

# for your health

Your resource for healthy living from Lowell General Hospital

Spring 2005

[www.lowellgeneral.org](http://www.lowellgeneral.org)



It is a staggering and largely unknown statistic: *Cardiovascular disease is the number one killer of American men and women, claiming the lives of nearly 2.4 million Americans each year.* That's more lives than the next seven causes of death combined, and nearly twice as many as all forms of cancer, including breast cancer.

It is time to "get smart" about heart disease, and Lowell General Hospital is leading the way. LGH and the American Heart Association have joined together in a powerful national yearlong initiative to reduce the occurrence of heart disease in our region.

"Our goal is to raise awareness and change behavior among men and women by

encouraging steps to prevent heart attacks, as well as recognize and properly respond when a heart attack is occurring," says LGH President Normand Deschene, who was selected by the American Heart Association to chair the "Learn and Live" campaign in Lowell.

This campaign will include advocacy for health issues and health education events designed to improve cardiovascular health through the prevention, early identification, and treatment of risk factors, under the clinical leadership of Richard Birkhead, MD, FACC,

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## LGH Designated as a Primary Stroke Service

Lowell General Hospital has been designated a "Primary Stroke Service" by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH), recognizing the hospital's timely and effective treatment of stroke patients.

The state designation process was created to identify hospitals with strong protocol for providing high-quality treatment of emergency strokes. The hospital was recognized for demonstrating a solid system of emergency and neurological services and teams meeting or exceeding DPH standards.

Upon receiving the DPH designation, Normand E. Deschene, President and CEO of Lowell General Hospital, said, "Our designation as a Primary Stroke Service is just another way that Lowell General is working every day to enhance patient care in our community."

For more information on strokes, see page 2.

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# Q&A: What You Need to Know About Strokes

**D**id you know that stroke is one of the leading causes of death and disability in the United States?

Jonathan Moray, MD, of New England Neurological Associates, and director of Lowell General Hospital's Stroke Team, answers questions about stroke, its effect and how to prevent it.

**Q:** *What is a stroke?*

**A:** Stroke is actually a type of cardiovascular disease. However, instead of affecting the arteries around the heart, it affects the arteries leading to and within the brain.

**Q:** *What causes a stroke?*

**A:** A stroke is caused by the brain being deprived of the blood and oxygen it needs to survive and once deprived, the tissue starts to die. This causes the effects we have come to recognize from stroke, such as paralysis, speech problems, and memory loss, among others.

**Q:** *What are the different types of stroke?*

**A:** Ischemic (as-KEM-ik) strokes account for more than 80 percent of all strokes. These strokes are caused by the effects of a blocked artery in, or leading to, the brain. Usually a damaged blood vessel or artery becomes narrowed due to plaque build-up and becomes blocked by a blood clot. When this happens, the brain cannot receive live-giving blood and oxygen.

A hemorrhagic (hem-o-RAJ-ik) stroke is just what it sounds like—a stroke cause by a hemorrhage—or bleeding. When a blood vessel ruptures, it deprives the brain of the same blood and oxygen, as does a blockage—resulting in damage to the brain tissue.

**Q:** *Is there any treatment for stroke?*

**A:** Ischemic stroke can be treated using tPA (tissue plasminogen activator). tPA is a clot-busting drug that can keep blood flowing, minimizing damage to the brain. However it is essential that tPA be administered within three hours of symptom onset.

**Q:** *Is there anything that can be done to prevent stroke?*

**A:** Many of the same lifestyle changes that help prevent cardiovascular disease can help prevent stroke. Eat a heart healthy diet, high in fiber and low in cholesterol, and get plenty of exercise. Make sure your blood pressure is under control and



Shorta Yuasa, MD, emergency room physician, and neurologist Jonathan Moray, MD, consult together at Lowell General Hospital, which earned state designation for its stroke treatment.

if you smoke, quit. Smoking damages the walls of the blood vessels, making it easier for plaque to adhere.

If someone in your family has had a stroke, or if you have risk factors like obesity or diabetes, discuss lifestyle changes with your physician that may promote better overall health—and prevent stroke in the future. ■

## STROKE: Immediate Treatment to Save Lives

Know the warning signs of stroke—it's that simple. The fact is, immediate emergency treatment with tPA (tissue plasminogen activator) within three hours of symptom onset can minimize the debilitating effects of a stroke.

The following symptoms can occur with a stroke and require immediate medical attention:

- Weakness, numbness, or paralysis of the face, an arm, or a leg—especially on only one side of the body
- Sudden blurred vision in one or both eyes

■ Difficulty speaking or understanding simple statements

■ Loss of balance or coordination, especially when combined with another symptom

■ Sudden, severe, and unexplained headache—often described as “the worst headache of my life”

One or more of these symptoms may appear briefly and then disappear. These episodes may be “mini-strokes,” known as transient ischemic attacks (TIAs). Don't ignore TIAs. They are a powerful warning that a full stroke may soon follow.

Chief of Cardiology at Lowell General. According to Dr. Birkhead, simple lifestyle changes are the most proven method for reducing your risk of developing heart disease, including:

■ **Quit smoking.** Smokers have more than twice the risk for heart attack as nonsmokers and are much more likely to die if they suffer a heart attack. Smoking is also the most preventable risk factor.

■ **Improve cholesterol levels.** The risk for heart disease increases as your total amount of cholesterol increases. A diet low in cholesterol and saturated fat will lower cholesterol levels and reduce your risk for heart disease.

■ **Control high blood pressure.** Over 50 million people in the U.S. have hypertension, or high blood pressure, making it the most common heart disease risk factor.

■ **Get active.** People who don't exercise have higher rates of death and heart disease compared to people who perform even mild to moderate amounts of physical activity. Even leisure-time activities like gardening or walking can lower your risk of heart disease.

■ **Manage stress.** Poorly controlled stress and anger can lead to heart attacks and strokes. Use stress and anger management techniques to lower your risk.

■ **Control diabetes.** If not properly controlled, diabetes can lead to significant heart damage including heart attacks and death.

### Know the Signs

Most heart attacks start slowly, with mild pain or discomfort. Often people aren't sure what's happening and wait too long before getting help. Here are signs that can mean a heart attack is happening:

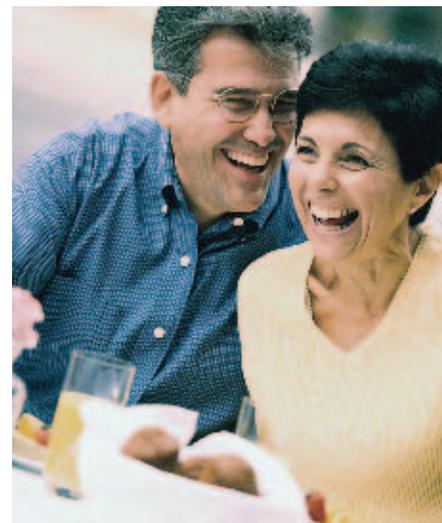
■ **Chest discomfort.** Most heart attacks involve discomfort in the center of the chest that lasts more than a few minutes, or that goes away and comes back. It can feel like uncomfortable pressure, squeezing, fullness, or pain.

■ **Discomfort in other areas of the upper body.** Symptoms can include pain or discomfort in one or both arms, the back, neck, jaw, or stomach.

■ **Shortness of breath.** May occur with or without chest discomfort.

■ **Other signs.** These may include breaking out in a cold sweat, nausea, or lightheadedness.

If you or someone you're with has chest discomfort, especially with one or more of the other signs, don't wait longer than five minutes before calling for help. Call 911 and get to a hospital right away. ■



## Lowell: Getting HeartSafe

Lowell General Hospital and the American Heart Association have joined Trinity Ambulance and the City of Lowell in helping Lowell become designated as a "HeartSafe Community" for everyone who lives, works, and visits there. Right now only about 5 percent of sudden cardiac arrest victims survive. Becoming a HeartSafe Community can increase that rate to 20 percent or more by providing early access to care, early CPR, early defibrillation, and early advanced care—all which lead to saving lives.

TAKE THE FIRST STEPS TOWARD GETTING "HEART SMART"

Call **1-877-LGH-WELL (877-544-9355)** to receive your **FREE "Heart Smart" kit**, including a **"Heart Smart" cookbook and pedometer**. Supplies are limited, so call today.

# NEW PHYSICIANS

Lowell General Hospital welcomes these new physicians to its outstanding medical staff.

## Samantha Bessega, MD



—Internal Medicine  
Dr. Samantha Bessega is board certified in internal medicine, and completed a fellowship in infectious disease at Boston University Medical

Center. She is fluent in Spanish and speaks Portuguese and Italian.

Dr. Bessega may be reached at Lowell Community Health Center, 585 Merrimack Street in Lowell at 978-937-9700.

## Lydia McClure, MD



—Family Practice  
Dr. Lydia McClure is board certified in family practice medicine, and completed both an internship and residency in family practice

medicine at University of Massachusetts Medical Center in Worcester. In addition, she speaks French, German, and some Spanish.

Dr. McClure may be reached at Lowell Community Health Center, 15-17 Warren Street in Lowell at 978-934-0164.

## David Yi, MD



—Ophthalmology  
Dr. David Yi joins Massachusetts Eye Associates. He is board certified in ophthalmology, and completed an anterior

segment fellowship (cataract, glaucoma, and uveitis) at Massachusetts Eye & Ear Infirmary.

Dr. Yi may be reached at Massachusetts Eye Associates, 19 Village Square in Chelmsford at 978-256-5600.

## Andrea Sachs, MD



—Pediatrics  
Chelmsford Pediatrics welcomes Dr. Andrea Sachs to their practice. A graduate of Harvard Medical School, Dr. Sachs completed a clinical

fellowship in pediatrics at Harvard Medical School and a teaching fellowship in pediatrics at Boston University School of Medicine.

Dr. Sachs may be reached at Chelmsford Pediatrics, 7 Village Square in Chelmsford at 978-256-4363.

## Rosemary Corderi, MD



—Internal Medicine  
Dr. Rosemary Corderi is board certified in internal medicine, and has a special interest in women's health. She speaks Spanish and Italian.

Dr. Corderi may be reached at Harvard Vanguard Medical Associates, 228 Billerica Road in Chelmsford at 978-250-6455.

## Kimberly Tresch, MD



—Pediatrics  
Dr. Kimberly Tresch is board certified in pediatrics, and completed clinical fellowships at Harvard Medical School and Children's Hospital in Boston.

Dr. Tresch is accepting new patients at Harvard Vanguard Medical Associates, 228 Billerica Road in Chelmsford at 978-250-6300.

## Gretchen Gaida, MD



—Internal Medicine  
Dr. Gretchen Gaida is accepting new patients for primary care. Dr. Gaida completed her internship and residency in internal medicine at Virginia

Medical College at Virginia Commonwealth University Medical Center (VCUMC).

Dr. Gaida may be reached at Harvard Vanguard Medical Associates, 228 Billerica Road in Chelmsford at 978-250-6455.

## The Physicians of Lowell General Hospital

Lowell General Hospital offers a network of the area's best, brightest, and most highly trained physicians. From primary care to dozens of specialties, you'll find doctors with the expertise, training, and experience from some of the country's most prestigious medical institutions. More than 400 independent physicians make up the medical staff at Lowell General Hospital. To find a doctor who's right for you, call our FREE Physician Referral Line at 1-800-544-2424 or meet our physicians online at [www.lowellgeneral.org](http://www.lowellgeneral.org).

Registration is required for all classes. Unless noted, you may register by calling 877-LGH-WELL (877-544-9355).

## Health Education and Wellness

Lowell General Hospital is pleased to offer a variety of Health Education and Wellness programs for you and your family.

### ■ Childbirth Education

Lowell General Hospital invites you to participate in classes to give you a rewarding childbirth experience and help the entire family prepare for the birth of your newest family member. Lowell General offers **Prepared Childbirth** over six weeks or an accelerated one-day session; a **Refresher** class designed for parents who have previously had a baby; a six-week **Hypnobirthing** class; and a **Breastfeeding** class. *Please register early for all childbirth classes as many reach maximum enrollment several months before they begin.*

### ■ Prenatal Yoga

This seven-week yoga class will utilize stretching, modified yoga postures, breathing, and relaxation techniques to help honor and support the body during pregnancy and the birthing process. This course is taught by a certified Kripalu Yoga instructor. Medical permission is recommended. Fee: \$70. *Meets Mondays, May 9 to June 20, 5:45 to 7 p.m.*

### ■ Infant Massage

Parents learn special strokes and moves to soothe and stimulate babies ages 4 weeks to 6 months in a nurturing, bonding experience. Fee: \$70 (includes two sessions and instruction book). *Meets Wednesdays, May 4 and 11, 10 to 11:30 a.m.*

### ■ Sibling Class

This class will provide children, ages 3 to 8, with the opportunity to explore their feelings concerning the arrival of a new baby. Children will learn how to hold and diaper the infant and, together with their parents, will tour The Birthplace to see where their new baby sister or brother will be born. Fee: \$20. *Meets one Tuesday, April 12, May 10, June 14, or August 9, 3:45 to 4:45 p.m.*

### ■ Baby-Sitting Basics

Designed to help develop baby-sitting skills for boys and girls age 10 and older. Topics include: basic safety issues, first aid, growth and development, baby-sitter activities, bottle-feeding, bath time and bedtime, care and handling of infants, and more. Fee: \$30. *Meets one Saturday, April 16, May 21, June 18, or July 16, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.*

### ■ The Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction Program at Lowell General Hospital

Discover deep inner psychological resources for self-care, high productivity, and stress reduction. New sessions begin in early fall. Classes meet from 6:30 to 9 p.m., plus one all-day Saturday session. Fee: \$350. Call 978-937-6022 for more information or to register.

## Nutrition Education

### ■ Weight Management

Are you frustrated when it comes to losing weight, and do

not know the correct approach to take? Do you feel that you have tried every diet but have failed in the past? Is the scale going in the wrong direction? If you have answered "yes" to any of these questions, sign up for our six-week weight management program. Our registered dietitians will provide up-to-date information regarding healthy eating and the right weight loss plan for you. Fee: \$75. *Meets Wednesdays, April 20 to May 25, 5:30 to 6:30 p.m., LGH Donovan Conference Room*

### ■ Shopping Tour

Are you confused when it comes to reading labels? Do you want to know what good health really means? Then jump into our shopping cart and let the dietitians at Lowell General Hospital wheel you around the aisles at the Hannaford Grocery Store at Drum Hill to help you sort through all the confusion and make your shopping experience an enjoyable one. Space is limited, so register early! Fee: \$15. *June 7, 12:30 to 2:30 p.m. or June 9, 5:30 to 7:30 p.m., Hannaford, Chelmsford, MA*

### ■ Body Fat Analysis

Monitor weight loss or muscle development. Includes weight recommendations, calorie needs, and exercise guidelines. Fee: \$15.

### ■ Nutrition Counseling

Learn healthy eating habits for weight control and disease management with a one-on-one

consultation with a registered dietitian. A physician's referral is required.

## Diabetes Education and Management

### ■ Diabetes and Exercise

Come and learn how to exercise safely. Topics include: benefits of exercise, appropriate steps to take if a low blood sugar should occur during exercise, exercise prescription, and more. Wear comfortable clothes and sneakers. Fee: \$5. *April 21, 12:30 to 2 p.m., LGH Hanchett Auditorium*

### ■ Healthy Summer Desserts for Diabetics

Come join the dietitians at Lowell General Hospital for a healthy summer desserts cooking demo. You will enjoy the sweet taste of summer. Food samples will be provided. Fee: \$15. *May 19, 12:30 to 2:30 p.m., LGH Hanchett Auditorium*

## Complementary Care

Lowell General Hospital offers Complementary Care therapies to our Cancer Center patients. Call Carole Legro, MA, RNC, at 978-937-6396 for more information, to schedule an appointment, or to register for the following therapies:

- Tai Chi
- Guided Imagery
- Meditation
- Reiki
- Therapeutic Massage

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Lowell General Hospital offers many support groups that provide support and education to members of the community. For more information on the following support groups, call 877-LGH-WELL (877-544-9355).

### ■ **New Mothers Support Group**

New moms are invited to come with questions and meet other mothers and babies.

*Meets Tuesdays, 10 a.m. to noon*

### ■ **Down Syndrome Support Group**

Parents of children with Down syndrome support each other and enrich the lives of their children so they may reach

their fullest potential. Parents of children of all ages are invited. Children are welcome.  
*Meets the third Monday of each month, 7 to 9 p.m.*

### ■ **Arthritis Support Group**

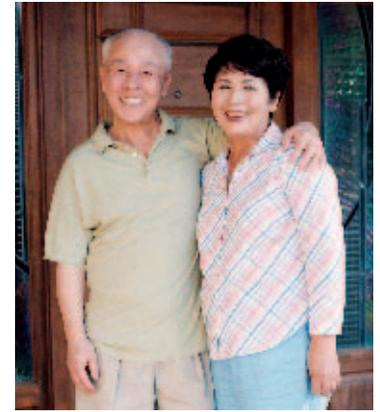
Arthritis and fibromyalgia sufferers learn and share information to better deal with their condition.

*Meets the second Friday of each month, 8 to 9:30 a.m.*

### ■ **Perinatal-Loss Support Group**

This group provides support and comfort when a family has suffered a loss through miscarriage, ectopic, stillbirth, or neonatal death. Call Linda Jezak in the Mother Infant Unit at 978-937-6324 for more information.

*Meets the third Tuesday of each month in the LGH chapel, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.*



## Cancer Support Groups

The Cancer Center at Lowell General Hospital offers a variety of support groups for patients and family members to help them cope and learn from the experience of others. Unless noted, call 978-937-6142 or visit [www.lowellgeneral.org](http://www.lowellgeneral.org) to register and for more information.

### For Patients and Families

#### ■ **I Can Cope**

An educational program for adults with cancer, their families, and friends.

*Meets the second Monday of each month, 6:30 p.m.*

#### ■ **Living with Breast and GYN Cancers**

For women with breast or gynecological cancers (a support person is encouraged to attend).  
*Meets the third Tuesday of each month, 7 p.m.*

#### ■ **Caring for a Loved One**

For caregivers involved in providing care to a loved one. Call 978-937-6129 to register.  
*Meets the second Thursday of each month, 6:30 p.m.*

#### ■ **Patients/Families Living with Cancer**

For patients and their families and friends living with cancer.  
*Meets the third Monday of each month, 6:30 p.m., and the second Thursday of each month, 11 a.m.*

#### ■ **Mi Vida con Cancer (My Life with Cancer—a Spanish-speaking group)**

A Spanish-speaking group for patients with cancer and their families.

*Meets the third Monday of each month, 5:30 p.m.*

#### ■ **Look Good Feel Better**

A program of the American Cancer Society helping women undergoing cancer treatment learn to cope with the appearance-related side effects of treatment, and regain a sense of self-confidence. Call Colleen Dubuc at 978-937-6519 for more information or to register.

*Meets one Monday a month October through June, 7 p.m.*

#### ■ **Living with Advanced Disease**

For patients with advanced disease. Lowell General patients, please call Meg Lemire at 978-937-6142, all others call Carole Legro at 978-937-6396.  
*Meets every other Tuesday, 3:30 p.m.*

#### ■ **Renew (offered by the Lowell Visiting Nurse and Hospice)**

A bereavement group for family and friends. Call Marie Jennings, LICSW, at the Lowell VNA at 978-458-4689, ext. 783.  
*Meets the third Thursday of each month, 10:30 a.m.*

#### ■ **“US TOO” Prostate Cancer Support Group**

For men with prostate cancer (a support person is encouraged to attend).  
*Meets the second Tuesday of each month, 6:30 p.m.*

#### ■ **Now What... Life After Loss**

A bereavement group for family and friends. Call 978-937-6129 to register.  
*Meets the second Wednesday of each month, 6:30 p.m.*

### Support for Children and Adolescents

Lowell General Hospital offers the area's only support groups helping children deal with a loved one's cancer. Call Cammie Caron at 978-937-6129 for more information or to register.

#### ■ **“What About Me?” (Ages 11 to 17)**

*Meets the second Wednesday of the month in November, January, March, May, July and September, 4 p.m.*

#### ■ **“What About Me?...Jr” (Ages 7 to 10)**

*Meets the second Wednesday of the month in October, December, February, April, June and August, 4 p.m.*

#### ■ **Teen Bereavement (Ages 13 to 17)**

*Meets the second Tuesday of the month, 3 p.m.*

# Special Care for Your Special Baby

**B**ette Surette was eagerly anticipating the birth of her first child last year when, unexpectedly, she developed extremely high blood pressure. She had to be rushed to the hospital, where little Sara was born more than four weeks early.

Fortunately, Bette and her husband, Bob, had chosen The Birthplace at Lowell General Hospital, with the area's only Level II Neonatal Special Care Nursery. Affiliated with the New England Medical Center's renowned Floating Hospital for Children in Boston, the Level II neonatal care unit at Lowell General provides specialized care to

babies born up to eight weeks early and weighing as little as two pounds.

## Superb Care for Your Newborn Right Here

"Thank goodness I had chosen Lowell General," says Bette, tickling the now thriving toddler on her lap. "No one else in the area has this kind of care."

Like most premature babies, Sara needed special help to survive. "Often premature babies will have immature breath control, problems with body temperature regulation, and immature swallowing capabilities," says Mario Cordova, MD, Director of the Special

Care Nursery and a neonatologist on staff at New England Medical Center.

The Special Care Nursery provides more than the state-of-the-art, high-tech equipment necessary to keep babies alive and healthy. A neonatologist—a specialist in the care of sick or premature babies—is available 24 hours a day. Nurses who specialize in neonatal care are with the babies in the Special Care Nursery around the clock, and lactation consultants work closely with parents and babies to ensure the close physical touch babies need. Along with a team of physicians, dietitians, and social workers, they carefully prepare parents for the joyous day when their baby

graduates from hospital to home.

According to Dr. Cordova, between 10 and 12 percent of all babies will need special care when they are born, and those numbers are growing. "Having a Level II nursery on the premises is very important in being prepared for a safe and healthy delivery."

## Lowell General's Prenatal Care Is Unique

Part of that preparation may also involve special care for moms. Lowell General's Maternal/Fetal Medicine (MFM) program—also affiliated with New England Medical Center—provides outpatient and inpatient counseling and diagnostic services for women with high-risk or difficult pregnancies. With MFM, expectant moms no longer need to travel to Boston to receive specialized prenatal care or to deliver their baby.

Like other couples, the Surettes of Ayer wanted only the best hospital for the delivery of their baby. As they began to research, they found that Lowell General has the area's only 5-star maternity center, and also had the only Level II nursery. They also found that the experienced obstetrician they wanted was on staff at Lowell General.

Today, they are expecting their second child and, not surprisingly, have chosen Lowell General for that baby's birth.

"I would never consider having a baby at a hospital without a Special Care Nursery," says Bette. "It is so important to have that peace of mind, knowing that if your baby needs extra care, it's right there." ■



Thanks to the Special Care Nursery at Lowell General Hospital, Sara Surette is now a thriving toddler.

## JOIN US FOR A FREE TOUR OF THE BIRTHPLACE!

Want to get a peek at all that we can offer you and your newborn?

Lowell General Hospital offers FREE tours of the Birthplace on the first Saturday of each month at 11 a.m., and the third Thursday of each month at 7 p.m.

Please call 877-LGH-WELL (877-544-9355) to reserve your space or for more information.



# Be a Part of TeamWalk's Fight Against Cancer

## Join TeamWalk for CancerCare

- **Walk.** Walk as an individual or put together a team—big or small—and get ready for the experience of a lifetime!
- **Sponsor.** Rather not walk? Sponsor an individual or team. Your support is priceless!
- **Volunteer.** Help make TeamWalk for CancerCare happen! Volunteering at the event is a fun and heartwarming experience.



**Y**ou can see it on their faces as they walk, a team over 3,000 strong, each step bringing them closer to their goal. There is a special purpose for every step taken in Lowell General Hospital's TeamWalk for CancerCare.

### Support for All Sorts of Reasons

Some walkers are celebrating the greatest achievement of their lifetime—their triumph over cancer. Others may walk to support loved ones who have won their own battles with cancer. Some are walking in memory of a loved one that is no longer with us. Others walk and volunteer as a way to provide much-needed support to their community.

Whatever your reason for joining TeamWalk for CancerCare, your generous participation will improve the quality of life for area cancer patients.

### TeamWalk a Success!

Through the contributions of countless volunteers, walkers, and area businesses, TeamWalk has made a difference in thousands

of lives over the last five years. The unique advantage to TeamWalk is that all proceeds stay in the community, directly helping cancer patients in their fight, providing vital cancer treatment and services, as well as cancer prevention programs to the community.

With your participation and support, the sixth annual TeamWalk for CancerCare will truly make a difference in the lives of cancer patients and their families. ■



LPGA Hall of Fame golfer Pat Bradley will again lead the TeamWalk as Honorary Chair.

## TeamWalk for CancerCare

- What:** Choose the 3-mile or 6.2-mile walk, sponsor a walker, or volunteer at the event
- When:** Sunday, May 15  
9:30 a.m.—6.2-mile walk  
10 a.m.—3-mile walk
- Where:** Starts and ends at Tsongas Arena in downtown Lowell. (FREE parking in the Ayotte Garage, adjacent to the arena.)

- How:** Register to walk or volunteer online at [www.lowellgeneral.org](http://www.lowellgeneral.org), or call the TeamWalk hotline at 978-937-6434. Sign up with your \$10 registration fee by May 1, and receive a commemorative TeamWalk wrist band.



For more information, go to [www.lowellgeneral.org](http://www.lowellgeneral.org) and click on the TeamWalk logo!



<http://www.lowellgeneral.org>  
Tel: 978-937-6000  
TTY: 978-937-6889

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