Get Out and Go
Exploring all of what NC has to offer

When tPA Isn’t Enough

Greater Precision with Robotics
Dear Readers,

Now more than ever, the phrase “saving life and limb” applies to what we are doing in the WakeMed Heart Center. The work we are doing in the Heart Center extends beyond the heart. The vascular system – the blood vessels (arteries and veins) that carry blood throughout the body – is equally important and we have a talented team of clinicians who are passionate about restoring proper blood flow to the heart, brain and limbs.

In Andrey Belayev, MD’s case, restoring blood flow to the brain is his forte. Dr. Belayev is a neurosurgeon with Raleigh Neurosurgical Clinic and WakeMed, who offers a higher level of interventional treatment for stroke patients with hard-to-treat blockages. Read more about this procedure and the life-changing impact for people like Doug and Libby Woodard.

You will also hear from Lonnie Mills, a patient who thought he was going to lose his leg before he met interventional cardiologist Siddhartha Rao, MD. Dr. Rao, who specializes in treating critical limb ischemia, has the expertise Mr. Mills needed to unblock an artery in his leg, restoring blood flow to his foot and saving his leg.

The Heart Center team continues to grow and lead in innovative technology and treatments for patients needing emergent as well as non-emergent care. The highly coordinated teamwork among providers, staff and area emergency responders mean patients are receiving the lifesaving care they need in record time. Interventional cardiologist Frances Wood, MD, shares how she and her colleagues are achieving greater precision in coronary procedures with the use of the CorPath GRX robotics technology. Dr. Marc Silver also highlights another first – his implantation of the first leadless “Micra” pacemaker.

The Heart Care Plus + Collaboration is bringing new services to WakeMed: Advanced Heart Failure Services in August and participation in the Cardiothoracic Surgical Trials Network to bring the latest advances in cardiovascular surgery to our patients. The WakeMed Heart Center also welcomes a number of talented new cardiovascular physician partners to the team – enjoy reading about their clinical expertise and passion for caring for people in our community. Speaking of new, I am excited to be taking on a new role with WakeMed, providing leadership and nursing oversight for our community-focused population health, patient navigation and transitions of care initiatives…partnering with you to live your “get out and go”, overall healthiest!

Thank you for the privilege of caring for your heart and those you hold dear.

Betsy Gaskins-McClaine, MSN-C, RN
Vice President, Heart & Vascular Services,
WakeMed Health & Hospitals
A Fond Farewell

The physicians and staff of WakeMed Heart & Vascular Services bid a fond farewell to their highly respected administrator Betsy Gaskins-McClaine, RN. During her 11-year tenure as vice president of WakeMed Heart & Vascular Services, Betsy played a key role in the growth and development of the department. She is admired for her unsurpassed dedication to and passion for patients, which she will continue to share in her new role with WakeMed.

Betsy’s colleague, Islam Othman, MD, medical director, WakeMed Invasive Cardiology, says it best: “Betsy’s passion for patient care is evident in everything she does. She exemplifies and stands for that which is good in medicine and that which is great in caring for your fellow man. Being a part of Betsy’s team inspires everyone to be a better version of themselves because of her caring and nurturing of her team members to be the best they can be in achieving a common mission and goal.”
When tPA Isn’t Enough

Removing blood clots with interventional stroke treatment

If you had a stroke, you may have received tissue plasminogen activator – tPA – a medication often referred to as a clot buster to dissolve clots in blood vessels and restore blood flow.

The use of tPA to restore blood flow to the brain has been and continues to be the gold standard treatment for ischemic stroke. It must be administered within three hours of stroke symptom onset. But what if tPA doesn’t work, or what if the blood clot is so large that tPA cannot dissolve it?

WakeMed and Andrey Belayev, MD, a neuroendovascular surgeon with Raleigh Neurosurgical Clinic Inc. offer a next-level treatment called an endovascular or intra-arterial mechanical thrombectomy, a minimally invasive procedure to actually remove clots that are too tough to tackle with tPA alone.

Dr. Belayev is expert in performing these neuroendovascular (meaning inside the artery or blood vessel) procedures, yet he continues to be amazed by the results. “I have seen patients who were paralyzed on one side of their body regain the use of their limbs on the affected side as soon as we remove the clot,” he says. “This isn’t always the case, but it does happen. When it does, it is remarkable.”

The outstanding patient outcomes Dr. Belayev and other U.S. neuroendovascular surgeons have seen are backed by research. In 2015, American Heart Association News reported groundbreaking research results: “People with clots blocking a large vessel in the brain are more likely to survive and fully recover if they have the clot removed by a stent retriever, studies found. Experts say qualified stroke centers nationwide are seeing an increase in referrals for stent retrievers.”

This year, American Heart Association News reported that the benefits of using stent retrievers in conjunction with tPA has now gained worldwide acceptance: “Since publication of the [research] paper, there is no doubt left around the world that this treatment is a major leap forward for treating acute ischemic stroke due to large clots.”
A North Carolina native, Doug Woodard, was enjoying life. Now 64, he decided to take an early retirement from his job as an insurance adjuster at age 56. He has a wonderful wife, Libby; two grown sons; two beautiful, twin grandchildren; and a place at the beach.

Doug suffered a transhemic attack (TIA—a stroke) at age 60. “It was about 6 pm and I was cooking and talking to my wife,” he explains. “She noticed a slight slur in my speech so I called my PCP and he was able to see me immediately. He evaluated me, but by that time, I had no symptoms that he could see so I went home, it was not until the next day when my PCP saw the results of the MRI, that he explained the results showed evidence of a TIA,” Doug said. This led to an admission to the hospital where further tests were run,” he continued. After a couple of days, he was discharged from the hospital with no side effects from the TIA.

People do not typically expect a stroke diagnosis, but to Doug, it did not come as a total surprise. “High blood pressure and stroke run in my family,” he says. High blood pressure is the leading cause of stroke.

Three years later, Doug suffered another stroke and this one was severe. “I had gone to bed at about 10:30 pm,” he recalls. “At 11:30, I tried to get up but I just stumbled and fell.” Doug’s left side was paralyzed and his speech was slurred. At first, Doug didn’t believe he was having a stroke but his wife convinced him otherwise and called 911. “I knew WakeMed was the place to go and I knew I had a small window to get there.”

Doug arrived at WakeMed and received the clot-busting drug tPA, but the tPA did not work. That’s when Andrey Belayev, MD, a neuroendovascular surgeon with Raleigh Neurosurgical Clinic Inc. came into the picture.

“He told me the tPA wasn’t working and he needed to do a procedure to get rid of the clot,” says Doug. Dr. Belayev performed a minimally invasive procedure called an endovascular mechanical thrombectomy. “I was awake for the procedure and Dr. B. talked to me the whole time,” recalls Doug. The procedure is performed under mild anesthesia. Some patients remain awake while others doze or fall asleep.

Since publication of the research paper, there is no doubt left around the world that this treatment is a major leap forward for treating acute ischemic stroke due to large vessel occlusions,” said Mayank Goyal, MD, the study’s lead author. “The national guidelines all around the world have changed. Whether you go to Spain or South Korea or Argentina, the treatment is here to stay.”

A stent retriever is the device used to capture the clot in the artery or blood vessel and remove it from the body. The patient is typically under light anesthesia during the procedure. The neuroendovascular surgeon makes a small incision in the patient’s groin and threads a catheter equipped with the stent retriever through the patient’s body to the clot, which the surgeon located before the procedure using advanced x-ray technology.

The surgeon then opens the stent retriever, which has a cage-like design. The retriever surrounds the clot and closes around it, allowing the surgeon to remove it. Because the procedure is minimally invasive (meaning performed through a small incision), patients typically recover quickly – within a day or two – and experience little or no pain or blood loss.

“The procedure should be performed within six hours of stroke symptom onset,” says Dr. Belayev, but that doesn’t mean people experiencing stroke symptoms can wait to seek emergency medical attention.

“I cannot emphasize enough the importance of calling 911 as soon as you notice stroke symptoms,” he says. “The faster you get to the hospital and receive treatment, the better your chances of a full recovery.”
Then, Dr. Belayev asked Doug a question: “He asked me ‘Can you raise your left arm?’ I did and I waved at him.” Dr. Belayev had removed the clot, which restored the blood flow to Doug’s brain in time to keep his temporary left-side paralysis from becoming permanent.

“Dr. Belayev prevented some serious consequences that could have impacted my lifestyle; it could have been catastrophic,” explains Doug.

After a short stay at WakeMed, Doug returned home. The next day he went shopping and the day after that he was cutting the grass.

The speed at which Doug received treatment coupled with the right medical and surgical technology saved Doug and restored his quality of life. Effective stroke treatment takes coordinated efforts among the patient, local emergency medical responders and a dedicated stroke team. We are fortunate to have the right mix at WakeMed. Doug and Libby said, “We are very thankful for Dr. Belayev and the numerous doctors and nurses, as well as, the wonderful staff at WakeMed.”

Mended Hearts and Michael & Sons Tee It Up

The Mended Hearts of the Triangle Chapter 394 at WakeMed participated in and was the beneficiary of the 2017 Joe Lomax Classic Charity Golf Tournament held on June 19, at Devils Ridge Country Club in Holly Springs. The tournament raised more than $21,000 that will go towards the Mended Hearts Chapter’s work with WakeMed cardiology patients and to support nursing students at Wake Technical Community College.

The tournament was held by Michael & Son Services to honor Joe Lomax who had a cardiac arrest in September 2016. Lomax was employed by Michael & Son Services. Hosting the charitable golf tournament was a special way to honor their fellow employee.

Many thanks from our Mended Hearts chapter to the sponsors, donors, golfers, volunteers and Michael & Son Services as the day would not have been such a wonderful success without their support.

Signs & Symptoms of Stroke

Here are the most common signs and symptoms of stroke.

F - One side of face droops
A - Cannot hold arm in the air
S - Speech is slurred
T - Time to call 9-1-1 immediately

Coaches Receive Lifesaving CPR/AED Training from WakeMed

WakeMed Public Relations and Nursing Education along with the WakeMed Foundation, teamed up with National Amateur Sports to provide lifesaving CPR training to Wake County High School coaches free of charge. The state now mandates that coaches are properly trained in CPR and the use of automated external defibrillators (AEDs), which are available in their schools. It was a great event!
WakeMed has again received recognition from the American Heart Association/American Stroke Association for providing high-quality, effective care for heart and stroke patients. The awards recognize our commitment to providing the most appropriate heart and stroke treatment according to nationally recognized, research-based guidelines for care.

“Our team members are highly skilled, compassionate professionals who are dedicated to providing the right care at the right time to save lives and prevent disability,” says Betsy Gaskins-McClaine, MSN-C, RN, vice president, WakeMed Heart & Vascular Services. “We are blessed to have such an exceptional team of people committed to giving their best every day to serve the patients and their families dealing with heart disease and stroke in our community.”

The awards for each hospital include:

**RALEIGH CAMPUS**
- Get With The Guidelines-Stroke® program Gold Plus Achievement
- Get With The Guidelines-Resuscitation® program Silver Achievement
- Target: Stroke Honor Roll Elite Plus
- Mission: Lifeline STEMI Receiving Center Silver Plus

**CARY HOSPITAL**
- Mission: Lifeline STEMI Referring Center Gold
Dr. Jeffrey Blackburn is a general and interventional cardiologist who is a Raleigh native and happy to come back home to provide expert cardiology services for his patients.

“Having a personal relationship with my patients that, when appropriate, takes on a more lighthearted tone helps us both feel connected in a positive way. It makes a huge difference to be able to smile and laugh with them, but also to be that empathetic shoulder to lean on when it is called for,” said Dr. Blackburn.

Dr. Blackburn comes to WakeMed Heart & Vascular Physicians by way of the South Carolina Heart Center/Providence Heart Institute in Columbia, SC, where he has cared for patients since 2012. He attended Wake Forest University for his undergraduate degree and the University of South Carolina School of Medicine in Columbia, SC. He completed a fellowship in cardiology at the University of Florida in Jacksonville.

Dr. Blackburn treats coronary artery disease and performs diagnostic coronary angiography and cardiac catheterization, transesophageal echocardiography (TEE), stress tests including echocardiography, nuclear medicine and treadmill, Holter monitoring and peripheral vascular ultrasonography. He will see patients at the WakeMed Heart & Vascular Physicians office located at Six Forks Road in Raleigh. To schedule an appointment, please call 919-350-9648.

Dr. Damien Marycz is an interventional cardiologist who treats cardiology patients for heart disease and peripheral artery and vascular diseases as well as performs interventional procedures such as coronary artery interventions and for structural heart defects.

“I became interested in cardiology during my first year as a medical student. I found the anatomy of the cardiovascular system and the physiology to be very fascinating,” said Marycz. “During my third year of medical school training in England I worked closely with the local cardiologists spending time learning and helping manage patients with cardiovascular disease, which I found to be most rewarding.”

Dr. Marycz comes to WakeMed Heart & Vascular Physicians following completion of a two-year fellowship in coronary, peripheral and structural interventional cardiology program at the University of Kentucky. Prior to that he attended Philadelphia University in Philadelphia, PA, for his undergraduate degree and the American University of the Caribbean School of Medicine in Saint Martin. He completed clinical internships in London, UK, Brooklyn, NY, and Southfield, MI, as well as residency at the Cleveland Clinic Foundation in Cleveland, OH, and a general cardiology fellowship at the University of Kentucky in Lexington.

Dr. Marycz will see patients in the WakeMed Heart & Vascular Physicians office located at WakeMed North in North Raleigh. To schedule an appointment, please call 919-350-9648.

Dr. Dwijesh Patel is an interventional cardiologist who specializes in treating peripheral and coronary artery disease. Peripheral artery disease is his passion. A native of the Triangle, he is no stranger to the WakeMed family.

“My first medical encounter was as a volunteer at WakeMed Cary Hospital,” said Patel. In addition, Dr. Patel completed his entire medical experience at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, including his bachelor’s degree in biological sciences, his medical degree, his internal medicine residency and his cardiology and cardiovascular fellowships. Eager to learn more about advanced techniques and other ways to improve the care of heart and vascular patients, Dr. Patel has been involved in several research studies and has worked in several hospitals throughout the area.

Dr. Patel will be seeing patients at the WakeMed Heart & Vascular Physicians office located at Six Forks Road in Raleigh. To schedule an appointment, please call 919-350-9648.
Dr. Alden Parsons is a thoracic surgeon specializing in minimally invasive thoracic surgery involving surgical procedures of the lungs and esophagus as well as other types of surgical procedures within the chest.

Dr. Parsons is a Georgia native who came to North Carolina to attend the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill as an undergraduate and for medical school. She completed her cardiothoracic surgery fellowship at UNC and a minimally invasive thoracic surgery fellowship at Yale-New Haven Hospital in Connecticut. She was instrumental in the start-up of a new thoracic surgery program upon completion of her minimally invasive surgical fellowship and first faculty job at MD Anderson Cancer Center, and now brings that expertise and know-how to WakeMed Heart & Vascular Physicians.

“WakeMed Heart & Vascular Physicians provides great partners, great people and new energy and vision for my patients,” said Dr. Parsons.

She believes providing personal, detailed care for each patient is the key to delivering exceptional care. She finds gratitude in helping patients through their health crises and putting them on the road to better health. Dr. Parsons is also an advocate for providing patients with clear communication and easier-to-understand clinical education in order to achieve positive outcomes.

Dr. Parsons lives in Raleigh, NC, and is married to Dr. Steve Parsons, a neonatologist, and is the mother to three active children. Outside of medicine, she enjoys spending time with her family, exercising, traveling to the beach and is currently learning to play the drums with her daughter.

Dr. Parsons sees patients at WakeMed Heart & Vascular Physicians – Cardiovascular & Thoracic Surgery offices at the WakeMed Heart Center in Raleigh and also in Cary at 200 Asheville Avenue, Suite 10. To make an appointment, please call 919-231-6333.

Dr. Trevor Upham’s passion for treating the patients and the diseases of the heart, lungs and chest while using his problem-solving skills led him to specialize in cardiothoracic surgery. His compassion and empathy for cardiothoracic surgery patients are at the core of his practice.

Originally from California, Dr. Upham found WakeMed Heart & Vascular Physicians – Cardiovascular & Thoracic Surgery and the Raleigh area to be a perfect match.

“My wife is from Raleigh – in fact she was born at WakeMed – so moving closer to family and friends, to an area that I’ve come to love was an easy decision. Even more, my unique knowledge and skill set in cardiothoracic surgery matches perfectly with the needs of patients here in North Carolina,” said Dr. Upham.

Dr. Upham specializes in minimally invasive cardiothoracic surgery, off-pump coronary artery bypass surgery, valve repair and replacement surgery, thoracic endovascular aortic repair (TEVAR) and thoracic surgery for benign and malignant diseases. He has presented internationally on minimally invasive thoracic surgery techniques.

Strong communication with his patients is an essential piece of Dr. Upham’s cardiothoracic surgery practice. When faced with a need for surgery, Dr. Upham takes the time to help patients and their families understand their options. He seeks input from the patient, their families and medical consultants for a multidisciplinary approach to making the right decision for the right treatment at the right time.

Dr. Upham resides in Raleigh with his wife, Catharine, and their son. In his spare time he enjoys travelling, scuba diving, cooking, fishing and golf.

Dr. Upham sees patients at WakeMed Heart & Vascular Physicians – Cardiovascular & Thoracic Surgery offices at the WakeMed Heart Center in Raleigh. To make an appointment, please call 919-231-6333.
Since announcing in February 2017 an agreement to work collaboratively, WakeMed and Duke Health’s Heart Care Plus+ has created leadership teams and set a number of initiatives in place to positively impact patient access and quality of care delivered. Leadership teams include a Joint Collaborative Board with representation from both WakeMed and Duke Health. Two committees were also formed – the Clinical Committee and the Operations Committee – to help fulfill the objectives for initiatives set by the Joint Collaborative Board. Those initiatives include clinical areas of focus in Heart Failure, Cardiac Dysrhythmia and Advanced Electrophysiology, Structural Heart and Heart Surgery.

This summer, Dr. Stuart Russell and Dr. Priyesh Patel joined the WakeMed Medical Staff to bring more care and capabilities in the treatment of congestive heart failure to Wake County patients. The new specialty practice, located in the WakeMed Heart Center, is staffed five days a week offering same-day access for those patients needing immediate follow-up care following a hospital stay. The practice is expected to open in early fall and will add services specific to heart failure patients in the coming months.

Both Dr. Russell and Dr. Patel are employed by Duke Health, but will practice at WakeMed Heart Center’s Advanced Heart Failure Services office.

Prior to joining Duke Health and the Heart Care Plus+ collaborative, Dr. Russell was chief of Heart Failure and Transplantation at The Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine. Dr. Russell completed his cardiology fellowship at Duke and an advanced heart failure/transplantation fellowship at UCLA Medical Center in California. Dr. Russell has 15 years of experience leading heart failure programs at academic centers and in building relationships with community physicians to provide advanced heart failure care and services.

Dr. Priyesh Patel joins Dr. Russell in the Advanced Heart Failure Services practice at the WakeMed Heart Center. Dr. Patel is a graduate of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and completed his medical degree at Duke University School of Medicine. He completed fellowships in cardiovascular diseases and advanced heart failure at Duke University Medical Center and served as an attending physician at the Durham Veterans Affairs Medical Center in Durham as well as a research scholar at the Duke Clinical Research Institute.
In May, WakeMed was selected to be a consortium member of The Cardiothoracic Surgical Trials Network (CTSN). Participation in The CTSN will bring the latest advances in cardiovascular surgery to Wake County cardiovascular patients.

The CTSN is supported by the National Institutes of Health and the Canadian Institutes of Health Research. Its mission is to promote the evaluation of newer surgical techniques, devices and innovative pharmaceutical and bioengineered products that directly improve cardiovascular disease outcomes in adult patients. WakeMed joins other participating institutions that include the Cleveland Clinic, Montreal Heart Institute, Baylor Research Institute, and University of Pennsylvania, among others.

WakeMed joins The CTSN with Dr. Judson Williams, who served as a fellow of The CTSN from 2009 to 2011, serving as WakeMed’s principal investigator. Dr. Frances Wood, Dr. Islam Othman, Dr. Bryon Boulton, Dr. William Killinger and Diana Rhyne round out the team of investigators at the WakeMed Heart Center. The WakeMed team will work closely with Dr. Peter Smith, professor of Surgery and chief of Cardiovascular and Thoracic Surgery, at Duke University.

This collaboration in research builds on the efforts put forth by WakeMed and Duke Health’s Heart Care Plus+ collaborative. Enrollment in The CTSN trials is anticipated in late summer with the first trial involving testing the effectiveness of performing tricuspid valve repair at the same time as mitral valve repair. WakeMed and Duke Health also participated in The CTSN’s National Network Investigator meeting in Washington, DC, held in July.
In May, Dr. Frances Wood from WakeMed Heart & Vascular Physicians and the Invasive Cardiology team completed the first robotic cardiac catheterization case at the WakeMed Heart Center. The procedure was completed using the CorPath GRX, a state-of-the-art robotic system that features increased precision and improved capabilities to expand the range of procedures that can be performed robotically.

Used during a coronary intervention, the CorPath GRX has easy-to-maneuver robotic controls, allowing providers to make precise measurements and adjustments to ensure that the stent fits appropriately. In addition, the CorPath system protects physicians and staff from the occupational hazards of working with radiation exposure in the cath lab.

“This innovative technology has the capacity to transform the way we perform percutaneous coronary interventions. WakeMed has the opportunity to partner with Corindus Vascular Robotics, Inc., the manufacturer of the CorPath system, and advance robotic-assisted interventions for more complex cases where radiation exposure to the patient and staff are even longer,” said Dr. Wood. “I am proud to be part of a health system that represents the best training, the latest technologies and the highest commitment to patient care, safety and innovation.”

WakeMed is one of just a few health systems in the state – and the first in Wake County – to adopt the CorPath GRX system. We are a Corindus Center of Excellence for the Southeast to train interventional cardiologists and advance patient care and clinical robotics research.
In May, Dr. Marc Silver, from WakeMed Heart & Vascular Physicians, implanted the world's smallest pacemaker in one of his patients. This new device, called the Micra® Transcatheter Pacing System (TPS), was a WakeMed first – the first performed in Wake County.

The Micra TPS provides patients with the most advanced pacing technology at one-tenth the size of a traditional pacemaker. It is unlike traditional pacemakers because the device does not require cardiac wires (leads) to deliver the pacing therapy or a surgical “pocket” under the skin. The device weighs the same as a penny and is similar in size to a large vitamin. Patients also benefit by having no chest scar, bump in the chest or visible physical reminder the pacemaker is there.

“Micra is placed in a minimally invasive procedure using a catheter through the femoral vein that takes less than 30 minutes to perform,” said Dr. Marc Silver. “It is ideal for patients who need a single chamber pacemaker and especially appropriate for dialysis or cancer patients with limited venous access due to previous procedures.”

Approved to treat patients with bradycardia, the device helps restore the heart’s normal rhythm by sending electrical impulses to increase the heart’s rate. Bradycardia is a condition where a slow or irregular heart rhythm, usually fewer than 60 beats per minute, occurs. At this rate, the heart is unable to pump enough oxygen-rich blood to the body during normal activity or exercise, causing dizziness, fatigue, shortness of breath or fainting spells.

Dr. Silver added, “Some of the great things about this device is that it all but eliminates the risk of infection, which occurs in over one percent of traditional pacemaker implant procedures, and the battery lasts as long as ten to 12 years.”
Amputation Isn’t Always the Answer

When it comes to vascular disease, it’s important to get a second - or even a third or fourth – opinion, especially when saving your leg from amputation is at stake. Lonnie Mills can testify to that.

At age 52, Lonnie has been living with Type 2 diabetes his entire life. He receives treatment for kidney failure three times a week and has neuropathy, which causes weakness, numbness and/or pain resulting from diabetes-related nerve damage. He was being treated for hard-to-heal wounds on his feet in his hometown of Union, N.J., before making the move with his wife to Cary, N.C. two years ago.

Once in Cary, Lonnie sought the help of a podiatrist, who diagnosed his peripheral vascular disease – blockages in the arteries in the legs that prevent blood flow - and recommended he have two toes amputated. Lonnie went through with the surgery, after which home care nurses visited him once a week to treat and dress his wounds.

Antibiotics and weekly home care treatments did not heal Lonnie’s wounds and the infection spread. Lonnie went to another podiatrist, who told him he would need an above-the-knee amputation. “I was shocked,” recalls Lonnie. “One doctor told me I was fine, while the next one told me I needed to have my leg amputated.” His frustration was very real.

The time came for a third opinion from Jacob Panici, DPM, with Piedmont Foot & Ankle. Lonnie was pleased with Dr. Panici’s can-do attitude and interest in helping to save his leg. “He told me there was something we could do, and that gave me hope,” says Lonnie.

Dr. Panici provided medical care to Lonnie and recommended he see Siddhartha Rao, MD, a cardiologist with WakeMed Heart & Vascular Physicians, who specializes invasive and interventional vascular disease treatment, for a fourth opinion. “He told me that treating people in my situation was his passion and he was going to do everything he could to save my leg,” says Lonnie. “I was surprised and happy to hear this.”

In early September 2016, Dr. Rao tried a procedure to solve Lonnie’s issue. “It was not successful,” recalls Lonnie. “But he told me not to worry and that he had ‘another bag of tricks’ to try.” Lonnie returned in several weeks for a second successful procedure that resulted in increased blood flow to the foot and helped his wounds heal.

Today, Lonnie’s leg is still intact and he can do all the things he used to do. “I liked the way Dr. Rao and Dr. Panici worked together to save my leg,” says Lonnie. “Everything is going good! I go to the gym; I work out; I’m a new person.”

He credits them for not only saving his leg but saving his life. Lonnie’s wife of 19 years, Kimberly, agrees: “They were a great team working together to help the healing process.”

Lonnie Mills and his wife are back to enjoying their walks and other activities.
Help from the Heart

The Heart Center’s Guest Services Specialists help make your arrival and departure a stress-free experience

The next time you visit the WakeMed Heart Center, be sure to keep an eye out for two helpful gentlemen in red polo shirts. You’ll find them at the curb on Heart Center Loop, just outside the main entrance, ready to help you find your way or in golf carts shuttling people to and from the parking lot.

Scott Blanchard and Dillon Thornton are the Guest Services Specialists, and their role is to make patients’ trips to the WakeMed Heart Center as convenient as possible. Their job begins the second a patient pulls up to the Heart Center’s entrance.

That’s when Scott and Dillon jump into action, greeting patients, helping them out of their cars, providing assistance with walkers or wheelchairs if needed, and pointing them in the direction of their appointments. Once patients are where they need to be, Scott and Dillon will hop in a golf cart and give the patient’s driver a ride back from the parking deck.

I used to tell people I treat people the way I want to be treated, but I’ve realized I treat people the way I want my momma to be treated.

- Dillon Thornton

“We’re full service,” said Scott. “We’re here for the patient, and we’re trying to make their stay as enjoyable and stress-free as possible.”

“A lot of first-time visitors are not at ease,” said Dillon. “We try to help them, right at the beginning, to be at ease. And you can tell they’re very appreciative.”

Scott and Dillon both have a history of helping others. They worked together as a part of the valet program at WakeMed before moving into their current roles. Before that, Scott spent time in law enforcement, and Dillon spent 30 years working for AT&T.

“Definitely my favorite part of the job is customer service, helping the people,” said Scott. “I’ve worked in public service for so long, and this is where I’m meant to be. I love WakeMed and the current role that I’m in.”

Dillon shares Scott’s fondness for both the patients and the staff at WakeMed.

“I really enjoy meeting people and talking to them and getting a little bit of their story,” he said. “I used to tell people I treat people the way I want to be treated, but I’ve realized I treat people the way I want my momma to be treated.

“When I came here I thought this was a good Heart Center, but since I’ve been here I’ve realized that it’s a great Heart Center. From the doctors up there helping you in the procedure rooms to us out here helping you get back to your car, we’re just a great group of people.”
Road Trip on the Blue Ridge Parkway
A drive along part of this 469-mile roadway about 4 hours from Raleigh is an excellent way to take in the beauty of the outdoors throughout all seasons. With plenty of stops along the way for scenic vistas, local arts and crafts, and hikes for all ability levels, the Blue Ridge Parkway is a treasure trove of activity. Here are a few spots to explore!

Folk Art Center (Milepost 382)
This spectacular spot is both an art gallery and a store featuring stunning examples of local craft artistry. The building also houses a Blue Ridge Parkway information desk, which can help you fine-tune your plans for a day (or more) on the road. During the summer, keep an eye out for crafting demonstrations by members of the guild in the center’s lobby area.

Get Out and Go!
Don’t let the heat keep you from exploring all NC has to offer

North Carolina summers (and often into the early fall) can be brutally hot and humid, and it can be tempting to stay at home and wait for cooler temperatures before venturing out. But there are plenty of ways to get out and go despite the heat without overdoing it. Below, you’ll find three of our favorite areas with ways to experience all North Carolina has to offer, even in the heat of summer. (P.S. Before setting off on your adventure, be sure to read our sidebar with some simple precautions from Dr. Jason Haag, cardiologist at the WakeMed Heart Center!)
Craggy Gardens Visitor Center (Milepost 364.6)
The Craggy Gardens Visitor Center is the starting point for one of the most beautiful short hikes in the area. Follow the Craggy Gardens Trail from the south end of the parking area for 0.3 miles to the trail shelter. For a stunning overlook, take the short spur to the left through the rhododendron bald. For a more strenuous but breathtaking 1.4-mile hike, consider the Craggy Pinnacle Hike, which takes you to the top of the 5,892-foot summit of Craggy Pinnacle and offers incredible views of the Blue Ridge Mountains. Keep in mind that with its higher elevation, this area tends to be 10-20 degrees cooler than Asheville — perfect for a hike on a hot summer day, but be sure to bring extra layers if you’re here on a chilly fall day. (Note: Trails in this area vary in difficulty; be sure to do your research and consult with your doctor before attempting a hike.)

Historic Orchard at Altapass (Milepost 328.3)
The late summer/early fall is a perfect time to visit the Historic Orchard at Altapass, which offers different varieties of apples ripening from June through late October. You can pick your own or purchase pre-picked apples from the orchard store. Far more than just an orchard, the Altapass Foundation’s mission is to preserve local culture, and in support of that mission, they offer a wide variety of music and dancing programs, as well as presentations from local historians, a book club and educational programs.

The Charm of Historic Edenton
Tucked away in the northeast corner of North Carolina about 2 hours from Raleigh, the small town of Edenton is a charming way to take in the delights of the coastal region without the crowds. While you’re there, you might want to check out a few of these activities.

Historic Edenton State Historic Site
This is the best place to start for an introduction to the history of the area. Doubling as the visitor center, here you can arrange guided walking tours of key historic sites nearby, including the Iredell House, St. Paul’s Church, 1767 Chowan County Courthouse, Cupola House and 1886 Roanoke River Lighthouse.

Stay Healthy on the Go
Not to sap the fun out of your next big adventure, but before you hop in the car, it’s always important to ensure you’ve properly prepared for your trip. Beyond just packing a suitcase and gassing up the car, spend a few moments thinking about your health and wellness before you leave to ensure you make the most of your trip. Dr. Jason Haag, a cardiologist with the WakeMed Heart Center, offers up five quick tips for staying healthy on the go. “Stay active,” said Dr. Haag, “but use common sense.”

- **Know where you’re going.** Dr. Haag recommends familiarizing yourself with the local hospital systems in the areas you’re visiting, just in case.
- **Take lists of medications.** “It is important to have an up-to-date medication list and procedure/device list on hand for providers who may not have access to your medical records,” said Dr. Haag.
- **Schedule outdoor activities for mornings or evenings.** Staying active is important, but summers in North Carolina are hot and muggy, so Dr. Haag suggests scheduling your time outdoors for before 10 a.m. or after 7 p.m. to avoid the hottest parts of the day.
- **Drink water.** Hydration is a vital part of staying well when you’re in the heat, noted Dr. Haag.
- **Watch for new symptoms.** Listen to what your body is trying to tell you, and take action if you notice anything out of the ordinary. “Any time you notice something unusual with physical activity such as shortness of breath, fatigue, chest pain or dizziness that is new and unexpected for the level of activity should warrant an evaluation by your doctor,” said Dr. Haag.
For More Information:

Folk Art Center  
www.southernhighlandguild.org/  
folk-art-center/  
Milepost 382 Blue Ridge Parkway  
Asheville, NC 28805

Craggy Gardens Visitor Center  
www.nps.gov/blri/planyourvisit/  
craggy-gradens-trail.htm  
Start at the Visitor Center  
at milepost 364.6  
Black Mountain, NC 28711

Historic Orchard at Altapass  
www.altpassorchard.org  
Milepost 328.3 Blue Ridge Parkway  
1025 Orchard Rd.,  
Spruce Pine, NC 28777

Historic Edenton State Historic Site  
www.visitedenton.com/  
sites.php#site-statehistoric  
101 West Water St.,  
Edenton, NC 27932

Edenton Bay Cruises (Liber-Tea)  
http://edentonbaycruises.com  
Edenton Harbor/end of  
South Broad Street

Chowan River Fishing Pier  
www.visitedenton.com/  
recreation.php#site-pier  
248 Wharf Landing Rd.,  
Edenton, NC 27932

NC Museum of Art  
http://ncartmuseum.org  
2110 Blue Ridge Rd.,  
Raleigh, NC 27607

Raleigh Flea Market  
www.raleighfleamarket.net  
1025 Blue Ridge Rd.,  
Raleigh, NC 27607

Historic Yates Mill County Park  
www.wakegov.com/parks/  
yatesmill/Pages/default.aspx  
4620 Lake Wheeler Rd.,  
Raleigh, NC 27603

Tour Edenton by Trolley or Boat

For a relaxing and informative way to get out on the water, consider a scenic cruise aboard the “Liber-Tea” tour boat. This small, six-passenger boat (with a canopy to provide shade on those overly warm days) cruises around the bay while Captain Mark shares stories about the history of Edenton. If you’d rather keep your feet on dry land while exploring Edenton, consider the Trolley Tour. Rest in comfort as the restored antique trolley car takes you to some of the most notable sites in the Historic District and into the Edenton Cotton Mill and Mill village.

Chowan River Fishing Pier

New life was breathed into the old U.S. 17 Chowan River Bridge in 2010 when it was transformed into the Chowan River Fishing Pier. Take a stroll down the 600-foot pier and just marvel at the river’s beauty or (with a valid N.C. Fishing License) cast a line and see if you can catch something tasty for dinner.

Adventures in the Capital City

Raleigh may be closer to home for many readers, but there’s something to be said for playing tourist in your own town.

NC Museum of Art

An excellent way to get moving without venturing into the summer heat is to spend an afternoon at a museum, and Raleigh is rich with museums for every taste. For art lovers, don’t miss the North Carolina Museum of Art, which is home to a wide variety of classical and contemporary art, including 30 Rodin sculptures (the largest collection between Philadelphia and the West Coast). The Museum Park offers both stunning outdoor art installations and meandering trails throughout the 164-acre campus.

Raleigh Flea Market

With more than 600 vendors inside and out, the Raleigh Flea Market is a great place to spend a weekend afternoon searching for treasures. Whether you’re looking for antiques, jewelry, knickknacks or local arts and crafts, the flea market is an excellent place to start. Even if you don’t buy a thing, it’s a fun place to take a stroll and enjoy the sunshine. Plus, if it gets too hot, you can pop inside the air conditioned building to cool down.

Historic Yates Mill County Park

Peer back into the agricultural past of Wake County with a trip to Yates Mill County Park, home to the last operable water-powered gristmill in the area. Guided tours of the mill and costumed corn-grinding demonstrations are available in March through November each year; visit the park’s visitor center for tickets and tour schedules. If you want to take a hike, the park offers three scenic trails of varying difficulty — one skirting the edge of Yates Mill Pond, one following the high ridge and one meandering near Steep Hill Creek. Maps and trail guides are available at the visitor center.
The 2017 American Heart Association Triangle Heart & Stroke Walk will be held Sunday, October 1, 2017, at the PNC Arena in Raleigh. Festivities start at 12:30 pm and the walk begins at 2:00 pm.

This year’s walk will celebrate the American Heart Association’s four pillars to a heart healthier lifestyle that includes:

- **EAT SMART:** Learn to ditch the junk, give your body nutrient-dense fuel it needs and love every minute of it!
- **ADD COLOR:** Learn to eat more fruits and veggies without breaking the bank.
- **MOVE MORE:** Find forms of exercise you like and will stick with, and build more opportunities to be active in your routine.
- **BE WELL:** Real health also includes getting enough sleep, managing stress, keeping mind and body fit, connecting socially and more.

And, new this year is a “Raise Your Heartbeat One Miler” for people who have a more competitive edge and want to run the event in a timed environment. The one-mile run begins at 1:15 with the walk en mass starting at 2 pm.

WakeMed is recruiting team captains and walkers to be a part of our awesome team! Encourage your family, friends and co-workers to be a part of a team you create or join a team from one of the WakeMed Heart Center departments. The WakeMed team goal is to have 100 team captains with a total of 650 walkers.

If you are interested in becoming a team captain or walker, please contact Sandra Van Scoy at svanscoy@wakemed.org or 919-350-8439; Patricia Jones at pjljones@wakemed.org or 919-350-7922; or Kristen Proctor with the American Heart Association at kristen.proctor@heart.org. To learn more about this event and future events, visit www.wakemed.org/hearts.
Compassion.
To some, it’s just a word. To us, it’s who we are, what we do and how we do it.

Inside every heart patient there’s a person. Someone who needs cardiovascular care that’s as compassionate as it is cutting edge. As focused on patients and their families as it is on performance and outcomes. As trusted as it is technologically advanced. As committed to caring for the whole person as it is to caring for your heart. If that someone happens to be you, your heart’s in the right place. See how it feels at hearts.wakemed.org.