65 years and counting: Ether Day celebrates longtime employees

PROUDLY DONNING MGH shield pins and multicolored ribbons indicating their years of service, longtime employees gathered in the Bulfinch Tent Oct. 12 for Ether Day. The annual event – held on the Friday closest to the anniversary of the first successful demonstration of ether in surgery at the MGH on Oct. 16, 1846 – celebrates the service milestones of employees in increments of five years. This year, 3,437 pins and ribbons were distributed.

After honorees enjoyed a brief reception, Peter L. Slavin, MD, MGH president, offered his congratulations. “We thank you from the bottom of our hearts for your years of dedication and service to the noble mission of this hospital.”

Jeff Davis, senior vice president for Human Resources, acknowledged employees celebrating milestones in groups until he reached 40 years. He then read names individually, ending with Morton Swartz, MD, of the Department of Medicine, who celebrates a record 65 years in 2012. In what has become an MGH tradition, the Ether Day dancers performed to top songs from the years when employees celebrating milestones would have joined the hospital, starting with 2007.

“Even though you’ve only been here for five years, which may not be long by MGH standards, you are ’Irreplaceable’ – which was a hit song (Continued on page 2)

Mass Health Information Exchange launched

“CLINICAL DOCUMENT SUCCESSFULLY SENT.”

With those four words, the Ether Dome erupted in applause as Gov. Deval Patrick’s health care record became the first to be transmitted through the new Massachusetts Health Information Exchange (HIE) system, sending it from the MGH to Baystate Health in Springfield. During the Oct. 16 HIE launch, Patrick was joined by health care leaders and early program adopters at the MGH, as well as staff and supporters at Baystate Health, which confirmed receipt of the record in real time via videoconference.

“In Massachusetts we believe the access to affordable, quality health care is a public good, and launching a secure, cutting-edge health information exchange is an important step in delivering on that,” Patrick said.

Earlier this year the Obama Administration approved Massachusetts’ request for $16.9 million in funding for the project through a combination of (Continued on page 2)
Helping military families stay strong

“WHEN I’M AWAY, I want to be focused on the mission and not be worried about the home front,” began U.S. Army Reservist and State Rep. Jerry Parisella. “But as the father to a girl who was just 6 at the time, it was hard to do. When I was in Iraq my daughter’s school really stepped up – and it made all the difference.”

Parisella addressed a crowd of nearly 200 people Oct. 1 at the State House during a celebration of the launch of Staying Strong, an initiative to support families at home and in school communities. It is the latest effort to come out of the Red Sox Foundation and the MGH Home Base Program.

The event included a screening of the film “Staying Strong: How Schools Build Resilience in Military Families,” which profiled the North Beverly Elementary School, the Parisella family and the Averys, another military family. The documentary highlighted an in-school support group for students with loved ones in the military as one way to support families.

“Military families deal with a long absence of a parent, concerns about his or her safety, and the adjustment when the parent returns home,” said Paula Rauch, MD, director of the Family Team Program at Home Base. “We need to better help the children of those who serve us.”

Also unveiled at the event was the website www.stayingstrong.org, which offers free parenting advice for families dealing with change when a veteran deploys or returns home. It also includes tools for educators, caregivers and community members who want to do more to support military families at school and in the community.

“For many families, when a parent comes home from the war, it can be a very stressful time,” said retired Brig. Gen. Jack Hammond, executive director of the Home Base Program. “Through our Staying Strong initiative, we encourage the entire civilian community to renew a commitment to support our military-connected families and not forget them.”

For more information, visit www.homebaseprogram.org or www.stayingstrong.org.

— Ether Day
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by Beyoncé in 2007,” said Davis. On cue, Beyoncé’s voice crooned from the speakers and the Ether Day dancers appeared on stage in themed costumes. The troupe performed to more than a dozen hits – ranging from “I Wanna Dance with Somebody” by Whitney Houston to “All Shook Up” by Elvis Presley.

Those celebrating milestones of 20 years or more were invited to celebrate once again Oct. 18 at the annual Ether Day Dinner at the Westin Boston Waterfront Hotel. To view a complete list of employees recognized this year, visit http://intranet.massgeneral.org/intranet/etherday.pdf.

— HIE system
(Continued from page 1)

an American Recovery and Reinvestment Act grant and Medicaid funds. The HIE system, also known as “Mass Hi-Way,” allows for electronic health information to be transmitted securely between health care providers and organizations to better coordinate care, increase patient safety and privacy, and lower health care costs.

“By expanding our connections and access to health information, we have the opportunity to be more efficient and most importantly, to improve the quality of care for our patients,” said MGH President Peter L. Slavin, MD.
PCS staff shines at awards celebration

“KAREN IS THE NURSE” I’d want if I were ill.” “Aomar does everything with a smile.” “Jesse is a natural-born leader.” The praise for 12 extraordinary MGH employees warmed hearts of attendees at the annual Patient Care Services’ (PCS) “One Celebration of Many Stars” Awards Ceremony Oct. 9 in the O’Keeffe Auditorium. The ceremony is particularly special to staff, as all of the awards were created in memory of grateful patients and exemplary employees.

“This is one of my favorite days of the year,” said Jeanette Ives Erickson, RN, DNP, senior vice president for Patient Care and chief nurse. “We get to come together to celebrate our own.”

More than 50 employees were nominated for the various awards. Selection committees – comprising staff, patients and family members – reviewed the nominees’ portfolios and chose the final recipients.

The 2012 awards and recipients are: Anthony Kirvilaitsis Jr. Partnership in Caring Award – Damien Leane, unit service associate, Vascular Surgery, Bigelow 14, and Liana Teixeira, unit service associate, Central Resource for Lunder; Norman Knight Clinical Support Excellence Award – Aomar Nait-Talb, patient care associate, Pediatrics, Ellison 18; Norman Knight Preceptor Distinction Award – Karin Rallo, RN, staff nurse, Medicine, Bigelow 11; Marie C. Petrilli Oncology Nursing Award – Margaret Garvey, RN, staff nurse, Oncology, Lunder 10, and Karen Ward, RN, staff nurse, Oncology, Cox 1; and the Stephanie M. Macaluso, RN, Excellence in Clinical Practice Award – Patricia Anne Chastain, PT, DPT, Physical Therapy, Robert Dorman, PT, DPT, Physical Therapy, Susan Gordon, RN, staff nurse, Cardiac Intensive Care Unit, Ellison 9, and Benjamin Lanckton, BCC, Chaplaincy.

Each recipient expressed gratitude while accepting his or her award. Teixeira thanked her supervisor, Stephanie Cooper, associate director of PCS Clinical Support Services, for believing in her. “I will never let you down,” Teixeira said. “My heart is with this hospital.”

Rallo, recognized for her mentorship, thanked the PCS Executive Committee, her department and her three sons, who inspired her to become a nurse 12 years ago. “This truly is a moment I will cherish forever.”

Forum focuses on improving equity

Racial and ethnic minorities often receive lower quality care and have poorer health outcomes than the majority population. On Sept. 24 and 25, the Healthcare Quality and Equity Action Forum – the first forum of its kind – brought together 150 health care leaders working to improve equity for patients across the country at a time of rapid change in the national health care system.

Hosted by the MGH Disparities Solutions Center (DSC) at the Seaport Hotel and World Trade Center in Boston, the forum included panels and workshops on topics ranging from “Crossing the Digital Divide: HIT and the Promise of Equity” to “What’s the Right Message: Crafting an Equity Communications Strategy.” Experts, including leaders from the MGH and Partners HealthCare, offered perspectives from private and public sectors at local and national levels.

Several sessions, such as “ACOs, PCMHs, VBP: Integrating Equity into the New ABCs of Health Care Reform and Payment Reform,” focused on factors driving the need for change. These include numerous federal initiatives aimed at improving care for the underserved – from enhanced coverage of preventive services to increased funding for patient-centered medical homes.

“Providing quality care to diverse populations will separate the winners from the losers as our health care system undergoes rapid change,” said DSC director Joseph Betancourt, MD, MPH. “Payment reform and health care reform stress the importance of delivering on our promise of quality for all patients, not just a select few. This will push us to tailor systems to meet the needs of vulnerable populations. Hopefully our forum begins this discussion nationally.”

The Healthcare Quality and Equity Action Forum was created through an initial grant from the Amgen Foundation in the fall of 2011. Since then, the DSC has received additional funding to support the forum in the form of educational grants from the following companies and foundations: Aetna Life Insurance Company, Amgen, Inc., The California HealthCare Foundation, The Commonwealth Fund, DentaQuest Foundation, Language Line Services, American Cancer Society and a private donor.

“This forum was an important step forward in continuing the Institute of Medicine’s emphasis on addressing equity in health care access and outcomes,” said attendee James Walton, DO, MBA, vice president for Network Performance for the Baylor Health Care System Quality Alliance.

“I plan to apply lessons learned at my own institution.”
Ryan appointed chief of Hematology/Oncology

ON OCT. 12, the Department of Medicine and the Cancer Center announced the appointment of David Ryan, MD, as the new chief of Hematology/Oncology at the MGH. Ryan, who succeeds Jose Baselga, MD, PhD, joined the MGH Cancer Center in 1998. He has served as associate chief of Hematology/Oncology and clinical director of the MGH Cancer Center since 2009.

“We are delighted to have Dr. Ryan in this new role,” says Daniel Haber, MD, PhD, director of the Cancer Center. “His clinical vision, together with his skill, enthusiasm and commitment, will ensure this division continues to flourish.”

Ryan, clinical director of the MGH Tucker Gosnell Center for Gastrointestinal Malignances since 2003, is an authority on the treatment of gastrointestinal cancers as well as the design and conduct of clinical trials for patients with those cancers. His expertise has been recognized by membership in leading national committees, including clinical task forces for the National Cancer Institute and the National Comprehensive Cancer Center Network. He currently co-chairs the Partners Colon Cancer Care Redesign Team for the MGH.

Taking steps toward a healthier lifestyle

EVEN TUESDAY MORNING at 7:30 am, Katie Medwar, NP, has a standing date. She and several physicians from the Primary Care Associates at Mass General West meet a group of patients in Lexington’s Depot Square. The group has their blood pressure taken, and then they are off, embarking on a two-and-a-half mile walk together down the Minuteman Bikeway. The weekly jaunt is part of a free program called “Walk with a Doc,” and it is taking the patient experience out of the doctor’s office and into fresh air.

“I don’t like to exercise,” says patient Marion Marsetta. “But it’s easier to do it when there’s good conversation. It’s a commitment. And I stick to it.”

“Walk with a Doc” is a program designed to get people to exercise, explains Medwar. “It’s also about supporting our patients and showing them how easy it is to make a healthy change. People walk at their own pace, and the physicians and nurse practitioners go between the groups to discuss all kinds of medical topics.”

During one outing, the conversation may focus on nutrition. Another time it may be diabetes. But no matter the topic, there is always time for individual questions as the group makes its way along the path. “It’s a great way to keep in contact with our patients, and it allows them to ask questions they may not have time for in a routine, once-a-year physical,” says Sunu Yeh, MD. “You never know where the conversation will go.”

The national nonprofit program “Walk with a Doc” was founded in 2008 by a cardiologist in Ohio. Today, hundreds of communities are lacing up to participate – both in the U.S. and around the world. The Mass General West chapter was launched this year, and it continues to grow every week.

“I show up with my own questions, and I always leave knowing the answers to them and about lots of other medical issues as well,” says patient Fredrick Crane. “You pick up bits of knowledge just from being a part of the group conversation. Plus you make friends and get a workout. You really take a lot from the experience.”

To learn more about “Walk with a Doc” at Mass General West, contact Medwar at kmedwar@partners.org. To learn more about the nationwide program or see an updated schedule of walks, visit www.walkwithadoc.org.