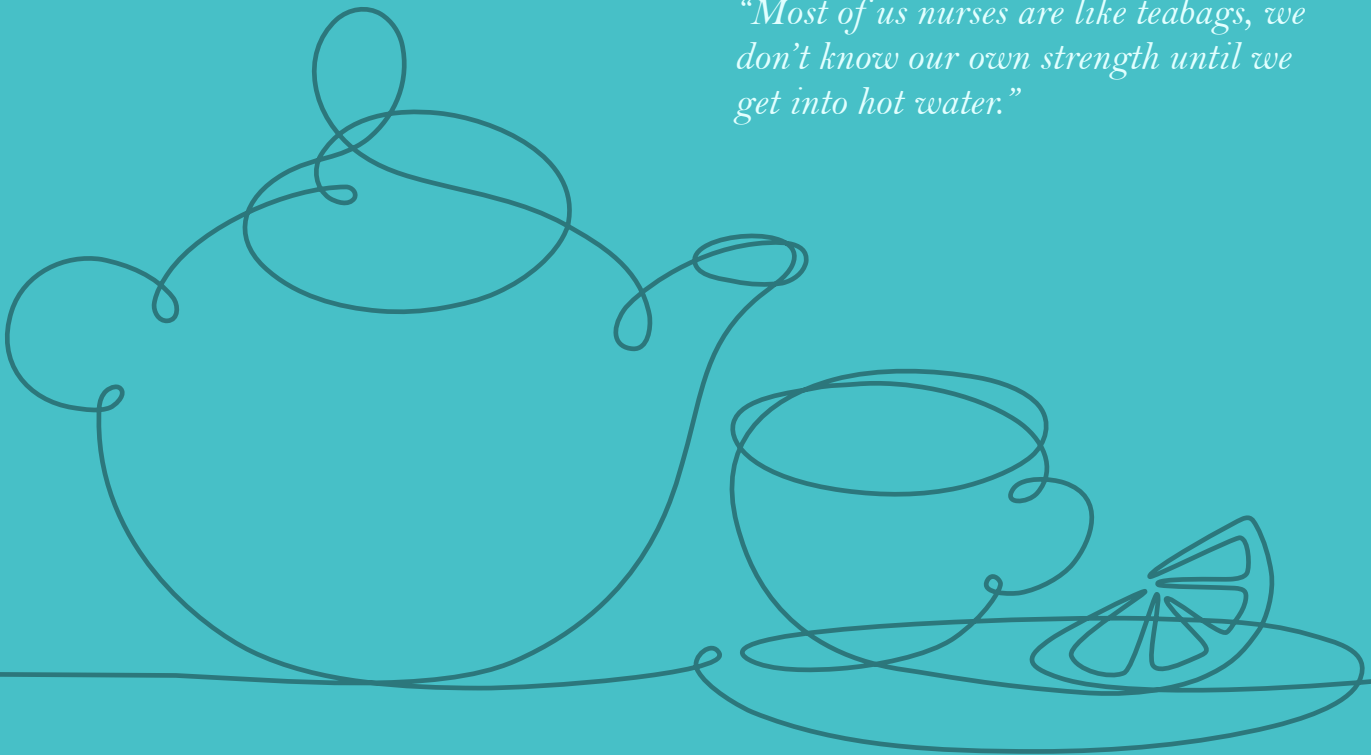




NURSE OF
Excellence
CEREMONY 2020



“Most of us nurses are like teabags, we don’t know our own strength until we get into hot water.”



A MESSAGE FROM THE COUNCIL PRESIDENT



In 1989, the New York State Legislature created a Nurse of Distinction Program. The program, coordinated at the time by Senator Tarky Lombardi Jr., recognized individual excellence in the nursing profession. Hundreds of nurses were nominated from across the state, eight regional designees were selected by peer review and one nurse from that group was awarded. The program was highly regarded by those within the healthcare industry and continued until 1995.

Since then, it has been the honor of the Nassau-Suffolk Hospital Council to continue this tradition on a regional level through our annual Nurse of Excellence program. The Hospital Council opted to maintain this recognition program because the registered nurse is truly the core of any hospital. Each member hospital and nursing school selects a nominee based on specific selection criteria. The nomination in and of itself is an honor. Then a Council peer review committee selects “the best of the best.” More important than those individuals named and honored, is the celebration of the entire nursing profession that pervades this program. We are proud of all of the nurses who care for thousands of Long Islanders, seven days a week, 24 hours a day.

On behalf of our board of directors, the council staff and the leadership staff at all of our hospitals, we express our sincere appreciation to all nurses and salute their commitment to compassionate quality patient care.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kevin W. Dahill', written in a cursive style.

KEVIN W. DAHILL
President and Chief Executive Officer
Nassau-Suffolk Hospital Council

THE LEGEND OF THE TEAPOT

The teapot tradition began in the 1980s with the New York State Legislature's Nurse of Distinction Program. The first recipient of the Long Island Nurse of Distinction nomination spoke of the challenges that nurses and all of health care face, and will face, in the decades to come.

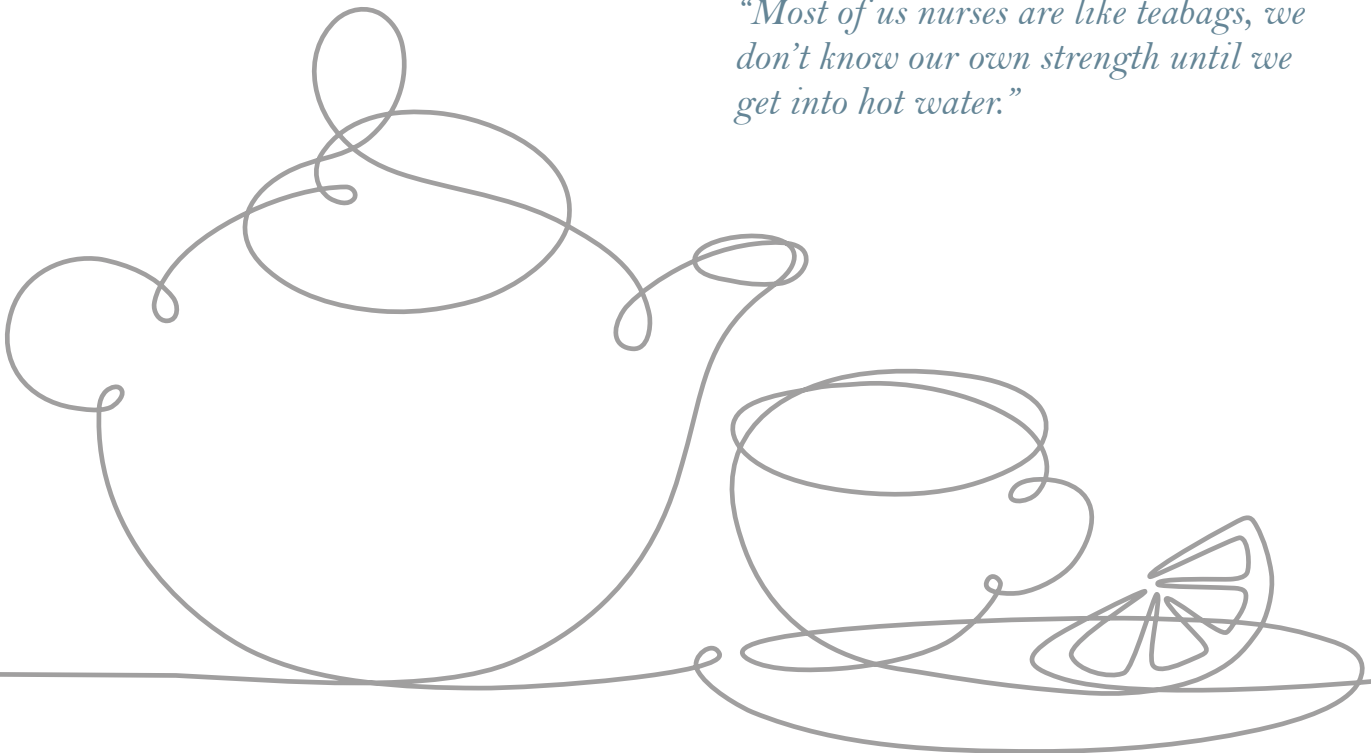
In keeping with the message that day, it was recollected her comments included, "most of us nurses are like teabags, we don't know our own strength until we get into hot water." The allegory resonated among those involved in the program and it eventually became a custom for a prior recipient of the Nurse of Excellence award to bestow a teapot upon the current honoree.

The teapots remind our honored colleagues of their achievement and of their strengths. Like each of us, the teapots are seldom exactly alike. They celebrate the unique value that each Nurse of Excellence brings to those they serve. And, the teapot symbolizes and reminds us that "hot water" often brings out the best in us and in our profession.

"Most of us nurses are like teabags, we don't know our own strength until we get into hot water."



“Most of us nurses are like teabags, we don’t know our own strength until we get into hot water.”



Celebrating all nurses IN THIS EXTRAORDINARY YEAR

The Nurse of Excellence Ceremony is an annual tradition treasured by nurse leaders and all Nassau-Suffolk Hospital Council staff members. Each year nurse executives and their teams take stock of the countless achievements of the talented and dedicated members of their nursing staff. They carefully select one candidate who they feel has demonstrated leadership, mentored peers, made outstanding contributions to the nursing profession, and given back to their community. A subcommittee of the Council's Nurse Executive Committee then has the difficult task of selecting a winner from this elite pool of candidates.

Anyone who has attended this ceremony in the past can attest to its power. Audience members listen intently as nurse executives proudly recount the achievements of their candidates. All in attendance bear witness to the changing baseline as together, they explore new depths of human compassion, innovation, and discipline.

One year, as part of the opening remarks provided by the chair of the Nurse of Excellence Sub-Committee, members of the audience were asked to reach their hands above their heads as high as they could. She then asked them to reach just a little bit further. They all did. The message she intended to deliver that day was to never give up and to trust the tenacity of the human spirit. But looking back, it also took leadership and direction from the right person to help an interested group of people go the extra mile.

When the COVID-19 pandemic struck Long Island, the community at large watched as our nurses marched into battle. For many frontline

workers, the months that followed were the most challenging in recent memory and perhaps in their careers. Stretched beyond their limits, our nurses truly went above and beyond the call of duty.

When infection rates declined and the Nurse Executive Committee was once again able to meet virtually, everyone knew that this year's Nurse of Excellence Ceremony had to be different. Nurse leaders with decades of experience in nursing reported never having witnessed this level of camaraderie, creativity, and extraordinary kindness. They knew that it would be impossible to select one Nurse of Excellence candidate to represent their organization when so many gave so much.

This year, in lieu of a singular nomination, we asked nurse leaders to reflect back on their experiences over the past nine months, and share a few moments that they will always remember about this time. In the pages that follow, Long Island's nurse executives recount selfless acts that they feel represent what it means to be a nurse, acts of true leadership that inspired other nurses, and innovation that improved patient care demonstrably. In return, the community and their staff thank them for their leadership during these harrowing times.

This year — the Year of the Nurse and the 200th anniversary of Florence Nightingale's birth — we celebrate all of you. We stand in awe of your selflessness, empathy, perseverance, courage, and resilience. We thank you for your sacrifices. Today is a celebration of nursing excellence.

2020
Nurse Executive
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Associate Executive Director, Patient Care Services
& CNO
Long Island Jewish Valley Stream Northwell Health

GLEN COVE HOSPITAL NORTHWELL HEALTH

Doreen O'Grady, RN, BSN, MBA, DNP, Associate Executive Director, Patient Care Services & CNO



I am so proud of the amazing group of leaders at Glen Cove Hospital. The teamwork and courage exhibited during this unprecedented pandemic was truly incredible. Leaders stepped up and took patient care assignments to support their staff and operating room nurses stepped up and became functional RN's to support our ICU nurses.

Many innovative practices were developed during this time including the opening of an Acute Ventilator Respiratory Unit (AVRU) for post-COVID patients. Under the leadership of Tina Rushforth, the Assistant Nurse Manager for the ICU, in just 2 weeks we turned an old Ambulatory Surgery unit (which had not been used in over 15 years) into a functioning ICU. We took down walls, installed new lighting, replaced floors, replaced doors, painted, and put new cabinets in the medication room. We upgraded the existing call bell system, phones and TVs in the patient rooms. We installed monitors in each room, two central monitoring stations on the unit, and a central monitoring station for the telehealth technicians in the ICU. This was a surge unit, so there was no dedicated staff. We had one ICU float nurse on every shift, but the rest of the staff was agency nurses and PCAs.

Within two weeks we received a total of 21 patients that were battling COVID from our health system's tertiary hospitals. Most of the patients had been in the hospital for months before coming to us and

hadn't been out of bed during their hospitalization. Every patient had a tracheostomy, was on a ventilator with PEGs for feedings and most of them had severe pressure injuries. Some of them were going through withdrawal from all the sedation they were on while intubated in the hospital.

There was such an incredible team approach to caring for these patients. We had hospitalists, critical care PAs, respiratory therapists, physical therapists, occupational therapists and speech therapists all working alongside our nurses and PCAs. We got them out of bed every day while aggressively weaning them from their ventilators. It was so rewarding to see patients coming off their ventilators, walking in the halls with their physical therapists, eating solid food and having conversations.

The patients on this unit had incredible outcomes. Most (82%) were decannulated. Three were discharged directly to sub-acute rehabilitation, the last one on November 4 after being hospitalized in March. Thirteen of the patients moved to acute rehabilitation, ten of whom went home shortly after. One patient was transferred for further treatment, one went directly home and unfortunately two died.

Tina said "In all of my years of nursing, working with this team and these patients was one of the most gratifying experiences and proudest moments of my career."

GOOD SAMARITAN HOSPITAL MEDICAL CENTER

Gara Edelstein, RN, MSN, Senior Vice President, Patient Care Services & CNO

I have always been proud to be a nurse, but never as proud as I was of the nurses at Good Samaritan Hospital Medical Center during the COVID crisis. As patients began to rapidly arrive at our emergency department doors we recognized the need to act quickly. Nursing leadership pulled together and formed teams of nurses to care for COVID patients. Nurses from all over the facility volunteered to help regardless of their specialty and training. Nurses from the operating room, post-anesthesia care unit, ASU, and medical-surgical units, teamed up with the emergency department and ICU nurses without hesitation, only questions of how they could help. We expanded our bed capacity over 100% and watched as these nurses put themselves at risk to care for the sickest of the sick. It was remarkable to say the least!

As the long days stretched on, these same nurses found ways to maintain a positive attitude and support one another. They played songs throughout the facility to celebrate the patients' progress and to encourage their colleagues. When a patient was extubated we played "Just Breathe", when they left the ICU we played "I'm Coming Out" and when they were discharged we played "Here Comes the Sun"! It was a wonderful way to foster hope and lift spirits.

The nurses at Good Samaritan found special ways to show each other kindness as well. A group of nurses created "Comfort Carts" for their colleagues. Every

day they went to each unit of the hospital with all of the donations that were sent in. They offered their colleagues toiletries, snacks, water, even leggings! Others brought in cakes and food they had made at home and delivered them all over the hospital.

Probably one of the most thoughtful acts I witnessed came from my ICU staff who collected all sorts of items to send to a hospital in Arizona! They knew the crisis would soon be there and felt they wanted to "pay it forward".

What I witnessed from the nurses at Good Samaritan was nothing short of amazing. They were professional, kind, caring and selfless. They showed the local community and the community at large how critical their skills were and how important their role on the healthcare team is and always has been. They continue to make me proud to be their CNO and part of their team!

HUNTINGTON HOSPITAL NORTHWELL HEALTH

Susan Knoepffler, RN, MPA, NE-BC, Vice President, Nursing & CNO

How does one capture the total experience of what we went through this year? The COVID-19 pandemic hit Huntington Hospital in March of 2020. Oddly enough (or not so oddly) the World Health Organization had proclaimed 2020 as the Year of the Nurse and Midwife, honoring the 200th anniversary of Florence Nightingale's birthday. Little did we know, this year we would face an unprecedented crisis.

As healthcare workers we learn about preparing for disasters, hurricanes, and mass causality events but we never learned to prepare for an event like this. This pandemic struck with speed and intensity. Our nurses arrived to work with the fear of becoming sick and the fear that they would bring the virus home and make loved ones sick.

The rate of infections and resulting hospitalizations overwhelmed and stretched our facility, our resources, our community and our caregivers to the limit. It became a time of rapid evolution that lasted for weeks as the volume of COVID positive patients climbed at an alarming rate. Although they did not want to be referred to as heroes, our nurses responded in a way that was truly heroic. They fought this pandemic with courage, compassion, creativity and resilience.

This was a physical and emotional challenge like no other. Yet, it was a time when nurses felt compelled to be at the hospital where their sense of purpose was fulfilled. Their desire to attend to their patients and support their peers took precedence. The low level of sick calls was a testament to their dedication, commitment and devotion to the nursing profession. The intensity and enormity of the situation demanded that the COVID units increase

throughout the hospital thereby requiring many nurses to dramatically change their roles in ways that they never anticipated.

As the severity of the situation expanded so did the need to communicate frequently and transparently. It demanded leadership that exemplified calmness while being optimistic, visible, supportive and empathetic. It required coordination that was purpose-driven in order to maximize the team's effectiveness. It required decision-making that was rapid yet deliberate so as to make optimal choices.

For all involved, the pandemic forced us to face challenging situations and impacted us in countless ways, some of which are yet to be recognized. It made us feel softer but stronger, cynical but more sincere, discouraged but hopeful, saddened but joyful, uncertain but wiser and alone but together. Most importantly we stayed true to our values; truly compassionate, truly innovative, truly ambitious, truly together and truly ourselves. As one nurse stated "The most positive experience, really, was how the staff became one to help fight this pandemic. I really learned what I was working with to get through this". Another nurse stated "We will never be the same".

On behalf of Huntington Hospital we thank all of our caregivers who tirelessly came to work to save lives. Our abilities exceeded our own expectations. We are eternally grateful for the ongoing loving support from our community. They carried us through by their generous donations and their presence as we came and went from the doors of our hospital. We were never alone – always together.

LONG ISLAND COMMUNITY HOSPITAL

Debra Grimm, DNP, MS, RN, Vice President & CNO

As a Nurse Leader with more than 25 years' experience, I thought I had seen, done or lectured on just about every care scenario a nurse could encounter. I had every confidence that this knowledge and experience left me well prepared for anything that could come my way, but I was mistaken. At our hospital and in health systems across the nation, no one could foresee the speed at which COVID-19 would come upon our communities, the voracity with which it spread, or the degree of morbidity and mortality it would have on so many of its victims.

Our hospital began to see the first COVID positive patients in March and within a few short weeks, our nursing and medical staff were faced with an array of challenges many had never experienced before. As the positive patient count began to tick up and new guidelines from local, state and federal regulators were issued daily, many changing the same day, our nursing and support services rose to the occasion. In a few short weeks, our community hospital had 125 COVID patients and 60 ICU patients. Our nursing staff was working tirelessly to care for the influx of the sickest patients they had ever encountered. Having just 24 ICU beds, nurses collaborated and found innovative ways to create an additional 36 ICU beds. Our emergency department was transformed into a M.A.S.H.-like unit. Nursing teams created mini-work stations to keep supplies close by. They developed proning teams, and placed infusion pumps outside the patient isolation area to help conserve supplies and keep everyone safe.

While our brave and courageous nursing staff saved many lives, at great risk to their own health and the health of their families, I was most in awe of the care and compassion they displayed day after day, in many cases, taking the

place of family members who could not be there. Holding the hands or cell phones of patients who knew they were not coming home as they said goodbye to loved ones. Conveying messages of love to vented patients who could not speak on the phone. Crying and comforting each other at day's end after an exhausting and emotional shift. It is these extraordinary and selfless acts of going above and beyond the care that will always stay with me.

Our nurses continued to put on a brave face. They donned and doffed PPE a dozen times a day, to save those who could be saved and comfort those who could not, even caring for two of our own fallen nurses, comforting them through their last days.

I cannot say enough about our brave and courageous nursing staff. They have inspired me and made me so proud to have the privilege of leading them. They also showed me that I still have much to learn and I will go forward with a new appreciation for my profession and for nurses across the country who, in choosing to make a difference, are truly deserving of the title of hero.

LONG ISLAND JEWISH VALLEY STREAM NORTHWELL HEALTH

Terry Pando, RN, MSN, NEA-BC, Associate Executive Director, Patient Care Services & CNO

Long Island Jewish Valley Stream found itself at the epicenter of the COVID-19 pandemic in its service to patients from the surrounding community and adjacent communities in Western Queens, where the highest rates of infection occurred. The nurses at Valley Stream responded to the crisis with passion and dedication to providing the best care for our patients. Fortunate to be part of the Northwell Health System, we transported over 300 patients to other Northwell hospitals so that our Emergency Department could be available to the line of ambulances coming in (over 40 at times).

Feelings of chaos, fatigue, compassion, commitment, teamwork and intense collaboration were experienced as our team fought this challenging opponent. My strongest memory is from the first weekend we outgrew our critical care capacity and transitioned an adjacent surgical unit into an ICU annex. Calls for additional staffing went out and the nursing leadership team came in force, prepared to provide care to our patients. We stayed together as a team ready to serve and realized that our everyday world had changed. Four of our leaders stayed and worked side by side with the nurses on the unit. Our doomsday scenario had occurred and we were ready for the battle.

We were surrounded by Healthcare Heroes who were dedicated to their patients and who frequently facilitated communication between them and their families. Many times it was a nurse at the patient's bedside for their last breath, with the patient's family on the phone, reciting a prayer or just saying silent. One of our emergency department nurses started a campaign to provide telephone chargers to our patients. She was overwhelmed with the response from the community and was highlighted on multiple news outlets.

Our greatest challenge was taking care of our own family members. One of our telemetry nurses became ill with

COVID at the same time as her father and husband. The love, dedication and exceptional care that the staff on that unit provided to her family members gave her the peace and strength she needed to fight the disease and return to work. Her father passed away in the care of her fellow nurses and nursing assistants. Our emergency department leadership team was struck by COVID and one member's father became a patient in our ICU, critically ill with COVID. The ICU staff held his hand while she spoke to him by phone, praying and talking to him. Sending him her strength and love.

The selfless acts of compassion, dedication, and teamwork were inspirational. Nurses from the operating room, PACU and wound care got to know their new colleagues quickly and formed bonds that will last forever. The interdisciplinary team worked seamlessly together day and night, supporting each other all the way!

The theme for Nurse's Week this year, The Year of the Nurse, is to lead, innovate, and excel. The LIJ Valley Stream staff did all three, every day. They were 'leaders' at the bedside advocating for the patient. They 'innovated' as nurses joined us from a variety of clinical areas to support each other. They "excelled" in compassion, through their countless FaceTime calls, simple gestures and presence, at the most sacred time, when our patients pass without family at their side.

I am so proud and thankful for all they do every day and for the sacrifices they continue to make, always dedicated to our community and each other! Our favorite quote is "You altered life's course for so many. You celebrated healing, you mourned losses and you felt as if it were your own". Bravo team!

MATHER HOSPITAL NORTHWELL HEALTH

Marie Mulligan, PhD, MSN, RN, CNOR, NEA-BC, Vice President, Nursing & CNO



Nursing practice has come a long way over the last 200 years, but there are many parallels that can still be drawn between Florence Nightingale's experience in the 1850s and the experience of our nurses in 2020.

Florence Nightingale was a philosopher and the founder of modern nursing. She was a courageous and visionary nurse leader who persevered in the face of adversity and carved out a role for the nurses that followed as a vital part of the healthcare team. Her efforts were regarded as heroic by members of her community and her colleagues.

Almost two centuries later, Mather's nurses were faced with the unprecedented challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. But like their founder, they did not waiver. They demonstrated true heroism in the way that they cared for our patients during a time of crisis.

Nightingale is credited with establishing standards of care for her patients that improved outcomes and reduced mortality. Under her leadership, wards were kept clean, basic necessities were provided and caretakers assisted patients in writing letters to relatives that could not visit. She often rounded the wards at night providing comfort and care to patients in need, a practice that earned her the nickname "the lady with the lamp".

When the highly infectious nature of this virus was revealed, Mather nurses quickly adapted. They were laser-focused on infection prevention through proper handwashing, consistent use of personal protective equipment (PPE), and meticulous cleaning of the patient care environment - all practices recognized as the first line of defense against the spread of the virus.

Mather nurses exhibited extraordinary patience and kindness with every patient, family member, and colleague

they encountered. They would sit with patients for as long as they could to provide comfort and to let them know they were not alone. They would FaceTime the family members of patients for encouraging words and tearful goodbyes.

But times of peril breed innovation. The nurses quickly recognized a need for patients to have more consistent contact with family members when they could not be at the bedside to assist. Soon after, the Nucleus device was identified as a potential solution to our patients' communication barriers. Mather nurses acted quickly and efficiently as they set up the devices in patient rooms and showed the patients how to use them. Patients were no longer alone.

Nurses are the bridge to healthcare. They are the crucial link between the people in our communities and the treatment they require for the complex healthcare issues they face. They are on the "front lines" of healthcare each and every day making sure the needs of their patients are met.

Mather's front line nurses and nurse leaders followed in Nightingale's footsteps by uniting with their colleagues all over the world to provide compassionate nursing care. They assisted patients who were critically ill in their recovery or peaceful death.

Their heroic efforts, resilience, courage, unwavering commitment, compassion, and selfless acts during the COVID-19 pandemic are greatly appreciated and respected. I cannot say the words "THANK YOU" enough! Just like Florence Nightingale, you have reshaped nursing practice globally during a year of crisis. As your CNO, I couldn't be more respectful or proud of the entire team.

MERCY MEDICAL CENTER

Barbara Gibbons, RN, MS, FNP, Vice President, Patient Care Services & CNO

Long before COVID-19, The World Health Organization designated 2020 the International Year of the Nurse; and what a year it has been for nurses.

Mercy nurses were the first on Long Island to face the demon virus. Very little was known about COVID-19 when we received our first patient, on 1 North, back in early March. That one patient became a local, and then national news story. News crews were parked outside our hospital waiting to see how the story would unfold.

One patient soon grew into many as Hempstead became a hotspot for Long Island. The first nurses to treat our COVID patients volunteered to work overtime to minimize the risk of exposure to other staff members. But the number of COVID positive patients continued to rapidly increase and our nursing staff was inevitably faced with the seemingly insurmountable challenge of caring for so many unstable and dying patients.

Our nurses were and continue to be truly courageous on the frontlines. In many cases our nurses were the last faces that patients saw before they passed away. They willingly facilitated FaceTime with families before the patients were intubated or to allow them to say good bye to their loved ones. They lovingly cared for sick colleagues in the makeshift ICU's and wept openly at their deaths. They celebrated those that were discharged by lining the halls and clapping upon their departure.

Our dedicated nurses bravely reported for work each and every day despite concerns about the impact it could have on their own families; worried that they might carry this deadly virus home to vulnerable loved ones. After long

shifts caring for COVID patients, many did not want to enter their homes. They removed their clothes in their garages, back yards and cars and limited the time they spent with their families. As New York shut down, many of our nurses struggled with childcare issues. They were faced with the added stress of making sure that their children were taken care of and home schooled while they were away. But they continued to come to work, never knowing what to expect.

Patient care dramatically changed during this time. The entire nursing staff formed multi-disciplinary teams to provide a level of care like never before. As a team, they tended to the physical, emotional and psychosocial needs of the patients. They were fierce advocates and a bridge to patients' families while on strict isolation.

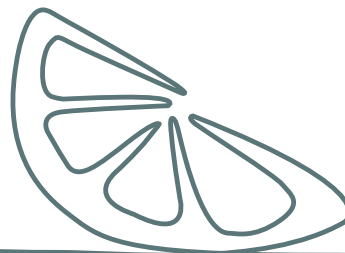
On one of our more memorable days, a patient who was being discharged informed the staff that she was supposed to be getting married but feared that she would miss her appointment at Town Hall. The staff facilitated a Zoom call and we were able to participate in our first Zoom wedding. Several nurses served as bridesmaids! A truly joyful event!

It has been a long haul and it is still not over. We never could have imagined the impact this pandemic would have on Mercy, the country, and the world. We continue to support and praise nurses around the globe for their skill, compassion and dedication. Still traumatized by the impact of COVID-19, we know that they are prepared to bravely face the "Second Wave."

2020 The Year of the Nurse, a year we will never forget.

MOLLOY COLLEGE

Marcia Gardner, PhD, RN, CPNP, CPN, Dean



The nursing faculty at the Barbara H. Hagan School of Nursing and Health Sciences at Molloy College are the engine that drives our success. The key qualities that define our faculty are expertise, compassion, flexibility, innovation, commitment and courage. Our faculty are educators, researchers, clinicians, mentors and innovators. Their expertise in all of these domains of nursing education were called upon, as the stresses of the pandemic and its significant ripple effects hit not only the health care industry, but higher education.

Molloy faculty and students continue to be on the front lines of healthcare in acute, emergency, community and primary care. They serve in a variety of roles from APRN to nurse educator, from clinical nurse to executive. As our college transformed from its traditional face-to-face to remote course delivery modalities, one hundred percent of our nursing faculty and our Clinical Learning Center lab instructors were engaged in creating innovative education-delivery strategies to ensure that undergraduate, graduate and doctoral students in nursing achieved the necessary and important competencies for healthcare

and nursing practice, could complete their courses and programs, and could enter the nursing workforce well-prepared for the realities of the current healthcare environment.

From packing bags of supplies for undergraduate students to practice clinical skills at home to livestreaming demonstrations to creating virtual hoodings for our PhD and DNP graduates; from developing high fidelity and virtual simulation experiences to virtual advisement to supporting students and alleviating their fears as they entered the clinical environment; from creating socially-distanced, expanded nursing lab opportunities to learning a wide array of new technologies for teaching and evaluation of students, the nursing faculty at Molloy transformed the educational experience of their students. It is impossible to list all of the amazing outcomes or to document the hundreds and hundreds of hours our faculty committed to clinical and educational practices. They are all heroes in this difficult and exhausting pandemic year. It is a privilege to have the Molloy College nursing faculty as my colleagues.

MOUNT SINAI SOUTH NASSAU HOSPITAL

Stacey Conklin, MSN, RN-BC, MHCDS, NE-BC, Senior Vice President & CNO

It's difficult to select one defining moment that reflects the indomitable spirit of our Mount Sinai South Nassau nurses during the COVID pandemic. There were so many. The legend of the teapot comes to mind, symbolic of a nurse's strength. Like our nurses, teapots are seldom exactly alike, and they remind us that "hot water" can bring out the best in us and the nursing profession.

Our emergency nurses courageously held the front line when a constant surge of acutely ill patients were seeking care. They truly "rolled with the punches", no matter how brutal, knowing a patient's life may depend on their actions. Our critical care team extended themselves beyond expectations, when critical care beds more than quadrupled. They were steadfast and brave in the face of an unparalleled challenge. Our acute care nurses in Telemetry and Med-Surg quickly adapted to evolving assignments and a focus on respiratory management of the sickest of patients. Our perioperative and procedural nurses were witness to an unprecedented closure of their operating rooms and procedural units, but readily shared their skill and expertise to care for inpatients. Our dialysis nurses experienced an unexpected spike in the volume of patients requiring hemodialysis services. They accepted the challenge.

Our advance practice nurses were an integral part of the healthcare team: Nurse Practitioners assuming roles as clinical nurses and clinical leaders; CRNAs bringing their skills to newly-created critical care units, leading the respiratory care of patients; and our behavioral health CNS focusing on preserving the psychological health of staff and promoting stress management.

Our infection prevention nurses led the way in a period of fear and uncertainty, helping staff to recognize the novelty of the coronavirus and remaining focused on the science surrounding the pandemic experience.

Our performance improvement nurses once again donned their scrubs and returned to the bedside to provide direct care and impact outcomes. Our care managers served as

liaisons between providers and families, keeping the lines of communication open. Women & Children's nurses found innovative ways to provide family-centered care and share the birth experience in an environment that precluded family presence and visitation.

Nurses from physician practices, homecare and other satellites returned to our main campus as members of the bedside team. They reconnected with former colleagues and brought a wealth of experience to the patients they cared for. Our nurse educators seamlessly on-boarded and redeployed nursing staff and agency nurses and provided ongoing education for rapidly changing practices. Our nurse leaders calmly and courageously led during a time of unplanned and sometimes chaotic change. They remained a consistent source of support for the nursing staff and fostered continuing communication that all could rely on.

One nurse who represents the spirit of our nursing team is Katie DeMelis. She is recognized as an exceptional clinical nurse, nurse educator, and nurse leader whose sense of accountability and selflessness were highlighted during the COVID crisis. Her dual background as an educator and critical care nurse enabled her to lead calmly, with purpose, and clear vision of what had to be done to expand critical care: support existing staff; train new agency nurses and furloughed staff; and provide care for critically ill patients. She worked tirelessly, putting in days and hours well beyond what was expected, putting patients and staff first, putting her own needs on a back burner. Katie exemplified the essence of MSSN nursing accountability on the front line of COVID: fighting fiercely to save patient lives, motivating and leading staff through insurmountable challenges, supporting colleagues, and easing the path of those who were lost to the ravages of COVID. Her caring and focus helped us get the job done and meet overwhelming challenges face on. Katie simply exemplifies our many nurses of excellence - all of them steeped to full strength and emerging as our heroes!

NASSAU UNIVERSITY MEDICAL CENTER

Janice Pateres, MS, MBA, RN, BC, Executive Vice President & CNO

When we think of superheroes we think of masked and caped individuals with extraordinary or superhuman powers whose mission in life is to protect the human race. All of the members of my nursing team are superheroes. They showed up every day, without wavering, masked and caped with the appropriate protective equipment to provide care for our ailing patients.

Our first COVID-positive patient was admitted on March 9, 2020. We expected to treat patients infected with COVID-19 and we were prepared for the challenge, but there was still fear and uncertainty in the eyes of our heroes. Despite their uncertainty, they never complained.

There was so much about the COVID-19 pandemic that will forever be imprinted in my mind. Four months into my role as a CNO, after a plan for retirement was put on the back burner, I remember encountering encouraging posters and signs throughout the building. One sign read “Hey, Warrior, keep going.” My heart sank and my legs felt heavy. My breath caught in my throat and I felt an overwhelming sense of panic. I didn’t think I could go on. I wasn’t a warrior; I was a nurse! I didn’t get a rule book; I didn’t receive a history lesson, and I was not prepared! No one was.

I kept walking, I didn’t think I had much of a choice. The nursing staff needed a leader and I had accepted that challenge. I was not going to walk away from them or our patients now. I worried endlessly about our ability to care for the sick and the dying. I worried about the staff, nurses, doctors, aides, and therapists. I would round and greet them, support them, and assist in any way that I could, all the while thinking, “Please God, keep them safe.”

Nursing Education worked quickly to design and implement cross-training pathways that would provide nurses and PCAs with the necessary skills to work in any unit regardless of their current specialty. The training would ensure all nursing staff within the different services were trained to provide the highest quality of care and safety and allow fellow nurses to support each other during the COVID -19 pandemic. Nurses moved to areas outside their comfort level and entered units they had not been

to, in some cases, since nursing school. Yes, there was tremendous fear but nurses worked together as buddies despite this to help each other and to provide the best possible care to their patients.

I found my strength in nurses at NUMC. I was in awe of their resilience, their tenacity and their fortitude. They were unwavering in their commitment to patients. They came to work with a focused determination to save lives. The unrelenting calls for anesthesia and the sobering calls for “Code Blues” only served to motivate my team to send another patient home to their family. Many of the staff “refused” to be sick. Many got sick, took a few days off, and returned to work even though the risk remained high. They worked long hours but they were adamant about putting their patients first.

The nursing team became advocates, spiritual healers, companions and sources of comfort for patients and their families. When it became necessary to ban all visitors, patients were left without their usual support system. Our staff became that support system for them. They communicated with patients’ families to keep them informed of their loved one’s status and ensured that their wishes were met.

When a husband and wife were admitted, both in critical condition, it became evident early-on that they were not going to survive. Our nurses moved the patients to the same unit and placed them side by side, where they spent their last hours together. A few days later, we received a thank you letter from the family stating “Remember that you cared for all of us when it mattered most”.

As the Chief Nursing Officer, I am incredibly proud and extremely grateful for all of our healthcare heroes that stepped up to the plate during such a challenging time. Despite the pressure and stress of the situation, our nurses were extremely proud of the way everyone came together during this critical time and to be part of the NUMC nursing team.

NORTH SHORE UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL

Tara Laumenede, MSN, RN, Deputy CNO

As so many have already acknowledged, being a nurse during the COVID 19 pandemic has been unlike anything we have ever experienced. To say that our nurses at North Shore University Hospital (NSUH) went above and beyond would be an understatement. Never, in my 30-year career as a nurse, have I ever witnessed such camaraderie, compassion, and extraordinary teamwork. Words honestly cannot describe the impact that my staff had on me during this pandemic as I listened to them and watched them care for people in such gentle and kindhearted ways. Because of them, I have never been more proud to be a nurse or more honored to be part of this extraordinary profession.

Throughout the pandemic, frontline staff stated over and over, “we are one” and it was amazing to see how all of our nurses worked in true solidarity. All of the ICU nurses from our five original ICUs worked in ALL of the twelve ICUs that were eventually erected (over 200 ICU beds), regardless of their specialty. They went where they were needed, when they were needed, without hesitation. Our medical-surgical nurses did the same as existing units were converted to COVID units and additional ICUs. Our float team nurses were everywhere; opening multiple medical-surgical units for COVID positive patients in areas not previously equipped for medical-surgical care.

Nurses in maternal and child health moved completely out of the building to care for their precious population in non-conventional post-partum areas. Despite these changes they remained strong and provided much needed support to frightened new mothers, allaying their fears and anxiety, and ensuring safety was never compromised. Our peri-op and ambulatory surgery nurses partnered with hospital nurses to provide care at the bedside - where many hadn't worked in years, or even at all.

But none of these changes could have been accomplished without our extraordinary nursing education team. They provided invaluable education on PPE and research protocols and prepared redeployed staff for new assignments.

Several staff members and colleagues recount witnessing the best in everyone during this time, both nurses and their interdisciplinary partners alike. Converting over 30 units to care for COVID positive patients and ensuring that the frontline staff had what they needed to provide the level of care needed would not have been possible without our interdisciplinary colleagues.

The nursing leaders at NSUH were beyond exceptional. Just like their frontline staff, they did what was needed, when

it was needed. They found innovative ways to use existing resources to expand our capacity and meet the needs of our patients. They added oxygen saturation monitoring on units where none previously existed; converted med-surg units to ICUs; worked with our materials management team to implement creative solutions to track PPE distribution; transitioned common meeting rooms and remote spaces into patient care areas; and partnered with our Patient and Family Centered Care Department to promote wellness and respite in our staff Lavender Lounge.

Our nurses stayed well past the end of their shifts to help patients and families connect. They made offers through social media to visit patients when their families could not. One nurse assisted a COVID patient in attending his father's funeral via Skype. His father had also been taken by COVID. One ICU nurse gathered pictures from patients' relatives to place on their doors. The pictures personalized the patients in the room and made staff feel as though they knew “the person” they were taking care of. The pictures also brought family members comfort when they saw them during FaceTime sessions. Staff promoted tremendous amounts of emotional wellness as they lined hallways with inspiring messages and clapped out every COVID patient as they were discharged.

One of the things that has amazed me most throughout this whole experience has been the resiliency of our staff. As I rounded in the endless number of COVID units inside and outside of the main building, I saw staff were worn down but never defeated. Their positivity and passion for their patients was undeniable. They leaned on each other, laughed and remained hopeful together. They were frightened together, cried together, and above all always supported each other. Their bonds deepened as they gathered around bedsides and surrounded their dying patients with love. They prayed with patients' families, and held their patients hands when the families could not, witnessing far too many final breaths.

As we head into a potential resurgence, hope and support for one another continue to resonate throughout our building. We still have COVID units and I remain so extremely proud of what I see amongst our staff today. Nursing staff from our non-COVID units send frequent letters of encouragement and weekly tokens of appreciation to the nurses caring for COVID positive patients - acknowledging their sacrifice and reminding them to stay safe and stay strong.

NYU LANGONE HOSPITAL - LONG ISLAND

Valerie Terzano, MSN, RN, NEA-BC, Senior Vice President, Nursing & CNO



The Year of the Nurse brought increased attention to the “heroes of health care”.... nurses working on the front lines of COVID-19.

Nurses continue to provide care in the face of fear, safety concerns, and uncertainty regarding the effects of this virus on our patients. As frontline health care professionals, nurses are the true heroes, risking everything to care for patients and proving to be an integral part of health systems as they get a handle on this crisis and prepare for the future.

I couldn't be prouder of our frontline teams and how our nurses have responded to the call to action. Nurses from differing departments and service lines, who have never worked together before, partnered to care for the sickest of patients using a team nursing approach. They worked hand in hand with the other disciplines on patient care units and in newly created surge areas to manage and attempt to conquer this virus. Through the chaos and uncertainty, caring and compassion prevailed. We've been in the midst of both miraculous recovery and unfortunate death. It's been both heart-warming and heart-wrenching all at the same time.

We talk about those defining moments in our lives - moments that have the ability to fundamentally alter a person, a process, an organization. The COVID-19 pandemic is one of those moments. If we have learned anything from this crisis, it is how truly awe-inspiring the strength of our nurses and combined team members can be when faced with the unknown.

We have endured unique war-like circumstances since the first week in March. That one confirmed case turned into hundreds within a very short period of time. Empathic and compassionate caregivers were turned into warriors who had to face “the invisible enemy.” Our response was courageous, having to put aside our fears for ourselves and our loved ones, to answer the call to action. Ingenuity, creativity, and fortitude forced us to think differently and to change care models as patient statuses rapidly deteriorated. Had our team members not been there, the numbers of casualties would have been far greater, which can't be underscored enough. Your actions have been truly heroic and exemplary. The character of the professional nurse has never been more apparent.

PECONIC BAY MEDICAL CENTER NORTHWELL HEALTH

Christine Kippley, RN, MBA, NE-BC, CCM, Vice President, Patient Care Services & CNO

March 13, 2020. That was the day we shut down visitation. The Joint Commission had just left our building, and the surveyors were practically running out the door after a week-long survey. I couldn't stop the tears when our patient experience director told me that I needed to get ready. People would be dying alone. I had no idea what lie ahead. My imagination began to take over and I started seeing life as if I were in a movie. I saw myself sitting in the ICU. Dirty. Exhausted. Alone.

Only in my role as a CNO for 5 months, I had to depend on a team of people that I was just getting to know. Every single day we were faced with new challenges. I wondered how in the world we were going to get through this. What happened next will stick with me for the rest of my career. Everyone around me stepped up and stretched themselves to the limits. Sure, there was some fear and confusion but mostly there was commitment, bravery and grit. They were going to do this!

The leadership team rolled up their sleeves and got to work. Whatever needed to happen, happened. We were moving patients around like crazy and trying to keep COVID isolated in one spot. The next day, the strategy would change and everyone would just with it and do what they had to do to get it done. They always were there to support our team, and provided reassurance, information and education as quickly as they could to our nurses.

Very early on, our nursing team began to place large posters outside of our ICU rooms with information about each intubated patient. There were notes about their family, their hobbies, and their life. The information on the posters humanized the patients which was both surreal and terrifying. When has there ever been an entire ICU full of intubated patients, all with the same illness? Next, the nurses posted their stories. How many kids they have, what they like to do when they are not at work and other personal notes. They are mothers, fathers, sisters, artists, gardeners, and pet owners too!

When we needed more support at the bedside, the peri-op and cath lab teams stepped up, ready to serve. The cath lab

nurses and PACU nurses changed their shifts and stepped right back into the ICU. We would have never made it without them. Others that had been away from bedside nursing for some time became runners and supported our nurses by providing an extra set of hands. The peri-op techs were eager to use their special skills and establish a proning team. Several other peri-op staff members joined our patient experience team to help patients FaceTime their families and connect with their loved ones. In many cases their work allowed a family member to lay eyes one last time on their loved one as a nurse comforted them in their death.

Our amazing staff found ways to encourage each other and to celebrate our success and the successes of our patients. I will never forget the whole hospital showing up for our first clap out. We were celebrating the first patient to be liberated from a ventilator and discharged. He was our inspiration and we knew we were going to be ok.

Lastly, I remember three very special nurses; Louisa, Casey and Diana. All brand new graduates. When I met them in our education office, all I could see were their eyes peering over their masks. It was their first week and we were knee-deep in COVID. I wouldn't have blamed them if they had decided to run away, especially since we knew that we weren't going to be able to offer them a "normal" orientation at this point. But they didn't. They were willing to show up and help out however they could to support our staff and our patients. I will always admire them for their bravery and dedication to their new career.

I will remember this time because of the fear and concern I felt for both our patients and our staff. I will remember that the days all ran into one another and the seemingly constant change in guidelines and knowledge. But mostly I will remember how thankful I felt for having such a dedicated, caring and compassionate team that supported their community in a time of need and the pride I felt for a job well done by all.

PLAINVIEW & SYOSSET HOSPITALS NORTHWELL HEALTH

Marianna Vazquez, RN, MS, NE-BC, Associate Executive Director, Patient Care Services & CNO

How do you tell ONE story about our hospitals' response to COVID-19, and the impact this pandemic had on our patients, families and staff? Frankly, the whole experience has been physically and emotionally exhausting but rewarding and inspirational at the same time. I am filled with gratitude.

Every link in a chain contributes to its strength, and the same is true about teamwork. Our team was made stronger by the work performed by each of its members at every level. A warm thank you to our team members for their hard work. This is OUR story at Plainview and Syosset Hospitals.

Our clinical team provided care at the highest level to our patients. Medical leadership, hospitalists, ACP's, medical students, interns, and residents all worked alongside the frontline staff to save as many lives as possible. The patient care services leadership team was essential and a very strong link in our chain. We could not have done this without them. Our peri-op staff took on patient care assignments that they hadn't had in years or ever in some cases. The pharmacy and respiratory teams linked arm-in-arm with the frontline team and didn't leave their side. The quality and case management teams returned to the bedside and the radiology team safely treated our patients without hesitation. The environmental health services and infection control teams provided support to our employees through education and much sought after advice.

The contributions of our non-clinical partners were invaluable. Our environmental services staff ensured that the facility was clean and safe for patients, families

and staff. Our food and nutrition services staff fed and donated food to all of our employees throughout the day. Our lab worked tirelessly to get COVID test results as soon as possible. The patient experience team lifted our spirits through heroic and motivating stories. The security team kept things moving at the front desk and kept us safe


Our hospital administration team planned 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, to support patients and staff. Administrative assistants, secretaries, ward clerks and payroll were indispensable, providing support wherever it was needed.

But the heart and soul of our team is our frontline staff, who with the support of all their teammates, persevered. You cradled patients who were dying without their family members. You became their family, and when you could, you found ways to connect these patients with their loved ones using technology. You brought tranquility to a developmentally delayed patient by playing the songs of Andrea Bocelli, which comforted her and gave her mom peace as well.

It is a great privilege to work alongside all of you. I hope you have felt the love through our relationship with each other. Thank you for your courage, compassion and competence. Thank you for having the resilience to come to work, and for wanting to do the best for patients, families and team members. You are the story, and I am inspired by all of you.

SOUTH SHORE UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL

Ralph J. Civello, MSN, MA, RN, Associate Executive Director & CNO



As COVID-19 placed unprecedented demands on healthcare systems across the country, nurses were deployed to care for severely ill patients in acute and intensive care units at rates never imagined. Over time, it became especially challenging for nurses to witness so many patient deaths daily. To curb the emotional toll of these deaths on frontline nurses, the innovative staff at South Shore University Hospital implemented an initiative called Gentle Hands. When a death occurred, the nurse education team was called in and asked to perform post-mortem care so that the bedside nurse could help to address the patient surge. The team would then transport expired patients to the morgue.

The creation and implementation of the Gentle Hands team reflected true collaboration and was a demonstration of overwhelming support for the bedside nurses who were working tirelessly to combat the pandemic. Many nurses recalled moments when they didn't think they could do another thing, until the Gentle Hands team came along. When the bedside nurses thanked the Gentle Hands team, the team responded, "Let us care for the deceased and so that you can care for the living. They need you. We need you. Stay safe."

ST. CATHERINE OF SIENA MEDICAL CENTER

Mary Jane Finnegan, MS, RN, CNO



Who would have ever thought that in this age of advanced medicine, a COVID pandemic could rock the world and cause such great loss of life? Nurses were at the forefront of patient care during this crisis. Each day, new treatment approaches were revealed and quickly implemented to provide our patients care that would yield best possible outcomes.

Franklin Roosevelt once said “Courage is not the absence of fear, but rather the assessment that something else is more important than fear”. His words guided our work. Our nursing staff assumed their roles understanding that their contributions were critical during this frightening time, and that ultimately we needed to be courageous, and move forward, to ensure our patients and colleagues worked in safe environments.

Our hospital set forth to increase its bed capacity by 50% knowing that elective procedures would be cancelled, and that the nursing staff in the operating rooms, endoscopy, ambulatory surgery, cardiac catheterization lab and pre-surgical testing would care for a new population of patients. Critical care units were redesigned to maximize infection control and to ensure staff and patients were kept safe in the ever-evolving care environment. Tents were constructed as overflow patient care areas and staff came prepared for their constantly changing roles. Nurses paired with colleagues of varying skill levels to provide optimal care for high acuity patients.

Our ambulatory surgery unit was transformed into a 12-bed critical care unit. Many of the unit staff were truly fearful for their own health, and for the health of the families that they returned home to at the end of their shifts. But they stepped up anyways and learned the additional skills needed to save their patients. Medication regimens changed rapidly and all were quickly educated. The newly assembled “team” formed a tight knit bond, giving each other the strength and courage to put fear aside and provide exceptional care. This unique unit was open for 28 days and was nominated for the 2nd quarter “Living the Mission Award”

recognizing all those who triumph over fear to provide compassionate care during this most challenging time.

Creativity and compassion were our most important tools. Staff found new ways to identify themselves when they were unrecognizable under their personal protective equipment (PPE). Nurses acquired longer tubing to allow IV infusions to be monitored outside of an infected patient’s room. Nurses learned to maximize the time they spent in the patients’ rooms by performing modified, efficient and accurate patient assessments. Patient and family meetings were conducted virtually to provide visits essential to the healing process.

The community was supportive to all of our health care workers and decorated the entryway with signs of thanks and encouragement. Car parades took place at 7 p.m. throughout the pandemic with music, signs and cheers to celebrate those arriving and leaving work. The community restaurateurs and local vendors donated food and water to the staff daily. Our community members donated hand-made face masks to ensure the safety of our staff.

The ingenuity of our community was fabulous! Some computer enthusiasts made face shields. Others made bands worn on the back of the head to relieve the pressure the facemasks put on workers’ ears. Each team member felt supported and thanked for their contributions.

Tears were shed by all, each time our staff gathered to watch another successful patient triumph over COVID-19 as they were discharged to the tune of “Here Comes the Sun”. Every 2 hours from 8 a.m. to 10 p.m., uplifting songs were played to energize the staff, and occasionally would precipitate “quick dancing” in the halls to break the palpable stress.

Every nurse at our hospital took their place among the many health care providers who have become a part of history, and will have many stories to share with their children’s children recounting how so many lives were saved because of their heroism.

ST. CHARLES HOSPITAL

Nicolette Fiore-Lopez, PHD, RN, CENP, CNO

On average, our hospital has between six and ten ICU patients with less than a handful on ventilators at any given time. At the height of the COVID-19 pandemic surge, we had 38 critical care patients on ventilators in our facility. To say that we were stretched beyond our limits is an understatement. There are a number of things that, as a nurse leader, I will always remember about this time.

We had approximately ten days to cease performing elective surgeries after the governor issued an executive order canceling them statewide. During that time, our nurse educators developed a curriculum for staff with varying skill sets at multiple different levels, including nurses who had previous ICU experience, telemetry nurses, and medical-surgical nurses. Nursing education was able to provide training to non-ICU nurses and upgrade their skill set. They also provided training to our support staff who would become an integral part of the teams that would soon be delivering care to our patients. They trained ancillary staff from the outpatient departments that were temporarily closing to augment our nursing ancillary support team.

The nursing staff mobilized as quickly as the patients began arriving. Many offered to work overtime before we ever considered incentive pay. As the full scope of the pandemic began to unfold, our staff rose to the occasion.

As the COVID-19 surge came, teams of nurses whose skill sets matched the needs of the patients were seamlessly put into place. All of the team leaders and their staff provided excellent care under the most stressful of situations. The need for us to create more critical care space was met with a can-do attitude by all levels of staff and our ancillary support workers.

In addition to the nursing teams, we had the support of our physical therapy colleagues who evolved into our proning teams. They provided 7 day-a-week coverage when it was needed. Our director of patient experience led an effort to repurpose unlicensed personnel from our outpatient areas to assist in much-needed opportunities for our patients to

communicate with their families and for our providers to hold virtual family meetings.

There are three specific stories that showcase the compassion that we delivered every day:

A long-retired employee was admitted to our hospital very ill with COVID-19. Although the employee was extubated once, the success was short-lived and he subsequently did not survive. Shortly before he died, a nurse with whom the patient had worked when the nurse was relatively new, had the honor of providing the patient his last rights and praying with the family remotely.

In a separate situation, a long-ago nurse-mentor of one of the nursing staff was gravely ill, and in the final days of COVID-19 disease. Before the nurse-mentor succumbed to the disease, the nurse who was so successfully mentored by this patient, was honored to be able to provide end-of-life and post-mortem care in a way that was comforting to everyone, including the family.

Finally, an employee, who was one of our very first COVID-19 patients, become extremely ill. In fact, he had to be transferred to a facility where more advanced therapies could be instituted and perhaps save his life. Our prayers were answered when this employee survived, came back to our hospital, received a long course of inpatient and outpatient physical rehabilitation and, is now back at his job full time.

These are three of the many examples of heart-touching moments that we experienced amidst the devastation of this pandemic. It was these stories and many others that got us through the dark days that seemed endless. It was these stories that will forever be examples of what nurses do, despite being in situations that no one could have ever imagined. And, we did it so well.

ST. FRANCIS HOSPITAL, THE HEART CENTER

Ann Cella, MA, MED, RN, NEA-BC, Senior Vice President, Patient Care Services & CNO

The past six months have been a challenging and unprecedented time for all, but particularly for our hospital community. During this time, I have witnessed the most extraordinary efforts on the part of all healthcare workers, but most especially the nurses at St. Francis Hospital.

In the spring, when our hospital was most challenged by caring for many critically ill COVID-positive patients, the nurses demonstrated compassionate care—the hallmark of St. Francis Hospital. The nurses worked in new and unique areas of the hospital that were only recently transformed into patient care units. The tender loving care given to our patients by nurses was observed in their kind and reassuring words, gentle touch and warm connections.

Our nurses also supported each other during this difficult time. Many St. Francis hospital nurses modified their work schedules to provide care 24/7. Nurses who typically worked the day shift agreed to work nights and weekends to ensure our patients received the excellent care they so deserved.

Our nurses are on the frontline, getting us through this pandemic. We need to support their resilience with our gratitude. I thank them with much appreciation and admiration.

ST. JOSEPH HOSPITAL

Barbara Gibbons, RN, MS, FNP, Vice President, Patient Care Services & CNO

Little St. Joseph Hospital in Bethpage proved to be mighty in this year of crisis. Never would we have thought that our emergency room would be bursting at the seams with patients gasping for breath. But one Saturday afternoon in March, 30 patients arrived at our emergency room in one hour! We had COVID patients in-house and arriving daily, but the unexpected influx of new patients was overwhelming. The staff was scared, not knowing how they would care for this patient surge. Did we have adequate PPE? Did we have ventilators? Did we have beds? Did we have support? Thank God the answer to all of these questions was yes. But their performance on this day was perhaps the most shining example of the skill, competency, compassion and empathy that St. Joseph nurses exhibited throughout the height of the crisis.

So many nurses went out of their comfort zones and floated to other units of the hospital to assist in the care of these very sick COVID patients. Many were asked to transition into roles that would require extra training and support. Our nurses accepted the challenge. They did not back down. The education and management team worked tirelessly to provide the staff with the needed education. Each nurse had a role to play in the competent, skilled and compassionate care that these patients so desperately needed. They did it with a grace and fortitude that would have made Florence Nightingale proud.

The ICU capacity went from 12 to 28 literally overnight. The nurses rose to the occasion. Nurses from the Intermediate Care Unit and PACU were quickly brought up to speed so that they could help to care for more acutely ill patients with the critical care nurses. With the rapid expansion of the unit, the typical RN assignment of 2 ICU patients jumped to 4. Most of these patients were intubated, sedated and paralyzed, requiring a tremendous amount of skill and care. We initiated proning teams with the nursing staff and physical therapy department to ensure that staff and patients were safe during this process.

These selfless women and men worked 12 to 16 hour shifts through uncertainty, anxiety, and at times, sheer terror about what lay beyond the door to the patient room. They found ways to support one another, their patients and families through this sad and isolating period of time. One nurse volunteered to call patients' families every day to inform them of their loved one's status. As nurses know, we

not only treat and care for the patients but we also treat the families. Patients and their loved ones felt comforted by the consistency of hearing from the same person daily, a person who knew their perhaps dying loved one.

Nurses made sure that no patients died alone. There was always someone who put their fears aside to stay in the room as patients took their last breaths and to facilitate family members' goodbyes.

As the community became a hot zone, 97% of the hospitalized patients were COVID positive at one time, so many that we had to send patients to our sister hospitals that had not yet felt the impact we were seeing at St. Joseph.

Despite knowing that their assignment would be caring for COVID patients, since EVERY unit was a COVID unit, the nurses came to work, sacrificing their own safety and that of their families. One such RN was a part-timer with three young children who asked a neighbor to look after her kids while school was closed so that she could answer a higher call of duty in the ED at SJH. She asked to change her schedule from part time to full time to meet the needs of our community. She used her leadership skills and critical care experience to assist her colleagues as they cared for this new and challenging patient population, and helped to develop a proning team in the ED.

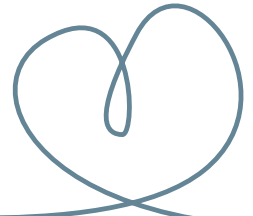
The same nurse photographed essential workers during the pandemic and put everyone's faces together in the shape of a cross, an EKG symbol, a heart, and the words "faith", "hope" and "love". Those faces and words are what got us through some of the darkest moments we have known as nurses.

The community support was strong at St. Joseph. Community members stood across the street and cheered for the staff at 7:00 p.m. Numerous donations of supplies and food kept the staff going. It was amazing to see the outpouring of love by this community.

As a nurse leader, I have never been more proud of the work that we do and the team that I am blessed to work with. The year 2020 will definitely be remembered as the Year of the Nurse!

STONY BROOK EASTERN LONG ISLAND HOSPITAL

Patricia Pispisa, Senior Vice President, Patient Care Services & CNO



In early 2020, the staff at Stony Brook Eastern Long Island Hospital was following the ongoing spread of the novel coronavirus throughout Asia and Europe. It became necessary for the hospital to begin preparations for future patients that would present with symptoms of the coronavirus. However, we were not completely ready for what was on the horizon.

During the first week of March, SBELIH received its first patient to test positive for the coronavirus, who was also first patient to test positive in Suffolk County. From that moment on, the hospital began to see an increase of positive patients from the North Fork. Over the next several weeks, the hospital treated an increased number of COVID-19 patients that accounted for more than 75% of our inpatient bed capacity. We faced many challenges along the way but we prevailed and brought the best possible to care to those patients.

From the moment the hospital had its first COVID-19 patient, the staff at SBELIH sprang into action and a new way to approach healthcare was implemented overnight. The nursing staff went above and beyond for the patients in the community. From the word “Go”, the nurses put their patients first, working wherever they were needed. With the hospital not having a designated unit for isolation patients, SBELIH closed its behavioral health addiction inpatient unit and converted it to a secure COVID unit. The nursing staff acclimated quickly to the changing environment. Staff from other units were redeployed to those units in need of extra staffing.

With the hospital located in a rural setting on the eastern most point of the North Fork, staffing was a challenge.

Our staff was hit hard, with a high infection rate for COVID-19. Over 30% of them were out on sick leave. Nurses and nursing assistants were redeployed from the OR, ambulatory surgery, PACU and addiction to the COVID unit as well as the newly opened ASU medical surgical unit, which was created specifically to treat non-COVID patients. Staff worked at the front entrances, screening individuals entering the building.

To ensure mental health and stability for the staff throughout such a trying time, the social work and counseling staff from the behavioral health units assisted the nursing and hospital staff with the creation of the “Comfort Room.” This designated section of the temporarily closed rehab unit allowed staff a quiet place to unwind and regroup. The counseling staff was available for those who needed a “pep talk” or to recover from a tough case or shift. Staff was able to recharge and get back out there to take on the world.

At SBELIH, the entire hospital staff set forth the highest standard of care for the community and patients we serve every day. The team at the hospital continues to care for COVID patients as the pandemic remains ongoing. Staff have shifted toward a new normal for nursing and patient care through the experiences they have learned since the onset of COVID. The Stony Brook Eastern Long Island Hospital team remains fluid with the rapid change of recommendations from healthcare agencies and the care provided by the nurses, nursing assistants and support staff was second to none. We have evolved into a new era of nursing; without the support of one another, we would not have achieved such greatness.

STONY BROOK SCHOOL OF NURSING

Annette Wysocki, PhD, RN, FAAN, Dean and Professor

Stony Brook School of Nursing will long remember that together the students, faculty, and staff—in partnership with our outstanding expert clinical colleagues at Stony Brook University Hospital—responded to the public health care needs of the people of New York during an unprecedented global pandemic.

Together, when the full extent of the public health crisis was not fully known and changing moment to moment. When members of our community required help managing not only their physiological needs, but also their emotional needs for compassion, understanding, and comfort, we continued to respond.

Together, students, faculty and staff contributed by working on non-COVID units, volunteering at the Long Island State Veterans Home, collecting PPE to replenish hospital supplies, and sewing masks to protect others.

At the same time, our faculty quickly pivoted to continue classes online and provide remote simulation experiences so that students would be able to graduate on-time and prepared to enter the workforce; at a time when the need for nurses at one point outstripped the staff employed at Stony Brook University Hospital. Their tireless efforts and undaunting courage in the face of a powerful biological adversary demonstrated the high degree of professionalism that is a hallmark of Stony Brook nurses, and indeed of all nurses who rose to meet an enemy invisible to the naked eye, but yet ever present in the severely altered physiological responses observed in their fellow humans.

Innovation and creative ideas constantly sparked our efforts to provide telehealth experiences, record virtual simulations, set up drive-by distribution stations for badges and iPads and host a virtual convocation and

graduation ceremony. At times the dizzying array of energy that was required and the flashes of insight needed to complete the tasks at hand became simultaneous adrenalin driven surges, and crashing realities. But at all times, it was the constant commitment to professionalism that continued to prevail and guide the collective actions and efforts of everyone together.

It is perhaps prescient that the World Health Organization designated the year 2020 as the Year of the Nurse and Midwife in recognition of the 200th anniversary of the birth of Florence Nightingale. It is also the year that the Stony Brook University School of Nursing celebrated its 50th Anniversary! The first class of slightly over 100 students was admitted in 1970, with 16 graduates completing the program and becoming the first graduates of the School of Nursing in 1971. Today, there are over 10,000 alumni of Stony Brook School of Nursing that are living across the Nation in 48 states and in the global community. Together, all of these events conspired to occur simultaneously at the same inflection point in history, and thus, this year will be one that will not soon be forgotten in our collective memories.

On behalf of the students, faculty and staff of Stony Brook University School of Nursing, I am humbled by the work of my colleagues to achieve the highest ideals of the human character: extraordinary commitment, undying passion, love for our fellow man, hope in the face of adversity, and continuing to move forward together. I express my gratitude for the opportunity to be witness to these extraordinary achievements.

STONY BROOK SOUTHAMPTON HOSPITAL

Althea Mills, RN, MSN, Vice President, Patient Services & CNO

To many frontline workers, 2020 has been extraordinary indeed. I spent many moments of reflection in the aftermath of the first wave wondering what had just hit us. I tried to make sense of what we had been through. I peered through the eyes of Florence Nightingale and wondered why she decreed that this year (from our calculation) 2020 would be the year of the nurse.

Well, as prophetic as that was, she was right. I don't believe that she foresaw what this year would bring, rather, in my understanding it would have taken this long to finally articulate the elements that truly encompass the working definition of a nurse. You see, the COVID-19 crisis, more than anything else, validated the true essence of nursing. It left nothing to the imagination. It clearly spelled out the complex intricacies embodied in the profession. This is art, science, and philosophy at its best.

As a nurse leader, I watched these scenes play out, over and over, as if no-one was watching:

Nobly, our nurses displayed a level of character that clearly distinguished us from every other person on earth. Indeed we belong to a superb class of human beings. The admiration of others was palpable, we were seen, felt and heard.

Untiring, we served and gave of our time our worth, our health and our talent.

Routinely, we saw death but responded with kindness and the utmost compassion. We realized that we were the only resource for our patients and families at this time.

Supportively, we carried on, night and day, despite the pain, fears and anxiety we felt. We sacrificed all we that we had and pressed on like angels on a mission.

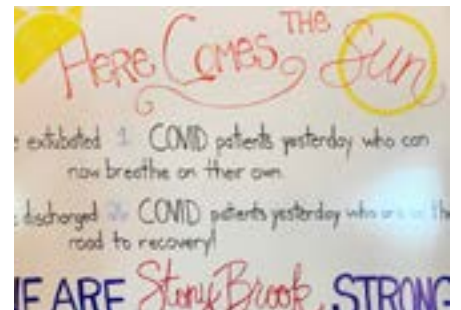
Every opportunity, we seized. Every effort, we put forward. Every burden, we bore because we were finally and forcefully validated as a profession of caring angels, ordained from the master of the universe to personify and occupy that sacred space in the lives of his creation. This is the living definition of the NURSE.

I recall our first patient being brought in by ambulance and admitted to our ICU. We quickly huddled with our ICU staff, very much like athletes that huddle together on the field. The act conveyed strength, hope and reverence to each other before the first tackle. Our leadership provided support and affirmation to the rest of the team and assured them "we got this and we are ready." Like a brave soldier, I watched our valiant nurse walk toward and into the room, geared for the battle.

Our frontline workers looked forward to and celebrated each and every patient success. Without realizing it then, it was a reflection of our efforts as well, for which we are proud.

I remember our last patient, leaving after 119 days in the hospital. She was vented and then extubated after many breathing trials and a sub-diagnosis of "failure to wean." She, after many weeks of compassionate and arduous nursing care, left us with much fanfare.

I commend nurses all over the globe for their matchless display of tenacity, bravery, altruism and indefatigable service to mankind. I am proud to be a nurse.



STONY BROOK UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL

Carolyn Santora, MS, RN, Chief, Regulatory Affairs & CNO

Make no mistake. This was a war. Our nurses were our soldiers in a war against a virus. As I look back, what stands out is the image of an army of nurses in scrubs, wearing blue isolation gowns, N95 masks, face shields and gloves to go into battle. Those scrubs, gowns, masks, shields and gloves were all stripped off at day's end, contamination washed off in showers before returning to families, sometimes in basements, garages, guestrooms. Some did not return to their families at all – finding temporary homes in hotels, dorm rooms and on-call rooms. They made these sacrifices to serve their patients. Dedicated to their mission, their profession, their community.

An image: A sea of nurses reentering the battleground every day. On the front line. Living with the enemy of COVID. To treat, soothe comfort. Working together to meet the goal of conquering a mutual enemy.

An image: Amazing nurses from Stony Brook greeting amazing nurses from Upstate who left homes and families to work side by side, entering the battlefield with us. An incredible show of solidarity that will never be forgotten.

An image: Two nurses in all of their PPE, leaning over a patient in the ICU, singing happy birthday with an iPad so that a family could share in the singing via FaceTime.

Every day, nurses became the caregiver and the family to our patients. This army of nurses innovated, creating tools and processes to keep their patients, coworkers and colleagues safe.

An image: Multiple IV pumps lined outside in the hallway, extension tubing snaked under doors, up and down the ICU. A sea of pumps, with lifesaving fluids, attended to by an army of blue gowned nurses.

An image: Nurses with large pictures of themselves taped to their PPE so patients could see their full faces, and know what the person taking care of them looked like. The “face behind the mask” was created by a nurse who saw the need.

An image: Backwards writing on glass doors outside patient rooms – that said simply “You are OK” in black magic marker.

An image: Nurses working together like never before. There was an acute understanding of how dependent

we were on each other. And how we shared this great challenge with nurses all across Long Island and indeed the country.

An Image: Nurses creating joy and managing stress through sharing silly tik-tok dances with each other and with the organization. Joy found in the midst of stress.

An Image: Nurses celebrating the small victories, detailed day by day on a simple white board. Listening to overhead songs and chimes that signaled to all that our patients were getting better, were recovering, were being discharged. And we cheered each and every time.

These images will live forever in the minds and hearts of the nursing staff at Stony Brook. I cannot begin to express the awe I feel for this army of nurses who came together, united in a cause, and triumphed. The work was soul draining, but the support they received from each other cannot be overstated.

I have been so honored to work with some of the most impressive, dedicated, and amazing nurses on Long Island. They battled throughout this pandemic to get our patients better, to soothe, to comfort and to overcome. It is essential that we do not forget this historic time in nursing and healthcare history. Every day, on every shift, incredible work was done. I witnessed the perseverance, talent and skill that our nurses applied to their work. I witnessed the compassion shown to patients on our battlefield. I witnessed nurses become our patients' families and become our patients' voices.

There were moments when many would have given in to despair or fear. But these astonishing nurses did not. They were vulnerable, but they were brave, and they were focused.

Florence Nightingale would be so proud to see that what she started in Crimea has 200 years later translated into a stunning group of professionals taking the lead in this newest fight.

I am forever grateful and inspired by the remarkable nurses of the 2020 pandemic. They stand tall. They stand proud.

All should exalt them. As for me, I bow to them.

NORTHPORT VETERANS AFFAIRS MEDICAL CENTER

Catherine Napoli, MA, RN, Associate Director, Patient Care Services

During the COVID-19 pandemic, all of the nurses, healthcare providers and ancillary staff at the Northport Veterans Affairs Medical Center worked tirelessly to provide exemplary care to the patients in our community. One nurse in particular represents the passion and commitment demonstrated by so many, Delores Vogt. Ms. Vogt is the nurse care manager for the Homeless Patient Aligned Care Team (HPACT). During the COVID-19 crisis, she was one of the first registered nurses to be reassigned to the COVID unit. She eagerly took on this new challenge and was happy to help wherever she was needed. She quickly completed the required competencies and acclimated to the unit she was assigned to. She took on these new challenges with a positive attitude and cared for some of Northport's sickest veterans.

Almost immediately after Ms. Vogt returned to the HPACT, there was a request for Disaster Emergency Medical Personnel System (DEMPS) volunteers to assist with the COVID crisis in Arizona. Ms. Vogt was quick to volunteer. She was on a plane to Arizona the very next morning and spent the next two weeks supporting the Yuma Arizona Veterans Affairs hospital.

In her role as a nurse care manager, Ms. Vogt is extremely adept at managing the individual needs of her patients, many of whom are homeless veterans. She frequently coordinates with other service providers to ensure that her patients have access to all of the services that they require. Her by-the-book attitude protects the veterans that she takes care of and ensures that her patients receive the best possible care. She is always pleasant and approachable.

Ms. Vogt stays current with the ever evolving COVID-19 research and provides education to her patients. She also acts as the unit flu champion every year. When the drive thru immunization clinic was implemented at the Northport VA this year, Ms. Vogt was the primary nurse assigned to the clinic. She worked to streamline the process, ensuring the charts were scrubbed the day before to avoid delays in care and continues to look for strategies to improve the clinic performance. She uses her experience and knowledge to act as a resource to her colleagues and her "can-do" attitude and compassionate personality provide reassurance to her patients.

PRIOR RECIPIENTS

2019 JUSTIN M. WARYOLD
Stony Brook University School of Nursing

2018 LILA V. HAGEMAN-SHEEHAN
NYU Winthrop Hospital

2017 LISA A. KOSHANSKY
St. Catherine of Siena Medical Center

2016 EILEEN DWYER
St. Francis Hospital

2015 CHRISTINE GLASER
Farmingdale State College

2014 RENEE GILCHRIS
North Shore University Hospital

2013 CATHERINE VIDETTO
St. Catherine of Siena Medical Center and LORI
ESCALLIER, Stony Brook University School of Nursing

2012 ANULI A. ERIKE
Nassau University Medical Center

2011 LISA QUINONES
Suffolk County Community College

2010 DEBRA GIUGLIANO
Stony Brook University Medical Center

2009 EILEEN M. ROBERTO
Good Samaritan Hospital Medical Center

2008 AMY B. PAKES
Nassau University Medical Center

2007 DONNA A. TANZI
Huntington Hospital

2006 MAY-LYNN ANDRESE
North Shore - LIJ Health System

2005 KATHLEEN PERRO
St. Francis Hospital

2004 MADELINE COZZI-GOTTLIEB
South Nassau Communities Hospital

2003 VIRGINIA REICHERT
North Shore University Hospital

2002 DONNA M. JOHNSON
Nassau University Medical Center

2001 SUSAN HOVANI
J.T. Mather Memorial Hospital

2000 KATHLEEN SOUTHERTON
University Hospital at Stony Brook

1999 KATHLEEN MILLER
Long Beach Medical Center

1998 ELIZABETH DEVINE
J.T. Mather Memorial Hospital

1997 ALICE FRIEDRICH
North Shore University Hospital at Plainview

LONG ISLAND NOMINATIONS TO THE NEW YORK
STATE NURSE OF DISTINCTION AWARD PROGRAM
1989–1995

RACHEL LIN Komanoff Center for Geriatric & Rehab
Medicine (NYS recipient)

NANCY MAEHL
Veterans Affairs Medical Center

ELEANOR O'BOYLE
J.T. Mather Memorial

MILDRED O'CONNOR
Lutheran Center for the Aging

DARLENE PADUANO
University Hospital at Stony Brook

DOROTHY PESSOLI
Veterans Affairs Medical Center

CAROLYN VAN HELDEN
St. Charles Hospital and Rehabilitation Center

SR. RITA VANSON
Mercy Medical Center

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