

Keeping Care Local

An Interview with Amy Loeb, EdD, RN, Executive Director, Peconic Bay Medical Center

EDITORS' NOTE As executive director, Amy Loeb is responsible for all strategic initiatives and operations for Peconic Bay Medical Center and the Peconic Bay Medical Group. The 144-bed community hospital is a leading facility on Long Island's East End, embracing significant growth and expansion including the construction of the \$67.8 million Corey Critical Care Pavilion and the Kanas Regional Heart Center. Dr. Loeb started her career at Northwell Health in 2005 as a registered nurse



Amy Loeb

at Huntington Hospital and has since assumed progressively senior leadership roles. In 2015, she joined Peconic Bay as chief nursing officer and was a pivotal member of the senior leadership team that helped guide the hospital's transition to the health system. She most recently was deputy executive director, responsible for leading day-to-day operations, where she drove significant improvements in patient experience, clinical quality, patient safety, and external hospital ranking surveys. During the COVID-19 crisis in 2020, Dr. Loeb coordinated all aspects of clinical surge capacity planning and execution, business recovery and institutional safety helping ensure access to hospital care for the 250,000 community members. Dr. Loeb holds a bachelor's degree in nursing, an MBA in Healthcare Management from St. Joseph's College and a Doctor of Education from Columbia University's Teachers College.

Will you provide an overview of your role and areas of focus?

I have the privilege of leading a team of 1,500 caring individuals who are working together to meet the healthcare needs and are committed to improving the health of eastern Suffolk county's 250,000 residents over 400 square miles. We provide comprehensive care including primary, specialty, trauma, cardiac, cancer, obstetrics and neonatology, women's and men's health, orthopedics, rehabilitation, and home care. I am very focused on keeping care local, which is what our community expects of us.

Will you highlight the history and heritage of Peconic Bay Medical Center and what have been the keys to its growth and industry leadership?

Peconic Bay Medical Center has its roots deep in the local farming community. In fact,

money to build "Central Suffolk Hospital" was raised in the community after a farmer died from a heart attack. Community support through volunteerism and philanthropy has been a cornerstone of growth for Peconic Bay Medical Center. Since 2004, Peconic Bay Medical Center has raised over \$100 million dollars in philanthropic support. This support has transformed the physical plant in extraordinary ways.

While our physical plant with the latest in technology and beautiful spaces is critical, it is our people that make the magic happen. When people come to PBMC, they find that we treat everyone as if they are a loved one, friend, or neighbor. This is because, in general, we are working with and taking care of our neighbors and it is our culture. This culture is one that I've personally committed to preserving even as we grow, modernize, and welcome talented individuals from "up the Island" or west of the William Floyd Parkway.

The culture of greater Northwell and the culture of Peconic Bay Medical Center mesh beautifully. This happens because, as big as Northwell is, it is committed to clinical excellence and growing our people so when PBMC joined Northwell in 2016, our commitments were totally aligned. PBMC didn't always have the resources to grow services, to recruit enough amazing talent, and to develop its own. I feel so fortunate to have joined PBMC as the Chief Nursing Officer at the time when we joined Northwell. We have been able to do amazing things here with the strategic vision of Michael Dowling (Northwell CEO) propelling us and the people at PBMC ready and excited to do the work. The team welcomed the opportunity to broaden services provided to their loved ones, friends, and neighbors, and they are very proud to be a part of the transformation.

How critical is the construction of the \$67.8 million Corey Critical Care Pavilion and the Kanas Regional Heart Center to the future of Peconic Bay Medical Center?

The Corey Critical Care Pavilion and the Kanas Regional Heart Center leveled up the care in the area significantly. As we were designing and then building it, we couldn't know that we would open it during a global pandemic. Just three days after we received our first patient with COVID-19, we more than doubled our intensive care capacity, had additional fully

functional space to surge into, and had a shell space for testing and vaccinations. This was a fortunate gift to us during the challenging times in the spring of 2020.

We had planned on a significant growth in services. Having a state-of-the-art intensive care unit, staffed with an incredible critical care team and with the support of eICU, we can now care for patients that we couldn't before. For example, we now care for patients with intra-aortic balloon pumps (IABP), a device that supports a patient's heart with excellence in care, close to home.

The Kanas Regional Heart Center has provided for the most modern cardiac catheterization and electrophysiology labs on Long Island. People experiencing a heart attack can now be treated here in Riverhead. Previously, people were transferred or brought directly to a hospital far west, losing precious time in the process. There is a saying "time is muscle" and we are saving hearts by saving time.

How proud are you to see how Peconic Bay Medical Center's team at all levels of the institution adapted the way they work and showed such compassion and selflessness as it treated patients during the pandemic?

The past year and a half has been the most challenging and yet pride inspiring of my 18 year career as a nurse and a leader. I think that the challenge speaks for itself, but the pride is worth expanding upon. I witnessed the best of what it means to be human during this time.

Selflessness – we showed up, ready to do whatever it took to take care of people and minimize suffering. Our leaders were present. I was blown away by Michael Dowling's presence in the hospitals and "COVID Units."

Ingenuity – we did whatever we had to do to get it done, moving units, creating new pieces of equipment, creating clinical protocols, and essentially building a plane while flying it.

Community support – our community had parades, donated supplies, and often even fed us. This support helped us get through the toughest of days.

I am so proud of and will never forget the compassion. I watched in awe of the care team that took care of patients with COVID and who facilitated visits with loved ones over an iPad. Day after day, hour after hour, these individuals facilitated a conversation, often a final conversation. This to me was an ultimate act of compassion and selflessness. ●