

ELLIS IMPACT



Ellis
MEDICINE

Canine Colleagues Reporting for Duty

Dogs have the power to make people feel better, just by being there. That is especially true when that dog is trained in protection and patrol and works with an expert handler to walk hospital properties and provide security and comfort.

His name is Wik, and the young German Shephard joined the Ellis Medicine Safety and Security staff in early August. He and his handler, Security Officer Keith Kruziak, took over the responsibilities of Cargo, Ellis' first K-9 officer—who retired in 2023 after eight years of service—and his handler. The K-9 program helps to deter violence, including verbal abuse, bullying and physical assaults directed at health care workers, which has become increasingly worse in hospital settings in recent years.

The National Center for Biotechnology has found that a hospital K-9 program can reduce incidences of violence and criminal acts by up to 85%. Cargo's presence actually resulted in a 90% reduction in potential violent activity when compared to times when he and his handler were not on site.

Keith Edwards, director of Safety and Security at Ellis, said dogs like Cargo and Wik are effective in deterring workplace stress due to their ability to provide rapid response, build trust within the healthcare community, and detect any potential threats.

"Ellis care teams depended on Cargo's ability to sense when an individual was



feeling anxious, emotional, or angry and his presence helped proactively stop the behavior and avoid escalation," he explained. "We had great success with Cargo over the eight years he was with us, and we wanted to continue our K-9 program, and potentially expand it, with a new dog or dogs. Wik is already excelling in his role and we know our staff and our patients will love him like they loved Cargo."

Ellis was able to add Wik to the team because of the generosity of David and Susan Theobald, owners of Davin Healthcare Workforce Solutions in Saratoga Springs. The couple made a significant donation that helped fund the purchase and training of the dog.

"My wife Susan and I are deeply passionate and honored to help restart

the K-9 security program at Ellis Medicine," David Theobald said. "Our commitment to healthcare and workplace safety initiatives is unwavering. As a former ER nurse, I understand firsthand the importance of raising awareness and enhancing workplace safety by de-escalating potential violence in the emergency rooms and beyond. Our hope and vision are that the Ellis Medicine K-9 program will foster a sense of security, trust, support, and safety among clinicians and patients."

Christopher Jordan, Chief Operating Officer of Ellis, said Theobald has long been an advocate for nurses in the community, and "this is really an extension of some of the work he has done to create a better environment

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Making Inroads in Detecting and Treating Cancer

It is just one piece of equipment, purchased with the help of one generous donor, yet its power to save lives may be immeasurable.

Lung cancer is the second most common cancer and the leading cause of cancer death in our region, yet it claims more lives than any other form of the disease. In many cases, earlier intervention could have made the difference. According to studies, the overall five-year survival rate for lung cancer is 18.6 percent. With early detection, it improves to 55 percent.

"Certainly in Schenectady County the prevalence of lung cancer is incredibly high and unfortunately people are often diagnosed far too late for us to be able to intervene in a very meaningful way," said Christopher Jordan, Chief Operating Officer of Ellis Medicine.

Ellis has made fighting lung cancer a priority, and is, with the support of philanthropy, investing in emerging diagnostic and treatment Oncology services in collaboration with our Roswell Park Care Network partnership.

In addition to our outstanding vascular surgeons, Ellis has hired a thoracic surgeon and formally partnered with Schenectady Pulmonary and Critical Care Associates to support the hospital and its growing Oncology service line.

Dr. Ahmed Kahn, interventional pulmonologist at Ellis, says, "Investments in new technology, including the Ion, a robotic bronchoscopy, will allow me to conduct more precise lung biopsies earlier in the patient's journey, when intervention is crucial."

The Ion, sometimes referred to as a "C-Arm" because of its letter-like shape,



allows for a minimally invasive yet highly accurate lung biopsy by enabling the pulmonologist or thoracic surgeon to get much further into the lungs with an ultrathin catheter capable of maneuvering through the bends and curves of narrow airways. It creates a real-time, three-dimensional image that makes even pea-sized nodules on the peripheral of the lungs easier to see and biopsy.

"Some of these masses are so small that, before, you really would not have been able to do anything until they were larger and then it would mean a much more complex and invasive surgery for the patient," Jordan added.

According to the website of Ion manufacturer Intuitive, "one goal in designing Ion was to help shorten the patient journey by making it possible to reach and biopsy difficult-to-reach nodules in the peripheral lung, where more than 70% of cancerous lung nodules may be located."

The company cited research conducted at multiple cancer centers

that demonstrated a diagnostic yield with the Ion of 83 percent and a sensitivity to cancer of between 84 percent and 88 percent.

Jordan said Ion's enhanced imaging capabilities were the key reason Dr. Kahn and his colleagues at Schenectady Pulmonary and Critical Care Associates championed the purchase of the equipment. The 3D pictures will not only make early biopsies more accurate, but Ion is made to integrate with other equipment and give pulmonologists and thoracic surgeons better views of the lungs during other procedures.

With the integration of this technology, along with other screening processes Ellis is utilizing to detect lung cancers at earlier stages, the ability to diagnose and treat lung cancer more effectively will significantly improve. Early detection is crucial, as it often allows for more treatment options and better outcomes for patients, ultimately improving survival rates and quality of life for those affected.

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Canine colleagues reporting for duty

for nurses as well as a safer environment for our patients. We are thankful to David and Susan for their generous support of our K-9 security program.”

Jordan noted that with the significant behavioral health needs that exist in the community, it is not uncommon for a patient to become frustrated and lash out, creating an unsafe situation. Wik and Kruziak will regularly roam the Ellis properties and be posted in sensitive areas, such as the ER, to keep the peace and de-escalate situations when necessary.

“We certainly never want to utilize Wik in any way that causes harm to our patients, that is not the intention,” Jordan noted. “It is his presence alone that has a significant impact.”

Wik’s presence also has a big impact on staff morale, which is of utmost importance at a time when competition for medical professionals is extremely tight.

“That notion of ‘how safe do I feel in my workplace’ is a significant driver of resilience and retention,” Jordan said. “If we can intervene early and create a more psychologically safe environment, we can materially impact engagement, resilience and ultimately retention of our staff.”

Ellis is continuing to seek donations from the community to support Wik’s ongoing veterinary care, grooming, food, and additional training, and to cover the costs of purchasing and training another dog.



YOUR TIME IS A GIFT

Greeting patients, answering phone calls and lending a helpful hand; volunteers play an important role at Ellis. You’ll find volunteers in almost every department at Ellis Medicine.

At Ellis, volunteers have the opportunity to bring comfort and support to patients and their families during difficult and celebratory times.

Ellis’ Volunteer program will work with interested individuals of all ages to match your skills and interests to the needs of the organization, while providing everyone an opportunity to give back.

The hospital recently launched a new therapy dog program and if you

SAVE THE DATE
43rd Annual

CARDIAC CLASSIC 5K
ELLIS MEDICINE 2024

Run. Walk. Join the tradition.

NOVEMBER 28, 2024
Thanksgiving Morning
Central Park, Schenectady



Registration is required in advance for the 5K and Wellness Walk

love dogs, this may be the perfect volunteer opportunity for you. There are four therapy dogs that roam the hospital and greet visitors and we’d love to add more, but we need the volunteer staff—and dogs—to do it.

If you know a junior or senior high school student with an interest in a healthcare career, the Junior Volunteer program may be a great fit. Ellis has more than 90 local students engaged in the workings of different Ellis service lines and fostering their interests in the medical field.

Consider spending a few hours of your week with us. Often a friendly face can brighten the day of those who are here!

The best way you can make a difference is to apply online at ellismedicine.org/pages/volunteers.

The Gala for Ellis Medicine

THE ANNUAL GALA IS AN OPPORTUNITY TO CELEBRATE INDIVIDUALS WHO HAVE MADE MEANINGFUL CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE HEALTH AND WELL-BEING OF OUR COMMUNITY.

On Saturday, January 25, 2025, at Rivers Casino and Resort, Ellis will recognize **David Buicko**, President and CEO of the Galesi Group, a Schenectady real estate development company and his wife, **Christine Mallozzi**, and **Dr. Michael Jakubowski**, a retired anesthesiologist and former Vice President for Medical Affairs at Ellis Hospital.

While these individuals have played vastly different roles in making Schenectady a place where people want to live, work and raise their families, they share the understanding that a strong Ellis Medicine is vital to the community, just as a vibrant, supportive community is crucial to Ellis.

As Dave Buicko puts it, “if you just focus on your own stuff, communities can’t succeed. This is a team effort.”

Buicko is looking through the eyes of a business executive whose company has invested more than a billion dollars in Schenectady, including rehabilitating brownfield sites into clean, beautiful spaces. Galesi Group projects include Rivers Casino, Mohawk Harbor, Center City, the headquarters of MVP Health Care and the Bowtie Cinema. Buicko said that while these and other projects



David Buicko

are important, it takes more than that to create the type of community that attracts workers—be that doctors or real estate developers—and builds prosperity for all.

“You need the health care component, the education component, the private sector component, the arts, etc.,” he said. “One weak link can destroy the fabric of the community.”

Buicko recalled that when he moved to Schenectady in 1975, these various elements were somewhat isolated from each other. It was another two decades before everyone started to work together for the common good.

“Fast forward and I think we’re the envy of the region,” he said.

Buicko’s role in this transformation has not gone unnoticed. In 1996 and again in 2006, he was named Executive of the Year by the Schenectady County Chamber of Commerce for his environmentally friendly economic development. He has also been recognized with the Capital District YMCA’s President’s Award and the Schenectady Foundation Hero Award for Leadership and Service. He was named a Schenectady Patroon, the highest award the city bestows upon its citizens and has been recognized by



“The health care of Schenectady is in our hearts and we’re all of a mind that we’ve got to continue to have a quality hospital in our community.”

DR. MICHAEL JAKUBOWSKI

The Albany Business Review, among others. Recognition alone does not make the community transformational. Dave has stepped up and advocated and served as leadership for various fundraising campaigns—including Ellis’ \$25M *Our Health. Our Future. Capital Campaign*, which united Schenectady’s hospitals and assured that community support for healthcare is a philanthropic priority for individuals, families, and businesses alike.

As he sees it, Ellis has also been a vital part of Schenectady’s rebirth, investing in people, properties and programs as it cares for every segment of a diverse community. As a businessman with an accounting background, Buicko understands the financial pressures on the hospital and has seen to it that Ellis, along with Schenectady itself, is a key recipient of Galesi Group’s philanthropy.

“We need Ellis healthy,” he said.

Part of what makes Ellis healthy is the high-skilled physicians, nurses, and other clinicians who work tirelessly to take care of the community. Dr. Michael Jakubowski, who currently serves as Medical Coordinator for the Office of Professional Medical Conduct at the New York State Department of Health, also expressed his belief that the community should support Ellis because “Ellis has always supported the community.”

Like Buicko, Dr. Jakubowski has been serving the people of Schenectady since the mid-70s. Fresh off of seven years with the U.S. Navy, he started as an anesthesiologist with Schenectady Anesthesia Associates and over the years held several titles including President of the Medical-Dental Staff and Vice President of Medical Affairs for Ellis.

While Jakubowski was the VP, from 1990 to 2001, the livelihood of the hospital was in jeopardy. Ellis was bleeding financially, and a nationally known hospital and health systems management firm, was overseeing hospital administration. Dr. Jakubowski, in his confident and collaborative way, played a pivotal role in gaining cooperation between the medical staff from Schenectady’s Ellis and St. Clare’s Hospitals, assuring their survival and a

stable financial future for both organizations.

Dr. Jakubowski was also able to make his mark on the health and wellbeing of the broader community, sharing his knowledge and expertise with the state DOH, the state Hospital Association, the Chamber of Commerce, the county Health Department and other organizations, participating in projects, serving on boards and working to educate the public.

Although he retired from practicing anesthesiology in 2015, Dr. Jakubowski remained an honorary member of the Ellis staff, serving on boards and committees for several years. He no longer has a direct clinical role with the hospital, and, as recently as 2024, has served as a fundraising volunteer for the Foundation. Dr. Jakubowski “absolutely” feels like part of the Ellis family and he and a group of other retired physicians from Ellis and St. Clare’s meet for lunch regularly.

“The health care of Schenectady is in our hearts and we’re all of a mind that we’ve got to continue to have a quality hospital in our community,” he said.

He therefore gives generously and without restriction, trusting Ellis to use the money where it is most needed.

Ellis is grateful to Dave, Christine and Dr. Jakubowski for all they do to assure that Ellis remains, “the best place to get better.”

SAVE THE DATE

THE GALA

FOR ELLIS MEDICINE

January 25, 2025 – Rivers Casino & Resort

The Impact of your Philanthropy

PHILANTHROPY HELPS EMPLOYEES ACCOMPLISH THEIR DREAMS



Alicia Hottois, RN, BSN and Jaime Hottois, RN, BSN study treatment effects on patients.

Alicia Hottois came to Ellis as a teenager with a nursing certificate and a dream to become a nurse. This summer she was promoted to the Nurse Manager on the cardiac care unit. She is continuing her education to earn a Family Nurse Practitioner masters degree.

Erika Johnston brings the benefits of a master's and a doctorate to her role as Director of Nursing for Cardiovascular Operations.

Alicia, her mother, Jamie, and Erika all were recipients of Ellis' Advanced Nursing Education Award, a \$15,000 scholarship for a Registered Nurse pursuing a bachelor's, master's or doctoral degree. Ten to 15 such awards are given each year as part of the donor-funded initiative.

"I am forever grateful to the donors because if it wasn't for them, I wouldn't be where I am today," Alicia said.

“ My goal has always been to be a nurse at Ellis: to do better, and be better, for the patient. ”

ALICIA HOTTOIS

New York requires RNs to obtain their BSN within ten years of becoming nurses. The law is grounded in evidence that patient care improves when nurses have the knowledge, critical thinking skills and experience that come with higher education. Studies have shown that the more BSN nurses a hospital has, the better its patient outcomes.

The Advanced Nursing award enables Ellis to attract nurses in a highly competitive climate and provide them with the resources to obtain their BSN sooner than they otherwise might. It also encourages them to remain with Ellis once they have their degree and, like Alicia, Jamie and Erika, aim even higher.

A companion program, the Create Your Own Career Award, provides \$15,000 scholarships to other employees pursuing a RN clinical licensure, degree or certification to progress in their career.

“That award has done wonders here,” Erika said. “A lot of employees come in as patient care techs or in food services or housekeeping and it allows them to pursue any medical field degree or certificate they’re interested in.”

With both awards, the result is a better educated staff with a deeper commitment to Ellis and the community, providing higher quality care. Alicia, Jamie and Erika are perfect examples.

ALICIA HOTTOIS:
YOUNG WOMAN ON A MISSION

Alicia started her health care journey at just 17, with a nursing certificate from BOCES. Her mother encouraged her to apply to the hospital, but she was told she’d need her high school diploma first. So, she joined the Army as a Chemical Biological Radiology Nuclear Specialist.

“It was the only job that actually had some kind of aspect of nursing to it,” she said. “I went to basic training my senior year of high school and came back to graduate.”

In October 2014, she returned to Ellis and said, “I have my diploma, now will you hire me?”

Ellis quickly became her second home. She not only gets to work with her mother, but with many others who have supported her growth through the ranks from nurse’s aid to the Nurse Manager role she took on in June.

Every step in that journey was made possible through philanthropy.

Alicia received funding to enroll in the Belanger School of Nursing (BSON) and earned her RN. She then applied for the Advanced Nursing award and used the \$15,000 to obtain her BSN from Governors West University while working as an RN in the cardiac care unit.

With the award balance not fully expended, she is working on her Master of Science at SUNY Polytechnic. When she graduates in 2026, she will be a Family Nurse Practitioner, a role she feels will enable her to give back to the community that has done so much for her.

“I want to be another provider and I would like to do it with Ellis,” said Alicia. She also plans to act as a preceptor, sharing the knowledge and experience philanthropy gave her with future nurses doing their clinical training at Ellis.

ERIKA JOHNSTON:
A DOCTORAL DREAM



Erika joined Ellis a decade ago as a nurse in the critical care unit. She already had her BSN, but the Advanced Nursing award enabled her to take her career, and contributions to Ellis, to new heights.

That journey began three years into her time at Ellis, when her promotion to Critical Care Educator prompted a decision to go back to school.

“ The Advanced Nursing award paid for my entire master’s degree, which was wonderful. It took a lot of stress off me. ”
ERIKA JOHNSTON

Her degree from from Excelsior College enabled Erika to step up into the position of Director of Professional Practice, which meant she was now in a position to help other Ellis nurses excel.

She also had the job of awarding the Advanced Nursing scholarships.

“It was clear during the applicant interviews just how much it meant to them and how much they appreciated what Ellis was willing to do for them to help them grow their career,” she said.

But, Erika was not done growing herself. With her remaining scholarship money, she earned a doctorate from Capela University and moved into the Director of Nursing position.

“I was able to fulfil my dream of getting my doctorate,” she said. “The scholarship program has opened up a lot of opportunities for not just me, but everyone else who has been able to take advantage of it. From the bottom of my heart, thank you to our generous donors.”

Alicia and Erika are just two outstanding examples of philanthropy improving lives and strengthening the community. The Foundation is grateful for the many donors who believe that nurses are the backbone of good healthcare.

ELLIS IMPACT

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The Future Looks Bright

A Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD) is a great way to make a tax-free gift to Ellis Medicine using your IRA.

A QCD transfer is a simple way to make a gift and full-fill your IRA required minimum distribution (RMD), while lowering your taxable income. When making a QCD, keep the following in mind:

- A donor who is at least 70½ can contribute up to \$105,000 in QCDs.
- For married couples, each spouse can make QCDs up to the \$105,000 limit for a potential total of \$210,000/year.
- You will benefit from this gift even if you do not itemize your deductions.
- You can use a QCD to fund a charitable gift annuity (CGA). **CGA rates have never been better!** (You can take advantage of this opportunity once in your lifetime with a maximum QCD transfer of \$53,000.)
- If you are age 73 years or older, a QCD transfer can be counted toward satisfying your RMD and will not count as taxable income.
- You will make an impactful difference for your community now.

A QCD needs to be paid directly from your IRA to The Foundation for Ellis Medicine to receive the gift benefits. For more information on how this gift will benefit Ellis now and you this tax season, call Beth Frear at 518.243.3434

Please consult your financial and legal advisors to determine which gift vehicle is right for you and your unique situation. Based on your expert's advice, the Foundation team is here to work with you to create a legacy and ensure Ellis remains a strong hospital for future generations.

