

Around the Square

The Newsletter for Employees & Friends
of Gracie Square Hospital



fall 2020

in this issue

2
Addressing Systemic Racism

2
Spiritual Care for Patients
and Staff

3
Fundraising for the Future

4
Recognizing Staff

Message from David Wyman

The past few months have been extraordinarily challenging, and the Gracie Square team have shown themselves to be *New York Strong*, both individually and together. We have become more resilient and creative, as we care for patients and each other during this crisis.

Today, Gracie Square Hospital is seeing patients who are more acutely ill, often with severe anxiety or depression. We know that the need for mental health care services has never been greater. This time will pass, but its effects on so many people, including the impact on mental health, will linger.

Gracie Square is here to provide excellent care to those who need our services. As we look to the future, we continue to improve our facility and enhance our workplace. In this issue, we are sharing some of the ways we are moving forward together.

Thank you to our staff and all members of the Gracie Square community for your ongoing commitment and support.

David Wyman

President and CEO

Creating a Warm, Welcoming Environment at Gracie Square

One of the most significant efforts underway at Gracie Square Hospital is to transform our space from institutional to warm and welcoming. Today, there is a greater understanding of how physical space can affect mental well-being. We are working to create



spaces that promote healing and help reduce stress for patients and their visitors, and function well for staff. To help us on this journey, we receive input from patients, Nursing staff and other frontline employees, as well as members of our Patient and Family Advisory Council.

This summer we completed the lobby and the sixth floor vestibule. Our roof-top garden is providing patients and staff with

much-needed outdoor space where flowers and vegetables grow. We are now in the process of renovating the entire third floor, including the patient rooms, bathrooms, corridors, nurse station, day room, and group rooms. Additionally, we are working on the elevator lobby and other key areas. *Above are photos of the lobby and garden, and a rendering of work in progress on the third floor.*

continues on page 2

Member

New York Presbyterian
 Regional Hospital Network

Acknowledging and Addressing Systemic Racism

In June, Gracie Square staff joined other health care workers in memorializing George Floyd with 8 minutes and 46 seconds of silence. “At Gracie Square, we wanted this to be more than an acknowledgement of



racial injustice in this country. We felt it was important to begin conversations with staff about racism and how it affects them personally,” says Natasha Bowman (pictured here), Chief Human Resources Officer.

To further the discussion, Natasha and

David Wyman began facilitating virtual Town Hall meetings where staff could express their thoughts and feelings about racism, both inside and outside of the workplace. “We are so appreciative that employees were forthcoming and honest in sharing their personal experiences about prejudice and racism,” says Natasha. “It was really moving and a valuable way to learn from one another.”

Leadership at Gracie Square is committed to keeping this dialogue going. Our Diversity and Inclusion Task Force is meeting regularly to reflect on what was shared at the Town Halls and discuss how we can implement change at Gracie Square.

“I want all employees to know that they can be their authentic selves at work and feel accepted for who they are here,” says Natasha. “We will be sharing more about the work of the Task Force in coming months.” ■



Members of Gracie Square team come together to memorialize George Floyd

Promoting Spiritual Care for Patients and Staff

This summer, Missy Trull became Gracie Square’s first dedicated Chaplain. In the past, we have had visiting clergy come to meet with our patients. Now, Missy (pictured right), who did her residency at NYP/Weill Cornell and NYP Westchester, will be on-site three days a week.



“My goal is to help people connect with their personal spirituality, whatever it may be,” says Missy. “As we live with the pandemic, people are struggling with feeling isolated and living with so much unknown. Our spirituality can be a resilient and comforting part of ourselves – a source of strength in this difficult time.”

Caring for Patients

In addition to speaking with patients individually, Missy holds spirituality groups with patients on the Units as part of our Therapeutic Activities Program. The groups are designed so patients can share their spiritual beliefs, values, and struggles to help make meaning

of their experience, connect with each other, and learn spiritual coping strategies.

“I believe spirituality is something we need to practice,” says Missy, “so I start every group with a meditation or a breathing exercise as a way to move into a more spiritual space. We then have a group discussion, focusing on topics like self-worth, forgiveness, bravery, fear, despair, and hope. The underlying principle of every group is respect. People come from varied cultures, religions, and contexts. Our beliefs may be different, but we can be together in this journey.”

Caring for Staff

Missy is offering Tea for the Soul for staff on all the Units. “In a caregiving environment it is easy to lose ourselves in the care we offer to others,” says Missy. “We can forget how much care we need in order to be able to keep giving to our patients with a whole heart and spirit. Teas provide a time to support one another and reconnect with ourselves.”

Missy is also available to meet with staff individually. “At Gracie, there are some hard days. It may be a difficult case that tugs at our heart in a unique way. I want staff to know that I am here to talk or pray with them as well as with our patients.” ■

Spiritual Check-In for Staff

Missy suggests that we can check in with ourselves by asking the following questions:

- ▶ Are you connected right now to your breath, your body, yourself?
- ▶ What might help you connect more fully?
- ▶ How much compassion do you have for yourself?
- ▶ Can you offer yourself a little more?

Welcoming Environment

continued from cover

In everything we do, we conform to behavioral health standards, while taking into consideration advances in lighting and materials that enable us to create more interesting and diverse spaces for patients. For example, since many patients may share a multi-purpose day room, these spaces are being designed to suit different needs simultaneously and to be reconfigured as necessary. The Covid-19 pandemic has taught us much about the need for flexible space and we are moving ahead with that in mind. ■

Fundraising for a Stronger Future

The Covid-19 pandemic has brought renewed focus on the need for mental health care. At the same time, the pandemic is affecting the financial well-being of most health care institutions. “As Gracie Square looks to the future and how we can best meet the needs of the communities we serve, the support of private family and corporate charitable foundations becomes even more crucial,” says David Wyman, President and CEO. “To help us with this effort, we have just recruited Julie Pape (pictured below) to be Gracie Square’s first Development Officer.”

Julie comes to Gracie Square with 10 years of development and fundraising experience. She will lead our fundraising efforts and collaborate with providers and staff to build a culture of philanthropy at the Hospital. “Fundraising is really critical now,” says Julie. “Gracie Square does wonderful work, and one of my first goals is to get Gracie Square’s name out there and share what we are doing with the community, Board members, and foundations. I think once people are aware of the great work being done here, they will really want to support it.”

Over the coming months, Julie will be learning more about Gracie Square so she can help design effective philanthropic strategies for our institution. “Before coming here, I heard so many wonderful things about the Hospital,” says Julie, “and now I am so excited to be part of the Gracie Square family.” ■



Helping New Nurses Transition from School to Professional Practice

Gracie Square’s new Nurse Residency Program is designed to help graduates of baccalaureate programs make the transition from student nurse to professional nurse. “Research shows that the national turnover rate among new graduate nurses within the first year is high,” says Silifat Adekunle, MSN, RN-BC, NEA-BC, Manager of Education. “We believe this program will help our nurses feel more supported in their first year and, ultimately, help improve the quality of care we provide, as well as retention rates.”

The Program, which also supports our Magnet journey, sets up cohorts of new graduate nurses, who will go through the experience together. They will:

- Participate in structured educational experiences to develop clinical nursing competence and professional skills.
- Share this experience with the other members of their cohort and build relationships.
- Meet with other members of the care

team to better understand how nurses collaborate with other disciplines.

- Practice in an environment committed to professional development.

In addition to the Residency Program, nurses are also paired with a mentor to help them in their new role. The mentor-mentee relationship builds teamwork, leads to improved job satisfaction, and increases the skill of the workforce. Most importantly, mentors help new nurses build self-confidence and provide guidance to help them succeed. ■



The first cohort of the Nurse Residency Program includes (from left to right): Cristina Hywel, BSN, RN, Sharon Li, BSN, RN, and Michaela Gianfrancesco, BA, BSN, RN

2020 Daisy Award Recipient: Maureen Patton, RN-BC



The Daisy Award for Extraordinary Nurses is an international program that honors the quality, compassionate care nurses provide every day. This year, Gracie Square honored Maureen Patton, RN-BC, as our Daisy Award recipient. Her colleagues praise Maureen as “embodying

nursing excellence” and “being a role model in the profession.” She is consistently recognized by patients in the Press Ganey Survey for being “compassionate, empathic, and caring.” Recently, a patient wrote, “When I first came into the hospital, I was crying, lost, and hurt. . . Nurse Maureen talked to me and told me I was in the best place. . . She is a great nurse and I don’t know where I would be without her that first night.” ■

Press Ganey Update

Due to the pandemic, Press Ganey Surveys were not conducted from March through May. In June, we reached our targets for 5 of

the 6 questions we are tracking, and almost reached the target for the sixth. This reflects the great work staff are doing.

Recognizing Staff Who Deliver an Exceptional Patient Care Experience

We are pleased to recognize three members of the Gracie Square team who received praise from patients on our Press Ganey

Survey: Meagan Mercado, Nurse Aide, Vesna Cvetkovic, Certified Activities Therapist, and Diana Dasraj, Social Worker. ■

What our patients are saying



/// Diana explained everything and reassured me about all my steps. She is an excellent Social Worker. ///



/// Nurse Assistants like Meagan are amazing and helped me so much during my stay with their kindness. ///



/// Vesna spoke to me and helped me understand myself. This program allowed me to open up, hear other people's situations, and put things into perspective. ///

Quality Cup Awarded to Second Floor Staff

Congratulations to the second floor team on being awarded the Gracie Square Quality Cup! Selection for this quarterly award is based on quality measures, such as fall prevention, Unit-based improvement activities, patient satisfaction scores, and more. The Quality Cup is displayed at the nursing station so all staff can take pride in their achievement. ■



Our Team: Deserine Baker-Ham, Director of Patient Access



How long have you been at Gracie Square?

I joined the Gracie Square team a little over a year ago,

from NYP Westchester. From the moment I got here, I had a sense of belonging and felt at home. I love the team that I work with. They are so professional and work together to achieve the Hospital's vision and goals.

What is your role as Patient Access Director?

Everyone at Gracie Square is here to help our patients and contribute to their well-being. In our Department, we have several roles and work closely with staff, patients, and patients' families. We are responsible for insurance verification, registration, and Patient Services. Our Patient Services team is here to answer questions from patients and

family members and assist them during their stay. We are also the Hospital switchboard operators, answering and directing calls and announcing emergency codes, if needed.

All your jobs have been in mental health facilities. What draws you to this work?

I love working in mental health. It can be both challenging and rewarding. Many of our patients come in disoriented and confused and when it's time for them to be discharged, they are completely different people. You quickly learn that mental illness does not discriminate, and at any moment our lives can change. It affects people of all ages, sexes, incomes, and ethnicities. Working in this field is very humbling and has taught me just how important mental health is for me and others.

What has it been like working here during the pandemic?

Working here during the height of the pandemic was difficult. We had to constantly

change how we did things to make sure that we stayed safe and to keep our patients safe. The Admitting team are the first people our patients see when they come in. No matter what is going on, we are here to welcome and reassure them. Every day the Admitting team came in with a positive attitude. Also, Hospital leadership were always present, and we never felt alone going through that crisis. I believe this experience has brought the entire Gracie Square team closer together.

What do you like to do in your time off?

My husband and I have two children. Our son is sixteen and our daughter is seven. We love doing things as a family, like traveling or just spending quality time with each other. I am a Boy Scout troop leader and a PTA mom. I have a leadership role in my church and am part of a very supportive women's group. ■