

## Wellness Center team ready to help you be 'Your best you' in 2023

BY CINDY ABOLE

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Perhaps the ancient Eastern philosopher Buddha said it best when it comes to welcoming the new year — “No matter how hard the past, you can always begin again.”

Every January, people choose to “begin again” — making pledges and resolutions to improve their lives through healthy choices and behaviors and improved fitness and routines, with the goal of improving their overall health and well-being.

At MUSC’s Wellness Center, the all-inclusive facility and support team is poised to get people started on their personal wellness journeys so they are able to establish and meet their personal goals.

It’s a favorite time of year for the Wellness Center director Dusty Jackson and his team. Jackson loves seeing members of all ages, students, employees and the public, come into the Courtenay Drive facility throughout the day — whether they’re catching a sunrise yoga class or boot camp session, completing a circuit in the cardio or renovated weight room or running on the indoor track — it’s all there in this popular and wide-ranging sports facility.

Since 2015, the MUSC Wellness Center has been voted the “Best Health Club” by the Charleston City Paper’s Best of Charleston annual awards as well as receiving the “Best Fitness Club in Charleston” award from Health Links Magazine.

Jackson noted that since the last quarter of 2022, the Wellness Center team has seen a steady return of pre-pandemic members, or regulars, alongside new members. With the wave of employees nationwide

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Photo by Sarah Pack

**Nurse Marsha Floyd helps Adonis Doctor, one of Black River’s first patients.**

## ‘Patients deserve this’: MUSC Health Black River opens

BY HELEN ADAMS

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A patient with the last name Doctor happened to be among the first patients to see the doctors at MUSC Health Black River Medical Center. Adonis Doctor of Johnsonville, South Carolina, came by ambulance to the brand-new hospital in the rural community of Cades in Williamsburg County.

“It was my blood pressure; my

head was hurting,” he said after he got treatment to ease his pain and address the underlying issue.

In the past, he said he’d have had to travel another 20 minutes to get to a hospital in Florence. Doctor is happy to have a medical center much closer to home. “It’s nice. They have good people. They don’t have you waiting, either.”

The opening of the Black River Medical Center is a welcome new chapter for many people in an area

that has gone through challenging times when it comes to health care. Lake City Community Hospital, about 10 minutes from Cades, and Williamsburg Regional Hospital in Kingstree, about 15 minutes away, closed their doors. Many employees of those hospitals now work at Black River.

That includes nurse Debra Holliday, who worked for years at Williamsburg Regional — before

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# AROUND CAMPUS

## PEOPLE

### John Comisi



John Comisi, D.D.S., associate professor, Department of Oral Rehabilitation and Restorative Dentistry in the James B. Edwards

College of Dental Medicine, is the newly elected president of the South Carolina Dental Association. In his role, Comisi plans to promote the oral health care needs of patients and advocate for improvements for Medicaid funding for South Carolinians.

### Garth Swanson



Garth R. Swanson, M.D., has been named the new director of the Division of Gastroenterology and Hepatology in the Department of Medicine.

Swanson will expand gastroenterology and hepatology clinical services and programs at MUSC Health. Swanson comes to MUSC from Rush University Medical Center in Chicago, Illinois, where he served as director of the Crohn's & Colitis Center and Clinical Chronobiology Lab and was the associate director of the Rush Center for Integrated Microbiome and Chronobiology Research.

He will begin June 1.

### Benjamin Toll



Benjamin Toll, Ph.D., professor of Public Health Sciences and Psychiatry and co-director of the Lung Cancer Screening Program and chief of Tobacco Cessation and Health

Behaviors at Hollings Cancer Center, was named the president-elect of the Society for Research on Nicotine and Tobacco (SRNT). He begins a three-year term with the SRNT, working with the national and international tobacco research community.



Photo by Clif Rhodes

**Dr. Raymond N. DuBois, center, presented Drs. Jezabel Rodriguez Blanco and David Long with the 2022 High Impact Publications Award.**

## Hollings director lauds researchers for high-impact work

### Staff Report

MUSC Hollings Cancer Center director Raymond N. DuBois, M.D., Ph.D., honored two of the center's up-and-coming researchers this week with the High Impact Publications Award. The award recognizes excellent work that has appeared in a high-impact journal with a Hollings researcher as a first or primary author.

The honorees for publications appearing in 2022 are Jezabel Rodriguez Blanco, Ph.D., for her paper "Noncanonical activation of GLI signaling in SOX2+ cells drives medulloblastoma relapse" in *Science Advances*, and David Long, Ph.D., for his paper "BRD4 promotes resection and homology-directed repair of DNA double-strand breaks" in *Nature Communications*.

"It's very difficult to publish in these high-impact journals," DuBois said. "It sometimes takes a whole year to get one of these manuscripts published because, in my experience, you have

to go back and forth with the journal and undertake a number of additional experiments to answer all of the reviewer's questions."

It's always a balance for a researcher to decide whether to pursue publication in a high-impact journal in which reviewers will demand additional experiments and answers or in a medium-intensity journal or a journal that allows immediate publication but lacks peer review. The immediate publication became the more popular option for COVID-related research during the pandemic because scientists wanted to get information out as quickly as possible. And sometimes, Long said, a researcher might want to lay claim to an idea by publishing quickly and then following up with publication in a more rigorous journal.

But the result of publishing in these high-impact journals is a more complete picture, Long said, rather than an interesting finding without further context.

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**OPENING** *Continued from Page One*

heavy rain in October 2015 led to damage so severe that the building became unusable.

"In April of 2016 we opened a modular facility and stayed there for six years," Holliday said, referring to a temporary facility on the hospital campus. "So everybody who comes to visit Black River from MUSC Health hospitals in Marion and Florence and talks about how nice our equipment is, I tell them I'm not sorry. I'm not going to apologize, because it's been rough for a long time."

That's why she's thrilled to be in a new, state-of-the-art hospital. "We are so grateful — all of us. Lake City Hospital wasn't going to survive. They had financial issues and the hospital itself had issues. Williamsburg definitely did. This is just a great opportunity."

Surgeon Joseph Asaro, M.D., also came to Black River from Williamsburg Regional Hospital. "It's beautiful. And bigger than I expected. I'm just excited about all of us finally bringing our care, which has been top-notch. We had patient satisfaction scores in the 90s for years, which is great. Now we have the facility to match that. I feel like we all deserve this, and the patients deserve this as well. So it's exciting."

Those patients now have access to equipment that hasn't been available in the past in their area. For example, a machine that does 3D mammograms. Mammography tech Tonya Carpenter explained why it's so beneficial when it comes to screening for breast cancer. "It takes three dimensional images so instead of just taking four normal pictures it takes a bunch of pictures so they can tell whether you need to come back. It's just so much clearer."

Black River Medical Center also has the first permanent MRI in Williamsburg County. MRI stands for magnetic resonance imaging. It's a noninvasive way to get detailed images of just about every internal part of the body.

And Ken Watts, director of imaging services, said the hospital has an excellent setup for people who come in suffering from strokes. It's designed to get the patient from ambulance to brain scan, the first step in assessing a stroke, as quickly as possible.

"Time is of the essence. So we're probably able to get results of a stroke quicker here than anywhere in the system. Just because of the proximity of emergency medical services dropping off to getting to CT." CT stands for computerized tomography. It tells medical staff what type of stroke the



*Photo by John Russell*

**Dr. Cristo Courban listens to Ola Mae Capers, of Lake City, take a deep breath. Capers was the first Emergency Department patient at the newly opened MUSC Health Black River Medical Center.**



**The Black River Medical Center on Williamsburg County Highway in Cades.**

*Photo by Sarah Pack*



*Photo by John Russell*

**Employees celebrate the opening of the Black River Medical Center.**

patient has, which guides what type of treatment is needed.

Rami Zebian, M.D., serves as chief medical officer for MUSC Health's Florence division, which includes the Black River hospital. He said it's reassuring to patients to know that Black River Medical Center is part of the larger MUSC Health system. "We are looking to have the best care locally. And we're doing MUSC level of care with the help of specialists through telemedicine that are in various locations serving patients here locally."

It's reassuring to employees, too. Nurse Marsha Floyd, formerly of

Williamsburg Regional Medical Center, marveled at the change. "We've got more equipment than we ever dreamed we could have. We got more space than we ever dreamed we'd have. It's going to take some getting used to, but we're excited."

MUSC Health Black River Medical Center, at 64,000 square feet, has 25 inpatient beds, four observation beds, two operating rooms and 16 emergency treatment rooms. Zebian said it's a great addition to an area that badly needed such a hospital. "Everybody I've talked to says, 'Well, if I'm sick, I'd rather be here.'"



# Serious fun: Robot Olympics helps surgical teams to hone their teamwork skills

By **KIMBERLY MCGHEE**

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Robots are being used more and more frequently in the operating room, not to replace surgeons but to improve both their precision and their vision of the surgical field.

With robotic surgery, cameras provide the surgeon, seated separately at a console across the room from the surgical team, a close-up view of the action as he or she carefully guides the robot's movements. For all of its merits, however, this revolutionary technology puts the surgeon at some distance from the surgical team, making interactions between the two difficult. This separation can pose a challenge to effective teamwork.

Training for surgeons on how to conduct robotic surgery is robust. However, little training has been available to members of the surgical team who need to adapt to this new environment.

"We train up surgeons very effectively and very rigorously to use the robots to perform the surgeries," said Kenneth Catchpole, Ph.D., the S.C. SmartState Endowed Chair



**Catchpole**

in Clinical Practice and Human Factors at MUSC and co-director of the Team Science program at the South Carolina Clinical and Translational Research Institute. "However, we don't always train our staff as rigorously in all the things that they need to do to support the robotic surgery."

With funding from the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, Catchpole and Jennifer Anger, M.D., a urologic surgeon at Cedars Sinai Medical Center, co-led a study that showed that incorporating "serious games" into this type of training can be an effective and engaging way to teach teamwork and other skills to busy robotic surgery teams. Their findings are published in the *Journal of Patient Safety*.

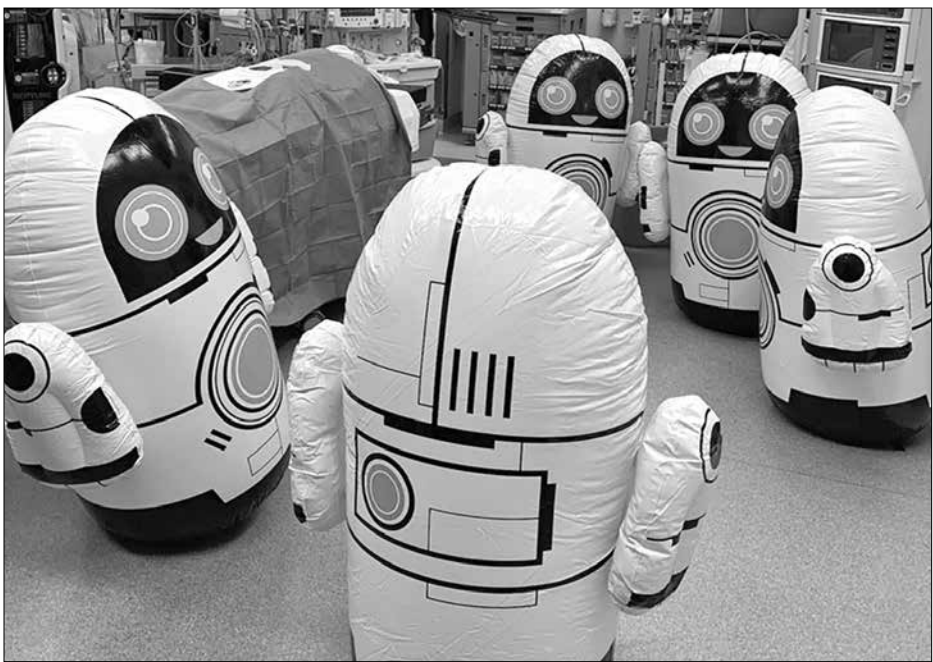
Tara Cohen, Ph.D., director of Surgical Safety and Human Factors Research in the Cedars Sinai Department of Surgery, is lead author of the publication.

"Being able to put the enjoyment back into learning is so important," said Catchpole. "If you're not enjoying something, then you're unlikely to learn."

Instead of asking teams to sit through didactic presentations, Catchpole and his collaborators engaged them in immersive scenarios. Raymund Avenido, robotics surgery specialist at Cedars Sinai, came up with the idea for a robot Olympics and collaborated with Catchpole and others at MUSC and Cedars Sinai to make it happen. Together, they created four escape rooms relevant to robotic surgery for teams to solve. In one, players had to identify safety hazards; in another, they had to troubleshoot the machinery. And in yet another, they had to retrieve instruments. The fourth room required them to navigate the workspace effectively, learning to maneuver around the robotic equipment and other obstacles.

Catchpole believes that games are more likely than traditional presentations to motivate teams to develop their teamwork skills and to ensure that those skills stick.

"It can be aspirational that you're



**Image courtesy of Dr. Kenneth Catchpole.**

presenting team members with a challenge and letting them use and develop their own skills to address that, and then they'll get feedback about how well they did," said Catchpole.

"So, it's interactive. That's often how people learn best," he continued. "And there's a competitive element: You'll get a score at the end, and you can compare your scores, and those with the highest scores can get a prize."

The recent publication reports data from the rollout of the four escape rooms at Cedars Sinai Medical Center. Sixteen surgical team members at Cedars Sinai participated in the four escape rooms and reported high satisfaction with the experience (4.5 on a 5-point scale). They also said that they found the experience relevant to their work, the interactive nature of the game engaging and enjoyable and the techniques they learned useful for improving their performances. Team members' confidence in their skills, already high, did not change.

Conducted as a four-hour workshop on a weekend at Cedars Sinai, the escape rooms are now being adapted to the MUSC clinical environment, with the help of MUSC robotic surgery specialist Betts Bishop, R.N., and Jessica Waxman,

a clinical practice nurse expert involved in training and quality improvement in operating rooms. At MUSC, the escape rooms will be worked into the established training/in-service schedule for surgical teams.

Having shown that teams find the escape rooms enjoyable, engaging and relevant, Catchpole and his collaborators are further collecting and analyzing data to determine whether teamwork improved due to the innovative training.

"We've done a lot of work looking at teamwork before and after participating in these escape rooms," said Catchpole, and those findings will be the subject of a future article.

Catchpole and his collaborators are also developing a manual that other institutions could use to create their own escape rooms. They could be used for robotic surgery or other types of operating room teams.

"There's more interest in this type of training as more technology comes into the operating rooms," said Catchpole. "So, if we can package up some resources and tips for using serious games to train teams on these new environments, their usefulness could extend well beyond robotic surgery."

## MEET JACK

**Joaquin "Jack" Malina Jr.****Department; Years at MUSC***Department of Facilities Management; 14 1/2 years***How are you changing what's possible at MUSC***By providing the best Facilities customer service as possible.***Pets** *A dog, Bruno; a cat, Karma***Music that's in your player now***Journey***Beach or pool** *Beach***Favorite place in the world** *Germany***The best thing about living in Charleston***The architecture***What food is a must have in the pantry***Latin food***Greatest moment in your life***The birth of my daughter***Favorite quote** *"Go ahead, make my day."*

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## IMPACT *Continued from Page Two*

And because the science has been so vigorously reviewed, these publications often lead to more funding to build upon the research. Blanco, for example, has just received a \$100,000 grant from the Vince Lombardi Cancer Foundation to continue her research into why medulloblastoma, a type of pediatric brain tumor, tends to relapse.

## 2023 Lowcountry Heart Walk scheduled for Feb. 25

Join friends, family and co-workers to support the annual 2023 Lowcountry Heart Walk on Saturday, Feb. 25. Event check in is 8 a.m., at Brittlebank Park. For information about the "Smart About Stroke SC" team, email Christina Blake, R.N., at [cloxton@musc.edu](mailto:cloxton@musc.edu) or visit the Heart Walk website at [https://www2.heart.org/site/TR/?fr\\_id=7825&pg=entry](https://www2.heart.org/site/TR/?fr_id=7825&pg=entry).

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# MUSC provides much-needed dental services

By CINDY ABOLE

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A few months ago, Ravenel, South Carolina, resident Maurilia Basurto experienced some pain on the right side of her mouth. Never having been to a dentist before, she tried to ignore it until the pain got increasingly worse.

After dropping off a neighbor to receive prenatal care at the Our Lady of Mercy Community Outreach's Women's Health Clinic, she learned that the facility offered dental services as well. She made an appointment and was recently evaluated for her tooth pain and quickly scheduled to see a specialist during the Jan. 13 endodontics clinic sponsored by Our Lady of Mercy Community Outreach and the MUSC James B. Edwards College of Dental Medicine.

The program marks a return of full endodontic services to the clinic after an extended period, closed at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, according to Theodore Ravenel, D.M.D., associate professor in the Department of Oral Rehabilitation and director of postgraduate endodontics in the Division of Endodontics.

Basurto was evaluated by endodontist resident Kyle Williams, D.D.S., assisted by volunteer third-year dental student Madison Covington. They talked, took several X-rays and started a root canal of her upper bicuspid tooth. Two hours later, her tooth was almost pain-free.

"Although there are community dental clinics around the Tri-county, none or very few are able to provide endodontic services or the ability to provide root canals for patients," said Ravenel. MUSC has partnered with the Our Lady of Mercy Community Outreach Dental Clinic over many years and brings our dental students and now residents to respond to the community's needs.

Prior to the pandemic, Ravenel accompanied dental students as part of a weekly clinical rotation for 1 1/2 years to work at the clinic with patients. As a precaution, the clinic closed for some time and eventually re-opened for general dentistry needs. For a short time, Ravenel coordinated the services of a few dental students at the clinic to perform root canal work for some patients, but the effort didn't fully launch.

The Our Lady of Mercy Community Outreach Dental Clinic started from humble beginnings in a trailer back in 1989. About 34 years later, it's now



*Photo by Sarah Pack*

**Endodontic resident Dr. Kyle Williams, center, performs a root canal on patient Maurilia Basurto at the Our Lady of Mercy Community Outreach Dental Clinic.**

located in a modern facility funded by donations and grants and has expanded to include a small but growing dental clinic located in the heart of downtown Charleston to provide dental services to Tri-county underserved and rural populations, free of charge. The MUSC team volunteers its time and services at the clinic at no charge.

During the Jan. 13 dental clinic, the endodontics team treated 23 patients from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., with a team that consists of six endodontic residents; two third-year dental students, who are volunteer dental assistants; Ravenel, the faculty preceptor; and dental assistant/endodontics program coordinator Vanessa Chapin.

First-year endodontics resident Alex Black, D.M.D., assisted Ravenel and the endodontic team in today's free clinic. "The facilities here at the Our Lady of Mercy Community Outreach Dental Clinic are very good. It's well-stocked and has the basic items we need as well as our own scopes and other equipment we brought to help us do our work efficiently," said Black. "The dental clinic personnel does a great job screening patients in advance for this clinic. They provided X-rays, notes and conducted some diagnostic tests on qualified patients prior to today's treatments."

Endodontists are dental specialists that focus on

*See CLINIC on page 11*



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# MUSC students spend MLK Week in service

By HARRISON HUNTLEY

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Most MUSC students have but one holiday off during spring semester: Martin Luther King Jr. Day. Some use this day to travel and see family while others might use the day to catch up on their studies - or sleep. But there are some students who dedicated time on this day to serve others.

As part of MLK Week @ MUSC, the University encouraged all MUSC community members to engage in service. Dr. King once said, “Life’s most persistent and urgent question is, ‘What are you doing for others?’” Congress passed the King Holiday and Service Act in 1994 and dedicated MLK Day as a day that carries on the legacy of his commitment to service. Since

then, AmeriCorps, a national service organization, has encouraged everyone to “engage with their community and create constructive action” on MLK Day and the days surrounding.

Julia Smoak, a third-year College of Pharmacy (COP) student, said the day off was a perfect opportunity to help those in need. “It is hard to find time where you have the opportunity to do stuff like this,” Smoak said. “So, days off seem like the perfect opportunity to get in here and give back to the community.”

The MUSC “Serve-a-thon” began on MLK Day as six students participated in a Meals That Heal event, making a chili dinner for guests of the Ronald McDonald House–Charleston. As they diced peppers, opened cans of beans and tried to avoid tears from cutting



Photo by Sarah Pack

From left, Susannah McFaul, assistant director of Volunteer Programs and Service Learning, with student volunteers Melina Wingerter, Charlie McCall, Kimberly McClure, Morgan Moody, Julia Smoak and Elizabeth Van Swol.

onions, the students shared in their experiences and encouraged each other. First-year students cheered on fourth-year students’ reports of residency

interviews while third-year students encouraged younger students facing

See **SERVICE** on page 10



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**WELLNESS** *Continued from Page One*

returning to the workplace, starting in 2022, more people are also returning to their pre-pandemic routines and activities like fitness and exercise.

"We've been seeing more and more people returning to the Wellness Center who haven't visited in years, which is so encouraging," Jackson said.

According to Jackson, the facility has already launched its 2023 campaign — "Your Best You."

"People are interested in getting back to a routine for fitness while also figuring out ways to eliminate stress from their lives. They're realizing the importance of exercise and health, especially after three years of COVID-19. They're seeing the importance of regular exercise and its connection with immune health. People are also realizing how physical activity can impact all areas of their lives," Jackson said.

Group exercise classes and offerings, include activities like cycling, Zumba, Pilates, water aerobics, the high-intensity training system (HITS), females in boxing and pickleball, to name a few. The facility also hosts several clinical collaborations with, for example, MUSC Hollings Cancer Center, such as the Survivor's Fit Club for breast cancer patients and a new prostate cancer fitness program for prostate cancer survivors. It also offers other specialty programs like Rock Steady Boxing, a program for Parkinson's patients, as well as specialized strength and exercise programs created for patients living with chronic diseases like diabetes, cardiovascular disease and neurological disorders.

To help with long-term planning, Jackson hired marketing director Colby Denton, who joined the team last October. Denton has been marketing the facility to various age groups to build its membership.

"Our goal has always been to get people through the door and see the



*Photos Provided*

**Wellness Center exercise physiologist Alicia O'Connor works with a member with the TRX suspension training system.**

*"Our goal has always been to get people through the door and see the facility for themselves and its offerings."*

**Dusty Jackson**

facility for themselves and its offerings. Once they see it, I know they'll be hooked," Jackson said.

Last fall, the team established a new effort to attract employees. It was a pilot program, offered to the Division for Education Innovation and Student Life employees, called EISL Week. It provided a free one-week membership to use the Wellness Center by trying out classes, equipment and programs. As part of the pilot, participants were also automatically enrolled in an incentive plan that let them earn points based



**Wellness Center's Dr. Tatiana Baier works with members during a Rock Steady boxing class.**

on participation and the ability to earn prizes at the conclusion. According to Jackson, the program was a hit and

had a good turnout, which allowed employees to jump-start their fitness

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goals while the center gained new employee-members in the process.

AN EMPLOYEE’S FITNESS JOURNEY

Several employees, like Jonathan Coultas, took advantage of this offer and made great strides with their wellness goals.

Coultas, 53, works as director of academic media in the Office of Instructional Technology and Faculty Resources. He’s become familiar with the Wellness Center’s offerings by assisting with numerous marketing campaigns utilizing his own photography and video projects.

An athlete who plays in the Charleston Masters over-50 amateur soccer league, Coultas had hurt his back and was seeking ways to improve it



Photo Provided

**The Wellness Center features an indoor and outdoor running track.**

through exercise and strength training. He and his wife, Dusti Annan-Coultas, Ed.D., also an employee, joined the Wellness Center in late October. Coultas started out with a general health and fitness assessment, working with Alicia O’Connor, an exercise physiologist and Wellness Center director of personal training. O’Connor conducted a body composition test, and together they discussed the results and limitations and established a training program and strategies, including suggested programs.

“I want to be as fit as I can, as long as I can,” said Coultas, who is also dad to a toddler-age son. “Hopefully by changing and improving my diet, daily workouts at the Wellness Center and at home, I will surely meet my goals.”

For EISL Week, he tried different programs that included pickleball and Body Composition test. He has co-workers who also visited the Wellness Center during various hours of the day to work out or try out classes.

Aside from preparing for his return to weekend league soccer, Coultas’ immediate goal is to run a 10K race by April. Almost three months into his membership, he can comfortably run a 5K. In January, he tracked his three-mile run at 26 minutes, with consistent mile splits.

“I never really thought about joining the Wellness Center until this time because of my injury and personal needs. The trainers and staff are so knowledgeable, experienced and helpful. They’re fantastic. They encourage members to try things out, stay active and succeed in their wellness goals to be the best version of themselves. I’m so glad that I did it,” Coultas said.

The Wellness Center’s current membership promotion offers a \$10 enrollment fee (a value of \$95) from Jan. 29-31. Ongoing is the Refer-A-Friend membership offer where both can get \$50 account credit. For information about the membership, classes and other specials, visit [muscedu/hsc](https://muscedu/hsc).

SERVICE *Continued from Page Eight*

difficult courses.

Melina Wingerter, a fourth-year COP student, said she appreciates events like this to get to know those around her. “I think it’s a good opportunity for us to work with other students in different colleges so we can learn more about their programs and ways that we can help them,” Wingerter said. “It’s nice to always hear them talk about their profession and be able to talk about ours and how we can work together in the future.”

Susannah McFaul, assistant director of Volunteer Programs and Service Learning at MUSC, organized two other service opportunities as part of the Serve-a-thon. “We don’t want to ask our nonprofit partners to open on a holiday if they aren’t already,” McFaul said. “We usually try to have one project day while organizing other service opportunities throughout the week.”

Since the Ronald McDonald House sits just steps from the MUSC campus, it’s usually not uncommon to see MUSC students volunteering in the kitchen. During MLK Week @ MUSC, students had another opportunity to serve Meals That Heal. The Serve-a-thon continued on Friday, Jan. 20, where students could volunteer at the Ronald McDonald House again, and on Saturday, Jan. 21 with Charleston Habitat for Humanity.

For more information, visit <https://education.musc.edu/students/ose/diversity/mlk-week-at-musc>.



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Presented in partnership with Trident Area Agency on Aging

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— Institute for —  
**HEALTHY AGING**



**CLINIC** *Continued from Page Seven*

advanced techniques to treat dental pulp, root issues and relief of tooth or mouth pain caused by decay, tooth injuries or abscesses.

In many cases, a tooth can be saved, which will help a patient preserve his or her natural teeth, according to Black. After evaluating the tooth for inflammation or infection, the specialist can perform a root canal to remove the infected tissue and pulp, apply a special irrigant to kill bacteria in the tooth and cover it using a temporary filling. Next, a general dentist will provide a tooth buildup to prepare a permanent crown.

Second-year endodontics chief resident Ann Nicholas, D.M.D., explained her approach to patient care.

"As endodontists, a big thing of what we do is conducting a patient history and review of their present illness. We only get a small idea of what's going on, based on what we see in a patient's mouth. It's important that we talk to the patient about what they've been

doing, what elicits their tooth pain, etc. That information, plus the imaging, testing and what we see in the mouth provides a comprehensive look at the situation so we can determine the best course of care," said Nicholas.

Time can also present a challenge for endodontists, according to Nicholas. Unlike general dentists, endodontist don't have the long-term established relationship typically built with their patients — they only see patients for one or two encounters in order to diagnose their situations quickly and provide relief for their pain.

"Sometimes the diagnosis is not black and white; it's a spectrum, so it's a challenge for us to take enough time and take the patient's health history to determine the best treatment for them," Nicholas said.

Fortunately, an endodontist's work can be very rewarding for both patient and practitioner.

"What we provide — relief from tooth pain — is an immediate, tangible benefit. Oftentimes, dentistry focuses



**Endodontics chief resident Dr. Ann Nicholas, center, talks to patient Amy Lopez, left, about her procedure via dental outreach clinic interpreter Lydia Librado-Wybesky.**

*Photo by Sarah Pack*

on treatment and providing preventive care for the patient. What we provide mostly is emergent dental care that has a huge effect and positive outcome for the patient. It's impactful and satisfying to be able to especially help this patient population," Nicholas said.

At the post-procedure follow up, it was explained to Basurto, via the clinic's Spanish-speaking receptionist-interpreter, that she received a root canal. Williams also explained that

she would need a crown and would experience some soreness that could be relieved with over-the-counter pain relief medicine. He cautioned her to avoid hard foods like ice and nuts and to check for any abnormal swelling.

For Basurto, things were already good. The pain was gone, and already, she was smiling. In a few weeks, she'll return to the clinic with her husband, as they will both receive their first dental cleaning.

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Level: Intermediate

8		5		4				7
							2	
			2					5
						2	5	
4			7	8			6	
		6	3	9				
		4	8		7			
				6		7		2
6	9					1		

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