

Volume 41 • Number 1 • Summer 2020 • Fairfield, CA



# Wellspring

## Get Back ON TRACK

It's Time to Return  
to Healthy Living

Choose Well, Choose NorthBay



# Good Time to Choose NorthBay

## Our community-based, independent health

**system** has prevailed over many crises in its 60-year history, but nothing compares to the 2020 outbreak of COVID-19. Families,

schools, businesses—and humanity in general—can say the same about agonizing personal experiences in the pandemic that came to Solano County seven months ago.

There's more uncertainty ahead. But I can tell you one thing is certain: NorthBay Healthcare is stronger today than before, prepared for what comes next.

Being the first hospital in the United States to receive a case of community-transmitted COVID-19, a decisive and immediate response was necessary. Our size and agility proved to be our strength. When our clinical staff learned of the patient's positive test for COVID-19, they mobilized in minutes to protect other patients, our staff and, ultimately, our community from the virus.

We learned a lot about the competency and character of our physicians, nursing teams, technicians, lab scientists and the support crews behind the front lines. The latter are unsung heroes. They are folks who clean the rooms, IT techs who keep our systems running, front desk staff who assist patients, finance staff who protect our fiscal viability, and countless others.

It is no exaggeration to say each and every employee, regardless of where they work or what role they fill, came to work with determination to save lives and protect the community.

When you choose NorthBay Healthcare to be your health care home, you choose a cast of devoted professionals. You choose a nonprofit organization laser-focused on serving our community, not a spoke in a sprawling corporate system with decision-making done elsewhere.

We have been overwhelmed by the generosity of our community as we work 24/7 to prepare, prevent and respond to COVID-19. From donated meals to masks and much more, we were humbled by the show of support. We are thankful for the coalition that emerged: hospitals, our county public health officials, first responders, volunteers, senior citizen advocates, donors and others.

The services NorthBay Healthcare delivers will improve and maintain your health. In this issue of *Wellspring*, learn about the breadth and depth of what we do every day.

If you are not a member of the NorthBay family, consider us during this open enrollment period. Choose a health plan that allows us to provide you compassionate care, advanced medicine, close to home.

Be well. Be safe.

**B. Konard Jones**

President and Chief Executive Officer

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*Wellspring* is published by NorthBay Healthcare, Solano County's locally-based nonprofit health care organization.

### Editorial Staff

Steve Huddleston  
[SHuddleston@NorthBay.org](mailto:SHuddleston@NorthBay.org)  
 Diane Barney  
[DBarney@NorthBay.org](mailto:DBarney@NorthBay.org)  
 Robin Miller  
[Robin.Miller@NorthBay.org](mailto:Robin.Miller@NorthBay.org)  
 Sally Wyatt  
[SWyatt@NorthBay.org](mailto:SWyatt@NorthBay.org)  
 Melissa Manry  
[Melissa.Manry@NorthBay.org](mailto:Melissa.Manry@NorthBay.org)

### Publication Designer

Page Design Group

### Photographers

Henry Khoo, Diane Barney  
 and Joel Rosenbaum

[Wellspring.NorthBay.org](http://Wellspring.NorthBay.org)



**NORTHBAY<sup>™</sup>**  
**HEALTHCARE**

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



**MAYO CLINIC**  
**CARE NETWORK**  
 Member

# It's Time to Get Back to Healthy Living

No doubt, 2020 has been marked by tremendous challenges. From the peril of COVID-19, to the stress of constant disinfecting and wearing a mask, the seemingly endless days of sheltering at home, school closures, lost vacations and proms and job insecurity.

When civil unrest, looting and nationwide turmoil erupted in June, NorthBay Healthcare's CEO and President Konard Jones challenged every employee to "carry the NorthBay spirit in every interaction we have," and to create a culture of love, compassion and kindness, as the organization continues to care for the physical, emotional, social and spiritual health of all of our patients.

It's a challenge we take seriously, but we can't do it alone. We need to work in partnership—with you.

It starts by focusing on your health.

Did you put on a few pandemic pounds? Did stress keep you from getting enough sleep? Drinking enough water? Were you so worried about others that you didn't take time for yourself?

**It's time for change,  
but change can be hard.  
We're all on a path to a  
"new normal."**

It's time for change, but change can be hard. We're all on a path to a "new normal."

So, let's do as our physicians recommend: Start small. Drink

more water today. Take a walk tomorrow. Set up a doctor's appointment to check in with your care team. Incremental change can result in big change—to your physical and mental health.

And as the world has changed in the last seven months, so has the health care landscape. In this edition of *Wellspring*, you will find what you need to get started: directories of primary and specialty care physicians; our innovative and advanced medical offerings; and a map to guide you to locations in Vacaville and Fairfield to better serve you; and assurances that patient safety is paramount.

Don't put your health on hold. Please aim to make the "new normal" a healthier, happier you. 🌸

## Safety First

Does the idea of a trip to the hospital or a medical office leave you unsettled? Rest assured your health and safety come first with NorthBay Healthcare. Here are some of the measures we've taken to go above and beyond to underscore safety:

**Face coverings** are mandatory for everyone—patients, visitors, staff—in our facilities.

**Video and telephone visits with doctors** and providers are available, so you can receive medical care from the comfort of your home.

Although visitors are not permitted in the hospitals (with a few exceptions), **we offer technology to help patients connect with families.**

Exam rooms and patient care rooms receive **extra thorough cleanings** after each patient.

**We provide COVID-19 screening and testing** at NorthBay Urgent Care centers in Fairfield and Vacaville.

**We test all patients prior to surgeries**

or outpatient procedures.

We have **thoroughly trained staff on COVID** and infection

prevention measures and have provided an ample supply of Personal Protective Equipment.

We created **dedicated nursing units to care for COVID-19 cases** in NorthBay Medical Center in Fairfield, isolating patients from the rest of the hospital.

Want to know more?  
Visit [NorthBay.org/Covid](https://NorthBay.org/Covid)





# NorthBay Has All Bases Covered

## SERVICE DIRECTORY

### 1 NorthBay Urgent Care

1679 E. Monte Vista Ave.,  
Suite 104, Vacaville

Services include: NorthBay Urgent Care, NorthBay Occupational Health and testing, COVID-19 testing and X-ray services.

### 2 NorthBay VacaValley Hospital

1000 Nut Tree Road, Vacaville

Services include: 24-hour emergency services, 44 medical-surgical beds, six critical care unit beds, two surgery suites, full-service laboratory, diagnostic imaging services, Joint Replacement Program.

### 3 The Surgery Center at NorthBay VacaValley

1006 Nut Tree Road, Vacaville

Services include: Same-day surgery, medical procedures and dental surgeries.

### 4 VacaValley Wellness Center

1020 Nut Tree Road, Vacaville

Specialties include: Medical and radiation oncology, diabetes, endocrinology, registered dietitian, imaging, pain management, osteopathic manipulative medicine and specialty pharmacy. HealthSpring Fitness is temporarily closed.

### 5 VacaValley Health Plaza

1010 Nut Tree Road, Vacaville

Specialties include: Orthopedics, rheumatology, podiatry, wound care, hyperbaric medicine, infectious disease, pulmonology, urology and gastroenterology.

### 6 NorthBay Center for Primary Care

421 Nut Tree Road, Vacaville

Services include: Primary care, lab, OB/GYN appointments on Fridays, nutrition counseling with registered dietitian available via video conference.

### 7 NorthBay Medical Center

1200 B. Gale Wilson Blvd., Fairfield

Specialties and services include: 154-bed acute-care hospital, 24-hour Emergency Department and STEMI (heart attack) Receiving Center, Level II Trauma Center, Accredited Chest Pain Center with PCI, Primary Stroke Center, modern birthing suites, neonatal intensive care unit, critical care units, comprehensive diagnostic imaging services, cardiac and pulmonary rehabilitation, surgical services, cardiac catheterization labs.

### 8 Gateway Medical Plaza

1860 Pennsylvania Ave., Fairfield

Specialties include: General surgery, trauma surgery, sleep medicine, urology, pulmonology, pulmonary function testing, cardiology, cardiac and thoracic surgery, cardiovascular imaging and testing, vascular surgery, heart health clinic, neurosurgery, neurology and neurodiagnostic testing, spine program, interventional gastroenterology, women's health, pain management, speech therapy, audiology and Ear, Nose, Throat and Voice.

### 9 NorthBay Urgent Care

1320 Travis Blvd., Suite C, Fairfield

Services include: NorthBay Urgent Care, COVID-19 testing and X-ray services.

### 10 NorthBay Health Plaza

1101 B. Gale Wilson Blvd.

Services include: Women's diagnostic imaging.

### 11 NorthBay Center for Orthopedics & Rehabilitation

2500 Hilborn Road, Fairfield

Services include: Orthopedics, podiatry, sports medicine, rehabilitative services (physical, occupational and speech therapies), X-ray services, and Orthopedic Urgent Care at Hilborn (O.U.C.H.) from 8 a.m. to 7 p.m. Monday through Friday.

### 12 NorthBay Center for Primary Care

2458 Hilborn Road, Fairfield

Services include: Primary care, lab; OB/GYN appointments on Thursdays; Nutrition counseling with registered dietitian available via video conference.

### 13 Hilborn Administration Center/Occupational Health

2470 Hilborn Road, Suite 209, Fairfield

Home to the NorthBay Ambulatory Administration, Quality, NorthBay Primary Care Call Center, Project Management Office; NorthBay Occupational and Employee Health and testing.

### 14 NorthBay Healthcare Green Valley Administration Center

4500 Business Center Drive, Fairfield  
No Medical Services provided.

Home to the NorthBay Healthcare Conference Center, administration, Human Resources, Information Technology, Public Affairs, Patient Financial Services, Finance, NorthBay Healthcare Foundation, Managed Care and Business Development.

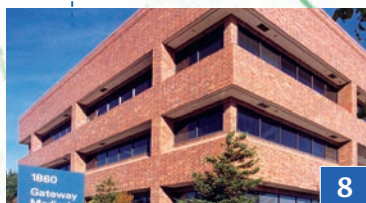
### 15 Green Valley Health Plaza

4520 Business Center Drive, Fairfield

Services include: Primary care, lab, OB/GYN on second and fourth Thursdays; Hospice & Bereavement, Home Health, gastroenterology, cardiology. Nutrition counseling with registered dietitian available via video conference.







## Mayo Clinic Care Network Provides Expert Input

As a member of the Mayo Care Network since May 2016, NorthBay Healthcare physicians work closely with the Mayo Clinic to share medical knowledge and clinical expertise in ways that directly benefit patients.

Through e-Consults, NorthBay's local doctors have access to more than 4,000 physicians and scientists for second opinions, as another set of eyes, or simply to weigh in on complex cases.

### Other care network membership benefits include:

**AskMayoExpert**, a database for reference at the point of care. AME offers the latest Mayo-vetted information on the management, care and treatment of a variety of medical conditions.

**Health Care Consulting**, which enables NorthBay to learn about Mayo's clinical, operational and business models, including how they are designed and implemented.

**eTumor Boards teleconferences**, during which care network physicians are invited to present and discuss complex cases with a multidisciplinary panel of Mayo experts and other participating network specialists.

# Primary Care: Your Safe Home Base

**Every health care journey should start with the basics.** At NorthBay Healthcare, that means picking out your primary care team of professionals who are there to serve you and your family with everything from annual evaluations and flu shots to blood pressure checks and immunizations.

There are three Center for Primary Care locations—one in Green Valley, one in Fairfield and one in Vacaville. Each offers a number of physicians who specialize in internal medicine, family medicine and pediatrics. Every physician is also partnered with a care team—a nurse practitioner and medical assistant who will assist on your health care journey.

Access to your care team has never been easier. Since the advent of the global pandemic, NorthBay Healthcare worked hard to make access to tele-health visits—both via telephone and video—simple and effective.

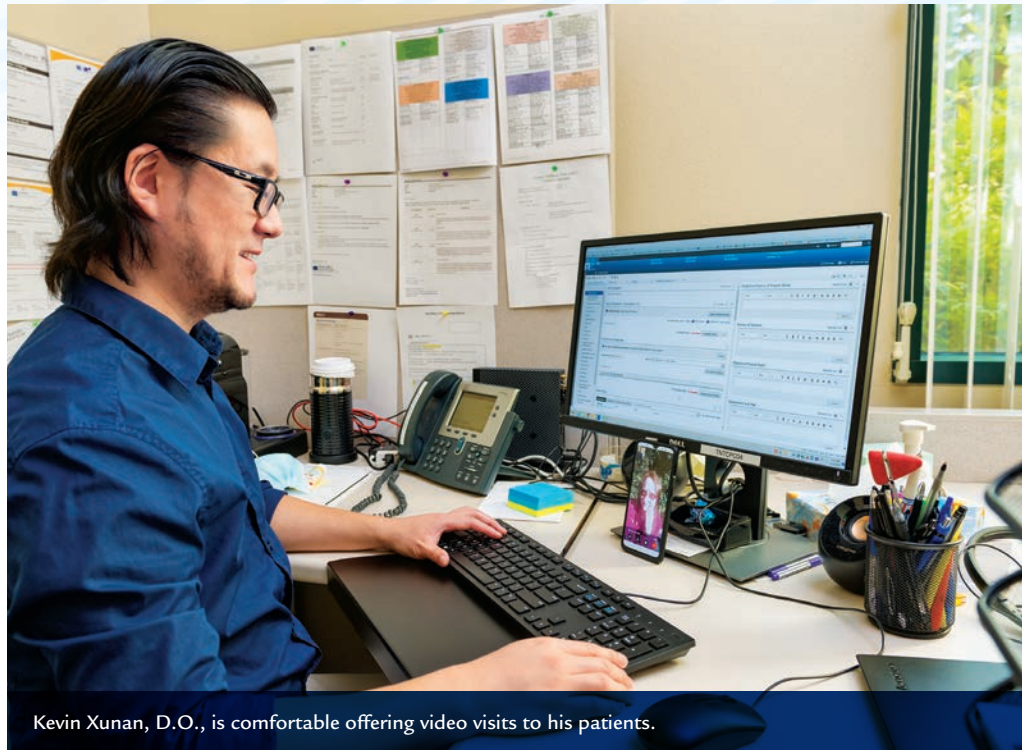
When it first launched on a system-wide basis in March, primary care physicians recorded 143 video visits. By the end of June, primary care's 23 providers logged nearly 1,900 phone calls and nearly 1,600 video

**“Our goal is to complement regular visits with a platform of virtual health options. It's all about making care available to our patients when they need it and where they want it.”**

—Wayne Gietz

visits collectively for the month. The goal, going forward, is to provide 20 percent of all visits via tele-health.

“Our goal is to complement regular visits with a platform of virtual health options,” said Wayne Gietz,



Kevin Xunan, D.O., is comfortable offering video visits to his patients.

vice president of Ambulatory Services. “It’s all about making care available to our patients when they need it and where they want it.”

Appointments can be scheduled by calling (707) 646-5500, or visiting [NorthBay.org/MyNorthBayDoc](http://NorthBay.org/MyNorthBayDoc) online. It’s also a one-stop place to check out test results or send a question to your care team.

Of course not everything can be done online. Physicals, immunizations and procedures still require an in-person visit.

Kevin Xunan, D.O., is a family medicine specialist at the Vacaville Center for Primary Care who also offers Osteopathic Manipulative Medicine. So while he’s happy to handle a virtual visit when it’s most convenient for the

patient, he’s also happy to schedule an in-person appointment for an OMM session or physical in his Vacaville office.

Many of his patients have returned to office visits, Dr. Xunan said, but some of his older patients and those with autoimmune issues have been hesitant to come in person. The video visits give them a way to stay connected and address concerns with him without compromising their health.

“At first, I was offering phone visits, and it worked, but video is better because I get visual feedback on the patient. I can see if they’ve got energy, or if they’re listless or depressed. It’s also more convenient for everyone, and once the patient is comfortable with it, they really appreciate it.” ☒



# Don't Get Lax on Childhood Vaccinations

Even after Solano County issued a shelter-at-home order in March, pediatricians at NorthBay Center for Primary Care facilities continued to report for duty. The only problem was that many of their young patients and parents stopped coming in for appointments.

It's understandable that at the beginning of the pandemic, families were afraid to get out and about. But now it's time to pick up and resume health care, especially immunizations for children, said Pediatrician Judy Yang, D.O.

"It's so important to bring children in for their routine physicals, especially if they are due for immunizations. Infants especially need to be seen every two to three months in the first year and a half of their lives," she said.

The rate of immunizations dropped significantly during the pandemic.

"Because of that, we are now really concerned there could be a vaccine-preventable outbreak on top of COVID-19 this fall. Measles and COVID-19 together would be a real nightmare," she said.

Unless parents jump back into the routine and pick up where they left off having their children vaccinated, Dr. Yang fears there could be an increase in whooping cough, measles, mumps and chicken pox.

"Parents should know we've gone above and beyond to make our medical office safe for them and their children to visit," said Dr. Yang. A dedicated cleaner frequently disinfects high-touch areas many times a day throughout the clinic, and exam rooms are sanitized thoroughly between every appointment.

In the medical office, all staff members are required to wear a mask. In late July, eye protection was added as a requirement. All patients older than 2 and any accompanying adults are required to wear a mask during the visit. In addition, only one adult per child is allowed to visit at a time.

More than 8,000 children under 21 are under the care of the five pediatricians who practice in the NorthBay Center for Primary

Care facilities in Vacaville, Fairfield and Green Valley.

"The message isn't to panic parents, but to encourage them to make the appointment now and get their child back on track with immunizations to keep them and their family members safe," she said. "Don't wait any longer." ❄



Azenith Rios holds her smiling 6-month-old Kyle, while pediatrician Judy Yang, D.O., prepares to listen to his heart.

## Center for Primary Care in Fairfield

2458 Hilborn Road, Fairfield



Amanda Adkins, M.D.  
INTERNAL MEDICINE



Angela Brennan, D.O.  
FAMILY MEDICINE



Douglas Freeman, M.D.  
FAMILY MEDICINE



Michael Ginsberg, M.D.  
PEDIATRICS



Nguyen Nguyen, M.D.  
FAMILY MEDICINE



Corinna Press, PsyD  
PSYCHOLOGY



Levon Tchakmakjian, M.D.  
INTERNAL MEDICINE



Judy Yang, D.O.  
PEDIATRICS

## Center for Primary Care in Green Valley

4520 Business Center Drive, Fairfield



Clarisse Cadang, M.D.  
INTERNAL MEDICINE



Gilbert Chang, M.D.  
PEDIATRICS



Ehsan Ghods, D.O.  
FAMILY MEDICINE



Alina Hongsakaphadana, M.D.  
FAMILY MEDICINE



Darshan Patel, M.D.  
INTERNAL MEDICINE

To make an appointment, call (707) 646-5500, or go to [NorthBay.org](http://NorthBay.org)



# Flu Shots More Important Than Ever

In 2020, getting your flu shot will be more important than ever, and NorthBay Healthcare has a unique plan to serve patients without increasing fears of exposure to COVID-19.

Flu vaccines will be offered by appointment only, at various locations in Vacaville and Fairfield.

Options include:

- Getting your vaccine during your normal visit with your provider, Monday through Friday.
- Making an appointment with a Center for Primary Care nurse to have a flu shot during business hours at any of the Center for Primary Care facilities in Fairfield, Vacaville and Green Valley.
- Scheduling an after-hours or weekend appointment, at one of four locations (two in Vacaville and two in Fairfield) between Sept. 15 and Oct. 27, by calling (707) 646-5500.

Not a NorthBay patient? You can schedule a flu shot at the NorthBay Urgent Care Center in Fairfield or Vacaville by visiting [NorthBay.org/urgent-care](https://www.northbay.org/urgent-care) or calling (707) 646-4000 for Fairfield and (707) 624-7400 for Vacaville.

If you select an after-hours or weekend appointment, you'll be able to check in from your car and receive your flu shot as well.

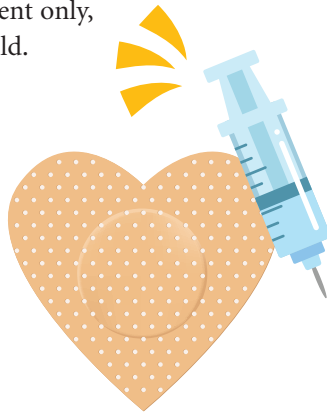
"Our practice lobbies will not be open after hours to ensure the safety and social distancing of patients," explained Rachelle Hunter, practice manager for Primary Care. "Your safety is our priority."

More information will be posted soon on [NorthBay.org](https://www.northbay.org).

According to Andres Vigo, clinical supervisor, NorthBay Healthcare expects to receive vaccines in September, with a goal of vaccinating 15 percent more patients than in 2019.

Both adults and children age 6 months and older should receive vaccines.

Injections and flu mist will be available during regular hours at the Center for Primary Care and Urgent Care facilities. Flu mist will not be available at the after-hours sessions. ❄️



## Center for Primary Care in Vacaville

421 Nut Tree Road, Vacaville



Kulbir Bajwa, M.D.  
INTERNAL MEDICINE



Ana Cherry, M.D.  
FAMILY MEDICINE



Madhav Goyal, M.D.  
INTERNAL MEDICINE



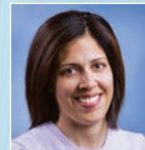
Ali Hassani, M.D.  
INTERNAL MEDICINE



Matthew Heeren, M.D.  
PEDIATRICS



Bruce Hewett, M.D.  
PEDIATRICS



Shanaz Khambatta, D.O.  
FAMILY MEDICINE



Stephen Newman, M.D.  
FAMILY MEDICINE



Teresa Whitley, M.D.  
INTERNAL MEDICINE



Kevin Xunan, D.O.  
FAMILY MEDICINE

## Special Visits for Women's Health Issues

In addition to regular office hours with the Center for Women's Health in Fairfield, NorthBay obstetric/gynecologic providers offer appointments at the NorthBay Center for Primary Care facilities in Vacaville, Fairfield and Green Valley. You can schedule an appointment by calling (707) 646-5500.

To make an appointment, call (707) 646-5500, or go to [NorthBay.org](https://www.northbay.org)



J. Paz Rodriguez and sons Moises and J. Paz, Jr. check in for care at NorthBay Urgent Care Center in Fairfield.

## Second Urgent Care Opens in Nick of Time

NorthBay Healthcare's second **Urgent Care Center** was set to open in early March, with plans for a grand opening celebration. Then the COVID-19 crisis broke and those plans were shelved.

"Patients needed to be seen," said Mary Jameson, director of Urgent Care. "We opened the doors on March 16, in the nick of time. In fact, we saw patients that first morning, just minutes after opening the doors."

Staff and providers quickly got to work, providing care seven days a week, as a convenient alternative to the emergency room, Mary said.

Located just across the street from NorthBay Medical Center, the Fairfield urgent care team—and their

colleagues at NorthBay Urgent Care in Vacaville—have been busy.

Both NorthBay facilities are operated in partnership with Carbon Health, offering immediate medical attention for non-life threatening conditions, such as strep throat, cellulitis, broken bones, shingles, hives, abrasions and bug or animal bites. For patients, the Urgent Care locations have proven to be a viable alternative to an emergency room, offering shorter waits and lower cost, and an option when a visit with their regular doctor isn't readily available.

In addition to serving patients with less emergent needs, the center also became one of the earliest providers of COVID-19 testing in Solano County.

"We have been able to provide COVID-19 testing for hundreds of patients at both Urgent Care centers ever since," Mary said. Because of a shortage of test kits, testing is limited to those with symptoms.

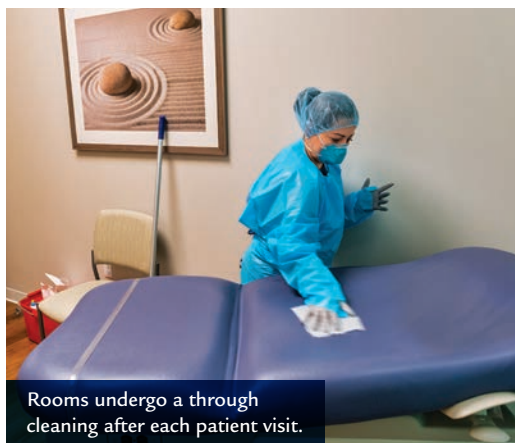
As an added convenience, both Urgent Care centers also offer "Virtual Visits," whereby patients can use their smartphones to talk with an

Urgent Care provider and get treated for a range of conditions.

After downloading the app, patients are connected through live video to one of the center's providers who will review the case and recommend a course of action. Prescriptions are sent directly to the pharmacy.

Both Urgent Care centers are open seven days a week, from 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. The Vacaville location is at 1661 E. Monte Vista Avenue at the Nut Tree Plaza, and can be reached by calling (707) 624-7400. The Fairfield center is located at 1320 Travis Blvd., and can be reached at (707) 646-4000.

NorthBay Healthcare rolled its former Care 'til 8 program into its primary care providers' schedules in May, according Damaris Valera, assistant vice president, Primary Care & Women's Services. "The Care 'til 8 program was established more than five years ago as a stopgap when we had primary care access issues. We have added a number of primary care providers to our Medical Group since then, and opened these two Urgent Care Centers. This has increased our ability to provide patients with the right care at the right time." ❧

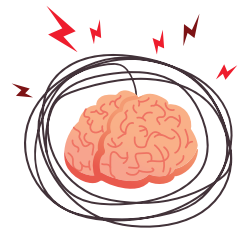


Rooms undergo a through cleaning after each patient visit.



# Stressed?

## Psychologist, Team Offer Coping Tools



Even before COVID-19 changed the world, licensed clinical psychologist Corinna Press, PsyD, was focused on people struggling with depression, anxiety and other disorders.

The global pandemic has only made her more determined to share her message: “You are not alone. There is hope, and it lives right here in Solano County.”

If anything, the pandemic sparked depression and anxiety on a much larger scale.

“Some people have lost jobs, and many more are worried it will happen to them,” she said. “They aren’t just worried about their financial future, they’re worried about how they’ll pay their rent or put food on the table.”

Shelter-at-home orders imposed mind-numbing isolation for those living alone. And for those living with large families, it created a very different set of frustrations. Vacations were cancelled, weddings, graduations and even funerals were postponed

or took on a whole new look. Social gatherings went online. Everything changed.

And change is hard.

So Dr. Press created a series of videos, “Tips for Coping with COVID Anxiety,” which can be found on [NorthBay.org](http://NorthBay.org), under Physician Tips at [NorthBay.org/coronavirus](http://NorthBay.org/coronavirus).

“I’ve read somewhere that in this time of COVID-19, there are no more strangers,” she said. “We are all impacted. And ... we’re just learning right now how to do this. While many of us have navigated difficulties in our lifetime, a global public health crisis is not something we’ve learned how to respond to... Although we don’t have control of the virus, we do have control over how we respond to the impact the virus has on our lives.”

In the videos, she touches on knowing your anxiety; staying

informed; focusing on things you can control; taking care of your whole self; and helping others.

COVID-19 also changed Dr. Press’ work world, but she quickly adapted, setting up video visits with her patients to help them navigate their new normal.

She also had to cancel plans she had for a pair of community events last May—Mental Health Awareness Month.

**“You are not alone.  
There is hope, and it lives  
right here in Solano County.”**

— Corinna Press, PsyD

NorthBay Healthcare had partnered with Foster Kinship Care Education

Program—Solano College, to present two special screenings of “ANGST: Raising Awareness Around Anxiety.” The film, by Indie Flix, was created to spark a global conversation on the subject, according to producers Scilla Andreen and Karin Gornick. Through candid interviews, the film shares stories of many children and teenagers who discuss their anxiety and its impacts on their lives and relationships, as well as how they’ve found solutions and hope.

Dr. Press is hoping that the event can be rescheduled in 2021, and hopes to partner with other mental health agencies in the county.

“It was an important message before COVID-19, and it’s more important now than ever that we engage our community in a healthy dialogue about mental health,” she said. “Depression and anxiety are real and common and treatable. We need to break the stigma and help folks understand that it’s nothing to be ashamed of, and there are treatments proven to work. First, we open the dialogue, then we open the doors to help folks start their journey toward recovery.”



Psychologist Corinna Press, PsyD, and Mental Health Tech Toni Perez were disappointed to have to reschedule two community presentations of “ANGST,” originally planned for May 2020. New dates have not yet been announced.



# Mental Wellness is a Team Effort

**Caring and collaboration are key components** for tending to a patient's physical condition at NorthBay Healthcare and it's no different when it comes to a patient's emotional well-being.

NorthBay's mental health team has been working to develop an integrated behavioral health program that provides "whole-person" primary medical care since 2011, explained Corinna Press, PsyD, a licensed clinical psychologist with NorthBay. "The behavioral health integration concept is founded on the principle that one's overall health is inextricably linked to multiple factors, including biological, social, psychological, and cultural determinants of health," she said. "In other words, our physical well-being is impacted by how we are doing emotionally, and vice versa."

Today, a team of one psychologist (Dr. Press), one licensed clinical social worker and one mental health technician work together at NorthBay's three Center for Primary Care locations in Vacaville, Fairfield and Green Valley. They include Jessica Valdez, licensed clinical social worker (LCSW), at the Green Valley CPC; and Toni Perez, mental health tech who joins Dr. Press at the Fairfield CPC. They provide consultation, crisis intervention, diagnostic evaluation, brief psychotherapy, and psychoeducation. "We work with the patient and their care team to provide the most useful interventions," said Dr. Press.

The mental health team members are called in when a primary care provider asks them to meet with their patient briefly to check on a particular concern, such as tearfulness, anxiety, or difficulty with a life transition.

"This is called a warm hand-off," explained Dr. Press. "A mental health provider or technician will briefly hear from the primary care providers about their reason for the warm hand-off. Then the mental health team will



meet with the patient to get a sense of what is going on, from the patient's perspective, and to help identify what the patient is looking for."

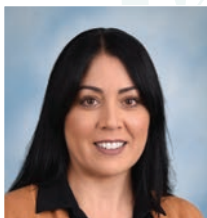
It's an opportunity for the patient to express themselves and for the mental health team member to get a clear understanding to make recommendations, she said.

Depending on the situation, a patient will receive recommendations, resources, or an appointment or referral to an appropriate provider, Dr. Press said. "We try to support their decision-making process by listening, reflecting back what we hear, working with the patient to clarify what they want, and then offering recommendations and reasons for these recommendations," she said. "We think of the conversation—even if it results in the patient saying no—as planting a seed or two. We offer a positive and therapeutic experience. This increases the chance they will follow through, if not now, then perhaps sometime in the future."

Teaming up within the primary care setting is important. "Visibility, education, and understanding go a long way," Dr. Press explained. "So does having a psychologically informed staff. Behavioral health integration in the primary care setting alone is a great step toward destigmatizing mental health issues. It is as normal as getting blood drawn, getting a cast put on, or being referred to any other kind of specialist."

Jessica Valdez, LCSW, also views the team approach as invaluable for patients.

"We are able to access patients who wouldn't normally seek out mental health services themselves," said Jessica, "and as it is under direction of their primary care physician, it creates more trust and opens opportunity to get that care." ❀



Jessica Valdez



Toni Perez

# Parental Insight Pays Off

## They've been there, and done that.

NorthBay Healthcare's obstetrics and gynecology team can speak with authority when it comes to all things relating to pregnancy, childbirth, and the challenges of juggling work and family time, as they are all parents. For some, the childbirth experience is fresh, as several have had their children within the past few years, while others have gained years of personal experience through raising children to adulthood.

All that expertise makes the team empathetic to the concerns and challenges their new and veteran parent patients may face through the life cycle.

"I think having children has made me a better doctor," observed Kalie Li, D.O., who has a son, 3, and a daughter, 2. "It has put a new angle on the empathy I feel for my patients because I can so easily put myself in their shoes. There are happy moments in my job, but also some of the most intense moments of grief and sadness. One of the most important things I can do as a physician is to offer a hand to hold and a shoulder to cry on."



Marlene Freeman, M.D., checks on the progress of patient Jamie Volkman.

"I had a complicated pregnancy and delivery," explains Shanna Snow, D.O., mother of a 22-month-old boy, "with pre-term eclamptic seizure, urgent C-section, and a week in the ICU for both me and my son. That was followed by postpartum anxiety and depression due partly to the stress of it all. While I could sympathize with my patients

before, now I have so much more empathy as I've been through the difficult and scary side."

"Being a parent of two kids, ages 6 and 4, has definitely made me a better doctor, and a better listener," said Stella Huang, D.O. "My patients would complain about certain symptoms and now I hear and empathize with them."

Being the parent of an 11-, 17- and 21-year-old brings different challenges, noted Marlene Freeman, M.D.

"Now that my kids are growing older, my point of

view has continued to evolve. As my kids are going through all these stages of life and hormone changes, and I have been going through a different kind of hormone change (menopause), I can relate to the changes my patients are going through, all of the moodiness and the drama. I can laugh (and sometimes cry) about it with them."

Drs. Li, Snow, Freeman and Huang are part of the comprehensive Women's Health team at NorthBay that also includes Rachel Villalon, M.D., who has four children, and Andrew Lin, M.D., who has two. Tori Garcia, nurse practitioner, rounds out the team.

Some of the physicians knew from a young age that women's health was a path they wanted to follow.

"But, the deal was sealed when I learned all the other ways this specialty could help women," Dr. Snow explained.

"I, too, was drawn to the variety that our specialty allows with outpatient office visits, including prenatal and

## NorthBay Center for Women's Health



Stella Huang, D.O.



Marlene Freeman, M.D.



Kalie Li, D.O.



Andrew Lin, M.D.



Shanna Snow, D.O.



Rachel Villalon, M.D.

gynecology visits, and surgery,” said Dr. Li. “I love working with women, guiding them through their reproductive years, perimenopause transition and then postmenopausal years.”

Dr. Huang was drawn to a career in women’s health when in college. She wanted to help women with challenges they face throughout life and to work with them to be as healthy as they can be.

And while many women look forward to being a parent, not all are thrilled with the pregnancy experience.

“I can admit I was not a fan of the whole process,” Dr. Snow said. “While many women love pregnancy and delivery, I realize now that I and many other women I’ve talked openly with since do not love it. Rather, it is a part of life that some endure to get to the end result: caring for and loving another precious human being!”

“I always knew I wanted children, but it happened for me at a later age, and that comes with its own set of challenges,” Dr. Li said. “I didn’t

have a complicated pregnancy or delivery, but did have breastfeeding obstacles. I am thankful I didn’t have a benign experience; it definitely helped me professionally, from an advice standpoint.”

The doctors also have great empathy for how new mothers struggle with the changes that come with the addition of a new family member or two.

“I’ve become very good at multi-tasking,” said Dr. Huang. “We know there is always more to be done, but the goal is to try and balance life well, to try and de-stress and accept that it all can’t be perfect. It’s OK if you’re not perfect! For me, I focus

on being present when I’m home with my children because they are so young, and I try not to bring work home.”

The team knows their patients have concerns and they’re ready to address them.

“Young mothers may have more questions because the experience will be so new,” Dr. Huang said. “For them, I recommend bringing in all their questions to the appointment and we will do the best we can to answer them all.”

“New mothers will worry if their baby is too large and won’t allow for a vaginal delivery,” Dr. Li said. “Every pelvis is different and it’s difficult to predict. The best thing for a pregnant mom is to not gain more than the recommended weight, which we review at each prenatal visit.”

“I try to educate them as much as possible that childbirth can be

very unpredictable, despite all the modern technology,” Dr. Freeman said. “In the long run, the end goal is safety for mom and baby, as the birthing

experience is just the beginning of becoming a mother.”

“Patients want to know if their fears, worries and stresses will affect their baby,” said Dr. Snow. “We have limited data on this topic, however, I actively seek out my patients who seem to be trying to hold onto a strong front, but are secretly suffering through the pregnancy process. I’ve learned the vast majority have some level of these concerns and high levels of stress, fear, anxiety and depression. Generally, all these babies do very well. So, the bottom line is they can stop worrying about if worrying will harm their baby!”

**“Being a parent of two kids, ages 6 and 4, has definitely made me a better doctor, and a better listener.”**

**—Stella Huang, D.O.**

## Pregnancy, Childbirth and COVID-19

**These are challenging times** and the COVID-19 virus adds to the complexity, especially for pregnant women and their partners, according to NorthBay Healthcare’s OB/GYN team.

“Many of my patients are nervous about being separated from the baby more than anything after delivery,” noted Dr. Snow. “We have had very few COVID 19 positive moms at delivery and their babies have tested negative. We work out a care plan for each family to ensure the baby’s safety while still allowing bonding. I also remind my patients to wash their hands, wear masks in crowded public places, and avoid crowds especially in the last month before the due date. Also, to keep the baby away from contact with others outside the immediate family, within reason, for the first three months.”

“Many patients are concerned about not having a support person allowed in the delivery room,” said Dr. Li. “We have never stopped allowing one support person in the hospital for our pregnant mothers.”

## One of the Best

**Newsweek magazine** recently named NorthBay Medical Center as a “Best Maternity Hospital,” one of 231 in 36 states.

*Newsweek* partnered with The Leapfrog Group to create the list. “The facilities cited by *Newsweek* are an elite group demonstrating excellence in maternity care,” the publication noted.

“The citation is an exciting validation of the work NorthBay physicians, nurses and care teams have done to make the hospital a great place to have a baby,” according to Katie Lydon, director of Women and Children’s Services. “Now, thanks to *Newsweek*, the entire country knows it.”



# Surgical Teams Back at Work

## Pandemic Pause is Over for Elective Cases

When NorthBay Medical Center opened eight state-of-the-art surgical suites in its newly built North Wing last fall, it began providing patients with access to technology, talent and surgical equipment found nowhere else in Solano County.

The suites are specially equipped to handle trauma, neurological and cardiovascular cases, but now they offer more. NorthBay expanded into robotic surgery with the addition of the da Vinci Surgical System in December. (See Page 13.)

After the COVID-19 outbreak began, NorthBay augmented its already robust infection prevention measures and put all but the most

serious surgeries on hold for a time.

“We were still providing surgical treatment for trauma patients or those needing emergent surgeries—for such things as cancer treatment, open heart or spinal surgeries or cases of extreme pain,” recalled Jim Bollig, senior director of Perioperative Services, “and we also needed to plan for the possibility of a surge of COVID-positive surgical patients.”

This spring, a separate isolation operating room was built especially for COVID-19 patients in a separate part of the hospital. The room’s air circulates under its own system and then is filtered and vented to the

outside. A negative pressure ante-room was built just outside the suite, where staff could safely don and doff their Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).

Special filters were added to anesthesia machines, and protocols and training established should a COVID-19 positive patient need to be intubated or extubated.

Elective surgeries—such as for hip or knee replacements—resumed in May, but only for those who passed a detailed pre- and post-op screening that included answering several COVID-exposure history questions, undergoing nasal swabs and temperature checks.

“We are happy to be back performing all surgeries,” Jim said. “People are getting back to work, our patients are getting the care that they need close to home, our surgical suites have always been safe and ready, and we are meeting the needs of the community.”



Sonia De Guia, R.N. (left) helps Andrea Francis, R.N., Robotic Surgical System program manager, gown up properly before a procedure.

### General Surgery



William Fulton, D.O.



Majid Kianmajd, D.O.



Ruth Rassel, D.O.



J. Peter Zopf, D.O.



## Robotic Surgery Now in Solano

Did you know that NorthBay Healthcare has a robotic surgery program? Here are some quick facts:

- The da Vinci Surgical System is typically used on such minimally invasive procedures as hernia and gallbladder repairs, appendectomies and urologic and gynecologic procedures.
- Four NorthBay physicians have been trained and more are in the process.
- The system is available for use by credentialed surgeons outside the NorthBay system.
- By July, more than 185 surgeries have been performed using the program.

## Surgical Prep for Safety

Patients undergoing surgery at NorthBay Healthcare's surgical suites at NorthBay Medical Center, NorthBay VacaValley Hospital or the Ambulatory Surgery Center on the VacaValley Hospital campus are prescreened before their procedures. To assure patient safety as well as the safety of medical staff:

- Prescreening includes a COVID-exposure questionnaire;
- A detailed review of the case between surgeon and anesthesiologist if the surgery requires general anesthesia and intubation, as well as possible recovery in a skilled nursing facility; and
- Nasal swab and temperature testing several days before elective surgery and again on the day of surgery.

## By the Numbers

NorthBay Healthcare has packed a whole lot of technology on the third floor of its new North Wing at NorthBay Medical Center in Fairfield. Although there are specialized operating rooms on the floor, NorthBay surgeons can perform other procedures outside of those specialties if needed due to a standardized room setup. Here's a quick peek into the surgical landscape, by the numbers:

**8 Surgical Suites** opened with state-of-the-art technology in October, 2019.

**3 General Purpose Suites:** Procedures run the gamut, with the exception of those intended for the specialty suites.

**1 Trauma Suite:** Slightly larger than the other suites to handle an array of equipment and traumas, it is located closest to the elevators that will whisk patients up from the Emergency Department.

**1 Neurosurgical Suite** provides real-time three-dimensional imaging and stealth computer-guided navigation — and a Zeiss Pantera operating microscope that allows NorthBay neurosurgeons to perform the most complex spinal and brain surgeries.

**1 Cardiovascular Suite** equipped to handle comprehensive cardiothoracic surgery and vascular surgery cases.

**1 Hybrid Suite** combines all the equipment of a traditional operating room with highly advanced imaging equipment. A robotic device couples multiple imaging capabilities with an integrated surgical table. Hybrid operating rooms are typically used for minimally invasive procedures — such as angioplasty, which is a surgical repair or unblocking of a blood vessel, especially a coronary artery. Minimally invasive surgeries are beneficial for patients because they reduce the risk of infection and bleeding and allow patients to recover and go home faster.

**1 Robotic Suite**, home to the da Vinci Surgical System, which is used on minimally invasive procedures such as hernia and gallbladder repairs, as well as appendectomies and urologic and gynecologic procedures.





Physician Assistant Joe Mashinchi (right) takes a look at Dominick Baker during an orthopedic visit. Joe is the primary provider for the O.U.C.H. program, providing patients with connections to the right orthopedic surgeon if needed.

# Broken Ankle? Time for O.U.C.H.

**Sprained your ankle?** Broke your wrist? It's time for O.U.C.H.!

It's better than it sounds. O.U.C.H. stands for Orthopedic Urgent Care at Hilborn.

The service was born in the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic as a way to lighten the load at NorthBay Urgent Care clinics in Vacaville and Fairfield and get patients who need orthopedic expertise into a same-day pipeline.

"Patients who experience pain or injuries can book themselves an appointment at O.U.C.H. through a link on the NorthBay Orthopedics website, NorthBay Urgent Care website, or via the Carbon Health app," explained Keiko Sargent, director of Musculoskeletal Health Services.

O.U.C.H. is primarily staffed by

Physician Assistant Joe Mashinchi in partnership with the orthopedic surgeons between 11 a.m. and 5 p.m. Monday through Friday at NorthBay Center for Orthopedics & Rehabilitation, 2500 Hilborn Road in Fairfield.

As the service expands, weekend hours may be added. In the meantime, NorthBay Urgent Care continues to handle sprains and broken bones seven days a week, from 9 a.m. to 7 p.m., as an alternative to the Emergency Department.

"Our overall goal for O.U.C.H. is to provide high-quality, easy-to-access, definitive orthopedic care to patients in a safe and friendly environment," said Keiko.

"Services include X-rays, casting/splinting, orthopedic exams, and follow-up care guidance." ❄️

"Our overall goal for O.U.C.H. is to provide high-quality, easy-to-access, definitive orthopedic care to patients in a safe and friendly environment."

—Keiko Sargent  
Director of Musculoskeletal Health Services

## NorthBay Center for Orthopedics



**Daniel Birkbeck, M.D.**  
ORTHOPEDICS/  
HANDS



**Andrew Brooks, M.D.**  
ORTHOPEDICS/  
JOINT REPLACEMENT/  
SPORTS MEDICINE



**Cornelis Elmes, M.D.**  
ORTHOPEDICS/  
TRAUMA/PELVIC,  
FOOT AND ANKLE



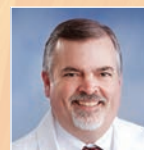
**Kevin Miller, D.P.M.**  
PODIATRY/  
ORTHOPEDICS/  
SPORTS MEDICINE



**Jay Parkin, M.D.**  
ORTHOPEDICS/  
SPORTS MEDICINE/  
TRAUMA



**Neil P. Pathare, M.D.**  
SPORTS MEDICINE/  
ORTHOPEDICS



**Robert Peterson, M.D.**  
ORTHOPEDICS/  
SPORTS MEDICINE/  
SHOULDERS/JOINT  
REPLACEMENT



# Diabetic Team in Your Corner

**Darin Moore, 46, of Fairfield**, knew he had diabetes for 20 years and did all he could to control it but when several low blood sugar incidents left him feeling out of control, he made the decision to get more help.

“I had incidents before but these left me feeling not in my right mind,” he said. They left his wife, Chastity, fearful. She would wake up multiple times each night to check on him.

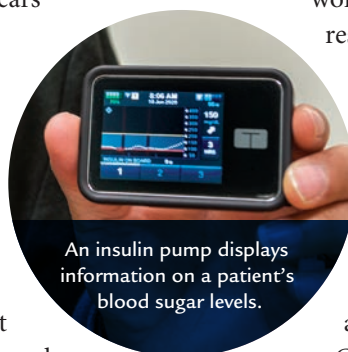
Connecting with the NorthBay Center for Diabetes & Endocrinology, Darin found just what he needed: experts who specialize in diagnosing and treating diabetes.

“I had never actually had the definitive blood test done, so that was the first thing they did and they confirmed I have type 1 diabetes,” he explained.

Type 1 diabetes is a chronic condition in which the pancreas produces little or no insulin, a hormone needed to allow sugar (glucose) to enter cells to produce energy. Although type 1 diabetes usually appears during childhood or adolescence, it can develop in adults. There is no cure and treatment focuses on managing blood sugar levels.

Type 2 diabetes is a chronic condition that affects the way the body metabolizes sugar. With type 2 diabetes, the body either resists the effects of insulin or doesn’t produce enough of it to maintain normal blood sugar levels. There’s no cure, but losing weight, eating well and exercising can help.

NorthBay’s Center for Diabetes & Endocrinology has two diabetologists—Sumera Ahmed, M.D. and Jay Shubrook, D.O.—who received advanced training in the diagnosis and treatment of diabetes as well as endocrinologist John McKenna, M.D., who specializes in hormones and hormonal diseases, including diabetes.



An insulin pump displays information on a patient’s blood sugar levels.



Darin Moore (right) looks over his latest blood sugar reports with diabetologists (left to right) Jay Shubrook, D.O., and Sumera Ahmed, M.D.

“Dr. Shubrook is the one who confirmed my type of diabetes and it has been really life-changing seeing a specialist who was able to get the firm diagnosis and explain everything to me in detail,” said Darin. “I had to come to grips with the fact that I will not get rid of insulin for my type of diabetes. I could go on a low-carb diet and run miles every day and I would still need insulin. That was eye-opening to me.”

Dr. Shubrook said education is a key part of the work he and the other specialists do. “We try to be a resource to provide information and tools to make managing diabetes much easier,” he said. “There is a lot of fear around diabetes. People think it’s a death sentence but avoiding diagnosis and treatment can lead to complications.”

And getting screened is vital, said Dr. Ahmed. “People with diabetes think they feel normal. It’s not like a cold or a headache where you have a pain and fix it. They feel normal but their glucose is high.” Getting screened involves a simple blood test.

That’s what happened with Darin and then technology helped him gain control.

“He was doing great work but struggling because he had no tools to make it easier to monitor and track his blood sugar levels,” said Dr. Shubrook. “We were able to get him an insulin pump and sensors that automated everything.”

An insulin pump is a small device worn on the outside of the body. A tube connects the reservoir of insulin to a catheter that’s inserted under the skin of the abdomen. Insulin pumps are programmed to dispense specific amounts of insulin automatically and when the person eats.

“It’s been like a godsend,” says Darin. “It’s automatic and it sends messages to my phone to remind me to eat something and so on.”

It’s working, he said. And his wife is able to sleep comfortably through the night now, he added with a laugh. 🌸

## NorthBay Center for Diabetes & Endocrinology



Sumera Ahmed, M.D.



John McKenna, M.D.



Jay Shubrook, D.O.

# Sudden Silence Needs Urgent Action

A ringing in the ear, a feeling of fullness or sudden silence—these issues are not to be ignored, as Barbara Battenburg discovered.

The Vacaville resident was in a car with her husband in 2011 when she lost hearing in her left ear.

“All of a sudden, just nothing,” she recalled. “I also had a fullness, and ringing. We were on a trip, but I called my primary care doctor right away.”

Making that call was critically important, said Shaulnie Mohan, M.D., ear, nose and throat specialist for NorthBay Healthcare.

“Loud ringing or an abrupt change in hearing is considered an emergency and a physician will send in a quick

referral for the patient to see an ENT specialist,” she explained. “If I can see a patient with sudden hearing loss within 48 hours, there is a lot I can do to try and save their hearing.”

Barbara’s early intervention and close monitoring in the days and weeks afterwards probably saved her hearing, added Wendy Schreuder, audiologist for NorthBay Healthcare’s Ear, Nose, Throat and Voice specialty.

“People who experience sudden hearing loss may dismiss it at first, thinking it’s wax build-up or allergies, but it’s very important to see a doctor right away. It could be a virus. The longer you wait, the longer it

takes to start treatment and the greater the risk of permanent hearing loss.”

Treatment usually includes an exam to rule out ear wax, and then a baseline hearing test that includes tone tests and a speech test to see if the patient can hear soft or clear sounds at a normal level, all to determine how much hearing has been lost. Then, a regimen of steroids will be prescribed to reduce inflammation around the nerves.

“After the course of steroids is done, I test the patient again to see if hearing has returned,” Wendy explained.

The process can take some time to stabilize, Dr. Mohan added, and is certainly benefitted by that early intervention.

Barbara’s first test revealed she had a significant hearing loss. Subsequent tests found it improved and then worsened.

“They told me it could be a virus that probably damaged my nerve endings,” Barbara said. “It’s a terrible thing to not be able to hear well.”

About a month into treatment, her hearing suddenly came back.

“It all happened so quickly, I didn’t have too much time to feel sorry for myself,” Barbara laughed.

Barbara has had annual check-ups with Wendy ever since, as NorthBay’s Ear, Nose, Throat and Voice specialty is the only one in Solano County to offer non-dispensing audiology services, which means it offers testing only, not sales of hearing devices.

“Barbara was fortunate because her primary care physician knew how important it was to refer her to Ear, Nose, Throat and Voice quickly following a sudden loss,” Wendy added. 🦻



Regular hearing checks by Wendy Schreuder (right) help keep Barbara Battenburg hearing well.

## Can You Hear Me?

If you have a sudden loss of hearing, particularly in one ear, it’s important to seek immediate medical attention. Signs of hearing loss may include:

- **Fullness and ringing**
- **Muffling of speech**
- **Trouble hearing consonants**
- **Difficulty understanding words**, especially against background noise or in a crowd
- **Frequently** asking others to speak more slowly, clearly and loudly
- **Needing to turn up the volume** of the television or radio
- **Avoidance** of some social settings.

## NorthBay Ear, Nose, Throat and Voice



Shaulnie Mohan, M.D.



Murray Woolf, M.D.



# Gut Instinct

Specialists have  
High-Tech Tools to Deal  
with Multiple Ailments



The team of experts at NorthBay Gastroenterology includes (seated, left to right) Michael Krier, M.D.; Nazia Hasan, M.D.; Mounzer Al Samman, M.D.; and (standing) Farhat Surti, N.P. Joining the team this month (not pictured) is Suk Charles Whang, M.D.

If you have ever undergone a colonoscopy, fought heartburn, or suffered from an ulcer, you've likely been introduced to gastroenterology—the study of the function and diseases of the digestive system.

At NorthBay Healthcare, a team of four physicians and one nurse practitioner work together to care for patients with a broad range of gastrointestinal issues.

Some of the most common disorders include acid reflux disease, irritable bowel syndrome, inflammatory bowel disease, hepatitis C, and chronic constipation. Gastroenterologists are also called to treat conditions such as colon polyps and cancer, peptic ulcer disease, colitis, gallbladder and biliary tract disease, nutritional problems and pancreatitis.

Advances in medicine and technology are improving options in the diagnosis and treatment of gastroenterological issues.

For example, NorthBay offers an advanced procedure for those with Barrett's Esophagus, a condition in which the flat pink lining of the swallowing tube that connects the mouth to the stomach (esophagus) becomes damaged by acid reflux, which causes the lining to thicken and become red.

"Barrett's is a complication of a common problem, gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD), which can lead to cancer," explained Nazia Hasan, M.D., an interventional gastroenterologist. "However, we have an effective, minimally invasive procedure we can use to treat this problem which is called radiofrequency ablation (which removes diseased cells from the esophagus). NorthBay is proud to feature this

service as we are one of only about 10 centers in the Bay Area that have this capability."

Technology is also helping with assessment of patient's intestinal track. For example, for several years now, NorthBay gastroenterologist Mounzer Al Samman, M.D., has offered his patients the GI Pill Cam. The Pill Cam is a small capsule that patients simply swallow. A tiny camera in the capsule transmits thousands of images of the small intestine as it passes through. An advantage of the GI Pill Cam is that the procedure does not require the patient to be sedated and they can perform their regular activities while it is working. Any gastrointestinal condition identified is treated separately.

Other conditions NorthBay Gastroenterology treats include: Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS): A common disorder that affects the large intestine; hemorrhoids; colitis, a chronic digestive disease characterized by inflammation of the inner lining of the colon, which can cause long-lasting inflammation and ulcers in the digestive tract; gallbladder and biliary tract disease; gluten intolerance; hepatitis; pancreatitis; peptic ulcer disease and tumors. ❄

## NorthBay Gastroenterology



Mounzer  
Al Samman, M.D.



Nazia Hasan, M.D.



Michael Krier, M.D.



Suk Charles Whang, M.D.



# Seizing Control

## Electronic Implant Helps Epileptic Patient

**Katherine Bergey** was just 11 years old when she had her first epileptic seizure. It was a classic grand mal seizure with violent muscle contractions. Her family says she didn't have any more seizures like that one. Instead, over time, she experienced smaller events that would happen while she slept involving strange motions and sounds.

That changed months later when Katherine, who had developed some unusual behavioral issues, tried to run onto a freeway and was hit by a vehicle. Police and rescue crews were able to get her to safety but at the hospital, she tore her clothes, kicked and hit the officers seemingly out of control. Katherine, now 26, remembers none of this. After some misdiagnosis and failed medications, her family recorded video of her having the strange seizures at night in her sleep and showed it to a pediatric neurologist who thought it might be a sleeping disorder. A second opinion from another pediatric neurologist in San Francisco finally determined she had epilepsy.

Epilepsy is a neurological disorder marked by sudden recurrent episodes of sensory disturbance, loss of consciousness, or convulsions, associated with abnormal electrical activity in the brain. In Katherine's case, she suffers from a refractory form of the disorder, meaning she

has multiple seizures despite being on more than one anti-epileptic medication. Only about a third of patients with epilepsy have the refractory form of the disorder.

"Katie's seizures aren't the classic type," said her aunt, Kaye Schleich, of Fairfield, who has cared for Katherine since her mother died several years ago.

**Epilepsy is a neurological disorder marked by sudden recurrent episodes of sensory disturbance, loss of consciousness, or convulsions, associated with abnormal electrical activity in the brain.**

"She gets ticks and she gets the far off look and then turns her head to the right and sometimes there are arm movements," she said. Katherine also doesn't have big, body-shaking motions or clenched jaw, or biting of the tongue.

A change in insurance eventually brought her to NorthBay Healthcare where she connected with neurologist Ruby Ali, M.D., who began a process of modifying the medications Katherine was taking.

Dr. Ali, however, wanted more information on the source of Katherine's seizures. Understanding

where the seizures originate in the brain can help in determining the best course of treatment. She sent her to UC San Francisco for a detailed study of the brain, but the findings limited Katherine's treatment options.

"Sometimes if we can pinpoint where the seizures originate, there are surgical options," explained Dr. Ali. "In Katherine's case there was not one single location where the seizures were starting and that means surgery is not an option."

So Dr. Ali recommended the next best treatment option: vagus nerve stimulation (VNS), in which a tiny device is implanted in the patient and used to treat seizures through small, controlled electronic pulses.

The VNS consists of a pacemaker-like generator surgically implanted. Thin wires are threaded under the skin and woven around the vagus nerve in the neck. The VNS device sends mild pulses to the vagus nerve at regular intervals throughout the day in an effort to prevent seizures. It also gives automatic delivery of an extra dose of therapy when a rapid increase in the heart rate is detected, which may be associated with seizures. The electronic pulses may stop or shorten a seizure once it starts. In addition, the patient wears a magnet device on her wrist, which the patient or a caregiver can wave over the generator to manually



“Epilepsy can be debilitating for patients who have repeated and uncontrolled seizures... With this device, patients can regain some control over their lives and reduce the number and severity of their seizures.”

deliver an additional dose of therapy in an effort to stop or shorten a seizure once it starts.

“The VNS therapy is another treatment option for one-third of patients and can help with quality of life,” said Dr. Ali.

Katherine’s VNS device was implanted in October of 2018 by neurosurgeon Edie Zusman, M.D., medical director for the NorthBay Center for Neuroscience.

“Epilepsy can be debilitating for patients who have repeated and uncontrolled seizures. They are unable to enjoy everyday activities out of fear of frequent seizures,” said Dr. Zusman. “With this device, patients can regain some control over their lives and reduce the number and severity of their seizures.”

Adjusting the device output is a lengthy process, as it has to be slowly increased over time, which is done with an electronic hand-



NorthBay Healthcare Neurologist Rubi Ali, M.D. (left) helps Katherine Bergey of Fairfield gain some control over her epilepsy through vagus nerve stimulation (VNS), an implanted device that controls seizures through small, controlled electronic pulses.

held wand and an iPad during Katherine’s visits to the NorthBay Center for Neuroscience. “Turning it up all at once would not be good for the patient,” said Dr. Ali. “It is a very gradual process and you make adjustments as needed.”

For Katherine, the device has made a big difference. She still has seizures but not at the level she did.

“The VNS will not stop all seizures, but it will cut them down by 40 to 50 percent,” explained Dr. Ali. Eventually, the battery will need replacement, but it is a simple outpatient surgery in which the old battery is removed and replaced with a new one.

Katherine’s aunt can see the difference.

“Before the device, she was having as many as two or three seizures a day,” Kaye said. “Now it’s a couple a week. And for someone like Katie, that’s an incredible positive. She will not get to where she can drive a car, but is she functioning better? You bet!”

For Katherine, it means no more canceling classes at Solano Community College where she is currently focused on studying history. “I’m obsessed with not missing classes,” she said. “I really didn’t like having to miss class, even just for the surgery.”

## NorthBay Center for Neuroscience



Rubi Ali, M.D.  
NEUROLOGY



Ameer  
Almulhassani, M.D.  
NEUROLOGY



Joshua Kuluva, M.D.  
NEUROLOGY



Atul K. Patel, M.D.  
NEUROSURGERY



Shahid  
Rehman, M.D.  
NEUROLOGY



Sherry Lee  
Taylor, M.D.  
NEUROSURGERY



Edie E. Zusman, M.D.  
NEUROSURGERY

# Specialists Abound for Easy Access

NorthBay Healthcare offers a rich slate of specialty care physicians with offices in Fairfield, Vacaville and Napa. In addition to those highlighted throughout this magazine, you'll also find:

## NorthBay Cancer Center

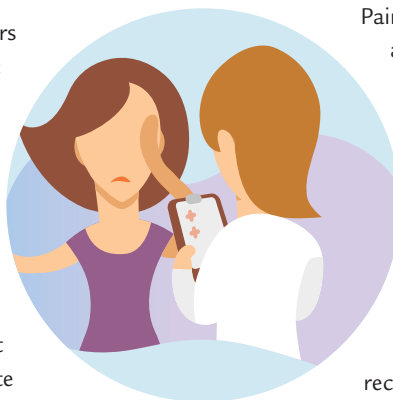
A team of physicians whose specialties include oncology, hematology and radiology, all located in the NorthBay Cancer Center in Vacaville. The same location offers radiation therapy on the first floor, infusion services on the third floor, and an in-house pharmacy that delivers precise medications for infusions. An oncoplastic surgeon offers breast reconstruction. In addition, a genetic counselor uses cutting-edge technology to offer genetic risk evaluations to patients who might warrant genetic testing.

NorthBay Cancer Center was established in 1987 on the same campus as NorthBay Medical Center in Fairfield, but moved to the state-of-the-art facility in the VacaValley Wellness Center in 2014. The location at 1020 Nut Tree Road is a one-stop shop for Cancer Center patients. Chemotherapy and biotherapy treatments are administered using the highest level of care by staff of oncology-certified nurses and other clinical staff. Radiation therapy—with the center's Varian TruBeam linear accelerator—kills or

shrinks cancer cells using an advanced image-guided radiation therapy system, while avoiding healthy tissues and organs. It is particularly useful for complex cancers of the lung, breast, head, neck, prostate and brain.

In addition to the linear accelerator, the Cancer Center has an array of advanced imaging, through Solano Diagnostics Imaging, which is also located in the Wellness Center. They include digital mammography, MRI, ultrasound, 3D mammography, MRI-guided breast biopsy, CT, PET scans and X-ray services.

Nurse navigators guide and support patients and their families through the diagnosis, treatment and recovery process, as they are able to answer questions, organize test results and expedite appointments.



## Trauma and Emergency Services

No one plans for disaster to happen, but it's good to know a full team of emergency medicine experts are available 24/7/365 at both NorthBay Medical Center in Fairfield and NorthBay VacaValley Hospital in Vacaville.

NorthBay Medical Center was verified as a Level II trauma center in 2014 and again in 2017, by the American College Board of Surgeons Committee on Trauma. NorthBay Medical Center's verification as an accredited Chest

Pain Center, Certified Stroke Center and Emergency Department Approved for Pediatrics (EDAP) may also help explain why so many seriously ill or injured patients are transported to NorthBay facilities. NorthBay VacaValley Hospital is also a Certified Stroke Center and EDAP. Both facilities have helipads and receive and transport critically ill and injured patients.

## NorthBay Cancer Center



Stephen Banks, M.D.



James Long, M.D.



Jonathan Lopez, M.D.



Jason Marengo, M.D.



James Mitchell, M.D.



Jessica Powers, M.D.



David Tate, M.D.



Brian Vikstrom, M.D.

## Trauma and Emergency Services



Ben Williams, M.D.

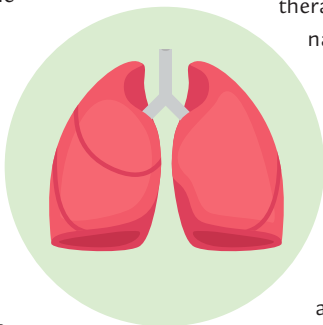


J. Peter Zopf, D.O.



## Pulmonary Medicine

Pulmonologists at NorthBay Healthcare specialize in treating patients with lung conditions such as Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD), asthma, shortness of breath, chronic cough, and pulmonary hypertension. A sleep specialist helps patients suffering from sleep apnea or conditions such as insomnia, sleepwalking and restless leg syndrome. NorthBay pulmonologists provide patient care and pulmonary function testing in both Fairfield and Vacaville locations.



## Rheumatology

Patients with complex arthritis, joint pain, and issues affecting muscles and connective tissues such as gout, fibromyalgia, lupus and rheumatoid arthritis need special treatment and care to maintain a quality of life. Many patients have various forms of arthritis, from rheumatoid arthritis and osteoarthritis to psoriatic arthritis. Other conditions treated include lupus, gout and ankylosing spondylitis.

## Infusion Services

Infusion treatments are available for neurology, gastroenterology, obstetrics/gynecology and rheumatology patients, for cancer patients who may need intravenous medications and blood or blood products, for patients who may need non-chemotherapy IV drugs to treat dehydration, nausea/vomiting and infections.

## General Surgery

NorthBay's general surgeons offer procedures such as hernia repairs, gallbladder removal, colon cancer surgery, and hemorrhoid removal. Surgical procedures occur at NorthBay Medical Center, NorthBay VacaValley Hospital and The Surgery Center at NorthBay VacaValley. Robotic surgeries are performed at NorthBay Medical Center in Fairfield, using the da Vinci Robotic Surgical System.

## Anti-Coagulation Services

A drive-through anticoagulation service was created in March in response to social distancing requirements. It operates from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays at the VacaValley Center for Wellness in Vacaville. Participants in the clinic meet at least once every four weeks with a specially trained clinical pharmacist who evaluates the medication dosage and appropriately adjusts the level if necessary. Dosage adjustments are made right away, minimizing the possibility of complications and side effects. Admission requires a physician referral, so ask your provider.

## Osteopathic Manipulative Medicine

Osteopathic Manipulative Medicine (OMM) is an advanced form of hands-on care that focuses on treating the whole person, rather than the symptoms, with a goal of helping the body to heal itself. NorthBay's osteopathic physicians have received specialized training in nerves, muscles and bones to diagnose, treat and prevent illness and injury through this form of care. OMM can benefit issues including asthma, pneumonia, carpal tunnel syndrome, menstrual pain; migraines and headaches; sinus disorders, myofascial imbalance; neck and shoulder pain, foot pain and knee pain.

## Infectious Disease

NorthBay Healthcare's infectious disease expert has been in high demand since the outbreak of COVID-19 in February 2020, and has spoken to service clubs, business organizations and other community groups sharing his vast knowledge of infectious disease control. He oversees a team of Infection Prevention specialists who work in NorthBay Healthcare's two hospitals to prevent transmission of COVID-19, as well as other viruses, including all current strains of influenza, pneumonia, tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS. He also focuses on non-healing wounds, and skin-tissue and bone infections.



## Pulmonary Medicine



Maqbool Ahmed, M.D.



Donald Doyle, M.D.



Karan Julka, M.D.

## Rheumatology



Melissa Schoenwetter, D.O.

## Osteopathic Manipulative Medicine



Angela Lim, D.O.



Sandra Skates, D.O.

## Infectious Disease



Gregory Warner, D.O.

# More Specialists Abound!

## Heart and Vascular

A team of physicians, surgeons, advanced health practitioners and technicians offer comprehensive cardiothoracic surgery, open heart surgery, vascular surgery and cardiology care around the clock, including minimally invasive interventional procedures. The team treats a full spectrum of heart conditions using some of the most advanced surgical techniques.

Vascular surgeons also provide in-office care for varicose veins and peripheral artery disease. For those living with heart failure, NorthBay's Heart Health Program provides guidance, education and expert care, including outpatient cardiac rehabilitation.

Some of the procedures performed by the Heart & Vascular team include:

**TAVR:** Transcatheter Aortic Valve Replacement. It's a minimally invasive procedure, with the physician inserting a catheter into a leg or chest, and guiding it to the heart to replace a narrowed aortic valve that fails to open properly.

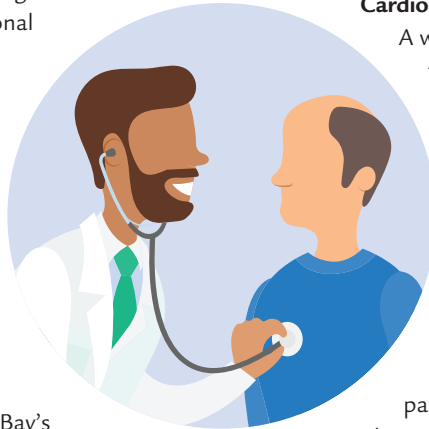
**FEVAR:** Fenestrated Endovascular Aortic Aneurysm Repair. It's a minimally invasive procedure that allows vascular surgeons to repair complex aortic aneurysms while still preserving blood flow to the critical branch arteries, which feed to kidneys and other organs.

### CardioMEMS HF:

A wireless heart failure remote monitor that has been proven to significantly reduce heart failure hospitalizations and improve quality of life is implanted in patients, and allows the care team to monitor their pulmonary artery pressure

at regular intervals. The team can intervene and make medication adjustments or other treatment changes to offset heart failure.

**PCI:** Percutaneous Coronary Intervention is a nonsurgical procedure used to treat a narrowing of the coronary artery of the heart. First the vessel is opened with a balloon catheter and then a stent is placed to keep it open.



## Urology

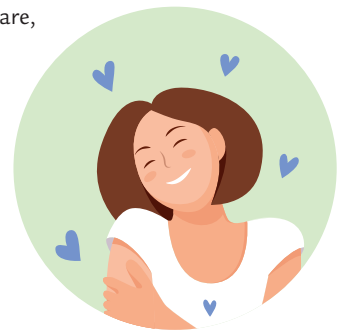
No one likes to talk about problems with their urologic system, but there is no reason to suffer in silence, say NorthBay Healthcare urologists.

NorthBay Healthcare schedules regular office hours and some procedures in Vacaville, Fairfield and Napa, as well as some procedures and surgeries at NorthBay Medical Center in Fairfield.

NorthBay Urology has been designated a Center of Excellence for innovative UroLift procedures and the treatment of enlarged prostate or BPH.

## Pain Management

The care team for NorthBay Pain Management focuses on everything from back and neck pain to runner's knee, headaches, chest wall pain and more. The team's hallmark is interdisciplinary care, which includes collaborating with nutritionists, Osteopathic Manipulative Medicine (OMM) and physical therapy.



## NorthBay Heart & Vascular Center



Jeffrey Breneisen, M.D.



Milind Dhond, M.D.



Saba Lahsaei, M.D.



Melissa Loja, M.D.



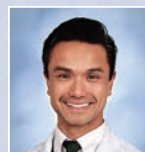
Cyrus Mancherje, M.D.



Shea Pribyl, D.O.



Brandi Upton, M.D.



Mark Villalon, M.D.

## NorthBay Urology



Benjamin Dudley, M.D.



Herkanwal Singh Khaira, M.D.



## Wound Care

A team of specialists at NorthBay Wound Care, on the first floor of the VacaValley Health Plaza in Vacaville, offers a variety of treatments and therapies. Patients with non-healing wounds can be treated with hyperbaric oxygen therapy, negative pressure wound therapy, compression therapy, bio-engineered skin substitutes, ostomy care and wound debridement.

NorthBay Wound Care is the only civilian location in Solano County to offer Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy. HBOT patients lie in a glass cylinder and breathe 100 percent oxygen, which helps all body tissues—even those in areas with reduced or blocked blood flow—to stimulate new growth and increase circulation, which reduces the risk of amputation and increases the healing of wounds.

## Occupational Health

NorthBay Occupational Health provides cost-effective and comprehensive occupational health care to businesses and industries in Solano County.

With almost 30 years' experience, NorthBay Occupational Health is the longest-serving provider of occupational medicine in upper Solano County. Offices are open weekdays with accommodations for injury care walk-in treatment as well as scheduled appointments.

NorthBay Occupational Health clients have instant access to the information

they need, and can see real-time results of office visits, work restrictions, next step for the employee, number of visits missed and more through iSystoc.

## Rehabilitation Services

A highly skilled team of physical, occupational and speech therapists provide expert care both before and after surgery. Services cover inpatient and outpatient care, neonatal intensive care, pediatrics, geriatrics, intensive care, coronary care, orthopedics and sports medicine.

**Physical Therapy:** In order to restore general mobility, strength and function to impaired portions of the body, physical therapists focus on rehab through exercises designed to reduce pain and swelling, facilitate strength and condition and teach optimal movement.

**Occupational Therapy:** Geared to help patients regain the ability to perform everyday tasks in their workplace and at home after accidents or illnesses interfere with mobility, these experts in fine motor skills integrate body and brain.

**Hand Therapy:** Merges occupational and physical therapy to treat conditions affecting the hands and upper extremities. Certified hand therapists help restore function in patient's hands and arms.

**Lymphedema Therapy:** Lymphedema is a common side effect of some cancer treatments, including surgery or radiation therapy. The resulting blockage prevents fluid from draining sufficiently, causing

it to collect in the fatty tissue under the skin, most often in the arms and/or legs. Certified lymphedema therapists use decongestive techniques as part of physical therapy services to help manage symptoms including reduced swelling and restoring motion.

**Speech Therapy:** Designed for patients with progressive disorders and conditions that affect communication, cognitive and speech skills, as well as issues with swallowing and voice. Therapists see patients in both hospitals and outpatient clinics.

**Cardiac & Pulmonary Rehab:** Designed to help patients strengthen their heart and lungs after heart attacks or heart surgery, it can also help those with chronic lung or heart disease increase stamina and breathe easier.

**Pelvic Floor Rehab:** This program features physical therapists who provide women of all ages with tools to regain strength and function of the muscles that support the bladder, urethra and other organs within the pelvis. Some of the conditions treated include: bladder and/or bowel incontinence, pelvic organ prolapse, pelvic pain and symptoms resulting from pregnancy or postpartum.

**Chronic Pain Management:** Rehabilitation specialists can help patients understand the stress and anxiety of chronic pain and help set realistic goals to allow a more active lifestyle.

For a complete and up-to-date list, check [NorthBay.org](http://NorthBay.org).

### NorthBay Pain Management



Michael Amster, M.D.



James Jaber, M.D.



Cynthia Pena, M.D.



Christopher Rumery, M.D.

### NorthBay Wound Care



Thomas Erskine, M.D.



John Slade Jr., M.D.

### NorthBay Occupational Health



Yolanta Petrofsky, M.D.

# Looking for the Right Insurance & Doctor?

# Ask Kelly!

Choosing the right insurance plan and doctors is a little like shopping for a new car. You want the one that is reliable and fits your lifestyle best.

That's where Kelly Rhoads-Poston can help. Prior to joining NorthBay Healthcare 20 years ago as a marketing representative and health plan specialist, she worked in the insurance industry. She 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 and health plan that fits the patient's needs.

"I ask a lot of questions when someone calls me," she admits. They include things like:

- Do you prefer a male or female doctor?
- Do you want an older or a younger doctor?
- Would a family doctor or an internist better suit your needs?
- Do you prefer a doctor who likes to chat or one who quickly gets down to business?
- What about location?



**Have a question?**

**Contact Kelly**

(707) 301-4071

[AskKelly@NorthBay.org](mailto:AskKelly@NorthBay.org)



As a marketing representative and health plan specialist, Kelly Rhoads-Poston helps patients navigate the complicated health insurance landscape.

"We have primary care doctors in Vacaville, Fairfield and Green Valley, so there's lots of choices in Solano County. Your doctor can be close to where you live, where you work, or both," said Kelly.

Ironically, she noted, a lot of people don't know what they prefer until they are asked to think about it. "Some have had the same provider for years and suddenly have to find someone new," she said. "It can be intimidating."

Also intimidating is "open enrollment," that time of year when people can select or change

their job-based health insurance, pick individual market health insurance or choose a new Medicare supplement.

NorthBay Healthcare works with more than 20 insurance companies (see partial list at [NorthBay.org/insurance](http://NorthBay.org/insurance)), and most Medicare supplement plans, said Kelly.

She knows the difference between an HMO and a PPO, as well as between Medi-Cal and Medicare. Do you have double coverage? What does that mean?" She can help you get the most out of your health benefits. ❄



# Western Health Advantage and NorthBay

In the mid-1990s, NorthBay Healthcare executives wanted to gain control of costs and provide better quality health care. They met with leaders at Woodland Memorial, who later brought the University of California, Davis, Health System to the table. The result was a new health insurance plan.

Western Health Advantage was created to serve local employers and better control premium costs. When Woodland Memorial was sold to Dignity Health, the relationship continued with the co-ownership comprising Mercy/Dignity Health Sacramento, UC Davis Health and NorthBay Healthcare. In 2017, UC Davis withdrew from the partnership.

WHA has grown to provide the best benefit possible for individuals and families where they live and work. Headquartered in Sacramento, it serves 14 Northern California counties: Solano, Sacramento, El Dorado, Placer, Yolo, Napa, Colusa, Sonoma, Marin, San Francisco, San Mateo, Alameda, Contra Costa and Santa Clara.

The WHA network includes major hospitals and medical centers, thousands of local, trusted doctors and specialists from several medical groups, including of all NorthBay Healthcare's providers and facilities.

There are many benefits because of the WHA-NorthBay connection, says Robert Coscione, vice president of payer strategy with NorthBay Healthcare.

"Membership with WHA means choices and flexibility, especially for specialty care," he said. "WHA's unique referral program allows your doctor to refer you to many of the specialists in our network, not just within your particular medical group."

Scott M. Davis, vice president and chief strategy officer at NorthBay, agreed. "Being a nonprofit means more of the premium dollar goes to care," he noted, adding, "care decisions are made by the medical group and not the insurance plan."

As a health plan created by doctors and hospitals, WHA supports the doctor-patient relationship and offers flexible access to quality providers close to your home and work, Davis explained. ❄



## ❄ Medicare Advantage HMO

This type of plan requires that you see doctors, specialists, or hospitals that are contracted with or on the plan's list in order for the plan to pay the bills. The only exception is in an emergency. If you go to a health care provider or hospital that is not on the HMO list, neither the HMO nor Medicare will pay the bill. These type of plans generally have a lower monthly premium than a traditional Medicare supplement, and may cover your Medicare deductibles and may offer additional benefits compared to original Medicare. For more on Medicare, visit [NorthBay.org/patients-visitors/medicare.cfm](https://NorthBay.org/patients-visitors/medicare.cfm)

## ❄ Medicare Advantage PPO

This is a type of Medicare Advantage Plan available in a local or regional area where you pay less if you use doctors, hospitals and providers that belong to the network. You can use doctors, hospitals, and providers outside of the network for an additional cost.

## ❄ Covered California

There are many health plan options through Covered California; NorthBay accepts the Western Health Advantage health plan.

## ❄ CalPERS

Western Health Advantage (WHA) offers all NorthBay Healthcare providers in their network, including access to the Mayo Care Clinic Network. Also in network are CalPERS Care, Choice, and Select PPO plans. For retirees, United Healthcare (Medicare Advantage PPO plan) is accepted with NorthBay Healthcare. Should you have further questions about this, call (707) 646-3280.

## ❄ Accepted Plans at NorthBay Healthcare

To see a list of accepted health plans that allow you to use NorthBay doctors and facilities, visit [NorthBay.org/patients-visitors/accepted-health-plans.cfm](https://NorthBay.org/patients-visitors/accepted-health-plans.cfm)

# Seven Months That Changed

Remember what daily life was like before late February? It feels as if a decade of change has occurred in the past seven months.

Thrust into the coast-to-coast spotlight, NorthBay Healthcare was first in the nation to have a patient with community-transmitted COVID-19. Add to that the challenge of shouldering the health care needs of hundreds of repatriated Americans quarantined on Travis Air Force Base.

“It only deepened our resolve,” said B. Konard Jones, president and CEO.

“The early experience with the virus enabled us to collaborate with experts from the California Department of Public Health, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Solano County Public Health and others,” he noted. “Together we laid the groundwork for guidelines and protocols that rolled out across this country and beyond as we learned about treating patients and protecting our health care workers.”

Being an independent health system, NorthBay was able to mobilize quickly. Safety measures for patients, staff, visitors and the community at large



Intensive Care Unit Nurse Sherryl Oliva, R.N., wears an N-95 mask and face shield on the COVID-19 unit. Patients preparing for surgery are tested for COVID-19 at drive-through test sites (below) prior to surgery.

came quickly. Capacity for a surge in patients was created with special units set aside to isolate COVID-19 patients from the general hospital population.

Testing equipment, adequate supplies of personal protective equipment and a huge commitment of additional staff resources were secured quickly, but not without a huge financial impact. “That’s what it took to protect our community from the pandemic,” Jones remembered. “That’s what we do.”

NorthBay Healthcare has been blessed by an ongoing outpouring of support from the community, from city and county staff, from elected and appointed officials in Solano County and beyond. Donations of masks, face shields, meals and moral support buoyed the spirits of health care workers.

“Once we created a sustainable response, we turned our attention to two objectives—bringing patients safely back for necessary surgeries and procedures, and launching community prevention initiatives,” Jones said.





# the World

## Among them:

- **Public testing sites** were established in NorthBay Urgent Care sites in Vacaville and Fairfield.
- **Clinical teams were dispatched** to help with testing in senior living centers and skilled nursing facilities.
- **A nurse outreach team contacted** NorthBay's most vulnerable primary care patients to check in and see if there was anything they could do to help. In some cases, supplies were delivered, appointments were made and prescriptions refilled.
- **Physicians went online** to deliver supportive messages to patients and the community at large. **NorthBay.org** has featured videos on stress and anxiety, meditation, suggestions for parents and more.
- **Physicians offered their expertise** to answer questions and lead conversations via social media, including a recurring Facebook Live COVID Chat with NorthBay's chief medical officer and our infection prevention expert being hosted on Zoom meetings with local nonprofit organizations.
- The Center for Primary Care used letters, the website and social media to **share updates with patients**.
- **Hundreds of social media posts** reminded the community about the importance of wearing a mask, social distancing, hand hygiene and more.

## What else?

"Because we have been part of the community for more than 60 years, and woven into its fabric, we were able to more quickly identify where help was needed most," Jones explained. "And we rallied as a cohesive team to respond."



Roger Merrill, president of the Green Valley Landowners Association, spearheaded an effort to provide food to frontline health care workers.

## Community Cares with Donations, Celebrations

**As the COVID-19 pandemic spread** through Solano County, the community stepped up to share food, resources, personal protective equipment and good will.

There were car parades with honks of encouragement, a military flyover, orchids for health care workers, hand-written cards of thanks and greeting cards designed by students for patients. One young artist sold her work to raise money to buy lunch for hospital workers.

"We've been overwhelmed by the generous nature of our community, and greatly appreciate the support," said Aimee Brewer, president of NorthBay Healthcare Group.

One major effort was spearheaded by Green Valley resident Roger Merrill, president of the Green Valley Landowners Association.

Merrill has spent time in NorthBay's emergency and intensive care units and saw an opportunity to pay back the kindness by launching a "Feed the Fight" group that ultimately raised thousands of dollars to serve meals to front line workers.

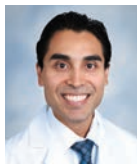
"I got great care there," he said. "I have a soft spot for health care workers and the role they play. I am aware of the impact they have and that's part of what motivates this effort."

He secured \$2,000 from the landowner's association board and then created a GoFundMe page which raised thousands more.

His group wasn't alone. Many groups, businesses and individuals came forward to offer what they could, from cash donations and home-made masks to face shields, gloves, gowns, and hand sanitizer, helping NorthBay through some critical times.

A complete list of all those who donated can be found on **NorthBay.org/donate**.

# Welcome New Doctors



## **Majid Kianmajd, D.O.**

NorthBay Healthcare welcomed general surgeon/robotic surgery specialist Majid Kianmajd, D.O., in September.

Dr. Kianmajd earned his medical degree at Touro University in Henderson, Nevada, and had minimally invasive/bariatric fellowship training at Methodist Hospital in Houston, Texas. He completed his general surgery residency at Rowan University SOM, Stratford, New Jersey.

Dr. Kianmajd said he strives to be straightforward with his patients, listen to their concerns and answer questions. “My training and the way that I was brought up taught me to look at my patients as a whole and not to just focus on one particular problem they have,” he said.



## **Marlene Freeman, M.D.**

NorthBay Healthcare recently welcomed a new obstetrician/gynecologist to the Center for Women’s Health.

Marlene Freeman, M.D., earned her medical degree from St. Louis University School of Medicine, St. Louis, Missouri, and completed her residency and internship at St. Louis University Hospitals.

She is certified by the American Board of Obstetrics and Gynecology.



## **Clarisse Cadang, M.D.**

The NorthBay Center for Primary Care—Green Valley recently welcomed a new internal medicine doctor to its team of providers.

Clarisse Cadang, M.D., earned her medical degree from the American University of Antigua and completed her residency at Richmond University Medical Center, Mount Sinai Health, Staten Island, New York.

“I love practicing medicine because it combines my passion for life-long learning and desire to help others,” said Dr. Cadang.



## **Melissa Loja, M.D.**

NorthBay Healthcare recently welcomed a vascular surgeon to the stellar team of specialists at its Heart & Vascular Center.

Melissa Loja, M.D., earned her medical degree at the University of California, Davis, School of Medicine. She is board-certified in vascular surgery by the American Board of Surgery and is certified as a Registered Physician in Vascular Interpretation (RPVI). She is also certified in abdominal aortic aneurysm point-of-care ultrasound.



## **Karan Julka, M.D.**

NorthBay Healthcare recently welcomed another physician to its team of specialists in pulmonology.

Karan Julka, M.D., earned his medical degree from Saba University School of Medicine in Saba, Netherlands-Antilles. He most recently was in private practice in Athens, Georgia, where he was also director of the ICU at St. Mary’s Hospital and director of their sleep lab. He was also director of respiratory therapy and the sleep lab at St. Mary’s Sacred Heart Hospital in Lavonia, Georgia, and worked as an assistant professor in the department of internal medicine division of pulmonary critical care at MCG-UGA Medical Partnership Campus in Athens, Georgia.

Dr. Julka is fellowship-trained in pulmonary and critical-care medicine and is board-certified in internal medicine, pulmonary disease and critical care medicine.

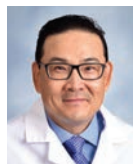


## **Benjamin Dudley, M.D.**

NorthBay Healthcare recently welcomed another physician to its team of urology specialists.

Benjamin C. Dudley, M.D., earned his doctor of allopathic medicine degree at the University of New Mexico School of Medicine in Albuquerque, New Mexico and completed his residency in urology at LSU Shreveport Health Sciences Center in Shreveport, Louisiana.

Dr. Dudley is certified in urology by the American Board of Urology and also in fluoroscopy by the California Department of Public Health. He is a veteran of the U.S. Air Force.



## **Suk Charles Whang, M.D.**

NorthBay Healthcare recently welcomed another physician to its team of gastroenterology specialists.

Suk Charles Whang, M.D., earned his medical degree from the Uniformed Services University of Health Sciences at Bethesda, Maryland. He completed an internal medicine internship and residency at David Grant Medical Center at Travis Air Force Base.

Dr. Whang is board-certified in gastroenterology.



# Nine New DAISYs Bloom

Nine NorthBay Healthcare nurses have received the coveted DAISY award this past year, presented to honor their outstanding patient outreach.

**Isabelle Johnson, R.N.**, a nurse at VacaValley Hospital's 1-2 West, was singled out for the compassionate care she shares not only with her patients, but with her coworkers.

**MacKenzie Anderson, R.N.**, a nurse in NorthBay Medical Center's Labor & Delivery Department, was nominated by a grateful patient who lauded the calm care she provided during a challenging delivery.

**Jessica McBroom, R.N.**, in NorthBay Medical Center's 1800 Unit, was singled out for helping a patient who was struggling with tremendous pain.

**Pamela Baumann, R.N.**, in 2-West at VacaValley Hospital, was nominated by a nurse, a patient and a physician for the compassion she displayed in caring for a patient who needed a special treatment.

**Kelly Gee, R.N.**, a nurse in 2 North at NorthBay Medical Center, was recognized for her compassionate counseling of a pregnant patient who was trying to avoid pain medications.

**Tammy Rodarte, R.N.**, in NorthBay Medical Center's Mother/Baby Unit, was nominated by a nursing student who was thankful for her support and patience.

**Sarah Thacker, R.N.**, in NorthBay Medical Center's 1600 Unit, was nominated by the daughter of an elderly patient, citing a calm and respectful bedside manner that made her mother feel better.



**Terri Ricks, R.N.**, and **Edelyn Araga, R.N.**, both of NorthBay Medical Center's ICU, were nominated by two different families for the compassion they displayed to patients at life's end and to their families.

NorthBay joined the DAISY Foundation in December 2015 and has now presented a total of 22 DAISY awards. The DAISY Award was created in memory of J. Patrick Barnes to express his family's gratitude for the skillful and amazingly compassionate care he received from his nurses when he was hospitalized with the auto-immune disease Idiopathic Thrombocytopenic Purpura (ITP) in 1999. He died at age 33. The awardee's names can be seen on a new display board posted in NorthBay Medical Center in Fairfield, outside the old cafeteria.



Have you had an outstanding experience with a NorthBay nurse?

Forms to nominate can be found at [NorthBay.org/DAISY](https://NorthBay.org/DAISY)

## NorthBay Wine, Brew & Food Jubilee Postponed

Over the years, the NorthBay Wine, Brew & Food Jubilee has faced blistering heat, high winds, rainstorms and even numerous venue changes, but overcoming a global pandemic was something organizers just couldn't surmount.

The event, originally scheduled for May 16, 2020, has been rescheduled for June 2021, due to COVID-19 uncertainties.

"The decision to postpone was rooted in the best interests of everyone's personal health, based on guidelines from Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and from state



and local health care leaders," said Scott Reynolds, chair of the 2021 event. "The event requires a great deal of advance planning and we must be sensitive to our beer, wine and food vendors as they face staffing and supply chain hurdles. And, as always, NorthBay Healthcare must put the health of our community first," he said.

All nine 2020 Presenting Sponsors have agreed to roll their financial support over to the 2021 event. All tickets will be honored for 2021 with no further action on ticketholder's part. Anyone wishing to support Hospice in 2020 can donate at [NorthBay.org/donate](https://NorthBay.org/donate), and more information can be found at [NorthBay.org/Jubilee](https://NorthBay.org/Jubilee).



c/o NorthBay Healthcare Group  
1200 B. Gale Wilson Boulevard  
Fairfield, CA 94533-3587  
Telephone (707) 646-3336  
[www.NorthBay.org](http://www.NorthBay.org)

**Do you offer  
video visits?**

**Can I just  
instant  
message  
my doctor?**

**Can I be  
seen today?**

**Do you have  
locations near me?**

**Do you accept  
my insurance?**

**Is it safe to be  
seen in person?**

**Can I be seen  
after hours?**

**Are your doctors  
accepting new patients?**

**Yes.**

It's open enrollment!

**Choose Well.**

*a plan that accepts*  
**Choose NorthBay.**

[NorthBay.org/ChooseWell](http://NorthBay.org/ChooseWell)  
or call (707) 301-4071

