

# LIFE & HEALTH<sup>®</sup>

A JOURNAL DEVOTED TO HEALTHFUL LIVING

SUMMER 2008



**NOT JUST THE 'DOCTOR BEHIND THE MASK':** Meet Shirley Harris, MD, medical director of anesthesia services.

## You're in good hands

PATIENTS RECEIVING ANESTHESIA BENEFIT FROM THE BEST OF CARE

**M**OST PEOPLE think of an anesthesiologist as just the “doctor behind the mask.” The truth is today’s anesthesiologist now practices one of the most complex medical specialties. These doctors command a vast amount of medical knowledge of the human body, medications and their interactions, and the effect of disease conditions during the administration of anesthesia.

Shirley Harris, MD, medical director of anesthesia services, uses three words to describe the services offered by the anesthesia department at St. Francis Hospital & Health Services: safe, comfortable and exceptional.

Dr. Harris joined the medical staff at St. Francis in June 2004. Because of her efforts to expand the number of anesthesia providers at the hospital, the staff has increased from one to three anesthesiologists and two full-time certified nurse anesthetists. The additional staff members assure patients, surgeons and hospital administration that care is being provided in a safe and

controlled environment.

Anesthesia services offered at St. Francis include preoperative anesthesia evaluation, acute and postoperative pain management, chronic pain management, epidural services for obstetrics patients, and preanesthesia consultation.

### CALMING PATIENTS' FEARS

“When we meet patients, they are frightened about their surgical experience,” Dr. Harris admits. “We help ease that tension and make them comfortable, and make their experience enjoyable.”

“Since patients come from various backgrounds—from farmers to bankers, housewives to students, from all walks of life and, surprisingly, multiple ethnic backgrounds—our team gives the utmost attention and care to each individual patient,” Dr. Harris says.

The individualized care provided by the St. Francis staff is what sets it apart from other facilities, according to Dr. Harris. “At our institution, each patient is treated as a unique person, not just as a number,” she

—Continued on back page

Anesthesiologists work hard to build trust and alleviate patients' fears.

# HEALTH NEWS UPDATE



## EVERY LITTLE THING



Whether for a romantic meal or a quiet evening at home, **CANDLES** are great for creating just the right mood. But to prevent fires, keep them out of the reach of children and pets and never leave them unattended.

—U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission

Always watch children near any body of **WATER**. No matter what the child's age or presumed swimming ability, there is still a risk of drowning.

—Safe Kids Worldwide

You may have heard that carrots are the star vegetable when it comes to vision. But here's something you may not know: **SPINACH** is even better. Among veggies, Popeye's favorite has the best nutrients for eyes.

—American Optometric Association

## Are you friends through thick and thin?

Acceptance in close friendships is a good thing. But can getting too comfortable with our closest pals spell trouble for our waistlines?

A study in *The New England Journal of Medicine* suggests that obesity can be contagious. One finding: A person's chances of becoming obese during a given interval (three-year period) increased if he or she had a close friend who became obese within that same period.

The obesity effect was greater among same-sex friends and same-sex siblings.

The researchers suggest that obesity becomes acceptable when a certain body size is viewed as normal within a social network of friends and family. ❖

## Heart-friendly workouts may help knees too

Exercise that gives your heart a boost may also benefit your knees.

According to research reported in the journal *Arthritis Care & Research*, physical activity that improves heart health—exercise that increases your heart rate and makes you sweat—appears to also help protect knees from the cartilage loss that contributes to osteoarthritis.

The research involved nearly 300 healthy adults between ages 50 and 79 who did not have a history of knee problems or osteoarthritis.

Using MRI (magnetic resonance imaging), the researchers found that vigorous physical activity can build knee strength and reduce the risk of cartilage loss. Even moderate physical activities, such as walking, seemed to be good for the participants' knees as well as their hearts.

This study didn't determine which specific kinds of exercises are best for



knees. But for a healthy heart, the American Heart Association recommends at least 30 minutes of moderate physical activity, such as brisk walking, at least five days a week.

If you have questions about what kind of exercise is right for you, check with your doctor. ❖

## Asthma control: Breathe easier each and every day

Are you in control of your asthma?

A nationwide survey shows that some people who think they are may not be.

The survey, presented by the Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America, revealed a gap between what people with asthma think about their condition's control and the actual impact asthma has on their lives.

For example, two-thirds of people with asthma surveyed said they're on top of their condition. But more than half also said they have shortness of breath, wheezing, coughing or other asthma symptoms at least once a week.

One-third said they use their rescue medicine at least once a day. Ideally, such medications should be used no more than twice a week.

People with uncontrolled asthma often can't enjoy everyday activities and may miss two to three times more days from school or work as people whose asthma is well controlled.

If asthma is interfering with your day-to-day life, talk to your doctor. He or she may suggest daily maintenance medications to help you get better control of your asthma. ❖



### Breathe better, learn more

You can learn more about asthma and allergies from the Allergy & Asthma Network Mothers of Asthmatics. The nonprofit group offers a number of free, three- to five-minute online classes covering topics such as sinuses, allergy testing and how to use peak-flow meters. Enroll at [www.aanma.org/college](http://www.aanma.org/college).

## KIDS AND CONCUSSIONS Handle with care

If your child gets a bump or blow to the head, it's important to keep an eye out for signs of concussion—even if everything seems fine at first.

Symptoms of a concussion may show up right after the injury, or they may take days or weeks to appear, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

If your child has any of the following warning signs, seek medical help right away:

- Headache, something the child describes as pressure in the head.
- Nausea or vomiting.
- Balance problems or dizziness.
- Double or blurry vision.
- Ringing ears.
- Sensitivity to light or noise.
- Concentration or memory problems.
- Loss of smell or taste.

**Sports and concussions.** If your child has had a concussion, be sure to follow the doctor's advice on how long he or she should wait before returning to sports or other activities.

Letting a child play too soon could put him or her at risk for a more serious injury. A second concussion occurring soon after the first can cause permanent damage to the brain and can even be deadly, according to the American Association of Neurological Surgeons.

You can learn more at [www.cdc.gov/ConcussionInYouthSports](http://www.cdc.gov/ConcussionInYouthSports). ❖

## Fight the bite! Avoiding West Nile virus



You might think of a mosquito bite as just an itchy annoyance. But the risk of West Nile virus makes the bite of this pest a health concern.

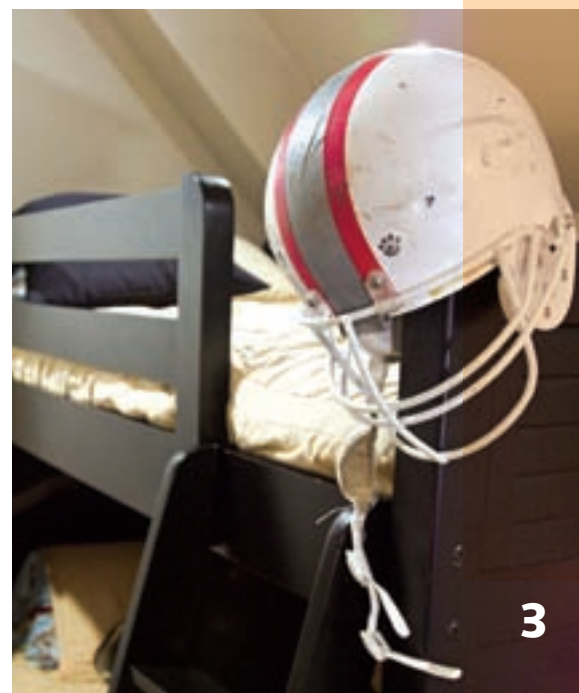
Mosquitoes can carry West Nile virus in their salivary glands. When an infected mosquito bites, it can pass on the virus. According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), West Nile virus is now in most areas of the United States.

Most people infected with the virus never get sick. Some develop West Nile fever, a flulike illness that lasts a few days. A very small number of people, about 1 in 150, develop a more severe form of the

disease, called West Nile encephalitis or West Nile meningitis.

The CDC offers this advice on protecting yourself from West Nile virus:

- Before you go outside, apply insect repellent to exposed skin and clothes.
- Consider staying inside in the early morning and early evening, when mosquitoes are most active.
- Make sure the screens in your windows and doors are in good condition.
- Drain any standing water around your home. Mosquitoes can lay eggs in even a small amount of water. ❖



## Report to the Community

FROM JAN. 1  
THROUGH DEC. 31, 2007

St. Francis Hospital & Health Services:

- Admitted 2,287 patients.
- Delivered 279 babies.
- Cared for 7,993 ER patients.
- Registered 46,834 outpatients.
- Performed 370 inpatient surgeries.
- Performed 1,359 outpatient surgeries.

St. Francis Hospital Auxiliary members  
donated service hours 5,655

### ECONOMIC IMPACT

Total employees	502
Salaries/wages/benefits	\$30,777,149
Contract labor and professional fees	\$1,373,791
Supplies and purchased services	\$10,932,515
Other expenses (including utilities)	\$4,546,752

### A LEGACY OF CARING

In March of 1894, Mother Augustine Giesen and four companion sisters arrived in Maryville with a mission to care for the sick. The first hospital was established in a renovated house with the philosophy “Turn no one away.”

The tradition first started by the founding sisters has been the hallmark of the physicians, employees and volunteers who have worked at St. Francis Hospital & Health Services.

Today St. Francis’ heritage continues. Providing health care to those in need is the greatest honor to the sacredness and dignity of the human spirit. ❖

# Our Dedication ADDS + UP

## \$213,574

Total cash and in-kind contributions made to nonprofit organizations, including the Ministry Center, Children and Family Center, Conception Abbey, American Cancer Society, American Heart Association, Big Brothers & Big Sisters, United Way, Lifeline, after-prom and graduation organizations, and a multitude of baseball, softball and dodgeball teams



# 28

Number of health fairs and screenings at which medical services—such as blood tests, bone density screenings, blood pressure checks and pulmonary function testing—were offered



# \$1,073,794

Total traditional charity care provided in 2007

# \$1,458,273

Total benefit of goods and services dedicated to the community by St. Francis Hospital & Health Services in 2007



# 30,083

Number of people served through community benefit activities such as charity care, financial contributions, health education and community health improvement services

# 172

Number of regular meetings, conferences and events conducted by community organizations and groups in hospital meeting rooms free of charge

# 24

Number of schools where free sports medicine services were offered by St. Francis certified athletic trainers and physicians

# It's a healthy habit: Checking your skin

**A** LITTLE watchfulness on your part could make a big difference when it comes to the threat of skin cancer. When it's found before it has a chance to spread, skin cancer can be relatively easy to treat.

That's why checking your skin routinely is such an important health habit. By reporting skin changes to your doctor right away, you can help ensure that you catch cancer in its earliest, most treatable stages. That's especially key with melanoma, a particularly dangerous form of skin cancer.

## WHAT TO LOOK FOR

Watch for anything that's new or changing, such as a new mole or blemish or a change in size, shape or color of a skin spot or mole, says the American Cancer Society.

To learn more, click on "Health Information" at [stfrancismaryville.com](http://stfrancismaryville.com).

Also be alert to any mole that is painful or that itches or bleeds.

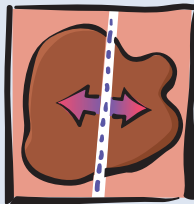
Examine your entire body, head to toe and front to back. If you do find something suspicious, play it safe and have your doctor take a look. ❖

## Be alert to the letter

When checking moles, remember the ABCD guide to the signs of melanoma.

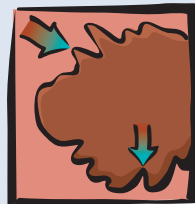
### Asymmetry.

One half of the mole doesn't match the other.



### Borders.

Its edges are irregular, ragged or blurred.



**Color.** There may be more than one color.



**Diameter.** It's larger than a pencil eraser or is growing.



# Multitaskers make dangerous drivers

**I**N TODAY'S fast-paced world, chatting on a cell phone while driving has become a common practice.

Yet cell phone use and other types of multitasking while driving is risky business.

In a study by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, researchers found that nearly 80 percent of car crashes and 65 percent of near crashes happened within three seconds of something

distracting the driver.

The study listed cell phones as the most common distraction. Dialing a cell phone was found to be most dangerous, closely followed by talking or listening on the phone. Other distractions included reaching for a moving object, reading or applying makeup.

**Focus on the road.** The study's researchers stress that drivers need to be alert when on the road. For safe cell phone use, don't



take or make calls when driving; instead, pull over to the side of the road in a safe spot. ❖

# Checking up on kids

REGULAR DOCTOR VISITS ARE PART OF A HEALTHY CHILDHOOD

**D**URING YOUR child's first year, the doctor might have seemed like an honorary member of the family.

All those checkups meant you were seeing each other quite frequently. But well-child checkups aren't just for babies. Kids of all ages can benefit from regular visits to the doctor's office.

For a healthy child you might wonder why bother, but these timely get-togethers offer important safeguards and something for everyone.

Your child, of course, will have his or her health and development checked. And you can use each visit to learn more about keeping your child healthy.

## THE DOCTOR'S ROLE

According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, your child's doctor can get a good picture of your child's overall progress when he or she sees your child regularly. And if there is a problem, spotting it early often means it's easier to treat.

You can expect your child to be weighed and measured at each visit. The doctor will listen to the child's heart and lungs, feel his or her abdomen, and examine other areas of the body.

The doctor can make sure your child is up-to-date on immunizations and recommended screening tests.

Older children may be comfortable going to their appointments without you; these visits can be a good opportunity for the doctor

## Growing up healthy: Right on schedule

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends the following general schedule for well-child checkups:

- Before your baby leaves the hospital.
- Within 3 to 5 days of birth.
- Within 48 to 72 hours after discharge from the hospital.
- By 1 month.
- At 2, 4, 6, 9 and 12 months.
- At 15, 18, 24 and 30 months.
- Yearly visits from 3 through 21 years.

to discuss issues that commonly affect adolescents.

## MAKE THE MOST OF VISITS

As a parent, you can use these checkups to ask any questions you have.

You might want to keep a notebook to jot down questions as you



think of them. And don't hesitate to ask for details during your child's checkup.

Are you curious about a test? Wondering what a vaccination is for? Just ask.

Need a pediatrician or family physician? Call 660-562-2525 or visit [www.stfrancismaryville.com](http://www.stfrancismaryville.com). ❖

## Tips for calling your child's doctor

**Cough. It's your toddler.**

Cough, cough. It feels like a fever too. You decide to give your doctor's office a call.

When you get the doctor on the phone, you'll want to make the most of that time.

So before you call, the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) suggests that you:

- Take your child's temperature.
- Have your child's immunization records and list of medications at hand.

■ Have your pharmacy's telephone number ready.

When your doctor gets on the line, have your child near the phone so you can answer questions regarding his or her condition more quickly.

Some pediatricians offer special phone-in times for general questions, according to the AAP. Check with your doctor's office about what you should do about calling after hours. Of course, call right away if you think your child is seriously ill.

## EXPERTS AT YOUR SERVICE



**ON THE ANESTHESIOLOGY TEAM:**  
Clockwise from top left, Wasif F. M. AlMuttar, MD; Dale Cavin, CRNA; Brandie Cockrell, CRNA; and Jose Marcelo Mendoza, MD.

Find a physician who is right for you. Call 660-562-2525 or visit [www.stfrancismaryville.com](http://www.stfrancismaryville.com).

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## In good hands

—Continued from front page

says. “The anesthesia team and the entire nursing staff take time to learn about the patient in order to give exceptional medical care.”

With the expansion of the number of surgeons over the past four years, the anesthesia team has broadened its scope of care. Currently the team works with three obstetrician/gynecologists, three general surgeons, two orthopedic surgeons, an ophthalmologist, podiatrists and an ENT (ear, nose and throat) specialist. In addition to the surgeries, anesthesia is also offered for endoscopies that require sedation in specific situations.

### PROTECTING CRITICAL LIFE FUNCTIONS

The American Society of Anesthesiologists points out that

before the discovery of anesthesia more than a century ago, relatively little surgery could be performed. Few people realize that beyond ensuring the patient’s comfort, today’s anesthesiologists’ primary role in the operating room is to make informed medical judgments to protect and regulate the patient’s critical life functions. These medical specialists are the ones who will immediately treat any medical problems that might arise during surgery or the recovery period.

“A lot of surgery patients are afraid of things that they have heard concerning anesthesia,” Dr. Harris says. “At St. Francis, we work hard to alleviate those fears and build trust between patients and physicians. We know that if we can make patients comfortable and assure them that they are in a safe and compassionate environment, patients are happy and recognize they are receiving exceptional care.” ♦

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