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2025 FIRST QUARTER



CHEERS FOR CARE TEAM MEMBERS

Meet the new Allina Health Annual Award honorees.

OUR MISSION IN ACTION

A doctor who creates compassion for patients living with autism, a nurse who measures success by the amount of joy she generates, and a volunteer coordinator who shares kindness and compliments with community members who donate their time.

These are some of the inspirational storylines that recently played on the big screen as we cheered for Care Team Members who received our most prestigious employee recognition.

Find out what drives this year's class of Allina Health Annual Award honorees in this edition of our magazine.

Also ahead:

- Learn how a cardiac arrest during a stress test put a Cottage Grove man in the right place for expert emergency care.
- Meet a St. Paul woman who's back to fitness and dancing following successful knee surgery and rehab care.
- Tag along with a volunteer whose donation of time has now surpassed the equivalent of more than 12 years of 40-hour workweeks.

Enjoy the good news!



Kerri Gordon
Chief Marketing, Communication
and Public Affairs Officer

DONNA ON DUTY

“ It’s what’s kept me going. ”

Donna Brandell
Volunteer

More than a decade after a brain tumor threatened her life, Donna Brandell is thriving through volunteering.

“My family and being able to do this, it’s what’s kept me going,” Donna said.

Following successful brain surgery and therapy, Donna has dedicated her life to giving back—including by mentoring people who’ve been diagnosed with brain tumors.

“You can help, so it’s not so scary for them,” Donna said.

Before her mentoring work, Donna’s service to Allina Health started with one hour of office volunteering. Since then, she’s been a familiar face among the volunteer ranks and has racked up a whopping 25,000 hours of donated time.



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APPLAUSE & HIGH HONORS

The Allina Health Annual Award is the most prestigious recognition presented by our organization.

For 2024, six individuals and one duo were recognized for ensuring safety, celebrating diversity, supporting our financial recovery and more.

Meet this year's honorees and hear what inspires their award-winning work.



AN EXPERT TEAM FOR CANCER CARE

“ I just felt surrounded by care, competence and compassion.”

Tom Steller
Patient

What he thought was a stomach bug from a trip abroad turned out to be a blessing in disguise for Tom Steller — a symptom that ended up revealing early-stage pancreatic cancer.

“I had no appetite,” Tom said. “So, when I got home, I went to the doctor.”

Scans showed a pancreatic cyst was pressing on Tom’s stomach and causing his loss of appetite. But there was a bigger problem.

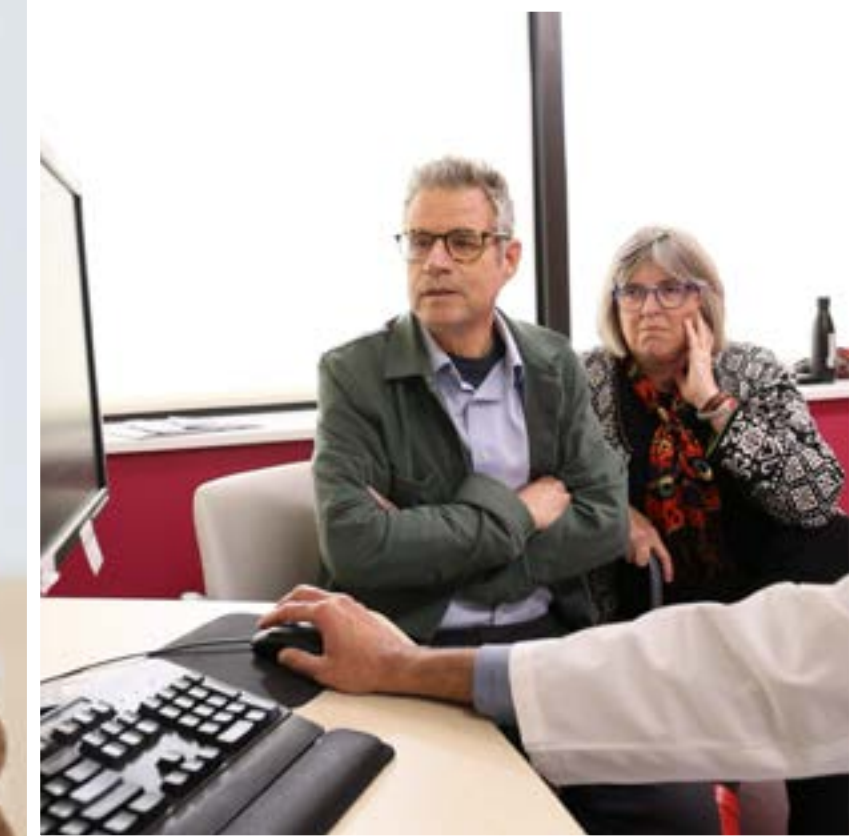
“There was damage across his pancreas,” said Ashwin Kamath, MD, hepatobiliary and pancreatic surgeon at Allina Health Cancer Institute. “My concern was that this was all related to pre-cancerous cysts within the pancreas.”

Dr. Kamath’s concerns were warranted as post-operative tests revealed cancer was present in Tom’s pancreas.

“Of course, my heart sank,” Tom said. “But I’m so grateful that it was discovered so early.”

Tom completed chemotherapy and is back to his pastoral work as an international teacher.

“I wish I could just look everyone in the eye and just say, ‘Thank you,’” Tom said. “These folks saved my life.”



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PUTTING SPRING BACK IN JAN'S STEP

“ I just felt so supported, so safe, every step of the way.”

Jan Johnson
Patient

Jan Johnson found joy in all kinds of fitness activities until the day she heard a “pop” in her knee.

“It was like my body letting me down,” Jan said about her injury.

“When I met Jan, the meniscal tear she had was on top of arthritis,” said Mark Heller, MD, a surgeon with Allina Health Orthopedics.

Dr. Heller and Jan agreed to start with cortisone injections to reduce her pain. When those stopped working, Jan knew it was time for surgery.

She had her left knee replaced at United Hospital in St. Paul and went home to recover the same day. Soon after, Jan began rehab.

“Physical therapy, that’s instilled in you,” Jan said.

Dr. Heller says knee replacement patients get better much faster than they did years ago — especially in cases like Jan’s, where there’s effective communication between the patient and Care Team Members.

“If the team were here, I would tell them, ‘You don’t know how much you’ve done for me along this journey. Truly, I couldn’t have done it without you,’” Jan said.



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PERFECTLY TIMED HEART CARE

“ If this had occurred at any other place, I don’t think I would have survived it.”

John Moore
Patient

John Moore’s story reads like a TV drama: Already feeling weak, he heads to the doctor, takes a stress test to see what’s wrong and ends up in cardiac arrest.

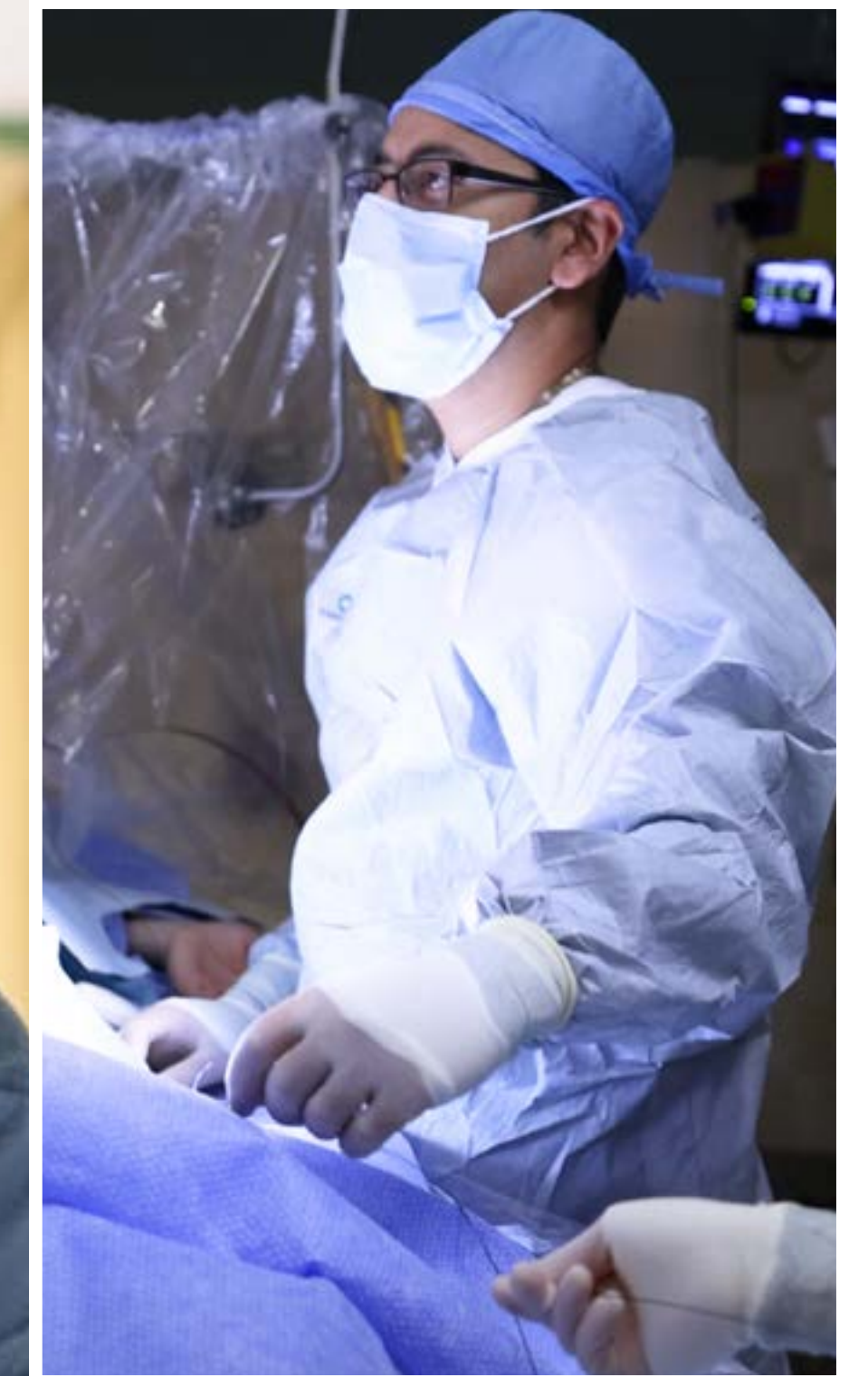
“If this had occurred at any other place, I don’t think I would have survived it,” John said.

John’s heart stopped moments after stepping off the treadmill during a stress test at United Hospital – Hastings Regina Campus. The team there spent more than an hour performing CPR to get him stable enough to transport him to Allina Health Minneapolis Heart Institute – St. Paul.

Upon arrival, Mohammed Jameel, MD, PhD, performed lifesaving surgery in the hospital’s catheter lab. He inserted stents to open severe blockages in John’s heart.

John has recovered from emergency surgery, made important lifestyle changes and is fully embracing his second chance at life.

“Words really can’t express the debt of gratitude I have for all the health care providers,” John said. “I was within inches of my life.”



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OPPORTUNITY IN APPRENTICESHIP

“ Allina Health, it’s definitely a place that cares about my growth.”

Deon Scott
Medical assistant

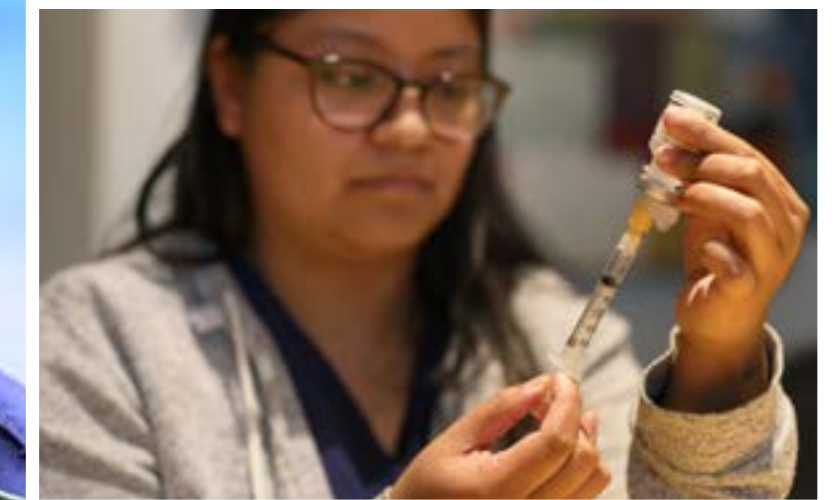
Deon Scott enjoyed working as an emergency inventory technician but was interested in taking the next step in his career. He found a path in the Allina Health Medical Assistant Apprenticeship Program.

The program begins with Allina Health covering tuition for online medical assistant certificate classes. Then, Allina Health nurses provide students with hands-on learning scenarios before they go to work in clinics.

“It’s so exciting to see the pride they have when they take their job,” said Maggie Borer, RN, director of ambulatory nursing at Allina Health.

Students in the program commit to working in an Allina Health clinic for at least a year. Many, including Deon, plan to stay longer and take more steps on their career paths.

“They want you to strive and keep on going,” Deon said. “I plan to go into nursing.”



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BRIGHT SPOTS



NEW LEADERSHIP

After joining Allina Health in 2022, neurologist Sanjay Singh, MD, has been named chief clinical executive and leader of the physician and provider enterprise.

In this role, Dr. Singh will focus on clinically distinctive programs, market-leading experience, innovative research and more to strengthen Allina Health's expert care.



A FOUR-PEAT FOR MAGNET® DESIGNATION

Nurses at Abbott Northwestern Hospital are part of an elite group that's achieved gold-standard marks in nursing.

In late 2024, Abbott Northwestern joined only 2% of U.S. hospitals to achieve Magnet designation from the American Nurses Credentialing Center for a fourth time.

"Nursing is the heart of any health care organization," said Carol Koeppel-Olsen, RN, chief nursing officer at Abbott Northwestern Hospital. "When nursing is healthy and strong, the organization is healthy and strong."



SIMULATING FOR PREPAREDNESS

Allina Health recently hosted the Minnesota National Guard in support of hands-on medical training.

A field medic platoon from the Guard's 34th Infantry Division trained at the donor-funded Vanderboom Simulation Center inside the MacMillan Community and Education Center.

"They're trying to test their ability to think on their feet and solve some challenging problems," said Captain Eric Jezierski, a member of the Guard and a security training specialist at Allina Health.