

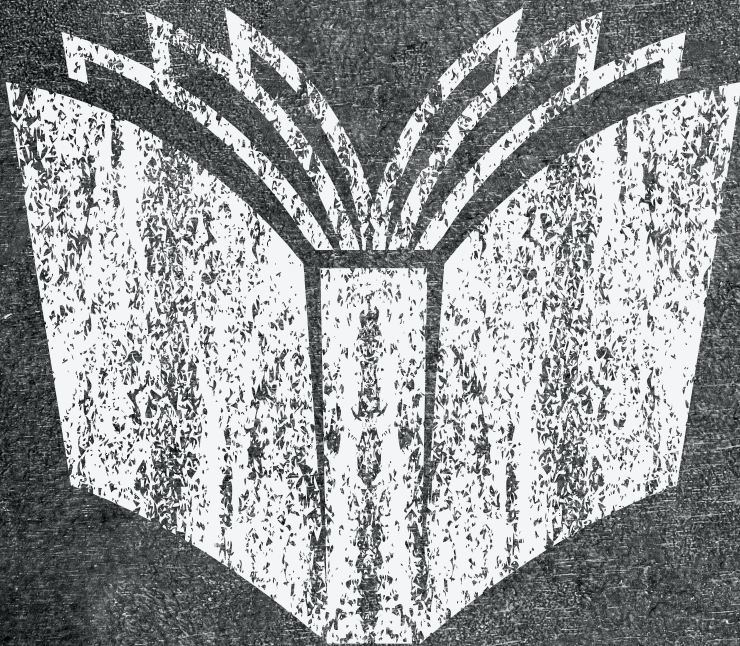
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PUBLISHER/CEO
ANTHONY RUSSO
arusso@cianj.org
EDITOR/PRESIDENT
MILES Z. EPSTEIN
mepstein@cianj.org

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

SIGNY COLEMAN
BETHANY COLEMAN-ATHERTON
MARTIN C. DAKS
BOB KLAPISCH
TRACY SCHOENBERG
DIANE C. WALSH

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LAYOUT AND DESIGN

MARJORIE CAMPOLONGO
*Art Director, Clear Tunnels
mjcampolongo@gmail.com*

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New Jersey, Flush With Money, Has an Opportunity for a Reset

Tax revenues are expected to yield a \$6 billion surplus in FY21.

By Anthony Russo
President, CIANJ

June marks the month where the New Jersey State Legislature needs to present a state budget back to the governor for approval. New Jersey must have a balanced budget by July 1 each year, according to our state constitution. So, what is

different about this year's budget? A few things.

For starters, New Jersey, along with the country and world, is coming out of a global pandemic. Now that the vaccines are being integrated and cases continue to drop, the world is opening up again. One can sense the jockeying for position and the anticipation of what the "new" normal will be once the pandemic is declared over.

During her testimony before the legislative budget committees, New Jersey's State

Treasurer, Elizabeth Muoio, broke down the amount of money New Jersey received in 2020 from the CARES Act and other federal initiatives. New Jerseyans received \$10 billion in direct stimulus checks, \$23 billion in enhanced

"CIANJ urges our leaders in Trenton to pay down our debt, reinvest in our businesses and infrastructure and save for the next downturn in our economy."

unemployment benefits and \$23 billion in paycheck protection program loans. Additionally, the State of New Jersey received approximately \$5 billion in direct aide.

When you add this all up, it is safe to conclude that a lot of money was pumped into our economy, which has been on life support since the start of the pandemic with a one third of businesses shuttering permanently.

As a result of this infusion of cash, tax revenues have been coming in higher than expected to the tune of a \$6 billion surplus in FY21 alone and a projected \$3 billion surplus in FY22. On top of these surpluses, New Jersey is slated to receive \$10 billion more over the next two years from the American Rescue Plan. This presents a unique challenge to our governor and legislature because, more often than not, the discussions center around budget deficits and whether to raise taxes or cut spending. So what should New Jersey do with all this cash?

Any good business owner would pay down debt, reinvest in business and save money to weather the next crisis. We urge our leaders in Trenton to do the same. Pay down our debt, reinvest in our businesses and infrastructure and save for the next downturn in our economy so taxes and fees do not need to be increased. 🇯🇵



CIANJ President Anthony Russo encourages state legislators to use tax revenues to pay down debt and invest in businesses and infrastructure.

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Early Childhood Learning, Preparing our Next Generation

The business of daycare and early childhood education reimagined for the post-pandemic era.

By Tom Worley
Chief Operating Officer,
Clear Tunnels Publishing Solutions

When the state of New Jersey mandated the temporary shut down of child-care and early childhood learning facilities on April 1, 2020, it allowed 500 facilities to remain open to serve the families of essential workers. Three of the 40 Lightbridge Academy providers in New Jersey were included in this exception. According to Guy Falzarano, CEO of Lightbridge Academy, those facilities were run at a significant loss to their franchisees. Aside from the primary business of franchising early childhood education facilities, Lightbridge Academy owns and operates 14 corporate centers. Anticipating the mandatory shut down, he decided to close its corporate facilities by March 19.

“The pandemic and corresponding economic shutdown was not kind to the early childhood learning industry,” asserts Falzarano, who also serves as president of Early Childhood Education Advocates (ECEA). ECEA is an organization engaged in lobbying to aid and promote legislation that affects New Jersey’s childcare industry. The association estimates that nearly 1,300 of their member providers have had to close their doors permanently during the past 14 months.

The shuttered businesses are mostly smaller operations that handled between 30-60 children. They weren’t prepared for the downturn and they simply ran out of money. Larger, more tightly managed organizations like Lightbridge and their larger competitors—Kindercare, Learning Care Group, Bright Horizons Family Solutions, Goddard Systems, Primrose Schools,

“We can spend money on education in the early years, or spend more for less results on education in the later years. Early childhood education is just a smart investment”

and others—seem to have enough resources to weather the downturn. With razor-thin margins in this business, well-funded providers will survive, but not without pain.

When the state allowed providers to reopen with restrictions on June 15, 2020, resumption of business was slow, early months showed less than a 20% occupancy rate. By the fall,

occupancy rose to around 40%; today, occupancy is at about 65% of capacity. Industry experts don’t anticipate that percentage rising significantly until some of the restrictions are lifted.

Meghan Tavormina, president, New Jersey Association for the Education of Young Children (NJAEYC) has seen momentum building in the early childhood education space. The public and private sectors have come to the realization that early education is essential and critical to all aspects of life, whether you have a child or not. She concurs with Falzarano’s opinion that childcare is a foundational component of the economy. Without childcare people, primarily women, can’t go back to work. She also adds that the issue runs deeper. Tavormina opines, “We can spend money on education in the early years, or spend more for less results on education in the later years. Early childhood education is just a smart investment.”

NJAEYC is a nonprofit 503c organization focused on the full spectrum of early childhood education facilities and the professionals that work in the field. It is a professional organization with almost 2,000 members statewide, representing teachers, directors, researchers, professors, volunteers, and others concerned with the well being of children from birth through the age of eight. Because the organization’s membership is based on annual renewal, it is unclear at this point whether the pandemic will affect membership, but one thing is certain; the pandemic has had an enormous impact on the members’ economic well being, work lives, classrooms, facilities, and school districts.

The measures imposed by the state—some necessary, others less so—hurt the profitability of providers in a number of ways. Pre-K is the most profitable age group for private providers and they rely on the revenue that this segment represents. Without pre-K revenue, it would be too expensive for parents of infants and toddlers to avail themselves of daycare. Necessary measures like implementing screening protocols and enforcing stringent sanitizing requirements are expenses categorized as the cost of doing business. Restricting parents and visitors from the building makes it very difficult to enroll new customers. Restricting pre-K group size to 15 (The pre-pandemic max was 24 students.) drives up costs, as does disallowing staff to handle more than one group per day. This lack of flexibility to manage staff efficiently increases labor costs while the restriction of class size reduces revenue.



Photo: Getty Images/Stockphoto

Early childhood education is key to competing in a global economy.

Continued On Page 9

Education

Continued From Page 8

“Adjusting the student to staff ratio alone will help, but will not solve the problem completely” Tavormina contends. “This is a business, and as such, cost vs. quality is an important aspect. The business model needs to maintain quality standards against an efficient cost structure. Positive relationships with the young students are essential. Increasing the ratio of student to staff may be cost effective, but would be detrimental to the quality of care. What’s needed is a balanced business model that takes both sides into account”.

Early childhood education needs to be reimagined and restructured. As part of this effort, substantial public and private funds will have to be allocated, existing public/private partnerships will need to be expanded, and new cooperative alliances will need to be forged. Though hampered by the pandemic, Lightbridge Academy continues to grow. The company projects double-digit expansion by the end of 2022. Universal pre-K, administered correctly, will facilitate this growth. Mismanaged, universal pre-K will decimate the early childhood education industry.

Both Falzarano and Tavormina agree that in order for universal pre-K to work effectively, community centers must be involved so parents have the option for extended care. Universal pre-K needs to be part of a mixed delivery of services. The school districts will have difficulty

handling it without private providers; private providers will not be able to survive without the public funds allocated to the effort.

Pre-K is not childcare. In order to go back to work, parents need childcare available year-round for extended hours. Early education-childcare facilities fill the need for extended hours before and after school. In order


to manage pre-K, public schools will need to add staff—that in turn adds to the tax burden while eliminating the most profitable portion of the childcare industry’s business. According to experts, if, rather than increasing the public school payroll, the state worked in cooperation with private providers, both children and parents would be better served. 



Photo: Getty Images/Stockphoto

Pre-K is not childcare. In order to go back to work, parents need childcare available year-round for extended hours.

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Post Pandemic Higher Education

Lessons learned from COVID will change higher education forever.

By Tom Worley
Chief Operating Officer,
Clear Tunnels Publishing Solutions

After completing their initial semester attending in-person classes, most New Jersey college students in 2020 were looking forward to resuming campus life after winter break. When COVID-19 hit, the pandemic dramatically changed the lives of students, essentially robbing them of the traditional college experience.

Like many businesses around the Garden State, college campuses found themselves needing to quickly pivot to a remote solution. Rider University sophomore Karl Stever was among the thousands of freshmen in the state whose campus experience was interrupted by the pandemic. According to Stever, "Rider University did an outstanding job transitioning to remote learning, but the vibe was slightly off." Like many of his fellow students, he felt cheated out of the total on-campus college experience.

Remote learning, like working remotely, requires an adjustment. College students with strong self-discipline have easily navigated the transition while students who require a more structured environment have not been quite as successful.

Most college students around the state are looking forward to the Fall 2021 semester and hoping that campus life returns to the pre-pandemic norm. Stever asserts that his school has been forthcoming and transparent with regard to its plans for resumption of in-person classes and campus life, but if it becomes necessary to return to remote classes due to a COVID spike, Stever, like many of his contemporaries, hopes to live on campus to get as much immersion into college life as possible.

Christine Harrington, Ph.D., an associate professor at New Jersey City University (NJCU) relates that a combination of approaches were employed to make the best college experience possible for students, faculty, and staff. Using Zoom for synchronous class meetings and office hours worked well, since students already had that time blocked out for class. Employing the virtual lecture hall to traditional online coursework is more difficult due to student schedules, but Zoom allowed the online learning community to stay connected with the university.

Some NJCU faculty recorded lectures and screencasts; they found this methodology successful for brief and targeted instruction. Like the students, the faculty and staff adapted to the technology in short order. Building on this success paved the way for learning. Most of the student support came directly from the faculty, while the

faculty was supported by NJEdge, a non-profit technology services provider specializing in education, research and healthcare organizations.

At NJCU, college professors are considering ways to weave technology into the traditional classroom. For example, assignments can be configured so students can work in Google Docs when collaborating on a project, and use Zoom breakout rooms rather than in-person project or study meetings. There is no doubt that more online options will be available moving forward.

Ramapo College in Mahwah took adoption of new teaching technology to an entirely different level, adding three new technology-based course delivery modes to complement their pre-pandemic methodologies. Instructors also experimented with various best-practice remote technologies like prerecorded lectures, virtual class meetings, instructor-created asynchronous learning experiences, and even simultaneous instruction of students on- and off-campus through the use of WebEx room kits. The article on the following

"Most college students around the state are looking forward to the Fall 2021 semester and hoping that the campus life returns to the pre-pandemic norm."

page describes Ramapo College's approach to the pandemic in greater detail.

"As a community college, County College of Morris (CCM) must be responsive to the needs of the community it serves," said Dr. Anthony J. Iacono, CCM president. Before the mandatory state shutdown, CCM, located in Dover, had approximately 8,000 enrolled undergraduate students and 4,000 students taking advantage of the college for continuing education coursework. Fortunately, enrollment hasn't suffered due to the pandemic. Dr. Iacono attributes this to the efforts of the 1,000-plus full- and part-time employees, all of whom needed to learn how to perform their responsibilities remotely.

Initially an academic transfer school, CCM is now a full-service college facility. As a commuter school, students appreciate remote access to administrative functions like financial aid, and online advisor meetings. This saves them the trouble of having to drive to campus. Now that these functions have been made available


online, they will continue on a permanent basis. Students, student organizations and clubs, faculty, and staff adapted to the virtual campus quickly, however, like the rest of the schools discussed, remote participation negatively affected camaraderie and interpersonal relationships. On balance, the virtual campus is a huge time-saver and will be incorporated into campus life moving forward.

While CCM was busy solving the virtual campus puzzle, the college still had time to earn multiple accolades during the pandemic:

In addition to these impressive achievements, CCM capitalized on public-private partnerships to open a new Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering Center. The center serves as a hub for innovation and helps close the skills gap in the engineering and manufacturing workforce. The college also started a Paramedic Science Program, and has experienced an increase in graduation rates.

Like all of the outstanding companies profiled in this issue, CCM gives back to its community. Through Dover College Promise, a grant-funded educational partnership with The Educational Center (TEC) Inc., and the Dover School District, CCM faculty, students and staff serve as mentors to low-income middle- and high school students with the opportunity to secure a college path. They also partner with of Table of Hope Food Pantry, volunteering and hosting food distribution events at the college.

As of mid-May, less than 7% of the state's college age residents have received a COVID vaccine, and this number is expected to trend upward as the number of institutions like Drew University, Fairleigh Dickinson University, Kean University, Montclair State University, Mount St. Mary's University, New Jersey City University, Princeton University, Rider University, Rutgers University and Stevens Institute of Technology require students to be fully vaccinated by the start of the fall semester. Many four-year colleges around the state have yet to announce a formal decision on mandatory vaccination, but there is a strong possibility that they will follow suit.

The pandemic challenged both four-year and community colleges to make change happen more quickly than they would have preferred. It forced them to explore strategies that might not have been possible only a few years ago. Although many faculty and students are excited to return to the campus and classroom, learning, campus life, and administration at the under-grad and post-graduate levels has changed, and improved forever. 

Ramapo College: How to Pandemic Right

The Mahwah institution of higher learning planned its work and worked its plan.

By Tom Worley
Chief Operating Officer,
Clear Tunnels Publishing Solutions

As the state's premier public liberal arts college, Ramapo College of New Jersey has been providing students with a strong foundation for a lifetime of achievement since its founding in 1969. The college emphasizes teaching and individual attention to all students, and promotes diversity, inclusiveness, sustainability, student engagement, and community involvement.

The Pandemic Assessment Team at Ramapo was kind enough to provide *COMMERCE* with a comprehensive look at how to correctly handle a pandemic.

COMMERCE: *What was your institution's immediate response to the pandemic in Spring 2020?*

PANDEMIC ASSESSMENT TEAM: Ramapo College of New Jersey responded to the pandemic in early Spring 2020. The 6,000-plus student public college immediately activated its Pandemic Assessment Team.

The Pandemic Assessment Team is led by the college's Dean of Students, Melissa Van Der Wall. It also includes:

- Provost/Chief Academic Officer, Susan Gaulden
- Associate Director of Facilities Management, Lauren Tibbets
- Director of Environmental Health and Safety, Gina Mayer Costa
- Other key personnel including representatives from Public Safety, Health and Counseling, Human Resources, etc.

The team also worked in partnership with a Return to Campus Task Force, comprised of faculty and staff, which was responsible for developing plans in compliance with the Restart Standards published by the NJ Office of the Secretary of Higher Education.

"In early 2020 the Pandemic Assessment Team began monitoring the evolving coronavirus and on February 3 the college issued its first communication to students and others. That initial message outlined the college's Emergency Preparedness Protocols, CDC information and prevention efforts, health and counseling services, and it announced the cancellation of some of the college's study abroad programs."

- Melissa Van Der Wall

"From the beginning we committed to ensuring our decisions prioritized the safety of our

community and that our communications with students, their families, and our colleagues focused on cogent information, actionable steps, and the availability of support services. In the past 15 months a great deal has changed in the world, but Ramapo's commitment to our students' safety has not fluctuated."

- Melissa Van Der Wall

"Prior to Ramapo's first confirmed Coronavirus case on campus or the governor's 'stay at home' mandate, the college had announced a shift to remote instruction for an initial two week period, and we had largely vacated our residence halls since the timing coincided with spring break. During this time, we learned of the first case of Coronavirus on campus, and we quickly moved to extend remote instruction and shifted to remote work for non-essential employees. Access to campus was severely limited during this time

"Care Managers provide individualized attention in assisting students with non-medical needs, including food, academic supplies, and access to counseling..."

due to state-issued mandates and institutional efforts were redirected to provide students and faculty with the technical, pedagogical, and wellness supports they needed to acclimate to this new instructional environment."

- Susan Gaulden

Q. *How did you adapt instruction? What worked, what didn't?*

A. "Pre-pandemic, Ramapo College delivered instruction via three distinct course delivery modes: in-person, hybrid in-person-asynchronous, and online. During the pandemic, the college developed three additional course delivery modes—hybrid in-person-virtual-synchronous, virtual-fully-synchronous, and virtual-synchronous-asynchronous—which means that students now have six different course delivery modes from which they may choose, each of which is thoughtfully designed to meet a variety of learning needs and comfort levels. For example, students who enroll in lab science courses

can choose course sections with face-to-face class meetings held on campus or can virtually participate in course sections that do not require any on-campus participation. Furthermore, a number of instructors experimented with various best practice remote instructional technologies including pre-recorded lectures, virtual class meetings held via Webex video conferencing, instructor-created asynchronous learning experiences delivered via the college's learning management system, and even simultaneous instruction of students on and off campus through the use of Webex room kits."

- Susan Gaulden

See: Course Delivery Mode Details at <https://www.ramapo.edu/provost/2021/03/08/fall-2021-academic-information-for-students/>

"Enrollment at Ramapo College has remained strong throughout the pandemic, and we attribute this to our undeterred commitment to continue to safely place students at the center of their collegiate experience. This means maintaining high-quality instruction through new learning modalities, providing students with meaningful opportunities for co-curricular engagement, and ensuring our physical spaces are safe and accessible for students."

- Susan Gaulden

"In collaboration with our Student Government Association, the college ramped up its efforts to make available programs and services for all students to help them cope with changing needs and demands. From virtual club meetings to modified on-campus career fairs and athletics, our students continued to remain engaged in collegiate life despite the challenges brought forth by the pandemic. During this time, the college's Men's Soccer team even won its first State Conference Championship, the college launched a Doctorate of Nursing Practice program, and our students, faculty, and staff earned national recognition from the Campus Prevention Network for our exemplary efforts to foster student safety, well-being and inclusion through online programs."

- Susan Gaulden

"A specialized group of Ramapo employees was developed to serve as Care Managers. Care Managers provide individualized attention to assist students with non-medical needs, including food, academic supplies, and access to counseling and related support services as needed."

- Melissa Van Der Wall
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“Ramapo College adapted its flexible work arrangement practices and instituted an alternating on-site work week schedule for our non-faculty employees and permitted faculty to adjust their delivery modes as appropriate for specific course learning objectives. The schedule ensures that students are able to choose how they wish to receive most services including advisement and tutoring, by visiting the college campus or by working virtually with an employee who is offsite. In addition, faculty and staff were provided with a range of virtual professional development offerings focused on mastering new instructional technologies and incorporating best practices in remote teaching and learning, remote management and supervision, and mental health support.”

- Susan Gaulden

“Through remotely delivered workshops, teaching circles, and faculty development events, the college’s Faculty Resource Center and Instructional Design Center became hubs that supported Ramapo’s virtual teaching and learning experiences. Full- and part-time faculty participation in these offerings increased dramatically, as compared with pre-COVID times. These learning and support opportunities greatly impacted the student experience, as faculty members became better equipped to offer dynamic synchronous academic experiences and well-constructed asynchronous learning exercises.”

- Susan Gaulden

“In addition to flexible work arrangements and the establishment of professional learning communities, a plan of action was set forth that included an analysis of all campus areas to de-densify academic and administrative spaces as well as residence halls. General safeguards were established and communicated for all on-site and off-site campus members and vendors. These safeguards included social distancing, requiring face coverings, promoting enhanced hand hygiene, proper disinfection of shared objects and spaces, and more. Procedures and policies were developed specifically adhering to the guidance set forth by the CDC, NJDOH, OSHA and OSHE with immediate implementation of EPA List-N approved disinfectants. Training programs were established for all students and staff with supplemental and ongoing training for custodial operations on updated methodology and application for cleaning and disinfection.”

- Gina Mayer Costa

Q. *What was done to ensure your facilities were safe?*

A. Ramapo College was able to quickly implement a multitude of measures when the pandemic arrived, due to the strong working relationship between our Environmental Health and Safety and Facilities Departments. Because student satisfaction and safety are a priority, the college was agile enough to make several transitions and adaptations in a timely fashion.

“As a result of the pandemic, Ramapo College reduced its student resident population and temporarily closed some of its fully vacated residence halls. The residence halls that remained open were converted to single occupancy, and

across our 300-acre campus for personal use with continuously supplied EPA approved products. Instructions and safety data sheets are included at each station to explain proper use. Disinfectant products were only purchased after a safety review to assure they didn’t present any hazard to the user. Informational and directional signage was also installed. Roadrunner (Ramapo’s mascot) footprint floor decals were designed internally and placed across campus to encourage social distancing. Signage also included important contact numbers, how to use supplied materials, protocols for use of products, safety data sheets, social distancing, and proper hand hygiene and face coverings.”

- Gina Mayer Costa

“Classes were staggered to permit disinfecting and cleaning between each class. This also increased air changes between occupancy. All desks and tables were marked to clearly indicate seating configurations.

Electrostatic sprayers were purchased utilizing EPA registered disinfectants that required minimal PPE for employees. Building Services (custodial operations) received specialized and recurring training on how to use new equipment and properly clean and disinfect for COVID-19. Further, a safety assessment was conducted for each area of campus. Operations were reviewed with a focus on staffing and occupancy needs and any physical changes required to the layout including furniture arrangement and plexiglass installation.”

- Lauren Tibbets

“Ramapo is active and attentive, and continues to strategically invest resources to improve existing infrastructure. Concentrated attention has been given to HVAC systems, preventative maintenance programs and development of programs and resources with the health and safety of all campus members serving as the steadfast focus of improvements. For example, all HVAC systems received additional preventive maintenance and upgrades following CDC and ASHRAE standards to include additional preventive maintenance, improved ventilation achieved by increased MERV rated filters, increased intake of outdoor air, and increased fan speed to achieve more air changes per hour. Ramapo’s ongoing systematic approach to improvements has aided our ability to provide an atmosphere focused on educational excellence and safety throughout the pandemic.”

- Lauren Tibbets

“The modifications and needed disinfection of Ramapo College’s 300-acre public campus

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no visitors were permitted. All common high-touch surfaces were cleaned and disinfected consistently and thoroughly several times every day. Hand sanitizer stations were installed at each hall and disinfecting wipes were provided in the laundry rooms and hall offices. All common areas were closed. Residential apartments were repurposed to serve as self-isolation and quarantine spaces for COVID-19 positive and close contact resident students and staff.”

- Gina Mayer Costa

“Disinfection of all areas was drastically and methodically increased across campus employing the use of dedicated internal labor resources in conjunction with external vendors. Disinfecting wipe dispensers and hand sanitizer stations were installed and are readily available

Education

were realized through a combination of dedicated in-house essential employees and external service providers that were already on retainer with the college. Our increased costs were not related to outsourcing—they were a result of increases in supplies and the purchase of new equipment.”

- Lauren Tibbets

Q. *How have you approached vaccinations and on-campus testing for the 2021-22 year?*

A. “The college launched on-campus COVID-19 testing, a Care Manager program, a contact tracing unit, additional mental health and wellness supports, and enhanced its real-time dashboards, which track COVID-19 activity at the college and among its members and the broader community. These efforts, among others, have proven successful in both slowing the spread of the virus among Ramapo’s 7000 plus member community and they will be continued.”

- Melissa Van Der Wall

“The college partnered with an independent vendor to administer on-campus COVID-19 testing for asymptomatic residential students and student-athletes in competition. The college has subsidized the cost of testing so that it is free to students. The college will require students to be vaccinated to participate in on-campus student life and instruction this fall and the college looks forward to serving as a vaccination site this summer.”

- Melissa Van Der Wall

Q. *What do you think may have been forever changed in higher education?*

A. “It would be short-sighted to discontinue using some of the new instructional technologies, remote learning components, and course delivery modes in specific academic programs and courses, as appropriate, since these options were well-received by a cohort of college students.”

- Susan Gaulden

“Students especially seemed to benefit from being able to access video recordings of class sessions, to remotely attend class meetings when they were not feeling well via the Webex Room kits, and to virtually meet with their instructors during faculty office hours. Many of the virtual services offered by college support units will likely continue to be offered for the convenience of students who may work full-time or have other obligations that prevent them from regularly spending time on our campus.”

- Susan Gaulden

“Higher-education related initiatives evolve over time and develop under a certain pace for change. We learned how to make change occur rather quickly while also underscoring vision and strategy. We are grateful for the time, talent, and dedication of the college’s student life staff for their unwavering commitment to student success. For example, our Center for Student Involvement engaged students in the Census and empowered students to think

about the kind of society they want to live in and vote during the general election. Our Counseling Services developed specific groups for COVID-19 stress management, support for students of color, and grief support. Ramapo’s time-honored arching tradition, in which all incoming students process under our iconic on-campus arch to individually shake hands with the president, was even thoughtfully modified to replace the handshake with oversized foam fingers. Our trusted team of professionals provided meaningful support to students. They continue to deploy a great deal of creativity and to absorb a great deal of responsibility to design a high-quality college experience amid the rapid and disruptive changes we are all navigating.”

- Melissa Van Der Wall

“The guidance and recommendations being issued from global and domestic agencies, our professional organizations, and local health department was numerous, at times overwhelming, and represented a very heavy lift to sort through. The Pandemic Assessment Team found ourselves making plans at a time when planning was extraordinarily complex. To this end, timely communication served as the best avenue possible for working together to implement initiatives to keep our students, colleagues, and broader community safe and meaningfully engaged in college life.”

- Melissa Van Der Wall



Ramapo College Modified (Foam Finger) Arching Ceremony

New Jersey Companies That Care About Education

Dedicated teachers and volunteers, in cooperation with school districts, private donors, and corporate social responsibility teams, worked through the pandemic to keep education on course.

By Tom Worley
Chief Operating Officer,
Clear Tunnels Publishing Solutions

The initial concerns facing remote learning at the elementary school level were a combination of the lack of adequate student computers and home broadband access according to Lynne Mullan, 5th grade teacher in the Freehold Township school system. Prior to the pandemic, Freehold elementary school students had one-to-one in-classroom access to computers, but those machines stayed at the school. In preparation for virtual learning, each elementary school student was given a computer to take home and the district provided ample materials for teachers to devise virtual lesson plans. This was the case in many state school districts.

At the high school level, Freehold Regional District students without adequate home computers were also given a computer to facilitate remote learning. Matthew Coulson, a history teacher at Howell High School in southern Monmouth County relates that he and most of his colleagues took advantage of professional development courses offered by the district. This continuing education simplified the transition to the virtual classroom. The administration and staff were proactive, making the move to virtual last October relatively simple.

The switch to remote teaching wasn't quite as easy. As with in-person classes, students with a high drive to succeed flourished while less-driven students tended to fall behind. The lack of social interaction, distractions in the home, difficulty checking on completion of classwork, and diminished focus on individuals who require extra attention all hampered the teaching experience.

Both Mullan and Coulson agree that while it is difficult to engage with students virtually, the hybrid model—where some students attend class in person and others participate virtually—is not quite as effective. It splits the teacher's focus, making it nearly impossible to engage with all of their charges. Faculty and administration have had to work hard to adapt to the changes brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Public school budgets have been strained by the need to provide students with computers and the extra costs incurred to improve ventilation and sanitize classrooms. Fortunately, like

our educators, New Jersey corporations have not been idled by the pandemic. Many corporate partners continue to support New Jersey's education system. Prudential, for example, has a long history of social responsibility. Since establishing The Prudential Foundation more than 40 years ago, Prudential has allocated over \$70 million in grants and more than \$250 million in impact investments to help improve education in America. Today, The Prudential Foundation actively manages more than \$140 million in grants and contributions, over \$14 million of which is slated for education initiatives in New Jersey.

With staff working remotely through the pandemic, the Social Responsibility & Partnerships teams have been as busy and as productive as ever. Social responsibility is a major priority at Prudential; a primary focus of their investment is the City of Newark, where the company has been headquartered since being founded there 140 years ago. Initiatives beyond education include community development, job training, financial capabilities, affordable housing, small business, and economic growth.

“Parents shouldn't have to choose between eating and education”

As education is one of the primary drivers of economic mobility, Prudential invests in both public and charter schools to create a high quality education system in Newark. Unlike New Jersey's more affluent communities, when the Newark schools went fully remote in April 2020, access to education was an immediate challenge. An estimated 52% of Newark's school age residents didn't have access to the necessary technology at home. To address this “digital divide”, The New Jersey Pandemic Relief Fund (NJPRF) matched a \$500 thousand grant from Prudential. These grants enabled the Newark Public School District to purchase Chromebooks as well as higher-end computers needed by students enrolled in career and technical education classes. In addition to financial support, Prudential supports The Newark Board of Education's technology needs by providing IT help desk support outside of school hours (7-8 AM and 4:30-9 PM)

for both parents and students who have technical issues with remote learning. Their employees regularly volunteer as guest speakers for students in classrooms, particularly in the area of technology and math.

Since its founding, Prudential has been a committed steward and anchor institution in the City of Newark, providing employment for thousands of residents. Recognizing the challenge presented by the fact that many Newark residents lack the educational requirements necessary for higher-skill math intensive positions, Prudential convened community leaders years before the COVID 19 pandemic to ask the question: How do we strengthen the math skills of Newark youth? These meetings yielded lists of initiatives and a plan of action.

“A high-quality education is essential in ensuring students in Newark are prepared for the jobs of the future. Building strong foundational math skills will give students the tools they need to be successful in high school and college, and ultimately in careers, putting them on a path to financial security. Prudential Financial is committed to solving the financial challenges of our changing world, and providing young students with critical resources needed to be successful is one way to do so. Along with Discovery Education, Schools That Can Newark, and Newark Board of Education we are making math more accessible, engaging, and meaningful,” said Sarah Keh, Vice President of Inclusive Solutions at Prudential Financial.

Altice USA, who operates the Optimum and Suddenlink brands, is one of the largest broadband communications and video services providers in the United States. According to Jen Ostrager, Vice President of Community Affairs, Altice takes the role they play within each local community they serve very seriously. It's a responsibility that focuses on making a positive impact by helping people connect to what matters most. During the pandemic, Altice increased their work with community organizations to make broadband Internet service available to low-income students, an initiative that they had started in early 2017.

Recognizing the high need for their services for work and school, coupled with a high awareness of the need, Altice contacted community centers and schools to see how they could help. The Elizabeth school system answered their

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question in short order. At the beginning of the pandemic, Elizabeth had nearly 200 households that didn't have access to broadband internet. With more than 32,000 students already using Student WiFi from Altice, they worked together with the Elizabeth school board who funded a free WiFi emergency broadband initiative for households in need. The program was extended to include Newark and Paterson. To date, Altice has donated more than \$200 thousand worth of equipment to education initiatives, and another \$1.5 million worth of ad grants to assist small businesses in the area. The Boys and Girls Club of Paterson and Passaic is a grateful beneficiary of some of Altice's generosity.

Partnering with local school districts, the Boys & Girls Clubs of New Jersey looks after more than 70,000 youth ages 5-18, 1,100 of those belong to the Boys & Girls Club of Paterson and Passaic. During the state mandated shutdown, the Paterson and Passaic clubs became food relief centers, distributing more than a half million lbs. of food before reopening in a limited capacity for summer camp.

With hours between 8:30 AM and 5:30 PM, the Club's 85 staff members now serve as educational mentors to 200 in person 5-13 year old students. These children are primarily from working families. Wendy McGuire, the Club's Chief Executive Officer is fond of saying: "Parents shouldn't have to choose between

eating and learning". The Club also monitors 180 students virtually; live capacity is limited since the eight school-based satellite facilities are currently unavailable.

"Commitment to community is why the Boys & Girls Clubs of Paterson and Passaic exists. We are here for working parents providing educational enrichment through Art, Dance, Music, STEM, and athletics" continues Ms. McGuire. In order to counteract the fact that September's first grade students will not have experienced kindergarten, the Club created different ways for these kids to socially interact e.g. 1/1 tablets, hula hoops, etc. In addition to her concern about her youngest charges, Wendy also points to a few of the Club's main post pandemic initiatives:

1. Essential Academics. Without in-person learning, B&G staff had to become education facilitators, their post pandemic focus is to develop their staff so that they can help more deeply, for example, tutoring programs.

Virtual programming enables the Club to reach more students, so when the facilities are at capacity, they will continue to use virtual learning technology.

2. Essential Food Service. The Club plans to increase nutrition and wellness programs and awareness to families with kids. Boys & Girls Clubs of Paterson and Passaic plans to be

more involved in total family nutrition complementing their current program of up to two meals per day.

3. Essential Teen Programming. The Club will offer programs for teens to keep them on the right track, and teach them work and life skills. Ms. McGuire feels that teens are an underserved segment of the Club membership.

As the largest childcare provider in Paterson and Passaic, the Boys & Girls Club's financing comes mostly from program fees (60%) with the remaining 40% from fundraising efforts like special events, and private and corporate donors. They try to keep scholarship funding available so no child is ever turned away.

The commitment of the faculty and administrators coupled with the generosity of corporate philanthropy has made the logistics of remote learning largely successful. While there is no specific statewide plan for September 2021, the priority is to resume in-person learning across the state. It will be left to the individual districts to develop reopening plans that best fit local needs. The Department of Education published and will continue to update anticipated minimum standards aimed at ensuring that our educational health doesn't come at the expense of our public health. Social distancing in classrooms, public areas, and transportation coupled with access to both public and private funds are major considerations for the reopening plans being developed. 📌

Communicate with Class when You Quit

We have all been there at one time or another. We find ourselves in a work situation or career that is not a great fit, doesn't fulfill our professional aspirations or, simply put, is just not making us happy. But when it comes time to quit, it is important you do it with dignity. Consider the following tips and tools.

No matter how much you hate your job, there is no value in saying so. How are you helping yourself by telling your boss that he's a jerk or telling a coworker that you dislike him or her? Instead, take the high road and thank them for the opportunity.

Never publicly trash or bad mouth your former employer. Sure, you can tell your close friends and family in private everything you really feel. Get your frustration out there, but remember, when you publicly trash the place and the people you are leaving behind, that carnage has a tendency to follow you.



STEVE ADUBATO'S LESSONS IN LEADERSHIP

Train your replacement. No matter how happy you are to leave and want to get out the door as quickly as possible, make sure you communicate how willing you are to take the necessary time (preferably two weeks or longer if possible) to train your replacement.

Communicate face to face that you are leaving. I have heard of employees quitting via e-mail, text, or one time, an employee just mysteriously left a letter on her employer's desk, never to be seen or heard from again. Just like you don't accept a job through electronic communication, you shouldn't leave a job that way.

Steve Adubato, PhD, is the author of five books including his latest, "**Lessons in Leadership**". He is an Emmy® Award-winning anchor with programs airing on Thirteen/WNET (PBS) and NJ PBS who has appeared on **CNN**, **FOX5 NY** 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

A Salute to Giving Back and Community Service in NJ

Helping those in need is a winning strategy.

By Diane C. Walsh
Contributing Editor

Acts of kindness and generosity—many aimed at trying to ease the suffering and anxieties brought on by COVID-19—were very needed, and are highlighted in this special section. Donations bought PPE (personal protective equipment) for the frontline healthcare workers. Lunches and dinners were delivered to hospitals for these heroes. Indeed, businesses, hospitals and institutions of higher education found innovative ways to help the communities and individuals most affected by the pandemic. Here are their inspirational stories, worthy of recognition and *COMMERCE* salutes these efforts and outreach.

A.J. Perri. In addition to taking steps to keep its employees, customers and community safe during the onset of the pandemic, including partnering with a local printer to donate more than 1,000 masks to area hospitals, plumbing and HVAC contractor A.J. Perri focused on supporting an important and overlooked group: frontline healthcare workers. In 2020 as part of its A.J. Perri Cares program, which previously honored veterans in need, the company installed no-cost water heaters or HVAC systems for certain eligible healthcare workers in its community. These included a hardworking nurse manager and single mom working

14 hours a day who caught COVID-19 from a patient, fully recovered during the quarantine period and went straight back to work. A.J. Perri is continuing this program in 2021 with a renewed focus on deserving veterans in need throughout the community.

AmeriHealth New Jersey. The collaborative spirit among AmeriHealth New Jersey associates extends outward to its members, customers, brokers, providers and community partners. Providing support and resources to people when they need it most is at the core of what AmeriHealth New Jersey does as a company. In 2020, AmeriHealth New Jersey wanted to do something to show support for the individuals who were providing unwavering care to New Jersey residents during the COVID-19 pandemic. To express heartfelt thanks for the tireless work of those on the front lines, we offered to have pizza brought in for the Emergency Department staff at each of our network hospitals. Throughout the summer of 2020, pizza deliveries were made to more than 50 hospitals across the state.

Berkeley College. In collaboration with the Community FoodBank of New Jersey and a \$10,000 donation from The Berkeley College Foundation, the Food Pantry at the Berkeley College Newark Campus stepped up operations to continue addressing food insecurity among college students throughout the pandemic. According to a study by Feeding America, from

2018 to 2020, New Jersey became one of five states with the highest increase in the rate of food insecurity. At the time the Berkeley College food pantry opened in 2019, it was one of 20 colleges offering food pantries on campus in the Garden State. Berkeley College students place their orders confidentially, and pickup of the orders is available at each of the New Jersey campuses, arranged in accordance with all safety guidelines. Based on the success of the Food Pantry at the Newark Campus, an additional Food Pantry at the Berkeley College in Midtown Manhattan was established early in 2021.

Berkeley College School of Health Studies students and faculty are frontline volunteers administering COVID-19 vaccines in collaboration with the City of Clifton's Health Department. Since February 24th, students in Berkeley College's Licensed Practical Nurse to Bachelor of Science in Nursing program have been administering vaccinations each week under the supervision of nursing faculty at a drive-through site located at Clifton High School. More than 10,000 vaccines have been administered at the site. Students from other programs such as Medical Assisting, Practical Nurse, and Medical Billing and Coding are assisting in other roles.

Charity Realty International. Charity Realty International's mission has, and will always be, to bring awareness and tangible contributions to its clients: cherished charities including the America Lung Association, Essex Morris Mental Health Association, Chatham Borough Fire Department, The Canal Society of NJ and Homes For Our Troops. The firm not only contributes to large-scale causes and even finds opportunities to help individual community members in need. A client of ours reached out, frightened her elderly father could not be placed in an essential senior care facility after recovering from COVID-19. Within hours, the firm secured a room for him and the care he needed. Charity Realty International will continue to support the community no matter the scale.

Chiesa Shahinian & Giantomasi PC. CSG has many long-standing practices—traditionally taking the shape of bake sales, charity walks and Jeans Days—geared specifically towards raising funds and awareness for well-deserving, local organizations. The CSG family has kept to this commitment despite operating virtually over the past year, raising nearly \$40,000 in support of three exemplary organizations close

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Nurse Carla Biondi (right) works 14-hour days at two jobs. A.J. Perri installed a free water heater in recognition of her work as a frontline healthcare worker during the pandemic.

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to home. In early Spring 2020, we leapt into action and raised more than \$5,000 for the Music, Meals & More for Healthcare Heroes emergency fundraising campaign, which supported the healthcare workers at Newark Beth Israel Medical Center and New Jersey's RWJBarnabas Health system. Later in the year, CSG's Diversity & Inclusion Committee hosted two fundraisers that were met with an outpouring of generosity. The first, over the summer, saw the firm raise more than \$24,000 in support of the New Jersey Institute for Social Justice; and, together, we proudly raised more than \$10,000—the equivalent of 30,000 meals for families in need—for the Community FoodBank of New Jersey just in time for Thanksgiving.

Columbia Bank. In a challenging year filled with economic uncertainty due to the COVID-19 pandemic, one of Columbia Bank's priorities was to remain active in the communities it serves. Through Team Columbia and the Columbia Bank Foundation, the bank leveraged its volunteerism and supported struggling businesses, nonprofit organizations and communities during this difficult time. In 2020, the Columbia Bank Foundation, one of the largest private giving foundations in New Jersey, provided nearly \$600,000 in support to nonprofit organizations affected by COVID-19. Some \$200,000 was designated to local hospitals to support the outstanding efforts of front-line healthcare workers. Team Columbia volunteered nearly 2,000 hours; and it expedited a \$1.5 million line of credit to transform Edison's 157,000 square-foot Convention and Exposition Center into a 500-bed emergency field hospital for overflow patients during the pandemic. While the year ahead remains uncertain, Columbia Bank's efforts to assist those in need remains strong.

Delta Dental of New Jersey. The COVID-19 pandemic has nearly doubled the number of New Jerseyans having difficulty putting food on their tables, resulting in as many as 1.2 million adults and children relying on food banks and pantries for sustenance. With massive unemployment rates a major contributing factor, these organizations were in dire need of outside assistance to keep up with the demand. Aware that food insecurity will very much persist in New Jersey long after the pandemic, Delta Dental of New Jersey donated \$250,000 to the Community FoodBank of New Jersey (Hillside), Fulfill (Neptune), and The Food Bank of South Jersey (Pennsauken) to help food pantries

“The COVID-19 pandemic has nearly doubled the number of New Jerseyans having difficulty putting food on their tables...”

with capital needs, such as refrigerators, storage shelving and delivery trucks. Delta Dental of New Jersey has a long history of addressing hunger in New Jersey. This donation supplements the more than 17,000 meals associates prepared for Rise Against Hunger and the 263 boxes of food they packaged at the Community FoodBank of New Jersey.

Eastwick College Foundation. When the urgent call for PPE went out, Eastwick College—which offers multiple medical degrees—responded by donating \$40,000 worth of surgical gowns, masks, face shields, shoe covers, hair bouffant caps and sterile gloves to New Bridge

Medical Center in Paramus and St. Joseph's University Medical Center in Paterson. Next, Eastwick College partnered with Visions Federal Credit Union and purchased lunches from local restaurants and donated them twice to front-line workers at New Bridge Medical Center and once to St. Michael's Hospital. It was a win-win for both the restaurants that lost so much business, as well as for the frontline workers who tirelessly provided round-the-clock care. Last but not least, students and staff rallied by raising money to fight hunger, ending the year with a \$40,000 donation to eight local food banks—half of which came from the college's president, Tom Eastwick.

Felician University. Felician University was undaunted in the face of challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic and remained committed to serving both its student population and the larger community. Felician stepped up to the plate to help students struggling due to the global COVID-19 pandemic by offering one-time emergency aid through the Emergency Student Fund. Students who faced family emergencies, medical expenses or job loss due to the pandemic applied for emergency aid, food assistance, temporary housing and transportation costs. Felician students took part in Make a Difference Day in November to pick up litter in and around the Rutherford campus, while many communities were restricting outdoor activities.

Goldstein Lieberman & Company, LLC. When the COVID-19 crisis hit, Goldstein Lieberman & Company knew that not-for-profits would be some of the worst hit during the pandemic. Thirteen years ago, during the 2008 financial downturn, the firm created Goldstein Lieberman Cares, a program that has contributed over a million dollars since its inception to help local charities achieve their missions.

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Columbia Bank volunteers prepared more than 600 individual food boxes and bags for a food distribution event with Table To Table and First Baptist Church in Englewood. Baptist Church in Englewood.



Delta Dental of New Jersey associates volunteered at Community FoodBank of New Jersey during its first-ever Community Impact Week.



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Corporate Philanthropy

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Charitable contributions typically dwindle when tough times hit, and during the COVID crisis, the firm knew the shutdown would shut down donations as well as fundraising events and opportunities. Goldstein Lieberman Cares made meaningful donations throughout the year to many not-for-profits and chambers of commerce including New Hope Community, whose mission is to enhance the lives of children and adults with disabilities. The firm also gave to various other not-for-profits, including the Lupus Foundation of America. The Boy Scouts of America benefited financially and through the volunteerism of Goldstein Lieberman team members. Throughout the pandemic GLC team members worked at local soup kitchens that provided food and clothing to people in need.

GZA GeoEnvironmental Inc. Cognizant that, as essential workers, GZA staff was fortunate to continue working while many were unable to do so during the pandemic, the firm helped where it felt it was needed most. First, a toiletries drive, which had already begun in January 2020 for homeless shelters, was re-directed (when shelters stopped accepting donations) to benefit frontline workers at RWJBarnabas Health. Many recipients were local healthcare staff working 18-hour shifts and out-of-state healthcare professionals who came to assist. GZA also collected dozens of backpacks for the Jersey Cares School Supply Drive to help kids adjust to wherever school was for them this year. To address food insecurities, the firm donated hundreds of food items to the Community FoodBank of New Jersey. Lastly,

because community begins at home, GZA collected funds for the café owner in the firm's own office building to help her through these lean months. GZA's corporate office made matching monetary donations.

ICA Risk Management Consultants.

During 2020, a most pervasive time in our country's history because of the pandemic, it was not hard to give. The only difficulty was in selecting organizations to give to, as so many were in need for so many reasons, which included basic needs for food, medicines, clothing and shelter be it for humans or animals. ICA's philanthropic programs have always been varied and targeted to the needs of society. In this regard, being nimble and fluid allows for new causes to be addressed and supported, along with the other 25 causes that have historically been supported for decades by ICA. A long-term charity that provides medical aid to homeless children and families is at the top of ICA's list. However, because of the pandemic, it was necessary to step up efforts to support food kitchens

“The organizations in need will always be many but, ... the reward is always the same—intense gratification knowing that you made a difference in the lives of others.”

that take care of so many who could not provide for themselves. The organizations in need will always be many but, regardless of the choice, the reward is always the same—intense gratification knowing that you made a difference in the lives of others.

Jersey City Medical Center. JCMC (RWJBarnabas Health) reaches beyond the doors of its facilities to not only treat disease, but to help avert it. Its goal is to improve health outcomes, promote health equity and eliminate healthcare disparities. At the height of the pandemic, while the hospital never once diverted any patient, JCMC continued to support the most vulnerable populations, particularly young people. JCMC provided school supplies to a local public school and donated a limited number of laptops to children of JCMC-Greenville clinic patients who had no means of doing at-home schooling. JCMC continues to distribute Butterball checks to students and families to address food insecurity. Our Partial Hospitalization staff conducted virtual support group therapy with parents, with more than 75 families using this resource on an ongoing weekly basis. Its Trauma Recovery Center meets with the Jersey City Allied Health Coalition



AmeriHealth New Jersey had pizza delivered to Emergency Department staff at more than 50 hospitals across New Jersey last summer.

monthly to provide behavioral health resources to the network of school counselors.

Lakeland Bank. Lakeland Bank was determined to do its part to help the thousands of residents who suffered economic hardship as a result of the pandemic. The bank remained a steadfast partner to the non-profits it helps annually, plus it donated \$180,000 in emergency COVID grants to help combat the dramatic rise in food insecurity witnessed throughout the state. It also provided funds to support various emergency shelter programs, as well as the New Jersey Community Development Corporation in Paterson to purchase 40 laptops for low-income students so they could join virtual classrooms. And when it was evident many students would not return to school, Lakeland stepped in to be a main sponsor for the Desk 4 Home campaign so volunteers could build school desks for children of Bergen Habitat for Humanity clients who did not have one at home. The program was a huge success and several rounds of desks have been donated.

Levine, Jacobs & Company, LLC. To support the community and the accounting industry, the firm is offering the first Annual Levine Jacobs Accounting Scholarship to two graduating seniors from Livingston High School, who are pursuing careers in accounting. To qualify, the students completed an application indicating their short- and long-term goals, lessons learned while in high school and why they felt they deserved to be awarded the scholarship. In the fall, both recipients will be attending universities with outstanding accounting programs. According to Senior Partner Michael H. Karu, "This has been a long time coming. We

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SUEZ employees packed food items to be distributed by Meals on Wheels in Berkeley, one of many efforts by SUEZ to combat food insecurity in Monmouth and Ocean counties in 2020.

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Lakeland Bank proudly funded the Desk 4 Homes initiative to help build desks for the children of Bergen Habitat for Humanity homeowners who found themselves attending school virtually.

continue to look for ways to support the community and our profession, and this seemed like a perfect way to blend the two. I'm sure that both students will strive to excel in the field and I'm happy that, in whatever small way, we can help put them on their chosen career path."

Monmouth University. The Monmouth University School of Social Work recently launched the Community Care Telehealth Clinic, a free, online counseling service with flexible hours for the external community. "Given the tremendous demand for accessible telehealth counseling services in light of COVID-19, and as an institution of higher education, the School of Social Work at Monmouth University was in a unique position to help

meet the needs of New Jersey residents while also facilitating a supervised, hands-on professional learning opportunity for our graduate students," said Robin Mama, Ph.D., dean of the School of Social Work. Available via cell phones, computers, and tablets, the counseling support program is open to New Jersey residents 18 years or older who are not members of the Monmouth University community.

Montclair State University. In February 2021, MSU and AmeriCorps' Volunteer Coordinator collected 79 coats and took them to one of the United Community Corporation sites located at Wolf Presbyterian Church in Newark. Community outreach and word of mouth helped collect these coats from faculty,

staff and students at MSU. During these trying times, basic needs are essential to fulfill. With the uncertainty of weather changes and a health crisis, something as simple as a jacket can help fulfill that need for warmth and comfort. With the donation of a coat, a person's concern for warmth can help diminish the worry about other basic needs such as health and safety.

New Jersey City University. Throughout the pandemic, New Jersey City University has been a friend to its community with COVID-19 surveillance testing and vaccination efforts. In recent months, NJCU, in partnership with the New Jersey Department of Health, has offered COVID-19 PCR testing to members of the local community. Through the university's partnership with the Jersey City Health Department, NJCU, beginning May 6 with future dates to be announced, has been hosting a mobile vaccination unit—open to the public—by appointment. Additionally, NJCU's Center for Community Engagement (CCE) continues to be a leader in fighting food insecurity throughout Hudson County. CCE has delivered more than 22,000 bags of groceries on Saturdays over the last 13 months to seniors throughout the county; and in partnership with AngelaCARES food pantry, has assisted with food needs for 275 families.

New Jersey Landscape Contractors Association. The Gramon School in Fairfield, which serves students with developmental disabilities, was having severe drainage issues that caused large pools of water to form, making the area unusable for students to play on. The school was also looking to install a greenhouse, re-mulch their playground equipment area and repair an uneven field. NJLCA members took on the project with gusto. Thirteen companies volunteered and 21 companies donated material and equipment to complete this project, which would have cost an estimated \$90,000 to \$100,000. Nearly 500 feet of drainage was installed from the side of and along the entire back of the playground leading to new concrete catch basins. Member volunteers installed a 1,000-square foot patio with three shade trees. An area was leveled, and a large cement pad installed for the new greenhouse. Raised garden beds were found beneath an overgrown area, which was completely cleaned up for use. Two playground areas were mulched with more than 100 yards of playground mulch. The entire playing field was regraded to remove low spots, then hydroseeded. To complete the project, 2,200 square feet of asphalt was laid.

Peapack-Gladstone Bank. Peapack-Gladstone Bank partners with America's Grow-a-Row throughout all seasons of the year in the fight against hunger. During the height of the pandemic when the organization was in dire need of in-person volunteers to harvest crops for New Jersey residents facing financial challenges, the bank provided consistent hands-on assistance at the farm throughout the summer and early fall.

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Corporate Philanthropy

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As supplies were dwindling, food banks, pantries and soup kitchens were overtaxed in their efforts to provide residents—who were unemployed, disadvantaged and impacted by COVID—with meal supplies to feed their families. Crops harvested by Peapack-Gladstone Bank employees were directly transported throughout the state, providing thousands of pounds of fresh produce for those facing food insecurity. By addressing the issues of proper nutrition and feeding the hungry during a time of historic proportion, Peapack-Gladstone Bank and America's Grow-a-Row made a direct impact in keeping New Jersey residents healthy and strong.

Rider University. Food insecurity has risen since the COVID-19 pandemic began, according to Feeding America. Rider University has seen similar increases in the need for food and supplies among its students. Since the start of the pandemic, the university's on-campus pantry, the Rider Resource Pantry, has completed nearly 700 orders for approximately 150 students. Established in 2018, the pantry provides students with food, personal hygiene necessities, clothing and more. Completely donor funded, the pantry received an outpouring of support during the pandemic, with nearly \$15,000 in donations since its onset. These funds have enabled the pantry to meet the increased need, add new refrigerated items and increase its supply of fresh, healthy food. Ensuring students have access to necessities allows them to maximize their college experience. They are free to explore their passions and forge their own pathways with the unyielding support of the Rider community.

Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital Hamilton. During COVID-19, Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital (RWJUH) Hamilton (RWJBarnabas Health) has never let go of its commitment to meeting the ongoing need of the community identified in the CHNA (Community Health Needs Assessment)—and the increased need due to COVID-19. Farm to Family, a program piloted in 2019, continued in 2020 as a partnership between RWJUH Hamilton, Snipes Farm and the CYO Bromley Center in Hamilton. From July through October, participating families would come to the Bromley Center to pick up their Snipes

“Since its inception in 2012, the 4 Miler has raised more than \$595,000 for the Child Life Department.”

CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) crop share and receive recipes and nutrition education and information from RWJUH Hamilton Community Health Educators. One participant said, “In my neighborhood there aren't many opportunities to have fresh vegetables, so this was great. During COVID, fruits and vegetables are expensive in the grocery store and my family needs to eat healthier. This was an opportunity to take advantage of fresh fruits and vegetables and the healthy eating teaching tips were great.”

Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital Somerset. Following a surge of

COVID-19 cases among members of the Hispanic community, Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital Somerset (RWJBarnabas Health) in Somerville launched a community outreach initiative to educate the community and prevent the spread of COVID-19. Through events held in collaboration with local schools, churches, food banks, health departments and municipalities, the hospital distributed more than 30,000 masks, 9,400 hand sanitizers and 5,700 soaps as well as Spanish-language educational materials. In the borough of Bound Brook, which had one of the highest numbers of Hispanics infected with COVID-19 in Somerset County, the rate of COVID-19 infection decreased by 85 percent as a result of the hospital's outreach efforts. The hospital also formed a Latino Advisory Council and launched a new online health education series in Spanish and is expanding access to the COVID-19 vaccine for members of the Hispanic community.

Saint Peter's University Hospital. Saint Peter's University Hospital's Community Health Services, along with Middlesex County's Office of Health Services and the Healthier Middlesex Consortium, distributed Coronavirus Care Kits to New Brunswick's hardest hit neighborhoods; Esperanza and Unity Square. Marge Drozd, Saint Peter's director of Community Health Services, said the locations were identified after analyzing Saint Peter's Emergency Department data from patients who sought treatment after presenting with symptoms. The Esperanza and Unity Square neighborhoods are primarily multi-family dwellings where individuals may have limited access to healthcare information. The kits were handed out at a local park, area churches and food distribution sites. “Our main goal was to distribute bilingual healthcare information and masks, hand sanitizer and soap to help residents engage in prevention,” said Drozd. “We provided critical information explaining how to identify symptoms, how to take care of yourself if you do get sick and ways to protect your family.”

Sax LLP. Sax is an avid supporter of St. Joseph's Children's Hospital in Paterson and holds an annual, family-friendly run/walk event called the 4 Miler at Garret Mountain. The firm's philanthropic arm, The Sax Charitable Foundation, absorbs all costs for the event (approximately \$20,000 per year) so that 100 percent of the dollars raised directly supports the Child Life Department at the Children's Hospital. This department offers high-impact, holistic therapies that are shown to be highly beneficial in mitigating the negative effects of hospitalization, particularly for pediatric patients with chronic, life-threatening or terminal illness. Since its inception in 2012, the 4 Miler has raised more than \$595,000 for the Child Life Department and Sax has become its largest financial contributor of the Child Life Department. This year, because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the event was held virtually and \$60,000 was raised. In

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Sax LLP team members at their annual 4 Miler at Garret Mountain run/walk event to benefit St. Joseph's Children's Hospital.

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At one area hospital, the staff came out to show their appreciation for an N95 mask donation from Turtle & Hughes, further emphasizing the critical needs that frontline healthcare workers were facing during the height of the pandemic.

addition, Sax's employees are deeply invested in this event and solicit clients and friends of the firm for donations, and personally contribute to the firm's fundraising goal, which the firm generously matches.

SobelCo. For more than 60 years, SobelCo has been committed to the New Jersey non-profit community. During the COVID-19 pandemic, its in-person volunteer initiatives were curtailed. Instead the firm created opportunities that followed protocols such as wearing a mask and maintaining social distancing. One of its most successful programs was its Trunk 'N Treat event. Employees and their families came in costume to participate in safe and fun trick-or-treating in the Livingston office parking lot. More than 14 cars arrived decked out to participate in the "Best Decorated Trunk" contest while the staff contributed to the Food and Diaper Drive to benefit HomeFront, a Lawrenceville-based nonprofit that fights to break the cycle of poverty. At the same time, there was plenty of candy and treats.

SUEZ. Since the pandemic struck New Jersey in early 2020, many in the communities SUEZ serves have struggled with basic needs, particularly with hunger, housing and medical care. SUEZ adapted its charitable giving in 2020 and in 2021 focusing much of its giving on food insecurity. In total relief efforts, SUEZ provided

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Corporate Philanthropy

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approximately \$300,000 to organizations across New Jersey in 2020, including the United Way, hospitals and local food pantries. The company supported programs like the Meadowlands YMCA, where people lined up in cars for miles to receive donations of groceries. In Hudson County, SUEZ supported an organization helping to feed immigrants who had lost their jobs. Employees raised money for Table to Table's food rescue initiative and participated in local food drives. SUEZ also provided meals to the homeless. The non-profits supported by SUEZ included: The Center for Food Action, Secaucus Food Pantry, Faith and Hope Food Pantry, Office of the Concern Food Pantry, The Food Bank of South Jersey, Rutherford Community Food Pantry, West Milford Presbyterian Food Pantry, Meals on Wheels and Palisades Emergency Residence Corp.

Troy Corporation. Troy Corporation has been a partner within the communities it serves for more than 40 years—actively participating in and working with charitable, business, environmental and local trade organizations from direct financial support to organizations such as the Ironbound Community Corp. in Newark, to landscaping and beautification programs for related daycare, schools and Branchbrook Park. Highlighting this dedication has been the company's annual Feed the Community program, launched every year before Thanksgiving

and conducted throughout the holidays. While Troy implements this program in both Morris County and Essex County—the home base for its offices and facilities—much of its efforts are concentrated in the Ironbound section of Newark. Each year, Troy works with community leaders and public officials to distribute hundreds of turkey dinners for those most in need, as well as to its employees, who live in these communities.

Turtle & Hughes. Turtle & Hughes electrical and industrial distributors answered the urgent need for lifesaving PPE by donating close to 6,500 N95 face masks to hospitals and first responders during the early months of the pandemic. Facing limited supply, many were forced to reuse masks or turn to cloth and conventional surgical masks, which are not as protective. As front-line healthcare workers and local governments sounded the alarm, Turtle responded by donating most of its available inventory, which the firm regularly stocks for its healthcare and pharmaceutical customers.

Valley Bank. During the COVID-19 pandemic, food banks and food pantries have been hit hard with an increased demand for food, rising food prices and a lack of volunteers. To help its community partners fight food insecurity, Valley allocated \$575,000 to 14 food bank and food pantry organizations including the Community FoodBank of New Jersey, Table of Hope and America's Grow a Row. These contributions helped the bank's partners continue

to deliver emergency relief in this unprecedented time as the need for it continues to grow. Through this support, Valley was able to provide 5,750,000 meals to help keep communities fed.

YWCA Northern New Jersey. The YWCA of Northern New Jersey is focused on supporting survivors and those impacted by sexual violence; empowering women and girls; advocating for the equality of all people; providing enrichment programs for children and enhancing the health, well-being and self-confidence of people of all ages and abilities. During the COVID-19 crisis, the organization adjusted its services by offering fully remote, and HIPAA-complaint platforms for counseling services, senior fitness classes, a job readiness series for women and girls leadership development programs. It also doubled down on our racial and social justice work with initiatives like the 21 Day Challenge, Racial Justice Awards and Share The Mic Now, which focused on education, awareness and continuing essential conversations around racial equity. 🍷

Every year, the Commerce and Industry Association of New Jersey pays a special tribute to the philanthropic good works of the business community through its Companies that Care awards, which will take place in September 2021. Stay tuned for more information and a call for entries to follow in the coming weeks and months.



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Ronald McDonald House Charities: Helping Families Care for Children

RMHC will broaden the impact of its more than 680,000 programs.

By Diane C. Walsh
Contributing Editor

Ronald McDonald House Charities (RMHC)—an international nonprofit that provides homes away from homes for families as they care for sick children—now plans to expand its programs to increase access to quality healthcare.

Under the leadership of new CEO and president, Kelly Dolan, the organization is making access to quality healthcare a top priority in its strategic growth plan.

The 47-year-old charity operates in 62 countries around the world. Last year it saved families \$935 million by providing them with homes away from home, food, support and comfort as they cared for sick loved ones.

Dolan said RMHC will broaden the impact of its more than 680,000 programs and seek innovative new ways to ensure that families of all backgrounds have access to the best medical, dental and mental health services.

The new CEO is eager to set the course. She brings to the job 30 years of experience in

nonprofit management and fundraising. Before taking the reins, Dolan had been the chief marketing and development officer at the charity.

She began her career in the private sector, working for the Leo Burnett ad agency in Chicago. When she relocated to Atlanta, she was recruited by the largest children's healthcare system in the Southeast, now known as Children's Healthcare of Atlanta. Working for a nonprofit organization with a mission and purpose fulfilled her. "And I never looked back."

In focusing on healthcare, RMHC will be building on some existing programs. Already the Ronald McDonald Care Mobile offers services, such as primary care, diagnostic treatment

"RMHC saved families \$935 million by providing homes away from home, food, support and comfort as they cared for sick loved ones."

and dental care, through the charity's partnership with medical providers. Dolan's ambition is to expand on this foundation.

"It's at the heart of our mission," she said. "Even in the midst of the global pandemic, the RMHC system has rallied together to not only provide vital support and resources to the families we serve, but also strategically pivot to temporarily repurpose several RMHC program spaces to support healthcare delivery and provide a respite for healthcare workers on the front line of the pandemic."

All the services provided by the charity are accomplished through its vast network of chapters. In New Jersey—one of the most densely populated states in the nation—there are two chapters. Kristy Geoghan, executive director of RMH Central and Northern New Jersey, said the charity's roots in the Garden State are more than 30 years old.

An eight-bedroom Ronald McDonald House was built in Long Branch in 1987 on the campus of what is now the RWJBarnabas Monmouth Medical Center. A second house was established in New Brunswick 16 years ago. It's adjacent to the Robert Wood Johnson Children's Specialized



Ronald McDonald House Charities President and CEO Kelly Dolan

Hospital and the Children's Hospital at Saint Peter's University. Since they opened, the houses have provided more than 120,000 nights of stay to more than 13,000 families.

In addition to the houses, the local chapter of RMHC also has family rooms at Monmouth Medical Center, Hackensack Meridian Jersey Shore University Medical Center and a hospital-ity suite at Centra State Medical Center. These rooms offer respite and relief for families spending long hours at the hospital.

The Southern New Jersey chapter opened its house in 1998 in Camden and has served more than 28,000 families. The latest annual report showed that in 2019 more than 500 families used the facility. Many of them used the house as their children were undergoing daily treatment at nearby hospitals.

The RMHC facilities "give families a place away from the hustle and bustle of the hospitals," said Dr. Harprett Pall, chairman of the pediatric department at the Hackensack Meridian K. Hovnanian Children's Hospital within the Jersey Shore University Medical Center where a RMHC room is located. Pall said the facility has a comfortable place to sit, a kitchenette, and offers computer access and a laundry area. "It's so important to help parents cope by making it easier on them."

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Photo: Getty Images/Stockphoto

RMHC programs help families with ill or injured children stay together and near leading hospitals and healthcare services.

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Corporate Philanthropy

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One mother who used the RMH in New Brunswick said it “helped me because you want to feel like you are at home when you’re going through something like this.” Gabrielle Ayala added that: “They cooked for us and took care of everything. They are always willing to listen and make you feel like family, even if you just met them yesterday.”

The New Brunswick house is a dedicated partner to the Children’s Specialized Hospital that is part of the RWJBarnabas Health system, according to President and CEO Warren E. Moore. “This home away from home gives family members the space they need to rest in order to accurately communicate and advocate for their child, all the while providing them peace of mind knowing that they’re only steps from the hospital.”

Dolan is proud the RMH facilities did not contribute to the community spread of COVID-19 throughout the pandemic. All the facilities have always adhered to the highest hygienic and safety standards, she explained, noting the families are interacting with fragile children who are often immune compromised. Their experience made them well prepared to face the pandemic challenges.

Through the organization’s sophisticated infrastructure, Dolan said, RMHC was able to “communicate quickly and consistently” with all the chapters on the restrictions and

operating guidelines specific to every location. “I believe we came out of 2020 stronger as a system in terms of alignment than we came into 2020,” the new CEO said.

The excellent training and leadership development offered by RMHC is its competitive advantage, in the president’s estimation. Worldwide, RMHC employs a staff of 5,000 complemented by 490,000 volunteers. By nurturing the chapters with extensive education on such topics as finances, branding, advertising and fundraising, Dolan is confident their mission can be elevated and strategic growth can be attained.

Another key to RMHC accomplishing its goal is corporate partners. Dolan encourages businesses to consider co-branding. “Our brand is strong and highly trusted,” she stressed.

She encourages corporate partners to consider sponsoring an event or program. Dolan is also very appreciative of companies that allow RMHC to access their employees as potential donors and/or volunteers.

During the height of the pandemic, volunteer opportunities were scaled back. For example, on-site food preparation was replaced by food delivery or drop-off. As the threat of COVID-19 recedes, Dolan hopes to re-engage volunteers in more activities.

She sees RMHC as poised to make a deeper global impact. “We have the platform,” Dolan said, “and we are looking forward to having a role in the equitable access to healthcare.”



The Ronald McDonald House Suite at Jersey Shore University Medical Center

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Scott J. Mariani

Healthcare Services Practice Leader

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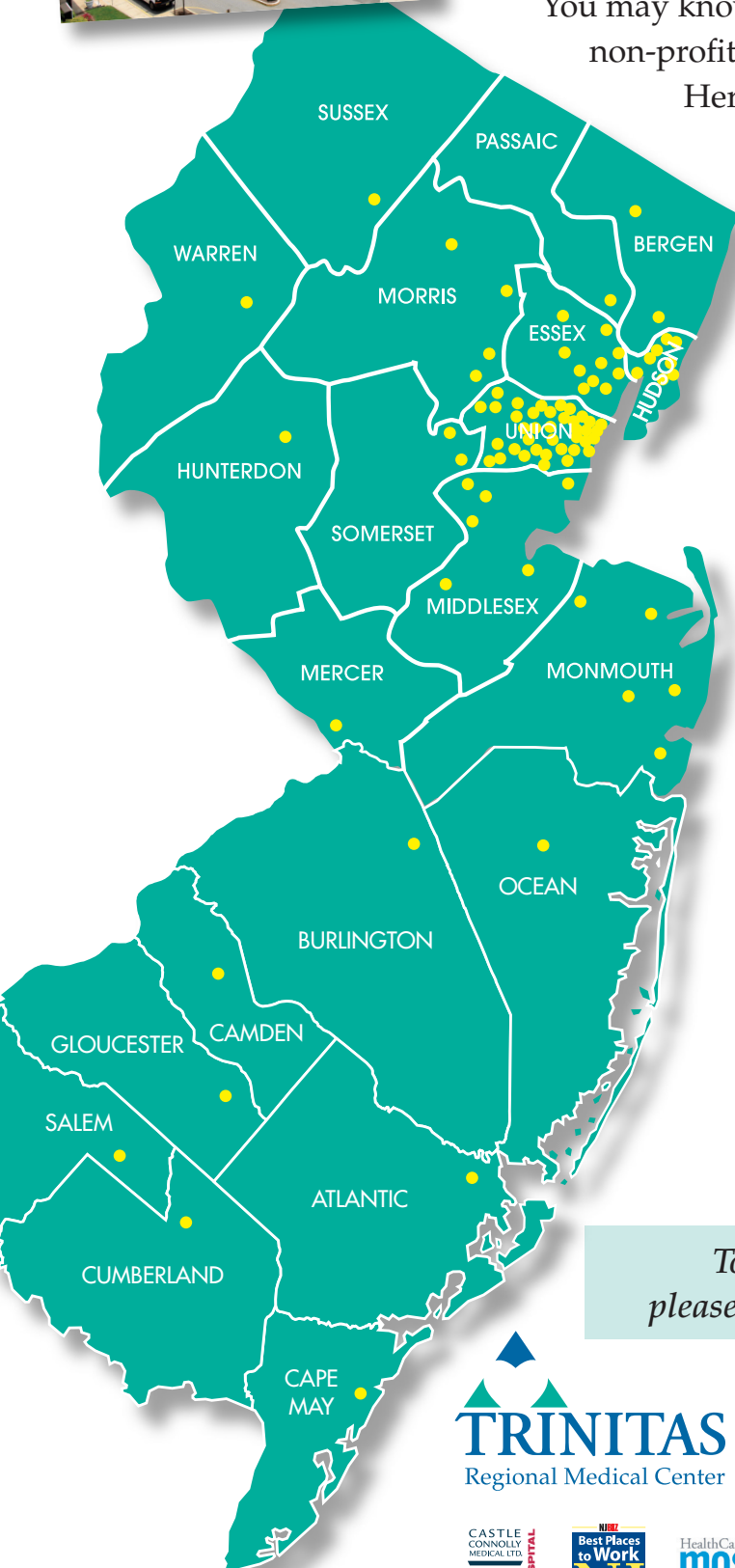
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- We offer a **Diagnostic Imaging Center**
- We offer an **expanded sleep center** in Homewood Suites by Hilton - Cranford
- The **Trinitas Health Foundation** provides millions of dollars in support of Trinitas
- Our service area includes **Newark Liberty Airport** and the **Port of Elizabeth**
- Our **Emergency Department** was enlarged and modernized as part of an \$18.7 million project, and was named after hospital CEO Gary S. Horan
- We offer **elective and emergency angioplasty**
- Our **Children's Therapy Services** are provided in over 30 school districts and private schools
- Our **Center for Wound Healing & Hyperbaric Medicine** has a 95% success rate and is known throughout the region
- We offer a **Long Term Acute Care Hospital (LTACH)**
- We offer the **Brother Bonaventure Extended Care Center** with an attached sub-acute unit. The Center was named Best Nursing Home - Short Stay Rehabilitation by *US News & World Report*
- We offer a **Cardiac Rehabilitation Center**
- Our **School of Nursing** is one of the largest in the country, and received Center of Excellence designation from the National League for Nursing
- We have a **Medical Office Building** on our main campus
- We offer extensive **outpatient programs** – some that are state-wide
- We provide the only **Palliative Care** program in Union County to receive advanced certification by the Joint Commission
- Our **Stroke Program** and **Total Joint Replacement Program** both received the Gold level certification from The Joint Commission
- We recently dedicated the \$3.4 million **Connie Dwyer Breast Center**
- We recently acquired the **Bayonne Community Mental Health Center**
- We broke ground recently on a 60,000 sq. ft. Medical Arts Building on our main campus
- In 2020 our Women's Health Services were awarded 3 Healthgrades Women's Excellence Awards

To learn more about Trinitas Regional Medical Center please visit www.TrinitasRMC.org or call (908) 994-5138.



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Top Healthcare Leaders in New Jersey

Here is our tribute to hospital, health insurance, dental insurance and advocates making a difference.

By Diane C. Walsh
Contributing Editor

Few businesses are as complicated to run—and important—as hospitals and medical centers; and COVID-19 added so many more challenges for these vital institutions. Here are some of the top healthcare leaders in the Garden State who are forging ahead with caring, innovation and community service. Quality healthcare is one of the most important contributions to a healthy and successful community.

HOSPITALS

AtlantiCare



AtlantiCare

Lori Herndon

Lori Herndon, CEO of AtlantiCare in South Jersey, began her career as a registered nurse in the intensive care unit at AtlantiCare Regional Medical Center. Over the past three decades, she served in various executive roles at AtlantiCare, including chief operating officer. The health system employs more than 5,500 people and works with 900 physicians and providers serving five New Jersey counties.

Herndon earned a master's degree in business administration at St. Joseph's University in Philadelphia. She did her undergraduate studies at Richard Stockton College of New Jersey and she received her registered nurse degree from Geisinger Medical Center School of Nursing in Danville, PA.

In July, 2016 Herndon was named CEO of AtlantiCare. Herndon is a member of the American College of Health Care Executives. She and her husband, Dorie, reside in Brigantine. She was named to the Atlantic County Women's Hall of Fame in 2013.

Atlantic Health System

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Atlantic Health System

Brian Gragnolati

Brian Gragnolati, a former chairman of the board of trustees of the American Hospital Association, is the president and CEO of the Atlantic Health System. Atlantic Health employs 17,000 workers and provides care to 4.9 million New

Jersey residents in 11 counties.

Gragnolati is recognized as a leading voice in healthcare and he is frequently asked to appear on CNBC, MSNBC and Bloomberg Radio, sharing his experience and insights on the nation's more pressing health issues.

He holds a bachelor's degree in health system analysis from the University of Connecticut. The executive earned an MBA from Western New England College and an executive leadership certificate from the JFK School at Harvard University.

Before joining Atlantic Health, Gragnolati was senior vice president, community division of Johns Hopkins Medicine and president and CEO of Suburban Hospital. He and his wife, Donna, live in Mendham.



Bergen New Bridge Medical Center

Deborah Visconi

Deborah Visconi was named CEO and president of Bergen New Bridge Medical Center in 2017. With more than 1,000 beds, New Bridge, located in Paramus, is the largest New Jersey hospital.

Visconi, who holds a master of science in healthcare administration from the New School for Social Research in New York, was selected to lead New Bridge by Care Plus Bergen—the not-for-profit operator of the facility which was created by an alliance among Rutgers NJ Medical School, Integrity House and Care Plus NJ Inc. New Bridge provides acute care, behavioral health services, addiction treatment and long-term care.

In February, Visconi was recognized by Modern Healthcare as one of 2021's Top 25 Women Leaders. Before joining New Bridge, Visconi served seven years as director of operations for Morristown Medical Center. She also previously worked for Mount Sinai Beth Israel in various roles for more than 19 years.



CentraState Healthcare System

John T. Gribbin

John T. Gribbin, a past chairman of the board of trustees of the New Jersey Hospital Association, is president and CEO of CentraState Healthcare System—a private non-for-profit health organization based in Monmouth County.

Prior to assuming the leadership role at CentraState, Gribbin was a founding member and served as executive vice president of Meridian Health System. Gribbin's career in healthcare spans more than 40 years and includes a stint as president of The Medical Center of Ocean County. In 1974 he graduated from the University of Pennsylvania with a bachelor's degree. He later earned his master's degree in business administration at Rider University.

A resident of Clarksburg, Gribbin is chairman of the board of trustees of the Monmouth-Ocean Hospital Service Corp. and a member and past chairman of the board of trustees of the Central Jersey Blood Center. He is also a fellow of the American College of Healthcare Executives.



Cooper University Health Care

Anthony J. Mazzarelli

Anthony J. Mazzarelli, the former medical director of the emergency department at Cooper University Hospital, racked up many years of experience with the institution before he was named co-president and CEO.

Over a 22-year span, he served Cooper University in various executive roles before he was tapped to be co-president. Dr. Mazzarelli was chief physician executive and senior executive vice president. In that position, he had oversight of the quality and patient safety for the health system as well as oversight of Cooper's practice plan of more than 630 employed physicians, who also serve as the faculty for Cooper Medical School of Rowan University.

Dr. Mazzarelli received his medical degree from Robert Wood Johnson Medical School. He also has a law degree from University of Penn-

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sylvania Law School and a master's in bioethics from University of Pennsylvania Center for Bioethics. In 2010 he was awarded the Halo Award by the South Jersey Professional Association for leading a team of 18 health care providers from Cooper into Haiti in the days immediately following the 2010 earthquake.



Cooper University Health Care

Kevin M. O'Dowd

Kevin M. O'Dowd, who served as chief of staff during the administration of Gov. Chris Christie, is the co-president and CEO of Cooper University Health Care. He joined the healthcare organization in 2014 as senior executive vice president and chief administrative officer.

O'Dowd is a graduate of The Catholic University of America. He earned a juris doctorate at St. John's University School of Law in 1997. During his career he was a New Jersey deputy attorney general for nearly five years and in that position his duties included providing legal counsel to the state Department of Health. In 2003, O'Dowd joined the U.S. Attorney's Office for the State of New Jersey, where he served as chief of the securities and healthcare fraud unit in the criminal division of the office.

He joined the Christie administration in 2010 as counsel to the governor. From 2012 to 2014 he served as chief of staff to the governor.



East Orange General Hospital

Paige Dworak

Paige Dworak brought nearly 20 years of healthcare experience to East Orange General Hospital when she was named president and CEO of the institution in 2017 after serving as the hospital's Chief Operating Officer. East Orange General is a 211-bed, for-profit acute care hospital serving the greater East Orange and Newark areas.

Born and raised in Edison, Dworak is board certified in healthcare management as a fellow in the American College of Healthcare Executives.

Her previous healthcare experience involved various leadership roles for facilities around the country, including the Cleveland Clinic, Trinity Health and the Greater New York Hospital Association.

She has been an active leader withing the American College of Healthcare Executives, serving in multiple leadership roles within the New York Chapter. She has been a featured speaker in local and national conferences, and in 2017 was honored as one of *NJBIZ*'s 40 Under 40 award winners.



Englewood Health

Warren Geller

Warren Geller joined Englewood Health in 2009 and became president and CEO in 2013. He is credited with transforming the facility from a community hospital into a leading tertiary medical center marked by an upward trajectory in patient volume and acuity, financial performance, and quality and safety outcomes. Geller has furthered positive community relations; modernized the medical center's campus, facilities and technology infrastructure; strengthened key clinical programs; expanded outpatient services; and developed an integrated physician network.

Geller previously served as executive vice president and chief operating officer from 2009 to 2012. Prior to joining Englewood, he served as senior vice president at Northern Westchester Hospital and director of business development at Mount Sinai Health System.

A graduate of the State University of New York at Albany, Geller earned a master's degree at Pace University.



Hackensack Meridian Health



Hackensack Meridian Health

Robert C. Garrett

Robert C. Garrett is CEO of Hackensack Meridian Health—one of the largest health networks in New Jersey encompassing 17 hospitals, 500 patient care locations, 34,000 employees and 6,500 physicians.

Through his leadership the network developed new partnerships designed to advance cancer and behavioral health treatment, as well as medical education and innovation. One of the most illustrative examples of the network's progress occurred two years ago when it merged with Carrier Clinic, one of the most respected providers in behavioral healthcare. Their partnership will result in opening new treatment centers. Hackensack Meridian also allied with Seton Hall University to open the state's first private medical school in decades.

Garrett launched his career at Hackensack University Medical Center in 1981. He served as CEO of the Hackensack University Health Network from 2009 to 2016. Garrett received his bachelor's degree from Binghamton University in New York. He has a master of health administration from Washington University in Saint Louis, Missouri.



Holy Name Medical Center

Michael Maron

Since 1997 Michael Maron has led Holy Name Medical Center as the chief executive officer and president of the 361-bed acute care facility located in Teaneck. It employs nearly 4,000 people and cares for about 30,000 patients each year.

Maron earned a master's degree in business administration at Columbia University. He completed his undergraduate studies at Providence College, where he received a bachelor's of science in accounting and healthcare administration. A New Jersey native, Maron is a graduate of Bergen Catholic High School.

He joined Holy Name in 1987 as vice president and chief financial officer. Maron was promoted to senior vice president four years later. He was named CEO in January, 1997. He had previously been assistant administrator and chief financial officer of Pascack Valley Hospital in Westwood. During his early career he also served as director of budget and reimbursement at Pascack Valley Hospital and internal auditor and financial analyst for The Valley Hospital in Ridgewood.



Jefferson Health—New Jersey

Brian Sweeney

Brian Sweeney, who began his healthcare career as a trauma unit nurse, is president and COO of Jefferson Health—New Jersey.

Sweeney has more than 23 years of experience with the Jefferson Health organization. He was chief operating officer of the Thomas Jefferson University Hospitals in Philadelphia before joining the New Jersey leadership team in the spring of 2020 and taking on all the challenges that came during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic.

He was recognized by *SJBiz Magazine* as one of 2020 "Power 50" business leaders. During his career he has led and managed diverse clinical programs, operational departments and support services. He has focused on strategic planning, business development, process improvement and service line leadership to achieve success.

A fellow of the American College of Healthcare Executives, Sweeney earned his MBA from Temple University in 2000. He received his nursing degree from Gwynedd-Mercy College in 1996.

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To learn more visit atlantichealth.org

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RWJBarnabas Health



RWJBarnabas Health

Barry Ostrowsky

As president and Chief Executive Officer of RWJBarnabas Health, Barry H. Ostrowsky leads New Jersey's largest, most comprehensive academic healthcare system, covering nine counties and 5 million people. He is spearheading a system wide endeavor to promote healthier living for employees as well as the communities RWJBarnabas Health serves. As part of that commitment, He is driving effective strategies to address racism in all forms, and the true social needs of diverse communities. He frequently speaks publicly about how the system is reaching its goals.

RWJBarnabas Health and Rutgers University are creating the state's largest academic health system, aligning the two institutions' education, research and clinical activities, including those at the Rutgers Cancer Institute of New Jersey—the state's only national cancer institute-designated comprehensive cancer center, and forming one of the largest medical groups in the nation.

Ostrowsky has been a key member of the RWJBarnabas Health system for three decades, having joined Saint Barnabas Medical Center in 1991 as executive vice president and general counsel. In 2016, with the merger of Barnabas Health and Robert Wood Johnson Health System, he assumed his present position. He is an active board member of several organizations and is annually named to national and state-wide influencers' lists. He received a bachelor's degree from Rutgers University and a law degree from the University of Tennessee School of Law.



Saint Peter's Healthcare System

Leslie (Les) D. Hirsch

The American College of Healthcare Executives of New Jersey presented its Lifetime Achievement Award last year to Leslie (Les) D. Hirsch, president and chief executive officer of Saint Peter's Healthcare System.

Hirsch joined Saint Peter's system as president in 2015—capping a 40-year career in healthcare. Prior to joining Saint Peter's, Hirsch was president and CEO of Saint Clare's Health System in Denville for seven years. He also formerly served as president and CEO of Touro Infirmary in New Orleans—starting just one week before the devastating Hurricane Katrina struck the area. During his career, Hirsch also served as president and CEO of Saint Joseph Hospital

in Denver. He also worked at the Cooper Health System in Camden for 14 years, beginning in 1988 as executive vice president. He was promoted to president and CEO in 1999.

Hirsch is also a past chairman of the New Jersey Hospital Association Board of Trustees.



St. Joseph's Health



St. Joseph's Health

Kevin J. Slavin

Kevin J. Slavin is president and chief executive officer at St. Joseph's Health—an integrated, multi-hospital system based in Paterson.

In his role, he is responsible for the overall clinical, academic and operational functions of the non-profit St. Joseph's Health, which encompasses St. Joseph's University Medical Center, including St. Joseph's Children's Hospital in Paterson, St. Joseph's Wayne Medical Center, St. Joseph's Healthcare and Rehab Center in Cedar Grove and many outpatient centers across Northern New Jersey.

Slavin did his undergraduate studies at Rutgers University, receiving a bachelor's degree in industrial engineering. He earned a master's degree in health administration from the University of Colorado's Graduate School of Business.

A trustee of the New Jersey Hospital Association, Slavin is also a member of the American College of Healthcare Executives and a trustee and past chairman of the Hospital Alliance of New Jersey.



Trinitas Health

Gary Horan

Gary Horan has been president and CEO of Trinitas Health and Trinitas Regional Medical Center in Elizabeth for the past 20 years.

Horan has extensive experience in healthcare leadership and was awarded the 2019 Outstanding Healthcare Executive Award by the Edward J. Ill Excellence in Medicine Foundation and MDA Advantage.

Before joining Trinitas, he served 11 years as president and CEO of Our Lady of Mercy Healthcare System in the Bronx. He is past chairman of both the Hospital Alliance of New Jersey and the Board of Governors of the Greater New York Hospital Association.

A resident of Sea Girt, Horan is a 1966 alumnus of Xavier High School. He earned his undergraduate degree in economics from St. Peter's College in Jersey City. He has a master's degree in healthcare administration from George Washington University School of Government and Business, Department of Health Care Administration in Washington, D.C.



Valley Health System

Audrey Meyers

Audrey Meyers joined Valley Hospital in 1980 and was appointed president and chief executive officer 22 years ago—making her one of the longest serving CEOs in the state.

She is currently overseeing the relocation of Valley Hospital from its original home in Ridgewood to a new health and wellness campus under construction in Paramus that will include a 372-bed hospital. Valley employs more than 5,000 staff and physicians and it ranks among the busiest hospitals in the state.

During her tenure Meyers is credited with establishing strategic and important alliances with Mount Sinai Health System and the Cleveland Clinic to enhance healthcare in the region. She was recently named to State Sen. Loretta Weinberg's 2020 Women's Power List, which represents some of New Jersey's most influential women.

In 2019 Meyers was also responsible for the opening of the Women's & Children's Primary Care Center in Montvale, as well as the launch of a new service, Dispatch Health, which brings urgent care to a patient's home.

HEALTH AND DENTAL INSURANCE LEADERS



AmeriHealth New Jersey

Mike Munoz

Mike Munoz has been market president of AmeriHealth New Jersey since 2017. In his role, he is responsible for the profit-and-loss management and business operations of the statewide health plan.

With more than 25 years of experience in the health insurance industry, Munoz previously led the sales and marketing division at AmeriHealth for many years. During his tenure there, he oversaw new business sales and retention across all market segments in addition to product management, marketing and public relations. His goals were to enhance product offerings, create better engagement with the broker community and heighten brand awareness for AmeriHealth New Jersey throughout the Garden State.

He is also an active leader in the business community. Munoz currently sits on the boards

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Healthcare

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of the Special Olympics New Jersey, United Way of Greater Philadelphia & Southern New Jersey and the Chamber of Commerce of Southern New Jersey. In 2018 the March of Dimes honored him as Citizen of the Year in Business.



Brighton Health Plans Solutions

Jim Cusumano

Jim Cusumano serves as president and chief financial officer of Brighton Health Plan Solutions and is responsible for the firm's strategic direction, day-to-day operations, financial planning and analysis, business performance reporting and risk management.

Under Cusumano's leadership the firm saw \$3 million in annual savings through ownership/debt reorganizations and efficiency reviews. The company's revenue has also nearly tripled in his 18-year tenure.

He began his career at Deloitte, one of the nation's leading accounting firms. Cusumano is a member of the American Institute of CPAs and the New York State Society of CPAs. He graduated from Pace University with a degree in accounting.

Before joining Brighton, Cusumano was chief financial officer of a startup, National Healthcare Resources, an episode management company focused on managing care for work-related injuries on behalf of property and casualty insurers. That firm achieved \$170 million in annual revenue before it was sold to Concentra Managed Care.



Delta Dental of CT and NJ

Dennis Wilson

A leader with more than 30 years of experience in the health and benefits industry, Dennis Wilson has served as president and CEO of Delta Dental of New York and Connecticut since 2013.

During his career Wilson has taken on diverse corporate and community board appointments. These have included: Delta Dental Plans Association Board of Directors and Executive Committee; chair of DeltaUSA's Board of Trustees; chair of the Board of Encara, Inc.; and vice chair of Healthentic Inc. He also serves as vice president and trustee of Delta Dental of New Jersey Foundation and holds a board appointment with the New Jersey Chamber of Commerce.

Wilson received his bachelor's degree in marketing from the University of Massachusetts and he credits his family's military experience

and his love for sports for his work ethic, drive and approach to leadership. He is also a proud survivor of quintuple bypass surgery and continues to share his story to encourage others to embrace preventative healthcare.



Horizon BCBSNJ

Gary D. St. Hilaire

Last year Gary D. St. Hilaire was named president and CEO of Horizon Blue Cross Blue Shield of New Jersey, which provides health insurance coverage to more than 3.8 million people throughout the Garden State.

St. Hilaire joined Horizon BCBSNJ after a 14-year tenure at Capital Blue Cross in Pennsylvania, where he was the president and CEO for eight years. He has more than 30 years of experience as a healthcare executive, entrepreneur and financial leader skilled in executive leadership, strategy, start-up operations, acquisitions and divestitures, and business turnarounds.

Under his leadership, Horizon BCBSNJ intends to lead the transformation of healthcare in New Jersey through collaboration with physicians, hospitals and health systems to deliver in-

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Healthcare

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novative, patient-centered programs that reward the quality, not quantity of care patients receive.

St. Hilaire graduated magna cum laude with a bachelor's degree in management advisory services from Southern New Hampshire University and began his career at Deloitte & Touche.



UnitedHealthcare New Jersey

Paul Marden

Paul Marden has been CEO of UnitedHealthcare New Jersey since May 2015. He is responsible for all aspects of overseeing the company's commercial health benefits business in New Jersey, including growing and retaining members, establishing markets and network strategies, achieving financial targets and acting as a primary interface with key stakeholders.

Marden has a total of more than 25 years of experience with UnitedHealthcare, previously serving as a vice president in sales and account management. He began his career with Prudential Insurance and Oxford Health Plans.

The CEO is a graduate of Trinity College-Hart-

ford, where he earned a bachelor's degree in economics in 1986. Marden is also a leader in the business community. He serves on the boards of the New Jersey March of Dimes, Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Newark, the New Jersey Chamber of Commerce and the Commerce and Industry Association of New Jersey.

HEALTH ADVOCATES, PHILANTHROPISTS AND ORGANIZATION LEADERS



Diabetes Research Institute Foundation

Lindsey Inserra



Lindsey Inserra is a member of the Diabetes Research Institute Foundation's Northeast Regional Board of Directors and a tireless advocate for diabetes research. Inserra, who lives with type 1 diabetes, has been a passionate supporter of the Diabe-

tes Research Institute since her family became involved with the organization following her diagnosis at age 11. Today, the Inserra family, which owns and operates a chain of Shop-Rite supermarkets in Northern New Jersey, is one of the DRIF's most generous supporters.

Inserra has helped lead numerous fundraising events to benefit the institute's research programs. In her role as vice president of marketing and corporate health and wellness for Inserra Supermarkets, she has spearheaded many fundraising drives throughout the 23 stores that have generated hundreds of thousands of dollars for the research efforts.

In her executive position at her family's supermarkets, Inserra oversees the extensive health and wellness initiatives for customers and employees, including its in-store dietitian program with 18 registered retail dietitians on staff.



HealthCare Institute of New Jersey

Dean J. Paranicas



For the past 10 years, Dean J. Paranicas has served as president and CEO of the HealthCare Institute of New Jersey (HINJ), which is an advocate for the re-

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Healthcare

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search-based biopharmaceutical and medical technology industry in the state.

When he was tapped to lead the organization Paranicas was vice president, corporate secretary for public policy for BD, a Franklin Lakes-based global medical technology company that is a member of HINJ. Paranicas worked at BD for 30 years in various legal roles, including director of corporate development and strategic investment, director of investor relations and vice president of investor relations and public affairs. While at BD, he served on the HINJ board as secretary and chairman of the steering committee.

Paranicas began his career as an associate attorney with McCarter & English, LLP in Newark. He earned his bachelor's degree with honors from Rutgers University. He received his law degree from Rutgers-Newark School of Law, where he was editor of Rutgers Law Review.



(IN)VISIBLE INTERNATIONAL



Montecalvo Foundation Platform for Tick Borne Illness Education

Valerie and Frank Montecalvo are successful business leaders who gave a trailblazing and transformational gift to a Cambridge, Massachusetts-based, non-profit, Invisible International, to help fight the scourge of Lyme disease.

The couple is the owner of Bayshore Family of Companies of Woodbridge, an environmental business they established in 1995. It is based on a 58-acre tract in the Keasbey section of Woodbridge and provides an outlet for the recycling of concrete, asphalt, brick, block, bulky waste, construction debris, non-hazardous petroleum-contaminated soil and other diverse materials.

They are committed to the fight against Lyme Disease because Valerie's own case went undetected for years, resulting in her condition worsening. The couple's philanthropic deed created a unique platform that offers physicians the latest, peer-reviewed, scientifically legitimate information on Lyme disease and other tick-borne illnesses.

Over the years, the Montecalvos have been honored many times for their leadership. In 2017 they were inducted into the National Construction and Demolition Recycling Hall of Fame.

ProCure Proton Therapy Center



ProCure Proton Therapy Center

Tom Wang

Tom Wang has been the president and DOH Administrator of the ProCure Proton Therapy Center for the past six years. He has been with ProCure for nine years in total, including his previous role as the chief financial officer. Tom is also a financial and operational advisor in the healthcare sector, within the BDO Consulting Group. He is a Certified Public Accountant and a Certified Turnaround Professional (both inactive) and participates in the National Association of Proton Therapy. 📌



Medical Grants for Children

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COMPREHENSIVE CANCER CARE

New Connections Via Zoom, Teams and Remo are Reshaping Business

The keys to success—being flexible, embracing innovation and being patient.

By Diane C. Walsh
Contributing Editor

Sally Glick is recognized throughout New Jersey as one of the state's most influential business professionals. A member of the Commerce and Industry Association of New Jersey's board of directors, she was recognized with a leadership award at CIANJs Annual Meeting & Luncheon in 2017. For many years, Glick has been the chief growth strategist at SobelCo, a leading accounting firm based in Livingston, where she guides the firm's branding and marketing communications outreach. The honors awarded her during her career include induction into the New Jersey Business Hall of Fame (2017) and the *NJBIZ* Lifetime Achievement Award (2016).

In this interview with *COMMERCE*, Sally Glick discusses how COVID-19 has changed the workplace and how companies have reimagined how business professionals should connect with each other. From using technology to changing traditional standards of meeting and establishing new best practices, the rules of the game are still evolving and worthy of attention.

COMMERCE: What do you think of Zoom, Teams, Remo and the technology being used to make virtual connections during COVID-19?

SALLY GLICK: Until COVID-19 struck, most of the organizations—both for-profit and nonprofit—heavily relied on in-person meetings with an occasional, somewhat reluctant, willingness to provide a dial-in option for those unable to attend in-person. This was the norm for committee meetings, board meetings, educational programs, networking events and, of course, fundraisers.

Once the pandemic became a way of life, shelter-in-place became one of the key tactics for stopping the virus from spreading. At the same time, it immediately eliminated any opportunity for in-person initiatives. Calling-in to participate was the first line of defense in some early instances, but once the business and nonprofit communities became familiar with the capabilities of Zoom, Remo and Microsoft Teams, their comfort level rose accordingly.

Today these technology tools are enabling us to remain in touch in a much more meaningful way than anticipated. I am sure they were originally intended to supplement traditional meetings in the situations where someone could not make the commute and wanted to participate

in the discussion in some meaningful way. As a Plan B, these tools were very effective—but I doubt anyone ever imagined they would be the only alternatives available, converting every in-person interaction into a virtual connection.

Q. Will conference calls make a comeback or are we forever changed by Zoom, Teams and Remo?

A. With so many people turning off the visual portion of Zoom—especially for early morning calls—this may be an indicator that people would prefer to be heard and not seen on many of these meetings. If the purpose is networking and interaction, then a conference call is much less efficient and effective. But for committee calls, or departmental-planning sessions, or board meetings, then perhaps conference calls will resume in popularity when used as a supplement with other in-person opportunities.

“Those of us who have established a pre-COVID robust pipeline of prospects can continue to nurture those existing relationships via e-mail, texting or Zoom.”

Q. How do you see opportunities for business development minus face-to-face meetings and gatherings?

A. I spent my career adhering to the premise that, for the most part, people do business with people they like and trust. Under these circumstances, business development activities were typically founded on powerful relationships that relied on personal face-to-face meetings. For now, those of us in business development roles who have established a pre-COVID robust pipeline of prospects can continue to nurture those existing relationships, even remotely, by staying in touch in a variety of ways such as e-mailing, texting, calling or Zoom.

However, new connections will be harder to make minus any personal contact. But a “cold” call can quickly become a “warm” lead if it is the result of a personal introduction. In lieu of a face-to-face meeting, business developers can be more effective if they ask their existing clients,



SobelCo Chief Growth Strategist Sally Glick

colleagues and referral sources for introductions. In this way, the opportunity for establishing a connection is on more solid ground and may have a better chance of thriving.

For now, I do not anticipate the likelihood of meeting someone on a Zoom call and nurturing that first-time interaction into a meaningful relationship. Do not misunderstand though, this may indeed occur. I am merely recognizing the odds are against it at this time. Going forward, if the only chance for consistently developing new business leads is through remote connections, then this prediction will change as well.

Q. How has the accounting industry been affected by the challenges of COVID-19?

A. The accounting profession has been well positioned for many of the challenges that, like COVID-19, can arise at any time. The technology exists to support remote/virtual audits and tax preparation and tax compliance has relied on sophisticated technology for decades. Indeed, most of the firms in the state have discovered that, when armed with laptops, multiple screens and other technology tools, their staff and leadership can be incredibly productive when working remotely.

CPAs are dedicated to helping their clients achieve success. As such, whether in a pandemic or not, one of the most important services offered by any CPA, the company's most trusted

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■ Workspaces Reimagined

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advisor, is usually in the area of business consulting. The good news is that advisory services, which rely intensely on personal conversations and interactions, can be conducted over the phone, via Zoom or Teams, or even over a socially distant, outside patio lunch meeting between CPAs and their clients.

For the profession as a whole, this means that long-standing relationships with clients and other colleagues continue to be enthusiastically fostered through proactive outreach, pre-emptive conversations, and the sharing of critical resources and information. Now, more than ever, leaders in the business community are looking to their professional services providers for cash-flow projections, “what if” scenarios and financial forecasts to assist them in making smart decisions. In addition, most of the companies needed some help interpreting all the options and learning how to take full advantage of the available opportunities that were pouring out of Washington, D.C., early on in the crisis.

Q. *Are the new normal and lessons learned good or bad for women looking to get ahead?*

A. Perhaps a major economic shake-up of this kind may result in greater opportunities for more diversity in the workplace, including looking for greater generational and cultural diversity as well as gender. One advantage for women going forward may be based on the fact

that over the years, many research studies have shown that women have earned a well-deserved reputation for working well on teams and for embracing a leadership style that encourages camaraderie and collaboration.

Today these traits may provide a competitive edge for women as they are more likely to help their employees stay connected to each other while also remaining committed to the company.

Women are often applauded for being good mentors and coaches and empathetic listeners. These are valuable characteristics that are essential for those who are charged with reinforcing the culture in spite of the physical separation we are all enduring. All in all, women may be better equipped to address some of the challenges that we are all facing.

Q. Will work-from-home help women more than men? Who are the winners in this new setup?

A. I am not sure if there are any winners in the COVID-19 world, but it is possible that a more flexible, work-from-home schedule has benefited women who up until now have had to juggle both professional and personal responsibilities.

Scheduling dentist appointments, helping with school projects or performing household tasks are a mere handful of the many tasks that have traditionally fallen onto women's shoulders more than onto those of their male partners. According to statistics shared by Pew



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COVID-19 changed in-person business meetings, with some allowance for people who could not attend, to meetings held completely online. Will in-person meetings ever return, or has technology eliminated the necessity for group gatherings?

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Workspaces Reimagined

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Research Center, mothers are more likely to see an uneven division of labor at home. If these numbers remain dependable and accurate for the foreseeable future, then it might be assumed that those women working from home, who have also eliminated the challenges of a commute, may be able to manage their schedule of multiple tasks more efficiently under the new setup.

Q. What advice to you have for virtual working? What do you see going forward post-pandemic?

A. My advice for virtual working is the same as for working in any circumstance; Think positive thoughts for starters. Railing against unfairness or complaining about how much you resent staying at home doesn't change anything and diverts your energy from creating beneficial outcomes to getting mired in negativity.

When thinking positive thoughts, make time to consider the good things that are going on around you. There are silver linings in some of the storm clouds floating over our heads. We are spending more meaningful time in our homes, focusing on each other, and for the first time in a long time, we are not as rushed or harried as we were when we were racing from task to task and from place to place. None of us asked for this, but it is providing more time for introspection, cultivating relationships, and maybe even

enjoying the pleasure of calling a friend and brightening the day for someone else.

The pandemic will end, and some of the changes we've made in our lives may remain

while others quickly dissolve. But regardless of the changes that are made, we have learned the importance of being flexible, of embracing innovation and of being patient. 🍷



Photo: Getty Images/Stockphoto

Research studies have shown that women have earned a well-deserved reputation for working well on teams and for embracing a leadership style that encourages camaraderie and collaboration.

BUSINESS & LIFESTYLE

Lifestyle Series: To Go or Not To Go...Out

By Wendy Tait,
CIANJ's EVP,
Business Development and
Strategic Initiatives,
Sommelier

If you have read just one or perhaps every article in this month's issue, then you will notice a theme and that is that life is moving on despite COVID. With

a renewed sense of where vaccination rates are heading, Gov. Murphy's lifting of more restrictions and schools beginning to reopen in a far more significant way, it's time to ask yourself when and how you intend to re-enter the world. The seemingly apparent and at times subversive sense I have is that many of us have become a bit more particular when it comes to how, and with

whom, we plan to spend our time. The adage "quality over quantity" couldn't be truer as we navigate this re-introduction into society. These days people prefer to network and participate in business events that are of interest to them personally, not just for the professional value. On June 2nd, we are hosting a cocktail party at the Liberty House in Jersey City, nestled quietly

along the Hudson, overlooking the NYC skyline. In that moment, on that day we will create our own temporary utopia, toasting our glasses as we roast smores over outdoor fire pits in this idyllic return to self and society with the distinct pleasure of getting to know one another again. To RSVP click here or type: <https://bit.ly/3w0g-9Zz> into your browser. 🍷



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Enjoy the NYC Skyline in an intimate setting with a select group of friends.

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The Lessons of COVID-19: Scarcity of Goods and Services is a Real Risk

The pandemic has revealed flaws in our supply chain.

Compiled by John Joseph Parker
Contributing Editor

During the COVID-19 pandemic, businesses, medical professionals and government officials have all struggled to maintain appropriate levels of goods and services. Whether ventilators and N95 masks or toilet paper and chicken, the supply chain has struggled to keep up with demand. In this interview, Penina Orenstein—an associate professor in the Department of Computing and Decision Sciences at Seton Hall University's Stillman School of Business—addressed the significant role of supply networks during this time and the impact upon the supply chain in the midst of COVID-19. Professor Orenstein teaches both undergraduate and MBA-level courses in Quantitative Methods for Business and Supply Chain Management.

COMMERCE: What concerns should the average American have about the grocery supply chain today and for the long-term future?

PENINA ORENSTEIN: The grocery supply chain is a robust operation until panic sets in. And during the pandemic, food demand in retail locations was at unprecedented levels, and to the extent that we saw food shortages, it was largely a function of panic buying. However, the grocery supply chain has built in mechanisms for disruption. The question is can we re-distribute the supply to those that need it?

Supply chain management is concerned with the efficient integration of suppliers, factories, warehouses and stores so that merchandise is produced and distributed in the right quantities, to the right locations and at the right time.

The question in a COVID-19 environment is

“Supply chain management is concerned with the efficient integration of suppliers, factories, warehouses and stores so that merchandise is produced and distributed in the right quantities, to the right locations and at the right time.”

what is right? How much should be produced if there is panic buying? What are the locations that are a priority? What is the timeframe?

As long as farmers are still farming, truckers driving, packages are being packaged, and therefore delivered, you still have a supply chain. As



Seton Hall University Professor Penina Orenstein

soon as there is a shutdown for any of these aspects, the supply chain will crumble unless steps can be taken to offer viable substitutes. The key is to keep all supply chain participants operational.

Q. A few years ago, you published a paper on the key drivers of future supply chains? What are the key drivers pre- versus post- COVID-19?

A. The key drivers that were identified in the paper were big data giving way to fast data; social media; and knowledge workers.

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Food shortages during the early months of the COVID-19 pandemic were largely caused by “panic” buying.



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Big consumer goods companies are trying to meet demands, particularly in the categories of food and nonperishable items.



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Supply Chain & Logistics

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As long as farmers are still farming, truckers driving, packages are being packaged, and therefore delivered, you still have a supply chain.

Post-COVID-19, a key part of big data is not only data collection, but also data interpretation or analytics, which highlights a growing need for a talent to interpret the data and make effective decisions. The need for knowledge workers to analyze the data is ever more critical. Social media is a way of distributing key information and again, during a crisis, the role of social media can be extremely important.

There is clearly going to be a demand for an ability to understand the responsiveness of the supply chain. Supply chains that are elastic in nature and can re-tool to cope with the unprecedented demand and changes are going to be successful. Those supply chains with efficient models for distribution will emerge as leaders. Essentially, the existing supply chain must be re-allocated and, since we are dealing with out-of-the-normal behaviors, this might pose a challenge. We also do not have a lot of time to analyze the trends as they are constantly shifting

“By remaining in constant contact with manufactures and suppliers, one can ensure that products will keep moving efficiently through the supply chain and there will not be an excess build up.”

in response to the behaviors. Eventually over time, as long as farmers keep farming, truckers keep trucking and manufacturers produce, the supply chain will reach an equilibrium.

Related to this is communication in the supply chain. As people rush to buy food and other nonperishable items, the big consumer goods companies are trying to meet demand without needlessly ratcheting up production. Ratcheting up production is another way of introducing the “bullwhip effect.” The bullwhip effect occurs when orders sent to the manufacturers and suppliers create larger variances or “waves” than the sales to the end customer. This variance can have a negative impact on the smoothness of the supply chain process as each link of the supply chain will over- or underestimate the product demand resulting in exaggerated fluctuations.

By remaining in constant contact with manufactures and suppliers, one can ensure that products will keep moving efficiently through the supply chain and there will not be an excess build up. People only need so much paper towels or shelf-stable goods. Eventually, they start shopping in their own basement supplies rather than shopping for more in stores, and demand will fall. Companies must be mindful of hiring more staff to ramp up production.



Photo: Getty Images/Stockphoto

Q. How will visualization software help the supply networks of tomorrow?

A. To think of how a supply chain works—think about it—not as a sequential chain but as a network. In a supply network, if one supplier is unable to supply (a fire in the warehouse), there are alternative suppliers to turn to. If one path/link goes bad, there are alternative paths. That is why network visualization might be helpful in this context. If one can see the extent of alternate paths, one can determine the robustness of that supply chain.

Q. Is a robust supplier-monitoring system that maps sub-tier dependencies a basic requirement for today's supply chain and sourcing professionals? In addition,

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Supply chains with efficient models for distribution will emerge as leaders.



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Supply Chain & Logistics

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if this is true, how can those without this current capability begin to garner it?

A. This is a fascinating observation and I would say it is absolutely true. But I would rephrase it slightly to state that a robust supplier-monitoring system that maps sub-tier dependencies is a basic requirement for today's supply networks and sourcing professionals. I say this because we are not dealing so much with a chain when it comes to looking at sub-tier dependencies but a complex network web. And in these instances, multi-layered and complex, the need for visualization tools is ever more apparent.

Q. Your most recent research collected data to visualize a series of supply networks—including the retail sector and Amazon—developing an algorithm that ranks the suppliers by their connectedness. What can this tell us about the strengths and weaknesses of the supply chain and particular sectors and companies within it?

A. I have been working with an exceptional undergraduate student, Anniek Jansen, who has added another dimension to supply network visualization. Ms. Jansen has developed an algorithm which can be applied to any number of

supply networks. The algorithm essentially provides a ranking of the key suppliers in the tiered network of suppliers. The suppliers that are most well-connected emerge as key operators in the ranked list of suppliers. These can be viewed as critical to the supply network operation.

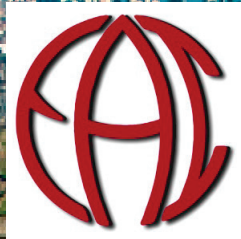
If anything happens to these key suppliers, the network will fail. Thus, we can see who the critical suppliers are in the supply chain network and compare how things are changing over time. Of course, it would be wonderful if we had post COVID-19 data but we do not. But, at any rate we can show why it is important to get this information in that knowing who the key suppliers are can help determine the resilience of a supply chain when a disruption occurs. And given the disruptions to the supply networks that we're now experiencing due to COVID-19, with the appropriate funding we will now be able to compare this data and the visualization modeling with the outcomes of this disruption as it become available to show the impact of connectedness (and the lack thereof) on the supply chain. Thus, in showing the weakness and vulnerability to disruption, it can give organizations the ability to adjust accordingly and build in resilience for the future. 📌

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Penina Orenstein, Ph.D., is an Associate Professor in the Department of Computing and Decision Sciences at Seton Hall University's Stillman School of Business, where she teaches both undergraduate and graduate courses, Quantitative Methods for Business and Supply Chain Management. Dr. Orenstein has introduced an undergraduate certificate in Supply Chain Management and has been responsible for the creation and deployment of a new concentration in Supply Chain Management at the MBA level. Her research focus is on the topological structure of supply networks and has appeared in the *Journal of Networks* and *Spatial Economics* and *Wireless Personal Communications*. She has also presented her work at various conferences including POMS, INFORMS, MSOM and the SCMA. In 2016, her research idea on the topological structure of supply networks attracted international attention by winning the 2016 Best Paper Award at SCMA 2016. In 2018, she won the University Research Council award for her work on digital mapping of supply chain networks. 📌



Network visualization may be helpful in understanding how a supply chain works, not as a sequential chain but as a network. If one link in the chain breaks down, there are alternate sources available.



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