

The Vigil

FALL 2023/WINTER 2024

Caring for Our Community
Then, Now, Always

1898 **125** 2023
ANNIVERSARY



Ascension St. Vincent's is celebrating its 125th anniversary

On a rainy, windy evening in November 1898, two members of the Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul, along with their spiritual director, arrived in Birmingham from St. Louis. As described by author Tom Wofford in *The St. Vincent's Story: A Century of Caring*, the world they stepped into was a frightful place.

"The city...drew its life's blood from iron and steel and coal, and these industries created a hard-living, grimy atmosphere. City sewers emptied into Valley and Village Creeks. Much of the city's water supply was unfiltered and polluted. There were frequent mining and furnace accidents, many more serious than

(continued on page 2)

the company infirmaries could treat. Tuberculosis and typhoid were common. There had been a smallpox epidemic for the second year in a row. Birmingham was a city in need. Even though there were more than 100,000 people in the immediate vicinity, the city had no hospital."

The travelers, however, had come south to start a hospital, so they did. Almost immediately, they rented an old mansion on 15th Street South and opened the doors to patients.

Flash forward 125 years from that bleak evening in 1898. Birmingham gradually moved away from its dependence on industries of the earth to an economy based on healthcare, finance, technology, and education. In the meantime, St. Vincent's Hospital grew, not only in terms of bricks and mortar, but in its capacity to offer more services to more people over a wider geographic area.

In 2007, St. Vincent's Hospital merged with Eastern Health System to form St. Vincent's Health System, now Ascension St. Vincent's, which operates five hospitals and more than 25 healthcare facilities.

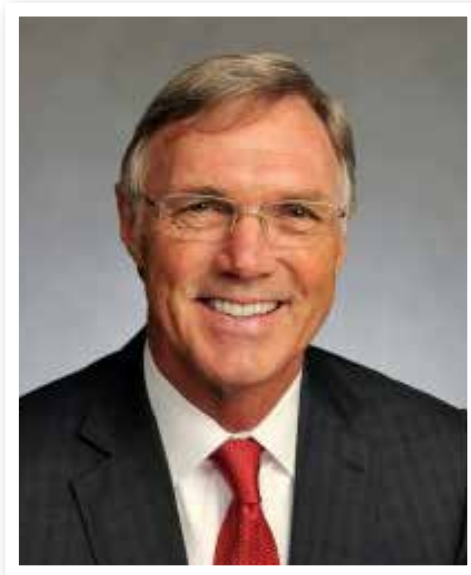
Harking back to its roots, Ascension St. Vincent's maintains its strong faith-based approach to patient care and offers a continuing commitment to excellence in term of facilities, staffing, and technology.

"Over the years, St. Vincent's has continued to improve and adapt to meet the increasing needs of the Birmingham area," said Jim Gorrie, CEO of Brasfield & Gorrie, who is serving as co-chair of the Ascension St. Vincent's 125th Anniversary Gala. "Several new facilities and services have been added and key strategic partnerships have been incorporated. The strategic partnership with UAB is a very important alliance as the system looks to meet the growing needs of our community for the next 125 years."



Jim Gorrie, CEO, Brasfield & Gorrie

On January 12, 2024, community leaders, medical professionals, and philanthropic-minded individuals will gather at The Club in Birmingham for Ascension St. Vincent's 125th Anniversary Gala. Proceeds from the event will support nursing education scholarships and the Care of the Poor Fund.



John Sherman, retired President/CEO, Coca-Cola Bottling Company UNITED

"I am grateful to serve as co-chair of the 125th Anniversary Gala with my good friend, Jim Gorrie, and the countless others who helped exceed our fundraising goal," said John Sherman, who retired in 2022 as president and CEO of Coca-Cola Bottling Company UNITED. "Many have experienced the community impact of Ascension St. Vincent's health ministry, including my wife, Terry, and me. We have been blessed by the opportunity to be a part of it and to witness the 'miracles.'"

Call 205-558-3850 or visit stvfoundation.org to purchase tickets to the Gala. Seating is limited.

Memorials *Lord, may our prayers come before you in memory of those we entrust to your eternal care.*

**Judith Anthony
Dr. Mack Barnes
Phillip Boone
Tim Boone
Ed Causey**

**Dianne Cleveland
Margie Cobb Pitts
Jacob Eaton
Dr. Richard Elkus
Dale Fowler**

**Charles Garner
Dr. Alfred Habeeb
Randy Harper
Jerry Hutchens
Dr. Wayne Killion**

**Dr. James Lawrence
Sheard McCulley
Dr. Edward Meadows
Yancy Morris
Helen Rozendale**

**Virginia Singleton
Elizabeth Stevens
Ben Tamburello, Sr.
Justin White
Mary Yates**

One NICU Family Donates to Benefit Others

The arrival of Samuel “Sam” Hinton on September 19, 2019, was a big surprise to his parents, Tyler and Jessica Hinton. Not that they weren’t expecting him. They just didn’t expect him to arrive quite so soon. Born at Ascension St. Vincent’s Birmingham two months ahead of schedule, Sam spent the first six weeks of his life in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU).

“As with most parents-to-be, a stay in the NICU was never on our radar until it became reality,” said Tyler. “It was obviously a scary experience at first, but the staff quickly put us at ease, and it became our second home that Fall.”

Sam started out in an incubator then spent the last few weeks of his stay in a bassinet. His parents watched in awe as skilled doctors and nurses, combined with the NICU’s state-of-the-art technology, allowed their tiny 3 lb. 11 oz. son to grow healthy and strong.

“Now, at age 4, Sam suffers no long-term effects of having been born prematurely,” his dad said.

In 2022, Tyler served as a Board Fellow at Ascension St. Vincent’s Foundation through the Rotaract Club of Birmingham. Through that process, he learned of a need for more bassinets like the one that had helped Sam during his NICU stay.

“Jess and I felt strongly that we owed Sam’s perfect health to technology like this, so we made the donation to help ensure that other families have the same chance we did for a positive outcome,” said Tyler, who now serves on the Foundation’s Junior Board. “Because we can never fully repay St. Vincent’s for the gift of our healthy, happy family, we’re honored to play a small part in helping continue its mission of care.”

The Hintons live in Mountain Brook with Sam and their dog, Clementine. Jessica started Empress Stationery part-time in 2007 then went full-time in 2013; Tyler came on board in 2018.

“We consider giving as a central pillar of the Empress culture and an important responsibility to the community,” said Tyler. “We believe that with success comes responsibility, and that responsibility includes using whatever resources are at your disposal to help lift others up.”



Tyler and Jessica Hinton with son, Sam

A donation to Ascension St. Vincent’s Women and Children’s Center can help premature babies thrive. Won’t you consider making one? Visit stvfoundation.org to learn more.

Honorariums *The following individuals were recognized through a gift in their honor.*

**Elizabeth Baker
Judge Sharon
Blackburn
Amelia Blighton
Caroline Blighton
Dr. Alain Bouchard
Dr. Joseph Brewer
Dr. Raymond Browne
Dr. Carter Capra**

**Ginger Clark
Dr. Jeffrey Cusmariu
Benjamin Dahle
John Dahle
Dr. Richard Diethelm
Dr. John Edwards
Andrew Gnann
Dr. Ira Gore
Dr. William Harvey**

**Dr. Stephen Heinzman
Katharine Henley
Lily Henley
Judge William Hereford
Dr. Wesley King
Thomas McCulley
Yancy Morris
Joanna Murphree
Dr. John Pierce**

**Dr. John Richardson
John Rochester
Dr. Susan Salter
Farris Smalley
Tyler Stewart
Victoria Stewart
Zachary Stewart
Dr. Stephen Stuart
George Thigpen**

**Dr. James Thomas
Dr. Norman Waldrop
Dr. William Woodall
Santi Wright**

Father/Son Donations Honor Bruno Cancer Center



L-R: Dr. Merle Salter, Dr. Sally Salter, Dr. Susan Salter, Austin Blackwell, and John Blackwell

A father/son duo recently expressed gratitude for life-saving treatment rendered to the son at Ascension St. Vincent's Bruno Cancer Center with separate gifts to Ascension St. Vincent's Foundation. The donations were directed to the radiation oncology department.

"It was just a token of our appreciation to St. Vincent's," said John Blackwell, the father of 42-year-old Austin Blackwell. "My family and I are so thankful for the care he received there, and I don't think it could have been any better."

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In the spring of 2021, the younger Blackwell began experiencing unusual fatigue and frequent headaches, neither of which had troubled him before. Even more concerning, he was getting worse.

"I've basically been one of the healthiest people I know of until this happened," he said. "Maybe a couple of broken fingers and small sport injuries. But nothing else, not even allergies."

So, when the usually energetic father of three declined to attend a family graduation celebration, an occasion he would normally not miss, wife Haleigh, a dentist, became insistent.

"You need an MRI," she said.

Soon an MRI scan was scheduled, and a journey that Blackwell never dreamed of taking began to unfold.

The scan revealed a cancerous mass in his brain (an oligodendroglioma), and Blackwell quickly found himself headed for an operating room.

"Eight days later, I was having brain surgery that involved an ear-to-ear incision and removal of the tumor through my left frontal lobe," he said. "It was insane."

Surgery went well, though a tough post-surgical recovery followed. When it came time for cancer treatment, Blackwell had no doubt that Ascension St. Vincent's Bruno Cancer Center was the place to be. A course of radiation and chemotherapy was subsequently administered under the care of Dr. John Piede and Dr. Susan Salter.

"I was born at St. Vincent's, and I've been connected to the Salter family from the beginning. The medical care they have provided for the community over the last 50-plus years is remarkable," Blackwell said. "In my case, Sally, a general surgeon, sat outside the operating room for nine hours with my medical power of attorney to make any needed decisions, Susan put together a complex radiation treatment plan and executed it flawlessly, and even Merle, a radiation oncologist, drove me to chemotherapy. I literally wouldn't be alive today without the Salter family and St. Vincent's."

Two years after treatment, Blackwell reports no visible signs of cancer.

"The surgery got rid of over 79 percent of the cancer, and the chemo and radiation took care of the rest," he said. "The obvious worry is that it could come back, but right now, I feel great. No medications, no treatments."

Supporting the mission of Ascension St. Vincent's Bruno Cancer Center promotes excellence in treating cancer patients.

Why I Give: A Cardiologist with a Heart for Giving

Some people have a talent for gift-giving, a knack for selecting the perfect gift, one that delights the recipient for having received it and the giver for having given it.

Dr. Alain Bouchard is one of those people. A cardiologist with Cardiology Specialists of Birmingham who practices at Ascension St. Vincent's, Dr. Bouchard has not only discovered the joy of giving gifts that his recipients are delighted to receive, but he has also tapped into the added joy of making a difference with his gifts.

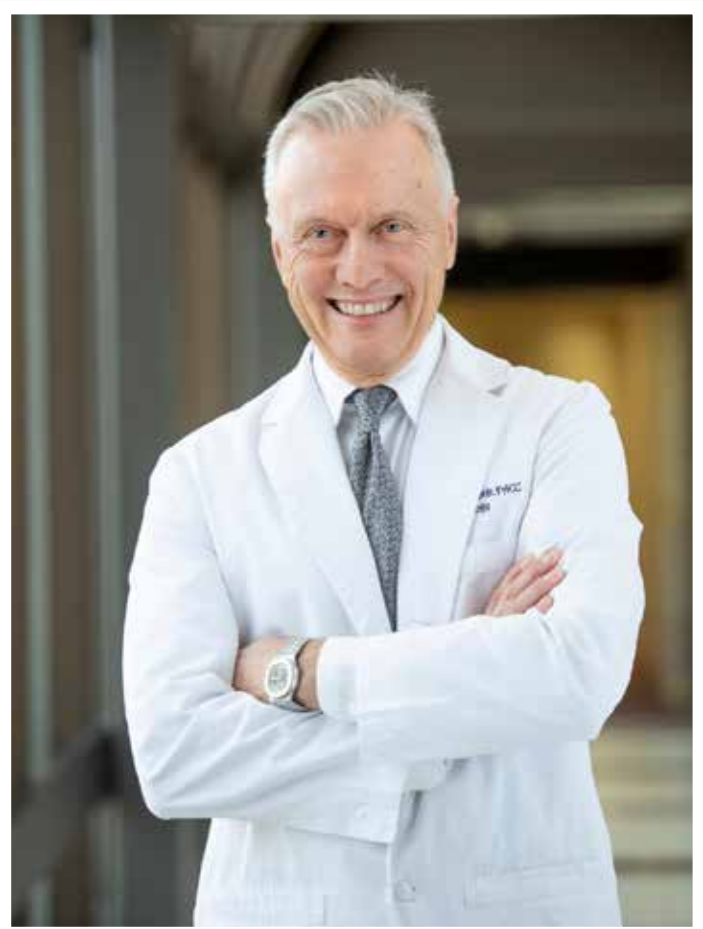
"One powerful way to honor and express gratitude towards the people who have made a positive impact on our lives is by making a donation in their name," he said, particularly noting the power of recognizing individuals in one's daily orbit of life.

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"In times of hardship or abundance, there is no denying the indelible bonds we form with our friends and neighbors. Whether it's supporting one another during challenging times or celebrating each other's victories, the value of these connections cannot be overstated," Dr. Bouchard said. "These friends and neighbors shape our lives in countless ways. They lend a helping hand, offer support, and create a sense of belonging. Recognizing their influence and expressing our gratitude through thoughtful donations is a wonderful gesture that can strengthen these relationships even further."

Dr. Bouchard, who has been known to also honor patients with charitable donations, suggests increasing the impact of a gift by supporting a local initiative. He gives Ascension St. Vincent's Foundation as an example of a local cause he chooses to support.

That way, he explained, "you contribute directly to improving the lives of those in your immediate vicinity, making your gesture even more significant." Furthermore, he continued, "Instead of traditional holiday presents, a donation to the Foundation



Dr. Alain Bouchard

encourages a collective focus on making a difference beyond material possessions."

Honoring friends and neighbors with a charitable donation, Dr. Bouchard explained, conveys gratitude, fosters goodwill, and strengthens the bonds that make a community thrive.

"By recognizing the impact our neighbors have on our lives and celebrating them through philanthropy, we not only uplift those we honor but also inspire a cycle of generosity that can extend far beyond our own circles," Dr. Bouchard said. "So, seize the opportunity to make a positive and lasting impact: Give back, honor, and make a difference in the lives of those who mean the world to you!"

Give a gift that the special people on your Christmas list will love. Honor them with a contribution to Ascension St. Vincent's Foundation. Visit stvfoundation.org to learn more.



Planned Giving

Love for Camp Bluebird Prompts Legacy Gift

Since 2015, Olivia Davidson has served as a Camp Bluebird volunteer. Her sisters also volunteer, driving from Georgia and using vacation time for camp time.

"It's become a family affair," said Davidson, who helps with registration. "We make gift bags, sort and fold T-shirts, and make cute little door tags (bluebirds of course!) so campers can easily find their rooms. Then we get everybody checked in, and the fun begins!"

Founded in 1985, Camp Bluebird is America's first adult cancer camp, where survivors gather for three days and two nights for sharing, educational workshops, and activities. The camp is sponsored and fully funded by Ascension St. Vincent's Foundation and private donations.

"Camp Bluebird is a wonderful experience," said Davidson. "The campers are full of love and support for each other."

Though a 10-year cancer survivor, Davidson has never been to Camp Bluebird as a camper. She simply responded to an urgent call for camp volunteers to hospital volunteers, thinking she was signing up to stuff a few envelopes. Four days of hard work later, she was hooked.

"Because of my love for Camp Bluebird and the Foundation," said Davidson, "I've named them as a beneficiary on my IRA."

When you name a charity as a beneficiary to receive your IRA upon your death rather than donating retirement assets during your lifetime, your estate will not be required to pay income taxes on the distribution of these assets. Because charities do not pay income tax, the full amount of your retirement account will directly benefit the charity of your choice. Won't you consider choosing Ascension St. Vincent's Foundation of Alabama? Contact Jennifer Carter, Director of Donor Engagement, at 205-558-3858 or visit legacy.stvfoundation.org to learn more.



Bench Honors Camp Bluebird Counselors

Camp Bluebird counselor Myra Franklin wanted to honor her friend, Judith Anthony, a fellow counselor who had recently passed away. Myra discussed it with other counselors and they decided to not only honor Judith but five other counselors who passed in recent years. A decision was made to recognize them with a memorial bench. Lloyd Beard agreed to take the lead in finding one.

After searching high and low, Beard found what was deemed the perfect bench for the job at Summer Classics in Pelham. And when management learned the purpose for which the bench was intended, they offered what Beard considered a great deal.

"We ended up getting a teakwood bench that we think is a beautiful tribute to those we've lost," said Beard.

The bench was promptly delivered to Springville Camp & Conference Center, where Camp Bluebird is currently held, and individual memorial plaques were ordered.

"This will allow us to add plaques in honor of other counselors as needed," said Beard.

A dedication ceremony for the memorial bench took place on the first day of Camp Bluebird's Fall session on October 10.

Send an adult cancer survivor to camp or help honor the memory of a deceased counselor. Donate to Camp Bluebird online at stvfoundation.org.

Who's on Board: Giving Hearts, Personal Experiences Compel Board Chairs to Serve



T J Willings, Chair, Board of Directors

By the time T J Willings became Chair of the Ascension St. Vincent's Foundation Board of Directors, he already held a deep appreciation for the health system.

"Ascension St. Vincent's has always been our family's hospital," said Willings. "We have depended on the doctors and staff for many decades, especially through my two diagnoses of cancer—prostate and melanoma—both of which were successfully treated. I cannot say enough good things about the hospital and the doctors who work there."

So, facilitating the Board's mission of supporting the health system is not just a Board duty for Willings; it's a personal quest.

Willings began his two-year term as chair by continuing to work with fellow Board members, community leaders, and the Foundation staff to fundraise and plan for Ascension St. Vincent's 125th Anniversary Gala on January 12, 2024.

"We have an active Board with each member engaged in various projects and fundraising events," he said.

Retired from Nextran Truck Centers, Willings has been married to wife Marlene for 40 years. They have three sons, three daughters-in-law, and six grandchildren with a seventh due in November.



Ginger Gray, Chair, Junior Board

Bradley attorney Ginger Gray, the Chair of the Ascension St. Vincent's Foundation Junior Board, has been a member since 2019. She previously served as vice chair.

Gray's passion to give back comes from a personal place.

"I have three kids, and all three were born at Ascension St. Vincent's," she said. "Both of my boys, my oldest and my youngest, were in the NICU. The first one was there only for 10 days, but with him being our first child, it was a difficult experience. Our third child was in the NICU for 60 days. He's now a healthy three-year-old.

"My husband, Jack, and I are very appreciative of what the NICU doctors and staff who took care of our boys did for our family and can never thank them enough." Gray's biggest goal as Junior Board chair is to encourage members to help raise awareness of what the Foundation does and how it supports Ascension St. Vincent's. "I want us to fundraise for the Foundation because I truly believe in the Foundation's mission and can see firsthand what a difference it makes in people's lives," she said.

"We've helped fund new equipment for the NICU and recently helped purchase some new bassinets for the Women and Children's Center," she said. "Because of the age of many of our members, the women and children's initiatives are something that's important to us."

Ascension St. Vincent's Foundation

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Sisters' Vigil



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In Memoriam: Dr. Mack Nathaniel Barnes



Dr. Mack Barnes

When Dr. Mack Barnes passed away on June 24, 2023, he left behind an indelible mark on the field of oncology at Ascension St. Vincent's, so it is only fitting that his legacy be commemorated in a lasting way. Thus, the Ascension St. Vincent's Foundation has commissioned a portrait of Dr. Barnes to be hung in the Bruno Cancer Center.

"We hope the portrait will serve as a constant reminder of Dr. Barnes's dedication to his work and will be a source of comfort to his patients, colleagues, and visitors alike," said Andy Bell, President of Ascension St. Vincent's Foundation. "Dr. Barnes was a friend to the Foundation, and up until the last moments of his life, he was an advocate for cancer patients like himself."

To honor the memory of Dr. Barnes in an ongoing way and to continue his legacy of excellence in patient care and oncological care, the Foundation has instituted the "Dr. Mack Barnes Award." Each spring, the award will recognize two outstanding individuals (an Associate and a Physician) within the Ascension St. Vincent's medical community who exemplify the qualities and values that Dr. Barnes embodied throughout his career.

"This award will not only celebrate the recipients' achievements," said Bell, "but it will also remind others of Dr. Barnes's commitment and inspire them to follow in his footsteps."

To support this endowment and honor Dr. Barnes,
visit stvfoundation.org and designate your gift to the Dr. Mack Barnes Fund.