NorthBay VacaValley Hospital
50-bed Acute Care Hospital • Opened 1987
1000 Nuc Tree Road • Vacaville, CA • (707) 624-7000

NorthBay Medical Center
130-bed Acute Care Hospital • Opened 1959
1200 B. Gale Wilson Blvd • Fairfield, CA • (707) 646-5000

Compassionate Care
for More Than 50 Years

NorthBay Medical Center in Fairfield and NorthBay VacaValley Hospital in Vacaville are your locally based, non-profit hospitals. Both hospitals were built by the community, for the community.

NorthBay Healthcare is committed to providing Solano County residents with the best health care available.

We live our mission:
Compassionate Care, Advanced Medicine, Close to Home.
a medical degree. But there’s also the public policy of healthcare, which I’m not sure anyone understands—especially politicians. We have made healthcare the most regulated, inspected, monitored and manipulated industry in America.

So it is no wonder we struggle to achieve the so-called “transparency” that would bolster public confidence and enhance our credibility. How do the lyrics to that song go? “The more I learn, the less I understand?”

Frankly, we are not very good at explaining the complex nature of our profession. Sometimes we talk over the heads of our patients, which makes us appear arrogant. Sometimes we point to myriad laws, protocols and regulations that make it sound like it is something else’s responsibility or fault. And sometimes we have not figured it out and therefore cannot explain it.

We must keep trying. Health care is the No. 1 public policy issue facing the nation. It’s tied to jobs, the overall economy and any hope for recovery. If patients and voters are to make an informed decision—about their own care or about something they confront at the ballot box—they need the straight story from us.

That is why I am writing “Healthcare Insider,” which launched in January on our Web site, www.NorthBay.org. My entry into the blogosphere was a bit tardy, to be sure. But better late than never. I’ve joined a small cadre of healthcare CEOs who believe it’s OK to talk frankly about what we do in order to help you learn more about what we do.

What should we talk about? So far, the blog has addressed many facets of health reform. It has described the dilemma of not having enough doctors for a growing and aging population. And it has tried to explain both the benefit and the peril of electronic medical records. In another blog posting, a physician colleague helped me explain why Canada’s system is not all that it is cracked up to be.

Agree or disagree, but please give it a read. It’s there to be challenged and debated, all in the spirit of increasing awareness and understanding. You’ll find new posts each week, on the bottom of our home page at www.NorthBay.org.

Gary Passama
President and Chief Executive Officer
Parents, want your children to eat their vegetables? Get them involved in growing produce, from the ground up.

Planting and tending a vegetable garden is a healthy activity that also helps children focus on eating well, says Shanaz Khambatta, D.O., a family practitioner at the NorthBay Center for Primary Care in Vacaville. She knows from first-hand experience, because her three children — ages 6, 4 and 2 — love to help tend the family’s vegetable and flower plots.

Dr. Khambatta and her husband, Alex, purposely enlist the help of their three children in all gardening chores for a variety of reasons. “Unlike running or biking, it’s an activity we can do with the kids. We can all be outside together. It gets them interested in eating their vegetables, especially when they know where they came from and how they grew. Plus, they love playing in the mud and looking for lady bugs and worms.”

Even gardening chores can be turned into a fun activity. “We made weeding a game. We tried to see who could fill their wagon with weeds first. It worked—for a while.”

The Khambattas built raised beds for their vegetable garden, and put the children in charge of picking out what would be planted in them, and watering the seeds and plants. “In the summer, when we come home from work and school, they head straight out to the garden and eat the veggies as snacks.”

Depending on the season, those raised beds may be planted with tomatoes, peppers, cucumbers, lettuce, chard, zucchini, squash, letruce and eggplant. What’s the secret to getting the children to eat eggplant? “Well, they’ll eat it when I put it in their lasagna,” she confides.

The family garden also includes fruit trees, berry vines and flower beds, in which the children have planted bulbs. “It’s a little delayed gratification, but when the flowers come up, it’s beautiful.”

“You really don’t need a lot of space to grow vegetables,” Dr. Khambatta adds. Even a planter box will do, if that is all the room you have. “It can be a very satisfying hobby.”

Daily Fruit and Vegetable Requirements
Without a doubt, what you eat and how much you exercise not only affects your overall health, but how you feel today, tomorrow and into the future.

How many fruits and vegetables you should eat each day depends on your age, sex and average physical activity, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. To find out what portions are best for you, visit www.mypyramid.gov.

The Web site also provides tips to help you get started toward a healthy diet, by showing how you can:

- Make half your grains whole.
- Vary your veggies.
- Focus on fruit.
- Get your calcium-rich foods.
- Go lean with protein.
- Find your balance between food and physical activity.
- Keep food safe to eat.

Gardening Plants the Seed

We can all be outside together. It gets them interested in eating their vegetables, especially when they know where they came from and how they grew. Plus, they love playing in the mud and looking for lady bugs and worms.”

Even gardening chores can be turned into a fun activity. “We made weeding a game. We tried to see who could fill their wagon with weeds first. It worked—for a while.”

The Khambattas built raised beds for their vegetable garden, and put the children in charge of picking out what would be planted in them, and watering the seeds and plants. “In the summer, when we come home from work and school, they head straight out to the garden and eat the veggies as snacks.”

Depending on the season, those raised beds may be planted with tomatoes, peppers, cucumbers, lettuce, chard, zucchini, squash, letruce and eggplant. What’s the secret to getting the children to eat eggplant? “Well, they’ll eat it when I put it in their lasagna,” she confides.

The family garden also includes fruit trees, berry vines and flower beds, in which the children have planted bulbs. “It’s a little delayed gratification, but when the flowers come up, it’s beautiful. “You really don’t need a lot of space to grow vegetables,” Dr. Khambatta adds. Even a planter box will do, if that is all the room you have. “It can be a very satisfying hobby.”

Kids and Gardens
Want to interest your children in gardening? Have them choose seeds and plants with a theme to tickle their imaginations, as well as their taste buds. A Pizza Garden could be filled with Roma tomatoes, garlic and basil. A Salsa Garden could be planted with tomatoes, green and yellow onions, peppers (both spicy and sweet) and cilantro. A Pickle Garden could include pickling cucumbers, garlic and dill. And for the grown-ups, a Tea Garden could include such herbs as lavender, chamomile or mint. If you grow mint, however, keep it contained in a pot, or it will quickly take over the garden.

Choosing a Harvest of Colorful Vegetables
- Buy fresh vegetables in season.
- Put a green vegetable on your dinner plate.
- Choose vegetables with more potassium, such as beet greens, winter squash, spinach, lima beans, cooked lentils and split peas, and sweet potatoes.
- Add red or orange vegetables by tossing in some shredded red cabbage, spinach, tomatoes or baby carrots.
- Munch on raw veggies, such as red pepper strips or carrot sticks.
- Learn how to prepare and cook vegetables.
- Buy vegetables that are easy to prepare, such as pre-washed bags of salad greens, baby carrots or celery sticks.
- Make vegetables interesting by adding the crunch of slivered almonds, toasted peanuts or cashews.
- Stock up on frozen or canned vegetables. Get your vitamins and minerals from foods. Dark orange and green vegetables provide vitamins A and C, fiber and potassium, as well as many other nutrients. For more information, go to www.mypyramid.gov.
We All Need to Get Moving

Matt Heeren, M.D., a pediatrician with the NorthBay Center for Primary Care in Vacaville, urges his young patients to be active to avoid gaining weight. And his commitment doesn’t end at the office. On Tuesdays he volunteers at North Davis Elementary School, helping his wife, Kristen Muir, teach her award-winning fitness program.

Six years ago, Muir was a volunteer in their son’s first-grade class. With physical education cut from the budget, the children had no outlet for their energy. Recognizing that while not all kids are athletic, they can all be active, she developed a program called “Kids in Motion.”

The program is based on the idea of giving children active play so they don’t realize they’re exercising. The children rotate among stations that could include relay races, jumping rope, fitness exercises, and games that encourage teamwork and coordination. The activities focus on cardiovascular fitness, flexibility, balance, strength training, endurance and sports-related skills.

Kids in Motion is now used by several schools and Muir’s program recently won second place in the Governor’s Council on Physical Fitness and Sports Challenge.

“Getting kids active early is a good way to avoid the obesity problems that so many have,” says Dr. Heeren, a father of three. “I encourage parents to lead by example, and join their kids in activities to get them moving.”

Lean Kids Don’t Drink Sugar

Exercise alone won’t keep kids slim without careful control of their diets, Dr. Heeren advises. He says the biggest contributor to children’s weight gain is drinking too many sugar-filled liquids.

“By age 2 children should be getting most of their calories from solid food,” Dr. Heeren says. “But many parents let their children continue drinking high calorie liquids, including fruit juices and soda.

“If you notice a child’s excess weight early, you can make small changes to correct the problem before they’re heading toward obesity.

“When kids are thirsty, give them a glass of water,” Dr. Heeren says.

Balance in a Ball

J. Peter Zopf, D.O., never worries about developing stress-based problems, despite his busy practice as a surgeon. In fact, he can honestly tell you that he has always been able to strike a balance throughout his life even though he is a dedicated, hard-working doctor. His secret is soccer.

The general surgeon for NorthBay Healthcare grew up loving the game. “I started playing when I was a young man growing up in Napa,” he says. “In fact, it was a vehicle for me to go to medical school.”

Dr. Zopf’s athletic abilities, along with his academic scholarships, helped to finance his college education and subsequently led him to medical school. And he kept on playing.

“I gravitated to coaching while I was at UC Davis,” he explains. “I had done a little coaching during my high school years in Napa. I got into coaching co-ed teams and now I work with youth on the high school level and even little kids under 10. I do a bit of everything.”

Dr. Zopf advises everyone to find balance in life, whether by going back to the community in some way, finding physical challenges or developing new interests. He says he sees the benefits in his patients when they strive to take his advice. “They do better with recovery, post-operative discomfort and they just seem to have a healthier lifestyle.

“I couldn’t picture a world without balance for me,” he says. “And I try to instill that in the young people I coach. I try to help kids not only focus on sports, which they love, but also to maintain their academics and community service so they can start building the basis for living lives to their full potential.”
Eighteen white-clad bodies hurl themselves across the raised mat in the Green Valley Kodokan, punctuating the air with grunts as they slap the mat.

It’s organized chaos as row after row of children—ages 5 to 14—cross the mat and somehow manage not to collide.

Supervising the scene is the sensei—or instructor—Milind Dhond, M.D., NorthBay Healthcare’s Medical Director of Peripheral Vascular Program. Tonight, the respected cardiologist is all business as he walks along the edge of the mat, observing his students in action as they demonstrate their jujutsu skills.

His wife, Teresa Whitley, M.D., is among the crowd of parents tonight who have assembled on benches that line the small dojo, or school. The families are eager, for many of the students will be promoted—graduating from one color belt to another.

Dr. Whitley, a brown belt, admits that life does get crazy in a household with two busy doctors’ schedules, three young children, school, jujutsu classes and soccer practices each week. But it’s clear the children love it. They demonstrate their moves with confidence, and are quick to help other children on the mat.

Dr. Dhond teaches one to two children’s classes and two to three adult classes each week. The children break up into smaller groups, the white belts working with other white belts, the orange belts banding together, and so on. Adult students who have offered to help out team up with the groups of children and help them walk through their exercises.

“‘This is not like stepping into any other place,’” the sensei warns them. “You must be aware of everything and everyone around you. If you aren’t, you’ll do 100 pushups,” he tosses in, casually.

Dr. Dhond, a black belt, taught the children and students. He realized it was a skill he could share with his wife and three young children. That, in turn, led the couple to begin classes.

“‘Jujuitsu provides a lot for kids,’” he says. “‘It provides structure, discipline and builds self-confidence. As a practice, it’s physical, mental and spiritual.’”

Dr. Dhond begins as a student in Sacramento when he was in his 20s and picked it up again in his 30s in Reno. By 2003, he was a black belt. He realized it was a skill he could share with his wife and three young children. That, in turn, led the couple to begin classes.

“‘Jujuitsu provides a lot for kids,’” he says. “‘It provides structure, discipline and builds self-confidence. As a practice, it’s physical, mental and spiritual.’”

Dr. Dhond teaches one to two children’s classes and two to three adult classes each week. The children break up into smaller groups, the white belts working with other white belts, the orange belts banding together, and so on. Adult students who have offered to help out team up with the groups of children and help them walk through their exercises.

“This is not like stepping into any other place,” the sensei warns them. “You must be aware of everything and everyone around you. If you aren’t, you’ll do 100 pushups,” he tosses in, casually.

Dr. Whitley, a brown belt, admits that life does get crazy in a household with two busy doctors’ schedules, three young children, school, jujutsu classes and soccer practices each week. But it’s clear the children love it. They demonstrate their moves with confidence, and are quick to help other children on the mat.

At the end of class, promotions begin, with Dr. Dhond asking the students if they’re ready to accept the responsibility of the next step. “Yes,” comes the answer, with only slightly muffled giggles. “Don’t laugh,” he instructs them. “This is serious business.”

He mentions each child by name and talks in depth about their skill, their commitment and areas in which they can grow. Then he leads a team bow and moves on to the next group.

“This is no secret to jujuitsu, it’s just hard work,” he tells the class. “The harder you work, the better you become. And guess what? It’s just like that in life.”

Of course after class, there’s pizza and celebration, with the Dhond-Whitley crew leading the charge.

Tip from Drs. Dhond and Whitley

Be aware of your level of fitness before embarking on physical activities.

Speak to your instructor about your goals and current level of fitness.
Shifting Gears

Long commutes are nothing new to residents of Vacaville and Fairfield. More than 40 percent of Solano County residents leave the area for work, traveling for an average time of 30 minutes. And, most travel alone by car, truck or van.

Studies show that commuters can have higher blood pressure, suffer more headaches and chest pains, and often express negative moods at home in the evenings. It doesn’t have to be that way.

NorthBay Center for Primary Care internal medicine physician Dinesh Nagar, M.D., finds his commute gives him time to relax and transition from personal business. By the time he gets home, all of his phone work is taken care of and he can focus on his family.

Dr. Nagar has outfitted his car with a hands-free, wireless phone system that makes it easy for him to call friends on the East Coast or to take care of personal business. By the time he gets home, his 5-year-old son is waiting at the door, “I’ve planned my commute time to be a haven between two worlds.”

His first rule of the road is to plan plenty of time to get to his destination. Fighting traffic congestion is a major cause of stress, but if you know you have time, it’s easier to relax.

Dr. Nagar has outfitted his car with a hands-free, wireless phone system that makes it easy for him to call friends on the East Coast or to take care of personal business. By the time he gets home, all of his phone work is taken care of and he can focus on his family.

Playing soothing music, listening to a good talk radio station or enjoying an audio book can also ease the stress of commute time.

“With imagination you can turn your commute into something you look forward to.”

Doctor Offers Driving Tips for Safe, Relaxing Commute

Going with the Flow

He has either been in, on or around water nearly all his life, so it’s no surprise that water is where Michael Amster, M.D., director of the NorthBay Center for Pain Management, heads when he needs to unwind.

“I grew up in La Jolla and did a lot of ocean sports and played water polo,” Dr. Amster explains. “I’m very comfortable in the water and I know how to read it.”

Knowing how to read water is an important skill for river rafting guides, and that is yet another water-related hobby he has mastered.

Dr. Amster was introduced to river rafting as an undergraduate at the University of California, Santa Cruz. When he came to UC Davis for his residency, he joined the school’s Outdoor Adventures club and signed up to lead rafting trips on the South Fork of the American River. He started volunteering as a guide eight years ago, and leads as many as 10 trips a year.

When rafting, “you’re connected with nature and it’s very therapeutic and healing. A day on the river clears my head. It’s so much fun and I just let go. As doctors, we have a lot of responsibilities, especially for our patients, and when I get on the river I can just let all that go.”

Dr. Amster believes river rafting is a metaphor for life. “When you’re on the rapids, you can be in a state of bliss, and at times life can be like that. But, you can hit rocks and turbulence and feel out of control and stuck, and life can be like that, too. Rafting is a spiritual experience.”

For those seeking a similar sensation, heading up to the South Fork of the American River will have its advantages. “The river is close by, and it has safe and easy rapids.” Trips, through organizations such as UC Davis’ Outdoor Adventures club, are open to everyone and are led by experienced guides well versed in the river’s every twist and turn. And, for those who fear fast-moving water may put them out of their element, rafters are well protected with helmets and life jackets, he says, “and the river itself is almost like an amusement park ride.”

Dr. Amster plans to lead a number of trips this summer. To learn more, call (530) 752-1995, or go to http://campusrecreation.ucdavis.edu and click on the link to Outdoor Adventures.
Marathon Mom

Kulbir Bajwa, M.D., an internist at the NorthBay Center for Primary Care in Vacaville, loves running in marathons and not much could stop her from training, not even being hit by a car and breaking her clavicle. “I had my arm in a sling, but I just went to the gym and did a lower body workout,” she recalls. “If it’s something you enjoy, you do what you have to do to continue.”

Dr. Bajwa’s unfortunate encounter with a car was the second injury she suffered in a year; several months earlier she tripped while running and broke her hand and scapula. Both injuries required six weeks to heal, but they did not deter her from continuing to train for marathon races.

What drives her so? “The euphoria and how you feel at the end of the race. It’s unbelievable,” she says. “The journey of running is amazing. Along the way, people are urging you on, cheering. Your family and friends are there for you, you’re seeing what your body can do. You also see other runners in pain, cramping up. Then you hit mile 20, and you realize you only have six more miles to go, so your mind just goes to a whole other level. The last mile is pure euphoria; it’s a very different feeling. You have the joy of accomplishment.”

Dr. Bajwa trains in some way every day because she has a personal goal of running in three more marathons in the next year. During the week, after a busy day of seeing patients, she goes on short runs for speed or tackles hills. On the weekend, she has more time for the long, endurance runs.

And, she is not the only Bajwa in training. Her husband has already completed three Ironman competitions (a 2.4-mile swim, 112-mile bike race and 26-mile marathon run, all within 17 hours), and is preparing for an ultra-marathon. Her two children, ages 10 and 12, participate in children’s triathlons.

For anyone considering elevating their jogs to marathon-length runs, Dr. Bajwa has some hard-earned advice to share. “Make sure you have proper running shoes and that they fit you well.” If you’ve had the shoes for a while, it may be time to get a new pair, too, as most running shoes are only good for about 400 miles.

“Don’t run on an empty stomach. Try to eat carbohydrates, such as a banana or a bagel beforehand.” Staying hydrated is also very important, she adds. “Drink water before and after you run. Don’t forget to put on some sun block, to wear a hat, and to tell someone where you are going. I know runners who bring identification, a cell phone and $3 with them, so they can get something to eat or drink if they need it, or make a call in case of an emergency.”

Finally, set a personal goal and keep your eye on it. “Goals help me stay focused. If I have a marathon coming up in three or four months, I focus on that. Maybe your goal would be to run in a 5k, a 10k, or to improve your time. Goals will help keep you from getting bored, and letting your training slide.”

— Kulbir Bajwa, M.D.
Think skiing is just for young thrill-seekers? Not quite, says Kenneth Forsythe, M.D., a sports medicine specialist and creator of the Green Light Wellness program. This former Olympian says it’s a great sport to take up, no matter your age, because of all the healthy benefits it provides. “Skiing is a wonderful, total-body, fun-for-life, great-for-families activity. Because of dramatic improvements in ski boots, skis and bindings, it is easier to do than ever before and it’s much safer, especially now that the hills are groomed so well.”

Dr. Forsythe started skiing at age 4 and competed until well into his 20s. He was invited to join the 1964 Canadian Olympic ski team at Innsbruck, competing in slalom and giant slalom. Now he skis for fun—and health. “People often tell me they’re too old to ski,” says Dr. Forsythe, “but I keep track of a gentleman at Mont Tremblant in Canada who still skis every year—at age 104. He says the sport keeps him young!”

Lots of people have been put off by the idea of skiing because of all the stories about how difficult it is and by worries about injuries, says Dr. Forsythe. But, thanks to the snowboard industry, skis and skiing changed dramatically during the past 10 years. “The ski industry woke up and made skis short, shaped, easy to turn, and a lot more fun,” coupled with lighter, comfortable boots and much improved bindings, the sport can be safe for all ages, he believes. “People may have been intimidated into not trying the sport because they heard it was dangerous, but it’s such a wonderful aerobic activity. It puts your cardiopulmonary abilities up there with tennis and hockey players.”

Before hitting the slopes, however, Dr. Forsythe encourages people to spend some time on conditioning. “Start a walking or jogging program, either at home or in the gym. For the gym, do resistance exercises, which provide strength and conditioning for every muscle group in your body.”

But you don’t need a gym to improve your conditioning. “When I was training for skiing, I could easily spend four or more hours a day working out,” recalls Dr. Forsythe, “but what I learned over 25 years of helping people to be healthier is that it’s the little bit you do all the time that really counts. It’s not at all about intensity—it’s about frequency.”

For those who are busy with work and family, Dr. Forsythe offers this advice: “One of the easiest conditioning tips for anyone is to think of all the hours you have available every day. For every hour you’re up and awake, try to walk for at least five minutes; you could do this answering phone calls, looking at the morning TV news, walking during coffee breaks, and so on. It’s the accumulation of activity that really makes the difference.”
Some people might think that photography is a fairly sedentary hobby, but not the way Terrell Van Aken, M.D., attacks it. Although the medical director of NorthBay Bridges, a palliative care practice, disavows any claim of being a hard-core hiker, he does travel around Northern California, lugging some 40 pounds of Nikon gear to find the perfect spot and patiently wait for the perfect light. The result: Dramatic vistas that capture the heart and the imagination.

For two years, Dr. Van Aken's scenic views—from frost-capped mountains to brilliant fall colors—have been featured on the pages of the NorthBay Hospice & Bereavement calendar, which is distributed annually to doctors, staff, volunteers and families in the bereavement program. He has also donated selected images as auction items at NorthBay fundraisers to support Hospice & Bereavement, a program which is near and dear to his heart.

“He brought in a number of his photos one day, and spread them out on a big table,” remembers Veronica Wertz, NorthBay Hospice & Bereavement volunteer coordinator. “He wanted staff to pick out the best ones for him to donate to the Solano Wine & Food Jubilee auction. I looked at the photos and realized they’d make a fantastic calendar. Not only does this showcase his talent, but it shows how compassionate this doctor is. He loves his patients, he loves this program,” she says. “It just puts it all in perspective.”

Dr. Van Aken came to Solano County in 1987 as a family practice physician, with an office on the edge of Vacaville’s Leisure Town. As his patient population aged, he began to specialize in geriatric issues. That eventually evolved into taking care of patients in their final days.

So when an opportunity to join the NorthBay Health at Home program came up, he realized it was a good fit for his practice style, and it would be an opportunity to work with hospice. Now in the role of medical director, he’s been able to add a palliative care program, which helps critically ill patients who are not ready for hospice make quality of life decisions about their care.

It’s a rewarding job, but certainly comes with its unique share of stress.

Photography has turned out to be a brilliant escape. “It allows me to refocus my energy on the scene at hand,” he says. “It’s a complete distraction, a cleansing.”

Earlier this year, Dr. Van Aken traveled to Horsetail Falls in Yosemite, just east of El Capitan. During the last two weeks of February, the sun can hit the falls just right so it glows a brilliant orange at a certain time of day.

Dr. Van Aken was packed side to side with scores of other photographers for hours on Valentine’s Day also hoping to get “The Shot.”

“We got skunked,” he grins. “At sunset, you should have seen everybody leave.”

But patience is what it takes, and he’s always ready to try again. Some of his favorite places include Yosemite, Big Sur, Point Reyes and San Francisco. The Michigan native also loves to photograph his home state, especially Porcupine Mountain State Park, which displays spectacular fall colors.

Dr. Van Aken became interested in photography after his father died, when he realized his family didn’t have much in the way of photographs. He wanted to work with old negatives, so he started with a traditional darkroom. He switched to digital in 2002, and hasn’t looked back.

“It’s amazing what you can do on your computer, in your own home,” he says. “Photography is something nearly everyone can try. It’s very accessible.”

It also provides a great incentive for getting outside and enjoying nature, he said. “I’m trying to expand my horizons. I want to get back up to Lake Shasta and Mount Lassen.”

While he’s shot a number of air shows (he’s a big fan of aircraft), he tends to gravitate toward nature: Majestic trees, sunlight dappled creeks, flower-drenched hillsides and, of course, waterfalls.

“His photographs are very beautiful, very peaceful,” says Wertz. “When I look at his photos, it’s usually a place I want to go. But if I can’t go there, I just let the photo pull me in. I can feel the serenity, and can practically hear the water crashing down. It takes me away.”
Take a Swim

It is a good whole body workout.

You use almost all the major muscle groups.

It places a vigorous demand on your heart and lungs.

It develops muscle strength and endurance.

It is a useful exercise for people with leg or lower back problems.

Swimming offers resistance training.

Offers the same aerobic benefits as running.

Swimming places no stress on bones, joints or connective tissue.

It improves your body’s use of oxygen.

Swimming benefits people of all ages.

Pediatrician Michael Ginsberg, M.D., of the NorthBay Center for Primary Care in Fairfield has been swimming since age 7. Today, he says that’s what keeps him fit and centered.

“For the daily hour I’m swimming, it’s just me, my body and the water,” Dr. Ginsberg says. “All other issues and ‘to do lists’ are gone from my mind.”

Growing up in Michigan, everyone in his family was required to choose a sport. A self-proclaimed clod on land, he was one of the fastest kids in the water. In high school he spent four to five hours a day in the pool and his swim team was state champion.

But by the time he entered Stanford, he was totally burned out on swimming. “I didn’t care if I ever got back in the water,” Dr. Ginsberg says. “And the result of my sedentary college life was that I gained 50 pounds.”

It was then that a friend introduced him to the Master Swimmers program and he got back in the water. Master Swimming began in 1970 as a way to give swimmers age 18 and older a goal for keeping physically fit. Today the nationwide program has more than 42,000 adult swimmers. Each chapter has a coach who assigns the daily workouts.

“I knew that being an overweight physician wouldn’t set much of an example for my patients,” he says. “I liked the Master Swimmers program and I managed to keep up with it all through medical school and residency.”

Today Dr. Ginsberg is in the top 10 percent of swimmers in his age group and swims with the Vacaville chapter of Master Swimmers.

Revved Up & Ready to Ride

If there is any doubt that Thomas Erskine, M.D., is crazy about dirt bikes and motorcycles, look no further than his cell phone. It’s encased in rubber that looks suspiciously like tire treads, and it doesn’t ring—it revs up like an engine.

And then there’s the two dirt bikes (a KTM 450 XC four-stroke, and a KTM 300 XC two-stroke) and the Harley Davidson that sit in his Napa garage.

You might think it was a lifelong passion, but NorthBay Healthcare’s new Chief of Staff—who divides his time between practicing internal medicine at the Center for Primary Care in Vacaville and serving as the medical director of the Center for Wound Care—has only been involved in biking for six years.

“My dad always rode motorcycles, and about six years ago I decided I wanted to buy a Harley, so we could do road trips together,” says Dr. Erskine.

Then a year later, his brother-in-law introduced him to dirt bikes. Now he’s got the bug, and loves his off-road adventures. They’ve gone to Baja, California, and have found miles and miles of dedicated tracks and trails in Northern California.

He’s active in the American Motorcycle Association’s District 36 and has joined the Valley Climbers, which puts on annual Enduros—100-mile, off-road races in which up to 250 participants compete against the clock for trophies or plaques.

It’s a family affair at District 36 events, says Dr. Erskine, with riders ranging in age from 7 to 82. His own two boys—at ages 3 and 1—are still too young to get behind the wheel, but that hasn’t stopped him from giving the 3-year-old what looks to be a mini-dirt bike—with training wheels. “It’s a family-friendly environment,” he says, noting his wife and family come along for the day.

“It’s a real adrenaline rush when you’re racing. You leave everything else behind, and stay focused and balanced on the task at hand. You have to be in great shape, and have good hand-eye coordination and great balance,” says Dr. Erskine. “It’s good for the mind and body.”

R X Take a Swim

● It is a good whole body workout.
● You use almost all the major muscle groups.
● It places a vigorous demand on your heart and lungs.
● It develops muscle strength and endurance.
● It is a useful exercise for people with leg or lower back problems.
● Swimming offers resistance training.
● Offers the same aerobic benefits as running.
● Swimming reduces the stress on bones, joints or connective tissue.
● It improves your body’s use of oxygen.
● Swimming benefits people of all ages.
Stephen Newman, M.D., a family practice physician at the NorthBay Center for Primary Care in Vacaville, started taking yoga classes more than three years ago after he realized yoga’s stretching and balancing movements were providing many positive physical benefits for his family members.

Those benefits—improved balance, greater flexibility and increased strength—have since helped him avoid some of the injuries he had been experiencing while jogging or working out at the gym. “I was getting strains and pulled muscles, probably because I wasn’t stretching enough and taking care of myself.”

The results weren’t immediate, Dr. Newman admits. “It took a few months. It’s slow, and the changes are subtle. It takes some time to learn the poses, and to make the connection between the movements and how it ties in with your breathing.”

But he now enjoys those healthy benefits, and maintains them by joining yoga classes at least two times a week. Yoga has also helped Dr. Newman in his work with patients. “I understand better how injuries occur; having balance issues puts you at high risk for falls.”

Although it’s possible to learn yoga from reading books or watching a DVD, Dr. Newman prefers taking classes because an instructor is right there to correct improper positioning.

Considering taking up yoga? Dr. Newman recommends taking a couple of classes a week, and adding in a bit of patience with the practice. “Give it at least four months before you decide if you like it or not.”

He saw that it worked for his wife and sister and thought, why not?

Strength, Flexibility and Balance from Yoga

Tips from Dr. Price
- Change it up. If it starts to get boring, try something new.
- It’s OK to start slow or to even miss a day.
- If things get met, try a class.

These days, women have many choices when it comes to battling depression, from medication to meditation, along with alternative therapies and a little counseling on the side.

But there’s one element that is sometimes overlooked—one that’s simple, affordable and effective, says Dr. Robin Price: Exercise.

In her role at the NorthBay Center for Women’s Health, Dr. Robin Price encounters a fair number of women struggling with depression. They often feel lost and out of control.

Exercise, she says, is a great way to put them back in charge. “Not only does it get their endorphins going, it can even out their moods,” says Dr. Price. “It actually provides focus and helps women realize they have some control over their minds and their bodies.”

Exercise, she cautions, is not an end-all to depression, but it can be a key ingredient in a woman’s treatment plan. Besides, exercise offers great advantages, even for those who are not dealing with depression.

“When you exercise, it’s one of those rare times when you can actually focus on yourself. Our lives are all so busy, and women are so focused on all the things they have to do, from fixing dinner to picking up the kids. It’s important that they make time for themselves.”

Dr. Price is no stranger to the workout. Even in college, she and a group of friends routinely challenged San Francisco’s hilly landscape with a run. And now she’s preparing to participate in the Susan G. Komen Race for the Cure event when it comes to San Francisco.

She’s always been active. As a child, she enjoyed track and field, swimming and basketball. She loves being outdoors and recently enjoyed a hike on Mount Tamalpais.

“I’d recommend Mount Tam to anyone who hasn’t been there. It’s not too difficult, and there are lots of trails. It’s just wonderful to take advantage of the Bay Area weather and get outside,” says Dr. Price. “It’s physical exercise, but it’s also a serene environment. You can just detach from the day’s pressure and relax.”

The toughest part, she admits, is finding the time. “You’ve got to make it a priority. Cut out watching a TV show if you have to—or watch TV while you work out.”

Dr. Price wakes up at 4 or 5 most mornings to get her workout at the gym in before her workday begins. She strives to do workouts on both weekend days, and three days a week during the workweek. Her routines include about 50 minutes of aerobic exercise, and another 30 minutes of weight lifting.

 Whatever exercise you decide to do—pick something you love. That way you’ll want to do it,” she advises. “And be flexible. If you can’t get it in today, then shoot for tomorrow. Just don’t give up.”

Robin Price, M.D.

Robin Price, M.D.

Stephen Newman, M.D., a family practice physician at the NorthBay Center for Primary Care in Vacaville, started taking yoga classes more than three years ago after he realized yoga’s stretching and balancing movements were providing many positive physical benefits for his family members.

Those benefits—improved balance, greater flexibility and increased strength—have since helped him avoid some of the injuries he had been experiencing while jogging or working out at the gym. “I was getting strains and pulled muscles, probably because I wasn’t stretching enough and taking care of myself.”

The results weren’t immediate, Dr. Newman admits. “It took a few months. It’s slow, and the changes are subtle. It takes some time to learn the poses, and to make the connection between the movements and how it ties in with your breathing.”

But he now enjoys those healthy benefits, and maintains them by joining yoga classes at least two times a week. Yoga has also helped Dr. Newman in his work with patients. “I understand better how injuries occur; having balance issues puts you at high risk for falls.”

Although it’s possible to learn yoga from reading books or watching a DVD, Dr. Newman prefers taking classes because an instructor is right there to correct improper positioning.

Considering taking up yoga? Dr. Newman recommends taking a couple of classes a week, and adding in a bit of patience with the practice. “Give it at least four months before you decide if you like it or not.”

Robin Price, M.D.

Stephen Newman, M.D.
INTERNAL MEDICINE
Ehsan Ghods, D.O., a family practitioner at the NorthBay Center for Primary Care in Green Valley, turns to free weights to tone his body and lift his spirits. It’s a strength-training routine he’s followed since college.

“My routine is aimed at building strong tendons rather than muscle mass,” he says. “This means I do a lot of repetitions with light weights.”

Strength training offers several health benefits. A regular program can improve your balance, flexibility and stamina and also prevent injuries. Just as aerobic activity has long been known to offer cardiovascular benefits, resistance training now too has a place in heart-healthy activity programs.

For older people, building strength has shown to prevent the muscle mass decline and unsteadiness once thought to be an inevitable part of aging.

“More muscle mass is like money in the bank as a person ages,” Dr. Ghods says. “Strength training increases your metabolic rate, gives you energy and helps prevent osteoporosis and hip fractures.”

Studies show that people who stay strong need nursing homes at a later stage of life. But, regardless of your age, adding regular strength training to your exercise routine will fine-tune your body to perform the daily activities of living with ease.

Strength-Training Tips

- Consult with your physician before starting a strength-training program.
- Start with weights carefully if you’re not fit.
- Visit a personal trainer to learn the correct way to use the weight.
- Choose a weight that’s heavy enough to achieve 10 to 15 repetitions before feeling fatigued.
- As your strength increases, raise the number of repetitions for each exercise.
- Exercise in a rhythmic manner, at a controlled slow or medium speed.
- Remember to breathe, don’t hold your breath.
- Concentrate on technique and good body mechanics.
- Use your full range of motion.
- Alternate between upper and lower body workouts.
- Limit your strength training to three days a week.

WELCOMING THE TONE

Welcome a Shelter Pet Home

If you’re interested in adopting a dog or cat, visit the Solano County Animal Shelter and help an animal in need. The shelter is open Monday through Friday from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. and Saturday from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. It is located at 2510 Clay Bank Road in Fairfield.

For further information, call the shelter at (707) 784-1356.

Setting the Tone

Ehsan Ghods, D.O., a family practitioner at the NorthBay Center for Primary Care in Green Valley, turns to free weights to tone his body and lift his spirits. It’s a strength-training routine he’s followed since college.

“My routine is aimed at building strong tendons rather than muscle mass,” he says. “This means I do a lot of repetitions with light weights.”

Strength training offers several health benefits. A regular program can improve your balance, flexibility and stamina and also prevent injuries. Just as aerobic activity has long been known to offer cardiovascular benefits, resistance training now too has a place in heart-healthy activity programs.

For older people, building strength has shown to prevent the muscle mass decline and unsteadiness once thought to be an inevitable part of aging.

“More muscle mass is like money in the bank as a person ages,” Dr. Ghods says. “Strength training increases your metabolic rate, gives you energy and helps prevent osteoporosis and hip fractures.”

Studies show that people who stay strong need nursing homes at a later stage of life. But, regardless of your age, adding regular strength training to your exercise routine will fine-tune your body to perform the daily activities of living with ease.

Welcome a Shelter Pet Home

If you’re interested in adopting a dog or cat, visit the Solano County Animal Shelter and help an animal in need. The shelter is open Monday through Friday from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. and Saturday from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. It is located at 2510 Clay Bank Road in Fairfield.

For further information, call the shelter at (707) 784-1356.

Sharing Life with Tukie

Internal medicine physician Lara Charneco, of the NorthBay Center for Primary Care in Green Valley, firmly believes in the health benefits of pet ownership. Growing up in Puerto Rico, she rescued many cats, dogs and small critters. Today she shares her life with Tukie, a dog she rescued 10 years ago on a Puerto Rican beach.

“I found Tukie when I was a medical student and he’s been my companion ever since,” she says. “Pets can improve your life in many ways, emotionally, physically, even socially.”

Most Americans agree. According to the American Veterinary Medical Association, more than 57 percent of U.S. households own one or more animals. Pets do much more than offer unconditional love. Research shows they can reduce stress and blood pressure in their owners, increase longevity in those who have had heart attacks and even relax Alzheimer’s patients.

“You don’t need to own a dog to get these health benefits,” Dr. Charneco says. “Even watching fish swimming in a tank helps lower blood pressure. That’s why you find fish tanks in many medical office waiting rooms.”

And, meeting people can be easier when you have a dog in tow. Dr. Charneco and Tukie visit a local dog park two or three times a week, and as the dogs frolic, their owners get to know each other.

“Dogs are great for making connections with other people,” Dr. Charneco says. “People find it easier to approach you if they can start a conversation about your dog.”

Owning a dog can also get you off the couch and out walking. People who wouldn’t walk alone will make time to walk when they have a dog that needs exercise.

Welcome a Shelter Pet Home

If you’re interested in adopting a dog or cat, visit the Solano County Animal Shelter and help an animal in need. The shelter is open Monday through Friday from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. and Saturday from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. It is located at 2510 Clay Bank Road in Fairfield.

For further information, call the shelter at (707) 784-1356.

Sharing Life with Tukie

Internal medicine physician Lara Charneco, of the NorthBay Center for Primary Care in Green Valley, firmly believes in the health benefits of pet ownership. Growing up in Puerto Rico, she rescued many cats, dogs and small critters. Today she shares her life with Tukie, a dog she rescued 10 years ago on a Puerto Rican beach.

“I found Tukie when I was a medical student and he’s been my companion ever since,” she says. “Pets can improve your life in many ways, emotionally, physically, even socially.”

Most Americans agree. According to the American Veterinary Medical Association, more than 57 percent of U.S. households own one or more animals. Pets do much more than offer unconditional love. Research shows they can reduce stress and blood pressure in their owners, increase longevity in those who have had heart attacks and even relax Alzheimer’s patients.

“You don’t need to own a dog to get these health benefits,” Dr. Charneco says. “Even watching fish swimming in a tank helps lower blood pressure. That’s why you find fish tanks in many medical office waiting rooms.”

And, meeting people can be easier when you have a dog in tow. Dr. Charneco and Tukie visit a local dog park two or three times a week, and as the dogs frolic, their owners get to know each other.

“Dogs are great for making connections with other people,” Dr. Charneco says. “People find it easier to approach you if they can start a conversation about your dog.”

Owning a dog can also get you off the couch and out walking. People who wouldn’t walk alone will make time to walk when they have a dog that needs exercise.

Welcome a Shelter Pet Home

If you’re interested in adopting a dog or cat, visit the Solano County Animal Shelter and help an animal in need. The shelter is open Monday through Friday from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. and Saturday from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. It is located at 2510 Clay Bank Road in Fairfield.

For further information, call the shelter at (707) 784-1356.
Adrenaline Rush on Two Wheels

As the Emergency Department didn’t generate enough adrenaline for Dr. Seth Kaufman, the Berkeley resident spends a chunk of his free time cruising up to 40 mph on a road bike.

“Despite the danger, it’s a stress reducer,” insists the medical director who oversees the emergency departments at both NorthBay Medical Center in Fairfield and NorthBay VacaValley Hospital in Vacaville.

“You don’t really think about the danger when you’re riding—you get used to the traffic and you know where to ride. Actually, it’s very meditative.”

He needs the quiet time. When he’s not dealing with the organized chaos of the emergency department, he’s got enough organized chaos at home with a 2-year-old and a newborn. “My wife is very supportive, but she says please don’t call when I’m riding unless I’m in trouble. If I got enough organized chaos at home with a 2-year-old she sees my cell number pop up, she gets worried.”

Dr. Kaufman started mountain biking about 15 years ago when he was in college, but found that it required so many preparations, that road biking was a better fit. And with the hilly landscape of Berkeley, he’s got exciting challenges right outside his front door. But that doesn’t stop him from getting out and about.

He recently rode a century—a 100-mile race—at Lake Tahoe, his first, and participated in the Wildflower Century, a popular event near Chico. He’s hoping to get another century in this fall.

Although he often rides by himself or with a training partner, he recently rode with a team, learning to stay in line and on task. “It’s a team sport, and it’s actually a lot of fun. You have to have good reflexes, and learn to deal with the wind, and resistance. You ride as a unit,” he explains. “You have to respond quickly if the guy in front of you stops. There’s an art to riding in line.”

And in some cases, the exercise and the quiet time don’t just benefit him. Last year he raised $4,100 by participating in the Leukemia and Lymphoma Team in Training event.

Dr. Kaufman encourages anyone interested in cycling to check out the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society’s Team in Training. “You get discounts on bikes, they teach you how to ride, and you meet other cyclists. It’s a good deal.”

The Good Life… Lead by Example

The way Deborah Murray, M.D., remembers it, her residency nearly did her in. During much of her 23 years in the Air Force, the now retired lieutenant colonel maintained a fairly lean form, but during her three-year residency in internal medicine, it was high stress, no exercise and bad eating. “I gained a lot of weight,” she admits.

While in her endocrinology fellowship, she suddenly found herself face to face with diabetes patients. “I had to tell them every single day that they had to follow a healthy lifestyle, to eat right and get into shape. I couldn’t be a hypocrite,” she says matter-of-factly.

And so Dr. Murray, a physician of NorthBay Center for Endocrinology and Diabetes in Vacaville, began to walk. At first it was just a little, then the distance grew.


Before long, she wanted to make it more challenging, so she started running. That, combined with healthier eating, did wonders. Buoyed by her healthy condition, she decided to compete in a short race.

“It turns out that I’m actually somewhat competitive in my age group,” she recalls. “There’s nothing like winning a trophy for a 5k.”

After that, her goal became clear. She wanted to run the Boston Marathon by the time she was 50.

“I had to add gym work, because I needed to be stronger. But I found that the healthier you become, the healthier you want to become. I was a late bloomer, but you know what? It’s never too late.”

She went on to run the Boston Marathon at 50, and plans to run it again when she’s 60, a good five years off. In the meantime, there are other races to be run, including San Diego’s Rock ‘n’ Roll Marathon, and the Tour de Cure bicycle race in Napa to benefit the American Diabetes Association. She and her husband also get as much downhill skiing in as they can, before the snow is gone.

“The more you exercise, the more you can eat, and I love to eat,” she admits with a smile. “I’m a real foodie—the Food Channel is my favorite.” And in October, she’ll be attending a cooking school in Tuscany, Italy.

So in the meantime, she’ll be doing a lot of exercise. “I figure I can lead by example,” she says. “You can enjoy wonderful food and even some alcohol in moderation and still be healthy. Being healthy doesn’t mean we give up the good stuff.”

PRESCRIPTIONS FOR HEALTH

Dr. Kaufman’s Simple & Nutritious Fruit Shake

Combine frozen blueberries, Greek yogurt, a banana, protein powder and a little white grape juice in a blender to make a delicious and nutritious smoothie.

Dr. Kaufman’s Simple & Nutritious Fruit Shake

Combine frozen blueberries, Greek yogurt, a banana, protein powder and a little white grape juice in a blender to make a delicious and nutritious smoothie.

Dr. Kaufman’s Simple & Nutritious Fruit Shake

Combine frozen blueberries, Greek yogurt, a banana, protein powder and a little white grape juice in a blender to make a delicious and nutritious smoothie.

Dr. Murray’s Workout Tips

• Walk, and gradually build up your time.
• Do something new—try walking, running, biking, cycling.
• Consider using a personal trainer, just to get started. A trainer can offer good exercises that will help you make the best use of your time and equipment.
• Take classes. It can be fun and get you in shape.
• Want to run marathons someday? Consider joining the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society’s Coach to Marathon team. Visit www.teamintraining.org.
• “The more you exercise, the more you can eat, and I love to eat,” she admits with a smile. “I’m a real foodie—the Food Channel is my favorite.” And in October, she’ll be attending a cooking school in Tuscany, Italy.

So in the meantime, she’ll be doing a lot of exercise. “I figure I can lead by example,” she says. “You can enjoy wonderful food and even some alcohol in moderation and still be healthy. Being healthy doesn’t mean we give up the good stuff.”
Knitting is the creative outlet Judy Yang, D.O., a pediatrician with the NorthBay Center for Primary Care in Vacaville, says keeps her relaxed and focused.

Dr. Yang discovered her craft one winter during her residency in North Carolina. She needed a plan for her family’s Christmas gifts that year—preferably something that would also keep her hands warm in the chilly winter. It couldn’t be too expensive, and if it involved some sort of creativity it’d be a bonus.

She had always admired the beautiful knitted and crocheted blankets volunteers made for the premature infants in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit, where she worked long hours at Wake Forest University Baptist Medical Center in Winston-Salem, NC. Encouraged by the many knitters amongst the NICU nurses, she learned to knit.

The rest, as they say, is history.

“I used to think it was a grandma hobby,” she admits with a smile. “But now it has turned out to be a really great creative outlet—lets me use my creative and analytical mind simultaneously—those math and geometry skills still have a purpose!”

And interestingly enough, it has recently become very popular among the younger crowd—20 to 40 year olds, men and women. She still cringes recalling those very first Christmas presents. “They really were horribly ugly scarves. I sure hope no one kept them,” she says with a chuckle. Currently, her favorite thing to knit are toys—the more complex the better, as she enjoys the 3-dimensional modeling aspect the most.

Knitting has also brought her a whole new circle of friends that she wouldn’t have other-wise met, a surprisingly social aspect she hadn’t considered before.

A knitting circle near her home allows her and similarly obsessed folks to share their fiber creations, while discussing anything from politics to family. In addition, knitting for charity is very popular amongst knitters, who make and send items to Afghans for Afghans and the Red Scarf Project (orphans headed for college). One online knitter even spurred many other knitters to raise over $1,000,000 for Doctors Without Borders. Recently Dr. Yang made several items for a charity auction to help underserved children continue their classical music education in the Los Angeles area.

“I do like creating things with my hands,” she says “whether it’s music or working with metal, but fiber has been the strongest connection so far.” What’s more, it’s a good, creative outlet that is both meditative and relaxing, she explains.

“It inspires me to be creative in my choices,” said Dr. Yang. “We all need unstructured time to think and play. That’s a good idea for all ages, but we tend to lose that as we become adults. This was just the perfect fit for me.”

Below is one of Dr. Yang’s favorite recipes. This low-fat soup is rich in calcium and antioxidants.

**Broccoli Soup with Chive-Cayenne Oil**

- ¼ cup plus 1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil
- ¼ cup coarsely chopped chives
- Pinch of cayenne pepper
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 1 fresh or 2 dried Turkish bay leaves
- 1 pound broccoli, stems and crowns cut into 1-inch pieces (about 6 cups)
- 4 cups low-salt chicken broth

Puree ¼ cup oil, chives, and cayenne in blender. Season with salt.

Heat 1 tablespoon oil in large saucepan over medium-high heat. Add onion and bay leaves; cook until onion is golden, stirring often, about 7 minutes. Add broccoli; stir until bright green, about 1 minute. Add broth. Simmer until broccoli is tender, about 5 minutes. Remove bay leaves. Cool soup slightly. Working in batches, puree soup in blender until smooth, about 1 minute per batch. Return soup to pot. Re-warm until hot. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Divide soup among six bowls. Drizzle with chive-cayenne oil and serve.

Makes 6 servings.
A Sure Bet

Woman’s Final Wish Takes Family to Casino

One of the first childhood memories Toni Maria can recall is watching German soldiers ordering her father to dig his own grave. They shot him, quickly buried his body, and moved her family from their Abruzzi farm to a prison camp. Today, she still leaves a little bread on a plate at the end of her meal, to remind herself of the scarcity of the food provided at the camp during WW II.

Blessed with beauty, vitality, strength and a strong character, Toni made it though. After leaving the camp, she became a nightclub singer, a chef, a restaurateur in San Francisco and a loving wife. Although she had no children of her own, her husband, Ben (her former meat delivery man who she met at her restaurant) more than made up for that by blessing her with six stepchildren. She loved them and they loved her, the beautiful meals she cooked for them and her understanding heart.

Living most of their lives in San Francisco and Pacifica, Ben and Toni learned several months ago that Toni was suffering from chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. She doesn’t have a long time to live—but she had a simple dream: To visit Cache Creek for a little gambling and to have a beautiful lunch at Kung Fu Fat’s, a Chinese restaurant located there.

Greeted at Cache Creek by Veronica Wertz, volunteer coordinator and creator of “Dream of a Lifetime,” Toni was set for a fun afternoon. She looked up at Veronica from her balloon-decorated wheelchair in amazement when Wertz handed her $100. Then she played on the slot machines, one quarter at a time. “Once Veronica gave me the money, my hands started shaking,” she says. “It was so fun to see Toni out of bed and enjoying her day,” says Wertz. “It may have been a simple dream for most of us, but it was truly what she wanted. She and her family had such a great time—and she loved every minute of it.”

Wertz said the Cache Creek staff made their visit even more of a special event. “Everyone went out of their way to ensure that Toni was going to have the time of her life, and we are so appreciative of all their efforts. They were truly ‘dream makers’ for her.”

After gambling for about two hours, the entire family sat down to a fabulous lunch at Kung Fu Fat’s. The chef even came out with a specially cooked, spicy shrimp prepared just for Toni. They also shared shrimp balls, wontons, dumplings, pot stickers and Fat’s traditional banana cream pie. Toni regaled the crowd by singing some old standards from her nightclub days and telling a few jokes.

Although she started her life with a nightmare, Toni appreciates that her closing chapter is ending with a dream. Her NorthBay Hospice & Bereavement nursing team has noticed that, since her dream, she seems so much happier and at peace. “I don’t know how long I have to live,” says Toni, smiling from ear to ear from her experience. “But I promise you that I will remember this day for the rest of my life.”

After lunch, the woman who has always lived her life to the fullest went back to play a few quarters more.

She doesn’t have a long time to live—but she had a simple dream: To visit Cache Creek for a little gambling and to have a beautiful lunch at Kung Fu Fat’s, a Chinese restaurant located there.
Jerry’s Joy

Widow Remembers Her Husband’s Life and Final Dream

When Jerry Larson realized he wouldn’t still be alive by Thanksgiving, he had an idea. There would be one more special party with his family to celebrate the holiday—it would just be a little early.

“He decided that we would have a special, early celebration,” his widow, Joy, said. “He told us what he wanted and he made a detailed menu. Even the day before our feast, he was still working on making notes of all the things that we had to have. We went so far as to create a chart, checking off all the elements to remember. Finally as we sat at the table, he looked up and down and said, “Something’s missing.” “What’s missing?” we asked him. “We have the wine, the turkey and the homemade cranberry sauce and the Jell-O.” He paused for a moment or two and finally said “My teeth!” “What’s missing? ” “We all burst into laughter, and of course he did too.”

Jerry Larson was a family man, dreamer, creator and beloved husband to his wife of more than 50 years. “Mr. Larson was such a special person,” says Veronica Wertz of NorthBay Hospice & Bereavement. “We were lucky to have gotten the chance to know him and his family and because of that, we found out what he most wanted before he passed away. It was a visit from his son, Mike, who lives in Michigan but was not able to afford a ticket for a flight to see his father. We were happy that we could provide care as Jerry’s condition worsened. “Jerry really enjoyed having Mike around,” says Joy.

“Thanks to Dream of a Lifetime, Mike’s presence provided a breath of fresh air during his final weeks. And, added to the loving and helpful care he received from our wonderful hospice nurses, we really have to remember that even though we lost him, all was done to give him comfort and dignity with his family always close by.”

Jerry Larson died from complications of chronic obstructive pulmonary disease on Nov. 10. “I remember it so well,” says Joy. “It was a day like so many others. I was in the kitchen cooking, Jerry was receiving treatments every couple of hours. I went to go give him his treatment and I knew. He was gone.”

Even though she is in a deep stage of grief, Joy doesn’t forget the humorous side of the man she was married to for more than half a century. She keeps a number of his beautiful wood carvings of horses, small musical figures and the whimsical creatures he loved to give to people. His favorite gifts to loved ones and friends were tiny mice. “I never named it,” she said thoughtfully when asked what she called the irresistibly cute critter. “Now that you’ve mentioned it, I think I’ll call it Jerry.”

Golden Opportunity

The second annual Run for Good 5K attracted an estimated 1,500 runners. April 17 and the NorthBay contingent was by far the largest. Like a river of gold flowing down Texas Street, nearly 400 NorthBay Healthcare employees and their families, ran or walked in the downtown Fairfield race. Clad in gold T-shirts, they helped the event raise an estimated $30,000 for the Matt Garcia Youth Center.

The 3.1-mile course was created to be used by elite runners but accessible to people of all abilities. Two professional runners took first and second place; Crosby Freeman won with a time of 14 minutes, 48 seconds. He was followed by Keith Haskins, who finished second in 15 minutes, 5 seconds.

First to cross the finish line from NorthBay was former high school and college runner Chris Dalton, a tech support analyst from the IT Department. He finished at the 18-minute mark, well under a 6-minute-mile pace, but not as fast as he had hoped. Ken McCollum, vice president of Human Resources, finished second in his age group, just missing a 10-minute-mile pace. Katie Lydon, an OB clinical nurse, finished first in her age group and 15th overall in the women’s division.

After the competitive runners came the parents running with kids, people pushing strollers, and those running with dogs.

Funds Aid the Matt Garcia Youth Center

The Matt Garcia Youth Center welcomes boys and girls from 7th to 12th grade. Located in the old 24-Hour Fitness Center, it is also home to the Fairfield Police Activities League. Three adults are present at all times, including volunteers and off-duty police officers.

The center is named after the late Fairfield City Councilman Matt Garcia, who tragically lost his life in a drive-by shooting in 2008. Garcia had championed the project to give local teens a safe after school outlet.

For more information about the center, call (707) 422-6288 or visit the Web site, www.fairfield-pal.org. The center is also on Facebook.

NORTHBAY HEALTHCARE FOUNDATION

Garcia Youth Center.

www.fairfield-pal.org. The center is also on Facebook.

Funds Aid the Matt Garcia Youth Center

The Matt Garcia Youth Center welcomes boys and girls from 7th to 12th grade. Located in the old 24-Hour Fitness Center, it is also home to the Fairfield Police Activities League. Three adults are present at all times, including volunteers and off-duty police officers.

The center is named after the late Fairfield City Councilman Matt Garcia, who tragically lost his life in a drive-by shooting in 2008. Garcia had championed the project to give local teens a safe after school outlet.

For more information about the center, call (707) 422-6288 or visit the Web site, www.fairfield-pal.org. The center is also on Facebook.
Community Turns Out in a Big Way to Support

Our Jazzy Jubilee

When describing the 23rd Annual Solano Wine & Food Jubilee, it’s best to use superlatives: more vendors, a larger tent, broader selection of silent auction items and the biggest turn-out of ticket-holders in the event’s history. All in all, the Jubilee, which was held on April 23, could only be classified as a resounding success, according to Wayne Senalik, event chairman. “Without a doubt, our 2010 event was the biggest and best in Jubilee history. From the beginning planning, including Open That Bottle night, right through to the end, we’ve had the best sponsors, vendors, volunteers, staff and committee.

We’re confident it will prove to be a record-setting year in terms of funds raised for NorthBay Hospice & Bereavement.”

Senalik also offered high praise for the Jubilee’s many volunteers, who spent many hours, not just during the Jubilee, but in the months preceding it, in preparation for the big day. “They are the hardest working, most devoted people, and their efforts really are what makes this the biggest and best fund-raising event in Solano County.”

“Last year was a very good year in a difficult economy,” added Brett Johnson, NorthBay Healthcare Foundation president. “This year the event gained terrific momentum and surpassed all expectations.”

Such success is great news for NorthBay Hospice & Bereavement, as Hospice programs benefit from the funds raised during this spring-time event. “Our community really came through for the Jubilee and for their support of Hospice, which helps care for families in their time of great need,” Johnson said. “With such broad-based support as this, it further proves that our community is one that truly cares.”

More than 2,000 people gathered under the big tents at the Nut Tree, where first they noshed, socialized and then later danced to the music of popular Latin salsaband Sapo Guapo.

At the Jubilee, guests were invited to sample a wide array of wines, beers and tasty foods, poured and plated by representatives from more than 130 vendors. A silent auction offered items as varied as movie and theater memorabilia, collections of wines, exotic gift baskets, jewelry and collectibles.

The cash raffle’s grand prize of $10,000 went to Fairfield resident David Bast, while Cathy Sacca won the Nut Tree shopping spree.

The date for next year’s event has not yet been set, but will soon be posted at www.wineandfoodjubilee.org.

PRESENTING SPONSORS
Sacca Family’s Burger King Restaurants
The Hofmann Company
Nut Tree
Freeman Family & Cosmetic Dentistry

PATRON SPONSORS
95.3 KUIC
Copart
Daily Republic
Stanley and Amy Davis
First Northern Bank
Solano Imaging
Medical Associates—Jim McMahon, M.D.
Total Home & Garden Show—Bob Back
City of Vacaville

For a complete listing of sponsors and participating vendors, visit www.wineandfoodjubilee.org.

Honoring Flu Fighters

NorthBay Healthcare was among seven organizations honored by the Solano County Board of Supervisors Tuesday, April 27, for partnering in efforts to combat the spread of the H1N1 flu virus.

NorthBay was recognized for its role in sponsoring nine flu vaccine clinics that were free and open to the public. Between October and the end of December 2009, NorthBay vaccinated nearly 6,000 members of the public and our patients with the H1N1 vaccine.

“We’re honored to work with the county and other partners,” said Daman Mott, director of Clinical Support Services and Infection Control. “The joint effort helped with supplies and getting the word out to a wider audience, increasing our ability to get the public vaccinated.”

In addition to NorthBay, other organizations recognized were Touro University, Solano Community College, the Church of Christ in Vacaville, First Baptist Church in Benicia, the Sikh Temple in Fairfield and West Wind Church in Suisun City.

Accepting the award at the supervisors’ meeting were Mott and Margo Walbolt, vice president, Administrative Services for NorthBay Healthcare.

“It’s great to get the recognition for a job well done, but this was really a partnership,” said Mott. “Positive things can come when the government and the private sector work together.”

Dr. Ronald Chapman, Solano County public health officer, told the audience he believes that the worst of the public health threat has passed.

“There’s a belief that enough immunity is out there that we won’t see a third wave in this pandemic,” he told the board. “It’s been a great vaccine campaign.”
The 100-Bear Project

For more than 20 years, Kathie Thoming of Fairfield has educated expectant parents about childbirth and infant care. As an adult educator with the NorthBay ABC (A Baby’s Coming) Clinic, Thoming teaches most of the maternal/child health classes listed in this Wellspring. Now she has a new mission—to raise enough money to give 100 new moms a “Heartbeat Bear” as a parenting tool. The bear makes the sound of the womb, which is comforting for newborns. The bears are created by DEX Baby Products in Vacaville, which offered a special reduced price for 100 bears. Thoming visits service clubs to present her idea and is half-way to reaching her goal.

New parents gain confidence and remain calm when they feel that they have a tool they can use to soothe their new babies. For more information about the 100 Bear Project, e-mail Thoming at babybusiness@att.net.

The bear makes the sound of the womb, which is comforting for newborns.

NorthBay VacaValley Hospital Installs New 64-Slice CT Scan

A new, $1 million Philips 64-Slice CT Scan was installed at NorthBay VacaValley Hospital in May, bringing the most advanced imaging possible to Vacaville. An additional $500,000 was spent on construction and preparation for the equipment. This new technology gives physicians the ability to see more anatomical detail in only a fraction of the time.

CT, which stands for computed tomography (sometimes called a “CAT” scan) is a fast, painless diagnostic tool doctors use to see inside the body. The information the CT reveals is used to rule out or confirm the presence of certain abnormalities or diseases.

A CT scanner combines X-rays with advanced computer processing technology to create accurate detailed images of a patient’s internal structures and organs. VacaValley Hospital’s new scanner produces crisp, detailed images of the body in just seconds.

“Our CT system offers an excellent combination of clinical excellence and patient safety—with the biggest benefit being increased capabilities for early detection,” says Jerry Wilcox, director of diagnostic imaging. “We’ve always put a premium on giving our physicians the best diagnostic tools—and the real winners continue to be our patient community.”

NorthBay Walks the Walk

When it comes to healthy living, it’s not enough for NorthBay Healthcare to talk the talk. The goal for 2010 is to walk the walk. That’s why NorthBay launched a major employee fitness challenge in January, called “Get Lean With Green.”

“The emphasis is not so much about weight loss as it is on getting in better shape. Points are awarded, based on participation, so even employees who are already in shape can participate. Prizes are being handed out along the way, with drawings in June for big prizes.”

For the second year in a row, NorthBay supplemented the entry fee for any employee who chose to participate in the Run For Good 5k fundraiser (for details, see page 29).

NorthBay has teamed up with Dr. Ken Forsythe, whose Green Light Program has helped hundreds of people get into shape. Employees who signed up were given access to Dr. Forsythe’s Web site, which includes information about his program, eating tips and exercise information. In addition, Dr. Forsythe filmed motivational and information video segments, which were posted on an employee intranet.

NorthBay’s team at the May 3 event was a good way to raise the public’s awareness. As an endocrinologist, she tells diabetic patients every day that they must eat healthy and get exercise.

“I can’t be a hypocrite,” she says. “I have to walk the walk.”

The emphasis is not so much about weight loss as it is on getting in better shape. Points are awarded, based on participation, so even employees who are already in shape can participate. Prizes are being handed out along the way, with drawings in June for big prizes.

There are other ways NorthBay is emphasizing wellness, fitness and active lifestyles.

The 100-Bear Project

For more information about the 100 Bear Project, e-mail Thoming at babybusiness@att.net.
New Chief of Staff Elected at NorthBay

Thomas Erskine, M.D., who divides his time between practicing internal medicine at the NorthBay Center for Primary Care in Vacaville and serving as medical director of the NorthBay Center for Wound Care, is the new chief of staff for NorthBay Healthcare.

A graduate of the medical school of the University of Southern California, Dr. Erskine joined the medical staff in October 1999. Lance Gough, M.D., J.D., medical director of the Emergency Department, was selected by his peers to serve as vice chief of staff. Dr. Kathryn M. Amacher, D.O., internal and geriatric medicine, was re-elected to the post of secretary-treasurer of the Medical Executive Committee, while Dr. James B. Bronek, MD, diagnostic radiology, will be the committee’s representative to the California Medical Association.

The committee acts as the organizational body that oversees the functions and duties of the medical staff. NorthBay Healthcare, the 50-year-old local non-profit healthcare system, operates NorthBay Medical Center in Fairfield, NorthBay VacaValley Hospital in Vacaville, three primary care clinics and a host of specialty services in northern Solano County.

Welcome New Physicians

Garth Davis, M.D., practices internal medicine at the NorthBay Center for Primary Care in Vacaville. Dr. Davis earned his medical degree from Oregon Health Science University School of Medicine. He completed his internship and internal medicine residency at David Grant Medical Center, Travis Air Force Base and U.C. Davis. He is board-certified in internal medicine.

Michelle Katzaroff, D.O., has joined the NorthBay Center for Primary Care in Vacaville. Dr. Katzaroff earned her doctor of osteopathy degree from Touro University of Osteopathic Medicine in Vallejo. She completed her residency in internal medicine at Alameda County Medical Center in Oakland. She is available to care for patients age 18 and older and has a special interest in geriatrics, pain management, health promotion and wellness. She is board-eligible in internal medicine.

Nancy McAfee, M.D., practices internal medicine and pediatrics at the NorthBay Center for Primary Care in Vacaville. She earned her medical degree from Creighton University School of Medicine in Omaha, Neb. Dr. McAfee completed an internal medicine and pediatrics combined residency at University of Missouri Kansas City, Mo., which is affiliated with Truman Medical Center, The Children’s Mercy Hospital and St. Luke’s Hospital. She is board-eligible in internal medicine and pediatrics.

NorthBay Wins Two Communitas Awards

NorthBay Healthcare has won two prestigious Communitas Awards. The awards recognize exceptional businesses that are selflessly giving of themselves and their resources, and those that are changing how they do business to benefit their communities.

NorthBay Healthcare’s new cogeneration facilities—a green initiative led by Dave Mathews, director of plant operations and general services—won in the category of “Green Initiatives.” The cogeneration facilities are expected to save our hospitals millions in energy costs.

The first annual Run For Good, sponsored by NorthBay Healthcare and managed by Debra Amos-Terrell, director of critical care/telemetry care services; Will Antipeueto, physician IT educator; and Kelly Rhoads-Poston, marketing representative; won in the category of “Community Partnership.” Communitas Awards is an outgrowth of the pro bono recognition program of the Association of Marketing and Communication Professionals, which honors creative achievement and fosters partnerships with charities and community organizations.

NorthBay Cancer Center will again team with the American Cancer Society to hold the 14th Annual National Cancer Survivors Day “Celebration of Life” on Sunday, June 6. The event will be held from 2 p.m. to 5 p.m. at the Fairfield Center for Creative Arts at 1835 Texas St. in Fairfield.

Celebration of Life events are held throughout the world on the first Sunday in June, and they provide cancer survivors, cancer caregivers and medical professionals with an opportunity to show the world that life after a cancer diagnosis is a reality according to the American Cancer Society.

At the event, cancer survivors are honored for their strength and courage, and the contributions of their families, friends and health care providers are also recognized.

Several activities are planned for the afternoon-long event, according to Charlene Thompson, Cancer Data Coordinator for the NorthBay Cancer Center:

Kyle Restad, the 2010 “Hero of Hope” for the Greater Bay/Redwood Empire Region, is the keynote speaker for the event. Restad, a resident of Petaluma, has a condition called FAP (Familial Adenomatosis Polyposis). He is a financial advisor and facilitates the American Cancer Society’s “Taking Charge of Money Matters” session, which helps cancer patients and their loved ones address common financial concerns.

Participants will hear a brief update on the latest in cancer treatments from James Long, M.D., NorthBay Cancer Center oncologist, and NorthBay dietitian Adrienne Bowen, R.D., will discuss dietary needs for patients undergoing therapy and breast cancer patients who have gained weight from hormonal therapy. Cancer survivors will also speak during the “Speaking from the Heart” portion of the day.

Entertainment will be provided by The Honeybee Trio, the teen vocalists from Vacaville known for their ability to replicate such popular Swing and WWII era song tunes as “It Don’t Mean A Thing,” “Blue Moon,” and “Straighten Up and Fly Right.” Vacaville resident and cancer survivor Robin Miller will also perform.

The event includes food, beverages, and a raffle.

While the event is free, attendees should pre-register because space is limited. To RSVP, cancer survivors should call the American Cancer Society, Solano Unit at (707) 425-5006, and choose option #3.

Find a NorthBay Doctor

If you’re looking for an exceptional physician to care for your family, visit the Physician pages at www.NorthBay.org., or call the NorthBay Center for Primary Care in Fairfield at (707) 646-5500; Vacaville at (707) 624-7500; or Green Valley at (707) 646-3500.
NorthBay Center for Women’s Health Joins
The NorthBay Center for Women’s Health is pleased to announce its affiliation with “Spirit of Women,” a coalition of American hospitals that aspire to high standards of excellence in women’s health, education and community outreach. Service line director Jane Panther, right, and clinic support specialist Lynn D’Modica, passed out pamplets and encouraged guests to join “Spirit” during “A Day for Women.”

Those who join the free group will receive notices of upcoming events, such as a “Girls Night Out,” planned for October, as well as coupons and discounts at local businesses and a subscription to their quarterly magazine.

Girls’ Night Out
Mark your calendar for “Girls Night Out,” Thursday, Oct. 28. Brought to you by the NorthBay Center for Women’s Health, this Spirit of Women event features nationally known comedienne Diana Jordan. One of Oprah’s “funniest people on the planet,” Jordan brings her stand-up comedy to Vacaville for the first time. Jordan will be the headliner for this inaugural event and the evening will be full of entertainment for the women who make a difference in our lives and our community. For information, please e-mail womenshealth@northbay.org.

Fashion, Fun & Focus on Females
NorthBay employees and volunteers, featured clothing and accessories provided by Christina S, a dress shop in Benicia. The day ended with a meditative yoga session.