

UPDATE

from the CEO and Dean



PennState Health



PennState
College of Medicine

Penn State Health, Vision to Learn team up to provide children's eye exams



Inside Vision To Learn's mobile clinic, 8-year-old Gabriella Asadi undergoes an eye exam in the parking lot of Steelton-Highspire Elementary School.

Gabriella Asadi's school year is off to a much better start, thanks to the free vision testing and glasses she's getting from the Vision to Learn mobile eye clinic that visited Steelton-Highspire Elementary School in late August.

Penn State Health coordinated the effort to bring the Vision to Learn mobile eye clinic to Steelton-Highspire School District so that children like Gabriella can do better in school and in life.

"Gabriella was telling me she had headaches, and she couldn't see the board at school," said Adamaris Delgado, the 8-year-old girl's mother. "I had no idea what might be wrong."

Just as her mother was considering what to do, a letter came in the mail about the Vision Van visit. "I read the letter and thought, 'This is exactly what I need!'" Delgado said.

Several days later, Gabriella was inside the van, getting a vision test and picking colorful frames for the lenses that will bring her world back into focus.

More than 70 students received free eye exams from Penn State Health, Steelton-Highspire school nurses and the Vision to Learn staff, and 56 students will receive free glasses, delivered to them at their school.

Statistics say 88% of children's learning is obtained through vision – when children can see well, they can be more successful at school.

The van was secured with funding from the Association of Clinicians for the Underserved.

"Gabriella tells me, 'Mommy, I cannot wait for my glasses because I'll be able to see!' She is so excited," her mom says. "Penn State Health changed her life and my life too – because when my daughter is happier, I am happier."

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New leaders appointed within Penn State College of Medicine

Penn State College of Medicine has two new leaders: Dr. Sue Grigson is now chair of the Department of Neural and Behavioral Sciences and Joseph Doncsecz is interim associate vice president for finance and business.

Grigson, professor of neural and behavioral sciences, had been serving as interim chair of the department since October.

“Dr. Grigson is a highly collaborative, solution-oriented leader, known for bringing together basic scientists, clinicians and clinician-scientists to address issues,” said Dr. Kevin Black, interim dean. “The gifted neuroscientists and staff in her department serve as the basic science hub for neuroscience research, advancing our understanding of our nervous system.”

Doncsecz, who is associate vice president for finance and corporate controller for Penn State, began serving in his new interim role on Aug. 1.

“Joe’s significant finance and business experience, as well as his deep knowledge of the University’s mission and operations, will support the continued growth and stability of our College of Medicine during this time of transition,” Black said. “I am grateful for his willingness to serve in this role while we conduct a national search for a permanent associate vice president for finance and business.”



Penn State Health St. Joseph physician named 2019 Family Physician of the Year

Congratulations to Penn State Health St. Joseph physician Dr. Robert Hippert, who has been named 2019 Family Physician of the Year by the Pennsylvania Society of the American College of Osteopathic Family Physicians.

In bestowing the honor, the society noted that Dr. Hippert is “esteemed by his fellow physicians for outstanding service to his profession and community.”



Hippert has been on the active staff of Penn State Health St. Joseph Medical Center since 1987. He has served in a variety of leadership positions, including as president of the medical staff and a member of the Penn State Health St. Joseph Board of Directors. Hippert was the first president of Penn State Health Care Partners and continues as a member of the board and executive committee. He also is considered a respected mentor to St. Joseph Medical Center physician residents, as well as Penn State College of Medicine students.

Hampden construction underway, Lancaster hospital proposed

Steel beams are now in place at the site of the future Penn State Health Hampden Medical Center. Since March, crews have been working at the 44-acre site at the intersection of Good Hope and Wertzville roads near Interstate 81 in Hampden Township.

When completed in 2021, the \$200 million facility will feature 108 private inpatient beds, an emergency department, physician offices, various specialty inpatient services, imaging and lab services and complete medical and surgical capabilities.



Additionally, Penn State Health’s plans for a new hospital in Lancaster County took another step forward on Sept. 4 when East Hempfield Township Supervisors approved the preliminary site plan/conceptual master plan.

The township’s approval of the plan for 30 acres near the intersection of State Road and Harrisburg Pike is the first of many steps required before a final land development plan could be approved and facility work could begin. Penn State Health continues discussions with community providers to determine the services most needed in the region, and plans to seek additional input from homeowners.

Milton S. Hershey Medical Center named among nation's best – again



Penn State Health Milton S. Hershey Medical Center has again been listed among the best hospitals in the nation in multiple specialties by U.S. News & World Report. For 2019-20, the Milton S. Hershey Medical Center is ranked as one of the best in orthopedics and urology.

Additionally, Hershey Medical Center is recognized as “high performing” in seven specialties: cancer, cardiology and heart surgery, gastroenterology and GI surgery, geriatrics, nephrology, neurology and neurosurgery and pulmonology. Overall, U.S. News & World Report ranked the Medical Center the No. 4 hospital in Pennsylvania, and the best in the southcentral region.

“Our specialized teams of physicians, nurses and providers strive each day to deliver outstanding care to patients at Hershey Medical Center,” said Steve Massini, CEO of Penn State Health. “We’re proud to be recognized for our ongoing commitment to patient safety and quality care.”

Hershey Medical Center provides patients across southcentral Pennsylvania and beyond with exceptional care for bone, joint and spine disorders. At Penn State Bone and Joint Institute, specialists provide high-level care for orthopedics, sports medicine, spinal disorders, hand surgery, metabolic bone disease and osteoporosis, rheumatology, radiology and chronic pain management.

Hershey Medical Center offers state-of-the-art medical and surgical care in all areas of adult and pediatric urology. Specialty services include treatments for urinary tract and genital cancers; urinary stone disease; benign diseases of the kidney; bladder and prostate; enlarged prostate and voiding dysfunction; female pelvic medicine; infertility and impotence.

U.S. News also recognized Penn State Children’s Hospital among the Best Children’s Hospitals in cancer and cardiology and heart surgery in the 2019-20 rankings.

Penn State Health Medical Group earns perfect scores from Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) rated Penn State Health Medical Group’s community and academic practice divisions, as well as St. Joseph Medical Group, with 100 out of 100 points in its 2018 performance feedback report.

CMS’ Merit-based Incentive Payment System determines the percentage that physicians and physician groups are reimbursed for Medicare claims. The program examines quality, cost, improvement activities and interoperability, which is the ability to share data electronically.

“This is a true testament to everyone’s efforts to improve care, access and patient satisfaction,” said Peter Dillon, president of Penn State Health Medical Group.

Factors that contributed to the outpatient practices’ perfect scores include:

- Expanding patient access by offering extended office hours
- Identifying opportunities for patient screenings or tests prior to a visit
- Providing patients with an after-visit summary
- Using secure messaging to transmit patient health information
- Providing a patient portal to enable patients to communicate with their providers and make appointments
- Enhancing the electronic health record system to better capture data and allow it to be reportable
- Making a telehealth option available—Penn State Health OnDemand

Dr. Michael Abboud appointed chair of the Department of Surgery at Penn State Health St. Joseph

Penn State Health St. Joseph appointed Dr. Michael Abboud, a board-certified vascular surgeon with 26 years' tenure at the hospital, as chair of the Department of Surgery.



In this new role, Abboud said he looks forward to helping grow and strengthen the department in terms of offering high-quality, compassionate surgical care in collaboration with his colleagues throughout the health system.

"I plan to work closely with the medical staff, nursing and other clinicians to ensure that the highest standards of safety and quality of surgical service are maintained at all times within the hospital and throughout the surgery department," he said.

A general surgeon, Abboud has focused his clinical practice on the diagnosis and treatment of benign and malignant diseases of the breast, management of disorders of the biliary and alimentary tract, including gallbladder, stomach, and small and large intestines and hernia repair.

He remains actively involved in many hospital leadership positions, including

serving as a member of the Surgical Leadership Committee, Medical Executive Committee, Peer Review Committee and Network Operating Council. In addition, he is involved in graduate medical education as the surgical rotation director for the hospital-based family practice residency program and New England College of Medicine medical student core rotation program.

A Penn State graduate, Abboud earned his medical degree at St. George's University School of Medicine in Grenada, West Indies, and completed his general surgery residency at Lehigh Valley Hospital and Health Network in Allentown, Pa.

St. Joseph Women's Services physician, director promote addiction screenings for pregnant mothers

The opioid addiction epidemic is taking its toll on Pennsylvania children, say two experts from Penn State Health St. Joseph.

Dr. Jessika Kissling, an obstetrician/gynecologist, from Women's Services, described the host of problems drug addiction can cause pregnant mothers and their babies at the Women's Caucus of the Pennsylvania County Commissioners Association annual conference Aug. 7 in Reading.

Dr. Kissling and Kirsten Benjamin, director of Women and Children's Services at St. Joseph, emphasized the importance of standardized screenings to help identify potential problems during prenatal care visits.

Benjamin highlighted some staggering statistics:

- An average of 15 per 1,000 babies are

born in Pennsylvania hospitals with Neonatal Opioid Withdrawal Syndrome (NOWS). Greene County has 76 per 1,000 babies born in hospitals with NOWS.

- NOWS babies stay in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit for an average of 17 days, five times longer than the average newborn stays in the well newborn nursery.
- The cost to Pennsylvania Medicaid for that care was \$14.1 million in 2017. From Jan. 1, 2018, to June 8, 2019, 2,788 babies were born in Pennsylvania exhibiting symptoms of NOWS.

Kissling and Benjamin participated in a question-and-answer session and discussed the value of community programs such as housing, transportation, counseling and nutrition to support pregnant women who have addiction issues.



From left, Kirsten Benjamin of St. Joseph Women's and Children's Services; Donna Iannone, Sullivan County commissioner; Kathy Pape, Milton S. Hershey board member; and Dr. Jessika Kissling, St. Joseph obstetrician/gynecologist, attend the Women's Caucus of the Pennsylvania County Commissioners Association annual meeting.

College of Medicine welcomes new medical, graduate students

Penn State College of Medicine welcomed 152 new medical students and 69 new graduate students in August.

Seven of those students are in the MD/PhD Medical Scientist Training Program, which trains medical scientists who are pursuing careers in biomedical research and academic medicine.

The incoming medical students were selected from a pool of nearly 12,000 applicants. Fifty six (37%) of the new students are Pennsylvania residents and 91 students (61%) are women.

The graduate students are pursuing degrees across the disciplines of biomedical sciences, anatomy, neuroscience, epidemiology and public health.

“Every day, there are new discoveries that give us deeper insights into improving health. Each day, we learn more about how our physical and social environments, our upbringing, and our individual DNA may hold the key to preventing, detecting and better treating illnesses,” Dr. Kevin Black, interim dean, told students.

Each member of this year’s incoming medical school class received a stethoscope, compliments of Penn State College of Medicine alumni and friends. The stethoscopes are engraved with the lion shield and the text, “We are Penn State.”



Dr. Alistair Barber, director of the neuroscience graduate program at Penn State College of Medicine, helped students with their white coats during the Graduate Student Oath Ceremony on Aug. 23.

Graduate student awarded fellowship with National Institutes of Health



Alissa Meister, a student in Penn State College of Medicine’s Neuroscience PhD program, was chosen as a Presidential Management Fellow through the National Institutes of Health

Penn State College of Medicine student Alissa Meister, who will graduate with a PhD in neuroscience, was selected as a 2019 Presidential Management Fellow.

Meister will begin her career in September working for Dr. Douglas Sheeley, the deputy director of the National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research. She was one of 350 finalists selected from more than 4,000 applicants nationwide.

The Presidential Management Fellows program develops leaders starting at the entry level for advanced degree candidates. Fellows employed at the National Institutes of Health spend two years learning disciplines that support scientific work beyond the bench of a laboratory. Meister and her colleagues will gain experience in grants management, scientific communication and technology transfer.

Meister is a 2015 graduate of Dickinson College with a bachelor’s degree in neuroscience. At the College of Medicine, she works in the lab of Dr. Renato Alberto Travaglini in the Department of Neural and Behavioral Sciences

Unusual eating behaviors may be a new diagnostic indicator for autism

Atypical eating behaviors may be a sign a child should be screened for autism, according to a new study from Penn State College of Medicine.

Research by Dr. Susan Mayes, professor of psychiatry at Penn State College of Medicine, found that atypical eating behaviors were present in 70 percent of children with autism, which is 15 times more common than in neurotypical children.

Atypical eating behaviors may include severely limited food preferences, hypersensitivity to food textures or temperatures, and pocketing food without swallowing.

Mayes said that many children with autism eat a narrow diet consisting primarily of grain products, like pasta and bread, and chicken nuggets. She said that because children with autism have sensory hypersensitivities and dislike change, they may not want to try new foods and will be sensitive to certain textures. They often eat only foods of a particular brand, color or shape.



Dr. Susan Mayes

According to Mayes, these behaviors are present in many one-year-olds with autism and could signal to doctors and parents.

“If a primary care provider hears about these behaviors from parents, they should consider referring the child for an autism screening,” she said.

Mayes stated that the earlier autism is diagnosed, the sooner the child can begin treatment with a behavior analyst. Previous studies have shown applied behavior analysis to be most effective if implemented during the preschool years. Behavior analysts use a number of interventions, including rewards, to make positive changes in the children’s behavior and teach a range of needed skills.

The researchers evaluated the eating behaviors described in parent interviews of more than 2,000 children from two studies. They investigated the difference in the frequency of unusual eating behaviors between typical children and those with autism, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and other disorders.

The study data show that atypical eating behaviors may help diagnostically distinguish autism from other disorders. Even though children from both groups have unusual eating habits, they are seven times more common in autism than in other disorders, according to the study data.

The study was published in *Research in Autism Spectrum Disorders* in August.



Campers connect with support from Children’s Miracle Network

For a few weeks every summer, 7-year-old Aubree Gentzler is just like every other kid – and no one asks about her glasses, the braces in her shoes or what muscular dystrophy means.

“Around November, Aubree starts asking me if she will be going to camp again,” said her mother, Ashley Gentzler. “She absolutely loves it. It’s a comfort for her to be around kids who don’t get singled out for what they can’t do. At camp, they adapt things so every child can do it.”

Aubree, who lives in Windsor, Pa., started attending Camp Mighty Tykes at age 4 and now goes to Camp Journey. Both camps, held at Leg Up Farm in Mt. Wolf, are aimed at promoting independence, socialization, recreational skills and confidence in children with physical or mental developmental delays.

Children’s Miracle Network (CMN) Hershey supports 11 camps across central Pennsylvania – either directly or through camper scholarships – that welcome some

250 children with special medical needs. More than 150 Penn State Health employees participate, ensuring the resources it takes to run the camps. CMN provides \$200,000 in camp scholarships.

Children come in wheelchairs, with breathing or feeding tubes, and with physical and emotional needs, but they all just want to have fun, said Paula Cameron, pediatric clinical care manager at Penn State Children’s Hospital.

“It really helps them realize from a young age that, yes, they may be different from other children, but they can still do some of the same things,” Cameron said. “I think they welcome the reprieve from a life that’s often full of medications, painful procedures and doctor appointments.”

At camp, Aubree has many adventures – everything from meeting horses to feeding fish to playing kickball – that give her exercise and fill in the summer gap in services.

“Aubree has muscle weakness and low tone, so each of these activities gives her exercise

and helps her meet therapy goals while she’s having fun,” Ashley Gentzler said. As a mom, she loves that she doesn’t have to worry about Aubree’s medical needs because the staff knows how to handle them.

“It’s unique for parents not to have to worry about that. The respite time is huge,” said Gil Pak, operations director at the Children’s Hospital and CMN advisory board member. For parents whose children go to Vent Camp – for ventilator-dependent children who have conditions such as muscular weakness or neurological disease, spinal cord injuries or spinal muscular dystrophy – it’s literally the only week of the year when they aren’t on call 24/7, he said.

A bonus to all the activities at Camp Journey this year – Aubree told her mom she made a new friend.

“As Aubree gets older, kids start to ask more questions about why she’s different,” her mom said. “We tell her, ‘You have to love yourself. It doesn’t matter what other people say.’ But it’s so nice to have a friend who is like you.”



Children Miracle Network supports the following camps for children with various conditions:

- Camp Setebaid and Keystone Diabetic Kids Camp – Diabetes
- Camp Journey and Camp Mighty Tykes – Physical and mental challenges
- PA Vent Camp – Breathing problems that require a ventilator
- Camp Kydnie – Chronic kidney disease
- Camp JRA – Juvenile rheumatoid arthritis
- Camp Spifida – Spina bifida
- Camp Echo – Congenital heart conditions
- Camp Lionheart – Heart surgery and congenital heart conditions
- iCan Shine Bike Camp – Various disabilities
- Camp Frog – Epilepsy
- Summer Treatment Program – Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder and other related disorders

With the help of staff and a seat harness, Chloe Koser, 8, climbs the rock wall and rings the bell at Camp Spifida.

Jonas Brothers surprise fan at Penn State Children's Hospital

A “crappy chemotherapy” session for a Penn State Children’s Hospital patient turned out to be an unforgettable day when the Jonas Brothers stopped by to visit her before their concert in Hershey.

Lily Jordan, 16, had tickets to the concert, but couldn’t go because of her treatment for osteosarcoma, a type of bone cancer.

She posted a photo of herself on her Instagram account, telling the performers, “I was supposed to be at your Hershey concert tomorrow but instead I’m across the street doing chemo,” she wrote. “If y’all wanted to pop in, I’ll give you my room #.”

“We saw your message. We had to come over,” Joe Jonas told the teen.

“Wow,” Jordan wrote on her social media page. “The power of social media you guys. YOU did this. YOU made my crappy chemo session into something incredibly special and unforgettable. Thank you, thank you, thank you @jonasbrothers for taking time out of your day to come pay me a visit. Literally made my life.”



Four Diamonds Mini-THON® reveals record fundraising total

More than 1,000 student leaders, teachers and advisors attended the 2019 Mini-THON Leadership Summit in Hershey on Aug. 9. The summit is designed to help students learn, network and share ideas about planning their school’s Mini-THONs and develop leadership skills.

At the summit, Four Diamonds Mini-THON leadership revealed a record \$7.2 million was raised this past year to fight childhood cancer.

Speakers at the summit included Four Diamonds co-founder Charles Millard and a Four Diamonds family. After opening remarks, students and advisors cheered and celebrated as the 2018-2019 fundraising total was revealed.

Mini-THONs are multi-hour, interactive events modeled after the Penn State IFC/Panhellenic Dance Marathon, or THON, held each year at University Park. The money raised benefits Four Diamonds, which assists families with children being



treated for cancer at Penn State Children’s Hospital. Money supports the families through financial support, as well as ground-breaking research for new treatments and cures for all childhood cancers.

Attendees of the summit represented the 90,000 students who participated in Mini-THONs at more than 265 schools in Pennsylvania, Maryland, New Jersey and Virginia during the 2018-2019 school year.