

# PA HEALTH

ISSUE 25 | Summer 2025 | Free

YOUR GUIDE TO FITNESS & WELL-BEING



## The kids who never quit

Celebrating decades of treating Miracle Kids



**HEALTHY SMILE,  
HAPPY HEART**

**BETTER CARE  
THROUGH RESEARCH**

**FIND FUN ON A  
SCAVENGER HUNT**

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# WELCOME

## On the cover:

Together, Geisinger Janet Weis Children's Hospital and Children's Miracle Network make miracles happen.

Photos of 2025 Miracle Kids Mila Bishop, Cora Scott-Ellard and Sarah Leighow by Robb Malloy.



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## CONTENTS

- 4 / Thanks to Children's Miracle Network's partnership with Geisinger pediatrics, our **Miracle Kids bloom, thrive and inspire us** with their stories.
- 7 / A **healthy smile** means a healthier you — at any age. From kids to seniors, dental care matters for whole-body wellness.
- 8 / **From lab to life**, medical research not only makes scientific advances, it elevates care and provides groundbreaking treatments.
- 10 / Camp Victory is **where health meets happiness** for special kids. And it's a place where tomorrow's healers are inspired by real-life experience.
- 12 / Technology works behind the scenes to **revolutionize healthcare** and deliver enhanced patient experiences.
- 14 / Encourage kids to **get moving** with a fun ZING543210 scavenger hunt. Leave the devices indoors, go outside — and earn a prize!

# Better Together

We've been part of the region for more than 100 years — celebrating with you at parades, fairs and sports events and supporting happenings that lift up our communities. Here's the latest on how we're connecting with you and your neighbors.



## A runner's dozen

In April, runners took to the streets in the Scranton Half Marathon,

sponsored for the 12th time by Geisinger. Volunteers from Geisinger's northeast region leadership team and emergency management team, Geisinger Community Medical Center's emergency medicine team and physicians, nurses, physical therapists and athletic trainers from Geisinger Orthopaedics and Sports Medicine staffed the event and kept runners safe.



## You're too kind

An April luncheon honored 52 Geisinger Lewistown Hospital

volunteers from the Juniata River Valley and beyond. Their 5,456 hours of work in 2024 created a welcoming environment for Geisinger patients, visitors and employees. Three volunteers received the President's Volunteer Service Award — and one received the Distinguished Service Award for reaching 10,000 hours of volunteer service!



## Play ball (safely)!

To patch up injuries from fly balls and slides into home base, Geisinger

Medical Center Muncy donated 16 fully stocked first aid kits to Muncy Little League Baseball and Softball. Geisinger Jersey Shore Hospital delivered another 25 kits to Jersey Shore Little League and Nippenose Valley Little League.



## Building better health

Excitement grew at the May groundbreaking ceremony in Danville for Geisinger

Medical Center's expansion. The \$880 million project will include construction of an 11-story tower with a larger ER, updated ORs and ICUs and all private rooms in the adult medical-surgical units, as well as a parking garage. The project is expected to be complete in 2029.

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*Photo credits: p. 4 courtesy of Geisinger archives; pp. 2, 5 courtesy of Sarah Sommer, Tyson Hale, AuD, Wrobel family and Mattucci family; pp. 2, 10-11 courtesy of Camp Spifida*



# Scranton girl poster child for telethon at Geisinger

DANVILLE — Shannon Herne of Scranton is happy to be the Poster Child for Geisinger Medical Center's 1988 Children's Miracle Network Telethon.

However, she wouldn't wish anyone the circumstances that led her there.

It all started with chicken pox. Shannon's little brother caught it first and itched his way through as most kids do. Shannon wasn't so lucky.

To begin with, she had so many blisters "you couldn't put the point of a nail between them," said her mother, Lou Ann Shackelton. "They were on her tongue, the roof of her mouth, as far down her throat as you could see."

On the morning of the sixth day, Shannon screamed out in pain.

"Her left leg was filling with blood and turning black," recalled her mother.

Dr. R. Hanna, a pediatrician, and staff doctors at the community hospital in Scranton, where she was taken, were worried. They gave her blood transfusions but her fever kept climbing and her blood pressure kept plummeting.

"I'm calling for Life Flight to take her to Geisinger," Hanna told the girl's mother. "If she doesn't go there, she'll die."

Fog delayed the helicopter and increased Lou Ann's anxiety for her daughter. Every minute seemed like an hour.

At Geisinger, Dr. Narayan Shah, a pediatric hematologist, and Dr. Stephen Wolf, a pediatric pulmonologist, were waiting.

Shah informed the pacing, anxious mother: "She has a very bad blood disease. If she can hold on for 24 hours, she'll have a chance."

Shah and Wolf were the first of many specialists involved in Shannon's treatment. The girl's mother would spend most of the next 209 nights sleeping in the reclining chair at Shannon's bedside in the hospital, keeping a diary—and documenting—every

log of every person who cared for her.

To mother and child, each member of the hospital staff became a personal friend, another caring human being who was helping to keep Shannon alive.

By the time they went home Oct. 31, the list included the names of 27 specialists, 43 pediatric residents, 52 nurses, a physician assistant, technicians, desk clerks, therapists, social workers, child life specialists, dietitians, a psychologist, a teacher, a mailman and housekeepers.

Talk to any of them and they'll say: "I only did my job... it was all the others who pulled her through."

Says Shah: "I only confirmed the diagnosis. She had *Purpura Fulminans*. It is an extremely rare and violent overreaction of the blood's clotting mechanism to infection—in this case the chicken pox virus—so rare it is only just now beginning to be understood by medical researchers."

Shannon's mother described her daughter's legs as looking like "two sacks of blood" at one point.

An anticoagulant called Heparin was administered in large doses to counteract the persistent clotting that had prevented blood from circulating through Shannon's legs.

Shannon survived the critical 24 hours but the aftermath required her to spend four weeks in an intensive care unit with frequent setbacks.

Her veins constantly collapsed. Shunt lines, which had to be inserted to help keep her blood circulating, failed. Internal bleeding continued, and a massive area of skin on her legs died, leaving raw flesh exposed—leaving her legs painful, vulnerable to infection and presenting a massive problem in nutrition, since protein is lost very rapidly through open wounds.

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the normal calorie requirements and almost three times the protein requirements for a child her age, just to keep her nutrition requirements stabilized.

It would be many months before Shannon could stand the stress of the extensive plastic surgery she would need to repair the damage to her legs.

In the meantime, infectious disease, hyperbaric medicine, endocrinology, gastroenterology, neurology, radiology, cardiology and at least 10 other medical specialties would be involved in the slow process of natural healing that was needed.

The 1988 Children's Miracle Network Telethon will air live from Disneyland in California, Disney World in Florida and Tokyo Disneyland on June 4 and 5. It is expected to be broadcast over more than 190 television channels nationwide, raising funds for 160 children's hospitals.

In northeastern and central Pennsylvania, the telethon will be shown on WNEP-TV, Channel 16. Portions of the broadcast will be aired live from Geisinger, featuring Shannon and her family, as well as other "miracle children" from northeastern and central Pennsylvania who have been treated at Geisinger's Children's Hospital Center.

All funds that are contributed through WNEP's broadcast will go directly to Geisinger's Children's Hospital Center, to benefit the thousands of children who are treated there annually.



Shannon Herne of Scranton, who suffers from a rare blood disease, has been chosen as Geisinger Medical Center's Poster Child for the 1988 Children's Miracle Network Telethon.

# Miracle child

## Telethon helps Geisinger help children

Molly Jeong Mianulli, a daughter of Alan and Susan Mianulli of Centre Hall, has been named Geisinger Medical Center's poster child for western central Pennsylvania for the 1988 Children's Miracle Network Telethon. Geisinger Medical Center's Children's Hospital Center, Danville, will be part of the 21-hour telethon, which will air live from Disneyland, Calif., and Walt Disney World, Fla. WNEP-TV 16 will air the entire festivities, beginning Saturday at 9 p.m. and continuing through June 4 at 6 p.m.



MOLLY JEONG MIANULLI... Geisinger Medical Center's poster child for the Children's Miracle Network Telethon.

The telethon benefits 161 hospitals for children worldwide. This year marks Geisinger Medical Center's sixth year of participation. Nationally, having raised \$20 million from the 1988 efforts alone, the Children's Miracle Network Telethon (CMNT) is the largest television fundraising event in the history of telethons. In six years, CMNT has raised more than \$170 million for children.

Each hour of the telethon is made up of a 40-minute national segment and a 20-minute local segment. During the local segments, stories of local "miracle children" treated at Geisinger's children's

donor to benefit the local Children's Miracle Network hospital. In 1988, a total of \$855,000 was raised to benefit area children treated at Geisinger Medical Center. Geisinger's children's hospital center treats children with many serious health problems, including cancer, birth defects, muscular and cardiovascular diseases and injuries from accidents. The nation's first rural Ronald McDonald House, on the grounds of the medical center, and camp DOST, the summer camp for "cancer kids," are examples of the special services Geisinger provides. Like other hospitals for children, Geisinger relies on public support to supplement its services. Children's Miracle Network Telethon makes it possible for communities in the region to donate necessary funding to maintain and upgrade the hospital's programs.

More than 100 television, recording, movie and sports personalities will appear on the 1988 show. Some of the celebrities involved this year include Bob Hope, Marie Osmond, John Schneider, Merlin Olsen, Marilyn McCoo, Mary Hart, Rich Little, Jim McMahon and

# Events

## Chamber breakfast to salute Philharmonic

This month's Red Carpet and other community cultural breakfast program sponsored by

**ROADS PUB & CLUB**  
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**TONIGHT**

**"BILL KELLY"**  
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# Geisinger will take part in Miracle Network Telethon

Geisinger Medical Center in Danville will participate in the 1988 Children's Miracle Network Telethon.

The 21-hour telethon will air from 9 p.m. on June 3, until 6 p.m. on June 4 on WNEP-TV, Channel 16. The Children's Miracle Network Telethon, produced by the non-profit Osmond Foundation, raises funds for children's health care. It is the only national telethon where 100 percent of the money raised remains in local communities.

"All of the money raised locally will stay right here in our region, helping kids with serious childhood diseases or injuries," said Dr. Kenneth E. Quicke, Jr., president of Geisinger Medical Center.

The Children's Hospital Center of Geisinger is proud to have been selected to join other major centers throughout the country in this exciting national effort.

Marie Osmond, John Schneider ("Dukes of Hazard"), Merlin Olsen ("Father Murphy") and Marilyn McCoo ("The Fifth Dimension" and "Solid Gold") will host the national telethon.

# Man's hearing continued again

A preliminary hearing for a Coudaite man charged in the hit-and-run death of a 16-year-old Coudaite boy on March 13 has been continued a second time by District Justice Norman Richards of Home town. The hearing for Christopher C. Keer, 21, had been scheduled for 10 a.m. Tuesday, but was continued to 10 a.m. on April 12, according to Richards' office. Keer is charged with 10 offenses by Coudaite Patrolman John Tank in connection with the death of Michael Steven Hytro, who was killed when struck by Keer's pickup truck while he was sliding in the vicinity of the



Michael Leidy Regional Poster Child

segment of the telethon which will originate from the Osmond Entertainment Studios in Utah. Miss Judy ("The Land of Hatcher-Malachy"), Nolan Johannes, Bryon, who turns 8 today, of the WNEP-TV news team will host the local segments of the telethon. One child who benefited from his care at Geisinger is young Michael Leidy, 9, of State College who will serve as the regional "Poster Child" for the telethon. Michael, a trauma victim, had suffered a severe head injury when he was pinned beneath an automobile last winter. Central Community Hospital in State College had Michael transferred by Life Flight to Geisinger where he spent five weeks in a coma with little hope for his recovery.

Less than a year later, however, Michael is back in school and doing very well. His recovery is only one of the stories that will be celebrated during the telethon.

# Harveys Lake boy, 6, wins fight with death

Survival is termed a miracle

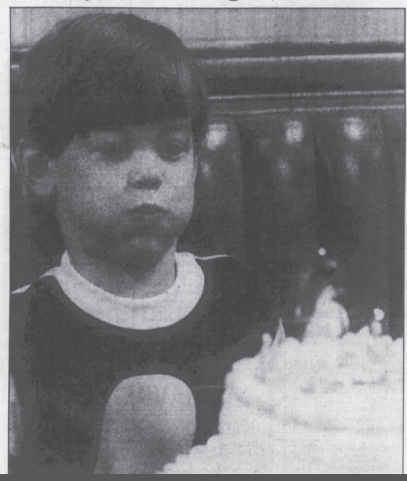
By JOSEPH HANUSAK  
Staff Writer

HARVEYS LAKE — If he's not hanging around his cousins and friends, Bryon Williams may well head to his turtle-shaped sandlot, smooth the sand and carve a few roads with a hand-sold plastic rake. Then he may soon sit his plastic race cars and his little bulldozer and dump truck over the grains of sand, imitating the sound of an engine.

And when his mom suggests a look at the real-life concrete-mixer toy, Bryon bobs are building a swimming pool, he'll grab his Big Wheel and accompany her.

Wearing his favorite "frog" boots, he'll meet buddies near the pool and once again lose himself in play. It is an ordinary day for a boy whose limp provides the most visible sign of his drawn fight with death.

Bryon, who turns 6 today, can't recall how all his major organs failed him last May, how his body turned blue, his hands and feet black. Bryon, who walks while warm friends and strangers alike, can't recall how he



# Danville — With band music playing, a young boy cut a red ribbon today, officially opening Rea & Derick Inc.'s new store.

Bryon Williams, 5, of Harveys Lake cut the ribbon with gold-painted hedge trimmers. Brian is the poster child for Geisinger Medical Center's Children's Miracle Network Telethon.

On hand for the grand opening, which continues through Saturday, were about 50 local officials and representatives of the telethon and Rea & Derick. The Danville Area

# Work in the store — three times the number employed in the other store.

Also scheduled today was the creation and selling of a 110-foot-long hoagie outside the store. Pieces of the hoagie will be sold and proceeds will go to the telethon, which will air this weekend.

A \$250,000 Indianapolis 500 car is on display as a reminder that Rea & Derick will be giving away tickets to the Pocono Raceway.

Miss Pennsylvania, Darlene Deedy of Altoona, is to be on hand today and tomorrow.

# MIRACLE CHILD — Army Stine, Geisinger Telethon poster child for northeastern Pennsylvania, sits at home with her dolls.

## GMC sets goal for telethon at \$1M

By MIKE FEELEY  
Press-Enterprise staff

**Schedule of events**

Money raised during the telethon has been used to buy equipment that saved the

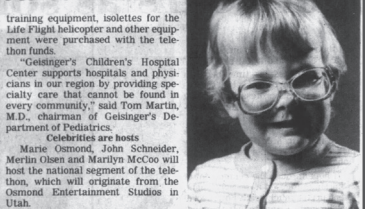
# Poster child named

DANVILLE — Carrie Bredbenner, a 4-year-old from Montgomery County, will be the poster child for the 1988 Children's Miracle Network Telethon.

Born in Danville, Carrie was born 12 and one-half weeks premature in Danville and spent several months in Geisinger's newborn intensive care unit.

As is the case for many premature babies, Carrie's immature lungs were not ready to breathe on their own. She spent almost two months on a respirator. Carrie had a heart murmur, liver problems and hydrocephalus, or fluid accumulating on the brain. Nineteen weeks and two surgeries later, Carrie Bredbenner went home.

Geisinger will participate in its second Children's Miracle Network Telethon on June 12. The telethon, produced by the Osmond Foundation,



CARRIE BREDBENNER  
Miss Judy of "The Land of Hatcher-Malachy"

# Lightstreet boy, 14, fights cancer, wins

Docs: Longterm outlook good

DANVILLE — Watching her 14-year-old son, Tyson, play baseball with deep pride and emotion. This is a boy who battled cancer, and won.

In June 1983, Tyson was diagnosed with T-cell lymphoblastic lymphoma, a form of cancer similar to leukemia, after his lymph nodes began to swell. The lumps, which had moved to the area from Hershey only a week earlier, thought Tyson might have mononucleosis and took him to pediatric specialists at Geisinger Medical Center in Danville, who diagnosed the red-headed 11-year-old with cancer.

"We admitted Tyson and began chemotherapy treatments right away," recalls Bradley, George, M.D. "The disease was localized in his chest and neck. Our best treatment approach was 18 months of chemotherapy." Those months were filled with trips to Geisinger for outpatient treatments and spinal taps as well as the administration of some medications at home. Side effects included hair loss, nausea and vomiting, but none could sideline Tyson's drive and determination. Tyson has been named one of the



TYSON HALE  
cancer victim no more

time running the mile and enjoying life. So are his parents. "Once something like this happens, you never look at your child the same way again," says his mother. "Tyson is a girl in the true sense of the word."



# Medicine – and miracles

## Celebrating a 40+-year partnership with Children’s Miracle Network Hospitals

For more than 4 decades, Geisinger Janet Weis Children’s Hospital has teamed up with Children’s Miracle Network Hospitals, a nonprofit organization that raises money for children’s hospitals across the nation and in Canada.

### *Because of you*

Since 1984, businesses, organizations and individual donors have provided more than \$38 million to Children’s Miracle Network at Geisinger. Some of the strongest supporters include Williamsport radio station KISS-FM, which holds an annual radiothon, and:

- Walmart Associates and Sam’s Club
- GIANT Food Stores and Martin’s Food Markets
- Rite Aid Corporation
- Marion G. Pollock
- Lee R. Herman
- Marie F. Kisner Charitable Trust

You can support pediatrics, too:  
[geisinger.org/becauseofyou](https://www.geisinger.org/becauseofyou)

Each year since that partnership began in 1984, several young Geisinger patients have been designated as “Miracle Kids.” They’re children whose strength and courage in the face of serious illness inspire and remind us why having exceptional pediatric care right here is so crucial.

“Geisinger pediatric staff provides the great care, but as a doctor who’s treated our Miracle Kids – and hundreds of young patients with serious illnesses – I’ve learned to never underestimate the healing power of their hope, bravery and resilience,” says Frank Maffei, MD, chair of the Geisinger Department of Pediatrics. “It’s amazing to see our Miracle Kids and their families go on to serve as ambassadors for the advancement of pediatric medicine here and across the nation.”

Recent items funded by Children’s Miracle Network at Geisinger include:

- Critical care and cardiovascular ultrasound equipment
- New ventilators and transport incubators for the smallest babies in our neonatal intensive care units
- Materials for the Child Life program, which helps make being in the hospital easier for kids

“All of us at Geisinger Janet Weis Children’s Hospital are so grateful to everyone who supports Children’s Miracle Network,” says Dr. Maffei. “They’re an invaluable partner to Geisinger pediatric services and our wonderful children’s hospital. And we’re especially grateful for our Miracle Kids and their families, who are willing to tell their stories and be advocates for other patients and our hospital.”

This year’s Miracle Kids are:

- Cora Scott-Ellard of Montoursville, born prematurely with complications
- Mila Bishop of Beach Lake, a newborn LifeFlight® passenger
- Sarah Leighow of Danville, thriving with DiGeorge syndrome, a chromosomal difference

About 470 Geisinger patients have been Miracle Kids over the years. Some have passed away. Many are now far from childhood. But membership in this elite group can have a lifelong impact.

*Continued on next page*



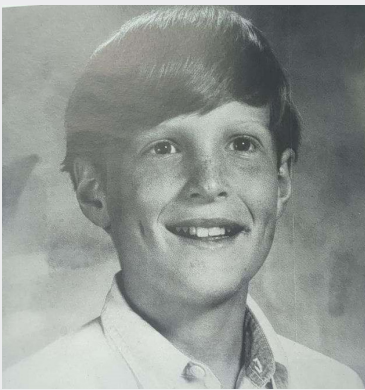
Sarah Sommer



## Once a Miracle Kid, always a Miracle Kid.

**Sarah Sommer** of Danville was in the first Geisinger Miracle Kids cohort. “When I was 2 years old, I was diagnosed with severe-profound hearing loss,” she says. “Geisinger provided my parents with much-needed guidance and support.” Today, Ms. Sommer is vice president of digital engagement with Geisinger’s Marketing and Communications

Department. “I am so impressed by how today’s Miracle Kids have become champions for their community and local hospitals,” she says.



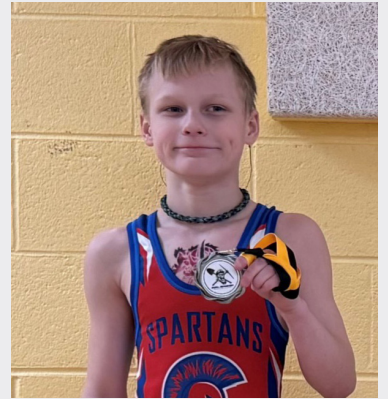
**Tyson Hale**, AuD, became a member of the 1996 cohort after successful cancer treatment at age 13, shortly after his family moved to Bloomsburg. “It was such a great pediatric team,” he recalls. “A core group of nurses who helped treat me are still there.” His inspiring story — teen who played football after having T-cell lymphoblastic lymphoma — launched him into a local and national media spotlight



Tyson Hale, AuD

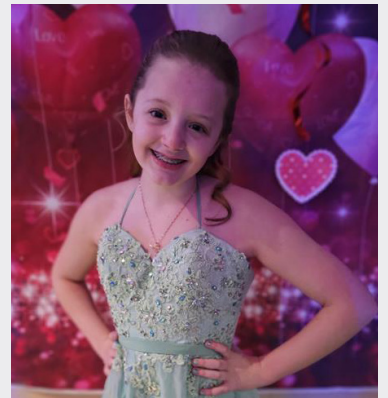
and inspired him to pursue a career in medicine. Today, as a Geisinger audiologist specializing in surgical neurophysiology, he sometimes works with children who have cancer. “Geisinger saved my life as a kid,” he says. “I’m paying that back.”

**Martin Wrobel** of Mount Carmel has been a Miracle Kid since 2019. In 2018, at age 2, he was diagnosed with bacterial meningitis that caused strokes and hearing loss. Now in fifth grade, Martin wrestles — and supports Children’s Miracle Network at Geisinger to help other kids, too. “He refers to Janet Weis as ‘his’ hospital,” says his mother, Alexis Groody. “He feels they saved his life.”



Martin Wrobel

When **Laila Mattucci** of Mount Carmel was just 9 months old, she underwent a 9-hour operation to adjust the size and shape of her skull, which had fused too early. A 2022 Miracle Kid, she’s now healthy and active. “Not everyone is blessed to have a hospital like Geisinger in their backyard,” says her mother, Heather Mattucci. “Everywhere you turn, there’s something provided by Children’s Miracle Network, whether it’s the tables they sit on during a well child visit or lifesaving equipment in the Pediatric Intensive Care Unit.”



Laila Mattucci



By Kimberly Adler-Morelli

# Good health starts with a smile

Kids' teeth get a lot of attention. We teach them to brush and floss. We take them to the dentist regularly. And we (try to) limit sugary treats. It makes sense — their teeth are developing right along with the rest of their bodies.

But aside from controlling bad breath, why do older adults need good oral health? Because cavities, gum disease and tooth loss affect more than just your mouth.

## The link between oral health and overall health

The connection between dentistry and medical care might not seem obvious, but as the entrance to the digestive and respiratory tracts, your mouth is also the doorway for disease-causing germs. Good oral care helps keep those germs under control.

## Healthy mouth, happy heart

For adults, oral health can play a part in cardiovascular disease. Studies show a link between inflammation and infections caused by oral germs and coronary artery disease, high blood pressure, clogged arteries and strokes.

Those with existing heart conditions should be particularly careful about oral health. They're at higher risk for endocarditis, an inflammation of the lining of heart valves or the heart chambers caused by a bacterial infection that can happen during some dental procedures.

"Both medical and dental professionals are on the same team in caring for patients, with similar goals in mind for better health, lowering inflammation and decreasing cardiovascular risk for events like heart attack and stroke," says Kristopher Pfirman, MD, Geisinger cardiologist. "Increasing collaboration between dentistry and medicine will achieve the best possible health outcomes for our patients."

## Keep smiling, keep thriving

For older adults, healthy mouths are just as crucial as they are during other stages of life.

Some chronic diseases, like diabetes, rheumatoid arthritis and osteoporosis, can affect your tooth and gum health. Medications taken for chronic conditions may also have side effects (such as dry mouth) that result in dental problems.

Poor oral health can contribute to chronic conditions, too, like heart issues. And untreated cavities and gum disease make it hard to chew properly, interfering with nutrition and increasing the risk of infections.

"Sixty-four percent of people age 65 and older have moderate to severe periodontal disease," says George Avetian, DO, primary care physician at Geisinger 65 Forward. "Not only does

gum disease lead to cavities and impaired eating, it also can cause systemic disease and heart issues such as endocarditis or inflammation of the heart valves."

One of the biggest barriers to oral care Dr. Avetian sees is cost. "If a senior doesn't have dental coverage or has poor coverage, they probably aren't going to go to a dentist until there's a serious problem. And delaying treatment can compound health issues," he says. He adds that patients with heart issues must have a dental evaluation and treatment before having surgery to correct them.

Seeing a dentist regularly, even if you have dentures, is essential as you age. Thorough cleanings and checkups can head off diseases, leading to better nutrition, a more confident social life and a healthier mind and body in your golden years. And with the average life span increasing, taking care of your teeth means you're more likely to keep them your whole life.

Dr. Avetian stresses that everyone at any age should have a dental checkup and cleaning twice a year and maintain oral hygiene by brushing and flossing twice a day. Good oral health is the key to a healthier you.

Sources: U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, American Heart Association



By Beth Kaszuba

# Creating a culture of research

Geisinger encourages everyone to consider how we can improve patient care.

When you think of Geisinger, you probably picture your family doctor's office, a ConvenientCare clinic or one of our hospitals. But there's another less visible, yet equally vital, component to our health system.

Research.

Last year, Geisinger supported about 1,400 research projects, including studies conducted by full-time research faculty, providers in our clinics and learners such as medical and nursing students, residents and fellows. These projects include clinical trials in areas ranging from brain disorders to pediatrics to women's health, giving patients local access to innovative new treatments.

"We're a 'learning health system,' which means research and innovation are integrated into patient care,"



says Christa Lese Martin, PhD, chief scientific officer at Geisinger and vice dean for research at Geisinger School of Medicine. “A lot of health systems don’t have active research programs. We’re always looking for better ways to care for patients.”

The studies may be cutting-edge, but Geisinger has supported efforts to expand the horizons of medical knowledge for over a century. The hospital system was founded in 1915, and by 1916, research projects on diabetes, heart disease and polio were already underway.

The emphasis on scientific inquiry has steadily expanded since then, with the founding of the region’s first research laboratory in 1952, the launch of a dedicated research center in 1971 and the opening of the \$21 million Henry Hood Center for Health Research in Danville in 2007.

### The rural advantage

While it might seem like urban research centers would have an advantage in terms of resources and large populations for study, Geisinger’s mostly rural footprint is a plus in some ways, according to Dr. Martin.

“Families stay here, so we can often study health across generations,” she says, adding that Geisinger’s geography also provides researchers with a different lens that can improve patient care locally. “In a rural setting, people might have different needs.”

Geisinger was also an early adopter of the electronic health record (EHR). The EHR makes keeping track of each patient’s health easier. Data collected over time in the EHR can be analyzed as part of research studies, allowing trends and patterns to emerge that might not have been noticed otherwise.

And Geisinger is a leader in genomics research, thanks to the MyCode® Community Health Initiative – the largest healthcare system-based study of its kind in the United States. Genomic and health information supplied by MyCode’s now 350,000 patient-participants have been used to support research related to cancer, developmental disorders and other potentially life-threatening conditions.

### Broad, varied inquiry

What gets studied at Geisinger?

The answer is as varied as the system’s network of providers and staff and their specialties and interests. A few examples include:

- Clinical trials by cardiologist Brendan Carry, MD, who seeks to improve care for patients with cardiac amyloidosis, a genetic disorder that can lead to heart failure
- Research led by neurodevelopmental pediatrician Scott Myers, MD, that established a link between genetic changes and cerebral palsy
- A study coauthored by Amitpal Johal, MD, Geisinger chair of gastroenterology, that determined that taking GLP-1s, the popular weight-loss and diabetes drugs, may make it unsafe for patients to undergo a common gastroenterology diagnostic procedure

Geisinger College of Health Sciences is also an active hub for research and innovation. Recently, the School of Medicine was 1 of just 5 study teams nationwide chosen to access certain public opinion polling data to conduct research about perceptions of health and health access in our Pennsylvania communities. And residents, fellows, medical students and nursing students are encouraged, if not required in some programs, to conduct original research across their disciplines.

The College also exposes local high school students to opportunities for pursuing careers in science and health professions. Last year, 93 students participated in the College’s REACH-HEI Pathway Programs and showcased results of their summer research in a symposium.

### Advancing science – and care

The goal of research at Geisinger is to expand medical knowledge, sometimes incrementally but sometimes in big leaps, in ways that improve patient care – even save lives. To do that requires a systemwide mindset, Dr. Martin says.

“We’re always asking, ‘How can we open up research opportunities for more people?’” she says. “We don’t want anyone to say, ‘We’ve always done it this way.’ We want everyone at Geisinger to constantly be wondering, ‘How can we do this better?’”



The MyCode DNA sequencing program analyzes the DNA of consenting participants to help make healthcare better – for you, your family, our community and people around the world.

Ready to join? [geisinger.org/mycode](https://www.geisinger.org/mycode)

By Lyndsey Frey

# When getting outdoors leads to more



*Left: Medical student Dayna DeSalve and camper Stella Cannon.  
Right: Campers Dakota Nesbitt and Ariana McDowell.*



A safe, fun camp experience for children with health issues — and a way for medical specialists to volunteer their expertise? It's a win-win.

Summer camp is a time for outdoor adventures, arts and crafts, nights around the campfire, making memories with new friends, building confidence, independence and so much more. And Camp Victory is no different.

Situated on a 130-acre property in Millville, Camp Victory is built specifically to offer that classic childhood experience to kids with special needs and serious health issues. From April to October, kids across the country come to enjoy all the fun activities you'd expect from summer camp. The difference: These are accessible to all abilities, from treehouse ramps to paved trails to specialty harnesses for using a rock-climbing wall and zip-line.

Camps are set up by medical condition, including cancer, spina bifida and autism, and include their own specialized medical support staff, in addition to a central "med shed" for things like medication distribution, catheterization and even

chemotherapy or dialysis. Staffers donate their time — and many return year after year to give kids a magical week of staying in cabins, swimming, biking, archery, fishing, crafts, challenge courses and talent shows in an environment built for them.

"For many of these kids, it's their first time away from home and their parents," says Paul Bellino, MD, a Geisinger pediatric hospitalist and Camp Spifida's medical director. "It's their chance to be a kid first, while building a peer group around others facing similar challenges and fears. It's a life-changing experience for kids — and parents, too."

Geisinger has been a corporate partner since Camp Victory's inception in 1994, annually contributing medical personnel and supplies, and supporting the budgets for various partner groups through grants from Children's Miracle Network. What started as a few loosely arranged camps for kids with cancer, diabetes and kidney

disease has grown to include more than 15 partner camps today.

Each camp works a little differently, based on kids' varying medical or behavioral needs and physical abilities, yet all have the same mission: to create a fun, safe camping experience for children.

"Camp Spifida is such an impactful part of childhood that many campers come back as counselors, so they can continue to be a part of this extraordinary experience and give back," says Dr. Bellino. "The camp is really that special."

## 'Life-changing experience' for kids

Year after year, Camp Spifida gives campers with spina bifida a weeklong experience they wouldn't otherwise be able to have — by offering the most specialized medical support with a 1-to-1 ratio of campers to counselors.



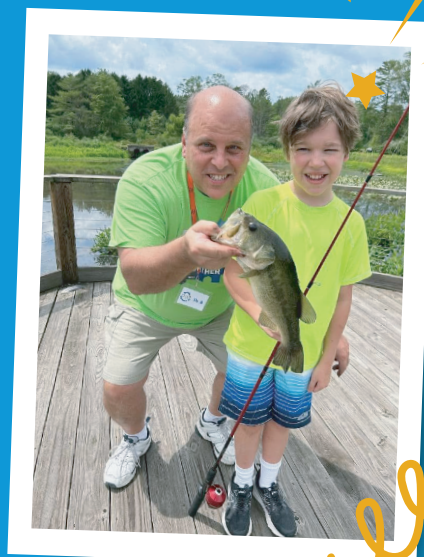
Kids ages 6 to 18 stay overnight in cabins, each with an assigned medical provider, and days are structured with set mealtimes, medical services and activities with built-in free time. But besides having fun, campers take away so many other positives.

“This camp has been the single most important and life-changing experience of my life,” says repeat camper Katherine Petersen of Connecticut. “It gave me lifelong friends that have supported me through depression, surgeries, illnesses – and helped me celebrate my successes! My experiences over the past 5 summers at Spifida have helped lift me up and form me into a fierce, determined young adult.”

For nearly 30 years, Dr. Bellino has coordinated care for the 75-plus campers that participate each summer with a volunteer crew of about 10 Geisinger pediatricians and a dozen subspecialists. Geisinger School of Medicine Phase 3 medical students and pediatric residents also join in to learn things no amount of time in the classroom or hospital can teach.

In fact, recent School of Medicine graduate Dayna DeSalve is so grateful for her experience, she plans to return this summer.

“As volunteers are paired 1:1 with a camper, I was able to see how prescribed medications, recommended equipment and bladder management are incorporated into the day-to-day routine of my assigned camper,” she says. “It allowed me to recognize how medical advice and treatments influence a child's daily life on a level I could not have experienced in the clinical setting.”



Top: Paul Bellino, MD, with camper Declan Brown.  
Bottom: Counselors Jack Marks and Billy Bellino with camper Niko Charistidis.



Camp Spifida wouldn't be

possible without donor contributions to Children's Miracle Network at Geisinger, who underwrites the camp each year to make sure operating costs keep fees low and no camper is turned away.

You can support Camp Spifida through Children's Miracle Network: [go.geisinger.org/cmn](https://go.geisinger.org/cmn)

*Because of you*

## Camp Victory partner camps

- + Project Beacon (military children)
- + CampEmerge (autism)
- + Camp Little People (dwarfism)
- + Camp Cranium (traumatic brain injuries)
- + Keystone Diabetic Kids Camp (Type 1 diabetes)
- + PA Vent Camp (kids on ventilators)
- + Camp Kydnie (kidney disease)
- + Camp Dost (cancer)
- + Camp JRA (rheumatic diseases)
- + Camp Spifida (spina bifida)
- + CampAbility (families with special needs)
- + Camp HERO (deaf or hard of hearing)
- + Camp ECHO (heart disease)
- + Camp ENERGY (healthy lifestyle changes)
- + Camp Discovery (skin disorders)
- + Camp Lily (adults with intellectual disabilities)

By Kimberly Adler-Morelli

# Transforming healthcare: Technology at your service

Ever heard someone say, “Technology is great — when it works”? Well, it’s working at Geisinger to create a better, more efficient patient experience. Here’s how we’re using technology to be the best in healthcare for you.

## Ambient documentation

Ambient documentation reduces time doctors spend typing during your visit, making it easier and more satisfying for both of you. After asking your permission, your physician uses an app that records your conversation and makes notes for your medical record. That way, they can concentrate on you instead of the keyboard.

“The app records and catches anything that’s important so I can focus on listening to the patient, caring for them, understanding, creating a plan, communicating,” says family medicine physician Seneca Harberger, MD. “Basically, it removes distractions for me.”

After your visit, the doctor reviews the notes for accuracy and signs it. The recorded information is secure, too. Data from your conversation



*A patient access rep explains how to use facial recognition at a check-in kiosk.*

is only available for 30 days, then it’s gone from the server. At no time is any information stored on the doctor’s device.

Right now, ambient documentation is available mostly in primary care and a few specialties.

## Virtual nursing

Nursing shortages are straining healthcare organizations nationwide. To support its nurse workforce, Geisinger is using innovative technology for remote care of hospitalized patients.

Virtual nurses handle some of the administrative responsibilities by connecting with you through an iPad. That gives your bedside nurses more time to care for you face to face.

“New tools and technology help us care for patients both in the hospital setting as well as in their homes,” says Janet Tomcavage, RN, Geisinger executive vice president and chief nursing executive. “Our virtual nursing platform has allowed us to leverage data from our sickest patients to identify those who might need closer



observation. We're using technology now to assist with admissions and discharges and free up our bedside nurses to provide hands-on care."

"We also help bedside nurses with 'non-touch' tasks like medication signoffs," says virtual nurse Casey Griffin, RN. Plus, they can let the bedside nurses know if a patient needs anything.

Patients can see firsthand how this technology helps. "Initially, when we come on screen, they'll realize we're not AI, but a real person, and we're listening to them and taking our time," says Ms. Griffin. "By the end of the admission or discharge, they're understanding the benefits."

### Facial recognition check-in

This technology is already available in many facilities throughout Geisinger's service area, with more to come. Once you're enrolled, a camera identifies your face when you arrive for your appointment. The benefits? Better security — you don't risk anyone overhearing your date of birth, Social Security number or medical record number — and a quicker check-in. You can enroll at your next appointment in just a few minutes.

### Hello Patient

The new Hello Patient feature lets you tell us when you're in the clinic reception area and ready for your appointment. Just log into your MyGeisinger account via the MyChart app and mark your arrival or use 2-way texting to let us know you've arrived.

Don't have a MyGeisinger account yet? Sign up at [mygeisinger.org](https://mygeisinger.org), then download the MyChart app and take advantage of all the convenient features.



*A pharmacist talks with a Hospital at Home patient during a virtual visit.*



*Doctor-patient interactions improve when ambient documentation takes notes.*



*A desktop camera can take patient photos for easier check-in.*

### Hospital at Home

Through in-home visits, virtual check-ins and remote monitoring technology, Geisinger's Hospital at Home program offers hospital-level care — right where you live. As a patient, you can wear your own clothes, eat your own food and keep family, pets and friends close by with no visiting hours. All the comforts of home, plus quality care. Hospital at Home is covered by your insurance, just like an inpatient hospital stay.

The program isn't for every patient. Ideal candidates are recovering from a condition that requires hospitalization, but not around-the-clock observation. If you're eligible for Hospital at Home, you'll get:

- Daily in-person and virtual visits from your medical team
- A device you wear on your arm that monitors your vital signs
- A tablet with a call bell that connects you with your medical team (no Wi-Fi needed!)
- Any needed treatments, oxygen or medical equipment

From check-ins to getting hospital care in the comfort of your home, technology is making great strides in improving processes. And when it's skillfully applied, it enhances the very human, very personalized care you've come to expect from all your healthcare team members.

*Because of you*

Unrestricted gifts from donors totaling \$170,000 helped launch the Virtual Inpatient Nursing Program. That's led to shorter average hospital stays for our patients — shining a light on how philanthropy makes a real difference.

You can help too: [geisinger.org/becauseofyou](https://geisinger.org/becauseofyou)

By Beth Kaszuba



Calling all curious kids!

# I spy with my little eye... A world of adventure outside!

Do you ever *really* look at the sights just outside your window?

No matter where you live, there's so much to see. Let's get out there and explore with a scavenger hunt!

Finding everything might take you less than a day — or all summer. There's no hurry. The more time you spend in the sunshine having fun, the better!



Can you find:



3 different birds

Red car



Stick shaped like a letter, like a Y or W

Lawn chair



Garden hose

3 stones that are different colors

Crack in the pavement



4 kinds of flowers (Don't pick — just look.)



Outdoor lights

Flowerpot



Cloud that looks like an animal — draw it here.

4 different insects



Fountain



Pine tree



Wind chimes

Tomato plant



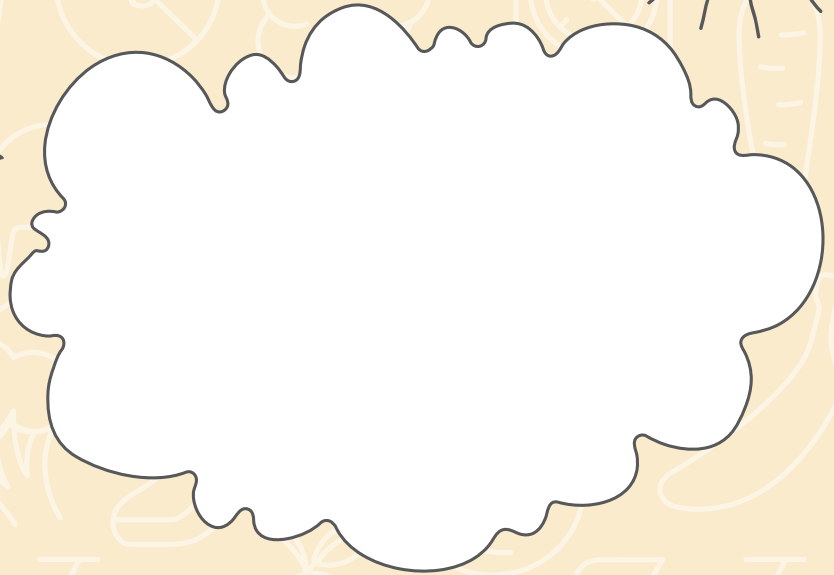
Dog on a walk

Stop sign



Bonus: Can you find a 4-leaf clover?  
If so, it's your lucky day!

Smile brightly! Sunshine gives you vitamin D, which builds strong bones — and teeth.



Did you find anything else interesting while you were exploring? We'd love to know!

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Hi, adults! ZING543210 is Geisinger's fun way to laugh more, eat healthier and get moving. There's even a card game that lets kids and adults build better habits. Help the kids in your life complete the scavenger hunt. Share their checklists with us, and we'll send you a deck of ZING543210 cards. Email them to [pahealth@geisinger.edu](mailto:pahealth@geisinger.edu) or mail to PA Health, M.C. 40-20, 100 N. Academy Ave., Danville, PA 17822. Happy hunting!



# Geisinger

M.C. 40-20  
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Danville, PA 17822

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

## Lucky find?

If you picked up this copy of *PA Health* in a hospital or clinic, why not subscribe? Have health and wellness delivered free to your mailbox or inbox.

[geisinger.org/magazine](http://geisinger.org/magazine)

# Geisinger



Janet Weis  
Children's Hospital

## Geisinger Janet Weis Children's Hospital: Where every child matters

Thanks for helping celebrate 3 amazing decades of caring for the little ones who light up our world!

For 30 years, thousands of kids from Pennsylvania and beyond have gotten the world-class care and cutting-edge technology they deserve. But Geisinger Janet Weis Children's Hospital isn't just about healing. It's about giving every child the best chance to thrive and grow into the amazing adults they're meant to be.

Investing in our children is critical, because we're investing in our future. They're the ones who will shape tomorrow — and we're honored to be a part of their journey from the very beginning.

So, let's raise a cheer for 30 more years of hope, healing and happiness!

Visit [geisinger.org/jwch30](http://geisinger.org/jwch30) for more.

