7th annual EXCELLENCE in healthcare

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CONGRATULATIONS
to 2018 Honorees!

Recognizing those who tirelessly give to others and who work hard to improve the quality of care in our region.

As the presenting sponsor of the 2018 Excellence in Healthcare awards, BHG is honored to recognize the healthcare heroes who care for our community. We’re proud to be the financial provider of choice to Central New York’s healthcare professionals for the past 17 years.
Robert Dracker MD, MHA, MBA, CPI
SUMMERWOOD PEDIATRICS

Dr. Robert Dracker is founder and medical director of Summerwood Pediatrics and Infusacare Medical Services. Summerwood has grown to include more than 30,000 patients, he says. Infusacare has also grown significantly and now does 5,000-6,000 infusions per year.

Dr. Dracker is a native of Queens, and received his bachelor’s degree in biology from New York University, graduating Phi Beta Kappa, and subsequently attended medical school and obtained his degree at the SUNY Health Science Center (SUNY Upstate Medical University) in Syracuse, where he graduated Alpha Omega Alpha with honors.

He completed a residency in pediatrics and fellowships in pediatric hematology/oncology and in blood banking/transfusion medicine at University Hospital in Syracuse. Dr. Dracker later obtained a master’s degree in health services management (MHA) from the New School for Social Research and an MBA from Columbia College (2007). He is board certified in pediatrics, transfusion medicine, quality assurance and utilization review and as a certified physician investigator.

Dr. Dracker was the president of the Onondaga County Medical Society in Syracuse, in 2009-2010 and was also the chief of pediatrics at Community General Hospital in Syracuse up until June, 2017. He is currently the VP and president-elect of the Alumni Foundation of the College of Medicine. Dr. Dracker served as medical director of the Transfusion Medicine Service at University Hospital for five years prior to his current position as founder and medical director of Summerwood Pediatrics and Infusacare Medical Services. Dr. Dracker has been actively involved in the area of clinical research, cord blood banking, and stem cell transplant.

He says he enjoys doing research studies at the practice because it allows them to provide the newest therapies available for children, whether it’s new vaccines or other treatments that they normally couldn’t get access to. “And it’s fun for me…it’s almost like a hobby,” Dr. Dracker says.

He was the medical director of the Biocyte Corporation, which facilitated the first cord blood transplant in the United States and was the medical director of ViaCord in Cambridge, Massachusetts up until May 2007. He was also the founding executive medical director of the Americord Corporation and still serves in that capacity. Dr. Dracker served on the New York State Governor’s Council for Blood and Transfusion Services for 17 years and was the chairperson and member of the Hematopoietic Progenitor Cell Committee for the New York State Department of Health.

He has been chairman of the Heart, Lung and Cancer Committee for the Medical Society of New York State from 2015. He also serves as a board member of the Office of Professional Conduct for the New York State Department of Health. Dr. Dracker also served as a board member of the Pediatric Advisory Committee of the FDA since 2014 and is currently the chairman of that committee.

Dr. Dracker has presented worldwide on many topics regarding pharmaceutical parenteral or intravenous therapies, clinical research, and a variety of pediatric health care policies and stem cell therapy. He holds five U.S patents in the area of cord blood stem cell collection and processing. He is actively involved in ongoing basic science and clinical research, particularly involving intravenous therapies, vaccine development, cord blood stem cell procurement and has published over 80 abstracts and articles.

He is an active board member of a number of local organizations including: Multiple Sclerosis Resources, Charity for Children and WCNY. He is also a major supporter and advocate for Joseph’s House in Syracuse, the Upstate Medical Foundation and Alumni Foundation, and Crouse Hospital.
Health Care Facility of the Year

FAMILYCARE MEDICAL GROUP, PC
(ONONDAGA COUNTY)

FamilyCare Medical Group (FCMG) is a multispecialty medical group dedicated to providing the highest quality medical care throughout Central New York. Founded in 1994 by 13 family doctors, FCMG has grown to more than 73 physicians and almost 40 nurse practitioners and physician assistants. Our patients are what matter most and we continue to strive to find new and better ways to serve them. FCMG believes that successful lasting relationships result from open communications, integrity and fairness, and family, in its many forms, is the most important institution in human development.

FCMG was recently awarded PCMH (Patient-Centered Medical Home) Level 3 certification, which is a comprehensive model of care focused on strengthening the relationship between patients and their physician. PCMH focuses on a coordinated, team approach for patient care.

Describe a major initiative or project you are currently working on: Increasing the number of flu and pneumonia vaccines given to our patients.

Share one tip that can change a person’s life: The best investment you can ever make is in your own health. Get routine screenings and immunizations.

Health Care Facility of the Year

MASONIC CARE COMMUNITY OF NEW YORK (ONEIDA COUNTY)

The Masonic Care Community (MCC) has been serving seniors from all over New York since 1893. During that time, the campus adapted to changing needs and was innovative in its approach to care. The Masonic Home, as it was first known, was creating facilities for seniors to live in their own rooms, as opposed to “wards” with multiple people. Buildings included a post office, sitting rooms, dining facilities, and other amenities.

MCC also cared for 979 children between 1893 and 1982. It saw the benefit of inter-generational programming from day-one, long before it became a standard practice.

Today, 500 seniors are enjoying life, whether it be in independent living, adult residential care, in patient rehabilitation, or skilled nursing. We offer a continuum of care, allowing individuals to move through the levels as their needs dictate without uprooting them from the community that they know.

Describe a major initiative or project you are currently working on: Our newest initiative is to build a greenhouse to allow our seniors and children in our child care center to interact and enjoy the activity and each other. We have our seniors digging in the dirt, weeding, and enjoying the fruits of their labors. We serve the food grown in our raised beds to our seniors. This greenhouse will allow residents the opportunity to grow plants all year long.

Share one tip that can change a person’s life: We know that resident choice is the number-one priority. We put the person before the task, whether it be a resident, or a visitor.

Health Care Facility of the Year

JACOB L. REVERCOMB, DDS, DICOI
REVERCOMB DENTAL GROUP

Dr. Jacob Revercomb, received his D.D.S. degree in 2000 from the Baltimore College of Dental Surgery. He completed his dental residency at Upstate Medical University in 2001. After residency, Dr. Revercomb joined his father, Dr. Gary Revercomb in his private practice.

He is an assistant clinical professor at Upstate Medical University, where he volunteers his time to teach dental residents. Dr. Revercomb is certified in oral conscious sedation, treatment of dental sleep apnea, and Invisalign. He has completed extensive implant dentistry training through the world-renowned Misch International Implant Institute and currently holds a fellowship in implant dentistry through the Misch International Implant Institute and is a diplomate of the International Congress of Oral Implantologists.

Dr. Revercomb and his wife live in Jamesville with their two children, and two dogs. In his spare time he enjoys fishing, travel, Syracuse University sports, and the outdoors where each spring you’ll find him making his own maple syrup.

Describe a major initiative or project you are currently working on: The privilege to work alongside my father led to a deep and abiding appreciation for the value of mentorship. I’m currently developing plans to open my own dental-assisting school, thus providing an affordable route for applicants to gain entry into the field of dentistry with the benefit of a peer-mentoring program. Our graduates will be prepared to provide a wide range of services an affordable route for applicants to gain entry into the field of dentistry with the benefit of a peer-mentoring program. Our graduates will be prepared to provide a wide range of services.

Share one tip that can change a person’s life: Always have a goal in mind. Having a particular goal keeps you motivated and keeps you on track even if you run into some challenging times.

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LORETTO RESTORATIVE CARE UNIT

Loretto’s TeliStat Restorative Care Unit (TRCU) offers 25 beds designed to help those recovering from major cardiac surgery and diagnosis requiring hemodynamics and tele-monitoring, to rehab more comfortably in a more home-like setting, resulting in quicker recovery and reduced hospital readmissions.

Patients benefit from noninvasive monitoring of their cardiac performance through state-of-the-art telemetry. This includes the ability to monitor essential vital signs in real-time, enabling physicians to intervene immediately in serious medical situations. Every patient admitted to the unit is outfitted with a portable Wi-Fi cardiac monitor which registers real-time data 24 hours a day, including when patients are in therapy. The information is transmitted to a central nursing station where our team has immediate access to any change in a patient’s status or condition.

Patients admitted to Loretto’s TRCU have comfortable rooms, experienced staff, advanced technology, and benefit from a smaller RN-to-patient ratio. That enables staff to deliver more hands-on, personalized care and supervision. In addition, a multitude of rehabilitation services are available to help patients get back on their feet quickly. And the unit is equipped with telemedicine technology, which allows multiple staff members to be involved in the real-time care of a patient via electronic communication, essentially doctoring from a distance.

Nurse of the Year

TARA FALSO, LPN
SYRACUSE ORTHOPEDIC SPECIALISTS

I have always wanted to help people as long as I can remember. My first job was as a cook in a nursing home, then worked as a resident aide because I wanted a more personal relationship with the residents who lived there. I worked as an aide in the beginning years of my marriage, then our family started to grow and we had two children. I wanted to spend time as a mom and wife and took some time off. When our children started school, I went back to work part time as a resident aide.

Life went on happily as a family until one day, Memorial Day weekend in the year 2000, my husband died of a massive heart attack and I was left alone with two young teenagers and a part-time job.

I went back to school and became a medical assistant and went to work for a family practice. I loved my new career, I especially loved the patients and felt like I was really making a difference. The doctors, NPs, PA, and nurses became like an extended family. The practice offered to pay for further schooling and I went back to school to become an LPN. During this time, I met my second husband who helped me get through this stressful, exhausting time of working full time and obtaining my nursing license.

As I got a little older and my children found lives of their own, I decided to find a Monday through Friday job. Although it was difficult to leave my extended family, I did, and I now work at SOS. I never thought I would find another bunch of amazing people to work with, but I have.

Share one tip that can change a person’s life: Always be kind. Especially when dealing with difficult people. Put yourself in their shoes for a moment—there is usually an underlying reason for their hurtful words or actions. Have patience and listen.
Jill Gillette has been a physical therapist in the Syracuse area for 26 years. She has focused on learning how to join DIR Floortime Approach and Physical Therapy to best meet the needs of the families and children on her caseload. Gillette has focused on any continuing education that meets the needs of her clients at that time, including taking an arduous in-ternship in physical therapy. She is devoted to education and uses that passion to bring information to her staff and community.

Gillette credits her success to the people she works with. John Tomens, who took a chance on her many years ago, the Regional Program Director Laura Zafarikas, and the outstanding supervisory team, Tara Pilchowski, Ann Washeleski, and Susan Scott who always support her to do and be better. The countless families that have opened their door to her also deserve credit for all the learning and growing opportunities they have provided.

Outside of work, Gillette has been a Girl Scout leader for 12 years, assisting in taking her troop across the country for a National Parks Tour in California in 2016. She has hiked with her troop to earn the status of Adirondack 46’r in August 2018. Gillette has an avid interest in camping and hiking and is invested in bringing knowledge of the outdoors to others. Gillette is the mother of two wonderful children. She has been married to her husband, Ron, for 26 years who has always remained that steady support no matter what life has brought.

Describe a major initiative or project you are currently working on: I am currently working on a continuing-education course for the staff at Liberty POST involving advanced praxis and primitive reflexes.

Share one tip that can change a person’s life: Live each day in gratitude.

Dr. Kara C. Kort is a general surgeon, specializing in breast and endocrine surgery at St. Joseph’s Health. Originally from Massapequa on Long Island, she attended Syracuse University and then SUNY Upstate Medical University for medical school and surgical residency. Dr. Kort remained on faculty at SUNY Upstate as a general and trauma surgeon for nearly 15 years, becoming associate professor of surgery and serving as medical director of the Patricia J. Numann Breast and Endocrine Surgery Center. While there, she initiated a unique and successful grant to fund breast cancer reconstruction for those denied this service due to their socioeconomic status. She helped create the first true multidisciplinary breast cancer program in CNY and was awarded the Carol M. Baldwin Humanitarian Award in 2011.

In 2014, Dr. Kort joined St. Joseph’s Health as medical director of breast care and surgery with the goal of developing a premiere practice, as well as endocrine surgery program. When not operating or seeing patients, Dr. Kort loves spending time with her husband of 27 years, Rick, and their four children. For fun, she enjoys dancing and karaoke parties with her neighbors, reading, and binge-watching Law and Order SVU to matter what life has brought.

Describe a major initiative or project you are currently working on: Currently working on creating a more efficient, less stressful office and surgical experience for the patient by educating not only anxious patients, but also referring physicians and imaging colleagues about the diagnoses and diseases we see. Most referrals to a surgeon prompt fear and anxiety. I believe more communication and education amongst physicians and our patients could alleviate much of this.

Share one tip that can change a person’s life: Theodore Roosevelt once said, “Comparison is the thief of joy.” He was so right. I try to remind myself of this daily. There will always be someone who is richer, smarter, thinner, faster, more attractive — you name it. Enjoy what God has blessed you with each day.

Dr. Bookbinder received his bachelor’s degree in cellular and molecular biology from the University of Buffalo (summa cum laude) and his DVM from Cornell University (valedictorian). Bookbinder did his small animal medicine and surgery internship at Michigan State University, and then returned to Cornell for his surgical residency. He received his board certification from the American College of Veterinary Surgeons in 1994. Dr. Bookbinder’s practice, Upstate Veterinary Surgical Center in Canastota, is a referral practice devoted to small animal soft tissue, cancer, and orthopedic surgery.

Bookbinder is known for his caring heart, generous spirit, and somewhat irreverent sense of humor. When not working, he enjoys spending time with his children, Lauren and Jack, his wife, Sarah, and all of their animals. His personal interests include steam trains, history, hockey, Cornell University, and riding bicycles and motorcycles. His vacation time is spent in Maine.

Share one tip that can change a person’s life: Anyone entering the medical field can benefit from the advice of one of my mentors, Dr. Eric Trotter: “The three most important things in the surgery room are The Patient, The Patient, and The Patient.” Never lose sight of that.
Volunteer of the Year

CAITLIN SGARLAT-DELUCA, DO, MSc

Board Member,
MAKE-A-WISH CENTRAL NY CHAPTER

Caitlin Sgarlat-Deluca is a brilliant, caring, engaged physician and volunteer. As the only pediatric rheumatologist in Syracuse, Dr. Deluca has a demanding practice in pediatric rheumatology and integrative medicine and serves as an associate professor of pediatrics at Upstate Golisano Children’s Hospital and a volunteer on the Board of Trustees for Make-A-Wish.

As the only physician serving as a voting member of the Board of Trustees, she wears many hats within the organization. As a physician, she brings a unique point of view to the Foundation’s Wish Policy Committee, often confirming or recommending appropriate medical support for a child’s wish, helping to make determinations about the medical appropriateness of a wish and/or specific support needed for a wish.

Dr. Deluca is a natural leader and teacher. She is eager to share her knowledge; always accessible to her peers and to our team. Her patience in teaching, problem solving, and ensuring our ability to say “yes” to every eligible child inspires those around her. Dr. Deluca’s infectious personality, boundless energy, and full dedication to our mission make her a valuable leader within the organization and an incredible role model to other volunteers.

Her passion for pediatrics stems from her upbringing, where she grew up in a large loving family as one of six children. She enjoyed helping care for her four younger brothers.

Dr. Deluca developed an interest in pediatric rheumatology, she spent three years in a pediatric rheumatology fellowship at Tufts Medical Center and completed a master’s degree in clinical research. She returned to Upstate Medical University to practice pediatric rheumatology in 2011 and has remained here since. She completed a fellowship in integrative medicine through the Arizona Center for Integrative Medicine at the University of Arizona Medical School, headed by Dr. Andrew Weil.

She has since become the division head of the Division of Rheumatology and Integrative Medicine at Upstate, where she is now practicing both pediatric rheumatology and integrative medicine.

Her other hobbies and interests include hiking, skiing, photography, pottery, and practicing yoga.

Describe a major initiative or project you are currently working on: Dr. Deluca started the Pediatric Integrative Medicine Center at the Golisano Children’s Hospital to bring integrative services to the children in our community. The program has grown and is an ongoing project that continues to evolve. The goal has been to enhance health and wellbeing, as well as to prevent and treat disease. Through a loving demeanor, integrative methods of medicine are utilized in combination with conventional practices in a welcoming and stimulating peaceful environment. A comprehensive integrative approach is used, anchored in lifestyle medicine in combination with nurturing intrinsic healing in the whole patient — mind, body, and spirit.

Share one tip that can change a person’s life: Never stop trying to make the world a better place, and try to find joy in doing so. “Love unconditionally, laugh intentionally, live strategically, and learn daily.” Hope D. Blackwell
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