Here to stay
Aging adults enjoy freedom, convenience of Via Christi Care At Home

Family affair
SHAPEDOWN program for kids helps the whole family get fit

Survivors share lessons of hope
Defeating breast cancer

...because your life matters
Chat with the CEO

Dear readers:

We strive every day at Via Christi Health to put the needs of our patients and senior living residents first in everything we do.

People come to us in their times of need — whether it’s for routine health care, a complicated medical condition or because their loved one needs a new place to live — and they place deep trust in us to properly care for them.

We must earn that trust every day by providing care that is truly centered on the needs of our patients, residents and the very best in quality, safety and caring service.

The stories in our latest issue of Via Christi Life show our commitment to serving the needs of our patients, our residents and our communities. We introduce four breast cancer survivors whose personal stories — like those of thousands of other patients — inspire us.

One survivor, Misty Frank, describes her experience with Via Christi Clinic’s Breast Care Services, which is a model for patient-centered care thanks to the work of breast surgeon Patty Tynolksy, MD, FACS; nurse navigator Terri Lieschuk, RN, BSN; and other clinicians.

At Via Christi Hospital in Pittsburg, patient-centered care means taking preventive health screenings on the road with our Wellness on Wheels Van. Cynthia Adams underwent a mammogram when the van visited a local mall and that diagnostic screening provided the early detection she needed to win her battle against breast cancer.

Patient-centered care also means providing services that help prevent disease and keep you healthy. For 10 years, Via Christi Clinic has provided SHAPEDOWN weight-management classes for children age 8 to 16 to help combat the alarming rise in childhood obesity. Nisha Jackson enrolled her three daughters in the program and talks about the lifestyle-changing work of instructor Elaine Harrington, MD, a pediatrician who specializes in combating childhood obesity.

Finally, patient-centered care sometimes means getting involved to help change laws to better protect those we serve. A team from the Via Christi Sports Medicine Clinic joined with other sports medicine experts to gain passage of a law designed to safeguard student athletes who suffer concussions.

These inspiring stories characterize the commitment, dedication and service of our thousands of Via Christi employees as we try to earn your trust every day by providing the best possible care to you and your loved ones.

Sincerely,

Jeff Kanosko
President and CEO, Via Christi Health
Chris Cannizzo, Via Christi certified athletic trainer, checks for concussion symptoms.

Connor Eleeson, a running back for the Maize High School football team, was carrying the ball in a game against Derby last November when he was hit up high by two tacklers.

“I was able to walk off the field, but I could instantly tell something was wrong,” he recalls. “My head was spinning and I felt kind of dizzy.”

Connor, 16, suffered the first of two sports-related concussions within three months — the second came in January on the basketball court — and he took time off from competition after both injuries thanks to a new state law designed to protect student athletes.

Concussions on the rise

Sports-related concussions have tripled among athletes ages 13-19 in a recent 10-year period, according to a Brown university study. Spurred by a nationwide campaign by the National Football League, Kansas became one of the first 10 states to pass a law to safeguard athletes suspected of suffering a concussion.

Concussion recognition, management

Via Christi Sports Medicine manager and athletic trainer Travis Francis served as president of the Kansas Athletic Trainers Society, which pushed through the legislation.

“There was no standardized way of saying, ‘Yes, this athlete is clear and can safely return to play,’” says Francis. “And, we were leaving those decisions up to people who potentially were not trained to make them, such as coaches or parents.”

The new law prohibits an athlete suspected of having a concussion from returning to practice or a game the same day in which he or she is injured and requires the athlete to have a physician’s signature before returning to activity. The return must also be on a graduated basis over five to seven days, based on the athlete’s condition.

A concussion is a traumatic brain injury in which a blow to the head or body can cause the brain to strike the inner skull or to rotate, shearing and straining brain tissue. With rest and appropriate treatment, most athletes recover and can return to competition within a few weeks. Athletes who return to competition too soon can face prolonged recoveries or suffer Second Impact Syndrome, a rare but devastating brain injury that can result in death.

Making safety a priority

In Connor’s case, Maize athletic trainer Chris Cannizzo put the sophomore athlete through a concussion test and banned him from returning to the football field until he had been seen by a physician. At the direction of his family physician, Connor took a week off from football and missed the next game, though he did return to finish the season.

Doctors estimate that as many as 30,000 sports-related concussions happen every year and far too many such injuries go unreported.

Q&A with Robert Huebner, MD, medical director, Trauma Services, Via Christi Hospital in Pittsburg

This is a brain injury that can be caused by a bump or blow to the head or a forceful body movement that causes the brain to move around inside the skull, disrupting the brain’s normal function. The latest studies indicate a concussion is not always the result of one “big hit.” Repetitive hits over time also cause damage.

What should you do if you suspect someone has a concussion?

For a concussion or any sort of head trauma, seek medical care. Anyone with a concussion needs follow-up care and monitoring by a physician. Make sure to discuss all symptoms with a physician.

How are concussions treated?

Brain rest — the elimination of music, television, computer and video games until symptoms improve — and a gradual return to activities are important. The amount of time it takes to recover varies. A referral to a brain injury specialist may be necessary in cases where symptoms are slow to resolve or with people who have complicated health issues.
If an athlete reports having the symptoms of a concussion, we will start treatment right away. Their concussion likely won’t be as severe … and they absolutely will get back to play sooner if they report it sooner,” says Andrew Porter, DO, assistant director, Via Christi Sports Medicine Fellowship, who strongly encourages athletes to be honest about reporting their symptoms.

“If you’re in doubt, hold them out.”
— Travis Francis, athletic trainer

Francis, Mark Stovak, MD, medical director of Via Christi Sports Medicine, and James Haan, MD, medical director of Pediatric Trauma at Via Christi, are part of the Kansas Sports Concussion Partnership, a project sponsored by the Kansas Medical Society and the Medical Society of Sedgwick County.

The group educates coaches, athletes and parents on the new law and on how to recognize and deal with head injuries. There will always be those athletes who don’t want to leave the game.

“Those are the scary kids,” says Francis. “They’re late getting off the pile and will shake their head a lot. They’ll come off the field and ask what happened on that play … so you just hold them out.”

Connor said his second concussion, suffered while at Maize basketball practice in mid-January, was worse than the first.

“Were we practicing hard, so it was physical, and I took an elbow to the head. It knocked me out. I was out before I hit the floor,” he recalls. “My coach propped me up and made sure I was OK. I was helped to walk to the trainer’s room. I was really tired and dizzy. My head was throbbing.”

Connor was treated at Via Christi Sports Medicine and barred from playing sports for nearly two weeks. He had to perform a series of graduated running and concussion tests before he was allowed to return to the court — something required under the law.

Connor is planning to play football for Maize again this season — his junior year — but has switched to defense so that he won’t get hit as often as a running back.

“My advice to other student athletes would be to be safe and don’t overdo it.” If you suffer a head injury, he says.

“Do what they tell you to do and don’t try to do too much too quickly.”