

# hello **Healthy**

CELEBRATING THE HEALING POWER OF HUMANKINDNESS • FALL 2018

## **Bakersfield is growing**

**Mercy Hospital  
Southwest is  
rising to the  
challenge**

## **Breathe easy this fall**

**Steps to stop  
that sneeze  
or wheeze**

## **Grateful grad**

***Humankindness  
makes the  
grade for local  
student***





# Four stories of success

## Mercy Hospital Southwest tower expansion project



“Once the expansion is complete, we will be able to accommodate a greater number of patients in a facility that is closest to their homes,” says Peters. “We are very much looking forward to being able to better serve the needs of this growing community.”

Mercy Hospital Southwest is breaking ground on a multimillion-dollar expansion that is set to bring an unparalleled level of care to the area. Dignity Health plans to build a four-story addition on the eastern end of the Mercy Southwest campus at Stockdale Highway and Old River Road.

Mercy Hospital President and CEO Bruce Peters says the expansion project is expected to close the gap between Bakersfield’s sprawling west side and demand for advanced health care services.

“This project is transformational for the Mercy Southwest campus,” Peters says. “Mercy Southwest is the only hospital west of Highway 99, and with all the expansion in the northwest and southwest, we need more beds to take care of all the people in these communities.”

### More treatment options

The new tower will allow the hospital to expand existing services, such as women’s health, orthopedics, and oncology, as well as add new ones, such as cardiology.

Right now the hospital has just 82 beds; the new tower will add 106 beds, including 24 new intensive care beds and 18 neonatal intensive care beds. The number of operating rooms will double, from 5 to 10. There will

also be an expanded emergency room and new cardiac catheterization labs.

“Cardiac intervention services are one of the things the community has asked for at Mercy Southwest,” says Peters. “We are pleased to be able to add this new service line to the hospital.”

### The better to serve you

Along with adding new treatment options, the hospital plans to hire new physicians, specialists, nurses, and other clinical and nonclinical staff, creating hundreds of new, permanent jobs.

“We believe the addition of new specialists and physicians will make a big impact in patient care over the next few years,” says Peters.

Dignity Health hopes to break ground on the project sometime in summer 2019 after plans are approved by the state. Fundraising efforts through The Friends of Mercy Foundation are already underway to help offset the \$250 million price tag.

“Once the expansion is complete, we will be able to accommodate a greater number of patients in a facility that is closest to their homes,” says Peters. “We are very much looking forward to being able to better serve the needs of this growing community.”



# Breathe better, feel better this fall

Do you sneeze, cough, and wheeze more at this time of year? That's not uncommon in our area—several troublesome respiratory issues tend to crop up in the fall. Find the facts about them below, along with a few stay-well tips courtesy of Amy Mehta, MD, a Dignity Health pulmonologist.

**Allergies and asthma.** Many people with allergies see their symptoms rise in the fall. One culprit may be airborne pollen, as well as dust from local harvesting, Dr. Mehta says. And if you happen to have asthma, allergies can, in turn, exacerbate that condition.

If you're prone to fall allergies, limit your outdoor activities on windy days or when news reports list the air quality as poor. "And start taking your allergy medication before allergy season arrives," Dr. Mehta says.

**Colds and the flu.** As the weather turns cooler, we spend more time indoors around other people, which exposes us to circulating cold and flu germs.

Remember to wash your hands often, including when you return

from public places. "And avoid people who are sick," Dr. Mehta says. Also, nearly everyone 6 months and older should get a flu shot each fall.

With rest and some over-the-counter medicines to relieve symptoms, you should start feeling better if you catch a cold or get the flu. "But if you're feeling worse and just not getting any better, see your doctor," Dr. Mehta says.

If you have a lung disease, like COPD, seek medical help sooner rather than later.

**Bronchitis.** Infections and allergies can trigger bronchitis— inflammation of the lungs' breathing tubes. "We see that a lot in the fall," says Dr. Mehta.

A cough that lasts more than seven days (especially with wheezing) should prompt a trip to your doctor's office for possible antibiotic treatment.



## Looking for a doctor?

We can help. Visit  
[dignityhealth.org/ourdoctors](http://dignityhealth.org/ourdoctors)  
or call **661.487.1042**.

Free!

## DRIVE-THRU flu vaccine clinics

**WHO:** All clinics are for adults 18 years or older.

**WHY:** Because in addition to making us miserable, the flu sometimes leads to serious complications.

**WHEN:** The sooner the better! Find a time and location listed below that fits your needs.



### Thursday, Oct. 4

Mercy Hospital Southwest  
551 Shanley Court, Bakersfield  
(Behind Friends of Mercy  
Foundation building)  
4 to 6 p.m.

### Saturday, Oct. 6

Mercy Hospital Downtown  
1919 16th St., Bakersfield  
(16th and D streets)  
9 to 11 a.m.

### Monday, Oct. 8

Memorial Hospital  
420 34th St., Bakersfield  
(Parking lot next to Human  
Resources building)  
11 a.m. to 2 p.m.

## Hello humankindness®

We hope you enjoy this issue of *HelloHealthy*. Comments about the publication can be directed to the Marketing and Communications Department:

DIGNITY HEALTH – Mercy and Memorial Hospitals

P.O. Box 119, Bakersfield, CA 93302 | 661.327.4647, ext. 4434

*HelloHealthy* is published by Dignity Health – Mercy and Memorial Hospitals to provide general health information. It is not intended to provide personal medical advice, which should be obtained directly from a health care provider.

Models may be used in photos and illustrations.

2018 © Coffey Communications, Inc. All rights reserved.

### Marketing and Communications Department

Robin Mangarin-Scott—Vice President, Strategic Marketing and Communications—Central California

Michelle Willow—Director of External Communications—Central California

Cody Brutlag—Marketing Manager—Central California

Jessica Neeley—Communications Specialist—Central California

Fabiana Rienzo—Communications Specialist—Central California

Michelle Oliver—Marketing Manager—Central California

# Stay steady on your feet

What you can do to help prevent falls

## Back on your feet again

If you ever do take a tumble and break a bone, turn to the orthopedic specialists at Mercy and Memorial Hospitals. They're experts at treating a variety of conditions and injuries that affect the musculoskeletal system. Get the full story at [dignityhealth.org/bakersfield/ortho](http://dignityhealth.org/bakersfield/ortho).

CLICK 



*"Younger people fall too, but there definitely is a higher incidence in older people who fall and fracture a bone."*

—Karl Balch, MD

*Don't fall.* That advice can be easier said than done, especially for older people. Weak muscles, arthritis, and poor vision all can contribute to a greater risk of falling.

Karl Balch, MD, has seen the results of falling—both in his orthopedic practice as a joint replacement specialist and as an on-call surgeon in the emergency department at Dignity Health – Memorial Hospital.

"Younger people fall too, but there definitely is a higher incidence in older people who fall and fracture a bone," Dr. Balch says. "It's the injuries that tend to be different with age—if you're older you're more likely to break a bone, whereas if you're younger you're more likely to have a muscle tear or sprain."

One reason older people tend to break bones when they fall is that bones grow weaker with age. That's because older bodies don't have as much calcium as younger bodies do.

"If one of my patients has had a fall with a fracture, I tell them they should be taking calcium and vitamin D supplements," Dr. Balch says. (Vitamin D helps the body absorb calcium.)

He also recommends that his patients who fall talk to their primary care providers about getting a DEXA bone scan to check their bone density.

"If your bone density is a little low, calcium and vitamin D can help," he says. "But if it's really low, we have medications that can help strengthen the bone."

## How to prevent falls

There are a number of other steps you can take to reduce your risk of falling. Here are a few Dr. Balch recommends:



Install grab bars in your shower.

Do exercises that strengthen your knee and hip muscles. One good exercise is lying flat on your side and doing leg lifts.

Consider using a shower chair when you bathe.



Make sure your home has good lighting, including night lights for late-night bathroom breaks.

Clear clutter from your floors—it's a tripping hazard.



Get rid of area rugs—or at least put sticky tape underneath them so they don't slide.



# Q&A about type 2 diabetes

Type 2 diabetes is the most common form of diabetes. About 30 million children and adults in the U.S. have diabetes. Of those, nearly 95 percent have type 2 diabetes. Another 86 million have prediabetes, a condition that comes before diabetes.

“It’s important to know about diabetes,” says Harshit Shah, MD, an endocrinologist with Dignity Health Medical Group – Bakersfield. “Don’t let the ‘pre’ in prediabetes fool you. ‘Pre’ is for prevention.”

Here, Dr. Shah answers five common questions about type 2 diabetes.

## 1. What is type 2 diabetes?

All the cells in your body need sugar (glucose) to work normally. Sugar gets into cells with the help of a hormone called insulin. In type 2 diabetes, your body does not use insulin properly. This is called insulin resistance. As a result, blood sugar levels rise higher than normal.

## 2. What are the risk factors and symptoms of type 2 diabetes?

Risk factors include overweight and obesity, physical inactivity, family history, race and ethnicity, high blood pressure, genetics, and smoking. Symptoms may include intense thirst, frequent urination, blurry vision, and sometimes weight loss.

## 3. What happens if I don’t control my blood sugar?

High blood sugar, if not treated, can cause serious problems over time. It can lead to heart attacks, strokes, kidney disease, vision problems (including blindness), pain or loss of feeling in hands and feet, and sometimes the need

to have fingers, toes, or other body parts removed (amputated).

## 4. How is diabetes diagnosed?

There are several blood tests used to measure glucose levels. The most commonly used tests are:

**A1C.** This measures the average blood glucose over the past two to three months. An A1C of 6.5 percent or higher is diabetes.

**Fasting plasma glucose.** A result of 126 mg/dL or higher is diabetes.

**Random blood glucose.** A result of 200 mg/dL with symptoms is considered diabetes.

## 5. How do I manage diabetes?

Studies have shown that people who are at risk can prevent type 2 diabetes by losing weight, being active, and improving the way they eat. Medications may be needed to control the ABCs: A1C, blood pressure, and cholesterol.

## Work with your health care team.

To learn about our diabetes classes, go to [dignityhealth.org/bakersfield/diabetes](https://dignityhealth.org/bakersfield/diabetes). Or call 661.846.2038, ext. 4326.

CLICK 



## Get to know Dr. Shah

Harshit Shah, MD, is a board-certified endocrinologist with Dignity Health Medical Group – Bakersfield.

He completed his residency at Loma Linda University, California, and his fellowship at the University of Florida. Dr. Shah has been recognized as a 2017–America’s Top Physicians and a 2018–Top Endocrinologist in California.

“It’s important to get to know my patients and their lifestyle to create a treatment plan that will work for them,” he says.

When he’s not seeing patients, he loves spending time with his wife (a physical therapist) and his daughter, and he enjoys reading. He was a big fan of the TV series *House, M.D.* Nowadays he’s into *Game of Thrones*.

**TO LEARN MORE** about Dr. Shah or to make an appointment, visit [dignityhealth.org/ourdoctors/Harshit-Shah](https://dignityhealth.org/ourdoctors/Harshit-Shah). Or call 661.327.1431.

# Small gesture, big impact

Graduation is a proud moment in any student's life. It's meant to be filled with inspiring speeches, proud parents, and diplomas. Chipman Jr. High student Destiny Perez would have missed celebrating her big moment if not for the kindness of a caring staff member at Dignity Health – Memorial Hospital.

Grace Wilhelm is a Child Life Specialist at Memorial's Lauren Small Children's Center. Wilhelm is there to calm and comfort children and their families during their hospital stay. She helps young patients understand and cope with medical experiences and prepares them for procedures.

"I love to help our patients and their families get through these tough times and make their hospital stay a more positive experience," says Wilhelm.

## A very special day

Recently, Wilhelm did just that by helping Destiny celebrate her eighth-grade graduation. Destiny missed her graduation ceremony from Chipman Jr. High due to a surgery.

"Her mom mentioned that she was missing her graduation," says Wilhelm. "She even had perfect attendance—that's a big accomplishment that needs to be recognized."

Wilhelm contacted Destiny's

school and, with a little planning, she arranged for a graduation ceremony to take place at Memorial's children's healing garden—complete with cap and gown, family, friends, and faculty.

"Grace was so sweet," says Maria Perez, Destiny's mother. "She really wanted Destiny to feel special and be recognized. Destiny had no idea what to expect. When she saw all of the people who showed up to be there for her, she was so touched. We were both a bit emotional."

"It made me feel so special," says Destiny. "I was so happy I got to see some of my teachers one last time

before I moved on to high school."

This small gesture made a big impact on everyone involved.

"It made me really proud to be at our hospital," says Wilhelm. "I was so happy to help in a small way. It was very gratifying to see it all come together so we could honor Destiny."

"I just want to thank Grace for everything she did," says Maria. "It made a big impact on Destiny."

Now that Destiny has graduated from eighth grade, she will attend Highland High.

On Oct. 16, Wilhelm will be honored at Dignity Health's Acts of Humankindness event in Las Vegas.



*"When she saw all of the people who showed up to be there for her, she was so touched. We were both a bit emotional."*

—Maria Perez

# Opening soon! Best in burn care

Bakersfield's burn experts are getting a new, state-of-the-art facility—right here.

The world-renowned Grossman Burn Center has been operating out of a temporary space at Dignity Health – Memorial Hospital since 2016. Construction is underway on a new facility: the SA Camp Companies Burn Unit at The Grossman Burn Center at Memorial Hospital.

The new, dedicated location will include a seven-bed intensive care burn unit, an outpatient burn clinic, adult and pediatric catastrophic burn care, and pediatric intensive care within a comprehensive program. It will offer cutting-edge diagnostic, clinical, and surgical equipment, including hydrotherapy and hyperbaric oxygen therapy. The unit will also offer follow-up care, including rehabilitation and psychological support.



## Restoring quality of life

Memorial Hospital's Chief Operating Officer Ken Keller says that the new unit is committed to providing world-class comprehensive, compassionate, innovative care to patients.

"We have a dedicated team of doctors who are committed to giving burn victims the best care possible," Keller says. "They are on the cutting edge of what's available for the treatment of burn injuries."

The Grossman Burn Center is renowned for its pioneering techniques that help burn survivors recover faster. Their goal is not merely to ensure survival, but to restore patients to as close to their pre-injury condition as possible.

Peter Grossman, MD, president and CEO of Grossman Burn Centers and medical director of the burn unit at Memorial Hospital, says it's this like-minded mission that makes Memorial Hospital and Grossman perfect partners.

"The mission of Memorial Hospital is very much in sync with what we aspire to do at Grossman: provide excellent care to the community and form good relationships with health care providers," Dr. Grossman says. "They truly live up to their mission statement and commitment to the community."



## Care close to home

Having a larger unit offering this level of care in Bakersfield means that more burn survivors can be treated locally, reducing the need to transfer to hospitals out of the area.

"We have a significant need in our community for people to receive burn care," says Keller. "This new facility provides a valuable service to patients in Kern County, because if we weren't around, they would have to seek treatment either in Los Angeles or Fresno."

"Bakersfield deserves the very best burn care, and our goal is to create a burn unit that is second to none," Dr. Grossman says.

The comprehensive SA Camp Companies Burn Unit at The Grossman Burn Center at Memorial Hospital is scheduled to be open to patients early in 2019.



**Dignity Health®**  
Mercy & Memorial Hospitals

Dignity Health  
PO Box 119  
Bakersfield, CA 93302

Nonprofit Org.  
U.S. Postage  
**PAID**  
Merced, CA  
Permit No 1186

Free!

**DRIVE-THRU**  
▼ to avoid  
the flu!

**SEE PAGE 3** to find  
dates and locations  
to fit your needs.

Save the Date

# #MarchForHumankindness

Thursday, October 18, 2018

Join us as we march for humankindness!

The route begins at CSUB's Icardo Center and ends back on campus with the Roadrunners Rally for Kindness and CSUB Blue & Gold basketball game.

Gather your friends, family, faith groups, and coworkers as we walk together to create a kinder community.

For more information, please visit  
**[dignityhealth.org/bakersfield](http://dignityhealth.org/bakersfield)**.



**Dignity Health®**  
Mercy & Memorial Hospitals