

TOO HEALTHY FOR A

HEART ATTACK?

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A MESSAGE FROM NORTH OAKS HEALTH SYSTEM CEO

American author Hal Borland once said, "Year's end is neither an end nor a beginning but a going on, with all the wisdom that experience can instill in us."

Reflecting on 2020 and looking ahead to 2021, these words ring true.

While we never could have imagined responding to a global pandemic in 2020, what I will always recall about our 60th year is the blessing that each and every member of our North Oaks family truly is to our community.

No matter the challenge, they have courageously met and exceeded it head-on without hesitation - banding together with incredible teamwork, resiliency, compassion, dedication and a singular focus on our mission to improve lives every time and with every touch.

The pandemic forced us to develop, implement and adopt new ways of operating, and the International Hospital Federation took notice. They recognized North Oaks as one of more than 100 hospitals from 28 countries for our comprehensive regional response to the pandemic through their COVID-19 "Beyond the Call of Duty" program.

Each and every day, I have the privilege of witnessing our team exceed the standards as they selflessly and graciously use their skills to treat our patients like family in their times of need. Because of this, I wake up energized each morning in anticipation of the great deeds our team will accomplish this

The new year brings with it hope and continued pride ... Hope that COVID-19 vaccinations put an end to the worldwide pandemic, and pride in our team's persistence during a pandemic in enhancing our services and improving the lives of those for which we are charged to care.

For example, North Oaks earned designation as a Blue Cross Blue Shield Blue Distinction Center+® for Maternity Care. Furthermore, for the sixth consecutive year, your feedback has garnered North Oaks to receive the prestigious Press Ganey Guardian of Excellence Award®, ranking our primary and specialty care clinics among the top 5% in the nation.

Additionally, we have invested heavily in our physicians by providing them with state-of-the-art technology for which to care for our patients. One example is the formation of an Interventional Radiology Biplane Suite, funded in part by the North Oaks Foundation to enhance our interventional radiologists' ability to care for patients with strokes, cancer and traumatic injuries. Another example is with the addition of ROSA®, a surgical robotic system used for knee replacements.

All that we have experienced and overcome in 2020 has strengthened our resolve to fulfill our mission. We look forward to another 60 years.

Michele K. Sutton, FACHE



2.587 Dedicated Employees



210 HOT Team Volunteers

1,437 Service Hours

33 Community Events

Total Value of

\$33,783.87







POSITIVE PATIENT **EXPERIENCES EARN NORTH OAKS NATIONAL ACCLAIM FOR FIFTH YEAR IN A ROW**

NEW ORLEANS CITYBUSINESS HONORS NORTH OAKS AS LEADING EMPLOYER AMONG LARGE COMPANIES



NORTH OAKS MEDICAL **CENTER, DR. CHARLES DUCOMBS AND NORTH OAKS ENT & ALLERGY CLINIC RECOGNIZED BY LOCAL PUBLICATIONS**



BOARD ANNUAL **REPORT**



COMMUNITY CONTRIBUTIONS JULY 2019 - JUNE 2020

North Oaks is involved in nearly 39 corporate partnerships, valued at about \$222,825 in monetary and in-kind sponsorships. Cornerstone partnerships include:

- Southeastern Louisiana University Athletics
 - The Official Health Care Provider
- South Tangipahoa Youth Soccer Association (STYSA) The Official Club Sponsor.

Community Education Classes Participants	212 4,802
Blood Pressure Checks Participants	21 353
Weight Checks Participants	14 203
Infant & Child Car Seat Installations & Safety Checks	110
Support Group Meetings	76





Dr. Robert Peltier Offers Insights to Those Considering COVID-19 Vaccination

As an internal medicine physician, tropical medicine specialist and chief medical officer of North Oaks, Dr. Robert Peltier is working to educate the public on the COVID-19 vaccine's role in helping to stop the spread of the virus.

Vaccines have been around for a long time. They help eradicate diseases, such as polio, mumps, measles and rubella, and reduce deaths. New vaccines are often associated with fear. A Journal of the American Medicine Association article assessed public reception to vaccines of the past and found that, in general, approximately 30% of the population indicated they would not receive a new vaccine when first introduced. Fast-forward to modern times, and 90-100% of the population safely receive the aforementioned vaccines.

Conventional vaccines trigger an immune response by putting a weakened or inactivated bacteria or virus into our bodies, but that's not the case with Messenger RNA vaccines (a.k.a., mRNA vaccines). Two mRNA vaccines, produced by Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna, were recently given Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) by the U.S. Food & Drug Administration (FDA) to fight COVID-19.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), mRNA vaccines instruct our cells to make a harmless piece of the spike protein found on the surface of the virus that causes COVID-19.



Once the instructions (mRNA) are inside the immune cells, they use them to make the protein piece. After the protein piece is made, the cell breaks down the instructions and gets rid of them.

Next, the cell displays the protein piece on its surface. Our immune systems recognize that the protein is foreign and begin making antibodies, like what happens in an actual COVID-19 infection. Protection is gained without ever having to risk the serious consequences of an actual COVID-19 infection.

The COVID-19 vaccine does not interact with our DNA in any way.

The FDA's longstanding guidelines for the approval of vaccines were followed. Volunteers were plentiful with 45,000 individuals participating in the Pfizer-BioNTech third phase trials and 30,000 in the Moderna third phase trials.

The trials found that both vaccines' ability to provoke an immune response was great in reducing cases and severity of disease. In the Pfizer-BioNTech trial, 95% of the volunteers who contracted COVID-19 received a placebo, while the Moderna trials found less severe disease experienced in volunteers who received the vaccine and contracted COVID-19 anyway.

The good news from both the Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna trials is that side effects proved minimal and included arm soreness, muscle and joint aches, fatigue, headache and fever. Side effects were more profound with the second dose.

Because the vaccines are new, long-term side effects are not known. However, previous mRNA research does indicate the general safety of this technology.

The more individuals we vaccinate, the larger the impact we can have on minimizing the virus' spread, and the sooner we can achieve herd immunity and prevent more cases and deaths.

Based on my research, I decided to get vaccinated. I experienced a slight headache and some fatigue the day after my second dose. Both were gone the next day.



Is COVID-19 Vaccination Right for You?

Do your research.

Both the CDC and FDA websites are useful—www.cdc.gov and www.fda.gov. Never agree to a medical procedure until you are fully informed of the risks and benefits. Speak with your personal health care provider to help you decide if vaccination is right for you, or contact me at (985) 230-6647 or info@northoaks.org.

Check your eligibility.

The Louisiana Department of Health (LDH) will expand eligibility in phases.
Check www.ldh.la.gov/covidvaccine for updates.

Schedule your appointment in advance.

Check with www.northoaks.org,
"mynorthoaks" on social media, your
physician's office or LDH for updates on
vaccine availability. Participating
locations can be viewed at
www.ldh.la.gov/covidvaccine-locations.

Be patient.

Public health officials are working daily to distribute more vaccine statewide.

Follow the public health measures of masking, handwashing and social distancing to keep your family safe.

When COVID hospitalizations increase, fewer beds and resources are available for other health care emergencies, like car crashes or heart attacks.

Individuals with COVID-19 symptoms or concerns should contact their primary care provider or the **North Oaks COVID-19 Screening Line** at **(985) 230-2778** for evaluation.



A LEGACY OF LIFE, **HONORING ALAN VARNADO**

North Oaks Health System and the Louisiana Organ Procurement Agency (LOPA) work closely together to save lives through organ donation in our community. The gift of organ and tissue donation is an act of quiet heroism. To honor the memories of donor heroes and their families, North Oaks Health System has partnered with LOPA to feature in CommUnity Newsletter local hero stories as submitted by their families. The stories tell of loss, grief and pain, as well as rebirth, renewed purpose, and continued missions. In this issue's feature, we learn about donor hero Alan Varnado in an interview with his sister Jessica Puissegur.

Tell us about your hero.

Alan was a father, son, brother, grandson and so much more. He was a skilled electrician and an avid outdoorsman. He loved to spend time outdoors, especially fishing and hunting. Alan's life here on Earth ended far too soon for those who love and miss him dearly.

What did organ donation mean to you and your family?

Tragedy was turned to hope as he saved four lives by donating his organs. Alan's heart, liver, and two kidneys were able to be recovered and, in turn, allowed the gift of life to be given. Alan had a huge heart that continues to beat on. His story isn't over because of the precious gift of life he gave.

Have you had the opportunity to connect with any of the recipients?

Alan's heart recipient reached out to us in sincere thanks but we have not been able to meet her personally yet.



If you met a family that was on the fence about donation, what would you share with them?

At the time of my brother's death, I naively had no idea what LOPA stood for. I knew I had a heart on my driver's license, but never fully grasped hold of its true meaning.

That all changed on July 13, 2018. It was that day that the heart on my driver's license came to have a significantly deeper meaning and a new name. The heart's name became LOPA. LOPA and organ donation became the only glimmer of hope my family and I could see in total despair and darkness. Knowing that Alan saved four lives through such unexpected tragedy gave our family comfort and a bit of peace.



MAKING LIFE HAPPEN

I understand you volunteer with LOPA. What made you become a LOPA volunteer and what does volunteering do for you?

Volunteering for LOPA has given me the opportunity to share Alan's story and make others aware of the significant impact that organ donation had on our family. It has also allowed for turning something that was completely negative, losing my brother, into positivity and hope for others

Do you have a donor hero story you'd like to share in CommUnity?

Visit www.lopa.org to submit a story, learn more about volunteering with LOPA and register to become an organ, eye and tissue donor.

TOO HEALTHY FOR A

HEART ATTACK?

A HEALTH COACH SHARES HIS STORY.

After what appeared to be an ordinary day for a health coach and fitness instructor, Chad Templeton never expected a heart attack at 50-years-old. Chalking up the tightness in his chest and pain in his arm to muscle soreness from his previous workouts, Templeton assured himself that he was much too healthy to be encountering something this drastic.

"It has to be those workouts that I'm feeling," Templeton said to himself as he was doing his nightly routine.

A heart attack happens when the flow of oxygen-rich blood to a section of heart muscle suddenly becomes blocked and the heart cannot get oxygen. If blood flow is not restored quickly, the section of heart muscle begins to die.

Despite the signs, Templeton held off visiting the emergency room until the following day when the pain persisted. When he checked into North Oaks' Emergency Room and described his pain, the staff reacted urgently to treat him. An EKG and immediate bloodwork were ordered to check for irregular rhythms and enzymes. Templeton, however, was still convinced that his pain was from his workout.

"The whole time I kept thinking, I need to just get out of here, this is ridiculous. I can't believe I am wasting these people's time."

The bloodwork had shown that Templeton suffered a heart attack the day before and a stent was needed. However, since too much time had passed, the clot that formed in the heart vessel was no longer soft enough to force a stent through. The clot had hardened and the affected area had already begun to die off. Fortunately, Templeton's heart was still deemed healthy despite the deceased section.



Receiving what seemed to be life-altering news, Templeton briefly wondered if the healthy lifestyle he was leading was a lie after suffering this trauma.

"I preach health, I preach nutrition, I preach physical activity, and here I am at 50-years-old and I just had a heart attack. Should I really be a health coach or fitness instructor?" However, leading a healthy lifestyle was not always at the forefront of Templeton's mind. After working in oil and other heavy industries for 30 years, he developed unhealthy habits, particularly smoking.

"I wasn't concerned about my health. I smoked about a pack and a half a day for about 20 years. My health was just not my main priority then."

Since eliminating these vices, a heart attack was something that still came as a shock. **Dr. Brandon Cambre**, an ER doctor at North Oaks who initially treated Templeton, said genetics play a massive role in one's health down the line.

"We all know the major risk factors for coronary artery disease, but one that cannot be ignored is your genetics and family history. Even if you are in peak physical shape, you still can't ignore it."

Dr. Brandon Cambre **Emergency Department**

Templeton said stroke and heart disease directly impacted his family; his mother suffered from heart disease and both his father and brother suffered from strokes. He came to the realization that if he would not have started living a healthier lifestyle, he fears that his heart attack could have been much more severe. He truly believes his health coaching nutrition plan and workout regime saved his life.

After two months of easing his way back into his regular life, Templeton is back motivating others every day through leading group fitness classes at the gym and running his health coaching business on Facebook. His main goal, especially after his heart attack, is to show others that it is never too late to turn your life around and that listening to your body is the first step.







You can choose; everyone has the power to choose every day, it just matters how we all react to these circumstances.

COVID-19 + Heart Disease: **What You Need To Know**

It's widely recognized that SARS-CoV-2, better known as COVID-19, impacts most with respiratory illness resulting in conditions that range from very mild to life-threatening. It has also become apparent that adverse cardiovascular impact is common among patients with severe COVID-19 disease and is associated with worse outcomes.



By Jherie Ducombs, MD North Oaks Cardiologist and Vice President/Assistant Chief Medical Officer

5 Important Things to Know About Your Heart and COVID-19

What do we know so far?

First, people with pre-existing heart and vascular disease are more likely to have severe illness.

This does not mean people with heart issues are more likely to contract COVID-19, just more likely to have complications and statistically worse recovery rates. People with the following conditions appear to be particularly at risk:

- High blood pressure
- Coronary artery disease
- High cholesterol
- Previous stroke history

The inflammation that accompanies the COVID-19 infection destabilizes existing plaque and worsens vascular (blood vessel) function, making these diseases worse. This fact is not surprising, as it has been observed with similar illnesses that cause inflammation (e.g., the flu). The increased risk is just one of the many reasons it's essential to actively work to prevent heart disease in your daily life.

Second, emerging data shows that COVID-19 affects not only the lungs, but also the heart. The most common mechanism appears to be the body's response to overwhelming illness, called a systemic inflammatory response. This exaggerated immune response results in the release of chemicals, including cytokines, which not only defend against the virus but can cause collateral damage to the host (that means you!).

> It can also affect the smallest blood vessels, leading to thrombosis (blood clotting) or ischemia (lack of oxygen). COVID-19 related heart disease can show up in the following ways:

- Heart attacks caused by blockage in a heart artery
- Infection or inflammation of the heart muscle, which can lead to weakness, failure or abnormal rhythms of the heart
- Stress-related heart failure
- Severe chest pain heart attack without blockage
- Other heart muscle injury without a heart attack

Blood tests, electrocardiograms (ECGs) and echocardiograms (ultrasound of the heart) are often used to detect heart muscle injury and evidence of heart failure. Outcomes of patients who contract COVID-19 are typically worse when these tests are abnormal prior to or during diagnosis of the virus.

Third, COVID-19 increases the risk of other vascular diseases like stroke and blood clots. Stroke severity and risk of stroke-related death are worse in individuals infected with the virus.

Fourth, the number of people seeking treatment for everyday emergencies, including heart attacks and strokes, has significantly decreased. The decrease has been reported both here in the United States and abroad. We're not sure if there's been an actual reduction in those emergencies. It would seem unlikely since those emergencies typically increase during epidemics of similar illnesses like the flu. There are also reports of people presenting to the hospital late and increased numbers of people found dead in their homes. Some may be reluctant to seek care for fear of

contracting COVID-19 or not sure where they can get medical attention. Most ER's remain open for these everyday emergencies. If you aren't sure, call ahead. It's important to seek attention early because early treatment leads to better outcomes and reduces the chance of permanent heart and brain damage.

And fifth, the most important things you can do to stay well at this time include preventing or managing chronic diseases and avoiding virus transmission. As they say, an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.



Positive Patient Experiences Earn North Oaks National Acclaim

For the sixth consecutive year, patients' feedback about the exceptionally consistent care they received at North Oaks has earned the health system's network of primary care and specialty clinics national acclaim.

> "The staff works well together. I'd definitely recommend this practice to anyone."

"My provider is concerned about my well-being."

"It's worth the drive just to have my provider care for me."

"I wish all hospitals and clinics ran their offices with the professionalism demonstrated at North Oaks."



These comments and others like them showcase the patient care that has earned North Oaks clinics the prestigious 2020 Press Ganey Guardian of Excellence Award®.

According to Michele Sutton, FACHE, president and chief executive officer of North Oaks Health System, the Press Ganey Guardian of Excellence Award® represents important recognition from the industry's leader in measuring, understanding and improving the delivery of care.

As recipients of this award, North Oaks' clinics are ranked among the top 5% of the nation's health care services in sustaining the highest level of patient satisfaction during a one-year period from May 2019 to April 2020.

To learn more about North Oaks' primary, specialty and walk-in clinics, visit www.northoaks.org. You also may call (985) 230-APPT or (844) APPT-NOW.

International Hospital Federation Recognizes North Oaks COVID-19 Response

Under the leadership of Chief Medical Officer Robert Peltier, MD, North Oaks has been recognized by the International Hospital Federation (IHF) through its worldwide COVID-19 "Beyond the Call of Duty" program. This recognition places North Oaks in the company of more than 100 hospitals from 28 countries so honored. North Oaks is one of 13 facilities honored in the U.S.

As early as January 2020, Peltier began educating North Oaks medical staff and leadership on the novel virus. As it became apparent that the pandemic was spreading to the U.S. in February and March, Dr. Peltier became a regional COVID-19 subject matter expert, making appearances on local news outlets and presentations to civic organizations, universities, chambers of commerce and regional and local government officials to educate, prepare, answer questions and quell panic. He led the development of one of Louisiana's first specialized COVID-19 triage processes in the emergency department at North Oaks Medical Center and the expansion of the hospital's Medical Intensive Care Unit to increase capacity.

Under Dr. Peltier's guidance, North Oaks has been able to help maintain calm in the community, educate businesses on appropriate use of PPE and disinfection procedures, support efforts to flatten the curve and prevent surges to the extent possible, and minimize mortality from the virus.

To learn more, visit www.northoaks.org/covid-19



North Oaks Sports Medicine Announces Program Enhancements

The North Oaks Sports Medicine team used the downtime caused by the COVID-19 pandemic to reevaluate and redesign service delivery to each of its partner schools under the guidance of **Drs. Katy Morris** and **Jeffrey Witty**, who are board-certified and fellowship-trained orthopaedic surgeons and sports medicine specialists.

Already staffed by nationally certified collegiate, high school and junior high athletic trainers, as well as sports-focused physical therapists and nutritionists, the program recently welcomed clinical supervisor **Rebecca Troulliet**, who is a board-certified physical therapy sports clinical specialist, and sports performance supervisor **Taylor Dunn** to the team.

With the redesign completed, student-athletes, their coaches and parents affiliated with each partner school now benefit from a more comprehensive program.

North Oaks Sports Medicine also retired the annual Physical Day model that it's used for the past 29 years in favor of individual screening events at each partner school.

"The end result is a more personalized level of care for our student-athletes," affirms Troulliet.

"With the health and safety of more than 1,000 student-athletes being our No. 1 priority, we knew our traditional one-day screening model would not work in the midst of the pandemic," continues Troulliet. "So, for the first time in our history, we performed physicals for each partner school's student-athletes on their home turf. All necessary precautions and distancing measures were taken to create a safe environment for them."

North Oaks Sports Medicine provides free annual physicals to student-athletes in fulfillment of Louisiana High School Athletic Association (LHSAA) requirements for participation in school sports programs.

Jason St. Pierre, principal of Walker High School, credits the onsite format with creating a win-win for all.

"It's certainly more convenient for our student-athletes and coaches to have the physicals performed here at the school, and it creates a great opportunity for networking among North Oaks health care professionals, our administration and coaches, student-athletes and their parents," St. Pierre continues. "It shows that North Oaks Sports Medicine is committed to our community and the success and safety of our athletic program."

For information on the North Oaks Sports Medicine program, visit www.northoaks.org/sportsmedicine.





CORN & BLACK BEAN BURRITOS

INGREDIENTS

¼ C scallions (green onions), rinsed and sliced into ¼-inch wide circles, including green tops

1/4 C celery, rinsed and finely diced

11/4 C frozen yellow corn

½ ripe avocado, peeled and diced

2 Tbsp. fresh cilantro, chopped (or substitute 2 tsp. dried coriander)

1 can (15½ oz.) black beans, drained and rinsed

1/4 C reduced-fat shredded cheddar cheese

1/4 C salsa or taco sauce (look for lowest sodium version)

12 (9-inch) whole-wheat tortillas

DIRECTIONS

- 1. Preheat oven to 350°F.
- 2. Combine scallions, celery, and corn in a small saucepan. Add just enough water to cover.
- Cover, bring to a boil, and reduce heat to medium. Simmer for 5 minutes, until vegetables soften. Drain vegetables. Set aside.
- Combine avocado, cilantro, and beans in a large mixing bowl. Add cheese and salsa, and mix.
- When corn mixture has cooled slightly, add to avocado mixture.
- 6. In a large nonstick pan over medium heat, warm each tortilla for about 15 seconds on each side. Place each tortilla on a flat surface. Spoon 1/3 cup of the mixture into the center of the tortilla. Fold the top and bottom of the tortilla over the filling. Fold in the sides to make a closed packet.
- 7. Repeat with the remaining tortillas.
- 8. When all tortillas are wrapped, continue heating in the oven 5 minutes, until all are warm and cheese is melted.

Yield: 12 servings • Serving size: 1 burrito

Calories: 189 | Total fat: 3 g | Saturated fat: 0 g | Cholesterol: 0 mg Sodium: 275 mg | Total fiber: 3 g | Protein: 8 g | Carbohydrates: 34 g Potassium: 204 mg

Note: Nutritional information may vary depending on selection of ingredients.

Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet. Source: https://healthyeating.nhlbi.nih.gov

COMMUNITY EDUCATION

Availability of events is dependent on current phasing guidelines for COVID-19 and is subject to change.

CLASSES FOR FAMILIES & CHILDREN

- Body Basics for Boys
- · Body Beautiful I: Puberty for Girls
- Body Beautiful II: Self Esteem and Peer Pressure
- Car Seat Safety Checks
- Prenatal Classes:
 - Breastfeeding
 - Families Under Construction
 - Labor & Delivery
 - Relaxation Techniques
 - Infant Care
 - American Heart Association CPR for Family & Friends
- Something for Siblings

CPR & FIRST AID CLASSES

- American Heart Association Healthcare Provider CPR—\$50 (for medical professionals)
- American Heart Association First Aid Class—\$50 (for the layperson)
- American Heart Association Heartsaver AED CPR Class—\$40 (for the layperson)

SUPPORT GROUPS

- Stroke Support Group of Hammond
- Traumatic Brain Injury/Spinal Cord Injury Support Group



Note: If you have bereavement support needs or questions, please call North Oaks Hospice at (985) 230-7620 for information on available community resources.

Please visit **www.northoaks.org/calendar** for class descriptions, updated information on availability and to register.

WELCOME NEW PROVIDERS

Providers have a choice in practice locations and we are delighted they have chosen North Oaks Health System. Join us in welcoming them to our region.

- 1. Erica Brown-Jackson, MD*
 Hospital Medicine
 North Oaks Medical Center
 (985) 345-2700
- 2. Matthew Bruhn, PA-C*
 Orthopaedic Surgery
 North Oaks Orthopaedic Specialty Center Hammond
 (985) 230-2663
- 3. Jason Chiang, MD
 Urology
 Southeast Louisiana Urology Associates
 (985) 542-1226
- Adrienne Holdridge, DNP, APRN, ACNPC-AG, CCRN* Shock Trauma North Oaks Shock Trauma (985) 230-1870
- 5. Shahed Jameel, MD*
 Hospital Medicine
 North Oaks Medical Center
 (985) 345-2700

- 6. Whitney Lashua, AGACNP-BC, FNP-BC*
 Pulmonology
 North Oaks Pulmonology
 (985) 230-2778
- 7. Carissa May, MD
 Obstetrics & Gynecology
 North Oaks Obstetrics & Gynecology
 (985) 542-0663
- 8. Mary Diane Rabalais, WHNP, APRN-CNP*
 Obstetrics & Gynecology
 Magnolia Obstetrics and Gynecology
 (985) 230-2778
- Julie Santangelo Ponder, WHNP, APRN-CNP*
 Obstetrics & Gynecology
 Magnolia Obstetrics and Gynecology
 (985) 230-2778
- Alison Smith, MD
 Surgical Critical Care, Trauma Surgery
 North Oaks Shock Trauma
 (985) 230-1870





















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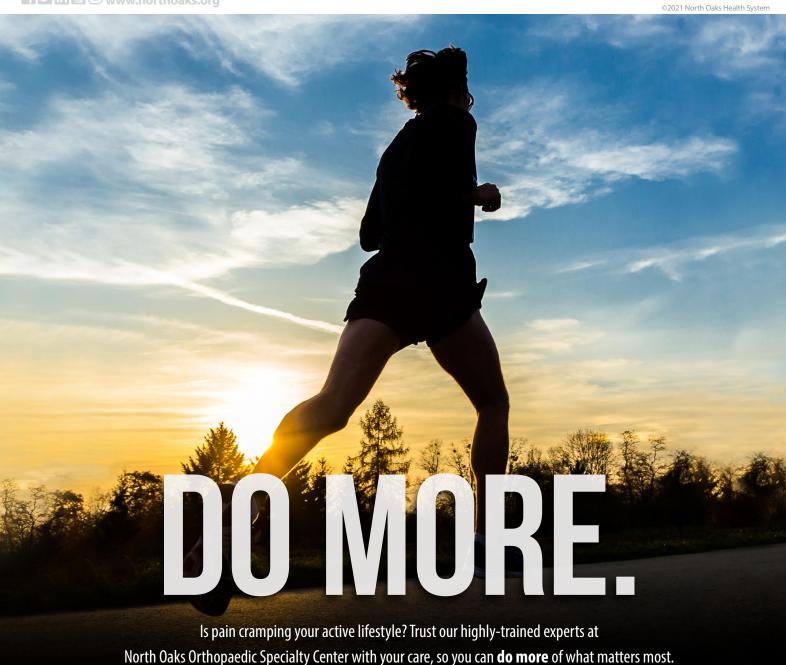
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www.northoaks.org

CommUnity is printed and published by North Oaks Health System with the leadership of the North Oaks Board of Commissioners.

The information in this newsletter is meant to complement the advice of your health care providers, not to replace it. Before making any major changes in your medications, diet or exercise, talk to your health care provider.

The North Oaks Health System mission is to improve lives, every time and with every touch.

f in iii o www.northoaks.org



Hammond | Livingston (985) 805-5498 www.northoaks.org/domore



