

Hometown Healthy

 facebook.com/PHKetchikan

Summer 2019

Healing a Grateful Heart

Mike Elerding never thought he'd be the one to suffer a heart attack. After all, he was running 3.5 miles a day, swimming, hiking, lifting weights, and generally taking good care of himself.

On Nov. 28, 2018, Mike learned that the unexpected can happen to anyone. Because of a 95% blockage in his left anterior descending artery, Mike found himself feeling anything but healthy that day.

"I had just finished working out and did not feel right. I felt dizzy and weak and fortunately ran into a friend of mine that said to me, 'Mike, you don't look quite right. Are you feeling ok?' And that's when I knew, if people can see it on my face, clearly something is going wrong." Mike made the decision to head back to the office which quickly turned into an ambulance ride to PeaceHealth Ketchikan Medical Center, where the ER team jumped into action.

"Immediately I'm getting hooked up to wires and machines and being given baby aspirin."

The doctor told Mike that there was good news and bad news. The good news was they knew what happened to him. The bad news was that he'd had a heart attack. Soon after stabilizing Mike, he and his wife were flown to Bellingham to have a stent put in the affected artery. With the "all-clear" just a few days after the heart attack, Mike was sent home to Ketchikan.

"Learning that we've made a real difference to a patient is the greatest reward we could receive."

"I got home and was just sort of stunned. I guess I was in denial of what took place. I was taking good care of myself so it came as a huge shock. But as time passed, I was really grateful for the care I received in both Ketchikan and Bellingham. I felt really lucky."



Mike Elerding presenting the ER team with a Guardian Angel award in appreciation of his excellent care.

Mike and his wife were so appreciative that they later recognized the ER care team with a Guardian Angel gift through the Ketchikan Medical Center Foundation. As one caregiver noted, "Providing compassionate support is part of being a caregiver. That's what we do. Learning that we've made a real difference to a patient is the greatest reward we could receive."

"I feel like myself again. My strength is coming back and I'm hopeful to be 100% very soon," said Mike.

Look for a video of Mike's story at our website peacehealth.org/hometownhealthy, this summer.

We heard you! Billing process improvements

For nearly a century, it has been the privilege of PeaceHealth Ketchikan to serve the people in our community. Over the decades, we have strived to maintain our hometown's health by enhancing our services in response to community needs.

More recently, we have received requests to improve our billing processes and customer service. We heard you and have made the following changes to improve your experience with us:

1. We established a specially trained customer service team that includes local liaisons dedicated to serve Ketchikan.
 - Along with answering general billing questions, this team helps eligible patients sign up for financial assistance and arranges individualized payment schedules.
2. We have implemented new tools to verify patients' information at the time of service to reduce errors.
 - A new address verification system that checks the provided address against the U.S. postal service database.
 - An automated insurance verification tool was implemented to validate the insurance information provided in real time.
3. We've adjusted the eligibility levels for financial assistance so more people qualify, proactively checking if patients might be eligible, and including a financial assistance application form with each bill.

4. We've redesigned our statements and our process to be more patient friendly. This gives the patient more time and options to view and pay the bill—including online! — establish a payment plan or apply for financial assistance before their account is referred to collections. Once a patient's insurance provider pays their share, patients receive a minimum of four bills prior to their account being sent to collections.

Billing bottom line: Healthcare billing is confusing – there's no way around it; however, we are committed to ensuring the accuracy of our bills and to improving your experience with us.

To keep our Hometown Healthy, we want to hear from you!

Questions or comments about your bill:

- 1-877-202-3597 (English-language support)
- 1-844-746-4737 (Support in all other languages)

Patient care comments and concerns:

- 1-844-749-8817 (Hotline to the Heart)

peacehealth.org/request-estimate

PeaceHealth welcomes psychiatrist Victor Chen, MD



"I love my work. It's challenging. There is a stigma in society about mental illness. We don't blame people who have cancer. No one chooses to have mental illness."

- Victor Chen, MD

The day before Victor Chen, MD came to Ketchikan to talk about working here, he was at a medical conference in New York City.

"Many consider New York the center of the universe," he said. "I got off the plane in Ketchikan and thought 'I am at the edge of the universe'. I mean that in the best way possible. "It was love at first sight."

Dr. Chen began seeing patients in October 2018 at PeaceHealth Medical Group Psychiatry.

He and his wife Shelly Chen, who is from rural Kentucky, wanted "a life less ordinary." They wanted to raise their two children, a three-year-old son and one-year-old daughter, by the ocean in a place where they could hike and fish.

"Most other specialties in medicine are better worked out; there are more precise treatment algorithms available to guide you. But in my work, there is a lot more art to the medicine. No two peoples' brains are the same, and no

two people are ever depressed in quite the same way or for the same reasons."

The new PeaceHealth psychiatrist grew up in a suburb of Los Angeles after his family moved there from Taiwan when he was five. He went to the University of California at Berkley for his undergraduate degree in Biology and, after a stint as an ambulance EMT, went to medical school before returning to California for his residency at UCLA-San Fernando Valley.

He knew what life was like in the big city but looks forward to living in Ketchikan; there are commonalities with his work. "You know," he said with a smile, "the brain is the last frontier of medicine. It's like Alaska in that way. We are just starting to scratch the surface."

Dr. Chen looks forward to welcoming another new full-time psychiatrist to the practice in mid-July—further enhancing local patients' access to care.

Cancer Center Grand Opening

In March, people packed the new first floor hallway connecting Ketchikan Medical Center with the Medical Office Building for the ribbon cutting celebration of the Cornelia "Pinky" Brindle Cancer Resource Center.

Talking about the donation made to the KMC Foundation to establish the Center, Foundation Director Matt Eisenhower said, "Through the generosity of the Brindle family, we are able to now provide this resource room for the entire community."

Pinky Brindle, the wife of Alec Brindle—who with his family, owned a cannery in Ward Cove—died in 2008 after a five-year struggle with lung cancer. The family's \$100,000 donation made the Center possible.

Former Ketchikan mayor Lew Williams and his wife Vicki cut the ribbon to officially open the space. Lew, who is currently being treated for cancer at KMC, talked about the importance of having a place to get reliable information, "whatever you do, don't go Google 'cancer' on the internet. It won't be helpful."

The Center will be staffed by a care coordinator, infusion suite nurses, and volunteers who can provide reliable cancer information and materials, answer questions, and assist patients as they arrange care. Tangible items will also be supplied such as wigs, scarves, and prosthetics, as well as quilts made by local quilters to provide comfort during chemotherapy. Another example of Hometown Healthy partnerships that will benefit the entire community.



Patients and family are encouraged to call (907) 228-8300 x7865 to schedule an appointment in the Cornelia "Pinky" Brindle Cancer Resource Center today!

3D Mammography comes to Ketchikan

Thanks to the generosity of our community donors and a capital investment by PeaceHealth, **Genius 3D** mammography featuring **Smart Curve** technology will be available in Ketchikan beginning this summer.

This partnership provides access to a highly accurate and comfortable imaging option right here at home. And, as we strive to keep our hometown healthier, we are also making it easier than ever to get a mammogram. You can now schedule a screening without a provider's referral.

Patients without breast complaints can call for an appointment at 228-7644. Even if you haven't found lumps or suspicious symptoms during your monthly self-exam, a mammogram provides a good baseline of your healthy breast for future reference.

To learn more about Genius 3D mammography, visit the Hologic website at <https://www.3dimensionssystem.com/>.

Ready to Respond in a Crisis

Each day caregivers at PeaceHealth Ketchikan Medical Center are prepared to provide life-sustaining care. On May 13, 2019, we rose to the challenge when 10 patients were brought to the Emergency Room within an hour following a tragic, multi-plane accident.

Caregivers across the medical center regularly train for multi-casualty events in coordination with local first responders, law enforcement, and Coast Guard personnel. Because of our training, our team of doctors and nurses was prepared to receive, assess and treat patients as they arrived. Our diagnostic imaging, lab, and support personnel were ready to attend and support patients, family members and others.

Vice President for Acute Care Services Hilliard Pettus was the administrator in charge that day. "Once we called the disaster alert, we gathered to organize the care teams for each patient. Having only been with PeaceHealth Ketchikan for a year, I was impressed to see the level of preparedness and professionalism of each caregiver who responded.

"Those who play key roles in disaster response were ready and knew what to do to ensure the best possible outcomes. These teams were surrounded with support from other caregivers. From food and environmental services to spiritual care, everyone worked together to meet each need that arose."



Community members and caregivers gather to pray for the survivors, as well as those who lost their lives in the accident.

Thanks to the skill of the first responders and the rescue efforts of bystanders, 10 survived, although with a wide range of injuries. Sadly, six people died at the crash site, six were medevaced to Harborview, a Level 4 trauma care center in Seattle, and four stayed in Ketchikan and had surgery at KMC or were admitted for inpatient care.

With five ER trauma physicians and general and orthopedic surgeons onsite, and others standing by, PeaceHealth Ketchikan was equipped and ready to provide stabilization and surgical care for every patient.

Our Numbers at a Glance

PeaceHealth Ketchikan Medical Center continues to provide our community with the care it needs across every stage of life.

162 active medical staff + 340 caregivers providing:

- 35,075 annual outpatient clinic visits;
- 9,405 ED visits;
- 1,638 surgeries;
- 1,194 inpatient admissions; and
- 203 births.

Caring for all members of our community by providing:

- \$1,464,000 in Charity Care
- \$5,678,000 in total community benefit

Quit Smoking to stay Hometown Healthy

Our **Smoking Cessation Classes** are starting July 18. This class is a **FREE** service for community members. Just bring your will to stop smoking. Register for the class today by calling **(907) 228-8358**.



PeaceHealth
Ketchikan
Medical Center