

Look good feel good

A guide to navigating local
health care and beauty solutions

BY Linda Margison / PHOTOGRAPHY BY Martin Boling



VIBRANT LIFE

Correcting Hormonal Imbalances

As a practicing gynecologist for 40 years, Dr. Clark Brittain has seen people struggle with hormonal imbalances that deeply impacted their health and intimate wellness. Wanting to help men and women fill the intimate void in their lives, he opened Vibrant Life 13 years ago and offers therapies for vaginal dryness, sexual sensation, orgasmic dysfunction, Peyronie's disease—a penile bend that can cause pain and erectile dysfunction—and other issues.

"Establishing adequate hormone therapy isn't always enough to take care of the intimate wellness people seek," Dr. Brittain says. "Good sexual health helps relationships, it helps the immune mechanism, it helps the hormonal balance."

Heather Lindsey, a nurse who has been with Dr. Brittain since he opened the practice, believes strongly in the work they do. "We are changing lives, we are saving marriages, and sometimes we are saving lives," she says, explaining how sometimes people want to give up on life. "It's fun to be able to make a difference in people's lives and their marriages and how they feel every day."

Dr. Brittain explains how one patient had not had an orgasm for almost 12 years, but he was able to get her hormonally balanced and happy. "The next time she came in, she had a big smile," he says. "She was sexually active and satisfied for the first time in 12 years. When our patients rediscover their hormone balance and sexual identity, they look good, they're smiling, and their partners are smiling." For information, visit drbrittain.com.

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Upright Walkers Help Experience Life Longer

With spinal stenosis preventing her from walking longer than five minutes without help, 58-year-old LeAnne Kelley's solution for exercise was to lean onto the taller Sam's Club shopping carts and walk around the store's perimeter. But then, the COVID-19 pandemic closed down stores and brought her quest for an active lifestyle to a screeching halt.

At 5 feet 9 inches, Kelley couldn't use a traditional walker because its low frame caused her to hunch over, putting too much pressure on her hands and back. So she went in search of a solution—and found the upright walker.

"I needed something that I could have a regular gait and walk sidewalks for speed," says Kelley. "To get my heart rate up, I had to walk at least a 21 1/2-minute mile." Instead of stopping at five minutes to rest, Kelley says she walks about 45 minutes each day, but could walk further if she wanted.

The upright walker—like UPWalker and NOVA Phoenix Rise UP—is a rolling stand-up mobility device that raises to a person's height and has troughs for resting one's forearms. This takes the strain off the lower back and redistributes weight to the arms, leaving hands free to grip the handles for better steering and braking.

With this equipment, Kelly can safely walk outside, which is her favorite place to get exercise. "I love to listen to birds, with the breeze or sunshine on my face, the smell of flowers blooming in the summer and leaves changing in the fall," she says. "You really notice the seasons coming in when you're walking outside."

When she travels, Kelley is able to keep up with others by taking her upright walker with her. "I can walk as long as they want to walk,



Williams Bros. Pharmacy's Kasey Butcher and a pair of upright walkers.

and I can easily get into shop doors—it's no problem at all," she says, adding that before she would have to sit and wait for others to finish shopping. "It really has given me my life back."

Lisa Fouts, the director of advertising and marketing for Williams Bros. Pharmacy, says the upright walker's upright position means a person's head is up and they're looking forward. "That helps them feel younger and better about themselves," she says. "They're able to keep experiencing life longer." To see a selection of upright walkers, visit williamsbrosparmacy.com.



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Front row (left to right): Glenn Dingman, Haley Stewart, Shannon Wiley, Nancy Stine, Tammy Sauer. Back row (left to right): Mark Buschhorn, Lisa Swafford, Becky Pemberton, Kevin Woodruff.

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COVID-19 Recovery Made Possible by Smaller Hospital



COVID-19 survivor Jeri Hall.

Jeri Hall believes in miracles. As an early COVID-19 patient at Monroe Hospital, Hall remembers being short of breath on her farm and driving herself to the hospital, where she was put on a ventilator. "After that is pretty much a blur," she says.

Hall's daughter, however, remembers the experience quite well. "She messaged me and said, 'I'm going on a vent—I love

you,'" says Ronnie Sue Robinson, who spent each following day going to the window outside Hall's room to see her, since the virus prevented family members from visiting. "I thought maybe she'd feel that I was there, and maybe it would make her come back—make her fight a little harder."

Dr. Eric Trueblood says the days after Hall went on a ventilator were a battle with her lungs to keep her alive. At that point, he gave her a 1% chance of survival and told her family she probably wouldn't make it through the night.

"Jeri held on—she held on that night, and she was a little bit better in the morning," Trueblood says. "Why did she make it? I don't know if we'll ever know that answer. ... She had maximum efforts given by the medical staff. ... Nobody gave up on her, and she held on just long enough that she got through it."

Hall says she knows why she survived, though. "Because of God, that's the only reason. It's not my time to go."

Forty-four days after being admitted to Monroe Hospital, Hall left on a gurney to cheers from hospital staff lining the hallways and flowing out the door.

Trueblood says being in a smaller hospital gave Hall the time she needed to heal. "To get good care, you need to have time," he explains. "None of the medications probably saved her. It was more of the care she got ... just biding time until her own body could fight this thing off."

Registered nurse Dawn Concannon adds, "We had the opportunity to let Jeri heal, and it took quite a long time for her to heal. She's a fighter. She's got something still in her that she's got to do here."

Hall's story of survival at Monroe Hospital is featured in a Blueline-produced, 22-minute documentary, *Time to Heal*. Watch it at magbloom.com/monroehospital.



Jeri Hall sent a message to her daughter one evening stating "I'm going on a vent. I love you." As of October 2020 there have been over eight million cases of Covid in the United States. **Time to Heal** tells a story of just one of those cases. Monroe Hospital is a small hospital with a big heart that serves the Bloomington community and surrounding rural area. This is the hospital where Jeri came when she began showing symptoms one day while working on her farm and drove herself to the hospital.

**PRESENTED BY MONROE HOSPITAL
IN ASSOCIATION WITH BLUELINE PICTURES**

To view **Time to Heal** go to www.monroehospital.com and type **Time to Heal** in the search bar.

Under General Content click on **Time to Heal**

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MONROE COUNTY YMCA

Adapting Exercise Classes for the Pandemic

Although the Monroe County YMCA has reopened after shuttering for the COVID-19 pandemic, Fitness Director Cara McGowan says providing group exercise took considerable planning to do safely. The most significant change has been to provide group exercise classes virtually, while also maintaining safe practices for in-person group exercise, personal training, and aquatics classes.

"We started classes with social distancing and everyone spread out, but we soon realized a definite need to offer virtual programming," McGowan says. "With the pandemic, it's so important to find ways to stay active."

About 20 of 50 group exercise classes are being taught virtually, including classes for yoga, Pilates, strength training, and cardio. "We're really trying to look at all of the different classes that we could possibly offer virtually," she says. "And then, we're giving members options to utilize things they have laying around their house to enhance their workout." For instance, members could use canned food or water bottles instead of hand weights and dumbbells, or paper plates instead of gliding discs.

While exercising in one's home is important, McGowan says the studio has benefits, too, from social interaction to accountability. "We know that exercise can be a powerful medicine for mental health," she explains. "People are missing that social component. It's great to have interaction, especially now, because people are lonely." Members in live classes maintain social distance, fill out a health questionnaire, and have temperatures taken.

The personal training program has also had to adapt to the pandemic. Clients and trainers wear masks and are mindful of the space and equipment, which is thoroughly disinfected and cleaned before and after sessions. Members can also opt for virtual sessions if they want one-on-one support from a trainer but aren't ready to return to the YMCA yet. "Our trainers have been very conscientious of the time that we're living in," McGowan says, adding that the aquatic classes have grown in popularity since the YMCA reopened. "A lot of people feel safer in the water."

McGowan has noticed a trend in people utilizing the virtual option for classes more frequently than attending in person. "Some people are getting more comfortable with the virtual option, and I think that it's here to stay," she adds. "The fitness industry is going to be forever changed by this pandemic." For information, visit monroecountyyymca.org.



A socially distanced exercise class at the Monroe County YMCA.

A Safe Environment to Help Prevent Accidents



A physical therapy session at Bell Trace.

From fall prevention to surgery “prehabilitation” to rehabilitation to home and outpatient therapy, Bell Trace provides a safe environment and on-site physical therapy for all its residents, while encouraging all seniors to be cautious. “Safety doesn’t happen by accident,” says Amanda Whitaker, occupational therapy supervisor, with physical therapist Cindy Berlin adding, “Falls are not a normal part of aging.”

The changing of the seasons from summer to fall and winter brings everyday challenges for seniors. With the rain, snow, and ice of winter creating slippery surfaces, people are more likely to fall. Bell Trace focuses on creating a safe space and educating

residents on making good decisions to prevent tumbles in the home. Outdoor yard work, like cleaning gutters and removing snow and ice, is an area where seniors are encouraged to exercise caution and even get some extra help with tasks to prevent precarious situations.

Inside the home, people are encouraged to remove clutter, eliminate throw rugs, have anti-slip mats in the shower, and refrain from using stepladders. If they cook eggs every day for breakfast, setting up the equipment they need in easy-to-manage locations, instead of in the back of a bottom cupboard or on the second shelf of an upper cupboard, can help prevent accidents.

Bell Trace encourages people to set up their home environment with safety in mind. “Fall prevention is a combination of making good decisions and creating a safe environment,” says Barbara Carroll, director of residential marketing. One goal of therapy is to empower people with safety education, environmental modification, and the use of assistive devices to reduce their risk of fall and injury, maintain their independence, and help them thrive at home.

“Therapy can help identify deficits and barriers to keep people moving longer and find the balance of a healthy life,” says Virginia Smith, therapy supervisor. Bell Trace’s physical therapy program—which is offered both inpatient and outpatient—includes strength and core balance training, as well as pain management. Therapists also provide vestibular therapy, which focuses on improving symptoms that affect gait caused by inner ear disorders.

Smith adds, “The goal of therapy is to identify where people need more assistance and to keep them independent in their homes as long as they want to be there.” For more information, visit cardon.us/communities/bell-trace.



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