Tickled PINK!

Cancer Center Receives $50,000-Plus from Donor, Firefighters, Soroptimists

The season of sharing has special meaning for the NorthBay Cancer Center this week, after firefighters, a Vacaville service organization and a generous individual donor came together on Monday to present checks totaling $54,800 in donations.

“This means a lot to us at NorthBay Healthcare, and at the
See TICKLED PINK, Page 12

Managed Care Has New VP

Robert Coscione has joined NorthBay Healthcare as our first vice president of payer relations and will head up the Managed Care division, announced Konard Jones, CEO and president.

See MANAGED, Page 5

NorthBay’s Top 10
2019: Long List of Achievements

From the openings of the North Wing to celebrations of certifications and accomplishments, it was a very good year for NorthBay Healthcare. Here are our picks for the Top 10 stories of 2019.
— Editor

1. North Wing Opens

After years of planning, permitting, building, hiring, training and putting on a last-minute polish, NorthBay Medical Center’s North Wing officially opened to patients on Oct. 1. The $200 million, three-story, 77,000-square-foot project began with a groundbreaking in 2016 and concluded with grand celebration.

See TOP 10, Page 14

Numerous Policies Get a 2020 Upgrade

After an extensive year of research, focus groups and forums, a cavalcade of changes to NorthBay Healthcare’s many administration policies are gearing up to

See POLICIES, Page 6

FYI Takes A Holiday Break

Enjoy this final FYI issue of 2019. We resume publication on Jan. 15.
Morgan Harris  
Patient Access Ambassador I  
Admitting  
VacaValley Hospital

Morgan Harris  
Patient Access Ambassador I  
Admitting  
VacaValley Hospital

Carolyn Rivers  
Clinical Nurse II  
Cardiac Catheterization  
NorthBay Medical Center

Carolyn Rivers  
Clinical Nurse II  
Cardiac Catheterization  
NorthBay Medical Center

Fallon Roth  
ASC Rad Tech III  
Ambulatory Surgery Center

Fallon Roth  
ASC Rad Tech III  
Ambulatory Surgery Center

Jorge Salgado  
Medical Assistant  
Ambulatory Float Pool  
Hilborn Administration Center

Jorge Salgado  
Medical Assistant  
Ambulatory Float Pool  
Hilborn Administration Center

Jocelyn Santos  
Nutrition Associate I  
Cafeteria  
NorthBay Medical Center

Jocelyn Santos  
Nutrition Associate I  
Cafeteria  
NorthBay Medical Center

Anthony Sario  
Patient Access Ambassador I  
Admitting  
VacaValley Hospital

Anthony Sario  
Patient Access Ambassador I  
Admitting  
VacaValley Hospital

Michael Sisson  
Nurse Practitioner  
OB ED  
NorthBay Medical Center

Michael Sisson  
Nurse Practitioner  
OB ED  
NorthBay Medical Center

Maggie Smith-Davidson  
Physician Assistant  
OB ED  
NorthBay Medical Center

Maggie Smith-Davidson  
Physician Assistant  
OB ED  
NorthBay Medical Center

René Steinhauer  
Nurse Practitioner  
OB ED  
NorthBay Medical Center

René Steinhauer  
Nurse Practitioner  
OB ED  
NorthBay Medical Center

Stephani Stewart  
HR Support Specialist I  
Human Resources  
Green Valley Administration Center

Stephani Stewart  
HR Support Specialist I  
Human Resources  
Green Valley Administration Center

Amy Thomsen  
Physician Assistant  
OB ED  
NorthBay Medical Center

Amy Thomsen  
Physician Assistant  
OB ED  
NorthBay Medical Center
It’s the Magic of Merriment

A brief rain storm did little to dampen spirits at the annual Merriment on Main tree-lighting celebration in downtown Vacaville Dec. 3. A large crowd helped kick off the holiday season with cheer and photos with the family, thanks to NorthBay Healthcare’s photo booth and hot cocoa stand.

Crowds of revelers started showing up around 4:30 p.m. and a steady stream took turns getting a family picture inside the NorthBay booth, where a wicker bench was surrounded by presents, a lighted Santa and two Rudolphins, complete with blinking red noses.

At nearby tables, NorthBay Foundation Guild members handed out cocoa, cookies and keepsakes and next door, HealthSpring Fitness staff were busy handing out canvas tote bags and information on the fitness center.

CNA on 1800 Wins Prize from #HealthTipTuesday

Pawanjit Dhaliwal, a certified nursing assistant in the 1800 wing at NorthBay Medical Center, is the latest winner in the #HealthTipTuesday campaign on the NorthBay Facebook page.

Pawanjit won the drawing for a $50 Amazon gift card after posting a comment on a #HealthTipTuesday post during the month of November. Everyone who posts a comment and shares the #HealthTipTuesday posts on Facebook is automatically entered in the monthly drawing.

You could be the winner of the December drawing. Comment. Share. Win!

News of Former Employee’s Death Stuns Colleagues

NorthBay Healthcare employees were stunned to learn in November of the death of Kyle Fowler, R.N., 48, who left the organization a couple of years ago, but whose Louisiana twang and compelling patient stories still reverberate.

Kyle worked as an administrative coordinator and later as supervisor on Unit 1800 at NorthBay Medical Center. He was an enthusiastic participant in “Creating Connections,” sharing his many stories, and was featured in two Wellspring articles.

Tracy Louis, R.N., said he was more than a co-worker. “I see him as a friend, as family,” she wrote. “He had a magical aura. He was as goofy, compassionate, loving, intelligent and witty as he was Southern. I feel blessed to call him my friend.”

Patrick Garner, R.N., remembers Kyle and his wife, Kat, taking him to a play, the “best birthday gift of my life,” wrote Patrick. Services were Nov. 8.
A Brief Holiday
Rainy weather meant the Holiday in the Park excursion for NorthBay employees and their families on Nov. 30 ended a little sooner than expected. The park closed early but is honoring the tickets until Dec. 31. In all, NorthBay sold 239 tickets for the event, which featured more than 1 million lights, holiday-themed shows, a snow hill, and a Merry Marketplace, where shoppers found unique, one-of-a-kind gifts from local artisans. Among those who ventured out in the storm to enjoy the display was Brook Brocato (above, second from the right) who is the daughter of Nicole Brocato, vice president of Operations and Chief Quality Officer. It was Brook’s 12th birthday, so she brought along a group of friends to celebrate. Also enjoying the day was (smaller photo) Katrena Walbolt, a professional fee coder in Ambulatory Patient Accounting, posing here with daughter Elaina.

Turkey Fun
Melissa Manry and Steve Huddleston of NorthBay Public Affairs had the Thanksgiving Day duty of handing out goodies and snacks to runners who participated in the Turkey Trot, a fundraiser supporting Meals on Wheels and the Kroc Center in Suisun City. Events included a 5K run and a 10K walk or run at the Solano Community College campus. NorthBay Healthcare partnered with Medic Ambulance to be major sponsors this year. NorthBay HealthSpring Fitness also had a vendor booth at the event.

Cornhole for a Good Cause
Vacaville Firefighters put down their razors in November to grow mustaches in support of men’s health, and then had a shave-off event to raise funds for the NorthBay Cancer Center at Pietro’s No. 2 on Nov. 30. The “Movember” event also included a cornhole tournament. Ryan Pasco, major gifts manager for the foundation, (far right) and wife Brittany were one team of 20 to participate in the fundraising event. “We lost early, but it was a good match,” Ryan reported. Proceeds will go to NorthBay Healthcare Foundation to support men’s health.
Focus on Alzheimer’s Education, Empowerment

Members of NorthBay Healthcare’s Adult Day Center joined in at an Alzheimer’s Education and Empowerment — Early Detection Matters event on Nov. 22 at the Solano County Events Center. Pictured are (left to right) Kammy Perion, activity aide at the Adult Day Center; SriSapna Boyapati, Adult Day Center supervisor; Bob Panzer, Donna Martin, Solano County Supervisor John Vasquez, Congressman John Garamendi and Art Zacher, pastor at Berean Baptist Church in Fairfield.

Opportunity for Support

During the annual Festival of Trees Opportunity House fundraiser, a team from NorthBay Healthcare gathered around the holiday tree purchased by NorthBay Healthcare Foundation President Brett Johnson. Decorated by NorthBay Guild member Karen Seiden and Georgeann Gebers of Unity Church, the tree is now on display in the lobby at NorthBay VacaValley Hospital. All the gifts that came with the tree were donated to the Women’s and Children’s Services party for families in need, scheduled Dec. 20 at the Center for Women’s Health in Fairfield. The gala raised thousands of dollars this year for Opportunity House, Vacaville’s homeless shelter. In the photo are Melissa Manry, Heidi Campini, Craig and Aimee Brewer, Jim and Gaylene Andersen, Sally Wyatt, Ryan Pasco, Steve Huddleston, Wendy Jackson, Karen and Bill Seiden and Diane Barney.

Managed ...

(From Page 1)

“Rob brings to NorthBay a deep and broad resume that spans the payer side and the provider world that will benefit NorthBay in 2020 and beyond,” said Konard. “With 20-plus years in payer/contracting leadership roles, Rob will assist in guiding NorthBay into the next decade of Healthcare’s ever-changing payer-provider environment, including chartering our payer strategy, employer strategy, sitting on the board at Western Health Advantage (WHA) and participating in our ongoing relationship with the Mayo Clinic Care Network.”

Most recently, Rob was vice president of Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan, one of the nation’s largest statewide health plans, a nonprofit corporation with more than 4.3 million members across Michigan with more than $29 billion in revenue in 2018.

Prior to his Michigan experience, he was vice president of provider network evaluation and management for Anthem in Indianapolis. His career also included a stint as regional vice president in Southern California for Aetna. Aside from his time in the payer space, Rob has also held leadership roles on the provider side including Eisenhower Medical Center and Palomar Pomerado Health System, both in Rancho Mirage.

Rob will take the corner office on the second floor of GVAC. You can reach him at extension 3288.
Policies ...
(From Page 1)
go into effect Jan. 1.

“You spoke, we listened,” said Jim Andersen, vice president of Human Resources. “We knew it was time for an update, but we couldn’t do it without taking our organization’s temperature on a lot of hot topics, from personal appearance to pay equity.”

The team in Human Resources reviewed data and compared current policies, input and suggestions to industry standards and trends for an update suitable for life in 2020 and beyond.

“We feel these are valid and important changes and believe the majority of our employees will embrace the update,” said Jim. Here are some of the highlights:

**Weekend Differential:** Although NorthBay Healthcare has many employees who work weekends, not all receive differentials. The new policy addresses that. Beginning in February 2020, if your department is open on the weekend and you work a designated shift, you are eligible.

**New Personal Appearance Policy (replacing Dress Code Policy):** While maintaining dedication to our standard of professional attire, NorthBay Healthcare is relaxing its restrictions on tattoos and piercings, as long as they are non-offensive.

“We recognize that personal appearance is an important element of self-expression, and that attitudes about tattoos and piercings have changed through the years,” said Jim.

**New NorthBay Sick Leave (replacing Extended Sick Leave or ESL):** Through the years, many staff members have expressed concerns with having to use their Paid Time Off (PTO) when they were sick. Now, employees can use Sick Leave, without touching their PTO.

Under most circumstances, no doctor’s note will be required, unless the absence exceeds three consecutive calendar days. Sick leave will be used for all medically related absences.

“Accrual rates, balances and caps remain unchanged,” said Jim, as well as the notification requirement.

“You must still notify your manager. If the absence is not approved in advance (or protected), it may be counted as an unscheduled absence/occurrence (see Attendance Policy).

**New Vacation/Holiday Pay (replacing PTO):** While accrual rates, balances, caps and observed holidays remain unchanged, eligible employees will be able to cash out of up to 40 hours of PTO each year, starting in the fourth quarter of 2020.

Vac/Hol pay is to be used for vacations or holidays and incidental, nonmedically-related absences, not sick leave.

As with sick leave, the notification requirement remains unchanged.

This benefit can no longer be “gifted” to co-workers. If you would like to assist co-workers in need, you may contribute through the Employee Emergen-cy Fund, via the NorthBay Foundation. Employees in need can apply for funding.

**For On-Call and Temporary Staff:** Under the state’s Healthy Workplace Healthy Family Act of 2014, NorthBay will continue to provide three days of protected/Paid Sick Leave to eligible non-benefited (on-call and temporary) staff members.

**NorthBay Attendance Policy:** It can get crowded around the time clock, so NorthBay is adopting a new policy that establishes a six-minute window to clock in for scheduled shifts. That window begins three minutes before your shift, and extends to three minutes after your scheduled start. In the past, time clocks rounded punches within a quarter of an hour. Under the new system, segments will be broken into six-minute increments. You should still begin and end work as scheduled and should not change your work practices.

The requirement to provide all staff with a 30-minute uninterrupted meal period does not change.

“To ensure accurate recording of time for meal periods, there will be no ‘rounding’ of time associated with meal period punches,” said Jim.

“An occasional tardy is not a huge problem. But two tardies in a single pay period or a pattern of tardies in consecutive pay periods may count as an ‘occurrence’ for attendance purposes.”

This policy also establishes a universal threshold of allowing five occurrences in any rolling 12-month period before corrective action is warranted.

**Leave of Absence:** There have been many changes and the policy is long and complicated. Here’s one example: If an LOA exceeds state and federally protected time and the staff member is unable to return to work, they will be asked to complete the ADA accommodation/interactive process. Benefit coverage may also change for non-protected LOAs.

Soon you will receive a mailing to your home address detailing all these changes and will be asked to acknowledge these changes through Cornerstone. Full policies can be found in PolicyStat; you’ll find the link on ShareSpace.
Boy Donates His Gifts to WCS Party

A holiday miracle of sorts took place last week at the Center for Women’s Health.

Marcelo Emerson realized a “lifelong dream.” The 5-year-old became Santa for a day, by giving away his birthday gifts.

“He’s a very kind boy,” said his father, Eddie Emerson. “He’s always said he wants to be Santa when he grows up.”

NorthBay was lucky he didn’t wait that long. He just turned 5 on Nov. 21, said his mother, Tara Bonneville, a nurse on Units 1600-1700. “He insisted we tell everyone who came to his birthday party to bring gifts that he could donate.”

When asked why he wanted to do that, Marcelo answered in a very small voice: “Because some children don’t have money for clothes and stuff.”

Tara called to ask if the staff might be willing to give Marcelo high fives or a sticker — to reinforce the importance of giving.

Mary Jameson, director of Womens’ Health (outpatient) and Heather Troutt, clinical manager for Womens and Children’s Services, put their heads together and came up with a plan. When the family arrived, they had a special “NorthBay Secret Santa” T-shirt and balloons ready to greet Marcelo.

They then took the family behind the scenes where most of the staff gathered to give the boy and his sister high fives and pose for a photo.

Tara said she’s always encouraged her children to give, and in fact, 6-year-old Zoe has also donated toys to other programs.

“Zoe’s birthday is Dec. 27, and Marcelo’s is Nov. 21 — both so close to Christmas. They get so much, and this way, they can give back.”

The staff had another surprise. They invited the children to join them Dec. 20, during the Womens Health Clinic party, when more than 200 children and their families will come to the third floor — decorated as Santa’s Workshop — to collect a toy. Marcelo will have the chance to hand out toys to the children.

“I’m overwhelmed by all this,” said Tara. “This is something he’ll never forget.”
They braved stormy weather to come and honor lost loved ones with tears, respect and sweet memories.

And, as it happened on Pearl Harbor Day, they also honored veterans and service men and women of all wars who made the ultimate sacrifice.

It was the annual Tree of Memories event, sponsored by NorthBay Hospice & Bereavement at the Green Valley Administration Center Dec. 7.

“We’re honored that you’ve chosen to share your memories here with us today,” said Jeanne Dennis, executive director of Hospice & Bereavement. “We hope that being here today will lighten your load. That it will ease your sense of aloneliness, because here you are with a community of others who have shared a similar experience of loss.”

Jennifer Flam, Hospice chaplain and bereavement volunteer coordinator, encouraged the 100-plus guests to look to the holiday tree at the front of the room — adorned in lights.

“Think about your loved one, shining their light for you to see, and think of the warmth of your memories. Here, we are creating a sacred space for those memories.”

In addition to lights, the tree was decorated with shiny gold and silver jingle bells. Guests were invited to write the name of a loved one on a tag with the ornament and hang it on the tree. At the end of the event, they were invited to take them home as keepsakes.

Oncologist and hematologist Jonathan Lopez, M.D., offered words of respect to veterans in the room, and to spouses and families of veterans for their service and sacrifice. He retired from the military after 27 years of service in the Air Force.

Red, white and blue ribbons and “We Honor Veterans” pins were handed out to all veterans in the room.

A special slideshow honoring veterans was presented by Terrell Van Aken, M.D., medical director.
Time Running Out for Employee Discount

Time is running short to take advantage of a great gift idea that not only supports a great cause, but can even be a tax deduction. Even better? A discounted price, but only for a short time.

It’s all wrapped up in a ticket to the 2020 NorthBay Wine, Brew & Food Jubilee. NorthBay employees can choose to purchase tickets for themselves, friends or family members through payroll deduction, and take advantage of an “Early Bird” discount of $75 per ticket. A limited number of Early Bird tickets have been set aside and the deadline to sign up for this special arrangement is Jan. 5, 2020. There is a limit of four tickets per employee through payroll deduction, and to make this arrangement, contact Lou Lopez, analyst for NorthBay Healthcare Foundation at (707) 646-3132, or LH Lopez@NorthBay.org.

The 33rd event, with its “wine country casual” theme, is set for 6:30 p.m. on May 16, 2020 at the Harbison Event Center at the Nut Tree. Jubilee ticket prices go up to $100 after Open That Bottle Night on Feb. 29, 2020, and will be $125 on the day of the Jubilee, if not already sold out.

Employees are welcome to become sponsors of the event, added Craig Bryan, Jubilee committee chair. Sponsors receive an invitation to Open That Bottle Night and a host of other perks. Last year was a record year in terms of sponsorship by individuals and employees, and the committee hopes there is similar enthusiasm this year, for the event that benefits the programs of NorthBay Hospice & Bereavement.

For more information about becoming a sponsor, how to purchase tickets or about the Jubilee itself, go to www.NorthBay.org/Jubilee.

Memories...
(From Page 8)

for the Hospice & Bereavement program. What followed was a 20-minute slideshow that Dr. Van Aken compiled to feature images of loved ones sent in as a tribute. In between segments, he shared scenic images from his travels, featuring shots from Yosemite, the California coast, the foothills and the Sierra.

Names were also read, and between groupings, Cynthia Schulz played soothing musical selections on her harp.

Nell Broussard had a smile on her face and tears in her eyes as she hung an ornament in memory of her husband, Preston, who died four years ago. Doris Duddleston came to remember her husband, who died eight years ago, and a grandson she lost just last year.

Jennifer Grant gulped back tears as she honored her fiancé, Chris Billingsly, who died in January. “He was my best friend,” she said. “There’s not a day I don’t think about him.”

Hugs were shared with strangers, and boxes of tissues passed down the aisles.

It’s important to remember, said NorthBay Hospice & Bereavement volunteer Lynn Gallagher, who has been with NorthBay Hospice & Bereavement for 30 years. “Not everyone is ready to come and participate, but when they are, we’re here for them,” she said. “Thanks to the generous support of the community, we’re here when they’re ready.”

Some keepsake ornaments (not the jingle bells) are still available, while supplies last, for a $20 contribution to the program. Call Brenda Boyd at (707) 646-3517 for more information. All proceeds benefit NorthBay Hospice & Bereavement.
Window signage has been put up and it’s close to official: NorthBay Healthcare will open its second Urgent Care Center at Solano Town Center in Fairfield, offering patients an affordable and convenient alternative to hospital emergency rooms.

It should open in the first quarter of 2020.

NorthBay Urgent Care will occupy 2,500 square feet, sharing a stand-alone building along Pennsylvania Avenue with Habit Burger and Sourdough Sandwich. It is conveniently located a block from NorthBay Medical Center and close to public transportation.

NorthBay’s first Urgent Care Center opened in January 2018 in Nut Tree Plaza in Vacaville. From its first day it surpassed all expectations in the number of patients it cares for and services it is able to provide, according to Konard Jones, president and CEO of NorthBay Healthcare.

“This second Urgent Care Center location will, as it does in Vacaville, provide care for people of all ages, extending NorthBay’s standard for quality of care, delivered by a team of ER-trained physicians and clinicians,” Konard said.

The facility will feature onsite X-ray, laboratory, pharmacy services and accelerated test results within minutes.

About 50 patients per day are expected to be seen for low-acute illnesses, such as flu, fevers, cuts, sprains, broken bones, sports injuries, ear aches and childhood maladies.

Wayne Gietz, vice president of Ambulatory Services, said retail medicine achieves two critical goals for NorthBay Healthcare:

- Eases pressure on overburdened Emergency Departments and thereby reduces waiting times for patients who need emergent care; and
- Introduces more of the community to the NorthBay Healthcare system and the compassionate care, advanced medicine, close to home, that it delivers.

“As the only community-based, locally managed, nonprofit health care system, we strive to fill the gaps in local services that people need,” noted Aimee Brewer, president of NorthBay Healthcare Group, the division that operates the two local hospitals and an array of outpatient services. “Convenient and affordable urgent care for anyone who needs it is an asset to our community.”

NorthBay Healthcare will again partner with Carbon Health, a pioneer in operating high-tech, patient-centric urgent care centers in the San Francisco Bay Area on this project. Carbon Health, an innovative medical practice, operates similar high-tech centers in Berkeley, Oakland, San Francisco and Mountain View, all in or near retail centers. Founded in 2013, one of its principals, Dr. Djavaherian, is an Emergency Department physician at NorthBay Medical Center.

“The benefit to the community is that we can treat patients in our urgent care setting and out of the Emergency Department,” Dr. Djavaherian explained. “That way the ER can do what it is amazing at doing — taking care of critically ill patients who need that level of care.”

Aimee added, “Our partnership with Carbon Health helps us fulfill our mission to innovate new healthcare services in our community. Our two missions align as we both believe in patient-centered care providing a seamless service experience, and access to care when and where people need it most.”
Putting the Focus on Hand Hygiene!

Hand hygiene has been proven to be the most effective means of reducing germ transmission in health care facilities. It is estimated that 80 percent of infections are spread by hands.

Hand hygiene plays the major role in keeping NorthBay Healthcare’s patients safe. Internal audits have revealed a compliance rate with hand hygiene that is hovering around 80 percent. NorthBay patients deserve clean hands every time.

“Hand hygiene is one of the most critical elements of a journey to zero harm,” said Vice-President of Operations and Chief Quality Officer Nicole Brocato.

“Without a hand hygiene culture of every patient, every time, we will never eliminate hospital-acquired infections.”

All members of the health care team who enter or exit a patient room or exam room are expected to perform hand hygiene with hand sanitizer or soap and water. Remember: Perform hand hygiene with every patient, every time.

Hand hygiene is a top priority in NorthBay’s Journey to Zero Harm. In January 2020 a new campaign will launch and all hand hygiene signage posted in the past will be removed and replaced with a new standard sign at every patient door and in any area with high patient volume.

All employees have the responsibility to speak up for patient safety. This includes supporting co-workers by politely stopping them and reminding them to perform hand hygiene: every patient every time.

While these conversations can be challenging, they should be viewed as supporting and helping coworkers while also being advocates for the patients, said Nicole.

Additionally, TeamSTEPPS training gives employees a tool to help with these conversations. The use of “CUS” (I am Concerned, I am Uncomfortable, this is a Safety issue) helps employees to use standard language to respectfully escalate the conversation as required and is appropriate.

Employees are also encouraged to use of the Risk Indentification Reporting system (RIR or Safety Saves as appropriate) for these types of events. This is not to get others in trouble. Instead, it is so that issues can be tracked and improvements made to best help staff drive toward the goal of zero harm, said Nicole.

Old Cafe to Host Vending Machines/Lounge

Work will begin in January to convert the old café at NorthBay Medical Center into a vending and lounge area for staff and visitors alike, according to Vice President and Chief Quality Officer Nicole Brocato.

“This has been in the works for many months, even before the café vacated the space to move into its new North Wing home,” said Nicole. “It’s an OSHPD project, so it takes quite a while.”

Planning began in early 2019, with money being set aside in the capital budget to cover the expense.

The new space will feature four to six vending machines, offering a variety of beverages and healthy choices. Access to the room will be 24/7/365.

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Additionally, TeamSTEPPS training gives employees a tool to help with these conversations. The use of “CUS” (I am Concerned, I am Uncomfortable, this is a Safety issue) helps employees to use standard language to respectfully escalate the conversation as required and is appropriate.

Employees are also encouraged to use the Risk Indentification Reporting system (RIR or Safety Saves as appropriate) for these types of events. This is not to get others in trouble. Instead, it is so that issues can be tracked and improvements made to best help staff drive toward the goal of zero harm, said Nicole.
Members of the Vacaville Firefighters Association, Soroptimist International of Vacaville and NorthBay Healthcare Foundation Board member Heidi Campini came together to present three checks totaling $54,800 to NorthBay Cancer Center staff and leaders.

**Tickled PINK ... (From Page 1)**

NorthBay Cancer Center,” president and CEO Konard Jones told a gathering of about 30. “We try to take care of the community, and when the community takes care of us, it’s humbling.”

Oncologist and Hematologist Jonathan Lopez, M.D., got things started by challenging Vacaville Firefighter Luke Iott to a pushup contest — one for every thousand the firefighters raised. After the pair successfully completed 17 each, Luke explained that firefighters sold T-shirts, and served meals at Pietro’s No. 1 and donated to proceeds — $17,400 — to the Cancer Center. NorthBay Healthcare Foundation Board Member Heidi Campini stepped up and matched the donation with another $17,400.

Then Lisa Hilas, president of Soroptimist International of Vacaville and a group of Soroptimists announced a $20,000, donation to honor the memory of Wendy Wasserman, a longtime Soroptimist and board member for NorthBay Healthcare Foundation. Wendy lost her battle with breast cancer in 2018. Her husband Jim Kellogg brought Wendy’s portrait and thanked everyone for keeping her spirit alive.

“There’s so much we can do with this money and we thank you so much for sharing this with our patients,” said Lori Muir, director of Oncology Services.
Urgent Surgery a Robotic Success

They say timing is everything and for Raul Agredano, 47, those words couldn’t be more true.

He had been suffering silently for months, but his belly pain became excruciating on Dec. 2. Family members wouldn’t let him put off medical care another moment. “They said, ‘We’re taking you to NorthBay and that’s all there is to it,’” Raul remembered.

So the day before NorthBay Medical Center officially launched its robotics program, Raul was admitted to the Emergency Department and diagnosed with a necrotic gallbladder, among other things. Even though the robotic surgery schedule for Dec. 3 had only elective surgeries on it, Raul’s emergent case suddenly became a priority for surgeon William Fulton, D.O.

Although Dr. Fulton frequently performs gallbladder surgery using laparoscopy, this time he was able to put his newly honed robotic surgery skills to the test, making Raul NorthBay’s second da Vinci patient, and its first emergency case.

And on both levels, it was a surgical success.

“I explained the benefits of robotic surgery to Raul,” Dr. Fulton said. “It is technology that allows us to do a minimally invasive procedure even better with improved 3D and HD visualization and to highlight the bile ducts, improving safety of the procedure.”

“I told Dr. Fulton I can take a delapidated house and refurbish it, and create all kinds of financing, but you know your stuff, so go for it,” Raul said.

“As a surgeon, I can remove a gallbladder multiple ways, but the robot has the additional ability to highlight critical structures with fluorescence, known as Firefly. Firefly is an integrated fluorescence capability that uses near-infrared technology. The da Vinci endoscope triggers injected dye to fluoresce, and it’s activated at the surgeon’s console,” he explained.

“Dissecting and visualizing critical structures is definitely improved with the da Vinci Xi. It allows us to achieve minimally invasive surgery when it may not be possible with traditional laparoscopy.”

During his visit to the Emergency Department, Raul also learned he was diabetic. Since he was discharged Dec. 5, he says he’s been on a healthier path.

“Dissecting and visualizing critical structures is definitely improved with the da Vinci Xi. It allows us to achieve minimally invasive surgery when it may not be possible with traditional laparoscopy.”

During his visit to the Emergency Department, Raul also learned he was diabetic. Since he was discharged Dec. 5, he says he’s been on a healthier path.

“I’ve seen my primary care doctor, Darshan Patel, M.D., and my blood sugars are down,” he said. “I’ve started on a healthy diet, and I feel great.”

Dr. Fulton, along with Majid Kianmajd, D.O., and Haroon Mojaddidi, M.D. have also completed intensive training and represent the first wave of general surgeons to earn credentials on the da Vinci. Herkanwal Khaira, M.D., urologist, has been performing robotic surgeries since 2007 at other facilities, and will bring his robotic practice to NorthBay.

“These first surgeries at NorthBay are the result of outstanding teamwork and leadership in our organization,” said Dr. Fulton. “It is truly the result of many years of dedicated leadership of physicians, administration and our entire organization. The da Vinci Xi robot offers considerable advancement in hernia and colon surgery as well as gallbladder, biliary and several other surgical procedures.

“I see a future where all general surgeons are robotically trained,” Dr. Fulton added. “I’ve worked in many medical centers throughout residency and with the U.S. Army as an active duty surgeon, and how NorthBay stacks up is unprecedented. Nowhere else in Solano County can you get this advanced level of care. We are among the best in the nation offering the most advanced care to our community.”
The addition includes eight surgical suites equipped with an array of state-of-the-art surgical equipment; 22 new patient rooms, bringing the number of beds to 154; a host of top-level diagnostic equipment; an expanded Central Sterile department; and the Shaw Family Kitchen, with indoor and outdoor dining, a grille and tasty new menu.

2. Accolades Abound

It was a year of awards and accolades at NorthBay Healthcare in 2019, including a huge announcement in August from the Commission on Magnet of the American Nurses Credentialing Center that NorthBay Healthcare has again earned its status as a “Magnet” organization.

It’s the second time since 2014 that the organization has earned the highest level of recognition that a healthcare system can receive for quality nursing care. Only 6.6 percent of hospitals in the United States have earned Magnet status.

The honors didn’t end there. NorthBay was also re-designated as a “Baby-Friendly” hospital by Baby-Friendly USA, an international breastfeeding education and support program sponsored by the World Health Organization and the United Nations Children’s Fund. NorthBay is the only hospital in Solano County that is designated as Baby-Friendly.

NorthBay Medical Center received the American College of Cardiology’s NCDR Chest Pain — MI Registry Gold Performance Achievement Award for 2019. It is one of only 30 hospitals nationwide to receive the honor and it is the sixth year in a row for the Fairfield hospital to be honored with the award.

NorthBay was recognized by the American Heart Association (AHA) as a leader in getting patient blood pressure rates under control, earning a 2019 Target: BP Gold award for achieving blood pressure control rates of 70 percent or more in their adult patient population with high blood pressure.

And for the fourth year in a row, NorthBay Medical Center earned the American Heart Association/American Stroke Association’s Get With The Guidelines Stroke Gold Plus Quality Achievement Award and also qualified for recognition on the Target: Stroke Elite Honor Roll.

3. Robots Rule

It was a series of threes: Three da Vinci robotic-assisted surgeries — the first ever to be performed in Solano County — were conducted on Dec. 3 on the North Wing’s 3 North. The surgeries — to remove gallbladders and appendix — were successful and marked a major milestone for Solano County’s surgical patients. The innovative service places NorthBay on the leading edge for minimally invasive surgical procedures, which allow for quicker recovery time, less pain, less bleeding and shorter hospital stays.
4. Back in the Blues
The year ended with both Blue Shield of California and Anthem Blue Cross including NorthBay’s two hospitals and our physician groups in their networks, ending a sometimes tumultuous series of negotiations and court battles. A jury in February ruled that NorthBay was owed a minimum of $15 million in underpayments after Blue Shield unilaterally terminated our contract. A new contract was signed in September. In July, Anthem Blue Cross withdrew its termination of a contract with NorthBay physicians just days before it was to kick in, and announced it would bring NorthBay’s hospitals back into their network and retain NorthBay physicians and specialists in a three-year contract. Meanwhile, Kaiser’s Health Plan continues to refuse to settle a two-year dispute over its underpayment for services NorthBay has provided its members in our emergency departments.

5. Gift of a Lifetime
A Green Valley couple made NorthBay history with their commitment to donate $5 million to the NorthBay Healthcare Foundation, the single largest donation in the foundation’s history. Al and Patt Shaw, typically more comfortable outside the philanthropic limelight, came forward with the news of their donation in hopes it would encourage others to do the same. They were honored during the North Wing’s grand opening with an announcement that the new dining area would be named The Shaw Family Kitchen, in a nod to their belief that the kitchen is a gathering place of comfort and nourishment, and where important decisions are made.

6. More Physicians
NorthBay Medical Foundation hits an all-time high with 197 providers, as of Dec. 1. It got a 30-plus provider boost when NorthBay Healthcare decided not to renew its contract with TeamHealth. The providers unanimously decided to join the NorthBay Medical Foundation, allowing the Emergency Departments at both hospitals to streamline goals. Another large group of hospitalists who have worked in NorthBay Medical Center’s Womens and Children’s Services for years joined the foundation in August. NorthBay Medical Foundation was formed in 2011 with couple of dozen physicians and providers — from primary care. Specialists were added later.

7. Facing Challenges
Code capacity issues, wildfires and power outages presented a share of challenges for NorthBay Medical Center in 2019. It started in January when a change in legislation made it more difficult to discharge homeless patients. That, combined with an inundation of flu patients caused immediate capacity issues in the already busy Emergency Department and hospital. More challenges occurred when fire season rolled around. PG&E opted for Public Safety Power Shutoffs, and while they didn’t directly stop power at either hospital, it did create issues for scores of patients and staff. And it didn’t stop wildfires from happening. The Kincade fire in Sonoma County forced evacuations of more than 200,000 people, and affected a number of hospitals. NorthBay Medical Center accepted patients from Healdsburg District Hospital and Sutter Santa Rosa Regional Hospital. Then, in the middle of the situation, NorthBay Medical Center’s power went out — not because of rolling shutoffs, but because of an accident involving a transformer. The facility went on generator power through the weekend, handling it in stride.

8. Leadership Changes
Elnora Cameron, president of NorthBay Healthcare Advantage and vice president of strategic development, stepped down June 28 after 32 years of service.

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vice, creating a senior leader vacancy that has been split into two positions. The first, vice president of managed care, was just filled this week by Robert Coscione (see Page 1). A search continues for the second vice president spot, which will oversee strategic development. Elnora was credited with the creation of Western Health Advantage, the development of NorthBay Health-Spring Fitness, playing a key role in getting NorthBay Healthcare affiliated with the Mayo Clinic Care Network, and fending off numerous lawsuits, among other things.

The search is also continuing to replace Chief Financial Officer Art DeNio, who died unexpectedly in December 2018. Theo Rallis, assistant vice president of Finance/Controller stepped up to the interim CFO role in November 2019, after the departure of interim CFO Jim Strong.

9. Jubilee Breaks Records
It was a record-breaking fundraising year for the Solano Wine & Food Jubilee. Thanks to a concerted effort by the Jubilee committee to bring in more sponsor participation, the event netted just under $400,000, the largest sum raised in the event’s 32-year history. And, the numbers are even more remarkable in that attendance was good, despite rainy, chilly weather.

10. Partnerships Exceed Expectations
NorthBay Healthcare’s partnerships with outside providers in the community exceeded expectations in 2019.

The NorthBay Urgent Care Center in Vacaville — a partnership with Carbon Health — opened in 2018. This year it saw visits top 7,200 as of November, an increase of more than 2,000 visits compared to the same time last year. In fact, the clinic is so successful, NorthBay announced plans to create a second urgent care site in Fairfield.

The Solano Mall location for the second center is just a block away from NorthBay Medical Center and will open some time in the first quarter of 2020.

NorthBay’s partnership with OLE Health marked its one-year anniversary on Nov. 6 and both organizations agreed it is filling a need for thousands of Fairfield residents who in the past struggled to find affordable health care. Patient visits for the site, inside the NorthBay Health Plaza, were projected to be 1,870 for the year; the actual number totaled 2,675.

“This is a perfect union of two patient-focused, quality-based health care providers,” said Wayne Gietz, vice president of Ambulatory Services for NorthBay Healthcare. “In a very short period of time, OLE Health has reached out to those who need a medical ‘home’ and promptly delivered high-quality care sorely needed by an underserved population.”

Free Sports Physicals Set
School will soon be out for the year-end holiday and the last thing teen athletes and their parents may be thinking about are sports physicals for the spring sports season.

NorthBay Healthcare’s Sports Medicine team will help young athletes prepare for the new season by offering free physicals for student athletes from middle school through college.

Physicals will be available from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Saturday, Jan. 11, 2020 at NorthBay Center for Orthopedics, 2500 Hilborn Road, Fairfield.

No appointments are necessary for individuals; teams or groups must schedule an appointment time by calling (707) 646-7599. No insurance is needed.

The event for student athletes will also include a raffle with prizes and refreshments.

For more information, go to www.NorthBay.org/SpringSports.
Ho-Ho-Holiday Meals for All!

A jolly holiday spirit was in full force Dec. 11-13 as NorthBay Healthcare employees from all four major campuses lined up to enjoy a special treat — a full holiday-style meal with all the trimmings.

Catered by Kinders, the meal included turkey, stuffing, mashed potatoes, cranberries, green beans and a spectacular cheesecake for dessert.

At NorthBay Medical Center and at VacaValley Hospital, employees were patiently waiting their turn during the lunchtime celebration in lines that snaked down hallways.

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The idea to have employees share their gratitude with their peers started last year with an idea from Aimee Brewer, president, NorthBay Healthcare Group, and it resulted in two huge boards of gratitude.

“The common themes of gratitude were wellness, family and amazing co-workers,” said Melissa Ermitano, executive assistant and organizer of the holiday meals. “They speak volumes of where we are as an organization.”

In all, 1,895 meals were served with the assistance of senior leaders.

Human Resources provided the individual ornaments for every employee. If you missed the meal and want to pick up your ornament, e-mail Melissa at MERmitano@NorthBay.org.

Several employees walked away as raffle winners, for prizes that included an assortment of restaurant and retail gift cards, Yeti cooler, air pods, massage gift certificates, wine and wine tastings, and tickets to a Kings, A’s or 49er game! Winners are:

- SF 49er Tickets: Marco Gallardo; SF 49er Tickets: Erin Davis; Kings Tickets: Leslie Wyatt; Oakland A’s: April Reed; YETI: Virginia Brady; Air Pods: Carla Lewis; Freakshow/Cast Iron: Patty Laxalmana; Got Wine: Susie Alamo; Champagne: Rowyn Harlan; Massage: Shyvell Rios and Yvette Gutman; Godfather/Pietro’s: Tanya Coleman; Beringer/Fuso’s: Arthea Espenshade; Rombauer/Backdoor Bistro: Sharon Llewelyn; Kinders: Donita Fuller; Tasting Domaine Carneros: Alexandra Viramontes; Starbucks $25: April Alviz, John Magno and Krystal Webster; Chick Fil A $10: Chris Silag; $50 Chevron card: Margaret Stohner; $25 at Napa Deli: Steven Rigs; $20 at La Borgata: Nancy Mai; $25 at Murillo’s: Melissa Bermulez; $40 at Rubio’s: Tiffany Primero; $25 at Fenton’s: Leamae Porter; and $25 at Vasquez Deli: Kelly Belli.
Employees from Green Valley Administration Center and Hilborn Administration Center gather to enjoy good food and holiday spirit.
Emergency Providers Join NorthBay

As of Dec. 1, some 30-plus providers from NorthBay Healthcare’s Emergency Services department became part of NorthBay Medical Foundation, making the group 197-strong, according to Wayne Gietz, vice president of Ambulatory Services.

The group, which includes physicians, physician assistants and nurse practitioners, previously was part of TeamHealth, a national contract management group.

“We have some providers in this group who have worked at our NorthBay facilities for more than 10 years,” said Wayne. “This is a great opportunity to bring them in and make them part of our team. When we work together to share resources, quality-building assets and access, it benefits the entire organization.”

Ben Williams, M.D., medical director of Emergency Services, agreed.

“This gives us a great opportunity to remove the middleman from our communications, and to develop mutually aligned goals,” said Dr. Williams. “TeamHealth sometimes had different ideas.”

Dr. Williams is one-third of a new triad that will oversee Emergency Services at NorthBay Healthcare. He is joined by Heather Theaux, R.N., director of Trauma Services, and a director of Emergency Department Business Operations, a position that is currently being filled by Damaris Valera, assistant vice president of Primary Services, until a hire is made.

The new hire will report to Damaris, and comes under Ambulatory Services.

Because the Emergency Department straddles both inpatient and outpatient worlds, it’s a big plus to have Damaris on the team, said Dr. Williams.

“A majority of the people we see are discharged, so it’s important for us to get them into ambulatory health. This will help us provide more seamless and timely care, getting them follow-up services in the ambulatory division.”

The triad will also work closely with nursing and techs, said Dr. Williams.

TeamHealth has had a contract with NorthBay since 1982, so making the switch was a big undertaking, he said. First the group had to agree to a new contract, then credentialing had to be redone with insurance companies.

NorthBay Medical Foundation began the year with 118 providers in the ambulatory division. It will end 2019 with 144 in Ambulatory, and another 53 who are hospital-based, according to Leard Mita, senior director, physician contracts, comp and ambulatory, in the financial operations and physician recruitment practice support department.

“It’s been a year of tremendous growth for us,” said Wayne. “It’s exciting to see how much we’re going to be able to accomplish by working together. This team is already part of NorthBay... but this is a great, positive change, to be even more closely associated as members of our foundation.”

Gift On Your Badge

A gift certificate valued at $35 from the Board of Directors has been loaded on to employee badges, as a way of showing their appreciation for the service we all — in our many ways — have provided to our patients and the community.

Employees can spend the funds in the NorthBay Guild Gift Shops at either hospital, where Guild volunteers have selected an array of items for you, or as gifts for friends or family. To redeem the certificate, all you have to do is select your items, and swipe your badge at the cash register.

Or, you can choose to donate the funds to one of NorthBay’s programs or departments.

Certificates should be redeemed by Jan. 31.