

PA

ISSUE 1, SPRING 2019

HEALTH

YOUR GUIDE TO FITNESS & WELL-BEING



REACHING NEW HEIGHTS AFTER SPINAL FUSION SURGERY



TAKE A HIKE

THAI CHICKEN
RECIPE

TOP 5 WAYS TO
STAY HEALTHY

WELCOME

Welcome to *PA Health* magazine's inaugural issue! We know that health and wellness are important to you, and we believe we can help you live your healthiest life by giving you information from a local perspective, told through the lens of our communities.

Here in Pennsylvania, our changing seasons, our family traditions and our close-knit communities all shape our lifestyle. So *PA Health* magazine will offer helpful tips about how to eat better, stay active and take the best care of all aspects of your health — and the health of your family.

Each issue will include healthy recipes; the best exercise routines and outdoor activities for our always-changing weather; and opportunities to attend events that support a healthy body, mind and spirit. But most importantly, we will share the inspiring stories of your friends and neighbors who have taken back their health after injury or illness, and

those who have found new and interesting ways to stay healthy.

This month our cover story features 2017 National Miss Teen Laurel Stiekes of Moosic and her inspiring story of recovery from back surgery to repair the effects of her acute scoliosis, demonstrating that she can stand tall after living with the pain of a curved spine. We also introduce you to Christine McHale of Scranton, who suffered a brain aneurysm last St. Patrick's Day and was home from the hospital two days later, thanks to a new program at Geisinger called ProvenRecovery. You'll also learn about some of the best spring hiking trails in our region and find a delicious and healthy grilled Thai chicken recipe.

We hope you enjoy this first issue, and we welcome your input and suggestions on how to make it even better.

Yours in good health!

— Don Stanziano
Executive Editor



If you have a story suggestion or an amazing health story to tell, we'd love to hear it, and maybe we'll even feature it in an upcoming issue of *PA Health* magazine. Email us at PaHealth@geisinger.edu.

PA HEALTH
M a g a z i n e

Publisher

ERICA L. SHAMES
Susquehanna Life Custom
Publishing Division

Creative Director

SIMONE TIEBER
estudio-5.com

Photography

JOSIAH LEWIS
GORDON WENZEL

Geisinger

Chief Marketing Officer/

Executive Editor

DON STANZIANO

Vice President of System

Marketing

JEFF BEAN

Associate Vice President of

Brand Management

JANNIENNE JONES VERSE

Contributing Writer

SARA GITKOS

Creative Director

PATRICK PACACHA

Editorial Support

BETH KASZUBA
JESSICA MARTIN

Cover: Laurel Stiekes, a third-degree black belt in tae kwon do, and the recipient of spinal fusion surgery, warming up at Red Dragon Karate Studio in Carbondale. (Photo by Gordon Wenzel, Impressions Studio, Lewisburg)

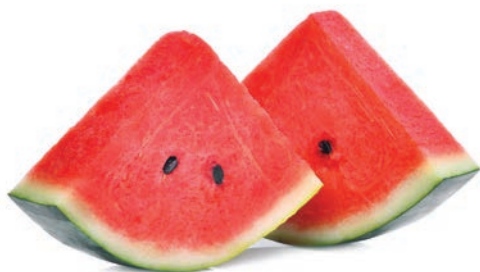
CONTENTS



8

6

- 4 Laurel Stiekes: Standing Tall**
Spinal fusion surgery at its finest.
- 6 Take a Hike**
Get outdoors for health and recreation.
- 8 Luck Favors the Prepared**
Speedy recovery from an aneurysm.
- 9 Thai Chicken Recipe**
Try this dish at home to spice up dinnertime.
- 10 Top 5 Ways to Stay Healthy**
Nutrition and exercise top the list.
- 11 Tackle a Half-Marathon This Spring: Here's How**



10



HEALTH EVENTS NEAR YOU

Yearning to do yoga? Searching for a support group to manage diabetes? Want to quit smoking? A wealth of wellness events await you — including classes, lectures, support groups, screenings and more! Just visit events.geisinger.org and browse by category, date or location.

LAUREL STIEKES: STANDING TALL



Laurel Stiekles isn't your typical teenager. At just 13 years old, this spirited young woman from Moosic, Pa., was ready to take on the world.

A fierce competitor in school sports and a participant in state and national beauty pageants, Laurel had an active life until she started to experience exhausting daily pain. "I was having trouble walking for long periods of time, sitting for long periods of time. I was in pain and I didn't know why," Laurel said. She complained about extreme fatigue, but her mother, Tricia, initially brushed it off as growing pains. "She just shot up 4 inches," she said. But a different perspective would change her mind.

On a family vacation, Tricia noticed something wasn't quite right about Laurel. "Walking behind her, I saw that her back seemed askew," Tricia said. After their pediatrician referred Laurel to Geisinger pediatric orthopaedic surgeon Meagan Fernandez, DO, the diagnosis became clear: Laurel was suffering from acute scoliosis, or

curving of the spine. While many people with scoliosis don't need surgery, Laurel's spine had a significant curvature: 55 degrees to the right and 41 degrees to the left.

"My spine looked like a spiral staircase," Laurel said. "It wasn't just curved; it was completely twisted." To live without pain, she would have to undergo spinal fusion surgery.

Together with Nancy Rowlands, PA-C, Dr. Fernandez performed a six-hour posterior spinal fusion using Mazor Robotics technology. After 2 titanium rods and 22 screws, Laurel's spine curvature was brought back to just 10 degrees. With this new adjustment, she was ready to reach new heights in more ways than one. "I grew 2 inches in one day," she said.

But before she could take the stage again, Laurel had to undergo vigorous physical therapy. Remarkably, after only four days in the hospital and many rounds of inpatient physical therapy, she headed home to recover



“She’s a tremendous patient with a great outlook on life and a very, very positive attitude.”

– Meagan Fernandez, DO

— and to live her busy life pain-free.

To her doctor, Laurel is nothing short of remarkable. “She’s a tremendous patient with a great outlook on life and a very, very positive attitude,” Dr. Fernandez said. With connective care, continual follow-ups and the personal connections she made with her doctors and the staff, Laurel is thankful for the strength she has been given to take on the world. Though her flexibility is a bit limited, her opportunities are now endless.

Three years after her surgery, Laurel hasn’t just taken back her life — she’s living it to the fullest. Throughout her journey, Laurel never lost her competitive spirit. At 17 years old, she has found her stride on the soccer field, basketball court and football field as a varsity cheerleader. For added physical therapy, she’s been practicing tae kwon do, and has earned her third-degree black belt.

Laurel has continued to take to the pageant

stage, where she earned the title of USA National Miss Teen in 2017. The former Miss Teen isn’t shy about wearing backless gowns to show the badge of courage she earned on her difficult journey. “I used to be scared to show my scar in pageants,” Laurel said. “But it doesn’t bother me anymore. It makes me who I am, and I’m really proud of that.”

And Laurel has no plans to slow her momentum. The four-time Presidential Volunteer Service Gold Award recipient continues to grow as a person by helping her community and sharing her story. “I’m happy to be a shoulder to lean on if somebody has a question. What I’ve been through has been able to help other people,” she said.

With her whole life ahead of her and renewed vigor, no matter how many curves life may give her, Laurel really can stand tall after all her accomplishments.

TAKE A HIKE



Greenways are corridors of land recognized for their ability to connect people and places. We're lucky to live within a 500-mile corridor of the Susquehanna River, for which land and water trails have been developed. Getting outdoors is one of the best feel-good activities — and it's free!

The Susquehanna Greenway Partnership and its Susquehanna Greenway link natural, cultural, historic and recreational resources along the 500-mile corridor of the Susquehanna River in Pennsylvania.

Here are three Susquehanna Greenway trails to get you started. Pick a trail and start your journey today!





1. SUNBURY RIVERFRONT PARK – MIDDLE SUSQUEHANNA

Sunbury's Riverfront Park is located along North Front Street (PA 147) in Sunbury, Pa., Northumberland County. This park and one-mile asphalt walking trail stretch between Race Street and the PA 61 bridge.

Along certain sections, the park and walking trail cross the flood wall and run on either side, providing beautiful views of the Susquehanna River and Lake Augusta. Take a stroll on the river side of the flood wall to see the Sunbury Amphitheater, boat dock and Sunbury fishing pier.

Parking and Trail Access:

Parking to access Sunbury's Riverfront Park can be found along each of the intersecting streets. North and South Front Street do not offer on-street parking. Metered parking is in effect during the work week, but not on holidays or weekends.



2. CHICKIES ROCK OVERLOOK TRAIL – LOWER SUSQUEHANNA

As its name implies, Chickies Rock Overlook Trail rewards hikers with a beautiful vista at the end of their excursion. The half-mile dirt trail follows an old trolley line that once took tourists up to Chickies Rock in the early 1900s.

Start at the trailhead on its eastern end (off Chickies Hill Road) and head west along the tree-lined pathway until your journey ends at a cliff towering above the Susquehanna River. Enjoy the spectacular view of the river and, in the distance, rural landscapes and the surrounding communities of Marietta, Columbia and Wrightsville.

Parking and Trail Access

A parking lot is available on the east end of the trail, off Chickies Hill Road (Route 441).

3. IROQUOIS TRAIL - NORTH BRANCH SUSQUEHANNA

This remote and scenic trail follows the route of the old Lehigh Valley Railroad's Montrose Branch through Tunkhannock, in Wyoming County — a designated Susquehanna Greenway River Town.

The majority of the trail is surrounded by thick forests and some marked crossings of a quiet country road. You'll get a nice overlook view of Tunkhannock Creek, as the trail follows it upstream. This is also a great biking path through scenic forests, but be sure to watch out for steep banks along the right side. You will be completely immersed in nature as you pass through forests of hemlocks and hardwoods, and see moss/white lichen-covered rocks.



More information about hiking trails is available at susquehanna.greenway.org



LUCK FAVORS THE PREPARED

On St. Patrick's Day, people take to the streets wearing green and feeling festive. Luck is in the air.

For Christine McHale of Scranton, it was a chance to spend time with her husband, watching a local band and having a drink. After just a sip or two, however, Christine's world started spinning. "I was mumbling, incoherent — my eyes were rolling back into my head," she said, recalling the event.

Christine thought the issue was too much sugar in her drink. So they went home, where

she drank some water and put cold towels on her head. She mentioned the episode to her doctor at a checkup later that week. He called for an MRI.

When the results came back, Christine's doctor asked her to come in. The problem hadn't been sugar. Christine had an aneurysm and would need brain surgery.

The news was a shock. "When I first heard

She had a glowing personal experience with the staff at Geisinger, especially the team that helped her through the ordeal.

about it, I was like ‘What do you mean, *an aneurysm?*’ I thought there’d be signs, you know?” Christine said.

As she researched her condition and recovery time, she worried. Her son was graduating high school, about to start college, and she had a vacation planned. She wanted to be there for all of it.

But her doctor didn’t think she’d have to cancel any plans. Christine was one of 350 surgical patients following a new protocol: the ProvenRecovery plan at Geisinger. Rather than fasting before surgery, she did just the opposite — she prepped by taking nutritional supplements, in the form of vanilla protein shakes and juices, to boost her immune system.

As her doctor predicted, Christine was home just two days after brain surgery. After a week, she was off her opioid pain prescription. “I expected to be hospitalized for weeks, but I had the surgery on a Monday morning and I was out of bed and walking that evening,” Christine marveled.

Heading into surgery well-nourished and hydrated may well have contributed to her speedy recovery. All she had left to do was impatiently twiddle her thumbs until she could return to work.

Christine had more than just luck on her side on that fateful St. Patrick’s Day and in the months afterward. She had a glowing personal experience with the staff at Geisinger, especially the team that helped her through the ordeal. And while she was happy to leave the vanilla shakes behind, Christine was grateful for an unexpectedly quick recovery so she could get back to living her life.



GRILLED THAI CHICKEN

Try this recipe at home to spice up dinnertime.

Serves 8

Ingredients:

- 4 tablespoons fish sauce
- 1 teaspoon curry powder
- ½ teaspoon turmeric
- 1 can light coconut milk
- 2 cloves garlic
- ½ bunch cilantro (stems and leaves)
- 2½ pounds (about 8) bone-in, skin-on chicken thighs

Directions:

Mix fish sauce, spices, coconut milk, garlic and cilantro in a blender and pour over chicken. Marinate overnight.

Grill chicken until cooked through (until internal temperature is about 165° F), basting throughout cooking time.

Nutritional info: Calories 300, fat 17 g, protein 28 g, carbs 0 g, sodium 207 mg, fiber 0 g

PA Health magazine has not tested this recipe and disclaims any responsibility for the outcome of its preparation.



NOTE:

You can also use breasts or legs, but make sure the skin is on.

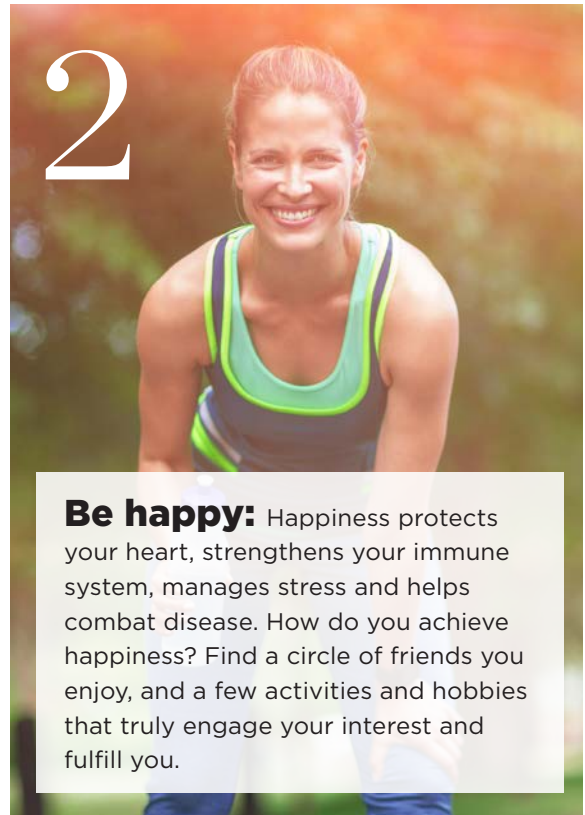
5
TOP

WAYS TO STAY HEALTHY



1 Make friends: People with more social support tend to live longer than those who are more isolated. Friends increase your sense of belonging and purpose.

2



Be happy: Happiness protects your heart, strengthens your immune system, manages stress and helps combat disease. How do you achieve happiness? Find a circle of friends you enjoy, and a few activities and hobbies that truly engage your interest and fulfill you.



3

Stay active: Exercise not only prevents excess weight gain, it combats health conditions and diseases, helps elevate mood and boosts energy. Exercise doesn't have to be rigorous to be beneficial. Walking and bicycling are easy on the joints, fun and get the heart pumping.

4

Control your weight: Paleo? Keto? What's the best diet to follow? The simple answer is: one that provides you with a variety of fruits and vegetables, whole grains, not too much fat and enough protein! Many people find that eating a low-glycemic diet — one that avoids sugar and simple carbs — better controls blood sugar swings, reducing hunger and warding off cravings.

5

See your doctor annually: Stay on top of numbers critical to good health — blood pressure, weight and height, and cholesterol level — with an annual visit to your doctor. That way, you and your doctor can make changes in medication and lifestyle, should your numbers change.



Half-marathon training for beginners

You've decided to take on the 13.1-mile challenge. Here are 8 tips to start off on the right foot:



1. See your doctor for a physical in time to begin training three to four months before the race.



2. Find your gear — outfit, running shoes, socks — and train in it.



3. Increase short-distance runs (and run outdoors!).



4. Cross-train — bike, swim or walk — to keep muscle groups balanced.



5. Take rest days.



6. Master the long-distance run on weekends. Get up to at least 10 miles!



7. Find the fuel that works for your run. No new foods on race day!



8. Embrace the taper: Cut back on training two weeks before the big race.

For more tips, follow [#ScrantonHalfForHealth](#) on Instagram.

What kind of insurance checks
on your well-being twice a day?

Mine does.

My asthma was so bad I was put into a medically induced coma. Geisinger Health Plan was with me every step of the way. My case manager treated me like a friend, not an assignment. She made sure my kids were looked after and called me daily during recovery.

This isn't just health insurance. This is caring.

GeisingerHealthPlan.com/MineDoes

Geisinger
Health Plan

Amanda
Duryea, PA