

THE WOMEN'S CENTER AT ST. LUKE'S: Consolidated services meet women's diverse needs

BY ALISON SHERIDAN

As the Baby Boom generation enters its 60s and as their children enter middle age, many women find themselves caring for two or three generations at a time. In fact, there are nearly 78 million Boomers in the United States, representing more than 27 percent of the population. Women make up nearly 60 percent of the population over the age of 65.

Research shows that two-thirds of women are entirely responsible for making their families' health-care decisions. Managing their own health, as well as that of their children and parents, can be exhausting and time consuming. Often, women will care for their spouses, children and parents at the expense of their own well-being.

In an effort to serve these and all women in the community, St. Luke's Hospital established The Women's Center earlier this year. The Center's goal is to meet the needs of women at all stages of their lives, from childbirth and wellness education to breast care and mammography services to heart disease prevention and treatment. Since heart disease is the number one killer for both men and women, St. Luke's also places a strong emphasis on cardiovascular care for women. St. Luke's offers a comprehensive array of services from education and screenings through diagnostic and surgical care and rehabilitation.

Pat Voss knows first-hand the quality care provided at St. Luke's Women's Center. In addition to having her annual mammograms in the Breast Care Center,



she recently underwent a hysteroscopy in the Women's Outpatient Diagnostic Center (WODC).

"There is a definite feeling of caring," said Pat. "I'm the type of person who reads a lot about my procedures before hand and the staff couldn't have been any nicer or more prepared. They really helped me understand what I was in for."

Hysteroscopies, like the one Pat had, are just one of numerous advanced procedures that can be performed in the Women's Outpatient Diagnostic Center, a division of The Women's Center. "Hysteroscopies are wonderful diagnostic and treatment tools," says Mary Pfenning, director of the WODC. "We also have the capabilities to offer women many options for heavy uterine bleeding."

The WODC was designed with women in mind. Pat found the space "gorgeous, light and airy, with plenty of private areas for patients."

"We only see women here and are proud of our abilities to offer OR-type procedures for women in this more comfortable, less stressful atmosphere," said Pfenning.

After spending 43 years as an educator, including many as the principal of Webster Groves High School, Pat knows how important it is to thank people for a job well done. After her successful procedure, Pat returned to the Center to bring treats for the staff. "I like to say 'Thank You' to people," she said. "So often we don't say it enough, but everybody needs a pat on the back." ■

THE OSTEOPOROSIS CENTER AT ST. LUKE'S HOSPITAL

As we age most of us lose bone density, putting us at increased risk of fractures in our later years, but for women the rate of bone loss is particularly rapid in the years following menopause. The surgeon general estimates that one in two women over the age of 50 will experience fractures in their lives. Luckily, there are now ways to minimize the effects of bone loss, even though it cannot be stopped completely.

"The most important first step is to measure bone density, which predicts bone fragility," said Katharine Mikulec, MD, director of the Osteoporosis Center at St. Luke's Hospital. "We use a DXA test, which is quick and painless, to measure the bone density at the hip and spine, two areas susceptible

THE WOMEN'S CENTER'S SERVICES INCLUDE:

- Breast Care and Mammography Services
- Breast Cancer Support
- Birth Care Suites and Perinatal Services
- Lactation Support Services
- Osteoporosis Services
- Specialty Surgical Services
- Cardiovascular Services
- Outpatient Nutritional Counseling

to serious fractures."

There are ways to delay the onset of bone loss, or to minimize its effect. Dr. Mikulec recommends weight-bearing exercise for anyone over 50, for 30 minutes, at least three times per week. "This can include activities like walking, jogging or dancing, any activity you find enjoyable," she adds.

For added protection, Dr. Mikulec says women should also consider taking a calcium supplement and Vitamin D, to help the body absorb calcium. Foods that contain natural sources of calcium include the obvious like low-fat dairy products, but also things such as canned sardines. Foods fortified with calcium, such as orange juice or oatmeal are also good choices.



Mary Sue Pense and Katharine Mikulec, MD go over Mary Sue's treatment options at the Osteoporosis Center.

For women who have not yet begun to suffer from osteoporosis, there are steps they can take to prevent the disease, including limiting alcohol and quitting smoking.

Mary Sue Pensel, who suffers from severe osteoporosis, has been seeing Dr. Mikulec for nearly two years and is thrilled with the specialized, personal care she receives at the Center. "Dr. Mikulec really takes the time to listen," said Mary Sue. "She is willing to sit and listen and then make positive suggestions." After trying other treatments with no success, Mary Sue has begun therapy with an injectable drug that stimulates new bone formation.

Mary Sue made the decision to help others who also suffer from this disease by becoming active in an osteoporosis support group. "It's just a matter of get-

ting the word out to people. You have to take a proactive approach to your own health," she adds.

As Mary Sue says, with a diagnosis of osteoporosis, "You may have to change your lifestyle, but you don't have to stop living." ■

ST. LUKE'S BONE BUILDERS OSTEOPOROSIS PROGRAM

Mondays, November 12 or
December 3 at 6 p.m.

To register or for more information
visit www.stlukes-stl.com or call
314-542-4848.

HEALTHY WOMAN AWARD

Barb Barber was awarded the 2007
St. Luke's Healthy Woman Award™ at the
Conversations for Women event in April.

Barb truly exemplifies how to live a healthy life, physically, mentally and spiritually. An avid walker for over 20 years, Barb incorporates exercise and wellness into her busy, everyday life. But for her, a healthy lifestyle doesn't end with exercise or eating right. An avid patron of the arts, Barb feels that finding emotionally uplifting activities, such as attending a play, or taking a class, is invaluable toward a more complete and healthful life.

In short, the key to Barb's healthy lifestyle is "balance." From the inside out, Barb always strives to make the healthiest of choices and model this lifestyle to her family, friends and those around her.

Barb, her husband, Dick and daughter Amy run their own temporary staffing company where she has worked for the past eight years. A native of Buffalo, NY and a resident of Chesterfield for nearly 30 years, Barb has three grown children: Amy, Molly and Rich, and five grandchildren, all of whom live in St. Louis as well.

Congratulations to Barb for putting her beliefs into action and exemplifying the modern Healthy Woman! ■

