

# Healthy

Winter 2025

COMMUNITY

Singer,  
songwriter,  
cancer survivor

*Kelly  
Lang*



**Powers**  
HEALTH<sup>SM</sup>



**This Issue:**  
**Focus on**  
**Women's**  
**and Men's**  
**Health**

# Kelly Lang: My Life Sentence

**I**T STARTED WITH A QUIET NIGHT on the couch. Kelly Lang, then 36, was flipping through channels when an episode of "The Oprah Winfrey Show" stopped her cold. The topic? Young women under 40 with breast cancer. "I didn't want to hear that," she remembers. "I even tried to change the channel, but nothing else caught my interest."

Something nudged her to keep watching and to check herself. That night, she felt a knot under her arm. "I thought, 'Oh, well, I don't know what this feels like. I'm probably too young.'"

At her next appointment, even her doctor brushed it off. But the knot stayed. Eight months later, the pain returned, and this time Kelly pushed for more answers. After an ultrasound and mammogram showed nothing, she asked the technician to press harder. The room went quiet. "Her face just dropped," Kelly recalls. A biopsy confirmed the news she had feared: breast cancer, which already spread to her lymph nodes.

That day, Kelly's journey began — one she now calls not a death sentence, but her "life sentence."

## **How did you decide on treatment?**

Kelly was never one to follow the crowd. "My doctors recommended a double mastectomy, but I turned that down immediately. It felt too aggressive for me." Instead, she chose a lumpectomy.

That decision wasn't popular, and chemo proved grueling. "The chemo, to me, was more brutal than the cancer itself." When it began threatening her ability to paint, sing and write, she stopped early. She also gave up tamoxifen within three

months. "The bone pain, the weight gain, the depression — it just wasn't for me."

Instead, she pursued hormone replacement therapy — a choice that raised eyebrows then, but which, two decades later, has been reassessed by research. "I'm not saying my way is the highway. I'm saying it was my way."

## **Did you doubt your choices?**

Yes, especially when doctors pushed back. "They were like, 'Kelly, we're trying to keep you alive.'" But

her inner voice was stronger. "It was almost like there was a supernatural power within me that knew the right thing for me."

Prayer became her anchor. "I prayed constantly, and those prayers gave me peace about following my instincts."

## **What about your husband, TG?**

Kelly says cancer didn't just happen to her — it happened to both of them. TG agrees: "When Kelly was diagnosed with cancer, I had cancer, too, with her."

He didn't feel the physical pain, but he carried the weight of fear and uncertainty. "In the quiet times was when it would get bad. Late at night, my mind would drift to what-if."

But cancer also gave them perspective. "It made us live life larger," TG says. "We wanted to make sure we got everything in our lives that we wanted to do, because you never know when life's going to throw you a curveball."

## **How did you cope together?**

Faith, community and humor became their lifelines. Friends brought meals, prayers and laughter. Even her wig became a running joke. "One time at the YMCA sauna, I smelled this horrible smell — and it



**“You’re stronger than you think, and you’re worth fighting for.”**

was my wig burning!”

Kelly’s dear friend Olivia Newton-John also inspired her with positivity and grace, even writing the foreword to her book, *I’m Not Going Anywhere*.

#### **What advice do you have for women?**

Kelly says one tool is always within reach: self-exams. “They’re free. Lather up in the shower — soap makes things slicker and easier to find.”

If you discover something, don’t panic — most lumps turn out to be nothing. But catching cancer early can be lifesaving. “If I can survive it — and I’m a wimp — anybody can.”



#### **What’s your message of hope?**

Doctors once told Kelly to record goodbye videos for her children. She refused. “This is not the end of the road. It could be just the beginning.”

Now, more than 20 years later, she looks back at cancer as her “life sentence.” One that made the sky bluer, the grass greener and every day more meaningful.

“If you’re facing this diagnosis now, please know — you’re stronger than you think, and you’re worth fighting for.” ■

## **Spotlight on Screening**

**Time passes quickly.** Getting a yearly mammogram is essential to staying on top of your breast health.

Studies prove that early detection saves lives. Mammograms can uncover irregularities years before physical symptoms appear, which leads to timely treatment and better outcomes.

The Women’s Care team at Powers Health is committed to the early detection and treatment of breast cancer. It offers advanced technology and care that has earned national accreditations for breast imaging, mammography, stereotactic breast biopsy, breast ultrasound and ultrasound guided breast biopsy.

The American College of Radiology and the National Accreditation Program of Breast Centers have determined Powers Health Women’s Services meet their high standards to be called Breast Imaging Centers of Excellence.

Our fellowship-trained, dedicated breast radiologists and navigators provide compassionate care, treating each patient with dignity and respect.

With six locations across Northwest Indiana, our experts guide you through the process with compassion so you can receive the reassurance you need.

In the event a mammogram is abnormal, a nurse navigator will help guide a patient through diagnosis, treatment and beyond. At any time, patients and their family members may access the navigation program, which is a free, confidential service of Powers Health. ■

**Powers Health offers Women’s Services locations in Crown Point, East Chicago, Hobart, Munster, St. John and Valparaiso. A physician order is required for a mammogram. For more information, visit [PowersHealth.org/mammogram-HC-winter25](http://PowersHealth.org/mammogram-HC-winter25).**

# Healthy Holiday Eating

**Enjoy the Season  
Without Sacrificing  
Your Health**

**T**HE HOLIDAYS ARE filled with joy, tradition and — let's be honest — temptation. Between family gatherings, office potlucks and endless dessert trays, it's easy to let healthy habits slide. But enjoying the season doesn't have to mean giving up on your health goals.

In fact, with a few mindful choices, you can savor your favorite holiday dishes and still support your overall well-being.

## 1. Balance Over Restriction

Experts agree: You don't have to avoid holiday favorites — you just have to approach them with balance. The key is portion control and intentional eating. Choose smaller servings of rich foods, and focus on enjoying each bite. Eating slowly gives your body time to register fullness, which helps prevent overeating.

Planning ahead also makes a difference. Instead of skipping meals to "save up" for a big dinner, aim to eat balanced, nourishing meals throughout the day. This keeps blood sugar steady and reduces the urge to overindulge later.

## 2. Rethink the Plate

Holiday dishes tend to be heavy on carbs and fats — and low on fiber and nutrients. Try filling half your plate with vegetables first. Roasted carrots, green beans or winter squash offer flavor and color without loading on calories or sodium.

For main dishes, opt for lean proteins, such as turkey, chicken or fish, and limit fried or creamy items. When it comes to sides, choose options with fewer processed ingredients or added sugars. Small swaps — like using olive oil instead of butter or Greek yogurt in place of sour cream — can make a dish healthier without sacrificing flavor.

## 3. Drink Smart

Festive drinks and cocktails often come with hidden calories. Eggnog, punches and sweetened ciders can add up fast. Try alternating with water or unsweetened beverages, and keep alcohol intake moderate.

Hydration is especially important during the holidays. Drinking water before and during meals can help manage appetite and support digestion.



## 4. Stay Active, Stay Energized

Physical activity is often the first habit to get lost during the busy holiday season, but even small efforts count. A brisk walk after dinner, a quick stretch in the morning or playing outside with family can improve energy levels and help balance blood sugar.

Exercise also benefits your mental health — something we all need during the hectic holiday rush.

## 5. Celebrate Without Guilt

Healthy eating during the holidays doesn't mean giving up joy — it means feeling good throughout the season and beyond. By making intentional food choices, staying active and using the nutrition calculator to guide smarter cooking decisions, you can enjoy everything the holidays have to offer — without the regret.

## 6. Use the Nutrition Calculator to Lighten Up Your Favorites

Whether you're making a traditional family recipe or experimenting with something new, a nutrition calculator can help you tweak ingredients to improve the health of your dish. Reducing added sugar, lowering sodium and swapping in whole grains are just a few changes that can make a big difference without sacrificing flavor.

Scan this QR Code and enter your holiday recipes into the calculator included in this article to see how small ingredient adjustments can create healthier versions of your seasonal favorites. ■



**Sources:** Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), National Institutes of Health (NIH), American Heart Association, Cleveland Clinic, Mayo Clinic, Johns Hopkins Medicine

# The Power of Early Detection

## What Every Woman (and Man) Should Know

**EARLY DETECTION REMAINS** the most effective strategy in reducing breast cancer mortality. Mammograms are the best tool for finding breast cancer early — often before there are symptoms — which makes treatment more successful.

### Why Mammograms Are Crucial

Mammography, an X-ray of the breast, is considered the gold standard for routine screening. Women aged 45-54 at average risk should get a mammogram every year. Some organizations recommend beginning as early as age 40, especially for women who may be at higher risk. Starting earlier is particularly important for Black women, who often develop breast cancer at younger ages and may be diagnosed at more advanced stages. Consistent, routine mammograms remain the most effective method for detecting breast cancer early.

Advanced imaging like 3D tomosynthesis, increasingly available at major health centers, can improve detection in dense breast tissue and reduce the likelihood of false positives.

While breast cancer overwhelmingly affects women, men also have breast tissue and are at risk of developing breast cancer. Men need to not only know that they can and do get breast cancer — but also that they must be proactive about reporting any lumps, inflammation or unusual changes to their doctors.

### Spotting the Early Signs

Even with regular mammograms, personal awareness is key. Any breast changes — such as a lump, swelling, skin

dimpling, nipple discharge or pain — should be brought to a healthcare provider's attention. While most changes are not cancer, it's essential to follow up promptly. Providers can help determine whether additional testing is needed and guide you through appropriate next steps.

### Overcoming Barriers to Screening

Despite clear guidelines, many women face obstacles to getting screened. Factors such as income, transportation, insurance status and access to healthcare can delay or prevent routine mammograms. Fortunately, programs exist to help. For example, national initiatives offer free or low-cost mammograms to eligible women, making this lifesaving screening more accessible.

### A Lifesaving Habit

Studies show that regular screenings can lower breast cancer mortality by as much as 30-40%. Pairing mammograms with self-awareness and timely follow-ups can help catch breast cancer early, when treatment is most effective.

While recommendations may evolve, one fact stays the same: Early detection saves lives. Whether you're scheduling your first mammogram or keeping up with annual exams, make breast health a priority. Don't wait — your future self will thank you. ■

To schedule a mammogram with Powers Health, call 800-809-9828.

**Sources:** Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), National Institutes of Health (NIH), American Heart Association, Cleveland Clinic, Mayo Clinic, Johns Hopkins Medicine, Breast Cancer Research Foundation

# No. 1 IN INDIANA

## Community Hospital earns top spot on list of 2025-26 Best Hospitals

by Mary Fetsch

**P**OWERS HEALTH'S Community Hospital in Munster has been named a 2025-26 Best Hospital by U.S. News & World Report.

The hospital ranked No. 1 in Indiana. This year, U.S. News & World Report announced 504 Best Regional Hospitals across 49 states and 95 metro areas that have demonstrated superior medical outcomes. Community Hospital also ranked No. 11 in the Chicago metro area and received 13 high-performing ratings in the report.

"This recognition by U.S. News & World Report honors the commitment of our team members, who follow the highest standards of care for our patients every day," Community Hospital CEO Randy Neiswonger said. "Our goal is to ensure that every patient receives the best possible care and leaves our hospital with improved health and better quality of life."

**"Our goal is to ensure that every patient receives the best possible care."**

U.S. News & World Report evaluated more than 4,400 hospitals across 15 adult specialties and 22 procedures and conditions; only 13% of evaluated hospitals earned a Best Hospitals designation.

"For more than three decades, U.S. News has been an invaluable guide for patients," said Ben Harder, the news outlet's managing editor and chief of Health Analysis. "With a 'Best Hospital' recognition, Americans, in consultation with their medical providers, can confidently choose a regional hospital known for providing superior care for their specific illness or condition."



To determine the Best Hospitals, U.S. News analyzed each hospital's performance based on objective measures, such as risk-adjusted mortality rates, preventable complications and level of nursing care. The Best Hospitals Specialty rankings methodology and Procedures & Conditions ratings methodology measure patient outcomes using data from over 800 million records of patient care. ■

For more information about the award-winning care at the hospitals of Powers Health – Community Hospital in Munster, St. Catherine Hospital in East Chicago, St. Mary Medical Center in Hobart and Powers Health Rehabilitation Center in Crown Point – visit [PowersHealth.org/hospitals-HC-winter25](http://PowersHealth.org/hospitals-HC-winter25).

# Powers Health, Northwest Cancer Centers collaborate on cancer care hub

by Vanessa Negrete

**R**ESIDENTS IN Northwest Indiana have a new regional destination for cancer-related treatment and support.

Powers Health and Northwest Cancer Centers recently opened their 71,000-square-foot Cancer Care Center at 10191 Broadway in Crown Point.

The two respected healthcare organizations partnered on the project to provide Northwest Indiana residents a multitude of services under one roof for convenient and efficient access to oncology care.

“This project is an example of the possibilities that exist when innovation intersects with collaboration,” said Donald P. Fesko, president and CEO of Powers Health. “Northwest Indiana residents will benefit from having convenient access to personalized cancer treatment just minutes from home.”

Powers Health occupies the first floor, and Northwest Cancer Centers occupies the second floor. The third floor is shared space. Patients will experience seamless care as they undergo testing and receive oncology treatments and therapies.

“Northwest Cancer Centers and Powers Health have a shared vision to deliver vital treatment and compassionate care to patients who are facing cancer,” said Mohamad Kassar, MD, president and CEO of Northwest Cancer Centers.

Key features include a CT simulation room and the TrueBeam linear accelerator. In the CT simulation room, radiation therapists perform a “mapping session” to generate a 3D map used to precisely define a patient’s radiation treatment. The TrueBeam linear accelerator combines advanced imaging with radiation treatment delivery for precision in targeting tumors to minimize damage to healthy tissue.

## The Cancer Care Center also offers the following:

- Advanced testing and diagnostic services, including PET CT imaging
- Clinical trials
- Healing garden with walking paths



- Infusion therapy
- Laboratory
- Nurse navigation
- Oncology prescription dispensing
- Radiation therapy
- Social services
- Therapy services

With an on-site multidisciplinary clinic to foster collaboration, patients will meet with providers from radiation oncology, medical oncology and surgical oncology in a single visit for a personalized treatment plan. As part of their holistic visit, patients also may meet with supportive care professionals from psychosocial oncology, oncology rehabilitation and nutrition.

The center also offers integrative medicine, which combines conventional treatments with therapies such as acupuncture and massage to address patients’ physical, mental and emotional needs. Nurse navigators and social workers support patients by coordinating interdisciplinary care, addressing barriers and offering emotional support. Our cancer research team contributes to studies that improve prevention, treatment and survivorship outcomes. ■

For more information about Powers Health, visit [PowersHealth.org/HC-winter25](https://PowersHealth.org/HC-winter25). For more information about Northwest Cancer Centers, visit [nccindiana.com](https://nccindiana.com).

# Screenings save lives

Colonoscopy may be  
'inconvenient' but  
necessary

by Vanessa Negrete

**N**ALPARAISO RESIDENT NICK NEAL has a message for anyone delaying their colonoscopy: make the appointment.

"I totally get it – it's inconvenient, it's uncomfortable," he said. "But for the minor inconvenience it causes, the potential downside is too high of a risk."

Nick was diagnosed with colorectal cancer in March, underwent treatment and has a good prognosis because the cancer was caught early.

Nick, who works in the fire suppression industry, keeps up on maintenance and regular checks for his house and cars, so he figured he should treat his body the same way.

When he approached age 45, he talked with his primary care physician about a colonoscopy referral, knowing medical experts lowered the recommended colorectal cancer screening age from 50 to 45 after an uptick in deaths in younger people.

"I had no symptoms, no urgency," Nick said.

He made an appointment with Powers Health Medical Group gastroenterologist Mark Fesenmyer, MD, for a colonoscopy.

"They found four polyps," Nick said. "Three were non-issues, but one was of pretty serious concern. Dr. Fesenmyer's bedside manner and professionalism and his team were very good."

They cautioned that biopsy findings could take a week or longer, but Nick learned the results two days later.

Over a span of two weeks, he turned 45, underwent a colonoscopy and was diagnosed with cancer. It was caught at Stage T1/T2, which is among the earliest stages of colorectal cancer. Further scans and testing showed no signs of other cancer in his body.

Nick underwent surgery on May 5 to have the cancer removed. For three months, as his body healed from surgery, waste was diverted to an ileostomy bag. By July, he was free of the temporary bag.

"I'm feeling good now," he said. "There was no cancer beyond the resection."

The flurry of medical appointments and testing has waned, and his prognosis is favorable.

"He is doing well and is being closely monitored with follow-up testing," Fesenmyer said. "Everything has been coming back within range."

By October, Nick had returned to some light landscaping and other projects around his house.

Nick, who has no family history of colorectal cancer, is grateful for his family's support and for his medical team's guidance. He hopes others will use his experience as motivation to stay on top of their health tests.

"Definitely get your regular checks," Nick said. "I know people put them off, but try your best not to."

Colon cancer is the third most common type of cancer in both women and men. Most patients do not experience symptoms early on, when the cancer is most treatable.

"If a patient has symptoms that might suggest colon cancer, such as bleeding, a change in the shape or size



**Above:** Nick Neal, 45, is recovering well after a colonoscopy revealed he had colorectal cancer. Nick had no family history of the disease and no symptoms. He encourages others to undergo recommended screenings to catch problems early and help maintain good health.

of their stool, change in the frequency of bowel movements, abdominal pain or bloating, they need to speak with their physician,” Fesenmyer said.

A stool test and a colonoscopy are the two ways to screen for colorectal cancer. A colonoscopy is the best test for average-risk patients and the only option for those who have an elevated risk, Fesenmyer said.

Polyps, which are precancerous mole-like growths on the lining of the colon, can be removed during the colonoscopy and biopsied. If no polyps are found and the patient’s risk of developing colon cancer is average, the next screening can wait for 10 years.

The second screening option for those with an average risk of colon/colorectal cancer is a stool test called Cologuard.

“This test looks for certain DNA markers and for blood in the stool that can indicate someone has a polyp or cancer in the colon,” Fesenmyer said. “If the Cologuard test returns positive, a colonoscopy is required for further examination.”

Factors that increase colorectal cancer risk include eating meats that are grilled, broiled or fried; a family history of the disease; smoking; consuming a diet high in red meat and processed meats; drinking alcohol; and being overweight or obese. ■

For more information about gastroenterology at Powers Health, visit [PowersHealth.org/digestive-health-HC-winter25](https://PowersHealth.org/digestive-health-HC-winter25).

# Shedding more than 100 pounds

Bariatric patient hopes his story will help others live a healthier life

by Kerry Erickson

**A**FTER LOSING MORE than 100 pounds through bariatric surgery at Powers Health, Deonte Mackie had one regret. “I wish I had done it years earlier. That has been my only regret throughout this journey,” the 37-year-old Hammond resident said. Deonte is sharing his story in the hopes that it could help at least one person live a healthier life.

Deonte, who had battled his weight since he was in middle school, had tried “literally everything,” but the scale was like a yo-yo. “I felt like losing weight and keeping it off was not something I could control with diet and exercise. There’s only so much you can do on your own,” he said.

In 2017, his primary care physician noticed his weight fluctuated significantly between visits. The doctor asked if he was actively trying to lose weight, and Deonte told him of his struggles with the scale despite eating right and exercising. The doctor asked him if he ever considered bariatric surgery.

“I used to think if you need surgery to lose weight that you’re not serious about it ... that you’re looking for an easy way out,” he said. “In hindsight, it is the stupidest thing to say no to a surgery that is going to help you in the long run.”

The turning point for him was when he experienced a lot of stress in his life. “I thought I was going to have a stroke,” said Deonte, who works while earning his physics degree at Purdue University Northwest. That was the moment he made an appointment with a Powers Health bariatric physician.

At his highest weight, Deonte was 330 pounds. After completing the two-week pre-surgical diet through Powers Health Bariatric Services, he weighed 307 and was ready for his sleeve gastrectomy on June 3, 2024, with Dr. Paul Stanish. Deonte’s weight one year after the surgery was 213, and by September, the scale dipped below 200 pounds. This was an accomplishment he said he never could have reached on his own.

“From my dietitian to my surgeon to every person in the Powers Health office, everyone was so helpful, so encouraging,” he said.

The number on the scale is not the only number to shrink for Deonte. His clothing size went from 52 to 36.

Over the years, he had saved a favorite shirt and pants in the hopes he would one day be able to wear them. “After I had lost the weight, I dug up that outfit and tried it on. I was almost in tears because they fit! They were even big on me!”

The benefits of his weight loss did not stop there.



Deonte is off one of his blood pressure medications and expects to be off the other two soon. His sleep apnea is resolving, he no longer suffers from acid reflux, and he can trek up the stairs at college, a task that used to leave him out of breath.

Dr. Stanish, who has been performing bariatric surgeries since 1998, praised Deonte's weight-loss success following his gastrectomy.

"He has done tremendously well post-surgery. An ideal patient, like Deonte, knows surgery is an important, effective weight-loss tool, but it is not a guarantee. Patients still have to prioritize their health. If they play by the rules, they will change their life," the Powers Health surgeon said. "Almost every week, I'll see patients while at Costco or somewhere else in the community, sometimes years after their surgery, and they will cry talking about how their health and quality of life were vastly improved since having the procedure."

In his lighter body, Deonte enjoys exercising, staying on track with his diet and getting creative in the kitchen to make healthier, tastier meals. He wants

**Left:** Deonte Mackie is seen in one of his "before" photos. Before undergoing bariatric surgery at Powers Health, he weighed more than 300 pounds. His weight now is just under 200.

**Above:** Deonte shares a moment with his Powers Health bariatric surgeon, Dr. Paul Stanish, at Community Hospital in Munster.

others considering bariatric surgery to know the procedure will help them live their best life.

"Don't be afraid. Do a lot of research. Listen to your doctors," he said. "This surgery is a tool that will change your life for the better." ■

**Powers Health offers bariatric surgery for people who find lifestyle changes and medical weight-loss treatment ineffective on their own. With board-certified bariatric surgeons among its team of healthcare professionals, the comprehensive bariatric surgery program has earned accreditation based on high standards of quality and successful outcomes.**

**For more information about Bariatric Medicine and Weight Management Services at Powers Health, visit [PowersHealth.org/bariatrics-HC-winter25](http://PowersHealth.org/bariatrics-HC-winter25).**



# Back in the swing of things

St. John man shares his take on treatment through Dizzy & Balance Therapy Services

by Karin Saltanovitz

**A**LITTLE OVER A YEAR AGO, Jim Schumann started feeling dizzy and couldn't stay on his feet. At 6 foot, 7 inches tall, falling proved to have serious consequences for the 82-year-old, including a brain bleed and a shoulder injury requiring surgery.

When Jim could no longer care for himself and his wife, he knew he needed help. He was referred by his cardiologist to Dizzy & Balance Therapy Services at the Community Hospital Outpatient Center in St. John.

"I was feeling a little rocky and a lot of things became difficult to do," Jim said. "Within 15 minutes of my first visit, they knew what my problem was and started treatment. Son of a gun, about five minutes later, I started feeling better."

Jim was diagnosed with benign paroxysmal positional vertigo (BPPV). This condition, which usually presents in one ear at a time, is caused by tiny calcium crystals dislodging in the inner ear, creating a false sense of spinning dizziness or vertigo. Almost any movement made Jim dizzy.

In Jim's case, the loose crystals were present in both



**Left:** Jim Schumann plays golf after being successfully treated by Dizzy & Balance Therapy Services staff at the Community Hospital Outpatient Center in St. John.

**Above:** Jim Schumann spends time on the golf course with his family.

ears, which explains a lot of his symptoms, his therapist, Lisa Sheehan, said.

“The older you are, most commonly 65-plus, the higher the likelihood of BPPV. Patients with chronic, systemic conditions, like diabetes and high blood pressure, tend to be at higher risk. A new study also has shown a correlation with low vitamin D levels,” said Lisa, a clinical specialist.

**“Our staff recognizes that every patient has unique needs, and we perform specific testing to best determine the cause of his or her dizziness and balance issues.”**

She explained the crystals have a specific function. “They give your brain information about the position of your head and the speed at which you move. It only becomes a problem when they become loose in the semi-circular canals,” she said.

Vestibular therapy is a type of physical or occupational therapy that focuses on the system responsible for our sense of balance and spatial orientation. The vestibular system is located in the inner ear and is crucial for a wide range of activities, from walking and running to driving and playing sports.

When the vestibular system is damaged or not functioning properly, a wide range of symptoms may result, including dizziness, vertigo, nausea and

balance problems. These symptoms are often debilitating and will significantly affect a person’s quality of life.

“Our staff recognizes that every patient has unique needs, and we perform specific testing to best determine the cause of his or her dizziness and balance issues,” said Veronica Cohen, a physical therapist and manager of Therapy Services for Powers Health. “We work with the patient’s goals to develop a cohesive plan of care that will treat the symptoms based on the latest research and standards of practice in our fields.”

The Dizzy & Balance Therapy Services team at the Community Hospital Outpatient Center in St. John incorporates advanced diagnostic and rehabilitative balance equipment to treat specific conditions and related symptoms.

Patients who may benefit include those who experience the following:

- Spinning or a sense of movement
- Feeling of floating
- Being woozy or feeling heavy-headed
- Feeling faint or light-headed
- Unsteadiness or loss of balance
- Falls

During therapy with Lisa, Jim worked on positional maneuvers to clear the vertigo. Within about six visits, the vertigo was remedied, and he moved on to strength training to improve his balance and gait.

Jim continued treatment twice a week for six weeks.

“I was paired with Lisa during every appointment, and I really liked that consistency,” he said. “I’ve been going to therapists for 20 years, for many different reasons, but I have never had such immediate and satisfying results.”

His daughter, Cathy Tinsley, said Dizzy & Balance Therapy Services gave her dad his life back. “It was life-changing for him to go from being scared to take a few steps to being back on the golf course.”

Jim agrees. “My quality of life has improved a lot,” he said. “I almost broke 90 the other day on the golf course, and at my age, that’s pretty good!” ■

**If frequent dizziness and balance issues are a concern, talk with your healthcare provider. For more information about Therapy Services at Powers Health, visit [PowersHealth.org/dizzy-HC-winter25](http://PowersHealth.org/dizzy-HC-winter25).**

# Ho, ho, hum ...



Understanding  
the Holiday Blues

\* by Karin Saltanovitz

IT IS SUPPOSED TO BE THE happiest time of the year, but for some the season of merriment becomes a season of misery with a dizzying array of demands, anxiety triggers and depression – a catalyst for the holiday blues. It is important to be cognizant of your physical and mental well-being, and there are things you can do to help minimize the stress that comes with the holidays.

“For anyone struggling this time of year, I would normally suggest things like using coping techniques, self-care, and reaching out for support,” says Stephane Degraff, MD, a board-certified psychiatrist with Powers

Health Behavioral Health Services. “Being mindful of your thoughts, emotions and actions are important to ensure you are taking care of yourself.”

Dr. Degraff shares advice for managing your mental health through holidays.

**Make a connection.** Healthy relationships with friends and family members increase the happiness and excitement of the holidays. If you are feeling the urge to isolate and withdraw from everyone, instead reach out to someone by phone, video chat or email. Look for support from a trusted source – whether a friend, family member, clergy, or through a support group. People with a mental health condition, such as anxiety or depression, may feel holiday stress more



intensely than others do. With mental health conditions in mind, Seasonal Affective Disorder, which is a type of depression, may exacerbate feelings of sadness this time of year.

**Limit alcohol.** Do not fall into the trap of alcohol or substance misuse. Increasing alcohol/substance intake not only increases the possibility of problematic behavior, it impairs your ability to handle stress in a healthy manner. The more often you utilize something like alcohol as a coping skill, the more you are putting yourself at risk of developing a habit, addiction, or dependence.

## **“Being mindful of your thoughts, emotions and actions are important to ensure you are taking care of yourself.”**

**Be smart with your money.** Do not feel badly if you cannot spend large amounts of money on gifts or activities for the holidays. This type of guilt causes a significant number of Americans to go into debt each year. The excitement of expensive gifts lasts a few moments, but the accompanying bills can last significantly longer.

**Start new traditions.** Sometimes we have an idealistic image of what the holidays should be, and it does not always work out that way. Be open to new experiences. Create a baking competition between friends or relatives. Have a holiday decorating contest and see who can make the best decorations out of non-conventional items. Build snowpeople and see who can make the most elaborate, funny or life-like.

**Volunteer.** If you find yourself with extra time and/or money, look for ways to bring cheer to others who are less fortunate. By trying to focus on ways to

show love and have fun with the people we care about rather than allowing ourselves to focus on things or people who are missing, we teach our brain to look at things from a healthier perspective.

**Set aside differences.** No matter anyone's political views, there has been an increase in strain and tension due to the climate in our country. Heightened emotions can unfortunately fuel family conflict.

**Remember, this too shall pass.** The worst periods we go through do not last. They stand out in our mind because we have strong emotions tied to them; however in reality, once we get through that time, we can look back and see that it did not truly last as long as it felt.

**Seek professional help.** One thing to consider is to what extent stress or depression is affecting you. If you find yourself unable to handle multiple aspects of daily life such as work, childcare, relationships, and hygiene, it becomes a concern that you may be experiencing more than “Holiday Blues.” Other signs to watch for include a significant change in mood, change in sleeping pattern, change in appetite, and increase in substance use. If you are having thoughts of suicide or self-harm, professional help is incredibly important. ■

The Behavioral Health Services team at Powers Health helps people connect with valuable resources to strike a better balance at home and in the community. To learn more, call 219-392-7466.

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE



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Kelly Lang



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Colonoscopy

# Mental Health Awareness: Your Mental Health Matters

**THIS IS YOUR REMINDER** that taking care of your mental well-being is just as important as taking care of your physical health. Mental illnesses are common and treatable — and yet many people still feel uncomfortable asking for help.

More than one in five adults in the United States experience a mental illness each year. Conditions like depression and anxiety can affect mood, sleep, energy and relationships — and they can also influence heart health, immune function and the ability to manage chronic conditions.

### Taking care of your mind is not a luxury – it's a necessity.

Mental health isn't just about the absence of illness. It also means being able to handle life's stressors, maintain supportive relationships and make healthy decisions. When mental health suffers, so can physical health.

Stress, in particular, has far-reaching effects. Long-term stress may contribute to high blood pressure, raise the risk for heart disease and stroke and interfere with healthy habits like sleep and exercise. That's why learning how to manage stress and recognize the signs of mental health struggles is essential.



Our focus on mental health encourages individuals to take small, meaningful steps: reach out to someone you trust, speak with a healthcare provider, move your body regularly, get enough sleep and give yourself permission to rest. Whether it's through mindfulness, therapy or support groups, there are effective tools available to help improve mental well-being.

Taking care of your mind is not a luxury — it's a necessity. Whether you're managing day-to-day stress or facing a deeper challenge, help is available. Mental health deserves attention year-round. ■

For more information, visit [PowersHealth.org/mental-health-HC-winter25](https://PowersHealth.org/mental-health-HC-winter25).

**Sources:** Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), National Institutes of Health (NIH), American Heart Association, Cleveland Clinic, Mayo Clinic, Johns Hopkins Medicine