It Only Takes a Minute
Putting a Stop to Summer’s Silent Killer

A CURE FOR GOOD ZZZ’S
New Sleep Apnea Procedure Aims to Offer a Better Night’s Rest

A WEEK IN THE LIFE OF A SPORTS DIETITIAN
Nutrition Guru Dishes on How to Eat Like an Athlete

UNPLUGGED
Here’s How to Take a Time-Out From Your Screen
IN THIS ISSUE

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Drowning is the No.1 cause of injury-related death for children under the age of 4. Parents whose children survived near-drownings warn that it only takes seconds for tragedy to strike.
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SLEEPLESS NO MORE
Memorial Hermann affiliated physicians are the first in Houston to perform a groundbreaking procedure that is helping many secure the best shuteye they’ve had in years.
For more than a century, Memorial Hermann has been guided by its commitment to serve our community with pride and distinction, helping to provide healing and compassionate care to our friends, families and neighbors who entrust us with their lives.

But it’s not enough to simply be here for those who need us. We believe it is our moral imperative to make Greater Houston a healthier and safer place to live for us all.

That is what we mean by “Beyond.” As an organization dedicated to helping create a healthier tomorrow for us all, we must go beyond the traditional scope of a health system to focus on advancing the health of our community outside the four walls of our hospitals and facilities. We must go beyond for the people we serve, to care for them the way we would want to be treated: with respect, dignity, compassion and expertise. We must go beyond the ordinary to deliver extraordinary patient care experiences they can find nowhere else.

This magazine is an extension of our commitment to care for people throughout every stage of their health journey – from the moment they first make contact with us to the moment they are discharged home, and beyond. This magazine captures those moments and highlights examples of our employees and affiliated physicians going the extra mile to provide compassionate care, advance health through research and community outreach, and utilize their expertise to foster wellness throughout Greater Houston.

It is our obligation – and our privilege – to equip our community with the necessary education and injury prevention tools to prevent tragedy before it occurs.

This is why – for the inaugural edition of Beyond magazine – we have decided to dedicate the cover story to a very serious issue afflicting our community: drownings.

Drownings are the leading cause of death among children under the age of 4 years old. Hundreds of children every single year lose their lives in drowning incidents – many of them preventable. As home to one of the busiest Level I trauma centers in the nation, we all too often bear witness to these heartbreaking losses. As caregivers, and more importantly, as human beings, we are compelled to advocate for the safety of the children in our community, to help make this a better and safer place for them to grow and thrive.

We are honored to be a part of Greater Houston’s story and we are grateful for the opportunity to share our stories with you. Thank you for allowing us to serve this community and go above and beyond every day.

Sincerely,

Chuck Stokes
President and CEO
Memorial Hermann Health System
As a sports dietitian for Memorial Hermann IRONMAN Sports Medicine Institute, Brett Singer might go from meetings to a gym to a soccer field sideline on any given day. Here’s a typical week in Singer’s life.

MONDAY: FREQUENT FLYER
Singer’s job takes him on the road – a lot. He starts his week in Chicago for a fellowship training event at the Gatorade Sports Science Institute (GSSI), which uses nutrition and hydration science to help athletes achieve peak performance.

Through GSSI, where he’s a consulting dietitian, he helps coaches and players in the NBA’s minor league. Singer, who came to Memorial Hermann in 2010, has been busy building a national reputation for the health system. He juggles 30 to 50 speaking engagements per year: one week, a coaches’ conference in Indianapolis, where he talks about fueling high school athletes in the age of fast food. The next week, he might be invited to Washington, D.C., to deliver a talk on nutrition for injury recovery.

With Singer, Memorial Hermann has become a training ground for aspiring dietitians who want to break into the competitive field of collegiate and professional-level sports nutrition.
TUESDAY: DYNAMO PRACTICE

When Singer is back in Houston, you can find him at a training session with the Houston Dynamo, the city’s professional men’s soccer team.

As the Dynamo’s dietitian, Singer helps shape the menu for team meals (today’s plate: fish with roasted sweet potatoes and asparagus). And he attends practices regularly, making sure players stay properly fueled for peak competition.

In June 2019, he spent extra time advising the athletes on how to stay hydrated in hot weather. Soccer is actually the sport that first attracted Singer to the field of nutrition. As a teenager, he played soccer for Klein High School and wanted to figure out the secret sauce to up his game.

“I was pretty light my freshman and sophomore year,” he said. “I wanted to gain weight to be more competitive in soccer, so I started exercising and working out more.”

He researched nutrition and how it affected muscle growth, and soon Singer was studying every book, magazine and nutrition website he could get his hands on.

Two nutrition degrees later, Singer says he is fortunate to fulfill his lifelong dream of becoming a sports dietitian here in his hometown.

WEDNESDAY: THE THREE R’S

It’s not just the pros that get his attention. Singer also dedicates his time to counseling collegiate athletes and high school sports stars on how to perfect their diets to maximize their performance.

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He helps his colleague, dietitian Christina Curry, educate athletes at Houston Baptist University on navigating the college cafeteria and he and his team work with athletes at Katy Tompkins High School.

His advice varies on the level of performance, but typically Singer sticks to the three R’s of sports nutrition: repair with protein, replenish with carbs and rehydrate with water or a sports drink.

THURSDAY: ONE-ON-ONE

One of the most rewarding aspects of his job, Singer says, is helping everyday athletes achieve optimum health. People like Byron Shelton, a 33-year-old biology teacher who has lost 30 pounds since January and wants Singer’s advice on keeping the momentum going.

In a tank top that shows off his tattoos, Shelton looks pretty fit already, but he wants to reduce his body fat composition. He’s working out twice a day, eating a repetitive diet of mostly beef and chicken – and feeling hungry most of the time.

“How’s your energy been during your workouts?” Singer asks, poring over his client’s food log.

“I’ve been pretty tired,” Shelton admits.

For the next hour, they talk about Shelton’s diet and exercise and why his weight loss has plateaued. Singer has a theory: Shelton’s diet is extremely high in protein, but it’s pretty low in carbohydrates.

“I think we should probably up your carbs, because that is going to be your fuel source for exercise,” Singer says. “One of my hopes with that is you’ll have more energy and you might wind up benefiting from those workouts a little more.”

Singer encourages Shelton to stick with it, even if the bump in carbs results in a bit of initial weight gain.

“In the end,” he says, “if you’re at a caloric deficit you’ll lose weight – wherever it comes from.”

FRIDAY: HOMEWORK

When he’s not on the road or meeting with clients, Singer finds himself working with players, preparing presentations or crunching numbers to calculate a midfielder’s ideal calorie intake.

“The opportunities I have now, I couldn’t have fathomed having five years ago,” he says. “That just would not have been on my radar.”

From assisting elite athletes to helping high school biology teachers master the science of building muscle, Singer is always excited to get people across their personal finish lines.

“Context is key with nutrition – there is no perfect diet that fits everyone’s needs,” he says. “I love helping people find success as they discover what works for them.”
As Andrew Colburn, patient care technician, walks the halls of the observation unit at Memorial Hermann Memorial City Medical Center each week, he does so with the goal of providing the best patient care experiences possible.

He doesn’t do it for the praise: he simply enjoys caring for people. It’s part of the reason why he sought a career in health care.

“When I was very young, my grandmother had brain cancer. When I was 15 years old, one of my uncles who was a nonsmoker died from lung cancer. And three years later, another uncle died of skin cancer, so those experiences are what pushed me to want to work in health care. Working in this industry has made me more vigilant, so I recognize warning signs of possible underlying medical issues within my own family now, as well.”

He joined Memorial Hermann three years ago and said he has been fortunate to be at the bedside of patients and put his knowledge into action every day since. His manner of going above and beyond for patients has not only attracted the attention of those for whom he is caring, but also his colleagues who nominated him for Memorial Hermann’s You Got Caught Caring campaign, which allows colleagues to recognize their peers who help create exceptional patient care experiences.

“If you look up ‘compassion’ in the dictionary, Andrew’s picture should be there,” a colleague wrote in a nomination form recognizing Colburn for his unique talents for extreme empathy.

“Andrew cared for an older patient with advanced dementia whose spouse was at the bedside. The patient was very active and needed continual redirection. Andrew was kind, gentle and compassionate and cared for this patient as if he were caring for his own grandparent. He also gave the patient’s spouse a break from caregiving so they could talk with their loved ones’ care team. Andrew was respectful and ensured the patient’s safety throughout the day. Honestly, I’d like to be this gentle and patient in all areas of my life, beyond just while at work. Memorial Hermann is so lucky to have someone like Andrew.”
The Underwater Epidemic

These Toddlers Nearly Died From Drowning. Now Their Parents are Speaking Out to Save Other Kids From a Similar Fate.
Twenty seconds. That’s how long it takes for a child to drown, according to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. That’s less time than the length of the latest quirky car insurance commercial playing endless loops on cable television. That’s less time than it takes to reheat a lukewarm cup of coffee. That’s less time than it took you to read the opening paragraph of this story.

Vanessa and Rolando Chang learned this lesson the hard way two years ago, when their 2-year-old daughter Tatiana wandered into their backyard pool in Cypress.

One minute, Tatiana was eating lunch and playing with her older sister. The next, she was being pulled from the water, lifeless and blue.

“She was right at the steps,” said her mother, Vanessa Chang. “She hadn’t even moved away from the steps.”

**A DEADLY TREND**

Every summer, in backyards and apartment complexes, at community pools and splash pads, families like the Changs experience the unthinkable. Drowning is the leading cause of injury-related death for children ages 1 to 4, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Nationwide, three children die every day as a result of drowning. In Texas alone, 91 children perished in a drowning incident last year, and this year is already proving to be especially deadly. The toll has risen to 45, with nearly one-third of those deaths occurring in the Greater Houston area.

Tatiana, now 4 years old, was one of the lucky ones. She survived. She was revived by paramedics and her heart started beating again. But the lack of oxygen for an extended period of time caused significant brain and neurological damage that left her unable to walk, talk, or eat on her own.

“I never in a million years thought my kid was going to drown,” her mother said.

**A MOMENT OF DISTRACTION**

Tatiana was the third child in a family of kids raised with swimming pools.

The Changs took precautions. They moved the locks on their back door out of reach of little hands. They always required their toddler to get into the pool with inflatable water wings on her arms. And later that summer, Tatiana’s grandmother – a longtime swim instructor – planned to visit and teach Tatiana how to swim.

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Vanessa has recited the details of what happened on June 15, 2017 countless times to family, to friends, to complete strangers – it’s a story she painfully shares to help prevent others from suffering the same tragedy that befell her family.

Tatiana’s older sister, Isabella, had invited a friend and her mom over to enjoy an afternoon in the pool.

“I put together some sandwiches and chips for lunch,” Vanessa said. Tatiana had been in the water already and removed her floaties to eat.

When lunch was over, the adults busied themselves taking leftovers back into the house. Vanessa told Tatiana to grab her floaties so she could put them back on – and at some point, with the older girls swimming and the moms moving in and out of the house, Tatiana had a moment by herself.

“The next thing I knew,” Vanessa said, “I heard Isabella screaming, ‘Mommy! Tati fell in the pool and she’s not breathing!’”

Tatiana was unsupervised, the family believes, for maybe two minutes.

Someone called 911. Vanessa and a neighbor tried CPR. Tatiana coughed and vomited, but she didn’t recover. She was taken by ambulance to a hospital near their house, then flown by Memorial Hermann Life Flight® to Children’s Memorial Hermann Hospital, where she remained for weeks while a care team worked to bring her back to life.

She eventually began to breathe on her own again without the help of a ventilator, but her brain injury left her with seizures and a condition called “neurostorming,” where her brain is firing but unable to make connections. Therapy has helped give Tatiana some of her life back, but she is far removed from the energetic little girl she was before the incident.

Total number of drownings in Harris, Fort Bend, Montgomery, Brazoria and Galveston counties

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<td>14</td>
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*As of June 17, 2019

Source: Texas Department of Family and Protective Services
BEATING THE ODDS

Not all children who survive a drowning incident suffer neurological damage, but their close brushes with death have left lasting impacts on their families.

In February 2016, 18-month-old Dominic Larkin crawled through the doggy door and into the family’s back yard in The Woodlands. His mother – who had dashed upstairs just for a minute - found him lifeless in the hot tub. Dominic was taken to Children’s Memorial Hermann and survived, but his lungs became infected, his liver ruptured, his kidneys failed and he developed a blood clot. It was late spring before he was able to leave the hospital.

On Easter Sunday 2016, 3-year-old Ishaan Pavuluri slipped into the pool and went unconscious after an Easter egg hunt in a family friend’s backyard. “It all happened in less than a minute,” said his mother, Deepthi Bollu. Today, Ishaan has no long-term injuries or side effects, but he spent days at Children’s Memorial Hermann being treated for the wheezing breaths of stridor, a high-pitched sound caused when airflow is obstructed.

And in 2014, 3-year-old Anneliese Nuño climbed into a neighbor’s pool in the brief moment before her dad could put on her life jacket. The adults’ attention was diverted for a minute at most, and suddenly she was face-down in the water.

Anneliese was brought to Memorial Hermann by Life Flight and recovered a few days later.

“I had a nightmare, a mother’s worst nightmare, for almost three days,” said her grateful mother, Elizabeth Nuño. “And then I woke up.”

ACCIDENTAL ADVOCATES

Tatiana’s ordeal has transformed the Changs into passionate advocates for swim lessons and, for babies, water survival training.

They encourage parents to consider enrolling their children into a six-week Infant Swimming Resource (ISR) course. The training works with babies as young as 6 months old. It’s a “self-rescue” maneuver: When placed in water, babies learn how to flip to their backs and float.

“As soon as they can start crawling, they can learn how to float,” Vanessa said.

Swim lessons have been shown to reduce the risk of drowning, according to the American Academy of Pediatrics. But swim lessons can’t “drown proof” any child, so the group’s drowning policy still recommends barriers such as fences and gates for young children, even if they have been taught to swim.

The Changs know they are lucky. They still have their daughter. Still, the trajectory of their lives has changed – and so has that of their daughter.

I had a nightmare, a mother’s worst nightmare, for almost three days.

– Elizabeth Nuño

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They recently moved to Florida to be closer to family, and Tatiana has been back in the hospital for surgeries related to her accident.

“People want to hear that she’s walking again, she’s talking again,” Vanessa said. “That’s not how it works.”

It’s “painfully slow” progress, Vanessa said – and it is slowness the Changs have learned to live with, a stark paradox to a split-second accident that changed their lives forever.

EDUCATION IS THE ANSWER

Vanessa wants parents to be better educated about how to prevent drowning. “I think, as parents, we don’t realize how dangerous it is,” she said.

“When new parents take their babies home, they can’t leave the hospital until they’re in a car seat,” Vanessa said. Vaccinations and the “Back is Best” sleeping guidance are standard. “But nobody hands you a pamphlet that says, ‘You need to understand that your baby is more likely to die from drowning than anything else.’ I’d never heard that statistic until Tati’s accident.”

So she’s taking it into her own hands. In a video Vanessa posted on Facebook in June, she sits in the front seat of her car and speaks directly into the camera.

“If you have small children, you need to teach them survival skills in the water,” she says. “I know there are people that think it’s never going to happen to you. I was that person.”

It’s worth all their efforts, Vanessa says, if it can prevent what happened to Tatiana, and if it can save someone else’s life.

No child is “drown proof.” However, you can significantly reduce the risk by using the following layers of protection:

Designate a “water watcher.”
This adult is responsible for keeping their eyes on all children in the water and should be free of all distractions— including cell phones and socializing. The “water watcher” should be switched every 15 minutes to avoid attention fatigue.

Learn CPR.
Become certified in CPR and update your skills every two years. It could save the life of your child or another person.

Teach children to swim.
Survival swimming lessons teach children self-rescue techniques to help prevent water accident deaths. Traditional swimming lessons teach children proper swimming strokes.

Have proper barriers.
Ensure the fence around your pool is at least five feet tall with a self-closing and self-latching gate.
The endless scroll – most of us know it well. But where does screen obsession fit into today’s self-care focused society? It doesn’t, says Mariam Wahby, PhD, LMFT, education specialist with Behavioral Health Services at Memorial Hermann Health System.

**Q: How do you know if you have a problem?**

**A:** Beware if you sense – or family, friends or bosses mention – you’re overly tethered to technology, Dr. Wahby says. You also may be in too deep digitally if you:

- Consistently lose track of time while on your phone
- Feel anxious when separated from your phone
- Reply to texts, emails and social messages at all hours or while eating or driving
- Slumber with your turned-on phone beneath your pillow or on your nightstand
- Text, direct message or email people more than talking to them in person

**Q: What are the risks of being screen-obsessed?**

**A:** As with drugs, phone addiction builds a thirst for longer and more frequent hits. Connecting may feel good in the moment but may be followed by regret, Dr. Wahby says. Not only that, but doubling up – scrolling one’s social media while watching TV – triggers symptoms of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder.

Teens, arguably the most plugged-in generation, seem to suffer. Adolescents were more likely to report mental health troubles than those who devoted more time to non-screen activities such as in-person social interaction, sports, homework and reading. In 2015, 42 percent of high schoolers confessed they sent texts and email while driving, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports.

**Q: Is addiction too harsh a term to use?**

**A:** No, Dr. Wahby says. Much like other addictions, excessive use of communication devices follows an arch: abuse, increased tolerance that requires greater use, dependence and a feeling of restlessness and irritability when attempting to quit, followed by a high risk of relapse before ultimate success.

**Q: How can you successfully give your screen a time-out?**

**A:** Your technology delivers entertainment and links to the outside world. To unplug, Dr. Wahby says, you need an alternative such as walking, reading, stretching, meditating or being mindful.

Lead by example if you want your kids to unplug. Toddlers under age two should only video-chat online, the American Academy of Pediatrics advises. Preschoolers’ screen time – TV included – should be curbed to just one hour daily.

**Q: Why is it important to reduce screen time before bed?**

**A:** Our bodies power down based on our circadian rhythms -- our internal alarm clock. Screen lights delay slumber. Calls and notifications from nearby turned-on devices can further disrupt snoozing. The National Sleep Foundation recommends 30 gadget-free minutes before bed. You’ll feel better – and so will those around you.
Joy Helminski was tired of being tired. Like millions of Americans, Helminski was diagnosed with sleep apnea, a serious, potentially life-threatening sleep disorder in which you repeatedly stop breathing during the night. And like many Americans, Helminski was prescribed the standard treatment – a sleep therapy machine that delivers constant airflow to prop open your airway while you sleep. Commonly called a CPAP, or continuous positive airway pressure machine, it was, for a long time, one of the only ways to effectively treat sleep apnea.

There was one problem: the machine didn’t work for her. Her facial features were far too small and the machine’s mask – which is supposed to fit tightly across the face -- was far too loose, leaving Helminski just as exhausted as she had been before.

“My doctor said I’d have more energy, feel better, and that the CPAP would help my blood pressure,” Helminski said. “I still felt tired all the time, and I’d go in and tell him that nothing was different.”

Turns out, she’s not alone. An estimated half of people who are diagnosed with sleep apnea through a sleep study can’t tolerate using the CPAP, according to some studies.

That’s especially troubling because untreated sleep apnea is dangerous, putting sufferers at higher risk for heart attacks, strokes, high blood pressure episodes, as well as other incidents – such as car wrecks or workplace injuries – that can result from fatigue.

After five years of using the machine – and failing to get the restful sleep she was hoping for – Helminski went looking for an alternative sleep treatment and found herself a winner.

The therapy involves a nerve stimulator loosely described as a pacemaker for the throat. The small device is implanted under the skin during an outpatient procedure. The device can be activated by a small remote before the patient goes to sleep. It delivers gentle stimulation to key airway muscles, keeping the airway open while you rest, according to the device manufacturer.

Dr. Michael Byrd, an otolaryngologist affiliated with Memorial Hermann Southeast Hospital, was among the first physicians to perform the procedure in the Houston area. The results have been startling. Earlier this year, Dr. Byrd performed the procedure on a patient who had been suffering from sleep apnea for over a decade. After just one night of sleep, the patient reported feeling more refreshed than he had in years.

Joy Helminski makes a career as a tank wash production clerk – a job that requires her full energy. Following her procedure, Helminski said she is feeling more refreshed than she has in years.

High-Quality Snoozing Can be Credited to a Pacemaker – For Your Throat
area. Board certified in otolaryngology, he has a special interest in ear, nose and throat conditions that contribute to sleep disorders, including common snoring and obstructive sleep apnea conditions.

Helminski, who lives in League City, said she was pleased to discover that she could get the device, a hypoglossal nerve stimulator, implanted at Memorial Hermann Southeast, right in her backyard.

In December 2018, Helminski had the procedure done by Dr. Byrd, who is also an assistant professor in the Department of Otorhinolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery at McGovern Medical School at The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston (UTHealth).

The outpatient procedure takes about two hours, and most patients do not require antibiotics or steroids after surgery. Pain can be controlled using over-the-counter medications, according to Dr. Byrd.

The results were almost immediate.

“Within two weeks after the device was activated, I felt like the sun had come out,” said Helminski, who is 67. “I’ve been a light sleeper all my life, and the device has improved the quality of my sleep. The difference in how I feel is amazing! I don’t have that dragging feeling at 10 in the morning or 3 in the afternoon. I get home from work and still have a lot of energy.”

In the year and a half since Helminski’s procedure, more physicians and facilities are now offering the novel way to treat sleep apnea. Today, physicians affiliated with Memorial Hermann Memorial City Medical Center and Memorial Hermann The Woodlands Medical Center have started offering it, creating wide availability in the Greater Houston area for patients who may qualify for the device.

**WHAT IS SLEEP APNEA?**

Sleep apnea is a sleep disorder where breathing is interrupted during sleep. People who have sleep apnea will stop breathing repeatedly throughout their sleep cycle. This disruption in a person’s breathing pattern may cause the brain to not get enough oxygen. If you snore loudly and feel tired during the day after a full night’s sleep, you may have sleep apnea.

**OBSTRUCTIVE SLEEP APNEA**

This is the most common form of sleep apnea caused by the muscles in the throat relaxing. When these muscles relax, the breathing airway narrows or closes with inhalation, restricting the amount of air into the body and lowering the amount of oxygen in the blood. When the brain senses this, it sends a signal to the body to wake up in order to get more oxygen.

**CENTRAL SLEEP APNEA**

Central sleep apnea occurs when the brain fails to send the correct signals to the breathing muscles.

**COMPLEX SLEEP APNEA SYNDROME**

Occurs when someone has both obstructive sleep apnea and central sleep apnea.

**Common symptoms include:**

- Loud snoring (typically associated with obstructive sleep apnea)
- Breathing that stops during sleep
- Waking up abruptly along with shortness of breath (typically associated with central sleep apnea)
- Waking up with a dry mouth or sore throat
- Experiencing headaches in the morning
- Insomnia
- Excessive sleepiness during the day
- Difficulty paying attention
- Irritability

To learn more about Memorial Hermann’s sleep apnea treatments, call 713-222-CARE or visit www.memorialhermann.org.

Source: Memorial Hermann
On average, the Greater Houston area sees sun 204 days out of the year—and every single one of those days forces Sabrina Farber to wage an inner battle against a fear that her melanoma may return.

“Once you’ve had a diagnosis of melanoma, it almost makes you afraid of the sun. One day I told myself, ‘Forget this. I am going to put on my protective clothing and I am going to enjoy the outdoors.’ But, it’s a battle to keep that fear out,” Farber said.

Farber, a fair-skinned, red-headed mother of five, says she’d always taken the extra precautions to try and protect her skin from the sun and has been vigilant about undergoing a yearly skin cancer screening. She’d had biopsies over the years and even had some basal cell carcinomas removed, so she didn’t think twice about a biopsy on a spot on her forearm.

“The results came back that it wasn’t cancerous, but the spot never quite healed well. When I asked my dermatologist, he suggested a second biopsy, but I was afraid that would only exacerbate the problem,” Farber said.

With the condition of her arm unchanged, Farber eventually went in for the second biopsy that would change everything.

“I don’t know how to communicate what it feels like when someone tells you that you have cancer, that you have a tumor. It’s frightening, no matter what type of cancer it is,” Farber said.

**DODGING A DEATH SENTENCE**

“Melanoma is the most serious form of skin cancer because it often spreads. The surgery surrounding the removal of the cancer is much more involved and patients require surveillance for the rest of their lives,” said Casey Duncan, MD, a surgical oncologist affiliated with Memorial Hermann-Texas Medical Center and an assistant professor at McGovern Medical School at The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston (UTHealth).

Farber says it was also difficult that she received the diagnosis near the holidays, but was thankful Dr. Duncan treated her in a timely manner.
“She told me she had availability to perform the surgery on New Year’s Eve, and I told her if she was willing to come in, I would be there! I was so impressed by her responsiveness and her supportive nature throughout the entire process,” said Farber.

Dr. Duncan also biopsied the lymph nodes in Farber’s armpit to ensure the cancer hadn’t spread.

“When Dr. Duncan called and told me there was no sign of cancer in my lymph nodes, it was like getting a ‘not guilty’ verdict when you faced a potential death penalty. I can’t even explain the weight it lifted off my shoulders,” Farber said.

**MELANOMA CAN REOCCUR OR SPREAD**

Dr. Duncan says Farber, like all patients she treats for melanoma, will need to undergo skin checks every three months for the rest of her life.

“If you have melanoma once, you are at a higher risk of it developing again. Combine that with the danger of melanoma spreading, and we want to catch any spots as early as possible,” Dr. Duncan said.

Dr. Duncan also recommends putting on sunscreen, or wearing protective clothing, when you will be in the sun for an extended period of time. The American Academy of Dermatology recommends using broad-spectrum sunscreen of at least SPF 30 that is also water-resistant.

Farber says the whole experience, while tough, helped give her clarity.

“You really start to realize what’s important and what isn’t. You see how strong your family is. Now, I do everything I can to encourage my kids, my friends and family to wear sunscreen, put on hats and take the extra steps to protect their skin. You just can’t take it for granted,” Farber said.

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**Do You Know the ABCDEs of Skin Cancer?**

A **Symmetry** – When the lesion is divided into halves, if the right half does NOT look like the left half, it is asymmetrical in shape.

B **Border** – Moles that have irregular or poorly defined borders should be reported. The borders appear notched or seem to fade or “stream out” onto the surrounding skin.

C **Color** – Is the color of the mole varied? Does the mole have tan, brown, black, blue, red or white areas?

D **Diameter** – Is the mole larger than 6 millimeters in diameter (the size of a pencil eraser)? Although 6 millimeters is used as a general guideline for evaluating growth of a mole, any mole that is asymmetrical, has an irregular border, has color variations and is changing should be evaluated by your healthcare provider – even if it is less than 6 millimeters in diameter.

E **Evolving** – Watch for any moles that start to evolve or change over time. Any change in size, shape or color can point to a dangerous change.

*Source: American Melanoma Foundation*

*Worried about a suspicious spot? Visit memorialhermann.org/doctors to make an appointment with an affiliated dermatologist.*
MEMORIAL HERMANN WINS PRESIDENT’S VOLUNTEER SERVICE AWARD FOR HOMETOWN HEALING

Memorial Hermann has been named a recipient of the President’s Volunteer Service Award – Gold (PVSA) in recognition of Memorial Hermann employees’ outstanding commitment to the community through Hometown Healing.

The Hometown Healing service campaign, which launched in 2018, provides opportunities for Memorial Hermann employees and their families to participate in team-building activities while serving the city in which they live and work.

The PVSA specifically recognized Memorial Hermann for its partnership with the Houston Food Bank. Employees dedicated a total of 2,561 service hours in 2018. The gold-level recognition is bestowed upon groups that contribute more than 1,000 volunteer service hours within a 12-month period.

To date, Memorial Hermann employees have provided 6,600 volunteer service hours to the community through Hometown Healing.

FREE NURSE HEALTH LINE ANSWERS CALLS AROUND THE CLOCK

As summer comes to an end and children prepare to return to school in August, it’s good to know that the free 24/7 Nurse Health Line is ready to help. When you or a family member needs medical attention and you’re not sure where to go, call the Nurse Health Line at 713.338.7979 or toll free at 1.855.577.7979.

The free nurse triage line is answered by trained registered nurses who can help you decide when and where to go for medical care. They can answer your health questions and direct you to area care facilities. Interpreter services are also available. Calls to the Nurse Health Line are confidential and the service is available regardless if the caller has insurance or a primary care provider.

MEMORIAL HERMANN EARNED ENERGY STAR PARTNER OF THE YEAR HONORS

Memorial Hermann Health System has once again received the ENERGY STAR® Partner of the Year – Sustained Excellence Award for continued leadership and superior contributions to ENERGY STAR. This is the sixth time Memorial Hermann has been recognized with this award, which is bestowed upon small, family-owned businesses to Fortune 500 organizations that reduce costly energy waste and ultimately improve air quality and public health while protecting the environment.

The highest honor among ENERGY STAR Awards is the ENERGY STAR Partner of the Year – Sustained Excellence Award. EPA presents the Sustained Excellence Award to partners that have already received ENERGY STAR Partner of the Year recognition for a minimum of two consecutive years and have gone above and beyond the criteria needed to qualify for recognition.
ADVANCING HEALTH. PERSONALIZING CARE.

At Memorial Hermann, we are all about advancing health. Yours. It begins by redefining health care. Our 6,400 affiliated physicians and more than 26,000 employees practice evidence-based medicine with a relentless focus on quality, safety and exceptional service for all patients, consumers and Health Plan members. Our efforts continue to result in national awards and recognition, including for our nationally acclaimed Accountable Care Organization. With a focus on enhancing access to care, Memorial Hermann offers Virtual Clinic for digital access and has 300 care delivery sites conveniently located across the Greater Houston area, including our flagship hospital in the world-renowned Texas Medical Center, which serves as the teaching hospital for McGovern Medical School at The University of Texas Health Science at Houston (UTHealth). We have proudly served this community for more than 110 years, and we contribute more than $588 million annually through school-based health centers and other community benefit programs. Because at Memorial Hermann, your health is always at the center of what we do. Through the community’s engagement, Memorial Hermann supports world-renowned patient care, research and education that will make a difference for the countless individuals and families we serve every day. Learn how your gift can make a difference by visiting memorialhermann.org/foundation.

www.memorialhermann.org
713.222.CARE