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Rebecca Coons of Emergency Trauma Services is one employee who recently made a helpful suggestion via the Employee Suggestion program.

# Suggestion Program Demonstrates Success, Innovation

## EMPLOYEES ARE REWARDED FOR GREAT IDEAS

Since its inception in 2007, the Employee Suggestion Program (Human Resource Policy Manual, policy V-G) has brought dozens of employees' innovative ideas to the fore. Employees who made winning suggestions to improve efficiency and/or patient care at Bassett each received a token of the organization's appreciation, a small stipend. The program, which has received more than 70 suggestions, has already awarded more than \$1,075 to 23 employees.

"Members of the Executive Operations Team (EOT) have been extremely impressed by the quality and insight of the suggestions that have come from our employees," said Executive Vice President and COO Dr. Bertine McKenna, who co-chairs the group responsible for reviewing employee suggestions. "These ideas are helping us do our work better and we appreciate these efforts."

Bassett's Suggestion Program policy states, "A successful health care organization...provides high quality safe care...at reasonable cost. Accomplishment of these goals requires recognition that there is always room for improvement and for original thinking. This means...encouraging employees to contribute ideas drawn from their own areas of expertise. The Suggestion Program is a way to stimulate creativity and to potentially reward employees whose exceptional ideas are adopted."

Several employees' ideas have been implemented and most have received a monetary reward. Congratulations to: Cheryl VanDenburgh; Coleen Vesely; Eric Vogelsang; Harold Pritchard; Jessica Gilmartin; Jodi Gurley; Kelly Armstrong; Loretta Ray; Michelle Gardella; Nancy Clickman; Pam Hotaling; Pat Hinds; Patricia Eggleton; Randy Beers; Rebecca Coons; Steve Cypress; Susan Farrington; Susan Havens; Susan Jack and Theresa Stevenson.

One of the employees rewarded, Rebecca Coons of Emergency Trauma Services, was particularly pleased with the quick response her suggestion received. Coons noticed that a substantial amount of paper was printed to the ER bullpen printer but not used. "Concerned with not only the environment but the waste of money, I looked for a way to report this and found the answer on the Bassett home page," Coons said. "I reported this in December and was very impressed with the quick response from the team assigned to investigate this. The solution to the problem was swift and well planned. I have seen a significant reduction of wasted paper and have to smile just a little to know that I was a part of that change!"

If you have a new idea that might save money, improve patient care or increase efficiency please bring it forward. Suggestion forms are on the Intranet Human Resources page and should be sent to the committee or directly to Dr. McKenna. You can also email your suggestion to [newidea@bassett.org](mailto:newidea@bassett.org).

## Under The Cupola: Steady Progress Despite Stormy Times

As we look ahead, we know summer is not far off. Yet there is a great deal to get through before that time. Bassett continues to remain conservative in regards to building and new services in light of the national economic situation. But, there are many things to be optimistic about. Upstate New York and health care are both environments that have not been hit as hard as other regions or industries, so far. Additionally, Bassett is one of the stronger health organizations in New York. We're working on an exciting opportunity for shared services with A.O. Fox in Oneonta and we're also marking the one-year anniversary of Tri-Town Regional Hospital, which has seen better-than-projected volumes. These are evidence of our ever-growing regional system in service to our patients.

Bassett's patient satisfaction and employee opinion scores were good for 2008. We always want to do better, of course, but our success in improving these scores is an indicator of our focused attention on our patients and staff. The medical school campus initiative was approved by Columbia University, and this is a momentous

event — one we will all embrace in the coming years for the anticipated benefits of training high-quality physicians who seek to practice in rural areas.

These are just a few examples proving that during these stormy times Bassett is the right, sturdy ship to be on. There are so many opportunities, exciting new programs and people who are committed to a great Bassett future. Although the economic environment fluctuates from day to day and is sure to cause anxiety, our organization is strong and healthy, and we will be working diligently in the coming months to enhance its strength even further.

Executive Vice President and COO  
Bertine McKenna, Ph.D.



# BASSETT AMBASSADOR

## FRANK GAWEL

Frank Gawel admits that he would prefer to stay under the radar, but does appreciate the recognition that comes with being selected as Bassett Ambassador. Essentially, he says that if you treat people right and take care of them, they'll take care of you. Frank has been taking care at Bassett for six years as the day-shift coordinator for the department of Patient Support Services.



Frank Gawel

Frank coordinates all the transporting activities of five other daytime support services staff. His work duties include transporting patients from one area to another, transporting specimens to the lab, delivering dirty equipment to sterile processing and bringing clean equipment back to the floors. Frank also tracks certain rental equipment (such

as special patient beds), trains new employees, and generally makes sure all transport requests go smoothly. Frank's most important piece of equipment on the job is his pager. Every transport request comes from the Call Center, and his day begins as soon as the pager goes off. He then prioritizes the job requests and informs the Call Center when each request has been completed.

In a nomination letter, Rose Emmino and Shaun Karasik, Call Center representatives, write that Frank never has a problem with any transport request, whether large or small, and that he is "always ready to lend a hand." They agree that Frank is a leader and a mentor to his co-workers.

Frank and his wife, Nora, have two grown children, and spend much of their free time tending to the 30 acres around their home in Richfield Springs.

## THREE CHEERS!!!

Dr. William Richtsmeier has received a Presidential Citation from the American Head and Neck Society, the professional society for head and neck oncologic surgery, and will accept the award at its annual meeting in May. Congratulations, Dr. Richtsmeier!



## Team Bassett Shows Heart at Run/Walk

Team Bassett takes a moment for a photo just before America's Greatest Heart Run and Walk 2009 in Utica. Nearly 100 employees from Bassett participated in the event, some walking and others running, to raise money for research, education and awareness relating to heart disease. Approximately 8,500 people took part in the Heart Run and Walk event, according to the American Heart Association. More than \$1.1 million was raised for the AHA, \$8,700 of which came from Bassett participants. Bassett Healthcare also sponsored the Telethon, which raised a total of \$89,165.



## Foodies Flock to Bassett Booth

Bassett Chef Brian Wrubleski's food demonstration booth at the Heart Run and Walk Health Expo is always a hit, and this year was no exception. He and his staff drew a crowd of people waiting to sample the mouth-watering recipes he dished out. This year, Chef Wrubleski and his team from Food Service served veggie reubens and yogurt parfaits.



# Health & Wellness

## WILL YOU ACCEPT THE, 10,000-STEP CHALLENGE?

Bassett's Employee Wellness Committee has issued a challenge to all employees to participate in the 10,000-Step Challenge. The idea is to encourage a fun activity (and a bit of competition) and create awareness that increased walking and daily activity will impart a variety of health benefits, such as lowering blood pressure and improving blood sugar control. Beginning May 3, participants who have registered will begin either a personal or team challenge to increase their steps every day, to be tracked by using a pedometer daily. The challenge ends May 30. Prizes (to be announced) will be available for individuals and teams who have taken the most steps at the end of the challenge. Each team and/or individual who completes the 10,000-Step Challenge will be eligible for additional drawings.

The goal of 10,000 steps a day is recommended, but your personal goal should reflect your baseline number of steps. For example, if your daily steps are far below 10,000, a goal of walking 2,000 more steps a day might be appropriate. If you are already close to 10,000 steps a day, choose a higher goal.

Watch for an all-Bassett e-mail containing a registration form, challenge rules and tips to increase your steps. Registration forms can be obtained by contacting Steven Garner in Corporate Communications, at [steven.garner@bassett.org](mailto:steven.garner@bassett.org) or by calling 607-547-3037. Forms will also be available in the cafes and at information desks. So, dust off that pedometer and prepare to get walking!

# Spotlight on Service

## BIRTHING CENTER

Service excellence means doing whatever it takes to serve our patients – and each other.

The following story illustrates the teamwork and dedication that goes on in our organization every day. Kudos to the Birthing Center team for routinely going above and beyond to serve patients, and one another!

*It was late at night in the Birthing Center. Five women were in labor; an employee on the night shift was sick and couldn't come to work. The previous two days were extremely busy as well, yet staff made sacrifices and came together in an extraordinary way to meet patient care needs:*

**Bernadette Hill** was called in the middle of the night and asked if she could come in to work early. She was here by 4 a.m.

**Pat Otis**, who was scheduled for a vacation day, agreed to come in and worked an 11-7 shift.

**Sandy Hula** was away but called back later and offered to make herself available.

**Kristin Orts**, who had completed her shift just a few hours earlier, agreed to come back in.

**Karen Waterman** volunteered to work the following night's 12-hour shift, even though she is a day-shift nurse.

**Donna Mumbulo** willingly floated over from Pediatrics to help and then stayed on.

**Mary Livermore** was scheduled for 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. but stayed with her patient until she delivered at 10:30 p.m., well past the end of her shift.

**Grace St. John**, who was scheduled for 3 p.m. to 11 p.m., also worked the night shift, but she didn't have a ride home.

**Marylyn Maher** went home and got her car so that Grace's son, who brought his mother a vehicle to drive home, had a ride back.

**Wendy Westbrook** was asked if she could work the evening and stayed until 3 a.m.



From left: Barbara Brown, Mary Livermore, Marylyn Maher, Grace St. John, Karen Waterman and Tanya Jennison are just a few of the dedicated nurses who make up the Birthing Center team.

**Karen Waterman**, whose grandmother had passed away, called to say she could still work the night shift, but could she take Friday off for the funeral.

**Robin Stasilli**, who brought this amazing collaborative performance to our attention, worked a double shift as well and says, "I feel so fortunate to work with such a dedicated group of nurses...they don't do it for overtime or bonus pay. They do it to ensure the safety of our patients."

The Spotlight on Service is a BassettWORKS feature focusing on the service excellence goals and success stories of a particular department or area.

## Fifth Annual Employees' Breakfast Club Honors 2008 Members

On Thursday morning, March 12, Bassett employee-donors were honored at the fifth annual Employees' Breakfast Club at The Otesaga Hotel. Hosted by the Friends of Bassett, the event recognized the contributions of Bassett employees who contributed a minimum of \$100 to Bassett initiatives in 2008.

Len Marsh, president of the Friends of Bassett's board of directors, welcomed the Breakfast Club members and thanked them for all they do for Bassett. Referring to the 2008 donor survey conducted by the Friends, Marsh related how 92 percent of donors stated the reason they give to Bassett is based on the important programs and quality of care that Bassett's staff provides.

Bertine McKenna Ph.D., Bassett's executive vice president and chief operating officer, praised employee donors for contributing their time, minds and talents to Bassett's mission. Their dedication resulted in, among many things, the new mobile screening coach, the new Bassett clinic in Middleburgh, the opening of Tri-Town Regional Hospital, the development of the Bassett medical school campus initiative, the opening of the Active Learning Center within the Mackenzie Medical Library and the acquisition of daVinci robotic surgery equipment, all in 2008.

Breakfast Club donors include:

Karen Adams, Sara Z. Albright, Donna Anderson, Linda Arquin, Frederic Atkins, James Baker, Bill Balcom, Scott A. Barrett, Peggy Bergen-Pavelka, Jennifer Bergeron, Ruth P. Blackman, JoAnne P. Blaise, Scott J. Bonderoff, Janice Bowker, Kathleen Breault, Amy L. Bressett, Kenneth Brinck, Kathleen Brooks, Jacquie & Jim Brophy, Ann Lindsay-Brown, Patricia Burney, Robert Burns, Cindy Cary, Edna Chase, Arleen Clark, Stephen Clark, Nancy Clickman, Suzanne Conway, Jean Dorsey Cramer, Diana Crean, Lucinda D. Crisman, Sondra Croft, Angella Davis, Doreen Del Rosario, Albert Dorn, Dennis W. Dorn, Ransom Dow, William J. Elder, Eileen P. Elwood, Michelle Empie, Susan Farrington, James Fernandez, Debbie Ferrari, Brenda Ferraro-Hanson, David Flynn, Patrick A. Franck, Linda A. Franck, Greg & Georgia Frevele, Cynthia Fullington, Shelley Gallagher, Susan Garvin, Lauraine J. Glockler, Jeannine A. Groff, Karen Halay, Jane Hamilton, Chris Harju, Deborah Harper, Martha J. Harris, Thomas Harter, Thomas Hohensee, Jennifer Hojohn, Margaret & Samuel Hoskins, Betsy Jay, Candace Jeffres, Bonnell Kaido, David Karl, Pamela Grady Karwan, Nancy Kern, Douglas Kilts, Margaret Kiss, Wendy S. Kiuber, Sally A. Klem, Joanne Kosciusko, Evelyn Kropp, Maureen Kuhn, Susan

E. Lamb, Ellen LaSalle, Jo Launt, Sheila F. LeMaster, Kathleen Leonardo, Mary Livermore, David M. Lott, Lori A. Malinowski, Sandra Manley, Robert & Sonja McCann, Annette D. McClenahan, Jan McGrath, Anthony McShane, Glen Miller, Melissa Miller, Shirley Moseman, George Murray, Maureen Fitzgerald Murray, Joan M. Nicols, Nicole Oliver, Rebecca Pace, Thomas D. Parrotti, Anthony D. Partenza, Frank Patrick, Matthew Pearsall, Lori M. Pecoraro, Kathleen Pellegrini, Robin Peters, Fred Ploutz & Shari Johnson-Ploutz, Laurel Quaintance-Meifert, Michael Quinn, Janet Ratliff, Deborah Rood, John & Maureen Rowley, Rebecca Rowley, Gail Sacchi, Lydia M. Saltsman, Katie Sebastian, Donna Senchyshyn, Natalie Sheldon, Kathleen Shirm, Lorraine Smith-Zuba, Janet H. Snyder, Ellen A. Spencer, Rebecca Sprague, Janet Spraker, William Stamp, Marti Stayton, Michael Stein, Kim H. Stockwell, Jill Stoecklin, Monica E. Stringer, Lorraine Stuble, Martha Freer Sunkenberg, Kristie L. Sweeney, Nancy H. Tallman, Marietta Taylor, Kim Thompson, David & Mary Thuma, Susan K. Trueworthy, Ramona Truscott, Anonymous, Martha L. Twichell, Pamela Ullman-Farris, Susan van der Sommen, Constance J. Vrooman, Mary Ann Vunk, Diane Wells, Catherine White, Martha Wilhelm, Beth Worden, Irene C. Young, Anthony & Aurora Zappa, Karen Zuill



## News and Views from the Region

Regional managers hosted an Appreciation Celebration on Feb. 25 at the Bassett Hall Chapel to say thank-you to the many departments in Cooperstown that provide cheerful assistance, direction and expertise to regional managers and their staffs on a daily basis. Photographed left to right are: Brenda Ferraro-Hanson, manager of Cobleskill, Middleburgh, Sharon Springs, Schoharie, Delanson centers; Mark Horton, manager, Canajoharie and Gloversville health centers; and Lisa Manzer, director, Health Center Clinical Operations.

# New Innovation Award Announced, Cobleskill Prime Care First Winner

To continue to be a leader in health care, we need to continually develop ideas that make us even better at what we do and then put those ideas into action. We need to listen to our patients, our referring physicians and to each other, to best learn how to do an even better job. It is well known that the organizations that will be successful in health care in the future will be those that are bright, innovative and energized.

Many of Bassett's Functional Teams are working together to find new ideas from the organization and helping to implement them. The Service Delivery Functional Team has taken on the task of eliciting new ideas to enhance service to our patients and their families, and the Business Development Group is working with the physicians to develop new clinical programs and business ideas. The Workforce Development Group is looking for new ways to continue to make Bassett the employer of choice in upstate New York, and the Safety Action Council is 'making the rounds' to find innovative programs that will continue to make Bassett a safe environment for our patients.

Innovation is such a priority here that, starting in December of last year, Bassett

Innovation Awards have been presented to deserving groups. The Cobleskill Primary Care Practice was honored as the first recipient for its new Group Appointments Initiative. This initiative improves access to service, shortens waiting times and is very popular with patients. (Watch for a full story on this initiative in an upcoming issue of BassettWORKS).

To be a candidate for the award, the program should be sustainable and measurable, and should meet one or more of the following criteria:

- Reduces expenses both short-term and long-term
- Reduces ineffective 'work-arounds' (alternatives to perceived barriers that do not address the problem)
- Improves customer (patient, family, referring physician) service
- Creates a new or redesigned workflow that makes work easier for the front line staff
- Creates new ways of doing things that impact finances, customer satisfaction, efficiency

Innovation Award nominations should be sent to COO Dr. Bertine McKenna or to Dr. Robert Lancey. Lancey, chief of cardiac surgery.

## CALL CENTER, OSS RECEIVE INNOVATION AWARDS

The Call Center, with the Herkimer health center, and Emergency and Trauma Services at Oneonta Specialty Services received Innovation Awards earlier this year.

The Herkimer Call Handling Pilot was the innovation of a group of directors, managers and vice presidents charged a year ago with the job of improving call handling in the entire organization. The goal is more efficient systems to handle incoming calls and the work those calls generate so that we better serve our customer, the patient. The call handling team launched its effort with the Herkimer Health Center because of particularly difficult issues specific to Herkimer. According to Manager Jennifer Main, the pilot program has increased patients' ability to contact the desired person or department, significantly increasing patient satisfaction, and it has nearly eliminated the number of misguided calls employees have to deal with. Nan Apps, director of Service Excellence, says the pilot program in Herkimer has been "deemed successful and sustained." The team has since turned its attention to Digestive Diseases, where call handling changes have been implemented and are being fine tuned. Next in line will be the Cancer Institute, which was scheduled to go live the end of March, followed by the Department of Surgery and Oneonta Specialty Services. The Call Handling Innovation Team addressed protocol, staffing, call flow and the relationship of call flow to work flow. Job well done!

The Herkimer Call Handling Pilot Innovation Team members are Nan Apps, Vicki Gold, Wendy Kiuber, Jennifer Main, Sandra Manley, Frank Panzarella, Thomas Parrotti, Jean Sechrist, Martha Sunkenberg, Marietta Taylor, Kim Thompson, Catherine Tuttle, Doug Bush, and Denise Raggi.

The Herkimer front line staff are Kelly Lyle, Jessica Kirby-Barnes, Marie Humphrey, Caryn Varvaro, Heather Duesler, Don Laible, Jana Green, Amanda Saunders, and Sara Kulas.

In 2008, Bassett opened the door to the urgent care clinic at Oneonta Specialty Services. It was a hit right from the start, proving to be a convenience to patients who needed to be seen right away for everything from sprains, strains and fractures to sore throats and lacerations. Nearly a year later, the number of people taking advantage of the services at Oneonta Urgent Care continues to outpace expectations. Congratulations to the team that made it happen and continues to make it happen.

Emergency and Trauma's Oneonta Urgent Care Innovation Team is Dr. August Leinhart; Scott Bonderoff; Noel Clinton; Vicki Gold; Leah Summers; Andy Earle-Richardson, PA; Frank King, PA; Jack Cymerman, PA; Scott Lawrence, R.N.; Chris Harju, R.N.; and Jeannine Bonhoff, PA.

## WELCOME NEW MEDICAL STAFF!



Dr. Carlos E. Bermejo

Dr. Carlos E. Bermejo, board certified in urology, has joined the department of urology. Bassett urologists see patients in Cobleskill, Cooperstown, Delhi, Hamilton, Herkimer, Little Falls and Oneonta. Dr. Bermejo performed the first prostate cancer operation at Bassett Healthcare using the da Vinci robotic-assisted technology. He had been the director of the Urologic Oncology Fellowship program at the University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio, where he also had a faculty appointment in the department of urology as an assistant professor.

Dr. Bermejo earned his medical degree from Universidad Francisco Marroquin School of Medicine in Guatemala. He completed his internship at the Berkshire Medicine Center in Pittsfield, Mass., a urology residency at The University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio, Texas, and a urologic oncology fellowship at The



Marie Rafalski, PA-C

University of Texas Anderson Cancer Center in Houston.

The Department of Surgery welcomed Marie Rafalski, PA-C. She is part of the Multispecialty Surgical Physician Assistant Postgraduate Training Program. This 12-month program trains surgical physician assistants in general and specialty areas of surgery, with the physician assistant rotating through a variety of surgical areas. Rafalski completed her master's degree in physician assistant studies at Le Moyne College in Syracuse.

Kevin McCaffrey, C.R.N.A., has joined the Department of Anesthesiology. He completed a master's degree at the Albany Medical College Center for Nurse Anesthesiology. McCaffrey also worked as a registered nurse in the cardiopulmonary surgical intensive care unit at Albany Medical Center. Welcome!



Kevin McCaffrey, C.R.N.A.



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