



Fall 2024

# Responder Newsletter

**Stony Brook World Trade Center (WTC)  
Health and Wellness Program**

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## Have you visited the Emergency Room or been hospitalized recently?

If you go to the hospital, whether it is an emergency department visit or you are admitted to the hospital, please contact Stony Brook World Trade Center (WTC) Health and Wellness Program at (631) 855-1200 as soon as possible.

Hospital coverage is based on your certified conditions. Our case management team will be able to help navigate the process, should you need assistance with your benefits.



If you have any questions or concerns, please call us at **(631) 855-1200** to discuss further with our case management team.

# Dr. Luft's Letter



Greetings and Welcome to Fall!

As the seasons change we have to be aware of new challenges to health and wellness. Be mindful of the challenges of upper respiratory disease and the importance of flu shots. Please consider getting your flu shot during your annual visit or stop by any in-network pharmacy using your WTC Health Program Express Scripts pharmacy card.

In September we implemented a new phone system. Please be patient while we work out any kinks in the system. The info in this brochure should be helpful when calling us.

Don't forget to utilize our Nutrition Services. Many members have found this very useful and are well on their way to their target weight loss goals! Keep up the good work!

We are making incredible progress with our Oral History Project thanks to you and our dedicated staff. Remember, you can still tell your story. We are especially interested in narratives that detail the long-term medical, psychiatric and social effects from the events that occurred on 9/11. Please contact Camile Arnone, Communications Coordinator at 631-855-1200 to discuss an interview if you are interested.

We received a lot of positive feedback from the members that attended the September 11 support group in Commack. I was so happy to see so many of you come together for a short while and share some of your feelings and just 'be' with one another. This type of socializing and comradery is important.

I want to wish you all a peaceful and pleasant fall season. Stay warm and stay healthy!

Benjamin J. Luft, MD  
Director, Stony Brook WTC Health and Wellness Program

# Our New Phone System

In September 2023, our office implemented a new, artificial intelligence-based phone system. This phone system uses voice prompts in order to assist in connecting you with the correct department at our 9/11 health clinic. The system works best when utilizing short, non-detailed keywords or phrases.

## Example of Our Phone Prompt

**Phone System**

You have reached the World Trade Center Health Program Clinical Center of Excellence. Our hours are Monday through Friday 8AM to 4:30 PM. If this is a medical emergency please hang up and dial 911 or go to the nearest Emergency Room. Our fax number is 631-630-6297.

To better direct your call, if you are a WTC Health Program member say "Member".  
If you are a provider office, pharmacy, laboratory, or other vendor or business associate say "Other."

**You**

**"Member"**

**Phone System**

It sounds like you are a WTC Health Member.  
Tell me in your own words what you are calling about today.

## Tips for our phone system

### Goal

### State

Trying to schedule, change or cancel an appointment?



**"Scheduling"**

Have an issue with or question about a medication?



**"Pharmacy"**

Have an issue with or question about your medical equipment, such as a CPAP Machine?



**"DME"**

Need to speak to someone about a problem with a referral?



**"Referral"**

Require authorization for a service?



**"Authorization"**

Trying to reach your case manager or social worker?

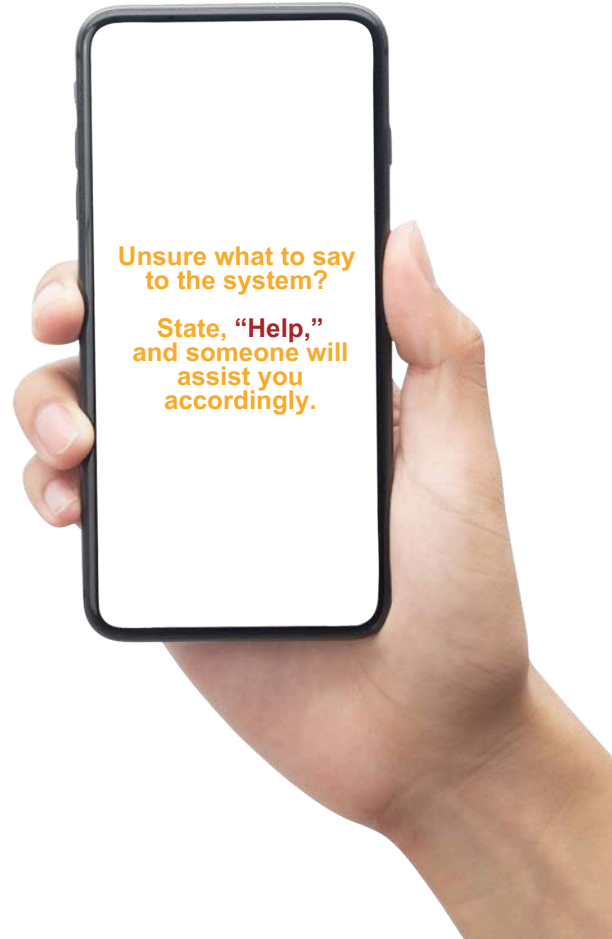


**"Case Manager" or "Social Work"**

Trying to reach your Dietitian/nutritionist?

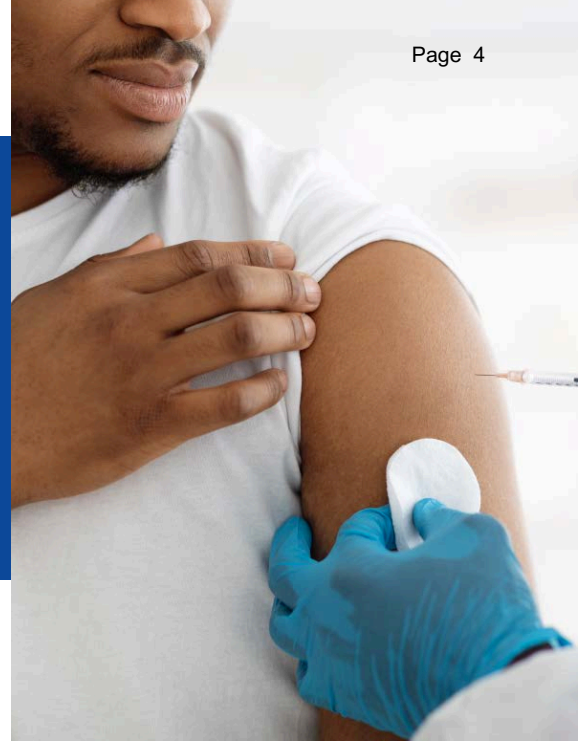


**"Nutrition"**



# GETTING THIS YEAR'S FLU VACCINE

Each year, research indicates which types of flu (known as strains) will be most common during the upcoming flu season, and a vaccine is developed to protect against those strains.



## WHY YOU SHOULD GET THE FLU VACCINE

The flu vaccine helps prevent or reduce the severity of the flu, which is especially important for adults with COPD or asthma, who are at higher risk for complications.

Flu viruses are most common during the fall and winter. The flu season varies but generally begins in October and peaks between December and February. The CDC recommends you receive your flu vaccine by the end of October.

### The most common side effects from flu shots are:

- Soreness, redness, tenderness or swelling where the shot was given
- Low-grade fever
- Headache
- Muscle aches

If these reactions occur, they usually begin soon after vaccination and last 1-2 days.

Consult your primary care physician or Program doctor for specific recommendations, especially if you have certain health conditions or treatments.

## STONY BROOK WTC OFFERS TWO VERSIONS OF FLU VACCINE:

- Fluzone Standard for members under 65.
- Fluzone High-Dose for those 65 and older, providing greater immune protection.

## HOW TO GET YOUR FLU VACCINE

- You can receive your flu vaccine during your annual monitoring visit.
- All flu vaccines are covered at no out-of-pocket cost by the WTC Health Program for certified members at in-network pharmacies. You do not need a prescription. Simply use your WTC Health Program Express Scripts pharmacy card at any in-network pharmacy.
- Members who are not certified should speak to their primary care physician and use their primary health insurance to receive the flu vaccine.

## THE FLU VACCINE CAN KEEP YOU FROM GETTING SICK WITH THE FLU

According to the CDC, during 2019-2020, the last flu season prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, flu vaccination prevented an estimated 7 million influenza illnesses, 3 million influenza-associated medical visits, 100,000 influenza-associated hospitalizations, & 7,000 influenza-associated deaths.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THE FLU:



<https://.cdc.gov/wtc/flu.html>

# Patient Spotlight: Artie Anncelli

## Aerial & Wildlife Photographer



### What was your role on 9/11?

I was a lieutenant with the NYPD from 1985 - 2003. I spent many hours at the WTC site following 9/11 supervising teams of officers during rescue and recovery operations.

### What challenges have you been working through?

Since 2019, I have been diagnosed with pulmonary fibrosis, a chronic lung disease that has been certified & attributed to my work at Ground Zero. With the aid of the WTC Health and Wellness Program and Stony Brook Hospital, I am receiving medical care through a network of physicians, including the finest in pulmonology.



Aerial View of Raphael Vineyard & Winery

### What are you creating? Tell us a little about your process.

I began my interest in photography as an amateur drone pilot about 5 years ago. I soon became intrigued by the aerial photos and videos on and around Long Island; all the while maintaining & adhering to FAA guidelines. We have so many beaches, landmark buildings, towers, downtowns & villages. I knew there would be enough subject matter to last me a long time.

Over the last eight months, I developed a big interest in wildlife photography. With the many pairs of nesting bald eagles on LI, I quickly became a fan & invested in the necessary equipment. Some days you can find me out east at Cupsogue Beach photographing seals. A few days later I could be at the Massapequa Wildlife Preserve, attempting to capture ospreys as they dive for fish. Other times I could be walking through the woods looking for owls. Whether I'm flying my drone or hiding in the woods waiting for a fox to appear, I do this as a fun hobby only.



Great Horned Owllet (chick)



Red Fox



Artie's Instagram Account:  
[@aerial\\_long\\_island](#)

# Patient Spotlight: Artie Annecelli



Aerial view of Water Tower (Robert Moses State Park)



Aerial View, Robert Moses State Park Beach, Field 2



Osprey



Great Horned Owl

## Have you experienced any unexpected positives from creating?

There have been many positives that grew out of this hobby, mainly getting to know the network of similar photographers, many of whom are local. I use Instagram as my social media platform to present my photos and videos. There are many with the same interests, whether it is wildlife photography or aerial photography, and we get to know one another and mutually support each other.

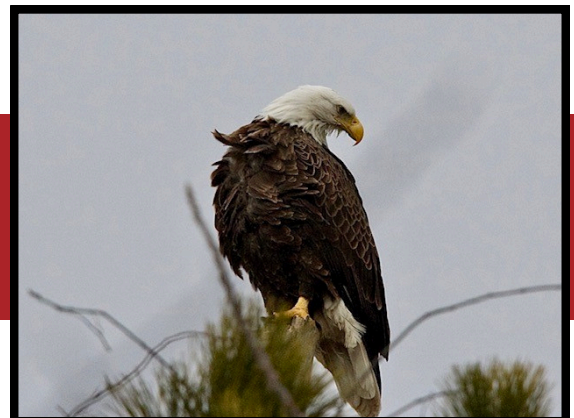
## What inspires you to create?

I am inspired by how the camera can capture my subject. Capturing an eagle in flight carrying a fish to the nest to feed his fledglings is as satisfying as an angler catching a large striped bass from the beach! I never realized that photography was as much an art form as many others. Photography gives me the opportunity to be creative. That means I get the opportunity to present the photo in a way that I choose. Many people judge a photo by the camera. I've learned that a photo should be judged more by the experience and creativity of the photographer.

## How does photography make you feel?

I refuse to let my illness keep me from being active. I've always played golf, ran many 5K races, and have never been a stranger at the gym. Now that I have to slow down, this hobby has been a Godsend. I love the outdoors, and the solitude and peacefulness of being out with nature. I'm only sorry that I didn't discover this leisure activity earlier in life.

After a photography shoot, there are many times I cannot wait to get home and look at what I captured. If I photograph an owl sitting on a branch, I may shoot 40-60 photos or more depending on the angle, light, time of day, etc. If I only get half a dozen good, quality, crisp shots out of that, then it was a very successful outing. Editing the photos prior to uploading to social media is just as exciting. Trying to adjust lighting, sharpness, warmth, vibrancy or contrast is paramount to presenting the subject in the best possible scenario.



Bald Eagle

# Meet the Nutrition Team



## Katie Hoffman

Nutrition Program Coordinator  
Certified Diabetes Care and Education Specialist (CDCES)

## Nichelle Watkins

Nutrition Care Coordinator  
Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN)



**Alexandra Cerone**  
Registered Dietitian  
Experienced in Oncology

≡ Welcome ≡

I decided to follow my passion in nutrition following a career in speech-language pathology. While working at Whole Foods Market in the supplements department, I realized how much I loved to talk to others about health and wellness. Going back to school at Queens College wasn't easy, but it was worth it! My nutrition career has spanned acute care and oncology. I came across a great opportunity to work for the Stony Brook WTC Health and Wellness Program, and I've been here for six months. I was inspired to work with this special population due to the utmost fortitude and perseverance that these individuals have displayed. Our members continually leave a positive impact on me by demonstrating the true meaning of resilience. I look forward to coming to work every day because my coworkers treat me like family, and we have an amazing nutrition team.

In my spare time, I like to make music, snuggle with my cats, practice kickboxing, and spend time in nature.



# Fall for Gratitude

## What is gratitude?

It is the ability to recognize goodness in both your life and in the actions of others

## Mental Health Benefits of Gratitude

- Positively impact our mood and perspective
- Reduce Stress
- Help calm fear and anxiety
- Help us be more optimistic and hopeful
- Build greater personal resilience



## How to Get Started

- **Write a thank you note, send a text or email** to loved ones expressing why you are grateful for them.
- **Tell someone when you appreciate them** - not only for the big things but for the small things too.
- **Be specific.** Instead of only saying thank you, add thank you for...and then share exactly why you are grateful.
- **Appreciate** another person's wins, including small victories.
- **Start a gratitude journal**, write down three things you are grateful for as you start and end your day. It can be positive thoughts, emotions or interactions you experienced.
- **Give thanks at bedtime** to help get your mind in a peaceful state for sleep. It doesn't have to be something significant - maybe that hot cup of coffee, or the beautiful foliage on your walkway.

## Physical Benefits of Gratitude

- Lead to a stronger immune system
- Reduce the symptoms of depression
- Improve sleep quality
- Improve health, including fewer headaches, gastrointestinal problems and respiratory infections
- Reduce Burnout
- Strengthen personal and work relationships



### References:

<https://www.aacn.org/blog/share-gratitude-during-thanksgiving-and-all-year>

# Nutrition Services: Lifestyle Medicine Program

The Stony Brook WTC Health and Wellness Program is conducting an ongoing research project to investigate the effects of a 6-month lifestyle medicine program.

Eligible participants are enrolled in our nutrition program and receive a free Fitbit, which will be utilized during participation. Other lifestyle wellness domains, including physical activity, sleep, and stress management will be targeted.

**If you are interested in enrollment, please contact “nutrition” at (631) 855-1200 to schedule an appointment.**



## Member Testimonials

“ I have lost weight by being involved with my very trusted nutritionist! I lost over 30 pounds and am only six pounds away from my goal weight... I have gotten off medication because of her and the plan she has for me... Fitbit keeps me getting a daily exercise goal (steps, workouts, etc.). ”

-Eddie C.

“ Some of my accomplishments since enrolling in the program are most importantly overall a better feeling. I have way more energy...I have lost over 50lbs and feel much younger...I would highly recommend this program because sometimes people need a little push to get motivated. My Nutritionist not only helps me get motivated, but keeps me going when I feel like I can't do it anymore. ”

-Mike D.

“ I have lost almost 60 pounds. With that everything has changed. I have more confidence and energy... I find that the coaching is the best aspect of the program... I hope other members would take advantage of this valuable program. My family has also made healthy lifestyle changes by me participating in the program. ”

-Jamie D.

“ My lifestyle was making me ill and I was not feeling well at all... The program introduced me to my dietitian who started me on a track that I am sure has saved my life. Since I first met with her, I have lost 42 lbs. I have a tremendous amount of energy, and I crave exercise...I would highly recommend this program to others who face the fact that they need a lifestyle change. ”

-Edward T.

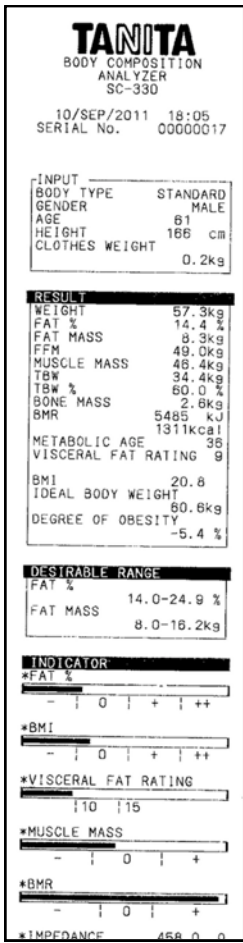
# Our Own Study:

## Are you currently taking any medications for weight loss?

Our clinic recently completed an observational study on Stony Brook WTC Health & Wellness responders who received weight loss medication using their private insurance from August 2022 - August 2024.

*\*These medications are also known as semaglutide, tirzepatide, or dulaglutide (Ozempic, Mounjaro, Zepbound, Trulicity, Victoza, Rybelsus, and Wegovy).\**

### Example of Body Composition Ticket:

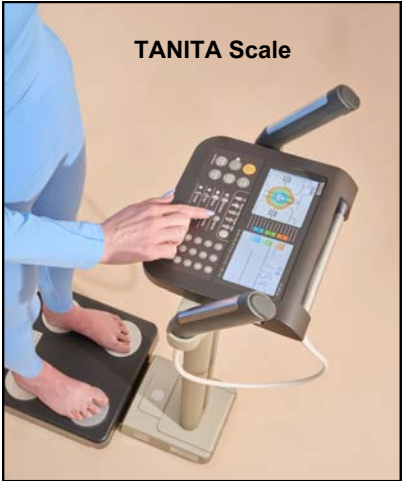


### Methods

- **Sample size:** 37 members receiving medications and who completed two body composition analysis tests at their Commack monitoring visit
- Compared fat mass, muscle mass, visceral fat, and BMI before and after taking weight loss medications
- Compared results among members who received nutrition counseling from WTC versus those who did not

### Results

- In both groups, patients lost body fat, visceral fat and muscle mass
- More body fat was lost than muscle mass in both groups with a mean change of 7.25 lbs compared to 6.97 lbs in muscle mass
- Patients without nutrition counseling lost significantly more muscle mass than those who recieved counseling



### Tips & Takeaways

- Weight loss medications may assist with diabetes management, weight and fat loss, but may also lead to muscle mass loss
- Muscle loss can lead to fatigue, decline in neuromuscular function and increase risk of injury
- **We recommend having your body composition analysis tested on our TANITA Scale at your annual monitoring visit - now available at Commack and Westbury locations**
- We recommend meeting with our WTC dietitians to help you maintain muscle and lose body fat in a healthy and sustainable way
- We recommend speaking with your physician first about ways to maintain muscle such as a high protein diet, strength training, and supplements

*\*Stony Brook WTC Health & Wellness Program does not currently cover these medications\**

# Recipe: Harvest Quinoa Salad



## Nutrition Information:

**Serving Size:** 1/10th of salad (3/4 cup) **Calories:** 268  
**Fat:** 18 g (Sat Fat: 4 g **Sodium:** 184 mg **Carbohydrate:** 15 g  
**Fiber:** 3 g **Sugar:** 10 g **Protein:** 6 g

[Dairy-Free](#), [Egg-Free](#), [Gluten-free](#), [Nut-free](#), [Vegan/Vegetarian](#)

## Ingredients for Salad

- 1 medium butternut squash, seeds and pulp removed, peeled & cut into ½ inch cubes (4-5 cups)
- 1 tablespoons avocado or olive oil
- Fine salt and black pepper
- ½ cup uncooked quinoa
- 1 cup water
- 4–5 cups chopped curly kale leaves (stems removed)
- 1 medium apple, cored and diced
- 3 celery stalks, diced (¾ cup)
- ½ small red onion, thinly sliced (about ½ cup)
- 1 cup crumbled feta cheese (omit for dairy-free and vegan)
- ¼ cup roasted pumpkin seeds
- ½ cup pecans (omit for nut-free)
- ½ cup pomegranate seeds (may substitute dried cranberries or dried cherries)

## Apple Cider Vinaigrette:

- ½ cup avocado or olive oil
- ¼ cup apple cider vinegar
- 2 tablespoons pure maple syrup
- 1 tablespoons Dijon mustard
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- Fine salt and black pepper

## Instructions:

**Make the squash:** Preheat the oven to 375°F degrees. Add the cubed butternut squash to a baking pan and toss with oil. Season with salt and pepper. Roast in the preheated oven for 45-55 minutes or until slightly golden brown on the edges, tossing the squash halfway through the baking time. Allow the squash to cool for 15-20 minutes before adding to the salad.

**Make the quinoa:** In a fine mesh strainer, rinse the quinoa. Add the quinoa, water, and a pinch of salt to a small saucepan over medium heat. Bring to a boil, then lower the heat to a simmer and cook covered for 15 minutes. Remove from heat and let sit for 10 minutes. Uncover and toss with a spoon or fork. Allow quinoa to cool before adding it to the salad.

**Make the vinaigrette:** In a small bowl, combine the oil, vinegar, pure maple syrup, mustard, garlic and a pinch of salt and pepper. Whisk well to combine and set aside.

**Assemble the salad:** In a large bowl add the kale with a pinch of salt. Massage the kale for 1 minute. Then add the quinoa, butternut squash, apples, celery, onion, feta cheese, pumpkin seeds, toasted pecans, and pomegranate seeds. Just before serving, add the vinaigrette, and toss gently to coat.

# Going Through a Tough Time?

## Help is Available.



### Mental Health Resources

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National Suicide Prevention Hotline  
NYS Crisis Text Line

1- 800-273-8255  
Text GOT5 to 741741

National Domestic Violence Hotline  
Family Service League-DASH Hotline 24/7

1-800-799-7233  
631-952-3333

### Alcohol and Substance Use Treatment Resources

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Long Island Council on Alcoholism & Drug Dependence 24/7 Hotline 631-979-1700

Nassau County Alcoholics Anonymous 24/7 Hotline 516-292-3040  
Suffolk County Alcoholics Anonymous 24/7 Hotline 631-654-1150

If You Are Having a Crisis, Please Dial 9-8-8.  
**\*988 is the Suicide and Crisis Lifeline Available 24/7**

The logo features the number '9.11' in white on a blue background, with a red vertical bar to the left.

WTC Health Program

Stony Brook World Trade Center Health and Wellness Program  
500 Commack Road, Suite 160  
Commack, NY 11725

### **Clinics Closed:**

**November 28 - Thanksgiving**  
**November 29 - Day After Thanksgiving**  
**December 24-Christmas Eve**  
**December 25- Christmas Day**  
**December 31- New Year's Eve**  
**January 1- New Year's Day**

### **Locations:**

#### **Commack Clinic**

500 Commack Road, Suite 160  
Commack, NY 11725  
(631) 855-1200

#### **Westbury Clinic**

1600 Stewart Avenue, Suite 220  
Westbury, NY 11590  
(631) 855-1200



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