

Summer 2013

fresh AIR

Rockcastle Regional Hospital and Respiratory Care Center



**MANY COOKS
MAKE IT BETTER**

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SPICK-AND-SPAN

•

EMBRACING LIFE

•

BORN TO RIDE

•

**GAINING
A VOICE**

•

**NEWFOUND
FREEDOM**

A Letter from the CEO



Dear Friends,

We make many choices every day. Some are good for us, and some are not. At Rockcastle Regional Hospital and Respiratory Care Center, we do everything we can to make positive health decisions and to help those we serve do the same.

Despite our best efforts, many of us will face an illness or disability that limits our capabilities for a time, if not for the long term. Respiratory Care Center resident Gina Merrick learned she had multiple sclerosis in 1979, but chose to face it with a positive attitude. As you'll read in her story, she continues to live with gusto.

Gina loves that we keep our residents as engaged as possible. From therapy sessions disguised as cooking sessions to our trip program, everyone here has the chance to be a lot more active than those in most long-term care centers. It takes more planning and effort, but we wouldn't have it any other way. Seeing Kari Taylor's face light up when she talks about her next trip reinforces that philosophy.

It's just as important to make sure that our facility, which is home to more than 90 residents at any given time, is clean, safe and welcoming for everyone who resides, visits or works here. It's especially rewarding when our efforts are recognized and appreciated.

We hope you enjoy this issue of *freshAIR*, and that you will be as inspired as we are by our residents and those who serve them in many ways.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Stephen A. Estes".

Stephen A. Estes
President & CEO



U.S. News & World Report ranks our facility among the best nursing homes in the nation in 2013 because we earned the top rating of five stars from the federal Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services for overall performance in health inspections, nurse staffing, and quality of medical care.

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Editor's Note: Two residents included in this issue passed away shortly before it went to press. Mary Spencer, who had been discharged to her home, and Jody Adams, who had been a resident for 16 years. We have included Mrs. Spencer and Mr. Adams in the stories at their families' request. They are in our thoughts and prayers.



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freshAIR focuses exclusively on the Respiratory Care Center at Rockcastle Regional Hospital, a 93-bed long-term care program for people dependent upon mechanical ventilation. Our thanks to those who allowed us to share their stories here.

To be added to or removed from our mailing list, or for more information about the facility or publication, please contact Melissa Brock at (606) 256-7703.

Many Cooks Make it Better



Occupational Therapy Assistant Tiffany McKibben poses with a fresh fruit dessert made by residents Lisa Haddox, left, and Mary Spencer.

Some cooks will run everyone out of their kitchen, believing the old saying that “too many cooks spoil the broth.”

However, visit the dayroom kitchen in the Respiratory Care Center at Rockcastle Regional Hospital, and you’ll experience a different approach to cooking. In fact, the weekly cooking group says the more the merrier.

The Crock Rockers, as they have dubbed themselves, enjoy the social aspects of working as a team to prepare a dish they select. They’re less concerned about

everything being perfect and more concerned about everyone being involved in the process.

“Everybody joins together and works on it. We get everything prepared and when you have a team of cooks, it tastes better.”

— Rosie Cody, resident

A frequent participant in the activity, Rosie said she likes to cook when she’s feeling good. Her favorite foods are pinto beans, meatloaf, and pork chops.

The group tends to stick to simpler recipes, but there is still a flurry of

activity as the therapists get the process going.

“There are a number of things happening all at the same time,

which is exactly why this is a therapeutic as well as a fun session for participants," said Tiffany McKibben, Occupational Therapy Assistant (OTA). "They are having social interaction and they can work on arm and hand strength by chopping and stirring. They also may sit up for a longer period. In a group setting, they don't even think about the exercise they are getting."

Occupational Therapy focuses on activities of daily living, such as bathing, cleaning, shopping, self-feeding, and food preparation. Most participants have Occupational Therapy as part of their care plan, although the group is open to others who would like to join in.

"We've been doing this class for six years and it's one of the most



Occupational Therapy Assistant Tiffany McKibben watches as residents, from left, Brian Knoops, Lisa Haddox and Mary Spencer slice fresh fruits for a healthy and colorful fruit salad.

Rosa said the Crock Rocker dish she enjoyed the most was peach cobbler. Others mentioned cheese

Cooking has made Brian Knoops more open to trying new things.

"At home, I was an excellent microwave cook," he joked. "I've learned to have more patience and am more likely to try something like a casserole. It's neat seeing us all work together and then to see the end result."

Getting to taste the fruit of your labor never hurts, either.

"...they don't even think about the exercise they are getting." — Tiffany McKibben, OTA

popular," said Occupational Therapist Danny McNew. "In addition to other benefits, we find it very helpful to observe residents' skills so we can work on the things they would have a problem with at home, such as using a can opener."

Junior Elliot joined his wife, Rosa, for the class while he was visiting her. They seemed to enjoy themselves, but there was some debate about her fondness for cooking. Rosa nodded when asked if she liked to cook at home while Junior grinned and shook his head no. They were in full agreement, however, on being glad they'd soon be back together in their Pineville home.

biscuits, taco bake, and vegetable pizza.

Some participants say the activity makes them feel more at home.



Resident Mary Spencer stirs the final ingredients as Bonnie Shelton smiles with approval.



Spick-And-Span



Left, housekeeper Darlene Smith operates the floor machine in a resident activity area. Right, resident Dewayne Combs converses with Linda Martin as she cleans his room.

Spills, scuff marks, dust and germs beware.

Linda Martin is a woman on a mission: "I don't much care for dirt."

The Rockcastle Regional Hospital and Respiratory Care Center housekeeper says cleaning is what she does wherever she is. "I do this at home—no dust, no cobwebs," said Linda. "I'd die if someone looked at my workplace and wondered, 'what does her home look like?'"

It's this kind of anti-dirt attitude that has earned the facility a reputation for being one of the cleanest healthcare facilities around.

In fact, patient satisfaction surveys indicate the hospital performs

significantly better than other, similar facilities across Kentucky and the U.S. In the most recent study, 84 percent of Rockcastle Regional Hospital's patients reported their room and bathroom were always clean, compared with a national average of 73 percent.

The exceptional scores are the result of a methodical approach to daily cleaning by 25 housekeepers – including Linda – three janitors, five laundry personnel and department director Carol Bryant.

"We clean every patient room daily," said Carol. "High touch surfaces such as light switches, door knobs and bed rails are cleaned and disinfected, as well as the patient area floors."

For infection control, the Housekeeping department uses fresh microfiber mop pads and

cleaning cloths for each room to prevent cross-contamination. They remove trash promptly for odor control, and use a disinfectant with a nice, fresh aroma.

Carol conducts spot-checks and other staff let housekeepers know when they spot a spill or other problem that needs to be addressed.

The facility has a detailed checklist for cleaning rooms after patients are discharged. Everything is checked to make sure it's spotless, sanitized and in working order.

Cleanliness is expected in all hospitals. However, relationships forming among housekeeping personnel, patients, and their families may be a unique characteristic of this one.

Linda Martin's experience is a



Housekeeping director Carol Bryant, center and in dark uniform, said it takes teamwork to keep the facility spick-and-span. Twelve of the department's 34 staff are shown here.

good example. She worked in the Outpatient building prior to moving to Respiratory Care. At first, she was a little concerned about working so closely with residents, and told herself she would not become attached to them as some housekeepers had. Yet it only took a couple of days before the residents won her heart.

Today she fights back tears as she thinks about how they have changed her as a person.

"I never meant to care like this," she said. "Now I love them. I wish them well when they leave on a trip, and enjoy getting to ask them about it when they come back.

"It's wonderful to come into work and have a resident like Dewayne ask you, 'Did you have a good night?'"

Longtime resident Jody Adams said Linda is one of the hardest workers the hospital has, and he appreciates that his room smells so nice.

"Our hospital is spotless," said Jody. "When you have a clean hospital, it translates into better health for the patient."

Housekeeper Darlene Smith said variety keeps her work interesting.

"Each day is a new challenge and you never know exactly what you are going to do when you come in for work," she said.

Darlene is as well known for her baking skills as her cleaning. She bakes and decorates creative, personalized cakes on her days off and brings them in for the residents for special events and birthdays.

It takes a lot of teamwork and communication to keep the 189,000 square foot facility spotless, so Carol holds regularly scheduled department meetings to keep everyone informed.

"My goal is to uphold the hospital's reputation for cleanliness, which is shared by all employees," said Carol. "We appreciate the high standards set by Brenda Mullins, who was the housekeeping director for many years, and want to continue her legacy."

One stroll through a busy hallway, or a conversation with a patient or visitor, will provide ample evidence that the hospital earns its spick-and-span image day in and day out.

Embracing Life

Have you ever crossed a mountain pass? Gina Merrick has, in her wheelchair no less. Her husband, Bruce Merrick, was right beside her, as always.

Windless Pass, along the Oregon Trail, is not the only challenge Gina has accepted with gusto, before or after her diagnosis of multiple sclerosis (MS) in 1979.

Take her family life: Gina and Bruce are the parents of six. They chose home education for their children, whose ages range from 41 year-old Chip to 21 year-old Al. In between are J.J., Ty, Susanna, and Monte.

"Home education allowed us to experience more together," said Bruce, who holds a PhD in education and was a youth minister in large churches for more than 18 years.

The family did the Santa Fe Trail twice. While traveling through Nebraska, they connected with a U.S. National Parks Service wagon train commemorating the 150th anniversary of the Gold Rush and wound up camping with them along the Oregon Trail. Then, in California, they attended a camp for families dealing with disability held by Joni Erickson Tada, founder of an international organization that ministers to the disabled.

Bruce says God has placed affirmative people in their lives. He shares his experience of seeing "America's Sweetheart," actress Annette Funicello when she made an appearance at a retail center near their home. The plan was for Bruce to join Gina in line as soon as he could get away from work.

"By the time I got there, I looked up at the table where Annette was sitting, and there was Gina sitting beside her!" he said. "It was remarkable that their diagnosis and progression of MS were almost the same. Annette was very encouraging to Gina."

Today, when asked what enables her to remain positive even as her disability limits her physically, Gina doesn't miss a beat.

"My relationship with the Lord. He has good plans for me, plans to bless me," she said. "Also, that I'm in this place, and have my husband of 41 years."

Gina and Bruce marvel at the progress she's made since transferring to the Respiratory Care Center at Rockcastle Regional Hospital in August 2012.

The family was relieved when they learned about the specialty facility because it's relatively close to their home in Pineville, where Bruce has been a professor with Clear

Creek Baptist Bible College for 10 years.

"Gina's made a remarkable turnaround," said Bruce. "The doctor she was seeing at the time pulled me aside and said she wasn't doing well and had six months at most to live. That was a year ago. Now she is able to eat and she is speaking again."

What Gina enjoys most is being able to participate in activities. During four years at another facility, she was never able to leave her room. At the Respiratory Care Center, when she feels up to it, staff roll her bed to the activity room.



Gina Merrick long ago chose to embrace life in spite of having MS.

"The experience is so much better, and the staff never fail to say, 'I'm glad you came to the activity,'" she said.

Gina, who is an RN, has additional goals. The first is to get her computer set up so she can continue working toward a higher nursing degree and communicate with friends again.

Though they haven't been able to visit with her for awhile, Gina's friends continue to be inspired by the mother, teacher, crafter, and child of God. Notes posted on Facebook share their well wishes.

"I think of you ALL the time... I admire your determination, positive attitude and love for your family... I treasure some of the words of wisdom you have shared with me in the past. You are a great lady..."

—greetings from friends and admirers

"There are so many friends, through the years, who support me and send cards," said Gina, who looks forward to being able to respond via email again. "My computer will let me do something productive."

It also will help Gina connect with her children more easily, since they live all over the country. Technology allowed her to see her daughter's New York City apartment and to talk with her children on Mother's Day.

She also strives to build up her strength so she can sit in her wheelchair again. That will open the door to other opportunities, such as taking short trips.

"I want to go to my house," said Gina.

Seeing her smile and look of determination, you can't help but realize going home is just one more "mountain pass" she'll conquer.



Next-to-youngest son Monte, a 2013 graduate of Western Kentucky University, wrote a special message to his mother on his graduation cap.



Gina's Mother's Day gift, a personalized blanket, shows special moments from the Merrick's adventurous life, including a trek across Windless Pass.

Born to Ride

From scream parks to weddings, and restaurants to concerts, Kari Taylor enjoys the same activities as other young adults, despite becoming dependent upon a ventilator due to a car accident 13 years ago.



Left, a photo from resident Kari Taylor's 'favorite trip of all time,' last year's Pink concert. Below, Kari poses with 'friends' she met at a scream park.



"Just because I'm like this, it doesn't keep me from wanting to have fun," said the

21 year-old Jessamine County native.

Her eyes light up as she talks about her choices of where to go when it's her turn to take advantage of the trip program at Rockcastle Regional Hospital's Respiratory Care Center, where she resides.



Like Kari, residents have the opportunity to take their minds off their medical issues for an excursion of their choice, which is available four days a week. They travel for things as simple as getting a haircut or as elaborate as going to a University of Kentucky football game. The opportunity to do things they enjoy and get outside of the hospital boosts residents' attitudes and outlook on life.

Kari's favorite trip of all time is last year's Pink concert, and she has high hopes for the Bruno Mars show that she'll attend in August.

Kari and a number of her friends were thrilled to go to the 12-hour Twilight Marathon. She had to get special permission from her doctors because it surpassed the normal time limits for day trips.

"I'm thankful everyone at the Respiratory Care Center is so flexible and supportive," she said. "They're the reason I can have so much fun and I get to go to my greatgrandmother's in Harlan!"

Making the trips a reality is a team effort involving many people within a wide variety of departments. Residents sign up for a trip, which must be approved by their physician. Activities and Social Services staff make arrangements for the day, then Nursing

personnel help the resident get ready, and a respiratory therapist and a nurse accompany them on the trip.

Family visits are a popular destination, said Vernon Sowder, certified respiratory therapist (CRT), who has accompanied residents on outings for 21 years.

He reflects fondly on some of the celebrities he's seen, such as Shania Twain and Montgomery Gentry, and how they were kind to residents when they had backstage passes.

"Charlie Daniels saw us backstage and asked to visit with the resident. He talked with her 15 minutes and was the nicest guy you've ever seen," he said.



Far left, Respiratory Therapist Vernon Sowder and LPN Vivian Farler assist resident Rosie Cody return from a shopping trip. Left, Vivian Farler, LPN is ready to accompany residents where they want to go.

Vernon and LPN Vivian Farler both accompany the residents wherever they go, which often means they see popular films repeatedly.

In fact, resident movie buff Chris Miranda schedules his trips for the end of the month when new movies are released. To make the most of his day, he always watches two per trip.

"I love it—getting out of the hospital!" he said. "It shows me I can still do the things I used to do. Ann, who coordinates the trips, is the sweetest person I've ever met. She makes us forget about our injuries with the activities."

Ironically, most people would not imagine, as they pass the Rockcastle Regional Hospital van on some Kentucky highway, that it's headed for a fun filled day.

Gaining a Voice

The little visitor is distracted and appears to be in her own world as she sits with her family in the hospital room. When she hears a voice that captures her attention, her eyes light up and she cries out, "Mammaw!" before scrambling up into the bed to snuggle with her grandmother.

The sudden recognition came after the resident of the Respiratory Care Center at Rockcastle Regional Hospital used a speaking valve for the first time.

Seeing that kind of reaction when a resident regains his or her voice is the type of experience therapists live for.

"We are social people, and it's hard when our voice is taken away," said Heather Marlow, a speech language pathologist (SLP). "There is a high incidence of information loss in lip reading, so it doesn't quite fill the void. It's important for residents to be able to say the name of a family member, tell a spouse 'I love you' and other important things they want to say."

For those who can tolerate it, a small piece of plastic known as a speaking valve makes it all possible.

The speaking valve is placed on the hub of the tracheostomy tube or in-line with the ventilator circuit to restore normal air pressure and allow the individual to swallow without aspirating and speak again. It improves their overall quality of life since it also improves the sense of taste and smell.



Above, Mary Spencer works on building her lung strength while using a speaking valve as Heather Marlow, SLP, and Brandy Cable, SLP, assist. Left, the small, plastic valve restores normal air pressure and allows the individual to swallow without aspirating and speak again.



Therapists evaluate residents upon admission to the Respiratory Care Center to determine if they can benefit from a speaking valve.

"It's very individualized. For some, the level of oxygen they need from the ventilator is too high to allow them to use a speaking valve. It creates high anxiety in others, or the air flow may irritate them," said Heather. "We re-evaluate them later, so there is always an opportunity to receive a speaking valve when appropriate."

Helping residents learn to speak again is a large part of a speech therapist's practice at the Respiratory Care Center. However, it's not something that is part of a speech and language pathologists' standard education.

"Speaking valves are within our scope of practice, but we have to

learn about them on the job," said Heather. "For that reason, many therapists at other facilities are not as familiar with the device and don't offer it as an option.

"We'd like everyone to know that, regardless of where they are, if a family member is on a ventilator, they can request a speaking valve evaluation."

Rockcastle Regional Hospital trains its therapists well and has standardized procedures and equipment to provide the best results. The goal is to reach adequate voicing rather than a whispered voice, and therapists use vocal exercises and devices to help train residents' lungs, such as singing and counting.

For residents, the motivation is being able to express themselves again, such as through a phone call. Heather reports it's thrilling to watch it happen, even when a family member occasionally hangs up out of disbelief when called the first time.

A Newfound Freedom

"Vote!" Una Charlton said many years ago to her younger sister Donna Wagner. "You'll be happier if you do."

Despite her sister's advice, Donna didn't have an interest in voting most of her life. Then in 2012, when her circumstances changed, her indifference turned into a burning desire to help elect her political representatives.

It started with a routine question during her admission to the Respiratory Care Center at Rockcastle Regional Hospital.

"We always ask residents if they are registered to vote. Then, as it gets closer to the election, we go around the hospital and find out who wants to vote," said Chelsen Larkey, Social Worker. "Donna let me know she wanted to vote for the first time in her life and needed to register."

In addition, Donna wanted to go to the voting booth in person rather than using an absentee ballot.

"I had to get up in a chair to go, and I still was the first person there!" said Donna of her first voting experience. "I was nervous. They had to show me how to vote, and I had to push all the buttons."

Asked how it made her feel, she beamed and simply said, "God bless America."

Long-time resident Kim Hall shares that sentiment. She was glad to vote in a presidential election for the first time last year.



Above, resident Donna Wagner lets her patriotism shine as she reflects on how it felt to participate in her first election.

Left, Kim Hall, a resident since she was a young child, was proud to cast her vote as soon as she was old enough.

"I felt I wanted to make my parents proud. I'm proud to be an American and wanted to vote to show my pride," she said.

She did some research before choosing her political party, and said more than any current leaders, she is inspired by two from history.

"Martin Luther King inspires me and Abraham Lincoln is one of my biggest influences," said Kim. "I can relate to both of them because I don't like people being mistreated. I'm a soft-hearted person."

At 22, Kim plans to enroll in college soon and to major in psychology. One of her top issues is supporting the right to life because she believes each child is a gift from God. She also feels a responsibility as a woman to vote

because she knows the right was hard-fought.

It requires extra effort, but many of the Respiratory Care Center's residents place a high value on the opportunity to express their opinions through the electoral process.

And their actions seem to underscore the words of minister, author and public advocate DeForest Soaries:

"Voting is the foundational act that breathes life into the principle of the consent of the governed."

Background and Credentials

Rockcastle Regional Hospital & Respiratory Care Center is a not-for-profit community healthcare system that operates an emergency department, a 26-bed inpatient acute hospital, outpatient services, a 93-bed long-term care program for patients dependent upon mechanical ventilation and a medical office complex. Rockcastle Regional Hospital was established in 1956 and is accredited by the Joint Commission. Rockcastle Regional Hospital is a six-time Kentucky Hospital Association Quality Award Winner for 2006, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011 and 2012 and a U.S. News & World Report 2013 Best Nursing Home. Visit www.rockcastleregional.org.

Mission

Rockcastle Regional Hospital and Respiratory Care Center is a family-oriented team of healthcare professionals dedicated to delivering the highest quality of care to those we serve.

Vision

Rockcastle Regional Hospital and Respiratory Care Center's vision is to be the hospital of choice for healthcare in Rockcastle County and surrounding areas and to be the facility of choice nationwide for ventilator care.

Values

We value excellence, friendliness, compassion, cleanliness and our commitment to our community.

Accreditation

All Rockcastle Regional Hospital and Respiratory Care Center facilities and programs are accredited by The Joint Commission.

Referral Contact

Carolyn Browning, Referral/Admissions Coordinator (606) 256-7757

Professional Association Memberships and Other Affiliations

- American Association of Respiratory Care
- American Health Care Association
- American Hospital Association
- Kentucky Association of Health Care Facilities
- Kentucky Hospital Association
- Kentucky Medical Association
- National Patient Safety Foundation

Rockcastle Regional partnerships with UK HealthCare

- Gill Heart Institute
- KY Neuroscience Institute

Rockcastle Regional affiliations with UK HealthCare

- UK Stroke Network Affiliate
- UK Markey Cancer Center Affiliate



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We are pleased to present information about healthcare and healthcare professions to the public. To schedule a speaker for your school, business, civic, healthcare or government organization, call Arielle Estes (606) 256-7880.

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