

A Gaylord Wedding Story

Not every "I do" happens the way it's planned.

For Mark Villada, exchanging wedding vows didn't unfold in a chapel months in the making — it unfolded during recovery, surrounded by care, perseverance, and the people who helped him get there.

After sustaining a fractured vertebra in a serious car crash, Mark was admitted to Gaylord Hospital for intensive rehabilitation. When his hospitalization disrupted plans for his wedding, Mark and his fiancée Elise asked if they could still be married — here.

"We love each other. It didn't really matter," the newlyweds shared.

With the support of his care team, Mark worked toward a deeply personal goal: standing at the altar. That goal became reality in the Hope Chapel, where an intimate ceremony brought together loved ones and the clinicians who helped him reach that milestone.

"At Gaylord, we treat the whole person," says his physical therapist, Donna Piercey, just steps away from the altar. "Sometimes it's listening to them cry, making them laugh, and sometimes it's being by their side so they can marry the love of their life."

The story was later shared by **WFSB Channel 3**, highlighting not only Mark's determination, but the collaboration and compassion that made the day possible.

Special thanks to *Dorothy Orlowski, Donna Piercey, Alicia Scillia*, and *Dr. Isaacs* for going above and beyond to help turn a challenging chapter into a joyful one for a very grateful couple.

[Read their story here.](#)



Our mission is to enhance health, maximize function and transform lives.

FYI

I nnovation
T eamwork
I nclusion
S afety
I ntegrity
C ompassion
A ccountability
R espect
E xcellence

FYI DEADLINE

Submissions for the next issue due:

Fri, Jan 2, 2026

Submit requests in JIRA



Yes, This Counts as Therapy

Who says progress can't be delicious?

Our Food & Nutrition team recently hosted its *first annual cookie-decorating party* that quietly packed in fine motor skill practice, coordination, and dexterity—without ever announcing itself as “therapy.” Patients as well as staff focused, created, and connected over frosting and toppings, all while building skills in a way that felt relaxed and fun (with a sweet payoff at the end).

A reminder that progress often happens best when it feels human—and maybe a little delicious.

Dancing Again After Brain Tumor Surgery

Amy and her husband George never expected to cry at a ballet performance. But as they watched Carmen during opening weekend at the Philadelphia Ballet, tears filled their eyes. On stage was their 17-year-old son, Jack — dancing just 13 months after a major brain tumor surgery.

Jack had been dancing since childhood, earning scholarships to elite ballet programs and training toward a professional future. That path was suddenly interrupted when he began losing hearing in one ear. An MRI revealed a benign acoustic neuroma pressing on the nerve responsible for hearing and balance. Surgery followed just ten days later.

When Jack arrived at Gaylord, he was too weak to sit up. Within days, he was standing. Within a week, he was walking — supported by Gaylord's ZeroG® Gait and Balance System — and beginning to rebuild his strength and confidence.

With his goal of returning to dance guiding every therapy session, Jack's physical therapist incorporated ballet-inspired movements into his rehabilitation. From pliés to barre-style exercises, therapy became a bridge back to the life he loved.

After one month at Gaylord, Jack walked out on discharge day and went straight to dance class.

Today, he is a trainee with the Philadelphia Ballet's pre-professional program — once again doing what he loves most.





STARBUCKS
will be open
CHRISTMAS DAY!

OPEN 8AM-3:30PM

 Gaylord
Specialty Healthcare

Staff and volunteers brought seasonal cheer to patient spaces through our:

Annual Holiday Window Painting Event

Check out the inpatient therapy gym's festive windows painted by staff.



Celebrating the Season Through Music and Movement

A little holiday magic made its way to the inpatient therapy gym as patients enjoyed a festive winter performance featuring live music and a graceful ballerina.

With nods to Christmas, Hanukkah, and the season more broadly, the concert was well-attended, offering a joyful pause in the day — proof that moments of beauty, movement, and celebration are meaningful parts of healing, too.

Thanks to all our performers, especially *beloved volunteer* Dino Fuoco, and special guest, Katie Savulak on pointe (daughter of Publicist, Joy Savulak).

Our patients look forward to the next one!



GRANT FUNDING

CHEFA Grant Strengthens Whole-Person Care

Whole-person, holistic care is at the core of who we are at Gaylord, and the CT Health & Educational Facilities Authority (CHEFA) is helping us strengthen it.

CHEFA has awarded Gaylord a \$75,000 grant to expand our inpatient and outpatient psychiatric services, increasing access to therapy, medication management, and trauma-informed mental health support.

Many patients navigating long hospitalizations or major injuries face emotional challenges that impact progress. Expanding on-site psychiatric care reduces barriers and ensures coordinated support for both physical and mental health.

When Local Support Fuels Big Progress

Big things are rolling into our inpatient gym—the heart of the hospital and the place where a lot of the day-to-day magic happens. Thanks to a generous grant supporting upcoming gym renovations, we're bringing in new equipment that will strengthen care right away: a tilt table, new harnesses for our ZeroG® Gait and Balance System, and additional e-stim units. Together, these tools help patients start moving safely earlier, build balance and strength, and gain confidence as they work toward greater independence after serious illness or injury.

We're grateful to partner once again with the Town Fair Tire Foundation, a neighbor in East Haven whose commitment to self-reliance and quality of life aligns so closely with our mission. Their support helps ensure that at Gaylord, progress isn't just possible—it's in motion.

A New Look for the Medical Services Hallway

The hallway leading to Medical Services on Jackson 1 has officially leveled up. Designed by Laura Phipps, Sr. Graphic Designer (pictured), the new installation brings movement, clarity, and a sense of visual calm to a space patients and staff pass through every day.

More than a visual upgrade, the wall offers patients and visitors a subtle preview of the comprehensive care that happens beyond the doors—setting expectations and building confidence before an appointment even begins.



PSST!

Coming up: Wheelchair Rugby returns to CT — details on page 12.

SPORTS
ASSOCIATION
GAYLORD HOSPITAL



Got a brilliant idea for a new product or process improvement?

We want to hear it!



Scan the QR code and share your genius with us!



innovator OF THE Month

— **Liz Martich** —

Congratulations to our Innovator of the Month for November: Liz Martich, PCT on Lyman 2!

This month, Liz went above and beyond—submitting five standout ideas that were all so strong, we couldn't choose just one. From recommending weighted blankets for patient comfort, to proposing a labeled bin system for dirty clothes, to suggesting SpectraLink text alerts for therapy schedule updates, to streamlining how staff order food for patients, Liz delivered thoughtful, practical suggestions that directly improve daily workflow and patient care.

Thank you, Liz, for your creativity, initiative, and commitment to making Gaylord better for both patients and staff. And thank you to everyone who submitted ideas—keep them coming! Your innovation is truly making a difference.

Research & Education Spotlight: From Evidence to Everyday Impact

Gaylord clinicians aren't just advancing rehabilitation through research — they're actively shaping how that evidence shows up in real-world care.

This fall, that work took center stage in two exciting ways: a **newly published ZeroG research study** and a **national OT ECHO presentation introducing GOT-Cog™**, a novel cognitive screening tool developed right here at Gaylord.

New Research Published on ZeroG Body-Weight Support

A multi-site team led by Gaylord's Milne Institute for Healthcare Innovation published new findings in JMIR Rehabilitation and Assistive Technologies examining ceiling-mounted body-weight support systems for stroke rehabilitation.

The study showed that body-weight support — with or without added balance challenges —

can safely improve balance, walking speed, and confidence in stroke survivors. The system allows patients to practice challenging movements without fear of falling, while also reducing physical strain on clinicians.

Sharing Innovation Through OT ECHO

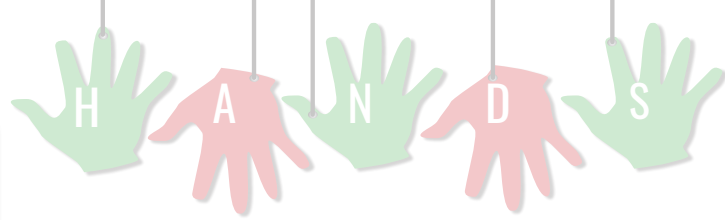
Emily Meise, MS, OTR/L and Henry "Hank" Hrdlicka, PhD recently presented to OT ECHO, a national learning collaborative connecting occupational therapists across settings.

Their session introduced GOT-Cog™ (Gaylord Occupational Therapy Cognitive Screen) — a 24-item, 9-domain tool created by Gaylord occupational therapists to address a critical gap in inpatient rehabilitation. GOT-Cog™ focuses on functional cognition, supporting safer care, clearer discharge planning, and more meaningful OT intervention.

Together, these efforts reflect Gaylord's commitment to turning research into practice — and sharing that knowledge to improve care well beyond our walls.



**Milne
Institute**



Helping Hands Delivers

Our incredible employees generously contributed to Helping Hands—Gaylord’s version of an angel tree—which allowed us to provide full holiday celebrations for three local families. This not only included a mountain of presents, but also gift cards for groceries, toiletries, pet supplies, and more.

On Friday, December 12th, Lori Vickers, Cat Dubail, and Chris Mallison played “elves,” delivering gifts to two agencies: the Wallingford Emergency Shelter and the Community Guidance Clinic in Meriden. Both agencies were overjoyed by Gaylord’s generosity and excited to share these gifts with deserving families.

Thank you to everyone who helped staff the bake sale and cocoa bar, purchased items from these events, or bought gifts directly for the families. This effort would not have been possible without you.

Happy Holidays from the Helping Hands Committee!

DONATE those extra takeout containers!

(You know what cupboard
I'm talking about)

**Drop off your clean
containers in Brooker Lobby
or contact
Kate Brophy in Marketing.**

kbrophy@gaylord.org, x3459

All containers will be
donated to Hands on
Hartford, helping
underserved
communities near
Kate’s hometown,
through food access
programs, homeless
outreach, prevention
services, and more.



Annual Children’s Holiday Party Returns

This year marked the return of our Annual Children’s Holiday Party—the first time we’ve been able to celebrate together like this since before COVID.

With Santa in attendance and plenty of festive cheer, the day was filled with laughter and special moments for the children and grandchildren of our staff.

It felt really good to bring this one back.

Catch a glimpse of the celebration here: <https://www.facebook.com/share/v/17H17GQ2n3/>



Each month, one lucky scholar will **win a raffle prize** by completing any one of the monthly featured courses in Gaylord University!



December's Featured Courses:

- Patient Hand-Off and Communications Failures (0.5 credit hours)
- Transferring Safely (0.25 credit hours)
- Leading in the Age of Generative AI (0.5 credit hours)
- Building Up Your Emotional Intelligence (0.5 credit hours)



Download the
UKG Pro Learning App
and use access code "gaylord."

To find the featured courses, select:
"Training" > "Courses" > then search by
course name or topic

Basic Life Support 2026 RENEWALS



New BLS Renewal Process using HeartCode Complete:

1. Complete HeartCode BLS Online
2. Complete your skills anytime, **no instructor needed.**

The new CPR manikin will be located
at the end of Lyman 1, across from
the CNA Academy by the Brooker
elevators.



SCAN FOR
MORE INFO

Questions? Call
The Center for
Education, x2135

Save the Date: Upcoming Education

Grand Rounds: Register in Gaylord University via the Course Calendar

- » Jan 29 • 12-1p: **Disorders of Consciousness** (Kyriacou Lecture Hall), Kate Rudolph & Jill Hellstrand
- » Feb 04 • 12-1p: **Vagus Nerve Stimulation**, Christopher Conner
- » Feb 12 • 12-1p: **Complex Spinal Surgery**, Dr. Singh, UCONN

Mulligan Movement – March 7 & 8, 2026

DECEMBER

Service Awards

Thank you and congratulations
to the following employees for their
years of service to Gaylord:

30 YEARS

Sonnica Belcourt
Infection Prevention

10 YEARS

Irene Bugliari
Nursing Services

Abigail Ortiz
Environmental Services

5 YEARS

Iliriana Selmani
Respiratory Therapy

Chris Porter
Information Technology

Jessica Mancini
Nursing Services

Christine Howard
Nursing Services

Agnieszka Lukaszewicz
Pharmacy



GOAL:

Keep everyone upright and injury-free all winter long!

Slips, Trips & Falls Prevention: Winter Weather Focus

Key Tips:

- **Walk slowly** and take small steps on snowy or icy surfaces.
- **Keep hands free for balance**-avoid carrying heavy loads on slippery walkways.
- **Wear proper slip-resistant footwear.** Employees receive a discount on Skechers work shoes - check the Employee Portal for details.
- **Report icy patches**, wet floors, or damaged mats to Facilities immediately.
- **Use handrails** on stairs and ramps.

SAFETY STARTS WITH ME

NEAR MISS OF THE MONTH



The Safety Coaches have selected to celebrate **Alyson Yakowicz, RN M1**, and her use of our CHAMP tools to catch and report a Near Miss she submitted for September.

A moment of attention and follow-through made all the difference. While reviewing an order for a new medication, Alyson noticed something didn't quite add up. With a Questioning Attitude, she paused, and then called to clarify the order. By using the CHAMP Tool: Validate and Verify the order, she prevented the medication from being initiated at the wrong time.

See something that doesn't feel right?
Say something.

Near Miss reports help us learn, improve, and prevent harm — even when nothing goes wrong.

You might never know the impact — but your voice matters.

Near Miss Reporting can be found on Sharepoint, under Frequent Links: Quick Launch

We'd like to acknowledge the following staff who submitted Near Misses in September:

- Andrea Fairchild
- Caleb Mayer
- Courtney Raynor
- Kaila Morin
- Keri Saxton
- Kimberly Fredsall
- Todd Belcourt

On behalf of the
Quality & Safety Department

Thank You for
Speaking Up for Safety

This Recognition Includes:

- A Safety Huddle shout-out
- A feature in FYI
- A gift card
- A visit from the Safety Gnome

Gaylord Blog



Check out our latest blogs from Jadean Hoff, Fairfield Clinic

- [What is Vertigo?](#)
- [Why Seniors Fall: One Hidden Cause You Might Not Know About](#)
- [Can a Concussion Cause Vertigo? Understanding the Link between Dizziness and Concussion.](#)
- [Untangling the Brain After Concussion](#)



Psst... Want to contribute to a blog? Do you have a topic that you're passionate about? We'd love to hear from you! Email Joy at jsavulak@gaylord.org and let's get blogging!

GAYLORD IN THE



A Full-Circle Story — From Patient to Team Member



A recent online feature from Hearst Media CT highlights the powerful journey of our own **Garrett Mendez**—from Gaylord inpatient to outpatient team member—showcasing resilience, purpose, and the impact of rehabilitation. The story also spotlights our new Fairfield outpatient office and how it supports patients as they move forward in recovery.

[Read the article here.](#)

Fairfield Ribbon Cutting Local Headlines



More Fairfield highlights as our newest clinic's ribbon cutting, featured in the last FYI issue, recently headlined the Fairfield County Business Journal and the Westchester County Business Journal newsletters.

[Read the article here.](#)

[Click here](#) for more media mentions including audio recordings of each article!



It's true when they say every step counts- **even on the weekends!**

That's why the Therapy Department is excited to continue our Weekend Walking Challenge, an initiative to support continued mobility and recovery even outside of scheduled therapy sessions.

Whether it's a short hallway stroll or a few laps around the unit, staying active is key to maintaining progress, preventing deconditioning, and boosting overall well-being. We thank you in advance for your help with this initiative!

-Inpatient Therapy

Weekend Walking Challenge

Keep Moving, Keep Progressing



Here's how:

1. Patients will be identified by therapists with a green tag on their door saying "Weekend Walker".
2. These walkers will also be highlighted on a form left at the nurses' station.
3. Every walk completed by a staff member will be recorded on this form.
4. The employee who has the most number of walks each month will be our **Weekend Walker Champion** and be recognized.





Friday,
January 9

The featured organization is:
Master's Manna

Established as a non-profit, in
Wallingford, CT in 2006 to serve

homeless, near homeless, low to moderate income families and
residents who face food insecurity in the greater Wallingford/
Meriden area.

The mission at Master's Manna, Inc. is to assist homeless, near
homeless, low to moderate income families and individuals obtain
essential life needs.

[Click here to learn more](#)

Employees need a Jeans for Charity
sticker or button to indicate their
participation.

Stickers can be purchased for \$2 in
the cafeteria, Jackson Java, Jackson 2
outpatient, Human Resources, and all
outpatient clinics.

GAYLORD TO-GO:

**Skip the Lunch Line,
Order Ahead Online!**



Order online and save time! The cafeteria
now offers online ordering for lunch. Place
your order in advance and pick it up at your
scheduled time for a faster, line-free lunch



1
Scan the order
form

2
Choose between our Deli & Salad
options and choose your pickup time

3
Pickup your order and pay at
checkout

Order by 10AM, and skip the rush!
Orders or weekday lunch ONLY at this time.



GAYLORD GAUNTLET 5k
6.13.26

SAVINGS CODE
staff26
\$10 off

SATURDAY
JUNE 13, 2026
5K RUN
OBSTACLE COURSE

GAYLORD HOSPITAL, WALLINGFORD, CT

To Benefit:



Register today at www.gaylordgauntlet.org



Put it on the Calendar!

More details can be found on our internal Sharepoint Snapcomm page.

Mondays:	Weekly Zumba Series, 4:10pm, Inpatient Gym
Tuesdays:	"Take a Breath Tuesdays" - Ten Minute Meditative Moment, 12:10pm, Chapel on Jackson Ground
Wednesdays:	Weekly Yoga, 4:10pm, Brooker Lecture Hall
Thursdays:	Weekly Walking Group, 12:15- 12:45pm, meet in Jackson Lobby
<hr/>	
W 12/31:	Deadline for Performance Evaluations - 2026 -
F 1/9:	Jeans for Charity
F 1/16:	Jeans for Charity
Th 1/15:	Headshot Appointments - now booking
S 1/24-1/25:	Wheelchair Rugby Tournament, New Haven
M 1/29:	Grand Rounds: Disorders of Consciousness
W 2/4:	Grand Rounds: Vagus Nerve Stimulation
Th 4/30:	Blood Drive

**Need to access Gaylord's
Employee Assistance Program?
Call (860) 233-6228.**

Please Note:

THE GIFT SHOP WILL BE CLOSED ON THE
FOLLOWING DATES SO OUR VOLUNTEERS CAN
ENJOY THE HOLIDAY WITH THEIR FAMILIES

12/24-12/26 CLOSED

12/31 -1/2 CLOSED

Complementary Headshots Available

For anyone who:

- Wants one
- Needs one
- Has been gently told they need one
- Or is reading this and feeling targeted

Thurs, January 15

• 9am-3pm •

Click Here to book your slot

Outpatient headshots available on site.
Contact Kate Brophy with any questions.
x3459 • kbrophy@gaylord.org



FRONT



BACK

\$20



FRONT



BACK

\$10

Think Possible T-Shirt & Long Sleeve Sale

While Supplies Last!

Brooker 316

**Between the hours of
8am and 4:30pm**

CASH or
VENMO
only

Questions? Reach out to Georgette at x2881





GET READY... THE BATTLE OF THE NORTHEAST IS COMING!

**JANUARY
24-25**

WHEELCHAIR RUGBY RETURNS TO CT!

The Battle of the Northeast brings four wheelchair rugby teams together for an exciting two-day round-robin tournament. Come cheer, volunteer, or sponsor and be a part of the action!

EVENT INFO:

WHERE:

Southern Connecticut State University
488 Fitch Street - Pelz Gym
New Haven, CT 06515

WHEN:

Saturday, January 24: 9:00 AM – 4:00 PM
Sunday, January 25: 9:00 AM – 1:30 PM

**Volunteers Needed
Sponsors Needed
Spectators Welcome!**



Visit the event
website to learn more

For more information:
Gaylord Sports Association
(203) 284-2772
sports@gaylord.org
gaylord.org/sports



HOSTED BY:



Earn Your Degree Debt-Free!



Looking for a degree, certificate, or professional development? Gaylord Hospital is partnered with Post University

WHY POST UNIVERSITY?

Through our Premier Education Partnership with **Gaylord Hospital**, Post University can assist you with achieving your career goals by providing fast, flexible, and affordable degrees and certificate programs.

- > **Graduate debt-free!**
- > **Family members** living in the same household receive the same reduced tuition rates
- > **100% Online** classes for your convenience
- > **Flexible format** to work around your schedule
- > **Start year-round**, 8-week terms start every other month
- > **50+ Degrees** and certificates to choose from

START NOW with No Out-of-Pocket Expenses

Pair your employer or union tuition assistance benefits with Post University's low Premier Partner tuition rates, deferred tuition, and 0% payment plans to start now with **no out-of-pocket expenses and graduate debt-free!**

- > **Transfer credits**, life experience, and other alternative credit options considered for those who qualify
- > **Dedicated Student Success Advisors** and support throughout your journey at Post University

Premier Partner Tuition Rates*

PROGRAM	COURSES PER TERM	COURSES PER YEAR	PRICE PER CREDIT*	PRICE PER COURSE*	MAX COST PER YEAR
Undergraduate	1-2	6-12	\$145	\$435	\$5,220
Graduate	1	6	\$290	\$870	\$5,220
DBA**	1	6	\$475	\$1,425	\$8,550

* Online, credit-bearing courses only. Does not apply to courses at American Sentinel College of Nursing & Health Sciences at Post University.

** Doctor of Business Administration program.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:

Edgar Glascott

✉ eglascott@post.edu

☎ 475.559.8781



OR SCAN THE QR CODE



800 Country Club Road | Waterbury, CT 06708

The pricing displayed on this flyer, while subject to change without notice, is current as of July 17, 2025

ADVANCE YOUR HEALTHCARE EDUCATION WITH POST UNIVERSITY



Looking for a degree, certificate, or professional development?

Gaylord Hospital is partnered with Post University

Post University has partnered with **Gaylord Hospital** to offer its members next-level education opportunities that could help you develop valuable career skills and knowledge.

WHY POST UNIVERSITY?

While many students enjoy attending Post University's scenic campus, we understand that working adults require more flexibility, which is why we also offer:

- > **100% Online courses** for your convenience
- > **Flexible log-in times;** complete coursework around your schedule
- > **Accelerated 8-week terms** to complete your degree faster
- > **Two ways to learn** for most nursing programs: **Term Based** structured 8-week terms, or **SIMPath® (Competency Based)** self-paced 16-week semesters
- > **Consideration of transfer credits**, life experience credits, and other alternative credit options
- > **Personalized attention** from faculty and staff throughout your educational journey at Post

TAKE ADVANTAGE OF YOUR PARTNERSHIP BENEFITS



30% reduced tuition on any credit-bearing online course at Post University's American Sentinel College of Nursing & Health Sciences for **Gaylord Hospital employees AND their family** living in the same household.



Tuition deferment and 0% interest payment plans available.



Support services including academic advising, tutoring, career services, and more



Over 50 degrees and certificates to choose from, plus 100+ professional development/continuing education courses

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:

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