

HEALTH MATTERS

Volume 2

A Publication of the Macon County Health Care Authority

Apr-Jun 2025

SAY YES TO A MAMMO!

SCHEDULE YOUR Appointment Today



Breast health just got a major upgrade in Macon County. Medical professionals at the Thomas Reed Medical Center are now performing advanced 3-D mammography with the ASPIRE Cristalle system—designed to improve early detection while making the screening process more comfortable and efficient. This state-of-the-art technology includes a patented Comfort Paddle that reduces pain and anxiety through a flexible, 4-way tilting design for even compression. It also features a Hexagonal Close Pattern (HCP) detector pixel design, which outperforms traditional square pixels by delivering:

- 20% increase in detector sensitivity
- Improved information capture
- Lower patient dose

With its Intelligent Automatic Exposure Control (iAEC), ASPIRE Cristalle creates clearer images at a lower dose—providing radiologists with superior diagnostic accuracy for all breast types, including those with implants.

To schedule your 3-D mammogram, you will need an order from your medical provider and the date and location of your last mammogram.

Appointments are required, call 334.727.5900 to secure your spot for this potentially life-saving procedure.

Medical services at the Thomas Reed building are delivered by professionals with the Tuskegee Medical and Surgical Center, an affiliate of Community Hospital in Tallassee.

Celebrating the Official Launch

Karin Hopkins, Editor-In-Chief HEALTH MATTERS

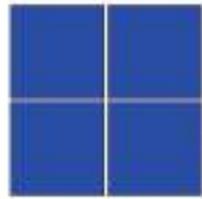
Deborah Ellis, a board member of the Macon County Health Care Authority and a breast cancer survivor, spoke candidly about her experience with early detection and how it changed the course of her life.

“I was busy being everything to everybody—raising two kids, working, being a wife—and I skipped my mammogram,” Ellis said. “When I finally went, they found cancer. If I had waited any longer, I might not be standing here today.”

Now cancer-free, Ellis encourages other women not to put off the screening. “Make the appointment. Take the time. Your life is worth it,” she urged.

Jennie Rhinehart, CEO of Community Hospital in Tallassee, also attended the event and shared that she too is a breast cancer survivor. Her personal journey added another powerful voice to the message of hope concerning life-saving, medical advancements.





Community Hospital



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Visit our website at www.chal.org



Visit us on Facebook: Community Healthcare Resources of Community Hospital

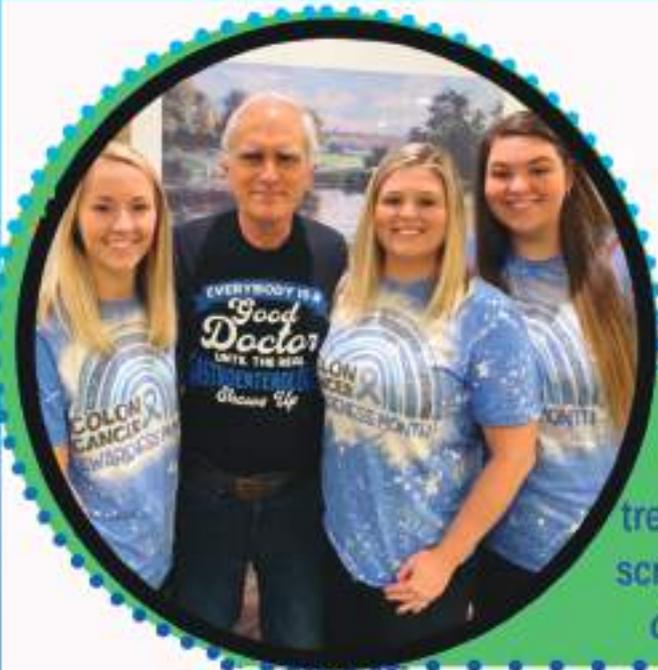
GASTROENTEROLOGY

THOMAS BIANCHI, M.D.P.A.

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TALLASSEE, AL 36078

(334) 283-3862



Colorectal cancer screening is important because it can prevent cancer or identify it early when it may be easier to treat. The American Cancer Society recommends colorectal cancer screening for everyone starting at age 45, though some people with certain risk factors may need to start at a younger age.



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Karin Hopkins
Editor-In-Chief
HEALTH MATTERS
Quarterly Newspaper

Karin Hopkins is a veteran communications professional with a career encompassing television news, corporate communications and digital media. She has used her voice and vision to inform, uplift and connect people. Over the years, she has also built a strong reputation for producing impactful special events and leading community engagement initiatives—skills that allow her to effectively coordinate major projects that fulfill the intended goal.

In 2024, Karin was named Editor-In-Chief of HEALTH MATTERS, the official newspaper of the Macon County Health Care Authority. In this role, she combines her editorial leadership with a passion for community wellness, ensuring that vital health information is communicated on every page.



WHY HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE IS SUCH A SERIOUS HEALTH MATTER

by David Clinkscales, MCHCA Board Member

Understanding and Managing High Blood Pressure

You may not feel it, but high blood pressure—also called hypertension—is serious. Often symptomless, it’s known as a “silent killer” because many people don’t know they have it. Blood pressure measures how hard your blood pushes against artery walls. A reading consistently at or above 130/80 mm Hg is considered high. Normal is below 120/80 mm Hg. Your blood pressure shifts during the day, but consistently high numbers can lead to heart disease, heart attack or stroke. Health care providers use guidelines from the American College of Cardiology (ACC) and American Heart Association (AHA) to diagnose and treat hypertension.

What Increases Your Risk?

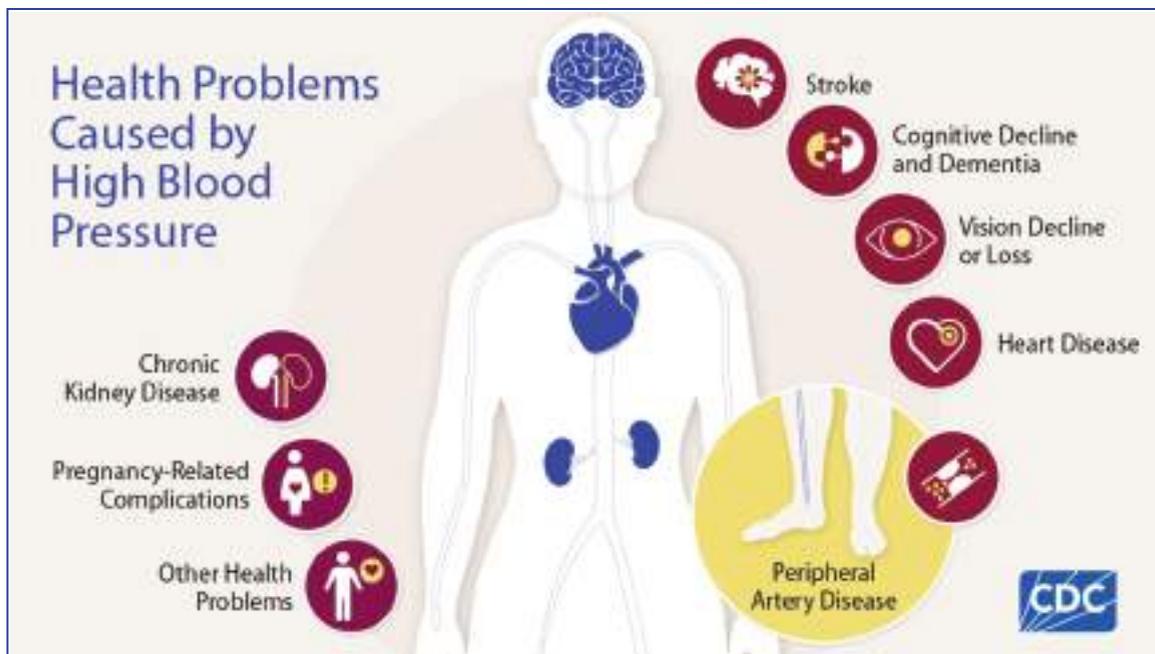
Risk factors include age, race, and family history—things you can’t control. But many other risks—like poor diet, lack of physical activity, obesity, smoking and excess alcohol use—can be managed. Conditions like diabetes and high cholesterol also raise your risk. If your blood pressure is between 120/80 and 129/80 mm Hg, it’s considered elevated. Without lifestyle changes, this can progress to chronic hypertension. Obesity forces your heart to work harder and is linked to high cholesterol, diabetes and heart disease. Managing weight is a key step toward better health. Diabetes also raises the risk; about 6 in 10 people

with diabetes have high blood pressure. Women may develop high blood pressure during pregnancy, which can affect both mother and baby. Early care and monitoring are vital.

Healthy Habits That Help

- **Move more:** Regular physical activity strengthens your heart and helps maintain a healthy weight.
- **Eat smart:** Cut back on sodium and processed foods and get enough potassium from foods like bananas, potatoes, beans and yogurt.
- **Limit alcohol:** No more than one drink per day for women, two for men.
- **Quit smoking:** Tobacco use damages blood vessels, raises blood pressure and reduces oxygen in your blood.
- **Know your family history:** Genetics, lifestyle and environment can all influence your risk.

Talk to your health care provider about your numbers and create a plan to manage or prevent high blood pressure. Small changes can make a big difference.



SELF-CARE FIRST: WHY CAREGIVERS MUST HEED THE OXYGEN MASK RULE

In the quiet heroism of caregiving—whether for a parent, partner or child—the caregiver’s own needs often go unmet. But health experts stress a simple truth: to care for others, you must first care for yourself. It’s the same principle stressed by airlines before takeoff: “Put your own oxygen mask on before assisting others.” That instruction is more than a metaphor. For caregivers, it’s survival.

From my own experience as a caregiver, I know this to be true. When you don’t take time for your own physical and emotional health, your ability to care for someone else is weakened.

The Silent Burnout

Many caregivers press on through exhaustion, driven by love, guilt or duty. But over time, that pressure can lead to burnout, resentment and serious health consequences.

Self-Care is Strategic, Not Selfish

Self-care doesn’t mean luxury. It can be simple: a brisk walk, a short nap, a standing lunch date with a friend. Saying no when you need to. Regular doctor visits. Balanced meals. Eight hours of sleep. Caregivers must give themselves permission to pause and recognize that you can’t pour from an empty cup.

That Airline Approach is Crucial

In a society where caregiving is becoming increasingly more common, the message is clear: Protect your own health—because if you get knocked down, who will be there to care for those who depend on you?



MY PERSONAL EXPERIENCE WITH CAREGIVING

By Karin Hopkins, Editor-In-Chief, HEALTH MATTERS

For thirteen years, I was a devoted caregiver. First, my granddaughter lived with us, filling the house with dolls, toys and storybooks. Then a health crisis involving my mother changed everything. I had to send my granddaughter to live with her father—my son—so I could turn that child’s room into a home hospital suite for the woman who delivered me into this world.

Like many caregivers, my helicopter hovering was a result of fear. I was afraid of what might happen if I stepped away. I gave everything to my mother and left nothing for me.

Then clarity hit—I could still earn a living—while working at my home. Long before COVID made remote work common, I launched ECHOboom Media from my dining room table, offering a content-rich platform—blogs, surveys, community calendars—all rooted in local storytelling.



Seven years of caregiving was my final gift to my mother, Theresa Mutry, who passed in May 2022

I felt useful again. And something unexpected happened: my mother’s health improved. She would walk to the bathroom to groom herself, bake her famous pound cakes and even drive herself to dialysis appointments.

Funny story—one day she was late coming home and I panicked. I almost asked authorities to issue an Amber Alert for a Missing Senior Citizen. When she finally pulled up, she was driving a new car. She had been delayed because she had been shopping for a good deal. My mother also traveled to Houston to visit my son, where she reconnected with the great-granddaughter she had grown close to when we all lived together.

Shifting the energy in our home, created space for healing. My work—writing, meeting deadlines, managing tasks—that was self-care for me. It renewed my spirit and, I believe, added years to my mother’s life.

The moral of this story? The oxygen mask theory is more than a travel protocol—it’s a blueprint for endurance. When I finally secured my own mask—through purpose, creativity and balance—I could breathe again. And with each breath, I was better equipped to pour nourishing life into my mother. It was an amazing lesson—love with self-care is empowerment.

Judge Blocks Alabama's Attempt to Regulate Birth Centers as Hospitals

A Montgomery judge has blocked the Alabama Department of Public Health (ADPH) from regulating freestanding birth centers as hospitals—a major win for midwives and maternal care advocates.

Circuit Judge Greg Griffin ruled that ADPH overstepped its authority, noting the state legislature never gave it the power to impose hospital-level rules on birth centers, which serve low-risk pregnancies outside of hospitals.

The ruling stems from a 2023 lawsuit filed by the ACLU on behalf of midwives, birth centers, and the Alabama chapter of the American College of Nurse-Midwives. They argued ADPH's regulations—requiring physician oversight, proximity to hospitals, and hospital licenses—would cripple access to midwifery care, especially in rural areas.



Midwives and doulas are different; midwives can deliver babies while doulas offer comfort, advocacy and emotional support.

This ruling is a step toward helping—not harming—mothers across Alabama,” said E’Licia Herndon, a birth and postpartum doula. “It opens the door to more affordable birth centers in underserved areas.” She added, “This is the beginning of reclaiming our midwifery legacy in Alabama, honoring the Grand Midwives who paved the way.”

ACLU attorneys said the decision protects access to equitable, community-based maternal care in a state grappling with poor outcomes, particularly among Black and rural communities.

Celebrating Juneteenth

Juneteenth is a sacred celebration of Black freedom and resilience, a soulful honoring of the day—June 19, 1865—when the last enslaved people in Galveston, Texas were finally told they were free, two and a half years after emancipation had been declared. At the heart of this celebration is the Juneteenth table—a gathering place where our history simmers and our culture sizzles. And nothing says heritage and heart like BBQ Beef Short Ribs. Slow-cooked, smoky and deeply seasoned; every bite carries the flavor of survival, the tenderness of community and the fire of liberation. Just like Juneteenth, they remind us that we’ve endured, we’ve elevated and we’re still rising—with sauce on our fingers and freedom in our bones.

A Soulful Feast Honoring Heritage and Freedom

Main Dish: BBQ Beef Short Ribs Ingredients:

- 3–4 lbs beef short ribs
- 1 tbsp smoked paprika
- 1 tbsp garlic powder
- 1 tbsp brown sugar
- 1 tsp cayenne pepper
- Salt & pepper
- 1 cup BBQ sauce



Instructions: Season ribs and let sit. Grill low and slow or bake at 300°F for 3 hours. Finish with BBQ sauce under broiler or grill.

Side Dish: Red Rice & Beans (Gullah Style) Ingredients:

- 2 cups long-grain rice
- 1 can crushed tomatoes
- 1/2 cup onions
- 1/2 cup bell pepper
- 1 clove garlic
- 1 tsp thyme
- 1 tsp paprika
- 1 can kidney beans
- 3 cups broth
- Salt and pepper



Instructions: Sauté vegetables. Add tomatoes, rice, beans, seasonings, and broth. Simmer covered for 20–25 minutes.

Greens: Sautéed Collards with Garlic & Vinegar Ingredients:

- 1 bunch collard greens
- 2 tbsp olive oil
- 3 cloves garlic
- 1/4 tsp red pepper flakes
- 1 tbsp apple cider vinegar
- Salt



Instructions: Sauté garlic, add collards, steam covered. Finish with vinegar.

Cornbread with Honey Butter Ingredients:

- 1 cup cornmeal
- 1 cup flour
- 1/4 cup sugar
- 1 tbsp baking powder
- 1/2 tsp salt
- 1 cup buttermilk
- 2 eggs
- 1/3 cup butter

Honey Butter:

1/2 cup butter + 2 tbsp honey

Instructions: Mix dry and wet ingredients. Bake at 375°F for 20–25 minutes



Drink: Hibiscus Sweet Tea Ingredients:

- 1 cup dried hibiscus
- 4 cups water
- 1/2 cup sugar
- 2 cups cold water or ice
- Optional: orange slices, cinnamon stick

Instructions:

Boil hibiscus 10 minutes, strain, stir in sugar. Add ice and citrus.



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Southeast Pediatrics

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334.724.0550

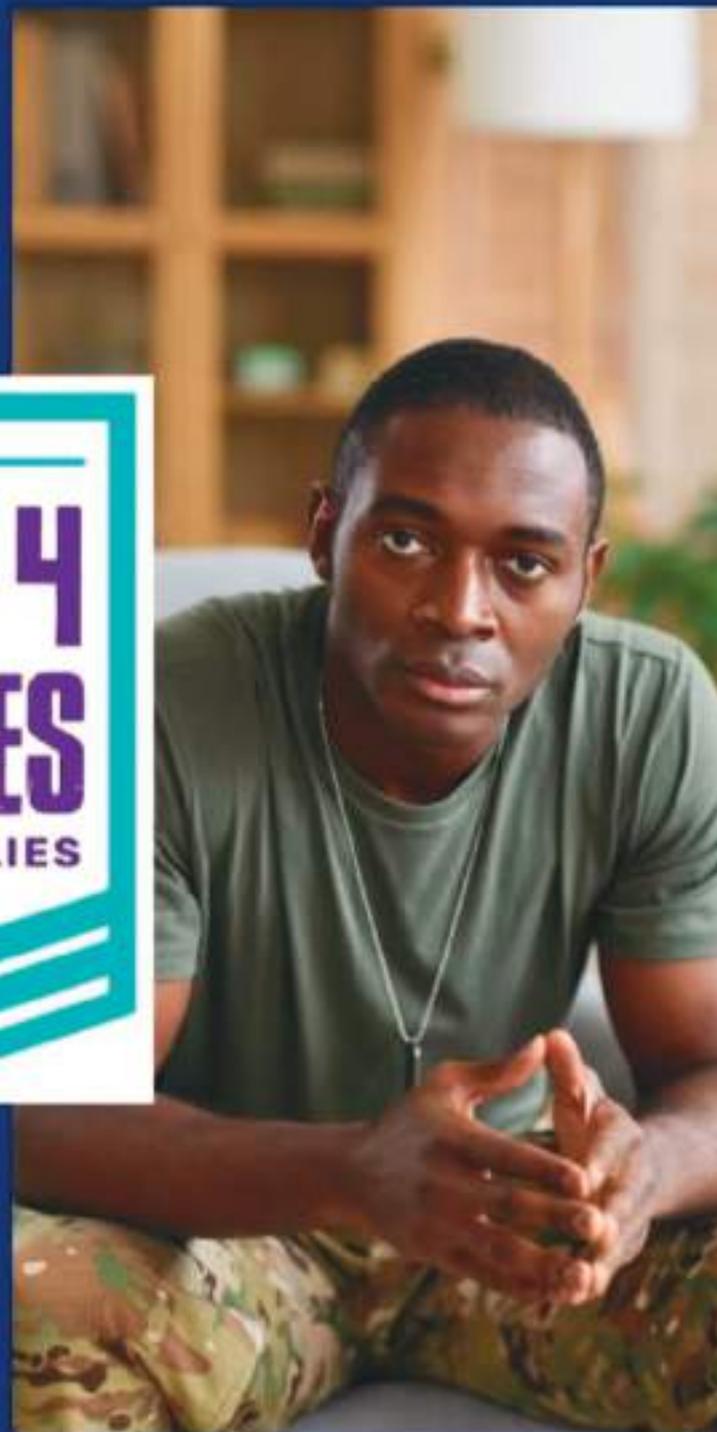
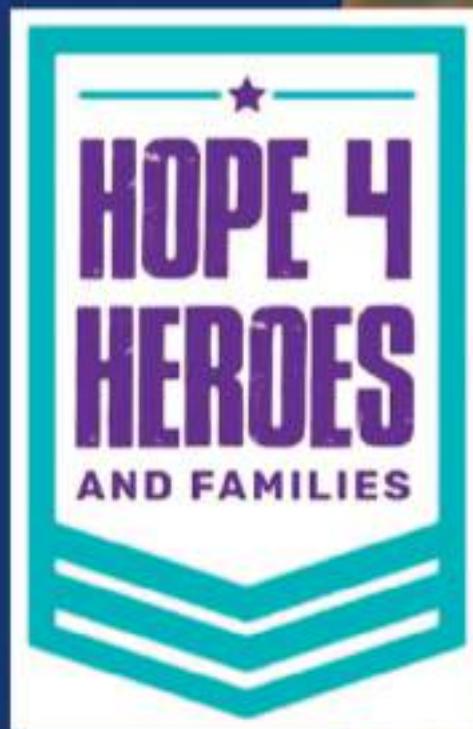
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