A Regional First:
The Cleft-Craniofacial Center Opens at Albany Med

Albany Med opened a new practice in July that will provide comprehensive treatment for the many patients born in our region each year with cleft and craniofacial abnormalities.

In addition to being the first comprehensive treatment program for these conditions in the region, The Cleft-Craniofacial Center at Albany Medical Center represents a unique model of care where Albany Med physicians will work alongside community-based specialists who represent numerous disciplines. Together, they will treat complex cases in one location.

Patients born with conditions including cleft lips, cleft palates, craniosynostoses, and other dentofacial and craniofacial anomalies typically need to schedule multiple appointments in several different locations to receive the care they need. The new Center will allow patients to see specialists in plastic surgery, orthodontics, dentistry, speech language pathology, genetics and other disciplines in one setting on the same day.

“Our community of providers has come together to help alleviate the strain these complex conditions often place on patients and their families,” said Dr. Oluwaseun Adetayo, MD, FAAP, director of The Cleft-Craniofacial Center and section chief of Pediatric Plastic Surgery at Albany Med.

“Too often, seeking treatment can become a very difficult ordeal for people,” she said. “We hope the establishment of the Center will help ease this burden on patients and their families, while at the same time providing them with the very best in quality team care.”

Other treatment centers able to offer a comparable level of care are located as far away as New York City or out of state.

In addition to Dr. Adetayo, Albany Med physicians serving at the Center will include: pediatric otolaryngologist Jason Mouzakes, MD, pediatric neurosurgeon Matthew Adamo, MD, pediatric geneticist Natasha Shur, MD, pediatric psychologist Bianca Schafer, PhD, and community-based specialists Michael Shubtoni, DDS, a pediatric orthodontist with Albany Braces, Nancy Cavotta, DDS, a pediatric dentist with Capital District Pediatric Dentistry, and Jacqueline Klein, MA, a speech pathologist and professor of communication disorders at The College of Saint Rose.

The opening of the Center coincides with Cleft and Craniofacial Awareness and Prevention Month. For more information please visit, www.amc.edu/cleft-craniofacialcenter.

Generous Gift from Stewart’s Shops and the Dake Family Supports Nurses and the NICU

Albany Med’s Grow Our Own Program, Celebrating Its 11th Graduating Class, to Benefit

Twenty-five Albany Med employees were recognized in June as new registered nurses through Grow Our Own, a program supported by a recent gift of $1 million from Stewart’s Shops and the Dake Family to Albany Medical Center. The program provides current employees with the financial and academic resources to return to school and become registered nurses.

For some of the 2015 graduates, the program provided their first opportunity to attend college, and particularly the NICU and nursing education programs, are key to ensuring our communities’ wellness.”

“Too many years, Stewart’s Shops and the Dake Family have epitomized commitment to community,” said Albany Med President James Barba. “Their great generosity will have a lasting impact on the Medical Center, the patients it saves and the providers who serve them. We are deeply grateful.”

The Grow Our Own program, which is also supported by KeyBank, is designed to take two years, during which the participants average 32 hours per week of work and eight hours of paid work release time to be used for academic pursuits. Once their courses are complete and they pass their licensure exam, Grow Our Own grads agree to work at Albany Med in an acute care setting for up to two years.

Future graduating classes, said Grow Our Own Academic Coordinator Marie Kaye, MS, RN, will benefit greatly from the generosity of Stewart’s Shops and the Dake Family.

“This program is such an important cornerstone for our employees and our community,” Kaye said. “The gift will directly impact nursing educating and the high level of nursing care here at Albany Med. Words can’t express our gratitude.”
Taking Care of a Treasured Entryway

In honor of Albany Medical College’s 175th anniversary, the Alumni Association proudly supported a project to restore a College entrance that dates back to the early 19th century. “There are few visual landmarks as iconic to the College as this one,” said Janet Gargiulo, MD, ’79, recent Alumni Association president, who helped facilitate the restoration. The entryway was part of the Lancaster School, which was designed by renowned 19th-century architect Philip Hooker, whose many projects included the original New York State Capitol building and Albany City Hall. When Albany Medical College was founded in 1839, the Lancaster School became its first home. In 1928, the original façade was moved to New Scotland Avenue, where it has seen the arrival and departure of thousands of Albany Medical College students, as well as its fair share of easterly wind and weather. The Alumni Association’s restoration project was completed in April.

C. Michael DiPersio, PhD, professor at the Center for Cell Biology and Cancer Research, was invited by the National Institutes of Health to serve as a member of the Tumor Progression and Metastasis Study Section of the Center for Scientific Review. Dr. DiPersio begins his four-year service this month. He was selected on the basis of his research accomplishments, publications and other significant scientific achievements.

George T. Hickman, executive vice president and chief information officer, was one of 45 CIOs across the nation nominated for Becker’s Healthcare 2015 Leadership Awards, and one of just five in New York State. Becker’s Hospital Review is a monthly publication dedicated to the analysis of hospitals and health care centers in the U.S.

Kimberly Kilby, MD, ’03, MPH, assistant dean of undergraduate medical education, was named the Family Practice Educator of the Year by the Education Commission of the New York State Academy of Family Physicians. Dr. Kilby was honored for her outstanding contributions in the field of family practice education.

Matthew Markham, senior communications specialist in the Department of Policy, Planning and Communication, recently received a regional Edward R. Murrow Award, the most prestigious honor in broadcast journalism, for his reporting on the Capital Region’s fight against heroin addiction that aired on CBS 6 WRGB in 2014. Markham also received an Emmy Award nomination for the report.

Andrew McCullough, MD, professor of surgery and director of Men’s Health in the Division of Urology, gave numerous presentations this spring. In April, he presented a lecture at the American Society of Andrology’s 40th Annual Conference in Salt Lake City. In May, he taught a course, chaired a symposium and gave five presentations at the American Urological Association’s 110th Annual Meeting in New Orleans. In June, he presented a lecture at the 4th International Consultation on Sexual Medicine in Madrid, Spain.

Adolfo Ramirez-Zamora, MD, the Philly Dale Chair in Movement Disorders in the Department of Neurology, was presented with the H. Richard Tyler Award from the American Academy of Neurology (AAN) in April. The honor provides funding for Dr. Ramirez-Zamora to conduct research using the AAN Rare Books Collection at the Bernard Becker Medical Library at the Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis. The collection has become one of the most important research resources for the history of neurology and the neurosciences in the world.

Ann Rutter, MD, ’08, MS, director of Family Medicine Medical Student Education, co-wrote an article “Community Preceptors & Medical Education: Dispelling Myths About Having a Student in Your Office” that appeared in the spring edition of Family Doctor: A Journal of the New York State Academy of Family Physicians.

Richard Uhl, MD, head of the Division of Orthopaedic Surgery, and Ferdindand Venditti, MD, vice dean for clinical affairs and head of the Albany Med Faculty Physicians group, were named 2015 Honorary Members of the Albany Medical College Alumni Association.

Xujin Judy Zhu, MD, assistant professor of medicine in the Division of Gastroenterology and assistant professor of cardiovascular science, led a translational research study published in the July issue of Gastroenterology, the premier journal in the field. The study, which was co-authored by Jun Yang, MD, PhD, Xiaofeng Zhao, PhD, Archana Patel, MD, Sadra Azizi-Ghannad, MD, ’12, Michael Dolinger, MD, ’14, James Cao, MD, ’97, PhD, Catherine Bartholomew, MD, ’94, Joseph Mazurkiewicz, PhD, David Consi, MD, David Jone, MD, ’97, Yunfei Huang, MD, PhD, and Xujin Judy Zhu, MD, found that noninfectious loose stool by the immunosuppressant rapamycin in organ transplant recipients is due to inhibition of the movement of sodium and water across the intestinal cell membrane.

Anupam Das, a fourth-year PhD candidate in the Center for Cardiovascular Sciences, wrote the article “Factors to Consider When Choosing a Lab for PhD Training” that appeared in the American Society for Cell Biology’s COMPASS Blog in May.

Madeline Haas, ’16, wrote the article “Medical Education in Cambodia” that appeared in the spring edition of Family Doctor: A Journal of the New York State Academy of Family Physicians.

Meghan Yi, ’18, will compete in the HITS Iron Distance Triathlon, a 140.6-mile race, in Kingston on July 11. She will donate all the proceeds she raises to the Alzheimer’s Association, a global nonprofit that aims to find a cure for the disease through the advancement of research. In addition, Yi, who recently ended her tenure on the 2014 Albany Tulip Court, will donate the entirety of the $1,500 scholarship she received to the cause.
A Run to Benefit Research: 
Queensbury 5K Honors Memory of Local Student Athlete

Runners who take to the cross country trails at Queensbury High School for the 3rd Annual Johnathan R. Vasiliou Foundation Zombie Gauntlet 5K on August 1 will not doubt have a great time dodging “zombies” in the woods. And that’s how fun-loving Johnathan would have wanted it. Those runners, however, will also be supporting an organization dedicated to research on the condition that took Johnathan’s life at age 16.

In 2012, the previously healthy Queensbury student and athlete succumbed to sepsis, an extreme bloodstream infection that can occur as a complication of another infection. Johnathan’s family started the foundation in 2013. The foundation will give proceeds from this race to Albany Medical College.

Michelle Lennartz, PhD, a professor and biomedical researcher at the College, is studying why the immune system, which helps us stay healthy, sometimes fails to protect us from conditions like sepsis.

“One consequence of our immune response is that it triggers inflammation, which is responsible for some of the symptoms we experience, like a sore throat with a cold. Sometimes, though, the effects of inflammation can be worse than the infection,” she said.

In sepsis, chemicals released into the bloodstream trigger an overwhelming inflammatory response, which can lead to multi-organ failure and death.

Dr. Lennartz studies inflammation on a molecular level, and she is particularly interested in the role of certain proteins in the activation of macrophages. A macrophage is a type of white blood cell that recognizes and destroys pathogens that cause infection, and also recruits other immune cells to respond. Her focus is on identifying which proteins are involved in this process.

Her work could lead to the discovery of new targets for regulation of inflammation in sepsis and other inflammatory immune conditions, like atherosclerosis and rheumatoid arthritis. In other conditions, like cancer, stimulating macrophages to be more inflammatory may help kill tumor cells.

“The results may improve treatment options for sepsis,” Dr. Lennartz said.

The Johnathan R. Vasiliou Memorial Fund has been established at Albany Medical College. Donations support the training of Albany Medical College students who assist Dr. Lennartz with her research.

The Zombie Gauntlet 5K takes place Saturday, August 1, at Queensbury High School. Please visit jrvfoundation.org.

Run for Research: The Johnathan R. Vasiliou Memorial Foundation

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Albany Med’s Pediatric Group Teaches Parents the ABCs of Interactive Reading

Patients of Albany Med’s Pediatric Group are receiving a healthy dose of reading that could help them become more engaged students, thanks to a new program spearheaded by a pediatric resident.

“Story Time Stars” was initiated by resident Sandhya Iyengar, MD, who worked with local educators to develop the program for children aged six months to six years.

Medical students at the College, who volunteer their time, are taught the principles of dialogic reading, which allows children to become active participants in a story, rather than just passively listening. They are encouraged to physically engage with a book, answer questions about the story and predict what comes next.

The medical students, or “reading ambassadors,” pass on these guidelines to interested parents in 10-minute one-on-one sessions at the time of their child’s appointment.

Dr. Iyengar said she was inspired to launch the program in the wake of another literacy initiative the Pediatric Group adopted earlier this year, “Reach Out and Read,” under the direction of pediatrician Stephen de Waal Malefyt, MD. Through this nationally sponsored program, every patient at Albany Med’s Pediatric Group is presented with a new book at the beginning of their appointment that is theirs to keep.

“I loved the idea of building on this program and really helping parents see that reading with your child not only stimulates their brain development, it enhances your bonding relationship with them,” said Dr. Iyengar, who hopes to expand “Story Time Stars” to more locations in the Capital Region.

“My ultimate goal is to help underserved communities in our area,” she said.

Dr. Iyengar is grateful for the support she’s received from her mentor Dr. de Waal Malefyt, the Albany Public Library, Albany County Healthy Families, Family Reading Partnership, the Capital District Child Care Council, Barnes & Noble and the Standish Family Fund of the Community Foundation for the Greater Capital Region.

Vol. 10, No. 7
July, 2015

ALBANY MED TODAY is published monthly by the Department of Policy, Planning and Communications at Albany Medical Center. Comments and story suggestions can be directed to Public Relations at (518) 262-3421 or albanymedcommunications@mail.alma.edu.
High School Junior Selected as ‘ShenNext Medicine Scholar’

A Shenendehowa High School junior who dreams of blending compassion with science as a future physician has been selected as the second “ShenNext Medicine Scholar.”

Sixteen-year-old Emma Smith was chosen as part of a unique partnership of Shenendehowa High School, Siena College and Albany Medical College. “ShenNext Medicine: Selecting Tomorrow’s Doctors Today” offers the opportunity for a Shen student who wants to become a physician to be accepted more than a year earlier than usual for Siena and Albany Medical College’s combined eight-year program. The initiative offers acceptance to both college and medical school at the same time and includes a scholarship at Siena of $18,000 for four years.

The first ShenNext scholar, selected last year, Ifeoluwa Adelugba, will begin studies at Siena College this fall.

During the past year, Smith and the other finalists participated in a mentoring program with Siena College students and in opportunities for enrichment at Albany Medical College.

“I am thoroughly honored to be named the ShenNext scholar. I have gone through a long process that has helped me to solidify that I am meant to be in medicine,” said Smith. “The fact that I have this opportunity as a junior in high school is almost too good to be true, and I am so grateful for those who have helped to make this program available to me and the future ShenNext scholars.”

The three students who will compete to become the “ShenNext Medicine Scholar 2016” are sophomores Jennifer Vu, Virginia Krause and Kaitlin Davis.

The Ross Building Named

The Biomedical Acceleration and Commercialization Center (BACC) at Albany Medical College was named for Karen C. and Jeffrey S. Ross, MD, in June. The Ross Building, which houses the BACC, is the former S-Building, located at the back of the Medical College.

Dr. Ross, the Cyrus Strong Merrill Professor and chair of the Department of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine, and his wife, Karen, pledged $1 million to the Lifeline campaign earlier this year, the largest gift ever made to Albany Med by a faculty member.

Albany Med Voted Best Hospital in Capital Region

In June, Albany Med was chosen the “Best Hospital” in the Capital Region by Capital Region residents in the Times Union “Best Of” Survey. “Who do we have to thank?” said Albany Med President Jim Barba. “The people in our community, whose voices of support continue to inspire us, and our outstanding employees, whose professional excellence, compassion and dedication to providing the highest quality care are the driving force behind this honor.”