

Vol. 21, No. 3 / Summer 2025



# Heart to Heart

A publication of St. Tammany Health System



## On the road again

STHS hits the streets with groundbreaking lung screening unit, p. 8

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CARE WHEN YOUR KIDS NEED IT



Because kids rarely come down with something during office hours, St. Tammany Health System came up with something to make things easier for your family. We call it ExpressCare Kids. Now your child can see the St. Tammany Pediatric team up until 8 p.m. weekdays, and from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. weekends for the same fee you'd pay for a regular office visit – no urgent care or emergency room co-pays!

MANY kids are treated after hours at ExpressCare Kids.

# ST. TAMMANY **MANY KIDS TREATED AFTER HOURS**



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We are the heartbeat of our community, caring for our patients and their families with excellence, compassion and teamwork.

#### VISION

We will strengthen the health of our community with compassion, innovation and partnership.

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Teamwork. Trust. Compassion. Quality. Innovation.

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## Gratefully Yours

Coming soon, to a neighborhood near you



Joan Coffman, FACHE

**“As you may know, innovation is one of our five organizational values, ... and the Breathe Well ConneCTion is a beautiful example of our team’s dedication to that principle.”**

Ordinarily, the idea of yet one more vehicle on our already-bustling local roads would not be something most people would celebrate. But our shiny, new Breathe Well ConneCTion – which graces the cover of this issue – is no ordinary vehicle.

The custom-designed mobile health unit, made possible by a generous donation from local gridiron hero Rich Mauti and his family’s Mauti Cancer Fund, is outfitted with an advanced CT system designed to detect lung cancers and other abnormalities quickly and painlessly – and, the hope is, to save lives through early detection.

It is the first of its kind in the region, and it joins our Be Well Bus – which is equipped with mammography equipment – in taking potentially life-saving screenings directly into our community.

As you may know, innovation is one of our five organizational values – the others are teamwork, trust, compassion and quality – and the Breathe Well ConneCTion is a beautiful example of our team’s dedication to that principle.

Like our Be Well Bus, you can watch for it at festivals, health fairs and other community gatherings throughout our community. Consider this your formal invitation to drop in and say hello when you spot it.

You can read more about the new Breathe Well ConneCTion and other health system happenings on the pages that follow.

Thank you for reading, and thank you as always for trusting St. Tammany Health System with your family’s care.

Gratefully,

Joan M. Coffman, FACHE  
St. Tammany Health System president and CEO



#### Let’s roll

St. Tammany Health System President and CEO Joan Coffman welcomes guests to the rollout of the health system’s new Breathe Well ConneCTion, a mobile health vehicle outfitted with a low-dose CT unit to help detect lung cancer in patients. *Read more on pages 8-9.* (Photo by Tory Mansfield/STHS)

# Ask the STHS Experts

How does poor sleep affect overall health? We ask pulmonologist Dr. Rick Casey

## By STHS Communication Department

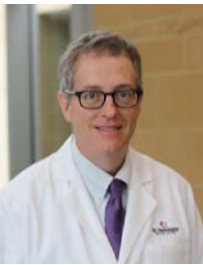
Got healthcare questions? We've got answers, thanks to our team of seasoned medical experts.

Recently, we spoke with pulmonologist Dr. Rick Casey, the director of St. Tammany Health System's AASM-accredited Sleep Disorders Center, to discuss the finer points of getting some quality Z's.

Here's some of what he had to say:

### How does sleep quality impact your overall health?

**Dr. Casey:** As you get older, you don't sleep as well, but even when you're younger, sleep deprivation is not good. Be it from work, stress, family or things like that, lack of sleep has been associated directly with heart disease, high blood pressure, even diabetes.



Dr. Rick Casey

### What are some of the most common sleep disorders that affect health?

**Dr. Casey:** Far and away, it's obstructive sleep apnea. The majority of apnea patients, probably 95%, have obstructive sleep apnea, which is where your throat closes down, your pharynx closes down, when you're sleeping.

### What's the link there between sleep and heart disease?



The STHS Sleep Disorders Center is located at 80 Gardenia Drive, just off Louisiana 21 in Covington.

**Dr. Casey:** If you don't get a good night's sleep, you have more adrenaline the next day and your blood pressure tends to get higher. There are hormonal factors, as well. Those go hand-in-hand with those disorders.

### How do you know if you have obstructive sleep apnea?

**Dr. Casey:** The main complaint is fatigue, or we say 'nonrestorative sleep' – when you wake up, you're just as tired as when you go to bed. Quite often, they'll be told they stop breathing at night. What I commonly ask patients when they come in is, 'Do you have a good night's sleep? Is that typical?' And right away, they say, 'No.' Most people with sleep apnea have no problem going to sleep, because they're sleep deprived. They just can't stay asleep, they don't feel good in the morning and they're tired in the

afternoon. They just don't feel good.

### If I suspect I have sleep apnea, what happens next?

**Dr. Casey:** Historically we would bring the patient into a sleep lab, which is the gold standard of diagnosing sleep apnea. Insurance companies have recently pushed away from that in favor of home sleep studies: You go home and put these devices on at night, you sleep in your own bed, and you wake up and then the information gets analyzed after that. Patients really like that. It's not as thorough as an in-lab study, but when we're looking at sleep apnea, it takes care of the majority of patients. ■

*Sleep issues? Start by having a conversation with your primary care doctor. You can also learn more at [StTammany.health/Sleep](https://StTammany.health/Sleep) or by calling (985) 871-5987.*



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1:20



4:17



# FLOWER POWER

Every quarter, St. Tammany Health System recognizes nursing excellence with the Daisy Award and non-nursing colleagues with the Sunflower Award. Here are the latest to earn the honors.



St. Tammany Hospice nurse Michele Salsiccia, far left, and colleague Anne Mills, second from left, react upon being informed by STHS Chief Nursing Officer Kerry Milton that the two were being honored with Daisy Awards for extraordinary nursing. (Photo by Chloe Stephan/STHS)



STHS nurse Cody Effler is photographed alongside former patient Jaden and Jaden's mother, Natalie Connelly. Mrs. Connelly nominated Cody for a Daisy Award after witnessing the care and patience he provided Jaden, who is autistic, during a visit to the STHS Pediatric ED. (Photo by Chloe Stephan/STHS)



STHS Certified Nursing Assistant Brenda Okeefe, left, reacts after being presented with a Sunflower Award for the second quarter of 2025. The Sunflower Award is awarded by the health system's Nursing Staff to those colleagues who demonstrate support for the nursing mission. (Photo by Chloe Stephan/STHS)



Certified Nursing Assistant Myletta Farria embraces RN Winnie Hernandez upon being presented with a Sunflower Award for the second quarter of 2025. Winnie nominated Myletta for the honor. (Photo by Chloe Stephan/STHS)

# STAT!

Quick hits from the STHS newsroom

## By STHS Communication Department

St. Tammany Health System has earned **Best Hospital**, **Best Cancer Treatment Center** and **Best Place to Have a Baby** honors in The Times-Picayune's first-ever Best of St. Tammany Awards. Other categories in which it earned top honors included **Cardiology** (gold), **Orthopedics** (gold), **Urgent Care/Walk-In Clinic** (gold), **Primary Care** (gold), **Women's Clinic** (gold), **Place to Work** (gold), **Hospice** (gold), **Medical Practice** (gold, for Northlake Surgical Associates), **Pharmacy** (gold, for St. Tammany Health System Pharmacy at Braswell's), **Physical Therapy** (gold), **Speech Therapy** (gold) and **Home Care** (silver). In addition, STHS physicians **Dr. Seth McVea**, **Dr. Christine Thurston** and **Dr. Robert Fauchaux** swept the Best Doctor category with gold, silver and bronze placement, respectively. ... In May, the **Leapfrog Group** awarded St. Tammany Health System its 19th consecutive "A" grade for patient safety, extending its streak to nine and a half years. It is the longest such streak in Louisiana. ... Also in May, St. Tammany Health System's Human Resources Department was named a recipient of industry group **RogueHire's Raving Fan – Hiring Manager Award**, bestowed in recognition of excellence in talent acquisition. ... Clinical educator **Angela Foley** was named to the Louisiana State Nurses Association's 40 Under 40 Rising Stars list. ... In June, STHS's flagship St. Tammany Parish Hospital was designated a **Recognized Leader in Caring for People Living with Diabetes** by the Leapfrog Group and the American Diabetes Association. It is one of 36 U.S. hospitals, and the only one in Louisiana, to earn the honor. ... In July, St. Tammany Quality Network bestowed its second-quarter Medical Director's Award on **Dr. Joseph Landers** and **Dr. Andrew Baier** in recognition of their contributions to the development and implementation of Structured Interdisciplinary Bedside Rounding (SIBR) at St. Tammany Parish Hospital. ■

Is there a St. Tammany Health System employee you'd like to honor?  
Find out how at [StTammany.health/ThankYou](https://StTammany.health/ThankYou) or by scanning the code at right.



**“This milestone reflects not only technical excellence but also a shared commitment to progress and collaboration, all wrapped up in achieving the highest quality patient care.”**

**– St. Tammany Health System President and CEO Joan Coffman**

## Embracing innovation

Hospital leaders unveil groundbreaking lab upgrade from Abbott

### By *STHS Communication Department*

St. Tammany Health System partnered with representatives from global healthcare company Abbott to unveil the installation of Abbott’s innovative GLP systems Track automated laboratory solution at the health system’s flagship St. Tammany Parish Hospital. The leading-edge upgrade represents the first installation of the system in Louisiana.

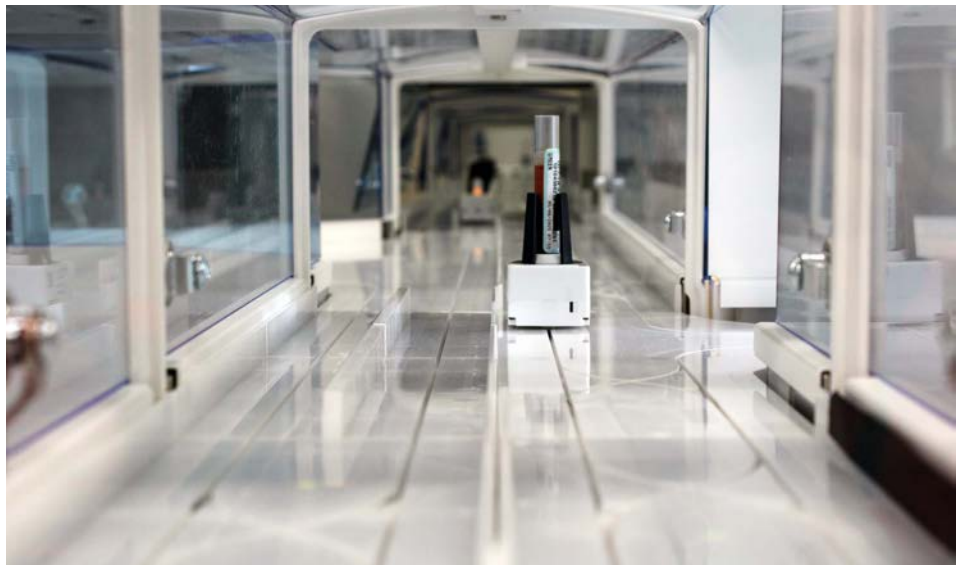
“This milestone reflects not only technical excellence but also a shared commitment to progress and collaboration, all wrapped up in achieving the highest quality patient care,” STHS President and CEO Joan Coffman said during a May 15 unveiling event. “It aligns beautifully with our vision here at St. Tammany Health System to strengthen the health of our community with compassion, innovation and partnership.”

Custom-designed to suit both the health system’s needs and the lab’s existing footprint, the automated system centers on Abbott’s next-generation Smart CAR Technology, which utilizes self-propelled sample carriers – or “CARs” – to route individual patient samples through the lab on a proprietary, belt-free track system.

Working in concert with Abbott’s Alinity ci-series and AlinIQ Digital Health Solutions platforms, the GLP systems Track solution is designed to minimize manual processes by as much as 80%, reduce errors and improve turnaround time for test results.

Although it all happens behind the scenes, each of those benefits has a direct, positive impact on patient care, STHS Chief Operating Officer Jack Khashou said.

“This system allows our med techs to work at the top of their competencies,



An autonomous cart carries a patient sample through St. Tammany Parish Hospital’s newly installed lab system, developed and installed by Abbott. The high-tech installation is the first of its kind in the state of Louisiana. (Photos by Tory Mansfield/STHS)



St. Tammany Health System President and CEO Joan Coffman (front, in white) is joined by Lab Director Mackey Martarona in cutting the ribbon for a new lab upgrade at the health system’s flagship St. Tammany Parish Hospital in Covington. Surrounding them are representatives from Abbott as well as from the health system’s lab and leadership teams.

increase time for physician interactions and consultation, and deliver faster results for patients and their providers,” Khashou said. “Automation also allows our teams to efficiently process high-volume workloads, allowing St. Tammany Health System to grow and offer services in step with the needs of our growing community.”

Following brief remarks and a ribbon cutting, those gathered at the unveiling event were invited into the lab for a close-up look at the new system in action. There, they watched

as dozens of vials in individual CARs – each boasting a unique bar code – zipped between instruments along enclosed tracks resembling high-tech versions of those used by slot-car racers.

Throughout, the automated system repeatedly verified that each CAR – and each vial – was where it was supposed to be in its journey. Final test results were then provided via readout to lab team members for interpretation, dissemination and diagnosis.

The installation of Abbott’s GLP systems Track technology represents only the latest expansion of capabilities for the St. Tammany Parish Hospital Lab, which opened with the hospital in 1954. In its first year, the lab served a reported 1,240 patients. Today, it processes well over a million patient specimens annually, providing timely data to the front-line care providers at the hospital as well as the numerous STHS facilities located throughout the community. ■

# Leading the way

In 2007, St. Tammany Health System became the first robotics institute on the Interstate 12 corridor with the acquisition of its first surgical robotic assistant. Today, it boasts multiple robotics systems — designed for an array of surgeries — at both St. Tammany Parish Hospital and its St. Tammany Health System Surgery Center. Here's a look at them:

## Stryker Mako System

Designed to streamline total knee and hip replacements, the Stryker Mako System assists our orthopedic surgeons by creating a 3D model of each patient's unique anatomy, allowing for development of a custom surgical plan before the patient ever enters the operating room. The result: more precise and efficient surgeries, less post-op discomfort and quicker recovery times.



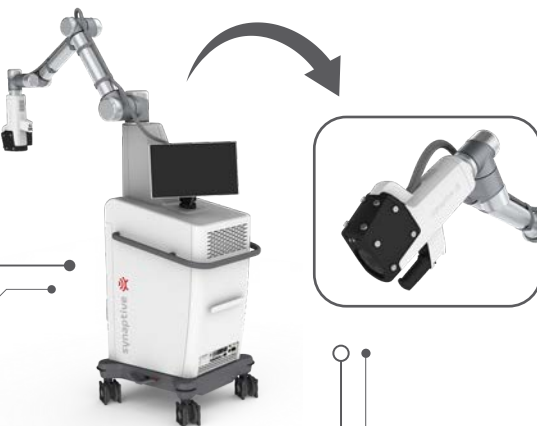
## Ion by Intuitive robotic-assisted bronchoscopy

Described as a game-changer when targeting even small lung lesions for biopsy, the Ion system is a minimally invasive platform providing surgeons with greater precision and efficiency when zeroing in on suspect lesions while also allowing for access to the entire lung.



## Da Vinci System

Surgical expertise meets technology to further bolster STPH's place at the vanguard of da Vinci-assisted surgeries on the Northshore, expanding patient access to technology being used for a growing number of surgeries, including minimally invasive procedures to treat pelvic and urologic cancers.



## VELYS robotic-assisted knee surgery

In 2022, St. Tammany Health System became the first in South Louisiana to conduct Velys robotic-assisted knee replacement, an innovative, second-generation procedure from DePuy Synthes designed to get patients back on their feet sooner, with less discomfort and more mobility.



## Modus V / BrightMatter

The combination of Synaptive Medical's innovative Modus V robotic microscope with its BrightMatter technology allows neurosurgeons at St. Tammany Health System to perform complex brain and spine surgeries, including some that may previously have been considered inoperable.

## Globus Excelsius GPS

This revolutionary robotic navigation platform is the world's first technology to combine a rigid robotic arm and full navigation capabilities into one adaptable platform for accurate trajectory alignment in spine surgery, providing robotic guidance and navigation to highly skilled neurosurgeons.





The Breathe Well ConneCTion, a mobile lung cancer screening unit operated by St. Tammany Health System, is the second vehicle in the health system's fleet designed to bring care directly into the community. The other is the Be Well Bus, which has been offering mobile mammograms since May 2021. (STHS photo)

# On the road again

**First-in-the-region vehicle brings lung screenings directly into community**

## **By STHS Communication Department**

Let's roll, St. Tammany.

In its continuing effort to combat stubbornly low population health metrics in South Louisiana, St. Tammany Health System on July 10 rolled out its latest mobile screening unit, a first-in-the-region lung screening vehicle designed to bring potentially life-saving cancer screenings directly into the community.

The Breathe Well ConneCTion joins the health system's Be Well Bus, a mobile mammography unit in service since May 2021, in crisscrossing the parish to visit local festivals, health



Rich Mauti of the Mauti Cancer Fund joins St. Tammany Health System President and CEO Joan Coffman and St. Tammany Parish Fire Protection District No. 4 Chief Bert Norton — along with a number of other local dignitaries — in cutting the ribbon on the health system's new lung screening vehicle, dubbed the Breathe Well ConneCTion, on Thursday, July 10, 2025. (STHS photo)

fairs and other community gatherings.

“Our longstanding commitment to our Northshore friends and

neighbors is right there in our health system's motto: to deliver world-class healthcare close to home for everyone we serve,” health system President and CEO Joan Coffman said. “Thanks to the Be Well Bus, and now the Breathe Well ConneCTion, that care is closer to home than ever before.”

In addition to providing quick and painless lung screenings through an advanced low-dose CT unit, the Breathe Well ConneCTion also employs AI-powered technology to offer a multi-organ approach that further addresses coronary calcium in the heart, aorta measurements





St. Tammany Health Foundation's Kathleen Thomas, left, talks with Nancy Mauti and Patrick Mauti aboard the health system's new Breathe Well ConneCTion, which was made possible with funding from the Mauti Cancer Fund. Behind Kathleen is the low-dose CT unit used to detect potential cancers in patients. (STHS photo)

and bone density in the vertebra.

"These really are remarkable tools, and I applaud everyone who helped make it become reality," Coffman said.

She was joined by other health system leaders, as well as local dignitaries and various community stakeholders. That included local gridiron hero Rich Mauti, whose family-run Mauti Cancer Fund provided key funding, in the amount of \$500,000, to put the bus on the road.

"This thing does maybe 2,500, 3,000 screenings a year," Mauti said. "That's a lot of people, and if we catch one and save one life, it's well worth it. I'm humbled to be here to kick this thing off. ... I'm so confident we're just going to knock it out of the park."

Additional supporters of the lung vehicle include members of the all-volunteer St. Tammany Hospital Guild as well as donors to St. Tammany Health Foundation's 2024 Giving Tuesday drive.

St. Tammany Health System Chief Operating Officer Jack Khashou said the Breathe Well ConneCTion is a four-wheeled embodiment of the health system's commitment



From left, Rachel Mauti and Rich Mauti of the Mauti Cancer Fund check out the Be Well ConneCTion with Dr. Tara Lopez, dean of the Southeastern Louisiana University College of Business; St. Tammany Health Foundation Executive Director Nicole Suhre; and St. Tammany Health System Vice President - Quality and Utilization Management Dr. Mike Hill. (STHS photo)

to the community, pointing out that Louisiana currently ranks near the bottom of the list nationally when it comes to early diagnosis.

"We want to help change that," Khashou said. "This is why we do it. This is why we embrace opportunities like this: because we know that we can impact lives in a positive way."

In an illustration of the Breathe Well ConneCTion's value to the community, its introduction coincided with a screening event for local firefighters, as called for in a 2024 act of the state



St. Tammany Parish Fire Protection District No. 4 Chief Bert Norton talks with St. Tammany Health System Community Engagement Director Anne Pablovich, center, and STHS Corporate Health Coordinator Emily Mobley at the rollout for the Breathe Well ConneCTion. Local firefighters were among the inaugural patients to use the first-in-the-region lung screening vehicle. (STHS photo)

Legislature in acknowledgment of firefighters' increased risk for cancer due to the nature of their work.

"I am grateful for St. Tammany Health System providing convenient, mobile health screenings for first responders of our community — the very people we rely on in life's most difficult moments," local State Rep. Kim Carver said in a statement. "It's hard to imagine a more impactful service — making vital screenings easier and more accessible for the heroes we depend on!" ■



St. Tammany Health System's Terri Johnston gets some face time with a new friend.



One butterfly, cleared for takeoff. (STHS Photos)

# WINGS OF LOVE

St. Tammany Health System  
honors organ donors with butterfly release

## ***By STHS Communication Department***

Dozens of butterflies took wing recently from St. Tammany Health System's flagship St. Tammany Parish Hospital in Covington, part of an expression of gratitude for the gift of life made every day by organ donors.

"In 2024, we here at St. Tammany Health System had the privilege of working with six organ donors, and 10 lives were saved through organ donations," health system President and CEO Joan Coffman said. "We worked with 17 tissue donors, and 12,075 lives were enhanced by those tissue donors.

"In 2025 in the state of Louisiana, there were 303 organ donors, 883 organs transplanted, 752 tissue donors and 56,400 lives enhanced. This is amazing, you guys."

In addition to praising the health system's clinical teams for their compassion and professionalism, Coffman made it a point to express particular gratitude for those in attendance whose lives have been impacted by organ donation.

That included Warren Whittington, a dual transplant recipient; and Paula Jackson, whose 10-year-old daughter's organs were donated following a tragic boating accident.

"We recognize that, though your loved ones have passed, their selfless gift has made it possible for others to live," Coffman said.

Following remarks and a brief invocation, the dozens of people gathered were each given a small cardboard "cocoon" containing a butterfly and invited to gather around the flagpole in front of the hospital.

There, members of the STHS Public Safety team raised a flag emblazoned with the "Donate Life" wordmark of the Louisiana Organ Procurement Agency, or LOPA, an organizer of the event. Afterward, the butterflies were released as a symbol of the hope and life generated by organ donation.

Currently, 100,000 people are on the national transplant waiting list. Learn more about organ donation, including how you can register as a donor, at [LOPA.org/donation](https://LOPA.org/donation). ■



Members of the STHS Public Safety team prepare to raise a LOPA flag during the butterfly release event as LOPA Donation Services Coordinator Bridget Wells Anderson addresses those gathered.



Paula Jackson shows off a piece of butterfly artwork made by her 10-year-old daughter, whose organs were donated following a boating accident.



A butterfly warms its wings before taking flight in front of St. Tammany Health System's St. Tammany Parish Hospital in Covington recently.



# STHS: The next generation

Summer program connects high school students to potential careers in healthcare

## By STHS Communication Department

School might have ended for the summer, but the learning didn't stop for a group of 19 local high school students participating in St. Tammany Health System's Health Tech Connect Camp, a weeklong program designed to give them a taste of working in the healthcare industry.

Conducted in partnership with the Southeastern Louisiana University School of Nursing and powered by a grant from CLECO, the camp ran from June 9 to 14 at the St. Tammany Academic Center in Covington. There, camp participants were introduced over the course of the week to potential careers in healthcare through hands-on training, expert guidance and behind-the-scenes insights.

If there was one key takeaway for campers, it was that there's a job for almost anyone in healthcare, from front-line caregivers to roles in finance, pharmacy, food service, laboratory services, radiology, communications, security, technology, philanthropy, environmental services, construction and on and on.

"I hope that's what you see this week," St. Tammany Health System Chief Nursing Officer Kerry Milton said in welcoming students on the program's first day. "There are a lot of options for you in healthcare."

Indeed, by the time the camp wrapped up, a number of campers – representing schools including Mandeville High, Covington High, Fontainebleau, St. Paul's, Archbishop Hannan, St. Scholastica and Mount Carmel – said they were impressed by the variety of career paths available at St. Tammany.

Also singled out by students were the hands-on learning opportunities, including how to collect and record



Teenage participants in the first Health Tech Connect Camp, a joint venture of St. Tammany Health System and SLU, pose for a group photo on the last day of the weeklong camp, designed to give them a look at the various career opportunities available in the healthcare sphere. (Photos by Mike Scott/STHS)



Local high school students roleplay as part of an exercise titled "What Went Wrong?" during the Health Tech Connect Camp, designed to introduce them to careers in healthcare.

a patient's vital signs, how to administer CPR and how to start an IV drip; as well as a tour of the health system's flagship St. Tammany Parish Hospital and a tour of the SLU campus in Hammond.

"I cannot pick a favorite thing," one student said during closing ceremonies on the last day of camp. "But it definitely sealed



St. Tammany Health System executives welcome participants to the first-ever Health Tech Connect Camp, a partnership between the health system and SLU.

the deal on SLU for me."

In what appeared to be a universal sentiment, another added: "I'm very happy I got the opportunity to do this."

Plans are underway to offer the camp again next summer. Watch the news feed at [StTammany.health](http://StTammany.health) or follow the health system's social media channels for more information as it becomes available. ■



Guitarist John Eubanks helped set the tone for a jazzy evening of celebration.



STHS President and CEO Joan Coffman.



The coveted Adrian Award.



From left, the foundation's Kathleen Thomas and Nicole Suhre are joined by foundation supporter Patrick Mauti. St. Tammany Health System President and CEO Joan Coffman and healthcare advocate Rich Mauti as the evening gets underway. Rich Mauti was a guest of honor, as the foundation recognized him for the Mauti Cancer Fund's generous gift to make the Breathe Well ConneCTion mobile screening bus become a reality. (Read more on page 8.)

## A thankful heart

Foundation salutes local generosity at donor appreciation event

**By STHS Communication Department**

St. Tammany Health Foundation hosted a jazzy evening May 8 at the Southern Hotel to recognize and celebrate its 2024 donors, supporters, volunteers and special friends who helped it raise more than \$2 million for the year to support the healing work of St. Tammany Health System.

Featuring special remarks from Rich Mauti of the Mauti Cancer Fund, which donated \$500,000 to help get the health system's new lung-screening bus on the road, the evening was filled with gratitude and great music in equal measure.

The foundation's annual Spotlight Award — affectionately known as “the Adrian” in memory of Dr.

Adrian B. Cairns Jr., the foundation's first chairman, and presented annually to an exceptional donor — was presented to Winn-Dixie.

With store initiatives like the Community Bag program and grants from the Winn-Dixie Foundation, Winn-Dixie has contributed nearly \$40,000 in cash donations over the years. Additionally, Winn-Dixie has contributed thousands of dollars in in-kind support including cakes and bakery items for colleague events, bottled water for special events and gift cards for various programs.

Thanks to all those donors who are helping to make a difference in our community. We hope to see you at next year's event! ■



STHS's own Dr. Mike Hill (far right) and STHS Guild President Michelle Pennington (center) pose for a photo with their spouses and friends.



Cher Cairns (in orange dress), wife of the late Dr. Adrian Cairns, carries on her husband's foundation legacy by helping to recognize Winn-Dixie for its years of in-kind generosity to the foundation.



St. Tammany Health Foundation Board of Trustees members Dr. Jim Woodward and wife Rachelle; Liz Healy; Norma Richard and husband Todd; and Kevin Mashburn with wife Carolyn.



## St. Tammany Hospital Guild celebrates its army of volunteers

By STHS Communication Department

In recognition of the tireless support they give to St. Tammany Health System and its patients – to the tune of more than 16,418 volunteer hours in 2024 alone – health system leadership paid tribute to members of the St. Tammany Hospital Guild on April 30 with an awards luncheon at Tchefuncta Country Club in Covington.

“You are the face of St. Tammany Health System,” STHS President and CEO Joan Coffman said in welcoming those in attendance. “So, I want to say thank you not only for what you do every day but for the way you go about doing it, with joy in your heart. Our patients feel that.”

In addition to a catered lunch and recognitions for service milestones, guild leadership presented their annual gift to the nonprofit St. Tammany Health Foundation, this year in the amount of \$72,670, a record.

Among the guild volunteers singled out for individual honors were Daniel Brady, who has contributed more than 9,000 hours of service; Joyce McHenry, who marked 35 years of service; and soon-to-be-nonagenarian Judy LaCour, who, in a surprise presentation, was named an STHS Ambassador for the first quarter of 2025.

As part of the day’s events, attendees were treated to a keynote address from New Orleans



Members of the St. Tammany Hospital Guild present the group’s annual donation to St. Tammany Health Foundation and St. Tammany Health System leadership in April. This year’s gift, in the amount of \$72,670, was a record for the 70-year-old volunteer group. (Photo by Mike Scott / STHS)



St. Tammany Hospital Guild volunteer Judy LaCour reacts upon being recognized as a St. Tammany Health System Ambassador during the guild’s annual luncheon. (Photo by Mike Scott / STHS)

broadcaster LBJ, whose remarks aptly celebrated the spirit of volunteerism.

“We see you. We thank you. You are making a difference every day,” he said, adding, “Community doesn’t exist without helping each other.”

The St. Tammany Hospital Guild was founded in 1955 to assist the healing work done by the care team at St. Tammany Parish Hospital. Today, its volunteers contribute their time to nearly every department of the hospital – clinical and non-clinical alike – including operation of the hospital gift shop. ■



## The St. Tammany Hospital Guild: Making a difference since 1955

Interested in giving back to the community?  
Become a St. Tammany Health System volunteer.

Learn more at [StTammany.health/Volunteer](https://StTammany.health/Volunteer) or scan the code for a brief video.



# The Power of Pink

Foundation's annual breast cancer campaign celebrates fifth year

By Mike Scott, [mscott@stph.org](mailto:mscott@stph.org)

In fall 2021, as the world grappled with the COVID-19 pandemic, St. Tammany Health Foundation decided the Northshore could use a dose of hope. It would come in the form of its inaugural breast cancer awareness campaign, a monthlong observation intended to drive home the importance of early detection in fighting cancer.

Five years later, the foundation's efforts to generate hope are still going strong.

Now a fixture on the Northshore's fall calendar, the foundation's fifth annual breast cancer awareness campaign — officially St. Tammany United in Breast Health: The Power of Pink — promises to be bigger, pinker and more hopeful than ever when it launches this October.

"Breast cancer is the second most frequently diagnosed cancer in Louisiana," the foundation's Kathleen Thomas said. "But with regular screenings, we can catch it early. That's why we're so proud to partner once more with survivors, caregivers, community partners and local businesses to spotlight the power of education and early detection."

As in years past, the centerpiece of the campaign will be the Be Well Bus, St. Tammany Health System's mobile mammography vehicle, which will roll through the community offering free and low-cost screenings.

Supporters are also once more invited to donate \$5 in exchange for



The Pink Ladies, a group of cancer patients, survivors and caregivers, get in the aloha spirit at a luau-themed open house event in June at the St. Tammany Health System Women's Pavilion. Members of the group designed the T-shirt being sold to benefit this year's Power of Pink breast cancer awareness campaign, which will run throughout October. (Photo by Mike Scott/STHS)



## HEIDI'S STORY

When Heidi Weiskopf-Gommel (at center) went in for her annual mammogram, she didn't expect her life to change — but that's exactly what happened. Visit [STHfoundation.org/PowerOfPink](http://STHfoundation.org/PowerOfPink) to hear her story of gratitude in her words.

signing a pink St. Tammany Parish Sheriff's Office vehicle in honor of someone they love; attend give-

back events at local businesses; or snag a 2025 campaign T-shirt designed by "the Pink Ladies," a spirited group of local cancer survivors, patients and caregivers.

All proceeds of the Power of Pink campaign will benefit St. Tammany Health System's work in community education, breast cancer screenings, early detection initiatives, survivorship programs and patient care.

"And if you really want to make a difference, local community members and businesses can become a 'Pink Partner' or campaign sponsor to help us fund mammograms year-round, making early detection more accessible to women across our region," Thomas said, adding, "How's that for spreading hope?" ■

Visit [StTammanyUnited.org](http://StTammanyUnited.org) for more information on the Power of Pink breast health campaign.

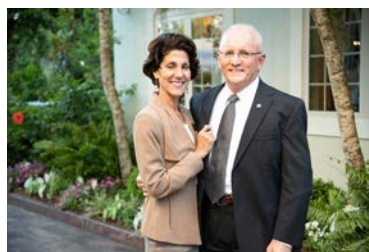


# A lasting legacy

## How two dear friends made sure their love will linger long into the future



Nicole Suhre, STHF executive director



Jim and Mary Lee.

Giving is a social act that binds us together for a greater good. At St. Tammany Health Foundation, we understand that all our supporters have a special connection to us, and we are grateful for their dedication to our mission.

Sometimes our team receives a donation and we aren't immediately aware of what the connection is between the donor and our foundation or St. Tammany Health System. There are other times in which the connection is evident and personal, but the gift itself is a surprise. That was the case with a recent bequest from the estate of Jim and Mary Lee.

Mary Lee, a former St. Tammany Health System Board of Trustees member and decade-long chair of its Healing Arts Initiative, and her husband, business owner Jim Lee, were dear friends of our foundation and loyal and passionate supporters since 2012. Mary lost her battle with cancer in October 2023, and Jim passed away soon after, in April 2025. Shortly after his passing, I received a call from their financial advisor that the Lees had made provisions for the foundation in their estate plans with insurance policies and annuities that totaled a significant six-figure sum.

This type of call is not all that uncommon at the foundation. But Mary and Jim certainly were. They were unique and beautiful souls, as well as friends, and I shed more than a few tears on the phone that day.

Our foundation's board and team are truly humbled by Mary and Jim's legacy gift, as we are with all planned gifts. When donors include our foundation in their estate plans, their generosity helps sustain the healing work of the physicians and staff of St. Tammany Health System well into the future and leaves a meaningful legacy long after they are gone.

I invite anyone who is interested in this type of giving to visit our planned giving website at [sthfoundation.planmygift.org](http://sthfoundation.planmygift.org) to see how easy it is to ensure quality, world-class healthcare for your family, friends, neighbors and our community.

Thank you for all that each of you do to make a difference every day.  
Enjoy your summer!

Sincerely,

Nicole Suhre, CFRE  
St. Tammany Health Foundation executive director

## Foundation calendar Save the dates!



### THE Gala 2025

Oct. 2 | The Greenwood

The foundation's signature annual fundraising soirée, which has become a highlight of the local fall calendar, steps into the Jungle this year. Expect a "wild" evening of music, dancing, live auction, delicious food and fun — all in support of local cancer care.

Details: [THEGalaNorthshore.org](http://THEGalaNorthshore.org) | (985) 898-4141

### Monster Mash

Oct. 18, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. | Bogue Falaya Park

St. Tammany gets in touch with its spooky side with the 37th anniversary of the spooktacular Monster Mash presented by Metairie Bank Northshore, featuring family-friendly games, costumes, trick-or-treating and more. Proceeds benefit the STHS Parenting Center.

Details: [DoTheMash.org](http://DoTheMash.org) | (985) 898-4435

### Power of Pearl Lung Cancer Walk

Nov. 22, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. | Covington Trailhead

We invite you to the 3rd annual St. Tammany United in Lung Health-Power of Pearl Lung Cancer 1-Mile Walk. Join survivors, families and friends as they walk to promote lung cancer awareness or in memory of a loved one who harnessed the Power of Pearl during their journey.

Details: [STHfoundation.org/UNITEDinPearl](http://STHfoundation.org/UNITEDinPearl) | (985) 388-5328



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# ST. TAMMANY MANY THANKS

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