

The Suffolk Times.

Stony Brook Eastern Long Island Hospital Earns National Stroke Care Award

July 22, 2026 | Brendan Carpenter



Credit: Courtesy Stony Brook Eastern Long Island Hospital

Stony Brook Eastern Long Island Hospital has earned national recognition for its stroke care — four months after receiving its long-sought Primary Stroke Center designation.

The Greenport hospital received the American Heart Association's Get With The Guidelines-Stroke Rural Recognition Bronze Award.

The rural award recognizes hospitals for meeting standards for the early treatment of stroke patients, including the timely use of clot-busting medication, patient transfers, brain imaging, swallowing screenings and consultations with stroke specialists.

"We are proud that our team at SBELIH is being recognized for the important work we do every day to improve the lives of people on the North Fork and Shelter Island who are affected by stroke, giving them the best possible chance of recovery and survival," said SBELIH Chief Administrative Officer Paul Connor. "This 2026 award by the American Heart Association/American Stroke Association affirms that SBELIH meets rigorous national standards for the rapid diagnosis and treatment of stroke by applying the latest evidence-based guidelines to improve patient outcomes in our East End communities."



Stony Brook Eastern Long Island Hospital celebrated its Primary Stroke Center designation on June 3. (Credit: Brendan Carpenter)

People living in rural communities face significant health challenges, including an average life expectancy three years shorter than their urban counterparts, a 40% higher likelihood of developing heart disease and a 30% greater risk of stroke-related death, according to the American Heart Association.

The Bronze designation recognizes at least one calendar quarter of meeting the association's rural stroke-care standards. Rural hospitals are evaluated separately because they often face challenges such as longer transfer times and more limited access to specialists.

"Patients and health care professionals on the North Fork and Shelter Island face unique health care challenges and opportunities," said Karen Joynt Maddox, chair of the American Heart Association Quality Oversight Committee. "Stony Brook Eastern Long Island Hospital has advanced the important work of improving care for all Americans, regardless of where they live."

Primary Stroke Centers like SBELIH are certified based on their ability to provide rapid diagnosis and treatment, including around-the-clock access to imaging, lab services and coordinated care protocols. That capacity is particularly important on the North Fork, where many residents are 65 and older and face a higher risk of stroke.

"As a hospital serving a rural community, we face challenges such as extended interfacility transportation times," Mr. Connor said. "We have made it a priority to ensure those challenges never compromise the high standard of care our stroke patients receive. Rural communities deserve exceptional stroke care, and I am proud of our team's unwavering commitment to making this standard a reality."

Peconic Bay Medical Center in Riverhead was also recognized through the American Heart Association's Get With The Guidelines-Stroke program, earning its higher-level Gold Plus award. That designation

recognizes at least two consecutive years of meeting the program's core stroke-care standards, along with additional quality measures.

PBMC also made the Target: Stroke Honor Roll Elite Plus for administering clot-busting medication within especially tight time frames and the Target: Type 2 Diabetes Honor Roll for its treatment of stroke patients with Type 2 diabetes.

The recognition comes several months after PBMC opened the \$7.4 million Bill and Ruth Ann Harnisch Neurosciences Center, a 1,545-square-foot facility that expanded advanced stroke treatment in eastern Suffolk County.

The center made PBMC the region's first thrombectomy-capable hospital, allowing doctors to remove blood clots from the brain without transferring patients farther west, as The Suffolk Times previously reported.