New Cardiac Facility Gains a Lead Gift and a Familiar Name:

Gagnon Heart Hospital
Much attention has been given to the innovative technology being incorporated within the new Gagnon Heart Hospital and rightly so. From diagnostic tools, like the Cardiac MRI and Rapid Multislice CT, to computerized charting and in-room access to digital imaging, the building will be as technologically advanced as we can make it.

What people may not know is that the new facility will be more patient friendly than hospitals of old. Rooms will be more comfortable and private, but more important, patients will be fully engaged in their hospitalization and recovery process.

When you enter a hospital as a patient, there’s an unbelievable loss of control. That creates stress, which can be dangerous for cardiac patients. By restoring a sense of control, we can alleviate that stress, and ultimately help patients heal quicker with less reliance on medication.

One example of the way we’re empowering patients is through our complementary medicine program for cardiac care. Under this program, which was funded in part with a $400,000 grant from the Louise Washington Charitable Remainder Unitrust, patients develop mind-body skills to help them before their surgery and during their recovery. Techniques such as guided imagery, relaxation, meditation, therapeutic touch and aromatherapy help them manage their pain and anxiety. As a result, patients regain a sense of control over their illness.

While several highly regarded research studies document the benefits of complementary medicine, I can tell you from firsthand experience that it works. When an auto accident left me with several broken ribs, mind-body techniques helped me transcend the pain and move more freely. This holistic approach not only helped me during my hospital stay, but it also provided coping skills for when I returned home.

Ensuring that patients make a smooth transition out of the hospital and develop the skills needed to make key lifestyle changes to improve their cardiovascular health is of primary importance at the Gagnon Heart Hospital. It does no good for patients to have excellent care, leave the hospital, and in many cases, go back to the bad habits that got them there in the first place. That’s where the Cardiac Health Center comes in.

This center, which is funded in part through a $75,000 grant from Pfizer Inc, offers educational lectures, supervised exercise, nutritional assessments, counseling, and even cooking classes to cardiac patients. The center’s critical care registered nurses, exercise physiologists, and clinical dietitian help patients devise a wellness plan based on their individual needs and goals. Pfizer also provided an additional $50,000 grant to develop educational DVDs for patients to take home that reinforce the lessons they’ve learned.

In addition to these programs, we’re at work on a Women’s Cardiac Health Initiative. More women die of heart disease than all forms of cancer combined. This initiative will educate women to this risk and how to respond to it. Our new chief of cardiology, Frank Smart, M.D., will be one of our key resources in this area.

Cardiovascular disease is the nation’s most critical health threat, with over 61 million Americans needing some form of cardiac care. In the new Gagnon Heart Hospital, our patients will be assured of the most advanced care, delivered by certified cardiac physicians, surgeons and medical staff in a state-of-the-art facility. But equally important, they will find a commitment to education and preventative care that takes each individual into consideration. Now that’s innovative.

Cover: The Gagnons are pictured in front of the three-story north addition, one story of which will be dedicated to cardiology. Photo: Sal Benedetto
Breast cancer survivor Denise McCrone refused to sit by idly and watch others suffer from the disease’s debilitating effects. A model of resilience, the Long Valley resident organized the first annual Hope Open golf tournament on Oct. 16, 2005, and raised over $5,000 for patient education and wellness programs in the Carol G. Simon Cancer Center. “Denise is an amazing soul,” says Jean Marie Rosone, LCSW, coordinator of oncology mind-body services. “Her hope is to help patients in the healing process, to give them the hands-on assistance they wouldn’t be able to afford in the community.”

The Fannie E. Rippel Foundation has pledged $160,000 over two years to Morristown Memorial’s Domestic Violence Program, which operates in partnership with Jersey Battered Women’s Service. This grant enhances the pilot program that the Rippel Foundation helped launch in 2004 when it donated $56,600 toward hiring a full-time social worker and increasing the domestic violence training of medical personnel.

With this renewed support, the hospital will increase the number of staff and patients receiving domestic violence awareness education and counseling, explore how volunteers can assist with the project, and share “lessons learned” to assist other organizations in replicating the project. Morristown Memorial also intends to join the Morris County Prosecutor’s Office in a public awareness campaign that encourages community members to assist domestic violence victims, police, and social service agencies in efforts to prevent domestic violence and hold batterers accountable for their abusive behaviors.

Matthew O’Neill may be just five years old, but he’s already a seasoned donor. For the second year, the birthday boy declined presents from his party guests, asking them to make donations to the Goryeb Children’s Hospital (GCH) instead. This year the Mendham resident raised $430 for the Pediatric Child Life Fund.

Last year, the boy and his sisters, Kayla and Sarah, had learned about others less fortunate than themselves from their parents, Mary Kay and Pat O’Neill. Knowing that they already receive ample presents from family, the children liked the idea of sharing the wealth. For the girls, whose birthdays are in December, the O’Neills suggested Toys for Tots. For Matthew, who had needed the hospital’s services as an infant, they thought of the GCH. This year no prompting was needed. “Matthew said, ‘For my birthday, I want to give money to the kids in the hospital,’” his mother says. “I think it makes him feel good helping other kids.”

Is red wine good for the heart? It was on October 24, 2005, when Gary and Liz Fisch, the owners of Gary’s Wine and Marketplace of Madison, Bernardsville and Chester, hosted their Grand Annual Walk-Around Tasting at the Madison Hotel. The fund-raiser, which featured 800 wines from around the world and a sumptuous buffet of foods, attracted 600 people and raised $15,000 for Morristown Memorial’s Campaign for the Heart and an additional $3,500 for the Goryeb Children’s Hospital. Pictured (r-l): the Fischs present their gift to Charisse Fizer, director of cardiovascular services for Atlantic Health System, and Eileen Heltzer, director of annual giving for the Health Foundation.
Before a person makes a lead gift to a campaign, a fair amount of number crunching and discussion is in order. But by Christmas last year Lois Gagnon had had enough time to weigh the decision. “She said, ‘Do you want to die with that money or what?’” recalls Neil Gagnon, who then made a call to the Health Foundation’s chief development officer, Jim Quinn. That call gave a name to the innovative cardiac facility rising on the Morristown Memorial campus and infused the Campaign for the Heart with new momentum. At press time, the $44 million campaign had reached $35.57 million.

Make no mistake; Mr. Gagnon didn’t need convincing about the value of the heart hospital to the community. Magnanimous donors to so many Morristown Memorial projects, the couple keeps a close eye on what’s happening and steps in with funding or a gift of their time whenever they believe it’s needed. To date, their generosity has allowed for significant advances in surgical robotics, cancer care and pediatrics, while providing steady support for operating expenses each year.

One reason the Gagnons chose to support the Campaign for the Heart was their experience with the team of doctors that helped their son-in-law’s parents obtain much-needed cardiac care. Their daughter’s in-laws are doing so well now, Mrs. Gagnon notes, they’re planning a trip to Italy.

Personal experience from a patient’s perspective got the Mendham couple involved with Morristown Memorial in the first place. Years back, not long after bringing their daughter to the Emergency Department, they received a phonathon call, requesting financial support for the hospital. Grateful for the gentle care and attention their daughter had received, the couple pledged “probably more than they normally expect,” Mr. Gagnon says, which prompted a follow-up call asking if they would like to be more involved.

From there came a swift succession of leadership roles, with Mr. Gagnon co-chairing capital campaigns for the Carol G. Simon Cancer Center and, with his wife, the Goryeb Children’s Hospital. “When it comes to raising money for cancer, it’s easy because everybody relates to it,” says Mrs. Gagnon, who lost her mother to the disease. “And people can relate to the children’s campaign as well.”

The Health Foundation was taken by surprise when the Gagnons volunteered to lead the Campaign for Children on the heels of the cancer campaign, whose $12 million goal was topped by more than $6 million. But as the parents of three and grandparents of 12 (soon to be 14), the pair was adamant; they wanted to do it as a team and they wanted to involve other couples. “It shouldn’t always be men at the table,” Mr. Gagnon says.

The couple-run campaign toppled its $17 million goal, bringing in $29 million to create the Goryeb Children’s Hospital, with emergency care provided in the Gagnon Children’s Emergency Center.

While Mrs. Gagnon admits she shies away from asking others to give money, her husband has no qualms about it. “I don’t ask unless I believe in the project; then it’s easy,” he says. “If the people I ask have the money and the inclination, fine. If not, I could never be angry; otherwise I would never have
In its annual tribute to those who have made the Garden State a better place to live, the New Jersey chapter of the Association of Fundraising Professionals presented three of its six 2006 Excellence in Philanthropy Awards to Health Foundation nominees. The Women’s Association of Morristown Memorial Hospital (WAMMH), the William E. Simon Foundation, and Lois and Neil Gagnon each received a philanthropy award at the April 24, 2006, ceremony held at the Crystal Plaza in Livingston.

The WAMMH, formally established in 1893, won the award for Outstanding Community Organization. The 650 plus-member auxiliary has raised both awareness about the hospital and millions of dollars for it through its gift and Bargain Box resale shops, its Mansion in May designer show house, and its art exhibits, vendor sales and small-group Twigs, which provide community service and hold independent fund-raisers.

The William E. Simon Foundation received the Outstanding Foundation award not only for its financial generosity in New Jersey and beyond, but also for the volunteer leadership and guidance its board members and staff provide to its grantees. Morristown has received almost $10 million in grants from the Simon Foundation in its 32-year partnership, including support for the Carol G. Simon Cancer Center, the Goryeb Children’s Hospital, and Project Independence, a financial grant program for patients and families. In addition, members of the Simon family have served on the Health Foundation board of trustees and Project Independence committee, leading fund-raising efforts and offering fiscal oversight.

The Gagnons, who are honorary trustees of the Health Foundation, are recognized for their generosity to nonprofit organizations throughout the region.

“When we find something that’s going to help a lot of people, we support it,” Mr. Gagnon says. “We’ve been fortunate business-wise, and now we want to give back.”

There was a time when the two were barely scraping by. Both were born to parents of modest means on Long Island, where they met in high school. A secretary from age 15, Mrs. Gagnon stayed in the workforce until her future husband finished college. They married and then transitioned into military life when Mr. Gagnon began a three-year stint in the army. To help make ends meet, he volunteered for the risky detail of Explosive Ordnance Disposal, earning the pair a sorely needed extra $110 a month.

Content with a military career, Mr. Gagnon was persuaded otherwise by his wife, who preferred civilian life. Curious about a place called “Wall Street” that a fellow soldier had mentioned, he took a correspondence course in security analysis from the New York Institute of Finance and was intrigued. Though it meant a return to work for his wife and a major pay cut for him, he left the army and forged ahead with this new interest. The Pratt graduate who had once been offered a fellowship to Purdue for advanced degrees in solid-state physics ended up with an M.B.A. instead from New York University. Today, he is president of Gagnon Securities and still loving the research his career entails.

“I always tell kids looking for a career to find what makes your clock go off without an alarm and whatever it is, do that,” Mr. Gagnon says.

While his success has afforded his family financial security and peace of mind, it has also given him and his wife of 45 years the great joy of passing on their good fortune. “There are two great pleasures from all of this,” Mr. Gagnon says. “One is the people you meet in this journey that you wouldn’t meet in ordinary business life and two is the feeling you get when someone is taken care of and you think, maybe I played some small part in that.”

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The Gagnons, whose personal commitment to Morristown Memorial has helped bring major innovations to the hospital, received the Outstanding Philanthropist award for organizations with budgets of more than $1 million. The Mendham couple’s generosity is topped only by their enthusiastic leadership in rallying others to support the hospital (see story on opposite page).

**Dr. Atlas**, an ex-officio trustee as the president of the medical and dental staff at Morristown Memorial, is a physician with the Adult and Pediatric Urology Group. The Randolph resident is a member of the American College of Surgeons, the American Association of Clinical Urologists, and the American Urological Association among other organizations. He and his wife, Lainey Atlas, have two children.

**Dr. Chen**, an ophthalmologist with Pediatric Eye Physicians in Morristown, has long supported child-centered projects at Morristown Memorial, including the Campaign for Children, the Neonatology Fund, and the Cummins Endowment for Adolescent Medicine. The Morristown resident belongs to a number of organizations in her field, including the American Association of Pediatric Ophthalmology and Strabismus, the American Academy of Ophthalmology and the New Jersey Academy of Ophthalmology. She and her husband, Calvin Shen, M.D., have two children.

**Dr. Gerardi**, the director of Pediatric Emergency Medicine at Morristown Memorial, is also a vice president of physician-owned Emergency Medical Associates in Livingston. A supporter of the Campaign for Children, the Emergency Room Fund, the Annual Fund and the Children’s Center for General Purpose, Dr. Gerardi has also served on the Pediatric Philanthropic Leadership Council. The Randolph resident serves on the board of the Emergency Medicine Patient Safety Foundation and is a member of the American College of Emergency Physicians and the American Academy of Pediatrics, among other associations. He and his wife, Lisa Gerardi, have three children.

**Mr. Lehrhoff**, the president of I. Lehrhoff and Company, co-chairs the NICU Steering Committee and is a member of the Pediatric Philanthropic Leadership Council. A generous contributor to the NICU Expansion Campaign, the NICU Fund, the Campaign for Children, the Annual Fund and the Carol G. Simon Cancer Center, he and his wife, Patti Brody Lehrhoff, live in Morristown and have six children.

**Mrs. Porges** is the co-founder of Happiness Unlimited, a wish-fulfillment program for adults with cancer that serves patients at Morristown Memorial and other area hospitals. A trustee of the William E. Simon and Union Hospital foundations, the Short Hills resident has supported the Campaign for Children, the Annual Fund and the Carol G. Simon Cancer Center, which is named for her mother. She and her husband, J. Randolph Porges, have six children.

**Mrs. Schaenen**, the winner of the 2004 Augusta Stone Award for her distinguished leadership and support of the Campaign for Encompassing Care, is a member of the Oncology Philanthropic Leadership Council. The mother of three has also contributed generously to the Campaign for Children. She is the vice president of the Cornpauw Foundation, a trustee emerita and Board of Visitors member at Drew University, and a board member of the Arts Council of the Morris Area. The former chair
Stress takes a toll on the health of family members when loved ones are critically ill and that, in turn, often increases patients’ anxiety and interferes with their ability to heal. To help ease that strain and foster better medical outcomes for patients, the 2006 Annual Fund Special Project is supporting Morristown Memorial’s Family Enhancement Program for Critical Care Units. The Family Enhancement Program will serve those with loved ones in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit, Pediatric Intensive Care Unit, Neuroscience Special Care Unit, Cardiac Care Unit, Cardiac Post-Anesthesia Care Unit and Intensive Care Unit. It will offer families such services as chair massages, meditation and relaxation through guided imagery, music therapy, increased pastoral care and support groups. A computer kiosk with a digital concierge in each unit will provide information on the unit, the staff and the hospital as well as on local hotels, restaurants and transportation. The digital concierge kiosks will also link family members to documents and web sites with information related to their loved one’s condition.

Morristown Memorial’s critical care units are already equipped with the most technologically advanced monitoring and treatment devices for patients. With your support of the 2006 Annual Fund Special Project, the hospital will be able to add essential complementary medicine and spiritual measures for families of the critically ill. The project requires more than $1 million for initial staffing, equipment and ongoing program delivery. To help, please contact Eileen Heltzer, director of annual giving, at 973/971-7013 or eileen.heltzer@ahsys.org.

**Pediatric Research Fund Honors Departing Chairman**

In March, the hospital community said goodbye to Leonard Feld, M.D., Ph.D., chairman of pediatrics, who is now leading the new Levine Children’s Hospital in Charlotte, N.C. In honor of his years of service and tireless fund-raising efforts on behalf of the Goryeb Children’s Hospital, the Health Foundation has created a Pediatric Research Fund in his name and provided a seed gift of $25,000. To support this fund, call Naomi Best at the Health Foundation, 973/971-7256.

**2006 Annual Fund Targets Family Health**

Dr. von Poelnitz is a specialist in cardiovascular disease with Morristown Cardiology Associates. A volunteer for the Campaign for the Heart, she has also supported the Mind Body Center, the Cummins Endowment for Adolescent Medicine and the Annual Fund. The Mendham resident is also a trustee of Plaid House, which provides housing and assistance to adolescents in northern New Jersey. She and her husband, Michael von Poelnitz, M.D., have two children.

**In Memoriam**

The Morristown Memorial community mourned the passing of Patricia Anne Kearns on March 24, 2006. The mother of five and grandmother of eight was 71. A volunteer with the hospital’s Twig community service group, Mrs. Kearns was the wife of former Health Foundation trustee and current volunteer, Bill Kearns, and the mother-in-law of former Health Foundation trustee, Linda Kearns.

**Mrs. Sobine** is an ex-officio trustee as the president of the Women’s Association of Morristown Memorial Hospital. She is a Campaign for the Heart volunteer and a former board member of Jersey Battered Women’s Service. She and her husband, David Sobine, have one son and live in Basking Ridge.

**Dr. Feld** with the look-alike bobble head presented to him at his farewell reception.
One of the components of a sound financial plan is a will, which will distribute your assets according to your intentions. Dying without a will doesn’t mean the government will get your assets, but the state will have the legal right to disburse your assets, and chances are the government’s decisions may differ from your wishes. For example:

- You owned a business, and it went to family members ill-suited to manage it. Or perhaps the business was divided among family members who do not agree on its direction.
- You were taking care of a special needs individual, and the court appointed a caretaker you would have deemed unsuitable.
- Your children received their share of the estate before you felt they were prepared for the responsibility.
- Your favorite charitable organization didn’t receive its promised funds.
- Your estate was exposed to taxes you might have avoided.

If you do not have a will, an estate planner, a financial advisor or the Health Foundation’s director of major and planned gifts, Cynthia W. O’Donnell (973/971-7010, cynthia.odonnell@ahsys.org), can help you find a suitable way to accomplish your goals.

About the Staff

Please feel free to contact MMHF staff at 973/971-240. For a full staff listing, log on to www.mmhf.org and select Who We Are > Our Staff

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