Foundation for Better Health

Essex Adult Primary Care expansion underway

Primary care is taking a big step forward in Essex.

At a ceremonial groundbreaking held August 22, this was apparent from the newly emerging foundation of a 12,500-square-foot building that will serve as UVM Medical Center’s expanded adult primary care practice at Route 15 and Essex Way.

A bigger physical footprint isn’t the only change: The practice will expand its reach with a team-based approach to health care, capacity for telemedicine and space that’s designed to meet the needs of patients and staff.

Taken together, the features of the new Essex facility will serve as an example of a primary care model that emphasizes population health management.

“It really is true that the foundation for better health for our patients starts with primary care,” said Jennifer Gilwee, MD, division chief for General Internal Medicine and Geriatrics at UVM Medical Center.

“We’ve been providing really good primary care,” Gilwee told providers, community members and media gathered under a white tent at the construction site. “This is just going to make it a little easier.”

Continued on page 2.
The new, energy-efficient Essex clinic will replace an outdated facility on Main Street in Essex Junction. It will feature two additional exam rooms and will be nearly twice the size of the current practice.

That facility “didn’t meet the current needs for the population that we’re serving and didn’t meet our promise of keeping people in Vermont as healthy as possible,” said Stephen Leffler, MD, UVM Medical Center interim president.

Leffler noted that, as a medical student, he did a rotation at Essex Primary Care in the late 1980s. But things have changed dramatically since then, Leffler said, and the current focus is on offering patients a variety of services including nutrition advice, behavioral health treatment and chronic disease management.

“I’m so happy to say this space is going to be much larger,” Leffler said. “It’s going to offer the opportunity for true, team-based care. And it’s also going to improve access.”

A bus stop in front of the building will enhance patient access. Essex Selectboard Chair Elaine Haney also noted the new practice’s proximity to senior housing.

“The expanded variety of services being offered, from wellness to mental health counseling, will help address the entire spectrum of health care needs.”

Essex Primary Care staff will have more room and capacity to meet those needs. Sarah Bushweller, PA, said the new Essex office will have consistent, uninterrupted Wi-Fi for telemedicine consultations with patients.

For in-person visits, staff will be able to “see patients in the right-size rooms that are set up for wheelchairs, assistive devices and being able to access equipment without having to squeeze around the patient sitting on the exam table,” Bushweller said.

The new Essex facility is expected to open in spring 2020.
In case you missed it, read Dr. Leffler’s thoughts regarding the recent action taken by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office for Civil Rights, Conscience and Religious Freedom Division.

Last week, UVM Medical Center became the focus of a challenging national discussion about protecting the religious and ethical beliefs of individual health care providers while meeting the medical needs of our patients. Right now, the spotlight is on abortion, but this issue includes procedures like life support, blood transfusions, organ transplants, and sterilizations and extends to patients and employees of many faiths, genders and sexual orientations. The challenge with this discussion is that it’s not simple and the perspective can change depending upon who you ask.

I want to take this opportunity to offer my perspective and share with you what I can.

First and foremost, it’s important for you to know that our legal team investigated the allegations made by a former employee. I can’t go into specifics, but based upon what we know of the procedure, and the interviews we conducted, the facts simply do not support what has been said publicly. On multiple occasions, we attempted to speak to HHS about the accusations, to no avail, and regrettably they’ve chosen the court of public opinion.

As an ER doc, I’m no stranger to difficult cases that come through our doors. Some have stuck with me to this day. Some brought me to tears then, and some still do thinking about them now. I’m sure that each of you, regardless of what you do or your level of interaction with patients, have had your own similar moments. When each of us joined the UVM Medical Center team, which I consider to be truly special, we did it to better the lives of our patients who come to us for expertise — and in some cases, to save their lives.

So I am sympathetic and understanding of our employees and staff who wrestle with their personal beliefs and the demands of their profession. That’s why it was so important to develop a policy that both respects those individual beliefs and protects the patients who trust us with their health and access to safe, legal treatment. A team representing many different parts of our organization, including a patient and family advisor, physician and nurse leaders, and HR tackled this challenging topic to create the thoughtful policy we have today. It abides by federal law and is in line with similar policies from health systems across the country.

The policy states that anyone employed by UVM Medical Center may request to be excused from procedures that go against their ethical and religious beliefs. We work hard every day to make sure we respect and honor their wishes — that’s our goal 100% of the time. But as the state’s only academic, tertiary care center, the world can change in seconds and in the face of all of our best laid staffing plans. Our policy takes into account these

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FACES
of The University of Vermont Medical Center

TARA PACY
Director, Emergency Care & Access Services
Nursing Administration
“Right time, right place, closest to home, with the appropriate Network resources—I am honored to be a part of an organization and Network that strives to exceed expectations.”
situations — and above all else, when there are no other staffing options, our obligation is to our patient.

We stand by our policy. Although we always seek to improve both our policies and our practices, we won’t be forced into going against what we believe is the right thing to do, which is providing safe and legal health care to those who need us while respecting our employees’ deeply held beliefs. Anything less undermines our purpose and mission as an institution.

We should all be proud of our service to our patients. It’s why we chose this profession. I’m honored to work side by side with over 8,000 of my fellow coworkers, many of whom I’m proud to call friends, who share vastly different beliefs, backgrounds, and life experiences. That’s what makes this a special place.

In the meantime, I’d like to thank you for your commitment to our patients, to this organization, and to each other.

Read below the official response from leaders of the Vermont House of Representatives and State Senate in support of UVM Medical Center.

HOUSE AND SENATE LEADERS RESPONSE TO HHS OFFICE OF CIVIL RIGHTS ANNOUNCEMENT

September 4, 2019

We object to the Trump Administration’s persistent efforts to limit women’s access to reproductive healthcare. Their recent cherry-picked enforcement action against the University of Vermont Medical Center is nothing more than an ideological stunt intended to intimidate medical providers around the country.

We have reviewed UVMMC’s detailed policies which promote safe, legal and high quality medical care, while also protecting their employees’ right to opt out of procedures they object to on ethical or religious grounds.

When the dust settles, this episode will register as just one more lowlight in President Trump’s war on women.

Speaker of the House, Mitzi Johnson

House Majority Leader, Jill Krowinski

Chair of House Committee on Human Services, Ann Pugh

Chair of House Committee on Judiciary, Maxine Grad

Senate President Pro Tempore, Tim Ashe

Senate Majority Leader, Rebecca Balint

Chair of Senate Committee on Health and Welfare, Ginny Lyons

Chair of Senate Committee on Judiciary, Dick Sears

Migraine Advocacy Event to Benefit Headache Center

Register to join us to walk, run, volunteer or cheer for the 2nd annual Miles for Migraine Burlington Event. All funds raised will benefit the UVM Medical Center Headache Center to support our headache fellowship program and local research. For more information, contact katie@milesformigraine.org

Date: Saturday, September 21

Time/Location: 9 a.m. at Veterans Memorial Park in South Burlington, VT
Tree of Life Honors Organ Donors

On what would have been their son Ben’s 28th birthday, Donna and Mike Andre traveled from their home in Brushton, NY, to the UVM Medical Center to help celebrate the installation of a new memorial honoring people whose gifts in death of organ and tissue donations have given life to so many others.

The brass sculpture, known as the Tree of Life, is mounted on the wall in a busy corridor on McClure 3. Eighty maple-shaped metal leaves cover the tree and 35 are currently inscribed with the names of an individual organ or tissue donor. More will be added over time and when all of the leaves are named, the oldest ones will be given to donors’ families so that the newest donors can be recognized.

“My husband and I cannot imagine a better way to spend this day,” Donna told the crowd of donor families, clinicians, hospital staff and special guests who gathered for the unveiling event. The Tree of Life serves as both a public commemoration of the donors and a tangible reminder to register as an organ and tissue donor, she said.

In Vermont, the number of registered organ and tissue donors has nearly doubled since 2013, when the Department of Motor Vehicles began proactively asking customers whether they wanted to become a donor when they applied for their driver’s licenses or renewals. Vermont now places in the top half of the nation in a ranking of designated donors per state, with 62 percent of its population registered.

New York is near the bottom of the national ranking with just 35 percent of its population registered. Donna has made it her mission to increase the number of registered donors in New York since her son Ben became an organ and tissue donor after his death in 2015. “We can only achieve removing stigma and achieving more organ donors if we talk about it and share our story,” she said. “We need to keep the gift of life growing.”

The family of Adam Reynolds found another way to encourage others to “Donate Life” by installing a hand-crafted bench outside the hospital with the message incorporated into the design. Danielle McCann-Tam said knowing her brother’s heart, lungs, liver and kidneys improved six lives was a bright spot in their loss.

Knowing that something good came from the death of their loved ones has proved comforting to many of the family members of organ and tissue donors who attended the Tree of Life event. In fact, one organ donor can save eight lives and help 75 more by donating tissue and corneas.

The Andres said they are blessed to have developed a friendship with the man who received son Ben’s heart. “He’s a big guy and he gives us big bear hugs,” Donna said. “He sent us a text message saying he’s thinking of us today.”

To register as an organ and tissue donor go to Donate Life Vermont or Donate Life New York.
Despite 90 degree temperatures kicking off a three-day heat wave, leaders from UVM Medical Center recently tied on their bandanas and buckled their tool belts to help build a house with Green Mountain Habitat for Humanity in the Old North End of Burlington.

“I’m hooked! Working together like this, we’re building on each other’s strengths and getting to see how other people across this organization work together,” said Julie Duchesneau, patient access supervisor.

Ten women from across UVM Medical Center joined in the spirit-building effort. For some, the work resonated on many levels. “I believe housing is such an integral and essential part of people’s lives to ensure they can work and raise their families,” said Susie Posner-Jones, Population Health director of development. “Being here today on this job site, it all comes full circle.”

The group of women, all eager to contribute to their community, signed up within an hour of the program’s announcement. At the work site they discovered an added bonus. “We found working together as a group of women was a great way to accomplish shared goals and learn new skills in a less intimidating environment,” said Lindsay Morse, director of care coordination and patient transitions.

“We’re able to contribute in a new way. There’s a gender barrier we create for ourselves. Men will sign up more often for these sorts of projects, but not because they have more skills than women”

LAURIE GUNN
CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE AND EXPERIENCE OFFICER

About the program

Women Build, a national annual event, encourages women who want to learn how to build and construct a home to volunteer to help build stronger, safer communities. Green Mountain Habitat for Humanity has been building simple, decent and affordable homes for low-income families in Chittenden County since 1984.

“We’re able to contribute in a new way,” said Laurie Gunn, chief administrative and experience officer. “There’s a gender barrier we create for ourselves. Continued on page 7.
Men will sign up more often for these sorts of projects, but not because they have more skills than women.”

While staining a fence in the shade of the newly constructed home, the women swapped helpful tips that they had learned just hours earlier.

“If you’re using a power tool up high, make sure you tie the two cords in a knot so that they don’t unplug from the weight of it hanging down to the ground,” said Gunn.

“It’s better to stain in the shade for a more even coat,” said Kelly Holland, manager of Patient Family Experience.

While cutting a fence post with a circular saw, Posner-Jones refined her technique by cantilevering the board for better support. “I texted my family and they said ‘Bring those skills home!’”

Thank you to our 2019 Women Build volunteers!

Laurie Gunn,
Chief Administrative and Experience Officer

Susie Posner-Jones,
Director of Development, Population Health

Kimberly Blaisdell Woods,
Manager, Rehabilitation Therapies

Kelly Evans,
Clinical Operations Nurse Manager

Kelly Holland,
Manager, Patient and Family Experience

Eve Johnson,
Manager, Nurse Workforce Management

Julie Duchesneau,
Patient Access Supervisor

Kelly Walters,
Community Health Improvement Supervisor

Lindsay Morse, Director of Care Coordination and Patient Transitions

Lisa Strate, Director of Nursing Education and Professional Development

Service to humanity is my philosophy of existence, of giving help, caring, thanking the neighbor unconditionally in a selfless, joyful and appreciative way, with the ideology of giving without expecting anything in return.

LUIS F. TORRES
Volunteer
Volunteer Services
‘Big Tiny Love’ Album Supports NICU Renovation

Elodie Joy Adler is just 3 years old, but she understands the basics of her premature birth: “You wanted me to stay in your belly, but I didn’t want to stay in your belly,” she tells her mother, Jaime Williams.

Williams was celebrating her 40th birthday at a surprise party thrown by her partner, Benjy Adler, when her water broke too soon. Elodie was born more than six weeks early, weighing only 4 and half pounds. She could breathe on her own, but she couldn’t stay awake long enough to eat, and needed several weeks at the UVM Children’s Hospital Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) before she was strong enough to go home.

Williams and Adler remember that time in the NICU with gratitude for the excellent care they received as well as an expanded empathy for the families they saw tending to newborns who were much sicker than Elodie. “It’s not a place you’d want to end up, but it was also a beautiful experience. I learned a lot and had my eyes opened,” Williams says. “Something about watching all of these vulnerable parents and infants made me want to do something to help.”

And so she conceived Big Tiny Love, a music compilation featuring some of Vermont’s most popular artists and bands, to support a planned renovation of the NICU that will provide more room and privacy for the 650 babies and families who are cared for each year. “The doctors and nurses work in tight spaces and make the very best with what they have, but their work would go even further with more space and resources,” Williams explains.

Francesca Blanchard signed on to record a lovely lineup of 14 original children’s songs and covers of classics.

Chris Dorman, who hosts the children’s TV show “Mr. Chris and Friends” on Vermont PBS, immediately agreed to write the title track, a soothing melody with affecting lyrics. Dorman and his twin sister were born 10 weeks early in 1982 and their survival was only possible because of recent innovations in health care. “I’m excited to be part of any effort that supports developments in helping little ones,”

Jackie Woodwell, events supervisor for UVM Medical Center Foundation, says both the funds and awareness generated by Big Tiny Love are a “super-impactful” combination for the UVM Children’s Hospital and the NICU. She adds: “It’s always inspiring when our patients and families give back to ensure that we can sustain the high level of care we provide, and also to make it better.”

The Big Tiny Love CD, released in November 2018, is available to download for $10 at www.bigtinylove.com. Sales are picking up, Williams says, adding that she raised $5,357.24 at the second-annual Big Tiny Love music festival held July 28 at Waterfront Park.
A Ray of Sunshine

When Patient Service Specialist Michael Ruiz is driving down 89 on his 40-minute commute from Highgate Center, he’s not wishing he were on vacation. “I love coming to work every day,” he says. “You make the job—it doesn’t make you.”

That job is far from where he started, on New York City’s upper west side. And it was love that ultimately brought him to northern Vermont, luring him from the fast pace of the Big Apple and a job at Weil Cornell Hospital. Once here, he got used to the comparative quiet of country life. A quintessential New Yorker, he learned to drive. Eventually, he landed at The Continence Center.

As a Patient Service Specialist, Michael greets patients, collects co-pays, helps patients with referrals, answers phones and “welcomes everyone with a smile.” For Michael, success on the job comes down to physics. “It’s the law of attraction,” he says. “What you put out there, you get back.”

And what he gets back is tremendously positive. Says Melissa Burbo, RN, “Michael is a compassionate, funny and positive person. In the time he’s been with our office, patients have gravitated towards him as if he has a special power. They love him, his laughter and his contagious smile, and we can’t forget his words of encouragement and peace.”

Michael has a unique ability to help patients feel at ease, says Melissa, using his sense of humor while also recognizing when they need to allow themselves to feel sad. “It’s not uncommon to see a patient at Michael’s desk,” she says, “with his hand on theirs, telling them it’s going to be okay. He gives personal attention as if you are the only patient that day.”

Of course, there are challenges every day. “Finding a way to serve our patients in a very busy practice is not always easy,” says Michael. “As a team, we work together to make sure we’re meeting their needs.”

And, for Michael, there’s joy in every aspect of his work. “I always say I found my family when I came here. There isn’t one day I take for granted.”

“Michael is the face of our clinic. When patients enter our reception area they are often nervous, sometimes embarrassed. Michael goes out of his way to make them feel less anxious, assist them with checking in and making follow-up appointments. We are so lucky to have Michael at our front desk.”

DIANA CHARLAND, MD
With Go-Live fewer than 90 days away, Team Epic is gearing up for training. Super Users will start classroom training in early September and the rest of Epic users will begin later in the month. There’s a lot you can do now to ensure that you hit the classroom ready to absorb as much as possible.

**HOW TO GET READY:**

- Informational sheets have been created for a number of areas/roles that explain some of the key changes. Your managers will share these with you or you can find them on the Team Epic Intranet.
- Watch the before-class videos for your assigned courses. These appear in Cornerstone, so log into the system and see which videos apply to your course or courses.
- Talk to your Super Users about the upcoming changes.
- Attend any available demos or drop-in sessions your colleagues offer.
- Verify when you’ve been scheduled for training and be sure to come to class on time and ready to learn.

**ONCE YOU ARE IN THE CLASSROOM:**

- Participate fully in your classroom training. Ask questions!
- Have an open mind and be prepared not to have all of your questions fully answered immediately during classroom training. We will track all questions and publish answers for your reference later.
- Complete your post-class practice exercises. Practice is what makes any team great!

More Information such as directions can be found on the Team Epic Intranet.

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**QUESTIONS ABOUT TRAINING?**
Email epictraining@uvmhealth.org.

**TRAINING LOCATIONS**

**Main Campus**
111 Colchester Avenue
Burlington, VT

- IT Learning Center
  2 classrooms
- West Pavilion
  3 classrooms

**25 New England Drive**
Essex Junction, VT

- 11 classrooms
Judy Davis, LNA, Receives Good Catch Award

Judy Davis, LNA, was familiarizing herself with the new tele-monitoring system at the nurse’s station on Miller 3 when she noticed that a patient’s SpO2 saturation was 70%. Judy asked an RN why this was not setting off alarms. Staff went to the bedside to assess the patient and found that her oxygen saturation was in the 70s, and they were able to quickly intervene. Further, they learned that in the Miller Building, when bedside alarms are shut off, alarms at the central monitoring station are also shut off. Turning off alarms at the bedside to decrease noise for the patient’s comfort in the previous unit did not turn off the alarms at the central monitor. Good catch, Judy!

Vermont Lung Center Team Receives Better Together Award

Recently members of the Department of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine, the Department of Medicine-Pulmonology and the Vermont Lung Center received the Better Together Award for the way they came together to honor the last wishes of two families with loved ones hospitalized at UVM Medical Center. Their efforts not only honored the families’ wishes in a meaningful way, but also enabled timely tissue collection.

Nicole Pace, RN, Receives Vision Award

Nicole Pace, RN, has received the Vision Award, in recognition of her knowledge, insight, dedication, professionalism and many contributions as nurse educator of the IV department. During her time with the department—less than one year—she has helped rewrite the central line policy, helped create training for IV nurses on US-guided IV placement, and more. Further, say her colleagues, “she handles any challenge that comes her way with grace and positivity.”
Kamal Bhattachan, Alexandra Polson, Receive DAISY Awards

We have two new DAISY Award winners: Kamal Bhattachan, RN and Alexandra Polson, RN. A few of Kamal and Alexandra's patients wrote eloquently about the care they received. Here are excerpts from their letters:

About Kamal
“Kamal Bhattachan embraces all the attributes and skills that make for an outstanding nurse, especially when dealing with the elderly population. The infection that our mother had produced an intense amount of pain and anxiety for her. In caring for her, Kamal demonstrated a high level of compassion and patience when delivering care to her. He talked and comforted her through her pain and anxiety, often holding her hand and talking calmly and soothingly to her in her moment of need. On top of the extraordinary care he provided our mother, he was also very considerate and patient with our family’s needs. The UVM Medical Center is blessed to have such a wonderful human being.”

About Alexandra
“Alex understands that the personal journey towards wellness is unique to each patient. She listens and supports. Alex cares about the desires of the patient and family and assists to meet the individual needs of the patient. She gives hope; she is knowledgeable. She never appears rushed, and takes the time to listen. She is true to her word, she gets back to you in a very timely manner. She supports patients outside of clinic visits by promptly getting back to them, and assists with symptom management. Her ability to help calm the chaotic world of cancer treatment is invaluable. In my first visit with her, I left with hope that this journey was possible.”
Surgical Tech Receives First BEE Award

Congratulations to Surgical Tech Jim Saunder, who has received our first BEE Award.

The BEE Award recognizes those individuals who go beyond expectations every day. Those eligible include all hospital employees who support patient care by working together with physicians and registered nurses to improve the physical, emotional and spiritual health of patients and their families.

Jim's colleagues described him as a conscientious person who makes patients feel comfortable. “This award makes me feel like my hard work means something,” he says, “and that I’m valuable to the team.”

The BEE award complements the Daisy Award, which recognizes nurses, because you cannot have daisies without the outstanding work of the honey bees.

Language Access and Communication Expo

When:
Friday, September 27
9–4 pm

Location: McClure Lobby Conference Room

UVM Medical Center Language Access and Communication Expo is a hands-on learning opportunity for physicians, providers, clinical and non-clinical staff and visitors. Join us to participate in a wide variety of experiential activities, including:

- Spanish-only and ASL-only “clinic” experiences
- Opportunities to learn fingerspelling and basic health-related signs
- Hands-on training with Video Remote Interpreting technology
- DeafBlindness simulations

The interactive design of the activities and the Expo makes a 30-minute experience commensurate with several hours of classroom or lecture-style learning.

We will serve a free Nepali buffet-style lunch. There will be raffle drawings with gifts that include tickets to the Flynn Theater, the Spirit of Ethan Allen Lake Champlain tour and more for attendees who visit 10 or more exhibits.

Questions?
Contact Lynette Reep, ASL Interpreter/Interpreter Coordinator at 847-0695 or lynette.reep@uvmhealth.org.

COMPLIANCE & PRIVACY DEPARTMENT INFORMATION

The UVM Medical Center has established a confidential disclosure mechanism through its Compliance and Privacy Hot Line, a toll-free telephone line, to enable employees, residents, staff and patients to report instances of noncompliance and/or make inquiries on compliance issues. The Compliance Hot Line can be reached at: (800) 466-7131 or (802) 847-9430, or via email at ComplianceOfficer@uvmhealth.org.