

## ABOUT THE CLINIC

To honor Robert Patterson's legacy of wanting to help others, the Living Water Community Clinic will name Exam Room No. 1 in his honor. Donations can be made online at [livingwaterclinic.life](http://livingwaterclinic.life) or through the mail at Living Water Community Clinic, Box 583, Locust Grove, VA 22508.

The clinic is for uninsured adults in Orange, Spotsylvania and Culpeper counties and is open each Thursday at 5 p.m. at 32345 Constitution Highway, Suite P, Locust Grove. The phone number is 540/854-5922.

While Patterson's story is "the most shining example," said Dr. Mike Evans, a clinic volunteer, of someone whose spiritual and medical needs were met, he's among more than 63,000 uninsured or underinsured Virginians who were helped in similar facilities last year, said Rebecca Butler, a spokesperson for the Virginia Association of Free & Charitable Clinics.

"Our clinics make it possible for vulnerable patients to regain their health, care for their families and contribute to their communities," Butler said, adding the clinics provided more than \$129 million worth of health care services.



TRISTAN LOREI / THE FREE LANCE-STAR

Robert Patterson says he's happy as he enters what could be the final phase of his life. His only desire is to let others know of the medical and spiritual help he received from the Living Water Community Clinic.

## CANCER PATIENT FINDS COMFORT IN COMMUNITY CLINIC

# 'Near the end of his journey, he's at peace'

BY CATHY DYSON  
THE FREE LANCE-STAR

Robert Patterson has terminal cancer and pain so fierce, he said it feels like there's a knife in his stomach.

But no one would know it by the look on his face or the tone of his conversation. Terry Maple, a Lake of the Woods Church chaplain who's become Patterson's driver, Bible reader and best buddy during what may be the last months of the sick man's life, said he's never heard him complain.

"There's not a word of negativity that comes out of Robert's mouth and that's absolutely amazing," Maple said. "Whereas you hear some people, 'Oh, why is it me?' he's accepted it and he's living with it."

As he's battled nausea from chemotherapy and dizziness from pain medicine, Patterson has been determined to leave a legacy. He wants others to know how he found healing—of the mind, body



PROVIDED

Patterson was first seen six years ago at the Living Water Clinic by Mike Evans, a physician's assistant.

and soul—at the Living Water Community Clinic in Locust Grove.

"I just hope this will help at least let one person, even if it's just one, see what ya'll have done for me," he said about those who donate their medical, counseling or administrative skills to the clinic. "I think other people need to know that there is good organizations out there, Christian organizations, that



TRISTAN LOREI / THE FREE LANCE-STAR

Patterson has dizzy spells and fell as he opened the clinic door to visitors.

want to help people."

For the last six weeks, Debbie McInnis, the clinic's executive director, has worked to schedule an interview between The Free Lance-Star and Patterson when he felt up to it. Ongoing chemo sessions knocked him down, and he had to repeatedly cancel the interview. He got so sick, he was hospitalized and then moved in with his sister, Gale Patterson in Spotsylvania County.

When he was able to be interviewed, he was alert and smiling. His color looked good and his head was full of curly gray hair. He joked that others have told him he's got the "purtiest hair they've ever seen in their lives."

He watched the traffic from the front porch, grateful for the chance to meet new people and share his story.

"When you think you're going to be talking to someone on their deathbed, you

SEE PATTERSON, A16



TRISTAN LOREI / THE FREE LANCE-STAR

Cassandra Singleton stands outside the Lloyd F. Moss Free Clinic.

## FORMER MOSS CLINIC PATIENT WORKING AS STAFF MEMBER

BY CATHY DYSON  
THE FREE LANCE-STAR

When patients at the Lloyd Moss Free Clinic in Fredericksburg come into Cassandra Singleton's office for help with paperwork, she knows exactly what they're going through.

Not long ago, Singleton was on the other side of the desk. She was a patient at the free clinic from 2011-17, after she moved to Virginia and didn't have a job or health insurance. Since November, she's worked as office

SEE SINGLETON, A16

## PATTERSON

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walk in with a certain set of expectations,” said Dr. Mike Evans, who first examined him. “But he defies those. Even though he’s near the end of his journey here, he’s at peace.”

### ‘ALOT OF STRUGGLES’

That was not the case the first time Patterson, 61, entered the clinic, a ministry of the Lake of the Woods Church in Orange County. That was in June 2016 on the second night it was open. He paced around the building until one of the greeters saw him and invited him inside.

“He had a lot of struggles with his social situation, finances, trying to find work,” said Dr. Cullen Hardy, a cardiologist in Culpeper and the clinic’s medical director. “He had substance issues and was pretty depressed. I think he was suffering the woes of lack of people around him and family.”

Patterson doesn’t have the happiest of backgrounds. Orphaned at an early age, he and his older sister lived in different foster homes and didn’t see much of each other. His education didn’t go past the eighth grade. He worked in landscaping and liked doing things with his hands, like working on cars, but he also struggled with alcohol abuse.

Patterson started coming to the clinic to get medical help for an assortment of ailments: chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, heart problems, back issues. When asked if he wanted to speak with a counselor—an option that McInnis said is offered but never forced—he agreed and Hardy said that seemed to cure what ailed him.

“I saw him after an interaction with the counselors there and he was a different guy,” Hardy said. “He was put together. He had stopped the alcohol use, he looked healthier, his face looked less gaunt and better.”

Patterson started making regular visits to the medical clinic, open each Thursday at 5 p.m. to uninsured adults in Orange, Spotsylvania and Culpeper counties. He said he always left feeling better, even after last summer when an unusual twitch led Hardy to order a scan. It showed cancer in the brain, and Patterson has since learned it’s also in his lungs and liver.

As Patterson dealt with his



PHOTOS BY TRISTAN LOREI / THE FREE LANCE-STAR

**Terry Maple (left) and Robert Patterson joke about Patterson picking up Maple’s British accent and habits, including the proper way to drink tea.**

diagnosis, clinic and church volunteers came to his aid. They brought him fresh vegetables and prepared meals, worked on a plumbing problem, mowed his lawn. McInnis is among those who call or text almost daily, just to see how he’s doing. She even contacted him while she was on vacation at the beach.

“I can’t get over that,” said his sister, Gale. “I mean, they have been there every step of the way for him. And with what Robby’s going through, we’ve all got each other to support each other.”

When it got to the point Patterson couldn’t drive to treatments or checkups, McIn-

There’s not a word of negativity that comes out of Robert’s mouth and that’s absolutely amazing. Whereas you hear some people, ‘Oh, why is it me?’ he’s accepted it and he’s living with it.

—TERRY MAPLE

nis put out a call for help and Maple, a former lay minister and government worker, answered it.

The two bonded on the first ride.



**Maple, a chaplain at Lake of the Woods Church, enjoys the community because he said many have a heart to help others.**

### ‘NOT AFRAID NO MORE’

Maple is 74 and British, so when he reads the traditional version of the Bible, it sounds as if King James himself is reciting it.

“I really never read the Bible, and he reads it to me and the way he reads it, I understand it,” Patterson said. “And I like his language, his accent.”

They joke that Maple’s way of talking—and culture—is rubbing off.

“Today he was talking about tea and biscuits,” Patterson said.

“Oh yes, we’re teaching him to drink tea properly,” Maple said, sounding ever so regal.

“I hold my pinkie out,” Patterson said, demonstrating.

“And he said biscuits, not cookies, so we’re really winning here,” Maple added. “We’ll make him a Brit before we’re finished.”

On a more serious note, Patterson said that Maple has helped him not be afraid of what’s to come. He said he knows he’s headed to a place where his pain will end.

“God will take me in his realm so I’m not afraid no more,” Patterson said.

There’s only one downside.

“I just hate leaving my family and friends behind, of course,” he said. “Especially the people in the clinic who’s helped me.”

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## SINGLETON

► FROM A1

manager at the facility that provided \$8.5 million in free services to more than 1,110 local residents in 2020.

While Singleton, 63, has a background in health care—she worked in hospitals and medical offices in Texas—she also has “a really good heart for the work that we do here,” said Karen Dulaney, executive director. “It’s extra special because of her past experiences.”

It’s also the first time in the clinic’s 29-year history that a former patient has transitioned to staff member. Others have volunteered at the clinic, which offers medical and dental care and a pharmacy for the uninsured or underinsured in the Fredericksburg area, Dulaney said, but none has become employed there before.

As office manager, Singleton has a lot of responsibilities, from making sure there’s toner in the printer to stocking paper products in the kitchen. But her primary duties are helping patients navigate the sometimes confusing—and lengthy—process of applying for Medicaid or filing the necessary paperwork to have their bills written off as charitable cases by Mary Washington Healthcare.

Each weekday, she may help eight to 10 people go over the list of needed documents. Interpreters are available to help with the many Latino patients, and Singleton said

she’s also seeing an increase in the number of refugees from Afghanistan.

Patients applying for financial assistance from MWHC have to provide information about their illness or injury, household, work status, what assistance they may receive, their monthly expenses and bank account balances.

Sometimes, Singleton has to practice tough love and let people know that while she’s there to help them, they have to do their part as well if they want their bills excused. There are steps that must be followed, she said, and when people want to bypass them, she tries to get them on the right path.

“I do have a passion to assist people and I also have a stern attitude with the ones who are stubborn, I would say,” she said. “I try to encourage them and let them know that I am here to help you, I’m not trying to hinder you in this process. There are things that you have to do to help yourself. With both of us working together cohesively, we can get this done because it’s gonna be kind of a lengthy process.”

Singleton files client’s paperwork with various medical offices in the area and anyone who’s ever done that knows what’s required can differ from one provider to the next—and that the tasks can be fraught with frustration. One patient may have been billed by four or five different practices within the healthcare system and she sends along the patient’s financial

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—CASSANDRA SINGLETON

status—and whether the person has been approved for assistance by MWHC—to all those places.

“My cup runneth over,” she said, laughing and noting she sometimes has to take a deep breath and keep moving forward. “I do a lot of exercise breathing throughout the day.”

Singleton also is the custodian of medical records and makes sure the paper trail of a person’s application for Medicaid or disability status, as well as medical history, is entered into the electronic system. Being “old school,” she also keeps hard copies, filed away in her desk drawer in alphabetical order.

That proved helpful when “some people accidentally deleted my files from the system,” she said. “I was like, Well, thank God I still had a

hard copy.”

As a former patient, Singleton recalled the way staff members, volunteers and providers who donated their time to the clinic helped when she needed regular checkups, mammograms or treatment for a rotator cuff issue.

“They were so warm and helpful with me when I was going through different issues and they treated me so good,” she said.

Apart from work, Singleton is active with Emmanuel AME Church in Stafford County, where she’s volunteered in the office and worked in the food bank and on clothes drives. A Stafford resident, she describes herself as happily divorced and “Nana” to six grandchildren, and she enjoys activities and day trips with family and church friends.

Her son, Chadrick Minniefield, lives in Fredericksburg and encouraged her to move to the area from Texas. He has a Ph.D. in finance—the family calls him their “financial guru”—and he also encouraged her to go back to school and get her degree in business administration. She did just that and got the medical treatment she needed at Moss while she studied.

She graduated in 2017 and did various other jobs before she was hired at the free clinic last fall.

“I thank God for Karen Dulaney for giving me a chance, and I love my position,” she said. “I love helping people.”

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# Snake sightings up as humans move in

## IF YOU'RE BITTEN

If you or someone you know is bitten by a snake, try to remember its color and shape to help medical officials determine treatment, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website. Officials do not recommend people try to kill the snake or handle it, even if it's dead. Here are other tips from the CDC:

- Keep still and calm to slow down the spread of venom.
- Seek medical attention immediately.
- If you cannot get to the hospital right away: Lie or sit down with the bite below the level of the heart. Wash the wound with warm, soapy water and cover it with a clean, dry dressing.
- Do not apply a tourniquet, cut the wound or try to suck out the venom.
- Do not apply ice or heat or immerse the wound in water.
- Do not drink alcohol or caffeinated beverages.

BY CATHY DYSON  
THE FREE LANCE-STAR

People may have seen more copperheads this spring and summer, but that doesn't necessarily mean there are more snakes in the Fredericksburg region.

More likely, things that slither are on the move—and coming into contact with people and pets—because of all the construction taking place around them.

“It's not like one summer they have billions of babies. Instead, it comes down to more habitat loss and availability of food,” said Sgt. Peter O'Brien, an animal control officer with the Spotsylvania Sheriff's Office. “Because of all the subdivisions and land being built on, it's pushed them out.”

Mike Arrington owns VA Wildlife Removal, based in Fredericksburg, and estimates he's gotten up to 10% more calls this year from frantic people who have seen copperheads in backyards—or on back porches—and want them out of there. He said he's turning down more jobs than he's taking because of so many requests.

“I tell everyone D.C.'s coming to Fredericksburg, there's more building and construction,” Arrington said. “We're tearing up their habitat and they're moving into housing developments.”

He said he's had more calls than



PETER CIHELKA / THE FREE LANCE-STAR

Levi was bitten above the right eye by a copperhead on the stoop of his family's Woodbridge home.

normal this season about all snakes, but “more so copperheads.” They are the most common venomous snake in this part of Virginia, although O'Brien said people often misidentify them.

SEE SNAKES, A6

# SNAKES

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Copperheads tend to have thick, muscular bodies and ridged scales, according to the Live Science website. Their heads have a triangular, arrow shape that's distinct from the neck, and their bodies typically sport patterns of reddish-brown cross-bands that sometimes look like hourglasses or dumbbells.

Juveniles are more gray than adults and have bright yellow tails, O'Brien said. That color usually fades in about a year.

Officials at local hospitals for both people and animals said they're not seeing any more snakebites than usual—although Free Lance—Star photographer Pete Cihelka heard otherwise last week. His son, Shane, and dog, Levi, were walking past the front stoop of their home in Woodbridge when Shane saw a snake. It was dusk, and the snake was heading into a rock garden next to the front steps.

The dog, an 8-year-old cockapoo, didn't yelp or react in any way when he walked by the snake, but soon thereafter "the whole right side of his face swelled up and he kept hiding under furniture to avoid us," Cihelka said.

While waiting at an emergency clinic about an hour later, Cihelka noticed two puncture wounds above Levi's right eye. Veterinarians who treated Levi in the clinic and during a follow-up visit said his bite was typical of a wound from a venomous snake—and that they'd seen more snakebites than usual this summer in Northern Virginia.

At Confederate Ridge Animal Hospital in Fredericksburg, receptionist Dorothy McKeithan hasn't scheduled appointments this year for pets with similar encounters. But she lives in an apartment complex and has been warned about what's outside.

A copperhead isn't one to warn when it's going to strike, it kind of sits and preys.

—DR. MADELYN GONZALEZ

"My neighbor said there's baby copperheads in the tall grass so watch out," McKeithan said. "She said to be careful because where there's one, there's more."

That is true, Arrington said. He trains his teams to not stop when they find one snake, but to keep looking because there probably are more. Copperheads give birth to live young and usually have eight to 10 babies per year, but can bear up to 18 young, he said.

This is birthing season "so people really need to be careful, especially of a night, late in the evening," Arrington said. "When the sun goes down, they're just like us, they're looking to get cool from the daily heat and they're crawling out on driveways and concrete stoops."

If they've been displaced by construction, they also may be drawn to homes with outside lights, O'Brien said. The lights attract moths and other insects which attract toads which, in turn, draw snakes.

Copperheads tend to feed at dusk, and if they're



PROVIDED

Soon after he was bitten by a copperhead in July 2020, Fisher the Lab had considerable swelling.



PROVIDED

Fisher still has scars from the copperhead bites. His owners say he's also more anxious in the yard.

going to bite a pet, it's probably going to be a canine.

"No offense to dogs," said Dr. Madelyn Gonzalez, medical director at St. Francis Animal Hospital in Spotsylvania, "but cats tend to be a little smarter," at least when it comes to snakes. "They don't stick their muzzle up to a copperhead's safety zone."

Also, "the dogs can't leave them alone," McKeithan said. "They think they're a toy."

If pet owners don't see the bite take place, it can be hard to know if a dog was bitten by a snake or stung by some sort of insect. However, there's usually blood tinged somewhere and a laceration or small wound, often with fang marks, Gonzalez said.

Keri Webb, the practice manager at St. Francis, saw her dog, Fisher, get bitten in July 2020 on two different occasions, both by copperheads. The black Lab was a puppy then, just playing in the yard when it was bitten.

"That's typically how it happens," said Gonzalez, who treated Fisher. "A copperhead isn't one to warn when it's going to strike, it kind of sits and preys."

The vet usually treats canine snakebite victims with pain medicine, antibiotics because "snake mouths are pretty gnarly and have a lot of bacteria in there," an antihistamine to ward off an allergic reaction and laser therapy which increases blood flow to the area and helps cells regenerate.

Even with Fisher's quick treatment, he ended up with scars on the side of his face from dead tissue caused by the bite. The encounters also changed his personality, Webb said.

"He was an outgoing and brave puppy, and he is now riddled with a little more anxiety and stress," she said. "He has moments he's nervous in the

backyard and doesn't want to go out unless we're with him."

The Webbs live in Lee's Hill South with woods and a golf course behind them. After the snakebites, Keri Webb said the family removed all the brush along the fence line and replaced it with gravel. They cut down thick honeysuckle that grew there and got rid of a trampoline. One of the snakes was near it, and Webb suspects it was searching for a shady spot.

"They like places where they can shelter and be protected," said Dr. Chris Holstege, director of UVA Health's Blue Ridge Poison Center at the University of Virginia. He was featured in a June story on UVA-Today about copperhead season.

"They like wood piles, because the temperature is fairly stable and it's easy for them to get into them," he said in the June article. "I've treated numerous bites after people were taking wood out of a wood pile."

Holstege said on Thursday he reviewed data and was "happy to report" that Virginia isn't seeing an increase in bites from venomous snakes this season compared to the last five years. In 2021, the state treated 167 bites and the center treated 22 venomous snake bites, most of them from copperheads, according to the U.Va. story.

He suggests people be careful about where they put their hands and feet this time of year.

"The snakes are out," he said, adding it's probably not a good idea to go outside barefoot while taking the dog on an evening walk. "I even had one guy whose dog was barking at the bushes and he put his hand in to separate the bushes and got bit by the snake."

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# Fredericksburg native has super antibodies

BY CATHY DYSON  
THE FREE LANCE-STAR

John Hollis has such a rare ability to fight the virus that's plagued the planet for 2½ years that he's been called the medical equivalent of the Holy Grail, an immunological unicorn—"immunicorn" for short—and COVID-19's worst nightmare.

The Fredericksburg native found out in the darkest days of the pandemic that not only is he immune from the disease that's killed more than 6.4 million people worldwide, but he also has wicked antibodies that aggressively kill the invading virus.



PROVIDED

A crew from the BBC films blood being drawn from Hollis in March 2021.

He's one of four men worldwide discovered to have this level of super blood coursing through their veins, and stories about his unusual medical status have been published in more than 120 countries.

A woman from Spain proposed marriage—he declined—and others have referred to his black magic or christened him the chosen one. One emailer from South America said Hollis was a direct descendent of Christ, immune to all the plagues of man.

"The whole thing is just mind-blowing," said Hollis, a Northern Virginia resident who worried, early on, how others might react to news of his powerful immune system. "People were scared and desperate then, and you never know what people who are scared and desperate might do."

SEE HOLLIS, A16

► FROM A1

He turned to friends for help, updating his classmates from Woodberry Forest School in Orange County and the University of Virginia on the discovery and almost daily conversations with doctors. They kept him sane by doing their best to keep things light.

“The running joke was, if you see white vans coming toward you, you need to run,” he said, referring to movie scenes when people are abducted by those in hazmat gear, tossed into white vehicles and never seen again.

The 55-year-old has had time to digest the heavy news handed him two years ago, when a research scientist at George Mason University, where Hollis works as a spokesman, told him tests revealed his super-charged immune system.

Hollis tends to be outgoing and talkative, but got so quiet when he learned the news, the doctor on the other end of the phone asked if he was still there.

“My jaw was on the floor, just hearing what I was hearing,” he said during an interview last week. “This was at a time when you’re seeing people dying in droves. The whole world was shutting down and all of a sudden you’re told, you’re an outlier of epic proportions.”

As Hollis has processed what it means to have blood that’s defeated every virus mutation—so far—he’s also pushed for the next step. Can scientists take his blood—and that of others with these super powers—and develop a one-size-fits-all vaccine that will kill whatever COVID-19 strain comes along? Can they replicate what’s in his blood to help other peoples’ immune systems fight off everything from coronavirus to cancer?

Those are the million-dollar questions Hollis has pondered in the wee hours of the night for last two years. He’s shared his story with anyone willing to listen and has been frustrated that pharmaceutical companies haven’t seemed that interested in the potential to prevent COVID-19, not just treat it. He has his suspicions as to why they’re not exactly knocking down his door,



PETER CIHELKA / THE FREE LANCE-STAR

**John Hollis talks about how doctors and scientists discovered his antibodies were especially gifted when it comes to killing the COVID-19 virus.**



PROVIDED

**Hollis and his son, Davis, take a selfie from the Eiffel Tower in Paris, right before the world shut down.**

but would rather not say.

“He definitely wants to do something to help, but that’s easier said than done,” said Kevin Tydings, a lawyer in Charlotte, North Carolina, and Hollis’ classmate from both Woodberry and U.Va. “He can’t make the drug companies do whatever they’ve got to do to create a vaccine or some sort of treatment.”

However, Hollis has taken it upon himself, using research skills he’s learned as a journalist to see what he can do with both the “responsibility and passion” he has to “do the right thing,” Tydings said.

Hollis has reached out to doctors, scientists and researchers across the world because he’s eager—almost desperate—to make the most of this discovery. On Tuesday, he has his first meeting, which he arranged, with a group of scientists and doctors to see what can be done.

“You feel like you’ve been given a gift, you need to use it for something,” he said. “I want to help, I can help. What if it’s my son or somebody I know who gets sick? I couldn’t live with myself if I didn’t try everything I could.”

### ‘IT WAS JUST CRAZY’

The blood test that changed his life almost didn’t happen.

In the first months of the pandemic, Hollis wrote a press release about the way researchers at George Mason University, led by Dr. Lance Liotta, had switched their focus to COVID-19. Liotta is a former deputy director at the National Institute of Health, and George Mason is one of 13 NIH-sponsored Biosafety-Level 3 Biomedical Research Laboratories with the facilities to handle live COVID samples.

Hollis was talking with Liotta in July 2020, after the doctor had tested

blood of COVID patients for antibodies. On his way out the door, Hollis casually mentioned that his housemate had been terribly sick with COVID and Hollis felt lucky that he hadn’t gotten it.

“Dr. Liotta said, why don’t you put your blood in the study, and I figured it would be cool to do it, just to be able to say I took part in a study like that,” Hollis said.

Two days later, he got the call that made his jaw drop. The doctor told him that he’d had COVID a few months earlier—but didn’t know it—and had since developed super antibodies resistant to the disease. Hollis began what would become a routine of twice-a-month blood draws at the George Mason clinic, where researchers put his blood through all sorts of wringers.

They discovered he had an American strain of the virus. Hollis had taken his teenage son, Davis, to Europe in early March—right before the world shut down from COVID—and figured he’d contracted it there.

Researchers also noticed that while others developed antibodies, most of their defenses waned over time. Hollis was the exception.

“Even when diluted 10,000 times, my blood still kills 90% of the virus,” Hollis said.

In two years of testing, Hollis said he’s been told his blood has killed all variants of COVID that have come along—and

doctors believe it may be lethal to SARS and SERS, other coronaviruses originated from bats. Liotta called him one morning to tell him he was testing his blood to see if it worked against the virus that causes AIDS. It didn’t.

“Can you imagine getting that phone call?” Hollis said, noting how he wondered if his blood could make a difference in a disease that’s killed more than 40 million people since the 1980s. “It was just crazy.”

In a February story by CBS News, Liotta said Hollis’ blood “gives us all of these new ideas for how we can fight the coronavirus or how we can make better vaccines or how we can choose individuals who would be ideal to donate their antibodies to help out others.”

### COMPARISONS TO LACKS

Hollis’ first newspaper job was covering sports for The Free Lance-Star and he resumed reporting on Fredericksburg-area high school football games recently, after moving back to Virginia five years ago. Before then, he’d spent most of the last 20 years farther South.

Hollis wrote for the Atlanta Journal-Constitution for more than a decade and covered the University of Florida’s Gators for three years. In 2017, he took his first job in higher education—as a media relations manager at George Mason University—and said he’s loved every minute of it.

His media savvy has proved beneficial as he’s dealt with newspaper reporters across the country and television networks with every letter acronym imaginable (think BBC, NBC and such). He wrote a first-person account about his super antibodies for Newsweek and it was published in March 2021.

Hollis also is working on a book that will detail his experiences as well as some of the ironies at play.

“We have a global pandemic that’s adversely affected people of color the most and here you potentially have a Black man who could play a role at a time when America is reconciling its racist past,” he said.

But if there’s a recurring theme among the thousands of emails and contacts from people world-

wide — o t h e r t h a n being called Superman—it’s warnings for him not to become another Henrietta Lacks. She was a Black woman in Baltimore who died from cervical cancer in 1951.

Doctors at Johns Hopkins Hospital took tissue samples from Lacks without her knowledge, and while other cells typically died in a lab setting, ones from Lacks reproduced every 24 hours. She was part of one of the most important cell lines in medical research.

“Henrietta’s cells were the first immortal human cells ever grown in culture,” according to Smithsonian Magazine. “They were essential to developing the polio vaccine. They went up in the first space missions to see what would happen to cells in zero gravity. Many scientific landmarks since then have used her cells, including cloning, gene mapping and in vitro fertilization.”

### ‘SHOWN HIS CHARACTER’

As Hollis and hundreds of people who contacted him pointed out, neither Lacks nor her survivors received any financial benefit from the billions of dollars’ worth of products generated from her immortal cells.

That’s why Hollis consults regularly with a team of lawyers as he attempts to find a way to help others with his super antibodies. He says the financial implications are just as staggering as the potential medical benefits.

As he proceeds with his quest to become what Liotta called “a hope for COVID recovery” and to make sure he’s fairly compensated for such, friends who’ve shared his incredible journey are certain he’ll find a way balance both.

“John’s a very intelligent, level-headed guy,” said RJ Lackey, a U.Va. alum who practices law in Danville. He said his friend has dealt with this “shocking and amazing and crazy” revelation exactly as he would have expected.

“This has shown his character and his love of life,” Lackey said, “and his love of fellow humans and his absolute humor in a crazy world.”