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COVER PHOTO: Guest Services Associate Ethan Zaerr escorts patient Rick Schmitt through Bryan Hospital.

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Partnership expands access to mental health and substance use services



Providing mental health and addiction services is a priority topic for Williams County's health improvement plan, as health officials work to improve outcomes related to depression, suicide and overdose deaths. A national poll from the American Psychiatric Association shows more people reporting mental health effects from the pandemic this year than last, with 43% of adults stating the pandemic has had a serious impact on their mental health, up from 37% in 2020. Younger adults are more likely to report serious mental health effects.

Community Hospitals and Wellness Centers (CHWC) has partnered with Harbor, Inc. of Toledo to expand on much-needed mental health counseling and substance use services in the Bryan community. Beginning this summer, Harbor now provides these important services on CHWC's Bryan Hospital campus at 127 Blakeslee Avenue—a smaller, separate building located to the west of the Bryan Hospital main facility.

CHWC currently offers mental health counseling at Bryan Hospital, but the overwhelming need for additional services continues to increase, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"We feel very fortunate to collaborate with Harbor, who has a long history of providing mental health and substance use services. This is such a win for our community," says Wade Patrick, VP and chief information officer at CHWC, who is facilitating the partnership between CHWC and Harbor.

"We look forward to collaborating with CHWC to expand services to Williams County to ensure that all patients have access to the appropriate care that they need," says Donna Jablonski, president and CEO of Harbor. "This collaboration will continue to allow effective and timely care for patients as they seek help for themselves or a loved one."

Harbor is a leading mental health and substance use provider in Ohio, serving over 22,000 individuals annually. The nonprofit agency provides services in 22 locations across Defiance, Hamilton, Hancock, Wood, and now Williams, counties. Harbor has served the Toledo area for over 100 years, and offers youth and adult counseling, psychiatry and psychological services, telehealth services, substance use disorder assessment and treatment, developmental and behavioral services, as well as vocational rehabilitation and career services, an Employee Assistance Program and grant-funded programs.

TO LEARN MORE, visit harbor.org/community-hospitals-and-wellness-centers or call **567-239-4171** to schedule an appointment.



D. Matt Cooley, MD



Brooke Moore, MSN, APRN, FNP-C

Nurse Practitioner Brooke Moore JOINS GASTROENTEROLOGY TEAM

In the less than three years since opening its doors, the Gastroenterology Clinic at Community Hospitals and Wellness Centers (CHWC) has been tremendously successful in providing much-needed services to our community.

From routine screenings like colonoscopies to treating debilitating gastrointestinal conditions like Crohn's disease, gastroenterologist Dr. Matt Cooley and the dedicated clinic staff have proven to be a major asset. Earlier this summer, the clinic welcomed Brooke Moore, an experienced, motivated and compassionate family nurse practitioner, to the team.

A LIFELONG INTEREST IN HEALTHCARE

Moore notes that she has always been interested in healthcare as a career, and upon completing a job shadow at CHWC several years ago, she knew nursing was the right fit. She earned her Bachelor of Science in Nursing from Capital University in Columbus, then worked as an orthopedics and a medical surgical nurse for several years before returning to school to pursue her nurse practitioner license.

"I was working with patients in the acute care setting with numerous comorbidities affecting their quality of life. I realized the important role of preventative medicine and quality disease management. This realization inspired me to further my education and strive to positively affect the quality of my patients' lives by keeping them out of the acute care setting as much as possible," Moore says.

Moore attended the University of Toledo to earn her Master of Science in Nursing-Family Nurse Practitioner, and is certified to practice by the American Association of Nurse Practitioners. As an advanced practice provider, Moore has experience with in-home patient evaluations and palliative care prior to coming to CHWC and focusing on gastroenterology.

CHWC WELCOMES BROOKE MOORE

Moore explains that gastroenterology has been a focus of interest to her from the very beginning of her nursing career. "As a floor

nurse, I saw a lot of patients on the medical surgical unit with gastrointestinal issues. I always felt like it was an area I understood and enjoyed," she explains. "Working with Dr. Cooley has shown me that, just like in my former field of palliative care, gastroenterology is focused on improving a patient's quality of life."

A Montpelier native, Moore expresses great enthusiasm about working in her community once again. "I'm from this area, I grew up here, I have a lot of family here, and I'm so excited to join this team and serve the community that I came from," she says.

CONDITIONS TREATED AT THE CHWC GASTROENTEROLOGY CLINIC

- Abdominal pain
- Anemia
- Barrett's esophagus
- Biliary diseases
- Celiac disease
- Constipation
- Diarrhea
- Gallbladder disease
- GI bleeding
- Inflammatory bowel disease (Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis)
- Irritable bowel syndrome
- Liver disease
- Malabsorption
- Pancreatic disorders
- Reflux (GERD)
- Screening for colon cancer and polyps
- Trouble swallowing (dysphagia)
- And other gastrointestinal conditions

THE CHWC GASTROENTEROLOGY CLINIC

provides services at Bryan Hospital and Archbold Medical Center. To learn more, visit chwchospital.org/gastro, or make an appointment today by calling **419-630-2021**.

GUEST SERVICES ADDS AN EXTRA TOUCH OF HOSPITALITY

T“Think of yourself going to a new place—a *hospital*—and the apprehension you are probably feeling. You’re nervous about having to be there. You’re not sure where to park or which door to go in. When you walk in, you don’t know which direction to go. I find it to be very important that we greet everyone who enters our doors, engage with them, find out how we can help them. First impressions matter,” says Kelly Colon, patient experience director at Community Hospitals and Wellness Centers (CHWC). “We have the ability to make or break a person’s impression of CHWC. In those moments, we can connect with people and hopefully alleviate some of the anxiety they may be experiencing.”

IMPROVING THE PATIENT EXPERIENCE

Colon leads a team of 14 guest services associates (GSAs), whose role is to provide authentic and compassionate hospitality to patients, support persons and employees of CHWC. The department that Colon oversees is just over a year old, but there has been significant praise about the impact GSAs have had on the dynamic within CHWC’s hospitals, and the patient experience as a whole.

Although Colon feels that CHWC has always done a good job of providing a hospitable and caring environment for patients and their loved ones, there were areas that required more focus. The first step was to station staff at entrances to greet patients and visitors, and help them to their destinations if needed. “Right away, our GSAs introduce themselves by name. That simple act helps alleviate stress for the patient. Coming to a hospital is the last place most people want to visit, so our focus is on meeting their needs,” Colon states.

In addition to greeting and escorting patients, GSA staff have begun rounding on inpatient floors to gauge how CHWC is doing

from any aspect. “We are trying to discover areas that we can improve upon, and where we are excelling. It gives us some great opportunities to collect and share feedback. It’s exciting to go back and tell our kitchen staff that a patient really enjoyed their meal, or to tell a nurse that their patient had great things to say about them,” Colon says.

Rounding is currently in its first phase, with phase two to extend to outpatient areas like clinics and the Emergency Department. Colon explains, “For rounding, we determine what patients are appropriate to go in and talk to, and we make it known that we are there for nonclinical reasons. It’s even better if the family is there because we can get their perspective as well. Overall, our patients have been extremely pleased

with their care—their nurses, physicians, therapists—everyone. They recognize that we are making an effort to all work together.”

WHAT THE FUTURE HOLDS

In addition to the current work GSAs are doing at CHWC, Colon has a vision for what the future holds for the department—and all of them are about improving communication. “I want us to start making follow-up phone calls after a patient is discharged to make sure they got home safely, were able to get their medications filled, they know what they need to do differently after being hospitalized, and how we can help make sure they are successful. Discharge can be hard because even though we feel like we are being



Guest services staff

Back row, L to R: Renae Millhouse, Tonya Andrew, Ethan Zaerr, Paula Poth, Melissa French
Front row, L to R: Jeri Goheen, Amy Wagner, Kelly Colon



Faces of CHWC: Kelly Colon, patient experience director

Prior to leading the Guest Services Department at Community Hospitals and Wellness Centers (CHWC), Kelly Colon was a social worker for over 10 years in the areas of oncology, palliative care and child welfare. The path to get to where she is now was full of surprises at nearly every turn.

SPREADING HER WINGS

Colon grew up in West Unity, and after graduating from high school, she couldn't wait to experience life outside of northwest Ohio. "Not many people think of spreading their wings in Kansas, but that's what I did," she laughs. She calls the two years she studied at a small two-year college in central Kansas some of the best of her life, then she moved back home to finish her bachelor's degree at Defiance College.

Since she was a kid, Colon had envisioned following in her aunt's footsteps and becoming a teacher, but after taking just one education course in college, she discovered that teaching wasn't the right career for her. Fortunately, she had excellent professors at Defiance College who helped her identify her strengths and find that social work was a good fit. After earning her bachelor's degree, Colon moved to Goshen, Indiana, to be near friends and to work. "Academia is not my thing, and I vowed I would never go back to school, but I did end up going back to get my master's degree in social work from Eastern Michigan University. Even though it was hard, I actually loved my master's program," she says.

A REWARDING CAREER

For the first seven years of her career, Colon worked in child welfare, assisting with family reunification when appropriate, and navigating the foster care system and potential adoption. She then began working for the Social Services Department at CHWC- Montpelier Hospital for three years before taking on a new role as an oncology patient navigator at the CHWC Bryan campus. "I knew absolutely

nothing about oncology, but I worked with an awesome team and I learned quickly," she recalls. "It was incredibly rewarding. That role was all about education and support. Sometimes there were difficult conversations about end of life, but there were also the joyous ones that made it through."

When leaders at CHWC discussed forming a Guest Services Department, Colon felt drawn to the challenge of shaping a new program and creating a more welcoming environment built on CHWC's core values of integrity, respect and compassion. "I'm in a role where my strengths are, and I love my current position. Helping people drives me, and I enjoy leading people who share my passion for helping others."

LIFE LESSONS LEARNED

Reflecting on her life, Colon shares that it's both surprising and unsurprising that she now resides in the same small town where she grew up, just over a mile from her childhood home. "Even though I said I would never come back, my family is here and ultimately, this is where I want to be, too," Colon says, adding that her parents taught her important lessons about patience and discipline, and that the path you take doesn't have to be larger than life to be richly enjoyed. Colon is married and has a five-year-old son and three adult stepdaughters (whom she lovingly calls "bonus daughters"). She says that she is living out her dream of being a wife, a mom and having a fulfilling career, and that her family fully supports her ambitions.

"I feel that it's important to be authentic, always. When you try to be someone that you aren't or someone that others think you should be, you'll fail every time. Know what your core values are, and follow them regardless of the circumstance," Colon says. "And when you allow yourself to be vulnerable, the amount of growth that takes place is infinite."

clear in our communication, our patients might be stressed or in pain and what we tell them isn't always retained," Colon explains. "It's nobody's fault, really, but we need to be sure patients understand their discharge information, so if we need to say it five times or if we need to make follow-up calls, so be it."

As previously mentioned, extending rounding to outpatient areas is another initiative GSAs will begin in the near future, and Colon also wants to tackle in-time service recovery. "If there is a patient complaint or issue or frustration, I want us to work through that in the moment instead of two weeks later," she says.

EXPERTS IN SERVING AND BRINGING JOY

Colon shares that she hears a good deal of positive comments about her team from staff, patients and visitors alike. "One thing I love about CHWC is that regardless of whether it's positive feedback or if I'm hearing about areas that need improvement, people do it in a way that is uplifting," she says. "I get tons of feedback about how GSAs are alert, aware, they communicate well and they engage with our patients. It's important to me that our GSA staff members provide quality work, of course, but it's equally important to me that they love what they do, and they look forward to coming to work. I think our team is dedicated to developing a culture of compassion, and we try to be the experts in serving and bringing joy every day."



COPING WITH COVID

JOHN AND BECKY WEAVER SHARE THEIR STORY



One of the many reasons COVID-19 is so concerning is that it impacts people without rhyme or reason, in terms of severity and range of symptoms. John and Becky Weaver are proof of this; both got COVID-19 last summer, and while

John's case was more mild, Becky's was classified as severe and she still battles the long-term effects—sometimes debilitating—even now, a year later.

John is the owner of John's Towing and Repair in Bryan, and Becky is a registered nurse and supervisor in the intensive care/telemetry units and cardiac catheterization lab at Bryan Hospital. "First of all, I don't want people to think that I got COVID because

of the hospital. It had nothing to do with patient care or a lack of PPE, or anything like that," Becky explains. "Mine is related to community exposure; I got it from an asymptomatic person. Fortunately, the only person I gave it to was John, while I was still asymptomatic, and he didn't give it to anyone else. That was such a concern for me; I would have felt terrible if I infected someone else."

WORSENING SYMPTOMS

The Weavers got COVID-19 in July 2020, and Becky says simply, "it started with a cough," which then spiraled into a fever, then hospitalization when she got pneumonia—a complication that

“EVERYONE TOOK VERY, VERY GOOD CARE OF ME. I WAS MISERABLE AND VERY SICK, BUT DR. FREDERICK AND ALL THE STAFF WORKING IN THE COVID UNITS HERE AND IN FORT WAYNE WERE AMAZING.”

— BECKY WEAVER

can occur from coronavirus. Becky spent three days in the COVID-19 unit at Bryan Hospital, being cared for by her co-workers, before transferring to Parkview Regional Hospital in Fort Wayne where she spent another week in their COVID-19 unit. “The only time I really felt scared was when I was being wheeled out of Bryan and the staff were lined up on the other side of the plastic curtain, waving to me. I remember thinking, ‘wow, I might not come back,’” Becky says through tears.

While Becky was hospitalized for COVID-19, John was isolated at home, recovering from his more mild case of the illness. “I started with a headache and fever, then my muscles, my legs, my hips burned horribly. I ached for several days, and every few hours I would take Tylenol. I pretty much slept for days because I felt so terrible. But after that, it lightened up. I never got respiratory or GI issues,” John says, noting that the health department was in regular contact with him to check on symptoms and eventually released him from isolation so he could go back to work.

Becky expresses gratitude for the care she received at Parkview Regional Hospital and within her own COVID-19 unit at Bryan Hospital. “Everyone took very, very good care of me. I was miserable and very sick, but Dr. [Scott] Frederick and all the staff working in the COVID units here and in Fort Wayne were amazing,” she says.

HOMECOMING

After making significant progress in her health, John was finally able to bring Becky home from the hospital. Although coming home was a step in the right direction, the Weavers would soon discover that the road to recovery would be a long one. In fact, it was another 14 weeks before she was able to return to work, and even that took baby steps.

Becky still needed to wear oxygen, and spent almost all of her time over the following six weeks in bed or sitting in a chair. “I was so sick, I couldn’t do anything. I couldn’t read or watch TV. I was so hoarse I couldn’t talk on the phone. I couldn’t even sleep for more than hour-long increments, I think because of the steroids I was on. When I was in bed, I had to lay prone—which means being positioned on my abdomen—to help my lungs work better. I was coughing up blood and my oxygen saturation would drop off which is not good, so it was really scary,” Becky says. “But John took care of me, doing the grocery shopping and the laundry and would make every meal; he did a great job.”

“Hey, now, let’s not pass that information around too much,” John jokes, the two of them laughing. “I’ve never been a caretaker like that before. But our friends and family and co-workers brought food over and left it on the porch, so that made it easier on us. I’d get breakfast ready every morning and I’d come home at lunch and bring it upstairs to her every day, and then I’d take care of dinner at night.”

“Never in our marriage has he taken care of me like that,” Becky says.

“Never had to,” John agrees, sharing that they have been married since 1976. “Our whole marriage, I’ve worked over 100 hours a week, and I kept working while also taking care of her. Some nights I would only get two hours of sleep in. But it had to be done, and we made it work.”

BABY STEPS

After 14 long weeks at home, Becky was finally healthy enough to return to work, starting with four hours a day for the first month, then increasing until she was back to full days. “Before this happened, I was the ‘Energizer Bunny.’ I didn’t know what it meant to be tired. I would be up from 5 or 6 in the morning until midnight and I was never tired. I couldn’t stop working, and people would say to me, ‘seriously, go home.’ But I want to work because I love what I do,” she says.

For this reason, those who knew Becky before she got COVID-19 are sure to notice major changes in her abilities. Even now, a year after her initial diagnosis, Becky still experiences exhaustion and struggles to walk even short distances because she becomes very short of breath and her heart races. Regardless, Becky is happy to be back to work, albeit most of what she does is at a desk nowadays.

Both John and Becky received their COVID-19 vaccines as soon as they were able to get them, and are thrilled that their family members, including their 14-year-old granddaughter, are now vaccinated, so they can safely spend time with their children and grandchildren once again.

GET VACCINATED TODAY
Getting vaccinated
is our best shot at
ending the COVID-19
pandemic for good.
To find a COVID-19
vaccine provider, visit
vaccines.gov.

“We want people to understand the seriousness of this virus and understand that it could happen to them or their loved ones,” Becky says.

“Get vaccinated,” John adds.

“I feel so fortunate that we both survived,” Becky continues. “There are a lot of people who can’t say that. I don’t know what the future holds, but for now I’m putting one foot in front of the other, slowly, still baby steps.”

Start them early! Introduce kids to healthy foods at a young age

Kids love to snack, but that doesn't mean junk food is the answer to curb their cravings. Healthy snacks are a great way for kids to stay energized while filling up on protein, calcium, fruits, veggies and whole grains. Introduce kids to healthy foods at a young age to set them on a path of healthier choices throughout their lives.

"When kids are younger, give them options for snacks rather than letting them pick whatever they want," suggests Tara Spisak, registered dietitian nutritionist and certified diabetes care and education specialist at Community Hospitals and Wellness Centers. Spisak is a mother of three teenagers who were raised on healthy foods. "You as the parent could give them a choice between yogurt, an apple with peanut butter or cheese and crackers, rather than telling them to get a snack themselves and they come out with potato chips or cookies. If kids are taught healthier food choices, they will continue to choose those foods as they grow up."



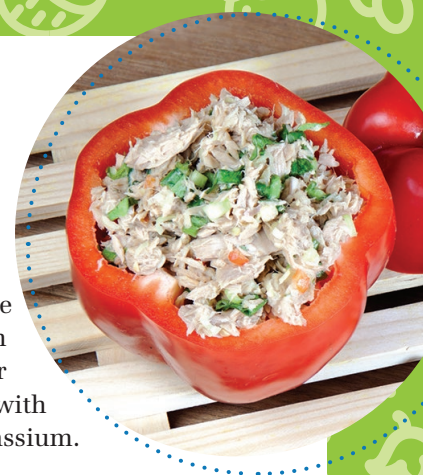
Spisak adds that kids learn from their parents, and recommends parents incorporate more fruits and vegetables into meals and try new things that are outside of their comfort zone. Roasting vegetables, adding cheese to broccoli or fresh green beans, or dipping raw veggies into a dip or sauce are great ways to get an extra serving of vegetables.

KID-FRIENDLY SNACKS TO TRY

Here are some fun and tasty ways for kids to fill up on healthy snacks when a craving hits.

- **Fruit-and-cheese kabobs:** skewer two 1-inch cubes of Colby cheese, two strawberries and five grapes for a fun treat big on protein and calcium.
- **Yogurt parfait:** make low-fat yogurt more appealing by layering it in a clear cup with fresh, antioxidant-rich blueberries or another favorite fruit of your child's choosing.
- **Apples with yogurt dip:** stir cinnamon into half a container of low-fat vanilla yogurt to make an easy, calcium-rich dip that tastes great with sliced apples.

- **PB&B waffle:** spread one tablespoon of peanut butter over a toasted multigrain waffle and cover it with banana slices for a snack packed with protein and potassium.



- **Ham crackers:** boost energy with whole grains and protein by topping a half-dozen low-fat wheat crackers with a little sliced ham.
- **Peanut butter dip:** turn peanut butter into a high-protein fruit dip by thinning it with a little milk and honey and serving it with fresh peach slices.
- **Tuna boats:** make healthy "boats" by hollowing out half a bell pepper and filling it with a half-cup scoop of tuna salad.
- **Mini pizza bagels:** turn pizza into a healthy snack by topping each half of a whole-grain mini bagel with tomato sauce and low-fat mozzarella cheese. Bake at 325 F until the cheese melts.



A whole catalog of healthy recipes—including kid-friendly snacks and meals—are available at chwchospital.org/live-it.