



WESTCHESTER HEALTH CELEBRATES FIRST ANNIVERSARY

First medical group formed in Katonah in 35 years

Katonah, NY (July 30, 2008) – Westchester Health Associates, based in Katonah, is celebrating its first anniversary, and there’s a lot to celebrate. Twelve months ago, in the face of turmoil, adversity, and diversity in Northern Westchester’s medical community, the Katonah Medical Group disbanded. No one thought a new medical group could be formed. Yet, in 16 weeks a small group of local physicians and one dedicated administrator worked tirelessly to conceptualize, plan, and build the first physician led, patient-centered medical practice to open in Katonah in 35 years.

“A year ago, when the Katonah Medical Group disbanded, physicians who were not the original partners were left with thousands of devoted patients but no office,” said Peter Mercurio, M.D., President and CEO of Westchester Health. “At the same time, many independent physicians wanted electronic medical records which are unaffordable to a single practice. The timing was right to team up and combine resources. However, we faced tremendous obstacles. Some of our physicians were previously competitors. They represented a wide range of specialties. Patients told us they preferred small, familiar and personal offices rather than a large institution, and physicians did not want to lose control over patient care. Many of our physicians were very concerned that forming a group would make their practice too big, too impersonal, and too business-minded. We needed to be creative and diverse in our solution,” said Dr. Mercurio.

Westchester Health devised a structure in which physicians could maintain control and respect their patients’ preference for small offices, by allowing physicians to continue to practice in their current offices as well as by allowing physicians certain autonomy and control over their divisions. As for leadership of the whole group, they formed an Executive Committee led by Dr. Mercurio.

The plan has worked so well that the changes have been virtually invisible to patients. Patients can see the same doctors in the same offices; and physicians have access to technology and communication across specialties, which enhance patient care.

Many of Westchester Health’s physicians also serve key positions at Northern Westchester Hospital. James W. Catanese, MD is President of the Medical Staff. Robert Pitaro, MD is secretary and treasurer of the hospital. Peter Richel, MD is Chief of the Department of Pediatrics, and Jerry Weinberg, MD is Chief of the Department of Urology, as well as President of the Medical Board. Finally, Dr. Constantine Bakas founded the pre-natal care center at NWH.

“We are pleased to serve the hospital and our community and we are honored by the vote of confidence from our peers,” stated Dr. Mercurio. “Northern Westchester Hospital is a vital part of our community and we will work hard to maintain and continue to improve the services provided by the hospital and by the doctors in the hospital.”

In order to be part of Westchester Health, physicians must meet the strict requirements of the Executive Committee which include exceptional clinical expertise and patient care skills. Many of the physicians in the group had already been cross referring for years which helped facilitate the group’s formation. A high level of trust and respect among many of the physicians in the group was already in existence.

There are currently about 70 physicians who are part of Westchester Health and they have 30 offices in our community, including Armonk, Brewster, Chappaqua, Jefferson Valley, Katonah, Mt. Kisco, Somers, Thornwood, White Plains and Yorktown. For a complete list, visit www.westchesterhealth.com.

Westchester Health’s website is up and running and is updated regularly. You can check back often for updates of content and news. As a patient-centered entity, the group is posting patient testimonies and physician hobbies as way of helping patients know more about their physicians “We’re always thinking of how we can put patients at ease and foster communication,” said Dr. Mercurio. “We always welcome comments from patients. A patient’s trust and referral of a friend or family is the greatest compliment we can receive.”

“At the end of our first year as a group, Westchester Health Associates is growing in many ways, sometimes surpassing our original vision,” stated Ms. Kuttruf, the Chief Operating Officer and Executive Administrator. “They said it couldn’t be done, not for the past 35 years, in this competitive marketplace, and certainly not in 4 months. If we had dwelled on the negative or got caught up in the reasons it couldn’t be done, we would not be here today. We are very pleased to be celebrating our first anniversary, and we will remain committed to treating our patients as if they are our own family members.”