

By Jeannie Counce

Editor's Note:

Alternate-site infusion providers are on a continuous journey towards achieving excellence. A path of quality care, paved with many examples of leadership and commitment—some highly visible, some not as readily apparent (but, nonetheless, deeply rooted and vitally important). Beyond the unmistakable center-stage roles played by home infusion pharmacists and nurses within our field, perhaps the most unexpected treasures for us all to discover and explore can be found in the stories of the skilled employees that work behind the scenes to make a home infusion company successful—the devoted “faces behind-the-scenes.”

Could your business thrive without the knowledge, skills and experience demonstrated by the personnel in the warehouse, the technicians, intake staff, dieticians, drivers and other critical individuals who display the passion and caring for the patient through the work they do everyday? Beginning with the below story, NHIA plans to utilize this new, periodic INFUSION department to better recognize and examine these indispensable faces behind-the-scenes!

Every home infusion provider needs drivers. But a driver who helps with an unexpected, serious medical emergency is a special breed. Although he claims he was “just doing his job,” Rick Serrano, driver for Johns Hopkins Home Care Group in Baltimore, Maryland, went above and beyond on a cold and snowy day this past January.

Serrano was making a scheduled delivery in treacherous weather conditions to the home of 12-year-old cystic fibrosis patient. The patient's mother, Terry Barcikowski, couldn't be there, so she made arrangements for the grandmother, Eleanora Yale, who lived in the house next door, to receive the delivery.

As Serrano approached the house, Yale came down the alley to meet him. She signed for the package and turned around to walk

back across the snow and ice. Just as Serrano was preparing to pull away, he saw her fall.

Yale was injured—she had broken her foot—and couldn't get up. Serrano was afraid to move her, so he called 911. Concerned that she would go into shock, he grabbed some blankets from his truck to keep her warm. He also called Barcikowski at work and remained on the scene until the paramedics arrived.

“He was an angel,” says Barcikowski, Senior Medical Office Coordinator for Johns Hopkins' Department of Medicine. “I'm not sure my mother would still be here without him,” she says, explaining that the way their houses are situated, it would be difficult for anyone to notice her injured mother in the alley. “It was cold and snowing that day, and she could have been out there for hours before I returned from work.”

“Rick is a very humble person,” says Director of Infusion, Mitra Gavgani, Pharm.D., of the driver who apparently went right back to servicing his route that January day. “None of us even knew this happened until Ms. Barcikowski called the next day to thank him.”

“We wanted to recognize him because from a service perspective he made a difference in someone's life—he reached out to help,” Gavgani continues. “There are so many people that are integral to everything we do. The ultimate goal is to serve the patients, but we know that somewhere we have the ability to touch their lives.”

Since the incident, Serrano was presented with an Employee Choice Award, and was recognized in a recent issue of *The Dome*, a monthly newsletter for the Johns



Rick Serrano and Eleanora Yale enjoy a happy reunion in the alley where Yale was injured after falling on the ice last January. Serrano, a driver for Johns Hopkins Home Care Group, was on the scene when Yale fell—he called 911 and stayed with her until help arrived.

Hopkins Medicine family. The entire Hopkins organization goes to great lengths to recognize employee contributions. From handwritten thank you notes to an annual employee gala, recognition increases job performance by putting patients in the front of employees' minds, says Gavgani (for more on how these programs promote a culture of employee retention, check out the next issue of INFUSION this September/October 2009).

“Every person in the organization—intake, medical records, human resources—touches a patient’s life whether they know it or not,” she continues. “Thanks to these programs, they are all starting to realize they can have an effect.”

That willingness to go out of the way for patients is a key ingredient in their choice of providers, according to Gavgani. “Anyone can send them medicine,” she says, “they come back because they know we care for

them like our own family.”

“The genuine caring behaviors of employees like Rick, who have frequent contact with our patients, is what makes the difference in our patients feeling that we care for them as we would want our own family to be treated,” exclaims Mary Myers, Vice President and Chief Operating Officer—a sentiment many alternate-site infusion providers would likely agree with! ■

Who’s working behind-the-scenes to make your organization great?

Share your stories and help up celebrate—and learn from—the unsung heroes of the alternate-site infusion community. Contact INFUSION Editor Jeannie Counce at jeannie.counce@nhia.org or 406-522-7222.