

HEROES Healthcare Heroes

as a quicker, easier, more convenient and affordable alternative to large hospital emergency rooms.

“Not only will Doctors Express help reduce the burden at our area’s busiest emergency rooms, like Bridgeport Hospital and St. Vincent’s, but our services can greatly decrease the wait time for patients and meet their most immediate medical needs,” said Heffer. “Our objective is to help our patients quickly and effectively. The Doctors Express goal is to have all patients treated in 30 to 60 minutes.”

The Bridgeport Doctors Express is open 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. weekdays and 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. weekends.

Author To Discuss Eating Disorders

BRANFORD — A **Shoreline Eating Disorder Presentation** will be held from 6 to 7:30 p.m. March 18 at Blackstone Memorial Library, 758 Main Street. This year’s speaker is Margo Maine, founder and advisor of the National Eating Disorders Association and founding fellow of the Academy for Eating Disorders. Author of *The Body Myth: Adult Women and the Pressure To Be Perfect*, the first book to address eating disorders at or beyond mid-life, Maine will discuss the many contributing factors, the unique characteristics and needs of adults, and the importance of identifying the problem and accessing care. Maine is also senior editor of *Eating Disorders: The Journal of Treatment & Prevention*, has numerous other books on the topic of eating disorders, lectures widely and maintains a private practice in West Hartford. The program is free and open to the public. To learn more phone 203-710-6665 or visit blackstonelibrary.org.

FALLEN HERO

Joel Silidker, MD
(1953-2013)

No matter whom you talk to among those who knew him, the mere mention of Joel Silidker’s name evokes an array of emotions that let you know he was truly loved by all and that his passing deeply affected their lives.

Silidker, a physician in practice with Obstetrics-Gynecology and Infertility Group, PC, with offices located in greater New Haven, died suddenly last July 6 at age 60. He was en route to the hospital in a car driven by Tina, his wife of nearly 37 years, after he experienced chest pains at home. He left behind a legacy that few feel will ever be duplicated.

Born in Newark, N.J., Silidker was graduated from George Washington University with a BA in 1974 and the George Washington University Medical School with an MD in 1979. He completed an internship in internal medicine and a residency in obstetrics and gynecology at Yale-New Haven Hospital (YNHH), where he was awarded the Irving Friedman Award as chief resident, an honor bestowed for his outstanding clinical and humanistic skills. He was a clinical professor in the obstetrics, gynecology and reproductive sciences department at the Yale School of Medicine.

He was offered fellowship positions in both reproductive endocrinology and maternal fetal medicine, but turned both down to enter private practice in obstetrics and gynecology. Silidker was one of the first to train and practice advanced operative laparoscopic surgery, pelvic floor and urinary incontinence repairs, as well as robotic-assisted gynecologic surgeries.

Silidker was renowned as a teacher and a mentor to countless residents and medical students, garnering virtually every teaching award offered by the department. He served YNHH on its medical board and obstetric practice committee, and authored the departmental newsletter.

“When I came to New Haven in 1982 as a young attending [physician in training], Joel, who was chief resident

‘One in a Million’

The passing of a beloved obstetrician leaves a hole in the hearts of all who knew him



at Yale-New Haven Hospital, took me under his wing and introduced me to everybody and brought me into his circle where I was immediately accepted because of the esteem in which he was held by others,” recalls Norman Ravski, MD of County Obstetrics and Gynecology Group, PC. “Joel and I became friends — but we were really more like brothers and spoke three times a day.”

Ravski explains that for 30 years Silidker provided compassionate, evidence-based, care to New Haven-area women. “As a partner in his practice he made everyone he knew feel as if they were his best friend. He offered sage advice to residents and opened his heart and home so that people could feel like a part of his family”, Ravski adds.

“He had a presence, an aura about him and he was just fun to be with. And he made sure that every minute you were with him was a fun, memorable moment.”

Silidker established his own tradition for incoming classes of residents at Yale-New Haven.

“He would buy them a case of wine with the proviso that they could only drink a bottle of it if at least three out of the six of them were having dinner together,” says Ravski. “He actually did it for them this year because the residents start in June, so it was before he passed away. I intend to continue that tradition for him. He wanted people to enjoy life. His message was, ‘Yes, you work very hard but you also have to enjoy life.’”

“Joel was one of the most sincere people I’ve known,” says Kim Fletcher, MD, who was in the same practice as Silidker. “He was someone who not only took care of patients but cared about the patients he took care of.

“He would go out of his way in ways that I can’t even imagine how he kept up,” Fletcher adds. “He’d call patients when they had family problems that had nothing to do with their medical issues. He’d check up on them and

Due to a production error the photo meant to illustrate Joel Silidker in the February issue of Business New Haven Healthcare Heroes was not Mr. Silidker. We sincerely apologize to his family friends and colleagues.

A corrected version is shown here and will run in the March April issue of New Haven magazine.

make sure they were all right. He was an excellent surgeon, he loved teaching and he was excellent at that. He was a motivator.”

Fletcher notes that Silidker received an award for teaching medical students just prior to his death.

“He didn’t expect it,” says Fletcher. “He was proud of it. I don’t know anybody who had anything negative to say about him. It was very much a shock when he passed away. He was one of my best friends and he was well-respected in the community. [Following his death] the patients called here and people were crying. For several months, patients who came in to the office were still devastated by his loss. He was one in a million. I don’t know anybody like him and I don’t think I’ll ever meet any other doctors like him.”

“He was such a special person,” says Diane Prunier, office manager of Silidker’s practice. “I’ve worked here for 32 years and he came in here six months after me, so we had a real special relationship. He just made everybody feel so special, whether it was his patients or his staff. Every day he would thank us. He would call me every morning and ask, ‘What can I do for you?’”

Prunier says that, even half a year after the fact, Silidker’s patients remain devastated by his loss.

“I can’t tell you what we’ve gone through here in the past six months,” says Prunier. “I feel so bad for my staff because they were upset about him passing suddenly. And then, to have to come in here the day after his funeral and pick up the phone and tell the patient that he’s gone, one after another. And the physicians and the midwife who are seeing his patients have a hole in their heart and the patients are crying. He made everyone feel like they were his only patient.

We’ll never be the same here. There will never be another Joel.”

— Thomas R. Violante