



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Joseph P. Addabbo Jr.

St. John's Episcopal Hospital Making Changes, Improvements to Stay Integral Part of the Community

JOSEPH P. ADDABBO JR October 9, 2014

Far Rockaway, NY (October 9, 2014) – The administration at St. John's Episcopal Hospital in the Rockaways is working to revive the facility and create a top-notch healthcare base. Thanks to various upgrades, including a Wound Care Unit and state-of-the-art equipment, and a Community Health Improvement Plan, it is already on its way. A new Emergency Room is projected to be complete by early 2016, and the hospital's clinics are being moved to a new building across the street in the coming months.

"The people of Rockaway can't afford to lose the only hospital on the Peninsula," said **State Senator Joseph Addabbo, Jr.** "Keeping St. John's doors open needs to be a priority for the community and its leaders. A stabbing victim in Rockaway Park doesn't have the time to rush to Jamaica Hospital. It is truly a matter of life and death."

Medical Director Joseph Tarantino, DPM said the Wound Care Unit treats injuries affecting "the health and quality of life of many of the residents of the Rockaways and the surrounding areas."

"These treatments and therapies are done by our wound care specialists, Podiatric surgeons, vascular surgeons, plastic surgeons and often physical therapists. Together, we strive to increase a patient's activity, their quality of life and indirectly extending their life," **Tarantino said.** "As well as healing their wounds, we try to direct a patient toward a healthy lifestyle and prevention of further problems."

Every day, staff are able to treat diabetic wounds that are slow to heal or not healing, foot or leg ulcer or sores, post-surgery wounds that have opened up, surgical wounds not healing, radiation-causing skin tears or open sores, bone infections and internal injuries. The unit also includes hyperbaric chambers, and hyperbaric oxygen therapy enhances the body's natural healing and strengthens the immune system. In the chambers, oxygen triples.

The hospital is also accredited in magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) and boasts one of the quietest MRI machines available. Staff members said it is typically the noise of the MRI scan that makes patients grow anxious and uncomfortable.

St. John's mammography work has almost tripled in the last two years, and include digital technology for personalized breast care. Special monitors show high-resolution images, allowing staff to truly get the full picture and get into hard-to-see areas. It allows viewing options with the unique ability to zoom in on and enhance certain areas to get a more precise picture of a patient's condition.

They have additionally added voice recognition to their technology which allows staff to skip the time-consuming act of transcribing radiology reports, and thus patients' reports are produced much quicker than before.

"We're trying to take care of the community. We have a lot of capabilities," said **Patricia Gillespie, Administrative Director of Imaging Services.**

Statistics show the population of the hospital's service area is rapidly growing. The Rockaways have one of the highest, and quickly growing, senior populations in the borough, as well as individuals below the Federal Poverty Level. Additionally, 65 percent of local residents report being overweight or obese, the area's cancer death rate is 16 percent higher than the Queens rate, and the asthma-related hospital admission rate surpasses Queens' and New York City's, according to St. John's report.

"The hospital's officials have done the research, and it clearly shows there is a need for them to stay just where they are," **Addabbo said.** "I can say with confidence the administration is working to be better than before, and you can see that by just walking through the halls. I have met with various personnel who tell me their plans for the future, and we want to keep the hospital open so we can see their dreams come to life. Easy access to healthcare and a comfortable, safe, effective place for patients to be is what we want St. John's to be for this community."

The hospital's administration created a Community Health Improvement Plan and Implementation Strategy based on sources of local, state and nation data, with input from community members and public health experts. It found needed areas of improvement include mental health and underlying behaviors and risk factors that lead to chronic diseases.

The detailed implementation action plan first starts with working with local schools and engaging students in baseline education and behavioral assessments, nutritional and physical activity counseling, and then continuing to track the results.

In order to see their big plans through, St. John's has partnered with various community organizations, including the Joseph P. Addabbo Family Health Center, Community Board 14, Rockaway Beach Channel Long Term Recovery, Visiting Nurse Service of New York and the Rockaway Beach Civic Association.