We Are Your Community Hospital

2021 REPORT TO THE COMMUNITY
Among the few silver linings of the terrible pandemic has been a recognition that TBHC is a valuable community resource.
A community, at its heart, is people: Those who live in proximity, who experience together the successes and challenges of the neighborhood they share; people who witness change, who bring it about, who strive for a better tomorrow for everyone.

For more than 175 years, The Brooklyn Hospital Center (TBHC) has been serving our community. In fact, we are your community. We live here and work here. Your challenges are our challenges. Our success is your success.

Among the few silver linings of the terrible pandemic has been a recognition that TBHC is a valuable community resource. As such, we are no longer one-direction with our patients. We want them to come to us, but we are also going to them.

We are reaching out to our people more innovatively. We are inviting the community in with new facilities and services, and we are thinking of fresh ways to connect. Even our new facilities are more apparent on the street, more easily accessed and noticed.

What we saw in 2021, and will continue to see in 2022, is the result of many long-term strategies coming into place. We will unveil our new Emergency Department, spring of 2022. There is a new dialysis center on Myrtle Avenue and a new cancer center opening nearby in 2022. We remain committed to upgrading our main campus, as well. There are new telemedicine and telelearning capabilities, and, because the pandemic has not ended, we continue to provide the latest Covid treatments and, as importantly, the latest vaccines and boosters.

The people of Brooklyn do not need to cross a river to get the best healthcare available. The quality care that TBHC offers didn’t just happen, in the same way that communities don’t just happen. It came through intention and dedication. We love our neighborhood and our neighbors and are dedicated to our mission, Keeping Brooklyn Healthy. We are your community hospital.

Lizanne Fontaine
CHAIR OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Gary G. Terrinoni
PRESIDENT & CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
I. Reaching Out to the Community

The pandemic may have hindered in-person outreach early in 2021, but as soon as the community recovered, we went out once again. Education, screenings, health fairs and partnering with community organizations and elected officials — this is the bread and butter of good community outreach, and no one does it better than TBHC.

But there was a new shift in how we envisioned “outreach.” For instance, we opened new facilities with consideration to proximity to main streets, with a focus on going to where the people are.
Beyond the patient exam or the compassion shown toward visiting family, what does it mean to connect with our community? Sakibeh Mustafa, Community Liaison, knows that outreach at a grassroots level is key. “The outreach team — staff, residents and medical students who sign up to help — provides education to anyone who asks. We fine-tune the programming to the audience,” she says. “We also are visible at events. Our community needs to know that we are here, around the corner.”

Covid did not stop community relations, it just forced it away from in-person activities. Sakibeh reached out to more than 100 organizations during the pandemic looking for virtual ways to provide health programming. By spring of 2021, she and TBHC came roaring back into the streets!

In August, TBHC was an integral part of National Night Out events, conducting more than 60 blood pressure screenings, including one with Congressman Hakeem Jeffries!

Our efforts with electeds go beyond taking their blood pressure, as fun as that is. “We cultivate relationships with elected officials and their staff at federal, state and local levels,” says Lenny H. Singletary, III, Senior Vice President, External Affairs, Strategy and Marketing. “We want them to know about our mission, strategy and goals. These are individuals who can help us when we are expanding facilities or services.”

One example of nurturing these vital relationships started during Covid. Mr. Singletary offered the

Senator Chuck Schumer at a community Juneteenth event. Flanking him, Ms. Mustafa and Dady Joseph, Patient Care Associate.
hospital as a backdrop for Covid-related press conferences to the then Brooklyn Borough President, and he took us up on the offer. That man today is New York City Mayor Eric Adams.

There is no clearer proof of our continuous commitment to outreach than our Community Advisory Board (CAB). “CAB members comprise a diverse group deeply entrenched in the community, its institutions and businesses,” explains Mr. Singletary. “This team helps us design services that target local healthcare needs. The CAB also includes top hospital officials such as President and CEO Gary Terrinoni, so leaders can learn of community needs firsthand.”

Whether at a local health fair, Borough Hall or a CAB meeting, TBHC is reaching out to our community. It’s in our DNA.

There is no clearer proof of our continuous commitment to outreach than our Community Advisory Board.
While it’s true TBHC got here first in 1845, Fort Greene Park has been our next-door neighbor since 1847 (formally receiving its current name in 1897). Like good neighbors everywhere, we support each other.

As 2020 turned to 2021, we partnered with the Fort Greene Park Conservancy and New York City’s Parks Department to establish a Garden of Heroes near the southwest entrance to the park. Six limber pine trees were planted to honor each of the six hospital employees lost in the 2020 Covid surge. At maturity, the trees will reach 50 feet and overlook both the hospital and a memorial bench we placed near the trees.

In 2021, the Conservancy recognized the hard work of our Food & Nutrition Department. Director Greg Vitale and Retail Manager Lou Motola were included in a Community Heroes project. Their photos are on a banner placed prominently along the border of the park and the hospital.

TBHC and the Conservancy also partner to provide the community with enhanced forms of wellness, such as yoga classes or walking programs.

Relationships deepen in smaller ways, too. A nurse on break takes a stroll through the park’s paths. A new mom gazes at the greenery from her park-side maternity room. Sometimes, community is formed one quiet act at time.

A key component of being your community hospital is making vital healthcare services convenient to you, so it’s easy to take advantage of our excellent care right here in Brooklyn. “Being visible in the community shows we are part of the community,” says Mr. Singletary.

Two shining examples of this “on the street” strategy are Myrtle Avenue Dialysis and, coming in 2022, The Brooklyn Cancer Center, located at 86 Fleet Street.

Our Dialysis Center already stood out as an example of TBHC’s award-winning array of services. In its former location it was one of just 13 such facilities in the New York region to earn the highest ranking of five stars from the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Service (CMS). Now, patients in need of
dialysis receive it on easy-to-access Myrtle Avenue, all in a new, modern facility staffed with compassionate, expert professionals.

“The transition to 218 Myrtle Avenue creates a better situation for all the patients,” says Kenneth Brown, Director of Hemodialysis. “It’s a more comfortable place for treatment and we offer state-of-the-art machines. All of that combines to give a greater level of confidence and a more personalized experience.”

In a similar vein, Brooklynites in the Fort Greene and Downtown areas need not go anywhere else to access the best cancer treatment available. In 2022, The Brooklyn Cancer Center moves out of the hospital into its own facility, also located on Myrtle Avenue, just a short walk from the hospital.

In early 2021, TBHC formed a partnership with New York Cancer & Blood Specialists, one of the nation’s top oncology
practices and launched The Brooklyn Cancer Center. In May, Maxim Shulimovich, MD, came on board as the new Chief of Hematology and Medical Oncology.

“Our partnership with New York Cancer & Blood and the facility we will open this year in the heart of Brooklyn means the very best care for cancer patients is available right here,” says Dr. Shulimovich. “I have learned that, beyond the incredible advances of chemotherapy and immunotherapy, treating patients is a matter of personal listening, learning and understanding that we are working not only with their bodies and minds but also with their families. Our new home will help make that happen.”
II. Inviting the Community In

Being downtown Brooklyn’s community hospital means much more than reaching out and being on the streets, among our neighbors. It also means inviting people and families into our hospital on DeKalb Avenue, in the heart of Fort Greene. It means winning the confidence of a pandemic-weary populace and demonstrating that health and healing await inside our walls with excellent service, attractive spaces and the highest-quality clinical care.

In 2021, we launched, enhanced and completed projects and programs that offer our community a clear invitation — come on in!
In the hit Broadway musical *Hamilton*, the ambitious titular character sings that he is “not giving away his shot.” Well, TBHC is giving away its shots — 22,000 Covid vaccination doses and counting, to those ages five years to more than 100 years old!

“I believe what is drawing patients is that they are more comfortable receiving the vaccine in a hospital setting with medical professionals,” says Robert DiGregorio, PharmD, Chief Pharmacotherapy Officer. The vaccination program is one more way TBHC is inviting the community into our hospital and one more way we can be of service to our neighbors.

Dr. DiGregorio and his team launched the program in late December 2020, mere days after the vaccination was released.
They began with healthcare providers and staff in the hospital, accommodating times that were most convenient for TBHC staff, which included early morning hours and working late into the night. Within the first two weeks, our team had vaccinated around 1,000 employees and set up a photo backdrop so staff could commemorate their vaccinations. "Shortly after that first wave, we extended the offering to healthcare providers in our community," he says. "Then to eligible members of the public as soon as it was available to them in March."

The Vaccination Center quickly set up shop in a patient-friendly space on the second level of the main lobby by the Women’s Health Center. “We repurposed a window-lined corridor. It’s a nice, sunny, inviting space,” says Dr. DiGregorio. "As each phase for age eligibility rolled out, we immediately adapted, providing boosters and then vaccines for children.” One benefit of the program beyond the obvious protection afforded our community is that many new-to-TBHC neighbors “discovered” us.
TBHC often had availability in our schedule that was hard to find elsewhere, making the hospital a quick and easy site. Staff and patients alike reached out to the community after vaccination to describe how easy the process was. Our team vaccinated a number of celebrities and dignitaries, some of whom supported the hospital during the worst of the spring 2020 surge, which made the program for many, a full-circle moment.

With about 80 to 100 people a day, Monday through Friday, taking advantage of the program, it has been a team effort from Pharmacy Services. Dr. DiGregorio himself runs the center, assisted by a pharmacy student, a pharmacy resident and two staff members. This allows the residents to continue their training and education while TBHC continues its efforts to protect and connect with the community.

To schedule an adult, pediatric or booster appointment, visit tbh.org/vaccine.
Familiar Ties, New Space

Family Medicine

During the Covid surge of 2020, many people who would have come to the hospital stayed home. All hospitals around the country and especially in New York City reported patients delaying care. In 2021, at TBHC’s Family Medicine Center, all that has changed. “We surpassed our 2018 and 2019 volume of patients,” says Dr. Sherly Abraham, Chair of Family Medicine. And patients came back to a newly renovated space in the main hospital.

Family Medicine has long been a prime example of TBHC’s vital role in our community. Dr. Abraham did her residency (post-medical school training) at the center and has been at TBHC for 17 years. She is seeing children today whose parents she treated when they were children.

As TBHC has focused on reaching out to the community, we also are committed to inviting them back in. The Family Medicine Center does both! “Community is familiarity,” says Dr. Abraham. “Our patients — from infants to older adults — know we are here and trust us. We are at the heart of connection between the community and the hospital.”

At the heart of connection are people. Family Medicine has a robust staff of doctors, nurse practitioners, nurses and a medical assistant. Additionally, satellite Family Health Centers in Williamsburg and Bushwick bring care to the neighborhoods. Throughout these sites, staff speak the language of our patients — English, Spanish, Russian, Chinese, Arabic and more.

In addition, members of Family Medicine, along with its residents, have again been partnering with our community liaison (see page 3) to go out to health fairs and other gathering places. “In 2021, we went into churches, mosques and adult day-care centers to educate people on a variety of health and wellness topics such as diabetes, high blood pressure and back pain,” says Dr. Abraham.

Finally, through the residency program based in the center, Dr. Abraham seeks to build an even stronger bond with the community. “I want Family Medicine residents, like our staff and providers, to extend our values and service, to be a part of our Brooklyn family,” she says. “We are training the next generation of providers to be community doctors, right here.”
There’s no denying it — no one wants to visit a hospital’s emergency room. Still, when an emergency strikes, the new TBHC Emergency Department will be the place to go.

“We’re excited about this!” says Senior Vice President & Chief Operating Officer, Robert Aulicino. “We have a brand-new waiting area, a new ambulance bay, new signage and expanded capacity.”

The new Emergency Department — which has been years in development — reflects TBHC’s commitment to being a vital part of our community and creating a welcoming environment. The waiting area is full of light and far more comfortable than a typical windowless lobby. Approaching the ED, patients will find attractive, easy-to-follow signage, a central admitting area that leads to adult treatment areas, and a separate area for pediatric waiting, triage and treatment. All spaces have been renovated with sleek and lovely finishes.

“Our modernized ED is much more conducive to patient care, and it’s beautiful,” says Mr. Aulicino. The entrance to the new ED will reflect our community as well, as it is being named for prominent Brooklynite Dr. Frank Coleman “Pop” Hamm through a generous gift from his son and daughter-in-law, Charles and Irene Hamm (see related story on page 19).

A three-stage process is making the vision of a new ED for Downtown Brooklyn’s community hospital a reality. It began with a $25.2 million grant from the New York State Department of Health. Phase One of the 26-month project was finished in March 2021 and included the main treatment areas. Learning lessons from Covid, the ED gained eight new isolation rooms — up from two — with the negative-pressure capability essential for treating infectious patients.

Phase Two was completed in November 2021 and included renovations and modernizations that make the ED an attractive, welcoming place (all the photos shown here were taken during the time Phase Two was wrapping up). Phase Three, the final stages of construction and outfitting the ED, began in late December, and should be complete by summer of 2022.

“The ED is a common gateway to any hospital, but especially a community-based one,” says Mr. Aulicino. “When we unveil the completed ED, we’ll be making good on a big promise we made to the community — an ED that quite literally displays the respect we hold for each and every one of our neighbors.”
Thinking Outside the Box

The pandemic opened the door for newer methods to deliver healthcare on a level not seen before. It was one of the very few good things to come out of very tough times. TBHC moved quickly when our patients faced difficulty coming to us. We began reaching out to them, even if that meant reaching out through a screen or a phone. In 2021, we fortified and streamlined these innovations. We provided solutions to all those who benefit from an easy way to access our care and our information.
“**We started our telemedicine program** right when the pandemic happened,” says Sam Amirfar, MD, Senior Vice President, Chief Medical Information Officer and Chief Information Officer. “In 2020, and continuing into 2021, people were concerned about getting out and coming to the hospital. So, we found a way to help providers stay connected to their patients.”

Electronic interaction with the community is nothing new for TBHC. The EPIC electronic medical record (EMR) allows patients to create a MyChart portal to set and confirm appointments, receive reminders and pay bills. EPIC gives providers access to medical records and much more information from anywhere in the hospital. Dr. Amirfar and his IT team knew that MyChart could serve as the mechanism for patients setting up video appointments, too.

The next step toward making those video appointments happen was employing an online platform called Doximity. Healthcare providers download an app that allows them to instantly contact their patients by video on their phone or laptop.

Nothing will replace in-person visits — healthcare providers need these, patients want them. But telemedicine provides continuity of care with no lapses in coverage. “The population of patients I work with are geriatric patients and many have physical or mental disabilities leading to problems getting to an office,” says Marcia Nelson, MD, Chief of Geriatrics. With telemedicine, patients stay safe in their homes while Dr. Nelson and her team continue to monitor their condition and prescribe medication, important because delayed care has serious consequences.

Dr. Amirfar estimates TBHC conducted about 120 telemedicine visits a week at the peak of the pandemic. It remains an option now for some practices even as patients have again become more comfortable with face-to-face visits.

Expanding the reach of our telemedicine service was made possible by TD Charitable Foundation, the charitable giving arm of TD Bank, “America’s Most Convenient Bank,” which donated $100,000 to the effort. TBHC has committed the staff and infrastructure and the community has yet another avenue to reach their community hospital.

**Marcia Nelson, MD, and telemedicine patient**
Just as with TBHC’s telemedicine efforts, the pandemic led to a significant increase in our capability to take health and wellness education online. Now it’s a permanent fixture. “Virtual education was obviously brought on by Covid,” says Pratibha Vemulapalli, MD, Surgery Chair and Chief of Bariatric Surgery. “The question was, how could we educate our community and still keep them in a safe environment?”

The bariatric team’s answer was bringing their seminars and ongoing education to the WebEx platform — the same technology CNN uses for on-air interviews — to connect with bariatric patients or those considering bariatric surgery. “We were able to set up virtual introductory seminars to tell people who we are and what we have to offer in bariatrics,” says Dr. Vemulapalli. “Online, we also began offering nutrition classes, teaching patients deep breathing exercises and more.” The team has since added pre-operative and post-op classes and videos to answer questions patients are asking. “The real big win is engagement,” she says. “Engagement is engagement, and it’s good for the patient whether in person or online.”

The nursing staff similarly has adopted the virtual education model in a big way and with great results. “After the 2020 Covid surge, people were afraid to come to the hospital and our patient census was low,” says Judy McLaughlin, DNP, Senior Vice President and Chief Nursing Executive. “We committed to being virtually visible and valuable to the community.”

The department launched the “Ask a Nurse” program and began producing monthly educational videos, each residing on the hospital’s YouTube channel. Topics covered the differences between the flu and Covid, vaccination myth-busting, and content dedicated to specific conditions such as Prostate Cancer Month, Intimate Partner Violence Month and more.

Initiatives are not limited to the screen either. “We’re moving toward diabetic education in partnership with Mount Sinai with 145 patients enrolled,” says Dr. McLaughlin. “We picked patients with elevated A1C and blood pressure levels and monitor them by phone.” The results? A 750 percent improvement in A1C, 13 percent improvement in blood pressure levels and a 58 percent improvement in weight loss!

Leonard Berkowitz, MD, Chief of Infectious Diseases, launched an education program for his staff when the Covid vaccine first came out explaining how the vaccines worked and their safety. It was shown to the entire hospital and was received with such appreciation that it was then shared with groups in the community and
After the 2020 Covid surge, people were afraid to come to the hospital. We committed to being virtually visible and valuable to the community through social media. “I think this kind of education is the model for the future,” he says.

Marketing Coordinator Ariel Raj says the data shows these fresh outreach initiatives are successful. Dr. Berkowitz’s one-hour vaccine presentation earned triple the engagement of other social media posts. Another video, featuring Dr. Berkowitz targeted to HIV patients and focusing on vaccine misinformation, resulted in a fourfold increase in community engagement. “We’re seeing community relationships develop through social media as a result,” says Ms. Raj. “The community is commenting, ‘Thank you, Dr. B, and thank you, TBHC, for what you are doing.’”
Over the past few years, TBHC has seen many long-term plans come to completion; the opening of the Physician’s Pavilion, The Brooklyn Heart Center, the new Emergency Department, Myrtle Avenue Dialysis and The Brooklyn Cancer Center, to name just a few. Each of these advances creates new opportunities to support TBHC. The Brooklyn Hospital Foundation forms a link between the hospital’s needs and the supportive community we serve, building legacies along the way.

“When we say ‘community hospital,’ that is a two-way street,” says Deborah Niederhoffer, Vice President & Chief Development Officer, The Brooklyn Hospital Foundation. “The community’s support plays a vital role in our mission of Keeping Brooklyn Healthy.”

That mutual support is highly visible at our new Emergency Department, with the entrance named for Dr. Frank Coleman Hamm through a generous gift from his son and daughter-in-law. It also is evident in new equipment and upgraded facilities throughout the hospital. And 2022’s in-person gala at the Brooklyn Museum is planned for May 23, with a theme that couldn’t be more fitting: Together Again ... in the Community!
Frank Coleman Hamm, MD, knew all about community. In Brooklyn, he lived his life for it. Dr. Hamm, or “Pop,” as everyone called him, worked more than 30 years at TBHC, including as Chief of Urology. His was a life spent invested in others, which is the very essence of what makes a community.

That is why his son and daughter-in-law, Charles and Irene Hamm, wanted to honor him in a special and visible way. The Hamms gave TBHC a $1 million gift, and the entrance to the new, state-of-the-art Emergency Department will proudly bear Dr. Hamm’s name as a thank you.

“I was born in Brooklyn Hospital,” says Mr. Hamm. “I grew up in an era when my father gave out his home phone number. Many were the times the phone rang at dinner and my father would ask me to answer. Then the voice on the other end would say, ‘I’ve got to speak to doc.’ This is what I call community and why his name is on the front canopy of the Emergency Department.”

“Pop was amazing,” says Mrs. Hamm. “People would come to his office with no appointment, sometimes not even for a medical reason, and Pop would reassure them. I hope his name on the entrance continues to alleviate fear as people come to the hospital in need.”

Growing up in the Midwest, Dr. Hamm was on staff at the Mayo Clinic when he was recruited to TBHC. “He could have gone anywhere,” his son explains. “That means Brooklyn was getting the best. And it’s still true.”

“What the Hamms’ gift is doing for TBHC, the fact that we are putting such an important name on the entrance, hopefully will usher in a new area of significant names associated with the hospital,” says Ms. Niederhoffer.

Charles and Irene Hamm know well the importance of visibly serving the community through their own service with numerous organizations and boards. “It’s important to get your name out front, it’s important to exemplify leadership,” says Mr. Hamm. “We’re saying, ‘We want you to join us.’ It’s not ego; it’s community.”
We have a dynamic Foundation board, outstanding staff and leadership, and strong support from our community. The people named on these pages are heroes, too, helping TBHC rise to the challenge of Keeping Brooklyn Healthy.

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“For more than 175 years, The Brooklyn Hospital Center has been providing healthcare to my fellow Brooklynites. In today’s health environment, I feel it’s more important than ever to continue to do so.”

— DINO J. VERONESE, TBHF BOARD CHAIR
“Roots & Wings Foundation supports The Brooklyn Hospital Center because all people deserve access to quality healthcare.”

— Roots & Wings Foundation
“My family supports TBHC because it has a long history and bright future providing high-quality services to the community and beyond.”

— LIZANNE FONTAINE, TBHC BOARD CHAIR
“The hospital is truly worthy of our generous support because our local community needs and deserves the high-quality healthcare that it provides. Your support and mine make it possible for people who live here to have first-class medical treatment, without regard to their ability to pay.”

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“The Brooklyn Hospital Center provides outstanding medical education and real, hands-on experience for our students. Giving back to this worthy institution helps create the next generation of talented, compassionate healers.”

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— Jeff Vacirca, MD, Chief Executive Officer,
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Yesenia Morales, MD
Michael Moretti, MD
BNY Mellon’s legacy is deeply connected to New York. Helping sustain institutions like TBHC is a critical way we work to serve the community.”

— BNY MELLON
The past two years brought many dark days. At the same time, they created many opportunities to shine, as supportive friends, providers and patients — as a community.

Now more than ever, the community is aware of TBHC’s contribution to the lives of those it serves. Now more than ever, The Brooklyn Hospital Center is committed to Keeping Brooklyn Healthy and to being your community hospital.

TBHC looks forward to a 2022 that is ripe with potential as we get healthier and build on the hard work that has taken place over the past few years. You can help!

Financial support from our community is key to providing our doctors, nurses and staff the resources they need to ensure the best healthcare available can be found right here in Downtown Brooklyn/Fort Greene.

On Monday, May 23, 2022, we will return to an in-person gala. It will be a great night at the Brooklyn Museum. Contact Deborah Niederhoffer, The Brooklyn Hospital Foundation, at tbh.org/ways-give or 718-250-8599. You can learn more about the Founders Ball and discover other ways you can help.

A community only grows and improves by working together. We look forward to working with you!
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