

# Focused On You

Fall 2024

Health News and Information from MedStar Montgomery Medical Center

## Savoring time.



After recovering from a stroke, Megan Ambrose, MSN, RN, CNL, celebrates every moment. Photo by Hilary Schwab

Inside: Cutting-edge vascular care services save veteran's life | When every second counts, fast-acting medical team buys nurse more time | Trusting her gut helped breast cancer survivor return to busy life | Classes and support groups

# Meaningful innovation inspires high-quality, accessible, and compassionate care.



Innovation is the beating heart of our care systems at MedStar Montgomery Medical Center, and every medical advancement emerges with our patients and community in mind.

Equipped with our teams' resourcefulness, unrivaled ability to assess and meet needs, and passion for forward-thinking strategies, we surpass even our most ambitious goals.

Earlier in 2024, MedStar Montgomery earned the prestigious Magnet® designation for excellence in nursing from the American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC) Commission on Magnet Recognition Program®, placing us within the top 10% of hospitals across the nation. This year we were also one of 10 healthcare organizations across the country honored with the Healthcare Innovators award from *Modern Healthcare*, which recognizes innovative organizations working to improve care.

As exemplified by our compassionate and driven associates, we rise to that responsibility with resilience and time-tested commitment.

Take, for example, the leading-edge enhancements to our catheterization lab, which have expanded our ability to deliver advanced vascular services and procedures right here in our own community. Or take the state-of-the-art imaging tests and treatment options made available to

Michelle Stallone as she began navigating her treatment path at MedStar Montgomery after a cancer diagnosis. Or take our team's swift arrangement for tertiary care at MedStar Georgetown University Hospital to support Megan Ambrose, MSN, RN, CNL, after she experienced a stroke.

These examples demonstrate the outstanding capabilities of our organization and emphasize a facet of our hospital of which I am immensely proud: MedStar Montgomery serves as the convergence point between world-class high-tech care and accessibility—all while upholding the highest levels of compassion for each individual patient.

With advanced resources and technologies, and deeply collaborative, multidisciplinary teams, our focus on meaningful innovation promotes a great sense of wellbeing across our entire community.

To me, that will always remain one of our most remarkable and transformative accomplishments.

Yours in good health,

**Emily Briton**  
President, MedStar Montgomery Medical Center  
Senior Vice President, MedStar Health

## Focused On You

**Kenneth A. Samet, FACHE**  
President and CEO, MedStar Health

**Gary Fernandes**  
Chair, MedStar Montgomery Medical Center Board of Directors

**Emily Briton**  
President, MedStar Montgomery Medical Center; Senior Vice President, MedStar Health

**Tonja Paylor**  
Director of Marketing & Communications

**Stefanie Bryant**  
Manager, Marketing and Community Relations

Writers  
**Emily Marrs**  
**Susan Walker**

Cover photo by  
**Hilary Schwab**

Serving our community through access to exceptional care and the latest medical advancements.

# Cutting-edge vascular care services save veteran's life.

By Emily Marrs

**With the addition of a state-of-the-art catheterization lab (known as the "cath lab") at MedStar Montgomery Medical Center, patients now have access to the most advanced diagnostic imaging technologies and cardiac procedures available.**

For James "Mike" Grisby, who turns 70 this year, the cath lab upgrades at MedStar Montgomery are not only accessible and convenient—they're lifesaving.

"The new cath lab puts MedStar Montgomery at the forefront of medical advancement," says Kyle Reynolds, MD, the site chief of vascular surgery at the hospital. "We are now able to provide exceptionally intricate vascular care to patients close to their homes. With the integration of improved imaging capabilities, certain procedures and emergencies can now safely be treated on site, and that brings comfort and more convenient family support to patients when they most need it."

Throughout the past two years, Mike, a U.S. Navy veteran, required multiple endovascular interventions for serious vascular conditions, including an abdominal aortic aneurysm repair.

"Dr. Reynolds diagnosed my conditions at MedStar Montgomery, but I had to travel an hour away to have the necessary procedure at another MedStar Health hospital," Mike says.

But when a new vascular issue developed and his symptoms began to worsen six months ago, he welcomed the news that the upgraded cath lab offered the critical treatment he needed locally at MedStar Montgomery.



**Access to local, advanced care at MedStar Montgomery Medical Center improved life for James "Mike" Grisby and his wife, Susan.** Photo by Hilary Schwab

"Mike was experiencing progressively worse abdominal pain, weight loss, and difficulty eating due to mesenteric ischemia, which is a condition that occurs when blood flow to the intestines is compromised," says Dr. Reynolds. "Using the cath lab's enhanced equipment, the detailed imaging allowed us to safely visualize and treat the blockages in his mesenteric vessels, the blood vessels that supply his intestines and GI system."

In April 2024 at MedStar Montgomery, Dr. Reynolds performed a percutaneous, minimally invasive superior mesenteric artery stent procedure on Mike, which opened the blockages and increased blood flow, allowing him to digest food properly.

"I couldn't eat because of the stomach issues, and now they're gone. The procedure has given me a new lease on the dinner table," Mike jokes.

Today, Mike is feeling strong and healthy, and he is grateful for the advanced care now available at his local hospital.

"The cath lab upgrades have been a game-changer in the community and have made it possible for me to schedule all my appointments in one place. My wife no longer has to worry about traveling and arranging to pick me up after procedures," says Mike. "I want to thank MedStar Montgomery for continuing to give me the innovative care that offers me a better life."



**Cutting-edge cath lab enhancements aid Danielle Salazar, MD, and Kyle Reynolds, MD, in providing advanced vascular care services at MedStar Montgomery Medical Center.**

Photo by Hilary Schwab

Visit [MedStarHealth.org/VascularCare](https://www.MedStarHealth.org/VascularCare) to learn more or to make an appointment with one of our specialists.



**After recovering from a stroke, Megan Ambrose, MSN, RN, CNL, takes nothing for granted.** Photo by Hilary Schwab

## When every second counts, fast-acting medical team buys nurse more time.

By Emily Marrs

**As a labor and delivery nurse, Megan Ambrose sees patients with all kinds of symptoms. You name it, she's seen it.**

But on one snowy morning in January 2024, she woke up seeing something she had never seen before: double.

Forty-one-year-old Megan was completely disoriented. She struggled to talk and walk, and had trouble moving the right side of her body.

"I crawled to the bedroom door and opened it and yelled as best I could for my husband to come help," she says. He called the ambulance right away, and Megan was transported through a blizzard to MedStar Montgomery Medical Center.

"When we got to the hospital, I heard the stroke code come over the intercom," Megan recalls. She remained conscious throughout the entire experience. "And then I realized it was for me."

**"If it wasn't for MedStar Montgomery immediately figuring out what was wrong and sending me where I needed to be so quickly, I probably would not be alive."**

– Megan Ambrose, MSN, RN, CNL

Springing into action, the team at MedStar Montgomery initiated its stroke protocol, beginning with a finger-stick to rule out low blood sugar—which can cause symptoms that mimic stroke—and a pair of CT scans to determine what might have caused the stroke, if, indeed, Megan was having one.

Typically, strokes are caused by a bleed or a blood clot in the vessels of the brain. Certain types of stroke-causing blood clots can be treated with clot-busting medication if emergency care is obtained within 4 1/2 hours after symptoms appear. For other blood clots related to stroke, such as large vessel occlusions, a procedure called a thrombectomy is necessary to remove the clot.

"As soon as the imaging results came back, I heard the nurses talking, and I said, 'It's a stroke, isn't it?'" Megan remembers. She learned she had a large vessel occlusion.

Even with blurred vision, the prognosis was clear. "As a nurse myself, I knew what needed to happen next," she says. "I also knew how quickly it needed to happen."

Megan required highly time-dependent treatment at a tertiary hospital. Helicopter transport wasn't an option due to the snow, so MedStar Montgomery associates transferred Megan to MedStar Georgetown University Hospital by ambulance, with the experienced flight team aboard providing additional support.

"Our care team worked together to get Megan where she needed to go as fast as possible," says Roslyn Katz, MSN, RN, CEN, stroke coordinator at MedStar Montgomery. "Our team continuously demonstrates incredible collaboration in caring for patients in these acute situations."

"If it wasn't for MedStar Montgomery immediately figuring out what was wrong and sending me where I needed to be so quickly, I probably would not be alive," Megan says. "They had my life in their hands, and they were completely in tune with getting me the advanced care I needed."

At MedStar Georgetown, additional testing revealed a blood clot in Megan's basilar artery, in the back of her brain. The medical team performed a thrombectomy, which involves the insertion of a catheter into the femoral artery to extract the clot. The procedure is effective only within 24 hours after the onset of stroke.

"When I woke up in the recovery room after the procedure, I could talk, see, and think normally. It was almost as if nothing had ever happened," she explains. Megan later found out that the blood clot originated from a congenital hole in her heart, called an atrial septal defect. She will eventually need heart surgery to repair it.

For now, she's focused on spending quality time with her husband and two daughters, as well as her five dogs, three of which she fosters. She's also taken up crafting and home projects to maintain cognitive ability and improve hand-eye coordination.

"I feel like I've been given a second chance," she says. "Instead of getting sidetracked with all of the hardness of life, I am much more present for everything. And I will forever be indebted to the amazing medical professionals at MedStar Montgomery."

## Stroke survival: know the signs and symptoms using BEFAST.

According to the American Heart Association, stroke is the fifth-most common cause of death in the United States and a leading cause of disability. Strokes are frequently caused by a blood clot obstructing blood flow to the brain, or a blood vessel rupturing and preventing blood flow to the brain (called a bleed). Anyone can experience a stroke, though the risk increases for those with high blood pressure, diabetes, and high cholesterol.

Understanding the acronym BEFAST can help in identifying stroke symptoms and in obtaining lifesaving care as quickly as possible. Time to treatment is critical to helping stroke victims survive and recover.

**B - Balance:** Monitor for difficulty balancing, dizziness, or disorientation.

**E - Eyes:** Pay attention to visual changes and trouble seeing in one or both eyes.

**F - Face:** Look for facial drooping, or changes to one side of the face. An uneven smile is an indicator.

**A - Arms:** Check for weakness or trouble moving one or both arms. Note if one arm drifts downward.

**S - Speech:** Monitor for unclear speech, difficulty talking or understanding speech, or general confusion.

**T - Time:** Every minute counts. If you notice any of these warning signs, note the time that the symptoms began and call 911 for emergency care as quickly as possible.

Additionally, monitor for sudden numbness of the face, arms, or legs, especially on one side of the body, and for a severe headache with no obvious cause.

"Being aware of the signs and symptoms of stroke helps patients get the emergency care they need quickly," says Roslyn Katz, MSN, RN, CEN, stroke coordinator at MedStar Montgomery Medical Center. "Educating and informing others on the warning signs of stroke saves lives."

Visit [MedStarHealth.org/StrokeCare](https://www.MedStarHealth.org/StrokeCare) to learn more about our lifesaving stroke services and receive more information about the warning signs of stroke.



**Roslyn Katz,**  
**MSN, RN, CEN,**  
Stroke Coordinator,  
MedStar Montgomery  
Medical Center



# Trusting her gut helped breast cancer survivor return to busy life.

By Susan Walker

## Like most women, Michelle Stallone got her first mammogram when she turned 40.

It was normal, which was what she expected with no family history of breast cancer. She went on with her regular routine, working at the family business, raising her 9- and 13-year-olds, and spending time with her husband of 16 years.

But about nine months after her screening mammogram, she noticed an indentation in her right breast. "My weight fluctuates, so I figured it might be related to that," Michelle says.

When the indentation was still there after four weeks, she made an appointment to see her Ob/Gyn, Gissel Sonnenbrot, CRNP, at MedStar Montgomery Medical Center, who sent her for a diagnostic mammogram and sonogram.

Those tests found abnormalities, so Michelle underwent a PET scan and breast biopsy. When she learned she had stage 2 breast cancer in her right breast, she made an appointment with Nora Sudarsan, DO, a hematologist oncologist at MedStar Montgomery. Dr. Sudarsan explained to Michelle and her husband that she had triple-negative breast cancer, a more aggressive type of the disease. Genetic testing found that she had a BRCA mutation, which increases the risk of developing breast and ovarian cancer.

"I was shocked," Michelle remembers. "No one in my family had ever had breast cancer, and I had no idea that I was at an increased risk. Dr. Sudarsan walked me and my husband through my diagnosis and treatment plan, and I was ready to do whatever was needed to fight this."



**Michelle Stallone is grateful to be back to busy life with her family after completing cancer treatment at MedStar Montgomery.** Photo courtesy of Michelle Stallone

Michelle had 16 rounds of chemotherapy, then underwent a double mastectomy with reconstruction surgery performed by MedStar Montgomery surgical oncologist Jennifer Son, MD, FACS, and Samer Jabbour, MD, plastic surgeon. After she recovered, she had a laparoscopic hysterectomy to eliminate the risk of developing ovarian cancer in the future.

"Throughout my diagnosis and treatment, I really appreciated that all the doctors were very open with me. They didn't sugarcoat anything, so I knew I was well informed and they had my back. Dr. Sudarsan was amazing and I felt very comfortable with her. She always had my best interests at heart."

Michelle is cancer-free, back to her busy life, and grateful for the outcome of her treatment.

"If something seems out of the ordinary, trust your gut," she says. "If I had waited until my next mammogram, my cancer could have spread, and I would have been in a very different situation. It's better to see your healthcare provider if anything seems off than assume it's nothing and deal with the repercussions."



**Michelle Stallone, pictured with her family, rings the bell at a Washington Wizards basketball game in November 2023, marking the completion of her cancer treatment.**

Photo courtesy of the Washington Wizards

**"Throughout my diagnosis and treatment, I really appreciated that all the doctors were very open with me. They didn't sugarcoat anything, so I knew I was well informed and they had my back."**

– Michelle Stallone

Visit [MedStarHealth.org/BreastCancerCare](https://www.MedStarHealth.org/BreastCancerCare) to learn more or to make an appointment with one of our specialists.

# Classes and support groups.

## Cancer support

### Support Group for Cancer Survivors

This patient support group provides a safe place to share encouragement and receive information and guidance while discussing the unique challenges of living with a cancer diagnosis. Free. *Meets the first Friday of every month, noon to 1 p.m.*

### Support Group for Caregivers

This group aims to provide both practical and emotional support to caregivers. We will explore ways to support your loved ones while practicing self-care. Learn about resources and ways to deal with the challenging and rewarding aspects of caregiving. Free. *Meets the second Friday of every month, noon to 1 p.m.*

### Gentle Yoga

Yoga classes are tailored to meet cancer survivors' needs at all stages of treatment and recovery. Classes combine guided breathing exercises, slow stretches, and special yoga sequences to improve balance, strength, and flexibility. Free. *Wednesdays, 10:30 to 11:30 a.m.*

To register for support or yoga classes, contact Samantha Falzoi at [samantha.w.falzoi@medstar.net](mailto:samantha.w.falzoi@medstar.net) or call **301-570-7878**.



## Childbirth and parenting classes

### Complete Childbirth Prep (Hybrid)

A five- or six-week program to prepare you for a positive birth experience and postpartum journey. The program is designed to help you and your support team plan for labor and delivery, learn comfort measures and tips for infant feeding, and understand how to care for a newborn. Fee: **\$150**. *Meets 7:30 to 9:30 p.m. Call for dates.*

### Prepared Childbirth Express

This one-day, four-hour class will prepare you and your support team for your labor and birth experience. To enhance what you have learned, the Comfort Measures Class teaches practical techniques. Fee: **\$75**.

### Comfort Measures Class

This class will explore the varied ways you can find comfort during labor and birth. Learn about all the tools you and your support team can use during labor and delivery, including but not limited to breathing patterns, position changes, and relaxation techniques. Fee: **\$60**.

### Infant Care Class

This hands-on class will give you a complete look at how to care for your little one. The topics discussed include bathing, diapering, feeding, safety, and more. Fee: **\$35**.

### Infant Feeding Class

This course is designed to offer an introduction to the basics of infant feeding. Mechanics/biology of breastfeeding, pumping, bottle feeding, and potential complications will be discussed. The lactation specialist will leave you feeling supported, confident, and capable in your lactation journey and provide you with resources and access to a lactation support group. *Meets 7:30 to 9:30 p.m. Call for dates.*

## Groups and classes

### Online Lactation/New Parent Support Group

New parents are encouraged to join as we answer questions surrounding breastfeeding, including nighttime feedings, pumping and storing milk, and returning to work while continuing to breastfeed. Free. *Meets online every Thursday.*

### Diabetes Self-Management Support Class

A group for people diagnosed with Type 1 and Type 2 diabetes or those who have prediabetes. Learn about knowing and controlling your hemoglobin, A1C, blood pressure, and cholesterol; glucose monitoring; medication management; and healthy nutrition. Virtual. Free. *Three-class series, 10 to 11 a.m.*

### Senior Strength and Balance

Have fun, feel better, and get fit with this group exercise class. It is designed to help seniors 55 and older increase muscle strength, flexibility, and range of motion while maintaining cardiovascular health. Free. *Meets Wednesdays at 1 p.m. at the Mid-County Community Rec Center.*

### Home Alone Class

This class helps prepare 8- to 11-year-olds to spend brief periods of time alone. The Home Alone class will teach tactics to help them be safe when there is no adult supervision, including answering the door and the telephone, calling 911, making a pizza bagel in the microwave, and other helpful skills. This class is an in-person interactive class. Free. *One day in-person class, Saturdays, 9 a.m. to noon.*

Some classes are virtual. For full descriptions, or to learn more about dates and times, visit [MedStarHealth.org/Classes](https://www.medstarhealth.org/classes), or call **301-774-8881**, option 4.

## Meet our **new providers.**



**Kurtis Bertram, DPM**  
Podiatry  
P 301-774-8962



**Diana Ng, DNP, CRNP**  
Geriatric Medicine  
P 301-570-7400



**Keith Kowalczyk, MD**  
Urologic Oncology  
P 202-295-0580



**Carla Petty, CRNP**  
Obstetrics & Gynecology  
P 301-570-7424

To make an appointment with one of our providers, call the individual numbers listed.

## Our **services.**

Offering a variety of specialty services and advanced medical technology, MedStar Montgomery Medical Center leads the way in providing world-class, compassionate care in our community.

Our multidisciplinary teams of skilled medical professionals deliver exceptional care across a multitude of areas, including:

- Bariatric Surgery
- Behavioral Health & Psychiatry
- Breast Health
- Cardiology
- Gastroenterology
- Geriatrics
- Non-Surgical Weight Loss
- Oncology
- Orthopaedics
- Physical Therapy and Rehabilitation
- Pulmonology
- Women's Health

To learn more about our services, or to make an appointment with a specialist, call **301-774-8882**.

**It's how we treat people.**