



St. Luke Vaccine Stories

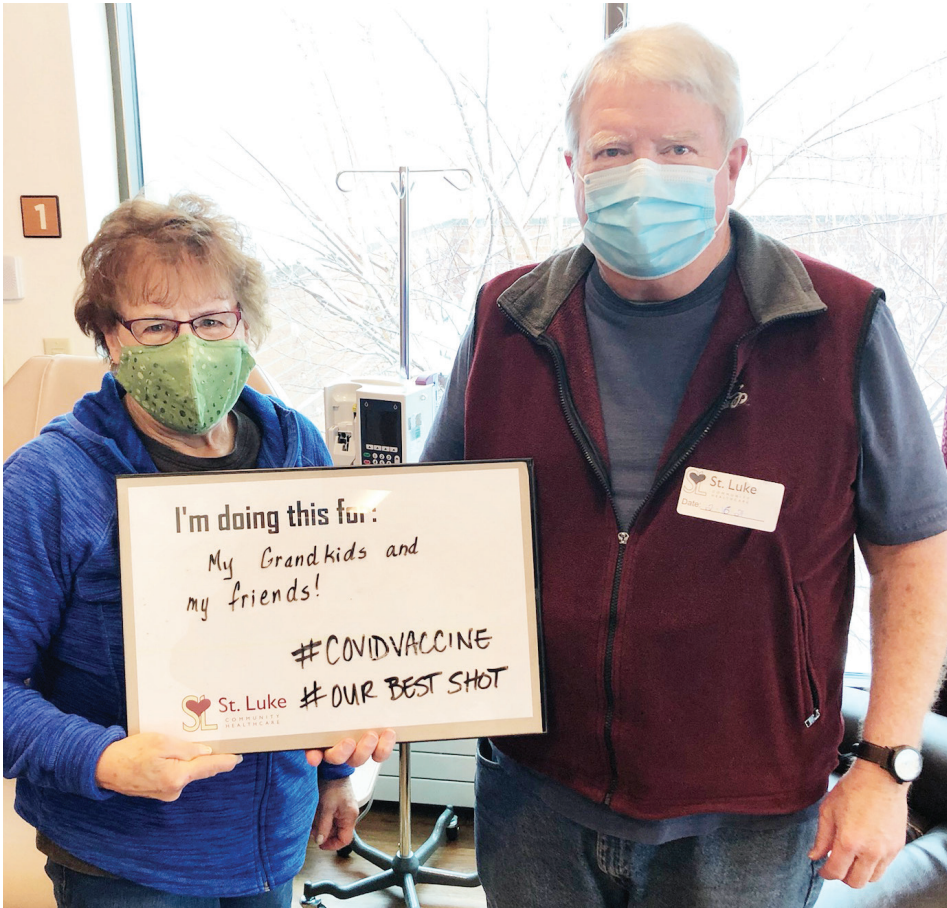
GETTING IT DONE. THAT’S WHAT THE TEAM AT ST. LUKE COMMUNITY HEALTHCARE IS DOING. Each week, they vaccinate hundreds of people as they administer primarily the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine. According to Dr. Tyler Thorson, family physician and obstetrician at St. Luke Southshore Clinic in Polson, the first vaccine shot provides 70-80 percent immunization and the second provides 97-98 percent immunization from severe COVID disease. St. Luke delivers all of the vaccines they receive.

At six months out, the vaccines have been shown to be 91 percent effective at providing immunity. It is not known at this point if vaccines will be a one-time event or if boosters will be required.

For those who have had COVID, natural immunity appears to last 3-6 months and it is possible to get re-infected with the virus.

“Vaccines do not inject infectious material but rather a part of the virus that creates a blueprint for how to make antibodies,” said Dr. Thorson. The vaccines do not cause anyone to get the virus.

Most individuals have little or no side effects, other than a possible sore arm.



ST. LUKE PHOTO

Marilyn and Phil Grainey of Ronan share their “why” for getting the COVID-19 vaccine.

Some have experienced flu-like symptoms for 24 to 48 hours. Those who have had the COVID virus may experience a slightly stronger reaction to the vaccine. This is a sign that antibodies are working.

Local residents Joe and Cynthia Yates chose to get their COVID-19 vaccine both for themselves and for others. Joe has

been fighting a serious medical battle and Cynthia wanted to stand beside him and help protect him. She is also committed to protecting those she doesn’t know, saying she feels getting a COVID-19 vaccine is her moral responsibility. Joe is excited to

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RETURNING TO NORMAL

THE AIR CERTAINLY SEEMS A LOT FRESHER THESE DAYS, especially when I have my mask off. Fortunately, I’ve been able to experience that a lot more in the last several weeks. We’ll continue, at St. Luke, to wear masks in our public and patient care areas, at least for a little while. I do see a future where our caregivers and patients can truly be face to face, without masks. In private settings, with small groups, our vaccinated staff are able to take their masks off and enjoy seeing each other. On a personal level, I’ve been able to socialize with small groups of friends. And I can’t overstate how refreshing it is to see our youth involved in outdoor spring sports (yes, even if we have to wear our winter gear). It is truly a breath of fresh air to see faces again. In the meantime, I’ll continue to follow the CDC’s recommendations, wearing my mask indoors in public spaces like the grocery store.

I have asked our clinical and department leaders to map a plan for a return to normal. While I do not know how long it will take, we should make it our goal to get there. You can help by remaining careful, committed, and by getting vaccinated.

It has been a long and challenging 14 months and the light at the end of the tunnel appears to be growing larger and larger by the day. In reflection, first and foremost, I am so proud and honored to work alongside true health care heroes, our physicians and staff, who rose to the challenge each and every day and put themselves at risk for the betterment of our community. Times are not as tough as they were, and our tough team has not only survived, but in most cases it has thrived. But I can’t say we haven’t been impacted, like many members of our community it has been a long and difficult time.

Recently, I participated in a Montana Hospital Association



virtual training that discussed the impact of Covid on healthcare workers and the resulting burnout, fatigue and depression. The presenter shared findings from a recent research study indicating that people can make significant improvements in these areas by applying the practice of gratitude. The practice of gratitude, in this study, followed a method called “Three Good Things” (3GT). To summarize, by simply writing down three good things, three things that you are grateful for, prior to going to sleep each night, participants saw marked improvement in levels of burnout,

fatigue and depression. I would urge all of us to try and implement the 3GT method.

It is great to see the continued decrease in Covid infections. Let’s help keep the improvement going. Vaccine options are available and remain safe for all community members. Talk to your physician if you have questions. For the majority of people that I speak to that have had Covid, they would have much preferred to have had the vaccine then to endure Covid and some of the lasting problems associated with the illness. At

St. Luke we have the Moderna vaccines which are available to those 18 years of age and older. You can get scheduled for a vaccine at St. Luke by visiting our website at www.stlukehealthcare.org or by calling our scheduling hotline at (406) 528-5331.

Please ensure you make time to take care of your own physical and mental health and wellbeing. Schedule an appointment today with your primary care physician. If you don’t have one, get one. If you have a significant other, encourage them to make an appointment too. For your child, make sure and schedule a well child check. It is time to get back to the things that we’ve been putting off.

Steve

“The amount of knowledge I gained was priceless.”

- Austin Taylor, past internship program participant

Internship program offers high school students hands-on experience

IN 2018, ST. LUKE WAS PRESENTED WITH THE OPPORTUNITY TO partner with Western Montana’s Area Health Education Center (AHEC) to launch an internship program that would promote health care careers for high school students while addressing growing demand for healthcare professionals in the state of Montana. After approaching Ronan High School, who was in full support of a partnership, the Med-Ahead High School Internship was born. The overarching goal of the internship is to foster a love of learning through hands-on experience in healthcare. Young people are of course encouraged to come back to Montana after training, where their education and talents will be fully utilized.

Three years after its inception, the internship program is going strong, despite the challenges of a global pandemic. At the start of the 2020–21 academic year, St. Luke accepted six of Ronan High School’s best and brightest students who were interested in learning more about careers in healthcare.

Students move from one department to another every two weeks learning both the clinical and business aspects of hospital work. Each hospital department creates learning objectives with corresponding activities for students. While students are encouraged to try everything, St. Luke allows them to spend extra time in the departments they are most interested in. Student involvement can include taking a patient’s blood pressure or, with the permission of surgeons and patients, students have observed ACL repairs

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"I'll do whatever I need to, to help protect other people."

- Jay Sumner, Lake County resident

vaccines (from page 1)

travel to see his grandchildren and plans to continue wearing a mask until more is known. "I'm not going to bellyache," he said. "It's a small thing and it's the right thing. The only downside is it fogs up my glasses sometimes."

It's expected that by the end of May nearly 50 percent of Lake County will have been vaccinated, making us one of the counties with the highest rate of vaccination. Dr. Thorson said that "herd immunity" requires 70 to 80 percent of the population to be vaccinated before the virus no longer has a place to live.

Most disease transmission has occurred through asymptomatic transmission, meaning those without

symptoms who carry the virus are the ones transmitting it to others. Getting vaccinated safeguards against inadvertently passing the virus on to others.

Another local resident, Jay Sumner, chose to get his COVID-19 vaccine to help curb the pandemic. He says he wants to protect himself and others from getting sick and that his vaccine experience has been, "really positive." "The people are great, and I didn't feel a thing," he said. Jay plans to continue his usual prevention measures, such as masking and physical distancing. "I'll do whatever I need to, to help protect other people."

Dr. Thorson along with Dr. Megan Vigil provide information via video about the COVID vaccines and virus on St. Luke's facebook

page. They are working to debunk the myths circulating about COVID vaccines and encourage those wanting more information to go to the FDA website.

Dr. Thorson also recommends the CDC and the World Health Organization as well as John Hopkins University, Stanford University and Harvard University for their good research information. He said since the virus is mutating and evolving, these resources can supply the most trusted and current information. Those sources, along with a discussion with your healthcare provider, will give you the best information available at the time.

Right: Roy Bilile shares his reason for getting the COVID-19 vaccine.



ST. LUKE PHOTO

Well-child exams important throughout childhood

WELL CHILD CHECKS HAPPEN ALL YEAR LONG, but soon student athletes will need to make a point to get in so they're ready for next school year. Well child checks begin at birth, then occur again at two weeks and one month. They then continue every two months until a child is six months old, then again at 9 months and one year. After the first year, children generally receive a well child check every six months until they are three years old and then annually from there.

Young children can be prepared for well-child appointments using their favorite stuffed animals and through role-playing. A promised reward after a check-up can help make appointments something to look forward to and managed happily.

During well child checks, children are monitored for growth in weight, height, and other developmental milestones such as age-appropriate motor skills, and phonation-speech-vocabulary. Physicians also inquire about and educate parents and children about the importance of dental care, well-balanced eating habits, healthy bathroom practices/behaviors, and the very important issue of sleep quality. According to Dr. Megan Vigil, a family medicine and obstetrics physician, "(St. Luke) is almost to gold certification for Safe Sleep Hospital Certification." This is the highest certification for hospital programs that model and teach infant safe sleep best practices that protect babies from sleep-related deaths.

Your child's physician will also address many safety issues important to children. These topics may include: the use of helmets, seatbelts or car seats, life vests, sunscreen, whether there are any smokers in the house/car, and if the home has working carbon monoxide and smoke detectors.

Well child checks, including those that include a sports physical for student athletes, are especially important in the tweens and teenage years. Unless they are ill, this age group often doesn't visit the doctor. Important information about children's physical and social-emotional well-being can be reviewed and discussed during well child checks. Physicians can ascertain if children are feeling bullied or pressured to engage in risky behaviors such as smoking, vaping, nonconsensual sex, or alcohol and/or drug use. Routine well child checks with sports physicals can reveal potential issues that might preclude children from certain activities and also help doctors by keeping a history of injuries.

Scheduling regular well child checks also means children are getting to know their doctor. This can be important because children who build a trusting relationship with their doctor are more likely to go to them as they mature, for help and information about health concerns.



SUMMER GODDARD / VALLEY JOURNAL

Dr. Megan Vigil offers a book to her young patient, Peter, during a well-child exam.

HEALTH WATCH

For those experiencing suicidal thoughts, or know someone who is,
please reach out.

1-800-273-8255 / Text MT to 741-741

SuicidePreventionLifeline.org

FOUNDATION **NEWS:** live, virtual options being planned for 2021 fundraiser

By Teresa Nygaard, St. Luke Foundation Director

SPRING IS HERE AND THE FOUNDATION IS ALREADY GEARING UP FOR OUR 2021 FALL DINNER/AUCTION EVENT. We are so hopeful that we will be able to gather safely this fall that we are planning a hybrid event, with a sit down dinner and auction plus a virtual auction component to boot! (There's a hint about our theme.) Our 2020 Virtual Auction was well received by longtime supporters, a

hit with our employees and garnered a great number of new supporters in the process. We couldn't have been more pleased with how well the event went and just how much overall support we received from the community. It's because of this that we wanted to continue to offer a virtual component for



Teresa Nygaard

everyone who is not able to join us in person.

Our Board and the committee members will be spending the next few months gathering donations, securing sponsorships and putting together another amazing fundraising event that our whole community will benefit from.

Please reach out to Teresa Nygaard in the Foundation office if you would like to help in any way or if you have questions. Teresa can be reached at tnygaard@stlukehealthcare.org or 406-528-5324.

Total knee replacement helps local senior get back to her active lifestyle

FAY ADDINGTON IS 83 YEARS YOUNG. Her knees however, weren’t feeling so young. She said, “All the jobs I’ve had since I was 17 or 18 years old have had me on my feet. I was a checker and a teller. They were worn out.”

She and her physician, Dr. Adrian Davis, worked together for two years, giving it a good “college try,” but in the end her knees kept deteriorating so she opted for surgery.

According to Dr. Davis, Fay had osteoarthritis, a degenerative joint disease, in her knee. A total knee replacement surgery, he explained, involves removing surfaces of bone at the knee joint and replacing them with metal and plastic components.

The typical age range for a knee replacement surgery is 60-80 years, Dr. Davis said. A good result, he added, will last about 20 years.

Though the prosthetic is stable enough to walk on right away, recovery time is typically around 3 months. Fay reported feeling better much sooner than that. After surgery, “I felt really good and had no trouble at all. They had the neatest icepack put on my knee. I just did not hurt except for a bit uncomfortable where the incision was.” She took no pain pills except for the anti-inflammatory, Tylenol.

“The rehabilitation people had me up and standing on it 24 hours later,” she said.

She went on to say, “I was so pleased with Dr. Davis. Everyone was so good ... the nurses, the doctors. Even the food was great. I have no complaints.” Fay said both the daytime and overnight staff took equally good care of her.

Since she had no one at home to take care of her, Fay’s stay in the hospital lasted 10 days. During that time she was in a “swing” bed and participated in physical rehabilitation and therapy. Physical therapy at Ridgewater Physical Therapy Clinic followed for another six to eight weeks. Fay said, “I loved going to physical therapy because they were so much fun. Kyo is great ... they were all so good.”

Laughing, Fay said, “This wasn’t my first rodeo. I’ve had two hip replacements and back surgery. This was the best and easier than my hips. I’d recommend it to anyone. You have to have the right doctor. Dr. Davis is really nice. I have such praise for him and his physician’s assistant, Rob Alfiero. They treated me like a queen.”

Fay lives a very active life with her children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren. She is pleased to resume her active life, more comfortably, with her new knee.

“I’d recommend it to anyone... They treated me like a queen.”

- Fay Addington, St. Luke patient

The overarching goal of the internship is to foster a love of learning through hands-on experience in healthcare.



Alana



Madeline



Katie



Justice



Makaila

Internship program

(from page 1)

and foot surgeries. If a student expresses an interest in a particular field of medicine, the program makes a special effort to provide an experience in that area. At the end of the semester, students select an area to spend their final three to four weeks in.

This year’s COVID pandemic has led to inevitable quarantines following exposures and many scheduling changes. Even at that, students continued with hands-on experiences via virtual online experiences. One virtual activity allowed students to work from home on a “quality improvement” tool by creating a survey regarding vaccine hesitancy. Students wrote reports based on their collected responses providing information about how vaccine information might better be explained.

Currently, based primarily on logistic concerns, only Ronan High School students participate in the program. According to St. Luke’s Chief Operating Officer, Sarah Teaff, “(St. Luke) would love to take other students ... and are open to conversations” with other schools. School curriculums would need to be developed and travel arrangements made, but thanks to a robot on wheels, provided through a grant from AHEC in Missoula, a virtual learning experience may offer another option. The robot, which is yet unnamed, has the ability to follow a nurse or other hospital employee as they go about their work, providing a virtual job shadow for students.

Past program participants enthusiastically praise their experiences at St. Luke. Austin Taylor said, “This internship helped me decide what part of healthcare I wanted to work in and gave me valuable experience to start working towards the career

of a nurse anesthetist. I was able to observe surgeries and learn firsthand what a nurse anesthetist’s job is like and the importance of it. The amount of knowledge I gained was priceless.”

Sacorra Reum, a current sophomore at the University of Nevada in Las Vegas, remarked that the program “... allowed me to distinguish what part of healthcare I wanted to start a career in ... healthcare administration ... it also helped me realize the importance of healthcare. This industry is ever changing and evolving, and the internship helped me see within myself that I can be a part of that change.”

For more information about the St. Luke internship program, contact Heather Grey at Ronan High School or email Sara Teaff at: steaff@stlukehealthcare.org

Photos above are of this year’s students. Madison Miller was also accepted, but is not pictured.

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EMPLOYEE OF THE QUARTER

Quarter 2: Sandra Smith, Dietary

SANDRA IS ALWAYS FRIENDLY AND HELPFUL. Even during the busiest times in the cafeteria, she makes time to smile and greet her co-workers. Sandy can always be seen working hard, keeping the cafeteria clean, inviting, and well-stocked. She is an excellent example of a great St. Luke employee!





Historic photo of the Thronson family store in Babb, Montana

ECF PROFILE: Ruth ‘Louise’ Thronson

RUTH “LOUISE” THRONSON WAS BORN ON MARCH 27, 1932 IN TUCSON, ARIZONA. She had a difficult childhood at times, with no siblings and her father passing when she was just 10. Louise and her mother made their own way through life and as a result, Louise grew up to be resilient, independent, and incredibly frugal – traits that would serve her well down the road, as luck would have it. Louise went on to attend the University of Arizona, where she studied Elementary Education. While there, she met a quiet but adventurous man named Harvey, who had traveled from the far northern state of Montana to study Civil Engineering. The couple married in 1952 and moved to LA, where Louise briefly taught school.

When Harvey brought up the idea to move to Montana to take over the family store, Louise didn’t entirely know what she was signing up for. The “store” was in reality a veritable hub for the small town of Babb, just 8 miles south of the Canadian border. Thronson’s General Store was much more than that. It included a restaurant, post office, auto garage, and motel! Babb itself was a bit of a shock, as Louise had to adjust to the harsh, lonely winters and the rushed summers, packed with travelers, but she and Harvey took on the challenge together. Harvey served as the postmaster and Louise kept all aspects of the day-to-day operations running like a well-oiled machine. Friends and family can remember her regularly pressing bedsheets with a large, hot piece of equipment called a “mangle” iron...with a deftness that only comes with time and a few burned fingertips.

Their children – Michael, Karen, Patrick and Karla – had an upbringing most children only get to read about, with endless adventures in the wild northernmost part of the state. Two of the children were born in Canada and as a result hold dual citizenship. Their parents would drive them to the Canadian border to attend elementary school, every day. When the kids were older, they attended middle school and high school in Choteau, Montana and the family would commute each week from their home in Babb to Choteau and back. To this day, their son Michael still runs Thronson’s General Store, although it looks a bit different today than it did when Louise first laid eyes on it.

In addition to running a business, Louise enjoyed playing piano, golfing, sewing, cooking, baking, gardening, hiking in Glacier Park, and canning. Her frugal nature helped her stretch and save to care for her family. Her grandchildren recall seeing her wash and reuse tin foil and freeze sweet potato juice for future cooking. She loved roadside picnics and would often pack a cooler of hot dogs, soda pop, and chips for impromptu campfire lunches



Ruth Thronson

when traveling with kids and grandkids. One of Louise’s biggest enjoyments was traveling. When it was their turn to retire, Harvey and Louise moved to Polson, but took yearly trips to Nevada, where they both loved to play the poker machines. It’s still one of her fondest memories, as the couple finally got to kick back and just have fun together after many years of hard work. Louise was active in her communities as well. She played piano and organ for years at the only church in Babb, served as an Officer in the Eastern Star Ladies Civic Club, and volunteered at the Polson Loaves and Fish Food Pantry.

Harvey and Louise moved into St. Luke Extended Care Facility (ECF) in 2016, when Harvey needed more medical care. He passed a couple of years later and Louise still speaks lovingly of him, but admits it’s difficult, because she still misses him terribly. Louise was able to reconnect with a golfing buddy at the ECF and enjoys playing games with her fellow residents. Staff describe her as “lively” with a well-intact sense of humor and a passionate love for music. Looking through Louise’s photos, one can easily see her strength and quality of character, which she passed down to her children and grandchildren. A lesson we might learn from Louise? Our greatest challenges in life have a way of preparing us for our greatest adventures, but only if we’re brave enough to apply what we learned. May we all be half as brave as this amazing woman!

NUTRITION CORNER



April is Bowel Awareness Month

By Yakira Bergsman, MSU Dietetic Intern at St. Luke Community Healthcare

THE MONTH OF APRIL IS BOWEL AWARENESS MONTH, BRINGING ATTENTION TO COMMON DISEASES OF THE COLON. Colon cancer, Crohn’s disease, Ulcerative Colitis, and Irritable Bowel Disease (IBD) are examples of conditions thousands of people struggle with each year. This month serves to highlight these conditions, as well as bring awareness to the gut, and review ways to keep the colon healthy.

“Gut health” has become somewhat of a trendy phrase lately, and for good reason. The gut is home to millions of microbes that play a crucial role in human health. These microbes help break down food, absorb nutrients, and influence our immune system. It is essential to maintain a healthy gut for overall health and wellness. Many companies have been releasing new products claiming to aid digestion, many of which contain probiotics.

Probiotics are live microorganisms, otherwise known as the “good” kind of bacteria. They often come in capsule form, though they can be found in whole, fermented foods such as yogurt, kefir, kombucha and kimchi as well. Probiotics are helpful for gut health, as they deliver beneficial bacteria to the intestines. This is especially useful for conditions such as IBD or diarrhea, as a probiotic can improve conditions in the gut, promoting better digestion. In addition to probiotics, prebiotics are another beneficial component to include in your diet for optimal gut health. Prebiotics are a type of fiber that feed the helpful bacteria in the gut (including probiotics). It is most beneficial to consume prebiotics and probiotics together, as they help each other to create a favorable environment. Prebiotics are found in most fruits, vegetables, and whole grains. This includes foods such as apples, bananas, asparagus, wheat, and oats. Aside from eating a variety of prebiotic and probiotic foods, eating a generally balanced diet is a great way to maintain a healthy gut. It is best to eat fresh, whole produce when possible, and avoid overly processed foods. Foods that are packaged are often high in sugar, which can be tough on our gut. Sugar, when eaten in excess, can decrease the amount of beneficial bacteria in the gut, as well as promote inflammation. If you have a food intolerance or allergy, be sure to avoid those foods as well, as eating them can be detrimental to your unique microbiome. Furthermore, be sure to get enough quality sleep and regular exercise. These factors help in reducing stress, which can take a toll on our gut if left unmanaged.

Sources:
<https://www.nccih.nih.gov/health/probiotics-what-you-need-to-know>
<https://www.gutmicrobiotaforhealth.com>
<https://www.eatright.org/food/vitamins-and-supplements/nutrient-rich-foods/prebiotics-and-probiotics-creating-a-healthier-you>



Heart to Heart

www.stlukehealthcare.org

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