

# For Life!

Fall 2017

MEADOWS

REGIONAL MEDICAL CENTER

Vidalia, GA

## 'Something Extraordinary'

### Cancer Center Ushers in a New Era of Care

Thanks in large part to a vision for what healthcare could be in Vidalia conceived nearly two decades ago, today the Tommy and Shirley Strickland Cancer Center is unlike any other oncology center in the region.



Alan Kent, CEO

With the completion of Phase II's expansion in May, the 15,000-square-foot center now boasts state-of-the-art facilities, brand new cutting-edge equipment and the consolidation of a staggering range of cancer services – all under one roof.

But to understand what went into the planning for the new center, Meadows Health CEO Alan Kent said you'd have to go back to that original vision for the hospital, which broke ground in 2009.

"Part of what made us different was that strategic vision we had years ago," he said. "We wanted to build a community health

network that attracted and supported a wider range of specialty medicine services than what the typical rural community has."

After the new hospital was built, planning for cancer care became the "natural next step," he said. "So again, we made the conscious decision to recruit specialty medicine physicians and build a center entirely with the patient's needs in mind."

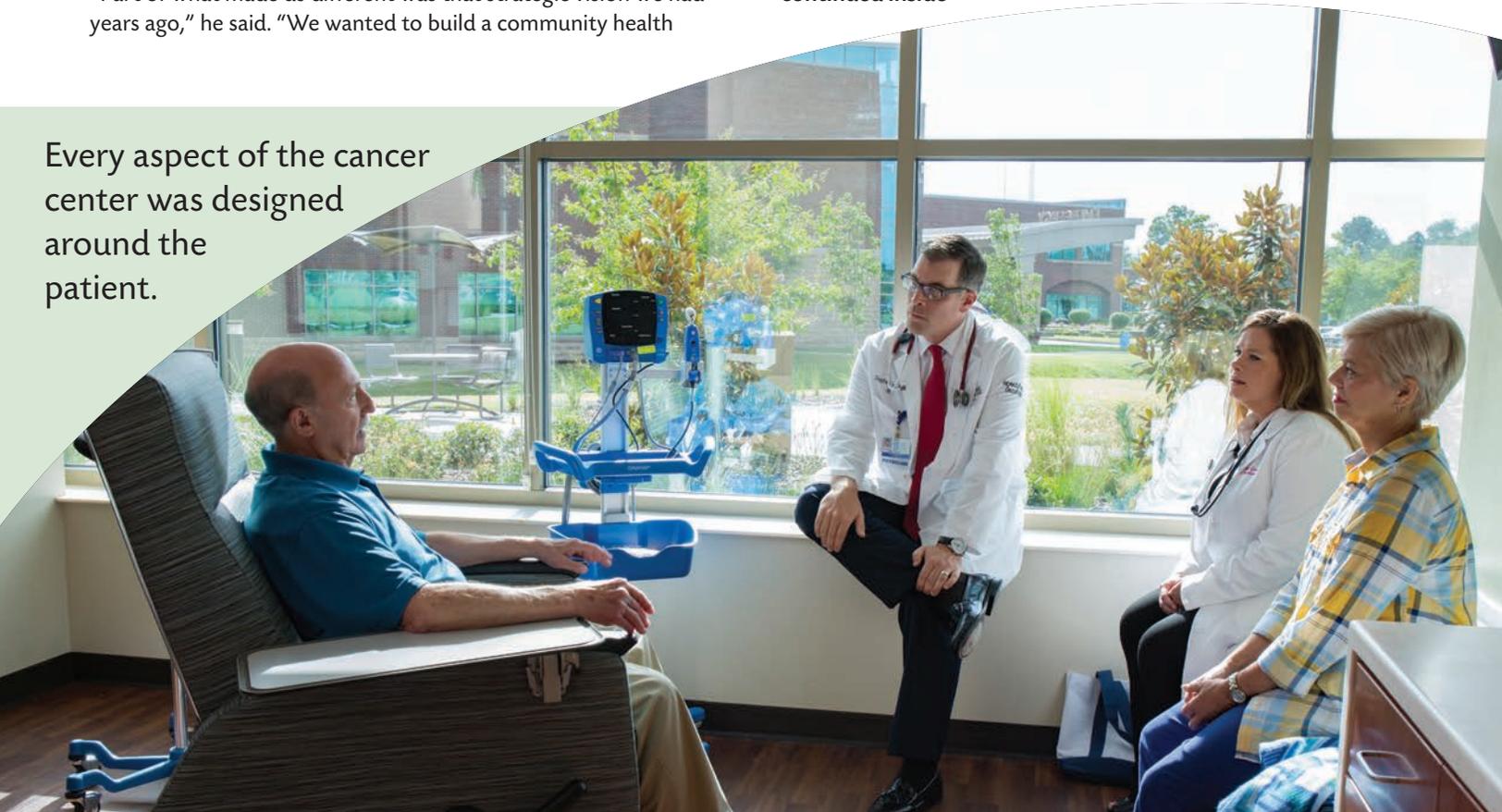
#### Designed for Patients

Every aspect of the cancer center was designed around the patient – from large, private chemotherapy suites to an abundance of patient-only parking just steps away from the center's main entrance.

Even the layout of the center's primary patient areas – with supportive services housed in the center and patient rooms on the periphery – was designed to increase efficiency and provide immediate access to patients and medical staff.

– continued inside

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## 'Something Extraordinary' – continued from front page

This patient first approach also extends to the model of care patients receive when they come to the center for treatment. Because cancer can affect other aspects of a patient's health and well-being, the center has embraced a holistic model of care. *(See the full story on the patient centered approach on back.)*

### Centralized Care That's Close to Home

Unlike other hospitals or institutes that offer oncology, Vidalia's new cancer center offers a range of services – from chemotherapy to radiation – in one centralized location that's close to home.

Before Meadows Health introduced radiation oncology, for example, patients had to drive to Dublin or Statesboro, some 30 to 45 minutes away, just for treatment. And as Dr. Henry Cline, the center's medical director explained, not only do many cancer patients need radiation treatment, a significant number will need both chemotherapy and radiation. Because of this, local radiation treatment was a fundamental need in the community.

"Considering that most treatments are six to nine weeks of daily Monday through Friday therapy, that was just rough on patients," he said. "They're already not feeling well and then they've got to get in the car and drive that distance? It just wasn't conducive to care."

What's more, other medical centers may offer both chemotherapy and radiation, but rarely are therapies together or part of the hospital's umbrella of services. Medical oncology, which includes chemotherapy treatment, is usually in a separate or private group in other cities or at larger hospitals, Kent explained.

"Also, many times the radiation oncologists are part of a hospital but sometimes not," he said. So for us to have both medical and radiation oncology on the same computer system, in the same building and with all the support network that we have, I bet there aren't a dozen of those in the state of Georgia."

### A Game Changer

Dr. Cline agreed adding that centralizing services was "a game changer" for the community.

Along with advanced medicine and state-of-the-art equipment, this continuity of care means patients benefit not only from greater convenience but greater collaboration and expedited services as well. And that, they said, can lead to healthier outcomes.

"If doctors need to collaborate or consult with another physician, instead of playing phone tag, it's literally just a walk around the corner to grab the other doctor," Dr. Cline said. "And just the fact that the patients have this 'one-stop shop,' that's more comfortable for them. It's just the best of all worlds."

But ultimately what makes the cancer center so special are a couple of things, Kent said.

"First and foremost, it's the commitment and the drive and the willingness of our people who have a passion for their patients and for medicine. So first of all, it's the people," he said.

"Second, it's the state-of-the-art technology that we've been willing to invest in, so that our doctors and nurses and staff members have the optimal tools to do their job as well as it can be done," he said.

Pair those two aspects with the support of a receptive community, Kent said, and you have the ability to make a tremendous impact on the health and well-being of residents for generations to come.

"As I've said many times, we would not have this hospital if it were not for this community," he said. "They have been truly supportive of their medical community. They have come out to be part of something extraordinary."

- 15,000 square feet dedicated to cancer patients' care and treatment
- The region's most comprehensive and advanced radiation therapy department
- Large, private chemotherapy suites
- Comfortable, light-filled public and family areas
- Outdoor gardens and seating areas
- Convenient patient-only parking



# The Patient Centered Approach – a Model of Care That’s Taken to Heart

**F**or the medical staff at the Tommy and Shirley Strickland Cancer Center, the phrase Patient Centered Approach is more than just a set of buzzwords. Based on the idea of holistic care, it’s the center’s new treatment model and as Samantha Walker, RN OCN, Cancer Care Director says, “it’s something that’s taken to heart.”

“When you talk about holistic care, you’re not taking care of a cancer patient. You’re taking care of a patient,” she said.

As Walker explained, because cancer can affect every aspect of a patient’s health – even their emotional needs – the patient’s entire health picture is taken into consideration.

“Cancer interrupts, interferes and affects everything about this patient,” she said. “So without a doubt, we wanted to focus on the patient experience and what this was going to mean for them.”

That’s why every aspect of the center – from private and spacious chemo suites that look out onto gardens and greenery to the flow of traffic in patient areas – was carefully considered with the patient’s needs in mind.

The same careful planning also went into how patients move through the process of treatment.

When an individual is first referred to the cancer center, for example, they usually have an initial consultation with a physician



*The nurse navigator helps patients throughout the treatment process. This may include coordinating appointments, help with insurance or suggesting additional support services.*

who will begin putting together their customized treatment plan. That patient may then meet with a nurse navigator, or someone who helps the patient to navigate the system of care.

“She is someone who knows that system and also knows it can be very overwhelming and confusing to patients and their families,” Walker said. “So she’s there to help.”

A group of specialists may also meet to discuss the patient’s individual treatment plan. Known as the Tumor Board this group – comprised of cancer center specialists and other staff along with physicians, including surgeons and radiologists from the hospital – meets once a month to discuss the most appropriate course of treatment for that individual.

“And that’s the gold standard of care,” Walker said. “As a patient, you can’t ask for anything better than your care team coming together to discuss you and your care all at one time.”

## The Care Team



**Every patient at Meadows Health is paired with a team of specialists. Based on the patient’s unique needs the team can include:**

**Nurse Navigator** - to offer guidance and support throughout treatment.

**Medical Specialists** - including the area’s top oncologists, surgeons, radiologists and support specialists to create personalized treatment plans.

**Nutritionist** - to provide dietary guidance as needed.

**Physical Therapist** - to help patients maintain strength during treatment.

**Survivor Coordinator** - to provide post-treatment support.



**For more information on our patient centered care visit [MeadowsHealthCancerCenter.com](http://MeadowsHealthCancerCenter.com)**



Richard Chavis

## Spotlight on – Richard Chavis

Richard Chavis and his wife, Sandra, live in Uvalda, about 20 miles from the Tommy and Shirley Strickland Cancer Center. They have three adult children and like to garden, fish and visit with family. Mr. Chavis was diagnosed with prostate cancer in early 2016. He is now cancer free.

**For Life:** Who did you see when you first learned you had cancer?

**Mr. Chavis:** I was having some trouble with my prostate, so my daughter had me go to Dr. Gonzalez. (The Chavis' oldest daughter, Tina Watson, works at Meadows Regional Medical Center as an office manager.) Dr. Gonzalez ran some tests and found the cancer and that was when they turned it over to Dr. Cline and said they could treat me right there at the cancer center.

**For Life:** Were you happy to learn you could be treated at the cancer center?

**Mr. Chavis:** Yes. To be able to stay close to home was a relief. And having it at Meadows, where my daughter works, made it better too.

But Dr. Cline took really good care of me. I had 45 (radiation) treatments. But I got along really well. Everyone there was just really good to us.

**For Life:** What did it feel like when you learned that you were cancer free and got to ring the bell?

**Mr. Chavis:** It was wonderful! I liked to ring that bell till it fell apart. But I was really excited.

# Cancer Center Features Advanced Clinical Care, Cutting-Edge Technology

With the opening of the Tommy and Shirley Strickland Cancer Center in Vidalia, area patients now have access to a range of oncology services in one convenient location. But even more importantly, residents now have access to the kind of advanced clinical care usually found only in larger cities or medical centers.

How is the center able to offer such comprehensive care? For starters, it takes a focus on specialized medicine and an effort to recruit those who practice it.

### A Highly Specialized Team

Case in point: the center's medical team is comprised of two medical oncologists, a radiation oncologist, a nurse practitioner specialized in oncology and a nurse navigator specialized in helping patients navigate the system.

Plus, each of the center's two main areas – medical and radiation oncology – has its own dedicated nursing staff with specialized skills in those areas.

Rounding out the team is a medical dosimetrist and a physicist, two roles that are strategic in diagnostic radiology. To have these two roles alone, as dedicated, full-time positions, is unique in and of itself, said Dr. Henry Cline, the cancer center's medical director and radiation oncologist.

"Most of the time, you may share a physicist with two or three other centers or you would have to go to Savannah, Macon or Atlanta before you would find a dedicated, full-time person," he said. "So for a town this size and a center this size, to have both? People just can't believe it." Along with a tumor board that meets monthly to evaluate the treatment plans for individual patients, the cancer

center enjoys an unprecedented level of collaboration.

The center also draws expertise from the hospital, Dr. Stephen Tiley, a medical oncologist at the center, pointed out that additional specialists including surgeons, pulmonologists and pathologists, join other professionals such as social workers and volunteers from the community. Together, this vast network of people all work toward the common goal of caring for patients with cancer and their families.

### Advanced Technology

An investment in technology also played a vital role in enabling the cancer center to offer advanced clinical care such as targeted-radiation therapy, a type of treatment that uses high-energy radiation to shrink tumors and kill cancer cells.

The center's new, state-of-the-art Elekta Linear Accelerator, for example, can focus radiation so precisely on the size, shape and depth of a tumor that damage to healthy tissue surrounding the area is minimized.

And something as simple as the center having its own dedicated CT simulator – in this case, a Big Bore 16-slice CT scanner – has also contributed to the level of care.

As Dr. Cline explained, before it received its own simulator, oncology had to share a scanner with other departments throughout the hospital. This often made it difficult to schedule cancer patients or have the equipment set and ready for its highly specialized setup scans.

"We now have a CT simulator that can be customized to our specific needs," he said "This includes tracking patient respiration to better target tumors in the lung and

**"Treating cancer patients takes a full team of people with different expertise to manage patients and their treatments."  
Stephen Tiley, D.O.**

Want to learn more about our advanced treatment options and specialized medical team?

Visit [MeadowsHealthCancerCenter.com](http://MeadowsHealthCancerCenter.com)

upper abdomen. We are now able to perform this crucial part of the treatment planning process much sooner and shorten the time frame for patients to begin radiation."

Dr. Alejandro Garcia-Hernandez, the cancer center's other medical oncologist, said it was this access to advanced technology that first impressed him when he came to Meadows Health from a much larger medical center. As he related, the convenience it provides has also left a lasting impression on his patients.

"If they need a PET scan, they may say, 'Where do I go for that?' and I can say, 'Right here,'" he said. "And if they need radiation, they will say, 'Is that here too?' And I can say 'Yes.' It's nice to be able to comfort them by saying, 'Everything that can be done, will be done and will be done here.'"

### The Latest Medicine

Having a highly skilled medical staff has

also enabled the center to take advantage of the latest in cutting-edge medicine. In addition to targeted-radiation therapy, such advancements include novel drugs and immunotherapies, said Dr. Tiley.

"We've been very fortunate to have had tremendous innovations and advancements in cancer care in just the last few years," he said. "And we've been able to treat our cancer patients here with those."

And because of their collective experience and expertise, the medical staff often takes advantage of relationships and partnerships with such institutions as Emory Healthcare in Atlanta.

"For some of the super specialized things, if we don't offer it, we at least have inroads into people who do," Dr. Cline said. "But for the size of the community and what we are doing here, it's just really amazing."



*The radiation therapy wing (shown at right) includes some of the region's most advanced technology for precise, targeted treatment, including a CT simulator to map tumors and a linear accelerator. The medical oncology wing (shown below and on the front cover) features patient suites surrounding a central nurses' station. Suites are expansive with a TV and sitting area and have large windows overlooking landscaped gardens. Doors can be closed for privacy.*



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## Special Thanks to our Namesake – Tommy and Shirley Strickland

Thanks to the generous donation of Tommy and Shirley Strickland, thousands of local families will be able to stay in the Vidalia area and receive exceptional healthcare at the Tommy and Shirley Strickland Cancer Center.

The Strickland family has been touched by cancer more than once. Tommy lost both of his parents to cancer. Shirley serves on the Cancer Center Foundation Board of Directors. Both are strong advocates of local cancer care.

**“We are deeply grateful to Tommy and Shirley for their amazing generosity.”**

**Alan Kent, CEO**

## Meadows Healthcare Foundation – Helping to Bring Advanced Healthcare to Vidalia and Beyond

Thanks in part to the Meadows Healthcare Foundation, Meadows Health today features a state-of-the-art hospital with private rooms, six surgical suites, a large emergency department, Women’s Pavilion and a new 15,000-square-foot cancer center.

### Want to Help?

Help us continue to bring quality healthcare to Vidalia and the surrounding areas by making a gift to the foundation today. Or learn more about our new online shopping partnership with Goodshop, which donates a portion of what you spend to Meadows Health when you designate us as your cause.

For more information call 912.535.5555, or visit [www.meadowshealth.com/about-us/meadows-foundation](http://www.meadowshealth.com/about-us/meadows-foundation).

## The Cancer Center Medical Team

The Cancer Center team is made up of two medical oncologists – Dr. Tiley and Dr. Garcia-Hernandez – as well as a radiation oncologist, Dr. Cline, who also serves as the cancer center’s medical director. The team also includes a nurse navigator, specialized in helping patients navigate the system and nursing staff with specialized skills for medical and radiation oncology. In addition to radiation technologists, the team also includes a dosimetrist and a physicist, who play critical roles in diagnostic radiology.



Henry Cline, M.D., FACRO



Stephen Tiley, D.O.



Alejandro Garcia-Hernandez, M.D.