

HealthBeat

SPRING 2021



Brighter Days Ahead

We're all hopeful for brighter days, and at EBCH, we maintain our commitment to the health and safety of our community.

"It has been a stressful year," said **Patti Banks, CEO of EBCH**. "The pandemic consumed our days, leaving less time to focus on projects that excite us—the projects that help us grow as an organization."

Yet even with its challenges, there were bright spots, including a new

partnership with John Bollins, D.O., of Advanced Surgical Associates of Northern Minnesota. Dr. Bollins is a trauma critical care surgeon and general surgeon, and served in Duluth hospitals since 2007. He has advanced skills in both traditional and robotic-assisted surgery.

EBCH is also providing COVID-19 vaccines to the community. For anyone with questions, or is hesitant to get the vaccine, call your primary care provider. He or she can help with any concerns you have.

"As we continue to move toward population immunity, we're proud of the team for vaccinating nearly 1900 patients from our service area," Patti said. "There's more work to do, but it gives us hope that life will soon return to some sort of 'normal.'"

Patti and the EBCH team are eager to move forward and find new opportunities to enhance care in the community. "With that hope of normal in mind, we will use the lessons learned from the pandemic to help us refocus our strategic vision as we move through 2021 and into 2022."

NAVIGATING SPECIALTY CARE IS EASY WITH EBCH

EBCH Offers Coordinated Specialty Care, Close to Home

EBCH offers specialty services, including General Surgery, Podiatry, Urology, and Orthopaedics. And when it comes to navigating these services, Kathy Udovich is the one to call. As the Specialty Clinic Team Leader, she is the point person for connecting patients with our specialists to ensure they get the care they need.

"I coordinate people's appointments with the specialty providers. I schedule them, call the patients, monitor their labs and any imaging they have done," she explained.

"When we have them here with our specialty providers, I coordinate their care and organize the flow for their day."

Beyond simply coordinating patients' visits and helping them navigate their day with the provider, she continues to help after appointments by scheduling follow-ups, getting answers to questions, coordinating with providers outside of EBCH, and even writing thank you notes to patients after their care is complete.

She plays an essential role in helping patients get necessary specialty care to get their health back on track, including these patients who graciously offered to share their experiences.

Our Patients Say it Best!



Patty Omerza

Patty Omerza Surgery Patient

Before she could get a critical surgery in Burnsville, Patty Omerza needed surgery to clear up an infection from a sebaceous cyst—and she needed it quickly. Fortunately, EBCH specialty provider Dr. John Bollins was able to perform the operation she needed.

After meeting with Dr. Bollins on a Thursday, they tentatively planned the cyst removal surgery for the following Thursday or Friday. But Patty was nervous that wouldn't be soon enough.

"Dr. Bollins said that he might be in Ely again on Monday to check on one of his patients, gave me his card, and told me to call if I had concerns or questions. I decided to call and ask if he would be willing to do the surgery Monday at EBCH. He caught

me by surprise when he answered the phone and told me he'd have Kathy work on it," Patty shared.

After some excellent coordination between Kathy and an EBCH surgical nurse, Patty's surgery for Monday got the green light.

"On Monday morning, I headed to the hospital where the excellent staff got me prepped for surgery. Then Dr. Bollins came in, we reviewed the surgery, and they took me in. I woke up a short time later, and the surgery was complete!"

While no one may want to have surgery, for Patty, the procedure was a resounding success.

"Everything from the first appointment with Dr. Bollins was wonderful - they were attentive, understanding of my situation, and efficient. They went above and beyond the call of duty!"



Dr. Sam Harms

Kim Bielawski Orthopaedics Patient



Kim Bielawski is one of our fabulous nurses at EBCH and knows firsthand how valuable the skills of our specialist providers, including orthopaedic surgeon Dr. Sam Harms, are to the community.

"I had a scheduled knee replacement in September

2020 and then, in November, slipped and fell on some ice," she shared. "This required a follow-up surgery, and I was very fortunate to have Dr. Harms do both surgeries."

Before her knee replacement, Kim was receiving care for her knee pain from another provider. But after speaking with many other people who had knee replacements performed by Dr. Harms, she knew he would be a good fit.

"He comes to Ely once a month, and the idea of being able to receive follow-up care right here was very appealing," she explained. "I think a big part of my successful recovery was because he could see me in Ely and worked so well with our therapy team."

Dr. Harms' passionate and skillful care certainly left a lasting impression on Kim.

"It was a great experience! I would definitely go to Dr. Harms for orthopaedics again."



Dr. Katie Evans

Sheila Shultz Podiatry Patient



While breaking an ankle certainly isn't a bucket-list item, Sheila Shultz is grateful that when she broke hers she ended up in the excellent care of podiatry specialist, Dr. Katie Evans.

The bad break led Sheila on a trip to the

EBCH emergency department. Fortunately, with some quick coordination between the ED nurse and Dr. Evan's office,

Sheila was able to have needed surgery that same day.

"I was so happy with how everything went," she gushed. "Dr. Evans made everything so easy. I had to have plates and a pin put in, but she explained everything beforehand and made it a much calmer experience."

After the successful surgery, Sheila was back home the very same day. Dr. Evans came right to EBCH for Sheila's follow-up care and helped facilitate her physical therapy, making sure Sheila's recovery went well.

"Dr. Evans was just fantastic! She turned a surgery into a positive, calming experience. I would recommend her to anyone!"



Don Ingerson

Don Ingerson Urology Patient



Surgery to remove a kidney stone by our urology specialist, Dr. Nick Johnson, turned into a blessing in disguise for Don Ingerson.

After scar tissue from radiation to treat prostate cancer led to a torn urethra during the kidney stone

removal, Dr. Johnson had to perform an additional procedure on Don to let the urethra heal. And that's where the blessing comes in.

"During that second procedure, Dr. Johnson found a small spot of bladder cancer," Don shared. "So right then, he was able to remove the cancerous spot—and I'm still cancer-free. I know God sent Dr. Johnson to me!"

With each surgery Dr. Johnson performed, Don has been beyond grateful for his good work. Going forward he will have an annual check-in with Dr. Johnson to confirm neither his bladder or prostate cancer has returned. And, as of right now, he has been given a clean bill of health.

"I trust Dr. Johnson completely, and I would recommend him to anyone," Don said. "I truly believe it was God working through Dr. Johnson. He was and is such a blessing in my life."



COMMUNITY CARE:

EBCH Pharmacy & Ely Community Pharmacy Help Coordinate Local Vaccine Distribution

Now more than a year into life with the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, there is reason for hope—the greater level of immunity to the disease thanks to the distribution of vaccinations.

EBCH Pharmacy and Ely Community Pharmacy were honored to help coordinate vaccination clinics and ensure people had access to the COVID-19 vaccines as soon as they were available. And with the Pfizer vaccine now approved for children ages 12-15, we are thrilled to continue to support their distribution.

Chris Schneider, hospital pharmacist, explained that coordinating the clinics included, "Getting vaccination supplies

and also the vaccines themselves, the sign-up lists, finding different places to hold clinics, setting up the clinics, preparing the vaccines for administration, and also administering the vaccines."

Initially, there were two vaccine clinics available at the **Grand Ely Lodge** and **Vermilion Community College**. EBCH pharmacy worked tirelessly to ensure both clinics ran smoothly and were easy to access. And now we are coordinating with **Ely Memorial High School** to provide a clinic for eligible students.

Each clinic had a limited number of time slots available, and

John Schindele, EBCH Hospital Pharmacy Team Lead, said they filled up quickly—a good sign for the community.

"Turnout was great. Our sign-up lists filled quite fast," he said. "Our community has been very positive about the vaccine, which shows in that we have, to date, vaccinated nearly 1900 individuals in the communities of Ely, Tower, and Babbitt."

With the newest vaccine clinics at **Ely Memorial High School**, EBCH is happy to work with a dedicated and talented team of individuals to help bring a sense of normalcy back to our community.



We're thrilled at the hard work of the EBCH pharmacists and all who've come together to help with COVID-19 vaccine distribution. Their efforts help keep our community safe and healthy while providing hope for a more "normal" future ahead.

"This has been no small effort on our part to get individuals vaccinated. We have spent a great deal of time between planning meetings, phone calls, sign-ups, and vaccination clinics. This effort has also been aided by our many community volunteers, Essentia Health - Ely Clinic, Ely Area Ambulance Service, Grand Ely Lodge, VCC, and VCC law enforcement students."