

# Focused On You

SPRING/SUMMER 2021

Health news and information from **MedStar Montgomery Medical Center**

## Everybody Loves a Miracle Baby



**Inside:** [Why the COVID-19 Vaccine Might Save Your Life](#) | [Help for the Long-Haulers](#) | [COVID-19 Vaccine FAQs: What You Need To Know](#) | [A Tale of Two Cancers](#) | [Bunnie Beats the Odds](#) | [Community Class Schedule](#) | [A Life-Saving Gift](#)

# Letter from the President



It's hard to believe it has been well over a year since we began treating our first COVID-19 patients\* here at MedStar Montgomery. In many ways, it has been one of the longest years of our lives—yet in other ways it's difficult to account for the passing time—as long weeks of battling the COVID pandemic quickly turned into months.

While it has had a devastating impact on virtually every aspect of our lives, COVID has had some silver linings. Among these, we are more aware and grateful for the seemingly small things that may not have even been on our radar prior to last spring, such as the ability to enjoy more of nature and the change of seasons.

We are also grateful to have administered COVID vaccinations to thousands of MedStar Health associates and community members. With the news that vaccines will be available to most Americans in the coming months, we are looking forward to a gradual return to whatever our new normal may be.

You can learn more about the COVID vaccine in this issue of Focused on You, where we also share other silver linings—stories of patients who triumphed over various medical conditions during the pandemic. You'll meet MedStar Montgomery cancer survivor Robert Dorn, who has battled two different types of

cancer with the help of our cancer specialists. Despite years of disappointment, the Grant family welcomed their very own miracle baby in 2020, and through orthopaedic surgical advancements, Alice Boswell is able to homeschool her grandson once again following a successful hand surgery.

As we share these wonderful stories of hope and healing, we remind you to continue to follow the CDC guidelines—wear your mask, wash your hands, practice safe physical distancing and do not delay care if needed. As always, MedStar Montgomery is here to serve all of your healthcare needs.

Wishing you continued good health,

**THOMAS J. SENKER, FACHE**  
President, MedStar Montgomery Medical Center,  
Senior Vice President, MedStar Health

*\*After many months of treating COVID-19 patients, we are pleased to report there were no COVID-19 patients inpatient at the time of printing.*

## Focused On You

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President and CEO, MedStar Health

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301-774-8882

## MedStar Montgomery Welcomes New Providers



**Carlos Espinel, MD**  
General Surgeon  
301-774-8962



**Kathryn O'Connor, MD**  
Orthopaedic Surgeon -  
Foot/Ankle Specialist  
301-774-8958



# Help for the Long-Haulers: The COVID Recovery Program

You may have heard that some COVID-19 survivors are experiencing issues long after they've "recovered" from COVID-19. MedStar Health recently instituted our COVID Recovery Program, one of the first in the area, with the intent to help these "long-haulers."

Their symptoms often include brain fog, GI issues, a racing heart rate, anxiety and fatigue. "Patients needed a more cohesive multi-disciplinary approach to their care; when they have so many different issues, the care can be fragmented and they can feel lost, especially with a newer disease," explains Dr. Estelle Jean, the COVID Recovery Program Cardiologist Representative for Montgomery County and a cardiologist at MedStar Montgomery. To facilitate this longitudinal care, MedStar Health provides an online portal for patients to set up appointments with specialists ranging from cardiologists, to psychiatrists, to pulmonologists and more.

Since its inception, the program has helped hundreds of people get referrals for more than 400 providers "The additional benefit is the ongoing collection of data so we see how we can best serve our patients," Dr. Jean notes. By tracking the data, the program administrators have discovered that many of these patients experienced mild symptoms while they had COVID, but the ongoing symptoms have been more challenging. These patients have welcomed the program. Dr. Jean explains, "Patients have found it helpful to be able to have someone to go extensively into their symptoms...to know that they're being taken care of by a group of specialists who are interested in their unique systems and finding ways to help them recover."

Knowing the extent to which these COVID-19 long-haulers struggle, Dr. Jean strongly encourages her patients to get the vaccine, especially since the group is finding that many long-haulers had only mild symptoms, and tend to be younger—groups that don't worry about COVID as much. The post-COVID complications have greatly altered their quality of life and "there is still so much that we don't know," she says.

She also advises patients not to skip regular physician appointments, especially if they are at a high risk for COVID-19 with obesity, high blood pressure or diabetes concerns, since COVID can make them severely ill. Dr. Jean urges people not to neglect their mental health and to continue to strive for good physical health through exercise, good nutrition and adequate sleep. Finally, she recommends following all CDC guidelines.

We must stay vigilant and see this through. As Benjamin Franklin reminds us, "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure."

## Dr. Estelle Darlyse Jean

Estelle Darlyse Jean, MD is a cardiologist who treats a full spectrum of cardiac disorders, with a primary focus on preventative interventions, cardiac sarcoid, women's cardiology and pregnancy-related cardiovascular conditions. She is the Montgomery County COVID Recovery Program Representative, and her offices are located at MedStar Montgomery Medical Center at 18101 Prince Philip Dr. in Olney, Maryland. (301) 570-7404



Estelle Darlyse Jean, MD

## If You Have Long-Hauler Symptoms

**Register on the Portal:** [www.myMedStar.org](http://www.myMedStar.org)

**Who is Eligible:** Anyone who has had post-COVID symptoms at least six weeks from the start of COVID symptoms, even if you didn't have a confirmed COVID case; preferably 18+ years old

**Who Initiates Appointments:** Patient or physician

**How Appointments are Administered:** Telehealth or in person

**Specialists:** Over 20 healthcare providers, including pulmonologists, neuropsychologists, physical therapists, neurologists, speech language pathologists, occupational therapists, cardiologists, ENT physicians, psychologists, psychiatrists, gastroenterologists, rheumatologists, dermatologists, endocrinologists and more

Visit <https://coronavirus.maryland.gov/pages/vaccine> to register for your vaccine.

# COVID-19 Vaccine FAQs: What You Need To Know

Do you have any questions about the vaccines? Here are some helpful answers!

## Q: Why is it important to get vaccinated?

**A:** COVID-19 vaccines work with your body's natural defenses so you will be ready to fight the virus if you are exposed. The vaccines will keep you and your family safe and are very effective at preventing COVID-19. They may also keep you from getting seriously ill, even if you do get the virus. The vaccination is free.

## Q: Is it safe for me (and now my child) to get a COVID-19 vaccine?

**A:** Yes. Children 12 years and older are now eligible for vaccination, and it is safe for them and all adults. Although fewer children have been sick with COVID-19 compared to adults, children can be infected with the virus that causes COVID-19, can get sick and can spread the virus that causes COVID-19. Getting your child vaccinated helps to protect your child and your family.

There was no compromise in safety in the development and testing of the COVID-19 vaccines, just like past vaccines that have been approved by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). COVID-19 vaccines have actually been proven to be safe and effective under the most intensive safety monitoring in U.S. history, including studies in children 12 years and older. They were tested with tens of thousands of people to study how they would provide protection to people of different races, ages and ethnicities, as well as those with different medical conditions. Further, the coronavirus is not a new virus and has been studied by researchers around the world for many years. Millions of people in the U.S. have already received a safe and effective vaccination, including children 12 years and older.

The vaccine cannot change your DNA and does not cause infertility. Also, you and your child cannot get COVID-19 from any COVID-19 vaccine.

Like adults, children may have some side effects after vaccination. While these side effects may affect their ability to do daily activities, they should go away in a few days. For more information, check out the COVID-19 Vaccine for Children and Teens page on the CDC website.



## Why the COVID-19 Vaccine Might Save Your Life

Wondering whether you should get the vaccine? The answer is yes! Pfizer and Moderna have been proven to be 94-95% effective at preventing the contraction of COVID-19 and almost 100% effective against serious illness or death from the disease. Additionally, the one-dose Johnson & Johnson vaccine was highly effective in studies (greater than 90%) at preventing hospitalization due to COVID-19 two weeks after vaccination and was 100% effective at preventing death due to COVID-19. These vaccines are extremely effective.

## Get Your Vaccine Questions Answered

<https://www.medstarhealth.org/mhs/about-medstar/covid-19-vaccine-information/>

Visit <https://coronavirus.maryland.gov/pages/vaccine> to register for your vaccine.

**Q: Can I get COVID-19 from the vaccine, or expose my family to the COVID-19 virus because of the vaccine?**

**A:** No. Because none of the Pfizer, Moderna and Johnson & Johnson vaccines contains the virus, they cannot infect the vaccinated person and cannot transmit the virus to those around them.

Remember that it typically takes a few weeks for the body to build immunity after vaccination. You could become infected with the virus that causes COVID-19 from external sources (NOT from the vaccine) shortly before or after vaccination and get sick because the vaccine has not had enough time to provide protection.

If you have COVID-19 symptoms, (such as shortness of breath, cough, loss of taste/smell, sore throat, runny nose) or a temperature higher than 100.4° F, please contact your personal physician and isolate yourself from others since these are not typical side effects from vaccination alone.

**Q: Should I take my medications the day I receive my vaccine?**

**A:** Yes, it is important that you continue to take all medications even on the day of your vaccine. Both the vaccine and your medications will continue to be effective and they will not negatively impact each other.

**Q: Can I receive other vaccinations during the same time period in which I receive my vaccine?**

**A:** Yes. The CDC's current guidance is that COVID-19 vaccines and other vaccines may now be administered without regard to timing. You do not need to wait to receive any other childhood or adult vaccines. Non-COVID-19 vaccines can be administered before, between doses or after receiving the COVID-19 vaccine series. This includes simultaneous administration of COVID-19 vaccines and other vaccines on the same day.

**Q: Do the Moderna, Pfizer and Johnson & Johnson vaccines have similar side effects?**

**A:** Yes. As with other vaccines, mild reactions are common. These reactions mean that the vaccine is working to help teach your body how to fight COVID-19 if you are exposed. These side effects do NOT mean that you have COVID-19.

The most commonly reported side effects, which typically lasted one or two days, included pain at the injection site, tiredness, headache, muscle pain, chills, joint pain, nausea and vomiting and fever. Side effects occurred less frequently among participants in the Johnson & Johnson study. Study participants who received the Moderna or Pfizer vaccines experienced more side effects after the second dose than after the first dose, and they happened less often in people over age 55. People with a history of severe allergic reactions to vaccines, medicines or food should consult with their doctor before scheduling the COVID-19 vaccine to learn more about the risks and benefits of the vaccine for these individuals.

**Q: How can side effects from the vaccine be treated?**

**A:** Side effects typically last one to two days and can be treated with over the counter (non-prescription) pain medicines, such as acetaminophen (e.g., Tylenol) or ibuprofen (e.g., Motrin or Advil).

**Q: If my symptoms persist after my vaccination, when should I call my physician?**

**A:** In the first 48 hours (two days) after a vaccine, you can assume that expected symptoms (for example, body aches, fatigue, chills, headache) are from the vaccine. If these symptoms last more than 48 hours after the vaccination or if you have symptoms of COVID-19 not typical of a vaccine (such as loss of taste and smell, cough, shortness of breath or a fever over 100.4° F, even within 48 hours), or other health concerns or questions, contact your personal physician.

You can also schedule a visit with a MedStar Health provider through MedStar eVisit. MedStar eVisit gives you 24/7/365 video access to trusted medical providers, making it easy to get non-emergency medical care, anywhere, anytime. Connect via secured video from your tablet, smartphone or computer. Sign up for free by creating an account at [MedStarHealth.org/eVisit](https://www.MedStarHealth.org/eVisit) from your desktop, or download the MedStar eVisit app from your iOS or Android device.

**Q: Can I take a COVID-19 test after receiving one of the vaccines if I have symptoms, or will the vaccine affect the results of the test?**

**A:** Yes, you can and should take a COVID-19 test if you are experiencing symptoms (such as loss of sense of smell or taste, cough, shortness of breath). The vaccine will not affect the COVID-19 test results because it does not contain any virus.

**Q: How many people need to be vaccinated to achieve herd immunity?**

**A:** According to the CDC, up to 90 percent of individuals may have to be vaccinated before enough people in the community are immune to the virus so that it doesn't easily spread. At this time, we have not achieved herd immunity through vaccination. We hope after you have a good vaccination experience you will share this with your friends and family and encourage others to vaccinate as well for the good of the community!





# Not Your Average Miracle Baby

**This is the story of a ten-year journey, a doctor who can put herself in her patients' shoes and one beautiful, unbelievable miracle.**

In September 2018, Jane Grant and her husband sought out Sujithra Jayaraj, MD, a board-certified obstetrician and gynecologist in the MedStar Montgomery Medical Center Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology. They were looking for hope. They had been trying to conceive a child for eight years and had just one heartbreaking miscarriage to show for it. Dr. Jay, as she's known affectionately by patients, laid out two possible options for Grant's diagnosis, which was an increasingly common condition called PCOS (polycystic ovary syndrome).

With PCOS, Dr. Jayaraj explains, she typically recommends IVF (the more common route) or ovarian drilling, which can be riskier since the ovaries can scar. Grant and her husband are people of great faith, and they were moved to opt for the ovarian drilling, despite the risks. To decrease the chances of scarring, Dr. Jayaraj's novel approach was to wrap the ovary with an anti-adhesive after the drilling.

To everyone's delight, it worked! But in April 2019, shortly after she conceived, Grant suffered another devastating miscarriage. Despite this setback, everyone was optimistic that Grant could get pregnant again. Dr. Jayaraj performed a D&C (dilation and curettage) to remove any extraneous tissue from the failed pregnancy. She performed this emergency surgery at 1 AM in the first available operating room. She even left her local vacation to handle the procedure. "That is the type of doctor she is," Grant says.

Then Grant was pregnant again in September 2019. The nurses celebrated along with her and her husband. But just as quickly, she started bleeding. This lasted for a month while her tests still showed a pregnancy. Dr. Jayaraj suspected a hidden ectopic pregnancy, a potentially dangerous situation for Grant.

**"She gave me the same diagnosis as other doctors, but always gave me hope."**

JANE GRANT



**After a ten-year battle with infertility, Jane Grant and her husband, Ronnie, are thrilled that Amari has joined their family.**

## The Power of Hope

Dr. Jayaraj met the couple before office hours at 8 AM and immediately recommended emergency surgery. These "missed miscarriages" need to be handled right away, she explains. She performed the surgery, and was even able to save the fallopian tube in the procedure, a real concern with ectopic pregnancies.

Throughout all of these disappointments, Grant never gave up hope or lost her faith. She credits Dr. Jayaraj with helping her, "She gave me the same diagnosis as other doctors, but always gave me hope. That was the difference. What makes her special is that she puts herself in the shoes of her patients. She enjoys it and it shows—you will always feel like you're her priority. She has medical knowledge and empathy, and she takes the time. Her name is now a household name in our entire family."

The staff at the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology was equally compassionate. Thirty-five percent of all pregnancies delivered at MedStar Montgomery are considered high-risk, according to Dr. Jayaraj. So the practice is very familiar with both the devastating difficulties and the all-important power of hope. "I remember going through 2019 and it was tough; loss after loss. The staff in the office were just as empathetic as Dr. Jay," recalls Grant. Her tremendous faith also saw them through those difficult times. "Faith kept us going. We didn't know when, but we trusted it was going to happen," she says.

## Her Patients' Shoes

"That's what we work for," says Dr. Jayaraj. "We want to practice medicine safely within the guidelines and still have a personal touch. I put myself in their shoes. Is this something I'd want to do? We have



**Amari Grant arrived in November 2020 to the delight of his parents and his extended MedStar Montgomery family.**

very detailed two-way discussions and we talk about alternatives in detail. I always ask my patients to go home and make decisions so they have time to decide, and if they have questions they can ask me. I explain the risks so there are no surprises.”

### **And Then, a Miracle**

On November 11, 2020, Grant delivered a healthy baby boy. Named Amari for “Miracle of God,” he is a living representation of the power of hope and faith—and the perseverance of the team of people who worked to bring him here.

Grant is thankful for Dr. Jay’s support throughout. “She could have easily taken us to IVF, but she was willing to take this chance and this is her success story as well. I believe that this miracle is not just for my husband and me, but a miracle to help others who are still hoping and wanting to be parents. As hard as infertility is, you can’t give up,” says Grant. There are more miracles waiting to be born.

### **Dr. Sujithra Jayaraj**

Sujithra Jayaraj, MD is a fellowship-trained OB/GYN with a focus on general and high-risk obstetrics care and cervical cerclage placement. She has board certifications in Obstetrics and Gynecology. She is fluent in English, Hindi, Tamil, and Telugu. Her offices are located at MedStar Montgomery Medical Center at 18111 Prince Philip Dr. in Olney, Maryland. (301) 570-7424



**Sujithra Jayaraj, MD**

## **Spotlight: OB Nurse Practitioners**



**Gissel Sonnenbrot**

### **What Is an NP and Why Are They Important?**

You may have been offered an appointment with a nurse practitioner (NP) the last time you called your doctor’s office. Although they’ve been around for 50 years, NPs have recently become more

ubiquitous, and that is a very good thing for all of us.

With the national shortage of primary care providers, NPs are capably filling their shoes. NPs have been proven to administer high-quality care just as physicians do—with a few added perks. They can help lower the cost of healthcare and provide even better outcomes. In fact, the American Association of Nurse Practitioners (AANP) reports that patients seeing NPs regularly for primary care have fewer ER visits and shorter hospital stays.



**Alexandra Assad**

NPs also tend to be very specialized in their fields. In Dr. Jayaraj’s OB/GYN office, Nurse Practitioners Gissel Sonnenbrot, Alexandra Assad and Alexis Tebyanian have been providing excellent specialized care to their patients.



**Alexis Tebyanian**

They also provide holistic services, focusing on not only the physical aspects of patient care, but also their mental and psychosocial needs. They are adept at patient education, inclusive of patients’ families, and receive high marks for listening well. So a visit with an

NP is a win-win for us all.



# A Tale of Two Cancers

## Robert Dorn's Extraordinary Journey with Colon Cancer and Acute Leukemia

In June of 2019, Dr. Behzad Doratotaj had just joined MedStar Montgomery in Olney as a Hematologist and Medical Oncologist. One of his first patients, Mr. Robert Dorn, was referred to him by Dr. Bello, a colorectal surgeon from MedStar Washington Hospital Center. Then 76 years old, Mr. Dorn had retired from his career as a Senior Computer Programmer at NY Life. He had come to the U.S. as a teenager from Hong Kong and developed an abiding love of dim sum, sailing and blackjack.

But now there was distressing news. Dr. Bello had discovered a tumor in Mr. Dorn's cecum (the beginning of the large intestine) and diagnosed him with stage 4 colon cancer, with multiple liver lesions throughout the liver. Dorn, a cheerful and unfailingly positive man, recounts that time. "It's a shock, when they tell you, 'You have cancer.' You always think about cancer as the other guy and not you."

### Fighting the Colon Cancer

Dr. Bello performed a right hemicolectomy (removing the right side of the colon) on August 26, 2019, due to significant bleeding, which caused him to have anemia despite treatment with intravenous iron. He then started a chemotherapy regimen that would hopefully shrink the liver lesions, and it did wonders. His cancer blood test became normal, and the tumor lesions shrank.

Since the liver was the only other affected organ, Dr. Doratotaj consulted with interventional radiology (IR) for liver-directed treatment, refined in the last few years and a specialty of Dr. Alexander Kim at MedStar Georgetown University Hospital. By sending a radio emitting substance through the artery, Dr. Kim could hopefully shrink the tumors even further. In March 2020, Dr. Kim performed two separate procedures, one on each side of the liver. Again, it worked!

### Another Storm Arrives

Dr. Doratotaj was prepared to start another round of chemo to keep shrinking the tumor for longer term control when, alarmed by his blood test and doing a bone marrow biopsy, he discovered that Dorn had leukemia. "This happens infrequently—having two cancers at the same time," he says. But he was not deterred. And neither was Dorn.

They abandoned the colon cancer treatment temporarily due to the very low blood counts as well as knowing the effectiveness of the treatments already given, albeit with close laboratory and imaging monitoring—and switched to treating the leukemia as it posed a more immediate danger. Administering a newly approved treatment combination of a pill and an injection helped improve Dorn's condition. "I was elated to see how well we were able to push back the leukemia," Dr. Doratotaj says. Then while keeping him on treatment for leukemia, they readdressed the colon cancer as it started to progress, using a chemo pill with promising results and also enlisting Dr. Chukwuemeka Ihemelandu from MedStar Washington Hospital Center to deploy intra-abdominal debulking with success and restart him on the chemotherapy for colon cancer.

### In Uncharted Waters

Now, Dr. Doratotaj says, "We are in uncharted waters; having both treatments for leukemia plus colon cancer treatments has never been studied. Fortunately, that combination has kept both cancers at bay. I am pleased that the cancer in the liver has not progressed. He is doing well now and very functional. That to me is the most important thing—quality of life. No one can believe how well he's doing." Additionally, he has seen that the leukemia pill and the colon cancer pill can be administered together, and at least in Mr. Dorn has not shown any unexpected effects. The fact that nothing happened could be reportable and this can help others as well.

Dr. Doratotaj considers all his patients to be family, and Dorn is no exception. "He's such a lovely, deep person. His attitude towards life and how he feels about life are the right mixture and I just love him," Dr. Doratotaj says. The feeling is mutual. Says Dorn, "Dr. D. took care of me one step at a time. He's great. I love the man."

**"After what I went through, I'm happy. One day at a time."**

ROBERT DORN



**Robert Dorn has been battling two types of cancer, and is thankful for his remarkable progress with MedStar Montgomery's Dr. Doratotaj and other MedStar Health specialists.**



He took his time to answer all of my questions and he's a very compassionate doctor."

His daughter, Kimberly Dorn, concurs, "Dr. D. seems very helpful. Based on my father's age and the type of cancers, to get good news is definitely an amazing thing."

Mr. Dorn is grateful for the treatment. "I have no complaints. I'm just so happy that all three doctors are tremendous and could take out most of the lesions, and I feel pretty well with the healing. After what I went through, I'm happy. One day at a time." One day at a time. That is the way you weather—and savor—the journey.

### **Dr. Behzad Doratotaj**

Behzad Doratotaj, MD is a fellowship-trained Hematologist and Medical Oncologist with board certifications in hematology, oncology, internal medicine and geriatric medicine. He is fluent in English and Farsi, and his offices

are located at MedStar Montgomery Medical Center at 18101 Prince Philip Dr. in Olney, Maryland. (301) 774-8697



**Behzad Doratotaj, MD**

# **Bunnie Beats the Odds: Battling Ehlers-Danlos Syndrome With a Surgeon's Hand**

**For most of her 79 years, the odds were stacked against Alice "Bunnie" Boswell. Yet she beat them all, one after another. A lifelong resident of Montgomery County, Maryland, she was one of the first African Americans to integrate into public schools. She persevered through the tremendous adversity. But then a mysterious illness made her movement difficult, and still Bunnie powered through.**

At eighteen months, doctors diagnosed her with an inherited disease called Ehlers-Danlos Syndrome, which affects the connective tissues—skin, joints, and blood vessel walls—creating overly flexible joints and stretchy, fragile skin. Doctors predicted she would likely not walk. But she did. People said she would not graduate from high school. She proved them wrong. And after doctors told Bunnie she could not have children, she gave birth to two sons. She has been defying expectations her entire life.



**Bunnie can open and close both hands now after surgeries to replace joints and realign her tendons.**

## **Going Bionic**

It hasn't been easy. She has undergone multiple surgeries on her back, feet and heart throughout the years. As a result, her body is filled with metal and plastic implants. "I'm the bionic woman," she would joke. But then things got worse. For many years, her hands mercifully escaped the problem—but they too succumbed and severely affected her essential movements, making daily life much more difficult.

In 2019, she was referred by her primary care physician, Mercy Obamogie, MD, to John Foley, MD, Orthopaedic Hand Surgeon at MedStar Montgomery Medical Center. Dr. Foley is a fellowship-trained hand surgeon with special expertise in disorders of the hand, wrist and elbow. When Dr. Foley first saw her, Boswell's left hand was nearly frozen into a fist.

"Bunnie's knuckle joints and the tendons around them were all dislocated as a result of her disease," Dr. Foley explains. "She had adapted over time, but her condition was very disabling. When we met, we talked about her options—including surgery to replace her joints with silicone implants and realign her tendons. There were some risks because of her other health issues, but we both agreed that the procedure would improve the quality of her life," he adds.

Boswell was convinced—and even more excited that surgery would be performed close to home at MedStar Montgomery. "I'm a go-getter," she says. "So, I just wanted to get on with it!"

## **In Good Hands**

Dr. Foley performed her procedure under general anesthetic and a nerve block in her hand. He made an incision to expose her knuckles and replaced the bones with "spacers" made of silicone. Then he put the tendons that allow the fingers to extend into their appropriate places around her new knuckles, and closed the incision.

"Our hand therapists created a splint for Bunnie, which she wore for six weeks. Then she began working with specialty-trained therapists to strengthen her hand and learn to move it again," Dr. Foley explains.

"After my therapy, I could wave again," says Boswell, happily. "And I continue to do exercises at home, and now I can open and close my hand. The result was so good I had Dr. Foley do the procedure on my other hand!"

That surgery was performed in late July, 2020. Meanwhile, Boswell has been home-schooling her great-grandson, juggling other family responsibilities, and still working as a contractor for Athena Consultants as a case manager for Montgomery County's Adult Drug Court Program. "I tried to retire," she says. "They just wouldn't let me go. But that's ok. I'm a people person and I want to continue to help."

She certainly has her hands full, and that's one obstacle she won't need to overcome.

### **Dr. John S. Foley**

John S. Foley, MD, Orthopaedic Hand Surgeon, is an Orthopaedic surgeon who specializes in hand, wrist, and forearm surgery. He has special interest in arthritic and inflammatory conditions of the hand and wrist, and in nerve compression disorders, including carpal tunnel and cubital tunnel syndrome. He sees patients at MedStar Montgomery Medical Center at 18109 Prince Philip Dr. in Olney, Maryland. (301) 774-8958



**John S. Foley, MD**

# **In Honor of Ramash: The Quasba Family Provides Life-Giving Connections to ICU Patients**

**The Quasba family recently made an impactful philanthropic gift to MedStar Montgomery Medical Center. By partnering with us to purchase ten iPads and stands, they honor the memory of their cherished father and husband and express their gratitude to the hard-working intensive care unit (ICU) team. With this generous philanthropic gift, patients in each room in the ICU will now be able to communicate with their families and overcome some of the loneliness brought on by their separation.**

The idea was inspired by the Quasba's recent experience at the ICU. When sixty-seven-year-old Ramash Quasba was fighting COVID-19 last fall, he was hospitalized for 17 days. Quasba was then transferred to a hospital closer to his family when he needed to be on a ventilator. After a valiant six-week battle against the disease, he lost his fight on September 22, 2020, leaving behind his wife, two daughters, son-in-law and two grandsons.



**The Quasba family is spreading their love for their husband, father and grandfather, Ramash Quasba, to the patients in MedStar Montgomery's ICU.**

Quasba was a man full of life. His daughters joked that in recent years, his cooking skills rivaled their mother's, and they would only visit if he were cooking. He lovingly tended his mint garden and made pickled vegetables plucked from his home garden. Prior to his falling ill on August 10, Quasba made a huge jar of pickled turnips. "We cherish it today in his honor," says his daughter, Naeha.

He had recently started exercising as well—he took neighborhood walks with his two grandsons and swam laps in the pool for an hour each day. Naeha recalls, "He was always the life of the party! From the young to the old, my father would make everyone feel special." After emigrating from India at age 26, he built a wonderful life here with a fulfilling career in mechanical engineering and a deep love for the American Indian community.

At MedStar Montgomery, the family was not able to visit him due to COVID-10 restriction in place at that time. "We hinged on FaceTime calls on my father's cell phone...To see your loved one decline through brief video chats is the most heart-wrenching experience," Naeha says. The last four days prior to her father's intubation, she remembers, "he was so demoralized that he stopped answering his phone altogether, and we had to ask the nurses to answer his phone so we could see our dad for a few moments."

The family wanted to give a gift that could help patients and families in the ICU through these extremely trying times. Naeha explains, "We wanted the iPads to be available for patients' families to connect with their loved ones. Even having the iPad on continuously can provide reassurance to the patient. We truly hope that these iPads are being used every day—not only by the patients, but also by the nurses, physicians, physician assistants and nurse practitioners on staff. It is comforting to the families to see the people who are caring for their loved ones."

With this generous gesture, Quasba's life will continue to help even more people—another beautiful offering to remember.

Read more stories and express your gratitude at [MedStarHealth.org/GratitudeStories](https://www.MedStarHealth.org/GratitudeStories).



# Community Class Schedule

## Senior Exercise Classes

### • Senior Strength and Balance

Have fun, feel better and get fit with a free 45-minute fitness active aging group exercise class, designed to help older adults increase muscular strength, flexibility and range of motion, and maintain their cardiovascular health.

### • Gentle Flow Yoga for Seniors

A variety of yoga poses to increase strength, balance and flexibility. The class ends with a wonderful meditation that soothes the mind and body.

## Childbirth Infant Care Classes

### • Prepared Childbirth Express

This condensed version will prepare couples for their labor and birth experience. Class is presented in lecture/video format. To enhance what you learn, hands-on instruction is available by taking the Lamaze Techniques class.

### • Complete Childbirth Preparation

Our six-week Complete Childbirth Preparation program prepares couples for a positive birthing experience. The program is designed to help expectant couples plan for labor, delivery and how to care for a newborn. It includes sessions on breastfeeding and infant care as well as the birthing process. A tour of the Labor & Delivery Unit is included.

### • Lamaze Techniques

This program helps women explore ways to find comfort during labor and delivery. Participants will learn about breathing patterns, position changes, relaxation techniques and massage. Both you and your partner will learn strategies that will enhance the progress of labor. All classes taught by a Lamaze Certified Childbirth Educator.  
(Note: You must have completed your childbirth class prior to this class.)

### • Breastfeeding Basics

This course is designed to offer advice and support for breastfeeding mothers. A lactation specialist will discuss topics on the health-related benefits of breast-feeding, practical techniques and breast-feeding at work.

### • Infant Care

This class is designed to give a complete head-to-toe look at how to care for your little one and to provide you with hands-on experience. Topics include bathing, feeding, diapering, safety issues and much more



**Online live classes are available for our seniors and parents in the community.**



## Support Groups

### • Diabetes Support Group

Knowing and controlling your your hemoglobin A1C, blood pressure and cholesterol can help you manage your diabetes better. And having the support of a specialist to help you do that gives you that power!

## Integrative Medicine Classes

### • Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) Free Intro

Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) is your own body's and mind's connection through meditation, body awareness, yoga and the exploration of your behavior, thinking, feeling and action. Take the complimentary introductory class to determine if this full session is right for you!

### • Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) 8-week Course

Discover through MBSR your own body's and mind's connection through meditation, body awareness, yoga and the exploration of your behavior, thinking, feeling and action. This 8-week virtual course is designed to assist people who want to learn to use their own internal resources (body sensations, thoughts, emotions) to respond more skillfully to stress and medical/psychological conditions, and to promote healthy living.

**For full descriptions, or to learn more about dates and times, visit [MedStarMontgomery.org/Classes](https://www.MedStarMontgomery.org/Classes) or call 301-774-8881 (Option 4).**

# Your safety comes first.

The safety of our patients will always be our top priority.

Now, we're taking extra precautions to help you feel at ease during your care. Each member of our team is focused on keeping you and your loved ones safe. Here's what you can expect:



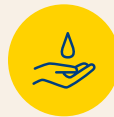
**Safe providers:** Our physicians, nurses and other healthcare team members use the proper safety gear to protect themselves and you to keep everyone healthy.



**Masking:** All patients and visitors are expected to wear a mask during their visit, regardless of symptoms. We will provide one for you, if needed.



**Cleaning and disinfecting:** We thoroughly sanitize and disinfect all patient exam, waiting and procedure rooms multiple times each day.



**Hand sanitizing:** Hand sanitizer dispensing stations are available throughout every facility.



**Staggered appointments:** We are carefully managing our schedules to minimize the number of people coming through our waiting rooms at one time.



**Screening patients and visitors:** We are screening all patients and approved visitors for symptoms at every hospital and medical office location.



**Physical distancing:** While inside our facilities, we'll help you practice physical distancing with floor markers, signage and reconfigured waiting areas.

You will never feel socially distant. MedStar Health associates care about you. Our mantra—It's how we treat people—is what drives us all to do what we do.

Visit [MedStarHealth.org](https://www.MedStarHealth.org)  
for more information.