

Dedicated to providing patient-centered care and improving the health and well-being of people in the communities we serve

Trim and proper



The 2019 Western Maryland Health System tree is now on display in the first floor lobby of the Western Maryland Regional Medical Center.

The tree is the proud result of a great deal of teamwork between the Community Relations and Marketing, Facilities and Materials Management Departments and George’s Creek Florist & Gift Shop in Lonaconing under the direction of Jack Coburn.

The tree has become an annual tradition at WMHS, and different themes have been featured over the years such as top hats, birdhouses, owls, snowflakes and different color schemes using silver, gold and red.

This year’s theme features elegant hues of gold. It will remain on display through the end of the holiday season.



‘Looking forward to the next chapter’

When she walks out of the Western Maryland Health System Administration Center on December 20, Senior Vice President and Chief Financial Officer Kim Repac will officially close the door on a career spanning nearly four decades.



Kim Repac

“It’s bittersweet,” she said. “Once I made my decision, I felt like a weight had been lifted. I struggled with it for a while, but I haven’t looked back and I’m looking forward to the next chapter.”

Kim began her career at Sacred Heart Hospital but also worked at Memorial Hospital for a time before going back to Sacred Heart and staying there until the formation of WMHS. She had what she calls “the pleasure and perspective” of working for both companies. “My areas were some of the first departments that came together,” Kim said, regarding the early days of WMHS. “We got to test the water and see how it was going to work, and it went very smoothly.”

Looking back now on her career, Kim tried to sum up her feelings.

“I can say I’ve had a wonderful job,” she said. “On the financing side of health care, there was never the opportunity to get bored. I would learn something, and right about the time I was up to speed on it, something would change, and I would need to learn something else. There were changes all the time.”

Those changes allowed Kim to stay engaged.

“Because I worked at smaller hospitals with fewer people, I was able to be involved in a lot more. Over my career I’ve been able to lead clinical departments, all the business-related departments, as well as some of our external areas of business. It’s given me a different perspective and kept things fresh.”

The relationships she has developed with her coworkers will be one of the things that Kim will miss the most. “I’ve found that since you spend so much time at your job, if you don’t enjoy the work or the people you work with, you’ll be miserable,” Kim said. “I’ve worked with and worked for some great people.”

As her career draws to a close, Kim is looking forward to spending more time with her parents, her children and grandchildren, as well as traveling and expanding her creative side.

As far as advice goes for newcomers to the world of healthcare, Kim’s wisdom is twofold.

“When first starting out, make sure you are committed,” she said. “If you find yourself with extra time, don’t be afraid to ask if there is anything else you can do to help out. If you do that, you will advance, and opportunities will come. The other piece of advice I have is to figure out what is important to you and let that drive you where you want to go in your career.”

When she finishes up work on her final day, Kim said she will look back with pride. “We’ve been on the cutting edge of a lot of things. We’ve brought so many services here. People from all over the country see that we are a forward-thinking organization, and I’m going to miss the challenge of being involved with that. I look forward to seeing where the Health System is going. It’s an exciting time.”

‘Grateful for the opportunity’

Community dinner provides a chance for WMHS employees to give back

Thanks once again to the efforts of more than 200 volunteers, nearly 3,000 Thanksgiving meals were provided to individuals and families in the communities served by Western Maryland Health System.

Volunteers gathered both Friday, November 22, and Saturday, November 23, at WMHS to cook, pack and serve 2,740 dinners to both homebound and on-site guests. Meals were packed and delivered hot or frozen to area senior high-rise communities, the homebound, and food pantries.

Partners providing volunteers for the annual event included two area churches, HRDC, AHEC West, Allegany College of Maryland, Frostburg State University, three area high schools as well as nearly every department across WMHS.

Being able to prepare, serve on-site or deliver a total of nearly 3,000 meals shines light on the manpower

required and the goodwill generated by the dinner each holiday season. The WMHS Dietary Department went above and beyond their regular duties in helping prepare the food and getting it to those in need. Nine hundred eighty pounds of roasted turkey served as the main course. Sides included 675 pounds of mashed potatoes, 515 pounds of stuffing, 730 pounds of green beans and corn, 43 gallons of gravy and 30 pounds of cranberry sauce. The spread was topped off with 276 pumpkin pies.

Along with the planned meals, several walk-ins were served. No one hungry was turned away, which is something in which Jo Wilson, WMHS Vice President of Population Health, takes much pride. “This annual gathering of volunteers and community members is an event unlike anything else we do,” she said. “The combined efforts of WMHS employees



Volunteers who gave their time worked two hour shifts. Here, a group packs hot meals that were delivered to area senior high-rise communities, the homebound and local food pantries.

and our many partners help to provide a hot Thanksgiving meal to those community members who might not get one otherwise. This is something so many people look forward to, and we are grateful for the opportunity to serve.”

WMHS thanks the following organizations for

helping to sponsor this year’s Thanksgiving outreach dinner: Allegany County HRDC, Mineral County Aging and Family Services and The Pharmacare Network. Those WMHS employees interested in volunteering for next year’s dinner should start looking for email alerts in the fall.

WMHS expands neurosurgery

Dr. Or Cohen-Inbar recruited as latest addition to comprehensive program

In May of this year, Western Maryland Health System expanded upon their already comprehensive neurosurgery program as they welcomed neurosurgeon Or Cohen-Inbar, M.D. Ph.D. Dr. Cohen-Inbar was recruited to be the latest addition to a program that has been blessed with Drs. Kheder Ashker and Augusto Figueroa, two neurosurgeons who have brought many years of service and dedication to our region. Recently, Dr. Cohen-Inbar sat down for an interview about his practice, his impressions of the community and who might benefit from the care that he and his team provide.

What type of patients are suitable for neurosurgery?
Who should consider coming to see you?

Neurosurgery is a very wide field. It deals with all central nervous system diseases of a potential surgical nature, meaning both the brain and the spinal cord. In that very large definition, we can find different aspects of care. Any type of patient who has a disease of the central nervous system that has a potential surgical solution should consider coming to see us.

How do patients get in to see you?

First, many of our referrals come from community neurologists and primary care providers. We put a lot of effort and time into collaborating with and educating these professionals in order to get them more knowledgeable about potential situations where a neurosurgeon is required.

Second, we accept referrals and second opinions from other institutions, and third, we also accept direct referrals. We have a form on the hospital website, wmhs.com, that allows easy access for referrals. A potential patient will answer a few easy questions, and a neurosurgery team member will reach out to them before a consultation is scheduled. A team reviews everything before an office appointment is scheduled to make sure all information that is needed is ready, and if anything is missing, they will help obtain it before the appointment. All of this is done to provide a very comprehensive and complete consultation.

What type of services do you provide, and what type of surgeries do you perform?

We provide the entirety of services when it comes to neurosurgery. For the spine, we perform surgeries for degenerative spinal diseases, bulging discs, spinal stenosis, instability of the spine and spinal tumors in both the neck and lower spine. For the brain, we perform surgery on brain tumors – my area of expertise, both benign and malignant lesions. We treat all other brain diseases and pathologies as well, including vascular malformations, aneurysms, hydrocephalus and hydrodynamic issues, traumatic brain injuries and functional issues like tremors or pain. We offer both open micro-surgery capabilities as well as stereotactic radiosurgery, which is a non-surgical highly focused radiation therapy used to treat a range of brain diseases. It can deliver precisely targeted radiation in a single high-dose treatment, effectively treating the diseased tissue while helping to preserve healthy brain tissue. I was trained in the multidisciplinary fashion, where the neurosurgeon speaks to the medical oncologist and to the radiation oncologist, and then a single treatment team is geared to providing optimal cancer treatment for the patient. For those reasons, we have built a very strong tumor program here at WMHS. We have weekly meetings, and we talk much more often as the need arises.

Another consideration is that, in many cases, timing is of the essence, and if you consider bad weather or the fact that the next large neurosurgical center is an hour or sometimes two hours away, we need to provide independent neurosurgical abilities here to the people of our community.

What are your impressions of our area now that you have been here for a little while?

I must admit that I have fallen in love with mountain Maryland and Cumberland. There is that small city allure where everyone knows each other, and the fact that you can find true kindness, accountability and caring for each other makes me want to be a part of and serve this community the best I can.

I've been here for only about six months, but I feel fully committed to both this community and this institution, and it brings me pride and joy to be part of it. I must tell you that our hospital has a lot to be proud of. The healing environment provided here at times is superior to that offered in larger ivy league institutions.

How has your experience been at WMHS since you began your practice?

In general, I would say I've gotten a lot of support for the



University of Virginia Gamma Knife Center, Charlottesville Virginia in this field, and hold an academic appointment with both the University of Virginia Department of Neurosurgery and the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center (UPMC) Department of Neurosurgery.

Why is neurosurgery important in our area?

Neurosurgery serves a pivotal role in our area for multiple reasons. First, we are the sole comprehensive medical center within 70 miles in any direction. That means we have to serve the community and be independent in providing the entire realm of medical and neurosurgical services. Therefore, WMHS leadership was adamant about building and maintaining an independent, strong neurosurgical service.

Most of the patients in mountain Maryland prefer to stay close to home, especially if they are dealing with a serious illness. Patients want quality care near where they live, and this needs to be done in a

way that I think neurosurgical care should be provided. Since I've been here, my colleagues have done their best to help me acclimate and start my practice. I've also found the administration to be very supportive in supplying me with the equipment and the staff needed to be able to provide a higher standard of care, as well as the ability to formulate and put into motion protocols that will allow for patients to receive better care.

We have established a cell phone hotline for every patient we operate on. If any medical concern arises, our patients have a direct line to call us and somebody will pick up the phone and give direct consideration to them. Even if it is weeks or months after surgery, if the patient develops some concern, there is no need to go to the ER or primary care provider or to have any doubts. They can come straight to us, and the matter will be handled directly. Additionally, every patient is called a few days after discharge to make sure their return home is going well and all aspects of their care are happening as planned.

Although I have come from far away, I feel like part of the WMHS family. My aim here is to build neurosurgical services that will provide high quality, personal, involved and accountable care for the patients of our community. We will try our best to be the friend and the support that patients need during the crucial points of their lives. Although this is something we do every day, we never forget the honor of receiving the patient's trust in allowing us to take care of them.

In good hands

WMHS Board member Kim Leonard gains a new perspective

Long-time Western Maryland Health System Board of Directors member and current Foundation Board President Kim Leonard recently learned firsthand what it was like to experience the care he so often lauds.

Now several months after undergoing open-heart surgery for an aortic valve replacement, Kim relishes the perspective he gained as a patient at WMHS. "It was interesting to go through a process that I have heard about, read about and experienced as a board member," he said. "As I went through the process, I remembered all I had heard about the cardiac program and after coming out on the other side, I hope it has made me a better board member."

His first thoughts after learning he needed the procedure were ones of trepidation. "My brother in Utah had a similar procedure 25 years ago," Kim said. "He then had it re-done about three years ago. Due to some complications, three days after he went home, he passed away. That gave me a lot of pause to think about what was

being done, when it was being done and where it was being done."

Having a nationally recognized cardiac program right in his backyard made the decision to have the surgery performed here an easy one. "With Dr. Nelson here, I knew I had one of the best surgeons in the northeast," Kim said. "We are fortunate to have the type of staff we have at WMHS right at our doorstep, and the fact that I could be at WMHS during my recovery was really helpful. I could have local visitors, and my wife did not have to get a hotel room at some faraway unfamiliar location. I found that to be a huge calling card for WMHS."

During his recovery and rehabilitation, Kim experienced the best of WMHS, and his interactions with staff as a patient will remain with him as he continues to serve on the Board of Directors and as Foundation Board President.

"The staff is made up of incredible people," he said. "I don't think I have ever met as many professional people at one time and in

one place in my entire life. From the minute you walk in until you wake up, things are in good hands. I had a lot of time throughout this process to think about all the possible outcomes. I had confidence that they knew what they were doing. After the surgery, the nurses and the staff were so amazing. I honestly wasn't expecting the quality of assistance that I received throughout the whole process."

Kim continued, "All the staff I came in contact with were just incredible, professional people. They know what they are doing, how to do it and how to make you feel comfortable when you are there. A big thanks should go out to all of them."

Due to the care he received, Kim is thankful to be able to continue to serve. "A big part of my life has been my community," he said, "and so a major part about having this procedure was allowing me to continue doing the work I want to do. When everything is said and done for me and the curtain falls, it would be nice to look back and see that I made our community a little different, and hopefully for the better."

Now nearly fully recovered, Kim will share his experience with those whom he works so closely. "At some point, every board member needs to stop and think about the processes we have at WMHS and thank the people who are providing these services to our community."



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- Kim Leonard



Drop us a line!

Community Relations wants to hear all of the good news about the employees, patients and departments at WMHS. Contact Ed DeWitt at edewitt@wmhs.com if you have a story that is begging to be told.

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