

# Health *Matters*

WITH ROCHELLE COMMUNITY HOSPITAL



Getting back into  
the swing of things

RCH SWING BED PROGRAM **PG. 4**



## LETTER FROM RETURNING CEO

GREGORY A. OLSON  
APPOINTED CEO IN JANUARY 2020



### Dear Friends of Rochelle Community Hospital,

It's great to be back! As some of you may know, I served as CEO of Rochelle Community Hospital (RCH) from 1999 to 2007. At that time, I accepted a position in Wisconsin to be closer to family—but I missed the sense of community we have here in Rochelle. It unites us during the best of times and the most challenging of times.

Shortly after I returned to RCH in January of this year, our country—and our close-knit corner of the world—was confronted with COVID-19. Since then, I have been impressed daily by the outstanding care delivered at RCH. I can honestly say the quality of our staff is second to none. That's what happens when you have neighbors helping neighbors; friends caring for friends.

This issue of Health Matters features a few of these amazing people and highlights some of the many services RCH offers.

One group of people featured is our lab team and the work they did to get COVID-19 testing available to our community in conjunction with the other processes implemented to keep people safe and healthy. They quickly rose to the challenge to learn this new test, providing an invaluable service to our community. Our lab manager, Karen Ravnika, gives some great insight into how they quickly adapted to this uncharted territory.

In another story, we're featuring how our swing bed services were able to help a patient receive the care he needed locally, making his recovery more comfortable and convenient. This program allows people to "swing" between levels from acute care to rehabilitation at RCH, which provides an alternative to receiving care at a skilled patient facility like a nursing home.

As CEO, I look forward to leading our organization in continuous improvement, and growth in areas like primary care, mental health services, telehealth and technology.

Someone once said, "For a community to be whole and healthy, it must be based on people's love and concern for each other." If that is true—and I believe it is—we have a bright future ahead of us. On behalf of everyone at RCH, we look forward to partnering with you to help you get the most out of your healthcare and your life!

Yours in good health,

*GREGORY A. OLSON* ✓

Gregory A. Olson  
Chief Executive Officer

### RCH is Part of Cherie Hayes' Extended Family

Cherie Hayes, BSN, RN, was recently appointed surgical services manager, but she has been part of the Rochelle Community Hospital family from day one—literally. “I was actually born here at Rochelle Community Hospital,” says Cherie. “In fact, my husband’s aunt ran the OB department at the time.”

Cherie’s connection with RCH continued in high school when she volunteered as a candy striper. That experience ignited her passion to become a nurse. While in nursing school, the allure of working at a big-city hospital led Cherie to Rockford in the early 1990s. She became a nurse’s aide and after graduating, stayed on as a nurse in the Medical Surgery area at the facility. But Cherie’s small-town roots pulled her back to her hometown hospital in 2008.

“When I worked in Rockford, I didn’t feel like I could devote enough time to my patients,” says Cherie. “At Rochelle, you can. I think that makes our patients feel more comfortable. They know we’re here whenever they need us.”

Since joining RCH, Cherie has worked in the OR, same day surgery and the post-anesthesia care unit before accepting her current position in March. “We have some of the best doctors and nurses around,” says Cherie. “Rochelle is like a little diamond in the rough.”



### New Chief Nursing Officer is a Familiar Face at RCH

Chief Nursing Officer Rhonda Marks, BSN, RN, is a familiar face at RCH. Yet her career could have taken a much different path had she not accepted an interview for a nursing position in 1998.

“I was working at another hospital when Rochelle called me about a nursing position,” says Rhonda. “I thought to myself, ‘I don’t know if I should go to the interview.’ I honestly hadn’t heard a lot about the hospital at that time.”

Fortunately for Rhonda—and RCH—she interviewed and ultimately accepted the position. “When I first came to Rochelle, I thought, ‘Wow, this is a really good hospital. It was like a best-kept secret!’”

Since then, RCH has evolved from a “best-kept secret” to a first-choice hospital for thousands of local

residents. Rhonda has also grown over the years, both as a nurse and as a leader.

Her experience includes serving in the hospital’s ICU and post-anesthesia areas, and cross-training in the surgery department. She managed the Convenient Care and Multi-Specialty clinics, and served as interim manager and manager of surgical services before accepting the CNO position in March.

“When I’m rounding, patients often tell me what a great organization this is,” says Rhonda. “It feels good to hear that. It validates that we’re doing the right thing and we’re touching people’s lives every day.”







*Left: Dale Bryant pictured with Tracy Richardson, PT, DPT, Manager of Rehabilitation Services  
Below: Dale pictured with Lindsey Boekenbauer, PTA*



# GETTING BACK INTO THE SWING OF THINGS

## *Swing bed program bridges care between hospital and home*

Dale Bryant is an active, good-natured, gentleman and a shining example of why Rochelle Community Hospital offers swing bed services close to home. As its name implies, the swing bed program allows patients to swing between levels of acute medical care to rehabilitation.

"The program helps patients continue their recovery after being discharged from an acute hospital stay, but before returning home," says Tracy Richardson, manager of rehabilitation at RCH. "It's an alternative to a skilled care facility, like a nursing home."

Recently, Dale's good nature was put to the test when he suffered from a painful kidney stone and infection, which left him weak—and worried. Due to his illness, Dale was hospitalized for several days, first at RCH and then as a transfer patient to OSF Saint Anthony Medical Center. During that time, he became deconditioned and was concerned about returning home before he regained his mobility.

That's when Dale and his wife, Shirley, started looking at options to help him transition from hospital to home.



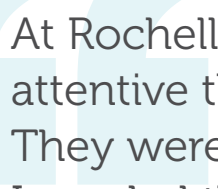
"There were quite a few different places they wanted to put me when I got out of St. Anthony's," said Dale. "But nobody seemed to do what Rochelle did. It was close to home, too, so my wife didn't have to run back and forth to Rockford every day. That made it a lot easier on her."

After weighing all of his options, Dale transferred from OSF back to RCH as a swing bed patient.

"The swing bed program is for anybody experiencing deconditioning due to a variety of things," says Tracy. "It could be due to a stroke, an accident or illness, surgery, or in Dale's case, an infection. He received physical therapy twice a day to help him regain his strength and improve his balance so he could return home safely."

"It helped me a lot," says Dale. "Every day we went down to the rehabilitation area and the physical therapists would come up to my room, too. Everyone was fantastic!"

Because RCH was close to home, Shirley was able to observe, and participate in, Dale's physical therapy sessions.



At Rochelle, they were more attentive than anywhere else. They were there whenever I needed them.

— DALE BRYANT, PATIENT

"A big benefit is that we're local," says Tracy. "So a spouse or family member can be there to learn the exercises and give moral support. They're like a coach for their loved one."

After being discharged, Dale returned for physical therapy as an outpatient to continue to build on his progress. "I think it's a real benefit to our patients to

be able to receive high-level local care that can follow them from their inpatient stay through their entire therapy journey," says Tracy.

## RCH swing bed services:

- Skilled nursing care
- Physical therapy
- Nutrition counseling
- Ancillary services (lab, imaging, respiratory therapy)
- Discharge planning
- IV therapy

Dale couldn't agree more. "At Rochelle, they were more attentive than anywhere else. They were there whenever I needed them," he says.

Since "graduating" from outpatient rehab, Dale feels like his old self again. At the ripe, young age of 90, you'll find him doing yardwork and stopping by neighbors and local businesses to say hello and share a clever comment or two.

"I've lived in the Rochelle area since '46," says Dale. "There are a lot of nice neighborhoods and businesses around here. And the people around here are all very nice—except me!"

Dale may have a quick wit but when it comes to describing his experience at RCH, he becomes more serious, saying, "If you want to be well taken care of by people that really put you first, I would recommend Rochelle swing bed very much."

To learn more about RCH's swing bed program, call case management at **815-562-2181** ext. **2590** or **2593** or visit **[rochellehospital.com](http://rochellehospital.com)**.



## REHAB & THERAPY: Can it really change your life?

As manager of rehabilitation services at Rochelle Community Hospital (RCH), Tracy Richardson knows how important physical therapy (PT) can be to a patient's recovery. She also knows—from personal experience—how important it is to offer those services close to home.

"When my close family member needed rehab farther away, he had very limited visitors," says Tracy. "It was depressing for him; he needed to be uplifted—and that was hard on my mom. She wanted to be there for him, but because of the distance, she couldn't."

Today, RCH patients and their families don't need to travel far for rehabilitation. Both outpatient and inpatient services (including a swing bed program) are available at the hospital. RCH's licensed physical therapists create a personalized rehabilitation program based on a patient's individual needs and goals.

If you think you might benefit from rehab, Tracy encourages you to talk with your primary care doctor, or call **815-562-2181**, ext. 1140, with questions.

*Olivia Caron, PT (on bike), Left to right: Hannah Goodnite, PT Tech; Ashley Swanson, PT; Lindsey Boekenhauer, PTA, Tracy Richardson, PT, DPT, Manager; and Susie Kreider, receptionist. Missing: Jim Coulter, PT; Katie Jones, OT and Carissa Sampson, PT Tech.*

"We provide PT for a variety of patients including illness or injury, stroke, and people who've had a joint replacement or generalized weakness," says Tracy. "Some people have a hospital stay or may have deconditioning after a long winter or an illness, so we work with them to help them regain their strength, independence and motion. We also see younger patients, including those with sports-related injuries."

Vestibular therapy helps patients who often experience vertigo—a visual disturbance or a sensation of feeling dizzy or off balance. These symptoms may also cause nausea, fatigue and a reduced ability to concentrate. RCH physical therapists can customize an exercise plan designed to help alleviate both the primary and secondary issues caused by vestibular disorders.

**In addition to physical therapy, RCH offers innovative rehabilitation services in the following areas:**



**Cardiac Rehab:** Patients who have experienced a heart attack or heart failure, or have had angioplasty or heart surgery can often benefit from this program, which is closely monitored by medical staff. It's designed not only to help patients strengthen their hearts but also can be an active partner in managing their health issues.

For more information, call **815-562-2181**, ext. 2732.



**Pulmonary Rehab:** Patients who are short of breath or being treated for lung disease, use pulmonary rehab to help improve their quality of life through customized strengthening, conditioning and breathing exercises.

For more information, call **815-562-2181**, ext. 2520.

Other treatment options include therapeutic heat/ice treatments, electrical stimulation and ultrasound to help relax muscles.

"Before physical therapy or occupational therapy, many people are in pain or have a fear of falling, or become deconditioned and tend to stay inside their home, which can lead to depression," says Tracy. "But after a few weeks of rehab, those same patients are saying, 'I'm finally back out living again!' People can have a great outcome and it's nice being part of that. It's like giving them their life back."



# Stroke!

## Don't be scared—be *smart*

Do you ever skim over an article like this because you want to know about your health risks—but at the same time, you're afraid to learn the facts?

At Rochelle Community Hospital (RCH), we believe knowledge is power, especially when it comes to stroke. So before you start "skimming," we'd like to share a little-known but encouraging fact: **80% of strokes are preventable!**

That's great news! Because now that you're in the know, you can take three steps to help avoid a stroke:

- Eat healthfully.
- Be physically active.
- Control your risk factors (e.g., obesity, diabetes, high cholesterol and smoking) through lifestyle changes.

### MORE ENCOURAGING FACTS

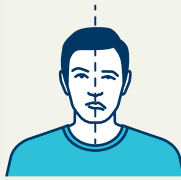
Today, stroke is the 5th leading cause of death and a leading cause of disability in the U.S. That's a scary thought—but consider another encouraging fact: stroke is a leading cause of preventable death.<sup>1</sup>

So why aren't more strokes prevented? A major barrier is lack of awareness and education. According to the American Stroke Association, less than half of the population is aware of sudden stroke symptoms.

<sup>1</sup>American Stroke Association: [newsroom.heart.org/news/twenty-things-you-didnt-know-about-stroke-that-may-save-a-life](https://www.heart.org/news/twenty-things-you-didnt-know-about-stroke-that-may-save-a-life)

### TO IDENTIFY A STROKE, USE THE F.A.S.T. TEST:

RCH wants to help make sure you're aware of the common warning signs of a stroke, because thinking "F.A.S.T." could save your life or the life of someone you know. And that's a fact!



#### Face:

Does one side of the face droop when smiling?



#### Arms:

Raise both arms—does one drift downward?



#### Speech:

Is it difficult to speak or are words being slurred?



#### Time:

If you notice any of these symptoms, it's time to call 911.

Other stroke symptoms can include sudden numbness, sudden trouble seeing in one or both eyes, sudden severe headache with no known cause and sudden trouble walking.

### EVERY SECOND COUNTS

During a stroke, each second a patient waits to be treated denies the brain of blood and oxygen. The cells and tissues within the brain begin to die, possibly causing irreversible damage. That means every second counts—literally.

**66%**  
OF THE TIME

someone other than the patient makes the decision to seek treatment—recognizing the sudden warning signs of stroke, and knowing that receiving treatment fast could help save a life.

Driving to the hospital is a common mistake people make that can result in longer wait times before receiving critical medical care. Don't wait. Call 911 and be assured that our emergency services staff is ready, willing and able to provide immediate care. RCH is a designated emergent stroke ready hospital (ESRH). This designation assures that all stroke patients have access to quality, rapid care.





# COVID-19

In the midst of a pandemic, Rochelle Community Hospital stepped up to the plate

Just a few short months ago no one could have predicted that a virus would turn the world upside down. Yet, when the novel coronavirus that causes COVID-19 began spreading across the U.S., that's exactly what happened—life as we know it paused as we all came together to help protect each other from this new illness.

It was no different at Rochelle Community Hospital. As more information about the pandemic came to light, our team sprang into action, implementing new safety measures, spreading awareness and readying our lab to begin testing patients for this new respiratory infection. Then, and now as we begin to resume our normal patient

care, our mission is always to keep patients safe and healthy.

Karen Ravnika, lab manager at Rochelle Community Hospital, shared, "We started testing in early March. It was a process to get up and running but our team adapted quickly to learn the needed skills."

To date nearly 2,000 people have been tested at the hospital, with many taking advantage of our COVID-19 triage line. This triage line is staffed by our RCH nurses and allows symptomatic people to call to get questions answered along with determining if they are a candidate to be tested. The triage nurse will then schedule a drive-up test to be completed right in our



circle entrance off of Third Street. These measures were put into place to keep everyone's exposure to a minimum.

"Our lab techs or nurses come out to patients in full personal protective equipment (PPE), take a swab, and then the patient is able to be on their way," Karen explained. "That was one of the biggest adjustments our team had to make. The extra PPE definitely takes some getting used to, but they did really well adjusting to all of that."

Initially, any tests done at the hospital were sent out to state labs or commercial labs, but today the hospital can process test results on site. "We went live with a respiratory panel by PCR testing, which is a much more comprehensive test for COVID-19 that requires a physician's order," Karen said. "It's a testing panel that can detect 20 different viruses and bacteria."

In addition to testing for the virus, Rochelle Community Hospital will soon also be able to provide antibody testing with a physician's order, which Karen thinks will be in high demand.

"We're working to ensure accuracy of our tests, but with things opening up more we know people will be anxious to find out if they've been exposed," she said.

As the community navigates through the uncertainty of the COVID-19 pandemic, it's RCH's mission to continue to lead the way in safety and healthcare. This includes continued COVID-19 testing for those who need it, taking extra infection control precautions, continued masking, social distancing and more.

"We want to welcome back patients who may have been holding off on getting the care they need, Karen said. "As dedicated healthcare professionals, we are ready to safely help you and your family with services and procedures critical to your health and quality of life."

Most of all, Karen credits the tireless work of RCH's dedicated staff for continuing to make quality care safe and accessible during this unprecedented time. "Rochelle Community Hospital really pulled together to take care of the community."





# Summer Salad

WITH STRAWBERRY  
AND AVOCADO

## Ingredients

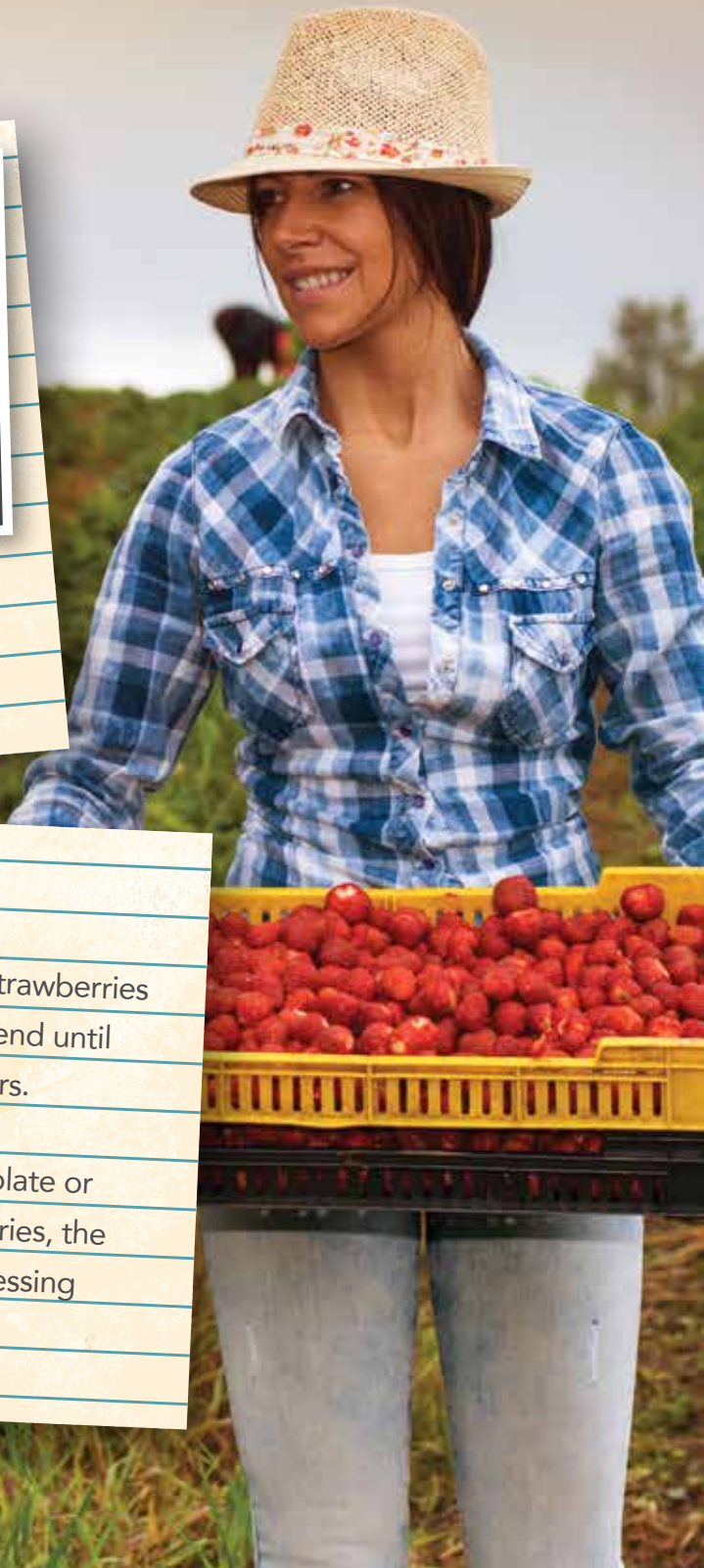
- 1 pkg fresh baby arugula (5 oz.)
- 2C quartered strawberries
- 2T extra-virgin olive oil
- 2T honey
- 1½T white wine vinegar
- ¼ tsp salt
- 1 avocado, halved, seeded, peeled and chopped
- ½ cup thinly sliced red onion
- ¼ cup crumbled reduced-fat feta cheese (1 oz.)



## Directions

**FOR DRESSING:** In blender, combine 1C of the strawberries with the oil, honey, vinegar and salt. Cover and blend until smooth. May be covered and chilled up to 48 hours.

**FOR SALAD:** Arrange arugula on a large serving plate or in a large bowl. Top with remaining 1C of strawberries, the avocado and onion. Before serving, drizzle with dressing and sprinkle with the crumbled feta cheese.







# Your Health Is Our Priority



The right care, right here in Rochelle.

## Return for care with confidence

### RCH IS TAKING THESE PRECAUTIONS:

- Temperature checks at entrances.
- Face coverings or masks are required.
- Setting up waiting rooms to encourage six-feet of social distance.
- Regularly cleaning and disinfecting all areas.
- Offering the COVID-19 triage line to safely separate sick and healthy patients.



**815-561-8829**

**HOURS:** Monday,  
Wednesday and Friday  
from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.



RCH was honored with a parade to thank healthcare workers on May 12 organized by the City of Rochelle. Throughout the COVID crisis, we have also received numerous donations. Thank you so much for your kindness in your words and deeds. We sincerely appreciate all the love and support we have received from our community in so many ways!





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 [www.rochellehospital.com](http://www.rochellehospital.com)

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## Rochelle Community Hospital Foundation 20th Annual Golf Outing

**Monday, September 14 – 10:00 a.m.**

**Fairways Golf Course – Route 251 South, Rochelle**

All contributions benefit the RCH Foundation and will support the purchase of new heart monitors.

Don't delay! Sign up now as registration is limited to the first 100 paid golfers.

For registration or sponsorship information, please contact Michelle LaPage, foundation coordinator, at **815-561-3110** or **[mlapage@rcha.net](mailto:mlapage@rcha.net)**.

