

Summer 2023

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Gail Schlesinger and  
Hello to Sue Brown  
Signing Up for Online  
Prescription Refills  
Navigating Our  
Provider Network  
More Succotash, Please!



Carolyn Byron with Jethro Byron, SMSgt., USAF (Ret.)  
and Seth, Anna, and Luke



# summer calendar

## JUNE



June is National PTSD  
Awareness Month.  
Find resources at [ptsd.va.gov](https://ptsd.va.gov)

14

Happy Birthday U.S. Army!  
Flag Day

18

Father's Day

19

Juneteenth

21

Summer begins (finally!)

28

Eid al-Adha (est.)

## JULY

4

Independence Day

## AUGUST

4

Happy Birthday U.S. Coast Guard!

14

Victory Day (Rhode Island)

## SEPTEMBER

4

Labor Day

11

Patriot Day

15

Rosh Hashanah starts at sundown

18

Happy Birthday U.S. Air Force!

23

Autumn begins

24

Yom Kippur begins at sundown

## COMMUNITY



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## WELLNESS



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## FITNESS



**PAGE 3** Brisk walking for fewer aches, improved memory, and better mood

US Family Health Plan members choose from a network of over 2,000 civilian primary care providers and thousands of specialists, plus a large network of civilian hospitals.

## Who We Are



US Family Health Plan of Southern New England is a Department of Defense TRICARE Prime option, and one of six regional US Family Health Plan programs across the nation. Our large network of civilian doctors, hospitals, and other health providers serves Plan members who live in Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and parts of southern New Hampshire and northern Connecticut.

We pride ourselves on friendly, personal service. If you have questions, call us at **1.800.818.8589**. You can also get to know us better at [usfamilyhealth.org](https://usfamilyhealth.org) or at [facebook.com/USFHP.SouthernNewEngland](https://facebook.com/USFHP.SouthernNewEngland).



a message from Gail Schlesinger,  
our Senior Vice President and Plan CEO



**Although it will be hard to go, I know that I'm leaving the Plan in capable hands, as we have a strong team that supports the commitment we have made to providing you with the best possible care.**

## A Bittersweet Goodbye

I am filled with emotion as I write this article. It will be my last, as I will retire later this summer. Although I look forward to this new chapter in my life and being able to take trips and spend more time with family and friends, it's also bittersweet. I have loved working here all these years.

I began my career with US Family Health Plan over 28 years ago, first as the controller, then in the role of Vice President of Operations and Finance, and in 2019 I became CEO. When I walked in the door for the first time in 1995, our family was building a new home in Medfield, our kids were 5 and 6, and I was starting a new job. Needless to say, my life was very busy. At that time, I never imagined I would be here until I retired.

I quickly realized that this was more than just a job. Although I had worked for other health care organizations, US Family Health Plan had a totally different feel. I attribute this to the people we serve: the military community. This is a special breed of people who have made deep sacrifices to serve our country but are nevertheless humble and grateful.

Over the years I have heard from many of you through that old-school technique called a handwritten note. Some of you shared concerns. But most of you expressed appreciation. For example:

*I give a 10+ in everything. Thank you for somebody caring about the veterans.*

*I have been with the plan since it first started.... Choosing US Family Health Plan was and has been the most important decision we ever made.*

Although it will be hard to go, I know that I'm leaving the Plan in capable hands, as we have a strong team that supports the commitment we have made to providing you with the best possible care. I'm also extremely pleased to announce that Sue Brown will be taking on the role of CEO. I have known Sue for almost 20 years — since the day she first came to work as our referral coordinator. As you will read in this magazine's welcoming article about Sue, after she left that position, she progressed through various other demanding leadership roles in health care. And now she's returning "home" to take the helm at this highly regarded program.

In closing, I'll share some history about the Plan. In 2001, we adopted a new logo: a heart within a star. It reflects the value we place on providing top-quality, personalized care to our members. At the same time, we stopped using the "USFHP" abbreviation for the Plan. Instead, we spell out "US Family Health Plan," putting the emphasis where it belongs: on family.

Thanks to all of you for letting me be part of your family. It's been an honor to serve you. I wish all of you health and happiness in the future. ■





## On Your Toes, Everybody!

### Brisk walking brings a world of health

A recent overview of nearly 200 studies of walking benefits showed that at least 11 minutes of brisk walking a day significantly lowered the risk of heart disease, many kinds of cancer, and overall mortality. The study also showed that at least 150 minutes of moderate exercise a week, especially brisk walking, further reduced the risk of early death. Other recent studies have expanded on walking's benefits:

#### Fewer aches and pains

Brisk walking can reduce new knee pain among people 50 and older diagnosed with knee osteoarthritis. Study participants who walked frequently for exercise had a 40 percent decreased chance of new frequent knee pain compared to the non-walkers.

#### Improved memory

A study of middle-aged and older people with memory impairments found that a brisk 30-minute walk, five days a week, for a year, increased blood flow to the brain, improving cognitive function and memory.

#### Better mood

Brisk walking can also help counter depression. One recent study found that adults who walked briskly for 150 minutes a week had a 25 percent lower risk of depression compared with adults who didn't exercise. ■

Sources: Garcia, L., et al., "Nonoccupational physical activity and risk of cardiovascular disease, cancer, and mortality outcomes." *British Journal of Sports Medicine*. 28 February 2023.

Lo, Grace, et al., "Association Between Walking for Exercise and Symptomatic Progression in Individuals with Knee Osteoarthritis." *Arthritis & Rheumatology*. 8 June 2022.

Tomoto, Tsubasa, et al., "One Year of Aerobic Exercise Reduced Carotid Arterial Stiffness and Increased Cerebral Blood Flow." *Current Alzheimer Res*. 2020;17(12):1115-1125.

## Out and About

US Family Health Plan was honored to be among the sponsors of **Joint Base Cape Cod's Spring 5K** at the end of March. It was drizzly, but that didn't keep away the 10 runners, 3 strollers, and 5 little kids who happily showed up.



YN1 Jose Rodriguez at the Spring 5K; photo by Gabe Agaman, Director of USCG Base Cape Cod MWR Youth Programs.

In April, sales rep Dave Mendoza, Maj, USAF (Ret.) was at **Barnes Air National Guard Base**, where he presented information about the Plan at the base's **Senior Noncommissioned Officer Professional Development Seminar**.



Current US Family Health Plan Field Representative and Former 104th Force Support Squadron Commander, Dave Mendoza is welcomed to the seminar by Operations Group CMSgt Tina Dimino-Frazer.



## Even More Provider Choice!

US Family Health Plan welcomes new primary care providers from **Emerson Health Primary Care** in Bedford, Massachusetts, near the historic Bedford town common and a short drive from Hanscom AFB. The new PCPs are:

**Rand Nashi, MD**

**Nnenna Onyemauwa, PA-C**  
(physician assistant)

Emerson Health Primary Care  
55 North Road, Suite 120  
Bedford, MA 01730  
339.215.5100



To switch to a new provider, call  
Member Services at **1.800.818.8589**. ■

Home Delivery Pharmacy News

## Sign up for online refills!

A win-win for you and the pharmacy staff

You win because you can:

- View your medications that are refillable and request them online
- Manage and update your address and payment information
- Request rush shipment if you're running low on your medication

It's a win for the pharmacy, because it will save our staff time taking refill requests by phone. And this time saving helps us fill your prescriptions and mail them to you *faster*.



FOCUS ON  
SERVING

YOU

To set up an account, follow these steps:

1. On the refill page, enter a valid refillable prescription number, your birthdate, and the email address you sent to the pharmacy on the Home Delivery Information Sheet. *Don't navigate away from this page.*
2. The pharmacy will then send a registration token to your email address. *Please open your email in a separate tab/browser or application.*
3. When you receive the registration token, enter the token exactly as it appears in the email from our pharmacy. *You will be asked to create a username and password.*

4. You will be taken to a login page where you will enter your username and the password you selected. *After logging in, you will be able to view your prescriptions, shipping address, and payment information, and you will be able to start requesting refills.*

### Receive shipment notifications by text message

By signing up, you can know when your medication has shipped, track your expected delivery, and know if there's been a delay.

To start, just call the pharmacy at **1.877.880.7007** and provide your cell phone number. We'll send you a text message to confirm it's you. Once you've confirmed, you're all set!

### Have too many medications? Forget to refill your medications on time?

You can now sign up for automatic refill! Certain limitations apply. Call the pharmacy at **1.877.880.7007** for more information. ■

Our easy-to-use online refill tool is available at [usfamilyhealth.org/refill](https://usfamilyhealth.org/refill).



Charles Rollinger, MD,  
is our Vice President of  
Medical Management  
and Quality

# Navigating Our Provider Network

US Family Health Plan is what's known as a "managed care plan." That means your care is provided through a network of participating health care providers. It's important for members to know which providers are in the Plan and which are not.

If you aren't certain whether a provider or facility is in the Plan, please contact Member Services at **800.818.8589**. You can also use the US Family Health Plan website at **usfamilyhealth.org** (click on "Our Network" and then on "Find a Doctor") to find out if a provider is in the Plan network. Keep in mind that some providers have offices at multiple locations, and not all the locations may be in the network. Member Services or the website can verify whether the office is in the network.

## Point of Service Option

If a member goes to a provider who is outside the Plan, the member may be responsible for a cost share. This is known as the Point of Service (POS) option. The POS option lets members access an out-of-network provider, but at a higher cost than an in-network provider. This is also an option if a member is out of the service area and has a non-emergency condition.

**If you aren't certain whether a provider or facility is in the Plan, please contact Member Services at 800.818.8589. You can also use the US Family Health Plan website at [usfamilyhealth.org](https://usfamilyhealth.org).**

## Referrals

Referrals are an important part of a managed care plan. Before you go to an appointment, it's important to have a referral from your primary care provider. Be sure to request the referral before the appointment to provide time for the information to be entered into our computer system. If you ask for the referral after the appointment, it may be paid at the POS rate and leave you with a bill. (Referrals aren't required for behavioral health services. Member Services can help find a provider.)

## Bills

If you receive a bill from a provider, it's always a good idea to wait until a claim has been processed by the Plan and you receive an Explanation of Benefits (EOB) before you make any payment. Members may receive bills from providers before they have been completely processed by the Plan and be concerned about balances due. Please don't pay the providers directly until you are certain that the Plan has thoroughly processed the claim. Again, please call Member Services **800.818.8589** if you have any questions about claims.

We try to help our members navigate the system to the best of our ability. We have a great provider network and by following a few rules you should receive excellent care. ■





# Hope in Connection

The U.S. Army's emphasis on preventing suicide among active-duty soldiers and veterans includes a focus on building resilience. According to Dr. James Helis, Col. USA (Ret.), now Director of the Army Resilience Directorate, developing community is key to fostering resilience and reducing suicide risk.

In southern New England, connection opportunities include:

- **Faith-based groups.** Although they aren't necessarily veteran-related, faith-based groups can provide a way to join others with a common sense of purpose.
- **Local public libraries.** Many libraries sponsor organizations for people with common interests. They may include groups learning another language, tutoring, or providing household repairs for people in the community.
- **Project New Hope.** This organization provides a variety of no-cost retreats for veterans and their families. See [projectnewhopema.org](http://projectnewhopema.org) for the event schedule.
- **Soldiers on Singletrack.** This crew and race team helps veterans manage service-related stress in a community pursuing common purpose through high-intensity mountain biking. Learn more at [soldiersonsingletrack.org](http://soldiersonsingletrack.org).
- **Warrior Writers Boston.** This group is a way to connect with others interested in writing — fiction or nonfiction. Find more at [facebook.com/WWBoston](https://facebook.com/WWBoston). ■

## VA crisis services

Call: 988 (then press 1)

Chat online: [VeteransCrisisLine.net/Chat](https://VeteransCrisisLine.net/Chat)

Text 838255



*Never quit. Overcome. Forever forward.*

# Welcoming Susan Brown

Senior Vice President and Plan CEO, US Family Health Plan

Sue Brown, our new head of US Family Health Plan, brings a wealth of experience to the program, as well as a lifetime of dedication to others.

One of six children in a family deeply involved in the Norwood, Massachusetts, community, she reveled in ice skating. For many years she loved figure skating, and she was a figure skating teacher, too. Her dad, a former Marine, and her uncle, a former Navy pilot, ran the Norwood youth ice hockey program.

In high school, she worked at Norwood Hospital. Although she found that a nursing career didn't appeal to her, she became interested in how a hospital works and meets the needs of its patients.

Spurred on by a natural curiosity about why people act the way they do, Sue studied psychology in college. A few years later, she

married Michael Brown, whom she first met in the seventh grade.

Sue returned to Norwood Hospital to work in Patient Access, and she started a family. When her children, Matt and Kelley, were 10 and 9, she moved to US Family Health Plan, where she managed the referral service.

Meeting people's needs on a personal level continued to motivate her. She has taken deeply to heart the importance, as she says, of "doing what's right for the members."

She moved to Human Resources at Steward Health Care and rose steadily through the ranks. By 2012, she was overseeing the company's employee health plan. Over time, the employee plan grew to 50,000 enrollees in nine states. In spring 2023, Brighton Marine, Inc. and Steward selected her to head US Family Health Plan and guide its future.

Kelley, Sue, Mike, and Matt Brown; Matt and former Army Ranger Lucas Carr, running partners in the Boston Marathon's Assisted Runner category







Sue attributes most of her, and her family's, positive attitude about life and helping others, to her son Matt. In 2010, at age 15, he suffered a spinal-cord injury while playing high school hockey and became quadriplegic. People marvel at Matt's strength in transcending his physical limitations to continue his education, engage in the community, and help others.

"Matt made all of us grow up," Sue says. "He has impacted every aspect of our lives."

"Right after the accident, he asked me how the boy who had collided with him was doing. Imagine asking about someone else at that time. He has taught me to look at all sides of things, which I now do at work and at home. And he has taught all of us to push forward."

Only months after the accident, Matt returned to Norwood High school, and received his diploma in 2012. He went on to graduate from Stonehill College in Easton, Massachusetts, with a degree

in communications. Since then, he has served as a motivational speaker and has completed marathons in the assisted-runner category in Boston, New York City, and Hyannis.

In 2019, he launched and now runs the Matt Brown Foundation to serve others who have suffered spinal-cord injuries, helping provide them with much-needed supplies and equipment to improve their quality of life. He runs the organization the same way he runs his life, with the credo that he coined and that his entire family adheres to: "Never quit. Overcome. Forever forward."

Kelley, Matt's younger sister, continuing the Brown family tradition of service, is a registered nurse in the Pediatric ICU at Children's Hospital Los Angeles. She has a passion for building a safe, effective, positive workplace, and moving "forever forward."

Welcome Sue. We're happy to have you here. ■



## 24-Hour Nurse Advice Line

Summer means more time outside, which is healthy for the whole family. But it can also mean poison ivy, cuts and scrapes, and headaches from too much sun.

Fortunately, as a US Family Health Plan member, you can use our reliable, free Nurse Advice Line 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Call **1.866.767.4546** for quick, expert advice from a registered nurse. ■

# Watch Out for Babesiosis

## New England's newest tick-borne threat

Warm weather unfortunately brings the return of ticks. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Babesiosis has extended across New England. Like Lyme disease, Babesiosis is spread by ticks, typically by the young nymph stage of *Ixodes scapularis*. Infected people may not notice a tick bite because the nymphs are very small — about the size of a poppy seed.

### Symptoms

Many people don't have symptoms and the disease disappears after a few days. Others may develop flu-like symptoms, such as fever, chills, sweats, aches, and nausea, and they may benefit from treatment with antibiotics.

It's important to know that Babesiosis can be severe and even life-threatening to people who are elderly, have a weak immune system, have serious health conditions such as liver or kidney disease, or don't have a spleen.

### If you have symptoms

If you have symptoms or suspect that you've been bitten by a tick, call your health care provider, who can use a blood test to determine a diagnosis.

### How to prevent bites

Preventing Babesiosis involves the same measures you'd use to prevent any tick-borne disease. When you're in an area that's likely to harbor ticks:

- Walk on cleared trails and stay in the center of the trail.
- Wear pants, light-colored socks, and a long-sleeved shirt.
- Tuck pant legs into socks.
- Perform a daily tick check (on pets, too) and remove any you find.

### How to remove a tick

Use pointed fine-tipped tweezers to grab the tick's mouth parts close to your skin. Then slowly pull the tick straight out until it lets go. ■





# Getting Ready to Barbecue?

These tips from the CDC will help keep your grilling prep safe.

**Separate.** When shopping, pick up meat, poultry, and seafood last, right before checkout. Separate those items from other food in your shopping cart and grocery bags. To avoid cross-contamination, put packages of raw meat and poultry into individual plastic bags.

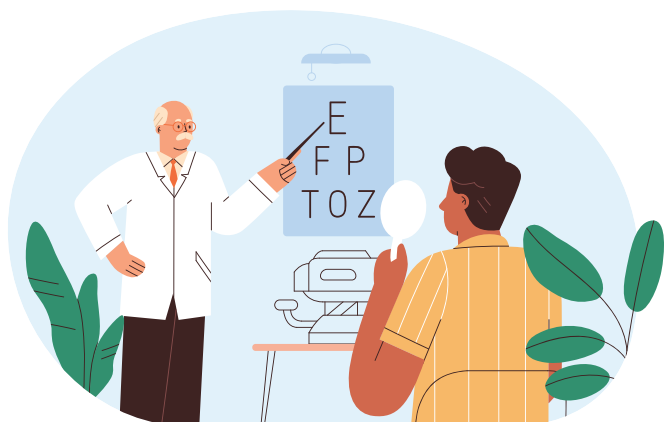
**Chill.** Keep meat, poultry, and seafood refrigerated until ready to grill. When transporting, keep it at 40° F or below in an insulated cooler.

**Marinate safely.** Always marinate food in the refrigerator no matter what kind of marinade you're using. Never thaw or marinate meat, poultry, or seafood on the counter.

**Clean.** Wash your hands with soap before and after handling raw meat, poultry, and seafood. Wash surfaces and utensils with hot, soapy water before and after cooking.

**Don't cross-contaminate.** Throw out marinades that have touched raw meat. Use clean utensils and a clean plate to remove cooked meat from the grill. Don't place cooked meat back on a plate that held raw meat. ■

Go to [CDC.gov/foodsafety](https://www.cdc.gov/foodsafety) for expert information about food safety in all seasons.



## Care for Your Eyes

Eyes truly are your windows on the world, and it's worth making sure they're cared for. Remember that US Family Health Plan covers one eye exam per Plan year (January 1 – December 31) by an optometrist in the EyeMed network.

Members also receive a 35 percent discount on frames, lenses, and sunglasses when you see an EyeMed network provider. Call EyeMed at **866.504.5908**, go to [tuftshealthplan.com/eyemed](https://tuftshealthplan.com/eyemed), or call Member Services at **800.818.8589** for details. ■





# Succotash

## Sunny Side Up

**Few dishes** say “summer day” like succotash, the traditional sauteed mix of lima beans and corn, staples at summer markets. Understood to be the invention of Native Americans in New England, succotash and its variations have spread across the country, including southwestern versions with hot peppers, and southern versions with bacon or ham.

The word “succotash” is derived from the Narragansett word *sahquittahhash* (broken corn kernels), which entered the English language not just through a love of the vegetable dish, but through reinforcement by Sylvester the Cat and Daffy Duck, whose exclamations of “Sufferin’ succotash!” ricochet through cartoon-lovers’ memories.

Also known as “butter beans,” lima beans are high in potassium and a good source of iron and magnesium.

*Makes 6 servings*

- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- ¼ cup chopped onion
- ½ cup chopped red bell pepper
- 1½ cups fresh or frozen lima beans
- 2 cups fresh or frozen corn
- 2 tablespoons water
- 3 tablespoons white vinegar
- 2 tablespoons chopped flat parsley

Heat the oil in a large skillet over medium-low heat. Add the onion and bell pepper and cook, stirring frequently, until soft. Add the lima beans, corn, and water, and cook, again stirring often, for about 4 minutes.

Remove from the heat, mix in the vinegar and chopped parsley, and serve right away.

**Riff on this all you want,** depending on what’s available and what you hanker for. Try edamame beans instead of lima beans or basil instead of parsley, or stir in some halved cherry tomatoes right after you take the pan off the heat. ■







*at ease*

Heaven is under our feet  
as well as over our heads.

— Henry David Thoreau,  
*Walden, or Life in the Woods*



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## The Comfort of Birds

In the spring magazine, I asked if any Plan members had thoughts about birdwatching. Anna Byron (left), a member just finishing her freshman year at Roger Williams University in Bristol, Rhode Island, kindly obliged.

“Birding,” she says, “is a grounding and calming experience for me. I started doing it because my brother, Luke, likes it so much.”

Now birding has become a way for Anna to relax and connect with friends. They especially enjoy birding at the beach.

“We’ve been seeing ospreys come back to Bristol. And we’ve seen a barred owl!” But her favorite bird?

“A tufted titmouse,” she says, with bliss in her voice. “I love a tufted titmouse.”

Members: Have any more of you taken up birding? What are your favorites and where do you find them? Let me know at **kerry.tucker@usfamilyhealth.org**.

Kerry Tucker  
Managing Editor/Senior Writer

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[usfamilyhealth.org](https://usfamilyhealth.org)

