

# hello **Healthy**

CELEBRATING THE HEALING POWER OF HUMANKINDNESS • WINTER 2018-19



*Grateful  
for life*

A breast cancer  
survivor describes  
her incredible  
journey back  
to health

# Patient navigators

## Guiding patients through difficult diagnoses

When faced with a diagnosis of a serious health condition, the journey ahead can seem full of uncertainty. That's why St. Joseph's Medical Center offers a free patient navigator service to help guide patients to resources to assist in their treatment and recovery.

Patient navigators specialize in providing patients and their loved ones with support and education regarding an array of health concerns, including cancer, heart conditions, stroke, joint pain, and diabetes.

"When a person first learns about a diagnosis or health condition from their doctor, they may not think about questions until they've left the doctor's office and had time to process their thoughts," says Jim Linderman, one of the patient navigators at St. Joseph's Cancer Institute. "Sometimes it's as simple as explaining terminology. No question is insignificant."

A new or chronic health condition can change a life in an instant. If you or a loved one ever encounters a tough diagnosis while traveling along this journey of life, know that a compassionate patient navigator is here to help.

### ▶ Getting connected to a patient navigator is easy.

Patients, caregivers, or anyone with questions can simply call **209.547.5700** to get in touch with a patient navigator.



**You do the healing.  
We'll do the rest.**

Get help for your journey.

Call a patient navigator

at **209.547.5700** or visit

**StJosephsCares.org/Navigator.**

## Hello humankindness®

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

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## Be inspired

Follow **@humankindness** on Twitter for more kindness inspiration from Dignity Health.

Connect with us on Facebook at **facebook.com/StJosephsStockton** for health tips, information about upcoming events, and an extra dose of inspiration.



# Livin' the sweet life with diabetes



With diabetes rates soaring in our community, St. Joseph's Medical Center is dedicated to providing individuals with the tools and skills needed to help prevent and manage diabetes. Diabetes is a chronic illness, and if left unmanaged, it can contribute to serious health complications.

St. Joseph's offers a full suite of diabetes education and support opportunities to help those with diabetes live well. If you or a loved one has diabetes, or has been diagnosed with prediabetes, we invite you to get involved with our diabetes education programs. They include informative workshops, peer-led support groups, clinical diabetes management services, and a dedicated exercise program specially designed for people with diabetes.

**For more information** on these and other diabetes classes and support groups, call St. Joseph's diabetes navigator at **209.944.8355** or visit **StJosephsCares.org/Diabetes**.

**CLICK** 



## Workshops, classes, support groups, and more

### **Sugar Fix Support Group**

Know what time it is? It's time for a sugar fix! St. Joseph's is proud to present the new Sugar Fix Support Group. When it comes to dealing with diabetes, "fixing" sugar is not as sweet as it sounds. That's why we offer support and education to help you keep your numbers in a healthy range. The new group meets monthly to encourage those with diabetes to take control of their health.

### **Sweet Journey 101**

In addition to Sugar Fix, St. Joseph's has also launched the new Sweet Journey 101 workshop. This two-hour workshop is available twice monthly and offers tips and tools to better manage your health for a sweet life's journey. This workshop provides basic information about diabetes in a fun and interactive manner to inspire you to learn more about managing your health.

### **Diabetes Exercise Class**

Exercise in a supervised, safe environment with an individualized program. Regular exercise has been shown to help control blood sugar as well as lower the risk of diabetes-related health complications such as heart disease and stroke.

### **Clinical Diabetes Management Program**

Our team of certified diabetes educators and specially trained pharmacists will work closely with you and your primary care physician to maximize the effectiveness of your treatment and pursue a healthier lifestyle.

# Feeling ‘good and alive again’

Specialized heart valve surgery gets beloved volunteer back doing what she loves best

Wilma Romero, 93, has a big heart and a busy Monday schedule.

Every Monday for the past 24 years, she’s worked alongside other members of Sewing Service, a volunteer group at St. Joseph’s Medical Center. They make stuffed animals and other items for hospital patients, many of whom are children.

“It makes you feel good to know that the children love the little animals,” Wilma says.

Wilma also does genealogy work on Mondays. It’s an active life, so it helps that she’s always felt healthy. Until Feb. 25, 2017, that is.

“I was sitting on a couch, and I just got so that I couldn’t breathe,” she recalls.

An ambulance rushed Wilma to St. Joseph’s, where doctors discovered that, among other heart problems,

she had acute heart failure brought on by severe aortic stenosis. That’s a condition in which a faulty heart valve doesn’t open enough to let blood properly flow through. Without treatment, severe aortic stenosis can become life-threatening.

## No open-heart surgery required

After extensive testing, it was determined that Wilma would be a candidate for transcatheter aortic valve replacement (TAVR)—a newer minimally invasive treatment.

Unlike regular valve surgery, TAVR does not require a large chest incision (open-heart surgery). Instead, specialists at St. Joseph’s insert a catheter into a small opening, usually in a leg artery, and deliver a new valve to the heart.

## TAVR milestones at St. Joseph’s

### April 2016

TAVR program launches in a new hybrid cardiac suite.

### June 23, 2016

First two patients receive TAVR.

### Fall 2018

100th patient undergoes TAVR.

After her TAVR procedure, Wilma Romero is feeling good and back to volunteering.



Because it's less invasive than open-heart surgery, TAVR offers people who can't have a major operation—because of their age or other health problems—a chance at a longer life.

“Our oldest patient so far was 97,” says April Randall, RN, Valve Clinic coordinator and the cardiac patient navigator for St. Joseph's Heart & Vascular Institute. “She is going to celebrate her 100th birthday this year.”

Patients also recover earlier with TAVR. Wilma went home just two days after her procedure. She felt so good that she tried to return to her volunteer duties the very next Monday—though she did agree to go home and rest until her doctor officially released her later that week.

“That's where I belonged on Mondays,” Wilma explains.

### Expertise + humankindness

The TAVR team at St. Joseph's is led by interventional cardiologists and cardiothoracic surgeons, physicians

with highly specialized skills and a commitment to their patients. Since the program began, they have undergone additional training so that they can perform more than one type of TAVR—allowing people with more complicated aortic valve replacements to receive treatment close to home.

The care is also individualized. The team takes the time to learn what matters to each TAVR candidate, many of whom return for a yearly TAVR reunion.

“It's rewarding to see them go to family weddings and to be able to continue to do all the things they thought they were going to miss out on,” Randall says.

And that includes Wilma. Thanks to her treatment, Wilma was able to continue her loving work at the hospital. After her TAVR procedure, Wilma says, she feels “good and alive again.”

“It's a lot better than open-heart surgery,” she says. “You don't have a long recovery time. That is what's neat about TAVR.”

## Warning signs of a heart valve problem

Heart valve disease signs and symptoms may include:

- ▶ Chest pain.
- ▶ Shortness of breath.
- ▶ Dizziness.
- ▶ Irregular heartbeat.
- ▶ Unusual tiredness.

If you've been told that you have a heart valve problem, call our heart patient navigator at **209.547.5700** to ask if a referral to the valve clinic might be right for you.

### Expert help

The expert team at St. Joseph's Heart & Vascular Institute provides state-of-the-art care delivered with a personal touch. Read about our many services at [StJosephsCares.org/Heart](https://www.stjosephscares.org/Heart).

CLICK 



# A terrifying diagnosis, an amazing recovery

A breast cancer survivor feels blessed to have been treated at St. Joseph's

When Brandy Anderson talks about learning she had breast cancer, she uses words like “terrified” and “horrifying.” She was only 31 and the single mother of two young boys.

But now, a year later and after undergoing surgery, chemotherapy, and 28 rounds of radiation, Brandy calls her diagnosis a blessing in disguise. She peppers her sentences with words like “gratitude” and “fantastic.”

Part of that is due to the changes Brandy has made in her diet and lifestyle.

But no small part of her new perspective is thanks to the supportive care she's received at St. Joseph's Cancer Institute's Breast Center of Excellence.

“The staff kept me in a constant loop of communication to make sure all of my needs were met—not just as a patient but as a person,” Brandy says. “I felt like they truly cared about me and my outcome.”

## A focus on the person

“The patient comes first.” Ask Jim Linderman and Charlene Smith about the philosophy at St. Joseph's Cancer Institute, and that's what they'll tell you (almost in unison). Linderman is the support coordinator at the Cancer Institute, and Smith is the director.

Being a Breast Center of Excellence means that everyone who's caring for a patient—from the surgeon to the pathologist to the

oncologists—works as a team, Smith says.

“Here at the hospital we offer radiation therapy,” she says. “We work closely with Stockton Hematology for chemotherapy. And we offer support services here at the Cancer Institute as well.”

Those support services include:

- A breast cancer patient navigator who helps coordinate all aspects of care for the patient.
- An exercise program.
- Yoga and tai chi classes.
- Support groups.
- Treat-Meant for You, a day of luxury services at the University Plaza Waterfront Hotel.
- Wellness in the Woods, an annual retreat for families dealing with cancer.

Most of these services are free of charge and open to the community—not just patients at St. Joseph's.

The high-quality, comprehensive services available to breast cancer patients have twice earned St. Joseph's recognition by the National Accreditation Program for Breast Centers (NAPBC). The most recent NAPBC survey, in March of 2018, called the programs available at the Cancer Institute “a model for others,” Smith notes.

“There are only 34 other Breast Centers of Excellence in the whole state of California,” she says. “It takes a very strong team to earn this kind of recognition.”



“The staff kept me in a constant loop of communication to make sure all of my needs were met—not just as a patient but as a person,” Brandy says. “I felt like they truly cared about me and my outcome.”



## Blessings & good people

When Brandy came to St. Joseph's, staff connected her with Kriste—a woman who, 12 years ago, had been diagnosed with breast cancer when she was 31 and the mother of two young boys. Kriste showed Brandy what survivorship looked like.

Now, a year after her diagnosis, Brandy threw out the first pitch at the Stockton Ports' Pink Night. She recently took a family trip to Disneyland, paid for through donations. She's even developed a product she calls "Rad Oil," which she used to help prevent burning during her radiation treatments and offers to other women going through treatment. "It's just been an amazing, overwhelming amount of blessings and good people," Brandy says.



### Here to help

For more information about the services available to people with breast cancer, call the Cancer Institute's Navigator Line at **209.939.4526**.





**Specialized heart surgery**  
gets beloved volunteer back  
doing what she loves best

**See page 4.**

# Highly trusted in matters of the heart.

**St. Joseph's has earned a top star rating!**



Woohoo! The three-star rating from the Society of Thoracic Surgeons denotes the highest category of quality and places St. Joseph's among the elite for heart bypass surgery in the United States.

From advances in open heart surgery and new cardiac treatments, to excellence in heart attack and stroke care, trust your heart (and those you love) to St. Joseph's. Learn more about St. Joseph's award-winning cardiac services at [StJosephsCares.org/Heart](http://StJosephsCares.org/Heart).



**13,000**  
Open Heart Surgeries  
Higher Volumes = Better Results



**10th**  
Largest Cardiac  
Surgery Program  
in the State



**1st**  
In our area to  
offer TAVR and  
many other  
advanced  
treatments



**85%**  
of residents who  
have heart surgery  
in Stockton choose  
St. Joseph's



**75**  
Cardiac Research  
studies over the  
last two decades