

# Thrive

For Your *Whole* Life | Expanded care from Edgewater Health





## Hello readers,

Thank you so much for taking the time to read our latest edition of Thrive. I'm happy to report that Edgewater has so many exciting updates to share in this issue.

One amazing story you'll read details how our staff participated in competency of care training to better serve our LGBTQ2IA+ patients—this training emphasized ending harmful stigmas in healthcare and building trust to ensure everyone feels welcome. I'm proud of everyone here for the work they are doing to develop more trust and reach out to this community.

We've also partnered with the Food Bank of Northwest Indiana to start a Grocery Locker program. This program will address the growing issue of food insecurity in the Gary area. I'm very excited to see how this program will positively impact so many people.

Next up, we're highlighting our primary care services, including care for chronic conditions. One of our providers, Dr. Gerri Browning, shares more about the importance of these integral services to maintaining overall health.

And, lastly, I am thrilled to share that, next year, we will be celebrating our 50th anniversary! It's been amazing to look back on everything that Edgewater has accomplished and to start planning for our big 50th anniversary gala, which will be held on June 1, 2024. We're thankful to be able to serve this wonderful community and commemorate being 50 years strong—and beyond!

Sincerely yours,

*Dr. Danita Johnson*



**DR. DANITA JOHNSON**  
PRESIDENT AND CEO  
EDGEWATER HEALTH



### We have some exciting news to share!

We now have a new, main number at Edgewater Health! **844-4-Edgewater** or simply dial **844-433-4392** to make an appointment or reach key people in our organization.

# Join our team!

## Come work at Edgewater Health!



"Working at Edgewater has been a personal and professional challenge that gives me an opportunity to not only connect with the community, but to make sure that I am continuously striving to assist with improving our organizational services, facilities, and

most of all, our employee culture. Observing our organization grow to the needs of our community, as well as seeing our clients walk out with a smile at the end of the day, assures me that this challenge and opportunity is a blessing."

**- RALYNN CROCKETT, CHIEF HUMAN RESOURCES OFFICER**

"I love collaborating with people and giving back to people who are less fortunate. Whether it's listening to them or pointing them in the right direction to get the help they need, it makes my day. Being nice to someone, whether that person is a client, guest, or coworker – it shows who you are as an individual."

**- TYRUS JULKES, LEAD SECURITY**

"I recognize that Edgewater truly helps people in the community I live in. I see it every day."

**- MICHAEL LABROI, CHIEF INFORMATION OFFICER**

"I enjoy getting to serve vulnerable populations."

**- DR. TANYA ROGERS (LCSW), DIRECTOR OF INTEGRATED HEALTHCARE**



# Edgewater Health is Prioritizing **INCLUSIVE & EQUITABLE CARE**

The entire staff at Edgewater Health is doing their part to end the stigma and discrimination that many LGBTQ2IA+ people face when reaching out for physical and mental healthcare services. We want to be a welcoming space for them, so they can comfortably and safely seek the care they need.

In February 2023, the entire Edgewater staff attended a three-hour competency of care training from Mosaic Health and Healing Arts, located in Northern, Ind., that focused on creating a welcoming environment for those who identify as LGBTQ2IA+ and on building trust with them to best serve their health needs.

“When I learned that a large portion of our LGBTQ2IA+ community members were traveling to Goshen—roughly a 30 to 45-minute drive away—rather than coming to Edgewater for their care, I knew we had to address this issue,” LaTanya Woodson, Director, Community Health Education, shared. “Many of these individuals are afraid they will face discrimination based on how they identify. The decision was made to partake in this training to help build trust, address barriers of care, and encourage them to receive care in a residential area.”

It is well-known that people who are LGBTQ2IA+ are at a higher risk of

experiencing mental and physical health inequities. Studies have shown that these disparities are a result of societal pressures and social norms that marginalize people with these identities and make them hesitant to seek care when needed. This can lead to much worse health outcomes for people who are LGBTQ2IA+, as compared to those who are cisgender or heterosexual.



To help combat this, the competency of care training addressed ways to create a welcoming and safe environment, including inclusive language.

“After the training, we purchased pronoun buttons for staff to wear,” Woodson said. “A big part of the training was helping people understand the ‘why’ behind wearing them. When members of the LGBTQ2IA+ community see the buttons, it helps them

know Edgewater is a safe place, offers support, and builds trusting relationships.”

Because those who identify as LGBTQ2IA+, or those who are members of other marginalized communities, have so often faced judgment from healthcare providers and society as a whole, Edgewater understands that earning the trust of the members of this community will take time. Edgewater is committed to putting in the work to make the facility a place that welcomes all people with open arms.

“We truly want to reduce the effects of discrimination, particularly healthcare discrimination, that so many people in this community experience,” Woodson explained. “Our hope is that, by intentionally creating a safe and inclusive environment, we can improve the mental and physical health of these patients and ensure they feel able to reach out for help when they need it—not when it’s too late.”

The staff at Edgewater are thankful for the opportunity to participate in this training and learn new ways to better serve patients. Edgewater will now be spreading the word and letting the Gary area know that Edgewater is truly here for ALL people, no matter how they identify.

We are your partners in health and here to help you live the best life you can.

# Your Journey to Better Health

## *Starts with Edgewater Health Primary Care Services*



The road to a healthier life looks different for everyone. Some people need help quitting unhealthy habits like smoking. Others need help finding ways to stay active amid a busy work schedule. Still, others need support to manage chronic illnesses.

That is where the primary care team at Edgewater Health comes in. We are here to meet you where you are on your health journey and help you take small, yet impactful, steps toward better health.

**Edgewater provides primary care services for patients 16 years and older. These services include, but are not limited to:**

- Full health assessments/physical exams
- Preventive screenings
- Diabetes management
- Diet and nutrition screenings & counseling
- Cardiovascular management
- Smoking cessation
- Mental health screenings

“There are, of course, certain screenings and preventive care measures recommended for most individuals, like mammograms and pap smears for women and prostate and colon cancer screenings for men,” Dr. Gerri Browning, Chief Medical Officer, explained. “But depending on age and other factors, screenings will be tailored differently and for each individual.”

By emphasizing personalized treatment for each patient, based on that patient’s health history and current health status, primary care

providers at Edgewater can make a deep and long-lasting impact. But the most important thing to do is make that first appointment, even if it has been years since you’ve stepped into a doctor’s office.

“Primary care is so essential to overall health because it provides an opportunity for preventive care to keep individuals healthy, as well as for early diagnosis and treatment of many common and unusual illnesses,” Dr. Browning said. “Long-term primary care builds upon itself, and the medical history can become known and efficiently applied by primary care providers over time.”

This idea of health being something constantly worked on—not just something addressed when a concern arises—is the core of primary care. This is also why Edgewater strongly encourages people to find a primary care provider they connect well with for their long-term primary care needs.

“Adults should seek a comprehensive assessment of their health every two to three years in their 20s, every two years in their 30s and 40s, and every year in their 50s and beyond,” Dr. Browning shared. “Of course, this should be tailored to the individual and will naturally be more frequent as you age or develop acute and chronic medical issues.”

Establishing a relationship with a primary care provider can improve your health in a variety of ways, starting with simply enforcing it as more of a priority. Getting caught up in the busyness of day-to-day life often means health gets put on the back burner. But your primary



**DR. GERRI BROWNING**

care provider will help you pinpoint actionable ways you can improve your health that are realistic for you, as well as help you stay on top of, and treat, any new or existing conditions.

*“Primary care is so essential to overall health because it provides an opportunity for preventive care to keep individuals healthy.”*

And for those who are anxious about how long it has been since their last health exam, just know it is never too late—your provider will be more than happy to ensure you get the care you need, when you need it.

“For someone who has gotten off track with their healthcare assessments, the next step would be to call for an appointment with a primary care provider and schedule a general health assessment,” Dr. Browning explained. “This will be the foundational step in a new health journey.”

Above all, Edgewater primary care focuses on whole-person health. From acute and chronic physical ailments, to substance abuse and behavioral health struggles, the providers at Edgewater want to work with you toward better health.



## CHRONIC CARE MANAGEMENT

Available at Edgewater Health

Chronic Care Management (CCM) is now available for patients with two or more chronic health conditions.

### CCM offers many benefits to patients, including:

- Creation of a comprehensive, individualized care plan
- Coordination of care between providers of differing disciplines
- Medication management
- Remote patient monitoring (RPM)
- Transitional care management
- Behavioral health integration

“At Edgewater, we are privileged to offer chronic care management,” Dr. Browning said. “Each patient receiving chronic care management services has an individualized care plan that is designed by the provider, but also updated by a team of individuals that deliver chronic care management services, as needed. It is our intention to provide these services to all qualifying patients at Edgewater.”

We strive to provide patients with the best-possible care, so we are thrilled to offer CCM to our patients and make managing chronic conditions that much easier.

**To schedule an appointment with a provider at Edgewater Health, call our new main number 844-4-Edgewater or simply dial 844-433-4392!**

# New Grocery Locker Program Assists Individuals Facing Food Insecurity in the Community



**LATANYA WOODSON**

Thanks to grant funding and a partnership with the Food Bank of Northwest Indiana, Edgewater Health launched a Grocery Locker program in January 2023 to address the growing issue of food insecurity among homeless individuals in Gary.

According to LaTanya Woodson, Director of Community Health Education, this program was needed, as Gary is known as a “food desert,” which means many people are at risk for facing food insecurity.

“Food insecurity is a huge problem for many people in our area, particularly for those who are homeless or elderly, or for those who lack resources like transportation,” Woodson shared.

The way the program works is simple: 16 temperature-controlled food lockers, located at Edgewater’s main campus, are filled with food twice weekly. Individuals assigned to the lockers by one of Edgewater’s case workers are given a code to retrieve the food. The lockers are available 24/7, making it possible for those eligible to access food when their schedule best allows.

The lockers are filled with nutritious, non-perishable food they may not have access to, otherwise, given their current living or financial circumstances.

Food insecurity takes a huge mental and physical toll on people. By offering this program, Edgewater Health is providing much needed relief to those who are food-insecure and alleviating some of the stress they face.

*“We really have worked diligently to make it as stress-free as possible, so people can easily enroll in the program.”*

“Edgewater’s partnership with the Food Bank of Northwest Indiana is another program that provides support to the local community, while promoting self-sufficiency and helping individuals maintain dignity, even as they seek assistance,” Woodson explained. “This program helps to reduce the emotional, mental and physical issues that result from food insecurity.”

Edgewater is determined to maximize the positive impact of the Grocery Locker program for the community.

To do this, Edgewater’s case workers and the Community Outreach Coordinator will work closely with the Food Bank of Northwest Indiana to ensure information and access are given as quickly as possible to individuals, once they are deemed eligible.

“We really have worked diligently to make it as stress-free as possible, so people can easily enroll in the program,” Woodson said. “And for people who may not have reliable transportation to the locker at Edgewater, we will work to find solutions, so they can access the locker, as well.”

Even though the Grocery Locker program has only been up and running since the start of 2023, it has already helped a considerable number of people get access to nutritious food and reduced the number of community members struggling with food insecurity. This is an incredible accomplishment, and as Woodson notes, it is only possible thanks to community partnerships.

“We truly value our community agency partnerships so much,” she said. “They help us serve families in Northwest Indiana, and it’s a wonderful feeling to know we can work together to help provide support and resources to those in need.”

**If you would like to know more about the Edgewater Health Grocery Locker Program, please contact LaTanya Woodson via email at [lwoodson@edgewaterhealth.org](mailto:lwoodson@edgewaterhealth.org), or by calling 219-885-4264.**

# 50 YEARS STRONG

## Edgewater Health is Celebrating 50 Years of Service to the Community



In May of 2024, Edgewater Health will celebrate 50 years of serving the citizens of Gary and the surrounding communities. Since our founding, Edgewater has provided invaluable health services, and we are excited to commemorate this momentous milestone.

Originally known as the Gary Community Mental Health Center, Edgewater began as a humble one-building facility dedicated to behavioral healthcare. Today, we are northwest Indiana's full-service partner for culturally competent, integrated behavioral health and primary care, providing expert service at ten different locations. At our core, Edgewater focuses on the health of the whole person—mind, body, and spirit—to ensure that each individual lives a happy and healthy life.

There is so much to celebrate as we approach our golden anniversary. In 2015, Edgewater established the first crisis intervention center in the state of Indiana. The Rapid Access Center (RAC) is an amazing benefit to people living in the Gary area and beyond, as it provides 24/7 connection to local law enforcement and hospitals to help deescalate psychiatric crises. Through this center, we also help people get more personalized treatment than they might receive from law enforcement or emergency rooms alone. Trained intermediaries can quickly evaluate the situation and then quickly offer compassionate and targeted care plans. In 2022, we opened the doors to a new facility in Cedar Lake that focuses on women's health.

But perhaps most important to the services that Edgewater provides are the people who work here. Many of them have deep roots in the Gary area and are personally invested in providing the best care possible. Even though healthcare can be a stressful line of work, many employees have been at Edgewater for two to three decades, consistently demonstrating compassionate commitment to their patients.

To celebrate 50 years in service, and to look toward the next 50 years, Edgewater is hosting a celebratory gala on June 1, 2024, at Duneland Falls Banquet and Meeting Center in Chesterton, Indiana. This event will serve as a celebration of all Edgewater has already contributed, while also serving as a chance to look ahead and raise funds to support

our continued mission of being the best, most compassionate, most innovate, and most driven healthcare partner for all those who need it.

As we approach our milestone anniversary, we are doubling down on the ways we engage with the community to ensure strong outcomes for patients and families in the decades ahead. If you are interested in partnering with us, check out these opportunities:

### AMBASSADORS OF EDGEWATER

Chaired by Dr. Sharon Johnson-Shirley, former Edgewater Health Board Chair and Lake Ridge Schools Superintendent, is gearing up to friend-raise and fundraise for the 50th celebration.

### BOYS AND YOUNG MEN OF COLOR COLLABORATIVE

Chaired by Lake County Prosecutor Bernard Carter, is a diverse group of influential leaders addressing the barriers that contribute to social inequity for boys and young men of color, from cradle to college and beyond.

### THE FIRST LADIES INITIATIVE

Focused on social and emotional well-being from a spiritual perspective will host a theatrical performance at the West Side Theatre Guild on Saturday, November 4, and Sunday, November 5.

### WOMEN'S HEALTH ADVISORY COUNCIL

Chaired by Dr. Deborah McCullough, plans to screen a documentary and talk-back session in the fall (the community is invited!) and a community walk in the spring.

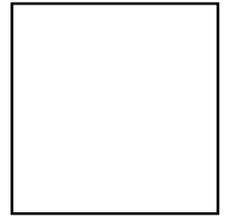
For more information, visit our website at [www.edgewaterhealth.org](http://www.edgewaterhealth.org) or send an inquiry to [info@edgewaterhealth.org](mailto:info@edgewaterhealth.org).

***We are eternally grateful for the support we've received over the last 50 years, and we hope the community will continue to support us through the next 50.***





1100 W 6th Avenue | Gary, IN 46402



# Calling all Women Who Want to Make a *Difference!*



We are looking for  
**empowered women** to  
join Edgewater Health  
First Ladies Initiative.

**WHO:**

Women who are community advocates, pastors, wives of pastors, deaconess, or serve in the faith-based community.

**WHAT:**

This group is focused on improving the overall health of our communities and congregations, including social and emotional well-being.

**WHY:**

Our goal is to improve the social determinants of health equity for uninsured, underinsured, and underserved people in the region by 2026.

**Want to get involved?**

Contact LaTanya Woodson  
lwoodson@edgewaterhealth.org  
219-885-4264 Ext. 4704

