This month, Penn Presbyterian Medical Center (PPMC) leaders initiated a historic partnership with the United States Navy. The agreement, signed by Kevin B. Mahoney, CEO of the University of Pennsylvania Health System (UPHS) and Rear Admiral Bruce Gillingham, Surgeon General of the Navy, marks the start of a unique three-year partnership that will integrate 11 members of the U.S. Navy with the PPMC Trauma Division.

The program, named The Naval Strategic Health Alliance for Readiness and Performance, is the first comprehensive partnership between the U.S. Navy and a civilian health system. The program aims to broaden members’ experience in a trauma setting between deployments and layer in team-based training with the goal of producing a unit that is prepared for rapid deployments. The Navy has selected 11 of their top members to form a team comprised of three physicians, three nurses, a physician assistant, two hospital corpsmen and a health care administrator. They will onboard into their respective clinical department as any Penn Medicine new hire would, and will fully integrate into PPMC and department clinical operations.

To celebrate this exciting partnership, PPMC leaders hosted RADM Gillingham and other members of the Navy’s Bureau of Medicine and Surgery for two days in September. The visit kicked off on Thursday, September 9, 2021, with an address from UPHS, PPMC, and Trauma Division leadership. Speakers included Mahoney, C. William Schwab, MD, the founding chief of Penn Medicine’s Trauma Program, a professor emeritus of Trauma Surgery, and a veteran of the Navy. Michele Volpe, FACHE, CEO of PPMC, and Gillingham.

After the remarks, Mahoney and Gillingham signed the agreement and embarked on a tour of PPMC. Over the two-day visit, Gillingham visited the Pennsylvania Hospital campus, the Penn Vet Working Dog Center, the Corporal Michael J. Crescenz VA Medical Center, the Penn School of Nursing, Penn’s hyperbaric chamber, the Penn Museum, and the ROTC Battalion. He also attended a meeting with the Veterans Care Excellence Program during his time in Philadelphia.

“Many members of the Penn Medicine community have ties to the military, both through their own service and the service of family members,” said Schwab, who led the efforts to establish the program. “Penn Medicine has a deep appreciation for the sacrifices involved in serving our country, and we’re honored to welcome the Surgeon General and the rest of the Navy team members to Penn Medicine.”

The Navy team officially joined the PPMC family in September. Welcome aboard!
GENE GOFMAN, ASSOCIATE CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER

Continued from front...

a suite of services to patients, from birth control consultations, to colposcopy, hysteroscopy, and ultrasounds, to other, minimally invasive surgeries for conditions like endometriosis.

While many PPMC patients come from the area surrounding Philadelphia, many of our patients are also University of Pennsylvania and health system employees. We want to encourage these employees, especially the ones here at PPMC, to utilize these services. Our providers are not only recognized as some of the best in the nation, but it’s also convenient and close to home and work.

We are committed to providing the best possible care to all patients, and making it as accessible as possible. This expanded approach to women’s health is an ambitious step toward reaching this extremely important goal.

DIFFERENCE MAKERS

BRINGING COMFORT ON SOMEONE’S WORST DAY

It is unfortunately common at Penn Presbyterian Medical Center (PPMC) to hear the wail of a siren indicating a police drop-off, when officers bring victims of gun violence to the Emergency Department directly, rather than waiting for an ambulance. However, Christian Eyrich, an Emergency Department technician, was surprised one night in June to find a two-year-old boy in the back of the vehicle.

“Att first, I didn’t realize the child was also injured, and was focused on removing him from the chaos so we could treat the adults that came with him,” Eyrich recalled. “But when I realized he was injured as well, I picked him up and rushed him into the trauma bays.”

Eyrich, a father of four himself, knew how frightening the trauma bay could be to a child, and set out to reassure and distract him from the chaos until his mother arrived.

“I didn’t want him to be scared of all the people and noises around him. I pulled my mask down momentarily so he could see my full face, and a nurse lent us her phone so I could pull up Disney+ and distract the little boy,” he said.

Eyrich typically does at least one shift a week in the Trauma Division, and is not unfamiliar with treating victims of gun violence, but this incident struck particularly close to home for him. “I have four kids at home, two of whom are around the same age as this boy,” he shared. “I’ll have in this family’s situation, I would want someone to take care of my kids like this.”

“It is often the mentality of the emergency room provider to constantly be thinking about the next patient, especially when we are busy,” said a nurse who worked alongside Eyrich that night. “But Christian is different. He truly, genuinely cares, and he wants to make everyone’s day better. And on this day, he knew the best way to help everyone in the department was to go the extra mile to make sure this little boy felt as safe as possible on the worst day of his life.”

Eyrich celebrated five years at PPMC this August, and plans to continue offering his compassionate care in new ways in the future. He is currently studying to become a nurse.

MAKING THE NEIGHBORHOOD GREENER

Vernell Stewart, a Central Processing tech, has been working at Penn Presbyterian Medical Center for 39 years. And for more than half of that long tenure, she has been cleaning up her neighborhood in West Philadelphia outside of work. Twenty years ago, she started cleaning up and maintaining an empty lot on her block, and her neighbors suggested she become the block captain. Today, she’s still committed to making her neighborhood a beautiful place.

This spring, a Penn Medicine colleague spotted her cleaning up “The Triangle” at Union Street and Sloan Street near Penn Presbyterian Medical Center, and suggested she apply for a Penn Medicine CAREs Grant to fund adding flowers, shrubs, and repairing the sidewalk.

“I was so excited to find out I got the CAREs grant,” Stewart said. “It’s so important for me to give back to the community, and once it’s repaired, this Triangle will be the perfect spot for our neighbors to read, meet with their friends, or even exercise.”

Are you interested in a Penn Medicine CAREs grant to support your own volunteer work in the community? Visit PennMedicine.org/community to learn more.