

Histotechnician Amanda Porath displays one of the slides that is now being processed differently, thanks to an idea she brought forward.

Histotechnician Wins Bassett Innovation Award

“Not only is this a huge cost savings for our department, but it is also better patient care, and it makes our pathologists’ work easier.”

A histotechnician in the Clinical Laboratory recently suggested a simple change that will not only improve patient care and make the Surgical Pathology department’s work more efficient, but save Bassett thousands of dollars a year.

Amanda Porath received a Bassett Innovation Award for her proposal to run immunoperoxidase staining control slides differently. Previously, histotechnicians were running a slide with the control sample on it next to a separate slide containing the patient tissue. Amanda suggested putting the positive control on the top portion of one slide and the patient tissue on the bottom portion, a common practice in the field but one that was new to Bassett.

“Not only is this a huge cost savings for our department, but it is also better patient care, and it makes our pathologists’ work easier,” she explained. “The only true way to know if the antibody was dispensed onto the patient slide is if there is a positive control on that slide. This new idea will prove that, and provide a higher standard of accuracy.”

According to Anatomic Pathology Manager **Vicki Spoon**, this simple change will have a net annual savings of \$9,600 in materials and supplies. “Amanda is a very knowledgeable histotechnician,” she said. “She keeps up to date in the field on her own time and makes suggestions for Bassett based on this learning... I am amazed at how this suggestion simplifies the technical work and is more convenient for the pathologists. Of course, ultimately, it’s the patient who reaps the benefits.”

Since the original change was implemented, Amanda has taken it a step further with the use of multitissue blocks, where several different control samples are placed on the same slide with the patient tissue, improving the efficiency of the work even more.

The Bassett Innovation Award was developed by Dr. McKenna as a way to encourage staff to think about doing work differently for efficiency, cost savings, quality and safety. Amanda received a \$1,000 award in recognition of the savings. She is the second recipient of the award; the first award was given to the team responsible for Bassett Healthcare-Cobleskill’s group Health Center’s group appointments initiative.

Bassett Innovation Award nominations should be submitted in writing to Dr. McKenna. To be a candidate for a Bassett Innovation Award, an idea or program should be sustainable and measurable, and should meet 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 quality and safety;
- 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.

In addition to the Innovation Award program, Bassett’s Employee Suggestion Program (Human Resource Policy Manual, policy V-G) has brought dozens of employees’ innovative ideas to the fore since its inception in 2007. 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.

Have a new idea that might save money, improve patient care or improve efficiency? Bring it forward! Suggestion forms are on the Intranet Human Resources page and can be submitted online or directly to Dr. McKenna. You can also e-mail your suggestion to newidea@bassett.org.

Under the Cupola: Summer Vacation Check List Is a Good Model for At-Work Reminders

As we engage in summer activities, our lives become more complex. Not only do we have all of the work every day at our jobs, but vacations and summer events and activities pull us outdoors—as well they should! Please have fun and be safe this summer.

It also is a time to reflect on how organized we are; it reminds me of preparing for a trip, whether a day trip or a week’s vacation. There are so many things to remember, pack and get finished before one leaves. Yet we are sometimes more organized in these times than at others.

Perhaps we can adopt this planning and organizing method to make sure that the fundamentals at work are always in place. Things like:

- ✓ ensuring new and revised policies are understood;
- ✓ verifying that regulatory requirements are in compliance, including Joint Commission;
- ✓ responding in a timely manner to requests from colleagues;
- ✓ making sure evaluations are on time as an indicator of our respect for the staff;

Executive Vice President & COO
Bertine C. McKenna, Ph.D.



- ✓ ensuring that we “round” to be sure our patients and staff know they can raise issues to all of us;
- ✓ making sure patient service is attended to so that we provide high-quality, safe care in every encounter;
- ✓ ensuring outpatient service expectations are exceeded.

There is a long list of things we need to be sure we do. Checking fundamentals routinely to be sure the journey the patient and our colleagues take in our organization is the best possible.

I know this is complicated with the many things we do every day, which is even more reason for a very organized approach to our workplace. Have fun this summer, stay focused no matter what you are doing in or outside of work, and create systems to have or give the best experience always.

This Just In! Bassett Featured in July 25 New York Times

Did you see **Dr. Streck** on the cover of the *New York Times* recently? Bassett’s president was quoted and our physician model featured in a broader article about health care reform. The article is reprinted as this month’s insert. *Check it out!*

MEDICAL STUDENTS GET CREATIVE WITH HUMANITIES PROJECTS

From fictional monologues between Chekhov and Shakespeare to sketches of patients, Columbia University students have been doing some amazing creative projects during their Bassett rotations.

Under the direction of Dr. **Alan Kozak**, Bassett has included a humanities component in its medical education program for more than 15 years. At the end of their Bassett rotations, third-year medical students are asked to present a creative project related to their experience in the primary care clinic. The first projects were mostly written pieces, many of which were later compiled in the acclaimed "Let Me Listen to Your Heart" anthology edited by Dr. **David Svahn** and Dr. Kozak. Recent projects have also encompassed art, music, theater and dance.

Dr. Kozak likens the humanities focus in Medicine to frosting on a cake, lending elegance and beauty to a foundation rooted in science. "Basic science is very important," he says "but we can't forget the importance of the human element that has to be factored in as we take care of our patients."

Brian Hwang said his project of sketching patients he had seen in the primary care clinic began as a way to decompress, but evolved into a meaningful tool. "At the end of the day, I was able to vividly remember the patients and their stories and issues (and even lab results) and synthesize a collective impression of them, which I transferred into my drawings. It was an uninterrupted 20-30 minutes of contemplation totally dedicated to one patient. Sometimes, to my amazement, this would help me think of different or new ways to address their concerns and medical problems, which I discussed with my attending the next morning."

For **Pelton Phinizy**, who transformed a soccer ball into a "memory ball" filled with illustrations of his experience upstate, the project was a refreshing change of pace. "As med students, I think we all get caught up and trapped in all the classes and memorization that we forget what's going on in our lives and in our world," he said. "It's nice to lift my head out of a book and take a look around every once in a while."



Dr. Alan Kozak displays some of the humanities projects done by medical students.

MCKENNA RECEIVES NATIONAL AWARD

Bertine C. McKenna, Ph.D., executive vice president and chief operating officer (COO), has been awarded this year's American College of Healthcare Executives (ACHE) Senior Level Healthcare Executive Annual National Award. She was presented with the award June 24 at an awards dinner as part of HANYS' (Healthcare Association of New York State) Annual Membership Conference, at the Sagamore Hotel, Bolton Landing.

Dr. McKenna has been a highly-motivated leader at Bassett, significantly enhancing safety, service excellence, performance improvement, physician relations and financial management. As a result of her efforts, Bassett has received Magnet recognition and many awards for quality and operational excellence. She led Bassett to be the first hospital in the state chosen for the Institute for Healthcare Improvement 5 Million Lives Campaign "Boards on

Board" initiative and was instrumental in the post-Katrina development of a sister relationship with West Jefferson Hospital in New Orleans.

Dr. McKenna has extended her leadership overseas, taking a central role in the establishment of a women's hospital in West Africa. In addition, Dr. McKenna participates in the HANYS COO Forum and the Empire State VHA COO group.

During her acceptance remarks, Dr. McKenna credited those around her saying, "It's the patients through the years who've taught me compassion, staff who've taught me commitment, and various teams I have led or followed who've taught me how to be a better leader, and the good bosses along the way who saw something in me and allowed me to be successful. Most of all, I credit my husband, Patrick McKenna, with reminding me who I am and am not everyday. He keeps me grounded."

Dr. McKenna has served as executive vice president and COO at Bassett since 2002. Prior to this, she served as special advisor to the chief medical officer at Fletcher Allen Healthcare in Burlington, Vt., as the president of Vermont Managed Care and in other leadership positions. She is also a Fellow of the American College of Healthcare Executives.

Dr. McKenna is a board member of the Catskill Symphony Orchestra, The Brookwood School and The Clara Welch Thanksgiving Home. She is a member of the HANYS COO Forum, Voluntary Hospitals of America COO Forum and a past regent in the New York Empire District 1 for ACHE.

The American College of Healthcare Executives is an international professional society of 30,000 health care executives who lead our nation's hospitals, health care systems and other health care organizations.



Thank You and Farewell

Bassett thanked the inaugural group of students from Albany Medical College during an informal barbecue last month. Pictured from left: **Dr. Weil; Shyama Mathews; Bruna Babic; Doug Fair; Audrey Farkas; Victoria Winkeller; Mitul Kanzaria** and **Dr. Franck**. In June 2008, Bassett and Albany Medical College announced a new partnership that established a regional clinical campus for third-year Albany medical students at Bassett. The new partnership was a pilot program designed to set the stage for the Columbia-Bassett medical school program announced in May 2009.

GE HEALTHCARE, HANYS, BASSETT COLLABORATE TO KEEP PATIENTS SAFE

In June, GE Healthcare announced a research collaboration with the Healthcare Association of New York State (HANYS) and Bassett Healthcare that will make hospitals safer for patients. GE's Global Research Center (GRC) and its partners are developing technologies for use in hospitals to identify and mitigate patient safety risks, including the Smart Patient Room and the Patient-Safety Forecaster, a tool used to model effectiveness and savings associated with patient safety interventions.

Testing of the Smart Patient Room technologies and the Patient-Safety Forecaster is expected to begin at Bassett this fall. The technology will initially focus on three common patient safety risks: hand hygiene, patient falls and clinical rounds adherence.

Beginning with one room in Bassett's ICU, the Smart Patient Room will include technologies such as optical sensors to track the movement of

clinicians and equipment, capture time between events and remotely read bar codes. The system will use artificial intelligence and multiple sensing technologies to monitor, for example, not only when hand washings occur, but also when hand washings should have occurred. As the first-ever technology to do both, the system will help address this often overlooked element of patient safety. Data collected will also be used to create reports that compare actual treatment with recommended clinical protocol. Health care providers can use this information to manage clinical workflow, identify areas for improvement in care delivery and help ensure patient safety.

"Smart, predictive technology can help make patients safer and help hospitals operate more efficiently," said **William Streck**, M.D., president & CEO. "Patient safety is critical to overall health

care quality and an urgent industry-wide need. Bassett Healthcare is proud to partner in developing and testing these new technologies aimed at keeping patients safer."

GE will also be involved in the development of a forecasting tool that calculates costs related to patient safety and adverse events. The Patient-Safety Forecaster will help organizations more accurately predict the benefits of various quality and safety investments and track the impact of improvements over time by linking behaviors, patient outcomes and cost. The initiative will combine HANYS' deep expertise in healthcare data analysis with GE's forecasting technologies and tools, providing a forward-looking estimate of the magnitude and cost of quality. Bassett Healthcare will help inform development of the tool and serve as the pilot site for testing forecast accuracy.

Health & Wellness

Employee Wellness Program Expands

“Healthy employees are the best way to ensure that we are able to apply our talents to help patients heal.”

From Go Red and Go Blue events to the employee wellness screening program and walking challenges, thousands of employees participate in wellness programs sponsored by Bassett Healthcare each year. These efforts will continue and expand in 2010. A wellness calendar of events is also being formalized by the wellness committee to keep staff informed about upcoming events.

The newly-named Employee Community Health Program is an organized program to support and assist employees in establishing healthier lifestyles that benefit their work and personal lives. This includes increasing employee awareness about health topics, providing behavior change initiatives and establishing or continuing policies that support health-related goals.

“The wellness screening is the foundation of our wellness program and the wellness calendar being developed for next year is a formalization and expansion of the Learn at Lunch program that has been a part of the wellness committee’s work since 2004,” said **Marti Stayton**, Employee Assistance Program coordinator and founding member of the

wellness committee. “The committee is working to weave wellness into our work life. Healthy employees are the best way to ensure that we are able to apply our talents to help patients heal.”

The Employee Community Health Program will provide employees with:

- Incentives for participation in a variety of wellness programs;
- Opportunities for increased health screenings;
- Targeted health educational programs;
- Weight-loss initiatives;
- Publicized medical plan and plan design for use;
- Lifestyle and behavior change initiatives;
- Safety and prevention initiatives;
- Stress reliever initiatives; and
- Disease management initiatives.

The committee will also make sure that all wellness programs available to the public, such as diabetes and cancer screenings, are made available to employees. Watch for updates in the Staff Bulletin and BassettWORKS.



Diane Suhocki removing a bucket full of sterilized glass culture tubes from the autoclave.

The Greening of Bassett’s Clinical Laboratory

Bassett’s clinical laboratory began looking for ways to be “greener” over a decade ago, according to **Timothy Willammee**, manager, core laboratory services. “Plastic, paper and container recycling have been embedded in the lab’s operations for over 10 years,” notes Willammee. “This includes a range of items from beverage containers that staff bring into the lab to empty reagent containers that are part of our work. Glass culture tubes used for susceptibility testing are sterilized by subjecting them to high pressure steam and then recycled, with recycle bins located in the main laboratory and break room.”

Willammee says the laboratory’s efforts to recycle have expanded over the years to include a longer list of items such as cardboard, empty toner cartridges and the Styrofoam inner box of reagent shipping boxes. In addition, there are other efforts in the lab to be more environmentally friendly:

1. Changing processes and substituting less-toxic materials where possible has significantly reduced the use of toxic chemicals.
2. Memos and the minutes from department meetings are distributed electronically.
3. Paper lab manuals are no longer printed and are instead available electronically (printing the manuals used to result in 300 two-inch binders, with 300 double-sided pages annually).
4. Instrument printouts in the lab are reduced where possible and the result review is done on-screen and stored electronically.

Additionally, as part of the Green Team’s work, **David Goss**, effective August 1, 2009, is heading up the work of forming a viable, sustainable recycling program. Willammee encourages other department managers to have the conversation with staff about ways they can adopt a greener approach to their work. Managers who would like more information or a presentation on recycling at Bassett should contact Dave Simonds in Housekeeping at 547-3517.



Go Blue Winner

Go Blue for Men’s Health event (June 19) bike raffle winner **Jennifer Blasetti** of OSS received her new bike. With her is **Thomas Parrotti**, organizer of the event. In conjunction with this year’s Go Blue event, two dozen male employees took advantage of a special wellness screening program to learn their numbers, like cholesterol, BMI and blood pressure.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR YEARS OF SERVICE AND DEDICATION TO OUR PATIENTS

Congratulations to the following employees celebrating service milestones this month.

Five Years of Service

Anouk Lambers M.D., Sandra Mortensen, Richard Robinson, Michael Kore M.D., Jeff Diefendorf, Vivian Clark M.D., Sheila Hall, James Leonardo M.D. PhD, Alisha Aramini, Melody O’Neill, Erin Allison, Eric Knight M.D., Richard Brown M.D., Alicia Beardsley F.N.P., Ely Nathan M.D.

Ten Years of Service

Frank DelPlato, Jacquelyn McCartney, Louise Roberts, William Stamp, Deborah West, Laura Dixon, Mary Humphrey, Heather Gasner, Judith Everts, Debra MacKenzie

Fifteen Years of Service

William Joslyn III, Barbara Perry

Twenty Years of Service

Arthur Tillman, Jonathan Crespi

Twenty-Five Years of Service

Janet Sterling

Thirty Years of Service

Sondra Croft, Patricia Hinds, Kathleen Shirm, Maureen Weir, Marylyn Maher

Forty Years of Service

Sandra Hula

news in brief

Check out the recently-completed renovations to the library to accommodate the Columbia-Bassett Program (announced in BassettWorks June 2009). The library stacks were removed and more than 1,300 square feet were renovated to create a classroom for 14 students and three offices.

O'Connor Offers CenteringPregnancy Program

O'Connor Hospital now offers the CenteringPregnancy Program, a new program for expectant parents, in which certified nurse midwife **Gail Phillips** coordinates group appointments for obstetric care through postpartum care.

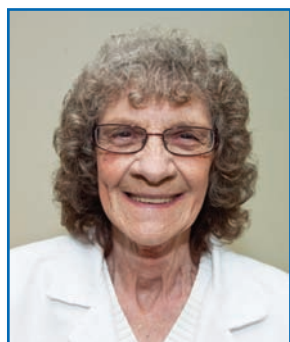
In addition to their individual care appointments, pregnant women are invited to join other women and couples with similar due dates for group-setting appointments every month. At the group appointments, women and their partners can engage in self-care activities such as tracking weight and blood pressure, with the help of the nurse midwife, as well as receive group support and participate in discussions about pregnancy, childbirth, parenting and personal growth.

According to Phillips, CenteringPregnancy is an innovative way to receive care during pregnancy—with the woman receiving individualized care with the added benefit of sharing and learning in a supportive group environment.



The CenteringPregnancy Program class at O'Connor Hospital in Delhi offers group learning to participants preparing for labor and delivery. Nurse midwife **Gail Phillips** demonstrates a shoulder massage as a comfort measure for labor.

Ambassador



Shirley Potts

"Shirley exemplifies true excellence in service by respecting every individual and their need."

"Bassett's a wonderful place to work. We all get along in the Eye Clinic and everyone helps each other out." That's not just lip service from **Shirley Potts**, patient services associate and current Ambassador. "I have good friends everywhere at Bassett. When I was ill and when my husband became ill, my friends actually pooled their time and donated it to me." Shirley says simply, "If you treat patients and co-workers well, they'll treat you well."

Shirley joined Bassett in 1990, beginning in Food Service/Dietary as a cart girl delivering meals to patients. She has also worked in OR scheduling. With the exception of leaving for three years to manage two local restaurants, she has been at the Eye Clinic since 2002.

In the course of a day in the reception area of the Eye Clinic on T2, Shirley, along with other staff, greets patients, answers a plethora of phone calls, puts charts together for patients appointments, and Shirley's favorite, schedules appointments for patients. This is where she shines with her patience, her helpful, calm manner and always-present smile. "I'm just a people person," said Shirley.

Carol Bennett, who also works in the Eye Clinic, and who nominated Shirley, said, "Shirley exemplifies true excellence in service by respecting every individual and their need. She is the spirit of Bassett. Her empathy for others is understandable—Shirley is a two-time cancer survivor and also lost her husband to cancer—however, her optimism and dedication is incredible."

Shirley, a lifelong resident of Richfield Springs, has four grown children and eight grandchildren. Two of the grandchildren live across the street from Shirley, along with their mom, **Stacey Mayne**, who also works at Bassett, in the Department of Surgery. Shirley spends the majority of her leisure time with her family and friends.

A NOTE ABOUT THE ICU SPOTLIGHT (BassettWORKS June 2009)

"As I reviewed the BassettWorks article, I realized that one integral part of our ICU team was left out. There is not a day that goes by that we don't need, use, ask for help of and work as a team with the fabulous members of the Respiratory Therapy Department. We could not do the work we do without them! Thanks for all that you do everyday."

Donna D. Anderson
Director of Critical Care and Emergency Services



BassettWORKS is a publication of Bassett Healthcare. President and Chief Executive Officer William F. Streck, M.D.; Editorial Board: Kara Travis, manager, Employee Relations; Ed Mintiens, program manager, Development Communications; Karen Huxtable, manager, Media/Public Relations; Editors: Leslie Raabe, Lisa Miller; Proofreader: Mary Ann Vunk; Design and Production: Maria Sohn Graphic Design; Printing: Carr Printing. The deadline for the September issue is August 15.

THREE CHEERS

!!! Congratulations to all those who participated in the Boilermaker last month and to Bassett's team, which finished 1st out of 10 teams in the coed large division. This was Bassett's third consecutive 1st place finish. The team members were: **Colleen Donnelly, Jamie Elderkin, Debra Ferrari, Paula Huntsman, Shari Johnson-Ploutz, Wendy Kiuber, Scott Maclachlan, Nancy Morris, Matthew Pearsall, Peter Pope, Drew Porter, John Raymond, William Rowland** and **Mike Rutledge**.

!!! Congratulations to Bassett security officers **Brian Lamica** and **George Crippen**, who used good intuition in their assessment of a situation near a Bassett parking lot. Brian and George saw to it that a person received appropriate medical care and went even further to determine, with the help of local law enforcement, that a young child was safe. We're proud of you, Brian and George!

!!! Two Bassett nurses were recently recognized for their contributions to the training of emergency medical service providers in Otsego County. **Sharon Wilcox**, R.N., assistant nurse manager in the emergency department, accepted the Otsego County Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Medical Facility Staff Person of the Year Award. A night nurse since she began working at Bassett in 1995, Wilcox has been recognized for her superior communication skills with EMS ambulance crews and co-workers. Registered nurse **Coleen Vesely** received this year's Otsego County's EMS Trainer of the Year Award. Vesely is the Trauma and Stroke Program coordinator and has been a Trauma Nursing Core Course instructor for nearly 15 years. Way to go!

Upcoming Events!

- **Bassett Gives Thanks to Ambassadors, Heroes, Retirees Lunch (by invitation)**
Sept. 22, 11:30 a.m. – 1 p.m.
Otesaga
- **Bassett Heart Care Institute Symposium**
Oct. 10
- **Bassett–Columbia Symposium on Cerebral Palsy**
Oct. 16
Otesaga, 607-547-4978 to register
- **Friends for Life Patient Education dinner, NBC's chief medical editor, Dr. Nancy Snyderman, "Medicine and the Media"**
Oct. 22
- **5-10-15 Years of Service Cocktail Party (by invitation)**
Oct. 26, 5 – 7 p.m.
Otesaga
- **20-25+ Years of Service Dinner (by invitation)**
Nov. 30, 6 – 9 p.m.
Otesaga