

# McLeod

Volume 37, Issue 2, 2022

## *magazine*



HIGH TOUCH,  
HIGH TECH

Belinda McFerrin  
Little River, South Carolina



# Views



Donna Isgett

At McLeod Health, we value faithfulness and commitment that reflect a servant's heart. We celebrate steadfastness to our mission of service. We challenge each other daily -- sometimes moment by moment -- to embrace wisdom, strength and dedication in caring for others when they are most vulnerable and in need of comfort and treatment.

We are committed to the values of Caring, The Person, Quality and Integrity, striving to improve the health of people who live in the 18 counties we serve and beyond. Our McLeod team of nurses, doctors, medical personnel, support services and volunteers are faithful to this work, diligent to seek new processes that lift the standards of medical care higher, both in touch and technology.

Our patients and their families are constant reminders that the vocation of medicine isn't about business; it's about relationships and being faithful to our community. We are local people caring for local people and consider it a privilege to be a partner in your health. We deeply appreciate your choice to entrust us with your health needs.

We have excellence in our name, a standard by which we measure each outcome. The following pages pay tribute to the courage demonstrated by both caregivers and patients, extraordinary results and authentic relationships.

Thank you for making McLeod Health a part of Your Story.

Donna Isgett  
President and CEO, McLeod Health



## ON THE COVER:

Belinda McFerrin struggles with a loose joint disease called Ehlers-Danlos Syndrome, a condition that weakens connective tissues. Her favorite pastime includes riding horses, which is hard on the joints. Belinda's left knee began giving her trouble, so she made an appointment with hip and knee specialist Dr. Christopher Walsh of McLeod Orthopaedics Seacoast. After multiple rounds of injections, Dr. Walsh suggested robotic-assisted knee surgery to relieve Belinda's pain. Belinda is now back in the saddle riding horses multiple times a week. The cover photo was taken after Belinda's robotic-assisted total knee replacement while she practiced Hunt-Seat at A Lil Bit A Paradise Farm in Tabor City, North Carolina.



is published by  
**McLeod Health, Florence, S.C.**

**Donna Isgett**  
President and CEO, McLeod Health

**Jumana A. Swindler**  
Editor, Vice President of Communications  
& Public Information

**Co-Editors**  
Tracy H. Stanton and Jessica Wall

**Contributing Writers:**  
Jennifer Beverly, Kristie Gibbs, Brett Gosnell,  
Jaime Hayes, Kelly Hughes, Jennifer Hulon,  
Leslie Mikell, Arielle Williams Miles,  
Carrie Anna Strange and Tammy White

**Photographer:**  
Jason Crist

**Design and Printing:**  
Sheriar Press, Myrtle Beach, S.C.

©2022 by McLeod Health.  
All rights reserved. For permission to reprint,  
contact McLeod Publications.  
(843) 777-2592 • [www.mcleodhealth.org](http://www.mcleodhealth.org)



# Inside

4 **EVERYDAY HERO**

6 **ACCIDENT BECOMES  
A BLESSING IN DISGUISE**

8 **DR. SRINIVAS KOLLA: McLEOD  
CARDIOTHORACIC SURGEON**

10 **BACK IN THE SADDLE**

12 **TWO REPAIRS, ONE TEAM**

14 **THE MANY FACES OF McLEOD HEROES**

18 **NAVIGATING TO EARLIER DETECTION  
OF LUNG CANCER**

20 **MOVING FORWARD**

22 **WEIGHING THE OPTIONS**

24 **A SERVANT'S HEART**

26 **McLEOD HEALTH: AN EPIC JOURNEY**

28 **FULFILLING A NEED FOR  
TRAUMATIZED VICTIMS**

31 **McLEOD NEWS**



ACCIDENT BECOMES A BLESSING | PAGE 6



TWO REPAIRS, ONE TEAM | PAGE 12



MOVING FORWARD | PAGE 20



# EVERYDAY HERO

## CARING FOR HIS COMMUNITY

Heart attack survivor Randy McKee is living life to the fullest while serving his community as a member of Clarendon County Fire Rescue.



by Carrie Anna Strange

When Randy McKee, a Firefighter III and EMT with Clarendon County Fire Rescue, suffered a heart attack at age 62, one of his biggest fears was that he would be unable to return to work. After all, being a first responder requires him to be in peak physical shape.

While responding to an accident on Interstate 95, Randy and his partner transported a patient to the McLeod Health Clarendon Emergency Department. The staff noticed Randy's unusual coloring and shortness of breath.

"I suspected that the shortness of breath and excessive sweating was due to the stress of the incident," said Randy. "I initially brushed off the symptoms, but to be safe my battalion chief insisted that I undergo an evaluation. Roles quickly reversed and I found myself as a patient and not a healthcare provider."

During Randy's examination, **Dr. William Sabina**, McLeod Health Clarendon's Emergency Department Medical Director, consulted with McLeod Hospitalist and Board Certified Cardiologist **Dr. John Rozich**. He ordered an EKG, ECHO and labs. The test results indicated that Randy had indeed experienced a myocardial infarction.

Randy was transported to McLeod Regional Medical Center in Florence, South Carolina. A heart catheterization performed by McLeod Cardiologist **Dr. Nicolette Naso** revealed three blocked vessels in Randy's heart and heart valve. Randy would need open heart surgery to make these repairs.

Prior to Randy's surgery, McLeod Cardiothoracic Surgeon **Dr. Cary Huber** met with him and his wife Jann.

"Dr. Huber answered all of our questions and reassured me that I would feel like a different person in a few short months," recalled Randy.

In July 2021, Randy underwent triple bypass surgery and aortic valve replacement.

"My wife and I were impressed with everyone who cared for me, from the techs, nurses, doctors and all of the staff we encountered during my hospital stay," said Randy.

Following the surgery, Randy spent a few days in the hospital before going to an inpatient rehabilitation facility. Upon discharge, Randy continued rehab with McLeod Cardiac Rehabilitation Clarendon. He completed 36 cardiac rehab sessions over 12 weeks.

"I wore a heart monitor during exercise, and at the end of my workouts staff would check my blood pressure, heart rate, and other markers to ensure all was well. They were constantly monitoring me," added Randy.

"Initially, Randy walked slowly on a treadmill. In just a couple of weeks, he pushed to do more. He wanted to regain his strength and endurance to be able to return to work and serve his community in their time of need," said Betty Dukes, RN, McLeod Health Clarendon Cardiac Rehabilitation Nurse.

Six months after surgery, Randy returned to the frontlines, responding to calls from those in need of emergency assistance. In December 2021, Randy was inducted into the Clarendon County Fire Rescue Hall of Fame during their awards banquet.

"I am grateful to the entire care team at McLeod Health," said Randy. "Because of them, I am living life to the fullest and have the opportunity to continue serving my community."

**"Initially, Randy walked slowly on a treadmill.**

**In just a couple of weeks, he pushed to do more.**

**He wanted to regain his strength and endurance to be able to return to work and serve his community in their time of need."**

**- Betty Dukes, RN,  
McLeod Health Clarendon  
Cardiac Rehabilitation Nurse**

## Signs of a HEART ATTACK

For both men and women, the most common signs of a heart attack include:

- Pain or discomfort in the center of the chest
- Pain or discomfort in the arms, back, neck, jaw or stomach
- Shortness of breath
- Nausea
- Feeling faint
- Profuse, sudden, uncontrolled sweating

If you think you are having a heart attack, call 911. Never attempt to drive yourself to the Emergency Department. Emergency Medical Services staff are trained to begin heart attack treatment right away while enroute to the hospital.



# ACCIDENT BECOMES *A Blessing in Disguise*

by Leslie Mikell



Ariana returned to her classes at Francis Marion University just weeks after her surgery by Dr. John Richey. She is pictured here by the fountain in front of the Rogers Library on the Francis Marion University campus.

Ariana Jackson, a Sumter native and Francis Marion University student, was enjoying summer break when a car accident on July 4, 2019, changed everything.

"I did not have any major issues after the accident, but I was experiencing some back pain, so I had a CT scan. The next week, I received a call saying there was something on the CT results that needed to be examined further," recalls Ariana.

The CT scan revealed a large tumor on Ariana's pancreas. Based on the imaging results, she would need a biopsy of the mass to determine whether or not it was cancerous.

"Thankfully, the biopsy indicated the mass was benign, but it still needed to be removed because of its size," said Ariana.

Ariana was then referred to McLeod Surgeon **Dr. John Richey** with Pee Dee Surgical Group, who specializes in complex pancreatic and biliary procedures.

"Based on the imaging and biopsy results, we knew that this was a solid pseudopapillary lesion of the body of the pancreas. Because of its size and location, a distal pancreatectomy and splenectomy surgery would lead to the best possible outcome for Ariana," said Dr. Richey.

"When left untreated, a solid pseudopapillary lesion of that size can eventually develop into cancer," he added.

A distal pancreatectomy procedure involves removing part of the body, or "tail," of the pancreas and leaving the "head" intact. A splenectomy is the complete removal of the spleen.

At McLeod Regional Medical Center, this procedure is performed robotically, which leads to faster recovery times for patients. The robot gives the surgeon greater range of motion during the procedure, while maintaining all the benefits of minimally invasive surgery, including a shorter hospital stay, reduced pain and discomfort, less blood loss, and smaller scars.

"Dr. Richey sat down with me and my parents and explained what type of mass it was and how it could affect me. He and his nurse Donna Foster made both me and my family feel very comfortable about what the procedure would entail," Ariana adds.

Even though her surgery was performed in the middle of the fall semester, Ariana did not skip a beat with her coursework. As a political science major, Ariana enjoys studying politics and the government.

**McLeod General Surgeon Dr. John Richey performs robotic-assisted surgery at McLeod Regional Medical Center.**

"I'm grateful to Dr. Richey, Donna, and the team at McLeod who made it possible for me to return to feeling normal in just a few weeks."

– Ariana Jackson

She is on track to graduate in December 2022 and plans to attend law school and become an attorney. On top of her already busy schedule, Ariana works part time at a local Food Lion grocery store as an Instacart shopper.

"Thanks to Dr. Richey, I was back to my classes and work in no time," says Ariana.

"Overall, it only took approximately a month to begin feeling completely back to normal. I had a drain for the first week after surgery, then Dr. Richey removed it the following week, and the incisions started to heal by the third week.

By week four, I had returned to my classes at Francis Marion."

A car accident is not usually a serendipitous event, but it was for Ariana.

"Everyone calls the accident my 'blessing in disguise.' Thanks to that, I was able to undergo surgery to remove the mass much sooner. Who knows how long it could have kept growing undetected. I'm grateful to Dr. Richey, Donna, and the team at McLeod who made it possible for me to return to feeling normal in just a few weeks."





**DR. SRINIVAS KOLLA**

McLeod Cardiothoracic Surgeon



McLeod Cardiothoracic Surgeon Dr. Srinivas Kolla, who specializes in robotic-assisted thoracic surgery, is pictured here with Bradley Tyner, CRNA, and Lavon Sherman, Certified Surgical Technologist.

# Specializing in Robotic-Assisted Thoracic Surgery

by Tammy White

In healthcare's everchanging landscape, Chemical Engineers can be found spearheading new developments in biotechnology and medicine. When **Dr. Srinivas Kolla** needed to make his next professional move after graduating from Rice University in Houston, Texas, with his Bachelor of Science in Chemical Engineering, he applied and was accepted to medical school at Stanford University School of Medicine in California.

Once in medical school, Dr. Kolla considered himself fortunate to be a medical student under Dr. Norman Shumway, the physician who performed the first heart transplant in the United States. He became Dr. Kolla's inspiration for choosing the field of cardiothoracic surgery.

Cardiothoracic surgeries involve the organs and tissues of the chest, including the heart and lungs. These surgeries are performed either as minimally invasive procedures or more invasive surgery which necessitates opening the chest.

Lung surgeries, which tend to be primarily for lung cancer, historically have been performed in the same manner as cardiac surgeries, with an open procedure that requires a large incision. This can cause prolonged hospitalization, pain and discomfort for the patient. Today, many thoracic or lung cases are performed with robotic-assisted surgery.

Robotic-assisted thoracic surgery removes the need for a large incision and instead only requires small incisions. This offers the patient a faster recovery and an earlier return to their quality of life.

"Robotic-assisted surgery provides a more thorough operation for lung cancer," said Dr. Kolla. "The unique feature of robotic lung surgery is that it gives a view inside the chest with 3D visualization of the lymph nodes, allowing us to remove them with minimal physical after-effects. Extracting more lymph nodes, as well as the primary tumor, provides a more complete removal of the cancer.

"In addition to easier extraction, robotic-assisted surgery often leads to better outcomes for patients because it more accurately stages the cancer than with previous methods. From a cancer perspective, it is unparalleled in its ability to deliver a comprehensive operation for the patient," remarks Dr. Kolla.

However, robotic surgery is more than just the robot and the surgeon. At McLeod Regional Medical Center, it takes an entire team of clinical staff to ensure a smooth operation and good outcomes.

"When I interviewed at McLeod, I was very impressed with the cohesiveness of the team," said Dr. Kolla.

"The medical professionals in the operating rooms had many years of service and I immediately noticed a unified flow among the team. This is a very rare find anywhere in the United States so it was a real plus for me when selecting this program.

"As I began performing surgeries at McLeod, that included working with the robotic surgical team. Quite frankly, they are some of the best staff I have ever worked with. I have operated in numerous medical facilities and none are as good as our teams at McLeod."



Dr. Srinivas Kolla





Eager to continue horse riding lessons, Belinda McFerrin jumped back into the saddle just days after being released from her post-operative follow up.

# BACK IN THE SADDLE

by Jennifer Beverly

Belinda McFerrin, 59, showed horses competitively for 12 years before moving to Little River, South Carolina, in 2021. She relocated to be closer to the beach and better enjoy her other hobbies, like deep sea fishing and golf, but remains passionate about horse riding.

"I rode horses competitively for many years -- dressage, stadium jumping and cross country -- but I quit competing last year to focus on other activities," said Belinda. "I still take lessons once or twice a week, and I have taken on a new challenge by learning the Hunt-Seat style."

Remaining active is important to Belinda because she struggles with a loose joint disease called Ehlers-Danlos Syndrome. This condition weakens the connective tissues, like tendons and ligaments, that hold the body together.

After having more than six surgeries to fix her partially dislocated kneecap,

or knee patella subluxation, Belinda finally had a right total knee replacement in 2012. With patella subluxation, the kneecap still tracks in the groove of the joint, but it may feel uncomfortable or unsteady. The bone is unstable in the joint and out of place.

A few months after moving to the coast, Belinda established care with hip and knee specialist, **Dr. Christopher Walsh** of McLeod Orthopaedics Seacoast, to help manage her ongoing bone and joint issues.

"My left knee began giving me trouble," said Belinda. "I tried a few rounds of cortisone shots, but the swelling became overwhelmingly painful, and my kneecap continued popping out of place. I already had multiple surgeries on my left knee and did not want to undergo another procedure."

After much discussion, Belinda decided to listen to Dr. Walsh's recommendation and move forward with a total knee replacement. "Belinda's left knee was rubbing together, bone on bone, as she walked," said Dr. Walsh. "I explained to Belinda that robotic-assisted total knee replacement surgery would be a great option for her and would provide the most accuracy with the least trauma on the bone and tissue."

Robotic-assisted knee replacement surgery utilizes real-time information and assists surgeons with precise placement of the knee implants based on the patient's unique measurements and knee anatomy. The robot transforms a series of preoperative 2D X-rays into a digital, 3D replication of the patient's

anatomy which creates a plan to ensure greater accuracy of the implant fit.

"During robotic-assisted knee replacement surgery, the robot functions like a sophisticated GPS system, utilizing optical trackers attached to the patient's leg to determine the exact position of the knee," said Dr. Walsh. "The system can detect even the slightest movements and makes adjustments to ensure the patient's surgical plan is maintained with excellent precision."

Receiving this information made Belinda feel more secure in her decision to have total knee replacement surgery. She also liked knowing some of the benefits from this minimally invasive approach included smaller incisions, less post-operative pain and a shorter hospital stay.

Dr. Walsh performed Belinda's robotic-assisted knee replacement surgery at McLeod Health Seacoast in December 2021. The procedure went so well that Belinda was released from the hospital the same day.

"Reflecting on my first total knee replacement, I stayed in the hospital for four days," said Belinda. "That surgeon used staples to close my incision, and I developed an abscess. Dr. Walsh used invisible sutures and glue which have healed beautifully and made for a much better surgical experience."

Belinda soon began physical therapy at McLeod Seacoast Rehabilitation Services to regain strength in her left knee.

"I had a great experience in physical therapy," said Belinda. "My physical therapist Ami Patel always took extra steps to help ease my pain when my muscles were overworked."

A few days after her final follow-up visit with Dr. Walsh, Belinda headed straight to the stables for a riding lesson. She could not wait any longer to get back onto the horses and pick up where she left off learning Hunt-Seat.

"I am amazed at how fast I have recovered from my robotic-assisted total knee replacement," said Belinda. "Dr. Walsh is an excellent surgeon with a great bedside manner. He released me six weeks after my procedure and told me I could start taking riding lessons again. My joint disease has caused me to have many surgeries, but my robotic-assisted total knee replacement has been one of the easiest recoveries."

**Dr. Christopher Walsh of McLeod Orthopaedics Seacoast was the first Orthopedic Surgeon in Horry County to offer robotic-assisted knee surgery.**

"During robotic-assisted knee replacement surgery, the robot functions like a sophisticated GPS system, utilizing optical trackers attached to the patient's leg to determine the exact position of the knee."

– Dr. Christopher Walsh





# TWO REPAIRS, ONE TEAM

by Tammy White

A harrowing experience for Richard McCoy of Summerton, South Carolina, that almost cost him his leg turned into a positive encounter when an unknown problem with his heart was also unearthed and repaired.

Richard became concerned when his leg suddenly felt ice cold and numb. "When it first started, I could walk on it, but as time passed the pain level increased to the point I could barely walk," recalled Richard.

He and his wife Dianne sought care at the McLeod Health Clarendon Emergency Department.

During the assessment, **Dr. Steve Nathanson** explained Richard's symptoms meant a loss of blood flow to his leg.

To return the blood flow, Richard needed to be urgently seen by a Vascular Surgeon.

"Dr. Nathanson referred me to McLeod Vascular Surgeon **Dr. Eva Rzuclidlo** at McLeod Regional Medical Center," said Richard. "He told me Dr. Rzuclidlo is outstanding in her field and that she would take good care of me."

Testing at McLeod Regional Medical Center revealed two of Richard's three major vessels below his left knee were one hundred percent blocked.

"Dr. Rzuclidlo said she would do her best, but was unsure if she could save my leg," said Richard.



McLeod Vascular Surgeon **Dr. Eva Rzuclidlo**, at left, with the image showing Richard's loss of blood flow in his leg that she repaired and McLeod Interventional Cardiologist **Dr. Ravi Parikh**, at right, with an image taken during the MitraClip procedure he used to stop Richard's heart valve from leaking.

Dr. Rzuclidlo performed bypass surgery on Richard's leg, similar to heart bypass surgery. A healthy vein was used to bypass the blockages and return blood flow to Richard's leg.

"For any bypass surgery to work well it has to have a good beginning artery and a good artery to bypass to," said Dr. Rzuclidlo. "Arteries with blockages further in the leg, or with only one open blood vessel, increases the risk of a failed bypass. I did not know until I started Richard's surgery what the outcome would be; fortunately, I was able to save his leg."

"I am eternally grateful," said Richard. "If it had not been for Dr. Nathanson and Dr. Rzuclidlo, I realize I could have lost my left leg. It is to their credit that I am still walking today."

As part of his pre-surgery testing Richard underwent an echocardiogram. The results indicated a heart valve issue but returning blood flow to his leg had to be addressed first.

After the completion of Richard's vascular surgery, a transesophageal echocardiography, also known as a TEE, which produces pictures of the heart using ultrasound, was scheduled with McLeod Interventional Cardiologist **Dr. Ravi Parikh**.

Richard's test results detected severe mitral regurgitation of his mitral valve. Mitral regurgitation is a condition when the heart's mitral valve does not close tightly, allowing blood to flow backward into the heart instead of out to the rest of the body.

Common symptoms of mitral regurgitation include fatigue, shortness of breath, swelling and an irregular heartbeat. Patients may also have an extra heart sound, known as a heart murmur, that is produced when blood flows turbulently or in the wrong direction.

"I could tell I was not 100 percent," said Richard. "With my daily chores or working in the yard, I would become short of breath. I did not realize it was related to my heart."



**Richard and Dianne McCoy** enjoy the lake view from their home in Summerton, SC. They are grateful for the care Richard received at McLeod that saved his leg and repaired his leaking heart valve.

"Our treatment goals focus on decreasing the severity of mitral regurgitation, lessening strain on the heart and improving quality of life for patients experiencing these symptoms," said Dr. Parikh. "Medications cannot fix a valve problem, but they can target things like high blood pressure that make the regurgitation worse. Those with severe cases, like Richard, will usually need some type of surgical repair."

The current standard to repair a severely leaking mitral valve remains through open-heart surgery. However, in patients who are not good candidates for surgery or who have mitral regurgitation due to congestive heart failure (a weak heart muscle), a less invasive mitral valve repair with MitraClip may be a safe and effective alternative.

A specialized team consisting of an interventional cardiologist, a cardiothoracic surgeon and a cardiac anesthesiologist, worked together to determine Richard's eligibility for this procedure. Tests to measure the size of his valve helped the team establish if the MitraClip was a good option for his treatment.

Performed in a Cardiac Catheterization Laboratory,

X-ray imaging and ultrasound technology is used to deliver the MitraClip to the correct position in the heart via a catheter through a blood vessel in the leg. Once in place, the clip attaches to the mitral valve leaflets, fastening them together. This improves the closure of the valve and reduces the backflow of blood.

Two months after his surgery to repair the blockages in his leg, Richard underwent a MitraClip procedure with Dr. Parikh to repair his leaking mitral valve.

"Richard came to the office for his follow-up visit one month after his procedure and reported that his symptoms had significantly improved," said Dr. Parikh.

"This is not my first heart valve surgery," said Richard. "A few years ago, I had my aortic valve replaced through an open-heart surgery. The recovery from that operation was much more extensive since I had a large surgical incision."

"Four weeks after my MitraClip procedure, I returned to my normal routine with no more shortness of breath," said Richard. "I feel blessed to have my health. I may be retired, but I still appreciate that now I can do the things I want to do when I want to do them."



# THE MANY FACES OF McLeod Heroes

From the Midlands to the Coast, McLeod employees stand strong and face the new challenges of today's world -- we call them McLeod Heroes.

More than 15,000 team members at McLeod serve patients in a variety of roles -- doctors, nurses, technicians, therapists, dietitians, housekeepers,

business staff, registration -- the list can go on. Whether providing medical care at the bedside or working tirelessly behind the scenes, each person's contribution is valuable.

Every McLeod employee has a vital role in the care of our patients, our communities and their fellow employees.

Linda has been a member of the respiratory department for 20 years and watched the services of the hospital expand to meet the growing needs of the community. Linda cares for patients who experience difficulty breathing or suffer from a chronic respiratory disease. Airway access is also crucial for patients experiencing a heart attack or stroke.

Respiratory Therapists played a vital role in the care of COVID-19 patients over the past two years and are an essential part of the medical team.

"The pandemic had a huge impact on every Respiratory Therapist in the world. COVID-19 has left some patients with long-term respiratory problems, and it is my job to help them achieve the best possible outcome. Seeing patients who suffer from respiratory illness improve and return home brings me great joy."

**~LINDA BUSKEY**  
RESPIRATORY THERAPIST  
MCLEOD HEALTH CLARENDON



Earl has worked in the Procurement Department for almost 25 years. In his role, he receives supplies and deliveries that come to the hospital. He ensures the warehouse has appropriate stock and packages are delivered timely.

"Our clinical staff is busy taking care of patients, so this is my opportunity to take care of them. I know they have a lot on them. Making sure we have what they need on the shelves, when they need it, is important.

"If something arrives from FedEx that I know is important to the operating room team, I get it to them as soon as I can. The pandemic has created a lot of challenges in the supply chain. Every day we are working to ensure we have substitutes for other items we cannot stock."

**~EARL EDGE**  
SPECIALIST, PROCUREMENT SERVICES  
MCLEOD HEALTH SEACOAST



The Central Processing staff play a critical role in preventing infections by cleaning, high-level disinfecting, assembling, sterilizing, storing and distributing patient reusable items.

"Our priority is always the patient. Even though we are not standing at the bedside, our work touches all areas of the hospital and directly affects patient outcomes. Any reusable stainless-steel item involved in patient care anywhere on this campus -- from physical therapy to special procedures or the Emergency Department -- comes through Central Processing. We have a great impact on keeping the infections down for all patients, not just surgical patients."

During the pandemic, Sharon and her team were also tasked with entering COVID areas and obtaining masks to re-sterilize, making masks during the time when supplies were limited and working in other areas throughout the hospital when needed.

"The pandemic has certainly presented challenges, but our team's dedication to quality and safety remains unchanged. We pour our hearts into our work, and we consider it a privilege to ensure the safety of our patients."

**~SHARON McFADDEN**  
SURGICAL TECHNOLOGIST, CENTRAL PROCESSING  
MCLEOD REGIONAL MEDICAL CENTER

"As a Pharmacist, I evaluate each patient's medication profile to confirm the medications prescribed to the patient are the correct ones, given at the correct dose and at the proper times. I also help monitor the supply of medications used in the hospital and purchase what is needed."

Kacey prepares and delivers medications to patient care areas and supports other staff members by making sure they have what they need for their patients.

"The pandemic has impacted our drug supply tremendously and many of the medications that we need are in short supply. Our team works to find alternative drugs to avoid any interruptions in treatment. With many medications being authorized for emergency use to treat COVID-19, continually educating myself is critical to ensuring that they are being used safely and effectively."

**~KACEY GAINNEY**  
REGISTERED PHARMACIST  
MCLEOD HEALTH CHERAW



Alphonso is a Respiratory Therapist at McLeod Health Dillon and finds great reward in helping his patients feel better.

"The pandemic has been a difficult time, and we have seen many dark days at the bedside. We rallied together as one to care for our patients, many of whom were very sick."

Part of this work included consistent staff huddles which allowed them to discuss best practices and prepare for new developments. His team also used this time to support and pray for each other.

**~ALPHONSO WALL**  
RESPIRATORY THERAPIST  
MCLEOD HEALTH DILLON

"Thank you for calling McLeod Health Loris, this is Dale, how can I help you?" Every caller who is greeted with that warm and friendly voice knows they are in good hands. In addition to handling the phones, Dale also greets patients and visitors and assists them with wayfinding.

"I enjoy my job and meeting new people every day. I always try to make them feel welcome and help them find where they need to go. I want them to feel good when they leave here."

Dale knows most visits to the hospital can be stressful, so being as friendly as she can helps make their visit a little bit easier.

During the pandemic, Dale also helped her co-workers when she could. Staffing shortages and inclement weather prevented McLeod Regional Medical Center from having enough operators to handle the volume of calls they were receiving one weekend. Dale came into work at McLeod Health Loris and helped answer the phones. "I try to think about how I would want to be treated and do the same," said Dale. "COVID has affected all of us in different ways. We just have to be willing to help whenever we can."

**~DALE CAMPBELL**  
SWITCHBOARD OPERATOR, TELECOMMUNICATIONS  
MCLEOD HEALTH LORIS







"As Director of the Medical Records Department, I monitor and ensure compliance with federal and state laws as well as make certain our policies and procedures are in accordance with the requirements of regulatory agencies."

"When patients need their records sent to another entity, they call us. Whether it is for a doctor's appointment, insurance, or legal matter, we send the charts when requested, abiding by the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) guidelines."

The most rewarding part of Cindy's work is putting a smile on the face of a patient or fellow staff member by locating that hard-to-find document they so desperately need.

"Even through COVID-19 we continued to meet the needs of our customers."

**~CINDY MEARES**  
DIRECTOR OF MEDICAL RECORDS  
McLEOD HEALTH CHERAW

"Our profession is somewhat like a behind-the-scenes detective in the health care industry. We are responsible for operating and maintaining the equipment used to analyze specimens and ensuring that tests are completed in a correct and timely manner."

The pandemic had profound impacts on the Laboratory, especially the Microbiology Department. However, the pandemic also shined a light on the importance of their work.

"Our workload increased with COVID-19 testing as we moved to performing all COVID-19 tests in-house to help decrease the turnaround time for our patients and the community."

"Working in healthcare is one of the most rewarding career choices. Even without having direct contact with our patients, knowing that I also make an impact on patients' lives brings me joy."

**~URVAL PATEL**  
MEDICAL TECHNOLOGIST, LABORATORY  
McLEOD REGIONAL MEDICAL CENTER



As a Supervisor in Environmental Services, Karen does more than clean patient rooms -- she makes sure their room feels like home.

"Each time I think about the fact that I could be in that bed and what I would want if I was a patient. I try to go above and beyond. When my mother was sick, I saw what she went through. I want to do whatever necessary to make our patients happy."

Karen's outgoing personality and friendly demeanor make her a great ambassador for McLeod visitors. She is well-known and loved in the community.

While the pandemic has made Karen's job more challenging, it has also made her appreciate how important her work is to patients who need her.

**~KAREN LEWIS**  
SUPERVISOR, ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES  
McLEOD HEALTH LORIS

Janice has worked in Radiology Services for more than 45 years and witnessed firsthand the growth and expanded services of her department and the hospital. "When I started, we only had X-ray and fluoroscopy. The technology to better serve our patients is always advancing and improving to help provide diagnosis and treatment for our patients."

"We are here to care for our friends, neighbors and family during their time of need. I always try to make patients feel comfortable and at ease while undergoing diagnostic testing."

Helping others brings Janice great joy as well as working with her co-workers who are more like family.

"During the pandemic, I watched staff from various departments come together to serve our patients. We truly work towards one common goal of providing the very best healthcare."

**~JANICE McNAIR**  
RADIOLOGY TECHNICIAN  
McLEOD HEALTH CLARENDON



Kenny joined the Security Department at McLeod Health Dillon three years ago with more than 25 years of law enforcement experience.

Each day, Kenny and the Security team patrol the hospital and physician practices, safeguard entrances, and answer calls of any disturbances.

"Our team is excellent in dealing with any emergency situations that may arise inside or outside of the facility. We share a common goal of keeping our patients, visitors and staff safe when they walk into the building."

The COVID-19 pandemic brought many challenges -- including visitation restrictions and mask requirements -- but Kenny is proud of how all departments, including Security, came together to provide the best experience for the patient.

**~KENNY MILLER**  
SECURITY OFFICER  
McLEOD HEALTH DILLON



Jackie has been part of the McLeod Health team since 1999 and is an original member of the McLeod Reservations and Scheduling Department. As the Insurance Supervisor, Jackie ensures that her team is equipped with the necessary resources to complete the financial clearance of all patients prior to their date of service.

"I oversee the insurance eligibility and verification for patients presenting to all McLeod Health facilities, including scheduled and unscheduled outpatient procedures within the scope of Patient Access. Our patients are at the center of what we do and the work we complete must be timely and accurate. The environment is fast-paced and constantly changing."

"During the pandemic, ordinary tasks changed significantly but we quickly shifted. These challenges made us stronger. We believe patients have a choice and the patients we serve, choose McLeod."

**~JACKIE INGRAM**  
INSURANCE SUPERVISOR  
McLEOD HEALTH PATIENT ACCESS

Sandra works as a Cashier in the Cafeteria at McLeod Health Seacoast. In addition to managing the cash register, she prepares the coffee and tea and keeps the dining room clean and ready for guests. Sandra's best quality is her friendly smile she shares with every guest.

"For staff, my goal is to be friendly, chat with them for a minute about their day and get them through the line quickly so they can get back to work. I also love meeting the visitors who are here to see their loved ones."

The COVID-19 pandemic required the cafeteria to implement additional cleaning and safety measures, and Sandra led this work.

"We consistently cleaned the tables, chairs, and equipment to maintain the highest safety standards for our staff and visitors."

**~SANDRA SINGLETON**  
CASHIER, NUTRITION SERVICES  
McLEOD HEALTH SEACOAST



Day in and day out with their unwavering dedication and commitment to caring for our communities, McLeod employees, both seen and behind the scenes, are making a difference in the lives of others.

As the world embraces the many changes of the past two years and strives to move forward, what remains constant is the determination of McLeod Heroes to be The Choice for Medical Excellence.



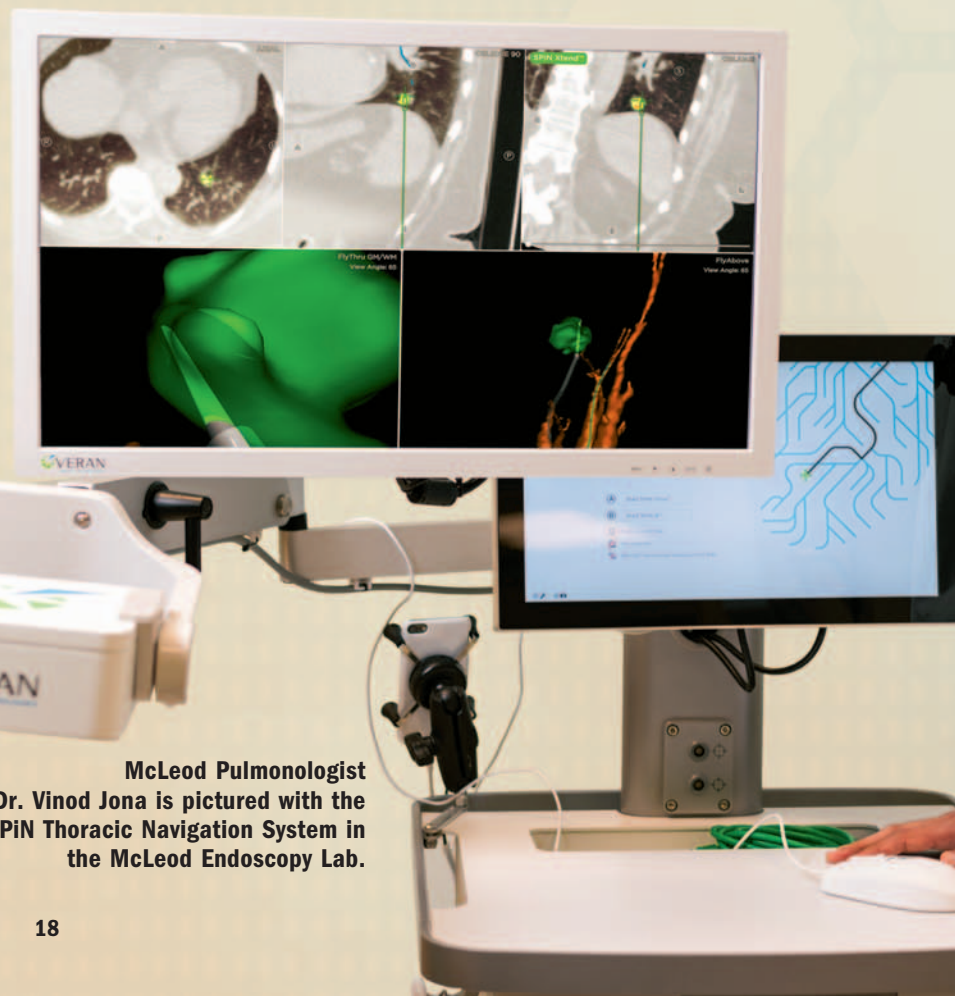
# NAVIGATING TO EARLIER DETECTION OF LUNG CANCER

by Tracy H. Stanton

Building on the success of its Lung Cancer Screening program, the McLeod Health team has been detecting lung cancer earlier and saving lives through low-dose CT scans for more than seven years. Since that time the cancer team has expanded the program to include four dedicated nurse navigators, a lung nodule clinic and patient conferences with multiple specialists.

Now, the addition of innovative early detection technology is enabling the team to precisely track and diagnose lung cancer in its earliest stages with electromagnetic navigation.

This new technology revolutionizes the speed and accuracy with which lung cancer can be diagnosed, allowing for treatment to begin sooner.



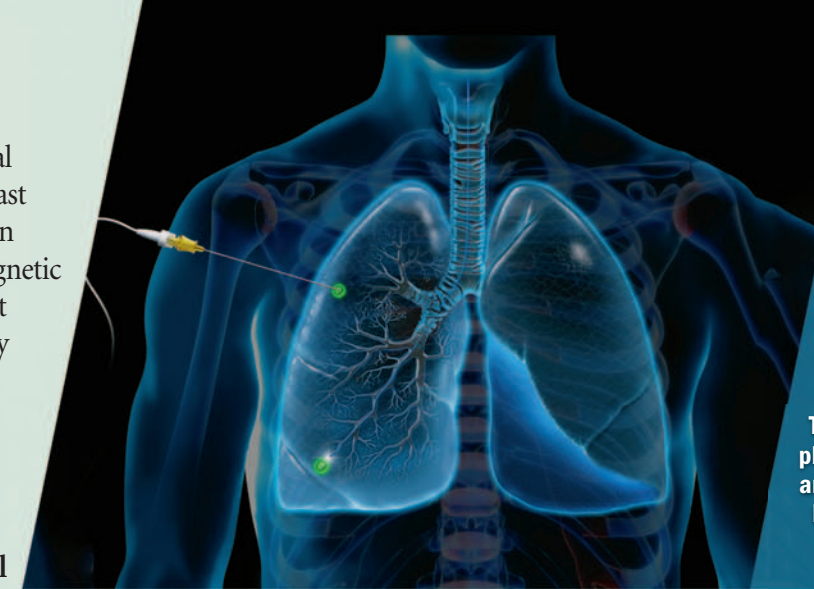
McLeod Pulmonologist  
Dr. Vinod Jona is pictured with the  
SPiN Thoracic Navigation System in  
the McLeod Endoscopy Lab.

Both McLeod Regional Medical Center and McLeod Health Seacoast offer the SPiN Thoracic Navigation System which provides electromagnetic navigation and guidance to distant regions of the lungs in a minimally invasive outpatient procedure, enabling McLeod Health Pulmonologists to **locate, biopsy and plan treatment for lung nodules that were previously difficult to access with traditional technology.** The McLeod team of **Dr. Vinod Jona, Dr. Kevin Dineen, Dr. Abhijit Mahalingashetty and Dr. Melissa Miara** are utilizing the system to act sooner and not wait for nodules to grow before they are biopsied.

Prior to the procedure, these physicians use the data from a patient's lung CT scans and SPiN technology to build a dynamic 3D map of the patient's lungs and navigate the shortest, safest path to the targeted nodule. Since it is often difficult to reach a specific nodule in the lung because it is a moving target, **SPiN accommodates the constant movement within the lungs created by normal breathing.**

Similar to GPS in your car, electromagnetic navigation (EMN) uses the natural airways of a patient's lungs as roadways. Utilizing sensor tip tracked instruments, the physicians can accurately navigate through the lungs using the EMN roadmap to access smaller and harder-to-reach nodules. They can also obtain tissue samples for biopsy by seamlessly transitioning from navigational bronchoscopy to a transthoracic needle aspiration (TTNA) in the same procedure. The SPiN technology provides patients with an earlier and more precise diagnosis.

**"Earlier treatment for lung cancer is proven to increase survival rates to as high as 92 percent. Using this technology, we can establish the diagnosis sooner and potentially**



The SPiN technology allows the physician to accurately navigate and access small, hard-to-reach lung nodules and obtain tissue samples for biopsy.

**perform pre-surgical staging in a single procedure. This is beneficial to patients because it requires fewer hospital visits and leads to better patient outcomes. And, it allows me to ease their concerns or fears and focus on the course of treatment they want to pursue whether that is surgery or radiation treatment," said Dr. Jona.**

In 2020, the team of dedicated caregivers at McLeod Regional Medical Center established the McLeod Lung Nodule Clinic to evaluate and monitor those patients who have been screened for lung cancer and a pulmonary nodule was detected, or those who had a nodule found incidentally as a result of a lung CT scan after a car accident, pneumonia or injury.

"This clinic enables us to determine the patient's risk of developing lung cancer and ensure they receive high quality care and follow the evidence-based guidelines," added Dr. Jona.

A year later, this team began inviting lung nodule patients to participate in a conference with providers from multiple specialties before they may ever be diagnosed with lung cancer. Offering this access through a virtual platform provides convenience for the patients and their families.

Each clinic patient receives complete testing and consultation with a physician to determine the best course of action for them, all in one

visit. This simplifies things for the patient while maximizing early detection of disease and minimizing unnecessary medical or surgical procedures. During the conference, physicians review the pertinent medical history, imaging scans, diagnostic studies and pathology to develop a plan appropriate for the patient. If the lung nodule is not growing in size or showing signs of developing into cancer, the medical team follows the national, evidence-based recommendations for lung nodules which may involve scheduling follow-up imaging scans at three, six or 12 months.

**When this system is a part of a low-dose lung CT screening program like it is at McLeod Health it significantly improves the chances of detecting lung cancer in its earliest stages and assists pulmonologists in providing their patients with the best course of treatment.**

For more information on the McLeod Lung Cancer Screening Program, please call Amy Perugini at 843-777-5953 at McLeod Regional Medical Center or Kristy Hinchey at 843-366-2220 at McLeod Health Seacoast.



# MOVING FORWARD

by Arielle Williams Miles



**Cheraw resident Sylvia Burr enjoys walking without pain after years of debilitating arthritis damage in her knees, thanks to the care she received at McLeod Health Cheraw.**

Sylvia Burr of Cheraw, South Carolina, has experienced pain in her knees for many years. Everyday activities like walking and standing grew more and more painful as time passed.

“The pain in my knees significantly restricted my ability to do things I enjoyed such as walking and attending church,” said Sylvia. “I knew I needed to see a doctor, and I had heard so many positive things about **Dr. Thomas DiStefano** that I scheduled an appointment with him.”

Initially, Sylvia considered going somewhere out of town to see an orthopedic surgeon about her right knee, but she kept hearing from her friends and family about positive outcomes with Dr. DiStefano.

After assessing her X-rays and the bone-on-bone state of her knee,

McLeod Orthopedic Surgeon Dr. DiStefano explained that Sylvia would eventually need to get her right knee replaced. Sylvia was not quite ready to make such a commitment so she asked for a little more time with a non-surgical approach that would reduce her pain while she considered a total knee replacement.

To lessen the severity of her pain, Sylvia received intermittent steroid injections in her knee. This approach worked to relieve her pain temporarily but was not a permanent solution. Despite these efforts, her pain gradually worsened, and she knew the time had come to schedule her surgery.

“The injections kept me comfortable for about a year prior to my surgery,” Sylvia recalled. “Eventually Dr. DiStefano convinced me to move forward with the procedure.”

During Sylvia’s pre-surgical appointment, Dr. DiStefano conducted a comprehensive evaluation of the extent of the damage to her right knee from arthritis and explained why she needed the procedure as well as what she could expect during and after.

“I was nervous before talking with him, but left the office feeling completely confident in the process, especially since the procedure would be outpatient and I could go home the very same day as my surgery,” said Sylvia.

Dr. DiStefano explained that because of the advanced capabilities of the orthopedic surgical team at McLeod Health Cheraw, Sylvia would be in and out with a new knee in the same day. Sylvia never thought this would be possible, especially in her small hometown.

“He encouraged me by saying that I would experience no pain during the

surgery and for quite some time after due to the advancements in pain management, including the type of injections used for outpatient total knees,” said Sylvia. “I could not believe my eyes when I was able to get up and walk around right after having my knee replaced -- all while experiencing no pain.”

On July 26, 2021, Sylvia tried out her brand-new knee at McLeod Health Cheraw.

“In what seemed like moments after surgery, I was walking with the McLeod Rehabilitation team around the department using only a walker,” said Sylvia. “Everyone was so helpful and compassionate during my short stay. I will never forget the kindness shown to me by McLeod Physical Therapists Anna Poole and Natalie Harris while I was there.”

The Total Joint Replacement Program at McLeod facilitates the coordination of care between McLeod Rehabilitation, Case Management and McLeod Orthopaedics Cheraw, ensuring that patients are prepared for discharge with the proper medications, durable medical equipment, such as walkers or canes, and clear expectations for how they can have a successful recovery in the days following their surgery.

“I was discharged from the hospital the same day of my surgery. When I left the hospital that evening, I could walk with my walker,” recalled Sylvia.

“I used a walker around the house for the first few weeks of recovery and continued my physical therapy at home until I was cleared to drive. After that, I began outpatient physical therapy where I continued to regain my strength.”

It was not long before Sylvia could walk without any assistance.

“Each day, I can tell that my range of motion and ability to walk is improving drastically, and I look forward to having my left knee replaced by Dr. DiStefano in the near future,” she added. “I am so grateful to Dr. DiStefano, his orthopedic team and everyone I encountered at McLeod Health Cheraw for their part in replacing my knee and restoring the quality of life that I have missed for so long.”

As a breast cancer survivor, Sylvia’s passion lies in raising awareness and inspiring others to fight for a cure for cancer with her involvement in the Cancer Support Ministry at her church, Pee Dee Union Baptist in Cheraw. She coordinates the Pee Dee Cancer Awareness Walk at Arrowhead Park each year in hopes of working towards a cancer-free future in the region. She also is a dedicated member of her church and is passionate about volunteering and helping others who are less fortunate around her. “That’s what I love doing best...helping those in need around me however I can,” said Sylvia. “Everyone deserves a chance to move forward.”

**“I could not believe my eyes when I was able to get up and walk around right after having my knee replaced -- all while experiencing no pain.”**

**– Sylvia Burr**

**McLeod Orthopedic Surgeon Dr. Thomas DiStefano performed Sylvia Burr’s outpatient total knee replacement surgery at McLeod Health Cheraw in July 2021. She plans to have her other knee replaced in the near future.**





# WEIGHING THE OPTIONS



Greg, at right, enjoys his time on a golf course, especially alongside his physician and golf partner Dr. John Karl, at left.

by Jennifer Hulon

The need to pay better attention to your overall health may become even more important closer to retirement. The best way to stay well is to live a balanced lifestyle through exercise, diet, not smoking and maintaining a healthy weight.

Greg Podell of Carolina Forest decided it was time to adopt a life-changing lifestyle. His years of corporate travel and dining out nightly had led to unhealthy eating habits and increased weight.

In 2019, he contacted his friend and golf partner, **Dr. John Karl** with McLeod Primary Care Carolina Forest.

At Greg's first appointment, Dr. Karl performed his Medicare annual wellness

visit exam. Dr. Karl focused on Greg's family history, current weight and other important risk factors. Together they developed a personalized plan to monitor Greg's numbers and a schedule of preventive health screenings that could potentially indicate diseases before signs and symptoms were even present.

The Medicare preventive screening is a plan designed to help prevent disease and disability based on current health and risk factors.

Due to Greg's family history of poor heart health, Dr. Karl was focused on Greg's cardiac screening. After consideration of Greg's bloodwork, sleep apnea, high blood pressure, high cholesterol and current weight, Dr. Karl ordered a Cardiac Calcium Scoring screening.

A Cardiac Calcium Scoring screening is performed using a multi-slice CT (Computed Tomography) scan that can measure the amount of hard, calcified plaque in the coronary arteries. A higher coronary calcium score suggests an increased risk of significant narrowing in the coronary arteries.

This Cardiac Calcium Scoring screening is not covered under the preventive Medicare screening program but is a critical test that can pinpoint a potential coronary issue.

The day after Greg's screening, Dr. Karl immediately contacted him with the results, which were critically elevated. Dr. Karl referred Greg to Cardiologist **Dr. Nicholas Jebaily** with McLeod Cardiology Associates.

Dr. Jebaily met with Greg and discussed the results of both his Medicare preventive screening and Cardiac Calcium Scoring screening. Greg also underwent a cardiac stress test and echocardiogram during the visit.

An echocardiogram uses ultrasound waves to diagnose and monitor heart disease. A stress test shows how the heart performs during physical activity.

Dr. Jebaily explained to Greg that his body was stressed by his heart issues and recommended losing weight to improve his heart condition. That was the moment Greg chose to change his life. He left Dr. Jebaily's office motivated to begin living a healthier lifestyle.

"Greg has a family history of heart disease, which is out of his control," said Dr. Jebaily. "I advised him to adopt a healthier diet and incorporate exercise into his daily life. This would not eliminate his heart disease, but could lessen the stress on his heart."

Within 10 months Greg lost more than 85 pounds and his body mass index (BMI) decreased from 45.64 to 32.08. Greg was making healthy strides, improving his overall health.

In January 2022, Greg got into his car and reached back for his seatbelt strap. He felt a sudden sharpness in his shoulder and chest. He recalled a conversation with Dr. Jebaily where he told Greg if he ever experienced a feeling like indigestion for more than ten minutes, to go immediately to the Emergency Department. As he drove, the pain continued but Greg still questioned if it was indeed indigestion or something heart-related.

In the middle of the night, he could not sleep due to the increasing pain. He woke his wife Betty and asked her to take him to the Emergency Department, as the chest pain persisted. An EKG test confirmed Greg had experienced a heart attack. Greg was transported to McLeod Health Seacoast for further testing and treatment by a cardiologist.

He was directly admitted and assessed by McLeod Cardiologist **Dr. Amit Pande**. Dr. Pande ordered an echocardiogram and EKG to monitor Greg's heart. He was not actively having a heart attack, but the tests showed he had experienced one recently.

Dr. Pande explained that Greg needed a heart catheterization and depending on the findings, could require invasive procedures. Considering the possibility of Greg needing more advanced care, Dr. Pande recommended that Greg be transferred to McLeod Regional Medical Center.

Upon Greg's arrival, McLeod Cardiologist **Dr. Fred Krainin** with McLeod Cardiology Associates performed a heart catheterization. Only a small area of Greg's heart was affected by the heart attack. No further procedures were needed. Greg was discharged and sent home with Cardiac Rehabilitation orders to begin in the next two weeks. Cardiac Rehab offers medically supervised therapy while monitoring the heart. This program benefits the patient by strengthening the heart.

At Greg's follow-up appointment after the incident, Dr. Jebaily explained how incredibly lucky Greg was to have such a small amount of his heart impacted.



Before Greg made a life-changing decision to lose weight, he had low energy and felt insecure. Now, he is incredibly grateful for a higher quality of life to share with his wife Betty. Photo by Bailey Daily.

"If Greg had this heart attack before he made such healthy improvements, the outcome may not have been the same," said Dr. Jebaily. "Family history plays such a significant role in heart health, but his lifestyle change improved his body's responsiveness."

"By coming in for his annual wellness visit and undergoing preventive screenings like the Cardiac Calcium Scoring screening, we were able to identify Greg's heart condition along with his concerning family history," said Dr. Karl.

Today, Greg can more fully enjoy his favorite pastime -- golf -- walking and swinging better than ever before. He feels confident as a result of his new approach to a healthy life.

"Utilize your primary care physician and the tests available to you. Take control of your health," advises Greg.

Medicare Part B offers free preventive screenings for their covered patients which creates awareness of possible health concerns. Some of the screenings/ tests are available annually; however, some are several years or once in a lifetime based on health risk. Some preventive screening services offered include:

- Cardiovascular Disease screenings
- Cardiovascular Disease (behavioral therapy)
- Colorectal Cancer screenings
- Diabetes screenings/Diabetes self-management training
- Lung Cancer screening
- Screening Mammograms
- Nutrition therapy services
- Obesity screenings and counseling
- Tobacco use cessation counseling
- Yearly wellness visit

If you have Medicare Part B, it is important to discuss with your doctor about the screenings available to you. Visit [medicare.gov](https://www.medicare.gov) to learn more.



# A SERVANT'S Heart

by Jaime Hayes



Henry Brunson of Latta says that the staff of McLeod Health Dillon treated him like family.

“Cooks for Christ” Founder and Dillon resident Henry Brunson has been helping local families in need for more than 30 years. Beloved throughout the region, Henry’s ministry has hosted countless chicken bog fundraisers for families facing difficult circumstances.

He chose the name “Cooks for Christ” because each benefit is put in the Lord’s hands and Henry gives the Lord all the credit for the ministry’s success.

In November 2021, Henry was working outside when a large pallet fell on his leg. He treated the wound and went back to his work. Over time, however, the wound worsened and Henry knew it needed attention.

Henry decided to go to the Emergency Department at McLeod Health Dillon, where he was treated by **Dr. Amid Hamidi**.

Henry’s wound had become infected and developed into cellulitis. “Cellulitis is caused when bacteria enters a wound,” explained Dr. Hamidi. “It initially appears as minimally inflamed but can quickly worsen as the infection spreads. Symptoms include redness, swelling, pain, blistering and in some cases, red streaks that radiate outward from the site. Headache, fever, weakness and chills may also be present. Left untreated, cellulitis can spread and cause serious problems. Thankfully, Henry sought medical attention.”

“Dr. Hamidi is one of the finest men I have met,” recalled Henry. “To this day, he remembers me and hugs my neck when I run into him.”

Henry was admitted to the Medical/Surgical Unit at McLeod Health Dillon to receive antibiotics.

Throughout his stay, Henry received excellent care. “I am still astonished at how well I was cared for at McLeod Health Dillon.”

“Dr. Hamidi is one of the finest men I have met. To this day, he remembers me and hugs my neck when I run into him.”

– Henry Brunson

Henry’s inpatient care team -- led by Hospitalists **Dr. Benjamin Mitchell** and **Dr. Nicholas Wallace** -- made quite an impression. “Everyone was just so caring, friendly and respectful,” he said. “The doctors are so knowledgeable and top-notch.”

Several staff members prayed with Henry during his stay. “Now that was something special,” he said.

One standout caregiver was Bambi Flowers, RN. “Bambi treated me like her own family,” said Henry. “I will never forget her.”

Bambi recalls her interactions with Henry and knows him to be a good-hearted man. “He always spoke about his love for the Lord,” she said. “His ministry has helped so many people, and he considers it an honor to help those in need.”

Earlier this year, Henry presented once again to the McLeod Health Dillon Emergency Department with episodic cardiac arrhythmias.

A cardiac arrhythmia occurs when the electrical system in the heart misfires. An arrhythmia can be a controlled life-long condition or can become life-threatening, depending on the type of arrhythmia.

Dr. Hamidi happened to be working in the ED again that day. He and his team were able to stabilize Henry and subsequently refer him for further testing.

“It is critical for patients experiencing the signs of a cardiac arrhythmia to seek medical attention,” said Dr. Hamidi.

Henry is quick to acknowledge that he received the same excellent care during this visit as his previous one.

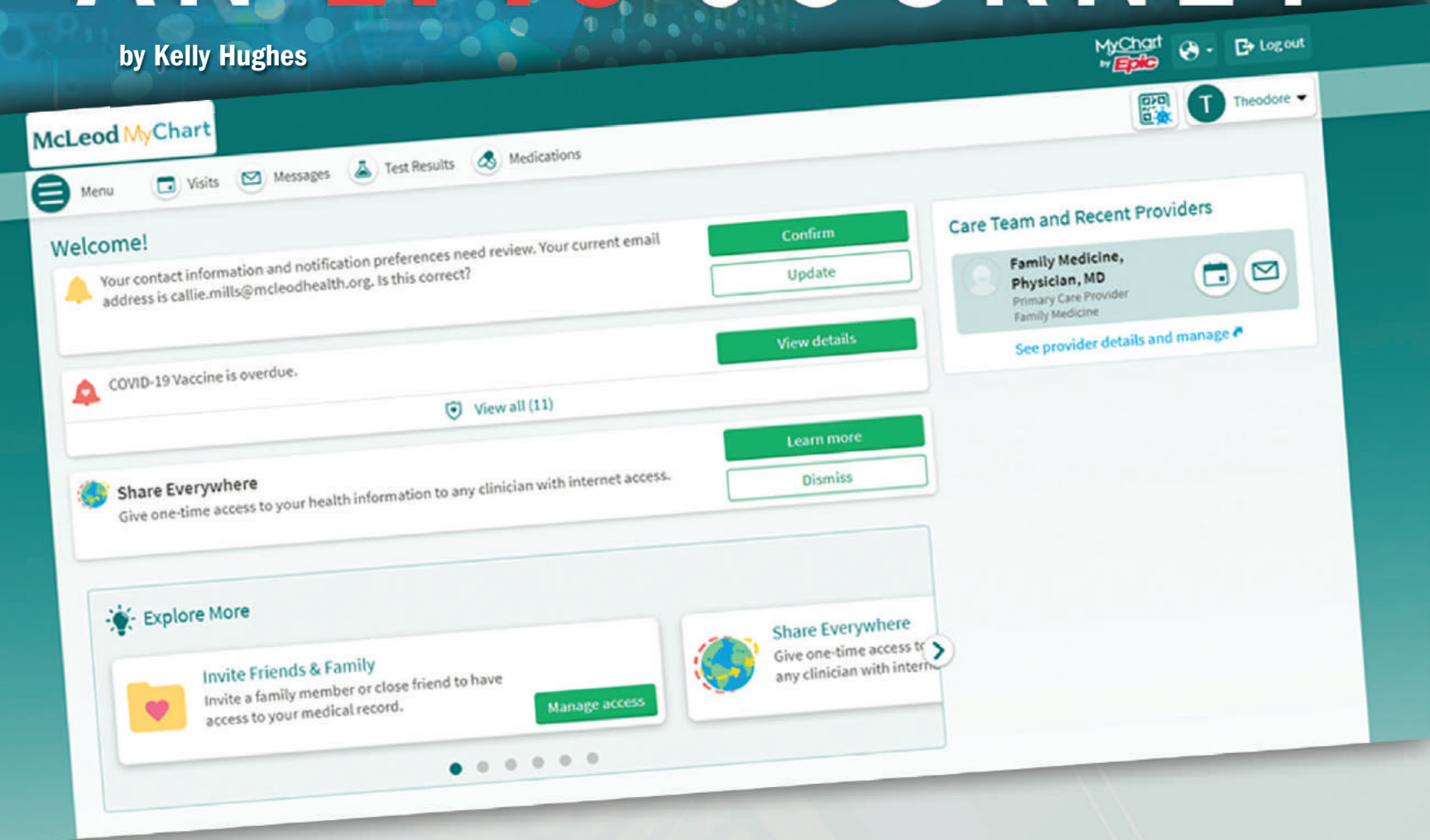
Henry’s testing yielded good results, and he has since returned to serving those in need.

“McLeod Health Dillon will always be my hospital,” said Henry. “Why would anyone not come here for care?”



# McLeod Health: AN **EPIC** JOURNEY

by Kelly Hughes



McLeod Health is in constant pursuit of care beyond excellence. To deliver on our commitment to provide quality care, McLeod Health is moving to a new electronic medical record platform which will revolutionize the patient's experience.

## What is Epic?

On December 3, 2022, McLeod Health will launch a new electronic medical record (EMR) platform that will enhance the way McLeod delivers healthcare. Epic is the preferred electronic medical record system for more than 250 health care organizations nationwide.

In 2021, healthcare customers rated Epic the number one EMR. With the

patient at its heart, Epic software is built around a single, comprehensive health record. Everything works together in the doctor's office, hospital and patient's home. In addition to award-winning features, Epic is already being utilized by 72 percent of the United States population. It is likely McLeod Health patients have already experienced Epic in other healthcare settings.

## What does this mean for you, the patient?

Safe and effective treatment, delivered in a warm and caring environment, provided as quickly as possible -- that is the goal. However, the complexity of healthcare requires physicians to have access to a patient's complete medical history quickly so they can meet that goal -- this is where Epic excels. Patients will also have real-time access to their medical information.

## What does this mean for providers?

Epic will ensure physicians and clinical teams have the patient's medical records at their fingertips. This includes both hospital records as well as medical records from their primary care provider or specialists.

Take, for instance, this scenario -- a patient from Cheraw who is on vacation at the beach suddenly has chest pains and goes to the Emergency Department at McLeod Health Seacoast. The physician will have access to the patient's records from their primary care provider in Cheraw as well as their cardiologist in Florence. Having this time-sensitive, critical information ensures the Emergency Department physician knows everything about the patient they are treating.

"Epic will allow a physician caring for patients in the office and in the hospital access to all of the patient's medical information -- lab results, medications, radiology reports and other critical components -- in one place," said **Dr. Matthew Weeks**, Chief Medical Officer of McLeod Loris Seacoast.

Doctors are not the only ones who will have better access to your medical records. McLeod MyChart will be the new patient portal going live with Epic in December 2022.

## McLeod MyChart

McLeod MyChart puts the patient in control of their health and wellness. McLeod MyChart is a secure and easy tool that allows the patient to manage their healthcare 24/7 without having to call the doctor's office or visit the medical records department. From a computer or a smartphone, you can access your medical records, message your care team, refill prescriptions, view and pay your medical bills and so much more.

"McLeod MyChart empowers patients to be active participants in their health care," said **Dr. Richard Alexander**,

Family Medicine Physician and Chief Medical Officer of McLeod Physician Associates. "With this tool, patients can quickly access medical information -- including their current medications -- which keeps our patients safe."

## Need to help a family member manage their care?

With McLeod MyChart a patient can grant others proxy access, keeping everyone informed of upcoming medical visits and changes in medications as well as the opportunity to communicate directly with medical providers. This feature ensures family, or a designated person, can help their loved ones stay on top of their health.

In the months ahead, McLeod Health patients will receive more information about the benefits of McLeod MyChart and how to sign up in December once the new system is live. Detailed information will be available in all McLeod Physician Associates practices and at each McLeod Health hospital campus.

McLeod Health started the journey of providing excellent healthcare from the Midlands to the Coast more than 116 years ago. Along the way, the system continues to focus on the patient's experience and seeks to stay at the forefront of the advancements in medicine. This transition to a new EMR and patient portal will propel McLeod forward. Join us on this Epic ride.





# FULFILLING A NEED FOR TRAUMATIZED VICTIMS

by Brett Gosnell

Earlier this year, McLeod Health launched its Forensic Nurse Examiner program. For the first time, victims of sexual assault in the Pee Dee have access to specialized, trauma-informed care without having to leave the region. This program, years in the making, serves adult and pediatric victims alike, at first operating out of McLeod Regional Medical Center, but with plans to expand to all McLeod hospitals in the coming years. It was made possible by the generous support of donors to the McLeod Health Foundation.

Until now, victims of sexual violence in the region had to travel to Columbia or Charleston to receive a forensic exam. Hundreds of women have made this profoundly difficult journey over the years, but what is perhaps even more distressing is the number of women who chose not to do so.

Given the socioeconomic burdens faced by many Pee Dee residents and the debilitating nature of sexual assault itself, an untold number of victims have likely decided to forgo treatment altogether.

“The need for this program is clearly there,” said Shannon Scott, Coordinator of the McLeod Forensic Nurse Examiner program. “Our first pediatric patient was just three years old.”

## Forensic Nursing

Forensic Nurses specialize in treating victims of sexual assault. In addition to providing care in a compassionate and understanding way, forensic nurses are trained on evidence collection, victim advocacy and courtroom testimony. Their duties do not end when the patient is discharged -- these nurses connect victims to community resources to help them through their long-term recoveries and guide them through subsequent legal proceedings. Studies have shown that victims receiving forensic nursing care have higher satisfaction, better outcomes and less trauma than those who do not; and the offenders who hurt them are more likely to receive convictions.

“Our focus is the patient,” Shannon explained of herself and other Forensic Nurse Examiners. “We provide treatment, we collect evidence, and we provide testimony, but our overriding goal throughout is to not add to the patient’s trauma. This is what ‘trauma-informed care’ means.”

## FNE Program at McLeod

McLeod now offers 24/7/365 forensic nurse coverage. Instead of sitting in the waiting room, victims of sexual violence entering the hospital’s Emergency

“I wish that donors could see the change in demeanor when we give a precious, frightened child a teddy bear to hold close or place a coloring book and crayons in their lap. And, they are so proud when we provide them new, pretty clothing. What a blessing this fund is for children.”

– Shannon Scott

Department are now immediately triaged and treated for physical injuries. While this acute medical exam takes place, an on-call forensic nurse is alerted and begins preparing a private room dedicated solely for sexual violence cases. Here, the nurse will first conduct a gentle interview with the patient to document the course of events. Next, the patient is brought to a dedicated exam room that, while equipped with state-of-the-art exam equipment, is specifically designed to provide a comfortable and homey environment.

In this room, the forensic exam, evidence collection and administration of appropriate medications take place.

“Our space is very comfortable,” said Shannon. “It is all about getting the patient through the exam with the least amount of trauma possible.”

In addition to a couch and recliner, exam rooms are equipped with various items to make the patient feel at home.

For instance, thanks to support from the McLeod Foundation’s Help Eliminate and Remove Obstacles (HERO) Fund, pediatric patients are given comfort bags containing teddy bears, coloring books, crayons and new clothes.

“I wish that donors could see the change in demeanor when we give a precious, frightened child a teddy bear to hold close or place a coloring book and crayons in their lap,” Shannon says. “And, they are so proud when we provide them new, pretty clothing. What a blessing this fund is for children.”

## Passionate and Experienced Leadership

Shannon grew up in a law enforcement family. Her mother was a gang prevention specialist in Anaheim, California. Shannon would go on to work in evidence collection at the Police Department. After many years working as a flight attendant and a stay-at-home mom, Shannon decided to rekindle her passion for forensics work in a unique way.

(Continued on next page)



The McLeod Forensic Nurse Examiner Team provides 24/7/365 coverage for victims of sexual assault in the Pee Dee Region.



"I went back to school and got my nursing degree just to be a Forensic Nurse," Shannon recalled.

In Virginia, Shannon found her calling -- leading a hospital's forensic nursing program. For a decade, Shannon oversaw an active program that treated more than 600 sexual violence victims per year.

When her husband retired from the Fire Department, the couple pondered their next steps. That was when a job posting in Florence, South Carolina, caught Shannon's eye.

"I had always dreamed of building a forensic nursing program from the ground up -- to bring my years of experience and passion to a place without an existing program," said Shannon. "McLeod gave me that opportunity."

### The Future

Although the McLeod Forensic Nursing program has recently launched, leadership already has an eye toward growth. Currently, six nurses work part-time to cover the call schedule at McLeod. Shannon envisions the program growing to not only include an entirely full-time staff and region-wide footprint, but to treat victims of other crimes besides sexual assault.

"I want us to provide specialized care for victims of elder abuse, domestic battery, sex trafficking and human trafficking," Shannon stated. "Our goal is for the Pee Dee to go from the only region in South Carolina without a forensic program to having the best one in the state."



A dedicated forensic exam room equipped with state-of-the-art equipment is specifically designed to provide a comfortable and homey environment.

## McLeod Receives Level 1 SAFE Designation for Forensic Nursing Services



The McLeod Health team was presented with a Level 1 SAFE Designation on May 25. Pictured from left to right: Will McLeod, CEO, McLeod Regional Medical Center; Cheryl Neuner, Regional Systems Developer-Perinatal Outreach for McLeod Regional Medical Center; Tammy Abel, Vice President of Women's & Children's Services, McLeod Regional Medical Center; Kelley McCormick, Clinical Nurse Manager, McLeod Regional Medical Center Emergency Department; Shannon Scott, Coordinator, McLeod Health Forensic Nurse Examiner Program; Lauren Moose, McLeod Forensic Nurse Examiner; and Dr. Carl Chelen, McLeod Pediatric Intensivist.

The South Carolina Victim Assistance Network (SCVAN) presented McLeod Regional Medical Center with a Level 1 SAFE (Sexual Assault Forensic Examiner) designation on May 25. Similar to a hospital's trauma level designation, this designation tells the community and collaborating agencies what type of forensic nursing services are provided at McLeod.

McLeod is only the second hospital in the state to achieve this designation.

Level 1 is the highest designation attainable and demonstrates that McLeod Regional Medical Center provides the most up-to-date evidence-based, trauma-informed and patient-centered forensic nursing practices for adult, adolescent and pediatric patients 24/7/365.

The Forensic Nurse Examiner Task Force, headed by SCVAN, in partnership with multiple state agencies including the South Carolina Attorney General's Office, the South Carolina Law Enforcement Division, South Carolina Hospital Association and more, has implemented a statewide standard of care for sexual assault victims.

Hospitals and other agencies involved in sexual assault care, including EMS, Law Enforcement, Fire and Advocacy Centers, can apply to have their organization/agency recognized with the SAFE Designation.

# McLeod News

## MCLEOD HEALTH RECOGNIZES CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL TEAM

McLeod Health recognized the incredible work of its pediatric teams who care for more than 56,000 children each year from the Midlands to the Coast during Children's Hospital Week earlier this year.

A driving force and differentiator for McLeod Health for nine decades, McLeod Children's Hospital's journey of medical excellence has resulted in expanded services, specialized care teams, advanced technology and more. With this level of care close to home, children and their families no longer have to leave the community for their healthcare needs.

- McLeod Children's Hospital is one of only four Children's Hospitals in South Carolina and is located on the campus of McLeod Regional Medical Center in Florence, SC.
- McLeod Children's Hospital is a depot site for the Mother's Milk Bank of South Carolina.

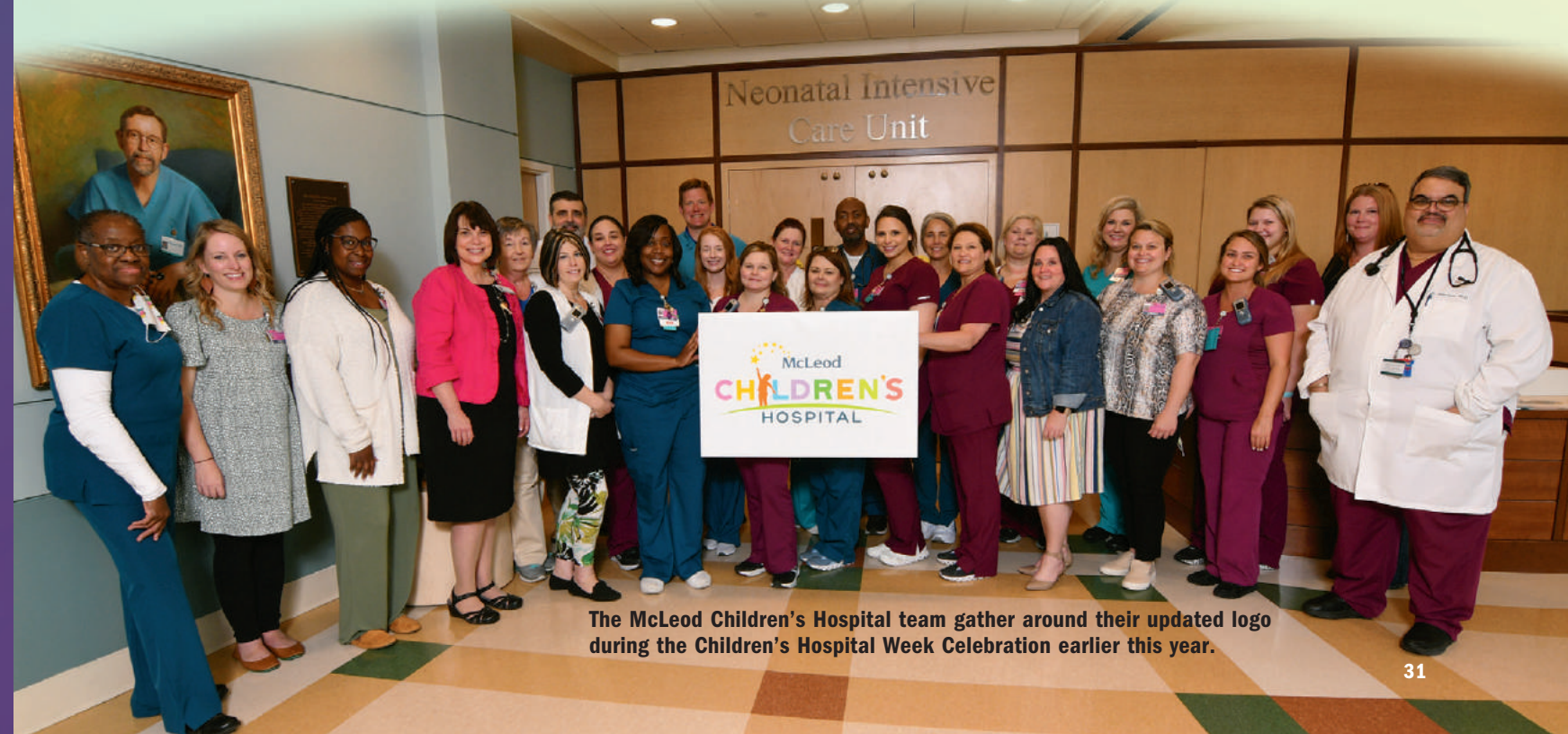
Essentially a hospital within a hospital, McLeod Children's Hospital provides an exceptional array of services, including a Level III Neonatal Intensive Care Unit, Pediatric Intensive Care Unit, Pediatric Hospitalist program, Critical Care Transport teams and a dedicated Child Life Program.

- The McLeod NICU is part of the McLeod Regional Perinatal System which services high-risk or pre-term newborns who need a higher level of care. The McLeod system currently serves eight counties -- Chesterfield, Darlington, Dillon, Florence, Horry, Marion, Marlboro and Williamsburg.
- In addition to outpatient pediatric offices located in Florence, Dillon and Cheraw, McLeod Children's Hospital offers advanced care through its Pediatric Subspecialists in the following areas -- critical care, cardiology, endocrinology, gastroenterology and orthopedic surgery.

- McLeod Children's Hospital also provides pediatric rehabilitation therapy in Florence and Little River.

More than 116 years ago, the untimely death of a young boy named Rufus inspired Dr. F. H. McLeod's vision for a local hospital to care for the medical needs of his community. Today, McLeod Health and McLeod Children's Hospital continue this legacy of "local people caring for local people."

As part of the Children's Hospital Week celebration, McLeod Children's Hospital revealed an updated, child-friendly logo designed to reflect both the strength of the McLeod brand as well as the spirit of the children it treats. This new logo replaces the existing logo and establishes McLeod Children's Hospital's identity as a leader in pediatric care throughout the state.



The McLeod Children's Hospital team gather around their updated logo during the Children's Hospital Week Celebration earlier this year.



# McLeod News

## COLONES HONORED WITH THE ORDER OF THE PALMETTO

*McLeod President Emeritus Receives State's Highest Civilian Honor from Governor McMaster*

Robert L. Colones, President Emeritus of McLeod Health, received the Order of the Palmetto from South Carolina Governor Henry McMaster on May 16, 2022. The Order of the Palmetto is the State of South Carolina's highest civilian honor presented in recognition of a lifetime of extraordinary achievement, service and contributions on a national or statewide scale.

During the presentation at the McLeod Medical Plaza, Donna Isgett, President and CEO of McLeod Health, opened the program welcoming Colones' family members, friends, and colleagues. "For those of you in the room who know Rob you know he doesn't like this because he is such a humble servant and his only purpose is to serve; it is not to be recognized for that service. Yet, he made us a national leader in quality and led an organization that is noteworthy enough to be recognized with the highest state honor."

Isgett was followed by remarks on Colones from Thornton Kirby, President and CEO of the South Carolina Hospital Association. Kirby said, "Rob, we honor your extraordinary greatness and leadership with this statewide distinction. On behalf of the South Carolina Hospital Association, we admire your strength of character and commitment and are sincerely grateful for all your work on behalf of others. You are certainly worthy of this superlative recognition."

The Honorable Terry Alexander, South Carolina House of Representative for District 59, serving Florence and Darlington Counties, offered remarks on Colones' contributions to the region. "It is also my privilege to be among you to witness such an honor being bestowed on an extremely

deserving gentleman and a very dear friend of mine both personally, professionally and spiritually. Under his leadership, McLeod Health is constantly seeking to improve its patient care by delivering excellence in quality. Rob encourages his teams to understand that the drive to constantly improve is not just a noble quest, but the right thing to do for patients and each other. We are so thankful for his incredible work."

Representative Alexander then introduced Governor McMaster who offered remarks and formally presented the Order of the Palmetto to Colones. "The reason I'm here today is because it is about the quality of people in South Carolina and the Order of the Palmetto is essentially another quality award. And from a quality perspective this man has done just about everything for everybody -- it's really quite remarkable all that he has achieved," said Governor McMaster.

In accepting the Order of the Palmetto, Colones said, "God gave me a team of great people...those who exceed my strengths...and who shore up my weaknesses. The right people at the right time in the right place and for that, I am eternally grateful. A recognition like this one is always about more than just one person -- it includes my family, my co-workers and mentors."

In closing, Isgett added, "One of my favorite things that I often refer to is we are better together...because we are better together. But at McLeod Health, we are much better because of Rob. Thank you for building an organization that is made up of local people caring for local people."

Isgett and the McLeod Health team also presented Colones with a Palmetto Tree for his home to commemorate the event and to serve as a reminder of this honor for years to come.



**Rob Colones, President Emeritus of McLeod Health, received the Order of the Palmetto from South Carolina Governor Henry McMaster on May 16.**

# McLeod News

## McLEOD HEALTH EXPANDS PATIENT CARE WITH NEW MEDICAL OFFICE BUILDING

McLeod Health continues to expand patient care and services available throughout the region. On May 18, 2022, McLeod Health Loris leadership and physicians welcomed the community to an Open House and Ribbon Cutting for a new medical office building located at 3112 Casey Street.

The new medical office building is home to McLeod Dialysis Access, McLeod Nephrology Associates and Atlantic Urology Clinics.

Scott Montgomery, CEO of McLeod Health Loris, welcomed guests and shared his vision for McLeod Health's growth in Loris and throughout the coastal region.



**McLeod Health Loris leadership and physicians welcomed the community to an Open House and Ribbon Cutting for a new medical office building located at 3112 Casey Street, Loris, South Carolina.**

"McLeod Health understands the importance of having the specialists our patients need in the community where they live," said Montgomery. "We have world class physicians doing specialized procedures right here in Loris and our patients are coming from three to four hours away to seek their care. This is an exciting day for McLeod Health and the economic development of Loris, South Carolina."

**Dr. David Bjerken**, Vascular Surgeon at McLeod Dialysis Access, **Dr. Christopher Po**, Nephrologist at McLeod Nephrology Associates and **Dr. Timothy Gajewski**, Urologist with Atlantic Urology Clinics, all made remarks about their practice and the care they will deliver in their new clinic offices.

## McLEOD NURSE RECEIVES EMERGENCY NURSE OF THE YEAR AWARD

Candace Norton, BSN, RN, a Patient Care Supervisor with McLeod Emergency Services at McLeod Regional Medical Center in Florence, has received the South Carolina Emergency Medical Services Nurse of the Year Award. The honor was conferred during an awards ceremony at the conclusion of the South Carolina EMS Symposium held in Myrtle Beach from March 8 to March 12, 2022.

The Emergency Nurse of the Year Award is given to the South Carolina nurse who has contributed most significantly to the EMS community. Nominated by EMS personnel, Norton was selected for the award based on her accomplishments to improve emergency services, her community involvement, her credentials and letters of recommendation.

During the awards ceremony, Norton was described as both incredibly professional and dedicated, and how throughout the many challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, she remained bright

and cheerful to her patients, fellow employees, and to EMS, fire, and law enforcement personnel.

"Being nominated by someone outside of our organization truly demonstrates the impact Candace has on the EMS community. She is an indispensable member of our Emergency Department and serves as a key partner between McLeod and EMS. As a dedicated member of the team for more than 25 years, Candace exemplifies the McLeod Core Values of Caring, the Person, Quality, and Integrity, and is very deserving of this award," states Emily Adams, Vice President of Patient Services for McLeod Regional Medical Center.

**Congratulations Candace Norton**  
**South Carolina EMS Emergency**  
**Nurse of the Year**



**Candace Norton, BSN, RN**



# McLeod News

## HISTORICAL MARKER UNVEILED IN FRONT OF THE HOME OF McLEOD HEALTH FOUNDER

McLeod Health unveiled a historical marker in front of the home of its founder, Dr. F.H. McLeod, on May 19, 2022. The unveiling event also included an Open House for the McLeod Health Foundation with tours of their new office location for community members and McLeod employees.

Jill Bramblett, Executive Director of the McLeod Health Foundation, welcomed attendees to the McLeod House and introduced Donna Isgett, President and CEO of McLeod Health. During her remarks before the unveiling, Isgett said, "It is indeed my honor to be a part of this day of recognition. Like Jill, I am pleased to launch today's tours and open house of the newly renovated F.H. McLeod House with this ceremony. As the new and very fitting remodeled home for the McLeod Health Foundation, this site represents more than just a reflection of the past.

Our location for the vital services and support of the Foundation underscores our McLeod Health commitment to the community of Florence and investment in the downtown area. We stand here in the cultural corridor and part of the historic district of our city, among other great institutions along this thoroughfare who have made substantial contributions for our local citizens.

"Over the years, this home withstood the many changes within the neighborhood and along this intersection. It is a proud reminder for us of the resilience, stability and determination of its original occupant, the founder of McLeod Health, Dr. F. H. McLeod," said Isgett.

In closing, Isgett added, "This is a reflection of not only consistent visionary



Jill Bramblett and Donna Isgett are pictured with members of the McLeod Health Foundation Board of Trustees following the unveiling of the historical marker.

leadership since the days of Dr. McLeod but is a result of the dedication of McLeod Health to put patients, their families and the community at the center of care. Thank you for being here today at the unveiling of this historical marker, which now supports the

health care legacy of Dr. McLeod, and makes this a local, statewide and national landmark."

The two-sided historical marker, coordinated with the South Carolina Department of Archives and History, bears the inscription:

*The Frank Hilton McLeod home was constructed in 1919 during the expansion of the Florence Infirmary. McLeod founded the Infirmary in 1906 on West Cheves Street, adjacent to his personal residence. To allow for the expansion McLeod moved his wooden frame home to this site. He and his wife Carolina Nelson McLeod (1878-1952) lived in the frame house where it stood until the brick residence was completed here at the corner of Palmetto and Dargan Streets.*

*While living here, F. H. McLeod oversaw the Infirmary's growth into one of the largest hospitals in the state, serving patients from around the Pee Dee. The residence was sold in 1940 and reacquired in 1999 by McLeod Regional Medical Center, the successor to the Florence Infirmary.*



McLeod Children's Hospital is home to the region's only team of advanced medical specialists for critically ill children. With the region's highest level of Neonatal and Pediatric Intensive Care, we deliver extraordinary care and outcomes.



Board-Certified Pediatric Intensive Care Specialists



Board-Certified Neonatologists



PICU & the Region's Only Level III NICU



Subspecialists in Cardiology, Endocrinology, Gastroenterology & Orthopedic Surgery



# McLeod Health

555 East Cheves Street • Florence, SC 29506-2606  
PO Box 100551 • Florence, SC 29502-0551  
Change Service Requested

PRSRT. STD.  
US POSTAGE  
PAID  
PERMIT 600  
MYRTLE BEACH  
29577

