

## RUMC Nurse Saves the Life of Off-Duty NYPD Detective

By Kristin F. Dalton, Staten Island Advance

Linda Messo, a neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) registered nurse at Richmond University Medical Center (RUMC), says she's a woman of faith who believes there were no coincidences on July 29 when she saved the life of off-duty Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) Det. Michael Cacciopoli.

Messo, 26, of Colts Neck, NJ, had just crossed the Outerbridge Crossing on the way to her 7 p.m. shift at RUMC, and was sitting in traffic. "I never drive in the far-right lane of 440 when I get off the bridge. I'm always in the left lane because I have to get on the expressway. I totally believe if I wasn't in that far right lane that I wouldn't have seen the car; I wouldn't have seen him on the floor," Messo told the Advance/SILive.com.

Cacciopoli was on his way home from a beach in New Jersey when he started feeling sick and began vomiting on the shoulder of 440. Moments later he was unconscious on the ground while his girlfriend was frantically screaming for help on the phone with 911. When he vomited, he aspirated—meaning the vomit entered his airway and went into his lungs.

Messo saw what was happening and pulled over, got out of the car, told Cacciopoli's girlfriend she was a nurse and began performing CPR. "I could tell based on my assessment that he was in full blown cardiac arrest," she said.

Earlier that same day, Messo had to recertify her basic life support (BLS) and CPR training, which expires every two years. So she had just finished a refresher course on how to perform CPR when she saw Cacciopoli unconscious on the ground.

"I truly believe God put me there, and was with me that day. I'm a NICU nurse; I work with tiny babies—I've never performed CPR on an adult. I've only ever used my two fingers or my thumbs to do chest compressions. Everything lined up that day, even though this poor guy did suffer in that moment, everything that day happened for a reason," she said.

While performing CPR, Port Authority police arrived. Messo asked them for an automated external defibrillator (AED). The AED shocked Cacciopoli three times and Messo performed CPR for approximately 20 minutes before his normal sinus rhythm returned. He was taken via ambulance to Staten Island University Hospital in Princes Bay, where he was intubated and placed on a ventilator. He remained on the ventilator for several weeks before being transferred to Glen Clove Hospital, where he also stayed for several weeks. Cacciopoli fully recovered and is due to return to active duty soon. A neurologist at Staten Island University Hospital said because Messo performed CPR so perfectly, he didn't lose any motor functions.

For her heroic actions, Messo was recently honored by the Drug Enforcement Agency and presented with an award, given to her by DEA Endowment Association President Paul DiGiacomo.



*(Left to right): Paul DiGiacomo, president of the Detectives Endowment Association; Linda Messo, RUMC NICU RN; Kenda Damate, Messo's stepmother and retired NYPD detective.*

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



We come to the end of yet another year together. The year started with the onslaught of the COVID-19 omicron wave that rippled across our city, state, and country. In mid-January, we were caring for over 100 COVID positive patients once again, echoes of what we experienced at the beginning of the pandemic in 2020. Thankfully, the surge quickly subsided. Thanks to vaccination, prior exposure, and less severity with omicron, we had fewer people needing advanced care

or losing their lives. We continue to provide vaccinations to the public to this very day.

The second quarter of the year was ushered in with the announcement of an expanded affiliation with Mount Sinai Health System to partner on emergency medical care and trauma services through our current Emergency Department, and eventually our new state-of-the-art Emergency Department, which opens to the public shortly. Our Emergency Department now features specialists, physicians, and medical personnel assigned to RUMC as well as the Mount Sinai Health System. Around the same time, we also received great news in the form of over \$1.8 million in federal funds allocated to our hospital by U.S. Senate Majority Leader Charles E. Schumer and Rep. Nicole Malliotakis. The funds enabled us to purchase one of the most advanced forms of interventional cardio/neurovascular technology available: biplane imaging. The biplane will be installed and ready for use in 2023.

The third quarter saw the first of our major capital improvement projects reach completion: our expanded Medical Intensive Care Unit. The \$15 million upgraded unit features isolation/negative pressure rooms, modernized nurse stations and patient observation areas, and larger family visiting areas. Each room also includes double headwalls enabling us to expand capacity from 14 beds to 28 beds in the event of a patient surge. Also in the quarter, we welcomed five new trustees to our board: Anita Laremont; Rosemarie Maldonado; David McGoy; Courtney Moore; and Marcello Sciarrino. We also elected a new board chair in Ronald

Purpora; and saw six trustees step off the board after 15 years of service each: the Rev. Dr. Tony Baker; Pietro Carpenito, MD; the Hon. James P. Molinaro; Catherine Paulo; Esq.; Dennis Quirk; and former Chair Kathryn Rooney, Esq., who was named Chair Emeritus.

Which brings us to the current quarter and perhaps the most exciting. On October 25, we cut the ribbon on our new Emergency Department, named in honor of trustee and former Staten Island Borough President James P. Molinaro. The new 35,000 sq. ft. Emergency Department features expanded trauma and urgent care areas; dedicated units for pediatrics, behavioral health, cardiac/stroke emergencies, sexual assault victims; and more. Over 300 people attended the ribbon cutting ceremony and over 1,000 people from across Staten Island received a first-hand look inside the new Emergency Department a few days later when we held a Community Day on October 29. The new Emergency Department will go into operation by the end of this year.

As if 2022 was not exciting enough, 2023 is already shaping up to be another tremendous year. Our new co-generation power plant will go on line. Our new Surgical Department, with 10 world-class operating suites, will open for its first patients. Our remodeled Mother/Baby Unit with private, single bed suites goes into service; and we will be offering expanded outpatient services at our 1161 Victory Boulevard location to go along with our Breast and Imaging Center, including bariatrics, cardiovascular, orthopedics, surgical services, and primary care. A lot to be excited about and a lot more in store for our great hospital!

Thank you for all you have done this past year for our patients, your colleagues and the community. I wish all of you and your families a healthy Holiday Season and a very Happy New Year!

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

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Daniel J. Messina". The signature is written in a cursive, professional style.

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

## Cancer Liaison Physician Earns National Recognition from ACS Commission on Cancer

Nisha A. Lakhi, MD, has been recognized by the American College of Surgeons (ACS) for her outstanding work as Cancer Liaison Physician (CLP) for Richmond University Medical Center (RUMC). Dr. Lakhi was presented with the Outstanding Performance CLP Award by the ACS Commission on Cancer. The OB-GYN specialist is one of only 10 CLPs from across the country to earn the award.

As CLP from March 2015 through this past July, Dr. Lakhi served as a link between RUMC and the community, worked with cancer teams to develop best practices, and monitored improvements in the RUMC cancer program by interpreting data and metrics.

Dr. Lakhi resolved deficiencies in the program and gave it “some TLC and diligence.” A community needs assessment resulted in increased screenings for cervical, prostate, breast, and colon cancer

as well as stronger support for cancer survivors adjusting to the aftermath of their illness. After a site visit last May, “we passed with flying colors,” Lakhi said, emphasizing that patients remained a priority through the process.

Dr. Lakhi earned two bachelor’s degrees, one in classical art and literature with a minor in physics from Indiana University, and another in biochemistry from Ohio State University. She earned a doctor of medicine degree from St. Georges University, a master of science degree in healthcare policy and research from Weil Cornell Medical School, and a master of business administration degree from Cornell University.

Now director of resident research for RUMC, she is currently working on a book titled, “Fifty Big Debates in Gynecologic Oncology,” scheduled to be published next year.



*Nisha A. Lakhi, MD*

## RUMC ED Physician Named Unsung Hero by New York American College of Emergency Physicians

The New York American College of Emergency Physicians (New York ACEP) announced the recipients of its 2022 Unsung Heroes in New York State Emergency Departments list. One of the 40 recipients is Richmond University Medical Center’s Mircea Muresanu, MD.

According to New York ACEP, the recipients, nominated by their department chair, embody what it means to be an emergency physician. Their impact goes well beyond those they directly treat. They train young clinicians, share their skills, knowledge, and experience and are always willing to do whatever is needed for their patients and colleagues.

In nominating Dr. Muresanu, RUMC chair of emergency medicine, Jonathon LeBaron, DO, said “Dr. Muresanu has always been available to serve his department and the community. His citizenship is incredible, always willing to come in to help when we experience a sudden surge. His kindness is incredible, always willing to help his fellow physicians with difficult patients. He is well loved by our med students and residents who look to him for education and advice. His patience and compassion is particularly evidence with these learners. He takes the time to listen and in a busy community ED, finds the time to teach. He has always done what is asked and despite how difficult does it with a smile.”

Dr. LeBaron said that in the month of July, “we were incredibly short staffed. Dr. Muresanu worked 180 clinical hours, well beyond what our other physician’s worked. He did this because he knew we needed the help. As with any ED, our shifts are difficult. He worked the shifts without complaint and did it with a smile.”

Dr. Muresanu completed medical school at SUNY Downstate in 2006 and also completed a residency in emergency medicine at SUNY Downstate. He continued on as an attending at SUNY Downstate prior to joining the VA in Brooklyn where he continues to work per diem. He joined Richmond University Medical Center in 2017.



*Mircea Muresanu, MD*

# New Emergency Department Promotes Streamlined Processes and Enhanced Patient Experience



According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, America's emergency departments log over 130 million visits each year for all manner of injuries or medical issues and are a critical patient-facing part of every hospital. For that reason, Richmond University Medical Center is proud to unveil its new Emergency Department (ED), which will deliver the utmost in streamlined processes and patient comfort.

"Through the hospital's ongoing quality improvement process, we're always looking for ways to improve our workflows and patient experience and we saw an opportunity to build an ideal emergency department designed to care for patients in the quickest, most effective, and most comfortable manner," said Johnathon LeBaron, DO, FACEP, chair for the Department of Emergency Medicine. "Our emergency department

space was limited before and the hospital seized on an opportunity to revolutionize the way we deliver care."

Speaking with Susan Bloom from the Staten Island Advance, Dr. LeBaron discussed some of features of the newly constructed facility and how the new design will enhance the emergency department experience for patients, doctors and staff members alike.

## **Q: Please share some of the features of the new Emergency Department.**

Dr. LeBaron: Patients will appreciate that our new ED is significantly larger than our previous space. In addition, all of our computers, stretchers, and everything else touching patients is brand new. Every patient will have a private room, all of which are outfitted with TVs they can watch and/or USB ports that enable them to charge their phone or mobile device while they're waiting for the results of tests or while care is being completed. Our new ED also features additional staff members and adequate space for family members to sit with patients comfortably while waiting for care. While exceptional medical care has always been a priority at Richmond University Medical Center, our new ED also enables a focus on patient comfort and the creation of a more healing environment.

## **Q: What medical conditions is the new ED equipped to handle?**

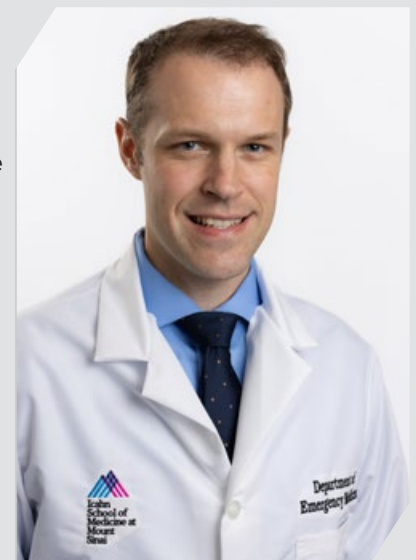
Dr. LeBaron: Everything comes through the emergency department — from life-threatening conditions like stabbings, gunshot wounds, heart attacks, and strokes to less-emergent issues like infections, children's fever, cuts, etc. — and there's not a day when we aren't presented with a situation we've never seen. But we successfully treat any and all emergencies that come through our doors and get patients to the next level of care that they require, whether that's with a trauma surgeon, members of our medical team, or through our referral to a neurosurgeon or another specialist. Richmond University Medical Center is an American College of Surgeons (ACS) Level 1 Adult Trauma Center and Level 2 Pediatric Trauma Center, which requires us to meet stringent standards relative to having specialists on call, facilities and equipment on hand to save lives, research programs in place, a schedule of community outreach programs, and more. We're proud to be able to support our community with these cutting-edge capabilities.

## **Q: How would you describe the experience patients will have in the hospital's new ED?**

Dr. LeBaron: The space is modern and the new flow enhances our ability to see and treat patients quickly. The new ED represents a tremendous progression of medical care and we're very excited to bring this to Staten Island because it's something the community deserves.

## **Q: As a doctor and chair of the Department of Emergency Medicine, what do you find most rewarding about the hospital's new emergency department facility?**

Dr. LeBaron: I and the rest of our team care about ensuring that our patients get the medical care they need in the most healing environment possible. In general, visits to emergency departments are often traumatic, chaotic situations that can trigger a lot of fear, so we take pride in doing whatever we can to alleviate that and make it an easier, more comfortable experience that helps patients get on the right foot again. Our ED processes are extremely efficient and our wait times to be seen are very low to begin with, but patients will now experience enhanced comfort, privacy, and other positive upgrades. This is how patients should be treated and we can't wait to welcome patients to our new space.



*Johnathon LeBaron, DO, FACEP, Chair for the Department of Emergency Medicine*

# The Quality and Patient Safety “Q Corner”

From Joan Gleason Scott, PhD, RN, NEA-BC, CPHQ, CPPS  
 Vice President Quality, Infection Prevention, Patient Experience, Language Services



Joan Gleason Scott

The Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) is an integral part of Richmond University Medical Center. A Level III NICU, which has cared for newborns weighing less than a pound, this 25-bed unit provides expert, compassionate, and quality care to infants who are born premature, or with physical illness that requires the highest level of support. The nursing and medical staff of the NICU are certified in Neonatal Intensive Care and many staff have tenure of over twenty years of service.

The quality of care is evident, as patient outcomes are collected and shared as a participant in the Vermont-Oxford Network. The network serves as a neutral, independent party in analyzing and providing benchmarking data for individual centers and groups that can be used to identify local opportunities for improvement of neonatal care.

Four databases collect information on very low birth weight infants, all patients cared for in a NICU, and follow-up for extremely low birth weight infants. Over 1,400 hospitals around the world participate in this network. Quality measures include reporting on infants' length of stay in the NICU; management of different illnesses, such as chronic lung disease; infection prevention; and the outcomes of laser surgery for retinopathy of prematurity.

Santosh Parab, MD, medical director of the NICU, and Nurse Manager Joanne Stuart, RN, BSN, are the leaders of the staff and work together to achieve some of the best outcomes in the state, nation, and around the world. The following represents the annual number of NICU admissions over the past eleven years:

• 2011	519	• 2017	671
• 2012	524	• 2018	773
• 2013	606	• 2019	719
• 2014	610	• 2020	592
• 2015	627	• 2021	513
• 2016	691	• YTD 22	456

Hospital acquired infections can be serious and sometimes fatal to patients, especially the infants who are cared for in NICUs. The infection rate of our NICU has been significantly lower than other hospitals in the Vermont Oxford database, and since 2021 there have been ZERO infections. This is an amazing accomplishment that could not be done without the skill and dedication of the entire team of care providers.

Necrotizing enterocolitis can be a serious illness in newborns as well. Tissue in the large intestine (colon) can get inflamed and cause damage to the cells. Prompt detection and treatment are essential and can also prevent the infection from spreading to the bloodstream as well. Data from our NICU shows that there is a significantly lower number of infants with necrotizing enterocolitis, and in fact, there have been no cases since 2020.

The data describes the quality of care given to the infants in our NICU and is also reflective of the professional and compassionate care delivered by the team—each and every day. On behalf of the Quality Division, thank you for all that you do!

## Local Organization Donates Television to Family Health Center

A heartfelt thank you to Charles Chase Gardner and his community organization, Uncle Chase Foundation, for their generous donation of a 65-inch television to RUMC for patient education and information at the Family Health Center, located at 800 Castleton Avenue.



## RUMC Salutes Our Military Veterans

On November 17, RUMC co-sponsored the Old Bermuda Inn's annual Salute to Veterans Breakfast. Over 200 veterans attended the event. Staff provided information on RUMC services and how to enroll in the hospital's special military VIP program. The program offers discounts and benefits to veterans utilizing RUMC for healthcare services. RUMC's chief of medicine, Philip Otterbeck, was the breakfast's guest speaker. Dr. Otterbeck spoke about diabetes management and the importance of maintaining good health. Staten Island has higher than average cases of diabetes, which can lead to health problems over time. For more information on RUMC's Military VIP Program, visit [RUMCSI.org/VIP-program-for-us-military](http://RUMCSI.org/VIP-program-for-us-military).



Non profit Conference

## RUMC Safety Officer Talks Emergency Preparedness at Annual Conference

At the recent Nonprofit Staten Island annual conference, Trientina Campbell, safety officer and emergency preparedness coordinator, participated in a panel discussion addressing the work of the Staten Island Community Organizations Active in Disaster (SICOAD) and the Medical Ecosystem. Both organizations emerged in the aftermath of Hurricane Sandy with the mission to better prepare Staten Island for future large-scale emergencies. The SICOAD comprises not-for-profit organizations, agencies, and representatives from the Borough President's Office.

## Patient Satisfaction: A Note of Thanks

Dear Louise Steward,

My wife, Lindsey, and I just wanted to reach out and express our gratitude for the wonderful staff in your department as my wife delivered our daughter on November 2. We had awesome support from Kristen, Kristen, Kayla, and Sam through Lindsey's few days in Triage and Labor. Everyone made a stressful experience of our baby coming five weeks early much easier and comfortable. We really can't thank you enough and wish your department continued success with bringing healthy babies and moms (and dads actually) through labor.

— Mike and Lindsey Demyan

Thank you to all of the doctors, nurses, assistants, and everyone else who took exceptional care of me. Everyone here was quick, caring, and beyond professional! I was here for a kidney infection and I was in amazing hands the entire time. I also delivered both of my boys here and all three times my experience with RUMC was above and beyond! Thank you, Thank you, Thank you!!!!

— Alisa Arrigo

I am writing this letter to attest to the importance of yearly lung screenings. We know the importance of early detection of lung cancer, but lung screenings can also detect other abnormalities.

Two years ago, my husband had his lung screening, only because of the persistence of (Lung Nurse Navigator) Nancy Rooney. The screening showed a large abdominal aortic aneurysm. Within hours of having the screening, Nancy contacted my husband's primary care physician. He was sent to RUMC's Emergency Department, where a CT scan with contrast confirmed the lung screening's findings. Within a week, my husband had surgery to repair the life-threatening aneurysm.

This year, again because of Nancy Rooney's yearly follow-up, my husband had his lung screening. This time the screening showed a small nodule in his lung that was not present on his last screening. He had a biopsy and follow-up at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center.

I believe these two examples substantiate the importance of yearly lung screenings for those at risk for cancer. It is my hope that RUMC will continue to advocate for these screenings through their physicians and other medical staff.

In addition, I would like to thank and commend Nancy Rooney for all her continuing efforts to ensure that those at risk in our community receive a yearly lung screening. She is persistent in her follow-up, but always in a caring and supportive way!

— Jane DiFortuna

# December Observances

Please join us in acknowledging the following health-related observances for the month of December:

## Month-Long

National Safe Toys and Gifts Month

## Week-Long

National Crohn's and Colitis Awareness Week: Dec. 1 to 7

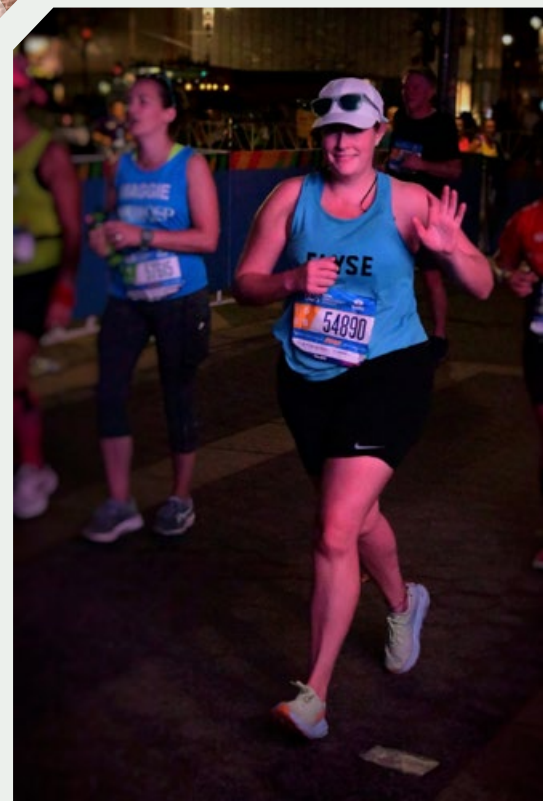
National Handwashing Awareness week: Dec. 1 to 7

National Influenza Vaccination Week: Dec. 6 to 12

## Recognition Days

World AIDS Day: Dec. 1

International Day of Persons with Disabilities: Dec. 3



## New Hires — Welcome to RUMC!

Elizabeth Belinsky — *Clinical Cancer Navigator*

Hodaya Benchlouch — *RN*

Josephine Brennan — *Social Worker*

Leonard Bromberg — *Security Gurard*

Witney Cadet — *RN*

Cynthia Calero — *MA*

Zynkera Carter — *NA*

Dana Chan — *EMT*

Ernif Cruz — *EMT*

Fationa Dede — *Building Service Worker*

Anthony Defilippo — *Unit Clerk*

Emine Fazlija — *Building Service Worker*

Mecca Fraser — *Case Aid*

Oleg Fuks — *Histology Manager*

Sabrina Gheller — *EMT*

Chelsie Gonzalez — *MA*

Jasmine Green — *NA*

El Gabari Hakima — *Building Service Worker*

Blerina Kosta — *Building Service Worker*

Krenare Limanoski — *HR Generalist*

Gabriela Matfiak — *EMT*

Brian McLoughlin — *Desktop Analyst*

Nora Meleegy — *RN*

Shakeia Miles — *MA*

Shpetim Mushanej — *Building Service Worker*

Maali Nour — *Classroom Substitute*

Regina Perez — *Respiratory Therapy*

Amy Ruiz — *Breast Feeding Peer Counselor*

Megan Sweezy — *Social Worker*

Denise Thompson — *Food Service Worker*

Jay Torres — *Directory*

Cleopatria Tovar — *Anesthesia Tech*

Christopher Vargas — *Social Worker*

Jasmine Washington — *Guest Rep*

Erica Young — *Administrative Assist*

## Congratulations to Our Marathon Runners

Elyse Harrell, RN, MSN  
Assistant Nurse Manager, NICU  
Time: 6:17:23

## RUMC and Mount Sinai Hold Simulation Day in New ED



Medical personnel from Richmond University Medical Center and Mount Sinai Health System worked side by side simulating various trauma and emergency cases inside RUMC's new ED.

In preparation for the new Emergency Department opening, a simulation day was held on November 16. Medical personnel from Richmond University Medical Center and Mount Sinai Health System worked side by side simulating various trauma and emergency cases that will arrive at the new ED, which will open shortly. The event was an opportunity for staff to become acclimated to the new facility and work through procedures before receiving actual patients experiencing emergencies.

## RUMC Celebrates First In-Person Gala in Two Years



The retiring members of RUMC's board of trustees with President and CEO, Daniel J. Messina, PhD, FACHE, current Board Chair Ronald Purpora, and RUMC Foundation President, Bobby Urs.

Richmond University Medical Center (RUMC) hosted its first in-person gala on November 16 at the Hilton Garden Inn. RUMC had held its previous two galas virtually due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Over 400 people attended the event, which was themed "A Night to Reunite."

Honorees included Investors Bank Foundation, Northfield Bank Foundation, Richmond County Savings Bank Foundation, and the Staten Island Foundation. The four foundations were honored for their impact on the Staten Island community and their continuous support of RUMC.

In addition to the four foundations, the event was also an opportunity for the RUMC community to acknowledge six trustees for their dedication and leadership to RUMC. These trustees stepped off the board after 15 years of service each: former board chair, now chair emeritus, Kathryn K. Rooney, Esq.; the Rev. Tony Baker, Sr.; Pietro Carpenito, MD; former Staten Island Borough President James P. Molinaro; Catherine Paulo, Esq.; and Dennis Quirk.

"After two years of holding virtual galas, it was exciting to come together again to celebrate the major accomplishments of RUMC this past year," Board of Trustees Chair Ronald Purpora said.