

# Impact Report

PO Box 156 | New Brunswick, NJ 08903 • 732-937-8750 • [rwjuhfoundation@rwjbh.org](mailto:rwjuhfoundation@rwjbh.org) • [rwjuhgiving.org](http://rwjuhgiving.org)

## Psychosocial Care for Pediatric Patients

Hospitalizations are stressful for everyone, especially children. Factor in a global pandemic and the ensuing burdens of limited visitation, closed playrooms and physical isolation, and it is easy to see the potentially devastating effects on pediatric patients.

COVID-19 presented monumental obstacles to care, but not enough to deter the Child Life team at The Bristol-Myers Squibb Children's Hospital at RWJUH. Dedicated to the emotional and psychosocial needs of children and their families, our child life specialists found novel ways of educating, nurturing and supporting this population.

Their efforts resulted in a partial transformation of the Child Life Program to a hybrid format with virtual interactions. Donor contributions allowed the hospital to equip pediatric patients with iPads for accessing a plethora of on-line resources, including educational YouTube videos to prepare children for surgery or explain a complex diagnosis, one-on-one virtual sessions for coping support, and group recreational programming through live streams.

Even families of our littlest patients, babies in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU), benefited from imaginative interventions, such as digital recorders that allowed parents



to read to their newborns, an expanded "Superhero Sibling Club" for brothers and sisters unable to visit, and other programs promoting bonding and neonatal development.

Philanthropists also responded to an unexpected need for toys, which cannot be shared under COVID-19 protocols. In 2020, a virtual toy drive brought thousands of games, books, and other new toys to the hospital, delivering smiles and comfort to children facing illness, injury and trauma.



### It takes a village.

That familiar proverb is used for all kinds of meaningful endeavors, from raising children to building communities. Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital (RWJUH) has always recognized the value of partnership. We recognize that working together is essential for elevating the health and well-being of those we serve.

The past year underscored that commitment more than ever before, as RWJUH confronted a global pandemic and navigated a period of historic consequence—for our nation and our neighborhoods, our lives and our livelihoods, our health care system and our hospital.

An academic medical center and Level 1 Trauma Center, RWJUH has been on the front lines of COVID-19. In 2020, we encountered challenges at every turn, fighting an aggressive and deadly virus along with surges in volume, economic upheaval, and exposed health inequities. Still our vision was unwavering and our spirit was sustained by the power of community. Thanks to the united efforts of employees, physicians, philanthropists, and other partners, our team persevered and even advanced vital new projects. Among the highlights was a June groundbreaking for the hospital's state-of-the-art Surgery Center, which remains a centerpiece of our ongoing capital campaign.

Importantly, 2020 was marked not only by trials but also by triumphs. When the pandemic struck, the RWJUH Foundation established an Emergency Response Fund and donors rallied around the cause, gifting nearly \$1 million. These resources fueled innovation, allowing the hospital to introduce new outreach projects for vulnerable populations—including a community health ambassador program, food and housing assistance, and free women's health screenings—while re-imagining existing initiatives affected by COVID-19.

In this report, we highlight a few impactful projects that would not have been possible without your generosity. Thank you for supporting our hospital through unprecedented adversity and for exemplifying the true meaning of community. Together, we will ensure that RWJUH remains a bedrock of strength, resiliency, healing, and hope throughout the pandemic and for decades to come.

Sincerely,

Mary E. Burke  
Vice President  
Foundation and Development  
Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital

## Combating the COVID-19 Crisis

RWJUH stands ready to address all medical emergencies, including outbreaks of infectious disease. In 2020, our comprehensive emergency preparedness plan was put to the test by the worst pandemic in more than a century—and perhaps the most serious public health crisis in our hospital's history. While our team was trained and equipped to respond, the virus was formidable in both scale and scope. Last spring, as COVID-19 related admissions soared and resources were stretched, we turned to our donors for help. And you answered the call.

Corporate partners, local organizations and individuals contributed monetary gifts along with truckloads of food, supplies and expressions of gratitude. Approximately \$933,000 was raised in a matter of months, which kept our team on the cutting edge of medicine and research—and poised to offer patients the most promising therapies—while allowing RWJUH to extend a broader safety net to a hurting community.

Our pandemic response was propelled by several donor-funded initiatives, including:

### Protective Equipment

Donations enabled RWJUH to secure enough personal protective equipment (PPE)—face masks, N95 respirators, medical gloves, disposable gowns, face shields, goggles and other specialized gear—to safeguard patients and caregivers. Additional resources, combined with support from RWJBarnabas Health, helped to prevent PPE shortages, even during the height of the pandemic.



### Supplemental Training

Fluctuating rates of infection and variances in illness severity required flexibility. As the crisis changed, RWJUH adapted in real time. COVID-19 patients were isolated to mitigate transmission, underutilized areas were transformed into critical care and medical-surgical units, and staff assumed multiple roles. This required supplementary training for all employees and physicians, with at least 40 percent of our staff learning skills outside their usual scope of responsibility. The hospital's Center for Professional Development, Innovation and Research took on the herculean effort, working seven days a week to ensure the hospital could meet rapidly evolving demands. As a result, RWJUH

accommodated every patient need through every stage of the crisis, serving as an epicenter of coronavirus care last spring and resuming normal operations when conditions allowed.

### Monitoring Patients at Home

To keep our doors open, the hospital managed capacity by safely discharging patients with mild and moderate symptoms to reserve beds for individuals with severe disease. Representing one innovative approach, philanthropic donations funded 500 continuous pulse oximeter machines. This portable technology allows staff to remotely monitor a patient's oxygen level and assess the need for additional intervention. Throughout the crisis, the machines enabled more people to recover at home while reducing hospital admissions and lengths of stay. Among those cases was a discharged patient who suddenly required a ventilator. If not for the monitoring system and vigilance of our staff, he may not have survived.



### Community Outreach

The outbreak of COVID-19 exacerbated vulnerabilities within our communities, where many individuals suffer from poverty, food insecurity, overcrowded living conditions, and insufficient health insurance. These conditions worsened exponentially during the pandemic, creating severe hardship for area residents. In partnership with farms, community organizations and other donors, RWJUH provided emergency support for those in need:

- We delivered more than 20,000 pounds of fresh produce and groceries to area families, food pantries, and soup kitchens.
- We offered motel rooms to patients without space to quarantine.
- We distributed over 12,000 COVID Prevention Kits with hand sanitizer, face masks, and bilingual health information.
- We facilitated social and legal assistance for people facing eviction, loss of income or other adversities.

These are just a few examples of how RWJUH mobilized resources to protect the health and welfare of New Brunswick citizens and residents of neighboring communities.

## Ambassadors for Community Health

As the health crisis unfolded, RWJUH realized that the community was vastly unprepared for the pandemic and other medical emergencies. Families, senior citizens and local businesses were not accurately informed about COVID-19, appropriate safety measures, or available resources. These circumstances prompted the hospital to establish a cadre of community health ambassadors, recruiting youth for a program aimed at increasing awareness, improving wellness, and diminishing health disparities.

RWJUH's Community Health Promotions department partnered with the Foundation, RWJ Emergency Medical Services, North Brunswick Community Emergency Response Team, and New Brunswick Health Sciences Technology High School to develop an introductory emergency preparedness course. Thirty-two incoming ninth- and tenth-grade students eagerly participated in the five-week opportunity, which included health education focused on COVID-19 along with first aid, CPR and AED (automated external defibrillator) training. In compliance with stringent safety guidelines, the hospital rented a large venue to conduct in-person classes that permitted socially distanced learning while covering a gamut of topics, from the proper use of personal protective equipment to aiding victims of sudden cardiac arrest.

Ninety-seven percent of participants completed the course, each receiving a \$500 stipend, an emergency supply kit, and Heartsaver CPR/First Aid/AED certification. Most importantly, students left better prepared to prevent and address emergency medical situations while helping their families, friends and neighbors navigate the pandemic and access life-saving interventions.

Due to its overwhelming success, RWJUH plans to repeat the program this fall.



## Protecting Women's Health

Women's health screenings are vitally important, even during a global pandemic. Unfortunately, many women in Middlesex County forego preventative health care because they lack health insurance, child care or transportation, or face language and/or cultural barriers. RWJUH helps women overcome such obstacles by providing up to 200 free mammograms annually to medically underserved women in the community. Additionally, in 2020, the hospital implemented a new outreach program called See, Test & Treat®.

The grant-supported initiative, held on Saturday, October 17, offered free cervical and breast cancer screenings, health education (accounting for cultural and linguistic diversity), and follow-up care to participants requiring additional testing and services.

Seventy-two women, ages 40 to 66, attended the event, which was staffed by volunteers from the hospital, University Radiology Group and Rutgers Robert Wood Johnson Medical School. None of them had visited a doctor for a routine check-up within the last 12 months, and approximately one in four participants had never received a PAP test or mammogram. What a difference a single day can make. While most of the women received a clean bill



of health, two cervical abnormalities and 18 breast abnormalities warranted additional imaging, biopsies and/or surveillance. One breast cancer was diagnosed, at an early stage, when the chance for successful treatment is highest.

With continued donor support, RWJUH plans to make See, Test & Treat® an annual event.