A SMALL BEE SITS on a bouquet of cheerful red paper flowers that soon will brighten the room of a patient undergoing cancer treatments at the MGH. While it may look like a simple design element by floral arrangement artist Amanda Baudanza, its meaning is deeply personal, as it honors her late husband TJ Baudanza.

“With its large body and small wings, traditional wisdom says a bumblebee shouldn't be able to fly,” Amanda says. “But the bumblebee doesn't know that, so it just flies anyway. TJ thought like that. He would say, 'I have cancer, but it doesn't matter what I'm going through – I'm going to beat it.”

Diagnosed with colon cancer in 2011, TJ battled the disease for four years. It was during one of his hospitalizations that Amanda first created a paper flower display – the only type of bedside flower allowed in the room due to his compromised immune system. After his death at age 32 in 2015, Amanda turned her crafting hobby into a business with the launch of AJBees. She donates 10 percent of proceeds to the MGH to benefit cancer research in her husband's memory.

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Art in bloom

MGH team in Mozambique supports Cyclone Kenneth recovery efforts

THE MGH CENTER FOR GLOBAL HEALTH (CGH) Office of Global Disaster Response deployed a six-person team on May 8 to support residents affected by Cyclone Kenneth in Cabo Delgado Province, Mozambique.

Team leader Lindsey Martin, NP, Blake 12 Intensive Care Unit (ICU); deputy team leader Kristen Giambusso, MPH, CGH; Carmela Berlin, RPh, Pharmacy; Catherine Welder, RN, Medical ICU; Michelle Winkler-Gettings, RPh, Partners eCare; and David Mather, AS, NREMT-P, Center for Disaster Medicine, are aiding the nonprofit Team Rubicon, a veteran-led global disaster response organization launching a mobile medical aid operation to the southeastern African nation.

“Mozambique has been impacted by two sequential Category 4 storms in a community already beleaguered by poverty,” says Hilarie Cranmer, MD, MPH, director of MGH Global Disaster Response. “It is our hope to provide a professional response to

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Scientific Advisory Committee meeting focuses on challenges facing research faculty

THE 2019 SCIENTIFIC ADVISORY COMMITTEE (SAC) meeting reflected a shift in focus from the progress of research at the MGH to the challenges facing members of the hospital’s research faculty. The April 4 meeting, preceded by the annual Celebration of Science on April 3 (see sidebar at right), began with a keynote interview by Linda Henry, managing director of the Boston Globe and STAT, of Harvard University president Lawrence Bacow, JD, MPP, PhD, who noted that, while progress has been made to increase research career opportunities for women, underrepresented minorities and those with financial challenges, obstacles still exist.

Karen Donelan, ScD, EdM, of the Mongan Institute Health Policy Center, reviewed the results of a survey of research faculty taken late in 2018. While participants expressed satisfaction with things like collaboration with outstanding colleagues, the innovative science and technology developed at the MGH and mentoring, they were least satisfied with administrative burden, organizational bureaucracy and with the need to raise sometimes-uncertain “soft money” to support their work. More than 23 percent of respondents reported receiving disrespectful treatment they felt was based on gender-related factors, age, or racial or ethnic background.

“In addition to the faculty survey, we solicited personal testimonials from faculty who had confronted diverse impediments to career success – ranging from balancing clinical versus research commitments, to work/life balance, to health challenges to concerns around discrimination,” said David Fisher, MD, PhD, director of Dermatology and chair of the Executive Committee on Research (ECOR).

A separate quality-of-life survey was conducted in September 2018 among CNY-based faculty, and David Langenau, PhD, of the Department of Pathology, explained the distance between CNY and the MGH’s main campus was identified as a major issue, leading many respondents to express feelings of isolation. Limited options for transportation, food and retail options were also cited, and Langenau said measures to address these concerns had begun, including changes to shuttle bus routes, updated parking policies, additional food options, and scientific and social events.

Several faculty members described how resources like the Claflin Awards and the support of senior research mentors enabled them to develop their careers, and members of the Center for Faculty Development reviewed the resources available through the Office for Research Career Development and the Office for Women’s Careers. Afternoon sessions focused on the challenges of attracting and retaining a diverse research workforce, and the importance of raising philanthropic funds to support programs like the MGH Research Scholars.

Fisher said that SAC committee members sharing best practices from their institutions helped leadership brainstorm some MGH-specific challenges, opportunities and potential solutions. “It was a sobering and highly informative process – one that will guide attempts to improve the quality of life for MGH research faculty into the future.”

CELEBRATION OF SCIENCE FEATURES AWARD-WINNING RESEARCH

Recipients of the MGH’s three top research awards gave presentations on their work at the annual Celebration of Science on April 3.

• Tanuja Chitnis, MD, of the Department of Neurology, received the Martin Prize for Clinical Research for her New England Journal of Medicine paper describing the first phase 3 clinical trial comparing fingolimod, a new oral drug for pediatric multiple sclerosis, to what had been the standard of care. The trial found that participants receiving fingolimod had an 82 percent reduction in relapses, results that have led to the drug’s FDA approval.

• Robert Anthony, PhD, Center for Immunology and Inflammatory Diseases in the Department of Medicine, received the Martin Prize for Fundamental Research for the Cell paper describing his team’s successful re-engineering in animal models of antibodies that attack an individual’s own tissues into anti-inflammatory antibodies. This ability, accomplished by attaching a specific sugar molecule to a key antibody region, may help improve treatment of autoimmune diseases.

• Marcela Maus, MD, PhD, of the MGH Cancer Center and the Department of Medicine, received the Goodman Fellowship for her investigations into the use of specially engineered immune cells called CAR-T cells to induce an immune response against cancer. The approach has been successful in individuals with some forms of leukemia, but not all patients respond and many have significant side effects. Her team will develop new strategies to improve outcomes and expand the types of cancer that can be treated with immune-system-based therapies.

The MGH Research Scholars Class of 2019 was announced at the evening reception.

• Jodie Babitt, MD, Department of Medicine, Division of Nephrology
• Dara S. Manoach, PhD, Department of Psychiatry, Martinos Center for Biomedical Imaging
• Miguel N. Rivera, MD, Department of Pathology, Cancer Center
• Natalia S. Rost, MD, MPH, Department of Neurology, Fireman Vascular Center
• Amar Sahay, PhD, Department of Psychiatry, Center for Regenerative Medicine

Asthma awareness at MGH Revere

The MGPO Population Health team sponsored an information table at the Revere HealthCare Center Pediatrics practice May 9 in recognition of Asthma Awareness Month, featuring educational handouts about asthma overall and asthma trigger management. There also were demonstrations on the proper use of a spacer and information about natural alternatives for household cleaning products. Here, from left, Natalie Johnson, senior project specialist, MGPO Performance Analysis and Improvement, and Christus Georges, pediatric asthma coach, MGPO Performance Analysis and Improvement, display a poster they created demonstrating what asthma does to the lungs and airways, common asthma medications and triggers.
Making a mark on mentorship

“YOU CAN MAKE all the rules and set all the examples, but unless you change the culture you’ve got nothing,” said Keith Lillemoe, MD, chief of the Department of Surgery, at the 11th annual Nancy J. Tarbell, MD Faculty Development Lectureship Series. “I think there has been a glass ceiling for women in surgery, and we are working hard at the MGH to change that.”

Lillemoe spoke on the topic of mentorship and its inequalities in his lecture, “Mentoring in Academic Medicine: Much Accomplished, But Still Much More to Do,” at the May 8 event hosted by the MGH Center for Faculty Development. “We have to work to overcome the message, ‘people hire who they look like,’” he said.

Tarbell – the founding director of both the Center for Faculty Development (CFD) and the Office for Women’s Careers at the MGH – was instrumental in advancing and promoting the academic careers of MGH faculty. The lectureship series was established to honor that dedication and leadership while providing career advancement and professional development insights to faculty from highly regarded leaders.

“I am the beneficiary of outstanding mentorship,” said Lillemoe. “I want to make sure the mentoring I’ve received throughout my career is available to my daughter and for all the female residents and faculty in the early stages of their careers.”

Ebola readiness: Staff practice proper lab procedures

APRIL 26, NOON: A blue cooler containing specimen samples is wheeled to the Microbiology Biothreats Laboratory in the Jackson Building. It is in this 283-square-foot room where, for the next three hours, a group of laboratory technicians will carefully and efficiently test the samples for possible Ebola virus disease as well as other labs that will help direct patient care.

The scenario is one of the Center for Disaster Medicine’s (CDM) monthly exercises, and the drill is as close to a real-life situation as possible.

“The lab is a vital yet often unseen component of our program,” says Eileen Searle, MPH, RN/NP, CCRN, Biothreats Clinical Operations program manager in the CDM.

Senior Medical Technologists Akita Joshi and Derek Bielawski – both newcomers to the drills – properly sterilize and label all specimen containers in the hood before transferring them through the airlock chamber into the negatively pressurized biosafety cabinet. It is in this cabinet that all specimen testing will occur, preventing exposure to any airborne pathogen.

In addition to training staff members who have not taken part in a drill, the lab leadership and CDM staff assess and update processes based on feedback from this and previous drills. These included new methods of donning and doffing personal protective equipment (PPE), effective transport of the medical waste after testing was complete, ensuring labels do not wipe off the tubes and that all information flows seamlessly into Epic.

“We aren’t teaching clinicians how to be clinicians,” Searle says. “What we have to do is practice a different way of doing things so when there is an actual event, our clinicians will know just what to do.”

— Mozambique

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those affected with this deep and experienced team working with Team Rubicon."

Working in conjunction with local, provincial and national authorities, Team Rubicon is providing mobile medical services to affected communities, including triage, clinical care, and basic laboratory and pharmacy capabilities.

In coordination with the broader incident response framework, the mobile medical team will work to help stabilize the area, provide medical care in hard-to-reach and remote areas, and help to monitor for and prevent disease outbreaks. —
– Yawkey art

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A KINDRED SPIRIT

Clad in a purple Polo shirt dotted with paint and clutching a brush in his left hand, Jonathan Zuker swirls bright colors onto a square canvas. Sunlight pours in the floor-to-ceiling windows on Yawkey 7 where Jonathan’s finished paintings are on display, showcasing iconic New England images. Patients pause to admire his work and the artist engages them in conversation, handing them a signed coaster featuring his art.

A patient walks by and Jonathan greets the woman by name and a warm hug. “We call him the pied painter,” she says. “He really uplifts the spirits. It’s always a joy to see him here.”

Jonathan sets up his easel on Yawkey 7 every Wednesday and 15 of his paintings are on display at MGH Danvers. Like Amanda, his road to creativity stems from a loved one undergoing cancer treatments at the MGH. For Jonathan, it was his father Michael who died four months after being diagnosed with late stage lung cancer 15 years ago.

“When my dad was diagnosed, I was going to architecture school. Once, when I brought him in to treatment, he turned to me and said, ‘The only thing you need is to stay positive.’ During his appointments, I started bringing paints and watercolors and I’d just doodle and people in the waiting room responded to it. I would hang the paintings in his room and I think it really brought us even closer together. He had four months of the most compassionate care – there are no words to say what that meant to us.”

Soon after his death, Jonathan, his mother, Susan, and his brother Matthew started the Conquer Cancer Coalition, a non-profit organization that has raised more than $1 million to help fund programs related to cancer throughout Massachusetts.

“People turn the corner and they are met with something so colorful and so happy that it makes them happy, and walking by brings back memories of something other than cancer,” says Susan Zuker, who is an active presence during her son’s Wednesday visits. “We go home thinking how lucky we are. It’s a kindness people don’t expect and that we are so happy to give. Jonathan’s got a heart of gold – his dad would be so proud.”

A CHANCE MEETING

Last August, Amanda met Jonathan and his mother at a cancer fundraiser. They immediately bonded, forming a friendship they all agree is one that is more like family. When Jonathan learned about Amanda’s artistic talents and her dedication and support of the MGH, he knew the Conquer Cancer organization could help bring more of her creations to patients who could use a boost.

The organization purchases and donates four bouquets a month to the MGH Caring for a Cure group – founded by the nurses of the Adult Hematology/Oncology and Bone Marrow Transplant Program – who work to ease the journey and uplift the spirits of their patients.

“We have collected so many inspiring people along our journey, and we were so happy to meet Amanda as we both enjoy adding some color to the hospital,” says Jonathan. “TJ lives on in everything that Amanda does and everything we do. His attitude was that nothing’s going to stop me – and that’s continued whether he is here or not. With my dad, and with TJ, we want to let their voices carry forward in a positive way and make a difference for others. I want the people who are experiencing what we did to also have a positive memory and we help by having that memory be colorful paper flowers.”

“And art,” Amanda adds.

Jonathan smiles. “Beautiful art. That’s what we wanted to leave them with.”