

A JOURNAL OF WELLNESS AND GOOD HEALTH CARE

Spring  
2019

# HealthMatters



Quality  
**matters.**



You don't have to travel to get the highest-quality care

From left to right: Amanda Iantosca, DO; Stephanie Joyce, MD; Arun Ranganath, MD

MaineGeneral Health

HealthMatters is published as a service for the people of the Kennebec Valley region. Information is written by MaineGeneral's Marketing and Communications staff.

MaineGeneral Health  
35 Medical Center Parkway  
Augusta, ME 04330  
149 North Street  
Waterville, ME 04901

**Nicole O. McSweeney**  
Executive Editor

Chief Marketing &  
Philanthropy Officer

**Joy McKenna**  
Editor/Writer

**John D. Begin**  
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[public@mainegeneral.org](mailto:public@mainegeneral.org)

[www.mainegeneral.org](http://www.mainegeneral.org)

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## Message from the CEO

Ensuring you and all of our patients get the highest quality health care is the goal of every MaineGeneral employee – every day.

We listen to all your feedback – your good and bad experiences – and work to improve because we care. You are not only our patients, but also our family and friends. We live here with you, and we want to make sure the care you get is the best – right here in the Kennebec Valley. You deserve nothing less.

To help us better serve you, we have changed the way we collect feedback through patient experience surveys that are sent to you soon after you leave our doors. Our surveys are now collected by email and phone. You receive the questionnaire within a day or two of your visit so your experience is fresh in your mind. And the surveys are much shorter than the old paper ones, which we've found leads to better response rates.

We know your time is precious and we really appreciate your honest feedback. We now get on average 5,000 responses per month – about the same amount we used to get in an entire year! The increased feedback helps us improve.

As you can see by the cover of this issue, we have received some awards results that give us great pride in how we're meeting your needs; see pages 3 and 4 for the complete list.

Recognition by outside organizations for work done well is rewarding, but we care most about what you are telling us. When you receive a request for your feedback, please complete the survey.

In addition to the quality and patient experience improvements we're continually undertaking, we also want to celebrate some impressive milestones in this issue. While we've been conditioned to constant and rapid changes in health care, this year MaineGeneral Health celebrates the 30-year anniversaries of our Hospice and Sports Medicine programs.



Both programs provide services that are not traditional hospital-based services people often think of.

You'll also find information in this issue about critical and ongoing work to address the opioid epidemic. We know the toll opioids take on our communities, and we're on the front lines of helping those in our community who are struggling.

Finally, we know when you need quality health care, you want to receive it right here in the Kennebec Valley. Most of the health care services you and your family will need in a lifetime are found here in our region of the state. You don't need to travel to get great care.

Our goal is to keep the services you need most local and of the highest quality. You'll see a visual on page 6 of the range and depth of the services we offer.

This includes access to your preventive and basic care at your primary care practices. You'll see that we've worked to have increased staff at those sites. We're also increasing convenience such as walk-in care at certain locations so when you need us most, we're there.

When you need high-quality health care, we're with you!

Chuck Hays  
President & CEO  
MaineGeneral Health



Michael MacKechnie, MD, MaineGeneral Orthopaedics

When choosing MaineGeneral for health services you and your loved ones need, you expect ready access to skilled and compassionate care. You also want to know the care you receive is among the best you will find.

We know you have choices, and we know quality and experience matter to you.

All MaineGeneral staff strive to give you the best experience – from the moment you make an appointment or walk through our doors to following up on the care you have received.

Quality can mean a lot of things, and we work on all of them. Hard data shows our success with low readmission and infection rates, but data only tells part of the story.

That's why we invested in better systems to track your experience, so we can constantly improve.

Our real-time feedback shows that getting through to our offices, scheduling timely appointments, staff helpfulness, addressing medication costs and including you in your health decisions are very important to you.

We are making progress in all of these areas.

Independently, we have been noted for our quality care.

MaineGeneral has received other awards, certifications and designations that speak to the quality care you can expect to receive.

- Receiving four out of five stars by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) in its star ratings for hospitals on the Hospital Compare website.

Kenji Saito, MD, Workplace Health

- Ranking “Best” for effective treatments in Maternity, Blood Clot and Stroke care on GetBetterMaine.org.
- Maternity & Pediatrics earned the national Blue Distinction Specialty Care designation, a program of the BlueCross BlueShield Association recognizing health care facilities that demonstrate expertise in delivering safe and effective, high-quality care.
- Echocardiology is now accredited by the Intersocietal Accreditation Commission (IAC). The IAC holds the highest nationally recognized quality standards for echocardiogram (ECHO) imaging.
- MaineGeneral Rehabilitation and Long Term Care at Glenridge was awarded five stars, the highest rating from Medicare. The rating is comprised of results from quality measures, staffing and health inspections. This recognition validates the high level of care our Glenridge teams give the residents on a daily basis.
- MaineGeneral received the American Heart and American Stroke Associations’ Get with the Guidelines Stroke Silver Plus Achievement Award, which recognizes MaineGeneral’s up-to-date, evidence-based stroke treatment guidelines.

*Continued on next page*



# Awards and recognition

Healthgrades analyzed more than 45 million Medicare medical claims records over the last three years\* to determine its hospital quality ratings. MaineGeneral achieved top grades:



MaineGeneral Medical Center earned an "A" on the Spring 2019 Leapfrog Hospital Safety Grade. Developed under the guidance of an expert panel, the Leapfrog Hospital Safety Grade uses 30 measures of publicly available hospital safety data to assign letter grades to more than 2,600 U.S. hospitals.



Women's Choice also gave MaineGeneral 2019 America's Best Awards, recognizing MaineGeneral for:



\*2015-2017

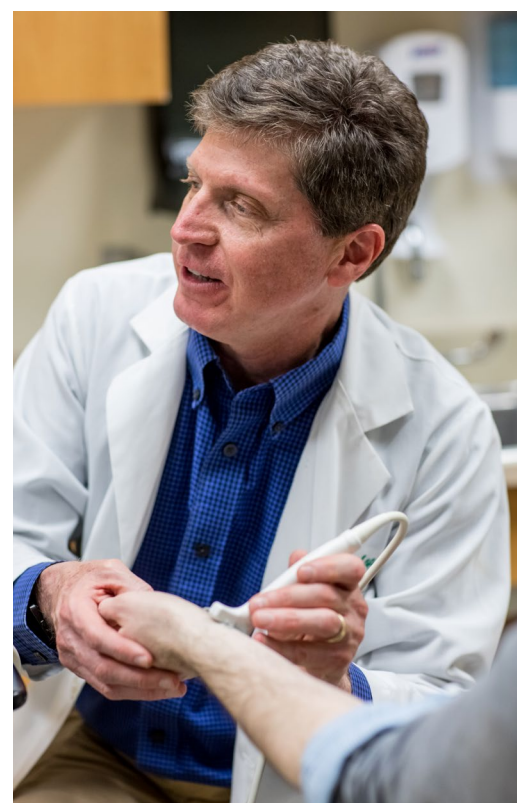
It also acknowledges the efforts of Emergency Medical Services (EMS) and our Emergency Departments to improve response times and patient care.

- The Comfort Care Unit at Glenridge received the Maine Health Care Association's Innovation Award. This award is given to long-term and skilled facilities that implement exceptional programs that improve resident care and quality of life, enhance employee development and relationships and engage the community. The Comfort Care Unit serves terminally ill patients receiving hospice and palliative care.
- Kennebec Pediatrics and Winthrop Pediatric & Adolescent Medicine were recognized as 2018 Let's Go! Healthcare Sites of Distinction! for their commitment to excellence in childhood obesity prevention.

- The US Department of Health & Human Services awarded MaineGeneral its Gold Recognition for our National Hospital Organ Donation Campaign which encourages enrollment in our state registry as organ, eye and tissue donors.
- MaineGeneral received the C. Everett Koop Award Honorable Mention for improving the well-being of employees through evidence-based health promotion programs.
- MaineGeneral was awarded the Pro Patria Award from the Maine ESGR in 2018. The award recognizes employers for their steadfast support of its National Guard and Reserve employees.
- MaineGeneral's Baby-Friendly Birth Facility Designation was renewed this year. The Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative (BFHI), launched in 1991, is an effort by UNICEF and the World Health Organization to ensure that birth facilities become centers of breastfeeding support for new moms and their babies.

- MaineGeneral received Joint Commission Acute Stroke Ready Hospital re-certification in 2018 and Stroke Rehabilitation certification in 2017.

James Dunlap, MD, MaineGeneral Orthopaedics



## Local woman cancer-free thanks to Mohs surgery

Last year MaineGeneral Medical Center began providing the latest surgical technology to fight skin cancer: Mohs micrographic surgery, or Mohs surgery, which is offered in Augusta.

Mohs surgery is the most advanced, precise and effective treatment for skin cancer, offering the highest cure rates while preserving healthy tissue. Skin cancer is removed in stages, in the office, until all cancer has been removed.

MaineGeneral Medical Center (with MDFMR Dermatology Services) is the only Mohs providers in the Kennebec Valley.

Recently, Debra Susi, a teacher at Maine Central Institute and respected director at the Waterville Opera House, experienced Mohs surgery firsthand, which started with a visit to a salon.

“The esthetician at the salon asked about two teeny-tiny, raised translucent spots, (almost wart-like in shape), one on my cheek and the other on my nose. She had a very worried look on her face,” Susi recalls. “She told me my two spots weren’t normal old-age growths and encouraged me to make an appointment with my doctor right away. Those words sent me running, not walking, to my primary care provider (PCP).”

Susi’s PCP was concerned and wanted to make sure that whoever was going to treat the area had the proper background/experience to deal with the spot. Her PCP then referred Susi to Dr. Dan Filitis, a Mohs surgeon with MaineGeneral Medical Center and MDFMR Dermatology Services.



Dan Filitis, MD, MDFMR Dermatology Services, with Debra Susi

“The Mohs procedure on my cheek was pretty straightforward - all of the cancer was eradicated in one stage and I was in and out of surgery within a few hours,” Susi says. “My nose was a bit of a surprise for both patient and doctor. The procedure was long and more involved than originally anticipated. However, those words ‘cancer-free’ made the wait, the process and my long recovery worth every minute.”

*“Professional, compassionate, educative and highly skilled. I had done a great deal of research beforehand, and Dr. Filitis and his team made sure I understood what was happening throughout the process.”*

*– Debra Susi*

Susi is incredibly grateful she can say she is cancer-free and is feeling stronger every day. And, being a teacher first and foremost, she has some lessons to share. “Don’t assume only sunbathers get skin cancer. I have never been one to lie in the sun, yet I am the first in my family to be diagnosed with any type of cancer, skin or otherwise.

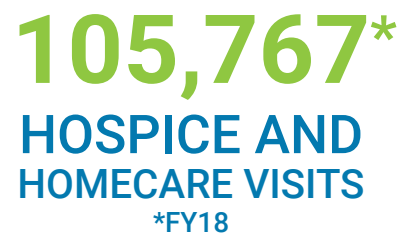
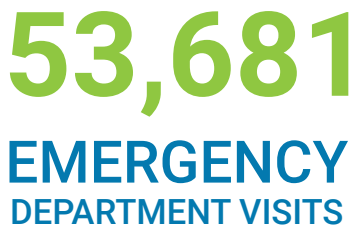
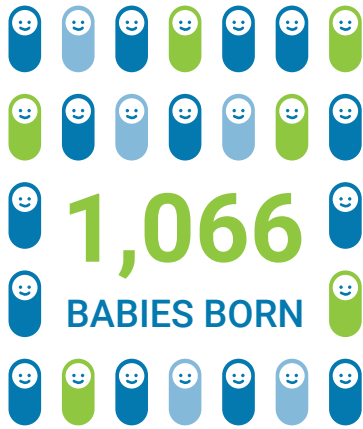
“Be aware of the cancer signs and symptoms and be proactive! One thing Dr. Filitis said that has stuck with me is many patients with skin cancer have ignored initial warning signs. He complimented me for noticing subtle changes and checking with my PCP.”

As Susi looks forward to a healthy future, she will forever be indebted and thankful to the team at MDFMR Dermatology Services that took care of her following her diagnosis.

To learn more about Mohs surgery call **207-623-6680**.

The MaineGeneral Health System:  
Serving you and your family with high-quality, patient-centered care.

Here's a glimpse at how we've served our community in the past year



# MaineGeneral's inpatient and outpatient rehab staff credited with Jamie Bean's recovery from a devastating stroke

A week of intense headaches and sleeplessness may have been more concerning to him if he had a family history or was a few years older.

But Jamie Bean was only 39. Being a candidate for a stroke was the furthest thing from his mind – until he stepped out of his truck Dec. 9 and had trouble walking. He started to lose feeling in his left arm shortly after and knew something was seriously wrong.

He told his wife Erica and stepdaughters Hanna and Halle that he thought he was having a stroke. A 911 call followed and then a trip to the emergency department at the Alford Center for Health (ACH) in Augusta where the medical staff confirmed that he had a stroke.

Imaging work and diagnostic tests determined that an aneurysm caused a severe right-side brain bleed and resulted in paralysis of his left side. After nine days in intensive care in Bangor, Jamie's condition was stable enough for him to transition to an acute rehabilitation program.

Stroke survivor Jamie Bean, happy to be home with wife Erica, stepdaughters Hanna, left, and Halle, and English bulldog Angus.



Without knowing much about its staff or services, the family opted for MaineGeneral's Physical Rehabilitation Unit at the ACH to be closer to their Sidney home. It was there, Erica says, that Jamie's miracle happened.

When Jamie got to the unit on Dec. 18, he couldn't even sit up on the bed. By the time he was discharged on Jan. 22, he walked out of the hospital using a cane.

Jamie Bean is effusive in his praise for the therapists and nursing staff, as well as acute rehab Medical Director Dr. Emese Simon, for the expert, compassionate care they gave him and for how they treated his family while they adjusted to a catastrophic event.

"The therapists gave me 100 percent every day. The physical therapists got me back on my feet and the occupational therapists taught me how to do basic things like taking a shower and getting dressed – things I needed to re-learn because I was handicapped," he says, adding that he also received therapy to improve speech deficits caused by his stroke.

Erica adds she will be forever appreciative for how the staff welcomed the family as partners in Jamie's recovery.

"They were phenomenal in letting us participate in his recovery. We could see what he was doing and the progress he was making," she says. "That was so important because we learned how we could help him at home to make sure he's always moving and always accelerating in his recovery."

The MaineGeneral staff were particularly supportive in light of the timing of Jamie's stroke, just a few weeks before Christmas.

"If I gave them a Yelp review, it would be five stars. What they did was the greatest thing because it

came during some very dark times for me and my family," Jamie says. "MaineGeneral even let my dog Angus visit me. They allowed my wife and stepdaughters to sleep in my room so we could have Christmas Eve together. They were very caring, very concerned about my recovery and just very nice people."

Stepdaughter Hanna Turgeon echoes his glowing endorsement.

"I know we wouldn't be where we are without them," she says. "They pushed Jamie to improve with each therapy session and the care they provided was incredible."

Now four months after his discharge from inpatient rehab, Jamie continues to receive physical and occupational therapy at MaineGeneral Outpatient Therapy in Augusta while also doing his daily "extra-credit homework" at home. This concerted effort has brought remarkable results.

"I know there's so much more progress for him to make but I'm so thankful every day that he's here with us because it's truly a miracle," Erica says. "Three months ago, I didn't think he'd be standing at the front door waiting to greet me with a kiss when I come home."

Jamie says he'll continue to do the hard work to regain his strength and function, motivated by his family's love and support.

"I'll keep working at it because I know repetition is going to help rewire my brain," he says. "I have a great family support system and they're always willing to work with me. I'm very lucky."

To learn more about MaineGeneral's Physical Rehabilitation Unit, call [207-248-0027](tel:207-248-0027).

## Providing greater access to meet patients' primary care needs

Dr. Ben Brown remembers the frustration area residents expressed just a few years ago when their phone calls to various MaineGeneral primary care practices failed to find one accepting new patients.



Ben Brown, MD

That's not the case these days, says Brown, medical director for Primary Care at MaineGeneral Medical Center (MGMC). Concerted efforts to recruit and retain primary care medical staff – along with other positive actions – have resulted in greater patient access to primary care services throughout the Kennebec Valley.

"Although a relatively large one, we're still a community hospital and much of that role is based on taking care of the community as a whole. If we're not able to see patients, we're not providing that care," he says.

"Thanks to the work we've done as a health care system, we're clearly better than we were a few years ago at providing patients with access to primary care services."

– Ben Brown, MD

"For some of our practices, we now have much better staffing levels and accessibility than we did before," Brown adds. "The changes we've made have helped increase the number of medical staff we have in the practices as well as streamline the process to get people in sooner while also providing the practice with the information and support it needs."

Laura Tracy, administrative director for Primary Care at MGMC, says MaineGeneral's previous challenges of not having enough primary care providers to meet the community's medical needs aren't unique to Maine or the nation.



Laura Tracy

Part of the issue, she says, is a national trend with family medicine-trained physicians and medical staff who seek other types of work situations. The field is personally demanding and many who start out in the field may choose to become hospitalists or transition to other medical specialties.

To combat this trend and other factors impacting primary care practices locally, MaineGeneral took action.

A concerted focus on medical staff recruitment and retention was coupled with the promotion of MaineGeneral Express Care's locations in Augusta and Waterville as places where patients without

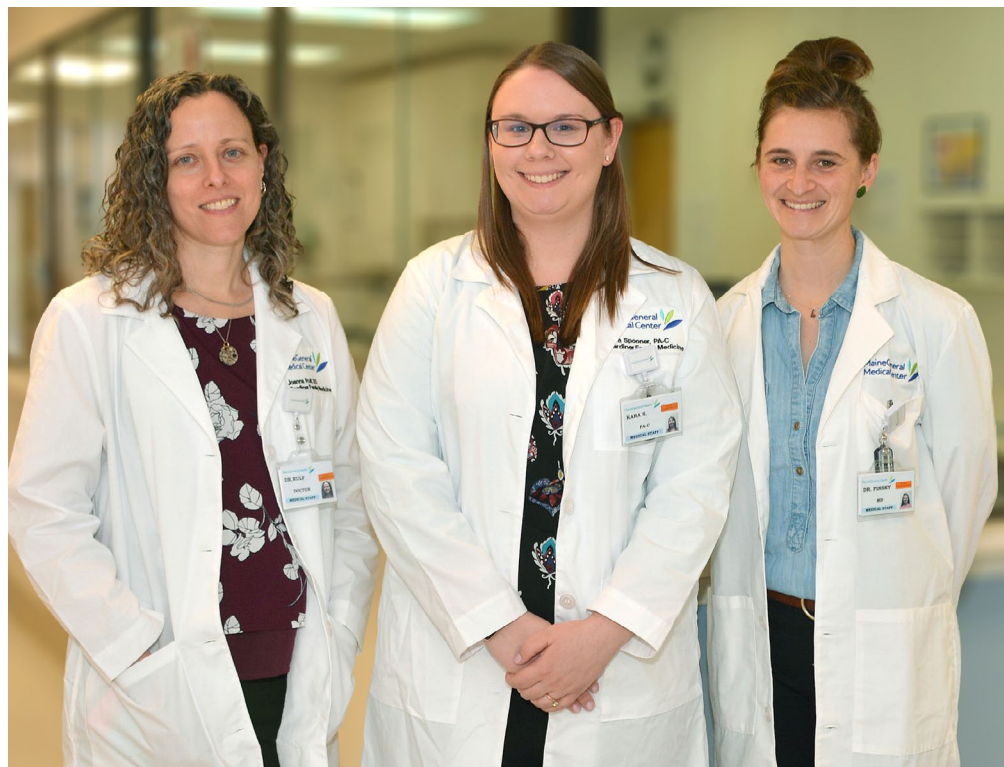
a primary care practice could have their non-emergency medical needs met – and be connected to a convenient practice that was accepting new patients.



Future Gardiner Family Medicine location

"We've been much more successful with recruiting new providers, filling vacancies and retaining people – which is a huge win for our community and our system," Tracy says. "That's helped us with everything else that comes after it, like making sure all of our practices are accepting new patients, and having walk-in hours available so patients don't need to wait for an appointment and can access care when they need it."

From left to right: Joanna Rulf, DO; Kara Spooner, PA-C; and Maia Pinsky, MD, Gardiner Family Medicine





Practices were re-tooled to employ the team approach to care of a “patient-centered medical home” that benefits both patients and medical staff. Physicians, nurse practitioners and physician assistants are complemented by experienced registered nurses, medical assistants, support staff, licensed clinical social workers, social workers and others who address patients’ medical needs and, often, so much more.

“All of these resources support the patients and give them a much broader array of services within our primary care practices,” she adds. “They also support our medical staff and make their work and work-life balance better.

Most of MaineGeneral’s primary care practices now also offer walk-in “Convenient Care” hours each day for established patients to have their acute care needs met without an appointment.

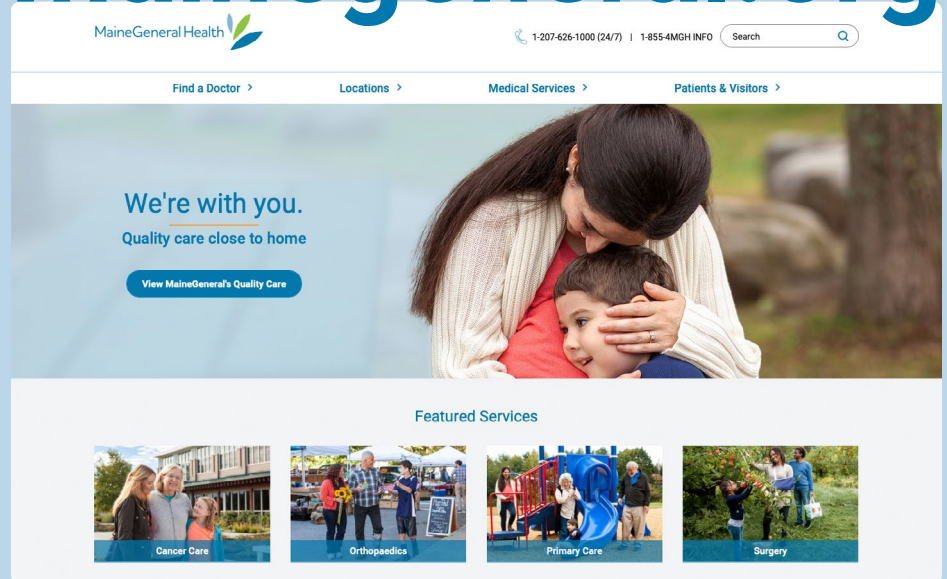
And the latest change on the horizon, scheduled for late 2019, is the opening of Gardiner Crossing, a new facility in Gardiner that will house Gardiner Family Medicine, imaging and lab services and a third MaineGeneral Express Care practice.

The positive response from patients shows just how much they appreciate MaineGeneral’s efforts.

“People were frustrated when most of our practices were closed to new patients. Now, when we get calls from patients, we can take them on and get them in for an appointment,” Tracy says. “Oftentimes, we can see them for an acute need even before we receive their records from their old practice. We’ve worked to expedite the process for patients and they’ve been very grateful.”

To learn more about MaineGeneral’s primary care services, visit [www.mainegeneral.org/medical-services/primary-care](http://www.mainegeneral.org/medical-services/primary-care).

# The NEW mainegeneral.org



As fast as health care delivery is changing, so are the tools by which you get information about your health care options. We’re pleased to offer you a more streamlined, robust experience on MaineGeneral’s website: [www.mainegeneral.org](http://www.mainegeneral.org).

The last version of the MaineGeneral Health website went live 5 ½ years ago – the same time as the opening of the Alford Center for Health. While constantly updating information on that website, the functionality aged quickly; the search features for doctors and services were difficult; and it took too many clicks to get to the information you wanted.

We heard you. At any given moment, you need quick and reliable information about your health care.

“Our community needs and deserves quick access to information,” says Nicole McSweeney, chief marketing and philanthropy officer at MaineGeneral Health. “That’s true if you need a quick appointment for your sick child, or if you realized you’ve gone without your checkup and you want to get caught up on your preventive screenings.

“Our old website was clunky and frustrating. You had to click multiple times for information about practice hours or to find out your options for care. We began the new website with

the question we ask every time we seek to improve our services: how do we bring the highest-quality, patient-centered resources to our patients and community?”

The new website is designed to be mobile-friendly, meaning the experience for users on their cell phones is as convenient and easy to navigate as it is through traditional desktop access. The website is designed for ease of use in searches of services, doctors and locations.

The site features the FollowMyHealth® Patient Portal, which offers registered users information about their past and upcoming appointments. The portal also offers direct communications to medical staff, and the ability to request prescriptions and appointments.

You can also access our outstanding Prevention & Healthy Living classes easily, and you can see patient experience and quality information for practices.

“We hope community members find the new website a tool that gives them quick access to the information they need most,” McSweeney says. “Our goal is to always treat our patients and families the way we want to be treated, and that includes having access to health care at their fingertips.”



From left to right: Nicole McSweeney, Kim Smith, Victoria Abbott, Sarah Kalagher, Deb Bowden

## Cancer center installs 23 new chemotherapy chairs for greater patient comfort

Deb Bowden and her team dreamed of one day replacing the chemotherapy chairs patients have used since the Harold Alfond Center for Cancer Care (HACCC) opened in July 2007. Finding funds to replace them with a model that offered enhanced features for greater patient comfort was a challenge – until the community stepped in with support.

Bowden, administrative director of Oncology Services at MaineGeneral, says the first step toward accomplishing that dream was taken by members of the Augusta Country Club Women's Golf Association (ACCWGA). Their charity golf tournament raised \$23,500 over two years to kick start a community fundraising campaign that raised \$115,367 to purchase 23 new chairs with heat and massage features. The chairs were delivered and installed in the early-morning hours of Feb. 19 to be ready when the first patients arrived at 7:30 a.m. for treatment.

In addition to the ACCWGA gift, the project was funded by \$16,689 raised through MaineGeneral's spring fundraiser, Farms, Forks & Friends, in April 2018. In October 2018 the community again came together during the 15th Annual Walk for Hope and closed the gap to

help support purchase of the chairs. The Walk brought together more than 1,000 community members, many of whom sat in the former chemotherapy chairs for their cancer treatments.

The new chairs are patient-tested-and-approved with built-in heat and massage, power recline, footrest, double side tables and sides that opens 180 degrees for easy patient transfers.

Sue Hanna, an ACCWGA member who also belongs to MaineGeneral Medical Center's Auxiliary and the cancer center's Patient and Family Advisory Council, was instrumental in the association's work to raise money for the new chairs. Bowden says the effort was deeply personal for Hanna as her mother received treatment at the center.

"Sue's golf club was planning a fundraiser and the members were considering ways in which proceeds from the event could benefit the community. We shared our goal of replacing our chemo chairs and mentioned that it would take a lot of money – and Sue jumped right on it! So the club's efforts really kicked off the project."

Bowden says the former chemotherapy chairs have served the center's patients well and have been very durable. In fact, they will be repurposed at the Thayer Center for Health's Infusion Clinic in Waterville. She notes that the new chairs will offer a greater level of comfort for patients thanks to innovations in chair design and technology.

"The new chairs offer heat and massage options, which are a really big deal for someone who has to sit a chair for one to eight hours while they receive chemotherapy treatment," she says.

"When I think of the people who will sit in these chairs receiving treatment, I also think of the different community members who, through their contributions of money to this project, are symbolically embracing these patients."

– Deb Bowden

Eric Klein, vice president of TSK Products, with locations in New Jersey, New York and California, was on site to help with the chair installation. He echoes Bowden's comments about how the new chairs will positively impact patients.

"Our company has worked with Champion Manufacturing to bring safer, more comfortable recliners and oncology seating to cancer centers throughout the country," he says. "With this purchase of these power recliners, the HACCC joins a select number of cancer centers that have seen the future of infusion treatment and have invested in patient satisfaction."

Klein says HACCC nurses, administrators, patients and family members conducted an exhaustive evaluation of possible chairs, deciding which recliner model and features would produce the best response from both patients and staff.

"Patients fell in love with the heat integrated into the seat and back. Both patients and staff selected the power recline function over the manual push-back models to give patients more independence while eliminating lifting for staff," Klein says.

Bowden adds that Oncology Services Manager Kim Smith spearheaded the patient pilot with Klein "to ensure these were the right chairs with the right features for our patients' comfort, but also to ensure they were staff-approved for patient safety to be maintained at all times."

To learn more about the HACCC's oncology services, please visit [www.maine-general.org/medical-services/cancer-care](http://www.maine-general.org/medical-services/cancer-care).

## MaineGeneral leading the way in addressing the opioid epidemic

The opioid crisis has gained national attention, and hits rural areas like Maine especially hard.

According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse, 47,000 people in the U.S. died of opioid overdose in 2017. Maine averaged more than one death per day from opioid overdose in the same year.

Behind the statistics are real people struggling every day with substance use disorder and their loved ones who hurt along with them.

Health care, law enforcement and community service organizations have come together to do the hard work of responding to save lives and families.

MaineGeneral Medical Center (MGMC) and its caring staff have been on the front lines helping those with substance use disorder and are recognized as a leader for their response.

"We need more places like you," Gordon Smith, director of opioid response for Gov. Janet Mills said earlier this year when he sat down with the Opioid Steering Committee at MaineGeneral, a collaborative group of medical center and community stakeholders addressing the opiate crisis in the Kennebec Valley.

### Building a coordinated effort

More than five years ago, MaineGeneral's senior leaders, medical staff and prevention team initiated a coordinated response to give the best chance to turn the tide on opioids in our region.

Early days of opioid response took creativity, and – not surprisingly – key partners in the state and national government as well as the community to address immediate needs.

Dealing with the immediate need to save lives in cases of overdose was an early effort.

MaineGeneral's Harm Reduction Program worked with then-Maine Attorney General Mills in 2014 to distribute emergency opiate overdose kits that included naloxone to reduce overdose deaths. Along with funding from the Attorney General's office, grants from the Bingham Program supported the kits getting into the hands of community members for free.

A year later, MaineGeneral received funding from the federal Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) to work with EMS and sheriffs' offices to train first responders on the use of naloxone and to provide education and resources to opioid users looking for treatment.

The next step was to pull together resources from inside and outside MaineGeneral Health. The Opioid Steering Committee formed in early 2016 as a collaboration among MGMC, Maine Dartmouth Family Medicine Residency, Discovery House, law enforcement, EMS and others. Both outpatient and inpatient team members help coordinate community-wide care.

"We needed a larger and community-focused stakeholder group with an outpatient and community focus," says Steve Diaz, MD, chief medical officer of MaineGeneral Health. Diaz, along with Andy Dionne, MD, chief medical officer of MGMC, are executive sponsors of the committee.

"We have good internal expertise, but more importantly we have ambassadors and networks where we can pull from the learning of others."

– Steve Diaz, MD

*Continued on next page*

MaineGeneral Opioid Steering Committee members with Gordon Smith (fifth from left), director of opioid response for the State of Maine



## MaineGeneral's history in supporting those with Substance Use Disorder

Program or Service	Number of People Helped Annually by the Service
Needle exchange	150
Counseling	287
MaineGeneral Residential Services	61
Assertive Community Treatment (ACT)	81
Intensive Outpatient Program, Augusta	92
Intensive Outpatient Program, Waterville	188
Outpatient Psychiatry	430
Inpatient Treatment, ACH	387
Matrix Intensive Outpatient Treatment (parents referred by DHHS)	43
Outpatient Plus	59

MDFMR has served 400 pregnant moms since 2007 and about 200 partners

MGMC Emergency Departments dispense SUBOXONE® with outpatient follow-up by Outpatient Plus

Early on, the committee compiled best-practice resources for fellow medical staff across the system and beyond on:

- State and federal laws regarding prescribing pain medications;
- Treating those with opioid use disorders; and
- Talking to patients about pain and their options.

The committee also helped develop expanded treatment options, including:

- Expanding harm reduction efforts (MaineGeneral now operates two of the six needle exchange programs in the state);
- Training primary care medical staff to prescribe SUBOXONE®;
- Beginning a step-down program called Outpatient Plus; and
- Helping people in withdrawal in our emergency departments.

### Next steps – Reducing stigma, increasing access

This past fall, MaineGeneral Prevention & Healthy Living received a HRSA grant to establish the Partners for Recovery program, a next step in addressing the individual and community challenges to the opioid crisis. The goals of Partners for Recovery are to:

- Strengthen and expand partnerships to increase treatment capacity and implement systems related to screening and referral;
- Address underlying stigma of opioid use disorder;
- Provide ongoing health care professional training;
- Support health care systems to enhance screening of opioid use disorder and care coordination; and

- Bring together more partnerships that include families, community leaders, law enforcement, peer recovery programs, social service organizations, behavioral health professionals and medical providers.

Addressing stigma must be part of the solution in our communities, according to Emilie van Eeghen.

“Reducing stigma of substance use disorder will impact both individuals who need to access services and the availability of treatment providers,” van Eeghen says.

At the Opioid Steering Committee meeting earlier this year, members were heartened by what they heard from the governor’s ambassador for the opioid response for the state.

Increased support from the state and federal governments, Diaz says, will help. “Start-up grants and ongoing financial support from government and third-party payers are the keys to ongoing success. Consistent support is vital.”

“For our efforts to be successful, more front-line resources are needed, including expansion of recovery coaches,” he adds. “Support for those with co-occurring mental health and substance use disorders is also needed, as it is for those with significant mental illness.”

Meanwhile, MaineGeneral continues to strengthen its partnerships to address the opioid crisis.

“The health of a community lies beyond the walls of the hospital and its clinics,” Diaz says. “True health care lies in community partnerships where everyone is contributing what they do best and coordinating their efforts. We owe this to the many people and families in our community who are struggling.”

## Returning to the sports they love – through excellent surgical care and support

Michael Wozniak and Jacob Mills have many things in common. Both seniors at Cony High School, they share a friendship as well as a love of sports – a shared passion for football at the top of the list.

They also shared a long rehabilitation journey, recovering from ACL injuries sustained in a home football game that cut their junior football season short and caused them to miss their spring seasons, too.

But thanks to the excellent surgical care they received from orthopaedic surgeon Dr. Michael MacKechnie and the support they received from MaineGeneral’s physical therapists and Sports Medicine program, they made full recoveries and successful returns to sports.

The duo were key members of a Cony football team that had a very strong season before following that up with their winter sports – Wozniak on the basketball team and Mills on the swim team. They’re now in their final sports seasons at Cony; Wozniak plays baseball, Mills plays lacrosse.

While acknowledging the long, challenging recovery process, both are very thankful for the care they received.

“When they told me it was probably going to take eight months, I was pretty scared,” Wozniak recalls. “But after surgery, I just got back

to training as much as I could. As time went on and I could do more, I started pushing more.”

Wozniak finished his physical therapy about six months after his surgery and then started working with MaineGeneral Sports Medicine athletic trainer Alycia Nored.

*“I really wanted it to work out so I’d be fully cleared before summer so I could do football activities during the summer. And it worked out perfectly that way. Being able to return to the field when the season started really brought me back to life.”*

*– Michael Wozniak*

While noting that he didn’t ever plan on meeting a surgeon, Wozniak says MacKechnie “was unbelievably kind... and very good at his job because it held together.”

Mills’ experience with MacKechnie was similarly positive.

“He was great and very thorough. He took his time, which I’m definitely glad for. If I needed to have surgery, I’d rather have it done well so I wouldn’t have any lasting problems afterward.”

Reflecting on his rehab journey, Mills says the biggest challenge was “holding myself back” from training while fully recovering.

“Having an ACL tear isn’t fun, but you have to accept it and take as much time as needed to do the rehab and fully recover.” Taking this approach, he adds, will lead to a healthy and safe return to the playing field – and the exhilaration that comes with it.

Praised by the athletes he helped, MacKechnie returns the sentiment.

“It was a pleasure because they’re such nice, dedicated young men. As a doctor, I feel very lucky to work with individuals like them who are very motivated to get back to 100 percent and put in the effort needed to have a good rehabilitation.”

MacKechnie also echoes Mills’ comment about injured athletes taking the time necessary to ensure a successful recovery.

“Having surgery is like running a marathon. The part I help them with in the operating room is like a sprint out of the gate and my goal is to help put my patients at the front of the pack. But in order to do well in the marathon, it’s really the recovery and all the hard work they need to put in over the next long months that will make the difference. These guys have shown they’re really great at doing that.”

“The success they’re having is really a nice thing to see,” he adds. “It’s the reason I really love my job.”

MacKechnie also notes that to best serve patients, orthopaedic surgery requires the skills and expertise of many individuals – from initial diagnosis, through surgery, follow-up care and rehabilitation.

“I don’t do any of this work in isolation,” he says. “It’s only possible with the great help and support of our athletic trainers, our non-operative sports doctors, the physician assistants and others that we’re able to achieve these great results.”



Michael MacKechnie, MD

Jacob Mills, left, and Michael Wozniak





MaineGeneral HomeCare and Hospice Staff

## MaineGeneral Hospice Celebrates 30 Years as Maine's First Medicare-Certified Hospice Program

MaineGeneral Hospice has evolved greatly in the 30 years since it became the state's first Medicare-certified hospice program.

"What hasn't changed in 30 years is our staff's passion for providing holistic care to our patients and their loved ones," says Jennifer Riggs, CEO of MaineGeneral Community Care and Chief Nursing Officer of MaineGeneral. "Our goal is to provide a peaceful end of life for each patient which includes managing their physical, emotional and spiritual care. It takes a very special person to commit to this kind of work and we are blessed to have the very best Hospice staff."

The program launched in 1988 with three nurses and a social worker who worked both in hospice and home care. With one patient enrolled, MaineGeneral Hospice (then known as HealthReach Hospice) passed its Medicare survey in December 1988 and received official certification in 1989 as Maine's first Medicare-certified hospice.

MaineGeneral Hospice now serves Kennebec County, southern Somerset County and part of Lincoln County with 60 full-time-equivalent staff, including nurses, social workers, hospice home health aides, chaplains, therapists, alternative therapy providers and bereavement counselors. Last year those caring individuals served 824 patients, made nearly 41,000 visits and covered nearly 380,000 miles.

The program also has trained Hospice Volunteers who offer companionship as well as practical and emotional support for individuals and families. Volunteers may help with light housekeeping, run errands, provide transportation and visit with patients.

MaineGeneral Hospice continues to respond to the needs of patients. Services have grown over the years to bring the latest techniques and comfort measures into patients' homes.

*"MaineGeneral HomeCare & Hospice has adapted to the needs of our community and the individual needs of those we serve."*

*– Jennifer Riggs*

"In the past 30 years a lot has changed," Riggs says. "While hospice has traditionally been associated with making cancer patients comfortable during their final days, we now understand that hospice and palliative care can improve the quality of life for patients with a wide range of illnesses, from congestive heart failure and respiratory disorders to dementia and Parkinson's."

Dementia care has expanded to support the unique needs of people with Alzheimer's and other forms of dementia and provide support to families. Patients have individualized plans of care and pain assessment tools and staff receive specialized training in dementia care.

Specialty services offered to all hospice patients have grown significantly and now include massage therapy; expressive arts; music by the bedside; pet therapy; and spiritual support volunteers. Experienced after-hours care nurses dedicated to patient and family support are available outside of regular office hours.

Intensive comfort care is available for periods of increased symptoms or when death is near. This includes increased nursing, home health aide, social worker and chaplain visits; after-hours check-in calls; education and support for families and bereavement counselors.

MaineGeneral Hospice also is a proud member of the We Honor Veterans Program in partnership with the National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization and the Department of Veterans Affairs. Through the program, staff are trained to better understand the unique experiences of veterans and to focus on respectful inquiry, compassionate listening and grateful acknowledgment. Staff also provide education to community and veteran organizations.

Riggs says MaineGeneral Hospice services will continue to evolve with the needs of patients. "We work with patients and their loved ones to improve the quality of their life, and we come to them wherever they are – at home, in a nursing facility, assisted living, wherever they live to help them live their lives to the fullest."

# MaineGeneral Sports Medicine Celebrates 30 Years of Providing Great Care to Injured Area Athletes

Chris Sementelli has a clear goal in mind when he shares “Back in my day...” stories with his peers about the early days of MaineGeneral Sports Medicine. And it’s not the hardship variety of someone talking about days of old spent “walking to school, uphill – both ways.”

To fully understand and appreciate what the program has become over the span of three decades, he says, it’s important for them to know what the program looked like when he first came to MaineGeneral.

Now in its thirtieth year of providing expert athletic training and sports medicine services to athletes at numerous area high, junior high and middle schools – with eight full-time and several per diem athletic trainers and six sports medicine physicians – the program’s early days were much different.

Sementelli recalls being a one-man show as he provided coverage to multiple schools and worked large-scale athletic events with only the barest of essentials.

“I remember back in the early 1990s covering everything myself and not having peers around me to bounce things off. I’d sit at the cross country

trail at the University of Maine at Augusta, covering a meet with nothing but a cooler of ice and my medical kit,” he says.

“Now we have a MaineGeneral-branded tent with tables set up, two or three physicians providing voluntary care along with two or three athletic trainers supporting the event who are well trained – and I don’t have to do everything myself. To remember how things started and see what they’ve become is amazing.”

– Chris Sementelli

Another vivid example, he says, is the annual Maine Principals Association high school basketball tournament at the Augusta Civic Center, where MaineGeneral Sports Medicine has an undeniable presence and provides immediate, expert care to scores of student athletes before, during and after games.

“We now have two or three physicians sitting at the courtside table and two full-time athletic

trainers throughout the tournament,” he says. “We can now rotate our staff so we can balance work, family and life. Having that ability and seeing the many ways in which the program has grown just baffles me.”

Sementelli credits the program’s longevity to the historical support it has received from MaineGeneral’s administration.

“They understood – and continue to understand – that this community outreach program touches so many people in so many ways,” he says. “And it’s truly a collaborative effort between MaineGeneral Health, MaineGeneral Sports Medicine and the many contracted schools we work with. If everyone works together and does their part, it’s amazing what we can accomplish.”

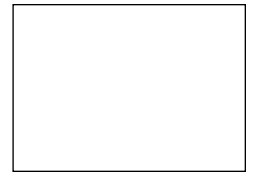
Yet despite Sports Medicine’s success, Sementelli said he’ll still occasionally share stories of long ago to both keep the program grounded and also poised for further evolution and growth.

“I always want the staff to appreciate what the program has become and where it can go in the future,” he says. “When I retire, I want MaineGeneral Sports Medicine to be in the hands of those who can help take it to the next level – to stay on top of the latest advancements in the field to best meet the needs of the community.”

To learn more about MaineGeneral Sports Medicine, visit [www.mainegeneral.org/medical-services/sports-medicine](http://www.mainegeneral.org/medical-services/sports-medicine) or call 207-621-7525 or 207-873-8140.

MaineGeneral Sports Medicine’s athletic trainers are, from front left: Samantha Farago, Emily Staples, Chris Sementelli and Jill Haskell; and back, Alycia Nored, Steve Tosi, Rich Garini, Nick Thompson and Pat Norwood.





At MaineGeneral,  
we're with you.

At MaineGeneral we see the care that's needed for you – and for those connected to you. So when you need surgery, MaineGeneral Surgery has the expertise and technology to get you home quickly and doing the things you enjoy. You expect more from your health care system and we're with you.

Learn more at [www.mainegeneral.org](http://www.mainegeneral.org).