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Bonnie Jacobs was celebrated for her 50 years at Carthage Area Hospital. Elaine M. Avallone/Johnson Newspapers

Carthage Area Hospital celebrates nurse's career

By Elaine M. Avallone

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Thinking she was coming to a mandatory staff meeting on May 29, Carthage Area Hospital registered nurse Bonnie Jacobs was surprised to learn that she was being honored for her 50 years of

employment in the hospital's obstetrics department.

Mrs. Jacobs, attended Canton Agricultural and Technical College utilizing in part a \$400 scholarship from the Carthage Area Hospital Auxiliary. After having her first child, Mrs. Jacobs was hesitant to return to school but

with encouragement from her husband, Carl, and support from her mother, she completed her degree and upon graduation went to work at Carthage Area Hospital and never left.

After 50 years and assisting in more than 24,000 deliveries, she is not ready to call it quits.

"I love doing what I do," she said, noting because of her scholarship from the hospital auxiliary she felt a personal obligation to stay on. "It is so satisfying. I love everybody I work with and the patients. They'll have to carry me out in a wooden box

See CAREER T2

Augustinian Academy offered Scrub Club

By Elaine M. Avallone

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CARTHAGE — Augustinian Academy teamed up with the Fort Drum Regional Health Planning Organization to offer second and third grade girls "Scrub Club" which provides the opportunity to examine different health fields.

FDRHPO's Scrubs Club program, for students from kin-

dergarten through 12th grade is designed to immerse students in the dynamic world of health-care, Scrubs Club provides firsthand insights into the roles, responsibilities, and rewards of serving in this vital field. Through engaging, hands-on activities and interactive exercises, students have the opportunity to experience various health-care occupations.

During the program 10 Augustinian Academy students met for eight sessions.

At the first session, after learning the importance of why most health care professionals wear scrubs each Scrub Club member was issued a set to wear during the sessions.

The students met with Alicia Eddy, the Augustinian Academy school nurse, for the second

session to learn about two tools used by doctors and nurses — a stethoscope and blood pressure cuffs. The club was given a stethoscope to use at the remaining sessions.

"Mrs. Eddy made a sample of one of the stethoscopes," said club advisor Mary Ann Margrey. "What a difference between that one and the ones used today."

At the next session, the club

met with Michael Briggs from Samaritan Hospital.

"Mr. Briggs has an extensive background in EMS and is a Stop the Bleed trainer," Mrs. Margrey explained. "He shared information on bandages and wound care."

For the fourth session club members went back to visit

See SCRUB T7



In recognition of her 50 years at Carthage Area Hospital, Bonnie Jacobs was presented with an Assembly Proclamation. Pictured from left, are Mrs. Jacobs, Tammie Nabywaniec from Assemblyman Kenneth Blankenbush's office, Carthage Area Hospital CEO Richard Duvall and Chet Truskowski, chair of the North Star Health Care Alliance. Elaine M. Avallone/Johnson Newspapers

Career

From T1

— I love Carthage Area Hospital and everyone here from dietary to cleaning have touched my heart and I hope I have touched theirs."

Assemblyman Kenneth Blankenbush's chief of staff Tammie Nabywaniec presented Mrs. Jacobs with an Assembly Proclamation.

"Thank you for delivering all of those babies," Ms. Nabywaniec said. "It is a credit to you and the hospital to have one employer for all of these years."

Hospital CEO Richard Duvall

thanked the OB nurse for her years of dedication and commitment.

"She is like the post office — she's always here," she said. "She even came to work once on a snowmobile."

OB nurse manager Kimberly Sparling said Mrs. Jacob was the reason she took her job.

"She is so committed to moms and babies and always has a smile for patients and co workers," Ms. Sparling said. "It is important to recognize this milestone. She has invested most of her life in her profession and community. I think she is amazing."

Chet Truskowski, chair of the North Star Health Care Alliance

of which Carthage hospital is part of, was in attendance at the celebration.

"I'm amazed that an employee has contributed 50 years and is not retiring," he said. "You are a shining star in North Star."

The hospital's chief medical officer Michael Gordon said Mrs. Jacob has "set the standard for high quality healthcare."

"She holds us all accountable — presenting a sense of excellent quality of care," he said. "We want to keep up with her expectations and we don't want to disappoint."

Reflecting on her career, Mrs. Jacobs said, "There have many memorable births I have been a part of — every birth though is

memorable."

She said she has kept in touch with some of the families and there have been some multigenerational deliveries.

"It kind of makes you feel older than you want to be when you have someone say, 'you delivered me' when they are here to have their baby," she said.

Members of her family were also in on the surprise party and helped to gather pictures for the event.

The Jacobs, who have been married for 53 years, have four children. Mr. Jacob is semi retired, having worked for Kraft Foods and is the owner of Jacob's Place in Copenhagen.

Staff report

LOWVILLE — Lewis County Health System has shared its updated vision, mission and value statements, which serve as guiding principles for the organization moving forward.

"These statements lay the foundation for what Lewis County Health System strives for every day and outlines how we want to move forward as an organization," said Gerald R. Cayer, LCHS chief executive officer. "The updated versions reflect the team's commitment to meeting the health needs of our patients, residents, and community as healthcare continues to change and evolve."

The new vision, mission, and value statements are as follows:

VISION

We commit to providing the communities of Lewis County with access to high-quality, evidence-based, essential rural health services.

MISSION

LCHS is committed to working cooperatively with individuals and organizations to help each individual achieve their desired level of health and well-

See LEWIS T7

Lewis County Health updates vision and mission

Unique Training Opportunity Combats Mental Health and Substance Abuse Crisis

By Holly Boname
FDRHPO

New York State Office of Mental Health TRUST train-the-trainer available in the North Country

(Watertown, NY) – With mental health and substance abuse crises on the rise, Fort Drum Regional Health Planning Organization (FDRHPO) is working to increase training opportunities for healthcare partners throughout the North Country.

According to the 2024 Community Health Survey, 69.6% of North Country residents state they know where to find suicide prevention services if they were to need them. However, only 7.7% of individuals report having referred somebody or accessed these resources themselves.

Identifying the increasing need for mental health and substance abuse services and resources, FDRHPO, through support from the Substance Abuse and Men-

tal Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), provides mental health awareness training to a variety of groups and stakeholders, including educators, healthcare workers, community-based organizations, fire fighters, EMTs, law enforcement, active-duty military, veterans, and their families.

Tim Fayette, Behavioral Health Coordinator with FDRHPO, conducts training throughout the year that includes Adult Mental Health First Aid (AMHFA), Youth Mental Health First Aid (YMHFA), and Question, Persuade and Refer (QPR).

"Since FDRHPO was awarded the SAMHSA Grant in 2023, we have been able to coordinate training throughout Jefferson, Lewis, and St. Lawrence Counties," said Mr. Fayette. "To date, FDRHPO has trained a total of 767 individuals."

The NYS Office of Mental Health (OMH) is also committed to enhancing our regional mental health



Tim Fayette, Behavioral Health Coordinator with FDRHPO, conducts a QPR (Question, Persuade and Refer) training at the Department of Social Services staff on Thursday, Feb. 20, 2025.

Contributed

training. Through the OMH Hospital and Community Connection initiative, a need was identified for healthcare professionals to enhance their skills in trauma-informed de-escalation and crisis prevention.

To fill this gap, OMH will train up to 24 individuals across Jefferson, Lewis, and St. Lawrence Counties as

trainers in their comprehensive TRUST (Therapeutic Relationship and Universal Safety Training) program. This training is designed to enhance skills and knowledge in areas like trauma-informed care, crisis identification and management, de-escalation techniques rooted in empathy, and safety protocols. By adding 24

regional TRUST trainers, the region will then be able to train several healthcare and community organizations on these skills and techniques.

"By increasing the number of TRUST trainers in the region, our regional healthcare and community organizations will feel better equipped to apply trauma-informed de-escalation strategies to respond to patients more safely, effectively, and empathetically," said Lindsay Baldwin, Chief Financial Officer with FDRHPO.

For more information on mental health and substance abuse resources in the North Country, visit www.fdrhpo.org/mental-health-and-substance-use-support. For more information on the many trainings offered by FDRHPO, visit www.fdrhpo.org/mhat-1.

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Ogdensburg's rare dual-hospital campus seeks continued support

By BRIAN KELLY

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OGDENSBURG — As North Star Health Alliance completes its plan for preserving rural healthcare in the north coun-

try, it is looking for continued strong support from the state to help it reach the final phase in the transformation of its Ogdensburg campus.

Since August 2022, North

Star has been working with the state Department of Health on a stabilization plan that unites Claxton-Hepburn Medical Center, Carthage Area Hospital, Claxton-Hepburn Medical

Campus, North Country Orthopaedic Group and Meadowbrook Terrace under a shared framework for leadership and service coordination.

Central to this transformation, according to North Star, is a pioneering Ogdensburg campus where two separately licensed hospitals operate side by side under one roof, a first in New York state.

Claxton-Hepburn Medical Center now serves as a 40-bed inpatient psychiatric hospital, which North Star says is the first stand-alone, not-for-profit facility of its kind in the state, with dedicated units tailored for children, adolescents and adults.

Adjacent to this is the Claxton-Hepburn Medical Campus, a 25-bed acute care hospital managed by Carthage Area Hospital that has completed the final steps for Critical Access Hospital status. It was previously a 137-bed acute care hospital.

In June 2024, the state's Public Health and Health Planning Council voted unanimously to approve the dual-hospital plan, praising it as a model for other rural healthcare systems, according to North Star President and CEO Richard A. Duvall.

"It's the first one in New York State to have a single campus with two hospitals on it," Duvall said. "It has been

nationally, but never in New York. All of this creates a sustainable model for the future of securing rural health care."

Duvall said the separation of the behavioral health unit has improved the traffic flow and patient experience in the emergency room.

"Instead of having the ER doctor whose got an appendix case here, cardiology case there, and then someone in behavioral health crisis over there, it allows for that more individualize, or specialized care. It speeds up the patient experience quite a bit too."

The Claxton Campus successfully completed its critical access survey on June 12, marking an important final milestone in the designation process, which Duvall said will move North Star confidently into the next phase of its strategic plan, focused on strengthening rural healthcare access and sustainability across the north country by better allowing for clinical integration, resource sharing and joint planning, all vital in a rural region.

In addition, North Star's member organizations support over 1,800 jobs across the region and generate \$307 million in annual economic activity. In 2024, North Star's facilities handled more than 325,000 outpatient appointments, 31,000 emergency department visits, 5,000 hospital admissions and welcomed 530 newborns.

He said the changes were made without cutting staff or services. "This is a good news story," he said.

Duvall said all of North Star's accomplishments have come with the strong backing of the state, from the Department of Health up to Gov. Kathleen C. Hochul. Duvall said the governor and DOH's leadership have been unwavering in support of North Star's efforts.

Now, North Star is looking to the state to help with a final piece of its transition and stabilization plan. It was recent-



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See NORTH STAR T7

Samaritan Announces Volunteer Service Award Winner

By Anna Doldo

Samaritan Medical Center

Watertown, N.Y. – At Samaritan, there are volunteers who serve at the hospital, long term care facilities, special events, off-site offices and on various boards of our respective entities. Initiated in 2023, the HIVE (Helpful Indeed - Volunteering Excellence) Award is a way to honor those volunteers who have contributed an extraordinary level of dedication and shown exceptional service to Samaritan while consistently demonstrating the organization's HEART values, which are Honest, Empathetic, Accountable, Respect, and Trustworthy.

Why HIVE? The beehive is symbolic of teamwork, unity, growth, and development. At Samaritan, we are all caregivers, including those who have committed to showing extraordinary compassionate care as a volunteer. We need each other to care for our community.

The HIVE Award complements the existing DAISY Award for Extraordinary Nurses®, the BEE Award (Being Excellent Every Day) honoring other outstanding



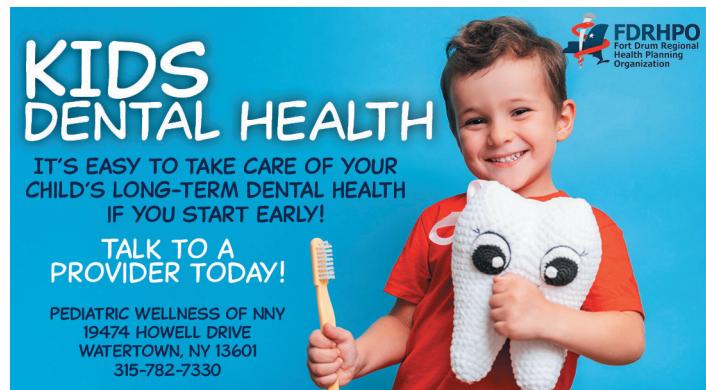
Barbara Gilbert

staff members who support patient care, at the hospital and all outpatient clinics, and the OWL (Outstanding Workers in Long Term Care) for the team of caregivers at the Samaritan Keep Home and Samaritan Summit Village. Altogether, we recognize the amazing caregivers of the Samaritan Health System and the culture we embrace.

Our first recipient for 2025 is Barbara Gilbert. Barbara, a Registered Nurse, serves as a volunteer with the 4 Pavilion (Medical-Surgical) team in the Medical Center.

A Samaritan Caregiver of the unit nominated Gilbert

[See HIVE T7](#)



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Lewis

From T2

ness.

VALUES — Values define our culture and empower those we serve when we practice "I CARE."

INTEGRITY — Do the right thing.

COMPASSION — Show kindness, caring and a willingness to help others.

ACCOUNTABILITY — Be accountable for actions, perfor-

mance and behavior.

RESPECT — Appreciate the feelings, rights, wishes and traditions of others.

EXCELLENCE — Approach every challenge with the determination to exceed expectations.

"As Lewis County Health System embarks on this new chapter, there is continued excitement about the opportunities before us as we integrate these guiding principles into the organization's operations," Mr. Cayler said.

Scrub

From T2

Mrs. Eddy and were introduced to two more medical tools. The school nurse demonstrated the use of a reflex hammer and a thermometer.

"It was fun being able to practice using these tools and learning what they are used for," said Mrs. Margrey. "She made little reflex hammers we could take home."

The next session was on sun-care.

"It is important we take care of our skin and protect our eyes when we are out in the sun," said the club advisor.

There was a visit from Mr. James T. Pharmacist, aka Mr. James Gratch during the sixth session. The retired pharmacist shared valuable information about medicines.

"He showed us the different forms medicines may come in and explained the difference between prescription and over the counter medicines," Mrs. Margrey explained.

A presentation on dental care was given by Donna Farney, a dental hygienist, and Leslie O'Brien, a dental assistant.

"We learned all about our teeth and how to take care of them," the club advisor said. "It was interesting to learn that some professionals specialize in specific types of dental care, such as orthodontists and endodontist."

Mrs. Eddy finished the sessions with data collection.

"Because there is so much

data collected by healthcare professionals, we focused on the data she collects as the school nurse," said Mrs. Margrey. "It was an eye-opener on all the things she needs just for us to go to school."

After completing the eight sessions, the club visited the Carthage Area Hospital to see healthcare professionals at work — visiting radiology, therapy services and cardiology and met with Dr. Mirza M. Ashraf, a cardiologist. Club members were able to see medical equipment and try out some of the therapy equipment.

According to Mrs. Margrey the club sparked interest for some of the students to go into a health field, and others have decided it is not for them.

"We are grateful to the Fort Drum Regional Health Planning Organization for sharing this program with us," said the advisor. "An extra special thank you goes to Tara Elmer, a teacher at Knickerbocker Elementary, who first implemented this program last spring. Watching what she did with her group inspired us to dive right in. Ms. Elmer graciously shared all her materials with us! This has been such an amazing opportunity, and we hope to offer it again to have other students become interested in one of the health fields."

A small graduation ceremony was held for Scrub Club group.

Scrubs Clubs are available to any school district in Jefferson, Lewis, and St. Lawrence counties that is interested in bringing in this curriculum for students from kindergarten through 12th grade.

Samaritan Celebrates Employees at Annual Service Awards Banquet

By Anna Doldo

Samaritan Medical Center

Watertown, NY — Samaritan Health proudly celebrated the dedication and service of its employees who reached twenty-years-in-service or more milestones in 2024 at the annual Service Awards banquet held on May 12, 2025, at the Hilton Garden Inn.

This annual tradition not only acknowledges the individual contributions of longtime employees but also serves as the kickoff to Samaritan Experience Week, a time dedicated to celebrating and appreciating all Samaritan staff. The week coincides with National Hospital and Nursing Home Week, which highlights the essential role hospitals, long term care facilities and healthcare workers play in communities across the nation.

"We are honored to recognize the incredible dedication of our most tenured employees," said John Ziegler, vice president of human resources. "Their commitment to compassionate care is the heart of everything we do at Samaritan and their

dedication to our patients and residents in unparalleled."

The banquet featured a formal dinner, a special recognition ceremony, and heartfelt remarks from leadership expressing gratitude for the enduring commitment of Samaritan's workforce.

Samaritan remains deeply thankful for the exceptional individuals who make its mission possible each day.

20 Years: Kim M. Bigelow, Thomas Carman, Cathleen Marie Ganter, Jessica L. Helm, Deborah A. Kimball, Candice Michele Matthews, Frank T. McIntyre, Gary F. Montondo Jr., Melissa Sue Pearson, Alexander R. Peer, and Katrina Marie Slate.

25 Years: Jenifer Kathleen Anderson, Jennifer Anne Castle, Tara Jean Cortright, Ellen J. Darabander, Patricia C. Finnegan, Michelle Olivine Fleming, Katherine H. Greenwood, Tamara A. Hooker, Raeanne Lafave, Chelsea Lynn Lyndaker, Beth A. Recore, Ruth Anne Rienbeck, Gina L. Shaver, Roxanna Marie Smith, Dandi Leigh Spearance, Linda Lee Turner, Sheree A. Typhair, Regina Marie Wetter-

hahn, Kristi L. Whitfield.

30 Years: Timothy G. Ackley, Michael J. Adair, Faith Aileen Campanaro, Mark A. Cote, Vivian L. Doolittle, Pamela A. Gardner, Candace L. Gault, Susan M. Gokey, Heather Lu Hardy, Jon S. LaFontaine, Valerie A. LaClair, Deborah S. Marshall, Maria C. Middlestate, Susan Mary Pepe, Rebecca S. Randall, Penny L. Ritz, Dr. Maritza A. Santana-Garcia, Kimberly A. Smith, Dierdra D. Sorrell, Gregory M. Thomas, Diane M. Weaver, Dr. Joseph F. Wetterhahn, and Kary M. Wilcox.

35 Years: Kim M. Anderson, Lynn A. Claflin, Alison A. Davidson, Lisa A. Fowler, Yvette Joan Garnsey, Diane Hanson, Jeffrey B. Jones, Andrea Leigh LaFontaine, Amy Jo Macgregor, Dorraine C. McIntosh, Theresa M. Patchen, Sheri L. Peer, Ann Marie Rogers, Christina L. Smith, and Joseph H. Vincent.

40 Years: Janine M. Hawn, Lorraine B. Leroux, Shannin M. Maitland, and Kelli Jo Laclair.

HIVE

From T5

saying, "Barbara consistently goes above and beyond. She takes extra time with pa-

tients, takes opportunities to teach others, and brings little treats to raise the spirits of the staff. Her ability to lead by example and inspire those around her reflects the true spirit of volunteerism."

Those interested in recog-

nizing a Samaritan volunteer may submit an online nomination at samaritanhealth.com/hive there are also paper nomination forms available at the Medical Center and Samaritan Summit Village gift shops.

North Star

From T4

ly invited to apply for funding through Gov. Hochul's Safety Net Transformation Program, which was established in the state's Fiscal Year 2025 Enacted Budget to provide, among other things, both capital and operating resources to safety net hospitals in vulnerable

communities.

Duvall said if North Star's application is successful, the state funding would enable essential facility upgrades and offset temporary revenue shortfalls as the hospitals transition to Critical Access Hospital status.

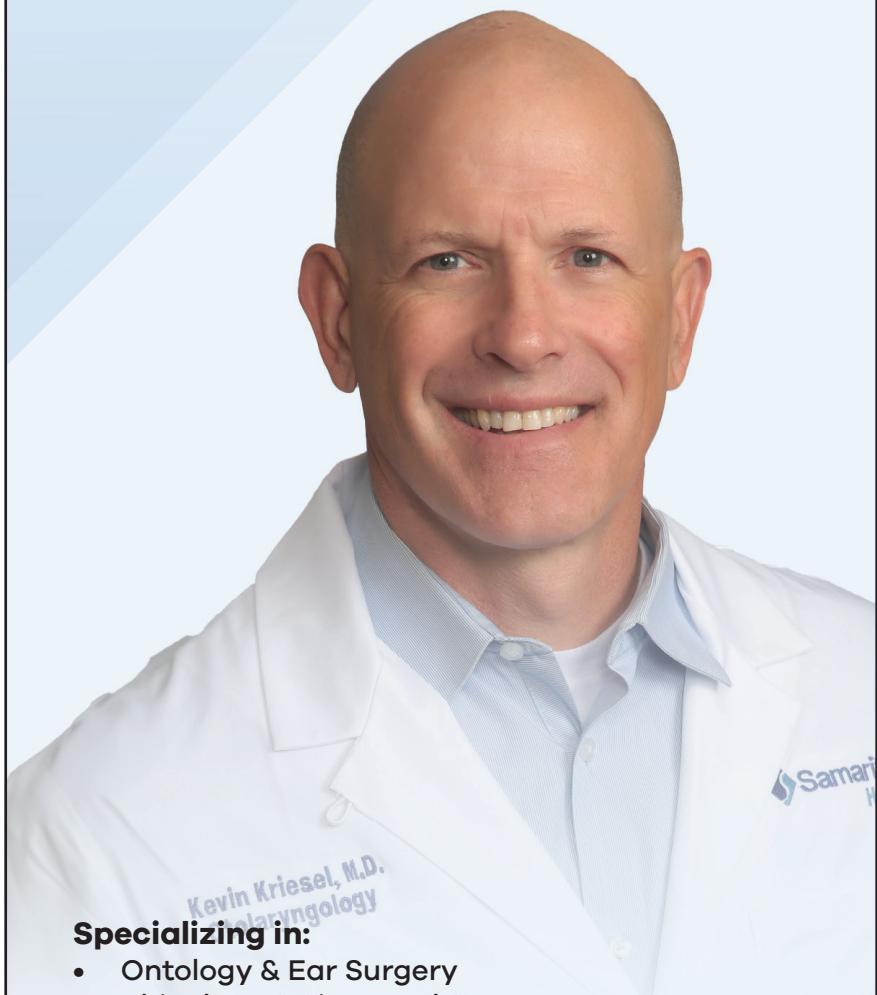
As North Star awaits word on the funding, Duvall expressed the alliance's gratitude to vendors and employees for their continued support

during what he concedes is a financially challenging period. He said, however, the changes being made by North Star will not only help preserve healthcare in the region at a time when many rural hospitals are cutting vital services, but allow for the expansion of specialty care while strengthening care delivery across each of the communities where North Star operates.

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