

Cancer survivor to ride LOWVELO with doctor who saved his life

BY KELLY RAE SMITH
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London native Nick Charalambous thought he had experienced the worst when a 2013 bicycle accident left him with a broken back and broken neck. Not to be defeated, the NewSpring Church pastor dug into rehab and set his sights on a triathlon in 2015.

"I literally had started training, and it was maybe a week or two, if that, when I started feeling these strange pains in my neck," he remembers. "It was odd enough that I went to the doc. But because I'd had a couple of breaks in my neck, and I was very prone to arthritis because of those injuries, I think the doctors just felt like, 'Well, maybe this is just the new normal for you.'"

The pain persisted over that summer, progressively so, and he eventually lost the ability to bend. "I would wake up in the mornings and try and brush my teeth, and I couldn't lean over the sink without a ton of effort," says Charalambous, who's now 46 and lives in Anderson, South Carolina, with his wife. "It was shortly after that that I realized I couldn't even lie down in bed at night because I couldn't get back up again after that."

More tests came back negative until an endocrinologist finally produced answers: Thousands of lesions had appeared along Charalambous' spine and

pelvis. Weeks passed as his Anderson-based medical team endeavored to find out what kind of cancer was at work, and that's when someone suggested he see oncologist Robert Stuart, M.D., at Hollings Cancer Center at MUSC.

The recommendation came not a moment too soon. On the drive from the Upstate to Charleston, Charalambous became delirious and began to lose consciousness. He was going into hypercalcemic shock.

"I didn't actually know much about hypercalcemia, but basically, my bones, especially my spine and pelvis, were crumbling at such a level that they were dumping just a ton of calcium into my bloodstream to the point where I was being poisoned," he says. "I don't remember the first three days there. I was very, very, very seriously sick, and at that point, crippled. I literally couldn't walk around."

Once at MUSC, the "odyssey," as Charalambous calls it, continued. Stuart determined his form of cancer was a type that can sometimes attack the bones: anaplastic large cell non-Hodgkin lymphoma. That was the answer.

As it was explained to Charalambous, the cancer had been attacking his T-cells while disguising itself to the immune system, only becoming visible once the obvious destruction of the bones had begun. Stuart suggested treating it with monoclonal antibodies, which are shown



Photo Provided

Nick Charalambous, left, says that his MUSC Hollings Cancer Center oncologist Dr. Robert Stuart, brought him "back from the dead."

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to work well against this type of cancer, particularly since Charalambous had a protein receptor site that suggested he would respond well. Within a week of treatment, he began to feel better. "I believe very strongly that that was God's providence in my life, because it was almost instantaneous," he says.

After a few months of being treated with the drug in combination with chemotherapy, Charalambous was back on his feet. To celebrate, he took his wife for a doctor-approved "holiday of a lifetime." It was also their wedding anniversary, which they spent at a beach resort.

"And I remember it was the first time that I was able to dance," he says. Less than a year before, he was emaciated, crippled and unable to get out of bed on his own. "And here I was, dancing. It was

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Suicide awareness event
planned Oct. 20.

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MUSC's Blessing of
the Dogs.

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a really poignant time."

The next step: a stem cell transplant, followed by what he'd originally feared would be a long road to wellness. But during his treatment, he went from being concerned about living a normal life again to believing very strongly that he'd have a full recovery.

"God had told me that I was going to be healed — fully healed, actually," he says. "I believed in my heart that I would be physically better than before. I struggled to understand, struggled to believe it. But I remember receiving that promise, and I trusted it in my heart."

He was so convinced that the promise was coming true that he started climbing the hospital stairs only three days after the stem cell transplant. "If you know anything about stem cell transplants, that's ridiculous and stupid," he laughs. "They wouldn't let me out of that hospital. And so I said, 'Well, they're not banning me from the staircase.'"

As he built his strength back up, one question he kept asking the doctors was, "Am I going to be able to get back on my bike?"

"We wouldn't recommend it," was the resounding answer.

But Charalambous' heart was set on fulfilling a promise he'd made the year before after finding out that Stuart was a cyclist. "I remember saying to him, 'Well, doc, I'm going to get healed. I'm going to be fully healed, and we're going to ride our bikes one day.' One of the cool things about LOWVELO is that I get to do that," he says.

But his 25-mile LOWVELO ride on

**The LOWVELO Bike Ride is
Nov. 1-2 in Charleston.
100 % of the money raised will
go to fund cancer research.
To register or volunteer, visit
<https://lowvelo.org/>.**

Nov. 2 won't be his first post-op ride. Last year, he embarked on a solo bike tour of South Carolina, racking up 930 total miles in 13 days, with one rest day, and raising \$5,000 for the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society. Passing through Charleston on July 4, he felt it was the day he was able to bring that cruel chapter to a close. Not only did he survive the grueling ride, athletically, but he claims to be in the best shape of his life — better than before the wreck. He has full flexibility, no arthritis and more endurance than ever before. "It's just ridiculous," he says. "Obviously, I see it as a fulfillment of the promise that God gave me. But it truly is just remarkable."

Charalambous believes that he is back in the shape he's in because of the team at Hollings Cancer Center, stressing that "Dr. Stuart was heaven-sent."

"I just really don't think that I would be speaking to you right now if it hadn't been for his care," he says, adding that the level of nursing care he received at MUSC was astonishing.

"It felt like family," says Charalambous, who'll ride LOWVELO with the same family — Team BMT — that helped him heal. "I never felt like I was a bother, just being cared for in a professional way. I felt like people really loved me, and that matters a whole lot."

FLU SHOTS AVAILABLE NOW



All MUHA and MUSCP care team members are required to have the influenza vaccine or have completed a declination by midnight, Dec. 13. University employees are strongly encouraged to get a flu shot (Must have ID badge). All offsite flu vaccination and declination forms must be submitted online using the documentation tracking system.

☐ Oct. 17 — MUSC Horseshoe from 7:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

☐ Oct. 30 — SouthPark Classroom (JB300M) from 12 to 2 p.m.

☐ Nov. 5 — Parkshore Conference Rm. 260 from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m.

Flu shots are distributed weekdays from 7:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. (no appointment necessary, bring your MUSC ID badge) at Employee Health Services, 57 Bee Street, 843-792-2991.



The South Carolina Chapter of the American College of Healthcare Executives (SC ACHE) has held elections for the position of Regent, to represent the State of South Carolina, and promote the mission, vision, and values of ACHE to the governance of South Carolina and its district.

The current election has ended in a runoff, three-way tie, and tie-breaker ballots will be open from 10/14 – 10/25.

Representation from the MUSC family would be highly-beneficial and highly-valuable for our organization and the Lowcountry region!

MUSC CATALYST news

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MUSC, partner S.C. universities recognize cybersecurity awareness

By CINDY ABOLE

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National Cybersecurity Awareness Month is being celebrated throughout October. Established in 2004 by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and the National Cyber Security Alliance, this collaborative effort between government and industry works to ensure that everyone has the best resources to stay safe and secure online.

This year's theme, "Own IT. Secure IT. Protect IT.," focuses on personal accountability and proactive behavior in the areas of digital privacy to identify common cyberthreats and ensure security best practices.

At MUSC, and at several of the state's universities, tackling cybersecurity threats and finding solutions is a priority. That's why MUSC chief information

security officer (CISO) Sanjeev Sah has joined fellow CISOs Hal Stone, Clemson University, and Marcos Vieyra, University of South Carolina, to address common cybersecurity threats, coordinate cybersecurity capabilities and explore response capabilities and

strategies across the state. In July, they formed the South Carolina Higher Education Information Security Consortium.

"Our goal is to ensure coordinated efforts, leverage each institution's capabilities and provide support regarding cybersecurity protection," said Sah. "Learning from each other is a tremendous value to everyone."

The group plans to collaborate with local, state and federal agencies and organizations to improve outreach efforts regarding cybersecurity advocacy and share resources and best practices to help other institutions.



National Cybersecurity Awareness Month October

☐ Own IT

- Never click and tell: staying safe on social media
- Update privacy settings
- Keep tabs on your apps: best practices for device applications

☐ Secure IT

- Shake up your passphrase protocol: create strong, unique passphrases
- Double your login protection: turn on multifactor authentication
- Shop online safely
- Play hard to get with strangers: how to spot and avoid phishing attempts

☐ Protect IT

- If you connect, you must protect: updating to the latest security software, web browser and operating systems
- Stay protected while connected: Wi-Fi safety
- If you collect it, protect it: keeping customer/consumer data and information safe

Source: NCSAM



Photo Provided

Chief Information Security Officers Marcos Vieyra (University of South Carolina), from left, Sanjeev Sah (MUSC) and Hal Stone (Clemson University) have established the S.C. Higher Education Information Security Consortium to focus on cybersecurity protection at statewide colleges and universities and collaborate on national educational and outreach efforts such as Cybersecurity Awareness Month in October.

S.C. chief information security officers discuss cybersecurity issues

Marcos Vieyra (University of South Carolina)

☐ What takeaways do you want people [students, administration, patients] to have about the consortium?

Through this consortium, the security teams of Clemson, MUSC and UofSC will work to more quickly and efficiently share knowledge and lessons learned and better leverage our collective relationships for more strategic partnerships and benefits all around.

Hal Stone (Clemson)

☐ What are the top issues the consortium set out to address in 2019-2020?

While more goals than issues, I believe we will continue to solidify the relationships among the three institutions, building processes and procedures that leverage the talent and resources of each security team. Our hope is to be able to showcase the value these efforts bring to each institution, creating the desire for other state-supported schools to join us.

Sanjeev Sah (MUSC)

☐ What are the top issues the consortium set out to address in 2019-2020?

Through collaboration, MUSC is partnering with Clemson and UofSC to leverage our cyber-capabilities for coordinated cyber-information sharing and cyber-talent development. Over time, we strive to develop and promote statewide coordination to advance cybersecurity understanding and capabilities to detect, respond to and prevent security threats and challenges most effectively.

Nurse uses pain of son's death to raise awareness of suicide, mental health issues

By LESLIE CANTU
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The tattoo inked across her forearm in heavy black letters seems out of place on the petite, polished woman.

"I love you and so do others," it says.

It's a conversation starter for sure, but a conversation many don't expect. The words were a message her son Jake wrote in his journal to himself; his parents saw those words, and the depth of his struggle, only after he died by suicide on Jan. 2.

Though their grief is still raw, Tracy and Roger Pennycuff want to talk about suicide and mental health. They'll be walking in the Out of the Darkness Charleston Community Walk in Riverfront Park in North Charleston on Oct. 20 to raise awareness and money.

Suicide has become an epidemic in the U.S., Tracy Pennycuff said, one that she is now all too familiar with. Between 2001 and 2017, the suicide rate in the U.S. increased 31%. The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, which hosts the community walks across the nation, wants to decrease the rate by 20% by 2025.

Regina Creech, injury prevention outreach coordinator at MUSC Health Trauma Center, is organizing the Charleston area walk. She pointed to statistics that show that twice as many people died by suicide in South Carolina in 2017 as died in alcohol-related car crashes.

"Mental health is part of total health and should be treated like any other chronic health problem," she said. "If you have high blood pressure, you seek medical care for it. Mental health is no different. But only by talking about it, can we prevent it. Talk saves lives — whether you are suffering from suicidal thoughts, or you're concerned about someone, assume you are the only person who will reach out."

Tracy remembers Jake, 22 when he died, as a funny, supersmart guy who loved to act goofy and make people laugh. The

youngest of three children, he was content to let his big sisters take the spotlight — one a cheerleader and the other a basketball player in high school. He talked about how much he'd like to visit Paris after his parents traveled there for their 30th wedding anniversary last year.

He was there for his friends, too, helping them when they felt down and even passing along the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline phone number. And yet, Tracy says, "He didn't call it that day that he needed it."

The Pennycuffs knew that Jake struggled. He had gotten heavily into drugs in college, beginning with Klonopin, a benzodiazepine used to control seizures and prevent panic attacks that is sometimes used recreationally. Tracy thinks Jake got the drug from a friend.

After a mental health crisis during his sophomore year, Jake reluctantly entered rehab in Charlotte, where the Pennycuffs lived at the time. When he got out, Tracy said, he seemed more clear.

He went to lineman school in Tennessee, graduated top of his class, and took a job in Denver.

Part of the appeal, Tracy says ruefully, was that marijuana is legal in Colorado.

Jake was functional. He worked, and he talked to his parents every day, either by text or phone. But he also used high-potency marijuana daily. Tracy thinks that the drugs mixed with his diagnosed depression and anxiety to create a toxic stew in his brain. On that last day, he called home upset, but he seemed to be fine when he got off the phone.

But the Pennycuffs didn't hear from him that night. And he didn't respond to texts or phone calls the following morning. Worried, they called the police.

"I don't know how many times we had the police go by — probably five at least, to the point where they were like, 'Listen, we can't go kick the door down,'" Tracy recalls.

The Pennycuffs decided to fly to



Photo provided

Jake Pennycuff with his grandmothers.



The Pennycuffs participated in the Out of the Darkness Overnight Walk in Boston in June. Participants walk over 16 miles through the night and finish as dawn approaches.

Photo provided

Denver on the morning of Jan. 4. Before they boarded the plane and turned off their phones, Tracy found the landlord's number and asked him to check on Jake. As soon as they landed, they turned their phones back on.

"Our phones just blew up with text messages, and the first one I saw was from the landlord. All he said was, 'Call the coroner.' That's how we found out. We were still on the runway," she said.

The months since then have seen the Pennycuffs trying to adjust to a new life. They moved to Charleston in March, partly for Roger's job and partly for a change of scenery. Tracy initially took a nursing job at MUSC Health, but, she said, "I came to the first day of orientation, and I felt like I was on another planet. My mind just was not here. I wasn't well mentally, and I

See **WALK** on page 11

MEET DANIEL



Daniel Torrelío

Department; How long at MUSC
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 at MUSC**

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Family

Erin, Ethan and Benjamin

**Who in history would you like to meet
 and why**

*The Founding Fathers; I wonder what they
 might say today...*

What's your idea of a dream job

It's the job I have right now — interpreting!

Greatest moment in your life

*The day I met my wife because all the
 other special days wouldn't have happened
 without her.*

Favorite quote

"To err is human; to forgive, divine."

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Friday, NOVEMBER 1, 2019



Keynote Speaker:

Suzanne Topalian, MD
 12:00 PM, DD 110

ABSTRACT DEADLINE:

Friday, September 27, 2019 @ 11:59 PM

NO ABSTRACTS will be accepted after this date

8:00-11:30 AM	Poster Session	Harper Center Gym
12:00 - 1:00 PM	Keynote Presentation	DD 110
1:30 - 4:30 PM	Oral Sessions	Education Library Rooms
5:00 - 6:00 PM	Awards Ceremony	DD 110

Links to submit an abstract as well as information about poster and oral presentations can be found by following the Research Day link on the [College of Graduate Studies home page](https://education.musc.edu/colleges/graduate-studies)

Or copy/paste: <https://education.musc.edu/colleges/graduate-studies>

MUSC Research Day 2019 is open to all students, postdocs, residents, fellows, and research specialists at MUSC and students, postdocs, residents, and fellows at other institutions who have participated this past year in programs of research at MUSC.

One abstract per presenter is allowed and team presentations are NOT allowed. Oral and poster formats are available.

Please direct any questions regarding MUSC Research Day 2019 to
 Dr. Steven Kubalak at: kubalak@musc.edu

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MUSC, partners speak on value-based health care on Capitol Hill

Staff Report

On Sept. 11, MUSC and strategic partners Siemens Healthineers and Medtronic hosted an informative briefing on value-based health care (VBHC) for congressional staff at the Capitol Visitor Center in Washington, D.C. David J. Cole, M.D., FACS, MUSC president; Patrick J. Cawley, M.D., CEO of MUSC Health and vice president for Health Affairs, University and Danielle Scheurer, M.D., chief quality officer, MUSC Health, joined Christian Howell, vice president, Value-Based Healthcare Partnerships, Medtronic, and Kevin Royer, senior vice president and general counsel, Siemens Healthineers Diagnostics and North America, on a panel to discuss how MUSC and our strategic partners are committed to delivering value by improving outcomes and lowering costs.

Some 30 guests participated in the

panel discussion, including roughly a dozen congressional staffers, at least one from all nine South Carolina Delegation offices; eight attendees from industry and health care trade associations; guests invited by Medtronic or Siemens Healthineers; and team members from each of the two global corporations.

Congressman Tom Rice, who represents South Carolina’s 7th District in the House of Representatives, provided welcome remarks along with commentary on healthcare and the current political landscape. Panelists engaged in a high-level discussion of VBHC and its future in the United States. Topics included data infrastructure and analytics, patient-focused quality metrics and some of the current systematic and regulatory barriers surrounding value-based care. Audience members posed plenty of well-informed questions about issues such



Photo by Van Scoyoc Associates

MUSC President David Cole provided opening remarks to a group of South Carolina congressional staffers to discuss value-based health care.

as the role of data in VBHC and certain “road blocks” to collecting and analyzing data.

“We are viewing the briefing event as the beginning of a conversation with our congressional delegation surrounding

public/private, provider/industry partnerships,” Cole said. “We continue to explore new ways to collaborate and accelerate the shift to value-based health care.”

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IP01-1826924-1

The dog days of summer – in October?

BY BRYCE DONOVAN

donovanb@musc.edu

Even though it was 90 degrees outside (insane barking begins) – whoops, totally shouldn't have said that word – dozens of typically boisterous pups were on their best behavior during MUSC's annual Blessing of the Dogs event, which was held on the Horseshoe Oct. 4.

Cathy Bennett, Pet Therapy coordinator for MUSC Health, kicked off the event saluting the hospital's pet therapy volunteers – both human and canine – saying a few words about the Pet Therapy Program.

"Today I'm not going to bore you with statistics like how last year our pet therapy volunteers saw close to 6,000 patients. I'm not going to talk about that," she said to smiles and laughter. "Or how we gave away 17,500 dog trading cards to patients last year alone. I know that because I have to pay attention to my budget."

Though most of the crowd was hanging on her every word, the truth is, a few were simply licking themselves. But that didn't stop Bennett from sharing her gratitude, especially for the 84 people and 93 dogs currently in the pet therapy program. She also didn't want to make too big a deal of the success the program has had in both the hospital and the community at large, but others weren't willing to drop it – droooooop it. Kathy Cole, wife of MUSC President David Cole, M.D., FACS and City of Charleston Mayor John Tecklenburg both shared their pride and appreciation for what the Pet Therapy Program means to MUSC and Charleston.

"To go into a patient's room and provide comfort and care and love to those who need it the most is an amazing healing opportunity. And you do that every day for our patients," Cole said to the volunteers.



Photo by Sarah Pack

Hundreds of people — and dozens of pups — were on hand for MUSC's annual Blessing of the Dogs, which took place on Friday, Oct. 4.

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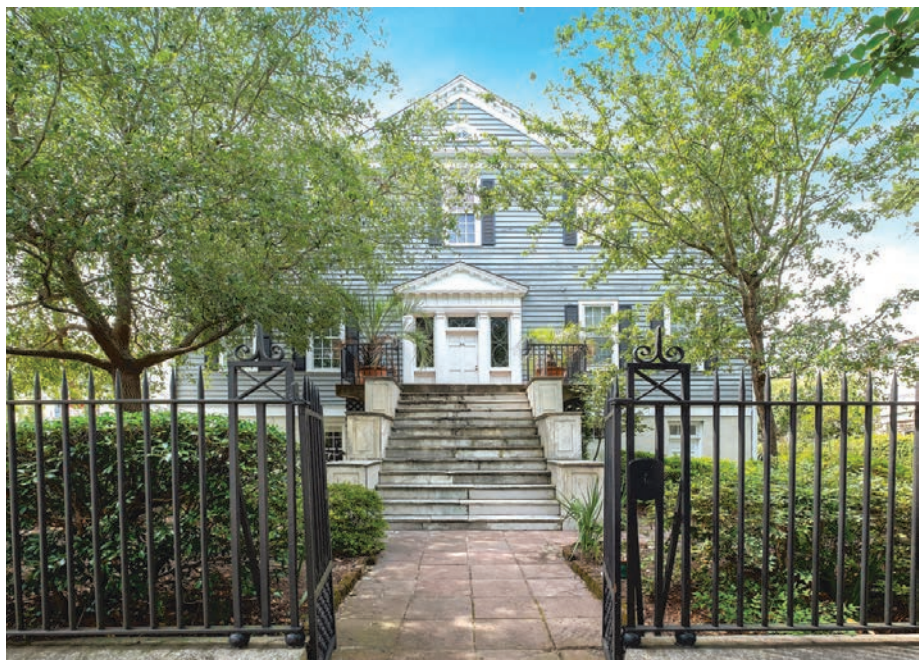
DAVID J. AND KATHRYN COLE BRIHTE LEADERSHIP ACADEMY CELEBRATES MIDPOINT



Photo by Anne Thompson

Members of the David J. and Kathryn Cole Building and Retaining Inclusive High-Potential Talent and Excellence (BRIHTE) Leadership Academy at MUSC gathered Sept. 24 at the Wickliffe House for the scholars’ dinner. The event gathered BRIHTE participants with program directors and enterprise leadership and helped mark the midpoint of the two-year leadership program. MUSC President David Cole shared insights about leadership at MUSC and the value of the BRIHTE program to employees interested in pursuing leadership. “I’ve always thought about leadership as something that is much more grounded. It’s much more accessible. Much more personal. Leadership is a choice. It’s a choice that we consciously make to step into. It’s something that helps to define who we are. Everybody has the ability to lead from where they are. So we all have an opportunity to make an impact.”

The BRIHTE scholars are, top row from left: Mary Lewis, Christopher Lanham, Alexis Bailey; third row: DaQurta Riley, Monterris Bradley, Ayaba Logan; second row: Dr. Kimberly Cannady, Quantella Rivers Bradley, Kathleen Stryker; first row: Kathy Cole, Joseph Powe, Lawanda Anderson, James F. Pinckney, Jr. and Dr. David Cole. Not pictured are Dr. Cephus E. Simmons and Shaquetta Ware.



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DOGS *Continued from Page Seven*

Tecklenburg echoed Cole's comments. "The wonderful people who are a part of this Pet Therapy Program ... I just want to celebrate today with you. Thank you for all you do for this community."

There were even testimonials to the power of pet therapy by staff, as well as former patients, including Emma Katz, who in her own words "spent more time in a hospital than any kid ever should." But, she added, she got so much out of her interaction with MUSC's pet therapy program that when she was discharged, she began volunteering for a service dog organization.

It was clear from the enthusiastic response of the audience that everyone wants to the program to stay — staaaaay. Good boy.

The Blessing of the Dogs is an annual event that honors the birthday of Saint Francis of Assisi, the patron saint of animals, who according to Bennett, "understood the magic and the power behind petting a dog." Organizers felt devoting at least one day a year to celebrate all the hard work the volunteers

and dogs put in was the least they could do. In addition to impassioned words from local leaders and pet therapy advocates, the event featured food (hot dogs, of course), dog treats, dog toys, even a kissing booth where people could get a smooch from a pooch.

The event culminated with the Rev. Herman "Frank" Harris and the Rev. George M. Rossi blessing all the pups in attendance — collies, poodles, huskies, even a hound wearing a unicorn horn headband.

No accidents were reported at press time, and officials say everybody was a good boy and girl.

Yes, they were! Yes, they were!

Research Town Hall

The Office of the Vice President for Research will host a Research Town Hall from 12 to 1 p.m., Wednesday, Oct. 23, Bioengineering Building Room 112. Dr. Kathleen Brady will give updates including the FY19 research funding and other details.



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WALK *Continued from Page Four*

definitely didn't need to be taking care of patients."

Supervisors were gracious about her backing out, she said, and in July, she returned and began working in the nursing float pool. Since then, Roger has taken some time off from work to process his grief. They both see a therapist and attend a survivors of suicide support group in West Ashley — a group that is unfortunately growing, Tracy said.

Tracy admits she dreads the upcoming holidays, even though she will have her two daughters and two grandchildren here. Roger recently marked his 50th birthday, a day that should have been a celebration but was instead a sad day.

She and her family are trying to use Jake's death to help others. They've applied for nonprofit status for their group, We Are Team Jake, which seeks to raise awareness about mental health and suicide. The group is holding a fundraiser Oct. 19 at the Charleston Pour House. Tracy and her daughter Amber Lynn will speak to health classes

The MUSC Health Institute of Psychiatry offers inpatient and outpatient treatment. For more information, call 843-792-9888.

If you're in crisis, call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 800-273-TALK (8225) or text TALK to the Crisis Text Line at 741741.

at Wando High School about mental health and suicide.

They often wear We Are Team Jake wristbands, and between those and the tattoo, Tracy has been astonished at how many people open up about how suicide has affected their lives.

She advises parents to be alert to personality changes or anxiety in their children. Parents want to fix things for their children, even their adult children, but if someone keeps talking about the same problems, the issue might be bigger than a parent can fix. Get them help, she said.

A change in behavior, sleeping a lot or increased use of alcohol or drugs can all

be signs of a mental health crisis, Creech said. She encouraged people who are worried about a friend or family member to trust their instincts and talk to the person.

"Express that you are concerned and offer to assist them with getting help," she said. "Suicide prevention starts with each and every one of us."

Tracy also urges people who are thinking about harming themselves to tell somebody. Admitting you need help will not ruin your life, she said.

"It takes a lot of courage to come out and say how you feel."

Women's Health Interest Group to meet Nov. 6

The MUSC Women's Health Interest Group will hold its next quarterly meeting from 12 to 1 p.m., Wednesday, Nov 6 in Gazes Auditorium, Room 125. Lunch is provided.

The group gathers to discuss potential and ongoing cross-campus research collaborations in the field of sex and gender differences. All are welcome.

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