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Stroke Program and Rehabilitations Services help a co-worker regain her independence.

AN ORGANIZATION THAT DELIVERS

Breast cancer is the most commonly diagnosed cancer in women after skin cancer. Each October, we recognize Breast Cancer Awareness Month. It's a time to celebrate breast cancer survivors and honor the heroes who support and care for them throughout their journey. Although we observe Breast Cancer Awareness Month in October, our efforts extend well beyond just one month.

At UF Health Jacksonville, our team offers a multidisciplinary approach for every patient under our care, including access to the latest technology such as 3D digital breast tomosynthesis. These advancements, coupled with the high-quality care delivered at our facilities, embodies our comprehensive clinical services.

With that said, please join me in congratulating the UF Health Breast Center – Jacksonville and its dedicated staff on its recent accreditation by the National Accreditation Program for Breast Centers. This accreditation not only recognizes the high standards of care at UF Health Jacksonville but also provides assurance to patients and their families that they are receiving the best possible treatment. We are indeed an organization that delivers.

As an academic medical center, we have the privilege of advancing the frontiers of medicine through patient-centered research, leading to tangible improvements in the health and well-being of our community.

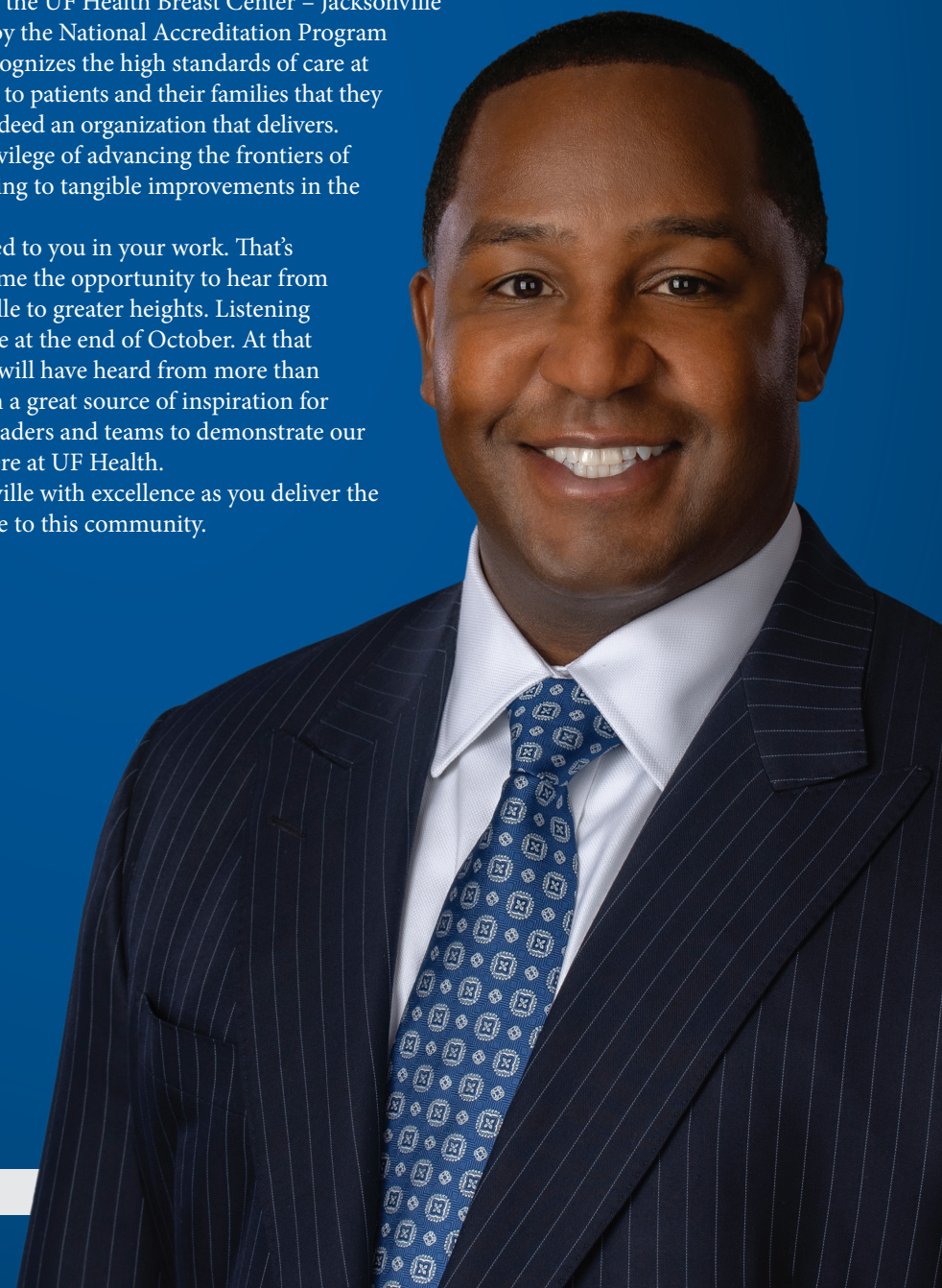
To do that well, I find it essential to be connected to you in your work. That's what our listening sessions have done — allowed me the opportunity to hear from you, so together we can take UF Health Jacksonville to greater heights. Listening sessions kicked off in September and will conclude at the end of October. At that time, the UF Health Jacksonville leadership team will have heard from more than 100 departments. The listening sessions have been a great source of inspiration for me and I look forward to following up with our leaders and teams to demonstrate our commitment to your well-being and belonging here at UF Health.

Thank you for representing UF Health Jacksonville with excellence as you deliver the most compassionate and outstanding care possible to this community.

Sincerely,

Patrick

Patrick L. Green, FACHE
CEO, UF Health Jacksonville



NAPBC[®]

**NATIONAL ACCREDITATION PROGRAM
FOR BREAST CENTERS
ACCREDITED BREAST CENTER**

A QUALITY PROGRAM
of the AMERICAN COLLEGE
OF SURGEONS



UF Health Breast Center – Jacksonville receives NAPBC accreditation

by Alex Linton

The UF Health Breast Center – Jacksonville provides integrated care for breast cancer patients in Northeast Florida and Southeast Georgia, and now that determined focus is receiving national recognition.

In August, The National Accreditation Program for Breast Centers, a program administered by the American College of Surgeons, granted accredited status to the UF Health Breast Center – Jacksonville. The accreditation signifies UF Health's compliance with NAPBC standards that recognize a breast center's leadership, clinical services, research, community outreach, professional education and quality improvement for patients.

Accreditation by the NAPBC is granted only to those programs committed to providing the best possible care to patients with breast cancer. The NAPBC provides the structure and resources to develop and operate a high-quality breast center and accredited program. Breast centers seeking NAPBC accreditation undergo a site visit every three years.

As an NAPBC-accredited center, the UF Health Breast Center – Jacksonville is dedicated to maintaining levels of excellence in the delivery of comprehensive, patient-centered, multidisciplinary care, resulting in outstanding service for patients with breast disease.

"We are incredibly proud of this recognition," said Shahla Masood, MD, FCAP, a professor and chair of the department of pathology and laboratory medicine, and medical director of the UF Health Breast Center – Jacksonville. "We believe bringing together experts in multiple specialties who can collaborate on finding the best options for our patients and then design a personalized therapy for each of them is the key component of their treatment."

UF Health patients can be confident that their breast care team includes experts from a variety of disciplines who are committed to working together to provide the best care available throughout their entire course of treatment. Patients receiving care at an NAPBC-accredited center also have access to information on clinical trials and new treatment options, genetic counseling, and patient-centered services such as psychosocial support, rehabilitation services and survivorship care.



SUPPORT THROUGH THE JOURNEY

by Angela Mack

The Breast Cancer Support Group at UF Health North is a positive outlet for group members.

A small group of women meets monthly at a safe place to show support, compassion and encouragement to others who understand their journey. Although they may enter as strangers, they leave as family. Breast cancer brought them together, but it does not define them.

The breast cancer support group at UF Health North welcomes women of all ages who have received a breast cancer diagnosis. Held on the second Thursday of each month, the group meets for an hour to 90 minutes.

The support group includes UF Health Jacksonville patients and patients from other North Florida health care institutions who are at different stages of their breast cancer journey, from newly diagnosed to breast cancer survivors. Some members attend regularly, while others as support is needed.

The goal is to help participants develop a greater sense of well-being, enhance knowledge and understanding of breast cancer, improve quality of life, increase coping skills, and reduce anxiety and stress.

COME TO BE CURIOUS

The group is led by Tamara Sorrye, LMHC, a licensed mental health counselor and oncology outpatient case manager at UF Health Jacksonville, and Sheila Compton, MSW, LCSW, a licensed clinical social worker in surgical oncology at UF Health Jacksonville. The two facilitate the breast cancer support group in an open setting, using a free-flow format to allow members to share without judgment. The leaders also connect the members to community resources.

"The impact of engaging with someone who is going through what they're going through can be so powerful. Support groups are created so that no one suffers alone," Sorrye said. "The group gives the ladies something to look forward to where they come as their authentic selves and share what they're comfortable with sharing. I encourage them to show up and come to be curious."

WOMEN WHO KNOW AND UNDERSTAND

"No apologies," "remember who you were before cancer" and "we're family" are a few of many powerful words of support shared by group members during a meeting. A new member mentioned that she doesn't have any family locally. Each woman immediately wrote their contact information on a piece of paper, gave it to her and said, "We're your family."

Tahisha Roberts learned she had breast cancer in 2019 and joined the group the same year.

"It's an outlet for us. Cancer messes with you emotionally and mentally. I wanted to talk with women who knew and would understand what I'm going through and walked the same path," Roberts said. "We can vent and talk about what we're going through. It has helped me emotionally."

NEWFOUND SPARK

It's not easy being vulnerable and sharing one's story, but Sorrye and Compton have seen how the breast cancer support group has empowered its members.

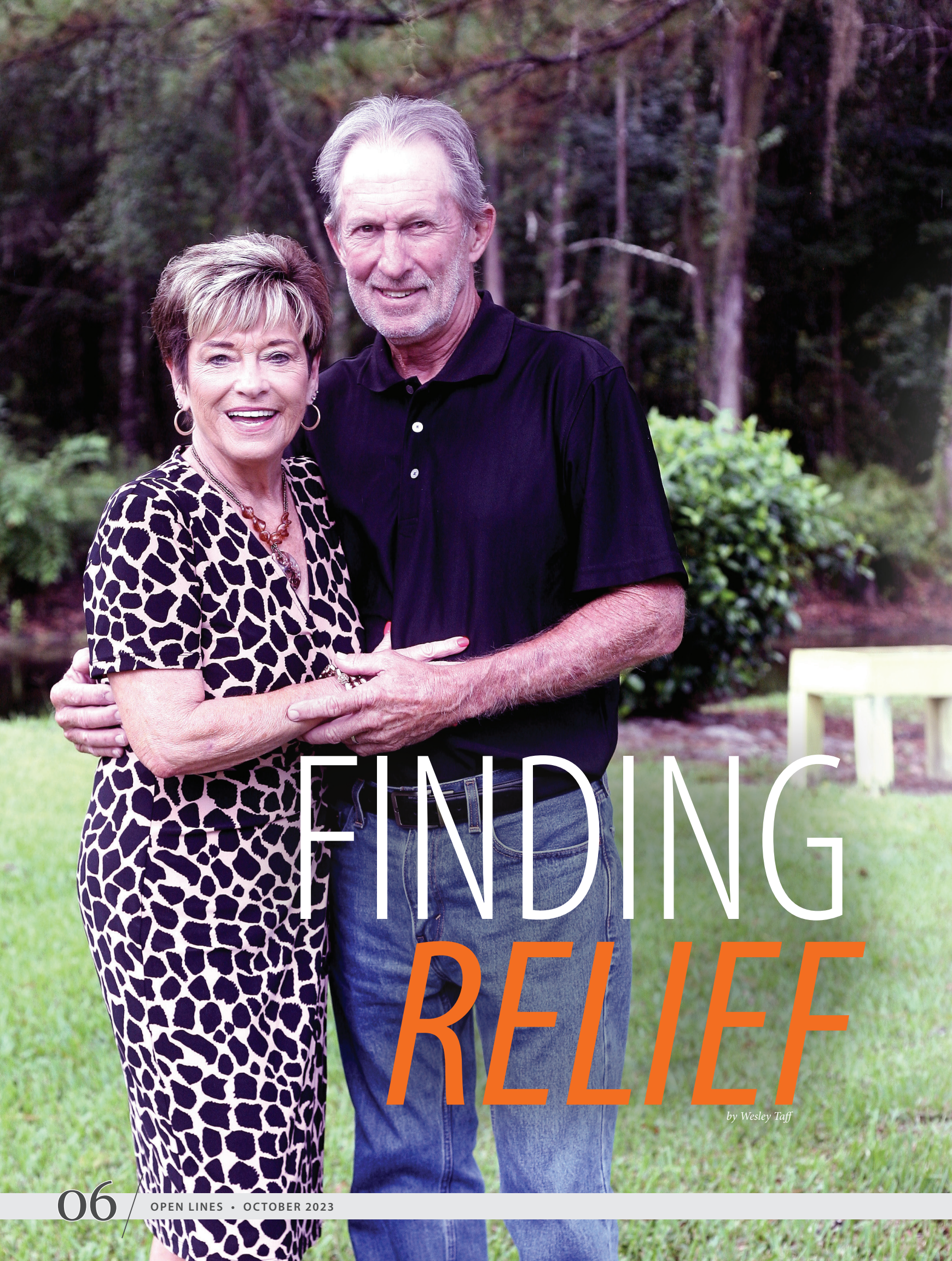
"There is a spark that I see inside them, and they begin to feel more comfort and relief. They're able to share more openly and be more engaging. Although they may have a plethora of support at home, the support may not understand what they're going through. The group members do, which makes a world of difference," Compton said.

The breast cancer support group is making an impact. Plans for the future include reaching more women and inviting speakers to address breast health and other related topics of interest to members.

"Hearing women share that they're glad that this space is available is gratifying. We, as a team, can provide a safe space for these women, whether it's one person or 10," Sorrye said.

Visit UFHealthJax.org/community for information on how to register for the Breast Cancer Support Group.





FINDING RELIEF

by Wesley Taff



Martin Conner poses for photo with his wife, Cindy.



After more than two decades, a patient's massive hernia is repaired.

Twenty-five years ago, Martin Conner developed what is termed an inguinal hernia, the most common type of hernia. It occurs in the groin when tissue inside the abdomen squeezes through a weak spot in the muscle to a space underneath the skin. For Connor, it began small and unnoticeable, then slowly enlarged. For a long time, he had no symptoms and was able to manage his life reasonably well.

In the last five years, however, the hernia had moved down into his scrotum, the sac of skin that holds the testicles. There it had grown to the size of a grapefruit. Throughout this time, Conner still didn't consult a specialist, as he wasn't in great pain and his career and family kept him busy.

With the large size of the hernia, however, he did feel uncomfortable out in public and at his workplace. He learned how to camouflage the hernia by wearing larger-sized pants and untucked, long-tail shirts. Eventually, the problem could no longer remain hidden. "In the beginning of 2022, the hernia became too painful and uncomfortable to ignore any longer," Conner said.

Finding the right surgeon

In April 2022, Conner had a routine visit with his urologist, who suggested he consult with a surgeon to repair the hernia. A few months later, Conner saw a local area surgeon who examined him but wasn't comfortable performing the hernia repair because of its size and complexity.

The Jacksonville surgeon referred Conner to a world-renowned surgeon located in Charlotte, North Carolina, who specializes in complex hernia surgery. Although Conner and his wife, Cindy, did make the trip to Charlotte to meet with the surgeon, they had concerns about the possibility of having to make the seven-hour trip multiple times if follow-up was needed. The surgeon understood and recommended that Connor meet with Jana Sacco, MD, a surgeon in Jacksonville who had trained with him and practiced only 50 miles from Connor's home.

Meeting Dr. Sacco

Jana Sacco, MD, is a UF Health Jacksonville surgeon, who specializes in abdominal wall surgery. She examined Conner in October 2022 and told him she could perform the surgery.

Although his hernia was large and complex, Sacco was confident that she and her multidisciplinary team could perform the surgery with great results.

"I was so impressed with Dr. Sacco's professionalism, kindness and warmth," Conner said. "She was just amazing and had a great bedside manner."

Repairing a complex hernia

Conner was scheduled for hernia repair surgery at UF Health Surgery – Jacksonville in December 2022. Due to the size of his hernia and the damage it may have caused, Conner was told that he might have to undergo a surgical procedure to remove the testicles as well.

During surgery, Sacco moved a large amount of small intestine that had entered the scrotum back inside the abdomen. She then repaired the hole with a tension-free mesh repair, which covers up the hole and prevents the hernia from coming back. No additional surgeries were needed.

"Mr. Conner's surgery was successful, with no complications," Sacco said. "He was discharged the next day. The only restriction I gave him was no heavy lifting for a month."

Life back to normal after 25 years

The surgery went so well that Conner felt he could have started walking soon after. The only side effect after surgery was a seroma, a fluid collection under the skin of the scrotum near the site of the surgical incision. Yet, the seroma was completely gone six months after Conner's surgery. "Seromas are normal after surgery and have to be managed, but they will go away in time," Sacco said.

Conner went back to work six weeks after surgery with a renewed confidence. Today, he no longer has to wear loose-fitting shirts and bigger pants. He sleeps better. And he can finally move around and exercise, with no thought of the hernia causing him pain or discomfort.

"I only wish I would've done this surgery 15 years ago," Conner said. "I'm happy my life is back to normal. I can tuck in my shirts and even wear a bathing suit. It looks and feels like the hernia was never there."

Visit UFHealthJax.org/surgery or call 904.383.1015 to learn more about hernia surgery, or ask your doctor for a referral to schedule an appointment.



Marshawna Lockett has endured a decade of medical challenges. Through it all, she has found unwavering support from her care team at UF Health Jacksonville. Beyond health care, Lockett has also received assistance with housing, counseling, dental services and more. She found access to those resources at the Social Services Hub, an initiative of the Urban Health Alliance at UF Health Jacksonville.

The Social Services Hub, a program offered within UF Health Jacksonville's Total Care Clinic, offers wrap-around holistic support to patients enrolled in the clinic. Launched in June 2021, the hub complements the clinic by addressing social issues that impact the health of vulnerable patients like Lockett. In this way, patients are treated with an integrated approach that enhances their overall well-being.

"With all the health issues I've faced, I've met fantastic doctors I just love," Lockett said. "I am so very grateful for them and the Social Services Hub. They've given me hope and the encouragement I needed to help me get back on my feet."

Social Services Hub employee Keisha Quaintance said that finding hope through a positive spirit is a necessary first step in the program. "Our resilience training focuses on changing a negative mindset into a positive one," Quaintance said. "We also strive to connect patients with reliable resources in the community, so they can live a healthier and more productive life."

Access to area services is vital for patients like Lockett, according to Ann-Marie Knight, MHA, FACHE, vice president of community engagement and chief diversity officer at UF Health Jacksonville. "Northeast Florida has a wealth of social service agencies, and having one hub where patients can connect to a wide range of resources is key," Knight said. "The timing of our work is perfect; findhelp®, a social services support tool, has now launched in our electronic medical record and provides an ability to centrally manage social services support, whether in the hub or across the organization. The Social Services Hub offers a high-touch approach, meaning we are designed to maintain our connection with our patients. This allows us to be there for the various milestones of success with each person."

For Lockett, her work with Quaintance and the hub have played an important role in her wellness journey. "I'm very appreciative of the understanding and support I get from Keisha," Lockett said. "When I first came to the Social Services Hub, I think Keisha could tell that I was really in a tough spot. She has given me quite a bit of information and connected me with helpful services."

Lockett said that Quaintance also adds a personal touch to all that she does. "She's seen me in the clinic waiting room and will sit with me and check in on me, asking me who I'm there to see and making sure that I'm staying out of trouble," said Lockett, laughing. "I tell her, 'I'm trying!'"

PEDIATRIC SPECIALISTS ARE HELPING FAMILIES NAVIGATE AUTISM

UF Health Jacksonville's CARD program is one of 7 sites in the state of Florida.

by Angela Mack

One in 36 8-year-olds were identified with autism spectrum disorder based on 2020 data, according to a recent report by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Autism and Developmental Disabilities Monitoring Network.

The Center for Autism Related Disabilities, or CARD, has been a source of support to individuals, parents and families navigating autism spectrum disorder and related disabilities. Autism is a neurodevelopmental condition diagnosed during childhood as early as age 3. It may affect how individuals behave, communicate, learn and interact with others. Related disabilities include dual-sensory impairment or deaf-blindness, and sensory impairments with other disabling conditions, such as individuals with hearing or vision loss in addition to a developmental disability.

PROVIDING SUPPORT FOR INDIVIDUALS AND THEIR FAMILIES

CARD's mission is to educate and empower individuals and families throughout the child's lifespan by providing support, assistance and awareness within the community. The ultimate goal is to optimize the potential of all individuals with autism and related disabilities. Located at UF Health Neurodevelopmental Pediatrics – DuPont Station, CARD provides free services to individuals, their families and the professionals who work with them, serving patients living in Baker, Clay, Duval, Flagler, Nassau and St. Johns counties.

David Childers, MD, chief of the division of neurodevelopmental pediatrics, and Jeannie Potthast, MBA, MEd, director of CARD, lead a dedicated multidisciplinary team to provide compassionate and comprehensive services for patients with autism.

"CARD is a one-stop shop, where we triage internally to our neurodevelopmental programs and externally to community resources. We serve the lifespan. Our philosophy is to not only treat the patient, but also, since the whole family is affected, we treat the entire family," Childers said.

CARD receives referrals from school districts and pediatricians, and directly from parents. To receive services, the individual must have a qualifying diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder, a social communication disorder or a diagnosis with significant red flags. CARD does not perform diagnostic evaluations but can help families find a qualified professional. Services available to families include case management, individual and group trainings



on communication, behavior and social skills, counseling, support groups and sibling workshops, as well referrals to community resources.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

In addition to serving families, CARD provides training to schools and the community, including law enforcement.

"We collaborate with local and regional school districts and community agencies to coordinate services for children, as well as provide training," Potthast said. "CARD is invited to numerous events to educate others about autism and related disabilities."

Educators receive training on strategies to incorporate in the classroom when children exhibit certain behaviors, and learn effective strategies for teaching math, reading and other subjects. CARD will begin offering training for law enforcement personnel, providing them with an understanding of autism and how to engage with children living with different ability levels.

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Throughout the year, CARD hosts special events and activities to provide respite and a sense of normalcy for families and siblings.

State funding is limited, so CARD relies on donations of time and treasure from companies and individuals donating time and treasure — making special family events possible. CARD recently resumed hosting its annual Spring Fling after a two-year hiatus due to COVID-19. More than 200 children and families attended the well-received event. The center offered games, hand and face painting, and prizes, and community agencies shared giveaways, information and treats. CARD staff led children from one fun station to the next.

The CARD team is committed to making a difference in the lives of families, and also to educating the community and professionals about autism and related disabilities.

"It's the big picture, helping families remain a family structure, whatever the structure may be for the individual family," Childers said. "I work with a group of dedicated people who are helping families become more resilient."

Visit www.pediatrics.med.jax.ufl.edu/autism/aboutcard for more information about CARD.

One Step at a Time

by Parker Hightower



Suzanne Hardaman with her physical therapist at the UF Health Rehabilitation - Jacksonville.

The UF Health Comprehensive Stroke Program and UF Health Rehabilitation Services – Jacksonville help a co-worker regain her independence.

After working the night shift as a clerical specialist in the UF Health Jacksonville Emergency Department, Suzette Hardaman's morning started like any other day. Once home from work, she immediately went to bed to catch up on some much-needed sleep. However, when she woke hours later, things had changed and she knew something wasn't right. Disoriented and suffering from a lack of balance, Hardaman struggled to stay on her feet and crashed to the floor several times.

"Whenever I got up, I kept falling back down again," Hardaman said. "I was able to scale the wall and make it to my bathroom, where I called my son to come over."

Hardaman then called one of the ED charge nurses she knew, who told her she may have had a stroke. Within minutes, her son and one of her co-workers arrived, and the pair took Hardaman to UF Health Jacksonville.

A battery of tests and a CT scan were ordered, and it was determined that Hardaman had a mild stroke. By this time, the left side of her face had begun to droop and she was no longer

able to sit up on her own. As time passed, she also succumbed to weakness on the left side of her body. For the next 11 days, she remained under the care of the UF Health Comprehensive Stroke Program to receive prescribed medication along with inpatient rehabilitation.

Research shows patients improve faster and recover more completely when managed in a dedicated stroke facility. The UF Health Comprehensive Stroke Program – Jacksonville provides inpatient and outpatient services for the diagnosis, management and rehabilitation of stroke patients. The program features state-of-the-art methods for the treatment of strokes and has received accreditation from the Agency for Health Care Administration.

Ryan Crooks, MD, vascular neurologist at UF Health Jacksonville, explained that Hardaman's condition is an unfortunate but common one.

"On a positive note, we have a lot of experience dealing with stroke patients and the field of stroke-related care is constantly improving. Our ability to treat strokes is well beyond what it was just five years ago. Patients have never had a better chance to recovery and return to a more independent standard of living," Crooks said.

Once discharged from UF Health Jacksonville, Hardaman's fight

continued. She transferred to an inpatient rehabilitation facility to regain her strength and balance to be able to return home more independent in her day-to-day life. Working with occupational and physical therapists, along with dedicated nurses, Hardaman steadily began to regain some resemblance of her life prior to her stroke. After a few weeks, she completed her inpatient care and looked forward to the final steps before returning to work.

Hardaman returned home and continued therapy on an outpatient basis at UF Health Rehabilitation – Jacksonville. Christina Hampton, physical therapist, worked with Hardaman to increase her mobility on her left side.

"Christina was the best," Hardaman said. "She pushed me to work hard, and I regained my ability to move, along with the confidence that I could get back to the way I was before my stroke. I saw her for more than six months, and she was phenomenal."

"Ms. Hardman's condition was serious, but she stuck with the therapy programs established by her therapists and steadily improved," Hampton said. "We use a multidisciplinary approach to provide individualized and comprehensive care. By addressing the rehabilitation needs of each patient, we provide techniques and exercises to assist our patients to improve their mobility, increase their independence and quality of life."

Hardaman completed her outpatient rehabilitation and was

cleared for light-duty work. She still has some lingering pain and benefits from the assistance of a cane, but, at almost two years since her stroke, Hardaman continues to improve and was determined to maintain a healthy lifestyle to avoid the possibility of issues in the future.

"I try to eat right and keep walking as much as possible," Hardaman said. "I know how lucky I am to be here, and I'm grateful to all the doctors, nurses and rehab therapists that helped me out along the way."

According to the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke, in the United States, about 800,000 people suffer from strokes every year, and nearly a quarter of strokes occur in people who have had one before. It is the leading cause of acquired physical disability in American adults, and the fourth leading cause of death.

Northeast Florida is part of a region referred to as the "Stroke Belt," where strokes are most common in the United States. Maintaining control over high blood pressure, heart disease, diabetes and high cholesterol will greatly reduce your chances of having a stroke.

For more information about stroke and the UF Health Comprehensive Stroke Program, visit UFHealthJax.org/stroke.

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The logo for UFHealth Jacksonville features the word "UFHealth" in a serif font, with "UF" in orange and "Health" in white. Below it, the word "JACKSONVILLE" is written in a smaller, white, sans-serif font.

UFHealthJax.org

PHOTO SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS

We welcome photos that are taken or submitted by employees. Photos should be at least 3 megabytes (3MB) in image size to be published. Please try to take or submit photos that are clear (camera is held very still); not backlit (flash is used and/or light source is not behind the subject); and framed correctly (feet are not cut off and/or subject is not shown too far away). Employees are encouraged to arrange photography with the Media Center before an event to ensure quality. **Direct questions to openlines@jax.ufl.edu or call 244.9750.**

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