

# FIRELANDS HEALTH

What matters to you...matters to us.

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## Dear friends,

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We are delighted to present our 2023 Annual Report. Firelands Health is not just a healthcare provider but a vital part of our community. We aim to serve the people who live, work, and enjoy life in our region. I am immensely proud of our care team, who delivers exceptional healthcare and champions community wellness, significantly enhancing the lives of those we serve. Beyond our mission, I am particularly proud of Firelands Health's economic impact on our region. Rural hospitals like Firelands are critical drivers of economic value in their communities and the surrounding areas.

In Ohio, the healthcare industry, including hospitals, is the largest employment sector. Rural hospitals play a crucial role, supporting 17% of total Ohio hospital employment - nearly one in five jobs. A staggering 6.4% of all employed individuals in Erie County are part of the Firelands Health workforce, making it the county's second-largest employer.

As a not-for-profit health system, we are exempt from paying some taxes, but we must provide a benefit to our community equal to or more than our tax burden if we were a for-profit system. During 2023, Firelands Health provided \$46.38 million in services back to our community, serving 172,684 individuals with these services. Hospitals are directly responsible for improving the health and wellness of their communities and providing care to all persons in need, regardless of their ability to pay. Hospitals also spend millions of dollars on education and research to further improve the health and wellness of their communities, prepare others to move into healthcare careers, offer scholarships and tuition assistance to train and retain local talent, and support a myriad of local and regional businesses through contracted and other vendor partnerships. Firelands Health had more than 565 regional vendor partnerships in 2023, exceeding \$52 million spent, with 31%, or \$16 million, occurring within the local community.

Firelands Health continues to make significant investments and impacts in population health, addressing social determinants, promoting health equity, and strengthening community partnerships. This is incredibly impactful, given that Erie County ranks 15th among all Ohio counties for unemployment, citing a 5.8% unemployment rate. The prevalence of seasonal and service-sector jobs across our regional economy, lower-than-average wages, and part-time employment created additional health-related gaps for many individuals and families. The ability of Firelands to partner with key community service organizations creates additional value-added synergies that ensure those most in need can achieve a much-improved quality of life to further drive economic growth over time.

Despite the challenging economic conditions of 2023, including inflation, a labor shortage, and underpayment for services, Firelands Health continued to achieve significant milestones. The effects of post-COVID on volume and inflation required a strategic plan focused on sustainability, margin growth, and most importantly, continuously delivering high quality of

care. We remained committed to excellent patient satisfaction, growing primary care, improving the health of our community, and supporting our workforce to ensure that Firelands Health's services remained top-notch despite the challenges.

The North Coast Healthcare Collaborative (NCHC) was formed so that our four area hospitals could work together more closely and help each other stay strong and viable. We collaborate on group purchasing, clinical services, and many exciting opportunities to benefit our patients. In this annual report, you will read about some exciting collaborations during 2023, which include our cancer care collaborative and regional pathology collaboration. All four CEOs agree we will be stronger and better able to remain independent, working together and aligning ourselves to a common goal.

The financial statement demonstrates how the accomplishment of our 2023 strategic initiatives significantly improved our operating results from 2022. Patient volumes increased to near pre-COVID levels. We were able to reduce some expenses, but like all other hospitals in the United States, we were adversely impacted by massive inflation and price increases. The cost of care not covered by insurance and the cost of care underwritten for persons without the ability to pay for their services also increased. Even with these headwinds, we improved our financial results for 2023 over 2022. We are continuing our efforts in 2024 so that we can care for our community in the best way possible!

2024 will be the baseline for a new normal since COVID here at Firelands. We enjoyed tremendous success in physician recruitment in 2023. The specialties cover a wide range and include five family medicine (all from our fantastic residency program), internal medicine, anesthesia, physical medicine and rehabilitation, hospitalist medicine, numerous advanced practice clinicians, two cardiologists, gastroenterology, and neurosurgery. FRMC has the most active medical staff I have ever witnessed in a hospital and there is no doubt this is reflected in the quality of care we deliver. The committees of our medical staff are led well by talented and dedicated individuals. These FRMC physicians care deeply about Firelands, Sandusky, and our region.

The same strategies and tactics that guided Firelands Health through the past twenty years will not be the ones to take us through the next twenty years. Philanthropy and collaboration of area resources are crucial to Firelands Health's independence and allow us to be responsive to our patients' needs. Community support from donors is essential. To the benefactors listed in this report, we sincerely thank you for your gifts and belief in our mission. None of this is possible without your support!

With gratitude,





Jeremy  
Normington-Slay  
President and CEO  
Firelands Health



SCAN ME



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The spirit of  
*collaboration*



## Local health systems serve cancer patients together

In healthcare, the phrase “continuity of care” is often used. PubMed.gov says, “Continuity of care is concerned with the quality of care over time.” It’s a responsibility we all share. Each decision we make, big or small, has a direct impact on our patients, both now and in the future.

In 2023, your local healthcare leaders joined forces to enhance access to cancer care, a move that directly benefits you, our valued patients. This collaboration, which expands upon the existing relationship between UH Seidman Cancer Center, Firelands Regional Medical Center, and Magruder Hospital, now includes Fisher-Titus Medical Center and NOMS Healthcare. As a result, you can now receive high-quality cancer care in the comfort of your local communities in Sandusky, Port Clinton, and Norwalk. This partnership also ensures that our local healthcare providers have easy access to a wide range of services and clinical trials offered by UH Seidman Cancer Center, further enhancing the quality of care you receive.

“Cancer care is so academic and dynamic that oncology departments in small or medium-sized hospitals tend to struggle to keep up,” said Timothy Adamowicz, D.O., an oncologist with NOMS. “We have tied together each entity’s program to minimize redundancy and maximize our ability to provide the highest level of care without requiring patients to travel to Cleveland.” Travel can be challenging and exhausting, especially for regular chemo or radiation appointments.

According to the National Cancer Institute, “Although an estimated 17%-20% of the U.S. population resides in rural areas, only 3% of medical oncologists practice in rural communities, and over 70% of counties in the U.S. do not have medical oncologists.” This collaboration will strengthen access to cancer care in the greater Sandusky region. “It also allows us to provide the same standard of care as major academic centers but with a much more patient-focused model at a lower overall cost of care,” Dr. Adamowicz explained.

“With this exciting collaboration, I think most cancer patients would be surprised to learn that a TEAM of physicians reviews their individual cases,” states Norleena Poynter, M.D., radiation oncologist. “Each of these physicians brings their respective academic training from institutions across the country and their years of experience treating. While our patients may

meet face-to-face with a single medical or radiation oncologist here at Firelands, their treatment plans are being analyzed, discussed, and refined with consulting specialists at UH, Cleveland Clinic, Toledo ProMedica, Mayo Clinic, Duke Health, Memorial Sloan Kettering, to name a few. Their cases are assessed for available clinical trial enrollment as well.”

Dr. Poynter added, “If our team of oncologists finds that there are treatments or imaging modalities that our patients are having to travel for, we work together with the Firelands administration to assess the ability to bring these modalities here locally.”

Dr. Adamowicz outlined a few direct benefits the entire cancer care team has come to realize following the collaboration, which formed in the summer of 2023:

- The pulmonary team can now use endobronchial ultrasound for minimally invasive screening and diagnosis of lung cancers and testing lymph nodes without having to go into surgery.
- The radiation department, led by Norleena Poynter, M.D., and multihospital radiology and urology specialists, have been able to adopt prostate PSMA PET and new cutting-edge radiation techniques to detect prostate cancer.
- The Center for Breast Care, with Fred Itzkowitz, D.O., and his colleagues, has raised the level of their breast care program through regularly scheduled tumor board meetings and literature discussions to the level of top-tier academic centers.

Coordinating cancer care and preventive screening services is what the rural communities need most. That’s what the collaboration aims to achieve. In simple terms, you don’t have to drive an hour east or west to receive quality cancer care, and the network of clinicians and convenient office locations make cancer care more available to you. By increasing community screening rates, earlier diagnoses will lead to enhanced outcomes.

“Now that we are all working together,” Dr. Adamowicz explained, “we have laid the groundwork to bring additional services and specialties to our region.” A merger of services like this is rare and will set a precedent for independent hospitals working together to unify efforts. In the long term, this effort will help cancer patients live longer and healthier lives.





Lori Baum, a 56-year-old medical specialist at the University Hospitals (UH) Seidman Cancer Center at Firelands Regional Medical Center, considered herself healthy. She ate a plant-based diet and ran regularly, but she was worried about her family's history of cancer. One grandmother died of stomach cancer, and the other from kidney cancer. Three of her uncles died of lung and prostate cancer. Two aunts survived breast cancer, but one died from the disease. Her parents also died from cancer – her father from lung cancer and her mother from ovarian.

"A genetics team from UH visits Firelands monthly to consult with our patients. When I lost my mom last year to ovarian cancer, I explained to them my family history and asked if they thought I should be tested. They said yes, especially with the prevalence of breast and ovarian cancer in my family," says Lori.

Even though the genetic testing did not reveal an identifiable genetic predisposition to cancer, the team was still concerned about Lori's family history. They recommended that she see breast specialist Dr. Ashley Simpson and nurse practitioner Jennifer Emerick at the UH High-Risk Breast Clinic in Westlake. The specialists advised Lori to have a breast MRI, which showed a mass





## Lori Baum, patient spotlight

in each breast, one of which was positive for triple-negative breast cancer. "The next step was to have a lumpectomy of my right breast along with a sentinel node biopsy under my right lymph node to see if the cancer had spread. Luckily, it hadn't, but because of the type of cancer I had, hormone therapy was not an option. I needed both chemotherapy and radiation," says Lori.

After surgery, Lori had to choose an oncologist and decide where she would receive her treatment. Because she worked at the Firelands Cancer Center, her colleagues reassured Lori that they would understand if she elected to seek treatment at another facility to protect her privacy. But knowing firsthand what excellent care the Firelands Cancer Center provides patients, Lori trusted her treatment to Firelands.



When Lori and David, her husband of 25 years, arrived at Firelands for her first chemo appointment, she was surprised by her three sisters and her mother's boyfriend, who had traveled from different parts of Ohio to show their encouragement and love. At her second appointment, her Firelands co-workers gathered in the cancer center lobby, all wearing Team Lori t-shirts and offering words of support. "I was so overwhelmed by their kindness," says Lori.

Lori underwent 16 rounds of chemo in four months and 15 radiation treatments over three weeks. Amy Reese, M.D., managed her chemotherapy; her radiation oncologist was Norleena Poynter, M.D. "They are such smart, amazing women. I knew I was in good hands," says Lori. "Having them as my doctors was a blessing, and having them and my co-workers in charge of my care was like being cared for by family."

Throughout her cancer journey, Lori was fortunate to be able to continue to work, just missing a few days because of the side effects of her treatment. She also found herself able to better relate and empathize with her patients. "I could understand what they were going through. I would show them my port where I received the chemo and talk to them about the various side effects, like the overwhelming fatigue and losing your

hair. I was able to reassure them that they, too, would get through this."

In addition to the support from family, friends, and co-workers, Lori received assistance from the RISE program. Funded by the Foundation for Firelands, RISE is a rehabilitation program for cancer patients to help them focus on recovery, survivorship, and a better quality of life. RISE offers physical, occupational, and speech therapy, acupuncture, and massage. Lori received acupuncture and physical therapy treatments to help relieve her arm and shoulder pain, which was causing her limited mobility due to her chemotherapy and radiation treatments. She also benefitted from Cancer Services of Erie County, which supplied her with caps to wear when she lost her hair.

In October 2023, the Crucial Catch program, co-sponsored by the NFL and the American Cancer Society, invited Lori to participate. Each year, NFL teams raise awareness of the benefits of early detection and the importance of screenings with a Crucial Catch game, where cancer survivors and those who currently have cancer are honored. Lori and her husband joined other cancer survivors and patients on the Cleveland Browns football field for the national anthem and were given tickets to the game. A lifetime Cleveland Browns fan, Lori had attended only one other game, and that was at the old stadium. "It was awesome to walk onto the field. I was honored to be part of that day, especially as a breast cancer survivor."

Because of the side effects of her treatment, cancer took away much of what Lori cherished, but today, she is again enjoying life. She recently ran a half marathon at Zion National Park in Utah and can once more care for the three-year-old toddlers at her church on Sunday mornings while their parents attend services. "Having cancer was one of the hardest things I have experienced in my life, but my faith gave me the strength and peace to get through it. I was blessed with all the prayers I received, along with the wonderful support from my husband, family, friends, church family, and co-workers, and the care I received at Firelands. Having cancer has given me a different perspective. I now appreciate everything in life, including the little things," says Lori. "I've learned how important it is to be your own health advocate and take your health into your own hands. Most importantly, I've learned how important it is to keep up with all your health screenings."



## Firelands Health partners with International Sports Academy



Cedar Fair and Firelands Health are partnering with the International Sports Academy (ISA) to offer student-athletes in grades 9-12 and postgraduates an elite basketball program designed to help them compete at the next level.

ISA contracted with Cedar Fair to use Cedar Point Sports Center facilities as their home site for the basketball academy. Students are housed at the newly renovated Explorer Rest & Recreation property on Cleveland Road. They can receive in-person instruction by attending St. Mary Central Catholic High School or pursue their education online. Postgraduates can attend area colleges or take courses online.

The students play at Cedar Point's Sports Center basketball facility. Firelands Health offers sports performance training and physical therapy for ISA athletes at the Lee C. Jewett Sports Medicine Center, which is adjacent to the building. "We provide strength

and conditioning, injury prevention, and recovery programs for them," explains Troy DeLamatre, MS, CSCS, USA-W, strength and conditioning specialist at Firelands Health. "I work with them three days a week, focusing on functional strength, agility, flexibility, and power development. We provide them with individual plans to help them achieve their goals."

If the student-athletes require additional care, they are referred to Matthew Widmer, D.O., who specializes in primary care, family medicine, sports medicine, and concussion, or Kevin Bailey, D.O., an orthopedic surgeon specializing in sports medicine.

Troy is working with 20 students from several countries this school year, including Australia, Taiwan, New Zealand, Canada, and the United States. Some are high school students, and others are taking a year off between high school and college. "It's not uncommon for athletes to spend a year improving their skills before they apply to college. They gain more experience and quite a bit of playing time. It's a development year for them," says Troy. "Here, they can concentrate solely on basketball and their goal of reaching the next level. They play against

## The Lee C. Jewett Sports Medicine Center offers:

- Outpatient Physical Therapy, Occupational Therapy, and Speech-Language Pathology
- Sports Performance
- Athletic Training Service
- Fit for Golf
- Circuit Exercise Class
- Parkinson's Exercise
- LSVT BIG and LOUD programs
- SPEAK OUT program
- VitalStim
- Men's and Women's Pelvic Health
- Vestibular and Concussion Management
- Dry Needling
- Functional Capacity Evaluations
- Driving Evaluations
- Lymphedema



academies and colleges throughout Ohio and other states, providing them with competition experience."

Because the Firelands Health Lee C. Jewett Sports Medicine Center is located next door to Cedar Point Sport Center, it is an ideal fit for ISA. "The ISA athletes have been a great addition to our sports performance program, allowing us to offer our services to another faction of the sports community," says Shelly Jordan, PT, Cert. MDT, director of physical therapy, occupational therapy, and speech-language pathology at Firelands Health. "We enjoy meeting the young people in the program and helping them advance in their basketball careers. It's added a whole new dimension to our services."





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State-of-the-art

# lab facility



## Laboratory Services undergoes major renovation

Firelands Health Laboratory Services recently completed an 18-month renovation project that enables the health system to offer the most state-of-the-art lab facility in the region.

Although the original footprint of the space remains, Firelands updated every piece of equipment and reconfigured the layout to accommodate the new laboratory. The project was completed in eight phases, with staff members continuing to provide testing services seven days a week, 24 hours a day, during the complex reconstruction.

One of the most impressive additions to the Firelands Laboratory is the DxA 5000 Fit automation system. This incredible workflow automation system delivers rapid and consistent turnaround times, reduces the number of manual steps performed before and after analyzing patient samples, and benefits from intelligent routing with a small- to mid-sized footprint. The system is an innovative automation solution that improves the workflow in the laboratory by providing access to intelligent automation, regardless of the size of the lab.

Before installing the new automation system, technologists conducted manual pre- and post-analytical work with patient samples. The new design streamlines the work process and is more efficient, faster, and accurate, expediting diagnosis and treatment to improve patient care. "The previous system was much smaller and could only be used for



chemistry tests. The design behind the new system is to connect as many instruments as possible to the automation line while using a no-look, one-touch method for all samples, not just chemistry tests. By leveraging the intelligence of the DxA 5000 Fit, safety, quality, and efficiency are maximized," says Josh Otiso, director of laboratory services. "Physicians and patients also appreciate the quick turnaround time."

Another advantage of the DxA 5000 Fit is that it manages samples requiring immediate testing, or STAT, from the beginning to the end of the testing process. When a lab technician loads a STAT specimen onto the



system, the DxA 5000 Fit quickly routes and processes the sample ahead of other routine specimens. The system optimizes the turnaround time of the result for the patient and physician, enabling important care decisions to be made as quickly as possible.

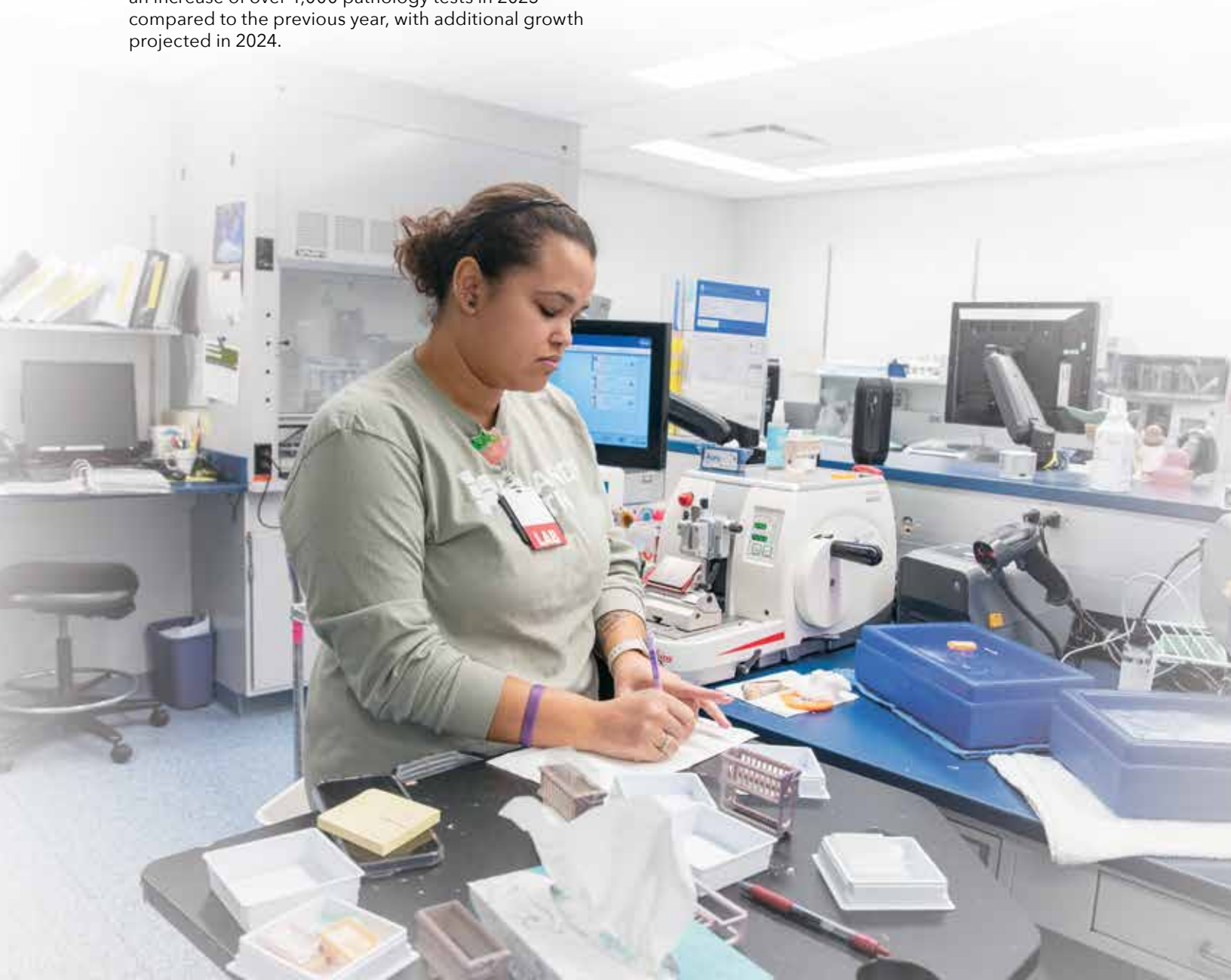
The laboratory also received new equipment for the departments of hematology, chemistry, fermentation, urinalysis, and microbiology, most of which connect to the DxA 5000 Fit automation system. A few diagnostic tests are performed manually, such as those involving spinal and synovial fluids. These tests will soon be automated. "It was an expensive investment, but it will save money in the long run. And the renovation will not increase the cost of lab services for patients," says Josh.

The laboratory expansion included equipment for histology and pathology, enabling Firelands Health to offer pathology services to other area hospitals, including The Bellevue Hospital, Magruder Hospital, and Fisher-Titus Medical Center. "Pathologists and histologic technicians use a variety of tests to examine the health of cells, tissues, and organs. These tests determine the cause of disease, monitor the progression of disease, or assess the effectiveness of treatment," explains Josh. Firelands Health, which has two full-time physician pathologists on staff, processed an increase of over 1,000 pathology tests in 2023 compared to the previous year, with additional growth projected in 2024.



The Firelands Laboratory has 65 staff members, including medical technologists, histology technologists, phlebotomists, and technical lab assistants.

While Firelands can conduct most tests, certain specialized tests are sent to partner national reference laboratories. In 2023, the Firelands Health lab processed nearly 850,000 tests.



Dr. Penny Jones receiving training on the new system from Firelands IT Analyst Eric Wagner.



Section	Item	Date	Severity
Allergies	Penicillin	04/12/78	allergic
	Penicillin	04/12/78	allergic
	5-ally Reductase Inhibitor (acetaminophen)	04/12/78	allergic
	Shellfishes (from A and D proteins)	04/12/78	anxiety
	Glucose (from A and D proteins)	04/12/78	anxiety
Medications	Nivolumab	04/12/24	active
	Nivolumab 25 mg IV Q3W	04/12/24	active





# Firelands Upgrades Electronic Health Records System

Firelands Health recently upgraded its electronic health records (EHR) system to improve the quality of providers' interactions with patients. The upgrade also included switching the EHR system used by the Firelands Physician Group (FPG) to the same one used in the hospital, making it easier for providers to access patient records, whether they are in the hospital or a provider's office.

An EHR is a digital version of a patient's paper chart. EHRs are real-time, patient-centered records that make information available instantly and securely to authorized users. While an EHR does contain the medical and treatment histories of patients, an EHR system is built to go beyond standard clinical data collected in a provider's office or hospital and can provide a broader view of a patient's care. EHRs are a vital part of health information technology and can:

- Contain a patient's medical history, diagnoses, medications, treatment plans, immunization dates, allergies, radiology images, and laboratory and test results.
- Allow access to evidence-based tools that providers can use to make decisions about a patient's care.
- Automate and streamline provider workflow.

Firelands Health has used the MEDITECH electronic health records system in the hospital for several years with excellent results. The decision was made to unite the hospital with its providers by switching the Firelands Physician Group electronic health records to MEDITECH, which took about 18 months. "There had been a push for quite a while to have a consistent EHR system between the hospital and provider offices. The conversion took time because we had to update the current MEDITECH system the hospital uses and prepare to install MEDITECH to about 100 FPG providers," says Sean Steffanni, senior director of information technology at Firelands.

There are three major EHR systems available on the market. Firelands chose MEDITECH because of its affordability and design, which favors smaller or rural hospitals. MEDITECH is considered easy-to-use software, and it can accommodate the clinical, financial, technical, and operational needs of the hospital and providers. Unlike other EHRs, MEDITECH can be customized to the hospital and its



workflow. "Our information technology department does a lot of work with MEDITECH in-house to adapt the system to our needs," says Sean.

Patients benefit from the integrated MEDITECH system in numerous ways. They can request virtual appointments and prescription refills, pay bills online, and upload their health data to medical devices and fitness trackers. They can also pre-register before their arrival to minimize waiting times, update their demographic and insurance information, add their personal and family history, and update their list of medications and allergies.

The training of providers and their staff took three weeks, with MEDITECH experts available at every FPG location. A lead project manager, Carolyn Muhlbauer, was hired from an outside healthcare technology firm to implement MEDITECH. She had helped integrate the system in 2017 at the hospital. "Her knowledge of Firelands and MEDITECH was invaluable and made a huge difference in the success of the transition. She was here for 14 months and did a superb job," says Sean.

The project, which came in under budget and on schedule, has provided Firelands with new tools to improve patient care and opportunities to better serve physicians and patients. Physician satisfaction is high, with providers now recognizing the system's benefits. "We were pleasantly surprised at how smooth the transition was. We will continue to implement new applications and update the ones currently in use. We are always looking for new ways to enhance the provider and patient experiences," says Sean.



## Dave Meredith, patient spotlight



Sandusky resident Dave Meredith suffered from shoulder pain for years. His physician, Dr. Matthew Widmer, recommended he have a shoulder replacement, but Dave was adamantly opposed to having surgery. After undergoing numerous surgeries during his 80 years, including brain, open heart, carpal tunnel, and carotid, it was easy to understand why. "I had been cut on so much I just didn't want any more surgeries," he says.

Dave's shoulder pain began 30 years ago when he had open heart surgery at a Cleveland hospital. "I was told that the way I was positioned during the surgery damaged my left shoulder. I've been battling pain ever since," he explains.

For the past several years, Dr. Widmer, a member of the Firelands Physician Group who practices family medicine and sports medicine at Firelands Health, has helped Dave manage his shoulder pain through injections and physical therapy. "Dr. Widmer is wonderful. He is an amazing doctor who did everything he could to help me with my shoulder pain. Dr. Widmer advised me to have surgery but never pushed it. He knew how much I wanted to avoid it and left the decision-making to me. Finally, last summer, the pain was so intense I told him I had to be realistic and have the surgery," says Dave.

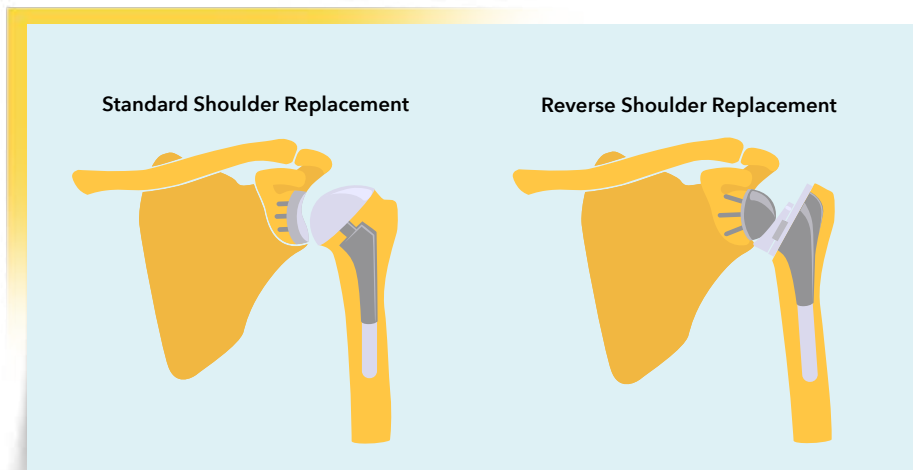
Dr. Widmer referred Dave to Kevin Bailey, D.O., a Firelands Physician Group orthopedic surgeon specializing in shoulder, knee, and hip injuries who had also completed an orthopedic surgery sports medicine fellowship at Allegheny Health Network in Pittsburgh. Because Dave's shoulder had suffered severe damage, Dr. Bailey recommended a reverse total shoulder replacement. In this type of surgery, the damaged parts of the shoulder are removed and replaced with artificial parts.

The difference between a reverse prosthesis and a standard shoulder replacement is that the ball is placed on the socket side of the joint, opposite of where it is naturally located. The socket is then placed on the arm side and is supported by a metal stem in the arm bone or humerus.

Dr. Bailey explained to Dave that a reverse total shoulder replacement would result in a better outcome for him because his rotator cuff was so severely damaged. A standard total shoulder replacement relies on muscles and tendons around the shoulder joint to be intact. A reverse prosthesis is for situations where the rotator cuff is torn or malfunctioning. "In addition to his rotator cuff damage, Dave also had severe arthritis, which was causing him significant pain, weakness, and limited range of motion. By the time I saw Dave, he was ready to have the surgery," said Dr. Bailey.

Following the surgery, Dave received physical therapy from Tim Albrethsen, P.T., at Firelands Health's Bone Creek. His recovery is progressing well. A few weeks after the shoulder replacement, Dave returned to work at Toft Funeral Home and Crematory and is again enjoying family vacations with his wife of 57 years, Dianne, their children, and grandchildren. "Tim did an amazing job helping me recover from the surgery. I have more movement in my shoulder than I've had in years. Best of all, I have no pain," says Dave.

"This whole experience has been unbelievable. Dr. Bailey, Dr. Widmer, and Tim are responsible for my success. In my opinion, there is no reason to go out of Sandusky for orthopedic care. We have the best doctors and therapists right here. We are so fortunate to have the resources we do at Firelands."





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## Board of directors

# spotlight

Firelands Regional Medical Center owes much of its success to the invaluable guidance and expertise provided by its board of directors. Comprising of local leaders from diverse businesses and organizations, the board plays a crucial role in shaping the hospital's policies and direction. In this spotlight, we would like to showcase four of our board leaders who have contributed significantly to the growth and development of our institution.

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## Board of directors spotlight

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### Shelly CHESBRO



Shelly Chesbro, a third-generation Sandusky business owner and a Firelands Health Board of Directors member, believes giving back to her community is expected of her, and she willingly does so. She found herself reexamining her approach to giving after losing her mother, brother-in-law, and close friend to three different types of cancer within a short period of time. Before the losses of these loved ones, she looked at philanthropy as the right thing to do and was happy to do so. Then, in an “aha” moment, Shelly realized that she shouldn’t give just because she wants to, but because she simply must.

With that realization, she committed to donating regularly to The Foundation for Firelands and became a member of the foundation’s Legacy Society. “I saw how much my mom, Terry, and Lucy struggled through their diseases. I wondered about those who didn’t have the same amount of support and resources. I personally witnessed the undeniable needs that cancer patients have at a time when they need help the most. I then decided to donate to The Foundation for Firelands and request the funds be used for services to help those fighting any cancer diagnosis,” said Shelly. “My goal is to help the Firelands Cancer Center continue to offer the latest cancer technologies and patient care to our community, and especially help those in need.”

When asked to reflect on highlights over the past 13 years as a board member, Shelly immediately mentioned the reinvestments in the Laboratory, the Cath Lab for critical cardiac care, the Sandusky Healthcare Center building, and 3D mammography capabilities a few years ago.

“These are just a few of the immediate highlights that come to my mind, and there are so many more. Recently,

when my husband, Chip, suffered a mild heart attack, I was able to observe the critical role the Lab played in his care with immediate results confirming that he was indeed having a heart attack, as well as the Cath Lab performing a much-needed stent procedure. The benefit and comfort of a life-saving operation performed right here where I live was amazing. What a blessing to have the depth of service lines provided by incredible doctors and nurses who are supported by each and every member of our remarkable staff. These are things you sometimes take for granted until the patient is you, or your loved one. Then you certainly take a very different perspective.”

“It has been humbling and astonishing to see my giving turn into receiving. As I have realized, it is not about how much you give. A gracious twenty-dollar gift can go a long way in helping cancer patients pay for transportation to get to their various treatments when they are physically or financially unable to do so. Gifts like that are just as important as someone’s thousands of dollars to purchase equipment that saves lives. Every little bit helps. It all counts. It is all for the greater good of Firelands and those we proudly serve.”

In addition to supporting The Foundation for Firelands, Shelly serves on the Firelands Health Board of Directors Facility Committee and the Physician Recruitment Committee, and recently accepted a role with the Executive Committee. Additionally, she serves as Board President of Cancer Services, here in Sandusky, a collaborative partner of Firelands.

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## Board of directors spotlight

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### Dan KELLER



Daniel Keller's life is a testament to the power of hard work and community spirit. While pursuing his business degree and MBA at the University of Mount Union and Bowling Green State University in the 1970s, he worked at factories and at Cedar Point to fund his education. His heart was always in Sandusky and Cedar Point where he eventually launched his highly successful career in the amusement park industry.

At Cedar Fair, Dan Keller's dedication and hard work propelled him up the corporate ladder where he became a corporate officer. He became the Vice President and General Manager of Worlds of Fun / Oceans of Fun in Kansas City. Dan then returned to Sandusky in 2000 to take on the role of Vice President and General Manager of Cedar Point Resort at Cedar Fair, L.P. Dan enjoyed working for Cedar Fair, a company that was expanding and acquiring parks across the country during his tenure. It was an exciting time to be a part of the company's growth phase.

Dan decided to retire from Cedar Fair feeling it was the right time to move on and explore other interests. Always fascinated by private equity and venture capital, he began a new career of investing in start-up companies, individually and with partners. He invested in various enterprises, including a sustainable teak plantation in Cambodia, water purification systems in remote parts of Mexico, several nanotechnology companies in Spokane, Washington, and a venture capital firm in Cleveland, Ohio. Locally, he invested in a self-serve yogurt company and a custom cabinet company. "I find this work very fulfilling. It keeps me involved in the world and my mind active," says Dan.

Dan Keller's commitment to community healthcare and philanthropy is evident in his service on many non-profit boards. He has served or is currently serving on the boards of the University of Mount Union, Bowling Green

State University which included serving as board chair, and Firelands Health. Over the past 15 years, he has been an active member of various Firelands Health Board of Directors committees, demonstrating his dedication to the community's health and well-being.

Dan states, "It is a great privilege for the community to have an independent healthcare facility instead of a hospital owned by a large healthcare system. Firelands is an independent hospital that focuses on meeting the medical and healthcare needs of the community more efficiently. Firelands is fully integrated into the community as a locally run health system. This enables them to identify and address patient needs more personally, thereby providing quicker and more effective health solutions."

The Sandusky region has a long-standing tradition of community-driven healthcare. Firelands Health has upheld this legacy by establishing a strong base of primary care physicians and a range of specialists. "The organization aims to attract the best providers possible, which allows for most of the community's healthcare demands to be fulfilled locally. This results in significant advantages for patients and their families," Dan shared.

Supporting Firelands Health is not just a choice but a responsibility for the region's overall well-being. Dan Keller emphasizes that residents can contribute to Firelands Health in three ways: by giving their time, sharing their talents, and contributing financially. "My wife, Laura, and I firmly believe that strong healthcare and education systems are the backbone of any successful community. That's why we support The Foundation for Firelands and various educational institutions. Each of us has the power to enhance our community's healthcare. By doing so, we can ensure a more vibrant, higher quality of life for all," he concludes.

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## Board of directors spotlight

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# Allen NICKLES



Allen Nickles' long-standing support for the Sandusky area community stems from one simple reason: "This community has been good to me. My success is partly due to the community's support, and I strongly feel I should show my appreciation by giving back," says Allen.

Born and raised in Sandusky, Allen co-founded the Payne Nickles Company, a full-service accounting firm with offices in Sandusky and Norwalk. He was a member of the board of trustees at Providence Hospital and instrumental in the negotiations that resulted in the acquisition of Providence by Firelands Health several years ago. Allen and two other Providence Board of Trustee members, Clarence Seavers and Barb Nielsen, were asked to join the Firelands Board of Directors after Providence became part of Firelands. Today, he is the chair of the board's Audit and Compliance Committee.

Allen and his wife of 53 years, Diane, have always donated to Providence Hospital and have continued that practice with Firelands. One of their many acts of giving includes sponsoring a newborn treatment room in the hospital's obstetrics unit. "Firelands is an incredible asset to our community. Without a good healthcare system, our residents would suffer. We

would have to seek healthcare outside of our area, and many people wouldn't be able to do that. Being independent allows Firelands to provide personal, community-driven care. If we weren't independent, we would be a tentacle of a larger system with no personal commitment to the community. We are so fortunate to have such a premier healthcare system in our own backyard," says Allen. "Diane and I are always ready to support Firelands and help in any way we can."

In addition to Firelands, Allen is a member of the board of trustees of Civista Bank and chairs the Finance and Audit Committee of the City of Sandusky. He is on the board of trustees of the Greater Sandusky Partnership, a private-sector organization committed to growing the population of Sandusky and Erie County. Jeremy Normington-Slay, the president of Firelands Health, is also on the board. "Firelands Health gives back to the community substantially, from the top down. All the employees at Firelands understand how important it is to give back to the community by supporting non-profits and other community outreach programs with their time, talent, and financial help," he says. "Firelands helps greatly in making our area attractive to new residents and businesses."

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## Board of directors spotlight

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# Jim WIBLE



Jim and his wife Norma arrived in the Sandusky community in the mid-1970s when Jim co-founded American Colors, a manufacturer of high-quality liquid pigment colors for the plastics, coatings, adhesive and sealants, and agriculture markets. A self-described “peddler by trade with a financial background,” Jim has overseen the expansion of American Colors from its first location in Sandusky to five additional plants in Tennessee, Texas, China, and Italy. “American Colors is an employee-owned, private company. Its tremendous growth and success can be attributed to the hard work and dedication of our employees,” says Jim. After serving as the president of American Colors for nearly 43 years, Jim stepped down as the president in 2018. He continues to be involved in the company as chairman of the board.

Recognizing Jim’s value to the community, he was asked to join the Firelands Regional Medical Center Board of Directors 24 years ago, where he is co-chair of the Investment Committee and serves on the Executive, Finance, and Governance Committees. In addition to Firelands, Jim is involved in the First Presbyterian Church and is a trustee of his alma mater, Allegheny College in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. He and Norma received the Alumni Medal from Allegheny, the college’s highest honor.

As a result of his business achievements, Jim has been recognized with numerous honors, including the Albert Nelson Marquis Lifetime Achievement Award. He is listed in Who’s Who in Finance and Industry, Marquis Who’s Who; Who’s Who in the Midwest, Marquis Who’s Who; and Who’s Who in the World, Marquis Who’s Who. Jim was recently inducted into the Erie County Chamber of Commerce Business Hall of Fame.

Jim is an ardent supporter of Firelands Regional Medical Center, considering it “one of the most worthwhile organizations in town.” He believes having a locally based hospital to serve residents is essential. “Too many communities lack such an important asset. Major hospital systems who provide healthcare to communities like ours just don’t have the personal connections or knowledge of the area and healthcare needs of residents,” says Jim.

In addition to his time and expertise, Jim gives to The Foundation for Firelands financially. His unrestricted donations allow the hospital to use the funds wherever they are most needed. “Medicine is expensive. It’s mandatory that Firelands add to our facility and keep pace with the best technology. We need to maintain the superior care that the Sandusky region has the right to expect,” says Jim.

Jim is proud of the healthcare legacy Firelands has created throughout the years, citing the efforts of the administration and physicians alike. “Hospital President Jeremy Normington-Slay is an asset to the hospital and the community. Those responsible for the financial side of the hospital should be commended as well.” He applauds the exceptional physicians that comprise the medical staff and the services they and other Firelands healthcare providers offer, which, in many instances, he believes are superior to those available from larger health systems. “It’s a source of pride to the organization and a real benefit to the community. We are blessed to have such competent and professional providers. It’s a reflection of the excellence and caliber of our medical community.”



# Physician spotlight

With over 235 medical staff members, Firelands Health is here to serve you - whatever your healthcare needs may be. We offer a wide range of treatment and care services - from mental health/addiction services, laboratory services, cancer care, cardiac or heart care, primary care, chronic pain management, orthopedic surgery, and much more. When you choose a physician at Firelands Regional Medical Center in Sandusky, Ohio for your care and treatment, you aren't just choosing a medical facility close to home - you're choosing a partner in health.

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## Physician spotlight

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# Kevin BAILEY

## D.O.

### Orthopedics

*Orthopedic surgery is performed by an orthopedic surgeon trained to treat problems that develop in the body's bones, joints, and ligaments.*

I was involved in all types of sports during my early childhood. During high school, I wrestled, played football, and continued wrestling in college at Lehigh University in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. Like many young athletes, I suffered a few sports injuries, which exposed me to orthopedics and sports medicine. Later, a close family friend who was an orthopedic surgeon encouraged me to pursue medicine. I resisted because I didn't want to commit to the many years of training and decided to major in mechanical engineering instead. During my sophomore year, I changed my mind. I finished my engineering degree but began taking premed classes and was accepted at the Ohio University Heritage College of Osteopathic Medicine in Athens, Ohio.

I completed an orthopedic residency at Cleveland Clinic South Pointe Hospital and a fellowship in orthopedic sports medicine at Allegheny Health Network in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. By the time I finished all my training, my parents and siblings had moved from our hometown of Bainbridge, Ohio. I was single and had no family ties, which would have influenced me to stay in Ohio. I could start my career anywhere. Justin Kelley, D.O., a good friend I had trained with at the Cleveland Clinic, had joined Firelands Physician Group and recommended that I check it out. He liked the hospital and area and thought I would, too. I hadn't considered Firelands, but because Justin liked it so much, I met with his colleagues, Drs. Colleen Calvey, Robert Carlisle, and Thomas Olexa, and members of the Firelands administration.

I was pleasantly surprised. Everyone was friendly and welcoming. I decided to join the practice and hospital, which proved to be the right one for me. I enjoy the community, my patients, and my colleagues. I see a variety of orthopedic cases, including sports medicine, and can develop my practice how I'd like. I like to run, bike, golf, work out at the gym, and spend time outdoors in my spare time. Last summer, some of my colleagues took me out boating and fishing, which I liked very much. I'm looking forward to enjoying the lake this year, and all Sandusky has to offer.

This past winter, I had the opportunity to participate in a two-week mission trip to Tenwek Hospital, a 400-bed mission hospital serving over a million people in southwest Kenya. I was kept busy throughout my visit performing a variety of orthopedic surgeries, including trauma, sports medicine, and joint replacement procedures. Samaritan's Purse, a Christian organization that helps coordinate medical mission trips worldwide, organized the trip. I can't say enough good things about the hospital and its mission. I hope to continue to participate in trips such as this annually.

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## Physician spotlight

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**George  
Augustine  
KOROMIA  
M.D.**

### Cardiology

*Cardiology is the field of medicine that specializes in diagnosing and treating diseases of the heart, blood vessels, and circulatory system. These diseases include coronary artery disease, heart rhythm problems, and heart failure.*

Before I pursued a career in medicine, I completed graduate work in management & clinical informatics at Duke University's Fuqua School of Business. After graduating, I was a consultant at Lantana Consulting Group, which helps government agencies, hospitals, technology companies, and insurance providers exchange clinical information to support continuity of care and information-driven policy and decision-making. I specialized in clinical informatics, interoperability, healthcare management, and health policy.

Although I liked working in informatics, I was also drawn to the field of medicine and the science behind it. I was particularly interested in the application of informatics to medicine and how it could change the practice of medicine and affect patient outcomes. As a physician, I could integrate informatics into medicine, thereby making the practice of medicine easier for doctors and more individualized for patients.

During my internal medicine residency at East Carolina University in Greenville, North Carolina, the cardiology faculty made a big impression on me. I liked how the different symptoms of disease conditions could be teased out with various means of testing. Cardiology is very evidence-based, and the diagnostic testing has unambiguous criteria, which appealed to me.

I followed my residency with a cardiology fellowship at the Marshall University Joan C. Edwards School of Medicine in Huntington, West Virginia, and another fellowship in advanced cardiovascular imaging (CT & MRI) at the University of Kentucky Gill Heart and Vascular Institute in Lexington. As one of the newest fields in cardiology, cardiac computed tomography angiogram (CTA), and cardiac magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) provides increased precision and higher diagnostic yield. This technology expands the number of tools in our toolbox to diagnose cardiac conditions. I'm fortunate to be able to provide such services to residents in our area.

My wife, Linda Njoroge, who is also a cardiologist, and I interviewed at several healthcare systems, but Firelands appealed to us the most. You can tell the administration really cares about the people working here and the patients they serve. When we visited Firelands, we had a great experience with everyone, whether they were board members, physicians, or employees. We are very happy with our decision to come here.

In addition to enjoying all things tech-related, my greatest joy is spending time with my family. Linda and I have five beautiful children. My biggest inspiration is Linda's ability to combine an impressive professional career with taking wonderful care of our family.

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## Physician spotlight

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**Catherine**  
**LY**  
**D.O.**

### Gastroenterology

*Gastroenterologists diagnose and treat problems of the esophagus, stomach, pancreas, gallbladder, liver, and intestines. Common conditions seen by gastroenterologists include swallowing problems (dysphagia), inflammatory bowel disease (ulcerative colitis or Crohn's disease), and fatty liver disease.*

I've been interested in medicine since I was a child, a pursuit my mother encouraged. I wanted to help people and thought medicine would be the best way to achieve that. Born and raised in Dayton, Ohio, I attended medical school at the Chicago College of Osteopathic Medicine. I completed an internal medicine residency and a gastroenterology fellowship at Advocate Lutheran General Hospital in Park Ridge, Illinois.

During college, I worked at a hospital as a transporter. I transported people to GI procedures and remember thinking there was no way I would want to be a gastroenterologist, but that soon changed. In my first week of medical school, my mother died from stage 4 colon cancer, and I found myself gravitating toward gastroenterology in residency. I loved the GI rotations and was fortunate to be accepted into a fellowship program after my internal medicine residency.

My husband and I moved back to Ohio in 2019 to be closer to his family, who lives on the west side of Cleveland. At the time, we had three children under the age of five and wanted them to grow up with their extended family.

I worked at the Cleveland Clinic with Dr. Imad Asaad before he came to Firelands Health. When the hospital began a search for another gastroenterologist, he encouraged me to apply. He said the Sandusky area was a great community; the patients were appreciative, and the people at the hospital were kind and friendly. I wasn't looking for a new opportunity but finally agreed to meet with Firelands Health's administration team. The more people I talked to and the more I learned about Firelands, the more I liked it. Because it is a smaller hospital, I thought I could impact patients and the community more. It was just what I was looking for.

When not practicing medicine, I spend most of my time with my family. My husband and I enjoy activities with our children, who are ten, eight, and six years old. I like playing tennis, traveling, cooking, and reading.

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## Physician spotlight

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**Linda  
NJOROGE**  
M.D.

### Cardiology

*Cardiology is the field of medicine that specializes in diagnosing and treating diseases of the heart, blood vessels, and circulatory system. These diseases include coronary artery disease, heart rhythm problems, and heart failure.*

When I was six years old, I was diagnosed with a heart murmur. The condition was considered serious for a child, and I had to undergo several cardiac investigations. My pediatric cardiologist had a long-lasting impression on me that piqued my interest in medicine. When I was growing up in Kenya, I would listen to the heartbeats of our pet kittens and cats, the birds we would find, and the chickens we raised.

During medical school in Kenya, I had significant exposure to valvular heart disease in patients affected by Rheumatic fever, which reminded me of my own experience as a child and inspired me to pursue cardiology. The physiology and anatomy of the heart are so fascinating, and there is tremendous evidence for the medicine behind cardiology. Multiple advancements in the field have increased the quality and quantity of life in cardiac patients, including heart transplants, heart pumps, coronary stenting, and implantable pacemakers and defibrillators, to name just a few.

I first came to the United States for a three-month elective internship in cardiology and trauma surgery during my fourth year of medical school in Nairobi. I was very impressed with the resources available here and saw how patients benefitted from them.

My professional journey in cardiology has been enriched by various experiences. I met my husband, George Koromia, who is also a cardiologist, on the first day of medical school. After graduating, we returned to the United States. I completed an internal medicine residency at East Carolina University, followed by advanced heart failure/cardiac transplantation fellowships at Case Western Reserve, Marshall University, and the University of Kentucky Gill Heart and Vascular Institute. These experiences have shaped my understanding and practice of cardiology.

My husband and I made a conscious decision to join Firelands because we believed we could make a significant impact on our patients in a smaller community. We were drawn to the genuine, warm atmosphere and the hospital leadership's prompt attention to team members' needs. At Firelands, it's not just about production but about providing quality care. It's one of the few hospitals in the country that remains independent, a true hidden gem.

We have five children under ten, so most of our time outside the office is spent with them. We have friends all over the country and visit them when we can. We enjoy the theater and museums, as well as skiing. The area is conducive to raising a family and is affordable to live in.

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## Physician spotlight

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**Christian**  
**SIEBENALER**  
M.D.

### Physiatry

*Physiatry is the medical specialty that emphasizes the prevention, diagnosis, treatment, and rehabilitation of people disabled by disease, disorder, or injury.*

My father is a doctor, which allowed me to see firsthand the impact a physician can have on a person's life. The desire to help people led me to medicine and to specialize in physical medicine and rehabilitation. I was impressed with how physiatrists help patients improve and regain functional independence after such life-changing events as a stroke or other debilitating illness. Watching patients improve enough functionally to resume their lives after completing a rehab program is so gratifying. I admire how much effort they put into the program to achieve their goals.

I'm fascinated by how the muscular and skeletal systems work together to support and move the body. Physical medicine and rehabilitation allow me to explore this more.

I was born and raised in the Toledo area. I went to the University of Toledo for my undergraduate degree, attended medical school at the University of Toledo College of Medicine, and completed my physical medicine and rehabilitation residency at the University of Toledo Medical Center. I wanted to establish a practice close to Toledo and was familiar with the Sandusky area. I like that Firelands is a community-based hospital and how the physicians, administration, and employees approach patient care. At Firelands, physicians know their patients on a personal level, which isn't always possible in a larger hospital system. Everyone here is so positive and friendly. They work as a team, and this really resonates with me.

My wife and I have a young son and are expecting a daughter. We share our lives with three golden retrievers. I like to cook, exercise, and do home improvement projects.

# Physician *retirees*

Four physicians retired from Firelands Regional Medical Center's active medical staff in 2023. It is our pleasure to honor those who have devoted their lives to the health of our community.

## Dr. Michael Felter

Dr. Michael Felter's roots are deeply intertwined with Sandusky, Ohio. His grandfather's entrepreneurial ventures and his father's education at Sandusky St. Mary's school are testament to their strong ties to the community. Despite moving to Shelby, Ohio, during the Great Depression, Dr. Felter and his siblings always cherished their memories of Sandusky and Lake Erie.

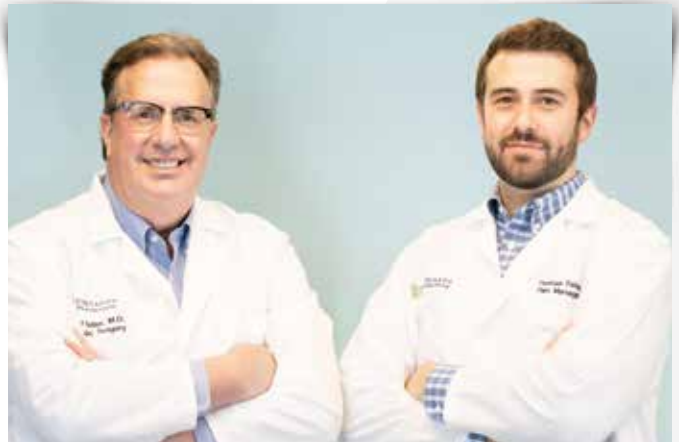
Dr. Felter arrived in Sandusky in 1983 with his wife and one-year-old son after completing medical school at The Ohio State University and his residency in orthopedic surgery at Mount Carmel Health System in Columbus. His family was very excited when he announced he was going to practice in Sandusky.

Dr. Felter met Dr. Jim Berry during his residency and agreed to go into practice together. Dr. Berry was a year ahead of Dr. Felter, and due to Dr. Berry's love of boating and desire to live on or near the water, Dr. Berry came to Sandusky in 1982. Dr. Felter joined Dr. Berry in 1983, forming Sandusky Orthopedics. They practiced out of four offices during their careers and grew the practice to include six physicians.

Dr. Felter and his colleagues served the community in many capacities, including sports medicine for the area schools and emergency care. Drs. Berry and Felter performed the first knee replacement in Sandusky in 1983 and proudly expanded joint replacement surgery to what it is today.

Dr. Felter loved caring for his patients and is proud of the practice he and Dr. Berry cultivated together, including robotic surgery and many more advancements. "I had so many opportunities to care for the people of Erie County and the greater region that it is hard to recall just one memorable experience. I had the honor of caring for a local sports editor until his passing. He and I would talk sports in the office until my office team would shoo us away...I loved our talks together! I also had the honor of providing ongoing care for a gentleman who was a Tuskegee Airman who served time in a German Prisoner of War camp. We had many incredible discussions that I will carry with me always," reflected Dr. Felter.

Of all his achievements in life, his family is his most significant source of joy. Dr. Felter shared, "I take great pride in what Tom has accomplished and am particularly proud that the name of Dr. Felter will continue at Firelands through Tom and in the



*Dr. Michael Felter with his son, Dr. Thomas Felter*

community for years to come. I am equally proud of my two other sons - John, who returned to Sandusky to practice law at Flynn, Py, & Kruse, and my son Nick, who is a CRNA and has been covering surgical cases at Firelands. My daughter-in-law, Natalie, is a nurse practitioner who practices in Sandusky. The Felter name is well-represented in the medical field! I am proud that my sons wanted to return to Sandusky and raise their families where they grew up. I think that says a lot about Sandusky."

In reflection, Dr. Felter admits that the transition to retirement did take some time, sharing, "I had been Dr. Felter since 1975, and then one day you wake up, and you are no longer a doctor. The transition has been enjoyable. I am excited that I have six grandchildren growing up nearby. I look forward to more golf, fishing, and travel."

Dr. Felter said he always listened to his patients and cared deeply about them. "My personality has always been to deflect compliments and tell patients that I was just doing my job. Being retired now, I do take some level of pride when I run into former patients and they tell me that they wish I was still practicing," Dr. Felter reflected.

We wish you all the best, Dr. Felter, and thank you for sharing your talents with patients in our community for the past 40 years!

Drs. Smith and Riemann were not available to participate in a reflection story about their time caring for patients at Firelands Health. We asked Vice President of Medical Affairs, Scott Campbell, M.D., to share his memories of working with these remarkable physicians:



Dr. Donald Smith

### Dr. Donald Smith

*"Don, always cool and collected, approached his career with a pleasant disposition. His colleagues held him in high regard, often praising his kindness and respectfulness. But it was his gentle, approachable manner with patients that truly set him apart. A true gentleman in every sense of the word, his presence was a calming influence in our healthcare environment."*



## Dr. Robert Rice

Dr. Robert Rice reflected on becoming a physician and his road to practice at Firelands.

"My road to Firelands was interesting. I was born in Nova Scotia to a family with a rich medical legacy. My father was a general surgeon and a family practice physician and served in a World War II Mobile Army Surgical Hospital, or MASH unit, for two years. His father, my grandfather, was also a general surgeon and a family practice physician. My mother was a registered nurse. Medical service was in my blood," Dr. Rice shared.

Dr. Rice graduated from Dalhousie Medical School in Halifax, Nova Scotia. The program was five years long and did not require students to complete a residency. As Dr. Rice contemplated his next step, his father wisely counseled, "If you want to be a good doctor, be a family practice physician now. You will learn about people." Dr. Rice commented that this was the greatest advice he received. He practiced as a family practice doctor for the next four years.

Still desiring to become a surgeon, Dr. Rice attended a five-year program at McGill University in Montreal, studying general surgery. In his second year, he did a rotation in urology, and the Urology Department offered him a position. Dr. Rice spent his final three years of training at McGill in Urology.

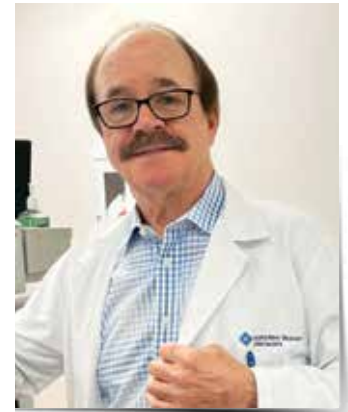
"My father told me to go to the States, take my boards, and practice in the United States." Dr. Rice went to Augusta, Maine, and became board-certified in urology.

"I started shopping for jobs in the United States. I applied to the Medical College of Ohio in Toledo and was invited to interview. I visited relatives in Norwalk, arriving on a Friday for my interview on Monday. That Saturday, I went to visit Good Samaritan Hospital in Sandusky. Walking in, I saw an older gentleman walking out of the hospital. I shared that I was a physician visiting the area and asked him for directions to the administration office," stated Dr. Rice. "He asked me what kind of physician I was, and I said I was a urologist. He shared that his name was Raymond Ward, and he was also a urologist! Dr. Ward said he planned to retire that summer and asked me if I wanted his practice?"

Dr. Ward walked Dr. Rice to his office in the former Medical Arts Building, now Firelands Center for Coordinated Care. After Dr. Rice looked at the office, the furniture, and the files, Dr. Ward told him that if he wanted the practice, he could have it on a handshake deal.

Dr. Rice, smiling broadly, said, "I asked Dr. Ward for 24 hours to consider. I called my dad, who told me that if I took the practice, I needed to stay there, no matter what, and build the practice. I accepted Dr. Ward's offer, studied and received my Ohio license, and started practice on September 1st. I walked into the office that morning, looked around, and waited.

The phone rang at 9:00 a.m., which started my 43 years of service to patients at Firelands."



Of all his accomplishments, Dr. Rice is most proud of his family, including his wife, Brenda, six children, and grandchildren. "My children have all found their talents and niche in life. Jason is a successful businessman, and Brandi is a kindergarten teacher at Furry School in Perkins. Rachel received her master's degree in education with school counseling and is currently a substitute teacher in the Perkins School system. Janice is an emergency room physician at Southwest General Hospital. Laura is a pharmacist at the Ohio Veterans Home in Sandusky, and Mitchell is a family practice physician, starting his practice at Firelands Physician Group in 2025. The family legacy of medicine continues, and we consult each other for advice, just as I did with my father," Dr. Rice shared. "The words of wisdom I have shared with them come from my experiences and mirror my father's advice - be kind and courteous and understand the patient's and their family's anxieties. Of equal importance is to listen to and examine the patient and their history...don't treat an X-ray without examining the patient and listening. Surgery is often an option, but is it the best and most appropriate option for this patient?" Dr. Rice commented, "My father's second most important piece of advice was they will teach you to operate, but you will spend the rest of your life learning when NOT to operate."

Dr. Rice is writing a book about his 50+ year career as a physician, commenting that it is incredibly cathartic for him. In his retirement, he looks most forward to being healthy enough, long enough to watch his children and grandchildren enjoy their lives.

We wish that for you, too, Dr. Rice! Thank you for sharing your talents with patients in our community for the past 43 years!



Dr. David Riemann

### Dr. David Riemann

*"Dave was a highly respected veteran of the anesthesia group. Despite being a man of few words, his input was always meaningful and relevant. He was highly regarded by his colleagues and often requested to work on complex cases due to his exceptional skill as an anesthesiologist. In fact, his surgical colleagues often turned to him for his expertise. His reputation was such that when he spoke, people listened attentively, much like E.F. Hutton."*

## Hospital Volunteers and Auxiliary

Volunteers are integral to Firelands Health's day-to-day operations and work in every department. They assist with patient and guest relations, special projects, and supporting areas such as the dialysis center, emergency department, information desks, and gift shops.

Throughout 2023, Firelands Health volunteers donated over 13,000 hours of their time. According to Independent Sector, the current value of a volunteer's time in Ohio is \$31.18 per hour. The continued support from our volunteers equates to a value of over \$405,340.

We are so grateful for our volunteers and would like to thank the men, women, and furry friends who served and supported our patients, visitors, and staff. Volunteers may work at their chosen schedule and availability. If you would like to volunteer at Firelands Health, please visit [firelands.com/volunteer](https://firelands.com/volunteer) or call 419-557-5469.

Dianna Acierto  
Jerry Adams  
Marta Adelman  
Heather Amezquita  
Susan Andres  
Nancy Bickley  
Judith Bouy  
Tammie Brenton  
Mary Ann Briehl  
Karen Brown  
Carolann Buderer  
Cynthia Carruthers  
Minnie Casey  
Ingrid Coiffard  
Marcia Collart  
Ann Daniel  
Lois Dean  
Wanda Dean  
Rita Dominick  
Kay Eash  
Brandy Eddinger  
Bonnie Faber  
Trudie Ferguson  
Diane Fitzthum  
Frank Floding

Andrew Franzen  
Sally Franzen  
Arlene Gilbert  
Donna Greulich  
Roland Hart  
Pam Hartung-Kellem  
Susie Hippler  
Jae Hong  
Louise Hoty  
Gayle Jeffrey  
Carolyn Kaple  
Candiss Kessler  
Donna Kieffer  
Aaron Klein  
Kathy Kreidler  
Steven Krisfalusy  
Janet Lippus  
Pat Mandrik  
Shirley Mapus  
Jo Ann Martin  
Christina Maschari  
Bev Matthews  
Millie McCready  
Ruth Meade  
Ralph Mominee

Cecilia Moffett-Hesch  
Sandy Morris  
Ruth Novak  
Sophia Olson  
Irene Opp  
Thomas Orihel  
Edwin Pawlowski  
Mary Ann Pelz  
Beth Pitts  
John Planthaber  
Steven Popke  
Jean Puckrin  
Patty Rinella  
Maureen Rosekelly  
Sara Samstag  
Maureen Saponari  
Marty Sawicki  
Daniel Schaeffer  
Katie Scheerer  
Ann Schott  
Louis Schultz  
Marcia Schutt  
Marsha Scott  
Nancy Siliko  
Amy Springer

Christine Stein  
Phyllis Stengel  
Brenda Strack  
Janet Stradtman  
Michael Toll  
Jean Tomasula  
Rebecca Trout  
Sharon Turini-Kent  
Susan Van Barg  
Donna Vanauken  
Darlene Veleba  
Jennifer Voight  
Jennie Waldock  
Caroline Walker  
Jan Ware  
Anne Warner  
Cecelia Weaver  
Judy Weit  
Ginny Wicker-Piddock  
Jill Wilhelm  
Helen Wirt  
Phyllis Wright





## Volunteer spotlight

Meet Jennifer Voight and her dog, Calli, an abbreviated name for "Callaway." They are two of our Pet Therapy Program volunteers.

Jen was raised in Mansfield, Ohio, and graduated from Ontario High School. She then continued her education at the University of Cincinnati, graduating with a degree in early childhood education. While working as a teacher in Cincinnati, Jen met her husband, Dave, and they married in 1996. Together, they raised two sons, Jacob and Zach.

The family moved to Erie County, where Jen taught preschool and third grade at Huron City Schools. She joined Firelands Montessori Academy as a reading specialist. Jen left teaching to become a content writer for n2y, an organization providing global special education solutions to enrich lives and empower achievement in special education students.

Jen eventually retired and started looking for something to fill the void of connecting with others. She began volunteering because she wanted to follow in her parents' footsteps. Volunteering is a way of life in Jen's family. Her father served as chairman of the board of MedCentral Health in Mansfield, Ohio, and helped expand the hospital's services. Her mother still volunteers at many places in Mansfield, including her church.

While on vacation with a friend, Jen shared pictures of Calli from the breeder's website. "I had been looking at pictures of Calli on this website since she was born," remembers Jen. "My friend told me to just get her! Dave and I picked her up one month before I had shoulder surgery. At that moment, I knew there was something special about her," says Jen. Calli was gentle with me even as a puppy during my shoulder surgery recovery."

Jen wanted Calli to be well-trained, so she took her to Lake Erie Dogs. There, Calli received the training she needed to be a therapy dog. Now, Jen and Calli visit Firelands Health weekly. "I love seeing the joy on patients' and employees' faces when interacting with Cali," says Jen. "People will tell me that they needed that visit from Calli. It makes Calli equally as happy. I tell her we are going to work, and she runs to the car. It's her favorite day of the week."



# phi·lan·thro·py

*noun*

the desire to promote the welfare of others, expressed especially by the generous donation of money to good causes.



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Dr. Leanne Strack	Justin Ward	
Katherine Strayer	Sara Warner	
Lisa Straziuso	Thomas Warner	
Melodie Streng	Lori Waters	
Thomas Strine	Waterstreet Financial	
Dr. Gregory Surfield	Dave Weisenberger	

## 2023 Community benefit

**\$1.54 million**

**Charity Care**

6,438 people served

Service provided without payment

**\$37.6 million**

**Unpaid Costs of Public Programs**

115,574 people served

Cost of services not covered  
by Medicare or Medicaid

**\$598,446**

**Subsidized Health Services**

37,375 people served

**\$252,598**

**Cash/In-kind donations**

Support for non-profit organizations,  
schools, etc. for programs benefiting  
the health of our community

**\$1.7 million**

**Medical Education Programs/  
Nursing Programs**

Served:

16 medical education residents

2 pharmacy residents

108 school of nursing students

Firelands provides a program  
to train physicians and provides  
a school of nursing

**\$4.3 million**

**Cost of Bad Debt**

**\$178,453**

**Patient Education & Home Care**

2,172 people served

Education on disease prevention and home care

**\$209,986**

**Community Health Education  
and Outreach**

10,999 people served

**\$46.38 Million  
with 172,684  
people served**

Percentage of Community Benefit  
to total system expense 14.7%

*The Community Benefit data is based on estimates that will be finalized after the filing of our 2023 Cost Report. The data does not reflect the impact of CARES Act funding that has helped support Firelands financially during the COVID-19 pandemic.*





## Financial statement

This financial statement reflects the 2023 and 2022 operating results for Firelands Health, including Firelands Regional Medical Center, Firelands Physician Group, and The Foundation for Firelands.

### Our income

Total Inpatient Revenue

2023  
\$216,451,177

2022  
\$208,124,972

Total Outpatient Revenue

\$522,316,693

\$494,531,342

**Total revenue from these services**

**\$738,767,870**

**\$702,656,314**

### Less

System contractual adjustments/  
allowances to third party payors

(\$450,748,571)

(\$427,252,362)

Cost of care underwritten for persons without  
the ability to pay for their services and bad debt

(\$18,107,521)

(\$13,768,670)

**Net revenue from patient services**

**\$269,911,778**

**\$261,635,282**

### Plus

Other operating revenue

\$40,433,442

\$39,945,446

### Equals

**Total Operating Revenue**

**\$310,345,220**

**\$301,580,728**

### Our expenses

Total Salary, Wage and Benefits Expense

**2023**

\$156,899,086

**2022**

\$159,986,096

Supplies and General Expenses

\$157,768,442

\$154,502,246

**Total Operating Expenses**

**\$314,667,528**

**\$314,488,342**

**Net Results**

**2023**

**(\$4,322,308)**

**2022**

**(\$12,907,612)**

**Our story is far from finished.**  
Let's write the next chapter, together.



[FoundationForFirelands.com](http://FoundationForFirelands.com)