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Sylvia Gadway, X-ray mammography technician, guides a patient during a mammogram at UVM Health Network's Alice Hyde Medical Center. The hospital recently unveiled leading-edge mammography imaging equipment that will improve the speed, accuracy and comfort of mammograms, while reducing unnecessary follow-up appointments. Contributed.

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Lowville hospital awarded for efforts to improve stroke care

Johnson Newspapers

LOWVILLE — People who live in rural communities live an average of three years fewer than their urban counterparts, have a 40% higher likelihood of developing heart disease and face a 30% increased risk for stroke mortality — a gap that has grown over the past two decades, according to a press release from Lewis County Health System.

Lewis County Health System has received the American Heart Association's Get With The Guidelines® — Rural Stroke Silver award for efforts to optimize stroke care and eliminate rural health care outcome disparities.

"Rural communities deserve high-quality stroke care. I applaud our team for their commitment to stroke care excellence and this achievement of elevating LCHS from bronze to silver recognition this past year," said Gerald Cayer, LCHS Chief Executive Officer.

The American Heart Association, the world's lead-

ing nonprofit organization focused on heart and brain health for all, recognizes the importance of health care services provided to people living in rural areas by rural hospitals that play a vital role in the initiation of timely evidence-based care. For that reason, all rural hospitals participating in Get With The Guidelines — Stroke are eligible to receive award recognition based on a unique methodology focused on early acute stroke performance metrics.

"We are proud that our team at Lewis County Health System is being recognized for the important work we do every day to improve the lives of people in Lewis County who are affected by stroke, giving them the best possible chance of recovery and survival," said registered nurse Marcy Teal, LCHS Chief Nursing Officer. "As a hospital in a rural community, we deal with extended interfacility transportation times and limited staffing resources. We've made it a goal



Lewis County emergency department nurses, medical director and members of the Rural Healthcare Outcomes team are in front, from left, Marcy Teal, Shannon Der, Rebecca Keefer, Falcia Bacon, Charity Glenn and Randy Mullin. In back are Georgie Murphy, Emily Paulsen, Lucy Austin, Tracie Davoy, Dawn Rennie, Devon Doll and Dr. Timothy Mathis. Provided photo

to ensure those hurdles do not affect the standard of care our stroke patients receive."

The award recognizes hospitals for their efforts toward acute stroke care excellence demonstrated by composite score compliance to guideline-directed care for intravenous thrombolytic therapy,

timely hospital inter-facility transfer, dysphagia screening, symptom timeline and deficit assessment documentation, emergency medical services communication, brain imaging and stroke expert consultation.

"Patients and health care professionals in Lewis County

face unique health care challenges and opportunities," said Dr. Karen E. Joynt Maddox, volunteer expert for the American Heart Association. "Lewis County Health System has furthered this important work to improve care for all Americans, regardless of where they live."

Community Services opens Future Stories Fund Grants

Staff report

LOWVILLE — The Lewis County Community Services Board has launched the Future Stories Fund, a grant program supported by funds distributed to the county from recent opioid settlements and designed to support organizations/entities of all sizes and origins in combating the effects of the opioid overdose epidemic.

The opioid overdose epidemic is an ongoing public health crisis that deeply affects individuals, their families, friends, co-workers, employers, and our community overall. For too many years, too many of our community members have died from drug overdoses and poisonings, those who need

help often can't get it, and the well-being of future generations is under threat.

Those who die have lost the opportunity to build a future story and to positively contribute to our community. Other lives are deeply impacted by the loss, creating multigenerational trauma and potential future losses of life, and productivity that negatively affects our community for decades to come.

The Community Services Board believes that to reduce drug use and overdose in our community, we must prioritize prevention, treatment and recovery. The objectives for the Future Stories Funding include:

- Encourage new and innovative solutions to miti-

gating the opioid overdose epidemic

- Support efforts to discourage or prevent opioid use initiation and the misuse of opioids

- Reduce negative consequences associated with drug use

- Reduce barriers to treatment for opioid use disorder (OUD)

- Provide support/resources for individuals and families dealing with the effects of the opioid crisis.

The community provided input on how best to use funds distributed to the county from recent Opioid Settlements via a survey administered in May, as well as conversations with community leaders and stakehold-

ers. Based on the feedback received, the Community Services Board will prioritize supporting innovative programs which address any of the following areas but not limited to these suggestions:

- Support efforts to discourage or prevent opioid use initiation and the misuse of opioids.

This category emphasizes upstream strategies that target the root causes of drug use and overdose by strengthening community institutions and providing opportunities for youth and families to engage in activities that bring purpose and meaning to their lives.

- Support people in treatment for and recovery from Opioid Use Disorder and

cooccurring substance use disorder/mental health conditions. This category includes strategies to increase access to treatment and recovery resources within the county and neighboring communities.

The application period for the Future Stories Fund is now open, and eligible entities are encouraged to submit their entries before the deadline on Sept. 6. For more information about the Future Stories Fund, including program objectives, eligibility criteria, program examples and application guidelines, visit <https://lewiscountyny.gov/departments/community-services-mental-health/future-storiesfund/>.

NAHEC's Summer MASH Camps Ignite Interest in Healthcare Careers

By **ALEC JOHNSON**
aej@wdt.net

This summer, the Northern Area Health Education Center (NAHEC) successfully hosted four MASH (Medical Academy of Science and Health) camps at Clinton Community College (Plattsburgh, NY), North Country Community College (Saranac Lake, NY and Malone, NY), and Clarkson University's Lewis School of Health Sciences (Potsdam, NY). These camps provided local students with an unforgettable and valuable opportunity to engage in hands-on healthcare activities and

explore many possibilities within the medical field.

Each MASH camp was designed to immerse students in a variety of healthcare scenarios, allowing them to step into the shoes of professionals from different medical disciplines. Through interactive sessions, students practiced skills such as suturing, Stop-the-Bleed training, CPR, nursing tasks like taking vitals, and much more.

MASH Camps are beneficial to school-aged students by sparking an interest in pursuing a career in healthcare. They provide a first-

hand look at the profession's demands and rewards. By

See MASH T14

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FDA approves new coronavirus vaccine

By **FENIT NIRAPPI**

The Washington Post

The Food and Drug Administration approved new mRNA coronavirus vaccines Thursday, clearing the way for shots manufactured by Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna to start hitting pharmacy shelves and doctor's offices within a week.

Health officials encourage annual vaccination against the coronavirus, similar to yearly flu shots. Everyone 6 months and older should receive a new vaccine, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends.

The FDA has yet to approve an updated vaccine from Novavax, which uses a more conventional vaccine development method but has faced financial challenges.

Our scientific understanding of coronavirus vaccines has evolved since they debuted in late 2020. Here's what to know about the new vaccines.

WHY ARE THERE NEW VACCINES?

Coronavirus keeps evolving to overcome our immune defenses, and the shield offered by vaccines weakens over time. That's why federal health officials want people to get an annual updated coronavirus vaccine designed to target the latest variants. They approve them for release in late summer or early fall to coincide with flu shots that Americans are already used to getting.

The underlying vaccine technology and manufacturing process is the same, but components change to account for how the virus morphs. The new vaccines target the KP.2 variant because most recent covid cases are caused by that strain or closely related ones.

Covid is less dangerous overall than it was earlier in the pandemic because our bodies have become used to fighting the virus off and nearly everyone has some degree of immunity from receiving shots or getting sick. A new shot is meant to shore up existing de-



Pediatrician Mohammad Jarvandi prepares a coronavirus vaccine at his pediatric and nutrition center in Fairfax, Virginia in September last year. Valerie Plesch/Washington Post

fenses.

"It's an opportunity to mitigate or to reduce that risk even further rather than just relying on what happened in the past," said Robert Hopkins Jr., medical director of the National Foundation for Infectious Diseases and a physician in Arkansas.

WHO NEEDS A NEW CORONAVIRUS VACCINE?

The United States differs from other countries in recommending an updated coronavirus vaccine for everyone except young infants, rather than just those at heightened risk for severe disease because they are 65 or older, are moderately to severely immunocompromised or have serious medical conditions.

Health officials rejected a more targeted recommendation, with some contending that it's easier to tell everyone to get vaccinated than to try to define what makes a person high-risk. Most Americans have a risk factor for severe covid, such as being overweight or having diabetes.

Critics of this approach, including Paul A. Offit, a pediatrician and director of the Vaccine Education Center at

Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, worry that it detracts from the urgency of vaccinating vulnerable people who have a harder time mounting an immune response to the coronavirus.

DO THE VACCINES PREVENT INFECTION?

You probably know by now that vaccinated people can still get covid. But the shots do offer some protection against infection, just not the kind of protection you get from highly effective vaccines for other diseases such as measles.

The 2023-24 vaccine provided 54% increased protection against symptomatic covid infections, according to a CDC study of people who tested for the coronavirus at pharmacies during the first four months after that year's shot was released.

"People who get vaccinated are much less likely to get infected in the first place," said David J. Topham, director of the University of Rochester Translational Immunology and Infectious Disease Institute. "We'd love vaccines to be perfect, but Mother Nature is pretty damn smart."

A nasal vaccine could be

better at stopping infections outright by increasing immunity where they take hold, and one is being studied in a trial sponsored by the National Institutes of Health.

If you really want to dodge covid, don't rely on the vaccine alone and take other precautions such as masking or avoiding crowds. But if you want to carry on with life as normal, a new vaccine lowers your risk of getting covid - at least in the short term.

DO THE VACCINES HELP PREVENT TRANSMISSION?

You may remember from early coverage of coronavirus vaccines that it was unclear whether shots would reduce transmission. Now, scientists say the answer is yes — even if you're actively shedding virus.

That's because the vaccine creates antibodies that reduce the amount of virus entering your cells, limiting how much the virus can replicate and make you even sicker. When vaccination prevents symptoms such as coughing and sneezing, people expel fewer respiratory droplets carrying the virus. When it reduces the viral load in an infected per-

son, people become less contagious.

That's why Peter Hotez, a physician and co-director of the Texas Children's Hospital Center for Vaccine Development, said he feels more comfortable in a crowded medical conference, where attendees are probably up to date on their vaccines, than in a crowded airport.

"By having so many vaccinated people, it's decreasing the number of days you are shedding virus if you get a breakthrough infection, and it decreases the amount of virus you are shedding," Hotez said.

HOW LONG DOES VACCINE PROTECTION LAST?

CDC data shows that the effectiveness of the 2023-24 vaccine, meant to reduce emergency room visits and hospitalizations, declined sharply more than four months after receiving it. But the risk of hospitalization still remains low for most people, which made it harder for the CDC to compare outcomes for people who received an updated shot with those who did not.

The CDC usually recommends a second dose for those at greatest risk, rather than everyone.

Vaccines create antibodies that target the spike protein of a virus that enters a cell, but the spike protein is often evolving to overcome them or avoid detection. Other elements of the immune response, such as killer T cells, are more durable and recognize the additional parts of the virus that are not mutating.

"Once the virus gets in, [T-cells] can kill off infected cells," Topham said. "They can slow the infection down. They can prevent it from spreading throughout the body. It shortens your disease."

DO VACCINES PREVENT LONG COVID?

While the threat of acute serious respiratory covid dis-

State monitoring Mpox outbreak

VIRAL SKIN INFECTION REDECLARED A PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY BY WHO

By ALEX GAULT
agault@wdt.net

Mpox, a viral skin infection that can cause blisters, fever and rash, has been declared as a public health emergency with international concern by the World Health Organization, the second time a declaration has been made regarding the disease since 2022.

The disease, formerly known as monkeypox, has been known to infect humans since the 1970s, but in recent years its spread has accelerated rapidly across many countries, including the United States and Europe. Spread by physical contact, the recent flareups of mpox have been primarily spread by sexual contact with an infected individual, although non-sexual contact can also spread the disease.

Last week, the WHO and its Director General Dr. Tedros A. Ghebreyesus determined that an increase in infection

rates in the Democratic Republic of Congo is cause for international concern. While mpox has existed in the DRC for decades, a recent spike in transmissions means its likely to spread internationally. The latest version of the virus, known as a clade, is primarily spreading through sexual contact in Africa as of now, and more than 100 confirmed cases of the new clade have been found in other central African countries. Last week, a case was confirmed in Sweden as well.

Meanwhile, the other, older clade of mpox continues to circulate in low rates in the U.S.

“It’s clear that a coordinated international response is needed to stop these outbreaks and save lives,” Ghebreyesus said in a statement as he moved to declare the public health emergency.

In New York, health commissioner Dr. James McDon-



A vial of the Jynneos mpox vaccine sits on a table at a pop-up vaccination clinic opened by the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health in West Hollywood, California. (Mario Tama/Getty Images/TNS)

ald said that his department continues to monitor the spread of the virus in Africa

and Europe.

“We are taking proactive measures now to encourage

those at risk to get fully vaccinated, which means two dos-

See MPOX T9

Vaccine

From T4

ease has faded, developing the lingering symptoms of “long covid” remains a concern for people who have had even mild cases. The CDC says vaccination is the “best available tool” to reduce the risk of long covid in children and adults. The exact mechanism is unclear, but experts theorize that vaccines help by reducing the severity of illness, which is a major risk factor for long covid.

WHEN IS THE BEST TIME TO GET A NEW CORONAVIRUS VACCINE?

It depends on your circumstances, including risk factors for severe disease, when you were last infected or vaccinated, and plans for the months ahead. It’s best to talk these issues through with a doctor.

If you are at high risk and have not recently been vaccinated or infected, you may

want to get a shot as soon as possible while cases remain high. The summer wave has shown signs of peaking, but cases can still be elevated and take weeks to return to low levels. It’s hard to predict when a winter wave will begin.

If your priority is to avoid getting sick ahead of the holidays or a major event such as an international vacation, you could get your vaccine a month ahead of the event to increase your protection.

If you were recently vaccinated, the FDA advises waiting two months since your last shot to get the updated vaccine. The CDC has previously said people can wait three months after an infection to get vaccinated.

Manisha Juthani, Connecticut’s public health commissioner, said people who have recently had covid could time their next vaccine several weeks before a holiday, when they will be exposed to a lot of people, whether that’s Halloween, Thanksgiving or end-of-year celebrations.

WHERE DO I FIND VACCINES?

Coronavirus vaccines are sold as a commercial product and are no longer purchased and distributed by the federal government for free. That means they won’t be as readily accessible as they once were, but they shouldn’t be too hard to find.

Major pharmacy chains should stock coronavirus vaccines, and CVS said its expects to start administering them within days, and Walgreens said availability at its stores begins Sept. 6. Availability at doctor’s offices might take longer. Finding shots for infants and toddlers could be more difficult because many pharmacies do not administer them and not every pediatrician’s office will stock them given low demand and limited storage space.

This year’s updated coronavirus vaccines are supposed to have a longer shelf life, which eases the financial pressures of stocking them.

The CDC plans to relaunch

its vaccine locator when the new vaccines are widely available, and similar services are offered by Moderna and Pfizer.

ARE CORONAVIRUS VACCINES FREE?

Most insurance plans are required to cover recommended vaccines under the Affordable Care Act, but some may not cover shots administered by out-of-network providers. Officials say billing code errors and failure to update systems that led to improper charges last year should mostly be resolved, but if you are still getting charged for vaccines, you or your provider should contact your insurance company or appeal to the agency that regulates your plan.

The federal Bridge Access Program, which provided free coronavirus vaccines to people without health insurance, ends this month. People might be able to find other assistance through federally qualified health centers, local health departments or nonprofit

groups.

CAN YOU GET YOUR COVID AND FLU SHOT TOGETHER?

Public health officials encourage receiving covid and flu shots in the same visit as a way to increase vaccination rates, and say that no serious side effects associated with co-administering the vaccines have been identified.

But if you are someone who will get both vaccines no matter what, it could be beneficial to space them apart. Flu shots are best administered in September or October, so it might make sense to get a flu shot first with a coronavirus vaccination later if you already had covid this summer.

Coronavirus vaccine manufacturers are working on combination flu/coronavirus shots. Moderna reported promising trial results that keep it on track to go to market as early as fall 2025. Pfizer-BioNTech reported mixed results from its trials, a setback.

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FDRHPO strengthens workforce through job opportunities

By **HOLLY BONAME**

FDRHPO

Recruiting and retaining a consistent and reliable workforce is a longstanding challenge for many rural healthcare organizations, including our region. The Fort Drum Regional Health Planning Organization (FDRHPO) recognizes these widespread challenges and is dedicated to supporting and strengthening our local healthcare workforce through its ongoing regional pipeline program.

FDRHPO engages with the community through various initiatives to build a resilient healthcare workforce both now and for the future. Our initiatives include the Health Career Army Pathways Program (HCAPP), which supports military spouses, dependents, reservists, and transitioning soldiers. The Medical Academy of Science and Health (MASH) Camp provides an immersive, hands-on experience for students in grades 8-12, while career exploration through job shadowing offers students a tailored firsthand experience with a healthcare professional. The new Scrubs Club program provides students with a range of school-based activities such as guest speakers, interactive demonstrations,

health-related projects, and visits to healthcare facilities. These regional efforts contribute to developing a robust pipeline of health professionals for our area.

"Pipeline programs that engage students early on help to inspire the next generation of healthcare professionals, increasing the likelihood that they will choose to stay and serve in their hometowns," said Pat Fontana, FDRHPO Deputy Director. "We are committed to ensuring that our region's healthcare workforce remains strong, sustainable, and deeply connected to the community."

Since 2008, the regional recruitment, retention, and education programs have been instrumental in orchestrating over 1,000 placements for local students, adults, and transitioning military members, as well as supporting the recruitment of hundreds of healthcare providers to the North Country. These accomplishments are due to observational learning, education and training, and career exploration opportunities at the forefront of FDRHPO's Health Workforce initiative.

Observational learning is a key component of the strategic plan for growing the regional health workforce. FDRHPO understands that

See FDRHPOT15

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Samaritan Medical Center is Nationally Recognized for its Commitment to Providing High-Quality Stroke Care

THE AMERICAN HEART ASSOCIATION PRESENTS GET WITH THE GUIDELINES® - STROKE SILVER PLUS AWARD FOR PROVEN DEDICATION TO ENSURING ALL STROKE PATIENTS HAVE ACCESS TO BEST PRACTICES AND LIFE-SAVING CARE

By ANNA DOLDO

Samaritan Medical Center

Watertown, NY – Samaritan Medical Center has received the American Heart Association's Get With The Guidelines® - Stroke Silver Plus quality achievement award for its commitment to ensuring stroke patients receive the most appropriate treatment according to nationally recognized, research-based guidelines, ultimately leading to more lives saved and reduced disability.

Stroke is the No. 5 cause of death and a leading cause of

disability in the U.S. A stroke occurs when a blood vessel that carries oxygen and nutrients to the brain is either blocked by a clot or bursts. When that happens, part of the brain cannot get the blood and oxygen it needs, so brain cells die. Early stroke detection and treatment are key to improving survival, minimizing disability and accelerating recovery times.

Get With The Guidelines puts the expertise of the American Heart Association and American Stroke Association to work for hospitals nationwide, helping ensure

patient care is aligned with the latest research- and evidence-based guidelines. Get With The Guidelines - Stroke is an in-hospital program for improving stroke care by promoting consistent adherence to these guidelines, which can minimize the long-term effects of a stroke and even prevent death.

"Samaritan Medical Center is committed to improving patient care by adhering to the latest treatment guidelines," said Leslie DiStefano, director of communications and public relations. "Get With



The Guidelines makes it easier for our teams to put proven knowledge and guidelines to work on a daily basis, which studies show can help patients recover better. The end goal is to ensure more people in the North Country can experience longer, healthier lives."

Each year, program participants qualify for the award by demonstrating how their organization has committed to providing quality care for stroke patients. In addition to following treatment guidelines, Get With The Guidelines participants also educate patients to help them manage their health and recovery at home.

"We are incredibly pleased to recognize Samaritan Medical Center for its commitment to caring for patients with stroke," said Steven Messe, M.D., volunteer chairperson of the American Heart Association Stroke System of Care Advisory Group and professor of neurology and director of fellowships of neurology at the Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania. "Participation in Get With The Guidelines is associated with improved patient outcomes, fewer readmissions and lower mortality rates – a win for health care systems, families and communities."

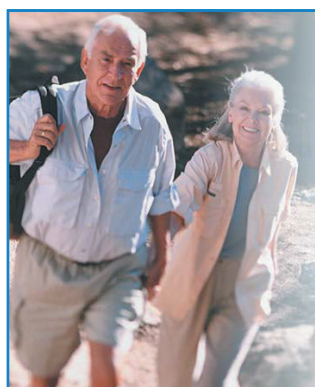
Samaritan Medical Center also received the American Heart Association's Target:

Type 2 Diabetes™ Honor Roll award. Target: Type 2 Diabetes aims to ensure patients with Type 2 diabetes, who might be at higher risk for complications, receive the most up-to-date, evidence-based care when hospitalized due to stroke.

Samaritan Medical Center also met specific scientific guidelines as a Primary Stroke Center, featuring a comprehensive system for rapid diagnosis and treatment of stroke patients admitted to the emergency department.

About Samaritan Medical Center

Samaritan Medical Center (Watertown, New York) is a 290-bed not-for-profit community medical center, offering a full spectrum of inpatient and outpatient healthcare services. From primary and emergency care to highly specialized medical and surgical services, such as cancer treatment, neonatal intensive care, behavioral health and addiction services, and imaging services, Samaritan Medical Center and its team of healthcare professionals proudly serves the medical needs of our civilian and military community. Quality, compassion, and safety are the basic principles by which exceptional care is delivered at Samaritan.



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Bloomfield joins Pain Management team at Canton-Potsdam Hospital

POTSDAM — Rochester Regional Health's St. Lawrence Region is pleased to welcome Nurse Practitioner (NP) Noel Bloomfield to the Pain Management team at Canton-Potsdam Hospital (CPH). His office is located in the Helen Snell Cheel Medical Campus, 49 Lawrence Avenue, Potsdam.

Noel is Board Certified through the American Nurses Credentialing Center and earned his Master of Science in Nursing, Family Nurse Practitioner (FNP) degree from Binghamton University, NY.

He is a member of the New York State Nurse Practitioner Association and the Rural Nurse Organization. Noel is fluent in Chinese-Mandarin and during his service with the United States Army he was a Human Intelligence Collector/Chinese Linguist.

He returns to CPH after having previously served at the Hospital as a Registered Nurse in the Medical-Surgical Department and prior to that as a Nurse Aide.

"I am not originally from the North Country; however, my career in health care began locally at SUNY Canton and then on to Binghamton. During my FNP studies, I completed clinical rotations throughout the North Country, including St. Regis Falls, Chateaugay and Malone," Noel noted.

"I have been blessed with



Noel Bloomfield

the opportunity to return to St. Lawrence Health as a Nurse Practitioner and am honored and privileged to join the Pain Management team," he added. "I am committed to providing compassionate care and look forward to supporting the health of the region's residents."

Within Pain Management, Noel can prescribe medications, identify the most likely source of his patients' pain, follow-up on their care and progress, and use his skills to find effective non-invasive treatments such as physical therapy, acupuncture and electrical stimulation.

It is anticipated that he will also offer his services in Massena over the coming months.

To learn more about Pain Management provided through St. Lawrence, visit <https://www.stlawrence-healthsystem.org/Services/Pain-Management>.

Mpox

From T5

es of the JYNNEOS vaccine," he said. "Health care providers should be vigilant and ask about travel when presented with patients who might have contracted mpox. While mpox cases remain low in New York and we have not yet seen a case of this mpox variant circulating here, I want everyone to take measures to protect themselves."

The state health depart-

ment is asking health care providers to screen any case that presents with fever and a skin rash for recent travel and sexual activity, and provide the vaccine to anyone who is eligible and unprotected.

The JYNNEOS vaccine is a two-dose live virus vaccine, available through most health care providers, that can prevent both mpox and smallpox. Unlike previous mpox vaccines, it has fewer adverse effects and is safe for people with eczema or atopic dermatitis.

The WHO, What, and Where of Hospice

By Kathleen Zeltmann

Director of Patient Care

Hospice of Jefferson County



Hospice of Jefferson County is dedicated to being available to provide guidance and support to our patients 24 hours a day – 7 days a week. Meet our weekend on-call Registered Nurse Case Manager, Shawn Smiley. Shawn provides a vital bridge for the patients and families during the weekend hours. His multiple years as a Registered Nurse in both the acute and homecare settings provide him the skills necessary to be able to support our patients and families both physically and spiritually. He is exceptional at guiding family members and patients through the dying process. He is a pillar of strength and a powerful spiritual presence at these difficult times. Shawn's ability to express empathy with patients and family members during their time of need is a remarkable skill many have recognized.

Ask about Hospice today as we continue to Make Every Day Matter for hospice patients and their families. Hospice of Jefferson County is a not-for-profit hospice serving Jefferson and Lower Saint Lawrence Counties. For more information, please visit jeffersonhospice.org or call (315) 788-7323.



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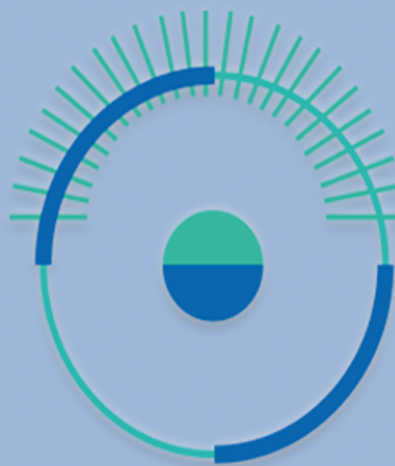


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Alice Hyde Adds Leading-Edge Mammography, Densitometry Imaging Equipment

New equipment makes exams faster, more comfortable for patients, and reduces unnecessary follow-up appointments

By PHILLIP RAU

prau@alicehyde.com

Mammography imaging and bone densitometry equipment upgrades at UVM Health Network – Alice Hyde Medical Center will make breast imaging and density exams faster, more comfortable, give patients more accurate and comprehensive results, and reduce unnecessary follow-up appointments, the hospital announced July 15.

Alice Hyde's Radiology department has upgraded its mammography and bone densitometry imaging equipment to include new state-of-the-art resources, including:

- Hologic 2D Mammography system
- Hologic Genius 3D Mammography system
- SmartCurve Breast Stabilization system
- Horizon DXA system

Breast Cancer Screening Upgrades

The new equipment gives clinicians and patients access to leading-edge technology that improves the accuracy of mammography and breast and bone density exams and gives patients a more comfortable experience during exams – something Outpatient Medical Imaging Manager Shannon Legacy, said her team hopes will improve breast screening rates across the region served by the hospital.

"Mammograms play a crucial role in the early detection of breast cancer. Being able to offer state-of-the-art equipment that improves accuracy and patient comfort while maintaining clinical quality is something we are very excited about," said Legacy. "By lessening the pain and anxiety that is often associated with mammograms, we hope to increase the number of women who receive appropriate screening services."



Sylvia Gadway, X-Ray mammography technician, guides a patient during a bone densitometry scan at UVM Health Network's Alice Hyde Medical Center. The hospital's new Horizon DXA densitometry system will improve image quality and can be used in a wide variety of other clinical applications. Contributed.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, breast cancer is the second most common cancer among women in the United States. The U.S. Preventative Services Task Force recommends that all women between the ages of 50 and 74 receive a mammogram every two years. According to the National Cancer Institute, in 2021 about 76% of women in that age range said they had received a mammogram within the last two years.

The hospital's new mammography equipment features a proprietary system – SmartCurve Breast Stabilization – that reduces pinching and allows for better distribution of force while the breast is compressed during a mammogram, according to manufacturer Hologic.

That system is paired with new 2-dimensional and 3-dimensional imaging equipment, including Hologic's Genius 3D Mammography system, which is clinically proven to significantly increase the detection of breast cancers and decrease the number of patients who are asked to return for additional testing.

Legacy said improved imaging quality and accuracy – the new system uses both 2D images and tomosynthesis scans, which takes multiple images and creates a multi-layered, 3-dimensional image – will result in more comprehensive breast cancer screening, which is also rated as more effective for women with dense breasts.

Providing the Latest in Bone Health Assessments

The department has also expanded the health-and-wellness services available to both men and women, adding the Horizon DXA bone densitometry system to its suite of services. The equipment provides superb image quality and also includes advanced diagnostic tools that support early detection and treatment of osteoporosis – a disease that develops when bone mineral density and mass decrease, or when the structure or strength of bone changes.

Bone densitometry – or a bone density test – is used primarily to diagnose conditions like osteoporosis and osteopenia, as well as patient's risk of future fractures. The test measures bone mass and tells clini-



Sylvia Gadway, X-ray mammography technician, guides a patient during a mammogram at UVM Health Network's Alice Hyde Medical Center. The hospital recently unveiled leading-edge mammography imaging equipment that will improve the speed, accuracy and comfort of mammograms, while reducing unnecessary follow-up appointments. Contributed.



Sylvia Gadway, X-ray mammography technician, guides a patient during a mammogram at UVM Health Network Alice Hyde Medical Center. The hospital recently unveiled leading-edge mammography imaging equipment that will improve the speed, accuracy and comfort of mammograms, while reducing unnecessary follow-up appointments. Contributed.

cians whether a patient's bones are brittle and prone to break or fracture easily.

The new equipment will help clinicians gain greater insights into patients' bone strength, better visualize internal calcification in abdominal blood vessels that can indicate heart disease and can be used in a wide variety of other clinical applications – from spinal studies to skeletal measurements.

"Providing comprehensive bone density services with advanced technology is a tremendous resource for our patients and Alice Hyde's medical staff," said Legacy. "As our entire region continues to age, we are investing in the equipment and technology that best serves their growing needs."

New partnership helps those with chronic kidney disease

UTICA, NY - Excellus BlueCross BlueShield members with stage 4 or 5 chronic kidney disease (CKD) may be eligible for a new program, REACH Kidney Care, that helps improve care and quality of life while delaying the need for more costly interventions such as dialysis.

The National Institutes of Health estimates that 1 in 7 adults has a form of CKD. That's about 37 million Americans. People are diagnosed with CKD when their kidneys are damaged and unable to perform their normal function of filtering blood. About 808,000 Americans are currently living with end-stage kidney disease often requiring dialysis. On average, the cost of dialysis is \$15,000 per patient per month.

"When you think about chronic kidney disease, it affects so many people," explains Kathleen Robischon, MD, VP of Medical Affairs and Clinical Services at Excellus BlueCross BlueShield. "At Excellus BCBS, we provide care management for members with chronic kidney disease stages 1 through 3," adds Dr. Robischon. "When a member moves into stage 4, we offer the support of REACH Kidney Care."

How REACH Kidney Care helps

REACH Kidney Care is a kidney health management program designed to help members with stage 4-5 chronic kidney disease navigate services and follow their physician's treatment plan. Members work one-on-one with a multi-disciplinary care team that provides personalized support to help members make the most of their care and manage their CKD. The REACH program is offered virtually, over the phone and in-person at no cost to members that have this benefit included in their plan.

"We are pleased that our eligible patients have the opportunity for additional support and resources," explains Philip T. Ondocin, MD, of Nephrology Associates of Syracuse, PC. "We encourage all patients to maxi-



Philip T. Ondocin, MD.
Contributed.

mize their insurance benefits to support their kidney function and slow down the progression of their disease."

Caring for a loved one with kidney disease

ElenaMarie Burns, Excellus BCBS Provider Programs Project Coordinator, faced the challenges of navigating CKD when her father suffered a stroke in his 50s that led to the discovery that his kidneys were not functioning properly.

She remembers times when her father would stop taking his medication or resist following the doctor's dietary instructions. "We didn't have someone to sit and talk to him, like a care management team to have that collaboration of care. I think he could have benefited from that," says ElenaMarie. Within a couple of years of diagnosis, her father began dialysis. "The dialysis really did a number on him," explains ElenaMarie.

Support for managing CKD

These care management services were not available when ElenaMarie was caring for her father. Knowing what is available to patients and caregivers now, she says, "I think that education [provided by the Excellus BCBS care management team and the REACH Kidney Care] would have given my father a better quality of life."

Hudson Headwaters opens new pediatric center in Plattsburgh



The new Hudson Headwaters building in Plattsburgh. Contributed.

PLATTSBURGH, NY — Hudson Headwaters Health Network plan opened its 25th health center, Plattsburgh Pediatric and Adolescent Health, on Monday. The new center is located at 25 DeGrandpre Way, just .25 miles from the Network's Plattsburgh Family Health location.

"As a nonprofit, Federally Qualified Health Center, Hudson Headwaters is committed to ensuring access for everyone in the communities we serve. The new Plattsburgh Pediatric and Adolescent Health addresses the pressing demand for access we've been experiencing at our northern locations," said Tucker Slingerland, M.D., Hudson Headwaters CEO. "While we continue to maintain adult and pediatric care at Plattsburgh Family Health, the pediatric facility will be an additional asset in the community for years to come. We look forward to continuing to work with our regional partners to develop strategies and actions that create sustainable health care for everyone."

Since opening in 2019, Plattsburgh Family Health has consistently ranked among the Network's fastest-growing sites. This past year, Hudson Headwaters' Plattsburgh and Champlain health centers have accepted

more than 5,000 new patients. The Network has responded with multiple efforts, including Plattsburgh and Champlain working closely together to provide same-day patient access, coordinating with Hudson Headwaters' southern providers and mobile health program to expand appointment options, increasing providers and staff and adding extra pediatric availability during the evenings and Saturdays.

"Opening our new pediatric center marks an exciting milestone in our expansion efforts to better serve Plattsburgh and surrounding communities," said Melissa Gooley, R.N., Hudson Headwaters' northern regional practice leader. "We know local families are eager to access services so we've opened our phone lines at Plattsburgh Pediatric and Adolescent Health in advance of opening day. We encourage the families of our pediatric patients to communicate with us directly at the new Plattsburgh Pediatric and Adolescent Health."

This practice is part of Hudson Headwaters Health Network so no transfer of medical records is needed for current patients of Plattsburgh Family Health or other Network locations. New patients are welcome to establish

by calling the health center. The phone number for Plattsburgh Pediatric and Adolescent Health is 518-824-2563, and more information about the center and scheduling appointments can be found at HHHN.org.

Plattsburgh Pediatric and Adolescent Health providers will be Danielle Baker, PA-C, Laurie Eamer, FNP, Christina Gallus, M.D., Sarah Hepworth, M.D., Suzanne LaBorde, FNP, Martha Passino, PNP and Sobia Qudsi, M.D. Pediatric appointments scheduled with these providers after August 24 will be moved to Plattsburgh Pediatric and Adolescent Health, with no action needed from the patient. The center will be open Monday through Thursday from 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., and Saturday hours are available at Plattsburgh Family Health (87 Plaza Blvd. in Plattsburgh) from 8:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

About Hudson Headwaters Health Network

Hudson Headwaters is a nonprofit network of 24 community-based primary care health centers serving patients of all ages from Saratoga County to the Canadian border, an area of about 7,400 square miles. Learn more at HHHN.org.

MASH

From T3

hosting these camps at various locations across Northern New York, NAHEC works to provide students from different communities the chance to participate, making healthcare education accessible and engaging for all.

Feedback from students and their families has been very positive, with many participants expressing enthusiasm for pursuing careers in healthcare. For some, the camps served as the first step toward a future in nursing, medicine, or an allied health professional career.

Please keep an eye out for information on next summer's MASH Camps, as we plan to reach even more students and continue to build the healthcare workforce in Northern New York.

For more information on MASH Camps and other NAHEC programs, email Whitney at whitney@nahecnet.net.

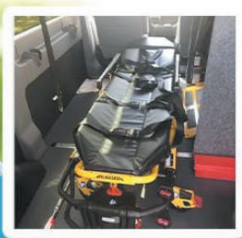


MASH Camp students take turns intubating an infant mannequin at Champlain Valley Physicians Hospital. Contributed.

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FDRHPO

From T6

hands-on learning experiences, starting with local students, are vital to developing an effective healthcare workforce; these experiences are crucial for students considering a career in healthcare and assist with discovering what specialty is best suited to their interests.

Twice a year, FDRHPO partners with local hospitals and educational institutions to offer its Medical Academy of Science and Health Camp — better known as “MASH” Camp. MASH Camp is a unique opportunity for students to experience the healthcare world in an interactive way. It provides an opportunity for students to take advantage of and experience the field of healthcare and start their educational pathway. Students learn about the educational requirements, skills, typical job duties, and personal qualities of specific health professionals while attending 3-days in local hospitals where each day is different, providing interesting and thought-provoking exercises and real-life activities and experiences.

“The interest and excitement that we receive for the MASH Camps is incredible. This program is extremely beneficial to students who are interested in learning more about healthcare roles,” said Beth Solar, Workforce Outreach Manager at FDRHPO. “The students who attend the MASH Camps then have the opportunity to go into our job shadowing program, and from there into their higher education curriculums. The goal is always to retain their talents here in the North Country.”

Additionally, FDRHPO offers job shadowing opportunities to both high school and post-secondary students, as well as to adults in Jefferson, Lewis, and St. Lawrence Counties and Military Spouses, Reservists,

and transitioning Service Members who are interested in pursuing a career in any healthcare field. Job shadowing offers an opportunity to learn, observe, and develop relationships with healthcare professionals. It exposes the job shadower, no matter what age, to various career possibilities in the healthcare industry and helps them identify their specific areas of interest.

FDRHPO has also partnered with regional schools to introduce a Scrubs Club program to students from kindergarten through 12th grade. Designed to immerse students in the dynamic world of healthcare, Scrubs Club provides firsthand insights into the roles, responsibilities, and rewards of serving in this vital field. Through engaging hands-on activities and interactive exercises, students have the opportunity to experience various healthcare occupations. Knickerbocker Elementary School completed the first after-school Scrub Club for 2nd graders. They met after school and learned about various topics in healthcare: Data collection, history of scrubs, oral health, sun/sunscreen safety, history of the band-aid (which was followed by FDRHPO providing a mini Stop the Bleed Training), and common tools/instruments. At the conclusion of the program, the students took a field trip to Samaritan Medical Center for a tour of the hospital and were able to meet some professionals and see some of the things that they learned about.

Each of these Health Workforce Development initiatives works hand-in-hand with one another to strengthen the healthcare workforce throughout the North Country.

For more information on any of these programs, visit www.fdrhpo.org or contact Beth Solar by calling 315-755-2020 ext. 25.

JCC Fall Precertification Allied Health Training Begins in September REGISTER NOW

By PAMELA J. DIXON
Jefferson Community College

Jefferson Community College (JCC) is pleased to announce the start of its fall precertification allied health training programs. JCC’s medical billing and coding, phlebotomy technician, clinical medical assistant, dental assisting, and pharmacy technician training programs will begin in September. Most classes are scheduled conveniently twice a week in the evenings from 6:00 p.m. to 9:30 p.m., and will be held on the JCC campus, at the Lewis County JCC Education Center in Lowville, and at Fort Drum. Registration is currently ongoing.

Military spouses can benefit from MyCAA funding for all allied health training programs, with the exception of the dental assistant training. To qualify for MyCAA funding, military spouses must submit their Education and Training Plans (ETPs) at least four weeks before the start date of their chosen program.

In addition to allied health training, JCC, in partnership with Ed2Go and Condensed Curriculum International (CCI), offers a wide range of online workshops. These workshops are designed to assist professionals at any career stage, whether it’s acquiring new skills, preparing for industry certification, conducting an externship, accessing career support, or advancing in their careers. For more details on these offerings, visit the College’s website at www.sunyjefferson.edu/workshops.

To inquire or register for programs and workshops, please visit the College’s website or contact the JCC Workforce Solutions office at (315) 786-2233.

Pre-certification Allied Health Training Medical Billing and Coding – 3-month training

Sit for the American Health Information Management Associate national exam upon

successful completion of this 80-hour program. Note: The exam fee is not included with tuition.

Location: Jefferson Community College

Date: Tuesdays/Thursdays, September 3 – November 21, 2024

Time: 6:00 p.m. to 9:30 p.m.

Cost: \$1,899 includes textbooks

Deadline to apply: August 27, 2024

MyCAA eligible

Phlebotomy Technician – 3-month training

Sit for the National Healthcare Association Phlebotomy Technician national exam upon successful completion of this 90-hour program. Note: The exam fee is not included with tuition.

Location: Jefferson Community College

Date: Mondays/Wednesdays, September 4 – December 9, 2024

Time: 6:00 p.m. to 9:30 p.m.

Cost: \$1,599 includes textbooks

Deadline to apply: August 28, 2024

MyCAA eligible

Clinical Medical Assistant (CMA) – 5-month training

Sit for the National Healthcare Association Certified Clinical Medical Assistant national exam upon successful completion of this 140-hour program. Note: The exam fee is not included with tuition.

Location: Fort Drum

Date: Mondays/Wednesdays/Fridays, September 9 – December 18, 2024

Time: 9:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

Cost: \$2,399 includes textbooks

Deadline to apply: September 2, 2024

MyCAA eligible

Dental Assistant - 2-month training

Sit for the Dental Assisting National Board (DANB) Radiation Health Safety exam upon successful completion of this 60-hour program. Note: The exam fee is not included with

tuition.

Location: Lewis County JCC Education Center, Lowville

Date: Tuesdays/Thursdays, September 17 – November 14, 2024

Time: 6:00 p.m. to 9:30 p.m.

Cost: \$1,499 includes textbooks

Deadline to apply: September 10, 2024

Pharmacy Technician – 3-month training

Sit for the Pharmacy Technician Certified Board (PTCB) – Certified Pharmacy Technician (PTCB) exam upon successful completion of this 50-hour program. Note: The exam fee is not included with tuition.

Location: Jefferson Community College

Date: Mondays/Wednesdays, September 18 – November 11, 2024

Time: 6:00 p.m. to 9:30 p.m.

Cost: \$999 includes textbooks

Deadline to apply: September 11, 2024

MyCAA eligible

About Jefferson Community College

Established on November 7, 1961, Jefferson Community College was the area’s first institution of higher education. Supervised by the State University of New York (SUNY), Jefferson offers 50+ associate degrees, certificates and microcredentials for career preparation or transfer; local access to bachelor’s and advanced degrees through partner institutions; lifelong learning through workshops and seminars; business and industry training; and provides community-based research and a forum for the productive discussion of ideas and issues of significance to the community through the Center for Community Studies. Jefferson is accredited by the Middle States Association and currently serves approximately 2,500 students, including a significant number of service members and their families. Please visit www.sunyjefferson.edu about for more information.



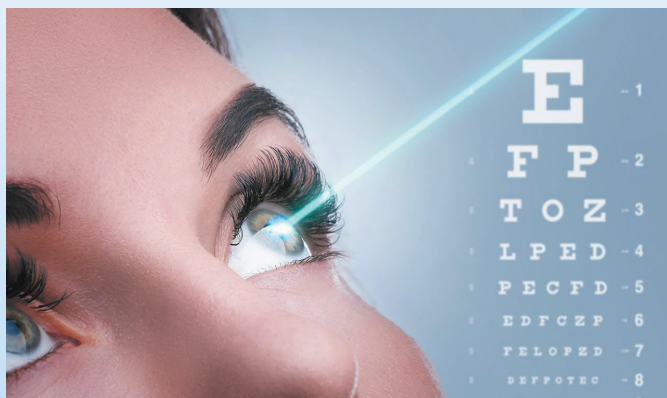
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