IN THIS ISSUE:
“Collaboratively designed” new surgical suite
St. Joseph’s is growing by leaps and bounds. Not only are we expanding facilities but we’re adding physicians and implementing new technology, all with the goal of continuing to serve our community with compassionate care for the next 145 years.

Our cover story in this issue features our brand new, expanded surgical suite. We have 27 new surgeons operating there today. Our surgical market share is 44 percent — and it’s growing. What’s more, our new patient tower is on track to open in the fall of 2014. All this growth is not confined to our hospital campus. We have 10 new primary care physicians, a new emergency department with a 25 percent increase in volume, and two urgent care centers in the suburbs. In addition, we recently relocated and expanded our primary care office in the Baldwinsville community and we’re extending the hours for many of our other suburban primary care offices. We’re also slated to open our new Westside Family Health Center on Syracuse’s Near West side in January.

Next spring, all our entities — both the hospital and community locations — will be linked via a new, state-of-the-art electronic health record system, which will reduce red tape and improve patient outcomes.

Our strategy for the future comes at a cost, but that cost will be mitigated by all the efficiencies and benefits we will gain. To further strengthen our position, we are pursuing a strategic affiliation with CHE Trinity Health to share best practices and achieve strong operational support for our strategy. We are excited at the possibilities this affiliation may bring us.

Our vision is simple — to provide the right care to all patients in the right place at the right time — and that vision has been lauded as a model for others to follow. The American Hospital Association awarded us with the Carol Boone Lewis Award for the “best vision and model for community engagement and formula for population health management.” I’m proud of our employees and volunteers, who create that caring connection with our community every day.

We are honored to continue to lead the way in health care for the region and we look forward to continuing to provide a higher level of care in the future.

Kathryn H. Ruscitto
President and CEO
St. Joseph’s Appoints Meredith Price Chief Financial Officer

Meredith Price was appointed Chief Financial Officer effective Sept. 1. Prior to joining St. Joseph’s, Price served as strategic planner, project manager, director of finance and interim chief financial officer in various health care settings, and served most recently as chief administrative officer for Upstate University Hospital’s Community Campus. She is a graduate of Siena College and is a Certified Public Accountant in New York State.

St. Joseph’s Celebrates Nurses’ Day

St. Joseph’s Hospital Health Center celebrated Nurses’ Day on May 7, recognizing three nurses nominated by their peers for outstanding nursing practice, nursing leadership and nursing education.

The nursing practice award recognizes a nurse involved in direct patient care who contributes to the advancement of nursing practice and demonstrates strength of character, commitment and competence. Liverpool resident Ann Yankay, RN, BSN, was honored with this award.

The nursing education award was presented to N. Syracuse resident Beth Williams, RN, BSN, who was recognized as a nurse who mentors and teaches nursing practice excellence and collaboration.

Heather St. Amour, RN, BSN, a resident of Clay, received the nursing leadership award, which recognizes a nurse leader who demonstrates exceptional leadership, guidance and service to St. Joseph’s and the profession of nursing.

And Baby Makes Three

A lot has happened in the life of Andrea Grant since her journey as a bariatric surgery patient at St. Joseph’s Hospital Health Center was profiled in the Winter 2011 Caring Connection magazine. She married Daquan Thomas in April 2012, and gave birth to a 6 pound, 15 ounce baby girl, Gabrielle, on July 3, 2013. Getting married and having a family were significant factors in her decision to have weight loss surgery. Overall, she has lost 143 pounds since her surgery in June 2011, exceeding her original goal of 140. Having since moved to Pennsylvania, Andrea and her husband Daquan, are shown here visiting the New York State Fair in August with their daughter, Gabrielle. To learn more about weight loss surgery, visit www.sjhsyr.org/bariatric.

Check Out Our Blog

Have you seen our new health blog — St. Joseph’s Health Connections? You’ll find it on our website, www.sjhsyr.org, under the “About St. Joseph’s” tab. The blog was created to provide you with useful health information — from prevention tips to firsthand patient accounts to recommendations for a healthy lifestyle — and to provide details on the wide array of services St. Joseph’s offers.

Share your comments on our posts, and tell us what you would like to read about! Contact us at community.relations@sjhsyr.org.

St. Joseph’s Establishes Office of Patient Experience

As part of its continuing commitment to ensure patient-centered care focused on quality, safety and clinical outcomes, St. Joseph’s Hospital Health Center has recently established an Office of Patient Experience.

This new office integrates multiple service areas and programs that relate to patient interactions throughout St. Joseph’s system of care, including patient relations, patient survey data analysis, patient/family advisory council, volunteer services, interpreter services, diversity/inclusion, ethics, palliative care, service excellence training and coaching, and the development of innovative programs to create a healing environment, including therapeutic music and pet therapy.

Amy Szczesniak, MS, RN, a member of the St. Joseph’s team for almost 15 years, has been appointed director of the office of patient experience.

Watch for a feature article on this in a future issue of Caring Connection.
St. Joseph’s Hospital Health Center has recently received a number of awards and recognitions.

**St. Joseph’s Receives Blue Distinction Center+ Awards**

Excellus BlueCross BlueShield has recognized St. Joseph’s Hospital Health Center as one of the first hospitals in the nation to receive a Blue Distinction Center+ designation in the area of cardiac care, and in the specialties of spine surgery and knee and hip replacement. Blue Distinction Centers are hospitals that meet robust criteria in consistently delivering both quality and cost-efficient specialty care.

**AWARDS CORNER**

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Creating the necessary channels to deliver quality patient care and clinical outcomes.”

Survey respondents completed 659 surveys, representing 1,713 hospitals, or roughly 30 percent of all U.S. hospitals. The survey is conducted in cooperation with McKesson Corp., AT&T, the College of Healthcare Information Management Executives, and the American Hospital Association.

**St. Joseph’s Receives National Recognition for Meritorious Outcomes from the American College of Surgeons**

The American College of Surgeons National Surgical Quality Improvement Program (ACS NSQIP®) commends a select group of hospitals for achieving meritorious outcome performances related to patient management in nine clinical areas. It is the only nationally validated quality improvement program that measures and enhances the care of surgical patients. Participating hospitals, including St. Joseph’s, are required to track the outcomes of inpatient and outpatient surgical procedures and collect data that directs patient safety and the quality of surgical care improvements.

While more than 500 hospitals participate in the program, only 37 received meritorious outcomes recognition.

**MOREOB Patient Safety Award for Maternity/OB**

St. Joseph's was the first in the United States to implement MOREOB, a highly successful Canadian program that revolutionizes the culture of safety within obstetrics. The MOREOB Patient Safety Award recognizes demonstrated leadership and exceptional efforts in teamwork in adopting MOREOB patient safety program. The award also recognizes the application of the High Reliability Principles within its birthing unit.

**MOREOB Patient Safety Award to members of the St. Joseph’s obstetrics team.** From left to right: Malcolm Eade and Sheri Demeester of Salus Global; Sue Lafaver, RN, manager of labor and delivery/St. Joseph’s Birth Place; Diane Gould, RN, clinical coordinator of labor and delivery/Birth Place; and James E. Brown, Jr., MD, FACOG, medical director for the women and children’s service line at St. Joseph’s and co-chair of the MOREOB program.

**St. Joseph’s Recognized for Community Outreach**

The American Hospital Association (AHA) awarded the Carolyn Boone Lewis Living the Vision award to St. Joseph’s in recognition of its comprehensive neighborhood revitalization strategy. The hospital is in the midst of an expansion project to enlarge its Westside Family Health Center on Syracuse’s Near West side, bringing behavioral health, primary care, pediatric and obstetric services all to one location for the underserved neighborhood. In addition, St. Joseph’s is partnering with Syracuse University and a local grocery store to offer preventive wellness and nutrition programs for the community. Their revitalization strategy even includes a “green” affordable housing development, a home ownership initiative and the establishment of a living lab to offer participants an affordable housing development.

“St. Joseph’s neighborhood revitalization program fully reflects its philosophy of a lifelong commitment to the people and communities it serves,” said Rich Umbdenstock, AHA President and CEO. “Their efforts touch every part of an individual’s health — from ensuring affordable housing development to job training. I am pleased and honored to recognize St. Joseph’s Hospital Health Center for its achievements and commitment to communities.”

Richard Umbdenstock, president of the American Hospital Association presents the Carolyn Boone Lewis Living the Vision award to Kathryn Ruscito, president and CEO of St. Joseph’s.

**St. Joseph’s Hospital Health Center was named a Most Wired Hospital for Fourth Consecutive Year**

For the fourth consecutive year, St. Joseph’s was named a Most Wired hospital, the only Central New York hospital to ever be named to the list. Health Care’s Most Wired Survey asked hospitals and health systems nationwide to answer questions regarding their IT initiatives. These initiatives help hospitals work more efficiently.

For example, “We’re currently implementing a new Electronic Health Record across our health care system,” said Chuck Fennell, vice president for information services and chief information officer at St. Joseph’s. “This significant investment allows those within the hospital and healthcare system to do their jobs more simply and more effectively, while

**Representatives of Salus Global present the MOREOB Patient Safety Award to members of the St. Joseph’s obstetrics team.** From left to right: Malcolm Eade and Sheri Demeester of Salus Global; Sue Lafaver, RN, manager of labor and delivery/St. Joseph’s Birth Place; Diane Gould, RN, clinical coordinator of labor and delivery/Birth Place; and James E. Brown, Jr., MD, FACOG, medical director for the women and children’s service line at St. Joseph’s and co-chair of the MOREOB program.

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**Richard Umbdenstock, president of the American Hospital Association presents the Carolyn Boone Lewis Living the Vision award to Kathryn Ruscito, president and CEO of St. Joseph’s.**
The relocation of Baldwinsville Family Medical Care to Willet Parkway in Radisson carries significance beyond the fact that the growing practice simply was in need of more space.

The new facility also reflects the practice’s philosophy of patient-centered medical care, the positive outlook and growth potential of the Baldwinsville-Radisson community, and an investment by St. Joseph’s Hospital Health Center in helping patients conveniently access quality primary medical care, according to the practice’s medical director, Dr. Timothy Tramontana and the practice manager, Maria Demko.

Currently serving about 4,000 patients, Baldwinsville Family Medical Care recently moved from a busy, commercial location at Moyers Corners to the Radisson Health Care Center. With a newly constructed handicap accessible entrance, the 8278 Willet Parkway offices in Radisson offer a number of enhancements, featuring family practice services delivered in a friendly neighborhood setting with park-like surroundings.

A Community and Care Investment

Expanding the primary care office in the Baldwinsville community “meets our goal of providing the right care, at the right time, at the right place,” explained Fred Letourneau, senior vice president for St. Joseph’s physician enterprise. “We want to be patient advocates. We want to provide patients with better access to primary care services in their community, and to have those offices be the conduit for preventive care and facilitating transition of care through the system. We also hope these services will prevent visits to the emergency room for patients who would otherwise not have had an option for care.”

More Space, More Comfort

The new location provides several added conveniences for patients. The practice is now adjacent to orthopedic and ob/gyn practitioners in the same complex, as well as St. Joseph’s Imaging.

Inside, the facility has been expanded to create more of just about everything:

- The patient waiting area is much more spacious.
- Ergonomically-designed furnishings and decor offer a more comfortable wait.
- The number of exam rooms has been increased from 11 to 22.
- Patient rooms are larger and provide more privacy.
- A better operational design has created a smoother work flow; benefitting staff members and patients alike.
- On-site laboratory services are planned, providing mean added time savings and convenience for patients, and faster turnaround time of lab results to aid in diagnoses.
- Office hours now include more evening and Saturday appointments (7 a.m. to 7 p.m. Monday through Thursday; Fridays from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.; and Saturdays from 8:30 to 11:30 a.m.).
- With additional room in the building, diabetes education programming is being added. A nurse educator who is part of the practice staff is providing the informational classes.
- In 2014, the practice will have digital medical records as it converts to a new electronic health record system. The new system connects each member of the care team to a single patient record, ensuring that treatment decisions are based on up to date information and that care is coordinated when patients are treated by multiple providers throughout the St. Joseph’s health care system.

The spacious waiting room at the Baldwinsville Family Medical Care office boasts natural light and comfortable chairs for the patients and their families. In September, the office relocated to its newly expanded location at Radisson Health Center.
Enhancing Patient Partnerships

The new facility “will be great for patients,” Dr. Tramontana believes. “It will provide for better privacy, better flow of movement around the office, and more comfort. It will also allow us to see more patients with greater ease, and we will be able to accommodate a greater volume of patients. The expanded hours will help grow the patient base and allow greater convenience in scheduling patients according to their own busy schedules. With radiology and some of the other specialties closer by, and access to lab draws, it will be more helpful for patients and physicians alike,” Dr. Tramontana observed. Extra space in the new offices will permit staff expansion as practice growth warrants, he added.

The practice’s culture as “a friendly atmosphere where physicians and professional teams strive to work with their patients with a focus on preventive medicine, in a true partnership” is enhanced by the amenities of the new location, Demko added.

“This is an all-new, very warm, friendly, and inviting place, with lots more space and easier access to radiology and lab services. The philosophy is that we are looking to be the patient’s medical home, close to home,” she said.

About Baldwinsville Family Medical Care

Baldwinsville Family Medical Care is a part of St. Joseph’s Physician Health, P.C. At Baldwinsville Family Medical Care, physicians are specially trained to treat the whole person regardless of age. Services include women’s health, pediatric care for newborns, adult and geriatric medicine and disease prevention. To learn more, visit www.sjphysicians.org.

Upstate Surgical Group, P.C., is now part of St. Joseph’s Physicians. The acquisition of the practice by St. Joseph’s Hospital Health Center, completed over the summer, creates a Surgical Services division within the St. Joseph’s owned ambulatory services group. Upstate Surgical physicians have been practicing at St. Joseph’s for more than 25 years, and according to the group’s senior physician, Dr. Balasubramanian Sivakumar, “this acquisition is a natural extension of Upstate Surgical and St. Joseph’s relationship, and is consistent with a national trend of closer physician/hospital clinical integration.”

Known for innovation and leading-edge surgical capabilities, Upstate Surgical Group physicians were among the first surgeons in Syracuse to use robotic laparoscopic surgery and to perform laparoscopic colon surgery, and among the first and only surgeons in the region to perform breast ultrasounds and minimally-invasive stereotactic biopsy procedures in an office setting.
Menopause Brings Change, But It’s OK

When women reach their mid to late 40s, they can expect to feel a bit differently, both emotionally and physically, than they did just a few short years back. That’s because it’s the time when perimenopause kicks in and symptoms may occur.

Perimenopause can bring on hot flashes, mood swings, irritability, anxiety and night sweats. And the symptoms can last through menopause—the actual point when menstruation stops for good.

“A healthy lifestyle is extremely important,” said Samuel Badalian, MD, and obstetrician/gynecologist at St. Joseph’s Hospital Health Center. “Exercising regularly and keeping metabolism up is going to help with a smoother transition to menopause.”

Once menopause does hit—usually between the ages of 50 and 52—a host of other potential health issues present themselves, ones that women may never have had to wrestle with before. The big ones are heart disease and osteoporosis. Others include gaining weight, vaginal dryness, urinary incontinence and pelvic organ prolapse. The good news, however, is all these problems can be prevented or treated through healthy living and annual gynecological exams.

**Cardiovascular disease**

“We’ve always believed women are protected from heart disease when compared to men of the same age, and it’s easy to understand,” said obstetrician/gynecologist James Brown, MD. “Men have heart attacks earlier than women do, and we’ve always believed it’s due to the benefit of estrogen.”

Because the body’s production of estrogen dramatically drops after menopause, a woman must do everything she can to protect herself from this disease. How? First, there are main risk factors to consider, including family history, smoking, obesity, cholesterol, hypertension and diabetes.

“If you have any one of those risk factors, you have to be more aggressive about taking care of yourself,” said Dr. Badalian. “Eat healthy foods, lower your cholesterol, don’t smoke and control sugar intake. Try avoiding preservatives. Maintaining a low-fat, low-salt diet will help keep you healthy.”

Hormone replacement therapy or combination therapy (estrogen and progesterone together) also is recommended, but only for those who are low risk for heart attack or stroke.

“If a patient is very symptomatic, with hot flashes and night sweats, her social life is down, she’s depressed, she cannot function, we will start her on combination therapy, but for no more than five years,” said Dr. Badalian. “If it’s estrogen alone, we can go more than five years. We can go 10 years, up to age 65, with no problem.” But studies show that after five years of combination therapy, you start to see an increase in breast cancer risk.

An alternative to receiving hormone replacement therapy is the FDA-approved selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors, more commonly known as SSRIs, which are typically used to treat depression and anxiety. “There are some lower dosages, which help patients with hot flashes,” said Dr. Badalian.

**Osteoporosis**

“Exercise is most significant in the prevention of osteoporosis, and it doesn’t have to be a lot,” said Dr. Brown. Ideally, women should combine walking 20 to 30 minutes a day with some weight-bearing exercises for maximum benefits. Taking calcium supplements is another easy way to maintain strong bones in later years.

**Weight gain**

“As women enter menopause or get close to that time period, their metabolic rates drop, and so if they eat and exercise the same way, they will gain weight,” said Dr. Brown.

So what can you do to maintain a healthy weight?

“Lower your carb intake and really try to learn what’s bad about carbohydrates,” he said. “Sometimes we eat really healthy, but we eat a lot of carbs.” Portion size is another point to consider at the dinner table.

Exercise is also paramount in losing or maintaining weight, but it will take more than just a walk around the block. “Change up your fitness routine,” Dr. Brown said, “don’t do the same thing every day.”

Dr. Badalian agreed. “All studies show that if you just diet alone, you will lose weight, but after a few months it goes up again,” he said. “Maintaining is very hard. If you do diet and exercise together, maintaining is easier.”

He added that sleep is also a component for losing weight. “If you sleep fewer than six hours, you’re going to gain weight. Optimal is seven and a half to eight hours.”

**Stress**

“Stress is a problem, not only for women, but for men also!” said Dr. Badalian, with a laugh. “We are living in a society that can be very stressful.”

Stress is a major risk factor for heart attacks and heart problems. For younger women, these conditions can be avoided due to the body’s production of estrogen, which protects against heart disease; but after menopause, reducing stress in your life becomes even more significant.

“We need family support. If you are stressed in your job, if you have something going on, you need to have some environment where you can talk about it, this is very important,” said Dr. Badalian. “So is exercising. I always tell my patients that endorphins are very

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important. If you start running or jogging, this actually helps to relieve the stress. The body has a tremendous ability of healing the problem."

Dr. Brown agreed that any type of exercise will help manage stress and make women feel better. He recommends waking up a half hour early. Although this can be hard in the beginning, "all of sudden you’re waking up and you’re ready to do it even before your alarm clock goes off," he said.

Supplements
There are a number of supplements to reduce the symptoms of menopause that women can try. Vitamin E reduces hot flashes and night sweats, although taking too much can increase a woman’s potential of having a heart attack or stroke. The vitamin B-complex helps with moodiness, and vitamin D is involved with well-being as a whole. Herbal products such as black cohosh are also useful in dealing with symptoms. It is recommended that before taking any over-the-counter supplements, women should consult with their doctor first.

Sexual health
Dr. Brown said communication is essential in maintaining a healthy sex life. "Everybody talks about libido and sex drive and vaginal dryness. I think all those things can and should be treated as secondary. You have to have good communication with your partner."

For example, if your spouse had a heart attack and you’re worried about being intimate with him, that’s a concern and could be the reason why a woman has no sex drive. "It’s not so much that it’s a hormonal issue. Is it your fear that he’s going to have a heart attack while you’re intimate? Being open with your spouse is really important as we get older," said Dr. Brown.

But, sometimes, it is hormonal.

In a recent study, Dr. Badalian said that 3,600 postmenopausal women were asked what types of symptoms they were experiencing, and 65 percent responded with vaginal dryness and painful intercourse. However, they never talk about it with their physicians because nobody asks them, he said.

"We need to ask," Dr. Badalian said. "We need to ask every single woman because this is a major thing for her family life and for her happiness, and things can be done easily."

There are many options, including local medications, systemic pills as well as over-the-counter and prescription medications to choose from. "Women in their 50s and 60s are just like women in their 30s and 40s were 50 years ago. They are active, and they need to have a normal family life and a normal sexual life."

Urinary incontinence and pelvic organ prolapse
"I’m treating a lot of patients with pelvic organ prolapse, and the first thing women need to know is that they need to do Kegel exercises after childbirth," said Dr. Badalian. By starting these exercises at a younger age, the risk of having prolapse in the future is significantly low. Training the muscles and keeping them in good shape is important. Treatments include using a removable device called a pessary that is designed to support pelvic organ prolapse, physical therapy and surgery. But not all people with this condition need treatment; it varies by individual discomfort.

"Incontinence is more common than prolapse; however, women don’t talk about it," said Dr. Badalian.

"Many women think this is part of getting older—their mom had this problem, so they think they’re going to have this problem. Sometimes they are not even complaining, but we have very good treatments."

Regular exams and screenings
Both Dr. Badalian and Dr. Brown emphasized the importance of annual screenings and examinations. Women over the age of 50 should still get pap smears, although the frequency does change depending on the individual’s history. Mammograms should be done annually. Colonoscopies are recommended once a woman turns 50, as well as a baseline bone density test.

Gynecological exams aren’t only to check for cervical cancer. The physician will also check the health of other organs, such as the breasts. "I can’t tell you how many breast cancers we find every day," said Dr. Brown. "Breast cancer is very common. One in eight women is going to develop breast cancer. Mammograms help save lives."

Recently, ultrasounds and sonograms, in addition to mammograms, have been even more effective in finding breast cancers early. "And that’s really important—finding it at an early stage," said Dr. Brown.

Added Dr. Badalian, "I think the key is women need to follow up once a year with their physicians, even if they don’t have any symptoms. They need to be checked for general purposes—any cancers, any problems which can be diagnosed early and treated early. We have a very good system now. Thanks to the pap smear, women are coming for their annual exams, but the pap smear is only for cervical cancer. At the annual exam, we can check for other issues and help a woman live a longer and healthier life."
New Surgical Suite — Collaboratively Designed to Benefit Patients, Families and Care Providers

On July 8, St. Joseph’s Hospital Health Center’s surgical teams performed the first procedures in the hospital’s new state-of-the-art surgical suite. Its 15 operating rooms—filled to capacity on “opening day” and every day since—reflect a collaborative design developed by surgeons, nurses and the support staff who keep everything running smoothly to ensure the very best care for the hospital’s surgical patients.

The surgical suite grew from 19,000 square feet to 73,000 square feet, said Jodi Donahue, RN, the hospital’s director of surgical services. Donahue said the primary sources of ideas for the new surgical suite came from the physicians, nurses and staff who had worked side by side, day by day with each other—some of them since the “old” suite of operating rooms opened more than 20 years ago.

“What we see all around us are mainly their ideas and improvements,” Donahue said. “We asked them to think of anything that was frustrating, that caused problems, so we could fix them as we developed the new operating rooms.” The team spent a full three years planning, collaborating, updating and revising, to get everything just right.

The benefits begin almost as soon as a patient enters the hospital. Syed Zaman, MD, a vascular surgeon and chief of surgery for St. Joseph’s, was delighted when he toured the new surgical suite.

“Our patients have always received excellent care in our previous surgical suite,” Dr. Zaman said, “and our newly designed operating rooms—with their extra size, superb lighting, and improved ventilation and infection control systems—will make it even better for the patients. When it’s better for patients, it’s also better for their families, and for the doctors, nurses and other team members providing support and care.”

One of St. Joseph’s busiest surgeons, Balasubramaniam Svakumar, MD, (who prefers to be called Dr. Kumar) can name dozens of improvements that aid both the patient and the surgeon.

“Two of the most significant aspects of the new surgery suite that will directly benefit our patients are the technical advances in terms of infection control and prevention,” Dr. Kumar said. For instance, one little-known aspect of the new surgery suite is the change in the location of the CSU—the Central Sterile Unit (CSU). Previously, virtually every piece of surgical hardware was transported to the separate CSU after every use, and returned after being sterilized and dried. Today, the CSU is a part of the surgical suite design; surgical instruments are cleaned and disinfected and returned to operating rooms right next door.

The changes have been extended to pre- and postoperative aspects, as well. There is a larger “line room” where patients are readied for surgery, and the perianesthesia care unit (PACU) has been increased from 16 to 25 beds. The design of the new PACU rooms also provides more space and greatly improves patient privacy.

“One more thing patients may not appreciate is the fact that waiting time is likely to be diminished,” Dr. Kumar said. “Because the surgical suite is so well designed, there will be fewer delays for doctors and patients alike. And even if patients may not remember their passage through the operating room itself, the clean, calm environment here gives them an overall feeling of confidence and comfort.”

There were thousands of details to be integrated to make the new surgical suite come together. A number of ideas and suggestions were submitted by St. Joseph’s employees, and people, such as Marylin Galimi, St. Joseph’s director of engineering and construction, sifted through them.

Galimi served as the contact between hospital staff and the project’s architects and contractors, and found it to be a uniquely challenging process to integrate input from St. Joseph’s surgical and nursing staffs, who had their own ideas of what the “ideal” operating room should look like, with the professional perspective of the architects and contractors who were hired to actually design and build the surgical suite.

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“From very early on we brought in the surgeons, the nursing staff and others to share our thoughts about our vision for these new operating rooms,” Galimi said. “We were definitely not going to design our surgical suite around stock drawings and standard plans.”

As part of the process, teams of nurses and surgeons visited other well-known surgical centers nationwide to research “best practices and procedures” from recently built centers.

One doctor likened the process to that of moving from an old house to a new one — difficult and challenging, but also a unique opportunity to toss out the old and redefine the new.

“We discarded the ‘old clothes’ and ‘boxes of stuff’ that had accumulated over the years,” said Seth Greenky, MD. “And we proactively spent time looking at all the new technology and products that are out there. The transition process isn’t simply transferring the old to the new—it’s a complete redesign, looking for better workflow, better equipment, better ways to treat your patients. We used a team approach to make that happen here.”

One of those team members was Kim Murray, RN, MS, CNOR, service line administrator for orthopedic and spine services. “We wanted to involve everyone who had some sort of work flow within the new setting,” Murray said. “Our group included physicians, nurses, anesthesia providers, orderlies, service line coordinators, housekeepers, transportation, scrub techs and others.”

The result: a surgical suite that offers state-of-the-art equipment, the best in modern technology and surgical practices, and the higher level of care for patients and their families that is at the heart of St. Joseph’s Hospital Health Center system.
I immediately do things that other hip replacement patients couldn’t, such as crossing their legs or bending their hip joint past 90 degrees. But, that’s just a small part of their recovery.

“The real difference is when I see them in my office for follow up in two or three weeks,” Dr. Bogosian said. “They definitely will not be using a walker. Some may be using a cane, but others will be cane-free and not even limping. That is a dramatic difference over what we used to witness.”

Dr. Bogosian estimates that he will eventually treat as many as 60 percent of his patients with the anterior approach. He knows some surgeons, primarily in California where the approach was first tried a little more than five years ago, who are treating as many as 80 percent of their patients with the anterior approach. Knowledge of the relatively new muscle-sparing technique is growing. Dr. Bogosian recalls one potential patient who walked into his office and said: “I know I need a hip replacement. Do you do anterior approaches?”

So, why isn’t everyone using the approach? Dr. Bogosian asks. There are several reasons. Not everyone is as well informed as the patient who entered his office requesting an anterior approach procedure, but Dr. Bogosian still discusses the pluses and minuses of the procedure with all his surgical patients. For example, although the patient may be mobile more quickly, blood loss may be slightly higher with the anterior approach and there is often numbness of a skin nerve on the front of the thigh close to the incision site.

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Innovative Patient Navigator Program in Emergency Department

Improving access to primary care is one of the key objectives of health care reform. As part of its ongoing commitment to ensure that patients are seen in the appropriate healthcare setting and are connected to the services they need, St. Joseph’s has established a unique patient navigator program in the Emergency Department. The only program of its kind in Central New York, the program connects patients with primary care doctors and helps patients and their families navigate the challenges of finding the right services for their immediate needs and their ongoing care, as well as appropriate health insurance.

Patient navigators are available in the ED, Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 11:30 p.m., and weekends from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., when most patients seek access to non-urgent health care services. The program is intended to help those with non-urgent medical needs get connected to primary care doctors who can provide for their medical care on an ongoing basis, rather than utilizing the emergency department’s critical care services, thus ensuring that the ED can respond quickly and efficiently to true emergencies.

“The patient navigators focus on two types of patients,” explained Christina Pavetto Bond, MS, FACHE, associate, strategic integration, “those who don’t have a primary care physician or can’t get to their doctor, and those who don’t have insurance or are underinsured.”

By connecting these patients with the health care services and insurance they need before they leave the hospital, the patient navigators also help ensure that patients will make and keep follow-up appointments, resulting in better overall outcomes.

Since the program began in April, more than 2,000 patients have been connected with primary care, insurance or both and nearly 80 percent of them have kept follow-up appointments.

“That’s important because the best ongoing care for patients is with a provider who can get to know them and their unique healthcare needs,” said Bond. “By connecting patients we initially see in the ED to a primary care physician, and helping them sort through the challenges of finding appropriate and affordable health insurance, we’re improving their access to health and wellness care on a more consistent and continuing basis.”

The unique ED patient navigator program is one more way in which St. Joseph’s can provide the highest level of care in the most appropriate health care setting more affordably and efficiently.
On Track with Maegan Krifchin

When Maegan Krifchin sets a goal, she goes for the gold. The dedicated occupational therapist, who’s employed part-time at St. Joseph’s Hospital Health Center, is also an accomplished runner. She aspires to compete in the next summer Olympic Games to be held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. “That’s a goal,” she said. “I have until 2016 to prepare for that!”

In the meantime, however, Krifchin’s focus is on competing in U.S. championships, and achieving faster times and different distances—all of which will help her qualify for the Rio 2016 games. Her drive to succeed is evident. Most recently, she came in first at 19:26 during the Corporate Challenge 5K held locally this past June in Liverpool. Prior to that race, she’s revealed in other events, both national and international, pulling in remarkable times that recognize her unyielding discipline for the sport.

Two years ago, Krifchin raced in her first half marathon at the Philly Rock N’ Roll competition and ran a debut time of 71:04, where she became an Olympic Trials qualifier. She came in fifth overall and was the first American woman to finish. That same year, she ran in the regional Utica Boilermaker 15K and came in fourth. It was also in 2011 that Krifchin became affiliated with the Nike corporation, signing a two year contract to promote its products by wearing and training in Nike gear.

In 2012, Krifchin competed in three more major national and international competitions, the first being the U.S. 15K Championships/Gate River Run in Jacksonville, Fla. where she finished third. That event was followed by the U.S. Half Marathon Championships in Duluth, Minn. where she finished second and ran a personal record of 70:56. It was this race that qualified her for the World Half Marathon Championships in Kavarna, Bulgaria. There, the Syracuse University graduate placed 13th in the world, and was the first American to finish on the U.S. team.

This year, Krifchin again competed in Duluth’s U.S. Half Marathon Championships and finished sixth. She said she will eventually transition to running full marathons, which will put her on the right track toward her 2016 target.

Currently, Krifchin trains with a group of men, former teammates, sometimes twice a day, both running and lifting. She pounds the pavement regularly in the villages and towns of East Syracuse, Manlius, Fayetteville and DeWitt. “I love Green Lakes—you can get the best of everything—it’s flat around the lake and then there’s a ton of hills. The Erie Canal is also a go-to spot.”

Krifchin, a petite young woman who comes from an athletic family, played a lot of soccer and tennis as a child. “I was always the fast one on the soccer field,” she said. “Everyone got bigger than me and I was able to outrun them.” Running became her main sport in high school. She competed in state meets and nationals, and eventually earned a scholarship to SU.

Competitive by nature, Krifchin said she sometimes even turns training days into contests with teammates. She commends athletes who participate in triathlons, which combine running with swimming and bicycling. “I give those people a lot of credit because I think it’s a tough sport,” she said.

In her role as an occupational therapist, Krifchin often takes on the athletic or training mindset and applies it to her patients. She compares it to developing a training plan in order to measure progress.

“You can take an approach like you’re essentially coaching them,” she said. “I think it’s fun to see me as the coach, in that role. I can take how I am as an athlete to motivate people and see how they react to it.”

And how do they react?

“I have established good rapport with my patients. I’m good at reading them,” she said. “With different patients, you can do different things. It depends on their age, strength and condition, but I think I’m pretty good at figuring out their current level and where we can take them.”

While Krifchin applies her goal-oriented attitude to both her careers as a practicing occupational therapist and professional runner, she also shares her experiences by giving advice to anyone who wants to set and meet goals.

“If you’re chasing after a goal, you can chase it—it’s just a matter of commitment,” she said. “Go after it, if you want it, put the training in, and get together with some friends to work with—that makes it a little more fun. Rather than training just to train, work toward something—some race. Plan ahead. For example, If you’re training for a race in September, you have eight weeks to prepare for it.”

As Krifchin’s life illustrates, setting goals and working hard can yield tremendous rewards.
Expanded Westside Family Health Center Embraces Patient-Centered Medical Home Model

Luis Castro, MD, and his co-workers have a little extra bounce in their steps lately as they see their new “home” take shape a few yards from their cramped quarters on Syracuse’s Near West Side. Dr. Castro and his crew have hundreds of patients who feel the same way.

As medical director of the Westside Family Health Center, Dr. Castro, his staff and patients expect to move from their current, cramped 4,000-square-foot space into a bright new 18,000-square-foot home owned by St. Joseph’s Hospital Health Center early next year. It can’t come too quickly.

The Westside Family Health Center (referred to as “Westside”) has for years served the underserved occupants of one of the poorest census tracts in the United States. About 40 percent of its patients do not speak English, and many of its dedicated staff members are fluent in Spanish. For patients from Somalia, Myanmar, Russia, Bosnia, Kosovo, Sudan and other refugee-rich countries, there are translation services.

Westside averages close to 9,000 patient visits a year, and when the new building is fully staffed, that number probably will climb to 30,000 or more visits annually. The center will expand its hours from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. and add weekend coverage, increasing patient access by about 50 percent.

“This is not just going to be a family medicine office anymore,” Dr. Castro predicted. “It is going to be like a ‘global primary care center’ in which you have prenatal care, pediatric care, obstetrics/gynecology and behavioral health providers on site. We will oversee many patient needs in one building coordinated by a primary care physician.”

There’s a name for the model that Dr. Castro is describing; it’s called the patient-centered medical home. Under the medical home model, patients, regardless of age, have an assigned primary care physician who coordinates care, whether it’s preventive care, care when the patient is sick, nutritional advice, behavioral health, physical therapy, X-rays or other imaging. As much of the patient’s care as possible is administered under one roof instead of patients seeing multiple doctors at different locations.

Right now, Dr. Castro said, if someone brings a teenager with a possible broken elbow to Westside for treatment, his only choice is to send the patient to St. Joseph’s emergency department for an X-ray, and then hope the patient can find his way back to Westside for treatment if the elbow is broken.

“That may not seem like a big deal to you or me,” Dr. Castro said, “but when the patient speaks another language, or there are cultural or transportation problems, it suddenly becomes very complex for the patient and family. It also contributes to the clogging of St. Joseph’s emergency department.”

The fact is that Westside patients seem to be most comfortable receiving care at the center. “When we can provide the service here, it just seems to work a lot better,” Dr. Castro said.

Prime examples are the prenatal visits scheduled almost every Monday. There is seldom a no-show at what has become known as the Pregnancy Club.
Nojaim Supermarkets and Westside Family Health Center Team Up to Improve Eating Habits

Ask Paul Nojaim, owner of Nojaim Bros. Supermarkets, the difference between white bread and whole wheat bread and you’ll get an earful. It’s the same with sugared-up, fruit-flavored concoctions that pretend to be real fruit juice. And, don’t get him going on processed peanut butter with trans-fatty oils.

The fact is that his stores carry all these products out of economic necessity, but whenever he gets the opportunity, he counsels his customers against unhealthy choices, and he has some strong supporters. Brought together by the Near Westside Initiative, Nojaim is joining forces with St. Joseph’s Hospital Health Center, Westside Family Health Center, and Syracuse University’s Lerner Center for Public Health Promotion in a “food-indexing” effort. The program is aimed at encouraging residents of Syracuse’s Near West Side to eat far healthier foods than many of them are eating now, and to avoid the kinds of food that contribute to high cholesterol, heart disease, diabetes, high blood pressure and may even lead to early death.

“We’re partnering with Nojaim and SU’s Lerner Center with this food index,” Luis Castro, MD, medical director of St. Joseph’s Westside Family Health Center (known as Westside), said. “When our patients shop at Nojaim and buy certain foods or beverages, each food will have a numerical index between 1 and 100 based on how ‘healthful’ the food is—the higher the index number, the better it is.”

There is a reward for patients depending on the “healthful foods” they are consuming. It may be a gift card with which they can purchase more items or other rewards for buying the “right things.”

With patients’ consent, Dr. Castro or Westside’s dietitian will counsel Nojaim shoppers on what they purchased the previous month, how healthful their choices were, and what similar foods are available at a higher, healthier index number.

“She had no clue what to expect from her first pregnancy,” Dr. Castro remembers, “but sitting next to her was an older mother who was having her third or fourth child. They shared life experiences, and that’s a powerful thing.”

“There is no way I can tell a first-time mother what it’s like to have a baby, but the other woman certainly could.”

The experienced mother opened up and told her everything she needed to know—what to expect when you go into labor, when she needs to call Dr. Castro, why she had to eat these nutritious foods...

“For the young mother-to-be, that day was huge!” said Dr. Castro.

Dr. Castro and his staff aren’t the only ones looking forward to Westside’s future. Mark Murphy, St. Joseph’s senior vice president for system development and ambulatory care leadership, is as excited as anyone with the new building going up just north of the existing facility.

“Our demand for services at Westside has outweighed our capacity,” Murphy said, “so the new building and growing staff is good news. It will bring those specialized services into one place instead of making our patients go to other parts of St. Joseph’s system.”

The majority of funding for the new Westside Family Health Center came from a HEAL-NY Phase 11 grant. 

Touring the construction site of St. Joseph’s new Westside Family Health Center are Luis Castro, MD, (right) and Paul Nojaim, owner of Nojaim Bros. Supermarkets. St. Joseph’s and Nojaim Supermarkets are working together to help improve the health of residents of Syracuse’s Near West Side.
CHAMPS Offers a Forum to Enhance Provider Communication and Patient Care

There is an odd paradox that has infected many American hospitals today, said Jarrod Bagatell, MD, but it has nothing to do with germs, or viruses or other infectious agents—it’s all about a need for enhanced communication among doctors and other health care providers.

Dr. Bagatell, a family physician, said that communication back and forth among doctors about patients they have in common is often lacking right when it should be at its peak.

To prod that vital communication link among St. Joseph’s Hospital Health Center’s medical staff, Dr. Bagatell has launched what he calls CHAMPS Rounds (Community and Hospital Physicians Aligning to Maximize Professional Satisfaction). CHAMPS is now a communication-boosting, four-year-old forum at St. Joseph’s that brings a score of doctors, hospitalists, nurses and specialists together to discuss critical cases in which communication was critical in the lives of real patients.

“During CHAMPS Rounds, we are trying to show the importance of communicating among people we don’t interact with on a regular basis,” Dr. Bagatell said. “We’re all doctors and nurses in the care of the patient, yet we may be strangers to each other.”

Dr. Bagatell said doctors and nurses of all sorts are involved in the care of a single hospitalized patient, yet they may not know each other personally. They are, he said, “islands of excellence” that sometimes miss important communications with each other.

“We’re all involved in the care of the same patient,” Dr. Bagatell said. “Whether it be a hospital stay, a visit to the emergency department, surgery, recovery ... there may not have been enough of the important communication that needs to take place during those transitions of care. That’s what this forum is all about!”

“We need to take the time to listen to each other about what care is in each patient’s best interest.”

Dr. Bagatell offers a compelling example of how surgeons now stop and check themselves before continuing with joint replacement surgeries. Called a “time out,” the circulating nurse initiates a halt among the surgical team, reading the patient’s name along with which joint will be replaced. Out loud, each team member confirms her or his concurrence before the surgery continues. The same kind of checking, the same kind of communication, needs to be followed by all health care providers, according to Dr. Bagatell. He suggests a few questions that should be asked:

“Have we dealt with the primary issue that brought the person into the hospital?”

“What significant changes have we made during the hospital stay?”

“What highlights does the person receiving this patient need to know?”

“How does this person get in touch with me if they need more information?”

The fact is that Dr. Bagatell doesn’t claim that CHAMPS Rounds is the “end all, be all.” He does, however, believe it is a viable benchmark for those seeking ways to improve upon how health care providers communicate with each other and their patients.
Dear Friend of St. Joseph's,

Each day’s sunrise sheds light on an ever-changing hospital landscape, both at St. Joseph’s and around the region. Early 2012 saw the opening of a state-of-the-art Emergency Services Building and this summer offered a new high-tech Surgical Suite complete with 15 operating rooms and a 25-bed PACU. Next year will provide a Patient Tower with 72 private patient rooms and 38 private intensive care rooms. From excavation to final touches, more than 900 hard-working, professional tradespeople will have worked on the hospital’s facility construction project.

Behind the scenes, thanks in no small part to hospital donors, other milestones are being met. Recognizing the need for enhanced health care in Central New York, friends of St. Joseph’s have come together to raise nearly $16 million in gifts and pledges toward the $30 million dollar overall goal for St. Joseph’s Generations of Compassion • Healing • Innovation Capital Campaign.

Campaign highlights to date include:
- Record-setting employee division campaign support from more than 1,600 staff at all levels;
- The largest single individual gift in the history of St. Joseph’s—to name both the Emergency Services Building and Patient Surgical Tower—from Samuel and Carol Nappi;
- Nearly $1.3 million in support from individual physicians and physician practices;
- $3.6 million in State funding toward the Patient Tower and green initiatives.

Despite this extraordinary level of support, we are not there yet. Over the next 16 months, St. Joseph’s Hospital Foundation is seeking community support to raise an additional $14 million to meet the $30 million campaign goal. Because this is such a vital project, we are asking you—community members with a vested interest in the health of Central New York’s residents—to consider a gift to the Generations of Compassion • Healing • Innovation Capital Campaign. Your support will enable us to continue to provide the highest quality of care with state-of-the-art facilities and equipment for generations of your children and grandchildren.

Every gift—whether it is outright, pledged over several years, or comes to us as part of an estate planning provision that names St. Joseph’s as a beneficiary—is appreciated.

A variety of naming opportunities are available for your consideration. Please call the Foundation office at (315) 703-2135 for more information on how you might name a piece of equipment, patient room or care unit after someone you love or admire. Your gift might qualify you for membership in the Circle of Caring—St. Joseph’s $1,000 and above annual supporters who are equally dedicated to superior health care and helping the less fortunate among us.

Sincerely,

Douglas G. Smith, FAHP
Vice President for Development

David Panasci
Chairman
St. Joseph’s Hospital Foundation
Board of Directors

Douglas G. Smith
David Panasci
Kinney Drugs Supports Hospital Expansion

Had Burt Kinney decided to endow one of the sparkling new private patient rooms in St. Joseph Hospital Health Center’s new patient tower, chances are the quiet pharmacist from Gouverneur, N.Y. wouldn’t have made much of a fuss about it. He was said to be a quiet man.

Today, 110 years later, now that the first store has blossomed to a chain of 98 stores in New York and Vermont, dispensing more than 10 million prescriptions a year, the same modest values hold true.

“Every aspect of our business is guided by our values and our commitment to improving the health and wellness of the people in our communities, while delivering exceptional customer service,” said Bridget-ann Hart, R.Ph., president of Kinney Health Care Services. “Supporting the growth of premier healthcare facilities in our market area, like St. Joseph’s Hospital, will help to ensure access to healthcare services not only for our customers and extended community members, but also for our employee-owners and their families.”

Kinney Drugs is an employee-owned company that takes pride in providing the highest in quality pharmacy and healthcare services. Their business model is comprised of four distinct and complementary businesses that strive to be the central part of people’s lives and the communities where they live and work. Together, their dedication to their customers and commitment to providing these quality services has been at the root of their success.

Kinney Drugs stores, whose logo is a low-key mortar and pestle above the letter “K,” is but one of the company’s units. The drug store pharmacists not only support the needs of St. Joseph’s patients by filling prescribed medications but, they also offer all patients throughout the area with pharmacy services such as automatic prescription refills, free prescription delivery, and discount prescription plans for those without insurance.

And, as anyone who has visited a Kinney’s store also knows, local customers go there for a variety of consumer goods from greeting cards, to school supplies, to light-bulbs, to copies of the New York Times, and over-the-counter health aids.

But Kinney Drugs offers other services, as well. Health Direct Institutional Pharmacy Services, a subsidiary of Kinney, ensures that senior residents at nursing homes, long-term care facilities, even correctional facilities get the important medicines they need delivered directly to the facility. Health Direct also helps many local facilities in the area comply with federal and state mandates that govern the provision of healthcare. Health Direct currently services 275 customers filling more than 1.7 million prescriptions annually. As a sidebar, Health Direct has earned an annual member satisfaction rate of 99 percent.

ProAct is a wholly owned pharmacy benefit management company that provides full service administration of prescription drug plans including a state-of-the-art home delivery service. They are able to consolidate its purchasing power to provide significant cost savings to employers and members. ProAct also offers Onondaga County a discount prescription card program to help lower prescription drug cost for county residents. Provided at no charge to residents or the county, this discount program has helped many local residents who are uninsured to save on prescription costs that can sometimes create financial hardships to those who have suffered during tough economic times.

Noble Health Services is a new pharmaceutical subsidiary of Kinney Drugs that dispenses specialty medicines used to treat rare and chronic diseases. Many of the life-saving medications that Noble provides can cost thousands of dollars per dose, so Noble Health works with manufacturers and others to try to help control the out-of-pocket-costs of drugs for those who need them. True to the “Noble” name, the company aims to provide the highest quality specialty pharmacy services to help ensure positive medical outcomes.
Founded in 2002, the company’s philanthropic arm—Kinney Drugs Foundation—helps people live healthier lives in the communities served by Kinney Drugs. Located in Gouverneur, N.Y., the Foundation is dedicated to the support of charitable organizations including health care throughout Northern and Central New York and Vermont. Guided by a strong sense of community and a desire to give back, the Foundation has awarded more than $7 million over the past 10 years to scores of charitable organizations within its designated service areas.

Kinney Drugs, their subsidiaries and Foundation have been part of the St. Joseph’s family for the past eight years. As sponsors of the hospital’s two major events—the Annual Golf Classic and the Annual Gala Dinner Dance—Kinney has provided support for a variety of projects at St. Joseph’s from patient care to nursing education and career development to mission services (St. Joseph’s primary care centers and mental health services).

“From the time Mr. Kinney opened the company’s first drug store in 1903, his vision was to quietly support the healthcare needs of the communities we serve,” Hart said. “We are proud to continue to follow this tradition over a century later.”

The Largest Project of Our Generation
We invite you to Be a Part

To learn more about the GENERATIONS Capital Campaign or to discuss naming opportunities, we invite you to call 315-703-2137.

To make a pledge or credit card donation, call 315-703-2137 or give online at www.generationscampaign.org.

Thank you.

College Corner

College of Nursing Celebrated 113th Commencement in May!

Emma Lingo at the 113th Commencement of St. Joseph’s College of Nursing. The 132 members of the graduating class received their Associate degree in applied science with a major in nursing on May 19.

Has Your Life Been Touched by a Nurse?

The quality of nursing at St. Joseph’s has been recognized as among the best in the nation. You can help ensure that it stays that way by contributing to the nursing programs and infrastructure needs at St. Joseph’s College of Nursing. For more information, contact Connie Semel, BS, RN ’74, director of development, St. Joseph’s College of Nursing. Email Connie.Semel@sjhsyr.org or call 315-448-5303. Gifts may also be made online at www.sjhcon.org/giving-options. If you prefer to use the giving envelope enclosed in this issue of Caring Connection, simply write College of Nursing on your check. Thank you!
Two Siblings Leave a Legacy to St. Joseph’s, Each Other and the Community

In the late 1940s when Tessie and Michael Hrynczuk received a $500 tuition bill from Notre Dame University for the beginning of their son Myron’s education, it was a hefty amount. The Hrynczucks were first-generation immigrants—Tessie from Brazil and Michael from Ukraine—who raised their only two children, Olga and Myron, in Fulton, N.Y. According to neighbors and friends who knew the Hrynczucks, the family was hard-working, close-knit, and quite private. Both Tessie and Michael sacrificed in order to provide quality educations for their focused and dedicated children. As a result, fast forwarding sixty years after Myron graduated from Notre Dame University in 1952, it is clear that both he and Olga gleaned their inclination to give from their parents. When Myron passed away in 2009, his estate left a large gift to St. Joseph’s Hospital Health Center as well as roughly a dozen other Catholic-affiliated charities. When Olga passed away in 2010, she gave to the same organizations.

Both unmarried and with no children, this pair of siblings remained extremely close throughout their lifetimes. In the words of Eleanor Fisher, a close friend and neighbor along with her husband John, they were “devoted to each other.”

Olga, born in 1919, graduated from St. Joseph’s School of Nursing in 1940 and went on to work as a registered nurse in different hospitals across New York, including St. Joseph’s Hospital Health Center, where she worked between 1951 and 1955. An avid seamstress in her spare time, Olga sewed all her own outfits, as well as those of her mother, pairing her own with head-turning, elegant hats.

Close friends of Olga described her as a passionate nurse, one who was proud of her profession. Eleanor Fisher shared that, “even after she retired, Olga would walk house-to-house, taking the time to check her nearby neighbors’ blood pressure,” all the while remaining devoted to caring for her elderly parents. Arlene S. Okoniewski recollected Olga being the nurse on duty for the birth of her first child at A. L. Lee Memorial Hospital in Fulton. She also told how Olga came back for the birth of her second child—this time not as a nurse on the clock, but as a friend. Olga also made special trips to Arlene’s house after the second delivery, to make sure that the new mother was comfortable and receiving the appropriate medical attention. “I was forever grateful for her kindness and care,” said Arlene. Clearly, Olga was carrying out what is now the mission of St. Joseph’s Hospital Health Center by being a truly “passionate healer.”

Myron was eight years younger than Olga, and is described as a well-rounded individual. In his younger days, he was involved in the Boy Scouts of America, participated in the sale of war stamps as a teenage newspaper carrier during the Second World War, and played violin. In his adulthood, he was an enthusiastic golfer and gardener. Many of the fresh vegetables he grew found themselves in meals carefully prepared by Olga. Myron also served in the U.S. Navy, and worked in a government position as a civil engineer.

According to the Hrynczucks’ estate attorney, Timothy Fennell, unbeknownst to others, Myron was an investor in the stock market. He would often invest in “blue chip” stocks, secretly saving much of his earnings so that when his will left a substantial amount to care for Olga and give to various charities, even Olga was surprised.

Certainly, however, Olga and Myron had a strong connection as siblings, and their relationship was one of overwhelming care for each other. Mr. and Mrs. Fisher chuckled as they fondly remembered Olga telling them that Tessie Hrynczuk, her mother, once declared, “Myron was put on this earth for you to take care of, Olga!” Olga took this to heart, even carrying Myron’s handkerchief, glasses, and wallet in her pockets, in their later years. When Myron was hospitalized, such as when he had knee replacement surgery at St. Joseph’s Hospital, Olga was a daily companion. She never let a
day pass without visiting him in the nursing home in his last years—a testament to her training at St. Joseph’s School of Nursing.

Contributing to the zealous care that the Hrynczuk siblings showed both for one another and for their community—evidenced by their generous donations—were their deeply spiritual lives. Rosalie Pappalardo, a good friend of the Hrynczuk family, recounted how Olga would work night shifts but always make sure to attend early morning mass every day. When Mr. and Mrs. Fisher would drive Myron into Syracuse on frequent occasions, he would often wish to stop at St. Anthony’s Motherhouse of the Sisters of St. Francis of the Neumann Communities, an organization to which he also donated regularly.

Coming from a modest home, Olga and Myron leave behind a legacy of generosity through their planned giving to those who were most important to them. St. Joseph’s is appreciative of their contributions to the Generations of Compassion · Healing · Innovation Capital Campaign, which will name two private patient rooms in the new tower, due to open in 2014. Even after death, the Hrynczuk’s exemplify the importance of being passionate in whatever path an individual chooses, and have provided a legacy to future generations. For Olga and Myron, being passionate meant leading lives dedicated to their family, friends, church and community. They worked hard, later giving back to organizations, such as St. Joseph’s Hospital, that had helped them to do so along the way.

HONOR AND REMEMBER THOSE WE LOVE FOREVER

ST. JOSEPH’S WALKWAYS OF CARING

Would you like to celebrate the life of someone you have lost? Is there a service member or other hero in your life who you wish you could honor? Are there physicians or nurses you would like to thank for enriching your life or the life of a loved one?

Each year, thousands of visitors to St. Joseph’s Hospital Health Center take comfort in the names and messages placed on the engraved bricks and benches that are located in the garden and parks of the hospital’s campus. St. Francis Garden, the Walk of Valor and the College of Nursing’s Caritas Park carry messages of hope, love, dignity and caring. Offering inscriptions that honor heroes, support the hospital’s mission or express gratitude for a special caregiver, bench plaques and bricks have been thoughtfully placed by loved ones, friends, patients and co-workers. Collectively, these “thank you,” “I love you,” “we remember you” messages have become a part of the healing atmosphere that permeates St. Joseph’s.

The three Walkways of Caring, located throughout St. Joseph’s Hospital Health Center’s grounds, are beautiful courtyard settings that offer patients and visitors a comforting retreat during what may be a stressful time.

To purchase a personalized brick or bench in honor of a loved one, as a memorial to someone special, to express gratitude to a healthcare provider or to leave a message for future generations, please contact the Foundation at 315-703-2137. Additional information is also available online at the Foundation website: www.sjhsyr.org/foundation.
Every Day is Doctors’ Day at St. Joseph’s

Health care is so much more than the latest medical technology or a state-of-the-art hospital facility. Quality care is delivered at the hands of highly skilled, compassionate physicians who have the knowledge and expertise to apply today’s medicine. Yet, they do so much more than simply heal the physical body. They listen. They care. They offer hope. They impact lives.

March 30, 2013 was National Doctors’ Day. In celebration, St. Joseph’s Hospital Health Center Foundation invited patients to honor a doctor who provided them, their family or friends with excellent care.

The response was amazing! More than 650 letters were received from individuals who were eager to say “thank you” to doctors, nurses and other staff. The writers mentioned “angels with stethoscopes” and how the clinical excellence they experienced was important. However, the compassion and the way our doctors, nurses, and technical people related to the human side of their situations really meant the most to them. They thanked their physicians for saving a life, for listening, for being available when they were most needed, for improving quality of life, for making final days peaceful.

Touching and often eloquent, the letters received thanked nearly 240 physicians, represented more than 30 different service lines and included $29,573 in donations. Without fail, each writer shared ways in which they felt their care provider lived St. Joseph’s mission and values of compassion, reverence, excellence and integrity in their daily work.

Dr. Ali Al-Mudamgha, Cardiology
He is everything you could hope for in a doctor. He is obviously very smart, very good at what he does, very well known and very well respected. He has a large practice and I wondered if I would be rushed and treated like just another number. But I wasn’t. He is just so nice. When you have heart issues nothing helps more than a nice, caring, calm approach. He’s just a really down to earth, regular guy who has made a huge difference in my life.

Patty Conway, Patient of Dr. Al-Mudamgha, April 12, 2013

Dr. Samuel S. Badalian, Gynecology
I went through a couple of surgeries and was so scared for what I had to face yet his gentle hug told me all would be OK. I have such trust and confidence in Dr. Badalian. He is a great compassionate, caring physician and I am honored to be his patient!

Gloria Alexander, Patient of Dr. Badalian, April 13, 2013

Dr. Michael T. Clarke, Orthopedic Surgery
Although there are several orthopedic surgeons providing similar procedures much closer to me, I chose to travel more than five hours to Syracuse to work with Dr. Clarke. This is due to Dr. Clarke’s competency, compassion and general overall great treatment. Thanks to the resurfacing performed [on my hip] by Dr. Clarke, my active life without pain has been restored. I’ve returned to biking, paddle tennis, horse riding and many other activities that were either difficult or caused considerable pain prior to resurfacing. Thank you, Dr. Clarke!

Thomas G. Walsh, Patient of Dr. Clarke, April 4, 2013

Dr. Angelo DeRosalia, Urologic Surgery
In 2012 I found out I had a tumor on my left kidney. Upon learning this devastating news I began researching on the internet. It didn’t look good. My family and I were VERY scared! From the moment my husband and I met Dr. DeRosalia, we began to feel better. He was so informative, confident, caring and patient with all of our questions and concerns, we felt relieved and confident ourselves that my chances of living a normal life after the surgery were extremely good. It’s rare to find a doctor that is both kind, compassionate and a competent, skillful surgeon. Dr. DeRosalia is all of the above and more. Like your letter to me stated, he did more than heal.
my body, he listened, cared and gave me and my family hope and a sense of security at a time in our lives that was very scary and fragile.

Esther E. Anthony, Patient of Dr. DeRosalia, April 24, 2013

Dr. Mark Emerick, Hospitalist

Gravely ill, my father had had pneumonia since November, 2012 when he was admitted [to the hospital] in January, 2013. Dr. Emerick was the light at the end of the tunnel assuring my father he would help him to get better. He did everything in his power making sure my father was getting the best treatment with medicines, consults, biopsies, and anything that came along. He also spent time with my father talking with him explaining every little detail which allowed my father to feel safe and confident. Sometimes for an elderly patient being in the hospital for the first time can be extremely scary. Dr. Emerick reassured my father every time he saw him as if he was Dr. Emerick’s only patient. My father is doing much better and getting stronger today. I do believe I owe it to Dr. Emerick and the rest for giving me my father back.

Kathy Miller, Father was a Patient of Dr. Emerick, April 2, 2013

Dr. Elizabeth Saarie, Internal Medicine

For more than a decade, you have provided our family with compassionate, thoughtful and exceptional care. In short, you have treated us as family. We are grateful for your dedication, and knowing you care for our family as you would your own is worth countless nights of good sleep.

The Lacey Family, Patients of Dr. Saarie, April 20, 2013

Dr. Balasubramaniam Sivakumar, Medical Director, General Surgery

Dr. Kumar’s expertise and extraordinary talent as a surgeon and caring person is unmatched. It suffices to say that he saves lives, fights disease and minimizes pain for each and every patient charged to his care. Dr. Kumar offers still sets beyond the norm. I can speak for the outcomes of my family, that is to say that in some cases his surgical techniques were literally life-saving. The psychological effects of the need for surgery are sometimes overlooked in view of the serious and literal nature of the procedure; however, Dr. Kumar lends compassion to this most confusing and serious time. Dr. Kumar recognizes that each patient is a unique person with differing levels of understanding and stress capacities. His healing hands, individualization of each patient and accepting mind further healing when [they] return home for recovery.

Joanne Ridley-Pacicca, Patient of Dr. Sivakumar, April 2, 2013

2013 Emeritus Luncheon

“Emeritus” is a distinction bestowed on physicians, professors and other professionals at or nearing the time of their retirement. In Latin, it means “having merited one’s discharge by service.”

To recognize their ongoing commitment and valued service to the hospital, St. Joseph’s Emeritus Physicians group was organized to facilitate the social and educational needs of retired physicians and their spouses.

Clinicians and educators, St. Joseph’s Emeritus physicians have played an important role in shaping the landscape of the hospital and its history. From pioneering medical breakthroughs, to providing quality and compassionate patient care, to the mentoring of their resident peers, these physicians have had a significant impact on health care at St. Joseph’s Hospital Health Center. Continuing to make outstanding contributions, they are the strong and vibrant threads that weave past and present together. Through significant contributions to their patients, peers and the hospital, the Emeritus physicians are the very fabric of St. Joseph’s.

“Our Emeritus physicians are important ambassadors for St. Joseph’s Hospital and we count them among our greatest resources because of their medical, educational and research experience,” commented Kathryn Ruscitto, St. Joseph’s president and CEO. “They are exceptional physicians who maintain an ongoing commitment to help enhance health care in our community.”

Gathering for the 2013 annual Emeritus Luncheon, held July 23, in the DeFuria Room at St. Joseph’s Hospital, Emeritus members socialized with long-time friends, posed for photos, enjoyed lunch and provided feedback to a presentation given by Ruscitto. Following lunch, attendees received a tour of the recently opened surgical suite.

Gathered at St. Joseph’s 2013 Emeritus Luncheon were, front row, left to right: Mrs. Mary Ricciardi, Dr. Trevor and Mrs. Margaret Iskander, Dr. A. John Merola, Dr. Daniel Rabuzzi, Mrs. Patricia and Dr. Edward Carsky, Dr. Michael Fitzgerald, Dr. Carl and Mrs. Mary Austin, Mrs. Kathleen Elliot and Sister Mary Obrist. Back row, left to right: Dr. Nicholas Ricciardi, Dr. Duane Cady, St. Joseph’s President and CEO Kathryn Ruscitto, Dr. John D’Addario, Dr. Joseph and Mrs. Joan Thornton, Dr. Richard Hehir, President of St. Joseph’s Medical Staff Dr. Balasubramaniam Sivakumar, Vice President for Medical Affairs Dr. Sandra Sulik and Dr. Charles Elliott.
Cherry Blossom Gala is a Blooming Success!

St. Joseph’s Hospital Foundation’s 22nd annual gala—Cherry Blossom Gala—was held May 31, at the Turning Stone Resort and Casino. This year, 850 individuals reserved their spot to celebrate moments of new life, healing and hope with St. Joseph’s Hospital amid the pink blush of cherry blossoms. Exceeding its goal for 2013, the annual black tie optional gala dinner dance netted more than $335,000. Presenting sponsor was Central New York Infusion Services, LLC; gala co-chairs were Dr. Ron and Mrs. Joanne Caputo, and Dr. Matthew and Mrs. Colleen O’Hern. Proceeds will support Foundation efforts to benefit the hospital’s patients—many of whom are among the poor and underserved.

“Central New York Infusion Services is proud to support St. Joseph’s Hospital Health Center and Annual Gala,” said April Stone, the company’s president. “The hospital’s core values are in alignment with our own and they represent the best in health care and in society. St. Joseph’s practices compassion, reverence, excellence and integrity as it cares for the sick and injured, while also supporting our local community. They have a vision of caring for the world and it is a natural fit for us to support the efforts of St. Joseph’s Hospital Health Center.”

After an evening of cocktails and fine dining, Atlas Band brought intensity to the stage, providing a tremendous performance that brought everyone to the dance floor. Enjoyed by everyone, their powerful rhythms and horn-driven musicianship was brilliant.

Through the use of green products such as renewable energy certificates provided by the Gala’s Energy Sponsor, Hess Corporation, all of the energy used by the Turning Stone Resort can be sourced from renewable projects.

“This year was a tremendous success; thank you to everyone for your support,” said Douglas G. Smith, FAHP, vice president for development. “We were pleased to see friendly faces from past years and new partners for the future.”

Since 1992, St. Joseph’s Hospital Gala has raised nearly $4.5 million to benefit hospital programs including Mission Services, cardiac services, medical imaging, the College of Nursing, the operating room, dialysis services and the intensive care nursery. Plans for next year’s gala — to be held May 30, 2014 — are already under way.
Recent Grant Awards

We thank the following foundations and agencies for their support of St. Joseph’s mission and services:

One of 11 hospitals across the U.S. to receive a Clinical Excellence Grant from the CAREFUSSION FOUNDATION, St. Joseph’s Hospital Health Center received a grant designed to help recipients develop and share infection prevention best practices. St. Joseph’s is using the grant funding to help address Clostridium difficile (C. diff.) rates in the community by seeking to extend the success of its internal Antibiotic Stewardship Program to local long-term care facilities. According to the Centers for Disease Control, long-term care facilities and/or nursing homes are ideal collaborative locations for hospitals because “half of all hospital patients with C. diff. infections have the infection when admitted and may spread it within the facility.” With the goal of reducing healthcare-associated infections through decreased use of antibiotics as well as to promote the appropriate use of these powerful medicines, St. Joseph’s Antibiotic Stewardship Program is collaborating with Loretto on this program to reduce C. diff. cases among its residents, and consequently among patients who present to St. Joseph’s with the infection.

“The medical staff at Loretto looks forward to this collaborative effort to reduce the incidence of C. diff. colitis. This pathogen has evolved into a major cause of morbidity and mortality in the elderly.”

— DENNIS DALY, MD, MEDICAL DIRECTOR, LORETTO.

“We applaud St. Joseph’s for its innovative approach to continue striving to reduce infections at its institution. We believe the efforts being made at St. Joseph’s will have lasting effects here and at hospitals across the country as they share best practices to improve patient care and safety.”

— DR. CARLOS NUNEZ, CHIEF MEDICAL OFFICER FOR CAREFUSSION.

St. Joseph’s Hospital Health Center recently received two large grant awards from the CENTRAL NEW YORK COMMUNITY FOUNDATION and the J.M. MCDONALD FOUNDATION toward the new Westside Family Health Center. (See related story on page 14.) When completed, this capital project will be relocated to a new 18,000 square foot location on Gifford Street. The larger footprint is the centerpiece of an initiative to co-locate and integrate primary care and outpatient mental health at three sites with the goal of improving access to care and health outcomes for the low-income, minority, immigrant and refugee populations of Syracuse, and in particular the impoverished near West side neighborhood. The center will open in early 2014 and will allow St. Joseph’s to add more practitioners to respond to the needs for care in our city. Thank you to the CNY Community Foundation and the J.M. McDonald Foundation for their vision and support!

“St. Joseph’s Westside Family Health Center is a community based primary care facility dedicated to caring for the underserved population of the near West side of Syracuse. These unprecedented donations will go a long way towards helping us continue our medical mission. It is generosity like this that is felt throughout the community and sets an example for all of us.”

— LUIS J. CASTRO, MD, MEDICAL DIRECTOR, WESTSIDE FAMILY AND MATERNAL CHILD HEALTH CENTERS

The pediatric office at St. Joseph’s Maternal Child Health Center (MCHC) promotes childhood literacy through the national REACH OUT AND READ program which has provided $4,477 in sustainability funding to St. Joseph’s children’s reading program. At check-ups, pediatricians give each child a new book of their own to take home. Also in support of child and family literacy, MCHC, St. Joseph’s Family Medicine Center and St. Joseph’s Comprehensive Emergency Program receive generous donations of children’s books, coloring and activity books and cook books from the ELLA FITZGERALD CHARITABLE FOUNDATION.

“The Ella Fitzgerald Charitable Foundation was created and funded in 1993 by Ella Fitzgerald, the First Lady of Song, in order to fulfill her desires to use the fruits of her success to help people of all races, cultures and beliefs. Ella hoped to make their lives more rewarding, and she wanted to foster a love of reading, as well as a love of music.”

— FRAN MORRIS ROSMAN, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR THE ELLA FITZGERALD CHARITABLE FOUNDATION

WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/ELLAFITZGERALD

Rendering of Ella Fitzgerald by Sharon B. Maguire
New Faces at St. Joseph's Health Center Foundation

David H. Panasci, Named Chairman of St. Joseph’s Hospital Foundation Board

St. Joseph’s Hospital Health Center Foundation welcomes David H. Panasci in his new appointment as chairman to the Foundation board, effective May 31, 2013.

President of DHP Consulting, LLC in Camillus, NY, Mr. Panasci has more than 30 years of executive management experience in the local Central New York business community. He is a management consultant with broad experience within a wide range of industries, including health care, manufacturing, media and retail. Prior to his current position with DHP Consulting, Mr. Panasci was president and COO of Fay’s Inc.—per drug stores under the name, “Fay’s Drugs” between 1958 and 1996.

A Syracuse University graduate with a bachelor’s of science in managerial law and public policy, Mr. Panasci also holds master’s in business administration degrees from Cornell University, Ithaca, N.Y., and Queens University in Kingston, Ontario. He is an active member of several professional associations, including the Institute of Management Consultants/USA and the National Association of Corporate Directors. Mr. Panasci is committed to helping to strengthen Syracuse and the surrounding region through community service. In addition to his service to St. Joseph’s Hospital Foundation, he is a board member for the Syracuse Opera Company and Syracuse 20/20. He is both a member of the Association of Fundraising Professionals of Central New York, the Association for Healthcare Philanthropy, The Association of Donor Relations Professionals, and several other donor and philanthropic associations.

St. Joseph’s Hospital Health Center Foundation Welcomes Meghan Barry

St. Joseph’s Hospital Health Center Foundation also welcomes Meghan Barry, major gifts officer, effective Sept. 3, 2013. Meghan is responsible for managing relationships with major gift donors, including cultivating major gift grateful patient prospects in key service lines and aiding in the completion of St. Joseph’s Generations of Compassion • Healing • Innovation Capital Campaign.

Barry most recently served as a development officer at Le Moyne College where she managed and cultivated relationships with leadership and major gift donors. She brings experience in annual and alumni giving, capital campaigns and major gifts to St. Joseph’s. A graduate of Le Moyne College, Barry holds a Bachelor’s degree in French language and literature.

Kuss brings to St. Joseph’s more than 11 years of healthcare and higher education development experience ranging from annual and alumni giving, capital campaigns, major gifts, fundraising events management, and public and donor relations. He has held development positions at two major universities and most recently, served as executive director for the College of Medicine Foundation at SUNY Upstate Medical University.

“We are pleased to have Vince join our Foundation," said Douglas G. Smith, FAHP, vice president for development at St. Joseph’s. “He will assist us as we continue our fundraising and capital campaign activities to position St. Joseph’s for the future.”

A graduate of the State University of New York at Cortland, Kuss holds a Bachelor’s degree in sociology. He also has a Master of Science in Higher Education Administration from Syracuse University and a Master of Business Administration from Le Moyne College.

Keeping a finger on the pulse of development, he is a member of the Association of Fundraising Professionals of Central New York, the Association for Healthcare Philanthropy, The Association of Donor Relations Professionals, and several other donor and philanthropic associations.

Vincent J. Kuss, MBA, MS

Vincent J. Kuss, MBA, MS, has been appointed to the position of director of development, effective Sept. 3, 2013. Managing development operations, he is responsible for cultivating major gift grateful patient prospects in key service lines as well as for completing St. Joseph’s Generations of Compassion • Healing • Innovation Capital Campaign in support of the hospital’s facility expansion project.

Meghan Barry

Meghan Barry
A new internship position has recently become a part of the St. Joseph’s Hospital Health Center Foundation. The position, titled the Scott Cameron Smith Development Internship, has been created and funded at the Foundation by Douglas G. Smith, FAHP, the Foundation’s Vice President for Development, and his wife, Jan, to help recipients learn and grow.

During eight to ten weeks in the summer, each year’s intern will take on a role that provides a rich, experiential opportunity to learn about development, focusing on the areas of grant administration and grant writing. Responsibilities of the intern include writing two small grant proposals from start to finish, assisting with larger grant proposals, assisting with fund-raising events and fall campaigns, assisting with article writing, researching funding opportunities, utilizing The Raiser’s Edge donor database software, and preparing and maintaining information. These projects often involve interaction with St. Joseph’s nurses, physicians, and staff members.

The internship is named in honor of the Smiths’ son, Scott Cameron Smith, who gained valuable experience through an internship with Royal Farms in Baltimore, Maryland. Scott’s internship eventually led to a full-time Information Technology position with Royal Farms. Coupled with the Smiths’ pride in their son’s achievement is their appreciation for similar help they themselves have received, which propelled their own careers after graduating from Ohio University.

Smith has stated that he believes it to be important that young people today be able to have opportunities to “get their feet wet” in various industries that are often difficult to break into, while also allowing them to make valuable connections for future career options. Reflected in his choice to give in this specific way to the Foundation, Smith is an advocate of the importance of not-for-profit organizations to the economy, and has found that internships can help young people use their individual talents and gain a better understanding of the big picture of not-for-profits, such as the St. Joseph’s Hospital Foundation.

The Smiths’ generosity has found its way to St. Joseph’s specifically because, as Smith has emphasized, hospitals have a very lasting impact on the larger community. As Vice President for Development since February, 2013, Smith is aiming to capture the existing momentum of philanthropy and also expand the culture of philanthropy at St. Joseph’s. In creating and funding this internship at the Foundation, he hopes to utilize the diversity of talents and viewpoints that interns bring with them in order to identify new ideas on how to improve the work of the Hospital and the Foundation. Ultimately, Smith’s goal for the impact of this internship is to bring the perspective of talented interns from the younger age demographic to the Foundation, and to inspire other departments to tap into the talents of interns as well.
Vent Patient Beats Odds and Goes to College

People assume Erin Vallelly can’t do certain things. She was diagnosed with a rare form of muscular dystrophy as a toddler, and has used a wheelchair and a ventilator since. But Vallelly is proving those people wrong. “I can do the same things they can; I just have to try harder,” she said. It’s how she was raised by her mother Mary and father Kevin. “We raised her with the idea that there’s something that everybody can’t do,” her mom explained. “Her disability is just something that you can see.”

While many people in her situation would be homeschooled, Vallelly attended school in Dryden daily and graduated in June. “I think Erin is an amazing person,” said Timothy Curtis, respiratory care manager at Franciscan Health Support. “I’ve worked with her for two and a half years now and she’s an amazing inspiration.”

“She’s incredible,” added her mom. “I think it’s amazing that she doesn’t really care what everyone thinks. She figured out what’s important for her which is remarkable for someone her age.”

Vallelly’s ventilator is provided by Franciscan Health Support. As a child, her ventilator weighed 60 lbs. “We had to redo our house so her bedroom was downstairs,” her mother said. “It was difficult to go out... not because we cared what people thought, but because it’s just a lot of stuff to carry. It’s difficult to carry a toddler and a lot of equipment.”

Now, she has a portable ventilator from Franciscan that is the size of a laptop computer. It allows patients to be mobile and improves their quality of life. Because of its portability, Vallelly was able to go away to college in the fall. She is currently attending Wells College in Aurora.

“I liked that there were only 500 kids,” she said. “I didn’t want to be a number. That’s not for me. Everyone is super friendly, welcoming and really nice.”

Vallelly acts like it’s no big deal to go away to college – but experts say it certainly is. “For her to graduate high school and go to college is phenomenal. In the 23 years I’ve been a respiratory therapist, I’ve never heard of that,” Curtis said.

“It’s pretty remarkable. It’s exciting for us. We are so proud of her,” said her mom. Vallelly is enjoying college life. She is studying business and psychology with the goal of becoming a professional fundraiser.

“All the work I’ve put in has paid off. I’m excited for the next chapter of my story,” said Vallelly.

Embracing Age provides the support services needed to remain living independently for as long as possible. Community members are benefiting from help around the house including companions, light housekeeping, meal preparation, clutter control, home health aides and transportation. Whether you or a loved one needs a ride to the doctor’s office, or help keeping the house running, Embracing Age is there for you. Rest assured that our staff members and services can be trusted to help in your time of needed. Embracing Age is located in DeWitt, NY, and can be reached at (315) 877-3779 or at www.EmbracingAge.org.
Living More Comfortably with Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy

Patients suffering from wounds caused by diabetes, circulatory problems, injuries and radiation are living more comfortably, thanks to the St. Joseph’s Center for Wound Care and Hyperbaric Medicine. Located at Northeast Medical Center, the wound care center offers Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy, or HBOT, in which a patient breathes 100% oxygen inside a pressurized environment. High concentrations of oxygen are pumped into the blood stream, which assists in the wound healing process.

“Not only have studies shown that HBOT accelerates wound healing, but it also reduces amputation rates and helps patients avoid hospitalization,” said Medical Director Dr. Joseph Byrne, MD.

The most common use of HBOT is to aid in the healing process of diabetic foot ulcers in which restricted blood vessels prevent the proper amount of oxygen from getting to the ulcers, a condition which often leads to amputations.

During HBOT, patients lie on a bed inside a plexiglas chamber, which is then pressurized to the equivalent of a 33-foot deep-sea dive, which then drives twenty times more oxygen into the blood compared to that of regular air. This increase in concentrated oxygen allows wounds to heal more easily, and aids in fighting certain types of infections.

A full round of Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy consists of 40 two-hour treatments, given daily five days a week for eight weeks. During treatment, patients can watch a movie of their choice or enjoy the scenery through a bank of windows.

“Because patients spend so much time in our office during their treatment, they really develop a good relationship with the doctors and nurses,” said Debra Bergman, former director for the Center for Wound Care. “We want them to be as comfortable as possible and relax during their treatments with us.”

Every staff member at the center is nationally certified to treat patients with HBOT. “They must have adequate knowledge, training and hands on experience because 100 percent oxygen is involved which needs to be taken seriously,” said Dr. Byrne. The St. Joseph’s Center for Wound Care and Hyperbaric Medicine has been accredited with distinction by the Undersea & Hyperbaric Medicine Society.

Medical Director Dr. Joseph Byrne, M.D. talks with a patient following Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy treatment.

Improving Nutrition in COPD Patients

Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary disease, or COPD, is a progressive disease that makes it difficult to breathe. Not only is this disease a major cause of disability, it is the third leading cause of death in the United States. Patients with COPD have an increased risk of malnutrition as the disease progresses; they can experience a loss of appetite and decreased food intake, mostly caused by difficulties in breathing while eating, chewing and swallowing. Some patients become reluctant to eat because they are afraid they will choke. Studies show that 25 to 40 percent of patients with advanced COPD are malnourished.

“If patients with COPD are experiencing these symptoms of loss of appetite or weight loss, they need to talk to their doctor about alternate forms of nutrition,” said Joseph Nicoletti, RN, executive director of clinical programs at Franciscan Companies. “They don’t realize they are taking in fewer calories and this could hamper their recovery.”

Nicoletti said it is essential COPD patients monitor their nutritional intake. Oral supplements and enteral nutrition often benefit these calorie-comprised patients, preventing weight loss and muscle mass depletion. Franciscan Health Support offers a wide variety of enteral nutrition supplies that can benefit patients who experience malnutrition, are at nutritional risk, or are experiencing involuntary weight loss. Products include PediaSure, Ensure, Jevity, Osmolite, PulmoCare and TwoCal among many other oral use and tube feeding options. Call Franciscan Health Support at (315) 458-3200 for more information.
Lifeline Medical Alert Celebrates 30 Years in CNY

On Oct. 3, the Franciscan Lifeline program celebrated 30 years of serving the Central New York community. Subscribers, caregivers, referral partners and employees from Franciscan Companies and St. Joseph’s Hospital Health Center attended a breakfast event to recognize the program’s success.

“During our 30 years of service to Central New York, we have helped tens of thousands of seniors and at-risk individuals remain safely in the homes that they love,” said Beverly Lawton, executive director of Franciscan Lifeline, “which allows them to remain vital participants in their communities.”

The Lifeline program was originally opened by Loretto; it later merged with a program operated by St. Joseph's Hospital Health Center, and the combined program is now managed by Franciscan Companies.

Attendees learned about the evolution of Lifeline technology over the last 30 years. In addition, they were introduced to Philips’ new HomeSafe Wireless System, which connects users to the Lifeline Response Center without the need for a home telephone. Just one in four U.S. households will have a traditional land phone line at the end of this year, according to the trade group US Telecom.

“We receive many phone calls from people who only have a cell phone yet want the security and peace of mind offered by Lifeline,” said Lawton. “HomeSafe enables us to provide this support to them, through state-of-the-art equipment and Franciscan’s commitment to helping Central New Yorkers live home and live well.”

For more information on Franciscan Lifeline or HomeSafe, call (315) 492-8175.

Feeling Safe at 99 Years Old

At the spry age of 99, Ona Smith’s doctor told her she’s the “sharpest little old lady” he knows. That cracks her up.

“I read the newspaper; I’m involved in church service,” she said.

This Syracuse woman isn’t letting her age stop her. But, sometimes her body doesn’t want to cooperate. She uses a walker to get around and lives with a fear of falling. That’s why she subscribes to Franciscan Lifeline.

“I wouldn’t be without it,” she said. “I depend on it a great deal.”

“Falls are a common, costly and real risk for older adults,” said Beverly Lawton, executive director of Franciscan Lifeline. “It is estimated that one-third of all people 65 and older will fall each year and 40 percent of nursing home admissions are related to falls.”

Smith has the choice between a wrist unit and a necklace. She prefers wearing Lifeline on her wrist and is eager to show it off to her friends and neighbors.

“They ask what’s on my wrist and I show them how to push it,” she explained. “My neighbors are old like me and they need to be able to get help if they need it.”

Smith signed up 16 years ago and is one of the longest subscribers currently enrolled in Franciscan Lifeline. It gives her the freedom and reassurance she needs to stay ‘young.’

For more information about Franciscan Lifeline, call (315) 492-8175.
Medicare Patients Impacted by Competitive Bidding

By Tim Scanlon, Executive Vice-President, Franciscan Companies

The Competitive Bidding Program, mandated by Congress through the Medicare Prescription Drug Improvement and Modernization Act of 2003 (MMA), required durable medical equipment suppliers to submit “bids” on commonly dispensed durable medical equipment, i.e. oxygen, CPAP, wheelchairs and other mobility equipment. The flawed competitive bidding program awarded contracts in July to those providers whose bids were lower than Franciscan’s, in large part because those companies will not provide the ongoing follow-up service and support that Franciscan provides. Most companies who won these contracts are not even located in the state of New York and do not have local contacts available to assist Franciscan customers. Because Franciscan did not “bid” below its cost to provide service, and because we do not simply deliver equipment, but also provide follow up and support services to ensure that your equipment is working properly, our organization was not awarded a Medicare contract. Ostensibly, Medicare’s Competitive Bidding program has separated Franciscan from its Medicare customers.

Some members of Congress, recognizing that this leaves Medicare patients without a choice of medical equipment suppliers, are pushing back on the program and there is legislation pending to appeal it. In addition, the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) is currently investigating the process because some vendors may not provide the level of equipment quality which Medicare patients have every right to expect of their providers.

In the meantime, Franciscan’s Medicare beneficiaries do have options: they can enroll in a Medicare Advantage Program, and they can articulate their concerns about the flaws in the Competitive Bidding program.

Franciscan is partnering with Fidelis Care, one insurance provider option for Medicare Advantage, in order to offer our Medicare patients an easy way to enroll in a Medicare Advantage program. Franciscan chose Fidelis because its commitment to promote health through quality, accessibility and services for all also supports Franciscan’s commitment to help its clients live home and live well. The majority of Fidelis’ Medicare Advantage plans have $0 premiums and most have $0 or low co-pays and $0 prescription drug deductibles. As a Medicare Advantage beneficiary, patients receive better coverage than is offered through regular Medicare and they can choose their medical equipment provider, thus choosing their own medical equipment provider. To enroll in or learn more about Fidelis Medicare Advantage program, call 1-800-860-8707. A representative will meet you wherever it’s convenient to review your options.

Franciscan has received many phone calls from Medicare patients who are concerned about the quality of their equipment and service. Make your opinion known by calling the local office of U.S. Senator Charles Schumer at (315) 423-5471, by writing to him at 100 South Clinton Street, Syracuse NY 13261-7318 or emailing him through the form available at www.schumer.senate.gov. If you have Medicare and you’re having problems receiving your equipment or supplies, please don’t hesitate to call me at (315) 458-3600 ext. 125. It is our goal to help you Live Home and Live Well.

What is Pulmonary Rehabilitation?

St. Joseph’s offers several preventive services at its Janus Park location in Liverpool including pulmonary rehabilitation. However, many people are not familiar with what pulmonary rehabilitation is and how it works.

Who Qualifies
If you have asthma, COPD, Bronchiectasis, Pulmonary Fibrosis or any other lung condition, you may qualify for pulmonary rehabilitation services.

Process
What can you expect from participating in pulmonary rehabilitation? You can expect to begin exercise under the supervision of our skilled staff. Each participant’s exercise program is individualized, starting slowly and gradually increasing at your own pace. You will attend classes that teach you breathing techniques to help reduce shortness of breath. You will learn skills to use when traveling and when to call your doctor for help. You will learn about medications that can help and how they work.

Goal
The goal is for you to leave our program feeling stronger and more confident. We want you to breathe better and live a healthier life.

Payment
Most insurance companies cover the majority of the fee. Our staff will design a program to fit your needs.

Contact Us
Talk with your doctor about a referral to St. Joseph’s pulmonary rehabilitation, or call us at (315) 458-7171 and we can help get the process started. Our site is easy to access and parking is free.

If you or a loved one has trouble breathing, why not check us out!