

## New Mural Comes to Life, Courtesy of Young Artists from Staten Island Mental Health Society



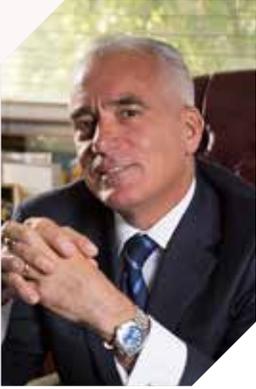
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Heart Healthy Tips for You

Mural adorns renovated facility for Staten Island Mental Health Society, a division of RUMC. **Story on page 3.**



## From the President & CEO Daniel J. Messina, PhD, MPA, FACHE

Welcome to the February edition of the RUMC Chronicle. As we observe February as American Heart Month, I'm proud to highlight the exceptional cardiovascular care delivered every day here at Richmond University Medical Center and our Richmond Health Network.

From our advanced invasive cardiology procedures to our comprehensive noninvasive services—expertly led by Dr. Francisco Rotatori, our Cardiovascular Department chief—our commitment to protecting and improving heart health across Staten Island and beyond continues to grow.

We are also making steady progress on construction of our Joan and Alan Bernikow Heart and Vascular Institute. This new institute will significantly expand our neurovascular and cardiovascular capabilities, enabling advanced procedures such as aneurysm coiling—a minimally invasive technique that treats aneurysms from inside the vessel. We remain on track to complete this major improvement by June of this year.

In addition, I am excited to share that we will soon announce the ribbon-cutting date for our New Springville Family Health and Specialty Care Center, located at the Staten Island Mall. This modern facility will bring expanded primary care and specialty services closer to where families live, work, and shop—strengthening our commitment to accessible, community-based care.

I also want to extend my heartfelt gratitude to our entire remarkable staff. During the recent snowstorm on January 25, your dedication and perseverance ensured uninterrupted care for those who rely on us. Your resilience reflects the very best of this institution and the values we stand for.

So, as we honor American Heart Month, I encourage all of us to take simple steps that make a big difference in heart health:

- **Move more:** Aim for at least 30 minutes of activity most days. Even a brisk walk helps.
- **Eat heart-smart:** Choose more fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and lean proteins.
- **Know your numbers:** Keep track of blood pressure, cholesterol, and blood sugar.
- **Don't ignore symptoms:** If you experience chest discomfort, shortness of breath, or unusual fatigue, seek medical care promptly.
- **Stay connected:** Social support and stress management are vital to heart wellness.

This month, I invite you to take one meaningful step toward improving your heart health—or encouraging a loved one to do the same. Whether it's scheduling a check-up with one of our Richmond Health Network Primary Care Providers, choosing a healthier meal, or simply taking a walk, every action counts. Together, we can build a stronger, healthier community.

Remember the Power of One: You Make A Difference.

Sincerely,

**Daniel J. Messina, PhD, MPA, FACHE**  
President and Chief Executive Officer

## Excellence in Residency and Fellowship Program Honoree

Each month, one or more residents and/or fellows are selected for their exemplary service and for embodying RUMC's commitment to fostering a collaborative culture that enhances patient care and professional excellence. Honorees are nominated by their colleagues and selected by the Office of Graduate Medical Education's Wellness Council.

This month's honoree is **Chanelle Campbell, DO**. Dr. Campbell is a PGY-3 in the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology. She earned her medical degree from Touro New York College of Osteopathic Medicine. Her hometown is Manhattan.



# RUMC Unveils Custom Mural Created by Teen Artists and Local Non-Profit



*Entitled "Mental Health Is a Journey," the mural depicts images of hope and caring, including the steps that help along the mental health journey.*

Richmond University Medical Center recently unveiled a custom designed mural for its newly renovated facility at 669 Castleton Avenue in West Brighton. The mural was created through a collaboration between two young artists from Staten Island-Mental Health Society and IlluminArt Productions, a Staten Island based nonprofit.

Staten Island "Mental Health Society" provides behavioral health services for children and adolescents and has been in existence for over 100 years. The Society merged with RUMC in 2019.

Entitled Mental Health Is a Journey, the mural depicts images of hope and caring, including the steps that help along that journey, and words of support and encouragement. The mural is located inside a new facility that has been renovated with new rooms and will offer inpatient adolescent services.

The two teen artists involved with the mural, Addison Irizarry and Kymira Joseph, stated that the mural sessions were one of the most impactful therapies they have received. Addison said that each session was filled with drawing, brainstorming, and creation that truly felt progressive. Kymira felt the same, stating it

was some of the most fun she had while receiving services from the Society.

"The mural is a great addition, and it shows the talented community we have created here," said Miriam Prat-Mallilo, director of the Office of Mental Health Child and Adolescent Outpatient Mental Health Services.

IlluminArt Productions is a Staten Island-based nonprofit organization serving the five boroughs of New York City since 2010. IlluminArt utilizes theatre, art, and music to illuminate critical social issues, create conversations for positive social change, address the prevention of bullying, violence, substance use, and relationship abuse, among additional topics.

IlluminArt artist Jodi Doreal spent months with Addison and Kymira discussing what the mural might include as part of their weekly art therapy sessions. She said Kymira and Addison were the two biggest influences on the final masterpiece.

"The mural is a powerful reminder that when young people are given creative space and support, their voices can transform not only their own healing journey but the environments designed to care for them," said Arlene Sorkin, president and CEO of IlluminArt Productions.



*Mural artists Addison Irizarry, Kymira Joseph, and Jodi Doreal*

## This month's question: What is your favorite Valentine's Day tradition?



**Karen Aguilar**, Unit Clerk, SLB5

"Every year on Valentine's Day, I make sure to always buy my son chocolate and a teddy bear! We sit on the couch and watch our favorite movies together while digging in to all the candy."



**Gisette Smith**, Nursing Assistant

"On Valentine's Day, I head to CVS and grab some candy grams to make sure my kids have something to give out to their classmates the next day. I always sit down and help with sorting and writing names."



**Salamatu Kanneh**, Nursing Assistant, SLB5

"My favorite thing to do on Valentine's Day is lots of self-care. I light some candles, get cozy, and watch some classic romance movies!"



**Jennifer Morris**, RN, SLB 6

"Just like every holiday, I decorate my house to celebrate Valentine's Day. I even have a V-Day tree that lights up pink and hearts all around the living room!"

# Eye on Glaucoma: Early Detection Matters



**Joseph Muscente, OD, MS**

According to the CDC, more than four million people in the U.S. and over 80 million people globally suffer from glaucoma, a condition in which increased pressure within the eyeball causes gradual loss of sight. Amazingly, an estimated 50% of these individuals are not even aware that they have the disease.

In the following interview, Joseph Muscente, OD, MS, attending optometrist at Richmond University Medical Center, explains what glaucoma is, how it's treated, and why regular eye exams are our best defense.

## **What is glaucoma and what are its symptoms?**

*Dr. Muscente:* Glaucoma is an eye disease that damages the optic nerve (which connects the eye to the brain) and occurs when the internal/intraocular pressure of the eye becomes too high for the eye to handle. Because it's typically a painless condition with little or no symptoms, glaucoma is often called "the silent thief of sight." It starts out with a slow and subtle loss of peripheral vision, which then becomes central loss. Glaucoma can be detected on routine eye exams, and, though it's not necessarily curable, it's very treatable and can be managed once diagnosed. Glaucoma that goes untreated, however, can lead to permanent vision loss.

## **What are risk factors for glaucoma?**

*Dr. Muscente:* Statistics reveal that glaucoma-related blindness is six to eight times more prevalent in the African American community than among other racial groups. Glaucoma is also more

prevalent among individuals over age 60, those with a family history of glaucoma, people with diabetes, and those who are nearsighted.

## **How can glaucoma be treated?**

*Dr. Muscente:* Most patients can be successfully treated with eye drops to decrease their eye pressure; sometimes, this requires one or a combination of drops to achieve this goal. If lowering the eye pressure to a safe level isn't achieved through eye drops, then laser and/or surgical procedures should be considered. Selective laser trabeculoplasty (SLT) is a quick, painless, in-office treatment that targets the eye's drainage system with low-energy light to improve fluid outflow, which in turn lowers eye pressure. Minimally invasive glaucoma surgery (MIGS) involves the placement of a tiny tube into the eye to improve the eye's natural fluid drainage. This procedure offers a high safety profile and rapid recovery.



## **How do eye exams test for glaucoma?**

*Dr. Muscente:* There are several tests that can help detect the presence of glaucoma during a routine eye exam. The most common test is known as "tonometry," which measures the pressure inside the eye, almost like a tire gauge. Using a simple anesthetic drop, your eye doctor will numb the front of the eye and gently place the probe on the cornea to measure the intraocular pressure. After checking a patient's pressure, a dilated exam should be performed to get a close look at the optic nerve. If a doctor is suspicious of glaucoma, they'll often perform a battery of tests as part of a "glaucoma work-up."

These tests include pachymetry (measurement of the corneal thickness); thicker corneas are less susceptible to damage from elevation in intraocular pressure while thinner corneas are more susceptible to elevated eye pressure. An optic nerve OCT (ocular computerized tonometry) is also a valuable tool in assessing an eye for glaucoma as it provides high-resolution images to detect early structural changes to the optic nerve that might not be easily evident to the examiner's eye. Finally, visual fields will be performed to create a map of how the patient sees. Vision loss from glaucoma typically starts in the periphery and, if left untreated, will insidiously move closer to the central vision and cause devastating vision loss.

## **How important are eye exams to detecting glaucoma?**

*Dr. Muscente:* Eye exams are the best and often only way to detect the presence of glaucoma and having them done routinely can help ensure that if glaucoma is present, it's caught early. If you have any risk factors for glaucoma, getting an eye exam with dilation every year is recommended; if you have no risk factors and are in good health, an eye exam every two years is acceptable.

## **Are there any dietary or lifestyle changes that can help prevent glaucoma?**

*Dr. Muscente:* Our best advice is to stay in good health overall, exercise regularly, keep your blood sugar under control, and don't smoke. It also helps to be aware of your family history of glaucoma.

## **What final messages do you want to share about treating and/or preventing glaucoma?**

*Dr. Muscente:* Once vision is gone, we can't get it back, so we can't reiterate enough the importance of getting regular eye exams. Though we can't restore vision that's been lost, we can manage glaucoma through a variety of effective treatments, get the eye pressure under control, and slow down the progression of glaucoma significantly to help maintain your vision.

# Patient Satisfaction: A Note of Thanks

On January 22, two of your RNs were at our senior center conducting a presentation about fall prevention to our seniors. As they were leaving, one of our seniors had a medical episode. While I was calling 9-1-1, they attended to him. They were so professional and calming during a stressful time. When EMS arrived, they stayed to answer any questions. We are incredibly grateful that they were there. We would like to extend heartfelt thanks to Amanda Brooks, RN, and Janet Pica, RN. They are both true assets to their profession.

Best regards,

**Lauren Della Salla, Center Director**  
Catholic Charities of Staten Island

I recently had a terrible accident. I slipped and fell on black ice and fractured my femur and hip. I was brought to RUMC via ambulance and had a partial hip replacement later that same day.

The surgeon assigned to me was Dr. Adam Margalit. He came to see me and assured me that he would take his time and make sure that my surgery was done with utmost precision and care. I was so pleased with him and his staff. They were kind, professional, and capable. I felt that I was literally in good hands.

While recovering, I was in the care of different nurses and support staff. While I had a good experience with all of them, I would like to note that one particular nurse, Joe Ruggiero, was outstanding! This was a major crisis in my life, and he helped me get through it with his patience, care, attention, and kindness.

Overall, I feel that I received excellent care during my stay at RUMC. Thank you!

Sincerely,

**Antonetta Sorrentino**

## Watch New Episodes of RUMC Vital Signs

### ▶ FORGING STRONGER HEARTS FOR A HEALTHIER STATEN ISLAND

In this episode, Dr. Francesco Rotatori, chief of RUMC's Cardiovascular Department, discusses heart-related trends here on Staten Island, introduces a new at-home cardiac rehabilitation program, tests what you really know about your heart in a Myth vs. Fact challenge, and gives a sneak peek at the upcoming Joan & Alan Bernikow Heart and Vascular Institute opening later this year.



To watch this episode and others covering a range of health-related topics, scan the QR code.



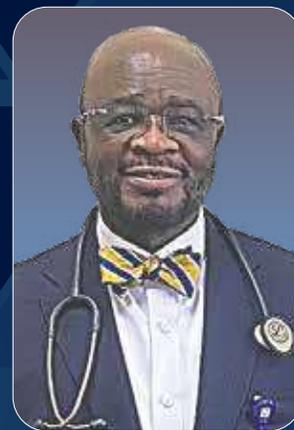
Airing on Community Media of Staten Island Channel 34 and available at [www.RUMCSI.org](http://www.RUMCSI.org), each episode of RUMC Vital Signs covers the latest trends in medicine and provides in-depth information on the services provided at Richmond University Medical Center.



## Catch Up on the Latest Episodes of RUMC Connections Podcast

### ▶ NO LUXURY OF TIME: INSIDE THE ICU

On this episode, we'll pull back the curtain on what happens inside the ICU, how teams handle life-or-death decisions, and the many lessons learned from the crises – from ordinary to extraordinary. This episode's special guest is Dr. Jay Mbeng Nfonoyim – a critical care physician, educator, and hospital leader, whose journey is as inspiring as the work he leads.



To listen to these episodes and others covering a range of health-related topics, scan the QR code.



[rumcsi.org/RUMCCpodcast](http://rumcsi.org/RUMCCpodcast)

# February Is American Heart Month: Small Steps, Big Impact



Every February is American Heart Month, a time to shine a spotlight on cardiovascular wellness—and for good reason. Heart disease remains the leading cause of death for both men and women in the United States. American Heart Month is an opportunity to learn, reflect, and take meaningful steps toward a stronger, healthier heart. Small choices, done consistently, can transform your heart health:



## KNOW YOUR NUMBERS

Understanding key health metrics—blood pressure, cholesterol, and blood sugar—is an essential first step in preventing heart disease. These numbers help paint a picture of your cardiovascular risk and guide the lifestyle changes or treatments that may be needed. Even foundational habits like getting 7 to 8 hours of sleep each night can support healthier blood pressure, heart rhythm, and long term well being.

## EAT WITH YOUR HEART IN MIND

Nutrition plays a major role in cardiovascular health. This month, try incorporating more heart-friendly foods into your routine:

- Add extra vegetables, especially leafy greens like spinach and kale, which support healthy blood vessels.
- Choose healthier fats such as olive oil, nuts, seeds, and avocados.
- Read nutrition labels and aim for foods lower in saturated fat, sodium, and added sugars.
- Enjoy plant based meals—beans, lentils, and whole grains make great, heart-smart choices.
- Include omega-3-rich fish like salmon or tuna once or twice a week to support heart function.



## MOVE MORE, STRESS LESS

Heart health is not limited to workouts or gym visits. Everyday movement adds up:

- Household chores, walking your dog, or playing with kids count as physical activity.
- Stretching for just a few minutes can improve flexibility and circulation.
- Laughter reduces stress hormones and benefits your blood vessels.
- Reducing long periods of sitting—even by taking brief screen breaks—supports circulation.
- Deep breathing exercises, such as inhaling for four seconds and exhaling for six, can lower heart rate and blood pressure.

## HEART HEALTH AT EVERY STAGE OF LIFE

From childhood through older adulthood, heart healthy habits matter:

- Encourage your loved ones, especially children, to stay active and limit sugary drinks.
- Women often experience different symptoms of heart attacks than men—knowing the warning signs saves lives.
- Quitting smoking remains one of the most powerful steps to protect your heart.
- Cold weather can also strain the heart, so bundle up and ease into outdoor activity, especially during the winter months.



## BUILD LONG-TERM HEART HEALTHY HABITS

Prevention is an ongoing commitment:

- Manage diabetes by monitoring blood sugar regularly.
- Take prescribed medications consistently to reduce complications.
- Limit processed foods high in sodium to support healthy blood pressure.
- Schedule routine checkups—if it's been more than a year, consider seeing your primary care provider.
- Social connection also matters: staying in touch with friends and family helps reduce stress and support emotional well being.

## CLOSING OUT THE MONTH—AND LOOKING AHEAD

As February wraps up, carry at least one heart healthy habit forward:

- Spend time outdoors.
- Drink water throughout the day.
- Cook more meals at home to control ingredients and portions.

Your heart is working for you every second of every day. Commit to caring for it in return.



## New Hires — Welcome to RUMC!

Betty Agho — *Central Sterile Tech*  
Christal Baker — *Unit Assistant*  
Yanneth Brandt — *Building Service Worker*  
Bahija Bryant — *Unit Assistant*  
Jelissa Butler — *Nursing Assistant*  
Theresa Campaign — *Paralegal*  
Angali Castillo — *Food Service Worker*  
Justina Catalano — *Nursing Assistant*  
Belinda Cooper — *Food Service Worker*  
Mark Dahl — *RN Practitioner*  
Ertin Demollari — *Building Service Worker*  
Taylor Finkel — *Nursing Assistant*  
Daniel Gadol — *Support Staff*

Veronica Labidou-Paillant — *Nursing Assistant*  
Kamila Lipka — *RN*  
Sandra Lykes — *Social Worker*  
Lindsay Martino — *Ultrasound Tech*  
Sophia Molinari — *Speech Pathologist*  
Ashley Ng — *Ultrasound Tech*  
Ann O'Neil — *Administrative Director of Nursing*  
Toni Pepia — *EMT*  
Sara Pulice — *Paramedic*  
Paris Reid — *Unit Assistant*  
Sandra Salcedo — *Nursing Assistant*  
David Skolnick — *Paramedic*  
Lanasia Verneau — *RN Coordinator*



## February Observances

Please join us in acknowledging the following health-related observances for the month of February:

### Month-Long:

Age-Related Macular Degeneration (AMD)/Low Vision Awareness Month  
American Heart Month  
Cholangiocarcinoma Awareness Month  
Gallbladder and Bile Duct Cancer Awareness Month  
International Prenatal Infection Prevention Month  
Low Vision Awareness Month  
Marfan Syndrome Awareness Month  
National Cancer Prevention Month  
National Children's Dental Health Month  
National Self-Check Month  
Teen Dating Violence Prevention Month

### Week-Long:

February 1 to 7: African Heritage & Health Week

February 2 to 6: Ambulatory Care Nurses Week

February 2 to 8: Peri Anesthesia Nurse Awareness Week

February 3 to 9: Tinnitus Awareness Week

February 7 to 14: Congenital Heart Defect Awareness Week

February 7 to 15: Cardiovascular Professionals Appreciation Week

February 8 to 14: Cardiac Rehabilitation Week

February 8 to 14: Heart Failure Awareness Week

February 8 to 14: National Cardiac Rehabilitation Week

February 8 to 14: Sepsis Survivor Week

February 9 to 15: Children's Mental Health Awareness Week

February 14 to 21: National Condom Week

February 16 to 20: National Certified Anesthesiologist Assistant Week

February 23-March 1: National Eating Disorders Awareness Week

### Recognition Days:

February 1: World Aspergillosis Day

February 2: Rheumatoid Arthritis Awareness Day

February 4: World Cancer Day

February 6: National Wear Red Day

February 7: National Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day

February 9: National Toothache Day

February 12: International Epilepsy Day

February 14: National Donor Day

February 14: National Impotence Day

February 18: Critical Care Transport Nurses Day

February 20: National Caregivers Day

February 22: National Heart Valve Disease Awareness Day

February 22: Recreational Sports & Fitness Day

February 22: World Encephalitis Day

February 27: National Protein Day

February 28: International Repetitive Strain Injury Awareness Day

February 28: Rare Disease Day

Richmond University  
Medical Center



RORY BEA & ARNIE O

# 5K RUN OR WALK

**SATURDAY, APRIL 25, 2026**

All proceeds will support the Wayne Zenna  
Neonatal Intensive Care Unit at RUMC

In Memory of  
Arnold Obey

**CLOVE LAKES PARK**

1150 CLOVE RD, STATEN ISLAND, NY 10301

REGISTRATION at 8AM

KIDS DASH Starts at 9AM

5K RUN Starts at 9:30AM

5K WALK Starts at 9:45AM

Trophies will be awarded to the top 3 male and  
top 3 female winners

Certificates will be presented to the top 3 male  
and top 3 female winners in each age category

For more information, including on how  
you can participate virtually, visit

[www.rumcsi.org/5K](http://www.rumcsi.org/5K)

Music by Joe Salemmo/DJ Joe Nose



In Memory of Rory DeCristoforo

SCAN CODE TO REGISTER  
AND LEARN MORE