

HEALTH MATTERS



Back To School, Hearing & Vision

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The Three Types of Tinnitus

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IMPORTANT STATISTIC

Did you know?

Older adults with untreated hearing loss have higher health care costs overall—an average of 46%, totaling more than \$22,000 over 10 years. Untreated hearing loss contributes to a higher risk of dementia and cognitive decline.

Source: Johns Hopkins' Bloomberg School of Public Health (publichealth.jhu.edu)

On the Cover

HEARING, VISION, BACK-TO-SCHOOL ISSUE

Dr. Nick Gularte of Montage Orthopedics and Sports Medicine with daughters Elaria, 4, and Anissa, 6, as they have fun baking together. Nutritious foods are just one way to keep kids healthy when they return to school.

Photo by Randy Tunnell





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Editor's Desk



Our five senses are essential to our understanding of the world. In particular, vision and hearing help us learn and develop, and as scientists begin to study further, they're finding that input from our eyes and ears is vital to keeping our brains healthy.

We know that vision or hearing impairment can be detrimental to children's development. Likewise, for older folks, vision or hearing loss can also have an impact—both of these are risk factors for dementia.

Here's the upshot: If you're having trouble seeing or hearing, even a little bit, it's worth getting it checked out.

The longer you live with impaired sight or hearing, the more likely it is that you'll feel the effects of it. Social settings may feel fraught if you can't hear what people are saying to you, or you're unable to recognize them. You then might begin to withdraw from your friendships, leading to a cycle of withdrawal—and guess what, lack of social interaction is also a risk factor for dementia.

Eyes, ears and brain: You need them all! So make that appointment with your eye doctor or audiologist, get tested, and find out what solutions are out there.

Here's to your health! *Kathryn McKenzie*

HEALTH+MATTERS

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HAVE YOU HEARD?



Chickens Can Regrow Hearing Cells

Did you know that some animals can **naturally restore their hearing**? Chickens, for example, can regrow the tiny hair cells in their inner ears—cells essential for detecting sound. Humans, unfortunately, do not have this regenerative superpower. Once these delicate cells are damaged due to aging, noise exposure or illness, the resulting hearing loss is usually permanent.

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Back ^{to} Basics



PHOTOS BY RANDY TUNNELL

Getting ready for a healthy return to school

DR. NICK GULARTE WITH DAUGHTERS ELARIA AND ANISSA

Part of what makes schools successful among children and teens is a sense of structure and routine. Yet the moment the bell rings on that last day of school before summer break, both structure and routine tend to fly out the door with the students.

During the summer, youngsters might stay up late and sleep in, enjoy more “fun foods” while traveling or attending family gatherings and parties, and indulge in more screen time and less reading.

The return to school also means a return to healthy habits to prevent illness, promote wellness, and make sure kids are at their best so that they’re ready to learn and do well in school.

An important assignment before heading back to class is for kids to get their annual physical exam and make sure they are up to date on their shots, says Dr. Pierre LaMothe, a pediatrician who recently retired from Monterey Peninsula Pediatric Medical Group,

Also of great importance, he says, is restoring sleep hygiene, the habits that encourage consistent quality sleep.

“When kids don’t get enough sleep,” says Dr. LaMothe, “their brain isn’t working right during the day, so everything is off kilter. They don’t do well in paying attention, taking tests, participating in PE.

“Kids need to go to bed early enough that they will wake up without an alarm clock. If parents are shaking them to get out of bed, they haven’t had enough sleep.”

During the summer, the sleep theme becomes “late.” Kids tend to stay up and sleep in late. Which, ironically, is the more natural sleep-wake cycle



DR. PIERRE LaMOTHE

among youth. This means they naturally feel more awake later at night and prefer to sleep later in the morning.

But this schedule doesn’t coincide with getting enough rest or getting to school on time.

LaMothe recommends returning to a productive sleep schedule a couple of weeks before classes resume. If students have been sleeping in till 8:30 a.m. but need to get up at 7 a.m., then they need to go to bed an hour and a half earlier than their summer routine has established.

Another important practice that should be woven into summer schedules, says Dr. LaMothe, is routine reading. Rather than shutting it down for summer, youngsters should read every day. Some schools send home a suggested reading list. Local librarians can recommend appropriate reading material to engage all ages and interests.

“I used to tell parents with young kids

to read to their children at bedtime,” he says. “Earlier in the day, when older kids are more awake, they can read to themselves or aloud to their parents. Reading is essential to help kids learn sentence structure and vocabulary, and for learning about the world and how to express themselves.”

Most importantly, he says, is to get off the screens and go outside.

“The biggest epidemics in pediatrics,” he says, “are obesity and mental illness. And we can draw a straight line from that to our kids’ cellphones. We need to look at technology as a way of saving time, like online banking, so we can spend more time outside.

“Decrease your kids’ screen time in the summer, so they can go to the beach, get on their bike, play kick the can.”

Guarding Against Germs

“Staying healthy means preventing infection,” says infectious disease and internal medicine specialist Dr. Martha Blum of Montage Medical Group. “We are anticipating lot more COVID circulating, and it’s more contagious, which may be a real concern for kids heading back to school.”

COVID shows up with upper respiratory symptoms and can present with gastrointestinal symptoms as well, Dr. Blum.

The three most common respiratory viruses which can peak very quickly throughout the classroom, she says, are all vaccine-preventable: flu, COVID, and RSV—respiratory syncytial virus—all of which can cause a cough, congestion, sore throat, runny nose, headache, fever, and fatigue.

“While wearing masks is still a good



DR. MARTHA BLUM

way to prevent viral transmission and get infected,” says Dr. Blum, “staying home when symptoms arise is the tried-and-true way to avoid transmitting infection to classmates and teachers.”

An important part of staying well is a strong immune system that can fight off infection. Parents should preach the message of good hand hygiene to prevent the spread of virus, she says, get into a good sleep routine, and eat a healthy diet, with lots of fresh fruits and vegetables and minimally processed foods.

Family First

When physical medicine and rehabilitation physician Dr. Nick Gularte of Montage Orthopedics and Sports Medicine thinks about keeping his young children healthy and well, he turns his attention to fostering supportive interpersonal relationships with family and friends.

“Healthy relationships with each other, with family, and with their community,” he says, “will help them be-



ELARIA AND ANISSA GULARTE

come effective human beings, which will enable them to be comfortable in themselves and be encouraged and able to serve their community.”

His daughters, Elaria and Anissa Gularte, 4 and 6, are excited to head to transitional kindergarten and first grade this fall, says Dr. Gularte. It’s also a time when he plans to expose them to a lot of different interests and activities—piano, dance, gymnastics, soccer, and caring for their dog—to help them grow and develop their own interests.

“I also want to teach my girls to care

about themselves,” Dr. Gularte says. “To avoid getting a cold is simple: Wash your hands, cover your mouth when you cough, sneeze into your elbow, get outdoors as much as you can to boost your immune system.

“I want my children learn how to eat healthy, work hard in school, lean into what inspires them, and be invested in life.”

Lisa Crawford Watson lives with her family on the Monterey Peninsula. She specializes in writing about art and architecture, health and lifestyle, and food and wine.

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LOW VISION HELP

New clinic in Salinas offers devices and training

A new satellite clinic for low-vision services is making life easier for clients in Salinas and South Monterey County.

Located at the Alliance on Aging Hub in Salinas, the Marjorie R. McNeely Low-Vision Optometry Clinic and Assistive Technology Center is part of the Blind and Visually Impaired Center of Monterey County, which has its main office in Pacific Grove.

The clinic opened on March 27 at the Hub, 236 Monterey St., Salinas.

"It's been really welcomed in the community," says BVIC executive director Steven Macias of the new clinic, which gives visually impaired residents access to adaptive devices, training and other important resources. "It really started off as a central location for the county."

The intent of the new clinic, Macias says, is to create a more accessible location for residents throughout Monterey County. Some clients who are dependent on public transportation faced a three-hour bus ride to the Pacific Grove clinic, Macias says. By contrast, the bus trip to Salinas is only about an hour.

Open on Wednesdays only, the clinic is three blocks from the Salinas Transit Center, making it convenient for clients taking the bus.

The Salinas clinic offers low-vision eye exams, support groups, Braille classes, and orientation and mobility training, which helps people with visual impairment navigate their environment by learning to use mobility aids like a white cane or guide dog. Vision professionals conduct one-on-one sessions to tailor training to a person's specific needs and goals.

Besides white canes and guide dogs, an



A CLIENT RECEIVES A LOW-VISION EXAM

O&M trainer has other means of helping the visually impaired. They include:

- Navigating roadways: Helping clients safely cross intersections and streets.
- Alternative transportation: How to use public transportation, paratransit or rideshare services.
- Integrating technology: How to use GPS apps on a smartphone. These can provide auditory guidance on the best route to follow.
- Self-advocacy: Asking for and receiving help.

A wide range of adaptive devices are available as well through the assistive technology center. "There are programs that pay for magnifiers and specialized lighting, computer software and TVs that magnify the image on the TV screen," Macias says.

Many of the devices are available for short-term loan so clients can test them at home and determine their usefulness. The center also sells, rents and loans devices.

Clients at BVIC come in all ages and stages of life, but tend to be older. Macular degeneration is the most common eye condition seen, which mainly affects people 80 and up. Other causes of vision loss include diabetic retinopathy, glaucoma and cataracts.

BVIC is a nonprofit group funded through grants, donations and events, such as its annual Fall Gala. The center is the only one in Monterey, Santa Cruz and San Benito counties offering low-vision eye evaluation and orientation and mobility training. It was incorporated on Aug. 13, 1971, making it 54 years old as

CONTINUE TO PAGE 14

Management of Wisdom Teeth

When should you consult an oral and maxillofacial surgeon (OMS) about third molars?



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About Dr. Philip Bhaskar

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LOW VISION HELP

of this month.

The center, Macias says, began as a social setting offered by a concerned group of citizens. The Lions Association of Monterey County bought the current location in 1973, offering supportive services. It is known as The Lions Building for the Blind, and the association leases it to BVIC for a dollar a year.

By 1988 BVIC's vision grew to include comprehensive rehabilitation services for the visually impaired. After a remodel the Pacific Grove clinic was named the Marjorie R. McNeely Low Vision Clinic, named for a past clinic client and the mother of a financial donor.

BVIC has a 13-member board of directors. One of the newest members is Helen Rudnick. While not involved in the planning of the Salinas clinic, she's exuberant about it.

"If it's anything like the one in Pacific Grove ... it's just a wonderful service," Rudnick says. "I'm so grateful for them



ASSISTIVE DEVICES ARE AVAILABLE FOR CLIENTS

and everything they do. It will offer things to lower income and immigrant populations that are a big part of the clientele."

For more information on the Blind and Visually Impaired Center and its clinics, or to make a donation, call (800) 404-

3505. To make an appointment for a low-vision exam, call 831-649-3505.

Tom Leyde is a freelance writer and a veteran print journalist who lived for many years in Salinas, and now makes his home in Arizona.



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KRATOM ON TRIAL

Unregulated herbal extract can cause harm, doctor says

You may not have ever heard of kratom, but this herbal supplement is now being scrutinized by health professionals for the lack of regulation around its use.

Although anyone—young people included—can walk into a local store and buy beverages containing kratom, or purchase it online, some people are calling for the substance to be regulated and restricted due to possible safety issues and the possibility that users may become addicted.

Moreover, most health care providers have no idea what it is, how it works, or the damage it can cause, says Monterey addiction medicine physician Dr. Casey Grover.

Kratom, which is extracted from an evergreen tree that grows in Southeast Asia, is traditionally used to combat fatigue and improve work productivity and endurance.

In the United States, where consumers are purchasing its derivative via the Internet and in local smoke shops, it's a product which acts as both a stimulant and an opioid, and the effects can lead to psychological and physiological dependence.

"People often purchase kratom, hoping it will help with fatigue and pain, but consumption of kratom, due to high doses or interaction with other drugs, such as opioids, can lead to overdose and death depending on what type of product is purchased," says Dr. Grover.

Dr. Grover walked into a local smoke shop and found kratom advertised as "causing collected clarity and optimized outlook," as an "all-in-one energizing life lifter," and as "a product that 'gives you energy, a body boost and well-being.'"



DR. CASEY GROVER

Yet nowhere, observed Dr. Grover, does it say that kratom causes withdrawals when users stop.

"When I mentioned the dangerous side effects of kratom to the person working at the smoke shop," he says, "she had no idea. Moreover, if a person using kratom goes to the doctor and asks for help to get off the drug, they typically get blank stares. There are very few doctors who understand kratom or its effects."

Community Awareness Campaign

When Dr. Grover speaks with patients about their use of kratom and its ill effects, the first question he asks is what type of product they're using. They don't know, he says, because it's not labeled. And nothing makes it apparent that the product is habit-forming.

"My patients are always so grateful I

have taken the time to learn about kratom," he says. "You buy a vape pen, and it says it contains nicotine, which is an addictive chemical. A bottle of alcohol says consumption of this beverage may cause health problems. Kratom doesn't have this. But we hope it will."

Actually, kratom could be equated to alcohol, he says, in that some people can use it and not have adverse effects, while many cannot. Since no one can predict into which category they fall, Dr. Grover wants people to be aware of the risks, so they can make wise, pro-health decisions.

"I went to buy a bottle of wine for dinner last week," he says, "and found the store also sells kratom."

Determined to protect health and save lives in this community and beyond, Dr. Grover met with local health officials, to work on creating cautionary labeling. He then contacted California Assembly members, to enact a Kratom Consumer Protection Act to regulate the sale and use of kratom.

"The KCPA would require not only labeling but also increased scrutiny over what products are sold. The people who use kratom actually want it regulated," he says, "because they're afraid, if it gets stronger, it will be banned."

Dr. Grover acknowledges that kratom is not as dangerous as fentanyl which, according to the Center for Disease Control, kills more than 150 people a day in this country. Yet the effects of kratom, he asserts, are not benign.

"I recently spoke with a young man I'm helping to wean off opioids. When I told

CONTINUE TO PAGE 29



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OUT OF THE DARK

Working to end stigma around mental illness

Jessie Bucci had a panic attack at age 14, the first of many that would continue through high school and college. She and her parents were under the impression she suffered from anxiety and depression until the day she experienced a psychotic episode—a disconnect from reality, which can be characterized by hallucinations and delusions.

“I felt extremely paranoid,” says the Carmel Valley resident, “believing people were out to get me, and seeing suicide opportunities everywhere. While the thoughts were intrusive, I never devised a plan, but I was terrified it might happen.”

While in the hospital, her mother lay a hand on her shoulder and told the ER nurse her daughter was “feeling a little suicidal,” perhaps, says Bucci, to make it seem less scary. She was placed on a suicide watch.

Bucci was remanded to a psychiatric hospital in New York for a month of observation to determine a diagnosis and appropriate medication protocol.

“It was terrifying, a real ‘One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest’ experience,” says Bucci, who has never allowed herself to watch the entire 1975 film. “Seeing other people there and watching what they were deeply struggling with, I felt so paranoid I would never get to leave.”

Bucci was 22 years old when she was diagnosed with bipolar disorder. Now 33, she has come to terms with her diagnosis after educating herself about her condition, which is characterized by extreme mood swings, a pendulum that moves between heightened elevation or mania, and severe depression.

Plus appropriate medication and therapy—a huge part of her journey, she says—



JESSIE BUCCI

plus learning about the importance of good sleep hygiene, physical exercise, and a healthy, nutritious diet to avoid experiencing a relapse.

“My favorite book,” Bucci says, “is ‘An Unquiet Mind: A Memoir of Moods and Madness,’ by Dr. Kay Redfield Jamison.” A leading authority on bipolar illness, Dr. Jamison is herself bipolar, and illuminated the disorder when she wrote about it in this 1996 memoir.

Bucci, who earned a bachelor’s degree in early childhood education from SUNI Courtland and a master’s in applied behavior analysis from Arizona State, was considering a second master’s degree in psychotherapy when she discovered Bring Change to Mind (BC2M). This nonprofit organization has a mission of ending stigma and discrimination surrounding mental illness, by bringing it into the conversation to make a real difference in the lives of teens and adults across the country.

“I believe I would have been a good therapist,” says Bucci, “but after researching BC2M, I realized stigma reduction is my passion in the mental health space.”

BC2M was established in 2010 by renowned actress and activist Glenn Close, after her sister Jessie Close was diagnosed with bipolar disorder, and her nephew Calen Pick was diagnosed with schizoaffective disorder.

“After my sister asked me to do something about the stigma of mental illness,” Close remarked during a presentation by the Commonwealth Club World Affairs in San Francisco, “I asked her and Calen if they would be willing to talk about their illnesses on a national platform.”

They said yes.

“We felt that the bottom issue was ‘Just talk about it,’” Close says. “In our family, no one talked about it, to great cost. That simple concept is actually quite profound and right to the point.”

During the 10 years Jessie Bucci has worked for BC2M, her day-to-day activities focus on providing virtual support to schools across the country and in-person work with local schools on behalf of their mental health awareness clubs. She provides resources and events materials as well as introducing activities, helping with access to grant funding—and, like Glenn Close’s family members—speaking at high schools and other events about suicide prevention and her own story.

What Bucci considers the gift of her mental health journey has been an increased sense of empathy to help others and the desire to uplift youth.

“Through my path of finding a way to turn my passion for mental health advocacy into action,” she says, “I found my cur-

rent job in a career I love. Through my role as regional program manager for Northern California, I am working to support mental health awareness clubs on high school campuses, of which there are almost 600 across the country, with a mission to end the stigma surrounding mental illness.”

Locally, those campuses include Marina and Soledad high schools.

Says Bucci, “BC2M starts with a willingness to have a conversation. We work to address the cultural stigmas around mental illness, stressing that it doesn’t discriminate.

“Because BC2M is a club, not an academic program, students are willing to participate in a deeper conversation around mental health. Every time I meet with a new school they all want to lean into this and bring our program to their campus.”

September is Suicide Prevention Month, a time when communities focus on awareness, advocacy, prevention, and remembrance.

“Mental illness is not your fault,” says Bucci, “but it is your responsibility. So let’s work together to end the stigma so people can receive the help they need and so deserve.”

To learn more about BC2M and how to get involved, visit www.bringchange2m-ind.org.

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NEW TO HEARING AIDS?

Some tips for the first-time user

Admitting that you have hearing loss can be a bit daunting, and so can visiting an audiologist to determine the extent of loss and being fitted with hearing aids.

Getting your first hearing aids can be a life-changing experience. So don't be discouraged by changes in sound perception or self-perception, hearing experts say. The adjustments are normal and likely will improve over time.

The first thing an audiologist does before prescribing hearing aid is to conduct a hearing test. The state-of-the-art test is known as a Cogniview test, or ear-brain test. It tells the audiologist how well your brain and ear connect.

The next step, says Dr. Laurel Hinton, an audiologist at Central Coast Audiology, is making a plan to help restore hearing loss. Hearing is tested in a quiet environment and one with background noise.

Taking a patient's lifestyle information and data from the hearing test, Hinton says, "We come up with a really good plan. ... We work with six different (hearing aid) manufacturers," Hinton says. "It's kind of like putting a puzzle together."

"It's not an instant fix," says Dr. Heather Besch, also an audiologist at Central Coast Audiology. "It takes time and it takes effort, so don't go in expecting that it's like (taking) a pill."

Patients have to be eased into hearing aid use, Hinton says. "The longer you wait (to get hearing aids) the longer it takes for your brain to connect."

That period of adjustment, she says can take anywhere from two to three months to a whole year. And, Hinton notes, connecting your ear and brain is a life-long journey.

"We love you to come back for annu-



als (hearing tests) once a year," Hinton says. Your hearing, she says, stays the same for gets worse. "We want you walking around for the next year all tuned up and ready to go."

Retesting, Hinton says, is one of the main reasons for going to a professional audiologist rather than buying hearing aids over the counter. "You don't get retesting," she says.

"We really pride ourselves on our servicing ...," she says. "It's a whole team approach. We have three doctors and (audiology) students and assistants, and it really makes for a success."

An audiology clinic also will examine hearing your aids to be sure they are working properly and clean them.

"Hearing well is aging well," Hinton says. So retesting also can determine if a patient's memory is improving or remaining the same. Hearing properly, she says, keeps a person more connected.

"A well fit set of hearing aids, you shouldn't really feel them in your ears at all," Besch says.

The cost of hearing aids depends on the extent of a person's hearing loss and what kind of environment they're in, she says.

Dr. Grant Ellison, an audiologist since 2011, created a website to help people getting hearing aids for the first time. He offers the following tips and advice:

- Give yourself time to adapt to your hearing aids and be patient with the process.
- See your audiologist multiple times to ensure you are adapting to your hearing aids correctly and maximizing their performance.
- Seek guidance from people who are going through the same experience as you.
- Hearing aids can cause changes in self-perception. You may feel like you are re-discovering a part of yourself and your ability to connect with others.
- Give yourself time to adjust to changes in sound perception. Sounds that you may not have noticed before may become more noticeable, such as the sound of flushing the toilet or crinkling paper.
- Hearing aids are programmed to match your unique hearing needs: for gain and frequency. The goal is to provide you with clear and natural-sounding speech while minimizing background noise and feedback.
- Fitting hearing aids is not a one-size-fits-all process. An audiologist will work with you to ensure that your hearing aids feel comfortable and that you feel confident wearing them. It should take 30 to 60 minutes for a fitting.
- Remember that the appearance of hearing aids should not be a barrier to improving your hearing. The benefits of clear hearing outweigh concerns about appearance.
- Technology is constantly improving hearing aids. Some are designed to be almost invisible.

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TINNITUS TRIFECTA

Three reasons for additional noise inside the ear

While hearing is a miraculous process of perceiving sound, we typically associate this physiological act with noises external to the ear.

Yet many people begin hearing sounds that manifest from the inside, phantom-like sounds no one else hears, that can be perceived as a hissing, whooshing, buzzing whistling, ringing, clicking, pulsing, humming, rushing noise.

Which, when relentless, can seem quite maddening.

This is tinnitus, a “very common” condition, says Dr. Ryan Casserly, an otolaryngologist and neurotologist with Central Coast Head & Neck Surgeons in Monterey.

“I think of tinnitus in three major camps or types,” says Dr. Casserly. “The first, which affects the vast majority of people who have it, is related to hearing loss. In fact, 90% of those with hearing loss report tinnitus, whether it’s a buzz, hiss, or a ringing sound. The general consensus is this is the brain filling in for hearing loss.”

The best way to describe tinnitus for most situations where hearing loss is attributable, he says, is to liken it to a phantom limb. A person has lost the limb, but the brain still senses it. Despite it not being there, it feels like it needs to be itched. The brain still has its sensory map. Tinnitus can be like this—the brain is still trying to fill the space with sensation.

“We joke that tinnitus not in your ear; it’s in your head,” he says, “but this is true. Tinnitus is generated not in the ear, but in the brain. And hearing-loss-related tinnitus is specifically related to the frequencies of hearing loss.”

Some 60% of people who have hearing



loss and who use hearing aids, says Dr. Casserly, report that their tinnitus is thus reduced. Rather than their brain having to fill in the hearing gap, the hearing aid is doing the job.

From a hearing-loss perspective, he says, we don’t have to have to just grit our teeth and live with it, but we have to learn to adapt to and manage it.

“When patients complain of tinnitus, the analogy I share with them is to think of a candle, burning in a dark room. If it is alone in the dark, it seems pretty bright. But if we turn on the overhead light, candlelight doesn’t seem nearly as bright. The candle didn’t change, the contrast did—how the brain interprets it.”

Additional Sources of Sound

Another “tinnitus camp,” says Dr. Casserly, is more indicative of inflammation or a reaction in the ear, which also may be layered on top of an existing hearing loss—but not always.

“Sometimes it changes pitch or character, or gets louder,” he says. “These

are the patients who tell us that when they don’t sleep well, or they consume too much caffeine—coffee or chocolate. This is treatable in that we can modify, alleviate, or smooth it out, so it shifts to the background and it is easier to forget about.”

Dr. Casserly knows patients who are 90 years old or better, who have had tinnitus for 30 years, and have since lost awareness of it. “They don’t think about it. Because their brain is no longer expecting to get stimulation at same volume levels, they adapt.”

“If they focus on it,” he says, “it is still there. But like any consistent sound we’ve heard—when we walk into the kitchen, and the fan from fridge is on—our brain completely ignores it because we tune it out.”

Through an investigation of how to address this, Dr. Casserly found a study from 2019, which reported that the intensity of tinnitus tends to fall away with a cochlear implant—a surgically implanted electronic device that electrically stimulates the auditory nerve.



DR. RYAN CASSERLY

“When we stimulate the nerve directly with the cochlear implant, the tinnitus decreases. This makes sense since, by stimulating that nerve,” he says, “the brain is getting what it wants again.”

The Heart of It

The third type of tinnitus is pulsatile or pulse-synchronous, which has a totally different cause. In this case, the person is hearing the “lub-dub” of his heart rate, pulsing in his ear.

This typically is due to a blood vessel against a thin layer of bone in the sinus at the back of the middle ear, says Dr. Casserly. So, the patient is listening to the echo of blood flow through the back of the mastoid bone and echo in the middle ear.

“Almost two years ago, I helped a woman who couldn’t fall asleep because she could hear her heartbeat pounding so loudly through her ear. Ultimately, I performed surgery in her ear, and she no longer hears that sound. In this case, her tinnitus was unrelated to hearing loss or her brain filling in the gap.”

When a patient says their tinnitus has a rhythm or sounds like their heartbeat, says Dr. Casserly, then the conversation pivots to a very different intervention.

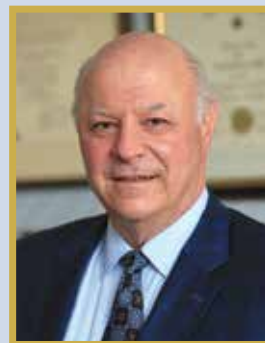
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DELICIOUS NUTRITION

Natividad Certified Farmers' Market now year-round

Staff Report

Fresh flavors, nutritious choices, and community wellness are at the heart of Natividad's Farmers' Market, which offers farm-fresh produce, wholesome prepared foods, and valuable health resources for all.

Operated by Everyone's Harvest, the Natividad Farmers' Market is held at the hospital's main campus at 1441 Constitution Blvd. in Salinas every Wednesday from 10 a.m.-2:30 p.m., with a brief break during the winter.

The family-friendly market features:

- **New market hours:** Shop and connect with local farmers from 10 a.m.-2:30 p.m.

- **The best produce:** From crisp greens to vibrant berries, seasonal offerings ensure the freshest flavors.

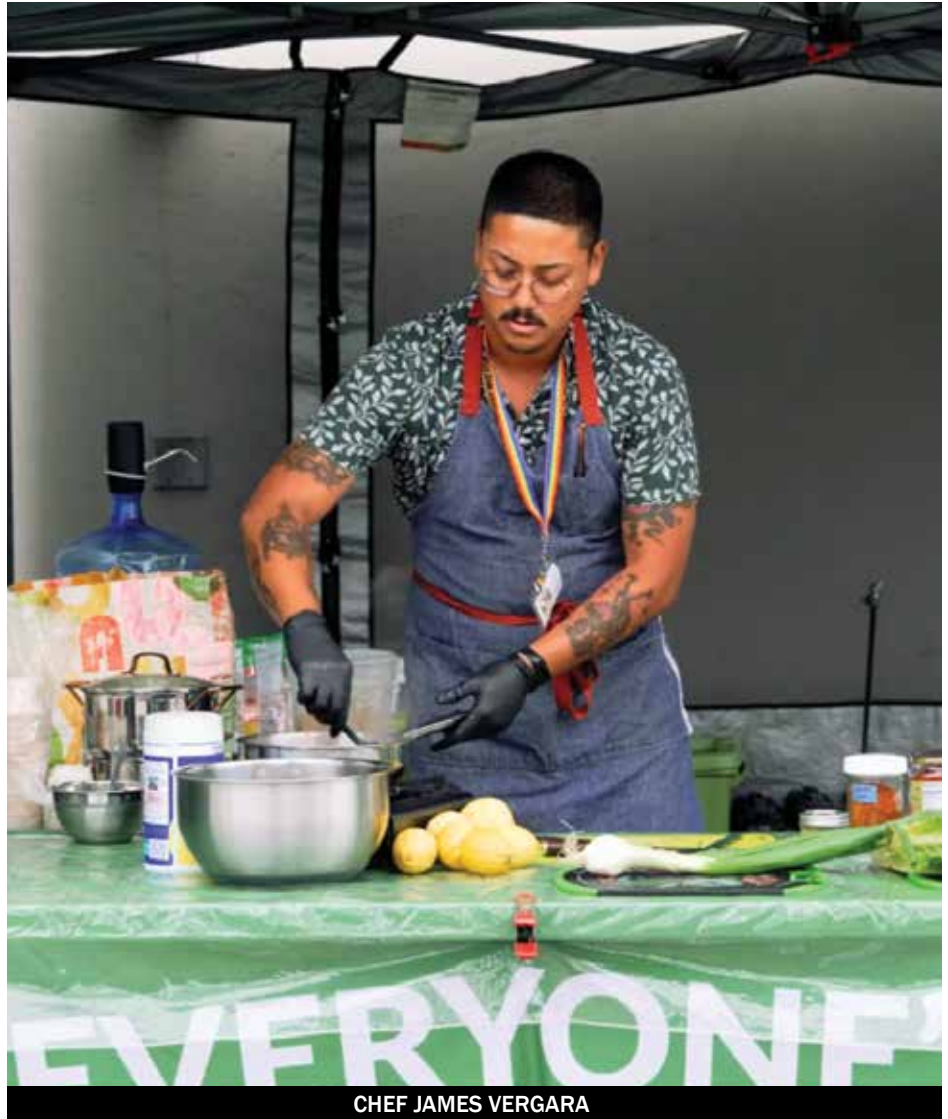
- **Expanded fresh food selection:** A diverse local vendor lineup offers healthy and delicious prepared food options.

- **Health and wellness focus:** Shoppers can learn about nutritious eating, secure easy-to-make healthy recipes and discover ways to incorporate more fresh food into their diet.

- **Interactive experiences:** Live cooking demos, tastings and wellness activities make the market an engaging experience for all ages.

"At Natividad, we believe in inspiring healthy lives in our community," says Natividad CEO Dr. Chad Harris. "We invite our patients, staff and community to our weekly farmers' market for fresh produce, cooking demos and community connection." The next cooking demo will be held on Sept. 24 at noon.

Natividad's Farmers' Market is a key component of the Fresh Rx Program, which provides fresh produce prescriptions to pediatric patients and their families who are at risk for or have diet-



CHEF JAMES VERGARA

related chronic diseases. Participants receive vouchers to purchase nutritious foods, supporting healthier lifestyles and long-term well-being.

"We are committed to making fresh food accessible to everyone," says Andrea Rosenberg, chief ancillary and support services officer at Natividad. "Through Fresh Rx, recipe cards, and interactive wellness initiatives, we're making it easier for families to eat well and live better."

The market manager, Chef James Vergara, is a community-focused nutrition

educator and industry-trained chef. As an Everyone's Harvest market manager, he combines nutrition education and culinary arts.

Through the EH Edible Education community food program, Vergara sampled these nutritious Turkish lentil balls at a recent cooking demonstration. This delicious, low-cost dish showcases the season's freshest ingredients. Originally made with bulgur, Chef James's version uses quinoa to make them gluten-free — ideal for people on various diets.

Chef James Vergara's Gluten-Free Turkish Lentil Balls (Mercimek Köftesi)

2 cups red lentils
1 cup quinoa
6 cups water
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/2 cup extra-virgin olive oil
6 scallions, sliced, whites
and greens separated
1 tablespoon tomato paste
3 tablespoons red pepper paste,
or Turkish red pepper paste
1 teaspoon ground cumin
1/2 teaspoon crushed red pepper, or
Aleppo pepper
1/2 teaspoon ground
black pepper and salt
1 bunch of Italian parsley, chopped
2 lemons, zested
Sumac, optional

Directions

1. Rinse lentils and quinoa, then add to pot with water and salt. Bring to boil, then reduce to simmer for 15 minutes. Lentils should be very tender and falling apart; quinoa should be tender. There should be no cooking liquid left. Set aside.

2. In a small sauce pot, heat olive oil. Once hot, add green onion whites. Sauté for 5 minutes.

3. Add tomato paste and pepper paste. Sauté for 1 minute.

4. Turn heat off and add cumin, red and black pepper, and salt.

5. In a large bowl, add lentil-quinoa mix, pepper oil, and parsley-scallion greens, and lemon zest. Also add in the tomato paste mixture. Mix well.

6. Form into balls, and serve with a squeeze of zested lemons on a bed of arugula, and garnished with matchstick radish and sumac.

More recipes and information about the farmers' market can be found at natividad.com/farmers-market.



VENDOR LINEUP

- Pensi Pasta
- Central Coast
Charcuterie
- Ely's Pupusas
- Chong's Korean BBQ
- Veloz Caffe
- Blissful Teas
- Tacos El Jerry
- Barajas Frutas
Frescas
- Viva Mexico Foods
- Companion
Bakeshop
- Rodriguez Ranch
- Stackhouse Farm
- Golden Flowers
- Gallardo Farm
- Coastal Paradise
Nursery
(every other week)
- Chava's Corn and
Baked Potatoes
- Freckles Pickles
(every other week)

HEAD AND NECK INJURIES

A Chiropractic Message From Dr. Steven MacDonald

My specialty is the UPPER CERVICAL SPINE. The skull and the upper cervical spine must be perfectly aligned because they house and protect the most important parts of your central nervous system—the brain and brain stem. If you've had a head or neck injury, chances are good that your spine and skull are not properly aligned. Many people don't realize that old head and neck injuries can be the cause of many of the symptoms they have today. They can affect your mood, causing you to be short-tempered or depressed. They can affect your balance and your ability to think clearly, give you headaches, head pressure, neck and shoulder pain, mid and low back pain, poor memory, blurred vision, and difficulty with speech. Head and neck injuries can also be part of the problem with Parkinson's, Alzheimer's, MS, and Fibromyalgia. Gently and specifically adjusting the cranial cervical area of the spine with NUCCA UPPER CERVICAL system I practice can help with these problems, without cracking, popping or unnecessary force. This treatment can also help correct full spine, pelvis, and leg length imbalance.

The NUCCA UPPER CERVICAL treatment I offer entails a 3-dimensional x-ray evaluation, which I study to determine the amount of distortion and misalignment. I then give a gentle, scientific chiropractic adjustment to help correct the upper cervical distortion so that pain, pressure, and many of your other symptoms can be relieved. **Please call for a consultation to see if NUCCA UPPER CERVICAL treatment can help you.**

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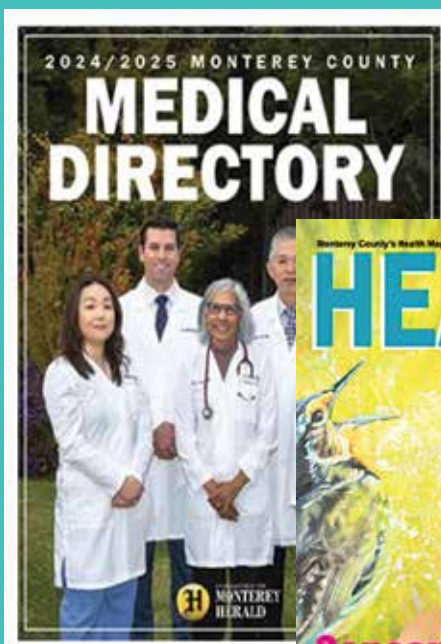
HEALTH^{MATTERS}

Monterey County's Health Magazine

Health Matters is a regional magazine for Monterey County residents offering information about local health care providers, hospitals, clinics, medical groups, and other matters relating to health and wellness on the Central Coast. Each issue of Health Matters details the latest news on the area's medical community, innovations in health care, and information on healthy lifestyles, fitness, and nutrition. Written by experienced columnists and journalists, Health Matters makes it easy to find the health news you need to know.

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Bulletins, News and Events in the Community

DOCTOR'S NOTES

New CFO joins Mee Memorial Healthcare System

Mee Memorial Healthcare System in South Monterey County has announced the appointment of Emily Emery-Shea as chief financial officer.

With more than a decade of financial leadership experience in the health care sector, Emery-Shea brings a proven track record of fiscal stewardship, strategic planning, and operational excellence. Her deep expertise in hospital finance and commitment to community-based health care make her an ideal fit for the mission and vision of Mee Memorial.

"Emily's addition to the MMHS leadership team marks an important step forward," says Rena Salamacha, the health care system's chief executive officer. "Her extensive background with Critical Access Hospitals positions us well to en-

hance our financial resilience and long-term viability."

In her role as CFO, Emery-Shea will oversee financial strategy while advancing Mee Memorial's mission to serve the South County community.

"I'm honored to join Mee Memorial at such a pivotal time," says Emery-Shea. "I look forward to contributing to a legacy of compassionate, high-quality care while supporting the financial strength needed to serve this vibrant and welcoming community."

Emery-Shea has held leadership roles at Geary Community Hospital and served as a senior healthcare consultant with BKD/Forvis Mazars, working with over 50 facilities, more than half of them criti-

cal access hospitals.

Emily is a certified public accountant and a Rural Hospital CFO (NRHA), holding multiple HFMA certifications in revenue cycle, accounting, and business intelligence. Before joining Mee Memorial, she served as CFO at Helen Newberry Joy Hospital in Michigan.

MMHS is a nonprofit, rural healthcare system and the only hospital in Southern Monterey County.

With a focus on compassionate, high-quality care and community health, MMHS operates Mee Memorial Hospital and several comprehensive outpatient clinics in King City and Greenfield, including the newly opened Children's Health and Wellness Center located in King City.

Golf tournament to support pediatric cancer research

Key for a Cure Foundation's fifth annual Golf Tournament benefiting St. Jude Children's Research Hospital in support of pediatric cancer research will take place Monday, Oct. 6, at Corral de Tierra Country Club in Salinas.

The golf tournament is part of the nonprofit organization's ongoing mission to raise funds for pediatric cancer research, which will directly benefit the work of St. Jude. The community can support their efforts by participating in the tournament or by securing one of several sponsorship opportunities.

For children, cancer can be especially heartbreaking. Despite advances in how childhood cancer is treated, the reality is one in five children will not survive cancer. St. Jude Children's Research Hospital stands on the front line of this battle, working tirelessly against catastrophic

diseases, particularly leukemia and other cancers.

Operating this pediatric treatment and research facility costs nearly \$3 million each day—a daunting figure when you consider that patients are never charged for their care.

Thanks to the generosity of the local community, Key for a Cure has raised more than \$1.1 million (it has increased since the Race for a Cure Gala) toward this groundbreaking research. Additionally, \$70,000 has directly supported local children diagnosed with cancer, helping provide essential services like in-home medical care, transportation to medical appointments, and delivery of nutritious meals.

Last year's tournament raised \$65,210 in net revenue through on-course fun-

draising competitions, a post-tourney reception, and a silent auction, according to Liz Grijalva, president of Key For A Cure Foundation. The Chasing Dreams Barrel Event the following month added another \$37,496 in net revenue. This year, the foundation is again partnering with Tony and Tina Sammut of T&T Enterprises as the presenting sponsor.

To become a sponsor, call (831) 241-3990 or email liz@keyforcure.org.

Tickets are available at \$250 per individual player. Reception-only tickets are \$100.

For more information on the tournament, visit keyforcure.org/events/, call (831) 241-3990, or email info@keyforcure.org.

To donate to Key for a Cure Foundation, visit: <https://keyforcure.org/donate/>

Natividad awarded top quality improvement honor

America's Essential Hospitals has recognized Natividad Medical Center for its work decreasing anemia and transfusion rates in pregnant patients.

Natividad received a 2025 Gage Award for quality improvement at a June 12 luncheon at VITAL2025 in Atlanta.

"We are deeply honored to receive the Gage Award for our 'Hospital-Led Outreach to Reduce Anemia at Time of Delivery' project," says Dr. Chad Harris, CEO, Natividad Medical Center. "This recognition reflects our commitment to improving maternal health outcomes, particularly for our Latina and indigenous communities. Together with our dedicated team and community partners, we are proud to bring accessible, high-quality care to our patients. We hope this program serves as a model of care for other health care systems."

Natividad team members noticed that transfusion rates began to increase rapidly in 2021, especially among Latino and native indigenous communities from Mexico served by the hospital. Recognizing that undergoing multiple rounds of infusions posed a barrier to treatment for patients, hospital leaders secured Medicaid coverage for single-infusion therapy courses.

Natividad's obstetrics leadership team taught medical staff at eight community clinics about the negative effect of anemia, how to monitor patients' hemoglobin and iron stores, and best practices in treating iron deficiency, which often involves up to eight rounds of iron infusions. From 2021 to 2024, the anemia

rate at participating clinics fell from 18.4% to 11.7%.

"Our members reach outside their walls to meet patients where they are and provide superior, person-centered care," said Dr. Bruce Siegel, president and CEO of America's Essential Hospitals. "These awards spotlight innovative solutions that reflect their commitment to their mission."

The Gage Awards, named after association founder Larry Gage, honor and share successful and creative member hospital programs that improve patient care and meet community needs. The Gage Award for quality improvement recognizes activities that improve the quality of care or that mitigate threats to patient safety.



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CONTINUE FROM PAGE 16

KRATOM ON TRIAL

him kratom acts like an opioid, he said something I hear all the time: 'I wish I'd known.' If you take kratom regularly and stop, it can lead to opioid withdrawal symptoms."

And, if you take it in high doses, he says, it can lead to an overdose.

"The consumer deserves the right to know," says Dr. Grover. "According to the National Library of Medicine, an estimated 2 million Americans are using kratom. I believe that's a conservative number.

"By approaching the consumer regulation division of the District Attorney's office, I'm trying to do my due diligence on behalf of public health."

More information about kratom can be found at the National Institute on Drug Abuse, nida.nih.gov/research-topics/kratom.

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Monterey Bay FC extends Montage Health partnership

Monterey Bay Football Club (Monterey Bay FC) has officially announced a new four-year extension with Montage Health to remain as a prominent partner with the club in an agreement that includes front-of-kit sponsorship through 2029.

In addition, Montage Health will continue to support the team's wellness, fitness and physical therapy needs, providing comprehensive care and recovery services to aid the players' performance both on and off the pitch.

"We are thrilled to continue our partnership with Montage Health," says Monterey Bay FC President, Mike DiGiulio. "From the onset we have been together on this journey to bring pro soccer to our great community, and the unity between our organizations has been exceptional from day one. Entering the next phase of our club's development with our founding partner is very special. We look forward to the next four years and all that we can accomplish together."



Monterey Bay FC and Montage Health recognize the important role sports play in fostering healthy lifestyles and mental resilience among community members. As a gathering place for families to enjoy time together, soccer offers opportunities to build lifelong habits that contrib-

ute to physical and emotional well-being. Montage Health values its ongoing partnership with Monterey Bay FC as a way to support shared goals of promoting wellness and strengthening connections across the region.

"Our collaboration reflects a commitment to encouraging healthy, active lifestyles and creating positive experiences for families throughout Monterey Bay," says Dr. Mike McDermott, president and CEO of Montage Health. "We are proud to support Monterey Bay FC as a community partner that helps bring people together through sport."

As part of the partnership, Monterey Bay FC and Montage Health will continue to work together to emphasize and educate on the importance of health and wellness in the region, while also inspiring children in the community through exciting and memorable opportunities such as Healthy Youth Field Day and multiple Ohana Camps focused on building mental health fitness.

Healthy Youth Field Day, in partnership with Aspire Health, is an annual initiative that brings together more than 150 elementary students and their teachers for a morning of active, hands-on wellness education. Montage Health will also feature on the sleeve of the jersey at each level of the club's development program for the duration of the deal.



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