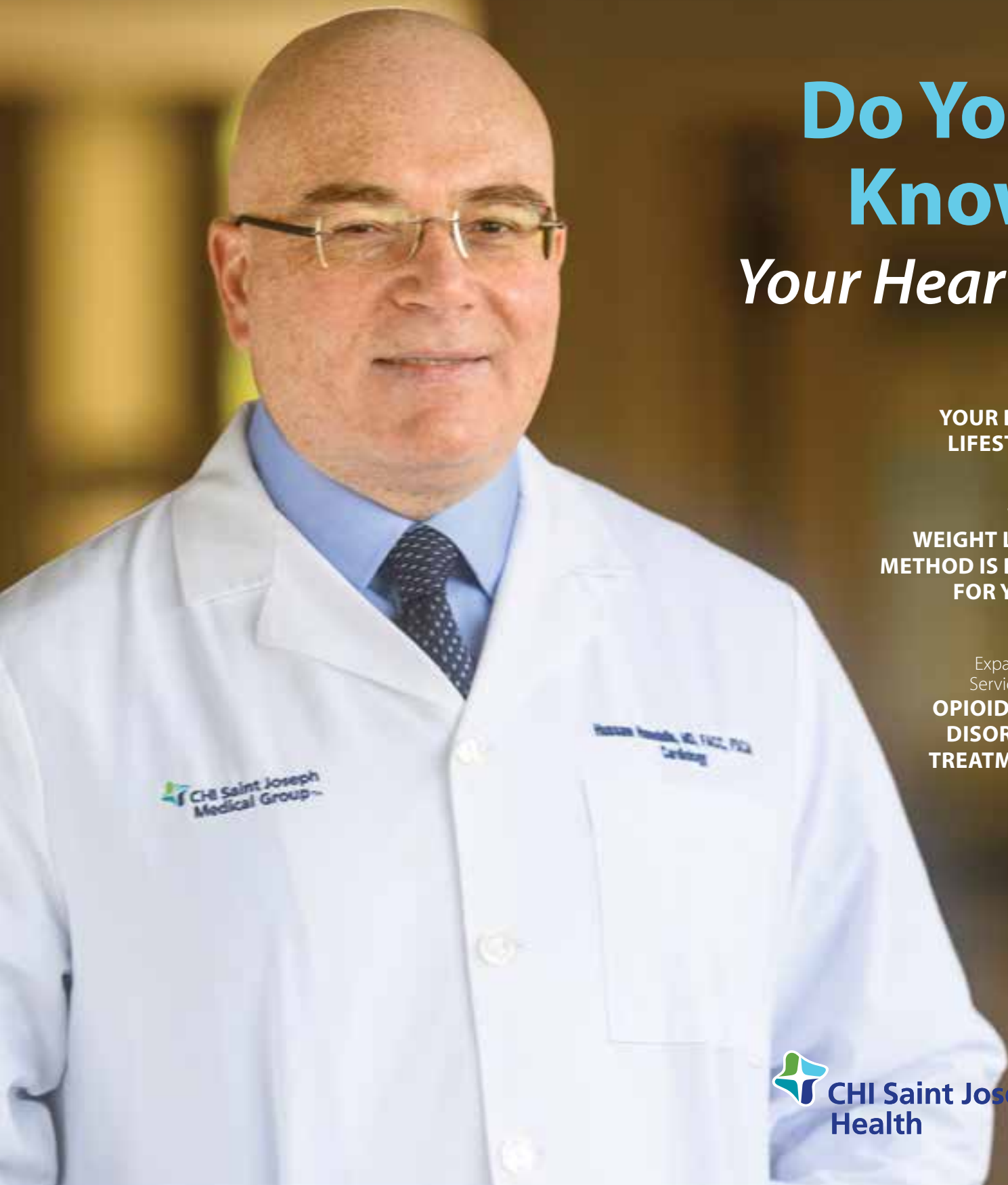


# Spirit of Health

WINTER 2024

A CHI Saint Joseph Health publication focused on building healthier communities.



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## Dear *Spirit of Health* readers,



In 1956, Saint Joseph Hospital joined the Kentucky Heart Association and the Fayette County Heart Committee to open the Heart Clinic for patients in need. In 1959, Dr. Richard

Crutcher performed the first open-heart surgery in Lexington at Saint Joseph Hospital. He was assisted by Dr. Richard Segnitz and Dr. J.B. Holloway Jr. Dr. Noble Macfarlane ran the heart-lung machine, and 15 people staffed the room. In 1981, Dr. Jamie Jacobs performed what was believed to be the first coronary balloon angioplasty in Kentucky on a 46-year-old Midway resident, also at Saint Joseph Hospital.

Those are just a few examples of how Saint Joseph Hospital led the way in heart care in our communities over the years. Our values of excellence, collaboration and inclusion have long been a part of our mission, and we are proud to have laid the foundation for quality heart care across Kentucky.

Our caregivers still provide that high-quality care, and we are proud that Saint Joseph Hospital has the legacy of being Lexington's heart hospital.

In this issue of *Spirit of Health*, our expert cardiology specialists share critical information that will help you stay on top of your health when it comes to matters of the heart.

Heart care is more than just the health of the organ. It's also an acknowledgment of the humankindness that makes your spirits soar. Our caregivers across the ministry provide that element of heart care.

In this issue you'll meet three such people within our ministry. Dr. Shawn Flynn, Donita Blanton and Allison Case all work in heart care, but their dedication to the communities they serve is a testament to the importance of having a spiritually healthy heart.

It's the beginning of the year, and we all know resolutions often include eight loss. Our experts in medication and surgical weight loss have a new educational video series that can help you choose whether one is right for you.

Finally, we are proud that two of our facilities have received grant funding to join the Kentucky Statewide Opioid Stewardship Emergency Department Bridge Program to ensure those people in need have access to care when they need it.

We are proud to serve communities across Kentucky and thank you for allowing us to be a part of your health care team.

Anthony (Tony) A. Houston, EdD, FACHE  
Market President  
CHI Saint Joseph Health

## Cover

Hussam Hamdalla, MD, FACC, FSCAI, is one member of our expert heart team at Saint Joseph Hospital. He said it is important for everyone to be aware of heart-related issues so they can get checked out before an emergency.

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## *Spirit of Health* Winter 2024

**Mary Branham**  
Senior Director, Marketing & Communications

**Chris Schmitt**  
Marketing Director



# Advanced Care for Vein Disease



Saint Joseph Hospital is home to the only certified Vein Center in Kentucky.

**The CHI Saint Joseph Medical Group – Cardiology** noninvasive services vascular laboratory recently earned accreditation as a certified Vein Center through The Intersocietal Commission for the Accreditation of Vascular Laboratories.

“It is a very rigorous process,” said **Steve Lin, MD, FACC**, cardiologist and medical director of the Vein Center and a diplomate of the American Board of Venous & Lymphatic Medicine. “We had to demonstrate our commitment to quality and technical expertise to a panel of expert vein practitioners. There are many vein centers but very few certified Vein Centers.”



Steve Lin, MD, FACC

## Detecting and Treating Vein Disease

The vein experts at Saint Joseph Hospital diagnose and treat conditions ranging from varicose veins to life-threatening blood clots in the legs or lungs due to vein disease. We offer the entire spectrum of state-of-the-art medical and procedural treatment of symptomatic venous disease, including sclerotherapy, VenaSeal, endovascular laser treatment, ambulatory phlebectomy, proximal venous stenting and thrombectomy.

“Vein disease is the most common vascular disease,” Dr. Lin said. “It’s the most visible but also the most overlooked cardiovascular disease. Patients are often affected for years prior to getting proper evaluation.”

Without treatment, vein disease usually worsens over time. However, treatments are available.

“Treatments are mostly done on an outpatient basis,” Dr. Lin said. “They are low risk and have high rates of significant symptom improvement.”



**Want to learn more about vein health?  
Call 859.276.4429 to make an appointment.**

# Cold Weather, Healthy Heart

Protect your cardiac health this winter.

**When temperatures drop**, keeping warm isn’t the only thing you need to think about.

“It’s very important to be aware of the cold and how it can impact your cardiac health,” said **Sharat Koul, DO, FACC, FSCAI**, interventional cardiologist at CHI Saint Joseph Medical Group – Cardiology. “Cold temperatures put extra stress on the heart, pushing blood pressure up.”



Sharat Koul, DO, FACC, FSCAI

## A Snowball Effect

In the winter, chilly temps cause blood vessels to constrict, decreasing the amount of oxygen-rich blood circulating to your heart and body. Doing strenuous activities stresses your heart, putting you at higher risk for cardiovascular events, including a heart attack.

“Doing isometric exercises where you’re picking things up and bearing down, such as shoveling snow, can push blood pressure up significantly,” Dr. Koul said. “Ask for help when you need it. People who have been diagnosed with cardiac disease and those with cardiac risk factors are at highest risk.”

When you engage in outdoor activities in the cold, be careful not to overdo it, dress in layers and protect your head, ears, hands and feet.

“It’s easy to slide into a sedentary lifestyle when it’s cold out,” Dr. Koul said, “but it’s important to stay active year-round and not undo healthy habits established in warmer weather.”

**To make an appointment with a cardiologist, visit [CHISaintJosephHealth.org/find-a-provider](https://CHISaintJosephHealth.org/find-a-provider).**







# Do You Know Your Heart?

Your heart is your body's most important muscle.  
Take action when you see signs of trouble.

**Every moment of** every day, your heart is busy pushing oxygen-rich blood throughout your body. When something goes wrong with it, you can experience serious complications. Do you know your heart well enough to know when to take action?

“Not everyone seeks early evaluation for heart-related symptoms, because they don't know what to look for,” said **Hussam Hamdalla, MD, FACC, FSCAI**, cardiologist with CHI Saint Joseph Medical Group – Cardiology. “This is a problem. The earlier we detect heart problems, the easier it is to manage and treat them without a trip to the emergency department [ED] in the middle of the night with worsening chest pain or a heart attack.”

## Minor Symptoms, Major Problem

According to Dr. Hamdalla, reduced energy is one of the most common early-stage heart disease symptoms. Suddenly, mowing

the grass or performing other normal activities doesn't come easily. You wear out quickly and require frequent breaks. When you're active, you get out of breath easily.

Crushing chest pain is not the only sign you have heart disease. Squeezing chest pain, an uneasiness or heaviness, and discomfort are common with heart disease. There are a variety of concerning symptoms that many people overlook, including:

- Abnormal heart rhythm
- Dizziness
- Fatigue
- Shortness of breath with exertion
- Swelling in the feet or ankles

Dr. Hamdalla sees people of all ages who ignore these symptoms.

“Older people don't want to complain, so they write off their minor symptoms as part of the aging process,” he said. “Younger people

feel invincible. They can't imagine their heart is in trouble, despite the increasing number of people experiencing heart attacks during their 20s and early 30s."

## Having a Heart-to-Heart

Fortunately, you don't have to wait for heart disease symptoms.

"Most people experience a slow, gradual onset of heart disease," Dr. Hamdalla said. "Being attentive to your health early can help detect heart disease before symptoms arise."

The best way to monitor your heart health is by working with your primary care provider. No matter what symptoms you experience, tell your provider as soon as possible. He or she can perform blood tests and other examinations to check cholesterol and blood pressure levels and more. If appropriate, your provider will refer you to a cardiologist or other specialist.

Your provider may also recommend Saint Joseph Hospital's new Health Risk Assessment, a group of tests and health factors that have been proved to indicate your chance of having a cardiovascular event, such as a heart attack or stroke.

"Regular heart screenings and cardiac tests help detect silent killers," said Sheila Devine Griffeth, MSN, market vice president, cardiovascular, infusion, neuroscience and surgical services at CHI Saint Joseph Health. "Once you know of potential threats, you can take steps to reduce risk for heart attack or stroke."



Sheila Devine Griffeth, MSN

Available since November 2023, the Health Risk Assessment combines several common heart disease screenings in a single appointment. The results indicate the degree of risk: borderline, intermediate or high. Tests performed include:

- **Abdominal aorta screening.** A provider uses an ultrasound to see how blood flows through the section of the aorta that runs through your abdomen. Aneurysms, or bulges, often form in this area and can be life-threatening if they rupture.
- **Ankle-brachial index.** Blood pressure in your ankle and arm are compared. A significant difference between the two can indicate blocked leg arteries.
- **Carotid artery screening.** Ultrasound technology helps show blockages in the carotid artery that may lead to stroke.
- **Ejection fraction measurement.** This measures how much blood your heart pumps out with each beat.
- **Electrocardiogram.** A recording of your heart's electrical activity detects an abnormal heart rate or rhythm.

The full Health Risk Assessment takes approximately 90 minutes. Afterward, our expert team reviews your results and tells you about your risk for heart disease.

"Having these assessments helps you unlock better cardiovascular health," Griffeth said. "Thanks to them, you get information to help you take charge of your heart and improve your overall health and well-being."

**To schedule a Health Risk Assessment appointment for your heart, call 859.313.2699.**



**Scan the QR code to take an online health risk assessment.**



## Teamwork and Technology

For three years, London resident Karen Combs' heart raced at random intervals, leaving her exhausted and unable to function the rest of the day. Thanks to teamwork and a high-tech watch, she got a diagnosis and treatment.

Arrhythmias cause your heart to beat too quickly, too slowly or at irregular intervals. Combs knew this from her family history: Her grandmother and sister both experienced arrhythmias in the past. When Combs' heart raced, she knew what to do.

"I contacted my doctor after the first one," she said, adding that her episodes were hard to predict. They occurred while she was doing everyday activities. She wore a heart monitor for a month, but it didn't detect any problems.

## Owning Her Health

Combs didn't give up hope. When a fitness watch that monitored heart rhythm went on the market, Combs bought one. It didn't take long for the watch to detect an arrhythmia.

She recorded the incident and sent the results to **Yousef Darrat, MD, FHRS**, cardiologist and electrophysiologist with CHI Saint Joseph Medical Group – Cardiology/EP.



Yousef Darrat, MD, FHRS

Although the fitness watch wasn't medical-grade technology, it showed Combs had an arrhythmia called supraventricular tachycardia. A few months later, Dr. Darrat treated the arrhythmia causing the problem with an ablation procedure.

A year later, Combs remains arrhythmia free. Dr. Darrat remains cautiously optimistic about DIY heart monitoring.

"Using a fitness watch is a great way to capture data for a diagnosis, but watches have some limitations, and the tracings need to be reviewed by a health care provider," he said. "I don't recommend anyone use it as the final word in diagnosis. Instead, follow up with your provider any time you don't feel well or your heart races."

# Living Your Best Lifestyle



Whether you are trying to prevent cardiovascular disease or maintain heart health, a healthy lifestyle is the foundation.

**The top predictors** of heart health are also areas people can work to improve. Focusing on the American Heart Association's Life's Essential 8 can help you reach your goals for heart health:

1. Cut down or quit smoking.
2. Eat well.
3. Get moving 30 to 45 minutes five days a week.
4. Reach and maintain a healthy weight.
5. Sleep seven to nine hours nightly.
6. Aim for blood pressure under 130/80 mm Hg.
7. Control cholesterol levels.
8. Keep A1c less than 7.

"Lifestyle remains the foundational therapy in reaching and maintaining healthy body weight and effective stress management," said **Steve Lin, MD, FACC**, cardiologist and director of cardiovascular services and cardiac rehabilitation at Saint Joseph Hospital. "In our clinic, almost 80% of patients are overweight or obese. Lifestyle is a critical component of weight management, and a big part of that is your diet."



Steve Lin, MD, FACC

## A Sea Change

Diet trends come and go, but the Mediterranean diet is known to promote heart health. When shopping, follow these tips, which research consistently shows will lead to better health:

- Focus on fiber-rich foods, such as vegetables, fruit, beans and whole grains.
- Choose healthy fats from fatty fish, olive oil, avocado and nuts and avoid saturated fat found in red meat and processed foods.
- Limit sodium by cooking more meals from scratch and avoiding foods high in sodium.

"People who follow this diet may find they feel better and look younger," Dr. Lin said. "Still, at some point, you will deviate from

the ideal diet. The main goal is to make sure that you do so only on occasion. Make heart-healthy eating part of your everyday lifestyle."

**Do you know your risk for heart disease? Visit [Care.YourCHI.org/hearthealth](https://care.yourchi.org/hearthealth) to take our heart health risk assessment and share the results with your provider.**



Scan the QR code to take an online health risk assessment.

## Heart-Healthy Quarterback Sacks

Put the power of heart-smart Mediterranean diet staples in a pita for a taste bud touchdown while watching the big game.

### Ingredients

- 2 cups black beans, low sodium, drained and rinsed
- 2 cups frozen vegetable mix (broccoli, corn, peppers and other vegetables), thawed
- 2 cups chicken breasts, boneless, skinless, grilled, diced
- ½ cup mozzarella cheese, low-moisture, part-skim, shredded
- 1 tablespoon cilantro, fresh, chopped
- 2 tablespoon scallions, chopped
- 2 6-inch pitas, whole wheat, halved

### Directions

1. Preheat the oven to 400 F and line a rimmed baking pan with parchment paper.
2. In a large bowl, combine all ingredients except pita bread. Mix well.
3. Divide the filling between each pita pocket and place on the pan. Bake for 10 minutes or until filling is heated through and cheese is melted.

### Serves 4

Source: [FruitsandVeggies.org](https://FruitsandVeggies.org)

**Calories:** 390  
**Calories from fat:** 16  
**Total fat:** 7g  
**Saturated fat:** 3g  
**Cholesterol:** 85mg  
**Sodium:** 560mg  
**Total carbohydrate:** 41g  
**Dietary fiber:** 8g  
**Protein:** 39g



# Our Spirit of Service

At CHI Saint Joseph Health, each caregiver leads as an embodiment of our values and faith. Many of our caregivers, including those featured here, answer the call to serve with compassion, integrity and humankindness.

Donita Blanton, a respiratory therapist at Saint Joseph London, draws strength from her own health struggles to inspire patients. Overcoming breast cancer and three back surgeries that left her partially paralyzed, she returned to work after a nine-year hiatus.

*Read her story on page 9.*

Interested in joining our team? **Scan the QR code to learn about our open positions.**



# Caring for 'All Matters of the Heart'

For one cardiologist at CHI Saint Joseph Medical Group – Cardiology, caring for patients' hearts is an extension of his faith.

**Growing up in** southwestern Jefferson County near Louisville, **Shawn Flynn, MD**, knew at a young age that he wanted to become a physician. During his college days, his goal turned into a calling as the pressure of studying and test-taking mounted.

"Going down the path to become a doctor wasn't easy, and the struggles that came along with it made me question whether it was what God wanted for my life," Dr. Flynn said. "He spoke to my spirit and told me this was the direction He wanted me to go, and that He would support and guide me."

Leaning on his faith, Dr. Flynn earned his medical degree from the University of Louisville and completed a residency and three fellowships in Arkansas and Michigan. He returned to the Commonwealth in 2015 and recently joined CHI Saint Joseph Medical Group – Cardiology. He sees patients at offices in Danville, Nicholasville and Lebanon.

## Holistic Healing

A general cardiologist, Dr. Flynn treats the full range of cardiac conditions, including coronary artery disease, high blood pressure, atrial fibrillation and aortic stenosis. As a medical resident, he fell in love with cardiology's ability to help patients get back to the activities they love. Helping patients find solutions continues to drive him, as does living his faith through the care he provides.

As a Christian cardiologist, Dr. Flynn looks to Christ's example when interacting with patients.

"My faith guides me on how best to care for, listen to and respond to patients," he said. "Jesus asked a lot of questions, and I tend to do that with my patients. I also listen, and I like to teach, just as Christ taught, using parables and analogies. I have a lot in common with pastors. The way our communities look to us for guidance is similar."



For Dr. Flynn, taking care of the heart doesn't just mean treating one of the body's most important organs.

"I'm focused on trying to help patients however I can," he said. "I have a saying: I can help take care of all matters of the heart, whether physical or spiritual."

## Faith, Family and Farming

When he's not seeing patients, Dr. Flynn devotes himself to the three F's: faith, family and farming. Dr. Flynn, his wife and their four children are active in their church, where he teaches Sunday school and leads the youth group. He spends the rest of his free time tending his land.

"I grew up on a hay farm in Jefferson County, and I've gone back to my roots by baling hay," Dr. Flynn said. "I offer horse-quality hay to the people around us. That's allowed me to connect with my patients, many of whom are farmers. I'm no different from anyone else. We're just neighbors caring for each other."



Scan the QR code  
to learn more  
about Dr. Flynn.



# A Heart for Education

Donita Blanton uses her own experience to teach patients how to find the strength to get better.

**Fifteen years ago**, Donita Blanton, RT, didn't know if she'd be able to stay employed in her demanding field of respiratory therapy.

After years working in home health care and in a long-term ventilator unit at a hospital, Blanton found herself sidelined by her own health problems.

"I survived breast cancer and three back surgeries," Blanton said. "I had partial paralysis from the waist to the knees for a year, and I ended up being unable to work for a total of nine years."

Eventually, prayer led Blanton to wonder if she could start again.

"In 2017, I felt like God was telling me to get my license reinstated," Blanton said. "Within the same week, I ran into a woman I barely knew, and she asked me, 'Do you ever think about going back to work? I work for a pulmonologist, and he needs an RT.'"

## Back on the Job

Six years ago, Blanton joined Saint Joseph London. Two years ago she began her current position as a cardiopulmonary rehabilitation specialist. During that time, her enthusiasm for her work has only grown.

"I absolutely love — and I have to emphasize the word 'love' — educating patients," Blanton said. "That's one of my favorite things, along with getting to know them and being their biggest cheerleader."

Now 51, Blanton uses her own experience as a patient to help the people she treats.

"When I have a patient tell me, 'You can't begin to understand what I'm going through,' I can tell them that I do," Blanton said. "I've learned from the hand life has dealt me, and it helps me be a better therapist."

Blanton works hard to treat the whole patient during rehabilitation, going beyond improving cardiac and pulmonary function after a heart attack or stroke.

"People often put on a happy face, but the majority of my patients are terrified of having another cardiac event," Blanton said. "I work with them to manage anxiety and focus on goals, such as getting back to church or out on the lake to fish."

## A Dedication to Family

When she's not working, Blanton is usually quilting, gardening or spending time with her family. With five grandchildren ages 10 to 2, Blanton and her husband of 32 years are always busy.

"My husband said my grandchildren are my favorite hobby, and honestly, they're my favorite thing in the world," Blanton said. "I just love to look at life through their eyes. It keeps me grounded."



“When I have a patient tell me, ‘You can’t begin to understand what I’m going through,’ I can tell them that I do.”

— Donita Blanton, RT, cardiopulmonary rehabilitation specialist, Saint Joseph London

# Nursing With Heart



Allison Case, RN, is dedicated to helping patients feel safe and cared for when they have cardiac surgery.

**Having heart surgery** can be a scary experience for any patient. That's why Allison Case, RN, cardiothoracic surgery nurse at Saint Joseph Hospital, knows her job is about more than assisting with the surgery itself.

"It is important to try to make patients feel as comfortable and safe as possible," she said. "As a cardiothoracic surgery nurse, I act as their support system before they go under anesthesia."

## Turning an Interest Into a Career

Even before becoming a cardiothoracic surgery nurse, Case long had an interest in the heart and cardiology.

"The heart is the most fascinating organ of the body," she said. "I knew cardiology nursing is where I needed to be."

Case completed her education at Morehead State University in Morehead, Kentucky. After earning her degree in nursing, she joined the team at Saint Joseph Hospital, where she has worked since 2019. Two years ago, she became a cardiothoracic surgery nurse, assisting on many cardiac surgeries and caring for patients in recovery.

"The most challenging aspect of this job is seeing patients in their most critical and vulnerable state," Case said, "but getting them through surgery and out of the operating room successfully is what makes all of the hardships of being a nurse worthwhile."

## Becoming a Family

For Case, another rewarding aspect of working on the cardiology team at Saint Joseph Hospital is the closeness she shares with the other members of the team.

"We are like family, and being in sync with one another really helps us on our jobs," she said. "Being able to have the comfort of your close friends with you during tough surgeries is a wonderful feeling."

Case spends a lot of her free time with her Saint Joseph Hospital family. She is also an active member of her church, helping members in need and teaching children's Bible classes.

When she isn't working or helping her community, Case loves to spend time with her husband, Peyton, and their dog, Tucker, either relaxing at home or taking walks around the neighborhood. They are also big college sports fans.

"My husband and I enjoy attending every UK football and basketball game that we can," she said. "We love cheering on our Cats!"

**“ When I witnessed my first open heart surgery, I truly fell in love with cardiology nursing.”**

— Allison Case, RN, cardiothoracic surgery nurse at Saint Joseph Hospital



# Which Weight Loss Method Is Best for You?

Medical and surgical weight loss treatments offer effective ways to address obesity. Still, many wonder if one is better than the other.

**Nearly 4 in 10** adults in Kentucky have obesity. Support and treatment are often needed to manage the condition, but it can be challenging to know what's best for you. Learning more about medical and surgical weight loss options can help you decide.

## Shared Benefits of Weight Loss Treatments

Obesity increases the risk of heart disease, high blood pressure, sleep apnea and Type 2 diabetes, among other conditions. Both medical and surgical weight loss options help manage, prevent or reverse obesity-related health issues and improve quality of life while you shed pounds.

## Medical Weight Loss Options

Medical weight loss uses medications to treat obesity. Medications may make you feel full faster or less hungry or decrease the body's ability to absorb fat. Medical weight loss is often recommended for people with a body mass index (BMI) of 30 or more, or 27 or higher with obesity-related health conditions.



"Decades ago, the medication options that were available were potentially very risky," said **Benjamin Neltner, MD**, CHI Saint Joseph Medical Group – Primary Care in Lexington. "Over the past 15 to 20 years, more safety studies were conducted and new medications approved and made available. Patients have had tremendous success with the newest injectable medications that have excellent safety profiles and promote long-term weight loss."



Benjamin Neltner, MD

## Surgical Procedures for Weight Loss

The most common weight loss surgeries make the stomach smaller to limit food intake, bypass part of the intestine to decrease absorption or both. Generally, surgery is considered when a person has a BMI of 40 or more, or 35 or greater with obesity-related conditions.

"Gastric bypass is one of the safest surgeries you can have today," said **David Swedler, DO**, bariatric



David Swedler, DO

surgeon at CHI Saint Joseph Health – Center for Weight Loss Surgery at Saint Joseph East. "Getting a robotic-assisted gastric bypass has similar risks of complications as a hysterectomy or getting a knee replaced."

## Making a Choice

There's no one-size-fits-all treatment for obesity. Ongoing healthy habits are essential for long-term success, no matter which treatment you choose. In addition, the right answer for you may not be one approach or the other but a combination of them.

"It's a multi-systemic disease, and it's best treated with a multidisciplinary approach — medicine and possibly surgery, as well as our dietitians and exercise physiotherapists, along with the psychological component," Dr. Swedler said. "It's a whole-team approach to a very complex disorder."

Learn more about treatment options for obesity with the new CHI Saint Joseph Health weight loss video series.





# How We Serve



**ON-THE-JOB TRAINING:** Nursing students from Kentucky State University had the opportunity to get on-the-job training working with caregivers at Saint Joseph Hospital.



**GO RED FOR WOMEN:** Tony Houston, market president, CHI Saint Joseph Health, and his wife, Rebecca, served as chair couple for this year's Go Red for Women luncheon and spoke to attendees about why CHI Saint Joseph Health supports Go Red and the importance of education and awareness around heart health.



**BACK TO SCHOOL DRIVE:** Caregivers at hospitals across CHI Saint Joseph Health, including Saint Joseph Berea, donated notebooks, backpacks, pencils and other school supplies to help students in their communities.

**CRITICAL CARE CERTIFICATION:** Several clinical paramedics earned critical care certification by completing a two-month, comprehensive Critical Care certification course. The 80 hours of continuing education allows them to provide a higher level of care within a critical care setting.







**EDDIE EAGLE GUNSAFE® PROGRAM:** Saint Joseph London's Nurturing Children Program launched its Eddie Eagle GunSafe® Program in Laurel County schools in September. The program expanded to all Knox County elementary schools in early 2023 and reached 2,531 students with its message about how they can stay safe if they encounter a gun.



**FMH STEM Day:** Flaget Memorial Hospital has worked to expand opportunities to students interested in health care careers. The hospital is also engaged with Bardstown City Schools for its new Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) program, which will be highlighting careers in health care.



**FALL FESTIVAL FUN:** Hospitals across CHI Saint Joseph Health held fall festival activities for families of caregivers. At Saint Joseph Hospital, the bouncy slide and face-painting were popular with children in attendance. Caregivers dressed up for the festival along with the children.



**MOVIE NIGHT:** Last summer, Saint Joseph London caregivers hosted the first Movie Night on the Lawn for the London community since the COVID-19 pandemic. The team showed "Finding Nemo" and gave away snacks and crafts to guests.



**KSU SCHOLARSHIPS:** CHI Saint Joseph Health Chief Nursing Executive/Chief Operating Officer Melissa Bennett joined Kentucky State University President Koffi C. Akapko, PhD, and other dignitaries in recognizing 15 nursing students who will receive this year's nursing scholarships from CHI Saint Joseph Health. The ministry will provide \$5,000 scholarships every semester, totaling \$10,000 per academic year, for up to two years to qualified full-time applicants who are pursuing a nursing degree and commit to service at a CHI Saint Joseph Health facility.

# Expanding Services for Opioid Use Disorder Treatment



**CHI Saint Joseph Health's** Opioid Stewardship program is rooted in our ministry's mission to improve health, advance social justice and make known the healing presence of God. A recent grant from the Kentucky Hospital Association and Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services will advance our stewardship program by providing critical resources for the communities Saint Joseph London and Saint Joseph Mount Sterling serve.

In September 2023, The Kentucky Statewide Opioid Stewardship Program (KY SOS) awarded \$50,000 grants to both the Saint Joseph Mount Sterling Foundation and Saint Joseph London Foundation for participation in the Emergency Department Bridge Program, the newest program in the KY SOS initiative.

"Our goal is to help our ministry deliver exceptional care to every patient," said Delaine Thiel, CFRE, vice president of philanthropy, CHI Saint Joseph Health Foundations. "We are committed to the health and well-being of our communities, and these grants provide the necessary personnel and resources to meet the needs of our patients."

This new program supports emergency departments with an opportunity to make opioid use disorder treatment accessible to all patients at any time. Saint Joseph London and Saint Joseph Mount Sterling will be among the first 13 hospitals in the state to participate in this program. Currently, CHI Saint Joseph Health offers inpatient care for opioid use disorder through its stewardship program, and these grants will expand access.



“Oftentimes people come in with an overdose or related medical event but aren’t admitted because they don’t meet criteria for hospital admission,” said Haley Busch, PharmD, CHI Saint Joseph Health’s Opioid Stewardship Program’s clinical leader. “But we don’t want to miss that crucial touchpoint for these patients. We can be a springboard for facilitating long-term recovery and support.”

The grant will establish two peer support specialist positions, one for each participating hospital, who will be the direct contact between patients who suffer from opioid use disorder, the hospital’s caregivers and community resources that support transition of care and long term recovery.

“We do a great job of treating medical diagnoses in a way that’s evidence-based and also facilitates transition of care, but we are seeing a growing number of patients coming to us with addiction medicine needs,” Busch said.

Lori Coots, director of emergency services at Saint Joseph London and Saint Joseph Mount Sterling, said caregivers see patients facing substance and opioid use disorder every day.

“This is a service these communities have needed for a while,” Coots said. “Historically we have had few options to offer these types of patients. When they present to the emergency department, they are often desperate and looking for help, and we had nothing to assist them in the recovery process. With the addition of this service, we will now be able to get them started with initiating the recovery process, and the peer support specialist will be able to maintain contact and assist and support them to hopefully improve their chances of successful recovery.”

The peer support specialist will not be a clinical position, but it will be a person who is also in long-term recovery for opioid or substance use disorder. They will build trust with patients and share information and resources for the next steps on the road to recovery. Specialists will also provide follow-up care and create relationships with addiction medicine treatment facilities in Laurel and Montgomery counties.

“This grant is helping us dig deeper into our commitment to understanding the evidence of opioid use disorder,” Busch said. “We want to make sure we have the appropriate resources to provide to the patient to continue their care beyond our emergency departments.”

In addition to the creation of the peer support specialist role, KY SOS will provide education and resources regarding opioid stewardship best practices, support and coordination for the program with Kentucky Hospital Association, and access to clinical advisors and subject matter experts to guide the program toward sustainability.

“Our goal is to build awareness and break down stigma and barriers that have been in place for so long across health care, because offering compassionate, evidence-based care to patients who have an opioid use disorder is an organizational priority,” Busch said. “Opioid use disorder is prevalent in our communities, and there’s not a single life it hasn’t touched. It doesn’t discriminate. It doesn’t care how much money a person makes or the color of their skin or their religion.”

[Visit SupportCHISaintJosephHealth.org/home](https://www.chisaintjosephhealth.org/home) to learn more about CHI Saint Joseph Health Foundations or make a donation.

## 2023 Yes, Mamm! Yes, Cerv! 5K

The Saint Joseph Hospital Foundation’s annual Yes, Mamm! Yes, Cerv! 5K returned for its eighth year, bringing together and celebrating local cancer survivors, and raising money to support local cancer patients. The race was held in Nicholasville on Oct. 14, at the racecourse of presenting sponsor RJ Corman Railroad Group.

Proceeds from the race provide free mammography and cervical cancer screenings, diagnostic testing, and program support to underinsured and uninsured patients across Kentucky. The event raised more than \$60,000 and proceeds will support Yes, Mamm! Yes, Cerv! programs statewide.





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