
ISSUE # 5

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Newsletter



2025 International Walk 4 PICS: It was a huge success!

In 2023, the inaugural Nashville, TN Walk 4 PICS was held at The Parthenon at Centennial Park in collaboration with the Critical Illness, Brain Dysfunction, and Survivorship (CIBS) Center at Vanderbilt University Medical Center. Approximately 40 walkers were present. Small but fierce, the annual Walk 4 PICS began.

For the second annual Walk 4 PICS, 11 locations in the USA and across the pond joined the movement. 2024 also marked the addition of the Richard Langford Service Awards.

The Richard Langford Service Award was born from both heartbreak and hope. Richard was one of the earliest ICU survivors to be formally diagnosed with Post-Intensive Care Syndrome (PICS), a condition that too often shapes the rest of a survivor's life in ways the world rarely sees. The long-term challenges, what PICS does to our bodies, our minds, our lives, are real and they last. This is the truth we feel compelled to share. Richard lived that truth with courage and grace.

As the first Walk 4 PICS approached, it was clear that Richard's health was declining and that he might be called home before the event. That possibility felt impossible to accept. Richard had given so much of himself by surviving, by sharing, and by allowing others to learn from his journey. His story needed to be honored, held, and carried forward.



The award is a way of keeping Richard alive in our mission. Each year, we recognize survivors and providers whose service, compassion, and advocacy reflect the same spirit Richard shared with us. Through this award, his legacy continues to guide us toward a kinder, wiser future for ICU survivors everywhere.

We are incredibly humbled by the number of people who continue this journey with us.

Topics you will find in this issue

- 2025 Recipients of the Richard Langford Service Award
- Reflections from some of the 2025 International Walk4PICS sites

Presenting the 2025 Richard Langford Service Award Recipients



Brian C. Peach, PhD, RN, CCRN, 2025 Richard Langford Service Award recipient

Dr. Brian Peach is an Associate Professor at the University of Central Florida (UCF) College of Nursing. He teaches courses in critical care, acute adult care, pathophysiology, pharmacology, and research. He is also a critical care researcher. Most recently, Dr. Peach's focus has been on ICU delirium and its impact on patients and their families. The goal of his research is to improve outcomes by understanding and developing strategies to treat Post-Intensive Care Syndrome (PICS).

Dr. Peach practiced many years as a nurse, mainly working in the ICU setting. He is a member of multiple societies - including the Society of Critical Care Medicine (SCCM), the American Psychological Association's ICU sub-group, and the PICS Advocacy Network - and is involved in various projects within those societies. He is a fierce PICS advocate and a key leader of the Orlando Walk 4 PICS movement.



Barbara VanMeter-Nivens 2025 Richard Langford Service Award recipient

If you saw Barbara's name in a dictionary, it would have to say caring, passionate, and persistent, to name a few.

Barbara contracted COVID-19 in 2020 and has suffered with nearly every side effect and illness associated with Long COVID.

Although her body fails her at times, she remains a fierce fighter and advocate for PICS and Long COVID. She is a Peer Leader and willingly shares her story with anyone who will listen.

She also helps edit and write the Walk 4 PICS newsletter and is very involved with the planning of the Nashville Walk 4 PICS.



Kirsten Harrell, PsyD, 2025 Richard Langford Service Award recipient

"I will remember this day forever. I received a call from Barbara telling me Kirsten was receiving this award. I was beaming with pride but had to keep it a secret. Very difficult indeed. Kirsten was so deserving and I knew it could not go to a more dedicated person. Knowing I would be presenting the award to her, I couldn't wait.

The day of the walk was exciting. Kirsten had no idea until the walk was about to begin in Tennessee. I set up the computer so all of her beloved BOX FRIENDS could watch me present this to her. What an honor to do this and to see how touched she was. Not a dry eye in the house here in Arizona.

This award sits front and center for all to see. It reminds me every time I look at it how honored I am to have Kirsten in my life. She is strong, courageous, super smart, and beautiful."

(quote provided by Kirsten's partner)



Perth, Australia

Thank you to everyone who took part in the inaugural Walk 4 PICS event in Perth, which aimed to help raise awareness about Post-Intensive Care Syndrome (PICS).

Coordinated by the Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital Intensive Care Unit (ICU), the walk saw more than 80 people, including our staff, ICU survivors and colleagues from ICUs across Western Australia (WA), walk from the Kid's Bridge into Kings Park.

Up to one in two ICU survivors experience PICS, which can affect physical health, cognitive function, and mental health.

The SCGH ICU runs an ICU Follow-up Clinic, providing multidisciplinary care and recovery support. This includes support for PICS through WA's first I See You Peer Support Group, where survivors and families connect and share experiences.

To find out more about these initiatives, please contact:

- Dr Matthew Anstey, ICU Consultant and Research Co-Lead:
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- Xavier Fiorilla, ICU Research Coordinator:
xavier.fiorilla@health.wa.gov.au



Brisbane, Australia

2025 was the first year we participated in the International Walk 4 PICS. Above and below are some photos from our excellent walk.





Houston Walk 4 PICS

On September 27, 2025, Houston Methodist's Critical Care Recovery Clinic hosted their 2nd Annual Walk 4 PICS event to raise awareness about Post-Intensive Care Syndrome (PICS) and its impact on ICU survivors and their families. The event brought together former ICU patients, loved ones, healthcare professionals, and community members for a meaningful morning of connection and education. Participants completed a short 0.8-mile walk through the Texas Medical Center, symbolizing the journey of recovery after critical illness. This collaborative effort highlighted the importance of supporting patients and caregivers beyond the ICU and fostering community engagement in improving long-term outcomes.

Houston Methodist Critical Care Recovery Clinic

Recovery from a critical illness or injury isn't always a straight line — either for patients or their loved ones. Following an intensive care unit (ICU) stay, patients can develop physical, mental and emotional symptoms that affect their well-being and quality of life, called post-intensive care syndrome (PICS). Loved ones can experience similar symptoms, called post-intensive care syndrome-family (PICS-F).

The Houston Methodist Critical Care Recovery Clinic, launched by the Center for Critical Care, is dedicated to recognizing and addressing the complex needs of individuals experiencing PICS, PICS-F and other conditions related to ICU hospitalization.

The Houston Methodist Critical Care Recovery Clinic is the first ICU recovery clinic in the State of Texas to participate as an active member of The Critical and Acute Illness Recovery Organization (CAIRO). CAIRO is a global collaborative of physicians, nurses, social workers, psychologists, pharmacists and rehabilitation specialists dedicated to improving outcomes for intensive care unit (ICU) survivors and their families.

Critical Care Doesn't Stop After an ICU Discharge

Houston Methodist sees more than 23,000 ICU patients every year, and more than half will experience PICS.

Our Critical Care Recovery Clinic team includes experts in caring for post-intensive care syndrome (PICS), post-intensive care syndrome-family (PICS-F) and other conditions related to ICU hospitalization.

To ensure patients receive the care, support and guidance that is tailored to their specific condition and unique needs, our critical care recovery team includes:

- Critical care intensivists
- Critical care pharmacists
- Nurse practitioners
- Physical and occupational therapists
- Psychologists
- Respiratory therapists
- Social workers
- Registered dietitians

We also partner with experts from other specialties to offer additional support that can further help survivors recover from their ICU experience.

Comprehensive Care Tailored to You

Our multidisciplinary team works to identify the underlying cause of someone's symptoms to develop a plan with the most effective treatment options available. We continuously explore innovative options to help improve quality of life and support PICS recovery.



Los Angeles and San Francisco Walks 4 PICS

We had our First LA Walk 4 PICS, which was exciting, inspirational and motivating! We held our walk in a park in Santa Monica, and though our turnout was small, we are excited to grow with more planning time next year.

Here are a few words from physicians who participated.

Ravi: (physician) "I was very proud of our PICS support group and our walk in the park. Finding the energy and enthusiasm to participate in this type of event is not easy for those of us living with PICS. I am so grateful for the unrelenting commitment of our group in making the LA walk happen... it is an event and accomplishment that I am proud to be part of."

Rashmi (physician): "I'm so grateful that we hosted our first PICS walk in LA for 2025. It was so wonderful to be in community with everyone in person rather than via zoom. Due to the hard work of our team, we not only had signage and food/prizes for our walkers, but we had informational folders to share. These incredible handouts described PICS and the struggles/challenges that survivors face and also highlighted resources on simple mind-body-spirit practices that can alleviate some of the burden. We shared this with a few interested bystanders who stopped by and after briefly sharing, many genuinely wanted to learn more. I think this is just the beginning for our group, and I can't wait for our event in 2026!"

Kristin (physician): "It meant so much to see and connect with our beloved patients outside - not only outside of the ICU, but also outside of the clinic! It was an amazing morning filled with joy and hope. I am so thankful to be part of this amazing initiative, which was all thanks to our amazing patients. It again reinforced to me that my patients are my #1 motivator for all that I do as a Pulm/CC physician."

Regardless of our small numbers to start, our first LA Walk was a success, and I am grateful for all of the support and help from our group to get it off the ground for our first time. It was small, but MIGHTY! Onward to 2026 in hopes of reaching more survivors as well as partners, caregivers, and medical professionals!



Huge shout out to Kali Dayton, DNP, AGACNP with www.daytonicuconsulting.com and Steve Edmonson, Peer Leader for PICS 201, who led our first San Francisco Walk 4 PICS.

See you again in September 2026!





Orlando, FL Walk 4 PICS

(Cheryl Thompson, Survivor)

Orlando had an excellent turnout for our second annual Walk 4 PICS. Over 115 people came out to Central Park in Winter Park on a gorgeous day to learn more about Post-Intensive Care Syndrome, to spread awareness about PICS, and to celebrate survivors of critical illness.

One of our goals of Walk 4 PICS each year is to let survivors know that they are not alone. This is particularly meaningful to me personally. In May of 2022, I had outpatient surgery to remove a cyst. Five days later I was admitted to the hospital with sepsis. Four days after my admission, I had a cardiac arrest.

I spent the next 10 days in a medically induced coma, fighting for my life. I survived sepsis, cardiac arrest, ARDS (Acute Respiratory Distress Syndrome), two collapsed lungs, double pneumonia, and more. When I was finally discharged home, I was struggling.

The doctors told me I was a miracle. I was so happy to have survived. I was also so weak that I could not walk from the car to the house. I needed help with all tasks, no matter how small. My voice was barely above a whisper due to multiple intubations and extubations. I could not eat much due to trauma to my jaw. I was not allowed to drive. I had brain fog and couldn't even add simple numbers together.

I could not go out in public due to heightened risk of re-infection. I constantly had loving family and friends around me, but I felt so alone in my suffering. I was terrified to fall asleep in case I had another cardiac arrest. Each night I relived my vivid dreams from the ICU. I had PICS, but I had no idea.

I assumed something was very wrong with me as I tried to live up to the miracle label I was given. I assumed the joy of surviving should wipe away all the anxiety, fears, and worries. It just didn't.

A few months after my hospital discharge, I was lucky to qualify for a research study with Dr. Brian Peach at UCF (University of Central Florida). I went through two weeks of virtual reality compressed exposure therapy at UCF Restores for my PTSD. It helped me tremendously.

Beyond just helping with the PTSD from medical trauma, it connected me with people who had gone through similar experiences to mine. I realized I was not alone in my struggles, and that gave me so much hope for my future. Throughout the few years that have followed my participation in that research study, I have become an advocate for PICS and I have met amazing survivors and friends who understand what this journey is like!



Now I am proud to be part of the fabulous team of hosts for the Walk 4 PICS Orlando. In June of 2024, Dr. Brian Peach informed me that he was planning Orlando's first Walk 4 PICS with Jennifer Chap, a co-survivor (loved one) of a critical illness survivor. I immediately asked how I could help! The three of us jumped into planning by securing a venue, getting sponsorships, and putting together a wonderful event. Through Jen's connections with Orlando Fire Department (OFD), we hosted a joint event with OFD's celebration of World Heart Day at Lake Eola. Jen and I shared our stories at the beginning of the event, and Dr. Peach spoke about PICS and how it affects so many survivors. OFD taught Hands-Only CPR to all our participants. It was a fantastic event!

We began planning Orlando's 2nd annual Walk 4 PICS in January 2025. Two other critical illness survivors joined our host group for this year's walk: Angela Leggett and Cathy Garrett. The five of us were determined to make the 2025 Walk even bigger and better! We wanted to reach more survivors, co-survivors, healthcare professionals, and community members. In 2025, we wanted to host the Walk 4 PICS at a venue with more foot traffic in the hopes of getting increased attention from passersby. Jen utilized her connections again, this time with the Winter Park Fire Department, to book the beautiful Central Park in Winter Park. The park is a sprawling green space in Orlando alongside an avenue with small local businesses and delicious eateries. It was a perfect venue for our 2nd annual Walk 4 PICS!

Dr. Peach, Jen, Angela, Cathy, and I communicated often via text, Zoom, and email. We had a small but mighty group of planners! Each of us worked diligently to acquire sponsors, partners, and volunteers so that we would have a successful event

All our hard work paid off as everything came together for Orlando's Walk 4 PICS 2025. We reached our goal of spreading awareness to more people this year with a fantastic event.

Each walk participant received a purple Walk 4 PICS t-shirt when they checked in. To begin the stage program, Dr. Peach welcomed everyone and spoke about PICS. He explained what PICS is, how frequent it is in ICU survivors, and how important it is to recognize and acknowledge it.

Dr. Peach then led a panel that included Stephanie Jacques, LMHC-QS from Advent Health along with survivor Cathy Garrett, an Amniotic Fluid Embolism and stroke survivor, as well as the founder and host of Birth Trauma Stories podcast. Stephanie shared her expertise and experience with PICS in a clinical setting. Cathy told her unbelievable survivor story.

To close out the stage program, WPFD demonstrated Hands-Only CPR to all in attendance. They explained what to check for before beginning CPR and taught us how to perform CPR if ever needed. We took a group photo after the demonstration, and then the Walk began! There was a short walk option for anyone who chose that. Most of the group walked about a mile! Those at the front of the group held a Walk 4 PICS banner and they were followed by over 100 people in purple t-shirts. It was an emotional and uplifting sight.

Following the walk, attendees had the opportunity to enjoy some activities that we set up around the park. There was a photo/selfie station for attendees to take pictures. We had a table with coloring pages and supplies. Volunteers from Scouting America (formerly the Boy Scouts) assisted at the snack and water table, and handed out cold water to everyone as they walked in the hot Florida weather! UCF had a table with research opportunities for critical illness survivors. JWR CPR shared information about BLS (Basic Life Support) classes that they teach. There was a table set up to share resources for survivors and additional information about PICS. WPFD had mannequins on stage for people to practice CPR, and many attendees did just that! As our event ended and the park was cleaned up, I couldn't help but feel energized and exhilarated. It was an inspiring day, surrounded by the most caring and loving people! I am so proud of our entire planning team.

We are excited to begin planning Orlando's third Annual Walk 4 PICS in 2026. We cannot wait to connect with even more survivors, loved ones, healthcare professionals, and community members in the next year.

Our promise remains to spread awareness about PICS and let survivors know they are not alone!



Charlotte, NC - Rome, GA - Winston-Salem, NC Walks 4 PICS

This was the second year Atrium has participated in the international walk for Post-Intensive Care Syndrome (PICS) awareness. We continue to grow with nearly 150 participants across the NC/GA Division of Atrium Health joining forces to raise awareness through the Walk 4 PICS!

Teams from Floyd, Wake, Cabarrus, and across the Charlotte Market walked to celebrate ICU Survivors and promote PICS awareness. ICU Survivor Mike Geraghty shared his story at the Charlotte Walk 4 PICS, highlighting the under-recognized and life-changing physical, mental health, and cognitive symptoms that often impact survivors long after leaving the ICU.



*Thank you,
Erika*





Indianapolis Walk 4 PICS

2025 marked the first time Indianapolis participated in the annual International Walk 4 PICS, after being rained out in 2024. It was a great turnout and an inspiring day of connection and community.



Lynchburg Walk 4 PICS

Lynchburg, Virginia hosted its inaugural Walk 4 PICS event, attracting eighty participants who braved the rain to join the walk. Rhae Newbill, RN planned a creative and engaging morning that invited attendees to learn about PICS and the journey of critical illness at various stations scattered throughout the park.

Walk 4 PICS is an event that allows participants to walk anywhere in the United States, either alone or with a team, to raise awareness about Post-Intensive Care Syndrome, commonly known as PICS. Join us on September 26, 2026!





2025 Nashville Walk 4 PICS

After overcoming bad weather for its 2024 Walk 4 PICS, the Nashville team was blessed with a beautiful day at Charlie Daniels Park in Mount Juliet. The teams at Vanderbilt University Medical Center (VUMC) and the VA Tennessee Valley Healthcare System executed an impactful and meaningful event, attended by nearly 20 survivors and 135 people in total.

The Nashville team added a fundraising element to this year's event, raising money to cover event costs, as well as support VUMC's survivor support groups. Funds were primarily raised through an online silent auction, which featured items donated from throughout the community. Other funds were raised through personal effort made by survivors within the support group community.

The walk itself consisted of a stage program, with survivors sharing personal experience with PICS and PICS-f. Dr. Jim Jackson and Dr. Carla Sevin of Vanderbilt's ICU Recovery Clinic shared their clinical insights, and Marna Hancock from Vanderbilt Wilson County Hospital spoke about her experience as an ICU nurse. Perhaps the highlight of the stage program, survivor Barbara VanMeter-Nivens received the Richard Langford Service Award for her tireless service to the PICS community in spite of a very challenging year.

Charlie Daniels Park offers a one-mile paved loop, which some attendees completed during the dedicated walk time. Those who sought a shorter route had multiple options in shaded areas. The park also has an extensive playground system, which regularly draws local families with young children. Knowing our proximity to the playground, the Nashville team setup some dedicated kids' activities, including face painting, superhero cape decorating, bubbles, and PICS-themed coloring pages. The hope was the walk would attract local Pediatric ICU survivors from Monroe Carell Jr. Children's Hospital at Vanderbilt, while also making full family participation easier for survivors and providers attending the event. The team also hoped folks visiting the park from the local community would bring their children to enjoy our kids activities and hear - possibly for the first time - the word PICS.





Pittsburgh Walk 4 PICS

Pittsburgh had a great turnout for its 2025 Walk 4 PICS. Attendees wore matching Walk 4 PICS shirts and Dr. Brad Butcher shared about ICU recovery. Survivors Connie and Ken each shared a bit of their story with those in attendance.



Mike's Corner

Be The Best Of Whatever You Are

By Douglas Malloch

If you can't be a pine on the top of the hill,
Be a scrub in the valley — but be
The best little scrub by the side of the rill;
Be a bush if you can't be a tree.

If you can't be a bush be a bit of the grass,
And some highway happier make;
If you can't be a muskie then just be a bass
But the liveliest bass in the lake!

We can't all be captains, we've got to be crew,
There's something for all of us here,
There's big work to do, and there's lesser to do
And the task you must do is the near.

If you can't be a highway then just be a trail,
If you can't be the sun be a star;
It isn't by size that you win or you fail —

Be the best of whatever you are!



Coming in March

March 15 is International LONG COVID Awareness day.

Our March edition will include:

- Newest Long COVID Research
- Stories of Long COVID Survivors
- Mental Health and Long COVID
- How chronic illnesses can affect family and friends
- Great Long COVID books to read
- ***And so much more***



SAVE THE DATE 2026



2026 International Walk4PICS



Saturday, September 26, 2026

*If that date is not an option for you or your group, feel free to walk any day in September.

For more information, contact Jenna MacDonald, LMSW at jennifer.macdonald@vumc.org



MAKE PLANS NOW TO JOIN US FOR THE 4TH ANNUAL INTERNATIONAL WALK 4 PICS!! BELOW ARE CITIES WHERE WALKS ARE BEING PLANNED. KEEP AN EYE ON WALK4PICS.COM FOR MORE LOCATIONS.

UNITED STATES

- ALBANY, NY
- BALTIMORE
- BOSTON
- CAMDEN, NJ
- CHARLOTTE
- HOUSTON
- INDIANAPOLIS
- LOS ANGELES
- LYNCHBURG
- NASHVILLE
- ORLANDO

PHILADELPHIA

- PITTSBURGH
- ROME, GA
- SAN FRANCISCO
- THE TRIANGLE, NC
- WINSTON-SALEM

INTERNATIONAL

- BRISBANE, AUS
- CHESTER, ENGLAND
- PERTH, AUS
- THE HAGUE, NETHERLANDS

	<p>WALK4PICS@GMAIL.COM</p>
<p>This newsletter is written and designed by PICS survivors Barbara VanMeter-Nivens and Carolyn Rogers.</p>	<p>2525 West End Avenue Suite 450 Nashville, TN 37203</p>

*Happy Holidays
and
New Year*



*May all of the joys of this happy
season be yours this holiday
and into the New Year*

*Barbara and Carolyn
Your Newsletter Team
2025*