



Atrium
Medical Center

F O U N D A T I O N

LEGENDS

FROM THE HILL TO THE ATRIUM

*A Tribute to the Men and Women
Who Made It Happen*

ISSUE 20

Our Medical Staff



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“The good physician treats the disease; the great physician treats the patient who has the disease.”

— William Osler, MD, co-founder of Johns Hopkins Hospital
and pioneer in bedside clinical training

For more than 100 years, Middletown Hospital in all its incarnations – Middletown Regional and Atrium Medical Center – has served its community and now its region not only with advances in diagnostics and treatment, but also with a corps of exceptional physicians whose commitment to patient care is unmatched. The hospital’s physicians have adapted and thrived, ensuring medical care continues to reach new heights.



Pioneering Physicians

In 1917, after much effort by the community, the 28-bed Middletown Hospital opened its doors with a small staff of family practitioners and surgeons. Dr. David Gerber, who used to make house calls on his bicycle, was one of the first physicians to practice at the new hospital, a step up from where he had opened his practice at the Armco Infirmary in 1908. When Dr. Mabel Gardner started her practice in Middletown in 1915, she was the city's first woman doctor. Dr. Gardner was a strong supporter of the hospital in its earliest days, and she was the driving force behind the 1956 expansion of the hospital's obstetrics department.

Dr. E. O. Bauer arrived in Middletown in 1911, as development of the new hospital was underway. He jumped right in to help find a location and plan the facility. When the hospital opened in 1917, Dr. Bauer was its first surgeon and held many leadership positions, including a stint as hospital administrator, until his retirement in 1953. He admitted the first patient to the new hospital and performed the first surgery, a successful appendectomy.

Physicians Push Medical Advances

As Middletown grew, so did the demand for a larger hospital. Physicians in Middletown were busy and always advocating for their patients. In the 1960s, hospital expansion established a new emergency room and brought bed capacity to nearly 300. Senior medical students covered the



ER with physicians serving on a rotating on-call basis. Family physicians were contacted if needed. Eventually emergency medicine became a distinct specialty.

A Force in the Community

In the 1960s, 70s and 80s, hospital rules required physicians to live within a certain number of miles or minutes from the hospital. With this close proximity, camaraderie ran high. Physicians knew each other, and so did their spouses.

Physician couples were involved in the community and worked together on fundraising events like the Charity Ball and the not-to-be-missed High Fever Follies talent show.

Group practice began to emerge where solo practice had been the norm. Bound together as they were, Middletown physicians became a force at the hospital. They monitored and policed themselves.





Section and interdisciplinary meetings were held in physicians' homes. All physicians gathered monthly in a conference room in the nursing school to discuss business matters and review cases. Saturday mornings saw grand rounds. Physicians often gathered to socialize in the surgeon's lounge overlooking West Middletown. On Sundays, physicians did their rounds and met at a coffee shop for friendly conversation.

Growth and Change

The 1970s began an era of rapidly accelerating medical advances, and Middletown Hospital was on the cutting edge. Middletown surgeons performed arthroscopic surgery before it received national attention. The hospital's surgeons were also the first in Southwest Ohio to perform FDA-approved total hip replacement and the first to use the Yag laser.

In 1983, Middletown Hospital became Middletown Regional Hospital to better reflect the hospital's ever-expanding service area.

Middletown was no longer a small town. Physicians from other cities came to practice in the city, and the requirement that physicians live



near the hospital was lifted. As diversity in medical practice grew, so, too, did the hospital's role as a force beyond the borders of Middletown.

While patient diagnosis and treatment advanced, operation of the hospital became more complicated. Meanwhile, the hospitalist specialty emerged, allowing most family doctors to focus their time on patients in the office.

Medicine continues to become more specialized and efficient. Ever-improving technology has led to more same-day and less-invasive surgeries.

In 2005 Middletown Regional Hospital joined Dayton-based Premier Health. In 2007, "the hospital on the hill" became the 328-bed Atrium Medical Center, a new, now 260-acre campus located near Interstate 75. The former seven-employee hospital had become Middletown's second largest employer and among the top 5 percent of hospitals nationwide for clinical excellence, according to Healthgrades. The medical staff's continual drive for innovation and excellence helped to fuel the growth.

Working Together

The practice of medicine is more precise today – and it's also more of a business than it was in 1917, when physicians were very involved in running Middletown Hospital. Today physician presence on boards and committees of the hospital, health system, and Atrium Medical Center Foundation helps ensure that the medical staff understands Atrium's administrative challenges and can contribute to solutions.

Today there is greater understanding that working together impacts quality. Physicians have also organized their own house. Leadership follows a clear-cut progression, with a face toward both the administration and the medical staff – always putting patients' well-being first.



It seems the hospital has come full circle since Dr. E.O. Bauer's administrative role in the early years. In January 2019, Dr. Keith Bricking was named president of Atrium Medical Center. He continues a tradition of physician leadership that includes the more than 50 physicians who have served as medical staff president/chief of staff since 1917. With the support of an outstanding and growing medical staff numbering nearly 650 – as well as dedicated employees, volunteers and donors – he leads the hospital into its second century of service in Southwest Ohio.



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This article is the 20th in a series of profiles celebrating the 2017 centennial anniversary of Atrium Medical Center (formerly Middletown Hospital and Middletown Regional Hospital). The series honors the men and women whose civic-mindedness and genuine caring for others helped Greater Middletown grow and contributed to the first-class medical center the region boasts today.

Past Legends focused on:

Paul Galeese, *Issue 1*; E.O. Bauer, MD, and John L. Bauer, MD, *Issue 2*; Educating Our Caregivers, *Issue 3*; Russell L. "Rusty" Malcolm, MD, and Albert S. Malcolm, MD, *Issue 4*; Ann and Arthur Bidwell, *Issue 5*; Atrium Auxiliary Middletown, *Issue 6*; Dr. Dick and Charlotte Nisbet, *Issue 7*; The Wilbur Cohen Family, *Issue 8*; Middletown Area Federation of Women's Clubs, *Issue 9*; Dolly Frieman Casper, *Issue 10*; The Sawyer Family, *Issue 11*; Southwest Ohio Businesses, *Issue 12*; Dr. Raymond and Jean Anne Kiefhaber, *Issue 13*; Richard "Dick" Slagle, *Issue 14*; Celebrating 100 Years, *Issue 15*; The Levey Family, *Issue 16*; Walter H. Roehll Jr., MD, *Issue 17*; Atrium Medical Center Foundation, *Issue 18*; The Breiel Family, *Issue 19*.

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