Mercy honors organ donors and families with Walk of Respect

It was 1 a.m. as Mercy employees began making their way to the East Tower. House Supervisor Trish Bolander had worked with a family when their daughter was first admitted to the Neuro Trauma Main Intensive Care Unit (NTMICU). Now, it was time to say goodbye. Their daughter was leaving this life all too soon; but as an organ donor, she was providing hope for a better quality of life for those receiving her selfless gifts.

When the family appeared in the hallway leading to surgery, they saw something unexpected. The hallway was full of Mercy colleagues. Numbering 100, they represented many departments and demonstrated Mercy’s values. Through their presence, they showed respect for the donor, her family and their colleagues in critical care. Together they provided personalized care, by focusing on the immediate needs of the patient and family.

This was the third time Mercy held an organized Walk of Respect to support organ donors and families. The act of compassion was developed by critical care colleagues, Pastoral Care, Administrative Director of Critical Care Julie Tuel and the Iowa Donor Network (IDN).

“Mercy’s NTMICU cares for the most organ donors in Iowa,” said Julie. “Our dedicated staff provides excellent care to save a life. When that isn’t possible, they work with the family and Iowa Donor Network to try to improve another life.” Julie says the Walk of Respect honors the patient and family at the time a donation is given. It helps provide closure and turns the focus to the good that comes from transplantation. Trish added, “This act of kindness to the family and donor definitely has a healing effect.”

Beginning Feb. 1, the Walk of Respect will become a standard part of critical care at Mercy. In instances where an organ donor will be making his or her final trip to surgery, a chime will sound, and an overhead message will say, “All available hospital employees, please join in the Walk of Respect in the East Tower, Level 1.” Colleagues will have five minutes before the walk begins, and all are invited to participate. A chaplain from Pastoral Care will also light a dedicated electronic candle in Our Lady of Mercy Chapel to signify an organ donation is being received.

Organ donation in Iowa

Organ donation in Iowa has become a significant way to help others. In 2018, IDN set a record, with 74 individuals becoming donors. This resulted in a record 248 lives saved through transplantation. Seventy-three percent of Iowa adults are signed up to donate. That is 1.8M people offering hope through transplantation. Nationally, donor signups average 54%
Skiff President donates wedding dress for infant gowns

Top: Skiff President Laurie Conner with Judy Swenson, longtime seamstress and owner of former Newton business The Bridal Sweet. Bottom: Laurie and Judy show the baby dresses and suits made from Laurie’s wedding dress.

Skiff Medical Center President Laurie Conner has shared a piece of her past to honor families going through difficult times. The Skiff Medical Center president recently donated her wedding dress to be made into infant gowns for babies who are stillborn, or who pass away shortly after birth, and whose parents wish to have them baptized.

The idea to bless grieving parents was one that had been in Laurie’s heart for the past year. “I had researched ways that wedding dresses can be repurposed and discovered this option,” she said. “Having not been able to carry my own children to term, and with no one to pass the dress on to, this was a cause I felt personally connected to.”

Using her own custom patterns, Newton seamstress Judy Swenson crafted more than a dozen tiny gowns and pantsuits from the beautiful satin and lace dress Laurie had worn during her 1990 wedding to Kevin Conner. The outfits have been donated to the neonatal intensive care unit at Mercy Medical Center – Des Moines. The custom pieces were so beautiful, and the gesture so profound, that Kathy Goetz, vice president of Women’s & Children’s Services, is hoping to build upon this program by soliciting volunteer seamstresses and women who would like to donate their wedding dresses.

“I was so very touched by Laurie’s donation,” Kathy said. “It truly exemplifies our cultural belief of ‘personalized care.’ Laurie understands the grief families experience at times of loss, and her gift demonstrates the compassion and empathy that are our Mercy values. Our team was so moved by this act of love.”

For more information about the Perinatal Hospice program at Mercy, please contact Ann Valdez at (515) 358-3000.

General Surgery and Pre-Surgery teams recognized

The General Surgery Team and the Pre-Surgery Team were recently recognized by the Quality Management Department for their initiation and implementation of the ERAS (Enhanced Recovery After Surgery) program with significant reduction in colorectal surgery surgical site infections. Other departments who have been recognized over the past few years include:

• 6N – 100% compliance with all stroke core measures
• Labor/Birthing – 100% compliance with elective delivery core measure
• 8N – 100% compliance with immunization core measure for first month of flu season
• 9S – 100% compliance with immunization core measure for first quarter of flu season
• 8S – 100% compliance with immunization core measure for first quarter of flu season
• MWL 5 – 100% compliance with critical results documentation and timeliness
• 5S – 100% compliance with VTE prophylaxis for five months and 100% critical lab documentation
• 5N – 100% compliance with VTE prophylaxis for four months
• NICU – 100% compliance with NICU central line care from June 2016-August 2017
• 7S – Zero CLABSI & Zero CAUTI for calendar year 2017
• 7N – Reduction in patient falls including falls with major injury from FY 2017-FY 2018

Congratulations to…

Jennifer McCawley, Mercy Cancer Center Radiation Oncology, and Michael, on the birth of their son, Jamis John. Jamis was born on Dec. 27.

Josiah Janecek, 7 South, and Mercedes, on the birth of their son, James Matthew. James was born on Jan. 15 and was welcomed home by Henry, age 3.

Nathan Riggle, Mercy ACO, and Jo, on the birth of their son, Henry Aaron. Henry was born on Jan. 16 and was welcomed home by June, age 4.

Sympathy to…

Leah Hemmingsen, Rehab, on the death of her mother.

Tom Lang, Plant Operations, on the death of his father.

New provider

Caitlin Arey, ARNP

Iowa Heart Center

Contact us:
The Bulletin is published weekly for staff and friends of Mercy Medical Center, 1111 6th Ave., Des Moines, Iowa. If you are interested in submitting information to be published in the Bulletin, send it to PR and Marketing or call 515-247-3050.