

# MOTIVATIONS

## NICU NURSES

### *'Give Their Hearts & Souls'*

Every tiny, fragile baby, some weighing as little as 600 grams – about as much as an iPad – has a distinct personality, rhythm, set of needs and responses. At The Children's Hospital at Montefiore's Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU), recognized for its excellence three times by *U.S. News and World Report*, nurses never lose sight of the individuality of each baby. "This one likes music, rock better than classical. That one loves to be told stories," says Zahava Cohen, RN, MSN, RNC-NIC, administrative nurse manager for the Weiler NICU. "We are highly tuned to these individual personalities."

NICU nurses work around the clock to meet the complex medical needs of these babies as well as the emotional needs of their families. Because babies in the NICU are so fragile, their medical needs so complex and their prognosis so uncertain, the subtlest shift in their response, development or well-being could signal a potentially serious change in condition. "The nurses are often the first ones to key into those changes," says Deborah E. Campbell, MD, Chief of Neonatology, The Children's Hospital at Montefiore and Professor of Clinical Pediatrics and Associate Professor of Clinical

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Be Well

**Montefiore**  
Inspired Medicine

Obstetrics & Gynecology and Women's Health at Albert Einstein College of Medicine. "One of the things the attending always teaches the house staff is you have to listen to the nurses. They are there on a minute-to-minute basis and really know their babies. When they have a concern, it is real."

### NAVIGATING AN EMOTIONAL ROLLER COASTER

Just about the only constant in the NICU is change; nurses help parents navigate the ups and downs of their baby's health. "The NICU has been described as a roller coaster," says Ms. Cohen. "It's so emotional. The nurses give their hearts and souls to every baby on that unit. The parents know that, and it makes a big difference."

The NICU is a hectic place, and the nurses work very hard to ensure quiet time for the babies. They lower the lights and encourage parents to touch and hold their children. "The nurses remind us about the lights, the noise, ask if we can cluster blood drawings so we're not bothering the baby as often," explains Dr. Campbell.



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– Zahava Cohen, RN, MSN, RNC-NIC



"We could not ask for a more skilled and caring group of nurses," says Dr. Campbell. Never was this more evident than during Hurricane Sandy, when Montefiore's Weiler Hospital NICU admitted six fragile evacuees in the middle of the night from a Manhattan hospital that had lost power in the storm. "As a NICU, you're prepared for any eventuality, so when you get a call like that you just mobilize," Dr. Campbell says, noting that every staff member on hand, including many who remained at the hospital several days and nights on end, played a vital role. "The nurses worked together seamlessly as a team, although it was honestly no different than any other time. It doesn't matter who's tired, it doesn't matter whose admission it is. They divide up and get to work."

### HOME AWAY FROM HOME

While cutting-edge equipment keeps the infants alive, it is not anything like a warm, homey first few months on this earth. Thanks to generous donors and a program called Covered with Love, the NICU nurses themselves knit and crochet blankets to help families make a comforting, intimate space for their babies amid the tubes and monitors. "The blankets are absolutely gorgeous, and families love



them,” Ms. Cohen says. “We put them on top of an incubator, and they help block the light and hide that clinical feeling. Nurses feel very proprietary: *That mom wants the purple one. The green one matches this baby’s personality.*”

Grateful for the NICU’s life-saving work, thankful families and other members of the Montefiore community make many different kinds of contributions to the unit, whether of time, money or other resources. One mother, whose family spent time in the NICU, decided to celebrate a milestone birthday by asking friends to forgo gifts in favor of donations, which she turned into dozens of “baby boy” and “baby girl” presents for current NICU families.

Since families frequently want to know how they can help, the NICU has a wish list of items that would enrich the difficult time babies and families undergo in the months of care before their homecoming. One such item is a Zaky hand, a positioning pillow whose size, shape, weight and scent simulate the touch of the mother, to comfort the baby when the mother cannot be there. Other desired items that

would benefit our families include a microwave oven and a computer for the family lounge. Of course, always needed are monetary donations to help cover transportation costs to and from the Bronx.

One profound gift received again and again are return visits to the NICU, so the care team and families currently on the challenging journey can see evidence of successful outcomes in the form of happy, healthy and growing children. “Parents are so grateful for what they were given,” says Ms. Cohen. “There’s nothing more moving and more important to our families than to see moms come back with their triplets who were born at 28 weeks – and now the kids are running around the lounge.” ●

To contribute to the NICU or inquire about volunteer opportunities, please contact Christy O’Keefe at 718-920-8985.



### Shalom Kalnicki, MD

Chairman, Radiation Oncology  
Montefiore Medical Center  
Professor, Radiation Oncology  
Albert Einstein College of Medicine

### GIVING BACK

To honor the importance and legacy of psychosocial oncology at Montefiore, Dr. Kalnicki and his wife Rachel are generously supporting two significant initiatives: The Anne and Charles Botstein Chairship, named for the late Charles Botstein, MD, founder of the Department of Radiation Oncology, and his wife, Anne Botstein, MD, former head of pediatrics for the Montefiore Medical Group, and the Kurt Elias Psycho-Oncology Memorial Lectureship, named for the late oncologist Kurt Elias, MD, who practiced at Montefiore in the 1960s and 1970s.

## *Captain of the Team Approach to Cancer Treatment:*

## SHALOM KALNICKI, MD

One might think that the focus of the radiation oncologist is literally a narrow one: home in on a tumor and destroy it without harming surrounding tissue. But Shalom Kalnicki, MD, Chairman of Radiation Oncology at Montefiore and Professor of Radiation Oncology at Einstein, believes in a wider point of view.

He is a longtime advocate of “psychosocial” oncology, which concentrates on how a cancer diagnosis affects the patient, their family, and the medical professionals who treat them.

### WHY IS THE PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT PROGRAM NECESSARY?

As cancer treatments become more effective, we see patients who emerge medically better, and often cured, but psychologically beaten. By starting support at the time of diagnosis, we are able to monitor the patient's emotional well being throughout their treatment, and, as a result avoid what psychiatrists call “post-cancer treatment blues.”

### HOW DOES THE PROGRAM WORK?

Once a multi-disciplinary team consisting of a surgeon, medical oncologist, and radiation oncologist formulates a treatment plan, a nurse assesses the patient's tension level. If it exceeds what is considered normal for the situation, the patient is offered counseling immediately. Every patient is monitored throughout their treatment, and offered support groups, nutrition and yoga classes, and massage therapy in order to relieve stress. Plus the physicians meet regularly to give their input on the patient's progress and state of mind.

## WHY ARE YOU CHOOSING TO SUPPORT MONTEFIORE SO GENEROUSLY?

Dr. Kurt Elias was one of the pioneers and founders of the field of psychosocial oncology here at Montefiore. His vision was that the psychosocial and psychiatric effects of cancer diagnosis and treatment were such that if they were not properly handled, even patients who are cured and their families would suffer from the consequences of such trauma for the remainder of their lives. As a young physician making daily rounds with Dr. Elias and Dr. Bulkin-Siegel, watching how they handled patients and families and how they communicated with them, I learned such vivid lessons, and it shaped me as an oncologist. My support for a lectureship in Dr. Elias' name is a minimum token of my appreciation.

Charles and Anne Botstein were passionate advocates of full, unlimited access to healthcare, fierce opponents of the role of marketplace economics in the practice of medicine and proponents of a holistic empathic approach to scientific evidence based patient care. This is embodied by Montefiore today.

At a time that just working outside the home was a major accomplishment for a woman, Anne Botstein rose to the top of the medical world, carried by her unique combination of intelligence, energy, commitment and wit, always with European elegance and charm. She was one of the

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– Shalom Kalnicki, MD

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founders of pediatrics as a specialty. She helped forge the role of women in scientifically-driven medicine and embodied the visionary concepts of great medicine for all people, which has become the banner that Montefiore so proudly carries today. Charles Botstein, founder of the Department of Radiation Oncology at Montefiore and Einstein, was a physician’s physician, a perfect blend of medical wisdom, compassion and ethics. He was instrumental in placing us amongst the main academic cancer centers in the US and internationally. Always ready to teach, mentor, help and care, a Chair would be the best way to honor them.

With this gift, I hope to keep alive the names and histories of these remarkable individuals, to instill in future generations of physicians a commitment to the humanity of medicine and to the treatment of every patient as a whole human being.

I hope I have been able to improve all aspects of our patients’ care. But, you accomplish nothing on your own. The beauty of practicing at Montefiore is that you are part of a superb team of medical professionals who consider their patients’ physical and emotional health their top priority.

## WHAT DO YOU DO DURING LEISURE TIME?

Classical music is my passion. My wife and I try to go to concerts as often as we can. I studied classical piano, and even gave recitals at one point. But, I realized medicine was a better choice for me.

*Dr. Kalnicki completed his residency and fellowship in radiotherapy at Montefiore. He served as Vice-Chairman for Clinical Affairs of the Department of Radiology Oncology at the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine before returning to Montefiore as Chairman in 2004. He is married to Rachel and has three children. ●*

# The Montefiore Community COMES TOGETHER

A

housebound senior citizen needs a walker and cannot afford one. **No problem.** An out-of-date, in-patient playroom needs to be refurbished. **We can do that.** They're running out of board games at CHAM. **On their way.** From employee-led fundraising initiatives to patient-sponsored toy drives, the Montefiore community works tirelessly to improve the lives of the population it serves.

## GETTING IT DONE

Jack Wolf is a man accustomed to getting the job done. And done right. Montefiore's Vice President and Chief Information Officer visited the pediatrics floor of the Wakefield Campus (formerly Our Lady of Mercy Hospital) last June. He left with a plan.

Wolf's mission that day was to investigate ways to improve technology for the kids at this Montefiore location. At The Children's Hospital at Montefiore (CHAM), young patients have the "Get Well Network," a state-of-the-art interactive system that allows them to do everything from surfing the web and playing video games, to researching their conditions, all through a flat screen TV at the foot of each bed. He wanted to see how his team could implement the "Get Well Network" at Wakefield, too.

Wandering down the hall, Wolf walked into the children's playroom, and immediately saw things that could be improved. "The televisions were older models, and there were no interactive learning tools," he said.

The children told Wolf they rarely used the playroom. Wolf saw an opportunity to enhance the experience of the pediatric patients at Wakefield, using some of the innovative technology that has been so successful at CHAM. But how to fund the project? Wolf came up with an idea: an initiative within the Montefiore Information Technology (IT) Department to raise \$50,000 to redesign and upgrade the playroom.

Working with his technology team, and the Department of Pediatrics at Wakefield, he had plans drawn up. Integral to the new design is a computer workstation and a large, flat-screen TV. "I attached the plans to an email, which also included instructions on how to make an online donation," he recalled. "I sent it out to the Montefiore IT Department on January 3, 2013. Within the first 24 hours, we had raised \$10,000."



Wolf emphasized that a hospital stay can be frightening for children. "They need a place to play and act like kids in order to facilitate healing. If we provide them with a state-of-the-art space, the road to recovery should be, I hope, a little easier." ●

To help support the Wakefield playroom renovation, please visit: [www.givetomontefiore.org/playroom](http://www.givetomontefiore.org/playroom).

Marie Musacchio



## COMMUNITY EFFORT

The families of grateful patients often make monetary contributions to Montefiore Medical Center. It is not so often that they organize an entire Bronx neighborhood to donate. But that is exactly what Marie Musacchio did.

Her son Nicholas, now age 9, was hospitalized twice within the last two years at The Children's Hospital at Montefiore (CHAM). During one of his stays, a man came to his room and gave him a toy. The man visited every year, he explained, in memory of his son who had passed away.

Musacchio said she was so moved by the gesture that in the Fall of 2012, she decided to organize a toy drive to benefit the Child Life Program at the hospital. She used the online network of Bronx merchants that she runs, Shop the Bronx, to coordinate the drive. "We made it very easy for people to donate," she explained, "by having drop-off boxes at participating merchants." Plus, Nicholas convinced his teacher to make the drive into a class project.

The result: On December 13, 2012, Musacchio, Nicholas, his teacher, and four classmates delivered close to 400 toys to CHAM. "In addition, 21 kids helped pack and organize the toys by age and gender, which gave them a real sense of participation," added Musacchio.

"It was wonderful to see kids giving to kids," said Catherine Verow, Child Life Program Supervisor. Child Life helps pediatric patients successfully manage illness and treatment during their time in the hospital. For example, specialists use medical play to teach about equipment and procedures, and creative arts therapy to encourage healthy coping skills. Unfortunately, none of these services, and the supplies needed to carry them out, are covered by federal funding. As a result, the program is perpetually in need of donations, both monetary and in kind, said Verow.

"And holiday time is always important," she continued. "But, because of Marie and her son's generosity and hard work, Santa and his helpers were able to spread holiday cheer to every child at CHAM on Christmas Day." ●

To help support CHAM, please contact  
Christy O'Keefe at 718-920-8985.

## GENEROSITY AT HOME

Employee generosity is a hallmark of Montefiore Medical Center, and Montefiore Home Care, the oldest hospital-based home care agency in the United States, is a prime example. For the past 10 years, their employees have organized Thanksgiving and Christmas food drives to provide holiday dinners to 25-30 families, according to Angela Schonberg, Montefiore Home Care Assistant Director of Business Development and Clinical Outreach.

In 2012, when it came time to provide the turkeys and the desserts, they asked Fairway and Whole Foods to donate. And, she noted, they were extremely generous. "For Thanksgiving, Fairway gave us 27, 18-20 pound turkeys, and Whole Foods pitched in with 15 pies," she noted.

In addition, they worked closely with the Montefiore Medical Group (MMG), placing bins at their practice sites to collect donations of non-perishable items. "Last year we filled 16 bins," she added.

Montefiore helping during the holidays



Director of Social Work at Montefiore Home Care and Food Drive Committee Chairperson Janice Korenblatt, LMSW, said the department also raises money within the hospital itself to provide toys and other holiday gifts to their frail, elderly and often destitute clients. "November is Home Health Care month so we tie in to that. One of our most successful fundraisers, besides a 50/50 raffle, was a cart filled with healthy snacks that cost one dollar, she said. "We also ran a lunch special at Applebee's for Montefiore employees. In return, Applebee's agreed to donate money which we used to buy additional food."

Unfortunately, many of Home Care's clients are uninsured and very poor. As a result, they cannot afford the essential healthcare items that would improve their quality of life, explained Schonberg. "Home Care works closely with MMG to identify the families, and in some cases, the individuals who would benefit. We give them walkers, tub benches, and folding wheelchairs, for example. Last year we were able to help 15 families."

Response from the staff who contributed food, toys, money, and time was overwhelming. Pamela Joachim, Montefiore Home Care Executive Director, believes as Winston Churchill did: "We make a living by what we get. We make a life by what we give." "And that really summarizes the generous attitudes of all who donated to our efforts. They do it because they want to, not because they have to." ●

To help support Home Care, please contact  
Angela Schonberg at 718-405-4510.



Celebrate Montefiore Gala



Yankee Stadium Outing

Stomp Out Sarcoma



Golf Tournament



Wine Tasting

## *Transforming Diets,* TRANSFORMING LIVES



**R**obert Ostfeld, MD, MS, Department of Cardiology, Montefiore, knows that if he were to move to certain parts of the world—rural China or central Africa, for example—he would quickly be out of a job. That is because heart disease is very uncommon in those cultures.

While 17 million people around the world die of heart disease each year, it is much less common in places where people eat an entirely plant-based diet. “If you take someone from that kind of environment and move them to the Western world, research shows that within a generation or two they catch up to us” on heart disease, he explains. “Genetics don’t change that quickly so this is a result of lifestyle—likely related to the toxic Western diet.”

Through the Cardiac Wellness Program, which aims to prevent and reverse heart disease through a whole-food, plant-based diet, Montefiore intends to bring the fruits of this evidence-based research to the Montefiore community. The stakes could not be higher. More than 27 million Americans currently live with heart disease, and it is the leading cause of death for both men and women in the United States.

Dr. Ostfeld and Lauren Graf, MS, RD, the program’s co-director, work with patients to embrace a diet that includes no animal products and consists of vegetables, fruits, whole grains, beans, legumes such as lentils and chickpeas, a small amount of nuts, avocado and other protein-rich foods, as well as dairy alternatives. Participants receive detailed information on the whole-food plant-based diet, including scientific evidence documenting its effectiveness, as well as recipes and sample meals that help them follow the diet.

The program, which costs nothing to the patient, is funded entirely through private donations. “Philanthropic support has been pivotal to the success of and is the very lifeblood of the Program,” says Dr. Ostfeld. “It’s crucial that we offer this to the community without charge.”

“We have been humbled and awestruck by our results,” says Dr. Ostfeld. “Behavior change is one of the holy grails of medicine.” When asked about why the nearly year-old program has become such

a success, he says, “Our patients are presented with the scientific evidence of this diet’s powerful effects during our three to four hour wellness program. It’s harder to get all of that information across during a 20-minute patient visit.”

He says many patients have seen their LDL (“bad” cholesterol) drop 40-70 points and lost 15-30 pounds. One 61-year-old patient, who felt terrible pressure in his chest and had a strong family history of heart disease, came to the center determined to avoid surgery and hoped to even get off of the low-dose statin he was taking. He embraced the diet and turned his life and lifestyle around without invasive medical procedures. “After one year of a plant-based diet, my total cholesterol is more than 100 points lower; I have lost 30 pounds; my heart pain and blockage is gone; and I have never felt better,” the patient says.

The Wellness Program advances the Montefiore cardiology program’s robust community outreach, which provides information, tools and outlets for residents in the Bronx, Manhattan and Westchester to improve their lifestyles and mitigate their risk for cardiovascular disease. “The program is far from exclusionary of medications,” says Dr. Ostfeld, emphasizing that he works in collaboration with other physicians to help patients improve lifestyle as well as follow the appropriate clinical regimen. “We’re all on the same team; medication and lifestyle working together.” ●

To support the Cardiac Wellness Program, please visit [giving.montefiore.org/cardiacwellness](https://giving.montefiore.org/cardiacwellness).

*“Philanthropic support has been pivotal to the success of and is the very lifeblood of the program. It’s crucial that we offer this to the community without charge.”*

– Robert Ostfeld, MD, MS

## Better Health, ONE STEP AT A TIME

“If you wanted to climb Mount Everest, you wouldn’t just charge straight up to the summit tomorrow, would you?” Jessica Rieder, MD, MS, Adolescent Medicine, asks her young patients. “It takes months and months of training,” she says. “Or getting a good grade—you have to go to classes, study, put in time. Well, the same is true with changing your lifestyle. You have to do it gradually. That’s the only way it will last.”

Dr. Rieder works with overweight and obese teens through the Bronx Nutrition and Fitness Initiative for Teens (B’N Fit), a unique partnership between the Division of Adolescent Medicine at The Children’s Hospital at Montefiore (CHAM) and the Mosholu Montefiore Community Center. The program teaches teens how to adopt healthy lifelong nutritional and physical activity habits, to develop coping skills and enhance their personal responsibility, as well as to avail themselves of their family, social and community resources to achieve personal goals.

An intensive nine-month program followed by a maintenance program, B’N Fit offers youth ages 12 to 21 the opportunity to play sports and exercise together, try new foods, participate in family activities, go on trips, attend summer camp, and, ideally, weave all they learn into their daily life.

Advancing Montefiore’s mission of bringing high-quality care into the community, B’N Fit addresses a vital health concern in the Bronx. One in three public high school students in the South Bronx is obese, and the borough has the highest childhood obesity rates in New York City. “I see these high rates of obesity in my general adolescent clinics, in the hospital hallways and in the streets outside the hospital,” says Dr. Rieder. “You’re not going to see change on its own. But if we as a community and a hospital promote healthy living and lifestyles and support kids, we’ll see a change.”

Jordan Rivers is proof of that change. The 16-year-old began the program last year at 280 pounds. Through healthy eating, portion control and regular exercise, he now weighs 235 pounds. More importantly, he has learned healthy habits that will stay with him for a lifetime. “In our house,” he says, “we all eat healthier foods now: fruits, vegetables, limited carbs, sugars and fats.” (Verdict on kale chips? “Really good.”)

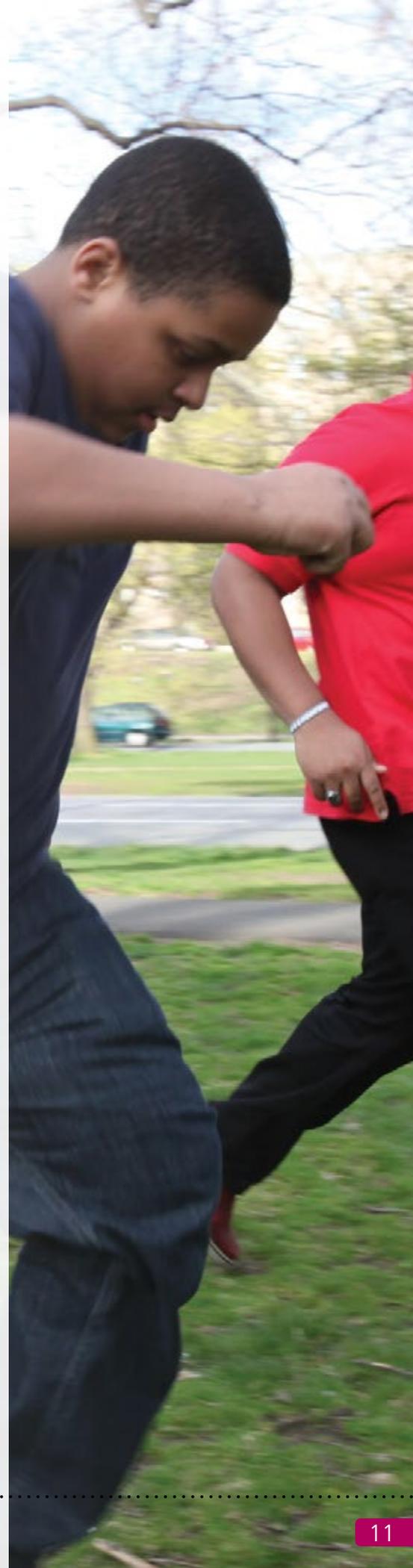
The challenges often go well beyond the plate, to social, emotional and economic issues, and involve the whole family. For families with two working parents, shopping for healthy foods can get lost among juggled priorities, for example, teens may be on their own to fix meals. Part of B’N Fit’s strength is family participation. Dr. Rieder credits Jordan’s success not only to his commitment but also that of his aunt and grandmother.

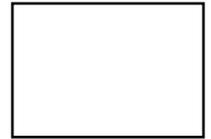
The biggest challenge for the Rivers family, who lives in Westchester, has been traveling to Montefiore several times a week to attend the program. “But it’s like church,” says Jordan’s aunt, Nicole Rivers. “We just go, no questions asked. We get out our sweats and we go.”

She has been delighted to see her nephew internalize B’N Fit’s lessons and independently make healthier choices. “When he goes to McDonalds with his friends, he orders a salad and a snack wrap rather than a burger, fries and a milkshake,” she says. “If he eats a little more than he should over the holidays, he’ll put in more time on the treadmill or go for a long walk.”

While B’N Fit receives state and federal funding, as well as industry support, it relies on private donations to ensure that it continues to reach the largest number of teens in our Bronx community. ●

To support the B’N Fit Program, please visit <http://bnfit.montefiore.org/donate/>.





## Office of Development

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*“That’s what Montefiore has done—built not only an excellent medical facility but one that reaches out and serves the community, not turning anyone away....that’s what my stepfather found, and that’s why we have been proud to be able to support Montefiore for all these years.”*

— Christina McInerney  
President,  
Jerome L. Greene Foundation

## Ways to GIVE

Please help Montefiore drive forward its mission of providing high-quality, compassionate care, breaking new ground in research, training the next generation of healthcare leaders with an unparalleled commitment to the community and one standard of excellence for all.

There are countless ways to give. Support the annual fund, which provides critical resources where they are most needed to advance strategic priorities and meet urgent health needs. Or make a gift in honor or memory of a loved one, doctor or nurse. You may also support specific programs, including those described in this newsletter.

Additionally, we suggest donors consider gifts of stock and estate planning, which allocate cash, a percentage of an estate, or a retirement plan to the hospital, to maximize your gift—and your legacy. ●

**There are many ways to give. Contact us to find the one that’s right for you.**

### Montefiore Office of Development

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