

Pulse

BAXTER HEALTH

FALL 2023
VOLUME 6 | ISSUE 4



PREPARED & PROACTIVE

FROM IMMINENT THREATS
TO DAILY CHALLENGES,
OFFICERS PRIORITIZE
SAFETY AND TEAMWORK

pg. 26

plus

SAFE AND SECURE

Baxter Health
Tackles Surging
Security Challenges

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FROM GUARDING KINGS TO GIFTING KINDNESS

Steve Cushing's
Unwavering Support for
Baxter Health Security

pg. 14



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On the cover: Security team of Baxter Health in front of main entrance.
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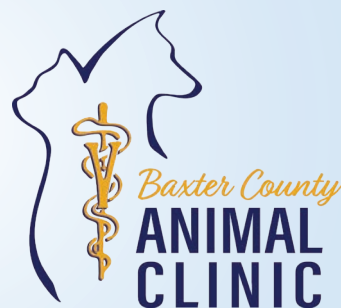
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VOLUME 6 | ISSUE 4

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Executive Editor
Tobias Pugsley

Associate Editors
Kyle Bradshaw and Adrienne Koehn

Project Manager
Ellie Lassiter

Contributing Writers
Dwain Hebda

Contributing Copy Editor
Melinda Lanigan

Contributing Photographers
James Moore and James Stefuk

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THE GUARDIANS OF BAXTER HEALTH

Hospitals, especially labor and delivery units, are often perceived as sanctuaries of joy and hope. However, a deeper dive reveals challenges healthcare professionals face, even in peaceful locales like Mountain Home.

Rachel Gilbert's account sheds light on these complexities, from confrontations to potential threats. With the open-door policy of hospitals, the line between public and private spaces blurs, leading to unique challenges. Recent escalations in emergency rooms further underscore the necessity for robust security measures.

Baxter Health's security evolution, particularly under Mike Armstrong's leadership over the past 15 years, is worth noting. Moving from a passive 'observe and report' approach, the team is now equipped with both tactical skills and empathetic de-escalation techniques. The decision to arm security personnel, taken a decade ago, came with rigorous specialized training. The professionalism displayed by Officers Fletcher and Delgado in July 2021, handling a volatile situation, stands testament to this approach's success.

Armstrong's transformative vision shifted the security focus from mere surveillance to genuine safety assurance. Echoing these sentiments, Officer Nichols spoke of the hospital's close-knit community, emphasizing the integral role of teamwork and communication.

As we share these insights, our aim is to offer a fresh perspective on the silent guardians of Baxter Health. Their dedication ensures the safety of our loved ones in moments of vulnerability, be it healing or welcoming new life.

With gratitude,



RON PETERSON
President/Chief Executive Officer
Baxter Health



PHOTOGRAPH BY JAMES MOORE

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Baxter Health has partnered with Premier Family Care in Harrison to form Baxter Health Premier Family Clinic. With a 17-year legacy, Premier Family Care offers services including pediatrics and geriatric medicine. Operations will persist at 1417 Gladden Street, Harrison. Dr. P. Corey Jackson, nurse practitioners Fred Fredlund and Candi Scarpa, remain on staff. As Baxter Health continues to grow into the Harrison market, the Premier Family Clinic staff are an integral part of providing compassionate care beyond measure. For more information, call (870) 741-0016.

+ BEST PLACES TO WORK FOR FIVE CONSECUTIVE YEARS

Baxter Health celebrates its fifth consecutive year as one of Arkansas Business's "Best Places to Work." This recognition, rooted in employee feedback and workplace evaluations, underscores Baxter Health's dedication to an inclusive, supportive environment. Ron Peterson, President and CEO, attributed the success to the company's culture, emphasizing the importance of employee growth, innovation, and work-life balance. This accolade adds to Baxter Health's ongoing commitment to excellence both in healthcare and employee welfare. Learn more at baxterhealth.org.

PRESTIGIOUS DAISY LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

Baxter Health is proud to announce that our Cline Emergency Center Nurse Director, Kelly Dicks, MSN, RN, has been awarded the prestigious Daisy Lifetime Achievement Award. This accolade is a testament to her exceptional contributions to healthcare and her unwavering dedication to improving patient outcomes. The Daisy Lifetime Achievement Award, presented by The Daisy Foundation, is an international recognition that honors the extraordinary work nurses perform every day.

As Baxter Health continues to innovate and set new benchmarks in healthcare, our commitment to delivering the highest standard of care remains steadfast. We are confident that under Kelly's leadership, and other nurse leaders like her, we will continue to transform healthcare and improve lives.



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ANONYMOUS DONATION FUNDS ADVANCED STRETCHERS FOR CLINE EMERGENCY CENTER

Baxter Health Foundation proudly announces a \$50,000 donation, facilitating the purchase of six innovative Stryker stretchers for the Cline Emergency Center. These stretchers, equipped with an integrated scale system, prioritize clinician ease and elevate patient experience. Sarah Edwards, Executive Director, expressed immense gratitude for this contribution, emphasizing its pivotal role in advancing patient care. This generous donation embodies the community's commitment to healthcare excellence. For more on Baxter Health Foundation or to donate, visit baxterhealth.org/foundation or call (870) 508-1770.



MOVERS AND NEWCOMERS



NATALIE AMATO
VICE PRESIDENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES

Baxter Health has appointed Natalie Amato as Vice President of Human Resources. In this role, she oversees all aspects of human resources operations for the organization. Natalie has been with Baxter Health for over a decade, serving in various human resources-related roles including Senior Human Resources Manager. She brings extensive experience in talent management, employee relations, and organizational development to her new position.



DR. GEORGE LAWRENCE
CHIEF MEDICAL OFFICER

Baxter Health has appointed Dr. George Lawrence as its new Chief Medical Officer. This significant appointment reflects Dr. Lawrence's unwavering dedication and remarkable contributions to both Baxter Health and the broader medical community. Dr. Lawrence comes to the position with an impressive 23-year track record as a board-certified family medicine physician with Regional Family Medicine in Mountain Home. His deep-rooted commitment to patient care and comprehensive

understanding of the healthcare landscape make him uniquely suited for this vital role.



CHARLES "CHUCK" HEITMAN
BEHAVIORAL HEALTH AND COMMUNITY RELATIONS SPECIALIST

Charles "Chuck" Heitman is the new Behavioral Health and Community Relations Specialist. He'll liaise between referral providers, the community, and Baxter Health Behavioral Health Units. Previously a Behavioral Health Specialist at Baxter, Heitman's experience spans various roles in community and behavioral health. With degrees from Arkansas State University, his background combines Sociology, Communication, and Business, equipping him to lead community relations.



DR. ED ROEDER
BAXTER HEALTH BONE & JOINT CLINIC

Baxter Health welcomes orthopaedic surgeon Dr. Edwin "Ed" Roeder to Bone & Joint Clinic with Dr. Win Moore and Cheyenne Morgan, PA. He will see patients in Mountain Home, Melbourne and Mountain View. Known for his expertise

and innovative care, he studied at Stanford and Baylor, specializing in sports medicine and orthopaedic surgery at Texas A&M.



DR. ROBERT C. LANE
BAXTER HEALTH FAMILY CLINIC AT CALICO ROCK

Baxter Health welcomes Dr. Robert C. Lane, with 53 years of family medicine experience, to Baxter Health Family Clinic at Calico Rock. Joining Dr. Bethany Knight, Dr. Donald Wright, and Kristie Branscum, APRN, Dr. Lane specializes in acute care, chronic disease, and diabetes treatment. A graduate of Harding University and University of Arkansas, he's practiced in Calico Rock for over 50 years.



DR. KEN HOLT
BAXTER HEALTH COMPREHENSIVE WOMEN'S CLINIC

Dr. Ken Holt, a board-certified obstetrician and gynecologist, has joined the practice of Dr. Maureen Flowers at the Baxter Health Comprehensive Women's Clinic in Mountain Home. Dr. Holt attended medical school at the University of Health Sciences in Kansas City and continued his training at the University

of Missouri and the University of Kansas Medical Center. He serves patients in Mountain Home and Harrison, enhancing women's healthcare services in the area.



DR. CHERISSE BALDEO
BAXTER HEALTH CARDIOLOGY CLINIC AT HARRISON

Baxter Health welcomes cardiologist Dr. Cherisse Baldeo to the Baxter Health Cardiology Clinic at Harrison, joining Dr. Ron Revard. She graduated from the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland and trained at the University of Florida Health and the University of Virginia School of Medicine.



DR. CHESLEY MURPHY
BAXTER HEALTH MARKET STREET FAMILY CLINIC

Baxter Health welcomes Dr. Chesley Murphy to the Market Street Family Clinic in Mountain Home. He studied at the University of Arkansas and Kansas City University, and later completed his family medicine internship at University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences in Jonesboro. Dr. Murphy is a member of the American Academy of Family Physicians and Arkansas Academy of Family Physicians.

CALENDAR

DECEMBER 2023-
FEBRUARY 2024

4

through 22
of December
Baxter Health
Auxiliary HOLIDAY
GIFT WRAP
FUNDRAISER,
Baxter Health Main
Lobby, Monday –
Friday, 7:30 a.m. –
3:30 p.m.

DECEMBER

December 7
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FRIENDLY HOLIDAY
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December 12
HOLIDAY AIR
FRYER & INSTANT
POT COOKING,
Mruk Family Center
on Aging, 1 - 2:30 p.m.



JANUARY

January 29
ALPHA GAL
SYNDROME
SUPPORT &
EDUCATION
facilitated by Lila
Doyel, RD, Mruk
Family Center on
Aging, noon – 1:30 p.m.

FEBRUARY

February 24
Save the date
for the Baxter
Health Foundation
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Development Center.

REOCCURRING

**Mruk Family
Education Center
on Aging**
**Fit & Fab for
Women,** Wellness
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
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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.

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

Peitz Cancer Support House

Cancer Journey Information & Support, 2nd & 4th Tuesdays, 10 a.m.

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

Ostomy Wellness, Monthly, 1st Friday, 11 a.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 Wednesdays, 10 a.m.

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LOCAL VETERAN DONATES TO SUPPORT BAXTER HEALTH SECURITY DEPARTMENT

BY DWAIN HEBDA

The story of Steve Cushing, the former Baxter Health Security Department volunteer who is now a financial benefactor for the department, is a colorful one, but his motivation for donating to the security force is simple. “I believe in the hospital. It’s well-run, in my opinion,” said Cushing, 82. “Security is a very vital part of it as far as I’m concerned because there’re some not-so-nice people out there.” Cushing’s journey began two years into his life as a college student, when he started feeling pressure from the administration to declare a major and chart the course of his life after graduation. Having no clue what that might be, Cushing decided to



take what today is known as a gap semester, right after which it dawned on him that Uncle Sam might be keeping tabs on things, this being the early 1960s. “I thought I’d better check and see where I’m at on the list for the Army,” Cushing said. “I went down and saw the recruiter, and I was number two. I said, ‘Oh no. I’m not going in the Army or the Marines, and I get seasick, so the Navy was out. I joined the Air Force.’” Thus did the small-town kid get a glimpse of a world much larger and more exotic than his native Hastings, Nebraska. In fact, he found himself in an assignment few of his peers back home could have imagined. “I was stationed in Tripoli, Libya. I was in security, and I got to guard King Idris,” he said. “It was something, let me tell you. He didn’t speak any English and I didn’t speak any Libyan, but we got along all right. He’d have his personal chef prepare something, and he’d point at me and point at the tray and insist I eat. Gosh, some of the pastries were the best I’d ever had.”

The experience was memorable, but the surroundings outside the palace were so rough and poor Cushing remembers the average Libyan living on a few dollars a month in dwellings with a single light bulb. A knee injury during an on-base softball game finally put him on a plane back to the States. “I came back with a cast on my leg from my ankle up to my groin,” he said. “I was so happy to be back. When I got off the airplane, I got down on the tarmac and kissed it. I didn’t know Charleston, South Carolina, could taste that good.” Cushing would come back to Hastings and forge a long and successful career in television advertising sales before moving to Mountain Home with his wife, Jo Anne, a career mental health nurse. Life took on a slower pace for the retiree until one day he was approached about volunteering in the Baxter Health security office. “My wife and I worked out at the hospital gym for a lot of years,” he said. “One day the security chief came up and said, ‘Come down and see me.’ We did a little interview



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and he said, 'I want you to come to work.' I said, 'I'll come in and see what you've got.'"

Reporting to his post that first day, Cushing remembers the security operation to be far less sophisticated than it is now.

"When I started down there, there were only five in the security office," he said. "Then there was a couple, three volunteers and I was the first one. When I went in there, all they had was what they called the DSX which is the badge system that all the people wear. That was it."

Cushing's duties as a volunteer included answering the phone, working with ID badges and taking over the lost and found department.

"It's amazing how people will go to the hospital and then leave their clothes, their hearing aids, their watches and batteries," he said. "Probably the biggest thing that I've ever inventoried was a wheelchair that was a Taj Mahal; it was a \$35,000 power wheelchair, candy-apple red. We finally got ahold of the family who said, 'Yeah we wondered what happened to that.'"

Cushing remained on staff when the leadership of the department was handed over to Mike Armstrong and said he's been very impressed with the changes the head man has brought about.

"Mike is a class act and knows exactly what he's doing," Cushing said. "When I started down there, the guys wore no pistols, had no weapons. They just had their hands and communication skills to talk people down or talk them out of what they were doing, and the people they were dealing with were sometimes not the best in the world.

"Now, all the guys are armed, and they've got over 200 cameras in the entire complex. Stuff's recorded on a 30-day drive so they can look back and catch people. Mike has also sent the guys to several training classes where they are taught how to handle people and not hurt them. Detain them and contain them."

During the time he was a volunteer, Cushing formed close bonds with the members of the department. That's why for the last seven years he's also shown his appreciation for the officers in another way by donating annually to help officers get whatever training or equipment they might need. (Not to be outdone, Jo Anne has also sponsored a scholarship for nurses over that time.)

"Mike and I just really tied together. He's an awful special guy for me," Cushing said. "We've both been through a couple of pretty tough times, and we both bounced off each other. And (Officer) Josh Fletcher is my buddy; he's got a son now. He comes over here, and Jo and I just enjoy them. I love Josh to death."

Cushing doesn't put any restriction on the money he contributes to the department every year, saying he trusts the judgment of leadership. He said he continues to make the gift so that all of the officers can reach their full potential but also as an expression of thanks for the time he got to work among them.

"It was 17 years I volunteered in the office there," he said. "I loved it, and I miss it dearly now." ■



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

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SAFE AND SECURE

THE COMPLEX CHALLENGES OF HOSPITAL SECURITY

WRITTEN BY DWAIN HEBDA
PHOTOGRAPHY BY JAMES MOORE

When many people think of labor and delivery units in the local hospital, they think of happy places where couples become families and joyful relatives gather to celebrate the next chapter in their family story.

What most people don't realize is that the typical maternity ward can also be one of the more challenging places for a healthcare professional to work, given the number of child welfare issues that play out here with alarming frequency, even in otherwise tranquil communities such as Mountain Home.

"I was the director of Women & Newborn Care Center for almost nine years, and working in obstetrics, we dealt with a lot of issues," said Rachel Gilbert, MSN, RN, now Baxter Health's chief nursing officer. "If a mother was positive for drugs or if we had to hold the baby and DHS had to take the baby, we had to deal with a lot of very angry patients. 'I have never physically been assaulted, but I have been verbally screamed at and spit-on. I've had some threats like 'I'm going to sue you' or 'I'm going to find you'."

Security isn't the first thing that people

think of when they think of what makes a hospital run smoothly, but in this day and age, security has become central to a positive and safe patient experience. Hospitals are open to the public 24/7 and are committed to dealing with whoever walks in, in whatever state or condition they are in. This can create some potentially dangerous scenarios for front-line workers.

"It seems to be happening more on a daily basis. People seem very angry; they want you to do something immediately for them. And as much and as fast as we try to take care of them and make sure all their needs are met, sometimes it's not fast enough," Gilbert said. "That seems to be where we're seeing a lot of the issues, especially with some of the increased assaults in our ER."

"We have had nurses not only verbally

“Knowing that you have security right there at your fingertips with just one call or being in an area where they're visible makes the environment much more pleasant to work in and for our patients to be healed in.” – Ron Peterson



(From left) Ron Peterson, Mike Armstrong, Anthony Reed, and Rachel Gilbert.

assaulted, but they have been physically assaulted as well. We have had nurses who have been attacked and punched. That's why we've been pushing very hard to make sure we do everything we can to keep our team safe."

Emphasis on security starts at the top, and at Baxter Health, the security department has no stronger ally than CEO Ron Peterson. He said over the 30 years he's worked in health care, he's seen security operations become much more sophisticated in training and tactics, something that has only intensified in recent years.

"Since COVID, there's definitely been a change in the public's ability to handle stress," he said. "They're much more reactive because they're so fed up with whatever and it just comes out, whether it should or shouldn't. We have an extremely good security force, but they can't do it all 100% themselves. So, we're getting training out to everybody of how to de-escalate situations, making sure people understand and know how to handle those types of situations."

The security department has been key in this effort, not only in training its own officers, but helping to prepare and coach

front-line workers on what to do in certain situations before security personnel can arrive on scene. In this way, medical personnel and security work effectively as a team.

"We have training in the crisis prevention institute where we have some instructors here that teach techniques on how to de-escalate patients," Gilbert said. "One thing I have really tried to focus on, which I did in OB, is to be more proactive. How we can avoid these circumstances versus just reacting?"

"One change we made was to have Security present in the unit anytime DHS was on the floor. Just small changes like that to be more proactive."

Security planning has also seen more strategic thinking on the placement of officers, knowing that being visible is both reassuring for staff as well as a deterrent for

would-be troublemakers. Leadership has also been more cognizant of restricting access to the building, especially after hours and on weekends

"We hired additional officers to provide better around-the-clock coverage," said Anthony Reed, Baxter Health's vice president of ancillary services. "We have implemented new policies; within the last



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month, we implemented a new nighttime policy at the hospital where the only access to the hospital after hours is through the ER entrance. Potential patients and visitors are all greeted when they come in by a security officer, and that security officer now asks them why they're at the hospital, signs them in and takes them where they need to go. We lock down the entire hospital at night beyond the ER corridor.

"The elevators also have badge access to get up after hours. A security officer would have to let a visitor up, so it controls that access much more than we had in the past. That's something very important to the senior leadership team at the hospital, trying to not only protect our patients but protect all of our employees as well."

Another element of coordination is with outside law enforcement agencies. Baxter Health is in direct contact with local police and sheriff's offices in the event of a suspect at large who might be seeking medical attention.

"They're very good at communicating with us, and that communication works both ways," said Mike Armstrong, director of security. "If we have somebody that has been here that has been a significant issue and then leaves, we contact law enforcement and let them know this person is a danger either to themselves or someone else."

Perhaps the most significant change in security operations came about 10 years ago when Baxter Health was the first non-university-based hospital in Arkansas to arm its security personnel. Armstrong said he's never received anything but positive feedback from staff about the move.

"It has been extremely positive," he said. "Not everyone is pro-gun, and I respect that. To go from not seeing a firearm on an officer's hip every day to suddenly seeing that, I can understand how that can be a little bracing. But we never received any negative feedback at all. In fact, we received a lot of positive feedback. 'We appreciate you guys and what you do. Thank you for your service.' That sort of thing."

"With our security, our enhanced lighting and our enhanced number of video cameras, as an employee I feel very safe and secure coming onto this campus, being on this campus, being around patients, being anywhere throughout the campus," Peterson said. "Knowing that you have security right there at your fingertips with just one call or being in an area where they're visible makes the environment much more pleasant to work in and for our patients to be healed in." ■

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IRON SHARPENING IRON

OFFICER TRAINING LIES AT
THE HEART OF SECURITY

WRITTEN BY DWAIN HEBDA
PHOTOGRAPHY BY JAMES MOORE



When it comes to keeping Baxter Health safe, Director of Security Mike Armstrong maintains a simpler-is-better mentality to dealing with situations. That is, an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure, which is particularly informative of his philosophy regarding training his officers.

“Twenty or 30 years ago, security was simply observe and report. We are not that,” he said. “We are an extremely proactive department. Training and tactical preparedness is something I take a great deal of pride in.”

Over the past 15 years that Armstrong had led the department, officers have become better equipped and better prepared thanks to the support of hospital administration and the ongoing training that readies the department for nearly anything the world can throw at it.

“In this type of organization, we are staying in the same facility with a lot of the people that we’re dealing with. It changes your approach ... Your de-escalation skills have got to be on point.”

— Mike Armstrong

And even though officers are armed and prepared for hand-to-hand engagement as the situation dictates, soft skills are an equally important tool in the day-to-day work of a professional security officer, Armstrong said.

“One of the differences between law enforcement and doing this job is with law enforcement you get called to a complaint or you get called to a dispatch call, you deal with that person and you walk away,” he said. “In this type

of organization, we are staying in the same facility with a lot of the people that we’re dealing with. It changes your approach. There’s a great deal of finesse that needs to be used.

“Your de-escalation skills have got to be on point. You have to carry a large degree of empathy to be able to put yourself in someone else’s position and see things from their point of view so that you can actually help facilitate them getting care and not be a deterrent to them getting care.”

This training, called Crisis Prevention Intervention, or CPI, is required of all officers, and as the name suggests, it is intended to develop skills and techniques to defuse situations before they escalate to physical altercations whenever possible.

“I like to call it verbal judo,” said Officer Jay Nichols. “There’s a lot of things when you approach a situation that you can use to redirect them from whatever the issue is. You’re just trying to get their mind off the pain or whatever situation that brought them in so that we don’t have to go hands-on with defensive tactics.

“For that, we use a lot of de-escalation techniques, redirecting. A lot of times it’s as simple as, ‘Hey, do you like fishing?’ Find a common ground that breaks the ice. Again, that’s something not everybody is born with, but we do practice it and train with it on a daily basis.”

As the department’s 13 officers undergo de-escalation training, they develop a better sense of how to deconstruct and defuse a situation in the moment. That begins with reading physical and verbal clues that suggest to the officer why someone is acting the way that they are.

“Maybe it’s the terrible last week, last two weeks or last six years

of their life that has created a behavioral response with them that is triggered automatically by either being hurt, or they’ve been victimized, or they had bad run-ins with law enforcement or bad run-ins with hospitals,” Armstrong said.

“Having an understanding of why people respond to things the way they do and being able to empathize with that is the first step to being able to de-escalate that situation. That’s always what we aim for, and that’s always my preference — that nothing becomes physical.”

Once things do escalate, officers are trained in the right way to counteract a physical assault thanks to extensive hand-to-hand training. Armstrong, a lifelong martial artist, designed the training program to help teach officers how to rebuff a physical attack or restrain an individual with a minimum of injury to themselves or the perpetrator as appropriate to the situation.

“On top of the de-escalation training, there are some soft-hand techniques that are taught along with that. Being able to control and deal with someone without injury is extremely important, if it’s at all possible,” Armstrong said. “We move from soft-hand techniques to hard-handed techniques — being able to strike and defend in strikes, ground fight, fight off your back if somebody gets you on the ground, as well as different means of getting out of different holds people could grab you in.

“Once we go through the defensive tactics portion of it, then you move more into expandable baton and handcuffing procedures. We do not use pepper spray because it’s an environmental contaminant for the hospital.”

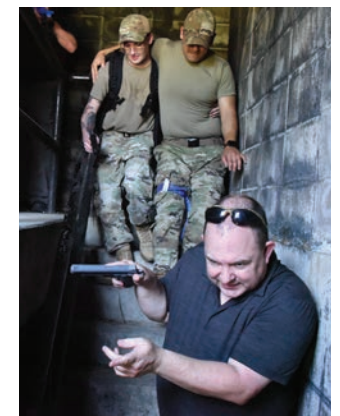
In 2013, Baxter Health officers began carrying sidearms, which

opened up another area of training. Under Nichols’ direction as head firearms trainer, officers spend a lot of time on the range practicing their marksmanship as well as a great deal of tactical training and situational preparedness using a firearm.

“We do a lot of work with room clearing with team strategies for dealing with active shooters,” Armstrong said. “How to deal with a static shooter, a shooter that’s in one place and doing harm versus a dynamic shooter that’s moving and shooting essentially targets of opportunity. It’s different approaches to dealing with those two — a barricaded suspect versus one that’s moving around.”

Nichols said the seriousness of purpose behind the training helps officers achieve the more rewarding parts of their jobs, which is to ensure everyone makes it home safely and can work, heal or visit loved ones in a safe, secure environment.

“We don’t always see people at their best, and when you can step in and make their day a little better, you feel like you’ve accomplished something,” he said. “It’s kind of cliché, but helping people, making them feel better, stepping in and helping kids or the elderly who can’t help themselves, at the end of the day you feel like you contributed and did something to help somebody else. That makes everything worth it.”



SOMEONE TO WATCH OVER ME

BAXTER HEALTH
SECURITY PROVIDES
AN ESSENTIAL ROLE

WRITTEN BY DWAIN HEBDA
PHOTOGRAPHY BY JAMES MOORE

In late July 2021, a call came into the Baxter Health Security Department about an imminent threat headed its way. A visibly upset Gassville man was armed and making his way from the parking lot

to the Cline Emergency Center.

It was a situation no one in the department ever wanted to have to deal with but precisely the kind of threat they'd trained for.





“We go all the way from being able to talk people out of having a bad attitude to dealing with the worst possible lethal threat.”

— Mike Armstrong

Mountain Home’s serene setting and small-town vibe belies the fact that it’s subject to the same challenges as any other community, especially when it comes to crime and a culture that at its worst has become progressively more predisposed to violence. Throw in the stress of illness or injury or the influence of pharmaceuticals, and patient interactions can turn in an instant.

“Our job is to ensure the safety and security of the hospital,” said Mike Armstrong, Director of Security. “We deal with everything from people waking up from anesthesia and being confused to dealing with drug- and alcohol-related matters to behavioral health issues. We’ve had some incidents where we actually had credible threats to the hospital that had to be dealt with.

“We go all the way from being able to talk people out of having a

“He was stating that he was going to go out with a bang and try to take as many people with him as he could,” said Officer Josh Fletcher who with fellow Officer Armando Delgado was first on the scene. “We ran out there and he was walking toward us with an AR-15 rifle and he had a full tactical vest on. When we drew our firearms, he saw us and then that’s when he realized this was about to be a bad day for him. He retreated, thankfully.”

Fletcher offered a wry chuckle at the memory, then added “That was an exciting experience, to say the least.”

bad attitude to dealing with the worst possible lethal threat.”

Armstrong, who has been in his role for 15 years, has led the department through major changes, including upgrades in technology, expansion of the staff and most notably a general level of professionalism alongside other areas of operations.

“When I started here, the security department had been having some issues where the reputation within the organization was not where it needed to be,” he said. “Officers were routinely being used to move furniture, they were being used to deliver cookie dough if somebody in the hospital had a kid who sold cookie dough. It was not things that security should have been used for.

“The first thing I did was allow officers the opportunity to say no in order to focus on the actual safety and security of the hospital instead of being used as a utility for convenience by the hospital. The administration has been very supportive in that.”

From there, Armstrong set about improving the skills of the officers themselves through routine and specialized training and improving visibility throughout the property through proper daily deployment. Taking security officers out of their professional silos paid several strategic dividends including forging stronger bonds of teamwork with other employees, Armstrong said.

“For years and years, we kind of maintained a low-profile presence,” he said. “We changed that when we became a commissioned department because the first item on the use of force continuum is uniform presence; you need to be seen. There is a certain deterrence factor to having uniformed officers on foot patrol, having a marked unit that patrols outside of the hospital. It makes people feel better. It’s also a notification to people that want to do something wrong that there is a plan in place to deal with that.”

One of the more noticeable changes that has come on Armstrong’s watch has been arming officers. Baxter Health was the first non-university hospital in the state to arm its security department. Each carries a sidearm with additional firepower on premises for use as needed.

Fletcher said during his time with Baxter, incidents have presented themselves where officers would have been in mortal danger had they not been able to draw a weapon, the intended shooter being just one. Instead, he’s never had to discharge his weapon, though he has come close.

“My first experience drawing my firearm on somebody was when a guy was fleeing police and he intentionally drove his car through the front of the hospital,” he said. “He had made a last stand, already tried to kill two or three cops by running them over and when he came through the front of the hospital, there was an elderly lady that had fallen in front of the vehicle. When he hit the wall, it kind of jarred him and he stopped for a moment. I had drawn my firearm on him.

“He looked at me, and he started to roll forward. She had frozen, so I had to tell her to get out of the way. I actually had a little bit of tension on the trigger on that one. At that point, another officer came up through the window behind him. That was the closest I’ve ever come to firing my gun, and that’s the moment I realized I never wanted to take a life but that I would.”

Such episodes, happily, have been few and far between. Most of the time, officers rely on their training in de-escalation techniques, including talking down situations and applying physical restraint that minimizes the chance of injury.

“We deal with a lot of suicide ideation individuals who are coming in looking for help. Sometimes they get here and they say, ‘I don’t want to be here,’” said Officer Jay Nichols. “A lot of times, we deal with intoxicated individuals, whether it be drugs or alcohol. They’re not thinking clearly, and sometimes they act out and pose a security issue to staff and other patients. We get called to step in and help try to calm them down and redirect them.

“We also deal with two different psych floors. Again, they’re not at their best. They’re withdrawing, so we’ve got to bridge that gap and try to calm them down while keeping them safe and keeping the staff safe.”

Nichols said he has noticed better team interaction between the security department and various patient-facing personnel. This makes everyone’s job easier, he said.

“We get to know the staff, which keeps that dialogue open so that they feel comfortable coming to us if they see a potential issue, and vice versa so we can work as a team,” he said. “All the officers try to keep our lines of communication open — talking to them when they have a down minute, having a joke, to where it’s time to get serious and this is what we need to do — just not being closed off to where the staff doesn’t feel like they can come talk to us. That’s what Baxter Health is all about, family and team.”

Prior to Armstrong leading the department officers were being used as a utility for convenience. Now officers are able to focus on the safety and security of the hospital. This has allowed them to form stronger bonds with the hospital staff and the community they serve.



JOSH FLETCHER

GENTLE GIANT

Officer Fletcher’s Dual Roles as Protector and Compassionate Samaritan



“When I’m at work, I’m very quiet and very calm. It’s a mode that I have to get into because you have to try to keep emotion out of things.”
— Josh Fletcher

At 6’7” and 400 pounds, Officer Josh Fletcher disarms many potentially volatile situations at work simply by showing up. But those who know him know Josh Fletcher to be much different than what meets the eye. “Everybody always says I’m two personalities,” he said. “When I’m at work, I’m very quiet and very calm. It’s a mode that I have to get into because you have to try to keep emotion out of things. It’s just a type of mindset that you have to be in to be able to do this job.” Unlike many in the department, Fletcher came to his role without any previous security or law enforcement experience. Thus, the job took some

adjustment for about the first two years of service. “Yeah, my first year I fractured my left foot when a patient threw an IV pole at me. That’s the only real injury I’ve had here other than scrapes and scratches and punches to the face that kind of hurt your pride more than anything,” he said. “As time went on, I got to see the impact I could have on people. “When you sit with a child that’s alone because their parent just got killed in a car wreck — you’re there to console them and you give them a little bit of happiness and not being afraid — that means a lot. When you save a nurse from being attacked by a patient and you see how grateful they are, that makes you feel pretty good.”

Away from work, Fletcher decompresses through time with his son and engages in an unusual hobby. He and his mother go dumpster-diving to retrieve usable and often brand-new items they can then donate to local nonprofits. “There’s a lot of waste in the U.S.,” he said. “There’s a lot of companies that’ll throw perfectly good food out, clothing that’s in boxes. Sometimes there’s one shirt torn up and 25 of them will be brand new and they’ll throw the whole thing in the dumpster. We’ve found full boxes of puzzle books and brand-new books from all over. We get tons of dog food that we donate to shelters or to people. It’s like a little treasure hunt.”



MIKE ARMSTRONG

FROM HEALER TO PROTECTOR

Leading with Empathy and Resolve in Hospital Security

Asked what inspired a decade in law enforcement followed by 15 years leading Baxter Health’s Security Department, Mike Armstrong offers a simple yet resolute answer. “I’ve always had an issue with bullies,” he said. “I have never liked people who use their position to get over on people they saw as being of a lesser position or who just enjoy standing on other people to make themselves taller. I always had a desire to protect people and to help people protect themselves.” An Navy brat, Armstrong moved around a lot before settling in Arkansas. He spent 10 years as a police officer in Bull Shoals, working his way up to chief, and was set to retire before the opportunity to take over security at Baxter Health came up. “I was notified they wanted

to build a professional security department, and what we agreed upon, essentially, was that I would come in and rebuild this department from the ground up,” he said. “The hospital was extremely supportive in doing that, and it just seemed like a good opportunity at that time.” Under his leadership, officers were armed, the headcount went from six to 13 and multiple security improvements were made including significantly increasing the number of cameras and introducing after-hours lockdowns to minimize access. He’s also invested countless hours of training and coaching to help develop officers into useful deterrents while exercising restraint and retaining their compassion for all with whom they come in contact. A vivid example was a would-be active

shooter in 2021 who was tased and sustained an injury in the process of being disarmed by security and local police, only to receive treatment in the very hospital he was about to shoot up a few minutes prior. “It takes a special individual to go from having to stand between a rifle and the safety of the hospital to having to make sure that this person, who has just been this enormous threat, is kept safe in the process of being treated in the ER,” he said. “It’s tough; you have to carry a large enough degree of empathy to be able to put yourself in someone else’s shoes and not pass judgment on them so that you can actually be helpful to facilitating them getting care. And you need to do it even for somebody that you might not particularly want to.”

“I always had a desire to protect people and to help people protect themselves.”
— Mike Armstrong

JAY NICHOLS

NAVIGATING MULTIPLE ROLES

The Multifaceted Responsibilities of Baxter Health Security



“I’ve always enjoyed figuring out the best way to handle situations and make sure people get to go home at night to their families”

– Jay Nichols

Officer Jay Nichols came to his role with the Baxter Health Security Department by a circuitous route. Originally from the area, he started as a volunteer firefighter and EMT in Missouri before making a career change to law enforcement. “At that time, there were situations where first responders were getting ambushed, basically,” he said. “I decided I wanted to be the one to keep our local first responders, firefighters and EMS safe and be that buffer for them when the call goes out.” Nichols served in law enforcement for eight years in Missouri and Arkansas before joining Baxter Health as a retail supervisor in the cafeteria. A few years after that, he got the urge to change roles.

“I’ve always enjoyed figuring out the best way to handle situations and make sure people get to go home at night to their families,” he said. “I got to know the director, Mike (Armstrong) and we hit it off. I just wanted to get back into security where I could help people.” Nichols said the role of the security officer covers more than just dangerous situations. Not unlike the cop on the beat, officers are available to lend a hand in a variety of situations. “It’s not just security issues. It can be, ‘Hey, I lost my vehicle. Can you help me find it?’ ‘How do I get to the fourth floor?’” he said. “We help people in from their cars if somebody’s injured. We’ll grab a wheelchair, help them into the ER and

guide them where they need to go. We answer questions for patients and visitors if they get lost. “It’s about helping the public and helping patients and visitors feel safe and giving them the information they need. We wear multiple hats.” When he’s not on duty, Officer Nichols likes to indulge a relatively new hobby — blacksmithing — which he’s taken up with his brother. “We watched the reality show Forged in Fire, and I was like, ‘Hey I can do that,’” he said. “Me and my brother make knives. We’ve progressed from a coal forge to a homemade gas forge, and then we bought an actual gas forge. “It’s a good stress reliever. You can pound on some metal and mold it into an object that’s useful.”



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NUTRITION

Braised Chicken Thighs with Squash and Mustard Greens

Servings: 8
From: Bon Appetit

INGREDIENTS

- » 4 pounds skin-on, bone-in chicken thighs (about 12), patted dry
- » Kosher salt, freshly ground pepper
- » 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- » 8 scallions, white and pale green parts sliced into 1-inch pieces, dark green parts thinly sliced
- » 4 dried chiles de árbol
- » 1 2-inch piece ginger, peeled, thinly sliced
- » 1 cup dry white wine
- » ½ cup low-sodium soy sauce
- » 3 tablespoons dark brown sugar
- » 2 tablespoons toasted sesame oil
- » 2 cups low-sodium chicken broth, divided
- » 1 acorn squash, halved lengthwise, seeds removed, sliced ½ inch thick
- » 1 bunch mustard greens, tough stems removed, leaves torn
- » 2 tablespoons unseasoned rice vinegar
- » 2 teaspoons toasted sesame seeds
- » Cooked white rice (for serving)

INSTRUCTIONS

1: Lightly season chicken thighs all over with salt and pepper. Heat vegetable oil in a large Dutch oven or other heavy pot over medium-high. Working in two batches and pouring off all but 2 tablespoons of fat between batches, cook chicken, skin side down until skin is browned and crisp, 8-10 minutes. Transfer to a plate, placing skin side up (chicken will not be cooked through at this point).

2: Cook white and pale green parts of scallions, chiles and ginger in the same pot, stirring often, until scallions and ginger are golden, about 3 minutes. Add wine, bring to a simmer, and cook until reduced to about 3 tablespoons, 5 minutes. Add soy sauce, brown sugar, sesame oil and 1 cup broth and bring to a simmer, stirring to dissolve sugar. Return chicken to pot, placing skin side up and overlapping if needed. Partially cover pot, reduce heat and simmer until chicken is cooked through, 25-30 minutes. Transfer chicken to a plate.

3: Add squash and remaining 1 cup broth to pot and push in squash so it's mostly submerged. Arrange greens on top. Bring to a simmer, partially cover pot, and cook until squash is barely fork-tender and greens are wilted, 10-12 minutes. Uncover, increase heat to medium and continue to cook until liquid is reduced by about two-thirds and has the consistency of thin gravy, 10-15 minutes.

4: Remove pot from heat and drizzle vinegar over vegetables. Taste sauce; it should be plenty salty, but season with more salt if needed. Add chicken back to pot, turning to coat in sauce, then scatter dark green parts of scallions and sesame seeds over top. Serve with rice.

Chicken can be braised 2 days ahead. Let cool; cover and chill. Reheat covered over low.



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NUTRITION

Shredded Brussels Sprout and Prosciutto Salad

Prep Time: 20 minutes
Cook Time: 10 minutes
Total Time: 30 minutes
Servings: 6
Author: Tieghan Gerard, Half Baked Harvest

INGREDIENTS

- » 3 ounces thinly sliced prosciutto
 - » 1 bunch kale, shredded
 - » 4 cups shredded Brussels sprouts
 - » Arils from 1 pomegranate
 - » 1 cup shredded manchego or Parmesan cheese
 - » 1 avocado, diced
 - » 3 tablespoons salted butter
 - » ½ cup raw hazelnuts
- FOR THE BALSAMIC**

DRESSING

- » ½ cup extra virgin olive oil
- » ¼ cup balsamic vinegar
- » 1 tablespoon fig preserves
- » 1 tablespoon fresh thyme leaves
- » 2 teaspoons orange zest
- » Kosher salt and black pepper

INSTRUCTIONS

1: Preheat the oven to 350 F. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper.

2: On the prepared baking sheet, arrange the prosciutto in a single layer. Bake for 10-15 minutes or until crisp. Watch closely.

3: In a large salad bowl, combine the kale and Brussels sprouts. Season with salt, pepper and red pepper flakes.

4: To make the dressing, whisk/shake together all ingredients in a jar. Pour the dressing over the salad and massage into the greens. Add the pomegranates and cheese; toss.

5: Melt together the butter and hazelnuts over medium heat. Cook until the nuts are toasted and the butter is browning. Season with salt, then pour the warm nuts over the salad. Top with avocado and prosciutto. Serve warm or at room temperature.

TO MAKE AHEAD: The salad can be made up to 1 day ahead, just add the avocado and prosciutto before serving.

LEFTOVERS: Leftovers will keep well for 2-3 days. This salad is delicious warmed or chilled.



Fire Roasted Chicken Tortellini Soup

Servings: 4
Prep time: 15 minutes
Cook time: 30 minutes
Total time: 45 minutes
From: How Sweet Eats

INGREDIENTS

- » 1 tablespoon olive oil
- » 1 sweet onion, diced
- » 4 garlic cloves, minced
- » Kosher salt and pepper
- » 1 tablespoon tomato paste
- » 14 ounces fire roasted diced tomatoes
- » 1 ½ cups cooked, shredded chicken
- » 1 Parmesan rind
- » 4 to 5 cups chicken stock
- » ¾ cup heavy cream
- » 3 cups chopped/shredded kale or spinach
- » 8 to 12 ounces cheese tortellini
- » Parmesan cheese, for topping
- » Crushed red pepper, for topping

INSTRUCTIONS

1: Heat the olive oil in a large stock pot over medium-low heat. Stir in

the onions, garlic and a big pinch of salt and pepper. Cook, stirring often, until the onions soften, about 5 to 6 minutes.

2: Stir in the tomato paste. Cook for a few minutes, allowing the color (and flavor!) to deepen. Pour in the diced tomatoes, chicken, Parmesan rind and 4 cups chicken stock. Bring the mixture to a boil. Reduce it to a simmer and cover, then simmer for 15 to 20 minutes.

3: After 20 minutes, stir in the heavy cream. Stir in the kale. Stir in the tortellini and cook for 5 minutes, until it's tender and cooked through. This is the time to decide if you want to add the remaining cup of chicken stock. If so, add it in! Remember that the tortellini will soak up the liquid as it sits.

4: Taste the soup, and season additionally with salt and pepper if needed.

5: Serve immediately with Parmesan cheese and crushed red pepper for topping.

Note: if you want to make this ahead of time, cook the cheese tortellini separately and store it separately. Heat the soup in single servings and stir in the tortellini when ready to eat!

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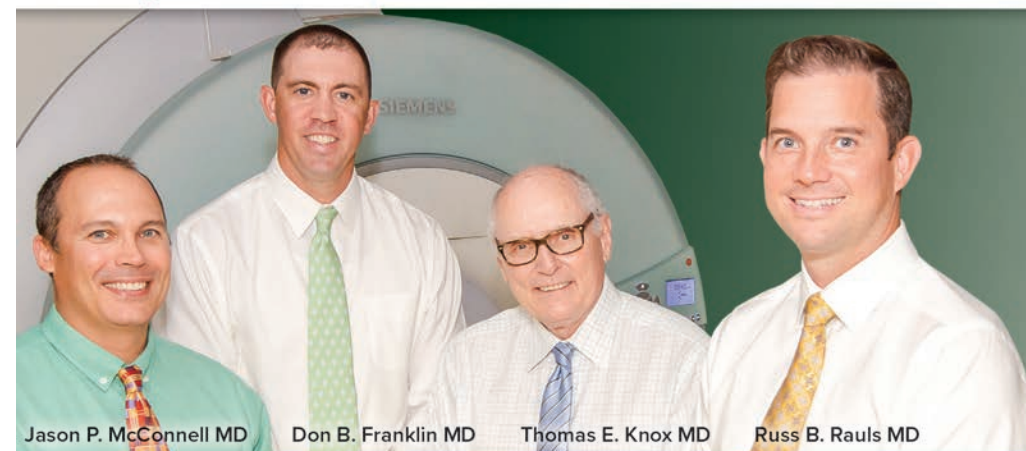
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THE ETERNAL EMBRACE

NAVIGATING LIFE'S TRANSITION WITH FAITH

BY RANDY LUDWIG

There is a popular term used most often by millennials. That term is “adulting.”

As defined within our urban dictionary, “adulting” is temporary moments of adult-like behavior, such as making sustainable decisions about the fundamentals of life. Let me point out that these adolescent “growing pains” have been around forever, even for my generation, the Baby Boomers; we just didn’t have a catchy phrase for it.

The practice of behaving in a way characteristic of a responsible adult, especially the accomplishment of mundane but necessary tasks, can be a challenge for young people ages 18–25. The reason it can be so challenging is that these are the transition years, the time in which we move

out from under the protection of parental guardianship.

There can be such peace and tranquility when we know that the responsibility of our welfare lies in the hands of someone else.

I think about this every time I read the 91st Psalm. The writer of the Psalm says this in verses 4 and 5:

*He will cover you with his feathers,
and under his wings you will find refuge;
his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart.
You will not fear the terror of night,
nor the arrow that flies by day.*

It was reassuring as a child to know that we, for the most part, had nothing to worry about when we were under the care and protection of our parents and that all of our needs were met. It, too, is reassuring

to know that we can find solace and refuge in the One who created us if we will place our trust in Him.

God never promises us a worry-free life here on earth, but He does promise us a peace-filled life free from the ultimate harm. If we have faith that in the end all is well, then life can be a joyous experience. Oh sure, we’re going to have to make a few “grown-up” decisions along the way, and yes, we need to act like adults; but in reality, we are all God’s children who live under the outstretched wings of His love and mercy.

Knowing that someone is always looking out for us and protecting us, knowing that we are safe from harm, whether it be in the things of this world or the heavenly things ... that my dear friends, is peace! ■



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