I was scheduled for surgery at UHB on 7/19/2013. To make UHB my first choice was a no-brainer because I believe in the care that we provide at Downstate. I was very confident about how good the care is, but I was not prepared to be blown away by the “above and beyond the call of duty” type of care that I received.

My pretesting swiftly completed several days earlier, I was greeted the morning of surgery with warmth and smiles from staff at the pre op areas. Ms. Matilda Dyer and her staff were excellent and so was the OR staff, Monica Coronado and Rose DeLaPena and their staff.

The warm voices of Dr. Rebecca Twersky and her team of anesthesiologists were sweet music to my ears upon waking up from anesthesia because I immediately knew my pain would be managed to my goal of 0 out of 10 – zero being no pain and ten being the most. I comfortably maintained that zero pain score into NS82 and discharge.

On NS82, ADN Nelcia Trim and her team of wonderful staff made my stay very comfortable.

My daughter had a sleeper bed and was allowed to stay with me overnight. I witnessed hourly rounding first hand, and I can attest: It works!! I did not have to put on my call bell because I was rounded on hourly and staff came as promised, every hour.

All my needs were anticipated and met by the staff of NS82. No wonder NS82 continues to win first prize in Press Ganey awards. And yes, every patient on the floor received the same high level of care and customer service.

I wish to thank Dr. Krishnamurthi Sundaram and his otolaryngology staff, the recovery room staff, the pre-testing staff, and the OR staff, with special thanks to Ms. Trim and all the NS82 staff.

I will continue to recommend SUNY Downstate Medical Center – the best staff work here!
New State Law: Hepatitis C Screening Must Be Offered

Effective January 1, 2014, all patients born between 1945 and 1965 must be offered testing for the Hepatitis C virus whenever they are a patient at a hospital, clinic, or physician’s office, according to a new state law. The law’s intent is to protect baby boomers, who are disproportionately affected by the disease. New York State DOH statistics show that as many as 150,000 New Yorkers are unaware of their Hepatitis C status.

Hepatitis C is known as the “silent killer” because it can attack the liver for over a decade before those affected by it exhibit symptoms.

“This law can save lives,” says George Allen, PhD, CIC, CNOR, director of infection control. “Acute HCV infection is usually asymptomatic. Consequently the characteristic jaundice (yellow eyes) is not seen and although it is possible for someone to become infected with HCV and then spontaneously clear the infection and not develop chronic infection, about 75%-85% of cases become chronic. This can result in liver disease, cirrhosis, liver cancer, and death.

“Treatment is available to prevent individuals from becoming seriously ill and dying from chronic HCV infection. Knowing can save your life.”

Stop Domestic Violence

October was Domestic Violence Awareness Month. On October 23, 2013, close to 100 Downstate members gathered to make a strong statement that domestic violence must end. Each participant held the name of a Brooklyn resident killed by domestic violence in 2011 or 2012 – 51 in all.

“We wanted to give those who have been victimized or affected by domestic violence hope that their family member had not died in vain,” said Lorraine C. Brooks, MPH, CEAP, director of Downstate’s Employee Assistance Program. “Our goal was to send a powerful message that there are people actively working to stop this from happening again.”

Child Life Fundraiser a Success

The Child Life Center raised $7,000 at its recent fundraiser at the Hotel LeBleu, which will cover costs for a weekend staff person for the next six months. Among the event highlights: Pediatrics Chair Dr. Stanley Fisher recognized Maureen Walsh, TH RCN-2, for 30 years of service to Child Life.
Walking to Raise Awareness of Depression and Suicide

On September 29, 2013, 20 psychiatry residents joined Michael Myers, MD, on a walk to raise awareness about depression and suicide. Dr. Myers, professor of clinical psychiatry at Downstate, is also immediate past president of the NYC chapter of the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP).

“Suicide claims more than 38,000 lives each year in the United States alone,” said Dr. Myers.

AFSP sponsors a national series of “Out of the Darkness Walks” to raise awareness and help fund research and education programs. Held in Coney Island, it was AFSP’s first-ever walk in Brooklyn.

The Downstate Team, which came in second place for fundraising with $2,392, was co-captained by PGY4 resident Audra Yadack, MD.

NS 74 Hosts A Very Special Celebration

By Dianne Forbes Woods RN, MA, NE-BC
Deputy Nursing Director

There are many important things in life. Learning, growing, loving, and exploring are all things that each person should take time for. Celebration is another thing that everyone should take time for. Celebration adds an excitement and a lot of fun to life.

One of the most important reasons for celebrations is that they allow us to remember the things in life that truly matter. Recently, I talked with the staff and the nursing leadership of Nursing Units 71/73, 72, and 74 and learned about a very special celebration they have now held for 13 years.

Erica Gumbs, RN, NS74, explained that it was started by Lima Simon, RN, after the tragedy of 9/11. Every staff member was affected in some way and many knew people who had died. The staff felt a need to come together to celebrate life and be thankful for every day.

What would a celebration be without food? Jacqueline Harry, RN, nurse manager NS71/73, told me that the celebration is truly a cultural melting pot – every staff member brings a dish reflective of his or her culture. Each year the celebration alternates between a breakfast and a lunch so that all staff can participate.

“We invite the whole seventh floor and other departments such as Housekeeping, PT/OT, and of course our physicians,” said Cheryl A. Rolston, MA, RN, NE, BC RN, director of nursing.

Ms. Gumbs adds that the celebration is a form of uniting and coming together as one. Each celebration is opened by a holding of hands and a prayer of thanksgiving for life. The prayer is offered by a former staff member, Pastor Evette Williams, who retired last year and has never missed this celebration since it started.

As we celebrate, we allow the stresses of life to fall behind and we spend our time doing things we love with the people we care about. There is something about a celebration that reminds us of the purpose of our life and of the power of our closest relationships.

These nursing units have truly found a way to do just that.
Halloween Fun

College of Medicine students Emily McDonald and Matthew Riscinti accepted the award for “Best Use of Direct Marketing to Healthcare Professionals” on behalf of the Brooklyn Free Clinic at the recent 2012 Media Marketing and Media Awards Ceremony for BFC’s work with CDMiConnect. The honor recognized BFC’s campaign to recruit volunteer physicians and its publicity on Downstate’s offerings in the TEDMED event last April. The campaign helped the clinic book sufficient physician volunteers to cover its needs six weeks in advance, compared to what had historically been week-to-week coverage (“We look forward to recruiting even more of our amazing Downstate physicians!” says Ms. McDonald.) In addition, several first-year medical students have already started organizing a steering-committee for TEDMEDxBrooklyn 2014.

Erica Hipp, second-year occupational therapy student and talented artist, participated in a fundraising project called “Chairs for Humanity,” for the Adaptive Design Association, which creates custom furniture, primarily out of tri-wall corrugated cardboard, for children with disabilities. Joyce Sabari, PhD, OTR, FAOTA, chair of the Occupational Therapy Program in the College of Health Related Professions, notes that the organization reflects the core values of the occupational therapy profession through its integration of art, design, and therapeutic interventions for people with disabilities. Ms. Hipp donated a tri-wall chair painted in pointillism and pattern work.

Todd Sacktor, MD, distinguished professor of physiology and pharmacology and of neurology, was given the honor of delivering the 2013 American Society of Anesthesiologists annual meeting’s prestigious John W. Severinghaus Lecture on Translational Science. This award recognizes physician scientists who perform groundbreaking translational research. Dr. Sacktor’s lecture was titled “Understanding What Happens to Memory during Anesthesia.”

Top photo: On October 31, the first floor of the Basic Sciences Building was taken over by superheroes, army generals, ballerinas, and more, as the Busy Bee pre-K class from the Children’s Center went trick or treating. Proudly representing their classmates are Connor (mom Vernalisa Joseph works in the General Counsel’s Office); Zahara (grandmother Althea Dinham is in Institutional Advancement); and Michael (grandmother Cheryl Hoyte is in the Department of Medicine).

Bottom photo: “Peds ‘R Us,” a Downstate College of Medicine student group, brought Halloween to children on the pediatrics floor through storytelling, face painting, pumpkin decorating, and crafts. “Even our shyest children came of their shells,” says Lisa Smith, director of Child Life. “The students were terrific.”

Peds ‘R Us volunteers included first-year students Eric Mlodzinski, Sinead Brady, Keriann Shalvoy, and Sezzy Yun, and second-year students Cynthia Gaw, Joanne Kwan, Lucy Leid, and Federica Picozzi.