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Avid football fan 17-year-old Turan Caudle is thriving after surviving a traumatic brain injury.
Adding Life to Years® — Helping You Live a Full and Healthy Life

Safety First When the First Snow Falls

The frigid predictions warn of a colder than average winter and more snow than last year. This white wonderland is an inevitable consequence of winter in the D.C. and Baltimore region—and so is the pain that can come from digging out.

“None of us is immune to back pain,” says Ann Wendel, PT, ATC, CMTPT, and clinic director at MedStar NRH in Lorton, Virginia. “In fact, worldwide 80 percent of all people will have at least one episode of back pain during their lives. It’s the most common cause of disability.”

It all comes down to body mechanics, she adds. “So many of us simply aren’t moving our bodies properly. We don’t breathe the right way when we exert ourselves or use our muscles to our advantage. So when we put extra strain on them—such as shoveling snow—we’re apt to injure ourselves.”

Even if you exercise regularly, the winter months may have slowed your pace, she adds. “So before you go outside warm your muscles.”

Building Strength and Stability

The best way to prevent weeks of discomfort following the first snowfall is by doing some prep work before you venture outside.

“Ideally you should be strengthening your core—your abdominals—all year round. A strong core helps create stability,” Wendel says. “Pilates, yoga and proper weight training are ideal exercises for a strong core. When you do these exercises, you learn to breathe correctly and exhale your breath upon exertion. That same breathing technique will help you tackle any physical chore,” she explains. “You will use your abdominals, glutes (buttock muscles) and chest muscles—which can carry the load far better than your back.”

Injury?

What does Wendel advise if you do injure yourself despite your careful preparation? “When you get inside, don’t lie down. Keep moving to increase blood flow to your back. Then follow with ice to decrease the pain.

“You should see a doctor if the pain persists a week after the injury,” she says. “And ask your doctor for a referral for physical therapy. Therapy should be the first option for low back pain. It’s often not serious and therapy to correct posture and body mechanics will be all you need for relief.”

But there are occasions when a cold compress isn’t enough, she warns. There are some red flags that mean you should stop what you are doing and go to your doctor, including:
- Sharp pain while shoveling
- Numbness and tingling down your leg
- Numbness in your groin
- Loss of bowel or bladder control

Wendel explains these symptoms could signal involvement of a nerve, and require diagnosis and treatment.

For comprehensive physical therapy services for back pain—and other injuries—find the MedStar NRH outpatient center nearest your home at MedStarNRH.org/locations. For multidisciplinary back pain diagnosis and treatment, call the MedStar Health Spine Center at 855-605-BACK (855-605-2225).

### Before You Pick Up the Shovel and Take the First Plunge into the Snow

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Give yourself a mechanical advantage by <strong>Keeping the Shovel Close</strong> to your body. This will lighten the load and put less strain on your spine.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Don’t Bend From Your Back.</strong> Keep your spine aligned and squat from the hip as if you are about to sit down on a chair. That way you are using the larger muscles in your buttocks and legs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shift the Direction</strong> that you pitch the snow—to the left and then right—to prevent overuse.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Pace Yourself.</strong> Take breaks.</td>
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BEFORE YOU PICK UP THE SHOVEL and take the first plunge into the snow, Wendel offers these tips to help perfect your shoveling technique:
Another year is at an end—the 29th in the history of MedStar NRH. This has been a period of challenges and change for all of us, and I’m happy to take this opportunity to report on the “State of the Network” to our patients, donors and community.

**Outpatient Growth Spurt**

Our expanding reach into the Washington, D.C., and Baltimore, Maryland, region continued this year, and our outpatient centers now number 51. The number of patient visits to the outpatient sites grew substantially as well, totaling 500,000, up 20 percent in just one year.

We have also expanded services at established outpatient centers in Olney, Maryland, and McLean, Virginia, to meet increased demand. As we move forward, we will continue to build on this model of multidisciplinary service delivery, bringing our rehabilitation physicians and therapists together with other medical specialists within the MedStar Health system. The goal is to increase access to our experienced team of nationally recognized experts and advanced medical care to families throughout the region.

We are also instituting a new electronic health record system at our outpatient sites, which is improving efficiency and documentation of patient information. Now, no matter where a patient receives care within the MedStar NRH Rehabilitation Network, clinicians will have “real time” access to their medical records.

**Sports Medicine Rehabilitation Dominance**

Sports Medicine is one of the fastest growing service lines within MedStar Health, with our MedStar NRH rehabilitation team as the cornerstone of the program. We’ve been expanding services and our team of sports medicine experts, as well. Numbers tell the story: There are more than 75 specialty trained MedStar NRH sports clinicians providing sports medicine services to 31 high schools, 16 colleges, several pro teams, 16 community organizations and the region’s major races.

We are also becoming a premier academic center for the training of sports medicine physical therapists and physicians. You can read more about MedStar NRH Sports Medicine on page 9.

**Inpatient Care**

This year we celebrated the second anniversary of our inpatient dialysis suite. This highly specialized service has transformed recovery for patients in rehabilitation, who also require routine dialysis for kidney disease. Before the suite opened, these patients had to travel across campus to the MedStar Washington Hospital Center three times each week. Now they are in and out of dialysis more quickly and back into therapy with little interruption.

We have also expanded our LVAD program, providing more beds for patients who have left ventricular assist devices—an engineering marvel that is serving as a bridge to transplantation or a substitute to a heart transplant for people in end-stage heart failure. We’ve also mounted an intensive educational program to train staff to handle these complex cardiac patients— and to serve the growing population of people who are benefitting from this advanced technology.

**Philanthropy**

On the philanthropy front, we are very pleased to announce that GEICO has committed to a $500,000 gift in support of our Adding Life to Years® Campaign. GEICO will serve as Title Sponsor for our upcoming 30th Anniversary Victory Awards® Gala to be held on Wednesday, April 20, 2016. (Learn more about the Gala on page 6.)

We’re so very grateful to GEICO, who has been our steadfast supporter for many years, dating back to our founding. This is GEICO’s second pledge to the Campaign, bringing their total commitment to a very generous $1 million. We’re so thrilled that GEICO is helping to secure our future with the building of the National Center for Brain Injury and Stroke Rehabilitation & Research. In addition, in November GEICO and Volkswagen Group of America gifted MedStar NRH with a new specially-equipped Volkswagen Passat, a training vehicle used in occupational therapy. The celebration is featured on the back cover of this issue of MedStar NRH Today.

As we close out this busy year, I want to thank all of our friends for their support and wish our patients—past and present—donors and Team Members a wonderful and healthy New Year!
**Defying the Odds:**

**Two Young Brain Injury Patients Fight Back**

**Two boys. Two tragic events. In an instant, with the crackle of gunfire, their young lives radically shifted. But what could easily have ended in catastrophe has instead become an inspiration.**

In October 2014, nine-year-old Jaydan Stancil was rushed to Children’s National Health System, the innocent victim of a shootout in a Northeast D.C. neighborhood parking lot. The bullet had torn through his skull, fracturing bone and ripping tissue. Jaydan’s parents were told he wouldn’t make it. But he survived emergency surgery to remove part of his skull to relieve pressure—and was in critical condition.

This past January, 17-year-old, high school football player Turan Caudle was shot in the head while playing video games with friends. In the first few hours after his shooting, he wasn’t expected to live. He suffered a devastating brain injury. But he is a strong young man with courage that surprised even his family. He had surgery at MedStar Washington Hospital Center to relieve the pressure on his brain—and survived those first critical hours following the procedure.

After a month in Intensive Care, Turan was admitted to MedStar NRH to begin intensive therapy. Jaydan’s rehabilitation was a bit rockier. Seven days after he came to MedStar NRH, he was back at Children’s. Spinal cord fluid had begun to accumulate on his brain and doctors inserted a shunt to relieve it. A little more than three weeks later, he returned to MedStar NRH to begin the next part of his recovery.

**Comprehensive Rehab from the Start**

“I saw Jaydan when he was first admitted to acute care,” explains Justin Burton, MD, co-program director of the National Center for Children’s Rehabilitation (NCCR) at MedStar NRH.

“Thats an important part of the rehabilitation process. We begin to evaluate patients even before they come to MedStar NRH,” he explains. “This continuity of care helps jump-start the recovery process and produce the best outcomes for these children.”

NCCR is a collaborative venture between MedStar NRH and Children’s National. Dr. Burton and other medical staff members have joint faculty appointments at both facilities. “I spend half of my time at each institution, and we routinely coordinate care between the two hospitals. It’s an important partnership that gives the children access to all the specialty services that are available at an acute care hospital—and all of MedStar NRH’s pediatric rehabilitation expertise,” says Dr. Burton.

**Intensive Multiple Therapies**

When Jaydan began his therapy, he had no motion on his left side. He wasn’t able to speak, understand speech or open his mouth completely. “He was suffering from what we call ‘left neglect,’” Dr. Burton explains. “He wasn’t completely aware of his world on his left side. This is because he suffered damage to the right side of his brain; it generally controls the function of the left side of the body,” he adds.

“He could respond to simple questions with a thumbs-up or by saying ‘yes.’ He was very weak and needed support to walk and move out of his bed. But we began an intensive therapy protocol that included physical, speech and occupational therapy. Like all of our pediatric patients, Jaydan also worked with recreational therapists and our child psychologist,” he explains.

Five to six days a week, Jaydan and other pediatric rehabilitation patients are put through their paces in an intensive regimen. “But play is also an important aspect of treatment,” Dr. Burton adds. “We encourage the kids to play together—scheduled activities like bingo, boxing, movies and board

**Photos:** Sharon Natoli and Derek Berry
games to encourage socialization, which is important to recovery.

“The Convo Club is the kid’s speech-language therapy group, which helps to get the patients talking to one another to enhance language skills. We have the Lunch Bunch, which also encourages the kids to interact. They need to leave the unit, go to the cafeteria, order their own meals and eat together. It’s all important to improving social and language skills—and help boost recovery.”

Family is a critical part of the rehabilitation process, as well. “We have family meetings as needed, offer a family support group, and encourage parents and siblings to join the weekly family dinners on the unit. To be sure the children’s education continues despite hospitalization, our educational coordinator serves as a bridge between the kids, parents and schools.”

**Determination, Inspiration**

When Turan came to MedStar NRH, he was weak but alert, says his mom Sherita. “He recognized me,” she says, gratefully. “Right at the start, Dr. Burton asked me what I wanted from therapy. I said I wanted to get back to normal as much as we possibly could. He said that if Turan was diligent with his daily therapy, he could be healthy when he left the hospital,” she remembers.

“At first Turan struggled with the activities, but when he started to participate I could see the progress he was making. He became very determined, and that made me much more optimistic.”

“Turan was aphasic when he arrived at the hospital,” Dr. Burton says. “That means it was hard for him to express or understand language. He had some spasticity in his right side and left leg, too. He could take a few steps with assistance. But he needed help doing most daily activities.”

But by the time he left MedStar NRH two months later, Turan was walking on his own, tackling three flights of stairs, doing some football moves on the hospital lawn, and was “socially independent,” Dr. Burton says.

After his two-month stay, Jaydan was able to walk and handle a flight of stairs—and was chattering away like any other happy, nine-year-old. “Cognitively, Jaydan has made a fantastic recovery,” Dr. Burton adds.

**Making Critical Connections**

“Both of these boys did very well considering the seriousness of their injuries,” says Dr. Burton. “They do have youth on their side. We know that children with brain injury recover better than adults, but we aren’t yet certain why,” he adds.

“When brain neurons are damaged they don’t regenerate like other nerve cells. But our brains can make new connections between neurons after injury. When one part of the brain is damaged, neurons create new networks and other parts of the brain take over those functions. We believe that children can make these new connections more easily than adults,” he explains. “In rehabilitation, we do all we can to help foster these new connections.”

Today Jaydan and Turan continue their recoveries in outpatient therapy. Turan is hoping to complete the classes he needs to graduate with his class next year.

Jaydan had surgery to replace the part of his skull removed early on. Turan had the same procedure this past summer.

“Every day, Turan keeps moving forward,” says Sherita. “I know for certain that the care he received at MedStar NRH made all the difference. Everyone was so wonderful and patient with him. They gave him fantastic care—and every time I look at my son I feel so very grateful to them all.”

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**National Center for Children’s Rehabilitation at MedStar NRH**

- Joint service with Children’s National Health System
- Located at MedStar National Rehabilitation Hospital
- Accepting patients between the ages of 6 and 18.
- Treatment of neurological and orthopedic conditions and injuries

Call 202-877-1152.
Join Us at the 30th Anniversary Victory Awards® Gala
Wednesday, April 20, 2016

The 2016 Victory Awards® Gala will be a joyful, 30th anniversary celebration of the MedStar NRH Rehabilitation Network, which began in 1986 when the MedStar National Rehabilitation Hospital first opened its doors.

Donors, friends, past patients and families, and our Team Members will gather together on Wednesday, April 20, 2016, at the Smithsonian National Portrait Gallery for this exciting evening of dining, entertainment and honors.

Olza M. Nicely, chairman and CEO of GEICO, will serve as Honorary Corporate Chair of the Gala. In addition, His Excellency, the Ambassador of Brazil Luiz Alberto Figueiredo Machado and Ms. Maria Angelica Ikeda, will serve as Honorary International Chairs. The evening will not only honor the accomplishments of several individuals and organizations, but will also celebrate Brazilian culture, with a touch of the cuisine, music and dance of Brazil.

“We are honored to be involved in this exciting event,” says Ambassador Figueiredo. “MedStar NRH has played such an important role in helping people with disabilities live full and meaningful lives—especially through its well-respected Adaptive Sports programs, which help to foster the dreams of future paralympians.”

Next summer, Brazil is hosting the 2016 Summer Olympics—and the 15th Summer Paralympic Games—in Rio de Janeiro. “It’s a wonderful opportunity to showcase the achievements of all athletes, especially those who have overcome physical challenges,” he adds. “These accomplishments wouldn’t be possible without the opportunity that places like MedStar NRH provide.”

**Celebrating the Victory of the Human Spirit**

MedStar National Rehabilitation Network created the Victory Awards® in 1986 to celebrate the Victory of the Human Spirit and to honor individuals who best exemplify exceptional strength and courage in the face of physical adversity.

Over the years, many of those honored have been celebrities from the fields of arts and entertainment, sports and politics. Others have been extraordinary community leaders, advocates for disability rights, champion athletes, teachers, parents, and children.


**Supporting MedStar NRH’s Mission**

The event raises significant dollars for this world-class institution, helping MedStar NRH to provide high quality care for persons with disabilities. This year, funds raised will provide a significant boost to the Adding Life to Years® Campaign, a multi-year effort to raise $25 million to build a 60,000 sq. ft. addition to the hospital and create the National Center for Brain Injury and Stroke Rehabilitation & Research. Donors have already contributed more than $17 million dollars to the effort.

This new center will focus on highly specialized clinical care for patients with stroke and brain injuries. MedStar NRH already has one of the nation’s most progressive programs to treat adults and children with neurologic injury and illness. The Network also has a thriving neuroscience research program, leading investigators, and a portfolio of promising research studies. Researchers and clinicians with MedStar NRH are among the most recognized experts in one of medicine’s most exciting and fast-changing fields.

Learn more about the Victory Awards® Gala through the years at MedStarNRH.org/gala.

JOIN THE CELEBRATION

Single tickets are available or donors may sponsor a table at the 30th Anniversary Gala. For tickets—or sponsorship information—contact Emily Riffle, VP, Philanthropy, at 202-877-1784 or Emily.A.Riffle@MedStar.net.

Photos: Herman Farrer, Theo Kossenas
The Super H 5K Run, Walk & Wheel Rolls on to Victory!

In late September, more than 250 participants donned their bright new Super H t-shirts and gathered under sunny skies at Sport and Health Club in McLean, Virginia (Tysons Corner), for the 12th annual Super H 5K Run, Walk & Wheel. Proceeds allow MedStar NRH to host regular clinics that open the world of sports to individuals with disabilities. Super H was created by Harry (Super H) and Renie Freedman after Harry had a serious workplace accident which required the amputation of his leg. Harry and Renie have been dedicated to raising money for MedStar NRH’s Adaptive Sports programs. It has become their mission to share with others the same kind of encouragement and support that Harry had received.

The race has raised more than a quarter of a million dollars since 2003 to benefit the Washington Paralympic Sports Club and the D.C. Chapter of BlazeSports America, MedStar NRH’s community-based adaptive sports programs for children and adults with physical disabilities. Proceeds enable the MedStar NRH teams to host regular clinics and compete in tournaments. Some Team Members are among the nation’s elite adaptive sports athletes, competing in the Paralympic games.

Check out MedStar NRH adaptive sports teams at MedStarNRH.org.

Results Super H 2015
- **First in Run:** Andrew Merritt
- **First in Handcycle:** Anthony Caparellam
- **First in Wheelchair:** Eric Rode

Thanks TO OUR SUPER H 5K SPONSORS:
- Presenting Sponsor: Volkswagen
- Transcend Sponsor: Darren Star
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- Corporation: Orthotic Prosthetic Center, Inc., Sunrise Medical, United Seating & Mobility LLC, Washington Express
- Food Sponsors: Gregorio’s, Neyla
- Facility Sponsor: Sport and Health
- Music: Timmie Metz Band

Little Girl, Big Heart, Big Results

Eight-year-old Hannah Diamond is a bundle of energy. Despite the physical challenges that come with an orthopedic condition she has had since birth, Hannah is in perpetual motion—at the sled hockey ice rink, downhill skiing with her family—and in her latest passion—handcycling.

In September, the whole Diamond family joined Hannah for her inaugural Super H. Sisters 13-year-old Mairav and 10-year-old Amalia ran alongside Hannah. But participating was only part of the adventure for this precocious little girl—she raised a whopping $5,000 to support the MedStar NRH Adaptive Sports Program in just two days!

Hannah’s mom Shari says her daughter’s enthusiasm for life is contagious. “She is tough and smart and she has never let her health issues—including 18 surgeries—stop her,” says Shari.

Despite Hannah’s physical activities, Shari and husband Robbie understand that there are some roadblocks to these type of activities during summer vacation for kids like Hannah.

“There aren’t any summer day camps for children with some physical limitations,” Shari explains. “So we began talking to MedStar NRH about starting one. It’s just a germ of an idea, but with Hannah’s fundraising skills, I think we can turn this dream into a reality.”
Sports Medicine Rehabilitation for the Pro in All of Us

The Washington, D.C., and Baltimore, region is filled with sports fanatics of every description—from sideline fans and weekend warriors to collegiate and professional athletes. Increasingly the people in charge of keeping them fit, preventing injuries and treating injuries are part of the comprehensive MedStar Health Sports Medicine program. It’s an ever-expanding service line comprised of a multidisciplinary team of experts—with MedStar NRH Rehabilitation Network sports rehabilitation specialists as an essential component.

“We think it is important to look at sports medicine in a broad context,” says John Brickley, PT, vice president of ambulatory operations and network development. “It’s not simply a service for elite athletes, but a specialty that can benefit any active person.

“Across the region, our multidisciplinary team of rehabilitation sports medicine experts are serving a diverse group of athletes—those with physical challenges, weekend warriors, and serious high school, collegiate and professional athletes,” he adds. “We continue to grow to increase access to this high level of care to more members of our community,” he adds.

“Our team of more than 75 clinicians include sports medicine rehabilitation physicians, primary care sports medicine physicians, sports physical therapists, and certified athletic trainers working closely with orthopedic surgeons and neurosurgeons to provide one-stop shopping for all athletes and active individuals. A range of services is covered including: therapists on the sidelines; on-site intervention; screening; diagnosis; treatment; therapy; athletic training; performance enhancement; and injury prevention services,” he adds.

Sports rehabilitation is critical to this continuum of care. “Physiatry is a unique specialty within sports medicine,” explains Jason De Luigi, DO, director of sports medicine with the MedStar NRH Rehabilitation Network. “We’re the experts in musculoskeletal rehabilitation and our goal is always to help patients reach their optimal functional abilities. For athletes, that means returning them to the sport, and improving their overall performance.”

Next steps for the program? A comprehensive Athletic Performance Enhancement Center will open in downtown Washington, D.C.’s Lafayette Center to support athletes of all kinds.

Here’s a brief look at the many aspects of the MedStar NRH Rehabilitation Network Sports Medicine program.

ON CAMPUS AND ON THE SIDELINES

With the recent addition of Towson, Loyola and Georgetown Universities, MedStar NRH is now providing sports medicine rehabilitation services to 16 area colleges and 31 high schools.

At Loyola University’s newly-established program, on-site physical therapy is giving student athletes convenient access to services to help them bounce back from injury. “Two therapists are providing services on campus, five-days-a-week,” explains Al Anglada, PT, clinic director, MedStar NRH at MedStar Good Samaritan Hospital.

Photos by Susan J. Clark, Herman Farrer and James Kegley.
“We offer morning and afternoon hours so students can come in before, in between or after classes. These athletes are young, motivated and anxious to get past an injury and playing again,” he says. “With on-campus services, we can provide seamless sports medicine care, working closely with the coaches, providing immediate therapy services—and when needed—treatment from the team docs, who are our MedStar Health colleagues serving the Baltimore area.”

Down the road at Towson University, another Division I school, Steve Frantz, PT, clinic director for the MedStar NRH Rehabilitation Network, Lutherville, Maryland outpatient center, is working with athletic trainers and providing physical therapy to team and club athletes.

“In the first, busy months of training and play, we have been taking care of football players with torn ACLs [anterior cruciate ligaments], torn labrum cartilage in the shoulder and one student who had back surgery,” he says.

“Physical therapy is provided right in the training room, which is a great convenience for students, who may have difficulty getting to an off-site therapy center.”

Georgetown University athletes have long benefitted from a strong MedStar Health Sports Medicine team, providing primary and surgical care. Now Scott Epsley, PT, MedStar NRH director of professional, collegiate clinical sports therapy, has joined the team. He is on-site to provide a scope of services, including sports performance enhancement, injury treatment and post-operative therapy services.

“I perform triage for the Hoyas athletic trainers and provide all the therapy services for players,” Epsley says. “I also work with pro teams in town—and the approach to therapy and injury prevention is the same no matter the client. It’s all about getting them well, and doing what we can to improve how they play the game.”

CARING FOR THE PROS

The MedStar Sports Medicine experts serve as the official medical partner for five professional sports teams in the region with MedStar NRH sports, medicine physiatrists providing the critical rehabilitation part of the program.

Jason De Luigi, DO, serves as head team physician for the Washington Wizards, the Washington Mystics, and the Washington Spirit Women’s Pro Soccer team. He says a physiatrist’s education and experience in the diagnosis and treatment of musculoskeletal disorders is the linchpin of sports medicine.

“Our ability to provide thorough multisystem assessments of injuries is pivotal to developing the right therapies to promote recovery,” he says. “We put an emphasis on healing injury and on developing strategies to prevent a recurrence of injury,” Dr. De Luigi explains.

He and his colleague Bryan Murtaugh, MD, are on the sidelines during games—and in the locker room working with coaches and trainers. “We are on hand when an injury occurs—and throughout the rehabilitation process,” he adds.

Dr. De Luigi, who also serves as the team physician for Olympians on the U.S. Adaptive Alpine Ski Team, says physiatrists bring another important level of knowledge to the care of adaptive athletes who are at greater risk of some kinds of health issues because of their disability.

“Rehabilitation physicians are trained to treat patients who have experienced a disabling illness or injury. That knowledge is important in caring for para-athletes and to helping prevent complications. We also can recommend the right adaptive equipment to ensure they perform at their very best.”

EXPANDING ROLE OF ATHLETIC TRAINERS

Thirty full-time MedStar NRH certified athletic trainers (ATCs) are also an important part of the sports rehab care continuum, providing services to athletes throughout the Washington, D.C., and Baltimore region.

Kimberly Bosley, LATC, CCS, MedStar Sports Medicine’s director of athletic training services, explains that their roles vary from site to site. “Sometimes we work side-by-side with physical therapists. In other instances, we serve as sports medicine physician extenders.”

Continued on page 10.
We are in the community, on-site at races, in high schools, on college campuses, on the sidelines of club sports, or working with professional teams."

Most ATCs have undergraduate degrees in athletic training, and all have received certification from the National Athletic Trainers Association. "We are health care professionals licensed to take medical histories and trained to order tests and make diagnoses," Bosley explains.

"And we’re trained to serve the broad range of athletes—from weekend warriors to pros; from young people to seniors. One Saturday I’m on the sidelines of a flag football game—and then I’m working with the Baltimore Ravens cheer and dance team."

**TRAINING SPORTS PHYSICAL THERAPISTS**

A newly developed residency program in sports physical therapy at MedStar NRH is providing advanced clinical training to licensed physical therapists. "The 18-month program offers an unparalleled diversity of experiences," says Michele Vita, DPT, OCS, MedStar NRH assistant vice president, ambulatory operations, and director of the residency program.

"Residents will receive substantial patient interaction, sideline experience, conduct research, and be mentored by experienced sports physical therapists," she says.

"Our sports medicine program is extensively far-reaching and serves every variety of athlete from the weekend warrior to the adaptive athlete to the professional level. No other program in the nation offers this kind of depth and diversity in training," Vita adds. "Residents spend six months in three different locations, concentrating on three different venues with multiple mentoring opportunities and exposure to a varied patient population."

Curriculum development, although always evolving, has been set and awaiting accreditation, and Vita says, "We have successfully graduated seven candidates through the program who went on to earn their Sports Specialist Certification. Currently we have one resident in the program and plan to increase the number to three next round."

**KEEPING RUNNERS ON THE MOVE**

At a dozen outpatient locations around the region, MedStar NRH sports medicine therapists are helping runners recover from injury and get back to the road or on the track.

"Our Running Injury Clinics are staffed by specially trained physical therapists who are runners themselves," says Josh Billings, PT, MedStar NRH Network regional director. "They understand the complex biomechanics involved in running—and about the treatment of runner’s injuries. We treat everything from common knee pain to stress fractures—and the casual weekend runner—to ultramarathoners."

Sophisticated video motion analysis allows therapists to review the runner’s head-to-toe biomechanics—critical information about posture, strength and flexibility that can leave runners open to re-injury.

An individualized exercise program is developed to target any problems. "We work on weakness, tightness and muscle imbalances. For example, if we notice a weak hip, we will concentrate on improving muscle strength."

"Runners want to get moving—often too quickly after injury," says Billings. "So we incorporate cross training and use the AlterG Anti-Gravity treadmill to get them moving, gradually and safely. The AlterG decreases the force of impact. We gradually increase the force over time as the injury heals," he adds.

In addition to providing services at outpatient centers, these therapists are on-site at races, working with cross-country runners at area schools, and offering running clinics to the public.

**BREAKING GROUND IN ADAPTIVE SPORTS**

Since 1986, MedStar NRH has been on the ground floor of the movement to provide sports opportunities to people with disabling conditions. Today it’s a regional hub for adaptive sports for children and adults, serving as the area’s Paralympic Sports club—a network of community-based programs that provides adaptive sports and physical activity and a pathway to national and international Paralympic competition.

MedStar NRH is also a partner with the D.C. Veterans Administration Medical Center to provide handcycling experience and training for their patients. MedStar NRH’s latest offering is the outpatient adaptive exercise program—the only one-of-its-kind in the region to provide circuit training and boxing based fitness to people with physical disabilities.

*Learn more about the MedStar NRH Sports Medicine Program at MedStarNRH.org/our-services.*
Multispecialty Spine Care in Single Location—

New MedStar Health Spine Center at Chevy Chase Opens

In August, the doors opened on the new MedStar Health Spine Center in Chevy Chase, Maryland—the area’s first and only multidisciplinary center for people suffering back and neck pain. The center’s staff of MedStar NRH Rehabilitation Network physiatrists and physical therapists, and neurosurgeons and orthopedic spine surgeons from MedStar Georgetown University Hospital work collaboratively to provide comprehensive evaluation and treatment for spinal problems—from common back pain to complex birth deformities.

A team of highly skilled and experienced spine experts have been gathered together in a single location, on the same floor as the MedStar Health Ambulatory Care Center. This gives patients convenient access to an array of services and a diverse team of medical specialists.

Streamlined Care

“We’ve developed a streamlined process that speeds delivery of comprehensive surgical and non-surgical spine care,” says Bobby Kalantar, MD, associate professor of spinal surgery at MedStar Georgetown and co-director of the center. He and MedStar Georgetown Neuro-spine Surgeon and Co-Director Faheem Sandhu, MD, PhD, have developed the care model for the center, which emphasizes collaboration between sub-specialty surgeons, rehabilitation physicians and physical therapists on-site.

“We’ve developed a triage system using trained individuals who respond to phone inquiries by patients and referring physicians,” Edwin Numsuwan, MD, MedStar NRH Interventional spine expert and on-site physiatrist. “An algorithm of questions helps to ensure that a patient’s first visit is with the most appropriate physician.”

“The central scheduling system, the fact that our offices are next to one another—and [that] a consult can occur by walking down the hall—just makes sense for patients,” says Dr. Kalantar.

Collaborative Partnership

In addition to providing easy access to a variety of medical and surgical specialists, the center also provides imaging services and state-of-the-art interventional spine injections all in the same location.

“Patients for whom physical therapy is the best treatment option—and those who require therapy after surgery—can receive their PT evaluation at the center, and their follow-up sessions at any one of the 50-plus MedStar NRH outpatient locations,” explains John Brickley, vice president for ambulatory operations & network development. “And no matter which center they utilize, their spine physician will continue to follow their care.”

“Treatment is evidence-based and focused on improving patients’ quality of life,” Dr. Numsuwan adds. “Spinal pain is one of the most common reasons for a visit to the doctor—second only to the common cold. We think the system we have developed helps to cut down on unnecessary doctor’s visits—and will ultimately improve patient outcomes.”

In addition, psychology services will also be part of the new Spine Center. Philip Appel, PhD, director of psychology and neuropsychology services for MedStar NRH Rehabilitation Network, says the center will be using an integrative philosophy of care, and dealing with the whole person. “We focus on patients’ medical conditions, but we also help patients adjust to their condition and live fully despite of their pain and disability,” he says.
New VW Goes GEICO Green, Ready for Therapy

Team members and donors gathered in MedStar NRH’s unique Independence Square occupational therapy space as John Rockwood, president of MedStar NRH, senior VP of MedStar Health, officially “cut the ribbon” to welcome the brand new VW Passat Demonstration Car—a generous gift from GEICO and Volkswagen Group of America.

The Passat’s decorative wrapping features GEICO Geckos, VW keys and each company's logo. The stationary vehicle is designed to help patients recovering from a variety of disabling injuries and illnesses, such as stroke, brain injury, spinal cord and orthopedic injuries, learn to safely transfer in and out of a car.

“This generous gift helps our patients relearn skills that promote improved motor function and independence, and those skills learned in the hospital setting are immediately transferrable in a community setting,” said Rockwood. “Both VW and GEICO connect with this goal, and understand that for our patients there is no greater independence than being able to travel in a car. We are truly honored that VW and GEICO have chosen to partner with us to make this new training vehicle a reality.”

“We at VW love to get involved in our local community—and helping people get mobile again seems like the perfect fit,” said Thomas Meuser, VW General Manager Fleet & Remarketing.

This is the third demonstration car installed by GEICO, a 30-year supporter of MedStar NRH. “We have been long-time partners with MedStar NRH,” said Gregory Kalinsky, SVP and Chief Information Officer at GEICO and MedStar NRH Board Member. “GEICO is proud to have supported MedStar NRH since its very beginning, and to have played a small part in helping it become one of the nation’s top rehabilitation networks.”