Local orthopedic surgeon helping patients get back on their feet

When local resident and business owner, Debra Laws, finally made the decision to do something about her knee pain, she had to look no further than right here in Ketchikan.

“I had been living with such bad knee pain for years. Both my knees were total bone on bone – I could hardly sleep at night. So, I had heard good things about Dr. Becker at Ketchikan Medical Center and went to see him.”

Dr. Stephen Becker came to Ketchikan after nearly 30 years as a highly respected orthopedic surgeon in Orange County, CA. After meeting with Debra, it became clear that she was a prime candidate for total knee replacement surgery.

When asked about Debra’s case, Dr. Becker had this to say: “One of the advantages of being a surgeon - of any kind - is that most of your patients get better. And that’s always a very gratifying thing.”

Debra had a total knee replacement done on both legs within two months of each other.

“To be able to have a procedure like this done right here in Ketchikan was so helpful. To not have to fly to Anchorage or Seattle and to get my rehab done right here at home made all the difference in the world. Once I had the second one done it was amazing. Within a week, I wasn’t using the walker, I could walk around going up and down steps...I could do a lot!”

“One of the advantages of being a surgeon - of any kind - is that most of your patients get better. And that’s always a very gratifying thing.”

- Dr. Stephen Becker

Debra Laws poses at the entrance to historic Creek Street where she operates her Northern Lights gift shop.

You’ll find Debra most days at her Northern Lights gift shop on Creek Street with a big smile on her face.

“It’s just unbelievable how much two knees makes a difference!”

To hear Debra and Dr. Becker talk about her incredible story visit https://www.peacehealth.org/home-town-healthy.
Bryan Cothren, MD, joins PHMG Psychiatry

Bryan Cothren, MD, has joined PeaceHealth Medical Group Psychiatry in Ketchikan. He joins Victor Chen, MD, to serve psychiatric patients in southern Southeast Alaska.

Dr. Cothren took a rather non-traditional route to become a psychiatrist but previous careers all had the theme of public service. He spent 14 years in the Navy and in the Louisiana National Guard, serving in the New Orleans aftermath of Hurricane Katrina in 2005. The devastation from that storm propelled him to medical school and psychiatry.

He attended the University of New Orleans and Louisiana State University Medical School.

Now that the department has two psychiatrists, PeaceHealth can expand their much-needed services to other communities in Southeast Alaska. Dr. Cothren will begin going to Metlakatla and he and Dr. Chen also plan to regularly travel to Prince of Wales Island and Petersburg to see patients in person as well as provide services via telemedicine appointments.

Dr. Cothren moved here with his wife and daughter, a junior at Kayhi. The Scottish-born, New Orleans-bred psychiatrist began seeing patients this summer.

2nd annual Stomp the Stigma Rally held in Ketchikan

Dozens of people attended the Stomp the Stigma rally at the Plaza Mall in September. There were booths staffed by local organizations and advocacy groups as well as a march through town at noon.

Victor Chen, MD, PeaceHealth Medical Group Psychiatry, was one of several people who addressed the group after the march.

Dr. Chen spoke about the types and benefits of Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT) to a rapt audience that included people in recovery, family members of addicts and alcoholics, and people, like Dr. Chen, who are dedicated to helping those who need assistance both to cope with addiction and other mental issues.

Stomp the Stigma encourages people to reach out for help for recovery, a mental condition like depression, or thoughts of suicide.

Mammography advances in Ketchikan

3D mammography arrived in Ketchikan just in time for October’s breast cancer awareness activities. Throughout the month, 79 women benefitted from a more accurate and comfortable screening exam.

One way women in our region were encouraged to have mammograms was by sharing the story of local breast cancer survivor, Julie Sande. She highlighted the role her local mammogram played in her diagnosis and how helpful it was to have chemotherapy available at PeaceHealth Ketchikan in her fight with cancer.

As she discussed her experience fighting triple negative breast cancer, she expressed, “The very best thing about Ketchikan is the people that live in it. The diagnosis is something that I could deal with and that my community helped me to deal with.”

For more information about the importance of regular mammograms, please visit www.peacehealth.org/mammo.
Getting the community rolling

A wheelchair isn’t a one-size-fits-all piece of equipment.

Ketchikan resident Stephanie Shervaha has used a chair for two years. She had a borrowed chair that wasn’t comfortable so it was a relief when she recently received a new chair, specially fitted for her.

Her new chair has a hydraulic system that lets her raise it so she’s level with the sink and stove. Also, the old chair was uncomfortable and hard to fit through a standard door.

“The new one is wonderful. They measured every part of me, I think!” Stephanie laughed and then grew serious and said, “now I can sit back in the chair, and sit up straight.”

In December 2018, PeaceHealth Ketchikan physical therapist Catherine Addington PT, ATP, was certified as an Assisted Technology Professional through RESNA (Rehabilitation Engineering and Assistive Technology of North America). Addington was, “really excited when PeaceHealth leadership was looking for a therapist to receive this certification in order to develop a wheelchair clinic here in Ketchikan.”

Over two months Addington completed the ATP certifications; the first step to formally becoming a Seating and Mobility Specialist. Her training included online sessions as well as in-person training to learn to optimally fit and configure wheelchairs. After the in-person course was complete, Addington spent the day in the PeaceHealth Bellingham facility observing their wheelchair clinic.

“I am so happy to be able to provide our community with this service, in conjunction with NuMotion,” said Addington. “This has been something that people in our community have been needing for a long time.”

The process for obtaining a specialized wheelchair can take up to six months but for those who need that type of wheelchair, it can be a life changing piece of equipment.

Since receiving her life-changing wheelchair, Stephanie is excited to find a way to fund a ramp at her home to make it even easier to get out of the house in her new chair. She expressed her gratitude for her new mobility saying, “This chair is wonderful. A lot of people went through a lot of trouble to make this possible. I am so grateful.”

PeaceHealth physician receives Excellence in Teaching Award for Alaska

Andrew Sanders, MD, has received the 2019 WRITE Excellence in Teaching Award for Alaska. The Primary Care physician at PeaceHealth Medical Group Ketchikan was recognized for “his excellence in teaching medical students” according to the award letter. The letter continues,

“You have clearly demonstrated the qualities we look for in outstanding preceptors.”

“I act as a mentor and a clinical instructor,” said Dr. Sanders. “I’ve really enjoyed my time with the students. They’ve all been exemplary, and I think they’ll make excellent physicians.”

Clearly, the high esteem in which he holds the students he mentors is returned in kind. His nominator writes, in part:

“Dr. Sanders leads by an incredible example. His patients open up to him due to his patient centered approach. His compassion carries across greatly...He cultivates a respectful and stimulating teaching environment for students, and encourages active involvement in procedures and managing patient care.”

The WRITE Program, WWAMI Rural Integrated Training Experience, is a clinical medical education program at the University of Washington School of Medicine. The program integrates community involvement, continuity of experience, and a proven curriculum to expand primary care and rural training options for participants in the WWAMI program.

WWAMI is a UW program that provides medical education for its neighboring states that don’t have medical schools: Wyoming, Alaska, Montana, and Idaho. About 12% of Alaska’s doctors were WWAMI students.
Billing improvements continue

PeaceHealth continues to address the billing concerns of our community. Over the past few years, we have implemented an address and insurance verification system, begun proactively screening patients to offer financial assistance, and adjusted financial assistance eligibility levels so more people now qualify.

We’re working hard to make the changes that matter including:

- Financial assistance that pays for copays, deductibles, and most non-covered services.
- Offering self-pay discounts for non-covered services.
- Improving payment options including payment plans.
- Revising our approach to collections, with no liens or patient credit reports.

In addition, our billing statements were recently redesigned with you in mind. Each bill provides clear information about the charges, what actions (if any) may have occurred thus far, and what the recipient needs to do next. In addition, a number of options are suggested for paying the amount due including paying in full online or by phone, calling to set up a payment plan, or applying for financial assistance.

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)

Request an estimate for your care:
- visit www.peacehealth.org/estimate.

Easy access to your Health Information

You may have already enjoyed the ease of the MyPeaceHealth.org site to access your health information. Now your health information is also available through an app on your smart phone. If you use an iPhone, you’ll simply look for the Health app and add PeaceHealth Ketchikan Medical Center for your hospital records and PeaceHealth Medical Group for your clinic records. If you use an Android phone, you’ll need to download the MyChart app and add PeaceHealth as one of your “Organizations.” Through these apps you’ll be able to see your health summary, view test results, get a list of your medications, view and pay your bills, and request and see any scheduled appointments.

Enchanted Forest Gala

SaturdaY December 7
4 p.m. Doors Open
6 p.m. Dinner Served
Ted FERRY Civic Center

Come enjoy a delicious 4-course meal featuring Filet Mignon and White King Salmon, delectable desserts and dancing to Rain City Band. Decorate your holidays by bidding on designer-decorated trees and wreaths, gingerbread houses, or maybe even a tropical vacation for under your tree.

Tickets available now at www.peacehealth.org/enchanted.
$100 Individual Tickets • $900 Table of 10 • $720 Table of 8
Arriving after 9 p.m. for dancing only, $15 person • $25 couple

Questions? Tickets also available through Foundation office at 228-8300 x7383.