

# VIM & vigor

SUMMER 2015



## A Healthy Mind

**A look at mental health** and its impact on your overall well-being

+ **David Beckham** became a soccer superstar in spite of obsessive-compulsive disorder

OLDER ADULTS MAKE THE MOST OF THEIR GOLDEN YEARS

**WK South's expansion:**  
**A commitment to patient care**

VIRTUAL HOSPITAL GIVES STUDENTS HANDS-ON EXPERIENCE



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# HEALTHY MIND, HEALTHY BODY

*Our mental state is a core component of our well-being*



When most people think of “health,” they think of their body, their physical well-being. Those who want to be healthy will focus on what they eat and how they exercise. They see a physician for routine screenings at appropriate intervals. Yet some of those who are focused on physical health often overlook that mental health is a very real and important aspect of overall health, one that can actually affect physical health.

This issue of *Vim & Vigor* highlights mental health and soccer star David Beckham’s struggle with obsessive-compulsive disorder. Reading his story and gaining information about good mental health gives us an opportunity to reflect on the importance of mental health and early detection and treatment of problems as well as preventive strategies.

One way many people keep their brains healthy is through activity and interaction with others. This is particularly evident at The Oaks of Louisiana, where residents enjoy a wide range of activities and associations with like-minded people. Learn more about what helps to keep their brains active in the story by Terrie Roberts, “Aging Actively,” on page 49.

While residents at The Oaks are getting a new lease on life when they move to that community, residents in Southwest Shreveport are seeing even more life at Willis-Knighton South & the Center for Women’s Health. That campus has been busy with construction and expansion over the last 18 months, marked by the opening of a spacious parking garage last fall. Read Darrell Rebouche’s story about this exciting growth phase on page 52.

The opening last year of the WK Innovation Center was another construction project for our health system, transforming the former Bossier Medical Center campus into a place of learning and new ideas. A year later, the Innovation Center’s Virtual Hospital has been well received by medical, nursing and allied health professionals who are honing their skills on lifelike simulators/patients. Lyne Robinson looks at this successful hospital training program in her story on page 54.

You will find other interesting and helpful information for yourself and your family in this issue. Our goal is to give you news you can use to improve your health. So stay cool and stay healthy this summer, physically and mentally.

James K. Elrod  
President and CEO



# VIM & VIGOR

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### **Set Your Mind to It**

Want to improve your mood and handle stress better? Work out with us! Stop by one of the four WK Fitness & Wellness Centers or call **318-212-4475** to ask about becoming a member.

# EXERCISE FOR THE BRAIN

*A good workout helps boost memory and reduce stress*



As Willis-Knighton's cardiac rehab coordinator, I mainly focus on the benefits of exercise as it applies to heart health. But I also know very well that exercise benefits all body systems, including the brain. Extra blood flow distributed during exercise delivers valuable oxygen and nutrients the brain needs to function at its best.

In a *Women's Health* article, fitness professional Karen Asp writes that

exercise "floods the brain with chemicals that enhance functions such as memory, problem-solving and decision-making," and "it signals the release of several key hormones, including serotonin, the famed mood booster; dopamine, which affects learning and attention; and norepinephrine, which influences attention, perception [and] motivation."

Asp quotes Thomas Crook, PhD, a clinical psychologist and memory researcher: "Cardiovascular health is

more important than any other single factor in preserving and improving learning and memory."

It's obvious that what exercise does for people can be powerful. I spoke with two cardiac rehab patients recently who confirmed that exercise helps them with memory and also helps reduce their stress and anxiety.

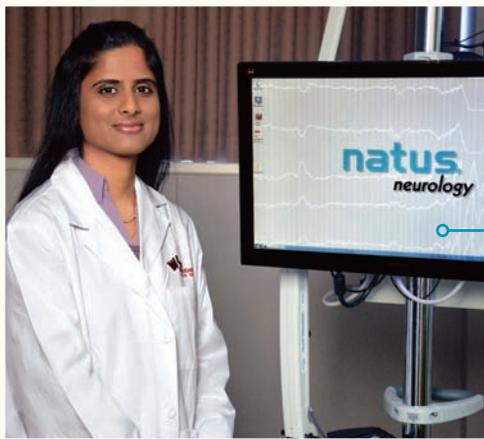
The brain benefits of exercise are clear. They are there waiting for you. Trust me, if you want improved memory and alertness, improved self-esteem, and reduction in stress, anxiety and depression, reap those benefits by continuing your exercise routine—or starting one. ■

## HIGH-TECH UNIT FOCUSES ON EPILEPSY

Willis-Knighton Medical Center is now home to an epilepsy monitoring unit (EMU) with state-of-the-art continuous video and electroencephalography (EEG) monitoring. “These highly specialized units are only available in hospitals with epilepsy specialists,” says Reena Nanjireddy, MD, neurologist with Tri-State Neurology. Dr. Nanjireddy joined Gurleen Sikand, MD, at Tri-State Neurology last fall after completing a fellowship in clinical neurophysiology and epilepsy at Detroit Medical Center, Wayne State University.

“In the EMU, we offer this complex testing to evaluate the cause of events that a patient is experiencing,” Dr. Nanjireddy explains. An EEG involves a short-term test, what she terms “a snapshot of the brain.” In the EMU, continuous recording of brain activity over a longer period, generally three to five days, is complemented with video and audio recording. She indicates that this is an advanced way to provide doctors with the information to make the best treatment decisions for patients.

“We are pleased to offer this wonderful technology to patients and the doctors who care for them,” Dr. Nanjireddy says.



**Reena Nanjireddy, MD, says the advanced technology in Willis-Knighton's epilepsy monitoring unit gives doctors more information to care for patients.**



**Gazi B. Zibari, MD**

## Willis-Knighton Surgeon Honored by Peers

The Louisiana State Medical Society presented Gazi B. Zibari, MD, with its Physician Award for Community Service at its annual house of delegates meeting earlier this year. The award recognizes a member who is actively involved in community and civic activities above and beyond their responsibilities in the practice of medicine. The award is given in appreciation of the time and personal investment contributed by physicians to the welfare of their respective communities and the positive reflection this service brings to the medical profession.

A physician in the Willis-Knighton Physician Network, Dr. Zibari performs transplants and advanced surgeries and is medical director of the John C. McDonald Regional Transplant Center at Willis-Knighton. He joined the network following a distinguished career in academic medicine.

In 1976 Dr. Zibari came to the U.S. as a 17-year-old refugee from Kurdistan, Iraq. He graduated from David Lipscomb College in Nashville, Tenn., and the University of Tennessee College of Medicine in Memphis. He served a residency at LSU Health Sciences Center in Shreveport and then completed a fellowship in transplantation at the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine in Baltimore.

He returns to Kurdistan each year to provide advanced medical care, encouraging colleagues to join him in providing care to an area that has been plagued with terrorism and war. Dr. Zibari and his passion to help others have been recognized previously by the National Ethnic Coalition of Organizations, which presented him the Ellis Island Medal of Honor for coming to this country and seizing opportunities to improve not only his life but also the lives of others.

**Dr. Zibari and his passion to help others have been recognized previously by the National Ethnic Coalition of Organizations.**

## BY THE NUMBERS



WILLIS-KNIGHTON HEART INSTITUTE HAS PERFORMED

**14,886**  
PROCEDURES EACH YEAR ON AVERAGE



INCLUDING



**797**  
PACEMAKER/IMPLANTABLE CARDIOVERTER DEFIBRILLATOR PROCEDURES



AND



**224**  
ABLATION PROCEDURES FOR TREATMENT OF ATRIAL FIBRILLATION



## RESTORING THE PAST FOR THE GOOD OF THE FUTURE

Anyone who has visited the WK Innovation Center in Bossier City can attest that what was once an abandoned and poorly maintained building has been given new life. A well-orchestrated renovation, coupled with the vision of Willis-Knighton's CEO, James K. Elrod, has given Bossier City a new source of pride with its Virtual Hospital, Talbot Medical Museum, WK Archives, and comfortable, tastefully appointed meeting space.

Late in 2014, Willis-Knighton purchased the former site of Doctors' Hospital on Louisiana Avenue, and the transformation of that building is underway. Fortunately, WK officials have noted that this building had been much better maintained than the old WK Innovation Center building, so the hope is for a faster rebirth.

"Our goal has been to carefully analyze possible uses for the health system and the community," Elrod says.

"We look forward to adding this new facility that will honor the former hospital's medical heritage while bringing new life and more people into the Highland area."

The health system will invest \$12 million in the project to transform the hospital into the Willis-Knighton Rehabilitation Institute, which will

**The former site of Doctors' Hospital on Louisiana Avenue will be transformed into the Willis-Knighton Rehabilitation Institute.**

include inpatient physical medicine and rehabilitation, inpatient behavioral medicine and rehabilitation, and several services that complement these forms of restorative care. The project is expected to be completed this fall.



**The many activities at The Oaks include art classes and trips to local museums.**

series, a lifelong learning offering presented by noted professors from LSU in Shreveport.

Special-interest clubs created this year make it easy for residents to remain socially active, make new friends and explore new (or renewed) interests with others, says Rhonda Maclsaac, director of independent living at The Oaks of Louisiana, indicating residents always seem to be busy.

“We have Stage Left, a theater club that attends performances throughout the theater season,” she says. “This area is home to Shreveport Little Theatre, Marjorie Lyons Playhouse, Emmett Hook Center, the Strand Theatre and River City Repertory Theatre, among others, so there are many opportunities to see entertaining shows.”

The Page Turners book club caters to residents who love to read for pleasure, enjoy learning new things or are interested in other perspectives of life. Members select a book and then schedule a discussion, Maclsaac says, indicating it is a self-directed club.

Other groups include a dining club, for residents who enjoy local food experiences; a travel club, for those who like to go and do; and a sewing club, for residents interested in sewing of any type—task sewing (alterations, hemming, repairs), crocheting, needlepoint or embroidery.

“If a resident can’t find a club to meet his or her interests, he or she can organize one,” Maclsaac says. “These clubs provide a network to engage with others socially while having fun.” ■

## GO AND DO

*Idleness is not on the community calendar*



The only thing residents don’t find on the monthly calendar at Tower at The Oaks is boredom.

Designed for active adults, Tower at The Oaks is not a cookie-cutter “retirement” option. The lifestyle offered is defined by amenities and activities.

Residents rarely find stereotypical activities like bingo, knitting or watching television on their to-do list.

Instead, these active adults enjoy a broad variety of cultural diversions, including performances by the Shreveport Symphony Orchestra, trips to area museums including the R.W. Norton Art Gallery, and dramatic and musical presentations by local theatrical and dance troupes.

They expand their horizons each spring and fall, participating in the popular University at The Oaks historical

# EATING HEALTHY CAN BE DELICIOUS

*Make these stuffed peppers with yellow, red and green for a colorful meal and serve with this scrumptious fruit salad*

## Summer Fruit Salad with Toasted Almonds

### INGREDIENTS

- 1 cup riesling or other sweet white wine
- 1 tablespoon white wine vinegar
- 1 tablespoon almond oil
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- ⅛ teaspoon black pepper
- 8 cups mixed salad greens
- 3 plums, sliced
- 2 peaches, peeled and sliced
- 2 nectarines, peeled and sliced
- 2 apricots, peeled and sliced
- ¾ cup pitted fresh cherries, halved
- ¼ cup (2 ounces) crumbled goat cheese
- 2 tablespoons sliced almonds, toasted



### INSTRUCTIONS

#### Dressing:

Heat wine in a medium saucepan over medium-high heat until reduced to 2 tablespoons (about 10 minutes). Remove wine from heat and stir in vinegar, oil, salt and pepper.

#### Salad:

Toss salad greens and fruit together in a large bowl. Gently stir in salad dressing. Sprinkle goat cheese and sliced almonds on top of salad. Serve immediately.

*Recipe from chefs at The Oaks of Louisiana.*



## Quinoa Stuffed Peppers

### INGREDIENTS

- 6 bell peppers, any color
- 1 cup organic quinoa, cooked
- 2 tablespoons sunflower seeds
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 2 garlic pods, chopped
- ¼ cup chopped fresh basil
- 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 2 cups vegetarian meat crumbles or lean ground beef
- 1 15-ounce can crushed tomatoes
- 1 teaspoon Himalayan crystal salt or sea salt
- 2 teaspoons cumin
- 1 teaspoon turmeric
- ½ cup grated goat cheese
- ½ cup organic cheddar cheese

### INSTRUCTIONS

- 1 Wash peppers, cut off top and remove seeds. Dice tops of peppers, discarding stems.
- 2 Pour juice from tomatoes into shallow baking dish and stand peppers aside.
- 3 Add oil to a large skillet and sauté onions and garlic about 3 minutes. Add basil and sauté an additional 3 minutes. Add diced pepper tops, quinoa, sunflower seeds, meat and tomatoes. Season with salt, cumin and turmeric and simmer mixture over medium heat 15 minutes, stirring occasionally. Remove from heat and stir in goat cheese.
- 4 Spoon quinoa mixture into each pepper, pushing down gently so each pepper is filled well. Sprinkle each pepper with cheddar cheese. Bake covered at 350 degrees for 45–50 minutes or until peppers are tender.

*Recipe from Julie Hartley, RD, Willis-Knighton Diabetes & Nutrition Center.*

**MANAGEMENT PROFILE**

# Emergency Care Coordinator



As **Susan Cash** reminisces about her career at Willis-Knighton, her eyes sparkle. "It has been exciting," she says with a wistful smile. "I've had a lot of different experiences."

As director of Emergency Services, Cash oversees the operation of WK's four emergency rooms, as well as air and ground transport services. To say she has had varied experiences is an understatement. She has dedicated 34 years to Willis-Knighton, starting as a staff nurse. She was the department's first educator and then rose to head nurse of the emergency department at Willis-Knighton Medical Center. The health system's additions, starting with Willis-Knighton South in 1983, followed by WK Bossier and WK Pierremont, have enabled her to oversee extraordinary growth. ER visits have increased from 53,000 to more than 181,000 in the last 18 years.

As the health system grew, so did Cash's responsibilities. She wouldn't have it any other way. "Being involved in the construction of new hospitals has probably been one of my favorite things," she says.

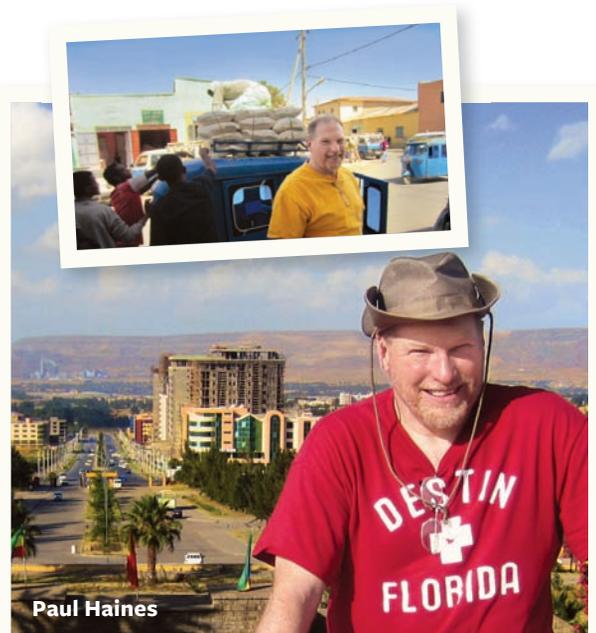
"I told one of our vice presidents that my goal before I retire is to build or rebuild each of our emergency departments, and I've actually done that, building some of them for the second time," she adds. "I'm not ready to retire yet, so maybe I'm going to improve them again."

# WK Employees Active in the Community

**Paul Haines** wanted to do "benevolent humanitarian work." Those are his words, worthy of his aspirations. Haines, a financial integration specialist at the Willis-Knighton Physician Network, found his avenue when presented with an opportunity to participate in a mission trip to Ethiopia. For nine days in the summer, Haines and his traveling companions worked with a permanent missionary to distribute food and interact not only with indigenous people but also people from all around the world. "We got to speak to a lot of different people from a lot of different countries," he says.

Haines found his first mission trip to be richly rewarding, but he was deeply moved by the response of his co-workers. "Before I left, I was called into a conference room," he says, admitting he didn't know what to expect. "There were 25 people in there. They all prayed for me before my trip. I was encouraged by that, that they care enough about me to do that."

Emboldened by the support, Haines was uplifted as he visited with Ethiopian people in their homes. He said he knew his co-workers were with him in spirit. "They all prayed for me while I was away."



Today's older adults are getting the most out of their golden years

# Actively Aging

BY **TERRIE M. ROBERTS**

**A**t an age when you might think baby boomers are slowing down, they are actually picking up speed.

Today, boomers are actively moving into retirement, looking at it as a new adventure rather than a withdrawal from life.

They travel, volunteer, reinvent themselves in new careers or continue to work in their old ones.

They take bold steps, not comfortable to spend these years as the generation did before them.

“As recently as 2001, 62 percent of people approaching retirement age viewed retirement as a winding down or continuation of life as it is,” says *U.S. News & World Report*, citing a Harris Interactive survey commissioned by SunAmerica Financial Group. “But by 2011, a majority (54 percent) viewed retirement as a whole new chapter in life filled with opportunities and new challenges.”

Certainly, evidence of this is apparent in all walks of life.

## Who's Slowing Down?

Distance swimmer Diana Nyad came out of retirement in 2013 and, on her fifth attempt and at age 64, became the first person confirmed to swim from Cuba



Residents at The Oaks of Louisiana have their pick of social engagements.



“This generation wants to stay healthy and work and play longer than this age group did in years past.”

Tower at The Oaks offers plenty of recreational activities.

CALL



## Your Next Adventure Awaits

Stop by The Oaks and ask about all the activities that residents can enjoy. Or call **318-212-OAKS (6257)** to talk to a lifestyle consultant.

to Florida without the aid of a shark cage, swimming 110 miles from Havana to Key West.

American stock car racing owner-driver Morgan Shepherd, 73, competes each weekend during the NASCAR season, driving the No. 89 Shepherd Racing Ventures Chevrolet.

*Dancing with the Stars*, one of the top-rated shows on television, reminds us each season that it isn't just for the young. Among contestants on the show have been boxing great Sugar Ray Leonard, 58; actress Kirstie Alley, 63; actress Cloris Leachman, 88; and comedian Tommy Chong, 76.

“This generation wants to stay healthy and work and play longer than

this age group did in years past,” says Holly Winterrowd, manager/senior wellness coordinator for The Oaks of Louisiana and group exercise coordinator for Willis-Knighton Fitness & Wellness Centers.

“When they become empty-nesters and make the decision to downsize, a growing number want to live among like-minded neighbors in communities with lots of amenities, recreational and social opportunities, physical fitness and mental stimulation,” Winterrowd says. “That is the appeal of active adult communities like The Oaks of Louisiana, which offer maintenance-free living and give residents more time to do what they want.”

## Creating a Vibrant Environment

Del Webb pioneered the active adult concept in 1960 when he started Sun City, Ariz., the first 55-plus active adult community in the country. Over the years, similar communities have been developed in various parts of the U.S., largely in Arizona, California, Florida and Texas, where a warm climate is favored by people whose lifestyles include outdoor activities and interests.

With the number of adults age 65 and older expected to grow by 83 percent by 2030 and an increasing number of baby boomers starting to retire, there is no doubt that demand for active adult living options will rise.

Foreseeing this, James K. Elrod, Willis-Knighton Health System CEO and himself a pioneer, and wife Margaret developed The Oaks of Louisiana in 2007. They wanted to bring to the area the type of active adult community that so many baby boomers flock to in other parts of the country. The Elrods and a team of health system executives visited premier communities throughout the South and Southeast and the result is “the best of the best” of what they saw.

With the opening of Tower at The Oaks, one of several living options within The Oaks’ community, residents enjoy a vibrant environment that supports the healthy, active lifestyle they seek. The palatial four-story residence offers resort-style living with concierge services and social and recreational amenities targeted to active adults.

## So Much to Do

Like active adult communities nationwide, The Oaks recognizes today’s group of residents is not content with playing shuffleboard or bingo or watching TV in a common room. They are active—and demanding.

Thus the unique living experience at Tower at The Oaks includes an in-house

movie theater, billiards room, putting and chipping greens, croquet lawn and state-of-the-art spa and wellness center with an indoor saltwater pool. Of course there are also structured activities, special-interest clubs and off-campus trips to neighboring restaurants and upscale cultural events. Add to that dance classes, pingpong and walking clubs.

These men and women have redefined life after 55 and beyond, and it is directly linked to their desire to age well, Winterrowd says. “They value mental stimulation and physical fitness as a means to achieving the health and well-being they seek at this stage of life,” she says.

## Age Is Just a Number

Barbara Thorne-Thomsen, 89, lives with her husband, Fletcher, at Tower at The Oaks, and is testament to that. The diminutive ball of energy and curiosity could herself be a contestant on *Dancing with the Stars*—after she retires! She still walks 3 miles four times a week.

A licensed professional counselor with Interactional Services in Shreveport, Thorne-Thomsen says she plans to retire when she turns 90 “so I can do anything and everything The Oaks has to offer.”

“I love what I do,” she continues. “I think you stay healthier when you are involved and engaged. I am very social and want to be involved in activities here in a big way.

“Today, people my age don’t think we are old,” she says. “We want to stay active, expand our mind.”

Winterrowd agrees. “Active adults recognize that they need to be in charge of their own health and well-being and they need to engage in a lifestyle that is going to help them sustain good health and independence,” she says. “The lifestyle at The Oaks helps them do that. Baby boomers aren’t slowing down and don’t want to. They want to stay active socially and physically.”

The Oaks of Louisiana enables that, even as those approach their 90s. Just ask Barbara Thorne-Thomsen. ■



**Barbara Thorne-Thomsen, 89, is a licensed professional counselor with Interactional Services in Shreveport. “I think you stay healthier when you are involved and engaged,” she says.**

# Born Again



*With its current expansion, Willis-Knighton South continues a tradition of care for women and children*

BY **DARRELL REBOUCHE**

**W**illis-Knighton South was born of necessity. As Shreveport grew to the southwest, much of its population migrated farther away from the nearest emergency room. In the early 1980s, the average response time for an ambulance to travel to a patient's door and then to an ER approached one hour. A hospital in that part of town was imperative, so Willis-Knighton stepped forward and built one.

Originally named SouthPark Hospital, it was Louisiana's first satellite hospital. People in the neighborhood responded to its opening with almost overwhelming support. "It started out with a bang," says Rita Leray, RN, a nursing supervisor who has worked at the hospital since opening day. Leray remembers the plan was to start small and build gradually. "It didn't work out that way," she says.

"They used to call it a country hospital," adds Helen Mena, RN, the hospital's chief nursing officer. "They can't do that now; it's grown so much." The growth continues. This year, a major new expansion will be completed.

## Rapid Growth

SouthPark Hospital opened to patients in January 1983, and, as a full-service acute-care hospital, it fulfilled a pent-up demand for services, growing rapidly. In 1987 it was renamed Willis-Knighton South to take advantage of the Willis-Knighton brand. Then in 1989 it added to that brand with the construction of the Center for Women's Health, the region's first women's hospital. Willis-Knighton's maternity services, pediatrics and neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) were all relocated to the campus at South.

With its emphasis on mothers and babies, Willis-Knighton South & the Center for Women's Health developed a reputation as a warm, friendly place for patients, visitors and healthcare workers. "Everybody loves coming here," says Karla Connella, RN, who has worked in surgery at South for more than 20 years. "Even though we've grown, we still have that warm, welcoming atmosphere." Chief Nursing Officer Mena echoes that sentiment, indicating that, despite the growth, the hospital will maintain its



**Left: An artist's concept of a portion of Willis-Knighton South & the Center for Women's Health, which will finish expansion and renovation later this year.**

**Inset: SouthPark Hospital, later renamed Willis-Knighton South, in 1983.**

"personality." "I don't doubt we'll stay as family oriented as we always have been," she says.

### Focus on Family

From the warm, family feel to the focus on family, the latest expansion reinforces a commitment to mothers, babies and children. It started with the NICU, which has more than doubled its size over the past 10 years. "With this unit, each patient has his or her own room," says Gerald B. "Brent" Whitton, MD, a neonatologist who joined the Willis-Knighton Physician Network in 2004. Dr. Whitton has overseen the development and expansion of the NICU and proudly declares the unit operates with a family-centered approach. "We have no visiting hours," he says. "We really encourage families to get involved and help care for the babies."

In addition to the burgeoning NICU, other pediatric specialties are thriving at South. Three pediatric surgeons, including Mark Brown, MD, began practicing there in 2013. "The goal is to concentrate all the pediatric care here," Dr. Brown says. "It's just a naturally positive environment." The ever-widening array of services of specialists and subspecialists makes it the right place to go for complex pediatric care. Dr. Brown believes this expansion of services makes life easier for patients and their families. "Having all the different specialists located in the same area makes communication much

*"Even though we've grown, we still have that warm, welcoming atmosphere."*



**Top: Kim Dean, RN, is part of the neonatal transport team at Willis-Knighton South & the Center for Women's Health.**

**Above: Gerald B. "Brent" Whitton, MD, a neonatologist, cares for Willis-Knighton's youngest patients and has overseen the design, renovation and expansion of the neonatal intensive care unit at Willis-Knighton South & the Center for Women's Health.**

easier," he says. "Parents can see more than one doctor in the same day easier if they can just go down the street or down the hall." While pediatric specialties focus on infants and children, some specialists, like perinatologists, work with high-risk pregnancies, caring for babies even before they are born.

### Continued Commitment

Although there's new synergy being created around maternal-child services, the hospital will continue its commitment as a full-service location, as evidenced by its expanded emergency department and equipment updates.

The current expansion is remarkable: more space for doctors, more space for patients (including a 430-car parking garage), more patient rooms, a new auditorium for classes and a glass atrium that ties the Physician Center medical office building to the hospital. "It's still home," Connella says. "Just a larger home."

Mena has watched her hospital change for 27 years. "Everyone who was here when I first came wanted to enlarge, get more people and serve the community even better," she says, "and naturally we're very proud of it."

Dr. Brown, a newcomer, is impressed. "The amount of support we've received from the health system is unbelievable, really," he says. "It's pretty amazing how nimble Willis-Knighton is and how they have the ability to put resources into something like children's care."

Dr. Whitton agrees. "Ten years ago, I would never have thought we'd be to this point, but Willis-Knighton is very supportive. Little South is a lot bigger than it used to be."

It is a visible testament to unwavering commitment to patient care, not just for the neighborhood but reborn as a regional healthcare destination. ■

# Model Behavior

*Willis-Knighton's Virtual Hospital creates real-world experiences for healthcare students* BY **LYNE ROBINSON**

**I**magine being rushed to a hospital with a life-threatening condition. Wouldn't you be comforted to know that those providing your care have not only been trained in the classroom, but also have reinforced their knowledge with hands-on learning experiences?

This distinctive style of training is a critical element in preparing for patient care, says Denise Jones, clinical education coordinator for Willis-Knighton Health System. Willis-Knighton's Virtual Hospital, which opened in 2014, provides that hands-on learning environment for healthcare professionals, especially students, in our community.

"The opening of the Virtual Hospital has literally changed the paradigm on the way nursing students learn," says Eydie Comeaux, director of the Career Institute & Virtual Hospital, Community Education and Women's Services. The Innovation Center, which houses the Virtual Hospital, transformed the abandoned Bossier Medical Center into a place that once again reflects its heritage of healthcare.

## High-Tech Simulation

Lifelike simulators, including two adults, two children, two babies and one pregnant mother, help make a difference in the quality of care in our community. Choosing not to refer to the facility as a

simulator lab but as a Virtual Hospital, Jones indicates it is like walking onto a real hospital floor.

Offering the high-tech simulators with human responses and innovative training methods in what was formerly an intensive care unit provides a different level of learning. "It is so realistic that students simply gain more from it," Jones explains. "They feel like they are taking care of real patients."

Jones says that there is disparity between sitting in a class and knowing the right answer is "C" and actually being able to apply that to real-life medical situations. "Students must know how to talk to the patient, be able to see them and assess their symptoms, determine what is going on and make the necessary decisions," she says.

In the Virtual Hospital, students behave not as students but as practicing healthcare professionals. They respond just as they would be expected to in the hospital. "This helps to bridge that gap from classroom to patient bedside," Jones says.

## Teachable Moments

The Virtual Hospital coordinator, Megan Stewart, finds it exciting to use the simulators to create scenarios for the students to assess. "If it can happen in the hospital, we can make it happen for students," she says.

Placing students in the moment and letting them care for the patient gives them experience to fall back on. "It is



**Nursing students apply classroom education to lifelike medical situations.**

like muscle memory,” Stewart says. “They go through scenarios until it becomes second nature.”

Realistic training offers benefits for the students in medicine, nursing and allied health and, ultimately, for the patients they will care for. Stewart reinforces that this is providing better care, not just for patients but also for their families.

In addition to patient scenarios, students practice handling the emotional concerns of a patient’s family. “They may fumble their way through the first time,” Jones says, “but we go back and talk about it and help to make it easier in the future.” Because these students have chosen healthcare careers, they know those conversations are coming, and Jones says this training helps prepare them for difficult situations.

## Wide-Reaching Education

Using Willis-Knighton’s Virtual Hospital for training are NSU College of Nursing, Louisiana Tech, LSU Shreveport’s LPN program, LSU



**Nursing students Missy Golding (left) and Sarah Chan work to properly start an IV on an infant simulator in the Virtual Hospital.**



**Megan Stewart monitors and controls all aspects of the simulators from the Virtual Hospital control room.**



**Life Air Rescue team members participate in the realistic environment provided by the Virtual Hospital at the WK Innovation Center.**

Health Science Center’s physician assistant program, Southern University, Life Air Rescue and the U.S. Navy. Inquiries continue to come in as educators hear about the opportunity to train their students in a realistic environment. Although simulators were available at some schools, they were often isolated in a classroom, not a real hospital setting.

Comeaux is proud of the service the Virtual Hospital is providing to the schools and the community. “Since our opening, Denise has trained well over a thousand students at the Virtual Hospital, and that is just phenomenal,” she says.

In addition to training for students, the Virtual Hospital also provides continuing education for Willis-Knighton employees to practice their skills and gain new ones. “Our staff has adjusted well to the changes and has embraced

the facility,” Jones says. From the newest nursing student to clinicians with decades of experience, all appreciate this opportunity to improve their skills and the care they give to patients.

Comeaux believes it takes special people to run a facility like this, people who not only are knowledgeable but really enjoy what they do. It’s clear that Jones and Stewart have a passion for the job, that they, like Comeaux, are dedicated to education for students and staff, and, ultimately, for enhanced care in the hospital setting.

Patient care. That’s really what this is about. Patient care provided by nurses, physician assistants, respiratory therapists and Life Air Rescue staff—all the people entrusted with patients’ lives. Jones explains it this way: “Here, today, we are training the ones who will be taking care of you tomorrow.” ■



## LIVE & LEARN

► WK and The Oaks host a variety of informative programs each month

### *The Oaks of Louisiana*

#### Hydrate Yourself



Come and join Julie Hartley, LDN, to learn how to stay hydrated during the long, hot summer months. Hartley will share information to help you know what

foods and beverages will keep your temperature lower and your hydration level higher. Get tips that you and your family will appreciate as the temperatures rise.

**When:** Thursday, July 9, at 4 p.m.

**Where:** Alta and John Franks Community Centre Living Room

**Cost:** \$5 for nonresidents

#### Maintain Your Independence

The Fourth of July continues at The Oaks past the Fourth this year, but with a different twist. Of course everyone wants to be independent as long as possible. That's the beauty of a community like The Oaks, with a focus on wellness, camaraderie, dining and, of course, lots of fun. This open house allows you to gain insight about The Oaks and all it has to offer to help seniors maintain their independence and live longer, more enjoyable lives. Here's a chance to see the campus and apartments and visit with residents about their experiences.

**When:** Sunday, July 19, 1–4 p.m.

**Where:** Clubhouse at The Oaks

**Cost:** FREE

EVENT



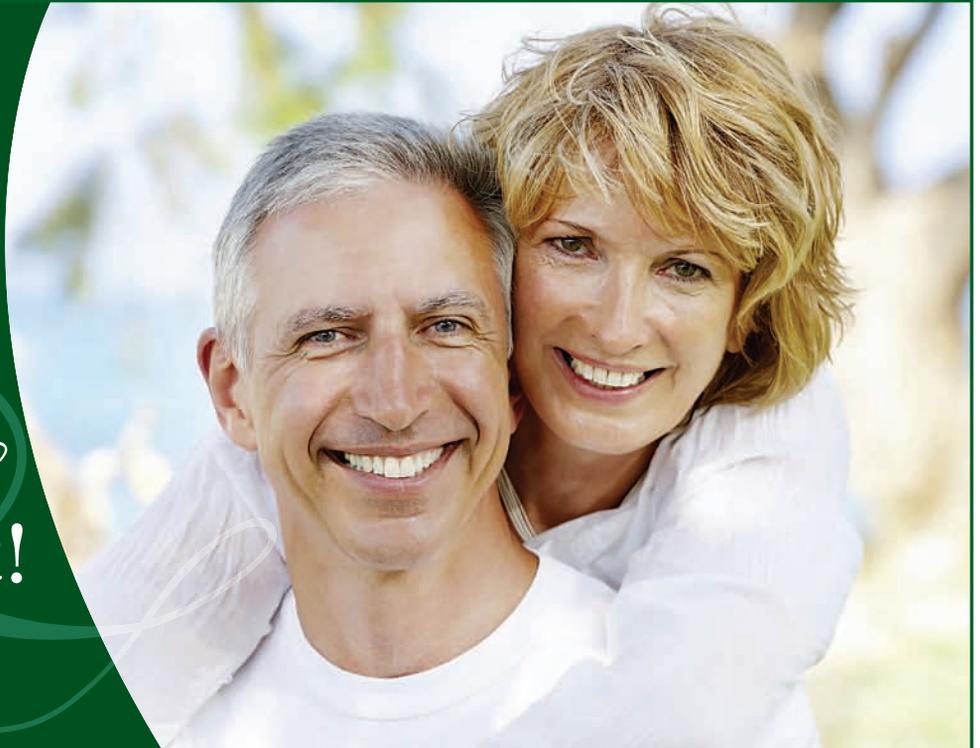
#### Sign Up Today

Space is limited for all events, and advance reservations are required. Make your reservations for any event at The Oaks or Willis-Knighton by visiting [classes.wkhs.com](http://classes.wkhs.com) or calling the WK call center at **318-212-8225**.

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## *We Put Life into Action*

At Tower at The Oaks, we embrace active, healthy living whether you are working or playing. From our LifeTrail outdoor fitness system, indoor saltwater pool, croquet lawn and putting green to enjoying group activities, special interest clubs, out-of-town trips, and more, you'll find Tower at The Oaks an ideal choice.

Located within The Oaks of Louisiana community, Tower at The Oaks seeks to combine resort-style living while also taking advantage of all Northwest Louisiana has to offer. And because we're maintenance-free, residents have all the time in the world to do what they want! Live here and love it.

  
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