

## Deja vu? Striking similarity in COVID cases

BY HELEN ADAMS

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The number of COVID cases in the Charleston Tri-county area is about where it was last year at this time – three for every 100,000 people. “We’re down in some low digits here. That’s really good,” said Michael Sweat, Ph.D., leader of MUSC’s COVID-19 tracking team.

But when he looks at what happened next in the summer of 2020, he worries history will repeat itself – although on a much smaller scale. “I just can’t imagine we’re not going to see some sort of increase in the weeks ahead.”

Last summer, after the governor lifted a “home or work” order and other restrictions eased, a lot of people emerged from lockdown eager to shake off pandemic precautions. It got hot outside, so they gathered inside to cool off with some air conditioning. Masks had become a political issue, so not everyone wore one.

Then, cases skyrocketed in July. So did the number of patients hospitalized with COVID-19.

This summer, Sweat said, it’s possible that we’ll see another increase – but a much smaller one, thanks to vaccinations and the natural immunity some people have from getting COVID. His team estimates that 62% of people in the Tri-county area, including children, have at least some immunity to COVID-19.

But it’s getting hot outside, so we’re gathering in air-conditioned spaces again. Masks and social distancing are fading. And despite the fact that almost 40% of people in our area have no immunity to COVID-19, things have pretty much gotten back to normal in a lot of areas.

“I know it feels like everything’s better, but there’s still

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Photo By Sarah Pack

**Nurses like Kathy Struthers, right, play a vital role in the operating room. MUSC Health hopes to encourage more student nurses to pursue placements in perioperative areas, which cover before, during and after a surgery.**

## MUSC Health, College of Nursing work together to provide surgical experiences

BY LESLIE CANTU

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Nursing school prepares students with the foundational knowledge to begin their careers, but it can’t possibly provide training in every niche within the profession.

One of those niches is the perioperative and special procedural area – a world hidden behind double doors with a severe admonishment that only authorized personnel are allowed. But with a shortage of operating room nurses, administrators

at MUSC Health are working with the MUSC College of Nursing to create one-day rotations to give nursing students the chance to see operating room and special procedural area nurses in action.

“We have to provide more exposure so we can recruit new nurses,” said Christy McEachern, R.N., executive director of nursing for Perioperative Services and Procedural Areas.

Although students have in the past had the opportunity to observe a surgery, Melody Reibel, Ph.D., R.N., lead faculty in the accelerated Bachelor of Science

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# MUSC Shawn Jenkins Children's Hospital achieves USNWR rankings

## Staff Report

New rankings from U.S. News & World Report's (USNWR) 2021-22 Best Children's Hospitals survey place the MUSC Shawn Jenkins Children's Hospital once again as the only children's hospital in South Carolina to be ranked. The latest rankings are published online and come as the health care community continues to manage the ongoing coronavirus pandemic and vaccine efforts.

The leading specialties for MUSC Children's Hospital include the following rankings: No. 12 for cardiology and heart surgery, No. 30 for nephrology, No. 42 for gastroenterology and GI surgery and No. 44 for cancer. USNWR issues the annual rankings "to help families with complex and rare conditions find the best medical care for their children," according to the publication's website. They're designed to steer parents and caregivers to the hospitals that are best equipped to treat their children.

The 15th annual rankings highlight the top 50 U.S. pediatric hospitals in each of 10 specialties: cancer, cardiology and heart surgery, diabetes and endocrinology, gastroenterology and GI surgery, neonatology, nephrology, neurology and neurosurgery, orthopedics, pulmonology and urology.

"The U.S. News rankings indicate that MUSC Children's Health is a viable regional and national choice for parents seeking care for their child," said Mark A. Scheurer, M.D., MUSC Children's

Health chief of clinical services. "We're working hard every day to transform the delivery of care to children and women in a safe and healing environment. These rankings are one of many measures that demonstrate what an outstanding team we have at MUSC."

This is the 14th consecutive year that the 12th-ranked cardiology and heart surgery program has made the overall Best Children's Hospitals list. Criteria include the survival rate of patients after complex heart surgeries along with the level of specialized staff, services and technologies and the ability to prevent infections.

The nephrology program at the MUSC Shawn Jenkins Children's Hospital ranks No. 30 in the U.S. That means it excels when it comes to the survival rate of children who have kidney transplants, the management of dialysis and infection prevention and other factors. It maintains its status as the highest-ranked children's kidney program in South Carolina.

The GI / GI surgery program is no stranger to the U.S. News rankings, either. For the 14th year in a row, it made the grade, coming in at No. 42, one spot



**Scheurer**

higher than last year. The rankings factor in the survival rate for children who have had liver transplants, the effectiveness of the hospital's treatment of children who have inflammatory bowel issues and other key measures. Like all of the rankings, the GI rankings also include input from specialists in the field who responded to U.S. News surveys and recommend the hospital for serious cases in GI care.

Finally, the MUSC Shawn Jenkins Children's Hospital's cancer program ranks No. 44 on the list of Best Children's Hospitals for Cancer. That's based in part on the 5-year survival rate for children with leukemia-related cancer, bone marrow transplant services, programs for brain tumors and sarcomas and infection prevention.

A critical criterion measured by USNWR is outcomes. Seven of 10 MUSC Shawn Jenkins Children's Hospital programs ranked in the top 50 nationally for the outcomes portion of their respective survey, including:

- Heart #4
- Nephrology #14
- Cancer #15
- Neurology / Neurosurgery #26
- GI / GI Surgery #38
- Orthopaedics #48
- Pulmonary #49

New this year, U.S. News featured regional rankings, and MUSC Shawn Jenkins Children's Hospital tied at

#12 for the Southeast region, which is one of the most competitive pediatric regions in the country. Five of MUSC's pediatric specialties ranked in the top 10: cardiology and cardiac surgery #2, nephrology #4, GI & GI surgery #7, cancer #8 and neurology and neurosurgery #10.

Current methodology combines clinical and operational data, results from a reputational survey of board-certified pediatric specialists and supplemental information from resources such as the National Cancer Institute. RTI International collects and analyzes the data for the rankings. The methodology reflects clinical outcomes, such as patient survival, infection rates and complications; the level and quality of hospital resources directly related to patient care, such as staffing, technology and special services; delivery of health care, such as programs that adhere to best practices and prevent infections; and expert opinion among pediatric specialists.

"Our MUSC Shawn Jenkins Children's Hospital care team members continue to be recognized for the outstanding care they provide, even in challenging times," said Patrick J. Cawley, M.D., MUSC Health CEO and vice president for Health Affairs, University. "The strength of our specialty outcomes is a testament to the quality of care our team members seek to provide to patients and their families on a daily basis."

## MUSC CATALYST news

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The MUSC Catalyst News is published bi-monthly. Paid advertisements, which do not represent an endorsement by MUSC or the state of South Carolina, are handled by Island Publications Inc., Moultrie News, 134 Columbus St., Charleston, S.C., 843-958-7480, 958-7384, 958-7488 or 937-7489. E-mail: [advertising@moultrienews.com](mailto:advertising@moultrienews.com).

**Editor's Note:** After a year-long hiatus of its printed, hard copy edition, The MUSC Catalyst News, is back. The Office of Public Affairs and Media Relations staff have consulted with MUSC infectious disease and Safety and Quality experts and industry studies to confirm that paper products such as newsprint are safe and low-risk in surface-based transmission of the coronavirus.

Copies of the newspaper will be

distributed bi-monthly to racks around campus as well as via the MUSC Mailroom's zoned mailbox system on campus and at various MUSC satellite medical offices and clinics in the Tri-county, as well as MUSC's Regional Hospitals, upstate.

For information about delivery or advertising in The Catalyst News, contact Cindy Abole, print editor at [catalyst@musc.edu](mailto:catalyst@musc.edu) or 792-4107. Remember to recycle!

## MEET RAVIAN



**Ravian Dowling**

**Department; Years at MUSC** MUSCSodexo Housekeeping; six months

**How are you changing what's possible at MUSC**

*By making sure my environment I care for is clean and safe*

**Family**

*Children, Ramon, Veronica, Shivaye, Jacquetta and Amani*

**A favorite summer memory**

*Taking my kids to the beach*

**Hobby or activity you enjoy in your spare time** *Crochet*

**Food that's a must-have in the fridge**

*Ice cream*

**A summer recipe you like to cook**

*Stuffed bellpeppers*

**Greatest moment in your life**

*Becoming a mother*

**Words of advice**

*Take one day at a time and it gets better.*



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# Psychiatrist who treated actors, athletes for social anxiety, depression glad tennis star spoke out

By HELEN ADAMS

adamshel@musc.edu

Psychiatrist Thomas Uhde has treated celebrity actors, athletes and business executives for the kind of social anxiety and depression that tennis star Naomi Osaka suffers from.

“As long as they’re in their professional role, they’re fine. But you take them out of that context, they may have extraordinary difficulty interacting with other people. If they have to give a press conference, it can just be disabling.”

Uhde, chair of the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences at MUSC, wasn’t surprised that Osaka withdrew from the French Open. “I don’t know her, but I’ve had many years of experience investigating and treating people with social anxiety disorder. It’s actually common for them to drop out of situations that are overwhelming for them.”

Those situations may seem harmless to other people. But that doesn’t make them any less stressful for someone suffering from social anxiety.

Uhde had one patient who was on the professional fast track – but tapped the brakes on a new job offer over his discomfort with using public restrooms. “He was being promoted to executive level, in a leadership role. I think it was a Fortune 500 company – either vice president or president. He had to have a bathroom in the executive suite, otherwise he was not going to take the job. He said,



Uhde

‘It’s not worth it to me.’”

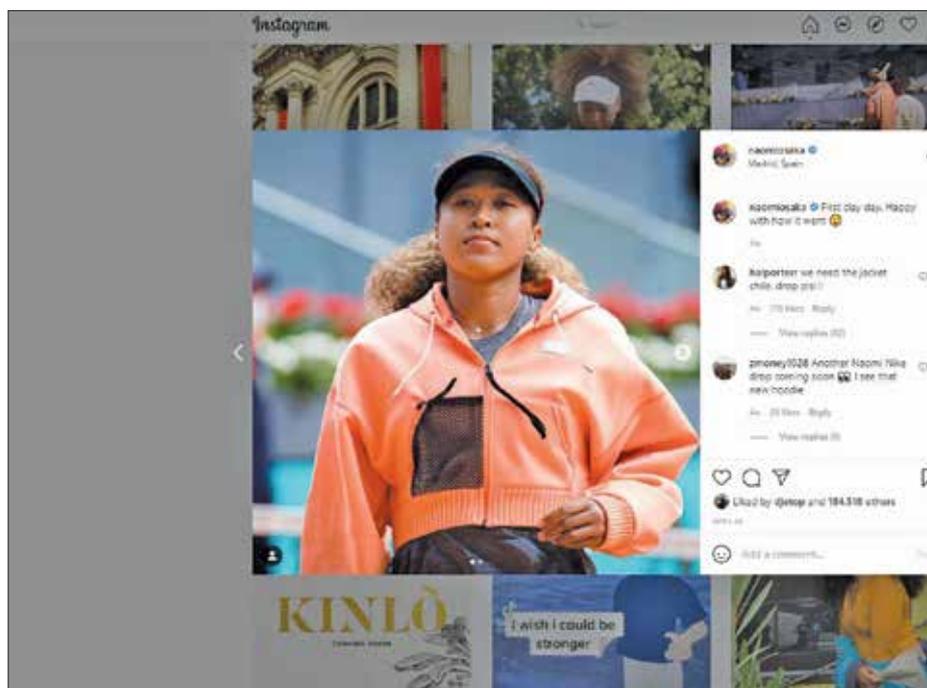
Another patient got what most people would consider great news – she was about to receive an award. “It was in a group of people that they knew well. But the idea of standing up and just receiving an award and recognition was so overwhelming to them that they quit.”

The National Institutes of Health defines the problem at the heart of those fears, social anxiety disorder, as persistent worry about being around strangers or being scrutinized, and doing something embarrassing and humiliating. About 12% of adults in the U.S. suffer from social anxiety disorder at some point. It’s worse in women than men, and peaks between the ages of 18 and 29. Osaka is 23.

The NIH defines depression as a period of at least two weeks where there’s a negative change in the way a person feels, thinks and handles activities such as sleeping, eating and working. About 7% of all adults in the U.S. have had at least one major depressive episode. Again, it’s worse in women and peaks in young adulthood.

Osaka said she had long periods of depression following the 2018 U.S. Open. She won the tournament but was left in tears after a dispute between her opponent and an umpire, over a controversial call, caused the crowd to boo and jeer.

The discussion about Osaka’s mental health comes at a time when more and more famous figures are speaking out about their own struggles. Serena Williams said she’s felt the same type of anxiety as Osaka. Prince Harry has talked about panic attacks, and his wife Meghan has described having suicidal thoughts. Regular people are talking more openly about mental health, too, recognizing it as a legitimate reason for time off from



Naomi Osaka, in an image from her Instagram account.

school or work.

Uhde, who did his residency at the Yale School of Medicine and his fellowship at the National Institute of Mental Health, said there are several ways to handle mental health challenges. In the case of social anxiety, if you can, start by doing what Osaka did: Let people know.

“In my working with clients who suffer from this condition, they are so concerned about what other people are thinking. The first thing I say is just be yourself. If you are shy and you have a lot of difficulty in these situations, just let people know. Tell your friends, ‘This is overwhelming to me. I have a really, really difficult time in these situations.’”

Uhde said cognitive behavioral therapy – talk therapy – can help people change thinking patterns. They learn to face fears instead of avoiding them, see where their thinking is distorted and become more confident.

There are also medications, both modern – such as Zoloft, Effexor and Paxil – and old school. One in particular stood out to Uhde. “There’s a class of medications, rarely used any more for the treatment of depression, that are called the MAO inhibitors. They’re actually extraordinarily effective in people that have the most severe forms of social anxiety disorder.”

Uhde said anxiety can be strongly

linked to depression. “I like to think of it as demoralization. You feel foolish about your anxiety. That can lead to secondary issues like alcohol and substance abuse. You’re trying to take substances that reduce your anxiety.

“And then you have some cases where a person – it could even be a friend – views shyness and social anxiety as endearing, and then, in an attempt to be helpful, minimizes or even jokes about the problem. This only worsens the anxiety and leads to future avoidance of that person or similar situations.”

But it’s all treatable, Uhde said. “You have a responsibility to take care of yourself when you have a viral infection to not come to work and make other people sick. And so you also should have a responsibility to take care of your mental health needs as well.”

Osaka’s decision to go public with her mental health needs may make that a little easier for others with similar worries. After some initial backlash, support has been swelling for one of the biggest names in tennis.

“People have no idea how classic that is for someone with social anxiety disorder to leave a situation that’s truly frightening to them,” Uhde said. “And then you have organizations that don’t understand that it, and other mental illnesses, are truly disabling. That needs to change.”

# A legacy built on service

*Executive leader comes full circle after an exceptional 30-year career*

Story by: Cindy Abole  
Layout and Center  
Spread by: Leslie Cantu  
Photo by: Brennan  
Wesley

It's fitting that Lisa Montgomery finish her 30-year career at MUSC — a place that she knows well and where she has spent much of her life. She's achieved so much: overseeing MUSC's financial strategy and operations, supporting leadership and the university's direction and supporting improvements to patient care for South Carolinians all while building and maintaining important personal connections with her employees.

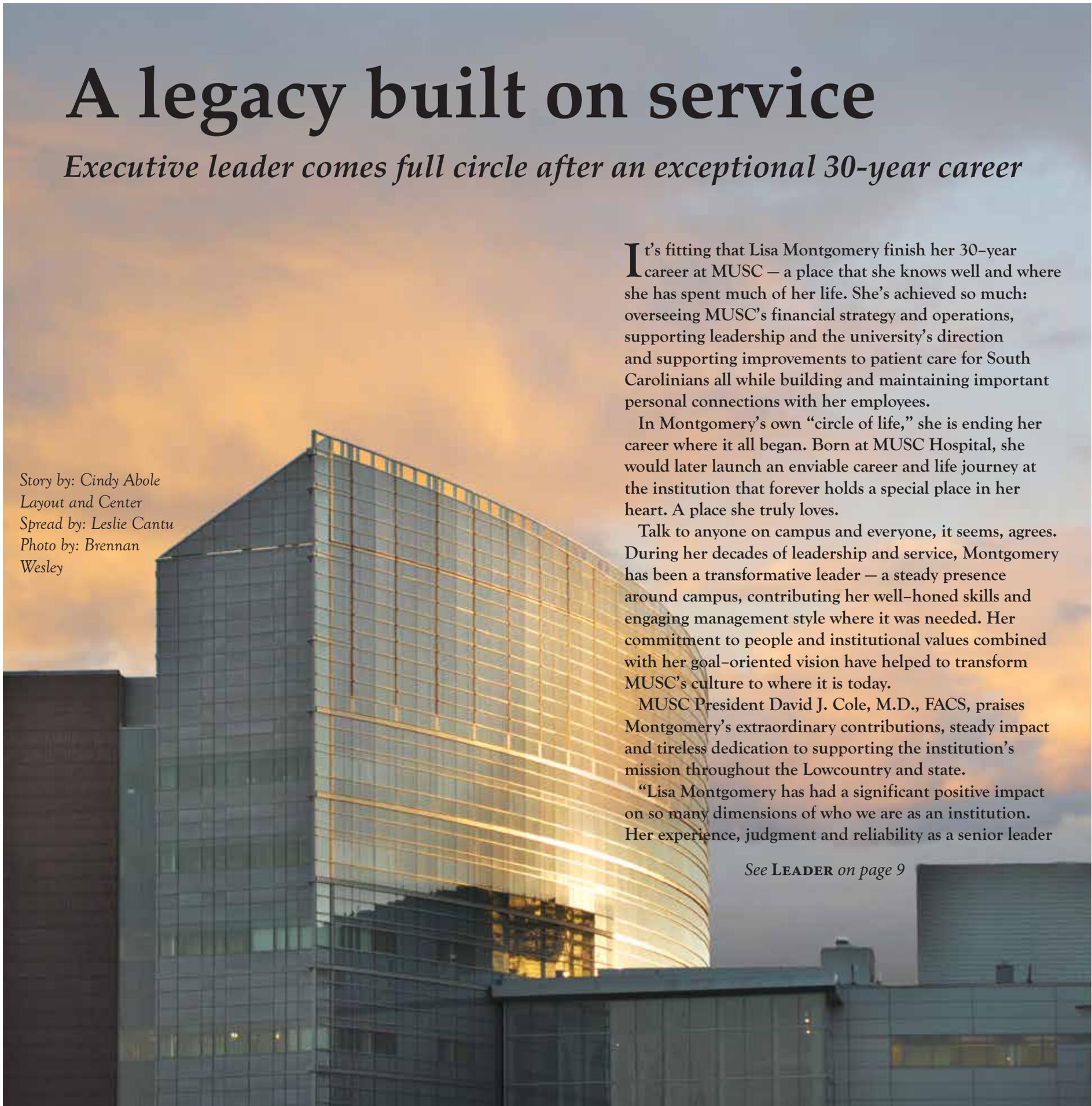
In Montgomery's own "circle of life," she is ending her career where it all began. Born at MUSC Hospital, she would later launch an enviable career and life journey at the institution that forever holds a special place in her heart. A place she truly loves.

Talk to anyone on campus and everyone, it seems, agrees. During her decades of leadership and service, Montgomery has been a transformative leader — a steady presence around campus, contributing her well-honed skills and engaging management style where it was needed. Her commitment to people and institutional values combined with her goal-oriented vision have helped to transform MUSC's culture to where it is today.

MUSC President David J. Cole, M.D., FACS, praises Montgomery's extraordinary contributions, steady impact and tireless dedication to supporting the institution's mission throughout the Lowcountry and state.

"Lisa Montgomery has had a significant positive impact on so many dimensions of who we are as an institution. Her experience, judgment and reliability as a senior leader

See LEADER on page 9



"It was a pleasure to work for Lisa. I could always have a candid conversation, and I respected that she had the 'big picture' in mind. There was never a doubt that she was trying to do the best thing for MUSC."

Greg Weigle  
Former chief facilities officer

"Lisa's loyalty, dedication and strong work ethic over the years have resulted in an increased state and national presence for MUSC. Lisa brought an invaluable, unique expertise in both hospital and university Finance and Administration and brought MUSC to new heights internally and externally. She will be sorely missed by our board of trustees, faculty, staff and students."

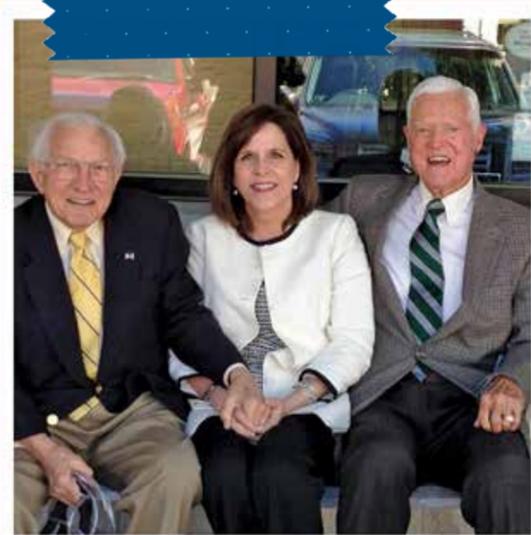
James Lemon, D.M.D.  
Chairman, Board of Trustees

"I recognized Lisa early on as a quality leader, as she is someone who can be relied upon, possesses great technical skills and judgment and is efficient. Looking at Lisa's 30-year career at MUSC, I think her greatest asset is how she's brought stability to her jobs with both the medical center and university – something that's rare and difficult to accomplish working with changing groups of people with unique goals and agendas. Lisa was a stable influence through different stages of MUSC's history. MUSC has been very lucky, as it's not often that people like Lisa stay in a leadership position like this for many years. It takes great skill to manage the enterprise's resources and negotiate solutions to provide individual and institutional success."

Marion E. Woodbury, CPA  
Former vice president of Finance and Administration  
Former CEO, University Medical Associates

"Lisa has played a vital role in both the physical growth and financial health of MUSC. You can see it in MUSC's footprint on the Charleston peninsula as well as the regional growth of MUSC Health around the state. There's been so much change within the institution over the years, which has resulted in lots of opportunities for improvement, and Lisa is one leader who has seized on those opportunities. She is one who lives and focuses on MUSC's values every day. We've worked closely over the years in various projects and situations. Mostly, I'll miss having someone around who truly understands and appreciates MUSC's journey from past to present. Lisa has been a valuable leader and contributor to the institutional history of MUSC."

Betts Ellis  
Chief of Staff  
MUSC Health System



With Dr. Jim Edwards and Sen. Fritz Hollings

"John Cooper and I hired Lisa back in 1991 as director of patient access services for MUSC Medical Center, where she did a marvelous job improving the hospital admissions experience to be more patient-oriented. Lisa's great personality, strong work ethic and attitude caused me to say, 'Wow, this is an impressive young woman.' Among her many gifts, Lisa's skilled at understanding the big picture, working with many groups and stakeholders by developing and building valuable relationships throughout her span of her career. I've always admired her courage to speak out and take risks in order to do her job or to help to further MUSC's agenda. MUSC is in a far better place because of Lisa's skills and gifts that she's shared selflessly with the institution. I've always valued our mentor-mentee relationship and time spent together, but mostly I've treasured our friendship through the years."

Charlene M. Stuart  
Former vice president of Finance and Administration and CEO, MUSC Medical Center

"I have worked with Lisa Montgomery for over 16 years and feel so blessed to have had such a strong leader at the helm for so long. She is one of a kind...driven, dependable, patient, passionate, kind and so much more! As a female leader, she was at the forefront of creating a woman-empowered workplace. Wishing you a long, healthy and happy retirement!"

Susie Edwards  
University Controller

"We began a relationship as mentor-mentee; and over the years developed into a friendship. If I call her and I say this is a mentee-mentor situation, she puts aside her EVP hat and that gives me that safe place to vent or do whatever I need to do, and she listens intently before giving me advice on how I might want to deal with the situation. Just giving me that space to be able to be open without repercussions, that's always been helpful for me. When people say, 'Just call me anytime,' that is true with her. I have made those calls at odd hours and she has always picked up, and she has always helped me through whatever I needed."

Velma Stamp  
Director, Grants and Contracts Accounting

# Happy Retirement, Lisa! Thank you for all you've done.



"It is my pleasure to reflect on the many accomplishments of my dear friend Lisa Pennington Montgomery. I have known and loved Lisa since her early childhood. Her father, Dr. Ken Pennington, was Jim's classmate at the University of Louisville Dental School, and, with his wife Helen, remained a lifelong friend and colleague as a dentist in Moncks Corner."

Lisa's steady rise through the ranks of the administration at MUSC was no surprise to me. She has served as a trusted advisor to the university's president, the board of trustees and its many administrative, academic and health care leadership teams. Lisa is a "real somebody" – a lovely, gifted, highly engaged contributor to the MUSC family and the entire Charleston community while remaining devoted to her parents throughout the years. Well done, Lisa, Jim would be so very proud of you! My congratulations, best wishes and God's blessings."

Ann D. Edwards  
Former MUSC First Lady



Awesome grounds crew!



With Ann Edwards

"I appreciate Lisa's 35 years of service to MUSC. She has helped navigate MUSC through some difficult times over the past 19 years I have known her. Without a doubt, she has made our campus and hospital a better place. She will be missed."

William Bingham  
Board of Trustees

"To say we are celebrating Lisa's retirement is something I struggle with. While of course I'm happy for her, she will be so greatly missed for her business savvy, her willingness to ask the hard questions, her strength to go face-to-face with a challenge, her compassion for her team and the MUSC family at large and certainly her care for all those we serve in MUSC's vast circles. These qualities are the core of who Lisa is and why she's made incalculable contributions that reach so far and wide."

David McNair  
The McNair Group

"I have truly enjoyed working with Lisa Montgomery for these last 19 years. She made sure that I was always informed as to all of the matters I needed as chairman of the board's Finance and Administration Committee for 16 of those years. Her knowledge of the inner workings of this massive enterprise and her ability to navigate the extreme complexities of both the health care and medical environments have been a huge asset to the MUSC Board of Trustees and made our roles a little easier. I know I am going to miss her, and I know that the board will also."

Charles Schulze  
Vice chairman, Board of Trustees



*file photo*

**Members of Lisa Montgomery's team and MUSC women leaders surround her after she was named the Trident United Way's 2018 Role Model of the Year.**

"Lisa is a person I feel comfortable talking to and sharing confidences. She's trustworthy and has integrity that I respect. When I was named chief diversity officer for the university, she helped me navigate and avoid land mines and often shared sage advice in ways to strategically approach things I wanted to get done. She's also a mentor, but more than that I call her my friend. Lisa genuinely loves MUSC – another thing that I love and respect about her. When you see a leader reflect that level of care and concern, it inspires you to be a better leader."

Willette Burnham-Williams, Ph.D.  
Chief Equity Officer

"Lisa has created an atmosphere of collegiality, quality and efficiency that has our division focused on providing the best services possible to MUSC. She has challenged us to find creative approaches, innovative ideas and an efficiency of operations to make that happen while also championing the success of our employees. We will miss Lisa's compassionate leadership, but even more, the quality of person that she is!"

Stewart Mixon  
Chief Operations Officer  
Division of Finance and Operations

"It was a pleasure to work with Lisa. She was very approachable, but very effective in communicating. I would bounce things off her with regard to strategy and thoughts and ideas, and she would do likewise."

Tom Anderson  
Former CEO, MUSC Foundation

"Lisa's been a fantastic boss. I began working with her when MUSC Hospital established a full-time compliance office, where we created the hospital's compliance program. Years later, I reteamd with Lisa to establish and manage the enterprise risk management initiative. She and former MUSC Hospital CEO Charlene Stuart were female executives who paved the road for me and many other women and minority leaders to excel through their leadership, work ethic, intelligence and experience. Women who work here have so much respect for Lisa. They know the quality of her work and the integral part she plays in MUSC's success. She's involved in big-picture decisions, but also keeps the trains running on time."

Reece Smith  
Director of Strategic Risk Management  
University Internal Audit

"Lisa's always been a voice to bring a level-headed approach to issues. She's a natural problem solver – smart, methodical, thoughtful. She's always willing to speak out when nobody else will or when something needs to be said, and she'll also be the first to congratulate you when something goes right. She knows MUSC and has served the institution well. Integrity of MUSC leadership is still very strong here. Lisa is one leader who possesses a strong sense of loyalty and with integrity. She'll always do the right thing while having a little fun along the way."

Annette Drachman, J.D.  
General Counsel, Office of the General Counsel

"What I've noticed about Lisa is she is, No. 1, good about understanding her people and what their needs are, what people need to do their jobs and providing them with support. Her strength is she is able to establish relationships of trust at every level of the organization. That's at the frontline level to the leadership level to the board level, she's able to establish relationships of trust."

Brad Taylor  
Chief Facilities Officer

"During those years I served as dean of the College of Medicine, Lisa represented me with an absolute mark of credibility, honesty and integrity. She possesses a combination of skills that makes her easy to work with while staying tough whenever it was needed. Lisa knows a lot about the workings of MUSC and the medical center, and you can believe what she says. I can think of no finer quality in a chief financial officer of a large institution like MUSC. She's truly an invaluable individual."

Layton McCurdy, M.D.  
Dean Emeritus, College of Medicine (1990-2001)

"Of all the wonderful people that I was privileged to work with at MUSC, Lisa Montgomery was one of the most insightful and talented. Having worked in leadership positions at the university and the hospital, even doing both simultaneously for eight years, she understood the differing needs and priorities of both entities. During that eight-year period, when the hospital and the university both faced financial challenges, Lisa was unflappable. She never lost her cool (or at least didn't show it if she did), and today, she leaves a university in a much more stable financial situation. I feel so blessed to have had Lisa as a colleague, but more importantly, as a friend."

Ray Greenberg, M.D., Ph.D.,  
Former President, MUSC

"Lisa worked hard in leading Finance and Administration through challenging times. She worked with deans and leadership to introduce a sustainable budget model to manage revenues and spending, brought the MUSC Excellence program to her division to create a great workplace environment and established employee engagement surveys to obtain employee feedback and manage data to make changes to improve employees' needs and delivery of services. Lisa has strengthened the university and MUSC enterprise's financial situation so that its stronger than ever before."

Patrick Wamsley  
University Chief Financial Officer

"It's been a pleasure working with you, Lisa, over these past few years – stressful at times, but mostly fun and very educational. I wish you nothing but the best for you in retirement and hope you live a long and happy life. Take care."

Stephanie Davis  
Executive Assistant

**LEADER** *Continued from Page Five*

have been invaluable. Although I certainly wish her well as she moves into her next chapter, she will be sorely missed on campus as a friend and colleague,” said Cole.

Patrick J. Cawley, MUSC Health CEO and vice president for Health Affairs, University, agrees wholeheartedly.

“This institution will miss Lisa Montgomery profoundly. Over the past three decades, she has proved to be a force of nature. She brings her best game to everything she does, and she’s always thoroughly prepared, having put a great deal of thought into all aspects of a matter. Her keen business acumen and willingness to speak her mind coupled with a deep connection to all around her have made an immeasurable impact on this institution. There is no doubt that she has been an integral part of the tremendous growth and transformation this institution has achieved. And, I would be remiss not to add that I’ll miss a valued colleague and most of all, friend,” he said.

Montgomery, who retires at the end of June as executive vice president of Finance and Operations, started her career at MUSC Hospital in 1991, when then-hospital CEO and vice president of Finance and Administration Charlene McCants Stuart was looking to build up the hospital’s finance team with new ideas and talent. Dependable, dedicated, courageous, savvy and a good judge of character – Montgomery shared qualities that reminded Stuart of herself when she started out at MUSC.

Montgomery was hired as director of Patient Access Services for MUSC Hospital. She had proved herself through previous successes at other health care institutions and was poised to take on new challenges in health care. In 1998, she was named director of Patient Financial Services and controller, working with senior leadership to revamp the hospital’s financial processes by reorganizing the revenue cycle and patient financial services to provide efficiency while still providing the highest quality patient care.

Stuart Smith, former CEO of MUSC Medical Center and vice president of

Clinical Operations, observed that Montgomery was taking on more difficult tasks.

“Lisa’s work was exceptional. I saw it as the start of a pattern of high performances during such difficult times. It’s these early successes and later ones that are the hallmark of her career,” he said.

**ESTABLISHING MUHA**

In 1999, she, Smith and institutional leaders collaborated to take MUSC hospital to greater heights by leading the hospital’s conversion to the Medical University Hospital Authority. This bold move, which won approval from the South Carolina Legislature, would allow the hospital to operate more efficiently as a public benefit corporation and foster future growth. MUHA officially launched in July 2000.

Montgomery credits the commitment and vision of the strong senior leadership team across the hospital, physician’s practice plan, College of Medicine and university for achieving this milestone. And, she explained, it occurred during rough times, which included reorganizations, failed mergers, significant losses from federal and state funds and a poor economy. Despite these challenges, MUSC emerged as a stronger organization.

“We made it through that period, thanks to everyone embracing a team approach,” she said. “The experiences helped forge bonds and relationships between these entities like never before. It was a time to embrace change, apply new ideas, innovative methods and best practices that were executed at other academic medical centers to help MUSC succeed through this transition.”

Montgomery’s experience and successes with the hospital soon caught the attention of MUSC’s Board of Trustees and then-president Raymond S. Greenberg, M.D., Ph.D., who tapped Montgomery to lead university finance and operations in addition to continuing to manage the Medical Center’s finance and operations arm. Understanding both entities proved to be both masterful and strategic, allowing Montgomery to see MUSC’s big picture and where she could share her strategic insight as a member of the President’s Council and senior

leadership team.

Among her first tasks within the university was to assess her division’s workforce of more than 1,200 employees, which supported three university units – Engineering and Facilities, University Finance and University Operations. Once the Medical Center had launched the MUSC Excellence program to improve patient and employee satisfaction, Montgomery and her team introduced elements of it across the Division of Finance and Administration, with a goal to improve customer service and satisfaction and employee engagement.

“We’ve always tried to connect the dots regardless of where employees work and ensure that they understood Excellence’s impact to the institutional team and overall mission to support patients, research and students – everything needed to make an individual’s experience at MUSC better,” said Montgomery.

Weathering several complex financial crises, Montgomery helped to steer the institution through rough waters. She launched responsibility-centered management as an effective decision-making budgeting system to support the university’s colleges and deans. She also worked with division leaders to streamline and merge expertise within various service units and supported new programs, creative methods and innovative ideas and measuring tools to support efficiency, transparency and cohesiveness throughout the university – all in an effort to achieve financial sustainability.

Most recently, Montgomery helped to lead MUSC’s response during the COVID-19 pandemic, joining executive leadership and the campus’ infectious disease experts to discuss safety strategies that supported MUSC’s patients, students, faculty and staff; revamping campus operations; and acquiring personal protective equipment for front-line clinical care team members. She partnered with Lisa Saladin, P.T., Ph.D., provost and executive vice president of Academic Affairs, to formulate a “playbook” for the future that included the transitioning of in-person classes for students to online learning as well as developing the MUSC Enterprise

Remote Work Plan and other pandemic support policies.

According to Saladin, it was a period of instant learning where clinicians, researchers and academic teams learned to adapt, transform and pivot on a dime. “We learned a lot and are still learning from this pandemic experience,” said Saladin.

Another area of impact that Montgomery has championed is mentorship and elevating women and minorities to leadership roles. She achieved this by piloting strategies first within her own division and later extending the focus campuswide. In 2006, just as MUSC Excellence was launched in Finance and Administration, she collaborated with interim chief equity officer Willette Burnham-Williams, Ph.D., to set diversity goals for the division and adopted communications tools and practices to connect diversity and inclusion efforts with great success.

“Lisa has modeled her area and the university after other leaders, taking risks to diversify the look of MUSC’s talent pool. She’s also a trailblazer, possessing the best Press Ganey employee engagement survey scores of any leader across the enterprise because of the risks she’s willing to take. Employees see her genuine desire to make positive change in order to build MUSC as the organization all of us want it to be,” said Burnham-Williams.

Much of Montgomery’s commitment to improving MUSC’s fiscal growth can be found in the hospitals, clinical facilities and research buildings around MUSC’s campus that have contributed to downtown Charleston’s changing skyline. Her influence has also extended to MUSC Health’s growth around the Tri-county, region and state – a great source of pride for her.

**FULL CIRCLE**

While others may be ready to retire and slow down years before it’s time, Montgomery cherishes her 30 years at MUSC. And along with the years of hard work and challenges, she has always valued the journey, for its afforded her the privilege of building important

# Staying healthy through summer

*Five simple strategies to keep you and your family well this season*

MUSC Health  
& Well-Being

By Susan L. Johnson, Ph.D.,  
MUSC Office of Health  
Promotion



With summer officially underway, schedules changing and traveling resuming, many exercise and fitness routines begin to fall to the wayside. Transition periods like summer break tend to be disruptive to healthy habits but shouldn't permanently derail them. But it does take some planning and focus to overcome the temptation to give in to those lazy summer vacation days and stay on track with fitness and healthy family goals. Following are some easy tips to help us through those first few weeks of summer break and keep us moving through every backyard barbecue and family vacation.

1. Establish individual and family exercise schedules. Most likely each person in the family has specific times and types of activities that are part of their normal exercise routines. Sit down as a group and figure out how to make time around summer activities, such as work, camp and vacations, so that each person can continue to work toward their fitness goals, even if it may look a little different in the summer compared with the school year.
2. Try to plan family dinners. With longer days, camps and vacations, it's hard to stick to a normal shopping/meal planning/cooking routine in the summer. But the more you can, the healthier your family will eat, and you all will benefit from that time spent around the table – whether it's the kitchen table or a picnic table.
3. Establish summertime “house rules.” Since most kids spend more time at home during the summer than they do during the school year, it is a good idea to establish some special summertime rules that keep their bodies and brains active while also ensuring adequate rest. Bedtime, reading, screen time and exercise can all be worked into a daily schedule while still allowing for lots of flexibility and summer fun.
4. Plan active vacations – even if the destination isn't in an “active” setting. Seek out activities that work fun and fitness into family fun. Swimming, boating and hiking are obvious outdoor summer activities, but even sightseeing and amusement parks can provide lots of opportunities for walking. Just be sure not to load up on unhealthy snacks while you're there.
5. Relax and have fun! Don't worry if you get off track for a weekend or even a week. It's OK every once in a while just to let loose and be spontaneous. Just be sure to get back to your healthy habits as soon as possible.

To stay motivated and on track this summer, participate in Imagine U, the digital MUSC employee well-being program. Simply sign in at [www.musc.edu/iu](http://www.musc.edu/iu) and get started. For questions or more information regarding employee wellness offerings and programs through the summer months and beyond, please email [daporek@musc.edu](mailto:daporek@musc.edu).

## TRAINING *Continued from Page One*

in Nursing program, wanted to ensure that students would see the patient's entire surgical experience from beginning to end.

“Having the opportunity to be in the perioperative area, to actually be there and see the preoperative experience, the operative experience and the post-operative experience, has been wonderful because then they can really put all of the pieces together and understand the whole nursing process,” she said.

Students get a chance to talk to the patients before surgery and watch as the nurse does all the pre-surgery checks and makes sure patients are fully informed. After surgery, the student accompanies the patient to the recovery area.

The first cohort of students went through the rotation during the spring 2021 semester, observing in the catherization lab, a robotic surgery suite and a traditional open surgery suite.

The rotation was Colleen Kinslow's favorite day of the semester. She got to observe a craniotomy and an above-the-knee amputation.

“I found it to be an incredible experience,” she said.

Even though Kinslow previously worked at a hospital and shadowed nurses before applying to nursing school, she admits that her ideas about the operating room were still mostly formed by TV and movies. But during this rotation, she was able to follow and ask questions of the circulating nurse and nurse anesthetist.

Kara Simpson, DNP, R.N., director of nursing excellence at MUSC Health, said recruitment of operating room nurses has typically been of the “friend of a friend” variety. She herself ended up working in the OR when she moved to a small town in Arkansas and that was the only opening.

She fell in love with the operating room. But, she said, it's not typically a role that would-be nurses envision.

“In my experience with nursing students, most of them think of nursing as floor nursing. You clock in, you pick up your patient assignments, you administer medications, you perform your assessments, dressing changes, all

those kinds of tasks,” she said.

The operating room is a little different. “It's your room as an OR nurse. The surgeon is doing the procedure; the anesthesia team is responsible for making sure the patient's life functions continue. But the operating room nurses are responsible for that room,” Simpson said.

That means ensuring that sterile procedures are followed, managing all nursing care, communicating with the family as well as other areas of the hospital and documenting the surgery.

“It can be a stressful environment to work in because there's a lot riding on it. There's a lot of responsibility there, and you need to be able to have a high degree of understanding and anticipation – based on the clinical presentation of the patient, based on what the provider has ordered as far as the procedure – anticipating what they are going to need in that room for any circumstances that might come up,” Simpson said.

Nurses who are new to the OR go through a six-month orientation, but it takes at least a year to become comfortable with the role, McEachern said. It can take two to five years to become proficient at multiple specialties.

“It has become so specialized in so many areas, like vascular and cardiac,” McEachern said. “There's so much specialization in each particular area, so it's even harder to get people fully competent in all areas, whereas back in the day, you could have an OR nurse who could go and scrub in or circulate for anything. That's almost impossible to do now.”

COVID has worsened an existing nurse shortage. Some of the experienced nurses who otherwise would have worked for several more years instead decided to retire, McEachern said. MUSC Health has at times hired international nurses, but it can take up to a year to get a foreign nurse into the hospital.

Licensed practical nurses can be trained for the scrub nurse role – the nurse who stands at the table and hands instruments to the surgeon – but the circulating nurse role must be filled by a registered nurse.

And it's not just nurses who are in

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**REPEAT** *Continued from Page One*

been a risk for people with no immunity. I think it's going to go up in the next few weeks," Sweat said.

"But all of us who have immunity — that, in mass, protects people without it. It makes it harder for that virus to move around and ultimately get to people with no immunity. So it's certainly going to be lower. The cases will be mild or mostly asymptomatic. And also, among young people, because older people, 65 and above, have very high rates of vaccination."

With that in mind, he does not anticipate the kind of strain we saw on hospitals last summer. "If we do see an increase in the weeks ahead, it will be totally manageable."

But Sweat is also keeping an eye on what COVID-19 is doing in other countries. "It's burning overseas in a terrible way. That's going to affect so many things — our own risks with new variants, the global economy, migration pressures, political stabilization. This is a big deal," he said.

"Latin America is on fire, badly, and it's popping up badly in parts of South Asia, and Africa is a massive worry. In Uganda, a huge blow-up is happening. That's very risky. Getting the global community to do something about that is so important for all of those places."

The more the coronavirus spreads, the more chances it has to change. "Variants could mutate to evade immunity. And we've seen some evidence of that in minimal ways. Vaccines appear to be a little bit less effective against the Indian variant. So that's a bad signal. It suggests if more and more mutations occur, and there'll be pressure on those viruses to do that, then we could end up having variants that we aren't immune to."

But for now, he's happy to see our case numbers continue to drop. The June 9 MUSC update showed the Tri-county area's growth rate went down 37% compared with the previous week. If a summer bump is coming, it's not showing itself yet. "Hopefully it won't happen and I'll be just totally wrong," Sweat said.

**TRAINING** *Continued from Page Ten*

short supply. McEachern said the local schools that trained surgical techs have closed those programs, leaving hospitals without a nearby source of new graduates.

"It's just an overall shortage of people going into health care, period," she said.

The operating room places additional demands on nurses. They can work long hours — a nurse on the transplant service, for example, could work all day and then have to work all night. They rotate onto disaster teams that camp out at the hospital during hurricanes or other emergencies.

They must also take call, which means being able to get to the hospital within 30 minutes of being paged — and that touches on the regional issue of affordable housing.

"That's becoming difficult, to find people who can afford to live within that 30-minute radius of the hospital for call," McEachern said. Administrators have started to consider creating call rooms within the hospital for people to rest while on call.

In the meantime, with this new clinical placement, about 90 students each semester are being exposed to operating room nursing.

"There are so many opportunities in nursing. What's great about this experience is it opens them up to different opportunities," said Reibel, who coaches the students to particularly observe how the interprofessional team within the OR works together.

Kinslow, who was already leaning toward the emergency room or trauma care, said the experience strengthened her interest.

"It was honestly, if anything, more affirming that I want to continue down that path of ER, trauma care, wound care, anything of that sort," she said.

Reibel has heard only positive reactions from students.

"I feel very fortunate that we have this opportunity and developed these relationships with the hospital and the perioperative areas because it is important

**LEADER** *Continued from Page Nine*

relationships over three decades.

"As bad as some times were, it's the people and relationships — the building of a team, mentoring people and watching the teamwork and people come together that is so important. I still think our worst day is better than most places. It's what has kept me and other people here at MUSC," she said.

Montgomery plans to remain in the Lowcountry — she's home-grown after all. She grew up in Pinopolis in Berkeley County. Her commitment to health care and service are modeled from her early childhood and a strong family work ethic. Her late father, Kenneth Pennington, D.M.D., was the first full-time dentist in Berkeley County, while mother, Helen Pennington, managed the business side of the practice. Not long after arriving at MUSC, Montgomery earned her Master in Health Administration from the College of Health Professions and rose quickly through both MUHA and university

management and leadership positions. Thirty years later, she has her sights set on new adventures.

Asked how she plans to spend her retirement, she's looking forward to spending time cultivating hobbies and interests, traveling, although her mother's health is currently her biggest priority, and enjoying the company of family and friends.

Perhaps Montgomery's success is easily summarized by looking to the past as she looks forward.

Smith may well have said it best. "Where we come from is just as important as where we are headed — in other words, where we have come from as an organization to where MUSC is today," he said. "MUSC has come so far over many years, and Lisa has been a key part of MUSC's transformation since the day she arrived."

Montgomery has established needs-based scholarships to support students in health care leadership in the College of Health Professions. To make a donation in her honor for more information, please visit <https://bit.ly/3goo6D8>.



*File Photo by Sarah Pack*

**A nurse wheels a lung into the operating room in preparation for transplant.**

that students are aware there are other areas they can go into, other than the medical-surgical area," she said. "So I feel very fortunate and grateful for that. And I know the students do, too."

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