

The Meaning of Care[®] magazine

Summer 2015

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METHODIST





John M. Fraser
President and CEO
Methodist Health System

President’s Letter

FAMILY.

Is anything more precious?

We know that our patients’ illnesses, injuries, medical treatments, health and well-being affect not only them, but also their loved ones. We have families of our own. We know the most helpful and healing care does not focus only on the patient.

We care for family members, too — as we did when tragedy struck 22-year-old Karla Perez, who suffered a catastrophic stroke early in her pregnancy. Karla and her “miracle baby” Angel made headlines worldwide due to the rare treatment and successful delivery made possible by a team of more than 100 caregivers and support staff at our Methodist Hospital and Methodist Women’s Hospital campuses.

Behind the scenes, away from the headlines, the ripple effects of hope and heartbreak are felt by our patients’ loved ones. And by our staff, too. In times of tragedy and of joy, it is an honor and a privilege to care for people, healing when possible while helping to ease difficult journeys.

Karla, who so generously gave the gift of life to others, will be greatly missed and long remembered. Her legacy lives on, and her beloved Angel is now home in his family’s tender care.

All babies are precious miracles, and we have had no shortage of these miracles of life at Methodist Women’s Hospital. This year, two milestones were reached on the same day. On June 21, the hospital celebrated its five-year anniversary and 20,000th delivery.

Methodist Women’s Hospital continues to deliver more babies and provide neonatal intensive care to more babies than any other hospital in Nebraska and southwest Iowa. As you will see, we are expanding to meet the region’s growing need for NICU care.

And every day, at every Methodist Health System facility, we are honored to care for both patients and families — one more way we live *The Meaning of Care*.

Sincerely,

John M. Fraser



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Enhances Patient Care**
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Methodist Health System
Receives President’s Award

Professional Research Consultants (PRC), a nationally recognized health care custom market research company, awarded Methodist Health System and its leadership with the 2015 President’s Award in recognition of their extraordinary contributions to the healthcare industry.

The President’s Award is the most prestigious award presented annually by PRC to one organization or individual that has made an extraordinary contribution to healthcare. Methodist Health System was the 12th recipient of the award.

“Methodist Health System is incredibly deserving of the President’s Award,” said Joe M. Inguanzo, PhD, president and CEO of PRC. “Methodist is committed to driving improved scores and making their hospital a better place to work, a better place to practice medicine and a better place for patients to be treated. It takes true dedication, determination and hard work to achieve this level of excellence in health care.”



Methodist Health System representatives who were present to receive the award.

Methodist Women’s Hospital Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) was also recognized, earning the PRC Platinum Achievement Award for inpatient pediatrics.

In addition to these top awards, Methodist Health System garnered 20 PRC Excellence in Healthcare Awards, including six Top Performer Awards.

PRC Top Performer Awards are given annually to each health care facility, provider, outpatient service line or inpatient unit that scores at or above the 100th percentile for overall quality of care for the prior calendar year.

Linda Burt Honored
as Top CFO

Becker’s Hospital Review published the 2015 edition of its list of “150 Hospital and Health System CFOs to Know,” and Linda Burt, Methodist Health System CFO, made the list.



**Linda Burt, Methodist
Health System CFO**

Burt was the only CFO from Nebraska to be recognized.

Individuals included on the list helped navigate their organizations through the stormy seas of health care reform during the shift to value-based health care.

The *Becker’s Hospital Review* editorial team selected leaders through an editorial review process that included considering nominations, reviewing prior lists from the publication and conducting editorial research.

“We certainly feel that Linda is very deserving of this recognition, as she has guided our organization to a very solid financial position,” said Methodist Health System President and CEO John Fraser. “Her knowledge of the health care industry and her strategic financial decisions have steered this organization through some rather challenging times.”

Burt has been the chief financial officer for Methodist Health System since 2008.

During her tenure, she has been integral in the implementation of an improved clinical documentation program resulting in substantial savings, restructured the finance division to enhance financial reporting, implemented a new patient accounting system and guided Methodist to an improved bond rating the past two years based on the organization’s financial stability.



Ribbon Cutting
for Gretna Clinic

Gretna’s newest business received a warm welcome from the Chamber of Commerce when ribbon cutting ceremonies were held recently at the Methodist Physicians Clinic Gretna location.

Community leaders, Methodist Health System leadership and members of the clinics’ medical team were all present. The clinic began seeing patients July 6.

“It is with great excitement that we hold this ribbon cutting for the new Methodist Physicians Clinic in Gretna,” said Methodist Health System President and CEO John Fraser. “Gretna is a growing, vibrant community with young families as well as many residents who have been in the community for generations. Our new clinic will offer a medical team well-versed in the health care needs of the entire community.”

Members of the Gretna business community and Chamber of Commerce turned out in full support of the ribbon cutting. Those present expressed their excitement for the new Methodist facility.

Methodist Physicians Clinic assembled an experienced and well-rounded medical team that will bring a vast amount of expertise to the residents of Gretna, while also providing care for the youngest to the oldest citizens in the community.

The medical team includes:

- Dr. Ryan Isherwood, family medicine
- Dr. Katrena Lacey, internal medicine/pediatrics
- Dr. Amber Cohn, OB/GYN
- Dr. Aimee Probasco, OB/GYN



Karla Perez's mother, Berta Jimenéz, holds miracle baby Angel Perez.



Karla Perez



Berta and Karla

KARLA'S Legacy

HER GIFT OF LIFE TO MIRACLE BABY ANGEL AND OTHERS

“Come back, Karla. Please open your eyes and come back to us.”

While pleading for their daughter to awaken, Berta and Modesto Jimenéz prayed and wept.

Their oldest child, Karla Perez, the 22-year-old mother of then-2-year-old daughter Genesis and unborn son Angel, had suffered a sudden catastrophic stroke.

As she lay silent in an intensive care bed, her every breath drawn by medical machinery, Karla was surrounded by the family who adored her: parents Berta and Modesto Sr.; partner Juan; brother Modesto Jr.; and sisters Emily and Gaby. All kept praying for a miracle.

Today, Karla's legacy lives on in miraculous ways. Karla has touched countless lives and given the gift of life to others, including Angel, her beloved son.

Karla: Laughing, Dancing, Giving

Those lucky enough to know Karla before tragedy struck, Berta explained, knew a lovely, vibrant, stylish young woman who was “always so happy, helpful and eager to dance.”

Berta, a Spanish speaker originally from Guatemala, spoke through an interpreter,

explaining that her family lived in California when Karla and her siblings were born, and later settled in Nebraska, where Karla attended Elkhorn High School.

“I don't have the words to say how special Karla has always been to me and others,” Berta said. “She had a truly kind and generous heart, always making time for family and friends, always noticing and finding ways to help if someone lost a job, needed encouragement or lacked food for their family.”

“I don't have the words to say how special Karla has always been to me and others.”

— Berta Jimenéz

Karla's love of children prompted her to work in a day care center. She would bring holiday trinkets to the poorest kids, telling Berta, “They have so little. This is what money is for.”

Karla's first pregnancy, Berta said, brought Karla and the family great joy.

“I don't know what I'd do without my daughter!” Karla would tell Berta. Karla loved putting Genesis in frilly outfits, letting her play dress-up in high heels, teaching her to dance and showing her how to be strong, yet kind.

Karla had a plan for their future. Berta said Karla had spoken of becoming a pediatric nurse.

Karla also hoped to have a son one day, telling Berta, “If I ever have a boy, I will name him Angel.”

Planning for Angel

Tiffany Somer-Shely, MD, an OB-GYN at Methodist Physicians Clinic Women's Center, cared for Karla during her first pregnancy and delivered Genesis at Methodist Women's Hospital.

“Karla was always very special and inspirational,” Dr. Somer-Shely said. “She had juvenile rheumatoid arthritis, a degenerative joint condition that causes pain and makes movement difficult, so Karla faced more hurdles than the average pregnant woman.”

Karla and her partner, Juan, met with Dr. Somer-Shely for preconception counseling in 2014. They were in love and very much wanted to have a baby. Karla was determined to live life fully, which meant love, laughter, dancing and another child — regardless of any personal discomfort.

“Karla was eager to go off her arthritis medications to have a healthy pregnancy,” Dr. Somer-Shely said, “and we had every reason to expect a second pregnancy would be as successful as her first.”



Karla with her daughter, Genesis



From left: Tiffany Somer-Shely, MD, Brady Kerr, MD, and Todd Lovgren, MD



Karla with her father, Modesto Sr.

Soon Karla, Juan and the rest of the family were overjoyed, first by the news that Karla was pregnant and later to learn that she carried a son, the longed-for Angel.

Joy to Tragedy

On February 8, 2015, in her 22nd week of pregnancy, Karla had an intense headache. That evening, when she suddenly lost consciousness, the family called 911, and an ambulance brought her to the Methodist Women's Hospital emergency department.

Within 30 minutes, a CT scan revealed an intracranial hemorrhage, Karla was put on a ventilator to protect her airway, and she was transferred by ambulance to the Methodist Hospital ICU for neurosurgical evaluation.

Karla had suffered a stroke, a catastrophic brain bleed that cut off the blood supply to her brain.

Andrew Robertson, MD, FACOG, director of the Methodist Perinatal Center, was the maternal-fetal medicine specialist on call that night.

"Karla's condition was grim," Dr. Robertson explained. "We don't know why she had the brain bleed, which was unrelated to her arthritis, but the massive hemorrhage quickly did so much damage her condition was not recoverable. Sadly, this was clinical brain death."

The laughing, dancing, joy-filled Karla her family and many friends knew so well was gone.

Caring for Karla and Angel

Todd Lovgren, MD, FACOG, another of Methodist Perinatal Center's eight maternal-fetal medicine specialists, first saw Karla the morning of February 9. He felt an immediate connection to this woman and her family.

Dr. Lovgren and his wife, parents of four young children, had lost their first daughter during delivery. The loss shaped his choice of specialty and approach to medical practice, inspiring him to find ways to make difficult birth experiences less traumatic.

Dr. Lovgren knew that Karla's body was stable on life support due to the quick, expert actions of the Methodist staff. He also knew that her stunned, grieving family could not yet understand what had happened nor imagine what might lie ahead.

"Of course, we kept evaluating Angel," Dr. Lovgren said. "There was little we could do to help Karla, but we still had a patient to save."

A multidisciplinary staff meeting was called to create a care plan in keeping with the

family's wishes. Nearly three dozen health care professionals from Methodist Hospital and Methodist Women's Hospital met to evaluate medical and ethical options.

"Our immediate concern was Angel's gestational age, because a 22-week-old fetus cannot survive outside the womb," Dr. Lovgren said. "Angel needed to reach a minimum of 24 weeks before delivery. Getting him there, given Karla's massive neurological injuries, was something we had never done before, but we were certainly willing to try if the family wanted."

The life support needed to sustain Karla and her pregnancy, called somatic support, is attempted very rarely. Since 1982, only 33 cases worldwide have been reported in medical literature of women kept on somatic support until delivery, resulting in just 15 live births.

That evening, after studying the literature, neonatologist Brady Kerr, MD, a member of the Methodist Women's Hospital NICU team, came away convinced they had a good chance to help Angel become Number 16.

"We deal with tiny preemies on the edge of viability all the time," Dr. Kerr said.

A conference was held with family members to carefully explain Karla's condition and be sure they understood the potential risks and benefits of somatic care. The family asked that everything possible be done to prolong Karla's life to save Angel.

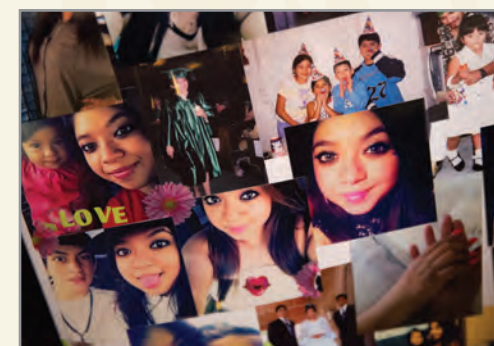
"Saving Angel," Dr. Lovgren told the team, "means doing what we do for our other pregnant moms with other complications: mobilizing all the resources necessary."

Those resources include physicians, nurses, pharmacists, technicians, social workers, chaplains, interpreters, reception staff and other team members sharing their expertise and compassion to make a difficult journey easier.

Caring for Family

"While the medical piece was very important and especially difficult in this case," said Methodist Women's Hospital medical social worker Jessica Winternheimer, "we can never lose sight of the human component, and that means taking care of the family."

Dr. Somer-Shely came to Karla's bedside at Methodist Hospital that first morning and returned that night with a care package of toiletries and comfort foods. She knew the family would be reluctant to leave Karla's side in the wake of this unexpected tragedy. She checked on Karla and the family daily.



Berta brought images of Karla's life and loved ones to her bedside.

"Mainly, I was there to help the family," Dr. Somer-Shely said. "All non-medical people struggle to understand what's happening in a critical care situation, and the nuances can be hard to capture in translation."

Methodist routinely connects to live interpreters 24/7 through a web-based service called MARTTI, My Accessible Real-Time Trusted Interpreter. Given the complexity of Karla's situation, arrangements were made to also bring in a local interpreter, a specialist in medical translation, who became an invaluable member of the care team.

Constantly Changing Care

When the essential 24-week viability milestone was reached, Karla was transferred to the Methodist Women's Hospital ICU to keep Angel close to the level III NICU.

"A significant neurological injury like Karla's leaves the body unregulated," Dr. Lovgren said. "All systems are affected, including respiration, heart rate, blood pressure, electrolytes, hormones and temperature."

On a daily basis, 20 to 25 staff members were involved in Karla's and Angel's constantly changing care. The maternal-fetal specialists led the team.

In essence, Dr. Robertson explained, "We were trying to be Karla's brain, adjusting our care over time to do what her brain could not. A pregnancy at 22 weeks is totally different from one at 24 or 30 weeks. Each requires very different care."

The three biggest worries remained infection, a blood clot or an abnormal heart rhythm leading to heart attack.

"If Karla went into cardiac arrest, we had at most five minutes to deliver Angel alive," Dr. Somer-Shely said, "so those of us involved in his delivery carried special pagers with the emergency code to report to Karla immediately."

The ICU room next to Karla's was kept fully equipped for an emergency delivery, and a C-section kit and neonatal resuscitation unit were ready near her bedside.

Every additional day of gestation gave Angel a better chance at life, fewer complications of prematurity and a brighter future. Every night Dr. Somer-Shely lay awake wondering, "Is tonight the night?"

A Mother's Love and Hope

Day and night, through tears and heartache, Berta stayed at her daughter's side. She never stopped hoping and praying for a miracle.

At both hospitals, chaplains from Pastoral Services were there to support the family and their faith, offering a supportive presence, words of comfort and a rosary, Spanish New Testament and handmade prayer shawl for Berta.

When Chaplain Barbara Todd asked Berta what they could pray for that day, Berta often would say, "For Karla to get up and be healthy again. I talk to her every day like she's going to wake up."

Karla's caregivers did too. Physicians and nurses greeted Karla and chatted while gently explaining each touch, test and step in her care.

"We treated Karla like any other patient in our care. We treated her like the person she was," Dr. Lovgren said. "Why wouldn't we?"

Karla's ICU nurses from Methodist Hospital traveled to care for her at the Women's Hospital. One of those nurses was Sarah Lane, BSN, RN, who had just returned from maternity leave.

"Here was a young pregnant mom with a child at home and the nicest family," Sarah said. "She had so much to live for, so much she would miss."

Emphasizing "what an amazing mom Berta is," Sarah teared up at memories of Berta filling the hospital room with family photos, lovingly placing a rosary or prayer stone in Karla's hand, painting Karla's nails and helping the nurses wash Karla's beautiful long hair. Together, they made sure Karla looked as much like Karla as possible.

"There is a scientific side and a very personal side to brain death," Sarah said. "We'd grasp onto our hopes for Angel to keep us together, both family and staff. Angel was the positive light at the end of the tunnel."

As Angel grew, Karla's abdomen swelled with size and movement. Family members tenderly kissed Karla's belly as they spoke to mother and child.

ICU nurse, Katie Pistillo, BSN, RN, described the situation as "very tough and very humbling,



Berta and Modesto Sr. hold Angel in the Methodist Women's Hospital NICU.

because tragedy can happen to any of us. Through it all, the family stayed strong spiritually and emotionally.”

“You never imagine something like this will happen,” Berta said. “It was all very hard, but I knew I had to be strong for my family.”

“Where’s My Mommy?”

At home, little Genesis kept asking, “Where’s my mommy?”

Berta said, “When she asked, we would answer, ‘At the hospital,’ and she’d say, ‘Let’s go to the hospital to see my mommy.’”

When Berta and Modesto brought Genesis to visit Karla, the sheets were tucked to hide much of the medical equipment while allowing Genesis to gently touch her mother’s face and hands.

“OK, Mommy, let’s go now,” Genesis urged. Through their tears, Berta and Modesto explained that Mommy was asleep, very sick and could not go.

Karla’s caregivers looked for ways to help Genesis. Dr. Somer-Shely and her staff sought out Spanish-language children’s books about loss, including *Wherever You Go, My Love Will Follow*.

When a nurse suggested “heartbeat bears,” staff members sprang into action. Dr. Lovgren carefully recorded Karla’s and Angel’s heartbeats, each on a paw-sized audio file. Chaplain Todd had the files installed in Build-A-Bear Workshop stuffed bears, which were given at the family’s baby shower for Angel held at Methodist Women’s Hospital.



Now, whenever Genesis presses her bear’s paw, she hears Karla’s heartbeat and says, “That’s my mommy.”

Other treasured keepsakes given to the family include impressions made from Karla’s hands, feet and lips labeled “Kisses from Mommy” and “Mommy’s Special Touch.” A scrapbook made by Dr. Somer-Shely captured milestones, memories and well-wishes from the many staff members who had grown so close to the family.

“We built a relationship with the family at a time when the hospital became their home,” said ICU



Karla with her brother, Modesto Jr.

nurse Jeana Westover, BSN, RN, CCRN. Jeana brought in filled Easter baskets for the family’s youngest children to make sure the Easter Bunny would not miss an annual appearance.

Caring for Staff, Too

“The staff responded in uniquely caring ways to Karla and her family,” Chaplain Todd said. “Whether involved in one tiny thing or an ongoing role, everyone felt it was a privilege to help this family. No one hesitated to step forward and be involved.”

The likelihood of a deep emotional impact on staff was recognized at Karla and Angel’s initial care planning conference and continues to be addressed today.

“When someone needed to sit and talk, we sat and talked. We still do,” said Chaplain Todd. “We always have someone here, chaplains and others, for the emotional needs of our staff.”

Expressing the heartbreak in a single sentence, ICU nurse Danielle Bryant, BSN, RN, said: “It’s hard to see a mother and child so close to each other, but never to meet.”

The staff held frequent team meetings to refine the collaborative effort to help Karla, her family and one another along an unprecedented journey.

“Staff came together to smooth the bumps in the road and talk through the things that went right,” Chaplain Todd said. “Every piece of medical care and family support was important, every team member was needed, and all perspectives were spoken and heard as we looked for the best, most sensitive and helpful options.”

Berta spoke of the family’s deep appreciation.

“All of the hospital personnel have been so wonderful,” Berta said. “I feel they’ve gone through everything we’ve gone through — especially Dr. Lovgren. He would cry with us. He felt the pain we felt.”

Pinpointing one of Methodist Women’s Hospital’s greatest strengths, Dr. Lovgren said, “It is unique to have a medical team like ours, trained at internationally known institutions, practicing at the highest level of any major city’s university medical center, and still functioning as a family to truly care for families.”

The goal that kept everyone going, ICU nurse Amber Fuller, BSN, RN, said, was bittersweet: “We couldn’t fix or change what had happened to Karla, but we could help Angel be born.”

Angel’s Birthday

Karla’s condition gradually deteriorated over her nearly two-month hospital stay. Eventually, when the risks to Angel outweighed the benefits of continuing the pregnancy, a C-section delivery was scheduled.

On April 4, with Berta and Modesto next to Karla, Angel entered the world. He was born at 30 weeks and 3 days gestation, weighing 2 pounds, 12.6 ounces.

“Angel’s cry was the sweetest sound,” Dr. Lovgren said. “It was good to be able to give the family that piece of Karla.”

Finally, Berta and Modesto could meet their beloved grandson.

“Angel was so sweet, so tender,” Berta said. “His big, big eyes are just like his mom’s. He looks exactly like his mom did as a baby.”

Modesto accompanied little Angel and his medical team to the NICU, while Berta stayed by Karla’s side. After 54 days on life support, Karla had given life to her precious Angel.

Miracle Baby, Normal Premie

Angel Perez, the world’s 16th baby born alive after somatic support during pregnancy, and the first in the U.S. since 1999, was a miracle baby.

He was also, Dr. Kerr explained, “a rather normal premie for his age, requiring fairly routine care.”

As a neonatologist, Dr. Kerr credits Angel’s safe arrival and good health to exceptional teamwork, reserving his highest praise for the maternal-fetal medicine specialists who brought Karla into her 30th week of pregnancy.

“They did a remarkable job, making our job relatively easy. We expect a 30-weeker to do well in our NICU, and Angel has done well,” Dr. Kerr said. “While we must be cautious about predicting his future due to the rarity of this situation, all test results give us reason to be optimistic.”

“Karla isn’t gone completely. She lives on in others.”

— Berta Jimenéz

Angel had to achieve three goals before he could leave the NICU: self-regulation of body temperature to transition from a heated incubator to a crib, breathing without a nasal device and learning to eat by mouth.

Every day, for every goal, Berta was there with lullabies, kisses, tales of the family so eager to bring Angel home — and endless stories about his mom.

Soft cotton cloths that nurses had placed against Karla’s skin to pick up her scent were nestled



close to Angel, with the familiar sound of his mother’s heartbeat available at the touch of a stuffed bear’s paw.

Karla’s Legacy

“You never imagine this,” Berta said. “We expect our children will bury us, not that we will bury our kids.”

Several days after Angel’s birth, Karla was declared legally brain dead, and, in keeping with her wishes, her organs were donated so others might live. Four lives were renewed through the gifts of Karla’s heart, liver and two kidneys.

“I taught my children it is good to give someone else life,” Berta said. “Karla isn’t gone completely. She lives on in others.”

On June 9, Angel went home, where in keeping with his father’s wishes, he is growing up under the tender care of his maternal grandparents, uncle, aunts and big sister.

When Angel is older, the family will explain why his birth and homecoming made headlines around the world, earning a place in medical journals. For now, they will make sure he knows that he has always been very special and very loved — as his mother has always been, too.

“Genesis will remember her mom, but, of course, Angel won’t,” Berta said. “So we will teach him.”

Story by Julie Cerney

Donating Life

When an organ recovery is in progress at a Methodist Health System hospital, a “Donate Life” flag flies to honor the donor’s compassion and selflessness.

The flag first flew over Methodist Women’s Hospital in April 2015, when Karla Perez gave the ultimate gift to renew the lives of four people. Karla’s wish to create this legacy was fulfilled through the close collaboration of medical teams at Methodist Women’s Hospital and the Nebraska Organ Recovery System (NORS).

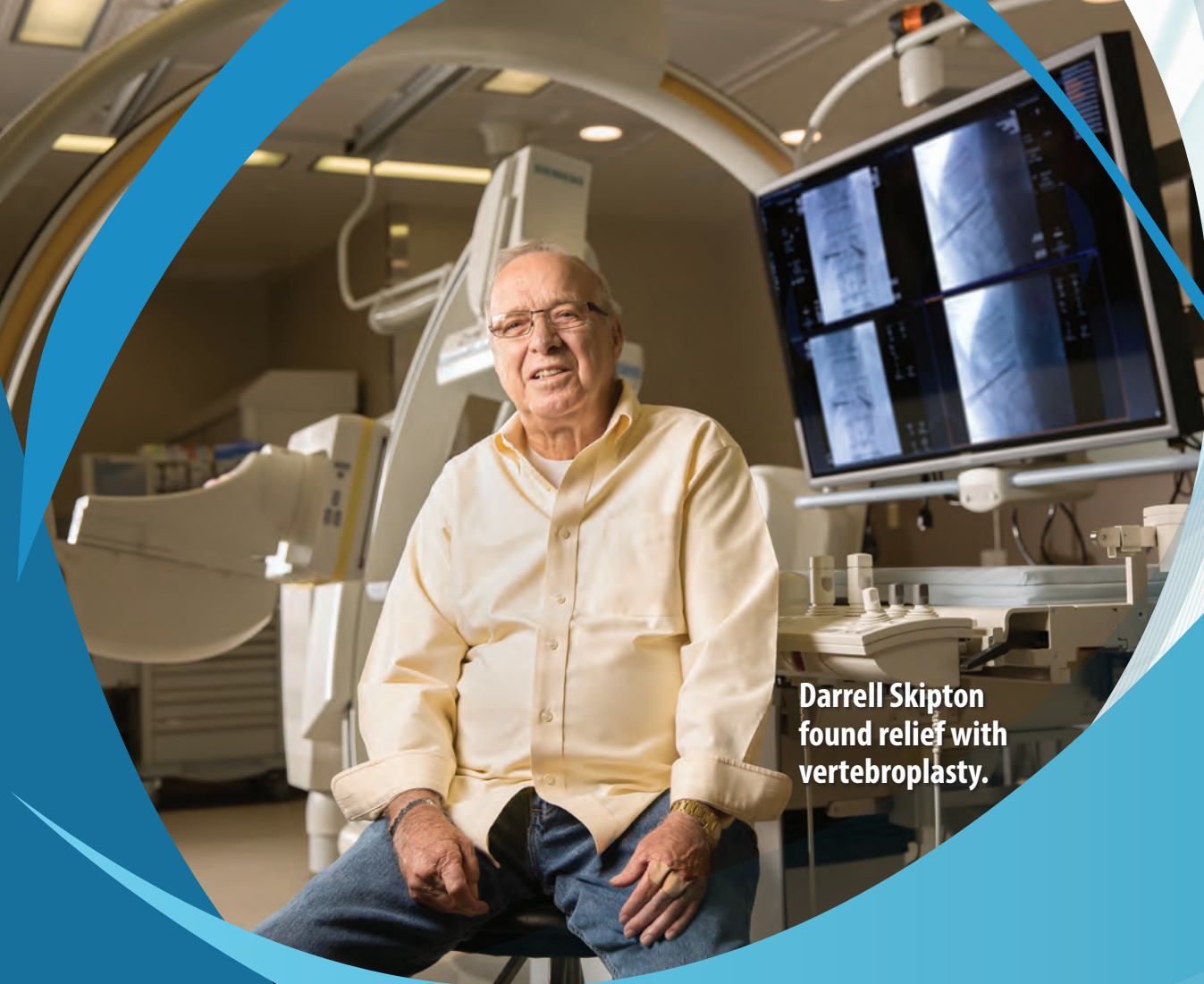
NORS Clinical Services Manager Jessica Roth, BSN, RN, CPTC, described the collaboration as “a fine balance of care to sustain Karla and her baby, always seeking the best outcome for them, regardless of whether a donation might result.”

NORS presented its Green Cape Award, given to those who work as “superheroes” to protect the donation process, to Dr. Todd Lovgren, citing “his compassion for both Karla and her family at every step of the way” and “his great respect for Karla and her desire to bring life to this world, both before and after her death.”

Karla Perez Memorial Fund

The Karla Perez Memorial Fund has been established to assist the family, and donations can be made at any Wells Fargo Bank.

ADVANCED Technology AND EXPANDED SPACE ENHANCE PATIENT CARE



**Darrell Skipton
found relief with
vertebroplasty.**

Sitting in front of the
high-definition monitor on his
desk, Paul Christy, MD, looks at a
scan of his patient's intricate circulatory system.

With the click of a mouse, he moves the crystal-clear image in every direction — up, down and around — taking a 3-D glance at the blood vessels that need his attention and expertise.

"We can do a road map of the vessels in 3-D. We can rotate the computer image so we see the arteries from any desired angle," said Dr. Christy, an interventional radiologist at Methodist Hospital. "Normally, with 2-D imaging, we can't always tell the exact position of the artery in space, but now we can manipulate the image to see whatever we want."

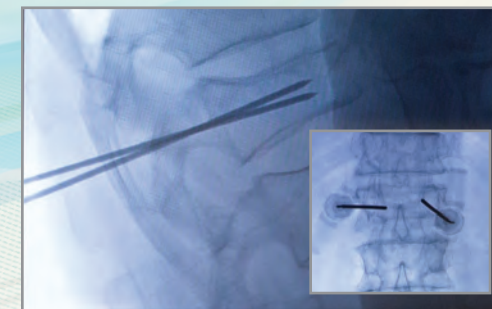
It's the stuff science fiction is made of, and it's in use every day at Methodist Hospital. Thanks to the addition of a new state-of-the-art imaging system called the Siemens Artis zee biplane DynaCT, and a

newly renovated
interventional
radiology space, doctors
now use high-end image-
guided therapy to help
patients feel better faster,
and do so more safely.

The Right Angle

"The machine allows us to look from several angles at once," said Pam Douglass, interventional radiology supervisor at Methodist Hospital. "There's both a lateral plane C-arm — which allows us to visualize from the side — and what we call an AP plane, which allows us to look from the front. Viewing the patient from both angles at once allows us to see better and also reduce radiation exposure to the patient."

Interventional radiology procedures are minimally invasive and can be done in place of surgery, reducing risk of infection and shortening recovery time. In some cases, like 77-year-old Darrell Skipton's, interventional radiology offers treatment when surgery isn't even an option.



**High-definition images help guide Darrell Skipton's
vertebroplasty procedure.**

In May, Darrell was toting his overloaded, heavy garbage can out to the curb when he lost control of the can and it fell on top of him. The massive load fractured vertebrae in his back, leaving him in excruciating pain.

"Dr. Christy gave me two options," said Darrell. "One was just to leave it alone and it will eventually heal itself over two to three

months, or I could have this procedure. That's what we did and I'm so thankful. I could tell the difference right away. I didn't have that pain anymore."

"Vertebroplasty is one of the most miraculous procedures we do," said Dr. Christy. The procedure is performed by injecting bone cement right into a patient's spine to stabilize fractures. "Patients come in with excruciating back pain, and by the time they wake up it's all better. It's really dramatic."

"Without the surgery," said Darrell, "I don't even want to think of where I'd be."

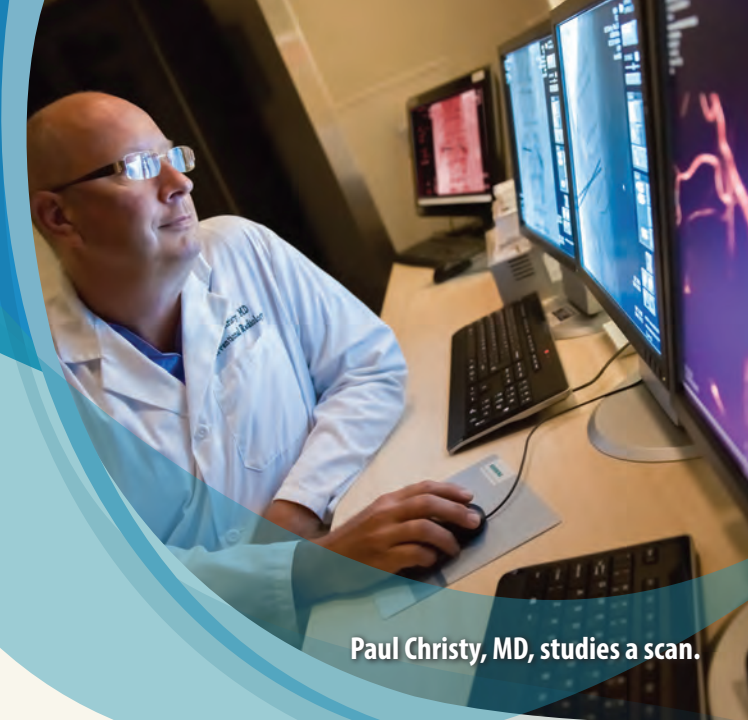
Precise Treatment

Interventional radiology can diagnose and treat a wide variety of conditions — from vascular disease to plantar fasciitis, migraine headaches and even cancer. Where surgery is not possible to remove liver tumors, the advanced imaging technology available through interventional radiology paves the way for what's called Y-90 selective internal radiation therapy. It allows doctors to pinpoint radiation therapy right to the source of tumors that are otherwise untreatable.

"We block the blood vessels to the tumors and put in a treatment to help shrink them," said Douglass. "The machine helps us pinpoint and visualize right where we need to be without ever having to move the patient."

The renovation of the procedure room space also offers doctors the technology to seek the expertise of other physicians without ever leaving the room.

"The larger and modernized area is a result of better use of what was once our existing



Paul Christy, MD, studies a scan.

space," said Jennifer Brase, service executive for diagnostic imaging services at Methodist Health System. "Our new procedure area, while much bigger, also will enhance our patient monitoring abilities and incorporates patient safety features, similar to an operating room."

**"I could tell the
difference right
away. I didn't have
that pain anymore."**

— Darrell Skipton

The new space and the improved technology allow physicians to care for patients like Darrell in a more efficient manner, while still providing the outstanding care they have to come to expect at Methodist.

"I haven't met anyone at Methodist who wasn't friendly and helpful. It's just a good place," said Darrell. "On a scale of one to 10, our experience with Methodist was a 10."

 **Story by Katina Granger**

SURVIVING CANCER WITH A *Smile*



Cheryl Stevens wears
a lot of different hats.
Literally and figuratively.

Most of them are colorful, quirky or otherwise simply laughable. But that is exactly the point.

“You put a silly hat on, and you have no choice but to laugh,” said Cheryl, a breast cancer survivor who used the power of laughter to ease her treatment. Scrapbooks of her cancer journey are filled with photographs of her wearing costumes and wigs to chemotherapy, and notes of encouragement from friends and family.



Flamingos for Hope founder Cheryl Stevens inspires survivors to face their cancer journeys with humor and a smile.

A Dash of Humor

“Humor has always been my defense, so being able to take an awful situation and laugh about it or make light of it helped,” said Cheryl, who now uses the healing power of humor to help others.

She founded Flamingos for Hope, a group of cancer survivor-volunteers who bring laughter

and light each month to the Methodist Estabrook Cancer Center. (Flamingos stands for **F**riends **L**aughing, **A**chieving **M**iracles, **I**nspiring and **N**urturing **G**ifts, **O**ffering **S**mile.)

“I think having a positive attitude is the preferred way to go, as is having that sense of ownership of your treatment,” said Timothy Huyck, MD, a hematologist-oncologist at Nebraska Cancer Specialists located at Methodist Estabrook Cancer Center. “That mentality is pivotal in getting through the day-to-day grind of treatment.”

While attitude has not been found to have an impact on survival of the disease, health care providers say it does have an impact on survivorship — the ability to live life to its fullest during and after diagnosis and treatment.

“Nobody wants to be told they have cancer and have to undergo surgery or chemotherapy or radiation to treat their cancer,” said Dr. Huyck, “but what I encourage patients to do is to say, ‘We have a diagnosis, and it sucks.’ Let’s acknowledge it, understand what it is, evaluate the treatment options and go forward.”

That’s not to say there won’t be difficult times. Every cancer survivor struggles with the emotional side of a devastating diagnosis. There are feelings of sadness, loss, grief, fear and anxiety — not to mention the side effects of chemotherapy and illness itself — which make maintaining a positive attitude difficult at times. It’s all a normal part of learning to cope with unexpected major life changes.

“You put a silly hat on, and you have no choice but to laugh.”

— Cheryl Stevens

“You’re going to have good days and bad days. It’s OK to cry and grieve. That doesn’t mean you’re weak or you’re not coping,” said Kevin Keeley, CMSW, LMHP, a behavioral health counselor at Methodist Estabrook Cancer Center. “No one plans to get cancer and have to go to radiation treatment daily. It’s something you need to grieve, but we don’t need to grieve all the time.”

“I encourage patients to voice their frustration and voice their anxieties. Those who do seem to do better,” said Dr. Huyck. “When you have a sense of control it helps you face what you’re dealing with and feel more hopeful you will succeed.”

“Survivorship is in developing a new normal with cancer having been part of your life,” said Keeley. “That doesn’t mean this new normal has to be less than your old normal. There’s no reason why it can’t be just as good or even better, but it is going to be different.



Timothy Huyck, MD

Find the road map by tapping into those things that bring positive energy into your life.”

Living with Positive Energy

Cheryl is doing just that. While her cancer is gone, her journey through survivorship continues. Once a month she leads the Flamingos through the Methodist Estabrook Cancer Center to share laughter and smiles with those still undergoing treatment. Supported by Harper’s Hope, a program of services available to all cancer survivors, created through a special gift from The Harper Family Foundation, the Flamingos have one goal: to enrich the quality of life of those touched by cancer through inspiration, fun and laughter.

“I’m passionate about giving people that chance to have a warm fuzzy during their treatment,” said Cheryl. “It takes their minds off the cancer for a little bit, and it’s just very rewarding. It makes me happy.”

♥ Story by Katina Granger

Cheryl brings fun and laughter to staff and patients.





Methodist Women's Hospital – *Growing Need* NICU Expansion Project

Taryn French



**Taryn was born 14 weeks premature
at 1 pound, 15 ounces, and spent
76 days in the NICU.**

Just five years after opening its doors, Methodist Women's Hospital needs more space.

The Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) is exceeding room capacity more than 90 percent of the time. As a result, a capital campaign called Everyday Miracles is underway to raise the \$19.3 million needed to expand the unit.

With its unique female focus, Methodist Women's Hospital is attracting patients from a five-state area. The state-of-the-art facility is the only one of its kind in the region. The NICU is an important part of the mission: providing family-centered care.

The NICU cares for some of the tiniest, most vulnerable patients. These are babies who need specialized care, often because they are born too soon and too small. Premature birth is the number one cause of death among newborns.

Kelli French never thought she would spend time in the NICU. Her life changed during a shopping trip when she just didn't feel right. She was rushed to Methodist Women's Hospital 26 weeks pregnant and gave birth to Taryn a few hours later.

Fourteen weeks premature and weighing in at less than two pounds, Taryn fought to survive.

Her lungs weren't developed, so a ventilator breathed for her. Neonatologists gave her lifesaving medicine and blood transfusions.

"It was awe-inspiring to experience the milestones that would normally be happening in my womb," said Kelli. "It's like watching a miracle."

This year alone, nearly 800 babies like Taryn will be cared for in the Methodist Women's Hospital NICU, the most relied upon and fastest-growing NICU in the region.

And the need keeps expanding, in part because of the more than 5,000 babies projected to be born at Methodist in 2015. In addition, Methodist Women's Hospital Perinatal Center has the area's largest group of doctors specializing in high-risk pregnancies.

The Everyday Miracles campaign will nearly double NICU capacity (from 28 private beds to 51). It will also add enhanced family space and new lifesaving technology to give more critically ill babies like Taryn a chance at a healthy life.

For other NICU success stories and to see the expansion plans, go to MethodistHospitalFoundation.org.

The 1891 Society

Named for the year in which Methodist Hospital was established, the 1891 Society recognizes the current giving of loyal donors who support the programs and projects of Methodist Hospital Foundation. We thank the following friends who have made a gift between **February 1, 2015, and June 30, 2015.**

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Our friends who wish to remain anonymous.



Kelli and Taryn



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