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SpeakSooner and Adirondack Health's oncology department

Adirondack Health oncology providers are utilizing the SpeakSooner initiative to communicate quickly and efficiently with patients. It goes beyond diagnosis and treatment, encouraging patients to voice their questions and concerns earlier in their care. It also helps ease patients into discussions about difficult choices like advanced directives and end-of-life care.

Oncology Nurse Practitioner Sara Ames began working with the Center for Communication in Medicine on its SpeakSooner initiative several years ago. During this time, Ames and the oncology team began re-evaluating their entire process of caring for new cancer patients – from the first time they came in the door.

Ultimately, the oncology team developed a method to integrate the SpeakSooner guide into their patient care.

"I felt like I finally found people who really understood how important it was to initiate these conversations early and thread them throughout a patient's care and continue it," Ames said.

"My approach to prompting the patients and having them be a part of SpeakSooner is that I am essentially the guide," Ames said. "The guide is incorporated into my everyday questions." Around the same time, oncology welcomed a social worker to its team, Kristina Hybicki, and a nurse coordinator, Jennifer Marshall.

"SpeakSooner is also an opportunity to teach new people who are coming into a close-knit department," Ames said. "It helps you teach these values."

Read the rest
of this story on
our website!



Adirondack Health's 2025 Economic Impact: *Care Close to Home, Strength for Our Economy*

Adirondack Health is proud to share our 2025 Economic Impact Report, prepared in collaboration with the Healthcare Association of New York State (HANYS). This report underscores the essential role your community health system plays in keeping the Adirondacks healthy and strong.

As the only full-service health system in the Park, Adirondack Health is more than a hospital, we are a cornerstone of both care and community.

We care for year-round residents, seasonal neighbors, and visitors, while also sustaining jobs, supporting local businesses, and contributing to the region's economic well-being.

Across the nation, rural communities face higher rates of chronic illness, maternal mortality, and premature death. Too many hospitals have closed their doors. Yet rural places also

embody resilience, resourcefulness, and strength. Adirondack Health carries that strength forward every day—delivering care, stability, and hope.

The landscape of rural health is changing. New federal investments in broadband, digital infrastructure, AI, and remote monitoring are helping to close the distance for patients, expand access to specialty care, and ease administrative burdens on clinicians.

Adirondack Health is embracing this moment, so our communities are not left behind, but instead positioned to lead to building a more connected and sustainable future for rural healthcare.

Together, for Good, your support fuels this progress—strengthening care for those who call the Adirondacks home and for everyone who visits this special place.

\$201 Million
Annual Economic Activity

1,200
Jobs Supported

\$73 Million
Payroll

\$27 Million
Tax Revenue Generated

\$29 Million
Community Benefits

162,000
Outpatient Visits

14,000
Emergency Visits

2,200
Hospital Admissions



Comfort Cart Brings Smiles to Patients

A small idea is making a big difference at Adirondack Health! Thanks to a 2025 Mini-Grant Award from the Adirondack Health Foundation, patients now have access to a new Comfort Cart filled with little essentials that can mean so much during a hospital stay. From phone chargers and reading glasses to lip balm, lotion, and even decks of cards, the cart helps patients feel cared for and connected. Kellie Trudeau, Patient Advocate and Experience Coordinator, dreamed up the project after seeing how something simple—like a charger for a phone—can ease stress and brighten someone's day. Rolling through inpatient floors and the ICU, the Comfort Cart is a reminder that kindness often comes in small packages.

Photo: Kellie Trudeau with the Comfort Cart

The Scoop with Britt: Ion Robotic Bronchoscopy revolutionizing cancer detection

By Britt Proulx

The arrival of Ion Robotic Bronchoscopy at Adirondack Medical Center means surgeons can detect lung cancers in earlier, more treatable stages. Patients can also recover quicker from an Ion procedure than a traditional bronchoscopy and are often able to return to their normal activities the next day. Dr. Michael Hill began performing Ion-assisted bronchoscopies in February.

The Ion-assisted bronchoscopy is performed as an outpatient procedure and takes 45 minutes to an hour. It utilizes a robotic camera, or bronchoscope, which is inserted into the patient's throat and lungs. The Ion's small telescoping bronchoscope – approximately one-eighth of an inch in size – is able to travel much further into the branches of the lungs than a traditional bronchoscope. The Ion allows surgeons to access all 18 segments of the lung and collect biopsies from previously hard-to-reach places. It extends the surgeon's reach, meaning faster, more accurate biopsies.

A quicker diagnosis means patients can start receiving treatment sooner. Since the cancer is more likely to be found in an earlier stage, patients can be connected to Adirondack Health's Merrill Center for Oncology to discuss a more diverse range of treatment options. "With this system, we have the ability to offer a diagnosis sooner," Dr. Hill said. "It simplifies and stabilizes the procedure for the surgeon. It's also simpler for anesthesia because there are



Pictured from left is Claudio Vega, Operating Room Supervisor; Danielle Rootes; and Dr. Michael Hill, Surgical Service Chief.

fewer moving parts in the airway, so there's less risk."

With lung cancer being the leading cause of cancer deaths in the United States, catching it early can make all the difference. Lung cancer accounts for 1 in 5 cancer deaths. The American Cancer Society (ACS) estimates there will be about 226,650 new cases of lung cancer in the U.S. in 2025 and about 124,730 deaths. "Lung cancer kills more people – especially women – than the next top four cancers combined," Dr. Hill said. "Adding the Ion to our services means we can catch these cancers sooner and treat them sooner."

The arrival of the Ion in December coincided with the arrival of the da Vinci Surgical System. Both robotic systems are created by Intuitive Surgical. The da Vinci increases the range and scope of procedures our

surgeons can perform laparoscopically.

Dr. Hill said Adirondack Health has always been good at tracking new technologies to move us forward and keep us ahead. "We have a lot of services that most rural hospitals do not have, and it's a real crown jewel to have all of those," Dr. Hill said. "It's great to be part of an organization that's always been striving to move forward with the best and the brightest technology, so we can keep on providing the best care possible and stay independent."

"Adirondack Health is committed not only to providing the best care for our patients today but also investing in the future of our care," said Adirondack Health CEO Aaron Kramer. "The arrival of the Ion and the da Vinci surgical systems advances our technology, improving outcomes and ensuring our patients have access to the most innovative treatments available."



How the Adirondack Health Medical Fitness Center Gave Melissa Her Life Back

For more than 40 years, Melissa called the Adirondacks home. She skied, hiked, kayaked, and poured her energy into her work as a substitute teacher. But when she faced stage four melanoma, heart complications, and eventually leukemia, her life shrank to hospital rooms, wheelchairs, and the exhausting challenge of relearning how to walk.

"The hardest thing to overcome in a serious illness, I think, is depression," Melissa said. "And that's where this facility was lifesaving."

With her doctor's special approval, Melissa found her way into the pool at the Adirondack Health Medical Fitness Center. Staff members went above and beyond—sanitizing her changing room, guiding her safely into the water—until finally, she floated free.

"Because I had this one thing I could do, it saved my life."

That freedom became her anchor.

Supported by a scholarship, she now works one-on-one with a trainer, rebuilding strength and confidence after six years of being bedridden. She's even found community in group classes, where encouragement is shared as freely as exercise.

"This isn't a gym, it's a health center," she said. "It allows you to be who you are, where you are, and move towards whatever goal you've set for yourself."

Melissa's journey is a powerful reminder that the Medical Fitness Center offers more than exercise—it restores hope. And she's not alone. Since opening in 2019, the facility has:

- Helped more than 1,300 members pursue healthier lives.
- Doubled overall participation in just four years.
- Provided 120 membership



scholarships, ensuring access for all.

- Expanded specialized, physician-referred programs that bridge healthcare and fitness.

In March 2025, Melissa received the all-clear from her oncologists. "Without this facility," she shared, "I honestly think the outcome would not have been the same."

The Adirondack Health Medical Fitness Center is more than treadmills and classes—it's a lifeline. It's where healing continues, where neighbors find strength, and where lives, like Melissa's, are given back.

Learn more about Adirondack Health Medical Fitness at ahmedicalfitness.org

To support this program please visit adirondackhealthfoundation.org/medfit

Chef Vargo's Classic Sauerbraten

With the arrival of fall in the Adirondacks, many hunters will venture into the woods to harvest their annual venison. This recipe is a perfect cool weather dish that is both hearty and satisfying. Of course it can be made with beef as well, but I really enjoy the robust flavor of venison to complement the rich dark sauce that accompanies it.



Ingredients for the marinade (brine):

3 # of beef or venison roast
2 cups of dry red wine
2 cups of apple cider vinegar
1 cup diced carrot
1 cup diced onion
1 cup diced celery
4 bay leaves
6 sprigs fresh thyme
20 peppercorns – cracked
8 cloves of garlic
6 juniper berries- cracked
3 tablespoons kosher salt
6 cups of cold water

Ingredients for braising liquid base:

2 tablespoons of butter
½ cup diced carrot
½ cup diced onion
½ cup diced celery
1 small can tomato paste
1 cup dark raisins
½ cup molasses
½ cup of dark brown sugar
Zest of 1 orange
1 apple- peeled, cored, and diced
3 quarts of cold water
1 quart of ginger snap cookies
Salt and pepper to taste

Marinade Procedure:

Place all ingredients EXCEPT the meat into a large saucepan and bring to a boil. Turn down to a simmer and cook for 15 minutes. Let cool completely. Once the marinade is cool to the touch, place the roast into the marinade and place a plate over it so that it remains submerged during entire brining process. Leave in refrigerator for at least 1 week or up to 3 weeks for a more intense flavor.

Procedure to cook:

1. Remove the roast from the marinade and pat dry with towel.
2. Place a thick bottom stew pot on the stove and heat it to medium temperature.
3. Add the butter - let melt and begin to sizzle.
4. Add the roast of meat and brown thoroughly over medium heat.
5. Once the roast is browned, add the tomato paste and stir gently until it turns brown.
6. Immediately add the remaining ingredients EXCEPT for the ginger snap cookies.
7. Braise (stew) slowly for 2-3 hours covered – stirring occasionally.
8. When the roast is very tender, turn off the pot and allow the roast to cool for 30 minutes in the sauce.
9. Remove the roast from the sauce and place it on a serving platter while you finish the sauce.
10. Return the sauce to the fire and bring it to a boil.
11. Reduce heat and allow the sauce to reduce by 1/3.
12. Place the ginger snaps into the sauce and cook for 5 minutes.
13. Remove from heat and puree the sauce with an immersible blender – or you can strain the sauce through a strainer, being sure to push as much of the vegetables/ fruit through the strainer back into the saucepan.

To Serve:

1. Return the sauce to the stove and reduce until smooth sauce is achieved. 2. Slice the roast about ¼ inch thick and shingle onto the serving dish. 3. Pour ½ of the sauce over the meat and reserve the remaining sauce for guests to add more as desired. 4. Serve with buttered noodles and roasted young carrots. Serves 6-8. **Guten appetit!**

The Decker Community Learning Center: *A Legacy of Education, Compassion, and Regional Impact*

At the heart of Adirondack Health's mission to educate and empower patients is the Decker Community Learning Center, led by Linda Savarie, RN, Certified Diabetes Educator. Linda has spent more than 25 years helping patients—and their families—better understand their health, manage chronic conditions, and transition confidently from hospital to home.



The Decker Community Learning Center provides personalized education sessions on a wide range of health topics, including diabetes, heart disease, cancer prevention, smoking cessation, and stress management. Services are available to anyone in the community, regardless of whether they were treated at AMC.

"This isn't just for hospital patients," says Linda. "We see individuals from across the region—and even from Vermont—who are seeking trusted,

personalized guidance. It has a tremendous regional impact."

The Center was established thanks to a generous estate gift from the late Dr. Alfred Decker, a respected AMC surgeon who believed deeply in the power of education to improve outcomes. His wife, Mrs. Janet Decker, has since carried on his legacy through a second legacy gift, ensuring the Center's continued service and reach.

"The Decker Community Learning Center is a shining example of how philanthropy and patient-centered care come together to truly transform lives," said Dan Hill, Chief Operating Officer at Adirondack Health. "We are deeply grateful to the Decker family and to Linda for continuing to elevate the level of care we provide."

The Decker Community Learning Center is open Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., with additional hours by appointment. To learn more or schedule a session, call (518) 897-2253.

To support the Decker Learning Center Fund, please visit adirondackhealthfoundation.org or scan the qr code below.



Scan this QR Code to
support the Decker
Learning Center Fund!

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- ✓ Receive a Charitable Deduction
- ✓ Make a Lasting Impact in the Adirondacks

To learn more or make a gift, please contact Jen Balog, Executive Director
jbalog@adirondackhealth.org | 518-897-2348





Cornerstone Forward
Delivering the Heart of Patient Care

The Cornerstone Campaign: An Update

At Adirondack Health, a new chapter in community care is unfolding. Thanks to the extraordinary generosity of donors to the Cornerstone Campaign, \$10 million in private donations has been raised, a bold step toward modernizing regional rural healthcare while maintaining uninterrupted services.

The Cornerstone Campaign, which officially wrapped up on Dec. 30, 2024, rallied more than 680 donors from across the region in support of this transformational project. This multi-phase modernization will upgrade infrastructure, enhance aesthetics, and improve patient comfort across all 35 inpatient rooms at Adirondack Medical Center.

"This project is a top priority for Adirondack Health," said President & CEO of Adirondack Health Aaron Kramer. "We're committed to being

the best possible stewards of the community's investment, and this renovation reflects our long-term strategy to strengthen rural healthcare and ensure our facilities match the high-quality care our team provides."

In anticipation of the renovation, new inpatient beds have been purchased and are expected to arrive within the next few months.

"This isn't just a renovation, it's a reinvestment in the health and well-being of our region," said Executive Director of the Adirondack Health Foundation Jennifer A. Balog. "Thanks to our donors and hospital partners, we are creating a more modern, healing environment that reflects the quality of care our patients receive."

Planning for one of the project's greatest logistical challenges, maintaining all 35 inpatient beds

during construction, is ongoing. Previously converted office spaces are being restored to patient rooms, while displaced departments are temporarily relocating to the former Health Information Management (HIM) Department, which was recently relocated on the Adirondack Medical Center campus.

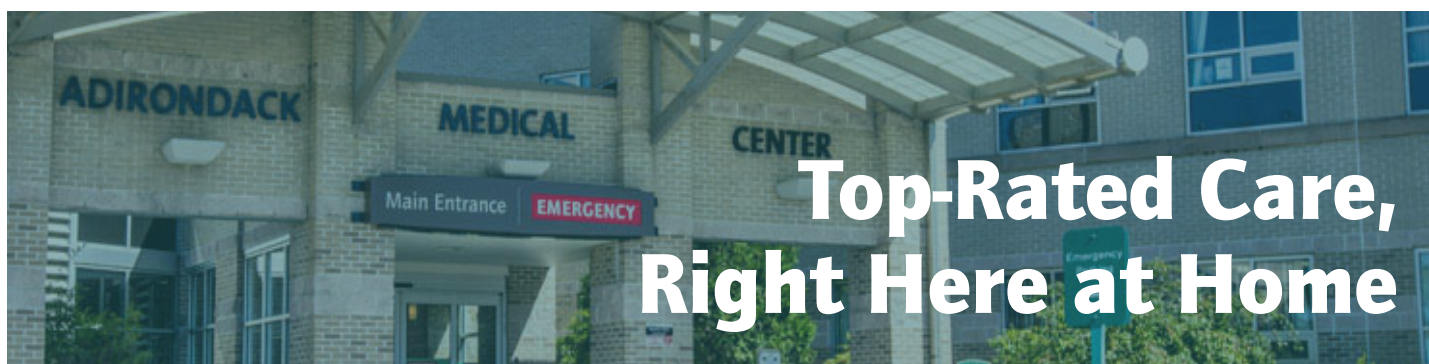
"There are so many moving parts to this project, and the facilities team has done an amazing job keeping everything on track while ensuring patient care continues uninterrupted," Balog added. "You can see the level of planning and dedication in every meeting."

The inpatient room renovations are a key aspect of Adirondack Health's broader strategic framework, an organizational roadmap focused on sustainability, access, and innovation.



Adirondack Health Foundation Receives \$10,000 Parkinson's Foundation Grant

Adirondack Health Foundation has received a \$10,000 community grant from the Parkinson's Foundation to expand specialized Parkinson's Disease fitness programming at the Medical Fitness Center in Lake Placid. These evidence-based classes help individuals living with Parkinson's maintain mobility, build strength, and improve quality of life. Thanks to this grant, two new group programs will launch in 2026, providing even more opportunities for healing movement and community support close to home.



Adirondack Health is the only acute care hospital in New York State to earn a 5-star rating for patient experience!

