

Appointments



Mark J. Cunningham, MD, named chief of cardiac surgery at RIH

PROVIDENCE — Rhode Island Hospital has named **MARK J. CUNNINGHAM, MD**, chief of cardiac surgery. Dr. Cunningham also holds the Karl E. Karlson, MD, and Gloria A. Karlson Professorship in Surgery at The Warren

Alpert Medical School of Brown University. He succeeds **FRANK W. SELLKE, MD**, who has retired from the role.

Dr. Cunningham joins Brown Health from Brigham and Women's Hospital, where he served as interim chief of cardiac surgery and was a faculty member at Harvard Medical School. A nationally recognized cardiovascular surgeon, he specializes in mechanical circulatory support, valve surgery, transcatheter aortic valve replacement (TAVR), and complex aortic surgery, including transcatheter endovascular aortic repair. Over his career, he has performed more than 500 heart transplants, led over 60 clinical trials, and advanced minimally invasive and robotic techniques that reduce recovery time and complications for patients. Before entering medicine, Dr. Cunningham worked as an aeronautical engineer at NASA's Langley Research Center, an experience that continues to influence his innovative approach to surgical care and research.

"We are thrilled to welcome Dr. Cunningham to Rhode Island Hospital," said **AURORA PRYOR, MD**, surgeon-in-chief of Rhode Island Hospital and The Miriam Hospital and chair of the Department of Surgery at The Warren Alpert Medical School of Brown University. "His unique combination of engineering expertise, surgical excellence, and leadership will further elevate our cardiovascular surgery program." ❖



Erin Yale named president, chief operating officer of Women & Infants

PROVIDENCE — Care New England recently announced the appointment of **ERIN YALE** as president and chief operating officer of Women & Infants Hospital, effective April 13, 2026.

She joins Women & Infants from Beth Israel Deaconess Hospital–Plymouth, where she has served as chief operating officer since 2024. During her tenure, she strengthened financial and operational performance across diverse service areas, co-led the launch of Epic, and advanced the hospital's strategic alignment with BI Lahey Health.

Previously, Yale held progressive leadership roles during a decade at Children's Wisconsin, a leading pediatric academic health system. There, she led large, multidisciplinary clinical service lines—including surgical, diagnostic, and therapeutic services—while guiding major capital expansion initiatives, regulatory achievements, and operational transformation efforts.

"Erin's career reflects deep expertise in service-line development, physician partnership, system integration, and performance improvement, as well as a steadfast commitment to clinical excellence, innovation, and collaboration," said President and CEO of Care New England (CNE), **MICHAEL WAGNER, MD**. "We look forward to her leadership in building upon Women & Infants' legacy as the region's premiere provider of women's and newborn care, while expanding access, strengthening outcomes, and advancing academic medicine and research across Rhode Island and beyond."

Yale will focus on advancing clinical and operational excellence while driving strategic growth in women and children's health across the region. In close collaboration with system and community partners, she will also advance innovative strategies that reinforce the hospital's national prominence in clinical care, research, and academic medicine while deepening WIH's impact throughout the southern New England region.

"I am excited to join Women & Infants Hospital, one of the nation's leading academic medical centers solely focused on women's health at such an exciting moment in its history," said Yale. "I look forward to working alongside our exceptional physicians, nurses, researchers, and community partners—including our longstanding collaboration with Brown University—to build on the hospital's national leadership in clinical care, research, and academic medicine, and to ensure that every patient and family we serve experiences the highest quality care."

She is graduate of Tufts University with a bachelor of science in psychology, and a master's in management and healthcare from The Heller School for Social Policy and Management at Brandeis University. ❖

Appointments



Lilia Holt, MBA, named interim president at the Rhode Island Life Science Hub

PROVIDENCE — **LILIA HOLT, MBA**, has been named the interim president at the Rhode Island Life Science Hub (RILSH), following the resignation of **MARK TURCO, MD**, in March. With more than a decade

of experience in financial services, economic development, and program coordination, she previously served as vice president of strategic initiatives at RILSH and vice president of business development at the Rhode Island Commerce Corporation.

According to a statement on the Hub's website, since its launch in June 2023, Holt has played a central leadership role in strategically advancing and scaling Rhode Island's life sciences ecosystem in alignment with statewide economic development priorities. She has built and strengthened strategic partnerships across government, academic institutions, healthcare systems, and industry to advance scientific translation, clinical collaboration, and business expansion. She was instrumental in the development of Ocean State Labs, the state's first life science incubator, and has led business attraction efforts to bring new life science companies and high-quality jobs to Rhode Island, including the expansion of Organogenesis. She continues to design and implement programs to catalyze company growth milestones and strengthen workforce development initiatives statewide.

Holt holds an MBA from Simmons University and a BA in sociology and psychology from Suffolk University. A native Rhode Islander, she is a graduate of Classical High School in Providence. ❖



Gov. McKee nominates William Tsonos to chair Rhode Island Life Science Hub

PROVIDENCE — Gov. Dan McKee nominated **WILLIAM TSONOS** to serve as the chair of the Rhode Island Life Science Hub on March 16th.

Tsonos has more than 30 years of banking experience and currently serves as the president of Beacon Bank (formerly BankRI), where he manages \$3.5 billion in assets and more than 200 employees. He previously worked as BankRI's director of commercial banking and oversaw the bank's commercial loan portfolio, commercial deposits, cash management department, as well as the Business Banking sales and underwriting teams.

In May 2024, Tsonos was nominated by Gov. McKee to serve on the Rhode Island Commerce Corporation's Board of Directors, where he currently serves. He is also an active member of the Woonsocket Investment Committee and the treasurer of The Miriam Hospital Foundation. Tsonos is a Bryant University graduate with a degree in business administration.

"It is a pleasure to be nominated and continue to serve Rhode Island as the chair of the Life Science Hub," said Tsonos. "I look forward to working with fellow board members, the Hub's staff, and Gov. McKee to continue to bring well-paying jobs to the State."

Tsonos' name will be submitted to the Rhode Island Senate for advice and consent. ❖

Recognition

Three Brown University Health hospitals named to *Newsweek's* World's Best Hospitals 2026 list

PROVIDENCE — *Newsweek* has named Rhode Island Hospital, Newport Hospital, and Saint Anne's Hospital to its World's Best Hospitals 2026 list. The rankings were released on March 5, 2026.

For the eighth consecutive year, *Newsweek* partnered with Statista to develop the World's Best Hospitals ranking. The 2026 evaluation includes hospitals across 32 countries. Countries were selected using multiple comparability criteria, including population size, life expectancy, standard of living, hospital density, and the availability of reliable data.

Each hospital was evaluated and assigned a score based on four primary data sources:

1. Recommendations from medical experts—including physicians, hospital leaders, and other health care professionals
2. Hospital quality metrics
3. Existing patient experience data
4. Statista's Patient-Reported Outcome Measures Implementation Survey

"This recognition from *Newsweek* highlights the strength of our entire health system and the dedication of our caregivers," said **SARAH FROST**, Brown University Health chief of hospital operations and president of Rhode Island Hospital and Hasbro Children's. "Our mission is to provide world-class care close to home, and we are proud that our hospitals continue to be recognized for the quality, innovation, and compassion they deliver every day." ❖

Sen. Reed celebrates U.S. Navy nurse's 105th birthday

EAST PROVIDENCE — Eighty years after the official end of World War II, it is easy for some to forget the sacrifices of unsung heroes who made valuable contributions to the war effort and helped the U.S. achieve victory. For U.S. Sen. **JACK REED**, there is an urgency to honor members of the 'Greatest Generation' and ensure they know how much people today appreciate their service.

Recently, Sen. Reed dropped by Anchor Bay at East Providence to salute **LILLIAN "CHRIS" NAUTA, RN**, one of the few female members of America's nearly depleted corps of World War II nurses. Sen. Reed said he was also there to help uplift the voices of Nauta's fellow World War II veterans and ensure their stories are widely shared and will never be forgotten.

He helped celebrate Nauta's 105th birthday, highlighted her devoted service as a U.S. Navy nurse during World War II, and urged Congress to pass a bipartisan bill to collectively award Nauta and her fellow World War II U.S. Army and Navy nurses a Congressional Gold Medal, one of our nation's highest honors.

During World War II, there were more than 10,000 women serving in the Navy Nurse Corps across 12 hospital ships, 40 naval hospitals, 176 dispensaries, and medical evacuation planes.

Born in Rhode Island, Nauta was just 18 years old when World War II began. She proudly served as a Lieutenant Junior Grade as a Navy nurse during the war, and her service was marked by the highest standards of professionalism and devotion to duty. Stationed at a Navy hospital facility in Massachusetts, she helped care for service members who were injured and returning home.

She met her husband, Russell Nauta, a fellow Navy service member, while she was serving in the Nurse Corps. They married and put down roots in New London, Connecticut, to raise their son, Russell J. Nauta, who would later be inspired by his mother's service and go on to become an acclaimed teaching surgeon. After the war, she continued serving as a nurse in private practices throughout New England for many years. ❖



Lillian "Chris" Nauta, RN, was honored recently at her 105th birthday celebration, attended by family, friends, and U.S. Sen. Jack Reed. [OFFICE OF SEN. JACK REED]

Recognition

South County Health Home Health recognized by *U.S. News & World Report's* Best Home Health Agency

WAKEFIELD — South County Health Home Health has been recognized among the best home health agencies in the nation in the inaugural *U.S. News & World Report* Best Home Health Agencies rankings, earning a “High-Performing” designation for quality and patient outcomes.

The recognition highlights agencies that deliver exceptional, measurable results for patients recovering at home. According to *U.S. News*, high-performing agencies:

- Began care on time for 99% of patients, outperforming the national average of 94%
- Demonstrated stronger patient improvement in mobility and daily independence
- Helped more patients safely manage medications

The inaugural *U.S. News* Best Home Health evaluation assessed more than 12,000 Medicare-certified home health agencies across the United States based on clinical quality measures and patient experience data sourced from the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, offering patients and families trusted insights into post-acute care options. ❖

VNA Home Health & Hospice ranked nationally as Best Home Health Agency by *U.S. News & World Report*

WARWICK — The *U.S. News & World Report* has ranked VNA Home Health & Hospice (formerly VNA of Care New England) as a Best Home Health and High Performing Agency.

In its inaugural review, *U.S. News* evaluated 12,157 Home Health Agencies across the country. It determined the ratings based on rigorous, unbiased analysis published by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS). It assessed both the quality of care and patient experience through sixteen measures. Only 10% of those rated met the standard of being named *U.S. News* Best.

“Home health and hospice care are essential to meeting patients where they are, whether they are recovering from surgery or illness, managing a chronic condition, or facing the end of life,” said **JANE PIKE-BENTON**, president and COO, VNA Home Health & Hospice. “Our team of visiting nurses, therapists, and other clinicians brings skilled healthcare and compassionate support directly to patients. Our mission is to help patients maintain dignity, independence, and quality of life wherever they call home. We are also there to support families during some of their most vulnerable moments, so they don’t feel like they are navigating their healthcare journeys alone. We are honored to be recognized by *U.S. News* for the work we do every day.” ❖

U.S. News & World Report names UOI’s East Bay Surgery Center among nation’s Best Ambulatory Surgery Centers for Orthopedics & Spine

PROVIDENCE — University Orthopedics announced that for the second consecutive year *U.S. News & World Report* has named the East Bay Surgery Center (EBSC) as one of the best ambulatory surgery centers (ASCs) in the country.

The report evaluated more than 6,200 centers across four specialty areas: Colonoscopy & Endoscopy, Orthopedics & Spine, Ophthalmology, and Urology. EBSC is one of only three Rhode Island ASCs among the 934 facilities rated as high-performing, and the only one in the state to repeat the honor. Of the more than 1,500 orthopedic and spine ASCs assessed, EBSC was one of just 233 recognized as high-performing.

Located on the second floor of UOI’s flagship Kettle Point location in East Providence, the East Bay Surgery Center made history in 2018 as the first facility in Rhode Island to offer same-day orthopedic procedures and concierge-type home care. Since then, patients have successfully undergone thousands of procedures, including fracture treatments, shoulder arthroscopy, rotator cuff repairs, and total hip and knee replacements.

“This continued recognition from *U.S. News & World Report* for the second consecutive year is a testament to the exceptional and unwavering dedication and expertise of our entire care team,” said University Orthopedics President **EDWARD AKELMAN, MD**. “From our surgeons and nurses at the East Bay Surgery Center to the CNAs and therapists who support patients through recovery at home, this honor reflects a truly collaborative, patient-centered approach to care.”

The report found that EBSC outperformed similar surgical centers, with lower-than-average rates of unplanned hospital admissions and adverse outcomes, as well as shorter-than-expected lengths of stay—reflecting efficient procedures and positive patient recovery experiences.

The ASCs were given designations of “high performing,” “average,” or “below average.” According to its methodology report *U.S. News & World Report* based its findings on Medicare data from 2022–2024. Criteria included how successfully the center avoided complications, emergency room visits, unplanned hospitalizations, and other undesirable outcomes. ❖

Recognition



Rhode Island State House illuminated teal green in honor of Miriam's 100th anniversary

PROVIDENCE — In recognition of The Miriam Hospital's 100th anniversary, the Rhode Island State House was illuminated in teal green in March. The illumination was a tribute not only for the communities the hospital serves, but also recognizes the team of 2800 professionals for their care, compassion and dedication.

The hospital is preparing for the future with a \$125 million construction and renovation project that will transform the hospital's campus, elevate the care provided and carry the mission of service forward for future generations. ❖