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Section B



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**Health-Care
HEROES
Awards**

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Beitler takes aim at cancer

By Giannina Smith Bedford

CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Although Dr. Jonathan Beitler likes to say his mother used the promise of a shortwave radio to bribe him into applying for a six-year medical program while in high school, the truth is he was meant to be a doctor.

As a professor of radiology at Winship Cancer Institute at Emory University and a flight surgeon and colonel in the National Guard, Beitler was also meant to use his

skills for the good of the country. For his contributions to the medical field and the military, Beitler is the winner in the Military Service category for the 2012 Atlanta Business Chronicle Health-Care Heroes Awards.

"I was a general surgery resident with lots of trauma experience and I thought that would be a useful skill for the Army to have," he said.

At Emory, Beitler is a professor in the Emory Radiation Oncology Department, with secondary appointments in otolaryngology and medical oncology. He compares the team approach used to treat patients at Winship Cancer Institute at Emory University to his time in the Army. It is with this team approach and his infusion of positivity that Beitler has touched the lives of many patients.

One of these patients is Rick Lester, a fellow military man who spent 26 years as an aviator and underwent radiation treatment under Beitler in 2010 for stage-four throat cancer. He is now almost two years cancer-free and thanks the team at Winship and the support of physicians like Beitler for getting him through.

"The guy is just a consummate pro. You can only dream to have this kind of a



MILITARY SERVICE WINNER

Jonathan J. Beitler



Title: Professor of radiation oncology at Winship Cancer Institute at Emory University; flight surgeon and colonel in the National Guard

Age: 55

Education: Graduate of Medical College of Pennsylvania; general surgery training at Downstate Medical Center; radiation oncology training at Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center; MBA from Columbia University

Top career achievement: "When I was president of the American Radium Society ... I made some management changes that I believe may have saved the society."

group helping you when you are in that type of situation where you realize the futility of life," he said. "It was like I was the only patient he had and that's not it, but that is they way he made you feel."

Allison Del Medico, who was diagnosed with a rare salivary gland tumor at the age of 29, went to see Beitler for post-operation radiation and said his "playful" personality and ability to read her concerns eased the difficulty of undergoing cancer treatment.

"The first thing he said when he walked in the door, and I'll never forget this, is 'you're way too young for this' and I just felt like that was exactly what I was thinking in my head ... I struggled for the first couple weeks with the 'why is this happening to me?' and every time he would see me in the hallway, he would say how are you doing," she said. "There is a lot of downside to cancer and treatment and I just think his positive energy makes things seem a little more tolerable."

Gass takes charge in time of crisis, saving a life

By Giannina Smith Bedford

CONTRIBUTING WRITER

On April 27, 2011, the tri-county area served by Dade Health and Rehabilitation in Trenton, Ga., was ravaged by tornadoes. People were overwhelmed at the destruction, while the employees of the nursing home scrambled to assist however possible. As the death toll rose, Dade Health and Rehabilitation, a member of the Georgia Health Care Association, which represents Georgia's skilled nursing care facilities, became a make-shift morgue for the community. Bodies were brought in wrapped in tarps and loved ones stood outside in mourning and shock.

A charge nurse at Dade Health and Rehabilitation for just a short time, Jeff Gass was working that day. He arrived early for his night shift after hearing of the storms and began assisting the staff and directing emergency workers to the rooms designated for the bodies.

While Gass and other staff members were placing bodies in one of the larger

rooms amidst emergency sirens, he heard a woman's voice coming from the corner.

"She was moaning in pain and asking some questions. She wasn't sure what had happened or where she was, but we realized she was alive," said Gass, a finalist in the Allied Health Professional category for Atlanta Business Chronicle's 2012 Health-Care Heroes Awards.

Gass, who had prior experience with trauma care, quickly snapped into action. While he worked to get an intravenous line into the badly injured woman, identified as Glynis Lawson, the other staff members called for the return of the emergency crew.

"Jeff just kicked into action. He acted very quickly, got an IV started and we stabilized her," said Dana Culpepper, director of nurses. "He played a real pivotal role to saving Ms. Lawson's life."

The tornado victim was finally stabilized and placed in an ambulance for transport. Although her situation was



ALLIED HEALTH FINALIST



Gass

grim, the discovery that she was alive gave the nursing home staff hope that there might be others who would pull through the natural disaster.

"We were all having a difficult time making simple decisions just from being in the shock of all of this destruction," Gass said. "Once we realized we had this live person it was kind of a bright spot for us to focus on. It renewed a lot of energy and lifted the haze of the confusion and shock and we were able to focus on that and use it as a bright spot in the middle of all this tragedy and it kind of got us through the evening and the night."

Following months of recovery, Lawson made an impressive recovery. She returned to Dade Health and Rehabilitation for a tearful reunion with Gass and the staff, thanking them for saving her life.

"The only thing I knew about the lady was her name," he said. "When she told me her name I knew immediately who she was and her and I both cried and just hugged each other and then just sat down and talked."

Jeff Gass

Title: Charge nurse at Dade Health and Rehabilitation

Age: 42

Prior jobs: Flight attendant with Delta Air Lines Inc.; experience working as a part of an organ transplant team and in the emergency room

Hobbies: hang gliding and fishing with his father

Although Gass and the staff remember the events of April 27 vividly, Lawson has no recollection of what transpired. The last thing she remembers was kneeling in her closet praying for her life. Since her recovery, she makes frequent visits to Dade Health and Rehabilitation and has become good friends with her rescuers.

"I just thank God that we had Jeff at our facility as an employee and I told Ms. Lawson time and time again, I really think she lived for some reason because I don't see how anybody could have come through that and survived but she did," Culpepper said.

Calmes a calming force

By Giannina Smith Bedford

CONTRIBUTING WRITER

When severely asthmatic patients arrive at the Emergency Department at Children's Healthcare of Atlanta at Hughes Spalding, Calvin Calmes is often one of the individuals they encounter. A resource-level respiratory therapist, he quickly provides patients with the clinical care they need and calms the fears of parents and families. Calmes' ability to quickly respond to an emergency goes beyond his training as a respiratory therapist or 10 years spent at Children's, however. With more than 20 years in the U.S. Army, he is currently a staff sergeant serving on his second deployment to Afghanistan and is a finalist in the Military Service category for Atlanta Business Chronicle's 2012 Health-Care Heroes Awards.

"Calvin is a very spiritual young man and that resonates through his work," said Irma Seabrook, manager of respiratory and laboratory services at Hughes Spalding. "Calvin takes his job seriously and his interaction with people is very straightforward. A lot of the skill set he's learned in that military environment in a sense has given him guidance in what he does in health care."

When Calmes is home, he works full-time as a respiratory therapist, specializing in emergency medicine for pediatrics. He is looked at as a vital resource in his department, said Seabrook, who often turns to him when sees a critical employee to cover for her.

"He is kind of a person that people go to for guidance," Seabrook said. "He precepts not only respiratory therapists, but also precepts nursing and he works closely with physician groups here on the campus to get buy-in on how to treat a particular patient that comes in to the ED."

With his varied roles, there is no

Calvin Calmes

Title: Registered respiratory therapist, Children's Hospital of Atlanta at Hughes Spalding and Army staff sergeant

Age: 52

Education: Associate of science degree in respiratory therapy

Prior job: Full-time military

wonder that Calmes is missed while he is gone. Seabrook said she looks forward to having him back on the team when he returns to Atlanta from deployment this summer.

"He is very warm, approachable, someone who when you are having a conflict has that keen ability to find common ground but he does so in a manner that is very respectful," Seabrook said.

Along with serving his patients and his country, Calmes gives back to the local community. He is an annual volunteer at Camp Breathe Easy, an asthma camp for kids, where his time is devoted to making sure kids

with asthma have fun and develop a positive self-image while also learning to manage their condition. Calmes is also active in his church and a participant in fundraising events supporting cancer and sickle cell disease research.

"A hero to me is somebody like him, somebody that presents himself as someone who is a star and cares about people, who has a passion for life and what he does, who is committed to service, be it the military service or service in the health-care sector," Seabrook said. "We need more like him."



MILITARY SERVICE FINALIST



'Dumbest guy in the room' paves road to success

By Giannina Smith Bedford

CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Don Mueller feels blessed to be able to contribute to the lives of children. As vice president of operations for Children's Healthcare of Atlanta and executive director of the Marcus Autism Center, he oversees the human, fiscal and capital resources that make their mission of helping children possible. For his leadership, Mueller is the winner in the Allied Health Professional category for Atlanta Business Chronicle's 2012 Health-Care Heroes Awards.

"At the end of the day the opportunity to help children is probably the highlight of what I do each and every day," he said. "I love to build programs and direct people and have a vision and implement the vision, but after it's all said and done, it's really just about the kids. There is nothing better in life than helping kids and helping parents and giving them the resources they need."

Mueller joined Children's in 2000 as director of tertiary service contracting. He was promoted to director of transplant services in 2003 — a move that took him from the finance side of business into hospital operations.

Responsible for the solid organ transplant programs, the dialysis unit and the gastrointestinal program, Mueller helped grow the program into one of the biggest in the country.

"I'm most proud of helping to build the transplant program that now has transplanted more than 1,000 children with remarkable outcomes. I'm extremely proud of that," he said.

Mueller rose to the role of vice president of strategy and business development in which he helped establish the 10-year Vision 2018

strategy aimed at positioning Children's to be a top pediatric hospital in clinical, research, teaching and wellness. He also helped negotiate the purchase of the Marcus Autism Center and bring it into Children's in August 2008.

As the largest clinical provider of autism-related services in the country, the Marcus Autism Center served the needs of more than 5,600 children in 2011 — some patients that traveled from across the Southeast and the world for care. Under Mueller's leadership, the Center has grown its volume by 41 percent and decreased the waiting list by more than 30 percent.

"There is a huge need for autism services; unfortunately not a lot of insurance companies pay for them. We have maximized our ability to serve children by putting in a lot of efficiencies," Mueller said. "Now we are building a research component on to what we are doing, which will extend our reach well beyond the state of Georgia."

Mueller played an integral role in the recent recruitment of Ami Klin as the Marcus Autism Center's first chief of autism and related disorders and a team from Yale University School of Medicine that is poised to further the research of autism detection and intervention. The recruitment of the team took wide community effort, Mueller said, involving the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Georgia Tech, Emory University, Georgia State University and The University of Georgia as well as Children's Healthcare of Atlanta.

"The autism community here in Atlanta leveraged the great work that Bernie Marcus began over 20 years ago, resulting in the recruitment of internationally known Dr. Ami Klin from Yale along with a team," Mueller said. "Marcus Autism



ALLIED HEALTH WINNER

Don Mueller

Title: Executive director of the Marcus Autism Center and vice president of operations for Children's Healthcare of Atlanta

Education: Bachelor's degree from The Catholic University of America; MBA from Loyola College in Maryland

Age: 41

Top career achievement: Helping build the Children's Healthcare of Atlanta transplant program; establishing Vision 2018 and bringing the Marcus Autism Center to Children's Healthcare of Atlanta

Prior jobs: Vice president of strategy and business development at Children's Healthcare of Atlanta

Hobbies: Spending time with family, the outdoors, hunting and fishing

Family: Wife, Dallas Mueller; children, Luke, Diana and Harper



BYRON E. SMALL

Business Chronicle selected him as one of Atlanta's Top 40 Under 40 and he was recently elected to Leadership Atlanta.

Much of his time, however, is spent educating the public on autism and the needs of children that suffer from the disorder. From negotiating case rates with insurance companies to fundraising — the center raises more than \$3 million a year to support its services — Mueller admits his job is challenging but credits his team at Children's and the community for much of the success.

"It's funny because I'm just the business guy, but we've got some of the brightest minds in the world at the Marcus Autism Center so it's fun to be the dumbest guy in the room and really help empower them to change the future of autism," he said.

Cavender builds prosthetics and children's lives

By Giannina Smith Bedford

CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Born with a congenital birth defect, Cavender knows what it's like to grow up an amputee. She was fitted for an orthotic brace when she started walking and remained in the brace until her foot was amputated at age 7, when she began wearing a below-the-knee prosthesis. Today, Cavender is an orthotics and prosthetics clinical assistant at Children's Healthcare of Atlanta and has spent the last 22 years fabricating and fitting patients with prosthetic limbs. When she treats patients, she gives them much more than the ability to function normally, however. She gives them hope of overcoming life's setbacks with her own personal story.

"I connect with them in a special way I guess because I'm an amputee," said Cavender, a finalist in the Allied Health Professional category in Atlanta Business Chronicle's 2012 Health-Care Heroes Awards. "When I was a kid I was very isolated as far as, I didn't know any other amputees so, when I got into this

field and realized I could make a connection with these children it was pretty rewarding."

Ever since she was a little girl, Cavender saw herself in the medical field. While spending time at Shriners Hospital as a child, she remembers admiring the nurses and thought one day she'd like to help people the way they did. After moving to Atlanta in 1987, she took a job as a prosthetic technician at Southern Prosthetics Supply in Alpharetta where she learned the basic skills of fabricating prosthetics.

"I didn't really know about the field of robotics and prosthetics. Although I wore one I wasn't familiar with how they were made until I started at that company in Alpharetta," she said.

After joining CHOA (then Scottish Rite) in 1990 she discovered her love for working with children and connecting with young amputees on a personal level. One of her patients, Jordan



ALLIED HEALTH FINALIST



Cavender

Robin Cavender

Age: 46

Title: Prosthetic clinical assistant, Children's Healthcare of Atlanta

Top career achievement: Working at Children's Healthcare of Atlanta every day

Prior jobs: Prosthetic technician at Southern Prosthetics Supply in Alpharetta

Hobbies: gardening/yard work, hiking, bicycling, spending time with her daughter and miniature schnauzer

Family: Daughter, Kristin Cavender; miniature schnauzer, Sparky

surgeons, physical therapists and prosthetists that make up the limb deficiency department, providing a vital service that is so close to her heart.

"To see a person that has just lost their limb and get on this device and be able to walk down the hallway again, it's priceless to help them do that and it's something that occurs on a daily basis for me," she said.