

HealthMatters

A Journal of Wellness and Good Health Care



We make it easy
to get the right care
at the right time
in the right place.

HealthMatters

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

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Thank you for considering supporting local care by using the envelope inserted in this issue.



Message from the CEO

It goes without saying that we continue to live in what seems an alternate reality due to the pandemic. Our economy has been hit hard. Our children have had to adjust to new ways of learning. We missed out on our summer fairs, festivals, concerts and sporting events. And who would have thought a year ago that face coverings would be part of our daily social lives?

Maine people are resilient, and we've responded with compassion for each other in so many ways. Our sense of community is strong. As we continue to support those in our communities, we have reason to hope for better days to come.

While access to quality health care has always been important in the fabric of our families and community, it's never been more apparent than during this pandemic.

Thank you for doing your part to keep you and those around you safe and healthy, including washing your hands often, keeping at least six feet from others and wearing face coverings.

Thank you for the many ways you've supported our staff and patients. This has meant so much to those working long hours to make sure health care is here when you need it.

In turn, at MaineGeneral we've responded to the continuing needs of our patients and community. In the early days of the pandemic, we began new services such as the Orthopaedic Walk-In Clinic and expanded use of technology like telephone visits.

We've thoughtfully adapted to make all in-person visits safe and help you find care when and how you need it.

Your journey in health usually starts with your primary care practice. There, the team of dedicated medical staff can help you on the path to wellness, track your chronic health issues and get ahead of health problems before they worsen.

When your primary care clinician isn't available and you have a non-emergency health need, MaineGeneral Express Care is here for you at three locations: Augusta, Gardiner and Waterville. Soon, you'll be able to have virtual visits, too.



These are just a few ways we've adjusted to expand services in safe, convenient ways for our community. Learn about all of these efforts and more on our website: www.mainegeneral.org.

Finally, I want to again thank you for your continued support during the pandemic. COVID-19 has shown us how important it is to keep quality health care close to home.

Thank you!

Chuck Hays
President & CEO
MaineGeneral Health



Navigating the health care waters to get the **care** you need.

Augusta Family Medicine's Jason Brown, MD, checks a patient's blood pressure during a recent appointment.

When you're feeling well, it may be easy to forget just how important health care is in your daily life. You may even take your access to services for granted.

When you're sick or injured, however, it's a different story. In that case, you want ready access to compassionate, high-quality health care for your medical needs. It's extremely important to your wellness and well-being – and also to MaineGeneral.

But what happens if you don't have a medical practice for your care or you find the process of getting the services you need to be confusing or overwhelming?

Fortunately for both new and established patients, MaineGeneral is here to help!

Understanding different care options

There are several ways to access care – in person, by phone and, in the near future, virtually – through an exciting telemedicine initiative that MaineGeneral is trialing internally before making it available to the general public.

Dr. Steve Diaz, MaineGeneral Health's chief medical officer, says being able to provide care to patients through different means is important, as initial restrictions to in-person care that came with the start of the COVID-19 pandemic illustrated so well.

"Different groups of patients may prefer to have their care provided in different ways. Older patients may want traditional, in-person care, while younger people may prefer to have virtual visits instead," Diaz says. "On the other hand, older patients, once they do experience virtual care, adopt it rather well. Being able to offer several ways to access health care allows us to best meet the varied preferences of our patient population."

Dr. Andrew Dionne, MaineGeneral Medical Center's chief medical officer, agrees.

"Even before COVID-19 hit, we had been working on being able to offer virtual visits for patients because we believe it's something our patients want, whether in the form of Express Care visits or, eventually, primary and specialty care visits as well," he says.

The importance of primary care

Diaz and colleague Dr. Ben Brown, MaineGeneral's medical director for primary care, emphasize that a patient's best path to receiving comprehensive health care for maintaining wellness or treating illness or injury starts with and continues to flow through primary care.

"Primary care is the foundation for both assessing your acute health needs and your wellness," Diaz says.

"Our primary care medical staff has the best training in the full spectrum of someone's health and, if you need specialized care, they know where to refer you. Having a full team of primary care clinicians and the staff to support them, for a team-based approach to providing care, is really the lynchpin to everything else."



Steve Diaz, MD

Using a football analogy, Diaz says primary care is the quarterback leading the entire health care team.

And while Diaz' analogy focuses on the "offensive" aspect of primary care, Brown says the "defensive" side that focuses on protecting against disease and promoting wellness is equally important.

"People often tend to overlook preventive health because they feel well and don't need health care immediately," Brown says, "but without ongoing health management through a primary care provider, people are at risk for developing other health issues that can become urgent or possibly even life-threatening. And it's really difficult for patients to receive these additional services without having a connection to primary care."

Fran Wheelock, MaineGeneral's director of primary care, adds that one of MaineGeneral's top priorities as services opened up following early pandemic restrictions has been communicating this message to patients who may have delayed preventive care due to circumstances or choice. While particularly addressing primary care, she notes that this effort has been system-wide.

"We're reaching out to patients with chronic conditions or are due for preventive screenings and may not have come in for an appointment during the pandemic. And we're adjusting our schedules to make sure we get these patients seen," Wheelock says.



We're following all of the CDC guidance, ensuring proper social distancing and masking through the practices and doing extensive cleaning daily.

Fran Wheelock

"We're reassuring patients that it's safe for them to come into our practices," she adds. "We're also doing creative things like registering patients from their vehicles in the parking lot and then having them come into the practice at their appointment time."

Finding a primary care home

So how does a person without the connection Brown speaks of find a primary care home? There are several ways.

Continued on page 6

“Hub” help is just a phone call away

Navigating the health care system, particularly if you’re looking for a primary care clinician, can be a challenge. MaineGeneral’s “Hub” is here to assist you!

Callers can get information about primary care practices that are accepting new patients, get connected to specialty care offices for information and learn about a host of other resources.

MaineGeneral’s Hub line – **1-855-4MGHINFO (1-855-464-4463)** – is staffed Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Callers after hours or on the weekend can leave a voicemail and request a call back during regular business hours, or choose to be connected to MaineGeneral’s switchboard for assistance.

Vicki Foster, community programs coordinator, says the volume of calls received through the Hub is substantial, with 2,125 calls fielded during the last fiscal year alone. In addition, her 10-person team of health educators assisted 1,324 patients in need of a primary care home who were referred from MaineGeneral’s Emergency Departments and Express Care sites.

“We work closely with primary and specialty care practices and other MaineGeneral departments to connect people with health care services,” Foster says. “If they simply need a primary care provider, we give them information about practices that are accepting new patients. If the Emergency Department medical staff has identified that a patient needs follow-up care within a week and we know the patient typically won’t be established with a primary care practice that quickly, we help get them an appointment at a practice.”

Callers also can learn about MaineGeneral’s upcoming healthy living classes and, depending on their needs, get information about chronic disease prevention and management programs like the National Diabetes Prevention Program, various Living Well programs, MaineGeneral’s Harm Reduction program and tobacco cessation services, among others.

While one of the Hub team’s primary roles is directly linking patients to medical practices and services, Foster says the staff also looks at patients’ overall needs, with a particular focus on those that could be barriers to receiving medical care.

“When our staff speaks with callers, we listen for other needs they may have beyond their health care needs, whether it’s housing, food, transportation or other social services,” she adds, “and we also maintain resources to share with callers, information about our own services and programs, as well as community-based resources that may be helpful.”



The easiest is to call the Hub Line – **1-855-4MGHINFO (1-855-464-4463)** – which is staffed Monday to Friday from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. (see related story)

The second way is to call MaineGeneral’s primary care practices directly to see if they are accepting new patients and if there are any restrictions.

The third way occurs when patients are treated in the Emergency Department, at MaineGeneral Express Care or are hospitalized – and staff learn that they’re in need of a primary care home. Those patients are then referred to the Hub where staff can assist them.

Dionne says MaineGeneral’s concerted efforts in recent years to address the community’s need for primary care services has resulted in greater access to care for patients.

“Organizationally, I think we’re in the best shape we’ve been in years,” he says.

“Having good access to care involves hiring and retaining medical staff, supporting those people as they develop their skills. And having the right tools to provide health care, which is where our commitment to digital health initiatives comes in.”



Andrew Dionne, MD

The future of technology

MaineGeneral already has used technology to enhance how it provides health care – with more initiatives on the horizon (see related story on page 8)

Brown says the addition of different forms of telemedicine services to traditional in-person care has already proven to be very beneficial to patients, particularly where geography and transportation can be barriers.

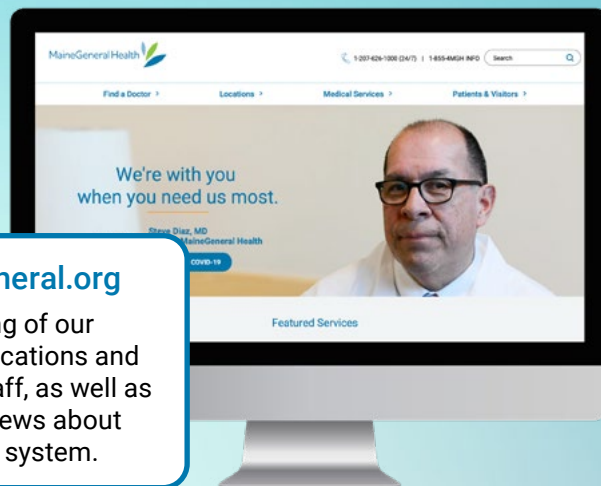
“I think what we’ve done with telephonic care during the pandemic will help us out in the future by better preparing us to provide more telehealth services, whether that’s for following up on chronic conditions, addressing some acute issues and even for handling some preventive care,” he says. “This is a way by which we can provide more access to care for our patients and allow them to obtain more services.”

All the Ways to Find Us



1-855-4MGHINFO

Toll-free



MaineGeneral.org

Find a listing of our services, locations and medical staff, as well as the latest news about your health system.

Primary Care Locations

Augusta Family Medicine

15 Enterprise Drive
Augusta, ME 04330
207-621-8800

Elmwood Primary Care

211 Main Street
Waterville, ME 04901
207-877-3400

Family Medicine Institute

15 East Chestnut Street
Augusta, ME 04330
207-626-1561

Four Seasons Family Practice

4 Sheridan Drive
Fairfield, ME 04937
207-453-3100

Gardiner Family Medicine

5 Central Maine Crossing
Gardiner, ME 04345
207-582-6608

Kennebec Pediatrics

Ballard Center
6 East Chestnut Street
Augusta, ME 04330
207-623-2977

Maine Dartmouth Geriatric Medicine

Ballard Center
6 East Chestnut Street, LL1
Augusta, ME 04330
207-626-7400

Maine Dartmouth Family Practice

Thayer Center for
Health
149 North Street
Waterville, ME 04901
207-861-5000

MaineGeneral Internal Medicine

211 Main Street
Waterville, ME 04901
207-877-3470

Oakland Family Medicine

9 Pleasant Street
Oakland, ME 04963
207-465-4000

Thayer Internal Medicine

Thayer Center for Health
149 North Street
Waterville, ME 04901
207-873-1098

Winthrop Family Medicine

16 Commerce Plaza, Suite 3A
Winthrop, ME 04364
207-377-2111

Winthrop Pediatric & Adolescent Medicine

16 Commerce Plaza
Winthrop, ME 04364
207-377-2114



Medical Center Locations

Alfond Center for Health

35 Medical Center Parkway
Augusta, ME 04330
207-626-1000

Thayer Center for Health

149 North Street
Waterville, ME 04901
207-872-1000

Express Care Locations

15 Enterprise Drive
Augusta, ME 04330
207-621-8880

5 Central Maine Crossing
Gardiner, ME 04345
207-588-3530

211 Main Street
Waterville, ME 04901
207-877-3450





Trusted Care at Your **Fingertips**

You want more convenient ways to get the care you need.

We're with you.

MaineGeneral continues to bring new options online to help you get the care you need more conveniently.

This year we started offering remote patient monitoring and telephone visits.

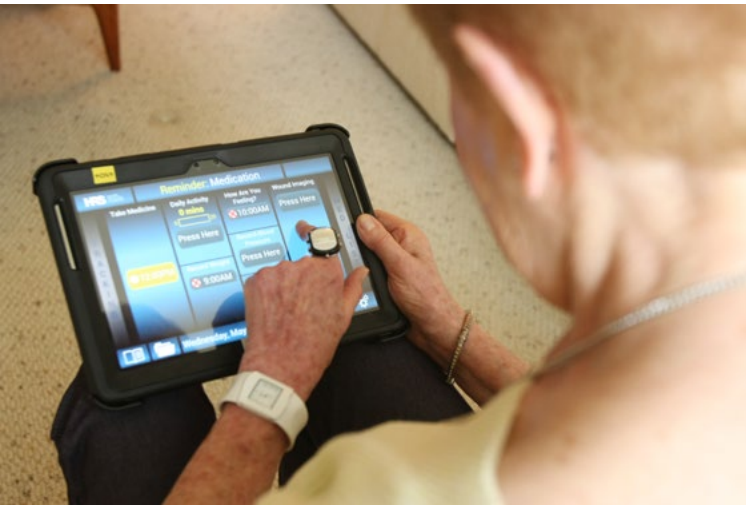
“MaineGeneral’s investments in technology have helped patients during the COVID-19 pandemic,” says Chuck Hays, president & CEO of MaineGeneral Health.



We continue to expand convenience and improve patient experience as we focus on great quality care.

Chuck Hays

Remote Patient Monitoring



January 2020

- Began with eligible patients with congestive heart failure and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease.
- Expanded in 2020 to include those with other chronic conditions such as diabetes, pneumonia, hypertension, cirrhosis and COVID-19.
- This service provides the security of your vital signs and other information being monitored by clinical staff while you are at home.
- Helps prevent visits to the Emergency Department and hospital readmissions.
- 120 people have used the service as of Sept. 1, 2020.

Telephone Visits

March 2020

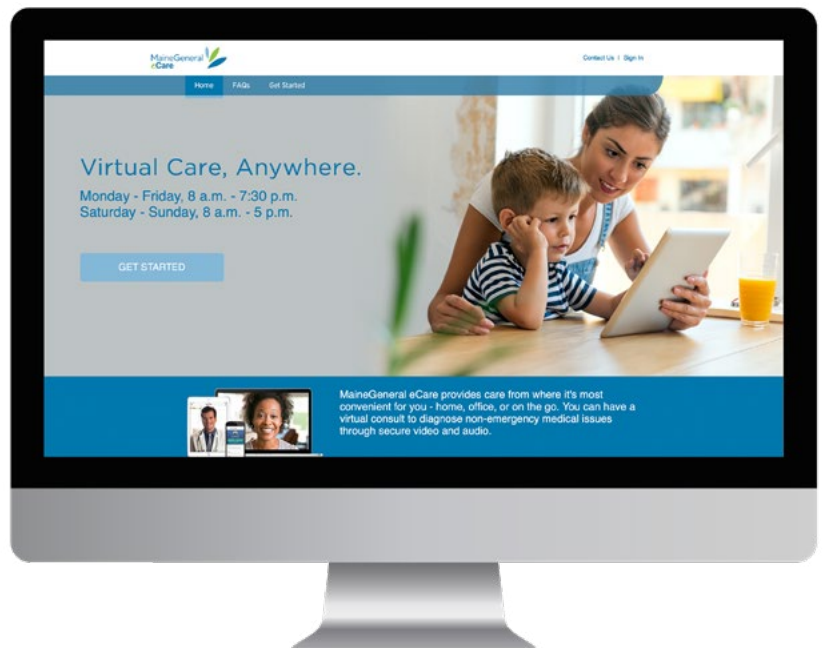
- Some visits can be done by phone with medical staff. During the pandemic, these visits have been covered by insurance.



Coming Soon



- Virtual visits (you don't have to be an established patient at MaineGeneral)
- Available anywhere in Maine – from your cell, tablet or computer
- Affordable – \$49 a visit out-of-pocket – no need to worry about insurance paperwork





The latest use of technology is MaineGeneral eCare, virtual (video) visits with MaineGeneral medical staff. A pilot program began in June with MaineGeneral employees and their families and will soon be available to all.

“Secure video visits with trusted medical staff from the comfort of your home or anywhere you may be is a convenience for community members,” says Laura Mrazik, telehealth coordinator.



Patients will appreciate not having to travel to the practice and sit in a waiting room when they're feeling sick or hurt. The medical staff also feel this is an effective way to deliver care.

Laura Mrazik

MaineGeneral eCare is a great way to get care for such conditions as:

- Allergies
- Headache
- Rash
- Cold and flu
- Nausea
- Respiratory problems
- Ear problems
- Pink eye

MaineGeneral eCare will be available to the public soon, with visits available by website and mobile phone app.

“These investments in technology began before COVID-19,” says Hays, “and they have been helping patients get care they otherwise may have delayed.”

FollowMyHealth® Patient Portal

If you are a MaineGeneral Health patient and want access to your health information on the go, make sure you're signed up with FollowMyHealth®, MaineGeneral Health's patient portal.

With FollowMyHealth®, you can:

- Get 24/7 access to medical information
- Update personal information
- Request an appointment
- View lab results, immunizations
- Pay your bill
- Message your provider
- Get information about your health condition
- Request a referral

MaineGeneral's patient portal is available on MaineGeneral's website (www.mainegeneral.org) and an app (FollowMyHealth®). You also can ask your primary care provider to help you sign up for this convenient service.

Such investments are important to our community going forward. If you'd like to help MaineGeneral provide these and other high-quality options for care, please consider donating today using the envelope attached here. Or make an online donation at give.mainegeneral.org/COVID.



We are so thankful for the commitment and dedication of all our talented staff, especially during these challenging times. MaineGeneral has been lucky to continue to find skilled, compassionate employees.

Here's how one of these dedicated staff members joined us.

"In mid-March 2020, I was nearing completion of my second-to-last six-week clinical rotation. More and more hospitals and clinics understandably closed their doors to students, and about half of my class was sent home.

After about a week of waiting for news, our program notified us that final rotation placements had been found for everyone. The MaineGeneral system, which already takes a significant number of students each rotation, had decided to open its doors to even more of us.

Despite the pandemic and influx of unexpected students, when I showed up for my first day at the hospital, I was met with open arms.

I was able to spend time in a few different departments during the rotation and was struck by how much everyone genuinely enjoyed their workplace.

I had not previously considered applying to MaineGeneral when searching for jobs to start after graduation, but the warmth and overall great environment I experienced during my rotation changed my mind.

I believe exceptional patient care is best delivered by those who feel cared for themselves, and MaineGeneral showed they share that belief."

*Katheryn Baden, PA-C,
MaineGeneral Express Care*

Attracting Top Medical Staff During COVID-19

MaineGeneral Health named

as one of the

2020

Best Places to Work in Maine



MaineGeneral Health is proud to have been named as one of the 2020 Best Places to Work in Maine. This is the second year in a row that the health system has earned this distinction.



MaineGeneral Health staff exemplify 'excellence at work' every day. Especially during the pandemic, our employees are proud to serve our community. They are dedicated, compassionate and skilled at their jobs, and strive daily to provide the best possible care and services to every patient, every time.

*Chuck Hays, President & CEO
MaineGeneral Health*



We're hiring! Come work with us!



Best Places to Work in ME

MaineGeneral Receives \$40 Million Investment in Prevention from the Peter Alford Foundation

The health and well-being of people in the Kennebec Valley region will be enhanced for years to come because of generous gifts from the Peter Alford Foundation to MaineGeneral Health and the Alford Youth & Community Center.

Peter Alford served nearly a decade on the MaineGeneral Health Board of Directors. He invested in wellness opportunities that became the teaching kitchen and cafeteria in the Alford Center for Health, and supported the creation of new programming accessible to all in the community.

A \$40 million endowment will allow MaineGeneral to significantly expand its prevention programs to sustain improvements to community health. The Alford Youth & Community Center has been endowed \$8 million to fund the positions of Wellness Director and Wellness Trainers.

“The \$40 million Peter Alford Prevention & Healthy Living Center Endowment Fund supports innovative approaches to improve lives,” says MaineGeneral President & CEO Chuck Hays. “With this investment, we will continue to break down barriers to care and wellness services to better address the health of community members. This requires us to provide tools and services where people live, work and play.”



The endowment supports investments in:

- Expanding the reach of MaineGeneral’s current Prevention & Healthy Living – now named the Peter Alford Prevention & Healthy Living Center – which provides free and low-cost classes on healthy cooking and eating, physical activity and mind-body health. Classes will expand to worksites as well as other places throughout the area to increase access.
- Enhancing access to teaching kitchens, including working with our community partners, and using pop-up kitchens to teach individuals how to make healthy, affordable and tasty food at home with their families. Additionally, this funding will support culinary medicine efforts throughout our system.
- Expanding community health outreach through a team of Community Health Workers (CHWs) who will meet people “where they are at” and link them to needed care and resources to improve their health and quality of life. CHWs are trusted members of the community who understand community resources and needs. CHWs facilitate access to services and improve the cultural competence of service delivery.

- Evaluation of supported programming to ensure the goals of improving personal and public health are being met through these efforts, and sharing best practices so other communities may benefit from successful strategies and tools.

Peter Alford’s children said, “It was our father’s sincere desire to improve the quality of life of those living in the Kennebec Valley. The Peter Alford Prevention & Healthy Living Center is the result of his vast knowledge of wellness, his entrepreneurial spirit and his relentless philanthropic zest. This gift represents a final manifestation of our father’s vision of a sustainable solution to improving one’s quality of life through a multi-faceted approach.”

Barbara Crowley, MD, Peter Alford Foundation Endowment leader at MaineGeneral Health, is overseeing the implementation of the MaineGeneral endowment funds.

“We lost Peter Alford, visionary, friend and philanthropist, three years ago,” Dr. Crowley says. “Peter believed passionately in disease prevention and healing through access to good nutrition, exercise, stress management and mindful living. He cared so deeply about this community and we are honored to receive this gift from his family and foundation to help us further his vision.”

Learn more about this tremendous gift at www.mainegeneral.org.



Sarah (Basham) Lemieux, RN

On the Front Lines of COVID-19

For months now, MaineGeneral staff have been on the front lines of the pandemic. Here are just a few stories of our dedicated staff, and their determination to continue excellent care to our patients. One of our staffs' slogans during COVID-19 has been "We got this!"

"I was nervous at the beginning when no one knew anything, everything was changing, we needed to be fluid and flexible and we were all learning," says Rich Beaudoin, a per diem nurse in MaineGeneral's Emergency Department and Critical Care Unit (CCU) and a veteran firefighter/paramedic in Augusta. "Once we got through that phase and the testing tents were up, it was no big deal. We knew what we were doing and knew we would come through to the end together. We train for this and we were ready, so while it was scary, it was also exciting to put our training to meaningful use."

Sarah Lemieux is a nurse on 1 West, the unit where the COVID-19

patients have been cared for in addition to CCU. "At first I was nervous because I'm fairly new to the nursing profession," she says. "But time and experience have made me comfortable and more confident. I know what to do now."

In between visits, Lemieux calls patients to see how they are doing. "I spend a fair amount of time with each patient and have formed amazing bonds with them," she says. "And they are so appreciative of the care because they feel so alone and isolated."

Beaudoin agrees. "Not having family there is one of the worst parts of this virus," he says. "It's so much harder for patients not to see their loved ones."

Both Lemieux and Beaudoin have seen patients with a range of symptoms, from testing positive and not having symptoms at all to being on a ventilator fighting for life. Beaudoin sees the most serious cases in CCU.

"COVID-19 can have a long and varied lifespan." He said that he's seen patients seemingly getting better only to quickly turn for the worse. "It's just sad."

At the same time, there are the patients who go home. Staff have lined MaineGeneral's hallways applauding and giving them a proper send-off. "It's amazing every time," Lemieux says. "And it's bittersweet, too, because we're saying goodbye to people who have become friends."

Lemieux adds that COVID-19 has definitely been a good learning experience for her. "It's made me a better nurse. I have more experience and confidence; I'm not as nervous about COVID-19; and building connections with these patients has been a gift. It's an honor to help them, and all of us try our best to show them we are thinking of them."

Michelle Harkins, medical assistant at MaineGeneral Express Care in Augusta, has worked her regular

shifts and picked up several extra shifts to help with COVID-19 testing. "Someone asked me if I would change what I do during this pandemic and I said absolutely not!" she says. "So many people thank me for what I am doing and that really touches me because we're working hard to not only keep them safe but to keep us safe as well."

"When I have the chance, I ask patients how they feel about COVID-19, and for the most part, they all say they want it to end, want whatever normal is back. I agree 100 percent but until that happens, the more people who follow the guidelines, the better."

Beaudoin echoes these sentiments. "I've seen people struggling to breathe. I've seen them die. Wearing a mask to protect myself and other people, washing my hands and physically distancing – these are easy things I can do for myself and my community."

And for patients who need care for COVID-19, MaineGeneral is with you – and we got this! "The past several months have taught us that we are prepared for anything that comes our way," Lemieux says. "Everyone really stepped up and embraced the changes we had to implement to keep everyone safe. The tremendous sense of teamwork has been very empowering. With the immense support that we have in place, I know we will get through it – together."

Michelle Harkins, medical assistant



Thank you, MaineGeneral providers, for attending to my potentially serious bump on the back of my head. It's always hard to wait, but the service was very good and helpful and I felt listened to. Both my doctor and nurse explained everything perfectly to me and my doctor walked me through what would happen beautifully. They were awesome. Thank you.

The experience was quick, simple and very helpful and reassuring. My provider, Suzanne, was awesome and I am very pleased with the service I received. I only wish I had come in and addressed my issue sooner. Thank you for the exceptional care you provided to me.

What a great office, so knowledgeable and friendly. I feel so much better now. The care was top notch. My doctor did a great job teaching me exercises and writing them down.


What Our Patients are Saying

I want to say this is a wonderful place. They took care of me in physical therapy. The nurses who took care of me are very special to me. I feel so much better.

I saw Dr. Stephen Clark and I was very impressed with him as a person, his knowledge of my problem, his ability to explain to me the extent of my back problem and how long it would take for me to feel like my "old self." He put my mind to rest and I now understand this problem will take time and I should be patient. He also said that if I had any questions or wanted to see him this summer, he would be glad to see me. This was very refreshing to hear. Many thanks, Dr. Clark!

Everyone I encountered was professional, courteous and pleasant. The check-in process was quick and efficient. I was taken in almost immediately by the radiology tech.

MaineGeneral Health DAY of HOPE




We have been presented with many challenges in 2020, but nothing could stop us from a celebration honoring our cancer survivors and fighters and raising funds for the Harold Alfond Center for Cancer Care (HACCC)!

Our Day of Hope unified two signature events – Cancer Survivors Day and Walk for Hope – virtually on Oct. 3. The Day of Hope included a virtual video celebration that premiered “live” on Facebook. A strong community of supporters, fighters and survivors came together distantly to walk and raise funds for patient needs and programming at the HACCC. Activities and resources leading up to the event included educational videos from HACCC staff, a pinwheel garden honoring those impacted by cancer and the amazing teams that provide care, and a youth artwork contest for our 2021 HACCC patient calendar. Our virtual Day of Hope video celebration, educational videos and names of those honored in our pinwheel garden can be found at www.maine-general.org/dayofhope.

We had people walking throughout the state, as well as the country, in support of our cancer patients. Additionally, the week of Sept. 25, the Alfond Angels, a team comprised of providers and staff members at the HACCC, spent 40 hours walking around the HACCC Healing Gardens carrying a baton filled with the first names of each person who has received care at the center since it opened in 2007.

With the support of 20 wonderful sponsors and more than 400 registered walkers, we came together to raise \$127,077 in support of patient needs and programming at the HACCC. Each year we are humbled by the community that shows up to show our cancer community that no one fights alone. While this year was different in so many ways, our community's steadfast support remained unchanged. We are so grateful!



It's not too late to support local cancer care.
Visit give.maine-general.org/hope to make a gift.



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Annual campaign donors

List recognizes gifts made between July 1, 2019 and June 30, 2020

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Bill and Joan Alfond Foundation
Harold Alfond Foundation
Peter Alfond Foundation
Ⓞ Norman and Teresa Elvin
Ⓞ Kennebec Savings Bank
MaineGeneral Medical Center Auxiliary
David and Janet Preston
Ⓞ Charlie and Nancy Shuman
United Way of Kennebec Valley

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Eric Stram, MD and Shari Stram, DVM

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Chest Medicine Associates
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Drueding Foundation
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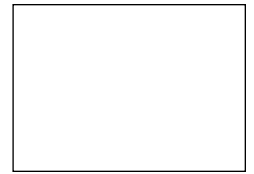
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