

# Health Connection



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Connection  
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# Stroke: When time counts

➤ **Theresa Swanson's mother is living proof that fast treatment pays off when you're having a stroke.**

Several years ago, Swanson's mother, Norma Michael, was having trouble communicating and was quickly brought into the emergency room at Galesburg Cottage Hospital. "The staff determined quickly that she was having a stroke," Swanson says. After the physician educated Swanson on the benefits and risks of the clot-busting drug tissue plasminogen activator (tPA), she gave the go-ahead for her mother to receive the stroke treatment.

Without it, Michael would likely have faced a difficult existence. "Not to be able to speak or eat on her own? My mother would never have wanted to live that way," Swanson says. Today, Michael is 85 years old and has very few residual effects from the stroke. A fast response made all the difference.

## About John Woodward Jr., M.D.

**What's so great about emergency medicine?** "The patients are different every day," Dr. Woodward says. He loves working with patients of varying ages and on cases he might not otherwise see—such as those with life-threatening illnesses or injuries—if he had focused on a different medical specialty.

Dr. Woodward has been at Cottage Hospital for three years. He graduated from medical school at the Medical University of the Americas and completed his residency at the University of Illinois in Peoria.



## Time is of the essence

When a potential stroke patient comes through the doors of Cottage Hospital, a chain of events rapidly unfolds. Following American Heart Association stroke care guidelines, patients are immediately triaged, says Mindi Lovell, R.N., emergency department director at Cottage Hospital. A medical history is performed, vitals are taken, IVs started and blood work drawn before the patient is rushed to undergo a computed tomography (CT) scan of the head—all within 10 to 15 minutes.

"We're looking for cerebral bleeding," Lovell says, noting that bleeding excludes a patient from receiving tPA. Patients who've had symptoms for longer than three hours typically don't receive tPA either, as their risk for medication-induced bleeding is increased.

A radiologist analyzes the CT scan to determine the results. From there, a decision is made whether to give tPA. If the patient receives it, he or she is sent to Methodist Medical Center of Illinois or Saint Francis Medical Center in Peoria, where a stroke neurologist handles any complications that may arise, says John Woodward Jr., M.D., an emergency room physician at Cottage Hospital. Patients not eligible for tPA may also be transferred to undergo other stroke interventions, such as manual removal of the stroke clot, he says.

The key is to act fast: The longer a patient goes without seeking medical help, the fewer treatment options he or she has. ●



## Did you know?

Complimentary blood pressure checks are available in The Cottage lobby every Tuesday morning from 10 a.m. to noon.



# The role of a lifetime

115 pounds lighter, actor is a new man

## ➤ For Gary Mustain, there was no hiding. Sure, the 52-year-old

seasoned theater actor from Galesburg could easily slip into costume and become someone else—Mayor Shinn from “The Music Man” or Ebenezer Scrooge from “A Christmas Carol.” But at the end of the day, there was no escaping from the excess weight that took center stage. He didn’t feel his weight fit in with how his characters should look. Healthwise, it contributed to high blood pressure and, in turn, physicians believe, a heart arrhythmia that forced him to undergo a cardiac procedure in 2000 to stop potentially dangerous irregular heartbeats.

Feeling down and faced with a string of failed diets and difficulties getting around, he decided enough was enough.

### Setting the stage

“I was 340 pounds when I started the program,” Mustain says, recalling when he officially signed on to undergo weight-loss surgery at Galesburg Cottage Hospital. “I couldn’t do this by myself. And I wanted something to help me.”

That something was gastric banding surgery, where an adjustable band is surgically fitted around the stomach to create a smaller stomach pouch that helps a person feel fuller faster without actually retooling the digestive system like gastric bypass does. Although the band is considered a permanent weight-loss solution, it can be tightened or loosened, or removed, if need be.

With his primary care physician’s blessing, Mustain began his weight-loss journey—first, losing some weight on his own, then undergoing the gastric banding procedure in May 2010. He lost most of his 115 pounds by November of that year. He credits the bariatrics staff at Cottage Hospital with helping him reach his goals.

“The surgery itself seemed easy,” Mustain says. “I went home the same day.” But as any weight-loss surgery patient will tell you, it’s what follows surgery that’s a little trickier. You need to be committed to lifestyle changes.

“The surgery has changed the way I look at food and portions,” he says. He now eats smaller, low-carbohydrate meals, attends support groups and—this is the part Mustain admits he’s still working on—exercises regularly. He believes exercise holds the key to the final 20 pounds he wants to lose.

### Stepping out

Post-surgery, the blood pressure medications Mustain takes have been cut in half. His cholesterol—while never particularly high—has dropped an astounding 50 points. He looks and feels great.

Mustain had taken a hiatus from the stage to focus on his health, but says he plans to audition again for the role of Scrooge this year. Dickens’ famous miser has always been depicted as more of a slender man. “I look more like him now,” Mustain says. ●



### We’re here to help

To learn more about weight-loss surgery, visit **Cottage Hospital.com**, click on “Services,” then “Surgical Weight Loss,” or call **(309) 343-8131**, ext. 2368.



# Heart smart

Our new specialist takes cardiac care to the next level



**ALAR SAMBANDAM, D.O.**  
CARDIOLOGIST



## Be heart healthy

To learn more about Cottage Hospital's cardiac services, visit [CottageHospital.com](http://CottageHospital.com), click on "Services," and then "Cardiac Services," or call (309) 345-4439.

### ➤ There's good news and bad news in the war on heart disease.

The bad news is that cardiovascular disease is still the No. 1 cause of death in the United States. But the good news is that physicians are constantly learning new and better ways to prevent and treat heart problems.

So says our newest specialist, Alar Sambandam, D.O., a board-certified non-interventional cardiologist who joined the medical staff at Galesburg Cottage Hospital in August.

"Changes are occurring extremely quickly in this field," she says. "Every day, new studies come out that provide more hope and promise." Indeed, Dr. Sambandam chose to specialize in cardiology because, she says, "the field is very optimistic. We can do a lot of good for our patients."

### Focusing on women

Dr. Sambandam has an office in the new medical building. "This is a great opportunity for me to grow a local practice that

helps the community," she says.

She plans to reach out to the community with free health screenings for residents to get their blood pressure checked and to answer any questions they have about heart health.

She's also especially interested in focusing on heart disease in women. "Cardiac disease is underdiagnosed and often under-recognized in women because they can have different signs and symptoms of the disease than men," she says. "I think it's very important to raise awareness so that women will get treatment sooner."

### A good listener

Dr. Sambandam believes that bedside manner is just as important as medical expertise, and patients often comment on

## About our new cardiologist

**Alar Sambandam, D.O., grew up in Florida and graduated from Emory University in Atlanta, Ga., with a biology degree. She attended Nova Southeastern University College of Osteopathic Medicine in Fort Lauderdale, Fla., and completed her internship and residency in internal medicine at Advocate Lutheran General Hospital in Park Ridge. She then completed her fellowship in cardiology at St. James Hospital in Olympia Fields.**

She lives in Galesburg with her husband, Subbu Ramanaphan, a chief financial officer, and their daughter. She enjoys reading, cooking and camping in her spare time.

## Letter FROM THE CEO



### DEAR NEIGHBORS,

Recently, I met with the president of a hospital in the quad cities so that we could get to know each other. It

**EARL  
TAMAR**  
Chief Executive  
Officer

was his first visit to Galesburg Cottage Hospital. As we sat down, he started the conversation off by complimenting me on how friendly he found our employees to be. He said that he was warmly welcomed as he came into the facility and that everyone that he passed in the hallway said "Hello."

That was music to my ears! I have a passion for customer service and feel that everyone who enters our facility should be treated in a special way. I want our staff to care for patients like they're members of their own family. While we're doing well in this regard, there's always room for improvement. We've trained all employees and volunteers in customer service skills so that we can attain an even higher level of service for our patients.

The only way to know whether we're reaching our goals is to receive feedback from those we serve. The next time you interact with one of our physicians or receive services from our hospital, please let me know whether you were satisfied with your experience. You can reach me at **(309) 345-4567**. Your feedback will make us even better. Thank you.

Sincerely,

## Earl Tamar

*Chief Executive Officer  
Galesburg Cottage Hospital*

### Do you know the symptoms of a heart attack?

**For both women and men, the most common symptom of a heart attack is pain or discomfort in the center of the chest. But women are more likely than men to have other common symptoms of a heart attack, including:**

- › pain or discomfort in one or both arms, the back, neck, jaw or stomach
- › shortness of breath
- › nausea or vomiting
- › feeling faint or woozy
- › breaking out in a cold sweat

Women are also more likely to have less common symptoms of a heart attack, including:

- › heartburn
- › loss of appetite
- › feeling tired or weak
- › coughing
- › heart flutters

The more symptoms you have, the more likely that you're having a heart attack. Even if you're not sure you're having a heart attack, it's important that you get checked out.

*Source: The National Women's Health Information Center*

her compassion, her listening skills and her ability to explain complex information in a patient-friendly way.

"Patients need to feel that they can ask any question and discuss any option. I want to make them part of the decision-making process," she says. "It's important for patients to go to a doctor who doesn't intimidate them." ●

# Oh, baby!

Birthing center offers numerous advantages for moms



## Special delivery

For more information, visit [CottageHospital.com](http://CottageHospital.com) and click on "Services," and "Family Birthing Center." For a list of classes available to expecting moms, call (309) 345-4211.



WITH THEIR BABY AT THEIR SIDE, NEW PARENTS ENJOY THEIR IN-ROOM CELEBRATORY DINNER.



### ➤ So what are you in the mood for? The cheese and spinach tortellini?

Perhaps the salmon? Or maybe the rib-eye steak?

Though they may sound like choices at a gourmet restaurant, they're just some of the dining options available to new parents at the recently revamped birthing center at Galesburg Cottage Hospital, where about 85 percent of all deliveries in the area take place.

### Homelike atmosphere with perks

The complimentary dinner is served in-room the day after delivery on a special table with linens and china. "It has more of a restaurant feel to it," says Melissa Stewart, R.N., obstetrics nurse manager. The hospital has also gone decidedly upscale, giving away designer "cinda b" quilted baby bags—in your choice of navy blue or pink—to moms who deliver at Cottage Hospital.

It's all part of our mission to make having a baby here a memorable experience. Recent renovations to the center saw new flooring, furniture and wall treatments (more than 40 beautiful photo canvases

of local families, donated through the Galesburg Arts Council) added as well.

### Experienced staff

Beyond physical appearances, the birthing center offers a mix of experienced nursing care—some nurses have been at the hospital for 40 years—and Ob/Gyns who have more than 50 years combined experience in bringing babies into the world.

"I receive very good feedback about the hospital and birthing experiences from our patients," says Tara Baum, M.D., an Ob/Gyn at Cottage Hospital. In fact, the birthing center consistently rates high in patient satisfaction, based on patient surveys, she says.

So what else can moms expect at Cottage Hospital? "While the birthing suites are private, we also have semi-private rooms that we try to keep private, too," Stewart says, adding that other perks include epidurals that are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and an experienced breastfeeding educator to help moms master breastfeeding.

From the physician perspective, Cottage Hospital is a great place to deliver. "It's a very well-designed unit," says Daniel Piper, M.D., a board-certified Ob/Gyn at Cottage Hospital. Newly remodeled rooms enable women to labor, deliver, recover and bond with their babies in the same room, and an updated monitoring system lets physicians keep an eye on moms whether they're on the move or in one of the unit's four labor tubs. Operating rooms for cesarean sections are located right in the birthing center.

"We make it so they want to come back," Dr. Piper says of the Cottage Hospital experience. "We have a lot of repeat patients." ●

Health Connection is published as a community service of Galesburg Cottage Hospital. There is no fee to subscribe.

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# Getting the skinny on **skin cancer**

➤ **Joan Rescinito isn't new to skin care. A former redhead—and thus at higher risk for skin cancer—the 83-year-old grandmother of four and great-grandmother of one has had several suspicious spots and moles removed over the years, none of which were cancerous.**

"Recently, I had a spot that just popped up on my arm," says Rescinito, a former teacher at Carl Sandburg College. Soon after, she saw a notice in the paper that Galesburg Cottage Hospital was holding a skin cancer screening at the hospital. "My husband, Joe, suggested I check it out," she says.

This is the third year the screening has been offered through the hospital's Healthy Woman program. John McClean, M.D., a board-certified hematologist/

oncologist, and board-certified general surgeons Mark Davis, M.D., FACS, and Sherwin Parungao, M.D., screened nearly 100 area women at the event held in June.

Of those, more than 20 women were told they should seek further medical advice for suspicious skin formations. One of those was Rescinito. "Dr. Parungao said we needed to look at this, so I made an appointment and he removed it a couple of weeks later," she says.

Her skin cells were sent to the lab for a biopsy.

"We never had sunscreen as kids," Rescinito says. "So it's very important to get screened. And use sunscreen—I put it on first thing every day." ●



**JOAN RESCINITO KNOWS FIRSTHAND THE IMPORTANCE OF SKIN CANCER SCREENING.**

## Skin cancer facts and figures

**Skin cancer is the most common form of cancer among U.S. adults.**

- **Types:** The two most common types of skin cancer are basal cell cancer and squamous cell cancer. They usually appear on the head, face, neck, hands and arms. Melanoma is less common, but also the most dangerous.
- **Risk factors:** Fair skin and having had

sunburns during childhood are major risk factors for developing skin cancer.

- **Screening tips:** Check yourself every month for changes in moles, freckles and age spots. Report any changes to your physician. Regular self-exams and physician exams increase the chance of finding skin cancer early, when it's most easily treated.



### Are you at risk?

To learn more about skin cancer and what you can do to help protect yourself, visit **CottageHospital.com**, click on "Health Resources" and type "skin cancer" in the search box to see a skin cancer guide.