



Left: Supporting nurses became a priority for (standing from left) Lisa Kaplan, Jason Kaplan, Amy Kaplan-Schafer, (seated) Helen Kaplan and Michael Kaplan. **Above:** Jason and Michael Kaplan are, respectively, President and Owner of Kaplan Companies.

A QUIET SPACE

THANKS TO A GENEROUS FAMILY, NURSES WILL SOON HAVE A ROOM TO RETREAT.

The COVID-19 pandemic hit New Jersey hard and fast. At the peak of the first surge in spring 2020, staff at Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital (RWJUH) cared for approximately 300 COVID-19 inpatients each day. As a result, RWJUH saw many more deaths than normal. The heart-wrenching volume took a particular toll on nurses, who were the caregivers spending the most time at the bedside.

When case numbers started to decline, RWJUH sought to assess and assuage staff fatigue, anxiety and trauma. Through a multidisciplinary committee called Resilient Together came a proposal for an accessible, quiet space where nurses or other staff members could retreat to decompress. Called respite rooms, such spaces are designed to feel relaxing, elevating and completely different from other hospital environments. They've also

been shown to boost quality measures of patient care.

PERSONAL APPEAL

Supporting construction of RWJUH's respite room greatly appealed to the Kaplan family, whose business, Kaplan Companies, is one of the largest regional builders in the state. When Michael Kaplan, the patriarch and owner of Kaplan Companies, became ill last fall, nurses at RWJUH not only helped him recover but comforted his wife, Helen.

"Our family felt we needed to show our appreciation," says the couple's daughter, Amy Kaplan-Schafer, who also has nurse friends that experienced the COVID-19 onslaught firsthand. Kaplan Companies has a long-standing

commitment to promoting good in the community. The entire family, including Lisa Kaplan and Jason Kaplan, joined in supporting frontline workers whose care made a difference to so many people.

The respite room will be more than a break room. Its design emphasizes a soothing color palette, features that evoke the natural world, relaxing furniture and high-quality finishes to convey a sense that a user has left the hospital behind. The Kaplan family wants the nurses to have "a quiet, safe haven of their own." They felt it was important for nurses to be able to take a moment for themselves so they can go on providing the best care possible, even in the most challenging situations. The space's quality also signals that a person inside is valued and appreciated.

"We're thrilled that we at Kaplan Companies can do our part to help these wonderful people who risk their lives every day," says Jason Kaplan, President of Kaplan Companies. "Our recognition of nurses shouldn't go away after the COVID-19 pandemic ends. We should be clapping for nurses and doctors every day."

To support the RWJ University Hospital Foundation, visit www.rwjuhgiving.org.

