@ UH
Heart and Soul

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As we celebrate our different holidays and unique family traditions during this special time of year, it is valuable to reflect for a moment on the many blessings we have shared with our patients, our families, our colleagues and our community. It has been my blessing to get to know so many of you this year.

What I have learned is how so many of you are indistinct from the community we serve. A lot of you were born and raised here, while others may have chosen to relocate here more recently. You know about the life experience of our patients outside of our walls. That is why someone like me, who isn’t from Newark, absolutely relies on you.

Choosing a career in healthcare was a choice you made about giving back. At University Hospital, that is what we do every day. You do not choose when to serve our patients; rather, you are there when they come to us in need. This can present demanding challenges, testing your endurance when dealing with difficult patients or colleagues. But because of your heart, your compassion and dedication, you find a way to give of yourself.

We are on the cusp of mobilizing key elements of our strategic plan. Soon after you return to work in 2020, we will be announcing a very bold vision for University Hospital, a vision of how we can finally meet the commitments that were made in the Newark Accords back in the 1960s. I took this job so that we could at long last meet those commitments. I will need all of you to make that a reality. We stand to achieve many exemplary things in the years going forward.

This holiday season, I celebrate your commitment to provide exceptional care to every patient, every time. I wish you and your loved ones a happy and healthy holiday and a joyous new year.
University Hospital patients who visit Financial Counseling are once again in for a special treat this holiday season as the staff has decorated their offices with colorful artwork and signs.

“We started doing this four, five years ago on the major holidays,” said Rose Amaro, a financial assistance advisor. “It’s a team effort.”

In addition to the Christmas holiday season, the staff put up decorations on St. Patrick’s Day, Valentine’s Day, Easter and other holidays. This year, the Christmas decorations feature cartoon characters from Peanuts and Minions.

The decorations are a big hit with patients and vendors who visit the offices, said Daliz Cordero, a financial assistance advisor.

“They like coming back every season to see how we change,” she said.
For virtually any employee who works at University Hospital, it is a safe bet they have contacted the UH Call Center at least once. It is also a safe bet, that they have never met the person who took their call.

Tucked away down a long corridor on Level A, the Call Center has nine employees who handle 65,000 calls a year, ranging from heliport landings to leaks to overhead paging. The call center opened in July 2013 and handles internal communications; external calls are handled by the hospital switchboard.

“I like to consider my department the heart of Support Services,” said Lazhar Mhiri, the Call Center manager. “It’s the hub of the operation.”

Mhiri said the Call Center supports and monitors medical emergency calls (1-1-1); fire, oxygen, medical air, nitrogen and vacuum air alarms; panic buttons; work request orders; patient transport; television requests, and a host of other issues. When the security service contract was recently transferred from Rutgers to a UH force, the call center assumed responsibility as the dispatch center.

“I think what we all agree on here as a group is that we treat the patients up there like family members,” Mhiri said. “We are here to make them feel good with the service we provide, to make them feel comfortable, and to try and expedite the service as much as we can.”

Tyrone Perkins has been handling calls for nearly 20 years.

“My favorite part of the job is interacting with the callers,” Perkins said. “I never see them, they never see me -- we just have a telephone relationship. If I walk past them in the hallway, I would never know who they are. But I like the fact that when they call in, we’re able to help them.”

Maya Jones is in her fourth year on the job. Her favorite task is taking part in Code Blue and Code Red calls because of the teamwork and coordination required within the Call Center.

The Call Center also gets its share of unusual calls.

“Somebody called to complain that the cold water was too cold, and another time someone said there was a fly and could we get rid of it,” Jones said.

“We joke a lot about the last person who just called in,” Perkins said. “Two nurses were in the same office, one thought it was too hot and one thought it was too cold. Both called.”

Perkins said some calls can be aggravating, but that he has never been treated with disrespect.

“You have to have good customer service skills, you have to be a people person,” he said. “You just have to keep in mind that you’re doing your job, you’re just trying to help someone.”

Jones and Perkins have favorite regular callers – for Jones, it’s a unit clerk on F-Yellow and for Perkins, it was a unit clerk from F-Blue who has since retired.

“We never met and then one time in the cafeteria, I saw her ID,” Perkins recalled. “We met there face-to-face for the first time.”

(L-R: Data Control Clerks Maya Jones, Michael Pappalardo, Sasha Emile, Tyrone Perkins)
BABY SHOWER 2019

University Hospital hosted its first Community Baby Shower, welcoming nearly five dozen new mothers and fathers and expecting parents. The event enabled the ObGyn outpatient health center to reconnect with patients and make them aware of the new pediatrics clinic open on Saturdays.

The day’s events included:
• Interactive prenatal education
• Prenatal yoga
• Car seat education
• Caring for a newborn
• Breastfeeding
• Postpartum care and the “4th trimester”
• Community resources, services and support
• Fatherhood
• New baby care items for those in need

The UH Auxiliary served lunch and the Foundation for University Hospital provided $25 ShopRite gift cards to help parents provide their Thanksgiving meal. Six community-based organizations that provide direct services to expectant mothers and their families also took part to raise awareness of their resources.

The organizations included:
• Partnership for Maternal & Child Health
• Essex Pregnancy & Parenting Connection
• The Leaguer Inc.
• Community Doulas
• Rutgers WIC Program
• The Fatherhood Program
• Ask A Nurse (Mother and Baby Unit)

PERIOD OF PURPLE CRYING

Assemblywoman Nancy Munoz (R-Union) returned to University Hospital in November to help raise awareness around Period of PURPLE Crying and Shaken Baby Syndrome by distributing knit purple hats to new mothers. Period of PURPLE Crying with newborns begins at about two weeks of age and can continue up to four months of age. PURPLE is an acronym for several conditions that typify the crying stage.

Munoz, an RN, is the widow of Dr. Eric Munoz, a longtime UH surgeon, for whom the Trauma Center was recently renamed.
University Hospital hosted an array of events during November to celebrate Transgender Awareness Week and to address issues surrounding the LGBTQ+ community. In addition, the hospital received a 2019 Newark PROUD Award from Newark Gay Pride and Essex County Executive Joseph DiVincenzo appointed Avi Richardson, Secretary I in the nursing department who has organized LGBTQ+ events, to serve on the county LGBTQ Board.

“One of the first things I noticed upon coming to University Hospital was how open, respectful and how much people embrace the LGBTQ+ community here,” said President and CEO Dr. Shereef Elnahal during the kickoff event. Michele Andrasik, PhD, (lower right) a clinical assistant professor at the University of Washington, delivered the keynote address.

The week’s events also included a mock game of Jeopardy! to raise awareness, a gender pronoun training session led by Dr. Michelle Dallapiazza of Rutgers Health, a mascara session, and a hot cocoa social. UH Board Chair Tanya Freeman moderated the final event, a Trans panel discussion held in the cafeteria.

“When I got here four years ago, there was no open mindedness and no work that was being done for the LGBTQ+ community,” said Chief Nursing Officer Dr. Carl Kirton. “It took us a little while to get our act together, but I’m really proud of where we are today at the hospital.”

Kirton and Val Jackson, director of special nursing projects, helped lead efforts that have resulted in UH being recognized as a top performer in LGBTQ health care equality by the Human Rights Campaign Foundation for three consecutive years.

University Hospital hosts the Rutgers Center for Transgender Health, where the first successful gender reassignment surgeries in New Jersey were performed. UH offers a full array of medical, psychiatric and surgical care for transgender individuals through the center.

Elnahal said over 30 percent of transgender patients nationally upon entering the healthcare system experience either verbal or physical abuse. More than 40 percent are refused care.

“Unfortunately, we have to grapple with a federal government now that is re-enforcing ‘rights to refuse care’ for certain groups of people based on their gender identity or sexual orientation,” he said. “We have to actively and ferociously fight back against that.”

The LGBTQ+ community must deal with basic medical needs, but also a number of public health issues.

“We can play a role as a hospital, not only in the equitable provision of care, but by using someone’s preferred pronoun as a sign of respect, without having to ask and without having to go out of our way to treat people respectfully,” Elnahal said.

Angel Santana, who works in Public Health, is HIV positive and works on an initiative to encourage transgender women with HIV to obtain their medications.

“I’ve had it for 20 years,” she said. “It’s a part of me, but it doesn’t define me.”
A nursing assistant, a patient relations manager and nine Emergency Medical Services employees have been honored with Heart of UH awards. The awards were presented for performance during the Third Quarter between July 1 and September 30.

“We are going to succeed or fail by the performance of every employee in this hospital,” said President and CEO Dr. Shereef Elnahal. “I have a philosophy that the only way we are going to succeed, not just in our strategic planning, but in executing on that vision by listening to the people who do the work. That’s what this recognition is about.”

The Outstanding Patient Care award was presented to Nneka Ogbonna, (left), a Nursing Assistant, who was nominated by Lynda Arnold, Nursing Director of Family Health Services.

“Nneka goes above and beyond at all times,” Arnold said. “She is always comforting and supporting parents, whether it is breastfeeding or just needing to sit and talk with someone. She is the go-to person for supplies, equipment and anything that you cannot find, Nneka seems to know where to get it.”

Family Health Services has received many letters and phone calls thanking Ogbonna for her work.

Megan Gargiulo, MPH, Manager of Patient Relations, (right), was presented with the Outstanding Service Excellence and Support award. She was nominated by Deputy Chief Nursing Officer Carol Torchen and Dan Bolima, Director of Patient Care Services.

“Megan is an exemplary leader,” the nominators said. “She has been a support to our nurse leaders and they have improved their rounding skills as a result. She encourages the managers to be cognizant of the patient’s body language, non-verbal communication, and environment of care during patient rounds.”

Gargiulo was credited with working all hours and all shifts, including rounding with night staff over a six-month period. In one case, Gargiulo washed the clothes at her home of a patient with no family.

Nine members of EMS captured the Outstanding TEAM award for their response to a burn incident. They were nominated by EMS Director John Grembowiec, EMS Coordinator Celeste Jachowski, and Flight Nurse Maybeth Wiedemann.

An EMS Rescue Unit arrived at a Riverside Avenue residence in Newark where “a panic-stricken mother handed her screaming three-year-old child to Rescue

(Left to right: EMT Josue Zamora, EMT Apprentice Steven Silva, EMTs Breanne and Scott Cook (husband and wife), Paramedic Nicholas Debellonia, Rashe Edwards and Chief Mario Piumelli. Not shown: Paramedic Edwin Sikaffy, Chief Ennis Terrell)

Technician Rashe Edwards.” Edwards saw burns over the child’s body that had been caused by an iPad fire. Advanced and basic life support teams joined the response and it was determined the child had 2nd and 3rd degree burns over 60 percent of her body.

“The compassion, empathy and care everyone provided for the patient and the patient’s family allowed all crews involved to obtain much-needed information from the mother, provide excellent treatment to the patient, and ultimately transport the patient to the hospital,” according to the nomination.
The holiday season at UH is celebrated with many events, including the tree-lighting ceremony in the Lobby and the Fantasy Flight to the “North Pole” (aka Newark Liberty International Airport) for children organized by EMS and United Airlines.

BEST FOR LAST