

# Patch

## Stony Brook Eastern Long Island Hospital Celebrates Designation As Primary Stroke Center With Ribbon-Cutting

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Lisa Finn | June 12, 2026



*William Wertheim, executive vice president of Stony Brook Medicine, and Paul J. Connor, III, chief administrative officer, Stony Brook Eastern Long Island Hospital, joined by Stony Brook Eastern Long Island Hospital leadership, officials at ribbon-cutting. (Courtesy Nomadic Friend Productions)*

**GREENPORT, NY** — Stony Brook Eastern Long Island Hospital celebrated its designation as a Primary Stroke Center by The Joint Commission with an official ribbon-cutting ceremony and annual Krystal Clear Award presentation held on Wednesday, June 3.

The event recognized the collaborative efforts of hospital leadership, physicians, EMS partners, staff, elected officials, and community members who helped make the achievement possible for the North Fork community.

"Time is brain," Paul J. Connor, III, chief administrative officer at SBELIH, said as he welcomed guests to the ceremony.

He reflected on how, two years ago, a dedicated team at SBELIH joined forces with Stony Brook University Hospital and Stony Brook Southampton Hospital to make the vision of a Primary Stroke Center a reality.

"The impetus for becoming a Primary Stroke Center was to improve outcomes and save lives here on the North Fork," he said.

"Today represents far more than the opening of a program. It represents access, equity, quality, and lifesaving care close to home," said William Wertheim, executive vice president of Stony Brook Medicine. "In stroke care, the time between the beginning of symptoms and treatment is everything. Every minute matters — to life, to brain function, and to recovery. While the residents of the North Fork and Shelter Island are blessed with beautiful geography, that can also present challenges to timely healthcare, particularly during an emergency. This designation helps ensure that patients experiencing stroke symptoms can receive rapid evaluation, diagnosis, treatment, and stabilization right here in their community."

He added: "For a condition that affects nearly 800,000 Americans annually and remains the fifth-leading cause of death in the United States, this service is critical."

Edward J. Boyd, president of the North Fork Volunteer Rescue Squad Association and chair of the Suffolk Regional Emergency Medical Services Council, congratulated SBELIH on achieving the designation and emphasized the importance of rapid stroke treatment.

"Time is not something a stroke victim has to spare," Boyd said. "As we are constantly reminded, 'time is brain,' meaning the longer a stroke goes untreated, the greater the damage to the brain and the lower the chance of recovery."

He concluded by wishing the hospital another 120 years of providing quality healthcare to the residents of the North Fork and Shelter Island.

Guests also heard from North Fork resident and stroke survivor Juan Ibanez, who offered a firsthand perspective on the patient experience.

"From the moment I entered the hospital, I was welcomed with warm smiles and genuine care for my well-being," Ibanez said. "A nurse quickly came over, brought me back to a bed, and said, 'Do not be alarmed, but we're going to run a stroke code. This is precautionary based on your symptoms, and we want to make sure we take care of you.'"

Ibanez continued: "Within seconds, my shirt was off, and what felt like 30 people were suddenly in the emergency room, all calmly and professionally doing their jobs. Nurses and doctors were examining me, attaching heart monitor pads, asking questions, and moving quickly with purpose."

Ibanez also said that looking back, the experience could have felt overwhelming. "But everyone remained calm and professional, which helped keep me calm, too. As a retired Marine who served 20 years and completed four combat deployments, I've seen chaos and I've lived through chaos. But the

medical professionals at Stony Brook Eastern Long Island Hospital are some of the finest healthcare professionals I could have ever hoped for. Their professionalism, teamwork, compassion, and urgency made one of the scariest moments of my life feel manageable, and for that, I will always be grateful."

"Time is everything," Suffolk County Legislator Greg Doroski, who represents the 1st Legislative District, agreed.

Presenting Connor with a certificate of merit recognizing SBELIH's designation, he noted: "This designation is vital for our community."

Also present were Southold town board members Anne Smith, Jill Doherty, and Brian Mealy, who presented a certificate of recognition to Connor on behalf of Southold Town Supervisor Al Krupski.

Speaking on behalf of the town, Smith highlighted the power of partnerships.

"This designation already strengthens our community," she said.

Doherty thanked the ELIH Auxiliary volunteers and EMTs for their continued dedication and service to the hospital.

"This is the Golden Age of medicine, where we can change the course of disease," said Z. Micah Kaplan, associate director of the Eastern Long Island Hospital Foundation. Reflecting on the hospital's history, he remarked that its physicians have always found ways to "bring us something new" and "teach us something new."

The ceremony also included the presentation of the 2026 Krystal Clear Award. Susan Apicello, vice president of administration and director of laboratory services, presented the honor to Nancy Williams, director of physical therapy.

The award recognizes a member of the SBELIH team for exceptional clinical intuition and swift action in patient care.

"Nancy exemplifies the calm professionalism and attentiveness that are so critical in stroke care," said Apicello. "Through her clinical insight and quick recognition that something was wrong with a patient, she helped ensure that rapid action could be taken at a critical moment. Her actions reflect the importance of preparation, teamwork, and the culture of awareness that has been built throughout our hospital as part of our journey toward stroke center designation."

"Thank you for allowing me to do my job. It's a privilege," Williams said.