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HEROES

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The Northshore Harbor Center Board and Management wish to express our congratulations to the CityBusiness 2012 Health Care Heroes for your success, the huge contributions you have made to the community and the impact on the local health care industry.

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2012

CityBusiness

HEALTH CARE HEROES



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 St. Tammany Parish Hospital
 Pediatrics



Ralph Millet MD
 St. Tammany Physicians Network
 Covington



Daniel Rupley MD
 Women's Pavilion of STPH
 Regional Radiology Group

The devoted team of professionals at St. Tammany Parish Hospital delivers world-class healthcare every day to our neighbors close to home. That kind of personal commitment permeates the organization, and it is personified in our three honorees for this year's *CityBusiness* Health Care Heroes.

Melinda Cox NP, Ralph Millet MD and Daniel Rupley MD set the example and live the mission every day.

The entire STPH care team of 1,700 compassionate employees, 400 associated physicians and 150 dedicated volunteers congratulate these heroes for this well deserved honor, and we thank *CityBusiness* for recognizing their dedication to caring.

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Krystal Howard
Family Nurse Practitioner



Maureen Larkins
VP, Strategic & Community Affairs



Dr. Carolina Urbizo
Internal Medicine & Pediatrics
Physician

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Introduction



Christian Moises
News Editor

The 51 people recognized in the 2012 edition of Health Care Heroes are nothing short of that — heroes.

This year's group of industry standouts are being highlighted based on their professional accomplishments, community contributions and perseverance.

Divided among six categories — animal care, first responders, nurses, physicians, professionals and volunteers — they are the heartbeat of the region's medical industry.

After six years, selecting honorees for this program is the most difficult. Their stories, accomplishments and contributions to the area's health care field make every nominee deserving.

Many honorees pull from personal experience to relate with and help care for patients. Others reach beyond clinics, hospitals and office walls to reach the community.

Several have made researching new techniques and procedures a priority to advance health care, while others focus on educating the public about healthy lifestyles.

CityBusiness thanks each of them for their tireless efforts and the differences they are making throughout the region.

Congratulations to the Health Care Heroes Class of 2012. •

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

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

- Joseph Campbell

The 2012 Slidell Memorial Hospital CityBusiness Health Care Heroes

Colleen Dale

Volunteer

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Past honorees

2011

ANIMAL CARE
Anne Bell
Amanda McDaniel

FIRST RESPONDER
Raul Guevara
Bryan Svihla

NURSE
Penny Banks
Jody Campo
Lynette Collins
Catrice Daniels
Wanda Genovese
Melissa Guidry
Mitch Handrich
Vicki Hirsch
Blake Mouch
Melanie Pichon
Carole Pindaro
Myra Varnado

PHYSICIAN
Sue Abdalian
Gerald Berenson
Craig Coenson
Terry Cummings
James Diamond
Elizabeth Dimitri
Jay Dumas and
Willard Dumas
Tod Engelhardt
Matthew French
Paul Friedlander
Amanda Jackson
Aaron Karlin
Benjamin Lee
Hector Linares
Matthew McElveen
James McKinnie
Mary Murphy
Wanda Robinson
Adrian Talbot

PROFESSIONAL
Judy Brown
Steve Brown
Jason Cobb
Michelle Gaiennie
Bob Hawley
Birgit Haylock
Felice Hill
Howard Mielke
David Robinson
Joan Rooney
Roxane Townsend
Julie Willheit

VOLUNTEER
Jack Bowman
Jerry Lambert
Clarisse Schleichardt

2010

ANIMAL CARE
Thomas Pelle
Greg Rich

FIRST RESPONDER
Ben Glaudi
Paula Kensler

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

PHYSICIAN
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

PROFESSIONAL
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

VOLUNTEER
Delores Guidry
Buddy Rini
Julie Rodriguez
Janet Trahan

2009

ANIMAL CARE
Karen Miller Becnel
Chris Fabacher

FIRST RESPONDER
Dan Russo, Dax Russo,
Jason Russo
Linda Thompson

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

PHYSICIAN
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

PROFESSIONAL
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

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

2008

ANIMAL CARE
Robin Beaulieu
Joe Dalgo
Kelly Kreider
Giselle Moises
Liz Saylor

FIRST RESPONDER
Briana Briscoe
Ryan Brown
Juliette Saussy
Cecile Watters Tebo
Chris Wilt

NURSE
Lillian Agnelly
Sheri Berger
Shane Brossette
Bryan Dean
Anthony DiGerolamo
Kerry Jeanice
Brian Mahl
Joan Rooney
Debbie Schmidt
Stella Wright

PHYSICIAN
Milton Anderson
Nicolas Bazan
Lisa Bazzett
Daniel Bouchette
Bryan Bertucci
Michael Brothers
Charles Brown
Randall Brown
Jocelyn Tinsley Greely
Emile LaBranche
Gabriel Lasala
Robert Matheny
Norman McSwain
Thanh Nguyen
Eboni Price
Elmore Rigamer
Ken Roy
Alfred Robichaux
Milton Seiler
Jim Smith
Keith Van Meter
Mark Workman

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

VOLUNTEER
Elsie Olivier
Philip Olivier
Theresa Trosclair
Jessie Williams

2007

ANIMAL CARE
Andrew Gutter
James Riopelle

FIRST RESPONDER
Steven Brown
Michael Guillot

NURSE
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

PHYSICIAN
Stephen Bardot
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Roland Bourgeois
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Gerald Cohen
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Joseph Guarisco
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Ronald Liuzza
Kevin Martinez
Richard Meyer
Paul Nathan
Steven Ross
Swati Shah
Charles Thomas
Najeeb Thomas
Gerald Vocke

PROFESSIONAL
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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

2012

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— PREMIUM —



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ANIMAL CARE

Kerry Backsen

Position: Louisiana SPCA lead shelter veterinarian

Age: 31

Family: husband, Craig

Education: bachelor's degree in animal science, Louisiana State University; doctor of veterinary medicine, LSU

Dr. Kerry Backsen became interested in animals and science as a young girl. So when it was time to choose a career, she combined her interests and became a veterinarian.

Backsen is the lead shelter veterinarian at the Louisiana Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. She joined the SPCA in 2009 after spending two years in private practice at Ridgefield Animal Hospital in Thibodaux.

"As a vet, I understand the realism of caring for sick and injured animals. But it's particularly challenging in a shelter because there are so many emotional hardships," she said. "To deal with it on a daily basis, you have to have thick skin and leave your thoughts at work when you go home. What we do is hard, but there's a big need for it."

Backsen examines and cares for every animal brought to the shelter. Last year the LA/SPCA took in 6,917 animals of which 2,300 were cats and 4,617 were dogs. On occasion, the shelter also takes in chickens, horses and rabbits.

Most of the animals are strays or turned in

by their owners, and about 50 percent are underweight, injured or sick. Animals with medical issues or deemed too aggressive to be put up for adoption are euthanized.

"We euthanize about 180 animals a month, which is one of the hardest parts of my job," Backsen said. "But it's our only humane option when we have limited space and staff. More people need to adopt animals from shelters as well as be responsible and get their pet spayed or neutered so we can get to the point where we don't have to euthanize animals at all."

Backsen has a 3-year-old female chow-lab mix named Lolly that she adopted from the shelter about two years ago. Lolly, who was eight months old when she was taken to the shelter, was severely injured after being hit by a car.

"I took Lolly home to care for her until she could be adopted," Backsen said. "But I became very attached to her and decided to adopt her myself. I'm attached to many of the animals here, but I can't take them all home so it's very rewarding to me when we do find a good home for one of them."•

— Kerry Duff



Photo by Frank Aymami

ANIMAL CARE

Allison Barca

Position: Allison D. Barca owner and veterinarian

Age: 48

Family: husband, Larry

Education: bachelor's degree in animal science and doctor of veterinary medicine, Louisiana State University

Dr. Allison Barca's youth was the stuff many children fantasize about. Her family was in the horse-boarding business and ran the stable her grandfather built that still stands at River Road and Oak Street. Horses were staples of her everyday existence.

Growing up, Barca dreamed of becoming a horse trainer but her father's advice about the sometimes-tough realities of that existence dissuaded her. Soon, she found herself on another track, one that combined her aptitude for science with her love of animals and a passion for horses in particular.

She became a vet specializing in equine medicine.

Barca does much of her work out of a clinic at the stable where she spent so much of her childhood. About half of her work is treating small animals, which represented only about 15 percent of her practice before Hurricane Katrina wiped out much of the local horse population.

Barca draws certain parallels between veterinary medicine and pediatrics. Because her

patients can't articulate what ails them, her diagnostics rely upon a hefty dose of intuition built on years of experience.

"Dealing with (animals') owners is just like dealing with parents," Barca said with a laugh. "Sometimes worse."

The difference in size between a horse and a child, of course, is substantial. Treating horses comes with a special set of precautions and dangers.

"I've been kicked numerous times," Barca said. "I've been pawed in the mouth. I thought I'd lost my teeth. These animals are extremely strong and really fast and they'll sit there and look like everything's fine," until it's not.

She points to a friend who was so severely injured while palpating a pregnant mare that he was unable to work for eight months. Barca said she takes such hazards in stride.

"I have no idea why it doesn't scare me, but it doesn't," she said. "I'm more scared of dog bites."•

— Emile Bahr



Photo by Frank Aymami

FIRST RESPONDERS

Chris Kaufmann

Position: St. Tammany Parish Fire District chief of administration

Age: 46

Family: wife, Pam; sons, Blaine, 19, Bryce, 16

Education: associate's degrees in applied sciences and fire protection technology, Delgado Community College

Chris Kaufmann's work in St. Tammany Parish goes beyond his responsibilities as a firefighter. In his 24 years as a fireman in the parish, Kaufmann has been behind the creation of programs dealing with suicide prevention and helping homeless youth.

He was a part of a parish task force that helped bring the "It's OK to Talk About It" initiative to the community.

"We started a crisis center and a critical response team that uses resources from the United Way to help combat the problem," Kaufmann said.

St. Tammany had 39 suicides in 2010 and 34 in 2011. The crisis center has given people another option to find help, he said.

"If someone calls 911 and has a need for services, they are directed to our 211 line where they can get access to mental health," Kaufmann said. "We started in August and we have been able to make a drastic difference in the community. When people make comments about taking that kind of action against themselves, it is critical to get to them early and that is what we are doing."

Kaufmann is also part of an initiative to help

high school students in the parish who don't have a dependable place they can call home. The program was developed about a year ago and there are plans to open doors to students later this year, he said.

"These are young members of the community who may come from a poor family environment and are moving from home to home staying with friends or others," Kaufmann said. "Our plan is to offer a stable place for them where they can get counseling and other resources to help get them through high school."

As the chief administrator for the fire district, Kaufmann said he has worked to create internal health care programs such as an annual physical and assorted fitness programs that have helped limit the amount of time firefighters use for sick leave while decreasing the department's health care expenses.

"We have paid as much as \$1.2 million a year for health care for the entire department," Kaufmann said. "The internal programs we have put in place have helped us to limit claims and bring down costs considerably. Now that money can go to other areas of the department."•

— Robin Shannon



Photo by Tom Maccom

FIRST RESPONDERS

Peter Seltzer

Position: Elaine P. Nunez Community College emergency medical technician program adjunct instructor; Volunteers in Government of Responsibility and New Orleans Emergency Medical Services volunteer EMT

Age: 27

Family: single

Education: bachelor's degree in business administration, Temple University

Peter Seltzer embodies the spirit of the young entrepreneur.

Returning to New Orleans after graduating from Temple University with a degree in business administration in 2008, Seltzer opened his own business, Canopy, which specializes in sustainable building materials.

He also subsequently launched Pete's Pedal Pops, a healthy dessert company that offers festival food.

In between those business interests, Seltzer has kept an active hand in what he describes as his passion: emergency medical services.

Seltzer said he is not certain where his interest in EMS comes from, although he said his inspiration was his father, Dr. Benjamin Seltzer, a long-time professor of neurology and psychiatry at Tulane University School of Medicine.

That led to him volunteer as a medical first responder when he was a 17-year-old boarding school student in Connecticut.

Leaving New Orleans briefly after Hurricane Katrina, Seltzer, upon return, decided to devote most of his free time to EMS volunteer work and training, serving as a volunteer EMT for New Orleans Medical Services.

"You never know what you are going to show up to," he said. "Every call is different and you can

be involved in any situation at any point in time."

Seltzer has taken his EMS enthusiasm to the classroom, teaching an emergency medical technician class at Nunez Community College, where he is also training to become a paramedic.

Seltzer, who teaches 40 students in two classes, took his instruction to the streets during Carnival when he and a small group of EMT students volunteered with the Red Cross at a series of first-aid tents along the St. Charles Avenue parade route.

Seltzer and his students treated up to 100 people for a variety of small injuries, while supporting New Orleans EMS with more serious injuries.

"We figured out together that we volunteered about 700 hours during carnival," Seltzer said. "The idea was to get students out in the field as much as possible, putting them in situations where they would know the experience of working with patients in a real life setting."

Seltzer said his goal now is to phase out his business interests while focusing more on EMS education.

"It's nice to have helped one person as an EMT," Seltzer said. "But if you are teaching others who can do the same thing, you are multiplying that — and that's a great feeling."•

— Garry Boulard



Photo by Frank Ajmami

FIRST RESPONDERS

Joseph Uddo

Position: East Jefferson General Hospital general surgeon

Age: 56

Family: wife, Amy; children, Joe, 24, Bobby, 23, Jimmy, 23, Casey, 21, Logan, 6

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

Dr. Joseph Uddo is no stranger to firsts.

He performed one of the first laparoscopic stomach resection surgeries in the country, which involves creating several small openings and removing part of the stomach. When he was a resident and performing his first, though, it was because there weren't really any other options.

"You just tell a patient straight," he said. "They always want to do it."

That trust earned Uddo the chance to perform many different proceeds for the first time, including several experimental laparoscopic procedures that he later taught to new residents.

East Jefferson General Hospital named Uddo, who previously served as the hospital's chief of staff, as medical director of its Emergency Medical Preparedness Committee following his work during Hurricane Katrina. He serves as the hospital's liaison for emergency preparedness.

"There was a void that we had during Katrina," he said. "During Katrina, we were in uncharted territory. I gravitated toward a leadership role."

Uddo has been a key player in the hospital's trauma courses and is Region 1 chairman for the Louisiana Emergency Response Network, which, among other



Photo by Frank Aymami

things, develops emergency medical services protocols in addition to creating a statewide trauma response system that meets national standards.

Uddo is also very hands on, regularly riding with ambulance units. He said much of his love for fast-paced work with trauma, which he sees in disaster recovery and through EMS, began when he was a resident at Charity Hospital.

"Charity Hospital was replete with trauma when I was a resident," he said.

He has also been involved in the community of medical professionals, having served as president of the Surgical Association of Louisiana, the Jefferson Parish Medical Society and the Louisiana chapter of the American College of Surgeons. •

— Travis Andrews

NURSES

Nicole Candiff

Position: West Jefferson Medical Center outpatient clinic nurse practitioner

Age: 53

Family: husband, Ramon Llorens

Education: bachelor's degree in nursing, Dillard University; master's degree in nursing, Loyola University

Nicole Candiff enjoys taking care of people and considers her work with oncology patients a privilege and a blessing.

"Working with oncology patients is my ministry and what I'm supposed to be doing," said Candiff, a nurse practitioner in the outpatient clinic of West Jefferson Medical Center, Marrero. "I believe God uses me, my skills and knowledge to help others have a better quality of life."

Candiff's nursing career began in 1983 when she joined the Air Force to work as an oncology nurse. After 12 years in the military, she worked for a hospital in Texas providing nursing care to patients undergoing chemotherapy, radiation and immunotherapy treatments.

After that, she moved to Biloxi, Miss., and worked for a hospice and Apria Health Care, where she managed oncology patients' infusion needs.

In the late 1990s, Candiff moved back to her native New Orleans. Since then, she has worked with oncology patients at University Hospital/Community Hospice, Tulane Cancer Center-Lakeside Infusion, Tulane Cancer Center-Radiation Therapy Department,

Ochsner Hospital and, most recently, West Jefferson Medical Center.

In her current role, Candiff cares for oncology patients and helps them navigate the medical system. She also teaches chemo classes and educates patients, family members and staff on symptoms and pain management. She also is writing an orientation book to help cancer patients through their treatment.

"Navigating the medical system can be overwhelming and complex for cancer patients," she said, adding that cancer also comes with financial burdens many patients don't have the resources to afford.

"One of the hardest parts of my job is not having resources to give patients, so I am in the process of writing a book that will provide them with helpful information and available community resources. There are many resources available for patients today, but they are often underutilized because patients don't know where to look ... to find the resources on their own."

Candiff hopes to collaborate with local hospitals and open a palliative care center for people with terminal diseases over the next 10 years. •

— Kerry Duff

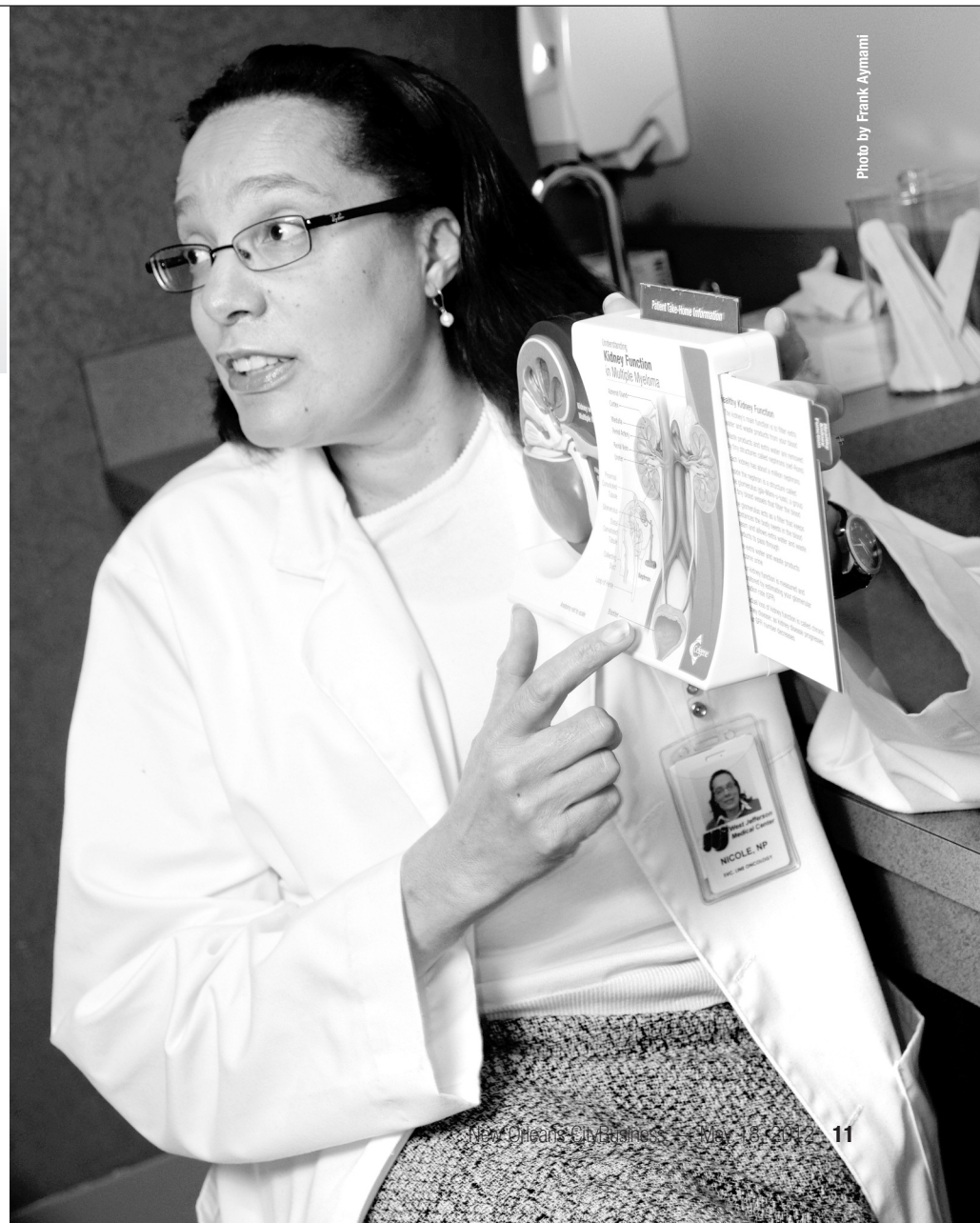


Photo by Frank Aymami

NURSES

Melinda Cox

Position: St. Tammany Parish Hospital pediatrics nurse practitioner

Age: 41

Education: bachelor's degree in nursing, Southeastern Louisiana University; master's degree in nursing, University of South Alabama

For Melinda Cox, a family nurse practitioner who oversees the pediatrics unit at St. Tammany Parish Hospital, there was never any question about how she would spend her working life.

"I've always enjoyed caring for people," Cox said. "There was never any other occupation I was interested in."

As a nurse practitioner, Cox's duties are similar to those of a physician. She works with a medical doctor but can write prescriptions, make assessments and write orders for patients. Her patients at the 10-bed pediatrics unit she oversees range from newborns to teenagers who are admitted after a doctor's office visit reveals they are sick enough to warrant hospitalization or after arriving from the emergency room.

"I see anything from fevers, dehydration, respiratory problems, surgery patients," Cox said. "It's kind of a wide array."

Cox found her way to pediatrics almost by chance. She was working in the hospital's emergency room when the new pediatrics unit opened and she was asked to make the switch.

She said her pediatric duties extend as much to the families of the patient she is treating as they do to the patient directly.

A large part of her job involves family counseling and education, both of which she says are rewarding and well suited to her skills and interests.

Cox said she enjoys providing care and comfort for patients that helps them get healthy and back to their daily routines.

Then there are the instances in which outcomes are less rosy, such as the 4-year-old boy admitted to Cox's unit who was diagnosed with a terminal brain tumor.

After traveling to dozens of hospitals over the course six months, the family decided to take the child back to Cox's ward to live out his last days close to home.

"You never become accustomed to it," Cox said of those types of outcomes. "You just do what you can do."•

— Emilie Bahr



Photo by Tom Macom



Olivia Fleming, right, reviews a patient's file with Kristin Locke in Tulane Medical Center's emergency department.

photo by Frank Aymami

NURSES

Olivia Fleming

Position: Tulane Medical Center Emergency Department director

Age: 31

Family: husband, Nicholas

Education: bachelor's degree in nursing, Louisiana State University

In taking over as director of Tulane Medical Center's emergency department in 2011, Olivia Fleming has been a part of a change in the way the hospital's emergency room operates.

"There was once a time where this ER only served about 70 patients a night," Fleming said. "Today, we are up over 144 patients. We have had to do a lot to improve our efficiency and quickness in getting to patients."

Fleming said Hospital Corporation of America, which owns the hospital, brought consultants to the facility in 2008 to identify gaps in processing ER patients. She said the hospital was trying to bring down the percentage of patients leaving without treatment, which was as high as 20 percent in 2007.

"We wanted to determine why patients were leaving," Fleming said. "What can we do to get them in to see someone before they make the decision to leave? The ER serves as the front doors to the hospital and we had to get all the procedures in place to improve the flow of patients."

Fleming worked with other departments in the hospital to create a flow chart detailing the patient experience. She helped implement new pro-

grams, such as a room for patients with minor problems who are just waiting for test results.

Instead of sending those patients back to the regular waiting room, where Fleming said they sometimes feel forgotten, or leaving them on a bed that can be used for a more serious issue, lower-level patients are now being sent to a different room where they can stay in communication with the staff.

She said the changes have helped the emergency room lower the percentage of patients leaving without treatment to about 1 percent. She said wait times have decreased and patient satisfaction has improved.

Fleming has been an emergency room nurse since 2004 and said the jump to the managerial side was a struggle.

"When you are a nurse, you often work shifts, and when you left work for the day, you were gone," she said. "Now, I'm working Monday through Friday more than 40 hours a week and I am on call if something goes wrong. It was a struggle at first, but I'm so engaged in it now. I can't see myself doing anything else."•

— Robin Shannon

NURSES

Krystal Howard

Position: Daughters of Charity Services of New Orleans family nurse practitioner
Age: 32
Family: husband, Norbert Henry; children, Nicholas Henry, 3, Madison Henry, 1
Education: bachelor's degree in nursing, Dillard University; master's degree in nursing, Loyola University

Krystal Howard says she joined the Daughters of Charity Services of New Orleans in 2008 because she wanted to do something that connected her more with the community.

She almost immediately realized that connection when treating migrant workers helping to rebuild New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina.

"When one of them was injured on the job, they would come to our clinic," Howard said. "And so often, as it turned out, we would find out that they also had undiagnosed diabetes or hypertension or something like that."

She said the job was tough because the employers would many times say to "just to fix them up so that they could get back to work," said Howard, who has also taught nursing at Dillard University. "At the same time, the workers themselves would be telling us that no matter what their condition, they could not lose their job because they were sending money to their families back home."

The need to educate and treat that underserved population on how to manage such chronic illnesses underlined why Howard signed on with the Daughters of Charity Services. But often, she said, such treatment flies in the face of traditions exist-



photo by Frank Aymami

ing within those same populations.

"For some reason, people in New Orleans will listen to what their grandparents and parents tell them to do, and that will carry more weight than what we may say," she said. "As a result, we spend a lot of time trying to re-educate such patients, trying to get them out of the mindset they came in with."

In a city predisposed to celebration, it's hardly an easy task.

"After we educate our diabetics and heart patients, we tell them that they can still have fun for a day when it comes to something like Mardi Gras or Jazz Fest," said Howard, who treats an average of 20 to 22 patients a day.

"You just have to do that in New Orleans," she said with a laugh. •

— Garry Boulard



photo by Frank Aymami

NURSES

Nancy Iovino

Position: Tulane Medical Center surgical clinical supervisor
Age: 58
Family: single
Education: associate's degree in nursing, St. Raphael School of Nursing

Nancy Iovino says it's vital to make a deposit into your heart bank.

Iovino, the surgical clinical supervisor in the operating room at Tulane Medical Center, works primarily with surgery cases that involve the da Vinci robotic operating system. But her work to help patients doesn't stop in the operating room.

Iovino is responsible for bringing Denmark's Heart Pillow Project to New Orleans. The program helps breast cancer patients by providing them with free heart-shaped pillows to ease pain from surgical incisions and tension in addition to helping to reduce swelling under the arm.

And Iovino has enlisted youth throughout the area to help with the task.

"They say this generation is all 'me, me, me,' but it's not. They're thinking of others," Iovino said. "You want to be a good example. When I leave this world, I hope they remember me as a

good person, that I gave something back to society."

She began by enlisting Emily Yu, a student at Haynes Academy for Advanced Studies.

"I'd meet her in the parking lot at Walgreens," she said. "I'd give her the materials (and) she'd give me the pillow."

Yu helped kick start the project with Iovino, but demand grew as they were sending the pillows to Arizona, Virginia and Pennsylvania, Iovino said. The Krewe of Isis made about 100 pillows, but production wasn't meeting the need.

Then Nick Galle came along. A freshman at Holy Cross working to become an Eagle Scout, Galle met with Iovino and made 150 pillows.

She said he was so taken by Iovino and the project that he decided to make a few more — 1,100 more. •

— Travis Andrews



NURSES

Janet Parrish

Position: Addiction Recovery Resources Inc. registered nurse

Age: 57

Family: widow; son, Sean, 21

Education: nursing degree, Charity Hospital School of Nursing; bachelor's degree in anthropology, University of Southern Mississippi

In 2003, when registered nurse Janet Parrish was working for the Jefferson Parish Human Services Authority, she was confronted with a young man who had multiple health problems.

The case proved to be one of her biggest challenges and greatest rewards.

"He had a lot of trauma in his life. He had cancer, substance abuse issues, family issues. He couldn't work, and just overall, his will to live was not very strong," Parrish said.

She worked with the young man for two years to help him get better, and he now has a full-time job and his issues are under control.

"The most rewarding part was him coming back to us and crediting us with him getting better," she said. "We worked with him step-by-step, gave him structure in his life, a support system to follow. When people become better and improve, and become productive citizens, it makes it all worth it."

As a registered nurse at Metairie-based Addiction Recovery Resources Inc., Parrish has more than 30 years of experience in hospital, clinic and administrative settings and in behavioral health medicine. She has developed a curriculum for acute inpatient psychiatry for nursing groups and provided supervision to

staff at Southeast Louisiana Hospital, the Jefferson Parish Human Services Authority and Methodist Psychiatric Pavilion.

In her role at Addiction Recovery Resources, Parrish helps assess people looking for treatment and visits patients already in its behavioral health treatment program. ARR has 20 inpatients and about 15 to 20 in a separate intensive outpatient program.

"Living in the present is what I stress to all of our patients," she said. "Find serenity where you are and use advantage of your current resources and support system to get better. It's a long process but not a process where the patient is alone."

Because nursing in the behavioral health field can be a stressful profession, Parrish said her peaceful outlet is volunteering for the nonprofit Gulf Coast Doberman Rescue Inc., which works to rescue, rehabilitate and place unwanted Dobermans throughout Louisiana. She has been a member of the board for six years and has four foster Dobermans at home.

"They're the biggest lap dogs you'll ever have, and they're very loyal, remarkable dogs," she said. "Pets are important to people, and they definitely help me unwind."•

— Tommy Santora

photo by Frank Aymami

NURSES

Laura Poole

Position: Terrebonne General Medical Center women's services director

Age: 50

Family: husband, James; children, Blake Picou, 22, Rachel Picou, 15, Isabel Picou, 15, Catherine Picou, 15

Education: associate's degree in nursing, Nicholls State University; bachelor's degree in nursing, Loyola University; master's degree in nursing, Louisiana State University Medical Center

Laura Poole's leadership and reliability have helped steer the success of Terrebonne General Medical Center's Women's Center for the past 14 years.

TGMC's Women's Center is the sixth largest facility in the state with about 2,000 babies born each year.

During the planning stages, Poole collaborated with hospital administrators and physicians to develop a vision for the center, which focuses on gynecology, obstetrics and breast health.

"I was fortunate to be directly involved from the time it was just a conceptual idea," said Poole, director of women's services at the hospital. "We devised a place that would provide women with a unique experience that's not typically possible in a traditional environment."

When the center opened in 2007, Poole submitted the project to the Snowmass Institute of Centennial in Colorado, which recognized the facility as one of its innovative projects in women's health.

As director, Poole works to expand the quality and capacity of the center's services. She played a key role in implementing the facility's Guided Infant Feeding Techniques program to support breastfeeding mothers. She also helped the facility become a Level 3 Neonatal Intensive Care Unit facility so it could handle pre-term infants.



Laura Poole, standing, checks in with nursery nurse Candice Pitre.

Photo by Tracie Morris Schaefer

Poole sets equally high standards for her nursing staff. An advocate for continuing education, she encouraged 30 nurses in the center to earn national certifications, including the lactation consultant designation.

"It gives nurses added credibility and provides patients with an extra level of comfort," said Poole, who is certified in neonatal resuscitation, advanced cardiac life support, pediatric advanced life support and peripherally inserted central catheter

for neonatal patients.

Poole recalls an occasion early in her career when a newborn on her unit suddenly experienced a medical crisis. Thanks to her training, and to the relief of the baby's mother, Poole acted fast and performed life-saving resuscitation.

"I will always remember this mom," Poole said. "To this day if I see her, she will still approach me and express her gratitude."•

— Tamara Moffett

NURSES

Yvonne Sterling

Position: Louisiana State University Health Sciences Center School of Nursing doctor of nursing science director

Age: would not disclose

Family: single

Education: bachelor's degree in nursing, Dillard University, master's degree in material infant nursing and Ph.D. in nursing, Catholic University of America

A woman approached Yvonne Sterling one day at church to say her son's asthma had improved significantly since Sterling visited their home to educate him on the disease. A few months later, another woman said the same thing.

That scenario has played out repeatedly throughout Sterling's more than 30 years as a nurse.

"I became a nurse to help people," Sterling said. "So when people tell me I made a difference in their children's lives, I feel rewarded."

Sterling, who was born and raised in New Orleans, moved to New York for a year in the early 1970s but wanted a stronger sense of community. She then moved to Washington, D.C., where she worked in various clinical settings as a staff nurse and nurse clinical specialist for high-risk babies at the Children's Hospital National Medical Center.

Sterling also completed her master's degree in material infant nursing at Catholic University of America and started her doctorate so she could teach other nurses.

In 1981, she moved back to New Orleans to write her dissertation on children with asthma and worked for the Louisiana State University School of Nursing as a member of the graduate faculty. Her dissertation involved working for a year with 10 New Orleans families that had children with asthma and observing



Yvonne Sterling, right, teaches Norris Johnson how to use asthma equipment for her child.

Photo by Frank Aymami

how they coped with the disease. She also collaborated with LSU's Department of Pediatrics and updated them on what she was learning in addition to developing and teaching the state's first neonatal undergraduate and graduate nurse practitioner programs.

She earned her doctorate in 2007 and moved into her current role as director of LSU Health Sciences Center's doctor of nursing science.

After Hurricane Katrina, Sterling participated in a \$7 million study of children with asthma in a post-disaster area called Head off Environmental Asthma in Louisiana. She also was a co-investigator in the Steps to a Healthier New Orleans program.

As a certified asthma educator, Sterling teaches asthma counselors how to perform home visits, recognize symptoms and track findings. She also evaluates case managers. •

— Kerry Duff

NURSES

Pat Talmage

Position: St. Tammany Parish School System team leader for special needs nurses

Age: 65

Family: husband, David; children, Susan Tarasova, 32, Gregory Talmage, 29

Education: bachelor's degree in sociology, Miami University of Ohio; bachelor's degree in nursing, William Carey College

There are roughly 37,000 students enrolled in St. Tammany Parish public schools and 27 nurses on staff to tend to them. Eight of those nurses are assigned to special needs students, such as those with cardiac issues, cerebral palsy, diabetes, cancer, autism and other conditions that would have kept them from mainstream classes.

Pat Talmage is the leader of this band of nurses, whose job is to make the necessary accommodations to help keep special needs students healthy and in school.

"I say I'm a school nurse and people think it's Band-Aids and ice, and it's not at all like that," said Talmage, whose job entails developing health plans for each of the special-needs students and training staff to manage their particular conditions, whether it's a food allergy or a feeding tube.

"We've got diabetes on the rise big time, asthma on the rise, autism," she said.

Some of the problems she helps manage are related to the rise in childhood obesity while others are the result of advances in medicine that mean more children with congenital problems are

making it past infancy.

A move away from segregating children with certain conditions from their more able-bodied peers also helps explain what Talmage describes as a large and growing population of special needs kids in the school system.

Talmage has been a nurse for 32 years and considers the 14 years she's spent in the St. Tammany school system the best of her career. Especially rewarding is the idea that she can help children with varying degrees of disability improve their quality of life, stay healthy and succeed academically.

"If you walked with me for a day and met some of these children, they're so inspiring," she said.

Talmage points to a student with spina bifida whom she has worked with for several years.

"When I first saw him, he was literally just dragging himself across the floor. Now he's walking," she said. "He's got braces, but he's walking and doing very well in school. He's the happiest child you would ever meet, and he has a very good future ahead of him." •

— Emilie Bahr



Photo by Tom Maccom

Nerissa Wood

Position: East Jefferson General Hospital clinical educator for oncology services

Age: 41

Family: husband, Lee; children, Josie, 11, Luke, 8, Ava, 4

Education: bachelor's degree in psychology, Tulane University; bachelor's degree in nursing, William Carey College School of Nursing

When Nerissa Wood meets with a cancer patient, often just diagnosed, she has to quickly assess how best to comfort them.

"I size up their verbal and non-verbal cues, but the key is to get close to them and within arm's reach," said Wood, clinical educator for oncology services at East Jefferson General Hospital. "Most of the time, they're venting their insecurities."

She will pull up a chair and, when the time is right, ask whether she can hold the patient's hand.

Sometimes, though, the patient is resolutely frightened. Wood once counseled a woman whose hands were clenched so tightly that there was no holding them. The woman was a breast cancer survivor who was facing a recurrence and refusing radiation therapy, remembering the burns she had suffered during treatment two decades earlier.

Wood said she used positive encouragement — assuring the woman the experience would be better, that oncology practices had evolved — rather than verbalize the grave risk of refusing radiation. Then Wood promised to be nearby.

"You're going to watch me?" she asked, and I said, "Yes," Wood recalled. "I was very delicate with her."

Wood finally got close enough, physically and emotionally, to hold the woman's hand while she lay on the radiation table.

It's that patience and care Wood conveys to the new nurses she teaches during their hospital orientation, and the nurses often pay it forward.

Once, Wood said she overheard a nurse tell a patient what to expect with chemotherapy, and it was "almost verbatim what I'd taught (her) in class," Wood said.

She also educates nurses on pain management, new computer programs and new oncology drugs.

Wood, who calls cancer "a devastating, chronic illness," brings that optimism to the survivors' support group she helps facilitate at the hospital.

"You're considered a survivor from the day you're diagnosed," Wood said. "It's a journey you have to take."

During support group sessions, she makes sure guest speakers "bring it to basics" by covering sleep conservation techniques or tips for handling nausea.

"I watch for a tilt in the head, which means a patient doesn't understand," Wood said. "Nurses are good at seeing that."•

— Anne Berry



Photo by Frank Aymami

Heroes Among Us.

Every day, these five individuals and countless others come together with the noble ambition of providing excellent and personalized healthcare. Today we recognize them for their efforts. But they would be the first to say their efforts are only possible because of the tireless efforts of others. Congratulations to each of our honorees for the role they play in providing award-winning blue ribbon care to our community.

Joseph F. Uddo, MD – General Surgeon

First Responder Healthcare Hero

Stanley Bleich, MD – Cardiologist

Physician Healthcare Hero

Mattie Hobley, RN – Director of Oncology Services

Professional Healthcare Hero

Nerissa Wood, RN – Oncology Educator

Nurse Healthcare Hero

Linda Kabbani – EJGH Volunteer

Volunteer Healthcare Hero



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PHYSICIANS

Juzar Ali

Position: Interim Louisiana State University Public Hospital medical director; LSU School of Medicine Pulmonary Critical Care professor

Age: 62

Family: wife, Isfana; children, Mutuza, 36, Riaz, 34

Education: bachelor's degree in medicine, Dow Medical College Civil Hospital, Karachi University

Dr. Juzar Ali, drawing on his hospital experiences in Pakistan and Kenya, says working as a doctor in New Orleans has always been a natural fit.

"When I look back at the challenges that I, as a member of a team, faced in what we call the Third World, with budget constraints and demand/capacity ratio," Ali said, "I can't help but think that that experience has made me much more attuned to what's going on here."

Ali said that when people complain about things here, he tells them that there are other places in the world that are more challenging to work in and things still get done.

His global perspective is partly behind his interest in diseases popularly thought to be problems only in other countries.

Take tuberculosis.

"There's a misconception that it's not an issue here," said Ali, director of the Louisiana State University Health Sciences Center Tuberculosis Center. "But statistically, New Orleans is fairly high nationwide in terms of the number of patients in our population affected

by this disease."

Focused throughout the 1990s and most of the past decade on medical education and patient care at LSU, Ali said he "shifted gears a little bit" in 2008 when he became the director of the Interim LSU Public Hospital.

"It's turned out to be one of the most challenging positions I've ever had," Ali said, noting that he has since worked to incorporate the mission of LSU's partner medical schools into a larger "mission of service for the underserved population of our city."

Ali said he has not lost sight of doing what he can to improve and enhance the workings of the hospital so it is prepared to make the move into the new University Medical Center, scheduled to open in 2015.

Having won more than two dozen teaching awards, Ali said he never feels quite as much alive as when he is in a classroom.

"That's what brings the passion out of me," he said, "and makes everything else worthwhile."•

— Garry Boulard



Photo by Frank Aymami

Dr. Juzar Ali talks with urgent care clinic supervisor Danielle Weber.

PHYSICIANS

Stanley Bleich

Position: East Jefferson General Hospital cardiologist

Age: 56

Family: wife, Caron; children, Lauren, 31, Steven, 27, Jeremy,

Education: bachelor's degree in biology, Brooklyn College; doctor of medicine, Mount Sinai School of Medicine

Dr. Stanley Bleich will never forget hearing the plea from a 10-year-old girl to help her grandfather.

Five years ago, Bleich, a cardiologist at East Jefferson General Hospital, faced a risky blockage removal procedure for a patient who was not a candidate for a bypass surgery. He remembered telling the family the surgery involved a 40 percent mortality rate.

The surgery was a success.

"We were able to deliver him through the surgery healthy and successfully, and all I can remember is delivering the news to that little girl and seeing her face when she thanked me. It was something I'll never forget," he said.

Bleich has served as a cardiologist since 1991 at EJGH while serving in multiple leadership positions within the hospital, including division chief for cardiology, medicine department chairman and currently as a two-year member of the hospital's board of directors.

Bleich said he knew early in medical school that he wanted to be a cardiologist. He served as director of the cardiology fellowship program and associate director of cardiology at Tulane University School of Medicine for four years before joining EJGH.

Bleich helped start and serves as vice chairman of the Gulf South Quality Network, a clinically integrated physician network with more than 300 members who are working with hospitals, insurance companies and health care executives throughout the Gulf South to maximize the value of health care services provided to patients.



Dr. Stanley Bleich reviews a patient's scans with Amy LeBlanc.

Photo by Tracie Morris Schaefer

"This is very important with all of the health care reform across the country. We need to get to a point where we're providing a high-quality of service at the most effective costs possible for our patients in all practices across the board," he said.

Bleich is a volunteer medical director at the Crescent City Classic and a former medical director at the New York City Marathon. He regularly appears on public television, conducts

guest lectures at universities and has authored several cardiology-related articles for medical publications.

"I'm always looking to get the word out about the latest medical advances in cardiology," he said. "Cardiovascular disease is the No. 1 killer in the United States, and we need to stay atop of the heart diseases and issues that most affect our patients."•

— Tommy Santora

PHYSICIANS

Roderick Chandler

Position: Orthopedic Clinic of Mandeville orthopedic surgeon

Age: 36

Family: wife, Melissa; sons, Roderick III, 9, Ben, 7

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

Orthopedic surgeon Dr. Roderick Chandler may not save lives, but he does help patients improve their quality of life through reducing their pain and allowing them to resume active lifestyles.

Chandler sees 125 patients a week at his office at the Orthopedic Clinic of Mandeville. He treats patients of all ages for issues such as broken bones, sport injuries, back pain and degenerative arthritis. He also covers calls in the emergency rooms at St. Tammany Parish Hospital, Lakeview Regional Medical Center and Louisiana Heart Hospital.

"My practice encompasses a wide variety of orthopedic issues, so I tailor my treatment to each individual patient," Chandler said. "Some people want aggressive treatment so they can get back to sports fast, while others prefer a more conservative route without surgery."

During high school football season, Chandler conducts sports physicals for players and provides medical coverage during games. He also hosts Saturday clinics to evaluate players injured during games.

"I enjoy watching the games and taking care of the athletes," he said. "I played football in high school, and when I was 18, I tore my ACL (anterior cruciate ligament) and had to have reconstructive surgery, which is what steered me toward



Photo by Tom Maccom

my career as an orthopedic surgeon. My dad was also a physician's assistant, so I grew up with an interest in medicine."

The best part of being an orthopedic surgeon, Chandler said, is helping people. He also likes that he can perform a hip replacement on someone who can barely walk, allowing them to once again function normally.

Chandler recently treated for the first time a 41-year-old woman who had undergone multiple surgeries and was still in

constant pain. He discovered a bone in her leg that didn't heal properly and was out of alignment.

"The woman was depressed and thought she was never going to walk again," he said. "So I did surgery, re-broke the bone and realigned it. I also took bone from the hip to help it heal. She's already feeling better and sees there's light at the end of the tunnel, which makes me feel good."•

— Kerry Duff



Photo by Frank Aymami

PHYSICIANS

Frank Di Vincenti

Position: West Jefferson Medical Center general surgeon

Age: 76

Family: wife, Irma; children, Lorna 53, Teresa 49, Maria 43, Amy 46, Frank 41, Victoria 40

Education: Pre-medicine, Louisiana State University; doctor of medicine, LSU School of Medicine

Most people look forward to retirement, but Dr. Frank Di Vincenti, 76, has never thought about it. The general surgeon, whose career spans 50 years, finds reward in helping people every day.

Di Vincenti is a clinical professor of surgery at Louisiana State University School of Medicine and Tulane Medical Center. He's also a senior surgeon for the Veterans' Affairs Hospital, a part-time position he's held since 1969.

"I enjoy treating veterans," he said. "It's very rewarding because I'm a veteran myself. Given their years of service and the fact they put their lives on the line, I think we owe them something."

Di Vincenti also sees patients in private practice and trains surgical residents at West Jefferson Medical Center. He has been chairman of the WJMC board of directors for the past seven years and a board member for 20 years.

Di Vincenti, who was born and raised in New Orleans, was assigned to the U.S. Army Institute of Surgical Research at Brooke

Army Medical Center in San Antonio in 1967. He treated burn patients injured during the Vietnam War.

After the army, he became a full-time faculty member in LSU's Department of Surgery. In 1971, he went into private practice at West Jefferson Medical Center and opened the area's first burn units at West Jefferson and Charity Hospital.

Although both burn units are now closed, Di Vincenti treated burn patients at the clinics for 20 years.

"Getting burned is the worst thing that can happen to a patient," he said. "It takes a tremendous team to get them through it and it's very hard work. It's also something you never forget."

Di Vincenti was also the founder of Southern Surgical Specialists and served as director of emergency services for the Gretna Police Department.•

— Kerry Duff

PHYSICIANS

Raul Doria

Position: Mary Bird Perkins Cancer Center at Terrebonne General Medical Center medical director

Age: 50

Family: wife, Kati; children, Alberto, 27, Raul, 26, Bruno, 22, Paola, 20

Education: doctor of medicine, National University of Asuncion, Paraguay

Dr. Raul Doria knows patients fighting cancer have emotional and physical battles to face.

Doria moved to the United States from Paraguay in 1987 after earning a medical degree from the National University of Asuncion. In 1995, he became a staff oncologist at Terrebonne General Medical Center in Houma.

Doria climbed the ranks to director of the hospital's stem cell transplant program, vice chief of staff and medical director of the Bayou Region Hospice. He eventually became medical director of TGMC's Mary Bird Perkins Cancer Center in 2008. The position has Doria working to build a program that offers comprehensive, cutting-edge cancer treatment to the local community.

He's also passionate about providing patients with the emotional and spiritual support they need to cope with their disease. Cancer patients at TGMC have regular access to counselors, chaplains and often to Doria himself.

"I'm a doctor that will pray for and with a patient if a patient asks," he said. "In my experience, patients who seek support tend to have a better quality of life."

Doria worries cancer patients who ignore their emotional needs risk succumbing to feelings of fear, isolation and hopelessness.

He recalls working with a patient who had terminal cancer. Despite Doria's best efforts, the patient became paralyzed with



Dr. Raul Doria and nurse Michelle Chauvin visit with patient Raymond Domangue.

Photo by Tracie Morris Schaefer

fear and suffered severe depression and insomnia.

"He was in complete denial and wouldn't accept his condition," Doria said. "Unfortunately, he died with that fear. We did everything possible but we couldn't help him."

Doria hopes to spare other cancer patients from suffering the same fate. In 2005, he started a cancer support group called Nosotros, the Spanish word for "we" or "us." The group meets once a month and averages between 20 and 25 participants.

Doria said he first started hating cancer when he lost both of his parents to the disease. He also beat his own battle with kid-

ney cancer in 2005.

"One of the reasons I founded Nosotros was because I had the whole package," he said. "My parents had cancer, I had cancer and two of my kids had cancer. I've experienced it as a son, a father and a patient."

In addition to Nosotros, Doria regularly appears on local television to discuss cancer-related health topics including ultraviolet light safety, cancer treatment modalities, free screenings and clinical trials. •

— Tamara Moffett

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Raul Doria, M.D.
Medical Director of Mary Bird Perkins Cancer Center at TGMC



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PHYSICIANS

Stacy Drury

Position: Tulane University School of Medicine Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Science and Department of Pediatrics assistant professor

Age: 41

Family: husband, Trey; children, Max, 12, Kate, 8

Education: bachelor's degree in religious studies and biology, University of Virginia; master's degree in human genetics, University of Michigan; doctor of medicine and Ph.D. in genetics, Louisiana State University School of Medicine

Tulane University School of Medicine child psychiatrist Dr. Stacy Drury considers her job the best of all worlds. She spends half her day doing genetic research and the other half working with children who need help.

"My job is fun and I'm lucky to have this balance," she said. "I get to work with super cute kids, see them get better, challenge myself intellectually, work with smart collaborators and train researchers to think scientifically."

Drury provides psychiatric treatment for children with trauma-related disorders, medical disorders and comorbid psychiatric illnesses, such as anxiety and sickle cell anemia.

She also works in a molecular genetics lab at Tulane where she studies the differences in a sequence of specific genes and how they relate to psychological and physiological outcomes.

"I look at how small changes in the functioning of genes make children respond differently to early adversity or trauma," she said. "Ideally, the goal is to use genetic studies to help develop new treatments and identify the best treatment for each child, while providing insight into the neurobiology of early stress

exposure. It's not just about developing new medications. It's also about new therapies and the best therapy for each child."

Drury currently leads a project called New Orleans Study of Stress, Physiology and Children. The focus is how children in the city age 4 to 14 are affected by diversity and positive influences.

"We know that 40 percent of kids that met screening criteria for mental health issues after Katrina are not being treated for trauma-related disorders or post-traumatic stress disorders," Drury said. "In fact, we estimate less than 10 percent are getting effective treatment. Our biggest challenges today are kids not having access to mental health care, lack of funding and a shortage of child psychiatrists."

While she was working on her Ph.D., she created a program that partnered medical students with pediatric oncology patients, which continues today. She also serves as the medical director and board president of Camp Challenge, which provides a free weeklong camp for children with cancer and their siblings.

— Kerry Duff

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PHYSICIANS

Julie Kanter

Position: Sickle Cell Center of Southern Louisiana director; Tulane University Pediatric Stem Cell Transplant Unit director; Tulane University School of Medicine Pediatric Hematology-Oncology assistant professor

Age: 35

Family: husband, Todd Washko; children, Samuel Washko, 3, Meredith Washko, 11 months

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

As a child, Dr. Julie Kanter watched her younger brother endure years of tests and treatments for all sorts of medical problems. There was the hole in his heart, the "failure to thrive" diagnosis and a developmental delay. He had pneumonia, hernias and a multitude of other ailments.

Eventually, he was diagnosed with DiGeorge Syndrome, a genetic disorder that results in the poor development of certain bodily systems. Kanter watched in marvel as modern medicine "put him back together."

She went to college planning for a career in physical therapy, having been impressed by the physical therapist who treated her brother. But a summer research project after Kanter's freshman year that included working with a pediatric orthopedist in town sold her on medical school.

Since 2009, Kanter has been an assistant professor of pediatrics in the hematology and oncology section at Tulane University School of Medicine. Much of her clinical research focuses on sickle cell disease, an inherited blood disorder most common in the black population so-named after the sickle shape red blood cells form that causes chronic pain and organ dysfunction.

Kanter studied sickle cell disease during her residency and



Dr. Julie Kanter plays with 2-year-old Hailey Taylor before her checkup.

Photo by Frank Aymami

fellowship and was struck by the disparity between the prevalence of the disease, which affects roughly one in 400 black people, and the limited treatment options available.

The only federally approved drug for treating sickle cell has been around for more than 100 years, Kanter said. Compare that to cystic fibrosis, a genetic condition that is about one-third less common than sickle cell, which she says benefits from roughly five times the research funding and many more pharmaceutical interventions.

"It's the patients I treat that keep me doing what I'm doing," Kanter said

She points to a recent patient, Kendill Molette, 11, as an example. Molette desperately wanted to play football, Kanter said, but the permanent port installed to facilitate monthly blood exchanges necessitated by his sickle cell kept him from doing so.

About six months ago, Molette received a successful bone marrow transplant from his younger sister.

"He's a very brave little boy," Kanter said. "He wanted to be in on every discussion about his care and had heard all the risks of the transplant and still decided he wanted to move forward with it."•

— Emilie Bahr

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Yvens Laborde

Position: Ochsner Medical Center-West Bank regional medical director

Age: 47

Family: wife, Margaret; children, Yvens, 22, Julion, 16

Education: bachelor's degree in biology, University of New Orleans; doctor of medicine, Louisiana State University Health Sciences Center-Shreveport

One of Dr. Yvens Laborde's earliest memories is sitting with his uncle, who was a scientist, in a Haitian biology lab and reviewing slides during a malaria epidemic. In the healthy neighborhoods, Laborde joined his uncle in distributing mosquito nets.

"I was very serious from a young age," Laborde said.

He couldn't have known that he would return to Haiti decades later, in service again, in response to an earthquake. On Jan. 12, 2010, Laborde was on the phone with one of his brothers in Haiti.

"He said, 'Something bad is happening. Everything is shaking,'" Laborde said, before the phone went dead.

Three days later, Laborde was on the island with a mobile personal clinic loaded with first aid supplies, antibiotics, suture kits, splints and electrolyte drinks thanks to a Haitian Relief Fund that had been assembled quickly at Ochsner Health System.

Laborde saw a teenage girl in one of his

clinics with a crushed leg headed for amputation. She fought the prognosis, and Laborde, who spent two weeks in Haiti, tended to her with antibiotics and bandages until he could save the leg.

Laborde came by his disaster management skills from growing up in Haiti and having endured the levee failures in Hurricane Katrina.

"I applied the same planning and logistics knowledge in triaging and taking control, leading with clarity," he said. "When there's chaos, people look for structure."

With Ochsner's support, Laborde founded Fondylsahh, a nonprofit that helps Haitian farmers and displaced children and recently opened a new school to serve toddlers to teens. Its donations also provide school uniforms, books and athletic equipment.

Simultaneously, Laborde has helped grow Ochsner Medical Center-West Bank's emergency medicine department. •

— Anne Berry



Photo by Tom Macom

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PHYSICIANS

Mary Lupo

Position: The Lupo Center for Aesthetic and General Dermatology founder and CEO; Tulane Medical Center clinical professor of dermatology

Age: 57

Family: husband, Robert; children, Tom, 29, Frances, 21

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

Dr. Mary Lupo doesn't follow the crowd.

As a clinical resident at Tulane University School of Medicine, she asked for injection instruction to be offered as part of the curriculum there. She pushed for so long that she was eventually able to open the Tulane Cosmetic Clinic, where she has taught other residents how to perform procedures such as Botox injections, chemical peels and laser therapies since 1984.

That led to a connection with Dr. Ragini Ghyy, a consultant dermatologist in Surat, India.

Ghyy was coming to Louisiana for an American Dermatology Association conference on cosmetic surgery and found Lupo on the Internet through her own conference called Cosmetic Bootcamp. She contacted Lupo to ask for some private instruction in the area of injections.

"The world is very small now because of the Internet," Lupo said.

Lupo took Ghyy under her wing, and Ghyy spent two of the three weeks she was in the United States with Lupo.

There were some cultural differences at first, but those were quickly overcome.

"It took at least three days for me to pronounce her name correctly," Lupo said.



Photo by Frank Aymami

At the end of the two weeks, Ghyy left with new knowledge, something that brings Lupo great satisfaction.

"It is so gratifying to open another door to their education," she said. "She was one of the most delightful young women I ever spent time with."

Lupo's interest in doing things her way also led her to open a private practice immediately upon finishing her residency. She said she never planned to make any compromises regarding her medical profession, something she said has "defined myself and my practice."

"I came out and started a medical practice from scratch, which is virtually unheard of," she said. "I wanted my practice to be exactly how I would want it to be. I didn't want to make any compromises."

Lupo is also a founding director of the Cosmetic Boot Camp, a continuing medical education program that teaches physicians the latest techniques for aging skin correction. She has also been a source for E! Entertainment Network, CNN, "The View," The Food Network and the local CBS, NBC and ABC affiliates. •

— Travis Andrews

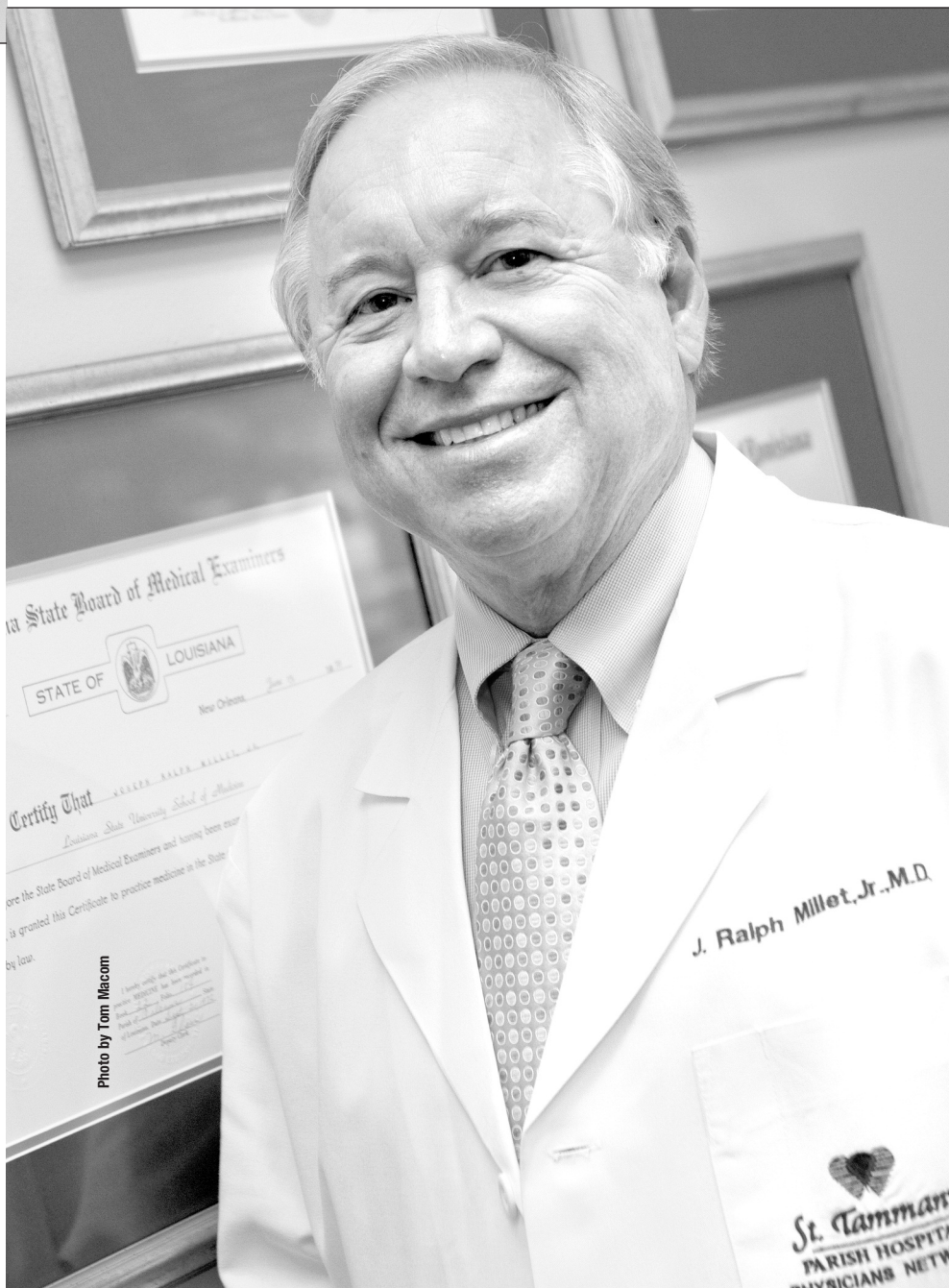


Photo by Tom Macom

PHYSICIANS

Ralph Millet

Position: St. Tammany Physicians Network-Covington primary care physician

Age: 65

Family: wife, Elaine

Education: bachelor's degree in biology, Tulane University; doctor of medicine, Louisiana State University Health Sciences Center School of Medicine

Dr. Ralph Millet said the most exciting part of his career has been watching "the little community hospital become a major hospital delivering state-of-the-art care for the North Shore."

What's made it more exciting is that Millet has played a role in the evolution of St. Tammany Parish Hospital.

Millet has been an internal medicine physician in St. Tammany Parish for more than 37 years, seeing many of his patients at STPH. Since 1994, he has served as the primary care physician at St. Tammany Physicians Network's clinic in Covington, a network of 15 physicians who see patients at offices in Covington, Mandeville and Franklinton. The group will open another office in Madisonville in August.

Before joining the network, Millet had a private practice, seeing most of his patients at STPH from 1975-94. He also served as the hospital's chief of staff, physician adviser for the skilled nursing facility and physician adviser for case management.

In the late 1970s, Millet also worked as medical director at Bowling Green Inn in Mandeville, a substance abuse treatment center.

"I have learned much from all my patients. Life is so unpredictable and more often than not out of our control," he said. "Our health is fragile, and I am impressed by the durability and strength of the human spirit."

Millet said his work includes finding the cause for patients' ailments by using exams, lab tests and radiology procedures. He then prescribes medications or treatments to cure or control their illnesses and initiates the coordination of care with other physicians and health care providers.

Physicians within the network also coordinate patient care with home health and hospice services.

Millet knew he wanted to be a physician at age 6, when his father, Ralph Sr., who served as cardiology research technician at Tulane University Medical Center, took him to the medical school to "hang out with all the medical staff and the physicians."

"I just grew up around it and I knew I wanted to be a doctor," said Millet, who recalled being the second board certified internal medicine physician in St. Tammany Parish in 1975. •

— Tommy Santora



Photo by Tom Maccom

PHYSICIANS

Surendra Purohit

Position: Louisiana Healthcare Associates solo practitioner

Age: 69

Family: wife, Vimla; sons, Sunil, 43, Ajay, 38, Vijay, 38

Education: bachelor's degree in biology, Hislop College, Nagpur University; doctor of medicine, Medical College and Hospital, Nagpur University

Dr. Surendra Purohit's contributions and leadership in the medical field transcend local accomplishments, including White House honors and state appointments.

At the national level, Purohit has successfully advocated for legislation that addressed fairness for international physicians. In Louisiana, he lobbied for the successful passage of a law that grants temporary licenses to foreign medical graduate students to help them obtain a permanent license.

On a similar scale, Purohit is a founding member of the American Association of Physicians of Indian Origin and serves as director for the organization's Charitable Foundation, which now has more than 40,000 members and helps physicians of Indian descent advance in the profession and communities.

Those accomplishments are indicative of Purohit's dedication to his practice as a heart and vascular surgeon and his community.

Locally, Purohit has carried out similar mandates through his private and hospital practices in Covington for the past 32 years. When

Purohit arrived in the area in 1979, there were two hospitals.

His goals then were to build a sizeable number of specialties in the medical community and to increase the use of technology at area hospitals. Leadership roles as chief of staff for St. Tammany Parish Hospital and Lakeview Regional Medical Center allowed him to reach those marks.

Now a solo practitioner for Louisiana Healthcare Associates, Purohit has expanded his portfolio to include endoscopy as well as laser and robotic surgery. He said he transitioned his practice so his business "can get the most modern technology that would benefit patients."

Such a move requires ongoing training and insight into industry trends.

"I go and learn the most modern technology. I keep up with CMEs (continuing medical education). I read a lot of medical journals," Purohit said.

In addition to his practice and community involvement, Purohit is a clinical professor of surgery at Tulane University School of Medicine. •

— *Nayita Wilson*

PHYSICIANS

Everett Robert Jr.

Position: Southern Brain and Spine neurosurgeon

Age: 37

Family: wife, Vanessa; son, Rhett, 2

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

Dr. Everett Robert Jr. is dedicated to helping patients with brain and spine issues. He works 60 hours a week — sometimes more — seeing patients in private practice and taking half the emergency calls for neurosurgery at East Jefferson General Hospital.

Robert is a native of New Orleans who graduated from Louisiana State University School of Medicine in 2003 and finished his seven-year residency in neurosurgery in 2010. Following residency, he became a member of Southern Brain and Spine, a private practice in Metairie with five neurosurgeons. His practice areas include brain surgery for trauma and brain tumors and operating on the spine for neck and back pain and herniated discs. He also operates on peripheral nerves, those outside the brain and spinal cord.

"Most of my patients come in for neck and back pain, not surgery," he said. "The challenge is determining why someone hurts."

Robert said that once he makes a diagnosis, he treats the pain with medication, physical therapy or injections. If nothing minimizes the pain, he said he offers surgery, which oftentimes changes a person's life.

Robert recalls when he and one of his partners worked on



Photo by Frank Aymami

a patient together. The man said he had been in pain for 20 years and had seen a number of spinal doctors. He also had a spinal cord stimulator, which was put in to decrease pain in the spine and legs.

"My partner and I were going over the patient's images, and I suggested that maybe he didn't have a spinal issue after all but rather a peripheral nerve problem," Robert said. "So we exam-

ined him, and we discovered he had a sciatic nerve problem."

The team operated and relieved the patient's pain.

"Afterward, he cried and thanked us. He also said one of his grandkids asked him why he wasn't crabby anymore," Robert said. "It's a pleasure to help people and take care of them, but when you change someone's life, it's really rewarding." •

— *Kerry Duff*

PHYSICIANS

Daniel Rupley

Position: Touro Infirmery Women's Imaging Center medical director; St. Tammany Parish Hospital Women's Pavilion medical director; St. Charles Surgical Hospital director of radiology

Age: 57

Family: divorced; children, Katherine, 26, Anne, 23, John, 24

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

Dr. Laszlo Tabar, who has interpreted more than 1 million mammograms throughout his 40-year career, has mentored tens of thousands of breast imaging radiologists worldwide, including Dr. Daniel Rupley.

While at Long Beach Memorial Medical Center for his medical training residency in 1989, Rupley met Tabar and worked with him to develop that hospital's breast cancer center.

Rupley then followed Tabar to Central Hospital in Palun, Sweden, for a two-month preceptorship in mammography.

"I felt this was the field I needed to be in because the stars had kind of aligned, and I had the chance to learn from the best in the field," he said.

Rupley said Tabar's breast imaging research has laid the foundation for early detection through modern mammographic screening.

"That affords (patients) the optimal chance for survival so that they can live long, happy and fulfilling lives, and we can achieve no evidence of disease," he said.

Rupley has spent his nearly 20-year career as the medical director of several women's imaging centers throughout the New Orleans area, including his current role as medical director of Touro Infirmery Women's Imaging Center, medical director

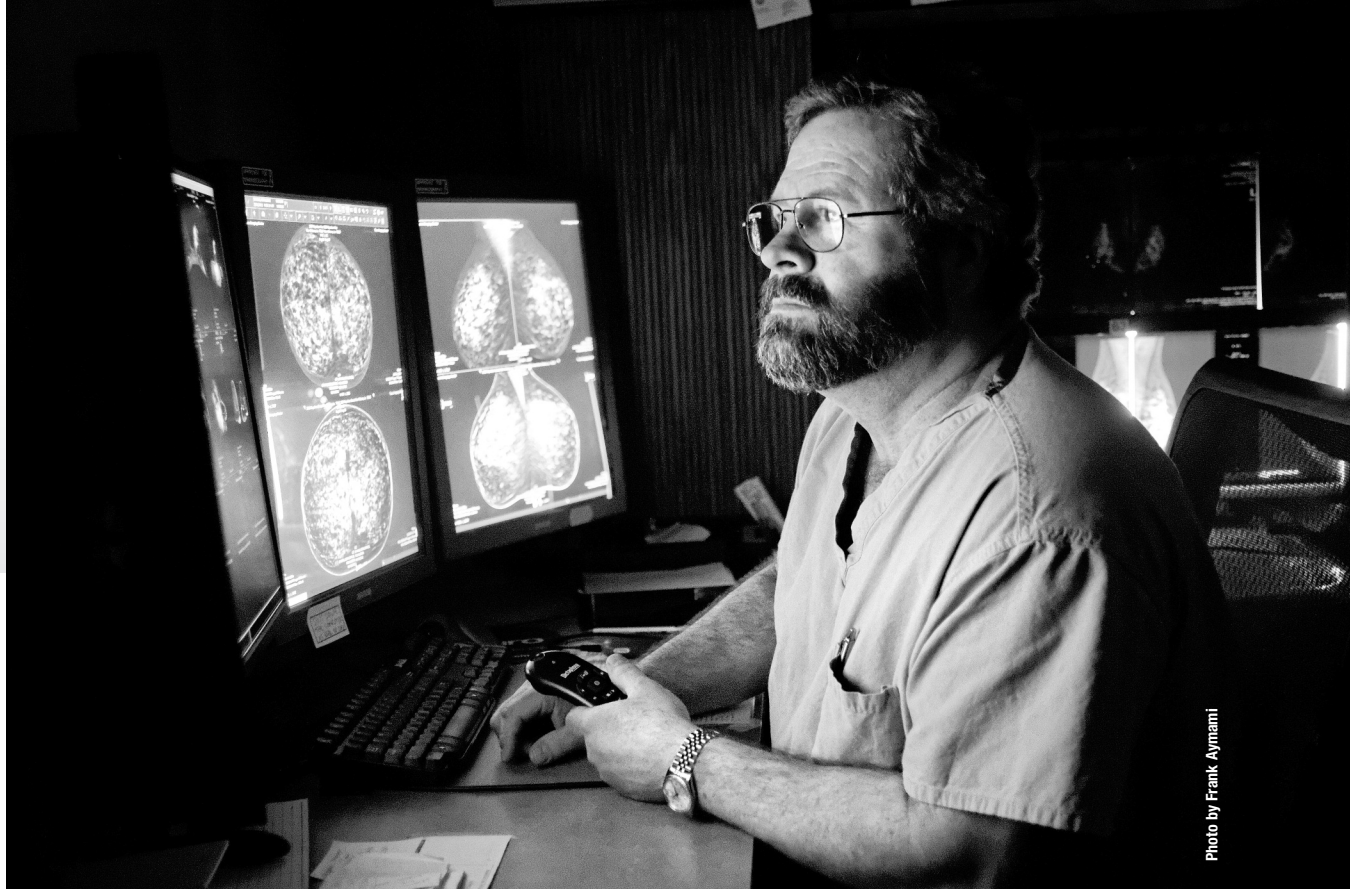


Photo by Frank Aymami

of St. Tammany Parish Hospital Women's Pavilion and director of radiology at St. Charles Surgical Hospital.

From 1994 to Aug. 29, 2005, Rupley served as director of the Memorial Medical Center Women's Imaging Center.

"What I do now with my scattered and broadened practice is a byproduct of Katrina, where my efforts were concentrated at one spot before the storm. Now, we're still regrouping and re-establishing what we had before, treating patients where we can in various areas throughout the city," he said.

Rupley describes his profession as the front end of the process for breast cancer patients, handling the review of biop-

sies, mammograms, imaging and diagnosis before the patients are transitioned to a surgeon, radiation therapist and medical oncologist.

"It's an extremely pivotal moment of transition for a woman who was used to being a healthy individual and now she has to deal with being told she's a breast cancer survivor," Rupley said. "But if we catch it early, and we have made some amazing progress in doing that, then it's that much better for the patient, and that's a goal I'm extremely passionate about every morning I come into work." •

— Tommy Santora

CONGRATULATIONS
DR. DANIEL RUPLEY
& DR. ELLEN ZAKRIS!



DANIEL RUPLEY, M.D.
Women's Imaging Specialist



ELLEN ZAKRIS, M.D.
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PHYSICIANS

Carolina Urbizo

Position: Daughters of Charity Services of New Orleans internal medicine and pediatrics physician

Age: 34

Family: single

Education: bachelor's degree in biology, Loyola University; doctor of medicine, Universidad Autonoma de Guadalajara, Mexico

Internal medicine and pediatrics physician Dr. Carolina Urbizo once counseled an obese young girl on the risks of being overweight. The young woman listened to Urbizo's advice, changed her lifestyle and eating habits, and lost 50 pounds. Another patient who did the same thing was able to cut her diabetes and high blood pressure medication in half.

"My patients trust me and come to me with problems, which I like," Urbizo said. "I also enjoy taking care of them, and if I can make a difference in even one person, it's very rewarding. It was my calling to be a doctor."

Urbizo is a physician at the Daughters of Charity's Carrollton Health Center, where her care ranges from newborns to geriatric patients. She treats adults for chronic diseases such as diabetes, high blood pressure and infections and sees children for well visits, colds, infections and vaccinations. She also sees newborns in the nursery at Touro Infirmary.

"Most pediatricians only see children until they turn 18,"



Dr. Carolina Urbizo checks out 6-month-old Sophia Navarro.

Photo by Frank Aymami

she said. "But I get to see them transition from babies to adolescents to adults, which is nice. I also like being able to treat anybody that needs a doctor. Some clinics don't accept patients without insurance or Medicaid. At Daughters of Charity, I can see anybody and provide affordable treatment options and medications."

Urbizo was born in Honduras and moved to the United States when she was 8. After that, she visited Honduras during summers to work in a medical clinic where her aunt

was a doctor.

Being fluent in Spanish also meant she could communicate better with patients at Daughters of Charity, which she said treats a growing number of Hispanics.

"It's nice when patients know they can communicate with their physician," Urbizo said. "I know their customs and cultural habits, so I know where my patients are coming from, which gives me an advantage when I treat them."•

— Kerry Duff

PHYSICIANS

Michael Wasserman

Position: Ochsner for Children pediatrician

Age: 59

Family: wife, Lynne; Danny, 31, Julie Green, 29; grandchildren, Yaakov, 4, Avi, 2, Becky, 2, Chana and Asher, 1 month

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

Pediatrician Dr. Michael Wasserman hails from a long line of physicians.

In 1906, a German physician August von Wassermann, his great-great-great uncle, developed the test to detect syphilis. His grandfather was a doctor in Germany before immigrating to the United States and resuming his medical practice.

Many of his cousins are doctors, and Wasserman worked for his father, also a pediatrician, for seven years before his father retired.

That he would opt for a career in pediatric medicine after studying economics as an undergraduate reflected something of "a natural sequence of events," as Wasserman puts it.

"The best part of my job is the children," said Wasserman, who takes a special satisfaction in watching his patients mature and develop over many years and in forging close ties to multiple generations of families. He now has patients whose parents were his patients when they were children. Sometimes his patients' grandparents were treated by his father.

He decided to specialize in pediatrics after spending a summer during medical school working at St. Jude Children's Research Hospital in Memphis, Tenn. It was something of a chance opportunity arrived at after another summer job in Memphis turned out to be less than he had hoped for.

"I wandered in and they took me on," Wasserman said.



Dr. Michael Wasserman examines Eli Franco, 3, at the Rothschild Ochsner Pediatric Center in Metairie.

Photo by Frank Aymami

At St. Jude, he reveled in the challenges and rewards of caring for sick children and the complexity of dealing with their parents, siblings and other relatives.

Treating children with serious illnesses remains one of the toughest aspects of his work.

"I've had several children with inborn errors of metabolism," such as Tay-Sachs disease, an inherited disease of the central nervous system that is most common among members of the Ashkenazi Jewish population, he said. "These (diseases) are

oftentimes incurable and there can be a long and drawn out decline ending in the child's demise."

Over the past two decades, Wasserman has become a regular source of medical advice for people he has never even met. For more than 20 years, he has appeared on WWL-TV's morning newscast, taking calls and answering questions from viewers on matters pertaining to children's health, behavior and parenting.•

— Emilie Bahr

PHYSICIANS

Ellen Zakris

Position: Touro Infirmary radiation oncology medical director
Age: 50
Family: partner, Peter Sather; children, Sara, 22, Arielle, 18, Jake, 16
Education: bachelor's degree in microbiology, Rutgers University; doctor of medicine, Duke University School of Medicine

First time-visitors to Dr. Ellen Zakris' office initially may dread the experience because they're there to confront some form of cancer in some stage of growth.

But the radiation oncologist has a knack for putting people at ease.

"I never give false hope," she said. "But I never take hope away."

And with more than 40 patients visiting her office every day, Zakris said every patient — and every cancer — she sees is different.

As a pediatric oncologist, Zakris also treats newborns but also has patients at the opposite end of the spectrum.

"I have seen some in their late 90s and even those who were more than 100," she said.

A common theme with nearly all of Zakris' patients is a desire to rout the cancer that threatens them.

"People want to fight on and do the whole course of treatment," she said.

It's a task that technological advances

have made easier.

"The radiation treatment, planning and delivery is completely different today from what it was 20 years ago," she said. "Because of these advances, there are much less side-effects and much less risk."

Even so, Zakris puts stock in personal patient interactions.

"It's important that I be there for them every step of the way," she said. "A person's treatment typically is an initial course of therapy which may last anywhere between one to six months. Then I am with them for life. I will follow up every few months and see them in my office."

Zakris, who teaches radiation oncology at Tulane University School of Medicine and Louisiana State University School of Medicine, also serves on the board of the Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation's New Orleans affiliate and the board of directors for Touro Infirmary and Touro Synagogue. •

— Garry Boulard



Photo by Frank Aymami

PROFESSIONALS

Mary Abell and Donald Erwin

Age: Erwin, 73; Abell, 61
Family: Children: Virginia Sirera, 47, Margaret Manley, 38, Betsy Elizabeth Pillow, 38, Frances Tucker, 29, William Smith Jr., 25, Mary Smith, 23
Education: Abell: bachelor's degree in nursing, Vanderbilt University; doctor of medicine, Tulane University School of Medicine. Erwin: bachelor's degree, Hampden-Sydney College; doctor of medicine, Virginia School of Medicine

Drs. Donald Erwin and Mary Abell are one in marriage and mission. For the past 25 years, the couple has shaped the St. Thomas Community Health Center into a leading health care provider for the St. Thomas and Irish Channel communities.

Under their leadership, the clinic added a 12,000-square-foot facility to its Uptown location in March. The expansion doubled the center's capacity to offer primary, pediatric, mental health and specialty services.

Their success and the expansion resulted from their relationships with community members, city leaders, financial backers and partners who have supported the center throughout the years.

Abell said she realized the clinic's strength and potential when it faced critical financial hardships in 1996. To prevent it from closing, more than 500 community members marched to City Hall and successfully petitioned helped from city leaders.

"It was the turning point for the clinic because the clinic realized it needed the community as much as the community needed it," said Abell, who serves as the center's medical director.

Nine years later, the community helped clean and reopen the center after Hurricane Katrina. Additionally, more than 10 organizations helped pay for the reopening.

As medical director, she is responsible for recruiting physicians and staff in addition to quality assurance and practice development.

Erwin is president and CEO of the center and spends time cultivating donor and partner relations. He said that while he may be the public face of the organization, Abell is the heartbeat that keeps everything moving along.

He said that's evident in Abell's understanding of the community and health care disparities as well as the fact he's been called "Mr. Abell" while navigating the surrounding neighborhood.

"People today are still focusing on health care disparities. Mary helped us to understand that we're guests in this community," said Erwin, who is proudest of the allies who have helped the center survive.

"The only reason in our mind that this clinic has any success and that it continues to exist is by the grace of God," he said. •

— Nayita Wilson



Photo by Frank Aymami

PROFESSIONALS

Kevin Bianchini

Position: Jefferson NeuroBehavioral Group neuropsychologist

Age: 53

Family: wife, Dawn; children, Chloe, 12, Alex, 9

Education: bachelor's degree in psychology, St. Joseph's University; master's degree in psychology, University of Tennessee; Ph.D. in clinical psychology, University of Miami

Dr. Kevin Bianchini doesn't just heal, he rehabilitates.

A lifting accident at work left an employee bedridden with multiple lumbar injuries. At first, Bianchini was attempting to help his patient "see the way to the light," but he ended up working with the patient on rehab for about six years.

"(Recovery is) a long window," Bianchini said. "It takes patience and seeing it in a longer time frame. And there's not always that amount of time allotted in health care."

This situation is one reason Bianchini opened his own office in Metairie and expanded to Mid-City, Algiers, Covington, Baton Rouge, Lafayette, Houma and Alexandria after Hurricane Katrina. His group also works with patients in Ocean Springs and Pascagoula, Miss.

Normally, the aforementioned patient wouldn't have received as extensive a rehabilitation process. But after five years, the employ-

ee was feeling psychologically healthier and returned to work.

"We were able to keep working with her and not just treat symptoms," he said. "The treatment being complete rehabilitation. Being independent helps us make those kind of calls."

Helping people return to a functioning state is Bianchini's goal.

"That's our emphasis. There's been a number of patients with significant problems we helped return to a high level of function."

Bianchini, who is the managing partner of a team of 17 psychologists, 20 psychometrists and 13 other staff members, said he always was interested in the brain but wanted to be able to work with patients as well, which accounts for his focus on psychological and physical rehabilitation.

"I still very much enjoy treating patients," he said. "I'm lucky that I like all of it."•

— Travis Andrews



PROFESSIONALS

Trisha Chandler

Position: Slidell Memorial Hospital quality indicator specialist

Age: 40

Family: husband, Randy; sons, Christopher, 21, Joseph, 16

Education: bachelor's degree in nursing and registered nursing license, Jacksonville State University

Patricia Chandler's career was at a crossroads in 2001.

She had used her licensed practical nurse degree in various nursing jobs at Slidell Memorial Hospital in pediatrics and home health, and then worked her way up to continuous quality improvement and information systems coordinator for the hospital's home health program.

But the LPN designation only got her so far. She needed a registered nurse degree for any kind of promotion within the hospital. So she moved with her two sons to Alabama and enrolled at Jacksonville State University to earn her bachelor's degree in nursing.

"I felt I was capable of doing something better," Chandler said. "It was a pretty scary move and it was a tough decision, but it turned out to be the right one."

Chandler returned to Slidell Memorial in 2007 as an emergency room staff nurse, and two years later became a Quality Indicator Specialist, a position she has held for the past three years.

Chandler is responsible for the hospital's annual year-end quality assessment and performance improvement report, meeting with hospital

directors and reviewing their quality indicators to improve the hospital's overall performance.

She presents patient satisfaction and hospital quality briefings to the board of commissioners and works with physicians on performance reviews and credential renewals.

"Quality assurance is so important," she said. "It's not just compiling numbers. It's a progressive tool for everything we do as a hospital, from our grass cutters to our nurses to our physicians. It touches the whole continuum of our professionals."

Chandler said one of her most memorable moments as a nurse came when a 4-year-old boy, who just recovered from an appendectomy, used Crayons and a coloring book she bought him to color her a picture.

"I was down the hall preparing his medicine when I heard a sound, looked up and there he was, walking toward me with this big IV pole," she said. "I miss that direct patient care aspect, but ... I also feel I can make a difference across a variety of a lot more areas through my quality department work."•

— Tommy Santora

PROFESSIONALS

Mattie Hobley

Position: East Jefferson General Hospital oncology services director

Age: 57

Family: children, Raichell, 28, Billy Ray, 21

Education: bachelor's degree in nursing, Dillard University; master's degree in health services administration, College of St. Francis; master's degree in nursing administration, Louisiana State University

When Mattie Hobley was in nursing school, her cousin died from cancer just before her 25th birthday. A few years later, she took a job in the oncology department at East Jefferson General Hospital. She considered it an opportunity to help others die a good death, she said.

"A lot of nurses don't want to work in oncology because they find it depressing," she said. "I understand that and I know we can't always prevent people from dying, but they don't have to die in pain anymore, which is a major accomplishment. I... understand death and dying, so my work is not sad. It's rewarding."

A few weeks ago, Hobley received a letter from a retired East Jefferson physician whose wife, one of Hobley's patients, died of cancer 20 years ago.

"This gentleman started volunteering at the hospital earlier this year, so he stopped by my office and brought me the sweetest letter," she said. "He always thanked me for taking good care of his wife, but he put it in writing, which

amazed me. It's been so many years, yet he wanted me to know that good deeds are not forgotten."

Hobley joined EJGH in 1979 as a floor nurse in the medical surgical unit. She moved to the hospital's cancer unit in 1985, and 15 years later became director of the oncology department.

As director, she is responsible for the outpatient, inpatient and palliative care departments and the hospital's cancer registry.

Her biggest accomplishment came four years ago when she spearheaded the affiliation between EJGH and M.D. Anderson Cancer Center in Houston, the first connection in New Orleans.

"This affiliation is what I'm most proud of in my career," Hobley said. "It's good for our patients and assures quality care because our physicians use the same practice guidelines as M.D. Anderson. Patients also don't have to travel to Houston."•

— Kerry Duff



Photo by Frank Aymami

PROFESSIONALS

Larry Hollier

Position: Louisiana State University Health Sciences Center New Orleans chancellor

Age: 68

Family: wife, Dianna; children, Larry Jr., 47, Michelle, 45

Education: bachelor's degree in medicine, LSU; doctor of medicine, LSU School of Medicine

When he was appointed acting chancellor of Louisiana State University Health Sciences Center in November 2005, Dr. Larry Hollier helped orchestrate the movement of six schools from the New Orleans area to Baton Rouge after Hurricane Katrina. Three months later, he was named chancellor and his focus turned to restoring the school's presence in the Crescent City.

"I helped to design and build up the new medical center when we started our return to New Orleans," Hollier said. "It was very satisfying because we went through tremendous turmoil following the storm. There was quite a bit of financial stability."

Today, he said, the hospital is stronger financially than it ever has been with more students than ever.

According to the registrar at the medical school, there are 763 medical schools enrolled this year.

"We have moved to a new building on St. Charles Avenue, and I am now monitoring plans to open a cancer center in the city," he said. "It has taken a lot to get where we are now,

but it is satisfying to see the development of the bio district in New Orleans."

Hollier began his career in medicine as a vascular surgeon at LSU when the specialty was in its infancy at the hospital. He said he was involved in developing solutions surgeons faced in treating patients.

"There were always new problems to solve because we were just beginning to learn the capabilities of vascular surgery," Hollier said.

He was part of a group that developed techniques to limit the threat of paralysis during aortic surgery, and he helped establish the school for vascular surgery at LSU and a program for vascular medicine at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minn.

In 1987, Hollier was named chairman of the department of surgery at Ochsner Clinic Foundation and served as a member of the board of management for Ochsner's 750-member, multispecialty group practice. He also helped expand surgical activities in oncology, vascular surgery, cosmetic surgery and transplantation at Ochsner.•

— Robin Shannon



Photo by Frank Aymami

PROFESSIONALS

Linda Kelly

Position: Delgado Community College Occupational Therapy Assistant Program director

Age: 63

Family: single

Education: bachelor's degree in occupational therapy, University of Illinois Medical Center; master's degree in special education, University of New Mexico; Ph.D. in educational administration, University of New Orleans

When it comes to training students to become occupational therapy assistants, Linda Kelly is a believer in giving lessons beyond the confines of the classroom.

"I try as much as possible to get my students out into the community in a wide variety of settings," said Kelly, who came to Delgado Community College in 1995 after serving as a lecturer and administrative head of the occupational therapy department at the University of Zimbabwe.

"The people we treat in our profession live in the community," Kelly said, "and I think students should be sensitized to that, going to where the people are and understanding what it is that they do."

Kelly's students have interacted with residents at nonprofits throughout the area, including Project Lazarus, Friendship Club, Kingsley House, Magnolia School and the former Sunshine House.

"In occupational therapy, what we are trying to do is get people back into what is called the

skills for the job of living," said Kelly, who often accompanies her students to the sites.

"To put it another way, we are trying to help return people to the kind of life where they can be functional in whatever it is they like to do and whatever is meaningful to them."

For the nearly 20 students who every semester are enrolled in Delgado's occupational therapy assistant program, that means learning how to help patients "maximize their independence in order to have the most quality of life that they can have," Kelly said.

She believes such interactions can help students understand the needs of those who feel isolated or ostracized because of their ailments.

"They learn from the residents there what it feels like to have had their families abandon them or not to be able to get a job," she said of students who work at Project Lazarus, a center for residents with HIV and AIDS. "That's the kind of learning experience that can't be duplicated in a classroom setting." •

— Garry Boulard



Linda Kelly, left, shows Tomekia Alvarez and Amber Lee how to use a Purdue Pegboard in her occupational theory and applications class at Delgado Community College.

Photo by Frank Aymami

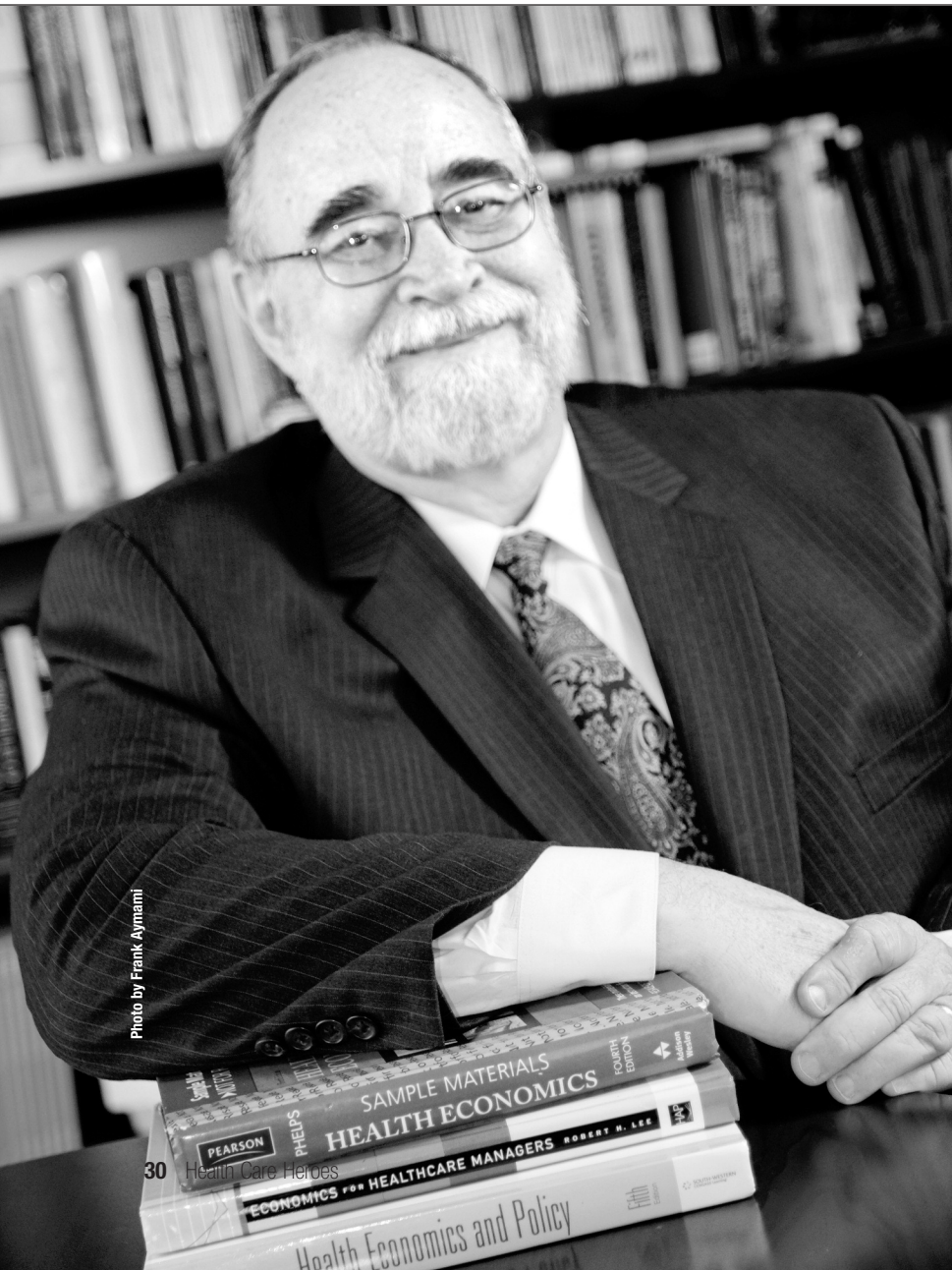


Photo by Frank Aymami

PROFESSIONALS

W.J. Lane

Position: University of New Orleans master of science health care management director and economics and finance department chairman

Age: 60

Family: wife, Diane; children, Jaime Michaelson, 33, Erin, 31, Rich, 29

Education: bachelor's degree in mathematics, Point Loma Nazarene University; Ph.D. in economics, University of California at San Diego

W.J. Lane was teaching an MBA class 15 years ago when a young nurse who was one of his students approached him and asked if he would offer independent study with a focus on health care economics.

"I didn't even know health care economics existed," Lane said. "I was a little embarrassed."

He agreed to teach her and set out to teach himself in preparation. Lane became fascinated with the material in the process.

"The way health care operates from an economist's point of view is so bizarre," he said

Lane approached the University of New Orleans and requested to create a program focused on health care economics, which the school did by establishing a master of science program in health care management. Lane is the director, and serves as chairman of the school's economics and finance department.

"Every time I turn around, I see another graduate," he said. "We're kind of as big as we can handle."

After a few years of working with the new program, he was contacted by Slidell Memorial Hospital's board of directors, who were aware of his background in economics but had no idea he also worked in health care economics, to help with a problem.

The hospital was going bankrupt, and it was Lane's chance to apply everything he had learned to a real-world situation.

"We went from virtually bankrupt to being on sound financial ground," he said.

A resolution was passed that redirected funds to allow the hospital to purchase some of the equipment it lacked but needed. Lane helped the hospital manage the funding and is now the only AA-bond rated hospital in Louisiana.

He now serves as the board's treasurer.

"I've been teaching how hospitals worked in my classrooms, but I had no real world experience," he said. "Turns out I was right." •

— Travis Andrews

PROFESSIONALS

Maureen Larkins

Position: Daughters of Charity Services of New Orleans vice president of strategic and external affairs

Age: 45

Family: husband, Berthod; daughters, Victoria, 19, Olivia, 18

Education: bachelor's degree in communications and business and master's degree in business administration, University of New Orleans

Maureen Larkins never envisioned working in the health care industry, but one night in the emergency room with her mother changed that.

Her mother became sick following a breast cancer surgery and was admitted into Methodist Hospital's emergency department. After a one-night stay in the ER and still having issues, her mother was prepping for a second night. That's when the hospital informed her she couldn't stay past midnight because her insurance didn't allow it.

Larkins said a nurse told her how to "beat the system" by discharging her mother and then checking her back into the ER, at which time a new hospital stay would begin that her insurance would cover.

Larkin said the experience instilled in her a passion to fight what she calls "the haves and have nots system of health care."

"I came out of that situation thinking, 'Wow, there has to be a better way for people to receive health care,'" Larkins said. "I saw a hospital staff advocating for patients, and I knew there was something I could do to provide access to the people who needed it."

Larkins is following up on that passion as

the vice president of strategic and external affairs at Daughters of Charity of New Orleans, which saw 52,000 patients in fiscal 2012, at its health centers in Bywater, Carrollton and Metairie.

For the past four years, Larkins has been responsible for strategic planning, business development, construction, project management, board governance, external affairs, community outreach and advocacy. Since her arrival, the organization has expanded to offer dental and optometry services. Its renovated facilities include a \$5.5 million, 24,000-square-foot health care center at the former St. Cecilia Catholic School in the Bywater, the \$400,000, 4,000-square-foot Metairie facility and the \$8.5 million, 24,000-square-foot Carrollton flagship office.

Larkins also led Daughters of Charity to work with Ascension Health to manage clinical services at a new community hospital in eastern New Orleans that is scheduled to open in the fall of 2013 at the former Methodist Hospital site.

Larkins expects the organization to serve 62,000 patients in fiscal 2013, which begins July 1. •

— Tommy Santora



Photo by Frank Aymami

PROFESSIONALS

Lori Mipro

Position: West Jefferson Medical Center vice president of physician practices

Age: 58

Family: husband, Paul; daughters, Lindsay, 32, Toni, 36; dog, Bear, 11

Education: bachelor's degree in management and master's degree in business administration, University of New Orleans

Lori Mipro has worked in hospital administration and management for 30 years managing processes and overseeing practice operations in areas such as human resources, medical records, scheduling and patient processing in Louisiana, Georgia, North Carolina and West Virginia.

Taking over the vice president role of physician practices at West Jefferson Medical Center in 2008 was a natural progression and has given her "freedom to go out and really make exciting things happen," she said.

In this role, Mipro is leading the implementation of a three-phase process, which includes further developing the hospital's presence on the West Bank of Jefferson Parish, simplifying physicians' self-governing abilities and implementing a Continuity Care program, which is under way.

Through the Continuity Care initiative, Mipro's team is implementing processes to strengthen communications between inpatient and outpatient physicians, prevent overlap of services between inpatient and outpatient physicians, and ensuring that a patient is seen at a newly instituted Care Transition Clinic within 48 hours of dis-

charge instead of one week under the older model.

"We've been doing it for a month and a half, and we've seen our readmission rate drop by 7 percent for the people who have gone to this clinic," Mipro said.

In addition to this module, Mipro is leading the opening of a Continuity Care Clinic for some of WJMC's most chronically ill patients. The clinic will develop individualized plans for patients and will allow patients and medical staff to work together.

"How much more gratifying can it be when you are providing, really, a much higher level of care?" she said. "This is a level of care that patients just don't experience anywhere."

As a key member of WMJC's leadership, Mipro also oversees the hospital's family doctors, hospitalists and specialists, and recruits for the group.

"I have always gotten a lot of enjoyment in facilitating and teaching," Mipro said. "I think that in a leadership position those are very, very important things, and that's how I lead. That's how I work every day." •

— Nayita Wilson



Photo by Frank Aymami

PROFESSIONALS

Steve Nelson

Position: Louisiana State University Health Sciences Center School of Medicine dean

Age: 59

Family: wife, Julie; children, David, 24, Karen, 20, Kevin, 17

Education: bachelor's degree in biology, State University of New York; doctor of medicine and master of surgery, McGill University Faculty of Medicine



Dr. Steve Nelson visits with third-year medical students, from left, Whit Rutledge, Sarah Barowka, Brandi Bradley and Chris Capps.

Photo by Frank Aymami

Dr. Steve Nelson's advice for the upcoming class of new doctors who are set to graduate from medical school comes from her personal experience.

"Show appreciation for your spouses," he said. "If your personal life isn't working, it will dramatically affect your professional life. I try to emphasize the human touch of medicine."

As dean of Louisiana State University School of Medicine in New Orleans, Nelson said he makes himself available to students in anatomy labs, research seminars and lecture halls.

Many students also come by his office — he says his door is always open — to privately share their struggles and ask advice.

One student had stepped up to be his ailing father's primary caregiver, a natural role for a medical student but not one Nelson thought he should play.

"That's not what his mother needed," he said. "I told him he needed to support them as a good son. His father had lots of doctors, but only one son."

Formerly an intensive care unit doctor, Nelson said he understands the value of listening.

"Patients will share secrets with you that they won't share

with anyone else," he said. "You listen, you observe, you ask, 'What's going on in your life?'"

In 2009, he became president of the LSU Healthcare Network. He is also the co-principal investigator of LSU Health Sciences Center's \$5.9 million clinical and translational research education and commercialization program and has served as director of the National Institute of Health's Comprehensive Alcohol Research Center since 2000.

Outside of clinical work and counseling medical school students, Nelson has also racked up a number of research grants.

Often, doctors used to instant success "too easily get discouraged" when they don't get a grant, he said. As an undergraduate, he took his idea for a summer research project to a professor, and together they wrote a successfully applied for a National Science Foundation grant.

"It's about finding someone who will share their knowledge and creativity with you. It's about finding the right mentor," Nelson said. "You can't expect to succeed all by yourself. It's not realistic." •

— Anne Berry



Photo by Frank Aymami

PROFESSIONALS

Eric Odom

Position: Addiction Recovery Resources Inc. executive director

Age: 45

Family: wife, Amy

Education: bachelor's degree in psychology, Louisiana State University; master's degree in counseling, LSU Health Sciences Center

Progress is different for different people.

That was a lesson Eric Odom learned 15 years ago and still applies to his behavioral health practice.

Odom was a therapist at Lutheran Social Services in New Orleans at the time when he treated a 13-year-old boy who was sexually abused by his father, who was a policeman.

Odom worked with the boy for about two years, but it took him a year and a half to make the boy feel comfortable being alone in a room with another male.

"It was a huge victory for this kid. It's the little things that mean the most," Odom said. "That was a career-defining moment for me. The boy moved into a foster home and restarted his life, and I realized that progress is different for different people. Each case is different, and you have to stay involved in every step of the process of the lives of the people you are helping."

For the past four years, Odom has served as executive director of Metairie-based Addiction Recovery Resources Inc., an addiction and substance abuse treatment center providing residential short- and long-term treatment, outpatient care and partial hospitalization.

A licensed professional counselor and certi-

fied rehabilitation counselor, Odom has more than 20 years of social service experience in the administrative, clinical, case management and direct care components of adult and adolescent rehabilitative treatment.

In 2011, he helped Addiction Recovery Resources acquire a contract from Metropolitan Human Services Authority to provide outpatient addiction treatment at an outpatient clinic on Canal Street and Claiborne Avenue for New Orleans residents lacking financial resources. That site has seen more than 100 outpatients since opening last fall.

Odom is the former board president of the New Orleans Mental Health Association and current vice president of the Council on Alcohol and Drug Abuse of Greater New Orleans. He also serves on the boards for the Louisiana Counseling Association and the Greater New Orleans Drug Demand Reduction Coalition, where he acts as part of a steering committee to implement additional prevention programs throughout the New Orleans area.

He also manages the efforts of Action against Addiction, an initiative providing educational services to adolescents and their families to prevent the early onset of addiction. •

— Tommy Santora

PROFESSIONALS

Charlotte Parent

Position: City of New Orleans deputy director of health

Age: 51

Family: husband, Charles; children, Jennifer, 30, Jenelle, 27, Melanie, 21

Education: nursing diploma, Charity Hospital School of Nursing; bachelor's degree in nursing, Loyola University

Charlotte Parent is helping transform the city of New Orleans Health Department into a model for the 21st century. She said she's changing the structure of the department to better serve families in the community and to foster a healthy quality of life for those who live, work and play in New Orleans.

"Our ultimate goal is to become an accredited public health agency, so we are overhauling who we are and focusing on communitywide health issues," said Parent, who has been deputy director of health for the city for 18 months. "We are also developing policies that will help change the overall health of the community, which is very important."

She oversees the city's year-round emergency preparedness plan and focuses on public health issues such as healthy lifestyles and living, childhood obesity, domestic violence, behavioral health and maternal child programs.

"The health department is at the forefront of helping families address these issues and find resources," she said. "We want families to understand that violence is violence, whether it's a street shooting or domestic violence at home."

In the past year, Parent created and executed a plan to close city-run health care clinics and link residents with a network of primary care clinics. Since the transition, 90 percent of citizens



Photo by Frank Aymami

who used city-run clinics now receive treatment at primary care clinics throughout the New Orleans area.

"It normally takes years to make a transition like this, but we were lucky to have a network of health care providers to work closely with us and our clients and provide the care they needed," she said. "Our biggest concern was people falling through the cracks and that didn't happen. The fact we laid out a plan and successfully executed it was extreme-

ly rewarding."

Before joining the health department, Parent spent three years working for the city's Healthy Start program, which focuses on decreasing infant mortality and positive birth outcomes. Before that, she was a labor and delivery nurse at Touro Infirmary for 10 years and director of maternal child services for seven years. •

— Kerry Duff



Terrebonne General Medical Center President and CEO Phyllis Peoples, center, with Mary Miller, left, and Sidney Hutchinson.

photo by Tracie Morris Schaefer

PROFESSIONALS

Phyllis Peoples

Position: Terrebonne General Medical Center president and CEO

Age: 48

Family: husband, Mike; sons, Jacob, 19, Mitchell, 14

Education: bachelor's degree in nursing, University of Louisiana at Lafayette; master's degrees in administration and education, Valdosta State University

Phyllis Peoples said her experience as a critical care nurse, which began right out of college, has kept her grounded as she climbed the ranks to become CEO of Terrebonne General Medical Center.

"Never forget where you came from — it is something I always say," Peoples said. "I'm in a position where you have to make lots of decisions that affect lots of people, and I try to remember what it was like to work the front lines nightly. Everyone won't always agree with everything, but you have to do what is best for the community."

Peoples grew up in Houma and left for college and the early stages of her career. She returned to TGMC with her family in 1995.

In the almost 10 years since she was named CEO, Peoples said the hospital has expanded its patient services, including the recent launch of the \$18.5 million Mary Bird Perkins Cancer Center. She also managed and promoted development of the hospital's state-of-the-art women's center.

Work is also under way on a new inpatient rehabilitation unit, and technology at the cardiac catheterization lab has been upgraded.

"We have done a lot to help patients, but we

have also gone a long way to help the families of patients served by the hospital," she said. "No one comes to the hospital alone out here. People always come with an entourage of four or five family members. We have worked to create a facility that can accommodate all those people comfortably."

Peoples has collaborated with local, state and federal lawmakers to keep them updated on the concerns related to health care reform. In 2009, she spearheaded a meeting with Sen. David Vitter to discuss the changes and the potential impact on patients throughout the state.

"Health care is getting less and less affordable, and it is sometimes difficult to provide all the services people need," Peoples said. "We do what we can to educate the public so they know what their options are."

She's also worked to improve the industry by serving on the Louisiana Hospital Association's board of directors in addition to the governing council for the American Hospital Association: Metropolitan Hospitals, where she worked to provide the 1,100 member hospitals with support, communication and advocacy. •

— Robin Shannon

Noel Twilbeck

Position: NO/AIDS Task Force CEO

Age: 55

Family: husband, Glenn Kahrman

Education: bachelor's degree in business management and master's degree in business administration, University of New Orleans

Noel Twilbeck's tenure as CEO of the NO/AIDS Task Force is defined by a budget that has grown from \$3 million five years ago to nearly \$15 million today.

Under his leadership, the agency has expanded its coverage area from New Orleans to include a 12-parish area with seven locations. He oversees a staff of more than 150 employees and more than 700 volunteers who work with more than 20,000 people each year.

After Hurricane Katrina, Twilbeck used his house as the agency's office for 20 to 30 employees and as collateral when funding for the non-profit was running low.

"My No. 1 responsibility is to make certain we are able to sustain our programs for our community," Twilbeck said of the nonprofit that provides treatment, care and public awareness of HIV and AIDS throughout southeastern Louisiana.

The always-changing availability of funding for those programs has made his job more difficult. Twilbeck said the task force receives money from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the federal Health Resources and Services Administration and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, among

other sources.

"New Orleans also gets federal dollars from the Ryan White Care Act to provide care and treatment, and we are a grantee from the city to bring dollars in to our supportive and clinical services," Twilbeck said.

He said he worries about future congressional funding levels for the Ryan White legislation and wonders what impact the Affordable Care Act may have on the mission of the NO/AIDS Task Force.

"Something is going to change, we just don't know what," he said. "The indications are that the money will go to the community health care centers, which for us would mean expanding our resources beyond HIV to anyone who has health care needs, and bringing in providers with specialties in pediatrics, OB/GYN and family medicine."

That means the agency will end up doing what it currently does, but for the whole community and not just people living with HIV or AIDS, said Twilbeck, who joined the Task Force as a resources center manager in 1989 and became the executive director a decade later. •

— Garry Boulard



Photo by Tracie Morris Schaefer



Photo by Tracie Morris Schaefer

Penny Walker

Position: UnitedHealthcare senior medical director for the Southeast Region

Age: 48

Family: partner, Chris Brinks; children, Paul Awa, 22, Grant Awa, 20, Harrison Gerber, 9

Education: bachelor's degree in biology and nursing degree, Purdue University; master's degree in business administration, University of Phoenix; doctor of medicine, Loyola University Medical Center

Dr. Penny Walker was taking some time off to enjoy the beaches of Pensacola, Fla., last year and had vowed not to check her work email. Then she logged onto Facebook, where she learned about the tornadoes in Tuscaloosa, Ala.

She said she immediately knew her vacation was over, as one of her responsibilities as senior medical director of UnitedHealthcare's Southeast region is activating a telephone network during emergencies to make sure the company's staff is OK and if patients are receiving care.

"One of my very good colleagues in the Birmingham area posted that a tornado just hit Tuscaloosa. Even though I was on vacation, I had phone calls every two hours," Walker said. "I stayed on phone all night long and all morning to make sure that not only was our staff taken care of, but that people (of Alabama and Mississippi were)."

Her coverage area extends beyond Alabama to Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, and North and South Carolina and includes leading health plans for more than 3 million people.

Before joining UnitedHealthcare in 2008, she was vice president and market medical officer for

Humana of Louisiana, where she helped reduce medical spending and helped increase membership more than 5 percent in a one year.

From 2004-05, she served as medical director of Blue Cross Blue Shield of Illinois.

Walker also hosts a public access television show on New Orleans Access Television called "Community Health Heroes" that honors "heroes" in the medical industry — survivors and medical professionals — in addition to local organizations that provide health and wellness resources.

The program also provides information on how to lead a healthy lifestyle and covers topics such as cancer awareness, diabetes prevention, hunger, childhood obesity and heart-related issues.

She recently interviewed a man who rides his bicycle around the country to raise money for cancer research.

"It's touching seeing these people who want to share their story," she said. "I really enjoy doing that because I feel like I'm touching more members."

Walker also makes weekly visits to nursing homes with a pet therapy dog. •

— Travis Andrews

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Entries are due August 10

Please attach additional sheets if necessary

VOLUNTEERS

Ronald Burns

Position: Orleans Parish Hospital Service District A chairman

Age: 60

Family: wife, Sheila; sons, Vinnie, 30, Jason, 28

Education: bachelor's degree in accounting, Dillard University

New Orleans Mayor Mitch Landrieu asked Ronald Burns in June 2010 to volunteer for the Orleans Parish Hospital Service District A Board. Burns said he knew it was his responsibility to also help bring a full-service hospital back to his community.

Two years later, the eastern New Orleans businessman is leading the hospital district, serves on the boards of Dillard University and Liberty Bank, and holds a seat on the Sugar Bowl Committee.

According to a timeline from the mayor's office, the community is a year and a half away from getting a full-service hospital in eastern New Orleans for the first time since Hurricane Katrina.

"You're either a spectator or you're a participant," Burns said. "I'm in this for the long-haul. Our community needs a hospital. Our people have medical needs and don't need to be driving long distances to get taken care of. This is extremely important to us."

Burns leads the 13-member board that worked to open East After Hours Urgent Care in July. The first patient showed up 37 minutes after the opening, and Burns estimates the center sees 30 patients a day.

The full-service hospital is projected to

open in the fourth quarter of 2013 with about 80 beds. Universal Health Services is purchasing the former Methodist Hospital site for \$16.25 million, and Daughters of Charity and Franciscan Missionaries of Our Lady will operate the hospital, with a \$2 million commitment from the Daughters of Charity Foundation.

Burns said the board received a \$990,000 grant from the Health Resources and Services Administration for hospital equipment.

"We started off with a blank sheet. Each day we made a little progress, and we have added building blocks from there," Burns said. "We have a dedicated and an engaged board, and that makes a difference."

Burns previously worked with the health care industry in the early 1990s when former Gov. Dave Treen asked him to serve on the Louisiana Health Care Authority Board, which at the time oversaw the Charity Hospital system throughout Louisiana. Burns served as vice chairman.

"I got first-hand information of how hospitals are run and the needs and scopes of service of these facilities," he said. "It's always been instilled in me to volunteer," he said. "You give back. That's just the right thing to do."•

— Tommy Santora

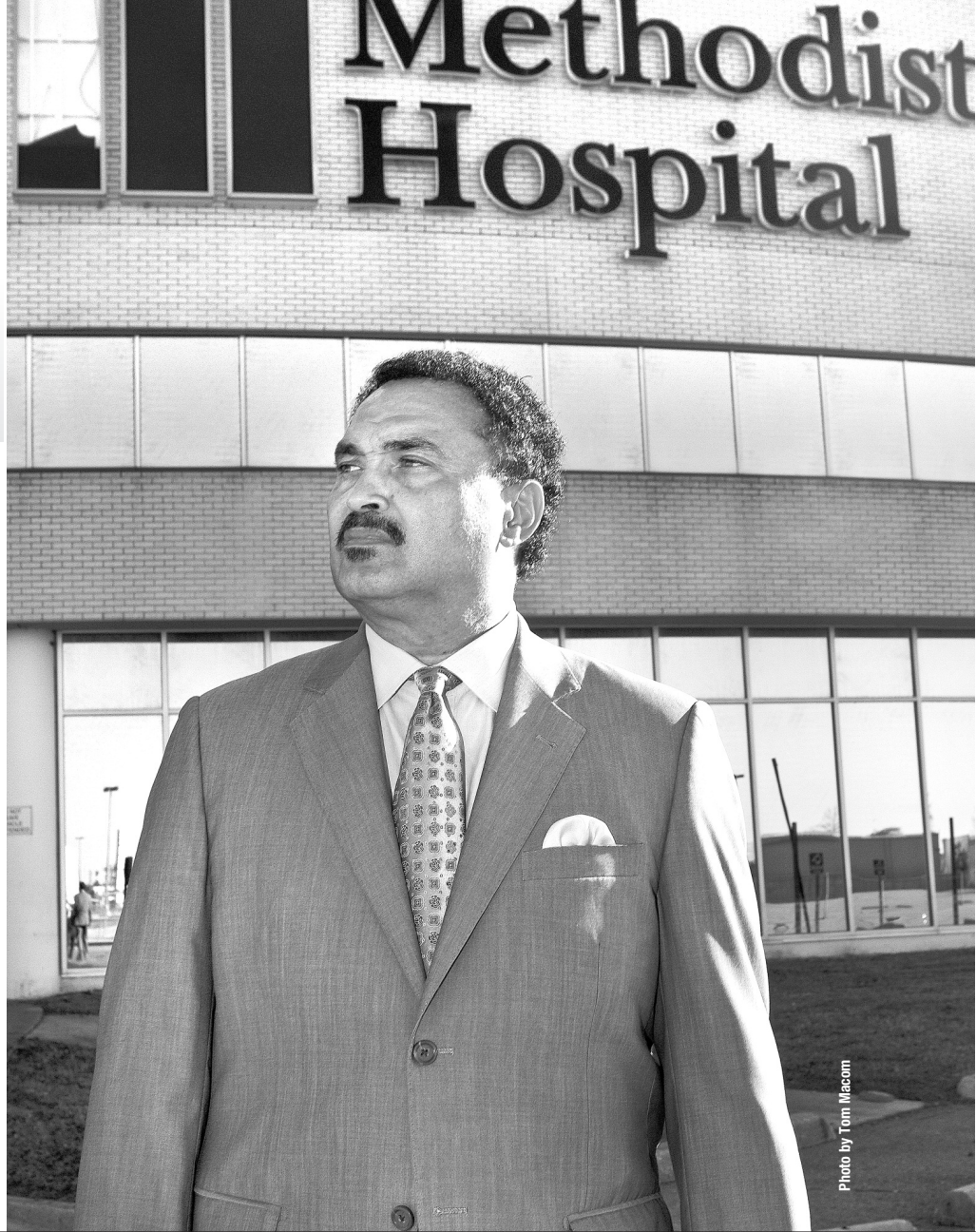


Photo by Tom Maccom



VOLUNTEERS

Colleen Dale

Position: Slidell Memorial Hospital volunteer

Age: 63

Family: husband, Fred Poole

Education: bachelor's degree in secondary mathematics education, University of New Orleans

After 17 years and more than 7,000 hours of service, Colleen Dale has become an indispensable part of Slidell Memorial Hospital's volunteer program.

Two days a week, Dale donates her time to helping keep the hospital's volunteer office in order. A former computer specialist, Dale found that many of her existing skills fit well with SMH's needs.

"It's a win-win situation because I'm doing things that I enjoy, and the hospital's happy that I'm doing them," she said. "They appreciate what I do, and they're always happy to see me when I come in."

Dale's also helped upgrade the volunteer office's volunteer tracking system. When she first arrived in 1995, its existing paper-based system was tedious, time-consuming and inefficient. In 1999, Dale convinced the volunteer coordinator to purchase new computer software.

"We've got a much more efficient way of tracking our volunteers," she said. "We were in the dark ages before."

Dale designed the database and populated

the system with all of the volunteer data. She then fine-tuned the software, spreadsheets, forms and reports used to track hours and assignments for the office's roughly 120 volunteers.

"I was able to customize it and make it suitable for the SMH environment," she said. "It really helps the volunteer coordinator because now she can get information at the touch of a button."

Dale also works with the volunteer coordinator to plan and implement ongoing projects such as National Volunteer Week, the junior volunteer program, the volunteer scholarship program and new volunteer orientations.

"The volunteer coordinators have always relied on me to keep them organized," she said.

Dale's most memorable experience at SMH was creating and instructing a public speaking class for senior management.

"I really enjoyed that day and I'd like to do more of that in the future," she said. "I've done some training in effective presentations and public speaking with Toastmasters, so it was a natural fit to do it at SMH."•

— Tamara Moffett

Photo by Tom Maccom



VOLUNTEERS

Linda Kabbani

Position: East Jefferson General Hospital volunteer

Age: 60

Family: husband, Marwan; daughters Dawn, 38, Lori, 30; grandchildren, Casey, 16, Callie, 10, Brayden, 8, Tyler, 4

When hospital volunteer Linda Kabbani enters a patient's room and sees a stuffed moose on the bed, she instantly reads that person's suffering.

"The moose is for when you need to cough; you push it up against your chest so it won't hurt," said Kabbani, who used the stuffed animal herself when recovering from heart attacks in 2007 and 2009. "I never had neck pain, and no trouble breathing, but a heart attack is like someone sitting on your chest."

About a year after her first heart attack and a subsequent quadruple bypass, Kabbani said she felt compelled to give back to the doctors and nurses who had "been so good to me," she said.

She returned to the same nursing floor at East Jefferson to take on almost any task, from stocking the snack room and feeding the fish to data entry and cleaning the equipment. She also services each patient's room, refilling cups of ice or pulling in chairs for visiting relatives.

But when she sees the moose, she'll often linger.

"They ask questions, they want to see my scar, they ask how long it will take to get back to

semi-normal," Kabbani said. "I tell them, 'Don't think that you'll go right home and cook dinner because you'll pay for it.'"

The patients also want to know what kind of pain to expect from procedures such as angiograms. Kabbani comforts them when she can, though "some things I hate to think about," she said, like hospital visits from her young grandchildren who were scared by the medicine drips and bandages, or the newborn grandson who she couldn't hold right away.

But all of her hospital memories aren't bad. She met her future husband when they were students and working after school at a hospital in Iowa.

As a devoted follower of East Jefferson's Cardiac Rehab Program, Kabbani hits the hospital treadmill up to five times a week and cheers on other rehabbers who take long walks around the nursing floor.

"Do your breathing exercises, take your medicine, try to be a good patient," Kabbani said she tells other cardiac patients. "Take baby steps and you'll be fine."•

— Anne Berry

Photo by Frank Aymami

VOLUNTEERS

Gerald Woodhead

Position: West Jefferson Surgery Center volunteer

Age: 67

Family: widowed

Education: associate's degree, Indian Hills Community College

A lot of people wake up wishing they didn't have to go to work. It's just the opposite for Gerald "Woody" Woodhead, who said he is thankful to be a volunteer at West Jefferson Surgery Center in Marrero, where he works from 5:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. five days a week.

Woodhead started volunteering at the center four years ago after his wife passed away. The retired military serviceman, who flew as an air crewman in Vietnam, Desert Shield and Desert Storm, needed something to occupy his time and keep him around people.

"I've watched too many people give up on life after a loved one dies and I'm not willing to do that," he said. "I love this job and I truly enjoy interacting with the staff and patients. It gives me warm fuzzy feelings to help people and make their stay at the center a little bit easier."

As one of the first to arrive at the surgery center Monday through Friday, Woodhead prepares coffee and patient rooms. He also delivers specimens to the lab, takes deliveries of medical supplies and keeps the shelves stocked and organized for nurses. To help patients feel at ease, he takes them a warm blanket after they change into a hospital gown. He also visits with them and their family to help alleviate tension.

After surgery, he delivers drinks and snacks. When



Photo by Frank Aymami

West Jefferson Medical Center volunteer surrounded by nurses, from left, DeeDee Lonser, Mikell Vodopija, Robyn Peranio, Fay Stevenson and Clair Kenedy.

patients are released, he helps them into a wheelchair and pushes them to their car.

"Most of our patients aren't real sick and are only here for one day, so the association I have with them is a perfect fit for me," he said. "It's very rewarding to take care of people and help alleviate their fears before surgery. I feel fortunate and I receive way more than I ever give."

Woodhead also meets with people at the center who have

been diagnosed with cancer for the first time. As a lung cancer survivor, he shares his knowledge and experience about chemotherapy and radiation treatments.

"I know how scary the word 'cancer' is," he said. "So I share my story in hopes of alleviating pressure and letting them know they can get through this. If someone is terribly afraid, I sit with them for their treatment."•

— Kerry Duff

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