Casual for a Cause Supports Employee Assistance Fund

By Lindsay Mogle

When Carrie Carter began giving to the Casual for a Cause Program – a giving opportunity that enables Mohawk Valley Health System (MVHS) employees to contribute to the Employee Assistance Fund (EAF) and wear casual clothing on Fridays – three years ago, she never dreamed she would one day be the one needing assistance.

Carter has been an employee at St. Elizabeth Medical Center (SEMC) for more than 33 years, working in Patient Access Services, Admitting and Finance.

“I found out about the Casual for a Cause program three years ago,” said Carter. “I like wearing my jeans on Friday and I liked the idea of my money going to benefit a fellow employee in need. I never dreamed I would be in a situation to need it myself.”

In the early morning hours of Sunday, March 6, 2016, Carter began to hear the fire alarm sounding from the business located below her apartment. The fire, which began in the basement, was now burning through the building. She ran out into the hallway to see what was happening. She smelled smoke and dashed back inside to get her keys. By the time she went back into the hallway, she was greeted by a wall of smoke. Even though she couldn’t see anything, she heard the building’s other tenants yelling and followed their voices to safety outside.

Carter and all of the tenants made it to safety, but the fire continued to burn throughout the morning and it took crews six hours to get it under control.

“The exterior and interior of the building sustained quite a lot of fire damage,” said Utica Fire Department Chief Fire Marshal Raymond Centolella. “And what wasn’t damaged by the fire was damaged by water.”

The building had to be demolished several months later. Carter had to start over with nothing, so she applied to the EAF for help.

“The hospital employees were so wonderful with their donations, everything was a blessing,” said Carter. “It’s not just for the dress down day, it is for people who truly need the help. It could be any one of us that ends up being the one in need, I truly appreciate the blessing my coworkers were to me.”

The EAF provides help to employees, like Carter, who are enduring a financial hardship as a result of a catastrophic event in their lives. It is funded through employee voluntary contributions to the MVHS Foundations in addition to the popular Casual for a Cause Program.

Eligible employees may receive a grant of up to $750 from the EAF. Catastrophic events which may qualify under the program include life-threatening or serious illness of the employee or the employee’s immediate family members, death or incapacitation of an employee or immediate family member, and natural or accidental catastrophe such as loss of home to fire, etc.

For additional information on this program or to apply for assistance, visit the intranet or contact Human Resources at 315-624-6094.
Every Wednesday morning, Onyx wakes up knowing she has a job to do. The collar comes out, she jumps in the car and she’s ready to go.

Onyx, a 4-year-old Shiloh Shepherd therapy dog, visits patients at the St. Luke’s Campus where she is accompanied by Sister Sharon Ann Boyd, who is a hospital volunteer and Onyx’s owner. Onyx takes her job very seriously, Sister Sharon said.

Onyx’s long, dark coat earned her the legal name of Adirondack Black Beauty and the call name Onyx. Her red bandana, identifying her as a therapy dog, stands out against her black fur. With her large size – 98 pounds – and friendly demeanor, Onyx manifests a powerful presence at the hospital. Employees fuss over her as she prances with confidence through the hallways, always obliging to engage onlookers who are eager to meet her.

“It’s Onyx, right?” one employee asked as he reached down to pet her.

“Hi Onyx, good to see you!” said another.

“It’s always ‘Hi Onyx,’” Sister Sharon said with a laugh, “and then they greet me.”

Onyx leads the way through elevators and down hallways. She knows the way to Sister Sharon’s office and once she’s inside, she relaxes on her dog bed and awaits a busy day of visiting hospital patients.

Before she began visiting patients, Onyx went through extensive training to become a therapy dog. When Onyx was eight weeks old, Sister Sharon adopted her from a breeder in Pennsylvania. Knowing that Shiloh Shepherds are bred for temperament, it had always been in the back of her mind to train Onyx, who earned her license last year, she said.

To become a certified therapy dog, Onyx went through a series of 14 tests at Therapy Dog International in Flanders, New Jersey. An important aspect of her training was socialization, Sister Sharon said. In order for Onyx to become accustomed to people and loud noises, Sister Sharon would take her to stores such as Lowe’s and Bass Pro Shops.

“Lowe’s is great because it’s big and there is a lot of activity – carts rattling, lumber dropping,” Sister Sharon said. “It might startle her but she remains calm. She has been all right with noises (at the hospital).”

Onyx’s training has paid off. People often call the office Sister Sharon shares with Deacon Paul Lehmann to ask if Onyx is still there. Deacon Paul manages and coordinates the mission activities at MVHS.

“I’ve become a secretary for the dog,” Deacon Paul said.

Both dog lovers and those who generally shy away from dogs enjoy Onyx’s company, Sister Sharon said. Sometimes Onyx will stop in rooms at random, and other times nurses might recommend that she visit a certain patient, Sister Sharon said.

Sister Sharon recalled a time when a 93-year-old patient was in a bed in the hallway and wanted to see the dog. Without any instruction, Onyx moved to the side of the bed and nuzzled her head between the bars so the patient could see her and reach out.

Continued on page 4
Onyx the Therapy Dog continued

Continued from page 3

to pet her. This is just one of the ways she has demonstrated her emotional instincts, Deacon Paul said.

“Some people are fearful of dogs but Onyx is intuitive – if someone is crying, she lies next to them,” Deacon Paul said. “She senses emotions before humans.”

Onyx’s role as a therapy dog is special because of the great emotional support she provides, Sister Sharon said. Robert Lusiak, a patient who was visited by Onyx, said he thinks her role is beneficial because it opens up patients’ inhibitions.

“You’re less likely to talk to a medical professional but you’re open to a friendly animal,” Robert said. “Dogs are open to people and people are open to dogs.”

When Onyx returns home after a day at the hospital, she is exhausted. There is a lot of emotional stress on the dog, Sister Sharon said, but Onyx loves going to the hospital.

What is Onyx’s reward for a hard day’s work? Usually a hug and a nap.

and we are grateful to have them in the Mohawk Valley.”

Robert Upton of Utica has been employed at SEMC for 24 years and works as a radiology technologist in the Medical Imaging Department. Upton is a graduate of Champlain Valley School in Plattsburgh, New York, and is a strong supporter of the Abraham House in Utica, where he has been a volunteer for 10 years. He has acted as a Big Brother to several children in the Utica area and is not only known for his selfless compassion but also as an artist, a comic book creator and a baker of novelty cakes.

Sister Sharon has another Shiloh Shepherd at home – 2-year-old Cody, who is already bigger than Onyx. Onyx and Cody run and play in the yard together, but Onyx rules the roost, Sister Sharon said. In the future, she might train Cody to be a therapy dog as well.

As for Onyx, her future may contain visits to the St. Elizabeth Campus. For now, she’ll continue to make her rounds and bring smiles each Wednesday at the St. Luke’s Campus.
Aspiring Leaders Program Develops Future Leaders at MVHS

By Taylor Watson, Intern

Each year, the MVHS Aspiring Leaders Program gives employees the opportunity to begin developing or fine tune their leadership skills and prepare for career growth and development within the organization.

The Aspiring Leaders Program developed through the support of the Keith A. Fenstemacher Center for Continuous Learning (KAFCCL) at Faxton St. Luke’s Healthcare (FSLH). KAFCCL promotes continuing education to employees as well as the community. It helps provide community programs such as diabetes and childbirth education, employee training and student education.

Since the program’s inception in 2008, 119 MVHS employees have completed Aspiring Leaders, with about 30 percent of those moving on to positions of greater responsibility within the organization. Of all graduates, 83 percent are still employed at MVHS.

Paul Rubsamen, director of Organizational Development and co-instructor of Aspiring Leaders, emphasized the value of developing employees within MVHS.

“Developing future leaders is important for the continued success of MVHS because it expands our leadership ‘bench strength,’” Rubsamen said. “It is important that we’re able to grow our own leaders, which we feel the Aspiring Leader Program helps to do.”

Many graduates move to positions with greater responsibilities and another part of the success of the program comes from participants being involved in team projects that allow them to apply the skills they are learning while making improvements at MVHS. In 2016, one group created a patient education video for breast cancer patients. Another researched cell phone use by hospital employees and recommended an updated policy. Research was also conducted on availability of information about MVHS service offerings and how to increase awareness of those offerings for Continuing on page 6

In March 2008, Brianna Amendolare began working at MVHS part time as a service representative. Later, she took a full-time position in the Service Response Center (SRC), which is a central point of contact for support services. SRC uses a service tracking system that receives phone calls from patients, families and staff then assigns the task being requested. She was also cross-trained in the Patient Transport Department and the Nutrition Department. In 2015, she was cross-trained in the Switchboard Department prior to its merger with the SRC. Most recently, she accepted a position as the hospitality services supervisor for SRC and Transport.

In the midst of her career growth, Amendolare took part in the Aspiring Leaders Program. She said she didn’t know what to expect before attending the first session, and was surprised by the level of personal and professional development she gained through the program.

“The program showed me that there are so many different aspects to being a leader,” said Amendolare, a 2012 graduate. “Aspiring Leaders is a platform for personal development that I believe everyone could use when deciding to take on a leadership role.”

Amendolare’s biggest takeaway from Aspiring Leaders was that communication is a central part of leading, she said.

“Communication comes in a number of forms and not every way that a leader communicates works for everyone,” Amendolare said. “Being able to adapt to your employees’ and other leaders’ communication needs is a key trait for a leader. Listening and actually hearing what your employees and other leaders are saying goes hand in hand with communication.”

Aspiring Leaders is just one of the many tools used to prompt employee growth within the organization, for which Amendolare said she is grateful.

“My career at MVHS has truly been a journey and I have had a number of great leaders support me and guide me down the path I’m on,” Amendolare said. “This organization believes in the growth of its employees and the time is given to see that it happens.”
employees and patients. Another group worked with the Facilities Department to change the location of waiting areas and outpatient procedure rooms.

Colette Wilk, MSN, RN, director of Clinical Education and co-instructor of Aspiring Leaders, said she enjoys seeing program participants work toward their goals while learning about MVHS as a whole.

“My favorite part of being involved in the Aspiring Leaders Program is seeing staff at MVHS grow and become more knowledgeable about the entire organization,” Wilk said. “The information provided in Aspiring Leaders and the chance to work directly with our Senior Leadership Team helps staff to understand how an organization works, the roles of our leaders and the skills necessary to be successful. It is very rewarding to see staff members learn and work toward their personal and professional goals.”

Each year, 20 MVHS employees are accepted into the Aspiring Leaders Program. Interested employees must submit an application, a letter of recommendation from their supervisor and complete interviews. The program usually has 10 to 15 more applicants than seats available each year. Those accepted into the program attend a full-day session once a month throughout the course of a year.

Each session features a guest speaker who gives an overview of their area of expertise. Participants learn about business and financial drivers within a healthcare setting, building communication, technology and management skills, explore the problem-solving process and identify goals for career growth and development.

Graduates leave the program with the skills and knowledge necessary to become leaders within the organization. Rubsamen said one of the most rewarding aspects of being an instructor is observing the growth participants make over time.

“I love working with the Aspiring Leaders,” Rubsamen said. “They are eager to learn and it’s wonderful watching the light bulbs go off as they make a greater connection to what leading in our organization is all about.”

In his nine years of employment at MVHS, Kyle Graves has learned one key lesson – everyone in the organization is working toward one common goal. This mindset has led him through several advancements in his career. He began as a payroll clerk in 2008 and was promoted to senior payroll clerk in 2009. In April 2011, he became payroll supervisor and in August 2016, he was promoted to his current position of MVHS payroll manager. Graves earned his associate degree in Accounting at Mohawk Valley Community College and is continuing his education at the State University of New York Polytechnic Institute. He is currently enrolled in classes to earn his Bachelor of Science in Accounting, which is being completed with support from MVHS’s Tuition Reimbursement Program.

Graves graduated from Aspiring Leaders in 2011. He says the main lesson he took away from the program was how to interact with other departments and understand their points of view. The program helped accentuate skills he was already working on regarding writing to other managers and having the confidence to speak up to executives and department managers.

The role-playing method used in class helped the topics resonate with Graves – especially since the instructors provide examples in the clinical and non-clinical setting.

“They’d create a situation – how to handle a difficult employee or a patient-care need, and you’d talk about how you would handle it and critique each other,” Graves said. “It made it more personable; I’m that type of learner.”

In addition to management skills, Graves gained a network of contacts. The program hosts reunions, and he said it’s nice to meet up with everybody again. He also made contacts with MVHS executives.

“Having executives attend those classes once a month and sharing their perspectives from a high level makes you understand how important your job is and how we all pull together,” Graves said. “The instructors do an amazing job of pulling us together in a class where we need to lean on each other and push forward to create that positive feeling.”
Congratulations to the 2016 Class of Aspiring Leaders

Past Aspiring Leaders Graduates

2015
Erin Angiulli
Michele Blatt
Derek Campbell
Robert Carey
Robert Cooper
Shalynn Cozza
Tara Evans
Lindsey Gullo
Theresa Hagens
Jennifer Humphrey
Kim Kovac-Bowman
Brittany Kiss
Dawn LaCava-Lounsbury
Amy Mlynarczyk
Catherine Olah
Jessica Rauscher
Sara Truax-Egen
Judy Verminske
Taylor Webster

2013
Donna Bridge
Jordan Burdick
Tamara Casella
Deborah Casler
Tessa Greene
Tammy Hart
Crystal Maxam
Shaun Miller
Anita Moller
Kim Morse
Hanifah M. Najeeullah
Audrianna Raciti
Gabrielle Wilkie
Kelly Zinicola

2012
Melissa (Robin) Abbass
Christie Alex-Hart
Brianna Amendolare
Anthony Blackmon
Kim Bywater
Ryan Casatelli
Debora Feola
Jason Fox
Stacy Gadway
Kristine Mcllwain
Beth Ray
Joseph Sageer
Eugene Salmon
Joseph Scarafie
Danyel Sommer-Everson
Michael Thompson

2011
Joeline Carey
Jason Frank
Scott Fiesthumel
Chris Gaca
Erin Giglioti
Kyle Graves
Juan Gonzalez
Barbara Kantor
Amanda Klein
Cathy (Joan) Leonard
Danielle Owen
Nicole Santiago
Ann Welch
Barbara White
Dulcia White

2010
Linda Agen
Dorothy Casale
Sue Cornelius
Kimberly Fazekas
Katherine Freeman
Tari Hagen
Carly Insel
Kelley Klockowski-Blidy
Aida Mariani
Tara Millson
Karen Paige
Jenny Plows
Suzanne Simmons
Thomas Thorngren

2009
Ed Dlugolecki
Patrick Dowling
Jennifer Enjem
John Gaetano
Pamela Givens
Kandis Harter
Donna Marie Johnson
Kim Lee
Eric McKinstry
Susan Minsaas
Lori Morosco
Shannon Roehm
Stephanie Smith
Steven Van Duren
Mary Wing-Marshall

2008
Thomas Brown
Ray Colon
Jennifer Cook
Michael Delahunt
Heidi Dooley
John Edwards
Linda McCurdy-Baird
May Beth Murphy-Parkhurst
Katherine Olsen-Gogol
Brenda Powers
Earlena Rood
Maria Santa Maria
Lisa Shaw

Left to Right: Cynthia Maunz, Surgery Scheduling; Rosanna Pion, HIM; Colette Wilk, Aspiring Leaders Instructor; Joanne Davis, Rehabilitation Services; Michelle Perkis/Joy, Rehabilitation Services; Vicky Ammon, HIM; Nichole Supachano, St. Elizabeth Lab; Lisa Steeper, Vascular Access; AJ Wiswell, Marketing and Communications; Coral Montana, Nursing Services (Float and Maternal Child Services); Kristen Rogers, Radiation Oncology; Gina Welch, Nursing Administration; Katie Friot, Infection Prevention; Paul Rubsamen, Aspiring Leaders Instructor; Jennifer Darling, Nursing Services (6th Floor).
VHS has opened a new service which provides advanced neuroendovascular care that treats complex vascular conditions of the brain including stroke, carotid stenosis, dissections, brain aneurysms, brain and spine arteriovenous malformations and more.

Since January 2009, the St. Luke's Campus of MVHS has been the area's Primary Designated Stroke Center and has treated more than 5,600 stroke-diagnosis patients. MVHS is the third-largest volume stroke center in all of New York State.

To be able to continue providing advanced stroke and neuro-interventional care close to home, MVHS has invested in the purchase of a new state of the art Artis Zee bi-plane fluoroscopic imaging system and partnered with a team of board-certified neuro-interventional physicians, available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year to provide patients with access to advanced neuroendovascular care, right here in the Mohawk Valley.

“We know how important it is to receive stroke care quickly and this is a very valuable resource in our community,” said Michael F. Trevisani, MD, MBA, CPE, FASCRS, FACHE, senior vice president/chief medical officer for MVHS. “MVHS invested $3 million in new technology for the stroke and neuro-interventional program so that we can provide this life-saving care to patients.”

Using this advanced imaging technology, the neuro-interventional physicians are able to perform life-saving stroke rescue procedures for patients arriving at the hospital. The detailed images that appear through the bi-plane system provide physicians a real-time view as they insert a catheter into blood vessels in the brain during an acute stroke.

They are able to remove the clot causing the stroke and restore normal blood flow as soon as possible.

The bi-plane angiography unit provides high-resolution images enabling physicians to see tiny blood vessels in great detail. It provides images simultaneously from two regions of the patient’s head – from front to back and side to side – and allows physicians to better visualize 3D arteries and vessels. This can reduce procedure time by as much as half and helps treat complex conditions like brain aneurysms and carotid stenosis.

“Essentially, the catheter has a stent on the end of it that is similar to a spring,” said Angelina Roche, MBA, RN, CNRN, SCRN, CPHQ, MVHS stroke program clinical coordinator. “The surgeon passes the clot, then opens up the spring and pulls it back. The

Continued on next page
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spring grabs the clot and, supported by suction, pulls it out.”

Until recently, patients with ischemic strokes – meaning blood clots were blocking blood flow to their brains – were given an intravenous drug called tPA in hopes it would break up the clots in their brains.

“tPA has been the standard of care since 1996,” Roche said. “It can only be given to patients within four and a half hours of the onset of their symptoms so it was important for patients to get to the hospital within that very narrow window of opportunity. Missing that limited time frame could result in long-term and life-changing disabilities.

“Even when we are able to administer tPA it only helps 30 to 50 percent of the time. Qualified patients, however, can still receive it only helps 30 to 50 percent of the time. Studies have shown that the clot retrieval procedure reopens blood vessels more than 90 percent of the time; it’s a lot more effective than tPA.”

Stephanie Litwen of Herkimer, New York, was treated using neuroendovascular clot retrieval at MVHS in October last year. After a short stay at a rehabilitation facility, she was able to go home to be with her family for Thanksgiving and has returned to a normal life.

“We arrived at the St. Luke’s Emergency Department via ambulance,” said Cheryl Ann Lower, Stephanie’s daughter. “We were told they could do the procedure my mother needed right at the hospital. She got the treatment she needed so much faster than if we had to transfer to Syracuse.”

This project was made possible by the generosity of our community. MVHS is grateful to the following individuals, businesses and organizations that supported us through a lead gift toward this initiative: Bonide Foundation, Inc., The Indium Corporation and Macartney Family Foundation, Blair and Gordon Jones, Dr. and Mrs. W. Anthony Mandour, Mohawk Healthcare, Gary and Lisa Philipson and The Community Foundation of Herkimer & Oneida Counties, Inc. We are also appreciative of the following funds: Erich K. Kupfer Memorial Fund, Faxon Street Home Fund, Frank W. Baker Fund, Frank, Mame and J. Lansing Reed Fund, Mohawk Valley Healthcare Foundation Fund, William L. Schrauth Fund, Bull Family Fund, The Gabriel, Joseph & Lila Mandour Karam Fund and the Mele Family Fund.

The office for the MVHS Neuro-Interventional Surgery and Comprehensive Stroke Services is located in Suite 203 of the Professional Office Building at the St. Luke’s Campus. The three interventional neurologists treat conditions such as brain aneurysms, carotid and brain artery stenosis, venous stenosis, brain and spine vascular malformations, brain tumors and ischemic stroke along with other vascular diseases of the brain and spine. The office can be reached at 315-624-4915.

Interventional Neurologists

Yahia Lodi, MD
Yahia Lodi, MD, is affiliated with United Health Services in Johnson City, New York. Dr. Lodi served as Neurosciences Academic Chair at SUNY Upstate Medical University at the Binghamton Clinical Campus at Wilson Regional Medical Center in Binghamton, New York. He also served there as director of the Comprehensive Stroke and NeuroEndovascular Center, as well as previously directing programs in Michigan and New Jersey.

Dr. Lodi earned his medical degree and completed an internship at Mymensingh Medical College in Bangladesh. He also completed an internship in Internal Medicine and a residency in Neurology at the Medical College of Wisconsin in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Dr. Lodi completed a fellowship in Neurosciences Critical Care and Stroke at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, Maryland. He is board certified in Neurology, Vascular Neurology and Neurocritical Care.

Varun Reddy, MBBS
Varun Reddy, MBBS, is affiliated with United Health Services, and SUNY Upstate Medical University in Binghamton, New York. He serves as the associate director of the Neuro-Interventional program at UHS Binghamton.

Dr. Reddy earned his Bachelor of Medicine at Bangalore Medical College in India. He also completed an internship in Internal Medicine at Staten Island University Hospital in Staten Island, New York, and residencies in Neurology at both New York University Medical Center and at St. Vincent’s Hospital in New York, New York. Dr. Reddy completed a clinical and research fellowship in Vascular Neurology at Harvard Medical School in Boston, Massachusetts. This was followed by a fellowship in Neuro-Interventional Surgery and Neuro-Critical Care at SUNY Upstate Clinical Campus in Binghamton/UHS Hospitals.

Q. Tony Wang, MD, PhD
Q. Tony Wang, MD, PhD, is affiliated with United Medical Associates/United Health Services (UHS). As a stroke and endovascular neurologist, Dr. Wang previously served as the Director of Neurovascular Services at Reading Hospital/Health System in Reading, Pennsylvania, and a neuroendovascular specialist at Mid Hudson Regional Hospital of Westchester Medical Center in Poughkeepsie, New York.

Dr. Wang earned his medical degree at Jiamusi Medical College in Jiamusi, China, and his Doctor of Philosophy in Human Genetics & Molecular Biology at Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine in Baltimore, Maryland. His research fellowships involved studies in Neuroscience, Molecular Biology & Genetics, and Ophthalmology at Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine, in addition to his three clinical fellowships at Mount Sinai Medical Center in New York, New York, in Cerebrovascular Neurology, Diagnostic Neuroradiology and Interventional Neuroradiology/Endovascular Neurosurgery. He is board certified in Neurology and Vascular Neurology.
NEWS
IN BRIEF

Maternity Department Recognized for Safe Sleep

MVHS has been recognized by the National Safe Sleep Hospital Certification Program as a Gold Safe Sleep Champion, for its commitment to best practices and education on infant safe sleep. MVHS is one of the first hospitals in New York State to receive this title.

“We are hopeful that our commitment to educating the community on safe sleep-related practices will reduce sleep-related deaths,” said Laura Bailey, BSN, RN-C, nurse manager of Maternal Child Services at MVHS. “We have worked hard to align our policies and practices to promote safe sleep, we are thrilled that we have earned this designation.”

The National Safe Sleep Hospital Certification Program was created by Cribs for Kids®, an organization dedicated to preventing infant, sleep-related deaths due to accidental suffocation. In addition to being Cribs for Kids® partners, MVHS was recognized for following the safe sleep guidelines recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics and providing training programs for parents, staff and the community.

Surgical Group Welcomes New Providers, Location

The MVHS Medical Group added a second office to its Surgical Group in February at the Faxton Campus. Christopher Max, MD, a specialist in General and Vascular Surgery, and Peter Dellerba, NP, RNFA, have joined the MVHS Surgical Group – Faxton Campus. Dr. Max was previously in private practice for 30 years. He received his medical degree from University of the Northeast/School of Medicine in Tampico, Tamaulipas, Mexico, and completed an internship and residency at Union Memorial Hospital in Baltimore, Maryland; fellowships at the Masonic Medical Research Laboratory in Utica, New York; Joslin Clinic and Research Laboratory in Boston, Massachusetts, and at Howard Hughes Medical Institute in Boston, Massachusetts. Dr. Max is board certified in General Surgery.

Prior to joining the MVHS Medical Group, Dellerba was employed with Dr. Max in private practice and at Surgical Associates of Utica, PC as a nurse practitioner/first assistant and also served as Surgical Services coordinator at SEMC. Dellerba earned his Adult Nurse Practitioner and Registered Nurse First Assist certifications at Community General Hospital in Syracuse, New York, his Bachelor of Science in Nursing at the State University of New York Utica/Rome in Utica, New York, and his associate degree in Registered Professional Nursing at Mohawk Valley Community College in Utica. They are accepting new patients and can be reached at 315-624-8110.

Cardiac Services Invests in Community Health

MVHS is proud to be the area’s home for Cardiac Services, and is a proud sponsor of America’s Greatest Heart Run and Walk that took place on Saturday, March 4. Check out our brand new Cardiac Services television commercials at www.youtube.com/user/MVHealthSystem.
Certified Child Life Specialist Erin Ratajczak works closely with children in our St. Luke’s Campus Emergency Department, Surgical Services and Pediatric Unit to help make them comfortable and understand what to expect during their visit or procedure.

MARCH 3: Wear silly socks
MARCH 7: Wear red for Bleeding Disorder Awareness Month
MARCH 10: Wear your favorite sports team’s logo
MARCH 17: Wear green for St. Patrick’s Day
MARCH 24: Dress like your favorite character
MARCH 31: Dress like your favorite super hero
hat do famed boxer, Muhammad Ali and Patty Duke, the teen who won an Oscar for The Miracle Worker, have in common? Most people wouldn’t be able to come up with many similarities. However, with the passing of the two celebrities last year, they developed one commonality – their cause of death. While initial reports indicated Ali’s cause of death was a respiratory issue, the actual cause was septic shock – the same reason for Duke’s death.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), sepsis is a complication caused by the body’s overwhelming and life-threatening response to infection, which can lead to tissue damage, organ failure and death. It is difficult to predict, diagnose and treat. Patients who develop sepsis have an increased risk of complications and death and face higher healthcare costs and longer treatment. And due to the aging population, sepsis-related deaths are on the rise.

“Sepsis is a profoundly under-recognized, misunderstood condition,” said Amy Bowerman, RN, director of Quality Improvement and privacy officer for MVHS Home Care Services and director of Patient Services for Senior Network Health. “When you say heart attack or stroke, everyone knows what those signs and symptoms are. But when you say sepsis, even in a room full of very educated clinicians, you’ll find there are many opinions as to what the critical symptoms are for sepsis.”

Estimates suggest that sepsis begins outside of the hospital for nearly 80 percent of patients.

“Equipped with the right tools, home care providers in New York State are among the best positioned as potential game-changers to this serious condition,” said Al Cardillo, executive vice president of the Home Care Association of New York State (HCA). “Home care providers deliver health services in the home and community, closest to patients daily lives and needs. Home care clinicians and direct care staff have routine, often daily interactions with 400,000 patients per year, many of whom are very sick, chronically ill or frail elderly, and among the risk populations for sepsis. These patients are receiving follow-up care after delivering babies, having surgery or already have conditions susceptible to infection, regardless of whether they’ve entered a hospital or not. Home care’s routine and expert patient interaction makes in-home nurses a powerful force in combating the sepsis health care crisis.”

After changing jobs and moving into home care services, Bowerman began to recognize the power of home care providers to deliver interventions for this major public health threat. She became the lead clinician working with the HCA to develop a screening tool that can be used to spot sepsis in home care patients – before it becomes too late to treat. Quality improvement experts at IPRO, the Sepsis Alliance, doctors, home care providers, and others were also involved in the development of the tool.

“Ms. Bowerman has been a tireless and pioneering leader in this effort,” Cardillo said. “Her work in this HCA initiative stands to benefit the entire health care system, providing an innovation to launch home care’s capacity in helping prevent and mitigate this all too often catastrophic condition.”

The HCA home care sepsis screening tool is expertly designed as a series of question prompts. It asks clinicians to consider whether a patient’s history, physical examination or findings suggest an infection; it also asks the clinician to check off certain other criteria of sepsis risk, such as fever or hypothermia, a heart rate or pulse above 90 beats per minute, respirations above 20 breaths per minute, pain, altered mental status, or paleness.

Depending on the answers, the clinician can determine whether a baseline level of sepsis risk is present or whether to check

**WHAT IS SEPSIS?**

- Sepsis is an inflammatory response to an infection, often with fatal results. Sepsis can cause organ failure, septic shock, a precipitous drop in blood pressure – and death.

- Older adults or people with weakened immune systems are most susceptible, but anyone can develop sepsis from an infection.

- Treatment usually includes antibiotics and large amounts of intravenous fluids.
MVHS Holds Information Sessions and Community Dialogue Events

In January, more than 300 community members attended two information and community dialogue sessions regarding the development of the new downtown health campus, which were held at the Radisson Hotel in Utica.

The events provided a forum for community members to receive a project update and to enable them to participate in the development of the project’s guiding principles. Guiding principles describe the community’s beliefs and philosophy regarding what a new hospital facility and integrated healthcare campus in the downtown location should strive to achieve.

“This new health campus is an exciting opportunity for our region and we are glad the community is involved,” said Scott H. Perra, FACHE, president/CEO of MVHS. “With the community’s support we are able to highlight key areas that our Project Steering Committee will consider as the development process advances.”

There will be other community input opportunities in the future as the project moves forward. Ongoing outreach efforts include individual meetings, group presentations and neighborhood and community-wide forums.

To view Scott Perra’s presentation from the sessions, visit www.mvhealthsystem.org/about/new-beginning.

MVHS Awaits Response on Request for Application

MVHS submitted its completed application to the New York State Department of Health (DOH) in January. Under the “Health Care Facility Transformation Program: Oneida County” grant opportunity, a total of up to $300 million is available for a capital project located in the largest population center of Oneida County that will consolidate multiple licensed healthcare facilities into an integrated system of care. A team of MVHS staff members worked diligently to complete the comprehensive application that reviewed all past, current and future steps of the integrated health campus project.

MVHS anticipates notification about the grant from the DOH in the next 60 days, at which point contract negotiations would begin with the NYSDOH to finalize next steps in accessing the funds.

New Sepsis Tool cont.

Continued from previous page

for additional warning signs related to lung, kidney or cardiovascular functions. The screening tool uses all of these patient-specific criteria in an algorithm that determines whether the patient meets the criteria for sepsis or severe sepsis.

A series of interventions are then advised. If the patient has a low risk for sepsis, they will receive education about sepsis so they will know what to look for should their risk increase. If the patient has met the criteria for potential sepsis or severe sepsis, they will receive immediate medical intervention from a physician and other medical and emergency partners. Without this medical intervention, it is likely the patient will not survive.

“This efficient, focused screening tool helps us assess the critical factors that would point to an infection and potential sepsis risk,” Bowerman said. “The follow-up/intervention component that provides specific instructions as to the action the clinician should take based on the findings from using the tool. Home care’s use of this tool holds incredible promise in tackling a major cause of morbidity, fatalities and healthcare costs.”

Bowerman, both an acute-care hospital and home care clinician, helped fashion the tool in a way that is compatible with the new protocols also applied in hospitals to help ensure it works with other new developments in the system. She sits on the MVHS Sepsis Committee where all information for implementation is relayed.

“It is important for MVHS employees to know that this tool exists and is being used,” said Bowerman. “It is our hope that it will reduce the number of severe sepsis cases seen throughout the health system and provide better outcomes for the patients. The tool’s purpose syncs perfectly with the goals of MVHS to promote health, quality and reduce avoidable costs, hospitalizations and patient morbidity.”

“This tool is generating interest from many areas, including other states and large hospital systems that are looking to integrate use of the HCA sepsis tool into their systems and communities,” said Cardillo. “The HCA tool has also been incorporated in the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services’ sepsis project now being conducted through IPRO in the Central New York and Capital District regional health systems. This tool is already showing the potential to contribute to the lessening and prevention of sepsis-related deaths as well as increasing the quality of life for those at risk for sepsis.”
Cancer Center’s Stomp Out Cancer Telethon

Wednesday, March 22

The MVHS Foundations are hosting their annual Stomp Out Cancer (SOC) Telethon on Wednesday, March 22 on WKTV NewsChannel 2 from noon to 7 p.m. and on CBS Utica from 7 p.m. to 8 p.m.

Dollars raised through the 2017 SOC Telethon will help support the Breast Care Center at MVHS.

To pledge or donate during the telethon, please call 315-624-6464. To pledge or donate before or after the telethon, please call 315-624-5600 or visit www.mvhealthsystem.org/foundations.

Prohibition Party

Friday, April 28

The MVHS Foundations and F.X. Matt Brewery host the ninth annual Prohibition Party on Friday, April 28, 2017, from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. at the historic F.X. Matt Brewing Co, 830 Varick Street, Utica. The event is sponsored by Theresa Flemma, CFP®, senior vice president of Flemma ~ Gornick Financial Group and M. Griffith Investment Services, Inc.

Tickets cost $45 per person if purchased by Friday, April 14, and $50 per person if purchased after April 14. Admission includes Saranac beverages, hors d’oeuvres, live entertainment, a 1930s costume contest and a silent auction. Local musicians All Tuned Up, Crushing June, Renaissance and The Other Guys will perform throughout the Brewery. Participants must be 21 and over. Proceeds from this year’s event will be used to purchase state of the art cardiac equipment for MVHS Cardiac Services located at the St. Elizabeth Campus.

A limited number of tickets are available and usually sell out early for the event. For more information or to purchase tickets, please visit www.mvhealthsystem.org/foundations, call 315-624-5718 or email jbecker2@mvhealthsystem.org. Tickets may also be purchased at the MVHS Foundations Office at 1676 Sunset Avenue, Utica, the F.X. Matt Brewing Co. Gift Shop/Tour Center at 830 Varick Street, Utica, from Karen Burton in the Administration Office at the St. Elizabeth Campus or from Delta Rubsamen in Volunteer Services at the St. Luke’s Campus.

Dr. McCormick Prepares For Change

By Sandra Fentiman

Undoubtedly, Kevin McCormick, DO, has mixed feelings about leaving the MVHS Washington Mills Medical Office after a 31-year career. He will greatly miss his patients. However, he has a new opportunity to grow.

“It’s been a privilege to serve this community,” he said. “What I value most are the connections I’ve built with both my patients and my colleagues.”

Some of those connections can be maintained, although in a different way, as Dr. McCormick changes gears to serve as the associate director of the Masonic Care Community in March. He is seeking a different life balance and is also retiring from the US Navy Reserves this spring, having just finished his last stint on active duty.

“I think the key to good patient care is the blending of the relationship between the patient and physician – that takes years – and marrying that with the medical situation,” he said.

In addition, he is grateful to his patients and professional colleagues for their confidence in him. He has worked with four nurses during his career at the office and they have all been excellent, he said. One of the great qualities of his current nurse, Cathy Knapp, LPN, is her disposition, which has a calming effect on both patients and him, according to Dr. McCormick.

“I’d like to thank Cathy for her tireless efforts for our patients. She makes it go,” he said. “She does all the little things that make this practice a success. I also thank my wife, Rose, and our children for all their support during my career and for making it possible for me to practice the way I did.”

Knapp noted that Dr. McCormick’s patients adore him and she can see why – he never rushes them. “He is truly interested in the whole family,” she said. “It’s a tribute that patients refer members of their family to him. It will be a tremendous loss.”

As he has discussed his upcoming move with patients, they often reminded Dr. McCormick of things he said years ago. “I am astounded by the little things they remember,” he said. “Things that seem small are what make a difference.”

MVHS Foundations Events Coming Soon

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Starfish Stories

Starfish Stories are about caregivers, protectors, companions and champions. They acknowledge special, and sometimes life-changing, moments that make a difference for our patients, residents, their families and our coworkers. The following stories are about those individuals and teams who inspire us to always do our best.

Elma Dolic, Patient Access Services

On Christmas Day, an elderly man was a patient at the SEMC Emergency Department. He was discharged but had no ride home. Elma Dolic, a patient registrar in the Patient Access Services Department, witnessed the gentleman, who was very upset, and approached him. The gentleman stated he had just found out his wife was being admitted to St. Luke’s Home, he had no other family and he just wanted to get home to his animals. The cab companies were not working due to the holiday. Elma was determined to get this man a ride home so she made some calls to find him a ride. About 10 minutes later, the gentleman had a ride home. He was so happy he began to cry and hug everyone, stating he didn’t need a single gift for Christmas, that this was a true blessing and that he would always remember Elma and her kindness.

- Kara Thieme, director of Patient Access Services

Sergey Germanovich, Language Assistance Program and Sue McKinstry, Education

On October 12, 2016, during the Campaign for Quality Health and Wellness Expo, we met a patient and his wife who seemed to be lost. The dental office had directed them to go to the North Utica clinic to establish care with a primary care physician and to have his blood pressure checked. Unfortunately, due to a language barrier, the patient misunderstood the instructions and arrived at the health expo instead. Initially, we were struggling to understand what the patient was saying and we were afraid we’d be unable to meet his needs. Luckily, Sue McKinstry and Sergey Germanovich were both present and able to come to the rescue of this patient. Sue immediately sprang into action, recruiting the assistance of Sergey and the language assistance program which happened to be presenting to expo attendees. By utilizing this service, we were quickly able to determine that the patient needed a dental procedure, but was unable to obtain it due to elevated blood pressure. While the patient was with us, we checked his blood pressure, which in fact was quite elevated. Sue contacted the North Utica Medical Office to secure an appointment for this gentleman and she referred him to Urgent Care at the Faxton Campus to be further evaluated for his blood pressure issues more acutely.

Thank goodness we have such wonderful resources as the Language Assistance Program, and amazing team members like Sue McKinstry and Sergey Germanovich who were able to work together to assist this patient in getting the care he needed.

- Taylor Webster, Education

William Ryan, MD, and Cristin Kirkland, FNP-C, Whitesboro Medical Office

In the past five months, the Whitesboro Medical Office has gone from an office of four providers to two, but the patient flow has not changed. The extra work that Dr. Ryan and Cristin have been doing since October has not gone unnoticed.

Since October, Dr. Ryan and Cristin have not taken time off. They’ve devoted long hours ensuring that patients are still being seen and getting the care they need while maintaining composure with a smile. Thank you for your amazing work, caring for your patients!

- Whitesboro Medical Office Staff

Stories are selected each month to be shared with the MVHS family and some will be featured in each publication. To recognize someone for going above and beyond, visit the Applause website.
Upcoming Events

March 3  |  My Heart. My Life. Expo at Utica College
March 4  |  America's Greatest Heart Run and Walk
March 17 |  Michelle Haddad, DDS Dental Program at Utica College
March 22 |  Stomp Out Cancer Telethon
April 28 |  MVHS Foundations 9th Annual Prohibition Party

Staff Announcements
November 2016 - January 2017

Medical Staff
Briana Button, FNP - Primary Care
Leonard M. Copertino, MD - General Surgery
Yahia Lodl, MD - Interventional Neurology
Yarun Reddy, MBBS - Interventional Neurology
Q. Tony Wang, MD, PhD - Interventional Neurology
Karly Woodrick, PA - Primary Care

Directors & Managers
Kelsie Becker, RN - Operations Manager for Faxton Urgent Care
Brian Croghan, CHFM - Director of Facilities Management

Michael Goodwill, MS, DABR, PMP - Chief Medical Physicist and Radiation Safety Officer
Kyle Graves - Payroll Manager
Sabrina Lindfield, RN - Nurse Manager for 2E
Erin Ratajczak, AS, BS - Child Life Specialist
David Volz, RN, BSN - Assistant Nurse Manager for the Dialysis Center
Sandra Whittemore, BSN - Nurse Manager for the Progressive Care Unit

Visit the MVHS intranet for more details.