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Preacher of Health
Dr. Peace advocates healthy living to her church and community

Exploring Future Options
Southeastern Health begins process to partner with a like-minded organization

Rehab programs get patients back on their feet
It’s nice to have options.

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In this issue:

4 Partnership exploration
SeHealth explores partnership opportunities and what’s next for health care in this region.

8 Doctor spotlight
Dr. Robin Peace is featured for her efforts to improve the health of her community.

10 Rehab program
Cardiopulmonary rehab helps patients regain their strength and stamina following medical issues related to heart and lung issues.

13 Heart update
Read about the record-breaking Southeastern Health Foundation Gala, the impact Southeastern Health Heart and Vascular has had on two patients, and the expansion of cardiology services.

18 Honoring employees’ service
Read about SeHealth employees who were honored for their dedication to the organization.
Southeastern Health

Fueled by an evolving healthcare landscape, officials with Southeastern Health recently announced the health system’s Board of Trustees is beginning a thoughtful and deliberate process to explore options to form a partnership with a like-minded organization.

“It’s no secret that healthcare has and will continue to experience dynamic, unprecedented change,” said Kenneth Rust, Chair of the Board of Trustees. “At the same time, we serve a unique population with growing healthcare needs. Since our inception 65 years ago, Southeastern Health has grown to best serve the needs of this community, and we believe now is the time to explore growth again to ensure we’re best positioned to care for our neighbors for the next 65 years and beyond.”

The trustees’ announcement comes as health systems across the country have to do more with less as a result of changing reimbursement models and tightened federal and state budgets. In North Carolina, where at least 70 percent of patients are on Medicare, Medicaid or are uninsured, these changes are especially felt by rural healthcare providers. These pressures, as well as others, have led hospitals across the country to explore partnerships to remain strong for the future.

“Our ability to remain independent is a testament to our quality care, strong financial position, and longstanding commitment to the communities we serve,” said Joann Anderson, President and CEO of Southeastern Health. “We’re working to ensure Southeastern Health remains a vibrant community health system with access to high-quality, compassionate care for generations to come.”

Key Areas of Focus

To evaluate potential partners, the Board established a clear set of criteria that includes: cultural and mission fit; understanding of rural healthcare; population health; and access to capital.

“It’s important that any potential partner honor our mission and share our commitment to delivering a superior experience for our patients and their families,” Rust said. “We’re also looking for an organization that understands the unique challenges and opportunities of delivering healthcare in rural communities and that maintains the resources and best practices necessary to keep our residents healthy.”

A History of Strategic Partnerships

Southeastern Health has a long history of aligning with strategic partners to advance the quality of care in the region. More than a decade ago, the health system forged a collaboration with Duke Health to open Southeastern Health Heart and Vascular managed by Duke Health, expanding access to leading cardiology services. Three years ago, Southeastern Health partnered with Atrium Health (formerly Carolinas HealthCare System) on a Strategic Services Agreement that allowed the health system to maximize its purchasing power for supplies and pharmaceuticals at lower costs. In 2013, Southeastern Health partnered with Campbell University’s Jerry M. Wallace School of Osteopathic Medicine to develop a robust pipeline of community-minded physicians.

“A formal exploration process is the natural next step for us,” Rust said. “We’ve been successful in the past when we’ve partnered with organizations that share our values. In pursuing partnerships, we want to have wisdom as we consider next steps.”

For more information about the exploration process, visit: www.sehealthforward.org.
What’s Next

“We are in the early stages of a partnership exploration led by our community board, and this process will support the Board in determining if that is truly what’s best for our patients and the community,” Anderson said. “No decisions about our future have been made today. We’re proud to be entering this exploration with a strong balance sheet and from a position of strength. This affords us the time to undertake a deliberate, coordinated and thoughtful partnership process.”

The Board has launched a website, www.sehealthforward.org, to keep the community informed throughout the exploration process. Members of the community are encouraged to visit the site to learn more about the process, view a list of frequently asked questions, and subscribe for future updates.

“We are committed to being open and transparent throughout this process,” Rust said. “We will share appropriate updates as they become available and appreciate everyone’s support as we move forward.”

In the meantime, nothing is changing for the patients or staff at Southeastern Health.

“Our number one priority remains providing exceptional care to the communities that count on us,” Anderson said. “You can be assured our patients will continue to receive the same high-quality care from our providers, nurses and other caregivers. Our day-to-day operations are not changing for our patients, employees or community. Our commitment is unwavering.”
New Providers

David Chandran, MD

Dr. David Chandran is SeHealth’s new medical director of psychiatry. Dr. Chandran was previously the unit director of the psychiatry program at Clifton T. Perkins Hospital Center in Jessup, Md. He received his medical degree from Kurnool Medical College in Kurnool, India, in 1976. He completed his psychiatric residency at the University of Maryland, where he also held a two-year fellowship in geriatric psychiatry.

Dr. Chandran is certified by the American Board of Psychiatry and Neurology. He has experience in forensic psychiatry, and the diagnosis and treatment of adult and geriatric patients’ neuropsychiatric and neurocognitive conditions. He has also worked with patients on drug counseling/rehabilitation treatments with opioid detox and maintenance treatments.

Dr. Chandran currently lives in Lumberton with his wife, Swarna. The Chandrans have adult twin daughters.

Mike Cox, PA

Physician Assistant Mike Cox has joined Southeastern Health. He treats patients at Southeastern Spine and Pain, located at the Southeastern Health Park at 4901 Dawn Dr., Suite 3300, Lumberton.

Cox holds a bachelor’s degree in emergency medical care from Western Carolina University and a master’s degree in physician assistant studies from New York Institute of Technology. He was previously with Scotland Health Care System’s Harris Family Practice in Laurinburg. Before going into healthcare full time, Cox served 26 years with the Lumberton Fire Department, retiring as fire chief in 2010.

Cox lives in Lumberton with his wife, Audrey, who is a nurse in Information Technology with Southeastern Health.

To make an appointment at Southeastern Spine and Pain, call (910) 671-9298.
Allison Scott, PA

Certified Family Nurse Practitioner Allison L. Scott has rejoined SeHealth’s Southeastern Cardiology and Cardiovascular Clinic and Southeastern Health Heart and Vascular, which is managed by Duke Health and located on the campus of Southeastern Regional Medical Center.

Scott, along with Interventional Cardiologist Dr. Matt Cummings, also treats patients at a second clinic location in Pembroke, currently located in Foxglove Place.

A native of Robeson County, Scott completed an associate degree in nursing at Robeson Community College in 2003. She completed a master’s degree in nursing with a family nurse practitioner focus from University of North Carolina Wilmington in 2010.

Scott previously worked with Duke Cardiology and SeHealth for six years before joining FirstHealth Cardiology in 2017. Prior to that, she worked for five years in Southeastern Health Heart and Vascular’s cardiac catheterization lab.

Scott lives in Lumberton with her three children: Jillian, Amelia and Ayden.

Southeastern Cardiology and Cardiovascular Clinic is located in the Southeastern Health Mall on the campus of Biggs Park Mall. To schedule an appointment with Scott in Lumberton or Pembroke, or for more information, call (910) 671-6619.

Denene Smith, NP

Southeastern Health’s Southeastern Urgent Care Pembroke has changed its name to more accurately reflect a growth in services offered. The urgent care has expanded to the neighboring clinic space within the Southeastern Health Pembroke complex which housed the former Trinity Urgent Care. Trinity’s provider, Certified Family Nurse Practitioner Denene Smith, has joined Southeastern Health’s expanded clinic under a new name, Southeastern Multi-Specialty and Urgent Care Pembroke.

Smith, a Rowland resident, earned an associate degree in nursing in 1985 from Robeson Community College, a bachelor of nursing degree from the Medical University of South Carolina in 1992, and a master’s degree in nursing with family nurse practitioner training in 2000 from Duke University. She has over 25 years of combined nursing and nurse practitioner experience in the fields of labor/delivery, home health, hospice, emergency services, intensive care, family medicine and urgent care.

The Southeastern Health Pembroke complex is located at 923 West 3rd Street, Pembroke. To schedule an appointment, call (910) 775-9027.

Lindsey Webb, MD

Dr. Lindsey Webb has joined Southeastern Women’s Healthcare, an affiliate of Southeastern Health. She will primarily practice at Southeastern Women’s Healthcare at 4300 Fayetteville Road, Lumberton.

Originally from Pennsylvania, Dr. Webb was most recently practicing at Sinai Hospital of Baltimore and Washington Adventist Hospital in Takoma Park, Md. She also completed her obstetrics and gynecology residency at Sinai Hospital. Dr. Webb received her Doctor of Medicine degree from The Commonwealth Medical College in Scranton, Pa., and received her undergraduate degree from the University of Pittsburgh.

In 2017, Dr. Webb was presented with the American Association of Gynecologic Laparoscopists’ Recognition of Excellence in Minimally Invasive Gynecologic Surgery and the Sinai Hospital Nursing Appreciation Award.

To schedule an appointment with Dr. Webb at Southeastern Women’s Healthcare, call (910) 608-3078.
Dr. Robin Peace came to Robeson County 20 years ago with a passion for family medicine and healthy living. Often referring to herself as a “preacher of health,” Dr. Peace has gone far beyond the usual office or hospital visit to reach out to the community.

“From the moment I decided to pursue family medicine as a specialty, I became an advocate for healthy living,” Dr. Peace said. “I want to prevent disease and improve the health outcomes for the patients I serve. When I came to Robeson County, it was one of the sickest counties in the state, which definitely made me more passionate about being an advocate for health living.”

After her first year at East Carolina University School of Medicine, Dr. Peace spent six weeks working with a family medicine doctor in Mt. Olive, N.C., Dr. Ellen Brubeck. Dr. Peace said Dr. Brubeck showed her the rewards of being a family doctor in rural North Carolina.

“What stood out the most was how she cared for her patients,” Dr. Peace said. “They loved her and often said she was like a member of their family. I can remember thinking, ‘I want my patients to think about me the that way.’ That’s when I knew I wanted to practice family medicine.”

Dr. Dennis Stuart works with Dr. Peace at Southeastern Medical Clinic North Lumberton, but he is also the person who first hired her in Robeson County in 1998. He said he has always been impressed with her sincerity, honesty and intelligence.

“As chief medical officer for Robeson Health Care Corporation at the time, I was immediately impressed by her truly stellar accomplishments in her quest to become a family physician,” Dr. Stuart said. “Dr. Peace’s humble beginnings, maturity, emotional and social quotient was only hidden by her vivacious smile.”

Dr. Peace grew up on a tobacco farm in Granville County, where her parents set good examples and high expectations.

“My mommy always told me that I could become anything I wanted if I applied myself,” she said. “I watched her care for the sick in my family and my community for my entire childhood and even up to this day. My heart to serve the underserved comes from her. My work ethic comes from my daddy pushing me on the farm. They are why I have evolved into the servant leader I am today.”

Believing in servant leadership, she saw an opportunity to encourage others by creating a platform that would allow her to share her messages with people across the region at health fairs, churches and schools and through the radio on WAGR. On top of doing one or two speaking engagements each month, she is heavily involved in the Hem of Hope wellness ministry at her church, Sandy Grove Baptist Church in Lumberton, and is the wellness instructor for the General Baptist State Convention Usher’s Auxiliary division.

Dr. Peace tells patients and anyone else who will listen that the basic starting points for living healthier are to move more and eat smarter.

“Exercise is medicine,” she said. “People who do it live longer and stay well longer. For diet, drink mostly water and...
avoid sodas and sweet tea to lower your calories. Eat less! Just eat one plate of food.”

To be the most effective, Dr. Peace believes she must practice what she preaches. She’s a regular at the Southeastern Lifestyle Fitness Center in Lumberton and can talk with authority about the struggle to eat healthy in a county where there are many fried food options as well as beloved family recipes for less-than-healthy dishes. And she’s not shy about asking other doctors to try harder to be healthy, either.

“I want to set an example for healthy living not only for my patients but for my family, friends, church members, and yes, even my medical colleagues,” she said. “You can’t help but spend more time encouraging patients about diet and exercise when you are actually doing those things yourself. When people say to me that it’s expensive to eat healthy, my response is that it is not expensive to at least eat less.”

Her commitment to walk the walk even led her to join a weight loss support group called TOPS (Taking Off Pounds Sensibly). Though she’s not overweight, she wanted to educate and encourage the members, some of whom were her patients, to “hang in there.”

“People truly don’t care what you know unless they know that you care,” she said. “My daily goal is to do the best I can do and to always show the people I serve that I care. I spend a lot of time reinforcing to patients about the importance of eating smarter and moving more to help prevent disease and improve the chronic medical problems that lead to so much suffering in our community.”

Pastor T. Shedrick Byrd, who created the wellness ministry that Dr. Peace co-chairs at Sandy Grove Baptist Church, said he’s heard some people wonder why Dr. Peace hasn’t taken her talents and moved on to a bigger city. He thinks she’s just made Robeson County home.

“Home is where the heart is,” Pastor Byrd said. “If truth be told, she’s the one with the heart condition. She cannot stop loving people.”

Dr. Peace’s desire to serve the community has also led her to be one of the few family medicine doctors in the area treating patients who also have HIV, something she has done for the last 10 years, rather than referring them to a specialist. As well as being certified in HIV medicine, she also practices palliative care through Southeastern Hospice, where she is an associate medical director.

A year ago, she was recognized with the SeHealth D.E. Ward Jr. M.D. Provider of Excellence Award for her many efforts for her patients and the community, including research in diabetes and blood pressure and lectures to medical students on the opioid epidemic. Before joining Southeastern Health full-time in 2015 at the Southeastern Medical Clinic North Lumberton, Dr. Peace practiced with Robeson Health Care Corporation for 17 years, serving as chief medical officer for 11 of those years. During that time, she also served as a hospitalist with Southeastern Regional Medical Center.
A stronger body is a healthier body when it comes to patient’s hearts and lungs, and better health means a better quality of life. For patients who have any of several heart or lung problems, rehabilitation programs can lead to a longer life with less symptoms. Southeastern Health’s Cardiac and Pulmonary rehab programs involve simple exercises with the guidance of a multidisciplinary team at the Southeastern Lifestyle Fitness Center in Lumberton.

Southeastern Health’s Cardiac Rehabilitation and Pulmonary Rehabilitation both have a treatment process that takes patients through a 12-week program. Patients are guided through their personalized rehab with the oversight of a medical director, supervising physician, nurses, clinical exercise professionals and dieticians.

Marietta resident Alex Benton Stubbs became a cardiac rehab patient after a blockage and his first stent.

He’d never heard of cardiac rehab before his doctor, Dr. James McLeod of Southeastern Medical Clinic North Lumberton, recommended it.

“He explained it would help build up my heart muscles and stamina,” Stubbs said. “I think I’m doing very good now. It was hard at first, and I tried to push myself, but now I have more stamina.”

Stubbs said it was comforting to start an exercise program through rehab because his blood pressure, heart rate and oxygen level was monitored.

“You’ve got someone to check on you to make sure you’re not overextending yourself,” Stubbs said. “The second week I had angina pains while I was exercising, but if something had really gone wrong, I’d have had medical help immediately.”
Brenda Pittman, who lives in the Long Branch community, started going to pulmonary rehab at the suggestion of Dr. Somnath Naik, of Southeastern Medical Specialists, after she recovered from surgery on a collapsed lung.

“Dr. Naik made me promise to go to the fitness center, and I trust him, so I decided to go. And he was right, I do feel better,” Pittman said. “I usually walk on the treadmill for 15 minutes and the recumbent machine for 20 minutes, and I walk two laps on the indoor track at the beginning and end to warm up and cool down. Once I got into it, I looked forward to coming because I knew I was going to feel better after each time.”

Stubbs also said that he’s found his rehab surprisingly pleasant.

“I enjoy coming and working out,” he said. “I’m tired when I leave, but that’s the point. I started walking at 1.2 mph, now I’m up to 2.9 mph.”

When a patient’s rehab program ends, the goal is for the patient to continue exercising on their own, using the tools they gained from rehab.

“The main thing is to keep exercising,” Cardiopulmonary Rehab Manager James Smith said. “Either with us in the Health Strides program, or by joining the fitness center, or in a program close to their home. Also, by exercising with another person or a group, it helps with accountability and just makes exercising more fun.”

Diagnoses that may be eligible for Cardiac or Pulmonary Rehabilitation:

- Heart attack
- Cardiac bypass surgery
- Coronary stents
- Valve replacement or repairs
- Heart failure
- Heart transplant
- Stable angina
- COPD
- Emphysema
- Chronic bronchitis
- Sarcoidosis
- Pulmonary fibrosis
- Pulmonary hypertension
- Lung Cancer
- Lung Transplants
- Other conditions deemed medically necessary

To learn more about SeHealth’s Cardiopulmonary Rehab program, call: (910) 738-5403.
Sleep apnea is a common condition that can occur when a person’s upper airway is repeatedly blocked during sleep, which reduces or completely stops airflow.

Since sleep apnea happens when the patient isn’t awake to notice it, a person should consider asking their doctor to refer them for screening for sleep apnea if they have some of the following symptoms: snoring, fatigue, morning headaches, irritability, sore/dry throat, nocturia, and sometimes waking up gasping for air.

Dr. Somnath Naik, of Southeastern Health’s Southeastern Medical Specialists, says people who have sleep apnea often let it go undiagnosed rather than seeking treatment.

“They rationalize that they’re tired because they work too hard, or say they sleep good but wake up tired,” Dr. Naik said. “They say they don’t sleep enough, or they wake up too many times, and they don’t question why they wake up. They’ll say it’s normal because everybody in the family has the same problem, but sleep apnea can run in a family.”

When left untreated, the condition can result in anxiety, brain fog, heart failure, stroke, high blood pressure, diabetes, depression, impotence or death. A person is at greater risk for sleep apnea if they have a family history of the condition, are overweight, have a thick neck, deviated septum, or enlarged tongue or tonsils. Aging and medications can also increase the risk of sleep apnea.

The first step to diagnosing and then treating sleep apnea is to schedule a sleep study, which allows healthcare providers to monitor and record a person’s breathing and oxygen levels during sleep. Patients who think they might have sleep apnea can ask their primary care provider to schedule a sleep study with the Southeastern Sleep Center, which is located within Southeastern Regional Medical Center and was recently accredited by The American Academy of Sleep Medicine.

Heath Turner, who works at Southeastern Health as an HR generalist, was a patient in the sleep center in 2018. After experiencing restless nights where he would wake up frequently and feel tired the next day, Turner turned to his doctor. After spending a night at the sleep center, he was diagnosed with sleep apnea and later fitted for a mask that helps him breathe better in his sleep.

“No I sleep great,” Turner said. “I don’t go anywhere overnight without my mask. When you do a sleep study it’s not like you’re ‘in the hospital’ by any means. You’re basically just sleeping in a different room and it’s almost like a motel room.”

The Southeastern Sleep Center performs sleep studies with an overnight stay at Southeastern Regional Medical Center in testing suites that resemble bedrooms with all the comforts of home. On the night of the study, the patient is asked to arrive at 7:30 p.m., and is ready to go home between 6 and 6:30 a.m. the next day. Certain patients may be eligible for in-home sleep studies.

To schedule a sleep study, call: (910) 272-1446.
Thanks to the incredible generosity of so many, the Southeastern Health Foundation’s 27th Heart of our Community Gala of Grateful Giving, presented by Robins & Morton, raised over $200,000.

The 2019 Gala proceeds will benefit patients by supporting SeHealth’s efforts to provide much-needed funding for advancements in the Cardiac Catheterization Lab at Southeastern Health Heart and Vascular, which is managed by Duke Health and located on the campus of Southeastern Regional Medical Center. The funds raised will go towards purchasing equipment for advanced cardiology studies. Advancing the complexity of cases will allow for even more cardiac care to be provided for patients throughout the region.

More than 600 guests danced the night away to the sounds of Liquid Pleasure, sponsored by Campbell University, at the event which was held at the Southeastern Agricultural Center in Lumberton on February 22.

Flowers By Billy, Greenstate Landscaping and the Foundation Gala chairs and committee members used red taffeta linens, ombre floral arrangements and fabric throughout the venue to emphasize the growth of the heart program. New to this year’s gala was the Duke Network Services’ sponsored Lounge Tent with beautiful chandeliers, flooring and lounge furniture for guests.

Leading the 2019 Gala committee were Gala Chairs Dr. and Mrs. Terry Lowry and honorary chairs, Mr. and Mrs. Bob Caton. The Lowrys, Catons, SeHealth President/CEO Joann Anderson and husband, Terry, SeHealth Board Chair Kenneth Rust and his wife, Lisa, and SeHealth Foundation Board Chair Mike Hardin and his wife, Jane, were on hand to greet guests as they arrived.

The proceeds raised from the Fund the Need will go directly toward the purchase of software, allowing critical patient data to be shared between EMS traveling throughout our vast region and the hospital’s critical care teams while traveling to SRMC. The opportunity to support this initiative to provide technology for providers to know exactly what to expect before patients reach our doors is still available. Go to one.bidpal.net/2019sehealthfoundationgala and click on “Open Your Heart Fund-the-Need Donation” to give our critical care teams the head start they need.

Sissy Grantham, executive director of the SeHealth Foundation, expressed appreciation for the Gala chairs and committee, who have made a tremendous difference in the lives of so many, through their vision, dedication and, most importantly, the outstanding community support for the entire heart care program at Southeastern Health.

“Together with gala supporters on all levels, we celebrated the Heart of our Community by sharing what Southeastern Health Heart and Vascular has accomplished and the opportunities we have for the future,” said Grantham.

Upcoming event opportunities to support the SeHealth Foundation include the Swing for Good Health Golf Tournament held May 2, 2019, at Pinecrest Country Club as well as Boots & BBQ, scheduled for October 25, 2019, at the Southeastern NC Agricultural Center Arena.

For information about the efforts and programs supported by the SeHealth Foundation, call (910) 671-5583 or go to www.southeasternhealth.org/foundation.
In the fall of 2017, Bob and Faye Caton were about to embark on a trip of a lifetime, a safari in Africa, but their plans came to an immediate halt when Bob began having some shortness of breath. Bob, who turned 81 in February, said he “was very macho about it and thought it would go away,” but it didn’t. He made the wise decision to visit his cardiologist at Southeastern Cardiology and Cardiovascular Clinic before embarking on such a long journey.

Cardiologists Dr. Chris Walters and Dr. Matt Cummings, who are both affiliated with Duke Health, evaluated and diagnosed him with 95 percent blockage in the main artery. Caton was quickly scheduled for a double bypass just a couple of days later with Duke Health-affiliated Cardiovascular/Thoracic Surgeon Dr. Terry Lowry. Traveling afar was traded for staying very close to home.

“No one wants to have to go through this, but I couldn’t have asked for a better group than the heart team that took care of me,” he said. “From the clinic to caregivers to housekeeping staff, the heart center is like an orchestra, working together as a team with a great attitude. Everyone, and I mean everyone, from the providers, nurses to the technicians, you name it, they all take great pride in their work.”

The Catons have a long history of supporting Southeastern Health Heart and Vascular, which is located on the campus of Southeastern Regional Medical Center and managed by Duke Health, beginning over 12 years ago when Faye served on the steering committee that helped raise funds to open the heart center in Lumberton. Years later, their experience and dedication to the heart center would become very personal.

Faye, who serves as an ex-officio of the SeHealth board, shared, “When I was on the original committee, we were on a mission to keep heart care here in our county. I never dreamed we, as a family, would use it and find the accessibility to be so valuable.”

After his bypass, Bob found himself educating people about his experience. “A lot of people have questioned me about where I had the surgery,” he said. “They ask if I went to Duke or Chapel Hill. When I say I had it done in Lumberton, they’re surprised. It amazes me, because we’ve got the best heart hospital in eastern North Carolina, maybe in the entire state, and we still have people in Robeson County who don’t know it’s here. I was able to stay home, which took a burden off my family, and I received outstanding care.”

Having the expertise of Duke right here in Lumberton and not having to travel for his surgery made a world of difference for both of the Catons.

“It was extremely nice that we could be in town while he was in the hospital,” Faye said. “I could come home at night and sleep and go back during the day. I knew he was in good hands. And afterward, all the follow-up visits were also right here at home. Most importantly, Bob just got the best care. I can’t imagine people wanting to go anywhere else when we have such great care here. We are very grateful.”

Now in recovery, Bob, who retired as the owner of Eagle Distributing in 2007, says he feels excellent. He’s following the road map provided by his physicians, exercising regularly, eating in moderation, and enjoying every moment.
Lumberton resident Steve Britt, who is known in the community for his landscaping business, will tell you that God put him in the right place at the right time three years ago. Unfortunately, the time was the moment he learned he needed heart bypass surgery, but he feels very fortunate that the place was Southeastern Health.

After his surgery in February 2016, Britt started to write a letter, a sort of testimony of faith and way of giving thanks to God and all the people who helped him through his heart surgery journey. He never mailed it, but he realized it was time to send it this year when he heard that the 2019 Gala, held in February, was to benefit the heart center and cath lab.

Britt, who had been working out of town, just happened to be back home in Lumberton the day that he first went to the hospital. He had been sweating, feeling pain in his back, and his arms had felt weak, but he blamed the symptoms on a past back injury and the costs of getting older while doing the type of outdoor work he’d always done. A cousin who works at the emergency room at Southeastern Regional Medical Center spoke with him on the phone about his symptoms and convinced him to come into the hospital.

“She said, ‘You’re going to have a heart attack,’ and I said, ‘You’re crazy,’ but I decided to go to the emergency room,” Britt said.

Dr. Michael Duerr admitted Britt and scheduled a stress test, which showed the need for heart catheterization. Britt’s mother and an uncle had both passed away after heart attacks in their 40s, but Britt had always felt relatively healthy, so he was shocked to think he had come close to the same fate at age 46.

“Then the news came, I was going to need bypass surgery. You want to talk about rocking a man’s world, a man who was full of pride and didn’t like to cry,” he wrote in his letter. “God has a way of doing it, and he did. I was then moved to the CVICU, where I met a lot of new faces and realized how special family and friends are.”

Three years later, Britt still can’t say enough about all the Southeastern Health doctors and staff who helped take care of him.

“I can speak from my experience, they are some of the most professional people with a family atmosphere that I have ever seen,” he wrote. “To all the staff of the ER, Dr. Walters and his staff, the CVICU, Dr. Lowry and his staff, and all the other staff of Southeastern Health, I want to thank you for a great job, great experience, and I hope God continues to use you in a special way.”

Some things have changed for Britt after his surgery, like getting more exercise and eating less steaks and fried food, but his opinion of all the people he met during his experience hasn’t altered.

“I don’t know how it could have been better,” he said. “They are the most incredible team of people I have ever met in my life. I wouldn’t ask for anything to be any different. I was very impressed.”
Dr. Archie “Zan” Tyson has brought a new procedure to Southeastern Health that is expanding the treatment options for local cardiac patients. Cardiac ablation is a safe and tested procedure that has been practiced regularly in the United States for many years but has never before been offered at Southeastern Regional Medical Center.

It is part of a rapidly expanding electrophysiology program, complementing SeHealth’s already extensive array of services.

Dr. Tyson performed SRMC’s first atrioventricular (AV) node ablation on Jan. 2 on Karen Wright, and the first cardiac cryoablation there on March 20 on Reggie Collins.

Wright, a 68-year-old Lumberton resident, has a pacemaker but has still been suffering from atrial fibrillation (AFib).

“Her procedure went routinely, and she had excellent results,” said Dr. Tyson, who is a Duke Health-affiliated cardiologist at Southeastern Cardiology and Cardiovascular Clinic and Southeastern Health Heart and Vascular.

“I feel great,” said Wright. “I can tell this worked. Before, my heart was always racing, and I was tired. I’ve been exhausted since September, but today I’m not tired and my heart isn’t racing anymore.”

Collins was able to go home the day after his procedure.

“I feel good, now,” said Collins. “I can tell the difference. I’ve had AFib since I was in my 30s, but I was recently recommended to see Dr. Tyson.”

Cardiac ablations involve catheterization under sedation while a medical team maps the malfunctioning nerves on the heart and systematically zaps them with a radio frequency or extreme cold. The radio waves, or cold, in the case of cryoablation, cauterize the specific problem-causing nerves, causing the heart’s muscles to return to normal rhythm.

SeHealth Heart and Vascular Director Chad Carpenter explained that procedures dealing with the heart’s electrical system are mostly a new area for SeHealth’s patients, aside from installing pacemakers.

“Regular cardiology deals with blocked vessels that bring blood to and from the heart, but electrophysiology deals with the electrical response that makes the heart pump,” Carpenter said.

Dr. Tyson said most people know if they have AFib, also called atrial flutter or ventricular arrhythmia, either because of family history or conversations with their medical provider. Patients with AFib can have no symptoms, or they can have palpitations, fatigue and shortness of breath. It can also cause clots to form and be pushed through to the brain, causing a stroke.

“This procedure can fix AFib and prevent more serious problems AFib can cause. When medication is no longer effective, then it’s time to try ablation,” Dr. Tyson said. “It’s for patients whose condition is progressing, leading to blacking out, or their heart racing, or the uncomfortable, sometimes scary out-of-rhythm sensations.”

Patients can self-referral to Dr. Tyson at Southeastern Cardiology and Cardiovascular Clinic, located in the Southeastern Health Mall on the campus of Biggs Park Mall at 2934 North Elm Street, Suite 103, in Lumberton, or ask their primary care physician for a referral. For more information, call (910) 671-6619. Patients who are experience alarming discomfort should go directly to the Emergency Department.
Residency Program

1. **SeHealth Family Medicine Residency receives ACGME certification**

Southeastern Health’s Family Medicine Residency program has recently received initial accreditation by the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME). The program, which began in July 2015, is in partnership with Campbell University’s Jerry M. Wallace School of Osteopathic Medicine. This new accreditation positions the program in compliance ahead of a change in the medical education field that is moving away from two accrediting systems, the American Osteopathic Association (AOA) and the ACGME. The single accreditation system also allows the program to recruit internationally.

“This opens more doors for a larger pool of candidates to enter the residency program,” said SeHealth’s Vice President of Medical Education Dr. Patricia Matto. “The ability to recruit medical school graduates from around the world will add cultural and experiential depth to the program.”

Also with this latest certification, SeHealth’s residency program will now pursue Osteopathic Recognition through the ACGME, which will enable the program to continue its commitment to teaching and assessing Osteopathic Principles and Practice (OPP) at the graduate medical education level.

2. **Sports Medicine services now offered at clinic**

Dr. Townes “Tucker” Leigh Jr. has expanded services offered at Southeastern Family Medicine Clinic at The Oaks to include sports medicine. Dr. Leigh serves as director of osteopathic education and assistant program director for Southeastern Health’s Family Medicine Residency Program. He graduated from the University of Tennessee at Martin in 2006 with a bachelor of science in chemistry and received his doctor of osteopathic medicine degree from West Virginia School of Osteopathic Medicine in 2010. He completed his family medicine residency at University of Alabama Tuscaloosa Family Medicine Residency in 2013 and completed a sports medicine fellowship at Lemak Sports and Orthopedics in Birmingham, Ala., in 2014. He is certified in Family Medicine by the American Board of Family Medicine and certified in Family Medicine/Osteopathic Manipulative Treatment by the American Osteopathic Board of Family Physicians. He also holds a Certificate of Added Qualification in Sports Medicine through the American Osteopathic Sports Medicine Examination Committee.

3. **Residency clinic offers obstetric services**

Family Medicine Physician Dr. Katherine Sheridan oversees the resident physicians in family medicine as well as the specialty areas of obstetrics and pediatrics, which enables these physicians to care for multiple family members of patients in one place as they complete their residency program.

Expectant moms who are at low risk for complications and seek obstetrical care through the family medicine clinic will be treated by Dr. Sheridan and resident physicians throughout their pregnancy and postpartum period. This will include prenatal care, delivery of babies at Southeastern Regional Medical Center, and the babies’ well-child care. As a family medicine physician, Dr. Sheridan has completed additional training to equip her to provide obstetrical care to patients. Board-certified obstetricians from Southeastern Women’s Healthcare will be available for consultations and referrals should complications arise during the pregnancies. Dr. Sheridan completed her medical degree in 2006 at Northeast Ohio Medical University in Rootstown, Ohio. She completed a family medicine residency at Aultman Hospital in Canton, Ohio in 2009 and fellowships in academic medicine with education, research and leadership tracks at Northeast Ohio Medical University in 2011, 2013, and 2017, respectively. She is board-certified by the American Board of Family Medicine. She also is bilingual, speaking both English and Spanish.

To schedule an appointment at Southeastern Family Medicine Clinic at The Oaks, located at 730 Oakridge Blvd., in Lumberton, call: (910) 738-2662.
Honoring Employees

Knecht and Everson Win SeHealth Top Honors

SeHealth Clinical Engineering Coordinator Phillip Knecht was named the 2018 winner of the John D. Drake Distinguished Service Award, Southeastern Health’s (SeHealth) highest employee honor, and SeHealth Director of Ancillary Services Jonathan Everson was named the 2018 winner of the W. Reid Caldwell Jr. Distinguished Leadership Award during surprise presentations at SeHealth’s annual service awards banquet held February 26 in Southeastern Regional Medical Center’s cafeteria. Knecht and Everson were awarded a framed certificate and an engraved watch as part of their respective awards. Their names will also be added to plaques that are permanently displayed SRMC’s main corridor.

“Phillip is always willing and eager to assist, consistently being an ‘all in’ employee,” said SeHealth President/CEO Joann Anderson, who made the surprise presentation. “His input and recommendations are often sought before decisions are made which affect many departments.”

Knecht, who has been with SeHealth for 22 years, is the 32nd person to be named winner of the Drake Award, which was established by the SeHealth Board of Trustees in 1988 to recognize exceptional service by employees. The Drake award was named in honor of the late John D. Drake, who retired as head cook in 1984 after 38 years of service.

Knecht, who is originally from Rockingham, lives in Lumberton with his wife, Tara, and their three children, Alayna, Addison and Easton.


“Jon is the embodiment of servant leadership,” said Anderson. “He is a bold and courageous leader who does not shy away from growth and significant change in his areas of responsibility, improving quality of care and developing new services. He is someone who will tell the truth and never compromise his integrity or personal ethics.”

The Caldwell award was established in June 2016 in honor of SeHealth Government Affairs Officer Reid Caldwell. Since joining the organization in 1981 as a vice president, he has led by example by exhibiting integrity, honesty and ethical behavior throughout his career. Everson, who was also recognized at the banquet for his 30 years of service at SeHealth, is originally from Philippi, W. Va. He lives in Lumberton with his wife, Nancy.

Previous winners of the Caldwell award were Elizabeth Kirschling, 2016, and Cynthia George, 2017.
Phyllis Richardson says she always wanted to be a nurse, a dream her parents helped support with money they saved from the family farm in Evergreen and their jobs at mills. After she graduated from West Columbus High School in 1966, she went straight into the nursing program at Southeastern Community College in Whiteville. Then, with her associate degree complete in 1968, she came to work at Southeastern General Hospital in Lumberton, now Southeastern Regional Medical Center.

Fifty years later, she has joined a very special group of Southeastern Health employees as the fourth person in the organization's history to have given five decades of service. Richardson was recognized for her longevity at the annual Service Awards Banquet in February.

"First I want to thank God for giving me the strength and allowing me to be able to work," Richardson said. "But also I am thankful to the organization for allowing me to be part of it and working for all these years. They have been really good to me."

Shortly after she joined SGH, the hospital expanded, opening 80 long-term-care beds and a 23-bed psychiatric unit. Richardson worked nights in the psychiatric unit for several years, until she moved to long-term care. Then, recently divorced and with a small child, Richardson was considering a move to a different organization that would get her an all-day schedule, which she wanted to better take care of her son, Phillip.

“When I was thinking about leaving, they told me that if I’d stay with the hospital they would give me a position in long-term care and have straight days with every other weekend off,” Richardson said. “So I thought, I have all these years in, why not stay at the hospital. The grass isn’t always greener on the other side. Mrs. Pearl Lester, who was the manager over those floors, her motto was, ‘No matter who the person was or what the person had done, there was good in everybody,’ and she wouldn’t ask anyone to do something she wasn’t willing to do. We made a good team.”

Richardson continued with the long-term care unit when it moved to the new WoodHaven Nursing, Alzheimer’s and Rehabilitation Care Center in 1986, where she worked for 26 years.

“When I was at WoodHaven, it was like a family,” Richardson said. “The employees were so dedicated.”

During those 26 years, she also worked for about eight years with the nursing assistant students at Robeson Community College as a clinical instructor. She still sees many of the students she taught, now working at the hospital. She also worked some evenings in other places until her son was out of college, when she came back to the main hospital as a staff nurse.

After moving around a couple of times as roles changed on the hospital’s floors, Richardson started her latest position, as a nurse in the outpatient infusion center. There she gives patients their monthly or bi-monthly medications that must be delivered through an IV, mostly for immune-suppressant drugs used to treat inflammatory diseases.

Richardson has enjoyed seeing how SeHealth has been good to her son, too. From when he was born at the hospital to when he would help the residents with fun events at WoodHaven as a child to when he started working part time at the Community Health Education Center, SeHealth has been a part of his life, too. Now he’s the manager of SeHealth’s Community Health Services department, and, at the next service awards ceremony, will be honored for 20 years of service.

For the latest news at SeHealth, visit: www.southeasternhealth.org.
Robeson Health Care Corporation CEO Tim Hall, center, cuts the ribbon on the newly remodeled and renamed Dr. A.J. Robinson Community Health and Wellness Center, along with, from left, Lumberton Mayor Bruce Davis, RHCC Board Chair Charles Townsend, Southeastern Health President/CEO Joann Anderson, SeHealth Board Chair Kenneth Rust and Lumberton Area Chamber of Commerce Immediate Past Chair Suzanne Abbott. After the ceremony, guests were invited to tour the facility, which reopened on February 18.

Clinic reopens following hurricanes

Go Red for Women Heart Health Event - 2.28.19

Rumba on the Lumber - 3.2.19

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