An Interview with Matt Byrne

Long-time GCH volunteer Matt Byrne was recently featured in a photo that was selected in an annual contest by the National Association of Children’s Hospitals and Related Institutions (NACHRI) for display at its annual meeting. Intrigued by the picture, and by all of the kind words spoken about its subject, the Crier learned that Matt Byrne has been an attorney at Byrne, Costello & Pickard PC (bcplegal.com) in Syracuse since 1983. Matt was kind enough to answer all of my questions in the following exclusive interview:

Crier (C): Hi Mr. Byrne. Thank you so much for allowing me to ask you some questions.

Matt Byrne (MB): Please call me Matt; “Mr.” Byrne was my father. I don’t ever want to be a “Mister” or a “Sir.”

C: First, could you give me your professional title?

MB: I work as an attorney. A lot of my practice involves working with charities that provide housing, health care and supportive services to the poor and elderly.

C: How long have you been volunteering at Upstate? Has it always been with kids?

MB: I started volunteering in the Upstate Admissions Department on August 1, 1996. Within six weeks, I transferred to the Child Life Program and have been there ever since. My goal is to volunteer in the Upstate pediatrics unit for forty years but I’ll settle for twenty-five.

C: What made you decide to volunteer at Upstate?

MB: Something drew me to volunteering. In the mid-80’s I inquired about volunteering at another local hospital but there weren’t any openings. So, I volunteered at Loretto for eleven years instead. In the mid-90’s I again inquired about volunteering in the local hospitals. Upstate was very welcoming and I’ve been here ever since.

C: What specifically do you do when you are here?

MB: I volunteer in the Child Life Program in the Golisano Children’s Hospital. Most of my time is spent with pediatric patients: reading stories, singing songs, playing games, making art projects, helping with feeding, taking patients for a stroll. When things get quiet, I scrub toys and clean the playrooms.

C: What do you enjoy most about your time at the GCH?

MB: Spending time with patients is the most incredible joy. It can be frightening at times and upsetting at others but if in some small way I can ease a child’s burden, if only for a while, it’s a joy beyond words.

C: Is there anything you would like to say to those contemplating being a volunteer here? Any other thoughts you would like to share with the staff and faculty of the GCH?

MB: Volunteering at Upstate is the most important thing I will ever do in my life; I highly recommend it to others. The staff is welcoming and appreciative, and there’s a variety of openings for volunteers throughout the hospital. It’s a great way to step outside your own world and share something of yourself with others.

I have the utmost respect for and admiration of the physicians, nurses and staff of GCH. They’re so much more than professionals. They care for their patients’ medical, emotional and personal needs, they minister to patients’ families, and they consistently do so with love, respect and joy. Every day, in countless little ways, they perform miracles without any expectation of recognition or reward.

C: On behalf of the entire Department of Pediatrics, I want to thank you so much for the many many hours you have put in, taking care of our kids!

One in a Million

Congratulations to Dr. Brad Olson and his team on having won the department a million+ dollar grant for the Hospital-Medical Home Demonstration (H-MHD) Program. In 2011 the NYS Dept of Health received approval for up to $250 million to conduct the H-MHD Program by awarding funds to hospitals that transform their outpatient continuity training sites to high quality Patient Centered Medical Homes. Hospitals must also work on improving integrated, coordinated, and culturally appropriate care in the outpatient setting, and implement safety improvements in the inpatient setting.

The proposal Dr. Olson submitted was to attain certification as a NCQA Patient Centered Medical Home, develop patient continuity initiatives in the residency program, provide culturally competent care to our refugee population, and improve on inpatient safety measures in the areas of sepsis and central line blood infections.

Dr. Olson submitted the grant to the New York State Department of Health but he tells the Crier, “it’s going to be a team...
effort of many individuals both in the outpatient division and on the inpatient side to achieve all of the key reporting metrics.” The total 3-year grant award is $1,066,000.

No Place Like Home at the GCH
Sarah Irish

After living in the Golisano Children’s hospital for three years, the idea was presented to add a homey feel to our Family Accommodations Area on the 12th floor. This space provides the opportunity for three sets of parents to sign up for a space to sleep on a daily basis, allowing them to be close to their child during their stay. In addition, this room hosts a private bathroom complete with shower and a laundry facility with double washer and dryers and complimentary laundry soap.

In an effort to redesign the space, we consulted with professional interior decorator, Kristie Baird, of Lafayette. Kristie donated all of her time in configuring the space. She recommended a new color scheme for the lounge area and sleep rooms, reconfigured existing furniture to make cozy areas for conversation, had custom headboards created for each twin bed, and added functional hooks and decorative art, (two photos re-purposed from 4A and framed by Michael's), mirrors and clocks throughout the space. The result is that of home away from home, offering that touch of comfort when it is needed most.

Funds for the project were provided by the Dylan Michael Cardinell Fund. Nature photography done by Don Terry, RN at Upstate Golisano. Kristie Baird is a professional interior designer. Contact information: phone: 315-677-7739 or e-mail: kbaird1@twcny.rr.com

As the 34 participants arrived on their various flights from the States, we were greeted by our wonderful multi-lingual guide, Olivier, and shepherded to the large coach would take us from Charles de Gaulle Airport to lunch in a country auberge around 3:30, then to Normandy to start the tour the next day. (My mother was the first to arrive, at about 6:30 in the morning. The last couple, a retired urologist and his wife from California, did not make it through Customs until after 1:30. Oooof: LONG day for mom.)

Anyhoo, we’re mingling around the bus, getting on and off to stretch our legs, take advantage of the facilities, etc, when I hear, “Sue?” Then my husband hears me inquire, “Paul?” and looks at me quizzically.

By what stretch of fate, Dr. Paul Fuller, our retired UPAC Division Chief, and his wife, psychologist Marlna Stabler, are participants on this trip as well! (And they used to live two houses away from us, when they lived here.)

[I also realized that Hal and I had been married for 30 years, and I’d known Paul for 29 of those. My, how time flies!]

It turns out that the Fullers signed up for the trip with 4 other couples from Rome, NY, who are all friends of theirs, engineers and school teachers and businessmen and physicians. So, all in all, 12 of the 34 of us on an international trip live in the little swath between Fayetteville and Rome, NY. Go figure!

Over the course of the two week trip, we saw all sorts of wondrous sites, including the famous World War II cemeteries; climbed up through Mont St. Michel; stopped in Honfleur and Rouen; spent a day at the Monet estate in Giverney; met a hale and hearty 92-year-old D-Day invasion veteran minutes after the accompanying photo was taken; and learned tons about the last year of World War II and all the marvelous servicepersons who participated in the greatest invasion the world has ever seen, all in a wonderful country with wonderful food and wine. We were thrilled to have the opportunity to share it with the Fullers and their friends, in addition to my mom. We will have wonderful memories!

A Double Win
As we reported earlier, our very own first year resident Steve Hicks took first place in the Annual Paige’s Butterfly Run. This was a double win for the department because the race took in $220,000 for Children’s Cancer. You can read all about it on the January Upstate Online. http://upstateonline.info/static/Jan3-Jan102013/blog/story-1/index.html

If anyone wants to take Steve Hicks on, or even just run for a very good cause, the 2013 Paige’s Butterfly Run is set for Saturday, June 8, with the Run and Walk starting and finishing behind the Federal Building on Franklin St. in downtown Syracuse. The run is held during the Syracuse’s annual Taste of Syracuse festival. For more information, visit Paige’s Butterfly Run at http://www.pbbrun.org/

There is also a great article on the LEAPP program (already thoroughly covered by the Crier) in this issue of Upstate Online. (link - http://upstateonline.info/static/Jan3-Jan102013/blog/story-2/index.html)

Beyond the Doctorate Winner
Congratulations to Aamer Imdad who just learned that his abstract was selected for an oral platform presentation at the 2013 Beyond the Doctorate Research Day on March 6th at 12:30 PM in Weiskotten Hall (Rm 2231). Aamer is also going to be featured on the cover of the Publication for Abstracts.
In the News
- Dr. Jana Shaw submitted the following announcement in the AAP News, January 2013 entitled, “2012 Resident Research Grant winners” which included the $2000 grant awarded to Aamer Imdad. See link for details. Note that applications are now being accepted for the 2013 awards. (crierfeb1.pdf)
- Our very own Dr. Mide Ajagbe was the cover girl… er… cover hospitalist for the Winter, 2013 issue of Update Health. You can read the full article here: “Nights & Weekends: here for sick, injured kids”. (LINK) crierfeb2.pdf
- Dr. Domachowske was also featured in the Winter 2013 issue of Upstate Health. LINK TO crierfeb3.pdf “Why is a vaccine-preventable illness on the rise?”
- The January/February issue of the Central New York Magazine featured an article about the four Anbar kids and all of the money they have raised for charity including the GCH. You can read the entire article by clicking here (crierfeb4.jpg). Congratulations and thanks to Joshua, Rebecca, Elinor and Jonathan for all they have done for the GCH and the community.

Syracuse to El Salvador
Dr. Domachowske will soon be headed off to what has become his annual pilgrimage to El Salvador in mid-February. He is still in need a few items: Toothbrushes, toothpaste, mouthwash, childrens chewable vitamins , infant and children formulations of acetaminophen, infant powered formula (as a supplement-they are all breastfed), powdered rehydration salts, gatorade etc. If you can help, please drop your donations off in his office, 5th floor UH. Just a reminder, cash/check donations are always appreciated too.

Mexico to Mexico
Meanwhile, the home of our own Jay Peacock recently made its Silver Screen debut for an ad soon to be released by AT&T. Jay is not giving autographs at this time. http://s.syracuse.com/UEJSysV

Just Married
Congratulations to former resident Ramzi Souki and his lovely wife Maya who got married in Lebanon on August 24.

Cheryl Mielnicki Retirement
A long-time member of the department, Cheryl Mielnicki retired at the end of January. She was honored by her coworkers on 1/22 at Azteca in Camillus and again on 1/23 with cake on 4W. She has been an integral part of the Pediatric Outpatient Specialty clinics on 4West for many years and will truly be missed. We wish her the very best!

Eli and Reese Ring in the New Year
Eli (Sisskind) Gnacik and Reese (Berry) Gallant got together to celebrate the New Year. They also invited their moms.

Pediatric Star-of-the-Month
By Lisa Blystone
The Pediatric Star of the Month is Jenny Lin. Jenny went above and beyond for a patient in the ED. The parents were very stressed. Even though Jenny had never met the family and was swamped with work in the ED, she was able to have social work deliver a nebulizer to the family in the hospital and she called in their prescription for albuterol. It saved the family a return trip to the ED and made a big difference to them. Congratulations, Jenny. Please visit Lisa Blystone in UH 5803 to pick out your Stars prize!

FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS
2/1 Lindsay Dudeck
2/3 Kevin Ragosta
2/5 Kristin Riley
2/7 Tristan Lindberg
2/14 Winter Berry, Steve Blatt
2/17 Trisha Tavares
2/18 Leonard Weiner
2/22 Tri Nguyen
2/23 Raya Safa
2/24 Manny Karjoo, Richie Cantor
2/28 Nellie Sadaghiani