

VISIONS



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www.saintclaresfoundation.org

† Saint Clare's Foundation

Our Mission

Saint Clare’s Foundation is dedicated to raising funds for Saint Clare’s Health System – assisting our healthcare system in its mission to nurture the healing ministry of the Church by bringing it new life, energy and viability in the 21st Century. Fidelity to the Gospel urges us to emphasize human dignity and social justice as we move toward the creation of healthier communities.



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Our Donors and Friends are Blessings

As the warm days of summer slowly yield to cool crisp days of fall, Saint Clare’s continues to advance a number of strategic initiatives designed to help the health system maintain a competitive edge while continuing to grow for the future. The entire organization has embraced a sense of innovation and has dedicated itself to meeting and exceeding the goals of our Strategic Plan.

Since the Strategic Plan was completed in May, 10 multi-disciplinary teams have been actively working on projects and initiatives that are tied directly into the Plan. Whether it is developing, launching or expanding a service or instituting nationally recognized best practices for care, Saint Clare’s is developing a firm foundation for future success and long-term viability.

We also welcome you to the new *Visions*. We have redesigned the publication to be more reader friendly and include more of the types of stories and information our

donors and friends are looking for. This newsletter will also move to a quarterly publication, allowing us to present you with more timely details on how your generosity is making a difference.



Saint Clare’s is in the midst of a true transformation, one that calls for each member of our family to enthusiastically do their part to ensure our success. Especially in a time of economic uncertainty, the fact that so many continue to support Saint Clare’s further defines the effect we have on our community. We realize that much of what we do would not be possible without the donors, friends, supporters and volunteers that embrace our organization. We deeply appreciate your generosity and thank you for being part of helping us to create healthier communities.

Steve Nicholl
Executive Director Saint Clare’s Foundation

Strategic Plan Outlines Goals for Future Growth

Last fall, Saint Clare's embarked on a strategic planning process, a collaborative effort between a Steering Committee, leadership from both Saint Clare's and Catholic Health Initiatives (CHI), and representation from a consulting agency. The result of many meetings, discussions and a significant investment of time has been a comprehensive Strategic Plan for Saint Clare's that was unveiled this past spring. The Plan outlines a number of Strategic Imperatives and provides goals that will ensure the future viability of Saint Clare's, improve its current financial and business situation, and position the system for long-term growth.

"Despite the current level of economic uncertainty nationwide and the complex healthcare environment in New Jersey, Saint Clare's success is based on its flexibility to expand programs, develop services, enhance technology and build infrastructure to meet the needs of our community," said **Leslie D. Hirsch**, President and CEO. "The Strategic Plan charts our course for the future, providing goals that will ensure business viability and growth."

This past summer, Saint Clare's received a boost to its long-term goals, with CHI's approval of a \$14.2 million



capital contribution towards a new operating room area at the Denville campus. This new state-of-the-art interventional platform will occupy Urban 4, with construction scheduled to begin in early 2010.

Many projects are being actively planned and executed across the entire health system, including our four main hospital campuses. In addition to the Denville operating room area, our flagship campus continues to add and expand services while improving the physical plant. The long-awaited Heart and Vascular Center at Saint Clare's opened to patients in late July, unifying our vascular departments into a single facility dedicated

(continued on page 4)

Dates and Events

Saint Clare's Employees & Friends Golf Outing

Monday, October 19, 2009
Picatinny Golf Club
Wharton, NJ

Saint Clare's Annual Spring Gala

Friday, March 19, 2010
Pleasantdale Chateau
West Orange, NJ

33rd Annual Johnny Rizzo Golf Outing

Wednesday, June 16, 2010
Skyview Golf Club
Sparta, NJ

For further details, call 973-983-5300
or visit www.saintclaresfoundation.org.

Strategic Plan Outlines Goals for Future Growth

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to providing comprehensive diagnostic and therapeutic services for the treatment of Peripheral Vascular Disease. Plans are also underway for renovation of the Denville Emergency Department, which will allow for state-of-the-art emergency services at all three acute care hospitals.

In Dover, planning continues to maximize usage of available space at the facility while growing and expanding many services. Early plans call for the expansion of available acute care beds and the conversion of the acute care units to private beds. A feasibility analysis is also in progress to determine the potential for separate, independent units for a combination joint and spine center and the Center for Weight Loss Surgery.

The Sussex campus continues its successful resurgence as a major care provider in the northern Sussex County area. In addition to the new CT technology installed last fall, the facility also enhanced its women's health services with the county's first digital mammography system, the gold standard for breast imaging. The facility also installed a bone density scanner for the screening and diagnosis of osteoporosis. Long-term planning is also underway for a potential new, larger hospital facility in the region.

The Behavioral Health programs and services will maintain operations at the Boonton campus. An active plan is being developed internally, and with the Joint Commission, to address infrastructure issues at the hospital facility, while long-range plans are in development for a new Boonton facility in the coming years.

"Even with the effective implementation of the Strategic Plan, our donors, friends, the community and all involved in our healthcare ministry continue to be integral to our overall success," concludes Hirsch. "Each person that touches the organization is a stakeholder in the process and we thank them for their ongoing support and partnership."

Following another successful *Johnny Rizzo Golf Outing*, tournament chairs **Bill Snouffer** and **Jack Rizzo** were recognized for their ongoing support and leadership of the event. Pictured are **Les Hirsch**, Saint Clare's President and CEO; **Bill Snouffer**; **Jack Rizzo**; and **Steve Nicholl**, Executive Director of Saint Clare's Foundation.



32nd Annual Johnny Rizzo Golf Outing Success

The 32nd Annual *Johnny Rizzo Golf Outing* was held on June 17 at a new venue, Skyview Golf Club, located in Sparta, New Jersey. The event was a success and raised more than \$26,000 net in support of the services at Saint Clare's Hospital/Sussex.

The event, held this year at an exciting new venue, welcomed over 140 golfers including boxing champion and legend **Gerry Cooney**. This year's event was sponsored by **Nielsen Automotive Group**.

"The success of this year's *Rizzo* is testament to the enduring legacy of the event, Johnny Rizzo's memory and the unyielding faith in Saint Clare's Hospital/Sussex by Jack Rizzo, the event's patriarch and Founder," said **Bill Snouffer**, Tournament Chair and Title Sponsor.

In addition to a great day on the links, participants also enjoyed a cocktail reception, dinner, skill prizes, raffle prizes, and a 50/50, which helped add to the day's success. Special thanks go to our hole-in-one automobile prize sponsors, **Franklin Sussex Auto Mall** and **Hackettstown Ford**.

Advanced Women's Health Technology a First for Sussex County

As part of our commitment to make the most advanced technology available to our patients, Saint Clare's Health System debuted its new Full-Field Digital Mammography (FFDM) system and announced the installation of a bone density scanner at Saint Clare's Hospital/Sussex in early July. Building on the success and proven track record of its women's health services, Saint Clare's now provides Sussex county residents with access to the county's first and only full digital imaging system for the breast.

As a FFDM system, the technology has the market's largest field of view, allowing for precision imaging of very diverse body types. The images are crystal clear, precise and easy to read, and offer an excellent view of the breast, especially near the skin line, chest wall and in women with diverse breast tissue types. The digital image is ready within 10 seconds, virtually eliminating wait time to determine if images are usable. Digital mammograms take as little as half the time of traditional scans, and if a second opinion is needed, the image can be sent electronically to a consulting physician instantly.

"We are pleased that we can offer this gold standard in breast imaging in a region that has only previously been served by conventional mammography technology," said Colleen Smorra, Director of Saint Clare's Diagnostic Imaging departments. "The digital mammography along with the bone density technology, allows women in the county to seek the most advanced diagnostic and screening technology under one roof. Early detection means a world of difference, and having the best technology available is part of the solution."



In addition to the digital mammography, the Sussex campus is now equipped with a bone density unit. Bone density studies are the most common diagnostic tool for osteoporosis and other bone abnormalities. This advanced scanning technology provides radiologists and physicians with a clear comparison of bone density over time.

"Patients in Sussex County will truly benefit from having this advanced technology available in their local area for routine screenings," says **John Fisher, MD**, an internal medicine physician practicing in Sussex Borough and a member of the Saint Clare's Medical Staff. "With these new technologies, enhancements and expanded geographic scope, Saint Clare's is truly the regional choice for high quality, individually focused women's health services."

Saint Clare's Auxiliaries Donate Time and Energy

Each of the three Saint Clare's Hospital Auxiliaries continue to work throughout the year to generate funding for our hospitals through various events and fundraisers.

The **Auxiliary of Saint Clare's Hospital/Denville and Boonton Township** continues to conduct fundraisers and

The *Baby Alumni* program, coordinated by the **Denville / Boonton Township Auxiliary**, raise funds to support the purchase of non-invasive monitoring for infant bilirubin levels. Pictured (l-r) are Teresa Rosario, Nursery Unit Secretary; Jennifer Waters, RN, Patient Care Manager of *The Katena Center*; **Sue Lee**, a Saint Clare's volunteer; and **Lucile Noonan**, Denville/Boonton Township Auxiliary President.



events in support of their capital campaign pledge to *The Roberta C. Ferguson Pediatric Center*. This active group will host their annual Fall Fashion Show and Luncheon on Thursday, October 22, 2009 at Zeris Inn in Mountain Lakes. Fashions for this year's show will be featured from the Bargain Barn, the Auxiliary's thrift shop and will be available for purchase.

The **Saint Clare's Hospital/Dover Auxiliary** will hold their annual Fashion Show on Saturday, October 10, 2009 in the cafeteria at Saint Clare's Hospital/Dover. The group recently completed their latest 50/50 raffle and held their annual Ice Cream Social over the summer. All proceeds from the Dover Auxiliary's events support their capital campaign commitment to the Emergency Department at Saint Clare's Hospital/Dover.

The **Auxiliary of Saint Clare's Hospital/Dover** recently presented a donation towards their *Miracles* capital campaign pledge in support of the Emergency Department. Pictured (l-r) Diane DiNunzio, RN, Assistant Patient Care Manager of Dover Emergency Department; Jan Bednar, RN, Director of Emergency Services; **Camille Milsom**, Dover Auxiliary President; Kimberly Armenti, Director of Saint Clare's Foundation.



The **Saint Clare's Hospital/Sussex Auxiliary** will once again hold its annual *Spirits of Autumn* event on Sunday, October 11, 2009 in the new Greenhouse at the Sussex County Fairgrounds in Augusta. The event features a wine tasting, art auction and antique and art appraisals by regional experts.

The **Auxiliary of Saint Clare's Hospital/Sussex** is preparing for their annual *Spirit of Autumn* fundraiser this October. Pictured (l-r) is the Sussex Auxiliary Spirit of Autumn Fundraiser Committee, including **Gail Clarke**, **Louise Basile**, Sussex Auxiliary Co-President, **Tammy Pastore**, **Ulla Abate** and **Glenita Meinhold** (Not pictured **Debbie Fisher**, Sussex Auxiliary Co-President).



The dedication of Saint Clare's Auxiliaries, and the support of their members, makes a lasting impact on the care our hospitals provide. It is through these dedicated volunteer groups that we can continue to fulfill our mission to care for all those who come to use for care, with the compassion that has been our hallmark for over 100 years.

President and CEO Forms New Leadership Team to Transform Vision into Reality

As part of efforts to ensure the success and viability of Saint Clare's during this time of strategic advancement and financial turnaround, **Leslie D. Hirsch, FACHE**, President and Chief Executive Officer, has assembled a new leadership team to lead the organization.



New members of the leadership team include **Gail Cohen**, Vice President for Human Resources; **Suellyn Ellerbe, RN**, Executive Vice President for Clinical Operations and Chief Nursing Officer; **Jan L. Bishop**, Vice President for Planning and Management; **Frederick (Fred) J. Hammond**, Executive Vice President for Finance and Administration and Chief Financial Officer; **Debra Babe**, Executive Director of Franciscan Oaks, and **Sister Susan Evelyn**, Vice President for Mission Integration.

These seasoned healthcare professionals join a pair of veteran Saint Clare's leaders in **Stephen J. Nicholl**, Executive Director of Saint Clare's Foundation and Vice President of Public Affairs, and **Alma Ratcliffe, MD**, Executive Vice President of Medical Staff and Business Development.

Gail Cohen, who has nearly thirty years of experience in human resources (HR) has been with Saint Clare's since July 13. Most recently she served at Catholic Health Initiatives (CHI), Saint Clare's national partner, as its Director of Human Resources Business Practices. She was instrumental in aligning Saint Clare's HR practices with CHI. Prior to CHI, she served at J&J Pharmaceutical and Janssen-Ortho, Inc.

Suellyn Ellerbe comes to Saint Clare's with over 30 years experience in healthcare leadership. She operated her own consulting practice for the last 10 years, assisting healthcare organizations with operational functions such as patient care re-design, strategic planning and more.

With 30 years of experience in healthcare finance and operations, Fred Hammond joined Saint Clare's in late March. Fred comes to Saint Clare's from the State University of New York (SUNY) Downstate Medical Center in Brooklyn. Fred is an accomplished financial professional who has worked with a number of other hospitals.

Jan Bishop joined Saint Clare's in mid-February. A registered architect and health planner with 25 years experience in planning and design, Jan has provided executive leadership of major institutional projects including healthcare, research and academic facilities.

Sister Susan Evelyn, RSM joined Saint Clare's during the summer of 2008, and plays a key role in assuring the culture of Saint Clare's remains grounded in CHI's core values of Reverence, Integrity, Compassion and Excellence. She also collaborates with others in the development of new ministries to promote healthy communities and to advance the advocacy agenda at the national, state and local levels. She comes to us after having ministered at Mercy Health Partners in Scranton, PA for eight years.

Debra Babe, who most recently served as the Senior Service Line Leader for Saint Clare's and previously as Marketing Director for Franciscan Oaks, was named Executive Director of Franciscan Oaks, Saint Clare's continuing care retirement community.

With the depth and breadth of experience of this new Leadership Team, Saint Clare's continues to further its commitment to grow, develop and change to meet the needs of our community.

Family's Lasting Memorial is a Gift to Patient Families for Years to Come

"He always took care of us. He always put everyone else first," recalls **Dee Abbate-Fetzer** about her beloved husband of 17 years, **Bernie Fetzer**, who passed away just more than a year ago after a valiant battle with cancer and other health issues. "He was truly a caretaker. He put everyone before himself."

Lifelong residents of Morris County, Dee and Bernie had come to know Saint Clare's as patients at the Dover and Denville hospitals throughout the years. In the last decade, as Bernie faced an array of medical problems, they turned to Saint Clare's for his care. During Bernie's final hospitalization in March 2008, Dee and countless numbers of friends and family would sit vigil in the family lounge in the Critical Care Unit (CCU) at Saint Clare's Hospital/Denville.

"The lounge became a gathering place for all who knew, loved and cared for Bernie," Dee remembers. "Though the lounge was not the most comfortable space, it gave us the chance to be together and to be near Bernie if we could not be at his bedside." After spending hours in the lounge, watching others come and go, it was apparent to Dee that something needed to be done. The lounge would become Dee's way of keeping Bernie's memory alive and serve as an enduring testament to the type of person he was to all who knew him.

Shortly after Bernie passed, Dee and her family approached Saint Clare's Foundation about what they could do to help improve the family waiting area. They wanted to help create a space where families of these extremely ill patients could gather in comfort, calm and peace. With active involvement and generosity by Dee and her family, the lounge was transformed last summer and the family attended a dedication ceremony around Bernie's birthday to celebrate his life. Those who use the room are now met with warm, soothing color tones, comfortable furniture to relax, a

flat screen television, a refrigerator and coffee machine, as well as other amenities. "The lounge has brought things full circle. For the families and staff, 'Bernie's Room' has all to do with the caretaking part of who he was," said Dee.



Dee Abbate-Fetzer and her granddaughter, Haley Alesi.

"The lounge became a gathering place for all who knew, loved and cared for Bernie," Dee remembers. "Though the lounge was not the most comfortable space, it gave us the chance to be together and to be near Bernie if we could not be at his bedside."

"The Fetzers are a loving family. Bernie was a wonderful man who spent a lot of time in Saint Clare's Critical Care Unit over the last few years of his life," said **Edward McManus, M.D.**, one of Bernie's doctors and Chair of the Saint Clare's Health System Board of Directors. "It is wonderful the family saw a need and made a difference. With the improvements, others can enjoy a warm and comfortable environment while visiting their loved ones."

"Families of patients have really appreciated the renovations to the waiting room. It is a comfortable place for them to wait, and has been a great comfort to have somewhere where some visitors can stay the night," said Kimberlee Gerardis, RN, Patient Care Manager for the Denville CCU. "The refrigerator and coffee machine are appreciated, allowing them to stay near the unit as they wait for physicians and other visitors."

"People can do little things that make a big difference," says Dee in offering guidance to others considering making a gift or creating change at Saint Clare's. "For me and my family, we found a way to help through Bernie's illness. Wherever you are, be aware of how you can influence change and make a difference."



Leave A Legacy

Saint Clare's Heritage Society

When you remember Saint Clare's in your will, you become a member of our *Heritage Society* entitling you to special recognition and benefits. Many of our donors have thoughtfully made provisions for Saint Clare's in their estate planning. By becoming a member of the *Heritage Society*, you will ensure that Saint Clare's will continue to bring quality healthcare to our community. For more information on how to become a member of the *Heritage Society*, call Saint Clare's Foundation's Planned Giving Office at 973-983-5305.

If you would like to remember Saint Clare's in your will, the proper legal wording for a bequest is: "I bequeath to Saint Clare's Foundation, 140 Diamond Spring Road, Denville, NJ 07834."

† Saint Clare's Foundation

Hospital-Based MRI Coming Soon to Denville

Bolstering its already extensive array of diagnostic imaging services, Saint Clare's will soon debut its first hospital-based magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) technology. Renovation and construction is well underway at Saint Clare's Hospital/Denville, and the new unit is expected to perform its first studies on patients in November. The cost for the facility renovation and construction is being supported through donations to Saint Clare's Foundation.

The MRI is a medical imaging technique most commonly used to visualize the internal structure and function of the body. MRI provides much greater contrast between the different soft tissues of the body than computed tomography (CT) does, making it especially useful in neurological, musculoskeletal, cardiovascular, and cancer imaging. Unlike CT, it uses no radiation, rather a powerful magnetic field to image the human body.

"MRI is a relatively young technology. It only has a history of about 30 years," says **Jeffrey Wexler, MD**, Saint Clare's Medical Director for Diagnostic Imaging. "Saint Clare's has always had access to community-based MRIs, but this technology will be the first hospital-based unit for the health system, providing easier access for inpatients and outpatients alike."

In addition to employing the latest in high-definition (HD) technology, the new unit also comes equipped with a specialized "sentinel table." With this specialized table, imaging capabilities can be expanded on many traditional scans and the unit can also be used to perform image-guided breast biopsies. According to Colleen Smorra, Director of Diagnostic Imaging, this technology is only found on a small number of units nationally and brings Saint Clare's to the forefront of MRI technology.



Leadership of Saint Clare's Health System and Saint Clare's Foundation pause a moment after viewing the construction progress on the new MRI facility at Saint Clare's Hospital/Denville. Shown are **Bruce Bott**, Vice Chair of the Saint Clare's Foundation Board; **Gale Bott**, Foundation trustee; **Basil O'Connor, Esq.**, Chair of the Saint Clare's Foundation Board; **Edward McManus, MD**, Chair of the Saint Clare's Health System Board of Directors; **Les Hirsch**, Saint Clare's President and CEO; and **Jan Bishop**, Saint Clare's Vice President of Facilities Management and Planning.

"Saint Clare's has always had access to community-based MRIs, but this technology will be the first hospital-based unit for the health system, providing easier access for inpatients and outpatients alike."

"With the large role that diagnostic imaging plays in today's healthcare, it is important that our community has access to the best equipment and technology available," said **Basil F. O'Connor, Esq.**, Chair of the Saint Clare's Foundation Board of Trustees. "It's rewarding to know that the Foundation and its countless donors and friends can have a role in making this project a reality."

Cancer Care Continues to Evolve to Meet the Needs of Patients

Cancer Care at Saint Clare's continues to look for more efficient and best practices to meet the needs and demands of their patients battling the disease. The latest developments in advanced oncology treatment at Saint Clare's include the anticipated opening of a renovated and expanded Infusion Center and the debut of Rapid Arc™, both at Saint Clare's Hospital/Denville.

The Infusion Center, a new chemotherapy outpatient service facility, is expected to open in early fall. The Center, which will be located near the Cancer Care outpatient center, was funded entirely through the generosity of donors to Saint Clare's Foundation.

"The new Infusion Center will streamline the medical oncology treatment for patients," said **Fazal Bari, MD**, of Oncology and Hematology Specialists. "The new facility will allow Saint Clare's medical oncologists easy access to patients and function as the perfect adjunct to the outpatient infusion areas available in Denville and at Parsippany Commons. The new infusion area

linear accelerator, and the treatment dose is continually shaped and reshaped according to the size, contour and position of the tumor within the body. This highly-precise, intensity-modulated radiotherapy (IMRT) treatment takes about 90 seconds and is delivered significantly faster than conventional technology.

"Rapid Arc allows us to deliver highly-precise radiation therapy treatments quickly," said **Timothy Chen, MD**, a Saint Clare's radiation oncologist. "The treatments target tumors accurately while sparing the surrounding healthy tissues. The speed of the treatments is easier on the patient and is found to be medically more effective. RapidArc is a perfect partner technology to our TomoTherapy system in Dover. With both technologies, our patients have access to the latest and greatest in radiation delivery in their communities."

"Receiving my treatment locally means a great deal to me," said **William Hudley**. "Saint Clare's makes it fast and convenient for me to receive my treatment. I am grateful to Saint Clare's and to our community for

making state-of-the-art technology and facilities available to their neighbors."



This fall, Saint Clare's will begin to offer advanced radiation therapy services in Denville with the addition of Rapid Arc™ radiotherapy technology from Varian Medical Systems.

will also alleviate space concerns on the oncology inpatient unit, allowing Saint Clare's to continue to improve patient and physician satisfaction alike."

This fall, Saint Clare's will begin to offer advanced radiation therapy services in Denville with the addition of Rapid Arc™ radiotherapy technology from Varian Medical Systems. With Rapid Arc, individual radiation treatments are completed with a single rotation of the

Friends of Saint Clare's (List reflects gifts received April 1, 2009 to June 30, 2009)

Saint Clare's Foundation gratefully acknowledges the generous support of our donors. Gifts to Saint Clare's ensure that the most technologically advanced medical facilities and equipment are available to you and your family when you need them.

In recognition of our generous supporters, Saint Clare's Foundation has established the *Urban Circle* giving club to acknowledge the work of former Saint Clare's President and Chair, Sister Mary Urban Harrer. Donors who contribute \$250 or more annually are entitled to the benefits of *Urban Circle* membership. In addition, special recognition is given to those who include Saint Clare's in their estate planning through our *Heritage Society*.

You can make a gift in tribute to a loved one, to honor a special occasion, or to memorialize a loved one or friend. You may also be able to increase the value of your gift to Saint Clare's Foundation. Many employers offer matching gift programs which double or triple their employees' charitable contributions.

For more information about how you can make a meaningful gift to Saint Clare's, please call the Foundation at **973-983-5300** or visit **www.saintclaresfoundation.org**.

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Pfizer Holds Book Drive

Haydee Schaefer,
 a grateful Saint Clare's patient,
 recently coordinated a book
 drive at her employer, **Pfizer Inc.**,
 to benefit Saint Clare's.
 Pictured (l-r) are **Nicole Nobles**,
Jagruhi Hiwale, **Haydee**
Schaefer, **Aruni Regismond-**
Pole, **Suzy Alex**, **Mike Kibby**,
 and **Doris Henderson**.



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Junior Volunteer Brings Cheer To Cancer Patients

Anna Kalavrezos, pictured here, is a two-year Saint Clare's junior volunteer, recently donated the fruits of her talents by presenting handmade angel towels, candles and books for cancer and senior patients.



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**Junior Youth Group donates to
 The Katena Center for
 Mother & Child**

**Temple Shalom of
 Succasunna's Junior Youth
 Group**

recently visited *The Katena Center for Mother & Child* with handmade knitted baby blankets and baby hats for patients. The Junior Youth group is pictured here during their recent visit to the Center, where they received a tour from Maureen O'Connell, RN (far right) of *The Katena Center*.



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Teen Makes Bracelets for Patients at Franciscan Oaks Health Center

Lizzy Ollo (l), a local resident, recently presented handmade bracelets to the patients at the Franciscan Oaks Health Center. Accepting the bracelets on behalf of the Center is Jennifer Bross, RN, Activities Manager at Franciscan Oaks Health Center.

MATCHING GIFTS

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ENDOWMENTS

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Corrections:

We inadvertently left out some names in our last issue. We apologize for any inconvenience this may have caused.

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SACRED STORY

What about Bob?

A new cancer patient, who was homeless, was to be starting chemotherapy. As his oncology social worker, I was faced with many seemingly irresolvable questions. Bob resided on the streets or stayed with a friend. All of his worldly possessions were stored behind the sign at the local McDonald's. I would provide as much support as would be accepted by the patient, but reiterated to all about a patient's right to self determination.

Transportation was arranged and Bob arrived for treatment in overused clothing with filthy fingernails. He was a small man with a big smile and a shuffling gait. His one demand was three cups of coffee with plenty of sugar.

My job as a social worker included more than my usual role of assisting with transportation, coping with illness and finding financial services. For Bob, I bought new clothes including underwear and socks, bought groceries and located a motel room, which Bob finally accepted once the snow came. Everyone in town knew Bob. When he did not show up for his treatment, a call would be placed to the McDonald's. The community driver and police would comb the streets looking for him.

Bob left an impression on the people around him, one that was surprisingly endearing, given his outside appearance and circumstances. Bob was always apologetic if he missed an appointment. He was estranged from his family due to a history of addiction and poor decision making. The only family contact he had was through the community social worker – where holiday gift cards and a few dollars would be sent from his two sisters in Florida.

As Bob's illness progressed, his hospital stays increased, causing him to become agitated and angry. Bob always regretted his behavior and voiced appreciation for all I did. Finally, with his permission, his sisters were located. They spent the last days of Bob's life with



him. They were both thankful that they were contacted and present when he passed. Three coffees always remained at bedside.

As an oncology social worker, I attend few funerals, but I needed to attend Bob's. The pews were partially filled with a mixture of people; his friends from the street, his community worker and drivers, a few business owners from town, and his sisters in the front row. The service was conducted by a minister who talked about Bob being a man who always followed the beat of his own drummer. The gratitude expressed by his sisters elicited a smile across my face as I recalled the shuffling image of a new patient, and everyone wondering, "What about Bob?"

Brandy Johnson, MSW, LCSW
Oncology Social Worker
Cancer Care at Saint Clare's
Denville, NJ

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