On March 25, 2013, I started a journey in health care after several decades in higher education which included teaching, administration, and fundraising. Assuming the position of Vice President and Chief Development Officer for Baptist Health Foundation has allowed me a new beginning in the exciting yet challenging field of health care. Every so often in life, one has an opportunity to embrace a new role, a role that encompasses areas of great interest. In my case, Baptist Health has opened the door for me to help people in need through philanthropy, participate in the evolution of health care delivery in this country, engage in a faith-based organization and, lastly, strengthen the Foundation for the future. Without a doubt, private support will play an increasingly important part of Baptist Health and all health care providers across the country.

*Faces of Philanthropy* is our way of sharing with you those who have made a philanthropic investment in Baptist. The reasons are varied as you read the stories. However, there are several common threads in these profiles. For example, they all reflect a certain amount of passion to make people feel better or at least comfortable. Similarly, these donors believe they are investing in health care in our community. Baptist represents a strong health system which strives to provide the best care, physicians, facilities and more to its constituents. If there is one element of Baptist which I have found to permeate this organization, it is the warm and nurturing culture from top to bottom. Baptist instills values across all employee groups.

Philanthropy is more than a financial transaction or giving one’s personal resources—it is a sign that people care about others. Helping where the needs are greatest and supporting those who have slipped through the safety net is paramount to our mission. Giving a gift, regardless of the amount, can make a difference.

For future issues you will not only read about those who generously give to improve health care in our region. You will also learn more about what gifts made in the past several decades are doing to advance care and the patient experience. I want to share stories of success, which clearly illustrate how Baptist is changing health care for good.

Sincerely,

Pierre N. Allaire, PhD
Vice President and Chief Development Officer
Baptist Health Foundation
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Shown on the cover: William “Bill” W. Gay and his wife, Eloise

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Baptist Health Foundation Inc. supports the health system’s mission through philanthropy and stewardship of gifts that enable Baptist Health hospitals – Baptist Medical Center Jacksonville, Baptist Beaches, Baptist Nassau, Baptist South and Wolfson Children’s Hospital – to continually serve patients and their families and other community healthcare needs.
Early in life, William “Bill” W. Gay received help he never expected. Today, he and his wife, Eloise, and his business associates continue to express their gratitude through philanthropy.

W.W. Gay Mechanical Contractor has offices in seven cities throughout Florida, more than 700 employees and a history of corporate philanthropy that includes almost every nonprofit organization in Jacksonville. But Chief Executive Officer William “Bill” W. Gay says he had a simple goal in mind when he founded the company in 1962.

“I was just trying to eat,” he says, with raconteur’s smile, when asked why he decided to set out on his own after working for several years as an engineer for Mr. F.J. Beckwith, a successful contractor and mentor of Mr. Gay. But if Mr. Gay is engaging in understatement when he describes his momentous decision in 1962, there is no hint of qualification in his assessment of his choice, why it worked out and why it continues to motivate his philanthropy and his company’s giving.
“I’ve had a lot of good things happen to me and a lot of people helped me out in ways that I never expected,” Mr. Gay says. “I can imagine that God made it happen, but it also made me realize, early on, that I had to give back. And I’ve always found the more you give, the more you get out of it.”

Causes that serve children are a favorite of Mr. Gay. “All children are blessings,” he says, and the waiting room at W.W. Gay’s corporate office on Stockton Street is like a small museum, filled with plaques and other recognition that honor gifts to a host of children’s organizations.

Health care is a close second, though. Mr. Gay and the company are long-time supporters of just about every not-for-profit health system in Jacksonville. At Baptist Health, for example, they are the annual title sponsors of the Wolfson Children’s Hospital Bass Tournament, the largest single-day bass tournament in Florida.

The bass tournament celebrates its 25th anniversary next year, but W.W. Gay Mechanical’s generosity to Baptist Health stretches back even further, to almost 30 years. In addition to other gifts to Wolfson Children’s, the company has made several gifts to Baptist Medical Center Jacksonville, the Hill Breast Center, Baptist Medical Center Beaches and the Baptist Health Foundation Professional Scholarship Program.

Here, again, Mr. Gay sums it all up simply. “Baptist Health has a lot of good people, and that’s what I believe in – working with and supporting people who have integrity.”

Mr. Gay’s adherence to his philosophy has benefited Baptist Health in many ways. Crews from his company are renowned for their ability to support health care institutions, and all of Baptist’s hospitals rely on W.W. Gay Mechanical’s expertise. But his choice of business associates has also benefited the health system, especially when he sold a related business, W.W. Gay Fire Protection to Nandu Paryani in 1991.
Mr. Paryani has followed Mr. Gay’s example, and W.W. Gay Fire Protection has remained a generous, consistent supporter of Wolfson Children’s Hospital and Baptist Health throughout Mr. Paryani’s tenure as president.

“My father taught me family values, and Mr. Gay taught me how to work with the community and share my earnings with the community,” Mr. Paryani responds, when asked about his company’s philanthropy. “I, too, believe strongly in Baptist Health, and I’m proud to continue the legacy of philanthropy that Mr. Gay started so many decades ago.”

Mr. Gay’s health care legacy in Northeast Florida is remarkable, too, for the scope of accomplishments and memories it includes. It spans everything from his own experiences as a child, when he and his brother had their tonsils removed at their doctor’s office, at the same time, for a discounted rate of $50, to the 1960s and integration. Mr. Gay joined the board of Methodist Medical Center in 1966, and worked with the hospital’s CEO, Marcus Drewa, to transform it into one of Jacksonville’s first integrated hospitals and the state’s first all-private-room, private-bath hospitals. And, later, in the 1980s, W.W. Gay had the lead role in designing and installing a “work of beauty” in the Baptist Medical Center Energy Complex—the first co-generation equipment, consisting of a turbine, heat recovery boiler and absorption chiller, that allowed the energy complex to provide all of the electrical needs of the hospital, and be totally independent of the utility company. It still puts a gleam in Mr. Gay’s eye.

“Other people probably don’t see what I see when they look at it,” says Mr. Gay of the energy complex, which was, at the time it was built, the nation’s largest co-generating power plant at a hospital. “I see beautiful welds and angles. I see perfection.”

Much like that power plant, which is ready, any time of day, to provide emergency back-up power to any part of Baptist Medical Center Jacksonville, Mr. Gay, 87, goes to work every day, five days a week. He is quick to point out that his company has many other “non-traditional” employees. Several are working well into their 70s and have no interest in retiring. Mr. Gay says that people in his profession only start reaching their prime in their 50s.

“We joke that retirement age around here is 85,” he says.

And, much like most of the comments Mr. Gay makes, that remark leads to something more profound—his own appreciation for his health and good fortune. “I’m lucky to be able to keep doing this, to have a beautiful wife who is still in good health and to have good people working with me,” he says. “I know I have to give back, and health care and medicine are right at the top because of what they can do for our community.”
Transforming the lives of seniors.

For Nathan, it’s being able to talk with ease about his issues, having his medications adjusted and getting back to enjoying friends and family. For Betty, it’s strengthening her wrist so she can keep writing her memoirs. For Dad, it’s regaining his balance so he can live safely on his own. At Baptist AgeWell Center for Senior Health, we’re innovating care of older adults by listening to their goals and treating the entire person. So they can age well, on their terms. That’s changing health care for good.

baptistjax.com/agewell

With generous gifts from donors, the AgeWell Center for Senior Health opened in October 2012 and has served nearly 350 patients. Join us in this partnership for good. Call 904.202.2919 to learn more about supporting AgeWell.
Suzanne Troughton and her family are all too-familiar with the drive from their Fleming Island home in Clay County to Wolfson Children’s Hospital. On a good day, it’s 30-40 minutes. In heavy traffic, it’s more than an hour. And in an emergency, the drive becomes an eternity.

Especially for a child like Mrs. Troughton’s son, Mason. Born in February 2012, Mason arrived 14 weeks early, weighing less than 2 pounds and measuring just a shade longer than 12 inches. He spent his first 196 days at Wolfson Children’s Hospital, and he’s made four visits to the hospital’s emergency center since he arrived home last August.
But that’s all changing for good now. Mason, now more than 23 pounds, hasn’t made an emergency-room visit in weeks. His doctors say his chances of living a long, healthy life are good, and Wolfson Children’s expertise is now closer than it’s ever been, thanks to the opening of the Baptist Clay Medical Campus, at U.S. 17 and Village Square Parkway in Fleming Island.

“I did a dry run, and it’s only 15 minutes to the campus,” says Mrs. Troughton. “It’s comforting to know that quality care is so close, and I like that it’s smaller. I’ve never had any trouble getting around the children’s hospital, but the size of the new campus makes it very convenient.”

Opened in May, the 32-acre Baptist Clay Medical Campus includes a full-service, 24-hour emergency center with physicians and staff from Baptist Health and Wolfson Children’s Hospital; a LifeFlight helipad; an imaging and diagnostic center; and a three-story medical office building with primary care and specialist offices. Baptist Primary Care and Baptist Heart Specialists have already opened practices at the campus. In September, a Wolfson Children’s specialty clinic and Orange Park Pediatrics opened and Borland-Groover Clinic will also open a practice this fall.

With its mix of services and convenience, the Baptist Clay Medical Campus represents a unique concept in health care in Northeast Florida, says Ron Robinson, hospital president of Baptist Medical Center South and the administrator responsible for opening for Baptist Clay. “It combines the ‘round-the-clock’ capabilities of our downtown hospital emergency center with the convenience of an outpatient, neighborhood setting,” Robinson says. “It was one of the first projects of its kind in the state.”

It’s also an innovation grounded in the needs of its community, and the activity at the campus is already proving that. More than 2,800 emergency center visits – including 1,100 that involve children – occurred at the campus in its first two months. But the community response is not surprising perhaps because the campus was built with significant feedback from residents and leaders from Clay County.

That partnership began almost a decade ago, when Baptist Health announced plans to expand its services in Clay County. Several county residents supported the plan and their support led to the creation of the Baptist Clay Advisory Board. A group of business leaders, physicians, government representatives
and other Clay County residents, the advisory board has helped guide the development of the campus, and its opening is cause for celebration for a variety of reasons.

Advisory Board Member David Robertson says choice brings powerful benefits to a community, especially when it involves health care. “Choice brings competition,” says Mr. Robertson, who is chief operating officer of Reynolds, Smith & Hills, Inc., and a board member of the Clay County Utility Authority. “And I go back to the statement, ‘God bless my competition because they only make me better.’ So, I see Baptist Clay as something that will upgrade medical services throughout the county.”

The benefits will go beyond health care, too, says Janice Kerekes, an advisory board member who is also the Fleming Island District Representative for the Clay County School Board. A mother of three boys who are now young adults, Mrs. Kerekes speaks almost wistfully about Baptist Clay’s opening, but she says its arrival is about the future, not the past. “My three boys are all into sports, and they had just about every body part X-rayed at one time or another while growing up,” Mrs. Kerekes says. “It would have been nice to have Baptist Clay then, but I’m very excited about the opportunities it will bring to our schools and our career academies. That’s where our community’s future nurses and doctors will come from.”

The county’s 16 career academies prepare students for careers upon graduation from high school, and the health science career academy prepares students for the certified nursing assistant exam. The health science academy is at Orange Park High School, but Mrs. Kerekes says Baptist Clay’s location creates easy expansion opportunities to Fleming Island and Middleburg high schools.

Baptist Clay offers convenient appointments before and after work to make it easier for Clay County residents to fit CT scans, MRIs and other imaging needs into their schedule.

Add more jobs – the emergency and diagnostic center alone added about 65 jobs to the community – to the benefits that Mr. Robertson and Mrs. Kerekes shared, and the result is an equation that sums up easily and nicely for Clay County, says Wendell Davis, an advisory board member who is also a county commissioner. “Better health care, more educational opportunities and more jobs; they all add up to better quality of life in our county, and that’s why I’m such a fan of Baptist Clay.”
The Women’s Board of Wolfson Children’s Hospital presents

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improving the overall patient experience

Giving his time and other resources to Baptist Medical Center Beaches has produced surprising rewards for Sonny Bhikha.
In 2004, when Sonny Bhikha was invited to join the Baptist Medical Center Beaches Board of Directors, his first thought was, “Why me?”

“I’m just an average Joe, working in the hospitality industry,” Mr. Bhikha, 44, recalls thinking upon receiving that invitation. “I didn’t know anything about hospitals, and I didn’t think I had any expertise to offer the board.”

Quickly, he discovered he was wrong. The board wanted his expertise in the hospitality industry. Mr. Bhikha is a partner in a family business that owns five hotels and board members believed his perspective would help improve the overall patient experience at the hospital. That possibility was both a revelation to Mr. Bhikha and an opportunity to finally address a need that had been gnawing at him for some time.

“For so many years, I have felt this void because my business career is something I do for my own benefit,” he says. “I’m proud to be an employer and to contribute to the community in that way, but I wanted to do something more to give back.”

So Mr. Bhikha quickly accepted the invitation, and, almost immediately, immersed himself in the hospital, shadowing staff in housekeeping, the emergency center and other areas. The experience was refreshing, in more ways than one. He found opportunities for improvement, but he was also impressed by the staff’s dedication.

“After seeing the way things work behind the scenes, I believe that Baptist backs up what it says. Baptist is deeply committed to patients and this community,” he says.

That commitment is also evident, Mr. Bhikha says, in the health system’s comfort with him as a representative. A member of the Hindu faith, Mr. Bhikha starts each day by placing four red dots on his body, one on his forehead, one on each arm and one on his chest. They remind him that his head, heart and hands must do the work of God each day and act with wisdom and compassion.

“My faith espouses ideals that are universal or common amongst all religions,” Mr. Bhikha says. “Still, a lot of people in our community don’t know much about it, and it’s very evident to me. No one at Baptist Health has ever questioned my ability to represent the organization. That has always meant a lot to me, and it reinforces the notion that Baptist is a faith-based organization—one that respects all faiths.”
Given his affinity for the hospital and his desire to give back to the community, it is, perhaps, not a surprise that Mr. Bhikha is also a donor to Baptist Beaches. His gifts to the hospital are recognized by a plaque in the hospital’s Emergency Center, which sees more than 40,000 visits per year, including about 11,000 from children. But, like the other elements of Mr. Bhikha’s relationship with the hospital, even that plaque has an interesting story attached to it.

The plaque does not honor Mr. Bhikha. Instead it honors the spiritual leader of his congregation, Pramukh Swami Maharaj, and quotes one of his religion’s guiding principles:

“In the joy of others, lies our own. In the progress of others, rests our own. In the good of others, abides our own.”

In addition to summarizing Mr. Bhikha’s motivations in life, those stanzas offer a fitting description for working with him, says Baptist Beaches President Joe Mitrick. “The word ‘joy’ leaps out at me when I read that quote because working with Sonny is a joy,” Mr. Mitrick says. “He’s humble, thoughtful and has a terrific sense of humor. He’s also deeply committed to our hospital and community.”

“After seeing the way things work behind the scenes, I believe that Baptist backs up what it says. Baptist is deeply committed to patients and this community.”

Sonny Bhikha
The beneficiary of Bass Tournament funds, Wolfson Children's Hospital, recognizes that our greatest hope today is a tomorrow for sick and injured children. In the history of the tournament, more than $2 million has been raised for our region's children and Wolfson Children's Hospital's not-for-profit mission.

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wolfsonchildrens.org/ways-to-give/bass/
Becky Jewett of Ponte Vedra Beach turned 60 more than seven years ago, but she remembers the day like it was yesterday. It was a Thursday, and she was shopping for new glasses when a phone call from her doctor made the day a milestone for all the wrong reasons. Becky had to schedule an appointment as soon as possible, the doctor told her. She knew immediately there was trouble.

“I had just had some tests for breast cancer, and I knew she had bad news because she wanted to deliver it in person,” Becky says. “I remember telling my doctor, ‘I have big plans for my birthday, but this isn’t exactly what I had in mind.’ Then, I said, ‘Tomorrow’s Friday. What do I need to do to get the ball rolling?’”

Not only did the ball roll quickly, it rolled in ways that Becky didn’t expect. She started treatment immediately and shaved her head, instead of waiting for her hair to fall out.
After six months of chemotherapy and radiation therapy, she was cancer-free. But shortly after her diagnosis, two fellow members of The Ponte Vedra Women’s Golf Association (PVWGA) learned they had breast cancer. And so The Pink Ribbon Golf Classic was born.

Created by PVWGA member Susie Buckey, The Pink Ribbon Golf Classic is an all-volunteer event that raises money for breast cancer care and research at Baptist Medical Center Beaches and Mayo Clinic Florida. The event’s motto is “Keep it Local,” and all proceeds stay in the community. In seven years, it has raised more than $600,000 and funded several improvements that help Baptist Beaches patients every day, says Hospital President Joe Mitrick.

“Pink Ribbon is a testament to the power of local philanthropy,” Mr. Mitrick says. “The amount of money it’s raised is amazing, and so is the impact. It’s helped us purchase state-of-the-art technology and provide a full-time breast cancer care coordinator. Both are essential for our patients.”

For Susie, these results are just the latest returns on more than 20 years of fundraising for breast cancer. Prior to moving to Jacksonville in 2003, she created a golf tournament in Richmond, VA, that funded breast cancer care in that community. She has never had breast cancer herself, but she has seen its toll on close friends and family.

“I lost a friend who was only 25, and she had two small children at the time,” Susie says. “It hit me really hard, and I’ve always been a believer in keeping philanthropy local, to help people in my community.”

Susie is also a believer in Baptist Health, and her experience with the health system stretches back decades. “I’ve been visiting Ponte Vedra since the 1960s, and with four kids, I was always going to the hospital for some reason,” she says. “I was pleased with the Beaches hospital, but I’ve also noticed how much it’s improved since Baptist purchased it in the 1990s.”

Though Susie and this year’s event chair, Millie Harrison, want The Pink Ribbon Golf Classic to raise more money and become even bigger, that focus hasn’t prevented them from appreciating the event’s essence – the generosity of a growing group of volunteers, sponsors and participants.
“We’re proud of the contributions we raise each year, and we’re now up to almost 200 golfers,” Millie says. “It’s so inspiring to see all the different ways that people give of themselves to make our event a success. Our volunteers give so much time, and we’ve received tremendous support from Ponte Vedra Inn & Club, Tabitha and Jim Furyk, Underwood Jewelers and several other donors. Brumos Motor Cars and Mercedes-Benz of Orange Park have also joined our team as the presenting sponsors this year. It makes you realize that we live in a very generous community.”

Friendship is another revelation that Susie and Millie have enjoyed as a result of The Pink Ribbon Golf Classic. They first met as neighbors, and Buckey almost immediately recruited Harrison as a volunteer for the event. Since then, they’ve become inseparable.

“We’re children of different generations, but we’re kindred spirits,” Millie says.

And neither of them can wait for The Pink Ribbon Golf Classic’s finest hour – a post-tournament luncheon that includes a moment that honors all participants who are breast cancer survivors. It’s a brief but powerful moment, says Becky, who has participated in every one.

“It makes you realize that anyone can get breast cancer and that you’re part of a big group of people,” Becky says. “And it makes you want to continue being a survivor.”

Pink Ribbon is a testament to the power of local philanthropy. The amount of money it’s raised is amazing, and so is its impact.”

Joe Mitrick
Hospital President,
Baptist Beaches

Volunteers with The Pink Ribbon Golf Classic meet regularly to prepare for the annual fundraiser.
Join Us for Our Seventh Annual

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Oceanfront home on Ponte Vedra Boulevard
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Ponte Vedra Inn & Club
Thursday, October 10, 2013

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To learn more, purchase a cocktail party ticket, register for golf, make a donation or become a partner or sponsor, please visit www.pinkribbonjax.org.

All proceeds benefit Baptist Medical Center Beaches and Mayo Clinic-Jacksonville.
As she saw tears streaming down the faces of her audience, the crowd at this year’s DreamCoat Society Dinner for Wolfson Children’s Hospital, Marissa Ierna, 19, of Jacksonville, couldn’t help feeling giddy. After all, she set out what she accomplished to do.

Not make people sad, Marissa explains, but help make them connect with the journey that she has made in the past year – from cancer patient, to grateful cancer survivor and, most recently, to member of the DreamCoat Society. “I’ve learned so much in the last year, including that I have the ability to make an impression on people with my story, and I’m proud of that,” Marissa says. “And I’d like to keep doing that in the future, to help patients like me in some way.”
Tears are a good gauge, too, of Marissa’s speaking efficacy, because they are woven through her journey. She has felt their sting too many times, but she’s also felt their cathartic power and the wellsprings of joy that can cause them. Best of all, she’s still around to explain it all.

**A Nightmarish Beginning**

Marissa’s odyssey began in a patch of South Carolina woods, where she was sleeping during a spring break camping trip. She woke in the middle of the night, after a dream about the persistent, painful bump on her leg.

“I thought the bump was an allergic reaction to a bug bite after a lacrosse game,” says Marissa, an exercise and sports nut. “But in my dream, someone told me it was cancer.”

The dream stayed with her when she returned from vacation, but she resisted the urge to see a doctor. The final straw came during an afternoon run. Pain radiated throughout her leg, forcing her to stop. She visited her high school’s athletic trainer, who quickly determined that she had something more than a bug bite and referred her to an orthopedic surgeon. The surgeon ordered an MRI scan and then recommended she see an oncologist.

The nightmare had become reality. After more tests, the oncologist told her she had cancer, a rare soft tissue malignancy called rhabdomyosarcoma. The bump, as benign as it first seemed, was the start of something far more sinister – a tumor that wrapped around the bones and muscles in her leg and was spreading. She had stage 4 cancer and a 30-percent chance of survival. The only treatment, she was told, involved immediate surgery that would prevent her from ever regaining the full use of her leg.

Instead of pursuing that immediate option, Marissa and her parents, Todd and Diane, sought advice from friends in the health care profession and eventually made their way to Nemours Children’s Clinic, Jacksonville and Wolfson Children’s Hospital. Her Nemours physician, Eric Sandler, MD, suggested that surgery would be best after chemotherapy, radiation therapy and other non-surgical treatments did their work and, hopefully, shrank her tumor. He also told her to throw out the statistics that predicted she had a 30-percent chance of surviving her cancer.

“Dr. Sandler told me that I’m my own statistic, and that gave me a lot of hope. It made me feel like I could do something about my disease.”

Marissa Ierna

“Dr. Sandler told me that I’m my own statistic, and that gave me a lot of hope,” Marissa says. “It made me feel like I could do something about my disease.” She harnessed that hope and the support of her family as she traveled across the landscape of children’s cancer care in Jacksonville, receiving proton beam therapy at the University of Florida Proton Therapy Institute, outpatient treatment at Nemours and weeks of chemotherapy at Wolfson Children’s Hospital. All told, she spent more than 60 nights at the children’s hospital. The treatments exhausted her. At times they scarred her throat so badly she couldn’t eat.
And yet, through it all, what she remembers most are the bonds that she formed with the Wolfson Children’s staff, who became like family to her. “One night, I started crying and I couldn’t stop,” Marissa says. “My nurse was with me the whole time, and she cried with me at one point. She wanted to comfort me, and it hurt her to see me in so much pain. Everyone at the hospital is so compassionate. They’re just incredible.”

Back to a New Normal
As her treatment progressed and her prognosis improved, Marissa returned, gradually, to normal life. She enrolled in college. She resumed exercising and now spends almost two hours a day in the gym. She still has a small mass in her leg, but it is dead tissue and may not even have to be removed.

Strangely enough, her battle with cancer has changed her life for the better in some ways. Her relationship with her mother, who spent many nights in the hospital by Marissa’s side, is better than it has ever been. She’s also become a celebrity of sorts, speaking at the DreamCoat Society Dinner and representing the Tom Coughlin Jay Fund and other organizations that serve children with cancer.

Marissa’s experience has also reinforced a core belief of her family’s, says her father. “From the day she decided to pursue non-surgical treatment, Marissa remained strong and kept a positive attitude,” Mr. Ierna says. “That not only helped her, it made the path we all traveled with her much smoother, and it reinforced my belief that being positive every day makes it possible to overcome almost anything.”

Cancer has also opened her eyes to the generosity of her local community. Her DreamCoat Society gift was the result of a fundraiser that her family held at the Loyal Order of Moose Lodge. In just one evening, the event raised more than $12,000, which the Iernas donated to Wolfson Children’s. “The response just blew me away, and it says a lot about the people here and their willingness to give,” Marissa says.

Now, with her first semester of college classes underway, Marissa is beginning to wonder what she will do with the rest of her life. But instead of agonizing over the choice, she’s taking her time deciding … and grateful that she has that option. “I’m not sure what I’ll do,” she says. “I’ve discovered I have some public speaking abilities, so I’ve been told I should pursue communications. But I’m not going to let the decision weigh on me or prevent me from enjoying each day because every day is a gift. And that’s the most important lesson I’ve learned from cancer.”
A Better Today and Tomorrow for Children with Cancer

At first, the bruise on her calf meant nothing to Marissa Ierna, an athlete and long-distance runner who is no stranger to aches and pains. But then she learned her bruise was a tumor, and that cancer was spreading through her leg.

Marissa was diagnosed with Stage 4 Rhabdomyosarcoma, a rare soft tissue cancer. Her tumor was the size of a baseball, and it wrapped around the bones and nerves in her leg. Doctors at Wolfson Children’s Hospital and Nemours Children’s Clinic, Jacksonville, diagnosed the rare condition and developed a treatment regimen to knock out her cancer, save her leg and preserve her ability to lead the active lifestyle she enjoys so much.

Marissa’s treatment continues, but so has her life. She graduated from high school and is off to college. She is not yet cancer-free. But she is confident. “I’m at the best place I can be, and I love my doctors and nurses,” she says. “No one wants to have cancer, but I’m lucky to have such a great medical team in my hometown.”

The endowment for childhood cancer research at Wolfson Children’s and Nemours Children’s Clinic will ensure that future generations of children like Marissa never have to leave home to get the best that medicine has to offer. This $1 million endowment will help children today and tomorrow, providing funding that will:

• Support research that will help identify new treatments for pediatric cancers and new ways to diagnose them earlier, when they are more treatable.
• Attract a leading physician-researcher to our community.
• Create fellowships, which bring bright young physicians to our area for specialized training and help keep them here.

As an endowment, your gift will benefit children in our community in perpetuity and grow over time. Wolfson Children’s Hospital and Nemours Children’s Clinic will recognize your gift prominently.

For information, please contact Kerrie Slattery at 904.202.2550 or e-mail kerrie.slattery@bmcjax.com.
At first, September 1, 1999, began just like most days for Rick Keffer of Fernandina Beach. He woke, dressed for a workout on his exercise bike and started pedaling. He finished the workout, too, just like he always did – pedaling hardest for the last 15 minutes. Then, everything stopped being normal.

After resting and lying down for several minutes, Mr. Keffer couldn’t stop sweating. His face was gray, too, and his heart continued to race. Then, both of his arms started tingling. He knew something was wrong. He walked into the kitchen, where his wife, Hollie, and their two children, Christopher and Katie, who were 7 and 9 at the time, were eating breakfast. “I think I’m having a heart attack,” Mr. Keffer told them. “We need to get to the hospital right away.”
The children ran to the car while Mrs. Keffer walked her husband to it, and she then drove him quickly to Baptist Medical Center Nassau’s emergency center. Just a few minutes after his arrival, a physician examined him, and Mr. Keffer learned he was right. He was having a heart attack because of a clot in his left descending artery.

Aspirin and nitroglycerin failed to break up the clot. Then, his doctors tried a more advanced anti-clotting drug. Almost immediately, Mr. Keffer started feeling relief, but he was air lifted to Baptist Medical Center Jacksonville, where physicians confirmed a few hours later that he was out of danger.

Something else was confirmed that day and in the weeks that followed—the soundness of the family’s decision to move in 1997 from Charlotte, NC, to Fernandina Beach. “We received an outpouring of support from people in the community, even though we’d only been here two years,” says Mrs. Keffer. “The director of the kids’ school went with me to Jacksonville and waited with me while the doctors did more tests on Rick, and [then-Baptist Medical Nassau President] Jim Mayo was there, too. He went above and beyond.”

Their move to Nassau County was, in some ways, a risky one. Mr. Keffer was moving from managing a dealership to owning one and from a large city that was growing by leaps and bounds to a small community where people often travel to Jacksonville for cars and other major purchases—a phenomenon that Mr. Keffer calls “the Ingalls effect,” after the Ingalls family of “Little House on the Prairie” fame.

“It was a risk we were willing to take,” he says. “We wanted to escape the hectic life that goes along with running a car dealership in a large city and we wanted to get involved in our community. After my heart attack, it just became more obvious that we moved to the right community.”

Their involvement with Nassau County started with their children and their schools. Mrs. Keffer volunteered at St. Michael’s Academy and Fernandina Beach High School and is still an active community volunteer. Mr. Keffer joined the board of Communities in Schools of Nassau County and served a term as chairman.

After Mr. Keffer’s heart attack, the couple became more involved with Baptist Medical Center Nassau and he joined the hospital’s board in 2004. In 2007 and 2008, they made campaign gifts for the hospital’s expansion and the construction of the Berkman...
Building, as did Mr. Keffer’s father. This year Mr. Keffer also agreed to chair the hospital’s board.

Satisfaction with his care was a motivator in his decision to join the hospital board and in the family’s gifts, which are recognized by a plaque on the hospital’s first floor. But other powerful motivators have emerged in the years since his heart attack. “Both of our parents have had medical issues, and that’s forced us to learn a lot about hospitals and to appreciate the importance of good health care in our community,” Mrs. Keffer says.

For Mr. Keffer that appreciation recalls the “Ingalls effect” and his desire, as a hospital board member, to see the hospital expand its services and help ensure that Nassau County residents receive quality health care in their community, instead of having to travel for it. Hospital President Stephen Lee shares that goal, and he says two recent additions are helping hundreds of Nassau County residents stay “local” for their health care.

“We now have a full-time neurologist and a full-time urologist on our staff, and we will continue adding specialists,” Mr. Lee says. “They increase convenience for patients, and they expand our emergency expertise, which is vitally important in a community like ours, as Rick’s own story demonstrates.”

Both men agree that philanthropy is essential for the hospital to continue expanding its size and staff, and Mr. Keffer says that’s both a challenge and an opportunity. “Financially, we know that the hospital is going to receive less and less from the federal government and state,” he says. “But in the past, people took care of each other in their community, with barn raisings and things like that, and it worked for hundreds of years. It can work here, too. It’s just going to take the support of the entire community.”
ABOUT BAPTIST HEALTH FOUNDATION

The Foundation advances the health system’s mission through philanthropy and stewardship of gifts that enable Baptist Medical Center Jacksonville, Baptist Beaches, Baptist Nassau, Baptist South and Wolfson Children’s Hospital to continually serve patients and their families and support community healthcare needs.

The Foundation was established in 1985 to be the conduit for all of the fundraising activities that support Baptist Health. It is governed by a Board of Trustees and supported by many dedicated donors and volunteers. Volunteer groups raise money on behalf of the Foundation through Giving Circles and business partnerships. The Women’s Board, Patrons of the Hearts and the Wolfson Bass Tournament are affiliated with the Foundation and contribute to the health system’s overall fundraising efforts.

Baptist Health is Changing Health Care For Good and You Can Too.

Any gift of any size can help create a better future for our community’s health care. You may use the enclosed envelope in this issue of Faces of Philanthropy or make a gift online at foundation.baptistjax.com/givenow.

You can also contact Baptist Health Foundation. We have expertise in planned giving, estate giving, corporate and retail sponsorships and a variety of other philanthropic vehicles that help people and organizations realize their charitable goals in especially rewarding ways.

A gift to Baptist Health is a gift to the community and our Foundation staff can help you contribute in a way that works best for you and your family.

When the group, Bunch of Kids, decided they wanted to help Wolfson Children’s, they held lemonade stands, garage sales and did odd jobs, raising enough to purchase two iPads and iPad accessories for Wolfson Children’s Child Life program.

If you would like to make a gift to Baptist Health Foundation, please contact:

Baptist Health Foundation
841 Prudential Drive, Suite 1300
Jacksonville, FL 32207
904.202.2919
foundation@bmcjax.com

Upcoming Events

Pink Ribbon Golf Classic
October 10, 2013
Ponte Vedra Inn & Club
pinkribbonjax.org

Florida Forum
With Former British Prime Minister, Tony Blair
October 16, 2013
Times-Union Center for the Performing Arts
thefloridaforum.com

Patrons of the Hearts’ Artscapade
October 18, 2013
The Museum
patronsofthehearts.org

Florida Forum
With Best-Selling Author, Michael Lewis
November 12, 2013
Times-Union Center for the Performing Arts
thefloridaforum.com

Florida Forum
With Former Governor, Jeb Bush
January 16, 2014
Times-Union Center for the Performing Arts
thefloridaforum.com

Wolfson Children’s Challenge
February 1, 2014
The Baseball Grounds of Jacksonville
wolfson55.org