

# FOCUS HEALTHCARE HEROES

Highlighting the leaders and innovators reshaping Greater Boston's world-renowned health system.



LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT

**A LIFE'S WORK**  
EDWARD BENZ IS LEAVING  
DANA-FARBER FAR STRONGER  
THAN HE FOUND IT. AND THAT'S  
SAYING SOMETHING. 20



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# HEALTHCARE HEROES

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## OUTREACH CARLA FOGAREN

**Title:** Director of Diversity Initiatives, Interpreter Services and ADA Coordination for Steward Health Care

**Education:** Bachelor's degree in nursing, Brockton Hospital School of Nursing, 1988

**Years in health care:** 27 years

**Why did you choose health care as a profession?** "When I was just a teenager I found myself being in the role of medical interpreter for my family and, looking back, I think that planted the seeds for the passion I feel for this work now."

Carla Fogaren was just a teenager and had immigrated with her family from South Africa when she found herself in a hospital, in a difficult but all-too-common situation.

When Fogaren's father was diagnosed with an inoperable brain tumor, it was Fogaren who had to translate the information into Portuguese for her entire family.

"As a 14 year old I had to be the one who delivered my father's death sentence to my family," said Fogaren. "When I look back, that registered with me obviously and motivated me to become a nurse and later to work in medical translation. No child, no matter how old they are, should be in that situation."

Fogaren first became a nurse and then quickly realized her language skills could be put to valuable use within the medical field. Today, she oversees interpreter services and diversity initiatives at Steward Health Care. Though the system has changed ownership, she has essentially worked in the same place her entire career.

At Steward, Fogaren takes pride in having reduced the time it takes for a medical translator to respond to requests from nearly 25 minutes three years ago to less than eight minutes now. At one Steward hospital, response time is under four minutes. "It's so fast that sometimes doctors aren't even ready when they show up," she said. Last year alone, interpreters had 260,000 encounters with patients at Steward.

But Fogaren's commitment to improving medical translation has gone well beyond her own work. She helped form the Massachusetts Medical Interpreters Association, which morphed into the International Medical Interpreters Association and has helped set standards for care and service across the profession.

— Keith Regan



COURTESY PHOTO

## RESEARCHER DR. DIANA BIANCHI

**Title:** Executive director, Mother Infant Research Institute at Tufts Medical Center, professor at Tufts University School of Medicine

**Education:** Bachelor's degree, biology, University of Pennsylvania, 1976; M.D., clinical training in pediatrics, medical genetics, and neonatology, Stanford University School of Medicine, 1980

**Years in the health care profession:** 35

**Why the health care field?** "I wanted to work in a field where I could help individuals through 'hands-on' clinical care, and simultaneously help many people through research."

Dr. Diana Bianchi, director of the Mother Infant Research Institute at Tufts Medical Center, spent 25 years working on a DNA test to screen for Down's syndrome after her professor, Leonard Herzenberg, who has a son with Down's syndrome, challenged her to develop a blood test to detect it. A study, led by Bianchi, shows that the less invasive test has 10 times better results than standard, more intrusive methods of detection, and the test can be taken as early as 10 weeks. Before Herzenberg died in 2013, he knew Bianchi had met the challenge.

"His challenge laid the foundation for my entire research career," she said. "I got to meet Michael Herzenberg (the professor's son), and it was very emotional for me."

And her research didn't end there because Bianchi and her team at MRI are developing a prenatal treatment for women who know their fetus will be affected by Down's syndrome and plans to continue on with the pregnancy. "Screening and diagnostics are extremely important, but as a physician the idea is to cure, heal or help people," Bianchi said.

The focus of her research is to develop a prenatal procedure that could possibly augment the fetus' brain to offset signs of Down's. If it is a viable option, it could transfer over to other conditions, Bianchi said.

Bianchi said she is proud of the work completed at the institute, which built a bridge between obstetrics and pediatrics enabling both to work together to solve problems. Bianchi says she's not done, but she is happy.

— Patricia Resende



COURTESY PHOTO

## VOLUNTEER AUDREY EPSTEIN RENY

**Title:** Marketing director, The Abbey Group

**Education:** Bachelor's degree in English language and literature, University of Pennsylvania, 1986; MBA, The Wharton School, 1991

Not long after witnessing what physicians did to save her daughter's life and limbs, Audrey Epstein Reny and her daughter Gillian, who was severely injured during the Boston Marathon bombings, discussed ways they could somehow thank the medical community at Brigham and Women's Hospital. Reny, together with her family, launched the Gillian Reny Stepping Strong Fund, a nonprofit that in less than two years has raised \$4.36 million, funded six researchers and brought together more than 7,100 people worldwide.

"There's hope that can emerge from darkness," Reny said. "The real heroes that day were the medical professionals and we wanted to do something that would honor their work and to advance and improve upon what they were doing."

A private family, the Renys decided to share their story with the launch of the fund in February 2014 to create awareness around trauma care and its funding shortfalls.

With such strong interest from the medical community, organizers of the fund are now trying to endow the programs. The fund set up a new trauma fellowship for the next generation of plastic surgeons, the first of its kind, according to Reny. And organizers are now taking the fund to the next level through various fundraising activities created to bring people together.

"We are humbled by the support of family, friends and strangers," Reny said. "We took something so awful and have turned it into something so positive."

Gillian, a dancer with a magnetic personality, continues to make progress and each milestone is symbolic and representative of what the family is trying to accomplish with the Stepping Strong Fund, Reny said.

"For our family this awful thing happened but we've had great fortune to see the best of kindness and human spirit."

— Patricia Resende



COURTESY PHOTO

## VOLUNTEER CARLA GOMES

**Title:** President, Antico Forno; president, Terramia Ristorante; owner, Cobblestone Cafe

**Education:** Bachelor of Science, dental hygiene, Forsyth School for Dental Hygiene, Northeastern University, 1981

Just after Carla Gomes rushed her toddler to Massachusetts General Hospital, doctors told her that her son was going into a diabetic coma and if he lived, he'd have diabetes for the rest of his life.

Gomes knew very little about the disease but her husband, a physician, knew what the diagnosis would mean for their 1-year-old son, David. "He was very depressed about it, but I went into mama mode and said 'We can handle this.'"

For the first several months after David's diagnosis, he was treated at Mass General, but after hearing about what Joslin Diabetes Center had to offer, Gomes took a leap of faith and hasn't looked back.

"Joslin has truly become a family for us, you know everyone from the physicians to the receptionist," she said.

After receiving such great care, Gomes wanted to thank the center. A restaurateur, Gomes said she was always asked to use her venues to host charity events, so why not do it for a cause so near and dear to her?

In 2005, Gomes launched "CityFeast: Dining Out to Conquer Diabetes," an event which includes a five-course dinner with five pairings of wine. It's held annually on the last Sunday of January and benefits the center's High Hopes Fund. Now in its 10th year, the event has raised more than \$285,000 for the cause.

"It was to bring awareness to help find a cure and to thank the Joslin Center for taking care of my son," she said. "Every dollar raised through CityFeast gets the diabetes world closer to a cure."

Gomes has no intentions on stopping and said she will do it every year until a cure is found. "I'll continue CityFeast as long as I can and as long as the Lord lets me," she said. "I want my son David and everyone like him to one day know what it's like to not have diabetes."

— Patricia Resende