When I was growing up in a small rural community in western New York, it’s safe to say that I never imagined I would one day become a health system CEO.

I may not have known it at the time, but the lessons I learned in my early life profoundly influenced me as a person, as well as how I approach my work at Penn Medicine Lancaster General Health. I suspect the same is true for each one of us.

Many of the values that are most important to me and my family are the same ones that serve as our foundation at LG Health, including commitment, teamwork, trust, and bringing our best to our work and each other every day.

Although I touched on my childhood in my very first blog post, it’s important to revisit, since it has shaped me into who I am today.

My family lived a very simple life, and I learned early on that there is nothing more important than people and connecting with others. My parents and grandparents were my first role models, and I’ve had the same best friend since second grade.

To this day, we are a very close extended family. Similarly, my wife Lisa and I raised our son and daughter, both now in their 20s, to value family. We love spending time together, whether it’s enjoying a meal at home, taking a hike or cheering together at a sporting event (likely LSU or the Buffalo Bills).

Sharing these experiences has helped us really get to know and trust each other. I view my work colleagues the same way — as a family. Whether it’s at home or at work, a strong family can get through challenging times together because of that shared sense of trust.

Besides our commitment to being there for each other, my family values a strong work ethic. My first job was mowing our yard, which was no small task, since it was about five acres. As a teenager, I worked on the dairy farm down the hill. My experiences at home and on the farm taught me that working hard and doing the right thing are the essence of continuous improvement.

I was fortunate enough to play football in college. I was not the most talented player on the team, but I brought my best self to the field and my teammates every day and showed up ready to work hard; and that earned me a starting role for three years. While we can’t control the future, I learned that through hard work, focus, discipline and a team-over-self mentality, we put ourselves and our team in position to take advantage of opportunities that come our way.

Each of us has a unique journey that landed us where we are today. We each bring our own experiences and perspectives to our work at LG Health, and this diversity serves to make us stronger as a health system, in the same way it does a family.

I hope you enjoy getting to know a little about me and my life experiences. I love getting to know you and hearing your stories as I have the opportunity to meet you. I hope that some of the traits I developed during my childhood — an appreciation for building trusting relationships, a strong work ethic, focus, discipline and a team-over-self mentality — will make the LG Health culture even stronger.

Thank you for the important role you play in our organization. Together we make an unbeatable team.
HELPING YOUNG ATHLETES RETURN TO SPORTS after COVID-19

Most student athletes diagnosed with COVID-19 can’t wait to feel better and get back in the game. Taking a cautious approach, providers from Penn Medicine Lancaster General Health worked with colleagues in Cardiology, Family Medicine and other specialties, as well as local school districts, to develop a protocol for student athletes to safely return to competitive sports.

“We are still learning about the short- and long-term complications of COVID-19 in the pediatric population,” said Patrick Moreno, MD, LG Health Physicians Sports Medicine. “The primary concern for competitive athletes after COVID-19 is potential heart damage. LG Health is following the recommendations of cardiologists from Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP), our partners in pediatric care. Any athlete who tests positive should wait at least 14 days after their COVID-19 symptoms resolve before returning to competitive sports. Cardiac testing or an EKG may be recommended, depending on the child’s age and severity of illness. Matthew D. Elias, MD, a CHOP cardiologist and assistant professor of Pediatrics at the Perelman School of Medicine who sees patients at LG Health’s Suburban Pavilion in Lancaster, explained that there is less concern about children under age 12. ‘Younger children generally self-regulate their physical activity, so they do not reach the same intensity level as older competitive athletes,’ Elias said.

Local school administrators, athletic directors and trainers, and team physicians are all involved in implementing the post-COVID return-to-sports protocol.

LG Health will continue to provide schools, parents and student-athletes clear and consistent guidelines during the COVID-19 pandemic to keep students healthy and safe.

Because every child and situation are unique, parents should discuss with their child’s primary-care provider any individual concerns, including what follow-up testing or other steps may be recommended before returning to sports.

In response to an emerging group known as COVID-19 “long-haulers,” Penn Medicine Lancaster General Health has established a multidisciplinary recovery and rehabilitation program to evaluate and treat lasting issues caused by the coronavirus. The program includes specialists from across the health system including physical therapy, occupational therapy, speech therapy and neuropsychology.

Long-term symptoms can include weakness and fatigue, pain, emotional issues, cognitive difficulties, and psychological issues including PTSD, insomnia, anxiety and depression. Rehabilitation therapies can help long-haulers deal with some of these conditions and return to more normal health.

The post-COVID rehabilitation therapy program is overseen by Tony Ton-Thar, MD, FABPMR, physiatrist and medical director of the Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation department at Lancaster General Health.

“Unfortunately more than 10 percent of patients continue to suffer from long-term symptoms of COVID-19 within 6 months or more after infection,” Ton-That said. “Our COVID recovery program continues to identify this rapidly growing population and will provide multidisciplinary rehabilitation care so patients can once again function as active members of their communities.”

The goal is to evaluate each patient individually and provide a customized care plan. Anyone having a difficult time recovering from COVID-19 may submit a form for a self-referral or contact their primary care provider about COVID-19 rehabilitation treatments.

On Match Day each spring, Penn Medicine Lancaster General Health welcomes a new class of graduating medical students from across the country into the family medicine residency program. Students eagerly anticipate Match Day, when they learn where they will be doing their residency.

On Match Day, 13 new residents to Penn Medicine Lancaster General Hospital, “We are excited to welcome the 13 new residents to Penn Medicine Lancaster General Hospital,” said Julie Cox, program director at LG Health’s Family Medicine Residency Program. “They attended medical school during unprecedented circumstances in our country. Each of them has demonstrated perseverance, resilience and commitment to patient care.”

We welcome the Class of 2024, who begin their three-year residency July 1.

Vittoria Boni
Lewis Katz, School of Medicine at Temple University

Elliott Brady
University of Kansas School of Medicine

Alexander Cantu
University of Texas Medical Branch School of Medicine

Jodie Cox
New York Medical College

Marco Conicelli
Edward Via College of Osteopathic Medicine – Virginia Campus

Trecon Davis
Lewis Katz School of Medicine at Temple University

Kendall Dempsey
Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center El Paso, Paul L. Foster School of Medicine

Stephan Elliott
Frank H. Netter MD School of Medicine at Quinnipiac University

Riley Even
Edward Via College of Osteopathic Medicine – Virginia Campus

Hannen Hussein
Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine

Jeremiah Lee
Baylor College of Medicine

Gabrielle Siegel
University of Maryland School of Medicine

Garret Tesman
Drexel University College of Medicine

Penn Medicine

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