

Filmmaker explores labyrinths as 'powerful tool' for solace, recovery

By **GEORGE ALTSHULER**
Current Correspondent

Once a month, employees at the Washington National Cathedral unfurl three canvas designs. They place two that are more than 40 feet in diameter in the transepts of the church and another smaller one downstairs in St. Joseph's Chapel.

At 6:30 p.m., live harp and flute music fills the Cathedral, and a diverse set of people begin walking along patterns painted on the canvases. Those walking on the two larger ones are following the same design people have followed since the 13th century.

These patterns are known as meditative labyrinths. As filmmaker Cintia Cabib documents in her 30-minute film "Labyrinth Journeys," this centuries-old practice has made a comeback in the Washington area. In hospitals, schools, churches and workplaces, people are walking curving paths into and then back out of labyrinths. Whether they're

patients suffering from illnesses, veterans overcoming traumatic brain injuries or simply rambunctious children, these practitioners are benefiting in their own way from what Cabib calls a "powerful tool."

Julia Langley, who helped create a labyrinth outside the surgery waiting room at MedStar Georgetown University Hospital, explained that labyrinths aren't mazes or puzzles, but instead provide people with a set "pathway." Outside the surgery waiting room, following this route offers medical professionals, patients and visitors waiting for their loved ones a respite from stressful situations.

"Something about the design of labyrinths provides a framework that makes you feel safe and allows you to let go of the outside world," said Langley, who is the director of the hospital's Arts and Humanities Program. "You're in a safe space, even though it's only marked with paint. I think that's the magic of it."

In her film, Cabib emphasizes how lab-
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Photos courtesy of Cintia Cabib

Above, visitors to the Washington National Cathedral stroll one of the canvas labyrinths there; left, filmmaker Cintia Cabib takes a break from shooting her new documentary "Labyrinth Journeys" at MedStar Georgetown University Hospital.

Proton centers to alter D.C. cancer treatment

By **BRADY HOLT**
Current Staff Writer

Throughout the United States, there are only a dozen proton therapy centers, which offer a sophisticated, relatively new cancer treatment that concentrates radiation on cancerous cells while minimizing the effects on healthy ones nearby.

But within about three years, D.C. will see two such centers open less than three miles apart — at Sibley Memorial and MedStar Georgetown University hospitals.

Physicians say proton therapy is particularly beneficial to children, as well as to patients with tumors in sensitive areas such as the brain, spine and various tissue near the heart, including breasts and lungs.

"I think proton therapy is the future of radiation oncology," MedStar Georgetown oncologist Brian Collins said in an interview. "The reason why it hasn't been utilized to date is because it's been extremely expensive. But there's

been a steep decline in the cost of the technology, and it's my prediction that in 10 years, the majority of facilities will have proton."

Georgetown won't wait a decade. The hospital is on track to open the Washington area's first proton therapy center in early 2017. In February, officials took delivery of their proton accelerator — the device that creates the proton beam that physicians will direct at cancer cells.

The hospital is now constructing its facility with 9,000 square feet of clinical space around the new equipment. Officials expect to serve 300 new patients per year, with about 30 coming to George-



Photos courtesy of MedStar Georgetown University Hospital
MedStar Georgetown University Hospital received the proton accelerator on Feb. 13.

town per day, according to MedStar spokesperson Marianne Worley. Collins estimates that proton therapy will quickly represent 20 percent of the hospital's radiation oncology patients, with the rest sticking to conventional photon treatment or the hospital's CyberKnife radiosurgery.

Sibley's pace isn't as aggressive as George-

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This month in ...

■ **1971** — Dunbarton College, a four-year liberal arts college for women (located on what would later become the site of the Howard University law school), inaugurated Paul Gordon Buchanan as the first male president in its 35-year history. D.C. Del. Walter Fauntroy was the principal speaker at the inauguration ceremony.

■ **1976** — Georgetown University pollsters found that District residents were less satisfied with city services than they were in 1974. The public schools and street maintenance turned up the greatest dissatisfaction. Of 830 persons polled, 64 percent were not satisfied with schools; 19 percent were satisfied; and 17 percent were not sure. The pollsters found 58 percent dissatisfied with street maintenance and repair, 37 percent satisfied and 5 percent unsure. The fire department drew a 72 percent satisfaction rating; garbage collection, a 60 percent rating; and the police department, a 58 percent rating.

■ **1981** — Former D.C. auditor Matthew Watson argued that too many department heads were spending time on superfluous programs rather than more pressing areas. "The acting superintendent of schools has enough unsolved problems in elementary and secondary education that his time should not be spent establishing a master's degree program," Watson wrote in a commentary published in The Washington Star and later The Current. "The recreation director could be fully occupied in minimizing the loss of services at recreation centers instead of planning a marathon."

■ **1986** — The District reissued street grading and improvement permits to allow the proposed paving of Glover Archbold Parkway and Upton Street for the building complex at 4000 Wisconsin Ave. NW. Mayor Marion Barry suspended the permits in February in order to receive community comments, but planning director Fred Greene said the city could not find any basis to deny the permits. Ward 3 D.C. Council candidate Ruth Dixon criticized the decision, saying that administrators should have waited until a scheduled Board of Zoning Adjustment hearing took place. She also repeated her request for citizen participation in street opening decisions, similar to the process already used for alley closings.

■ **1996** — Georgetown residents won a pledge from Mayor Marion Barry to scrutinize an application to open a Papa John's restaurant on Reservoir Road NW at 35th Street. The Georgetown Homeowners Alliance appealed the District's decision to grant an interior building permit to Papa John's, which opponents described as a takeout and delivery operation ineligible to occupy the site under the existing zoning. Company officials said they would alter the company's traditional concept to provide a sit-down restaurant with delivery as a secondary use.

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LABYRINTHS

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labyrinths can be meaningful for a wide range of users. In one part of the documentary, Cabib follows a soldier who walks through an outdoor labyrinth at the Walter Reed National Military Medical Center after surviving breast cancer. In the film, the soldier describes feeling anger and frustration, but also joy.

On the other end of the spectrum, the film also shows children playfully enjoying a labyrinth in Garrett Park, Md. "I wanted to emphasize that labyrinths aren't only used in a contemplative manner," Cabib said. "Kids love to run around in them."

In another vignette, Cabib interviews a man at the National Cathedral who is navigating unemployment and homelessness. "The labyrinth gave him the feeling that there was some hope in life," Cabib said.

Terri Lynn Simpson, director of the Cathedral Crossroads program at National Cathedral that started in 2002, said that for attendees, walking the labyrinth is a "very important part of their spiritual practice." Other people simply wander into the Cathedral and discover the labyrinths.

"Since walking a labyrinth isn't a prescribed practice for any one tradition, it appeals to a wide range of people," Simpson said.

The two large labyrinths at the National Cathedral are modeled after the labyrinth in the Chartres Cathedral in France, which dates back to the year 1200.

The origin of labyrinths is not known, but there is evidence that they existed as long as 4,000 years ago. The ancient Romans and Greeks used them, and they were also popular in medieval



Photo courtesy of Cintia Cabib

Cintia Cabib's documentary includes filming locations on labyrinths in the D.C. area, including the roof of the American Psychological Association headquarters in NoMa.

and Renaissance churches in Europe.

Despite the beauty of many ancient and medieval labyrinths, Cabib emphasized that they don't have to be elaborate. She pointed out that the School for Tomorrow, a private school with campuses in Reston, Va., and Silver Spring, Md., created a labyrinth in a classroom by using just green tape.

The labyrinth at MedStar Georgetown University Hospital was painted in black on concrete outside the surgery waiting room in October 2014. Langley explained that the labyrinth is modeled after one from a cathedral in Reims, France. (Ironically, this labyrinth was destroyed in 1779 by clergy upset that children were running through it, according to French historian Yann Hault.)

In her documentary, Cabib also features a labyrinth on the green roof of the American Psychological Association downtown headquarters. Klia Bassing, who leads

a mindfulness class for 15 to 20 employees at the association, said having a labyrinth is especially helpful in a workplace.

"Having a labyrinth in an office can allow for a different type of mindset to emerge," she said.

Bassing, who teaches various mindfulness practices, said that labyrinths are especially engaging because of the movement they require. She added that their long history gives people a sense that they are participating in something sacred.

"It's about setting aside time," she said. "And that can offer a different perspective on our lives."

Cintia Cabib's film "Labyrinth Journeys" will premiere at 7:30 p.m. on Tuesday, May 31, at the Washington National Cathedral as part of the monthly Cathedral Crossroads evening, which includes labyrinth walks beginning at 6:30 p.m. The event is free and open to the public.

HOSPITALS: Facilities planned

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town's, but its planned facility is substantially larger. When its proton therapy center opens during the 2019 fiscal year, it will be 80,000 square feet and serve 125 to 150 patients per day, according to spokesperson Gary Stephenson. Within about four years of its opening, Sibley expects 900 patients per year.

Since 2010, Sibley has been part of Johns Hopkins Medicine, and its proton therapy center will be the first in the Hopkins network, according to Ted DeWeese, head of radiation oncology at Johns Hopkins.

"This center is extremely important to the citizens of ... the area around Sibley, but it is also very important to what Johns Hopkins does," DeWeese said in an interview. "We gather patients from around the country and around the world."

Even so, he added, the most value will likely come to nearby residents, who won't have to travel far to receive the treatment five times a week for four to six weeks. Today, the nearest proton therapy center to D.C. — the Maryland Proton Treatment Center, which treated its first patients in February — is located an hour north in Baltimore; the next closest is three hours away in southern Virginia.

DeWeese said that Johns Hopkins will also dedicate a portion of the Sibley proton therapy center to medical research, testing animals or individual cells for how they respond to a mix of proton therapy and other treatments. He hopes that researchers there will confirm doctors' hopes that because proton therapy has fewer side effects, patients won't

be blocked from taking other helpful drugs while they're undergoing it.

Sibley is also partnering with Children's National Medical Center to provide pediatric oncology, and will have one of its three proton therapy treatment rooms geared toward children, DeWeese said.

Asked how the proton therapy centers at Sibley and MedStar Georgetown will differ, the hospitals' respective oncologists described various advantages.

DeWeese said that in addition to Sibley's extra patient capacity, Johns Hopkins intends to install costlier, more advanced equipment than Georgetown, which will take up more space but provides a greater precision to its treatment. "It's literally just the most advanced way that one could do it that's available at all," he said of the Sibley system.

Collins declined to speculate on whose equipment will be superior, but he said Georgetown has a history of providing nationally recognized oncology programs, including pediatric oncology. And, as with CyberKnife 15 years ago, Georgetown has a record of effectively incorporating the latest technology into its treatments.

"Whenever you have new technology, your level of care has to be elevated, so we spent many weekends making sure everything was optimal," he said of his experience rolling out CyberKnife.

Both oncologists said there is room for two renowned D.C. hospitals to offer proton therapy.

"I don't like the way that people think there's going to be a glut of proton therapy," Collins said. "I think there's going to be good care for many patients by different practitioners."

HOMELESS: D.C. Council overhauls mayor's shelter plans, shifts site for Ward 3 facility

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was more hopeful of reaching the 2018 completion deadline under the council's plan.

The revised proposal would relocate shelters in wards 3, 5 and 6 to land already owned by the District. In Northwest, Bowser's plan called for the Ward 3 shelter to be built at 2619 Wisconsin Ave. NW, across from the Russian Embassy, but the council-approved plan would place it on property that's currently the parking lot of the Metropolitan Police Department's 2nd District Headquarters, at 3320 Idaho Ave. NW. The Ward 1 and Ward 4 shelter locations are unchanged from the mayor's plan, but the council's legislation calls on the mayor to negotiate the purchase of the land or acquire these locations through eminent domain.

The drive to construct the family homeless shelters on city-owned land came after residents and some council members complained that the city would pay pricey leases on the facilities to developers. Under the mayor's plan, the city would have leased the facilities for up to 20 or 30 years in all the wards except ones east of the Anacostia

River, where the shelters were already proposed on government-owned lots. An independent real estate analysis released on Monday, commissioned by Mendelson, concluded that the proposed leases negotiated between the Bowser administration and developers for the wards 3 and 6 sites were "significantly above market." The report, by Integra Realty Resources, also found that the city would be leasing the Ward 1 site at an above-market rate and recommended the city acquire the land.

The plan approved by the council showcased a rift between Mendelson and Bowser on the issue. The council chairman said his plan was drafted in collaboration with council members, but top Bowser aides voiced frustration that they were cut out of the process. Administration officials said they were first notified of Mendelson's plan on Monday morning, and hours of private meetings ensued among officials. The Bowser administration accused the chairman of pushing through a plan without committing enough "due diligence."

Tensions boiled over in a Wilson Building hallway on Tuesday afternoon between council sessions, when Bowser reportedly

responded to Mendelson with an expletive, according to two reporters who overheard the exchange. "You're a f---ing liar," the mayor yelled at Mendelson, adding that he should know the council plan would not enable D.C. General to close by 2018.

Bowser spokesperson Michael Czin told reporters that afternoon that using eminent domain to acquire shelter land would set a "problematic precedent," and City Administrator Rashad Young said the process could delay the closing of D.C. General. The council's relocated Ward 6 site, aides said, could take at least three years to secure.

"We had a nine- to 14-month process that we engaged council members, including the chairman, on. ... And what we're left with today is a plan [that] we found out about 26 hours before," said John Falcicchio, the mayor's chief of staff. "For that, there is a bit of frustration, that we're not both dealing with each other at level footing."

The council on Tuesday also took a first vote on the District's 2017 budget, and Mendelson, in the capital budget, set aside \$60 million for the family homeless shelter plan, shifting those funds from the Coolidge High School modernization.

In Ward 3, some community members had leveled complaints about the original Massachusetts Avenue Heights shelter site for months. Ward 3 Council member Mary Cheh voted yesterday for the council's plan and said she supports using the police headquarters property for the new 38-unit shelter.

At the Advisory Neighborhood Commission 3B (Glover Park, Cathedral Heights) meeting last Thursday, before the council's plan went public, residents peppered Bowser with questions and concerns about her proposed Wisconsin Avenue site, including criticism that she hadn't adequately consulted the ANC or the broader community.

One woman complained that the mayor's aides had set up a process that would inevitably become adversarial. Several audience members objected to last week's filing of a Board of Zoning Adjustment application for the Wisconsin Avenue site.

"Some of the people in the administration don't seem to understand our role," said commission chair Jackie Blumenthal when asking Bowser more generally about responsiveness to ANC concerns.

Staff writer Chris Kain contributed to this report.