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Summer 2021



A Couple's Retreat
Page 6



**Memorial Community
Hospital & Health System**

Blair • Fort Calhoun • Tekamah

With a mission to partner with our community to heal, nurture, and promote wellness, Memorial Community Hospital and Health System displays commitment to that mission through offerings and support of community needs.



When checking e-mails on the morning of June 25th I found what I first thought was a junk e-mail. The sender was “The White House” and in the e-mail was an invitation that started with the words “The President of the United States and Dr. Jill Biden invite you to a Fourth of July BBQ.” I am thankful that I did not follow my initial instinct to delete this “junk e-mail” and continue on with my original plans for the holiday weekend. A little research showed that the invitation was actually for a barbecue on the White House South Lawn, where a total of about 1,000 healthcare providers, first responders and military members were expected. How could I not accept this once in a lifetime invitation on behalf of MCH staff?

What could be more patriotic on Independence Day than celebrating it at the White House? The White House and its surrounding grounds serve as the home of the President of the United States and first family. However, it is also a museum of American history—and the same place where presidents, dignitaries and their guests have been watching Independence Day fireworks since 1801, when Thomas Jefferson first celebrated the Fourth of July at the White House.

Attending this Fourth of July celebration with my husband, Gary, made me feel that we, along with the other invitees, contributed just a tiny bit to that history. This year’s celebration was entitled “America’s Back Together 2021,” a fitting name after the isolation that many experienced during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. On the grounds, anyone who was not fully vaccinated against COVID-19 was asked to wear a mask. Guests that were fully vaccinated were free to go without a mask.

We arrived on the South Lawn of the White House after passing through numerous checkpoints. Picnic tables and chairs were set-up right where you would usually see the landing pad for the president’s helicopter, Marine

One. When we saw the podium with the seal of the President of the United States just a few yards from the tables, we were hopeful that we would actually get to see our host, President Joe Biden. Dinner choices ranged from brats and burgers to pork sandwiches. After dinner, lawn games were available, and the President’s Marine Band played a variety of popular music. We certainly took this opportunity to play cornhole on the most secure lawn in the entire country! The President’s Fourth of July address was given on the South Lawn. I was able to be right up front, where both my husband and I had the opportunity to shake hands and exchange a few words with the President as well as with the first lady.

The national anthem was performed by Jennifer Nettles of Sugarland, accompanied by Alex Lacamoire and the Marine Band. The entertainment continued throughout the evening and at sunset we were able to sit on the White House South Lawn to watch the fireworks, which were launched from both sides of the Lincoln Memorial reflecting pool.

The day ended much too soon, but the memories we made that day will remain with me forever. Throughout the weekend I spent time reflecting on this amazing opportunity, the likes of which I may never experience again. However, I know that if it were not for the actions and perseverance of our amazing team right here at MCH throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, there would never have been a trip to the White House to represent this organization and every one of the members of this great team. While each and every employee at MCH deserved to be invited, I am honored to have been asked to represent our employees and team members in Washington, D.C., this Fourth of July 2021.

Please know that we have and continue to make a difference. First in the initial response and now in the prevention of COVID-19 through vaccination and with the ongoing care of COVID-19 patients. If you or your loved ones have not yet received your vaccine, please get vaccinated. This will allow all of us to continue to celebrate big and small events together, allow loved ones in care facilities to have much needed visits, allow kids to get back to living without restrictions, and for all of us to resume the activities we love.

A heartfelt “thank you” to everyone at MCH and to our wonderful communities that support us.

God Bless America!

Manny Banner



October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month!

What is breast cancer?

Breast cancer is a type of cancer that forms when cells in the breast begin to grow out of control. These cells usually form a tumor that can often be seen on an x-ray or felt as a lump. Breast cancer occurs almost entirely in women, but men can also get breast cancer. It's important to understand that most breast lumps are benign and not cancer (malignant). Non-cancerous breast tumors are abnormal growths, but they do not spread outside of the breast. They are not life threatening, but some types of benign breast lumps can increase a woman's risk of getting breast cancer. Any breast lump or change needs to be checked by a health care professional to determine if it is benign or malignant and if it might affect your future cancer risk.

Breast cancers can start from different parts of the breast. Most breast cancers begin in the ducts that carry milk to the nipple (ductal cancers). Some start in the glands that make breast milk (lobular cancers). There are also other types of breast cancer that are less common like phyllodes tumor and angiosarcoma. A small number of cancers start in other tissues in the breast. These cancers are called sarcomas and lymphomas and are not really thought of as breast cancers.

Although many types of breast cancer can cause a lump in the breast, not all do. Many breast cancers are also found on screening mammograms, which can detect cancers at an earlier stage, often before they can be felt, and before symptoms develop. There are many different types of breast cancer and common ones include ductal carcinoma in situ (DCIS) and invasive carcinoma. Others, like phyllodes tumors and angiosarcoma, are less common. Once a biopsy is done, breast cancer cells are tested for proteins called estrogen receptors, progesterone receptors and HER2. The tumor cells are also closely looked at in the lab to find out what grade it is. The specific proteins found and the tumor grade can help decide treatment options.

Breast cancer can spread when the cancer cells get into the blood or lymph system and are carried to other parts of the body. The lymph system is a network of lymph (or lymphatic) vessels found throughout the body that connects lymph. The clear fluid inside the lymph vessels contains tissue byproducts and waste material, as well as immune system cells. The lymph vessels carry lymph fluid away from the breast. In the case of breast cancer, cancer cells can enter those lymph vessels and start to grow in lymph nodes. Most of the lymph vessels of the breast drain into lymph nodes under the arm, around the collar bone, below the collar bone and inside the chest near the breast bone.

If cancer cells have spread to the lymph nodes, there is a higher chance that the cells could have traveled through the lymph system and spread (metastasized) to other parts of the body. The more lymph nodes with breast cancer cells, the more likely it is that the cancer may be found in other organs. Because of this, finding cancer in one or more lymph nodes often affects your treatment plan. Usually, surgery is needed to remove one or more lymph nodes to know whether the cancer has spread. Not all women with cancer cells in their lymph nodes develop metastases, and some women with no cancer cells in their lymph nodes develop metastases later.

There is certainly a lot to learn about breast cancer, including signs and symptoms and treatments available today. To learn more about breast cancer, visit the American Cancer Society at www.cancer.org. Most importantly, have your annual check-up and schedule your mammogram.



Program Participants are **Benefitting from Senior Life Solutions!**

What a few patients have to say:

"I lost my husband a few months ago. I feel numb, have no energy, and no desire to do anything. I sit and stare at the walls. I have never felt like this before. I have had thoughts of taking my own life. The Senior Life Solutions program is helping me to find my way. It helps to be around others who are supportive and have felt the same way." - SLS Patient

"I am grieving the recent loss of my wife. I feel lost. I saw a Senior Life Solutions flyer on a store front and decided to call. I am starting to feel back to my old self again. Having others in the group who can relate to what I am going through and realize that I am not alone has been a big help. With the therapy, I am learning new ways to think about things and not always be so negative." - SLS Patient

"I am restless and have nagging thoughts that will not go away. I have stomach aches often. I worry about everything. Senior Life Solutions has given me the tools I need to help me overcome my worry. I don't have as many stomach aches. I still worry, but I can use what I learned at Senior Life Solutions to look at the situation and think about it " - SLS Patient



Holly Mackie
RN, BSN
Program Director
Senior Life Solutions



Denise Falcon
LIMHP, LMHP, LCSW
Program Therapist
Senior Life Solutions

Dr. Bagby

One of MCH's founding doctors, Dr. Kenneth Charles Bagby, peacefully passed away on June 21, 2021. Doc, as many of us referred to him by, was an integral part of what MCH is today. In 1964, he began at the Blair Clinic and practiced medicine until his retirement in 2001. However, retirement didn't stop him, he was an avid volunteer and spent many hours volunteering for community organizations, including the MCH Auxiliary and MCH Foundation. It was also his idea to build the Healing Garden and Railroad when the hospital expansion project started in the mid-2000's. He was a familiar and friendly face to so many of us here, a kind man, and will be missed greatly by many in this community.



CT Upgrade

*Written by Shelby Snyder,
MCH CT Technologist*

MCH recently upgraded the CT scanner from a 20-slice to a 64-slice scanner. This upgrade allows for higher coverage and faster speed to acquire images, which improves patient comfort and safety. This upgrade also allows for more and different exams which were not possible with the previous version. With fast acquisition speed, additional CT angiography exams (examination of blood or lymph vessels) are now offered.

CT angiograms are an essential part of MCH's CT stroke protocol used in emergency settings to rapidly diagnose patients presenting with probable strokes and to enable appropriate urgent management. CT angiography is a CT examination performed with a timed IV contrast (dye) to enhance the carotid and vertebral arteries and other structures in the brain. It not only allows for the visualization of numerous intracranial features relevant to a stroke, but also shows brain structures (anatomy) that may be relevant to the treatment of the stroke. With the upgrade to a 64-slice scanner, MCH upgraded to the newest CT software available. The updated software improves CT image quality in patients with implanted metalware. It allows artifacts—often caused by dental fillings, implants, artificial joints, or pacemakers—to be significantly reduced to improve the image quality of your CT. The ability to see more detail in these types of challenging exams leads to improved ability of the Radiologist to read and interpret the CT images.

Appreciation held in July

An appreciation event was held for MCH staff, board members, and volunteers in late July as recognition for their efforts and exceptional teamwork throughout the past year and a half. Manny Banner, president and CEO at MCH, credited her team for showing great resilience during an extra stressful period. "We have asked our team to give their best and they reacted with an amazing effort. This ensured that our communities and patients would continue to receive great care, even during a worldwide pandemic," Banner said. The appreciation event included food vendors Don Morgan with Smoke on Arrival, and caterers Tom and Jacque Muff. Acoustic guitarist Tanner Sovereign provided excellent music while guests enjoyed activities from Bounce Omaha. A dunk tank, face painting and other lawn games were also provided as part of the celebration.



A Cancer Journey during COVID

COVID-19 probably saved Dave Waite's life, which seems like such a strange statement. Dave and Harriet Waite had just returned from a cruise to celebrate Dave's 70th birthday when the COVID lock down began. In the spring through the fall of 2020, Dave and Harriet spent a lot of their time together to avoid COVID exposure. One thing they did everyday was get out and walk. It was in late October that Harriet began to notice a few changes in Dave. He was losing weight, and seemed to have some stomach issues. She insisted he make an appointment with his doctor.



Dave made an appointment with his doctor at the MCH&HS (MCH) Blair Clinic, Dr. Charles Smith, who decided to order a CT scan and blood work. They were shocked and devastated to get the call that Dave had a tumor on his pancreas. Dr. Smith got him an appointment with Dr. Tim Dorius, oncologist at MCH, as soon as he could. After a needle biopsy, and further CT scans, it was determined that it was stage one Pancreatic Cancer. Dr. Dorius made an appointment with a surgeon at Estabrook Cancer Center, and a plan was put into place.



Dave started chemotherapy at MCH in late November. The Waites felt lucky to be able to stay in Blair for Dave's treatments. They knew most of the people caring for him. They were also pleasantly surprised that Dr. Dorius and his partner, Dr. Schwartz, came to Blair to see patients at the Specialty Clinic. Dave would spend up to six hours in the chemo suite at MCH for his infusions, and then was sent home with a fanny pack of more meds that were pumped into him for two days. This went on for 11 rounds, every other week.

According to Harriet, "The nurses who administered the chemo made sure Dave was comfortable, warm, offered him food and snacks, and just stopped and visited with him while he was there. They made the time there much easier." She also went on to say, "Sandy Mullen, Chel Garder and Cheryl Slominski were a blessing to both of us," as they journeyed through the six-month period. Some days Dave felt so bad and needed to get fluids. A quick call to Sandy or Cheryl, and they made time for him to come as soon as they had a chair available. Harriet said she "shed many tears with some of the nurses, Lana Thompson, and her Specialty Clinic staff as Dave was going through this. They were all so willing to listen, and address her concerns."

On May 11, Dave had surgery to remove the tail of his pancreas, where the tumor was. As a precaution, they also removed his spleen. The chemo had done its job in reducing the size of the tumor, and no cancer had spread to anywhere else in his body. He has put on 20 pounds since chemo ended. He still wants to put on 5-10 pounds more to reach his normal weight. His port has been removed, and he will see Dr. Dorius every three months for follow up, and the surgeon in six months. He will continue to see Dr. Smith for his routine medical care. "We are grateful to Dr. Smith for quickly getting a diagnosis and treatments started for Dave," Harriet said.

Harriet and Dave have enjoyed spending more time with their sons and their families, enjoying soccer games, dance recitals, and going out for dinner with friends. Dave is anxious to play some golf, and they look forward to doing some traveling in the months to come. For now they are blessed knowing that Dave's prognosis is very good. They are thankful for their COVID quarantine time together, which allowed them to find this cancer early.



The 5th Annual Baby Expo at MCH will take place on Oct. 30, 2021, from 9 a.m. - 12 p.m. This event has become popular with new moms in our service area over the last five years by providing local resources for their upcoming delivery and allowing them a chance to meet our delivering physicians. Private tours will be given by the physicians of our Labor and Delivery Department, highlighting our private rooms, family suites, and one-on-one care. Touring moms will also be able to register for prizes, which will include large baby items such as a pack-n-play, jumper, or car seat, etc. If you're interested in taking a tour, being an information vendor, or if you have more questions, please call Laura in the Marketing Department at 402-426-1494.



Dr. Amanda Duxbury



Dr. Kevin Sisk



Dr. Paula Thielen-Kocharov



The following story was shared with MCH by the Dreamweaver Foundation. Both patients are residents of Blair and have received their cancer treatment at MCH.

A Couples Retreat by Dreamweaver Foundation



Local Blair residents Joyce and Clyde Johnson, have been married for 47 years. Because of their lifelong compassion for helping others, the couple wasn't ever able to take a honeymoon. They dedicated their time at work, and were busy caring for the 70 foster kids they helped raise in their home for 29 years.

Joyce enjoyed daily dips at the Blair pool, which reminded her of the joy she felt when she first saw the ocean as a young girl. Unfortunately, Joyce's daydreams were overshadowed by her stage 3 ovarian cancer diagnosis in 2019. Joyce battled the cancer and went into remission in 2020. In February 2021, the couple was rocked by another cancer diagnosis. They learned Clyde was battling stage 4 lung cancer. Learning Clyde's diagnosis helped Joyce realize her dream to see the ocean again wasn't her dream alone, she dreamed of sharing the ocean with Clyde.

Dreamweaver Foundation received Clyde's nomination to receive a Dream in February 2021. Just as it was about to be turned into reality, the couple was shook by more bad news, Joyce's cancer was back. Although the dream was delayed for a short time to allow Joyce to begin treatment, they were finally able to travel in July and were sent to a dream resort, the Bungalows Key Largo, a luxurious all-inclusive resort in the Florida Keys where the management and staff treated the couple like royalty. During their stay, they were greeted with a private tour of the resort, al fresco dining, lots of swimming, and of course, the ocean! Joyce and Clyde said their trip to Florida was a Dream come true! To conclude the trip, Dreamweaver coordinated a large group of their friends from Passageway Church to greet them with welcome home signs, balloons, and hugs as their limo pulled up to their apartment. The couple could not believe the group had gathered just for them.

Dreamweaver Foundation is dedicated to fulfilling the dreams of seniors who are terminally ill, making their life-long dreams come true through incredible experiences they will never forget. Dreamweaver is local non-profit based out of Omaha, NE. Interested to learn more, get involved, or nominate a senior? Go to www.dreamweaver.org.

Outpatient Procedures Increasing

Outpatient procedure, same day surgery, or ambulatory surgery are all terms used for procedures that do not require an overnight hospital stay. A recent report by Healthgrades said over the last 30 years, outpatient procedures have tripled in the United States. Now at 54 million annually, outpatient procedures equal the number of procedures requiring a hospital stay.

Just like many hospitals and clinics around the country, MCH is adding to this number daily. Physicians and Physician Assistants at MCH do a variety of skilled procedures right here in your own community hospital. Some of the more common procedures include, but are not limited to, knee and elbow joint injections, IUD placement and removals, colposcopy, toenail removal, cryotherapy, suture/laceration repair, punch biopsy, and vasectomy, among others. Hospital procedures which they also do and may or may not require a hospital stay are colonoscopy, scope, c-section, D&C, paracentesis, peg or feeding tubes, EGD, in addition to a few others.

To find out if you can get your outpatient procedure done at MCH please talk to your physician or call 402-426-1239 for more information. MCH love to take care of you close to home.

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Dr. Duxbury to Join MCH Staff in the Fall

Dr. Amanda Duxbury will join MCH as a Family Medicine Physician in mid-September. Dr. Duxbury specializes in Obstetrics and has completed a Fellowship in Advanced OB.

Dr. Duxbury obtained her Bachelor of Science degree in Genetics, Cell Biology and Development from the University of Minnesota and her Doctor of Medicine from the University of South Dakota, Sanford School of Medicine. She then attended St. Joseph Family Medicine Residency Program in Denver, specializing in Family Medicine, followed by a Primary Care maternity Care Fellowship as part of the St. Joseph Family Medicine Program. Currently, Dr. Duxbury is a Family Medicine Physician at Sanford Health in Vermillion, South Dakota where she provides full spectrum care specializing in Obstetrics. She has expertise in performing multiple in office procedures including vasectomy, colposcopy, and contraceptive management (IUD/Nexplanon placement). Dr. Duxbury is Certified with the American Board of Family Medicine.

Dr. Duxbury's hobbies include spending time on her parents' farm, gardening, attending sporting events and enjoying free time with her husband and daughter.

COVID-19 - Where We are Today

By Kaylee Smith, BSN RN
Infection Preventionist and
Quality Improvement Specialist

The COVID-19 pandemic has consumed our daily lives for over a year. It can be difficult to sort through all of the information being given through the media. So where exactly is Nebraska at right now with the pandemic? As of the end of August 2021 Nebraska has 51.2% of the population vaccinated from COVID-19. In Washington County 46.85 % or 9,472 people are fully vaccinated. Unfortunately, once again we are seeing a rise in cases with the "DELTA" variant. This variant has been found to be more transmissible. The delta variant is now the dominant strain in the U.S. Nebraska is seeing approximately 400 new cases per day. Hospitalizations due to COVID are also rising weekly. The majority of hospitalization patients are unvaccinated or partially vaccinated. There is a small number of fully vaccinated individuals that have contracted COVID-19 and even smaller number of those who are hospitalized. The vaccines appear to be effective against severe illness from the Delta variant of COVID if not protection from contracting it.

In May and June, we experienced a reprieve from COVID cases and hospitalizations. Mask mandates ended and businesses went back to "normal" practices. But at the end of July the CDC recently put new recommendations into place. Masks should be worn when using public transportation, in schools, and in healthcare facilities. Masking is also recommended for all people (even fully vaccinated) when in public places in areas with substantial to high transmission rates. Douglas and Washington county are considered a high transmission area.

Please stay diligent and continue to take precautions against COVID-19. Practice good hand hygiene by scrubbing your hands with soap and water for 20 seconds. If you are not vaccinated, MCH recommends doing so. If you have questions or concerns about the vaccines please talk with your health care provider. As of 8/19/2021 the FDA has authorized an additional dose of Moderna or Pfizer in certain immunocompromised individuals. If you believe that you fall into that category please talk with your physician. At this time MCH requires a physicians' order for a booster of the COVID vaccine. As of August 23, 2021 the FDA has given the Pfizer-Biotech COVID vaccine full approval. This is a fluid situation, please continue to check MCH's website or call us if you any questions. We are also offering Pfizer for ages 12 and older from 8am to 2pm on Saturdays; please call 402-426-4611 and reserve a time slot.

As of printing COVID information was up-to-date with current guidelines.



Direct Access Physical Therapy

Many patients have never heard the term "Direct Access" or know what it means in regards to Physical Therapy. What Direct Access refers to is a patient's right to determine where they want to receive therapy. This means the patient can choose. Insurance companies often dictate where a person can get medical care, but Nebraska is one of 20 states where a patient can choose where to go for Physical Therapy. They may wish to stay close to home or choose a specific physical therapist they already know and trust. Direct Access requires a change of thought, not necessarily going where you're told to go, but rather making the best healthcare decision for you.

MCH is proud to offer Physical Therapy to the residents of our community. Conveniently located on the ground level with parking right outside of check-in, our Therapy Department is easy to get to and known for its friendly faces and talented staff. MCH employs five physical therapists, who are experienced with diagnosing physical abnormalities, restoring physical function and mobility, and promoting physical activity and proper function. Our Physical Therapists take care of a patient in all phases of healing, with or without other ongoing treatments.

In addition to Physical Therapy, MCH also offers Occupational Therapy, Speech Therapy, and Wound Care Services. Call 402-426-1129 today to speak to our dedicated staff should you have any questions.



Memorial Community
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Celebrating 65 years

of extraordinary care

Celebrating 65 years of healthcare and a special recognition for Dr. Bagby

The year 2021 marks the 65th anniversary for MCH. In celebration, MCH will host a party on Thursday, Oct. 14 from 4:30 to 7 p.m. The event will be held in the main hospital lobby in Blair and everyone is invited to attend. In conjunction with this event, a special ceremony will be held in the Healing Garden at 6:00 p.m. at which time the Healing Garden Railroad will be dedicated to “Doc”.

