



# The Derrick. and The News-Herald • 2025

# BUSINESS

## Review & Forecast

Friday, Feb. 14, 2025

### Section E — Health Care



Throughout the two decades that UPMC Northwest has sat high atop Venango County in Seneca, the hospital has worked to be a leader in health care for the local community. To read more about its milestone anniversary, see page E2.

By Jamie Hunt

### Section



Section E of the Business Review & Forecast focuses on the health care industry.

It begins with an overview of UPMC Northwest as it celebrated its milestone 20th anniversary. It was back in 2004 when the hospital brought together the hospitals in Franklin and Oil City and combined them into one in Seneca. Today, UPMC Northwest is a 126-bed facility and 28-bed behavioral health center.

In addition, there's a story about the Northwest Hospital Foundation — the nonprofit, that through its various projects, helps support the hospital's mission of providing high-quality health care.

The health care section also takes a look at other various care providers that either marked milestone anniversaries in 2024 or will celebrate them in 2025.

In addition, many health-related businesses expanded their wellness offerings last year, and Community Ambulance Service expanded on its fleet of emergency vehicles.

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# UPMC Northwest celebrates 20 years

SUBMITTED ARTICLE

In October, the first UPMC hospital built from the ground up celebrated its 20th anniversary. UPMC Northwest, located in Seneca, Venango County, officially opened its doors on Oct. 8, 2004. The 126-bed facility and 28-bed behavioral health center brought together the hospital's two former locations in Franklin and Oil City. UPMC Northwest's leaders, board, the Northwest Hospital Foundation, and others, gathered to celebrate the milestone, debuting a video featuring Leslie Davis, president & CEO, UPMC, that highlighted the services that make UPMC Northwest such a special place. Brian Durniok, president, UPMC Northwest and market president, Northwest Pa., and Western New York, called UPMC Northwest a "super-charged community hospital." He touted the hospital's excellent Emergency Department, Inpatient Telemetry unit, full array of Surgical Services, Obstetrics, Inpatient Behavioral Health, Physical Rehab, a Transitional Care Unit, Hillman Cancer Center, Imaging and Physical Therapy services. The last 20 years at UPMC Northwest have been full of growth, and the hospital continues to provide excellent care and service to Venango, Clarion, Forrest, Mercer, and Crawford counties and beyond.

The Backbone of UPMC Northwest

Some of the staff who have been with UPMC Northwest since the opening of the new building reflected on their best memories, lessons learned, and thoughts on what has changed. George Wilbur, lead medical laboratory scientist, reflected on how much the hospital has advanced. "The use of a computer system has greatly decreased the time it takes to get results," George said. While he has adjusted to many new methods of providing care, George's goal has never changed: to serve every patient with quality work and respect. Meanwhile, Tonya Myers, director, Rehab Services, has seen her unit grow rapidly since she started at Northwest Medical Center in 1996, where she worked in the Rehab unit at the Oil City campus as one of two occupational therapists. "Now, we are UPMC. We have a beautiful, all-inclusive campus, and our department has grown by

leaps and bounds," she said. "We receive 40 to 50 visits a day in acute care alone." "Moving from Oil City to our new wing in Seneca is a wonderful memory," she said. Similarly, Denise Boughner, manager, Specialty Imaging Services, has always been impressed by how UPMC Northwest works together to do what is best for their patients. "I have always felt like I am part of a huge family here," she said. "We all come together to support each other and our patients." At UPMC Northwest, Denise has learned to treat everyone with kindness, as you never know what people are going through. "At UPMC Northwest, I've learned that it is okay to not have all the answers. There is always someone to ask who has the answers you need," said Cheryl Siverling, unit director, Obstetrics/Nursery, who began her career at Oil City Hospital 48 years ago. Whenever someone asks Cheryl when she is going to retire, she knows exactly what to say. "I have never gotten tired of seeing a baby being born," she said. "I tell them I have the best job in the world, seeing miracles every day in the eyes of a newborn baby." According to Durniok, nothing would be possible without such a talented team. "The staff are truly the fiber and backbone of this organization, and everything we accomplish is because of them," he said. "I am grateful to be associated with such a great group of people."

Honoring Life Through Art at UPMC Northwest

Every year, UPMC Northwest's behavioral health unit hosts an art show and sale in May for Mental Health Month, featuring art created by patients. In 2024, one day before the show, the unit was struck by the tragic loss of their beloved colleague, Candace Kent. "Candy Kent was an amazing clinician, colleague, and friend," said Trisha Rimpa, M.A., unit director, behavioral health. "Losing her suddenly was tragic for the patients she compassionately advocated for and for the staff who witnessed her dedication to the field of psychiatric nursing." Kent was on the behavioral health unit for eight years, helping to make the unit what it is today as one of the first nurses on the unit to obtain board certification in psychiatric mental

health nursing. "Candy's memory lives on in all the hearts who knew her and learned from her," said Rimpa. She led study sessions and provided encouragement to other staff who wanted to be certified. Postponing the show to mourn her loss, the team found two touching ways to honor her legacy at UPMC Northwest's behavioral health unit, creating a beautiful mural in the unit to memorialize her mark on the unit and renaming the art show the Candy Kent Memorial Art Show and Sale. Lindsey Burchfield, milieu therapist, took the lead on creating the mural on the front wall by the entrance. She designed a piece showcasing Kent's favorite flowers and colors with the goal of making the environment feel more inviting to patients. Day-to-day, Burchfield runs groups and one-on-one sessions with the patients, ranging from psychoeducational recreational activities to therapeutic conversations. "My goal is to get to know them as people rather than by their diagnosis," said Burchfield. Outside of work, Burchfield has always had an artsy background, working on craft projects in her spare time. "It was my little hidden talent, but after Candy passed away, I was more than honored to paint the mural." Burchfield wanted to showcase what Kent meant to the unit while making the environment feel more inviting. Over two months, Burchfield worked on the mural, often finding time between 11 p.m. and 3 a.m. while the patients were asleep. Burchfield enjoyed working in the quiet hours of the night. "I loved that I was able to make the process fun for the patients and staff," said Burchfield, who loved seeing patients' reactions when they woke up to see her progress or her coworkers' faces when they stopped by. On a slower day in the unit, Burchfield showed a talented patient on the EAC how to paint a leaf on the right side of the mural, allowing the patient the chance to give back to Kent, who helped care for them. "Candy was a huge advocate for patients with mental health diagnoses, which is why the process of doing the mural meant so much to me," said Burchfield. "While I was working on the mural, there were many times that I would sense she was there." Burchfield added the butterfly as a finishing touch to symbolize Kent looking over the rest of the mural,



Longtime employees at UPMC Northwest, left to right, 20 years ago and today: George Wilbur, lead medical laboratory scientist, Lisa Smith, executive assistant II, Denise Boughner, manager, Tonya Myers, director.

Hospital president recognizes dedication and hard work

BY BRIAN DURNIOK  
UPMC Northwest President

As we reflect on the past year, we celebrate the accomplishments of an extraordinary year at UPMC Northwest. Together, we've navigated challenges, embraced innovation, and consistently delivered high-quality care to our patients. This year in review highlights the dedication and hard work of our exceptional team, the compassionate care we provide to our community, and the remarkable progress made in advancing healthcare excellence to the residents of Venango and Clarion counties and beyond. In 2024, patient access to UPMC Northwest services remained robust with 5393 total admissions; 437 deliveries; 1905 observations; and 4587 surgeries. Welcome additions to the UPMC Northwest clinical team this year include: Francis Ogbolu, D.O., urology; Satyasagar Morisetty,

M.D. pulmonology; and Edward Marchan, M.D., radiation oncology. Additionally, Kristen Maguire, D.N.P., returned to UPMC to fill the role of chief nursing officer and vice-president, Patient Care Services at UPMC Northwest. She previously served as director of nursing, women and infant services at West Penn Hospital. Prior to that, she worked at UPMC Magee-Womens Hospital, where she held several leadership positions. Being part of a 40-hospital academic medical center continues to help in our overall management of operations. We share resources, transfer patients, have access to a variety of experts, and secure the appropriate equipment and technologies to keep our staff and patients safe. We continue to offer the largest tele-health program in the UPMC system with 40 out-patient specialty programs and 10 in-patient programs. Telemedicine became very important and widely throughout the pandemic.

Throughout UPMC, the use of telemedicine increased significantly, as much as 300 percent since the start of the pandemic. This event has taught us all about being adaptable. Our patients need to receive care; we are able to seamlessly accommodate patients through telemedicine. UPMC Northwest's annual economic impact to the region is more than \$245 million. In Fiscal Year 2023, UPMC Northwest provided \$11 million in benefits to the community, including more than \$7 million in free and reduced-cost care to the area's most vulnerable citizens. Numerous health care programs, such as stroke support groups, better breathing clinics and health fairs are offered to the community. It's part of our commitment to deliver the best possible patient care and overall experience and the best possible work environment for our employees, a team at UPMC Northwest of which I could not be prouder.

the unit, coworkers and patients. In addition to the mural, the annual Behavioral Health Stamp Out Stigma Art Show and Sale was renamed the Candy Kent Memorial Art Show and Sale. Recently, the event went off without a hitch, drawing off the success of the past four annual art shows. The patients from the Extended Acute Care (EAC) unit typically facilitate the show, helping with set-up and working during the show. "They truly love it," said Rimpa. Christina Greggs, lead behavioral health counselor, spearheads the whole event. Last year, the raffle was a quilted blanket made of past UPMC Northwest t-shirts. The team also makes T-shirts, designed by patients, that staff can buy. In addition to art, the team began selling plants. The patients work on growing flowers and vegetables in the hallway outside of the behavioral health unit, which becomes the 'greenhouse.' The proceeds from the show now go towards the Candy Kent Memorial Scholarship for Student Nurses, a scholarship open to current nursing students who plan to go into psychiatric nursing. Growing up in the communities surrounding UPMC Northwest, Burchfield noted how the small area lacked mental health resources. "I see how mental health affects everyone in our community, whether you see them passing on the street or at a gas station," she said.

"I never realized the impact I could make until I started working on the unit two years ago." "Every day is a memory," said Burchfield. "The patients have given me drawings, handwritten letters, and thanked me in ways that help carry me through my days." Burchfield has grown very passionate about breaking the stigma surrounding mental health, currently pursuing a Master of Science in clinical mental health counseling in Arizona. "As our unit is behind a locked door, we are often 'in our own world,'" said Rimpa. "We are on a constant mission to decrease the stigma behind the behavioral Health unit."

Advanced Nursing education offers opportunity

A \$1.18 million grant from the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), will provide UPMC Northwest nurses the opportunity to receive specialized training to become sexual assault nurse examiners (SANEs) from Pennsylvania Western University Clarion Campus. This program will enhance care for survivors of sexual assault and domestic violence, making trauma-informed care accessible across Venango County. The grant, awarded to Randilyn Lewis, clinical education specialist, will fund a comprehensive certificate program for three cohorts of 15 students, equipping a total of 45 nurses to provide trauma-in-

formed care and forensic examinations for both adult and pediatric patients across the region. Currently, Randilyn is an instructor in the Department of Health and Human Services, Nursing program at Pennsylvania Western University. "We are targeting medically underserved areas," said Randilyn. "Currently, there are only a few trained SANEs in Venango County. We are filling a need in our rural communities, significantly increasing access to this specialized care." "I am so thankful for the support I've had from my UPMC Northwest leadership team and the team at Pennsylvania Western University," said Randilyn. "It is an absolute honor to bring this service to our community. We're all working together to offer better education for our nurses and to improve outcomes for all survivors of sexual assault and domestic violence in this area." The whole process, however, begins with a story. "When a patient has undergone a serious trauma, it takes an admirable amount of bravery to tell their story, to be able to stand in the door, and say this is what happened, and I need help," said Randilyn. "If we need to send them somewhere else, retelling their story can be a hurdle to their recovery." In addition to identifying any injuries, SANEs meticulously capture photos of the patient's injuries and collect evidence. If the patient decides to press charges against their assailant, this documentation and expert testimony will be key evidence in their case. Once the exam is over, the SANE will make sure the patient has a safe discharge plan. Pennsylvania Western University's offering is a unique, dual educational program and will be available to nurses at UPMC Northwest. "Unlike typical programs that focus on either adult or pediatric care, we will allow nurses to choose their specialization or pursue both certifications," said Randilyn. To become a SANE, clinical preceptorship is required, plus a minimum of 300 practice hours that must be completed to sit for the exam. This combined program requires 64 hours of online coursework and 16 hours of hands-on skills education. The grant will cover the education, certification, and travel costs, making this opportunity completely free and accessible for the nurses.



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## The Mended Willow launches float therapy

### SUBMITTED ARTICLE

The Mended Willow is proud to be the first “Float Spa” to open in Venango County. The spa, located in Seneca, offers floatation therapy, a truly unique opportunity to completely relax both body and mind.

Perfectly supported by a skin temperature solution of 800 pounds of pharmaceutical grade Epsom salt and about 10 inches of water, patients will lose track of where their bodies ends and the water begins. Basking in total weightlessness, they’ll release all the tension stored in their muscles, allowing their minds to rest like never before. They will emerge with a euphoric afterglow that can last for days afterwards.

Float therapy is known to have both mental and physical healing properties and is often used for stress relief, anxiety relief, depression relief and PTSD, in addition to pain relief, enhanced sleep and rapid muscle recovery.

Each float session lasts 60 minutes, and the experience is customized with music and blue light to the level of comfort and desire each client has for complete sensory deprivation, which is a light and sound proof environment. Floating in complete sensory deprivation allows the brain waves to slow to the theta state, the dream-like state right before one falls asleep. The experience provides a tranquil environment that encourages the mind, body and soul to heal from within.



The Mended Willow is a local family owned and operated float therapy / sensory deprivation business. For more information, please visit [www.themendedwillow.com](http://www.themendedwillow.com).

In 2024, The Mended Willow opened their doors in April of 2024. They have a passion for holistic healing and are excited to provide such a unique opportunity to the community. They believe humans have a need for healing, not only on a physical level, but also on an emotional, spiritual and psychological level.

The Mended Willow prides themselves in cultivating an inclusive, relaxing space where anyone can feel comfortable to deeply unwind, heal and restore.

### Plans for 2025

In January of 2025 we launched a new service “Vibro-acoustic Reiki”. A specially designed bed uses carefully crafted sound frequency to penetrate into your joints and muscles deeper than traditional massage. The soundwaves coupled with a Reiki Healing session creates a powerful new form of holistic healing and wellness.

The Mended Willow can be reached by calling 814-758-2273 or emailing [themendedwillow@gmail.com](mailto:themendedwillow@gmail.com).

### SUBMITTED ARTICLE

Peaces For You Massage Therapy is celebrating 22 incredible years in business, and they want to take a moment to thank their wonderful community for their continued support. They are also excited to share some important updates as they move into the new year.

Founder and owner, Kammi Mooney, has been a dedicated Licensed Massage Therapist for over 20 years. As of Jan. 1, Kammi has taken on a new and exciting role as the Executive Director at the YWCA. While Peaces For You Massage Therapy will miss her presence, they are proud of her and will be cheering her on in this next chapter of her career.

Peaces For You Massage Therapy is thrilled to welcome Chelsey Stoner as our new Licensed Massage Therapist. Chelsey graduated from the Great Lakes Institute of Technology for Massage Therapy in April 2024, and she’s already become a wonderful addition to the massage family. Chelsey is committed to understanding her clients’ needs and offers a therapeutic approach, specializing in trigger point therapy. “The world of massage

is endless, and I’m excited for this journey,” says Chelsey. In addition to her work with Peaces For You Massage Therapy, Chelsey also provides Shockwave and Laser treatments at Eckert Chiropractor. She is passionate about helping clients find comfort and relaxation.

As Kammi transitions to her new role, the practice is also excited to announce that Kayla Schmader will be taking over as the new manager of Peaces For You.

“I am very excited to take on this management role. My massage dream is slowly coming true, and I am so honored to have this opportunity. Kammi has been a wonderful mentor and it means so much to me that she believes I’m ready for this new change,” Kayla said. Kayla is looking forward to sharing her ideas with clients and continuing to provide relaxation and comfort.

Kayla joined in 2021 after relocating to the Venango County area. Kayla graduated from Pittsburgh School of Massage Therapy in 2010. After graduating, she started her massage career right away in the Northern Pittsburgh area. For the last 14 years, Kayla has been a Li-

retrofit energy management efforts that were initiated in 2018 with Envinity, a sustainability-focused commissioning and engineering firm.

The hospital has achieved an annual reduction of 770 metric tons of carbon dioxide, while its ENERGY STAR score improved from 59 to 83. The facility’s electric consumption was reduced by 15% and gas by 11%, with a total annual energy cost savings of over \$230,000 per year. The program had a simple payback of less than four years, which funded the upgrade of 25% of the facility to digital controls, improving patient comfort and operations oversight.

The greenhouse gas emissions that were reduced due to the project is equivalent to 219 gasoline-powered passenger vehicles driven for one year, and the CO2 emissions reduced are equal to 1,104,359 pounds of coal burned. This achievement is a significant offset and just one example of the win-win of a more sustainable UPMC.

## UPMC

Continued from Page 2

### UPMC Northwest awarded for reducing CO2 emissions

In 2024, UPMC Northwest was awarded an Energy Star Certification, which is a program run by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) that grants certification based on strict energy performance standards like electric, natural gas, and water usage along with hospital metrics.

To achieve certification, a building must maintain a minimum score of 75 over a year-long period. UPMC Northwest scored 83 for 2022. Over the past few years, UPMC Northwest has made major energy management changes, following an ambitious sustainability plan first developed in 2017. The plan called for low cost retrocommissioning and deep

censed Massage Therapist and loves that she can always continue to grow in this career.

Peaces For You continues to focus on therapeutic massage techniques that address their clients’ unique needs. Along with Swedish and Therapeutic massage therapy, they offer a range of other services, including Hot Stone, Prenatal, Lomi-Lomi, Shiatsu, Cranial Sacral, and more. Their team is dedicated to making sure patients leave feeling better than when they arrived.

In addition to massage therapy services, they also provide Infrared Sauna and Halotherapy. Infrared Sauna helps soothe aches from repetitive motion or arthritis, promotes muscle recovery for athletes and provides a detoxing experience. Halotherapy, a salt therapy used to help with allergies, sinus infections and COPD, is also available. These services can be added to any massage session or used separately. They have brought great results for many clients.

Peaces For You Massage Therapy has also given their space a fresh new look! The updated lobby area is designed to help patients unwind and relax

even before the massage begins.

Peaces For You Massage Therapy is proud to continue their close connections with their neighbors at 1047 Allegheny Avenue. Between their therapeutic massages, Dr. Kate’s expertise in chiropractic care, Shockwave and Laser therapy, and the relaxing services offered at Lynn Marshall’s Headline Hair, Peaces For You is seeing remarkable results in their clients’ pain management and overall well-being.

“I absolutely love it when I hear our clients are spending the whole day in our building. Whether it’s for therapeutic or relaxation reasons, I’m confident they will leave feeling better than when they first walked in,” says Kayla.

Peaces For You Massage Therapy is so grateful for the trust and loyalty of their clients over the past 22 years. Whether people are a regular client or someone they’ve just had the pleasure of meeting, Peaces For You Massage Therapy is committed to providing them with the best care possible. They look forward to many more years of serving their community.

Be sure to follow them on Facebook for the latest updates, special offers and news.

## Brooker Kidney Care would like to welcome Dr. David M. Brooker, DO to the practice.



Dr. David R. Brooker, MD



Dr. David M. Brooker, DO

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# Peripheral Neuropathy WARNING!

Butler, PA – The most common method your doctor will recommend to treat your neuropathy is prescription drugs that may temporarily reduce your symptoms. These drugs have names such as Gabapentin, Lyrica, Cymbalta, and Neurontin, and they’re primarily antidepressant or anti-seizure drugs. These drugs may cause you to feel uncomfortable and have a variety of harmful side effects.

Peripheral neuropathy is a result of damage to the nerves. It most often causes weakness, pain, numbness, tingling, and the most debilitating balance problems. This damage is commonly caused by a lack of blood flow to the nerves in the hands and feet which causes the nerves to begin to degenerate due to lack of nutrient

flow.

As you can see in Figure 2, as the blood vessels that surround the nerves become diseased they shrivel up, which caused the nerves to not get the nutrients to continue to survive. When these nerves begin to “die”, they cause balance problems,



Figure 2: When these very small blood vessel become diseased they begin to shrivel up and the nerves begin to degenerate.

pain, numbness, tingling, burning, and many additional symptoms.

The main problem is that your doctor has told you to just live with the problem or try the drugs which you don’t like taking because they make you feel uncomfortable.

There is now a facility right here in Butler that offers you hope without your taking those endless drugs with serious side effects. (See the special neuropathy severity examination at the end of this article.)

In order to effectively treat your neuropathy three factors must be determined:

- 1) What is the underlying cause?
- 2) How much nerve damage has been sustained?
- 3) How much treatment will your condition require?

NOTE: Once you have sustained 85% nerve loss, there is likely nothing that we can do for you.

The treatment that is provided at Discover Wellness Center has three main goals:

- 1) Increase blood flow
- 2) Stimulate small fiber nerves
- 3) Decrease brain-based pain

An infrared test will be done to see if you have decreased blood flow in your feet that could cause your neuropathy. See Figure 1.

The treatment to increase blood flow utilizes a specialized low-level light therapy (not to be confused with laser therapy) using light emitting diode technology. This technology was originally developed by NASA to assist in increasing blood flow.

The low-level light therapy is like watering a plant. The light therapy will allow the blood vessels to grow back around the peripheral nerves and provide them with the proper

nutrients to heal and repair. It’s like adding water to a plant and seeing the roots grow deeper and deeper.

The amount of treatment needed to allow the nerves to fully recover varies from person to person and can only be determined after a detailed neurological and vascular evaluation. As long as you have not sustained at least 85% nerve damage there is hope!

Dr. Ram Parikh, D.C. at Discover Wellness Center will do a neuropathy severity examination to determine the extent of the nerve damage for only \$45. (The normal cost of such an exam is \$257.) This neuropathy severity examination will consist of a detailed sensory evaluation, extensive peripheral vascular testing, and a detailed analysis of the findings of your neuropathy.

Dr. Ram is offering this neuropathy severity examination now through **Monday, February 10th.**

Call 724-602-0290 to make an appointment with Dr. Ram to determine if your peripheral neuropathy can be treated.

#### Discover Wellness Center

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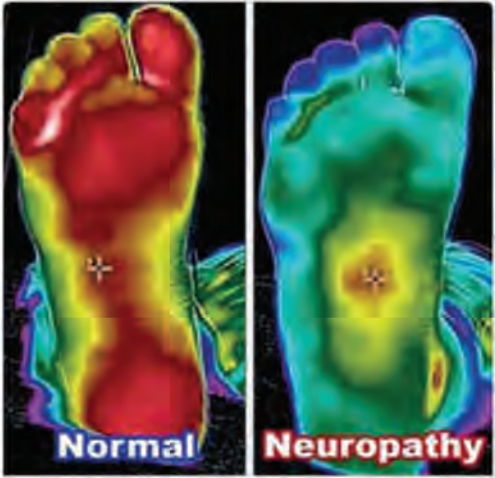


Figure 1: Showing temperature changes for neuropathy foot versus normal foot. Causing cold and numb feet.



# Northwest Hospital Foundation tends to healthcare needs

SUBMITTED ARTICLE

The Northwest Hospital Foundation connects the passions of everyday donors with the healthcare needs of the community. As the supporting foundation to UPMC Northwest, donors can be assured that every gift stays local to provide life-changing medicine close to home.

In 2024, the Foundation proudly marked a milestone alongside UPMC Northwest — 20 years of caring for the community at the Seneca location was celebrated, along with recognition of community leaders and philanthropic commitments that made it possible.

The \$72 million dollar hospital, situated on 144 acres of land donated by the Northwest Hospital Foundation, stands as a testament to the power of transformative philanthropy in our region. The Foundation played a pivotal role in making UPMC Northwest a reality for the community, including a \$10 million gift, making it the single largest contribution ever made by the Foundation.

In addition to celebrating this historic milestone, the Northwest Hospital Foundation launched several new initiatives in 2024.

Among them was the free monthly Walk With A UPMC Northwest Doc series, which utilizes the hospital’s walking trail by encouraging community members to stay active while

learning about health and wellness from UPMC Northwest’s dedicated physician experts. These walks foster direct connections between healthcare providers and the communities they serve. Walks are planned again for 2025 from May through September.

With much anticipation, a new outdoor fitness station was also officially opened in June. Conveniently located behind the pavilion along the UPMC Northwest walking trail, the fitness station features ten state-of-the art exercise equipment units, three of which are wheelchair accessible. QR codes provide access to work-out features demonstrating how to use each exercise machine, including video demonstrations.

In addition to the walking trail, the fitness equipment is free to use and open to the public. The project was made possible through the generosity of the Laura M. Smedley Trust, United Way of Venango County, UPMC Health Plan/UPMC Northwest, Dr. & Mrs. Arthur William Phillips Charitable Trust, the UPMC Northwest Medical Staff and many generous individuals.

Over \$155,000 was invested in life-saving technologies in 2024 that help ensure UPMC Northwest stays at the forefront of medical care for the community.

Some of those technologies included a LigaSure Generator for the removal of fallopian tubes during C-section deliveries or for post-

partum sterilization immediately after vaginal delivery, and a StealthStation Navigation System. The StealthStation is a powerful tool for improving surgical accuracy and targeting disease with pinpoint precision while navigating the inner workings of the ears, nose and throat.

Helping others is at the root of all that the Foundation does. In 2024, patient hardship funds helped meet the needs of vulnerable patients and assisted them in regaining their health. Nearly \$220,000 provided help with after-hours transportation, medications, clothing, durable medical equipment and helped provide vital assistance to patients who were unable to afford the cost of their medical care.

To support its mission and expand their reach, in October, a new website was launched, providing an enhanced user experience. The site offers easy navigation, streamlined donation options, information on programs and events, and patient impact stories. Current donors or those interested in joining the Foundation’s mission can visit northwesthospital-foundation.org to learn how contributions are making a difference and discover new ways to get involved.

At the core of the Northwest Hospital Foundation’s mission is a dedicated 17-member board of directors. This group of passionate individuals brings diverse expertise, leadership

and unwavering commitment to improving healthcare for the community.

Soni Graff and James H. Williams, Jr. were newly elected at the beginning of the year. In addition, Dr. Debra Flaherty, Beverly Lawton, David and Tiffany Nolf, Joseph Pastor, Gregory and Katrina Piercy, Dr. Donna Puleio and Gary Thompson, and Tyler VanWormer were voted into the 264-member corporation board. The corporation board meets annually in October and serves as ambassadors to further share and support the Foundation’s work.

Foundation staff include Executive Director Theresa Edder and Annual Giving Officer Juliet Hilburn. The Foundation’s administrative office is in the newly rebranded UPMC Seneca Professional Building on State Route 257.

The Northwest Hospital Foundation gratefully accepts a variety of charitable contributions to support its mission, including monetary donations, memorial and tribute gifts to honor loved ones. Planned gifts, such as bequests and beneficiary designations, are also encouraged, allowing donors to leave a lasting legacy. Additionally, gifts of stock, securities and other assets are accepted, offering flexible options for impactful giving.

For more information or to request an appointment, visit northwesthospitalfoundation.org or call 814-676-7920.

# West Park Rehab remains committed providing quality care

SUBMITTED ARTICLE

While the vision at West Park Rehab and Diagnostics is to “deliver skilled and compassionate Physical Therapy that will transform the members of our community to optimize movement, improve quality of life, and enhance the human experience,” the increasing complexity and limitations imposed by insurance companies are creating significant challenges for physical therapy practices nationwide.

Delayed reimbursements, low reimbursement rates and mounting administrative burdens are straining resources and making it more difficult for practices to maintain financial stability. Despite these hurdles, West Park Rehab remains committed to providing high-quality care and upholding its mission to improve the well-being of every patient.

West Park Rehab and Diagnostics, owned and operated by Eddie St. Clair, DPT, CHT, is a trusted provider of physical therapy services with two convenient loca-

tions in Venango County. Eddie leads a dedicated team of five Physical Therapists, seven Physical Therapist Assistants, eight Admin Team members, and four Technicians.

The first location at 571 Pone Lane in Franklin opened in 2005, and a second location at 3233 State Route 257 in Seneca opened in 2017. Both facilities are committed to offering exceptional care and rehabilitation services, helping patients regain strength and improve their quality of life.

**Direct Access Physical Therapy gains popularity**

Direct Access Physical Therapy allows patients to seek physical therapy services without needing a referral from a physician, providing quicker access to care. This option empowers individuals to schedule appointments directly with a licensed physical therapist, speeding up the process of addressing pain, injury or rehabilitation needs.

With direct access, patients

can receive personalized evaluations and treatment plans right away, ensuring a more efficient recovery.

**The growing role of Ultrasound and EMG**

West Park Rehab is excited to offer Musculoskeletal Diagnostic Ultrasound at their Franklin location. Beth Carr, DPT, CWS, has completed extensive coursework through the nationally recognized Hands-on Diagnostics fellowship program and earned her fellowship in Musculoskeletal Ultrasound in the Fall of 2021.

Musculoskeletal ultrasound has become an invaluable tool in diagnosing and treating a wide range of musculoskeletal conditions. Unlike traditional imaging methods, it provides real-time, dynamic images that allow healthcare professionals to assess soft tissues, muscles, tendons and joints with remarkable clarity.

This technique offers numerous benefits: it is non-invasive, radiation-free,

cost-effective and provides immediate results, making it an excellent choice for evaluating both acute and chronic musculoskeletal issues. It is particularly effective for diagnosing conditions like tendonitis, sprains, muscle tears, arthritis and bursitis.

As part of West Park Rehab’s commitment to personalized patient care, they are pleased to offer this service at a self-pay rate.

Kevin Cheung PT DPT is conducting electrodiagnostic tests at West Park Rehab’s Franklin location. If a doctor suspects a problem with a patient’s nerves or muscles, an EMG and nerve conduction study (NCS) may be recommended. This combined test helps identify the source of symptoms.

The NCS measures how quickly and effectively electrical signals travel through the nerves, like checking the speed of a train on its tracks. Meanwhile, the EMG evaluates the electrical activity in muscles — both when they are at rest and during movement.

**Neuropathy Neubie treatment providing relief**

The Neubie/Neufit system is rapidly becoming a preferred treatment for neuropathy due to its impressive ability to provide relief from nerve damage symptoms. This non-invasive, drug-free therapy leverages advanced direct current (D/C) electrical stimulation, which helps regenerate damaged nerves, alleviate pain and enhance circulation.

By addressing the root cause of neuropathy through natural healing, the Neubie/Neufit system offers a promising solution for those who struggle with chronic pain or mobility issues.

**Joining the West Park Team in 2024**

In April, West Park Rehab was thrilled to welcome Amanda Kucic, PTA, to their team of skilled therapists at the Franklin location. Amanda, born and raised in Limestone, began her college journey at Slippery Rock University, majoring in exercise science, before transferring to Penn State Dubois, where she earned her Associate of Science degree as a Physical Therapist Assistant in 2022. Since graduating, Amanda has

worked primarily in outpatient settings.

West Park Rehab is also pleased to introduce Tera Phillips, who joined the Front Desk team at our Seneca location.

**Professional Advancements and Achievements**

The entire team of Physical Therapist Assistants (PTAs) at West Park Rehab have successfully completed the Neufit/Neubie Practitioner Certification course. The Neufit/Neubie certification has equipped them with powerful and transformative techniques to enhance patient outcomes using the Neufit/Neubie system.

**Looking Forward to 2025**

Moving into the new year, West Park Rehab is excited to announce plans to provide Wellness services to their local community. They are looking forward to hosting events that will offer high-quality services and products aimed at improving overall health and well-being. These events will be designed to empower community members with the tools and resources they need to lead healthier lives.

# SENIOR SERVICES

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# Adagio Health expands services to empower women

SUBMITTED ARTICLE

Healthy Women for Life Program

The Healthy Women for Life program, funded by the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services, is an initiative at Adagio Health aimed at advancing accessible and inclusive healthcare for women. The program offers a comprehensive range of services, including prenatal and postpartum education, STI testing and treatment, health screenings for chronic conditions like heart disease, hypertension and diabetes, and more.

Through the program, women can enroll in virtual and in-person nutrition classes and educational workshops on a variety of topics, including menstrual health education. Adagio Health Seneca offers no-cost menstrual products (pads, tampons and menstrual cups) to eligible participants.

In the program’s first year, 2,160 women in western Pennsylvania received free period products from Adagio Health and project partners. In 2025, Adagio Health hopes to continue to provide needed access to these essential products for women. For more information about the program, visit [adagiohealth.org/hwfl/](http://adagiohealth.org/hwfl/).

**Nutrition Counseling and Behavioral Health Services**

Personalized nutrition counseling is now available for Adagio Health Seneca patients. Leading this service is Teresa Yoder, a Registered Dietitian-Nutritionist (RDN) and Licensed Dieti-

tian-Nutritionist (LDN) who is dedicated to advancing community health through nutrition education and fostering equitable food systems. Yoder is based out of Adagio Health’s Uniontown office, but provides services virtually for Adagio Health patients throughout western PA.

Additionally, patients can also find support for anxiety, depression, assistance with utility payments, finding affordable housing, or applying to other financial assistance programs; receiving healthy food; and much more with Behavioral Health Clinicians and Care Navigators at Adagio Health.

**Meet Hayley Masters**

Hayley Masters is board certified in Family Medicine and is a Certified Registered Nurse Practitioner at Adagio Health Seneca. She lives and is involved in the Seneca community and provides friendly and supportive care to patients who visit the office. Hayley brings expertise in women’s health and works to empower individuals through education and personalized healthcare services. Those interested can make an appointment with Hayley online or by calling the office at 814-676-1811.

They can also find and schedule appointments with other providers at an Adagio Health Medical office through [adagiohealth.org](http://adagiohealth.org).

Adagio Health Seneca is located at 3292 State Route 257 and is open Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Hayley Master



# CFVNA providing care over 40 years

## SUBMITTED ARTICLE

Clarion Forest VNA (CFVNA) is a non-profit home health and hospice agency that has been proudly and faithfully serving its neighbors for more than 40 years. Their team's focus on compassionate care goes hand-in-hand with their investment in clinical excellence.

The CFVNA team's approach to patient care and extensive training with staff are some of the many factors that promote clinical excellence which the agency prides itself on.

CFVNA offers Home Health, Hospice, Extended Care (private duty care), and an Adult Daily Living Center. Their agency provides care in Clarion, Forest, Jefferson, and portions of Venango and Armstrong counties. The programs offered by the CFVNA include home health, palliative, maternal-infant and hospice care. They provide skilled home health care including nursing, physical therapy, occupational therapy, speech therapy, home health aides, registered dietitian and medical social workers. They also have two certified wound and ostomy registered nurses.

Their agency's telehealth monitoring program also contributes to their clinical excellence. These monitors are all wireless, with education videos available to help educate patients on numerous disease processes. Telehealth trends are sent weekly to the patient's primary care physician. Physicians are also notified of any abnormalities in vital signs/weights. CFVNA incorporates monitoring in an effort to help reduce rehospitalizations.

The Hospice program is separately certified by Medicare and Medicaid and also accepts most major insurances. In addition to providing in-home care, they are contracted with Clarion Hospital to provide general inpatient hospice care. CFVNA also has contracts with the skilled nursing facilities in their service area to provide hospice care in nursing homes. The program includes the same services as the home health program, as well as spiritual counseling, anticipatory grief counseling, bereavement services and a volunteer program. Dr. Robert Luderer is the Medical Director and Dr. Catherine Cunningham is a hospice physician employed by the VNA.

VNA Extended Care Services, Inc. is a separate agency, but it is affiliated with the VNA. Extended Care provides private duty care, which offers a variety of services including help with personal care, meal preparation, reminders and assistance taking medications, light housekeeping, laundry, and socialization and companionship. These services may be paid for by long-term care insurance or veteran's benefits, but typically they are paid for out-of-pocket.

Clarion Forest Adult Daily Living Center (ADLC) is also a program within VNA Extended Care Services, Inc. The ADLC is unique to their community and rapidly growing. It is licensed by the PA Department of Aging and the Office of Developmental Programs. The Center offers a safe and comfortable environment for individuals who need assistance dealing with their daily living routines.

The facility is fully handicap accessible. A health check is also provided quarterly by a registered nurse. The ADLC offers therapeutic activities to promote socialization, and maintain or increase the client's present level of function. The ADLC provides personal care, health monitoring, noon meal and routine blood work. Information and support are also provided to caregivers.

CFVNA's agency is a member of the Pennsylvania Homecare Association, The National Alliance for Care at Home, and Leading Age. They continue to work tirelessly with these organizations to advocate for rural healthcare.

To learn more about Clarion Forest VNA, Inc. and their community events, please visit [www.cfvna.org](http://www.cfvna.org) or visit their Facebook page.

# Community Ambulance Service expands fleet

## SUBMITTED ARTICLE

Community Ambulance Service (CAS) is a not for profit agency that was started in 1967. Community Ambulance is governed by its Board of Directors, a dedicated group of seven volunteers made up of community leaders and residents. The money generated by CAS is returned to the Community in continued medical and vehicle equipment upgrades, employee medical continuing education, quality improvement programs and numerous other community minded events.

Community Ambulance Service, Inc., had a total of 19,960 customer contacts in 2024, an increase of about 5% from 2023. Ambulance calls increased 12% from 2023. Total emergency calls for 2024 were 6,425, with non-emergency ambulance calls totaling 2,833 and wheelchair transports at 10,702.

CAS also transported 2,695 customers to or from out-of-county facilities by ambulance and wheelchair van over the past year. The service still transports customers by wheelchair van from private residences and skilled nursing facilities to or from local and out-of-county doctor appointments, dialysis centers, local schools and discharges from local and out-of-county hospitals. There is an additional fee for this service above a patient's ambulance subscription fee, and most insurance plans do not cover these charges.

CAS has a fleet of 11 Advanced Life Support equipped ambulances. Their fleet of vehicles traveled nearly 700,000 miles in 2024. Their wheelchair vans traveled over 246,000 of those miles. All the units are licensed through the Pennsylvania Department of Health. CAS also has a fleet of 11 wheelchair accessible vans and holds a license with the Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission for Venango County.

Community Ambulance Service employees 32 full-time and 34 casual employees, ranging from wheelchair van operators, EMT's, AEMT's, paramedics, Pre-Hospital Registered Nurses (PHRN's),

dispatching, office, billing personnel and administration.

In 2024, CAS provided stand-by coverage at 124 events for over 1,000 hours. Most of the events were youth and high school sporting events, but they also covered Tri-City Raceway Park, Lockhart Raceway and special events held at Venango County fairgrounds.

In addition to public standbys, CAS provides other public service programs. One example of those is providing lift assists for people who need aid in getting from their house to their vehicle. Other public services include public awareness programs, ambulance tours and education. Between special event standbys, lift assists and other services, CAS provided over 1,200 hours of community service.

CAS provided 71 classes of public training and taught 748 people in their community during the year. The education includes First-Aid, CPR, Automated External Defibrillation (AED) and Stop the Bleed. Training encompasses various individuals, high schools, vocational classes, extended care facilities, personal care homes, emergency service workers, fire departments and local businesses and industries in Venango County.

## Improvements

In 2024, CAS was able to buy three new ambulances and one used ambulance. They also purchased two new ambulance chassis and remounted one of their box ambulances.

These new ambulances allowed CAS to replace two of their aging ambulances. They also purchased a van style ambulance as a replacement van. The used ambulance that was purchased will be remounted on a new chassis in the future, increasing their fleet to 11 ambulances. CAS now has the ability to have a larger ambulance for all first-out emergency calls. This allows EMT's and paramedics some extra room to care for patients. The van style ambulances are primarily used for non-emergen-

cy transports and for transports to Pittsburgh and Erie hospitals for an upgrade in care.

In 2024, CAS also purchased a new full-size wheelchair van, increasing their wheelchair van fleet to 12 vehicles. They put a great number of miles on their wheelchair vans, and being able to replace them allows them to keep reliable vehicles on the road. With the large increase in use of this service, being able to upgrade the fleet has become a necessity.

During 2024, CAS applied for a grant from the Pennsylvania Department of Health and the Volunteer Fire Company, Volunteer Ambulance Service Grant program funded by the Office of the State Fire Commission to aid in the purchase of one of their new ambulances. They were approved for this funding, which helped to defray the cost to purchase this ambulance in 2024.

They also made some big investments in employee and patient safety through donations and grants. The Northwest Hospital Foundation donated a Stryker cot loading assist device. This device allows EMT's and paramedics to load or unload the stretcher without having to lift the weight of the patient and stretcher. This device will reduce the number of lifts by over 1,000 times per year. Lifting and moving patients is one of leading causes of injuries in the EMS system. CAS also purchased a second, used lifting device independently, which will be installed into a new ambulance.

Another important addition to equipment was the purchase of four Stryker Xpedition powered stair chairs. These power stair chairs will allow employees to more easily move patients up and down stairs. Instead of lifting and carrying, they will be able to position and guide the stair chair to more safely move the patients. Many ambulance and wheelchair transports require moving patients on stairs, so this will greatly decrease the amount of manual lifting and carrying needed. The chairs were purchased in part through a grant from the County of

Venango with some available money through the American Rescue Plan (COVID) money, as well as through a generous donation from a local grant.

Venango County 911 is making upgrades in their radio system and it will require CAS to purchase new mobile and portable radios that are compatible with this new system. They have submitted a grant application to the Department of Homeland Security's Federal Emergency Management Agency's Assistance to Firefighter EMS grant program to assist in purchasing the new radios.

## Furthering education

CAS also continues to send interested employees to further their education. The Paramedic class is about a year long and requires many hours of classroom time, reading and bookwork time, and hands on training in the emergency department, operating room and on the ambulance.

These courses allow EMTs to receive advanced training to better prepare them to handle emergency calls. They are now trained to use cardiac monitors, initiate IV's and administer medications, among other skills. These advanced skills allow them to better diagnose and treat patients with chest pain, breathing difficulties and stroke symptoms. By completing this advanced training, it has allowed CAS to put more advanced crews on duty.

## Staffing

If you or someone you know is an EMT and would like to work in the pre-hospital medical field, call or stop into CAS's office and talk to someone regarding career opportunities. If you have an interest in becoming a paramedic, talk to us about financial and other assistance available to you.

Community Ambulance Service, as well as most EMS agencies across the state, face an ever-increasing manpower crisis. Finding energetic people who have an interest in this field is becoming more of a challenge. It takes a special

kind of person to deal with the stress and physical demands that this job requires. EMT's and paramedics are needed almost everywhere across our area and the state. For young people just getting out of school or someone just looking for a career change, emergency medical service jobs are available and can be very rewarding. Anyone interested in receiving more information about available training or jobs in the EMS field can call the CAS office.

In May 2024, CAS will be starting a new subscription program. This program allows people to protect themselves from out-of-pocket expenses when they have to use an ambulance. Most insurance companies will not cover all ambulance transportation expenses, especially in non-emergency situations such as transfers to out-of-county facilities. A new trend for insurance companies is to have co-pays for ambulance transportation, which may be as high as \$500. Community Ambulance Service offers the residents of Venango County a subscription plan that is available to households, individuals, senior citizens and nursing facility patients to help avoid surprise costs.

Venango County is very lucky to have network of emergency services that range from the 911 system to the quick response services of fire departments and police departments. The residents and visitors of the County must realize the value of the quick response services. They bring emergency medical personnel, fire personnel, police and fire police to the scene of an emergency, and these services make the network complete. If you see an emergency service worker, give them a heartfelt thank you.

Community Ambulance operates three stations within Venango County. The office of Community Ambulance Service is located at 1010 Buffalo Street in Franklin and houses a station. The second station is located at 1502 West First Street in Oil City, and the third station is located at 3561 State Route 257 in Seneca.

# Clarion Community Medical adds new physicians

## SUBMITTED ARTICLE

In the three years since Penn Highlands Healthcare opened the Clarion Community Medical Building, the region has had access to a range of specialty services in one convenient location.

"At Penn Highlands Healthcare, we continually recruit new skilled providers to deliver care to the Clarion area," said Will Chinn, president of Penn Highlands DuBois.

In the past year, the Clarion Community Medical Building welcomed three additional physicians who are now seeing patients.

## Timothy Kennedy, DO

Timothy Kennedy, DO, is a board-certified family medicine physician at Penn Highlands Family Medicine with deep ties to the region.

Dr. Kennedy was raised in Pennsylvania and completed his education and training in Erie and DuBois. He provides

patients with comprehensive care. Dr. Kennedy treats a wide range of illnesses and conditions such as:

- Allergies
- Asthma
- Cancer
- COPD/Emphysema
- Diabetes
- Heart disease
- High blood pressure
- Immunizations
- Major illnesses
- Minor illnesses
- Preventive care/screenings
- Rashes
- Thyroid abnormalities

## Deanna Mascho-Cawley, DO, FACOG

Deanna Mascho-Cawley, DO, FACOG, specializes in obstetrics and gynecology, and provides many of the most advanced treatments available for women's health issues.

She offers individualized and compassionate care to patients throughout the region. Common treatments

and procedures include:

- Obstetrics Care:**
  - Complete prenatal and postnatal care
- Gynecology Care:**
  - Preventive care
  - Minor and major surgical procedures
  - Total laparoscopic hysterectomy
  - Pelvic support/prolapse issues
- Urinary incontinence problems
- Menopausal difficulties
- Pelvic and bladder concerns
- Menstrual problems
- Contraceptive counseling

## Kaylin Strauser-Curtis, DO, CAQSM

Kaylin Strauser-Curtis, DO, CAQSM, is a board-certified physician specializing in sports medicine. Dr. Strauser-Curtis is a fellowship-trained specialist, conferring upon her the highest level of

education and training in her field. She provides patients with leading-edge treatments and procedures. Common treatments and procedures include:

- Carpal tunnel release (CTR)
- Concussion diagnosis and treatment
- Cryoneurolysis (Iovera)
- Fractures
- Joint injections
- Joint injuries, such as dislocations
- Micro-invasive trigger finger release
- Minimally invasive tendon procedures to treat, such as Tennis elbow, golfers elbow, plantar fasciitis, shoulder pain, Achilles tendonitis, hip pain
- Minimally-invasive tenotomy utilizing Tenex, Tenjet
- Orthobiologic injections
- Stem cell, platelet-rich plasma "PRP"
- Overuse injuries, including stress fractures, tendonitis, osteoarthritis
- Pain block for knee pain, hip pain, shoulder pain

- Peripheral nerve stimulator (Sprint)
- Prolotherapy
- Ultrasound-guided diagnosis, treatment and injection

In addition to Family Medicine, Obstetrics/Gynecology and Sports Medicine, the Clarion Community Medical Building offers Outpatient Diagnostic Testing, Gastroenterology, Physical and Speech Therapy, Lung Care, a full-service Pharmacy with easy access drive-thru, Walk-in Clinic and Occupational Health.

"Convenience is the hallmark of the facility," said Chinn. "Not only does the building's location on Holiday Inn Road along Route 68 make it easy to visit, many of the services are offered to accommodate most schedules."

To learn more about the services offered at the Clarion Community Medical Building, visit [www.phhealthcare.org/clarion](http://www.phhealthcare.org/clarion).

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# The Caring Place marks 30 years of service to Franklin

SUBMITTED ARTICLE

On July 21, 1995, The Caring Place opened its doors to residents of the Franklin area for the very first time. Since then, The Caring Place’s 100-bed skilled nursing and rehabilitation center and The Purple Iris at The Caring Place’s 32-bed personal care home have provided compassionate care to countless residents and given peace of mind to their families and loved ones. This year, The Caring Place is proud to celebrate its 30th Anniversary of service to the Franklin-area community.

The history of The Caring Place

The Caring Place is a subsidiary of Grove Manor Corporation, and is affiliated with The Churches of God, Allegheny Region Conference. A “home for the aging” was a dream in the minds of members of The Church of God for many years. This dream came from a story about a retired pastor who had nowhere to go during The Great Depression.

After years of working toward this dream, Grove Manor Corporation opened Grove Manor in Grove City in 1971.

Recognizing the growing need in the area, Grove Manor Administrator Mary Gray proposed building a home in Franklin. She had visited Franklin Hospital and felt it was the perfect location to extend Grove Manor Corporation’s vision of hope and healing. Mary consulted with Grove Manor Board Treasurer Howard Potter and together they formulated a plan. On Dec. 21, 1993, Grove Manor resident Connie Shorts, age 98, used the same gold shovel previously used to break ground for Grove Manor to break ground for The Caring Place.

Since that groundbreaking, The Caring Place and The Purple Iris have kept Grove Manor Corporation’s dream of providing compassionate care to the area’s seniors and attending to their physical, spiritual, social and emotional needs at the forefront every day. Something unique about The Caring Place and The Pur-

ple Iris in today’s healthcare environment is that the facility has been owned by the same corporation since its inception.

Rehabilitation services

In addition to skilled nursing and personal care programs, The Caring Place offers a “Bridge to Home” rehabilitation program for anyone needing assistance recovering after surgery or a recent hospital stay. In addition to physical, occupational and speech therapy, this program provides on-site 24/7 medical coverage, pain management, person-centered care plans and discharge planning to ensure a safe and smooth return home.

The Caring Place and The Purple Iris invite the community to join them in celebrating their 30th anniversary this year. Be sure to follow The Caring Place’s Facebook page @CaringPlace to keep up to date on the celebrations and activities happening later this year.

To learn more about The Caring Place and The Purple Iris, visit CaringPlaceNursing.com or call 814-432-4491.

# Next Step Therapy celebrates 19th year with new ownership

SUBMITTED ARTICLE

Next Step Therapy, Inc. is in its 19th year of operation and is under new ownership.

In November 2024, Melissa Bean and Carrie Warcholic, both dedicated 18-year employees, purchased the company. Both Melissa and Carrie grew up in Venango County and continue to live here with their husbands and sons. Carrie is also a speech therapist with the company and will continue to service children in the area. Melissa and Carrie hope to continue growing strong relationships within the community and collaborate with other agencies to better the lives of children.

Next Step Therapy provides a wide range of services to support children’s developmental needs. The company employees 25 staff, including ten speech therapists, two occupational therapists, three physical therapists, two special instructors, three counselors, three office employees, and two students. Next Step Therapy continues to be a provider of in-home early intervention services among 12 counties and has two outpatient clinics. Our main office is located at 145 Steffee Blvd. in

Seneca, and our satellite office is located at 118 S. Kerr Street in Titusville.

The company has a mixture of highly experienced and newly graduated therapists who work collaboratively as a team to help children overcome developmental challenges and reach their fullest potential. Next Step Therapy continues to provide in home services among Venango, Clarion, Crawford, Warren, Forest, Clearfield, Jefferson, Armstrong, Indiana, Butler, Erie and Mercer counties. Their staff is dedicated to helping coach children and their families in their daily routines and overcome any struggles they may have.

Early Intervention is a home-based program available for any child, ages birth to three, who qualifies for services. Services can consist of speech therapy, physical therapy, occupational therapy, nutrition services and specialized instruction. Services are set up through the patient’s local county Early Intervention program. Counties are always accepting referrals for these services, which are provided at no cost to the families. Please remember that parents have a choice of their provider and can

ask for Next Step Therapy.

The outpatient clinics, Next Step Clinic, Inc., continue to take new referrals, and accept most insurances. Both offices provide speech, physical and occupational therapy.

In the fall of 2024, Next Step hired their third counselor on staff, Kara Raybuck. Counseling services are provided at the Seneca location only. The Seneca location also offers speech therapy for adult clients. Ian Hepler is the company’s speech therapist currently handling adult clients. Ian is a recent graduate that joined the practice late summer of 2024, and he enjoys having clients of all ages.

In addition to outpatient services, Next Step Clinic, Inc. offers contract services to public and charter schools. They have helped many local school districts with their overflow of students needing speech services or needing assistance during maternity leaves.

For those with any questions about early intervention or clinic services, contact their office at 814-677-1390, check out their website, www.nextsteptherapy.net, or email them at info@nextsteptherapy.net.

# Independence Health System continues to provide quality care

SUBMITTED ARTICLE

Independence Health System continues to provide high-quality healthcare to the region, eliminating the need for patients to travel far. In 2024, the system expanded access to providers and specialty services in the Clarion area, including bariatric weight loss services, plastic and reconstructive surgery, pulmonary rehabilitation, Mohs micrographic surgery (a highly effective and minimally invasive treatment for skin cancer), and also enhanced access to specialists in vascular, electrophysiology and general surgery. In 2025, plans include enhancing access to more specialized services, including wound care specialists, and installing a new MRI at Clarion Hospital.

Enhanced access

In Seneca, the primary care location at 1 Park Way Seneca Commons began offering walk-in health clinics from Monday to Friday, 9 a.m. to 11 a.m. These clinics provide general health screenings, vaccinations and treatments for common illnesses and injuries. Additionally, women’s health services expanded to 2 Park Way, offering a range of gynecological care, prenatal services, reproductive healthcare, and specialized services including lactation consultations, cancer screenings and STD testing.

Clarion Hospital receives recognition

In 2024, the Hospital & Healthsystem Association of Pennsylvania (HAP) recognized Clarion Hospital for the development of its care coordination program, addressing the needs of patients with chronic health conditions who are at a higher risk of hospital readmissions. The program is staffed by a Care Transition Navigator who identifies these patients and works with them upon discharge, helping them schedule follow-up appointments, coordinate transportation, and also provides community resources for food, disability, housing and energy assistance.

“I’ve seen firsthand the impact the program has on patients’ lives,” said Carrie McHenry, Care Transition Navigator. “Offering personalized support with regular check-ins at seven, 30, 60 and 90 days of discharge, we are able to help patients manage their chronic health conditions, keeping them healthier and at home.”

Since implementing the program, rates of hospital readmissions due to chronic health conditions have gradually declined, resulting in lower costs and better health outcomes for patients.

Health and Wellness Center

The Health and Wellness Center at Trinity Point continues to expand services, most recently adding pulmonary and vascular services to its offerings. Patients have access to high-quality services and specialists in one convenient location, including:

- Cardiology
- Cardiothoracic surgical consultations
- Electrophysiology
- Cardiac rehabilitation
- Primary care
- Pulmonary care
- Food Institute & Lifestyle Coaching
- Walk-in laboratory, X-ray, and EKG Services
- Women’s care and women’s imaging.

The Family Medicine Residency Clinic at Trinity Point provides convenient walk-in services from Monday to Friday, 8 a.m. to 10 a.m. These services include general wellness checks, care for sprains and strains, flu shots and more.

Additionally, the Women’s Imaging Center continues to offer walk-in 3D Mammography services every Wednesday from 12 p.m. to 4 p.m. Walk-in laboratory services, X-ray, and EKG services are available from Monday to Friday, 7:30 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Food Institute and Lifestyle Coaching continue mission

The Food Institute, located in the Health & Wellness Center at Trinity Point, opened in September 2022 with the mission to build healthier communities by addressing food insecurity and offering community resources to learn about healthy eating. Upon referral by the system’s physician network, participants meet with a nutrition liaison once a month, for four months. On the initial visit, an individual’s needs, such as dietary restrictions and cooking utensils, are assessed. Patients receive food shares, recipes and nutritional education at each visit.

Education on the sustainability of healthy eating is an important focus of the program. Topics include food safety, label reading, reducing added sugars, choosing healthy fats, reducing sodium, menu planning and shopping on a budget. Participants receive ingredients and recipes for ten healthy monthly meals that feed a family of four. To date, the Clarion area Food Institute has seen 221 patients and has provided more than 1,170 hours of education through one-on-one coaching and lifestyle coaching seminars.

The Lifestyle Coaching educational seminars are offered on three platforms: virtual, video-on-demand and in-person. They are available to everyone in the community at no cost and include several evidence-based disease management courses taught by healthcare personnel. Lifestyle Coaching instructors will continue to offer classes in 2025.

21st Annual Light Up Night

In September, the Clarion Hospital Cancer Center hosted its 21st annual Light Up Night celebration to honor patients, caregivers and community supporters. The event, held at the Clarion Eagle’s Pavilion, had the theme “Fighting Cancer Together.”

Since 2003, the Clarion Hospital Cancer Center has provided patients with advanced treatment options, including cutting-edge surgical techniques and supportive therapies. The outpatient facility offers medical oncology services by a team of highly specialized providers and staff, certified in chemotherapy administration.

In 2023, the facility acquired innovative technology that enhances the safety and quality of radiation therapy treatments with the use of an Active Breathing Coordinator (ABC) device. The device includes software and hardware that controls a patient’s breathing patterns during certain cancer treatments, protecting surrounding healthy tissue during radiation therapy. The Clarion Cancer Center provides top-tier radiation therapy and is an APEX accredited program through the American College for Radiation Oncology.

Taking the lead in Alzheimer’s care

In August, Independence Health System was the first in the region to offer breakthrough diagnosis and treatment options to patients at its Butler and Westmoreland campuses, aimed not just at managing symptoms of Alzheimer’s disease but at addressing the underlying cause.

The program is designed to rapidly move patients from clinical assessment to infusion, if appropriate, when Alzheimer’s disease is detected. The protocol includes cerebrospinal fluid (CSF) analysis or amyloid positron emission tomography (PET) scan to determine the presence of disease-causing proteins. Patients and their families receive guidance about which of the medications recently approved by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) would be most appropriate. Lecanemab (Leqembi) was approved in 2023, followed by Donanemab-abzt

(Kisunla), in mid-July. Both target amyloid plaque, believed to be responsible for a toxic buildup causing damage to brain cells.

“As with every therapy, there are risks and benefits,” explained Dr. Kovacic Eichler, Director of Neurosciences. “But we know the trajectory of Alzheimer’s if left untreated. Now we have hope to offer where there was no hope before.”

The new medications are delivered over a series of up to one-hour infusions, with periodic MRIs to assess for side effects.

Clarion Hospital Foundation

The Clarion Hospital Foundation is committed to its mission of supporting and improving quality health care, education and overall community wellness through various projects and services.

“The generosity of our donors and supporters has enabled the Clarion Hospital Foundation to assist Clarion Hospital and its work over many years, said Bridget Thornton, Development and Community Health Coordinator. “We are truly grateful for the support we receive and proud of the work we do!” Donations, sponsorships and contributions have helped fund numerous initiatives.

Highlights of 2024 include:

- “Handbags for Health” designer purse bingo event raised more than \$20,000 to support the Clarion Hospital Ambulance Fund. Clarion Hospital EMS averages 7,300 requests for ambulance services each year and covers approximately 750 square miles. Due to the aging fleet, the hospital identified the replacement of a 2005 ambulance as a high priority to benefit the community. Additionally, the Clarion County Economic Development Corporation (CCEDC) assisted the Clarion Hospital Emergency Medical Services in securing a Local Share Account (LSA) Statewide grant to assist in replacing other higher mileage vehicles in the emergency fleet and to upgrade aging equipment. Those vehicles were presented to the Clarion Hospital Ambulance Service in January 2024.

- In partnership with the Clarion Rotary, the Foundation held their biannual Multiphasic Blood Screening, raising more than \$20,000. Between 300-400 community members participated in the screening which offered 60 + blood panel tests.

- The Annual Clarion Hospital Foundation Golf Tournament raised over \$27,000 to help support hospital initiatives that serve the community.

- Healthcare and nursing scholarships available through the foundation assisted eight students pursuing a career in the medical field, from six area schools.

- Clarion Hospital launched its newest fundraiser in 2024 that directly benefited families in the community. The “Caring Angel” basket raffle program was held in November, raising more than \$8,000 to support the Clarion Hospital Charity Care program. This program assists patients in the community struggling with ongoing medical expenses.

Keeping care close to home

Independence Health System is driven by a singular mission: to bring expert care, here. They have an unwavering commitment to improving the health and well-being of the communities they serve. They believe that quality healthcare should be accessible to all — right where you live, work and raise your family.

Join them in this journey. Whether you are seeking care, looking to join the team, or supporting their mission through community involvement, you play a vital role in helping them achieve their vision. Visit [www.independence.health](http://www.independence.health) to learn more, get involved or explore the comprehensive services they proudly offer.

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# PRIME Fitness expands with new headquarters

SUBMITTED ARTICLE

From its origins as a small start-up in Franklin, PRIME Fitness has grown into a global leader in strength training equipment. Founded in 2014, the company’s rapid growth is a result of its relentless commitment to innovation, quality, and cutting-edge biomechanics. As it continues to expand worldwide, PRIME has just made a significant move by acquiring a new, expansive 95,000 square-foot headquarters in Franklin. This new facility is a crucial milestone in the company’s journey and will support its continued growth and innovation.

A journey of innovation and growth

PRIME’s meteoric rise in the fitness industry can largely be attributed to its innovative approach to strength training equipment. In 2014, the company introduced its revolutionary SmartStrength technology — a game-changing development in the world of selectorized and plate-loaded machines.

Unlike traditional machines, which only target the middle portion of the muscle’s range of motion, PRIME’s SmartStrength technology allows users to manipulate the resistance curve throughout the entire exercise motion. Similar to training with elastic bands or chains, SmartStrength adjusts the resistance as the user moves through different phases of an exercise, helping to target three key muscle ranges:

- **Shortened Range:** Focusing on the muscle’s contracted state
- **Medial Range:** Targeting the middle of the muscle’s movement
- **Lengthened Range:** Engaging the muscle as it stretches

This variable resistance training leads to enhanced benefits for the user, including:

- **Complete muscle hypertrophy**
- **Increased muscle fiber recruitment**
- **Improved flexibility and mobility**
- **Injury prevention and rehabilitation**

PRIME’s products have expanded significantly to include a variety of equipment designed to complement their training system. The product range now includes:

- **Racks and Single-Stack Machines** with accompanying attachments
- **Specialty Bars**, such as the Trap bar with varying handle options and adjustments
- **Innovative Accessories** to support diverse training needs.

The combination of high-quality engineering, scientific principles and cutting-edge design has propelled PRIME to global success.

Global expansion and the need for a new facility

As the demand for PRIME’s science-driven equipment grew in the U.S., the company quickly gained international attention. With 13 dealer partners around the world, PRIME found itself in need of a larger facility to accommodate both its growing product line and the increased volume of busi-



ness. PRIME’s new 95,000 square-foot headquarters facility is a critical piece in the company’s long-term growth strategy, providing the necessary space to meet demand, increase product output, and support new innovations.

Key features of PRIME’s new headquarters

The new headquarters is designed with both employees and operations in mind, providing a collaborative, efficient and expansive environment. Here’s a breakdown of the features that set the new facility apart:

- 1. Employee-Centric Design**  
The facility provides a more cohesive work environment, bringing together teams from various departments — such as engineering, assembly and sales/marketing — under one roof. This design promotes better communication, creativity and collaboration across teams, fueling innovation and helping accelerate product development.
- 2. Expanded Assembly and Warehousing Space**  
With the larger space, PRIME can now handle increased production volumes. The expanded assembly area allows for more efficient workflows, while the increased warehouse capacity ensures that the company can keep up with demand both domestically and internationally.
- 3. Improved Shipping and Logistics**  
One of the biggest challenges in the company’s previous facility was its limited product staging area, which led to inefficiencies in shipping. The new facility includes:

- More loading docks for faster and more efficient shipping
- Increased product staging space to accommodate bulk shipments, particularly for international orders
- Enhanced logistics capabilities to meet the growing demand for PRIME products worldwide

4. State-of-the-Art Showroom

The new headquarters also features a dedicated showroom that showcases the full range of PRIME’s equipment. Customers and dealers can explore and test out PRIME’s latest machines, from smaller accessories to larger, more complex equipment like the PRIME Hack Squat and Plate Loaded Pulldown. This space serves as a hands-on experience for potential clients to see and feel the innovation that sets PRIME apart in the fitness industry.

Ongoing innovation and product development

Innovation is at the heart of PRIME’s success, and the

company’s new headquarters is designed to further this commitment. PRIME’s research and development (R&D) efforts remain a cornerstone of its operations. With new products continually in the pipeline, the company is poised to launch several exciting new pieces of equipment in 2025.

Rod Griffin, President of SFS, reflects on PRIME’s commitment to innovation: “PRIME’s innovation is the cornerstone that has afforded the company the opportunity to continue to develop its state-of-the-art equipment.”

The company’s engineering teams are constantly working to refine and enhance their existing product lines. Whether through smarter machine designs, more versatile attachments, or cutting-edge biomechanics, PRIME is constantly pushing the envelope of what is possible in the fitness equipment space.

What’s next for PRIME in 2025?

Looking ahead, PRIME plans to continue its upward trajectory in both the residential and commercial sectors. According to Jarrad Griffin, Senior Vice President of Operations, the company will focus on expanding its domestic and international presence through strategic partnerships and innovative product launches. Key objectives for 2025 include:

- **Expansion of Residential and Commercial Business:** Growing the reach of PRIME products in both sectors, both domestically and internationally.
- **New Product Launches:** PRIME has several exciting new products scheduled for release in 2025, which will further solidify its position as a leader in strength training equipment.
- **Continued Innovation:** Leveraging its R&D pipeline to develop new solutions that meet the demands of athletes and fitness enthusiasts worldwide.

As PRIME gears up for new product launches and further global expansion, their commitment to innovation and excellence remains unwavering. Whether you’re a professional athlete, a fitness enthusiast, or someone recovering from injury, PRIME Fitness is dedicated to providing the best strength training equipment available to help you achieve your goals.

Be sure to follow PRIME Fitness on Social Media [@primefitnessusa] for updates, giveaways, news, and more. To learn more about PRIME Fitness, visit PRIMEfitnessUSA.com or call 855-269-4378.

# Simply Skin Medical Spa focuses on health, beauty and wellness

SUBMITTED ARTICLE

Simply Skin Medical Spa continues to blend advanced technology with personalized skin health, beauty and wellness.

Dr. Cynthia Hoffmeier, the owner and medical director of Simply Skin, is very pleased that the company now has two locations, one in Clarion and one in Franklin.

Simply Skin remains committed to non-surgical, customized and regenerative therapies to leverage the body’s natural healing mechanisms to rejuvenate skin, promote hair growth, and achieve skin health and vitality.

Their team of skin care specialists are able to analyze skin conditions and concerns and apply medical grade technology and treatments to empower clients to achieve their skin care goals.

As technology improves, they have improved. Simply Skin has upgraded their facials and chemical peels with more effective treatment products with little to no downtime.

Simply Skin has embraced the integration of Wellness and Aesthetics with their current offerings of Massage therapies, Infrared Sauna, Red Light Therapy, IV therapies and Vitamin injections.

The Massage Therapies at Simply Skin result in physical and mental rejuvenation which are both therapeutic and relaxing. The Infrared Sauna also offers relaxation but is utilized to decrease pain and inflammation, improve circulation, increase metabolism, weight loss and boost immunity. In addition, Red Light therapy stimulates the production of collagen and elastin.

IV Therapies allow the infusion of vitamins, minerals, amino acids and potent antioxidants for the body to absorb and immediately utilize to boost immunity, rehydrate,

decrease pain and inflammation, improve mental clarity, stimulate weight loss, brighten the skin and improve physical performance and energy. They also offer Intramuscular injections of vitamins and minerals for on-the-go treatments or in between IV therapies.

Dr. Hoffmeier is recognized as a “Master Injector” by Allergan Aesthetics and has 22 years of experience with Botox and the dermal fillers. Simply Skin now carries all five of the FDA approved neurotoxins to soften the lines of expression, and all the Juvéderm, Restylane and RHA dermal fillers.

In addition, they are proud to offer advanced injection treatments designed to enhance the natural beauty and rejuvenation of the skin. Simply Skin’s biostimulator therapies, including Sculptra, Radiesse, and PRP (Platelet-Rich Plasma), are among the most innovative and effective solutions available today. Each of these treatments works in its own unique way to stimulate collagen and elastin.

Laser treatments remain the cornerstone of their medical spa and they have invested in the newest generation of lasers, offering improved efficacy and shorter downtime. The advances include: Lase MD Ultra for skin resurfacing, Clarity II for hair removal, unwanted pigmentation, and vessels, Genius Radiofrequency Microneedling for collagen stimulation skin tightening, Spectra for tattoo removal, active acne and acne scarring, and the “Hollywood Laser Peel”. Mona Lisa for vaginal rejuvenation, and Coolsculpting Elite for body sculpting.

Simply Skin’s newest device, Sofwave, is a non-invasive ultrasound treatment that uses cutting-edge technology to produce collagen, elastin and hyaluronic acid

to lift and tighten the skin on various areas of the body, including the face, neck, arms, abdomen and thighs. Sofwave addresses common concerns like sagging skin, fine lines and wrinkles, and results in a more youthful and refreshed look without the need for surgery or down time.

Coolsculpting Elite is a non-surgical device to permanently reduce fat and allows body contouring for those areas that were previously only achievable with surgery. The body can truly be re-sculpted by eliminating stubborn fat pockets. January and February are the best months to begin this journey.

Chellsy Lesniak, R.N. is Simply Skin’s skilled and certified aesthetic nurse. With advanced certifications in lasers, Botox and dermal fillers, Chellsy brings a wealth of experience to the team. She works closely with the doctor to provide personalized treatments, and sees clients directly to ensure they receive top-tier care and results.

At Simply Skin Medical Spa, they are committed to offering only the most advanced, proven technologies to help you achieve your aesthetic goals. Their team of licensed professionals is dedicated to providing you with personalized care and the highest quality results. Whether you’re new to med spa treatments or are looking to enhance your existing beauty regimen, they invite you to explore their new offerings and experience the transformative power of modern rejuvenation.

Come visit them today and take the first step toward a more youthful, radiant version of yourself. To contact Simply Skin Medical Spa, call 814-227-2362 or visit their website at [www.simplyskinmedispa.com](http://www.simplyskinmedispa.com).

# Himalayan Salt & Body helps customers relax and rejuvenate

SUBMITTED ARTICLE

With over 6 years in business at the corner of State and Main Streets in Knox, Himalayan Salt & Body just keeps growing.

“We love being in Knox,” states Ron Conner, owner. “It has all of the small town charm and other places to shop and eat when our customers are in town.”

Himalayan Salt & Body’s model is simple: Relax, Rejuvenate and Breathe.

“We want every guest to feel relaxed and enjoy the peaceful surroundings of our Himalayan salt room,” says Conner. “It is not an institutionalized setting; it is also a destination. We believe that stress relief is a big part of our Halotherapy experience.”

The main benefits of Halotherapy are used to alleviate symptoms of breathing conditions like COPD, asthma, allergies, sinusitis, and softer, younger looking skin is an added benefit from salt therapy.

Infrared sauna

“Our sauna is one of the

highest quality units available today,” states Conner. Infrared saunas have been shown to improve heart health, better muscle recovery, relieve joint aches and pains, reduce stress and improve sleep.

Himalayan Salt and Body offers 30-minute sauna sessions on the same days that they are open for their Himalayan Salt room. Why not enjoy a sauna after your Halotherapy session? Book your Halotherapy session first and then choose the next sauna session online at [himalayansaltandbody.com/book-now](http://himalayansaltandbody.com/book-now).

Gift shop

“We continually add a few new organic or all-natural products in our gift shop that help remove toxins out of your everyday life,” says Conner. “It is very important to us that our customers receive a quality service, products and gifts that add to a healthier lifestyle.

“Himalayan salt lamps,

foot warmers and heated massage stones are still the most popular,” says Conner. Other examples would be Muslin blankets, Watkins 1868 spices, dōTERRA essential oils, organic teas, Earthly Body Hemp body lotions and body butters, hand-blown collectibles, and their most popular, all-natural Australian soaps. They also have gift certificates. Those interested can also visit their gift shop online at [himalayan-salt-body.square.site](http://himalayan-salt-body.square.site).

Book Halotherapy easily online

You can book your sessions for either the Himalayan Salt Room or the Infrared Sauna online at [HimalayanSaltandBody.com](http://HimalayanSaltandBody.com) or call them at 814-797-2013. Custom packages are available. They are open on Thursdays from noon to 7 p.m., Fridays from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., and on Saturdays from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. and are located at 605 West State Street in Knox, PA 16232.

# Franklin Jazzercise moves to new location, adds additional equipment

SUBMITTED ARTICLE

Franklin Jazzercise embraced its new location in 2024, enjoying a great new dance floor that provides ample space and a stage so all participants can clearly see the instructor.

The business also increased their supply of equipment so anyone interested in trying a dance based cardio and strength group fitness class will have everything they needed to jump in.

Some of Franklin Jazzercise’s hopes for 2025 are to increase their instructors and ultimately increase their weekly class offerings.

“The goal of Franklin Jazzercise is to help as many people become happier healthier versions of themselves through fitness and community,” said owner and instructor Julie Fowler.

Classes are currently offered Tuesday and Thursday from 4:30 to 5:30 p.m., as well



Contributed photo

as Saturday morning from 8:30 to 9 a.m. and 9 to 10 a.m. No dance experience is required to take a class, and several class pack options can be purchased.

For over half a century, Jazzercise has been a trailblazer in the fitness industry. Through a variety of workouts touting effective results, the company offers a full-body dance fitness routine that combines metabolism and mood-boosting dance cardio with powerful strength training.

With a track record in re-

tention, Jazzercise’s customers average a minimum of seven years, due to the company’s promise of bringing fresh workouts, new music and the latest exercise science to keep the program continuously up-to-date.

Franklin Jazzercise is located at 1102 Liberty Street, Franklin, PA 16232.

Call 443-566-2426, email [franklinpajazzercise@gmail.com](mailto:franklinpajazzercise@gmail.com) or visit [www.jazzercise.com/studio/pa/franklin-first-united-methodist-church](http://www.jazzercise.com/studio/pa/franklin-first-united-methodist-church) for more information.

## PRIME Purpose.

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Prime fitness equipment, a division of Specialty Fitness Systems, is owned, operated and manufactured in Franklin, PA.



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# Novacare Rehabilitation’s provides quality care across three locations

## SUBMITTED ARTICLE

Novacare Rehabilitation has three locations in the local area, including in Seneca, Franklin and Titusville. All three locations provide physical therapy services to local residents. Novacare in Seneca is located in the Seneca Square and is situated along the side by The Dive Bar, China City restaurant and Bob’s Subs. Novacare in Franklin is located on Allegheny Blvd or Route 8 directly across from Macs Snax. Novacare in Titusville is located on South Perry Street diagonal from the Get Go convenience store.

As with most businesses in healthcare, 2024 was full of challenges due to changes made by the insurance industry. The physical therapy profession in general has needed to adapt to the various changes that have been made over the past couple of years. All three clinics managed to have a productive year despite these challenges.

All three facilities have relaxing and spacious environments. There are both private and open areas for treatment with state of the art equipment. Individuals with a wide array of conditions are treated at Novacare, including orthopedic injuries and post-surgical conditions, such as total joint replacements, neck and back pain, fractures and sprains.

Physical therapy can be vital in reducing pain and can be a good alternative to taking pain medications. Novacare clinics work closely with the local pain management centers to assist in managing chronic pain conditions. Therapists at all three clinics are skilled at treating sports injuries, headaches and improving balance, which leads to decrease risk in falling.

In addition, the therapists in the Novacare Seneca and Titusville clinics are trained in the treatment of concussions and in the performance of post employment testing. The therapists in Franklin are trained in the treatment of dizziness and vertigo.

All three clinics boast a skilled group of clinicians whom all live in the immediate and surrounding area. All three clinics experienced staffing changes in the past year at the front desk/reception area and with the clinical staff. New to the Patient Services Specialist position is Janie Wornoff who joined the Titusville clinic and Crystal Dunlap who joined the Franklin clinic. Amanda Jackson



From left, Amanda Jackson, Ellen Stover, Mariah Wessell and Russell Carr.

moved from the Titusville clinic to the Seneca clinic. Though staff agrees there is enough work at the front desk for two people, but all are doing a fabulous job at learning a tremendous amount of information which is always changing.

Laura Churchill and Mariah Wessell assist as casual staff at the front desk as they are needed. Rich Whitney is the Physical Therapist at the Franklin clinic and has 41 years of experience in healthcare with 24 of those as a Physical Therapist. Ellen Stover has 34 years experience as a Physical Therapist and 38 years experience as a Certified Athletic Trainer. She is currently managing both the Seneca and Titusville clinics. Maureen Johnson, who is also a Physical Therapist, is currently assisting in the Titusville clinic.

Rounding out the team is a talented group of Physical Therapist Assistants who have primary locations but also travel to help in all three clinics. Jennifer Mallory, Adrienne Beachy, Lisa Wonderling, Russell Carr and Marilyn Orsino do a tremendous job of treating patients and keeping the clinics running smoothly. Carr joined the staff in Seneca in July and resides in Emlenton. He is a talented young therapist and has integrated quickly into a great team member.

Novacare’s parent company, Select Medical, continues to search for Physical Therapists and Physical Therapist Assistants to join the team. Both jobs are posted at SelectMedical.com. If anyone has family out of town looking to move back to the area or knows of anyone looking for a full or part time position in either capacity, please call any of the numbers listed below for more information.

Novacare Rehabilitation is looking forward to seeing any and all patients, if they should need any physical therapy in the upcoming year. Most of the patients, when surveyed, choose to return to a Novacare facility because of already being a patient previously or from being referred from a friend or family member who has been a patient. All refer to the excellent care they have received at Novacare. Remember, everyone has the right to choose where they go for physical therapy, and the staff at Novacare Rehabilitation are ready to provide a fun, relaxing and production experience when needed.

For those in need of physical therapy, come see Novacare Rehabilitation or call them to set up an appointment at one of the following numbers: Seneca — 814-677-0738, Franklin — 814-432-7200, Titusville — 814-827 0332.

# Titusville Hospital adapts to serve the community

## SUBMITTED ARTICLE

Titusville Area Hospital (TAH) remains committed to meeting the evolving healthcare needs of our community. Over the past year and into the new year, TAH has made significant investments in its facilities, services and equipment to ensure the highest level of care for patients.

“Every new service and enhancement has contributed to improving the quality of care we provide, and we are incredibly thankful for the continued support from our community,” said Lee Clinton, CEO of TAH.

The hospital recently earned a prestigious 5-Star Rating for Patient Experience from the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS). This exceptional recognition places TAH among just 10 hospitals in Pennsylvania to receive the highest rating, showing the hospital’s unwavering commitment to delivering outstanding care.

“We are deeply honored to receive this 5-Star Rating. This achievement is a testament to the dedication of our entire team, whose hard work ensures exceptional care and service to our patients. We are grateful for the trust and feedback from our patients, which drive us to continually raise our standards,” said Lee Clinton.

Another recent achievement is the completion of the Oncology Department renovation. This department, now located on the ground floor near the front lobby, has been designed to provide a more accessible and comfortable experience for patients who depend on these essential, close-to-home services. This project was made possible through the generous contributions raised by the Titusville Area Health Center Foundation, which secured over \$500,000 for the renovation.

“We are grateful for the support from our community, businesses and local foundations that helped make this transformation possible,” said Holli Wolfe, TAH Vice President of Operations. To celebrate the completion, an open house with a ribbon-cutting ceremony was held in the Spring of 2024.

TAH continues to expand specialty care provided to the community. In 2024, Behavioral Health at TAH expanded to three full-time providers. The full-time counselors, Rachael Rubaker and Jennifer Chase, both licensed clinical social workers, offer family and individual counseling services to ages eight and above. Melinda Douglas, CRNP offers medication management to ages 14 to adult. Behavioral Health offices are located within the hospital, and these services are available both in-person and via telehealth.

TAH also added General

Surgeon, Rona de la Vega, DO, to its surgical team. In her role at TAH, Dr. de la Vega collaborates with Dr. Rogers and Dr. Shore to offer exceptional surgical care. Renu Paneru, MD, a highly skilled otolaryngologist, commonly known as an ENT doctor, has recently joined TAH as well. She sees patients on a full-time basis in the Physician Services office. TAH welcomed Heather Hunter, AT-C, as a new Athletic Trainer. Heather works in partnership with the Titusville Area School District to enhance its athletic programs. In addition, TAH Physical Therapy introduced a Concussion Management program under the guidance of Kai Skinner, DPT, offering a valuable service for athletes and others who suffer concussions.

Looking ahead, TAH has two major projects underway. The first is a renovation of the Intensive Care Unit (ICU), which will modernize the space for the first time since its last update in 1995. This facelift will create a more comfortable environment for both patients and staff, promoting quicker recovery and better overall care.

The second project focuses on expanding outpatient therapy services. Currently, outpatient Occupational Therapy (OT), Physical Therapy (PT), and Speech Therapy are provided in separate locations. This presents challenges for patients needing multiple types of therapy. The site for the expansion, currently housing PT, located at 228 East Central Ave, offers convenient access, ample parking and a therapy pool. Combining the services at this one location will reduce patient travel time, improve access, and increase overall efficiency. The expansion will include multiple private treatment spaces for each therapy department, as well as new equipment.

It will also feature a much-needed new amenity: a Pediatric Sensory Room. This innovative space will serve children with sensory processing disorders and other developmental challenges, providing a supportive environment for sensory regulation, emotional control and therapeutic activities. As the first of its kind in our service area, this project will be a critical addition to the community.

For 125 years, TAH has served as a trusted and vital healthcare provider in the region. The hospital’s board of directors, staff, physicians and volunteers are grateful for the ongoing support from the community and are committed to being a financially sustainable, high-quality medical provider for many years to come. Titusville Area Hospital. More than a hospital.

# Kelly’s Precious Palms Massage looks ahead

## SUBMITTED ARTICLE

Seneca — Kelly’s Precious Palms Massage, located at 2803 RT 257 in Seneca, PA, inside the CS Technologies Plus building, proudly celebrated its successful first year in 2024 and has announced plans for exciting new developments in 2025.

### 2024 Business Review

In 2024, Kelly’s Precious Palms Massage was launched by owner Kelly Mitchell, a dedicated massage therapist committed to promoting relaxation and wellness in the Seneca community. From its convenient and tranquil location inside the CS Technologies Plus building, Kelly built her business from the ground up, offering personalized

massage therapy services tailored to meet the unique needs of each client.

Specializing in Swedish Massage, Warm Bamboo Stick Massage, Deep Tissue Massage, Lymph Drainage Therapy and Therapeutic Work, Kelly worked diligently to create a calming environment where clients could unwind and recharge. Her one-on-one approach, professionalism, and passion for helping others quickly earned her a loyal client base and positive recognition throughout the area.

### 2025 Forecast

Looking ahead to 2025, Kelly is excited to expand her services and become more involved in the local community. Plans include participating in

local community events and collaborating with other businesses and organizations to raise awareness about the benefits of massage therapy. Kelly will also be introducing monthly specials to provide added value to her clients and enhance their wellness journeys.

Additionally, clients are encouraged to ask about small group sessions, which are ideal for friends or family looking to enjoy a relaxing and restorative experience together.

“2024 was all about starting strong and building trust with my clients,” said Kelly, owner of Kelly’s Precious Palms Massage. “As I look to 2025, I’m eager to bring more value to my clients and connect with the community in meaningful ways.”

### About Kelly’s Precious Palms Massage

Kelly’s Precious Palms Massage is located at 2803 RT 257 in Seneca, PA, inside the CS Technologies Plus building. Specializing in Swedish Massage, Deep Tissue Massage, Warm Bamboo Stick Massage, Lymph Drainage Therapy, and Therapeutic Work, Kelly is dedicated to helping clients achieve balance and wellness through personalized care.

Call Kelly at 814-758-7699 to make an appointment. Hours of operation are by appointment only.

For more information, visit the Facebook page at [www.facebook.com/KellysPreciousPalms](http://www.facebook.com/KellysPreciousPalms).

# God’s Little Garden and Cranberry Wellness Center marks 25 years

## SUBMITTED ARTICLE

Well, 2025 is here, and at the start of a new year, many people start looking at improving their health. The question is where to begin.

When you look on the internet, there is so much information out there and it makes you wonder whether it is right, wrong, or what to try. At God’s Little Garden and Cranberry Wellness Center, they guide people in the right direction. Still located in the Cranberry Mall, God’s Little Garden carries a variety of foods, vitamins, supplements, protein and meal replacement shakes, and a staff more than ready to help guide customers through the maze of diets, supplements etc.

For Owner Paula Bickel, the realization that she had to write this review brought another realization with it.

“Oh my do you realize this is 2025?” she asked her husband. “That means this year is our 25th. Anniversary!” Reaching 25 years in business was a surprise for Paula, but time flies when you are busy. Owner Calvin Bickel said “Wow, we are going to have to celebrate this.”

Many new products are being added to the God’s Little Garden and Cranberry Wellness Center inventory each week. Some old reliable ones have disappeared, but they are finding new and better ones to take their place.

With trends such as meatless Monday’s, the Veganuary challenge and people just wanting to be healthier, the God’s Little Garden and Cranberry Wellness Center has seen a steady growth in the health food lines. Their dried herbs and teas are growing popular as more and more people find out that they carry them. For 2025, they plan on expanding the product lines and adding more organic, natural foods for people to choose from.

This year, God’s Little Garden is also looking forward to even more health education classes to teach people how to take better care of themselves. Classes will be advertised both by email and postcards, and attendance will be limited.

Also new to their staff last year was Ronald Bonner from Cleveland, Ohio. After making many trips back and forth and watching people get well, he decided to move here. After a year of doing this, he asked to join the ministry to help others. Ronald has some experience in the use of herbs, and God’s Little Garden was glad to have him join the team.

Susan Carlson joined God’s Little Garden and Cranberry Wellness Center about two years ago and is the receptionist for the wellness center. She is working hard to make sure things run smoothly, from answering phones, scheduling

clients, ordering products or anything else that needs done. In interviewing her she replied “I didn’t know how busy I would be. We have people coming here from all over the country. They come from California, Maine, Florida, the Carolinas — everywhere. When the phone rings, I never know where they are calling from.”

Patricia Jarzenske also comes out of retirement to rejoin us as an MSA tester every summer. Though Patricia now goes to Florida every winter, she comes back every summer to help clients on their path to wellness.

Vince Ganoe L.Ac. has now been with God’s Little Garden for over two years. After a temporary absence, he returned and started acupuncture services in the area. It is worthy to note that according to the World Health Organization, acupuncture can treat over 50 medical diseases, disorders and symptoms, including pain, depression, anxiety and allergies. Acupuncture can also help to overcome drug, alcohol, food and sugar addictions and to quit smoking.

Massage therapist Joe Estatico has continued to see more clients coming in for pain relief. Joe has extensive experience in helping people get out of pain. His training includes such therapies as myofascial release, deep tissue, neuro reset

therapy and quantum alignment technique. Now he has added Tesla purple plates to his other techniques. Joe is a therapeutic massage therapist. According to Joe, “A lot of people will go to a chiropractor when they actually need to see a massage therapist. Yes, they may need an adjustment but if the muscles are stretched or too tight, they will pull the body back out of alignment. It really is a two-way street, and you need both chiropractic and massage.”

God’s Little Garden and Cranberry Wellness Center’s Bioscan tester has been quite busy this past year. As people find out about it, they are flocking to have the test done, which can show what organs are stressed or weak and what supplements to use to restore health. No guess work on whether you need something or not.

God’s Little Garden and Cranberry Wellness Center’s new Qest 4 body analyzer is now up and running. Owner Calvin Bickel said, “The Qest 4 Meridian Assessment system is a bio-energetic testing technology that utilizes a computer-based instrument for measuring the energy of your acupuncture meridian points. These readings provide a highly accurate method for determining the energetic causes of poor health.” It uses a combination of herbs, supplements and hemopathies to help you

on your way to get better.

2024 saw an increase in Ionic Foot Soaks. Using negative and positive ions, it pulls toxins and poisons out of the body through the feet. The entire process takes about half an hour. Many clients like this to add to their detoxing, because they say it makes them

feel better. Others use it just for a quick detox from all the chemicals and toxins they are exposed to in everyday life.

Their beam ray machine has also had many people using it. The machine uses light, sound and various frequencies to help bring the body back into a state of homeostasis.



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# Eckert Chiropractic is the first stop for pain treatment

SUBMITTED ARTICLE

Eckert Chiropractic will celebrate 14 years in business this Valentine’s Day.

Dr. Kate Eckert reported last year that 2023 was a year of exponential growth and that was true. However, the last 12 months saw them double the amount of treatments they did compared to 2023. She invested another \$40k in an additional Shockwave machine (to meet demand) and Vibration therapy (to get even better results with existing therapies and add value to patient visits).

The offices did over 10,000 treatments in 2024. Their numbers are exploding because of the patient referrals they have been getting from patients that have had wonderful results.

Shockwave Therapy has caught on like wildfire, and at least two other offices have introduced it into their practices. Eckert Chiropractic aims to set itself apart from other offices with training, use of the machines, and using it synergistically with Class IV Laser, Vibration therapy, and Decompression therapy. They have done four trainings for their equipment in 2024 and multiple group trainings for the full staff. They have found that these therapies need to be administered meticulously and are only as effective as the provider using them.

Shockwave therapy is the same technology as lithotripsy, which uses sound waves to break up kidney stones. The Shockwave ESWT that the practice has in the office breaks up calcifications in muscles, tendons, ligaments and around joints. It also helps to improve blood flow. This is very effective and some DOs and MDs use this exact machine to treat certain types of Erectile Dysfunction caused by blood flow issues. This is done in Clarion and Pittsburgh and widely throughout Europe. EC does not use this machine for that purpose, but the increased blood flow helps treat musculoskeletal issues by delivering more oxygen to an area and speeding up healing.

The most impressive function of Shockwave Therapy is that it stimulates cell regeneration. This is what makes it so much longer lasting than other therapies. Cell regeneration takes about two months to occur after each treatment.

The other unique thing about Shockwave Therapy is that it is also diagnostic. When using the therapy on an area of injury,



the sound waves detect areas of calcification by making the patient feel a deep ache. Those spots are the injured area that needs treatment. It is often found that the spot where a person feels like they are injured are not the source of dysfunction that causes that referred pain. If they do not find any areas of calcification, it might not be the best therapy to treat the injury, and they can shift gears and try the Class IV Laser.

EC has been using their machines on conditions they never dreamed of treating when they first got them in 2022. They have learned so much in the past year and updated their techniques as they continue to improve. They have now started using Shockwave therapy to treat bone on bone joint pain with a new technique that they learned at a seminar this year. They are also seeing cartilage growth with the new techniques they are using, and are having much more success treating headaches and disc issues with their new techniques.

Class IV Laser Therapy is widely used by PTs, Chiropractors and Veterinarians. Dr. Eckert states, “Laser has been a great addition in our office. We pair it with Shockwave to treat TMJ, headaches, disc issues and neuropathy. We always add it in if some-

one is having swelling. It is our go to when using decompression. The synergistic approach is what has been working best for us.”

EC’s Laser is 60 watts and has three diodes with three different wavelengths. These wavelengths increase blood flow, decrease inflammation and speed up the cellular process. This makes patients heal faster. Their laser can penetrate 5 to 7 cm into the tissue, and that is what makes it beneficial to treating disc issues.

EC uses Decompression therapy combined with Laser and Shockwave therapy. They have been to the basic and advanced training for this therapy in 2024 and have learned that more is not always better. A common mistake is to use too much force in Decompression, which can actually have a negative effect.

The next closest facility that combines these three therapies is an office in Clarion run by a DO. Decompression therapy is perfect for disc issues, facet issues and stubborn neck and lower back pain. It is a type of traction used to gently stretch the spine. This in turn relieves the pain and helps restore function. Stretching and relaxing the spine intermittently in a controlled manner creates a negative pressure within the disc. This helps with fluid exchange within the central part of the disc, bringing essential nutrients and hydration into these areas to assist in healing.

Vibration therapy is something new that they are doing to give their patients even better results post Shockwave and Laser treatments and it also helps build bone density for their osteoporotic patients. Vibration therapy is something that they are offering to their patients complementarily because they know that it can give them even better results and reduce downtime.

Dr. Eckert wants her practice to be considered an alternative to pain management and the least invasive option that people should turn to before they try steroid injections, long standing medication use or surgery.

While these therapies are not covered by insurance, EC offers payment plans and has incorporated a community giving day once a month where they offer free treatments to those that cannot afford it. Dr. Eckert acknowledges that healthcare costs can compromise patients being able to get adequate care and she tries to make it as accessible as possible for patients.

Dr. Eckert says, “We started the year of 2024 with a total of six employees; myself, Chris Zagar our office manager of nearly 8 years, Mikayla Markle who works from home doing insurance authorizations, and Renee Knight, Fawn Todd and Julia Allman, our Shockwave and Laser providers. We ended 2024 with ten employees. In winter 2024, we added an additional Shockwave and Laser provider, Molly Ranker at the Grove City location. In spring of 2024, we added an additional Shockwave and Laser provider at the Oil City office, Chelsey Stoner, who is also a massage therapist at our neighboring business, Peaces for You Massage. In summer of 2024, we added an additional front office staff, Deb Mitchell, who has been a long time patient and is a retired teacher. In fall of 2024, we added a new front desk staff at the Grove City location, Sarah Sabella, who is a student at Grove City College. We also have our original employee, Bruno (my 13 year old Labrador) the office greeter.”

Oil City hours are Tuesdays and Thursdays from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. and 9:30 a.m. to 7:30 p.m. on Wednesdays. The website for Oil City is [www.chiordrkat.com](http://www.chiordrkat.com) and their phone number is 814-670-0568.

In Grove City, hours are Mondays from 1 to 5 p.m., Fridays from 1 to 6 p.m., Saturdays from 11:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m., and Sundays from 10:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. The website for Grove City is [www.formfunctionandflowlab.com](http://www.formfunctionandflowlab.com), and the office’s phone number is 724-372-9833.

Dr. Eckert also has an extensive YouTube channel for her patients to reintroduce them into safe movement and help them prevent getting reinjured.

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