



THE CUPOLA

The Bulletin of The Medical Alumni Association of Bassett Medical Center
Cooperstown, New York

Fall 2024
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Alumni Reunion Was Deemed a Great Success

Sun, blue skies, a palette of fall colors, and mild temperatures set the stage for the 2024 Bassett Alumni reunion which took place October 4-5. More than 60 attended what proved to be a magnificent program and social activities.

Dr. Susan V. George, professor of Medicine at University of Massachusetts, and Internal Medicine Program director at St. Vincent Hospital in Worcester, Mass., delivered the Dr. John S. Davis Lecture, "The Evolution of Learning and Teaching in Medicine." Her presentation was masterful, containing many works of art as well as archived photos

depicting the growth of what has become, but always has been, such an important part of physicians' lives. In her talk, she covered the challenges faced by women, minority groups, and international graduates who now comprise a growing part of the America systems of care, education, and administration.

Following the lecture, attendees were afforded free time to interact with each other and explore the hospital and Cooperstown. During this time, the Alumni Board members were shown the newly constructed and reconfigured surgical team room, funded with the Board's support. The room was occupied by several surgical residents, sitting at their computers, performing their daily work and conveying an esprit reminiscent of that experienced in our own training years...although in most of our cases, without computers.



Dr. Susan V. George, guest lecturer, with Bassett retiree Dr. John S. Davis and Alumni Reunion keynote presenter Dr. George Abraham

Later in the afternoon, the Board convened in person and via Zoom for its business meeting. A late afternoon and early evening Meet and Greet gathering at The Otesaga Resort Hotel provided a perfect conclusion to the day's activities.

Saturday morning, following a lavishly catered breakfast in the Clark Auditorium, the keynote address was given by Dr. George Abraham. He is a professor of Medicine at the University of Massachusetts and chief of Medicine at St. Vincent Hospital in Worcester, Mass. He is a former president of the American College of Physicians and chair-elect of the Board of

Directors of the Federation of State Medical Boards. He provided another outstanding address entitled "Leadership With Inclusivity: a Paradigm Shift." Using leadership as an acronym, presented on page 3, his talk was impressively polished and engaging, at the end of which many participants requested that it be made available in recorded or printed form.

The morning's program concluded with IMY (Interesting Medical Yarns) talks provided by Bassett alumni and a Columbia-Bassett medical student. Dr. Francis Nolan, (Transitional intern, 1990-91), a board-certified Emergency Physician and Fellow of both the American College of Emergency Physicians and the Australasian College for Emergency Medicine, spoke of his and his family's experience

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Message from the President of the Medical Alumni Board of Directors

Happy autumn greetings to all my colleagues in the Alumni Association.

There is much to share in this issue of the Cupola, beginning with the Bassett Alumni Reunion. I must start by offering grateful thanks of all who made this event such a success, including Mary Wiswell, Olta Minenna, Dr. Anush Patel, and of course the illustrious speakers.

Something should also be said for the weather, which cooperated beautifully, and allowed everyone to see Bassett, Cooperstown, and Otsego Lake in its full glory. It was gratifying to see that so many



Dr. James A. Murray

families made their way to Cooperstown to join in the activities of the reunion weekend and reconnect with Bassett and the community. I returned from our gathering with a feeling of elation.

If you were not able to attend this year's event, remember that we will do this again in 2028, and in the meantime drop us a line for the Family Album. Your classmates and colleagues would love to hear from you.

Best wishes to all of you as you celebrate the upcoming holidays. We are grateful for the continued interest and support of alumni members. ■

The Cupola is the newsletter of the Medical Alumni Association of Bassett Medical Center. The Association was founded to provide support and recommendations to Bassett's Medical Education Department; to assist in recruiting medical students, house staff and attending staff; and to provide financial support to develop and enhance medical education at Bassett.

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Alumni Board Meeting Update

The 36th meeting of the Board of the Bassett Alumni Association met in Cooperstown on Friday, October 4, both in person and via Zoom. President, Dr. James Murray called the meeting to order. Members approved the previous minutes and acknowledged the excellent work of the staff of Medical Education (especially Mary Wiswell and Olta Minenna) as well as the Association's Executive Vice-president Dr. Anush Patel in planning our Alumni Reunion.

Board members discussed the ideal size, demographics, and job descriptions of board members. Those with terms expiring who were committed to continuing to serve were re-elected to an additional term. Potential new members were proposed. Dr. David Newman was elected to serve as President-elect of the Association.

The board re-committed to its fiscal support of the Resident Wellness Program and discussed expanding that commitment. A subcommittee will be convened to work with the house staff and the Medical Education department in this regard.

There was discussion about the Medical Education Endowment fund, its fiscal management and the need for increased support.



Clockwise: Dr. Anush Patel, Dr. Michael Foltzer, Dr. Alan Kozak, Dr. Gary Hoffman, Dr. Sean Morton, Dr. Diane Hoffman, Dr. Jim Murray, Dr. Matthew Gilbert, guests Dr. George Abraham and Dr. Susan George, Dr. Douglas DeLong, Dr. Ken Wilkins, and Dr. Stephanie Oceguela

The board was fortunate to have a lengthy question and answer session with Dr. Henry Weil in his roles as President of Bassett Medical Center, Chief Clinical Officer and Chief Academic Officer of Bassett Healthcare. He described the network's current fiscal headwinds and challenges while at the same time emphasizing the ongoing support for medical education and research at Bassett Healthcare.

The next meeting of the full board is scheduled for October 17, 2025. ■



Bassett welcomes the Columbia-Bassett class of 2028. Front Row (L-R): Sonja Lazovic, Kylie Pecord, Nobel Zhou, Nadeem Jones, Hawley Brown, Hannah Huang, Dr. Henry F. Weil. Back Row (L-R): Stephen Blaskovics, Rishav Dasgupta, Emma Ladd, Micah Jordan

Reunion from page 1

working, living, and traveling in Australia for several years. The experience is beautifully presented in his book, "Doc Down Under". He has authored another, "The Mountain Hunters," published in 2023.

Dr. Dave Prakash (Transitional Year resident, 2003-04), presented "Life Lessons Learned from a Career Unplanned." Starting out with plans to enter the field of Anesthesiology, his career course has involved a circuitous route through the U.S. Air Force as a pilot, serving 12 years, ultimately becoming an operational test pilot for bomber aircraft, as a kidney donor to his wife, and as a student of business and public policy at Stanford University through a scholarship from the Pat Tillman Foundation to his current role as Director of AI Governance at Booz Allen Hamilton. Many saw him on national television this past year when he was selected by the NFL to honor Pat Tillman and serve as a coin toss captain in Super Bowl 57. The basic themes of his presentation had to do with courage, following one's heart, willingness to take risks, and doing what's right.

Dr. Rashmi Bismark (Medicine resident, 2004-05), whose career has been devoted to mindfulness and meditation to enhance wellness in several settings, read from her own published children's book, "Finding OM". She then very effectively directed the audience to participate in a mindfulness experience.

The program ended with a vocal and piano performance by current Columbia-Bassett medical student Kyle Tower. His repertoire included several pieces, concluding with an aptly placed nostalgia provoking Beatles song, "In My Life," an ideal ending for the program.

The final weekend's event and celebration took place at the Brewery Ommegang, where food, drink, as well as lively conversations around a large fire pit were enjoyed by all. It was a great reunion whose quality will be hard to beat in the future. A special thanks to the planners, including Drs. Anush Patel, executive vice president of the Alumni Association, James Murray, president of the Board of Directors and fellow board member Doug DeLong, as well as the Medical Education staff contributors, Olta Minenna and Mary Wiswell! ■



L to R: Vijaykumar Sekar, M.B., B.S. (Internal Medicine resident 2018-21); Anush Patel, M.D. (Internal Medicine resident 2003-06; chief resident 2006-07; Attending, hematology/oncology 2011-present); and guest Edgar Hoover



Presenters of the 2024 IMY talks (Interesting Medical Yarns) were (L-R) Dr. Rashmi Bismark, Dr. Dave Prakash, Dr. Francis Nolan and Columbia-Bassett medical student Kyle Tower.



Dr. George Abraham's Leadership mnemonic.



Alumni, current staff and their family members gathered for a welcoming reception on the veranda of The Otesaga Resort Hotel on a mild autumn evening.

THE BASSETT FAMILY ALBUM — ALUMNI NEWS

Please keep your notes and photos coming!

1960s

Allan Cunningham, M.D.

(Intern 1966-67, Attending physician 1971-93) continues to live in Bowerstown and keeps up with medical advances.



Allan Cunningham, M.D. with Linda Cunningham, Jay Mohr, M.D. (Rotating/Internal Medicine resident 1963-65) and Joan Mohr

1970s

Gary Hoffman, M.D.

(Attending physician 1974-84) over 40 years after leaving Bassett, he returned and refreshed his memories of “how extraordinary this beautiful region is and how wonderful it has been to see old friends, colleagues, and former trainees.” He found the weekend informative and heart-warming.

1980s

Kenneth Wilkins, M.D.

(Internal Medicine resident 1980-83, Chief resident 1983-84) shared that he retired for the third and final time in April 2023. He and his wife Dru have since enjoyed their grandchildren, travel, reading, and pickleball.

Michael Foltzer, M.D.

(Flexible intern 1981-82, Internal Medicine resident 1983-86, Attending

physician 1990-2002). After leaving Bassett in 2002, he was at Geisinger Health System first as the Director of Infectious Diseases (2002-14) and as an ID physician (2014-18). He added, “Since retirement, I’m pursuing learning the guitar and renewing my love of flying gliders. I’ve volunteered in a Habitat for Humanity construction and served as a board member and currently volunteer in

a local food cupboard.

We recently moved to Rochester, N.Y., where two daughters and three grand-kids reside.”

1990s

Manuel Chaknis, M.D.

(Transitional Year resident 1992-93) In June 2024, he transitioned from full-time private practice in ophthalmology to full-time independent contractor doing disability eye exams and reports for U.S. military veterans. He had a wonderful

time at the reunion in Cooperstown and enjoyed great visits with **Alfred Tinger, M.D.**

(Transitional Year resident 1992-93, Attending physician 1999 to present), and **Michael Miller, M.D.** (Internal Medicine resident 1992-93, Attending physician 1999 to present), and **John Davis, M.D.**

(Medicine resident 1956-58, Attending physician 1964-95, Director of Medical Education 1980-95).

2000s

Kai Mebust, M.D. (Internal Medicine resident 2000-03, Chief resident 2003-04, Hospitalist/Chief Hospitalist 2004-19, Chief Department of Medicine 2020-present) and “Bassett Lifer in Training” reports that his wife and grown sons are all doing well. In September,



Deanna Palumbo, M.D. (Internal Medicine resident 1982-85; Attending physician 1988-2016) with Michael Levenstein, M.D. (Medicine resident 1981-85; Attending physician 1988-2016) and Michael Foltzer, M.D., and his wife Midge

he and his boys swam from Alcatraz to San Francisco. In addition, he has taken up woodworking classes from retired Bassett orthopedic surgeon, **Jonathan Richman, M.D.** (Attending surgeon 1987-2003).

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Kenneth Wilkins, M.D., William Streck, M.D. (Attending physician 1978-2009, CEO and President 1985-2014), Bradley Lauderdale, M.D. (Internal Medicine resident 1980-83), and Donald Raddatz, M.D. (Attending physician 1981-2021)



Alfred Tinger, M.D. with Manuel Chaknis, M.D. and Michael Miller, M.D.



Kai Mebust, M.D. and his wife Lynn with Dave Prakash, M.D.



Kunjal Luhadia, M.B., B.S., JVP Gopalakrishnan, M.B., B.S. (2024-present), Anush Patel, M.D., Vivian Matubia, M.D. (Internal Medicine resident 2021-24; Chief resident 2024-present), Bijal Patel, and Stephanie Ocegueda, M.D. (Surgery resident 2002-07; Attending surgeon 2008-present)

Family from page 4

2010s

Nischala Ammannagari, M.B., B.S. (Internal Medicine resident 2011-14) is practicing medical oncology in Albany, N.Y., and lives in Clifton Park with her husband and two daughters (Aadya age 9 and Akshadha age 4). She said it was wonderful to walk down memory lane spending a weekend at Bassett Alumni Reunion.

Rachel Zehr, M.D. (Surgery resident 2012-17, Attending surgeon 2017-23) Returned to her roots in Lowville, N.Y., and enjoys “providing surgical care to my hometown crowd.”

Srujana Madderla, M.B., B.S. (Internal Medicine resident 2014-17) Currently works as a hospitalist for Orlando Health in Orlando, Fla. She is married to a wonderful, supportive husband and has two beautiful kids, Riaan age 8 and Akshara age 2. She adds, “I am where I am today, accomplished, due to my parents, family, and more importantly, Bassett, who gave me the opportunity. Bassett, its people, and Cooperstown are very dear and close to my heart.”

Our thanks to all those who contributed photos of the reunion weekend including Doug DeLong, Srujana Madderla, Vivian Matubia, Anush Patel and Ken Wilkins.

Maryam Khavandi, M.D.

(Internal Medicine resident 2017-20) moved to northern Virginia after graduation to work as a hospitalist at MedStar Washington Hospital Center. In November 2023, she was appointed to the academic rank of Assistant Professor at Georgetown University Medical Center.

Vijaykumar Sekar, M.B., B.S.

(Internal Medicine resident 2018-21) completed an endocrinology fellowship in 2023 at Lehigh Valley Health System in Allentown, Penn. He stayed on there and enjoys teaching and collaborating with fellows, residents, and students. His daughter is in second grade and his son is in Pre-K.

2020s

Kunjal Luhadia, M.D.

(Internal Medicine resident 2021-present) had a wonderful time meeting Bassett alum and was inspired by the weekend’s presentations. She looks forward to coming back after graduation to build connections with other alumni. ■



Diane and Gary Hoffman, M.D., and James Dalton, M.D. (Internal Medicine resident/chief resident 1979-83, Attending physician 1988-2021, Director of Medical Education 2002-21)



Bradley Lauderdale, M.D. and Barbara Lauderdale, M.D. (Internal Medicine residents 1980-83) and Carol Beechy, M.D. (Flexible intern 1977-78, Internal Medicine resident/chief resident 1978-82, Attending physician 1985-present)



Sowmya Chidurala, M.B., B.S. (Internal Medicine resident 2013-16; Chief resident 2016-17), Nischala Ammannagari, M.B., B.S. and Srujana Madderla, M.B., B.S.



**See our latest news
and updates at Bassett
Medical Alumni Association**

2024 Walter A. Franck Physician Excellence Award Announced



Dr. Eric Mooney

Dr. Eric Mooney, Senior Attending physician in Bassett's Department of Plastics and Reconstructive Surgery, is the recipient of the 2024 Walter A. Franck Physician Excellence Award. As part of this award, a Bassett Healthcare Network fund of the recipient's choosing receives a \$5,000 stipend. Mooney chose to have this year's stipend given to the Fieldstone Assistance Program, which helps Bassett Medical Center employees with emergency financial needs.

The Franck award is among the most prestigious recognitions awarded by Bassett Healthcare Network to its caregivers. It recognizes a physician, nominated by peers, who exemplifies excellence in the areas of clinical care, scholarship and citizenship.

"This was surprising — I know and work with many providers who are worthy of this distinction," said Mooney.

"My fellow colleagues are one of the main reasons why I've made Bassett my professional home for almost 27 years. In my division, we help and cover for each other, rather than competing against one another. Working in a department that primarily focuses on reconstructive work, I also get to connect with many other specialties, like Cancer Services. I am surrounded by wonderful people to work with," said Mooney.

Medical missions have been an important highlight of his career. "I made my first trip to perform surgery abroad to Bangladesh in the mid-1990s. Once I was here, Tom Huntsman introduced me to the organization Resurge. I've been on dozens of trips since to Tanzania, Vietnam, Nepal, Brazil, Peru, Ecuador, China, and India to rebuild after burns, reconstruct cleft lips and palates, and repair hands. I am very thankful Bassett has given me the opportunity to do that work."

Mooney also feels particularly honored to receive an award honoring Dr. Walter A. Franck. Franck is a retired rheumatologist who provided exceptional care for over four decades and served as senior associate dean at Bassett's Columbia Medical School program until his retirement in 2014.

"Dr. Franck is a remarkable physician," said Mooney. "In fact, on my last trip to Tanzania, I worked with an anesthesiologist who completed his residency here at Bassett Medical Center. He shared with me a story about Dr. Franck's personal attention as a hospital leader that he says has profoundly shaped his own doctoring to this day."

"It is a huge honor to receive an award named for someone with such a living legacy. It's also a good reminder to us as healthcare providers: our impact on others is much bigger than we realize." ■

Alumni Join Bassett Staff

Dr. Mark Travor joined Bassett Healthcare Network recently as an Attending physician in Ophthalmology. He is working in several network locations: Bassett Medical Center, A.O. Fox Hospital and Oneonta Specialty Services, Little Falls Hospital and Herkimer Specialty Services.

He earned his medical degree from the Columbia University Vagelos College of Physicians and Surgeons in New York. He was a participant in the Columbia-Bassett Medical School Program and completed a Transitional Year residency at Bassett Medical Center and went on to an ophthalmology residency at Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center, Lebanon, N.H.



Dr. Mark Travor



Dr. Parikshya Giri Rijal



Dr. Cyrus De Souza

Dr. Parikshya Giri Rijal started as a Hospitalist at Bassett Medical Center in September 2024. She received her medical degree (M.B., B.S.) from Chitwan Medical College, Bharatpur in Bagmati, Nepal. She was an Internal Medicine resident at Bassett Medical Center from 2021 until 2024.

Also, her classmate Dr. Cyrus De Souza joined Bassett Medical Center as a Hospitalist after completing

his Internal Medicine residency at Bassett. He completed his medical degree from St. George's University Medical School in Grenada. ■



A reminder: Who are the members of the Bassett Medical Alumni Association?

You are past and current interns, residents and fellows. You are former and current members of the senior doctoral staff. And you are students of the Columbia-Bassett Medical School program or students who spent your final two years of medical school at Bassett.

IN MEMORIAM: A Personal Tribute by Dr. James Dalton

Antoinette Kuzminski, M.D. (1946-2024)



Dr. Antoinette Kuzminski

On Thursday, August 22, 2024, after a six-month trial with metastatic angiosarcoma, we lost a dear and long-committed member of our Bassett community. Dr. Antoinette (known as T'nette) Kuzminski was a doctor, colleague, friend, teacher and inspiration to many during her tenure at Bassett on the General Internal Medicine faculty. Her intellectual curiosity, direct approach, commitment, courage and unwavering advocacy for her patients made her a model for all who worked with her — colleagues, staff, residents and students alike. Her patients were the recipients of her honesty, integrity and compassion.

T'nette first visited Cooperstown and Bassett in the mid-70s when she visited her sister Stephanie, a Columbia medical student doing a clerkship at Bassett. T'nette and her husband, Adrian, fell in love with the community — when she finished medical school at the University of Hawaii, they returned for her rotating internship at Bassett in 1977. Then, after an Internal Medicine residency in Hawaii, she returned to Bassett for her chief residency and stayed on as faculty in the division of General Internal Medicine in 1981, where she spent the remainder of her career, retiring in 2016. During that career, T'nette touched thousands of patients. In the words of one of her colleagues through all those years “there was no one — no one — who was more committed to the best care for her patients”. As the only woman for many years in the division

of General Internal Medicine, she was a special role model for the young women who came through the Internal Medicine residency. She was the recipient of the coveted Golden Apple award in 2001, awarded to the faculty member who has taught the residents the most about being the kind of doctor they hope to be.

But T'nette's contributions to the Bassett and Cooperstown communities were not limited to her impressive medical skills. She applied the same level of curiosity and commitment to the community. She was the founder of Kid's Garden at the Cooperstown Central School, with the goal of helping our community's children understand where their food comes from. She was a leader in many civic and environmental organizations and has brought to each the same rigorous attention to truth and integrity. She was a regular contributor to the local newspaper, The Freeman's Journal, most recently as co-author of “Life of the Land”. She and her husband, Adrian, have been the backbone of Sustainable Otsego, an organization dedicated to the sustainable and responsible preservation of our beautiful region. Her boundless energy and aesthetic sensibilities were also evident in her beautiful gardens and artistic endeavors that she shared with Adrian.

The Bassett community, the Cooperstown community, the county, region and the world has lost a great friend. She leaves behind her husband of 57 years, Adrian, their sons Stefan (wife Melissa) and Jan, grandchildren Sonya and Rowan, sisters Julie and Stephanie, brother Phil and many adoring nieces, nephews and friends from every part of her life. We will miss her dearly.

Editor's Note: Due to space constraints in this Reunion edition, additional obituaries will appear in the spring issue of *The Cupola*. ■

Giving from page 8

of education and resources available to current and future medical professionals. Every gift, regardless of size, collectively builds a robust foundation for our educational programs.

How to Contribute

We invite you to consider supporting Bassett Medical Center's Medical Education Endowment Fund. Making a donation is simple:

- **By Mail:** Use the enclosed remittance envelope and send it to the Friends of Bassett Healthcare Network.
- **Online:** Visit our website at www.friendsofbassett.org to make a secure online donation.
- **Make a legacy gift:** Contact us at 607-547-3928 to learn about what options are best for you.

Your continued support helps us maintain the high standards of medical education and patient care that Bassett Medical Center is known for. Your commitment to the future of healthcare is deeply appreciated. Together, we can build a brighter future for medical education and ensure that Bassett remains a model of excellence in healthcare.

Please consider your support of the Medical Education programs at Bassett — your gift makes a lasting difference. ■

Physician Employment Opportunities in the Bassett Healthcare Network

Thinking of a career move? Do you know another physician seeking a position in an award-winning network of six hospitals and 30 regional sites? Consider these openings in Central New York and Cooperstown.

Anesthesiology	Neurosurgery
Cardiology - Non-Invasive	Ophthalmology
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Nephrology	
Neurology	

For more information visit:
<https://www.bassett.org/careers/physicians-and-advanced-practice-clinicians> or call
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The Importance of Alumni Giving: Supporting Bassett Medical Center's Legacy in Rural Healthcare

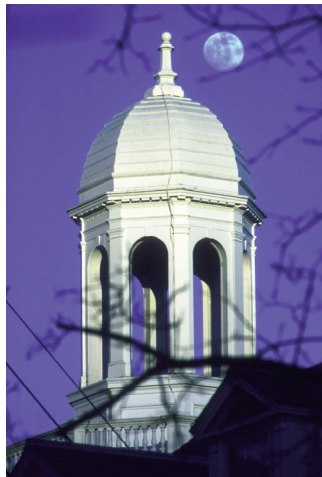
As an alumnus of Bassett Medical Center, you understand the transformative role our institution plays in the field of healthcare. For decades, Bassett has been dedicated to training compassionate, skilled healthcare professionals who not only serve their patients but also uplift entire communities. Your experiences and insights are invaluable, and as we look to the future, alumni giving emerges as a vital mechanism for enhancing our Medical Education Program.

Investing in the Future of Healthcare

The challenges faced by rural healthcare settings are unique and multifaceted. To prepare the next generation of medical professionals to meet these challenges, we are committed to continuously improving our educational resources, facilities, and training opportunities. Your support helps ensure that future physicians are equipped with the knowledge and skills needed to provide exceptional care in underserved areas.

Recent Advancements Through Alumni Support

Thanks to contributions to Bassett's Medical Education Fund, we have made significant strides in enhancing the educational experience for our medical staff, residents, and students.



Notable advancements include:

- **Cardiovascular Fellows Workspace:** An additional area that promotes team-based patient care and facilitates research, essential for developing innovative healthcare solutions.
- **Advanced Training Initiatives:** Funding for training in laparoscopic sutures and resident wellness programs ensures our learners receive comprehensive education while maintaining their well-being.
- **New Resident Lounge:** A dedicated space for studying and collaboration, fostering an environment where residents can share knowledge and support one another.

These enhancements not only improve the quality of education but also enrich the overall training environment, preparing our alumni to make meaningful contributions to the future of healthcare.

The Power of Your Contribution

Your contribution is crucial in advancing our mission. Alumni support is not merely a donation; it's an investment in the future of healthcare. By giving, you directly impact the quality

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