

RUMC Signs Agreement with Project Hospitality Aimed at Treating Staten Island's Most Vulnerable



President and CEO Daniel Messina signs a letter finalizing a partnership with Project Hospitality to strengthen clinical integration between the two organizations.

Representatives from Richmond University Medical Center and Project Hospitality, two key Staten Island institutions serving the community's healthcare needs, gathered to formalize a partnership aimed at strengthening the full continuum of care for people who are among the borough's most vulnerable.

Project Hospitality offers care, advocacy and support to individuals experiencing homelessness, hunger and other hardships. The partnership between the two organizations aims to enhance continuity of care for Project Hospitality clients following their discharge from RUMC and its affiliates, including the Richmond Health Network.

"We look forward to helping to improve health equity and to remove some of those social barriers preventing the well-being of our community," RUMC President and CEO Daniel J. Messina, PhD, FACHE, said at the event, held at Project Hospitality's office in St. George.

In a given year, at least 2,500 clients from Project Hospitality with intensive needs are treated within the RUMC hospital system, according to a Project Hospitality representative.

As an example of the importance of the partnership, Reverend Terry Troia, president and CEO of Project Hospitality, explained that it is critical for the organization to be aware of timing for their clients' hospital discharge, to coordinate their shelter following release.

"Over at RUMC, at any given moment we have seven or eight people living with us, but we have no one to release them to, so of course we're not going to leave them on the street," Timothy Harrison, chair of the board of trustees of RUMC, said.

Messina outlined the initial goals that will be part of the partnership's initial rollout over the coming months. These include Project Hospitality's participation in RUMC's newly formed community advisory board to strengthen collaboration and address Staten Island's healthcare challenges.

The partnership will also implement a clinical integration strategy to improve care coordination, ensuring better communication during hospital stays and discharge for Project Hospitality clients.

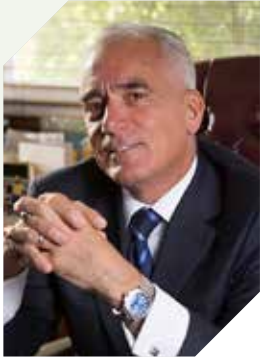
Additionally, the initiative aims to streamline outpatient services by speeding up intake and appointment scheduling for medical and behavioral health care. Project Hospitality clients will also have the opportunity to enroll in RUMC's Chronic Care Management program for ongoing support.

Lastly, the organizations will work together to tackle food insecurity as part of their broader commitment to community well-being.

"I think it's a wonderful opportunity for us to be at the table and share our insights and our experience of caring for people, which is for us integrated on a continuum, because we see people from the street to the shelter to supportive housing to independence," Troia said. "Being on the community advisory board allows us to bring the spectrum of that person's life, not just the acute moment that they are admitted to the emergency room or get into an ambulance."

She added that by working directly with the hospital, patients with conditions like diabetes, neuropathy, kidney disease and dementia can receive regular care, preventing emergency room visits and ensuring a better quality of life.

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



A world class facility providing state-of-the-art cardiac and neuro-vascular care is coming to Richmond University Medical Center in 2026. The Joan and Alan Bernikow Heart and Vascular Institute will open its doors where our current Cardiac Catheterization Lab is located on the first floor.

The institute expands the existing lab which currently treats over 500 cardiac patients annually and has been experiencing continued growth year over year. The number of preoperative and holding bays will increase from four to seven, the existing waiting and reception area will be renovated, and new support and family accommodations will be constructed, among additional features.

Key to this new institute will be state-of-the-art biplane imaging technology, the latest and most sophisticated technology for interventional procedures. Biplane imaging uses rotating cameras, one on each side of the patient, to take simultaneous images. As the cameras move side to side and front to back, they produce highly detailed images of blood vessels, soft tissue and blood flow in real-time. When combined, the two sets of images form a 3-D portrait of the area enabling our team to path the blood flow through vessels and find the precise location of disease or malformation. Using a small amount of injectable dye, the biplane cameras can also take x-rays that can be viewed in real time to detect blockages or aneurysms.

The Heart and Vascular Institute is named for Joan and the late Alan Bernikow, longtime Staten Island philanthropists and humanitarians. An accountant and corporate leader, Alan was a dear friend and colleague to many and a member of our Board of Trustees who passed away in 2023. In addition to the generous support provided by the Bernikows, the project is also funded by the Staten Island Foundation, Swedish Home, and the New York City Capital Grants program. More than \$1.8 million in federal funds for the project was also secured by U.S. Senate Democratic Leader Charles E. Schumer and Rep. Nicole Malliotakis.

This is just another example of RUMC on the move that will vastly improve our ability to care for our community and help meet the growing demand for our services. We are committed to providing Staten Island with the most advanced healthcare services available close to where they live and work. We have been here for our community for over 100 years and the Joan and Alan Bernikow Heart and Vascular Institute ensures that Richmond University Medical Center continues to be here for many generations to come.

Remember the Power of One — You Make A Difference!

Sincerely,

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

Patient Satisfaction: A Note of Thanks

I wanted to take a moment to express my deep gratitude for the care and support that Rachel Saccenti provided during the birth of our son, Antonio, on January 26. Rachel's professionalism, kindness, and calm presence made such a difference during what could have been an overwhelming experience.

From the moment Rachel was by my side, I felt reassured knowing that I was in such capable hands. She not only helped bring our baby boy into the world, but also made me feel safe and supported throughout the entire process.

I want to personally thank Rachel for her patience, her encouragement, and for going above and beyond to make our birth experience as smooth and joyful as possible. We will always remember the role Rachel played in one of the most important moments of our lives."

— Cassandra and Frank

Nurse Kevin did my paperwork and checked me in. He was compassionate, professional, and made me feel at ease. All of the nurses that were part of my procedure were incredible (Allison, Lil, and Roseanne). They made sure I was comfortable both during the procedure and in recovery, and you can tell that they really care about their patients. My doctor (Dr. Yiachos) was excellent. He explained everything and came to see me after to let me know that everything went well. Thank you for making an unpleasant procedure so much easier!"

— Pamela

"I cannot thank Dr. Ahmed and his amazing team of physicians for helping my 3 year old son feel better after being diagnosed with RSV. He was super gentle with my son. They were super fast and up to date with everything. This was one of the best hospitals we've been to. From the reception in the front to the security guards, everyone was super friendly and all wished for my son to feel better. Sometimes it's the little things that really help lift people up. Thank you again Dr. Ahmed and team. We are forever grateful."

— Tahana

"I just got back from having a procedure at RUMC and I could not have been treated any better. From the moment I walked in, every staff member I encountered was friendly and competent.

Eagle Scout Delivers for Richmond University Medical Center's Youngest Patients



Eagle Scout Aiden Kurt delivering arts & crafts bags to RUMC staff with the help of his brother John and father Cihan.

On February 7, Eagle Scout Aiden Kurt delivered over 50 arts and crafts bags to Richmond University Medical Center's Theurer Family Health Center. The bags are for pediatric patients coming to the center for services.

A member of Boy Scout Troop 8 in

Annadale, Kurt distributed flyers around his neighborhood, at school and church asking for donations for his project. His efforts were rewarded. His family, friends, neighbors and local businesses provided new art supplies including coloring books, activity books, stamp sets, sticker sets, crayons, colored

pencils, markers, clipboards/lapboards, and construction paper. The donations were enough to make over 50 bags with some of the items left over.

On the afternoon of February 7, Kurt, along with his father Cihan and brother John, came to the health center with the bags. Kurt was met by Ana Mendez, MD, Chief of Ambulatory Pediatrics and several members of her pediatrics team. Kurt spoke about his project and that the reason he chose to collect arts and crafts was to give young patients something to do while waiting to be seen by the doctor. He then went room to room with his father and brother dropping off bags with patients. The remaining bags will be distributed to patients by the staff.

Located at 800 Castleton Avenue, the Theurer Family Health Center works to meet the healthcare needs of adults and children on Staten Island. The center provides a wide range of outpatient services including pediatrics, primary care, neurology, oncology and behavioral health.

Protecting Hearts at the Broadway YMCA

In celebration of February being American Heart Month, Richmond University Medical Center partnered with the Broadway YMCA to provide free blood pressure checks to the public

on February 10. Nearly 20 people had their pressure checked by Family Nurse Practitioner Marisa A. Semioli, FNP-BC, FNP-C, CEN. Semioli also hosted a seminar on maintaining a healthy heart.

The seminar was attended by over 30 people who also took part in a Q & A session with Semioli. The Broadway YMCA is located in West Brighton.



New Hires — Welcome to RUMC!

Suzana Bojkovic — *Family Nurse Practitioner*

Alexis Carazas — *LMHC*

Jamie Castellano — *Security Guard*

Nawalge Cooray — *EEG Tech*

Shandese Davis — *Clinical Document
Improvement Manager*

Gabriella DiMartini — *RN Intern*

Frank Fico — *RN Intern*

Lorraine Figueroa — *Security Guard*

Steven Flores — *Respiratory Therapist*

Bridgit Gardner — *LMHC*

Magdalena Grzumpwska — *Nursing Assistant*

Shaleisha Heath — *Social Worker*

Maged Issa — *Switchboard Operator*

Shanell Johnson — *Switchboard Operator*

Nicole Kapica — *RN*

Heather Martone-Tarantino — *FNP*

Marisa Mckoy — *RRT*

Elena Rock — *Paractice Manager*

Tiffany Toma — *RN*

RUMC Optometrist Brings Specialty into Focus in New Ophthalmology Textbook

Dr. Joseph Muscente, an optometrist at Richmond University Medical Center, has co-authored a textbook on complex ophthalmology cases.

"Complex Cases in Clinical Ophthalmology Practice" was published on Jan. 25, and it took Muscente about two years to write it, along with two other authors, Dr. Inrava Khasnabish, who works in a private practice on Long Island, and Dr. Tapuwa Chikwinya, a low-vision specialist.

"We all practice in different ways, one in private practice, one with patients who have experienced vision loss, and I work in a Level 1 trauma center," said Muscente, who has worked at RUMC for six years and has 30 years of experience. "We all had our little niche. Mine was the trauma center."

The book illustrates the variety of uncommon cases in the three unique and common styles of ophthalmic practice. He said he hopes it serves as a resource for those working in all levels of ophthalmic care.

"I think people in the eye world will definitely benefit from this," Muscente said. "I think patients could benefit, too. It will give them all the information they need to make educated choices."

The book's chapters are divided by anatomy, from the anterior to posterior segment of the eye. Within each chapter, anatomically relevant cases illustrating a unique condition or challenging diagnosis are presented with ancillary testing and images.

Each chapter also contains clinical assessments and opinions that have been highlighted and summarized throughout each case to further illustrate the relevance of the case report and the importance of diagnostic ability for the common clinician.

Working in a trauma center brings new opportunities and fulfillment each day, Muscente said.

"I love it," he said. "When someone is in an emergency situation, and you help them, you really feel like you've done something good."



Now that the book has been published, Muscente said he's relieved.

"It was a labor of love," said Muscente, a product of the State University of New York College of Optometry. "Proud. Relieved. Those are the two words that come to mind. This has been on the horizon for 15 years and finally came to fruition."

RUMC Physician Discusses How to Effectively Control High Blood Pressure



Gautham Upadhyia, MD, MPH

According to the CDC, nearly half of all adults in America suffer from hypertension, or high blood pressure, which occurs when the force of blood pushing against the walls of blood vessels becomes too high. Known as a “silent killer,” high blood pressure is a key risk factor for cardiovascular disease and stroke, two leading causes of death in the U.S.

Thankfully, many long-standing medications have proven highly effective in controlling blood pressure and related cardiac conditions and helping to prevent their fallout.

“High blood pressure occurs when the arteries carrying blood flow become stiffer and less elastic, which can strain the heart and kidneys and lead to stroke and impaired blood flow to the heart and brain,” said Gautham Upadhyia, MD, MPH, Interventional Cardiologist. “This condition is often a function of the aging process, but other conditions can accelerate the development of high blood pressure, including diabetes, high cholesterol, kidney disease, and genetic factors which predispose people to having it earlier. Catching it early helps slow its progression, as high blood pressure gets more resistant and difficult to address the longer it goes untreated.”

In his work as an interventional cardiologist, Dr. Upadhyia often prescribes blood pressure medication for those suffering from hypertension as well as coronary artery disease and diabetes.

“About 5% of Americans are diagnosed with coronary artery disease, a condition

defined by blockages within the coronary arteries, which supply blood to the heart itself, and there are likely many more undiagnosed cases,” Dr. Upadhyia said. “Diabetes causes injury to the interior of the body’s blood vessels, making diabetics more prone to developing disease within the coronary arteries and other organs. Because these populations are at high risk for cardiac disease, stroke, kidney disease, and other serious illnesses, they benefit from having their blood pressure carefully monitored and controlled.”

According to Dr. Upadhyia, there are several classes of blood pressure medication on the market and each works through a different pathway.

“One common class of blood pressure medication is the ‘calcium channel blocker’ and it promotes relaxation of the blood vessels, which leads to lower blood pressure,” he said. “Side effects are rare, but some patients can experience swelling in their lower extremities, which is usually very mild and tolerable. Calcium channel blockers are the most common blood pressure medication prescribed and are very effective and quick-acting, usually within 24 hours.

“Another class of blood pressure medication is the ‘angiotensin-converting-enzyme (ACE) inhibitor,’ ” he said. “Kidneys also play a role in controlling blood pressure, so these drugs target certain receptors in the kidneys and have been shown to effectively control blood pressure while reducing the risk of kidney injury for diabetics in particular.”

While side effects from ACE inhibitors are also extremely rare, “1% of patients may develop a cough or an allergic reaction like swelling or a rash in response to these drugs, in which case we’ll discontinue their use immediately,” he said. “But like calcium channel blockers, ACE inhibitors are highly effective and take effect quickly.”

A third class of blood pressure medication is that of diuretics. “Salt causes fluid retention, which drives up blood pressure, so these drugs work by inhibiting the kidney’s reabsorption and promoting urination or water removal from the body,” Dr. Upadhyia said.

While each of the mentioned medications targets a different pathway, two or more classes may be effective when combined in low doses to target multiple pathways, depending on how high a patient’s blood pressure is. “In fact, many blood pressure medications come in a combined form because their use together improves blood pressure so significantly,” Dr. Upadhyia said.

“These medications have been on the market for a long time and are all well-studied and effective,” he said of these options, all of which come in a pill form. “The issue is reaching patients early enough, before they’ve developed advanced conditions which become harder to treat.”

Dr. Upadhyia encourages anyone experiencing such symptoms as shortness of breath, increased urination, bad headaches, or chest pain/discomfort to get evaluated by a doctor, as these could be indications of high blood pressure and/or a cardiac-related issue. “Everyone should have their blood pressure checked once a year,” he said. “A reading of 120 (systolic)/80 (diastolic) or less is considered normal, and if it’s consistently elevated it’s important to manage it.”

While some people can control their high blood pressure and other co-morbidities through diet, exercise, stress reduction, and other lifestyle changes, Dr. Upadhyia confirmed that medication is beneficial and lifesaving for many others.

“For these patients, we’ll do everything we can to simplify and reduce their medication regimen as much as possible, and a healthy diet, regular exercise, and positive lifestyle changes will only help enhance their effectiveness,” Dr. Upadhyia said.

“Overall, blood pressure medications have been around for a long time and are very effective and well-tolerated by patients of all ages and backgrounds,” said Dr. Upadhyia, who reiterated that early identification of elevated blood pressure is key. “These medications help save lives and are essentially a magic pill to control high blood pressure and help avoid heart attack, stroke, kidney disease, and other serious conditions.”

This month's question: What's a fun fact about you that most of your coworkers don't know?



Kim Antonacci, *Inpatient Coding Manager, Endoscopy*
"I'm always in Las Vegas and my favorite game is blackjack."



Frank Fico, *RN Intern, Emergency Department*
"I'm a big animal lover and love dogs. My favorite exotic animal is the jaguar, and I also love capybara. It's really cool to see capybaras walk under water."



Geri Coscia, *RN, Assistant Nurse Manager, Endoscopy*
"I'm a grandmother of 5, soon to be 6."



Rosanne Devincenzo, *RN, Endoscopy*
"I have the best penmanship on the unit. I handwrite everyone's invitations for their weddings."



Jonathan LeBaron, *DO, MBA, FACEP, Chair, Emergency Medicine*
"I'm a pretty big gamer and am currently into playing Pokémon on Gameboy Color. I've added video game socks to my sock collection and also have some cool gaming coasters as well."



Jane Baldassarre, *RN, Endoscopy*
"I have a wine cellar in my home that contains old wine barrels, wine sleeves that one of the doctor's donated, and an antique wine press. There's seating with tables, which is a barrel cut in half to create two tables. There are hundreds of saved corks that we write commemorative events on."

RUMC Brings Vital Health Screenings to Black History Town Hall



Richmond University Medical Center was proud to participate in the 20th Annual Staten Island Black History Town Hall at Central Baptist Family Church on February 22, providing essential health screenings and resources to the community. Our team provided over 20 screenings, helping attendees take proactive steps toward better health.

Throughout the day, community members received EKG and blood pressure checks to monitor heart health, PSA and A1C screenings for prostate health and diabetes prevention, and FIT kits for colorectal cancer screening. In addition, our team provided HIV/AIDS education, behavioral health resources, and oncology and trauma information. Recognizing the importance of addressing the opioid crisis, we also distributed NARCAN kits and training.

Events like this reinforce RUMC's mission to serve and support the health of our Staten Island community. By offering these free screenings and educational resources, we empower individuals to take charge of their well-being and connect them with the care they need. We thank Central Baptist Family Church for hosting this impactful event and look forward to continuing our efforts to improve health equity across the borough.

March Observances

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

Month-Long:

Alport Awareness Month
Brain Injury Awareness Month
Deep-Vein Thrombosis Awareness Month
Malignant Hyperthermia Awareness Month
Multiple Sclerosis Awareness Month
Myeloma Action Month
National Bleeding Disorders Awareness Month
National Cheerleading Safety Month
National Colorectal Cancers Awareness Month
National Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month
National Endometriosis Awareness Month
National Kidney Month
National Nutrition Month
Problem Gambling Awareness Month
Save Your Vision Month
Trisomy Awareness Month
Workplace Eye Wellness Month

Week-Long:

March 1 to 6: National Aplastic Anemia and MDS Awareness Week
March 9 to 15: Patient Safety Awareness Week
March 9 to 15: Pulmonary Rehabilitation Week
March 9 to 15: Sleep Awareness Week

March 16 to 22: National Poison Prevention Week
March 17 to 23: National Drug and Alcohol Facts Week
March 10 to 16: Brain Awareness Week
March 31 to April 6: World Autism Acceptance Week

Recognition Days:

March 2: World Teen Mental Wellness Day
March 3: World Birth Defects Day
March 3: World Hearing Day
March 4: HPV Awareness Day
March 4: World Obesity Day
March 5: Dissociative Identity Disorder Awareness Day
March 6: National Hospitalist Day
March 10: National Women and Girls HIV/AIDS Awareness Day
March 13: World Kidney Day
March 14: World Sleep Day
March 20: National Native American HIV/AIDS Awareness Day
March 20: World Oral Health Day
March 21: World Down Syndrome Day
March 24: World Tuberculosis Day
March 25: American Diabetes Alert Day
March 26: Epilepsy Awareness – Purple Day
March 30: National Doctors' Day
March 30: World Bipolar Day

Celebrating Excellence in Residency and Fellowship Program Honoree

Each month, one or more residents and/or fellows are selected for their exemplary service, and for embodying RUMC's commitment to fostering a collaborative culture that enhances patient care and professional excellence. Honorees are nominated by their colleagues and selected by the Office of Graduate Medical Education's Wellness Council.

This month's honoree is Johnathan Caggiano, MD, Department of Pediatrics. Dr. Caggiano is from Staten Island, graduated from Villanova University and earned his medical degree from St. George's University.





**Richmond University
Medical Center**

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5K

RUN OR WALK

SATURDAY, APRIL 12, 2025

SILVER LAKE PARK

915 VICTORY BLVD, STATEN ISLAND, NY 10301

All proceeds will support the Wayne Zenna Neonatal Intensive Care Unit at RUMC

REGISTRATION at 8AM • KIDS DASH Starts at 9AM
5K RUN Starts at 9:30AM • 5K WALK Starts at 9:45AM

Special Presentation to the Saukin Family in Memory of Dr. Tamara Saukin

Trophies will be awarded to the top 3 male and top 3 female winners
Certificates will be presented to the top 3 male and top 3 female winners in each age category

**For more information, including on how you can participate virtually,
visit www.rumcsi.org/5K**

Music by Joe Salemmo/DJ Joe Nose



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AND LEARN MORE**