Making Spirits Bright

Teams across the hospital were determined to bring joy to their units. The Nursing and Patient & Guest Relations teams put out a call for artwork and kind words to display in patient rooms, and staff, their families, and even their children’s classmates rose to the challenge. Hundreds of cards, decorations, and letters “brought hope to patients during a potentially challenging period of isolation,” said Annelies Wood, MSN, RNC, WHNP-BC, a nurse in the Intensive Care Nursery. “It has been truly inspiring to see everyone come together during this difficult holiday season.”

The 5 Cathcart team also filled a wall by the nurses’ station with activities they’re looking forward to post-pandemic, like widespread vaccinations, well-deserved vacations, and long-overdue haircuts. “The wall boosted morale for everyone,” said nurse manager Angela Ross, MSN, RN, OCN. “It reminded all of us that even if we’ve been navigating COVID longer than we’d hoped for, there is an end in sight.”

Serving as Santa’s Helpers

For individuals struggling with food or housing insecurity, medical or mental health crises, or financial issues exacerbated by the pandemic, the holidays can feel more stressful than special. That’s why PAH made efforts to bring joy to their units. The Nursing and Patient & Guest Relations teams put out a call for artwork and kind words to display in patient rooms, and staff, their families, and even their children’s classmates rose to the challenge. Hundreds of cards, decorations, and letters “brought hope to patients during a potentially challenging period of isolation,” said Annelies Wood, MSN, RNC, WHNP-BC, a nurse in the Intensive Care Nursery. “It has been truly inspiring to see everyone come together during this difficult holiday season.”

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When a patient arrives at our Emergency Department after experiencing a stroke, every second counts. For every minute they remain untreated, their brain loses approximately two million neurons, making it absolutely critical for them to receive rapid, life-saving care. This past October, Pennsylvania Hospital’s interdisciplinary stroke team received several accolades from the American Heart Association/American Stroke Association in recognition of their vigilance and commitment to using the most up-to-date guidelines to prevent death, reduce disability, and improve the quality of life for our patients following a stroke.

PAH earned the Get with the Guidelines® Gold Plus Award for stroke care and secured “Elite” status on the Target: Stroke Honor Roll. To qualify for this advanced recognition, we were required to reduce door-to-needle times for patients being treated with tissue plasminogen activator (tPA) and to maintain at least 85 percent compliance for at least two years in each of the achievement measures.

We were recognized on the new Target: Type 2 Diabetes Honor Roll as well, which distinguishes programs that ensure patients with type 2 diabetes receive evidence-based care when hospitalized with stroke. These awards are only possible because of the outstanding collaborative efforts of our emergency medicine, neurology, cardiology, nursing, physical therapy, social work, diabetics management, and home health teams, all of which ensure that each patient receives personalized care at every stage of their treatment and recovery.

This is only one of the awards that our exceptional PAH team received in 2020. Some of our other achievements include earning another Get with the Guidelines® Gold Plus Award for heart failure, netting an "A" rating from the Leapfrog Hospital Safety Grade, and being recognized on Healthgrades’ list of America’s 100 Best Hospitals. I am enormously proud that PAH continues to lead in so many areas. While the New Year still demands our focus, fortitude, and flexibility, I am confident that all of us at Pennsylvania Hospital will continue putting forth award-winning efforts to keep our community healthy and safe.

The pantry was established last spring to help employees who are struggling with food insecurity due to COVID-19, whether because a family member lost their job or they’re experiencing another financial hardship. The pantry has received consistent donations since it opened, but in November, Ferrarello, Patty Inacker, DSW, MBA, administrator of the Behavioral Health Service Line, Carolyn Tobin, director of Food & Nutrition and Environmental Services, and Christine Tierney, RN, MSN, SPHR, Chief Human Resources Officer, announced a hospital-wide challenge to give the pantry a holiday boost.

Inspired by the season of giving and the spirit of friendly competition, the PAH community went above and beyond. For two weeks, departments hurried to fill bins, bags, and boxes with non-perishables and gift cards, eager to earn the winning trophy by collecting the most pounds of food per person on their team. On December 8, a representative of each team weighed their bounty on a large scale next to the Christ Healing the Sick in the Temple painting.

Altogether, PAH staff contributed more than 2,000 pounds of food and more than $2,500 in grocery gift cards to aid their coworkers in need. The Perioperative Materials Management team, led by Senior Director Feargal Roche, came out on top, donating 117.25 pounds of food and $400 in gift cards (calculated to equal an additional 200 pounds for the purpose of the charitable challenge).

“The pandemic’s impact on the local economy has been enormous, and members of the Pennsylvania Hospital team are not immune. The pantry is stocked by Penn staff, for Penn staff, and there are no questions asked—we just want to help,” Ferrarello said. “The challenge was a huge success, and what’s really amazing is that the donations haven’t stopped. We’ll be stocked for a while, but the bins across campus are still filling up! I’m humbled by the generosity shown across departments.”