

Center for Joint Replacement Celebrates 4th Anniversary

Four years ago, Shamokin Area Community Hospital (SACH) opened the new Center for Joint Replacement. Approximately 340 knee and 110 hip replacement cases later, it can be said that the Joint Center has been very beneficial to the mobility and well being of this community.

“In 2004, SACH took the initiative to open the first Joint Replacement Center within a five-hospital radius,” stated Corinne Klose, RN, vice president of patient services. “We knew the structure of such a program with an emphasis on group dynamics was a major benefit for patients needing a joint replacement, and we wanted to be able to offer this highly specialized service right here at SACH.”

SACH’s Center for Joint Replacement offers patients undergoing joint replacement surgery a specialized unit for their treatment and care from pre-operation to discharge.

Charles L. Cole, Jr., M.D. and Thomas Dominick, M.D., of SUN Orthopaedic Group, have served as co-medical directors of the Center since its inception.

“From day one, our goal has been to ensure that our patients have a positive experience from their first clinic visit through surgery, recovery and discharge,” stated

Dominick.

Dominick added that he is very pleased that the Joint Center has been able to have such a positive impact on this community over the last four years. “I’ve seen former patients make and commit to major lifestyle changes and therefore, are far more active today than prior to their replacement surgery,” said Dominick.

Thomas R. Harlow, FACHE, president and chief executive officer, is also extremely proud of the progress that the Joint Center has made over the past four years. “It’s amazing to see how the reputation of our Center has spread by word of mouth,” stated Harlow. “Since the focus of our program is group dynamics, we see friends and family members coming in together to have their surgeries at the same time.”

“I credit the success of the Joint Center to all the caregivers throughout this facility who continually strive to provide the best care possible,” said Harlow.

One aspect of the Joint Center that has been universally praised is the educational class held for those going through the program. Patients appreciated being well informed on the joint replacement process and felt it led to the best preparation possible for their surgeries.

“Joint Center graduates are comforted by the amount of information that was made available to them during their classes,” said Charlene Kalinoski, RN, joint team coordinator. “Every step of the process is well documented in the guidebooks, which are given to our patients,” said Kalinoski. They are very satisfied with the availability of our staff at all times especially when they have questions about their treatment.”

The group dynamics of the Center for Joint Replacement have also received praise. Placement of patients in a group throughout the program allows them to share experiences and provides them with the comfort of knowing that they are not alone during the recovery process.

The physical therapy, occupational therapy, social services, respiratory therapy, the operating room and nursing departments all work together toward a common goal; the betterment of any joint replacement patient.

SACH’s physical and occupational therapists serve as valuable components in the joint replacement process, assisting Dr. Cole and Dr. Dominick in designing an exercise program to help the patient build strength and aid in recovery.

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SACH's occupational and physical therapists have received rave reviews from Joint Center graduates for their ability to both motivate and empower those recovering from a knee or hip surgery.

Melanie Kofskie, OTR/L, occupational therapist, noted that the goal of occupational therapy in the joint replacement process is maximizing the patient's performance within their activities of daily living (bathing, dressing, grooming, transferring on/off surfaces with an assistive device) within several days of surgery so that they can return home safely and as independently as possible.

"We hope within several days after surgery, our patients are very close to their prior level of functioning (complete independence), but if not, then they receive further rehabilitation in the Skilled Nursing Facility (SNF)," said Kofskie.

Robert Veach, PT, director of rehab services, expanded on the subject of how crucial proper therapy is for any patient after joint replacement surgery.

"Physical therapy (PT) is very important immediately after the joint replacement surgery in order to maximize patient recovery efforts," said Veach. "Physical therapy will help patients achieve a better quality of life free from pain."

Veach noted that the past four years of providing PT at the Joint Center have been very rewarding to both him and his staff.

"Seeing patients return to the hospital for joint center reunion luncheons, walking without canes or walkers and free of pain has been the most rewarding aspect of our job," added Veach.

The SACH social services staff is another important part of the Center for Joint Replacement team, keeping close tabs on every patient and checking with the nursing and therapy staffs regarding each patient's progress to determine if a longer stay at the hospital

is needed and/or what services are needed upon returning home.

In an effort to remain in contact with those who go through the program, SACH regularly holds special joint replacement reunion luncheons. The feedback obtained during these luncheons allows the staff of the Joint Center to continually make improvements, which ultimately, better serves the patients.

"It is important that we hear and recognize criticism," said Dr. Cole. "We love to hear the many positive reviews and see the dramatic improvements in our patients' health/mobility post- surgery, but we also need to find out how we can improve our efforts to serve them best."

SACH's Center for Joint Replacement covers all the bases. Whether providing the best and most detailed care possible for its patients, supplying detailed information every step of the way, or allowing added time for recovery through SACH's SNF, the Center is the local resource for joint replacement care.

"Here at SACH, we would like to thank all those who have passed through the program, and for putting their trust in us to care for them," said Klose.



Dr. Charles L. Cole, Jr., co-medical director of the Shamokin Area Community Hospital Center for Joint Replacement, examines Barbara Nye of Coal Township during her follow-up appointment two weeks after a total knee replacement.

SACH Children's Health Fair Slated for June 28th

In an effort to provide health and safety tips to children and their families, Shamokin Area Community Hospital (SACH) will be hosting a Children's Health Fair on June 28^h from 11 am – 2 pm.

According to Angela Furca, RN, MSN, fair coordinator, the event will address important issues such as fire prevention, gun safety, bicycle safety, emergency situations and much more. The goal of this annual event is to make sure children and their guardians are aware of every potential danger, pitfall or accident and how to steer clear from them.

"We're very fortunate to have the support we do for the children's health fair," said Furca. "It is a wonderful day for families to participate in learning activities while addressing health and safety concerns with their children in a fun and non-intimidating environment."

The Health Fair will educate children and parents on numerous important safety issues such as child passenger safety, crime safety, poison control, emergency medical services and ATV/motorcycle safety to name a few.

A show-n-tell is planned in order to familiarize children with local fire and rescue response units.

Anger management, vision, height/weight, childhood nutrition, sun protection and hand washing are among the numerous health education programs/screenings that will also be available at the Children's Health Fair.

Child safety seat inspections will be available by appointment only. Pre-registration is required by calling (570) 644-4274.

Taking place throughout the afternoon will be children's activities including face painting, seed planting, pet therapy, an appearance by Smokey the Bear, children's photos and IDs as well as two colorful "Bounce Houses" for kids to play in.

Door prizes and refreshments will be available to all who take part in the Children's Health Fair.

Be sure to mark June 28th on your calendar as an important day. It will be an afternoon where parents and children can enjoy themselves, as well as gain valuable information that can help to keep them safe.

For more information on the Children's Health Fair at Shamokin Area Community Hospital, please contact Furca at 570-644-4222.



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EMS: Your Life is Our Mission

The 35th Annual Emergency Medical Services Week was celebrated across the nation from May 18th-24th.

The week united residents and local medical personnel in paying tribute to the dedication of those who provide day-to-day lifesaving emergency services.

The theme for this year was “EMS: Your Life is Our Mission”. The theme certainly applies to the EMS professionals who work closely with Shamokin Area Community Hospital (SACH) as they embark each day on a mission to work together as a team during emergency situations, with an ultimate goal of providing the best care possible and saving lives.

The SACH ER staff maintains strong relationships with numerous local community emergency service providers and deal with three advance life support systems, including MICU 90 from AREA Services, MICU 170 of Elysburg and MICU 11 of Mount Carmel.

Three area rescue squads from Coal Township, Shamokin and Mount Carmel are also in the service area, as well as two quick response services from Kulpmont and Brady and three ambulance services from Kulpmont, Trevorton and Fairview in Coal Township.

Emergency professionals have got to be quick thinkers and exhibit teamwork at all times. Most units in this area respond to incidents with two staff members and an

EMT, who is the driver, while the paramedics treat the patient in the back of the vehicle.

“The professional and volunteer providers in this area are well trained and we are fortunate to have their services at our disposal,” said SACH emergency services nurse manager, Mark Williams, RN. “They provide life saving care to patients of all ages.”

“I have nothing but respect for those who practice emergency care in such an unpredictable environment (i.e. on the street, in the middle of a field, confined spaces such as an overturned vehicle, etc.),” added Williams.

In 2007, 15,500 emergency cases were treated at SACH. With so many emergencies present, it’s important that people realize WHEN they are having an emergency as opposed to something that is not as serious.

“If you have a medical emergency, such as chest pain, shortness of breath, uncontrolled bleeding or severe abdominal pain, be sure to call an ambulance or get to an ER,” said Williams. “For any non-emergency situation, it’s important to contact your family physician in order to prevent any ER overcrowding.”

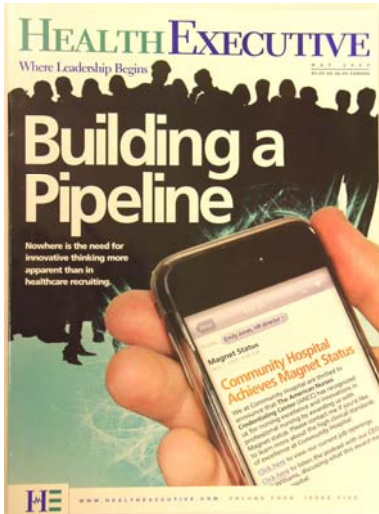
Williams also noted that it is important for anyone in an emergency situation to bring or have a family member or friend bring along a list of medications, allergies and insurance cards to the ER.

On May 21st, a luncheon was held at SACH for all of its valued emergency workers in honor of EMS Week, and each was presented with a token of appreciation. These professionals work together on a daily basis to ensure the safety of this community.



Local emergency services personnel were treated to an outdoor barbecue luncheon prepared by the Shamokin Area Community Hospital emergency services staff in recognition of Emergency Medical Services Week observed in May. Present here are: (seated from left to right) Katie Chernago, EMT, Kim Pufnak, EMT, (standing from left to right) Karen Wasilewski, RN, Mark Williams, RN, nurse manager, Diane Worhach, RN, all SACH emergency services personnel, and Kyle Anderson, EMT. The EMTs attending the luncheon represented the American Hose BLS of Mount Carmel.

SACH Appears in National Publication



Shamokin Area Community Hospital (SACH) has once again made headlines – literally!

SACH was recently featured in the May 2008 edition of *Health Executive* magazine. SACH was first featured in a December 2006 edition of *Health Executive*, which highlighted the Vision

2005, capital campaign and the construction of the West Wing.

Health Executive is a monthly magazine providing top-notch leadership information for hospital board members, chief executive officers, chief financial officers and administrators. It has a strong circulation and is a must-read for all those with a strong interest in the healthcare industry. The magazine is distributed to over 60,000 hospitals and health-systems across the United States.

SACH president and chief executive officer, Thomas R. Harlow, FACHE, was interviewed for the piece, which focused on the importance of the community in the transformation and growth of the hospital over the past 16 years.

The article described SACH's ability to survive and thrive in an area where a great deal of healthcare competition is present. Special emphasis focused on the Women's Health Center and in-house MRI Suite.

The new Women's Health Center features digital mammography equipment and bone densitometry scanner, while the MRI Suite offers the top of the line MRI unit with a 90 percent reduction in noise (currently the quietest model on the market today).

It was noted that even though the hospital must constantly strive to improve equipment, the biggest concern for SACH going forward is ensuring that it provides the best quality, value and service

within its market.

The clinical staff was lauded for its accomplishments over the past 16 years and it was noted that they were a key element to the growth of the facility.

SACH's receipt of an award for operational excellence for its emergency preparedness plan, which won the hospital a 2006 Achievement Award from the Hospital and Healthsystem Association of Pennsylvania, was also mentioned.

It was noted that SACH is currently focused on staff retention, particularly with nursing. The recent SACH nursing expo was cited as one way in which SACH is trying to address this issue.

Harlow noted that over the next three to five years, SACH will look to become the absolute best in its market for quality, value and service.

"Quality, value and service has to be more than a cute slogan," said Harlow. "We have to be able to continually demonstrate it daily to our patients, staff and the community at large."

"That is the critical success factor for us," he concluded.



Annie Adams, MRI technologist (left) and Shelly Stellar, MRI coordinator, take a moment to review the May edition of *Health Executive* magazine, which featured Shamokin Area Community Hospital's recent additions of the new Women's Health Center and in-house MRI Suite.

Lack of Sleep Impacts Performance

Sleep is a daily (or should it be said, nightly) activity that far too many of us take for granted. Unfortunately, as time passes, more and more Americans are not getting the amount of sleep they need.

There are numerous things that can cause sleep deprivation including sleep disorders, poor sleep habits and an uncomfortable bed.

Another culprit is stress. According to a recent Better Sleep Council (BSC) Stress Survey, 66 percent of Americans are losing sleep due to stress, up from 51 percent last year.

The number one source of stress that keeps American's tossing and turning is family matters with many of those surveyed citing issues close to home as the reason they are kept awake at night.

Job-related concerns and financial matters were also a source for worry among 19 percent and 13 percent of individuals surveyed, respectively, and only five percent of Americans are kept awake by current events in the news.

The BSC Stress Survey also found that 17 percent of Americans are losing sleep at least three nights a week. Losing sleep due to stress one or two nights a week generally will not impact an individual's ability to perform. However, loss of sleep three or four days in a row will definitely impact performance.

With all the forces on our life competing for time and attention, it is important to recognize what we can take control of – like getting an adequate amount of sleep each night. A good night's sleep improves an individual's energy level, enhances their ability to think clearly and strengthens their capacity to deal with life's daily challenges.

The BSC reminds sleep-deprived Americans that starting each day with a good night's sleep

and taking control of their sleep environment can effectively reduce stress and improve their quality of life.

And while there's much that Americans are not able to control when it comes to causing stress, the BSC reminds consumers what they can do to control their sleep environment and increase their chances of getting a better night's sleep.

Here are some tips that can put you on the path to a better night's sleep.

- Determine your sleep requirements. Determining the amount of sleep you need each night to be fully alert the next day is a big step toward sleep environment control. You should try to get at least your minimum sleep requirement each night, if not more. Most adults need between 7-9 hours of sleep each night.

- Reduce noise. Keeping your bedroom noise level at a minimum creates an ideal, relaxed sleep environment. Consider removing your television and/or radio from the bedroom.

- Create a comfortable bed. Evaluating your mattress is important – is it giving you the support and comfort you need to get a good night's sleep?

- Engage in pre-bedtime relaxation. Engaging in a relaxing, non-alerting activity at bedtime, such as reading or listening to music will help you sleep better. Avoid activities that are mentally and physically stimulating that might keep you awake.

- Develop a bedtime ritual. Keeping the same routine each night just before bed signals your body to settle down for the night. Set a regular schedule that takes you from dusk till dawn.

Be sure to take advantage of the above helpful hints and recognize the importance of a good night's sleep.

Physician Profile...Meet Dr. Franklyn R. Gergits



Growing up in the city of Allentown, Dr. Franklyn R. Gergits clearly envisioned his future in the field of medicine.

“I wanted to be a dentist, like my uncle,” said Gergits who also was influenced by his mother who worked as a nurse and by his father who helped teach him the value of hard work.

As time passed, Gergits decided to go into a different area of medicine as an ear, nose and throat (ENT) physician.

“As an ear, nose and throat doctor, I have a wider area of responsibility than I would have as a dentist, which is very challenging and fulfilling for me,” said Gergits.

Doing ENT work, Dr. Gergits can help his patients in a multitude of ways including: finding solutions for inner ear disorders, clearing up nasal obstructions, solving problems with snoring (diagnosing and treating sleep apnea), providing care for sinus problems and so much more.

Gergits is also an accomplished surgeon who is currently providing a procedure known as sinuplasty at Shamokin Area Community Hospital (SACH). Dr. Gergits was the first person to perform this particular kind of surgery in Pennsylvania and it is a credit to SACH and area residents to have this medical service at their disposal.

Sinuplasty is a procedure that uses a thin balloon to open the sinus passages to allow for easier breathing and in most cases, reduce/end sinus headaches. Gergits noted that sinuplasty can benefit patients with sinus headaches/recurring sinus infections and this procedure is often a great alternative to standard sinus surgery since sinuplasty offers minimal discomfort and a faster recovery time.

Since arriving at SACH in August 2007, Dr. Gergits says things have been great and he was appreciative of the warm reception given to him by those at the hospital.

Gergits is the president and founder of Northeast Ear, Nose and Throat Associates, Inc., located in Bloomsburg, where he practices with another valued member of the SACH medical staff, Lisa S. Ayers, D.O.

His educational path started when he received a Bachelor of Science degree in Chemistry from W. Virginia University in 1986. From there, he went on to receive his Master’s in Bio Chemistry at Lehigh University in 1988.

Dr. Gergits received his doctor of osteopathy degree from Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine. He also did his residency there where he specialized in pediatric and adult general otolaryngology, head and neck surgery and facial plastic surgery.

He also did an otolaryngic allergy fellowship at St. John Oakland Hospital in Madison Heights, Michigan. Otolaryngology is the branch of medicine that specializes in the diagnosis and treatment of ear, nose, throat, head and neck disorders.

Board certified in Otolaryngology and facial plastic surgery in 1999 and otolaryngic allergy in 2004, Dr. Gergits is a very decorated, fellowship-trained, board certified ear, nose and throat surgeon who can provide the highest level of care for all the patients he treats.

Gergits noted that if he could give one health tip to the public, he would encourage more people to use a salt-water nose spray to flush out any allergens. Over 30 million Americans suffer from chronic sinus troubles and even more suffer from rhinitis, more commonly known as a “stuffy nose”. Thus, a salt-water nose spray/rinse is one of the most simple, effective and inexpensive ways to cure sinus problems.

In his limited amount of spare time, Dr. Gergits enjoys fishing and is a huge fan of the Philadelphia Eagles.

Fireworks Safety

Thousands of accidents each year tell us that fireworks are dangerous. Approximately 9,000 fireworks-related injuries occurred last year, resulting in nearly 2,000 eye injuries.

In an effort to reduce these preventable injuries, eye doctors across America encourage families to attend local public fireworks displays instead of using fireworks at home this July 4th.

This recommendation is made as part of Fireworks Eye Safety month, which is sponsored by the American Academy of Ophthalmology. Attending a professional public fireworks display is a safe way to honor our nation.

People do not recognize how dangerous fireworks can be when in an inexperienced hand. As many as 400 Americans each year lose vision in one or both eyes due to fireworks injuries. The risk of losing an eye is not worth the excitement of setting off fireworks.

Here are some tips you can follow to enjoy a safer Fourth of July.

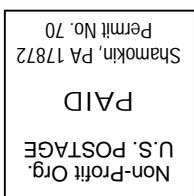
- View public fireworks displays from at least 500 feet away.

- Respect the safety barriers set up by pyrotechnicians.
- Let trained professionals light the fireworks.
- Follow the directions of local firemen and police at public displays.
- Do not touch unexploded fireworks.

People also need to realize the following facts:

- Thousands of fireworks injuries are caused by legal fireworks.
- Bottle rockets are the most dangerous legal fireworks. The rockets fly erratically and the bottles or cans used to launch the rockets can explode, showering fragments of glass or metal often resulting in bystander injuries.
- For children under the age of five, sparklers account for more than one half of all fireworks injuries. Fascinated by the bright sparks, children find these sticks of fire – burning as hot as 1,800 degrees (hot enough to melt gold), irresistible to touch.

Please take all of the above advice into account and share the safety precautions with others. Keep yourself and those you love safe this Fourth of July.



Quality Care... Close to Home

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