

Nursing

ANNUAL REPORT

20
25



RWJBarnabas
HEALTH

**Robert Wood Johnson
University Hospital
Somerset**





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UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL SOMERSET



UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL
SOMERSET



**Michael Valendo, DNP, RN,
NE-BC, CEN**

Chief Nursing Officer and
Vice President of Nursing



Jamie Perry, MSN, RN, NE-BC

Vice President of
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Clinical Operations

Advancing our Profession and the Patient Experience

We're pleased to share the 2025 Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital (RWJUH) Somerset nursing annual report, which highlights the many ways our nurses embrace curiosity, continual growth and collaboration to advance not only evidence-based care, but also the overall patient experience.

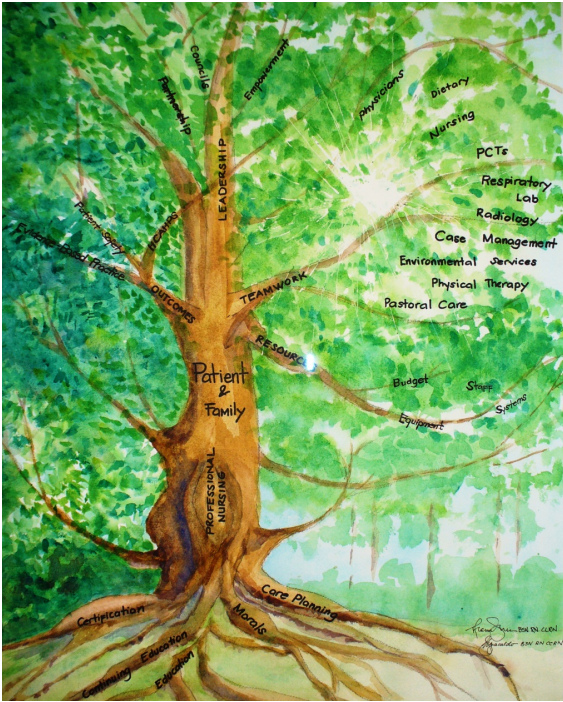
Thanks to the dedication of our entire team, RWJUH Somerset's overall patient experience scores increased to above the 50th percentile in 2025. Our nurses contributed heavily to our strides in patient satisfaction – in fact, nursing-specific domains for nurse communication and communication about medications finished the year in the top 25% nationally, and we also met our target goals for nurse leader/senior leader rounding.

These exemplary outcomes were accomplished in part due to a strong focus on effective bedside rounding and shift reports that helped us deliver cohesive care, elicit broader patient feedback and proactively address issues in real time. Our achievements in this area were shared with health care leaders from across the country at Huron's annual conference with a presentation illustrating how our physicians, nurses and the Patient Experience team collaboratively use the organization's rounding technology to improve care for our patients. Likewise, the RWJBarnabas Health (RWJBH) Nursing Leadership Development and Coaching Program has empowered our nurses through tactics designed to optimize communication and interactions with patients and staff – helping to build understanding of the “why” behind everything we do. In addition, nursing efforts to prevent infections and injuries have led to impressive outcomes in the ICU and beyond.

Another common theme in 2025 was preparation – a practice that leads to peak performance. We successfully orchestrated three emergency preparedness drills across departments and RWJBH hospitals to ensure that our team can navigate the many parameters of a large-scale crisis. In implementing a new workplace violence prevention program, we broadened training so that staff throughout the hospital have the most effective tools for de-escalation. And after four years of preparation, we submitted our document to the American Nurses Credentialing Center for a fourth Magnet® designation – a journey that has truly been a hospital-wide effort in gathering and synthesizing the information that showcases our outcomes.

As part of transformational leadership, we involve nurses at all levels in the decision-making, design and implementation of the initiatives that advance our practice. We value your insight and feedback in helping us strengthen our nursing culture and workplace – and we're addressing more of these suggestions through our “You Said, We Did” initiative, from integrating PACU monitors with Epic to the inclusion of bedside tables in the Paul R. Nardoni Oncology Pavilion renovation.

As we reflect on our progress, we recognize that the outcomes we achieve extend far beyond our walls and into the lives of the patients, families and community we serve. We're incredibly proud of the way you live the Magnet standards every day in caring for our patients, ensuring safety and quality, sharing knowledge, supporting our colleagues and elevating our profession. Thank you for the exceptional care you deliver, and for your steadfast commitment to our patients and one another.



Professional Practice Model

The RWJUH Somerset professional practice model, “Our Caring Tree,” represents the Ten Carative Factors of the nursing professional practice model defined by Jean Watson, RN, PhD. This approach sees nursing as a human science that focuses on the process of caring for individuals, families and groups. Through caring transactions, nurses assist people in gaining a higher degree of harmony within the mind, body and soul.

The tree image represents how nurses are rooted in excellence and continually seek to transform, empower and inspire. It reflects nurse, patient and family relationships, the foundations of professional practice, the standards of care that ensure a nurturing environment and the shared governance structure that supports patient care delivery.

- Based upon sound judgment, competence, evidence-based research and ethics, adaptation is key in our ever-changing health care environment.
- Methods of quality improvement, research and innovation refine our practice.
- Nurses serve as leaders, aspiring for the highest level of judgment, ethics and standards. Leadership is recognized through accountability and accepting the responsibilities, privileges and rights within our professional practice.

Mission, Vision and Values

The nursing team at RWJUH Somerset embraces the mission, vision and values of RWJBarnabas Health:



Our Mission: We are an academic health system, partnering with our communities to build and sustain a healthier New Jersey.



Our Vision: RWJBarnabas Health will be the premier health care destination providing patient-centered, high-quality academic medicine in a compassionate and equitable manner, while delivering a best-in-class work experience to every member of the team.



Our Values:

Accountability: An acceptance of responsibility for honest and ethical conduct towards others.

Synonyms: responsibility, liability

Compassion: Sympathetic concern for the sufferings or misfortunes of others.

Synonym: understanding

Curiosity: A strong desire to know or learn something.

Synonyms: interest, inquisitiveness

Empathy: The ability to understand and share the feelings of another.

Synonyms: sensitivity towards, understanding of

Excellence: The quality of being outstanding or extremely good.

Synonyms: greatness, superiority

Kindness: The quality of being friendly, generous and considerate.

Synonym: selflessness

Respect: A feeling of deep admiration for someone or something elicited by their abilities, qualities or achievements.

Synonyms: esteem, regard

Teamwork: The combined action of a group of people, especially when effective and efficient.

Synonyms: partnership, synergy



TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP

At RWJUH Somerset, nurses at all levels and in all roles serve as transformational leaders who share in decision-making to achieve the organization's mission and to inspire nursing practice across the care continuum. Exemplary safety, service and quality outcomes are achieved through open communication, execution of a well-defined nursing strategic plan, application of a well-articulated nursing philosophy and a vision that supports nursing excellence in an ever-changing health care environment.

Leadership Coaching Improves Patient Experience

The Nursing Leadership Development and Coaching Program at RWJBH is designed to develop competence, foster growth, promote retention and enhance overall team performance. In 2025, the program focused heavily on new nurse leaders, rounding and bedside shift reports at RWJUH Somerset, ultimately contributing to improved patient experience scores.

Lainie Messina, MS, LAC, NCC, assistant vice president of the program, joins nurse leader rounds to provide coaching on the elements of the RWJBH nursing prescriptive plan. She also facilitates leadership skills labs for day and night shifts and provides one-on-one coaching sessions aimed at personal and professional growth.

“Being a great nurse is not the same as being a great nurse leader,” explains Messina. “A nurse leader’s goal should be to obtain actionable feedback, and rounds are the most powerful tool for doing so. Asking positive, open-ended questions rooted in evidence-based practice can transform the patient experience – and those same strategies can be used to improve communication with team members. Nurse leaders are there to ensure that staff have the tools, support and resources they need to take exceptional care of their patients.”

“When we validate the what and the why of evidence-based practice, coaching becomes the how,” she adds. “We’re consistently investing in nurse leaders to build the skills and emotional intelligence that are critical to success.”

In 2025, RWJUH Somerset exceeded its HCAHPS maximum goal for communication with nurses and communication about medications. The hospital also met target goals – with scores nearly at maximum goal – for nurse leader/senior leader rounding.

“Coaching sessions and role-playing scenarios with Lainie have been incredibly helpful, particularly in developing communication strategies for having critical conversations with team members that in turn motivate them to go above and beyond,” says Taylor Kohlhepp, MSN, RN, SCRNP, CNL, assistant nurse director on 4 West, which had the highest scores for communication with nurses in 2025. “We’re using our skills to observe staff at bedside shift reports and provide feedback that fosters patient-centered conversations.”



Taylor Kohlhepp, MSN, RN, SCRNP, CNL

Systemwide Mentorship Spurs Far-Reaching Growth

To foster meaningful professional connections and create structured pathways for career growth across the system, RWJBH launched a six-month Mentorship Program as part of its commitment to building a strong organizational culture that reflects its Total Wellbeing Promise, **Wellbeing starts with you.** The program helps mentors strengthen their leadership and coaching skills while enabling mentees to develop new skills and set meaningful goals.

RWJUH Somerset mentees included nurses and other team members who were matched with mentors at the hospital and across other RWJBH facilities based on their career interests and goals. The mentees completed structured learning modules, trainings and professional development exercises, and they met regularly with their mentors.

“As a new nurse, this program was a really unique opportunity to gain advice from someone who’s been there – especially since I was paired with the CNO!” says 4 West clinical nurse, Elizabeth Rosen, BSN, RN, who has met regularly with Michael Valendo, DNP, RN, NE-BC, CEN, and has since become co-chair of her Unit-Based Council. “I’m so grateful for his genuine interest in my personal and professional growth. In particular, he’s helped me in the areas of time management, work-life balance and considerations for next steps in my career.”



Michael Valendo, DNP, RN, NE-BC, CEN, and his mentee Elizabeth Rosen, BSN, RN

Sharing Patient Experience Improvements Nationally

Irene Dela Cruz, BSN, RN, RN-BC, coordinator for the Patient Experience Department, partnered with RWJBH emergency medicine physician Marc Milano, MD, to present at the What’s Right in Health Care® conference held by Huron in August 2025 in Boston. Their breakout session on “Transforming Patient Experience Through Dyad Leadership and Effective Coaching” focused on how RWJUH Somerset customized, implemented and piloted Huron Intelligence Rounding web-based technology across inpatient units, expanding the ability to respond to patient feedback in real time.



Irene Dela Cruz, BSN, RN, RN-BC

While nurses and physicians each have their own Huron rounding template, they complement each other in amplifying opportunities to identify and resolve patient needs quickly and ensure that they understand the plan of care. Patients feel heard with this consistent, meaningful rounding, and the technology helps track and trend areas where additional leadership coaching can be valuable. Since the implementation of Huron rounding, HCAHPS scores for communication with nurses and with physicians have shown marked improvements, far exceeding target goals. In fact, RWJUH Somerset was recognized by Huron and RWJBH as a leading hospital achieving meaningful change in purposeful rounding.

“Nurses and hospital leaders from across the country wanted to hear about our experience,” says Dela Cruz. “Part of our success has been the incredible teamwork between nurses and physicians, which forms the dyad that serves as a strong foundation for our efforts. I’m very proud of our accomplishments and the opportunity to serve as a model for others.”



STRUCTURAL EMPOWERMENT

Solid structures and processes have been developed at RWJUH Somerset to support nurses' professional development, promote participation in community and population health outreach activities and recognize nurses for their contributions in achieving strategic priorities. Interprofessional collaboration and participation in shared governance councils are encouraged to promote an innovative and research-intensive professional practice environment in which nurses, patients, families, colleagues and the community at large flourish.

Collaborative Exercises Fine-Tune Emergency Preparedness

Three exercises held in 2025 enhanced critical thinking skills and collaboration among RWJUH Somerset team members, departments and other RWJBH hospitals to ensure optimal preparedness during a crisis. The exercises engaged nurses and other team members across many units and departments, including the Emergency Department, Emergency Management, Security, Facilities, Marketing/PR, Laboratory, Pharmacy, Radiology, ICU, Cardiac Catheterization Laboratory, Respiratory Services, Environmental Services, Transport, Clinical Engineering, Information Technology Services, Infection Prevention and the hospital emergency response team.

The **Operation Chain Reaction Special Pathogens Tabletop Exercise** was held at RWJUH in New Brunswick to test and assess protocols for patients arriving at the hospitals with a dangerous pathogen – in this case, one causing hemorrhagic fever. The exercise covered identification, isolation, transfer and treatment processes as the scenario evolved.



Sharon Parrillo, BSN, RN, CIC, CPPS

“It’s so valuable to talk through existing plans, ask the ‘what ifs’ and determine where adjustments are necessary,” says Sharon Parrillo, BSN, RN, CIC, CPPS, director of Infection Prevention. “This type of critical thinking can only happen when all the key players are at the table to troubleshoot in real time, pivot around issues that arise and determine the best path forward.”

In collaboration with RWJBH’s Information Technology Services and Emergency Management departments, RWJUH Somerset was the first hospital in the system to hold a two-day **Cyber Resiliency Exercise**. In this scenario, a patient having a heart attack arrived at the Emergency Department when the hospital’s computer network was down due to a cyberattack. Staff learned about the drill only when the patient walked in, enabling a true assessment of the ability to deliver safe and effective care under these circumstances.

“The drill was a positive, eye-opening experience because many of our staff have never lived in a world without advanced technology,” says Mary Wiczorek, MSN, RN, NE-BC, administrative director of the Emergency Department. “Exercises like these help us ensure we have everything we need at our fingertips, including downtime boxes with paper forms maintained by unit secretaries. By practicing these scenarios, we can remain calm in a true crisis.”

A two-day **Mass Casualty Drill** successfully tested the hospital’s incident response plan to a terrorist attack scenario involving multiple patients filling the Emergency Department. The presence of volunteer patients helped nurses and other team members think through every step in the process, including planning space and transferring certain patients for specialized care. Improvements made after the drill included broadening Wi-Fi access to a triage tent area outside the Emergency Department.

“All hands were on deck, and it was good practice in considering how to best assign nurses, prioritize real patients and balance drill patients who were arriving via EMS and walking in,” says Emergency Department clinical nurse Rod Abaya, BSN, RN. “In a drill, you can make a mistake and learn what to do differently, so we are all better prepared for a real incident.”



Rod Abaya, BSN, RN

Broadening Workplace Violence Prevention Knowledge

As part of an RWJBH initiative, RWJUH Somerset implemented a new workplace violence prevention model designed by Iron Temple Training Center. With three levels of training and skills maintenance sessions, the platform has broadened knowledge by educating all employees in verbal de-escalation and specific patient-facing departments in more in-depth, scenario-based tactics, including hands-on de-escalation.

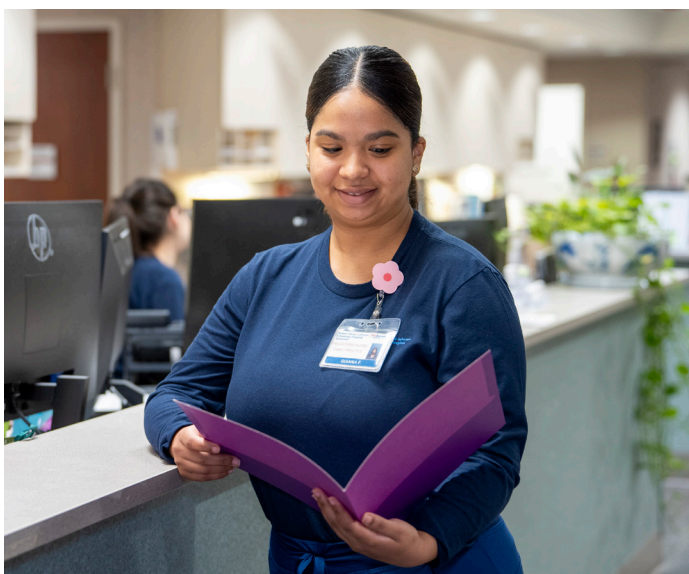
In collaboration with Iron Temple educators, Kathleen Wilson, MSN, RN, CNL, SCRNP, director for the Center for Professional Development, Innovation & Research (CPDIR), and CJ Cruz, vice president of Operations, coordinated the education of nurses and staff and the deployment of the program across the hospital.

“We want as many people to have as many tools as possible to safeguard themselves and our patients,” notes Wilson. “With this validated training program, everyone learns situational awareness and consistent messaging to mitigate potential risks. The program is customized to our hospital setting, but it has also been used successfully across numerous other industries.”

“As we conduct emergency screenings, we frequently see patients who are agitated or unable to follow directions due to psychosis,” adds Urenna Colaire, MSN, RN, assistant director of the Emergency Department Crisis Center. “The instructors and class structure have been very accommodating, and our team feels more confident in their ability to anticipate signs and prevent escalation - including using their own skills before automatically calling for backup. This approach also shows our patients that everyone around them cares about their well-being.”



Urenna Colaire, MSN, RN





Victoria Lamzon, BSN, RN

Nurse Residency Program Earns Accreditation

The American Nurses Credentialing Center's (ANCC) Practice Transition Accreditation Program® (PTAP®) awarded RWJBH Accreditation with Distinction for its Nurse Residency Program, distinguishing it as a national leader in supporting new graduate nurses as they transition into professional practice. As the highest level of recognition awarded by PTAP, this accreditation demonstrates that the program meets rigorous standards for structure, process and outcomes.

RWJUH Somerset began its Nurse Residency Program in 2023 and received accreditation in June 2025 after submitting a comprehensive application and participating in an ANCC virtual site visit with other RWJBH hospitals. Nurse preceptor Victoria Lamzon, BSN, RN, and former nurse residents Brianna Davis, BSN, RN, Jiyeon Kang, BSN, RN, and Rebecca Skalski, ADN, RN, participated in the site visit to discuss their experience with the program and how it fosters structured support and clinical competency.



Center for Professional Development, Innovation and Research

The Center for Professional Development, Innovation and Research (CPDIR) provides staff with opportunities to practice, learn and grow professionally in an increasingly complex and challenging health care environment. The team is committed to providing structural empowerment for family-centered care, shared decision-making, autonomy and clinical excellence. By incorporating high reliability organization (HRO) principles, CPDIR helps ensure that outcomes and safety are always a priority.

“Our program helps new nurses become great nurses, and I was honored to participate in the site visit to answer questions about it,” says Lamzon, who has more than 20 years of nurse preceptor experience, including for numerous RWJUH Somerset nursing residents. “It’s stressful when new nurses are starting fresh in a clinical setting. But seeing their growth and how they take care of their patients is so rewarding.”

Forty-five nurses entered RWJUH Somerset’s Nurse Residency Program in 2025, with 120 participating to date. Nurse retention among residents from the first-year cohort is 91%, highlighting the value of the program.

“We pair a competency-based orientation, didactics and simulation with a strong nurse-preceptor structure aligned with the needs of individual departments,” says Kathleen Wilson, MSN, RN, CNL, SCRNP, director of the Center for Professional Development, Innovation & Research and site coordinator of the Nurse Residency Program. “To ensure ongoing support, the program offers built-in professional development, mentorship and engagement opportunities that spark nursing inquiry and involvement – including a course that enables nurse residents to serve, in turn, as future preceptors.”

Shared Governance Councils

Shared governance provides an organizational framework that empowers clinical nurses to participate in and lead decision-making processes. Through unit-based departmental councils, the shared governance model provides a forum for the exchange of ideas and information that enhances the quality of nursing care and promotes clinical excellence through accountability and collaboration.



Education Council

Hong Zhang, BSN, RN, SCRNP, Chair

Education Council representatives disseminate current and ongoing educational activities and updates to their nursing units while serving as a resource to identify and address unit-specific educational needs.



Magnet Enculturation Council

Peachie Miranda, BSN, RN, Chair

Members of the Magnet Enculturation Council support the Magnet framework of facilitating professional growth and continuous lifelong learning by increasing the academic progression of education in nursing, promoting continuing competencies, developing leaders and facilitating educational opportunities supporting the advancement of the profession through evidence-based practice.



Nursing Performance Improvement (PI) Council

Heather Davis, BSN, RN, OCN, Chair

As part of shared governance efforts, the Nursing Performance Improvement (PI) Council meets monthly to recommend appropriate actions for quality assurance and performance improvement activities across the organization.



Professional Practice Council

Sean Mullen, ASN, RN, OCN, CNRN, SCRNP, Chair

Members of the Professional Practice Council ensure that nursing practice standards are ethical, current, evidence-based, theoretically sound and aligned with RWJUH Somerset’s strategic goals.

Nurse of the Year Awards

In May 2025, RWJUH Somerset held a celebration to honor Nurse Excellence Award recipients, present scholarships and recognize Nurse Residency Program graduates.



2025 Magnet Nurse of the Year Award Maria Potestas, BSN, RN, CCRN – PACU

With more than 30 years of nursing experience at RWJUH Somerset, Potestas is an indispensable member of the team and a catalyst for positive change. Her relentless pursuit of excellence in patient care has made her a role model for her colleagues and a significant contributor to ongoing performance improvement initiatives. Her extensive involvement in quality improvement projects underscores her belief that continuous improvement is integral to safe and effective care. Potestas' leadership for the PACU patient falls performance improvement project serves as a shining example of her proactive nature and unwavering dedication to patient safety.

Transformational Leadership Award

Jennifer Lettieri, MSN, RN, CCRN, SCRNP – 4 West

Structural Empowerment Award

RRT Committee

Exemplary Professional Practice Award

Jennifer Higgins, BSN, RN, CCRN – Rapid Response Team

New Knowledge, Innovations and Improvements Award

Jocelyn Accetta, BSN, RN – PACU

Community Outreach Award

Ashley Hernandez, ASN, RN – 2 East Cardiac Pavilion

Advanced Practice Provider Award

Samantha Brocato, MSN, RN, APN, FNP-BC – Allied Health Professionals & House Coverage

Nursing Technician/Technologist Award

Lateacha Royer – Oncology Pavilion

Friend of Nursing

Malgorzata Fraczek – Nursing Administration

BSN Magnet Enculturation Scholarship

Giavanna Romero, ASN, RN – Labor & Delivery

DNP Magnet Enculturation Scholarship

Jazmin Cruz, DNP, RN, MEDSURG-BC – Center for Professional Development, Innovation and Research (CPDIR)

The Lynn Kearney Memorial Scholarship Recipients

This scholarship was established to carry on the ideals and legacy of Lynn Kearney, MS, BSN, RN, NE-BC, FABC, former chief nursing officer at RWJUH Somerset, by supporting a new generation of nurses who are pursuing nursing degrees. The scholarship is funded by generous donations to Somerset Health Care Foundation. The 2025 recipients were:

Kailey Akkaway | Meron Dawit, BSN, RN, PMH-BC | Grace Drumgool | Tiffany Geiling, BSN, RN
Jennifer Green, BSN, RN | Jynnelle Hernandez | Joseph Vergal

Additional Awards



Clane Norville, MSN, RN, CEN

Top 40 Under 40 Award,
Somerset County
Business Partnership

RWJUH Somerset Employees of the Month

Lisa Goldeski, ASN, RN
Breast Center



Navdeep Kaur, MSN, RN
Care Management



Brianna Morris, BSN, RN, MEDSURG-BC
CINJ Flex Suite





The DAISY Award

FOR EXTRAORDINARY NURSES

IN MEMORY OF J. PATRICK BARNES

Extraordinary Nurses Recognized with DAISY Awards

Established by the DAISY Foundation™ and coordinated at RWJUH Somerset by the Magnet Enculturation Council, the DAISY Award® recognizes the extraordinary, compassionate care that nurses provide for patients and families.



Ana Bolanos Flores, BSN, RN - Pavilion 1 Medical

A family member wrote on behalf of a patient, "The difference between being a good nurse and an exceptional nurse lies in all the little things...Ana truly took the time to understand what I was feeling during my stay...She is extremely compassionate when she speaks with her patients...For someone who has had frequent hospitalizations, I can say with full confidence that I have never had a more empathic nurse than Ana...She cares and had my best interests at heart. Although I believe all nurses have a gift, in my opinion, Ana has truly found her calling."



Sandra Eskander, BSN, RN - 4 West

In nominating Eskander, a patient wrote, "I genuinely want to thank Sandra for all of her patience, kindness, help and love over the past few days. Sandra truly makes the world a better place; we need more people like Sandra. I want to thank her for continuing to show up and for being there for me; she radiates light. Sandra is truly sunshine and one who demonstrates the finest acts of kindness and love."



Kimberly Gerdes, BA, ADN, RN, RNC-OB - Labor & Delivery

A patient who anticipated C-section pain wrote, "from the moment I met Kim, I felt reassured that she heard me, would advocate for me and would take care of me. I was scared, but she helped to alleviate that...she was relentless in finding adequate pain relief for me. I truly don't know what I would have done without her during that experience...she demonstrated such care, empathy, compassion and commitment to helping me at my most vulnerable...she exemplified what DAISY nurses - and any nurse, really - should aspire to be in this line of work."



Stephen Linn, BSN, RN, CCRN - Rapid Response Team

In nominating Stephen, a colleague wrote, "Stephen has never expressed that something is not part of his job and is always compassionate and creative in finding methods to make our patients the center of our focus. Stephen's dedication to mentorship, emotional intelligence and patient care makes him the heart of his workplace, ensuring that no one faces their challenges alone. His leadership and unwavering compassion are a true testament to outstanding nursing care. He exemplifies and practices the mission, vision and values of our organization."



Leighton "Kat" Moore, BSN, RN - 2 West Cardiac Pavilion

A colleague nominated Moore, writing, "she has embedded her compassion, knowledge, commitment and sense of humor into the fabric of our family unit. She never misses an opportunity to give more, stay late, make someone laugh or show support. Her selflessness and dedication are unmatched. She gives her all to her staff and patients, consistently putting others before herself, and her presence creates a safe and supportive environment for everyone around her. Kat's kindness, compassion and unwavering support are exactly what the DAISY Award represents."



Taylor Pugliese, BSN, RN - 2 West Cardiac Pavilion

In the words of a colleague, "Taylor is more than a nurse; she is a true angel with a special calling. She goes above and beyond for her patients and whoever needs help. Even when Taylor is not the assigned nurse, she is eager to step in and ensure patients are safe. Her proactive nature and commitment to her patients are truly commendable. Taylor exemplifies the mission and vision of RWJUH Somerset and has significantly impacted her unit and nursing care. Her knowledge, willingness to assist others and dedication to her profession make her a perfect DAISY Award nominee."



Nurses Embrace Community Outreach

RWJUH Somerset respects and celebrates the unique backgrounds of its nurses and all employees. The hospital has earned national recognition for its diversity and inclusion efforts, and it encourages and supports related outreach initiatives. Through various community outreach initiatives, nurses and other health care providers partner to promote healthy behaviors, improve access to primary and preventive care and reduce health disparities.

Community Education and Donations

In 2025, the nursing team at RWJUH Somerset led presentations and supported 129 community events and health screenings, including outreach to underserved populations at health fairs, churches and other venues. Nurses also volunteered for mission trips and helped coordinate multiple donation drives for items ranging from back-to-school supplies to Thanksgiving meals and holiday gifts.



Plainfield Family Festival Outreach

RWJUH Somerset conducted health screenings and provided health education and resources at First Lady Tammy Murphy's Family Festival in Plainfield, which was attended by more than 900 people. Nurses and other team members had 1,135 interactions, made 315 referrals and screened 120 individuals. Health screenings included blood pressure and glucose screenings, sleep assessments and lung risk assessments.

Go Red Event Promotes Heart Health

In recognition of American Heart Month, RWJUH Somerset and Bridgewater Commons partnered to present a health-focused family festival and red-styled fashion show featuring heart disease survivors and hospital team members modeling clothing provided by the mall's shops. Nine nurses participated in the event to model clothes, provide health education and conduct blood pressure screenings. With more than 500 attendees, the event also included a teddy bear clinic, heart-healthy nutrition advice and kids' fitness sessions.

Cardiac Screenings Safeguard Athletes

To help detect underlying heart disorders that can trigger cardiac arrest, RWJUH Somerset cardiologists, family practice residents, nurses and technicians conducted free cardiac athletic screenings for 60 student athletes in the Cardiology Diagnostic Testing Department. The screenings included a cardiovascular history and physical exam, blood pressure screening, body metrics, an electrocardiogram and, if indicated, an echocardiogram. Since 2009, the hospital has screened more than 1,300 young athletes.

RWJUH Somerset nurses were also involved in the following outreach activities in 2025:

Nabeedah Abdus-Salaam, BSN, RN
Lenore Rubino Rogers, MSN, RN, OCN, CHPN
Health Education, National Night Out, North Plainfield

Nana Akua Asomani, BSN, RN, CNOR
Erin Behre, BSN, RN, CNOR
Lori Latsko, MSN, RN, CNOR
Ariana Passariello, BSN, RN
Yesenia Torres, ASN, RN
Adopt a Family for Thanksgiving and Christmas

Linnet Angir, BSN, RN, CCRN
Lordina Borja, BSN, RN
Daisy Cardoso, MSN, RN, APN, FNP-BC
Shirley Cuaresma, BSN, RN, RN-BC
Nancy Fischer, BSN, RN
Alison Hosler-Koemm, ASN, RN
Deslin Jackson, BSN, RN
Eileen Kerrigan, BSN, RN
Sarah Kish, BSN, RN
Melissa Polumbo, BSN, RN
Maria Theresa Reyes, BSN, RN
Mary Jane Sibayan, BSN, RN, CPAN, CAPA, MEDSURG-BC
Gemma Tigol, BSN, RN, MEDSURG-BC, CEN
Christine Woolf, BSN, RN, RN-BC
Maria Yavornitski, BSN, RN, RN-BC
Back-to-School Supplies Drive, Somerville

Eniola Aramide, BSN, RN
Mental Wellness: Creating a Healthier You, Foothill Acres, Hillsborough

Ma. Arlene Azores, DNP, RN, RNC-LRNN
Moneeka Bhattacharyya, BSN, RN
Edna Estrada, BSN, RN, CCRN
Sarah Kish, BSN, RN
Conchita Macaro, BSN, RN, RN-BC
Peachie Miranda, BSN, RN
Mary Rowland, BSN, RN, CCRN
Bernadette Tomale, BSN, RN, RNC-LRNN
Blood Pressure and Glucose Screenings, Asian Indian Health Camp, Sri Venkateswara Temple-Balaji Mandir, Bridgewater

Ma. Arlene Azores, DNP, RN, RNC-LRNN
Sheila Castro, BSN, RN, RNC-MNN
Fundraising Drive, MLK Week of Service, Samaritan Homeless Interim Program (SHIP), Somerville

Ma. Arlene Azores, DNP, RN, RNC-LRNN
Taniesha Crawford, BSN, RN
Dulce Dela Fuente, BSN, RN, RN-BC
Kerry Eskay, BSN, RN
Gianna Ferreiras-Moya, BSN, RN, RN-BC
Ashley Moise, BSN, RN
Ana Plaras, BSN, RN, RN-BC
Harvinder Singh, BSN, RN, RNC-MNN
Yesenia Torres, ASN, RN
Blood Pressure Screenings and Modeling, Go Red Fashion Show, Bridgewater Commons

Ma. Arlene Azores, DNP, RN, RNC-LRNN
Marieta Jones, MSN, RN, RNC-OB
Mary Mickelsen, BSN, RN
Blood Pressure and Glucose Screenings, Senior Wellness & Resource Fair, Bridgewater

Rosielynn Borja, BSN, RN
Bernadette Tomale, BSN, RN, RNC-LRNN
Blood Pressure and Glucose Screenings, Tarantino Promenade, RWJUH Somerset

Janet Brooks, BSN, RN
Mission Trip to Ghana, Ghana Association for Medical Aid

Daisy Cardoso, MSN, RN, APN, FNP-BC
Sylvan Staples, ASN, RN
Yesenia Torres, ASN, RN
Blood Pressure Screenings, Bilingual Family Night, Somerset School, North Plainfield

Jamila Carter, MSN, RN
RU Transitioning? Trans Healthcare Event Series, Rutgers University, New Brunswick



Sheila Castro, BSN, RN, RNC-MNN
Health Education, National Night Out, Hillsborough

Sheila Castro, BSN, RN, RNC-MNN
Grace Colipano, BSN, RN
Sarah Kish, BSN, RN
Keyana Nash, ASN, RN
Traycee Ward, BSN, RN, RNC-MNN
*Blood Pressure Screenings and
Sleep Study Risk Assessment, Franklin Day*

Kimberly Cromwell-Piniella, BSN, RN, CBCN, OCN
*Health Education, It's a Pink Party!
Make Time for Mammograms, Steeplechase Cancer Center*



Kimberly Cromwell-Piniella, BSN, RN, CBCN, OCN
Edna Estrada, BSN, RN, CCRN
April Giron, MSN, RN, CCRN
Karen Jahn, BSN, RN, CV-BC
Marieta Jones, MSN, RN, RNC-OB
Sarah Kish, BSN, RN
Tiffany LoBianco, MSN, RN, OCN
Natalie Manfre, BSN, RN, RNC-OB
Melissa Morano, BSN, RN, RNC-OB
Alice Nyangau, BSN, RN
Victor Okani, ASN, RN
Marjorie Pomerantz, BSN, RN, MEDSURG-BC
Lenore Rubino Rogers, MSN, RN, OCN, CHPN
Maria Scibilia, BSN, RN, CCRC
Kendall Squires, BS, ASN, RN
Akua Yeboah, BSN, RN
*Blood Pressure Screenings, Somerset County 4-H Fair,
Bridgewater*

Shirley Cuaresma, BSN, RN, RN-BC
Meron Dawit, BSN, RN, PMH-BC
Edna Estrada, BSN, RN, CCRN
Welda Joseph, MSN, RN, APN, AGNP-C, CDCES
Sarah Kish, BSN, RN
Tenagne Lakew, BSN, RN
Blood Pressure Screenings, Canal Walk Health Fair, Somerset

Shirley Cuaresma, BSN, RN, RN-BC
Ann Elise Poiani, BSN, RN
Ashley Seyer, BSN, RN
Marybeth Strange, BA, RN
Christine Woolf, BSN, RN, RN-BC
Maria Yavornitzki, BSN, RN, RN-BC
Adopt a Family for Thanksgiving and Back-to-School Supplies

Angela Daly, MSN, RN
*Blood Pressure Screenings and Health Education,
Homecoming, First Baptist Church of Lincoln Gardens,
Somerset*

Dagmar Delgado, MSN, RN, APN, AGACNP-BC
Blood Pressure Screenings, North Plainfield Fall Festival

Kathleen Edge, MSN, RN, PCCN/CCRN
Karen Huerta, BSN, RN, CV-BC
Joseph Merida, BSN, RN, CV-BC
Renee Shubiak, BSN, RN, CV-BC
Sara Straub, BSN, RN, PCCN
Serena Varughese, BSN, RN
Cardiac Athletic Screenings, RWJUH Somerset

Jill Ferrante, MSN, RN
Somerset County Food Bank Volunteer, Bridgewater

Gianna Ferreiras-Moya, BSN, RN, RN-BC
Sarah Kish, BSN, RN
Yesenia Torres, ASN, RN
El Poder, Blood Pressure Screenings, RWJUH Somerset

Tiffany Geiling, BSN, RN
Sarah Kish, BSN, RN
*Blood Pressure Screenings, Community Mental Health
& Wellness Event Tabling, Central NJ Chapter of
Jack & Jill of America, First Baptist Church, Somerset*

Jennifer Grosseto, BSN, RN, IBCLC
*Health Education, Birthing Basics; Prenatal Breastfeeding;
Infant Care; Car Seat Safety, RWJUH Somerset
Health Education, Maternal Child Health Tabling Event,
Bridgewater Commons*

Jennifer Grosseto, BSN, RN, IBCLC
Marieta Jones, MSN, RN, RNC-OB
Swapna Kandathil, BSN, RN, ONC
Vanessa Young, MSN, RN
Jan Yu, BSN, RN, OCN
*Health Education and Blood Pressure Screenings,
Plainfield Family Festival*

Rosemarie Gungon, BSN, RN
Felicia McClain, BSN, RN
*Facilitator, Monthly Eating Disorder Support Group,
RWJUH Somerset*

Alison Hosler-Koemm, ASN, RN
*Volunteer Outreach, Immaculate Conception Church,
Somerville: Knitting/Crocheting Volunteer, Knit a Rainbow,
#HATNOTHATE; Project Linens; Caring Casseroles;
Baby Bottle Boomerang*

Rosalynne Javier, BSN, RN, RN-BC
Samantha Jedziniak, BSN, RN
Sarah Kish, BSN, RN
Judith Pagatpatan, BSN, RN
Sophia Rodriguez, BSN, RN
Stroke Risk Screening, RWJUH Somerset

Rosalynne Javier, BSN, RN, RN-BC
Jennifer King, ASN, RN
Sophia Rodriguez, BSN, RN
Blood Pressure, Glucose and Lung Cancer Screenings, BizFest, TD Bank Ballpark, Bridgewater

Rosalynne Javier, BSN, RN, RN-BC
Sarah Kish, BSN, RN
Yesenia Torres, ASN, RN
Blood Pressure and Glucose Screenings, Iglesia Cristiana Vida Integral, Somerville

Rosalynne Javier, BSN, RN, RN-BC
Gbemisola Obidike, BSN, RN, PCCN
Judith Pagatpatan, BSN, RN
Blood Pressure and Glucose Screenings, Pepsi Health Fair, Piscataway

Welda Joseph, MSN, RN, APN, AGNP-C, CDCES
*Glucose Screenings, RWJUH Somerset
Glucose Screenings, Canal Walk Health Fair, Somerset
Diabetes Management Update: Type 2 Explained, Somerville Elks*

Swapna Kandathil, BSN, RN, ONC
*Health Education, Joint Replacement Reunion Dinner, RWJUH Somerset
Women's Health: The Importance of Self-Care, Affinity Federal Credit Union Virtual Education
Mako Robotics: Revolutionizing Joint Replacement Surgery, Somerville Elks*

Melissa Keenan, MSN, RN
Health Education, Lung Force Walk, Bridgewater

Jennifer King, ASN, RN
Glucose Screenings, BizFest, TD Bank Ball Park, Bridgewater

Sarah Kish, BSN, RN
*Blood Pressure Screenings, HealthHike Walking Program, Bridgewater Commons; Jewish Community Center Health Fair, Bridgewater; Stirling Point (Integra), Somerset Health Education, 125th Anniversary Event, RWJUH Somerset; National Night Out, South Bound Brook; Journey Through the Years Exhibit, Bridgewater Commons; Healthier Somerset Coalition Annual Meeting, Bridgewater Manor
Teddy Bear Clinic, Lightbridge Academy, Warren
Holiday Toy Donation, Somerset Family Practice, RWJUH Somerset*

Sarah Kish, BSN, RN
Bernadette Tomale, BSN, RN, RNC-LRNN
Blood Pressure Screenings, Senior Wellness & Resource Fair, Bridgewater

Sarah Kish, BSN, RN
Kerstin Scheper, DNP, RN, OCN, GERO-BC, NE-BC
Health Education, Live Your Best Life: Annual Breast Cancer Awareness Symposium with Elissa Kalver, Bridgewater Manor

Taylor Kohlhepp, MSN, RN, SCRNP, CNL
Stroke Education, Life Skills Day, Somerville

Tenagne Lakew, BSN, RN
Blood Pressure, Cholesterol and Glucose Screenings, RWJUH Somerset

Vaida Liepiene, BSN, RN, CNOR, RNFA
Costa Tome, BSN, RN, CNOR, RNAS-C
Health Education, Somerset County Youth Leadership Tour

Natalie Manfre, BSN, RN, RNC-OB
Career Day Health Education, John F. Kennedy High School, South Plainfield

Sandra McNelis, BSN, RN
Flu Clinic Volunteer, RWJUH Somerset

Mary Mickelsen, BSN, RN
Mary Jane Sibayan, BSN, RN, CPAN, CAPA, MEDSURG-BC
Harvinder Singh, BSN, RN, RNC-MNN
Blood Pressure Screenings, Green Living & Wellness Fair, Hillsborough

Peachie Miranda, BSN, RN
Mission Trip, Camiguin Island, Philippines

Attiyah Muhammad-Callaway, BSN, RN
Health Education, Community Day, First Baptist Church of Lincoln Gardens, Somerset

Keyana Nash, ASN, RN
Karen Nunez Huerta, BSN, RN, RN-BC
Akua Yeboah, BSN, RN
Health Education, National Night Out, Franklin



Ginger Newmark, MSN, RN CCRN, ONC
*Volunteer, North Hunterdon Youth Baseball
Member, Bethlehem Township Parent Teacher Association
Healthy Aging, Somerset County Retired Educators
Association, Somerville Elks*

Clare Norville, MSN, RN, CEN
*Walk and Talk on Rapid Decision Units,
HealthHike Walking Program, Bridgewater Commons*

Marilyn Omabegho, MSN, RN, NE-BC, CDP
*Managing Stress, HealthHike Walking Program,
Bridgewater Commons
Health Education, Community Mental Health &
Wellness Event Tabling, Central NJ Chapter of
Jack & Jill of America, First Baptist Church, Somerset*

Sharon Parrillo, BSN, RN, CIC, CPPS
*Hand Hygiene Demonstration and Health Education,
Woodland School, Warren
Infection Prevention in the School Setting,
Immaculata High School, Somerville
Preventing the Spread of Communicable Disease,
Immaculata High School, Somerville*

Marjorie Pomerantz, BSN, RN, MEDSURG-BC
*Site Leader, Raritan Headwaters Association
Stream Cleanup*

Theresa Powell, BSN, RN
Magnet Fair Volunteer, RWJUH Somerset

Melissa Rivers-Richardson, DNP, RN, APN, FNP-C
*Nutrition Presentation, Sampson G. Smith Middle School,
Somerset
Women's Retreat Health Education,
Community Transformation Church, Newark*

Samantha Robolledo, BSN, RN
*Career Day Health Education,
Randolphville Elementary School, Piscataway*

Kerstin Scheper, DNP, RN, OCN, GERO-BC, NE-BC
*Health Education, Cancer Awareness Service,
First Baptist Church of Lincoln Gardens, Somerset*

Maria Scibilia, BSN, RN, CCRC
Prostate Screening Event, Somerville

Carole Skalski, MSN, RN, CNS
*Cholesterol: The Good, the Bad and the Ugly,
Somerset County Senior Wellness Center, Bridgewater*

Laura Smith, MSN, RN, CNRN
*Stroke Risk Screenings, Steeplechase Cancer Center
Hidden Causes of Heart Attack and Stroke,
Somerville Elks Club
Stroke Education, NJ Stroke Prevention and
Management, Quail Brook Senior Center, Somerset*

Sylvan Staples, ASN, RN
*Health Fair Volunteer, RWJUH Somerset
Health Education, Jazz Fest, Somerville;
Community Event, Good Shepard Lutheran Church,
Somerville; Orgullo Latino, North Plainfield Middle School
and High School
How to Do Business with Healthcare, Basking Ridge Seniors,
Delta Hotel, Somerset Middle School
Flu Vaccines, RWJUH Somerset*

Traycee Ward, BSN, RN, RNC-MNN
*Health Education, Somerset Health Fair, Eternal Life
Christian Center, Somerset*





EXEMPLARY PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

The true essence of a Magnet® organization stems from the nurses' exemplary professional practice. RWJUH Somerset nurses are competent, accountable, autonomous practitioners who uphold ethical, safety and regulatory standards while striving for excellence through the application of evidence-based practice. Our nurses embrace the principles of exemplary professional practice as evidenced by our professional practice model and overarching care delivery model that places the patient and family in the center of all that we do.

Exemplary ICU Outcomes

RWJUH Somerset had a record year in ICU infection prevention, with zero catheter-associated urinary tract infections (CAUTIs), central line-associated bloodstream infections (CLABSIs) or ventilator-associated pneumonias (VAPs).



Nurses have contributed to significant decreases in central line, urinary catheter and ventilator utilization by helping to ensure these modalities are necessary before placement and advocating for removal when clinically appropriate. Effective rounding, enhanced communication with providers and on-site central line education with Vizient also supported these successful outcomes. Daily Epic data analysis helped identify patients at potential risk for infections, with infection preventionist Aurora Bianco-Gilliam, BA, RN, CIC, frequently attending nursing huddles to provide real-time education and recommendations. In addition, respiratory therapists assisted with ventilator utilization considerations.

“Everyone had a role in this incredible achievement,” says Sharon Parrillo, BSN, RN, CIC, CPPS, director of Infection Prevention. “It’s a testament to the commitment of the team across all fronts.”

Beyond supporting these outcomes, Aiko Makino, BSN, RN, CCRN, director of patient care in Critical Care: ICU, CCU & IMCU, focused on helping her team reduce pressure injuries in collaboration with the Wound Care Department. Skin assessments are now ensured and documented in Epic at every shift change, and the Wound Care team implemented a flow chart that has helped new nurses classify stages. Critical Care participated in an RWJBH trial of a new wedge device to offload pressure on specific points in the body. Nurses also received education on preventing device-related pressure injuries from nasogastric tube holders.

“Our focus on prevention demonstrates the strong culture of safety we want to embody in our unit,” says Makino. “Zero harm is not luck; it’s reliability. We achieve this by aligning our team around evidence-based practice and collaboration.”

Additional Strides in Infection Prevention

Across the hospital, RWJUH Somerset nurses and team members also contributed to excellent infection prevention outcomes in the following areas.

- With the support of coaching, education and Epic-based alerts, nurses fully utilized a new protocol empowering them to place *Clostridioides difficile* (C. diff) orders when indicated to proactively identify this infection earlier. The team achieved a significant reduction in infections to 0.124 in 2025, which is 65% below the CMS threshold.
- RWJUH Somerset achieved an exemplary hospital-wide hand hygiene compliance rate of 98.2% and nurses achieved a compliance rate of 98.6%, which were improvements over already strong scores from the prior year.
- The perioperative and surgical teams ensured a zero surgical site infection rate for colon procedures.





Safeguarding Patients from Sepsis

Through various multidisciplinary efforts over the past five years, RWJUH Somerset has significantly reduced severe sepsis mortality among patients.

In 2025, the hospital implemented a new sepsis identification process in which nurses call a rapid response for potential sepsis cases. This triggers an assessment from an advanced practice provider (APP) who can then activate “Code Sepsis” overhead if necessary, and order stat laboratory work if warranted. APPs also receive alerts via Epic so they can review charts, discuss parameters with nurses and initiate a sepsis order set when needed. Education about sepsis order sets – including “badge buddies” that detail the lab work, medication, blood pressure checks and other steps needed – have increased compliance and cross-checking. Likewise, sepsis education is reinforced at RWJUH Somerset’s annual APP Skills Day.

Between 2020 and 2025, the severe sepsis mortality rate decreased by nearly 77% to 13.24%. By the last quarter of 2025, the sepsis composite care score and bundle compliance increased to 92%.

“These outcomes are possible thanks to collaboration across disciplines, including nurses, physicians, APPs, the lab and informatics,” says Megan Madara, MSN, RN, APN-C, administrative director of Advanced Practice Providers. “Identifying sepsis often starts in the Emergency Department, and Dr. Christopher Crean (medical director, Emergency Department) has been integral there in providing ongoing education for ED providers and nurses.”

“By maintaining constant communication and sharing our progress, we’ve been building momentum that has translated into better outcomes,” adds Katie Faggiano, MSN, RN, performance improvement coordinator and sepsis lead on the quality team. “As a high reliability organization, we’re ensuring that everyone has the information they need to safeguard our patients.”



Deirdre Blaus, Chief Administrative Officer, right, with members of the APP team.

RWJUH Somerset Awards and Recognitions

The following national awards and recognitions mark the dedication and efforts of the entire RWJUH Somerset team – including nurses throughout the hospital – in maintaining a strong focus on patient safety and quality.



Leapfrog “A” Hospital Safety Grades

RWJUH Somerset received its second and third consecutive “A” Hospital Safety Grades from the Leapfrog Group in their spring and fall hospital ratings. These ratings mark 16 “A” grades from the independent nonprofit, which evaluates nearly 3,000 hospitals nationwide on their ability to prevent medical errors, accidents, injuries and infections.



Healthgrades Quality Achievements

Healthgrades recognized RWJUH Somerset as one of America’s 250 Best Hospitals for 2025, ranking the hospital in the top 5% nationwide for overall clinical performance. In addition, the hospital earned the following Healthgrades specialty care awards and rankings:

- America’s 100 Best Hospitals for Critical Care Award™
- America’s 100 Best Hospitals for Gastrointestinal Care Award™
- America’s 100 Best Hospitals for Pulmonary Care Award™
- America’s 100 Best Hospitals for Stroke Care Award™
- Specialty Excellence Awards in Gastrointestinal Care, Gastrointestinal Surgery, Neurosciences and Surgical Care, all ranking in the top 10% of hospitals nationwide
- Top 3 ranking in New Jersey for Gastrointestinal Medical Care, Neuroscience Care and Stroke Care
- Top 5 ranking in New Jersey for Critical Care, Gastrointestinal Care and Pulmonary Care



U.S. News & World Report Recognitions

In the *U.S. News & World Report* annual hospital rankings and ratings, RWJUH Somerset achieved a High Performing Specialty rating for Orthopedics, signifying it is in the top 10% in the nation for outcomes, patient experience, advanced capabilities and expert opinion scores. *U.S. News* also rated the hospital as high performing for the care of patients with congestive heart failure and diabetes, and as one of the 2026 Best Hospitals for Maternity Care.



National Stroke Recognition

The American Heart Association and American Stroke Association recognized RWJUH Somerset with the Get With the Guidelines® Stroke GOLD PLUS Award in recognition of the commitment to ensuring stroke patients receive the most appropriate treatment according to nationally recognized, research-based guidelines. The hospital also earned the associations’ Target: Stroke Honor Roll Elite Award and the Target: Type 2 Diabetes Honor Roll Award.



Joint Commission Surveys

After successfully completing a four-day triennial survey with a team of seven surveyors visiting departments throughout the hospital, RWJUH Somerset earned reaccreditation from The Joint Commission. In addition, the hospital’s Stroke Program completed a successful on-site review by The Joint Commission for recertification as an Advanced Primary Stroke Center.



Becker’s 100 Great Community Hospitals List

RWJUH Somerset was honored by *Becker’s Hospital Review* as one of its 100 Great Community Hospitals for 2025. The publication recognized the hospital for its high-quality care and comprehensive health services.

Professional Nursing Certifications

Congratulations to the following nurses for achieving certifications in their specialties in 2025:

Catalina Agosto, MSN, RN, RNC-OB, WHNP, C-EFM, Registered Nurse Certified Inpatient Obstetrics Nurse

Nana Akua Asomani, BSN, RN, CNOR, Certified Operating Room Nurse

Kimberly Bates, MSN, RN, CPPS, CCRN-CMC, Certified Professional in Patient Safety

Angela Hidalgo, BSN, RN, CCRN, Critical Care Registered Nurse

Christine Khalil, BSN, RN, SCRNP, Stroke Certified Registered Nurse

Alfred Kolta, BSN, RN, CCRN, Critical Care Registered Nurse

Stephen Linn, BSN, RN, CCRN, Critical Care Registered Nurse

Natasa Livelli, BSN, RN, MEDSURG-BC, Board-Certified Medical-Surgical Nurse

Matthew Redding, BSN, RN, CCRN, Critical Care Registered Nurse

Maria Christina Sarles, MSN, RN, CCRN, SCRNP, Stroke Certified Registered Nurse

Kelly Sheridan, BSN, RN, CEN, Certified Emergency Nurse

Professional Appointments

Congratulations on these professional appointments:

Kathy Easter, MSN, RN, CCRN, Board of Directors/Treasurer, New Jersey Council of Magnet Organizations (NJCOMO)

Kimberly McKeivitt, BSN, RN, CWON, WCC, OMS, Executive Board Member, St. Stanislaus Kostka Home School Association; Trustee, Sayreville War Memorial High School Touchdown Booster Club

Kerstin Scheper, DNP, RN, OCN, GERO-BC, NE-BC, Board of Directors/Secretary Treasurer, Oncology Nursing Certification Corporation (ONCC)

Laura Smith, MSN, RN, CNRN, President, New Jersey Stroke Coordinator Consortium (NJSCC)

Michael Valendo, DNP, RN, NE-BC, CEN, Advisory Council, Raritan Valley Community College School of Nursing

Kathleen Wilson, MSN, RN, CNL, SCRNP, Board Member, Somerville/Branchburg Youth Football and Cheer Program; Board Member, Junior Somerville Pioneers Wrestling Club

Educational Achievements

Congratulations to the following nurses who earned degrees in 2025:

DNP Degrees

Jazmin Cruz, DNP, RN, MEDSURG-BC, Chamberlain University

Kashawna Still, DNP, RN, PCCN, Rutgers University

MSN Degrees

Ryan Canaria, MSN, RN, APN, Walden University

Jamila Carter, MSN, RN, Montclair State University

Abe Espin-Paredes, MSN, RN, Chamberlain University

Katie Faggiano, MSN, RN, Post University

April Giron, MSN, RN, CCRN, Thomas Edison University

Karyn La Canna, MSN, RN, Western Governors University

Sandy Perez, MSN, RN, Capella University

Vanessa Young, MSN, RN, Chamberlain University

BSN Degrees

Jennifer Colline, MBA, BSN, BA, RN, Thomas Edison University

Tiffany Geiling, BSN, RN, William Patterson University

Alexis Kitrinis, BSN, RN, William Patterson University

Rima Liascaukaite, BSN, RN, Capella University

Colin McKeown, BSN, RN, William Patterson University

Joseph Naples, BSN, RN, Walden University

Fabienne Oukessou, BSN, RN, William Patterson University

Samantha Schlosser, BSN, RN, Capella University

Diana Siguenza, BSN, RN, Capella University

Paul Zdrite, BSN, RN, William Patterson University

Nurse Residency Program Graduates

Congratulations to the following nurses who completed RWJUH Somerset's Nurse Residency Program in 2025:

Ayobami Akingbesote, BSN, RN

Lynette Arhin-Baden, BSN, RN

Georgette Ashford-Afful, BSN, RN

Julisa Barrera, BSN, RN

Claire Beck, BSN, RN

Sara Blair, BSN, RN

Grace Blamo, ASN, RN

Emily Bravo, ASN, RN

Karla Castillo, BSN, RN

Sarah Collier, BSN, RN

Kayla Cooper, BSN, RN

Taylor Crabtree, BSN, RN

Taniesha Crawford, BSN, RN

Brianna Davis, BSN, RN

Riley Francisco, BSN, RN

Noël Frey, BSN, RN

Crisbel Garcia Roa, ASN, RN

Ashley Giacomarra, ASN, RN

Eden Gill, BSN, RN

Katherine Hemley, BSN, RN

Azalea Holly, ASN, RN

Isabelle Jalandoni, BSN, RN

Shannon Kile, BSN, RN

Rachele Kim, BSN, RN

Kaitlyn Lentz, BSN, RN

Emile Lilkha, ADN, RN

Nadine Martinez, ADN, RN

Erin Maselli, ASN, RN

Tiffany Mendez, BSN, RN

Allyssa Merhi, BSN, RN

Marissa Michie, BSN, RN

Julio Morales-Carrera, BSN, RN

Melissa Ortega, ASN, RN

Kailey Paieda, BSN, RN

Catherine Radice, ASN, RN

Ashley Ramos, ASN, RN

Samantha Robollo, BSN, RN

Giavanna Romero, ASN, RN

Elizabeth Rosen, BSN, RN

Katherine Shah, BSN, RN

Chirstena Shehata, BSN, RN

Rebecca Skalski, ADN, RN

Henna Soomro, BSN, RN

Sylvan Staples, ASN, RN

Dayanna Valverde, BSN, RN

Mason Walczak, BSN, RN

Modielle Wallace, ASN, RN

Oscar Zubieta, BSN, RN



NEW KNOWLEDGE, INNOVATIONS AND IMPROVEMENTS

RWJUH Somerset promotes a research-intensive environment and a culture of inquiry and innovation. Nurses at all levels participate in the Nursing Research Council, monthly Journal Club meetings and Nursing Informatics end-user teams to collaborate, plan, implement and evaluate practices, knowledge and innovations new to the organization.

New Rapid Decision Unit Streamlines Care

RWJUH Somerset opened the Kalafer Family Rapid Decision Unit (RDU), an 18-bed unit that functions as an extension of the Emergency Department to improve patient flow and deliver a more streamlined, efficient and patient-centered approach to diagnosis and treatment. Serving as a buffer between the Emergency Department (ED) and inpatient units, the RDU is a comfortable, modern space for patients who require additional testing, monitoring or treatment to determine next steps in their plan of care.

The RDU's emergency medicine nurses, physicians and clinical care technicians provided insight into the design and flow of the unit to best meet patient needs. The unit was named in honor of the Kalafer family, whose contributions of more than \$3.5 million have supported RWJUH Somerset in enhancing care for the community.

"Patients now can wait for additional testing and consultations in private, single rooms instead of a hectic ED setting," says RDU director Clane Norville, MSN, RN, CEN. "This not only frees up space for more critically ill patients arriving for emergency care, but it also avoids admitting patients who can be safely discharged after further evaluation."

Nurses appreciate the streamlined care processes and staffing benefits, while patients benefit from more timely decisions to help them get home faster. Based on initial feedback, Norville anticipates a positive impact on both patient and nurse satisfaction scores.

"It's a great feature for our hospital," he adds. "Our nurses play a pivotal role on the unit as they assess and advocate for patients, coordinate care, provide education and ensure quality and safety."



Members of the RDU nursing team.



Leadership and nurses gathered in the RDU to celebrate the launch of the unit on its first day live.

Robotic Technology for Joint Replacements

A fourth surgical robot was introduced at RWJUH Somerset and is now elevating orthopedics care for patients requiring total knee and total hip replacements. Using Mako 4 SmartRobotics™ Technology, the robot enhances surgical precision and personalization while helping to speed recovery.

Prior to the minimally invasive procedure, the technology enables detailed 3D CT-based imaging to map each patient's unique anatomy for optimal surgical results. It also provides real-time feedback during the procedure, guiding surgeons to preserve healthy tissue and ensure precise implant placement and alignment. Nurses, Central Sterile Processing staff and other team members received hands-on education and training on the new technology, including how to handle equipment and assist during the procedure.

“We always love to learn new things that benefit our patients,” says Lori Latsko, MSN, RN, CNOR, administrative director of Perioperative Services. “With Mako, it's exciting for our staff to be able to see the 3D image line up with the patient's bone in real time. The robot enables the implant to be placed with the highest degree of accuracy, meaning better patient outcomes. In some cases, patients are even discharged the same day.”



Members of the perioperative nursing team during training on the Mako robotic surgical system.



A Novel Option for Breast Reconstruction

To expand surgical options for patients having breast reconstruction following a mastectomy, RWJUH Somerset began offering deep inferior epigastric perforator (DIEP) flap reconstruction. This procedure uses abdominal skin, fat and blood vessels – but not muscle – to rebuild the breast.

Nurses and staff in the OR, Same Day Surgery Unit, PACU, ICU and Pavilion 3 Surgical learned how to assist with the procedure and provide post-operative care through a comprehensive education and Q&A session with plastic and reconstructive surgeon Colin L. Failey, MD, FACS.

“DIEP flap is a complex surgery involving very fine vascular connections and post-op internal and external dopplers to monitor blood flow, and the planning, education and implementation across the team has been seamless,” explains Lori Latsko, MSN, RN, CNOR, administrative director of Perioperative Services. “For patients, the muscle-sparing aspect means an easier recovery compared to other flap procedures. It also provides a more permanent solution than implant reconstruction, often with a more natural look.”



Samantha Dindial, BSN, RN

Implementing Ultrasound-Guided IV Technology

New ultrasound-guided peripheral IV technology is enabling rapid response team (RRT) nurses to insert IVs in more patients with difficult access or poor vasculature, contributing to the hospital's goal to minimize the number of central line insertions and prevent central line-associated bloodstream infections (CLABSIs). The technology visualizes and identifies appropriate veins by size to decrease insertion attempts, increase accuracy and improve success rates.

"This technology has been available in the ICU, but now RRTs have a portable device to assist nurses throughout the hospital when needed," says Monika Ramirez, MSN, RN, PCCN, administrative director of Clinical Operations. "Our RRT nurses received online and hands-on training to be proficient in ultrasound-guided access, which minimizes delays in patient care."

"We're available 24/7 to help nurses deliver appropriate care to patients, and we were happy to learn this skill," adds RRT nurse Samantha Dindial, BSN, RN. "It not only fosters timely access to treatment, but it also contributes to patient satisfaction."



RWJUH Somerset Nurses Disseminate New Knowledge in 2025

Quality Fair Presentations

RWJUH Somerset nurses shared their knowledge through the following poster presentations at the hospital's annual Quality Fair, with the first two advancing to RWJBH's 2025 Quality and Patient Safety Forum.

Jennifer Lettieri, MSN, RN, CCRN, SCRN
 Michael Valendo, DNP, RN, NE-BC, CEN
 Jamie Perry, MSN, RN, NE-BC
 Alexandra Rodriguez, MHA, CPXP

Enhancing Nursing Excellence: Utilization of Commit-to-Sit and Midday Huddles to Improve Unit Performance and Nursing Communication

Marilyn Omabegho, MSN, RN, NE-BC, CDP
 Narinder Dhillon-Athwal, MD
 Kathleen Toomey, MD
 Christopher Crean, MD, FACEP
 Matthew Young, PharmD, BCPS
 Kwame Mensah, MSW
 Karen Kowalenko, DO
 Deborah Feng, PA
 Ryan Norman, MI, AHIP
 Alyssa Kizun, MSW, LCSW, ACM, CCM
 Irene Dela Cruz, BSN, RN, RN-BC
 Sheryl Ciccarella, APN

Sickle Cell Disease Management Task Force and Reductions in Length of Stay

Ma. Arlene Azores, DNP, RN, RNC-LRNN
The Impact of the Breastfeeding Education and Training Program on Perinatal Nurses' Knowledge and Practices and the Hospital's Exclusive Breastfeeding Rate

Sharon Parrillo, BSN, RN, CIC, CPPS
 Ronald Nahass, MD
 Beth Vergara, MSN, RN, RN-BC
 Dominique Kennelly, MLS (ASCP)^{CM}
Influenza Outbreak Management

Nursing Research Studies

Jazmin Cruz, DNP, RN, MEDSURG-BC
 Jennifer Green, BSN, RN
 Jenalee Jenkin, BSN, RN, MEDSURG-BC
 Swapna Kandathil, BSN, RN, ONC
 Angela Daly, MSN, RN
 Helene Pasteur, BSN, BSPH, RN, FN-CSA
 Cesar Torres
 Kathleen Wilson, MSN, RN, CNL, SCRN
Exploring the Impact of Boxed Breathing on Anxiety and Pain in Total Hip Replacement (THR) and Total Knee Replacement (TKR) Patients on the Orthopedic Unit

Kimberly McKeivitt, BSN, RN, CWON, WCC, OMS
 Nicolette Dallessio, BSN, RN, CWOCN
 Kaitlyn Gray, MSN, RN, MEDSURG-BC
 Natasa Livelli, BSN, RN, MEDSURG-BC
 Jazmin Cruz, DNP, RN, MEDSURG-BC
 Kaitlyn Fitzgerald, BSN, RN
 Mary Rowland, BSN, RN, CCRN
 Kathleen Wilson, MSN, RN, CNL, SCRN
Effectiveness of Pressure Injury Staging Algorithm

Internal Poster Presentations

Yelena Shokarova, BSN, RN, PMH-BC
Fall Prevention Education, RWJUH Somerset Fall Fair

Internal Podium/Virtual Presentations

Alison Hosler-Koemm, ASN, RN
Exploring Coping Strategies Used by Registered Nurses Working in a Community Medical Center During the COVID-19 Pandemic, Performance Improvement Council Research Dissemination

Laura Smith, MSN, RN, CNRN
Stroke Education: Hot Topics in Stroke Care, RWJUH Somerset Virtual Presentation

Hong Zhang, BSN, RN, SCRN
Exploring the Impact of Expanded Nurse Manager Coverage on Job Satisfaction for Nurses and Their Perception of Leader Support and Engagement, Education Council Research Dissemination

External Podium/Virtual Presentations

Irene Dela Cruz, BSN, RN, RN-BC
Transforming Patient Experience Through Dyad Leadership and Effective Coaching, What's Right in Health Care® Huron Conference, Boston

Jennalee Jenkin, BSN, RN, MEDSURG-BC
 Madison Johnson, ASN, RN
Effects of Lavender Aromatherapy on Pain in Total Hip and Total Knee Arthroplasty, RWJUH Hamilton Virtual Research Dissemination

Marilyn Omabegho, MSN, RN, NE-BC, CDP
Stress in the Workplace, Affinity Credit Union Virtual Presentation

Kerstin Scheper, DNP, RN, OCN, GERO-BC, NE-BC
Disparities in Mammography Screening and Breast Cancer, Healthier Somerset Coalition Virtual Presentation

Laura Smith, MSN, RN, CNRN
Intracerebral Hemorrhage, EMS Virtual Grand Rounds, Stroke Collaborative
Why Do Stroke Education and Discharge Readiness Matter? New Jersey Statewide Fall 2025 Virtual Stroke Symposium



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