

 DANBURY HOSPITAL
DEVELOPMENT FUND, INC.



2008
REPORT TO DONORS

 DANBURY HOSPITAL
DEVELOPMENT FUND, INC.

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Achieving more because of you.





Richard Jabara, *Chairman*
Danbury Hospital Development Fund, Inc.

Catherine Halkett, *President*
Danbury Hospital Development Fund, Inc.

Frank J. Kelly, *President/CEO*
Danbury Health Systems, Inc. and
The Danbury Hospital

“Thank you. Because of you, we are able to aim high and achieve more every day.”

PHOTOS AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Cover: (top, left to right)
Byron Thomas, MD, *Medical Associates of Danbury*
Janaka Periyapperuma, MD, *Chief Resident, Department of Medicine, Danbury Hospital*
(center)
Pamela Morganti, Robert Morganti
(bottom)
Laura Choi, MD, *Medical Director, Center for Weight Loss Surgery*

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Catherine Halkett, *President, Danbury Hospital Development Fund, Inc.*
Frank J. Kelly, *President and CEO, Danbury Health Systems, Inc. and The Danbury Hospital*

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Kathryn McDonnell, RN, MSN, CCRN-CSC, *Clinical Administrator, Nursing Operations*
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ANNUAL REPORT TO DONORS 2008

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Leadership Letter



January 2009

Dear Friends,

Every day a life is transformed at Danbury Hospital. This transformation is heard in the cries of a healthy newborn and in the tears of joy when a patient is pronounced cancer-free. It's seen in the sincere compassion our staff provides. It's what sets Danbury Hospital apart.

Within these pages, you'll find some of the genuine and remarkable stories representing those who have been transformed by the extraordinary care at Danbury Hospital.

You will be inspired by Fred M. Bering (pg. 2), whose long lost note from his father motivated him to fund an endowed chair for laparoscopic surgery. You will be impressed by the unique collaboration between Moreen Donahue, DNP and Harold Spratt (pg. 5), which produced The Harold, Myra, and Cora Spratt Center for Nursing Education and Research. And you will be touched by the Merullo family (pg. 12) who, having been affected by cancer several times, are dedicated in their volunteer efforts for the Annual Danbury Hospital Cancer Golf Tournament. Although the individual circumstances were different, each donor's and volunteer's objectives were the same—to express sincere gratitude for the exceptional level of care they experienced at Danbury Hospital, and to help others in the community.

This year we raised over seven million dollars for Danbury Hospital, making 2008 our most successful year to date. Without your support and generosity, this would not have been possible. While donations come in many forms—from both large and small monetary contributions to countless hours of time and support from volunteers—every gift directly impacts our patients on a daily basis. We have made cutting-edge technological advances, fostered clinical education and created inroads in providing an exceptional level of patient care. Much was accomplished, but each year the needs of our patient community change and grow, so we continue to aim high. Thanks to you, we are able to do just that.

Many patients and family members have expressed appreciation for the higher level of care they have received at Danbury Hospital, without needing to leave their community. Our staff has shared their heartfelt gratitude for the ability to practice the kind of world-class medicine, and deliver the kind of care they only dreamed of when they embarked on their careers as caregivers.

On behalf of our patients, staff and the Hospital, we say “thank you.” Because of you, we are achieving more...every day.

With gratitude,

Frank J. Kelly, President/CEO
*Danbury Health Systems, Inc. and
The Danbury Hospital*

Richard Jabara, Chairman
Danbury Hospital Development Fund, Inc.

Catherine Halkett, President
Danbury Hospital Development Fund, Inc.

A Higher Level of Expertise



Fred M. Bering escaped Nazi Germany when he was just 17 years old, taking with him a few personal belongings and a letter from his father, whom he never saw again.

Nearly 70 years later, as he was preparing to sell his Connecticut house, he found the letter, which read, “If you should ever find yourself in a position where you have more than you need, think of those who are less fortunate.”

At once, Fred knew he could pay it forward, carrying out his father’s wish, with Danbury Hospital as the beneficiary. The care and compassion he and his late wife, Irmi, had received at Danbury Hospital through the years resonated with him, just as his father’s words did.

“Nothing compares with the spirit you find among the nurses and doctors at Danbury Hospital,” Fred has said. “The care is superb. I hope this contribution will benefit the community and assist the Hospital in attracting the finest physicians in the country.”

With his generous gift of \$2 million, Danbury Hospital established the *Fred and Irmi Bering Chair for Laparoscopic Surgery*, naming Laura Choi, MD, FACS, general surgeon and medical director of the Center for Weight Loss Surgery, as its first Chair.

Although Dr. Choi is in the early part of her career, she is considered by many to be a rising star in her field. “Dr. Choi exudes purpose, confidence and direction,” says Dr. Pierre Saldinger, *The Carmen L. and Peter Buck Chair of Surgery*. “Her speed and accuracy come together in a no-frills technique, which is what you want in surgery. Her patients and staff adore her, yet she is incredibly humble.”

The field of laparoscopic surgery involves ever-emerging technology, with advances being made every day to make it more efficient and less invasive. This endowment gives Dr. Choi and her team, who speak reverently about her extraordinary skill and compassion, the time and resources to access the latest research and medical developments.

For example, Dr. Choi has already attended several conferences, including one on surgical outcomes research, which teaches medical staff how to collect data and look for the safest and most efficient surgical outcomes. Dr. Choi will be utilizing the training from these courses to further educate her staff, which will give our patients more hands-on care both pre- and post-operatively. The cutting-edge technology, she adds, gives patients more directed and precise care that will eliminate many problems, lessen side effects and shorten recovery time.

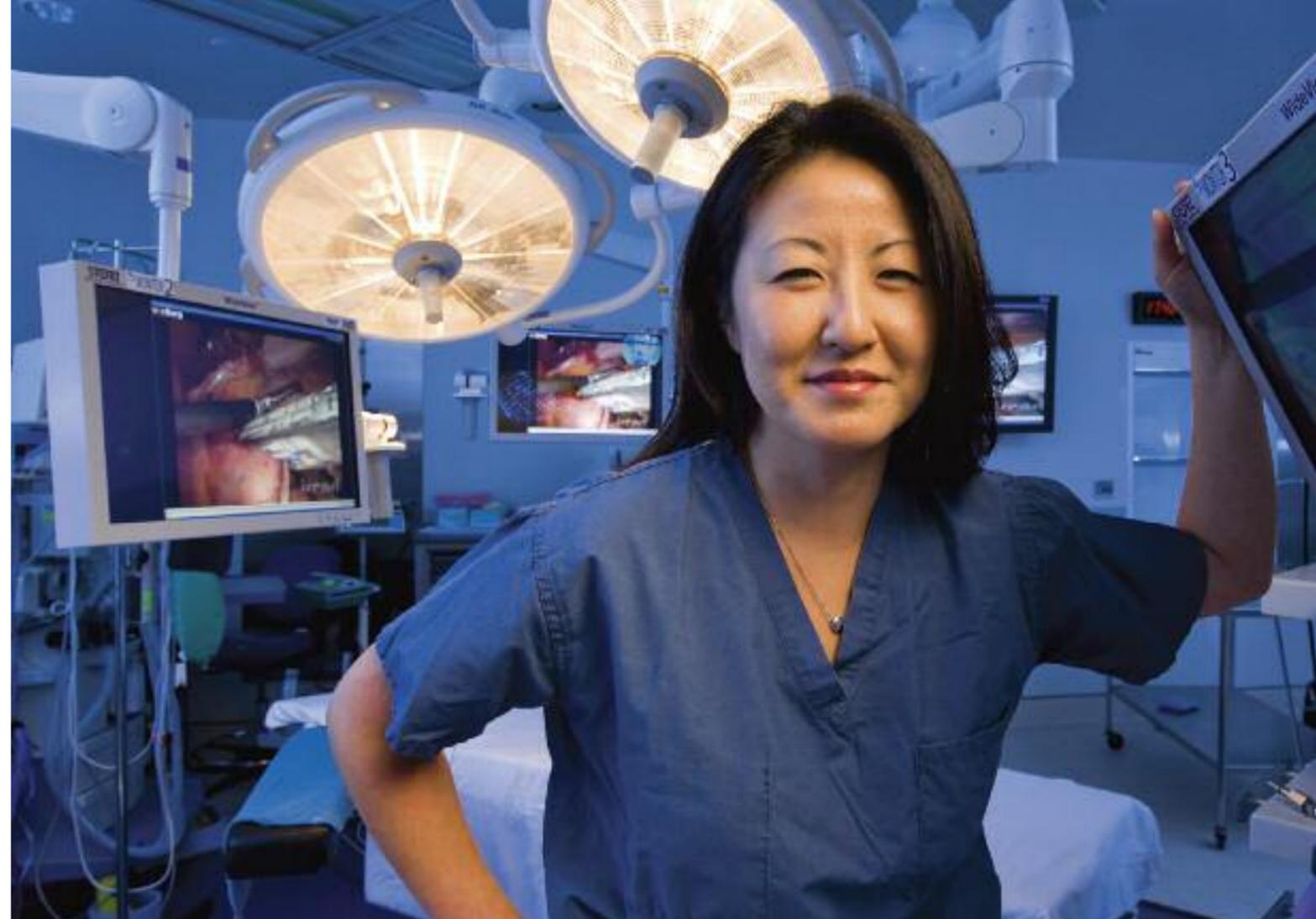
Dr. Choi is excited about being able to respond to evolving community needs while keeping pace with rapid developments in the field of medicine.

Just as Fred Bering emigrated to America and fulfilled his father’s wishes, so too has Dr. Choi realized the dreams of her immigrant parents, who longed for better opportunities for their daughters, thus making the endowment of the Bering Chair even more poignant.



Says Dr. Choi, “Mr. Bering is in that special position to be able to help others on a grand scale and we are deeply grateful.”

And one thing is always certain—when remarkable medical talent is recognized by exceptional donors, it is the patients who win.



“Nothing compares with the spirit you find among the nurses and doctors at Danbury Hospital. The care is superb.”

— Fred Bering

“We are deeply grateful that Mr. Bering has chosen to honor our work with such a generous gesture,” Dr. Choi says. “This gift will enhance the Hospital’s laparoscopic surgery program by supporting post-graduate medical education, clinical research, program development and other activities.”



The Spratt donation is unique, in that it focuses on the nursing profession by supporting learning, research and professional development.

A Higher Level of Nursing

Advances in medicine have allowed people to live longer than ever before. Yet with longevity comes a greater need for nurses and the special brand of care they give.

Moreen Donahue, DNP, RN, NEA-BC knew this. In her position as chief nurse executive and senior vice president of patient care services at Danbury Hospital, she also knew that a clear link had been shown between higher levels of nursing education and better patient outcomes. For a long time she had been contemplating ways to help the Hospital further educate, reward and retain its outstanding nurses.

Enter Harold Spratt. During a reception, he and Dr. Donahue began to chat. When he discovered Dr. Donahue's job title, he recounted how positively nurses had impacted his family, particularly when his late wife, Cora, was battling cancer.

Dr. Donahue then shared her idea of infusing fresh talent into the profession by empowering Danbury nurses through education, research and mentoring opportunities. Harold understood the potential effect such a project would have on the nursing profession at Danbury Hospital. He and his wife, Myra, wanted to help.

So, with Dr. Donahue's vision and Harold and Myra's generous gift, *The Harold, Myra, and Cora Spratt Center for Nursing Education and Research* was born.

The Spratt donation is unique in that it centers on the nursing profession. Through the Center, which focuses its programs on learning, research and professional development, several nurses participate in advanced degree programs in conjunction with local universities, and the wheels are in motion to offer a Doctorate of Nursing Practice (DNP).

Veronica Passaro, RN, BSN who works in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit, is working to publish an article under the leadership of Dr. Joyce Fitzpatrick, the Center's first visiting scholar. "When nurses are willing to advise and mentor other nurses, it's a wonderful thing," says Veronica.

"Keeping the nurses invigorated about what they do every day and communicating to them that the institution cannot do without them is the key to retaining nurses, and that is what the Spratt Center is doing," says Kathryn McDonnell,

RN, MSN, CCRN-CSC, a clinical administrator. Kathryn, who is pursuing her DNP, contributes 16 hours each week to the Hospital, and in return, is provided with full tuition reimbursement. Dr. Donahue adds, "It's an environment where we can continue to learn and grow."

For nurses like Peggy O'Shea, RN, who is the Clinical Leader of Complementary Medicine, research is key for the highest level of patient care. Peggy is working with Dr. Fitzpatrick to implement a study on the impact that Mindfulness Meditation has on a select population of patients. "I'm very excited to be able to conduct research that will support the effectiveness of eastern medicine modalities we use with our patients. Many of these modalities have been in use for thousands of years." Peggy explains.



International collaborations through the Center promote shared learning on a global level, as well. "Dr. Donahue is so proud of the nurses," says Kathryn. "She wants to showcase to the world what we're doing, and she wants us to know what our contemporaries are doing across the globe."

The nurses who have taken advantage of the multitude of programs *The Spratt Center* offers, and those who will do so in the future, are grateful to Harold and Myra Spratt for their generosity. "I have never been the recipient of something that has touched me so personally and has enabled me to pursue my dreams," says Kathryn.

That's exactly what Dr. Donahue and the Spratts intended when they came together to bring a higher level of opportunities to the extraordinary nurses at Danbury Hospital.

A Higher Level of Trust



The Morgantis' unrestricted gift will enable Danbury Hospital to stay at the forefront of rapidly-changing, state-of-the-art technologies and continue to attract the best and brightest to its medical and nursing staff.

Robert and Pamela Morganti have always believed in Danbury Hospital. For nearly 50 years, the firm founded by his family, The Morganti Group, has worked together with the Hospital's leadership to build, expand and renovate several buildings at the Hospital, including The Praxair Cancer Center. "Danbury Hospital has always been a part of my life," says Robert. "I've seen it grow to be a very, very good hospital and I am proud that my family helped build it."

Throughout the years, the Morgantis witnessed how their work furthered improvements throughout the Hospital. "Danbury Hospital has become an outstanding medical center. They are truly a cut above," says Robert. Reflecting on his experiences as a patient in the Hospital, Robert recalls, "The nurses I had here were excellent and the doctors were superior."

Trust. It's what led the Morgantis to give an extraordinary \$1 million donation to Danbury Hospital, without any stipulation or specific cause earmarked. Their deep respect for the Hospital's goals and belief in the superior care Danbury provides motivated them to make their gift unrestricted, knowing that the money would be responsibly

put to use by hospital leadership to address priorities and foster research, educational and technological advances.

In appreciation of their gift, Danbury Hospital named *The Robert J. and Pamela Morganti Center for Wound Care and Hyperbaric Medicine* in their honor. The Center treats more than 1,500 wounds per year, using hyperbaric oxygen therapy to speed up the healing process for severe wounds, resulting in shorter hospital stays and amputation prevention for diabetic patients.

It is the Morgantis' hope that their donation will enable Danbury Hospital to stay at the forefront of rapidly-changing, state-of-the-art technologies and continue to attract the best and brightest to its medical and nursing staff. Robert, however, clearly doesn't think he did anything extraordinary. "It's wonderful we can contribute this gift to the Hospital knowing that it will help," he says.

Unrestricted giving.

No conditions.

No requirements.

And no limits to what can be accomplished.



A Higher Level of Community



Alexandra Vitolo kept a small tree on her desk that she decorated for every holiday: Halloween, Valentine's Day, even St. Patrick's Day. A resident of Ridgefield and a recent graduate of Gettysburg College, Alexandra had recently begun her career at UniversalProcon in Stamford as an event planner.

In just 15 months with the company, she had already been promoted and was considered a valuable team member. "She was definitely an up-and-comer," reflects Jennifer Cirillo, human resources manager at UniversalProcon. "She was so bright and enthusiastic about her job."

On a daily basis, Alex's co-workers remember how she brought a burst of sunshine into the office. "She had this way of lighting up a room and making people feel comfortable. She was absolutely beautiful, and there was something so down-to-earth about her," says Jennifer.

So when Alex died suddenly on Christmas Day 2007, it seemed fitting that her company and co-workers wanted to create something in her memory. "We wanted a living memorial, someplace that would be in bloom and beautiful, just like Alex was, but also a place where our employees could mourn," says Jennifer. "Alex was young and vibrant...so we wanted something living and vibrant."

Alex's co-workers considered planting a tree or setting up a fundraiser, but they wanted to work together and give back to the staff at Danbury Hospital, in appreciation of the care and support the Vitolo family received during Alexandra's final hours. UniversalProcon donated to a memorial fund set up by the Vitolos to create a bereavement room, but they felt there was more they could do at the Hospital.

Grace Linhard, Vice President of the Danbury Hospital Development Fund, suggested a piece of land at the Hospital's Medical Arts Center that would be perfect for a garden, and UniversalProcon and its employees agreed. "Planting a memorial garden was something we could do

together, getting our hands dirty and having a great experience as a group of friends," says Jennifer, "while creating a beautiful memorial for someone we cared about."

"The story of Alex's life and her passing not only impacted the hearts of our company, but those of the amazing staff at Danbury Hospital," Jennifer says. "For that reason, UniversalProcon and Danbury Hospital came together in what was a truly memorable and cathartic experience."

Jennifer recalls the cold, rainy day in October when they planted the garden and how, by the time they started, the sun had come out, which seemed symbolic to everyone present. "We were thinking that if Alex was with us, she would have been doing the rain dance, and if it was sunny, she'd be sunbathing her face," Jennifer says.

Situated on grounds in front of the Medical Arts Center, the garden is a spot of tranquility at the Hospital. A variety of lush roses and a large Japanese maple add color and shape, while a weeping blue atlas cedar and weeping white pine give the garden softness and serenity. "We wanted to plant it now so we could stay connected to it over the years," Jennifer says. "It's big enough that we can plant spring flowers, or even put lights on the trees during the holidays because if Alex was alive, that's what she would have done."

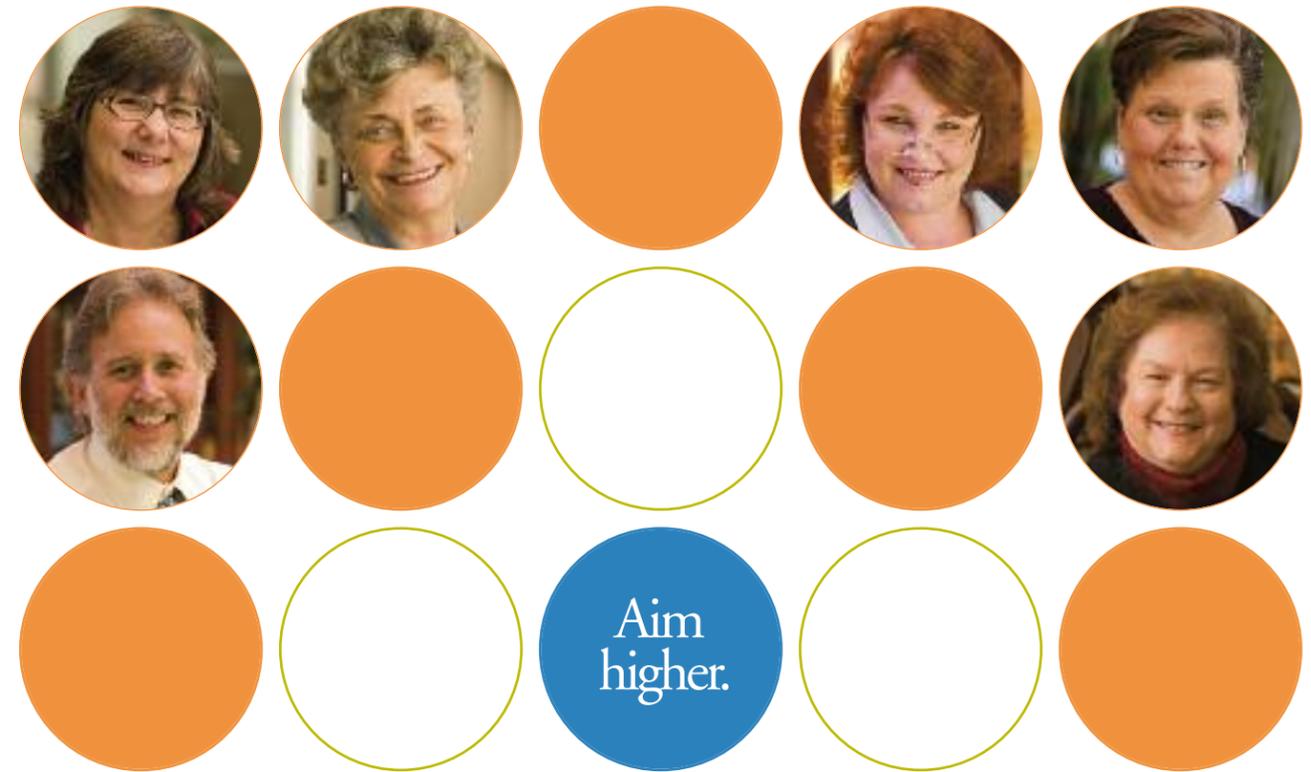


Alexandra Vitolo

"The story of Alex's life and her passing not only impacted the hearts of our company, but also the amazing staff at Danbury Hospital. Planting a memorial garden was something we could do together, getting our hands dirty and having a great experience as a group of friends," says Jennifer, "while creating a beautiful memorial for someone we cared about."

A Higher Level of Teamwork

“All you have to do is take a tour through the department one time to see what these patients go through, and it will just grab at your heart.” — JoAnn Auriana



For patients living with kidney failure, dialysis is their lifeline. With technology constantly changing and the ever-present need for new dialysis machines, the Danbury Hospital staff knew they needed to help.

That's why the 2008 Family Campaign, “Together Employees Are Making A Difference,” focused its efforts on vital equipment upgrades for the unit. Twenty-five employee volunteers, under the guidance of Holly Lemoine, Director of Annual Giving and the leadership of Chairperson JoAnn Auriana, reached out to over 3,600 staff members to raise the necessary funds. “It was the most successful year yet. We raised more than we ever have,” says JoAnn, who has worked faithfully on the campaign since its inception seven years ago.

Dialysis removes dangerous toxins from the body, doing the work for kidneys that no longer function. Patients who endure the arduous procedure three times a week for three hours or more, are often waiting for a kidney transplant as well. “All you have to do is take a tour through the department one time to see what these patients go through, and it will just grab at your heart,” JoAnn says.

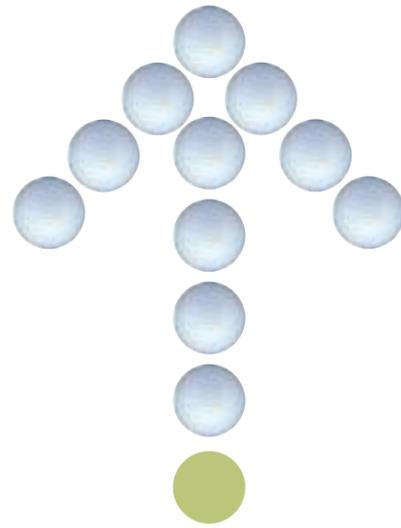
The committee knew their initial goal of reaching 999 employees and raising \$170,000 was going to be a challenge, but JoAnn felt it could be done. “I know the hearts in Danbury Hospital are good,” she says. She felt certain that if the staff knew how the patients were counting on them, they would come through.

For three weeks the committee members worked tirelessly, educating fellow staff members about kidney failure and dialysis. They were a daily presence, setting up posts throughout the Hospital and making trips to the Hospital's affiliates. Tours of the dialysis unit were offered, brochures about kidney failure were distributed, and video presentations featuring patients talking about their experiences were shown. Education was key to their success. “It was the one-on-one contact, telling them how important it was and that they could make a difference that made the campaign a success,” says JoAnn.

Employees were asked to make confidential donations and were given options to donate weekly or in a lump sum, in cash or through payroll deductions. “We made it as easy as possible, any way they wanted to do it,” JoAnn says. The committee also held several raffles, contests and an ice cream social to add some fun to the mix without tapping into their campaign funds. “We assured them that 100% of their gifts would go directly to this cause,” JoAnn adds.

Due to the 1027 employee participants' efforts, the campaign far surpassed its goal, raising \$177,058. Starting in January 2009, the Renal Dialysis Unit will purchase at least nine new dialysis machines over a three-year period. With the support of a caring staff, the Hospital is able to keep up with changing technologies, all to the benefit of their patients. “When it comes to the patients, the employees always come through,” JoAnn says.

A Higher Level of Dedication



Imagine you are 27 years old, newly married with a one-year old child, and your spouse is diagnosed with Stage 3 Hodgkin's lymphoma. Most people would travel to the largest and most notable cancer treatment facilities in the country. Not John Merullo, who received this diagnosis in 1977.

Just 31 at the time, John, who was always athletic, thought nothing of the bulge he had noticed in his neck. However his brother-in-law, a physician, insisted he see his doctor. After blood tests and a biopsy, Dr. John Pezzimenti, chief of oncology and hematology at Danbury, broke the news to the Merullos. Betsy, who told Dr. "Pezz" how frightened she was of losing John, clearly remembers his response: "I have never lost a Hodgkin's lymphoma patient and I don't intend on it now."

"That sold me. Right then and there, and I made up my mind that this was the doctor who was going to take care of me," John says. In fact, John remained cancer free for 26 more years, until he was diagnosed with cancer three more times in a three-year period. Today, John remains cancer free after surgery and treatment.

In 1988, Betsy was diagnosed with thymoma, a severe form of thymus cancer. Once again, the Merullos put their faith in the Praxair Cancer Center at Danbury Hospital and Betsy has been cancer free ever since. "When you have cancer and are questioning if you're going to be here for your child's next birthday, walking into the environment at Danbury Hospital makes you feel like family," she reflects.

Fast forward to 2003, when the Merullos were once again faced with a cancer diagnosis: this time it was their son Tim. Knowing how the Praxair Cancer Center had always taken care of the Merullos, Tim says, "I had all the faith and confidence in the world that I would be ok." After undergoing treatment, Tim is also cancer free and everything is indeed, ok.

Despite the hardships, the Merullos have endured, they

maintain the same positive attitude that has seen them through the years. "They have gotten us through crisis after crisis—chemotherapies, radiation, and surgeries—and every time we celebrate a holiday, we look at each other and thank God, Praxair and Dr. Pezzimenti that we're together", says Betsy.

In June 2008, all three Merullos came together with more than 150 volunteers, staff, corporate sponsors, players and donors, for the 20th Annual Danbury Hospital Cancer Golf Tournament. Organized every year by a dedicated Tournament Committee under the leadership of Susan Kania, Director of Donor Relations and Stewardship, the tournament raises funds to support clinical services and new treatment advances for patients throughout the region who come to the Praxair Cancer Center for care.

Tournament proceeds will help launch a new medical advancement—High Dose Radiation (HDR) Brachytherapy

This year's tournament generated over \$260,000 for the Center. In 2009, the proceeds from the tournament, along with generous donations from countless others, including the Sherman Fairchild Foundation and Harold and Myra Spratt, will launch one of Danbury Hospital's newest medical advances, High Dose Radiation (HDR) Brachytherapy.

This cutting-edge treatment, which will initially be used to treat uterine cancer, allows concentrated amounts of radiation to be directed rapidly and precisely at tumors. It



also greatly shortens the treatment time from up to seven weeks of hospitalization to one week of outpatient visits. Patients can go to and from home and work during the daily treatments, which greatly improves their quality of life during this period in their lives.

The Merullo family was thrilled to be able to donate their time and effort to making the 20th Annual Danbury Hospital Cancer Golf Tournament a huge success. "The golf tournament is so very important to me", says Betsy, who also volunteers weekly for the Development Fund. "Danbury Hospital has kept my family alive and I do whatever I can to ensure that the Praxair Cancer Center has everything they possibly need."

Tim, who plays in the tournament every year, agrees. "Because of the care, compassion, and love that were given to me," he says, "I feel indebted to give back."

"The golf tournament is so important to me. Danbury Hospital has kept my family alive, and I will do whatever I can to ensure that the Praxair Cancer Center has everything they possibly need." —Betsy Merullo

A Higher Level of Innovation

Doctors were puzzled by the patient's large lesions and patches of red, numb-to-the-touch bumps. Maybe it was an allergic reaction. Maybe she had contracted a disease. But one thing was certain...they had never seen a condition like hers before.

Like many of the patients who seek medical attention at Danbury Hospital's Seifert and Ford Family Community Health Center, this woman had nowhere else to turn. She had limited income and no health insurance. The questions about this case are twofold: How do doctors diagnose conditions they have never seen? And if an infectious disease outbreak or bioterrorism threat had occurred, how would they know?

The answers lay with a cutting-edge technology known simply as VisualDx.



Dr. Dino Messina who is the associate program director of the Internal Medicine Residency Program at Danbury Hospital, was introduced to VisualDx at a scientific meeting. With the world's largest library of over 50,000 images, VisualDx is designed to speed disease recognition for faster, more accurate decision making by doctors.

Dr. Messina understood the importance of helping clinical staff and individual physicians keep up with a vast and growing medical knowledge base. He felt the VisualDx software would not just help patients by speeding diagnoses, but could serve as an excellent teaching tool for his residents and

provide information about disease outbreaks (like pandemic flu) or bioterrorism threats (like an Anthrax scare), to physicians hospital-wide.

When donors Dale and Laura Kutnick heard about this relatively simple opportunity to help, they enthusiastically donated the \$33,000 necessary for the VisualDx system.

According to Dr. Messina, making a differential diagnosis involves identifying several probable causes of an ailment. For example, a rash may appear to be poison ivy, but it can look like many other conditions as well. In the past, doctors researched and cross-referenced medical textbooks and sources. "Thanks to the foresight and generosity of the Kutnicks, we now have a tool that allows us to do that in a visual, user-friendly way", says Dr. Messina. According to Logical Images, the developer of VisualDx, diagnoses with the software are 120% more accurate than traditional methods.

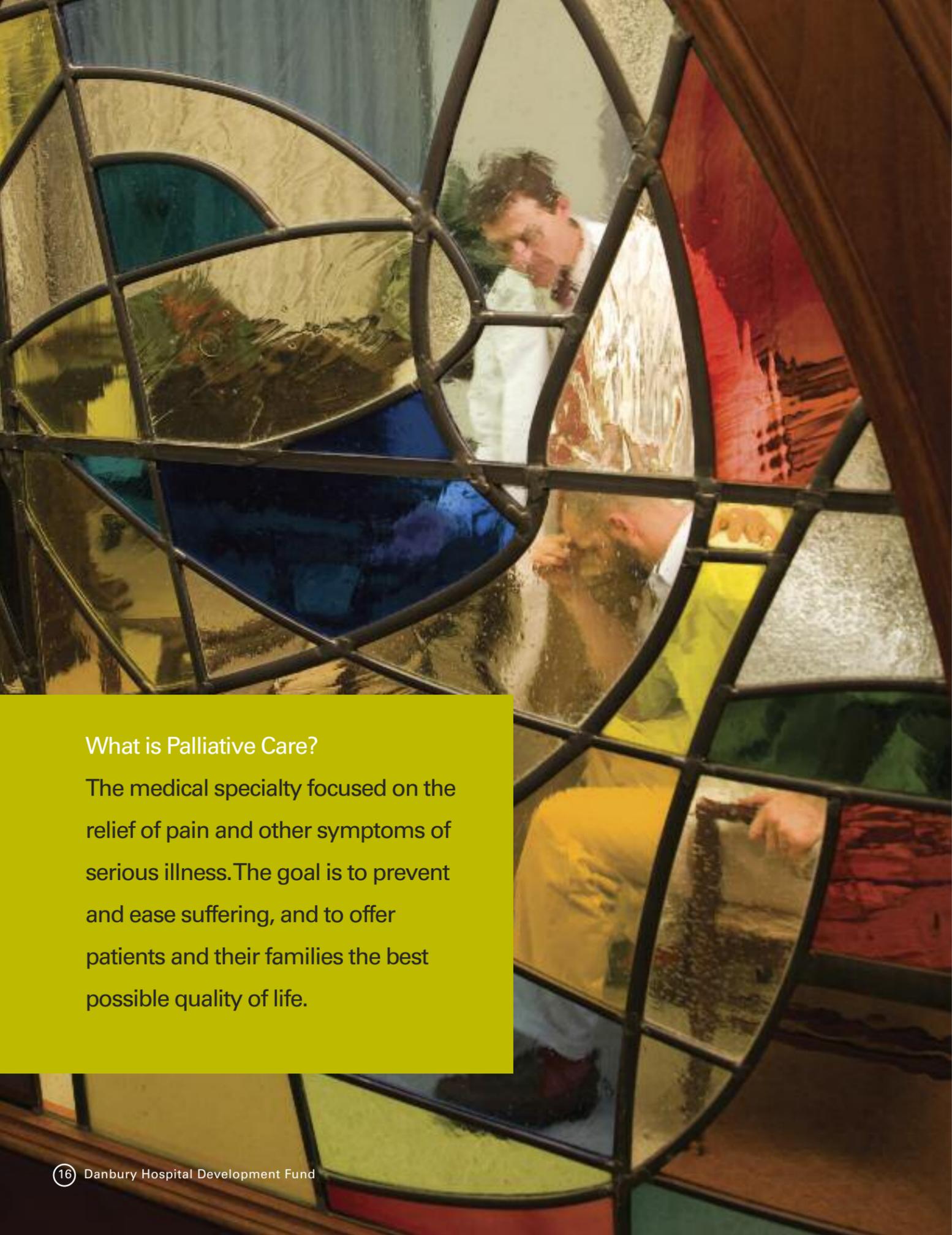
VisualDx also provides Danbury Hospital doctors with instant access to potentially life-saving information through alerts and allows them to report cases to the community at large. "If a disease outbreak, terrorism threat, radiation leak or any type of emergency were to occur, VisualDx would help us to quickly assess, diagnose and treat our patients," says Dr. Jose Pinero, an Internist and Emergency Medicine Physician.

In the case of the mystery patient, Danbury's Seifert and Ford doctors asked questions, ran tests and came to the preliminary and stunning diagnosis of an ailment rarely seen in the United States: leprosy. The doctors used VisualDx to confirm their diagnosis and quickly referred the patient to an infectious disease specialist. The patient was treated, and valuable time was saved. If there had been an outbreak in the community, VisualDx would have also alerted doctors to this crucial information.

Like so many other success stories that are a result of teamwork, all it took for Danbury Hospital doctors to make a world-class diagnosis and yield a positive outcome was a great idea, an open mind, and a generous donor.



"If a disease outbreak, terrorism threat, radiation leak or any type of emergency were to occur, VisualDx would help us to quickly assess, diagnose and treat our patients," says Dr. Jose Pinero, an Internist and Emergency Medicine Physician.



What is Palliative Care?

The medical specialty focused on the relief of pain and other symptoms of serious illness. The goal is to prevent and ease suffering, and to offer patients and their families the best possible quality of life.

A Higher Level of Compassion

Many doctors, nurses, and other medical caregivers chose the medical profession so they could save lives. Yet when they've done all they can, and their patients are at the end of their lives, the job description suddenly changes. They are now entrusted to make sure their patients' last days are filled with compassion and peace, while also supporting the families in the process.

End-of-life care is a difficult and painful topic for patients and health care professionals alike. So it takes a special kind of vision and initiative to confront this complex subject head on. Damanjeet Chaubey, MD, Chief of Hospital Medicine, in collaboration with Karen Mulvihill, APRN, Palliative Care Coordinator and Jo-Ann Maroto-Soltis, MD, a specialist in Palliative Medicine, identified the need for an interdisciplinary approach. "By having the entire hospitalist service trained, we are able to provide palliative care to a larger population," says Karen Mulvihill.

To that end, the Education in Palliative and End-of-Life-Care (EPEC) Conference was held in September 2008 at Danbury Hospital. Over 70 healthcare providers attended the two-day conference, the first ever presented at a hospital in Connecticut, addressing end-of-life care and educating staff on these important issues. "This event was absolutely ground-breaking because it brought together staff across all disciplines and trained them on-site," says Dr. Chaubey.

Utilizing unrestricted funds, the conference addressed topics such as *Advance Care Planning*, *Communicating Bad News*, *Pain Management*, and *Withholding and Withdrawing Treatment*. There were videotaped vignettes and moderated group discussions, as well as practical exercises about subjects like pain management.

"During our training we're always focused on what we can do to save lives, but this was a completely different approach," says Dr. Martin Williams, an Internist at the Danbury Medical Group, who has been on staff at the Hospital since 1982. "The conference emphasized how important end-of-life care is, not only for the patients, but almost more so for the families, because they are impacted most during these times."

One of the modules addressed ways to handle *Advance*

Directives, or the instructions given to the doctor when a patient can no longer communicate his or her wishes. "I am much more apt to start that conversation now," says Dr. Williams. "People generally don't want to talk about these things, and unless a physician initiates the conversation, it will be put on the back burner."

Two residents who attended were so motivated by the conference, they applied for fellowships in palliative care. "It was a unique collaboration and we can already see a visible impact," says Dr. Chaubey.



Julie MacMillan, RN, who works in Danbury's ICU, never realized how deeply she and other caregivers are affected by the deaths of their patients. "You have a patient who dies, and five minutes later you find out you're admitting another one, so there's very little time to cope with death," she says. She found the *Professional Self Care* module, which discussed tools and coping mechanisms like deep breathing and debriefing sessions, to be particularly helpful.

By going above and beyond comfort levels with programs such as the EPEC Conference, compassion and caring can be delivered where it is most needed. Educational conferences such as EPEC can motivate hospital staff and stimulate discussion, making a difference in every aspect of patient treatment and raising the standard of care for all.