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Baptist Health gives a six-month update

By **JEFF McDONALD**
editor@monticellonews.net

On Sunday, December 3, 2023, Drew Memorial Hospital officially became Baptist Health Medical Center-Drew County. In the six months that have followed, many things have remained the same, but there have been quite a few changes as well. The staff at the Advance reached out to Baptist Health to see if they could give a brief six-month update, and they were gracious enough to provide us with quite a bit of information.

Since transitioning from Drew Memorial, BHMC-DC has experienced tremendous growth in a variety of areas. The 60-bed acute care facility serves approximately 200,000 residents in Southeast Arkansas.

The Labor and Delivery Department has achieved re-



Baptist Health MEDICAL CENTER Drew County

cord-setting numbers every month since the beginning of 2024, with May 2024, having over 50 babies delivered, which is the most in a single month for the hospital. BHMC-DC's OB Perinatal Quality Collaborative received recognition for its success.

In addition to the growth of obstetric services, the hospital has undergone renovations in different parts of the facility such as the Geriatric Behavioral Health Unit, a new pharmacy mixing lab, and new signage both on the outside and inside

the building.

Since December, the hospital has implemented Epic, an advanced electronic medical records system. Epic provides BHMC-DC and the rest of the Baptist Health system access to a single platform for the electronic health record across points of care. Specialists associated with the hospital have also been granted EpicCare Link access. This platform allows them access to updates about their patient's care from the comfort of their clinics. Another useful tool since imple-

menting Epic is MyChart. This app allows patients to see their medical history, scans, and receive results promptly.

Another new addition at BHMC-DC is integrating virtual care access for patients. This has expanded the hospital's reach, offering high-quality healthcare services to the community. This implementation has been beneficial to patients by allowing them to meet with specialists across the system via tablets located at their bed-

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BAPTIST

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sides.

The hospital is also home to a state-of-the-art surgical center with four surgical suites, two gastrointestinal procedure suites, a dedicated post-anesthesia care unit, and a very comfortable and spacious family waiting room.

BHMC-DC hosts specialty clinics, allowing patients to receive care from specialists close to home. These clinics feature specialists in Cardiology, Neurology, Dermatology, Orthopedics, and more. Baptist Health is actively recruiting more specialty clinic physicians to allow further expansion of services.

The BHMC-DC Education Department now offers CPR classes for members of the community. The class is offered on the second Tuesday of each month and is \$40 per participant.

The Emergency Department is a Level IV Trauma Center. This means that the staff is well equipped to assist in any emergency, from accidents to sudden illnesses. There is also a helipad on site which gives quicker access to transport patients if they need a higher level of care.

The hospital also offers many additional healthcare services including the cancer center, sleep center, radiology services, and medically assisted detox services.

BHMC-DC offers both inpatient and outpatient Behavioral Health services. The inpatient Geriatric Psych unit has 11 beds along with a common area for the patients to enjoy. The outpatient services provided include Intensive Outpatient Psych and Outpatient Behavioral Health.

Since the transition, BHMC-DC has added many different tools and events to connect with employees. Recently, the

hospital established an employee engagement committee. This committee hosted Hospital Week activities for the staff and has planned a year's worth of exciting activities for everyone. Employees participate in daily huddles for essential information and the healthcare system's bi-weekly employee newsletter has become an invaluable tool for employees to stay informed about both system-wide news and the local campus.

In closing, Baptist Health wants the citizens that they serve to know that BHMC-DC remains the heart of this community, with community members caring for other community members as if they were family. The healing ministry provides unwavering support during life's most challenging times and serves as a reliable partner for all of the happy moments. Baptist Health is committed to being a trusted partner for life.



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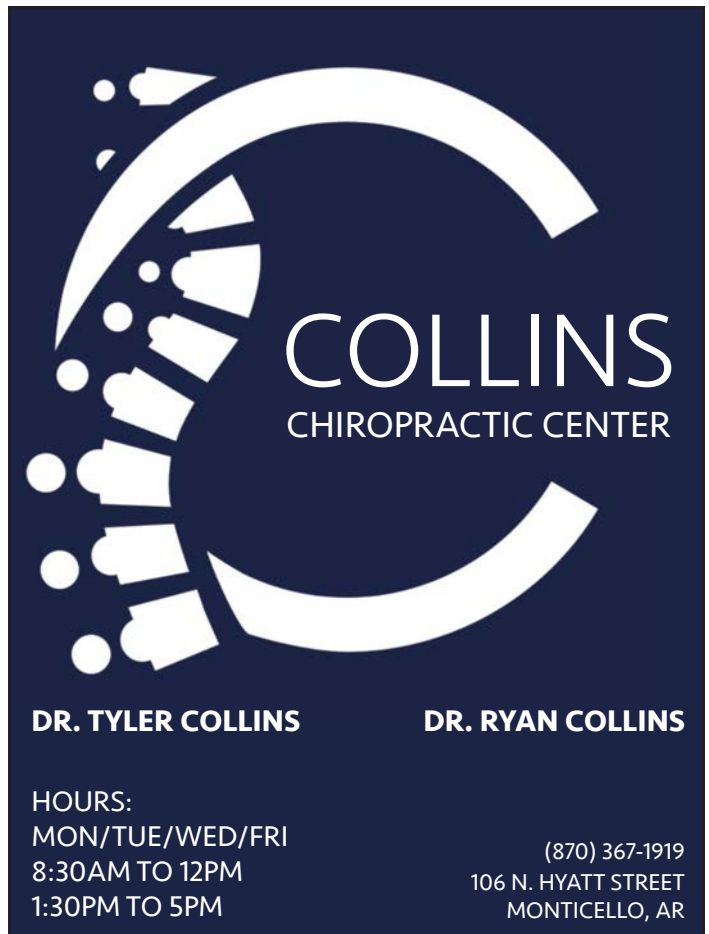
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Personalized care in a small town

By JOANNA POOLE
reporter@theeagledemocrat.com

If you live in Bradley County and have needed to see a doctor at any point in your life, you probably know the names Joe H. Wharton and Kerry Pennington. Both are Bradley County natives and have been practicing medicine there for a long time. I became a patient of Dr. Wharton as a small child and experienced full circle moments when he delivered two of my children. I have many family members who have been patients of Dr. Pennington as well.

Both men graduated from Warren High School knowing that they wanted to become physicians. Both also attended UAM.

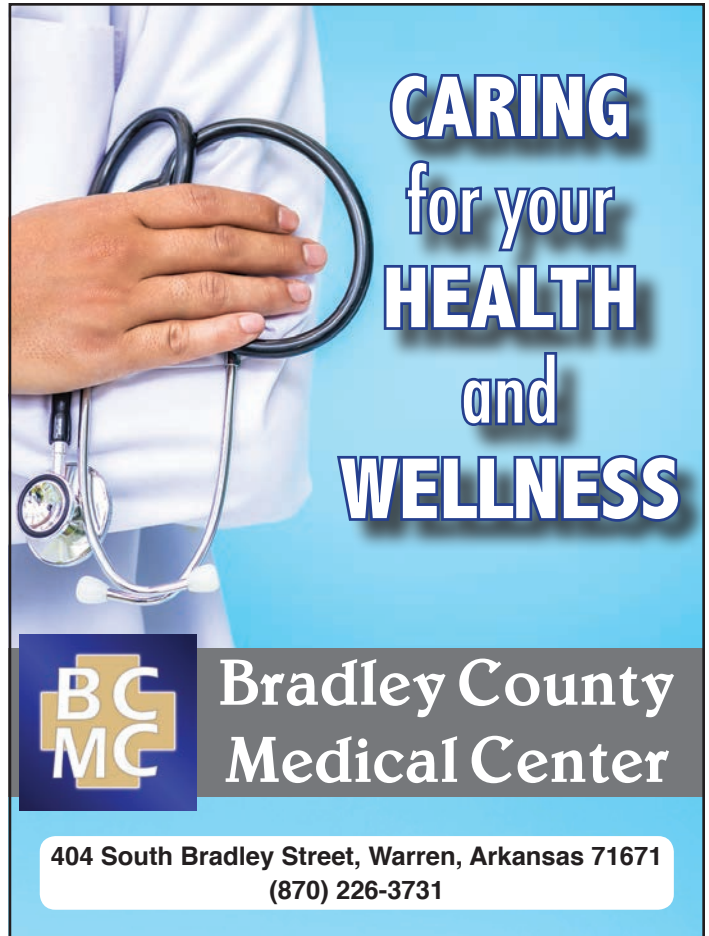
Dr. Wharton attended UAM from 1968-1972, the University of Southern Mississippi from 1972-1977, and then UAMS from 1980-1984. I asked him why he decided to return to Warren to practice.

“It had always been a desire of mine to practice in Warren,” Wharton said. “I believe it was a leading from the Lord as well. Looking back, it has been great!”

Dr. Wharton has been practicing medicine for 37 years and he is continuously reaping the rewards.

“I feel a personal relationship with my patients, and I have found that quite rewarding,” Wharton said. “I have loved helping with the care of

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Baptist Health

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DOCTORS

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my family and delivery of my grandchildren, great nephews and nieces as well.”

Dr. Pennington attended UAM and UAMS. He knew from the start that he wanted to practice in Warren as well.

“I always wanted to come back home and raise my kids,

and give back to my community,” Pennington said.

I asked Dr. Pennington, who has been practicing for 43 years, what he felt was most rewarding about his profession.

“Relationships with patients and watching people get well or do better,” Pennington said.

I asked both doctors what common health advice do they find themselves giving their pa-

tients frequently.

“Issues with diet, weight, exercise, and things patients can do to help themselves, which helps me care for them,” Wharton said. “It’s more than just prescribing medications.”

“Low salt diet, lose weight, and follow my instructions,” Pennington said, the last part with a laugh.

With each passing year, both

men’s passion for healing and dedication to their patients only deepen. Through countless consultations, diagnoses, and treatments, they have woven a tapestry of care and compassion, touching the lives of countless individuals and families. Their profound impact on the health and wellness of those they serve is the true reward.

Mainline taking integrated approach in healthcare

By **ASHLEY HOGG**

publisher@monticellonews.net

“We are in a behavioral healthcare crisis,” Jaime Harvey, Director of Behavioral Services Mainline Health Systems, Inc.

“I was a clinical director for 16 years before I came to Mainline and while I absolutely loved my job, I had a vision for a more holistic approach to

healthcare.”

Harvey stated that many people are interested in receiving mental health services, but a stigma still exists among Americans in receiving this type of treatment.

“At Mainline, when you walk into one of our clinics, you could be there for a check-up, dental visit, or behavioral health. No one has to know,”

Harvey added.

“The continuity of care is really important to us. We have several school based clinics and if a student needs to be referred to a mental health provider and they don’t want to be seen on the school campus, we can provide those services at one of our clinics. We want everyone to be comfortable and know this service is available to them.”

According to statistics from the National Institute of Mental Health, one in five American adults suffers from some form of mental illness at least once in their life. The behavioral health program at Mainline is working to provide easier access to patients across the Natural State.

Mainline Health Systems

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MAINLINE

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now has clinics in Monticello, including the Drew Central and University of Arkansas at Monticello campuses; Warren; Sheridan; Star City; Portland; Dermott; Rison; Eudora; and Wilmot.

“Through the behavioral health clinic and our awesome women’s clinic, we are able to offer infertility counseling, postpartum counseling and other specific pregnancy related services,” Harvey stated.

Mainline also has Psychiatric Nurse Practitioners on staff that are available to help specifically with medication needs.

“Something I want to help educate our community on is the fact that it really is simple to make an appointment, all you have to do is call,” Harvey said.

Mainline does accept most health insurance plans, has a sliding scale payment structure for patients and has behavioral

health case managers on staff to help new patients navigate the process of mental health treatment.

“We (Mainline) really try to wrap around the entire need of the patient,” Harvey stated.

“Mental health has been a problem for a long time but I believe during Covid, people had to sit with themselves and some may have realized they needed some help.”

By adding behavioral health providers to the team, the medical providers are able to address mental health issues with a patient as well as physical issues, while never leaving the office.

“Our medical providers don’t specialize in behavioral health but if they notice a patient is struggling in that area, they can bring them to one of their colleagues and the patient doesn’t have to go through the stress of making another appointment and taking more time from work or their family,” Harvey added.

How routine physical activity affects mental health

The physical changes people experience after committing to routine physical activity are visible to the naked eye. After making such a commitment, particularly if one is accustomed to a sedentary lifestyle, people may shed a noticeable amount of weight, move more quickly and even appear younger, a change that is perhaps related to the positive effects exercise has on sleep.

Less noticeable but no less advantageous are the mental health benefits associated with routine exercise. According to the Mental Health Foundation, physical activity releases chemicals in the brain that positively affect mood, thus making exercise a tool anyone can utilize to improve their mental health. As individuals ponder the ben-

efits of physical activity, they can keep the following ways exercise affects mental health in mind.

- Exercise and stress reduction: A 2022 Gallup poll found that 40 percent of adults worldwide experienced a lot of stress. The poll asked adults in 142 countries and areas, which underscores the significance of stress as a legitimate global health concern. The MHF notes that the most common physical signs of stress include difficulty sleeping, sweating and loss of appetite, symptoms that are triggered by a flood of the stress hormones adrenaline and noradrenaline released in the body. Those hormones increase blood pressure and heart rate.

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The basics of financial literacy

A financial safety net can help people navigate the ups and downs of life. Developing that safety net requires a measure of financial literacy that anyone can nurture.

What is financial literacy?

The United States Department of Education defines financial literacy as an understanding of how to earn, manage and invest money. That recognition can increase the chances that individuals make sound financial decisions, thus setting them up for long-term success and stability.

What makes financial literacy so important?

The benefits of financial literacy are not limited to theoretical notions such as the ability to understand money makes individuals more likely to make sound decisions regarding their finances. Indeed, the Financial Industry Regulatory Authority (FINRA) notes that financial literacy has been proven to produce positive results. In its National Financial Capability Study released in 2022, the FINRA found that respondents who exhibited higher financial literacy were more likely to make ends meet than those

without such knowledge. Sixty-five percent of respondents with higher financial literacy were able to set aside three months' of emergency funds at higher levels than respondents with lower literacy levels. The study also linked financial literacy to long-term stability, as more than half of respondents (52 percent) with higher financial literacy calculated their retirement savings needs, an important step that fewer than one in three (29 percent) with lower literacy levels had taken.

What are some additional benefits of financial literacy?

Individuals are often confronted with a host of options when making financial decisions. That includes choices regarding bank accounts and credit cards, which are two variables related to financial literacy that individuals encounter every day. Individuals with financial literacy can pick a bank account that most suits their needs, whether that's standard accounts like checking and savings or something more unique like a high-yield savings account. Knowledge of financial basics also can prepare individuals to choose the



right credit card, which can be a more difficult decision than choosing a bank account given the number of different cards available. Low-APR, no-APR, travel rewards, cash-back cards, and balance transfer cards are some of the options consumers can choose from when picking a credit card. Financial literacy increases the

chances consumers pick the card that best suits their short- and long-term needs.

Financial literacy can help people navigate challenges that periodically arise during the course of everyone's life. Taking time to learn some financial basics can set people up for long-term economic health.

HEALTH

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Exercise can help to alleviate stress, and the MHF notes that adults who are highly active have been found to have lower rates of stress than those who live more sedentary lifestyles.

- Exercise and self-esteem: A 2022 study published in The Journal of Sports Medicine and Physical Fitness compared 352 participants between the ages of 20 and 40 who regularly exercised at least two days

per week for the previous six months with 350 similarly aged sedentary individuals. The study assessed various characteristics of each group and researchers ultimately concluded that those who exercised had higher levels of self-esteem than those who did not. As a result, the authors behind the study recommended exercise as a preferred method to increase self-esteem.

- Exercise and depression: A systematic review and network

See **HEALTH** Page 12

A large advertisement for Union Bank. At the top, there is a stylized logo of a classical building with columns, with the text "Your 'Hometown' Bank" below it. To the right, the words "SERVING YOU" are written in large, bold, white letters. Below that, the text "and our community Since 1887" is written in a smaller white font. In the bottom right corner, there is a logo for "EQUAL HOUSING LENDER" with a house icon. The main part of the advertisement is a photograph of a brick Union Bank building. At the bottom, the Union Bank logo (a large blue 'U') is followed by the text "Union Bank" in a large blue font. Below that, the website "www.unionbnk.com" and the text "MEMBER FDIC | CONNECT WITH UNION BANK" are displayed, along with a small Facebook icon.

Foods that can affect long-term health and wellness

The phrase “you are what you eat” can serve as a warning that the foods a person consumes greatly affect his overall health. Although eating a cheese-laden burger with a side of deep-fried potatoes every so often will not turn a person’s health on its head, repeatedly making poor dietary decisions may be a recipe for chronic health problems.

Health experts say foods (and beverages) can affect hearts, waistlines and brains. Foods that are grouped under the category of “junk food” tend to be the largest dietary offenders. The term “junk food” refers to foods that contain high levels of fats, sugar or salt, and lack nutrients such as fiber, vitamins and minerals. Some of the foods that fall into the junk food category include cakes; processed meats like bacon and lunch meats; chips; chocolate and candies; sugary drinks; and fast food, like burgers and pizza.

Here’s a more in-depth look at certain foods or ingredients and what they can do to the body.

- Industrial and processed seed oils: According to Harvard nutritionist Dr. Uma Naidoo, highly processed oils are usually

extracted from soybeans, corn, rapeseed, cottonseed, sunflower, and safflower seeds, and contain a lot of omega-6 fatty acids. Excessive consumption of omega-6 fatty acids can trigger inflammation in the body and the brain. Inflammation is recognized as a risk factor for Alzheimer’s disease. Olive, coconut or avocado oils are healthier alternatives.

- Processed foods: Foods are processed to keep them shelf stable longer. Heavily processed foods like crackers, baked goods, and jarred pasta sauces are potentially unhealthy. It is estimated that more than half the calories in the average American diet, and around 48 percent of the Canadian diet, come from ultra processed foods, advises the Laborers’ Health & Safety Fund. A five-year study of more than 100,000 people found that each 10 percent increase in consumption of ultra processed food was associated with a 12 percent higher risk for cancer.

- Sugar: Foods and beverages with added sugar can be problematic. A high sugar diet can contribute to excess glucose in the brain that can cause memory impairments, and the

strength training were found to be especially effective at treating depression, which the World Health Organization estimates affects about 280 million people worldwide.

The physical benefits of routine physical activity may be most noticeable. However, regular exercise also has a profound effect on individuals’ mental health.



National Institutes of Health indicates studies have shown that individuals who consume greater amounts of added sugar tend to gain more weight and have higher risk of obesity, type 2 diabetes, hypertension, and cardiovascular disease.

- Saturated fat: Eating too much red meat can be bad for the heart and brain. WebMD says red meat is high in saturated fat and can contribute to cardiovascular disease. The same can be said for butter and full-fat cheeses. Opting for low-fat dairy and alternative protein

sources can be beneficial.

- Mercury-containing fish: While eating fish is generally touted as a healthy move, swordfish and tuna lose points because they can contain high levels of mercury. WebMD says mercury is a neurotoxin, which means it is toxic to the brain and can cause memory loss.

Certain foods can compromise long-term health. Careful dietary planning that emphasizes nutritious meals over junk food and processed foods can promote both short- and long-term health.

HEALTH

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meta-analysis of randomized control trials found that exercise is an effective treatment for depression. That review and analysis, published in the peer-reviewed medical journal *The BMJ* in 2024, reviewed 218 unique studies involving more than 14,000 participants. Walking, jogging, yoga, and

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