A Gift that Transformed Lives

On the face of it, there wasn’t anything specific about Eileen Rooney Hausermann’s life in Vermont that might have indicated she would one day be an organ donor.

She grew up in Essex Junction, in a large, healthy family, with no hospital experiences as a child and young woman.

And yet there were small things. When she was just 12 or 13, her mother showed her a Readers Digest article about organ donation. It made an impression.

Then, in 2000, as evening manager at The Ronald McDonald House, she watched a family caring for their son, who was struggling with a second rejection from a kidney transplant. It made an impression.

With the young boy in mind, she began looking into kidney transplantation. Though he passed away before she was able to get through the process, she pursued her interest, undergoing a series of medical and psychological tests before ultimately being approved.

Eileen says that Marta Taylor, organ donation coordinator at then-Fletcher Allen Health Care, asked her every step of the way if she wanted to go forward. And in a process that she says today can only be described as a leap of faith, there was a curveball: tests revealed benign liver lesions, which delayed her becoming a donor for a year.

But in November of 2005, all hurdles had been cleared and Eileen donated a kidney anonymously to Jennifer Dudley. It was the first set of back-to-back surgeries at Fletcher Allen, in which a healthy person donated a kidney to a stranger. Says Marta, “The idea of an anonymous kidney donation – giving a kidney to someone you do not know and have no relationship with, had never been explored in our program before.”

As it turned out, the “stranger” part was temporary. After the surgery, the women decided they wanted to meet – and there began an improbable friendship that lasted until Dudley passed away from colon cancer in 2013.

Today, Eileen says the memories and experiences connected to this altruistic act have had lifelong implications. “Would I do it again? Absolutely. While I lost a physical part of me, I gained so much more: the passion and drive of advocating for organ donation; and, equally important, a deeply meaningful friendship.”

That friendship evolved over the years. Eileen and Jenni, who, coincidentally, both lived in Colchester, forged a bond

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based on their shared experience and a mutual respect and admiration. “Jenni lived a life of adventure and service to others,” says Eileen. “To give someone the ability to carry on a life of adventure and service is, to me, the gift of a lifetime.”

And there are others who, being a part of this experience, benefited from this gift as well. Says Marta, “Working with Eileen throughout this process, I received much more than I gave. Eileen had a profound effect on my career as a nurse and a transplant coordinator. She gave much more than a kidney.”

Today, Eileen continues to advocate for organ donation. “Anyone who’s even willing to look into it – you’re a hero. Talk to your family, address your fears, trust the process. And then take a leap and say, ‘this is what I’m doing. Because it’s in my heart.’”

“Anyone who’s even willing to look into it – you’re a hero. Talk to your family, address your fears, trust the process. And then take a leap and say, ‘this is what I’m doing. Because it’s in my heart.’”

EILEEN ROONEY HAUSERMANN

DONATE LIFE MONTH
On Wednesday, April 4, Governor Scott signed a proclamation declaring April Donate Life month in Vermont.

He was joined by Abhishek Kumar, MD, representatives from the DMV, the Health Department and families who have been touched by organ donation.

Also in attendance, Frank Hewitt, a Woodstock resident, who has gone skydiving four times since receiving his new heart.

UVM Medical Center Fund Grants 2018

By pooling philanthropic gifts from our community and awarding grants to our employees, the UVM Medical Center Fund continues to fuel innovation. To date, two rounds of grants have been awarded and nine innovative projects have been funded.

One of the projects recently awarded is The Culinary Medicine Program, which focuses on plant-based nutrition for our patients, employees and our community.

Studies have shown that eating more fruits and vegetables is associated with a decreased risk of heart disease, stroke and cancer – but, unfortunately, knowing what you’re supposed to be eating doesn’t address the barrier of knowing how to prepare healthier foods.

The Culinary Medicine Program aims to address that gap by marrying the nutritional advice of a registered dietitian with the hands-on cooking instruction of a professional chef. It has already proven effective: 84% of respondents indicate they have made changes to their diet; 87% report using the recipes they were trained to prepare, and 55% report an improvement in health.

With the grant, the program will hire an additional 0.5 FTE, which will allow them to increase participation, expand data collection and expand employee education.

The process for applying for UVM Medical Center Fund Grants in 2018 is currently being updated. Once the process is finalized, details will be posted on the Development page of the intranet.
Siblings

International Adoption for Brother and Sister

Airports are places of transition, defined by events that are both mundane (baggage check) and the extraordinary (travel to far-away places). And sometimes, they are transformative places, where a person’s life is altered and is never quite the same.

So it was for Jonathan Hutchins, senior field service technician and Jennifer Smithers, Clinical Lead PT, brother and sister, who, in front of the JFK terminal on September 23, 2015, were handed their brother and sister babies from Sierra Leone.

Their journey to parenthood began with a single email. A family friend contacted the Hutchins family to say that a set of twins, a boy and a girl, were available for adoption. Their mother had died 15 days after giving birth.

Both Jonathan and his wife Christine, and Jennifer and her husband Greg, had struggled for years to have their own biological children.

Jennifer saw the email at noon. “My first thought was that this could be an answer to our prayers.”

Jonathan was intrigued - yet overwhelmed. They each took a day to think about it, and on Easter Sunday, they discussed it with other family members. As it turns out, their extended family has more experience than many with the realities of raising a person of color in a mostly-white state: Jeanne Hutchins, Jennifer and Jonathan’s stepmother, and her husband had adopted an African American boy, Michael, and raised him here in Vermont.

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“Watching Michael grow up – and watching Jeanne as a mother – made me feel that ‘yes, we could do this,’” says Jennifer.

On Easter Sunday, they made the decision to go forward with the adoption. The next question: who would take whom?

Today, they joke that they talked about tossing a coin – because each of them would have been happy with either child. In the end, it was decided that Jonathan and Christine would adopt the boy and Jennifer and Greg would adopt the girl. Then came their first official act as parents: naming them. They were still “Baby boy and Baby girl.” And that is how James Anson Hutchins and Grace Sierra Smithers came to be.

Over the next several months, Jonathan and Jennifer’s lives were consumed with the logistics of an international adoption. Home studies, paperwork and delays dotted their family’s landscape. But on May 4, 2015, all their work paid off when James and Grace were officially adopted into their families.

Jonathan still remembers the judge asking what would happen to James if “God grants you a child of your own?”

“He’s my son,” Jonathan said, “and he’ll always be my son.”

Today, Jonathan and Jennifer talk about how connected their two children are; and how each child is funny, goofy and brimming with happiness. They talk about how their lives are immeasurably transformed for the better, filled with love and joy.

And most of all, they talk about how, in one moment, their lives took a turn that they could never have anticipated.

“It’s so much more than we ever expected,” they say. “There really aren’t words to explain.”

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**New Residency Program to Improve Transition for New Nurses**

The UVM Medical Center has begun a nurse residency program designed to ease the transition of newly graduated nurses from the classroom to clinical practice. Research indicates programs like this promote quality and safety of care, and reduce turnover rates for first-year nurses.

The one-year experience is based on the Vizient and American Association of Colleges of Nursing (Vizient/AACN) Nurse Residency Program™, and is open to all graduating nurses hired by UVM Medical Center with licensing from an accredited school.

“Nursing is a tough profession, so it helps to share experiences with other new nurses working on other units and in other specialties,” said Kate Flynn, RN, a program participant. “It gives me a sense of comradery.”

The Vizient/AACN Nurse Residency Program curriculum includes sections on leadership, critical decision-making, quality outcomes and incorporating research-based standards into daily patient care. All class members are required to complete an evidence-based practice project during their residency.

“Nursing has been a wonderful profession for me and I want to support and help develop newly graduated nurses so they can enjoy long and fulfilling careers,” said Joanne Barton, MSN, nurse residency coordinator for the UVM Medical Center. “I see newly graduated nurses as one of our greatest resources, and we need to care for them, protect them and nurture them,” she explained.

There are 23 nurses in the first class of residents. Eventually there will be 75–90 graduates every year.
Diabetes Alert Day

More than 350 participated in the recent Diabetes Alert Day, with over 328 undergoing screening. Of those, 13 were identified as being in the “at risk” range for diabetes, and three were identified in the diabetes range.

One person had a screening blood glucose level of above 500, which is considered a medical emergency. That person was assessed at the event and immediately sent to the lab for additional testing. After he was determined to be medically stable, he visited the Endocrinology and Diabetes Clinic, where he was examined and received insulin instruction.

“Many people do not have symptoms and are unaware that they have pre-diabetes or diabetes. Community screening events such as our Diabetes Alert Day help identify people who may be at risk, and allow for early diagnosis, lifestyle modifications and medical management.”

LINDA TILTON
CERTIFIED DIABETES EDUCATOR
Big Change Roundup Raises Over $360,000

The annual “Big Change Roundup for Kids” raised $368,144.62 to support specialized care provided at The University of Vermont Children’s Hospital. The Roundup is the largest fundraiser each year for the hospital, and this is the largest preliminary total in the 13-year history of the event, outpacing last year’s mark of $314,600.

The three-month long coin-collecting campaign is a joint project of the UVM Children’s Hospital and 98.9 WOKO-FM with support from hundreds of local businesses and community groups, and thousands of volunteers from throughout the region. Key sponsors this year included Maplefields, New England Federal Credit Union, Walmart, TC’s RV’s, The Edge Kids and Fitness, and McKenzie Natural Artisan Deli Meats.

Money was raised in a wide variety of ways from door-to-door campaigns, school events, dance marathons and daily collections at businesses throughout the region. This year’s top fundraiser was 13-year old Victoria Reed of Alburgh, who supervised a team that raised more than $32,000.

Visit www.bigchangeroundup.org for more information.

Lewis First, MD, chief of Pediatrics at the UVM Children’s Hospital, and staff from WOKO-FM reveal the preliminary total in the Big Change Roundup for Kids.

A Safe, Low-Cost Treatment for Depression

Learn more about magnesium as an effective treatment for depression in our blog.
Reproductive Endocrinology and Infertility Team Nurses Connect with Patients

Infertility can be a long and difficult journey. For patients who come to the Reproductive Endocrinology and Infertility team (REI), nurses Melody Bresnic and Anne-Marie Newton are there to provide education, information and support.

Both of them say that they can't imagine doing anything else.

An interest in women’s health was their calling to nursing – and their positions on the REI team. For Anne-Marie, there was a personal component: she, too, had struggled to conceive her daughter.

On a day-to-day basis, Melody and Anne-Marie are the primary communicators with the patient. That connection means giving them information about their medications, providing emotional support, and giving them updates on how their treatment is progressing. Ultimately, too, they are the ones who tell women whether they are pregnant or not.

They also play a key role in some of the fertility procedures, such as inseminations and IVF. “I love the variety of our work,” says Melody. “We really get to be a part of every aspect of our patients’ care.”

Further, they both enjoy the teaching aspect of their interactions with patients. “I love patient education,” says Anne-Marie. “That’s a very rewarding part of what we do.”

In the end, for both women, their roles are a reflection of a long-felt interest in women and their health – and a desire to connect with patients at such a meaningful time of life.

“It’s a privilege to work with our patients,” says Melody. “We both feel so lucky to do what we do every day.”

ABOUT THE REPRODUCTIVE MEDICINE AND INFERTILITY CENTER

The Reproductive Medicine and Infertility Center provides medical care covering the entire spectrum of hormonal issues in women as well as comprehensive fertility issues in women, men and couples. Services they provide include In-Vitro Fertilization; Intracytoplasmic sperm injection; ovulation induction and intra-uterine insemination; and donor eggs and sperm.

“Melody and Anne-Marie are an essential part of the REI team. Our patients appreciate the connections they establish, their hard work, and their expertise.”

ELIZABETH MCGEE, MD

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Cancer Patient Plays the Hero

New York State residents Timmy and Kathy Sabins believe in the power of doing good, and no amount of hardship on their end is going to stop them from helping others.

Exhibit A: Timmy, a patient at the UVM Cancer Center, continues to volunteer with Meals on Wheels in spite of regular trips to Vermont for treatment.

It was on one of their recent delivery routes that they noticed smoke coming out of a mobile home. After calling 911, they watched in horror as the front wall of the home literally melted before their eyes. Inside, they heard people scuffling back and forth.

Then they heard a call for help.

Apparently a woman inside had health issues affecting her mobility. Within minutes, they had helped the woman out of the home and into their car, where they waited with her until the Rescue team arrived.

Then they went back to delivering their meals. “For some of these people, we’re the only people they see all day,” says Kathy. “We weren’t going to miss a day.” They even took a few minutes to call Meals on Wheels and ask them to let their clients know that today’s meals would be a bit late.

In spite of the recognition they have received for their efforts, Timmy and Kathy insist that their heroics are something any good neighbor would do. “What were we going to do,” says Timmy, “drive by while people inside are hollering for help?”

And they continue to feel a special connection to the staff at the UVM Cancer Center. “Every doctor there makes us feel like we’re their only patient,” says Kathy. “That’s a pretty special feeling when you’re on a tough road like ours.”

KATHY SABINS

“Every doctor there makes us feel like we’re their only patient. That’s a pretty special feeling when you’re on a tough road like ours.”

KATHY SABINS

PATRICIA ONDOVCHIK, RN
Dialysis/Apheresis Staff Nurse III, Renal Services

“My greatest satisfactions? Advocating for patients and families, providing them with the tools they need to succeed on their journeys, and sharing my experiences and knowledge with patients and staff.”
Volunteer Services by the Numbers

In recognition of Volunteer Services Week, April 15-21, here are some facts and figures about the important work of our volunteers:

• Our 800 active volunteers completed 7,460 hours last month (March).

• On any given weekday we have around 55–60 volunteers putting in hours (30+ AM and 20+ PM).

• The FAVORS Room Service Program received 638 calls last month from patients and/or staff on behalf of patients. Our most frequent requests are for reading glasses; hearing aid batteries; dental floss; deodorant; magnifying glasses; DVD players and movies.

• The FAVORS book carts delivered 380 books and magazines to patients last month.

• Our flower delivery volunteers (including FAVORS volunteers) delivered 100 flower arrangements to patients last month.

• We deliver at least 35 of The Burlington Free Press to patients every week.

• A 100-year-old volunteer still knits a hat a day. Her hats go to the ED, Pediatrics or to the Refugee Clinic at 1 South Prospect Street.

• One of our volunteers – in her 19-year career volunteering in Hem-Onc – brought a homemade coffee cake every Wednesday – for a total of 800 coffee cakes.

• The most popular items are “toe socks” or “cast socks” used by orthopedic patients. We ship these off to Main Campus and Fanny Allen PACUs, the ED, and the Adult and Pediatric Orthopedic Services at Tilley Drive.

• One volunteer has completed 16,000 hours of knitting and sewing. This includes making 3,900 drain bags for the Breast Care Center, Baird 6 and PACU.
Network Update

Michelle LeBeau, RN, MHRM, Named To Lead Two University of Vermont Health Network Hospitals in the North Country

Michelle LeBeau, RN, MHRM, has been named President of Alice Hyde Medical Center (AHMC) and President and Chief Operating Officer of Champlain Valley Physicians Hospital (CVPH), both affiliates of the University of Vermont Health Network.

LeBeau will succeed Stephens Mundy, who for 16 years served with distinction as a health care leader in the North Country. LeBeau has been the Chief Operating Officer at CVPH since 2015 and prior to that was the Vice President of Human Resources.

LeBeau has been a member of the CVPH executive team for seven years and Mundy noted that during that time, she has championed a number of significant initiatives including building an organizational culture that celebrates accountability, teamwork and professional growth. She was instrumental in the development of a blended executive leadership team that now serves both AHMC and CVPH.

LeBeau first joined CVPH as a critical care nurse and she and her family have a long history with health care in the North Country. Her late grandfather, aA.B. Degrandpre, MD, was a well-known and respected general surgeon in the community, practicing for 56 years at the Plattsburgh hospital.

LeBeau and Mundy will be working closely to assure a smooth transition.

The mother of five children, LeBeau resides in Morrisonville.

Moses Ludington Becomes Part of UVM Health Network - Elizabethtown Community Hospital

Though Moses Ludington has had a clinical affiliation with the medical center in Burlington for years, joining the UVM Health Network through its affiliation with Elizabethtown Community Hospital brings additional benefits including improved communication between doctors throughout the network and increased access to specialists, so that patients may not need to travel as often or as far for specialty care. This will lead to better care and a better experience for patients.

An additional advantage is the opportunity to access network resources when working toward regional projects, such as the one to develop the Health and Living Center in Ticonderoga – a project that will redefine the manner in which health care is structured within the region. Moses Ludington is now the cornerstone of the Health and Living Center, composed of a number of health-related organizations along with assisted living and senior living facilities, located adjacent to one another, for the convenience of patients.

Work has been underway to align the administrative, operational and clinical functions of Moses Ludington and Elizabethtown Community Hospital.

Advocating for DREAMers

Read this moving blog written by Juan Conde, ’21, of the UVM College of Medicine, in which he talks about his work in support of DREAMers.
Resident Finds Way to Give Back

We all know how busy residents are. But somehow Anna Zuckerman, MD, pediatric resident at UVM Children’s Hospital, has found the time to fulfill all her responsibilities as a doctor-in-training, but also to give back to her community.

Anna was born in Russia, grew up in Israel, and moved to New Jersey with her family when she was eleven years old. After graduating from McGill University in Montreal as a neuroscience major, Columbia University Medical School, and then conducting research on school-based health centers in the Dominican Republic, Anna arrived in Burlington in 2016 to begin a pediatric residency at the University of Vermont Children’s Hospital.

At the same time, she undertook an unusually challenging child advocacy project. Together with Liz Parris, Winooski school nurse, as well as a large team of physicians and the school administration, Anna worked tirelessly to develop and launch a School-Based Health Center in Winooski, which opened in October 2017.

The need was great; JFK School serves pre-K through high school students in Winooski, one of Vermont’s most diverse communities. Many students are New Americans and English language learners. Here, children may be at risk of not receiving needed medical attention because their parents have no transportation, or cannot take time off from work, or have language barriers.

In addition to providing accessible health services right at the school, the clinic assists families with insurance eligibility, communicates with the child’s primary care provider, and ensures the child has a medical home where his/her health care will continue.

The complicated process of organizing a new center required a team approach as well as leadership and vision. Anna provided that leadership, undertaking all aspects of the work, from planning and convening meetings throughout the community to writing grants to obtain funding – all the while completing her time-intensive residency program.

Anna was recently recognized as an “Outstanding Promising Professional” by KidSafe Collaborative at their annual Outstanding Service Awards ceremony.

Caption: Joining KidSafe in presenting this award to Anna Zuckerman were pediatricians Dr. Jerry Larrabee and Dr. Barb Frankowski.
Evans and Hagan Appointed Members of UVM Medical Center Board of Trustees

The UVM Medical Center Board of Trustees has appointed two new members who will serve four-year terms – John N. Evans, PhD, senior advisor to the president and provost of the University of Vermont and professor emeritus of the Larner College of Medicine; and Joseph F. Hagan, Jr., MD, a clinical professor of pediatrics at the Larner College of Medicine.

Christine Downing, RN, Receives DAISY Award

“...In pre-op with my brother’s fiancé to go into surgery to abort an 18-week gestation fetus with anencephaly. Christine was so kind, patient and compassionate. When messopressin was given prior to surgery it gave my brother’s fiancé pretty bad cramping to the point she felt like pushing, like in labor. Christine did everything in her power to provide comfort for the patient while waiting for the OR to open. The patient actually ended up giving birth to the fetus in the pre-op area with Christine by her side. Christine even cut the umbilical cord. Christine was able to provide profound care and compassion in a time of great sadness. This is completely out of the type of care that she usually provides on a daily basis but she did it with so much empathy. There are many nurses at UVM Medical Center, but this kind of care speaks volumes to the kind of care that is provided to any patient in any situation. Thank you so much, Christine!”

Dorothy Boutin Receives the Good Catch Award

When an uncommon medication was ordered for a patient, Pharmacist Dorothy Boutin was persistent in questioning the order, taking multiple steps beyond conferring with the ordering provider. Eventually, she discovered that the ordering physician believed that this drug had been recommended by a consulting team. However, the consulting specialist had recommended a different medication with a somewhat similar name. Dorothy’s persistence prevented a potential serious medication error. Her SAFE report led to changes in the order entry questions for the uncommonly ordered medication, and provided an opportunity for team review, with focus on team-based care and communications. Good Catch, Dorothy!
Thank you so much, Doctor Lahoud. You and your fellow cardiologist put a stent in my artery yesterday morning. I am very grateful, impressed with the entire procedure (and that Eric Clapton was on when they brought me in the room).

Jonathan Rake