



UHS Stay Healthy

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YOUR RESOURCE
FOR HEALTHY LIVING
AND WELLNESS

+ Wendy Barnum found solace in UHS' nurse navigator program when she was diagnosed with breast cancer.

Navigating *the* diagnosis

UHS nurse navigators help breast cancer patients cope with their treatment and more

KEEPING UP THE GOOD WORK

UHS ensures top-quality care with Commission on Cancer accreditation

TIPS FOR A SAFE AND HAPPY HOLIDAY

Minimize stress and safety hazards unique to this time of year

An array of services

Every month, UHS receives feedback from *Stay Healthy* readers. Many of these loyal fans tell us how much they've learned about health and wellness in the pages of the magazine. We are very grateful for their comments and grateful, too, that we have such a large and loyal readership across the Southern Tier.



That's because *Stay Healthy* is one of the important ways we keep in touch with you, our patients and our communities. Like our website, nyuhs.org, this publication gives us the opportunity to keep you informed about the latest

enhancements in care and services offered by UHS.

Take just a few of the stories in this issue, for example: Here you will find an update on the UHS Wilson Project, which will feature a new Emergency Department, helipad and 120 private patient rooms in the six-story Wilson Main Tower. We also highlight our expanded Neurosurgery team, with four outstanding physicians bringing a new level of expertise in neurosciences to our hospitals. You will learn how our nurse navigators guide cancer patients through the challenges of their disease, plus how we're improving access to care through volunteers driving people to their cancer treatment appointments.

We are very proud of the wide array of services we offer to the Southern Tier and of the exceptional care provided by our team of dedicated healthcare professionals—including those featured in this and upcoming issues of *Stay Healthy*. As always, we're committed to keeping you well-informed about new developments at UHS that can have a positive effect on your well-being today and in the future.

Thank you for your continued interest. Good reading!

John M. Carrig
PRESIDENT AND CEO OF UHS



UHS Wilson Project sees rapid progress

The UHS Wilson Project is moving forward, with work progressing rapidly on the Wilson Main Tower. The tower is right on the campus of UHS Wilson Medical Center, facing Main Street in Johnson City. Work on the exterior of the tower is nearing completion, with much of the focus now moving to the space indoors. Activity is happening on every floor.

The new tower, scheduled to open in Spring 2024, will consist of 120 private patient rooms, each with its own private bathroom, and a new, enlarged Emergency Department linked to a rooftop helipad for life-flight transports. The building also will be equipped with a new in-house magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) machine. The tower is near two other UHS projects planned to open in the near future: a new 24/7 UHS Pharmacy location and the new UHS Child Care Center, both also on Main Street.

The Wilson Project demonstrates UHS' commitment to healthcare access and quality for the entire Southern Tier. The goal is to create an exceptional patient experience.



✦ The Wilson Project is on track to open this upcoming spring and redefine health care for the Southern Tier.

Now on board

UHS builds strength in neurosurgery

As part of UHS' commitment to bringing our patients the highest quality care, we welcome four new neurosurgeons to our medical staff. After a national search, UHS is pleased to introduce Simone Betchen, MD, as the new chief of Neurosciences. Dr. Betchen comes to the Southern Tier with extraordinary clinical and leadership experience in the neurosciences field.

Two more neurosurgeons have joined the department recently as well. Kenneth Foxx, MD, was born at UHS Wilson Medical Center and grew up in Binghamton before leaving the area to pursue his education in Rochester. He loves his hometown and its residents so much that he returned and brought another neurosurgeon with him: his wife, Katarzyna Czerniecka-Foxx, MD.

Rounding out the team is Paul Mauer, MD, who served as chairman of Neurosurgery at Rochester Regional Health Systems and professor of neurosurgery at the University of Rochester Medical Center, where he trained and mentored the Foxxes. Having practiced for 25 years, Dr. Mauer will serve in an emeritus role, lending the department his experience and expertise.



✦ From left: Drs. Katarzyna Czerniecka-Foxx, Kenneth Foxx, Simone Betchen and Paul Maurer are the latest additions to the UHS neurosurgery team.

These surgeons are providing high-quality patient care and bringing to the UHS program a focus on listening to patients. UHS is committed to helping patients get access to their surgeons in a timely manner so they can have their questions answered. Having a good patient experience contributes to a good clinical outcome.



24/7 pharmacy to find new home on Main Street

UHS is expanding its pharmacy services to accommodate patients' needs whenever and wherever those needs arise. Southern Tier residents can fill their prescriptions at the 24/7 UHS Pharmacy Wilson Place, 52 Harrison St. in Johnson City.

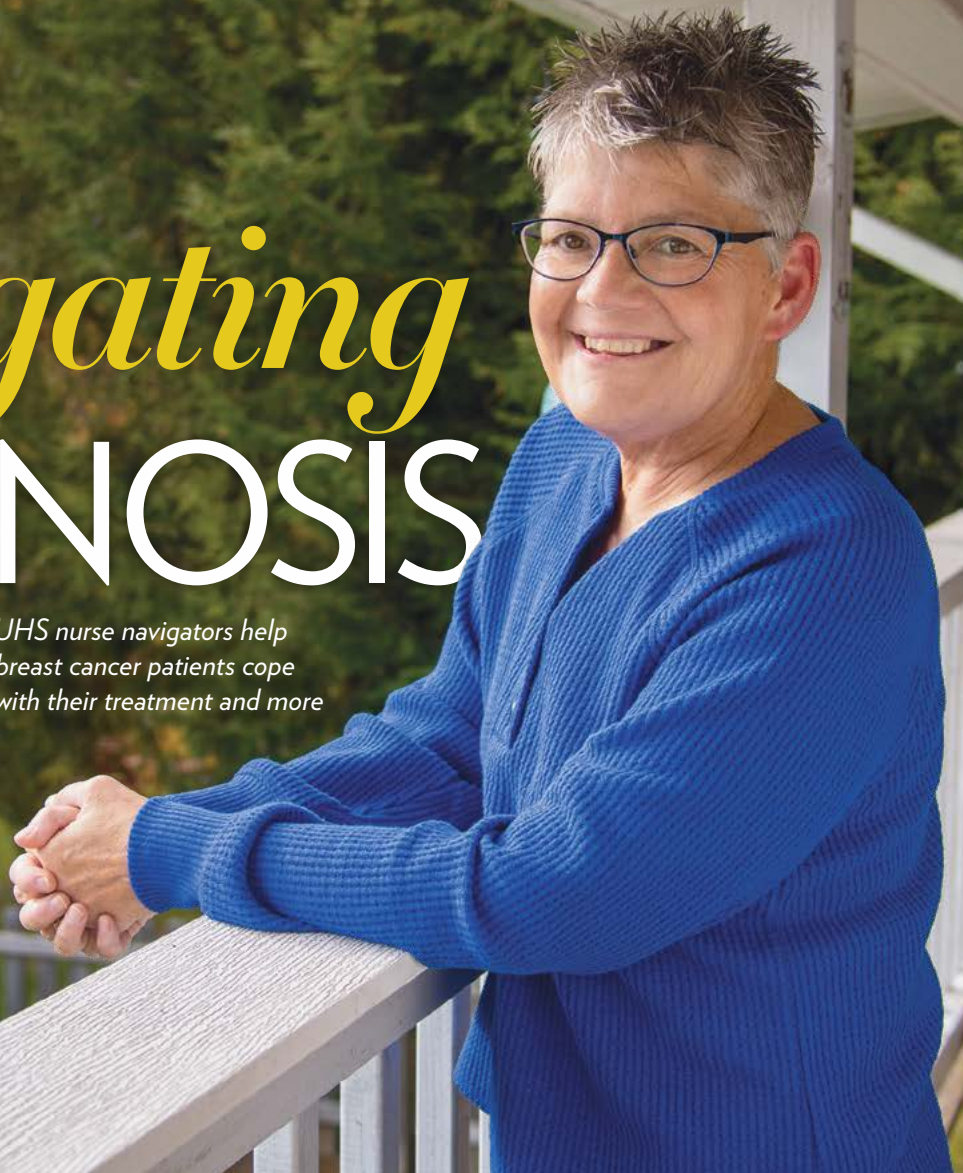
The Wilson Place location is Greater Binghamton's only 24-hour pharmacy. It is conveniently close to all local hospitals, making it helpful for patients who are leaving one of the emergency rooms or being discharged after hours and needing a prescription.

And by early 2024, that pharmacy will be moving to an even more centralized location: 345 Main Street. Work started this fall on the 10,000-square-foot structure, the site of a former CVS retail store. It's on the other side of the street from the Wilson Main Tower, now under construction. One of the new pharmacy's key features will be a drive-up window for prescriptions.

The site will also include the UHS Specialty Pharmacy, focusing on medications for patients with complex and chronic medical conditions, as well as a vaccination clinic.

Navigating THE DIAGNOSIS

UHS nurse navigators help breast cancer patients cope with their treatment and more



What seemed like a routine mammogram for Wendy Barnum, a Southern Tier resident, soon became the diagnosis that changed everything. Throughout her life, she had dense tissue and benign lumps. Ms. Barnum thought to herself: “Here we go again,” as she walked into her appointment. She didn’t expect that to lead to a cancer diagnosis in April 2019, leaving her with a new array of questions and challenges to overcome.

“You hear about breast cancer, but you’d never think: ‘This just happened to me,’” Ms. Barnum said.

The UHS Breast Center strives to be a leading provider of oncology care, ensuring it offers not only a comprehensive program that treats the physical aspect of battling cancer but also a nurse navigator program that assists patients with the mental

and emotional toll that comes with a diagnosis and treatment.

“There are a lot of components that go on,” Ms. Barnum said. “You get your mammogram, they give their interpretations, you get your biopsy, and then you get the biopsy results. But the biopsy results take some time. So, from the point of time when I had the biopsy to the discussion about the type of breast cancer, my nurse navigators were instrumental in getting me through the terror of that week.”

PROVIDING REASSURANCE

Getting a cancer diagnosis can be an exhausting experience. During this emotional time, patients can be overwhelmed with advice—sometimes unsolicited—from friends, family and an endless



For more information or to schedule a mammogram, visit nyuhs.org/care-treatment/womens-health/breast-health

supply of internet resources. UHS Oncology nurse navigators are available to guide patients from diagnosis to post-treatment, helping them follow a plan that's right for them. They also assist with care coordination, taking notes during appointments and advocating to providers on the patient's behalf while remaining available to answer any patient questions.

"I look at it as I'm their friend on the inside," said Julia Mack, BSN, RN, CBCN, at UHS. "I'm here to relieve some of the stress for them during a very overwhelming time. I advocate for timely appointments, coordinate those appointments and get the balls rolling to start cancer treatment as quickly as possible. I'm well versed in evidence-based breast cancer treatment, so I use my knowledge to help them."

Ms. Mack said one of the ways nurse navigators stay involved in care is by attending appointments and taking notes to print out for patients following their appointments. This way, patients don't have to worry about absorbing and understanding all the information right away. They have notes they can look back on to process and can contact a nurse navigator to clarify anything their providers said to them.

Ms. Barnum said at the beginning of her diagnosis, she would play "Dr. Google." Ms. Mack helped her stay out of that downward spiral by answering questions she would have as a result and urging her to look only at the American Cancer Society's website if she must insist on going online.

"I was calling them twice a day," Ms. Barnum said. "I would get off the phone, and I could feel myself

crawling out of the rabbit hole I had put myself in. I could not have gotten through that without them. It was a lot of reassurance, but they weren't just saying, 'Everything's going to be fine.' They gently held my hand through the process."

UHS nurse navigators are trained to serve not only as a nurse but also an advocate and friend. They offer information and support for all patients with breast care issues while scheduling surgical consultations and relaying information to primary and specialty care providers.

"It's overwhelming when you hear that you have cancer to start with.

There are a lot of different treatment avenues that you're going to be visiting, most likely. Sometimes, the hardest part is knowing who to call," Ms. Mack said.

BONDS THAT LAST A LIFETIME

Today, Ms. Barnum is approaching her fifth year post-surgery and is enjoying time with family and friends. She loves power walking, watching football, dominating at fantasy football and being anywhere near water. She still utilizes support from her nurse navigator team at the UHS Breast Center and goes in twice a year—one visit for a mammogram and another for a clinical exam.

"I love to go in and see them," Ms. Barnum said. "It sounds strange to say, given a breast cancer diagnosis, but I had a wonderful experience with the UHS Breast Center. I consider these people, these women, my friends."

Ms. Mack encourages her patients to call their nurse navigator with any questions, no matter how silly it may seem. They understand that patients may feel defeated, confused and bombarded with information, so having someone they can talk to and bond with is important.

"We maintain a relationship sometimes into years after their initial treatment. You build bonds with patients during that scary time, and they last," Ms. Mack said. "It's nice to see patients coming back after having completed their treatment and doing well. It's what keeps me coming to work every day." 🌱

While the UHS Breast Center located at UHS Vestal on the Vestal Parkway provides the greatest number of breast health programs available from UHS, services are also available at:

- **UHS Chenango Memorial Hospital:** digital mammograms and a breast surgeon; for more information, call **607-337-4111**
- **UHS Delaware Valley Hospital:** digital mammograms; for more information, call **607-865-2126**



✦ Ms. Julia Mack (left), a nurse navigator at UHS, consults Ms. Barnum on her cancer treatment options.



To read more about UHS patients and get cancer advice, visit stayhealthyuhs.org

Keeping up the good work

UHS maintains quality through Commission on Cancer accreditation

For people in the Southern Tier facing a cancer diagnosis, it should be a great relief to know they can receive excellent care through UHS Oncology Services. The oncology program is in its ninth year of accreditation from the Commission on Cancer (CoC), a consortium of professionals and organizations dedicated to providing the highest quality cancer care under the auspices of the American College of Surgeons. By participating in the accreditation process, UHS has committed to adhering to quality standards in care delivery and other ways of providing for patients' longevity and quality of life.

"There are eight different areas we focus on to maintain the accreditation," explains Kimberly Pilarchik, director of Oncology Services for UHS. Among these are the education and credentialing of providers, education for staff, caring for patients, support and survivorship, nutrition counseling and more. "It's an extremely comprehensive look at best practices for cancer care," continues Ms. Pilarchik, "and one aspect of that is the yearly quality or performance improvement project."

GOING ABOVE STANDARD CARE

One recent improvement focused on patients who developed lymphedema, a painful fluid accumulation in the tissues that commonly occurs after radiation therapy. In the past, it might have taken up to 30 days for patients with lymphedema to be evaluated and helped. But because of the multidisciplinary quality improvement project including physicians, lymphedema therapists and the nurse navigator, UHS significantly decreased the time between referrals and the start of therapy.

"What separates our program is the way that we're interpreting the guidelines through our ancillary and supportive care services for patients," Ms. Pilarchik explains. "We're not just clinically treating their cancer. We have a whole program and staff, including social workers, nutritionists, patient navigators and others who are helping patients understand their diagnosis. We're educating them, offering counseling during care, and providing support groups and other supportive services."

"What separates our program is the way that we're interpreting the guidelines through our ancillary and supportive care services for patients."

KIMBERLY PILARCHIK,
DIRECTOR OF ONCOLOGY
SERVICES FOR UHS



Patients who come to UHS Wilson Medical Center for radiation treatment or chemotherapy can access the support services available in the same location. When discussing how the CoC accreditation benefits patients, Ms. Pilarchik says, "I think what's important to know is that the accreditation provides a framework for high-quality cancer care and that our staff members and medical teams work within that framework to constantly improve and innovate with respect to the services that we provide." 🌱



PHOTO COURTESY OF AMERICAN CANCER SOCIETY


Changing lives, one ride at a time

Volunteer to give people with cancer free rides to treatment

Lack of transportation can be one of the greatest barriers to receiving timely treatment and quality cancer care. Millions of Americans delay or have difficulty getting needed medical care each year due to a lack of available and affordable transportation to treatment.

Family and friends may help, but over several months, they may not always have the time or resources to provide every ride. That's why UHS recently partnered with the American Cancer Society's Road to Recovery program, which removes barriers to cancer treatment by offering people facing cancer free transportation to treatment and other medical appointments.

Volunteer drivers donate their time (as little as one hour a week) and the use of their personal vehicles to give people with cancer free rides to treatment. The program can be truly meaningful in the patient's life, said Kimberly Pilarchik, director of UHS Oncology Services.

"Quite simply, having a volunteer driver available to a patient can mean the difference between the person getting to their appointment and not getting there," she said. "Often, cancer patients' progress depends on whether they have a ride to their appointment. Many patients have multiple clinical appointments and either don't have a car or can't drive. Road to Recovery truly makes a difference." 

GIVE A RIDE

If you can be a driver, sign up now to become the lifeline, enabling patients to get to their appointments. You'll get a pick-me-up feeling in return! Training is provided. To volunteer in your community or for more information, call **800-227-2345** or visit **cancer.org/drive**.



GET A RIDE

If you are a patient in need of transportation to a cancer-related medical appointment, call **800-227-2345** or visit **cancer.org/transportation**. Trained volunteer drivers will pick you up, take you to your appointment and drop you back home when you're finished, at no cost.



Tips for a safe and happy holiday

We might hold some ideal holiday season in our minds, full of joy and happy families. But the reality isn't quite like a greeting card. It can be a stressful and emotionally difficult period for many. "Holidays aren't always happy times for people," says Cara Fraser, LCSW-R, MPA, administrative director of Behavioral Health at UHS Binghamton General Hospital. "In winter, people withdraw and isolate—the human version of hibernation, really—and because of it, people often report increased loneliness, sadness and depression during the winter months and even more so during the holidays."

Fortunately, there are ways to reduce the stress. Fraser advises the following:

- Try to get outside no matter how cold it is during sunlight hours, even if for just 10 to 15 minutes.
- Find a new indoor hobby to keep your mind occupied.
- Maintain social connections or find new ones.
- Reduce social media time. What you see is not always reality.
- Focus on the basics—eating well, sleeping well, exercising.

Another possible stressor can come in the form of parental concern for holiday dangers. Mary DeGuardi, MD, a UHS pediatrician, wants parents to be aware of these ways to reduce risk to kids when it comes to holiday gifts and toys:

- Stick to the recommended age for safety and developmental reasons.
- For kids under 2, avoid electronics.
- Watch out for broken toys with sharp edges.
- Avoid toys with small parts, such as marbles, buttons, or batteries.
- Toys that have shooting or flying objects should be used only outdoors.
- If a child gets a scooter or bike, include a helmet.

Holiday decorations can also pose a hazard. Shiny glass balls on a tree can easily injure a child. And trees should be properly secured to keep curious kids and pets from knocking them over.

"I advise parents that 'less is more.' If there is less around that your child can get into and potentially get hurt, then your holiday is less stressful," Dr. DeGuardi says. "And all parents could use a little less of that around the holidays." 🌲



PUMPKIN CUSTARD

Holiday desserts should feel indulgent, but they don't have to be loaded with sugar or fat to be something special. This pumpkin custard from UHS clinical nutrition coordinator Jaclyn Zindell, MHA, RD, CDN, is flavorful and festive without being excessive.

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 1/2 cups canned pumpkin
- 1/4 cup plain yogurt
- 1/4 cup whole-milk ricotta cheese
- 3 tablespoons honey
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1/8 teaspoon ground ginger
- 1/8 teaspoon ground allspice
- 2 large eggs, separated

DIRECTIONS

Preheat oven to 350°F.

In a medium mixing bowl, stir together canned pumpkin, yogurt, and ricotta cheese until blended. Stir in honey and spices.

Separate egg yolks from whites and stir egg yolks into pumpkin mixture. Beat egg whites until stiff peaks form and fold into mixture.

Pour into six ramekins and bake at 350°F for 25 to 30 minutes until puffed and rounded. Serve immediately.

Nutrient analysis per serving:
Calories: 103; Protein: 5g; Total carbohydrates: 14g; Sodium: 40mg

