Shelves of colorful supplies line the walls of the St. John School art room in Boston’s North End. Gathered here on June 3 under fluorescent lights and whirling ceiling fans sits a group of 12 teachers listening attentively as their students often do, preparing for a day they hope never comes.

“Normally we think of the first responder as being the policeman, or the fireman, or the paramedic, right?” says David King, MD, MGH trauma surgeon. “But if you look back at recent disasters, including the Boston Marathon bombings, the people on scene were not first responders; it was the people closest to the victims. And if you look at the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting, the first responders there? That was you. That was the teachers.”

It is a heavy subject and not one discussed lightly, but King and the teachers understand it is part of the reality that educators face. It also is a topic that King – an Army combat surgeon who has served in Iraq and Afghanistan – cares deeply about. He participated in the 2013 Boston Marathon both as a runner and a caregiver, returning to the MGH following the horrific attacks to operate on victims. In the aftermath of that tragedy, he became involved with the Hartford Consensus, a group of trauma and emergency medicine experts and first responders, who studied violent episodes – like the shootings at Sandy Hook and Columbine High School – to identify ways to enhance the survival of victims. The group found that traditional first (Continued on page 2)

Harnessing the power of PERT

IN AN INSTANT, Kerry Hearn Kawai’s life completely changed. In 2011, the 34-year-old lawyer was preparing for the day – and for motherhood – when she collapsed in her kitchen, suffering a massive pulmonary embolism (PE), a life-threatening blood clot in the lung. She was rushed to an area hospital, where doctors were forced to prematurely deliver her child at 26 weeks, then quickly transferred to another facility to extract the problematic clot.

Due to the severity of her case, Hearn Kawai was then transferred to the MGH, under the care of Ken Rosenfield, MD, section head of Vascular Medicine and Intervention in the Division of Cardiology. After receiving a transfusion of 120 units of blood, undergoing multiple surgical procedures, and spending almost two weeks on extracorporeal membrane oxygenation (ECMO) – which provides both cardiac and respiratory life support – she embarked on a nearly four-year road to recovery. Hearn Kawai shared this journey during a May 22 scientific symposium, “Pulmonary Embolism: What Is Known, What We Need To Know” at the Wyndham Boston Beacon Hill.

More than 150 people attended the event – hosted by the MGH Pulmonary Embolism Response Team (PERT), the MGH Fireman Vascular Center, the MGH Corrigan Minehan Heart Center and Partners HealthCare – to discuss (Continued on page 3)
Renewing the pledge against violence

AN MGH GROUP dedicated to the fight against domestic violence will celebrate its 10th anniversary this month. Evolving from a special effort by the MGH Domestic Violence Working Group in 2005, MGH Men Against Abuse includes men and women who meet regularly to share information and provide education and awareness about domestic violence throughout the MGH community.

“MGH Men Against Abuse has maintained momentum and has continued to grow throughout the years,” says Lenny DeBenedictis, LICSW of the MGH Employee Assistance Program. “There is still a lot of work to do to end violence against women. It’s important that we engage our peers, collaborate with women in the workplace and make men part of the solution.”

Throughout the years, members of MGH Men Against Abuse have dedicated their time to the effort by hosting speakers, participating in awareness training and taking a pledge to help end domestic violence against women. The group also is a strong supporter of the White Ribbon Campaign, an international initiative that urges men to wear white ribbons as a pledge to never commit, condone or remain silent about violence against women and girls.

“Our mission in the MGH community is to engage men in working to end domestic violence, to provide education and to promote equality and respect in all relationships,” DeBenedictis says.

To mark its 10-year anniversary, MGH Men Against Abuse will host a special Father’s Day brunch at noon on June 17 in the MGH Chapel. The group also will unveil its new website: www.mghmenagainstabuse.org. For more information, or to join MGH Men Against Abuse, contact DeBenedictis at (617) 724-2206.

Jackson Society honors grant recipients

THE MGH DEPARTMENT OF MEDICINE’S James Jackson Society hosted its annual celebration May 27 at the Paul S. Russell, MD Museum of Medical History and Innovation. The society – named for the co-founder and first physician of the MGH – recognizes current and former trainees of the Medicine Residency Program and works to help them become future leaders within a diversity of fields, including clinical care, education, innovation and research.

The reception included remarks by Katrina Armstrong, MD, physician-in-chief of the MGH Department of Medicine, and Jatin Vyas, MD, PhD, program director of the MGH Internal Medicine Residency Program. The evening also featured presentations by the recipients of the 2014 White Coat Grant, which sponsors resident-led initiatives in hopes of forging the way for new advances in medicine. This year’s honorees were Benjamin Bearnst, MD; Ross Boyce, MD; Utibe Essien, MD; Jacqueline Seiglie, MD; Akl Fahed, MD; Laura Myers, MD; and Scott Nauty, MD.

Trauma preparedness

(Continued from page 1)

responders often are delayed from providing care until the affected area is deemed secure and every moment care is delayed – be it minutes or hours – lessens the chance victims have to survive.

“By studying these tragedies, we learned just how crucial it is to prepare those who will be at the center,” says King.

Both the findings of the consensus and his work as a surgeon brought him to St. John School to provide training and equipment to prepare teachers for a crisis. During the lesson, each participant is given a professional-grade tourniquet. They then practice wrenching the black nylon and Velcro straps firmly before turning a small stick-like device that provides additional leverage to tighten the tourniquet.

“It’s really important to pull that strap as tight as you possibly can,” King tells one teacher. “Really crank down on that thing. There you go, now you’ve got it!”

The mood has shifted slightly. The heavy feeling in the room becomes a little lighter as fear lessens and confidence emerges. These would-be first responders are getting the hang of it.

“The scenario is very scary, but this isn’t, says teacher Amy Tobin, as she points to the tourniquet. “I think it’s just great for teachers to have these skills, especially because we’re learning a lot about different safety procedures.”

Like the youngsters they instruct every day, these students have not completed the lesson without a final test. One-by-one they line up so King can see if they are up to the task. With focus and precision, each passes with ease. Smiles and handshakes punctuate the victory, but the teachers cannot rest easy – they will be tested again in six months.

“When David contacted us about this opportunity we felt we had an obligation to take him up on it, especially following the events of Sandy Hook,” says Karen McLaughlin, St. John principal. “Our teachers feel empowered to help their colleagues and students if they need to, and that’s a wonderful thing.”
Workplace Education Program celebrates 20 years of achievements

THE MGH Workplace Education Program celebrated its 20th anniversary by recognizing the achievements of the latest class of hardworking employees who completed English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) and computer classes. The MGH partners with JVS to provide education to employees who wish to better their skills and expand their education. To date, hundreds of students have taken classes through the MGH/JVS partnership.

On May 28, MGH President Peter L. Slavin, MD, and keynote speaker Bill Banchiere, director of Environmental Services, joined teachers, volunteers, managers, coworkers, friends and family members who gathered to celebrate the accomplishments of the 115 graduates.

“I never dreamed at the age of 60 that I’d learn to use a computer,” said Kevin Caples, of MGH Nutrition and Food Services, who recently completed his third computer class. Now my nephew doesn’t need to Google things for me.”

Kristen Schlapp, lead instructor at JVS, praised the determination of the students who finished college courses with the help of the program. “You all work full time, have families and other responsibilities, and are taking college courses on top of that and still got As in most of your courses – now that is truly amazing,” she said.

Mina Chaibat, of Environmental Services, spoke at the celebration, telling those in attendance how she started her career at the MGH in Housekeeping – and now, after 10 years and many JVS classes, has recently passed her Pharmacy Technician test. “It’s better late than never,” she said. “And I am excited to say I got my first job as a pharmacy technician here at the MGH, and I start on Monday!”

ROUND OF APPLAUSE:
Mirna Bari, unit service associate on Ellison 12, is honored at the event.

DYNAMIC DISCUSSION:
Former U.S. Drug Enforcement Agent Bob Stutman addressed the Charlestown community last month to educate parents and provide them with strategies to reduce substance use and misuse by their children. The discussion was sponsored in part by the Charlestown Substance Abuse Coalition (CSAC), supported by the MGH Center for Community Health Improvement. Following the discussion, Stutman was fielded questions alongside CSAC’s Gretchen Wagner, Sarah Coughlin, and Shannon Lundin, as well as Carolina Abuelo, MD, a physician at MGH Charlestown HealthCare Center.

— PERT
(Continued from page 1)

improvements in PE detection, care coordination and patient management.

The symposium was a result of years of hard work by the PERT, formed in 2012 by a group of MGH physicians – including Rosenfield, Michael Jaff, DO, and Ido Weinberg, MD, both of the Fireman Vascular Center; Richard Channick, MD, of Pulmonary/Critical Care Medicine; Thoralf Sundt, MD, of Cardiac Surgery; Christopher Kabrhel, MD, of Emergency Medicine; and Rachel Rosovsky, MD, of Hematology. Following a number of national speaking engagements and published articles featuring the highly successful experience of the MGH team, the PERT concept has gained widespread interest with many centers around the country setting up similar teams.

“We decided to create a national consortium where we could harness ‘the power of PERT’ to share data, develop research protocols, establish practice guidelines, and work together collaboratively to enhance the care and improve outcomes in our patients with PE,” said Rosenfield. “There seems to be a great demand for education, research and advancement in this field, but we are most excited about the prospect for improving the care of patients with this terrible disease. PE is an entity that kills tens of thousands every year.”

Attendees from throughout the United States gathered at the inaugural symposium to discuss how to further the field through the exchange of best practices, the establishment of an infrastructure for collaborative research and the development of a roadmap for future research.

“Imagine if we can get a group of dedicated health care providers to collaborate on investigating novel approaches to the management of PE, and we collect the data on outcomes and complications;” said Jaff. “We will learn more about PE in one or two years than over the past 20 years combined.”

While the long-term effects of PE can be poorly understood – the condition’s often debilitating aftereffects are not measured by current high-quality outcomes data and evaluation tools – the symposium’s founders believe a national group of experts focused on furthering education and research would drive advancements in patient care.

“In our institution alone, no fewer than 200 patients per year have a large pulmonary embolism. It is one of the most common and important illnesses in our society, and yet one of the most neglected,” said Rosenfield. “Through these newly established relationships, we are forging partnerships with leading academic partners to better understand, treat and develop interventions for PE sufferers in Boston and throughout the country.”

Tackling substance misuse
A lasting tribute

CAREGIVERS on the MGH Medical Oncology Unit routinely provide integrated and highly individualized care to sick patients. While that means staff often form a bond with many of their patients, sometimes there is a deeper, personal connection with a patient and their family.

Phyllis Seresky was one of those patients who made a lasting impression. Today her name and memory are preserved in the busy Lunder 9 conference room that hosts daily clinical rounds and teaching sessions. Now named the Phyllis R. Seresky Conference Room, this space was dedicated on May 18 in a special ceremony to celebrate her life.

Dozens of family and friends joined MGH leaders and Seresky’s surviving husband Clifford to cut the ceremonial ribbon and present a gift to support lymphoma research and educational opportunities under the direction of Ephraim Hochberg, MD.

Lunder 9 staff members recall Seresky’s poise and grace throughout her courageous battle with lymphoma. “Phyllis was a remarkable individual,” said Hochberg. “This philanthropic commitment in her honor to support the Center for Lymphoma and advance research efforts in the field will make a lasting difference. While we continue to make incredible progress in moving the science forward, our efforts to provide more personalized and targeted therapies for cancer patients continue to be constrained by financial resources.”

Hochberg added, “The Seresky family’s philanthropy and shared vision play a key role in the MGH Cancer Center’s ability to provide world-class care to our lymphoma patients. The naming of this special space on Lunder 9 will serve as a true motivator to all of our staff as we continue to care for our patients and move this important research forward.”

Hotline print schedule

MGH HOTLINE has altered its print schedule for the summer. It will be printed every other week from now through Sept. 18. The next edition of Hotline will be available on June 26. For more information, email hotline@partners.org.