



## Carry Over Up to 40 Additional Hours of PTO

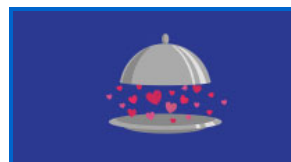
Learn the criteria and how to submit a request.

[Read more →](#)

## Free Sandwiches for Colleagues

Learn how you can take advantage of free food for colleagues.

[Read more →](#)



## Watch Leadership Partners Meeting, February 2022

Learn about network performance, leadership changes, patient care services roundtable and more.

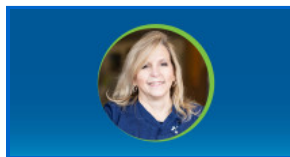
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## Partner of the Month Award – February 2022

A hospitalized couple cherished their last moments together thanks to the compassion of Patricia Horvath.

[Read more →](#)



## Help Us Attract Graduate Nurses

Nursing students are invited to attend a careers conference on March 5.

[Read more →](#)



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## LVHN Chief of Neurology Named to World Federation of Neurology Post

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[Read more →](#)



## Innovations in Education

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## Mindfulness for Children

Practicing mindfulness can help children manage stress and develop healthy coping skills.

[Read more →](#)



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## Finding Heart Disease Through Lung Cancer Screening

A single scan can identify multiple health conditions.

[Read more →](#)



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## Alert LVHN Exercise Physiologist Helps Bethlehem Man's Heart Keep Pace

Retired welder Frank Vince receives pacemaker after problem spotted at rehabilitation session.

[Read more →](#)





## **Carry Over Up to 40 Additional Hours of PTO**

Learn the criteria and how to submit a request.

LVHN Insider

Wednesday, February 23, 2022

**This message is from Lynn Turner,  
Senior Vice President and Chief Human Resources Officer.**

**This communication does not apply to colleagues at LVH–Hazleton, LVH–Schuylkill and LVH–Pocono; and colleagues covered by an employment agreement or contract, inclusive of LVPG providers at all campuses.**

Time off is important for our colleagues to recharge and for their mental and physical well-being, particularly during the pandemic. During the COVID-19 crisis, the following PTO carryover guidelines will be implemented (for carryover from fiscal year 2022 which ends June 25, 2022).

Up to 40 additional hours of carryover (max of 80 total carryover hours) may be approved by a Vice President using the form below for colleagues who meet the following criteria:

- Colleagues who were denied PTO or asked to cancel PTO to provide extra staffing for patient care or business needs will be eligible for additional PTO carryover

The form must be submitted to HR by June 25, 2022.

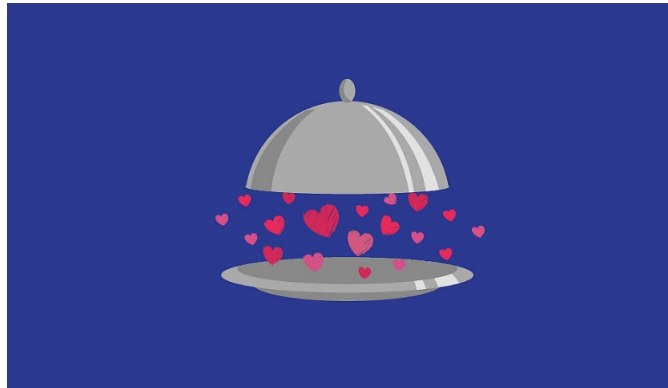
Please note the following circumstances will not allow for additional carryover:

- Colleagues who could not use PTO due to external circumstances (e.g. trip cancellation)
- Colleagues who chose not to use PTO during a furlough

This policy does not apply to colleagues covered by an employment agreement or a contract (inclusive of LVPG providers at all campuses; any exceptions for providers will require Chair/Institute Chief approval).

This policy only applies to colleagues in the Lehigh Valley, Coordinated Health and LVHN Emergency Medical Services because PTO for colleagues in our Hazleton, Schuylkill and Pocono locations is not based on a June effective date.

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## **Free Sandwiches for Colleagues**

Learn how you can take advantage of free food for colleagues.

LVHN Insider

Thursday, February 24, 2022

LVHN colleagues continue to go above and beyond to care for each other and for our community. To thank you, LVHN invites you to enjoy a treat because there's nothing like free food to bring a smile to your face.

### **Get your free sandwich here!**

LVHN will be offering free sandwiches to colleagues from March 2 to March 5 in the cafeterias at the following locations.

- LVH–Cedar Crest
- LVH–17th Street
- LVH–Muhlenberg
- LVH–Hazleton
- LVH–Schuylkill
- LVH–Pocono
- LVHN–Tilghman
- LVH–Hecktown Oaks
- Coordinated Health Allentown
- LVHN–Mack Boulevard

The dates are staggered to ensure all colleagues will be able to enjoy a free sandwich, regardless of which days of the week they usually work. Managers may call Volunteer Services to request deliveries during weekdays at 610-969-2850.

Sandwich options include:

- Asiago turkey
- Turkey and cheddar
- Chicken cutlet hero
- Italian combo
- Grilled veggie and mozzarella
- Tomato and mozzarella

Colleagues at LVPG locations will also be able to enjoy free food. Practice managers and directors will be given the opportunity to order lunch for their practices three times in February and three times in March. A communication will be sent to leaders with detailed instructions on how to do so.

Please note that none of the above free food offerings will be taxed.

Thank you for all you do, and be sure to enjoy some food on LVHN.

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## **Watch Leadership Partners Meeting, February 2022**

Learn about network performance, leadership changes, patient care services roundtable and more.

LVHN Insider

Wednesday, February 23, 2022

Click below to watch presentations from February's Leadership Partners Meeting.

### **Network Goals and Financial Performance**

Lynn Turner, Senior Vice President and Chief Human Resources Officer  
Stephen Molitoris, Vice President, Reimbursement and Revenue

### **Introduction of New Leadership**

John Pierro, Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer

### Patient Care Services Roundtable

John Pierro, Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer

Kim Jordan, Senior Vice President, Patient Care Services, and Chief Nursing Officer

Jodi Koch, Vice President, Patient Care Services

Joe Napolitano, Vice President, Patient Care Services

### Women's Heart and Vascular Program

Deborah Sundlof, DO, Co-Director, Women's Heart and Vascular Program

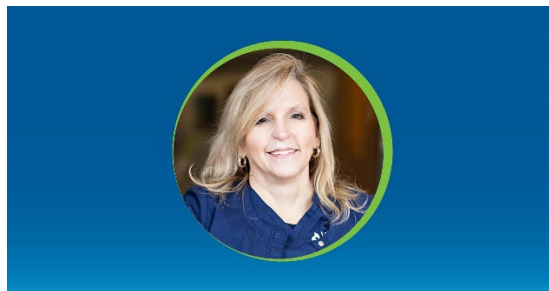
### Young Professionals

Ashley Bubbenmoyer, Co-President, Young Professionals Committee

### Proud Partner and Partner of the Month Awards

Lydia Semonski, HR Consultant

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### Partner of the Month Award – February 2022

A hospitalized couple cherished their last moments together thanks to the compassion of Patricia Horvath.

LVHN Insider

Thursday, February 17, 2022

**Patricia Horvath, RN, MICU/SICU, LVH-Cedar Crest**

Hematology Oncology Clinic Practice Manager Deb Sell describes her parents as very close, even after being married for 64 years. After retiring, they enjoyed traveling across the country in an RV. Recently, both were hospitalized with COVID-19. Sell's mother also suffered from chronic heart failure, and her father had hypoglycemia and pneumonia. Both were fully vaccinated and boosted. Her father's blood pressure began to drop and his condition worsened. "When I arrived at my dad's bedside, my mom was



already there,” Sell says. “Her nurses had brought her to his bedside. The next morning, I spoke with dad's nurse, Patricia Horvath. She informed me that my dad was struggling to breathe and was going to be placed on a ventilator. Patty then called my mom so she could speak with him, for what turned out to be their last conversation.” Soon after, he passed away. When the family gathered to say their goodbyes, Horvath told the family how she had connected with their loved one. He shared memories of his wife and daughter, and talked about how proud he was of his granddaughter. “Patty truly exhibited all of LVHN’s core values,” Sell says. “She put me and my mom at ease, sharing stories of her conversation with dad. I was deeply touched by her compassion. I am so proud to work for LVHN. I would not want my family treated anywhere else if they needed health care.”

## **Next Steps**

Nominate a Partner of the Month.

Congratulate these Proud Partners Award recipients.

### **Jarrold Kile, Clinical Pharmacy Specialist, Pharmacy**

For 24 years, Kile has worked tirelessly to ensure the safe delivery and proper use of antibiotics. In addition to his daily duties, Kile formed an antibiotic therapy stewardship program at LVHN. He has a wealth of information about antibiotics. When COVID-19 hit, Kile, in his personal time, visited a monastery to administer vaccines to nuns and prisons to give vaccines to inmates. He immersed himself in the monoclonal antibody program. Kile’s behind-the-scenes dedication has benefited countless patients and colleagues.

### **Donald Lortie, Supply Distribution Services, LVH–Hecktown Oaks**

Lortie was stocking the clean supply rooms when he was approached by a patient. She told him that she had left her denture adhesive at home and was afraid she wouldn't be able to eat lunch. Lortie reached out to colleagues at other campuses and had the item sent to LVH–Hecktown Oaks. When the adhesive arrived, he delivered it to the patient's room. She was so happy and ordered a hamburger for lunch. When he saw her lunch being delivered, he personally brought the tray to her room.

### **Ann Castillo, Clinical Service Video Monitor, LVH–Cedar Crest**

While observing a patient via video monitor for fall prevention, Castillo noticed that the patient was drooling and his speech was garbled. Immediately, she called the patient's nurse. Castillo’s attention to detail, quick action and dedication to patient care resulted in a stroke alert.

### **Erin Sweet, RN, Diagnostic Radiology, LVH–Cedar Crest**



Sweet demonstrated excellence and compassion when she helped a parent living in Hazleton schedule an appointment for a head CT scan for her infant. During the scan, the patient has to remain still, which sometimes requires anesthesia. When Sweet learned the mother didn't have a car, she called CT in Hazleton. She arranged an appointment and changing room during the infant's nap time, hoping the infant would complete the procedure without anesthesia; the first choice. If not, Sweet planned to schedule the next available early morning CT scan with anesthesia at LVH–Cedar Crest. Because of Sweet's attention to detail, the baby got the scan in Hazleton, and the mother was spared the extra travel time and stress.

**Margaret (Peggy) Mayhue, EKG, LVH–Schuylkill**

While rounding, Mayhue was talking with a patient. During the conversation, the patient mentioned she didn't have decent clothes or a jacket for when she would be discharged. Because Mayhue had been cleaning out her mother's house recently, and her mom loved to shop, Mayhue gifted the patient four large bags of clothing from her mother's closet.

**Theresa Shelhamer, CRNP, and Debra Lisella, RN, Administration, HealthWorks-Bethlehem Township**

One morning, a colleague was feeling bad due to an ongoing migraine and stomach pain. When she began to slur her words, could not lift her arm and her face began to droop, Shelhamer identified the signs of a stroke. Lisella rushed the colleague to the ED. She was treated and released with no lingering effects from stroke thanks to the quick response and teamwork of the duo.

**Danielle Wiley, LPN, Physiatry, LVPG Hazelton**

In 2017, when our neuro technologist suffered a stroke, Wiley decided to learn everything she could about nerve conduction studies, tests that measure the electrical activities of nerves and muscles. Over the past five years, Wiley has become an expert in this field and transformed our electrodiagnostic testing. She is knowledgeable, skilled and compassionate, always putting her patients with neuromuscular disorders at ease. She plays relaxing music and discusses topics they enjoy. She continues her quest to learn more and collaborates with colleagues to produce the best outcomes for patients and colleagues.

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## Help Us Attract Graduate Nurses

Nursing students are invited to attend a careers conference on March 5.

LVHN Insider

Thursday, February 10, 2022

Nursing students from Scranton to Philadelphia to Pittsburgh and beyond are invited to a special graduate nurse careers conference at Lehigh Valley Health Network (LVHN). Learn about opportunities for student nurses and newly licensed nurses.

**First 200 students to register and attend get a FREE stethoscope!**

Here's the agenda:

**Saturday, March 5, 8:30 a.m.-4 p.m., Lehigh Valley Hospital–Cedar Crest**

(Attendees may conclude at 4 p.m. or continue their visit Saturday night and Sunday).

- Welcome from hospital presidents
- Transitioning from student to professional nurse
- Career progression at LVHN
- Scholarship opportunities
- Young professionals' scene in Lehigh Valley
- On-site interviews with nursing leadership
- Hospital tour
- **Bonus! VIP experience** at Lehigh Valley Phantoms Ice Hockey game

**Sunday, March 6, 8 a.m.-2 p.m., Bus tour of the Lehigh Valley**

- Parks and trails, and miles of green space
- Lehigh Valley Hospital–Muhlenberg
- Historic Downtown Bethlehem
- SteelStacks, a ten-acre campus dedicated to arts, culture, family events, community celebrations, education and fun in Bethlehem
- Lunch at Bru Daddy's Brewing Co. with optional beer tasting

- Tour brand-new luxury apartment in the heart of downtown Allentown, Center Square Lofts

Overnight hotel accommodations available upon request. Email [careers@lvhn.org](mailto:careers@lvhn.org) to coordinate.

Advanced registration is strongly encouraged, but walk-ins will be welcome. Register here: [LVHN.org/GNevent](https://LVHN.org/GNevent)

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**Thank a Resident Day gives us a chance to show gratitude and appreciation to our exceptional trainees. Thank you, LVHN residents and fellows. Your efforts to heal, comfort and care for our community have been and continue to be extraordinary.**

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### **George Gavalla Named Vice President, Diagnostic Imaging Services**

He will lead strategic planning and operations to expand access and deliver high standards of reliability for imaging.

LVHN Insider

Wednesday, February 23, 2022

**This message is from Amy Nyberg, Senior Vice President, Ambulatory Services.**

George Gavalla has been promoted to Vice President, Diagnostic Imaging Services, LVHN. George joined LVHN in 2001 as Director of Operations for Lehigh Valley Diagnostic Imaging. In 2017, he became Administrator of Diagnostic Imaging Services for Lehigh Valley Hospital. Under George's leadership, imaging services has grown to

serve 10 hospitals, 14 advanced imaging centers, and 49 health centers and ExpressCARE locations. George has provided both clinical and operational leadership for every aspect of imaging services and led multiple department integrations and expansions including the Emergency Care Trauma Center at LVH-Cedar Crest and LVH-Hecktown Oaks, and upcoming expansion in Carbon County and Dickson City. He is an active member of the Advisory Board/Imaging Partnership, AHRA and RBMA, and a board member for Allspire Health Trust and Lehigh Valley Imaging.

In this new role, George will lead strategic planning and operations for imaging services to expand access and deliver the highest standards of reliability for imaging across the health network.

Born in Allentown Hospital (LVH-17<sup>th</sup> Street), George grew up in the Whitehall area. He is a Certified Radiology Administrator by the AHRA. He received his bachelor's degree in Business Management at Allentown College and his MBA from DeSales University in 2002.

Please join me in congratulating George on this new role.

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## **NEWS ANNOUNCEMENT**

### Lehigh Valley Health Network Chief of Neurology Named to World Federation of Neurology Post

By **Brian Downs**

February 18, 2022



Lehigh Valley Health Network (LVHN) announced today that [Steven Lewis, MD, Chief of Neurology](#), has been appointed to serve as the Acting Secretary-General of the [World Federation of Neurology](#) (WFN). As Acting Secretary-General, Lewis will help guide the field of neurology by working closely with the WFN to create curricula for educational programs, organize the biennial World Congress and help oversee WFN charity and fiduciary responsibilities.

[“I am honored to have been appointed Acting Secretary-General, where I can continue to pursue and advocate for brain health awareness worldwide while also providing the highest quality care to my patients at LVHN,” Lewis said.](#)

“We are thrilled for Dr. Lewis and WFN for his newly appointed leadership position on the Board of Trustees, where he will help advocate for brain health awareness by building world-class, global neurological education and training curriculums,” said [Robert X. Murphy Jr., MD](#), Executive Vice President and Chief Physician Executive, LVHN. “The importance of WFN’s work cannot be emphasized enough, especially reaching under-resourced areas across the world.”

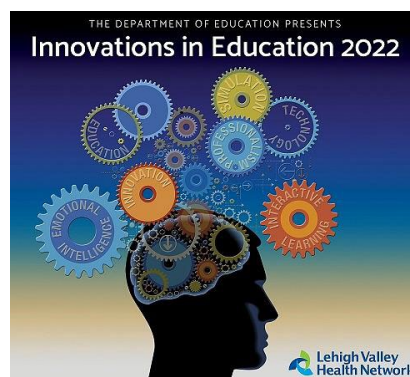
Prior to his appointment, Lewis has served as an elected trustee at the WFN, where he has helped guide the organization through his work as Chair of the Education Committee. The new appointment as Acting Secretary-General brings the benefit of global expertise, research and insights to LVHN, while also allowing a larger impact on WFN priorities by working closely with all committees and its members – allowing for further education of, and advocacy for, brain health awareness on a regional and global scale.

“I am honored to have been appointed Acting Secretary-General, where I can continue to pursue and advocate for brain health awareness worldwide while also providing the highest quality care to my patients at LVHN,” Lewis said. “I look forward to serving both communities to continue to advance the progress neurology has made and will continue to make.”

Lewis has over 30 years of expertise in neurological care and medicine and previously served as Professor and Associate Chair of Neurological Services at Rush University Medical Center in Chicago, where he educated neurologists on the future of proper care and practice across the many aspects of neurology.

Lewis is an avid writer and editor of neurological journals, including serving as Editor-in-Chief of *Continuum: Lifelong Learning in Neurology*, the official Continuing Medical Education (CME) journal of the American Academy of Neurology, and Editor of *World Neurology*, the official newsletter of the WFN. Lewis also serves as a neurology director of the American Board of Psychiatry and Neurology.

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## Innovations in Education

Attend a conference for health care educators.

Donna Stout

Wednesday, February 23, 2022

The LVHN Department of Education is excited to announce that the annual Innovations in Education conference will be held virtually on two dates: March 29, 2022 and April 13, 2022.

If you cannot attend the live stream days, registrants will have access to on-demand recordings of the conference for 60 days. Continuing education credit will be awarded to both live stream and on-demand attendees.

The topics include:

- Excavating Your Greatest Personal Resource...Your Energy!
- Creative Ways to Teach the Diverse Learners: It's All About Engagement
- Future of Healthcare Education and Experiential Learning
- Three Surprising Things You Can Do with PowerPoint to Make Your Virtual Training POP!
- Precepting in a Bold New Way
- Immersive Technology in Healthcare Education: Definitions, Evidence and Practical Considerations
- Lions, Tigers and Bears. Oh My!
- Livin', Laughin', Learnin' Through the Years

Registration fee is \$125 for both days or \$100 for one day

To view conference details and to register: <https://cvent.me/X3LoG9>

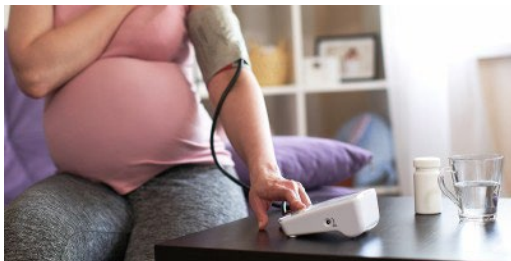
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## **NEWS ANNOUNCEMENT**

### Lehigh Valley Health Network Earns Recognition for Providing Comprehensive Care for Hypertensive Disorders During Pregnancy

About 10 percent of pregnant women develop hypertensive disorders, like preeclampsia

By **Hannah Ropp**  
February 23, 2022



Hypertensive disorders during pregnancy, including preeclampsia, affect roughly 10 percent of women in the United States and can lead to serious complications for both mother and baby. Fortunately, Lehigh Valley Health Network (LVHN) offers an award-winning comprehensive program to care for women with hypertensive disorders during pregnancy.

“We want the best for both mother and baby, so we have really focused our research on what we can do to improve outcomes for women with hypertensive disorders during pregnancy,” says Meredith Rochon, MD, Chief, Division of Maternal-Fetal Medicine.

### Recognition for award-winning care

LVHN’s Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology (OB-GYN) received the HHS Hypertension Innovator Award for its submission “Comprehensive Program for Hypertensive Disorders of Pregnancy.” The submission outlined the innovative ways women with hypertension during pregnancy and/or postpartum receive appropriate monitoring and follow-up care.

Lehigh Valley Health Network (LVHN)’s Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology (OB-GYN) was recently recognized for seeking innovative ways to care for women with hypertensive disorders during pregnancy and awarded a \$100,000 grant to develop a home-based care program for women with hypertensive disorders during pregnancy.

For this particular submission, the team had to demonstrate evidence-based approaches to screening and treating hypertensive disorders, especially among populations that may experience disparities in care, including racial/ethnic and/or urban/rural disparities. The award also came with a \$50,000 stipend to help develop the program.

### Grant funding for home-based care

Additionally, the LVHN Department of OB-GYN submitted a proposal to Pennsylvania Medical Society (PAMED) 2021-2022 Innovation Grant, titled “Development of a Remote Patient Monitoring Pilot Program to Improve Cost and Patient Satisfaction for the Management of Hypertensive Disorders of Pregnancy.”

This proposal was awarded the full \$100,000 grant available to develop a home-based care program for pregnant women with hypertensive disorders who otherwise might have needed hospitalization.

The program is being implemented over the next few months.

“Lengthy hospitalizations have always been a challenge for our mothers, some of whom are leaving at home other children, significant others, even pets. The visitation restrictions that have occurred as a result of the pandemic have made this issue even more challenging. While maintaining high-quality care and safety for mother and



newborn, select patients will now be able to remain in the comfort of their home,” says Rochon.

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## HEALTH TIP

### Mindfulness for Children

By Maggie Wurst



You may have heard that mindfulness, or the practice of being aware of the present moment, is a helpful practice for adults looking to reduce stress in their everyday lives.

However, practicing mindfulness is also incredibly useful for children, too. It can help them navigate the many emotions they experience throughout the day and increase their self-awareness, capacity to pay attention, self-regulation abilities and social skills.

“Mindfulness teaches children how to stay calm in the face of life’s stressful times,” says Maureen Wendling, Executive Director of the [Opens in new tabShanthi Project](#), a mindfulness education organization that partners with [Lehigh Valley Health Network \(LVHN\)](#) on various initiatives. “Mindfulness promotes happiness and self-compassion by lowering social anxiety and stress. It can also improve attentiveness, impulse control and executive functions in the brain, such as focus, working memory and cognitive flexibility.”

Mindfulness can be especially helpful for kids during the ongoing pandemic, which has caused many stressful changes to routine and circumstances.

“The depression rate for children was already on the rise before the COVID-19 pandemic, which has brought additional financial stress, sickness, isolation and uncertainty into the lives of many families,” Wendling says. “Mindfulness can support children by helping them develop the coping skills needed to deal with these ongoing challenges.”

Practicing mindfulness can help children manage stress  
and develop healthy coping skills.

[Upcoming Mindfulness Workshop Series for Children](#)

To help children and their caregivers learn more about mindfulness, [Lehigh Valley Reilly Children's Hospital](#) has partnered with the Shanthi Project to offer four consecutive Tuesday sessions free of charge for all attendees.

Starting Tuesday, March 15, at 6:30 p.m., each 45 minute-long virtual class will include mindful activities, movements and games taught by a certified child mindfulness and yoga instructor. Children will learn simple and practical techniques to help them feel calm, focused and connected to themselves and those around them.

These sessions are appropriate for children in kindergarten through third grade. Children must be joined by a parent or guardian for each virtual class, and attendees must go to all four sessions.

Registration is limited to 10 children.

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## **HEALTH TIP**

### Finding Heart Disease Through Lung Cancer Screening By **Maggie Wurst**



You may know that lung screenings can detect cancer in its earlier, more treatable stages. However, there's another benefit to these scans that you might not be aware of: They can identify heart disease.

[A single scan can identify multiple health conditions.](#)

#### [One scan, two screenings](#)

In addition to identifying suspicious masses, lung cancer screenings (done with low-dose computed tomography scans) also can show atherosclerosis, or a buildup of fat and calcium, in the coronary arteries or the aorta.

"When we see atherosclerosis in the coronary arteries or the aorta, we know that the patient is at higher risk for having a heart attack or a stroke," says cardiologist [Deborah Sundlof, DO](#), with [Lehigh Valley Physician Group \(LVPG\) Cardiology–Muhlenberg](#). "Atherosclerosis is often asymptomatic before causing a major cardiac event, so finding it incidentally during a scan gives us a chance to stop its progression."

It's more common to find during lung cancer screening than you might think.

"To be eligible for screening, you need to have an extensive smoking history," says pulmonologist [C. Gerard Petersen, MD](#), with [LVPG Pulmonary and Critical Care Medicine—1250 Cedar Crest](#). "Along with being the biggest risk factor for lung cancer, smoking is one of the top risk factors for coronary artery disease. That's why it isn't surprising to find atherosclerosis in individuals who get screened."

Treatment for atherosclerosis focuses on preventing additional buildup in the coronary arteries or aorta. This can be done by:

- Addressing risk factors by making heart-healthy lifestyle changes, like:
  - Eating healthier
  - Getting to and maintaining a healthy weight
  - Controlling your stress levels
  - Getting regular exercise
  - Quitting smoking
- Taking medications to lower your cholesterol and/or prevent blood clots

Treatment recommendations are different for everyone; however, lifestyle changes to improve risk factors will always be recommended.

### Screening eligibility

To be eligible for a lung cancer screening, you must meet all the following criteria:

- Be age 50-80
- Have a 20 pack-year smoking history (determined by multiplying the number of cigarette packs smoked per day by the number of years smoked)
- Currently smoke or have quit within the past 15 years

During the test, you lie on a table while an X-ray machine uses low doses of radiation to create detailed images of your lungs and chest. The scan only takes a couple minutes and is completely pain-free.

### Multidisciplinary expertise

At Lehigh Valley Health Network (LVHN), our radiologists have developed a system for grading the severity of atherosclerosis found during lung cancer screening. Depending on the level of calcification, family medicine doctors and pulmonologists will recommend additional testing, certain treatment options or referral to LVHN's cardiology program.

"Our grading system categorizes the level of calcification as none, mild, moderate or severe," says radiologist [Kenneth Cavorsi, MD](#), Chief, Section of Chest Radiology for LVHN. "Patients at the farther end of the scale are at a much higher risk for heart attack

and stroke. By knowing this, their care team can provide individualized recommendations for their care.”

If patients are found to have both a lung nodule and atherosclerosis, their LVHN clinicians will work closely together to evaluate both conditions and recommend a treatment plan that is best for their overall health.

“A major push among our clinicians is collaboration,” Sundlof, who also treats patients through LVHN’s cardio-oncology program, says. “Coming together from multiple disciplines allows us to address the full picture of our patients’ health and optimize their outcomes.”

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## **PATIENT STORY**

### **Alert LVHN Exercise Physiologist Helps Bethlehem Man’s Heart Keep Pace**

Retired welder Frank Vince receives pacemaker after problem spotted at rehabilitation session

By Joe Nixon



Like a car in need of a tuneup, retired Bethlehem Steel welder Frank Vince’s heart wasn’t firing on all cylinders.

And while a car with a sputtering engine might leave you stranded, a heart that’s not working properly can be deadly.

The 81-year-old Vince now has a pacemaker to help his heart – his body’s engine – to beat and pump blood like it should. He also has a hero in Christina Talbot, Exercise Physiologist with [Lehigh Valley Health Network \(LVHN\) Rehabilitation Services](#), who spotted his slow-beating, misfiring heart during a pulmonary rehabilitation visit in early November.

At the same outpatient rehabilitation appointment, Talbot and others insisted Vince get straight to the emergency room at Lehigh Valley Hospital–Muhlenberg, just a short distance away in a nearby building. Vince said he initially resisted because he felt OK,

and he certainly didn't want to be transported by ambulance. "They read me the riot act," he recalls with a chuckle. He says he walked to the hospital, was promptly admitted and received his pacemaker the next day.

"The bottom line is we always want patients to get the care they need. By trying to see things from the patient's perspective, we can help encourage them to do the right thing for their health." – Christina Talbot, Exercise Physiologist.

### Hidden heart danger

Vince will be the first to admit he can sometimes have an "if it ain't broke, don't fix it" mindset about his health. Talbot's training and nearly 20 years of experience got him the care he needed.

Vince says he was under a doctor's care for chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) and knew his heart rate was on the lower side of the normal range of 60-100 beats per minute (bpm). When Talbot was checking his vital signs prior to his first pulmonary rehabilitation session, one number stood out – 32. Vince's heart rate was showing just 32 bpm.

Because Talbot's clinic does both pulmonary and cardiac rehabilitation, she put a heart monitor on Vince to get a better idea of what was happening. That confirmed 32 bpm and showed Vince had a heart block. The term "heart block" refers to a disruption in the heart's electrical system, not a blocked artery.

Vince's cardiologist, Nadeem Ahmad, MD, with [Lehigh Valley Heart and Vascular Institute](#), says tests that day showed the top chambers of Vince's heart were beating at 100 bpm, but because of disease in the heart's electrical system, only about a third of those signals were getting to the two bottom chambers to cause them to beat as well. "His heart was pumping slowly because the electrical signal was slow," says Ahmad, of LVPG Cardiology–Muhlenberg and LVPG Cardiology–Bangor.

Ahmad says as people age, their heart's electrical system also ages and it's not unusual to develop a slower heart rate. Of course, heart rates such as Vince's 32 bpm are extremely slow and not the norm, with the potential to cause symptoms such as dizziness, lightheadedness and fatigue.

Talbot says once she explained everything to Vince, he was willing to take the next step of going to the hospital emergency room. She says Vince comes from a generation that sometimes feels if something isn't that bad, if they feel relatively good, they can tolerate it and don't seek follow-up care. Vince says he did have some prior dizziness but chalked it up to being tired. "I didn't think anything of it," he says.

"We were able to convince him the best thing to do is be evaluated in the ER and consult with the cardiologist," Talbot says. "The bottom line is we always want patients

to get the care they need. By trying to see things from the patient's perspective, we can help encourage them to do the right thing for their health."

### A great combination of skill and caring

Talbot loves what she does. When she talks about her job, her passion and compassion are equally evident.

"I absolutely love what I do. I love people. I care about people," she says, adding she wants her patients to know their time with her is about them and their health. She wants them to be happy. "I like joking and sometimes being silly and having a good time with the patients. And I take it personally, because you feel it could be your family member and you would want someone to do the same for your family."

Talbot says her years on the job are an asset she's proud to possess. "It absolutely helps. I have the experience of knowing what is normal or not normal," she says. "You have a feel for things and you can sense something is off. You have the resources and you do what you know how to do."

### In the hospital and beyond

Vince's pacemaker was implanted by Ahmad's partner, Hari Joshi, MD, a cardiologist with Lehigh Valley Heart and Vascular Institute, who Vince called "one hell of an electrician." Joshi specializes in electrophysiology, the treatment of irregular heartbeats.

Vince went home from the hospital the day after his procedure, but his bond with Talbot was not lost. He's still a regular at her rehabilitation clinic, Cardiac Rehabilitation—Muhlenberg.

Soon after his pacemaker was installed, he went back to the clinic with a thank you letter to Talbot in hand. Vince says he feels good now and doesn't get tired, even walking up stairs.

"I want to thank you for the exceptional care and dedication you gave to me," the note reads. "Because of your keen eye and experience, you were able to detect a critical health issue that if left untreated could have been disastrous for me."

The letter continues, "I want to sincerely thank you for convincing me to go to the ER that day, which very well could have saved my life."

Vince says he'll be forever grateful. "She [Talbot] deserves the recognition," he says.