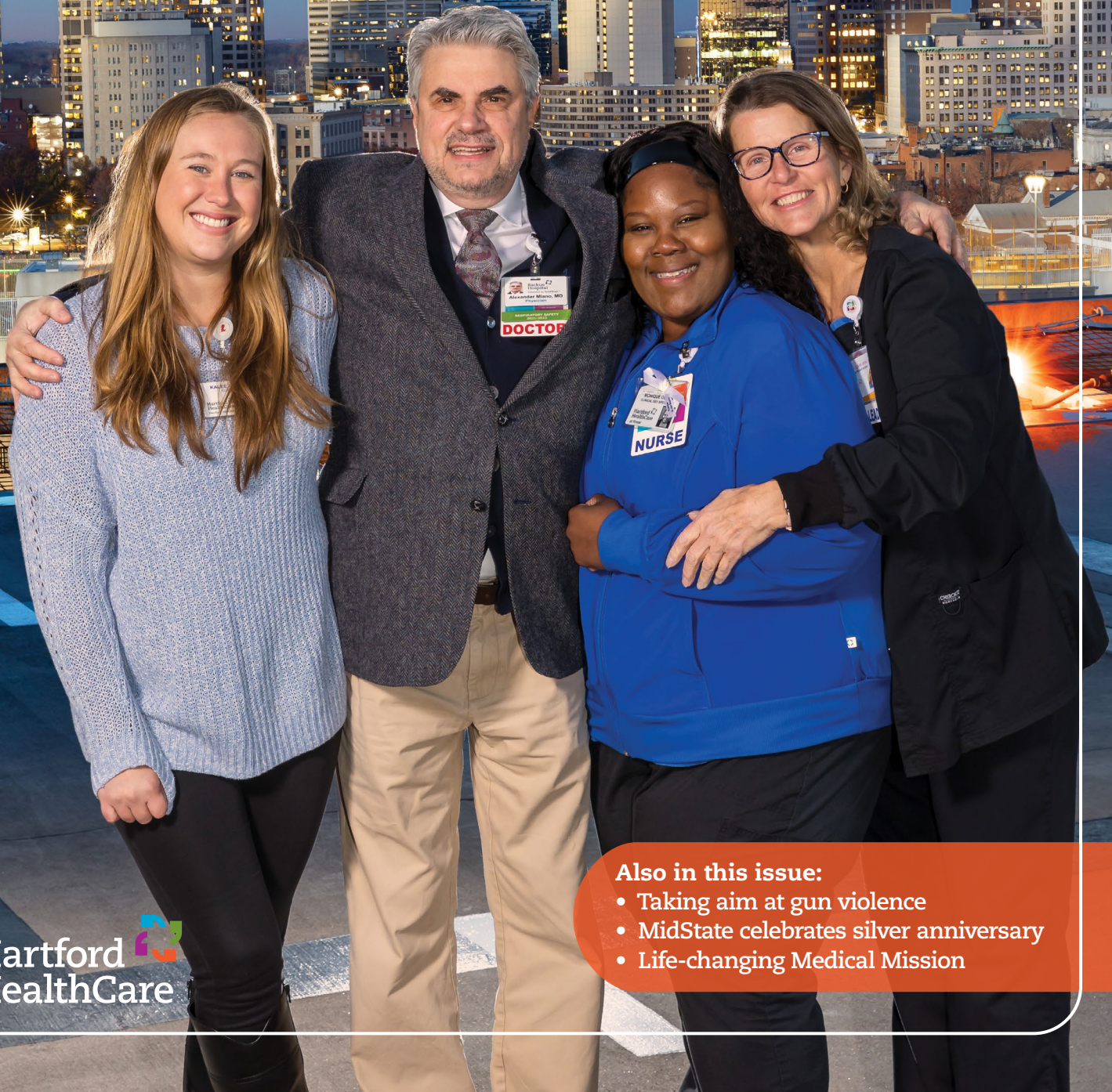


A publication for Hartford HealthCare colleagues

# moments

## Heroes Among Us



Also in this issue:

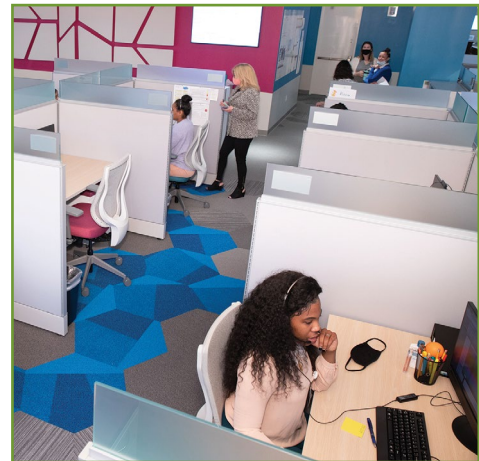
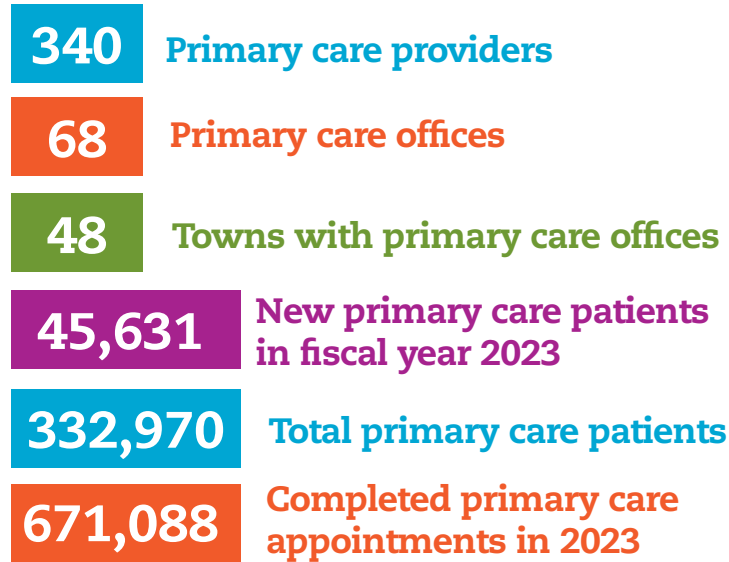
- Taking aim at gun violence
- MidState celebrates silver anniversary
- Life-changing Medical Mission





# It All Starts with Primary Care

The foundation of good healthcare is cemented in primary care, and the Hartford HealthCare Medical Group team has focused on building a strong panel of primary care providers in all regions.



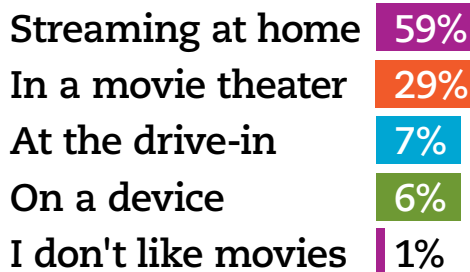
The Access Center team enables access to all Medical Group practices. Above, colleagues in the Access Center work the phone lines.

THE POLL



## When You Feel the Need – the Need for a Movie

In winter’s burrowing weather, there’s no place like home under a fluffy blanket with some snacks and your favorite people (or not!). We wondered “How do you like to watch movies?”



**On the cover:** Hartford HealthCare colleagues hailed as heroes for their actions include, from left: Kalee Latham, Dr. Alexander Miano, Monique Cobbs and Wendy Clark. To learn how the cover photo was created, see page 6.

Photo by Chris Rakoczy



## Dear Colleagues

Healthcare is all about people. Whatever role we have at Hartford HealthCare, we are here for others. And every day — in ways large and small, remarkable and unnoticed — we touch the lives of others.

This issue of *Moments* magazine shines a spotlight on just a few colleagues whose unselfish actions, deep compassion and natural instincts saved lives, delivered care and turned horrible situations into happy endings.

Each of these stories is inspiring on its own. Knowing they are part of a much bigger picture, a story of everyday heroism and selflessness, makes me so grateful to be part of this team of heroes — 37,000 strong, and making lives better every day.

To the colleagues celebrated on pages 22 through 27, and all of you who perform acts of heroism every day, thank you for being healers.

Jeffrey A. Flaks  
President and Chief Executive Officer



39

# table of contents



30



22



11





18



13

- 6 Behind the Scenes: Making of a Cover Photo
- 8 Points of Pride
- 11 The Pix!
- 13 The List
- 14 This is Us
- 17 Why We Do It
- 18 HHC Profiles
- 22 Cover Story: Heroes Among Us
- 28 Wellness Corner
- 29 Behind the Scenes: Dedication spells success for print shop team
- 30 Community Care
- 36 Moments That Matter
- 39 All in the Family
- 40 We Belong Here
- 42 Showing We Care
- 43 Thank You Notes

*Moments* is a magazine produced three times a year by Hartford HealthCare. Please send suggested story ideas for *Moments* to [susan.mcdonald@hhchealth.org](mailto:susan.mcdonald@hhchealth.org).

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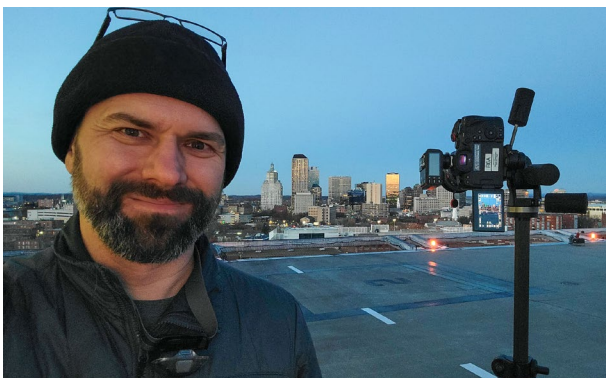
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# The Making of a Cover Photo



*Maybe you've marveled at the great cover photos we've had at Moments in the past. We're fortunate to have experienced photographers working with us on each issue, and their work is amazing. But, this issue's cover comes with its own story of talent, artistic eye and skill that we wanted to share with you. Photographer Chris Rakoczy, pictured above during the shoot, explains his process.*

I wanted a photo that was a little more epic and felt the Hartford city skyline — as seen from the LIFE STAR helipad at Hartford Hospital — with golden sunset light, rich blue skies and sparkling city lights that would provide a great backdrop for our group of heroes. Unfortunately, golden light, blue skies and sparkling cities don't all happen at the same time! So, this had to be a composite shot.

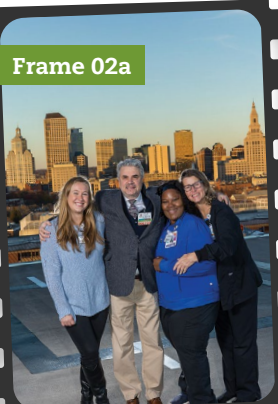
I began by determining where to put my camera and the group so I could see them in the foreground, the city in the background and have enough sky for the magazine title. I set my camera up on a tripod weighted down with sandbags. It had to stay absolutely steady for the next few hours as I captured frames that I would later dissect and reassemble, combining parts from one time of day with parts from another. For that, the images had to all line up perfectly.





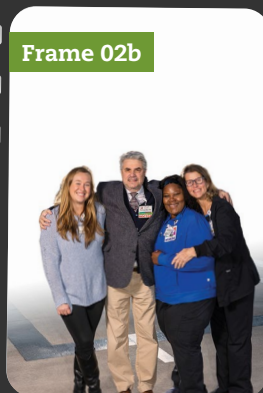
Frame 01

**Frame 01 - 3:42 pm:** I captured the warm light of late afternoon.



Frame 02a

**Frame 02a - 4 pm:** I set up a flash to the group's right (camera left) with a diffusion umbrella to soften the light on our heroes. I set up another flash directly behind them to create a sharp edge light around them as if they were lit by the city lights that would eventually come on.



Frame 02b

**Frame 02b:** This is the same frame with parts masked, or made transparent, to show just the parts I kept.



Frame 03a

**Frame 03a - 4:48 pm:** After the group left, I captured nearly 30 more frames a few minutes apart, trying to get just the right shade and color on the skyline. The frame I used was taken at 4:48 p.m.



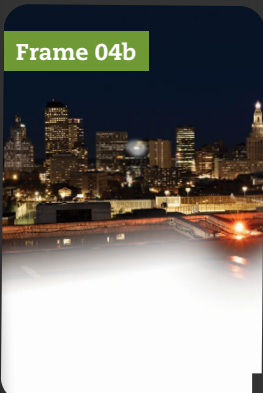
Frame 03b

**Frame 03b:** This is the same frame with parts masked to show just the parts I kept.



Frame 04a

**Frame 04a - 5:05 pm:** I waited for as dark a sky as I could get for the final shot, wanting as many city lights on and as much contrast with the buildings as possible.



Frame 04b

**Frame 04b:** This is the same frame with parts masked to show just the parts I kept.

The remaining frames show the build-up of masked images, with the group on the earlier afternoon city (Frame 05), then adding the darker city and sky but keeping the warm light on the edges of the buildings (Frame 06), further darkening the sky and adding some clouds for texture (Frame 07), and, finally, adding in all the city lights (Frame 08).

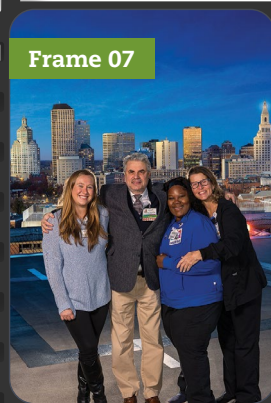
A few subtle adjustments were made to the overall composite before the final image was ready for use.



Frame 05



Frame 06



Frame 07



Frame 08



## MidState Celebrates Silver Anniversary of Caring

Let's rewind to 1998: "Titanic" was the number one movie at the box office, Furby was the hottest toy on the market and the average price of a gallon of gas was just over a dollar. Something else significant happened that year — MidState Medical Center opened its doors on Sept. 29.

"It's come so far in the last 25 years from really a dedicated community hospital to one of the busiest hospitals in Connecticut," says former President Gary Havican.

The hospital's history runs much deeper than 25 years, though. In 1892, Meriden Hospital opened

and grew considerably over the decades. The name was changed to Meriden-Wallingford Hospital and, in 1991, the hospital merged with War World II Veterans Memorial Hospital. Several years later, the plans for a new state-of-the-art facility began to gel.

Construction began in 1996 despite some initial concerns.

"It went from that to the recognition that we were a gem in the community and something people were talking about in a positive way," explains Lucille Janatka, former MidState president.

Over the years, MidState's service area grew



Some of MidState's longest-serving colleagues took part in a cake-cutting ceremony to mark the hospital's 25th anniversary. With former MidState President Gary Havican, at right, they are (left to right): Jerry Chaparro, assistant director, environmental services; Kay Yamartino, RN, Infusion Center; Mark Dalidowitz, point of care coordinator, lab; Drew Metzger, MD, medical director; Elena Rivera, CIA secretary, Pavilion B; Diane Forstberg, business system analyst, food and nutrition; Janet Gonzalez, food and nutrition; Christine Scully, director, integrational operation; Mandy Miller, nursing assistant, Pavilion C; Marlene Williams, physical therapist; and June Parker, medical technologist, lab.

Photo by Rusty Kimball



considerably — bringing care to communities including Cheshire, Wallingford and North Haven — then the Connecticut Orthopaedic Institute was added in 2017, and Hunter’s Ambulance joined the Hartford HealthCare EMS Network.

Chris Scully is one of many colleagues with deep ties to MidState, having started at Meriden-Wallingford Hospital in 1979 as a college student.

“I was always proud to be part of MidState Medical Center and Hartford HealthCare, and would choose to go no place else to work,” says Scully, who recently retired.

— Brian Spyros

MidState Medical Center under construction, circa 1996.



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## Dr. Sutton Receives Inaugural QU Faculty Award

Quinnipiac University selected Trevor Sutton, MD, an anesthesiologist with Hartford HealthCare in Hartford, to receive its inaugural Frank H. Netter MD School of Medicine Promotion of Equity, Inclusion, Diversity and Anti-Racism Faculty Award. The award recognizes faculty “demonstrating



Trevor Sutton, MD

dedication to promoting diversity, equity, inclusion and/or anti-racism in direct teaching of learners and/or in the care of patients and communities, advocacy and scholarly activities.”

— Susan McDonald

---

## Dr. Umashanker Earns International Research Award

Devika Umashanker, MD, metabolic weight loss specialist with the Hartford HealthCare Medical Group, presented a talk at the International Federation for the Surgery of Obesity and Metabolic Disorders (IFSO) conference in Naples, Italy.

The presentation, “Prevalence and Risk Factors of Migraine in a Clinic-Based Sample of Patients Pursuing Surgical or Medical Treatment for Obesity,” also earned Dr. Umashanker the IFSO Integrated Health Early State Scientific Investigator Award.

The study was conducted in collaboration with



Devika Umashanker, MD

Brian Grosberg, MD, director of the Ayer Neuroscience Institute Headache Center and his team.

The Integrated Health Emerging Scientist Award is given to the presenter based on the scientific and clinical significance of their study, innovation and rigor of study methods, clarity of presentation, and quality of responses to questions from the

audience and panel. The presenter must also have received their last degree less than 10 years ago.

— Susan McDonald





# First System-wide Medical Mission Changes Lives

On Nov. 4, 2023, more than 2,000 Hartford HealthCare colleagues arrived bright and early at six locations across the state, ready to staff Hartford HealthCare's Medical Mission. They offered some reassurance, necessary health-related information, necessities like winter coats and canes, and kindness to underserved people in the community. Throughout the day-long Mission, a tradition at St. Vincent's Medical Center that spanned the entire system for the first time, more than 2,500 people of all ages came in for care and support. Here are some moments from throughout the day, at every location.

*Photos by Chris Rakoczy, Rusty Kimball, Zee Rubin and Joel Callaway*







More photos on page 12









# Crushing a New Era of Content Creation

Maybe you've seen him at events, panning the room, cell phone aloft, invigorating Hartford HealthCare colleagues on an Instagram reel or laughing with a provider after an interview — it's all in a day's work for Caleb Green, manager of content development since June 2023. Here, he shares a little about what his job entails.

I have the opportunity to identify, coordinate, create and, ultimately share video content to our system's social media channels — demonstrating to our patients and communities that we are the most trusted for personalized coordinated care in Connecticut.

This includes creating more than 80 pieces of video content, helping the system accumulate more than 200,000 additional organic views on social media, and boosting followers by nearly 5,000 across all platforms.

Each day, I get the chance to interview physicians, nurses, physical therapists, colleagues, executive leaders, patients and community stakeholders in an effort to make the public aware of the resources and transformational care we offer within the system. I apply the "Influencer Model" — used by other industries such as sports and automotive in slightly different capacities — to serve as a connection point between colleagues and communities. The formula for this model is quite simple:



As the system's manager of content development, Caleb Green, above right, can be found anywhere from the opening of the Institute of Living museum to golf tournaments.

Photo by Chris Rakoczy

### Highest performing posts include:

**LINKEDIN:** "Rocco Orlando Appointed President of the New England Surgical Society," posted October 26, 2023, with 343 likes, 7 shares, and 12,654 impressions

**INSTAGRAM:** "Medical Mission Kick Off," posted November 4, 2023, with 270 likes, 41 shares, and 5,750 impressions

**FACEBOOK:** "K9 Nitro's Retirement Celebration," posted September 14, 2023, with 201 likes, 3 shares, and 4,443 impressions



### Check out Hartford HealthCare on these social medium platforms:

[linkedin.com/company/hartford-healthcare](https://www.linkedin.com/company/hartford-healthcare)

[twitter.com/HartfordHealthC](https://twitter.com/HartfordHealthC)

[youtube.com/user/HartfordHospitalCT](https://www.youtube.com/user/HartfordHospitalCT)

[facebook.com/HartfordHealthCare](https://www.facebook.com/HartfordHealthCare)

[instagram.com/hartford\\_healthcare](https://www.instagram.com/hartford_healthcare)

[tiktok.com/@hartfordhealth](https://www.tiktok.com/@hartfordhealth)



Hartford HealthCare might be where we work, but when we asked you where you find fun, relaxation or deeper meaning in your lives, we were astonished at the variety of hobbies and activities you pursue in your spare time. Here are a few of those stories, and we'll have more in upcoming issues of *Moments*. To share your hobby, email [susan.mcdonald@hhchealth.org](mailto:susan.mcdonald@hhchealth.org).

## History Buff Shares Skills, Knowledge at Museum

### Christopher Woods

Facilities maintenance, Hartford Hospital, IOL

A carpenter at both Hartford Hospital and the Institute of Living for the past 20 years, Christopher Woods has seen many changes at both campuses,



some of them quite historic. That's nothing, however, compared to the history he witnesses as a volunteer at the West Point Military Academy Museum in New York.

#### How did you become a volunteer at the West Point Museum?

My dad and uncles served in World War II so I have had an interest in the military and its history for as long as I can remember. My wife is involved with a lot of organizations as a volunteer and I have been looking to do something as well, so when I saw on Facebook that the museum was looking for volunteers, it seemed the perfect opportunity.

#### What is your role?

I go wherever I am needed and try to help with whatever I can. I recently helped build a display case for the Javelin Missile System exhibit, which was a lot of fun. I have fixed one of the garage doors and main doors, I've done some painting, all kinds of things.

#### What do you like best?

My favorite thing to do is give tours. It's a great way to share the passion I have for history with visitors from all over the world. Touring them around the museum allows me to teach them about what is there and is a great opportunity for me to learn things I may not have known.

#### How has your experience been?

It's been great. I feel very lucky to be able to spend time at such an incredible facility. There is so much that goes on behind the scenes that people do not see — it's amazing. Go, Army!

—Ken Harrison

*Christopher Woods shares his love of military history as a West Point Military Academy Museum volunteer.*





# Swathed in Silk and Bright Jewels, PT Finds Joy in Dance

**Bijal Shah, DPT**

*The Hospital of Central Connecticut*

Thirty-five-year-old Bijal Shah, DPT, physical therapist at The Hospital of Central Connecticut, loves helping people feel better, but her real passion is the traditional Indian dance Bharatnatyam. Her bachelor's and master's degrees from India are in dance (she also has bachelor's and master's in physical therapy from India, a master's in exercise science from Central Connecticut State University, and a doctorate in physical therapy from University of Montana). She grew up in Ahmedabad, Gujarat, India.

## **Tell us about your evolution as a dancer.**

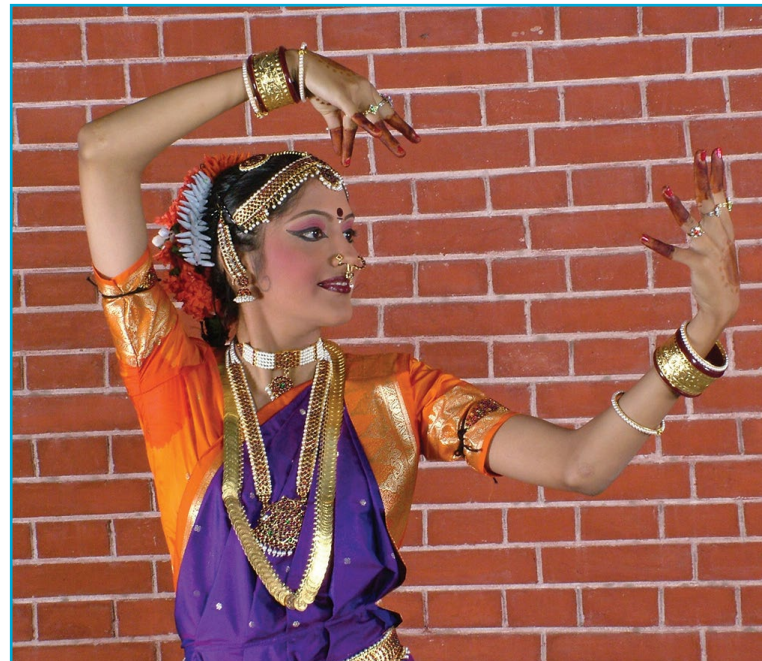
My journey is pretty typical of a first-generation classical dancer. Since both my mom and dad love dancing, it started as a hobby in 1994 at age 8. I learned Bharatnatyam. After six years, I performed what we call "Arangetram," a Sanskrit word that translates to "ascending the stage." In Bharatnatyam, it refers to the debut performance, marking the completion of dance training. It is considered a significant milestone in the dancer's artistic journey, marking their readiness to perform professionally. I was able to perform on different stages in India and internationally, and went to Dubai to represent an Indian classical dance form.

## **How has your study of dance helped you in life?**

I have been dancing for more than 25 years. Not only am I most happy when I am dancing, but my dance experience has increased my college readiness, providing me with cultural awareness, personal accountability, work ethic and commitment. I have become very culturally aware and appreciative of other styles of dance and music. I have always loved dancing because it fills my heart with joy and has changed my life in numerous ways.

## **You believe your study of dance helped you as a physical therapist. How?**

Bharatnatyam involves repetitive open chain movements of the lower limbs. It challenges balance, control and stability of the body. Dancing requires a high level of dynamic control, as more often one leg is off the ground as you perform.



*Bijal Shah wears brightly-colored silk outfits and an array of gold jewelry when she dances the traditional Indian dance Bharatnatyam.*

The benefits of dancing include: improvement of balance, stamina, concentration, endurance, flexibility, agility and coordination.

## **Tell us about your dance costumes, jewelry and makeup.**

The costume consists of a saree in the style of a Tamil Hindu bridal dress and is draped in a way that emphasizes footwork and movements of the legs. The saree, usually made of silk, is embellished with intricate designs and patterns, often featuring gold or silver thread. The blouse is typically short-sleeved and fitted, with a high neckline, and is also often embellished with decorative elements such as sequins, beads or embroidery.

Dancers wear a wide range of jewelry such as earrings, necklaces, bracelets and anklets. The jewelry is typically made of gold, studded with precious stones and jewels. Each piece holds symbolic significance and adds to the dancer's regal and divine aura. The colors are usually bright and vibrant.

## **Do you teach dance to your children?**

My daughter Kiana is 5 and takes dance lessons. We perform together, wearing matching costumes. It's so special to me. (She and her husband also have a 21-month-old son, Kahaan).

—Elissa Bass



## The Pull of the Pool Proved Too Strong

**Robert Hagberg, MD**

*Chief of cardiac surgery, Hartford Hospital*

Robert Hagberg, MD, chief of cardiac surgery at Hartford Hospital, dedicates his days to saving lives, but his true passion lies beyond the hospital walls and in the water. As a Stanford University swimmer, Dr. Hagberg was destined for Olympic glory until the United States boycotted the 1980 games in Moscow to protest the 1979 Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, sinking his dreams of representing the red, white and blue on the global stage. A total of 65 nations refused to participate in the 1980 games.

### **What was it like hearing about the boycott?**

Not going to the Olympic trials due to the boycott was a massive disappointment. I didn't even know what to think. I had hoped for so long that this was just a bad dream. In Moscow, I would have been in the prime of my career. I dedicated my life to swimming and the training that came along with it. So, to hear President (Jimmy) Carter make that announcement, it totally derailed me and changed

my life. I didn't know what to do with myself. My life took a totally different path than what I had expected. I went into a state of anger and depression for a while.

### **How did you regroup?**

I focused on my medical career, graduating from Stanford Medical School and never looking back at swimming.

### **Did that ever change?**

Yes, becoming a father changed that for me. My kids helped remind me of the passion and love I had for swimming. For so long, it was my life and when the boycott happened, I was so angry I wanted to forget about it.

My three children picked up swimming. Two are still active collegiate swimmers on the East Coast. Watching them dive into the pool, their eyes filled with determination, rekindled my love for the sport and I was determined to reconnect with the sport that had once brought me so much joy. While watching my kids fall in love with swimming, I missed every part of it. That's how I knew I was ready to get back because I didn't need to — I wanted to.

—Libby Marino



*Robert Hagberg swimming the butterfly stroke in 1980 as part of the swim team at Stanford University.*







## Love of Sports Leads to Career as Athletic Trainer

As a three-sport athlete in high school, Amanda Soltis was treated by an athletic trainer at her school, as well as trainers from other schools at rival games.

“I got to know athletic trainers in high school, and became interested in that as a career,” Soltis says, noting she received care after ankle sprains playing soccer, basketball and softball. “When my athletic trainer helped me with rehab and getting back to competition, I realized how important the role was to me and other athletes.”

At various points, she was treated by Bob Snyder, a Charlotte Hungerford Hospital trainer for 40 years before retiring last June.

“He treated injuries of mine, then I got to work with him and he was a mentor, which was a cool experience,” she says.

Soltis is now an athletic trainer at Litchfield High School, where she covers practices and home games, providing any needed emergency treatment, concussion evaluation, taping and rehabilitation treatment for students playing soccer, field hockey, cross country, basketball, lacrosse, baseball, softball and track.

*“When they are injured, I help them get back to playing. I know how much it means to them.”*

“I enjoy working with student athletes, seeing them progress,” she says. “When they are injured, I help them get back to playing. I know how much it means to them.”

Beyond the courts and fields, Soltis also helps people with Parkinson’s disease at the Sullivan Senior Center in Torrington, demonstrating mobility exercises and keeping them moving and active.

The 26-year-old New Hartford resident started at Charlotte Hungerford in March 2020, initially in the Intensive Care Unit assisting during the surge of COVID-19 cases. “It was an eye-opening

experience,” she says.

In the fall of 2021, she gained more experience as an athletic trainer, handling return-to-play protocols for students who tested positive for COVID and masking for indoor sports.

“I love sports. They’ve been a big part of my life,” she says. “Helping kids be able to do what they like to do, and seeing that gratification after working with them through an injury, is what I enjoy most.”

— Kate Carey-Trull



*Amanda Soltis became an athletic trainer after positive experiences with trainers when she played high school sports.*





## The Power of Committing to Collaboration

Nora Brugueras, born in Colombia, moved to the United States at the age of 7, starting a new life in Hartford with her mother and four siblings. From that moment on, she had a passion for helping others.

But her previous career left her feeling unfulfilled. She knew it was time to make a change. She decided to pursue her passion for human services.

This part of Brugueras' journey began in 2008 with an internship at Hartford HealthCare and led her to work as a health system navigator in the Early Detection and Prevention Program. In this role, she devoted more than 13 years to increasing the number of women getting breast and cervical cancer screening, plus diagnostic and treatment referrals.

Yet, her goals expanded beyond screening. Through collaboration and her innate ability to bring diverse stakeholders together, Brugueras created the HHC Women's Wellness Day, an annual event offering vital breast and cervical services directly to the community.

Launched in October 2018, Women's Wellness Day reflects her commitment to reaching women facing barriers to care. The program's impact breaks down such barriers as fear, lack of insurance and trouble navigating the healthcare system.



Nora Brugueras

Photo by Chris Rakoczy

Drawing on her immigrant experience, she aims to ensure every woman, regardless of status, has access to essential screenings. Her concern extends beyond medical services, addressing holistic health and empowering women with knowledge.

Over the years, women continue to express gratitude for the program's accessibility, especially on Saturdays when it caters to a population often overlooked by traditional healthcare. Empathy and cultural competence help Brugueras navigate the complexities faced by the underserved.

She also draws on her journey as a cancer survivor herself, and as a caregiver for her husband as he battles cancer. Strength from such personal experiences amplifies her advocacy and support for others facing health challenges.

Transitioning into a statewide role, Brugueras teaches and supports new hires, emphasizing the importance of collaboration building relationships to create sustainable and impactful programs. Her message, like her visionary leadership, is rooted in her experience, showcasing the profound impact one person can have when fueled by passion, empathy, and a commitment to collaborative change.

—Maggie Werner

## Ridge Director Knows Path to Recovery Well

Treatment for substance use disorder and addiction has greatly evolved over the last few decades to care that is personalized, and aimed at physical, emotional and psychological health and healing.

At The Ridge Recovery Center, there is a literal path to recovery meandering through trees on the idyllic 60-acre property in Windham. Perhaps no one understands the journey of finding — and staying on — that path more than Ridge clinical director Lauren Galarneau.

In 2006, Galarneau came to Connecticut from Maryland in search of help for her own addiction. She was in her 20s and still on her parents' insurance, unable to find care in her home state. Her experience with that search, recovery and years of sobriety helped shape her career, and made her a perfect fit for The Ridge.

"One of the goals of The Ridge is to break down barriers and increase access to care, and to create availability to those who may not always have



many options for treatment,” she says.

Treatment today, she adds, is so different from methods used in the past.

“It was very rigid — do this, do that. There was only one way to do things,” Galarneau explains. “What we know now is there are many different paths of recovery, and they all need to be incorporated. We need to do that to give clients the best possible chance to obtain their recovery.

“We incorporate holistic, trauma-informed approaches with evidence-based interventions including, but not limited to, cognitive behavioral therapy, dialectical behavioral therapy and motivational interviewing,”

Features like art and pet therapy, walking trails, yoga, movement classes, a fully equipped gym, auricular acupuncture, sound therapy and more have already set The Ridge apart from other treatment facilities.

“Study after study has shown that the cookie-cutter approach to recovery doesn’t work. There are all different types of support and different pathways that lead to greater outcomes of success,” she says.

Prior to starting at The Ridge, Galarneau was a clinical program manager at Rushford, where she had held a variety of positions in management and direct patient care over her nine years. She has an associate’s degree in drug and alcohol recovery counseling, plus bachelor’s and master’s degrees in social work. She is a licensed clinical social worker and licensed alcohol and drug counselor. She is also certified in auricular acupuncture, which focuses on the ears and is a well-known therapy for substance use disorders.

When talking about The Ridge, Galarneau is

particularly excited about the “extended stay” accommodations. After treatment is “officially” complete, patients can opt for extended stay housing, where they’ll have access to outpatient and partial hospital services as well as all other amenities.

“This will be a safe, sober living environment,” she explains. “We wanted to incorporate a smoother transition back to their life. Often, when someone finishes residential care and they are ‘done,’ they don’t feel quite ready. With this, they have a safe environment and familiar supports while waiting to fully transition back to their community.”

—Elissa Bass



Lauren Galarneau helms the new Ridge Recovery Center in Windham.

Photo by Chris Rakoczy

#### **The Ridge offers:**

- A three-tier, comprehensive design for recovery care, from medically monitored withdrawal management (16 beds) through residential treatment (36 beds) and beautifully appointed, sober living accommodations for the option of extending one’s stay.
- En suite, single rooms which ensure time and space for individual privacy and respite.
- Individual counseling
- Group therapy
- Medication management
- Trauma-informed care
- Support and educational groups, including art and pet therapy, financial counseling
- Recreation and fitness options, including Planet Fitness gym, walking trails, yoga, morning movement classes and more, as well as spiritual support
- Premier dining, including vegetarian and gluten-free options.
- Family support, including groups



## Blazing a Trail to Success for Herself and Others

When teenager Jennifer Rivera sought college advice in her high school guidance office in East Hartford 20 years ago, the secretary asked the young Latina if she was there for the teen moms class.

The teenager, now Jennifer Doran, reacted in what has become her successful signature style: She didn't get angry.

She didn't internalize the belittling assumption.

She simply plowed forward with a polite persistence that carried her from poverty to Hartford HealthCare's professional fast track.

"You have to take control of your journey," says Doran, 38, reflecting on a year in which she was recognized as one of Connecticut's 40 under 40 by the *Hartford Business Journal* and with the Emerging Leader Award from the Hispanic Health Council, where she serves on the board of directors. Most recently, *Fortune's Business Review* named her to its list of the 10 most empowering women leaders in business 2023.

HHC EVP and Chief Operating Officer Mike Daglio recalls advising Doran and Jose Garcia when they led the SOMOS Colleague Resource Group (CRG). Daglio is executive sponsor. To climb the leadership ladder, he suggested they join a community board of directors.

"They didn't just join, they kicked the door down," he says.

From that day in the guidance office, every step of Doran's journey has been deliberate. After earning her bachelor's degree, she completed a dual master's program, graduating from the University of Phoenix with degrees in business (MBA) and health administration (MHA).

She joined HHC in 2007 as a program assistant in the bariatrics program and, after numerous promotions over 16 years, is now senior director of the HHC Digestive Health Institute.

Ambitious and determined, she has sought opportunities for growth and mentorship, honing her warm, candid, no-nonsense style that,

early in her career, earned her some less than flattering feedback.

"I felt like I was having to prove myself, I was wearing a mask," she says, recalling observations that she could be "too loud," "too out there," "not polished enough."

She's smoothed the rough edges a bit, but Doran says she's grateful to now be recognized and respected for being herself in an organization with equity at its core.

"When you have leaders who walk the walk and talk the talk, that's what's keeping me [at HHC]," she says.

The daughter of a teenage mother who poured all her energy into creating opportunity for her children, Doran learned by example. After raising five children — including one with a doctorate — her mother earned her bachelor's degree in 2014.

Doran married her high school sweetheart, Brendan Doran, and together they are singularly focused on their children's future. They own a home in South Windsor plus investment property. Olivia, 15, is enrolled in a competitive high school. Carter is a fourth grader who invests in stocks with his father and aspires to be a paleontologist.

"We are making generational change," Doran says.

—Hilary Waldman



Jennifer Doran holds the award she received as one of the Hartford Business Journal's 40 Under 40.



# Whipping Up Success in the SVMC Kitchen

What began as a part-time job turned into a fulfilling career for St. Vincent's Medical Center executive chef Eugene Chest.

In 2008, Chest started a per diem position as a pot washer in the St. Vincent's cafeteria to help offset the cost of local college certifications. His background is in computers, having graduated from Temple University as a computer science major, and working briefly as a network technician. When he realized it wasn't quite what he wanted to do, he turned to his other passion, cooking.

*"I've always enjoyed cooking for my family and I was good at it."*

"It was not the daily thing that I wanted to do, so I decided to look around and see what else there was," he says. "I've always enjoyed cooking for my family and I was good at it."

At St. Vincent's, Chest began working his way up to cook and sous chef. Last fall, he made his way to the top, named executive chef. He oversees day-to-day responsibilities like finances, equipment use, food ordering and menu creation for both St. Vincent's and Westport Behavioral Health.

*Eugene Chest has always loved to cook, and worked his way up in the kitchen at St. Vincent's Medical Center.*

*Photo by Amy Mortensen*

"It cemented my goals," he says. "I had a goal in my mind and knew I was on the right path to get there."

Recently, he helped coordinate food for the system-wide Medical Mission, which he'd been involved with at St. Vincent's for several years.

When wearing the chef's hat, his specialties include outdoor grilling and Asian foods. He recently returned from a trip to Japan where he learned more about the culture and food.

"I wanted to see how the food tasted in Japan versus here. I feel like you can't cook if you don't know the origins of what you are cooking," Chest says. "I wanted to try everything and then replicate it."

He also makes it a point to mentor other cooks as a way to pay it forward.

"I tell people if they want to learn, I'll teach them," he says. "I've had two people work for me and one is a sous chef aspiring to be an executive chef."

—Robin Stanley





# HEROES Among Us

By Susan McDonald

Every day, Hartford HealthCare colleagues perform heroic acts large and small as part of our mission to help people. What we've found, however, is that for our HHC colleagues, helping is not just their jobs — it's part of who they are. We're sharing stories of

heroism on behalf of some colleagues, plus a nod to those who protect our campuses and us each day as public safety officers, and, lastly, a look at the theory of bystander intervention and why some people will help strangers in need. If you know of a heroic act performed outside of work by a colleague, please email me at [susan.mcdonald@hhchealth.org](mailto:susan.mcdonald@hhchealth.org).

## Heroes are in the Right Place at the Right Time

Thursday, July 20, 2023, began like any other for Cindy Valentin — the sun was shining and birds chirping as she went to work as a medical assistant in Hartford Hospital's Urogynecology Department.

She left around 5 p.m. (later than usual), heading to a friend's house, a different route than usual. About seven minutes into the drive, she hit traffic and grumbled about bad luck.

As traffic chugged along Park Street in Hartford, Valentin noticed a man directing traffic to the left, keeping cars from going straight or right. She peered a bit closer and saw a man lying unconscious in the street.

Her adrenaline kicking in, she was out of her car in seconds and dialing 911. Another woman, Jane Wilson, did the same.

Luckily, Wilson had a CPR kit and, together, the women performed life-saving measures on the man. As time went on, the man's lips and fingers turned blue and Valentin couldn't find a pulse. She asked the gathering crowd for Narcan because she suspected an overdose.

After administering the Narcan, the women continued CPR, stepping aside only when EMTs arrived and took over. Valentin and Wilson waited anxiously until the man's blue eyes opened wide as he gulped for air. They bumped shoulders and

smiled, knowing they had just helped save his life.

In talking with Wilson, Valentin found out she had also taken an alternate route that day, which gave her the chills. Reflecting on that day, she says she'd repeat it all in a heartbeat. Anybody's life, she says, is worth saving because there is someone who loves them.

Yet, Valentin is quite modest when it comes to being hailed a hero, brushing off the label. While others consider her act heroic, to her, it's just who she is.

—Maggie Werner

*Cindy Valentin helped save the life of a man overdosing in the middle of Park Street in Hartford one night after work.*

Photo by Chris Rakoczy





## Heroes Jump Out to Help, Without Thinking Twice

On any given morning, Route 2 in Norwich is jammed with Backus Hospital colleagues on their way to work. That turned out to be good luck for those involved in a fiery June car accident.

Alexander Miano, MD, a psychiatrist with Hartford HealthCare's Behavioral Health Network, was heading in from his Stonington home when two cars in front of him suddenly slammed into the highway median. Respiratory therapist Amy Jodoin, in a nearby car, saw it too.

Both pulled over and rushed to help.

Dr. Miano approached a badly damaged SUV with an elderly woman trapped in the driver's seat. An elderly man was stuck beside her. With other drivers who stopped, he helped pull them out.

Jodoin went to the second vehicle, where a woman appeared to be in shock.

"I blurted out, 'Hi, my name is Amy, are you OK? Your car is on fire, we gotta get you out of here!'"

She then noticed the driver of the SUV had returned to the wreckage to rescue her dog from the backseat.

"I pulled the curtain airbag out of the way so she could get her dog," Jodoin recalls.

Meanwhile, Dr. Miano fashioned a tourniquet using his necktie to stop bleeding on the man's leg.

Both colleagues consoled the injured until fire and ambulance crews arrived and transported them to the Backus Emergency Department.

Dr. Miano dismisses words like "hero" and "lifesaver."

"I think anyone would have done this," he says. "I'm just glad I was there. It's not just the right thing to do, it's the human thing. It was just an act of human kindness."

Would he do it again?

"Of course I would," he says. "Without a second thought. It is what we all are brought to do under dire situations."

Jodoin agrees.

"Heroes, in my eyes, are my coworkers, not just respiratory therapists, but all members of the interdisciplinary team who bring different aspects to the healthcare arena for the best care of our patients," she says. "I don't want to overlook first responders — they are everyday heroes. Fire, EMS, police — they go willingly into the unknown to



*Dr. Alexander Miano and respiratory therapist Amy Jodoin were honored by the City of Norwich for their heroic actions to save people involved in a fiery car crash on Route 2. They are pictured with Donna Handley, president of Backus Hospital, and Norwich Mayor Peter Nystrom.*

*Photo by Rusty Kimball*

rescue and transport patients."

The City of Norwich honored the two Hartford HealthCare colleagues, declaring July 17 as Dr. Alex Miano and Amy Jodoin Day.

"They put their own lives on the line to save two people and a family dog," Norwich Mayor Peter Nystrom says. "The Rose City is proud of them for their courage."

The experience changed her, Jodoin says. If presented with a similar situation in the future, would she react the same way?

"I have a 3-year-old who I had just dropped off to daycare 10 minutes prior to this," she recalls "If he was in the car, I wouldn't have hopped out for his safety. If I was alone in the future, I would do whatever I could to ensure the person was safe and received the care they needed."

"I would hope if I or a member of my family was in trouble someone would be a kind human and help. This is a new philosophy I have incorporated into my teaching of new respiratory therapists: Be a kind human. You never know when the opportunity to help someone will arise."

—Elissa Bass



## Heroes Give of Themselves

What would you do to help a stranger?

- A. Help them across a busy intersection?
- B. Hold open a door?
- C. Let them cut you in line at the grocery store?
- D. Give them one of your kidneys?

For Andrea LaRue, Wendy Clark and other Hartford HealthCare colleagues, the answer, without hesitation, is D.

In the last year, several colleagues announced they needed lifesaving kidney transplants and even more stepped up to offer theirs. As of November, four colleagues awaited a kidney transplant and 10, three of whom work in the transplant department, had donated a kidney.

Sixty-year-old Clark, a surgical services nurse educator at Windham Hospital, donated a kidney in July on behalf of Lucienne “Lucy” Donofrio, a medical assistant at Hartford HealthCare Medical Group’s General Surgery Department in Hartford.

LaRue, a 34-year-old medical assistant in the Hartford Hospital Colorectal Department, donated a kidney in August on behalf of Sanjay Banerjee, MD, a psychiatrist with the Institute of Living.

Both say that as soon as they heard about the need, they knew they wanted to help.

Clark was inspired after reading Donofrio’s story in Heartbeat, the systemwide weekly newsletter. Diagnosed with type 1 diabetes at 16 that developed into diabetic kidney disease as an adult, Donofrio experienced severe kidney damage after the 2016 birth of her daughter Giovanna. She was on dialysis.

“She’s 38 years old, she’s got a 7-year-old, and she needs a kidney,” Clark says. “I’ll tell you it was the photos of her with her daughter that did it for me. I thought, ‘I have to help.’”

As of November, Donofrio was still awaiting her transplant.

LaRue was also inspired by Donofrio’s story, but after she was set for transplant, she switched to benefit Dr. Banerjee, who had his transplant in the fall.

When signing up, LaRue was told her BMI was too high to donate so she changed her eating and exercise habits to lose 35 pounds.

“I needed to get healthier to help someone else, so that’s what I did. I felt like I was meant to be on this Earth for a reason, and this was my reason,” she says.



*Andrea LaRue felt compelled to donate a kidney after reading about an ill Hartford HealthCare colleague.*



*Sanjay Banerjee, MD, of the Institute of Living, center, was greeted by members of his team as he went in for his transplant surgery.*

If you ask Asamoah “Azzy” Anane, living donor transplant coordinator at Hartford Hospital, why so many colleagues step up to donate, it’s because of who they are at their core.

“We are in the healthcare business,” he says. “People who get into healthcare want to help other people and 80% of our donors have been nurses. These are people who naturally want to help others. Then they read the stories, they’re touched and they call.”

Hartford HealthCare provides donors a six-week enhanced disability benefit to colleagues who donate an organ at their regular rate of pay. Colleagues who act as living donors are not required to use a week of PTO before becoming eligible for disability leave. (Learn more on the



Leaves of Absence page of HHC Connect).

There is no cost to the donor for the testing, procedure or two years of follow-up care involved in kidney donation, Anane explains.

Under the living donor system, donors don't have to "match" with the intended recipient to help them. Working with the National Kidney Registry, donors provide kidneys to someone who is a match. The HHC colleague then becomes eligible for a donation from someone who matches them.

For LaRue, life has returned to normal. She's back at work and feels great.

"I don't feel like I'm missing anything," she says. "I kind of forget I had this major surgery and I'm missing a piece of myself. Now it's helping someone else feel good and live their life. I was able to give somebody extra time. It's an honor."

Clark finds the experience as life changing for her as the person who has her kidney. She plans to be "the poster child for kidney donation. If I can do this at 60, a lot of people can do this. This has been a very profound journey for me. I am an educator at heart and this will be my new cause."

—Elissa Bass

## Heroes Show Up Every Day

Every day, Hartford HealthCare colleagues, patients and visitors rely on uniformed public safety officers to keep them and the environment safe.

During Public Safety Week in the fall, Patrick Turek, senior system director of public safety and emergency management, recognized our public safety colleagues of the year.

### Congratulations to:

- Duane Corey, St. Vincent's Medical Center
- Adriana Figueroa, Windham Hospital
- Michael Mirmina, The Hospital of Central Connecticut
- James Pollard, Backus Hospital
- Victor Sanchez, Hartford Hospital
- Peter Towne, Charlotte Hungerford Hospital
- Michael Wright, MidState Medical Center

### Lifesaving Awards were given to:

- Phillip Brown, MidState Medical Center, "for his unwavering actions in assisting a family and infant suffering from a seizure into the hospital's Emergency Department."
- Craig Getter, Backus Hospital, "for his quick and competent use and also being the first HHC public safety officer to deliver Narcan to revive someone in great medical need."
- Orlando Maldonado, Jasmine McCall, Jeymar Soto, Anthony Hines, St. Vincent's Medical Center, "for their heroic actions and placing themselves in harm's way to prevent a patient from harming others or taking her own life with an edge weapon."

—Susan McDonald



Public Safety Week included celebrating HHC colleagues of the year and those who performed life-saving actions.



## Heroes Tune into Trouble

Kalee Latham finally got up early enough one Thursday morning to take her golden retriever Marley for a good walk before heading to work as an outpatient clinician at the Institute of Living.

Turns out Marley didn't get much of a walk, and the 29-year-old ended up late because they very well may have saved a life.

As Latham started on a trail she walks frequently, a man stopped to tell her that a young woman was sitting on top of a bridge, looking as if she might jump. Latham ran in that direction.

"I said, 'Hey, you OK? Do you need any help?' She wouldn't look at me. I asked her name, I said my name is Kalee and this is Marley. I just kept talking, making small talk. She had on a concert t-shirt, and I talked about music. Little by little, she looked at me," Latham recalls.

A passing cyclist stopped to help, and she quietly asked him to call 911, not wanting to upset the young woman by using her own phone to call.

"I told her I know what it's like when your upbringing is tough, but there is a good part in life and if she would come back onto the bridge we could talk about how to get there," Latham says.

After about 25 minutes, the woman climbed down, walking with Latham and Marley toward the trail entrance. When police arrived, Latham took Marley home.

"I'm not a morning person," she says, "but my



*Kalee Latham and her dog Marley helped save the life of a woman contemplating suicide one morning.*

adrenaline was really going after that! I had an 8 o'clock meeting and I was trying to get in touch with my boss to explain why I wasn't there."

While she doesn't know for sure if the story ending is ultimately happy, Latham says it's a lot like work she does every day at the IOL.

"I'm glad I was there. I'm glad she trusted me. I'm glad she got off that bridge," she says. "With my patients, I don't always know what happens afterward, but I always hope for the best. And I hope she got connected to the treatment she needs," she says.

—Elissa Bass

## Heroes Stay Prepared and Respond Quickly

Monique Cobbs, Hartford HealthCare at Home clinical manager, planned to spend the day in her office supporting a new colleague, instead of out in the field where she usually works.

Settling into a desk, she heard someone urgently call out, "Is there a nurse here? She's not breathing!"

Cobbs ran toward the commotion, discovering a colleague slumped in her chair. Checking for a pulse, Cobbs found none and quickly prepared for CPR by guiding the woman to the floor. In moving, the woman emitted a small gasp, indicating return of a weak pulse.

Switching gears, Cobbs started sternal rubs, a technique designed to produce a painful reaction and bring patients to consciousness. As the woman

gradually awoke, she mentioned feeling chest pain and cold. Maintaining her composure, Cobbs directed the office staff to wrap her in jackets to keep her warm. Throughout, Cobbs kept the colleague conscious until the paramedics arrived.

Asked about her instinct to get involved, Cobbs downplays her actions, attributing them to the inherent nature of a nurse.

"I am a nurse. There is nothing in me that wouldn't have wanted to help," she explains.

Reflecting on the experience, she emphasizes the importance of being prepared.

"You have to always be ready to help, expect the unexpected. Public, office, parking lot emergencies aren't preplanned. It feels good to know what I can



do to help, what is within my expertise,” she says.

Despite being called a hero, Cobbs modestly states, “I don’t feel like my actions were heroic. I feel like they were me stepping up to what I am trained to do.”

The entire office team — including the person initially calling for help — were key, she adds.

“Do you have to know how to be a surgeon and do the things you see on TV? No, because that is not realistic. Even if it is talking to someone, holding someone’s hand, comforting someone’s child while they are having an emergency. The smallest things mean the world to someone in crisis. Anyone can be the hero if they remember that. It’s just about being there, stepping up and doing what you can to support and bring someone to the care they need,” Cobbs says.

—Elissa Bass

*Monique Cobbs is a clinical manager with Hartford HealthCare at Home.*

Photo by Chris Rakoczy



## Healthcare Workers Make Natural Heroes



*Javeed Sukhera, MD, PhD*

There are two kinds of people who witness emergencies — those who jump in to help and those who do not.

Good Samaritans pull people from burning cars, chat with distraught people and help reunite lost children with parents. Their response, rooted in psychology and the very essence of who they are, can be explained by the bystander intervention theory, says Javeed Sukhera, MD, PhD, chair of psychiatry at the Institute of Living.

“It describes how people recognize a situation and lean into it, intending to make it better,” he explains.

Healthcare workers are logical good samaritans, feeling the same pull that draws them to their work.

“They have a calling and desire to be helpful. They are more natural helpers who are unable to tolerate something negative happening if they feel they can be useful,” Dr. Sukhera says.

Despite increasing trends that suggest more

people are likely to jump in and help, fear remains for some more than others. There are various reasons people are afraid to step in to help. Research, he says, suggests bystanders are more likely to step into situations they do not perceive as potentially dangerous.

“At the beginning of the pandemic, we learned of resident doctors reacting to how some groups were being treated differently. They naturally learned to do extra for these people,” Dr. Sukhera notes. “But, research also found that the residents engaged in advocacy in a constrained way because they didn’t want to get in ‘trouble’ for actions that might go against the norm.”

Personally, he has stopped after witnessing a motorcycle accident, calling 911 and waiting with the driver until an ambulance arrived. Yet, he acknowledges there are many healthcare professionals who still fear potential litigation or risk. Nonetheless, he suggests they are built to be helpers.

“That is who we are — we are healers and are programmed to bring our positive energy into the world,” he says.

—Susan McDonald



# Mother of Well-being at HHC? Just Call Her Catie

By Hilary Waldman

The year was 2019 and an epidemic of physician suicides shook the nation's medical community, hitting home when a member of the Hartford HealthCare community took their own life.

Catie Santarsiero — a nurse practitioner with training in leadership and organizational development and head of HHC's Provider Leadership Development Institute at the time — was tapped to “create something” to address physician burnout.

She dug into the research and best practices and interviewed scores of providers about what was taking the joy out of practicing medicine. She asked for suggestions to make it better.

With no funding or staff, she solicited interested colleagues to help and was overwhelmed when 70 volunteers answered the call.

They created the Physician and Provider Health & Wellness Initiative, recognized with that year's Making a Difference Together team award for working across departments and disciplines to turn innovative thinking into measurable change.

The applause had barely faded when the COVID-19 pandemic shut down the nation and challenged the healthcare community like never before.

Once again, Santarsiero was called on to help support the psychosocial needs of colleagues caring for the sickest patients imaginable while worrying about their and their family's health and safety. The stress could be crushing.

Working with Behavioral Health Network

leaders and others, she helped launch the Colleague Support Center, a 24/7 hotline connecting distressed colleagues with the support they needed from counseling to childcare.

To meet the demand, HHC created the Well-being Department with an executive-level chief wellness officer and Santarsiero as director.

“It went from a concept, ‘Catie, can you create something?’ and that something became the Well-being Department,” she says, crediting Rocco Orlando, MD, senior vice president and chief academic officer; Gerry Lupacchino, senior vice president for human experience; and John Santopietro, MD, physician-in-chief of the Behavioral Health Network.

But, they will tell you the spark was all her. In May 2023 she was honored with a Nightingale Award in recognition of contributions to well-being here and accomplishments as a nurse.

“For several years, she worked as my partner educating the next generation of leaders of our organization,” Dr. Orlando recalled. “Realizing burnout was a major challenge, Catie immersed herself in an initiative to improve provider well-being.”

A nurse at heart, Santarsiero returned to her roots and is now director of nursing quality and safety in the Central Region. It feels good to be back, she admits.

“Catie's vision helped make

the case for the organization's commitment to well-being and informed the strategy for our well-being approach,” said Jennifer Ferrand, PsyD, who succeeded Santarsiero as well-being director. “Her impact is felt every day in the way she embodies our values and leadership behaviors and helps embed well-being into our culture.”



Catie Santarsiero





# Dedication Spells Success for Print Shop Team

By Elena Bisson

There's nothing typical about the Hartford Hospital digital print shop — a small yet formidable department that offers affordable printing services to the entire system.

Managing a remarkable 700 to 900 printing jobs each month, the tasks vary in scale from business cards and clinical forms to patient resource guides, producing nearly 500,000 documents monthly.

At the helm is Stew MacCluggage, who played a vital role in conceptualizing and building the facility in the Bliss Building in 2010, in collaboration with Ricoh, where he worked. He has worked here ever since. The print shop emerged from the merger of three entities in the system, revolutionizing in-house printing by transitioning from bulk printing to print-on-demand to minimize waste.

Chatting with MacCluggage reveals the passion he has for his team. When asked about his accomplishments, he says, "It's not about me, it's about this exceptional team. None of this would be

possible without them."

He then lists individual contributions of each employee, acknowledging their dedication and spirit of collaboration. Whether it's Nathan Crespo, the site operator with 40 years here, or Mark Daniels, senior service specialist frequently found distributing complimentary lunch vouchers in the hospital café, MacCluggage is sure each receives the recognition they deserve.

Outside of work, the Connecticut native who lives in Marlborough with his wife and two children, enjoys early morning commutes with son Connor, a Hartford Hospital food service associate.

The print shop team eagerly anticipates the future, planning to enhance production capabilities by adding three cutting-edge color printers, a significant upgrade from the single unit currently in operation. This advancement, MacCluggage reports, will be complemented by a modernized digital storefront and introduced to colleagues through an open house so the team can showcase the full extent of their services.



Mark Daniels, Nelson Crespo, and Stewart MacCluggage in the Hartford Hospital Digital Print Center.

Photo by Chris Rakoczy



## New Technology Tells 200-year-old Story

While the message about the moral treatment of people with mental illness at the Institute of Living's museum hasn't changed, the infusion of advanced technology has boosted the way the message is delivered to visitors.

"Myths, Minds and Medicine: Two Centuries of Mental Healthcare" first opened 28 years ago on the campus to showcase the indelible role the IOL played in the advancement of mental healthcare in this nation. Powered by a small, dedicated group and technology partners, an updated museum re-opened in the fall.

"As the IOL's 200th anniversary came up, it seemed like a no-brainer to renovate the museum," says Harold "Hank" Schwartz, MD, IOL physician-in-chief emeritus. "Many of the exhibits were created using the technology of the time and were in need of updating."

The upgrade, which took several years, resulted from work by him, Harrison "Whitey" Jenkins, founder of the Connecticut Sports Museum and Hall of Fame, and Lee Monroe, Schwartz's wife and former IOL public relations director. Jenkins was an integral part of the ideas behind and execution of new exhibits, while Dr. Schwartz and Monroe spent countless hours in IOL archives selecting items for display and updating exhibit text.

The revolutionary changes, however, came from a team from Quast Media that created new interactive exhibits.

Jeff Durham, director of strategy at Quast, notes that previous museum technology included VHS tapes and laser discs. The new exhibits tap interactive touch-screen technology to provide visitors with intriguing hands-on experiences.

"It was antiquated," Durham says. "Audiences are constantly changing, especially in the digital age, and museums need to keep up. You need digital components to get your audience excited and engaged. We were able to use this technology to create a sense of fascination."

A new "brain box," for example, takes visitors digitally through different parts of the brain, with fun facts the average person wouldn't know. There's even a quiz to test how well you paid attention.

### Tracing the history

A permanent exhibit, "Myths, Minds and Medicine" explains dramatic changes over the past 200 years in perception of and attempts to treat people with mental illness. It takes visitors from a time when the mentally ill were chained and caged, through the principles of "Moral Treatment" on which the



The modernized exhibit includes a replica of a patient room, left, video screens beside displays, above, and other artifacts.



Photos by Chris Rakoczy



IOL was founded, to modern day.

Visitors are welcomed at the entrance by a quote from psychiatrist Carl Jung: “I am not what happened to me, I am what I choose to become,” followed by an IOL statement, “We are here to help you choose.”

Exhibits highlight contributions from early psychiatrists to the establishment of “moral treatment,” a revolutionary approach requiring mental disorders be treated with the best medical care available and a focus on the social, psychological and spiritual aspects of patients’ lives. Founded in America at the Hartford Retreat,

now IOL, moral treatment evolved into the biopsychosocial model guiding care today.

A nearby exhibit recreates a patient room from the early 20th century. Visitors can push a button to hear Monroe give a tour. Other buttons play letters from patients to family. One video captures campus life in the 1940s and 50s, while another in the Modern Therapies Room features a demonstration by Godfrey Pearlson, PhD, director of Olin Neuropsychiatry Research Center, of modern neuroscience and its application to psychiatry.

The museum is open weekdays from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

—Elissa Bass

## Schwartz Etched into IOL History

There’s a new name carved in stone at the Institute of Living, reflecting the 35-year career of Harold (Hank) Schwartz, MD.

Dr. Schwartz’s legacy includes transforming the IOL into one of the nation’s leading modern-day mental health institutions, being a voice on topics he felt were important, including speaking out against the Catholic Church during priest abuse scandals, and his work following the Sandy Hook massacre.

For this, he was honored in September with the dedication of the Schwartz Commons Building, home of the Hank Schwartz Education Center.

“It means an enormous amount to me, especially since I spent my entire professional life devoted to the IOL,” said Dr. Schwartz, who also noted the IOL has a tradition of naming buildings after people “who led the way through significant changes.

I am honored to be thought worthy of that.”

“Rock star” is how John Santopietro, MD, senior vice president of Hartford HealthCare and physician-in-chief of the Behavioral Health Network, refers to Dr. Schwartz.

“It’s hard to imagine anyone having more of an impact on an organization — particularly as it relates to the dignity of the patient — than Hank has had. It’s only fitting that we honor that legacy with this building,” he said.

The achievements of Dr. Schwartz, who arrived at the IOL in 1992, shortly before merger discussions with Hartford Hospital began, include:

- Schizophrenia Initiative, a multi-faceted process that led to new programs and research such as the Olin Neuropsychiatry Research Center, home of cutting-edge research generating millions of dollars in grants.
- Potential Program helping young people showing the first signs of mental illness.
- Anxiety Disorders Center/Center for Cognitive Behavioral Therapy
- Depression Initiative
- Re-establishment of IOL residency programs for adult, child and adolescent, and psychosomatic medicine

—Elissa Bass



The long career of Harold “Hank” Schwartz, MD, center at left, was recognized in the fall when a building at the Institute of Living was renamed after him.

Photo by Chris Rakoczy



## Health Workers Bridge the Healthcare Divide

Citlaly Ibarra begins days as a certified community health worker (CCHW) at St. Vincent's Medical Center saying good morning to her beta fish, Itzcali, whose name means "house of beauty" in the Aztec language Nahuatl.

The fish reminds Ibarra of her Mexican heritage. She moved to the United States with her family as a baby, eventually becoming the resident English-Spanish translator. From scheduling appointments to asking which aisle rice and beans were on in the grocery store, Ibarra played an integral role in meeting everyday needs of family and neighbors.

She's still meeting the needs of people more comfortable speaking in Spanish, coming to SVMC to work as a CCHW, qualified bilingual colleague and certified nursing assistant. She works with Mission Services Community Health as one of three Spanish-speaking team members with Edna Borchetta, Mission Services manager, and CCHW

Patricia Lopez. That skill is a huge asset as more than half of their clients speak Spanish as their first language.

As a CCHW, Ibarra typically meets clients at community health fairs and through initiatives like St. Vincent's weekly farm stand and community health screenings and bi-weekly food distribution, where she helps connect patrons with community resources. The resources, according to Borchetta, can be essential for those suffering from food and housing insecurity, as well as other challenges.

Much CCHW work begins with informal counseling. Through multiple phone calls, texts and in-person meetings, Ibarra assesses patient needs based on their situation, then connects them with appropriate resources.

It's work that feeds her passion to help others. For example, she and Lopez met a woman in the emergency department who'd recently emigrated from Mexico but did not speak a language they recognized. The woman was pregnant and had two young children, one of whom had an orthopedic issue with his feet and was unable to walk.

Communicating in broken Spanish and hand gestures, the CCHWs connected the mother with doctors at a local federally-qualified health center for prenatal care and pediatric care for her children. The two also connected the mother to St. Vincent's, where she delivered her baby. Just a few days later, her son received life-changing surgery to repair bilateral club feet, a diagnosis and intervention possible through HHC's partnership with Connecticut Children's Medical Center.

Thanks to the work of Ibarra and Lopez, today the boy can walk and all family members have medical homes. Their efforts earned the pair a Great Catch award for spotting and addressing a preventable harm.

Yet, Ibarra says the real value is "when you can see the difference you've made in somebody's life."

—Levell Williams



*Citlaly Ibarra confers with Patty Lopez, on phone regularly as they work with Spanish-speaking patients in Fairfield County.*



## Sophia Myles Can't Help but Help

Whether it's at her job as assistant director of environmental services at Hartford Hospital or at her family business, if there's a problem, Sophia Myles wants to help fix it.

The same is true when she sees homeless people without access to clean or adequate clothes. To help, she enlisted her family and their business, The Laundry Room of Cromwell.

"We have been in business for a long time and we are part of the community. We wanted to find a way to give back," Myles says. She and her brothers were brainstorming when they came up with an idea that's a win for the business and the homeless community.

They call it "Washing Away Homelessness."

At The Laundry Room, clothing that is not picked up by customers after 60 days is considered unclaimed. A surprising number of people drop off their clothes to be washed, dried and folded and then never return, Myles says. Things pile up.

She reached out to Hartford Hospital's Neighborhood Health Department, which brings health prevention services and support directly into the community through mobile CareVans that visit

and operate daytime health clinics every week.

CareVan staff see patients daily who need clean or better clothing. The Laundry Room team bundles unclaimed clothes and van staff hand them out to patients.

"It's everything," Myles says, noting that distributions started in August. "Shirts, underwear, pants, socks, really nice blankets. We didn't want to give these things to an organization that would sell them. We wanted them to go directly to people in need."

Not having access to clean or sufficient clothing is an issue that hits home for Myles, whose mother and aunt immigrated to the United States from Jamaica.

"As immigrants, we understand what it's like not to have things," she says.

The Laundry Room also partners with ABC Women's Center in Middletown, raising money to buy diapers and other necessities for clients, and organizes an adopt-a-family program at Christmas for My Sister's Place in Hartford, which works with homeless women and families.

—Elissa Bass



The Myles family runs a laundromat, from which they donate unclaimed clothing to Hartford HealthCare for distribution to patients in need. From left to right are: Sophia Myles, Alma Myles, Ayana Franks, Vernice Reid, Taylor Edwin.

Photo by Chris Rakoczy



## Experts — Plus a Service Dog! — Ease Children Through Child Abuse Investigations

They interview about 70 children a year as part of child abuse investigations and every year it seems that more frightened faces sit before them.

The mission of the Child Abuse Investigation Team of Northwest Connecticut (CAIT NW), based in Charlotte Hungerford Hospital's Center for Youth and Families (CYF), is to find the truth without further traumatizing child victims, says Michelle Colleoni, coordinator.

The multidisciplinary team of law enforcement, victim advocates and mental health professionals reviews about 120 criminal child abuse cases a year involving sexual and/or physical abuse, sex trafficking, and exposure to violence. Referrals come from law enforcement or the Department of Children and Families.

“Our center is a neutral, child-friendly environment where they can talk about difficult things to trained professionals. We then wrap services around the child and their family. We also provide community education to increase awareness and prevention of child abuse,” says Colleoni, who coordinates the team and schedules forensic interviews, mindful to minimize the times children have to talk about the abuse.

The center, one of 10 in Connecticut accredited through the National Children's Alliance, also

provides trauma-focused therapy for children and non-offending caregivers and on-site forensic medical evaluations through Connecticut Children's. Such services, Colleoni says, help ease stress in what can be an overwhelming system to navigate.

### Team expansion

The team recently expanded its potential impact by hiring two new members — one human and one canine. Child trauma response coordinator Kevin Tieman, a retired Torrington police detective specializing in sexual assault and child abuse cases, and his service dog Dani, a Portuguese water dog, help ease children through interviews. He's the first service dog assigned to such a facility in the state.

Anxious children can visit with Dani to help them relax and many spend time with him before or after the interview, during therapy sessions, forensic medical exams and family meetings.

### Raising awareness

Part of Tieman's role is to serve as liaison with community agencies, such as law enforcement and the state, setting up interviews and following up on different cases. He also goes into communities to explain the investigative process to mandated reporters such as school staff, coaches and child care providers.

“We want to educate these agencies about their role as a reporter, that they need to make an immediate phone call to DCF or law enforcement, but not ask further questions of the victim at that time,” he says, adding the process helps protect the integrity of the interview and testimony for court proceedings.

—Kate Carey-Trull



*Child trauma response coordinator Kevin Tieman and child abuse investigation team coordinator Michelle Colleoni often bring Dani the service dog in to ease the anxiety of children being questioned about abuse.*

Photo by Chris Rakoczy



## ER Doc Shares the Power of Surf Therapy

For Marc Guttman, MD, surfing offers an escape from the hectic pace of his job as a physician in the Backus Hospital Emergency Department, creating a tranquil place where he can enjoy being among waves and changing tides.

“Surfing is great outdoor exercise that gives me the opportunity to work on a fun skill,” he explains. “I started surfing during my emergency medicine training in New York City where I would take the train from Manhattan to Long Beach on Long Island. Since that time, I have enjoyed surfing waves in Central America, Hawaii, the Caribbean and Europe.”

Dr. Guttman recently began sharing his passion with some unlikely surfers when he started working with Life Rolls On, a non-profit organization dedicated to improving the quality of life for people living with various disabilities.

Founded by Jesse Billauer, who suffered a spinal injury while surfing and became quadriplegic, Life Rolls On has been organizing adaptive surf and skate events nationwide for 20 years. In 2022, Dr. Guttman, with the help of his daughter Tara, a senior at East Lyme High School, organized Life Rolls On’s first New England event at Narragansett Town Beach in Rhode Island.

“As an emergency physician, I often see patients and their families dealing with their disabilities,” Dr. Guttman says. “Having enjoyed surfing myself for many years and enjoying the good feelings it offers, I thought that adaptive surfing must be a great way for individuals with disabilities to



*Marc Guttman, MD, and his daughter Tara share their love of surfing by organizing Life Rolls On adaptive events for people with disabilities.*

be active, share in the joy and maybe help be a springboard to other endeavors that could enrich their lives.”

He credits the success of Life Rolls On New England to the hundreds of volunteers and event sponsors who help make it happen, including Gnome Surf, a surf therapy organization in Little Compton, RI, which provided essential equipment and expertise.

“We had a great inaugural event last year and an even better turnout this year with surfers from Connecticut, Massachusetts and Rhode Island,” Dr. Guttman says. “We have an amazing group of volunteers, sponsors and supporters who make this an incredible event for the participants.”

—Ken Harrison

## Plane Pull with a Purpose

Colleagues from the Central Region took part in a Plane Pull this fall at Tweed-New Haven Airport as part of a fundraiser for Special Olympics Connecticut. They raised \$3,000 and qualified to pull an Avelo Airlines Boeing 737, which weighs 87,000 pounds! Fourteen teams from across Connecticut participated.

The Central Region came in third place, pulling the plane the required 20 feet in a little more than nine seconds.

—Brian Spyros



*Colleagues from the Central Region pulled an 87,000-pound plane to raise money for the Special Olympics.*

*Photo by Rusty Kimball*



## Candyland Takes on New Meaning in Therapy

They don't play games when it comes to therapy for adolescent clients at Rushford, or do they?

Allie Juchniewicz, a social worker with Rushford Adolescent Services who earlier last year developed a dialectical behavior therapy (DBT) track for group sessions, tapped her creativity to engage clients with a life-size version of the board game Candyland.

"In any therapeutic program, client engagement is important to keep adolescents returning to sessions and remain actively engaged in their treatment," Juchniewicz says.

These are clients with severe symptoms of emotional dysregulation, who struggle to

*"This life-size Candyland demonstrates that therapy does not have to be just group discussions or worksheets, but it can be fun and inviting."*



manage their emotions and behavior. They often need emergency help and/or a hospital stay. The Rushford DBT track, she says, teaches these adolescents the skills needed for better self-control, significantly reducing safety concerns, preventing hospitalizations, increasing use of coping skills and improving their quality of life.

The Candyland game was built to reinforce DBT skills adolescents learn through each track cycle. To play, pairs of players spin the Candyland wheel and move to the appropriate color. Each color prompts them to answer questions about emotion regulation, distress tolerance, managing interpersonal issues and safety planning, allowing them to consider how to use their skills when they feel unsafe and determine available support like emergency hotline numbers.

The game also offers easy exercise prompts that gets players moving, notes Javonna Davis, clinical program manager. As teams move through the life-size board, they collect candy. Winners earn gift cards.

"Given the intense nature of the program, it's important to keep adolescents interested, motivated and engaged in treatment by getting creative, while also allowing them to practice the skills they are learning in the program," Juchniewicz says.

Many clients have been through multiple types of therapy and feel hopeless about participating in more, but she explains that when group sessions involve teamwork, play, real-life scenarios, games and peer led discussions, they're more likely to engage and feel motivated to work on their issues.

"This life-size Candyland demonstrates that therapy does not have to be just group discussions or worksheets, but it can be fun and inviting, allowing skills that are taught to be retained and easier to use in their everyday lives," she says.

—Susan McDonald

*Allie Juchniewicz created a life-size version of the board game Candyland to help her adolescent clients remember and practice behavioral skills.*



## Mobility is Medicine

Every day, Danny Taylor experiences the reward of being a Backus Hospital volunteer, a retirement pursuit driven by his passion for helping others.

“I’ve helped so many families over the years. Every so often, I run into one that will say they remember me when I helped their loved one,” says Taylor, who started in 1987 as an x-ray aid. “One man said he remembered how I cared for his wife and provided comfort when she had cancer. It’s the little things that go a long way and make a difference.”

Taylor worked in the imaging department for 10 years before becoming a patient care technician (PCT).

“After a decade, I decided to go back to school. Once I graduated, I pursued a career on A4 (an inpatient unit at Backus),” says Taylor, who took courses in dementia, PCT and to be a certified nursing assistant.

He retired in 2018, but returned to Backus a week later as a volunteer. He drew on his 25 years as a PCT and his compassion for others to lead the hospital’s Volunteer Mobility Program.

“Some people don’t want to move. They feel life isn’t worth living or it’s too hard to get up. That’s what we’re here for. We help push and motivate them little by little, one lap at a time,” Taylor adds.

The Volunteer Mobility Program, a collaboration among Volunteer & Guest Services, nursing and rehab colleagues, launched on one patient unit and later expanded to two more.

“They identify patients who may benefit from assistance with mobilization and exercise. Danny works with the clinical team to identify the safest plan, helps patients prepare for ambulation and ambulates them throughout the unit,” says Carley Warzecha, manager of workforce development and volunteer services.



*Danny Taylor helps patients ease back into mobility after surgery or illness.*

*Photo by Libby Marino*

This program runs weekdays, helping 30 or more patients per week.

“Because of this program, patients will walk anywhere from 15 to 30 minutes a day. We try and encourage them and remind them the more they do – the better chance they have of going home,” Taylor says.

Spending time in a hospital can be lonely, and the program also gives patients important socialization.

“The volunteers are not sharing test results, good news or bad news with them. They aren’t running tests or taking vitals. This provides an opportunity to connect on a personal level and the patients really appreciate and look forward to it,” Warzecha says.

—Libby Marino

## Mooney Earns System’s First Heart Failure Designation

Megan Mooney, heart failure program coordinator at Backus Hospital, was the first at Hartford HealthCare and one of two in Connecticut to earn heart failure certification through the Heart Failure Society of America.

This certification recognizes providers with demonstrated advanced knowledge and skill.



*Megan Mooney, with flowers, is one of two people in Connecticut with heart failure certification.*



## Preserving Evidence, Healing Hearts

One in three women will experience physical violence, rape and/or stalking by an intimate partner in their lifetime.

One in 10 men will experience intimate partner violence in their lifetime.

Last year, 21 people were killed in domestic violence incidents in Connecticut.

Many victims of abuse never get the closure they deserve. At Hartford HealthCare, a special subset of colleagues is doing everything they can to bring perpetrators to justice.

Jill McTighe was only 18 months into her career as an emergency nurse at St. Vincent's Medical Center when a woman arrived requesting a "rape kit."

"I was still very new to nursing and I didn't know how to use the evidence collection kit," she recalls. "I knew I wanted to do a good job for people who had experienced such a traumatic event."

The experience led McTighe to seek training to become Sexual Assault Forensic Examiner (SAFE) certified. The certification is not easy, involving lengthy clinical and classroom training, on top of her full-time job.

"The training was a big part of my life at the time but there was a desire to serve others," she says.

All emergency room nurses can use evidence collection kits, but SAFE training helps ensure the integrity, preservation and documentation of forensic evidence. Evidence that is properly collected can help convict perpetrators in court.

The evidence collection kit is a time-consuming 12-step process with every detail documented by hand.

"Depending on the severity of injuries, it can take anywhere from three hours up to eight hours," McTighe says. "You cannot leave the evidence at any point."

Preserving the integrity of the evidence is crucial. It could be thrown out of court if collected incorrectly. For McTighe and other SAFE nurses, this means no bathroom breaks or stepping out for a bite to eat until the police come to collect the kit.

This dedication and compassionate care helps SAFE provide closure for victims.

"The process can be very challenging and almost revisiting the entire event for the victims," she says. "But it can also be rewarding because you can give the victim hope and the ability to look past the event to a point where they can start to heal from it."

—Robin Stanley



*Jill McTighe wanted to help victims of violence and became SAFE certified.*

*Photo by Amy Mortensen*

### SAFE by the numbers

The number of SAFE-trained (Sexual Assault Forensic Examiner) nurses in HHC emergency departments:

**Hartford Hospital: 2**

**Charlotte Hungerford Hospital: 3**

**Backus Hospital: 3 full-time,  
3 per diem**

**Plainfield Emergency Department: 1**

**Windham Hospital: 2**

**MidState Medical Center: 2**

**St. Vincent's Medical Center: 4**





Many refer to their units, departments or hospital as “one big family.” Maybe it’s because we spend so much time together, or because some invite relatives to apply because it’s a great place to work. This section is about those connections. We want to hear your story. Email [susan.mcdonald@hhchealth.org](mailto:susan.mcdonald@hhchealth.org).

## Twinning on the HHC Pharmacy Team

There was one time — once — that identical twins Kristen and Katie Marti went their separate ways.

It was after both graduated from the University of Connecticut School of Pharmacy in 2020. For residency, Kristen went to Hartford Hospital and Katie to Baystate Medical Center in Springfield.

That was it.

After, they were both hired by Hartford HealthCare as clinical pharmacists. Kristen works in the Hartford Hospital transplant department and Katie for the ambulatory care pharmacy covering Farmington endocrinology and per-diem at Hartford Hospital.

In addition to being born at the same time, going all through school together, playing high school doubles tennis together, rooming and majoring in pharmacy at UConn together (a six-year program to earn PharmD degrees), the 27-year-olds currently live together, hang out together, train for road races together and generally enjoy life ... together.

“We’re just best friends,” Kristen says. “We don’t get sick of each other.”

“It’s a bond that’s hard to describe,” Katie adds. “You just always have somebody there. We can’t read each other’s minds or anything but we are definitely on the same wavelength. We are always in sync, even when we’re not trying to be.”

In ambulatory care, Katie works primarily with patients who have diabetes to ensure their medications works for them, provide counseling, and ensure medication adherence.

In transplant, Kristen works with patients before surgery and provides follow-up.

“It’s very complex for transplant patients, and there is a lot of monitoring required from a medication standpoint,” she explains. “I provide medication education and counseling pre-surgery, manage their medications while they are

hospitalized and then follow up post-transplant with more education.”

It’s a career both decided to pursue while still in high school.

“Growing up, we always thought the medical field was for us. There were so many avenues. We got jobs at CVS to see if we liked it. We loved it,” Katie says.

At work, they often get mistaken for each other, although they’ve never purposefully “Parent Trapped” anyone, a trick named after the movie in which twins switched places. Sometimes, they say a doctor who is rounding will mix them up, or someone will wave from across the parking lot.

It can get confusing for them as well.

“If I don’t say hi back, then assume you know my sister,” Kristen says with a laugh.

—Elissa Bass

*Kristen and Katie Marti decided in high school that they wanted to become pharmacists. Now both work at Hartford HealthCare.*

*Photo by Chris Rakoczy*





## Caring for the Community Generates Interest in Nursing



Simona Z. Dowdy got her start in healthcare at East Hartford High School, when teachers and counselors recommended her for a Hartford Hospital program that cultivated an appreciation for the way nurses can empower patients to take

charge of their health.

Impressed with her work, Dowdy's clinical instructor personally delivered her resume to a hospital manager, launching her Hartford HealthCare career as a patient care assistant when she was 19.

In that role, she met Vicie Brooks, Hartford Hospital's first community nurse liaison, who inspired her by bringing care beyond hospital walls, providing clothing, food and shelter to those in need.

"She was the first and only community health worker in the Greater Hartford area," Dowdy says.

With support from Brooks and others, Dowdy earned an associate's degree in nursing at Capital Community College and a bachelor's in nursing from Grand Canyon University.

A mentor and friend, Brooks also introduced Dowdy to the Northern Connecticut Black Nurses Association (NCBNA), where she remains involved in community work, providing nutrition education, blood pressure screening, clothing and food drives and other resources.

After Brooks retired in 2019, Dowdy carries the torch and continues to champion community work. In addition to NCBNA, she is an active member of HHC's Black and African American Colleague Resource Group (BAA CRG),

which promotes equity and belonging among colleagues and supports community care. She's also a founding chair of the Ann Jennings-Vicie Brooks Fellowship, mentoring aspiring nurses. The fellowship provides career development and financial support to nurses with associate's degrees who want to earn a bachelor's.

In her official role, Dowdy is community care manager with HHC's Integrated Care Partners, where she helps ensure patients have healthy care transitions.

She also leads her own community work, holding the holistic women's wellness event A Rose in Hartford, in partnership with the Hartford-based women's empowerment organization Sister Circle, for two years. Events blend services like blood pressure screenings with poetry and dancing for a unique take on the beauty and resilience — flower and thorns — of women's wellness.

Last spring, she helped introduce Hartford elementary and middle school students to nursing as part of NCBNA's Mini Nurse Academy where they

did blood pressure education, pulse checks and chest compressions.

Such community work enabled Dowdy to pay forward the investment others made in her. As a leader in the CRG and fellowship, she is an example and mentor to aspiring health professionals, as Brooks was for her. Like her teachers and counselors, she helps budding professionals discover careers in nursing.

"The most important thing is really teaching people how to take care of themselves," Dowdy says. "If we can meet them [where they are] and provide that education to them...it's going to be a healthier world, I feel."

—Levell Williams





## A Piece of Paper for Peace of Mind

Twenty-two years after arriving in the United States as a 22-year-old student, Shasi Malipeddi became a citizen in September 2023.

While cause for celebration, the naturalization ceremony also meant Malipeddi, director of IT security for Hartford HealthCare, had to give up citizenship to his home country of India.

“Having to revoke my Indian citizenship was one of the reasons it was a hard decision,” says Malipeddi, whose wife retains her Indian citizenship, with a green card, to travel freely back to India in case their parents need help.

The education system in the United States is what first drew Malipeddi, who came from Andhra Pradesh in south India to earn a master’s degree in mechanical engineering at Cleveland State University. After graduation, he started an IT job that eventually brought him to Hartford HealthCare. He enjoys the challenge of staying ahead of hackers’ technological advances.

“You have to keep learning and keep innovating as things in IT change,” he says.

His complex journey to citizenship began in 2007 when he applied for a green card authorizing him to live and work in the U.S. His previous employment visa needed renewal every three years and could be denied.

“You are at the mercy of someone who doesn’t know you to decide your fate, if you can stay or leave,” he says.

In 2012, his renewal was denied and Malipeddi had to return to India, leaving his wife and infant son (they now have two sons). He reapplied and was back in the U.S. two months later, but the experience was nerve-wracking.

Meanwhile, the green card application took a decade to be approved.

“There are a lot of people from India applying. Ten to 12 years is a typical amount of time,” he explains, adding he applied for full citizenship in February 2023.

The citizenship process is rigorous and includes a civics test. There are 100 possible questions and an immigration agent chooses 10 randomly for each applicant to answer during an interview.

“It is an interesting test,” Malipeddi chuckles. “I am a news buff, so I could answer pretty well. There are questions like, who is your representative



*Shasi Malipeddi became a U.S. citizen in September after coming for graduate school 22 years ago.*

in Congress and when was the war with Mexico?”

Becoming an official citizen, he admits, was less emotional for him than getting his first green card, but underscores the permanence for him.

“America is my home,” he says. “I have lived in the United States as long as I lived in India — 22 years. I found my home, where I will grow old. It’s a piece of paper, but it means a lot.”

—By Elissa Bass



In addition to working, raising families and enjoying hobbies, many Hartford HealthCare colleagues give of their time and talents in a variety of ways. From coaching youth sports to holding elected office to tackling projects that enhance our world, you're out there at night and on weekends giving of yourself. This new feature in Moments will highlight those efforts. If you want to let us know about the work you or a colleague is doing, please email Susan McDonald at [susan.mcdonald@hhchealth.org](mailto:susan.mcdonald@hhchealth.org).

## One Woman Plans Assault on Gun Violence

"Turtle in a shell" is how Jen Torres describes herself, that is until it involves her family.

Torres, office manager for the Ayer Neuroscience Institute Neuro-opthamology Department in Hartford, grew up in the inner city of Hartford, where gun violence was and still is a norm. She has never personally been a victim of gun violence but family members have and she lends support.

"I feel most people [know someone] — it is absolutely out of control," says the 40-year-old mother of three.

In August 2020, Torres's son lost his brother at a party. Three years later, her grandson lost his father, the first of eight deaths in a six-day streak in Hartford. Both murders were two days apart and suspects are incarcerated, but she says her family awaits convictions.

The source of the issues, she says, is "a trickle effect. As time and technology progresses, it all ties



Jennifer Torres

into the poor choices people make." She points to everything from music to social media to lack of communication, saying people would rather resort to violence than find a solution to a problem.

As the shoulder her family can lean on as they grieve — "I have to hide my pain to support my loved ones and take their pain away" — Torres feels the emotional struggle but vows to spark change.

"Everyone has their own views. The people who are taking the stand are the ones who have been affected," says Torres, an Oxford resident and member of the SOMOS Colleague Resource Group. "The word of the community is how we help."

She plans to "start here" at Hartford HealthCare, with colleagues, making sure they have a safe, comfortable space free from stigma and judgment. She also plans to collaborate with other CRGs to create and maintain an active community presence in black and brown communities.

Anyone interested in being part of her anti-violence efforts can contact her at [Jennifer.torres2@hhchealth.org](mailto:Jennifer.torres2@hhchealth.org).

—Leaja Johnson

## The Birth of Connecticut Healthcare Champions

By any measure, 2023 was a banner year for Hartford HealthCare. One of a few health systems in the country where all hospitals earned straight A grades for safety from the Leapfrog Group, and having cardiac surgery and kidney transplant programs ranking as best in the nation, we launched a statewide marketing campaign this winter to highlight our excellence in care and how we've built the teams that have made us one of the elite health systems in country.

Drawing on a sports analogy, we created two TV commercials: One showing a local basketball



Just like championship teams, Hartford HealthCare accolades were hoisted on banners as part of the new television ads.

player's rise to stardom and the NBA; the other capturing the intensity of our cardiac surgery team as they prepare for a life-saving procedure. All people appearing in the spots are from Connecticut, including our colleagues and 10-year-old Hartford native Nolan McBride, the top under-18 player in the country who was born at Hartford Hospital.

The campaign also includes digital and social media advertising, billboards and appearances by our experts promoting excellence on local TV stations.

—Steve Coates





# thank you

*“I would like to (mention) the amazing kindness, compassion and care demonstrated by the entire staff on North 8 at Hartford Hospital for our mother, Ann Mongell. She was under their care for two weeks while cancer consumed her 99-year-old body. Family members were with her every day until her passing, and not a day went by that we didn’t comment on the loving care everyone provided.”*

—The family of Ann Mongell

*“After numerous interactions with St. Vincent’s Medical Center staff, I can truly say I have never experienced such caring and dedicated people! In 2023, I needed a valve replacement. Dr. Robert Jumper was assigned to my case and TAVR surgery took place. His team was great! I tell everyone of the friendly, highly-qualified and caring healthcare professionals at St. Vincent’s!”*

—Dale Peters

*“I came to The Hospital of Central Connecticut Emergency Department because of a fall. Within five minutes, I met with the trauma team, which I found to be communicative, friendly and professional. They put me somewhat at ease. I was admitted and received excellent care from the nurses, aides and physicians, who responded quickly to my requests and questions. I was treated with the utmost respect.”*

—Aaron Gersten

*“I walked into the Backus ER with chest pain. Within 10 minutes, they took me into the exam area where I had a heart attack and died. If not for the professionals who gave me CPR and used the crash cart, I wouldn’t be writing this. I can never thank your staff enough for the complete service I was given. They flew me to Hartford where I received a stent and now can spend a little more time with my family.”*

—Scott Spicer

*“My husband was found to have fluid around the heart and had surgery the same day. We were fortunate to have a super team in the (Hartford Hospital) ER — Tyler Reardon, Lindsey Decker, Charlemagne Dunbar and others. After, he was brought to PACU and cared for by two phenomenal nurses, Ashley Brown and Lauren Connor. On the ninth floor, he was under the care of diligent and hardworking nurses: Tyra, Demaris, Huyen and Alicia. Demaris and Huyen went above and beyond with kindness, enthusiasm, encouragement and phenomenal energy.”*

—Diane and Richard Lieberfarb



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