

University Hospital Honors Community Clergy



The Reverend Louise Scott-Rountree, Director of Mayor Ras Baraka's Office of Clergy Affairs, was the featured speaker at the second annual Interfaith Blessing of Hands event at University Hospital.

University Hospital hosted its second annual Interfaith Blessing of Hands to celebrate the contributions of its Community Clergy, welcoming The Reverend Louise Scott-Rountree, Director of Mayor Ras Baraka's Office of Clergy Affairs, as the guest speaker. Father Jose Bello Wilson of the Archdiocese of Newark and Rev. Dr. Jean Cole-Baltram were honored as "Hospital Heroes" for their contributions to the chaplaincy program.

During the daylong event, Community Chaplains and Chaplain Interns circulated throughout the hospital to provide blessings to UH staff. "We're offering back



Hospital Chaplain Helen Kurczynski (right) with Rutgers NJMS student Jessica Sher who organized an interfaith panel on 'Faith and Spirituality at the Bedside.'

and providing blessings; it's a cycle of gratitude," said UH Chaplain Helen Kurczynski, MDiv, BCC.

The hospital's seven community clergy and four chaplain interns were recognized for their contributions over the past year which totaled 1,755 hours of visits to more than 3,500 patients and 1,100 family members. The Archdiocese of Newark, through the services of Father Wilson, Father Bob McLaughlin and Father Josephat Kalema, contributed 286 hours of visits, anointing 342 patients.

Special note was made of a wedding ceremony that the Chaplaincy Office organized in less than 24 hours for a terminally ill patient and his fiancée in the Intensive Care Unit.

Reverend Rountree, in her remarks, stressed the importance of the faith-based community being part of the healing process.

"Every one of us has a piece of us that works in this hospital, that has a healing piece," she said. "It depends on how you address someone, it depends on your attitude towards individuals and the same goes for our faith-based leaders, because of the calling and the assignment of our lives."

Reverend Rountree said the clergy alliance she

manages in the mayor's office has grown to 800 priests, rabbis and imams.

"What I explain to them is that we all believe in something," she said. "I choose to believe in God. I don't question the rabbi, I don't question the imams, I don't question the Baptist, the Methodist or the Episcopalians. When they come to work with me, I say,

'This is not about you, it's always about the people.' So whatever you do, don't come to me and say, 'Well if they're not a Muslim, I can't pray for them, or they're not a Christian, I can't pray for them.'

"We are working together for the cause of the people, not our religion," she said.

Reverend Rountree stressed the importance of positive thinking and believing in one's self to achieve happiness and success.

"If your mind is not growing in a positive way, then that's a problem for the people that you are serving and ministering to," she said. "It is not an easy task to get up in the morning with your own issues and have to come into an establishment where there's a million other issues that are not yours. You have to put your issues on the side — no matter what happened at home, no matter what happened with your children, no matter what argument you had with your husband or your girlfriend, no matter what arthritis you had, no matter what's going in your little toe or your finger — you have to come in here with a smile.

"Not every occasion is a smiling occasion," she said. "You can be faced with a gunshot victim, or a heart attack victim, or someone's husband running down the hall wanting to cuss you out because they think you have not done everything you could have done to save their loved one's life.

"If you learn to be positive all the time, you will realize the power of human thought on your life," Reverend Rountree said.

During the event, two community chaplains were recognized as "My Hospital Heroes." The program was created by The Foundation for University Hospital to allow patients and hospital staff to recognize UH employees for their contributions.

Dr. Adam Fox, a trauma surgeon, presented a Hero award to Father Wilson in recognition of the



Dr. Adam Fox (right) presented Father Jose Bello Wilson of the Archdiocese of Newark with a 'Hospital Hero' award honoring his decade of service ministering to UH patients.

3,500 hours of service he has provided UH over the past decade. Father Wilson delivers Friday masses, runs the Ash Wednesday service and leads a team of Eucharist ministers.

"The frequent refrain I hear is, when he's asked to do something — 'Yes, I'll be there in 10 minutes'," Dr. Fox said. "He exemplifies a humility, a kindness and compassion that we want to recognize as a Hero



Former UH Emergency Room Nursing Director Michelle Hepburn with Rev. Dr. Jean Cole-Baltram who also was honored as a 'Hospital Hero.'

for this year."

Michelle Hepburn, Emergency Department Nursing Director at the time of the event, said the ED and trauma unit has developed a cadre of Community Clergy and Chaplain Interns to provide spiritual and emotional support. She presented the second Hero award to Rev. Dr. Jean Cole-Baltram, a former UH employee, who visits twice a week with patients in the ED and trauma unit. In response to employee requests, she began offering twice-a-week meditation classes in the chapel.

In addition to Reverend Baltram and the Archdiocese of Newark priests, the Community Clergy includes: Chaplain Dawn Bowles, Imam Abdul Aleem Razzaqq, Minister Sergio Artiles, Pastor Warren White, Reverend Andre Scott and Reverend Louella McIntosh.

The chaplaincy program recently introduced PrayerCare, a service provided by the hospital's spiritual care volunteers to offer patients the comfort of non-denominational prayer during their stay. Prayer requests are prayed over daily, and patients receive a special PrayerCare visit when the spiritual care volunteers are on site (usually once a week).

In December, the Healthcare Foundation Center for Humanism and Medicine at Rutgers New Jersey Medical School hosted "Faith and Spirituality at the Bedside: An Interfaith Panel." Moderated by Chaplain Kurczynski, the panel included Imam Razzaqq, Pastor White and Father McLaughlin with Kadam Donna Campinelli (Buddhism), Yehuda Eidensohn (Judaism) and Dina Bandhu das (Hindusim).

More than 60 medical staff plus 10 staff attended the event which was organized by Rutgers NJMS student Jessica Sher in partnership with the Jewish Medical Society, Christian Medical & Dental Association and Muslim Student Association.

Watch for these upcoming events with University Hospital:

February 2:

Pink Goes Red! Day; 3 to 5 p.m.,
Newark City Hall, 920 Broad St.
Remarks by Dr. Pallavi Solanki,
blood pressure screenings

February 19:

Workshop on Women's Heart Health;
11 a.m. to 1 p.m.,
Weequahic Family Success Center,
1065 Bergen St., Newark;
workshop and blood pressure screenings