



NNY Health

*Your connection
to the north
country's health
world.*



A Watertown Daily Times and
Malone Telegram publication

Daily updates: NNY360.com September 2024

Twins and Carthage hospital celebrate 60 years

■ **River Hospital is
modernizing Alex Bay
building**

PAGE 4

■ **Dr. Logan Curtis is
veteran entrepreneur of
the year.**

PAGE 7

■ **Older people are
reaping the benefits of
using technology.**

PAGE 8

■ **Canton-Potsdam
Hospital graduates
pharmacy residents.**

PAGE 10

■ **Samaritan Medical
Center launches several
measures to combat
breast cancer**

PAGE 11

*Learn more
inside*



Lori Kelsey and Lisa Brenon — the Steria twins — visited Carthage Area Hospital to celebrate 60 years. The ladies are holding a framed Carthage Republican Tribune clipping of them at age 16 holding a picture from their first birthday. Elaine M. Avallone/Johnson Newspapers

By Elaine M. Avallone
eavallone@lowville.com

CARTHAGE — Less than a week after the Carthage Area Hospital opened on West Street, July 7, 1965, the first twins were born.

Without the technology there is now, the parents Margie and Richard Steria then of Carthage, did not know there were two babies on the way.

Lori Lee was born at 5:59 a.m. weighing 4 pounds, 4 ounces and Lisa Ann fol-



The Steria twins at age one. Photo provided by Margie Decker

lowed at 6:03 a.m. at 4 pounds, 2 ounces.

The mother of the twins, now Ms. Decker of Watertown, said it was a surprise not only for her but for the late Dr. William D. Wiley who delivered the girls. She explained that Lori had laid on top of Lisa so only one heart beat was heard.

"Dr. Wiley yelled, 'Get another bassinets! We got a

second one coming!'" said Ms. Decker. "We weren't prepared. We had no names picked out for the second one."

"My aunt named me," her daughter, Lisa Brenon of Watertown, said.

Mr. Steria said the twins came as a shock.

"Someone came to the waiting room and broke the news to me," he said. "Then

I called my parents to break the news to them. It was a surprise but a pleasant one. It's been 60 beautiful years."

He noted it was a long labor with his then wife being admitted to the hospital in the afternoon and the girls being born early the next morning.

The mother of the twins

See TWINST2

Professional Connection Page 5

Millions in grants for NNY hospitals

STATE SENDS \$300 MILLION TO 50 LOCATIONS

By ALEX GAULT

agault@wdt.net

Hospitals in Lowville, Alexandria Bay and Ogdensburg are getting millions of dollars to update their facilities and improve operations.

On Aug. 8, Gov. Kathleen C. Hochul announced that the latest round of state Health Care Facility Transformation Program grants were awarded. That includes an \$18.2 million award to Claxton-Hepburn Medical Center, Ogdensburg, \$1.54 million for River Hospital, Alexandria Bay, and \$650,000 for a North Country Family Health Center location in Lowville.

"This targeted investment will help ensure that every New Yorker — regardless of ZIP code — can access safe, high-quality

health care," Hochul said. "By supporting providers that serve vulnerable and underserved populations, we're strengthening the foundation of our health care system and building a healthier future for all."

In Lowville, the money will go to building a new primary care clinic in the village. In Alexandria Bay, River Hospital will use the capital to upgrade its mammography machines, and in Ogdensburg the money will go toward redesigning the hospital and moving the maternity, critical care, lab services and surgical departments.

U.S. approves latest Covid shots with limits on who gets them

By GERRY SMITH & DAMIAN GARDE

Bloomberg

U.S. regulators have approved updated versions of the Covid vaccine, though a much smaller group of people will be eligible to receive them this fall.

The Food and Drug Administration on Wednesday cleared Covid shots that target strains related to the prevailing JN.1 variant for people 65 and older or who have underlying conditions. Last year, everyone was eligible for a Covid booster.

The FDA approval for a seasonal shot is normally a formality that draws little attention, but immunizations have become a major flashpoint in recent years. They've drawn even more scrutiny since Robert F. Kennedy Jr., a vaccine critic, was appointed to lead the U.S. Department of Health

and Human Services earlier this year.

Under his leadership, agencies that are a part of HHS have taken a tougher stance on vaccines. In one of its more dramatic shifts, in May, the FDA said it would only give the green light to shots for older people and those with underlying conditions. The decision meant those who don't qualify for the shots can only get them if their doctor prescribes the vaccine off-label, and insurance may not cover it.

Each year, FDA advisers meet to formally decide which strains to include, typically aligning with recommendations from the World Health Organization. Once selected, manufacturers, like Moderna Inc. and Pfizer Inc., produce large quantities of the shot. The FDA then later approves the

new formula, which allows companies to ship doses to pharmacies, hospitals and clinics.

Pfizer also received approval for its Covid shot in children as young as 5 who have at least one underlying condition that puts them at high risk for severe disease, Kennedy said Wednesday. Novavax's vaccine is approved for people 12 and older at elevated risk. Moderna's shot was already approved in July.

Limiting access to the shots could mean more people get Covid, or have worse outcomes, over the coming months. However, the shots were already unpopular. Just 23% of U.S. adults and 13% of children got a Covid booster last fall, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Twins

From T1

said the bill for the delivery was paid for by the hospital. She noted it was easier with two although there were challenges. The babies had two different formula and at the beginning, it was hard to tell the girls apart. As a result their hospital bracelets — girl A and girl B were left on until they could be easily identified. The babies slept in the same bed early on, their mother said. When she went grocery shopping, a line was cleared for her to purchase all the baby food.

"It was a great journey," she said.

Ms. Decker said that the Carthage Republican Tribune had come to the hospital to report on the birth and

kept in touch over the years, marking the twin's milestone first, 16th, 21st and 40th birthdays.

With the hospital celebrating its 60th anniversary of being at the West Street location, the family visited the hospital to see the changes over the past six decades.

They were surprised with the amenities in the maternity department built in 2007.

Jessica Bowline, the hospital director of marketing and public relations, said when the West Street campus opened in 1965, there were 54 patients treated. During the same week — July 7, 2025 — there were 400 unique patients treated at CAH not including outpatient clinics or Claxton-Hepburn Medical Campus.

"It has been exciting to welcome Lisa and Lori back,

meet them both, hear about their stories of being twins and what they've been up to for the last 60 years," said Jerian O'Dell, the hospital's chief operations office. "It was good to have them see the new wing, the changes and how far we have come."

The fraternal twins look very much alike and did admit to trying to fool people about their identity when younger.

"In second grade we tried to fool our teachers but that last too long," Mrs. Brenon said, explaining she is left-handed and her sister, Lori Kelsey of Philadelphia, is right-handed.

She noted that Dr. Wiley had said they mirror twins because of this difference.

"Lisa has a dimple," Mrs. Kelsey pointed out noting she often had had difficulty telling her sister and herself apart in old photos.



Visiting Carthage Area Hospital to celebrate 60 years for the hospital and the Steria twins, were from left, are Lori Kelsey, Margie Decker, and hospital COO Jerian O'Dell, Lisa Brenon and Richard Steria. Elaine M. Avallone/Johnson Newspapers

As teens, the girls tried to trick boyfriends when they called the house but the boys soon caught on.

The sisters said they often think alike and see the same

number 712 at times.

The sisters now both have children and grandchildren but no twins as of yet.

FDRHPO Offers High-quality IT Services to Increase Digital Security in NNY

Certified information technology specialists offer low-cost services to regional organizations

In response to the growing demand for experienced and affordable IT services across the region, the Fort Drum Regional Health Planning Organization (FDRHPO) is proud to offer comprehensive, customizable IT support solutions tailored to meet the unique needs of community organizations, small practices, and healthcare providers.

FDRHPO's IT services are designed to eliminate the high cost and complexity of maintaining an in-house IT department, especially for smaller organizations. Whether your needs are short-term, long-term, or project-based, the highly credentialed IT team is available.

"Hiring a full IT staff simply isn't feasible for many small practices or community-based organizations," said Tom Zecher, Director of Health Information Technology at FDRHPO. "Our mission is to deliver high-quality IT services at a sustainable cost, ensuring that everyone—from solo providers to growing organizations—has the technical support they need to succeed."

Services that are available include cybersecurity, fully managed or project-based services, custom IT support, network solutions, active directories, telephony, net-

works including wireless or virtual private networks, computer servicing, HIPPA privacy, security and compliance, remote monitoring, anti-virus, and more.

FDRHPO has a robust compliance program to ensure the secure and confidential exchange of information. FDRHPO requires that Business Associate Agreements be in place with all contracted partners before the exchange of Protected Health Information (PHI).

"FDRHPO is uniquely positioned to provide these IT services within healthcare organizations and other business sectors because of our experienced staff who are already trained with the required compliance, privacy, and security elements. We have the working experience in these areas that are not currently available in the greater Watertown area," said Mr. Zecher.

FDRHPO's IT solutions provide peace of mind with ongoing support, proactive monitoring, and expert guidance designed to improve efficiency, security, and performance in today's digital landscape.

For more information or to submit a request for a consultation, visit www.fdrhpo.org/it-services.

SUSAN PETERS NURSE PRACTITIONER SCHOLARSHIPS ANNOUNCED

Watertown, New York--- Samaritan Medical Center Foundation of Northern New York is pleased to announce the recipients of the 2025 Susan Peters Scholarship: Olivia Marra and Courtney Sartwell.

Olivia Marra, a Registered Nurse in Samaritan's Interventional Radiology, Progressive Care Unit (PCU), and Infusion Departments, is pursuing her Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner degree. Courtney Sartwell, also a Registered Nurse at Samaritan in the PCU, is continuing her education to become a Nurse

Practitioner.

The Susan Peters Nursing Scholarship was established in 2018 to assist with the education costs for Registered Nurses who are continuing their education, specifically to pursue Nurse Practitioner degrees. Two scholarships of \$2,000 are awarded each year.

Mrs. Peters graduated from the former House of the Good Samaritan School of Nursing and retired from Samaritan Medical Center as a Certified Oncology Nurse; prior to that, she had served as a staff RN and for more than 20 years as

a Nurse Manager of Medical/Surgical, Orthopedic and Alternate Level of Care Units. Susan Passed away in 2020.

Nurse Practitioners are able to provide many of the same services as physicians, including developing treatment plans for their patients, ordering tests, performing minor procedures, and prescribing medication.

For more information, please contact the Samaritan Medical Center Foundation at 315-785-4584, visit samaritan-health.com/scholarships, or email info@shsny.com.

Honor Guard pays tribute to nurses

The Northern New York Nurse Honor Guard is preserving nursing history one tribute at a time, honoring fallen nurses with a solemn ceremony that celebrates their professional legacy.

The volunteer organization, covering St. Lawrence, Jefferson and Lewis counties, performs memorial tributes at funeral services, wearing traditional white nursing uniforms complete with caps and navy blue capes.

"We pay tribute to fallen nurses, going to funeral services to honor their memory," said Joanne Carkner, one of the organization's founders. The group has conducted approximately a dozen tributes since its inception.

During their ceremony, members ring a bell, recite a poem, and present families with a Florence Nightingale lamp, symbolizing the enduring light of the nursing profession. The group rings the bell three times, calling the nurse's name and symbolically relieving them of their final duty.

"There's one of our members that she says, every time that last bell rings, it just gives her goose bumps, it just chokes her up," Michele Montroy, a co-founder of the group, said.

Carkner and Montroy were inspired after attending a conference in Albany and seeing a Central New York group performing a ceremony.

"We just had to do it for our county," Montroy said.

Once they had the idea to offer the services, they set about spreading the word.

"We started by going to some of the local funeral directors and speaking to them. Then the first or second tribute happened because a family member knew a fallen nurse," Carkner said.

The group now uses multiple methods to connect with potential families:

- Proactively checking obituaries to offer their services.

- Receiving direct calls from funeral directors.

- Getting recommendations through family members who have seen their tributes.

In addition to honoring nurses, the organization aims to reconnect with nursing's traditional roots and recognize the community contributions of nurses.

In addition to offering services for nurses who have passed away, they would also like to perform ceremonies for elderly nurses so that they can receive a tribute while they are still living.

Currently comprising about 10 volunteers, they are seeking additional members to expand their mission.

The group operates entirely through volunteer efforts and donations, participating in local events to raise awareness and potentially recruit new members.

"It gives us a connection to our nursing roots and our profession," Carkner said.

Nurses interested in joining the group or people interested in the services can contact Carkner at jocarkner@gmail.com or Montroy at michelemontroy@gmail.com.

FDRHPO
Fort Drum Regional Health Planning Organization

IT BUSINESS SERVICES

- Cyber Security
- Fully-managed solutions
- Project-based solutions
- Custom support services
- Network solutions

Want to learn more about the many Information Technology Services offered? Call 315-755-2020 today!

River Hospital breaks ground on multi-million dollar modernization project



Local leaders break ground on River Hospital's multi-million dollar project Wednesday. Photo provided by River Hospital

By JONATHON WHEELER

jwheeler@wdt.net

ALEXANDRIA BAY — River Hospital broke ground on its \$10.7 million modernization project on Wednesday which, in part, will modernize its inpatient unit and strengthen the hospital's ability to be able to meet the health needs of the community.

"This is an exciting and significant moment for River Hospital," Kelley Tiernan, CEO and president of River Hospital, said in a statement. "With this project, we are creating modern inpatient spaces that reflect today's standards of care, improving technology and workflows for our staff, and most importantly, ensuring that our patients and families can continue to count on qual-

ity care close to home."

Funding for the project was done through the state's Health Care Facility Transformation Program III.

As part of the modernization efforts, licensed inpatient beds will be decreasing from 22 to 17 in order to create larger, functional patient rooms with private showers in each room.

There will also be increased negative-pressure isolation capabilities, improved accommodations for bariatric and handicapped patients, and improved rehabilitation spaces.

In attendance on Wednesday was Sen. Mark C. Walczyk, R-Sackets Harbor, Assemblyman Scott A. Gray, R-Watertown, and Jefferson County Legislators Bobby Cantwell, R-Clayton, and Phil Reed,

R-Fishers Landing, who joined hospital leaders, board mem-

bers and community partners.

"This investment means that

families in the North Country will have reliable access to high-quality, compassionate care right in their own community," Sen. Walczyk said in the hospital's statement. "It also preserves jobs, modernizes infrastructure, and lays a stronger foundation for future generations. I'm proud to stand behind River Hospital as it undergoes this transformation, and I eagerly anticipate the positive impact this project will bring."

Also included in the project is advanced nurse call and patient notification systems, streamlined patient flow in the hospital's imaging department, updated infrastructure, and a visitor and staff dining room.

The hospital says that the community will benefit from the project by having care close to home; workflows will become safer and more efficient; patients will be more comfortable and have an enhanced experience; and they say the hospital will have long-term sustainability as a critical access provider.

The improvements are expected to be completed in the middle of 2027.



A rendering of River Hospital's new inpatient room.

Image provided by River Hospital

YOUR LOCAL PROFESSIONAL CONNECTION



Contact Angel

**315-661-2457
or 315-782-0400**

email: aspencer@wdt.net



315-232-3280

★ 24 EMERGENCY SERVICE ★

✓ PLUMBING ✓ HEATING ✓ AIR

58 N. Main Street, Adams • 315-232-3280

SHERMAN ELECTRIC

Residential & Commercial
Electrical Supplies
Distribution Equipment, Conduit,
Lighting Fixtures, Wiring Devices, etc.

GREAT PRICES!

417 S. Clinton St.
Carthage, NY

315-493-3050

Over 100 years of knowledge and experience!

TIC TOC CLOCK REPAIR

★ Alex MacKinnon ★



All Kinds of Spring
and Weight
Driven Clocks

**Pickups and
Delivery Available**

**Phone:
315-778-1287**

ZEHR

HEATING & AIR CONDITIONING, INC.

SALES • INSTALLATION • SERVICE

Let our family help your family with your heating & air conditioning needs

FAMILY OWNED & OPERATED

All employees are
Zehr Family Members!

24-Hour Emergency Service
**FREE ESTIMATES • FULLY INSURED
CALL 315-788-5828**

JOYNER'S, INC.

AUTHORIZED KIOTI DEALER



2506 US RT. 11
MANNVILLE, NY

315-465-6661



AUTOMATIC STANDBY GENERATORS

GENERAC

24/7
AUTOMATIC
POWER PROTECTION

**Back-Up Power
For Your Home Or
Business**

KIERNAN
CONTRACTORS, INC.
ELECTRICAL AND UTILITY CONTRACTORS

**315
348-4049**

SUNY Adirondack, Hudson Headwaters Offer 'Life-Changing' Scholarship

QUEENSBURY, NY — When Logan Hayes crossed the stage to receive a SUNY Adirondack degree in Nursing in May, she knew she was walking toward a better future.

The Johnsbury mother of four is the first recipient of the Chelsea Coutant Memorial Scholarship, providing her \$16,000 in financial support and — perhaps even more valuable — the opportunity for a two-year nursing position with Hudson Headwaters Health Network (HHHN).

"I'm incredibly grateful for the opportunity this scholarship provides and to have a job right out of school," said Hayes, who was selected from more than 40 applicants for the scholarship, which was founded by Robert Nemer, a member of the boards of both SUNY Adirondack Foundation and Hudson Headwaters, and his wife, Francine.

The scholarship is offered to a second-year nursing student at SUNY Adirondack, who receives \$4,000 in the fall semester and \$4,000 in the spring.

"This college scholarship and career-entry support represents a wonderful opportunity for our student, Logan, to embark on an exciting career in Nursing and an example of the remarkable partnership SUNY Adirondack enjoys with Hudson Headwaters Health Network," said Anastasia Urtz, J.D., president of SUNY Adirondack. "We appreciate the leadership of Robert and Francine Nemer in supporting SUNY Adirondack and HHHN to prepare the next generation of Nursing

professionals in our region."

An additional \$8,000 is awarded by Hudson Headwaters once the recipient successfully completes the hiring process.

"Upon completion of the degree and passing the licensing exams, the recipient is also provided a retention bonus in exchange for a two-year commitment to the Network," said Susan Corney, executive vice president of human resources at Hudson Headwaters. "While the Network is long accustomed to helping our employees with professional development and tuition assistance, collaborating with SUNY Adirondack has been a proactive way we can strengthen our workforce with aspiring providers who have deep connections to the communities we serve. We are delighted to welcome Logan to our team."

The scholarship — created in honor of a SUNY Adirondack nursing student who died in a 2017 car crash, whom Nemer knew as a waitress at a restaurant he frequented — grew out of what Nemer saw as a need for the college and health care provider.

"At almost every HHHN board meeting, the topic came up about needing key personnel, including nurses, and at almost every SUNY Adirondack Foundation meeting, the topic came up as 'What do we do to keep some of these newly educated students in our area?'," Nemer said. "The scholarship idea came out of putting these two needs together. Logan is an amazing example of

what this program is all about. I hope other donors are inspired to join Franny and me to support future recipients."

The result is life changing for Hayes, who became a mother as a teenager, then worked for several years in hospitality as a waitress and bartender. "My children have been my biggest motivators," she said. "My childhood had some family struggles and difficulties, so I knew I had to do something different, that I had to put in the work and make something of myself."

Hayes passed the NCLEX (National Council Licensure Examination) — a standardized exam that assesses the competency of a nursing school graduate — in June and, while awaiting arrival of her nursing license, is working under a nurse leader as part of the network's women's health team.

"For each of my pregnancies, I received care from Hudson Headwaters. Looking back, this likely piqued my interest in gynecological and obstetrical care, and pushed me to pursue my nursing degree," Hayes shared. "I hope I can continue to be an example for my daughters and serve the community that helped shaped me."

To learn more about donating to this opportunity and other scholarships, contact SUNY Adirondack Foundation at foundation@sunyacc.edu or 518-743-2243.

Accepting New Patients at Family Health at Malone!

Where Compassion Meets Quality.

Award-winning health care right here in the North Country.



[HHHN.org](https://www.hhhn.org)

SBDC Celebrates Dr. Logan Curtis, Veteran Entrepreneur of the Year

On Aug. 22, representatives of the New York Small Business Development Center (NYSBDC) and North Central Small Business Development Center (SBDC) recognized Dr. Logan Curtis, DDS, owner of Upstate Oral Surgery and Dental Implants, as the Statewide Veteran Entrepreneur of the Year. The award was presented by Sonya Smith, State Director of the NYSBDC, during a ceremony held at the practice's new location, 22755 Summit Drive, Watertown, NY.

In addition to the award, Dr. Curtis was presented with a U.S. flag that was flown over the United States Capitol on April 2, 2025. At the request of the Honorable Nydia M. Velázquez, Member of Congress, the flag was flown specifically for Dr. Curtis in recognition of his achievements as Veteran Entrepreneur of the Year.

Dr. Curtis's path to oral and maxillofacial surgery began at age 15 after a foot-

ball injury that left him with a broken jaw and the loss of seven teeth. That experience sparked his passion for oral surgery, a field that focuses on the diagnosis, surgery, and treatment of diseases, injuries, and defects of the mouth, jaw, face, and neck.

Following 20 years of service in the U.S. Army, including four years stationed at Fort Drum, Dr. Curtis transitioned to civilian life with the support of the North Central (formerly Watertown) SBDC office. In 2019, he launched Upstate Oral Surgery and Dental Implants as a solo practice. Today, the practice has grown to include multiple surgeons and a team of 15 dedicated employees.

The recognition highlights not only Dr. Curtis's professional success but also his commitment to community impact, service, and mentorship.

Dr. Curtis says, "It is wonderful to receive recognition on behalf of our staff



Robert Griffin, Regional Director, North Central SBDC; Sidney Pond, JCC Vice President of Administration and Finance; Dr. Logan Curtis, Veteran Entrepreneur of the Year and Owner of Upstate Oral Surgery and Dental Implants; Sonya Smith, State Director, NYSBDC; Debbie Wilson, Certified Small Business Advisor, North Central SBDC.

and entire dental team. We

are very grateful to be part of this community of caring and fantastic patients, and it is our privilege to serve the great people of the North Country. We are truly honored by the recognition of that service."

"Dr. Curtis had a trusted advisor and professional confidant working alongside him, helping to turn challenges into opportunities for growth," said Smith, State Director, NYSBDC. "This award is not only about celebrating a successful business, but also about celebrating a vision fulfilled. A soldier who served our country with honor. A surgeon whose skill was born out of personal hardship. And now, an entrepreneur who has built a practice that supports families, provides good jobs, and delivers exceptional care to his community."

The success of Upstate Oral Surgery reflects not only Dr. Curtis' exceptional surgical skills, but also his entrepreneurial spirit and

commitment to building a thriving practice. The SBDC is proud to have supported him throughout his endeavor.

Robert Griffin, Regional Director, North Central SBDC, said, "Logan's journey with the SBDC began under the guidance of his first business advisor, Robin Stephenson, and continues today with Deb Wilson and the entire North Central SBDC team. His success reflects exactly what we strive for — being a trusted partner for entrepreneurs at every stage of their business journey. We're honored to have played even a small role in Logan's story and proud to support the passion and determination that drive business growth in our region. The SBDC remains committed to walking alongside Logan — and all our clients — as they turn vision into reality."

Degree Programs

Areas of Interest:

- Allied Health & Biological Sciences
- Healthcare Management
- Nursing

Microcredentials:

- Direct Support Professional I & II
- Healthcare Management I & II

Workforce:

- Clinical Medical Assistant
- Dental Assistant
- Medical Billing & Coding

GREAT CAREERS IN HEALTHCARE START HERE!

Transfer

Starting at Jefferson secures your spot at a four-year college & saves you money!

Jefferson
COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Potsdam
STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK
Public Health

UPSTATE
MEDICAL UNIVERSITY

Medical Imaging Radiography (X-ray)
Medical Imaging Sciences/Ultrasound
Medical Technology
And More

315-786-2200

sunyjefferson.edu/academicprograms

How older people are reaping brain benefits from new tech

Aging in Place?

Consider an AmeriGlide stair lift to keep you safe on your stairs.

We provide affordable stair lifts to increase safety in your home and improve your quality of life while aging in place.

Benefits of owning an AmeriGlide stair lift:

- ✓ Eliminate the risk of falls on the stairs.
- ✓ Enjoy a comfortable ride up and down all levels of your home.
- ✓ Enjoy comfortable, safe and easy access to all of your home.
- ✓ More affordable than options such as moving.



Custom fit to
your staircase



Indoor and
Outdoor options



Fast delivery
and installation

**CALL NOW TO
SAVE \$200**

1-844-741-1603

Get your **FREE, no obligation**
quote in minutes!



AmeriGlide
ACCESSIBILITY SOLUTIONS



By **PAULA SPAN**

KFF Health News (TNS)

It started with a high school typing course.

Wanda Woods enrolled because her father advised that typing proficiency would lead to jobs. Sure enough, the federal Environmental Protection Agency hired her as an after-school worker while she was still a junior.

Her supervisor “sat me down and put me on a machine called a word processor,” Woods, now 67, recalled. “It was big and bulky and used magnetic cards to store information. I thought, ‘I kinda like this.’”

Decades later, she was still liking it. In 2012 — the first year that more than half of Americans 65 and older were internet users — she started a computer training business.

Now she is an instructor with Senior Planet in Denver, an AARP-supported effort to help older people learn and stay abreast of technology. Woods has no plans to retire. Staying involved with tech “keeps me in the know, too,” she said.

Some neuroscientists researching the effects of technology on older adults are inclined to agree. The first cohort of seniors to have contended — not always enthusiastically — with a digital society has reached the age when cognitive impairment becomes more common.

Given decades of alarms about technology’s threats to our brains and well-being — sometimes called “digital dementia” — one might expect to start seeing negative effects.

The opposite appears true. “Among the digital pioneer generation, use of everyday digital technology has been associated with reduced risk of cognitive impairment and dementia,” said Michael Scullin, a cognitive neuroscientist at Baylor University.

It’s almost akin to hearing from a nutritionist that ba-

con is good for you.

“It flips the script that technology is always bad,” said Murali Doraiswamy, director of the Neurocognitive Disorders Program at Duke University, who was not involved with the study. “It’s refreshing and provocative and poses a hypothesis that deserves further research.”

Scullin and Jared Benge, a neuropsychologist at the University of Texas at Austin, were co-authors of a recent analysis investigating the effects of technology use on people over 50 (average age: 69).

They found that those who used computers, smartphones, the internet, or a mix did better on cognitive tests, with lower rates of cognitive impairment or dementia diagnoses, than those who avoided technology or used it less often.

“Normally, you see a lot of variability across studies,” Scullin said. But in this analysis of 57 studies involving more than 411,000 seniors, published in *Nature Human Behavior*, almost 90% of the studies found that technology had a protective cognitive effect.

Much of the apprehension about technology and cognition arose from research on children, sometimes focused on adolescents, whose brains are still developing.

“There’s pretty compelling data that difficulties can emerge with attention or mental health or behavioral problems” when young people are overexposed to screens and digital devices, Scullin said.

Older adults’ brains are also malleable, but less so. And those who began grappling with technology in midlife had already learned “foundational abilities and skills,” Scullin said.

Then, to participate in a swiftly evolving society, they had to learn a whole lot more.

Tech

From T8

Years of online brain-training experiments lasting a few weeks or months have produced varying results. Often, they improve a person's ability to perform the task in question without enhancing other skills.

"I tend to be pretty skeptical" of their benefit, said Walter Boot, a psychologist at the Center on Aging and Behavioral Research at Weill Cornell Medicine. "Cognition is really hard to change."

The new analysis, however, reflects "technology use in the wild," he said, with adults "having to adapt to a rapidly changing technological environment" over several decades. He found the study's conclusions "plausible."

Analyses like this can't determine causality. Does technology improve older people's cognition, or do people with low cognitive ability avoid technology? Is tech adoption just a proxy for enough wealth to buy a laptop?

"We still don't know if it's chicken or egg," Doraiswamy said.

Yet when Scullin and Bengé accounted for health, education, socioeconomic status, and other demographic variables, they still found significantly higher cognitive ability among older digital technology users.

What might explain the apparent connection?

"These devices represent complex new challenges," Scullin said. "If you don't give up on them, if you push through the frustration, you're engaging in the same challenges that studies have shown to be cognitively beneficial."

Even handling the constant updates, the troubleshooting, and the sometimes maddening new operating systems might prove advantageous. "Having to relearn something is another positive mental challenge," he said.

Still, digital technology may also protect brain health



Those who use computers, smartphones, the internet, or a mix do better on cognitive tests, with lower rates of cognitive impairment. (Dreamstime/TNS)

by fostering social connections, known to help stave off cognitive decline. Or its reminders and prompts could partially compensate for memory loss, as Scullin and Bengé found in a smartphone study, while apps help preserve functional abilities like shopping and banking.

Numerous studies have shown that while the number of people with dementia is increasing as the population ages, the proportion of older adults who develop dementia has been falling in the United States and several European countries.

Researchers have attributed the decline to a variety of factors, including reduced smoking, higher education levels, and better blood pressure treatments. Possibly, Doraiswamy said, engaging with technology has been part of the pattern.

Of course, digital technologies present risks, too. Online fraud and scams often target older adults, and while they are less apt to report fraud losses than younger people, the amounts they lose are much higher, according to the Federal Trade Commission. Disinformation poses its own hazards.

And as with users of any age, more is not necessarily better.

"If you're bingeing Net-

flix 10 hours a day, you may lose social connections," Doraiswamy pointed out. Technology, he noted, cannot "substitute for other brain-healthy activities" like exercising and eating sensibly.

An unanswered question: Will this supposed benefit extend to subsequent generations, digital natives more comfortable with the technology their grandparents often labored over? "The technology is not static — it still changes," Boot said. "So maybe it's not a one-time effect."

Still, the change tech has wrought "follows a pattern," he added. "A new technology gets introduced, and there's a kind of panic."

From television and video games to the latest and perhaps scariest development, artificial intelligence, "a lot of it is an overblown initial reaction," he said. "Then, over time, we see it's not so bad and may actually have benefits."

Like most people her age, Woods grew up in an analog world of paper checks and paper maps. But as she moved from one employer to another through the '80s and '90s, she progressed to IBM desktops and mastered Lotus 1-2-3 and Windows 3.1.

Along the way, her personal life turned digital, too: a

home desktop when her sons needed one for school, a cellphone after she and her husband couldn't summon help for a roadside flat, a smartwatch to track her steps.

These days, Woods pays bills and shops online, uses a digital calendar, and group-texts her relatives. And she seems unafraid of AI, the most earthshaking new tech.

Last year, Woods turned to AI chatbots like Google Gemini and OpenAI's ChatGPT to plan an RV excursion to South Carolina. Now, she's using them to arrange a family cruise celebrating her 50th wedding anniversary.

The New Old Age is produced through a partnership with The New York Times.

(KFF Health News is a national newsroom that produces in-depth journalism about health issues and is one of the core operating programs of KFF—the independent source for health policy research, polling and journalism.)

©2025 KFF Health News. Distributed by Tribune Content Agency, LLC.

Upcoming blood drives

Massena and Gouverneur, NY — Two regional hospitals will host Red Cross blood drives next week, encouraging community members to donate amid ongoing needs.

Massena Hospital will sponsor a blood drive on Tuesday, September 16, at the Massena Community Center, 61 Beach Street. The event runs from 12 p.m. to 4 p.m. Donors must be healthy, at least 16 years old, and weigh a minimum of 110 pounds. Those eligible are encouraged to consider a Double Red donation if they have O Negative, O Positive, A Negative, or B Negative blood type.

Pre-registration is available via RapidPass at www.redcrossblood.org/rapid-pass, but it can only be completed on the day of the drive before arrival. Walk-ins and first-time donors are welcome. Additional registration options include online at www.redcrossblood.org or by calling 1-800-RED-CROSS.

Meanwhile, Gouverneur Hospital will host a blood drive on Thursday, September 11, at the Gouverneur Community Center, 4673 NY-58. The event runs from 11:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. The same eligibility requirements apply: donors must be healthy, at least 16, and weigh at least 110 pounds. The hospital also recommends considering a Double Red donation for certain blood types.

Pre-registration through RapidPass is available, with same-day completion prior to arrival. Those interested can register online or by calling the Red Cross at the same number. Walk-ins and first-time donors are welcome at both events.

Samaritan Home Health Achieves High Quality Rating in Latest Medicare Care Compare Report

WATERTOWN, NY – Samaritan Home Health Agency, a leading provider of home health services in Jefferson County is proud to announce its recent performance in the latest Medicare Care Compare Quality of Patient Care Star Ratings, reaffirming its commitment to delivering exceptional care to patients in the comfort of their homes.

In the most recent update, Samaritan Home Health received a 4-star quality rating, placing it above average compared to other home health agencies across the country and in the region. This score is based on seven key measures of care quality that assess both processes of care and patient health outcomes. This rating represents an improvement from a consistent 3.5-star rating, reflecting the team's continued efforts to enhance care and patient outcomes.

"This recognition reflects the unwavering dedication of our team to provide compassionate, evidence-based care that improves the lives of our patients every day," said Mariah Sech, RN, BSN, Administrator and Director of Patient Services for Samaritan Home Health.

The Quality of Patient Care Star Rating is based on:

- How quickly care is initiated
- Improvement in patients' ability to: Take oral medications correctly walk or move around.
- Get in and out of be

- Bathe independently
- Breathe with less difficulty
- Rates of preventable hospital admissions

These quality measures fall into broader categories that matter most to patients and families: managing daily activities, treating symptoms, preventing harm, preventing unplanned hospital care, and value of care delivered.

Across the nation, most agencies receive a 3 or 3.5-star rating, making Samaritan Home Health performance notably strong. These scores are updated quarterly based on the most current available data.

Patients and families can compare agencies using the Medicare Care Compare tool:

<https://www.medicare.gov/care-compare/#-search>

"We are honored by the trust our patients place in us and remain focused on continuous improvement to ensure safe, effective, and personalized care at home," added Sech.

While the ratings help consumers make informed decisions, it is important to note that a high rating does not imply federal endorsement but rather indicates strong comparative performance based on publicly reported data.

For more information about our services or to speak with an intake coordinator, please contact:

315-782-0415.

www.samaritanhealth.com/homehealth

CPH Pharmacy Resident Program graduates



Two have been recognized as the newest graduates of Rochester Regional Health Canton-Potsdam Hospital's Pharmacy Residency Program. Licensed Pharmacists Alexis Velie and Aishat Musa have successfully completed their rigorous year-long residency; during which they developed and presented their own clinical research study, worked collaboratively as part of an interdisciplinary team to improve patient care, and became better prepared for a career in clinical pharmacy. Pictured from left: St. Lawrence Region President Donna McGregor; St. Lawrence Region Pharmacy Services Director David Sogoian, RPh, BS; Canton-Potsdam Hospital Pharmacy Residency Graduates Alexis Velie and Aishat Musa; and Canton-Potsdam Hospital Pharmacist and Pharmacy Residency Director Brett Ouimet, PharmD. Submitted photo

Dr. Rogers, MD

Certified Internist

**Accepting New Patients
Ages 18 and Older**

at our Canton Health Center



Community Health Center
of the North Country

(315) 386-8191

4 Commerce Lane, Canton

Samaritan Enhances Breast Surgery Precision with EnVisio® Navigation System

WATERTOWN, NY – Samaritan is proud to announce the integration of the EnVisio® Surgical Navigation System into its breast surgery program at Women's Wellness and Breast Care. This state-of-the-art technology provides real-time, image-guided navigation, allowing surgeons to perform breast-conserving procedures with greater precision and confidence.

The EnVisio system, by Elucant, acts like a GPS for surgeons. It allows them to locate and remove breast lesions with pinpoint accuracy, often through smaller incisions and with less disruption to surrounding healthy tissue.

"This technology represents a significant advancement in breast surgery," said Michael Peyser, MD, Breast Surgeon. "We are one of the first hospitals in Central NY and the North Country to utilize the EnVisio system which makes breast surgery more precise and efficient. The technology provides 3-D surgical awareness and uses real-time data on the location of the cancer to be removed."

The addition of EnVisio to Samaritan's surgical suite brings several patient benefits:

- Greater accuracy in locating tumors and abnormalities
- Smaller incisions, leading to faster healing and better cosmetic outcomes
- Improved surgical confidence, especially in complex or non-palpable cases
- Streamlined coordination with radiology and pathology teams

"We are committed to staying at the forefront of innovation in breast care," said Dr. Mario Victoria, Vice President for Medical Affairs/Chief Medical Officer. "EnVisio is part of our investment in providing patients with the safest, most advanced surgical options available."

This cutting-edge technology supports the hospital's broader mission to deliver comprehensive breast care through a collaborative team approach that includes breast surgery and genetics, radiology, medical and radiation oncology, and plastic surgery—ensuring patients receive seamless, compassionate, and state-of-the-art care.

For more information about breast surgery and treatment options at Women's Wellness and Breast Care, visit www.samaritanhealth.com/breast-care.

Samaritan Welcomes Dedicated Breast Surgeon Dr. Michael Peyser

WATERTOWN, NY – Samaritan Medical Center is proud to welcome Dr. Peyser, a breast surgical oncologist, to the team at Samaritan's Women's Wellness and Breast Care (WWBC), located at 1575 Washington Street in Watertown.

WWBC offers comprehensive breast care through a collaborative team approach that includes breast surgery and genetics, radiology, medical and radiation oncology, and plastic surgery—ensuring patients receive seamless, compassionate, and state-of-the-art care.

Dr. Peyser brings advanced training and experience to the team. He received his medical degree and completed his surgical residency at Eastern Virginia Medical School, followed by a Fellowship in Surgical Oncology at Roswell Park Cancer Institute. He is board certified by the American Board of Surgery.

Dr. Peyser is committed to delivering the most progressive breast cancer treatment using the latest surgical innovations and a multi-modality approach to care. He specializes in:



Dr. Michael Peyser

izes in:

- Hidden scar lumpectomies and mastectomies
- Nipple-sparing mastectomies
- Nerve reinnervation for improved nipple sensation
- Other advanced techniques in breast surgery

"I am honored to be part of a program that takes such a comprehensive and patient-focused approach to breast care," said Dr. Peyser. "My priority is to offer leading-edge surgical treatment while fostering a compassionate environment where

patients feel informed, supported, and confident in their care."

He also holds a Certificate of Performance in Oncoplastic Surgery from the National Consortium of Breast Centers (NCBC), awarded in 2024. His oncoplastic techniques focus on both effective cancer treatment and preserving the natural appearance of the breast.

"We are proud to welcome Dr. Peyser to our Women's Wellness and Breast Care team," said Dr. Mario Victoria, Vice President for Medical Affairs and Chief Medical Officer at Samaritan Medical Center. "His advanced training in surgical oncology and commitment to comprehensive, patient-centered care will further strengthen our ability to provide high-quality breast care within the North Country community."

Dr. Peyser is now accepting referrals. To refer a patient or schedule an appointment, please contact Samaritan's Women's Wellness and Breast Care at 315-785-4155.

For more information visit samaritanhealth.com/breast-care

Samaritan to Use Innovative Advanced Technology to Improve Lung Cancer Diagnosis

Robotic Bronchoscopy Aims to Help Enable Earlier Access to Lung Nodules

WATERTOWN, NY – For lung cancer patients, getting an earlier diagnosis is crucial in creating the opportunity for accelerating treatment discussions. Johnson & Johnson MedTech's MONARCH™ Platform, a robotically assisted bronchoscopy system enhanced with advanced computer-guided technology, is improving how physicians reach and biopsy lung lesions¹.

The facts:

- Nearly every 2 ½ minutes, someone in the U.S. is diagnosed with lung cancer, and every day, lung cancer takes the lives of more than 356 people².
- The 5-year relative survival is 61% in Stage 1 (localized), but when diagnosed at a late stage (distant) there is a 7% 5-year relative survival³.
- Over 70% of U.S. lung cancer patients are not diagnosed until stages III-IV⁴.
- Transthoracic Needle Aspirations have an approximate 20% pneumothorax rate; 7.3% of patients require a chest tube and 2.8% - 9% experience significant bleeding^{5,6}.

We at Samaritan want to enable physicians to pro-

vide patients and their families quicker answers, especially around earlier diagnosis and treatment options.

The MONARCH™ Platform is now in use at Samaritan Medical Center enhancing the work of the skilled pulmonologists at Samaritan Pulmonology – Dr. Rory Sears, Dr. David Rechlin, Dr. Lawrence Kramer, Dr. Aaliya Burza, and Dr. Marco Campitelli. The technology effectively integrates bronchoscopes, instruments, navigation, and robotics into one easy-to-use platform that provides the physician with a full suite of possible endoscopic intervention capabilities. The MONARCH™ Bronchoscope is designed for continuous vision throughout the procedure^{7,8,†}. The latest advancement in the platform's navigation technology, MONARCH™ QUEST, combines next-generation navigation software with the GE Healthcare OEC 3D Imaging System to speed up algorithm and data processing. It is designed to travel deep into the lungs and precisely guide a biopsy instrument into even the most difficult nodules, while maintaining vision during the most critical segment of the procedure, the biopsy^{9‡}.

Samaritan is currently the only hospital in New

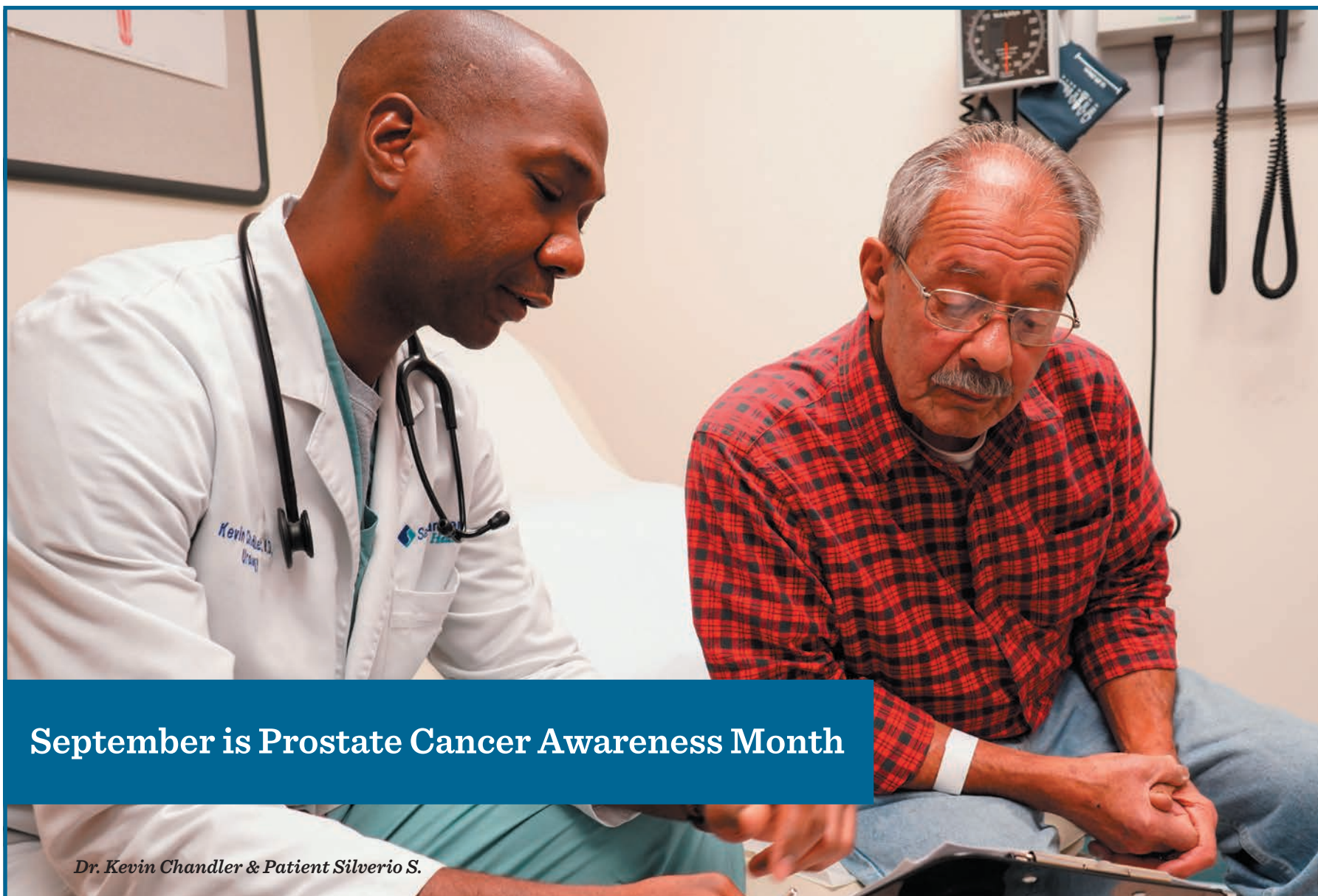
York State utilizing the Monarch Platform with advanced technology. Since its launch, the team has already performed four successful procedures, setting a new standard for lung care in the region.

The outcomes:

- As of April 2024, physicians throughout the country have used the MONARCH™ Platform on over 40,000 patients¹⁰.
- With MONARCH™ for Bronchoscopy, physicians have demonstrated a 15% improvement in overall diagnostic yield compared to traditional ENB bronchoscopy¹¹.

Samaritan continues to invest in our community and with the help of the MONARCH™ Platform will change the future of lung care. "The Monarch Platform is transforming the way we approach lung procedures," said Dr. Rory Sears, Pulmonary and Critical Care specialist at Samaritan. "Its advanced robotic precision allows us to reach and biopsy lung nodules with greater accuracy and safety, which ultimately means better outcomes and peace of mind for our patients."

Learn more at www.samaritanhealth.com/lung-care.



September is Prostate Cancer Awareness Month

Dr. Kevin Chandler & Patient Silverio S.

Prostate cancer is one of the most common cancers among men - but it's also one of the most treatable when caught early. According to the American Cancer Society, 1 in 8 men will be diagnosed with prostate cancer during their lifetime.

Talk with your doctor about a simple prostate screening.

Samaritan's Urology team is led by board certified physicians and compassionate clinical staff. The clinic specializes in prostate care, offering services such as prostate screening, prostate biopsy, treatment for prostate cancer, and urodynamics for prostate-related urinary concerns. Additional in-office procedures include vasectomy, circumcision, cyst removal, and treatments for bladder cancer and Peyronie's disease. The team at Samaritan Urology is also proud to offer minimally invasive robotic surgery for complex and routine urological, reproductive, kidney, and reconstructive procedures.

To learn more about Samaritan Urology visit
samaritanhealth.com/urology

