

THE pulse

Working Toward Home, Together

Kenny Stratton's Story of Recovery through Skilled Rehab

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Letter from the CEO



Lisa Voorhees
CEO

Dear Reader,

As summer arrives across Southeast Nebraska, we are reminded of the many ways health and wellness show up in our everyday lives, from staying active outdoors to caring for our children and finding the right support during recovery or a difficult season.

This edition of The Pulse reflects the wide range of care Syracuse Area Health is proud to provide close to home. You'll meet Kenny Stratton and learn how coordinated, compassionate care helped him continue his recovery journey and return home with confidence.

Inside this issue, we are also highlighting services that support patients through important moments in their health. Our Cardiopulmonary Department provides respiratory and heart-related services throughout the organization, while Cardiac Rehabilitation helps patients rebuild strength, confidence, and heart health after a cardiac event. These programs are examples of how local access to care can make a meaningful difference.

You'll also read about pediatric care in our Family Medicine Clinics, hometown service through Syracuse Area Health Retail Pharmacy, and the continued integration of behavioral health into family medicine. Each of these stories reflects our commitment to caring for the whole person – body and mind – at every stage of life.

We are also proud to feature the Medical Pathfinders Program, which helps introduce local students to healthcare careers and encourages the next generation of caregivers. Investing in young people is one more way we support healthier communities for the future.

Thank you for continuing to trust Syracuse Area Health. We are honored to care for you and your family, and we remain committed to our mission: Compassionate Care, Healthy Communities.

Warmly,
Lisa Voorhees
CEO



Ride Smarter This Summer

E-Bike and Scooter Safety for Kids

As summer turns to fall, families continue to enjoy time outdoors on bikes, e-bikes, and scooters. While these activities are a fun way to stay active, the growing popularity of e-bikes and e-scooters has also led to an increase in serious injuries, especially among children and inexperienced riders. Understanding the risks and practicing safe riding habits can help everyone enjoy the season safely.

To help keep young riders safe:

- Always wear a certified helmet. Helmets are one of the best ways to prevent serious head injuries.
- Avoid roads with traffic. Young riders should stay away from cars and high-traffic areas.
- Supervise new riders. Children and inexperienced riders need guidance and practice before riding independently.
- Control speed. Faster speeds increase the risk of serious injury and leave less time to react.
- Choose age-appropriate equipment. Children under 16 should not operate adult-sized electric scooters.

SAH Recognized for Excellence in Workplace Culture and Rural Healthcare Quality



2026 Modern Healthcare's Best Places to Work in Healthcare

For the third consecutive year, SAH has been recognized as a 2026 Best Places to Work in Healthcare by Modern Healthcare, highlighting employee engagement, satisfaction, and retention.

Years won: 2026, 2025, 2024



2025 Rural Provider Excellence in Quality

SAH was awarded the 2025 Rural Provider Excellence in Quality Award by the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services for the fourth consecutive year. The award honors SAH's top 10 performance in quality among Nebraska's Critical Access Hospitals.

Years won: 2025, 2024, 2023, 2022



Working Toward Home, Together

Kenny Stratton's Story of Recovery
through Skilled Rehab

When Kenny Stratton arrived at Syracuse Area Health, he and his wife, Marilyn, were looking for answers – and they found a team ready to act.

Kenny first came to the Emergency Department, where he received testing and a care plan without a long wait.

"The main reason I go to Syracuse Area Health is they get you right in," Kenny said. "They got X-rays to figure out what it was and took me right to the hospital. I didn't have to wait."

From there, Kenny was admitted as an inpatient before transitioning to Swing Bed for skilled rehabilitation. With a coordinated team focused on helping him regain strength and return home safely, Kenny and Marilyn found comfort in quick access to healthcare professionals and state-of-the-art equipment.

"The care was wonderful," Kenny said. "It's close to home, but I would go to Syracuse Area Health if it were 100 miles from here."

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Care That Adjusts When Plans Change

Kenny's determination was matched by attentive, coordinated care. Throughout his stay, Syracuse Area Health's providers, nurses, therapists, pharmacy, dietary, and social work teams met regularly to monitor his progress, adjust his care plan, and prepare Kenny and Marilyn for the next step in his recovery.

That daily collaboration was especially important when Kenny's condition required a higher level of care. Jim White, APRN, identified an acute concern that prompted Kenny's transfer to Lincoln for specialized treatment. Once he was ready, Kenny returned to Syracuse Area Health to continue skilled rehabilitation close to home.

"When I came back from Lincoln, I requested to go to Syracuse," Kenny said. "I can't tell you enough good about them."

Returning meant Kenny could continue recovering with a team that already knew him and was invested in his success.

An Interdisciplinary Team with One Goal

The therapy team, including Occupational Therapy and Physical Therapy, worked with Kenny on strength, mobility, safety, and independence. A home safety evaluation helped the team understand what Kenny would need after discharge and how outside support, along with strong family support, could help him continue moving forward.

Pharmacy, dietary, and nursing teams each played an important role by managing medications, supporting nutrition, and providing around-the-clock care and encouragement.

Motivated to Keep Moving

Kenny's determination quickly stood out to the staff. Paige Niedermeyer, RN, Acute/ED, shared how impressed she was by his motivation during rehab.

"He went down to the gym to work on arm exercises with me and the Patient Care Tech (PCT), not only once but twice in one day. He is working so hard on his left arm's mobility and walking. I am so proud of him and thankful for all of the work everyone has done to get him to this point."

For the staff, Kenny's progress was a team success.

"I want to give a big shoutout to our nursing staff, especially Amy Frederick and Paige Niedermeyer for their work with our swing bed patient, Kenny," wrote Director of Rehabilitation Services Lindsay Tuxhorn, OTD, OTR/L. "There were so many great things about his stay, including getting his own chair here and giving him extra opportunities to do his therapy exercises on the weekend."

Director of Acute and Emergency Services Dotti Easter, RN, BSN, shared, "I want to recognize our Medical Doctors and Advanced Practice Providers for their exceptional work managing medications and complex disease processes. Their thorough assessment identified

Amy Frederick, RN (left)
Paige Niedermeyer, RN (right)



Cali Bartling, OTD, OTR/L, CLT

diagnoses and underlying issues that had not previously been addressed elsewhere. Because of their intervention, our patient received a more accurate diagnosis and appropriate medication management."

Close to Home, Centered on the Patient

For Kenny and Marilyn, the experience at Syracuse Area Health was about more than convenience; it was about trust.

"They were so nice at Syracuse Area Health," Kenny said. "Every nurse there was friendly and upbeat...I would recommend the hospital to anyone who is in need of care."

Throughout his stay, Kenny's care reflected what Swing Bed is designed to provide: skilled rehabilitation that helps patients safely transition home. At Syracuse Area Health, that care is delivered close to family by a team that takes the time to know each patient.

For Syracuse Area Health, Kenny's story is a reminder of what compassionate, coordinated care can do. For Kenny, it was simple. "There is no better place in the world than Syracuse Area Health Hospital."



Supporting Every Breath and Beat

Inside the Cardiopulmonary Department at Syracuse Area Health

At Syracuse Area Health, compassionate care often begins with helping patients breathe easier, feel more comfortable, and receive important testing close to home. The Cardiopulmonary Department provides respiratory and cardiopulmonary services throughout the organization, supporting patients in the Emergency Department, Acute Care areas, and outpatient settings.

The Cardiopulmonary team plays an important role in bedside care for patients who need respiratory support. This may include oxygen therapy management, delivery of respiratory medications, non-invasive ventilatory support, airway management and emergency response, airway clearance, lung expansion therapy, and patient education related to respiratory care.

In addition to respiratory care, the department provides several important diagnostic and support services. These include EKG testing, cardiac monitoring device placement,



Shannon Hoffman, MHA, RRT
Director of Cardiopulmonary

in-lab sleep studies, home sleep study testing, pulmonary function testing, and pulmonary rehabilitation services.

These services help providers better understand each patient's heart and lung health while allowing patients to access testing, treatment, and education in a familiar setting. Whether someone is experiencing breathing concerns, needs cardiac testing, is being evaluated for sleep-related concerns, or is working to improve lung function through rehabilitation, the Cardiopulmonary team is here to help.

For more information about Cardiopulmonary services at Syracuse Area Health, visit [syracuseareahealth.com](https://www.syracuseareahealth.com).



Haley Volkman, RN, BSN
Diabetes Education and Cardiac Rehab

A Stronger Heart, One Step at a Time

How Cardiac Rehab Supports Recovery

When someone experiences a heart attack, heart surgery, heart failure, or another cardiac concern, recovery can bring many questions. How much activity is safe? How do you rebuild strength? What changes can help protect your heart moving forward? At Syracuse Area Health, Cardiac Rehabilitation helps patients take those next steps with support, education, and encouragement close to home.

Cardiac rehab is a medically supervised program designed to help improve cardiovascular health after certain heart conditions or procedures. Our program

includes monitored exercise, education about heart-healthy living, support with medications and risk factors, and guidance for managing stress and building confidence during recovery.

For many patients, cardiac rehab is about more than exercise. It is about learning what their body can do safely, understanding their heart health, and feeling supported as they work toward everyday goals. With the guidance of trained healthcare professionals, patients can build strength at a pace that is right for them.

Cardiac rehab can be an important part of recovery for patients after a heart attack, heart surgery, angioplasty, stent placement, heart failure, or other heart conditions that qualify. It can also help lower the risk of future heart problems and support a better quality of life.

At Syracuse Area Health, the goal is to help patients feel informed, supported, and encouraged throughout their recovery journey. **For more information about Cardiac Rehabilitation at Syracuse Area Health, visit [syracuseareahealth.com](https://www.syracuseareahealth.com).**

Recent scientific studies have shown that people who complete a cardiac rehabilitation program can increase their life expectancy by up to five years.



Growing Up Healthy, Close to Home

Pediatric Care at Syracuse Area Health and Sagewell Family Medicine Clinics

At Syracuse Area Health, caring for families often begins with caring for their youngest members. From the first newborn checkup to school physicals, sick visits, vaccinations, and care through the teenage years, Syracuse Area Health Family Medicine Clinics are here to support children and families through every stage of growth.

Pediatric care is about more than treating illness. It is about building trusted relationships with families, watching children grow, answering questions, and helping parents feel confident along the way. Whether your child is a baby, toddler, preschooler, school-age student, or teenager, our family medicine providers offer compassionate, personalized care close to home.

For babies, regular wellness visits help monitor growth and development, provide recommended immunizations, and give parents a chance to ask questions about feeding, sleep, milestones, and everyday care. As children grow into the toddler and

preschool years, visits often focus on development, behavior, nutrition, safety, and preparing for school.

As children enter the school-age years and beyond, our clinics continue to provide care for common illnesses, injuries, annual wellness exams, sports physicals, immunizations, and ongoing health concerns. Providers also help families navigate important topics such as healthy habits, emotional well-being, sleep, screen time, and activity.

Having care close to home makes it easier for families to stay on track with routine visits, ask questions when concerns come up, and receive care from a team you know and trust.

To schedule an appointment for your child, contact a Syracuse Area Health Family Medicine Clinic. We are proud to care for the youngest members of our community and help families grow healthier together. **Learn more at syracuseareahealth.com and sagewellmed.com.**

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More Than a Pharmacy: A Neighbor You Can Count On

At Syracuse Area Health Retail Pharmacy, patients find more than prescriptions. They find friendly faces, trusted support, and care that feels personal.

As a rural pharmacy, the team is focused on building relationships and helping patients feel confident about their medications. Whether you need help understanding a prescription, transferring a medication, finding an over-the-counter product, or requesting a refill from your provider, the Syracuse Area Health Retail Pharmacy team is here to help.

Recent patient survey comments say it best:

"This is absolutely the best pharmacy ever! Super friendly, very knowledgeable, kind, and amazing staff! We drive 20 miles just because they care."

Another patient shared:

"The Syracuse North Pharmacy is a wonderful alternative to big, impersonal pharmacies in the city. Fast, friendly, professional, with a complete inventory of over-the-counter medications. Unmatched in my opinion."

That personal care is what makes a local pharmacy special. Patients can ask questions, talk through concerns, and receive support from a team that takes the time to know them.

Syracuse Area Health Retail Pharmacy accepts most insurance plans and offers a wide variety of over-the-counter medications. The team can also help with medication flavoring for children who may not like the taste of liquid medications.

With convenient access, trusted support, and friendly service close to home, Syracuse Area Health Retail Pharmacy is proud to care for patients and families throughout the community.

"This is absolutely the best pharmacy ever! Super friendly, very knowledgeable, kind, and amazing staff! We drive 20 miles just because they care."



Stephanie Blair
PharmD



Sean Tolstedt
PharmD

Behavioral Health Integrated into Family Medicine

At Syracuse Area Health, caring for your health means caring for the whole person—body and mind. That's why behavioral health services are integrated into our Family Medicine Clinics, making support more convenient, comfortable, and connected to each patient's overall care.

Behavioral health plays an important role in many areas of life, including stress, anxiety, depression, grief, sleep

Heather Noerrlinger
APRN, FNP-C, PMHNP-C

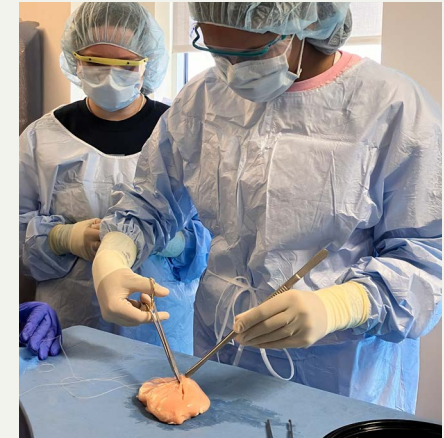


Nicole Maher (left)
LIMHP, LADC

concerns, life changes, chronic illness management, and overall emotional well-being. Patients now have access to an expanded range of services through a collaborative team that includes therapy, counseling, substance use support, and psychiatric care—including evaluation, diagnosis, treatment, and medication management.

Behavioral Health Nurse Practitioner Heather Noerrlinger, APRN, FNP-C, PMHNP-C, recently transitioned into her new role after serving patients in Family Medicine. Her experience caring for families, combined with advanced psychiatric training, allows her to help patients navigate mental health with compassionate, personalized care. As Heather shares, her goal is to build trusting relationships where patients feel heard, supported, and empowered with hope.

Having behavioral health services available within the same clinic where patients receive their primary care helps providers work together to better understand each person's needs. It also makes conversations about mental health feel more natural while reducing barriers to accessing care.





Medical Pathfinders Opens Doors to Healthcare Careers

At Syracuse Area Health, investing in the future of healthcare starts close to home.

Through the Medical Pathfinders program, local high school students are getting a firsthand look at the many career paths available in healthcare. The program helps students see that a career in healthcare can mean much more than becoming a doctor or nurse. It can include work in therapy, radiology, surgery, laboratory services, dietary, maintenance, mental health, emergency care, and many other important areas that support patients every day.

Medical Pathfinders was created to spark interest, build confidence, and help students imagine themselves making a difference in healthcare. By connecting students with Syracuse Area Health employees, the program gives them the opportunity to learn directly from the people who do this work every day.

The program began during the 2023–2024 school year with students from Syracuse–Dunbar–Avoca High School and Weeping Water High School. Since then, it has continued to grow. Conestoga High School joined during the 2024–2025 school year, and Elmwood–Murdock High School was added for the 2025–2026 school year. Students participate through a class, Health Occupations Students of America (HOSA), or simply because they are curious about healthcare careers.

Each school year, the planning team works with Syracuse Area Health departments to create a schedule of monthly 90-minute sessions. Each session highlights a different area of care and gives students a chance to try real skills in a supportive learning environment.

Students have explored radiology, including the opportunity to see a real-life baby ultrasound; surgery, where they practiced cautery and used the surgical robot; respiratory therapy, including intubation; laboratory services, with blood draws and lab equipment; PT/OT; athletic training; Acute/ED; specialty clinic; and provider-led activities such as suturing and casting. Dietary, maintenance, and behavioral health staff have also played important roles, making Medical Pathfinders a true team effort across Syracuse Area Health.

The goal is simple but meaningful: to inspire future healthcare professionals from our own communities.

Medical Pathfinders would not be possible without the support of administration, department leaders, staff members, and the Syracuse Area Health Auxiliary. Thanks to their time, creativity, and encouragement, students are gaining a better understanding of healthcare careers while building connections that may one day lead them back to serve Southeast Nebraska.



2731 Healthcare Drive, Syracuse, NE 68446
syracuseareahealth.com



Sagewell Urgent Care

Life doesn't always happen on a schedule, and neither do injuries or unexpected illnesses. Sagewell Urgent Care offers walk-in care for patients of all ages, with onsite lab and imaging services available to help you get answers and treatment quickly. Our team is here to provide compassionate, convenient care when you need it most.

7350 Willowbrook Lane, Suite 101, Lincoln, NE
8:00 a.m. – 8:00 p.m., seven days a week

Scan to learn more. —→

