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# HEALTH CARE HEROES

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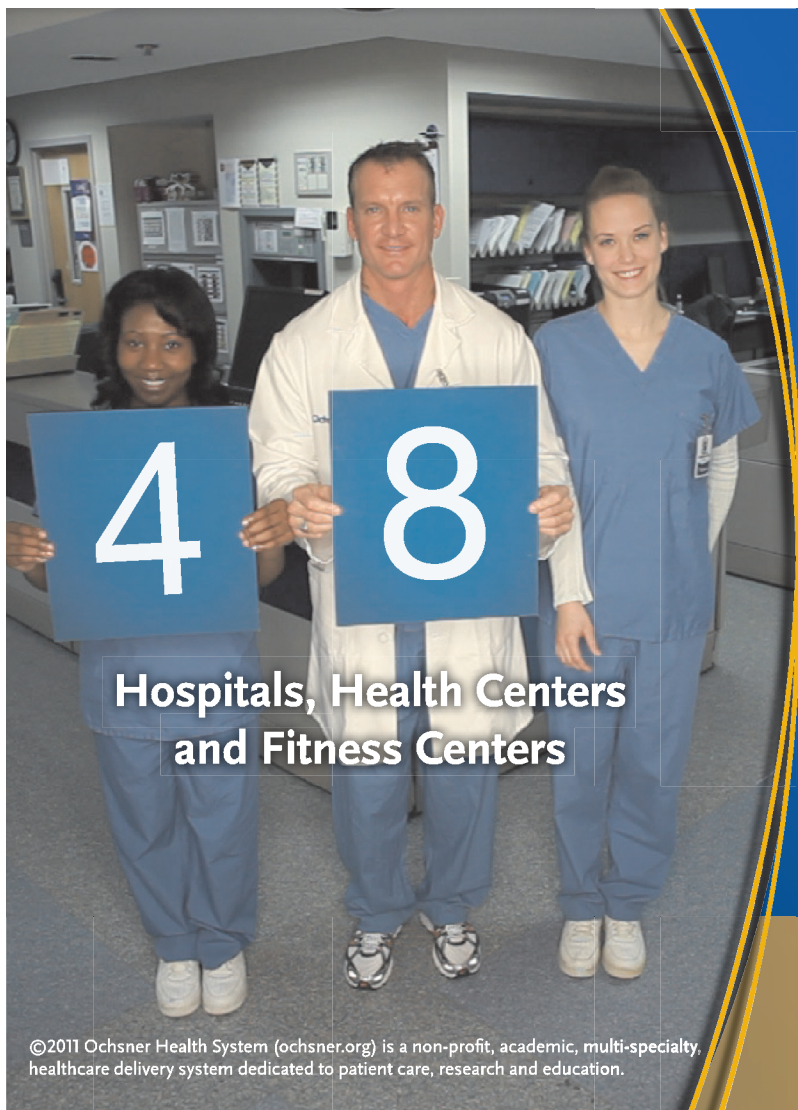
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# 2011 New Orleans CITY BUSINESS HEALTH CARE HEROES



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Aaron Karlin, MD  
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# Introduction



**Christian Moises**  
News Editor

The area's health care industry has its share of challenges. Worker shortages and increased patient loads among a reduced number of facilities are among them.

Other issues include a considerable population of uninsured and under-insured patients who struggle to get the care they need. Those challenges are opportunities for the 51 honorees in the Health Care Heroes Class of 2011, a group of industry workers who have proved their commitment to the region based on their professional accomplishments, contributions and perseverance.

The honorees are divided among six categories — animal care, first responders, nursing, physicians, professionals/administrators and volunteers.

In the program's fifth year, honorees discuss their most challenging, memorable, difficult or rewarding experience. Their stories are powerful.

They have pulled from personal experiences of caring for patients. They have reached beyond their clinic, hospital or office walls to reach the community.

Several have developed new techniques and procedures to advance health care, and others focus on educating the public about healthy lifestyles.

This year's animal care heroes show their commitment to patients who cannot defend themselves or communicate when they need help, while the first responders represent the best of health care's front line.

The nurses honored this year are noted for their bedside care and for providing comfort to patients in otherwise uncomfortable situations.

The physicians selected this year offer their expertise through research, mentoring, education and daily patient treatment.

The selected professionals and administrators continue to guide the industry by overseeing finance, construction of new facilities, expanded outreach and research advancement.

And the volunteers recognized have devoted their time and specialized skills to help patients and visitors feel more at ease in the hospital setting.

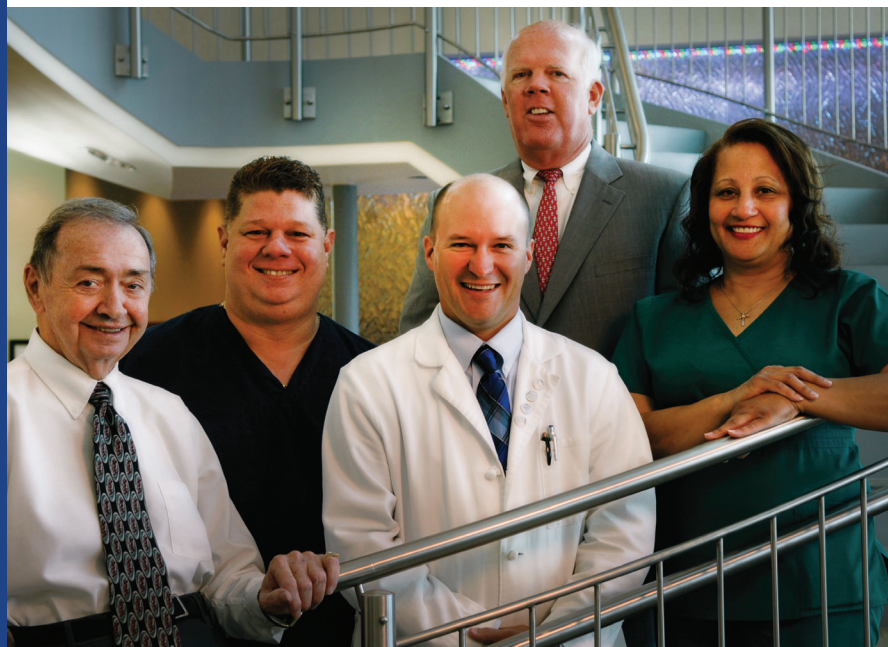
CityBusiness honors each of them for their tireless efforts and the difference they make in people's lives.

Congratulations to the Health Care Heroes Class of 2011. •

*News Editor Christian Moises can be reached at 293-9249 or christian.moises@nopg.com.*

**“A hero is someone who has given his or her life to something bigger than oneself.”**

- Joseph Campbell



## The 2011 Slidell Memorial Hospital City Business Health Care Heroes

(from left to right)

**Jack Bowman**  
Volunteer

**Jody Campo, RN**  
Surgical Intensive Care Unit

**Matthew McElveen, MD**  
Medical Oncologist  
SMHRCC Medical Director

**Bob Hawley**  
SMH Chief Executive Officer

**Melanie Pichon, CNA**  
SMH One West

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# Past honorees

## 2010

### ANIMAL CARE

Thomas Pelle  
Greg Rich

### FIRST RESPONDERS

Ben Glaudi  
Paula Kensler

### NURSING

Karen Anthony  
Becky Charneco  
Debbie Godsey  
Jacqueline Havnen  
Denise Johnson  
Mary Kelly  
Vera King  
Keith Norman  
Laurie Norman  
Mikeal Swift  
Alfred Abaunza  
Physician Hero

### PHYSICIANS

Adrienne Atzemis  
John Breaux  
Wesley Bryan  
John Couk  
Raymond DeCorte  
Corey Hebert  
Stephen Heinrich  
Dan Jacob  
Indira Kailas  
Ravi Kanagala  
Sandra Kemmerly  
Yvens Laborde  
Chip Lavie  
Joseph Nadell  
Rebecca Nguyen  
Oliver Sartor  
Donna Waters  
Thomas Weatherall  
Denise Woodall-Ruff

### PROFESSIONALS

Aubrie Augustus  
Vicky Banner  
Julie Catellier  
Myra Digange  
Lori Fonte  
Michael Griffin  
Staci LeBlanc  
Julia Mora  
Steve Moye  
Lillian O'Cain  
Angie Ruiz  
Rebecca Stubenrauch

### VOLUNTEERS

Delores Guidry  
Buddy Rini  
Julie Rodriguez  
Janet Trahan

## 2008

### ANIMAL CARE

Robin Beaulieu  
Joe Dalgo  
Kelly Kreider  
Giselle Moises  
Liz Saylor

### FIRST RESPONDERS

Briana Briscoe  
Ryan Brown  
Jullette Saussy  
Cecile Tebo  
Chris Wilt

### NURSING

Lillian Agnelly  
Sheri Berger  
Shane Brossette  
Bryan Dean  
Anthony DiGerolamo  
Kerry Jeanice  
Brian Mahl  
Joan Rooney

Debbie Schmitz  
Stella Wright

### PHYSICIANS

Milton Anderson  
Nicolas Bazan  
Lisa Bazzett  
Daniel Bouchette  
Bryan Bertucci  
Michael Brothers  
Charles Brown  
Randall Brown  
Jocelyn Tinsley Greely  
Emile LaBranche  
Gabriel Lasala  
Robert Matheney  
Norman McSwain  
Thanh Nguyen  
Eboni Price  
Elmore Rigamer  
Ken Roy  
Alfred Robichaux  
Milton Seiler

Jim Smith  
Keith Van Meter  
Mark Workman

### PROFESSIONALS

Bonnie Arton  
Redfield Bryan  
John Celments  
James Doty  
Bill Fox  
Robert Hawley  
John Lemoine  
Barbara Moffett  
Mark Peters  
Dwayne Thomas

### VOLUNTEERS

Elsie Olivier  
Philip Olivier  
Theresa Trosclair  
Jessie Williams

## 2009

### ANIMAL CARE

Karen Miller Becnel  
Chris Fabacher

### FIRST RESPONDERS

Dan Russo, Dax Russo, Jason Russo  
Linda Thompson

### NURSING

Diane Abbondante  
Elizabeth Buras  
Rosa Bustamante-Forest  
Cheryl Carter  
Darlene Gondrella  
Donna Guzman  
Kim Haley  
Paula Harrelson  
Dianna Lauve  
Kathy Steiner  
Mark Stockstill

### PHYSICIANS

Glenn Casey  
Pui Chun (Joan) Cheng  
Michele Cooper  
Frank DellaCroce and Scott Sullivan  
Joseph Epps  
Sander Florman  
Ana Hands  
Timothy Harlan  
Peter Hertzak  
William Johnston  
Leslie Levenson  
Steve Levine  
Sam Lucas, Dennis Mello, Chris Snyder  
Robert Post  
Eric Richter  
Carlos Rodriguez-Fierro  
Hector Ventura

### PROFESSIONALS

Stephen Baldwin  
Matthew Curole  
Richard Gaiennie  
Robert Gardner  
Thomas Grimstad  
Geoffrey Nagle  
Melba Perez-Berguno  
Mackie Shilstone  
Diane Sieta  
Lillian Stiegler  
Debra Thibodeaux  
Steve Worley

### VOLUNTEERS

Viola Cochran  
Christine Dittmann  
Betty Dugas  
Joseph Heintz  
Walter Melan  
Mattie Schouest

## 2007

### ANIMAL CARE

Andrew Gutter  
James Riopelle

### FIRST RESPONDERS

Steven Brown  
Michael Guillot

### NURSING

Patricia Berryhill  
Lorris Bouzigard  
Jan Hebert  
Ann Kallauner  
Alice Craft Kerney  
Patrice Kimball  
Anna Kokes  
Mary MacGregor  
Evelyn Randolph  
Wayne Rau  
Lena Riordan  
Joan Rooney  
Jennifer Steel  
Sally Tusa  
Nathalie Walker  
Cynthia Warren  
Ray Yakelis

### PHYSICIANS

Stephen Bardot  
Lionel Bourgeois  
Roland Bourgeois  
Jay Brooks  
Gerald Cohen  
Joseph Crapanzano Jr.  
Frank Culicchia  
Karen DeSalvo  
Raja Dhurandhar  
Sander Florman  
Juan Gershanik  
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Kevin Jordan  
Ronald Liuzza  
Kevin Martinez  
Richard Meyer  
Paul Nathan  
Steven Ross  
Swati Shah  
Charles Thomas  
Najeeb Thomas  
Gerald Vocke

### PROFESSIONALS

James Spencer Campbell  
Bruce Clement  
Scott Crabtree  
Virginia Davis  
Les Hirsch  
Lynn Hobbs-Green  
Sarah Hoffpauir  
Larry Hollier  
Corey Marvel  
William Pinsky  
Patrick Quinlan  
Warner Thomas  
Basil Thoppil  
Lynn Witherspoon  
Richard Zuschlag

### VOLUNTEERS

Cheron Brylski  
John DeCamp  
David Diaz  
Barbara Hyland  
Curtis Jacob  
Lester Johnson  
Salvador Paz  
Rudy Sampey  
Shirley Tuero

ANIMAL CARE

# Anne Bell

**Title:** Southern Animal Foundation director

**Age:** 66

**Family:** husband, Ken; children, Elizabeth Sprang, 39, Brian, 35; two grandchildren

**Education:** bachelor's degree in medical technology, Loyola University

Anne Bell grew up riding horses, fostering a love of animals she carried with her throughout a career in medical technology from which she retired in 1996. That was when she co-founded Southern Animal Foundation and dedicated herself to help animals in her native New Orleans.

"I saw such a need in this city to take care of the strays in the streets that it just seemed natural," Bell said. "I believe this work is incredibly important."

The Southern Animal Foundation operated at 1823 Magazine St. during its first few years as a small, grassroots organization focusing on animal rescue. In August 2002, a fire burned down the entire block, and Bell was left to pick up the pieces. She spearheaded a rebuilding project that transformed the foundation into a full-service veterinary clinic with a spay-neuter program.

Bolstered by community support and insurance money, Bell staffed her facility with experienced veterinarians whose affordable fees help subsidize the various free services the organization provides.

Now, Bell puts in 10 to 12 hours a week res-

cuing animals throughout the metropolitan area.

An elderly woman recently called to report a Shih Tzu puppy that had broken two legs in an automobile accident. Bell found the dog had been injured for more than three weeks before the woman's call, and the damage was beyond the scope of normal veterinary care. She brought the dog in and paid \$2,000 for a specialist to fix the dog's legs, which otherwise would have worsened beyond repair. The dog now runs and plays normally.

"It's a lot of work. But when you love something, it really doesn't feel like work," Bell said. "How can we turn our backs on these needy animals?"

In another recent case, Bell received word of a dog that had spent more than a week in a storm drain in LaPlace. Bell and her colleagues went through the news media to persuade city officials to open the drain, then brought the dog in and nursed her back to health.

"At the end of the day, if we make a difference in the lives of these animals, it's a success," Bell said. "My staff and I are in it for the animals, and there are so many that need our help."•

— Thomas Leggett



photo by Frank Aymami

ANIMAL CARE

# Amanda McDaniel

**Title:** St. Tammany Parish animal control officer

**Age:** 29

**Family:** partner, Holly Thoede; three dogs, Jack, Avery and Ziggy

**Education:** Bonnabel High School graduate

In the early morning hours when others are fast asleep, Amanda McDaniel might be plying a 3-foot long escaped pet lizard from a suburbanite's garage or rounding up a rowdy rooster whose crowing has enraged a neighborhood.

Other times, the job takes her to a sadder place, such as the home of a negligent owner to remove a skeletal dog.

All of these stories have come from less than a year on the job for McDaniel, one of six members of St. Tammany Parish's animal control team. The officers take one week of call at a time, during which, "You're on the road pretty much 24/7," she said.

A Kenner native who now lives in Slidell, McDaniel spent eight years as an Air Force security officer before returning to Louisiana in 2009. With encouragement from her partner, Holly Thoede, she then followed her lifelong passion for animals to a job in animal control.

Since McDaniel started with St. Tammany Parish Animal Control, she has helped increase shelter adoptions, reducing its need to euthanize unwanted pets. She spreads the gospel of animal adoption and the importance of spaying and neuter-



photo by Tracie Morris Schaefer

ing pets whenever she has the opportunity.

She also helps find foster homes for animals brought to the shelter. McDaniel estimates she's fostered about 30 animals at her own home since 2009, and she is the facility's go-to expert on various rescue organizations dedicated to particular breeds.

McDaniel credits her mother, Joni Lynn Weaver, with instilling in her a deep-seated compassion for creatures of all species. "If there was a stray animal, she was picking it up,"

McDaniel said. "One time she even picked up a cocoon she found when she was cutting the grass and put it in a plant (inside). We woke up one morning and there were hundreds of praying mantises all over the house."

McDaniel's family had to gather up all the plants in the house and take any stray insects outside, she said, "so they'd all have a chance."•

— Emilie Bahr

## FIRST RESPONDERS

# Raul Guevara

**Title:** East Jefferson General Hospital emergency medical services director

**Age:** 63

**Family:** wife, Maureen; children, Ben, 32, Katie, 29

**Education:** bachelor's degree in biology, Louisiana State University; doctor of medicine, LSU School of Medicine

If Dr. Raul Guevara isn't in the emergency room or poring over books to keep up with the ever-changing field of medicine, he's probably in the rainforest of Belize.

The Spanish-speaking ER physician spends one week a year in the Central American country, where he works with the Dos Amigos clinic that his brother, Michael Guevara, started 25 years ago. After 32 years practicing in his field, he said he loves the fast pace of the ER and having to make a diagnosis on his feet.

"Emergency medicine is medicine that's quick and unexpected," said Guevara, who recently became medical director of East Jefferson General Hospital's emergency medical services division. "You never know what's coming in the door."

Part of what makes it enjoyable, he said, is making a diagnosis without the full story because of less than lucid patients or language barriers.

He has been able to overcome that obstacle working with Dos Amigos, where he travels every Easter with several other physicians to offer needed care to poverty-stricken people in villages throughout Belize.

"We go to the area where we founded the clinic ... and we make day trips out to rural villages to do general medical care," he said. "Our primary focus is dental care, which the people in Belize really don't have access to."

The two-floor clinic has a waiting room, medical room, dental rooms, an X-ray area, pharmacy and a small living area for the doctors. Guevara calls it a "work in progress."

Every year, the number of physicians and family members they bring along to help at the clinic increases. Guevara has brought his family for a not-so-traditional family vacation.

"It's definitely an eye-opening trip for all of the teenagers, young college kids, to experience service and see what real poverty is like. It's really gratifying," he said.

Guevara has also been an instructor for the University of Miami emergency neurological deficit exam for the past 10 years and worked with the American Heart Association's Operation Heartbeat program to install more than 250 automated external defibrillators at public buildings throughout the New Orleans area. •

— Travis Andrews



photo by Frank Aymami

## FIRST RESPONDERS

# Bryan Svihla

**Title:** Children's Hospital lead pilot

**Age:** 43

**Family:** son, Sean, 10

**Education:** bachelor's degree in airway science, University of North Dakota

Flying a helicopter transporting infants and children to receive emergency care may seem harrowing enough to the average person, but for Bryan Svihla there's often an additional challenge: the weather.

"It's pretty tough when you have to tell a customer, in this case the family of the child, that you can't take a flight because it doesn't seem safe due to the weather," said Svihla, who leads a team of four pilots who fly transports for Children's Hospital through his employer, Metro Aviation.

"And you also have to figure into it the time," he said. "If I say 'Yes, we can go,' and the weather turns worse and we have to go back, then I have delayed the patient. And that delay can sometimes be equal to two or three hours. I don't like doing that because I know the patient has to get to the hospital."

Svihla, who flew Apache helicopters in the U.S. Army for eight years, logs 12-hour days on a seven-day on, seven-day off schedule since the hospital started the service nearly two months ago.

Even though patients can be as young as newborns, flight rules allow only the pilot, the patient and the medical team on board the flight.

"It is our policy that we don't bring family members along," he said, adding that his youngest transport so far was only four weeks old.

Svihla said he is always happy when such patients are delivered safely to the hospital.

"That's especially true when the parents and grandparents have told you to take care of their child," he said. "They look at you and you know they are putting their most important possession in your hands." •

— Garry Boulard



photo by Frank Aymami



**NURSES**

# Penny Banks

**Title:** St. Charles Surgical Hospital director of clinical services

**Age:** 48

**Family:** husband, Murphy; daughters, Kasie, 21, Korey, 19

**Education:** nursing diploma, Charity School of Nursing; bachelor's and master's degrees in nursing, University of Phoenix

Penny Banks believes that if anyone in her group of friends and coworkers has to suffer from cancer, she should be the one.

"We always said one day, one of us is going to end up with some kind of cancer," Banks said of the close-knit group of medical professionals she has worked with for years who have treated cancer patients.

As director of clinical services at St. Charles Surgical Hospital, which focuses on reconstructive breast surgery, Banks says her strength and optimism give her an advantage in surviving the struggle. Going through her own cancer diagnosis and treatment helped her better relate with her patients.

"I always look at the positive side," said Banks, who marked her one-year anniversary of battling ovarian cancer in April. "I walked around with a bald head, no wig, no scarf. I did it for the sake of the patients I deal with."

She held a head-shaving party, encouraged by her husband and three others who sported bald heads in support of her situation. Banks also maintains an online journal at [caringbridge.org](http://caringbridge.org) as an inspiration to other cancer survivors, such as the 28-year-old breast cancer patient who followed



photo by Frank Aymani

Penny Banks, left, St. Charles Surgical Hospital director of clinical services, reviews a patient's chart with nurse Melissa Gandy.

her example in logging a journal on the site as well.

"I was able to help her," Banks said. "I feel like it was another part of my journey."

Banks said she's optimistic because a near-death experience in 1995 during emergency surgery for a perforated colon makes her appreciate life all the more.

"I almost didn't make it off the operating table. I fought through that and moved on," she said. "It just makes you

appreciate every day you have."

The Susan G. Komen Foundation considers Banks one of its key allies, honoring her as the 2011 Support Angel of the Year for her work with breast cancer patients.

During Breast Cancer Awareness Month each October, Banks speaks at high schools to educate young people on the topic, and she participates in several Komen outreaches. •

— Diana Chandler

**NURSES**

# Jody Campo

**Title:** Slidell Memorial Hospital registered nurse

**Age:** 48

**Family:** wife, Carol; daughter, Elysia, 27; granddaughter, Milauna, 2

**Education:** associate's degree in nursing, Charity Hospital

Standing 6-foot-4 and weighing 350 pounds, Jody Campo might be the most imposing presence at Slidell Memorial Hospital if it weren't for his warm personality.

"You'd think I might intimidate people, but I think they see me as a teddy bear," Campo said. "My personality is what has made me successful as a nurse."

His personality came to the attention of colleagues when the mother of Bonny St. Andre, SMH human resources specialist, was admitted into the surgical intensive care unit.

"Bonny's mom was critically ill," Campo said. "My roles were to help the family with grief and keep them informed throughout the process."

After helping fight to save the woman's life, Campo faced an outcome everyone fears but one veteran nurse comes to experience — losing the battle. St. Andre told hospital administrators she was very impressed with Campo's bedside manner and how he broke down information from doctors during the process, praising him among hospital employees.

For Campo, his affable personality has come in handy since he left the construction business in 1995 to become a nurse. Campo was working as a carpenter when he started taking some college courses. In a study group, he met some female students who were studying nursing and encouraged him to join.

"I didn't realize men could be nurses," Campo said. "But I thought about it and decided to try it, and I just loved it."



photo by Tracie Morris Schaefer

He was sent to work in the surgical intensive care unit last year, in part to train heart nurses, and he found that his personality was an asset for teaching.

"I love to teach," Campo said. "My own abilities as a nurse can be attributed to the great teachers I've had, so I enjoy giving my knowledge to other nurses."

In addition to medical expertise, Campo has found his

niche by maintaining a focus on patient care.

"Being in an intensive care unit can be overwhelming, so we try to make people feel comfortable and keep them informed," he said. "When somebody's critically sick, there's nothing more rewarding than hearing them thank you for making them feel at home." •

— Thomas Leggett

NURSES

# Lynette Collins

**Title:** Daughters of Charity Services-Bywater family nurse practitioner

**Age:** 56

**Family:** husband, Frank; children, Wendy, 21, Julie, 23, Billy, 24, Sarah, 25

**Education:** nursing diploma, Touro Infirmary; bachelor's degree in nursing, Loyola University; master's degree in nursing, Louisiana State University; pursuing doctor in education, Walden University

Lynette Collins' achievements could tend to make even accomplished people feel a little less so.

As a family nurse practitioner, she attends to about 25 patients during each shift at the Daughters of Charity's St. Cecilia Health Center in the Bywater. Her clients run the gamut in age and background, though most lack health insurance and conventional access to medical care.

She's simultaneously pursuing her doctorate in education, with a research focus on preconception care and reproductive-life planning.

Thanks to her nurse-practitioner credentials, Collins possesses a level of authority typically reserved for physicians. But she prides herself on her slower-paced, palliative approach.

In 2003, Collins moved to a remote village in southwest Alaska. In her three years there, she established a pediatric primary care program and provided medical care for members of the Yupik Indian tribe. She moved back to New Orleans in 2006 and spent much of her time working in a mobile unit to provide prenatal and health care in some of the areas hardest-hit by Hurricane Katrina, such as St.

Bernard Parish.

Collins said a key to her mission is providing a ready ear to listen and teaching patients to better care for themselves.

"We're brought up through the nursing model first," Collins said of nurse practitioners. "There's a little bit more hand-holding, a little bit more listening, a little bit more being there for the patient. ... Sometimes just patting the patient's hand makes a difference. Saying, 'I'm here for you.'"

She realizes she could make more money practicing at a private clinic but finds a different, imminently rewarding type of remuneration in her current post.

She points, for example, to a woman she recently treated for diabetes. The patient had been off her treatment regimen for a year because of the high cost of care. When Collins told the woman she could get her a free meter and access to medicine at a reduced fee, the woman broke into tears.

"It's not always about the money," she said, "Life is not that simple."•

— Emilie Bahr



photo by Frank Aymami

NURSES

# Catrice Daniels

**Title:** LSU Interim Public Hospital mental health emergency room supervisor

**Age:** 31

**Family:** husband, Gerald; children, Demire Johnson, 13, Gerald Daniels III, 2

**Education:** associate's degree in general science, Delgado Community College; nursing degree, Charity School of Nursing

Fitting square pegs into round holes is routine for Catrice Daniels. As supervisor for the LSU Interim Public Hospital's mental health emergency room, she faces an array of obstacles on a daily basis.

"The hardest part about the job is to not have the room to accommodate the number of patients we have sometimes and to just barely be able to determine ... where we can find beds for them," Daniels said.

To meet the challenge, she is working on a system to reach patients before they get to the hospital.

"Recently one of the patients who we service, he murdered his niece and his nephew and that just raised the importance of what we do on a daily basis," she said. "If we can reach our patients ... we can prevent something like that happening. We were all greatly impacted by that."

To reach those patients, Daniels meets with various government and private sector mental health organizations once a quarter to find solutions. Daniels worked in the hospital's emergency room until 2009 until she discovered how much she wanted to help patients with mental health needs.

"I was an ER supervisor, and I found I really enjoyed ... working with the patients," she said. "I realized what a monstrous task it is dealing with the mental health community."

But Daniel said she's glad she made the switch, especially on days when staffing is down and she gets to take off her director's hat and sit down to interact with the patients themselves. She said she'll be working with these patients for a long time, and her sentiment as to why is simple.

"I enjoy what I do," she said. •

— Travis Andrews

Catrice Daniels, supervisor of the mental health emergency extension at LSU Interim Public Hospital, checks on patient Erica Lee.



photo by Frank Aymami

NURSES

# Wanda Genovese

**Title:** East Jefferson General Hospital registered nurse and noninvasive cardiology clinic supervisor

**Age:** 46

**Family:** husband, Raymond; children, Lauren, 19, Madison, 17, Morgan, 14

**Education:** bachelor's degree in nursing, Nicholls State University

Wanda Genovese believes in taking a proactive approach to health care. She knows that when it comes to cardiac patients, early diagnoses and treatment can save lives.

As a supervisor at East Jefferson General Hospital's cardiology clinic, she oversees the inpatient and outpatient testing of more than 100 patients each day.

Genovese recently helped spearhead an effort to expand the clinic's testing capacity by opening a new cardiac testing center in a nearby building. The added space allows Genovese and her team to test up to 30 more patients a day.

She says providing patients with quick, high-quality, compassionate care is what nursing is about.

"We want people to be diagnosed and treated in a controlled setting before a cardiac event occurs outside of the hospital," Genovese said. "It's rewarding to know that we've treated their problem before they've been taken away from their families, before they lose their lives."

Genovese said she believes patient education also plays a key role in keeping cardiac

patients out the emergency room. Consequently, she is involved in hospital outreach efforts designed to educate the community about the importance of healthy living and recognizing the warning signs of heart disease.

Genovese also shares her expertise with students as well as with patients, serving on the medical assistant advisory board at Herzing College and mentoring the medical assistant externs on rotation at her clinic.

"I think it's important to mentor the younger students who enter the medical field so they can see what it's like to be in a real office and see real people at work, to help them become productive members of the medical community," she said.

Introduced to the health care field as a high school student, Genovese started her career by serving as a volunteer at the hospital where her mother worked as a phlebotomist.

"I just fell in love with the medical profession," she said. "I love being able to take care of people and help them through times in their lives when they need help."•

— Tamara Moffett



photo by Frank Aymami

photo by Frank Aymami



NURSES

# Melissa Guidry

**Title:** Tulane University Medical Center perioperative services director

**Age:** 53

**Education:** bachelor's degree in nursing, Southeastern Louisiana University; master's degree in public health, Tulane School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine

Melissa Guidry's first time in an operating room was at age 9 when she had a polyp removed from the roof of her mouth. A positive experience then, as well as having an aunt who was a nurse, drove her become a nurse.

"My favorite thing as an operating room nurse was that I had one patient I was taking care of, and I saw them through that phase," Guidry said.

Guidry arrives at the hospital for work as early as 6:30 a.m. to "get the atmosphere of the day," she said. As perioperative services director at Tulane University Medical Center, she monitors details that affect patient care before, during and after surgery. She resolves personnel issues and any equipment glitches, keeps up with the latest operating room technology and tracks statistics such as patient wait times.

Guidry also hires operating room nurses, looking for candidates with "sincerity, critical thinking skills and compassion," she said.

When a 14-year-old girl was brought to the operating room with an open abdomen wound, Guidry was sensitive to the teen's self-consciousness.

"I knew she was embarrassed for anyone to see," she said.

Though she's no longer as closely involved with patients, Guidry still empathizes with them. She has worked to schedule the operating room nurses so the patients' favorites will be on the right shift.

"You can form a bond with a patient within a couple of minutes," Guidry said.

A single visit can also make a big impression, such as the patient who was about to enter the operating room with advanced pulmonary tumors and a grim prognosis. Guidry, following standard procedure, spent a few minutes with him in the staging room, getting his consent form, asking about allergies and soothing away his anxieties.

But the only assurance the man wanted was to know that his body would be donated to science, she said.

"Sure enough, he died," Guidry said. "Sometimes we have a premonition of what our outcomes are going to be."•

— Anne Berry

NURSES

# Mitch Handrich

**Title:** Interim Louisiana State University Public Hospital registered nurse

**Age:** 47

**Family:** single

**Education:** associate's degree in nursing, Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College; bachelor's degree in nursing, Chamberlin School of Nursing

Mitch Handrich didn't let his inexperience in skydiving keep him from volunteering with the Remote Area Medical Airborne Unit. He completed skydiving lessons and training just in time to respond by parachute to earthquake victims suffering from cholera in the remote mountains of Haiti.

The 12-day mission to Medor, Haiti, in December provided medical care to the rural village so remote that the team had to either parachute in or hike up a mountain to reach those in need. A nurse, Handrich was one of nine volunteers who built an airstrip in the village and assisted doctors treating patients.

"Probably because I'm a little bit crazy and a little bit of an adrenaline junky," Handrich said of his participation in the mission that was chronicled on "Dateline NBC." "I like to do things that tend to be different from what regular people like to do. I like to help people and be adventurous."

With the help of 60 villagers, the crew began clearing trees and rocks to build an airstrip that would allow air travel to the village.

It wasn't his first trip to Haiti. He had traveled to the island the weekend immediately after the January 2010 earthquake, helping doctors treat victims in a makeshift clinic in the bordering Dominican Republic.

"Doctors don't do nursing work. The first day it was extremely overwhelming, because it was just me, (one other nurse) and 400 patients," Handrich said. "Gradually, there would be another group of volunteers that would show up. By the time we left, there were many, many nurses."

Handrich participates in about three volunteer health missions a year in the United States and abroad. When he retires from full-time nursing in about 10 years, he hopes to continue volunteering, a love grounded in his Mennonite upbringing in Michigan. •

— Diana Chandler



photo by Frank Aymami



photo by Frank Aymami

NURSES

# Vicki Hirsch

**Title:** LSU Interim Public Hospital registered nurse manager

**Age:** 48

**Family:** children, Bobbie, 31, Barry, 30

**Education:** nursing diploma, Charity Hospital School of Nursing

Eleven years into her now 21-year nursing career, Vicki Hirsch fulfilled a long-time dream. The single mother of two joined the military when her children left home for college.

Today, she is a captain in the U.S. Army Reserves and the Army Nurse Corps. Since enlisting, Hirsch has been deployed twice for Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom. She said her military experience sharply contrasts her civilian work as a nurse manager at the LSU Interim Public Hospital in New Orleans.

"As a result of my deployments, I have cared for very young soldiers who have had severe, disfiguring, life-changing injuries," Hirsch said.

Determining who receives medical care in the field varies based on the situation, she said, whereas patients with the greatest needs are served first in civilian life.

Despite the variance in her respective roles,

Hirsch said she is able to capitalize on both experiences.

"I think my experience on the military side helps me with my civilian job and vice versa," she said. "Each job benefits from the other."

As nurse manager at LSU, Hirsch oversees four departments, including the in-house pool nursing, staffing, registered nurse liaison and volunteer services departments. It's a position she has worked toward since starting out as a floor nurse.

"I like working in a teaching hospital. I like working where nurses have autonomy and where nurses have a say in patients' care," she said.

Hirsch also helps four-legged patients with her daughter, Bobbie. The two volunteer with the Sula Foundation to rescue and rehabilitate pit bull terriers and help place them in good homes. •

— Nayita Wilson

**NURSES**

# Blake Mouch

**Title:** Children's Hospital registered nurse

**Age:** 38

**Family:** single

**Education:** bachelor's degree in nursing, Louisiana State University School of Medicine

A four-year-old girl arrived at Children's Hospital's emergency department in 2007 with septic shock because of a serious system infection and life-threatening low blood pressure.

Registered nurse Blake Mouch and a team of physicians gave her an IV, antibiotics, put her on a breathing machine and got her to the intensive care unit where she eventually fully recovered from the septic shock.

"I remember we saved her life that night, and that was the most rewarding experience I ever had on the job, working with people to save this girl's life," Mouch said. "To see her parents' faces before-hand and then afterward, when we helped her, it was all emotionally overwhelming."

Mouch said he knew early on he wanted to take care of people, but he was unsure of the kinds of patients he wanted to help. Nearly 15 years later, he is now one of the two most senior RNs in the emergency department.

"Working with kids is fantastic and so rewarding. To see the smiles on these kids' faces and the feeling you get when you help

them out or make them better is an uplifting experience," he said.

More recently, Mouch was running around during a busy day in the emergency department in January. His co-workers urged him to take a break and attend the annual hospital awards ceremony, but Mouch initially told each of them he was too busy. Finally, after much persuasion, he attended the luncheon.

The CEO was presenting the hospital's Employee of the Year for 2010, and in the employee description of the honoree, he read, "This employee is an outstanding ambassador ... always a smile with a cheerful and positive attitude and a willingness to help everyone ... a true leader within the department, who provides superlative clinical care and leadership and is the glue that holds our department together."

"The more he read the description of the honoree, I was like, 'Wait a minute, that sounds like it could be me,' and then when he announced my name, I was surprised and honored," Mouch said. "To know my coworkers nominated me was a truly humbling experience." •

— Tommy Santora



photo by Frank Aymami

Registered nurse Blake Mouch performs a blood test on Callie Frey, 14, at Children's Hospital.

**NURSES**

# Melanie Pichon

**Title:** Slidell Memorial Hospital certified nursing assistant

**Age:** 56

**Family:** children, Mario, 38, Ramon, 32

**Education:** attended Long Beach City College

At Slidell Memorial Hospital, certified nursing Assistant Melanie Pichon says she feels fortunate to have landed in a profession where she can devote herself to others and contribute to their recovery.

On a typical day, she checks frequently on her patients, takes their vital statistics, bathes them and comforts the critically ill.

"I was just looking for a job when I was young and started working in the medical community," she said.

But as she matured, Pichon found caring for others drew on her talents. With 30 years under her belt now, she says, "I try to be there for my patients and their families with compassion, especially when things are really rough for them."

Most patients at Slidell Memorial are relatively easy to care for but a few are cantankerous, she said.

"However, I've found everyone has a little soft spot if you just take the time to find it."

Pichon said she likes the challenge of looking after the toughest patients and helping them communicate. Personal inspiration and determination help her get through her long shifts, which begin at daybreak and end at night.

"People ask me how do you keep doing this year in and year out, and it's because my job is rewarding and is what I'm called to be doing," she said.

"I've had patients return to the hospital and request that I take care of them," she said. "And when I'm out in the community, people come up and tell me how much they appreciate the care I gave them or the comfort provided to a family member who passed away."

Pinchon said she maintains a pleasant demeanor with the hope of brightening up the corridors and rooms at Slidell Memorial.

"Patients say when I walk through the door, my smile is everything," she said. •

— Susan Buchanan



photo by Tracie Morris Schaefer

Slidell Memorial Hospital certified nursing assistant Melanie Pichon visits with patient Beverly Gross.

NURSES

# Carole Pindaro

**Title:** NO/AIDS Task Force nurse practitioner

**Age:** 53

**Family:** partner, Kathy Norton; daughter, Julia, 13

**Education:** nursing certificate, Peter Brigham School of Nursing; master's degree in public health, Tulane University School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine; master's degree in nursing, Mississippi University for Women

Carole Pindaro is a pioneer for HIV and AIDS care in the New Orleans area.

The NO/AIDS Task Force nurse practitioner started working with HIV patients in the early 1980s when she was still earning her master's degree in public health from Tulane University School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine.

"(I) started to see a need for home care for people with AIDS," she said. "There weren't really any agencies in the city who would do home care."

Pindaro helped write a proposal that resulted in grant funding for the first HIV clinic at Charity Hospital as well as one that helped form the NO/AIDS Task Force, where she has worked for more than 20 years.

"There was a very small core group of people who weren't afraid," she said. "There was a lot of fear and ignorance, mostly fear of what is unknown."

Today, Pindaro continues to care for patients she has seen from the task force's beginning. She also focuses on those who don't receive equal treatment at many clinics as a

result of prejudice or simple misunderstanding.

"In the last year or two, I'm sort of focusing on transgender patients," she said. "They often go without much in the way of understanding or services. So those transgender individuals with HIV, I see them a lot and try to work with both of those situations ... at least provide an understanding health care environment."

Pindaro says the best moments are when she can bring hope to patients who have none. Sometimes, it's as small as calling a transgender patient by her chosen name.

"I think sometimes they are not understood, not treated with the same dignity and respect that other patients are," she said. "Sometimes it's hard to (use a chosen name) if you've never seen it before and their chart has their male name."

Fostering a caring and compassionate environment is Pindaro's daily challenge, especially when so many of the established clinics and health care providers don't have the experience, training or time to do so.

"It's just the little things that can mean a lot."•

— Travis Andrews



photo by Tracie Morris Schaefer

photo by Frank Aymami



NURSES

# Myra Varnado

**Title:** Louisiana State University Interim Public Hospital clinical manager of wound, ostomy and continence services

**Age:** 54

**Family:** daughters, Taylor, 27, twins, Hillary and Emily, 23

**Education:** bachelor's degree in health sciences, Virginia Tech University

Myra Varnado's secret to happiness in her nursing career is grounded in the unusual: mastering what proves insurmountable to others.

"I've always tried to do things that other people haven't wanted to do," said Varnado, a registered nurse specializing in wound, ostomy and continence care at the Louisiana State University Interim Public Hospital. "If you do the thing that others don't want to do and you really enjoy it, you've hit the jackpot."

Varnado, who works in the hospital's trauma unit, sees many profound wounds, but her passion is helping diabetics. By educating them to become engaged in their care, she can help them avoid characteristic ulcers and amputations, and teach them to remain independent.

Varnado recalls the successful case of a 62-year-old man who was a good candidate for foot amputation but refused the surgery. As a diabetic, he suffered from nerve damage in his foot and

poor blood flow to the extremity. Varnado said he became a model patient after she educated him in caring for his condition.

"The long and short of it is the man walked out of the clinic," she said. "I still hear from him from time to time. He says, 'I'm still good.'"

Educating patients is key to Varnado's work. She helped implement the hospital's Lower Extremity Amputation Prevention Program, an interdisciplinary approach to decreasing amputation rates, as most amputees die within five years after their first amputation, Varnado said.

"The goal is that patients become engaged in their care," she said, improving their health outcomes.

She is one of two primary authors of neuropathic guidelines published by the Wound Ostomy and Continence Nurses Society and is hopeful rising nurses will continue developing innovations in the field. •

— Diana Chandler

PHYSICIANS

# Sue Abdalian

**Position:** Tulane University School of Medicine professor of clinical pediatrics

**Age:** 58

**Family:** husband, Robert; children, Zarouhie, 27, Andrew, 26

**Education:** bachelor's degree in psychology, Case Western Reserve University; doctor of medicine, Tulane University School of Medicine

Dr. Sue Abdalian decided to work with teenagers after a great experience teaching a ninth-grade Bible study class right after graduating from medical school while on maternity leave.

"I found that they were interesting people ... and asked great questions," Abdalian said. "I thought, 'This is it. I've found my place.'"

Besides being a pediatrics professor at Tulane University School of Medicine and chief of the adolescent medicine section at Tulane University Medical center, Abdalian manages the Adolescent Drop-In Clinic, which she also co-founded. Through the clinic, she and a team provide medical and counseling services to roughly 400 homeless and at-risk teens each month.

"Often they don't think of themselves as homeless," Abdalian said. "They think of it as an adventure, or a kind of boot camp. But they do have a healthy sense of peril."

The clinic's doctors help troubled teens make better decisions by asking them to recall what they used to do for fun before they discovered a bad crowd or drugs.

"They're remembering a life that was differ-

ent," Abdalian said. "They don't need to be coddled, but they do need to be coached."

The medical team identifies each teen's strengths, such as resilience, social smarts or a love of learning, and helps them recognize and use those assets to improve their circumstances.

Often a teen's best advantage is having an independent mind, such as the chronically sick 12-year-old boy who found his way to the hospital when his own family refused to drive him there.

"He felt like he knew what he needed, and he was a plucky kid," Abdalian said. "I'll help along the way, but they're the heroes of their own lives."

In addition to managing the clinic, she serves as medical director of the recently opened Walter L. Cohen High School Student Health Center. The school-based facility offers immunizations, annual exams, health education and mental health services, including family counseling.

Abdalian also is the primary investigator of the New Orleans Adolescent Medicine Trials Unit, which targets youth for research of behavioral and therapeutic HIV intervention and prevention. •

— Anne Berry



photo by Frank Aymami

PHYSICIANS

# Gerald Berenson

**Title:** cardiology and pediatric cardiology clinical professor and epidemiology research professor, Tulane University School of Medicine; Tulane Center for Cardiovascular Health director; Bogalusa Heart Study principal investigator

**Age:** 88

**Family:** wife, Joan; children, Leslie, 56, Ann, 54, Robert, 52, Laurie, 49

**Education:** bachelor's degree in biology, Tulane University; doctor of medicine, Tulane School of Medicine

The walls and shelves inside Dr. Gerald Berenson's Canal Street office overflow with acknowledgments and awards for advancements in childhood obesity and advocacy for improvements in cattle and beef production.

In a nearby storage room, he maintains oversized portfolios filled with newspaper clippings that document his pioneering initiative: The Bogalusa Heart Study.

"Bogalusa is the only heart study like it in the world beginning with children and ending with adults (and) with a black and white population," Berenson said.

The purpose of the 33-year-long initiative was to study the early natural history of coronary artery disease, hypertension and diabetes, but it grew into something more influential.

"When I started the study, I just collected risk factors in kids. I never thought it would impact the world," he said, adding that experts from as near as California and Iowa and as far as Finland, Australia and Brazil have expressed interest in the study.

The Bogalusa Study also led Berenson to embark upon a childhood disease and obesity prevention project, which resulted in the

Ahead/Heart Smart curriculum for public school students. It addresses issues facing children such as obesity, smoking and alcohol use, teenage pregnancy and dropout prevention.

"It's one of the best programs in the world because it has a psychological and behavioral orientation," he said.

The curriculum was implemented at Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Charter School in the Lower 9th Ward before Hurricane Katrina, and Berenson hopes to return the program to the area and beyond. He recently received a \$140,000 grant to implement the program for 7,000 elementary school students in Washington Parish, but financial challenges remain to expand the program.

He remains optimistic, nonetheless.

"Our goal is to get health education like we're talking about into the public school system," he said. "Everybody's interested in obesity, and we have the method on how to prevent it, but we need help from the community on how to do this."

Berenson says he's ready for the challenge.

"Why should I retire? I have far too many things to do," he said. •

— Nayita Wilson



photo by Frank Aymami

PHYSICIANS

# Craig Coenson

**Position:** Metropolitan Human Services District medical director

**Age:** 49

**Family:** wife, Kathy; stepdaughters, Kristin Hafstad, 22, Britt Hafstad, 18

**Education:** bachelor's degree in biology, Tulane University; doctor of medicine, Tulane University School of Medicine

Help is often a phone call away. For the mentally ill, having somebody to talk to may be a lifeline.

A phone call unanswered, however, is a problem. It was one that needed to be fixed when Dr. Craig Coenson became medical director of the Metropolitan Human Services District in 2009. MHSD provides services to people with mental health issues, addictive disorders and developmental disabilities.

"On average, we receive 33,000 calls per month, and before I got here, many of those calls just went unanswered because we didn't have people manning (phones) 24-7," Coenson said. "We also only had two phone lines and a phone system that had to be from the 1970s, so calls would easily roll over. It was a technology issue we needed to fix."

Coenson created a 24-hour access system and crisis hotline for the district. In the past two years, he created three Assertive Community Treatment teams made up of psychiatrists, social workers, nurses, and housing and employment specialists. Team members visit with patients in the community and even at their homes to work on long-term solutions to avoid hospitalization.

Coenson said he remembers when the process worked on one freezing night in New Orleans as a mentally ill homeless woman called the district for help. She was transferred to a shelter that night and saw the ACT team the next day, which helped



photo by Frank Aymami

Ashley Wilbert, left, and Angelica Blakely review calls records with Dr. Craig Coenson, medical director of the Metropolitan Human Services District.

get her into transitional housing.

"It's rewarding to get a vision of how to do things better, develop a strategy, implement that strategy and then see results," Coenson said. "Contrary to what people may think, the mentally ill get better, and that's very rewarding to see that play out."

Coenson said he meets quarterly with hospital administrators, emergency room personnel, first responders, jail administrators, ACT teams, housing agencies, substance abuse facilities

and members of the New Orleans Police Department to determine various ways to continue to improve the city's public health system.

"I have talked to a lot of first responders, and they say the public mental health system is getting better," Coenson said. "They feel it and they see it first-hand, and that means a lot. But we still have a long way to go and a lot of work to do."•

— Tommy Santora

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PHYSICIANS

# Terry Cummings

**Title:** Tulane Multispecialty Clinic internist and pediatrician

**Age:** 48

**Family:** spouse, Dr. Terry Dise; children, Rory, 13, Caleb, 9

**Education:** bachelor's degree in biochemistry, University of Pennsylvania; doctor of medicine, Tulane University School of Medicine

Born in Louisiana, Dr. Terry Cummings grew up in Maine, went to college in Philadelphia and then headed to Tulane University Medical School.

"I planned to go back to New England to practice, but New Orleans and its wonderfully diverse culture caught me," said Cummings, an internist and pediatrician at the Tulane Multispecialty Clinic in Uptown Square.

Cummings sees patients of all ages and backgrounds and also provides well baby care at Tulane Lakeside Hospital. She said she tries to really listen to her patients and find out what's troubling them.

"Often patients feel rushed and leave a doctor's appointment worrying that they didn't have a chance to express themselves. I think that's unlikely to happen in my office," she said, adding that she allows patients to email her directly. "Many doctors don't provide this service, but it's a very quick way for a patient to reach me and know their doctor is available to them."

Cummings said she strives to be thorough and pay attention to detail to reduce the chance of diagnostic error. Cummings



photo by Frank Aymami

Dr. Terry Cummings, left, discusses a case with medical office assistant Tiffany Smith at the Tulane Multispecialty Center at University Square.

said that understanding what's happening within a family is sometimes crucial for a diagnosis.

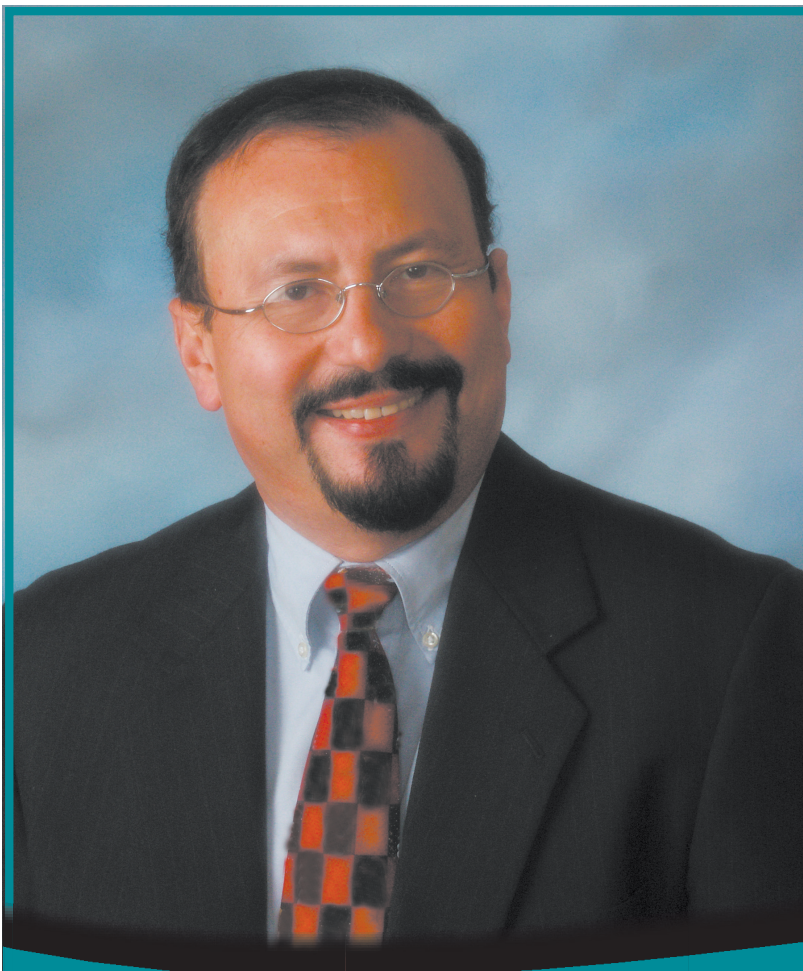
Most of her patients have several relatives that see her for treatment, she said. For example, lactating mothers know she can help them and their children

Cummings said she's glad to have chosen medicine and finds

it gratifying. As for her decision to become a doctor, she said she wanted to help people and thought this was a good way to start.

"The opportunity to listen to patients and help them find their path toward better health is my ultimate goal. I tell them all — I'm planning to get you to 100 years old."•

— Susan Buchanan



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PHYSICIANS

# James Diamond

**Title:** Tulane University Medical School of Medicine professor emeritus ophthalmology; University of Malta Medical School professor of ophthalmology and consultant to the minister of health care; Southeast Louisiana Veterans Health Care System vitreoretinal services director

**Age:** 69

**Family:** wife, Kathleen; children, Jennifer, 39, James Diamond, 41, Tanya Lounet, 35

**Education:** bachelor's degree in English history, College of the Holy Cross; doctor of medicine, Georgetown Medical School



photo by Frank Aymami

To say Dr. James Diamond is a busy man is an understatement.

The 69-year-old ophthalmologist helped invent a field of eye surgery, trains doctors in Malta, has operated on an orangutan and a white tiger, and offers a weekly interactive international telecommunication conference.

All of these efforts were part of his desire to make a difference in people's lives through the knowledge he's gained over the years.

"It's one thing to provide training," he said. "It's another thing to provide training that makes a difference in people's lives."

Diamond helped develop vitreoretinal surgery, which uses microscopic visualization and instrumentation to operate on people blinded by injury, trauma, diabetes and strokes.

"In laymen's terms, we reconstruct the eye. ... It's a surgery done to restore vision," Diamond said, adding that he's performed more than 30 of the procedures.

He started volunteering in Malta about 2000 but quickly

realized that once the volunteers leave, the treatment ends. So he decided to become a teacher and train doctors at the University of Malta Medical School, which he saw as having a much more lasting effect. He currently holds a weekly teleconference for students in Central and South America, Scandinavia and Malta, as well as with medical institutions throughout the United States.

"I could do more by having other individuals learn everything I could teach them," he said. "It's like a family. It procreates and keeps going and going."

Though he has been involved with the Louisiana Veterans

Healthcare System for years, he said he has a great deal of humility when it comes to the plans for the new Veterans Affairs medical complex, where he initiated, developed and runs the vitreoretinal subspecialty department.

"It's not me. It's sort of a team," he said. "A person's success is only built on the individuals who he is privileged to work with."

And for Diamond, that success is pretty simple.

"I'm 69 and I love coming to work every day and doing what I'm doing."•

— Travis Andrews

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PHYSICIANS

# Elizabeth Dimitri

**Title:** Dimitri Dermatology dermatologist

**Family:** husband, Mike Cottman; children, Anna, 9, Charlotte, 7, Brody, 1

**Education:** bachelor's degrees in chemistry and psychology, Arizona State University; doctor of osteopathic medicine, Touro University

For Dr. Elizabeth Dimitri, being a dermatologist means much more than just improving her patients' skin. In her experience, curing conditions such as acne and psoriasis gives patients back the self-confidence those skin disorders often strip away.

Dimitri has been practicing in the New Orleans area since 2002. Over the course of her career, she has seen firsthand the emotional damage severe skin problems can cause.

"Patients become depressed and it really impacts their quality of life," she said. "If you can clear up someone's acne or psoriasis, you completely change their life. It's very rewarding."

Dimitri said she can understand her patients' pain.

"If I have an acne bump — just one — I'm very upset about it," she said. "So if someone has a hundred lesions on their face, I feel like I can sympathize with that person. I just imagine how I would feel if I had a face covered in acne."

Dimitri's dermatology clinic also sees rare skin disorders. Two especially memorable cases

include a leprosy case and a very rare condition called calciphylaxis, or CPX, in which excess calcium accumulates in the skin causing ulcers, infections and, in extreme cases, organ failure.

Dimitri also said melanoma is becoming too common for comfort.

"Skin cancer is increasing in incidence, and it's increasing at an increasing rate," she said, "so much so that I see skin cancer in populations such as African Americans who are usually not affected as much by sun-related skin cancers."

For Dimitri, becoming a dermatologist seemed like the ideal choice.

"I'm also really interested in the science behind why we have certain skin conditions, what makes skin healthy and what makes disease processes occur," she said.

Dimitri is currently involved in research studies that are investigating the potential of new dermatologic medications for patients who don't respond to existing options. •

— Tamara Moffett

Dr. Elizabeth Dimitri injects Botox into patient Michelle Vick.



photo by Tracie Morris Schaefer

PHYSICIANS

# Willard Dumas

**Title:** Daughters of Charity Health Centers of New Orleans staff dentist

**Age:** 68

**Family:** wife, Karin; children, Willard III, 42, Jay, 37, Cherie Nobles, 33

**Education:** bachelor's degree in biology, Xavier University; doctor of dental surgery, Howard University College of Dentistry

# Jay Dumas

**Title:** Daughters of Charity Health Centers of New Orleans director of dental services

**Age:** 37

**Family:** single

**Education:** bachelor's degree in biology, Xavier University; doctor of medical dentistry, Temple University School of Dentistry



photo by Frank Aymami

When Willard Dumas began practicing dentistry 40 years ago, preventive dental care in New Orleans was mostly reserved for the well to do. Dental insurance was a novelty.

But Dumas believed everyone should have access to dental care, instilling such compassion in his son, Jay, that he would later join his father in private practice.

"I was inspired by his coming home every day and not complaining. I never heard my father complain about the practice of dentistry," said Jay, who worked with his father in private practice for nearly 10 years.

The duo had been renting space in the nonprofit's Bywater clinic since 2006 for their private practice, but DSC approached

the two in 2008 about offering dental care at its new health centers. The older Dumas saw an opportunity to provide state-of-the-art care to the masses without incurring the rising costs of private practice.

The health centers provide dental care based on a patient's ability to pay, allowing the father and son to reach a larger group. Jay practices dentistry at the Carrollton facility, and Willard works from the St. Cecilia Medical Center in the Bywater.

"We treat health care as a luxury in the U.S.," Jay said. "It should be a right. I believe everyone should be afforded the right to receive dental care."

The Dumas team goes beyond the scope of the clinic to volunteer their expertise in various programs to help those unable to pay, including the Donated Dental Program, Give Kids a Smile, Team Smile and the Colgate Dental Van Services.

"It's an important part of my life to be a volunteer," Willard said. "My parents raised us to give back."

The two treat all patients with respect, regardless of their financial standing.

"We treat every patient the same," Jay said. "We learned a long time ago not to judge patients by their appearance. We offer each person the best dentistry available." •

— Diana Chandler



photo by Frank Aymami

Dr. Tod Engelhardt reviews a patient's file with nurse Kerri MacDonald.

**PHYSICIANS**

# Tod Engelhardt

**Title:** East Jefferson General Hospital cardiovascular thoracic surgeon  
**Age:** 52  
**Family:** wife, Alicia; children, Scott, 11, David, 9, Amy, 7, Heather, 5  
**Education:** bachelor's degree in medicine, Loyola University; doctor of medicine, Tulane University School of Medicine

A patient arrived at East Jefferson General Hospital in the summer of 2010 with an acute pulmonary embolism, or an obstruction of the pulmonary artery or one of its branches.

The current procedure to administer a clot-busting drug to the embolism can often take too long to remove the obstruction, so the patient's doctor approached Dr. Tod Engelhardt, who suggested they try a new, quicker method.

"When a patient is diagnosed with a serious cardiac event like acute PE, there is often only a one or two hour window before the patient is lost," Engelhardt said. "In the past, the only treatment for acute PE is for doctors to administer the drug on its own. The problem with that is the drug often arrives at the clot too late."

Engelhardt, a cardiovascular thoracic surgeon, had been working with a vibrating catheter that helps decrease the time it takes to administer the drug, which was given to the patient. She was being taken to recovery less than 45 minutes after being admitted.

Engelhardt said the catheter changes things because it allows for the drug to be administered right to the clot, dissolving it in as little as 12 hours. He said it allows for smaller doses of the drug and influences quicker activation.

Since first using the catheter in the summer of 2010, Engelhardt said he has performed the procedure on 33 patients, all with 100 percent success.

"It has the potential to revolutionize the way we treat pulmonary embolism," Engelhardt said. "There are statistics that show that as many as 600,000 people die each year because of massive acute PE. It is saving the lives of people who deal with this problem."

Engelhardt's work has grabbed the attention of cardiac physicians worldwide who treat patients with acute PE and other pulmonary issues. In the past few months, Engelhardt said he has been asked to speak about the procedure to physicians in Switzerland, Germany, India and the United States. •

— Robin Shannon

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PHYSICIANS

# Matthew French

**Title:** The Surgical Specialists of Louisiana general surgeon

**Age:** 41

**Family:** single

**Education:** bachelor's degree in biology, Washington and Lee University; doctor of medicine, Tulane University School of Medicine

For the past 10 years, Dr. Matthew French has worked as a general surgeon for the Surgical Specialists of Louisiana, one of the largest weight-loss practices in the region. French, who specializes in laparoscopic surgery, is one of five partner-specialists who conduct weight loss procedures such as gastric bypass, gastric sleeve and lap band surgeries.

However, his private practice is a far cry from the cosmetic appeal that is associated with such procedures. After consultations and life-altering surgeries, French said the end results for his patients include adding 15 years to a patient's lifespan, or for female patients, the ability to have children.

After one procedure, a female patient discovered a breast mass, which was later removed. French said the discovery was attributed to the weight the patient lost following the procedure.

In another instance, one patient became pregnant after losing 100 pounds, having tried unsuccessfully for years.

"It was a very emotional and powerful experience for her," French said. "And it was

very rewarding to help her in that quest."

In any given year, French and his partners consult with about 600 patients, some of who are up to 200 pounds overweight. The patients' conditions can be exacerbated by diabetes, high blood pressure and arthritis. French said the long-term benefits afforded to patients who undergo weight loss procedures are the most rewarding aspects of the job.

"I love doing the work. I love being in the operating room, and it's very rewarding to watch my patients lose weight and get healthier," he said.

The steps and consultations that lead up to such results are equally as important. And French said he takes great care in fostering relationships with patients early on through an open communication process, which requires listening and patience.

"My No. 1 goal is to make sure they (patients) know exactly what to expect from the surgery and to give them all the pros and cons to help them make the best decision," he said. •

— *Nayita Wilson*



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# Paul Friedlander

**Title:** Tulane Medical Center otolaryngology department chairman

**Age:** 47

**Family:** wife, Jessica; son, Alex, 8

**Education:** bachelor's degree in biology, Georgetown University; doctor of medicine, Louisiana State University School of Medicine

Black people have twice the mortality rates of patients with head and neck cancers, and Dr. Paul Friedlander, who runs the head and neck cancer program at Tulane Medical Center, noticed that trend hitting too close to home.

In the past several years, he has seen an increase in inner city black patients who were coming in with more advanced head and neck cancers at later stages.

So Friedlander and his colleague, Vanessa Landry, an instructor of clinical surgery at Tulane and a pastor in the black community, helped form partnerships with six New Orleans churches and the Louisiana State University School of Dentistry to create the Greater New Orleans Coalition on Cancer Disparities in September 2010.

The group offers free oral, head and neck cancer screenings through a Tulane Mobile Hospital van and has conducted six community awareness events in New Orleans and LaPlace. Friedlander said the group is close to adding three more churches to the list, and two screening events were planned for April and May.

"The feedback from the religious leaders has

been positive, and the group has been meeting and making plans, such as addressing access to dental services because dental hygienists help screen for head and neck cancers," he said.

Friedlander said the group's long-term goal is to determine the barriers to health care that prevent residents from being detected early.

Friedlander, chairman of Tulane's otolaryngology department since 2009, said the department sees about 1,400 patient visits per year. Hurricane Katrina-related damage forced Friedlander, who was working at Charity Hospital before storm, to see patients in Lafayette and Baton Rouge for about a year, and he returned to New Orleans in 2006 to join Tulane.

"I'm a native New Orleanian, and the most rewarding part of my career was returning home after Katrina to help re-establish cancer care treatment in the city," he said. "I have always thought that after the storm, we don't just return our health system to the way it was, we make it better. We're doing that by expanding our cancer care services to as many people as we can in this city and the various communities that are most affected."•

— Tommy Santora



photo by Frank Aymami

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PHYSICIANS

# Amanda Jackson

**Title:** Ochsner Children's Health Center general pediatrician

**Age:** 35

**Family:** husband; two children

**Education:** bachelor's degree in microbiology, Louisiana State University; doctor of medicine, LSU School of Medicine

Pediatrician Dr. Amanda Jackson sees children from infancy to age 18 and wants to be a positive influence on them and a resource for their parents. She enjoys the bond she has formed with families and likes watching the children she treats as they grow.

But some of Jackson's toughest work involves child neglect and abuse.

"Child advocacy is a very necessary and often difficult aspect of general pediatrics," she said.

One of her happiest times in recent years was when she learned a caring foster family was adopting an abused child who had been one of her patients.

"It was amazing to see him thrive once he was placed in the family," she said.

Jackson said she is interested in challenging medical issues and enjoys teaching. She supervises and teaches outpatient pediatrics at the continuity clinic for pediatric medicine residents at Tulane University and Ochsner Health System. She also teaches general pediatrics to students enrolled in the University of Queensland-Ochsner Medical Education Program, where students who are enrolled in the Australian



photo by Frank Aymami

Dr. Amanda Jackson warms up patients Jayden Craig, 2, and his brother Keith, 15 months, at the Ochsner Medical Center for Children.

medicine and surgery programs come to Ochsner to complete the second two years of those curricula.

Jackson also participates in the Clinical Education Committee for Ochsner Clinical School, where she helped design the pediatric curriculum.

She has been a speaker for the past three year at Elmwood Fitness Center's "I Can Do It" program, which teaches obese children how to make healthy lifestyle choices and how to eat correctly.

"I really enjoy lecturing at the center, talking to parents and children about what they can do at home and school to combat obesity," which is difficult to treat in today's culture, she said.

Jackson became a doctor because "I wanted to find an area where I could help that was both fulfilling and intellectually challenging."•

— Susan Buchanan

PHYSICIANS

# Aaron Karlin

**Title:** Ochsner Children's Health Center pediatric physical medicine and rehabilitation section head

**Age:** 37

**Family:** wife, Cheri; children, Atticus, 3, Antoinette, 2

**Education:** bachelor's degree in biology and history, Macalester College; doctor of medicine, Mayo Clinic Medical School

Dr. Aaron Karlin admits that treating children with disabilities can be an emotionally overwhelming task.

"Particularly when a child gets very sick or even dies," he said. "That can be exceedingly hard and makes you very sad. But there are 10 times as many highs in the interactions I have with my kids ... The rewards, especially in working with the disabled populations, the children and their families, far outweigh the frustrations.

Karlin, section head of pediatric physical medicine and rehabilitation at Ochsner Children's Health Center, has forged a partnership with the St. Tammany Parish School Board to screen high school athletes through immediate post-concussion assessment and cognitive testing.

He also launched and is chairman of the nonprofit ACCESS, Adapting and Changing Children's Environments with Successful Solutions, which raises money for families with children who have disabilities.

"The money is used for purchasing things like car, van and home modifications, adaptive equipment and assistance devices, things that often get denied by Medicaid," Karlin said. "We also do things like an equipment exchange program and education."

The big need for a lot of those families is financial assistance, he said.

"And if they don't have the money, they lack getting certain equipment and devices and interventions that could modify the



photo by Tracie Morris Schaefer

Dr. Aaron Karlin plays with patient Chalys Martinez, 2, and her mother, Lazara, before an examination.

disease process of the child or help maintain their range of motion," he said.

Karlin has helped raise awareness of children with disabilities by organizing the Boo Fest at Lakeview Regional Medical Center in Covington. The Halloween event for children with disabilities has raised money to pay for grants that support vehicle modifications and other adaptive devices.

Last year, he helped host two Day in the Park events at Kid

Konnection that brought children with disabilities and special needs together to play while parents received medical information about their children.

"Whether it comes to helping these kids walk or ride or do daily activities, communicating in ways that they weren't able to before, what I do could not be more satisfying," Karlin said. •

— Garry Boulard



# Benjamin Lee

**Title:** Tulane University School of Medicine professor of urology and oncology; Tulane Medical Center director of robotics, laparoscopic and endourologic fellowship

**Age:** 42

**Family:** wife, Sharon; children, Ethan, 7, Sophia, 6

**Education:** bachelor's degree in biochemistry, Cornell University; doctor of medicine, Johns Hopkins University

Dr. Benjamin Lee plays with robots but not just for fun. His work in cryosurgical, laparoscopic and robotic surgical methods has increased the odds of survival for urologic cancer patients, as well as improved their quality of life. Through his efforts, they experience minimal pain and shortened post-treatment healing time.

"It's not something that develops overnight," Lee said of his research. "I've been working at refining these techniques and treatments for over 10 years now."

One such treatment is single-port laparoscopic renal cryosurgery, a method that uses a flexible camera and surgical equipment to deliver blasts of extremely cold to destroy tumors. The technique allows patients to retain 80 to 90 percent of their kidney after surgery.

"An additional technique that we've helped develop and refine is a robotic surgery for kidney cancer," said Lee, adding that the procedures have been used to treat more than 1,000 patients.

The procedure allows doctors to remove a growth and save 50 to 75 percent of the patient's kidney. Using the technology also helps patients avoid dialysis treatment.

Lee is also working on applying an ultramodern technique to treat recurring prostate cancer using high intensity focused ultrasound waves.

"Generally what happens is you have a probe and the ultrasound sends out a signal, bounces off the body part, and then it's read," Lee said. "If you use a different wavelength of energy, you can actually deliver treatment in the same manner."

The procedure allows doctors to attack tumors without making an incision on the patient. Rather, tumors are attacked with sound waves that rapidly heat up the tissue, similar to how kidney stones are removed.

Such methods also seek to avoid the negative repercussions of traditional cancer treatments such as radiation and chemotherapy, which impede the body's resiliency and thus slow healing time and patient recovery.

"I get a lot of satisfaction in helping patients," Lee said. "It's nice to be able to help those patients whose kidneys aren't working 100 percent, to be able to still treat their cancers and have them do well." •

— Leigh Stuart



photo by Frank Aymami

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# Hector Linares

**Title:** Terrebonne General Medical Center Rehabilitation Program medical director

**Age:** 59

**Family:** wife, Edith; children, Ana McCann, 34, Hector III, 32, Carmen, 24

**Education:** doctor of medicine, Universidad de El Salvador; master's degree in health administration, University of St. Francis

Dr. Hector Linares chose to specialize in physical medicine and rehabilitation in 1980 after fleeing El Salvador during the country's civil war.

He had hoped to return to help those recovering from battle wounds, but when the war ended 12 years later, Linares has grown comfortable in New Orleans, which had a culture similar to the one in his home country. He was already raising a family and enjoying a medical practice that allowed him to help the injured walk again.

"My idea was that there would be a lot of need for rehabilitation in a country with a civil war," he said, adding that physical therapy was not a very popular specialty at a time when quality of life issues were not always addressed.

"Now everybody loves it. I love it. There was a need for rehab here as well."

Linares, medical director at Terrebonne General Medical Center, teaches stroke management to resident physicians at the

hospital and at Louisiana State University School of Medicine, the Louisiana Rehabilitation Institute and Southern Baptist Hospital. He's a frequent speaker and author on stroke prevention.

With a passion for helping stroke victims regain their lives, Linares' leadership of Terrebonne General's rehab program garnered accreditation for its stroke specialty program from the Commission for Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities. It's one of just four facilities in Louisiana to earn the designation.

Linares gives credit to the team of specialists working there.

"I'm just a member of the team," Linares said.

The team's success is evident in the independence of former patients attending the center's twice annual patient reunions.

"It's very gratifying to see them. They tell you how well they've been doing, how much they're enjoying life," he said. •

— Diana Chandler



Dr. Hector Linares review patient charts with secretary Gail Hamilton.

photo by Tracie Morris Schaefer

# Matthew McElveen

**Title:** Slidell Memorial Regional Cancer Center medical director and medical oncologist

**Age:** 43

**Family:** wife, Linda; children, Jacquelyn, 17, Evan, 10, Eric, 7, Ethan, 5, Elena, 20 months

**Education:** bachelor's degree in medicine, University of New Orleans; doctor of medicine, Louisiana State University School of Medicine

As a general practitioner for cancer patients, Dr. Matthew McElveen says his biggest challenge has more to do with the personal aspect of his work than the medical component.

"Everything about medicine is a challenge," McElveen said. "The real work comes in applying the emotional aspect, especially with cancer patients. I think that you have to enjoy the patient contact and the one-on-one time you get during or after a treatment."

McElveen, medical director and medical oncologist at Slidell Memorial Hospital's Regional Cancer Center, said it was especially difficult for him in his first year as an oncologist because of lessons learned about the highs and the lows of the treatment.

"It's hard when you walk some folks through therapy and then they succumb to the disease," McElveen said. "I, for one, am a people person. I'm close to friends and you can get close to patients. There was a time where I thought maybe I was in the wrong field. I didn't understand my purpose, but you come to realize that a loss is going to happen. You come to grips with

the mortality aspect of it."

McElveen said that even though there are some times in his work where it hurts to lose a patient, he has come to understand his role and embraces it.

"I don't think you ever really get it," McElveen said, referring to the mindset of a cancer patient. "But you can't be afraid to get close because you want your patients to be comfortable with you to ease their worry."

McElveen has spent the past six years as an oncologist at Slidell Memorial. When SMH opened its new cancer center in January, McElveen, who was a driving force on the hospital's Cancer Program Working Group that made the center a reality, asked those attending the grand opening why people left the area for so many years to travel to places such as M.D. Anderson in Houston for cancer treatment.

"They left Louisiana (because) they lacked the confidence that the care was good enough here," McElveen told the group. "This building represents confidence people can have that we can treat you here." •

— Robin Shannon

Dr. Matthew McElveen examines patient Stephen Faught.



photo by Tracie Morris Schaefer

PHYSICIANS

# James McKinnie

**Title:** East Jefferson General Hospital clinical electrophysiologist

**Age:** 54

**Family:** wife, Nancy; children, James Steven, 22, Christopher Michael, 19

**Education:** bachelor's degree in chemical engineering, Louisiana State University; doctor of medicine, LSU School of Medicine

Dr. James McKinnie embraced his fascination with heart rhythms during his teen years while working as an orderly in the Coronary Care Center at West Jefferson Hospital. Today, he is one of the area's few specialists in clinical electrophysiology who performs procedures on individuals with heartbeat irregularities.

In January, McKinnie introduced cryoablation to the region. The procedure uses a minimally invasive catheter to access the heart's upper chambers and block electric signals that trigger irregular heartbeats. It was the second time the procedure had been performed in the United States.

Each week, McKinnie performs between 12 to 15 cryoablations, which equate to about seven hours in the lab per day. He recently conducted a successful procedure on a patient who had suffered atrial fibrillation, a type of abnormal heartbeat, for years.

"This field is very satisfying because you can actually fix



things and they (patients) are cured," he said.

McKinnie said most of the patients he treats are sent to him on a referral basis, and, more often than not, they are reaching out for a second opinion.

"I usually just try to reassure them (patients) that there's something available to them," McKinnie said.

For patients suffering with life-threatening conditions, the options available are much better than they were 10 to 20 years

ago, McKinnie said.

"The technology we have to fix these problems is growing. It is very satisfying to see how we can apply that to patients in curative ways," he said.

On the down side, McKinnie said technological limitations pose challenges, and he wishes he had access to the technology European cardiologists use. •

— *Nayita Wilson*

PHYSICIANS

# Mary Murphy

**Title:** NO/AIDS Task Force medical director

**Age:** 58

**Family:** single

**Education:** bachelor's degree in biology and Latin American studies, New York University; doctor of medicine, Juan N. Corpas School of Medicine, Bogota, Colombia

Dr. Mary Murphy made a career change in 2007, and the NO/AIDS Task Force has benefited from her decision ever since.

Murphy spent 10 years as medical director of the adult clinic at the LSU Interim Public Hospital's HIV Outpatient Program, which during her tenure grew to be the largest provider of HIV/AIDS-related health care in the Gulf South Region with more than 3,200 patients.

But Murphy wanted to make more of a difference in the lives of HIV-infected patients beyond medications and treatments.

The nonprofit NO/AIDS Task Force, under Murphy's direction as medical director and full-time physician, has grown over the past four years from a clinic with 200 patients to a full-service, one-stop shop with two physicians, a team of nurses and 100 employees assisting more than 900 patients. The services include case management, education workshops, mental and behavioral health needs, and food and housing assistance.

"I saw an opportunity to expand services for HIV-infected clients in an open and innovative atmosphere, and I wanted to meet that challenge head on," Murphy said.

There about 3,700 people who live with HIV in the New Orleans area, according to the Louisiana Office of Public Health. Being fluent in Spanish also has helped her and nonprofit workers communicate with an the increasing number of Spanish-speaking clients who have come to the clinic since Hurricane Katrina.

She also has added visits from medical specialists to the clinic's lineup.

One success story Murphy is proud of involved a woman in her 50s who had been in and out of a clinic for four years before visiting the NO/AIDS Task Force. She suffered from substance abuse, financial problems and was in the very advanced stages of AIDS, Murphy said.

"She was completely uncontrolled and on her way to death, but we got her in here, got her back on her medications regularly and worked with her on housing through Project Lazarus," Murphy said. "For the past two years, she's on her way to a more healthy person with improved self esteem, taking her medications regularly, rising T-cells, undetectable viral load and just a great transformation. •

— *Tommy Santora*



photo by Tracie Morris Schaefer

# Wanda Robinson

**Title:** Ochsner Clinic-Algiers family physician; John Ehret High School Student Health Center medical director  
**Age:** 43

**Family:** husband, James; children, Nigel Andrew, 14, Jaelyn Deshon, 11

**Education:** bachelor's degree in chemistry, Xavier University; doctor of medicine, Louisiana State University School of Medicine

Dr. Wanda Robinson is a family physician devoted to making sure the West Bank is healthy. She treats children and adults at Ochsner Health Center in Algiers and serves as medical director at her alma mater, John Ehret High School in Marrero.

Robinson, who has been with Ochsner's West Bank campus for 13 years, moved her practice to Algiers after Hurricane Katrina once the clinic reopened in 2008. She educates her patients about prevention and tries to manage stages of their diseases to avoid long-term complications.

"I believe in treating the whole person and taking into consideration their total well being," she said.

One of the challenges Robinson says she faces is treating the elderly, whose medical conditions can become more complex as they age.

"We're seeing people live well into their mid 80s and 90s these days, which is a good trend," she said. "I am often limited because more time and resources are needed to care for them."

Robinson said she treasures the relationships with her patients and feels she has grown personally by getting to know them.

"I'll never forget the time I met one patient whom I've treated since my second year of residency. She was well dressed and her hair was pretty, with lots of curls."

Toward the end of that first appointment, Robinson mentioned to the patient that she hadn't removed one her hair rollers.

"Of course, she was very embarrassed but we continue to laugh about it years later," she said.

In addition to her clinic work, Robinson also sees students at the John Ehret High School Health Center for a half day each week. The center, operated through a partnership involving the Jefferson Parish Public School System, Ochsner Health System, Baptist Community Ministries and the state Office of Public Health, examines students and educates them on lifestyle decisions.

"We perform sports (screenings) and routine physical exams, and treat acute and chronic conditions such as diabetes and asthma," Robinson said.

She also devotes time to working at the Faith Health Alliance, a free-standing clinic in Mid-City that provides health care for the uninsured. •

— Susan Buchanan



photo by Frank Aymami

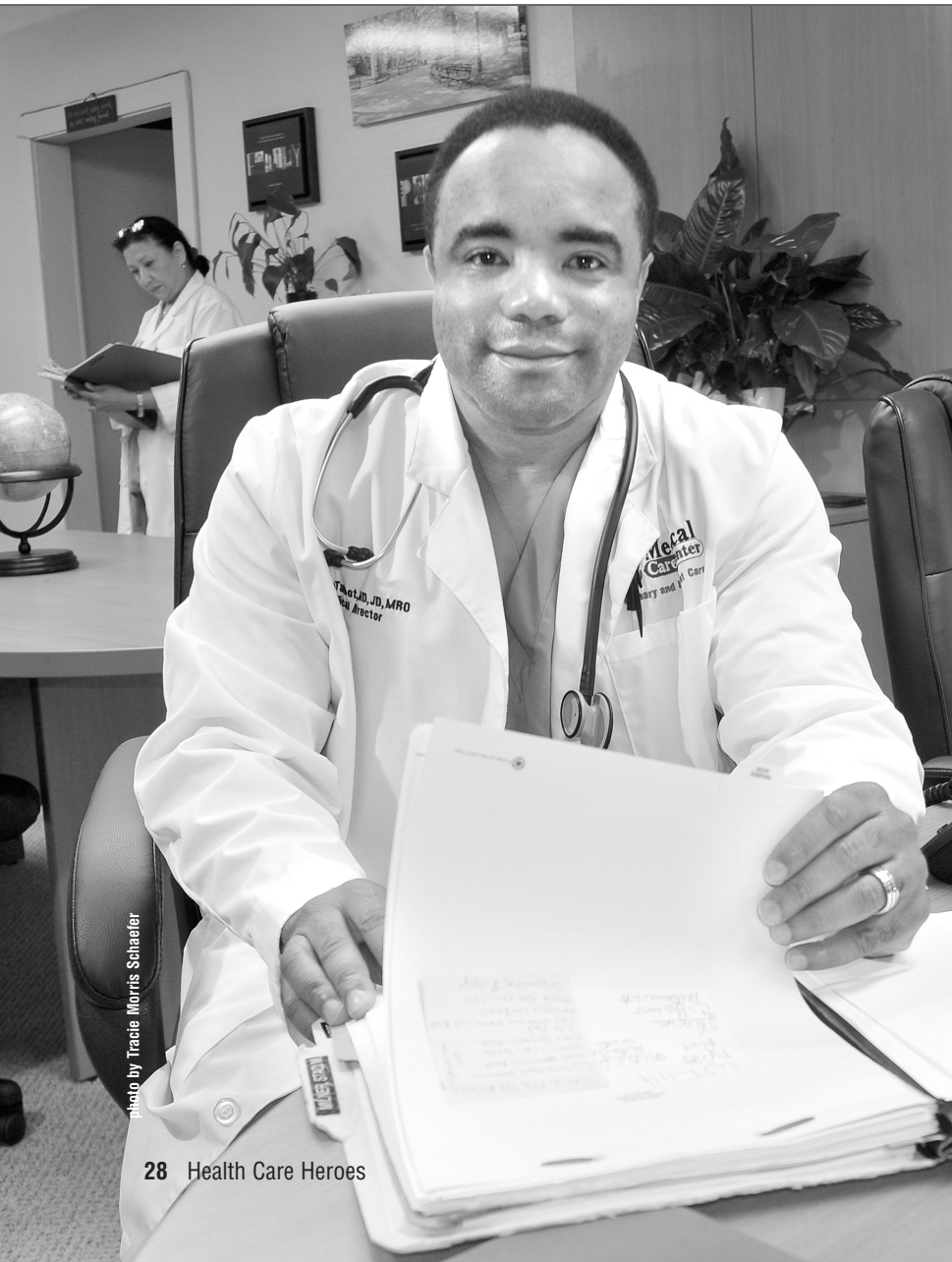


photo by Tracie Morris Schaefer

# Adrian Talbot

**Title:** Medical Care Center medical director

**Age:** 45

**Family:** wife, Andrea; children, Jennifer, 23, Alexandria, 18, Erin, 12, Adrian Jr., 11, Deionisio, 10

**Education:** bachelor's degree in chemistry; Fordham University; doctor of medicine, F.E. Hebert School of Medicine; juris doctor, Loyola University College of Law

Despite the negative effects of the recession, Dr. Adrian Talbot is committed to keeping the Medical Care Center dedicated to its original mission of providing care to those with limited financial resources.

"We curtailed the program as it was originally conceived," Talbot said of the center he founded in 2005 as a part-time practice that quickly evolved into a full-service medical practice with an emphasis on primary care and substance use disorders services.

"After Katrina, we saw every kind of medical problem you could imagine. The most striking thing was the amount of people who were de-toxing and withdrawing, people using various kinds of substances."

And many of them, Talbot said, did not have money.

In response, he decided the facility would treat patients in financial need for free. That included any variety of Katrina-related traumas.

"If someone had a surgical issue because they hurt themselves trying to put their house back

together, but they didn't have the money, we paid for whatever surgery was needed," he said.

For about three years, the Medical Care Center, which now treats up to 40 patients a day, maintained its indigent treatment policy primarily because the patients who had insurance were actually paying for those who didn't, Talbot said.

"Today, because of the downturn, we're seeing only a handful of people who have no insurance," he said. "It's nowhere near the hundreds of cases we used to treat."

In addition to his medical work, Talbot also volunteers with Habitat for Humanity, Boys and Gils Club, the city of Slidell's Housing Authority and the Christian Immunization Program, which prepares people who are traveling overseas for mission trips.

Talbot, who has also served as a Navy commander, has one immediate goal.

"I want to get us back to the model where we can see everyone who comes in here, regardless of their ability to pay." •

— Garry Boulard

PROFESSIONALS/ADMINISTRATORS

# Judy Brown

**Title:** East Jefferson General Hospital executive vice president and chief financial officer

**Age:** 58

**Family:** husband, Terry; children, Michael, 38, Matthew 35, Josh, 28

**Education:** bachelor's degree in accounting, University of Texas at Tyler; master's degree in health care administration, Trinity University

Finance and quality health care go hand in glove, says Judy Brown, executive vice president and chief financial officer of East Jefferson General Hospital.

"You can't be financially healthy if you don't have quality care," she said. "I don't think that you can have good, quality care if you don't support it with your dollar."

As CFO, Brown executes financial reporting and cash and debt management for EJGH. She's also responsible for care and supply management, outpatient services and information technology.

One of Brown's primary objectives is to secure money for the hospital and maintain its financial health. A financial surplus also provides an important cushion for EJGH in the event of an extended operating loss, such as the aftermath of a hurricane.

"The 2010 year was spent on trying to find ways to cut costs and increase revenue," Brown said. "To make sure that we stay financially healthy, we weren't in default of any of our bond covenants, things like that."

Brown has successfully overcome numerous challenges in her one year with EJGH. For example, when the hospital lost a key social service block grant, Brown rose to the occasion.

"I had a really quick ramp up to try to make up the difference in that \$22 million of funding," she said of the challenge. "That was a really tough recovery"

The hospital's community disaster loans also became due, and the administration was going to have to start paying it back or find a way for it be forgiven.

"Once they were successfully forgiven, that was about \$68 million of debt we could take off our books," she said.

Outside of healthy finances, though, Brown said the main focus is on providing top-notch health care.

"I want to make sure that the quality of care is the best quality you could possibly have in this market," Brown said. "I feel that's important to the community."•

— Leigh Stuart



photo by Frank Aymami

PROFESSIONALS/ADMINISTRATORS

# Steven Brown

**Title:** West Jefferson Medical Center senior director of emergency medical services and emergency preparedness

**Age:** 44

**Family:** wife, Karen; children, Alex David, 19, Ashley, 14

**Education:** associate's degree in general studies, Delgado Community College; pursuing bachelor's degree in business, University of New Orleans

In the midst of the chaos of the Deepwater Horizon oil rig explosion, Steven Brown reached beyond his administrative offices at West Jefferson Medical Center to establish medical services in Grand Isle.

He set up a first aid tent for oil spill cleanup crews that provided free basic medical care for 20 days. Steven also opened three 24-hour care centers staffed with a nurse and paramedic that operated until late October. His work helped hundreds in the months after the disaster.

Brown provided personnel for the tents and oversaw their operation while continuing his daily duties at West Jefferson. BP covered other costs through subcontractors, he said.

"I wanted to help the community in southeast Louisiana," Brown said.

His desire to help others was heightened during his early days as a firefighter when he had to perform CPR on both of his grandfathers in two separate emergencies. His maternal grandfather had congestive heart failure, and his paternal grandfather suffered an aortic aneurysm. He

responded to both emergency calls and performed CPR before paramedics arrived. Both grandfathers died, but the tragedies steered Brown to the health care industry.

"It made me want to be able to do more," he said. "It made me that much more passionate about my job."

He completed paramedical training and made the switch from firefighting 23 years ago. He has delivered more than 100 babies and responded to numerous accidents and disasters.

Even though he is now senior director of emergency medical services and emergency preparedness at WJMC, which takes 1,700 emergency calls a month, Brown still responds to emergencies with paramedic units when his workload allows.

He teaches 10 to 12 CPR classes a year for the American Heart Association, some at no cost, and conducts community outreach education programs on the proper use of the 911 emergency line. •

— Diana Chandler



photo by Frank Aymami

PROFESSIONALS/ADMINISTRATORS

# Jason Cobb

**Title:** Lakeview Regional Medical Center CEO

**Age:** 40

**Family:** wife, Jaime; children, Andrew, 10, Alex, 7, Aiden, 3

**Education:** bachelor's degree in business administration, University of Arkansas; master's degree in business administration, Texas A&M University; master's degree in health administration, Washington University of St. Louis School of Medicine

Teamwork, respect and an emphasis on patient care are the three foundations Lakeview Regional Medical Center CEO Jason Cobb emphasizes on a daily basis. They are what put the Covington area hospital in the top 10 in employee satisfaction among 110 facilities in the Hospital Corporation of America system.

"My goal has been to produce a facility that is a great place to come to work each day," Cobb said. "I enjoy the business aspect of what I do, but I have always been driven by the humanistic element that makes this industry the greatest industry to work in."

Cobb began his career as a health care executive in 1997 at Willis-Knighton Health System in Shreveport, where he served as a vice president and later CEO.

He also held management level positions at West Houston Medical Center and Tulane University Hospital and Clinic in New Orleans before joining Lakeview in 2007, where he oversees a 172-bed facility.

He was instrumental in developing the

recently opened Heart Center and Surgical Institute, both which opened in the spring of 2009, and helped establish the hospital's neonatal transport team that started in December. Cobb also oversaw the development and January 2010 opening of Lakeview's pediatric and adult rehabilitation and sports medicine team.

Cobb said medical management was not always where he saw himself after college. He said he was always interested in pursuing a business-related field, but a stint at a St. Louis hospital changed his point of view.

"I had the opportunity to work as an intern at the Christian Hospital System there and I absolutely enjoyed it," Cobb said. "The nice part about being in the Covington/Mandeville area is that it is truly small enough to allow you to really get involved in the community."

In the community, Cobb serves on the United Way Leadership Council and is also a member of the Committee of 100 for Economic Development in St. Tammany Parish. •

— Robin Shannon



photo by Trace Morris Schaefer

PROFESSIONALS/ADMINISTRATORS

# Michelle Gaiennie

**Title:** Grace House executive director

**Age:** 43

**Family:** single; standard poodle, Chase

**Education:** bachelor's degree in political science; Louisiana State University; master's degree in social work, Tulane University

Michelle Gaiennie's love of social work stems from her father, Buzzy Gaiennie, who has worked at Bridge House for more than 25 years and is now its CEO.

After graduating from Louisiana State University in 1994, Gaiennie joined the organization. In 2003, she was named executive director of Grace House, the only residential substance abuse treatment center in the Greater New Orleans area exclusively for women.

During her tenure, she has worked with Bridge House to increase the number of treatment beds for women. In 2010, Michelle oversaw Grace House's expansion to 1160 Camp St., the previous location of Bridge House, increasing its bed count from 25 to 70.

She evacuated from New Orleans for Hurricane Katrina with her patients and describes returning to the city as a stressful experience.

"I didn't know the future of Grace House and my home had been destroyed," she said. "Then something really wonderful came into my life."

She was introduced to a group of acupuncturists who came to the city to provide treatment for first responders. She then traveled to South Bronx, N.Y., to study the acupuncture detoxification, which is often used in substance abuse treatment programs.

In 2009, Michelle was in the first class that was granted acupuncture certification in Louisiana. Acupuncture is also special to her because it has allowed her to maintain contact with the clients after she moved into an administrative role.

"Often you can instantly see an impact on the person you are treating because they are so relaxed."

Michelle fulfills her love of sports serving on the Sugar Bowl Executive Committee and is also co-chairwoman of its entertainment committee. She will serve on the NCAA's Final Four organization committee for the 2012 event in New Orleans. •

— L. Kasimu Harris

photo by Frank Aymami



PROFESSIONALS/ADMINISTRATORS

# Bob Hawley

**Title:** Slidell Memorial Hospital CEO

**Age:** 64

**Family:** wife, Freida; children, Robert, Chuck, Jessica, Joey and James

**Education:** bachelor's degree in political science, University of Oklahoma; master's degree in business administration, San Diego State University

Slidell Memorial Hospital CEO Bob Hawley was riding on the elevator on day with a woman who began to talk about treatments for her rare form of cancer. She was saying how she was fortunate to get all her treatments at Slidell Memorial and not have to travel elsewhere.

"She didn't know me from Adam, or that I was CEO or anything," Hawley said. "We were just making chit chat. When I stepped out of that elevator, I said, 'Bada Bing, that's exactly what we're trying to do here and it's working.'"

One of Hawley's top successes at Slidell Memorial since becoming CEO in 2000 has been building the Regional Cancer Center, a \$19 million, 51,500-square-foot facility that opened in January and has three floors of advanced technology such as image-guided radiation therapy, nanotechnology for drug delivery, specialized ultrasound and genetic testing.

Hawley spearheaded the project since 2004 when he urged the community to approve a \$17.5 million tax milage to pay for the building.

"If they approved those bonds, I told them no one in our community would ever have to travel to another state again for cancer diagnosis and treatment," he said. "We are drawing

patients from throughout the Gulf South, and we wanted to be the one place where patients could go to visit every specialist and get every service they'd need in their cancer journey."

When Hawley was named CEO, the 150-bed and 900-employee hospital was in a rough financial state with just three days cash on hand, he said.

Hawley said the hospital now has 136 days cash on hand. Following the cancer center project, SMH plans to expand with a \$25 million, two-story emergency room building with 22 emergency beds and 36 private hospital rooms. The hospital currently has 14 emergency beds.

Hawley said the project still needs voter approval for a bond issue but could be open by 2013.

"I'm a big believer in showing our employees and the community everything we do and everything we're about as a hospital," Hawley said. "That lays the groundwork of trust, and that support from our community got us out of the hole we were in 10 years ago and enabled us to build a hospital that fully services the needs of our community."•

— Tommy Santora



photo by Trace Morris Schaefer

PROFESSIONALS/ADMINISTRATORS

# Birgit Haylock

**Title:** Children's Hospital Medical Practice Corp. director

**Age:** 44

**Family:** children, Genevieve, 12, Christopher, 9

**Education:** bachelor's degree in history and international relations, Tufts University

Birgit Haylock worked her way up through the Branks to become director of Children's Hospital's Medical Practice Corp. after a career as a professional chef. In a typical week, she oversees purchasing, receiving and construction of new clinics, and troubleshoots problems such as telephone outages.

CHMPC is a group of 13 pediatric clinics at 15 locations throughout the greater New Orleans area. In other words, she oversees all activities at Children's Hospital's outreach clinics that are focused on providing care for the less fortunate.

"I took a job here 12 years ago as a secretary when the insurance company where I was an administrative manager closed," Haylock said. Management at Children's thought she was overqualified for the secretarial position, Haylock said, but she needed insurance for her family.

"My efforts were recognized and I was promoted to accounts receivable analyst, then to physicians' billing manager. Six years later, I was named director."

A Rhode Island native, Haylock was in culi-

nary school when she first visited New Orleans. She relocated two decades ago, got married and worked as a chef at the Bistro at Maison de Ville and NOLA.

After having two children, she said she decided to change careers to "something more family-friendly."

One of her biggest challenges now is getting patients' medical records converted to an electronic system.

"The conversion process has been tough for some of our employees, but having electronic records will add to the ease and quality of reporting in the long run," Haylock said. "And it's required by many insurance carriers."

Haylock has seen the fruits of her labor as CHMPC's director. This year the Medical Group Management Association recognized the clinics as some of the best performing in the country.

"I worked on that application process and we are very proud of the accomplishment."•

— Susan Buchanan



photo by Frank Aymann

# Felice Hill

**Title:** Daughters of Charity Services of New Orleans medical social work case manager

**Age:** 42

**Family:** husband, Fred; children, Cody, 17, Dylan, 10, Kayley, 8

**Education:** bachelor's degree in psychology, University of New Orleans; master's degree in social work, Southern University of New Orleans

In a time of reduced social services and acute homelessness, Daughters of Charity Services of New Orleans case manager Felice Hill devotes her energy to matching patients with available resources.

"The homeless population in the New Orleans area has increased dramatically in the last several years," said Hill, who also cofounded the Forgotten Angels Program. It provides gifts and meals during the winter holidays to more than 200 children throughout the area.

"Before there were already a lot of people who were just making their way," she said. "But now we have people who were affected by the oil spill and the downturn in the economy, not to mention the people who came in but didn't find jobs rebuilding the city."

That means Hill and her colleagues are trying to help people who were homeless before Hurricane Katrina, those who became homeless after the storm and now those who are homeless because of the economy.

Hill coordinates the DCSNO medical and social services, working with the group's

mobile unit, which provides medical care and assistance to nearly every pocket of the city.

All of the homeless shelters in the New Orleans area refer to Daughters of Charity, and in return DCSNO coordinates its efforts with agencies such as the city's Healthcare for the Homeless program, which provides free care.

"When we can't match a person with a service, we try to piecemeal it with a variety of other organizations that can give a little here and there," Hill said. "It's frustrating because we feel that we are not doing enough, but even a little is better than nothing at all."

She recently worked with a homeless 5-year-old kidney transplant patient and his mother to coordinate medical care for the boy and find a place for them to stay. The mother gave up her family home and job to relocate to another city where her son could receive treatment. When they returned to New Orleans, Hill and her team helped coordinate medical services through Tulane Medical Center and housing through the Harry Thompson Center. •

— Garry Boulard



photo by Frank Aymami

Daughters of Charity Services medical social work case manager Felice Hill, right, talks with Albert Winding, who is staying at Ozanam Inn.



# Howard Mielke

**Title:** Tulane University research director

**Age:** 70

**Family:** wife, Tina; daughter, Beverly, 29

**Education:** bachelor's degree in biology, MacAlister College; doctor of geography, University of Michigan

Tulane University research professor Howard Mielke has spent his career investigating ways to make the world safer.

During his youth, the use of highly detrimental pesticides and atmospheric testing of atomic and nuclear weapons was common practice. Since then, Mielke has pursued a lifetime of studies in geography, mapping and environmental sciences.

Mielke's career highlights include testifying before the U.S. Senate on the problem of leaded gasoline, and his research helped shape policy to remove the toxic additive from fuel.

But Mielke said he's particularly proud of his work mapping lead pollution density in major cities throughout Louisiana.

"We know that the children in the city of New Orleans have been lead poisoned for a long time," he said. "I am now working toward making every child care center (and) play area in the city of New Orleans lead-safe for children."

To help solve the problem, Mielke has tested a quick and inexpensive way to remediate lead exposure in childcare centers and school playgrounds. The solution, funded by the Greater New Orleans Foundation Environmental Fund,

involves bolstering existing soil with clean sediment, which can be harvested as such sediment accumulates in areas along the Mississippi River during times of high water.

"We have to know that there's a contamination problem in the backyard. Children playing in bare soils could be excessively exposed to a substance like lead without anybody even realizing," he said, explaining later that his own daughter had been unknowingly lead poisoned as a child.

His research, which has also helped change regulations for house painting in New Orleans, has supported revised lead laws in Louisiana, Michigan, Canada, Norway, the European Union, Mexico and Peru.

"I've been delighted and awarded by fact that people are paying attention," Mielke said of his work. "More than half the human population lives in cities, so we must be careful about the quality of the urban environment, to make sure that it supports and sustains the well-being of human beings. If it doesn't ... we have major problems on Earth ahead of us." •

— Leigh Stuart



PROFESSIONALS/ADMINISTRATORS

# David Robinson

**Title:** Doctors Imaging Services imaging services director

**Age:** 48

**Family:** wife, Sandra; son Ben, 15

**Education:** associate's degree in radiological technology, Delgado Community College

Patients go to Doctors Imaging Services with broken bones, torn cartilage or even eye trauma. But no matter how varied their problems, they're all anxious about getting an MRI scan.

That's when David Robinson climbs into the other end of the tube, referred to as "the magnet."

"I'll put a hand on their shoulder and let them know I'm there, and that I can get them out," Robinson said. "I like the hands-on working with patients." He's even read Bible passages to one anxious cancer patient during a scan.

Robinson manages Doctors Imaging Services' Uptown and Metairie offices and maintains its network of machines, including digital X-rays and the latest MRI and CT scanners that can take 3-D images of bones, tissue and the circulatory system and download those images onto computer discs.

"I understand technology at the advanced level because we have to answer clinical questions with this imaging equipment," said Robinson, who ensures that the images are radiologist-ready.

He's known as such an expert that local hospital oncology departments have asked him to develop technical protocols to

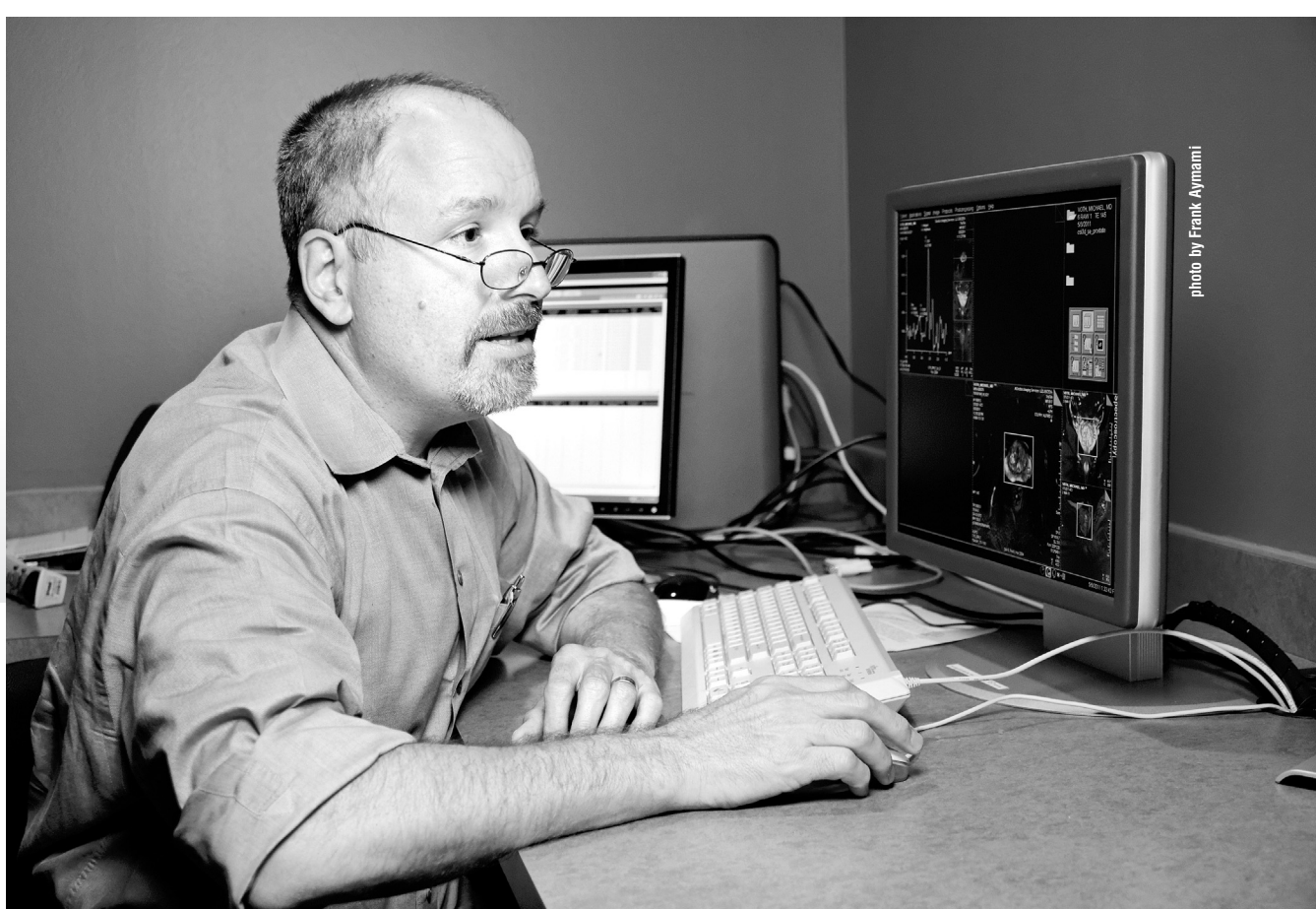


photo by Frank Aymami

improve radiation therapy planning, using MRI and CT scanners.

Robinson stumbled into this career out of high school, where he had been leaning toward forestry. Then his mother became ill, and Robinson wanted to stay near her. A friend suggested he go into the emerging field of radiology.

"When I was born in 1962, they were still injecting X-ray contrast liquid into your cranial arteries to detect brain tumors," he said. The field didn't truly advance until computer technology became prevalent in the late 1970s.

Robinson said he stays on top of radiology's changing tech-

nology, demands and possibilities through conferences and constant training. Much of what he learns is about safety.

For example, the MRI is so powerful that someone with an undetectable metal shaving in his eye could have it sucked out by the giant magnet, he said.

But the biggest risk Robinson's patients fear is claustrophobia. "Our 80-year-old patients look at the MRI scanner and say it makes too many banging noises," Robinson said. "But it also takes really good pictures."•

— Anne Berry

PROFESSIONALS/ADMINISTRATORS

# Joan Rooney

**Title:** Ochsner Medical Center-West Bank assistant vice president of primary care/women's services

**Age:** 56

**Family:** husband, James; children, Aaron, 35, Sean 31, Matthew, 25

**Education:** bachelor's degree in allied health, University of St. Francis; master's degree in nursing, Loyola University

Most people associate labor and delivery nursing with cuddly newborn babies. However, not all tears cried in the delivery room emanate from joy.

As a former labor and delivery nurse at Ochsner Medical Center-West Bank, Joan Rooney is all too familiar with the darker side of labor and delivery nursing.

"It's a very emotional time and you become very tied to that family and you feel for them," Rooney said. "It's very difficult because as a nurse you want to make everything all better."

Still, Rooney said she cherishes the time she spent working in the delivery room. For her, participating in successful deliveries was extremely rewarding.

"You're seeing their first child being born," Rooney said. "You are a part of their lifelong memory and to me that was more empowering than anything."

Rooney was promoted from a labor and delivery nurse to direct the mother/baby unit in 1999. She took over her current position as assistant vice

president of primary care/women's services about two years ago and admits she kind of misses working with patients.

"Now that I'm in administration, I'm not at the bedside doing that direct hands-on anymore," she said.

Rooney says being an administrator still allows her to do what she loves most — serving patients. All health care providers have a responsibility to partner with one another and come up with solutions to meet the needs of the community, she said.

"We can no longer work as one individual facility practicing health care," she said. "We have to work together to connect our resources so that patients can be on a continuum of care."

Rooney says her calling has always been to serve others, which leads her to volunteer with organizations such as Café Hope and New Orleans Medical Mission Services.

"Every day that I come to work, even now that I'm a manager, I know this is where I need to be."•

— Tamara Moffett



photo by Tracie Morris Schaefer

PROFESSIONALS/ADMINISTRATORS

# Roxane Townsend

**Position:** Interim Louisiana State University Public Hospital interim CEO; LSU System Office for Health Affairs and Medical Education assistance vice president; LSU Health Care Services Division CEO

**Age:** 53

**Education:** bachelor's degree in nursing, Duquesne University; doctor of medicine, LSU School of Medicine

Dr. Roxane Townsend said her passion to work in the medical field dates back to age 9 when she underwent an emergency appendectomy and had the chance to see medical employees in action.

"I think at that point my plan was to become a nurse," Townsend said. "I went after my nursing degree at Duquesne and worked as an ICU nurse."

Eventually, Townsend switched gears and steered toward the management side. After college, Townsend took a job at Humana where she trained to be in management.

"I have learned that I can't keep my opinions to myself," Townsend said with a laugh. "When I see a problem, I want to fix it. That's where the management drive comes from."

She served as secretary of the Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals under Gov. Kathleen Blanco, and now as interim CEO of the Louisiana State University Public Hospital, a position she has held since 2008, Townsend manages a staff of more than 7,000 at a facility that admits about 35,000 patients annually.

She also is assistance vice president of the LSU System Office for Health Affairs and Medical Education and CEO of the LSU Health Care Services Division.

But Townsend says her biggest joy is walking the halls to speak with employees and patients.

"I love hearing the excitement for what they are doing day in-day out," Townsend said. "I also make it a point to walk through the waiting room and talk to patients, many of whom have no other option other than coming to us. It's about taking care of people at the bedside."

Townsend said she has some concerns for the future regarding the challenges of funding and financial resources, as there are times where needs outweigh the resources at hand.

"It has become a real balancing act for many hospitals," Townsend said. "The needs will always be there, but how do you pay for it? We try to do our best to get the best value for what we spend in tax dollars."•

— Robin Shannon



photo by Frank Aymami

PROFESSIONALS/ADMINISTRATORS

# Julie Willheit

**Title:** Doctors Imaging Services senior CT technologist

**Age:** 51

**Family:** husband, Randy; children, Jennifer, 28, Randy Jr., 27, Nicholas, 18; grandson, Dylan, 3

**Education:** certificate, Charity School of Radiology

To learn about Julie Willheit, you should ask someone else.

She's quick to praise her coworkers, saying her gratification comes from holding a patient's hand when they get the worst information or watching them beat cancer. She'll also tell you about the people she and the staff at Chalmette Medical Hospital saved during Hurricane Katrina.

What Willheit won't tell you about are the protocols she has developed for plastic surgeons during her 30 years in the imaging field.

In conjunction with Doctors Imaging Services, where she is senior CT specialist, her procedures have aided women recovering from breast cancer. Willheit has worked with plastic surgeons who focus on microsurgical breast reconstruction to create protocols for perforator flaps, which uses the body's tissue and eliminates the need for implants or sacrificing muscles in the abdomen.

The protocol involves scanning the patient 24 hours before surgery to help the surgeon select the

best tissue to be used in reconstruction.

Willheit inherited an interest in medicine from her mother, who was a registered nurse and wanted one of her children to pursue the profession.

"As a small child, I was caring for animals, so I knew I wanted to do it."

Her son, Nicholas, a graduating high school senior will major in pre-medicine in college.

Despite 30 years in the industry, Willheit plans to keep working.

"I don't want to retire and I'm not a stay-at-home type person," she said.

During Hurricane Katrina, she left home for her other family at Chalmette Medical Hospital. She remained there for five days until the last of 55 patients, 100 staff members and their families, and about 250 other people rescued from rooftops were evacuated.

Willheit worked at CMH for 22 years and knew the entire community.

"I wasn't going to leave them," she said, her voice cracking with emotion. •

— L. Kasimu Harris

Doctors Imaging Services senior CT technologist Julie Willheit prepares Sara Loewy for a scan.



photo by Frank Aymami

# 2011

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**VOLUNTEERS**

# Jack Bowman

**Title:** Slidell Memorial Hospital volunteer

**Age:** 83

**Family:** single

**Education:** Crystal Spring (Miss.) Consolidated High School graduate

Slidell resident Jack Bowman hadn't been retired for long after working more than three decades with Shell Oil Co. when he decided to take up his second, unpaid career in 1989.

He had recently returned to Slidell from his native Crystal Springs, Miss., after spending months as a caretaker for his mother when he signed up to volunteer at Slidell Memorial Hospital.

Bowman previously had been a patient in the hospital and said the demeanor of the staff and quality of the care he had received impressed them.

"I decided there was more to life than pulling weeds in the flower bed," he said

Bowman is in his 23rd year of volunteering with the hospital and surpassed 20,000 hours of service in December.

His work is varied but includes general office duties such as maintaining reports and computer records. He also works with the volunteer coordinator on special projects and helps in the gift shop, where he first started as a volunteer bookkeeper.

"I'm still the problem solver for the gift shop," he said.

Bowman counts among his proudest moments at SMH his work after Hurricane Katrina getting the gift shop back up and running.

"We didn't have people coming back as quickly as we had hoped," he said. "I went in and reopened the shop. (Soon) it was doing as well or better than it was doing before the storm."

Bowman has never married nor had children.

"I never did see the light, I guess," he joked, adding that hospital staff and volunteers have become his surrogate family members. They're one of the main reasons he has stuck around so long.

"When you're active, it keeps you younger than it does just to sit at the house and hibernate."

Bowman, who at 83 sounds as though he could be in his 50s, said he has no plans to give up his volunteer work any time soon.

"I'm gonna try to make it ... the same amount of time in an unpaid position as I did in a paid position," he said. "I've only got 10 more years to go."•

— *Emilie Bahr*



photo by Tracie Morris Schaefer

photo by Tracie Morris Schaefer



Jerry Lambert, president of the Lakeview Regional Medical Center Volunteer Auxiliary, helps Laurie Spurlin into the hospital.

**VOLUNTEERS**

# Jerry Lambert

**Title:** Lakeview Regional Medical Center Volunteer Auxiliary president

**Age:** 71

**Family:** wife, LeRene; children: Kent, 43, Jodi, 39

**Education:** bachelor's degree in business administration, Miami University

When most people think of getting into the health care industry, 63 isn't the typical median age. But that didn't stop Jerry Lambert. He's president of Lakeview Regional Medical Center's Volunteer Auxiliary and donates time at Mary Perkins Cancer Center in Baton Rouge.

He spent 28 years working for an aluminum company before retiring as a general manager in 2000. While he said he had always looked forward to retirement, he quickly found himself bored and wanting to help other people.

"I thought I would just play golf and do all the things you never have time to do when you're working, and that got tiresome," he said. "I knew I wanted to do something, and I didn't know what. Volunteering filled that void."

His neighbor convinced him to try it out in 2003, and everything fell into place.

"I can't imagine coming home on a Thursday and not having been there ... sometimes (with) aches and pains and tired but always a good feeling knowing you helped people," he said, referring to his time at Lakeview Regional.

Recently, the auxiliary has focused on recruiting younger volunteers, even having programs in the

summer to involve high school students looking to make a difference. But, in the end, patient interaction is what Lambert values most.

"At Lakeview, it's the interaction with the patients, especially the young ones," he said. "I really got into that because you see them come in tired and not feeling well ... getting them to smile makes you feel better."

But it's not just about smiles. Though he was restricted from providing specifics, Lambert said a donation his center made was immediately linked to saving at least one life last year.

"We made the donation that made the person get connected through an organization to help someone get life-saving transplants," he said.

This year marks Lambert's fourth year as auxiliary president, and even though he's term limited, he said he'll continue to volunteer and encourages anyone with an interest in volunteering to do so.

"I'm very proud of our 98 volunteers because all of them give of themselves," he said. "I encourage people to do it, and I thank the hospital for the opportunity."•

— *Travis Andrews*

# Clarisse Schleichardt

**Title:** East Jefferson General Hospital volunteer

**Age:** 87

**Family:** children, Jane, 59, Julie, 53, Jennifer, 52

**Education:** bachelor's degree in biology, H. Sophie Newcomb College; master's degree in supervision and administration, University of New Orleans

Outsiders may find the often hectic world of a hospital emergency room bewildering. But for Clarisse Schleichardt, it's inspirational.

"Things do get wild sometimes," said Schleichardt, an 87-year-old volunteer at East Jefferson General Hospital. "But I like it when we're busy."

Schleichardt has always kept busy. Before signing on with EJGH in 1992, she worked as a special education teacher for the Jefferson Parish Public School System for roughly 30 years.

"When I was in college I wanted to be a doctor. And back then you either had the money to go to medical school or you didn't," Schleichardt said. "After I graduated from Newcomb, I went to work at the Eye, Ears, Nose and Throat Hospital, which no longer exists. I read all the textbooks I could find and took and passed the exam at Charity, qualifying me to become a registered

medical technologist."

Schleichardt said she had always wanted to do something in the medical field, and even though she ended up in education, she never abandoned that yearning.

That's why, she says, it was an easy decision to become a volunteer when she was 68 years old, a time when the vast majority of her contemporaries were moving out of the workplace.

Volunteering in EJGH's Emergency and Diagnostic Outpatient departments, Schleichardt said she does whatever is needed.

"When the unit secretary is gone or busy, I answer the phone," she said. "I also do packets and am responsible for getting all of the forms together."

She puts in 9 1/2 hours a week at EJGH.

"I think at my age that is pretty much all I can give it," Schleichardt said, "but I really wish I could do more."•

— Garry Boulard



photo by Frank Aymami

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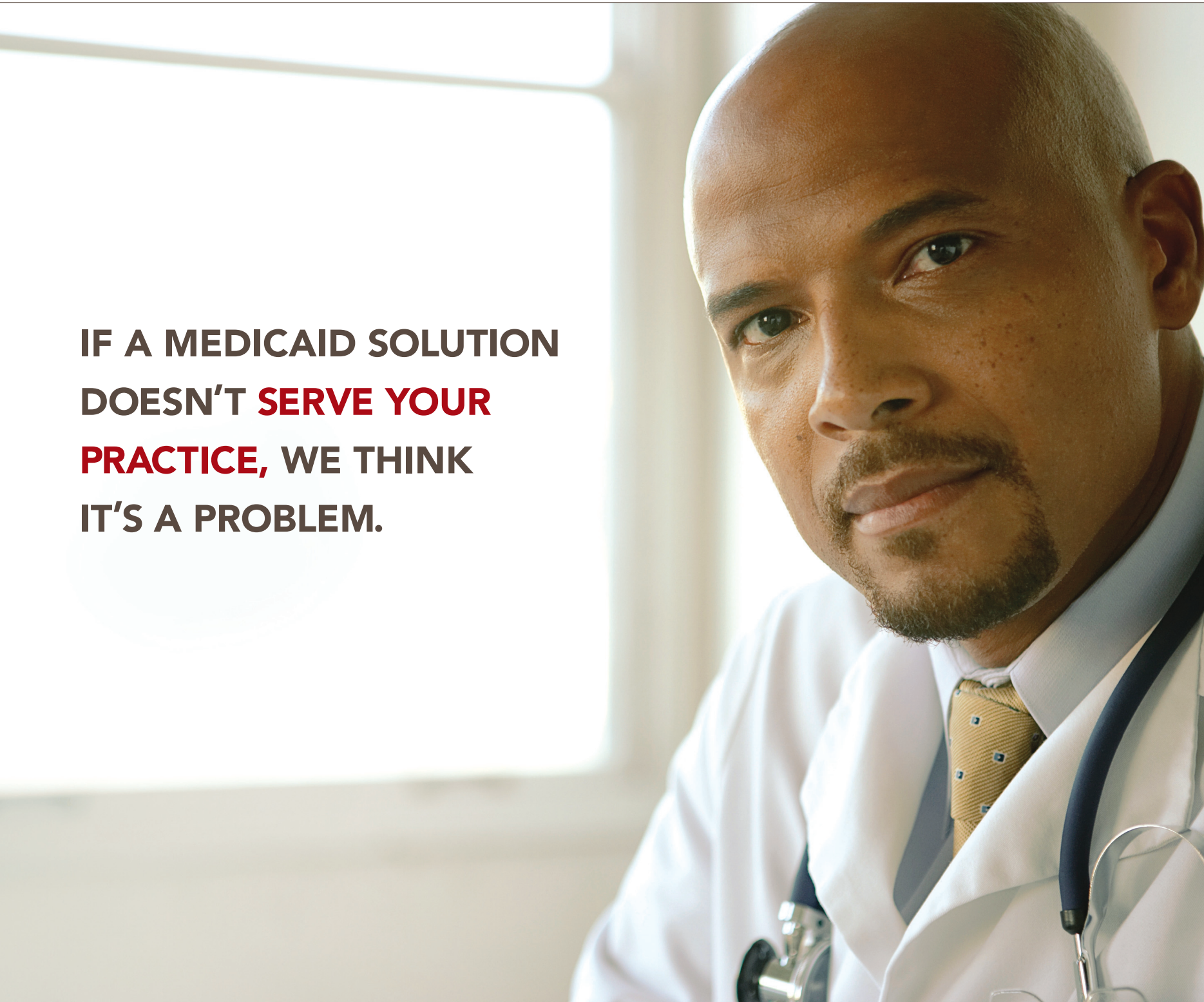
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