



MedStarGeorgetownMD

D.C. police officer returns to duty, thanks to innovative shoulder surgery.



Shoulder surgery returned Officer Arnette Perkins to duty, where she leads motorcycle escorts in the Presidential Unit with the same stamina and skill she's shown for 25 years.

Arnette Perkins is no stranger to extreme physical challenges. However, if not for the expertise of Brent Wiesel, MD, at MedStar Georgetown University Hospital, her 25-year career with the Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) in Washington, D.C., would likely have come to an abrupt end.

Since 2008, Arnette, 56, has been assigned to the MPD's Presidential Unit, Special Operations Division, where her role includes providing a motorcycle escort for the President, Vice President, and visiting heads

of state as they travel through the District.

The job, which includes mastering a 1,000-pound motorcycle in all kinds of weather, requires high levels of stamina, balance, and coordination, as well as the ability to handle very stressful situations. Yet nothing could have prepared Arnette for the driver who slammed into her while she was stopping traffic for the Prime Minister of Georgia in 2010. "When the car hit me, I flew up in the air and landed on my

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After brain tumor surgery, life returns to normal for one grateful family.

Sam, a 42-year-old journalist, and his wife Cassandra Broffitt were enjoying her maternity leave in his native country, France. One night, Cassandra was awakened not by a crying baby but by her husband who had been sleeping next to her and was having a

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After a sudden seizure revealed a brain tumor, Sam (below, with his daughter) is back to family life, grateful for the care that carried him through an unexpected diagnosis.



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When surgery wasn't an option, proton therapy opened a new cancer treatment door.

When William Licamele, MD, began experiencing severe chills and a high fever, he knew something was seriously wrong. A retired psychiatrist and former head of the Child and Adolescent Psychiatry program at MedStar Georgetown University Hospital, he suspected COVID-19 or meningitis, but didn't wait to find out. He went straight to the emergency department at MedStar Georgetown.

"Since I completed treatment, my CT scans have been stable and my cancer markers are in the normal range."

William Licamele

hopeful turn, but his blood test cancer markers remained elevated. That's when his care team began exploring radiation as the next step forward.

"We have a complete suite of radiation treatments, so we're able to tailor the treatment precisely to the patient's needs and treatment goals," explains Keith Unger, MD, William's radiation oncologist and the physician executive director of MedStar Health Radiation Oncology and chief of Radiation Oncology at MedStar Georgetown. "We looked at a variety of options and determined that William was a good candidate for proton therapy, which can be very effective for larger, inoperable liver tumors and spares as much normal liver tissue as possible."

Proton therapy with HYPERSCAN™ is a highly targeted type of radiation treatment that uses protons instead of X-ray beams to target and kill cancerous cells. MedStar Georgetown is the first and most experienced proton therapy facility in the Washington, D.C., area and the first site in the world to offer the most advanced form of proton therapy.

This state-of-the-art radiation system allows physicians to treat a single layer of a tumor at a time by matching the tumor's exact shape and size. Because the treatment is so precise, the surrounding healthy tissue receives less radiation than with

standard radiation therapy. In addition to being a good option for treating liver cancer, proton therapy is also effective for tumors anywhere else in the body, including the gastrointestinal tract, breast, prostate, brain, lung, and more.

William underwent three weeks of proton therapy at MedStar Georgetown, a total of 15 treatments that each lasted 30 minutes. "Overall, it was a pretty easy experience," says William. "Since I completed treatment, my CT scans have been stable and my cancer markers are in the normal range." He has resumed traveling, working as a volunteer interviewer for Georgetown University undergraduate and medical schools (his alma mater), and cheering on Georgetown University's sports teams. He's also an avid fund raiser for BellRinger, a bike ride and community movement launched by Georgetown Lombardi Comprehensive Cancer Center to raise money for cancer research.

"For people with advanced or complex cancer, MedStar Georgetown offers the full spectrum of medical, surgical, and radiation treatments," says Dr. Unger. "Our multidisciplinary team meets weekly in a tumor board to consult on complex cases and find the best treatment options. We also provide second opinions for patients who have received a recommendation for conventional radiation therapy, and we are committed to seeing proton therapy patients within 48 hours."

"I'm feeling well and am very grateful to my wife, who cared for and supported me throughout my treatment," William says. "I've recommended that family members diagnosed with cancer go to MedStar Georgetown because they not only have the expertise but they also are thoughtful about their treatment recommendations and can offer access to clinical trials."

Visit [MedStarHealth.org/ProtonTherapy](https://www.MedStarHealth.org/ProtonTherapy) for more information. To schedule an appointment, call 202-444-4255.

Ferrill family's \$10M gift launches the future of gastroenterology.

New patients walking into the Department of Gastroenterology at MedStar Georgetown University Hospital might not suspect that this unassuming space is home to some of the country's most advanced and respected gastroenterology (GI) care.

Serving 65,000 patients referred each year from across the nation, the department performs more than 16,000 GI procedures annually. It is the region's only GI department for advanced pediatric endoscopic procedures and the only facility in the Washington, D.C., area recognized as a "Center of Excellence" by the National Pancreas Foundation. In addition, it was recently recognized as "high performing" by U.S. News & World Report.

Joan and Jeff Ferrill of Alexandria, Virginia, experienced that excellence firsthand. In 2012, Jeff arrived at the emergency department with severe abdominal pain. A rapid assessment and emergency surgery revealed gastric volvulus—a rare, complex, and often fatal condition in which all or part of the stomach twists more than

180 degrees. Jeff's life was saved, but this was only the start of his three-year recovery journey. "We spent a lot of time in the Department of Gastroenterology because Jeff had to have repeated endoscopies for a stricture—a narrowing in his digestive tract that made it hard for food to pass through," says Joan.

Guiding the Ferrills on that journey was the GI team led by Nadim Haddad, MD, executive pillar chief of Gastroenterology at MedStar Health. "Dr. Haddad is an inspirational leader," says Joan. "He and his team truly embody the MedStar Georgetown mission of *cura personalis*—care of the whole person. They treat the whole person, not just the condition." In gratitude, the Ferrills made several donations in support of various projects at MedStar Georgetown—including renovations to the former emergency department, as well as construction of the new Verstandig Pavilion.

Now, their largest philanthropic gift yet will ensure that GI patients and families receive that compassionate care in an equally comforting environment. "The Department of Gastroenterology deserves an area that's as fabulous as the new Verstandig Pavilion," continues Joan.

Enhancing patient care, convenience, and comfort

Creating a new location for the GI department will have an impact well beyond aesthetics. Moving to larger facilities on the ground floor will provide a more convenient street-level entrance and easy access for pickups, drop-offs, and parking. As Joan put it, "it's going to be a visible, beautiful gateway to the hospital."

Once patients enter that gateway, they will find a larger, welcoming lobby and waiting areas that exude a therapeutic sense of calm. The ergonomically-designed layout will make navigating easy for patients, and care delivery more efficient for our care teams. Larger exam and procedure rooms will offer patients greater comfort.

The new space will also serve as a foundation for innovation, further enhancing the robust training programs and leading-edge research that the department is already known for. "Our clinical practice, patient care, education opportunities, and research endeavors are second to none," says Dr. Haddad. "This will yield better outcomes for patients and lay the groundwork for future advancements."

"The new [space] will allow these compassionate and dedicated physicians to treat patients in the world-class facility they deserve."

Joan Ferrill

"The Department of Gastroenterology has long been a destination for exceptional care," echoes Lisa Boyle, MD, FACS, president of MedStar Georgetown and senior vice president of MedStar Health. "Joan and Jeff Ferrill's generous gift honors that tradition and helps propel us into an even more dynamic future, one where our physical space reflects the expertise and compassion within."

Thanks to continued generosity, philanthropy will be the driving force. Joan and Jeff Ferrill look forward to the day when the "cover" of this inspiring book fully reflects the [outstanding care] given within. "Jeff and I are honored to support the Department of Gastroenterology, Dr. Haddad, and his team," says Joan. "The new GI department will allow these compassionate and dedicated physicians to treat patients in the world-class facility they deserve."

To learn more about how your support can make a significant difference, visit [MedStarHealth.org/SupportGI](https://www.MedStarHealth.org/SupportGI) or call 410-772-6747.

Jeff Ferrill (right) stands with Nadim Haddad, MD, whose leadership in gastroenterology helped guide the Ferrills through Jeff's complex care—and inspired their gift to transform the department's future.

How the flu shot supports healthy breathing.

By Katherine Byrd, MD, Chief, Emergency Medicine, MedStar Georgetown University Hospital

Each year, as colder weather arrives, we see a predictable rise in respiratory illness. The flu and other seasonal viruses spread easily when we spend more time indoors, and these viruses can take a serious toll on lung health, especially for people with asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), or other chronic conditions.

Even people who are generally healthy can find themselves unexpectedly short of breath or with a cough that quickly becomes more serious.

The good news is that protection is easy to get. A flu shot is one of the simplest and most effective steps you can take to protect your lungs during flu season. Even if you do catch the flu, the vaccine helps reduce the severity of illness, making it far less likely to lead to complications or require emergency care.



Even healthy lungs can be hit hard by the flu. A vaccine makes symptoms less severe and helps you bounce back faster—so make time to get yours.

Why flu shots make a difference

The flu is a contagious respiratory illness, caused by influenza viruses that infect the nose, throat, and sometimes the lungs. It spreads easily from person to person by way of respiratory droplets, especially in colder months when people spend more time indoors. For most people, the flu can cause fever, cough, body aches, and fatigue. These symptoms may sound mild, but the flu is more than just a bad cold. Influenza can lead to pneumonia, trigger asthma attacks, and exacerbate chronic lung conditions.

Cold, dry air can add to these challenges by irritating the airways and worsening symptoms. When airway irritation from the cold air combines with inflammation from the flu, breathing problems can become more severe, even for people who are generally healthy.

How to take care of your breathing this season

- It's best to be vaccinated by the end of October, but late is better than never! Get your flu shot now if you haven't already. Flu season often begins in the fall and peaks during the coldest months. After administration, the vaccine takes about two weeks to build up protection.
- On cold days, covering your nose and mouth with a scarf or mask helps warm and humidify the air before it reaches your lungs.
- Wash your hands regularly.
- Breathing through your nose can also help minimize irritation from the cold, since your nose naturally warms and moistens air more effectively than breathing through your mouth.
- Limiting time outdoors on very cold or windy days can make a difference, especially for people with sensitive airways or chronic lung conditions.



Katherine Byrd, MD

- If you have a rescue inhaler or other medications to manage asthma or COPD, keep them with you and use them as prescribed.
- Take care of the health of others around you by wearing a mask or staying home when you are sick.

When to seek care

If you find yourself struggling to breathe, develop wheezing, or have symptoms that continue to worsen despite using over-the-counter remedies, it's important to seek medical attention. In the emergency department, or at urgent care, we can help ease symptoms quickly and prevent your condition from worsening.

This season offers plenty to enjoy. With a little preparation, such as making time for a flu shot and being mindful of your breathing on cold days, you can stay healthy and active through the months ahead.

We're here when and where you need us. For non-life-threatening care, visit [MedStarHealth.org/UrgentCare](https://www.medsstarhealth.org/urgentcare) to learn more about our urgent care options.

Living donor program brings strangers together in a very special way.

Walter Lanier of Glen Burnie, Maryland, was in his 20s when he was diagnosed with IgA nephropathy, a condition in which blood and protein are present in urine and blood pressure is elevated...often signs of kidney disease. Yet he was able to manage symptoms for decades, in partnership with his doctor. Then, in 2022, Walter learned he needed dialysis.

The next three years were challenging for the retired U.S. Air Force veteran who required three-hour dialysis treatments each week for the duration of that time. Walter knew he would eventually need a kidney transplant to come off dialysis and get back to living the life he loved, so he worked hard to stay fit and waited patiently for a donor match.

"With a shortage of deceased donor kidneys, living donors make a huge impact and save lives."
Jennifer Verbesey, MD

"There are two ways to receive a donated kidney—from a living donor or from a donor willing to donate upon their death," explains Jennifer Verbesey, MD, one of our MedStar Georgetown Transplant Institute providers, director of the Living Donor Kidney Transplant program and surgical director of the Pediatric Kidney Transplant program. "Some living donations are 'directed' to a specific person. Other donors allow the kidney to go to anyone who matches. With a shortage of deceased donor kidneys, living donors make a huge impact and save lives."

Living kidney donors come from all walks of life. "Often living donors are related, such as parents, siblings, or children; or unrelated, like spouses, partners, or close friends," notes Dr. Verbesey.

Keri Ayres Coutts of Warrenton, Virginia, had long thought that she might want to donate a kidney to someone in need. "I had a childhood



friend who died from kidney disease, and when I was in college, a close friend of mine donated her kidney to her mother," she says. "So, it was something I had been exploring for several years. I had just turned 50, I was healthy, and I decided if I was going to do it, now was the time."

After doing some research, Keri enrolled in the Living Donor Kidney Transplant program at MedStar Georgetown University Hospital.

In June 2024 Keri began her screening, which included a full workup to assess her eligibility. While the tests revealed a couple of minor health issues that delayed her donation, she was finally approved in February 2025. Shortly thereafter, Keri and Walter were matched through the donor program. That spring, Walter received a kidney from Keri through a pair of carefully sequenced surgeries.

Before his surgery, Walter's biggest concern was about the donor he didn't even know yet. "I wanted to be reassured that my donor would be OK," he says.

Keri's surgery was performed laparoscopically with a small incision to remove her kidney, which took just a few hours. She was discharged the next day and recovered quickly. Walter, an avid cyclist and golfer, also had a faster than usual recovery, despite having a more complex procedure.

Strangers no more, kidney recipient Walter Lanier meets his living donor, Keri Ayres-Coutts, after the transplant that changed both their lives. Dr. Verbesey smiles broadly behind them.
Photo courtesy of Fauquier Times.

Later that spring, Dr. Verbesey arranged for Walter and Keri to meet. "It's up to both the donor and recipient if they would like to meet," she notes. "For Walter, now age 62, it was an opportunity to express his gratitude. For Keri, it was a bonus after decades of thinking about kidney donation."

Keri greeted him with a smile, reaching out for a handshake that quickly turned into a hug. "It's nice to meet you," she said. "Nice to finally meet you," Walter replied with a big smile.

While standing between the donor and the recipient, Dr. Verbesey says, "I couldn't help but point out that although the two came into this as strangers with different backgrounds, they were brought together in a very special way."

As the meeting wrapped up, Walter looked at Keri and with his final goodbye promised: "I will take care of your kidney."

This story first appeared in the *Fauquier Times* on June 13, 2025.

Give the gift of life. Be a living kidney donor. Learn more about living donation at [MedStarHealth.org/LivingDonorKidney](https://www.medsstarhealth.org/livingdonorkidney) or call 202-444-3714.

D.C. police officer returns to duty, thanks to innovative shoulder surgery. continued from page 1



After a reverse shoulder replacement corrected years of pain, Officer Arnette Perkins regained her range of motion and returned both to duty and to the family life she treasures.

shoulder,” she explains. X-rays and MRI confirmed a fracture, and she eventually had surgery to repair it.

“My pain never completely went away, but I thought it was just arthritis,” she says. “By 2022 the pain had become unbearable, and my first surgeon at a hospital that has since closed referred me to Dr. Wiesel.”

“Arnette came to us with ongoing issues from a previous shoulder replacement,” says Dr. Wiesel, chief of the Shoulder Service, MedStar Orthopaedic Institute, and vice president of Operations for the Department of Surgery at MedStar Georgetown. “She had developed arthritis from the initial trauma, and the previous shoulder replacement had placed the socket in the wrong position and caused her rotator cuff to wear out. To address these issues, we removed the mispositioned components and performed a reverse shoulder replacement.

She responded well, and after several months of physical therapy, she was able to return to work.”

“Reverse total shoulder replacement has been a game changer. It has greatly expanded our ability to help more people with incapacitating shoulder pain or immobility.”

Brent Wiesel, MD

A reverse shoulder replacement can benefit patients who are not good candidates for the traditional surgery due to loss of rotator cuff function or major bone loss from severe arthritis. The procedure changes the position of the ball and socket joint and is supported by a metal stem in the arm bone (the humerus) so that patients can use a different healthy muscle—the deltoid—to move their upper arm, instead of the damaged rotator cuff muscles.

“Reverse total shoulder replacement has been a game changer,” says Dr. Wiesel, who was one of the first orthopaedic surgeons in the Washington, D.C., area to perform the procedure when he came to MedStar Health in 2008 and who now uses it routinely. “It has greatly expanded our ability to help more people with incapacitating shoulder pain or immobility.”

“I told Dr. Wiesel I was not ready to retire and he gave me

confidence that the procedure would be successful,” says Arnette. “Now, I’m pretty much pain free, and my range of motion is back to almost 100%!

“Even though my job is very demanding, I am very family oriented and try to spend as much time as I can with my daughter and two very active young grandchildren, who live with me in Waldorf,” she adds. “Thanks to Dr. Wiesel and the team at MedStar Georgetown, I can now do both.”

Close to 150 reverse shoulder replacement surgeries are performed each year by our MedStar Orthopaedic Institute experts at MedStar Georgetown, more than 100 physicians across MedStar Health.



Meet Brent Wiesel, MD. Visit [MedStarHealth.org/Wiesel](https://www.MedStarHealth.org/Wiesel) to learn more.

MedStar Health has more than 100 physicians across 40 locations throughout Washington, D.C., Maryland, and Virginia. Visit [MedStarHealth.org/Ortho](https://www.MedStarHealth.org/Ortho) for more information. To make an appointment with one of our orthopaedic specialists, call 202-444-8766.

After brain tumor surgery, life returns to normal for one grateful family. continued from page 1

seizure. As a neuro ICU nurse at MedStar Washington Hospital Center, she knew that a seizure in a person with no history of epilepsy could be a symptom of something seriously wrong.

“It was so unexpected,” she says. “A few days before, Sam had run a half marathon. He was in good health and always ate a healthy diet. He hadn’t had any signs that something was wrong, like headaches or vision changes. This seizure came out of the blue.”

Sam was rushed to the emergency department at a nearby hospital and had CT and MRI scans of his brain to help figure out what caused the seizure. The doctors there recommended that he see a neurosurgeon. Cassandra braced herself—she suspected that meant a possible brain tumor.

“Throughout the whole experience, the doctors, nurses, and staff at MedStar Health provided thoughtful, complete support that went beyond medical care.”

Cassandra Broffitt

The family quickly returned to the U.S. and were seen the day after their return by Daniel Roque Felbaum, MD, an endovascular neurosurgeon at MedStar Washington. Dr. Felbaum confirmed that Sam had a brain tumor and referred him to John Lynes, MD, an experienced neurosurgeon at MedStar Georgetown University Hospital.

“We were reeling,” says Cassandra. “Dr. Lynes spent an hour answering our questions and explaining the treatment plan, which gave us some peace of mind and an understanding of what to expect.”

Sam had surgery to remove the tumor two weeks later. While he was



With a tailored treatment plan that considered their stage of life, Sam and Cassandra Broffitt found relief and a way forward.

still recovering in the ICU, he and Cassandra met Edina Komlodi-Pasztor, MD, PhD, a neuro-oncologist and MedStar Health director of Neuro-Oncology, who would be responsible for the next phase of Sam’s treatment.

The usual treatment recommendation for Sam’s condition includes radiation and chemotherapy, which can cause significant side effects. This concerned Sam, who was a very active person and a new father who didn’t want to be sidelined during treatment. But after genetic testing revealed that Sam’s tumor was a slow-growing type, Dr. Komlodi-Pasztor said that a watch-and-wait approach—with scans every three months—was also an option for him.

“We were so appreciative that Dr. Komlodi-Pasztor thought about Sam’s lifestyle and where we were in our lives and offered us an alternative to radiation and chemotherapy,” adds Cassandra.

“She also referred us to a dietitian and a fertility specialist because we wanted to explore options for having

a second child in the future. Throughout the whole experience, the doctors, nurses, and staff at MedStar Health provided thoughtful, complete support that went beyond medical care. I was so proud as a MedStar Health nurse to see the experience from the other side and see how caring and understanding everyone was.”

Sam is back at work, running, and playing with his daughter. “He’s 100%,” says Cassandra. “No symptoms, no side effects from the surgery. It now feels like a chronic condition that we can manage rather than something we’re living in constant fear of.”



After completing treatment, Sam and his family no longer live in fear.

Visit [MedStarHealth.org/Neuro](https://www.MedStarHealth.org/Neuro) for more information. To schedule an appointment, call 202-444-4400.



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Stroke care program earns national honor.

The American Heart Association has recognized our team at MedStar Georgetown University Hospital with its *Get With The Guidelines*®–Stroke Gold Plus award.

This achievement reflects our hospital's dedication to exceptional stroke care and better outcomes for patients. Stroke is a serious medical emergency and the fifth leading cause of death and a leading cause of disability in the United States. It occurs when a blood vessel in the brain is blocked or bursts, cutting off oxygen and nutrients. Quick action and expert treatment are critical to saving lives and reducing long-term effects.

"We are committed to improving patient care by adhering to the latest stroke treatment guidelines," says Sharon O'Brien, MD, chief quality and patient safety officer at MedStar Georgetown. "*Get With The Guidelines* allows our teams to put proven knowledge to work on a daily basis to improve patient outcomes and help our patients experience longer, healthier lives."

Stroke program coordinator Kelsey Dawson, BSN, RN, adds: "From a nursing perspective, this award reflects our commitment to delivering the best care for our patients. Our nurses demonstrate evidence-based practice by performing timely assessments, proper screenings, and stroke education."

The *Get With The Guidelines* program helps hospitals nationwide deliver consistent, research-driven care proven to improve survival and recovery. By meeting these high standards, our team at MedStar Georgetown ensures stroke patients receive the best care from the moment they arrive through every stage of treatment and rehabilitation.



MedStarGeorgetownMD shares the latest health news with our community.

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