



WHO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

The people on the following pages contribute to island life in a variety of ways to enhance the Nantucket experience for all of us. From their contributions in commerce to conservation, health care and senior assistance, creating vibrant experiences in the arts and education, feeding the island responsibly through sustainable farming and making sure no one goes hungry, working with the island's youth and mentoring their development, these people pay it forward and are making a difference for all of us, creating a community that is undeniably our home.

– *Written by Joshua Balling, Ingrid Feeney,
Allison Goldsmith, Jason Graziadei,
Lindsay Pykosz, Hana Schuster and Marianne Stanton*



PHOTO BY NICOLE HARNISHEGER

Dr. Margot Hartmann

Margot Hartmann said Nantucket was an unlikely place for her to end up. The president and CEO of Nantucket Cottage Hospital attributes her arrival at NCH to "a combination of loving medicine, loving adventure, and being able to find a place where I love to do what I love."

She joined the NCH team in 1999 as head of the emergency department, where she said she learned the true ins and outs of patient care.

"There you often see people at their most acute stage of an illness. It's a fabulous puzzle," she said. "I'm constantly trying to figure out 'why this person, why now, why this illness?' I've always thought it was such a privilege to be let into a person's life in that way – when they are in the most need. I try to honor that relationship at all levels."

Hartmann assumed the presidency of the hospital just one year ago, at a time when NCH was facing serious turmoil. The hospital had seen its endowment and donations fall victim to the ongoing recession. Its financial struggles were exacerbated by diminished patient volume and shrinking insurance reimbursements, which accounted for 83 percent of revenue. Together, they precipitated a \$4.3 million loss from the hospital's \$36 million budget and led to the layoffs of 16 of its 175 full-time and seasonal employees in January, and the elimination of several departments. Morale was low.

"This community had an unusual puzzle to solve in terms of healthcare," she said. "Even apart from

all the changes going on in the industry, the model that the hospital had been functioning in for the last 15 years had reached its maximum level of functioning. It was time for a new formula."

Hartmann was just the person to face the problems head-on and create a new template that would ensure the future of NCH and of its dedication to the community and to its patients.

"While in some ways I think I was a very improbable president because I'd had no business or financial background, I think there are different CEOs for different institutions at different times in their history, and maybe I'm the right person for this little hospital right now," said Hartmann.

Because the hospital was on the brink of so much change when she took on its leadership, "it was important to hold on to what was always good. We needed someone who had been in the trenches and knows what it takes to deliver quality care when you're 30 miles at sea and don't have layers and layers of support. The reality can be sobering," she said. "Figuring out how to create a healthy institution that can do that every day is very complicated. But it's so rewarding to be able to do that."

While the hospital still shows signs of struggle, in the last year, Hartmann has improved its functioning and works every day toward improving outpatient practices in order to attract more off-island specialists, undertaking major renovations – both to the building and the hospital's outdated computer systems, pursuing better reimbursement contractually and through financial counseling to decrease debt, and she is still working to identify a business model "that will allow us to achieve operational break-even within the next two years, "key to which is a new hospital building," she said.

Hartmann's childhood dream was to go into medicine, though she said she took a "round-about path" to get there.

She first studied sleep research and earned a masters degree and Ph.D. in clinical sleep studies.

"I realized, though, that if you're not a clinician, you can't take on clinical responsibility," she said.

To gain that experience, Hartmann went back to medical school in England at St. George's Teaching Hospital, affiliated with the University of London and known for its acute hospital services and advanced medical research. There, she said, she received "the most wonderful training."

At St. George's, Hartmann was encouraged to use bedside medicine for clinical assessments, rather than relying on hi-tech machines and equipment to make diagnoses.

"I learned to listen to the nuances of heart and breath sounds in a way that isn't done much anymore. It's a very different way to train and to diagnose, and as a result, we could take on more responsibility at an early stage in training," said Hartmann. "It was an amazing opportunity."

At NCH, Hartmann said she hopes "to bring credibility and common sense to the hospital from someone who believes in the mission and knows what it takes to deliver it."

"I don't really feel like patting myself on the back just yet," said Hartmann. "I've been lucky enough to find work that I love doing in a place that I really believe in. Sometimes this island just needs all of us to grab an oar." ❖

Dr. Tim Lepore

Dr. Tim Lepore arrived on Nantucket Jan. 1, 1983, on the noon boat, and was in surgery by 7 p.m. He installed a pacemaker, and the operation was a success.

Since that day 28 years ago, the island's surgeon, resident tick expert, long-time School Committee member, falconer and marathon-runner has become a true part of the community fabric.

He rarely leaves the island for more than a day or two at a time, and when he does, Nantucket Cottage Hospital has had to fly in surgeons and obstetricians to replace him.

Lepore wears his dedication to his patients on his sleeve. While he acknowledged the hospital's struggles in recent years, the pride he feels in the work he does, and where he does it, is obvious.

"I see a small hospital that has moved ahead tremendously," he said. "Yet we're always in this awkward position of what do we do, and what do we send off-island? We can do anything if we have to, but if a seriously-ill patient comes in, we don't have, nor should we invest, in sophisticated monitoring equipment, when the patient is better served in Boston.

"It still amazes me when people ask if we do surgery, or deliver babies. Of course we do. It's a real hospital that was just shrunk. We do an excellent job taking care of seriously-ill patients. Our surgical-site infection rate is tremendous. It's less than 1 percent. You won't see that in Boston, and you won't see it at a bigger hospital," Lepore said.

He often sees 40-50 patients a day, when he's not in the operating room or doing tick research. His workaholic ways and country-doctor style were featured in a *New York Times* article in 2007, and there was even talk of a book and profile on the BBC.

A staunch supporter of Nantucket's children and athletic teams, he's provided over two decades of continuity and institutional knowledge on the School Committee, serving during the tenures of four superintendents, countless principals and thousands of students.

In addition to serving the medical needs of hundreds of patients over the years, he's equally involved in research into tick-borne illnesses, has become one of the nation's foremost experts on Lyme disease, babesiosis and ehrlichiosis, and taken controversial stances on the need to reduce Nantucket's deer population to stop the spread of ticks.

Lepore, 66, and his wife Cathy, a counselor in the school system, raised three children on the island. Lepore can't see himself anywhere else.

"I came from an academic, surgical background, and find this hospital and this community very much to my liking. I grew up in what was then a small community in central Massachusetts. I'm a Whaler by acclimation, if not by birth. This is my home, and this is my hospital, and I'll do everything I can to meet the needs of the community we serve," he said. ❖

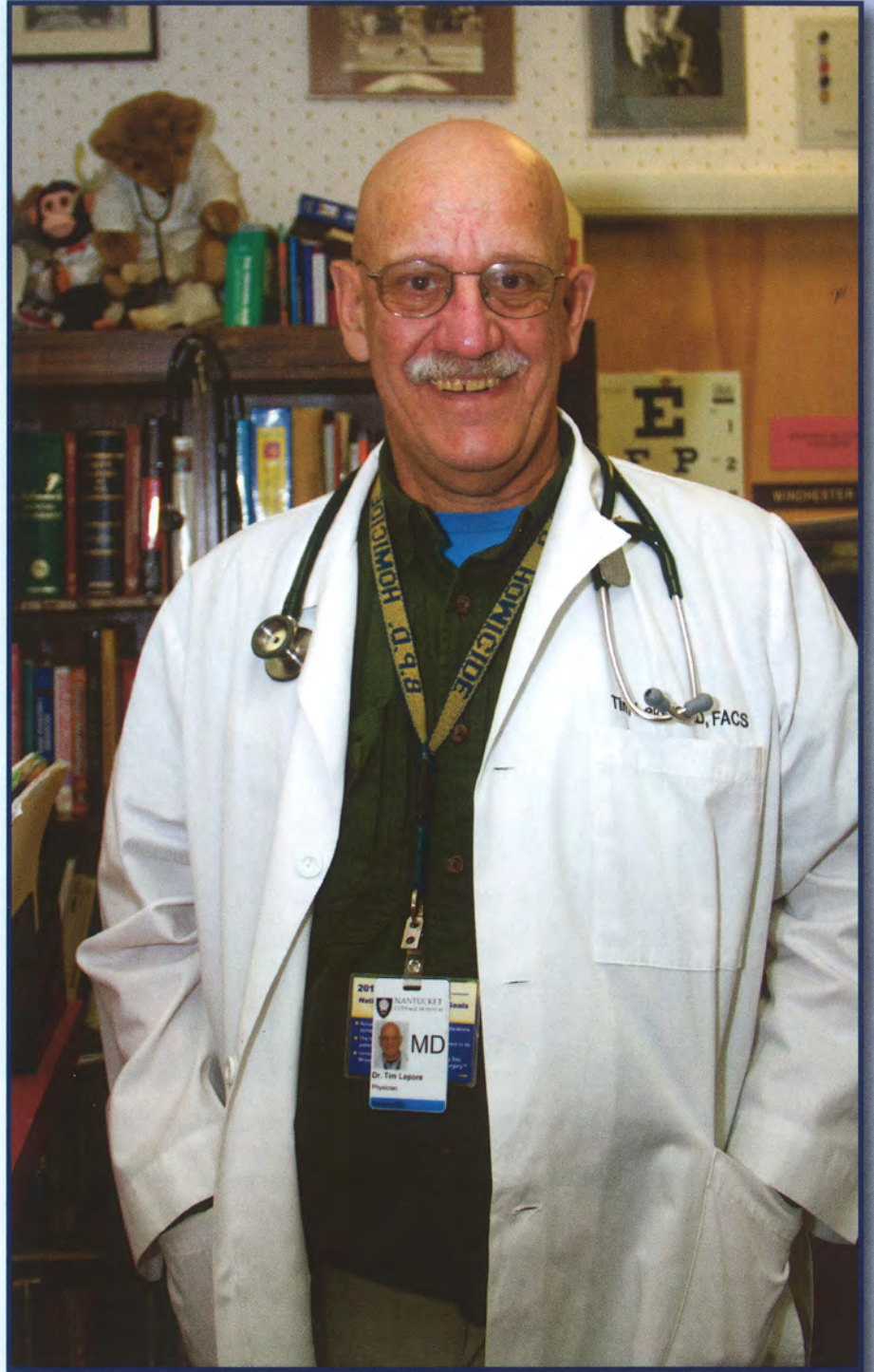


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