

Spring
2023

A publication for Hartford HealthCare colleagues

moments



The Future of Health Starts Here

Also in this issue:

- HHC MG celebrates 10 years
- Mother-daughter Daisies at Backus
- Surfing surgeon on Dawn Patrol

Hartford
HealthCare



Food4Health 2022 Summary

Food4Health is a service at Hartford Hospital that provides healthy foods to people who are food insecure.

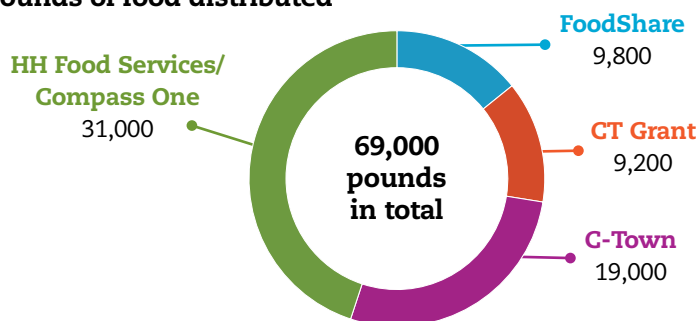
We delivered Food4Health with:

■ Dignity and respect ■ Clear communication ■ Only healthy food

	Patients	Staff
Total visits	1185	15
Total patient referrals	303	8
Total 2022 renewals	12	TBD
23 HH clinics have been onboarded		



Pounds of food distributed



Grants and Funding



Competitive Purchasing

25% AT NO COST!

Food
Spending
\$79.2K

Supplies &
Marketing
\$64.2K

Purchased
Services
\$42.9K

On the cover: Stephano Donzell and Melissa Buckley from the human resources team at the Behavioral Health Network pose on the campus of Eastern Connecticut State University, which they both attended. They will use the new Hartford HealthCare brand slogan "Start Here" for intern recruitment. Photo by Rusty Kimball



Dear Colleagues

In May, the nation celebrates nurses during the week leading up to the anniversary of Florence Nightingale's May 12 birthday. We recognize our hospitals as cornerstones of our communities during the week starting May 8. In the same week, we thank those who provide care to residents in skilled nursing facilities. And the following week, we honor those in emergency medical services who are first on the scene when seconds count.

In addition to the commemorative days and weeks for healthcare providers and services that are traditionally set aside in May, Hartford HealthCare again proclaims this as HealthCare Heroes Month. We began this tradition when COVID-19 first raged in 2020. And through the three-year roller-coaster ride of the pandemic — from its onset through the arrival of testing and vaccines, through peaks and valleys of prevalence — you have continued to put our communities first with selfless service.

In setting aside this entire month, we recognize the work of all 37,000 HHC colleagues — in every role and location, with every backgrounds and skillset. You continue to collaborate, innovate and help us move forward. You acknowledge and address real issues of inequity and inequality, finding new ways to provide access to quality care to each and every person.

You are all heroes. On behalf of a grateful community, thank you for all you do.

Jeffrey A. Flaks
President and Chief Executive Officer



6

table of contents



10



8



38



19



22

- 6 Why We Do It
- 9 By the Numbers
- 9 The Poll
- 10 Points of Pride
- 16 Nurses Honored as Nightingales
- 19 Showing We Care
- 20 The Pix!
- 21 HHC Profile
- 22 Cover Story: Start Here
- 27 This is Us
- 30 Wellness Corner
- 34 Medical Group Celebrates 10 Years
- 36 Behind the Scenes
- 38 Community Care
- 40 Moments That Matter
- 43 We Belong Here
- 46 All in the Family
- 47 Thank You Notes

Moments is a quarterly magazine produced by Hartford HealthCare. Please send suggested story ideas for *Moments* to susan.mcdonald@hhchealth.org.

Editor: Susan McDonald

Cover story: Elissa Bass

Contributing writers: Elissa Bass, Laura Benys, Kate Carey-Trull, Keith Fontaine, Ken Harrison, Leaja Johnson, Brenda Kestenbaum, Tim LeBouthillier, Libby Marino, Susan McDonald, Brian Spyros, Robin Stanley, Danielle Swift, Sebastian Trabucco, Maggie Werner, Levell Williams and Chris Wojcik

Photography: Rusty Kimball, Amy Mortensen, Chris Rakoczy

Graphic Design: Karen DeFelice Graphic Design

Connect with HHC on [HealthNewsHub.org](https://www.healthnewshub.org)



Find more
Moments content at
www.hhcmoments.org



Sign up for text alerts by texting MoreLife to 31966. Visit HartfordHealthCare.org/podcast to browse all episodes of our More Life podcast.



Health Catastrophes Helps Dietitian Live in the Moment

By Elissa Bass

Before he even turned 35, Christopher Barrett suffered a major cardiac event, a stroke, and was then diagnosed with cancer.

A successful marathoner and a top performer at both the New York and Boston marathons, Barrett had to quit running after ventricular arrhythmia meant he needed an implantable cardioverter defibrillator (ICD)/pacemaker.

A registered dietitian and nutritionist with the Bone & Joint Institute Center for Musculoskeletal Health, he says the three catastrophic health events since 2017 also changed his mental outlook on life.

"I look at life with a different perspective now," he explains. "Before, it was all about competing. It has refocused me on the things that really do matter in life. It's like Hartford HealthCare's slogan, 'Every Moment Matters.' Every moment does matter."

It started in 2017, when Barrett, then 29, was training for a marathon. Out for a run, he collapsed in someone's front yard. Taken by ambulance to a hospital, it was determined he had suffered ventricular arrhythmia. Five days later doctors implanted the ICD, ending his long-distance running career.

"I look at life with a different perspective now...It has refocused me on the things that really do matter in life."

Three years later, he and his new wife, Taryn, had just closed on their first home in Berlin. After dinner, Barrett got up to put his dishes in the sink, and couldn't move his right leg or arm. His wife asked if he was okay, and he couldn't speak. Again at the hospital, doctors diagnosed a stroke. Surgeons cleared the blockage that caused the incident, and it took him days to regain speech and movement. Current treatment is provided by HHC cardiologist Antonio Fernandez, MD.

In 2021, a self-exam led to a diagnosis of testicular cancer. HHC urologist Anoop Meraney, MD,

immediately scheduled him for surgery. Because it was diagnosed early, he didn't need follow-up treatments but continues to have periodic scans and x-rays.

Through Dr. Fernandez, Barrett began seeing a Behavioral Health Network therapist David Finitis, PsyD, to help process all that has happened and manage his anxiety.

"I felt like I was always waiting for the other shoe to drop," he says. "Life is short and it has continued to humble me, yet I wake up daily grateful for another opportunity to make those who I love proud."



After weathering a few health scares, Chris Barrett and his wife, Taryn, enjoy the simple things like being outside with their dog.

Hockey Player Wins Face-off With Death

By Robin Stanley

Eric Huss will be telling the story about the scar on his face for years to come.

In a hockey game between the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, where the 23-year-old plays forward, and Sacred Heart University, Huss recalls feeling the impact of a freak accident with an opposing player's skate blade. Slicing his facial artery, it was a life-threatening situation.

"His foot came up and, honestly, it felt like I had been hit in the face with a punch," Huss says. "I didn't register that I had been cut. I looked down and saw this trail of blood."

West Point's senior associate athletic trainer Rachel Leahy jumped into action to stop the bleed. She applied pressure to the wound with both hands and didn't let go until the gurney was wheeled into the St. Vincent's Medical Center Emergency Department.

"There wasn't space in the ambulance for me to stand next to Eric. I got on top of him so I could apply pressure and fit," says Leahy, a Quinnipiac University graduate.

The trauma team, led by surgeon Matthew Carlson, MD, took over.

"Eric came through as a level 1 trauma activation, the highest level," Dr. Carlson says. "Since Sacred Heart is so close to St. Vincent's, we didn't have much advance notice. Eric was injured very badly. He was very pale, but calm and alert."

After quickly assessing the injury, the team decided Huss needed surgery. Preparations were made for a blood transfusion and the anesthesiologist worked to get Huss sedated as quickly as possible.

"His facial artery on the right side was severed and bleeding rapidly," Dr. Carlson explains. "There was some injury to the muscle in the neck but the

primary life-threatening injury he had was to the facial artery."

The team clamped and ligated the facial artery, and Huss was released from St. Vincent's just 24 hours later.

"Eric came through as a level 1 trauma activation, the highest level. Since Sacred Heart is so close to St. Vincent's, we didn't have much advance notice."

"Everything just worked perfectly," Dr. Carlson says, attributing Leahy's quick actions with saving Huss's life.

One month later, West Point was back to play Sacred Heart. Huss laced up and reunited with the medical professionals who saved his life.

"How do you thank someone for saving your life?" he says. "I'm going to get there. I'll figure out a way."

See more of
Eric's story here



Eric Huss fields questions from reporters after returning to the ice at Sacred Heart University just one month after a potentially fatal injury during a hockey game.

Photo by Jocelyn Maminta





Clinical Duo Celebrates Four+ Decades of Caring

By Maggie Werner

They've only been with Hartford HealthCare for three years, but Muzibul Chowdhury, MD, and Marina Flodine have practiced medicine together for more than four decades, caring for three generations of patients.

It was 1975 when Dr. Chowdhury began practicing cardiology and internal medicine in a small Windsor practice. When he needed a medical assistant, Flodine applied.

"I heard about the job and thought, 'I guess I'll try this out,'" she says. "All of a sudden, one year became five, five became 10, 10 became 20 and here I am at 44 years. I decided I'm staying in this until the end."

After about 40 years in private practice, Dr. Chowdhury decided to transition to Hartford HealthCare Medical Group and, of course, Flodine joined him.

"I'm almost 77 years old," Dr. Chowdhury says. "I wanted to know if something happens to me, my patients will be taken care of. That's why I came to Hartford HealthCare."

Both enjoy what they do and value the relationships formed with patients over the years.

"We love our patients and they love us," Flodine exclaims. "We have this wonderful relationship with them that we don't even have to discuss. It just exists."

"I hear a lot of doctors say they're burnt out, and I don't have the sense of burnout. I like what I do and I look forward to seeing my patients," Dr. Chowdhury adds. "I don't need to work, but I do it because Marina has been here. Over the years, she's picked up a lot of things that I do. She knows my preferences and the way I do things, so it's easy."

"We work well together," Flodine replies. "I know what he likes and he knows what I like. We sort of finish each other's sentences."

The dynamic duo has watched many of their patients grow old over the years and live full lives.

"Our patients follow the instructions we give them and they live late years," Flodine says. "We have so many 90-year-old patients. We were just invited to a patient's 100th birthday, and that wasn't the first one!"

"We grow with our patients," Dr. Chowdhury says. "They become like our families."

Even after 44 years working together, he and Flodine still embody the passion of medicine and are in it for their patients.

Muzibul Chowdhury, MD, and Marina Flodine have been work partners for 44 years.

Photo by Chris Rakoczy



Answering the Call

Hartford HealthCare sees the value in not only providing outstanding care to patients in our facilities, but ensuring quality and speedy transportation to the hospital by skilled emergency medical services teams. Kevin Ferrarotti, senior system director of EMS for HHC, provided the following numbers to give you an idea of the services his team provides.



Ambulances stand ready outside the Hartford HealthCare Amphitheater in Bridgeport.

Photo by Amy Mortensen

Ambulance systems we are affiliated with* **110**

Ambulances HHC owns and operates **59**

PLUS

- paramedic response vehicles **9**
- air medical helicopters **3**

Combined with joint venture ownerships

- total ambulances **118**
- paramedic response vehicles **13**
- air medical helicopters **3**

EMTs and paramedics we employ **813.5 FTEs**

Locations we have service

- emergency departments **8**
- EMS sites/stations** **20**

Number of runs each year*** **108,000**

New paramedics we teach each year **105**

New EMTs we teach each year **1,900**

*HHC has medical oversight of 110 EMS agencies and departments statewide through our sponsor hospital affiliations.

**Includes American, pending approval by the state Office of Emergency Medical Services.

***Represent responses by HHC assets and JV affiliates for both emergency and non-emergency calls.



THE POLL

Which Fictional Place Would You Like to Visit?

Hogwarts **50%**

Emerald City **42%**

Narnia **37%**

Stars Hollow **32%**

Neverland **18%**

Gotham **3%**





New Technology Helps Diagnose Reflux Quickly

An innovative new tool is helping specialists at St. Vincent's Medical Center quickly diagnose reflux.

The first hospital in the state to offer the mucosal impedance test or MiVu, St. Vincent's tapped Amir Masoud, MD, co-medical director of the Neurogastroenterology and Motility Center, for the procedure. The test is performed during an endoscopy to detect early changes related to acid reflux or other inflammatory conditions in the esophagus.

Mucosal impedance, he explains, measures resistance in the lining of the esophagus.

"The cells that make up the lining are bound together by a cement called the tight junction," Dr. Masoud says. "One of the earliest consequences of reflux is the loss of these tight junctions which, in turn, lowers the electrical resistance."

Measuring these changes early, before symptoms are noticeable, can potentially lead

to a management plan to prevent reflux-related complications.

The best candidates for MiVu are patients with reflux symptoms but no diagnosis.

"Many patients have atypical reflux symptoms such as sore throat, a lump in their throat or even a chronic cough," Dr. Masoud says. "In most cases, they are put on a medication to reduce acidity but their symptoms don't improve."

Patients typically undergo more testing which can be cumbersome, uncomfortable or, in many cases, inconclusive.

"MiVu is an important tool that finally allows us to comprehensively assess for reflux and enables the very early detection of reflux-related effects in the esophagus," Dr. Masoud says.

The technology can also differentiate reflux eosinophilic esophagitis (EoE), an allergic condition of the esophagus usually related to food allergies causing symptoms that overlap with gastroesophageal reflux disease.

"The impedance values in reflux and EoE are very different. A spot differentiation can be made within minutes, and in real-time, during the endoscopy," Dr. Masoud notes.

—Robin Stanley



MiVu helps doctors detect early changes in the esophagus related to acid reflux and other inflammatory conditions.

Workplace Wellness Efforts Earn Platinum Seal for Mental Health

Efforts by the Hartford HealthCare Wellness Department to tend to colleague needs earned the organization a platinum Bell Seal for Workplace Mental Health from Mental Health America.

The first-of-its-kind workplace certification recognizes employers striving to improve colleague mental health and create a psychologically safe workplace for everyone.

"We are proud to note that we scored higher than most organizations applying, with standout programs including peer support, the fact that we are a high-reliability organization, and the percentage of people who complete our engagement survey," notes Jennifer Ferrand, PsyD, HHC director of well-being.

On the application, she says the system scored very high in all the domains assessed, including:

- Culture
- Benefits
- Taking a holistic approach to colleague well-being
- Caring beyond compliance

"We do have some opportunities for improvement, particularly in the area of strengthening our mental health benefits and continuing to improve access and utilization. We will be working on these goals in the coming year," Dr. Ferrand says.

—Susan McDonald



Digestive Health Joins Institute Ranks

The Digestive Health Institute (DHI) became Hartford HealthCare's seventh institute.

DHI is a fully integrated model of care focused on management of all digestive diseases and disorders, from preventative screening to the most complex care for advanced disease. The Institute offers coordinated, personalized and convenient care in the system's acute care hospitals, surgery and endoscopy centers, and neighborhood locations throughout Connecticut.

Led by Jeffry Nestler, MD, a gastroenterologist, Bret Schipper, MD, a surgical oncologist, and Vice President of Operations Lindsey Meehan, PA-C, the DHI promotes physician collaboration across multiple specialties including gastroenterology, surgical and medical weight loss, general and colorectal surgery, complex hernia and abdominal core health, hepatopancreaticobiliary surgery, GI oncology, nutrition, behavioral health and others.

With a sharp focus on excellence and innovation, the Institute also offers the most advanced diagnostic and therapeutic interventions available and adheres to national quality and safety standards.

The DHI joins our other world-class institutes focused on behavioral health, cancer, heart and vascular, neuroscience, orthopedics and urology and kidney.

—Elissa Bass



Bret Schipper, MD, left, Lindsey Meehan, PA-C, and Jeffry Nestler, MD, head the new Digestive Health Institute, Hartford HealthCare's seventh institute.

Former NAACP President Earns Leadership Award

Maxien Robinson-Lewin, a fixed asset analyst at Hartford HealthCare and a member of the Black and African American Colleague Resource Group, will be honored this fall at the eighth annual 100 Women of Color Gala and Awards event in Hartford.

The awards recognize women of color for their leadership, entrepreneurial success, and public and community service.

Robinson-Lewin recently completed two terms as term as president of the Greater Hartford branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), where she has volunteered since 2013. She is a Silver Life Member and a part of Women in the NAACP (WIN). Before being elected president, she served as branch treasurer, secretary and youth council advisor. She serves as an at-large member of the executive committee of the Connecticut State Conference of NAACP branches, and previously held the position of third vice president and assistant secretary.

She is a member of the University of Hartford President's Community Advisory Council for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, and Hartford HealthCare's Community Outreach Advisory Council.

Robinson-Lewin also served as a member of the Jewish Family Services of Greater Hartford Board of Directors from 2019-2022.

A Hartford native, one of nine children of Jamaican immigrants, she lives in the city with her husband and two children. She earned a bachelor of science degree in business administration with a concentration in accounting from the University of Hartford.

—Susan McDonald



Maxien Robinson-Lewin



Women in Full Force in Central Region Safety Ranks

The Central Region is experiencing something new: A rise in the number of female officers working in public safety.

As of early spring, there were eight females working between The Hospital of Central Connecticut (HOCC) and MidState Medical Center. The previous high was three.

"People ask me what it's like being a public safety officer," says Paulina Feroni-Amezquita, public safety officer at HOCC. "Sometimes, people are shocked to see a woman in this role."

She began working for Hartford HealthCare in 2022 and hopes to one day become a police officer in New Britain, her hometown.

"I've wanted to be in law enforcement ever since I was a little kid," Feroni-Amezquita says, adding that her job at HOCC is preparing her for that step. "I get to learn so many skills working here and I'm exposed to so many different situations and encounters. I'm helping people and serving the community."

She's also the captain of the New Britain Police

Explorers, a program preparing people age 14 to 21 for a career in law enforcement.

When she's at work, Feroni-Amezquita's role model is nearby. Kelly Walsh, director of public safety in the Central Region, spent 17 years with the Avon Police Department before retiring in 2019 as a lieutenant.

"Over time, the policing profession has evolved," Walsh says. "There are more young females, like Paulina, who want to serve, protect and make an impact in their communities. Being a public safety officer can be an important stepping stone to get to that point."

Women not only possess the physical ability to do the job, but Walsh says they can serve an even bigger role.

"We have community policing and crisis intervention and females are more receptive in certain situations, which allows them to connect with people in an important way," she explains.

As for Feroni-Amezquita, she credits the Explorers Program for connecting her with Walsh and, by introducing valuable skills, helping her land the HOCC job.

"It's been a great experience and it's really inspiring to see Kelly in the leadership role, especially since she came from a career in law enforcement," she says.

—Brian Spyros



A few of the Central Region's female security officers pose outside The Hospital of Central Connecticut. From left to right, they are: Paulina Feroni Amezquita of HOCC; Nina Cividanes of MidState Medical Center; Faith Lea Medina of HOCC; and Kelly Walsh, director of public safety in the region.

Photo by Rusty Kimball

HH Earns Rectal Cancer Accreditation

Hartford Hospital earned three-year accreditation for rectal cancer care from the American College of Surgeons National Accreditation Program for Rectal Cancer (NAPRC).

To achieve this, a rectal center must demonstrate compliance with NAPRC standards for program management, clinical services and quality improvement for patients. Centers must establish

a multidisciplinary rectal cancer team that includes surgery, pathology, radiology, radiation oncology and medical oncology.

The program also met standards around such clinical services as carcinoembryonic antigen testing, MRI and CT imaging for cancer staging.

—Kate Carey-Trull

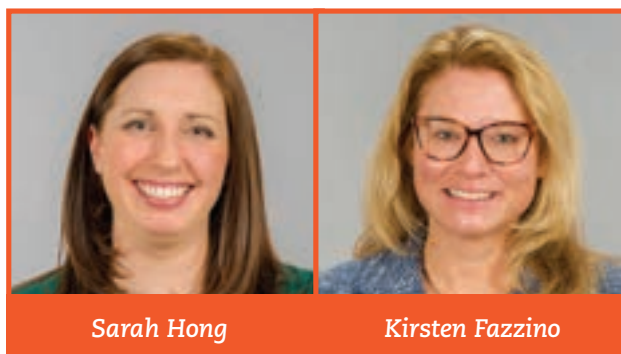


Pair of Nurses Head to National Stroke Care Conference

Sarah Hong and Kirsten Fazzino will represent Hartford HealthCare at the Association of Neuroscience Nurses: Advances in Stroke Care Conference in August 2023.

Hong, nurse educator at Hartford Hospital, and Fazzino, system director of nursing for the Ayer Neuroscience Institute, will present the poster “Systemizing Stroke Education for New Hospital Employees Across a Five-Hospital System.”

The abstract details the work done by stroke coordinators and nurse educators across the system, in partnership with Warly Remegio, vice president of nursing education and professional development, to centralize stroke care training for new nurses.



Sarah Hong

Kirsten Fazzino

Before the project, training was regionalized with many HealthStream assignments and classroom sessions. The team combined best practices to standardize stroke education for all.

—Kate Carey-Trull

Ready, Aim, Fix That Trigger Finger

About 9 million Americans suffer from a common condition called trigger finger, and The Hospital of Central Connecticut (HCCC) has a new device to help.

Trigger finger is the result of swelling between tendons in that fingers that allow the hands to move and the pulleys that keep the tendons close to the bone.

“Trigger finger can occur spontaneously, but people who have repetitive gripping and pulling movements when they work, diabetics and those with rheumatoid arthritis are at higher risk of developing trigger finger,” says Jacob Jabbour, DO, hand surgeon at HCCC.

One or more fingers can be affected by trigger finger, and people with the condition may experience the following issues with their hands:

- Popping or clicking sensation when moving fingers
- Bump or tenderness in the palm at the base of the finger
- Stiffness in the affected finger

“In some cases, the affected finger may get locked in a bent position and you have to manually force it to straighten out, which can be painful and uncomfortable,” Dr. Jabbour says.

HCCC is the first in the state to use the UltraGuideTFR™ device by Sonex Health to address trigger finger symptoms. It’s used with real-time ultrasound guidance to perform trigger finger release procedures.



Jacob Jabbour, DO, is a hand surgeon using a new device for a minimally invasive procedure that alleviates the pain and symptoms of trigger finger.

Photo by Rusty Kimball

“We make a small hand incision and use the device to cut the pulley causing the trigger finger,” Dr. Jabbour explains. “Once you cut that pulley, it allows the tendon in the affected finger to glide smoothly and relieves the symptoms of trigger finger immediately.”

The procedure can be done under local anesthesia in an office or procedure room, and takes less than 20 minutes per finger. The smaller incision means less pain and swelling.

“People can return to work and normal activities rather quickly, and it doesn’t require pain medication or hand therapy afterwards,” Dr. Jabbour adds.

—Brian Spyros



Philanthropy Manager Earns Event Planning Award

Tina Fabiani, manager of philanthropy in the Central Region, received Live Nation's "Best of Live Awards" for women who plan exceptional events.

Fabiani won in the "best fundraising event" category for organizing the "Luck, Lights and Laughter Gala" at the Oakdale Theater in Wallingford in November 2022. The Vegas-themed event, hosted by the MidState Medical Center Auxiliary,

raised money for the Cancer Institute at MidState and included themed dinners, casino games and live entertainment from Elvis and Cher impersonators.

—Brian Spyros



Tina Fabiani

Rushford Outpatient Program Gives Young Adults a Helping Hand

Being a young adult is more challenging than ever, but many ages 18 into their late 20s now have the support of a program developed by the Rushford Middletown team on the journey.

Their innovative approach provides therapy that addresses such topics as mental health, substance use, transitions and relationships.

"This uniquely structured psychotherapy program utilizes dialectical behavior therapy and education, with a focus on key concepts including mindfulness, mood-regulation, distress tolerance and interpersonal skills. Together in groups, we explore many ways to help people get back on track," says Lana Zakhour, MSW, a clinician at Rushford.

The program features on-site case and

medication management, including Suboxone and other forms of medication-assisted treatment, and easy access to detox and/or residential care as needed. There are also recovery support specialists who have been successful in their own recovery process and offer help to others experiencing similar situations. Participants meet up to five times a week for up to six weeks.

"We want young adults and their families to know we are here for them and there is professional and compassionate assistance to those going through substance use and other issues," says Clinical Program Manager Carolyn Camire Ruutel, LCSW.

For more information and scheduling, call 877.577.3233.

—Tim Lebouthillier



The Rushford team, in the front row from left, includes: Arlene Maloney, CSR; Lynn Camire Ruutel, LCSW, clinical program manager; Sabrina Aliano, LCSW; and Jaime Morales, LADC. In the back, from left, are: Michelle Buscarello, LADC; Yvette Chacon, MSW, CSR; Thomas Nicholson, case manager; Todd Colonghi, case manager; Lana Zakhour, MSW; and Kayleen Deegan, LMSW.

Remarkable HOCC Reunion Highlights New Trauma Designation

When 15-year-old Johairy Fernandez suffered a life-threatening gunshot wound to the head in late 2022, first responders made a critical decision to transport her to The Hospital of Central Connecticut, now a level III trauma center.

“Our proximity to the hospital is really what made all the difference,” says Lt. Sean Fiske with New Britain EMS. “She would not have made it if we had to transport her anywhere else.”

In the end, the New Britain teen survived, thanks to the quick thinking of the first responders and HOCC trauma team who helped stabilize her for transport to Connecticut Children’s Medical Center.

Three months after her harrowing ordeal and remarkable recovery, Johairy returned to HOCC with her family to meet those who saved her life. More than 40 people were presented with a certificate of recognition for their heroic efforts in a situation that shone a spotlight on the important relationship between HOCC and local first responders.

“When you combine that pre-hospital care with excellent care inside of the hospital, you get outcomes like this, which is amazing,” says Charles Johndro, DO, medical director for Hartford HealthCare EMS.

HOCC started the process to become a level III trauma center in September 2020 and immediately began caring for trauma patients as part of the

verification process. Since, HOCC teams have cared for thousands of trauma patients ranging in age from one month to 105.

The culmination of the work came in February when the hospital received official trauma designation from the American College of Surgeons. Now, HOCC can offer surrounding communities an even higher level of critical care and Johairy’s story is just one of many positive patient outcomes.

“It’s just remarkable and exactly what we hope will happen when these types of patients are brought to us,” says Karen Weintraub, MD, medical director of trauma and surgical critical care at HOCC.

The Fernandez family is grateful for everyone who was in the right place at the right time.

“I say thank you to everybody for saving the life of my daughter,” says Jose Fernandez, Johairy’s father. “It’s a miracle. I can’t believe my daughter is a survivor.”

—Brian Spyros

[Go to hhcmoments.org](https://hhcmoments.org) for a video of the day.



Johairy Fernandez and her parents, center, pose with some of the first responders and medical staff at HOCC who saved her life after she was shot in the head.

Photo by Rusty Kimball

Nurses Honored with Nightingale Status

Nightingale Awards are given out each year to nurses nominated by patients or peers for excellence. Hartford HealthCare is proud to have so many outstanding nursing professionals on our team.



HARTFORD HOSPITAL



Asamoah "Azy"
Anane, BSN, RN



Lori Arsenault, BSN, RN



Gina DiGiovanni,
MSN, RN



Tara Eshoo, MSN, RN



Kimberly Ewankiewicz,
MSN, RN



Gabriela Jablonski,
BSN, RN



Michelle Johnson,
BSN, RN



Vennada Lour, BSN, RN



Lyz Meza-Villantoy,
BSN, RN



Cheryl Mitchell,
MSN, RN



Barbara Norman,
BSN, RN



Dominique
Petrucci, BSN, RN



Amie Redfield, BSN, RN



Stefanie Sigmund, APRN



Taryn Sokolik,
BSN, RN

NATCHAUG HOSPITAL



Jason Wowk, ASN, RN



Sarah Zurek, BSN, RN



Gino D'Eliseo, RN



Lenka Horsakova, RN

RUSHFORD



Amber Colello, APRN

BACKUS HOSPITAL



Alysha Medina, RN



Cheryl Plecan, RN



Emma Rooney, RN, BSN



Chelsea Voelker, RN, BSN



Kathryn Wyland, RN, BSN

THE HOSPITAL OF CENTRAL CONNECTICUT



Sabra Dunn, RN, BSN



Lillian May, RN, BSN



Catherine Santarsiero, MSN, APRN



Sarah Viggiano, RN, BSN



Jennifer Warren, RN

ST. VINCENTS MEDICAL CENTER



Adam Agyemang, RN, BSN



Sue Bousa, RN, BSN



Renee Divine, RN, BSN



Helen Ditchkus, RN, BSN



Rebecca Ann Kennedy, RN, BSN

MIDSTATE MEDICAL CENTER



Stacey Piotrowski, RN, BSN



Sunil Bellore, RN



Sylvie Fortin O'Connell, RN



Kimberly Romajas, RN



Cathy Sawicki, BSN, RNC-OB

CHARLOTTE HUNGERFORD HOSPITAL



Ashley Cole, RN, BSN



Linda Gryniuk, RN

WINDHAM HOSPITAL



Stephanie Dean, RN,
BSN



Killeen Dwyer, RN

HARTFORD HEALTHCARE AT HOME



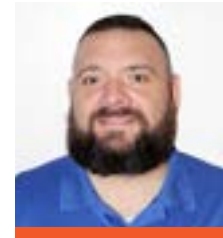
Elena Asberry, RN, BSN



Edyta Siebiedzinska, RN



Kristen Murphy, RN



Matthew Bielomyza, LPN

HARTFORD HEALTHCARE MEDICAL GROUP



Jane Baillargeon, RN



Alexandra Gianci, RN



Melissa Roberts, RN



Kimberly Diamond, RN

TALLWOOD UROLOGY & KIDNEY INSTITUTE

HARTFORD HEALTHCARE SENIOR SERVICES



Maria Aguas, RN, BSN



Sharon Dempsey, LPN



Rebecca Elliott, RN



Athena Mains, RN

HARTFORD HEALTHCARE SSO

To read more about each **Nightingale**, go to <https://hartfordhealthcare.org/health-professionals/nursing/nursing-recognition/nightingale-recipients>.



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.

Helping Kids Find Their Way

Steve Coates' life as a philanthropist began when he took a job 15 years ago promoting a non-profit organization helping kids in Hartford.

Our Piece of the Pie (OPP) serves youth ages 14-24 who are either involved with child welfare or justice system, struggling with low income, and/or un- or under-employed. They needed help with marketing.

"I had my first job in communications and marketing there in 2008, and I have always really admired the organization," Coates says of the group, which helps youth with personal development, academic achievement and workforce readiness.

Now a senior director of marketing at Hartford Healthcare, Coates was named to the OPP board in January 2022. He chairs its development committee, raising funds for the group.

In addition, he is working with the Hartford Hospital human resources team on an initiative to create internship opportunities for OPP youth at HHC, in such areas as food and nutrition, patient transport and environmental services.

"It is a great way to give young people opportunities while also filling critical staffing needs," he says.

The similarities between the two organizations is interesting, Coates notes.

"The organization has a similar culture to HHC, based in respect, leadership and doing the right thing. You know an OPP youth when you meet them because they have superior interpersonal and professional skills," he says.

He says he has donated his time for administrative assistance, but also would like to become more involved in job readiness training with the youth, such as mock job interviews, workplace etiquette and communication.

"It is really awesome to be a part of this organization. It is inspirational to see young people succeed. Often, they just need a caring adult who can open doors for them and help keep them on track through some serious barriers. It is amazing to watch them thrive," he says.

—Kate Carey-Trull



Steve Coates, front row right, Hartford Mayor Luke Bronin, back row right, pose with kids from Our Piece of the Pie after a press conference previewing DominGo! Hartford.



Safety's Best Friend

Hartford Hospital public safety officer Kyle LaRiviere patrols the entire campus with his K9 colleague, Kenzo.

Photo by Chris Rakoczy





Singing Chef Lends Jamaican Spice to Cafeteria Food

By Robin Stanley

It was Amateur Night, October 29, 2014, at the legendary Apollo Theater in Harlem and a nervous Milton Samms took the stage not knowing if he would be booed.

"I was like, 'Oh Lord, please just let everything go OK,'" he recalls.

He needn't have worried. As soon as he belted out the first few notes of Sam Cooke's "A Change is Gonna Come," the crowd went wild.

Samms was crowned the winner that night in the competition that launched the careers of Ella Fitzgerald, Lauryn Hill, H.E.R and Machine Gun Kelly, among others.

The experience was life-changing.

"My whole community knew me after that. I wasn't Milton anymore. I was the Apollo kid," Samms says. "I started branding myself with cooking and singing and became the Singing Chef."

The title was solidified when an impromptu performance for News 12 went viral on TikTok.

Samms, a cook at St. Vincent's Medical Center, was born and raised in Jamaica. His love of singing started at a young age.

"Both of my parents are pastors so I grew up singing in church," he says. "I won a gold medal for singing at school and I've sung for the (former) prime minister of Jamaica, P.J. Patterson."

After moving to New York in high school, Samms started working part-time as a cook, learning the ropes and cultivating his craft. He specializes in seafood boils, Jamaican and Italian cuisine. In addition to his work at St. Vincent's, Samms does catering and hopes to open his own company, aptly named Singing Chef Catering.

"My motto is that I bring the food, fun and flavor," he says. "A lot of people have told me I have to pick one, either food or music. But I said no, music and food go together because both come from the soul."

On the weekends, you can find Samms working at a local karaoke restaurant, cooking and entertaining, mixing gospel and R&B.

"My dream is to have my own catering business, but I also want to open a recreational center for kids going through stuff," he says. "Somewhere (free) they

could go after school."

The Singing Chef may be busy, but he remains humble and grateful for the work he pours passion into each day.

"When you're doing what you love, people see that," he says.

Find Milton Samm's music on streaming platforms such as Spotify, iTunes and Apple music.



Milton Samms enjoys whipping up Jamaican dishes — and many others — for colleagues at St. Vincent's Medical Center.

Photo by Amy Mortensen



Start Here:

The Story Behind HHC's New Brand Message

By Elissa Bass

It sounds simple. It looks simple.

But Hartford HealthCare's new brand message, officially launched in late February, is anything but simple.

It is a message designed to convey all the layers of a sprawling healthcare system, from care to innovation to employment to community. And it builds on the messaging of the last several campaigns dating back to 2014, ensuring that consumers understand what Hartford HealthCare offers.

"It's deceptively simple," says Helayne Lightstone, senior director of marketing and branding. "It is most powerful because of its ability to resonate across so many circumstances and aspects of Hartford HealthCare. The beauty of the 'Start Here' phrase is it applies to a career, a new life, any type of care you need — as well as access, equity and affordability."

The two words contain four key messages:

- Hartford HealthCare is thinking differently about advancing health.
- We are delivering care into more communities.
- We believe excellent healthcare should be more affordable.
- Health equity and better access are priorities to us.

Lightstone and Reem Nouh, chief strategy officer for Adams & Knight, HHC's integrated marketing and brand agency partner, said "Start Here" builds on HHC's last two message campaigns, "Connect

to Healthier" in 2015 and 2020's "More Life in Your Life." The latter pivoted with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, which helped plant the seed for "Start Here."

"We wanted to make sure (the new message) told the whole story — the community outreach, innovation, health equity, future of healthcare."

"During COVID, people came to rely on us for information, care, testing and vaccines," Lightstone says. "As we returned to being able to deliver services as usual, we reflected on who we are, a healthcare system that innovates and adapts to meet the changing needs of the community."

When work began to create the new brand message, Nouh says the centerpiece of discussions revolved around HHC President & Chief Executive Officer Jeffrey Flaks' belief that post-COVID the system should be "better than normal."

"We took that to heart," she says. "We wanted to take lessons from COVID and apply them here. The community outreach Hartford HealthCare did during COVID was huge and we wanted to convey that. Everybody already knows we have the best doctors and great hospitals. We wanted to make sure (the new message) told the whole story — the community outreach, innovation, health equity, future of healthcare."



Images from the Start Here campaign, above and at left, reflect diversity and energy. Below, Reem Nouh, chief strategy officer for Adams & Knight, and Helayne Lightstone, HHC senior director of marketing and branding, third and fifth from left, pose with other members of the team bringing the television commercial to life.

Rollout of “Start Here” began internally, with “launch parties” across the regions to introduce employees to the campaign and hand out branded goodies. The public launch included TV and radio spots, digital ads, social media posts, billboards and website refreshes.

“We do the rollout internally first to make sure everyone understands the ‘why,’” Nouh says. “We got good feedback immediately.”

After the message has been public for a few months, Adams & Knight does consumer awareness testing.

“We do that to gauge perception,” Nouh explains. “We are looking for a halo effect (from the brand message). The goal is to elevate the brand, create a preference among consumers, and have synergy with existing specific marketing campaigns.”

The message will build on consumers’ already strong awareness of HHC. In a 2021 marketing survey, Lightstone notes 50% of those questioned recognized the HHC logo, and 55% were aware of HHC as an entity. It was the highest level of any healthcare system in the state.

The greatest marketing minds, she adds, can come up with a brilliant brand message but, “A brand is not just a slogan. It’s how people perceive you. You can have the best brand slogan but if it doesn’t match people’s experience, it won’t work.”

Both she and Nouh admit the healthcare advertising world is crowded these days, and it was paramount to create an HHC message that stands out.



“Going back to ‘Connect to Healthier,’ we were doing something different,” Nouh says. “We were talking about wellness and how we could help you live healthier outside the hospital walls. We were so ahead of the times with the concept of wellness first, and access. ‘More Life in Your Life’ built on that, noting we are bringing care to communities across Connecticut, making it easier to access.”

This is Lightstone’s last brand message for HHC, as she retires in June after nearly 20 years. She feels she’s ending on a high note.

“I’m very proud of it,” she says. “I’m proud we are able to take a message that is true and somewhat disruptive to the norm and share it with our many communities. It’s an engaging and different approach.”



Behind the Scenes of the 'Start Here' TV Ad

It's only 30 seconds long, but there's a lot to unpack in the TV ad for Hartford HealthCare's new brand message, "Start Here."

We asked Helayne Lightstone, senior director of marketing and branding, and Reem Nouh, chief strategy officer for Adams & Knight, HHC's integrated marketing and brand agency partner, to take us inside the creation of the spot, directed by Justin Liberman and written by Patrick Dugan of Adams & Knight. The ad was filmed over two days in a Boston studio.

"For the actors, we wanted to reflect a diverse group of individuals to be more inclusive and show that we deliberately reach out to and accommodate everyone," Lightstone says. "We embraced diversity and selected people of different races, professions

and gender orientations. We wanted our spot to be appealing to a broad range of people, and reflect our innovation."

Every detail of the ad, Nouh explains, has a purpose.

"We added brand cues throughout the spot during production from our logo pin to wardrobe to eye make-up and paint stroke," she says. "In editing we brought in our logo visually in four different areas throughout the spot (parkour/graffiti wall, LifeStar, Care van, logo at the end)."

Lightstone says, "Reem and I worked with the makeup artist to choose brand colors for the eye makeup on the ballerina in the dramatic shot toward the end."

The shot of the artist, she adds, features a custom painting based on HHC brand colors in the background.

"As you see the artist swipe her brush across the screen in front of her, she is actually painting



on clear Plexiglas,” she says. “There were multiple takes of the scene and the Plexiglas had to be meticulously cleaned after each to accommodate the new brush stroke.”

Posters behind the rock star, Nouh says, were generated by artificial intelligence.

“The athlete was incredible to witness as he effortlessly leapt and jumped through multiple takes,” Lightstone says. “His efforts triggered a discussion of a very funny episode of ‘The Office’ in which Michael, Dwight and others clumsily scramble around Dunder Mifflin wreaking havoc and causing damage while trying to be Parkour athletes!”

—Elissa Bass

Check out the ad here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dZxbAZsb1i0>



‘Start Here’ as a HHC Brand Ambassador

When Hartford HealthCare launched its new “Start Here” brand message, the rollout began internally well before the public got a glimpse.

Regional marketing and communications teams hosted launch parties showcasing the new brand TV ads and handing out giveaways of seed packets and notebooks bearing the “Start Here” theme.

The brand spot showcases how HHC is working to improve access to care, make care more affordable and equitable, and bring our expertise to more people in more communities.

The hope is that HHC colleagues will become brand ambassadors, says Helayne Lightstone, senior director of marketing and branding.

“Every employee already is a brand ambassador, because the experience they provide to our patients and others is actually our brand in action,” Lightstone says. “Whether it’s someone providing care in a hospital or answering the phone in our Access Center, they help us become the trusted place where people will start their care.”

Celebrating the new message with colleagues first helps them get excited about the campaign and understand its message. Explaining the message and providing branded promotional items “reflects their ability to share with the community what Hartford HealthCare has to offer,” Lightstone says.

—Elissa Bass



Hartford Hospital colleagues pick up promotional items bearing the new brand look after Leadership Forum.

Photo by Chris Rakoczy



BHN HR Team Adapts ‘Start Here’ for Internship Recruitment

Two words surfaced in Stephano Donzell’s mind as he prepared to present data to Behavioral Health Network (BHN) leadership.

Donzell, a BHN human resources generalist, had spread out the data to create an infographic that could accompany the talk he and colleague Melissa Buckley, a BHN human capital consultant, planned. He heard two words in his head:

“Start Here.”

Like many HHC colleagues, he first heard the words during one of many presentations promoting the new system brand and tagline, “Start Here.” While the first advertisements urge people in Connecticut to start at HHC for a wide variety of healthcare services, the hope, according to brand experts, is to apply the slogan in a variety of other ways too.

“A light bulb went off and I thought we could use ‘Start Here’ as a marketing tool for

our internship program,” Donzell says.

He and Buckley coordinate six- to 12-month clinical internships for social work students in BHN locations across Connecticut. Field education is required for students in mental health disciplines to earn their college degree and, if they are high-performing professionals during their internship, the students are often hired by the Network.

The internship program has regularly been sought out by schools and students, but Donzell says the HR team is starting to be more proactive, especially with the shortage of healthcare workers. Relationships with important academic partners have become stronger in recent months.

“The intention is to build out a pipeline that feeds our needs as a system,” Buckley explains. “We want students to start here, where we’ll help develop them as potential clinicians and mentor them. Once they become more proficient and graduate, we want them to stay here.”

The pair plans to use the “Start Here” slogan to enhance recruitment initiatives with college campuses across the state, including Eastern Connecticut State University, where they both studied human resource management.

“We have a formal field education program in place, and we want schools that have students searching for internship opportunities to start here,” Donzell says.

—Susan McDonald



Stephano Donzell and Melissa Buckley from the human resources team at the Behavioral Health Network, recognized what the new Hartford HealthCare slogan “Start Here” could bring to their internship recruitment efforts. They are pictured on the campus of Eastern Connecticut State University, which they both attended and from where they were recruited to work for HHC .

Photo by Rusty Kimball



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.

Pilot Gets a Turn on the Big Screen

Mike Kwas

Pilot, LIFE STAR

Pilot Mike Kwas joined the LIFE STAR team in 2013, originally based at Backus Hospital. In 2018, he transferred to MidState Medical Center and became an aviation safety officer. Previously, he worked as a helicopter pilot in New York City. A special assignment on Memorial Day weekend, 2008, led to work on the big screen and a Screen Actors Guild card.

What movies did you work on?

I didn't know ahead of time, but the special assignment in 2008 was to fly a helicopter in "The Taking of Pelham 123," a movie about the hijacking of a subway train in New York City.

The movie, directed by Tony Scott of "Top Gun" fame, stars Denzel Washington and John Turturro. I was able to meet Scott, which was a unique privilege, and fly him, Denzel and John around in different scenes. In one scene, Scott was lying on the floor of the helicopter shooting the action!

After that, I worked on "Transformers: Revenge of the Fallen" and "New York," a Bollywood production filmed in Philadelphia. There was a scene where I had to hover over a downtown skyscraper, simulating a kidnapping, which is a lot different than a sightseeing tour!

How did you end up getting SAG card?

I was encouraged, after I got a temporary waiver for the first movie, to get my SAG card, so I did. I have been asked to be a background actor, which I might do in the future, but currently I only answer requests for SAG pilots.

Mike Kwas flies helicopters for LIFE STAR and also in the movies.

Photo by Steve Coates

How do you juggle your schedule?

As a LIFE STAR pilot through Air Methods, my schedule is one week on, with three or four day shifts and then three or four night shifts, but then I have a week off. So, I have two weeks a month that I can pursue other interests and I negotiate around that schedule.

What is your dream role?

My dream job, from age 15, was actually to fly a LIFE STAR helicopter for Hartford Hospital. I had an interest in medical services from a young age and rode my bike over to watch the first helicopter land at Hartford Hospital in 1985.

I met Rich Magner, one of the original pilots. Once I got my EMT and paramedic certification, he realized I might be serious about doing it and advised me about getting a pilot's license. I was working as a firefighter in West Hartford and went to Northeast Helicopters in Ellington. I went on to become an instructor there and flew helicopters in different places, including Alaska and New York State, before returning to Connecticut. When there was an opening at Backus, I ended up there and got to work with Rich. In 2018, I moved to Meriden, filling his spot when he retired.

—Kate Carey-Trull





The Dawn Patrol

David Gutierrez, MD

Spine program director, Division of Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation

On those freezing Saturday mornings when you're trying to talk yourself out of bed, David Gutierrez, MD, is probably out on the ocean, waiting on a wave. Dr. Gutierrez grew up in southern California and started surfing in his teens at Newport Beach. These days, home base is Rockaway Beach, NY, where he rents a surf locker year-round. Typical time of departure: 6 a.m.

"I'm not chasing mavericks or 60-footers here," he says. "But sure, you could call me on Dawn Patrol."

Do you really surf year-round?

Almost. I pause in February, because that's when it tends to be really, really cold. But by the end of March, I get out there again.

Part of the appeal of winter is it's not as crowded. The sweet spot is in the late fall, even early winter. You get a nicer swell, but not as many people because they think it's way too cold. But I'm telling you: With the right equipment, it's not that bad!

What's a perfect surfing day for you?

People can get so hopped up on whether the waves are great or the swells are worth anything. Honestly, for me, it's just a chance to be outside.

It's rare to have times when you don't have to think about anything except what you're actually doing. With surfing, you get the exercise of paddling out. There's a sense of excitement, anticipating the next wave. You get the calm of being out on the water, mostly on your own. Sometimes you see dolphins, even at Rockaway.

Some people get a runner's high. I get that from surfing.

Does your hobby ever overlap with your work?

I've had spine program patients tell me they surf, and it's a nice connection, talking about where we go.

More than that, it's "practice what you preach." I often tell my patients to find an exercise they enjoy, so that they'll keep doing it. For an outdoor activity, surfing is mine.

You have two young daughters. Is surfing in their future?

We'll see. Maisie is 3 years old and G.G. (Genevieve) is 1. Maisie just started swimming classes, so maybe she'll get more intrigued about getting in the ocean.

She's also into the Disney movie "Moana" right now — really, really into it. That may be a good sign. In the meantime, I think I've seen "Moana" more than anyone else has ever seen that movie!

—Laura Benys



David Gutierrez, MD, and his daughter Maisie enjoy a moment in the sand at Rockaway Beach.

Donkeys Need Rescuing, Too

Heidi Latka

IT business partner, Northwest Region

Heidi Latka grew up on a farm, bought a farm with her husband and, in 2020, realized a dream in launching an animal rescue to help donkeys. An IT business partner for Hartford HealthCare's Northwest Region and a former nurse, Latka and her arborist husband Marc visited a donkey rescue in Aruba and both thought: "We should do this!" Now, they own an official 501(c)(3) called The Donkey's Cross in Bethlehem.

Why donkeys?

The need for donkey rescue is more necessary than one might think. Donkeys have unique needs and are under supported in the rescue community. Donkeys live longer than most horses and, sadly, often outlive their owners, leaving them at risk for neglect and abandonment. Their unique dietary and health needs, which can cause significant vet bills if mismanaged, also causes them to be an unwanted expense.

Donkeys have a reputation for being stubborn and difficult. Is that accurate?

It's not. Donkeys are kind, tolerant, social and intuitive. But, they are also reactive to their situation. If they are mistreated, they can hold a grudge. They are true reflections of how they have been treated.

Who was your first rescued donkey?

Our first rescue was a group: Waffles, Biscuit and Gemma. They are mini donkeys, about the size of a large German shepherd. A guy purchased them to try for a tax benefit by having a farm, but his town told him three donkeys didn't equal a farm. He stopped caring for them, and we took them. They basically became employees. They are bonded and very friendly and they love kids, so when we have open barn days, everyone can pet them, groom them and hang out with them.

What are open barn days?

We work hard to integrate our program into the community. We have several open barn days a year for visitors. Some youngsters visit frequently to work on their language and reading skills by reading to the donkeys. We work with several local

school programs — in fact Biscuit will be going to school this spring to teach students about animal rescue and animal health. We partner with the local Vo-Ag programs and are a supervised agricultural education site for students. We host field trips for schools and programs.

Do you take volunteers and donations?

We are working toward setting up a volunteer program but it is a logistical challenge in addition to the cost of the insurance. We are a registered nonprofit and 100% donation funded. You can donate directly to the rescue on the website (<https://thedonkeyscross.org/>).

—Elissa Bass



Heidi Latka poses with one of her rescue donkeys on her Bethlehem farm.



HUMAN TO HUMAN:

Nurses put COVID emotions onto paper



With the help of poet David Hassler, Hartford Hospital nurses crafted a poem that reflects the challenges, rewards and emotions they experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic. During the virtual “Healing Stanzas” workshop, they put their thoughts and emotions into words that Hassler transformed into the community poem, “Human to Human.”

Scan the QR code at right for a video of the verses and a glimpse at the workshop.



Human to Human by Hartford Hospital Nurses

Composed May 2022

Some days you underestimate the impact you have on another.

A helpful hand, a kind gesture, an ear to listen can be exactly what someone needs just to get through the day.

Remember you are a comforter, a care giver, a life changer.

You are sunshine in someone's life.

You make the world a better place.

Some days you reflect on yourself before you care for your patients and wonder who is there to care for me. You mourn the words of a dying mother, tell your children you love them and think about your own mortality, the thought that they would grow up without you.

Some days with grace and grit you prepare for the battles of the day. You fight to get out of bed and leave your little ones who want you to play mom all day. You fight to be seen and heard through the halls, to prove you are good at what you do, to make a difference for someone else. You fight to smile behind sadness, to feel worthy of being a nurse with its magnitude of responsibilities, to turn it off at the end of the day and to do it all again tomorrow.

Some days you feel you've lost the war. You can't come up with the right words and don't know what else to give. You feel guilty for being sad when there are those suffering through much greater situations.

Some days you feel like an actor in the play of your life. You choose to play a character who portrays confidence and joviality rather than revealing the truth of the chaos within. You don the costume of a nurse, undergo a physical and mental transformation to animate your role. You change into your uniform — a specific color signifying your area of practice, a hat, a mask, shoe covers, ID badge with a tag that declares "NURSE" — and become fully immersed. You hang your real clothes and real self in your locker while you put on a performance. But there is no applause, no standing ovation, no flowers at the end of the show.

You return your costume and don your street clothes again.

You emerge from the hospital theater and return to your real self, prepared to perform again the next day.

Some days you will touch people in ways you may never fully understand, but they will never ever forget you, how you made them feel. Until you have walked both sides of healthcare — as provider and patient or family — this is hard to know.

Some days you will feel all the feelings in twelve and a half hours — happiness and sadness, joy and pain — and know how lucky you are to feel them regularly and deeply. This is exactly where you want to be, helping a patient and their family overcome the unknown.

Remember we carry the weight of our responsibilities at work and at home. We carry every breath not taken, every back turned to walk away, every dropped shoulder and hung head. We grieve who we were before, the lightness of problems in the air we could comprehend. Hidden behind masks, we have become experts in the windows to the soul, no longer the facial expressions that manifest it.

Together we will heal the pieces of our broken hearts that aren't so readily accessible. Remember how everyone is hurting, and we are here to hold that memory. Together we carry each other forward, like today when the dementia patient with soft blue eyes smiled at me as I softly took her hand.

For we are the hands that touch and the heart that feels, the soul that is tired and the knees that are weak. We pour out our hearts each day, willing to lay it down for others. Be kind, be human, for there is no other like you. Human to human is the only way to heal.



Work ‘Besties’ Boost Your Spirits and Productivity

Whether it's spending a few minutes on Monday rehashing your weekend or going on shopping or gym dates, many adult friendships are forged at work.

That's a good thing, too, since a 2022 Gallup report showed work friendships not only boost our spirits, they increase productivity and engagement during the workday.

"Most of us spend eight plus hours a day, five days a week, doing our chosen jobs. And, many jobs revolve around a common goal — helping patients, building better processes, educating children. That innate sense of camaraderie easily helps us forge bonds with colleagues," says Jennifer Ferrand, PsyD, director, Hartford HealthCare Well-Being Department.

Friend benefits

In the workplace, Gallup shows having a close — or even "best" — friend leaves us:

- More likely to share ideas
- More innovative and creative
- Apt to get more work done in less time
- Less likely to get injured doing your job
- Having more fun and feeling increased job satisfaction
- More productive and creating higher-quality work
- Less likely to feel burnt out or stressed

"This is logical when you think how friends naturally support and encourage each other," Dr. Ferrand explains. "They talk regularly and communicate better. Plus, they are committed to each other and their shared purpose."

Like healthy relationships outside of work, workplace friendships can relax and motivate us to do better. When there's a problem, it's easier to share and receive feedback with someone you trust.

Business benefits

Workplace friendships and camaraderie benefit the employer, too, Dr. Ferrand notes. For example, she says businesses can realize:

- Lower employee turnover
- Improved employee satisfaction
- Fewer sick days taken
- Drop in safety incidents (36% less, according to Gallup)
- Increase in customer engagement and profits

"Work friendships tend to improve our ability to strike a work-life balance as we experience some socialization while at work," Dr. Ferrand says. "This is key because with the millions who left the workplace during and after the pandemic, we can see that people are not working just for a paycheck any longer. They want and need more from their work days."



Fostering friendship

There are many ways employers and managers can create an environment that helps colleagues forge friendships, starting with being interested in their lives outside of work. This atmosphere, Dr. Ferrand says, shows value for social bonding.

Other tips include:

- **Be less formal.** While projects and deadlines definitely need attention, it doesn't mean you can't be creative with structure. For example, try lightening up meetings when possible. Try a walking meeting on a nice day. The simple act of being outdoors and walking relaxes people, allowing their creative juices to flow.
- **Ask questions.** In one to one meetings, try asking

about their lives in general. If you see something telling — like a gym bag or takeout container advertising a restaurant, ask about it. Knowing what someone enjoys can help you understand what motivates them.

- **Try team building activities.** This doesn't have to be organized or during the work day. Suggest an outing after work on a Friday or schedule a monthly potluck lunch.
- **High-five.** Give recognition freely. Try sharing something on LinkedIn about your team as a surprise.

Do you have a work bestie? Share your story and photo by emailing susan.mcdonald@hhchealth.org.

—Susan McDonald

With Each Journey Comes a Purpose

Who is Enileika “Eni” Lopez-Riddle? She's someone who loves to advocate, mentor and see personal growth. She's confident in who she is — an ambitious, outgoing and determined woman who no longer suffers from depression.

Today, there is no doubt Lopez-Riddle knows who she is and her purpose.

However, if you ask who she was the year before, the answer would be different.

It started after her parents split up in 2005.

“I think a breakup for any family is complete heartbreak,” Lopez-Riddle begins. “To make matters worse, my mom underwent surgery a few months later and was diagnosed with cancer.”

The cancer spread and her mother passed away in November 2006. Depression hit Lopez-Riddle like a truck. The foundation she had known quickly crumbled. A young woman, fresh out of high school and still trying to figure out who she was had lost the biggest pillar of her life.

Not long after, Lopez-Riddle moved to Puerto Rico to live with her grandmother and finally started to rebuild herself. She returned to the mainland a year later and, at 19, decided to start a career, applying for a free certified nursing assistant (CNA) program.

“My mom was a CNA, so when I joined the program, my purpose began to align,” she says.

Three months later, she passed at the top and as president of her class. By August 2010, Lopez-Riddle was a full-time CNA at Hartford HealthCare. She found she enjoyed helping others.

“Taking care of people who also suffered depression, lost family members to cancer, and were

losing their own lives to cancer — that's what led me to my purpose,” Lopez-Riddle says.

The young woman who started as a CNA is now a practice manager and leader within the Hispanic and Latinx Colleague Resource Group. She is a wife and mother of two beautiful children, and, most importantly, a woman who knows her purpose.

There were many bumps, but because Lopez-Riddle navigated through them, she can now be strong for others. As someone lacking a support system when she needed it most, she lets people know they are not alone.

“It may feel like nobody will ever understand you and your situation, but know there are people out here who care and want to help,” she says. “Know that it's OK to lean on someone and share what you're going through. You are strong enough to get through this, and with each journey comes a purpose.”

—Maggie Werner



Eni Lopez-Riddle poses with her family.

Medical Group Celebrates 10 Years



Hartford HealthCare Medical Group 2013 to 2023



OFFICE LOCATIONS

2013	2023
41	429



PHYSICIANS

2013	2023
180	944



ADVANCED PRACTICE PROVIDERS

2013	2023
75	652



EMPLOYEES

2013	2023
900	3,750



PRIMARY CARE VISITS

2013	2023
308,447	822,721

By Chris Wojcik



January 1, 2023 was both a day of new beginnings and historic reference for Hartford HealthCare Medical Group — Padmanabhan Premkumar, MD, assumed his new role as president as the group launched its 10th year in existence.

Dr. Premkumar, a primary care physician who was vice president of revenue cycle before the latest promotion, expresses excitement at the opportunity to build on the medical group's success and evolve clinical care to meet patient needs.

In the beginning

The medical group was Hartford HealthCare's first step toward complete coordination of healthcare services, bringing together dozens of outpatient practices and providers. Over the years, it has expanded into nearly every community in Connecticut. More providers in more locations mean greater access to quality care.

In 2012, HHC CEO Elliot Joseph opted to align the expertise and resources of five clinical practices in the Hartford and Central regions — Hartford Medical Group, MidState Medical Group, Doctors of Central Connecticut, Windham Family Medical Services and Hartford Specialists/Connecticut Surgical Group — into one physician-led health system.

For six months, nearly 175 stakeholders from across the system worked tirelessly to build a governance and operating model. They developed policies, constructed workflows and procedures, and established a standard human resources manual for providers and staff.

On January 1, 2013, Hartford HealthCare Medical Group was born, leveraging the strength of 180 physicians and 75 advanced practitioners to deliver primary and specialty care services at 60 locations. This significant first step ensured HHC's superior level of care is always available to patients, close to home. The goal was to expand strategically throughout Connecticut and bring healthcare into communities, rather than forcing patients to travel to a single location.

Internist Kent Stahl, MD, was named the first president and CEO of HHC MG, as well as vice president of primary care. He was joined by colorectal surgeon Jeffrey Cohen, MD, as vice president of specialty care.

The purpose

Unification of these entities provided benefits to the organization and patients, including:

- The ability to harness HHC's size and scale and efficiently provide coordinated care.
- Consistency through shared infrastructure and resources across the system, allowing providers to deliver the best care to patients.
- Development of a common work culture among offices and colleagues. Leadership understood the sum of parts was worth more than the whole, and that internal collaboration would allow us to get through challenging times.

"What really matters is people," Dr. Cohen explains. "It's important that everyone be aligned, work together, have the same mission and vision, and move in the same direction together. When you do that, people feel like they're on a team — not alone on an island."

Overcoming barriers

Creation of the medical group faced immediate challenges in operational and logistical barriers. The leadership team, however, developed innovative solutions that proved to be the organization's strength.

To be successful, leadership knew it was

important to include practicing physician leaders on the team. In this new model, a physician was paired with operation leads at every level, allowing the team to make the best decisions for our organization, colleagues and patients.

"It's important that everyone be aligned, work together, have the same mission and vision, and move in the same direction together."

One of the biggest keys to success came in 2014, with the decision to bring all entities onto a single medical records system — Epic. At that time, there were as many as six systems being used, none of which was Epic. Roll-out began in August 2015, with primary care being the first to integrate. Bringing everyone onto one system allowed for complete coordination of care across the network.

Looking ahead

As Dr. Premkumar plans for 2023 and beyond, he intends to keep the medical group evolving to meet ever-changing patient needs.

"People are looking for care that's more digital and mobile," he explains. "They want information delivered to their doorstep."

To meet their accessibility demands, he is prepared to develop the infrastructure, including enhanced virtual platforms and other delivery systems, and make care more personalized and responsive.

"We're blessed to have great people with a genuine passion to help our communities and patients," Dr. Premkumar explains. "I truly believe we have the operating model to not just deliver on core values, but incorporate the latest advances in technology, with an ability to attract the best talent across the nation."

Celebration

In its first 10 years, the medical group made tremendous strides in expanding its network across Connecticut. With more than 400 practices and nearly 1,600 providers, access to quality healthcare is greater than ever before.

Although the scope of care has broadened, the mission remains the same: To improve the health and healing of the people and communities we serve. That, more than anything, is something to celebrate.



Preparation Drives Teams Facing Joint Commission Visits

By Brenda Kestenbaum

It's 6:30 on a Monday morning. Hartford Hospital Director of Quality and Safety Perioperative Services Maggie Hanbury, RN, MPA, is on her phone hitting the refresh button with the intensity of someone trying to score tickets to the hottest Broadway show.

Simultaneously, Director of Regulatory and Accreditation and Nursing Operations Gail Nelson, MS, RN, is going through the same ritual. But it's not tickets that are at stake. They are awaiting word that The Joint Commission (TJC) will be coming that day to survey the hospital and its various departments for the first time in more than three years.

Shortly after 7, one final refresh reveals that the surveyors are on the way.

Hanbury and Nelson had been preparing for the visit for months with Data Manager Kim Pires, business Systems Analyst Tracy Hespelt and colleagues from numerous other departments. It is an orchestral piece with many moving parts, to be played out in a week-long visit.



Left to right: Tracy Hespelt; Maggie Hanbury, BSN, RN, MPA, CPHQ; Kim Pires; Gail Nelson, MS, RN, NEA-BC work with departments across the hospital to prepare for Joint Commission surveys

Here's a behind-the-scenes look at some of the work that goes into a TJC visit:



Preparing for the day

- Based on previous visits, Nelson expects TJC will send nine surveyors. Knowing the survey isn't likely to straddle a weekend, Mondays are the most likely choice for the team to arrive. "They notify us the day they are going to arrive," Nelson shares. "If we don't hear, we wait until the next week."
- To determine the length and scope of the survey, TJC uses information the hospital team provides on things like number of locations, quantity of ED visits, ambulatory visits and types of services.
- TJC's Survey Activity Guide is used to mobilize the hospital team. The guide outlines expectations, timelines and objectives, serving as a valuable planning tool.
- Champions are assigned to manage chapters of the guide. This survey, Nelson managed the nursing chapter, creating and following a punch list of items required by the standards and expectations of the survey. Hanbury handled the perioperative chapters, working with Jennifer Ash, APRN, director of quality and safety for patient care services, and Jennifer Martin, RN, MPH, a quality and safety nurse in the Department of Medicine, to pull together an electronic regulatory readiness tool in REDCap™.
- Using tip sheets shared every Wednesday in leadership rounds, hospital colleagues are engaged and prepared for the survey. Daily messaging and visual management boards also cascade important information.



The day of

- Once the team receives the news, hospital-wide mobilization begins. Departments are notified and the necessary materials are produced to ensure the visit goes as smoothly as possible.
- The nine surveyors fan out across the hospital, visiting outpatient clinics, units and departments. With them are scribes, hospital personnel who support the surveyor.
- Records are reviewed and tracer methodology used to follow patient experiences in the hospital and examine coordination of care, something largely driven by Centers for Medicare and Medicaid requirements.
- On units, surveyors talk with colleagues, patients and family members.
- Because this year's survey emphasized the hospital's high reliability organization (HRO) journey, surveyors met with leadership to evaluate topics like culture of safety, infection control, medical staff credentialing and medication management, as well as steps being taken by the organization as it pursues HRO status.



After the survey

- TJC posts findings on the last day of the survey, leaving a preliminary report with the team.
- The final report arrives a few days later.
- After analyzing the report, the team drafts and implements an action plan to address any necessary items.
- Experiences and insight are shared across Hartford HealthCare to help other hospital teams during their own survey.
- Within 45 days, TJC will return to reevaluate any areas of concern.



Working Together on a Healthy Solution

Jennifer Doran knows the challenge in getting people the healthcare they deserve is often access and, as vice chair of the Hispanic Health Council Foundation Board, she's thrilled to be part of a solution.

Doran, director of digestive health and surgery at Hartford HealthCare and co-chair of the Hispanic and Latinx Colleague Resource Group, was on hand when the council announced the March opening of its Family Wellness and Cultural Center at 590 Park St., Hartford.

The center serves as a resource hub providing access to programs and services, embodying the group's commitment to ensure "people of color have access to the best healthcare possible."

Hartford HealthCare operates the health clinic. Other services include a behavioral health clinic for children and families, recording studio, demo kitchen, dance and art studios, and classrooms.

"This is about making sure we have the connection and taking the difficulty out of it," Doran says. "We have community partners and allies readily available, we just need to make sure we're making that connection."

Building trust, she adds, is also key in the Latino community.

"It's making sure we have partners and being



Jennifer Doran, center, vice chair of the Hispanic Health Council Foundation Board and director of digestive health and surgery at Hartford HealthCare, speaks about a new health center in Hartford. Behind her, from left, are: state Sen. John Fonferra; Hispanic Health Council CEO Ken Barela; Mayor Luke Bronin; and state Rep. Minnie Gonzalez.

able to say, 'Come talk to me, I can help you' to close the gap," she adds.

The venture addresses the community's health on a holistic level, explains Hispanic Health Council CEO Ken Barela. It's important, he stresses, to address current health needs but provide wellness care to help people in the future.

Mayor Luke Bronin agrees, saying, "We learned something I suspect folks in the Hispanic Health Council have known for a long, long time, which is that all aspects of wellness are tied together."

—Susan McDonald

Babies and Books – A Recipe for Bonding

Their newborn's stay in the neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) can leave parents feeling helpless and afraid, but a program at The Hospital of Central Connecticut is supporting them through books.

While the National Institutes of Health estimate



Read to Grow, HOCC Auxiliary buys books for the NICU at the Family Birth Place

up to 15% of babies born in this country spend time in the NICU, few parents are prepared for the machines and tubes, or not being able to hold their baby at times.

Reading is one way to help them bond, so the HOCC Auxiliary helped fund a "Read to Grow" program to help spread awareness of literacy development and the importance of reading to kids from a young age.

"The act of an adult reading to an infant provides brain stimulation and comfort to the baby and family and could promote positive health outcomes for the child. The parent becomes the child's first teacher and can lay the groundwork for the child to love learning and become successful in school" says Annette B. Salina, auxiliary president.

Benefits of reading to babies in the NICU include:

- Supporting the parent-child bond.
- Decreasing stress.
- Distracting parents from their worries.
- Calming babies and helping them become familiar with their parents' voices.

HOCC teamed with Connecticut Children's for "Read to Grow" as part of the Pediatric Care Alliance. Participating children will receive books until their

first birthday and can request more through the program's website.

"All babies receiving care in the HOCC NICU will receive books of their own for their parents or other adults to read to them," Salina says.

"Read to Grow" has been building literacy across Connecticut for 20 years, donating more than 2.3 million books.

—Libby Marino

IOL Fellow Creates Trauma Workbook for Children in Turkey

Fear set in when a flurry of texts exploded on her phone late on February 6, alerting Hanife Akal, MD, to the devastating earthquake that just rocked her native Turkiye (Turkey).

It took days for Dr. Akal, a child psychiatry fellow at the Institute of Living (IOL), and her husband to connect with relatives and friends living around the country. Although thousands died, their loved ones were safe. Some were temporarily displaced, others left homeless. But they were safe.

That's when the behavioral health practitioner side of her kicked in and she thought of the children.

"I wanted to help them and be part of their healing," Dr. Akal says.

While Turkiye (Turkey) struggles to create a foster care system and orphanages overflow, she says caregivers needed tools to help them grapple with the losses. The workbook became the academic project for her final year of fellowship. The pages contain guidance for caregivers and space for children of all ages to draw pictures representing their feelings and situations. Caregivers, she stresses, can be any adults caring for children, including family members, teachers, volunteers and professionals.

"We know it's important to provide brief and simple information to the caregivers in a developmentally appropriate manner," Dr. Akal explains.

Completed workbooks can serve as reminders — or keepsakes — of the earthquake experience later on. Very young children can draw and tell their caregivers what they're feeling, and older children can fill the pages in themselves. There are lines for name and age, others for children to describe their emotions or talk about what happened to their families and friends. Coloring pages contain hopeful yet realistic prompts such as a cracked road with cars and birds nearby.

"A disaster like this can be very disorganizing. Encouraging the child to create a story is a powerful



Hanife Akal, MD, a native of Turkiye (Turkey) and child psychiatry fellow at the Institute of Living, created a special workbook to help the youngest victims of the devastating February earthquake there process their emotions.

Photo by Chris Rakoczy

way to help them make more adaptive sense of their experience. This workbook is a structured opportunity to tell their story," Dr. Akal says. "It's designed to help them focus on who they are, what happened to them, how they feel and their future."

"Disaster psychiatry" was relatively new to her, but interacting with children is her specialty. Her workbooks are available for free in English, Turkish and Arabic on the websites of New Beginnings and Supporting Child Caregivers, sponsoring non-profit organizations.

The project enabled Dr. Akal to focus on helping people suffering at home.

"There's a feeling of helplessness. You can't go over because you have work, but you know how much this will affect them, how deep this goes," she says. "Relationships and the sense of community can be scaffolding in disasters like this, as we work to help them through, help promote resilience.

"It's something meaningful that I could do, and it's become rewarding in a way."

—Susan McDonald



Natchaug Client Conquers Her Self-sabotaging Ways

Natchaug Hospital's clients regularly emerge from treatment feeling renewed and able to combat life's challenges with the tools they are given by staff who are determined to help them heal.

At a recent graduation ceremony, Sarah, a woman from Mystic, told about climbing out of the hole childhood trauma and mental health issues left her in.

"In elementary school, I was usually daydreaming ... I would think about living in a home where I had a mom and dad that didn't always fight, a home where I wasn't emotionally neglected and given hugs, told I was loved," she says.

After dropping out of high school and starting to drink, Sarah says she jumped from one job to another. She'd start jobs enthusiastically and eventually self-sabotage herself to the point where she'd quit or get fired.

"It came in the form of criticism from myself in the voice of my abusive past," she recalls. "I would hear myself say that I was making no difference and the job didn't make one either.

"When you come from a home of neglect, you never get nurtured to grow into yourself."

After being diagnosed with bipolar disorder in her 30s, Sarah tried therapy unsuccessfully. Instead, she'd keep her emotions to herself to avoid shame. She was left struggling with doubt, anxiety and suicidal thoughts.

A new job caring for people with dementia in her 40s left her feeling rewarded and passionate. Yet, old patterns still emerged and the emotional weight caused a breakdown. She finally called Natchaug's Care Plus Program, where she found others who

understand what's she has gone through.

"When I sat down for my first therapy session, I let out a sigh of relief as other patients began to tell their stories," Sarah says. "Some of the stories were similar to mine, some not, but the pain we all carried was relatable ... I finally felt validated and really began to open up."

For two months, the program helped her learn to make human connections, and credits Peter DeRosa, her therapist, with helping her learn how to communicate "with guidance and wise correction."

"I found a new strength in me ... and I now look forward to the future as I see a light at the end of my tunnel," Sarah says.

—Susan McDonald



Sarah is all smiles after sharing her success story at a Natchaug graduation.

Photo by Tim Lebouthillier

When the Colonoscopy Conversation Gets Personal

In 2019, when I was 37 years old, I went for a routine physical and my doctor discovered something that prompted concern. To err on the side of caution, he wanted me to go for a colonoscopy. In the end, I was completely fine.

However, during the colonoscopy, the doctor found and removed two small polyps from my colon. He then told me if the polyps had stayed in my body until I was 50, which, at the time, was the recommended age to start getting regular

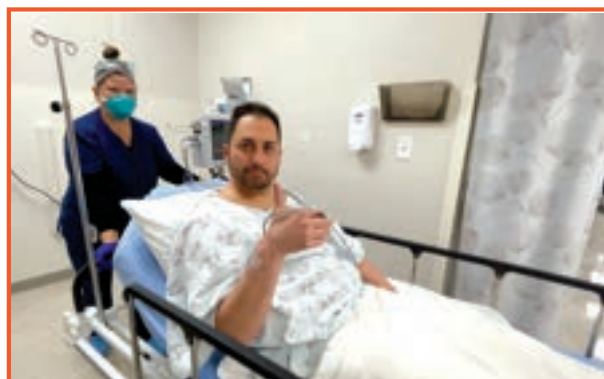
colonoscopy screenings for colon cancer, they would have likely turned into cancer. Hearing that gave me chills. The recommendation was for me to get a colonoscopy every three years.

Fast forward to now, studies show more and more people under the age of 50 are being diagnosed with colon cancer. That concerning data prompted the American Cancer Society to change its guidelines, dropping the recommended age for colonoscopies to 45. Of course, people at greater risk

are advised to start that screening even sooner. I now fall into that category.

I've encountered countless people over the years who continue to put off getting a colonoscopy because they don't think they need one or they're afraid because they don't know what to expect. When I was due for my screening, I thought it the perfect opportunity to show people how it works, what the doctors look for and how life-saving it can be. I hope doing this will help save someone's life.

—Brian Spyros



Brian Spyros, manager of marketing communications for the Central Region, chose to create an informational video about his colonoscopy to dispel fears and encourage people to have the potentially life-saving test. Scan the QR code to watch the video.



Taken from video by Keith Porter

Backus Public Safety Officers Begin Carrying Narcan

Members of the Backus Hospital public safety team now carry Narcan, a life-saving medication that can reverse an overdose from opioids — including heroin, fentanyl and prescription opioid medication — in minutes.

The step was prompted by an increase in incidents in which public safety officers are called to help unresponsive individuals in hospital parking lots.

“Carrying naloxone is no different than carrying an epinephrine auto-injector for someone with allergies,” says Gen Boas, director of public safety at Backus and Windham hospitals. “It simply provides an extra layer of protection for those at a higher risk for overdose and gives our team one more tool to help them protect the communities we serve.”

There are two ways to administer Narcan, injecting it into the thigh or leg, and a nasal spray. The Backus team, which includes a K-9, will be the first public safety officers at Hartford HealthCare to carry the medication and will act as a pilot program for other teams throughout the state.

“This initiative was brought forward as an idea from the public safety officers in the field,” explains East Region Vice President of Operations Matt Kaufman. “The public safety team can find themselves as first responders when patrolling the campuses, and, with the unfortunate growth of overdose risk in the community, we saw this as an idea that met a need to benefit patient safety.”

The program will expand to Windham soon, Kaufman adds.

—Ken Harrison



From left to right are: Mark Rankowitz manager, Windham public safety; Gen Boas, regional director, public safety; Rob Judd, manager, Backus public safety; Tim Furman, public safety officer; Craig Plante, K9 supervisor with K9 Remi; John Mish, public safety officer; and Tim Shefer, public safety officer.

Photo by Ken Harrison



Coralys Mercado, LPC, worked with patients at The Hospital of Central Connecticut's Intensive Outpatient Program to create a small garden of rocks painted with inspirational words.



Our Youngest Fan

Sixteen-month-old Alberto, grandson of Brenda Stewart, a colleague with Hartford HealthCare at Home, enjoys the Winter issue of Moments magazine.



Ambulances Find New Purpose in Public Health

It's easy to reuse furniture, clothing, even a car you no longer need. But an ambulance? Turns out that's pretty easy, too.

Four ambulances retired from service at Hunter's Ambulance Service found new life helping others in new ways, says Kevin Ferrarotti, senior system director for Hartford HealthCare's emergency medical services and administrative director of Hunter's, part of HHC's system of care.

One will be part of the HHC Neighborhood Health initiative, which brings health prevention services and support directly to people and communities across the state. Neighborhood Health teams stage clinics in locations like community centers, soup kitchens and shelters to provide medical care to underserved populations.

"I love this, it's such a great use," Ferrarotti says. "Currently, all the supplies and consumables they use for Neighborhood Health are transported in different vehicles. Going forward, they will use the repurposed ambulance to transport everything they need."

The ambulance was stripped of all emergency lights and sirens and branded with HHC and Neighborhood Health logos, says Kelly Toth, APRN, system clinical director of Neighborhood Health. Fully stocked with food, snacks, hygiene products, clothing,

blankets and medical supplies, it will also have barber supplies on hand as Hartford barber Miguel Delvalle often works with the team.

"This was one of our longer-term goals, and to have it come to fruition is incredible," Toth says. "We will quite literally be meeting people where they are in the community."

Ferrarotti and Toth say the goal is to eventually have one repurposed and branded ambulance in Neighborhood Health regions across Connecticut. This first will stay in the Hartford Region.

Two other ambulances are mobile training units, one each for the University of New Haven and Hunter's. Hunter's "will be the only ambulance company in the state to have a true mobile simulation ambulance," Ferrarotti says. "It will be used in EMT and paramedic training and as a recruitment tool."

The fourth ambulance went to Rushford, a Hartford HealthCare provider of addiction and mental health services, for opiate awareness and prevention programs through the Meriden Opioid Referral for Recovery (MORR) project and others. The collaboration between Rushford, City of Meriden and Meriden first responders focuses on addressing the opioid crisis through Narcan administration in the field and referrals to specialized MORR staff embedded on Rushford's Crisis Team. The program is a way for people to receive the treatment they need rather than being incarcerated.

"The ambulance will help people have a greater sense of privacy at these programs," Ferrarotti says.

—Elissa Bass



Hartford HealthCare and Hunter's Ambulance teams stand with one of four decommissioned ambulances donated to support public health initiatives.

Photo by Chris Rakoczy



Grateful for His Mentors, Bill Morin Gives Back

By Levell Williams

Growing up in Hartford's housing projects in the 1960s and '70s, Bill Morin's prospects may have been limited by his surroundings.

But, his single mom, a computer operator for United Technologies-Hamilton Standard during the height of the space program, ignited a spark that would propel him into technology leadership roles and mentorship.

Morin's first interest was cooking, and culinary skills brought him to Hartford Hospital in 1991 for a cafeteria job. A self-described video-game and computer geek, he also volunteered to teach doctors to use Windows 95 and Office operating systems.

That work didn't go unnoticed. When nurse Vicie Brooks needed tech support so a hospitalized patient could witness her son's wedding, she knew just who to ask. Morin rigged a cart with a camera, speakers and Wi-Fi hotspot and the patient watched the vows from her hospital bed. His discretionary effort eventually led to a career in IT.

"Ms. Brooks always pushed me to get involved and was a great mentor to me," Morin recalls of the retiree who continues to advocate for and mentor the next generation of healthcare professionals from traditionally underserved communities.

Motivated by Brooks and Greg Jones, HHC vice president of community health and engagement, Morin continued to advance. He also paid it forward, taking promising interns under his wing and teaching technology skills in programs such as the Boys and Girls Club of Hartford.

Brandon Murillo was one of those interns, learning to prepare, deliver and troubleshoot computers. Thanks in large part to his internship, Murillo now works at HHC, keeping computers running at 100 Pearl St.

Most recently, Morin helped launch Digital DividENDS, a partnership with Hartford HealthCare, Our Piece of the Pie, Hartford Youth Service Corps and the city to teach computer skills to young adults.

In addition to learning the ins and outs of computers, the students work on 150 decommissioned laptops donated by HHC as they become certified in PC repair. The laptops they refurbish will be donated to those in need, including first generation college students and the elderly. The youth have opportunities for summer internships at HHC, too.

"Programs that take a kid into a different area may open their eyes to new and different things," says Morin of his hopes to expand participants' understanding of potential career opportunities.

After 30 years at Hartford HealthCare, Morin is a field service analyst with the IT Department. The relationships he's built nurture him as much as he influences those he mentors. He will never forget how colleagues supported him when his



Bill Morin pays it forward by helping teach local students about computer repair through programs like Digital DividENDS.

Photo by Chris Rakoczy

mother tragically died in the 2003 Greenwood Health Center fire.

"If you have people that care about you and push you ... you can do good work," he says. "That's the kind of good work I think that I have done and I'm trying to do."



CRGs Enjoy Collaboration From the Very Top

In 2021, Hartford HealthCare created four colleague resource groups (CRGs) to help guide us on our journey toward diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging. The groups are made up of people of all levels and backgrounds across the system, each working with a dedicated member of the executive leadership team. We wanted to share a little about these executive sponsors, what motivated their engagement in these efforts and what they have learned so far along the way.



Meet Jeffrey Cohen, MD

Executive vice president and chief clinical operating officer

Executive sponsor: LGBTQ+ Colleague Resource Group

Why did you become the executive sponsor?

I am so committed to the journey we're on as a system. I think a diverse workforce makes us a stronger, more successful organization and enhances our ability to make significant improvements in healthcare. We have not only aspirations, but also the obligation, to take care of everyone equally, and one way to do this is through the CRGs.

I chose the LGBTQ+ group for a few reasons. First of all, one of my daughters is gay and struggled through adolescence with her identity. Second, I grew up in New York City, and my mother, who was in the fashion industry, had a lot of friends who were gay, yet during that period of time many "remained in the closet." Their journey and struggles had a significant impact on me. Lastly, early on in my career as a colorectal surgeon, I became known as "gay friendly" and a destination surgeon for the community.

What have you learned in this position?

I have learned:

- A reinforced respect for people.
- Not only is diversity to be celebrated, but we're all more alike than different. We're all people first with our challenges and celebrations.
- More obstacles and barriers exist for people who don't come from the majority. For instance, I've learned a lot about transgender challenges and prejudice that are so pervasive in our society.

What are you proud of so far and or what are you looking forward to with the group?

Ours is a small but mighty team that has become unbelievably engaged in less than two years. I am proud to note that this group has tremendously raised awareness, both internally, as well as in the community, regarding LGBTQ+ issues through sponsoring programs and becoming progressively more visible. There was significantly less visibility before the CRGs were created.

I'm also looking forward to more organic growth for the group. It's more challenging with this group because their belonging to this category is not as obvious as, for instance, it is for Asian American or Black colleagues, and therefore, difficult to recruit to. But, I look forward to growth on all campuses and ideas for projects that drive DEIB efforts.

—Susan McDonald



Meet Tracy Church

Executive vice president and chief administrative officer

Executive sponsor: Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI) CRG

Why did you become the executive sponsor?

I am incredibly honored to serve as the sponsor for the AAPI CRG, and I do it to actively show my support for this critically important work.

What have you learned in this position?

I have learned so much from this amazingly broad and diverse group of colleagues who, together, comprise the Asian American Pacific Islander CRG. In addition to spending time during each meeting learning about the many different sub-groups within the AAPI CRG, I've especially enjoyed getting to know each of the members and hearing from them about their unique cultures, wonderful holidays and amazing heritages. We also spend time learning about the "Model Minority Myth" and biases our AAPI colleagues face, and ways to overcome them, while we build an environment of inclusion and belonging.

What are you proud of so far and/or what are you looking forward to with the group?

While there are many, one of the more recent moments of pride was having CRG Co-Chair Amina Weiland connect with Breakthrough Magnet School

South to arrange for our CRG members to volunteer to read to the students — and then seeing the wonderful pictures of them sharing the stories and celebrating the Lunar New Year with the children.

Another proud moment is the work of the team to create and launch the learning module “What’s in a Name?” This interactive tool helps increase cultural awareness and respect by providing us with tips and techniques to help to pronounce people’s names correctly.

—Sebastian Trabucco



Meet Mike Daglio

**Executive vice president and
chief operating officer**

*Executive Sponsor: Hispanic Latinx
Colleague Resource Group*

Why did you become executive sponsor?

I came to Hartford HealthCare as St. Vincent’s Medical Center in Bridgeport was about to become part of our system. Leading that effort gave me an opportunity to see firsthand what we mean when we focus on “access.”

I love Hartford HealthCare’s ambition to create a more equitable culture for our colleagues of all backgrounds and identities. Being executive sponsor for our Hispanic Latinx Colleague Resource Group allows me to directly engage with the group’s passionate and creative members. I didn’t only want to support our continued journey for diversity and inclusion, I wanted to help lead it.

What have you learned in this position?

So much! This CRG continues to amaze me with the many ways they channel energy and enthusiasm into projects that have real impact — and get noticed. For example, I am delighted by the “Somos” (“We Are”) HHC campaign the CRG created. This video and social media series included Hispanic/Latinx clinicians and colleagues introducing themselves as proud members of the HHC community. It promoted HHC’s greatest strengths and points of differentiation: our people, and our collective commitment to diversity and inclusion.

What are you proud of so far, and what are you looking forward to with the group?

I think of how the CRG brings system-wide attention to Hispanic Heritage Month with great intranet content, the inclusion of culturally authentic dishes in hospital cafeterias, and sharing key Spanish

words and phrases, plus celebrating countries with engaging content. I’m proud of how the CRG uses all the tools HHC makes available to create awareness and display pride in who they are and what we do together. But what I am most proud of are the people who have joined this CRG. They have created a “safe environment” for each other. They care for each other. They share venerable stories about their experiences, and encourage others to do the same, so that we can learn how to be better as a large organization serving so many unique individuals.

I see only more great things ahead, as the CRG further connects with patient education and translation services, builds a translated clinical library for patients, and partners with HHC career coaches and mentors. It’s amazing.

—Keith Fontaine



Meet C. Okey Agba

**Executive vice president and
chief financial officer**

*Executive sponsor: Black and African
American Colleague Resource Group*

Why did you become the executive sponsor?

I was introduced to the CRGs during an executive leadership meeting. Shortly after, I was nominated as executive sponsor for the Black and African American CRG. I also felt a calling to do so. I knew if I was not in a leadership role, I would still be an active member of the group.

What have you learned in this position?

During my short but significant time with Hartford HealthCare, I have noticed greatness across the system, such as:

- Respect for diversity and inclusion.
- Respect of the workforce and how it reflects the people we serve and the state we live in.
- How we empower people inside and outside the organization to always do the right thing.

What are you proud of so far and/or what are you looking forward to with the group?

I want the CRG members to be engaged and excited. I am excited and passionate, taking on any task that may come my way. I believe that if you are passionate about what you do, you will be successful. I look forward to meeting, planning and executing goals as a team.

—Leaja Johnson



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@hhhealth.org.

Mother-Daughter Duo Make Working at Backus a Family Affair

The apple doesn't fall far from the tree for an inspiring mother-daughter nurse duo at Backus Hospital.

“I enjoy working with the community, and love working in the same hospital as my mom. Being able to share the same passion is something that has made us grow closer,” says Emily Arico, RN, of the Critical Care Unit.

Working in healthcare was an early calling for both Emily and her mother, Vicky Arico.

“When I was 12, I knew I wanted to be a nurse. I grew up caring for my grandmother. The things we did back then were very different,” says Vicky Arico, RN, who works on A-3. “It helped shape me into the nurse I am today.”

Emily followed in her footsteps, becoming a nurse in 2019 at Backus, where Vicky has worked for more than four decades.

“My mother is definitely my role model. I loved hearing her stories growing up and getting to see her passion and enjoyment each and every day. I wanted to make that big of a difference,” she says.

Typically, their paths don’t cross at work, but

sometimes patients remind them they are closer than they realize.

“I had a woman on A-3 and Emily had her husband on the CCU. The wife wanted to FaceTime and asked me to help. While talking, they both shared how great their nurses were!” Vicky says. “The wife told him my name and he said his nurse was Emily. Then, we got on FaceTime and said hi.”

Emily adds, “Patients love her, coworkers enjoy working with her and she’s always willing to help someone else.”

Months after Emily joined Backus, COVID-19 swept the globe, pushing healthcare workers to the brink.

“It was something none of us have ever experienced. It was a time we were both grateful to work under the same roof,” Vicky says.

Emily agrees.

“We help one another through difficult times. I call her every night to talk about our day, experiences and what we’ve learned.”

After two years working under the same roof, the Aricos was honored with DAISY Awards, international recognition honoring the skillful, compassionate care nurses provide.

Colleagues nominating Emily wrote, “(She) is committed to providing the best care for her patients and always appears positive.” She gives them hope for the future of nursing, they added.

A patient wrote that Vicky made her feel safe and comfortable, saying, “I never felt alone in the hospital.” She added that Vicky’s love for her patients is undeniable.

“Receiving this honor is an amazing accomplishment and the fact that I get to share it with my mother and role model is something I will always cherish,” Emily notes.

—Libby Marino



Vicky, left, and Emily Arico both earned DAISY Awards for their work as nurses at Backus Hospital.

Photo by Jeff Evans

thank you



I wanted to acknowledge the amazing care team at St. Vincent's while my mom was a patient. She was admitted with the flue and was in terrible shape. To say her care was great is an understatement. I'd like to call out a few folks who made her time tolerable and pleasant: Maria from house-keeping, who made conversation and brought a smile to Mom's face, like two old friends catching up; nurse Meghan G, who was outstanding and made our mom feel like a million bucks whenever she went to check on her; Karen Collins made sure Mom was getting the right food and something she knew she would eat; and Carin Florin, nurse manager and a Godsend, who mapped out the steps of the illness progression so it wasn't so scary.

—Cynthia Nigro, Trumbull

I had a partial knee replacement by Dr. John Grady-Benson of the Bone & Joint Institute. His high quality of surgery and professionalism in considering the concerns of his patient were most exemplary – and matched by the dedication of his staff of nurses, therapists and technicians. The care provided regarding my surgery was of the highest professional caliber.

—Francis Brady, West Granby

My husband was diagnosed with multiple myeloma after many years of surveillance. We are grateful for the outstanding guidance and brilliant decision-making Dr. Michael Kane has provided, and thank his team who treated my husband with care and sensitivity. This includes Katherine Masoud, APRN, and Sylvia Williamsen.

—Nancy Perini, Mystic

My partner and I would like to thank the staff in the Backus Emergency Department for their support and care. He went into the ED with nausea, vomiting and weakness, three weeks after a diagnosis of pancreatic cancer. At 42, he was aware that he would not live very long. The staff was so caring and respectful as they stabilized him so he could go home to die. He left with none of the symptoms and was able to complete his "bucket list." I am so grateful for his care.

—Jennifer, partner of Shane Graves, Colchester

.....

Tell us about it!

Have you or someone on your team connected with a patient in a special way? Your story may be selected to appear in future HHC publications, so please be sure no protected health information (PHI) is shared.





181 Patricia M Genova Drive
Newington, CT 06111

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit #4361
Hartford, CT



Simpler, less stressful health care for your loved ones. And for you.

CarePartners of Connecticut is the only Medicare Advantage plan built with, and guided by, Connecticut doctors every step of the way. And that makes a difference when it comes to care. By partnering with local doctors you know and trust, we make it easier to get the best care possible.

Learn more about how our Medicare Advantage HMO and PPO plan options can provide your loved ones with the quality coverage they deserve.



Call **1-844-267-2322**



Visit **carepartnersct.com/circle**



Other providers are available in our network. CarePartners of Connecticut complies with applicable Federal civil rights laws and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, sex, sexual orientation, or gender identity. ATENCIÓN: Si habla español, tiene a su disposición servicios gratuitos de asistencia lingüística. Llame al 1-888-341-1507 (HMO)/1-866-632-0060 (PPO)/TTY: 711. Y0151_2022_208_C