

# Goal to prevent skin cancer

## SBU Hospital will screen all entering patients

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Mollie Biggane was a healthy, active 20-year-old who played soccer and tennis while growing up in Garden City. She had no idea the unusual mole behind her leg would turn out to be a deadly form of skin cancer known as melanoma.

By the time she was diagnosed, the cancer had progressed. Six months of treatments and surgeries were not able to stop it.

Since her death in 2000, Biggane's family has focused on bringing awareness to skin cancer in hope of sparing another family from the grief it went through.

Their latest efforts with the nonprofit Mollie's Fund is a new initiative that will help screen for skin cancer all patients who enter Stony Brook University Hospital.

Incidences of skin cancer have reached "epidemic proportions," said Victoria Siegel, a registered nurse who sits on the medical advisory board of Mollie's Fund.

Siegel, a professor of nursing at Molloy University in Rockville Centre, has helped develop the screening protocols that will be employed at Stony Brook and have been implemented at other Long Island hospitals.

"Nurses are so involved in teaching people about healthy behaviors, such as proper nutrition and safety for children," Siegel said. "This is a chance to teach them about sun-safe behaviors, checking their skin and going to a doctor if they think something's wrong with their skin."

Years of exposure to ultraviolet rays from the sun, tanning



**Mollie Biggane, who grew up in Garden City, died in 2000.**

beds or sunlamps can lead to skin cancer, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Estimates quoted by the American Academy of Dermatology show about 9,500 people in the United States are diagnosed with skin cancer every day.

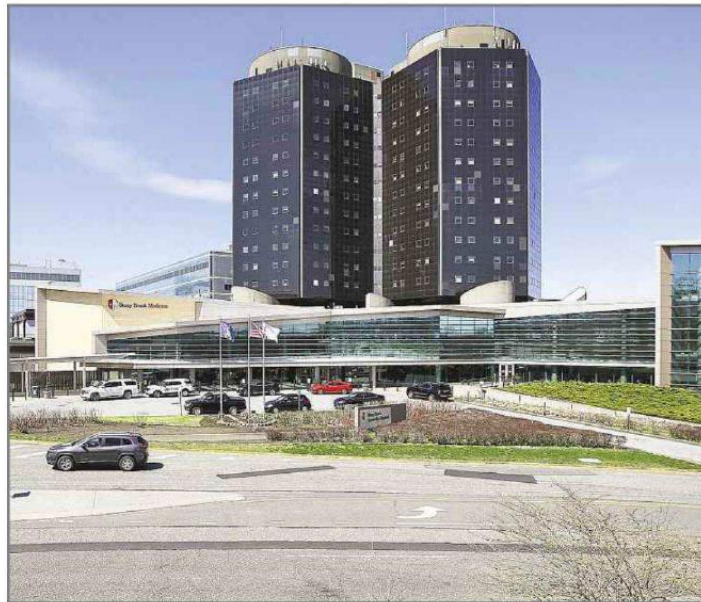
"Skin cancer accounts for more cancer than all the cancers combined," said Biggane's mother, Maggie Biggane. "Anyone who has skin can get it and, to a large extent, it's preventable."

### Melanoma can spread

Melanoma, the most serious form of skin cancer, can spread to the lymph nodes and internal organs. It is highly treatable when detected early, according to the American Academy of Dermatology.

"Young people never think it's going to happen to them," said Maggie Biggane, who created the nonprofit with Mollie's father, Jack, and their children, Cara, Julie and Jack.

Maggie Biggane said awareness of skin cancer has vastly improved since Mollie first noticed the unusual mole on the



**The Mollie Fund is assisting Stony Brook University Hospital.**

back of her leg.

"It had all the hallmarks [of skin cancer]," Biggane said. "It was bleeding. Now we know that's a warning sign."

With her reddish-blond hair and fair skin, Mollie wasn't a sun-worshipper, her mom said. But she was captain of her tennis team and played travel soccer.

"Did we use sunscreen? Yes. Were we vigilant about it? Probably not," Biggane said. "We had an umbrella, but that doesn't compare to the SPF clothing parents are putting on their kids today."

Mollie's Fund works on educational programs, public service announcements and other efforts to remind people to be mindful of sun exposure and to always wear sunscreen.

The hospital initiative is a "natural extension" of the screenings that nurses do for all new patients, said Carolyn Santora, chief nursing officer at Stony Brook University Hospital.

"Currently, when patients are admitted to the hospital, nurses do a full skin assessment," Santora said.

"We are looking for pressure ulcers, bruises, rashes and other skin conditions," she said, adding, "a natural extension of that skin assessment is to observe for moles and talk to the patients about their history, how much sun exposure they have had over time, and whether or not they use sunscreen. Risk of skin cancer increases with the amount of unprotected sun exposure over time."

### Discussions on prevention

Santora said nurses also will use the opportunity to explain to patients the importance of protecting themselves from the sun's rays.

If the nurses see an unusual mole or skin lesion, or if the patient relates a concern, they can be referred to a dermatologist for further examination and possible treatment.

Siegel said people should be mindful of the sun but not feel like they can't go outside.

"Be smart about it," she said. "Cover your skin with clothing. Wear a wide 4-inch brim hat, wear sunscreen and never go tanning."

## Cops: Teen wounded in shooting, 2nd person grazed

A 17-year-old boy was shot and wounded early Sunday in North Bay Shore and a second victim was grazed by a bullet, Suffolk County police said in a news release.

The teenager, who was not named, suffered nonlife-threatening injuries after he was shot twice at 12:10 a.m. while standing at the corner of Pine Acres Boulevard and Benton Place,

police said. He was taken to a hospital for treatment.

An acquaintance, who police said was "slightly older" than the injured teen, refused medical attention after he

was grazed.

Police asked anyone with information on the shooting to call detectives at 631-854-8352 or Crime Stoppers at 800-220-TIPS. — GRANT PAPAN

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### HOLIDAY CLOSINGS

Monday is Memorial Day. Government offices, schools, courts, the financial markets and post offices are closed. The Long Island Rail Road will operate on a Sunday schedule.

### THIS DATE IN HISTORY

**1790** Rhode Island became the 13th original colony to ratify the United States Constitution.

**1914** The Canadian ocean liner RMS Empress of Ireland sank in the St. Lawrence River in eastern Quebec after colliding with the Norwegian cargo ship SS Storstad; of the 1,477 people on board the Empress of Ireland, 1,012 died. (The Storstad sustained only minor damage.)

**1953** Mount Everest was conquered as Edmund Hillary of New Zealand and Tensing Norgay of Nepal became the first climbers to reach the summit.

**1988** President Ronald Reagan and Soviet leader Mikhail S. Gorbachev opened their historic summit in Moscow.

**2009** A judge in Los Angeles sentenced music producer Phil Spector to 19 years to life in prison for the murder of actor Lana Clarkson. (Spector remained in prison until his death in January 2021.)