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Five-year-old Sebastian celebrates his graduation from Andwell services with Pediatric Occupational Therapist Jessica Story. After overcoming early medical challenges, Sebastian has exceeded expectations, showing remarkable progress and resilience.

A miracle named Sebastian

When Sebastian was born five years ago, his did not look like a story of hope and healing.

"I didn't even get to see Sebastian after I had him," his mother, Bethani recalled. "They just took him away."

Born at Stephens Memorial Hospital in Norway, Sebastian had to be transported to Barbara Bush Children's Hospital in Portland for specialized care.

At only 30 weeks gestation, Sebastian's lungs weren't fully developed. His esophagus was incomplete, so he was unable to feed. First, Sebastian needed surgery on his trachea to stabilize his airway. During the procedure, his lungs collapsed and his heart stopped.

"They had to do CPR on him for 19 minutes and cut open his chest on each side to re-inflate his lungs with some chest tubes," said Bethani. "They said it was a miracle that he didn't have any brain damage from being gone for 19 minutes."

Two weeks later, doctors successfully completed Sebastian's tracheostomy.

Sebastian spent nearly six months in the hospital. When he came home, the care team from Andwell Health Partners began working with Sebastian to help him

Continued inside



As a baby, Sebastian required a tracheostomy to stabilize his airway after a life-threatening surgery. Despite these early challenges, he showed incredible strength, beginning his journey of recovery with the support of Andwell Health Partners.

meet developmental milestones, despite months of limited mobility while on a ventilator.

Jessica Story, Pediatric Occupational Therapist for Andwell, began working with Sebastian when he was a baby.

At first, Jessica recalled, Sebastian was very quiet and couldn't tolerate a lot of intervention because there was so much going on medically.

"Then, Sebastian kind of just came around at one point and he became just this little spitfire," she recalled. "He really just looked at us as kind of like that one hour where he would be, in some ways, a typical kid and we were his friends coming to play with him."

Initially, doctors told Bethani that her son would be unable to talk at all.

"But he defied the odds and he did it. He figured it out," she said. "He found a way to communicate even though we were told he wasn't going to be able to talk at all, and he's been talking ever since – doesn't stop talking!"

Now at five years old, Sebastian has graduated from Andwell's services.

"I feel like they've helped him meet his milestones in a timely manner," said Bethani. "He's actually exceeded some of those milestones. He's super smart!"

Jessica said the impact is on the family as much as the patient. "I feel like for a lot of these families we have a huge impact because we're more than just their therapist. For a lot of parents, we are hearing all of their stressors every week. They really let us into their lives."

**WATCH
SEBASTIAN'S
STORY**



Andwell's Dr. Elizabeth Hart receives national recognition

Elizabeth Balsam Hart, MD, Hospice Medical Director/ Director of Medical Services at Andwell Health Partners, the largest, non-profit home and community-based healthcare and care management organization in Maine, has been named one of the most influential leaders in hospice and palliative care, a field focused on relieving suffering and improving quality of life for people with serious illnesses.

The American Academy of Hospice and Palliative Medicine asked its more than 5,000 members to nominate 2024 AAHPM Visionaries in Hospice and Palliative Care.

"To be recognized as an AAHPM Visionary is a great honor and is deeply humbling to me personally," Dr. Hart said. "More significantly, this recognition acknowledges the value of the shared work of many colleagues of diverse disciplines throughout Maine that ensures access to high-quality Hospice and Palliative Medicine in rural and underserved communities."

The specialty of hospice and palliative medicine focuses on improving quality of life and relieving pain and other symptoms in seriously ill patients, the AAHPM explained in the award announcement. Palliative care can and should be provided to patients who continue to receive treatments to try to cure or control their disease, regardless of their prognosis, they said. Hospice is a specific type of palliative care for patients whose life expectancy is likely to be six months or less.

Hospice and palliative care teams also help patients and families to understand their treatment options and to make decisions about their care. These interdisciplinary teams also offer psychosocial and spiritual support to patients, families and caregivers, and bereavement support through hospice following a patient's death.

When the AAHPM reached out to the 2024 Visionaries to gain insight into what motivated them to pursue leadership positions and what they find more fulfilling in their experiences, Dr. Hart shared, "Being present for the deaths of my father and a dear friend early in my residency deeply impacted who I became as a doctor and as a person. These experiences permeate both my clinical work and advocacy. Patients are often my most treasured teachers."

Dr. Hart's vision for the future of Hospice and Palliative Medicine "is that our approach, which holds what matters most to patients and families as the center of their care, will become embedded in all elements of healthcare."



Dr. Elizabeth Hart, Hospice Medical Director/Director of Medical Services at Andwell Health Partners, has been named a 2024 AAHPM Visionary for her leadership in hospice and palliative care.

Dr. Hart is a family physician with additional board certifications in Hospice and Palliative Medicine and Geriatrics. An honors graduate of Harvard-Radcliffe Colleges and Dartmouth Medical School, she completed her family medicine residency and her geriatric fellowship at Maine-Dartmouth Family Medicine Residency in Augusta. She is a graduate of the Practice Change Fellowship, a national program supported by the Hartford Foundation and Atlantic Philanthropies to advance excellence in geriatric leadership. She enjoyed her two-year local PCF project, “Cultivating Meaningful Conversations to Guide Care,” which focused on launching the POLST (Physician Orders for Life Sustaining Treatment) program in Maine.

Nature-inspired art transforms the Hospice House

At Andwell’s Hospice House, a transformative art initiative has brought the beauty of Maine’s nature into the hearts of patients, their families and staff, with a collection of 85 pieces that offers both comfort and connection. Artist Pamela Hetherly was tasked with curating the collection.

Andwell’s President and CEO, Ken Albert, first approached Pamela after visiting another hospice facility where “he was excited about the quality and consistency of the newly installed art,” she said. “He wanted new art to support the end-of-life purpose, and provide a connection for patients and families. He also wanted a cohesive feel, and thought one way to do that would be to reflect the environment outside, to ‘bring the outside in,’ as he put it.”

Pamela welcomed the idea of installing meaningful art in a public facility for many to see.

“I really loved the challenge of putting together a diverse collection that held together thematically,” she said.

She hopes that the nature theme helps patients and families connect to something they love about Maine.

“I believe that art is an important aspect of any space where we want to give and receive comfort,” she said. “The experience of end of life is different for everyone. Some people will not even notice the art on the walls. But others will. And I hope for them it will provide a level of comfort, or a distraction, or just a different place to rest the eyes when the mind is exhausted.”

The collection includes oil paintings, watercolors, acrylics, pastels, photographs and prints all by Maine artists.

Pamela, an oil painter who joined Circling the Square Fine Art Press in Gardiner in 2024, said she was very pleased with how the project turned out.

“Every time we hung a room or hung the hallway, and stepped back and looked at it, I was just in awe really,” she said. “I think this is an amazing facility and the staff here is incredible. I’m thrilled to have been part of it and to be able to make a difference maybe in the way that the place looks. I mean, art! How can you go wrong? Everything’s better with art in it.”



Four of many pieces of art displayed at the Hospice House. The collection is designed to bring a sense of serenity and comfort to patients and families.



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Andwell's 21st annual Autumn Night Out raises more than \$150,000

Andwell Health Partners is pleased to announce the success of its 21st annual Autumn Night Out, held on Friday, September 6th at Poland Spring Resort. Thanks to our generous sponsors and supporters, the event raised over \$150,000 to support Andwell's end-of-life care and pediatric services.

The organization extends its heartfelt thanks to the Autumn Night Out Committee, co-chaired by Cyndi Robbins and Heather Printup. The Committee's hard work in planning, organizing and managing every detail was instrumental to the event's success, reflecting their passion and dedication.

Andwell also expresses deep appreciation to its sponsors for their crucial support. Their partnership played a key role in making the event possible and advancing Andwell's mission to enhance quality of life through innovative and compassionate health care. Special thanks go to New England Cancer Specialists, MaxtrixCare, SimiTree, Integrity Services of Maine, Dignity Memorial, Emerson Chevrolet Buick, Androscoggin Bank, and Praxis Motion Pictures for their generous contributions.



Guests enjoyed festivities at Andwell's 21st annual Autumn Night Out, held at Poland Spring Resort. The event, made possible by generous sponsors and dedicated volunteers, supported Andwell's end-of-life care and pediatric services.