

Greenport Hospital Achieves Prestigious Designation For Stroke Care

Brendan Carpenter | June 11, 2026



Stony.Brook.Eastern.Long.Island.Hospital.celebrated.its.Primary.Stroke.Center.designation.on.June.9j.(Credit:Brendan.Carpenter)

Stony Brook Eastern Long Island Hospital celebrated its recent Primary Stroke Center designation last week, opening the door for what officials say could significantly cut treatment time for stroke patients across Shelter Island and the North Fork.

The hospital officially earned the designation from the Joint Commission in March, following a two-year effort to meet national standards for rapid stroke evaluation, diagnosis, treatment and stabilization.

“This designation helps ensure that patients experiencing stroke symptoms can receive rapid evaluation, diagnosis, treatment and stabilization for a stroke if it occurs right here in the community,” Dr. William Wertheim, executive vice president of Stony Brook Medicine,

said before the ribbon cutting ceremony. “Achieving primary stroke center designation requires tremendous dedication, persistence and collaboration.”

The designation carries particular weight on the Island and the North Fork, where hospital officials said the population is among the oldest in New York State. Roughly 75% of strokes occur in people age 65 and older, Chief Administrative Officer Paul Connor said during Wednesday’s celebration.

“Time is brain, that is the mantra for stroke centers,” he said. “Before our program got certified, if you had a stroke and you were living out here, it’s going to take you 35 to 45 minutes or even longer to get to Riverhead or Southampton. Now that has changed.”

Primary Stroke Centers are certified based on their ability to provide rapid diagnosis and treatment, including around-the-clock access to imaging, laboratory services and coordinated care protocols.

Edward Boyd, president of the North Fork Volunteer Rescue Squad Association, said the designation gives local emergency responders another option when transporting patients with stroke symptoms — a critical benefit for volunteer ambulance crews with limited personnel.

“The establishment of Stony Brook Eastern Long Island Hospital as a primary stroke center means that we now have an additional weapon in our arsenal to defend against the damage caused by a stroke,” he said.

Mr. Boyd said early detection remains the primary weapon against strokes, pointing to the “BE FAST” warning signs: balance loss, eye or vision changes, facial drooping, arm or leg weakness, slurred speech and time.

Those signs are also displayed on the back doors of the hospital’s new mobile stroke unit.

Juan Ibanez, Southold’s NJROTC instructor and a former Marine, shared how he suffered a stroke in January, and SBELIH saved his life.

“I’ve seen chaos and lived through chaos, but the medical professionals here at Stony Brook Eastern Long Island Hospital are some of the finest healthcare professionals I could have ever hoped for,” he said.

Suffolk County Legislator Greg Doroski and Southold Town Board members Anne Smith, Brian Mealy and Jill Doherty presented the hospital with certificates recognizing the designation.

Nancy Williams, the hospital’s director of physical therapy, was also awarded the 2026 Krystal Clear award, which recognizes individuals who demonstrate clinical awareness, critical thinking and decisive action during time-sensitive situations.

“I call this the actual golden age of medicine,” said Dr. Micah Kaplan, associate director of the hospital’s foundation. “Think about this for just one second — we can change the course of the disease. We’ve never been able to do that.”