

Below are nominations of 29 physicians and employees affiliated with Indian River Medical Center submitted to Scripps Treasure Coast Newspapers by their peers, patients, family members and others from the community. Please note that some nominations have been edited grammatically and for consistency.

Rebecca Abbott, RRT—SEMI-FINALIST IN THE NON-PHYSICIAN’S EXCELLENCE CATEGORY!

Respiratory Therapist Clinical Specialist

Rebecca Abbott has been a respiratory therapist at IRMC for 15 years. Never have I seen a person love their job more. Every day Rebecca states how she loves her job. She does countless acts of kindness not only for her coworkers but also for her patients. She has been known to take the clothing of a homeless patient home to wash. She organized a fundraiser in memory of a recent employee that passed away and was able to raise enough money to have a lifetime endowment that will pay for new respiratory graduates to take their credentialing exams every year. A recipient of the Clinical Excellence award at IRMC, Rebecca also spends innumerable hours every year organizing Respiratory Therapy Week for the staff. The staff would receive gift certificates, lunches and more each day of the annual celebration. Rebecca organizes a cookie and brownie bake for the nurses each year during Nurses Week. She is involved in sending a child with asthma to camp each year and adopting a family of children for Christmas gifts every year. Rebecca exudes a philosophy of ‘what can I do to help another person.’

Rebecca started out as a new respiratory graduate here at IRMC 15 years ago and has advanced up the clinical ladder and is now a clinical specialist. In addition to her daily duties, Rebecca teaches smoking cessation classes for the community. At Easter, she can be found eagerly dressing up in costume as the Easter bunny for the children of IRMC staff. On career day, she can be found promoting respiratory as a career choice to the high school students.

Her enthusiasm and empowerment is unmatched by anyone I know. Rebecca is never satisfied with the status quo and is always pursuing good deeds. Her most recent goal – to do volunteer work at an asthma camp.

—T.H., Vero Beach, FL

Kathleen Baggett, M.D.

(See The Face, Ear, Nose and Throat Center of Vero/Vero ENT Associates below)

Felix Bigay, M.D.

Chairman of the OB/GYN Department

Medical Director of Partners in Women’s Health, IRMC

Dr. Bigay has been a stable provider of women’s healthcare at Indian River Medical Center for more than 10 years. I have had the pleasure of working with him for approximately six of those years. During this time, I have come to respect his work ethic and have grown to understand why he has often been referred to as a ‘can-do’ person. During the toughest of times, he has always ‘pulled up his boot-straps’ and delivered service to his patients. He always shows up ready to work. He has earned a reputation for his skill and proficiency in his practice and as a result, is popularly sought out by new patients. He sits on several committees including the Medical Executive Committee, supervises a busy office practice, and still finds time between family commitments to take part in charitable endeavors like March of Dimes. He has truly motivated me to become a better physician as I try to capture that drive that allows him to continuously ‘show up and play.’

—D.C., Vero Beach, FL

Derrick Clunis, M.D.

Newborn/ Pediatric Hospitalist, IRMC

Dr. Clunis is an outstanding physician. He is very intelligent and deserves this recognition because he is an awesome person. Caring for our newborns and pediatric patients, it does not matter to him if you need to call him at 2 in the morning or 2 in the afternoon. He always speaks to you in a calm, caring manner and never gets upset because you are interrupting his sleep. There are not many people out there that would work like this and keep an upbeat, glowing personality. He is the kindest, most considerate and compassionate person you could ever meet. In any circumstance or crisis, he maintains a calmness that encourages everyone around him to feel confident and secure with him. He maintains a positive attitude with all his coworkers and goes out of his way to speak and help everybody from Dietary to Environmental

Services to Administration. He never has anything negative to say about his work or anyone around him. He has the utmost respect from other physicians, nurses, coworkers, patients and colleagues. This is why Dr. Clunis deserves to be a Health Care Hero!

—P.B. and A.H., Vero Beach, FL

Marieke Dam, MPT

Physical Therapist

Marieke Dam is a young physical therapist at IRMC. She is so excellent and full of life that many patients request her. Last year, Marieke started to feel fatigue and short of breath, which is unusual for this vivacious salsa dancer. She was diagnosed with a large mass in her chest – it was non-Hodgkin's lymphoma. She underwent major surgery. After several months and some complications, Marieke began her chemotherapy and radiation journey. During the course of her treatment, she never gave up her love for patients. She began visiting cancer patients in the hospital with words of encouragement. Many patients started to ask for her. She rarely missed a day of work during her treatment. She would sit with patients and cry and laugh with them all the while her own chemotherapy was infusing into her veins. She met with the head of the hospital gift shop to discuss a line of 'cancer-related' products such as lotions, creams, hats and makeup to make cancer patients feel more beautiful. She always had a smile or a joke – never a negative word.

Marieke is from Norway and has no family here in the United States. IRMC became her family. Everyone would ask – “How is Marieke today?” Marieke is now finished with her treatment and she is cancer-free, although the scars from her surgeries and chemo remain. She has gone back to dancing. She now attends a cancer support group at IRMC as a survivor and a supporter. She continues to visit patients and encourage them. Her laugh and smile are contagious. Her courage is overwhelming. She is a hero!

—D.C., Vero Beach, FL

Donna Fabean, R.N., MSN, MHA (representing IRMC)

Director, Women's Health Care, Pediatrics, Partners in Women's Health

IRMC has recognized that domestic and sexual violence aimed toward females is a life-ending and life-changing issue that thousands of women face daily. The unsettling reality is that four women every day in the United States are murdered by their partner, and one in every four women will be a victim of domestic violence in their lifetime. It is an issue that many people choose to ignore, the 'dirty little secret' that some women live with, sometimes for years.

Besides recognizing this fact, IRMC has taken numerous steps toward making a positive difference in the community.

- 1) IRMC has specially trained Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners (SANE), a program run through its Emergency Department to provide services to victims of sexual assault. These experts offer services designed to deal with the physical, emotional and psychological effects of sexual assault, and to offer information vital to the victim for their recovery.
- 2) IRMC partnered with SafeSpace, the area's only certified domestic violence agency, to offer the Every Woman is my Sister luncheons in 2010 and 2011. In 2010, Denise Brown, the sister of Nicole Brown-Simpson, was the keynote speaker. Denise spoke in both Vero Beach and Stuart and had discussions with IRMC's SANE personnel at the hospital's Emergency Department. In 2011, the speaker was Victor Rivers, actor, athlete, author and activist. His book, *A Private Family Matter*, is a heart-wrenching account of one family's survival of 'domestic terrorism.'
- 3) IRMC partnered with SafeSpace for the first Walk a Mile in Her Shoes®, which is an international march to bring awareness to domestic and sexual violence toward females. This fun outreach event had 85 men walking in 4-inch, red stiletto heels to bring awareness to a very serious subject.
- 4) IRMC is again partnering with SafeSpace for the second walk this October during Domestic Violence Awareness Month.
- 5) IRMC, in recognizing the importance of collaboration and partnership, has one of its key staff, Donna Fabean, serving on SafeSpace's board of directors. Donna, with her passion and drive, has been instrumental in bringing the spirit of collaboration and partnership to fruition.

It is with great admiration and pleasure that I nominate IRMC for the Community Outreach Award for their partnership, collaboration and bringing services and assistance to many victims in our community.

—A.C., Stuart, FL

Hamid Feiz, M.D.
Chief Quality Officer, IRMC

As the Core Measure coordinator, I have had the pleasure of working closely with Dr. Feiz during the past year and found him to be highly successful in promoting the positive culture changes that are directly improving best practice behaviors in our organization. Dr. Feiz is a seasoned professional who consistently excels in giving verbal praise while encouraging a productive climate for action and self-direction. He is an inspirational leader projecting energy and enthusiasm as he first established, and then nurtured, the growth of a daily multi-discipline rounding program. He avoids over-supervising and shows genuine respect by giving sound, practical advice and always responds quickly to any request for help, no matter how big or small. Dr. Feiz also possesses the strong, dynamic leadership qualities required to overcome tough challenges. He is admired for his ability to quickly create rapport and restore positive direction whenever confrontations erupt. Because Dr. Feiz is an extremely dedicated leader, striving for the highest standards of excellence in the care provided to every patient at IRMC, we would sincerely appreciate his recognition as one of the {many} Health Care Heroes in our community.

—L.S., Vero Beach, FL

Peggy Gavigan, R.D., L.D.
Outpatient Dietitian

Peggy Gavigan's main role here at IRMC is to provide medical nutrition therapy to individuals with health issues that can be controlled with the proper diet and nutrition education. Peggy receives numerous compliments from individuals because she has helped them adopt a healthier diet, all the while respecting their eating habits, food choices and personal lifestyles. It is difficult for most people to make drastic changes in their eating habits. But the one-on-one sessions that Peggy provides are individualized. Peggy is deserving of being a Health Care Hero because the services she provides create a healthier community.

—D.A., Vero Beach, FL

Aleta Glynn (1)
Patient Advocate, ER, IRMC

Aleta Glynn is the lead 'patient advocate' in the Emergency Department at IRMC. Everyone who experiences a healthcare crisis (whether themselves or a family member or friend) truly needs someone to 'advocate' for him or her. Aleta is that person. She makes those difficult phone calls when a family member is too distraught to pick up the phone; she holds the hand of someone who has just received a new medical diagnosis; she arranges transport home for those elderly or financially burdened patients and she connects the patient with outside resources. The list is endless. She is not a medical person; she is simply a 'nice lady' who is there for you when you are in need of comfort or support. Truly, our community could not exist without her and her team's efforts. Their daily task is 'outreach' in so many ways.

—J.T., Vero Beach, FL

Aleta Glynn (2)
Patient Advocate, ER, IRMC

Aleta Glynn provides exceptional leadership for a unique program at Indian River Medical Center called the Patient Advocates. She and her team of eight advocates provide non-clinical support 24/7 to more than 50,000 patients each year in the IRMC ER plus the on-average 2.2 visitors accompanying each patient on an ER visit.

At the most stressful time of someone's life, when health issues are serious enough to warrant a trip to the ER, Aleta and her team provide comfort and support, help as liaisons between clinical staff, patients and their families, and assist with the timely transfer of information. We could not ask for a more dedicated person to lead this program than Aleta Glynn. Her 'above and beyond' dedication is demonstrated by her exceptional caring way with patients, her support of the professional team delivering care in the ER, the high standards she sets for the members of her team and her mindset that this is a 24/7/365 commitment.

Aleta's job is one that requires a high level of energy as she and the other Advocates make their continuous rounds among the 42 beds in the IRMC ER. On some days they are with a family when a doctor breaks bad news. Often they help patients by contacting loved ones who live far away. Other times it can be holding a patient's hand, anticipating their needs or simply bringing yet another warm blanket to be a calming influence. For patients who face frequent medical crises requiring visits to the ER, Aleta and her team become the 'friend' who welcomes them back to the medical center and makes them feel at home.

According to Foundation Board Chairman C.B. "Jack" Rogers, "I've known Aleta up close and personal for four years. The care given my wife Sally over the extended time of her illness was exceptional. Aleta is someone who truly cares about people. As manager of the Patient Advocate program, job descriptions mean little because Aleta goes anywhere needed. In my mind, the way Aleta connects with people truly makes her a Health Care Hero."

Other leaders of Aleta's Patient Advocate 'fan club' are Dr. Eric Carter, medical director of Emergency Medicine for IRMC, and Cindy Vanek, IRMC chief operating officer. To quote Dr. Carter, "If you've never been to the IRMC Emergency Room then you cannot truly appreciate the difference Aleta and her team make. Any injury or illness that results in an ER visit can be a very frightening event. The Patient Advocates provide the comfort and assurance that you are not alone throughout your visit to the ER at IRMC."

Aleta's genuine caring and concern has brought much success to the Patient Advocate program over the last nearly eight years, always making sure the needs of the patients come first. Letters of appreciation from patients and their families come regularly to the Foundation, thanking donors for funding this wonderful program that makes a difference for our entire community. Aleta is our Health Care Hero who makes it all possible.

—J.D., Vero Beach, FL

Ruth Hatfield, R.N.

Intermediate Cardiac Care

Ruth Hatfield truly is an amazing leader on our Telemetry Unit. Ruth continually sets the example of a true professional in her field. The knowledge Ruth shares with her coworkers and the standards of care are exemplary. A charge nurse has many challenges working with multiple patient diagnoses, multi-tasking and dealing with diverse personalities of staff. Ruth has the knowledge and experience to take on this challenging position with ease. Ruth is continually challenging the night staff with her leadership, by setting the example, assisting and always educating by sharing her experiences in the medical field. We are better nursing professionals for working with Ruth Hatfield.

—F.V., Vero Beach, FL

Robert Hendley, M.D.

Cardiologist

Simply stated, Dr. Robert Hendley cares, is thorough, follows up with patients and explains all aspects of treatment. He is dedicated to and encourages both physical and mental ways of healing, giving special attention to seniors. He always makes himself available, especially in the case of a patient facing a crisis.

If it were not for him, many of us would not be able to continue enjoying quality of life, able to spend time with our children and grandchildren. Or possibly even be alive today. Anyone who has encountered Dr. Hendley holds him in the highest regard and respect. He deserves this award because of his professionalism, superb methods and for providing real hope to his patients.

—I.T., Sebastian, FL

Rick Herndon

Chemistry Supervisor, Laboratory

I have never worked with someone so compassionate, not only to our patients, but to staff. Rick is very knowledgeable and when we ask him a question, he answers in a way that we understand. If someone is absent, Rick often sits at the desk to order tests or draw blood. He will help whenever and wherever he needs to so that our flow of patients runs smoothly. It is nice to know that even though he holds a supervisor position, he will do anything for this organization. He is an asset to IRMC and this community. He communicates well with our patients and ensures that they are completely satisfied when they use our facility. He is very deserving of this award. I feel very lucky to have him as my boss!

—D.C., Vero Beach, FL

Neil Heskell, M.D.

Dermatologist

Dr. Heskell is a respected dermatologist catering to the often-affluent community in Vero Beach, FL. Yet, he volunteered on a medical mission to Haiti to treat the poorest of the poor in the slums of Port-au-Prince. He said, "This is why I went into medicine" as he treated all ages of people with all sorts of diseases. He got involved with the organization Haiti Clinic, Inc., for which he volunteered and is now its president. Under his excellent leadership, the organization has expanded to the point there is now a full-time medical clinic manned by a Haitian doctor and nurses with groups of U.S. medical professionals volunteering on a regular basis. His sacrifice in time, talent and treasure has and is helping thousands of destitute Haitians receive basic primary care at no cost to them.

—D.P., Vero Beach, FL

Steven Hulecki, M.D.

Urologist

About a year ago, I was in dire need of a procedure that seemed to be an emergency to me. Because it was considered 'elective,' it was challenging to find a physician who would take my case as I was in the process of getting insurance in place. I had a 2-centimeter kidney stone wreaking havoc and causing infection in my body that needed to be blasted. Dr. Hulecki took me in, made sure I had the treatment and procedures I needed, and did it without blinking. My insurance became effective and he was paid, but he took me in when it was very difficult to get an appointment. In this day and age, it is rare to see a doctor personally care enough about a new patient to extend himself this way and place front and center the main objective of truly helping and healing people. Dr. Hulecki is my Health Care Hero.

—H.T., Sebastian, FL

Sheila Jackson, MSW

Discharge Planning

I have had the pleasure of witnessing countless examples of this social worker's strong, professional commitment to caring for patients. Compassion, teamwork, respect, accountability and excellence may be the core values of IRMC, but I believe they were already Sheila's 'code' long before she came to work in our facility. Her peers, staff nurses and managers often seek her out for guidance and direction, not only because she can provide them with good advice and information, but also because she has a natural, 'Zen-like' calming effect on those around her. Sheila always communicates on a highly professional level, yet shines with a warm and genuine kindness that allows her to quickly build rapport and trust with patients and families in their time of crisis or fear.

Every day she celebrates the successes and grieves the losses experienced by patients and their families – supporting them, comforting them and educating them while efficiently and determinedly working behind the scenes to be sure their healthcare needs will be met when they leave the hospital and return home or transfer to another facility. She never wavers in her pleasant and cheerful disposition – always kind, always calm. There are heroes among us and angels among us – I believe Sheila Jackson is that rare combination of both.

—T.T., Vero Beach, FL

William Lasswell, M.D.

Endocrinologist

I have been a patient of Dr. Lasswell's for about 15 years and he has never let me down. He is what a doctor should represent – patience, wisdom, compassion, integrity. I could go on and on, but to it is because of the care I get when I see him that I think he deserves this honor. He is so hands-on. I am a brittle diabetic and have had some serious problems recently. No matter when I call him, he – not his nurses or staff – returns my call with concern and always strives for a solution to fix my situation. He understands that I am a good patient and believe in him so I do what he asks me to do at home. But I also have no insurance, and in order to take good care of diabetes, it is very expensive. I test my blood sugar levels eight to 10 times a day and a box of test strips is \$25 for 50. Yet, he never charges me for my visits and he tries to get me samples of the insulin when he can. I just think he is the best doctor and person ever because it comes from his heart. He reminds me of the doctors way back when they did house calls. He deserves this award hands down; no question about it. Just talk to him and witness him with his patients and you will agree.

—D.C., Vero Beach, FL

Jeffrey Livingston, M.D.

(See *The Face, Ear, Nose and Throat Center of Vero/Vero ENT Associates* below)

Gregory MacKay, M.D.—WINNER OF THE ‘COMMUNITY OUTREACH’ HEALTH CARE HERO AWARD!

Gastroenterologist

I have known Dr. Gregory MacKay for 9 years. He is respected by everyone at Indian River Medical Center; his physician colleagues, staff, and patients. After the devastating earthquake in Haiti, he became involved with the Haiti Clinic. He has made three trips – March 19-21, 2010; Oct. 15-28, 2010 (where he was the leader of the mission); and May 21-22, 2010 (accompanied by his college-aged daughter who also volunteered her time). Dr. MacKay is caring, gentle and sincere in all his interactions and has a special gift for listening to his patients. He never worries about time—patients have his full attention. He was accompanied by Deborah Silver, a Scripps Newspaper reporter/ photographer, during his October trip in which he led the mission. Since pictures talk louder than words, I’m hoping readers will go to www.tcpalm.com and in the search section write ‘Gregory MacKay, Haiti.’ Once you watch the videos of that trip, you’ll see why Dr. MacKay is my Health Care Hero.

—B.W., Vero Beach, FL

Karen Marple

Director, Patient Care Services, IRMC

Karen began her career at IRMC in 1988 as a staff nurse on the surgical unit. Her career quickly expanded as her capabilities were noted, and she became a charge nurse, then a nurse manager, then a case manager, and now a director in Patient Care Services. Karen is an operational genius and knows how to coordinate among multiple disciplines, to ensure that patients receive only the best care. During the hurricanes of 2004, she was the ‘go to’ person and was a resource for all. While working full time, she has received both her bachelor’s and master’s degrees in nursing from Barry University. She is active in her faith community, and has a heart that ministers to others through her service. She loves being married to her best friend in the world, Charlie, and is a proud mother to her son Shannon. Indian River Medical Center is blessed to have Karen’s heart for patient care excellence.

—M.S., Vero Beach, FL

Steve Massey, R.N.

Nursing Recruiter, IRMC

Steve is the epitome of a Health Care Hero. Serving Indian River Medical Center for 40 years, Steve began his career at age 16 as an orderly, until earning his RN licensure a few years later. He has served in various nursing supervisory positions in the Emergency and Medical Surgery Services departments, before transitioning into Human Resources as a nurse recruiter in 1988. As an avid blood donor, Steve “lives and breathes healthcare” in order to serve the needs of the community. For many years, Steve has organized IRMC’s annual Easter Egg Hunt, hiding Easter eggs for the children of IRMC employees.

Over the years, Steve has ‘adopted’ many homebound, elderly friends, faithfully bringing hot meals and a smile to brighten their day. His passion for helping others is the reason that Steve made the decision to enter the healthcare field at such a young age. After losing his own parents while he was a young man, Steve has dedicated his life to always putting the needs of others first and truly making a difference in this world. It’s not unusual for Steve to respond to a friend in need, even in the middle of the night. Often, Steve assumes the position of a role model in the lives of children from single-parent families. Additionally, Steve is an avid supporter and past president of the Pelican Island Wildlife Refuge.

Once you meet Steve, you will most certainly agree that Steve always puts the needs of others before his own and is most deserving of the Health Care Hero Award.

—L.P., Vero Beach, FL

Erin Mercado, R.N.

Charge Nurse, Women’s Health Care, IRMC

Erin came to Women’s Health Care at a time of transition. She always maintains good rapport with everyone, including co-workers for whom she is responsible to lead and instruct. She has become the

proverbial 'go-to person,' both administratively and clinically. "When someone has difficulty starting an IV, find Erin." It's a comfortable feeling, when at work you know that you can trust the judgment of a team member who is in charge. As a result she is highly respected and commended and quite deserving of the Non-Physician Excellence in Health Care Award. She gets a solid 10 out of 10.

—D.C., Vero Beach, FL

Summer Monroe, BSRN
Intermediate Cardiac Care, IRMC

Summer Monroe set her goals high and she persevered. She graduated from Florida Atlantic University in 2005 with a BSRN. For the next six years, she worked on continuing her education while working part time (at times full time) for two facilities: Indian River Medical Center and Vero Radiology Associates. She believed in delivering great patient care with a smile. While working on her ARNP degree, she also got married, was step mom to an adolescent, gave birth to one child and just became a mother again. That did not stop her from putting her nursing skills to work and being part of the nursing field. She loves a challenge and interacting with others in the medical field. She is an inspiration to others who want to pursue a career in the medical field.

—D.S., Vero Beach, FL

Susan O'Toole-Evans, M.D.
Pediatrician

On June 28 of this year my son was born. His first few hours were uneventful. Dr. O'Toole-Evans came to see him and immediately determined he had a heart condition requiring transfer to Orlando. I was shocked with this news. She managed, with extreme kindness, to comfort us while still provided excellent care to my son. Without her, we would have lost him. I will never forget with all my pain, she came to me and gave me a hug and told me everything was going to be fine.

—A.P., Vero Beach, FL

Jean Peterson, R.N.
Imaging Sciences

Jean Peterson has been a nurse for more than 30 years and has enjoyed it since she first began. She never once thought she should be an astronaut or police officer. She wished to be a nurse – not a doctor or a high-ranking official – but a nurse. I know that she cares for her job just by the way she talks about her adventures at work. She brings home stories of kind individuals who have shared stories with her while she cared for them. Jean is the kind of nurse that others call upon when they need assistance. One morning a child would not stay still and Jean stepped in and cradled the child. The child stopped crying and started laughing and the next thing she knew, the procedure was all over. Now that alone is exceptional to me. She deserves recognition for the amount of love she has shown for her career. She sacrificed some of her personal life just to make sure that someone else was doing fine. To me she is a hero.

—S.R., Micco, FL

Arthur Splendoria, M.D.
Family Practice

I have known Arthur since 1996. He has been a tireless care provider. I have seen him many times in the hospital past anyone's usual hours. I met him when he was quietly taking care of his patients in the late of the night without complaint. His first priority is his patients. He is the most efficient patient advocate. He remains hopeful about patient outcomes and does not accept defeat, yet he has a very realistic assessment of the situation.

His tireless efforts bear fruit when my patients uniformly praise him. As a team player, he never hesitates to ask the right questions or express his opinions. He is a joy to work with. I as a consultant feel very confident when I get a consult from him that all the bases are covered. He is thorough in his approach, but he is reasonable in not doing unnecessary tests. He talks to families and keeps them informed of the events of their sick family members. He is truly a patient advocate.

He keeps up with current events and the latest technology. He continually strives to improve his practice and delivers the best care possible to his patients. He never hesitates to take time to call me and discuss a case. He quotes the latest literature when he is discussing his patients' problems and provides

detailed background information of his patients. He truly knows his patients, not just medically but as people as well.

Arthur is a quiet person who does not talk about himself. I learned to know him from our day-to-day contact taking care of patients. He never misses a beat. He can be counted on to follow a case daily and carefully as necessary. I can call him any time and he would patiently listen and discuss the patient's problem in question. We have known each other now for over 15 years and he is remarkable.

—L.H., Vero Beach, FL

Dudley Teel, M.D.

Emergency Medicine Physician

Dr. Dudley Teel has been an Emergency Department physician here at IRMC for many years. He is known in the community as the ER doc with that 'special touch.' Meaning, literally, he still holds patients' hands and provides comfort as he interviews and examines patients. He is forever calm, patient and kind when dealing with the public. He donates his time to the university to assist in educating medical students. Not only is he teaching them medical science, more importantly, he is teaching them the importance of 'bedside manner.' He certainly is deserving of a physician's excellence award because he exemplifies all the qualities and characteristics of excellence in his profession.

—J.T., Vero Beach, FL

Cindy Vanek, M.S., R.N. (1)

Senior VP/Chief Operating Officer, IRMC

Cindy is the pinnacle of professional excellence in healthcare. Although she carries the exhausting and challenging responsibility as our Chief Operating Officer and must maintain a cost-effective hospital operation, she still steadfastly holds true to her nursing core values as a passionate, unwavering advocate for the patients. Her soft-spoken, unobtrusive mannerisms combined with a razor-sharp intelligence are the persuasive tools she uses to overcome opposition, leading everyone to what matters. Simply but effectively she reminds us before every decision that is made, "How will this help our patients?" She is a mentor for all leadership with her tactful ability to always display grace, showing those around her how to find positive opportunities within every situation. She is widely recognized as a strong leader and committed to continuous learning, promoting an educational environment for those around her in addition to serving as an active faculty member at Duke University. Always polished and poised, Cindy is the first to arrive in the morning and the last to leave. Her calm, orderly systematic work ethic gently encourages accountability throughout the organization. This petite, quiet woman is a powerhouse of knowledge and compassion, a gift for both the hospital and the community. It has been my privilege to learn from and work alongside such a talented healthcare professional.

—D.A., Vero Beach, FL

Cindy Vanek, M.S., R.N. (2)

Senior VP/Chief Operating Officer

I worked under the leadership of Cindy Vanek in 2005-2006 when I was a clinical nurse specialist in the Emergency Department. Circumstances beyond my control caused me to move out west for the past five years and I have now returned to Florida. When I was investigating my career options prior to arriving here, I had heard that Cindy Vanek was promoted to the Chief Operating Officer at IRMC. In as much as I had received an offer for a significant increase in salary at another organization, I chose IRMC primarily because Cindy Vanek asked me to return in a different role. I admire her patience, kindness, professionalism and demeanor. When you walk by her office, the door is often wide open for any and all to enter. She offers support when you encounter obstacles. I admire her as an administrator and more importantly, I admire her as a strong role model for women. She proves that someone can be successful in their career without compromising his or her character and ethics.

—J.T., Vero Beach, FL

The Face, Ear, Nose and Throat Center of Vero/Vero ENT Associates

Otolaryngology

Drs. Kathleen Baggett, Jeffrey Livingston and Alex Yoon are, in my opinion, the best in the field of otolaryngology. They are compassionate with each and every patient and sincerely care about their

patients' health and well-being. They each see approximately 30 patients each day and follow up on each patient's care and needs in a timely and caring manner. They staff about 30 employees and are, by far, the best employers in Indian River County. They care about their employees and show it in many ways. I feel they are very deserving of this award!

—S.A., Vero Beach, FL

Alex Yoon, M.D.

(See The Face, Ear, Nose and Throat Center of Vero/Vero ENT Associates below)

Karen Westberry, M.D.

Pediatrician

Never before have I found a pediatrician or any kind of doctor that I would say exudes the amount of caring and concern for her patients as Karen Westberry. She consistently delivers superior care and takes the extra time and attention to do the right thing for her patients. She continues to increase her knowledge and consistently show compassion for her patients, their families, and her staff and delivers the right care at the right time. Dr. Westberry is the kind of family doctor this community is fortunate to have and her excellence is shown in the everyday things that she does to give her patients the right level of care. She does a great job at hiring and retaining a high quality staff from the front office, to the back office, to nursing care. She keeps her patients informed of what is currently recommended for their children and respects their opinions, beliefs and religious feelings. I have personally referred quite a few people to Dr. Westberry's office and each one has consistently been amazingly happy with Dr. Westberry and the quality of care they have received from her office. To me, Dr. Westberry is The Health Care Hero for the Treasure Coast!

—R.R., Vero Beach, FL

-End-