



## From Patient to Friend

Jim Gardinella

In 2005, I retired after nearly 40 years at Bristol-Myers Squibb. It was time for me to spend more time with family, fishing on my boat "Miss Molly," and enjoying time with friends.

I have always been an avid fisherman, and if it were up to me, I would be out nearly every day. Growing up in North Jersey and residing here now in South Jersey as an adult, fishing has often been my reprieve.

A few years prior to retiring, however, I suffered a serious health scare. I was painting the house one afternoon and began to feel ill. Assuming it was nothing serious, I went inside and relaxed. Feeling better, I was out fishing the next day but again began to feel "not right." When I arrived home my wife Diane took me to a local emergency room. The doctors ran test after test and none of the tests indicated anything abnormal.

A few days later a Coronary Angiogram was scheduled. Diane and I planned to go out to dinner afterwards, but the test results prevented that.

"Mr. Gardinella, there is good news and bad news. The bad news is that you have a 99% blockage. The good news is that you're going straight to Deborah Heart and Lung Center."

We knew nothing about Deborah, but it seemed like a credible place based on how the nurses described it to us.

After arriving at Deborah, Diane and I were amazed at the level of care that I received and the heartwarming compassion shown to me by the medical staff. When I was discharged, Diane and I decided we would do whatever we could to ensure others had access to the same level of care that I had experienced. We immediately became involved with some of Deborah's fundraising and outreach events, and still routinely recommend Deborah Heart and Lung Center to anyone in need of care.

Since that original visit in 2002, I've come back to be treated for a serious non-healing wound, as well as for general diabetes care through Deborah Specialty Physicians. Experiencing Deborah through various departments and with several doctors and nurses has reinforced my belief in this wonderful institution. It is easy for me to understand why this is such a special place. And the many other patients I have spoken with all agree: It is a blessing to have Deborah in our own backyard.

One particular detail about Deborah that continues to amaze me is the organization's commitment to advancement. Every time I have an appointment, and even in casual conversations with Deborah Hospital Foundation staff or medical staff, I'm learning more about Deborah's plans to not only grow in size, but improve upon its exceptional level of care.

I'm extremely proud of my two daughters, Lauren and Jennifer, who have enjoyed much professional success. Lauren recently graduated from medical school at

UMDNJ and, prior to starting her internship in trauma surgery, was required to complete some observation hours in a medical center. The medical staff at Deborah was kind enough to accommodate her request and she then experienced Deborah's magic on a different level. She had an amazing experience shadowing Dr. Lynn McGrath, Vice President of Medical Affairs, which

further cemented her intention of becoming a surgeon. She had only good things to say about the medical staff, the facility itself, but more importantly, the interactions she observed between the patients and doctors. That level of trust and compassion is not as common at other facilities, but certainly shines through at Deborah.

As a very grateful patient and friend of Deborah, I thank you for your support of this wonderful organization. Collectively we can all ensure that Deborah's mission continues for decades to come.

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