Introducing Our Leadership

Back row, left to right:
Charles Whitesell, Chair, The Foundation for VBMC; Edward Farhangi, M.D., President, VBMC Medical/Dental Staff; Carla Gude, Chair, Vassar Brothers Medical Center; Gregory Rakow, Chair, Health Quest; Robert R. Dyson, Immediate-Past Chair, Health Quest; Ann K. Armater, Sr. VP, Development; Luke McGuinness, President and CEO, Health Quest.

Front row, left to right:
Randi Petrovits, Immediate-Past Board Chair, The Foundation for VBMC, and Robert Friedberg, President, Vassar Brothers Medical Center; Executive Vice President, Health Quest.
Dear Friends:

How do we measure a successful year at Vassar Brothers Medical Center? Some would point to the growing number of patients who turned to Vassar Brothers for care in 2014. Those numbers are impressive:

- **20,235 patients**, including 2,237 newborns, were discharged in 2014.
- **283 babies** were treated in our Neonatal Intensive Care Unit.
- **373 heart surgeries** were performed by our cardio-thoracic surgery team.
- **4,799 patients** underwent cardiac catheterization, angioplasty or electrophysiology procedures.
- **50,506 radiation treatments** were provided to cancer patients.
- **67,824 patients** were cared for in our Emergency Room.

Some might measure success by the degree of investment made in people, technology and facilities. Last year, we added 36 new physicians to our outstanding medical staff, representing an impressive cross-section of clinical specialties that enhance an already extraordinary scope of services. Included in this number are seven physicians based right inside the hospital who bring patients hard-to-find expertise in pulmonology, thoracic oncology and — a first for this region — interventional neuroradiology for the definitive treatment of stroke.

Then again, maybe Vassar Brothers Medical Center’s success is reflected in the achievement of a 7.3% operating margin – ranking the Medical Center once again among the most financially healthy in the State of New York.

ALL of these are measures of a very successful year. Each reflects a commitment to ensuring our patients continue to have access to care that is close to home, and that is marked by the highest quality, the greatest compassion and the best outcomes. We will continue our diligent work to safeguard these measures — and our 128-year mission of caring for this community — by remaining true to the fundamentals of sound planning and prudent investment.

So much of Vassar Brothers Medical Center’s accomplishments in the last year resulted from the wonderful philanthropic support provided by friends across the community. In our 2014 “Report on Giving,” we proudly and gratefully recognize the many friends who made that progress possible.

Your support brings so much to Vassar – and ultimately helps us provide what people in our community most need and deserve: outstanding outcomes and an excellent patient experience. That is really what Vassar Brothers Medical Center is all about. Thank you!

Sincerely,

Luke McGuinness, President & CEO, Health Quest

Robert Friedberg, President VBMC, Executive Vice President, Health Quest

Carla Gude, Chair, VBMC Board of Trustees

Edward Farhangi, M.D., President, VBMC Medical and Dental Staff

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Gregory Rakow, Chair, Board of Trustees, Health Quest
ACKNOWLEDGING OUR GENEROUS SUPPORTERS

The many friends listed below provided generous gifts to Vassar Brothers Medical Center in 2014. The annual programmatic, unrestricted and capital support provided by individuals, businesses, medical/dental practices and organizations throughout the region allows the Medical Center to ensure the availability of the very finest in healthcare services. Not listed here because of space constraints are nearly 300 members of our community who provided gifts between $1.00 and $24.99. We thank these friends, too, for their invaluable support of Vassar Brothers Medical Center.

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The one and only fabulous party planner, Elaine Blum with husband, Dr. Aaron Blum

Gala Sponsor Sheila Appel (IBM) with VBMC Trustee and sponsor, John O’Shea (Marshall & Sterling), and Tom Appel (r).
The USMA kicked off the 2014 Diamond Gala with an outstanding performance of our National Anthem.

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Sue and Rick Mitchell have been long-time supporters of the Medical Center – readily giving of their time, talent and treasure without realizing just how much they would one day need the services and expertise they were supporting. Sue was willing to share their story.

Nearly 20 years ago, I had emergency cardiac-bypass surgery to repair a dissection of a coronary artery. I had been in excellent health right up to that moment and have continued to be healthy and active every day since that surgery. That’s why I wasn’t overly concerned when the nagging ache in my jaw started suddenly one night last October. At first, I attributed it to a tooth, but, when the pain persisted, I became concerned that something more serious might be happening. I asked my husband, Rick, to take me to the Emergency Room at Vassar Brothers Medical Center, and it is there where my story really begins.

We arrived in the ER shortly after 10:00 p.m. Within no time, I was given a battery of tests – none of which pointed to a problem. My blood levels were fine. My blood pressure was fine. In fact, except for the pain in my jaw, everything seemed fine. It wasn’t until the results came back from my CT Scan that I knew things were not at all “fine.” What I thought was simply a toothache was something far more alarming: My aorta, the vital artery that pumps blood through the body, was rupturing. Oddly enough, I did not panic. Rick told me that my cardiologist, Dr. David Weinreich, was en route to the Medical Center and I knew that the cardiac surgery team, led by Dr. Peter Zakow, was assembling to perform the surgery that would save my life. I never doubted that I was in good hands.

What I did not know was that the surgery would last for eleven hours and that there was a 40 percent chance that I would not survive. But Rick and our children – who had gathered from Providence, Cazenovia and Baltimore to be on hand for us – were painfully aware of both the complexity of the surgery and the high risk associated with it. For them, it was a long, nerve-racking wait.

The next thing I remember was waking up in the Cardio-Thoracic Intensive Care Unit. I was not yet breathing on my own, but I was pain-free and surrounded by a terrific group of nurses. One in particular was my evening-shift nurse, Eric, who went out of his way to spend time with me. His constant presence throughout the three long nights I was on the unit was so reassuring – for me and my family.

Finally, I was moved to the Cardiac Step-Down Unit – where the real work began. I was soon on my feet, walking around the unit and working to regain my strength and stamina. It was during my recovery on that unit that I learned that scar tissue from my bypass surgery 20 years earlier had saved me from a complete aortic rupture – something that would have been catastrophic.

Within a week of my surgery, I was home. Under Dr. Weinreich’s watchful eye, I have recently started my outpatient rehabilitation and am looking forward to getting back to my regular exercise regimen.

As I recount this story, I realize again how very fortunate we are to have this Medical Center so close to home. We are grateful for all it offers: caring, expert healthcare professionals and the state-of-the-art technology, services and facilities needed to save – and change – lives.

Thank you, Vassar Brothers Medical Center!
Do your grandchildren know you helped build Vassar Brothers Medical Center?

Whether you have a sizeable estate or a modest accumulation of assets, planned gifts are a personal choice and an important investment decision. By including VBMC in your financial or estate plans, you leave a legacy that can help ensure that the quality healthcare we depend on today will be here for generations to come.

For more information on bequests and trusts, please call the Foundation for Vassar Brothers Medical Center at 845.790.9360, or go to our Planned-Giving website: http://vassarbrothers.giftplans.org.
THE CAMPAIGN FOR THE CENTER FOR AMBULATORY SERVICES

In May 2012, Vassar Brothers Medical Center proudly cut the ribbon on the spacious, state-of-the-art Center for Ambulatory Services, celebrating both the grand-opening of this long-awaited facility and the extraordinary generosity of the many friends who supported the $15 million campaign launched in support of it. Listed below are those who provided gifts and pledges of $1,000 or more to this vital initiative.

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Friends from Toll Brothers present another generous gift to the VBMC Neonatal Intensive Care Unit.
We were very excited when we learned that Baby Number Three was on the way. From the very beginning, it was an easy, uneventful pregnancy. I felt great and left each prenatal appointment confident that the baby was healthy and growing. That is why we were so unprepared for what happened next.

At 39 weeks, I went into Vassar Brothers for a scheduled c-section. I had no doubt I was in good hands. I liked my obstetrician very much; I had every confidence in the anesthesia team, and I was pleasantly surprised to find the staff from the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) on hand for the delivery—standard operating procedure for C-sections (and, as it turned out, very fortuitous for us!). More than anything, my husband, Stephen, and I were excited about welcoming this newest member to our family and bringing her home to meet her sister, brother and three grandparents.

In the unnatural silence that followed Samantha’s birth, our excitement turned to deep anxiety. Instead of the gusty wails of a newborn, we heard only the urgency of healthcare professionals working on a silent, limp and surprisingly small baby. We never heard her cry in the delivery room and it would be weeks before we would hear her make a sound. The doctors told us that Samantha’s muscle tone and weight were very low for a full-term baby; they needed to admit her to the NICU to run tests and to keep her stable. Sensing our confusion and alarm, one of the nurses stopped to give us the briefest look at our little daughter before whisking her away.

Thank goodness the NICU is staffed with such knowledgeable, caring people who were so sensitive to the overwhelming anxiety we were feeling as we waited to learn more about what was happening with Samantha. Hours passed but felt like an eternity as we waited for the okay to go see her. At the outset of that very first visit, the chief neonatologist, Dr. Stephen Kovacs, gave us an update. He told us that the immediate concerns were around Samantha’s need for assisted breathing and her low platelet level. He told us that she would eventually need a platelet transfusion. Most important, Dr. Kovacs had consulted with the geneticist and was able to tell us why our little girl was so tiny and weak: Samantha had been born with Prader-Willi Syndrome, a random, rare event that occurs when there is an anomaly on Chromosome 15. Up until that very moment, neither my husband nor I had ever heard of it. Today—a full year later—we are quickly becoming experts in this syndrome.

In April, Samantha will celebrate her first birthday. Her milestones will not be any different than those of other growing babies, but they might take longer to reach. The limpness that characterized her first few months has given way to busy legs that move constantly, and active arms that reach for everything in sight. She is a happy, smiling, alert baby who watches in wonder as we eat—something she can’t do until her sucking and swallowing reflexes develop. For now, her meals are fed to her through a tube in her tummy.

Sometime before she reaches Kindergarten, her metabolism will slow down and her appetite will increase—thus setting into motion a lifetime of very challenging diet control. Children with Prader-Willi Syndrome do not feel full, no matter how much they have eaten. As parents, we will need to be vigilant about her diet. As she grows up, that vigilance ultimately must become her responsibility. Samantha will face the double challenge of an insatiable appetite and a slow metabolism and will need to limit her daily intake to only 60 percent of what an average person will eat in a day. There may be other challenges, too, including a shortage of stamina and a learning style that may require more time to master a concept.

Today, as she approaches her first birthday, Samantha is a constant source of joy for our entire family. As we look back on the year, we remain very grateful to the wonderful staff in the NICU at Vassar Brothers Medical Center. They helped ease the difficulty of those first few weeks with their compassion and expertise. Most important, they led us to the specialists whose early intervention has helped Samantha thrive.

They say it takes a village to raise a child. Our village is rich with the many people who are helping Samantha get from one milestone to the next: our loving, caring extended family, the many specialists who are part of our routine, and, of course, the wonderful team at Vassar Brothers who helped get us on our way. We are very grateful!
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Earlier this year, Bruce Knickerbocker, Director of the Nephrology Care Unit, received a moving letter from the McCarthy Family acknowledging their meaningful experience at Vassar Brothers. We are honored that the family has agreed to let us share their letter in this Report.

Dear Bruce,

One year ago today, Sean Patrick McCarthy lost his 18-month battle with End-Stage Renal Failure. You may not remember my children and me, but we remember you. I recall the first time you came into Sean’s room to introduce yourself to us and ask if we were getting the care we needed. You were warm, kind and thoughtful.

At the time, I suspect we politely said we were fine (we weren’t) and that everyone was doing a great job (nearly all of the staff were, in fact, amazing), but the rotating door in the hospital lobby was more than a metaphor for our lives by the time we met you and we didn’t have the bandwidth to answer your question with much clarity. We knew Sean was dying and there was nothing anyone could do about it, which made considering whether we were getting what we needed nearly impossible.

But now, I’ve had a year to reflect and I want to attempt to answer your question so that you and your staff know that your work is meaningful and incredibly important. I’m sure that many members of your team could be described similarly, but the two people I came to know best are the two through whom I want to illustrate my response.

Charlie is an outstanding patient-care tech. His smile, his laugh, his positive attitude, and his willingness to chat as long as he could with Sean during what were sometimes excruciatingly boring days in the hospital set him apart. What impressed me most, however, was his absolute dedication to Sean’s dignity under the most humiliating and demoralizing of circumstances. He was tender and honest, and when he made his rounds or responded to the push of that red button, he never, ever made any of us feel as though we were imposing. He took an interest in the things that mattered to Sean in his life outside the hospital and, while he was always focused on Sean’s medical care, he seemed to know that caring about Sean as a person mattered just as much.

Ilonka. What an incredible treasure. Nurses play an exceptionally important role in patient care. Yes, they’re in the trenches, that’s a given. But the much more challenging part of their work (in my view) involves keeping the patient front and center while managing multiple directives coming from a parade of hospitalists and specialists. Nurses have a grasp of the whole patient, including medical and psychological perspectives. Ilonka always kept this in mind, even when Sean was being difficult, stubborn, contradictory, and unreasonable. I knew that if she was on shift, I could get a good night’s rest. She listened. She observed. She treated him as a person. She gave him a break when he needed it and she went the extra mile. She was on shift when he was diagnosed in June of 2013 and she was on shift the last time he was conscious on February 4th.

That night, when it became very clear that we were at the end, she listened. She cared for me as I left the room having said goodbye for the last time. I can’t tell you how much that meant to me and still means to me to this day.

So yes, your staff gave us what we needed. Gave me what I needed and I’m forever grateful.

With gratitude,

Willa McCarthy
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Vassar Brothers Medical Center’s history of providing excellent and compassionate healthcare has been made possible by a tradition of generous community support. That support has enabled the Medical Center to purchase the latest technology, update its facilities, and attract topflight healthcare professionals – and all for one common purpose: to provide the people of this region with the very best in healthcare.

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Making a gift to VBMC has never been easier. Simply visit GiveVBMC.Health-Quest.org. For more information, please call Ann K. Armater at (845) 790-9360, or Priscilla Weaver at (845) 790-9358. Your support is always welcomed!