

Volume 39 • Number 3 • Fall 2018 • Fairfield, CA



# Wellspring

## Tribute to Veterans

Our Military Roots Go Deep





## Let's Thank Them for Their Service

Whether you're walking the hallways at NorthBay Medical Center, NorthBay VacaValley Hospital, or visiting a physician at one of our primary care facilities, it's not hard to find a veteran. There are scores of

them working at every one of NorthBay Healthcare's six campuses in Fairfield and Vacaville.

Of our 2,600 employees, more than 200 boast military affiliations, most in the past, but some on active duty or in the reserves. And when it comes to physicians and providers, there are scores—in our primary care and specialty care practices, and in our hospitals, who have served their country, and now are serving our patients.

This issue of *Wellspring* is dedicated to them, and to the men and women who serve in all branches of the military. Its timing is no coincidence. With November comes Veterans Day, and that's the perfect opportunity to not only thank them for their service, but to salute Travis Air Force Base, which is celebrating its 75th anniversary this year, and David Grant Medical Center, which is celebrating 30 years at its current location.

In this issue, we spotlight how our medical professionals collaborate with our military counterparts both on and off the base, helping our shared patients receive the best possible care. You'll find stories of some of our brave and phenomenal colleagues, whose experiences run the gamut:

- ★ There's the occupational health physician who served as a medical advisor to NASA.
- ★ The podiatrist who deployed twice to the Middle East as well as Africa, during the Somali conflict.
- ★ The surgeon who worked alongside the "Godfather of Trauma Surgery," at the Army's busiest trauma hospital in Germany.
- ★ The pediatrician, who was offered leadership opportunities early in his career.
- ★ The anesthesiologist who learned how to manage a team and deliver care in the back of a flying, vibrating C-130.
- ★ The volunteer who now runs a grief support group for veterans.

These are just a few of our many outstanding employees, providers and volunteers who have served. Please join us, as we thank all our veterans for all that they have done and continue to do for our community and for our country.

**B. Konard Jones**

President and Chief Executive Officer

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Our collaboration with Mayo Clinic, through the Mayo Clinic Care Network, allows more patients to stay home for answers to complex medical questions.





*“We have many doctors, nurses and ancillary staff here at NorthBay who got their start in the military.”*

~Wayne Gietz

# NorthBay Healthcare is Rich with Military Roots

NorthBay Healthcare has many employees and physicians with military roots, but coming up with an exact number is difficult. Of NorthBay’s 2,600 employees, nearly 200 have indicated an affiliation. More than 20 from NorthBay’s team of 150-plus primary and specialty care physicians and providers hail from one (and sometimes more than one) branch of service. And of the nearly 450 physicians with working arrangements at NorthBay Healthcare’s two hospitals, it’s anyone’s guess how many have military affiliations because there is no repository for that information.

That said, the military connection to NorthBay and its surrounding communities is obvious, said Wayne Gietz, vice president of Ambulatory Services. “You don’t have to live in Solano County very long to pick up on it.”

That’s why you’ll see buses wrapped with congratulatory messages to Travis Air Force Base for its 75th anniversary. The Fairfield newspaper has added a commemorative graphic to its masthead. Merchants around the county offer military discounts. And the Travis Regional Armed Forces Committee, which was formed to combat military



Wayne Gietz

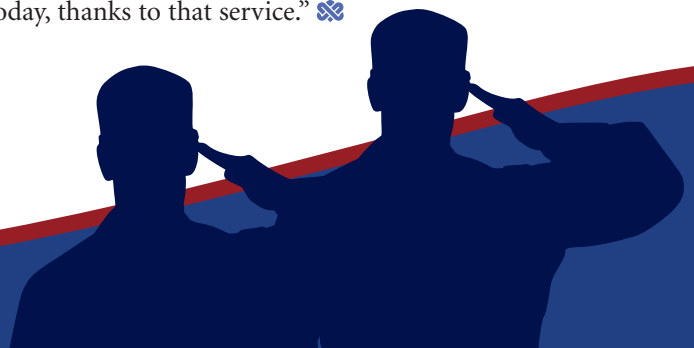
base closures in the 1980s, is still active today.

Wayne, who joined NorthBay Healthcare in 2016, is also a veteran, having served nine years in the U.S. Army as a medic. He recognized a number of physicians and providers on his team with military roots, and suggested a story. That blossomed into

this magazine, which is purposely timed to coincide with Veterans Day.

“It’s the perfect time for NorthBay Healthcare to offer congratulations to Travis Air Force Base on its 75th anniversary, and to salute our partner in saving lives—David Grant Medical Center—which moved into its current home 30 years ago,” said Wayne.

“It’s no secret we have many doctors, nurses and ancillary staff here at NorthBay who got their start in the military,” said Wayne. “We are proud of their service, and honored to salute the leaders they’ve become today, thanks to that service.”





# Collaboration: Priceless

**Y**ou don't need an economist to put a dollar figure on the value of partnership between NorthBay Healthcare and David Grant U.S. Air Force Medical Center. It only takes one of the many patients who are alive today because of that collaboration to tell you it's priceless.

Take Evelyn Stanley, for example. In December 2017, the Fairfield resident collapsed with a torn aorta, a life-threatening condition.

The ambulance delivered Evelyn and her husband to David Grant, on Travis Air Force Base. Cardiothoracic surgeons Shea Pribyl, D.O., and Curtis Wozniak, M.D., were called. But that morning the ancillary support staff needed wasn't available at the base hospital, so they raced her to NorthBay Medical Center in Fairfield, where both military physicians have working arrangements to be on call and perform surgeries.

NorthBay Medical Center is Solano County's only Chest Pain Center, and stands ready with both a catheterization lab and a special heart and vascular surgery suite to handle such surgeries at a moment's notice.

"They were nothing but amazing," recalled Dr. Pribyl. "They got our call and said, 'bring it on!'" Also joining in on the collaboration was cardiothoracic surgeon Gasevoort Dunnington, M.D., from St. Helena, and NorthBay Healthcare cardiac anesthesiologist Adam Tibble, M.D., a former Air Force physician.

Evelyn was placed on a cardiopulmonary bypass for 24 minutes, so surgeons could replace the ascending aorta with a synthetic graft. "A large percentage of people who suffer this type of incident don't even make it to an emergency room," said Dr. Pribyl. "And when they do, depending on the scenario, a large percentage will not make it through surgery."

Not only did Evelyn survive the surgery, but she shared her story and took time to thank NorthBay Healthcare staff and her David Grant physicians.

## It's Mutually Beneficial

During their formative years, there were many informal relationships between the base and NorthBay hospitals—borrowing or sharing equipment, training labor and delivery nurses and referring patients for cardiac and pulmonary rehabilitation, for example—but it has only been in the last decade or so that the relationships have become more formalized.

"Much of that is due to NorthBay's phenomenal growth as a facility that offers advanced medicine and technology," said B. Konard Jones, president and CEO of NorthBay



Lt. Col. Shea Pribyl, D.O., poses with patient Evelyn Stanley, whose life was saved after suffering a torn aorta.

Healthcare. "What started in Fairfield as a 32-bed hospital in 1959 has flourished. Our investments in trauma care, cardiovascular and neuroscience centers have made partnership more attractive."



Col. Patrick Shea, M.D.

Col. Patrick Shea, M.D., chief of medical staff at David Grant Medical Center, agreed. "Air Force doctors, surgeons, nurses and medical technicians at Travis must be primed and ready to deploy anytime, anywhere to care for Airmen injured during combat operations. David Grant patients don't always have the complex medical conditions our surgeons need to maintain clinical wartime proficiency. We must work at civilian hospitals that routinely treat critically ill patients and victims of explosions, stabbings and gunshot wounds," said Dr. Shea.

David Grant has agreements to share resources with a number of hospitals and medical centers in Northern California, including NorthBay Healthcare, which provides labor and delivery training to military nurses and final phase medical training for laboratory, pharmacy and radiology students.

NorthBay's inpatient pharmacy trains David Grant pharmacy residents on the challenging aspects of inpatient chemotherapy preparation. It also works closely with three cardiothoracic surgeons and two neurosurgeons, who



# Partnership with NorthBay, David Grant Saves Lives

are on call for emergencies, and also sometimes bring their patients—such as Evelyn—to NorthBay facilities for treatment. Another nine surgeons are assigned to the NorthBay VacaValley Hospital campus.

According to Dr. Shea, David Grant providers average about 22 hours per month at NorthBay facilities. “Both hospitals benefit because NorthBay’s support staff is fully engaged and David Grant patients get the treatment they need,” he said.

“Participants learn how to research and critically analyze data, and put together a poster—like a science fair—to show their results. By sharing our findings, both hospitals and teams benefit and, ultimately, our patients also benefit,” said Dr. Shea.

Those partnerships sometimes turn into long-term relationships. “It’s remarkable how many physicians and employees we have at NorthBay Healthcare who at one time worked at David Grant Medical Center,” said Aimee Brewer, president of NorthBay Medical Group. “They moved to the area because of Travis Air Force Base, and then decided this is where they want to live and work after retirement or separation from the military, and we are fortunate to welcome many as part of the NorthBay family.”

## Another Life Saved!

Joe Carter and his wife Ruby were having the time of their lives on a cruise to the Mexican Riviera last November. There was a family reunion, his niece got engaged, and much fun was had by all.

But two weeks later, he struggled to breathe. Pneumonia set in, and the retired Navy yeoman first class found himself at David Grant Medical Center, the first of four visits in a



Joe Carter, with heart pillow, and his wife Ruby were thrilled with the excellent care at NorthBay Medical Center and returned to the facility to thank, left to right, ICU nurse Arold Nelson, R.N., Karen Loewe, R.N., clinical manager for NorthBay Cardiac & Pulmonary Rehabilitation and Lisa Ensley, R.N., far right.

two-month period. He couldn’t seem to kick it. “Finally, my cardiologist, Dr. David Appel, suggested an MRI so he could take a look at what was going on,” Joe recalled. A leaky valve was suspected and the MRI confirmed that he needed surgery.

He met with specialists, underwent a number of tests and considered his options. He decided to come to NorthBay Medical Center where his Air Force cardiothoracic surgeons—Drs. Pribyl and Wozniak—could team up with cardiothoracic surgeon Gasevoort Dunnington, M.D., of St. Helena and NorthBay medical staff for surgery close to home. “The entire team was outstanding,” said Joe from his Suisun City home. He was particularly thankful for the compassion of Arold Nelson, R.N., who talked him through recovery in the Intensive Care Unit and the oversight of nephrologist Steven Tolkman, M.D. And, he has been able to receive ongoing care through NorthBay Cardiac & Pulmonary Rehabilitation.

Actually, it was his second time going through rehabilitation at NorthBay. Cardiac issues led to a stent being placed in 2010, followed with a referral to NorthBay for rehab. “We all know and love Joe,” said Karen Loewe, R.N., clinical manager for NorthBay Cardiac & Pulmonary Rehabilitation. “We’re here to help get him back on his feet.”

Joe is grateful for the cohesive care offered by the two teams. “It all looks like one care team to me,” he said. “I couldn’t tell which hospital I was in—NorthBay treated me every bit as good as David Grant did. They coached me through so much. I owe my life to this team.”



## Our Special Honorary Commanders

In 2016, Two NorthBay senior managers became Honorary Commanders at Travis Air Force Base. Aimee Brewer, president of NorthBay Medical Group, was sworn in to serve with Col. Mark Coakwell, left in photo, commander of the 60th Aerospace Medicine Squadron. Meanwhile, Konard Jones, president and CEO, became honorary commander of the 60th Diagnostics and Therapeutics Squadron and worked with Col. Anderson Rowan. Konard poses with Senior Airman Nicole Leidholm, at right in photo. She was standing in for the colonel at the ceremony.

# Veteran in Paradise

## Physician Enjoys Offering Care to Fellow Vets

Twice a month, Douglas Freeman, M.D., slips on one of his patriotic ties and makes the drive to Paradise Valley Estates, a retirement community in Fairfield that is home to some very special patients—many veterans and spouses of veterans.

Paradise Valley Estates was founded in 1997 by military officers and provides its 500-plus residents an independent lifestyle coupled with assisted living and skilled nursing care.

In 2017, NorthBay Healthcare opened an office in the Laurel Creek Health Center inside the master planned community, offering primary medical care twice a week. Dr. Freeman covers mornings every other Monday and Teresa Whitley, M.D., an internal medicine specialist, offers care in the afternoons, every other Thursday.

“It’s been a great outreach for NorthBay Healthcare,” said Wayne Gietz, vice president of Ambulatory Services. “We are delivering care to a whole new set of patients, where they want it, close to home, and during convenient hours, on a regular basis.”

The partnership with Paradise Valley has also allowed NorthBay Healthcare to showcase some of its physicians by offering free lectures to residents. Topics have included joint replacement, gastroenterology, back pain and pain management.

As a veteran himself, Dr. Freeman says he enjoys the opportunity to interact with those who have served. “We share similar backgrounds and we share similar stories,” he said. “I was deployed to Korea for one year and I may have actually cared for them while they were actively serving.”

Dr. Freeman was in the Air Force Reserves from 1991 to 1995 and was on active duty from 1995 to 2002. He served his residency and as a clinician at Scott



Douglas Freeman, M.D., enjoys chatting with patient Bruce Bartels during an appointment at Paradise Valley Estates.

Air Force Base in Illinois where he took care of both troops and their families.

He was stationed at Osan Air Force Base in South Korea between 1999 and 2000, where he served as medical director and clinician. “My job was to ensure that the pilots and their support teams (some 300 patients) were healthy enough to fly,” he recalled.

Dr. Freeman said he always knew he wanted to be a general practitioner. After being accepted into medical school he applied for an Air Force scholarship and was honored to be accepted. He joined NorthBay Healthcare in 2004 and maintains his practice at the NorthBay Center for Primary Care in Fairfield, when he’s not at Paradise Valley Estates. He especially appreciates opportunities for geriatric medicine. “I have a deep and profound respect for the elderly,” he said. “I feel it’s my calling.” ☒

Three NorthBay Center for Primary Care facilities offer appointments Monday through Friday with more than 20 physicians, nurse practitioners and. Call (707) 646-5500.

**In Fairfield, 2458 Hilborn Road:** Offers two internal medicine physicians, two family practice physicians, two pediatricians, a psychologist, a licensed clinical social worker and a nurse practitioner. It also has Care ’til 8, an after-hours service for patients with non-life-threatening medical conditions.

**In Vacaville, 421 Nut Tree Road:** Hosts 10 physicians, including two pediatricians, four family practice specialists and four internal medicine specialists. It also offers Care ’til 8.

**In Green Valley, 4520 Business Center Drive:** Features one internal medicine provider, two family medicine doctors, a pediatrician, a psychologist, a nurse practitioner and a physician assistant.



# Pediatrician Learned to Lead, Military Offered Opportunities

Pediatrician Bruce Hewett, M.D., did not intend to have a lifetime career in the military. “I just kept kicking the can down the street,” said the retired colonel. “They kept making me bigger and better offers.”

He was the middle of six siblings to go to college and wanted a way to spare his parents the financial burden. He visited an Air Force recruiter and applied for a scholarship.

The next thing he knew, he was in medical school at Colorado University. After that, he had a choice: a civilian or military residency. “I chose military as an opportunity to see the world,” he said.

And so he did. In 1984 he completed a medical student rotation at David Grant Medical Center. This gave him the chance to impress the resident recruiter at Travis Air Force Base, which led to a three-year residency.

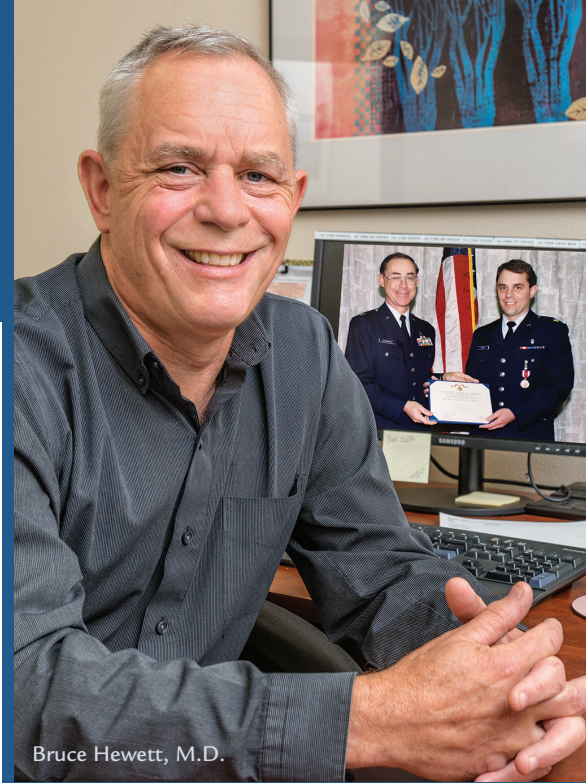
Then came four years in Myrtle Beach, S.C. During operations Desert Shield-Desert Storm, he was promoted to chief of medical staff. After the Gulf War, there was a rash of base closures, and Myrtle Beach was shuttered. So Dr. Hewett and his family went to Albuquerque for five years, where he was promoted to a lieutenant colonel. Then it was Anchorage, Alaska, for another five years, and a promotion

to colonel. He returned to Travis in 2002 and retired from active military duty on Jan. 1, 2008.

When he started at NorthBay Healthcare’s Center for Primary Care in Vacaville, he thought it would be great to just focus on patients. But within a couple of years, he was tapped for his leadership skills to head the physician quality team. “I feel like I learned a lot of leadership in the military, it gave me opportunities at a younger age than I would have had in the civilian sector,” he said.

Stepping up is part of paying back. So is teaching. It’s not uncommon to see Dr. Hewett being trailed by three or four medical students on any given day. He shares not only his expertise, but his passion for his job.

“I love the large spectrum of work,” said Dr. Hewett. “I can walk into one room and hold a newborn baby and then minutes later visit with an 18-year-old patient in the next exam room. When you’re a pediatrician, every day is interesting, a good day to make a difference in someone’s life.”



Bruce Hewett, M.D.

*“When you’re a pediatrician, every day is interesting, a good day to make a difference in someone’s life.”*

~Bruce Hewett, M.D.

## The Mission Transcends the Job

Physician Assistant Joel Ambrosio says his two years as a hospital corpsman (medic) in the U.S. Navy instilled in him the drive to give his all and offer his best for the mission, every encounter, every time. That has translated to his job now, as a physician assistant at the NorthBay Center for Primary Care in Green Valley. “My mission is to provide the best personalized care I can to the patients in my charge and to do so with unswerving commitment,” said the Vallejo native. “I believe my military training definitely instilled that in me and I have carried it through each stage of my medical career.”

He joined the military when he was 18. His dream job at the time would have been to work at Naval Air Station Alameda—close to home and family. Unfortunately, he joined at a time when bases were closing, and that dream job didn’t materialize. (Alameda closed in 1997.)

Instead, he was assigned to work at Assault Craft Unit Four in Little Creek, Virginia, before moving on as a surgery scrub tech at Portsmouth Naval Hospital in Virginia, caring for shipmates and learning that he loved medicine, especially in a primary care setting.

“The Navy really taught me to appreciate the team aspect of medicine. Now I’m able to bring that forward and be part of an excellent team here at NorthBay,” he said.



Physician Assistant Joel Ambrosio now, above, and then.



# Cancer Specialists Ready to

It's rare for a small, community-based hospital to offer all of the sophisticated medical services typically found in a big-city cancer center, but that's exactly what is available at the NorthBay Cancer Center, according to Lori Muir, director of Oncology Services for NorthBay Healthcare.

"There isn't a single kind of cancer that we can't treat here. We have everything we need: expertly trained and highly respected physicians, the latest

in diagnostic equipment and treatment options, and a support staff that includes nurse navigators and accredited oncology nurses, a dietician, social worker and genetic counselor."

And, since the NorthBay Cancer Center is located in Solano County, "our patients and their families don't have to travel very far to receive this world-class care."

At the center of it all are the Cancer Center's six hematology and radiation

oncologists, half of whom obtained their training through military service. "Military physicians are battle-tested, not only on the field, but in emergencies, in public health crises, during natural disasters and conflicts," Lori observed. "Now, our team is going to battle every day for our patients."

## Hope for Healing

A self-avowed "math nerd," James Long, M.D., was initially focused on a major in physics at the University of Texas when he realized he didn't want to spend his life in a lab. And, later, when his father suffered from heart disease and a stroke, the idea of helping others became further cemented in his mind.

After receiving his medical degree, Dr. Long did a residency in internal medicine at Wilford Hall Medical Center at Lackland Air Force Base in San Antonio. He was interested in cardiology when he had an epiphany.

"After seeing patient after patient suffering from chest pains in the ICU, and then suggesting one after another that they stop smoking and lower their cholesterol, I realized I wanted something more."

A fellowship training in hematology and medical oncology came next, in a combined program between the Air Force and the University of Texas. He was transferred to David Grant U.S. Air Force Medical Center in 1990.

Oncology and hematology allowed him to deal with virtually every organ in the body. It offered the hope of an actual cure for some diseases and active research for all the others, he said.

"Hope keeps patients going and it keeps me going. There is a lot of cancer research going on and it's being widely



◀ A trio of oncologists at NorthBay Cancer Center share a background of training and service in the Air Force. They are: Jessica Powers, M.D., James Long, M.D., back row left, and Jonathan Lopez, M.D.

# Go to Battle for their Patients

shared. Consistent guidelines for treatment have been developed and are being constantly updated.”

Today, Dr. Long serves as medical director of the NorthBay Cancer Center. Not only does he treat patients with cancer, but those suffering from blood issues, ranging from acute leukemia to blood clots. All receive his undivided attention, as part of his personal philosophy. “I’m interested and willing to spend time answering questions my patients might have. I want them to feel trust in the decisions we make and to know that they are part of the team.”

## Honing a Skill for Compassion

Jonathan Lopez, M.D., hematologist/oncologist with the NorthBay Cancer Center, made a simple choice when pursuing his career: Enlist in the U.S. Air Force and get educated.

His first job was as a pharmacy technician, but then he elected to go through medical school at the Uniformed Services University of Health Services in Bethesda, Maryland. His intention was to become a primary care physician but all that changed during his six-week rotation in hematology/oncology. An encounter with a patient opened his eyes to the significance of compassion and communication.

The patient was not interested in talking to a medical student. “She said she would just have to repeat everything to the doctor, so she sat with arms crossed and wanted no part of me,” he recalled. “I saw in her chart that she had declined chemotherapy which was curious to me since and her breast cancer was advanced. So, we started chatting about little things while we waited.”

As she became more comfortable, the patient allowed Dr. Lopez to listen

to her heart and lungs and to ask a few medical questions. He noticed that she had a prosthetic leg and on it was a band aid. When queried, the patient told him her mischievous grandchildren had scuffed it up, so she put a band aid on it to prevent the scuff from snagging her pantyhose.

Now appearing more relaxed, Dr. Lopez asked her why she refused chemotherapy. She said she did want it, but was caring for her grandchildren and had no way to get to the treatments. “Her prior medical team only heard that she declined the treatment and had failed to consider her social situation. I’ll never forget her.”

Dr. Lopez suggested she could get chemotherapy as an inpatient, and she agreed to the treatment. “The military taught me to be efficient and on time with my patients,” he says, but it also taught him the intrinsic value of compassion. “I strive to give my patients the support they need as we battle their illness together.”

## Eyes Forward to Future Goals

Jessica Powers, M.D., hematologist/oncologist for NorthBay Cancer Center, knew from an early age that she wanted to be a physician. So, she joined the Air Force’s Reserved Officers’ Training Corps (ROTC) when she enrolled at the University of Virginia.

ROTC cadets agree to a four-year active duty assignment in exchange for having college paid for. After graduating from medical school, she was promoted to captain and did her residency in internal medicine and then a three-year fellowship in hematology and medical oncology at Wilford Hall Medical Center at Lackland Air Force Base in San Antonio.

She was drawn to oncology in part because of her physician mentors,



Dr. Powers pauses to share a moment with a favorite patient she was treating in 2016 at David Grant Medical Center.

but also because of the patients. “Oncology patients are special. They are full of hope and gratitude, which I find very inspiring. Being an oncologist and seeing first-hand the struggles my patients face gives me a unique perspective about life. I try not to take anything for granted.”

Being in the military also taught her perseverance, flexibility and patience. “I learned to keep looking for a Plan B. If the solution wasn’t in front of me, I’d work to create one. I still use those values today to fight hard for my patients.”

Dr. Powers spent 14 years in active duty, and came to the NorthBay Cancer Center in 2017. “I grew up in a small town with small-town values of caring for your neighbor, giving back to your community and doing the right thing. NorthBay values are exactly the same. I enjoy being part of an organization full of people who respect each other, work hard to take care of patients and enjoy coming to work every day.”



# Partnership is Good

*When it comes to matters of the heart, patients of NorthBay Heart & Vascular Center are served by a team steeped in military know-how, from one of NorthBay Healthcare's long-time cardiologists and a nurse practitioner, who both served in the Air Force, to two lieutenant colonels currently assigned to David Grant Medical Center at Travis Air Force Base.*

*They share their mission to serve, not just the U.S. Air Force, but heart and vascular patients throughout Solano County.*



Jeffrey Breneisen, M.D., holds a photo of his Critical Care Air Transport Class, taken at Brooks Air Force Base in Texas. In the inset, Dr. Breneisen and company pose with then-Miss America.

## Experience Offers Bigger Picture

Cardiologist Jeffrey Breneisen, M.D., was driving onto Travis Air Force Base the morning of Sept. 11, 2001, when he heard a radio report that a plane had crashed into the north tower of the World Trade Center. Back then, he was the cardiologist on call at David Grant Medical Center. It took a long time to get on base, but once he did, his colleagues were in a state of shock. By then, a second crash into the south tower had been reported. One resident had a brother who worked in one of the towers. Then came the crash at the Pentagon. And then the crash in Pennsylvania.

"I remember a lot of us trying to get calls through. We finally learned he was OK," said Dr. Breneisen. But the husband of another colleague was killed in the Pentagon crash. "Most of us from cardiology, ICU, emergency and nursing were already assigned to a Critical Care Air Transport team," he recalled. "We were put on alert that night but they never deployed us."

It was a scenario Dr. Breneisen saw several times during his military career. He'd already earned his bachelor's degree in pre-med from Notre Dame University and was just starting medical school at the University of Illinois when he decided to join the military. He did his officer's indoctrination at Lackland Air Force Base in Texas.

He was stationed at Travis Air Force Base for his residency, and then moved to San Diego at the Naval Medical Center for a fellowship. He returned to Fairfield three years later. After separating from the military in 2002, he worked as a civilian contract cardiologist, later went into private practice and then joined NorthBay Healthcare.

His time in the military gave him a unique perspective, he said. "You not only study medicine, but you're aware of world events and the bigger picture. You deal with patients who have traveled the world to serve our country. Many of them are heroes. They've made sacrifices. They've deployed during times of war and have served while being away from their families," he said. "It's an honor taking care of these people."

## From Technician to Practitioner

One week after she turned 18, Rebecca Parker enlisted in the U.S. Navy and found herself at boot camp in Orlando, Florida. She was no stranger to military life. Her father served in the Army (Special Forces) and



# for the Heart



instilled in her the core values of honor, courage and commitment from a very early age. “The Navy just reinforced them,” said the nurse practitioner for the NorthBay Heart & Vascular Center.

“The military gave me a sense of pride to always be the best I can be with anything I do,” she said, noting that it has carried over to her career in health care.

She worked as a civilian at David Grant, helping establish their cardiothoracic intensive care unit in 2010 and joined NorthBay Healthcare in 2017. She often encounters patients with military backgrounds.



Rebecca Parker, N.P.

“I have a very special place in my heart for veterans,” she said. “They often have difficult problems and unique needs. I feel they should be held in high regard for the sacrifice they made. We have freedom in this country because they were willing to fight for it and continue to protect it.”

## Serving is in His Blood

Lt. Col. Shea Pribyl, D.O., comes from a long line of family members who have served in the military. “It was in our blood from the beginning,” said the David Grant Medical Center cardiothoracic surgeon. “It was always a chance to serve our country and to be a part of something greater than oneself.”

Dr. Pribyl started in the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy in 1996 and served four years after college in the U.S. Naval Reserve. Then he “crossed over to the Blue” and joined the Air Force in medical school. He has been with the Air Force for 14 years, and started in partnership with NorthBay Healthcare in January of 2017.

“My mother was a nurse and was an inspiration to pursue medicine,” he recalled “Even as a boy, when someone would get hurt on the playground, I would spread my hands and say, ‘Everyone stand back. My mom is a nurse.’ Oddly enough, people always stepped back and let me lead. That leadership and passion has helped to guide me through life and has

fortunately given me the opportunity to draw from a culmination of similar, mixed experiences leading me toward medicine.”

Mentors, he said, inspired him to pursue cardiothoracic surgery. “The pathophysiology and anatomy of the chest always fascinated me,” said Dr. Pribyl. “I was motivated by the constant mental and physical stimulation of the procedures—a high-level marriage of hands and mind—all in the context of being able to impact people’s lives in a concrete way. I wanted to be part of a profession that is constantly innovating and rewarding results.”

## Mom’s Stories Inspired a Doctor

Lt. Col. Curt Wozniak, M.D., knew from the time he was in high school that he wanted to be a doctor. His mother, a hospital unit clerk, regaled him with heroic stories of physicians and he thought: I could do that.

So he headed off to the Uniformed Services University of Health Sciences, the Department of Defense medical school. “I thought it would be a great way to get good a medical education and serve my country at the same time,” he said. “Since then, I’ve been very fortunate to have received excellent training 100 percent supported by the Department of Defense, in both military and civilian hospitals.”

Based at David Grant on Travis Air Force Base, he started in partnership with NorthBay Healthcare in 2016. The partnership not only allows him to bring his patients to NorthBay hospitals, but it also allows him to be on call for cardiac emergencies.

The extra hands-on opportunities help keep the surgeon’s skills in tip-top shape.

Mentors, he said, inspired him to pursue cardiothoracic surgery. “They perform some of the most technically demanding procedures every day. They were also extremely dedicated to their patients.”



Lt. Col. Shea Pribyl, D.O., left, and Lt. Col. Curt Wozniak, M.D.

# From Great Feats to Podiatrist Recalls Early Days as Navy Field

When you are a field medic with an infantry combat Marine unit, you see a lot of bad feet. Just ask NorthBay Healthcare podiatrist Kevin Miller, D.P.M., who served his country as a U.S. Navy hospital corpsman with the Fleet Marine Force, First Marine Division.

During his service, which stretched from 1992 to 1998, Dr. Miller was deployed to the Middle East twice. “It meant going to Africa during the Somali conflict,” he said. At the age of 24, he was trained and working alongside military doctors on all manner of health issues.

“I saw a lot of foot and ankle injuries among the Marines,” he said. “I saw a lot of muscular, skeletal and ligament issues like fractured ankles and feet, chronic repetitive injuries and skin problems from poor foot care. I saw it all daily and it was something that I wanted to help with.”

And he met a podiatrist who inspired him. “I had not really thought of that line of medicine until I saw it in action,” he said. “Caring for injured

*The lessons learned in the military remain at the core of what he does.*

Marines, helping them get back on their feet made me feel good.”

As a corpsman, he also experienced a continuity of care with his military patients. “I saw my Marines full circle with their injuries. I was able to help from the time they got hurt, through their hospital stay and physical therapy before they were sent back to the field,” he said. “We would see a young Marine injured in a helicopter accident and it was heart-breaking. Helping to get them out to keep fighting was important to me.”

After his military service, he went through undergraduate and medical school earning his degree at California School of Podiatric Medicine at Samuel Merritt University in Oakland. He completed his residency at St. Mary’s Medical Center, San Francisco and went into private practice and academia. He

## Military Mission Brings Family Closer Together

In 1989, Dan Hartley was a newly married father-to-be working as a nurse in a Seattle hospital, but he wanted to be closer to family in Arizona. So he joined the Air Force and landed at Nellis Air Force Base in Las Vegas.



Dan Hartley

He became a second lieutenant and a perioperative nurse. When he left the service eight years later, he had achieved the rank of captain and served in Saudi Arabia as part of Desert Storm.

His career path really chose him, he said. He hadn’t thought about nursing when he entered Northern Arizona University as a forestry major. A Campus Crusade for Christ conference helped him realize he’d rather spend his career with people than in a forest.

In the military, he enjoyed a wide variety of experiences. “There was a lot of autonomy and as an officer I was in a leadership role, working with enlisted members,” he said. “In that position, you learn to develop relationships, you have to learn everybody’s job in the surgical realm.”

He gained invaluable surgical experience, he added, from general surgery to orthopedics, neuroscience, vascular surgery and C-section deliveries.

Eventually, he came to Travis Air Force Base and, like so many others, fell in love with the area and decided to stay when he left the service in 1996.

After obtaining his Family Nurse Practitioner certification, he joined NorthBay Healthcare to work in cardiac surgery. He later obtained a doctorate of nurse practice and moved to orthopedics. Today he

# Great Feet and Medic for Marines

landed in the Fairfield and Vacaville area in 2010, and taught at Samuel Merritt, but he had his eye on NorthBay Healthcare.

"In 2012, I said to NorthBay's recruiter, 'You should hire me,' and she said, 'We've never had a podiatrist before,'" he recalled. "And then I got the call from NorthBay and came here (in 2016). It's the best decision I ever made."

The need for his specialty continues to grow, he noted. "Everyone has feet and ankles, and they are a priority for our active lifestyles," he said. "Being active is important in the management of a lot of health problems. My focus is to keep people up and moving."

As his practice has grown, so have the treatment options. He is now part of the NorthBay Joint Replacement Program, doing ankle replacements and is part of NorthBay's new Sports Medicine focus.

The lessons he learned in the military remain at the core of what he does. "It's that honor, courage and commitment to duty promise I made," he said.

"I have that same sense of service to my patients." ❧



Kevin Miller, D.P.M., said his inspiration for becoming a podiatrist started while serving in the U.S. Navy, addressing the needs of a Marine Division.

## and Leads to Travis

*"My career path chose me."* ~Dan Hartley, N.P.

works in NorthBay's Joint Replacement Program. It's a job that allows him to use the same skills he honed in military leadership, spending time and getting to know his patients and their needs. "My goal is to help patients obtain peace about the medical care they receive," he said.

"When patients leave appointments, they know we are their advocates."

And that first child? Well, he's following his dad's lead. Holden Hartley, 29, is a hospital corpsman in the U.S. Navy. ❧



Holden Hartley

## Everything You Need, Available Under One Roof

NorthBay Center for Orthopedics includes a host of talented specialists who are among the finest in their field in the Bay Area, including experts who first developed their skills through years of military service. They provide a full range of care for orthopedic conditions using a variety of surgical and non-surgical therapies.

The new NorthBay Center for Orthopedics and Rehabilitation opened in March at 2500 Hilborn Road in Fairfield and provides patients with access to their orthopedic specialists, X-ray services and rehabilitation team, all under one roof. For more information, call (707) 646-5599.



# Former Flight Surgeon Still Soaring

## Physician Keeps Solano Work Force Grounded

A quick look at the resume of Yolanta Petrofsky, M.D., and you'll quickly confirm that there's not much she can't do. While in the Air Force, the senior flight surgeon flew countless missions—to places like Russia, Turkey, Micronesia, Guam and Canada—providing international medical support and strategic planning. She led investigations into mishaps and coordinated responses to chemical, biological and radiation

accidents and pandemic outbreaks. She has lectured on everything from women's health to programs countering fatigue. She's conducted extensive research on pilot fatigue and developed and implemented the first Flight Medicine/Occupational Health joint clinic in the United Arab Emirates, providing medical services for embassy personnel and their families. She's served as the lead flight surgeon for NASA, while providing medical

support for multiple Space Shuttle Launch Trans-Atlantic Abort Landing sites staffing, along with being the contingent French translator.

And that was just during her eight years in the Air Force. How do you top all that? You go back to school and earn your masters of public health from Harvard.

She joined NorthBay as medical director of Occupational Health and Employee Health in 2014, and has seen the Fairfield operation grow to a second location in Vacaville.

She says her time in the military—including 350 days deployed to locations under adverse conditions—reinforced her decision to go into a medical field to support the working community. “Identifying and recognizing occupational hazards and focusing on mitigating workplace risk drew me to the field,” she said.

While stationed at Spangdahlem Air Base in Germany, she learned to perform work-place safety compliance inspections, industrial hygiene assessments and served as consultant and deputy chair of a multidisciplinary Occupation Health Working Group, composed of public health experts, industrial hygienists, nutritionists, exercise physiologists and bioenvironmental engineers.

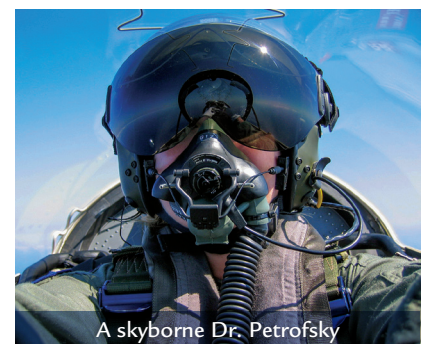
“I think my experience taught me flexibility; the ability to adapt to any environment, and relate to any patient across different fields,” she said. ☒



Yolanta Petrofsky, M.D., has mastered flexibility, thanks to a world-wide range of experiences from her days in the U.S. Air Force.

### Occupational Health Now in Two Locations

NorthBay Occupational Health and Employee Health operates two offices, one in Fairfield at 2470 Hilborn Road, Suite 100, and another in NorthBay Urgent Care in Vacaville, 1679 East Monte Vista Ave., Suite 104, in the Nut Tree Plaza. Two physicians, a physician assistant and a nurse practitioner lead the teams at both sites. It is the longest-serving provider of occupational medicine in northern Solano County, providing cost-effective and comprehensive occupational health care to businesses and industries in Solano County. To make an appointment or for questions about drug screens, call (707) 646-4600.



A skyborne Dr. Petrofsky



William Fulton, D.O., shows an image from his Army days.

## Trauma Skills Honed in the Shadow of War

Surgeon William Fulton, D.O., learned many powerful lessons during Operation Iraqi Freedom, especially during a brief stint at the Army's busiest trauma center in Landstuhl, Germany, working alongside world-renowned trauma surgeons, including Dr. E. Gene Moore, "The Godfather of Trauma Surgery."

He treated gravely injured young soldiers. He learned techniques to stop life-threatening hemorrhage with pelvic fractures. Protocols and techniques were being developed all the time to improve the way trauma patients were resuscitated.

"The sense of mission to care for soldiers, mostly very young, defending our right to freedom in our own country instills a sense of patriotism and aligns the mission of healthcare so well that it is palpable," he said.

All that experience has prepared Dr. Fulton for his current role as a trauma and acute care surgeon at NorthBay Medical Center. When he joined the U.S. Army at 22, his primary incentive was the Health Professional Scholarship Program to pay for medical school in Kirksville,

Missouri. His father was in the Navy and his grandfather served in the Army during World War II.

The Army offered him a chance to provide the unique type of care that has innovated trauma practice around the world. Throughout his military experience—13 years in all and four active duty—he was given numerous leadership roles and opportunities. But ultimately, it all comes back to the patient.

"There is simply no divergence from the compassionate care and teamwork that comes when we see an 18-year-old soldier who has lost his leg or suffered a burn to fight for our right to live free from terrorism," said Dr. Fulton.

He said surgeons must similarly align their sense of mission and incentives in civilian healthcare. "The patient is not only the center of health care but the center of our community and the reason we feel compelled to work, improve our organization, and grow with our colleagues in a mission much greater than ourselves," he said. ❧

## Life Lessons on a C-130

There's nothing like delivering care to wounded warriors in the back of a flying, vibrating C-130 to push a doctor out of his hospital comfort zone. But according to NorthBay Healthcare cardiac anesthesiologist Adam Tibble, M.D., his four years in the Air Force as a physician with Critical Care Air Transport resulted in some of his most meaningful, rewarding work.

He served during the Iraq/Afghanistan conflicts and was deployed twice over four years, once to Afghanistan and once to the Middle East. He found himself teamed up with an ICU nurse and a respiratory therapist—both with exemplary skills, he says proudly—handling the care of as many as two dozen high-acuity patients, as well as numerous other low-acuity or insurgent patients.

"We would bring patients to stark hospital outposts and fly them to higher acuity hospitals within Afghanistan or on to Germany," he explained. "Our U.S. military and International Security Assistance Force soldiers are the real heroes," he said. "They enter a cave or go on a



Adam Tibble, M.D.

mission, merely because they are told to do so. They deserve excellent care. They deserve to know that their country will go to the ends of the earth to keep them alive and

transport them home, and we did."

Those lessons, he said, are easy to apply to the patients back at home—both at David Grant Medical Center and at NorthBay Healthcare, which he joined in 2011.

"My team's experience showed me the power of being intensely motivated for your patient," he said. "Finding and sharing those stories of our current patients is imperative, motivating and rewarding." ❧





Deborah Murray, M.D.

# Air Force Helped Her Discover Her Specialty

Sometimes you need to create your own opportunities, and for Deborah Murray, M.D., those opportunities—through the U.S. Air Force—led to a highly satisfying medical career.

She followed in her father's and stepfather's footsteps and joined the Air Force as a medical technician. After eight years, she wanted more, so she left the Air Force and attended medical school on the GI bill.

A pediatric endocrinology resident introduced her to the specialty and she was immediately captivated. "It was so

fascinating I couldn't imagine any other specialty would ever satisfy me," she explained.

She retired in 2005 as a lieutenant colonel, after 23 years in the Air Force, and joined NorthBay Healthcare in 2006, splitting her time between primary care and endocrinology before

being named medical director of the NorthBay Center for Diabetes & Endocrinology two years later. After a sabbatical, she has returned on a part-time basis, working out of the NorthBay Center for Primary Care facility in Fairfield. "It is a great honor for me to serve all of my patients, including many men and women who have served. They deserve the best care we can give." ❧

## Diabetes & Endocrinology

NorthBay Healthcare's Center for Diabetes & Endocrinology offers its patients comprehensive care through a team of specialists—endocrinologists, nurse practitioners, nurse educators and a dietitian—so they may better manage hormonal imbalances, osteoporosis, cholesterol, adrenal disorders and diabetes and enjoy healthier lives.

The center is located at VacaValley Wellness Center, 1020 Nut Tree Road, Suite 290 in Vacaville. Dr. Murray sees patients at the Center for Primary Care in Fairfield, 2458 Hilborn Road.

## Controlling Chaos: An Acquired Skill

Julian Gallegos was a fairly new nurse in the U.S. Air Force when he was sent to Germany's Ramstein Air Base to help care for service members being flown in from the war zone in Iraq. He met incoming flights and cared for patients—whose injuries ranged from minor to critical—as they were bused from the landing strip to the hospital.

"You grow up fast," noted the nurse practitioner in NorthBay Healthcare's Urology and Sleep Medicine clinics. "I believe they call it controlled chaos."

That experience helped considerably when he came to NorthBay Medical Center in 2010 as an administrative coordinator for the night shift. He was responsible for supervising all operations of the medical unit, working with doctors, nurses and various departments so that everything ran smoothly. It's a job akin to that of a traffic cop.

He was named stroke program coordinator in 2012, and returned to clinical nursing four years ago, in the Urology

and Sleep Clinic. And in his spare time, he earned a doctorate in philosophy with a major in nursing from the University of Arizona.

Now, he is teaching the next generation of nurses, as a full-time assistant professor and doctorate of nursing practice program coordinator at Touro University in Vallejo.

The military, he said, is a great place for nurses to start, "because the leadership skills that you learn translate well in the civilian world." ❧



Julian Gallegos, N.P.



# Tiniest Patients Captured His Heart

Neonatologist Steven Gwiazdowski, M.D., had his heart set on becoming a pilot, but that was before a physical determined that nearsightedness was an issue. “In those days, it all but disqualified candidates from flight school,” he remembered. But it didn’t stop him from pursuing medicine, so he figured a flight surgeon might be the next best thing.

During his time in medical school, he decided to go a different route. “I became passionate about the care of the tiniest, most vulnerable members of our society.”

He served his residency at David Grant Hospital, back when it was known as “the Hospital on the Hill,” and then set off for a fellowship in Neonatal-Perinatal Medicine at the Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia/ University of Pennsylvania.

When he returned to Travis Air Force Base in 1988, it was to the newly opened, bigger and better David Grant Medical Center. He attained the rank of major and served for four years as medical director for the David Grant Neonatal Intensive Care Unit, or NICU.

He was on active duty during Desert Shield and Desert Storm and was ready to deploy to Europe if the call came, but it never did.

In 1994, he began full-time work at NorthBay Medical Center in Solano County’s only Level III referral center for premature and critically ill babies.

Even though Dr. Gwiazdowski couldn’t be an Air Force pilot, it didn’t stop him from becoming an instrument-rated pilot. The lessons he learned in the aviation world of teamwork, communication and continuous quality improvement influenced his approach to patient care, he said.

“In the unforgiving world of aviation, attention to detail, discipline around checklists and anticipating contingencies have helped prepare me for treating very complex patients in the NorthBay NICU, some of whom have less than 3 tablespoons of blood in their entire bodies,” he said.

His time in the service taught him the value and sanctity of camaraderie. “The most satisfying aspect of being a physician is the connection I have with my patients, families and NICU staff,” he said. “I am so blessed to practice here.” ✂



Steven Gwiazdowski, M.D., cradles one of his young charges in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit at NorthBay Medical Center.

*“The most satisfying aspect of being a physician is the connection I have with my patients, families and the NICU staff.”*

~Steven Gwiazdowski, M.D.

## Marriage: Made in Korea

When you’re stationed in a far-away country, the dating landscape definitely changes. Hikes to scenic vistas, ski trips... and an adventure in the Korean Demilitarized Zone? It was all part of the whirlwind courtship between pediatrician Chad Tarter, M.D., and Stephanie Bredar, R.N., in 2005, photo at left, when both captains were stationed at Osan Air Base in South Korea. Dr. Tarter was the only pediatrician on base, while Stephanie’s role as a nurse had her taking care of active duty airmen. And yes, one of their more memorable dates was a visit to the DMZ. Fast forward to 2018, and the couple, now married, both work at NorthBay Healthcare: Dr. Tarter at NorthBay Medical Center in Women and Children’s Services, and Stephanie as director of Ambulatory Quality. They hold a note of gratitude, far left, from the government, complete with barbed wire from the DMZ.



# Hundreds at NorthBay



Jaime Clemente

## And They Continue Caring for Others in New Civilian Roles

*Nearly 200 of NorthBay Healthcare's 2,600 employees are classified as veterans, and they can be found in every nook and corner of the organization, operating CT scanners and taking X-rays, caring for patients in Labor & Delivery, working in security and sanitizing patient rooms. They are physical therapists and equipment technicians, accountants and scientists, and they all served our country before coming to NorthBay Healthcare to serve patients and the community. Here are just a few:*

## Former Loadmaster Keeps Hospitals in Tip-Top Shape

As a sergeant in the U.S. Air Force and Air Force Reserve, Jaime Clemente served as an apprentice loadmaster and a journeyman jet engine mechanic. Today, he oversees 25 Environmental Services staff members who are responsible for ensuring the proper cleaning and disinfection of NorthBay Medical Center. This includes Emergency Department exam rooms, in-patient rooms, operating rooms and cath labs, and the nightly cleaning of most offices in the medical center, as well as the proper disposal of soiled linens; trash; medical, biohazard and hazardous waste; and

the use of Tru-D, the ultra violet (UV-C) radiation disinfection system.

Is the work he did in the Air Force different from what he is doing now? "Not really. Paying attention to detail and working in areas most people would not want to work were hallmarks of my life then, and that continues now," he says with a chuckle.

His first environmental services manager, also an Air Force veteran, hired him because "as a fellow veteran, he said he knew I was well-trained in the 'art of cleaning things,'" he added.

## Lab Director Learned to Embrace Diversity in the Air Force

Jerry Simmers broke the chain when he joined the U.S. Air Force. "My father, grandfathers, brother and brothers-in-law were all coal miners in western Pennsylvania. I didn't want to work in the coal mines!" So, as soon as he turned 18, he looked to the heights, and achieved them career-wise during his 26-and-a-half-years with the Air Force. He worked his way up through the ranks from chief master sergeant to laboratory technologist, laboratory manager, and to squadron superintendent before becoming laboratory career field manager for the entire Air Force, working for the Air Force Surgeon General.

During his tenure, he obtained his bachelor's degree in medical laboratory technology, and a master's degree

in management.

He joined NorthBay Healthcare in 2010 as director of Laboratory Services. "One of the best things about the Air Force was the diversity of

the people I served with, from different backgrounds and demographics, experiences and perspectives. Embracing those differences built stronger teams and innovations that lead to success for our mission. I've found that to be true working at NorthBay, as well."



Jerry Simmers



# ay Honored to Serve

## From Military Nurse to Military Spouse, Back to Nurse

After obtaining a bachelor's degree in nursing from Ohio State in the mid-90s, Lisa Torgerson joined her husband in the U.S. Air Force—he as a pilot and she as a second lieutenant in the nurse corps. But, a few years later, after she became pregnant, she decided to separate from the Air Force. “We didn’t want both of us deployable with a young family.”

And then 9/11 happened. “My husband was deployed several times, often six months at a time, and that’s when I began my most important service—as a military spouse.” They moved seven times during 20 years and she held down the fort as the family grew to include three children. “I have a lot of respect for military spouses, because I know they serve, too. They are willing to make sacrifices, not only for their country but for their family,” she said.

The Torgerson family settled in Vacaville, and her husband, Jason, retired after 20 years to continue flying with a commercial airline. She returned to nursing, this time with NorthBay Healthcare, in 2014.



Lisa Torgerson, right, is with fellow Air Force veteran and coworker Olivia Avila, R.N., at NorthBay Medical Center.

“I think I am more sensitive to veterans as people because I, too, served and because I was a military spouse,” she said. “I understand their pride in their service and in their identity as a veteran, especially if they were in the military for a long time.”

## Trained Firefighter Ensures NorthBay’s Readiness



This photo was taken by Sean Zortman during a recent drill with NorthBay Healthcare and Travis Air Force Base personnel.

The 9/11 attacks played a key role in Sean Zortman’s enlistment to the U.S. Air Force, where he was trained as a firefighter and driver/operator. He served for just over four years, all during Operation Enduring Freedom.



Sean Zortman

He spent a year in Korea and five months in Kyrgyzstan for overseas assignments, and then started a career in healthcare safety with a civil service position for the Air Force. “As a firefighter I learned about fire protection, fire behavior and prevention, and building fire systems and response training. These are critical factors in fostering a safe environment of care. And, a background in fire protection lead to studies in occupational safety and health, which is essential in creating a safe and healthful place of work,” said NorthBay’s Environmental Health and Safety manager.

Additionally, his military experience taught him effective decision-making, as well as “resiliency; respect for rights, dignity and diversity; and self-accountability.”





## NorthBay Hospice's Commitment Says 'We Honor Veterans'

NorthBay Hospice & Bereavement joined the "We Honor Veterans" program in 2016 and is now recognized with its highest honor as a "Level Four" partner. The program is a collaboration between NorthBay, the Department of Veteran Affairs and the National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization.

The program's mission is to help NorthBay Hospice better serve veterans and their families, and includes rigorous training of volunteers, outreach to veteran groups and the Department of Veteran Affairs and the ongoing NorthBay Veteran Men's Support Group.

Only another veteran who has been through war can understand what it's like to live with traumatic memories, and only another veteran can know how this might affect another veteran, said Mike Goodwin, a U.S. Air Force veteran and NorthBay Hospice & Bereavement volunteer.

A scholarship program was created in 2017 to help veterans who can't afford hospice care. "Mission to Serve" is funded by donations. In addition, veterans under NorthBay Hospice care are also offered an opportunity to have their service honored through a special "pinning" ceremony. More than 10 veterans have opted to receive the honor since it was begun in 2017, according to Jeannine Sawyer, Hospice manager. ☒

# Help for Warriors Burdened by Grief

**"Man up!" That command may stiffen the spines of soldiers hauling heavy packs on grueling training hikes, but it's not so helpful for veterans hauling the heavy weight of grief.**

"The military trains you to keep moving, to just deal with it," said Mike Goodwin, a U.S. Air Force veteran and NorthBay Hospice & Bereavement volunteer. But, for some veterans who have lost a loved one, the weight may be too much to bear. That's where having another veteran to stand by and help through the dark days has proven to be helpful for the participants in NorthBay Hospice & Bereavement's Veteran Men's Support Group.

Mike knows. He lost his son in a car accident 11 years ago, and spent seven years in emotional lock-down, unable to process his grief.

Then, five years ago, he saw an advertisement for NorthBay Bereavement's eight-week "Journey Through Grief" program and it clicked: The time had come to face his sadness head-on.

Through the program, Mike found the courage to face feelings he had shuttered away, and then became determined to turn his son's death into renewed purpose for life. He signed up to be trained as a hospice and bereavement volunteer and now he regularly meets one-on-one with those who are in deep grief. He also helps facilitate the "Journey Through Grief" program, and volunteers at the NorthBay "Tree of Memories" event.

Then, when NorthBay Hospice decided to form a Veteran Men's Support Group two years ago—as part of its commitment to the "We Honor Veterans" program—Mike was the natural choice to help get the group going.

The original group has grown to a steady following of 13, representing all branches of the military except the Coast Guard. Some have been coming since Day 1, while others graduated from the bi-weekly meetings.

Tom Edwards is a veteran-turned-volunteer, who joined the group about a year and a half ago, after his wife passed away. "It was very helpful to hear others who are in different stages of their grief process beyond where I am, because it gave me hope that I could get there, too," Tom said.

Attendees can count on something else, Tom noted. "If we break down, no one will be critical. This is a safe environment and we can say what is on our minds." ☒



Tom Edwards, left, has found the veterans support group led by Mike Goodwin offers compassionate camaraderie.



Louis McCreaven

## Yeoman's Job As a Volunteer

A 20-year veteran of the U.S. Navy, Louis McCreaven knows how to keep a tight ship, and that's what the retired yeoman aims to do as a NorthBay Guild volunteer, signing up to spend two days a week in NorthBay Medical Center's Emergency Department.

He started volunteering for the NorthBay Guild 15 years ago, working first in cardiac rehabilitation and then, for the past 10, in the Emergency Department.

Through the years he has donated more than 2,500 hours of his time to NorthBay. In the Emergency Department, his tasks include assuring that the blanket warmer and linen shelves are stocked, that specimens are delivered to the lab in a timely manner and that specimen tubes are pre-labeled and sorted. He comforts patients and family members, trains incoming volunteers and serves on the Guild's Leadership Council.

"My being a vet breaks the ice with some patients, even though most are Air Force retired," he laughed. "I've enjoyed my time volunteering here. Everyone is so pleasant in their greetings and I'll even get a hug."

"We've been fortunate to have many veterans who have opted to volunteer with us over the years," said Jane Hilliard, NorthBay's director of Volunteer Services. "I'm grateful not only for their service to our country, but also for service, above and beyond, to our community." ❧

## Teamwork Skills Honed in the Air Force

NorthBay Healthcare gastroenterologist Michael Krier, M.D., credits his time in the military for teaching him the importance of being a team player in health care. "It taught me to remain flexible, always. 'Semper Gumby,' as some put it," he says with a smile. "There's great camaraderie there... teaching clinicians the necessity of being a team player can make all the difference in delivering effective health care."



Michael Krier, M.D.

Dr. Krier began his military career as a biomedical engineer working with robotics/haptics at Armstrong Laboratory Wright Patterson Air Force Base. He transitioned into the medical corps as a staff internist and gastroenterologist. He trained upcoming GI physicians at the Air Force's only gastroenterology training program in San Antonio, Texas.

During his time in the Air Force he served in Afghanistan as part of Operation Enduring Freedom and in 2012 was chief of medicine at Craig Joint Theater Hospital.

The lieutenant colonel served 17 years in active duty and still serves in the Air Force Reserves today.

He eventually landed at Travis Air Force Base where he became medical director of gastroenterology at David Grant Medical Center. He started at NorthBay Healthcare in 2017.

Dr. Krier focused on gastroenterology because it "provides a good mix of time in the clinic, building relationships with patients and also doing procedures, affording the opportunity to intervene and fix things," he said. He also saw a tremendous need for specialists in his field. "There are many folks who are struggling with GI complaints and it's an honor to take part in the relief of their suffering in any way," he said. ❧

## Gastroenterology Experts

NorthBay Gastroenterology's team of board-certified experts employs a variety of advanced treatments, from medications to minimally invasive endoscopic procedures and complex digestive endoscopy. Patients with complex conditions benefit from education and case management provided by specialized nurses.

Gastroenterology is located at 4520 Business Center Drive, Suite 180 in Fairfield. For more information, call (707) 646-3555.



# In Memoriam

After courageous battles with cancer, two NorthBay Healthcare Foundation Board members passed away this fall, a huge loss for their families, NorthBay Healthcare and the entire community, said Brett Johnson, NorthBay Foundation Board president.

Wendy Wasserman-Kellogg died Thursday, Sept. 27 at NorthBay VacaValley Hospital after a nearly five-year battle with breast cancer.

Adam Burke was diagnosed in January with lung cancer and died Monday, Oct. 8, also at NorthBay VacaValley Hospital.

"Both of these incredible individuals worked tirelessly to elevate the image and reputation of NorthBay Healthcare at many public fundraising events," said Brett. "They were unique individuals with hearts of gold who embraced our mission of making a difference for those around us."



Wendy was first diagnosed with breast cancer in 2014, and then suffered a recurrence in 2016. She was the first NorthBay patient whose case was reviewed by Mayo Clinic experts, after NorthBay Healthcare became a member

in the Mayo Clinic Care Network. She shared her story in the Fall 2016 issue of *Wellspring*.

Wendy joined the Foundation Board of Directors in 2016, bringing enthusiasm, community connections and a willingness to participate and promote programs and events. She became one of the first members to join NorthBay's Patient and Family Advisory Council, sharing her patient experience with those who could effect positive changes in specialty and hospital care.

Adam was an extremely talented artist-animator and coveted creative genius for Pixar. He came to NorthBay in 2015 because he wanted help others in his community and beyond.



He quickly contributed to the success of the Wine & Food Jubilee and other philanthropic endeavors of the Foundation, said Brett.

"We have been honored to work with both Wendy and Adam, and our hearts go out to their family and friends, and all of us who feel the loss," said Brett. "They will not be forgotten." ❧



It may be months away, but it's never too early to block your calendar for the Solano Wine & Food Jubilee which returns to the Nut Tree Plaza in Vacaville May 18, 2019. The 32nd annual event promises to deliver all the good food, wine, brews and socializing that ticketholders have come to expect.

It also represents philanthropy at its most compassionate, as funds raised through the Jubilee continue to support the programs of NorthBay Hospice & Bereavement, helping patients and their families as they face an end-of-life illness.

One way to ensure you have tickets to the Jubilee is to become a sponsor, and the earlier you commit, the more advantages you will receive. Sponsorships start at \$1,500 and can go up to \$20,000. Not only will the sponsorship provide a tax deduction, but if agreed to before Dec. 31, 2018, the sponsor is guaranteed at least two seats to Open That Bottle Night, set for Feb. 23, 2019. This by-invitation-only gala is an elegant evening celebration of support for 300 people. Sponsors are also placed on a Jubilee VIP list, which includes access to special pre- and post-event receptions and to the Jubilee venue itself an hour before general admission.

To learn more about becoming a sponsor, contact NorthBay Healthcare Foundation at (707) 646-3131 or sign up directly at [c2c.org](http://c2c.org). ❧

## Healthcare Conundrum? Ask Kelly

Open enrollment is that time of year when people can sign up for Medicare, select or change their job-based health insurance and/or pick individual market health insurance plans. Need help figuring out which insurance plan will be best for you and your family? Kelly Rhoads-Poston is ready to help you.

A senior marketing representative and health plan specialist for NorthBay Healthcare, Kelly understands the complicated health insurance landscape and goes out of her way to help others navigate it. And part of that is selecting a physician who fits the patient's needs, making her a matchmaker of sorts.

"We have primary doctors in Vacaville, Fairfield and Green Valley, so there are lots of choices in Solano County. Your doctor can be close to where you live, where you work or both," said Kelly. NorthBay Healthcare works with more than 20 insurance companies (*see a partial list at [NorthBay.org/patients-visitors/insurance.cfm](http://NorthBay.org/patients-visitors/insurance.cfm)*), and most Medicare supplement plans, said Kelly. Call (707) 646-3280. ❧

# Community Health Education Classes

**Healthier Living** • A six-week class offered several times during the year, taught in conjunction with Solano Public Health and the Area Agency on Aging. Classes are free but space is limited. Call (707) 646-5469.

**Caregivers' Support Group** • For anyone involved in caring for a loved one with Alzheimer's disease or a dementia-related illness. Meets second Wednesday of the month, 7 to 9 p.m., at 1020 Nut Tree Road, Vacaville. Cost: Free. Call (707) 624-7971 or (707) 624-7970.

**Supporting Parents After a Loss** • Meets the last Wednesday of each month from 6 to 7:30 p.m. at NorthBay Medical Center, Annex Building. Cost: Free. Call (707) 646-5433.

**Adult Grief Support Class, Journey Through Grief** • Class meets weekly for eight sessions. Limited to 12 people per group. Participants follow a step-by-step approach using a book and journal. Cost: Free. For a schedule and to register, call (707) 646-3517.

**Veterans Men's Support Group** • A grief support group for men meets on the second and fourth Thursdays from 10 to 11 a.m. Cost: Free. Call (707) 646-3517 for dates.

**Pulmonary Education Series** • Three-session course meets on Tuesdays from 12:30 to 2 p.m. at NorthBay Medical Center in Fairfield and on the third and fourth Tuesdays at 9 a.m. at the VacaValley Wellness Center in Vacaville. A new course begins each month. Cost: Free. Call (707) 646-5072.

**Congestive Heart Failure Class** • Class meets every Wednesday from 12:30 to 1:30 p.m. at NorthBay Medical Center and on the first and second Thursdays at 9 a.m. at the VacaValley Wellness Center in Vacaville. Cost: Free. Call (707) 646-5072.

**New Beginnings Support Group** • For stroke survivors, caregivers and family members. Third Tuesday of the month, 10 to 11:30 a.m. at VacaValley Health Plaza, Suite 240, Vacaville. Cost: Free. Call Elizabeth Gladney at (707) 646-4034.

## Maternal/Child Health Classes

All prenatal and maternal child health classes are free if you are delivering at NorthBay Medical Center. Sign up at NorthBay.org or call (707) 646-4162.

### Labor of Love

A two-week prepared childbirth class for moms and dads or coaches.

### Labor of Love—Saturday Class

A prepared childbirth class for moms and dads or coaches. One Saturday a month.

### Newborn Care/Car Seat Class

Expectant parents are instructed on daily care, nutrition, safety and development for the first few months of life. Parents are also taught how to choose and properly use infant and child car seat restraints. One-session course.

### Maternity Orientation and Tour

A tour of NorthBay Medical Center's maternity unit with information about hospital registration, birth certificates and other pertinent information.

### Breastfeeding the Baby-Friendly Way

Babies are born to breastfeed. Learn normal newborn behavior and what to expect from a lactation expert. Support persons are encouraged and welcomed.




For a complete schedule of classes and events, visit [NorthBay.org/calendar](http://NorthBay.org/calendar).

## Welcome New Physician



**Darshan Patel, M.D.**, an internal medicine physician, has joined the team at the NorthBay Center for Primary Care in Green Valley, 4520 Business Center Drive, in Fairfield. Dr. Patel earned his medical degree at Smt. B.K., Shaw Medical Institute & Research Center, Gujarat University

in India and completed his residency at Mount Sinai Hospital in New York City.

As an internal medicine physician, Dr. Patel cares for adult patients with a wide variety of health issues. "The best quality in a doctor is to make a patient feel cared for," he said. "Being compassionate and listening to patients are as important for a physician as being knowledgeable and having good clinical skills. These are the qualities that I strive to bring to my own practice. I want to be someone my patients can trust." For more information or to make an appointment with Dr. Patel, call (707) 646-5500. Read his profile on [NorthBay.org](http://NorthBay.org). 





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