

# MILESTONES

SPECIAL EDITION



OUR HEROES BEHIND THE MASK



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A special thank you from the MMC Foundation Team to Michael Gordon for taking the time and care to edit and help us produce this special edition of Milestones.

Mission

As an RWJBarnabas Health facility, Monmouth Medical Center Foundation is a leader in identifying, cultivating and soliciting charitable gifts in support of Monmouth Medical Center’s mission to deliver quality-driven, efficient and responsive healthcare services to the community.

Vision

Monmouth Medical Center Foundation, a charitable organization dedicated to supporting Monmouth Medical Center and its programs and services, has a fivefold mission:

- I To develop and implement foundation programs that provide charitable financial support to MMC
- I To demonstrate to the public at large how philanthropy benefits donors, patients and the community served by MMC
- I To increase public awareness and enhance the community’s positive perception of MMC by being an advocate of the center’s commitment to the community
- I To serve responsibly as the steward of contributed funds to MMC
- I To develop candidates for leadership positions for MMCF and MMC

Message from the President and CEO Eric Carney



There are no adequate words to say thank you enough for the commitment, dedication and compassion of the entire MMC team throughout these past few months. Nothing short of amazing, our hospital team rose to every challenge during this health crisis.

While we couldn't celebrate our staff as we traditionally would during the spring observances of Hospital and Nurses Weeks, we were determined to show our gratitude for our health care heroes. During the evening changes of shift on April 15 and May 14, hospital leadership stood in long reception lines and applauded incoming and outgoing staff to let our frontline healthcare workers know how appreciated they are. The emotional “heroes salutes” also included local first responders who lined up in emergency vehicles and sounded their sirens and ran their lights in tribute to hospital staff, making it an amazing moment of Heroes thanking Heroes. Organized by our Foundation, the events also featured distribution of “A Hero Lives Here” lawn signs to publicly celebrate the dedication and sacrifice of our staff within the community.

Beyond these events, the Foundation worked tirelessly throughout the height of the pandemic to connect with the community to further support the work of the hospital. They coordinated the delivery of countless meals and crucial personal protective equipment, and secured donations to our emergency relief fund. This was another great example of how our MMC family worked together to care for those who care for our community.

Most recently, we were also excited to welcome back patients who we know may have chosen to delay getting healthcare out of fear of being exposed to COVID-19 — a choice that can have devastating consequences. As a high reliability organization, safety comes first in everything we do. In fact, Monmouth recently received its 11th consecutive “A” Hospital Safety Score rating by the Leapfrog Group in recognition of our commitment and focus on safety and quality. This “A” rating is a timely recognition of our frontline heroes, who are providing extraordinarily safe care in our community’s time of need. It’s so inspiring particularly in times of crisis to see our community come together to support each other. I see it day in and day out in the tireless dedication of our staff to our patients and each other, and I have seen it from the very beginning of the pandemic in the generosity shown to us by our community. It is truly a testament to the power of people to come together in a crisis to help each other, and this issue of Milestones is an amazing tribute to the courage of our healthcare heroes and generosity of our donors.

Eric Carney  
PRESIDENT AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER  
MONMOUTH MEDICAL CENTER AND  
THE UNTERBERG CHILDREN’S HOSPITAL

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## Message from the President Southern Region, RWJBarnabas Health

If there is one thing I've learned over the course of my career, it is that a hospital cannot run without teamwork. Nothing has crystallized this for me quite like the COVID-19 pandemic.

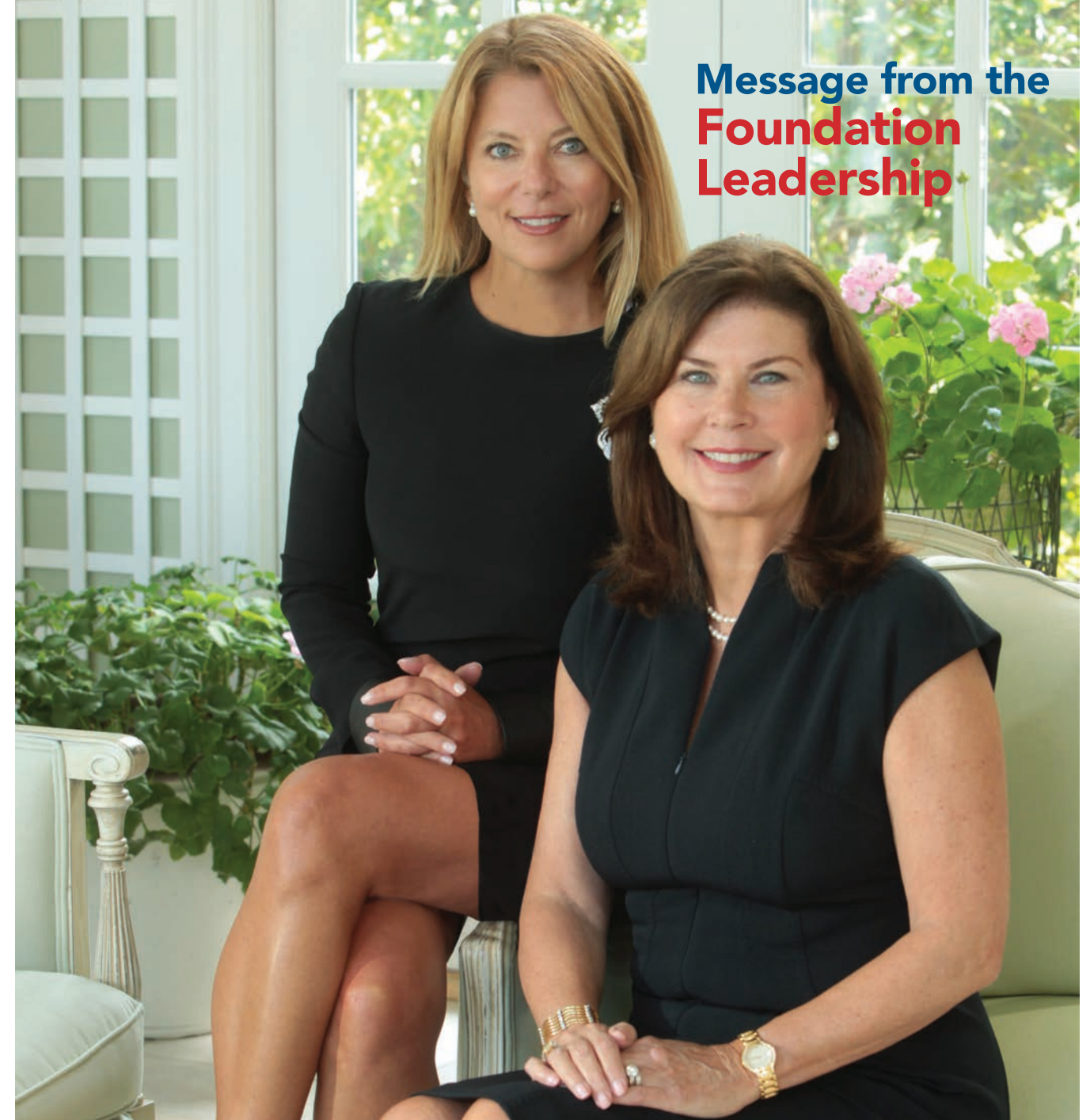
The response of the entire RWJBarnabas Health (RWJBH) Southern Region team, including Community Medical Center, Monmouth Medical Center (MMC) and Monmouth Medical Center Southern Campus, has been truly outstanding. At every level within and among

these hospitals, I witnessed the very best teamwork during the very worst of times. Despite the uncertainties, stress and pressure, every team member worked together with great courage and compassion to continually provide the very best care possible to our communities. They communicated constantly, suffered their losses and celebrated their wins together, and shared resources, knowledge and experiences to the benefit of all. It is a true testament to the commitment and dedication of our employees and the leadership of the RWJBH Southern Region CEO's and management teams.

I will never forget rounding in the epicenter of MMC's COVID-19 battle — the Intensive Care Unit — and witnessing firsthand the immense challenges our teams were up against. Under the leadership of Dr. Dean Patton, Medical Director of Pulmonary and Critical Care and the Healthy Lives Program, I saw a tireless and united team doing everything in their power to save lives. Every day, Dr. Patton would reach out to share every glimmer of hope and each win he and his team celebrated when they were able to successfully extubate a patient. Their colleagues from every department throughout the hospital eagerly took up the torch to support and encourage them every step of the way. For every MMC patient that won their battle with COVID-19, there was an entire hospital team on their side, and I will forever be inspired by this.

There are no words to adequately express how deeply grateful I am for the outpouring of support MMC has been receiving from all of you throughout this pandemic. Your thoughtful messages, expressions of thanks and generous financial support have and continue to enable the team to successfully fight this battle alongside their patients. It's comforting to know that when the community needs them most, the MMC team is there, and when our MMC team needs your support the most, you are there. I thank you all from the bottom of my heart.

**Bill Arnold**  
PRESIDENT SOUTHERN REGION, RWJBARNABAS HEALTH



## Message from the Foundation Leadership

Earlier this year our community felt the impact of the global COVID-19 pandemic as it reached our families, our friends, and our hospital. As Monmouth Medical Center braced for, and then aggressively responded to, an unprecedented surge of critically ill patients, the community came together in a groundswell of support — financially and emotionally. We all stood in solidarity and awe of our courageous frontline healthcare workers at MMC, as we continue to do so now.

In this special "Hero Edition" of Milestones you will read stories of both recovery from patients and about those who raised their hand to help. Even when the pandemic shuttered businesses, many contributed whatever they could in the form of funds, cases of N95 masks and gloves, a hot meal, a poster of thanks on a front lawn, a handmade card, and much more.

The funds raised helped provide the construction of the triage tent, the establishment of negative pressure rooms, and the procurement of ventilators. These funds helped provide food and housing to members of the staff who were unable to return to their home and their loved ones. We all learned to replace hugs of gratitude with cards and clap-outs.

As the leaders of the Monmouth Medical Center Foundation we are humbled by and deeply grateful for this outpouring of support. We are honored to share with you these incredible and heartwarming stories in the pages ahead. We invite you to join us in supporting our competent and compassionate clinical team at Monmouth Medical Center. They were ready when the community needed them most and we remain steadfast in our support of them.

We look forward to welcoming you back to Monmouth Medical Center. MMC will continue to provide the excellent care for which it has always been known.

**Claire Knopf**  
BOARD CHAIR  
MONMOUTH MEDICAL CENTER FOUNDATION

**Tara Kelly**  
VICE PRESIDENT OF DEVELOPMENT  
MONMOUTH MEDICAL CENTER FOUNDATION

PICTURED FROM LEFT:  
Tara Kelly, Vice President of Development,  
MMCF; and Claire Knopf, Board Chair MMCF



# Welcome **NEW** Trustees

**MEGHAN DEL PRIORE** is an entrepreneur who has started two successful businesses in Monmouth County. She currently is the sole proprietor of MD Interiors, which provides interior decorating, design and small construction ideas to homeowners throughout the county. Prior to this, she co-owned the Bee's Knees boutique, a clothing and accessories store in Red Bank. In between these ventures, Meghan took time off from her entrepreneurial efforts to raise her three children.

Meghan is a graduate of Rumson Fair Haven Regional High School and Elon University. Outside of living in New York City for a few years after college, she has resided in Fair Haven and Rumson her entire life.

Meghan's desire to give back and her deep roots in the community have resulted in a long history of service. She has served three times as the VNA Beach Ball auction chair, twice as the event chair of Toast for the Unterberg Children's Hospital, Deacon at Tower Hill church, Red Bank and is currently on the church nominating committee.

**WILLIAM E. THYGESON JR.** is the Chief Administrative Officer at Everest Insurance®, a position that entails direct responsibility for Strategic Planning and Operations, and serves on the Executive Leadership group.

Bill's education includes a BA from Lafayette College and an MBA from Wharton, and his military service was as an Intelligence Officer for the United States Air Force. His experience in financial services was as Vice President of Person-to-Person Marketing for MBNA Bank, NA.

Bill's insurance career began with American Insurance Group (AIG), where he rose to Senior Vice President of Operations and Deputy Business Transformation Officer for AIG Property & Casualty. He previously was Senior Vice President for AIG Japan Holdings, and Global Operations Head, Claims.

Prior to joining Everest Insurance®, Bill was the Chief Operating Officer at Hamilton USA where he helped found the US Property and Casualty operation of Hamilton Insurance Group.

Given his broad executive background, the Foundation looks forward to Bill's participation in its future endeavors.

**VINCE TIZZIO** heads Global Specialty at The Hartford, a team providing specialty insurance and reinsurance. After earning a B.A. degree in finance and sociology from Adelphi University, his career as a leader of insurance service companies began in underwriting and management positions at American International Group. Subsequently, Vince became Executive Vice President of Zurich North America, leading the company's commercial markets business. In 2012, Vince became President and CEO of Navigators Management Company, assuring a steady hand during its acquisition by The Hartford.

In addition to extensive operational experience, Vince served on the Board of Governors of Maguire Academy of Risk Management at Saint Joseph's University. He is a board member of several nonprofit social service organizations, notably the Freedom House (treats addiction) and the Visiting Nurse Association. Lastly, he founded Feed Belly Farm, providing food to people in need. Clearly, the Foundation will benefit from Vince's knowledge of organizational governance.

**JAY GRUNIN** is co-founder and chairman of the Grunin Foundation. He graduated with honors from Brooklyn College in 1964, and from NYU School of Law in 1967, where he was an editor of the Law Review and where he met his wife and future business partner, Linda. Following a brief stint in Big Law in New York and a one-year Appellate Division clerkship in New Jersey, Jay and Linda moved to Toms River to practice law. As Ocean County developed in the 1970s, the Grunins' law practice flourished and their business interests expanded into real estate and other investments.

In the 1990s, the Grunins dissolved their law practice to concentrate on their investments and philanthropy, resulting in creation of the Grunin Foundation in 2013.

Unfortunately, Linda passed away in 2018, but her inspiring legacy lives on. She was memorialized in the Spring 2019 issue of Milestones.

Jay is currently Advisory Board Chair of the NYU Grunin Center for Law and Social Entrepreneurship and is a Trustee of the Monmouth Medical Center Foundation Board.

**OPPOSITE PAGE: STANDING FROM LEFT:**  
Lauren Simons, Development Manager;  
Robin Lowy Embrey, Director, Donor Relations;  
Elizabeth Parks, Senior Executive Assistant;  
Cheryl Solon, Director of Development

**SEATED:** Madison Lopez, Special Events Manager;  
Caitlin Olson, CCS Fundraising Consultant  
**FRONT ROW:** Evelyn Nitis, Special Events Director;  
Tara Kelly, Vice President of Development, MMCF;  
Gabiella Prieto, Development Coordinator



## Meet the Monmouth Medical Center **Foundation Team**

**"It's humbling to represent the clinical excellence we witness every day; philanthropy brought forth by gratitude is what impacts change and fuels outstanding medical outcomes."**  
— Tara Kelly  
Vice President of Development



## A BIG THANKS TO THE DEDICATED WORKERS

"To the hardworking personnel:  
I hope you don't forget how strong  
you all are not just during this  
hard time but every day."  
— **BILL SHEWAN**

"This message was supposed to be  
inspiration for you, but the reality is  
that you are all an inspiration to us.  
Sending love from my family to  
you and all of yours."  
— **THE MANALO FAMILY**

"We would love to thank all the  
doctors and nurses who are keeping  
us all safe! A special shout out to our  
very own Dr. James Martin."  
— **THE TREBINO FAMILY**

"Essential Workers,  
Medical Professionals  
and Support Staff:  
THANK YOU for all you are doing!  
Your kindness, compassion and  
selflessness will never be forgotten."  
— **MADONNA GOSS ROBINSON**

"Thank you nurses, doctors and staff  
for all you're doing. This is a very  
hard time for everyone. Without  
you guys we will not be here.  
I will pray for everyone and  
I hope you all get through this.  
Thank you from the bottom of my heart."  
— **JUNE EULO**

"Keep up the great work that you do!"  
— **RABBI AND MRS. MOSHE RAITZIK  
& FAMILY**

"Thank you Dr. Mark Gesell for your  
professional medical wisdom and  
guidance last October. We appreciate  
all the staff at MMC who are dealing  
with the Covid 19 virus. Our thoughts  
and prayers are with ALL of you."  
— **ROBERT AND SUSAN SOROKOLIT**

"Thank you doesn't feel like enough  
but we are so grateful for all of you!  
'Even the darkest night will end and  
the sun will rise again.' Stay Well."  
— **THE SHEEHAN FAMILY**

"In ordinary life we hardly realize that  
we receive a great deal more than  
we give and that it is only with  
gratitude that life becomes rich."  
— **ROSEMARY ROBERTS  
BREAST CANCER SURVIVOR**

"Dear Monmouth Medical Center staff,  
thank you for your dedication and  
bravery as you care for all those afflicted  
by the coronavirus in our community.  
We are so appreciative."  
— **THE BALTO'S  
ANDY, CATHY, ANNA & BRYAN**

# Our Community Sends Gratitude to Our MMC Frontline!



Due to the overwhelming  
amount of gratitude and  
messages from patients,  
their families, and our  
community, the walls of  
**Monmouth Medical Center**  
are adorned with drawings,  
hand written notes and  
short inspiring messages.

As we faced the challenges  
of COVID-19, our community  
sent in thousands of these  
inspiring messages to let  
our frontline staff know that  
they were thinking of them  
and the impactful, stellar  
care they were providing  
for the community.







# The Unterberg Challenge

## Generosity Inspires Community to Give

In early March, the pandemic that we had all watched and feared from afar reached New Jersey and our community in Monmouth County. In a matter of days after the first COVID-19 symptomatic patients were seen in the Emergency Department, our hospital was transformed by implementing rapid new screening protocols and creating a triage tent. Since then, our frontline nurses and physicians have worked around the clock tirelessly to meet the demands of incoming patients who were positive or suspected positive with COVID-19.

As the influx of patients continued, Ann and Tom Unterberg, longtime supporters of Monmouth Medical Center, made a leadership gift encouraging the development of our MMC Emergency Relief Fund. Their leadership gift quickly was matched with gifts from The Grunin Foundation and The Jules L. Plangere, Jr. Foundation. Within weeks the MMC Emergency Relief Fund raised over \$2,000,000.

**"Today's healthcare workers are our heroes. As patients fight for their lives, our brave medical teams fight for the lives of others. We cannot stand alongside them physically, but we can stand side by side with financial support and resources. They deserve nothing less."**

**— The Unterbergs**

These funds enabled MMC to set up a triage tent; fund the housing needs for nurses and physicians who had been exposed to the virus; establish childcare and eldercare to enable staff to continue coming into the hospital; and, provide for the ongoing need for supplies to appropriately protect our frontline staff. Building on generations of support from the Unterberg Family, Ann and Tom Unterberg represent the philanthropic leadership of our community to whom we all remain grateful for their support.

**"Monmouth Medical Center is honored that for generations the Unterberg Family has led the way in philanthropy to Monmouth Medical Center for others to follow."**

**— Bill Arnold**  
PRESIDENT SOUTHERN REGION,  
RWJBARNABAS HEALTH

OPPOSITE PAGE: Ann and Thomas Unterberg





PICTURED FROM LEFT: Jaclyn Rodemann, *Director of Operations*; Jeremy Grunin, *President*; Jay Grunin, *Chairman*; Heather Barberi, *Executive Director*; Kelly Filler, *Director of Communications*

## The Grunin Foundation Inspiring Gift to Monmouth Medical Center

The mission of the Grunin Foundation is to improve the quality of life for all members of our community by using philanthropy to drive economic excellence at the Central Jersey Shore. The Foundation believes that access to the arts, abundant educational opportunities and quality healthcare options help to create a vibrant and thriving economic ecosystem.

For years, the Foundation has supported the hospital systems in Monmouth and Ocean Counties, funding programs that are innovative, have a measurable impact and promote economic growth, including a recent gift to Monmouth Medical Center to establish The Linda Grunin Sim Lab. The lab will deliver simulation-based medical education to Monmouth Medical Center's resident physicians and medical students and will provide a valuable resource to the community for training first responders, including local EMT and firefighters.

In light of the COVID-19 pandemic and its incredible impact on our community, the Grunin Foundation knew it was more important than ever to support quality of life and the economy. In addition to making contributions proactively to local nonprofits providing direct services to support basic human needs during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Foundation contributed over a half a million dollars to the healthcare systems supporting the Central Jersey Shore. Of that, \$250,000 was given to the RWJBH Emergency Relief Fund to support Monmouth Medical Center and the other RWJBH Southern Region hospitals.

**"We are grateful for and dedicated to our hospitals and healthcare workers, and appreciate the exceptionally hard work they are doing for the Central Jersey Shore community, especially during this global health pandemic. We are proud to support the COVID-19 relief efforts of Monmouth Medical Center and the hospital systems in Monmouth and Ocean Counties."**

— Jay Grunin

*Co-Founder and Chairman of the Grunin Foundation,  
Trustee of the Monmouth Medical Center Foundation Board*

**"Philanthropy is most effective and powerful when generous, caring people join together. We are thrilled that our community has been so supportive. Thanks to all but especially the Grunin and Plangere families, who set the bar high for all of us."**

— Ann Unterberg

## The Jules L. Plangere, Jr. Family Foundation Charitable gift to MMC'S Emergency Relief Program

In late March, The Jules L. Plangere, Jr. Family Foundation, a private family philanthropic foundation, reached out to Monmouth Medical Center (MMC) to discuss the hospital's immediate needs to address the COVID-19 pandemic. Thanks to their generous funding of \$250,000, they were among the first leaders in the community who committed to MMC's Emergency Pandemic Relief Fund. Their support has provided the resources for necessary equipment, Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), installation of additional Intensive Care Units and isolation rooms, and the heated triage tent.



The late Jules & Jane Plangere, Jr.

Al Colantoni, Vice Chairman said, "As the worldwide spread of COVID-19 evolved, the Foundation made the decision to focus on charities that provide direct COVID-19 assistance to the local community. We contacted several front line COVID-19 organizations and, with their cooperation and guidance, allocated funds to assist them in their ongoing efforts to support their workers through the acquisition of badly needed medical supplies. Philanthropy can play an important role in addressing the immediate and long-term implications of this crisis in our communities. The situation is changing daily, and the philanthropic community, including the Foundation, will need to continue to monitor the situation and allocate resources to frontline organizations, such as MMC."

**"Since its inception, the Fund established by Jules and Jane has provided \$30 million to support charities whose generosity promotes the Foundation's mission, thereby setting an example for other philanthropic organizations to join our important efforts to help our local communities."**

— Al Colantoni  
*Vice Chairman*

Established in 1997, the Jules L. Plangere, Jr. Family Foundation, founded by the late Jules L. Plangere, Jr. and his wife Jane, continues their philanthropic legacy of supporting numerous critical programs that enrich the lives of thousands of people in the shore area and beyond.

**"We are so thankful to The Jules L. Plangere Jr. Family Foundation for their gift that has ensured that MMC had the most important resources during such a challenging time and has allowed us to continue to offer extraordinary health care to the community we serve."**

— Eric Carney  
*President and CEO,  
Monmouth Medical Center*



**"Everyone in the world has the ability to do something. Do not waste your talents. If one person gives, and everyone follows, we have the ability to change the world."**

**— Margaret Lam**  
*United Chinese American Association of NJ*



## Local Organizations Help in the Fight Against COVID-19 Pandemic

Over the years, Monmouth Medical Center (MMC) has generated strong partnerships with different community organizations. When the pandemic started to affect New Jersey, many of these organizations reached out to see how they could help. The Fukien American Association of New Jersey and the United Chinese American Association of NJ were two of the first to reach out to see what they could do to help MMC.

Stephanie Zou, Director of the Community Specific Medical Program at MMC, connected these two organizations with the hospital and MMC doctors many years ago. "Our team has helped many of their organization members. Over the years, I attended many of their events and built a very good relationship with them. We do outreach and education seminars during community events that they organize. I am very happy to have built a bridge between the community and our hospital."

Mr. Li of the Fukien American Association felt strongly that he wanted to help MMC. "We knew the virus was going to be bad, and that it would be extremely costly to provide care. We wanted to step up and do something for MMC, which had sponsored many of our events and cared for many of our members as patients. A monetary donation would help to purchase the necessary PPE that was so difficult to obtain."

Margaret Lam, of the United Chinese American Association of NJ, immediately thought about Stephanie when the pandemic created serious medical problems in the area. "I have watched the Chinese Medical Program grow and admired its work. Because the hospital really helps the community, I knew we needed to give back." Donors like these make it possible to provide the excellent care for which MMC is known.

**COMMUNITY SPECIFIC MEDICAL PROGRAM TEAM**  
PICTURED FROM LEFT: Tatiana Pidgainy, Russian Medical Program Coordinator, Yelena Sloush, Russian Medical Program Manager, Stephanie Zou, Director of Community Specific Medical Program at MMC, Josephine Kam, and Vivien O'Neil, Chinese Medical Program Coordinator. (Photo taken in 2019)



# I Gave to MMC Because...

"As an older member of the community, I felt very vulnerable throughout the pandemic. To know that the doctors and nurses were willing to risk so much, putting their own families in harms way, I felt that I had to do my part to support these courageous workers at Monmouth Medical Center. Thank you for everything you do!"

— Patricia Strandberg

"An enormous humanitarian effort MMC had to put forth overnight ....the hospital had to become overnight family members to patients and their families and give the love that their families could not be present for."

— Dawn Lehmann

"We were pleased to learn that the Monmouth Medical Center Foundation had created the Emergency Relief Fund. It is precisely the vehicle we sought to offer tangible support that evidences our admiration of, and gratitude for, the hospital staff's courageous efforts to care for the sick during the pandemic."

— Sally and Michael Gordon

"Our daughter-in-law, Nicole Weshnak, is a nurse anesthetist at Monmouth Medical Center, we made our donation for her benefit and the benefit of all the amazing frontline healthcare workers at Monmouth Medical Center."

— Barry & Carol Anne Cawley Weshnak

"As relatively new residents of Monmouth County we have been so appreciative of the excellent care we received when we needed either emergency care or routine visits for X-rays and minor procedures at Monmouth Medical Center. During this pandemic we felt it was necessary to support our local hospital and all the wonderful nurses and doctors who have cared for us over the years. We salute and thank all of them for the extremely amazing job they are doing."

— Anonymous

"There are times in life when ordinary people do extraordinary things. We are witnessing are our healthcare providers doing just that. We hope our contribution in some way helps them to continue to do their important work."

— The Marrone Family

"Our most vulnerable populations keep Monmouth Medical Center going. Housekeepers, maintenance workers and other support staff are responsible for the well-being of doctors, nursing staff and patients. I am proud to provide equipment and supplies to support these often unnoticed and underappreciated essential workers."

— Frances P. Sykes

"I donated to Monmouth Medical Center when I saw all the essential workers putting others before themselves. Chaos can bring out the best and worst in people. At Monmouth Medical Center it was by far the best!"

— Sharon and Dan Lynch

"Jersey Shore Theater Club is a proud donor of Monmouth Medical Center. We are honored to support our local community, especially in their time of need. We salute our doctors, nurses and staff who have been working tirelessly during this global pandemic."

— Pauline Warshak  
Jersey Shore Theater Club

"I wanted to help a local hospital that was well known to me."

— Sandy Pangborn

"I gave to the Emergency Relief Fund in honor of Dr. Ronald Weinberg, who, has been my primary care physician for many years, until his recent retirement."

Dr. Weinberg has long been associated with Monmouth Medical Center and I could not think of a more appropriate way of honoring him than supporting Monmouth Medical in these days of medical crisis. Dr. Weinberg always treated the 'whole patient' and I hope that this donation can help that philosophy to continue at MMC."

— Christopher Foard

"Monmouth Medical Center is my first choice of hospitals and Dr. Douglas Ross is an amazing caretaker so I chose to donate to the Emergency Relief Fund to help out this excellent facility during this unprecedented time."

— Michelle McDonough

"Monmouth Medical Center has been there for us during this terrifying health crisis. The hospital's presence and immediate action taken in regard to a global pandemic of this type gave us the confidence to donate to the Emergency Relief Fund. We believe it is our responsibility to support MMC and its workers so they can support our community."

— Claire and Woody Knopf

To make a donation or to learn more about the ways you can be involved, please contact us at 732.923.6886 or go to [monmouthgiving.org](https://monmouthgiving.org)







**JOIN US** as we celebrate our COVID-19 patients with their families and the team that brought them home.

## Grateful Patient Eric Otero

In late March, Eric Otero felt fine and went to dinner with his wife, Alex, and friends. In only a matter of a few days, that changed rapidly. Eric, who is a healthy 45-year old father of three, started to feel fatigued. Over the next few days he developed a low-grade fever, followed by shortness of breath and faintness.

When his condition quickly deteriorated, Alex brought him to the Monmouth Medical Center (MMC) Emergency Room. Given the circumstances, Alex dropped Eric off and then had to leave, unaware that she would not see him for more than three weeks. Alex kept a diary documenting every conversation she had with the frontline at MMC, something she shared with Eric upon his return home.

Not being able to see Eric was very difficult for Alex. "I called every three hours to get an update and the staff was in constant communication with me," she said. "They never got mad when I called. They had their own stress, too, but that did not change how they treated me. They made a difference. They helped to set up FaceTime for us so he could hear and see me speak to him. I could not be there with him, but it made me feel better to know that the incredible staff was there with him."

After being intubated for 11 days, Eric was the first successful COVID extubation at MMC. The frontline team was grateful for his journey back to good health.

JoAnn Wolfson, Clinical Director of Critical Care, said, "We formed a great rapport with his family. Alex often ordered lunch for the entire unit and we were in constant contact with her. When we were able to discharge him, there were tears of joy as he left the building."

After discharge from MMC, Eric recovered in rehab and returned home, fully recovered and grateful. Eric said, "Everyone was amazing at MMC. I owe everything to Dr. Patton and the frontline MMC team. They stepped up for my family, especially for my wife. You do not find that compassion everywhere."

**OPPOSITE PAGE:**  
**STANDING FROM LEFT:**  
Billie Lesperance, Respiratory Therapist,  
Gretchen Nicolosi, RN, BSN, CNL,  
Dr. Chandler Patton, Medical Director of ICU

**SEATED:** Alex and Eric Otero

**STANDING IN FRONT FROM LEFT:**  
Dylan, Ryan and Russell Otero

PLEASE NOTE: Due to camera angle, subjects appear closer than they are.  
Social distancing was observed for this photo.





## To Our G5 Team

LAUREN RUSSO

### OUR COURAGEOUS NURSES

Toni, Yve, Lauren, Nikki, Kat, Kayla, Kaitlyn, Sneha, Alexandra, Debra, Jackie, Eddie, Edna, Juvy, Samantha, Maggie, Beth, Xenia, Kylie, Liz and Jessica

### OUR DEDICATED DOCTORS

Dr. Ghali, Dr. Ross, Dr. Shah, Dr. Morelli, Dr. Patton, Dr. Livornese, Dr. Lee and the ID Care provider team

Papa Barry's niece from Boston, Dr. Kronenberg

"Thank you for being our angels. You carried us when we were losing hope and overwhelmed by grief witnessing our dad's deteriorating condition. We are forever grateful to each of you. You continued to root for him, care for him and try to reach him while never giving up on him, even though he was combative at times and unresponsive at his best. We wondered daily, how did you find the strength and courage to fight this fight, day after day, night after night? To know that you left your own families each day to go take care of ours was remarkable to us."

— Michael, Mona, Shari, Glenn and Bonnie Blitstein



# From the Frontline TO THE FRONT PORCH

## Grateful Patient Barry Blitstein

Our family suddenly found ourselves confronting a new reality this past March. It was all too surreal when our dad, "Papa"—a joke-telling, coastal living, business building, transcontinental traveling, robust guy with an even more robust mustache—became unrecognizable to the family within a week of returning from a month-long Florida vacation with our mom. Infiltrating his mind and body, the virus had left him unable to speak or eat, lethargic, and confused as to his own name and address. This was the start of an incredibly difficult and emotional six-week journey for our whole family.

Lauren Russo and the G5 Team of heroic nurses and doctors, despite being overwhelmingly busy on the COVID floor, patiently took our calls whenever we inquired whether we could try to connect with Papa even though he was unresponsive. With genuine smiles and warm greetings, they were so understanding and held the phone to his ear while we pleaded with him to fight and stay strong, and told him how much we loved him. Thanks to their compassion, this became a near-daily occurrence that eased some of the deep sorrow we were feeling not being by his side.

When Papa became extremely weak from being unable to eat, experiencing severe dips in oxygenation levels, and developing blood clots throughout his lungs, we had to have the heart-wrenching family discussion about DNR. With guidance from the G5 Team, we made the difficult decision to insert a feeding tube in place as a last effort treatment to hopefully awaken our dad from the deteriorating state he was in. This procedure was the miraculous turning point that brings us to this day, enabling us to write this note of sincerest gratitude. Our ray of light through all of this was our connection to our G5 Team of doctors and nurses who tirelessly did the sleuth work and formulated plans to tame this virus. They found the time and energy to communicate with us daily, not only to give a status update, but also to listen, strategize, and ask thoughtful questions to uncover every possible underlying issue.

Lauren Russo and our G5 Team exemplifies the best of medicine—proof of what the brightest minds coupled with the kindest hearts can do to carry a family through a very difficult journey. Each time we touched base, we could feel their sincerity—in their empathy, concern, sense of urgency, and tenacious efforts in trouble-shooting at each turn. Thank you from the bottom of our hearts. Thank you for our miracle.

— The Blitstein Family

### OPPOSITE PAGE:

#### STANDING FROM LEFT:

Wael Ghali, MD, Grandson Ty, Son Michael, Daughter-in-law Mona, Grandson Cole, Doug Ross, MD

#### SEATED: Barry & Bonnie Blitstein

#### SEATED ON PORCH FROM LEFT:

Yve Massre, RN, Toni Higgins RN, BSN-BC, Lauren Russo, MSN, RN

#### NOT SHOWN:

Niece Frannie Kronenberg, MD, Grandchildren Emily and Matthew, Daughter Shari, Son-in-law Glenn

PLEASE NOTE: Due to camera angle, subjects appear closer than they are. Social distancing was observed for this photo.





## From the **Frontline** TO THE **FRONT PORCH**

### Grateful Patient Richard Ceralde

When Richard Ceralde, a healthy 37-year-old man, began experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 for a few days, he asked his sister Maria, who is a healthcare worker, to drop him off at Monmouth Medical Center (MMC). Within 24 hours of admission, he required intubation and was transferred to the ICU.

Richard spent 25 days on a ventilator before he was successfully extubated. According to Richard, "I was really confused when I woke up and thought I had been asleep for 3 days. The nurses and doctors updated me on my condition. I was scared, no one could visit me, but I remember the nurses who held my hand and whose prayers gave me calm and peace."

Over the course of the next 15 days, the nursing staff, led by Lauren Russo, saw to it that Richard received physical therapy, speech therapy and nutritional support to rehabilitate him and renew his strength after spending such an extensive time in the hospital.

Lauren said, "Richard was working hard, but he was homesick. Isolation and extended care can be very lonely. His progress was limited most by his ability to eat. After many discussions, we were able to approve home cooked food for Richard from his sister Maria. She cried tears of joy that she could drop off home cooked meals for Richard that, ultimately, gave him the push he needed. From there his progress continued daily, much to the delight of his entire care team."

Richard made great progress, and, after 45 days, was able to be discharged into Maria's care. As he left MMC, nurses, case managers, social workers, providers and physical therapists lined the hallway to wish him well on continuing his journey to good health.

Today, Richard is feeling better, getting stronger and recovering well at home. "I am very thankful to my family and friends who supported me. I am so fortunate to have had the best care at MMC. My family and I will never forget all the efforts, care and compassion from the nurses and doctors that treated me. They helped me survive. They never gave up on me and I could not have done it without them. Words cannot express my heartfelt gratitude."

**"Meeting Richard and his family was a day I will always remember. It was a true gift for me."**

— Yve Massre  
MMC Nurse

**"It was truly a blessing to witness a happy ending. I was able to see that our hard work was worthwhile because it enabled our patients to make it back home to their families who love and need them."**

— Joy Aschettino  
MMC Nurse

OPPOSITE PAGE:  
TOP ROW: MMC Nurses Yve Massre, RN and Joy Aschettino, RN,, BSN  
FOREGROUND: Richard Ceralde with his sister Maria Leah De Castro,  
brother-in-law Kyle De Castro and niece Adia De Castro.

PLEASE NOTE: Due to camera angle, subjects appear closer than they are.  
Social distancing was observed for this photo.





## Grateful Patient Gabrielle Mastrocola

### MMC Nurse Becomes COVID-19 Patient

Gabrielle Mastrocola never thought that becoming a nurse would immerse her in the middle of a pandemic. Although her initial reaction, like that of so many others, was fear, she nonetheless believed that she was ready to face the challenges of caring for COVID-19 patients.

Things began to change for her on April 3 when she developed a fever of 102.3. According to Gabrielle, "I was scared and got tested for COVID-19 immediately. However, the test came back negative. For weeks, I endured relentless high fevers. After experiencing shortness of breath and a cough, I was re-tested. Consequently, I learned that I had developed pneumonia. Eventually, I had to come to the hospital because I could no longer manage my symptoms at home."

As a result of working in the Emergency Department for two years, Gabrielle said that admittance to the hospital as a patient was stressful and strange. However, she was greeted with love and support, exemplified by a sign hanging on her door that read, "We Love You Gabby." It was determined that her condition would require her admission to the hospital. This gave her comfort, knowing she could return to the unit she worked on not as a nurse, but as a patient, and to be cared for by her "work family."

"Unfortunately, my condition slowly deteriorated," Gabrielle said. "My fevers would not break and my shortness of breath only got worse. When my second test was negative, I became confused and scared, and I began to really fear for my life. The only thing that kept me going was the support, incredible care, and love from my coworkers who were now my caregivers."

"It was her third test that confirmed her fears and finally came back positive. Dr. Aquillino, who she knew well, started treatment immediately. Within days, Gabrielle turned a corner and began to see daily improvement. Finally, the day came when she was strong enough to return home. Upon her discharge, a large crowd of her peers applauded her on her way out. "I cried the whole way down to the car. I was so humbled to have so many people cheering me on," Gabrielle said.

**"Having COVID-19 very much amplified the empathy I already had for patients. I now understand how it feels to be isolated in a room, unsure of the status of my health and even my life. Having been in their shoes, I now take more time to listen to my patients. Importantly, I am increasingly aware of how incredible the doctors and nurses truly are having been the recipient of their care. I am in awe of our team at MMC."**

— Gabrielle Mastrocola  
MMC Nurse



PICTURED: Gabrielle Mastrocola, RN and Luis Soto

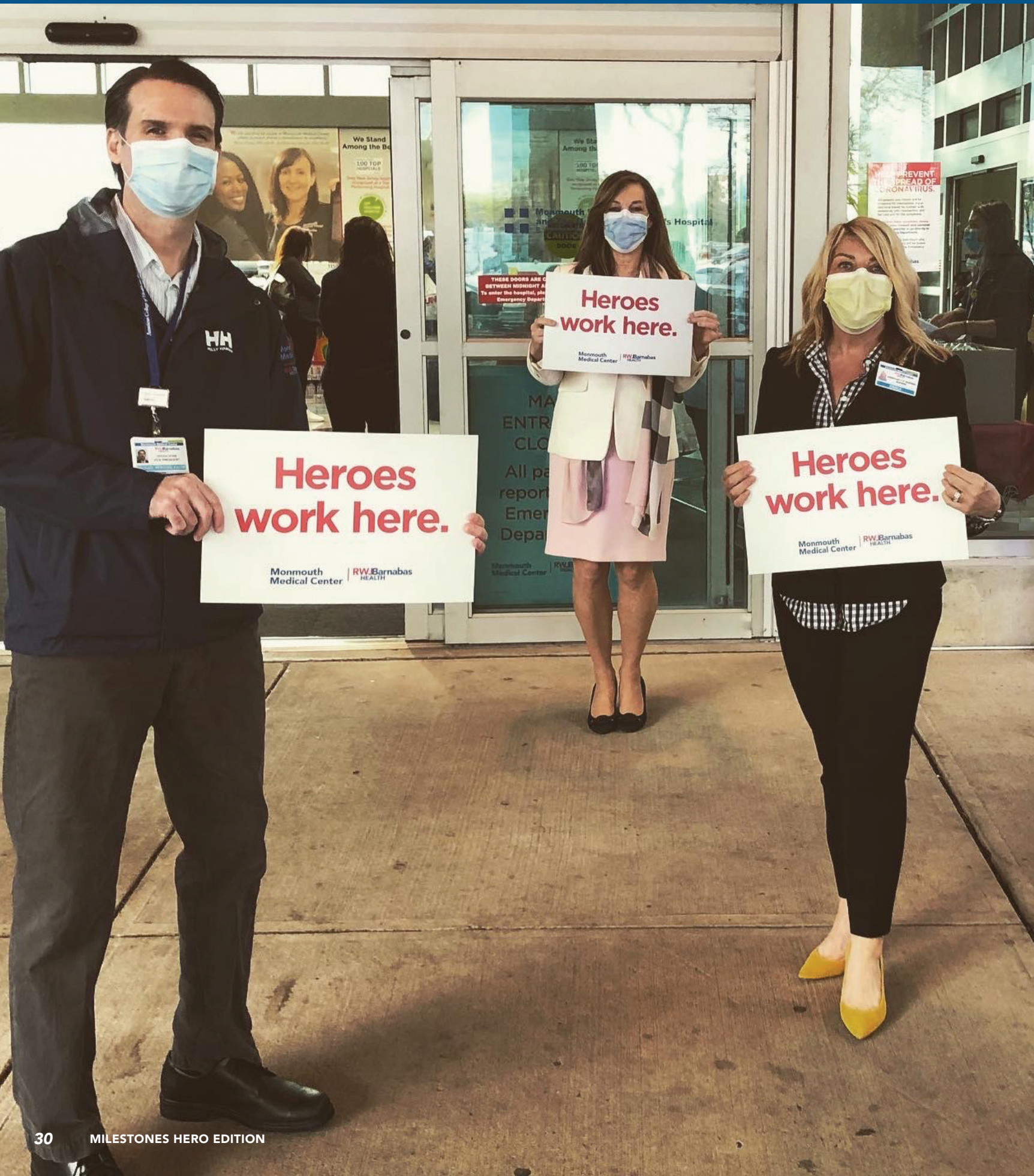
PICTURED ON OPPOSITE PAGE: Gabrielle Mastrocola, RN







PICTURED FROM LEFT: Mike Perdoni, VP Operations, MMC  
Diann Johnston, Chief Nursing Officer, MMC  
Darla Harmer, Assistant Vice President, Nursing, MMC



# Celebrating Our Heroes

## MMC Says THANK YOU to the Frontline Team

On Wednesday, April 15th and Thursday, May 14th, Monmouth Medical Center and Monmouth Medical Center Foundation held a "Clap Out" during shift change to show the gratitude and continued support for those on the frontline team of the coronavirus battle. The Management Team, along with other staff members, clapped and cheered the healthcare warriors as they entered or exited their shift.

In a show of support, healthcare workers received "MMC Hero" windbreakers and thank you cards from the community. The healthcare workers also received lawn signs for their homes designed by local children that expressed their gratitude and apprised passerby, "A Hero Lives Here."

The staff was incredibly appreciative during these truly moving evenings where there were lots of tears intermixed with uplifting moments when everyone realized they were saving lives everyday.

"On January 15, 2020, team Monmouth Medical achieved Magnet Recognition with 7 Exemplars. I didn't think I could be prouder of this team. Shortly thereafter, these elite Magnet professionals were transformed into COVID-19 warriors. They are true Heroes that I am humbled to lead. I am so proud, so inspired by the Heroes of Monmouth Medical Center. God bless them and keep them safe."

— Diann Johnston  
VP of Patient Care Services  
& Chief Nursing Officer

PICTURED BELOW: MMC Heroes along with local first responders





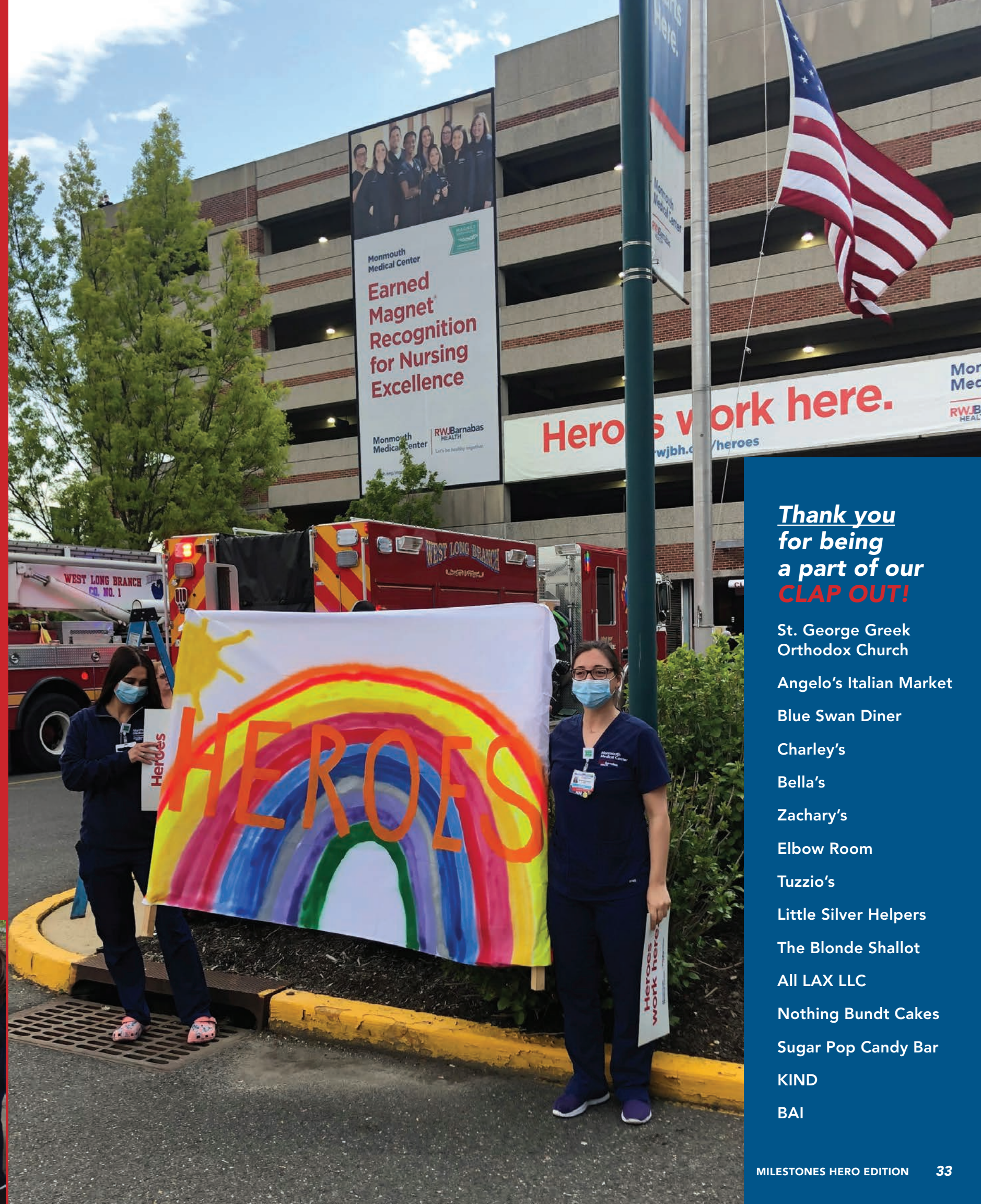
PICTURED: Members from All LAX with MMC Team



PICTURED: MMC Frontline

PICTURED BELOW FROM LEFT: Eric Carney, President and CEO of MMC along with Margaret Fisher, MD, Medical Director, The Unterberg Children's Hospital at MMC Clap In and Clap Out MMC Heroes

PICTURED BELOW FROM LEFT: Diann Johnston, Chief Nursing Officer with MMC Frontline Team



***Thank you  
for being  
a part of our  
CLAP OUT!***

St. George Greek  
Orthodox Church

Angelo's Italian Market

Blue Swan Diner

Charley's

Bella's

Zachary's

Elbow Room

Tuzzio's

Little Silver Helpers

The Blonde Shallot

All LAX LLC

Nothing Bundt Cakes

Sugar Pop Candy Bar

KIND

BAI



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- Elliot Douek
- Heather and Michael Fallas
- Jamie and Eddie Fallas
- Marcy and Steven Feldman & Family
- FLAG (Front Line Appreciation Group): Oceanport & Monmouth Beach
- Ivee and Samuel Fromkin
- Suzette and Gregory Fromkin
- Michelle and Victor Gindi
- Dr. Gregory A. Greco & Daniel P. Ranger & the Staff of Monmouth Plastic Surgery
- International Flavors & Fragrances
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- Mike Jensen, US HomeMed
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- The Timothy J. Piazza Memorial Foundation
- Kevin Tsay, President SimplyHelp Foundation
- VLS Pharmacy, Inc.
- Bill Vogel, Brielle resident, President Shore Manufacturing, Freehold



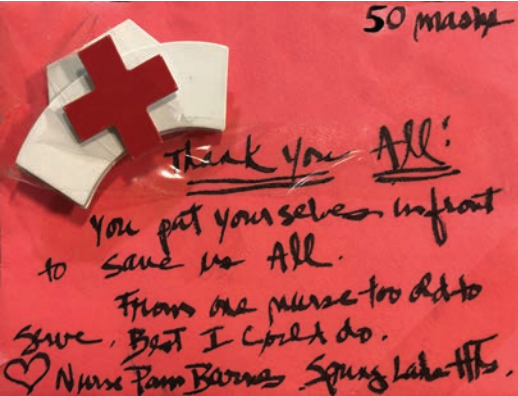
Jonnie G's pulls in for lunch.

On May 5th, Rose and Jon Grossman pulled up in their bright and shiny food truck with over 200 meals prepared and ready to feed our healthcare heroes. Service was provided with condiments but no contact. What a delicious way to express their gratitude for the frontline workers in the fight against the pandemic.



MMC Frontline receives dinner donation.

Feeling the Gratitude  
of Our Community



600+  
DONORS  
PROVIDED  
MONETARY  
SUPPORT



NEW  
EMPLOYEE PROGRAMS  
CHILD CARE, ELDER CARE,  
HOUSING

FOOD  
FOR THE  
STAFF  
450+ DONATIONS  
FROM DONORS, VENDORS  
& RESTAURANTS

1,600+ GOGGLES

THOUSANDS  
OF GLOVES, GOWNS &  
OTHER MEDICAL SUPPLIES



111,000+ MASKS

"The frontline workers are the REAL HEROES — the doctors, nurses and staff. They have the courage to risk their lives everyday to help others and that is phenomenal. I am just trying to give back in a small way to show my appreciation while assisting other businesses in the area. THANK YOU to the Monmouth Medical Team!"  
— Bill Vogel





OPPOSITE PAGE:  
PICTURED FROM LEFT:  
BBR2 Team

**BBR2 Team enjoys food delivery from Bill Vogel, Shore Manufacturing**

**Foundation Development Coordinator Gabriella Prieto accepts a flower donation from Amy O'Hara of [bearainbowproject.org](http://bearainbowproject.org)**



## Feeling the Gratitude of Our Community



PICTURED FROM LEFT:  
Dr. Stanley Lu, Vice-Chair of Radiology, Lydia Lu, Cheryl Solon, Director of Development, MMC, Jason Montero, Director, Distribution, MMC

**Dr. Stanley Lu & Lydia Lu: Hand-Made COVID Masks**  
Dr. Stanley Lu, Vice-Chair of Radiology, his daughter Lydia and their friends donated hundreds of hand masks to the frontline staff at MMC.

**Shari Sutton & Linda Hakim and Their Children Fuel the Frontline Heroes**  
After watching and hearing about "frontline heroes" and their unmatched dedication and support to all their patients and their families, Shari Sutton and Linda Hakim and their children decided they wanted to recognize and give thanks to the men and women who put their lives on the line. Collectively, their children Renee, Jackie, Carly, Savanna Sutton and Saulie, Noah, David, and Daniel Hakim came up with the idea of gifting them with a present. After all, everyone loves gifts, and it will surely put a smile on anyone's face. Together with their moms, they hand picked mugs and filled them with coffee packets and healthy snacks so that they can "fuel the frontlines."

PICTURED BELOW: MMC Nurses receive gifts from the Suttons





# Blue Knights and Former Big Blue Make Generous Donation to MMC

On April 22, Rasheed Simmons, a former New York Giant and current owner of Simply Southern in Belmar, NJ, visited Monmouth Medical Center (MMC). Rasheed was accompanied by Tony Zuzio, the director of the Jersey Shore Harley Owner Group and Blue Knights NJ XV. Their mission was to donate food and medical supplies to the frontline staff. Collectively, they contributed 12,000 gloves and over 100 meals.

Tony was humbled and honored to give back to the hospital during these unprecedented times. He has been supportive of MMC since 2010 when he initiated a toy drive for Unterberg Children’s Hospital patients that has netted hundreds of toys each year for the last 10 years. A couple of years ago, the Jersey Shore Harley Owner Group expanded this program by running a biannual event in June that raises thousands of dollars for our Cystic Fibrosis fund at the hospital.

MMC is truly appreciative for these local icons. More than just one-time donors, Rasheed and Tony have demonstrated longstanding community support.

OPPOSITE PAGE:  
Blue Knights ride for MMC



The Blue Knights serving warm meals on wheels.





SOPHIE, LORI, ALLAN AND JACK BAILEY



# The Bailey Family

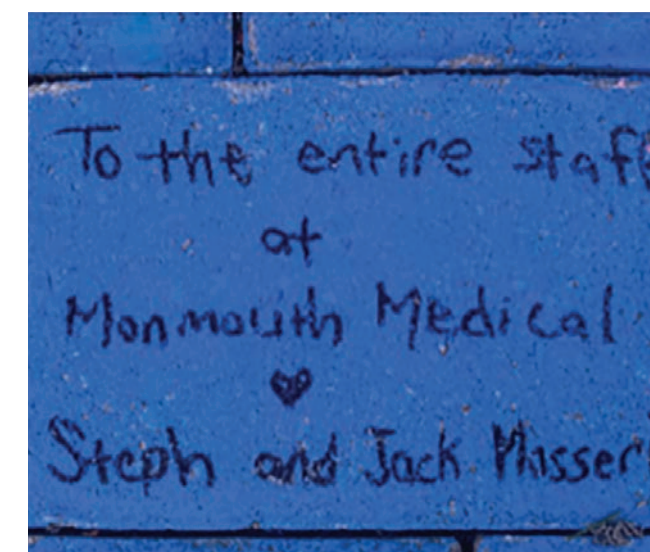
takes on a project of hope & love

## Paver Project supports front line and MMC'S Emergency Relief Program

The Bailey family of Brooklyn, NY, and Oakhurst, NJ, took on a project to send love to all medical staff during the COVID-19 pandemic. "Our idea snowballed into an amazing outpouring of love and charity combined into one," said Candice Bailey. The family decided to paint the pavers in their yard and then sell each one to community members in efforts to raise money for Monmouth Medical Center's (MMC) Emergency Relief Fund. "Each paver was a testament to many people's appreciation for all healthcare workers who put their lives on the line during COVID-19," Bailey says. Their children, Sophie age 10, Allan age 5, Lori age 8, and Jack age 3, worked tirelessly to paint and write out over 85 pavers (in between Zooms of course!). They posted on Instagram to help sell the pavers to their followers. Their efforts proved very successful. In total they raised \$3,312! This wonderful paver project shows the amazing appreciation from this family and their friends, and demonstrates the connection the community has with MMC.

**"Our idea snowballed into an amazing outpouring of love and charity combined into one."**

— Candice Bailey



**"Monmouth Medical has proven many times to be a source of comfort for my family and we've been treated there on many occasions. We are extremely grateful for their constant hard work and dedication. The staff is always so welcoming and warm."**

— Candice and David Bailey

**OPPOSITE PAGE:**  
PICTURED ABOVE: Lori  
PICTURED BELOW: Alan, Sophie and Lori



"Being a frontline hero initially I was petrified. But the enormous support from my team and community made it more manageable. It was so rewarding to see the patients getting better and discharged."  
— Sheeba Suresh

PICTURED: Hero Sheeba Suresh, RN with her husband Suresh Pandanthara, son Nikhil, daughter Nia



"Our daddy works hard every day to make sure people stay healthy!"  
— Logan and Owen Butala

"Todd's dedication to the healthcare system goes beyond what he does at work. His dedication to keep not only our family safe but everyone's family safe show the boys that they have a superhero for a dad."  
— Stephanie Butala

PICTURED: Todd Butala, Assistant Director of Pharmacy Operations with his wife, Stephanie, and sons Logan and Owen

# MMC Celebrates

# Heroes at Home



"Our 'HERO' at home does not consider himself a hero at all. Rather, Billy considers all frontline team members the 'TRUE HEROES'. Billy helped lead the Engineering Department in preparation of additional COVID-19 units and negative pressure rooms. Billy is always humble in his actions to help others out whenever possible."  
— Maria Clohosey

PICTURED: William Clohosey, Plant Operations Manager with his wife Maria, daughter Jillian, and sons Kevin and Patrick

"I was terrified, overwhelmed, stressed and often felt that what I was doing wasn't enough to help. However, my team and watching patients recover and walk out those doors made this fight worth it. We got through the battle together and I am beyond grateful."  
— Vanessa Bowles

PICTURED: Vanessa Bowles, Patient Care Associate with her parents, Martha and Russ





# Monmouth Medical Center | RWJBarnabas HEALTH

Foundation

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