

Spring 2013

# Health Matters

## at Aspen Valley Hospital



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- Therapy services at AVH
- Can you get too much exercise?
- Protect yourself from the sun

*"The physical therapy department is top notch and is responsible for my quick recovery."*

– AVH patient

# Therapy services at AVH: So much more than you can imagine

A woman is eager to return to her active lifestyle after a hip replacement procedure. A child born with Down syndrome has difficulty eating. An elderly man needs help learning skills of everyday living following a stroke. A middle-aged smoker must regain his ability to speak after a laryngectomy.

What do these people have in common? All can benefit from the array of physical, occupational, and speech/language therapy services offered at Aspen Valley Hospital (AVH), now housed in a beautiful new facility with more space, equipment, and support than ever before.



Physical therapist Jan Alling with a patient following surgery.

## Rethinking 'rehab'

Many people still think of "rehab" primarily as a way to recover from joint replacement surgery or a torn knee ligament. In fact, therapy is crucial to optimal recovery from an astonishing number of conditions, from brain injury and memory loss to swallowing disorders and stuttering.

"Although our patients are generally well educated, they are often surprised at the extent of services and variety of techniques we offer," says Jan Alling, director of

rehabilitation services at AVH. "Besides general treatments, we have specialists in women's health, men's health, wound care, dry needling, cognitive and developmental therapy, and worksite evaluations, to name just a few."

"We treat newborns to centenarians," Jan adds, "and we often establish friendships that last beyond the therapy sessions."

## Different therapies, complementary services

**Physical therapy** techniques are used to treat cardiovascular diseases, orthopedic injuries, and more. But unlike past eras, when immobilization was a common approach to care, physical therapy now emphasizes gentle exercises that begin as soon as possible to reduce complication risks and begin rebuilding strength, range of motion, and endurance.

Although physical therapists elsewhere may have to motivate patients, that is usually not a concern locally. Aspen Valley residents are "highly motivated to recover," Jan says. "Often, our job is to hold them back and keep them from trying to do too much."

Where physical therapy focuses on rehabilitating a particular part of the body, **occupational therapy** maximizes the ability to perform skills needed for everyday living.

"An occupational therapist asks, 'How does that illness or injury limit your ability to do the things you want to do: to ski, take care of your children, or get dressed?'" says Krista Fox, occupational therapist at AVH. "With that



Occupational therapist Krista Fox with a patient receiving hand therapy.

information, we develop a personalized program that focuses on giving the patient as much ability as possible.”

Occupational therapists also help individuals who suffer from cognitive impairment involving memory, attention, communication, and organizational abilities. This can include people who have profound mental illnesses, as well as those who suffer with substance abuse issues.

**Speech/language pathologists** at AVH work with a similarly broad spectrum of patients, from children to the elderly. For young patients who may not be developing speech skills appropriately, therapy often takes the form of play, while adults recovering from a brain injury may work to overcome speech and information-processing difficulties.

“It’s very traumatic when you have any kind of accident as an adult, and changes to your memory can really affect your lifestyle and daily life,” says Jill Rathbum, speech/language pathologist at AVH. “We have exercises that can help patients regain some of that memory.”

Speech/language pathologists can also help older adults affected by swallowing disorders or hearing loss, or who need accent modification.



Physical therapy’s new headquarters features a hydrotherapy room. Hydrotherapy involves the use of water for pain relief and treatment, taking advantage of the physical properties of water such as temperature and pressure.

### Individualized, hands-on care

With each type of therapy, the emphasis is on individualized, hands-on care. And while each therapy is distinct, they often overlap and complement each other. That’s what makes AVH’s new facility such a community asset.

Therapy services are now headquartered in a new wing of the hospital that includes new equipment such as a hydrotherapy room, AlterG Anti-Gravity Treadmill, Pilates, and Gyrotonics equipment. The design offers enhanced privacy, a dedicated wound care room, and a specially designed speech therapy room.

“Having the different therapies in the same area is a real benefit, because the therapists are constantly feeding off of each other, getting ideas, and team treating,” Alling says. “Our new home probably exceeds the services offered at many larger hospitals. And, of course, none of the others have our view.”

Therapy services require a physician referral. For more information or an appointment, call **544.1177**.



Physical therapist Louie Carder with a patient on the new AlterG Anti-Gravity Treadmill. This state-of-the-art equipment takes pressure off the joints by using a pressure-controlled chamber to gently lift the rehab patient, which helps to normalize the gait while still protecting healing tissue, and leads to quicker recovery from injuries.

*Therapy is crucial to optimal recovery from an astonishing number of conditions, from brain injury and memory loss to swallowing disorders and stuttering.*

# Can extreme exercise be too much of a good thing?

Compared to the rest of the nation, Pitkin County residents are generally a very fit bunch. That focus on fitness means our community enjoys lower than average rates of heart disease, obesity, diabetes, and many other conditions. So, it may seem strange to ask, "Are we overdoing it?" The surprising answer is: "Maybe."

Recent studies suggest that too much strenuous activity may be harmful rather than helpful. For example, a report in *Mayo Clinic Proceedings* in June 2012 said that "long-term excess endurance exercise," such as months or years of long-distance running and bicycling, may cause "structural remodeling of the heart and large arteries." In another 2012 study, European researchers reported that marathons, alpine cycling, and similar extreme endurance exercise may damage the heart's right ventricle.

According to Gordon Gerson, MD, cardiologist at Aspen Valley Hospital, our awareness that long-term endurance exercise is not a guarantee for good health and longevity dates back decades. "In the 1970s Dr. Kenneth Cooper brought us the aerobic exercise revolution," he explained.

"Then Jim Fixx wrote a book that led some to believe that if you were a marathon runner you could count on a long life. Shortly thereafter, ironically, he died while running at the age of 52."

Initially there was only anecdotal evidence to indicate that more is not better. But now, there are a number of studies suggesting just that. Even Dr. Cooper has said if you're running more than 15 miles per week you're doing it for reasons other than health.

"The key to healthy exercise," said Dr. Gerson, "is just like anything else: moderation, in both volume and intensity. Evaluate your goals, be aware of any symptoms, and report them to your physician promptly. Remember that fitness and heart attacks are not mutually exclusive."

*"The key to healthy exercise is just like anything else: moderation, in both volume and intensity."*

## Calendar of Events

### Health Fairs

Thursday, June 6

8:30 - 11:30 a.m.

Blood tests only at After-Hours

Medical Care in Basalt

Saturday, June 8

8:30 - 11:30 a.m.

Blood tests only at Aspen Valley Hospital

Sunday, June 9

8:30 - 11:30 a.m.

Blood tests and all screening stations  
at Aspen Valley Hospital

### Community Blood Drive

Tuesday, June 25

10 a.m. - 2 p.m.

Aspen Valley Hospital

Call **544.1296** for more information.





# Foundation update

by Deborah Breen, Aspen Valley Hospital Foundation President

Since my arrival in January, it has been a whirlwind of planning and strategizing. Each critical first step has focused on creating the core building blocks to support the newly formed Aspen Valley Hospital (AVH) Foundation's singular mission of encouraging philanthropic support for the current and future needs of AVH.

Bringing fundraising in house last June was a turning point in the development efforts for AVH. Going hand in hand with launching the Foundation was the quiet phase of an unprecedented capital campaign to support the Master Facilities Plan already underway. With an initial target of raising \$60 million to support this project, it became very clear that a dedicated Foundation with a singular mission was absolutely essential. Under the careful leadership of John Sarpa as the Foundation's first chairman, we have already made great strides.



Laura Lauder, Josh Lauder, Leonard Lauder, Gary Lauder, and Ellie Lauder.

In fact, the early response to the new Foundation has been overwhelming. On my first day of work, I attended the dedication ceremony for the Evelyn H. Lauder Patient Care Pavilion, which recognized an early lead gift to the campaign from the Lauder Foundation. What a moving tribute. Evelyn's husband of 52 years, Leonard Lauder, was emotional as he dedicated the new area with his family by his side.

Making the dedication even more meaningful was the additional donation of 78 beautifully framed and artfully placed photographs that adorn the Patient Care Pavilion walls. All photos were taken by Evelyn during her 30 years of visiting Aspen. As our CEO Dave Ressler said, "Seeing these photos is like seeing Aspen through Evelyn's eyes."

Next steps? We are making progress on multiple fronts including shaping policies, writing procedures, formalizing organizational structure, and establishing goals. By late spring, we hope to have a core group of inaugural Foundation board members in place and to be in position to ramp up our fundraising efforts. Having the right plan and the right people in place will make the difference between success and failure — and failure is not an option!

I am so excited to be here and to be involved with such an incredible organization. Thank you to everyone for the warm welcome to Aspen, and I look forward to keeping you updated on the Foundation's progress.

For more information about the Foundation, or to meet with Deborah, call **544.1302**.



Leonard Lauder (far left) proposes a toast in honor of his wife, the late Evelyn Lauder.

*Having the right plan and the right people in place will make the difference between success and failure.*



## Construction update

Phase II progress continues and will be finalized by summer's end. It brings to fruition many improvements, with cardiopulmonary rehab and diabetes education moving to their long-awaited permanent locations and with the addition of two much-needed on-site medical offices: trauma/general surgery and obstetrics/gynecology.

The four-bed ICU, which has been temporarily housed in the new PCU, will also open in its new dedicated space. While cardiopulmonary diagnostics, specialty clinics, and same-day surgery will all relocate to temporary locations until Phases III and IV are complete, their new "digs" will be much improved over the past.

Garnering a lot of attention in recent weeks are Phases III and IV as the hospital seeks final approval from the Aspen City Council (conceptual approval was obtained in 2009). These final two phases address equally important areas for patient care including the emergency department, surgery, diagnostic imaging, the lab, specialty clinics, and registration/admissions.

### Funding of Phases III and IV

Funding sources include philanthropy and hospital resources. A \$60 million capital campaign is currently underway, spearheaded by the Aspen Valley Hospital (AVH) Foundation. This funding allocation — like Phase II which also included tax-supported general obligation bonds — does not place an undue burden on any one group of citizens and is consistent with the community's philanthropic history for hospital construction.

### How will Phases III and IV improve the hospital?

Expanding and renovating these primarily outpatient service areas will bring multiple benefits to a large portion of the community (more than 24,000 patient visits in 2012). AVH was originally constructed as an inpatient facility with minimal outpatient services — and those were mostly to support inpatients. As a result, the outpatient areas are quite small, lack sufficient storage, have small waiting areas, and afford minimal privacy to patients. Space and design issues prevail.

With the completion of Phases III and IV, we will be able to:

- place the helipad on top of the building, enhancing safety for both the flight crew and those on the ground, as well as minimize patient exposure to weather conditions;
- better accommodate emergency admissions by ambulance, including patients in need of hazardous material decontamination, and in the event of a mass casualty event;
- better serve ambulatory emergency patients with a separate, easily identifiable entrance;
- provide privacy and comfort to patients in one of their greatest times of need, during an emergency visit to the hospital;



## Strike a healthy balance with sun exposure

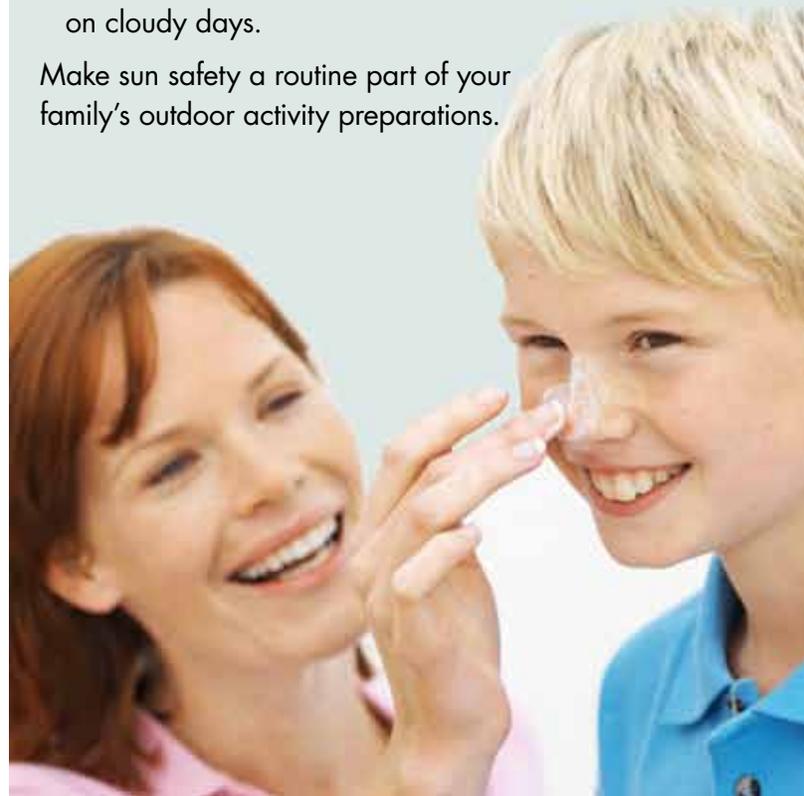
What's an outdoor sports enthusiast to do? On the one hand, you hear that exposure to the sun helps the body produce vitamin D and improves mood. On the other hand, there is ample evidence that sun exposure, especially at high altitudes, can lead to skin cancer and other health problems. In fact, a recent Community Needs Assessment found that rates of skin cancer in Pitkin County are about 50 percent higher than the national average, probably because of our love of outdoor activities.

**Fact:** Ultraviolet (UV) radiation exposure increases up to 5 percent for every 1,000 feet above sea level, according to the Skin Cancer Foundation. At an altitude of 9,000 to 10,000 feet, UV radiation may be as much as 45 percent more intense compared to sea level.

Finding a healthy balance can help you enjoy the outdoors without suffering the ill effects of excess sun exposure. When possible:

- Avoid being outdoors or in direct sunlight from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.
- Cover up with long pants, long-sleeve shirts, hats, sunglasses, and other protective gear.
- Use a broad-spectrum sunscreen with an SPF of at least 30 or higher on exposed skin whenever you are outdoors for an extended amount of time, even on cloudy days.

Make sun safety a routine part of your family's outdoor activity preparations.



- enhance patient safety with sufficient space to accommodate multiple pieces of equipment and numerous staff representing various specialties during emergencies and surgeries;
- provide appropriate space for all diagnostic imaging modalities — many of which are new technologies added after the existing hospital was constructed in 1977;
- ensure departmental adjacencies for maximum patient care and efficiency;
- eliminate inappropriate interactions among patients and the general public;
- provide quiet, private space for families dealing with loss;
- offer appropriate medical office space to essential specialists from Glenwood Springs and Denver who consult with patients in Aspen on a regular basis;
- register patients and discuss payment and billing in a private setting; and
- accommodate additional local medical practices, thus providing a complete health campus addressing a full spectrum of care — prevention, wellness, early detection, diagnosis, and treatment.

For more information about the hospital's Master Facilities Plan, contact community liaison Frank Goldsmith at [FGoldsmith@aspenhospital.org](mailto:FGoldsmith@aspenhospital.org).



*This publication in no way seeks to diagnose or treat illness or serve as a substitute for professional medical care. Please see your physician if you have a health problem.*

## News in brief

### Congratulations, AVH lab staff!



John Chmielewski, MT

Based on the results of a recent on-site inspection, the Aspen Valley Hospital lab has been once again accredited by the College of American Pathologists. Chief pathologist Jerry Steinbrecher, MD, was advised of this national recognition and congratulated for the excellence of the services provided. Inspectors examined lab records, staff qualifications, equipment, safety measures, and quality control procedures for the preceding two years.



Medical Technologists Lauren Munger, Keri Sivess, Kim Taets, Mary Carter, and Lab Assistant Steve Romanello.

### Hockey for Health helps “put a helmet on every head”



The AVH hockey team.

Aspen Valley Hospital's first community event of the year was a hockey game featuring players from AVH verses Aspen Mother Puckers. This fundraiser benefitted the hospital's injury prevention program by raising over \$3,000 for its helmet program that provides helmets to children and adults who otherwise can't afford them. The money will also support the "Think First" program which targets kids and helps shape safe habits.