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Cover Photo: AJ Johnson, new CEO of the NJCPA Society.

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Communicating “Bad News”



By Steve Adubato,
PhD
Freelance Contributor

One of a leader's toughest jobs is to communicate a message that people don't want to hear. The true test of a leader is how he or she handles adversity.

Consider some leadership tips when sharing difficult information:

- State the problem using clear language. For example, “We are nearly bankrupt and if we don't do something about it immediately, the pain is only going to get worse.” Avoid using language like; “I think this is a serious situation that we should probably address in the near future.” Such qualifiers as “I think” and “probably” communicate doubt on your part.
- Go into detail about the problem, without inundating your audience. At some point if we communicate too much detail, we lose the ability to engage our audience in a spirited conversation. Alternatively, if we don't share enough detail, it will leave your audience with unanswered questions. Striking a balance is key.
- Have an open-door policy. Once you communicate your plan of action, it is essential to be totally accessible. Too many CEOs attempt to shield themselves from tough questions. That's why open and unscripted forums with employees and key shareholders are so productive.
- Create a sense of urgency without panic. Telling people, “We have a serious problem, and this is how we are going to get out of it” is one thing; but communicating that the sky is falling and there is nothing we can do to stop it is another.
- Be firm but flexible. A leader should communicate his or her plan with conviction and passion while still being open to recommendations and revisions. Being receptive to feedback

makes you stronger by showing you are confident enough to listen and admit you don't have all the answers. 📌



Photo: Getty Images/Stockphoto/fizkes

Steve Adubato, PhD, is the author of five books including, “Lessons in Leadership.” His sixth book, “Lessons in Leadership 2.0: The Tough Stuff,” will be released in summer 2023. He is an Emmy® Award-winning anchor with programs airing on Thirteen/WNET (PBS) and NJ PBS. He has also appeared on CNN, NPR and NBC's Today Show. Steve Adubato's “Lessons in Leadership” video podcast with co-host Mary Gamba airs Sundays at 10:00 a.m. on News 12+. For more information visit www.Stand-Deliver.com



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Felician President, Delta Dental VP Join CIANJ Board of Directors

By Anthony Russo
President, CIANJ

CIANJ is fortunate to have a strong board of directors upon which to rely. Our directors come from every industry, reflecting the diversity of our membership. Many of them have served for a decade of more, providing ad-

vice and insights.

We are always pleased to introduce new members of our board. This month we welcome Mildred Mihlon, PhD, the acting president of Felician University, and Barry Petruzzi, vice president of underwriting and actuarial at Delta Dental of New Jersey. Dr. Mihlon's appointment continues the close relationship CIANJ has long held with the university. Many of the university's board, including its chair, James R. D'Agostino Jr, have been active and very supportive CIANJ members. Mr. Petruzzi succeeds the late Jeffrey J. Furbish Sr. Mr. Furbish was a diligent member of the CIANJ board, who is deeply missed. He was the chief sales and officer and vice president of Delta Dental in New Jersey and Connecticut when he died a few months ago.

Dr. Mihlon was named to the president's office in April. She has nearly 25 years of higher education leadership experience, having previously served as at predominately Hispanic and Minority-serving, Catholic institutions with missions focused on service, justice, and compassion. Her background well prepared her to carry out Felician University's mission and the Felician Franciscan core values that are the foundation of university life and learning.

Before she was named acting president, Dr. Mihlon was Dean for the School of Arts & Sciences with oversight of nearly 50 full-time faculty members and 15-degree programs. Dr. Mihlon joined the Felician University community in September 2020 amidst the global pandemic. In a relatively short time, she and her team made significant contributions to the university. Bringing a clear and articulated vision and energy to the School of Arts & Sciences, Dr. Mihlon secured the most substantial Department of Education grant in university history. The \$4.5 million FIESTA grant award has supported faculty development, and new and continuing transfer enrollment, and funded the construction of science labs, teaching spaces, and



Mildred Mihlon, PhD, the acting president of Felician University

a STEM resource center with modernized technology. The FIESTA initiative has already begun to impact student success and improve the overall quality of STEM education at Felician. Under her leadership, the faculty in the School of Arts & Sciences are engaged in strategic curricular change, accelerating graduate and adult learner initiatives, and added the Occupational Therapy Assistant (OTA) and Doctor of Psychology (PsyD) programs, which have both received full accreditation from the state.

Prior to Felician, Dr. Mihlon was at Saint Peter's University in Jersey City where she served as the Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs & Assessment. Her extensive portfolio there included managerial and fiscal oversight of student learning and enrollment management outcomes, student retention and graduation initiatives, and numerous student support areas including global learning, study abroad, international student services and the school for adult and continuing education, among other initiatives. Dr. Mihlon received her PhD from the Graduate Center of the City University of New York in Educational Psychology with a concentration in learning, development, and instruction.



Barry Petruzzi, Vice President of Underwriting and Actuarial Services, Delta Dental

Mr. Petruzzi joined Delta Dental of New Jersey in May 2019 as Vice President of Underwriting and Actuarial Services. He is responsible for developing and maintaining Delta Dental's pricing structures and underwriting guidelines. He is also responsible for determining the company's reserve liabilities and leads the development of DDNJ's financial projections.

In his role, Mr. Petruzzi provides strategic perspectives on actuarial and underwriting matters and is a member of DDNJ's Executive Leadership Team. Prior to joining Delta Dental, he was Vice President and Chief Group Actuary for Prudential Financial. Barry has more than 30 years of experience in the Group Benefits marketplace, having held senior leadership positions at The Hartford and Guardian Life Insurance Company of America over the course of his career. The new CIANJ director is active within the actuarial industry, and is a Fellow of the Society of Actuaries, a member of the American Academy of Actuaries, and a frequent speaker at meetings hosted by the Society of Actuaries and Group Underwriters Association of America. He holds a bachelor's degree in Mathematics from Penn State University. 📌



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New NJCPA CEO Tackles Profession's Pipeline Issues

Aiysha “AJ” Johnson, the new CEO and executive director of the NJ Society of Certified Public Accountants (NJCPA) gives a simple definition of her role – advocate and voice of the membership.

But the challenges she is facing defy simplicity. Since taking the helm of the 13,000-member organization six months ago she has waded into one of the profession's most complex issues – the dwindling numbers of accountants.

The Association of International Certified Professional Accountants (AICPA) has been carefully tracking the issue nationwide, using information supplied by the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System. The latest figures show the number of bachelor's degrees in accounting for the schoolyear 2021-2022 dropped 7.8 percent after steady declines of 1 to 3 percent a year since 2015-2016. A similar story is seen in the master's programs, where the drop off was 6.4 percent.

The association's report highlighted trends and found declines reach back over a decade. In 2011-2012 the data from responding universities showed there are 57,483 bachelor's degrees earned in accounting, compared to 47,067 in the 2021-2022 class. Among the academics surveyed only 44 percent believe accounting enrollment will increase in the 2023-2024 schoolyear, while 22 percent expect it to drop.

Upon graduation fewer students are taking the examinations to be CPAs also. Just eight years ago there were 48,004 students applying for the examination, while in 2022 the applicants totaled only 30,251.

Within the profession, the downturn is referred to as a “pipeline” problem and to rectify it Johnson says: “we're looking at turning every stone to support the profession.” The NJCPA established a task force, headed by Zack Cohen, the chair of its Emerging Leaders Council. Johnson is an “unofficial” member of the task force and encouraged it to “think freely and brainstorm,” said Cohen, who is a senior manager at CFGI, the nation's largest non-audit accounting advisory firm.

The task force was charged with developing recommendations specific for New Jersey and appreciated the rapport Johnson has been establishing with firms statewide as she met with leading professionals across the Garden State in the past few months. For her part, Johnson is forging partnerships with the key stakeholders, including government officials, leaders in higher education, member firms and others to devise strategies.

She brings 20 years of association management experience and knowledge to the task.

Johnson succeeds Ralph Albert Thomas, who retired last spring. Both the current and former CEOs were trailblazers as the first African American woman and man, respectively, to lead any CPA society in the nation. Thomas made diversity a priority and Johnson echoes the commitment. There are few minorities in the profession, she notes, emphasizing that striving to enhance diversity overlays all her work, especially on pipeline challenges.

Before accepting the NJCPA position, Johnson was executive director at BKR International, an association of independent accounting and advisory firms. She was in charge of the executive offices in Manhattan and dealt with members across the nation, Canada and Latin America.

Her tenure there coincided with the early throes of the pandemic when accountants were working through the new regulations of the federal Payroll Protection Program, helping business clients through the crisis. When she was offered the NJCPA job, “I thought what better way to continue to serve the profession,” she said.

Johnson's commitment well impressed the NJCPA as it was interviewing candidates for the CEO slot. “The search committee considered many factors with a focus on leadership skills, strategic planning, vision and a passion for the accounting profession. AJ embodied all of these characteristics and came to the NJCPA with relevant experience and significant knowledge of the profession,” said Edward G. O'Connell, CPA, a partner at Withum. “As the NJCPA president, I have been working very closely with AJ, and she has been very focused on meeting with many members, firms and other business leaders. She has placed emphasis on several strategic areas, including the pipeline challenges, and is well positioned to lead our 125-year-old organization into the future.”

Johnson holds a master's degree in administration and policy from the University of Chicago. Early in her career she worked in health care. That industry's strict regulatory compliance well prepared her to enter the accounting realm.

The new CEO is looking forward to “a lot of grassroots activities around advocacy and just supporting the profession as a whole.” She wants to ensure that “members have the resources at their fingertips to support them in their day to day work.”

A majority of the state's licensed CPAs belong to the CPA Society. Johnson wants to support them throughout the “continuum” of the profession. That starts with the early career and licensing qualifications, extends to the more



Aiysha “AJ” Johnson, CEO and Executive Director, NJ Society of Certified Public Accountants (NJCPA)

experienced accountants seeking pathways to promotion and greater opportunities and naturally includes the veteran leaders who are approaching retirement and ceding their partnerships to the next generation.


Johnson is motivated and inspired by young accountants, who have shared the stories about how they impacted their communities. “They are telling me we need to tell a different story (about the profession),” she said.

Cohen said one of his task force's primary recommendations was aimed at eliminating the profession's negative stigma. He wants to quash the old stereotype of accountants as stodgy and boring. “I think being an accountant is absolutely crucial in today's world, especially in terms of how we could be strategic advisors – it adds a whole different dimension,” he said.

Starting at the high school level, Cohen said the Society must “educate the educators” about the rewards of an accounting career and make presentations in schools to engage the students.

The Society is also working with state leaders to have accounting recognized as part of the STEM education program. Johnson said the designation would increase awareness, provide access to government support and possibly increase funding. If more financial assistance is available, it could open doors for more diverse students, she noted.

The Society has a robust scholarship program and Cohen said another proposal under consideration would allow recipients to use scholarship funds for CPA examination prep classes. Tackling the pipeline issues will continue to demand multi-pronged approaches.

“We are at the future of accounting. What we're doing now is going to make an impact,” said Johnson, who plans to support the profession for the long haul. 



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Alexander's Iconic Mural Panels Find New Home at The Valley Hospital

Valley Health System is pleased to display panels from Polish-born artist Stefan Knapp's mural entitled "The World" on the grounds of The Valley Hospital in Paramus. The mural was prominently displayed for decades on the exterior of Alexander's department store in Paramus.

In 1961, Knapp, a WWII prison camp survivor, was commissioned to paint the 280-panel mural, to be displayed on the exterior of Alexander's. The design of the mural was said to be a map of the world, inspired by the views he saw while flying as a pilot for the Royal Airforce. The mural became one of Paramus' most well-known landmarks. The store closed in 1992, and when the building was torn down in 1998, the panels were disassembled and placed in storage where they have remained for the past 25 years.

"A healing environment provided to patients and their families plays a crucial role in recovery. This environment includes various elements such as amenities, lighting, room temperature,

sound, and art," said Audrey Meyers, President and CEO of Valley Health System. "Whether our patients are appreciating the beauty of the panels from their room or a family member is walking past the panels in the gardens, we believe the beauty of the art will aid in the healing process for our patients and their families."

Valley Health System acquired the panels in 2021, an acquisition spearheaded by Robin Goldfischer, Senior Vice President and General Counsel, for Valley Health System.

Working with conservators from Aegis Restauro, LLC, the conservation of the Stefan Knapp panels included meticulously cleaning each panel of art and reinforcing their metal frames. The two-year project was completed this year.

Twenty-four of the panels are now proudly displayed in the gardens at The Valley Hospital in Paramus. When the hospital opens in April, visitors will be able to stroll along walking paths and admire the beauty of this artwork up close.

Additionally, a display of the panels that feature Knapp's signature is located inside the hospital near the hospital's conference center, steps from the front entrance.

"The Knapp panels long served as a landmark in the Borough of Paramus. We are proud to have returned the panels to our community where they will remain for generations to come," said Goldfischer.

Forty-eight of the panels will be displayed in different Valley Health System locations, including the new hospital, a medical arts building located at 140 East Ridgewood Avenue, in Paramus, and the Robert and Audrey Luckow Pavilion, which houses Valley-Mount Sinai Comprehensive Cancer Care and a same-day surgery center.

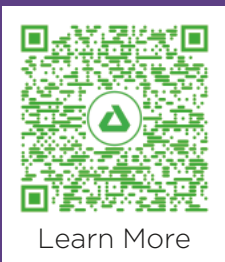
The Valley Hospital in Paramus will open its doors on Sunday, April 14, 2024. For more information about the progress of The Valley Hospital in Paramus, please visit [ValleyHealth.com/NewHospital](https://www.valleyhealth.com/NewHospital). 📍



Panels from artist Stefan Knapp's mural entitled "The World" returns to Paramus at The Valley Hospital.



Expanding access to dental care for children & adults with special needs.



Delta Dental of New Jersey is expanding dental care access by introducing an enhanced special health care needs benefit for group-covered children and adults with qualifying special health care conditions. Effective January 1, 2024.

deltadentalnj.com/SHCN

Delta Dental Teams With Diabetes Foundation

Delta Dental of New Jersey and Mahwah, NJ-based organization, Diabetes Foundation, are educating New Jerseyans on the connection between oral health and overall health.

According to the American Diabetes Association®, approximately 43.6% of New Jersey's adult population has prediabetes or diagnosed diabetes, and 207,000 people are unaware they have it.


"When Delta Dental and other amazing organizations collaborate with the Diabetes Foundation, it elevates the holistic conversation about diabetes, from what it means to why you should get tested to monitoring blood sugar levels," said Ginine Cilenti, executive director at Diabetes Foundation. "Diabetes management is a learning process and educating individuals living with or at risk of diabetes on the connection between their oral health and overall health is key."

Since 1990, the Diabetes Foundation has been working throughout the state to provide individuals with or at risk of diabetes with the

resources and education necessary for long-term and effective diabetes self-management. It provided about 4,000 services to the public last year.

"Diabetes often gets the most attention during Diabetes Awareness Month, but it's not just in November when diabetes' impact on oral health needs to be highlighted for individuals with or at-risk of diabetes," said Dr. Keith Libou, Chief Clinical Officer of Delta Dental of New Jersey. "Delta Dental of New Jersey provides resources and educational information on diabetes and oral health on our website and social media channels, and working with the Diabetes Foundation helps elevate this conversation and hopefully make more New Jersey residents aware of their diabetes risk."

Oral health is a crucial determinant of a patient's overall health, and diabetes is now one of the more than 120 systemic conditions a dentist can screen for during an oral exam. Untreated diabetes can negatively impact oral health over time, causing dry mouth (which can increase the risk for cavities), gum disease, and weakened taste buds.

Delta Dental of New Jersey and Connecticut led the initiative in 2017 to allow dentists to provide an in-office A1C blood test for those who are at high risk for diabetes or pre-diabetes, as well as have that test covered through their Delta Dental plan. Results are available within five minutes of the test being administered. 

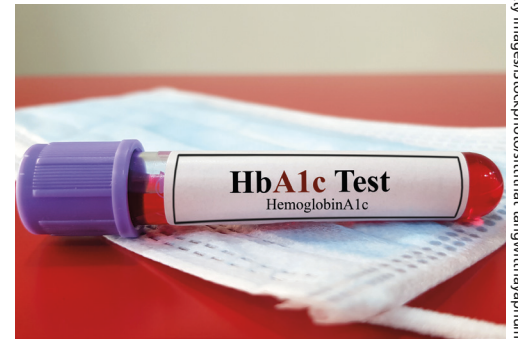


Photo: Getty Images/Stockphoto/istithat tangwithayaphum

Delta Dental led the initiative allowing dentists to provide testing for diabetes and pre-diabetes.

Bergen New Bridge Opens 3rd CareRite at Hillsdale Inserra

Bergen New Bridge Medical Center cut the ribbon on its third CareRite Now center located in Inserra Supermarkets Shoprite of Hillsdale recently.

"I am a proud and grateful CEO because I have the best team of dedicated professionals who have made our third CareRite Now a reality," said Deborah Visconi, President & CEO, Bergen New Bridge Medical Center. "By putting primary care centers in Inserra Supermarkets, and having these centers directly linked to New Jersey's largest Medical Center for wrap around and integrated services and care, we have removed another healthcare barrier and moved a step closer to better population health and community wellness."

"We are delighted to welcome Bergen New Bridge's CareRite Now to the Shoprite of Hillsdale," said Larry Inserra,




Photo: Getty Images/Stockphoto/Richard McMillin

Adding primary care centers to supermarkets removes another healthcare barrier, bringing better population health and wellness to New Jersey communities.

Jr., Chairman of the Board & CEO, Inserra Supermarkets. "CareRite Now will provide the community and our associates convenient access to quality healthcare right here in our store."

"Today we are in the Shoprite of Hillsdale where the newest CareRite Now location will help people by giving them an opportunity to walk in and get the medical care that they need and deserve, provided by the best hospital in the state," said James Tedesco, Bergen County Executive.

"Supermarkets are a community hub and when you bring in healthcare, it is a wonderful partnership which keeps our communities healthy," said Germain Ortiz, Vice Chair, Bergen County Board of Commissioners. "A healthy community is a vibrant community and that is what we want for the residents of Bergen County." 



AS THE MOST RECOGNIZED PROVIDER OF QUALITY HEART CARE IN NJ, WE'RE READY.



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*2022 NJ Cardiac Data Registries. **American College of Cardiology HeartCARE Centers:
Hackensack University Medical Center, Jersey Shore University Medical Center, JFK University
Medical Center, Ocean University Medical Center, Riverview Medical Center.



**Hackensack Meridian
Hackensack University
Medical Center**

KEEP GETTING BETTER

Getting to the Heart of the Matter: Advances in Cardiac Care

By Diane Walsh
Editor, COMMERCE

Candy hearts are overflowing on store shelves everywhere. These boxes of chocolate gooey delights are literally the sweetest way to celebrate a romantic's favorite day. And while Valentine's Day festivities would not be complete without red roses, Cupid's arrows, and giving our hearts away, it's also a good time to think about heart health.

The American Heart Association joins February's celebrations of Heart Month by emphasizing heart-healthy living and cardiac care. Great progress is being made. Since 1968 the rate of cardiovascular disease has dropped 71 percent, the heart association reports. At CIANJ we asked cardiac specialists to discuss the latest treatments and innovations they are using to provide excellent care for their patients across the state.



Bergen New Bridge Medical Center

Irfan M. Admani, MD, FACC
Chief of Cardiology

Bergen New Bridge Medical Center is in the process of expanding our ambulatory cardiac care facilities. These services will be available to all regardless of insurance status and the goal is to offer these services every day at all our clinics.

In 2024, we will be enhancing our cardiac diagnostic capabilities. One of these improvements will be adding a CT angiogram to our Non-invasive Cardiac Department which would diagnose coronary artery disease (CAD) early so appropriate care can be rendered more efficiently. Our Non-Invasive Lab is in the process of upgrading its ultrasonography and nuclear scan imaging.

Additionally, the Medical Center has been at the forefront of mental health and substance abuse disorder treatment. We have plans to expand our Cardiac Department to provide treatment and support for these patients.

The Cardiology Department is working closely with the Bariatric Center to screen patients for appropriate weight management strategies. We continue to improve management of chronic care conditions. Our clinicians are making tremendous progress in identifying patients at increased risk of CAD and other contributing risk factors early.

Our mission at Bergen New Bridge remains the same – to provide compassionate quality cardiac care to everyone that walks into our clinics or Emergency Department.



Jersey City Medical Center

Kimberly Skelding, M.D.
Division Chief for Cardiovascular
Services Chief of Cardiology

At Jersey City Medical Center and throughout RWJBarnabas Health, our unwavering commitment to placing the patient at the heart of their healthcare journey is what sets our cardiac care apart. In our thorough approach, we delve into a patient's daily life – discussing everything from their eating habits and activity level to their past and current medical issues to explore how it might play into their health concerns.

Whether it's a valve problem, chest pain, or any other cardiovascular concern, our center is the only full-service heart hospital in Hudson County offering a wide array of care services. For valve issues, for example, we offer a range of treatments, including catheter-based valve replacement and interventions, open-heart surgery, or a more conservative approach tailored to the patient's specific interest and needs. This thorough assessment ensures accurate diagnosis, offering peace of mind to patients and providing targeted treatments and interventions.

Our commitment also extends beyond medical interventions; we aim to be a community-centric healthcare provider. We continue to expand our resources into the community, offering comprehensive cardiac care locally,

ensuring that patients can receive world-class treatment near their home.



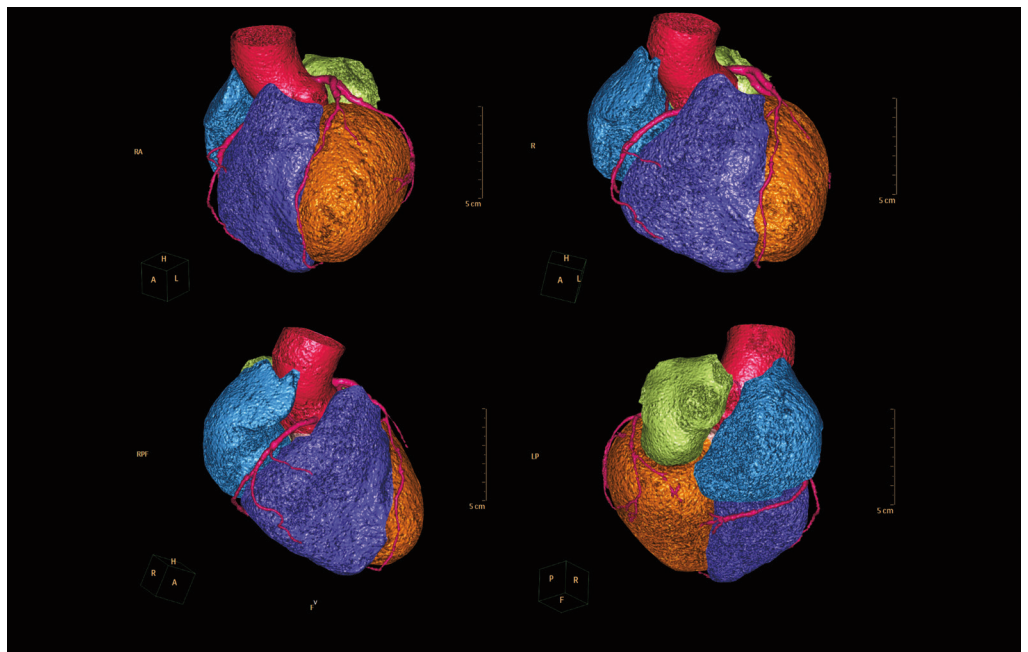
Hackensack Meridian Jersey Shore University Medical Center

Renato Apolito, M.D.
Medical Director, Cardiac
Catheterization Laboratory

Jersey Shore University Medical Center is a large 630-bed tertiary care hospital serving Monmouth and Ocean counties. It is the only hospital in these two counties providing advanced cardiac surgical, structural and valvular heart disease, and electrophysiological services while also providing coronary intervention/stenting programs performing with ever-increasing complexity in patients who are not candidates for open heart surgery. Our hospital provides the second most cardiac surgery, structural, and interventional cases in New Jersey and is growing. We have excellent patient outcomes for all of our cardiac services thanks to our well-trained staff, nurses, and physicians.

Additionally, our advanced heart failure program continues to grow, offering access to several clinical trials. For patients who fail medications and have advancing heart failure, we offer durable, surgically implanted mechanical heart support with the HeartMate 3 device; that

Continued



Multi view of CTA Coronary artery 3D rendering image for detect coronary artery disease.

Photo: Getty Images/Stockphoto/mrsupachai praerdumronghai



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affords either permanent cardiac support or as a bridge to heart transplant in appropriate candidates. Temporary mechanical left ventricular support in the form of the Impella device has also proven very effective in managing patients who present to us from outlier hospitals with acute cardiogenic shock from pump failure due to heart attacks (myocardial infarction) or myocarditis. It has been successfully used to save many lives that otherwise would have no chance of survival.

Looking forward, we are excited to move into our new dedicated cardiology suite in the coming year including 10 mixed use interventional, electrophysiologic, and structural heart disease laboratories to meet our community's growing needs. Great things are happening here and I suspect we will continue to grow as an epicenter of cardiac care not just in New Jersey but in the entire tri-state region and beyond.



Hackensack University Medical Center

By Ryan K. Kaple, M.D., FACC, FSCAI
Director of the Structural and Congenital Heart Program

When patients need structural heart care for a valve condition, they need a team they can trust to deliver effective minimally invasive care. With the addition of three structural heart experts, the Hackensack University Medical Center's structural heart team delivers outcomes exceeding national standards.

Ranked by U.S. News & World Report as New Jersey's #1 Hospital for 2023-2024, Hackensack University Medical Center is also home to the state's "best" Cardiology, Heart & Vascular Surgery program.

It is my honor to lead the Structural and Congenital Heart Program where we have created a structural heart "dream team" composed of interventional cardiologists Sung-Han Yoon, M.D., and Craig Basman, M.D. Our collective experience is unmatched in the region.

This fellowship-trained structural heart team specializes in minimally invasive, catheter-based approaches to correct valve disorders – including MitraClip to treat a leaking mitral valve and transcatheter aortic valve replacement (TAVR) to treat narrowing of the aortic valve.

The team performs more MitraClip procedures than any other hospital in New Jersey. With the addition of the new interventional cardiology experts, this collective experience is unmatched in the region and will directly benefit our patients in need of complex care.



Holy Name Medical Center Dr. Tariqshah Syed, MD *Chief of Cardiology*

Holy Name Medical Center distinguishes itself in cardiac care through a commitment to high-quality treatment, utilizing cutting-edge technology, and a com-

prehensive approach to cardiovascular issues. Recognized by U.S. News & World Report as a high-performing center for heart failure treatment, our facility takes pride in addressing a spectrum of cardiac concerns, from common to complex.

Holy Name's experienced cardiologists specialize in addressing various cardiovascular issues, including heart rhythm disorders, artery blockages, and structural heart problems requiring lifelong support. Furthermore, we excel in treating structural and congenital heart disease, peripheral vascular disease, and pulmonary blood clots, utilizing state-of-the-art non-surgical therapies.

Our electrophysiologists are proficient in cardiac device implants such as pacemakers, defibrillators and implantable loop monitoring devices as well as cardioversion procedures, specifically for treating atrial fibrillation and other arrhythmias. These procedures play a crucial role in managing cardiac rhythm disorders, ensuring optimal patient outcomes.

To enhance our diagnostic capabilities and identify concerns at an earlier stage, Holy Name is exploring the integration of wearable technology for remote patient monitoring. Patients experiencing symptoms like heart palpitations, which may not be evident during office visits or short-term cardiac event monitoring, can benefit from continuous monitoring using smartwatches or similar devices.

Smartwatches and other wearable devices capable of recording and displaying heart rate and vital signs offer a valuable tool in monitoring patients' cardiovascular health. Continuous data collection allows us to analyze trends over an extended period, providing insights into an individual's heart behavior. Some advanced smartwatches even feature EKG recording capabilities, screening for abnormal heart rhythms such as atrial fibrillation.

One notable area of rapid expansion is interventional cardiology, where non-surgical, catheter-based procedures are employed to assess and treat blockages. Holy Name predominantly uses the radial artery approach through the wrist for cardiac catheterizations and angioplasty/stent procedures, enhancing patient comfort and enabling quicker recovery.



Saint Peter's University Hospital

David E. Jacob, MD, FACC, FASNC
Interim Chair, Department of Medicine Chief, Division of Cardiology

Saint Peter's University Hospital offers a breadth of cardiology services, including peripheral vascular angiograms and interventions, and pacemaker implantation performed by cardiologists in Saint Peter's two cardiac catheterization labs. Saint Peter's offers treatment of congestive heart failure, cardiomyopathy, coronary artery disease and cardiac arrhythmias, among others. Critical services include echocar-

diography, both transthoracic and transesophageal, for evaluation of cardiac function, as well as pharmacologic nuclear stress testing and exercise stress testing to evaluate blood flow to the patient's heart.

Saint Peter's has been successfully performing diagnostic cardiac catheterization and emergency angioplasty for those patients in need and has added elective angioplasty to its complement of cardiac care services.

Angioplasty is a decades-proven procedure that increases life-sustaining blood flow to the heart when coronary artery disease has blocked the vessels that feed it. Guided by sophisticated imaging, cardiologists thread a thin, flexible tube through the bloodstream to deliver powerful intervention, right at the site of the blockage.

By opening narrowed or blocked arteries, the procedure can relieve symptoms such as chest pain and shortness of breath. It can also enhance overall heart function. In cases where the blockage is severe, emergent angioplasty can help prevent a heart attack by restoring blood flow to the affected area of the heart.



Valley Health System

Suneet Mittal, MD,
Chair of the Cardiovascular Service Line

The Valley Heart and Vascular Institute at The Valley Hospital is distinguished by our multidisciplinary team-based care approach that centers on each patient's needs. Under this approach, the patient is the core of their care team – serving as the key decision-maker – guiding the clinical team based on their personal preferences.

The patient is supported by a network of cardiovascular specialists, who collaborate to design a customized treatment plan. Collaboration among these teams includes:

- The cardiac imaging team provides pre- and post-procedural advanced imaging for the cardiac surgery and structural heart teams, utilizing the latest advances in three-dimensional image reconstructions to help guide procedures and assess their long-term impact
- Electrophysiology and heart failure specialists offer highly-specialized treatment – whether medication, a novel cardiac ablation procedure, device implant, or clinical trial – for patients diagnosed with symptomatic heart failure
- Valley's interventional cardiology and vascular surgery teams recently established a Pulmonary Embolism Response Team (PERT) to provide rapid care and advanced treatment for patients diagnosed with pulmonary embolism

Through Valley's alliance with Cleveland Clinic's Heart, Vascular & Thoracic Institute, patients also have access to a built-in second opinion as our cardiologists collaborate on complex cases with providers at Cleveland Clinic. 📍

Business Leans in on DEI, Policies And Approaches Evolve

By Diane Walsh
Editor, COMMERCE

Aon, one of the world's leading consulting firms, embraces diversity among its workers, believing diverse and inclusive teams create better insights and solutions, deliver the best outcomes to clients and ensure long-term success.

Hackensack Meridian Health, the largest integrated health network in New Jersey, is committed to diversity, equity and inclusion also as a strategic priority to achieve its goal of transforming health care and becoming a leader for positive change. "Should be New Jersey is one of the most diverse states in the country. It is important to us that our workforce, our leaders and our board reflects the communities that we serve," said Dr. Avonia Richardson-Miller, a senior vice president at the network and chief diversity officer.

Peter Webster, resident managing director of Aon's risk and health division in New Jersey, is also very proud of his company's commitment. It can be seen at all levels, he said, starting with the board of director's Inclusion and Diversity Subcommittee and encompasses the Global Inclusive Leadership Council.

"Every colleague is encouraged and empowered to bring their full and authentic self to work every day," Webster said. Aon expanded the culture to reach beyond its wall over the

past few years to support and encourage diverse-owned companies. CEO Greg Case and Michael Benvenuto, chief procurement officer, documented the stance by signing the Commitment Statement for Supplier Diversity. It pledges Aon to engage with small and diverse businesses to support its clients' needs.

Webster explained that every time Aon seeks bids or requests proposals there must be at least one minority-owned business participating. He said "intentional programs such as this led to an increase in diverse spending to over 6 percent in the United State in 2022."

The advances that Aon, Hackensack Meridian and others have achieved exhilarates Lucy Sorrentini, the founder and CEO of Impact Consulting LLC, whose career has been devoted to diversity and fairness. Impact Consulting is a boutique talent and consulting business with offices in New York and Wayne.

Corporate concern for diversity has been prevalent for many years. But since the horrific 2020 murder of George Floyd in police custody and the social unrest it stirred, the demand for diversity, equity and inclusion services burgeoned dramatically. Richardson-Miller said in the three months immediately following the killing there was a 153 percent increase in diversity, equity and inclusion, which is often abbreviated as DEI. Sorrentini had to scale up her operation because so many corporations wanted to deepen their commitment.

As she recalled: "Companies and CEOs in particular, want it to be known that they're really making a conscious effort to lean in and step up and say no, we don't support this and no, we don't do this. We're taking a position. DEI matters. There's no space for hate crimes. There's no space for discriminatory action."

Impact Consulting's clients range from small family-held businesses to Fortune 500 corporations from across the country, giving Sorrentini a rare perspective. She said many company leaders reached out to community leaders and workers to foster dialogue about DEI. "And just as importantly, they started to allocate funds, to programs and projects that would help level the playing field to create opportunities for under-represented populations. For example, to help fund internal workshops and working groups and training around unconscious bias or inclusive leadership," she said.

In the last year, however, Sorrentini has detected a change in business' approach to DEI. She traces the change in large part to the June 2023 U.S. Supreme Court ruling which upended affirmative action by finding race could no longer be considered a factor in university admission decisions. Many businesses are also reacting to new laws some states enacted making certain behaviors and policies a criminal offense.

Richardson-Miller said a study by SHRM, an international association of human resource



Peter Webster, resident managing director of risk and health division in New Jersey, Aon



Lucy Sorrentini, founder and CEO of Impact Consulting LLC



Dr. Avonia Richardson-Miller, senior vice president and chief diversity officer, Hackensack Meridian Health

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

managers, found in the past two years there has been an 18 percent decrease in company leader's endorsement of DEI. For these companies, Richardson-Miller questioned if there had been a true commitment and was it embedded in the company's culture. She also noted the relatively small decline has to be considered against the overwhelming support DEI received immediately following George Floyd's slaying.

"Leaders are still committed to DEI and the premise of DEI, which is to create more equity and more inclusion in organizations. And at the same time, there's a recognition that this is hard. This topic is really hard and there's that fine line between what employees are expecting and what companies can deliver," Sorrentini said.

The new climate led Sorrentini and her team to pivot in their approach, taking on a more long-term advisory role under retain agreements. "We're delivering services to them as an extension of their team," she explained.

"We get to work with our clients in an advisory capacity to support them on their journey. And equally important we bring forth best practices, we bring forth trends, we bring forth ideas that maybe they didn't even know were possible as solutions to help them grapple with where they are," Sorrentini said.

What's keeping CEOs up at night is their concern over compliance and risk. Sorrentini understands the anxiety. Her team listens to the

problems, whether it's recruiting, compensation or any other issue, and then makes recommendations for solutions.

The goal of Impact Consulting is to have company leaders provide a value proposition that fits their employees needs and conversely to have employees deliver what the organization needs.

Richardson-Miller said Hackensack Meridian believes that diversity is a strength that provides the network with an advantage that is driving

innovation and resulting in high quality care. She emphasized a 2020 report by the international consulting firm McKinsey & Co, which found companies that adopt diversity outperform those that do not. Later studies also found diversity fuels profitability.

"DEI sits on top of everything that is HR. It sits on top of everything that's people. And so for us, with our background as human capital consultants we connect all the dots," Sorrentini said. 📌



Photo: Getty Images/Stockphoto/Ewin Tan

More companies are signing onto incorporating diversity in their hiring.

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

AnythingIT Grows with ITAD Industry

The discarded smart phones, laptops, monitors and innumerable other tech equipment that clog the waste-stream emphasizes the need for AnythingIT – an innovative company that grew up in the Information Technology Asset Disposal (ITAD) industry.

Entrepreneurs David Bernstein and Vlad Stelmak founded the business in 1992. Back then technology was expensive and users wanted to repair and maintain equipment. Their original niche was buying and selling computer parts, especially the more obscure items.

Initially, they operated out of a boat in Jersey City for no other reason than it was available. Soon they graduated to a small warehouse in Lodi. The entrepreneurs proved savvy businessmen, adapting to every change, as the industry faced the Y2K crisis, cyber-security worries, the dot-com era surges, remote work during the pandemic, and more.

When the calendar flipped to 2000 without a disaster, Bernstein said questions arose. "It was the first time that the enterprise IT world had to face the obsolescence of technology" he recalled. Without regulations or industry best practices, it was a "kind of wild west," Stelmak said. Bernstein remembers visiting a Wall Street firm

where the IT manager was throwing old equipment out a window to a trash bin below. In another instance involving a government client, Bernstein said the supervisor was leaving the technology closet open in hopes that employees would take home the outdated items.

But Bernstein and Stelmak saw opportunity for their business to focus on reselling, reusing, repurposing – essentially recycling technology. Often, they partner with companies that sell new equipment, offering a way to dispose of a client's obsolete items. Bernstein said the business is akin to a used car dealership in some ways. "If you're going to buy new technology, for the cost why wouldn't you take the older equipment and trade it in to get some value."

Items that cannot be repurposed and have no value are deemed scrap materials. They go to a very detailed downstream recycling process that AnythingIT is authorized to conduct through its e-steward certification. As the ITAD industry standards and protocols evolved, AnythingIT became fully certified.

Over the years the operation grew to 30 employees working out of a plant in North Bergen.

Bernstein estimates they have ensured the proper disposal of more than 100,000,000 pounds of e-waste. AnythingIT was also one of the first companies awarded a government contract by the federal General Services Administration for ITAD. Bernstein recalls the company had obtained a Congressional recommendation to be eligible. Public contracts continue to flow to AnythingIT, which is now recycling Ipads used in U.S. Air Force fighter jets.

Bernstein wants to further assist clients by developing comprehensive reporting on the environmental impact of removing old technology from the waste stream. "It's the single biggest threat to the environment right now because of the sheer volume," Bernstein said. His goal is to generate highly detailed reports that will even advise clients on how contracting with AnythingIT affected greenhouse gas emissions. He believes companies will incorporate these reports into their evaluations for ESG – environmental, social and government performance.

Like a proud father, Bernstein is pleased by his firm's accomplishments. "We created a business, where there really wasn't one." 📌

Election 2024: A Conversation with National Review's Rich Lowry

By Larry Feld
Contributing Editor

This year began with many political wildcards. Pending presidential elections, expensive military conflicts overseas, and inflation-inspired interest rates continue weighing heavily on everyone's mind. What direction will our economy take this year? Will immigration continue to increase unchecked? And the big question: Will we be better served in the White House by the Democrat candidate or the Republican?

For a unique perspective from someone possessing a finely-tuned ear on the national conservative beat, CIANJ members recently listened to the wisdom of Rich Lowry, editor-in-chief of the National Review, the conservative publication founded by the late William F. Buckley, Jr.

Lowry began his career as a research assistant for the late columnist and political commentator Charles Krauthammer, a job Lowry admits was sometimes terrifying. "Not because Charles wanted to terrify anyone, but because he was inherently formidable and not a backslapper. But he was a wonderful man," Lowry reflects.

After a stint for a local newspaper in northern Virginia, in 1992 Lowry earned a job at the National Review after placing second in the magazine's young writers' contest. By 1997, he was promoted to Editor of National Review.

In a freeform discussion about what we can expect in the 2024 national political realm, CIANJ members offered Lowry a broad range of challenging questions.

Why Trump Will Win the Nomination

Lowry explains the real reasons why the former president is the leading candidate at the moment.

"Two big things that almost effectively hand Trump the nomination. One is the indictment and the supportive reaction from Republicans," he claims. The other reason, Lowry says, is the collapse of Joe Biden's popularity in the polls. "He is in a pathetic state. Trump is leading in polling by double digits on every policy matter against Biden. At this point, he has a 50-50 chance to win the election," Lowry predicts.

Does Lowry feel that Donald Trump will run away with the nomination?

"Yes. It is not a contest. I wish it were a contest because contests are interesting if you are a journalist. If Trump wins it will be crazy, but the other candidates have zero traction," he says.

On Ron DeSantis:

"I am surprised at the level he didn't resonate. I think one problem is that he is running as

Donald Trump. Also, politics on a national level depends on performance ability and personality. It is a terrible cliché, but he doesn't have the X factor. Donald Trump has this in spades. He is a showman above everything else. He is highly entertaining. He is highly charismatic. He is bigger than everyone else. He is orange-er than everyone else," Lowry explains.

On Chris Christie:

"He is a tremendously talented communicator. I think he was a good governor, but there is no path for him in this election."

On Nikki Haley:

"Her problem is that she went after the never-Trump Republicans. While that might be 25% of the Republican vote, there is nowhere else for her to go. At this time, I don't see any plausible scenario where Trump doesn't get the nomination," Lowry says.

What if Trump is Convicted on Federal Charges?

Lowry opened the door to a scenario almost no one has raised: What if the former President gets convicted of Federal crimes before the election?

"I tend to think he will get convicted in Jack Smith's case and I tend to think that he might go to jail," Lowry suggests, although he quickly explains his prediction is one of caution. "There will be a fierce reaction. I don't think there is any reason to go down this path and it will be highly destructive for the country."

What about if Biden is not the nominee?

"Biden doesn't want to be switched out, and I don't think he will be switched out," Lowry says. "Polls now show that things are about even. It is still very early to rely on these numbers, but Biden's health is declining. We can see it with our own eyes. If that should get worse, things could change."

But if Biden is not the candidate, is it possible that an unknown candidate could grab the nomination?

"The truth is, it is probably too late for that to happen. He is the nominee," Lowry suggests. "However, if he becomes incapacitated and Vice President Harris has to step in as President, she will be the nominee," Lowry predicts.

Gavin Newsome

Lowry also feels that Kamala Harris, if she ran at the top of the ticket, would have a problem, as several other democrats may challenge her. "For example," Lowry says, "There is Gavin Newsom.



Richard Lowry, editor-in-chief of the National Review

He looks like a West Wing version of the president. He's an empty suit, but it is a very nice suit," Lowry quips.


Michelle Obama

"I don't think she will try to run, because once you are a world celebrity and you have already been there, it becomes beneath you. But if she were to run, I think she would win hands down," Lowry predicts, adding that the negatives are high for both Trump and Biden. "Any generic candidate with that (Obama) kind of power – be they Democrat or Republican – would have an advantage over either party's candidate this election," he says.

Potential Congressional Republican Weakness

Lowry also notes that Republican seats in the House may be in jeopardy as the party struggles for leadership, money, and power. "It has not been a good time for the Republicans. They shot their biggest fundraiser, Kevin McCarthy in the head. Without the money, the Republicans could have some weakness in house races," he notes.

The Economy

"The economy is the most important issue, and it is the tale of two cities. Inflation has receded but people still feel it. Expenses are higher than they have ever been. Employment is good, but the cost of living is still a factor. There is a real disconnect between pundits and the people. That is why Trump is leading by over ten points on economic issues," Lowry notes. 

Mediation Offers Alternative for Business Dispute Resolution

By Margie Echevarria

Executive Vice President of
NJ Association of Professional Mediators

Access any business report in New Jersey and you will confirm that an engine for productivity, the sale of goods and employment in the state is small business. Small business is defined as any firm with 500 or less employees. According to the SBA's 2022 report, the small business profile for New Jersey in the past two years (2021 & 2022) confirm that 99.6% of New Jersey businesses are small business. Their reports establish that this engine is diverse consisting of businesses owned by women, men, blacks, Hispanics, and veterans that employ almost half of the population of the state. In 2022, small business accounted for \$15 billion in loans from banks. From Professional, Scientific, and Technical services to Construction, Retail Trade and Health Care sectors, many of the top small businesses in the state employ from 20 to 499 employees.

One of the potential lags on this productivity is litigation. At any point in the productive life of a small business, litigation involving a product, an employment situation, or a consumer conflict can arise. It is a generally accepted fact that litigation can be costly not just limited to legal fees related to the time parties take to be "trial ready", but also due to the potential loss of reputation related to publicity of the dispute, the distraction which results in loss of business management time while engaged in court proceedings, and finally, the loss of business relationships depending on how caustic the dispute becomes.

Businesses can insulate themselves from these potentially expensive "drawbacks," that is the publicity, distraction, and cost of legal disputes, by planning ahead and ensuring that their employment agreements, B2B, and even terms of service agreements with their consumers include arbitration, mediation clauses or both. Often Alternative Dispute Resolution provisions in commercial contracts involve these clauses or adopt a two-step process – first mediation, and if that process doesn't end in resolution-then, final binding arbitration. As noted by the American Arbitration Association, providers can handle the administrative processes like the filing of a claim, the identification of the ADR professional for your selection, and the process to final disposition.

The speed, efficiency, confidentiality, cost effectiveness and finality offered by these alternatives to litigation have become a normal facet of doing business today. You may already have legal

counsel that helped you set up your business that can be tapped to assist you in adopting the appropriate clause for your contracts and, or invoices. You can review in advance sample clauses on service provider websites so you can have an informed conversation with your legal counsel. Alternatively, you can choose to "do it yourself" and use services such as "Clausebuilder" offered by the American Arbitration Association which provides clear and effective arbitration and mediation agreement forms.

If a business decides to pursue legal action against another party or becomes a party to legal action, the business owner can use mediation to resolve their civil matter regarding debt collection, employment, breach of contract, personal injury, and other areas. In many NJ counties, cases have been aging from one to over two

"...99.6% of New Jersey businesses are small business... consisting of businesses owned by women, men, blacks, Hispanics, and veterans that employ almost half of the population of the state."

years in the courts. Mediation can be scheduled before or after a formal legal complaint is filed to attempt a settlement outside the courts in a less costly, less adversarial, and more timely manner. Parties can:

- Schedule dispute resolution taking only into consideration the calendars of the parties involved and the mediator in setting a mediation date. (Avoiding court calendar delays).
- Gain greater control of their costs
- Finalize resolution with an enforceable agreement between the parties as required by NJ law. (Reference Willingboro Mall Ltd. V. 240/242 Franklin Avenue LLC. 215 NJ 242 (2013))

A mediator does not take sides but works with the parties to reach an amicable solution. While cases litigated in court are settled in accordance with the law, mediation allows for more flexible solutions. Each party can choose to include their legal counsel, third party experts and relevant participants in the sessions. All discussions and



Margie Echevarria, Executive Vice President of
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information shared within mediation remain confidential. Terms of Agreement can be developed, outlining agreed-upon conditions in the resolution of a dispute, and can be enforced in the courts, if needed. If the parties cannot agree to a solution, the legal system is still an option.

By anticipating through Mediation how you will manage the inevitable disputes that will arise in the conduct of your business, you will be able to

- Select a professional Mediator with the experience and expertise to assist in the resolution of your dispute.
- Engage in a Confidential process that avoids unwanted publicity for your business.
- Avoid the filing of legal documents to initiate resolution of your dispute that are public records.

An important resource available to businesses is the NJ Association of Professional Mediators. For the past 30 years, NJAPM has been the voice of the public to the NJ Judiciary and our legislative representatives on ways to improve the delivery of mediation services to NJ residents. NJAPM can acquaint businesses with advice on how to plan for inevitable disputes and advise on the benefits of mediation, how to protect yourself by adopting ADR provisions in your contracts and provide you with a directory of professional mediators (www.NJAPM.org). 📌



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