

A publication of FHN

Volume 16, Issue 3

Insight

**I Walked in
and Thought
'Wow, Things
Might Just Be
OK'**

**Mercyhealth
and FHN:
Growing Together**

**Keep Moving with
FHN's Ortho Team**

**Women's
Diagnostic Center:
Care Tailored to You**



We're here, for you.

FHN



MARK GRIDLEY, PRESIDENT AND CEO

It Has Never Been More True; We're Here, for You

FHN has been in the spotlight this fall with exciting news about our new affiliation with Mercyhealth. As you'll read later, the decision came after careful consideration, and our leadership and board are confident

it's the best step forward to ensure our communities continue to have access to exceptional healthcare for years to come.

In the meantime, the people of FHN have continued to care for their patients and their communities just like we have been doing for more than 120 years. Our providers are still working with their patients to achieve their best health, our community services team is in the thick of flu shot season, and we're all proud to be here every day for you.

Sometimes, routine care takes a backseat to working with highly trained specialists, as it did for Carol Anderson when an unusual feeling in her stomach she shared with her doctor turned out to be ovarian cancer. She didn't have to travel far from her home in Forreston for treatment, and she regards most of the FHN Leonard C. Ferguson Cancer Center staff as "my favorite."

We are celebrating the Cancer Center's 30th anniversary throughout this year, highlighted by a special open house this past summer. I hope you'll take a moment to meet our cancer care specialists and enjoy some photos from the open house.

I'm also proud to highlight the specialists on FHN's Orthopedics and Sports Medicine team in this issue. Our orthopedic surgeons have a considerable range of training and talent, from helping patients with back, knee or shoulder pain to extensive experience working with collegiate and professional athletes. They work with our Physical Therapy and Rehabilitation Services team to help patients keep moving and enjoying life.

Finally, speaking of enjoying life, we're proud to share details about this year's FHN Festival of Trees events, including the popular Community Festival of Trees as well as a fun family night and plenty of story time with Santa and Mrs. Claus at the Freeport Public Library. I hope you and your loved ones are able to join us as we celebrate the sounds of the season.

All of us at FHN are honored to care for our loved ones, friends, and neighbors, and to be part of our communities. Thank you for trusting us with your healthcare, and be assured that **We're here, for you** well into the future. ■

FHN is an award-winning regional healthcare system committed to the health and well-being of the people of northwest Illinois and southern Wisconsin. Organized in 1995, non-profit FHN is comprised of FHN Memorial Hospital, the Leonard C. Ferguson Cancer Center at FHN Memorial Hospital, and 15 healthcare centers in 5 counties spanning northwest Illinois offering primary and specialty medical care, and hospice. For more information about us please visit www.fhn.org.

A HIDDEN GEM: Carol Anderson's Journey with the Leonard C. Ferguson Cancer Center

For Carol Anderson of Forreston, healthcare at FHN had always been reliable, routine, and reassuring. "I always had great labs and appointments," she recalls. "Dr. Miller and I often joked that I was such an easy patient." With no family history of cancer, she never imagined the Leonard C. Ferguson Cancer Center at FHN Memorial Hospital in Freeport would become such a central part of her life.

That changed after a routine check-up with her longtime primary care provider, FHN Family Medicine Physician Terry Miller, MD. Just before leaving, Carol mentioned an unusual feeling in her stomach.

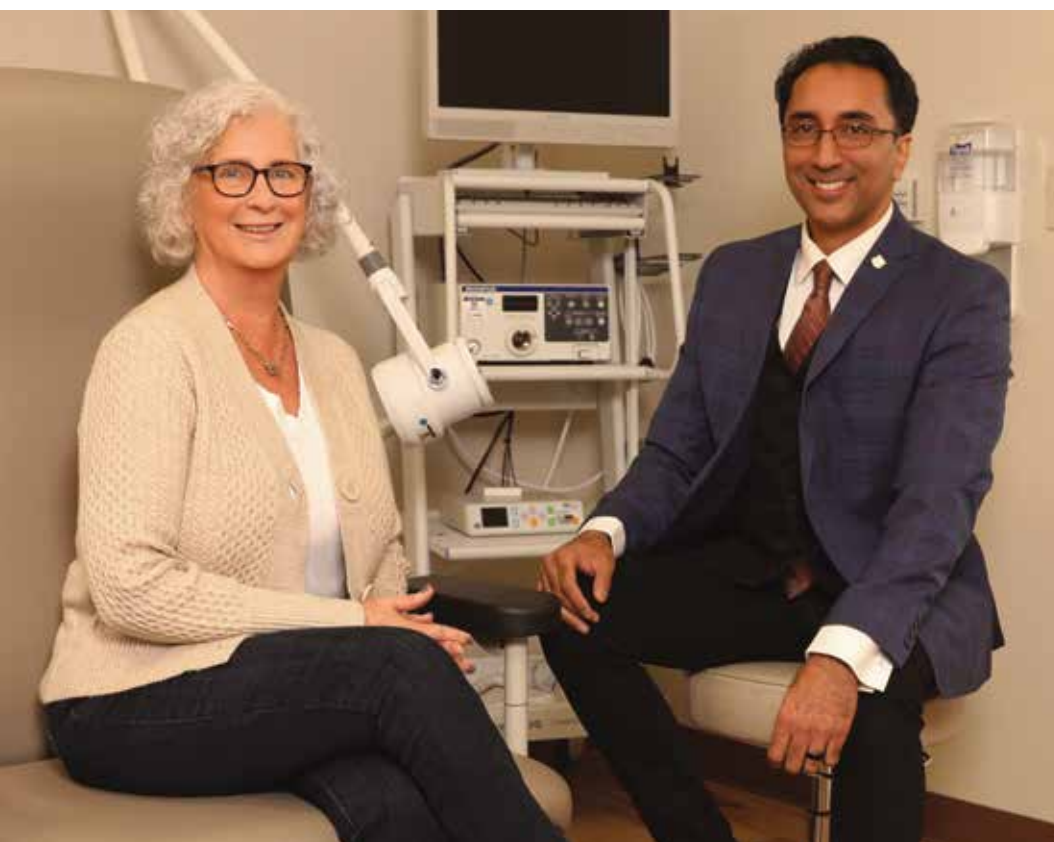
"Since you never complain about anything, let's take a closer look," Dr. Miller said. A CAT scan quickly followed, and within days, Carol received the life-altering diagnosis: Stage 4A ovarian cancer.

"It would have been so easy to put it off," Carol says, "but I am grateful I had a doctor who really listened."

Carol began her treatment in Madison with a series of tests and major surgery. Still recovering, she knew she wanted to arrange for her ongoing care closer to home. With the help of a nurse navigator, she transitioned her care to the Leonard C. Ferguson Cancer Center at FHN Memorial Hospital in Freeport – a decision that, in her words, changed everything.

"I walked into the Cancer Center, and it was calm ... it was peaceful," Carol says. "Amanda and Natalie at the front desk, no matter what was going on in their lives, always wore huge smiles. I felt like, wow, things might just be OK."

Though the emotional toll of her diagnosis was heavy, Carol was lifted by the support of her friends, family, and her new care team led



▲ Patient Carol Anderson and FHN Medical Oncologist Arshad Shaikh, MD, share a moment of gratitude at the Leonard C. Ferguson Cancer Center, where Dr. Shaikh led her cancer treatment journey.

by FHN Medical Oncologist Arshad Shaikh, MD, and oncology nurse Kathy. Treatment was just 20 minutes from home, allowing her husband, coworkers, friends, and even the family dog to be part of her journey. “I never felt like I was going through cancer treatment,” she says. “The nurses often laughed and said it was more like a party. They knew exactly what I needed to get through this.”

Over the past two years, Carol has continued treatment, now through immunotherapy, and her appreciation for the Cancer Center only deepens. “Every time someone comes to get me from the waiting room, I think, ‘Oh, my favorite!’ because they all are my favorite,” she says with a smile.

One moment stood out especially: After meeting a new nurse for the first time, Carol later received a handwritten card thanking her for the privilege of providing her care.

“Whoever selects the staff here knows exactly what they are doing.”

Her oncologist, Dr. Shaikh, has been a constant source of strength. “He has the most honest and encouraging bedside manner. He always gave me the facts, but he also always made me feel like I knew why what they were doing was important. I think he works miracles.”

Looking back, Carol shares three pieces of advice for anyone newly diagnosed:

1. Stay off Dr. Google.

“It can be a terrifying place.”

2. Advocate for yourself.

“If I hadn’t asked about treatment closer to home, I wouldn’t have been placed at FHN.”

3. Take a support person.

“It can be overwhelming, and having someone to absorb the information makes all the difference.”



▲ Top to bottom: Carol and her husband, Wayne, in Aruba in 2025. A passionate traveler, Carol continues to explore the world – proving that cancer hasn’t slowed her adventurous spirit.

Carol during her second chemo treatment, joined by her steadfast supporter, Darla, who attended nearly every appointment.

As the Leonard C. Ferguson Cancer Center celebrates 30 years of service, Carol reflects on her journey with deep gratitude.

“The promise made to me was that I would get the best possible care. The promise kept was that I got the best possible care. I don’t even call it a facility ... It’s a building of family. It’s a hidden gem. I don’t want everyone to have to experience it, but if you do, it is a great place.”



A Promise Made, A Promise Kept

Celebrating 30 Years of Cancer Care at the FHN Leonard C. Ferguson Cancer Center

In 1995, FHN made a promise to our communities to keep cancer care close to home. **Thirty years later**, the FHN Leonard C. Ferguson Cancer Center at FHN Memorial Hospital in Freeport has honored that promise by providing expert, compassionate care to **more than 25,000 patients**.

Many of our team members have been with us from the very beginning, and together, **our staff represents over 600 years of combined experience**. As we look to the future, our commitment remains the same - bringing the latest technology and most advanced treatments to the people of northwest Illinois.

Trusted Leaders in Cancer Care



Dr. Arshad Shaikh, Medical Oncologist

Board-certified hematologist and medical oncologist Arshad Shaikh,

MD, has provided leading-edge chemotherapy to FHN patients for more than a decade. Today, he is also on the front line of immunotherapy, a revolutionary treatment that boosts the body's immune system to fight cancer.

"Immunotherapy has been one of the cornerstone treatments of the future of cancer, and the indications are only expected to broaden," says Dr. Shaikh. "I have seen remarkable benefit across various cancers, particularly melanoma."

While he embraces the latest in medical science, Dr. Shaikh believes in treating the whole person. He shares,

“ Establishing a heart-to-heart connection is personally the most important criteria to me. Faith, compassion, and a holistic approach are essential to care. ”

◀ Staff of the FHN Leonard C. Ferguson Cancer Center and the FHN Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer Kathryn Martinez (standing second from right) take a moment during the Center's 30th anniversary celebration to capture a photo in the Leonard and Mildred Ferguson Healing Garden. The milestone event celebrated three decades of compassionate cancer care, medical innovation, and community partnership, honoring the dedicated providers, staff, and patients who have made the Cancer Center a place of healing, hope, and excellence for northwest Illinois.



Dr. Bobby Koneru, Radiation Oncologist*

Through FHN's alliance with Paramount Oncology

Group (POG), patients benefit from the expertise of Bobby Koneru, MD, a board-certified radiation oncologist and national speaker on advanced cancer therapies.

Dr. Koneru provides patients with access to **state-of-the-art stereotactic radiosurgery**, which **precisely targets tumors** with fewer, high-dose treatments while preserving surrounding healthy tissue. He also brings a patient-first philosophy. He explains,

“ Every patient is different. I try to understand what the patient's needs are and make a collaborative decision between standard recommendations and what is unique for them and their family. ”

Dr. Koneru emphasizes that patients receive care comparable to major academic centers: “This facility offers all of the latest technologies, with a team that truly takes the time to know each patient.”

**Dr. Koneru is not an employee or agent of FHN.*



The Leonard C. Ferguson Cancer Center at FHN Memorial Hospital in Freeport offers advanced, university-level cancer treatments close to home. ▶

The chemotherapy wing provides a calm, healing environment with personalized privacy and beautiful views of the Healing Garden. ▶

Dr. Shaikh shares a moment with an attendee at the Cancer Center's 30th anniversary celebration. Floral arrangements were donated by Blooming Grove Flower Farm.

Dr. Shaikh and Dr. Koneru join in celebrating 30 years of compassionate, expert treatment in northwest Illinois.

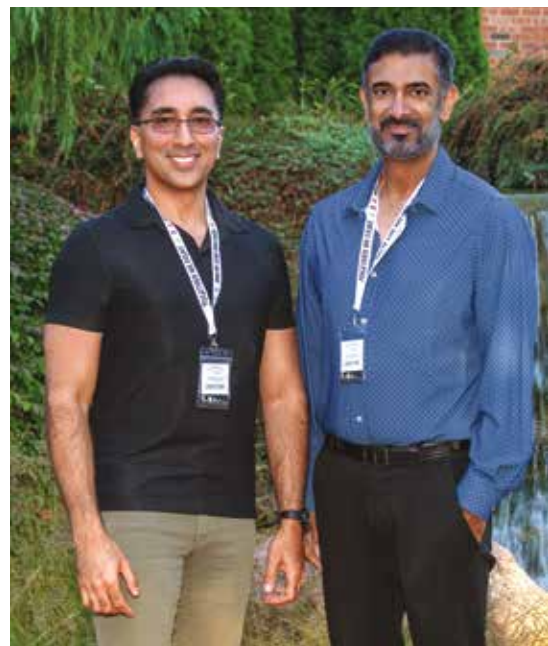


Innovation Beyond Cancer Care

The Ferguson Cancer Center also is at the forefront of low-dose radiotherapy for conditions such as osteoarthritis, tendinopathy, and bursitis. This non-invasive treatment provides **relief for 80 percent of patients**, reducing pain and restoring movement in everyday life.

Honoring the Past, Shaping the Future

For three decades, the FHN Leonard C. Ferguson Cancer Center has delivered on its **promise to bring advanced cancer care close to home**. With cutting-edge treatments, expert providers, and a compassionate team, FHN will continue to provide hope, healing, and a future for patients and families across the region.



From Screening to Support: Navigating the Breast Health Journey



Meet Tonya Pennington, RN

Breast Health Nurse Navigator

Your guide. Your advocate. Your partner in care.

Tonya Pennington serves as FHN's Breast Health Nurse Navigator, a trusted resource for patients navigating breast imaging and diagnostic care. She ensures that each patient receives timely follow-up, clear communication, and the emotional reassurance that no one walks this path alone.

“ I want every woman to **FEEL SEEN, SUPPORTED, and INFORMED** – because understanding what's next can make all the difference. ”

— Tonya Pennington, RN, Breast Health Nurse Navigator

Tonya coordinates care between your imaging team, primary care provider, and specialists, making sure your next steps are well organized and that you always know what's coming next. Her role blends medical guidance with compassionate support, reflecting FHN's commitment to whole-person care.

At FHN, we know that waiting for answers after a breast health screening can be one of the most uncertain times in a person's life. Whether you're here for a routine mammogram or a diagnostic follow-up, our priority is to ensure you feel supported, informed, and cared for through every step of your journey.

When a screening requires a closer look, our advanced diagnostic imaging, such as 3D mammography, ultrasound, and MRI, helps our care team gather the most accurate information possible. These tests enable us to provide clarity quickly, allowing you to move forward with confidence in your care plan.

Personalized Care Begins Here

The Women's Diagnostic Center at FHN Memorial Hospital was designed with the comfort and privacy of our patients in mind. From soft shawls to private hallways and serene spaces, the center creates a calm, home-like environment that helps patients feel at ease during their appointments.

Schedule Your Mammogram!

With one call to our central scheduling team at 815-599-6860, we can set up a time that works best for you – often within just a few days. You'll have your appointment confirmed before you hang up the phone.



For more information on breast health screenings and frequently asked questions, scan the QR code to access our **FHN Breast Health Information Guide**.

FHN Provider Spotlight

FHN's Primary Care Providers are close to home, no matter where you live in our area, with offices throughout northwest Illinois. These dedicated professionals have one goal in mind: **To help you maximize your personal wellness throughout your lifetime.**

This issue spotlights **Brittany Blomberg, DO**, who sees patients at the FHN Family Healthcare Center – Highland View Drive in Freeport.



**BRITTANY
BLOMBERG, DO**

FHN Family Healthcare Center –
Highland View Drive, Freeport

Phone: 815-235-3165

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE OR MOST REWARDING PART OF YOUR JOB?

I love being able to listen to patients' stories and to help them feel heard and seen. Although it may sometimes be difficult, I am gratified to have tough, deep conversations with people and help support them through really difficult times in their lives. It makes sense, then, that the favorite part of my training was working with the hospice and palliative medicine doctors. That experience helped me be a better communicator with my patients and their families.

WHAT CAN PATIENTS EXPECT WHEN THEY WORK WITH YOU?

First of all, I would tell them that I like to partner with patients to make healthcare decisions together and help people to take a more active role

in their healthcare. I also try to meet people where they are at and help them work toward their healthcare goals in a way that feels authentic to them.

HOW DO YOU HELP PATIENTS FEEL INVOLVED IN THEIR CARE?

I try to present all options when we are making a healthcare decision and give my reasoning for these opinions. That way, patients can decide what makes sense for them.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE HOBBY OR SKILL?

I enjoy a broad variety of pastimes – maybe I like collecting hobbies! Favorites include reading, crafting with my kids, crochet, video games, nature walks, live concerts in my car, and the Renaissance Faire.

IS THERE ANYTHING ELSE YOU WOULD LIKE TO SHARE?

Reading and literacy are very important to me ... so much so, in fact, that I hand out books at my well-child appointments! I also volunteered at story time at the Freeport Public Library this year, representing FHN. I'm usually in the library about once a week, and one of my favorite things to do with my kids is to read stories to them. Since I am from Freeport, I have fond memories of going to our library when I was young, and I enjoy nurturing that tradition.

I am very intentional about both the books that I read and the ones I choose to read to my children. I

focus on books about, and written by, people with diverse backgrounds and cultures that are different from our own, because I believe that their stories are important to learn and to share. I once borrowed a huge stack of books about an Asian country when I had a couple from that country choose me as their provider. I was unfamiliar with their background and culture, and in learning more about it, I was better able to serve them. Reading can really open doors to better understanding!



She's a doctor by day, but once a year, Dr. Blomberg trades her white coat for flowing gowns and becomes M'Lady Brittany at a nearby Renaissance Faire. It's an adventure that lets her step back in time – and embrace a touch of magic. ▲



Movement is Medicine.

Studies have shown that regular exercise – just moving around – improves your health.

In the past few years, researchers have shown that physical activity can:

- **Improve arthritis symptoms**
- **Strengthen your heart** by lowering blood pressure, cholesterol and inflammation
- **Alleviate some symptoms of Parkinson's disease** and slow its progression
- **Reduce your risk** of developing **type 2 diabetes**
- **Improve your brain health** and slow age-related memory issues
- **Boost your mental health**
- **Reduce your risk** of several types of **cancer**



But what if movement itself hurts?

It's difficult to play pickleball with a painful shoulder or go for a walk if your knee won't cooperate.

FHN's Orthopedics and Sports Medicine team can help, with three surgeons trained in a wide range of specialties, to the physical and occupational therapists who will work with you to regain strength and ease of movement.

Our team is led by **Kevin Draxinger, MD**, who has been caring for patients at FHN for nearly 20 years. Dr. Draxinger earned his medical degree from the University of British Columbia in Vancouver, Canada and served a fellowship in spine surgery at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, MD.

His specialties range from helping people of all ages with back pain or a fracture to caring for patients with injuries or conditions that limit

movement, from minimally invasive knee arthroscopy and meniscus repair to total knee replacement; minimally invasive treatments to reduce shoulder pain to open rotator cuff repairs; hip replacement surgery; and treating patients affected by carpal tunnel syndrome or "trigger finger," which causes a person's finger to get "stuck" in a bent position.

Orthopedics and Sports Medicine specialist **Woodley Desir, MD**, joined FHN this spring. He earned his medical degree from the State University of New York Downstate Medical Center in Brooklyn, NY. He also earned a Doctor of Dental Surgery (DDS) degree from the State University of New York at Buffalo in Buffalo, NY. He completed an orthopedic surgery residency at Howard University Hospital in Washington, DC, and served two



**Kevin
Draxinger, MD**



**Woodley
Desir, MD**



**Michal
Zlowodzki, MD**



**Andrea
Shewalter,
MSN, FNP-BC**



▲ Our friendly front-line team helps patients schedule appointments and our nurses and certified medical assistants begin every appointment with a check on your progress. Left to right, our team is Brittney Mordini, RN; Karen Desalvo, RN; Nicole Kass, CCNA; patient service representatives Jennifer Miller Wiggins and Shaniqua Jackson; and Mary Price, CMA.

fellowships: Sports Medicine and Shoulder Surgery at Vanderbilt University Medical Center in Nashville, TN, and Hip Preservation/Arthroscopy/Reconstruction and Regenerative Medicine at the University of Colorado in Boulder, CO.

Dr. Desir has been caring for orthopedic patients since 2009, including high-performance athletes for the Nashville Predators NHL team and Vanderbilt University's Division 1 football, women's lacrosse, and baseball teams.

His specialties include hip preservation, regenerative medicine, hip, knee and shoulder reconstruction, and sports medicine.

Michal Zlowodzki, MD*, joined the FHN Orthopedics and Sports Medicine team in 2024. He earned his

medical degree from the University of Hamburg in Hamburg, Germany, and completed an orthopedic surgery residency at the University of Minnesota in Minneapolis, MN. He went on to serve a fellowship in orthopedic trauma and hip preservation and replacement at Duke University in Durham, NC. Dr. Zlowodzki has 13 years of experience in helping patients struggling with knee and hip injury or conditions and cares for patients ages 3 and up for fractures other than those in the hand. He is not an employee or agent of FHN, but Dr. Zlowodzki provides care for FHN patients and is an important part of our dedicated healthcare team.

Orthopedics nurse practitioner **Andrea Shewalter, MSN, FNP-BC**, works with all of the providers on the FHN Orthopedics and Sports

Medicine team. She earned her bachelor's degree in nursing from Northern Illinois University in DeKalb and her master's degree from Saint Anthony College of Nursing in Rockford. ([You can read more about her professional statistics on page 11.](#))

Physical Therapy & Rehabilitation

Our PT/R Team is an important part of Orthopedics and Sports Medicine at FHN. They are the people who will work with you one-on-one to regain your strength and mobility in one of our state-of-the-art gyms or private treatment rooms.

Physical therapy is an important part of rehabilitation from trauma

— Continued on next page

**This provider is not an employee or agent of FHN.*



▲ Especially helpful for lower back pain, headaches, and tendonitis, dry needling can effectively treat musculoskeletal pain and dysfunction. Here, FHN PT Shawn Gorsline gently inserts thin needles into the back of Emily Beach, who suffers from low back and hip issues.

like stroke or heart attack, a car or workplace accident, or surgery.

For some patients, working with a physical therapist or physical therapist assistant is the answer to their problems. Our PT/R Team offers excellent non-surgical, drug-free options for conditions from back pain and muscle tears to arthritis and diseases like Parkinson's or cerebral palsy.

Our PT/R Team specializes in:

- Helping surgical patients recover and regain mobility
- Neurological conditions such as stroke, Parkinson's disease and multiple sclerosis
- Orthopedic and sport-related injuries
- Bio-mechanical problems and muscular control
- Vestibular vertigo impairments
- Back and neck pain
- Arthritis
- Acute or chronic pain
- Evaluation and treatment for flexibility and strengthening impairments
- Balance, exercise, and coordination training
- Recovery from work-related injuries
- Recuperation from injuries
- Developmental delay or another neuromuscular dysfunction
- Therapeutic exercise, range of motion and stretching exercise
- Gait (walking training)
- Electrical stimulation, ultrasound, traction, heat/ice therapy, and manual techniques to ease movement and help heal injured tissue
- Dry needling for pain relief – helpful for lower back pain, headaches, and tendonitis

Our more than 40 PT/R specialists can care for patients of all ages and work hand-in-hand with the Orthopedics and Sports Medicine Team.

FHN is proud to offer world-class orthopedic and sports medicine care for our patients, close to home.

New patients may speak with their primary care provider for a referral or call our Orthopedics Department at 815-599-7730.

Visit fhn.org/ortho for more information.

FHN Expands Patient Care with Two New Advanced Practice Providers

FHN is proud to welcome two advanced practice providers who help our patients navigate through our busy orthopedics and gastroenterology departments!



Board-certified gastroenterology (GI) nurse practitioner **Dana McKinney, FNP-BC** has joined FHN's Gastroenterology Team at FHN Specialty Care – Stephenson Street in Freeport.

She holds a bachelor's degree from Southern Illinois University in

Edwardsville, IL and a master's degree / FNP certification from American Sentinel University in Waterbury, CT. She also has completed a master's degree focused on leadership in healthcare systems from Grand Canyon University in Phoenix, AZ. Alongside her work with our GI Team, Dana is pursuing a doctorate of nursing from American Sentinel University.

Dana has cared for patients in settings from GI departments to cardiac catheterization labs, intensive care units and even served as a traveling nurse for COVID-19 and critical care patients.

Andrea Shewalter, MSN, FNP-BC has joined FHN's Orthopedics Team at the FHN Family Healthcare Center – Burchard Hills in Freeport.

After completing her bachelor's degree at Northern Illinois University in DeKalb, Andrea earned a master's degree / FNP certification from Saint Anthony College of Nursing in Rockford. She began her career with an associate's degree from Kishwaukee Community College in Malta, IL.

Andrea has cared for neurology / neurosurgical and surgical patients and has served as a nursing instructor as well as a clinical educator for perioperative and cardiac patients. [Learn more about Andrea on page 9.](#) ■



FHN COMMUNICATIONS SURVEY

We value your input on how FHN shares healthcare information and news about its services. Please take 5 minutes to let us know how we can improve our communication with you.

Complete the survey by December 15, 2025, to be entered in a drawing for one of 10 \$100 Visa gift cards. To qualify for the drawing, please answer each question and provide your contact information at the end of the survey.



Please use your phone/tablet to scan the QR code to take the survey.





Mercyhealth FHN: Growing and Serving Together

With an eye on the region's future, the FHN Board of Directors made a deliberate and proactive decision this fall: FHN will partner with Mercyhealth to continue offering and expand healthcare services in northwest Illinois.

The statistics are sobering: More than 760 U.S. hospitals are struggling financially and at risk of closure, including 16 hospitals in Illinois.* Less than 24 percent of hospitals nationwide remain independent.

"In the past few years, we've seen a number of healthcare facilities closing, declaring bankruptcy, or just holding on until they were about to close to be forced into a situation where they didn't get much input in what happens going forward," says FHN President and CEO Mark Gridley.

"We are very proud to have been providing healthcare in northwest Illinois for more than 120 years, and the first priority for FHN's leadership and board was to preserve and continue that legacy for generations to come," Gridley says.

The board started researching the possibility of working with larger healthcare organizations in the past year to preserve FHN's commitment to providing care close to home while ensuring that patients have access to the advanced, specialized services they need.

Through these discussions, "our true north has been to see how any solution going forward would be better than what we could do on our own – not just for the short term, but for the foreseeable future," Gridley says. "We didn't want to just survive, but to grow."

During our diligence discussions, there were options from other organizations that didn't emphasize growth, lacked a willingness to make strong financial investments in our area, and some even included significant reductions in locations, services, and even in the number of our highly talented caregivers.

"That was pretty simple for us to say, 'No, thank you'," Gridley says. Our local healthcare system provides more than care – FHN is one of the

largest employers in the region – and keeping, even growing, those jobs remains a priority.

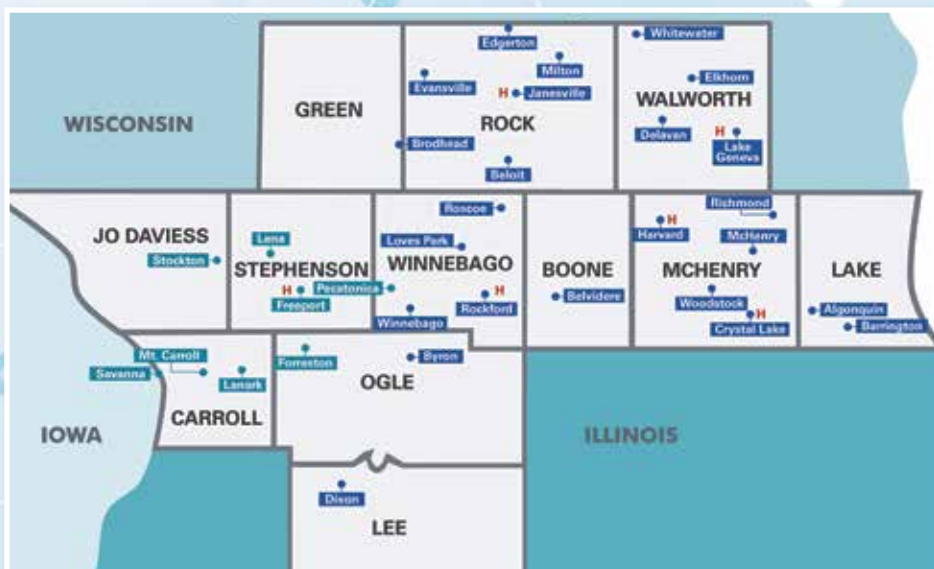
Mercyhealth was willing to make a significant capital investment, and shared with the board that the organization saw northwest Illinois and FHN as a growth opportunity.

"They saw a lot of potential to grow their market share, but also to grow FHN's potential – our services and our people, and our own market share," Gridley says. "They saw the potential to grow FHN and Mercyhealth as a regional medical center, not just keep the doors open, but invest in improving local healthcare."

The agreement, Gridley says, will have almost immediate benefits. Mercyhealth has committed to investing \$100 million in FHN over the next five years.

Plans are underway to purchase and install a new linear accelerator for the FHN Leonard C. Ferguson Cancer Center at FHN Memorial Hospital in Freeport. This multimillion-dollar upgrade will keep the Cancer Center on the cutting edge of radiologic cancer care.

Other plans include a robotic surgical system in the hospital's operating rooms to expand and upgrade FHN's surgical capabilities. This investment, along with Mercyhealth's extensive



A list of all Mercyhealth locations following the FHN Affiliation

residency and fellowship programs, will serve as a pipeline of new physicians to the region, helping to ensure patients don't need to travel to hospitals more than an hour away for the care they need.

Patients will receive the benefit of a fully integrated EPIC- Electronic Health Record across the entire system of over 900 providers throughout northern Illinois as well as the state-of-the-art functionality that they deserve to make working with their care team even better than the current options.

“ By joining forces with Mercyhealth, we are taking an active step to **preserve and strengthen care for our patients.** The directors of our board are proactive thinkers, and they want what is best for their **families, friends, neighbors and communities, too.**

— Mark Gridley

Together, Mercyhealth and FHN will address public health challenges, strengthen community health initiatives, and ensure that the healthcare services we provide will evolve alongside the needs of the people we are privileged to serve.



Stay up to date on the **Mercyhealth FHN Affiliation.**

The online FAQ page will continue to be updated. Scan the QR code here or visit www.fhn.org

* <https://www.beckershospitalreview.com/finance/760-hospitals-at-risk-of-closure-state-by-state/>

YOU ARE US



JOIN OUR TEAM!

- First-day benefits
- Educational assistance
- Career advancement programs

fhn.org/careers

At FHN, we've created a culture that attracts bright, passionate people who want to do their best for our patients and communities.

As a team member at FHN, you can expect to make a difference through your work, directly impact our mission, significantly advance your career, and still have room for your daily life. We know that achieving a mission as critical as ours requires incredible talent and teamwork, and our team is the most important thing to us.



TO OUR TEAM OF TALENTED
STAFF COMMITTED TO
**DELIVERING HEALTHCARE
EXCELLENCE IN OUR
COMMUNITY**



www.fhn.org/foundation
815-599-6900



Thinking About the Future, Acting in the Moment

Al Evon, Foundation Director

There is an old Chinese proverb that states, **“When the winds of change blow, some people build walls, and others build windmills.”**

Change happens all the time. Oftentimes we have no control over the changes that take place. What we do control is how we respond to the changes. Do we resist them? Or do we try to adapt to them and use the changes to improve the situation to the best of our abilities?

For over 120 years, FHN has served our region as an independent, standalone healthcare entity.

Now, FHN will be part of a larger healthcare system. *However, that does not diminish the desire to deliver healthcare excellence for our communities.*

I have been asked numerous questions about how the affiliation will impact the FHN Foundation. What I can tell you is that it is part of the affiliation agreement that **all of the dollars that we raise in the future, as well as what has been raised previously, will remain in OUR COMMUNITY to improve healthcare in our region, honoring the donor’s intention.**

Our local foundation will still have a role to play, and with your help, will

have the ability to make a difference in health and wellness for the people we serve.

When we think about this affiliation, we must also consider the bigger picture. Healthcare is a key element of any community. Employers must be sure that their workers and family members have access to the care they need. Spouses want to ensure that their significant others can obtain quality healthcare services. Parents want the best care for their children. Beyond medical care, healthcare helps the economy; it provides both direct and indirect employment opportunities. Healthcare organizations also give back to their communities through sponsorship and support of events.

Our employees may be your friends, neighbors, and family members. We are here to support and reflect

the values of the communities we serve. **That is our PROMISE and COMMITMENT.**

Mercyhealth has announced a commitment of at least \$100 million for capital needs and projects. That is a large investment in our communities, and includes projects that the foundation had been focused on, such as replacing the linear accelerator for the FHN Leonard C. Ferguson Cancer Center. However, even that level of funding will not completely cover all costs related to improving healthcare in our region. There are still more needs to be met and the FHN Foundation is here to assist in providing the resources to meet them.

One such project is to **purchase new defibrillators for the healthcare system.** This project rose to the top of things that the Foundation

wanted to accomplish through conversations with many local donors about potential projects. The donors identified new defibrillators as a priority because of the life-changing impact that they can make.

If your heart stops beating or you have a life-threatening heart rhythm, you are in need of a defibrillator. A defibrillator is a medical device that delivers an electric shock to your heart to restore a normal heartbeat. When you are watching a medical television show and the actor who is portraying a doctor says "Clear!", a defibrillator is being utilized. A defibrillator can save your or your loved one's life.

The FHN Foundation is now focused on raising funds to replace the defibrillators in the hospital. Through this replacement, numerous adults' and children's lives will be saved in our Emergency Department and throughout the hospital setting. The new defibrillators have enhanced features to ensure that while the patient is being monitored, documentation of the patient's heart rhythm and any medications administered are recorded.

Through your donation to replace defibrillators, you truly will be part of SAVING A LIFE! The total cost to replace 15 defibrillators is \$300,000 (see sidebar with additional information).

Just as healthcare is at the heart of every community, defibrillators are at the heart of quality cardiac care.

During this time of transition, I hope that you will celebrate FHN's past and impact on the community, look forward to the future of healthcare in our region, and rally with us around this important project. **WITH YOUR HELP**, the FHN Foundation can purchase these new defibrillators. While this equipment has a cost, **a patient's life is priceless.**

Please consider making a gift toward the purchase of the defibrillators.



Whatever donation you can make toward this equipment will assist in providing better healthcare for each patient. Remember, the patient you help through your giving to this project may be a FAMILY MEMBER, FRIEND, a LOVED ONE – or even yourself!

Thank you for making a difference in the health and wellness of the people in northwestern Illinois and southwestern Wisconsin.

Remember, you may make your gift to the FHN Foundation in honor of someone who is living and has impacted your life or in memorial to remember someone special. Additionally, all gifts postmarked by December 31, 2025, are eligible to be deducted from your income taxes.

Besides a gift made by check or credit card, you may also choose to send us a gift, via a distribution from your Donor-Advised Fund, or a Qualified Charitable Distribution from your IRA. If you would like to donate other appreciated assets like stocks, please contact the FHN Foundation at (815) 599-7213.

You can also use this qr code to go online and donate. Just select **Year-End Appeal – Defibrillators** from the drop-down menu.



How is a Hospital-Grade Defibrillator Different Than a Typical AED?

Most people are familiar with defibrillators (AEDs) that are used in businesses and public spaces. In these situations, the AEDs are housed in little boxes throughout the facility. These AEDs are placed in these locations in the event of an emergency, and would be used prior to an ambulance getting there. These devices provide basic monitoring and 'shocking' to a person's heart when needed.

The defibrillators used in the hospital are much more advanced. Capabilities include:

- Being able to view the patient's heart rhythm on a monitor
- Changing the voltage for the shock depending on the patient's needs
- Monitoring features like pulse ox and end tidal CO2 (patient's ventilation)
- Reading blood pressure
- Capturing a certain part of the heart rhythm and using the pacemaker feature to give small shocks to the heart (acting as a pacemaker while a patient is being treated)
- Using the machine for cardioversion (which is when the machine is able to deliver a controlled shock at just the right time in order to convert back to a regular rhythm)
- Capturing all the parts of a code on the strips that print (that way when someone who knows where to look examines the monitor they can see when we gave meds, delivered shocks, or provided other types of care)

With the newer technology we are seeking there will be additional features that are available to enhance efficiency for emergencies throughout the hospital.

*Information provided by Tammy Stadermann
MSN, RN, NPD-BC, EBP-C, CMSRN*

In the *silence*
of a snowy night,
the sounds of the season
speak

2025 FHN FESTIVAL OF TREES



COMMUNITY FESTIVAL OF TREES

November 24 – December 28
Freeport Public Library, 100 E. Douglas Street, Freeport

Enjoy holiday trees decorated by local service organizations, clubs, and church groups competing for prizes. Vote for your favorite holiday tree by Dec. 13.



FHN FROSTY FAMILY FUN NIGHT

December 1 • 5:30 – 7 p.m.
Freeport Public Library, 100 E. Douglas Street, Freeport

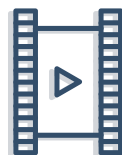
Enjoy an evening of holiday fun for the whole family – holiday crafts, treats, bingo, and more! Grown-ups who bring kids to the event can enter to win a \$100 or \$50 gift card.



HOLIDAY STORYTELLING

December 4 • 6:30 p.m.
December 13 • 2 p.m.
Freeport Public Library, 100 E. Douglas Street, Freeport

Listen to a holiday story or two by Santa and Mrs. Claus in Santa's visiting area.



HOLIDAY CLASSIC MOVIE

December 11 • 1 p.m. and 7 p.m.
Classic Cinemas Lindo Theatre, 115 S. Chicago Avenue, Freeport

Enjoy "The Shop Around the Corner," hosted by Alan Wenzel and Ed Finch. Admission is free with a donation to the food pantry.



FREEPORT COMMUNITY LUMINARIA NIGHT

December 21 • Dusk
Stephenson St. and Lincoln Blvd.
Enjoy the beauty of the soft glow of luminarias as FHN joins the residents around FHN Memorial Hospital in the annual lighting of the luminarias.



SANTA LETTERS

Santa Letter forms are available online or at the Freeport Public Library and Freeport FHN locations. Visit www.fhn.org/festivaloftrees for a complete list of locations and return information. Letters must be received by Dec. 14 to allow time for Santa to respond.



Join us as we celebrate the season!

We hope you join us at one or all of FHN's Festival of Trees events – there's something for everyone! Visit www.fhn.org/festivaloftrees

Insight



We're here, for you.

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Editor: Sarah Rogers

Contributors: Andrea Barthel, Julie Beach, Mindy Becker, Tara Hagemann, Kaitlyn McNutt, and Pete Willging

Send your contributions, story ideas or comments for Insight to Sarah Rogers at srogers3@fhn.org or call 815-232-2121.

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