

Deputy Mayor Visits RUMC, Thanks Hospital for Response to May 22 Waterfront Explosion



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*Deputy Mayor Dr. Helen Arteaga with RUMC Chair of Emergency Medicine, Dr. Johnathon LeBaron.
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From the President John C. Evanko, MD, MBA, FACOG

As we move into July and mark our Independence Day, we are reminded of the enduring values

that have shaped our nation—service, resilience, and a shared commitment to one another.

This year in particular carries added meaning, as our country approaches its 250th anniversary. It is a moment to reflect not only on our history, but also on the responsibilities we carry forward every day. At Richmond University Medical Center, those responsibilities have guided us for more than 120 years.

For over a century, RUMC has been a constant presence in the Staten Island community—adapting, growing, and meeting the needs of our patients and families through times of change and challenge. That legacy is not defined by buildings or milestones alone, but by people—by each of you.

In many ways, what we do here reflects the same spirit that has sustained our country: showing up when it matters most, working together toward a common purpose, and putting the needs of others first. Whether providing care at the bedside, supporting operations behind the scenes, or ensuring our

patients and families feel seen and heard, your work makes a difference every day.

As we take time this month to celebrate our nation, I encourage you to also take pride in the role you play in continuing the mission of this organization. The strength of RUMC, much like the strength of our country, comes from the dedication and character of its people.

Thank you for your continued commitment to our patients, to one another, and to the community we are privileged to serve.

I wish you and your families a safe and meaningful Fourth of July.

Sincerely,

Dr. John C. Evanko
President

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 Shikha

Baishya, MD. Dr. Baishya is a PGY-4 in the Department of Psychiatry. She earned her medical degree from St. George's University School of Medicine. Her hometown is Boulder, Colorado.



Congratulations to our Employee of the Month:



Chris Ann Crowe, RN
Labor and Delivery Unit

Richmond University Medical Center Welcomes NYC Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services



Deputy Mayor Dr. Helen Arteaga with RUMC Chair of Emergency Medicine, Dr. Johnathon LeBaron (right), and NYC Council Minority Leader David Carr, touring RUMC's Emergency Department.

On June 4, New York City Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services, Dr. Helen Arteaga, visited Richmond University Medical Center to thank the hospital staff on behalf of Mayor Zohran Mamdani for its response to the waterfront explosion on May 22 that killed one person and



Deputy Mayor Dr. Helen Arteaga presenting a City Citation to RUMC on behalf of Mayor Zohran Mamdani.

injured 40. The majority of individuals cared for at RUMC were members of the Fire Department of New York City.

Following the explosion, RUMC ambulances were dispatched to the scene in Mariners Harbor and 20 individuals, mostly FDNY, were transported to RUMC for treatment. RUMC is a Level 1 Adult Trauma Center, equipped to handle the most serious health emergencies and mass casualty incidents.

The Deputy Mayor was welcomed to RUMC by hospital leadership and staff from the emergency department who cared for the injured the evening of the explosion. The Deputy Mayor presented a City Citation to RUMC on behalf of Mayor Mamdani.

"We came here today to recognize the amazing work that you did with so much

compassion and so much clinical excellence," the Deputy Mayor said. "We wanted to let you know that we here at the city thank you and support you all the way."

The Deputy Mayor was joined by Yesenia Mata, commissioner of the New York City Department of Veterans' Services; Dr. Mitchell Katz, president and chief executive officer for New York City Health + Hospitals, and New York City Council Minority Leader David Carr.

"Sometimes the people who need help the most are our first responders," Council Member Carr said. "RUMC delivered and RUMC made sure that those individuals went home to their families."

The Deputy Mayor was also provided with a tour of RUMC's Emergency Department, named for former Staten Island Borough President James P. Molinaro, by the hospital's Chair of Emergency Medicine, Dr. Johnathon LeBaron.



RUMC President Dr. John C. Evanko with NYC Council Minority Leader David Carr.

"It was a pleasure to have the Deputy Mayor take the time to thank our staff," Dr. LeBaron said. "It meant a lot to our entire team who always put their heart into caring for every single patient that comes through our doors."

American Cancer Society: Cancer continues to be a growing public health concern across New York State



*Dr. Keith Diaz, Chief of
the Division of
Pulmonary Medicine*



*Board certified
gastroenterologist
Dr. Vahe Shahnazarian*

By Cheryl Garber

The American Cancer Society (ACS) recently released its cancer statistics for 2026 stating that there will be an estimated 2,114,850 new cases of cancer diagnosed in the United States this year. At the state level, the burden is especially significant for New York, with over 125,000 estimated new cases of cancer projected in 2026 with prostate cancer ranking the highest at over 22,000 new cases. These figures demonstrate the persistent prevalence of cancer and underscore the need for continued emphasis on prevention and early detection, according to the ACS.

Although cancer incidence remains high, survival rates have improved due to advances in early detection, treatment, and prevention. National data shows that cancer mortality has declined substantially over the past several decades, largely because cancers are being identified earlier and treated more effectively.

However, disparities in access to care persist, particularly in communities where screening services may be underutilized. This highlights the importance of expanding access to preventive care and ensuring that all individuals have opportunities for early diagnosis.

Richmond University Medical Center is playing a key role in addressing these challenges through community-based

outreach. RUMC boasts a robust cancer prevention program that is consistently out in the community to encourage our community to participate in early screening testing for preventative care. By offering free screenings and providing results directly to participants, RUMC helps reduce financial and logistical barriers that often delay diagnosis and treatment.

These efforts are reinforced by findings from RUMC's 2025 Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA). The CHNA highlights access to healthcare and chronic disease management as key priorities, emphasizing the importance of preventive care and early detection. Community health assessments are designed to identify gaps, risk factors, and disparities, providing a foundation for targeted interventions that align with broader ACS trends.

Healthcare leaders at RUMC emphasize that many cancer-related deaths are preventable with screening. Dr. Keith Diaz, Chief of RUMC's Division of Pulmonary Medicine, said "although lung cancer is not the most commonly diagnosed cancer, it remains the leading cause of cancer death. This shows the importance of smoking prevention, smoking cessation, and lung cancer screening, because survival improves dramatically when lung cancer is detected at an early stage... Despite this progress, lung cancer remains one of our

nation's greatest cancer challenges and a major public health priority."

According to the newest statistics from the ACS, it is predicted that in 2026, New York State will see an estimated 13,000 new cases of lung cancer.

Dr. Diaz's point was further emphasized by Nancy Sayegh-Rooney, RUMC's Lung Nurse Navigator, who said, "no one needs to die from lung or any cancer that we have a screening program in place for... these are all preventable deaths with early detection."

Similarly, board certified gastroenterologist Dr. Vahe Shahnazarian said "we can completely prevent most colorectal cancers by simply screening for them." In 2026, the American Cancer Society estimates that 9,000 New Yorkers statewide will be newly diagnosed with colorectal cancer. While not the leading cancer detected statewide, Dr. Shahnazarian noted that when it comes to citywide diagnosis, Staten Island has the highest colorectal cancer rates in the five boroughs according to the ACS.

First accredited by the American College of Surgeons' Commission on Cancer in 1937, RUMC is home to Staten Island's longest continuously accredited cancer care program.

**For more
information on
the ACS findings
SCAN HERE**



Clinical Study Underway to Help Patients with Type II Diabetes Mellitus



Chief Medical Officer, Chair for the Department of Medicine, and Chief of Endocrinology Dr. Philip Otterbeck

By Cheryl Garber

Richmond University Medical Center's (RUMC) Department of Clinical Research is currently conducting a study for patients with Type II Diabetes Mellitus (DM). The overall purpose of the study is to evaluate the efficacy, safety, and tolerability of nisotirostide in this patient population. The total study duration is approximately 40 weeks. Approximately 200 participants will be enrolled in the study.

Nisotirostide is an experimental medication given as an injection under the skin. After a person eats, the body releases a hormone called PYY that tells the brain to stop feeling hungry. Nisotirostide mimics PYY. As a result, it can reduce hunger and help people feel full sooner, which is why researchers are studying it for conditions like diabetes.

This is a phase two trial where patients will be randomized to receive either nisotirostide, or a placebo. Potential patients to be considered for enrollment will be those on stable doses of either semaglutide or tirzepatide and remain inadequately controlled.

Eli Lilly and Company sponsors this clinical trial. RUMC's Chief Medical Officer, Chair for the Department of Medicine, and Chief of Endocrinology Dr. Philip Otterbeck, serves as the Principal Investigator for the study.

The clinical trial started in July 2025. To date, 15 patients have been screened

for the study. Out of the 15 patients, three have met the enrollment criteria and have received active treatment. As of May 2025, one patient has completed the study.

The Department of Clinical Research is still looking for qualified patients to participate in the trial before it closes in August. To enroll, participants must be between 18 and 75 years of age with Type 2 diabetes mellitus, are overweight, and have an A1C between 7.5% and 10.5%. Further, they must be on a stable dose of either semaglutide or tirzepatide and have stable overall health for three months prior to enrollment.

During study participation, patients will be closely monitored. As part of the study, frequent physical examinations and detailed laboratory tests will be conducted. Please contact Dr. Jakey Patwari at 718-818-2707 for more information about the trial.

RUMC Physicians Among New Officers for Richmond County Medical Society

By Cheryl Garber

As the United States prepares to celebrate its 250th anniversary, the Richmond County Medical Society celebrated a milestone of its own: the installation of its 220th President, Dr. Charles Sineri. Dr. Sineri was installed along with a new slate of officers for 2026-2027 during a ceremony and annual dinner on June 10.

Also sworn in were Dr. Victoria Forte as President-Elect; Dr. Lance Austein as Vice President; and Dr. Arthy Yoga, as Treasurer. Dr. Forte is RUMC's Chief of the Division of Hematology/Oncology, Cancer Service Line Director, and Fellowship Program Director. Dr. Yoga is a board certified breast surgical

oncologist, also with RUMC.

Dr. Charles Sineri is a double board-certified cardiologist with Mt Sinai and is caring for patients at RUMC. Born and raised on Staten Island, he completing his undergraduate studies at Drexel University, and earned his medical degree from West Virginia School of Osteopathic Medicine. He went on to complete an internal medicine residency at RUMC while simultaneously earning a master's in healthcare administration at Drexel University. He then completed his fellowship training in cardiology at Deborah Heart and Lung Center in New Jersey, while concomitantly earning his



(l-r): Dr. Arthy Yoga; Dr. Lance Austein; Dr. Victoria Forte; Dr. Charles Sineri; and outgoing President of the Society, Dr. Ishita Kharode.

master's in business administration. To finish his training, Dr. Sineri completed his interventional cardiology fellowship at Stony Brook University Hospital. He is also a Fellow of the American College of Cardiology and an associate faculty physician with The Icahn School of Medicine.

Beyond the Symposium: Advancing Inclusive Care at RUMC



Panelists participated in a discussion highlighting inclusive care practices and advancements in LGBTQIA+ healthcare



Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer, Dr. Jonathan Zipkin gave opening remarks at the symposium



Maya Gilbert-Smith, from the Pride Center of Staten Island, raises the flag during RUMC's annual Pride flag raising ceremony

by Meredith Gaskins

Richmond University Medical Center (RUMC) brought together healthcare professionals, community advocates, and local leaders on June 11 for a comprehensive LGBTQIA+ Health Symposium dedicated to advancing inclusive, affirming, and equitable care for LGBTQIA+ patients across Staten Island and beyond.

The symposium came at a particularly meaningful moment for the hospital. RUMC was recently recognized as an “LGBTQIA+ Healthcare Equality High Performer” in the Human Rights Campaign Foundation’s 2026 Healthcare Equality Index (HEI) – the nation’s leading benchmarking survey for LGBTQ+ inclusion in healthcare. This designation, which places RUMC among a select group of healthcare institutions nationwide, reflects significant progress from its previous “Builder” recognition and underscores a deepening commitment to equality in patient care, workforce culture, and community engagement.

The symposium opened up with remarks from Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer, Dr. Jonathan Zipkin, who underscored the importance of humility and compassion in modern healthcare. “We don’t know it all – but we can make it right by being human,” he said, encouraging attendees to embrace two core challenges: enriching the lives of others while also reflecting personally

on how they can visibly demonstrate allyship in their daily work.

Romeo Smith, Senior Human Resources Recruiter at RUMC, underscored the importance of diversity within healthcare teams and patient populations alike. “Differences matter,” Smith noted. “We learn from one another when differences are welcomed, and that ability to adapt ultimately strengthens patient care.”

The event also featured a cultural awareness training presented by Maya Gilbert-Smith, events and outreach manager from the Pride Center of Staten Island. She focused on building understanding around LGBTQIA+ identities, language, and lived experiences. The training emphasized the importance of creating welcoming healthcare environments through respectful communication, inclusive policies, and visible signals of support. It also reinforced the need for ongoing education to ensure healthcare providers remain informed and responsive to the evolving needs of LGBTQIA+ individuals.

A panel discussion closed out the symposium offering practical insight into enhancing patient comfort and trust, with panelists from various departments of RUMC, emphasizing that respectful communication and intentional inclusivity are crucial to creating safe spaces for LGBTQIA+ patients. The discussion also explored advancements in HIV

prevention and treatment, noting that patients now have multiple options available, including oral medications, long-acting injections, and vaginal rings, reflecting significant progress in expanding access and choice.

Looking toward the future, speakers shared a collective vision for a more inclusive healthcare system over the next decade. They emphasized the importance of establishing consistent standards of care that ensure patients feel safe regardless of where they seek treatment, advocating for expanded protection, and more inclusive healthcare policies.

Throughout the symposium, a consistent message emerged: creating inclusive healthcare environments requires more than policy – it demands active, everyday commitment. Providers were encouraged to move beyond discussion and actively “live the conversation” by demonstrating respect, empathy, and understanding in every patient interaction.

The event concluded with RUMC’s annual Pride flag raising ceremony, held outside the hospital. Raising the flag was Dr. Zipkin and Gilbert-Smith who were joined by Priscila Echevarria de Sepúlveda, RUMC’s Manager of Health Equity; and Dr. Ginny Mantello, director of health and wellness from the Office of Staten Island Borough President Vito Fossella

RUMC Earns “LGBTQ+ Healthcare Equality High Performer” Designation

By Meredith Gaskins

Richmond University Medical Center has been recognized as an “LGBTQ+ Healthcare Equality High Performer” in the Human Rights Campaign Foundation’s 2026 Healthcare Equality Index (HEI). The HEI is the nation’s leading benchmarking survey evaluating healthcare facilities on policies and practices dedicated to the equitable treatment and inclusion of LGBTQ+ patients, visitors, and employees.

The HEI 2026 survey evaluated hundreds of healthcare facilities across the United States on criteria including nondiscrimination policies, staff training, patient services and support, employee benefits, and community engagement related to LGBTQ+ inclusion. RUMC is one of only 343 healthcare facilities nationwide to earn the “High Performer” designation in the 2026 report.

This designation represents the next step forward for RUMC, building on its 2024 recognition as an “LGBTQ+ Healthcare Equity Builder.” It underscores the organization’s ongoing commitment to advancing inclusive policies, practices, and meaningful community engagement.

“We are honored to be recognized by the Human Rights Campaign Foundation for our ongoing work to advance health equity and inclusive care,” said Priscila Echevarría de Sepúlveda, EdD, MPA, RUMC’s Manager of Health Equity. “This designation reflects our commitment to ensuring that all patients – including those in the LGBTQ+ community – receive respectful, affirming, and high-quality care.”

The HEI, published by the Human Rights Campaign Foundation, is widely regarded as the national standard for



LGBTQ+ inclusion in healthcare. It provides a comprehensive framework to help healthcare organizations implement best practices and create welcoming environments for LGBTQ+ individuals and their families.

“This recognition underscores our continued dedication to ensuring equitable, nondiscriminatory care for all our patients while also promoting a culture of inclusion across our workforce and community,” RUMC President Dr. John C. Evanko, said. “The HEI designation signals to patients, families, and the broader community that Richmond University Medical Center is committed to fostering a safe, inclusive, and respectful healthcare environment.”

Vice President of Public Relations Honored for Service Above Self

By Meredith Gaskins

Recently, the South Shore Rotary of Staten Island presented its Service Above Self award to Alex Lutz, RUMC’s vice president of marketing and public relations. He was recognized as one of four recipients of the prestigious award at a luncheon hosted by the Rotary.

“Its is an honor to work every day with the fantastic physicians, nurses, medical professionals, support staff and leadership at Richmond University Medical Center,” Lutz said.

The annual event celebrates individuals whose work demonstrates exceptional dedication and meaningful impact within the community, an honor that reflects Lutz’s ongoing commitment to advancing RUMC’s mission and serving Staten Island. RUMC Trustee, Joseph Torres, the incoming president of the

South Shore Rotary, served as the event’s emcee and nominated Lutz for the award.

Alex has been at Richmond University Medical Center since 2018. He oversees the development and implementation of advertising and marketing initiatives that promote the hospital’s services and programs. He also collaborates closely with community leaders and key stakeholders to strengthen RUMC’s mission and public reputation, and serves as the hospital’s official spokesperson. He is also host of RUMC Vital Signs television program, which airs on Community Media of Staten Island, Channel 34. The monthly show features conversations with medical professionals that engage and inform the local community.



Alex Lutz was presented with the Service Above Self award by Allison Cohen (right), chief of communications and fundraising at the Jewish Community Center of Staten Island, and Lynne Persing (left), COO, speaker chairman, and scholarship chairman for the South Shore Rotary of Staten Island.

Lutz is also a board member of NonProfit Staten Island, and previously served on the board of IlluminArt Productions, a Staten Island-based nonprofit organization, spending three years as its board chair.

New Hires — Welcome to RUMC!

John Aidoo — *Nursing Assistant*
Alnel Alvendula — *RN*
Diamante Aquinchay — *Registrar/ Discharge Clerk*
Malak Atwi — *Receptionist*
Yeva Belyakov — *RN Extern*
Michael Bilewu — *Nursing Assistant*
Cecilia Brisman — *RN Extern*
Drianna Caraballo — *RN*
Rose Cormack — *RN*
Shatina Etienne — *Family Worker*
Shqiponja Fazliu — *Unit Clerk*
Jill Greenfield — *Nursing Assistant*
Allen Hernandez — *Transporter*
Joyce Ho — *RN Coordinator*
Alevtina Kalenik — *RN Extern*
David Kopelevich — *RN Extern*
Rosemary Labeeb — *HIV Navigator*
Jacob Ladin — *RN*
Ricky Lugo — *Nursing Assistant*
Paola-Quiroz Malaquias — *LMHC*

Emily McAlarney — *RN*
Sophia Mekhall — *RN Extern*
Oluwadamilare Ogunfuwa — *RN Extern*
Matthew Pickman — *RN Extern*
Claudine Pierre — *MCU Supervisor*
Alyssa Rammairone — *RN*
Camryn Rattray — *RN Extern*
Ida Ratut — *Ultrasound Tech*
Shauna-kay Richards — *Security Guard*
Joanna Rotondi — *Nursing Assistant*
Miguelina Santana — *Building Service Worker*
Sujani Senanayaka — *RN*
Drenada Sino — *RN*
Daniel Thomas — *Respiratory Therapist*
Andre Thomas — *Care Transition Manager*
Elizaveta Timofeeva — *RN Extern*
Christine Vasquez — *Ultrasound Tech*
Alina Velianyk — *RN Extern*
Giavanna Willis — *RN*

July Observances

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

Month-Long:

Cord Blood Awareness Month
International Group B Strep Awareness Month
Juvenile Arthritis Awareness Month
National Cleft & Craniofacial Awareness and Prevention Month
National Hemochromatosis Awareness Month
National Minority Mental Health Awareness Month
Sarcoma Awareness Month
UV Safety Month

Recognition Days:

July 10: Chronic Disease Awareness Day
July 11: World Population Day
July 22: World Brain Day
July 23: World Sjogren's Day
July 28: World Hepatitis Day

