

Winter 2024

# LiveWell

CEDAR RAPIDS



**ROUTINE CHECKUP  
UNVEILS SILENT  
HEART DISEASE**  
The Importance of Being  
Proactive About Health

**UNEXPECTED  
STROKE AT 34**  
How to Recognize Stroke Signs

**ONE MAN'S JOURNEY  
TO COMBAT GENERATIONS  
OF HEART PROBLEMS**  
Discussing Family History with Your Doctor

**ROBOT-ASSISTED  
LUNG SURGERY**  
Minimally Invasive and Available  
Only at St. Luke's

**ASK THE EXPERT**  
Where Should I Go for Care?



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**UnityPoint Health**  
Cedar Rapids

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# LiveWell

## Winter 2024

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# WE ♥ YOUR HEART



As Cedar Rapids' Heart Hospital since 1978, it's our mission to educate our community on ways to stay healthy and understand the signs of a heart attack and stroke. Please read and remember these symptoms and act if you or someone you know displays any of these warning signs. **Call 911 and immediately go to St. Luke's ER.**

## STROKE is an Emergency





Every minute counts!  
**B.E.F.A.S.T.!**

-  **BALANCE** - Is the person suddenly having trouble with balance or coordination?
-  **EYES** - Is the person experiencing blurred or double vision or a sudden loss of vision in one or both eyes without pain?
-  **FACE** - Does one side of the face droop? Ask the person to smile.
-  **ARMS** - Is one arm or leg weak or numb? Ask the person to raise both arms. Does one arm drift downward? Is the person having trouble walking?
-  **SPEECH** - Is speech slurred? Ask the person to repeat a simple sentence. Is the sentence repeated clearly and correctly?
-  **TIME** - If the person shows any of these symptoms, **Call 911** immediately.

Information provided by the National Stroke Association.

## HEART ATTACK is an Emergency

Time Is Muscle!  
**Signs & Symptoms:**

-  Chest discomfort (pain, pressure, squeezing or fullness).
-  Shortness of breath, sweating, nausea or lightheadedness with or without chest discomfort.
-  Discomfort in arms, back, jaw, neck or stomach with or without chest discomfort.
-  Dizziness and extreme fatigue. Feelings of anxiety or "impending doom."

*Although a woman's most common symptom is chest discomfort, women are more likely to experience shortness of breath, nausea/vomiting and back or jaw pain.*

If the person shows any of these symptoms, **Call 911** immediately.

## ST. LUKE'S MARION ER PROGRESSES

Construction is moving along as planned for St. Luke's Marion ER, which is planning an August opening. This new ER is located at 3301 Armar Drive. It will be an important emergency health resource for the Marion community and residents on the northeast side of Cedar Rapids and surrounding eastern Linn County communities.

The facility will feature 12 private treatment rooms. It will be open 24/7 and staffed by board certified

emergency medicine providers, as well as nurses, patient care techs and other healthcare professionals.

St. Luke's Marion ER will be equipped to treat patients with illnesses and injuries, which require a higher level of care. The ER will also include advanced imaging, CT, X-ray and ultrasound, plus there will be an on-site pharmacy and lab.

Our St. Luke's ER team looks forward to expanding services to our community.



Marion ER Front Desk



Marion ER Exam Room



## St. Luke's Second Electrophysiology (EP) Lab NOW OPEN!

The first phase of St. Luke's \$25 million Heart & Vascular Center Expansion Project is now complete, with the opening of a second electrophysiology (EP) lab.

An EP lab is used for treatments such as pacemakers, implantable defibrillators and ablation procedures to correct Afib (irregular heartbeat). These services are in high demand, as St. Luke's treats the most heart patients in Cedar Rapids. The additional EP lab will accommodate the growing number of patients who need St. Luke's electrophysiology services.

The Heart & Vascular Center Expansion reflects St. Luke's commitment to meeting the evolving needs of the community. It aligns with St. Luke's reputation for excellence in cardiovascular services and ensures patients receive the most advanced heart care locally.

The next phases of the Heart & Vascular Center expansion are progressing on schedule. Phase two focuses on vascular and interventional radiology, providing greater access to imaging and biopsies, treatment for aneurysms (ballooning vessels)

and revascularization (restoring blood flow to blocked vessels). It will also include new, dedicated space for pre- and post-op needs, providing optimal coordination

and experience for patients. Anticipated completion of the vascular and interventional radiology space is fall 2024.

The third and final phase of our expansion project will enhance capabilities in structural heart with the addition of a hybrid operating room and state-of-the-art technology in spring 2025. Structural heart is the area of cardiology that treats defects and disorders of the heart's structure, including valve repair and replacement.

**For more information about St. Luke's Heart & Vascular care, and to follow our expansion progress, visit [unitypoint.org/cr-heart](https://unitypoint.org/cr-heart).**





# UNEXPECTED STROKE AT 34

How to Recognize  
Stroke Signs



Bret Davidson went to St. Luke's ER after he started having balance issues and vomiting at his son's hockey game. The 34-year-old Cedar Rapids man had a stroke and underwent five months of physical, occupational and speech therapy at St. Luke's Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation.

At just 34, the idea he might be having a stroke never occurred to Bret Davidson. After all, many associate strokes with older people.

"We thought maybe I was dehydrated,"

explained Davidson. "I didn't think it was a stroke. I was at my son's hockey tournament in Chicago last February when the rink started spinning. I then started vomiting non-stop for the rest of the day until I was able to go to bed that night. We had driven about halfway home but had to stop at a hotel for the night."

Davidson, his wife Latasia, and their children Noah, Skylar and Jagger headed home the following day and went right to St. Luke's ER after returning to Cedar Rapids.

"The woman at the front desk at St. Luke's ER recognized I was having a stroke right away," recalled Davidson. "I went immediately to a room and the ER team started working on me."

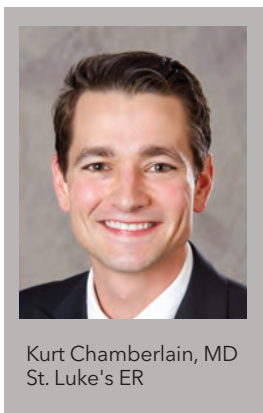
"Bret presented with headache, vomiting, and confusion," said Kurt Chamberlain, MD, St. Luke's ER physician. "His neurologic exam was concerning, and his eye movements did not line up symmetrically to focus. These issues are an indication for conditions such as a cerebellar stroke, a stroke in the cerebellum, which is used in coordination and balance."

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), every 40 seconds someone in the United States has a stroke. Stroke risk increases with age but can occur at any age. About 38 percent of people hospitalized for a stroke are under age 65. It's the leading cause of serious long-term disability in the U.S.

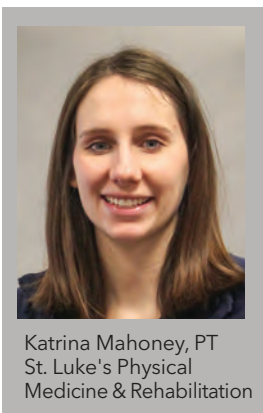
Davidson spent three days in intensive care and was moved to St. Luke's Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation (PM&R) unit to begin his recovery. U.S. News and World Report and Becker's Hospital Review named UnityPoint Health - St. Luke's Hospital Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation one of the top rehab hospitals in Iowa.

"When he first came to our rehab unit, Bret was not able to walk on his own," recalled Katrina Mahoney, St. Luke's PM&R senior physical therapist. "Bret had some difficulty talking but you could easily tell he wanted to return to his job and get back to being a dad."

"I didn't talk well at first," shared Davidson. "You couldn't make out what I was trying to say a lot of the time. And I had to relearn how to walk because my balance was off. My fine motor skills were not present. I couldn't use my hands well at first."



Kurt Chamberlain, MD  
St. Luke's ER



Katrina Mahoney, PT  
St. Luke's Physical  
Medicine & Rehabilitation

## How to Recover from a Stroke

At St. Luke's, Davidson participated in daily, physical, occupational and speech therapy for the next two weeks.

"We ended up doing some fun things in therapy," explained Mahoney. "Before his stroke he was ice skating and playing hockey with his kids - so we were able to simulate a little of that in our rehabilitation gym. We'd use glide boards and other similar items to work on his balance. He made so much progress."

After Davidson was released from St. Luke's PM&R inpatient rehab program, he returned for outpatient therapy where the team continued their collaborative work. Davidson spent the next five months working on regaining what the stroke took away from him.

"When we discharged Bret from therapy in July, his balance scored within the normal range for his age," shared Mahoney. "He was doing jumping jacks, push-ups, climbing ladders and a lot of hard work. We were working on getting him back to his supervisor position at a production facility. He was able to return to work that same month he completed outpatient therapy at St. Luke's."

## A Closer Look at What May Cause a Stroke

Davidson had a patent foramen ovale closure (PFO) procedure last summer following his stroke. A PFO is a hole in the heart, which typically closes after birth. The hole is an opening between the upper heart chambers. It usually doesn't cause complications but sometimes small blood clots travel elsewhere in the body, likely the cause of Davidson's stroke.

"The important thing to remember is that not all strokes occur in elderly patients with predisposing factors such as hypertension, high cholesterol and diabetes," Dr. Chamberlain said. "They can also occur as a result of an artery dissection or tear, a hemorrhage, or other factors. The symptoms aren't always obvious such as one-sided weakness or speech difficulty. The important thing is to get to the ER if someone is showing some of the signs of a stroke just to be sure. Look for things like, is their balance off, are they having vision problems, does one side of their face droop, is one arm weak or numb or is their speech slurred? If they have any of these symptoms call 911 immediately."

"St. Luke's was a big help in getting me back to work and back to my life," shared Davidson. "I am working again, driving on my own and I was told to take a year off from recreational hockey, but I'd like to get back to it again next fall."

Many strokes can be prevented by living a healthy life and working with your healthcare provider, to reduce health issues, which can raise stroke risk. If you do not have a primary care provider, scan this code to find a UnityPoint Health provider.





# HOW A REVOLUTIONARY PROCEDURE HEALS HEARTS WITH PRECISION SCAR TISSUE

In the hustle of daily life, juggling kids' activities, work and household responsibilities, Heather Bottelman, 43, of Anamosa, found herself in an unexpected health crisis. While she raced from one activity to another, her heart was doing some racing of its own and she ended up in St. Luke's Hospital's Emergency Room.

During one of her regular fitness center workouts, Bottelman's heart rate soared above 200 beats per minute, a concerning discovery flagged by her heart rate monitor. Normal resting heart rate is 60-100 beats per minute, and during vigorous physical activity, target heart rate depends on a person's age.

A specialized heart procedure at St. Luke's Hospital fixed Heather Bottelman's racing heart, allowing her to resume regular workouts at her fitness center, HOTWORX Cedar Rapids.

For Bottelman, that range is 88-149 beats per minute, with a maximum of 175.

"I couldn't get my heart to settle down," Bottelman said. "I went back to my office and a coworker had me wear his Apple watch. My heart rate was still in the 180s, even 45 minutes after my workout. I had a massive headache and abnormal vision, then I started to lose feeling to my left side. My coworkers helped me get to St. Luke's ER."

Bottelman's heart rate eventually stabilized on its own, but Sarah Hemming-Meyer, DO, St. Luke's ER, continued to investigate. An EKG showed Bottelman had supraventricular tachycardia (SVT), a form of cardiac arrhythmia (abnormal heartbeat), that was causing her heart to beat too fast. That's when St. Luke's Heart Care Clinic Electrophysiologist Weiwei Li, MD, PhD, got involved.

### Heart Rate Restored by Cardiac Ablation

"Generally, SVT is not a life-threatening arrhythmia, but it can progress over time and cause cardiac arrest," Dr. Li explained. "In Heather's case, it was significantly affecting her quality of life. She randomly experienced palpitations and likely lived in fear of when it would happen and if she would be able to terminate it. We recommended treating it as early as possible."

Treatment starts with lifestyle modifications, such as reducing stress, decreasing caffeine and limiting alcohol. It can also involve taking medicine, which Bottelman was hoping to avoid long-term.

"Dr. Li was phenomenal," Bottelman shared. "She really cared about my goals, and we came to a solution together. She recommended a cardiac ablation."

"Cardiac ablation is a special treatment for patients with SVT and other heart rhythm abnormalities," Dr. Li explained.

"We take patients to one of our electrophysiology (EP) labs, insert catheters into the heart and use a 3-D mapping system that provides a real-time picture of the heart's anatomy. We induce SVT to pinpoint where the rhythm trouble is coming from. Then we use heat or cold energy to cause a tiny scar in the muscle to prevent the abnormal rhythm from happening again. Patients feel relief after the procedure and go home the same day."

Bottelman said her heart palpitations, nausea and headaches are gone, and she no longer requires medication. A couple of days after her ablation, she was able to resume her normal family routine, activities and workouts.



Weiwei Li, MD, PhD,  
St. Luke's Heart Care  
Clinic Electrophysiologist

### Why it's Important to Know Family Health History

Heart issues run in Bottelman's family. Her father had a heart attack and passed away about a year before her heart procedure. Her paternal grandfather also died from a heart attack, and all her mother's siblings had Afib (irregular heart beat).

"My advice is to know your family history and be an advocate for yourself," Bottelman recommended. "I made every excuse in the book - I'm dehydrated, I need to eat better, I'm stressed, anxious, tired, embarrassed. I just pushed off my care thinking I didn't have time to be sick. But, if something doesn't feel right, get it checked out. That's why the professionals are there. I'm grateful to Dr. Meyer, the resident doctor who was working with her and Dr. Li - for their education, compassion and being right here in Cedar Rapids. St. Luke's is amazing."

St. Luke's recently opened a second EP Lab, completing the first phase of its \$25 million Heart & Vascular Center expansion (read more on page 1). The additional EP lab will allow more patients to receive St. Luke's cutting-edge electrophysiology services.



Heather Bottelman (right) reunites with St. Luke's Electrophysiologist Weiwei Li, MD, PhD, following her ablation procedure that corrected her racing heart.

Learn more about St. Luke's nationally recognized heart and vascular care at [unitypoint.org/cr-heart](http://unitypoint.org/cr-heart). To connect with a cardiologist, call St. Luke's Heart Care Clinic at (319) 364-7101.





Ed Carpenter lives a healthy, active lifestyle, but recently required open heart surgery, which doctors attribute to family history. He's now back to regular workouts at his gym.

Ed Carpenter has always enjoyed staying active, whether he's on the golf course, playing basketball, lifting weights or riding a four-wheeler. That's why the 54-year-old husband and father of two was surprised when everyday activities made him tired.

"I had chest pain and tightness, but I thought it was just indigestion," Carpenter recalled. "Normally I could go running and do all kinds of things in the gym, but I started getting tired more quickly. The symptom that caught me off guard was when I went up a flight of stairs and my legs got tired. I struggled to get up the second flight."

His chest tightness during exercise and fatigue, along with his family's encouragement, convinced Carpenter to have his heart health checked. He made an appointment with his local cardiologist at UnityPoint Clinic Cardiology in Dubuque, who ordered an echocardiogram to investigate further. The results showed severe weakness of Carpenter's heart pumping function.

### **Swift Diagnosis Unveils Hidden Heart Blockages**

Carpenter's cardiologist performed a cardiac catheterization, with the help of ultrasound, to assess for possible blocked heart arteries. Ultrasound measures severity of blockages in a more accurate and reliable way, from inside

the arteries. During the procedure, he discovered multiple blockages and determined Carpenter would need bypass surgery.

While Carpenter was still in recovery, the cardiologist contacted Garry Weide, DO, cardiothoracic surgeon at UnityPoint Health - St. Luke's Heart & Lung Surgery in Cedar Rapids. He scheduled an appointment the following day, and within a week, Carpenter was in St. Luke's operating room for open heart surgery.

"I was shocked. It all happened so quickly," he said. "I didn't think it was anything that major. I was healthy, never smoked, didn't drink much and exercised whenever I could. It just came out of the blue."



# ONE MAN'S JOURNEY TO COMBAT GENERATIONS OF HEART PROBLEMS

## How to Help Your Heart Avoid Your Family's Fate

While Carpenter didn't expect such a serious diagnosis, he knew heart trouble runs in his family. His father had triple bypass surgery at age 39 and passed away at 56. His grandfather had coronary artery disease and died at age 49.

"Dr. Weide and my cardiologist said my diet may have contributed to my blockages, but they believe 90% of the reason was genetics," Carpenter shared.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), knowing family history is the first step in preventing heart disease. Individuals with family history of heart disease are most at risk if a parent or sibling had a heart attack or was diagnosed with heart disease before age 50. While genetic factors are unavoidable, there are other controllable risks.

St. Luke's cardiologists recommend paying attention to cholesterol level, blood pressure and blood sugar readings, as well as eating a healthy diet, staying active, maintaining a healthy weight, avoiding smoking and limiting alcohol consumption.



Garry Weide, DO,  
Cardiothoracic Surgeon,  
St. Luke's Heart & Lung  
Surgery

## What Happens After Heart Surgery

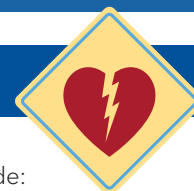
Following surgery, Carpenter attended cardiopulmonary rehab, which is designed for individuals who have experienced a heart issue.

The rehab team creates an individualized treatment plan that includes evaluation and instruction on physical activity, as well as nutrition coaching, stress management and other health-related education. Cardiac rehab helps patients decrease the chance of additional heart problems, reduces the physical and emotional effects of heart disease, improves stamina and strength, and boosts confidence to resume an active lifestyle.

Today, Carpenter is happy to be back to work. "It's because of the personal care I received from UnityPoint Health that I feel so good," he said. "From the beginning, the doctors explained everything and didn't go over my head, so I felt at ease with the surgery. At St. Luke's, I wasn't just a number, it was always 'Ed' or 'Mr. Carpenter,' and everyone was always asking if I needed anything, or my family needed anything. At rehab, everyone was perfect to work with. All along, I knew I was where I should be to have the best care."

If you have family history of heart problems, be proactive and talk to your primary care provider. To connect with a cardiologist, call UnityPoint Health - St. Luke's Heart Care Clinic at (319) 364-7101.

## SYMPTOMS OF HEART ATTACK



If you or someone you love experiences heart attack symptoms, the best course of action is to **call 911 immediately**. Symptoms can include:

- Pressure, fullness, squeezing pain in the center of the chest, spreading to the neck, shoulder or jaw
- Lower chest discomfort
- Chest discomfort with lightheadedness, fainting, sweating, nausea or shortness of breath
- Back pain
- Upper abdominal pressure or discomfort
- Unusual fatigue
- Unusual shortness of breath
- Dizziness
- Nausea



## ROUTINE CHECKUP UNVEILS SILENT HEART DISEASE

Open heart surgery patient Steve Mathers expressed thanks to his primary care provider and the nursing staff at St. Luke's. He credited them for saving his life, allowing him to continue one of his most cherished activities - time with his grandsons.

"What else is on your mind?" That question from Steve Mathers' primary care provider at the end of his annual checkup, unveiled a silent, unknown problem. He had heart disease, and it needed immediate attention.

Mathers was seeing Emily Fitzpatrick, FNP-BC, at UnityPoint Clinic Internal and Family Medicine in Hiawatha for a routine visit. When she asked if there was anything else he wanted to discuss, his response prompted her to investigate.

"I just casually mentioned I had shortness of breath after I exercise," Mathers recalled. "I walk five miles a day, but I'd had COVID a few months before, so I thought I hadn't totally recovered. Emily jumped right on it."

"Steve is a healthy guy," Fitzpatrick said. "He walks a lot and has great stamina; he's not on any medications and doesn't have any chronic illnesses. When he told me he was having a hard time recovering after his workouts, I thought it was odd."

During his appointment, Fitzpatrick had Mathers undergo an electrocardiogram (EKG), which uses electrodes to check for abnormalities in the heart's electrical activity. She also ordered lab work and a chest X-ray. "Everything came back normal, which is typical if a patient isn't symptomatic," Fitzpatrick explained. "I still thought something was amiss, so I suggested he see a cardiologist."



## Stress Test Findings Lead to Urgent Open Heart Surgery

Fitzpatrick referred Mathers to St. Luke's Heart Care Clinic Interventional Cardiologist Subhi Halawa, MD. He first had Mathers do a stress test, which involves walking on a treadmill during an EKG. This allows the cardiology team to monitor heart rhythm, blood pressure and breathing to see if there is a blood flow problem in the heart.

"Unfortunately, he 'flunked' the stress test," Dr. Halawa said. "He was able to exercise for seven minutes, but there were dramatic changes in his EKG, indicating severe blockages in several areas. The nuclear images also showed the front wall of his heart was completely wiped-out during exercise. That's what we call the 'widow maker,' because it is the typical cause when someone dies of a heart attack at home. A widow maker is when the main, or descending artery that extends down the front of the heart, is blocked, cutting off blood supply to the front part of the heart and causing it to fibrillate."

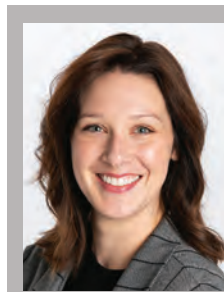
Due to the results of Mathers' stress test and nuclear images, Dr. Halawa performed a heart catheterization, where he found multiple arteries that were 90-95% blocked. It was clear Mathers required open heart surgery, and soon. He was immediately admitted to St. Luke's Hospital and scheduled for quadruple bypass surgery.

## From Unknown Threat to Grateful Recovery

After surgery, Mathers participated in cardiac rehab and is now back to his usual activities, including pick-up basketball games with his grandsons. He went from making a casual comment at a routine doctor visit, to a life-saving procedure he didn't know he needed.



Subhi Halawa, MD,  
St. Luke's Heart Care  
Clinic Interventional  
Cardiologist



Emily Fitzpatrick, FNP-  
BC, UnityPoint Clinic  
Internal and Family  
Medicine - Hiawatha

"I had absolutely no symptoms whatsoever; no idea something like that was pending," Mathers shared. "I'm thankful Emily took what I said seriously. She's extremely knowledgeable and proactive.

"I'm also grateful for the care I received at St. Luke's," Mathers continued. "The entire nursing staff was extremely professional and kind. They treated me with a great deal of respect. I'd never experienced anything like this before, and my family and I really want them to know how grateful we are for their care."

To express his appreciation, Mathers nominated several nurses who all received a St. Luke's Foundation Guardian Angel award. The Guardian Angel program is a way for patients and families to recognize staff members who go above and beyond. One of the nurses also received the prestigious Daisy Award, a program that rewards excellence in clinical skills and extraordinary compassion. It is given to nurses in more than 2,300 healthcare facilities throughout all 50 states and in 15 countries.

Ultimately, Mathers believes it was Fitzpatrick's actions that saved his life. However, she credits him for his outcome. "He was an advocate for his own health," she pointed out. "If he hadn't brought up his issue, I would've never known."

One thing they both agree on - the importance of annual checkups. "Make sure all your concerns are addressed when you come for your yearly exam," Fitzpatrick advised. "If you have an issue and it's different than your baseline, or you have a specific concern, don't hesitate to make an appointment more often."

Log in to your MyUnityPoint account to confirm or schedule your annual exam, or find a doctor at [unitypoint.org/](https://unitypoint.org/) providers. If you have a health concern outside of your scheduled visit, learn where to go for care at [unitypoint.org/get-care-now](https://unitypoint.org/get-care-now).



Steve Mathers enjoys a basketball game with his grandsons at the Cedar Rapids YMCA after recovering from unexpected open heart surgery. His primary care provider flagged a heart problem at his annual checkup.

Kay Ledesma of Oelwein is thankful to now be cancer-free thanks robot-assisted lobectomy surgery, which is performed only at St. Luke's.

## MINIMALLY INVASIVE ROBOT-ASSISTED LUNG SURGERY AVAILABLE ONLY AT ST. LUKE'S

Kay Ledesma is now cancer-free thanks to a new minimally invasive surgical procedure now available in Cedar Rapids only at St. Luke's. Ledesma was one of the first patients to benefit from da Vinci robotic lung surgery at St. Luke's. The Oelwein woman had a robot-assisted lobectomy last year to remove lung cancer found during a chest X-ray during a bout with bronchitis several years ago.

"They discovered I had a nodule in the lower lobe of my left lung," shared Ledesma. "I started seeing Dr. Gogineni, a pulmonologist, and he's been doing CT scans on my chest every six months. He was watching the nodule for changes. The last couple of years, there's been no change, but in 2023 it increased in size."



The da Vinci Xi surgical system.  
©2024 Intuitive Surgical Operations, Inc.

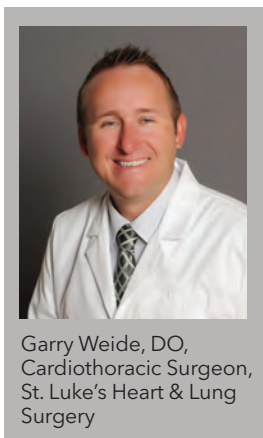


It was during the next scan that Vijaya Gogineni, MD, from UnityPoint Clinic – Multi-Specialty and Nassif Community Cancer Center, noted the nodule changed again – this time in its density. Ledesma had additional testing and a biopsy, which returned a diagnosis of lung cancer. She was a long-time smoker but had kicked the habit 12 years ago. She was told the nodule was likely from smoking. Thankfully her cancer was caught early.

“Dr. Gogineni talked with me about my treatment options, and I chose to have the lower lobe of my lung removed to get rid of the cancer all together,” Ledesma explained. “I wanted to eliminate the chance of it spreading. He told me about Dr. Weide and minimally invasive robotic lung surgery.”

### The Increase of Robot-Assisted Procedures in Thoracic Surgery

Cardiothoracic Surgeon Garry Weide, DO, St. Luke’s Heart and Lung Surgery, began using the da Vinci surgical robot for some thoracic surgeries last year.



Garry Weide, DO,  
Cardiothoracic Surgeon,  
St. Luke’s Heart & Lung  
Surgery

“Surgeons at St. Luke’s have been operating with the da Vinci surgical robot since 2005, predominately in urology, gynecology and some general surgery,” explained Dr. Weide. “The most recent iteration of the technology is the da Vinci Xi, which St. Luke’s invested in. The instrumentation, 3-D visualization, and the articulating robotic arms, which mimic hand movements, made the new robot more favorable for thoracic surgery.”

During robot-assisted surgery the surgeon is fully in control – operating the surgical instruments while seated at a console in the operating room.

“Initially when I decided to have surgery, I was in a total panic because I didn’t want to have open surgery with a large incision and a long recovery,” Ledesma said. “When Dr. Weide said I could have robot-assisted surgery and explained it would be less invasive, with smaller incisions and a faster recovery – it made me extremely happy.”

### Minimally Invasive Surgery Reduces Hospital Stay, Speeds Recovery

“Kay was in the hospital for only two days. Prior patients who had open thoracic surgery approaches were in the hospital five to seven days,” Dr. Weide explained. “Her hospital stay and recovery were cut down significantly. The incisions are much smaller, the pain is reduced, and patients can return to their normal activities sooner.”

“My care at St. Luke’s was great and my nurses were awesome,” said Ledesma. “I had my surgery on a Friday and was able to go home Sunday. Dr. Weide removed the lower lobe of my lung and eight lymph nodes. All the lymph nodes came back cancer-free. The only cancer detected was in the lower lobe. He was certain they removed all the cancer.”

“The tumor came out with negative margins and because of that she doesn’t need additional treatment,” shared Dr. Weide. “I am glad we are able to offer this minimally invasive surgery at St. Luke’s. Currently there aren’t a lot of places in the state doing robot-assisted thoracic surgery. It’s a nice option for our patients who need it, and it’s close to home.”

Thanks to this new minimally invasive surgery offered at St. Luke’s, Ledesma is happy to be back spending more time with her family, playing with her grandchildren, and living life without cancer.

To find a list of surgeons who perform robot-assisted surgery at St. Luke’s, visit [unitypoint.org/providers](http://unitypoint.org/providers).

## St. Luke’s Lung Check ✓

The best chance of a cure for lung cancer is early detection. That’s why St. Luke’s and the Nassif Community Cancer Center developed the Lung Check program. Lung cancer remains the leading cause of cancer death in both men and women and is typically diagnosed at a more advanced stage after the cancer has spread. This test offers patients an earlier diagnosis, so they can recover faster.

St. Luke’s Lung Check includes a chest CT scan, which is a non-invasive test using low-dose X-rays that provide detailed, three-dimensional images of the lungs. Radiologists review the images for the presence of small spots on the lungs, called nodules.

### Take Our Quiz to See if You’re a Candidate for a Lung Screening

- ✓ Are you between the ages of 50-77?
- ✓ Do you have at least a 20-pack-per-year history of smoking?
- ✓ If you no longer smoke, did you quit within the last 15 years?
- ✓ Have you ever been diagnosed with any type of cancer?
- ✓ Have you been exposed to a significant amount of secondhand smoke?
- ✓ Have you had prolonged exposure to asbestos or radon?
- ✓ Do you have a family history of lung cancer?
- ✓ Have you ever been diagnosed with a lung disease?
- ✓ Have you had long-term exposure to chemical fumes, vapors or dust?

If you answered yes to three or more of these questions, you may be a candidate for a lung screening. Call (319) 558-4876 to learn more about St. Luke’s Lung Check.

## WHERE SHOULD I GO FOR CARE?

It's 10 a.m. Friday and daycare called - your baby is running a slight fever, has a runny nose and is tugging at her ears.

A Saturday morning game of basketball abruptly ends for your husband with what he thinks might be a bad sprain.

And on Monday morning you get a call from your dad who is complaining of shortness of breath and chest discomfort.

In all these scenarios, would you know the most appropriate place to seek healthcare for your family?

"Most people are pretty good about discerning where to go to receive care, but on occasion they may need help deciding," shared Richard Hodge, MD, UnityPoint Clinic Urgent Care and Express medical director. "If your child has a cold and fever, you should try to call their pediatrician or family provider to get a same-day appointment. If one isn't available, UnityPoint Clinic Express is an option. Our urgent care clinics are a good

place for sports injuries because they can take X-rays, evaluate the injury and give fracture care for many simple fractures. Chest discomfort may be a gray area for some people especially if they are 25, but if you are 60 and you've been out shoveling snow and start having chest pain, the ER is the place you need to go."

Dr. Hodge stresses the importance of calling 911 immediately and going to St. Luke's Emergency Room when someone is experiencing an emergency like a heart attack, stroke or other trauma because time is critical when it comes to treating medical emergencies.

"If it's something simple - an earache, runny nose, cough - those sorts of things, UnityPoint Clinic Express is great choice if you're not able to get into primary care," explained Dr. Hodge. "Urgent Care is a step above Express. Urgent Care also takes care of the simple stuff like scrapes, coughs and colds, but it can care for more complex concerns like a fall that may have resulted in a broken bone, a gash that's going to need stitches,

or a sports injury or concussion. Then urgent care is a good choice. Our Urgent Cares have doctors who are board-certified in Urgent Care Medicine."

UnityPoint Health strongly encourages patients to save their spot online at Express and Urgent Care clinics to guarantee they will see a provider before a clinic closes. Each day, there are also slots available at our Urgent Care Clinics for people who walk-in to receive care.

"Bottomline, we want people to think about the best place for them to seek care at that moment," said Dr. Hodge. "If it makes sense, start with your primary doctor and if you aren't able to see them, take advantage of the many other options we offer. Our healthcare providers want to get patients back to their lives and feeling better as quickly as possible."

**If you are experiencing a medical emergency, call 911.** To find care near you or to save your spot online at one of our Express or Urgent Care clinics, visit [unitypoint.org/get-care-now](https://unitypoint.org/get-care-now).



Richard Hodge, MD  
UnityPoint Clinic  
Urgent Care - Marion

## CARE OPTIONS

UnityPoint Health has several options for healthcare to make things easier and more personal when you need care:



**Virtual Care** - available 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. for ages 2 and up



**Primary Care** - 19 locations in Eastern Iowa



**Urgent Care** - Cedar Rapids, Marion and Anamosa locations, which are open from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. weekdays and from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. on weekends



**Express Clinic** - Cedar Rapids and Hiawatha locations open daily from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m., including holidays



**Emergency Room** - St. Luke's in Cedar Rapids and Jones Regional Medical Center in Anamosa



## CULTURALLY INCLUSIVE PERSONAL CARE PRODUCTS AVAILABLE FOR PATIENTS

UnityPoint Health is committed to showing people they belong by creating a safe and welcoming space for everyone in our care. To support this effort, patients at St. Luke's have access to culturally inclusive care products for those with textured hair.

The kits include products that are better suited for protecting textured hair, which requires more moisture and a different care regimen.

Kits also include a boar bristle brush, wide tooth comb, satin head scarves, sulfate-free shampoo and moisturizing conditioner, leave-in conditioner and a coconut oil-based body lotion.

**Please ask your healthcare team if you would like one of these kits when you are a patient at St. Luke's or any UnityPoint Health hospital.**



## UNITYPOINT CLINIC WELCOMES NORTH LIBERTY FAMILY HEALTH CENTRE

North Liberty Family Health Centre (NLFHC), a family practice clinic with three physicians - Drs. Natalie Hempy, Lisa Johnson, and Sarah von Harz - and 11 staff, joined UnityPoint Clinic late last year. The clinic is now called UnityPoint Clinic Family Medicine - North Liberty. NLFHC doctors remain at 420 Community Drive, Suite 1 in North Liberty.

"UnityPoint Clinic and NLFHC share the same medical philosophy - that patients and their families matter," shared Stacey Barrett, UnityPoint Clinic vice president for clinic operations. "Both organizations are dedicated to providing high-quality care that's safe and accessible, and they strive for the best outcome for every patient, every time."

UnityPoint Clinic is part of UnityPoint Health, which has hospitals and clinics in Iowa, Illinois and Wisconsin. The North Liberty clinic is affiliated with UnityPoint Health - St. Luke's Hospital in Cedar Rapids and AbbeHealth Services, with locations in Cedar Rapids and surrounding communities.

**We invite you to find a primary care provider or specialist within UnityPoint Health by scanning the QR code.**



St. Luke's Child Protection Center (CPC) has always been a safe haven for children who have experienced physical or sexual abuse. Now these kids can count on a friendly—and furry—face to give them even more comfort and support.

Scout is the state's first facility dog trained for a therapeutic role at a child protection center. A poodle/German shorthair pointer mix, Scout belongs to CPC nurse practitioner Hope Breitbach. His training was made possible by donations to St. Luke's Foundation in memory of Laura Hotz, who passed away in 2022. She's the mother of Nikki Hotz, an investigator with the Marion police department.

Scout's job is to accompany Hope during medical exams, where he's trained to notice if a child shows signs of anxiety.

"Scout alerts me," Hope explains. "If I give him the OK, he goes to the child so he can be petted and provide a sense of calm and reassurance."

When he's not assisting with patients, Scout's available to provide comfort and support for the CPC staff as well.

**To learn about ways to give to St. Luke's Child Protection Center or St. Luke's Foundation, scan the code.**



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## One of the Nation's Best



St. Luke's Hospital is rated among the best in the country. St. Luke's was chosen from nearly 3,000 U.S. hospitals based on an objective, qualitative study by PINC AI™, a leader in healthcare information.

Top 100 Hospital recognition is the gold standard in healthcare. The extensive study analyzes hospital data, including patient safety, length of stay, survival stats, cost effectiveness and patient ratings.

### What does it mean to be a Top 100 Hospital?

- 31 percent fewer deaths than non-winning hospitals
- 9 percent fewer patients with complications
- 39 percent fewer healthcare-associated infections
- Nearly 20 percent lower inpatient expenses per discharge
- Shorter average length of stay
- Better patient experience

Our team is committed to providing the **best outcome for every patient every time**. This national recognition is a reflection of this continuous work.

*Join our team!*



St. Luke's ER  
Physicians



Scan to learn more about  
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