

INAUGURAL ISSUE

# peakHEALTH

BY NATIVIDAD MEDICAL CENTER

## A Breath of FRESH AIR

Natividad's Pediatric Unit  
tackles respiratory illnesses

inside

Fighting Back  
After Trauma

A CHOICE  
Worth Making

Art Gives  
Hope

THE HIGHEST QUALITY HEALTH CARE FOR ALL

# Caring For Our Community



# Inaugural Issue 2018

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We hope you enjoy this edition of Peak Health. Comments about the publication can be directed to the Administration Department:

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### TRIUMPH OVER TRAUMA

Natividad's skilled emergency and rehabilitation teams join forces to help restore the lives of two courageous women.

## features

### HOW TO SAVE A LIFE

Natividad's Level II Trauma Center provides top-tier lifesaving care once unknown to the Central Coast.



### BREATHING SPACE

A tiny ballerina dances again after a bout with pneumonia, with loving care from Natividad's pediatric team.



# Greetings

Welcome to the inaugural issue of Peak Health magazine. I'm Dr. Gary Gray, chief executive officer at Natividad Medical Center. We are excited to share with you stories about the remarkable patients, outstanding staff and innovative programs that make Natividad a leading medical center providing first-class health care for the entire community.

In its 132 years, Natividad Medical Center has established a long history of serving the people of Monterey County. And, while we can always look to the past for inspiration, our focus is a continuous forward-thinking approach to health care that helps patients live healthy lives.

As I look back on the Medical Center's many successful programs – our Trauma Center, Women's and Children's Services, Family Medicine Residency Program and Sam Karas Acute Rehabilitation Center, to name a few – I see more than a high-caliber staff and top-level of care. I see exceptional people with a purpose and a passion offering outstanding clinical services throughout the Medical Center.

Our desire to support better lives comes from a sense of respect for all of our patients and an understanding of the communities and backgrounds from which they come. Our doctors, nurses and support staff treat all patients, as well as their family and friends, with utmost respect, instilling a desire for wellness throughout the community.

Peak Health magazine is our opportunity to educate the public about what we offer and to help create a community among our many partners.

One of those partners is the Monterey County Board of Supervisors, which had the foresight to see that top-notch trauma services are available to the community. In January 2015, Natividad became the only Level II Trauma Center serving the entire Central Coast region.

Another outstanding partner is Natividad Medical Foundation, which is dedicated to bringing people together to strengthen the Medical Center through engagement of contributors and community leaders. We are deeply grateful to each donor to Natividad Medical Foundation.

But our most valued partners are the patients we serve, who continually come back to us when they are in need.

And that, ultimately, is what makes us an award-winning Medical Center. Regardless of the accolades we have received, patients in peak health are what we strive for everyday.

**Dr. Gary Gray**  
CEO, NATIVIDAD MEDICAL CENTER

# Photo Album



It was a busy summer and fall for Natividad Medical Center, both within the hospital and the community! At left, some of Natividad's administrative staff who help keep the hospital on the right track. Middle row, left to right: Dr. Gary Gray, CEO honored Natividad's vital staff members during an Employee of the Quarter Celebration. The weekly Farmers Market provided nutritious produce and other goodies for patients and visitors. Natividad staffers helped fit bike helmets to protect little heads. Bottom row: Dr. Gary Gray, Linda Ford and Andrew Ausonio celebrate Ausonio Inc's sponsorship of the HOME Monterey County photo exhibition at the Sam Karas Acute Rehabilitation Center. The Family Medicine Residency Graduation in early summer launched some top family physicians into the world.



# Making the right CHOICE

## Innovative program helps violence victims

Contributed Content by  
**Lorraine Artinger, RN**

**C**esar\*, an 18-year-old soccer player, didn't realize that a simple walk home from the soccer field would change his life.

While walking through a neighborhood park with a classmate, he was shot by someone in a passing car.

After Cesar's injuries were treated at Natividad, he was fearful about returning to school; he had missed a lot of his studies. Cesar wanted to earn a high school diploma and was also interested in receiving vocational training.

An innovative program at Natividad gave Cesar a "CHOICE" in the matter. With the help of an Intervention Specialist, Cesar was admitted to Rancho Cielo, a continuation school and vocational training program. Cesar is now in his first semester there, on the way to finishing high school and training for a career in solar power installation and maintenance. He lives at the school's residential site and says he is very excited about continuing his education and training.

Cesar is just one of the many trauma patients the hospital's CHOICE program has aided when it comes to their care after a violent injury. This program, in its third year, is offered in only 27 other hospitals in the nation.

The hospital-based violence and prevention intervention program serves victims of violence – those who have suffered from gunshot wounds, stabbing or blunt force injuries. CHOICE Intervention Specialists connect with victims from the time they are admitted to when they are discharged and after, helping them prevent such injuries occurring in the future.

CHOICE Intervention Specialists are on hand when a patient has recovered enough to express his or her needs – anything from a ride home to disengaging from a violent lifestyle, like gang activity.

Some patients might need housing and money to get back on track; others may need more long-term assistance. The value of the para-professional Intervention Specialists is that many can say, "I've been there before."

CHOICE has helped 175 patients and families since its inception.

"I was exposed to an environment of violence at a young age and thought it was normal," says Intervention Specialist Martha Edeza-Gomez. "Then as I grew up, I realized that violence is a choice. I want to help others see the alternatives, as I wish someone was there for me in the middle of my chaos."

CHOICE Intervention Specialists are on hand when a patient is recovered enough to express his or her needs – anything from a ride home to disengaging from a violent lifestyle.



CHOICE Intervention Specialists work as a team to provide case management for 6-12 months after someone has experienced a violent episode.



Intervention Specialists connect with victims of violence immediately following an injury during the "reachable moment."



CHOICE's peer team includes Rev. Lawrence Robles, Sorena Holguin and Nick Langarica.

Natividad's CHOICE program is funded by donors to Natividad Medical Foundation including the Barnet Segal Charitable Trust, Claire Giannini Fund, and the City of Salinas CalGRIP grant.

Natividad's CHOICE team also helps families and communities affected by violence offering resources and support. In addition, doctors from the residency program are regularly scheduled at least once a month to visit CHOICE clients in their

homes for follow-up care. This service provides a rich experience for both patients and Family Medicine Residents as patients receive personal medical attention following their injury while doctors are exposed to the medical needs and challenges of clients after a life-threatening traumatic event.

"I have experienced firsthand the emotional trauma that a parent or other family member goes through," says Intervention Specialist Nick Langarica. "I can empathize with others and I know

I am contributing to the healing process of someone else, and that person's extended family. Working in CHOICE, I am part of a vital safety net!"

*\*Not his real name.*



Lorraine Artinger, RN is a Trauma Prevention and Outreach Nurse at Natividad.

# IS WHERE THE Heart is

# Home THE Heart is

Natividad's Family Medicine Residency Program keeps some doctors close by

by Peggy Spear

When Natividad Medical Center graduated eight physicians of its Family Medicine Residency Program last summer, many went off to prestigious positions at other hospitals and clinics in the U.S. and around the globe.

But each year, one or two decide to stay in the Salinas area to work, including 2017 graduate Dr. Kristin Burstedt. Dr. Burstedt is working at Natividad and participating in the HEAL initiative fellowship. HEAL, which stands for Health, Education, Action and Leadership, is a new program in which Natividad is partnering with the University of California San Francisco. HEAL helps create and sustain a pipeline of health professionals to care for the poorest communities domestically and abroad.

## Coming Home

Coming home is no surprise to Dr. Minerva Perez-Lopez, a Natividad physician who is a graduate of Natividad's Family Medicine Residency program.

"A number of factors played a role in my decision to return, including the proximity of my family, and also the community I would be working in," Dr. Perez-Lopez says. "Natividad serves a large Latino community, many of whom are either underinsured or noninsured. Many work in agriculture. We are a small town with big city problems: violence, drugs, teen pregnancy, etc. But this is home. What better place than to serve and care for those who are closest to your heart? This is why I have stayed."

It truly is home to Dr. Perez-Lopez. She was born at Natividad Medical Center, the younger of two children born to Mexican immigrants. Both her parents had only elementary educations – her father second grade and her mother sixth grade.



Dr. Minerva Perez-Lopez



Dr. Melissa Nothnagle

But that didn't stop their daughter. Dr. Perez-Lopez attended Macalester College in Saint Paul, Minn. for her undergraduate degree, and Brown School of Medicine in Rhode Island.

What made her choose Natividad for her residency? That, she says, is an interesting question.

"As a teenager I wanted to leave Salinas and see 'the world,'" she says. "Fortunately,

as I 'matured,' there were many factors that influenced my decision to select Natividad for residency. I was looking for a residency that provided comprehensive family medicine, including strong training in operative obstetrics. I also wanted to work in an underserved area, with a large Latino community."

Her father suffered a stroke in her third year of medical school that left him disabled and unable to care for himself. So it became more important that she return to California to be closer to her parents. "I looked at a number of programs that fit my criteria, and it so happened that one of the top programs was in my hometown. I was fortunate to be accepted at Natividad, and the rest is history."

## Diverse Practices in One

The residency's focus on family medicine is vital, she says, an opinion shared by Dr. Melissa B. Nothnagle, the new head of the residency program who came to Natividad Medical Center in October. "Yes, there is a shortage of general practice doctors in the country, especially in underserved and rural areas," she says.

That is one of the reasons Dr. Nothnagle wanted to come to the Salinas Valley – she loves her "specialty." "I feel very privileged to practice and teach family medicine," she says. "I like the fact that I get to practice many diverse medical practices in one."

Dr. Nothnagle says she takes a "holistic" approach to family medicine, in which she is not only able to confront many different illnesses, but to treat an entire family, and learn the family dynamic. "We look at things like mental health, family conflicts, substance abuse, nutrition and many other lifestyle issues that people face."

Dr. Nothnagle says she and her students see their



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“What better place than to serve and care for those that are closest to your heart? This is why I have stayed.”

— Dr. Minerva Perez-Lopez

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The Salinas area grows strong family practitioners.



Working in the Salinas area is rewarding for many residency graduates.

role as family medicine doctors as a service to the community. “That’s the culture of family medicine. We’re going to take care of the whole person.”

### Caring for all Ages

For Dr. Perez-Lopez, the joy of her work comes from not only taking care of the whole person, but entire families as well.

“Caring for patients is perhaps one of the most rewarding aspects of a physician’s job,” she says. “As a family physician however, we are in the unique position of caring for an entire family of all ages. What is an even bigger plus is that the patients I care for have very similar backgrounds to my own, making my job even more meaningful.”

This year Dr. Perez-Lopez will be serving as faculty in the residency program, and therefore will have a larger role in training medical students and residents and helping produce the next generation of family medicine practitioners. Some perhaps will be coming to a clinic or office near you.



# Trium



# ph over trauma

Two women survive  
devastating accidents  
to live life fully again

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By Peggy Spear



Sharon Thompson is back  
in the saddle again.



**Sharon and Maria: Two different women, with one thing in common. Thanks to Natividad's Trauma Center, they survived life-threatening accidents and received a second chance to do the things they love.**

For the first time in nearly a year, Sharon Thompson felt she had gotten her life back.

That was the day in early October when the 70-year-old Templeton woman rode on horseback for the first time since early December 2016, when a devastating fall caused traumatic injuries, and there was doubt she would ever walk again, much less ride.

It was a rare dry day in last year's wet winter, and Thompson and some friends were on a horse walk through the wilderness in the San Antonio Lake bottom.

She felt comfortable on her 5½-year-old mount – after all, she had exercised him the day before and he was fine – and all was going well. Until it wasn't.

Something spooked her horse, and he took off at a dead run, leaving her friends far behind.

### A Terrifying Fall

"I don't remember much about what happened, except that as we were walking our horses there were no concerns with my horse," she said. "The run came out of the blue."

Thompson does remember saying, after the horse bolted, "What are you doing? We don't do this."

Friends say she valiantly tried to keep the mount under control, but ended up tumbling into the trunk of a tree. "My friends were terrified," she said. "They thought I'd broken my neck."



Maria Sanchez, back into service.

Someone called 911 and within 10 minutes a helicopter arrived to transport her to Natividad Medical Center's Trauma Center, more than 100 miles away.

And that's where her healing ride began.

Another thing Thompson can remember is how caring the staff and caregivers were at Natividad.

"I can't believe how nice they were, how concerned with my privacy, the care they took of me." The longtime horsewoman said she "has been in enough hospitals to know good service. Natividad offered great service."

She had fractured her C-7 and T-2 vertebrae. Once out of danger, she spent time in the Acute Rehabilitation Center. She was also facing another chal-

lenge. Her sister Roselyn was dying of cancer, and she felt she needed to be there to take care of her.

She left rehab early, armed with exercises and referrals down in Templeton with the goal to someday ride horses again.

Today, she's grateful for the kindness and respect she received at Natividad. "I felt I owed it to them to do all I could to get back into shape."

Now she's closer to her dream, once again able to enjoy the life she loves. But she knows riding horses is not without its risks.

"I'm going to walk the horses for now," she says. "I'm not going to gamble with my life. After all, I have a new great-grandson I'd like to teach to ride someday."

**“I don't remember much about what happened, except that as we were walking our horses there were no concerns with my horse, The run came out of the blue.”**

– Sharon Thompson



Her right side was in pieces, with bones broken from her foot to hand.

“Miraculously, they made the pain go away.”

– Maria Sanchez

## Thankful for Her Life

Giving something back to those who treated you in a crisis is nothing new to Maria Sanchez.

The 55-year-old hospital volunteer is a walking testament to the exceptional care provided by Natividad’s Trauma Center.

It was in February 2015 that Sanchez was driving home to Salinas from her job at another local hospital late at night when her car was broadsided by another motorist.

“I don’t remember much of the accident but I do remember waking up in the car in tremendous pain,” Sanchez says. “It was a bad accident. The other car was in flames.”

She was rushed to Natividad’s Trauma Center, where she said, “miraculously, they made the pain go away.” Her right side was “in pieces,” with bones broken from her hand to her foot.

The night of the accident, Natividad staff did tests to determine the severity of her injuries.

She eventually had surgery on her crushed right hand, her foot and her wrist, and medical staff told her husband Jose “she might never be normal again,” Sanchez says. “But Natividad staff did everything possible to make me feel positive.”

They fused her crushed fingers together, and caregivers – doctors, nurses, nurse practitioners and the rehabilitation staff – spent time teaching

her how to use her injured hand. “I can do almost everything I did before the accident,” she says.

She was still in a lot of pain, but Natividad caregivers helped her manage her medications until she was able to use nothing stronger than ibuprofen.

Sanchez was in a wheelchair for four months, but with the help of Natividad’s rehab professionals, was able to walk again. These days, she walks for exercise, sometimes maybe two blocks, sometimes two miles.

“You don’t need to go to other hospitals,” she says. “Natividad has it all.”

“There’s nothing I can do or say to pay back Natividad for what they gave me,” Sanchez says. But she tries.

Today, she volunteers at Natividad Medical Center a couple of days a week.

“I tell patients not to worry,” Sanchez says. “They will take great care of you here.”



# How to SAVE a LIFE



PRACTICE  
profile

By Peggy Spear



## Natividad's Trauma Center revolutionizes care in central California

The whirl of a medical helicopter or the scream of a siren are the sounds at Natividad's Trauma Center that mean it's time to get to work.

The words Trauma Center can seem scary. But when you're the only one who can

provide help within a wide swath of California, the words take on a whole new meaning: Saving lives.

That's the role of Natividad Trauma Center, which covers serious injuries in locations from

San Benito County to the north to Santa Barbara County in the south.

"You'll be in good hands here," says Julie Ramirez, trauma program manager at Natividad and an integral part of the team that orchestrates





the care throughout the hospital, from the emergency department to acute rehabilitation services.

## What is Trauma?

Trauma is mostly preventable, and in most cases, is associated with high-risk behavior. Trauma is the leading cause of death for ages 1 to 45.

According to the American College of Surgeons, trauma is characterized by three major factors: 1) A physical injury that requires surgical specialists to immediately consult, observe or perform surgery in order to optimize recovery. 2) A patient with the most severe and critical injuries that require a coordinated and organized approach to save life and/or limb. 3) Timely care is critical.

"There is a set, highly standardized system for treating trauma patients," says Dr. Craig Walls, chief medical officer at Natividad and an emergency medicine physician. "As the patient is brought in, an Emergency Department physician will determine the extent of the injury: blunt force, such as from car accidents or falls, or penetrating, such as from stab wounds or shootings. They are

# "We are a Level II Trauma facility operating with Level I services."

- Dr. Alexander Di Stante

almost immediately brought to the ED, where they are attended by a vascular surgeon, orthopedic surgeon or neurosurgeon – sometimes all three – depending on the trauma."

"It is a highly choreographed scene," Dr. Walls says, even to the point of where the surgeons stand. "It's a sight to behold."

The main trauma cases Natividad sees are patients from automobile and motorcycle accidents, at a whopping 60 percent. But since its service area includes hundreds of miles of Highway 101, it's not hard to see why. Other trauma casualties like assaults – stabbings, shootings

COMMUNITY OUTREACH  
AND INJURY PREVENTION  
PROGRAMS

**CHOICE** – Support Services for  
Victims of Violence

**Brain Smart™** – Community  
Education on Brain Injury Risks

**In One Instant** – Teen Safe  
Driving Program

**A Matter of Balance** – Fall  
Management for Older Adults



and blunt-force trauma – are 12 percent, and autos vs. pedestrians 3 percent.

“Our ability to save lives is high,” according to Dr. Walls. “Of course, with a dedicated trauma unit, that’s usually the result.”

He illustrates that by pointing out that every patient in the 2014 Boston Marathon bombings who made it to a trauma center survived.

## Creating a Top-Tier Trauma Center

That’s the importance of trauma centers, and why the service is so critical in and around Salinas. It wasn’t always that way. Until January 2015, Monterey County was the largest of the remaining counties in California without a designated trauma center. Studies have shown a higher preventable death rate from trauma in counties without organized trauma systems as compared to counties that have them.

In January 2015, Natividad Medical Center received designation as a Level II Trauma Center from the Monterey County Emergency Medical Services Agency. That entailed deploying a highly skilled trauma team in-house 24/7, critical-care trauma surgeons, neurosurgeons, orthopedic surgeons, nurse practitioners, nurses, technicians and support staff, Dr. Walls says.

It also involved obtaining the equipment and system improvements to elevate trauma care, with imaging services including a dedicated Interventional Radiology (IR) program.

Perhaps one of the most important enhancements Natividad implemented was extensive staff education and training on trauma care.

In addition to all those improvements, Natividad trained over 55 physicians, physician assistants and nurse practitioners from around the country in Advanced Trauma Life Support.

Natividad also offered specialized training for nurses: the Trauma Nursing Core Course certification courses and Trauma Care After Resuscitation education programs. These courses are ongoing.

The Trauma Center treats 100-120 patients monthly.

What makes this Center so special, besides the fact that is the only one on the Central California Coast?

“We are a Level II Trauma facility operating with Level I services,” says Dr. Alexander Di Stante, chief of surgery and trauma director, referring to the rating systems given to trauma facilities across the U.S.: Level I is usually reserved

for academic medical centers with research.

“You’re not going to find better,” says Dr. Walls.

Preparing for the certification by the American College of Surgeons required a lot of “heavy lifting,” Dr. Walls says, among himself and his emergency department colleagues. They bought new equipment, brought in surgical specialists and nurses, and expanded existing divisions at the hospital.

He says the quality outcomes with trauma patients are on par with top-tiered hospitals, and credits that to many factors, including the onsite Sam Karas Acute Rehabilitation Center.

“We created a lot of jobs,” Dr. Walls said.

The hospital is engaged in many trauma prevention services, including promoting seat belts, bike helmets, and the Brain Smart™ head safety program. (See page 22.)

Patients are entered into a national trauma registry that analyzes the findings on trauma care. “It is a powerful microscope on how people are getting hurt,” Dr. Walls says.

Meanwhile, for those who are hurt, it’s reassuring to know that one of the most comprehensive and successful centers is right down the road.

## TRAUMA BY THE NUMBERS

- Getting treatment for severe injuries at a trauma center can lower your risk of death by **25** percent.
- Trauma accounts for **41 million** Emergency Department visits across the nation each year.
- Natividad treats **100-120** trauma cases monthly.
- There were **2,050** cases of trauma at Natividad from Jan. 15, 2015 to July 2017.
- **64** percent of trauma patients at Natividad are male; **36** percent are female.
- Trauma patients at Natividad ages 15-25 make up **26** percent of the total. **20** percent of trauma patients at Natividad are older than 65, the next highest group.



A close-up photograph of a child's hand gripping a thick, red, braided rope. The rope is part of a playground structure, with a blue metal connector visible. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with green foliage and a blue sky. The title 'Breathing Space' is overlaid in a large, pink, cursive font.

# Breathing Space

Helping Kids Fight  
Off a Common  
Winter Villain

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By Peggy Spear





Samantha Fuentes had a bad cold. For a 2-year-old, that's bad enough, but having it evolve into something worse was no fun at all.

That's what happened to this young child last April when a lingering cold – accompanied by fever – wouldn't go away.

### WHEN A COLD ISN'T A COLD

A few days passed, and Samantha got sicker, not better. So her mother, Yuleika Casillas took her to her pediatrician, who noticed Samantha's lips were blue. She had a fever and the level of oxygen in her blood was dropping.

Her pediatrician, associated with Natividad Medical Center, called the hospital right away. "They said get her to the Emergency Department," Casillas recalls.

So Casillas took Samantha to Natividad Medical Center, where emergency department physicians immediately recognized the signs of viral bronchiolitis. She was then admitted to Natividad's Pediatric Unit and was under the care of the pediatric team for a seven-day stay.

"Viral bronchiolitis is often caused by respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) a common and extremely contagious virus that affects small



"All she wanted to do was make sure she was home in time for her dance class."

-Yuleika Casillas

children during the winter months," says Dr. David Goldstein, who treated Samantha at the hospital.

During this time of year, it's too easy to mistake sniffles and fever as the common cold or flu. But parents of young children must be especially careful when their little ones get sick.

"Samantha's oxygen rates kept dropping. They gave her oxygen in the ED, and the rates

would go up, but as soon as they stopped, they would go down again," Casillas says.

"It was a scary situation," the mother recalls. Samantha's RSV infection took an alarming turn when she developed viral pneumonia, which resulted in her lengthy hospital stay. But Casillas says the frightening experience had a positive side: All the doctors and nurses took special care to make sure that Samantha, now in the Pediatric Unit, had love and attention.

## TIPS FOR WHEN YOUR CHILD IS HOSPITALIZED

- Keep a loved one with them at all times.
- Bring a "comfort item" from home, such as a favorite blanket or toy. Games are also a welcome distraction.
- If there are no dietary restrictions, make or bring a favorite food.
- Don't be afraid to ask questions, both of the patient on a regular basis, and of all staff members to ensure communication is flowing smoothly.
- See if painful procedures can take place outside of the hospital room, so the child doesn't associate the room with pain, but sees it as a comfortable respite.



Samantha Fuentes, 3, suffered a common case of RSV that turned into pneumonia.

"It was very comforting," Casillas says.

One night they tried to spare Samantha from an oxygen mask – wildly uncomfortable for a young child – but when her oxygen levels dropped, the nurses quickly acted to bring them up again.

"It was a roller coaster ride," Casillas recalls. She spent every night at the hospital, leaving her 9-year-old son in the care of her husband, Tony.

## NEW WEAPONS AGAINST RSV

"RSV and viral pneumonia are common in younger children," says Dr. Chris Carpenter, director of Natividad Pediatrics Services, "and they are now coming into season."

Natividad now has two new tools to treat these conditions and make babies and toddlers more comfortable. One is the humidified high flow nasal cannula, a well-tolerated and highly effective way for patients to take oxygen at high pressure.

The other new tool is the hospital's synagis clinic, where doctors can check for antibodies that may indicate high risk for RSV. "It's important for parents of premature babies, who have more likelihood of chronic lung disease and certain heart defects, to consult with their pediatricians to see if it's right for them," Dr. Carpenter says.

Dr. Goldstein also says parents can guard against such conditions as RSV and viral pneumonia infections by washing their hands often and by practicing good hygiene for their young children.

Natividad's Pediatrics Unit is the only hospital in the county staffed with physicians 24 hours a day, seven days a week. With Natividad's advanced medical tools, children need not be sent to other tertiary medical centers out of the county.

Still – as welcoming and comforting as Natividad's caregivers are – a week in a hospital is a long time for a little girl like Samantha.

"All she wanted to do was make sure she was home in time for her dance class," Casillas said.

With the right care she was, and she's been dancing in good health ever since.



## WHEN TO CALL THE PEDIATRICIAN

Not all young children with bad colds or infections like RSV need hospitalization. Dr. David Goldstein and Dr. Chris Carpenter of Natividad's Pediatric Unit say to call a pediatrician when:

- If under 1 year of age, your child stops eating or exhibits poor eating habits with the breast or bottle;
- If your child stretches the muscles in the neck or ribcage to take a breath;
- If you notice that your child is gasping for air or otherwise has trouble breathing;
- You notice blue lips. This indicates your child isn't getting enough oxygen.



# art for body & SOUL

Natividad's distinctive art exhibits help healing

By Linda Ford

Natividad Medical Foundation is dedicated to philanthropically supporting Natividad Medical Center in its mission to improve the health of the people of Monterey County. Natividad Medical Foundation brings people together to strengthen Natividad Medical Center, helping transform health care into solutions that heal people, unite a community and stand as a model for the nation. One of the Foundation's biggest contributions is bringing donors, patients and creative artists together through The Art of Better Health program, transforming what could have been a generic hospital setting into one that affirms the strength of our community and promotes healing.

This is especially true in the Sam Karas Acute Rehabilitation Center. Patients in the newly renovated Sam Karas Acute Rehabilitation Center receive world-class medical care as they work to regain their mobility and independence. Knowing the impact that a welcoming and familiar background can have, General Contractor Ausonio Incorporated sponsored a permanent photographic exhibition by local artist Kirk Kennedy. The exhibition features more than 80 photographs from Kennedy's *HOME Monterey County* book. Surrounding patients with scenes of Monterey County, the photographs have become a vital part of the rehabilitation center's renovation. The art creates a warmer, more nurturing environment

for patients and is also an important component of patient care. Physicians and medical staff work with patients on specific goals and integrate scenes from Kennedy's art into their rehabilitation plans and everyday activities. In addition to Ausonio Incorporated's generous donation, Kirk Kennedy, Kindred Healthcare and Dr. Pete Chandler also supported the exhibition. The Art of Better Health makes the Rehabilitation Center feel more like home for those who are on the road to recovery.

Healing through art continues throughout

Natividad Medical Center. The Monterey Bay Plein Air Painters Association partners with the Foundation to submit dozens of original paintings tied to an annual theme. These paintings are available for sale, with a portion of the proceeds supporting spiritual care for patients at Natividad.

Natividad Medical Foundation is so grateful to the donors and sponsors who fill the hospital with the soothing art that helps Natividad's patients recover faster physically and emotionally. Stay tuned for more updates on The Art of Better Health and other programs that the Foundation supports.



Linda Ford is the former President & Chief Executive Officer of Natividad Medical Foundation. For more information or to donate visit [www.natividadfoundation.org](http://www.natividadfoundation.org).



# USE YOUR HEAD IN SPORTS

Don't keep a young athlete playing if concussion is suspected

Many parents think that if their children don't play football, they are not at risk for sports-based concussions.

The truth is, everyone is at risk of concussion if they suffer an injury to the head. Parents should be especially cautious if their child plays a sport. Winter and spring sports like soccer, lacrosse and basketball have their fair share of

opportunities for head injuries.

A concussion is a type of traumatic brain injury in which a blow to the head causes the brain to move suddenly. It can also occur when the head experiences a sudden force without being hit directly. While usually not life-threatening, a concussion is serious and can have long-lasting health consequences if symptoms are not recog-

nized and treatment is not provided.

Signs and symptoms of concussion can show up immediately or may not be noticed until days or weeks after the injury. Ninety percent of concussions do not involve loss of consciousness. Those who do lose consciousness even momentarily or move in a clumsy way after an impact need careful evaluation.





## WHAT HAPPENS AFTER A BLOW TO THE HEAD?

Stop play if a concussion is suspected. Continuing to play with a concussion lengthens recovery time for young athletes. Experiencing a second concussion before the first one heals increases the chances for serious long-term injury. The healing process may take days or weeks, depending on the severity of the injury.

## TREATMENT

Resting and restricting activities will allow the brain to recover. Rest means no reading, no listening to music, no watching TV. It means no texting, no email or no cellphone. Rest means physical rest AND mental rest.

## WHAT CAN PARENTS OF ATHLETES DO?

Talk to your child about the importance of brain-safety health. Players often feel loyalty to their team and might not recognize that to play at 100 percent, they need to be healthy. By understanding how to prevent, recognize and treat a concussion, you will facilitate your child's healthy return to play. Make sure the youth sports program has a graduated return-to-play protocol in place.



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## Symptoms

### the athlete may sense or feel

Do not try to diagnose the severity of a head injury on your own. A medical professional will make that call after a careful evaluation. It is important to recognize signs of concussion – take your child to an emergency room to be examined should any of these symptoms be present:

- Nausea/vomiting
- Decreased coordination or unusual behavior
- A headache that gets worse
- Slurred speech
- Inability to stay awake

## Symptoms

### observed by parents/coaches

- One pupil larger than the other
- Unsure of game, score, or opponent
- Answers questions slowly
- Balance problems
- Forgets an instruction
- Shows mood, behavior, or personality changes
- Changes in sleep patterns



# SPOT THE WARNING SIGNS OF CONCUSSION

**DID YOU KNOW?** 90% of concussions do not involve loss of consciousness.

## HEADACHE



Watch for headaches that get worse, won't go away, or are accompanied by one pupil appearing larger than the other.

## DOUBLE VISION



Watch for double images where there should only be one. Images can be side by side, on top of each other, or a combination of both.

## NAUSEA/ VOMITING



Watch for nausea brought on by dizziness or headache, and call a doctor right away if vomiting occurs more than 3 times.

## DIZZINESS



Pay attention to dizziness described as a rocking or swaying sensation, lightheadedness or general imbalance.

## CONFUSION



Be aware when athletes seem "zoned out," are easily distracted by lights and noises, or have trouble focusing.

## DROWSINESS



Watch for changes in sleep patterns, such as sleeping for much longer periods than normal, or insomnia.