

Pulse

BAXTER HEALTH

SUMMER 2023
VOLUME 6 | ISSUE 3

GIRLS JUST WANT TO HAVE FUN

plus
**ROLLIN' ON
THE RIVER**
Unwind on one
of Arkansas's
favorite rivers
pg. 28

**WOMEN HELPING
WOMEN**
with their collective
impact of giving
pg. 15



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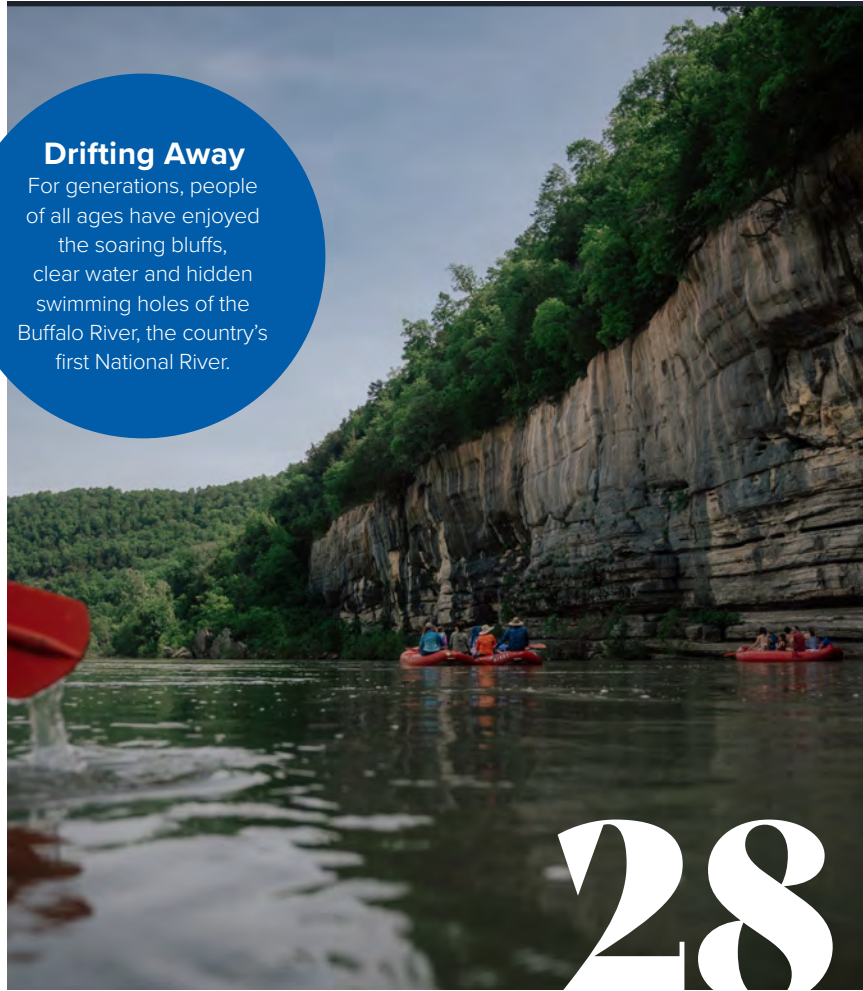
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CONTENTS

SUMMER 2023

Drifting Away

For generations, people of all ages have enjoyed the soaring bluffs, clear water and hidden swimming holes of the Buffalo River, the country's first National River.



22 | Let's Go Muddin'

The women of Baxter Health swap stethoscopes and spreadsheets for off-roading adventure

28 | Float On

Baxter Health's unique river floats promote relaxation and camaraderie

IN EVERY ISSUE

- 06 Letter from the President & CEO
- 08 News & Briefs
- 10 Calendar
- 35 Wellness
- 39 Nutrition
- 44 Last Word

FEATURES

15 | Women in Philanthropy

A new group at Baxter Health champions women to collectively influence and fund crucial medical services

20 | Women's Services

Empowering women with specialized care



On the cover: Group of Baxter Health women with their ATVs at Cloud 9 Ranch in Caulfield, Missouri.
PHOTOGRAPHY BY JAMES MOORE.

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(Seated left to right) Rachel Collie and Jackie Conner (Standing, left to right) Phillip Collie, Conner Collie, Carson Collie and John Conner

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Pulse

SUMMER 2023

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WONDER WOMEN

It takes a lot of people to make an organization run, and that's especially true in healthcare. From physicians to volunteers and nurses to environmental services techs, every single member of the Baxter Health family has a critical role to play in delivering a top-quality experience to our patients and their families.

Healthcare has always had women playing key roles in the industry. Women are invaluable in every aspect of Baxter Health operations and have helped to build the health system we know today. Successful women can be found at every level of our organizational chart and in every role at Baxter Health.

In this issue, you can read about some of the amazing work these women are doing to improve care, foster camaraderie and raise the funds needed to meet the challenges of a very complicated marketplace. You'll meet:

- Kim Beavers and Debbie Henry and their side-by-side off-roading group.
- Dr. Melissa Dirst-Roberts, who regularly leads employee float trips on the Buffalo River.
- Shannah O'Dell whose commitment to healthy living led the nurse and mom to a remarkable physical transformation.

We also take a look at the health system's continuum of women's medical and wellness services and the newly reformed Women in Philanthropy group, both of which help Baxter Health stay on the cutting edge of medical technology and treatment.

As CEO, I am grateful for the work these outstanding individuals put in every day to help improve Baxter Health. Every employee matters here, and I am honored to lead an organization that's an employer of choice, providing robust career opportunities for all.

I hope you enjoy this issue of Pulse magazine, with our compliments.

With gratitude,

RON PETERSON
President/Chief Executive Officer
Baxter Health



PHOTOGRAPHY BY JAMES MOORE

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MOVERS AND NEWCOMERS



+ DR. JOHN NEIS COMPLETES FIRST INSPIRE® THERAPY PROCEDURE

In a significant medical advancement, Dr. John Neis of Mountain Home ENT & Allergy has successfully performed the first Inspire procedure at the Baxter Health Outpatient Surgery Center, offering a new solution for treating obstructive sleep apnea (OSA). A FDA-approved therapy, Inspire works within the body's natural breathing process, using mild stimulation to keep the airway open and allow for normal oxygen flow during sleep. This treatment provides an effective alternative for the 22 million Americans affected by OSA, particularly those unable to use Continuous Positive Airway Pressure (CPAP) therapy. Implanted via an outpatient procedure, the Inspire system has shown significant reductions in sleep apnea events, high patient satisfaction, and a strong adherence to the therapy.



CARRIE GEIER
EDUCATOR/REPELL
DIABETES CLINIC

Baxter Health welcomes Carrie Geier, MEd, RN, as the new educator at Reppell Diabetes Clinic. Bringing over 20 years of experience in diabetes education, Geier will leverage her expertise in personalized patient assessment, goal setting and self-management strategies to assist in diabetes management.

Tasked with creating educational programs and resources, Geier will work closely with the Reppell Diabetes Clinic team to ensure comprehensive, patient-centered care. Her addition strengthens the clinic's ongoing commitment to providing top-tier diabetes care in North Central Arkansas and Southern Central Missouri.



HAILEY HARDEN, APRN
BAXTER HEALTH FAMILY
CLINIC AT MELBOURNE

Experienced Nurse Practitioner Hailey Harden, APRN, is now serving patients at the Baxter Health Family Clinic in Melbourne, AR. Harden,

who previously worked as an RN at Baxter Health Home Health, brings a wealth of healthcare knowledge to the clinic.

Joining the clinical practice with Dr. Adam Gray and Fern Sherrell, APRN, Harden is keen to use her skills to meet the healthcare needs of Melbourne and its neighboring communities.

Her addition further enhances the quality of compassionate care offered by the clinic's expert healthcare team.



MEGAN MARTIN, APRN
BAXTER HEALTH
NEUROSURGERY & SPINE
CLINIC

Baxter Health Neurosurgery & Spine Clinic welcomes Megan Martin, APRN, to its expert team of healthcare providers. Martin, a board-certified family nurse practitioner, began her career at Baxter Health in 2016 and recently earned her Master of Science in Nursing from Arkansas State University. Her addition is timed with the clinic's expansion to better serve patients across Mountain Home, Harrison, Ash Flat, Mountain View and West Plains. Joining Drs. Lucas Bradley, Allan Gocio, and Adam Smitherman, and nurse practitioners Brandi Anderson, William Keller, and Ashton Smitherman, Martin is set to be a valuable team asset.



+ FACILITY OF THE MONTH BY ARKANSAS CHILDREN'S ANGEL ONE TRANSPORT TEAM

Baxter Health's Cline Emergency Center has been named Arkansas Children's Angel One Transport Team's Facility of the Month for April 2023. The award, which considers any facility that calls for transport, is in recognition of the teams' joint efforts during a challenging patient transport on April 23. Debbie Izor, RN, of the Angel One Transport Council, praised the teams' commitment to patient care and medical excellence. We extend our thanks to Angel One Transport and Arkansas Children's Hospital for acknowledging our staff.

PHOTO BY MOUNTAIN HOME OBSERVER



+ TAMMY PENKA AMONG ARKANSAS' GREAT 100 NURSES

Baxter Health proudly announces Tammy Penka, Director of Quality, has been recognized as one of the Great 100 Nurses of Arkansas. The annual award, sponsored by the Great 100 Nurses Foundation, honors exceptional nurses for their significant contributions to nursing, concern for humanity and mentorship. Tammy's unwavering commitment to quality patient care, excellent leadership skills and passion for the nursing profession have distinguished her in this prestigious recognition. Baxter Health extends heartfelt congratulations to Tammy on this well-deserved honor.



TAMMY PENKA, MSN, RN
DIRECTOR OF QUALITY

Tammy, a nurse of 28 years, worked as a clinical nurse, case manager, nurse manager and nursing instructor before beginning her career at Baxter Health. She joined the Baxter Health Family in 2010 serving patients as a clinical nurse. She transitioned to the Quality Department in 2011 as a Process Improvement Specialist and then assumed the role of Director of Quality in 2016.

+ SAFE HAVEN BABY BOX

Baxter Health has partnered with Safe Haven Baby Boxes, becoming the second Arkansas hospital to offer a secure, anonymous drop-off for mothers unable to care for their newborns. The 24/7 monitored box is a collaboration between Baxter Health, Safe Haven Baby Boxes and local organizations. Since 2015, Safe Haven has grown to 140 U.S. locations, facilitating nine adoption referrals and over 120 legal surrenders. Founder Monica Kelsey aims to provide support to mothers, giving them a lifesaving option for their child.

CALENDAR

SEPTEMBER-
OCTOBER 2023

9

of September
**OUTRUN CANCER
5K, RUN OR WALK
AT ASUMH, Peitz
Cancer Support
House, 8 a.m.**

SEPTEMBER

September 13
LUNCH & LEARN,
Green Smoothies
101, Heather
Hammonds MD,
CAQSM, DipABLM,
Peitz Cancer Support
House, noon.

September 14
LEARNING
SESSION: The Heart
Truth, Know Your
Numbers with Diana
Fuller, RN – Baxter
Health Cardiac
Rehab, Schliemann
Center for Women's
Health, 1 p.m.

September 18
Registrations open
for **KICK CANCER IN
THE BASS FISHING
TOURNAMENT** on
Saturday, November
4. For registration

form and more
information, visit
baxterhealth.org/
KickCancerInTheBass
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September 19
LUNCH & LEARN:
Depression or
the Blues, Jessica
Johnson, APRN, Mruk
Family Center on
Aging, noon.

September 21
THE STAGES &

**TRANSITIONS OF
DEMENTIA,** Christy
Pennington, RN, and
Diahanne VanGulick,
Certified PAC
Dementia Trainers,
Mruk Family Center
on Aging, 1 p.m.

September 26
**MEMORY RECALL
& RETRIEVAL
STRATEGIES FOR
THE AGING BRAIN,**
Mruk Family Center
on Aging, 1 p.m.

September 27
**AARP DRIVER
SAFETY COURSE,**
AARP Members \$20/
Non \$25, Mruk Family
Center on Aging,
noon - 4 p.m.

OCTOBER

October 5
LUNCH & LEARN:
Permanent Makeup
& Breast Areola
Tattooing, Heather
Ray Smith, Permanent

Makeup Artist, Peitz
Cancer Support
House, noon.

October 11
LUNCH & LEARN:
Hormone Blockers,
Heather Hammonds
MD, CAQSM,
DipABLM, Peitz
Cancer Support
House, noon.

October 18
**AARP DRIVER
SAFETY COURSE,**
AARP Members \$20/
Non \$25, Mruk Family
Center on Aging, 12 -
4 p.m.

October 14
**LOVE LIFE
FUNDRAISER: Boos
& Brews Monster
Gala,** Schliemann
Center for Women's
Health, 6 p.m.

October 25
**GIRLS' NIGHT
OUT: Breast to Be
Informed Featuring
a Medical Panel,**
Schliemann Center for
Women's Health,
5:30 p.m.

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CALENDAR

Education Center, Tuesday and Thursday, 9:15 a.m. or 10:15 a.m.

Fitness for Men, Wednesday and Friday, 9:15 a.m.

Rock Steady Boxing for Parkinson's, Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, times vary.

Seated or Standing Exercise for Seniors Tuesday and Thursday, 10 a.m.

Parkinson's Carepartner Support Monthly, 2nd Thursday, 10 a.m. Please call for specific location.

Senior Nutrition & Wellness Support Monthly, 2nd Monday, 2-3 p.m.

Senior Drum Fitness, 8 week series: September 11 - November 6. Located at the Wellness Education Center on 5 North, Mondays, 3-4 p.m.

Dementia Care Partner Support Monthly, 4th Thursday 1-2 p.m.

Schliemann Center for Women's Health

Childbirth, Monthly, 2nd Saturday, 9 a.m.

Crafting Class, Fridays, 10 a.m.

Breastfeeding, Monthly, 3rd Tuesday, 5:30 p.m.

Heart Healthy Women, Monthly, 2nd Thursday, 1 p.m.

Infant Loss & Support, Facilitated by Deanna Howarth-Reynolds, LMFT, Lighthouse Counseling of the Ozarks, Monthly, 1st Thursday, 5:30 p.m.

Novel Women's Book Club, Monthly, 3rd Wednesday, 1 p.m.

Ladies Exercise, Wednesdays, 10 a.m.

Line Dancing, Tuesdays, Wellness Education Center, Beginners at 11:15 a.m., Advanced at 12:15 p.m.

Dance! Mondays and Wednesdays, Wellness Education Center, 4:15 p.m.

Cardio Kickboxing & Strength Training, Mondays and Wednesdays, 5:30 p.m.

Peitz Cancer Support House Recently Diagnosed Information and Support, 1st and 3rd Wednesdays, 1 p.m.

Men's Cancer Discussions Monthly, 2nd Thursday, 9 a.m.

Ostomy Information and Support, Monthly, 1st Friday, 11 a.m.

Art & Craft Class, Monthly, 3rd Friday, 1 p.m.

Threads of Hope: Creating Gifts for Cancer Patients, Mondays, 1 p.m.

Knock Out Cancer Boxing, Tuesdays and Thursdays, 3:30 p.m.

Intermediate Yoga, Tuesdays and Thursdays, 8 a.m.

Chair Yoga, Mondays and Fridays, 10 a.m.

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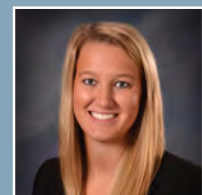
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SISTERS ARE DOIN' IT FOR THEMSELVES

NEW GROUP HARNESSSES WOMEN IN GIVING

BY DWAIN HEBDA

Sarah Edwards is looking for a few good women — more than a few, actually.

Edwards, Executive Director of the Baxter Health Foundation, is beating the drum for a new philanthropic group, Women in Philanthropy, which seeks to empower women to make their voices heard on what's needed most in the Baxter Health suite of medical services, amplified by their collective pocketbooks.

"This group is something we've begun to give philanthropically

mind ed women in our community a means to join together to bring a big impact on women's health needs here," Edwards said. "We're doing it in a way that offers them an opportunity with little to no time commitment because we are all busy. A lot of women are working or mothers or own businesses, so this is designed to allow them a way to be a part of something bigger and still balance everything they need to do in their daily lives."

Edwards recruited a five-member committee to form the nucleus of the club and begin the process of growing the membership. The committee members, comprised of Judy Loving, Jan Schmeski, Jodi Strother, Donna Musara and Shelly Hill, represent a mix of ages,

(Top, from left) Sarah Edwards, April Rosa, Jillian Bemis, Karen Montgomery and Sandy Irby at a Women in Philanthropy event held in May. (Above) Jodi Strother and Cindy Costa.



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backgrounds and experiences, bound by a common love of community.

“That hospital has just always been, for so many years, important to my family,” said Schmeski, a financial adviser and former member of the foundation board. “Before I lived here, I had one brother down here. Then shortly after I moved, several other family members followed. My parents have been treated there. My husband’s mother has been treated there. Grandchildren have been born there. So it’s always been important to me to support the local health care services.”

“One of the reasons I wanted to do this was because my goal in giving is to help change and evolve the community that I am a part of,” said Musara, an organic farmer and owner of a local artist’s collective. “I want to make a difference, but I am not as interested in preserving the status quo of an organization or an institution. I want to help create new solutions to current problems and be more entrepreneurial with my giving and help create a generational change in the area.”

Edwards explained this is the second go around for the Women in Philanthropy group. A previous version a decade ago proved the concept of bringing women together to donate to the health care causes they collectively felt most passionate about. The organization was short-lived but very successful — in just two years it raised \$30,000 — prompting Edwards to broach the idea of bringing it back.

“Jan (Shmeski) and Judy (Loving), were both part of Women in Philanthropy when it first existed, and I wanted their insight and historical knowledge on how it was created, what went well and how can we make this something sustainable,” Edwards said. “I brought in the other three women from our community who I saw as very strong and influential to help make this successful.”

“The hospital is very important to me,” said Loving, a retired banker, longtime board member and donor of some 20 years. “I know that it saves lives every day, and it has saved the life of some people who are very significant to me at various times, who had heart issues or pulmonary issues. Where life-saving specific skills, compassion and thought were needed, they were there, they were quick and they were wonderful. It changed my way of thinking about local health care.”

The new version of the group is designed to allow women of all ages, backgrounds and financial means to participate. Members pay a \$500 annual fee and get a voice in how the accumulated funds are



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donated, based on a list of needs supplied by the hospital. Preference is given to those requests supporting women's health care.

"I hate to say small, because to some people \$500 is not small, but most people could do \$500, especially if they get their place of business to sponsor half," said Hill, a local banker. "Best of all, it doesn't take too many people to start a total that can really make a difference in meeting a need of the hospital. That gives a woman a bigger voice than donating \$500 by itself."

A secondary benefit of the club's collective giving mentality is that it gives younger women more confidence in their potential to effect change, something men have enjoyed for years.

"Women have pretty much been locked out of large donorships. That's mostly been an arena for men," said Musara. "That's a powerful position to be in, and through Women in Philanthropy, members can not only do that, but they get a say and a vote in the final decision of where that money goes. That's very empowering."

"You just tend to think of philanthropy as being more of a man's world, or at least that's what you hear about more often," Hill said. "Those 'big impact donations' always seem to have men attached to them more so than women. I know for myself and a lot of young women I talk to, we love the idea of being able to learn from some prestigious women in the community and be mentored by some of these women as well."

Recruitment for members is going full force as the foundation seeks to welcome as many women as possible who are interested in establishing a pattern of giving that is multiplied by their friends, coworkers and neighbors. Edwards said they plan on having a formal membership drive event in the fall and hopes to have assembled enough members by year's end to vote on the group's first major donation.

"I see this growing into something organic because a lot of women know other women who might have a heart for giving," Edwards said. "We also have a goal of making this something that reaches new people in our community. We have an incredible donor base already with our foundation, but a lot of people have moved here over the last couple of years who may not know about us."

"If they haven't had a situation where they needed to use the hospital, but they are still philanthropically inclined, we want this to be their opportunity to do something in the community they now call home." ■



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WOMEN AND CHILDREN FIRST

WOMEN TAKE CENTER STAGE THROUGH BAXTER HEALTH'S SPECIALTY CARE

BY DWAIN HEBDA

Earlier this spring, the Mayo Clinic published sobering statistics about the health care inequities that still exist in America on the basis of gender. The piece illustrated some shocking statistics when it comes to the care women receive — from being less likely to receive CPR from bystanders over fear of being accused of inappropriate touching to not being taken as seriously as men when expressing health concerns or pain levels during a doctor's appointment.

The article also noted that women overall still aren't receiving the kind of wellness information or pre-delivery health education that's needed to take charge of their own health risk factors. Per the piece, only half of the women surveyed in one poll know that cardiovascular disease represents one-third of deaths among women in the U.S. or that the death rate in pregnancy and delivery have been on the rise.

In light of these statistics and others like it, Baxter Health has invested heavily in women's health resources. Leveraging the Schliemann Center for Women's Health, the Comprehensive Women's Clinic, and the Women and Newborn Care Center, the health system is providing expertise and education for women at every stage of life.

"(These resources) are something unique to our hospital," said Amy Myers, MSN, RN, NPD-BC, Director of the Women and Newborn Care Center. "A lot of hospitals our size don't have the

luxury of offering these kinds of services, such as a dedicated educator for maternal newborn care or a simulation center for training nurses. Baxter Health really sets itself apart because of these services."

"It's a huge benefit to our ladies that we offer information and services in a female-specific environment," said Stefany Isham, Coordinator for the Schliemann Center for Women's Health. "Our programs are only for the ladies, so they can ask all the questions they want without fear of being judged.

"More often than not, they're going to hear another woman in a class saying, 'I am so glad you asked that question. I've been dying to ask, but I wasn't sure how to do it.' Or, 'I'm glad you asked. I didn't think about that.'"

Even with services that are more common across the board, the Baxter Health offerings stand out for being under the umbrella of the health system, which takes certain burdens off of physicians and allows them to focus on quality care.

"The fact that we're a hospital-owned clinic, I don't have to worry about overhead," said Dr. Maureen Flowers, Chief of Obstetrics at Baxter Health and OB/Gyn at the Comprehensive Women's Clinic. "It's also a little different because, for private clinics, they need you to have insurance or pay in cash. That's how they function. As a hospital employee, I typically don't worry about those things; regardless of if you have insurance or not, we take you, we take care of you." ■



» Women and Newborn Care Center

In 31 years of service to Baxter Health, Amy Myers has served a variety of nursing roles from bedside to nurses' education. Her latest role — heading the Women and Newborn Care Center — brings that wealth of experience to bear helping ensure expectant and new mothers are healthy and prepared for the responsibilities of parenting.

"As a director, my role is to make sure the nurses have what they need to provide excellent care for our laboring moms, our newborn babies and our gynecological patients," she said. "Baxter Health makes sure nurses have what they need as far as supplies, equipment, education and adequate training.

"As far as patients are concerned, it's our department's responsibility to provide discharge education, so our families understand how to care for themselves and their baby.

During their hospital stay, we gather moms together for a discharge class, or the nurses conduct that training on a one-on-one basis. Adequate knowledge helps decrease stress for new parents so they are better able to enjoy this wonderful time with their newborn."

Megan Wunderlin, BSN, RN,

RNC-OB, IBCLC, is the staff OB Educator tasked with training both nurses and patients on a variety of subjects matter relating to pregnancy, labor, delivery and postpartum. She does this not only through classroom instruction and one-on-one face time, but also through a learning lab that features a medical manikin that can simulate a range of delivery scenarios.

"One of the scariest things for a new OB nurse is the thought that they're going to be the one to catch the baby if the doctor can't get there in time," she said. "So, we let them 'deliver' in a controlled environment, walking through the steps until they understand what they need to do to help that mama and then what they do immediately after.

"I had a nurse that wanted to practice delivering (on the manikin) so that she would be better prepared when the situation occurred. She's caught a baby since then and felt more confident doing it because of practice scenarios in Baxter Health's Ed & Gayle Goodman Simulation Center."

Education is also vital for the moms themselves, even those who feel they've got the bases covered due to having delivered multiple children.

"Sometimes our moms are a little reluctant to go to discharge class if it's not their first baby, but almost every one of them is glad that they went because there's always new information coming out," Wunderlin said. "They all get consistent information, they get to ask questions, and even moms who

have had six babies can learn something new because things are always changing."



» Schliemann Center for Women's Health

For nearly 20 years, the Schliemann Center for Women's Health has provided a wide range of educational services on topics of wellness, women's health conditions and related topics.

"I think it's pretty true to say that an educated patient makes for a better patient," said Stefany Isham, Schliemann Center for Women's Health Coordinator. "That's what we do; our focus is to educate women in every aspect of health, and sometimes that branches out a little bit to their children. We try to help with their overall mental status or bring families together to do crafting projects. It's a holistic approach."

The center provides an impressive variety of programs, from support groups to exercise classes to babysitter certification and more. The clientele seen here daily is equally diverse.

"I haven't noticed an increase in one age group over another; the trends are more in the type of topics that we're addressing," Isham said. "We're leaning toward mental health, we're leaning toward grandmothers

who are now stepping into the role of being parents for whatever reason. Sometimes women don't know what they need. Sometimes they just need to talk to somebody."

Isham said a benefit of being part of the health system is the access it gives center staff to various medical experts and resources to address anything that walks through the door or any question offered over the phone.

"We are so fortunate to be part of the hospital system," she said. "Dr. Andrea Bounds is our Medical Director, and she really is my go-to person for suggestions of resources or people a woman can talk to on a given subject such as incontinence or sexual health.

"The women on our board are from all different walks (of life) and include nurses and nurse practitioners. Sometimes I'll call them directly and say, 'I've got a group of ladies who are wanting to learn about this or this. Can we have those conversations?' And they've never said no. The center is just an amazing place for women to go."



» Comprehensive Women's Clinic

Growing up in nearby Flippin, Dr. Maureen Flowers saw firsthand how Baxter Health made a difference in her hometown as

well as the other small communities in the area surrounding Mountain Home. In her role with the Comprehensive Women's Clinic, she continues this legacy by providing top-quality care to all women, every day.

"I take care of all ages, from about 12 years until the end of life," she said. "Pediatric patients don't typically need an OB/GYN unless something crazy is happening, and I do have a few of those. I've taken care of some who have been 6 or 7 years old over the years just for one thing or another.

"Right now, my patient demographic is mostly my reproductive women because my OB numbers are so large. We take care of everything across the board — all demographics, all ages, all of it."

Flowers attended the University of Arkansas Fort Smith, completed medical school at UAMS in Little Rock and served her residency at the University of Texas Southwestern, Parkland Hospital in Dallas. In addition to their part of the OB caseload of 650 to 700 births per year, the clinic provides patients with lactation consultation, well-women exams, initial infertility work-ups, contraception and family planning services as well as postmenopausal treatment and hormone replacement therapy.

"I love taking care of women," Flowers said. "It's just a very huge passion of mine to be able to take care of women and their needs, to listen to them and figure out what it is I can do for them to help them and fix what's going on. And who doesn't love delivering babies, you know?"



GET YOUR MOTOR RUNNIN'!

ATV RIDERS TAKE TO THE TRAILS

WRITTEN BY DWAIN HEBDA
PHOTOGRAPHY BY JAMES MOORE

“ We go riding all year long. On New Year’s Eve, we were over at Batesville at Greasy Bend, and on New Year’s Day, we were out there riding.” – Kim Beavers



All day, as Vice President and Chief Financial Officer of Baxter Health, Debbie Henry navigates spreadsheets covered in numbers and maneuvers through the halls of Baxter Health going from one meeting to the next.

But on the weekends, she’s far more likely to be navigating a trail in her side-by-side, maneuvering through dirt and mud. It’s not everyone’s idea of a good time, but for Henry, it’s just the ticket.

“Our family really started getting very active in riding side-by-sides when COVID hit,” she said. “That’s when we purchased our first vehicle, or buggy. We ride as a family a lot, and we ride with a church group in Harrison. They try to do a group ride at least once a month during the fall and summer months.

“They ride mostly in Arkansas and a lot of times south of Harrison and down by Russellville in the national forest. There are a lot of trails in the area. It’s just beautiful country.”

Henry was so smitten with the activity, she started to notice that many other members of the Baxter Health family shared her love for trails and the open road. One of them, Nurse Recruiter Kim Beavers, is as passionate about riding as she was.

“My husband and I actually started about a year and a half ago,” Beavers said. “We live up on Bull Shoals Lake, and I have a side-by-side that I use down at the lake. It’s a larger side-by-side, and I can get all the grandkids and our kayaks in it.

“We go riding all year long. On New Year’s Eve, we were over at Batesville at Greasy Bend, and on New Year’s Day, we were out there riding. We’ve also gone to Kentucky since then, and of course, over here in Arkansas, there’s a lot of good trail riding around the Witts Springs area.”

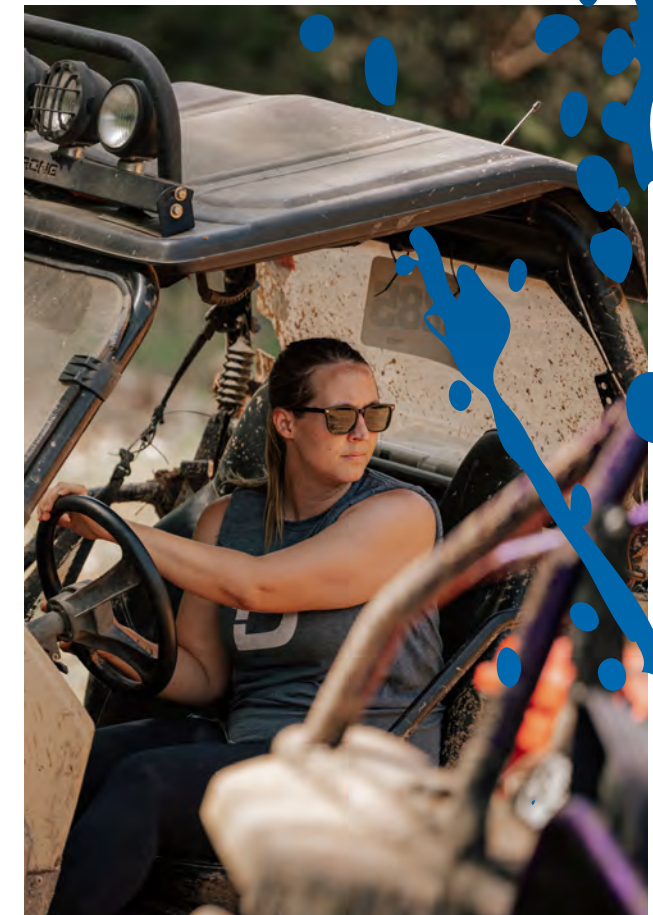
Both women said the allure of side-by-side riding is in its stress relief. Slingshot mud or splashing water is a great antidote for the tribulations of corporate life, and fresh air and sunshine do a person good anytime. Even the fickle temperament of Mother Nature makes for a good story.

“The most exciting thing we’ve done is when the hailstorm hit Northern Arkansas,” Beavers said. “We were headed back, and we knew the storms were supposed to move in around 5 o’clock. We were planning on being back around that time, but the storms hit early over there, about 3:30. So we were out in that hailstorm.

“We’ve got videos of the hailstones; they were pretty big — bigger than a golf ball, definitely. My husband got dinged and got a bruise on his arm. But we made it back all right.”

“You never know what you’re going to come up against because sometimes there’s a lot of water and a lot of mud,” Henry said. “Sometimes there’s just a lot of dirt, but when we’re riding in the forest and on the back trails, a lot of times there’s rock. You just have to maneuver your way through, and it’s always challenging.

“Sometimes, you get stuck or turn over — depends on the day and where you are or what you encounter. But most of it’s just fun with family and friends and out in nature and away from the masses. It’s different than being in the city.”



Having fun in the mud is (top) Miranda Bradley, HR Recruiter, (above, left to right) Janie Pugsley, MSN, RN, Director, Baxter Health Home Health and Kim Beavers, Nurse Recruiter.



(From top) One of the many great trails Cloud 9 Ranch has to offer. Wynne Woodard, MSN, APRN, ACNS-BC, NE, Baxter Health Education and First In Service Hospitalists. A big group shout out to Kelly Dicks, who was unable to come along for the ride.

The duo enjoyed their rides so much that they thought it a great idea to form a group of like-minded individuals at work. Under the banner of “Girls just want to have fun,” they posted flyers to anyone who’d like to come along on the inaugural ride, held at Cloud 9 Ranch in Caulfield, Missouri.

Wynne Woodard, MSN, APRN, ACNS-BC, NE, Baxter Health Education and First In Service Hospitalists, has been a Baxter Health employee for over 28 years. A Cloud 9 Ranch member, Woodard was helpful in planning the group ride and said, “In addition to the thrill of the ride, my favorite part is when a patient or their family recognize me from the trails. It gives you an instant connection with the people you are caring for to identity with them on a personal level. This has a positive impact on the patient-provider relationship.”

“We sent flyers to all of our directors and encouraged them to reach out to anybody they knew they enjoyed riding side-by-sides” Henry said. “We had a core group we all know that rode often, and many were Cloud 9 Ranch members, where we rode. So, we just decided to organize a group ride for our Baxter Health Family.

“Most of the employees that signed up for the ride were couples and families. The Baxter Health Marketing team helped organize the ride and capitalized on the opportunity to support marketing efforts with adventure pictures and videos.

“It was a great day with not only our work families, but our actual families, too.”

The event accommodated drivers and riders of various experience levels from relative beginners to more experienced riders like Henry and Beavers, who chuckled at the memory of taking newbies for their first real spin.

“Janie Pugsley is our Director of Home Health; she was on this ride when we went to Cloud 9 Ranch, she, her husband and her grandkid,” Beavers said. “When the girls were driving, she didn’t want to drive. She said, ‘Can I ride with you?’ I said, ‘Sure.’ I think I scared the badoogies out of her. She kept going, ‘Oh, I want to ride with Debbie! I want to ride with Debbie!’ I was giggling, and Janie was hanging on for dear life. I felt guilty about that later, but it was pretty funny.”

Both Henry and Beavers said the inaugural ride was so much fun they’d like to organize another outing among Baxter Health employees and families. They said the combination of the scenery, the speed and the people they meet puts side-by-side riding in a class by itself.

“My daughter and her family have a side-by-side, and I love to hit the trails and ride with family or friends, either one,” Henry said. “Being out in nature is always a blast.”

“We have met so many nice people on these rides that you would have never met otherwise,” Beavers said. “I mean you’ll be out somewhere, and you’ll come across somebody that works hourly wages and somebody else who’s a retired doctor. It’s just a huge group of people who get together and want to have a good time and enjoy the outdoors.” ■

“ In addition to the thrill of the ride, my favorite part is when a patient or their family recognize me from the trails. It gives you an instant connection with the people you are caring for ...” – Wynne Woodard



From left are Miranda Bradley, HR Recruiter; Janie Pugsley, MSN, RN, Director, Baxter Health Home Health; Wynne Woodard, MSN, APRN, ACNS-BC, NE, Baxter Health Education and First In Service Hospitalists; Debbie Henry, VP/Chief Financial Officer; and Kim Beavers, Nurse Recruiter.

ROLLIN' ON THE RIVER



UNWINDING ON
THE WATERS OF
ARKANSAS' FIRST
NATIONAL RIVER

WRITTEN BY DWAIN HEBDA
PHOTOGRAPHY BY JAMES MOORE





Every year, thousands of Arkansans and out-of-state visitors flock to a wooded north-central spot for an annual rite of spring — floating the Buffalo River. For generations, people of all ages have enjoyed the soaring bluffs, clear water and hidden swimming holes of the state’s crown jewel waterway and the country’s first National River.

Some of these guests pack their own gear, but the vast majority visit one of the outfitters that dot the area for their canoes, rafts or tubes, renting a cabin and getting some well-worn advice. One of the oldest and most established of these outfitters, Dirst Canoe Rental & Log Cabins, is a must-stop for river veterans and rookie paddlers alike, and Dr. Melissa Dirst-Roberts is there to serve them with a smile.

“The Buffalo River became a national park in 1972,” Dirst-Roberts said. “My family received one of the first permits when it became a national park. We moved here in 1976, and that’s when Dirst Canoe Rental was started by my parents.

“So, I’ve been a part of this since 1976. When my dad retired, my husband and I took it over and this will be our eighth season to run the canoe rental.”

Having been here that long, there are a lot of familiar faces and perennial groups which make the trek every spring to the

outfitter in order to gear up when the water is high. Dirst-Roberts, whose day job is with First In Service Hospitalists at Baxter Health and Chief of Staff-elect, envisioned a Baxter employee group among them. So, last May, she sent out invitations for just such an excursion, a call answered by 14 individuals to float the Lower Buffalo.

“I knew there were some physicians that in their off time enjoy floating the Buffalo River,” she said. “I noticed some other groups at the hospital were organizing outdoor activities, and I thought this would make a great addition to that. We ended up with several physicians and their families, and everyone seemed to have a really good time.

“We had a good mix of experience and even included one family who were first timers. They enjoyed it so much, I think they’re going to be regular Buffalo River lovers.”

Dr. Maureen Flowers, Chief of Obstetrics at Baxter Health and OB/Gyn at the Comprehensive Women’s Clinic, was



“The activity is very relaxing; we all just kind of get out there and float down the river. We hang out, we talk, we vent. It’s a great little relaxing thing for us to do. It also gives me a chance to get to know other people who I ordinarily wouldn’t see on a day-to-day basis at work.”

– Dr. Maureen Flowers

one of the physicians who joined the group. A native of Flippin, Flowers is an old hand on the water. She called the activity a great stress relief and the outing a good chance to connect with coworkers.

“I think this is the second or third year I’ve done this with this group,” she said. “The activity is very relaxing; we all just kind of get out there and float down the river. We hang out, we talk, we vent. It’s a great little relaxing thing for us to do. It also gives me a chance to get to know other people who I ordinarily wouldn’t see on a day-to-day basis at work.”

Flowers said the fact that Dirst-Roberts knows the life of a physician firsthand lent something to the spirit of the trip itself.

“She really does accommodate us,” Flowers said. “We pick the day together, figuring out which of us are not on call, and she and her husband do the rest. We just kind of show up and enjoy ourselves,

which is really nice. It’s really, really awesome what she and her husband do for us.”

Due to the range of ages and experience levels, Dirst-Roberts chose a 9.5-mile route on the Lower Buffalo from Dillard’s Ferry to Rush.

“The Upper Buffalo is for people who want to be in kayaks and go through rapids and flip upside down. It’s where the



Dirst Canoe Rental & Log Cabins is one of the oldest and most established outfitters on the Buffalo River, having received one of the first permits when it became a national park in 1972. (Pictured above, left) Dirst Canoe Rental arranged to pick the group up at Rush.

The 9.5-mile route on the Lower Buffalo from Dillard’s Ferry to Rush was chosen to accommodate the range of ages and experience levels within the group.

(From left)
Dr. Jamie Pritchard,
Dr. Jennifer Foster,
Dr. Melissa Dirst-Roberts,
Dr. Maureen Flowers,
and Dr. Rebecca Martin.



adventuresome go and where you need a helmet on the water,” she said. “Up around Ponca, Pruitt and that area close to Fayetteville, you get a lot of the younger crowd, the Fayetteville college kids up there. It’s a pretty rowdy crowd up there. The Lower Buffalo is the section where you bring children.”

Everything about the Buffalo River experience revolves around water levels, which is why a typical spring break can see the river clogged with watercraft. Levels drop considerably as the calendar moves into the summer months, making some stretches of the Buffalo too shallow to float, but canoes and kayaks can generally navigate most areas.

As an outfitter, Dirst-Roberts rents various watercraft, provides shuttle service to and from put-in and take-out points, as well as imparts the valuable wisdom gained through a lifetime spent in the area.

“A canoe is a large vessel; most of them are 17-foot canoes,” she said. “You can have two people, a big cooler, camping equipment, a dog, a small child sitting in the middle. You can put a lot in a canoe.”

“Kayaks are single sit-on-top kayaks. That’s where teenagers can have their freedom, but you can watch them closely. I even call them marriage savers because he wants to fish and I want to look at turtles, and we can both do it in our own kayak. I mean it; you may test your relationship in a canoe,” she laughingly stated. “Because it takes cooperation and teamwork to navigate the more challenging waters.”

Another feature of the summer trips to the Buffalo River lies around certain bends which harbor swimming holes adjacent to the exposed sandbar beaches. These extend the river’s popularity as visitors cool off in the dog days of the year.

“This is a favorite of school aged children and adults alike,” Dirst-Roberts said. “We are happy to provide advice and guidance

“We’re right next to the national park, which has over 100 campsites with sewer, water, electricity, but if you just want to float from Point A to Point B down here or hike and camp on the river, it’s free.”

– Dr. Melissa Dirst-Roberts

for families on age-appropriate trips to take that can be safely floated based on current water levels.”

The Buffalo River’s status as a National River means its protection as a wild waterway is assured. Even so, Dirst-Roberts said there are a number of amenities in the surrounding areas that make the river an affordable in-state destination.

“We’re right next to the national park, which has over 100 campsites with sewer, water, electricity,” she said. “But if you just want to float from Point A to Point B down here or hike and camp on the river, it’s free. There are not many free things these days.”

Dirst-Roberts said the reception her Baxter Health outing received was encouraging, so much so she’s looking forward to organizing similar trips in the future with the goal of working up to an outing per month. She said in addition to the scenery and physical exercise, the trips pay dividends in stress reduction and strengthening families.

“You have no cell service on the river. Your beeper does not work. You get a whole day where you can focus on your family and no one else,” she said. “That’s really important to physician’s families because we don’t get to do that a lot. There’s never been a week where the phone doesn’t ring at least once when you’re home, for any of us. While that often means interruptions during dinner or time with our family, we have each made that commitment to our patients as providers, and our families are very supportive of that. But when we’re on that river, there is nothing else you focus on.”

“That’s really important. In health care, our patients are our number one priority on a day-to-day basis. A river excursion on a day off gives you the opportunity to escape from these responsibilities and invest your time in friends, family and even yourself. And that’s crucial, because time is the one thing you can never get back” ■

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THE WEIGHT IS OVER

SHANNAH O'DELL'S JOURNEY FROM NURSE DIRECTOR TO WEIGHT-LOSS INSPIRATION

BY DWAIN HEBDA

As Director of 3 West Medical/Pediatrics, Shannah O'Dell, MSN, RN, CPN, sees many patients and staff throughout the course of a typical day. But over the past two-plus years, there has been steadily less of O'Dell for others to see, thanks to her commitment to a weight loss regimen that has gradually but substantially slimmed her profile.

"You can officially put in print that I have lost 100 pounds," she said with pride ringing in her voice. "I have been asked the question, 'How did you do it?' a lot. I think the biggest lesson that I have learned that I would want people to know is, you can't cheat. There's no pill that's going to do it for you, no shot, not even surgery. Nothing is going to do the work for you. If you want lasting health and weight loss, you have to put in the work."

O'Dell, 37, claims she has always struggled with her weight, but rarely was the challenge as difficult as coming out of the pandemic.

"In February of 2021, I was coming off a year of living in craziness here at the hospital, being the director of an inpatient unit that was dealing with COVID-19," she said. "A lot of stress, working a lot of hours and I put on quite a bit of extra weight. I was in my mid-30s, and I realized that I was not going to get away with being that overweight in my 30s like I did when I was in my 20s."



The other motivation to get healthy was her family. A mother of two, she wanted her children to not only have a healthy mom, but to have their own healthy habits as well.

"I've got these two little kids at home, and I really wanted to be healthy for them," she said. "I wanted to be a better example for them because their behavior mimics my behavior. They're eating what I'm eating. They're sitting on the couch when I'm sitting on the couch."

O'Dell admitted to having tried every fad diet in the book leading up to her latest attempt at slimming down, but something about her resolve in early 2021 suggested that this time would be different.

"I think the biggest thing in all of this is your weight loss is not in your body, it's in your mind," she said. "You have to master your mindset. We always think you just have to be motivated. I think your determination has to be bigger than your motivation."

O'Dell joined a local workout class for women and started the long journey toward her goal of dropping pounds and adopting a healthy, active lifestyle. Predictably, the first few months were taxing, but drawing on her considerable mental strength, she pushed through the aches and pains, determined to succeed.

"From the beginning, I really, really, wanted to do this on my own," she said. "I wanted to be able to say, 'I didn't take pills. I didn't take shots. I didn't have surgery. I got my diet right, and I changed my life on my own.'

"I didn't know if I would always be able to stick to that commitment, but I have so far. And that's been important to me throughout the whole thing."

One important element of sticking with her game plan to lose 100 pounds was to not target the whole thing at once.

"I made month-by-month goals," she said. "So my goal would be I want to lose 10 pounds this month or I want to try to get 5 pounds off this month. I think on Day One if my goal had been 100 pounds, it would have overwhelmed me and I would have said, 'Forget it. I'm never going to get there.' Setting small goals I felt like I could meet over the course of 2 1/2 years kept me feeling like I was continuing to be successful."

Early on, O'Dell also developed a unique strategy of leveraging what she didn't like about her new regimen as motivation. She didn't love exercising, for instance, and knowing how much more of it she'd have to do if she fell off the diet wagon helped her pass up temptation.

"I first attacked what was hardest for me, and that was exercise," she said. "I weighed a lot, and exercise was very, very difficult for me. I thought if I'm going to do this, I'm going to attack the thing that I dread and hate the most, and that was exercise."

"When you work really, really hard doing a session of cardio, you'll think twice about what you eat. I worked my butt off sweating, so I'm not going to eat that piece of pizza because it's not worth it. You cannot outwork a bad diet."

Like a lot of things in life, success in weight loss often boils down to just showing up. Despite her loathing of working out, O'Dell continued to report to class, and before she knew it she started to see results. Not only that, she also began to evolve on the subject of exercise, exploring new activities to keep things fresh.

"I've actually had a pretty interesting exercise journey," she said. "I started out with these classes that were high-intensity interval training and then I kind of got bored with that, so I switched to powerlifting, of all things. I absolutely fell in love with it, and I did powerlifting for about a year."

"Then I kind of again got bored with that, so I did some cardio classes again, and now I'm currently in a body-building program. Been doing that for about three months."

Additional motivation came from her clothes getting looser and people commenting on her progress, but the march to 100 pounds lost wasn't without its hiccups. After dropping weight steadily for months, she hit a wall in November 2022.

"I had lost 96 pounds and could not get past that point. And I have struggled for months gaining weight back and losing it and gaining and losing," she said, adding that while she finally did push past it to reach the 100-pounds-lost mark, she's well aware there's no such thing as autopilot when it comes to health and fitness.

"I have from the very beginning made the decision that my journey's never going to be over," she said. "One hundred pounds lost is just where I'm at right now. I'll eventually get to a healthy weight and I'll stop losing weight, but I have to continue the grind of exercise and eating right or my obese body is going to come back, and I know that."

"A big motivator for me starting a few months ago was my 14-year-old who started working out with me and has lost about 30 pounds. Now that he is into it and very committed, I've got to stay in it for him too."

O'Dell said the process continues to teach her things about herself in ways that go far beyond a number on a scale.

"A big part of where I feel my success has come from is feeling like I have control of what I do with my body. I'm not a victim of what my body does," she said. "I definitely see things from a different perspective than when I was a big ol' girl who thought 'I can never do this or that' because of what I weighed. I now see things from the lens of what's possible."

"There are still days that I'm not motivated. There are days I don't want to work out. There are days when I want to eat the pizza and the cake and all the things, but my determination is to win. You have to win the battle in your mind before you can win the battle in your body." ■



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NUTRITION

Eggs Benedict with Homemade Hollandaise Sauce

Prep time: 10 minutes
Cook time: 25 minutes
Total time: 35 minutes

INGREDIENTS

- » 2 English muffins
- » 4 large eggs
- » 4 slices Canadian bacon
- » Vinegar, just a splash

FOR THE HOLLANDAISE SAUCE:

- » 4 tablespoons butter
- » 4 egg yolks
- » 2 teaspoons lemon juice or lime juice
- » 1 tablespoon heavy whipping cream
- » Salt and pepper (to taste)

INSTRUCTIONS

FOR THE HOLLANDAISE SAUCE

1: Melt the butter in a small saucepan. In a separate small bowl, beat the egg yolks. Mix in lemon juice, whipping cream, and salt and pepper.

2: Add a small spoonful of the hot melted butter to the egg mixture and stir well. Repeat this process adding a spoonful at a time of hot butter to the egg mixture. (Adding the butter slowly, a spoonful at a time, will temper the eggs and ensure they don't curdle).

3: Once the butter has been incorporated, pour the mixture back into the saucepan. Cook on low heat, stirring constantly, for just 20-30 seconds. Remove from heat and set aside. It will thicken as it cools. Stir well and add another splash of cream, if needed, to thin.

TO POACH THE EGGS

1: Fill a medium size pot with about 3 inches of water. Bring the water to a boil and then reduce heat until it reaches a simmer. You should see small bubbles coming to the surface but not rolling.

2: Add a little splash of vinegar to the water (this is optional, but it helps the egg white to stay together once it is in the water).

3: Crack one egg into a small cup (I use a measuring cup). Lower the egg into the simmer water, gently easing it out of the cup.

4: Cook the egg in simmering water for 3-5 minutes, depending on how soft you want your egg yolk. Remove the poached egg with a slotted spoon.

5: **It is not abnormal for a white foam to form on top of the water when poaching an egg. You can simply skim the foam off of the water with a spoon.

6: While the egg is cooking, place the slices of Canadian bacon in a large pan and cook on medium-high heat for about 1 minute on each side.

TO ASSEMBLE

Toast the English muffin. Top each toasted side with a slice or two of Canadian bacon, and then a poached egg. Top with hollandaise sauce.

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Scones

Prep time: 30 minutes
Cook time: 25 minutes
Total time: 1 hour
Yield: 8 large or 16 small scones

INGREDIENTS

- » 2 cups all-purpose flour, plus more for hands and work surface
- » ½ cup granulated sugar
- » ½ teaspoon salt
- » 2 ½ teaspoons baking powder
- » ½ cup (1 stick) unsalted butter, frozen
- » ½ cup heavy cream or buttermilk (plus 2 tablespoons for brushing)
- » 1 large egg
- » 1 ½ teaspoons pure vanilla extract
- » 1 to 1 ½ cups add-ins such as chocolate chips, berries, nuts, fruit, etc.

Optional: coarse sugar for topping

INSTRUCTIONS

1: Whisk flour, sugar, salt and baking powder together in a large bowl. Grate the frozen butter using a box grater. Add it to the flour mixture and combine with a pastry cutter, two forks or your fingers until the mixture comes together in pea-sized crumbs. Place in the refrigerator or freezer as you mix the wet ingredients together.

2: Whisk ½ cup heavy cream, the egg and vanilla extract together in a small bowl. Drizzle over the flour mixture, add the add-ins, then mix together until everything appears moistened.

3: To make triangle scones: Pour onto the counter and, with floured hands, work dough into a ball as

best you can. Dough will be sticky. If it's too sticky, add a little more flour. If it seems too dry, add 1-2 more tablespoons of heavy cream. Press into an 8-inch disc and, with a sharp knife or bench scraper, cut into 8 wedges. For smaller scones, press dough into two 5-inch discs and cut each into 8 wedges. To make 10-12 drop scones: Keep mixing dough in the bowl until it comes together. Drop scones, about 1/4 cup of dough each, 3 inches apart on a lined baking sheet. To make mini (petite) scones, see recipe note.

4: Brush scones with remaining heavy cream and for extra crunch, sprinkle with coarse sugar. (You can do this before or after refrigerating in the next step.)

5: Place scones on a plate or lined baking sheet (if your fridge has space!) and refrigerate for at least 15 minutes.

6: Meanwhile, preheat oven to 400°F.

7: Line a large baking sheet with parchment paper or silicone baking mat(s). If making mini or drop scones, use 2 baking sheets. After refrigerating, arrange scones 2-3 inches apart on the prepared baking sheet(s).

8: Bake for 18-26 minutes or until golden brown around the edges and lightly browned on top. Larger scones take closer to 25 minutes. Remove from the oven and cool for a few minutes. Feel free to top with any of the toppings listed in the recipe.

9: Leftover scones keep well at room temperature for 2 days or in the refrigerator for 5 days.

NUTRITION

Belgian Waffles

Prep time: 10 minutes
Cook time: 15 minutes
Total time: 25 minutes
Servings: 6

INGREDIENTS

- » 1 cup all-purpose flour
- » 1 cup whole wheat flour
- » 1 teaspoon baking powder
- » ½ teaspoon baking soda
- » 1 teaspoon salt
- » 3 tablespoons light brown sugar
- » 3 large eggs at room temperature
- » ¼ cup unsalted butter melted and slightly cooled
- » 2 cups buttermilk at room temperature
- » 1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
- » Berries whipped cream and maple syrup, for serving, if desired

INSTRUCTIONS

1: Preheat waffle iron according to manufacturer's directions.

2: In a large bowl, whisk together the all-purpose flour, whole wheat flour, baking powder, baking soda, salt and brown sugar. If you have any brown sugar clumps, use your clean hands to unclump the sugar and whisk again.

3: In a medium bowl, beat together eggs and melted butter. Stir in the buttermilk and vanilla extract.

4: Add the wet ingredients to the dry ingredients and stir until just combined. Don't overmix.

5: Spray the waffle iron with nonstick cooking spray. Pour the recommended amount of waffle batter onto the hot waffle iron. Close the waffle iron and cook until the waffle is golden on both sides and is easily removed from iron. Serve immediately or keep warm in a 200°F oven until ready to serve.





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BY RANDY LUDWIG



I know that what I am about to say will not be a revelation to you or even surprising, but let me point it out just the same: Every major thematic event that takes place in the Bible is centered around women — from the establishment of the human race through Eve to Mary giving birth to the incarnate God. It doesn't stop there either. Nearly every important and memorable story told in both the Old and New Testaments revolves around a brave and courageous woman. Whether it be Sarah, Ester or Ruth in the Old Testament, or the New Testament stories of courageous acts in the likes of Priscilla, Lydia, Mary and Martha, Phoebe, the list goes on.

One group of people that always inspires me every time I read the story is the women who go to the tomb of Jesus.

I don't know if we, who live in the 21st century, can fully appreciate the danger they put themselves in to exhume Christ's body and prepare it for a proper burial.

All four Gospel writers tell the story of what took place on that first Easter morning, but Mark's rendition includes a passage that speaks volumes about the mindset of these women: "Very early on the first day of the week, just after sunrise, they went to the

tomb. They were asking one another, 'Who will roll away the stone from the entrance to the tomb?'"

You see, these women were not going to let a major detail stop them from doing what had to get done. They didn't sit at home and contemplate the logistics; they weren't going to assume defeat before they even got started. No, their minds were set on accomplishing their goal ... regardless of what it took. Their driving force was love and compassion.

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