



*Daniel J. Messina, PhD, FACP, president and CEO,
Richmond University Medical Center*



Arthur Klein, MD, president of Mount Sinai Health System

Richmond University Medical Center and Mount Sinai Health System Announce Expanded Clinical and Academic Affiliation

Last month, Richmond University Medical Center and Mount Sinai Health System, an integrated system of eight hospitals, a nationally ranked school of medicine, and a continually expanding network of multi-specialty services, announced a clinical and academic partnership to broaden access to world-class primary, specialty, ambulatory, and inpatient care to residents of Staten Island.

“We are delighted to enter into this clinical and academic affiliation with Mount Sinai Health System,” president and chief executive officer, Daniel J. Messina, PhD, FACP, said. “We share many goals, including patient care outcomes and quality; expanding access to advanced primary, specialty, and ambulatory services; and the overall clinical commitment to population health. We see this as an opportunity to build and expand on the solid base of our own tertiary care teaching medical center by exploring opportunities for new programs and initiatives.”

Mount Sinai and RUMC will establish closely integrated clinical and academic relationships while maintaining independent governance with the overarching goals of improving quality outcomes for patients and increasing efficiencies, economies of scale, and business development opportunities for both parties.

Under the agreement, Mount Sinai and RUMC will:

- Integrate ambulatory practices in primary care, cardiology, and cancer
- Co-brand and co-market jointly operated practices/programs in cancer and cardiology
- Jointly recruit physicians
- Expand academic affiliation to potentially include residency program sponsorships, case-by-case faculty appointments and hospital privileges, and clinical opportunities for the Icahn School of Medicine and Mount Sinai students
- Offer clinical research opportunities
- Provide tertiary and quaternary services, including ambulatory specialties, when clinically necessary and appropriate

“We look forward to working with our colleagues at RUMC to expand and advance care for residents of Staten Island,” president of Mount Sinai Health Network, Arthur Klein, MD, said. “Our commitment to the community and shared mission to provide the care that this community deserves is our main goal. For any health need, from maintenance of chronic conditions to having access to the most complex medical procedures, Staten Island residents can rest assured that their medical needs will be met.”

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From the President & CEO Daniel J. Messina, PhD, FACHE



The last few weeks have been exciting for the future of our hospital! As you can see from the front page article of this month's Chronicle, we are now a proud affiliate of Mount Sinai Health System. The affiliation was made official last month. While we maintain our independent governance, the affiliation will enhance our already strong primary care, cardiology, and oncology programs and also create added opportunities to expand clinical opportunities. Further integration with additional programs and services will be explored in the months to come, but these are tremendous initial steps to what will no doubt be a fantastic partnership for our hospital and our community.

Another exciting development, one I alluded to in last month's Chronicle, is that thanks to Congressman Max Rose, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has announced approximately \$30 million in additional federal funds so we can make critical

upgrades to the windows throughout the hospital. In 2016, we were awarded over \$14.5 million for the project, which would not have covered the full cost of the project. Following continued advocacy by us and Congressman Rose, FEMA awarded the additional funds, bringing the total federal funding for the project to over \$44.3 million. This ensures we can replace all existing windows to properly protect the hospital from future storms and weather emergencies.

And as if that is not enough exciting news, our new emergency department continues to take shape before our very eyes, the Co-Gen project is steadily progressing next to the facilities building, and our new parking lot is nearing completion, ready for use in a few short weeks! In the planning and financial assessment phase is the surgical modernization project, which is designed to replace operating suites and perioperative support space, including exploratory and intensive care renovations.

These are exciting times we are sharing! Thank you for all your continued

dedication and commitment to our patients and our community.

In closing, I would like to take this opportunity to remind everyone of the importance of continuing to practice all of the precautions put in place to stop the spread of COVID-19. Together we have flattened the curve, together we can keep it flat. Please remember to wear a mask at all times in the hospital unless you are in your office alone or eating and maintaining 6 feet of social distance. Remember to also frequently wash your hands, use hand sanitizer, and monitor your symptoms. Remember to also complete the employee self-assessment form daily before reporting to work. Together we can keep each other and our patients safe.

**Remember the Power of One —
You Make A Difference!**

Sincerely,

Daniel J. Messina, PhD, FACE
President and Chief Executive Officer

Patient Satisfaction: A Note of Thanks

I, along with my husband and his entire family, are eternally grateful for the first-rate level of care your hospital has provided to my mother-in-law. It surpassed our expectations, and most importantly, saved my mother-in-law's life. God bless your staff and from the bottom of my heart, thank you.

Warm regards,
Marissa

I wanted to thank you and the entire staff at RUMC for the exceptional care my mom received at the hospital. Your staff has treated her and my family with a kindness and caring that we have never seen at a hospital before. From security right up to the doctors, everyone has been incredible. We cannot thank you enough.

Frank N.

A letter to labor and delivery nurse, Diane Donaghy, RN

Dear Diane,
I just wanted to thank you for all that you did. I truly felt that God put me with you knowing that I would be in good hands, from taking care of my husband, putting in my IV correctly, hugging me during the epidural, helping me push, making sure we had all the best equipment and staff and most importantly for your kind heart and patience. Please know your 32 years as a nurse do not go unnoticed. I was blessed to have you as a nurse.

Love Nicole and Family

Richmond University Medical Center Provides Warm Send-Off to 60-Year-Old COVID-19 Survivor



COVID-19 survivor Silvestre Flores with his son Pedro (kneeling), RUMC president and CEO Daniel J. Messina, PhD, FACHE, and the medical team that treated him and helped escort him home after a 90-plus day battle with the virus.

On July 7, Richmond University Medical Center provided a warm send-off to Silvestre Flores, 60, who recovered from COVID-19 after a 90 day battle, over 60 of them spent sedated and on a ventilator.

“Seeing you return to your family is the greatest gift you can give them and is a gift to us here at RUMC as well,” president and chief executive officer, Daniel J. Messina, PhD, FACHE, said to Flores as he was escorted out of the hospital.

Flores, who is from the Stapleton community of Staten Island, was admitted on April 5 and arrived at RUMC by ambulance and placed on a ventilator.

After 46 days, he became well enough to be removed. However, the virus, still in his body, forced him to be placed back on a ventilator for more than two weeks. Thanks to his strong will power and his team of medical professionals, Flores made a full recovery and returned to his family.

Waiting outside the hospital with his family was a mariachi band, which played a medley of songs in honor of his return home. Flores was escorted out of the hospital by his son, Pedro, and members of his medical team including many of the physicians, nurses, and staff who oversaw his care and recovery.

“We are so happy and excited for this day to come,” Raja Masood, MD, said. “We fought for him day by day and he fought along with us. He showed improvement each day and while it was a long journey, we are here today sending him home. He is an inspiration.”

“My entire family wants everyone at RUMC to know how much we love you and thank you for all you did to care for my father,” Pedro Flores said.



RUMC nursing administration with some of the visiting nurses from across the country who helped the hospital during the COVID-19 outbreak.

Thank You to Nurses Who Came to Battle COVID-19

When Staten Island needed them most, they came: nurses from all across the country, trained in all different specialties. They came in March and April at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic here in New York City. On Friday, June 26, Richmond University Medical Center expressed its thanks and unending gratitude to almost 80 of these nurses as they begin making plans to return home. The hospital held a “grab and go” breakfast early that morning as the nurses arrived for their shift at 7 AM or left after completing their overnight duties.

“Providing breakfast is a small token of our appreciation for the dedication and commitment shown by these professionals, some of whom came from as far away as California, Oklahoma, Washington state, and even Canada,” president and chief executive officer, Daniel J. Messina, PhD, FACHE, said. “Many of them will be returning home to states that are seeing spikes of COVID-19 that rival what we faced earlier this year. I am hopeful that these men and women who came when we needed them most can now take what they learned here, apply it in their own hospitals, and save lives.”

The nurses were assigned to RUMC by New York City to provide support during the height of the pandemic. The hospital admitted its first COVID-19 patient on March 14. Just three weeks later, RUMC would reach its high point of COVID-19 inpatients with 210 admitted patients in need of care. In addition to providing support in RUMC’s emergency department and Intensive Care Units (ICUs), the nurses were assigned to various other departments to provide support, including Labor and Delivery, among others. For some of the nurses, RUMC was only one of the hospitals they worked in during their time in New York City.

“Many of them have been away from their homes and families since early March, working various assignments throughout the New York City area,” chief nurse officer and chief operating officer, Rosemarie Stazzone, RN, MS, CNE, said. “They came to us at a critical time. Their professionalism and enthusiasm to be a part of our RUMC team were truly a bright spot during one of the most difficult and challenging times in our hospital’s history.”

As cases of COVID-19 have declined across New York City, some of the nurses returned home after the July 4th holiday, while others will remain at RUMC into August.



In addition to breakfast, departing nurses were provided with “RUMC hero” bags as a thank you for helping the hospital. Among the items in the bags were tubes of hand sanitizer.

Construction Update

While the main focus of Richmond University Medical Center these past few months has been on the COVID-19 pandemic, it has not stopped the hospital from forging ahead with its plans for the future. Construction has steadily progressed on capital improvements that increase its capacity and enhance healthcare services for the community.

“Construction on our new emergency department, Co-Gen plant, and parking lot have all continued throughout these past few months while much of our attention was focused elsewhere,” president and chief executive officer, Daniel J. Messina, PhD, FACHE, said. “Recent months have shown the increased need for both a larger and more expansive ED and the need to

ensure our hospital has adequate power and energy to meet the growing need the community has for our services.”

“I know everyone at Richmond University Medical Center is looking forward to the official unveiling of all three of these projects with eager anticipation,” Messina said.

New Emergency Department

As of early June, the retaining walls for RUMC's new emergency department had been completed, drywells had been installed to ensure adequate drainage, and work had begun on erecting the steel shell that will support the new two-story, 35,000 square foot, state-of-the-art emergency department when it is completed in early 2021. The current emergency department, constructed in 1978, is 15,000 square feet and built to service around 30,000 emergency care patients annually. Today, RUMC averages about 60,000 patients coming to its emergency department for care annually, and during the pandemic the department has treated over 1,000 people affected by the virus. When completed, the new emergency department will feature private treatment rooms, trauma bays, and comprehensive specialty areas for pediatrics and urgent care on the ground floor. The second floor will be used to upgrade the hospital's surgical unit and increase space for additional services.



Co-Gen Plant

Richmond University Medical Center will join other companies leading the way in energy efficiency when its new cogeneration plant—or Co-Gen—is completed in 2021. The new Co-Gen is being constructed in an existing building at the rear of the campus. Over the past few months, work has progressed to include interior demolition and excavation for subsurface utilities. When completed, it will make the hospital self-sufficient and able to continue operating in the event of an area power failure or natural disaster. The Co-Gen will also feature two new cooling towers.

“Co-Gen, or combined heat and power, is the use of a power station to generate electricity and useful heat at the same time,” Messina said. “Energy creates steam, which in turn will be used to heat our hospital and create a cleaner, more efficient power system.”

Increased Parking Capacity

Parking lot construction has reached its final stages with landscaping, minor concrete work, and paving all completed in early June. The new parking lot will provide over 200 new parking spots on-site for hospital employees, increasing their accessibility to the hospital and taking employee cars off of local residential streets. The new parking lot, which also features adequate lighting and new trees, shrubs, and landscaping along the surrounding perimeter, is expected to be completed and ready for use this summer.



Lung Cancer Screenings Are Saving Lives

The Lung Screening Program at Richmond University Medical Center is saving lives. The program, one of the first of its kind in the New York metropolitan area, each year screens approximately 300 patients. Among those who test positive for lung cancer and are referred for additional testing and treatment, about 80 percent have survived because they were tested early.

“We used to find 70 percent of lung cancers in their later stages, either stages 3 or 4,” said Keith Diaz, MD, director of the Lung Screening Program. “Now, 70 percent of the cancers we’re finding are in stages 1 or 2 and are treatable.”

The screening program targets people at elevated risk of developing lung cancer: those ages 55 to 77 who have been smoking a pack or more of cigarettes daily for 30 years or longer, or who have quit smoking within the past 15 years. Annual screenings are vital to detecting and diagnosing lung cancer in its early stages, particularly because most patients initially don’t experience symptoms. RUMC’s screening program, which uses low-dose computed

tomography (CT) imaging, was launched in 2014 after data from the landmark National Lung Screening Trial found that annual CT screens reduce deaths from lung cancer among current and past smokers by 20 percent compared with traditional chest X-ray screening.

During a CT scan, narrow X-ray beams are aimed at the chest and rotated around the body to produce images that reveal abnormalities in the lungs before they fully develop. Compared with X-ray imaging, the reduced dose of radiation in CT scans carries a lower risk of side effects, and CT scans also are less likely to generate “false positive” results in patients who are cancer-free, Dr. Diaz said.

The scan is performed in 5 to 10 seconds, and the entire examination takes 15 minutes. Test results are provided 24 hours later, so patients don’t have to wait days or weeks for their results. “This takes a lot of the fear out of the process,” said Nancy Sayegh-Rooney, RN, ONN-CG, NCTTP, nurse navigator for the Lung Screening Program.



Keith Diaz, MD, Director of the Lung Screening Program

Moral Support, Practical Help Against Nicotine Addiction



Nancy Sayegh-Rooney, RN, ONN-CG, NCTTP, the Lung Screening Program's nurse navigator

Cigarette smoking is a relentless addiction that cannot be overcome without support. That’s the message Richmond University Medical Center’s Lung Screening Program imparts to chronic smokers who attend its Tobacco Cessation Group. Participants receive practical information and moral support to help them ignore nicotine cravings and quit for good.

“People have to understand that nicotine is the most addicting drug out there,” said Nancy Sayegh-Rooney, RN, ONN-CG, NCTTP, the Lung Screening Program’s nurse navigator.

How addictive are cigarettes? Consider that many smokers repeatedly try to stop smoking but fail, with some making 30 or more attempts before they finally quit. Sayegh-Rooney notes that nicotine is both physically addictive, with potential withdrawal effects, and psychologically addictive because smokers see cigarettes as a source of comfort.

“Educating people and telling them they have this addiction and that it’s not their fault can be a big help to them,” Sayegh-Rooney said.

The weekly, six-week class meets three times annually: in January (to help smokers fulfill their New Years’ resolutions to quit), and in the spring and fall. As the five to 10 participants who attend each session discuss their struggles with

nicotine cravings, Sayegh-Rooney offers practical tips for responding to those urges, such as:

- Following the five D’s: Nicotine cravings on average last two minutes, Sayegh-Rooney says, so she tells the group to:
 - Delay lighting up
 - Distract themselves
 - Drink water
 - Take Deep breaths
 - Discuss their addiction struggles with someone who understands.
- Holding an object. The average smoker spends two and half hours each day holding a cigarette, so Sayegh-Rooney advises the group to reach for something other than a cigarette, such as a cinnamon stick or worry stone. “They need to keep their fingers busy,” she said.

Leadership in the Face of a Pandemic

As the coronavirus marched across the country, members of the Incident Command Center (ICC) at Richmond University Medical Center launched into action. ICC is a standardized approach to coordinate, command, and control an emergency response using internal and external resources. All departments and staff of the hospital work in a coordinated approach to prioritize needs and ensure that resources are used efficiently.

Led by chief operating officer and chief nurse officer, Rosemarie Stazzone, RN, MSN, NEA-BC, the ICC team of 40 department heads, chairpersons, and managers met regularly from March 25 to June 16. The coordination and activities were conducted by conference call and small in-person meetings limited to essential participants to ensure social distancing and the safety of those involved.

The ICC team was updated on the supply and demand of personal protective equipment as well as admissions and discharges.

"It's a new disease, so it's all about the unknown," said Rosemarie, emphasizing the critical role of the command center. "That has made it very unsettling, even for a seasoned person. Everyone has been learning as we go along. We had to keep the staff focused; we knew it would be a long haul."

Working closely with her colleague, assistant vice president of nursing, Rita Magnuski, RN, MSN, Rosemarie took a hands-on approach to supervising the staff during the height of the pandemic. Caring for the hospital's nurses and nursing staff was a priority for the two administrators as they worked 14-hour days straight through the pandemic.

"We did everything we could for them within the walls of this building," Rita said. That included converting a conference room into a relaxation room away from the sirens, STAT calls, and ventilator alarms, and offering the quiet needed to decompress.

With more than 40 years of nursing experience each, Rita and Rosemarie agree that the novelty of the coronavirus has added anxiety to the situation.

"I've been through a lot of disasters—September 11, Hurricane Irene, Hurricane



Chief operating officer and chief nurse officer, Rosemarie Stazzone, RN, MSN, NEA-BC; and assistant vice president of nursing, Rita Magnuski, RN, MSN, supervised the hospital's COVID-19 Incident Command Center, coordinating response activities.

Sandy—but this one is different because of its length," Rita said. "We knew it was going to take months to subside, and the challenges go on."

"Other disasters were less than 72 hours and felt more controllable," Rosemarie added.

"The staff looked much more stressed and fatigued" in this crisis, said Rita. With so many patients fighting for their lives, "you didn't know which way to turn."

Rita and Rosemarie went on regular rounds through the floors to check in personally with the staff and make sure patient needs were being met.

"When they [the staff] see us, they know they have our support," Rosemarie said. "We wanted to help in any way that we could."

"I wasn't afraid" of infection even as the hospital neared capacity in March and April, she added. "I trained for this. I recognized we were in a very difficult situation."

Still, the severity of symptoms and rapidly deteriorating conditions the administrators saw in COVID-19 patients on their rounds was at times alarming.

"The presentation [of symptoms] is very different" with this disease, Rosemarie reflected. "This pandemic has taken an emotional toll on patients, families and staff. Because this is a community-based hospital, most of the staff saw their neighbors, their families, come in as patients."

They praised the hospital's medical staff who stepped up and pitched in.

"We are very proud of the staff here at RUMC," Rosemarie said. "This was above and beyond anything we could have imagined. We are in awe of all they have done."

"The staff was resilient," she added. "It was as if they were taking care of their own family members."

Written by Claire Regan, Contributor



Outpouring of Love from the Community Bolsters Spirits During Darkest Days

Sometimes a line from a Beatles song says it all: “I get by with a little help from my friends.” For Richmond University Medical Center, those friends came from every corner of Staten Island and well beyond. And they came in droves, delivering meals, supplies, and support through the toughest days of the pandemic.

Sandwiches and salads from Blue restaurant, courtesy of Verizon; goggles from high school chemistry departments; hand cream and moisturizer from a cosmetic company; 50,000 face masks from Lowe’s; enough Easter candy for the entire staff from CVS.

Uber rides were donated for employees reluctant to take public transportation; iPads and tablets were donated so families could monitor newborns in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit when visitation was restricted.

“The COVID-19 crisis brought out the best in people,” says Laura Gajda, the hospital’s vice president of development who accepted and tallied the donations as they arrived—sometimes all at once.

Non-stop deliveries of food kept the hospital staff well-fed on all shifts. Some were courtesy of Feed the Frontlines NYC, a non-profit organization that delivers free, nutritious meals prepared by local restaurants to healthcare workers.

“My phone was ringing off the hook,” Laura says. “People wanted to show support for the workers and for their local restaurants. It was a win-win.”

In April alone, 25,000 meals were served to employees. “There was enough food to feed the entire hospital lunch and dinner,” Laura adds.

The Staten Island Chamber of Commerce and Staten Island Borough President James Oddo teamed up to donate meals from Beyer’s Market and Aunt Butchies twice a week for four weeks.

Through NYC Healthcare Heroes, an initiative sponsored by the hospital supply company Aramark, two giant shipments of food

and personal care items were delivered for frontline workers.

Many of the food deliveries were unscheduled but, of course, always welcome, Laura says. “A restaurant would call and say, ‘We’re bringing 50 pizzas today!’ We even got a delivery of lobster rolls one day from Nick’s Lobster House in Brooklyn, courtesy of Congressman Max Rose.”

“Employees were complaining that they were gaining weight,” Laura adds with a smile.

People realized just how important their community hospital really is... Everyone wanted to show their support—and they did.

The RUMC cafeteria staff made adjustments by setting up an area for grab-and-go, offering necessities like milk, bread, eggs, and pasta to save employees a trip to the supermarket after their long, stressful shifts.

Cash donations also poured in from individuals and organizations, totaling over \$225,000. They enabled the hospital to secure needed supplies, including seven HEPA filtration machines that use negative pressure to prevent contaminated particles from spreading through a hospital room.

“People realized just how important their community hospital really is,” Laura says. “Everyone wanted to show their support—and they did.”

Written by Claire Regan, Contributor