

WINTER 2025

COMMUNITY CONNECTION

A MILLER-KEYSTONE BLOOD CENTER PUBLICATION

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AN INSPIRING JOURNEY: LABORATORY TO LEADERSHIP

Established in 1968, Hospital Central Services, Inc. & Affiliates (HCSC.org) is a support services organization comprising several subsidiaries serving healthcare facilities in the Mid-Atlantic region. Its divisions include HCSC-Linen Services, HCSC-Solutions, and HCSC-Blood Center, operating as Miller-Keystone Blood Center. In September 2024, HCSC announced the retirement of Peter J. Castagna, Jr., President & CEO, after 11 years of dedicated leadership. The organization also confirmed that Rami Nemeh, Chief Operating Officer of Miller-Keystone Blood Center, would assume the role of President & CEO on January 1, 2025.

Many of us take to heart the stories of our parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents who immigrated to the United States from various corners of the world. This story holds personal significance for Rami Nemeh, the new President and CEO of HCSC. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, Rami's grandparents and uncles traveled to the United States, settling in the Lehigh Valley and working at Bethlehem Steel and textile companies. Meanwhile, Rami's parents chose to remain in Syria, where he and his siblings were born. It wasn't until 1997 that Rami decided to follow in his older brother's footsteps—who had arrived in 1994—making the journey to the United States himself.

After immigrating from Syria as a young man with limited English skills, Rami's journey took an unexpected turn while working at a textile-cutting factory in Allentown. One day, while driving through Bethlehem, he spotted the headquarters of the Miller-Keystone Blood Center. Curious about the organization, he decided to drop in and ask about job openings—that simple moment of curiosity set a remarkable career path in motion.

Rami began his journey at Miller-Keystone Blood Center in 1998 as a part-time Component Laboratory Technician, where his enthusiasm for laboratory medicine and blood banking quickly shone through. His commitment and hard work paved the way for a succession of promotions: he became Senior Medical Technologist/ Supervisor in 2002, then Manager of Laboratory and Automation in 2006, followed by Laboratory Director in 2008, and ultimately, Senior Director of Technical Operations in 2017.

In each of these roles, Rami took charge of crucial functions, including overseeing manufacturing, donor testing, immunohematology laboratory, product distribution, and logistics. He boosted annual donor testing volumes by forging strategic partnerships and innovative marketing strategies. Moreover, he significantly cut down on costs by implementing Lean manufacturing principles while upholding an outstanding compliance record and spotting new revenue streams for the organization.

In January 2020, Rami was promoted to Executive Director of Technical Operations, a crucial role that coincided with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. By January 2021, he became the Blood Center's Vice President and Chief Operating Officer. During this period, the leadership and staff of

Continued on p. 2

A publication designed to inform our community about the programs and services of the Miller-Keystone Blood Center.

- Rami Nemeh, BS, MT
President & CEO
- D. Kip Kuttner, D.O.
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Readers are invited to send their comments and letters to us at:

Miller-Keystone Blood Center
Lehigh Valley Corporate Center
1465 Valley Center Parkway
Bethlehem, PA 18017



Download the MKBC Donor Mobile App for your Android or Apple device!



RAMI NEMEH APPOINTED CEO Continued from p. 1

the Blood Center, in collaboration with regional hospitals and supported by dedicated blood donors and drive sponsors, ensured that patients’ transfusion needs were met. Additionally, in just a few weeks, the organization developed and launched its convalescent plasma program, which the FDA authorized as an experimental treatment. This initiative was based on the idea that plasma from recovered COVID-19 patients can help treat severe cases, showcasing the Blood Center’s patient-centered approach during the pandemic.

Rami represents MKBC on several boards of directors, including the American Blood Centers (ABC), Blood Centers of America (BCA), and the National Blood Transfusion Committee (NBTC). His exemplary leadership skills have fostered collaboration among hospitals to ensure patient safety and enabled the organization to navigate challenges and sustain revenue streams successfully during critical transitions.

Rami earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Biochemistry and a Pathologist Assistant (Medical Science Laboratory) degree from the University of Aleppo. He also possesses a CEO Academy / Wharton Program certificate, a Front-Line Leadership Development certificate from Northampton Community College, and a Strategic Leadership for Growth and Innovation certificate from the Manufacturing Resource Center (MRC).

In 2024, HCSC’s President & CEO, Pete Castagna, informed the board of directors of his plan to retire at the end of the year. HCSC formed a Succession Planning Committee – consisting of the Chair and Vice Chair of each of the four HCSC Boards- to determine the best leadership path for the organization. However, it didn’t take long for the committee to realize that the ideal candidate was already within the organization. The committee unanimously decided that Mr. Nemeh was the best choice to lead the organization forward. On September 30, 2024, HCSC officially announced that effective January 1, 2025, Rami Nemeh will assume

the role of President and CEO of Hospital Central Services, Inc. and Affiliates.

Rami is a dedicated advocate for employee growth and talent development, consistently identifying and mentoring individuals who have emerged as leaders within MKBC and the broader community. His steadfast commitment

to supporting young immigrants from Syria in the Lehigh Valley is particularly notable; he plays a vital role in helping them acclimate to their new culture and achieve academic success. Rami also contributes to the community as a Board Member of the Greater Lehigh Valley Chamber of Commerce Foundation – Main Street. He attributes his success to key qualities such as active listening, approachability, adaptability, and attention to detail,

which have been instrumental in his ability to make thoughtful and practical decisions throughout his career.

Rami and his wife, Maria, an event planner, reside in Allentown with their two cats. A lifelong sports enthusiast, Rami’s passion for athletics began with a notable high school soccer, basketball, and volleyball career, extending through college and professional volleyball in Aleppo, Syria. As a dedicated Philadelphia sports fan—especially of the Philadelphia Eagles—he stays active in volleyball, tennis, and football, pursuing his love for sports whenever his schedule allows.

Hospital Central Services has benefited from the long-term leadership of two exceptional individuals: the late J. Michael Lee, DBA, LFACHE, who led the organization for 33 years, and Peter J. Castagna, Jr., MBA, who has guided the organization since 2013. Both left a profound, lasting legacy on our organization and community. As we look to the future under Rami’s leadership, we are confident in his ability to build upon this strong foundation and steer HCSC toward new horizons. Together, we eagerly embrace the opportunities that lie ahead!

On behalf of HCSC and Miller-Keystone’s boards of directors, we cannot be happier having Rami as our new President and CEO. We have witnessed Rami’s operational excellence for some years as he served as COO of our organization. In addition, Rami’s professional growth under Pete’s mentorship has been exponential. He brings a vibrancy, enthusiasm and passion to this position and we are certain that HCSC/MKBC, under Rami’s leadership, is poised for great things over the next several years. We all welcome Rami and wish him the best in his new role.

— JOSEPH BUBBA ESQ., Partner at Fitzpatrick Lentz & Bubba, P.C., and Chairman of the MKBC Board of Directors

LEHIGH VALLEY RESIDENT MEETS HER LIFESAVERS

When Allentown resident Sofia Groves was a junior in college, she was diagnosed with Lupus. Several months later, Sofia suffered a toxic reaction to one of the Lupus medications she was prescribed, which caused seizures, a stroke, a medically induced coma, and a 95-day hospitalization. During this time, she received more than 50 blood and platelet transfusions, received through the generosity of volunteer blood donors.

In October 2024, Sofia was the honoree at the Blood Center’s latest “Celebrate Hope” event at the Four Points by Sheraton in Allentown. After remarks from Rami Nemeh, MKBC’s President & CEO, Sofia’s father, Tom Groves, shared the family’s story of those harrowing months while Sofia was hospitalized. Sofia thanked everyone for their generosity and support, and was then given the opportunity to meet 10 of her lifesaving blood donors.



See the video of Sofia’s emotional reunion with her donors at <https://www.giveapint.org/programs/celebrate-hope/> or scan the QR code.



MKBC’s “Celebrate Hope” program unites a transfusion recipient with some of the actual blood donors whose selfless generosity saved his/her life.



YOUR BLOOD. THEIR HOPE. PODCAST

MKBC recently launched its highly anticipated podcast, “Your Blood. Their Hope!” The monthly podcast, hosted by MKBC’s Krista Hill, Community Engagement Manager, and Jonathan Ortiz, Team Lead, MKBC Hamilton, launched on Spotify January 14, 2025. Hear stories from some of our amazing blood donors and blood drive sponsors, as well as grateful transfusion recipients and our dedicated Blood Center staff. In addition, learn why it is important to donate blood, how easy it is to sponsor a blood drive, what current donation eligibility guidelines are, and more!



For additional details, including episodes and broadcast dates, visit <https://www.giveapint.org/media-center/mkbc-podcast/> or scan the QR code.





SAVING LIVES...ONE PINT AT A TIME

MKBC's Universal Hero Club recognizes and rewards "O" red blood cell donors and "AB" plasma donors. The red blood cells from an O-negative donor, and/or or the plasma from an AB (positive/negative) donor can be transfused to anyone in need, regardless of blood type. Additionally, the red blood cells from an O-positive donor can be transfused to any patient with an Rh-positive blood type. These blood and plasma donations are especially important in accident/trauma cases, where there may not be time to identify a patient's specific blood type. To show our appreciation to these individuals, we've created our Universal Heroes Club!

Type O Blood Donors Individuals with O-positive or O-negative blood types who pledge to make 4 or more whole blood donations per year, or who pledge to make 2 or more double red blood cell donations per year, receive a special MKBC gift when their pledge is fulfilled.

Type AB Plasma Donors Individuals with AB-positive or AB-negative blood types who pledge to make 8 or more plasma donations per year receive a special MKBC gift when their pledge is fulfilled.



The Universal Hero Club is an opt-in program – donors are not automatically enrolled, they must voluntarily join. Donors can enroll at any time by visiting our website at <https://www.giveapint.org/programs/universal-hero-club/> or scanning the QR code.

THANK YOU NORTHAMPTON COUNTY

Northampton County Executive, Lamont McClure, and officials from the County of Northampton present MKBC with a check for \$250,000 to underwrite the purchase of a new community bloodmobile.



HAVE YOU JOINED OUR FREQUENT LIFESAVER CLUB YET?

Our Frequent Lifesaver Club recognizes and rewards dedicated donors for saving lives through the generous act of voluntary blood donation. Points are earned for every donation; simply put, the more often someone donates, the more points they will earn.

Points can be redeemed anytime in one's secure donor portal, for several gifts including t-shirts or a duffle bag, as well as a wide variety of e-gift cards. Bonus point days will also be announced periodically.



MKBC's Frequent Lifesaver Club is an opt-in program – individuals are not automatically enrolled. For additional details or to start earning your donor points, visit <https://www.giveapint.org/frequent-lifesaver-club/> or scan the QR code.



SAVE MORE LIVES BY DONATING PLATELETS



Platelets are particles circulating in our blood that help control bleeding. They are crucial for accident victims, surgery patients, and burn victims. In fact, cancer patients are the #1 patient user group requiring platelet transfusions. This is because some cancer treatments can result in anemia and a decreased platelet count. When platelet levels fall too low, patients require transfusions to replenish their supply and prevent life-threatening hemorrhages. Many cancer patients require daily platelet and red blood cell transfusions for several weeks.

What many people do not realize is that platelet has a usable lifespan of only seven days. With this short lifespan, platelets are in constant demand for lifesaving treatments. Individuals can safely donate platelets every eight days, up to 24 times per year.

To encourage eligible individuals to donate platelets, MKBC recently established our Platelet Warrior Club. By donating 12 times during a 12-month period, our platelet warriors earn exclusive MKBC merchandise, such as an MKBC windbreaker; an exclusive, embroidered polo shirt; an embroidered MKBC duffle bag; or a YETI coffee mug.



To learn more and sign up for our Platelet Warrior Club, visit <https://www.giveapint.org/programs/platelet-warrior-club/> or scan the QR code.



A NEW ADDITION TO THE SCREENING ROOMS at our donor centers is our "What's Happening" frames, which contain information on donor programs, promotions and events, and other activities taking place at MKBC!

Want additional details? Simply scan any of the QR codes on the frames for additional information!

Don't Forget to Visit the Promotions & Giveaways Page

on our Website for a full list of current and upcoming donor promotions, giveaways and events!



<https://www.giveapint.org/promotions/current-promotions/> or scan the QR code



Congratulations to donors Lorraine S. and Michael G., who won tickets to the Penn State playoff game at Beaver Stadium; and Keith B. who won a \$250 Wegmans gift card as part of our Holiday Dinner Gift Card Giveaway!

HAVE YOU RECEIVED YOUR MKBC CHALLENGE COIN?

It is always a privilege for our staff to present our blood donors with an MKBC Challenge Coin, a token of thanks and appreciation for their military service. If you have served or are serving, and have not yet received your MKBC Challenge Coin, be sure to let our staff know the next time you visit us to donate!



CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR LATEST GALLON DONOR HONOREES!

Brian L. (Top, L) and Donald H. (Top, R) 50 gallons; Thomas B. – 75 gallons (Bottom, L); and David H. (Bottom, M) and Jim H. (Bottom, R) – 100 gallons!



OUT&ABOUT



Representing MKBC in the 2024 Pittston Holiday Toy Truck Parade were Collections Logistics Supervisor, Larry Birtell, and NEPA Account Manager, Laura Ryan.

> Congratulations to Lehigh University, winner of the 2024 "Blood Cup" competition versus Lafayette College!



MILLER-KEYSTONE BLOOD CENTER HOSTING BLOOD DONOR MADNESS COMPETITION

The Winning College Will Receive A \$10,000 Award To Its Scholarship Fund

Miller-Keystone Blood Center (MKBC) recently announced the inaugural "MKBC Blood Donor Madness" – a promotion designed to increase blood donations in the community by creating a fun, friendly competition between the colleges and universities in the Lehigh Valley.

"43% of blood donations in our region come from individuals over the age of 55," said Monika Wieggers, Director of Donor Relations. "What is concerning is the fact that only 18% of blood donations are from individuals between the ages of 16 and 24."

As older blood donors tend to become those in need of blood transfusions, or to be deferred due to medication or health-related issues, younger individuals are not donating blood at the same rate, potentially leading to longer and greater incidents of blood shortages in the region, she noted.

"Blood is perishable and it cannot be manufactured," Wieggers explained. "It can only be given through the generosity of volunteer blood donors who make time in their busy schedules to visit a donor center or blood drive to give the gift of life."

"We are excited about our MKBC Blood Donor Madness promotion as we encourage young adults to become life-long blood donors," MKBC's Director of Marketing, Keith Vogrin added, confirming Capital BlueCross as the Madness Sponsor of the first annual event.

MKBC Blood Donor Madness launched on Monday, January 13, and will run for 12 weeks. During this time, colleges and universities in the Lehigh Valley will compete with each other to see who can collect the most blood donations. These donations can be collected at college-sponsored MKBC blood drives, as well as at MKBC donor center locations (including Allentown, Bethlehem and Easton).

Schools committed to participating in the inaugural MKBC Blood Donor Madness competition include Cedar Crest College, DeSales University, Lafayette College, Lehigh Carbon Community College, Lehigh University, Moravian University, Muhlenberg College, Northampton Community College, and Penn State Lehigh Valley.

"The school collecting the most lifesaving blood donations will be crowned as our 2025 College Champion," Vogrin said, explaining that the total number of blood donations will be weighted, based on the total student population at each school.

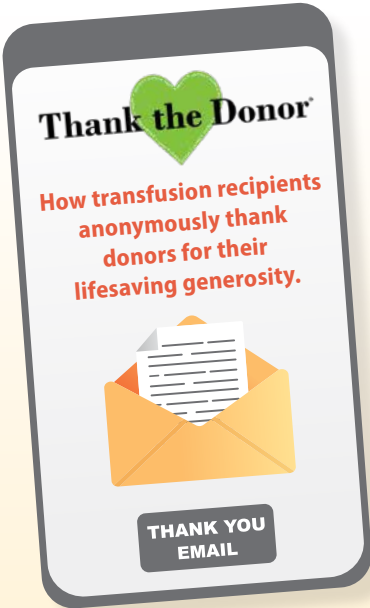
Winners will be announced the week of April 7, 2025, with an awards presentation slated for the week of April 14, 2025. Each school will have a goal of 4% of their student population. If the goal is attained, the school will receive a \$1,000 award for its college scholarship fund, with the winning college or university being awarded a \$10,000 award for its scholarship fund. In addition, student and school faculty donors will have the opportunity to win randomly selected prizes, such as gift cards, air pods or sneakers.

"While the competition and individual prizes are geared towards student blood donors, everyone is encouraged to donate in the name of their favorite Lehigh Valley college to boost the school's chance at winning a \$10,000 scholarship," Vogrin concluded, noting that faculty, family, friends and others can donate towards the competition by giving the group code for their favorite school when arriving for his/her blood donation.

For additional information, including the list of participating schools and their MKBC group codes, visit GIVEaPINT.org/donormadness/ or scan the QR code.



Thank you to our MADNESS SPONSOR



WITH GRATITUDE

Thank the Donor® is a program that allows transfusion recipients to anonymously connect with their lifesaving blood donors, sending them a message of thanks via email for their generosity.

To read some of the messages recently received by some of our dedicated blood donors by grateful recipients and/or their families, see the featured messages highlighted throughout our gift listing on pages 8-11!

MKBC ANNUAL REPORT OF FINANCIAL GIFTS

Miller-Keystone Blood Center is grateful to have a generous community of financial supporters. We recognize and thank those members of the Miller-Keystone Blood Center family who provide the Center with annual financial support. This list represents those who have made a financial gift to Miller-Keystone Blood Center from July 1, 2023 through June 30, 2024. Our MKBC Champions, Benefactors, and Partners are listed here. To review the full list, including our MKBC Sustainers, please visit our website at: [GIVEaPINT.org/annual-report-financial-gifts](https://www.giveapint.org/annual-report-financial-gifts). Every gift contributes to our lifesaving mission, and we thank you for your generosity and ongoing support!

* Deceased

Thank you to MKBC CHAMPIONS for giving \$1,000 or more:

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"Thank you so much for your blood donation! My husband really needed it today and we are very grateful. Please know that what you do does save lives!"

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- St. Luke's University Hospital – Bethlehem Campus
- St. Luke's Hospital – Allentown Campus
- St. Luke's Hospital – Anderson Campus
- St. Luke's Hospital – Carbon Campus
- St. Luke's Hospital – Easton Campus
- St. Luke's Hospital – Lehighton Campus
- St. Luke's Hospital – Miners Campus
- St. Luke's Hospital – Monroe Campus
- St. Luke's Hospital – Sacred Heart Campus
- St. Luke's Hospital – Upper Bucks Campus
- Geisinger St. Luke's Hospital

Geisinger Hospitals

- Geisinger Bloomsburg Hospital
- Geisinger Community Medical Center
- Geisinger Jersey Shore Hospital
- Geisinger Lewistown Hospital
- Geisinger Medical Center
- Geisinger Medical Center – Muncy
- Geisinger Wyoming Valley Medical Center

Grand View Health

Tower Health

- Reading Hospital
- Pottstown Hospital
- Phoenixville Hospital

Temple Health

- Chestnut Hill Hospital

Lehigh Valley Health Network

- LVHN Carbon
- LVHN Cedar Crest
- LVHN Dickson City
- LVHN 17th Street
- LVHN Hazleton
- LVHN Hecktown Oaks
- LVHN Muhlenberg
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- Hunterdon Health
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