

## Palenville Man Regains Independence After Swimming Injury

When 69-year-old Ed Synan of Palenville, NY, went on vacation to the New Jersey Shore in August 2016, a fun-filled day at the beach turned into a family nightmare.

While bodysurfing with his kids and grandchildren, Ed suffered a life-threatening spinal cord injury when the waves pushed his head into the sand.

He remembers nothing of his rescue on the beach or the lifeguards who performed CPR, but he does remember waking up about 45 minutes later in the ambulance on his way to the nearest hospital.



**Pictured far right, Ed Synan is able to march in his community parade thanks to his remarkable rehabilitation.**

Once stabilized, Ed was transferred to Jersey Shore University Medical Center where he spent about a week before being discharged to a rehabilitation facility in northern New Jersey.

“When I arrived at the rehab facility, I was paralyzed. I was unable to walk or feed myself. I depended on others to help me with everything,” noted Ed, a retired high school English teacher. In time, he was able to move his legs and arms, and with the help of physical and occupational therapists, he started to regain his independence.

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## Palenville Firefighters Honor Past-president with Donation to Sunnyview

An active member of the Palenville Fire Department for many years, Ed Synan served as its president for more than a decade. That’s why it’s not surprising that the organization decided to recognize Ed with a generous donation in his honor to Sunnyview.

Every winter, the Palenville Fire Department Ski Team participates in the East Coast Firefighters Ski Race at Hunter Mountain. A two-day event, the competition attracts both professional and volunteer firefighters from throughout New York State and surrounding states of NJ, CT and MA.

Earlier this year, the Palenville Fire Department team won the competition and the cash prize of \$1,364 which they donated to Sunnyview in honor of Ed and in recognition of the excellent care he received there.

“Our team has won the competition several times in the past and we’ve always donated the prize money to causes that mean a lot to us,” noted current fire department president Blake Garrison. “When this year’s competition rolled around, we knew that if we won, we’d donate the winnings to Sunnyview.”



**The Palenville Fire Department Ski Team.**

We’re a tight-knit community and Ed’s recovery was special to us. We are very appreciative of the excellent care he received at Sunnyview and are thankful and glad to have him back with us.”

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*Rehabilitation Insight is a publication of Sunnyview Rehabilitation Hospital. The goal is to bring timely issues of acute medical rehabilitation, including updates and advances of the hospital and its foundation, to the forefront.*



**Sunnyview Rehabilitation Hospital**

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### **Address Change? Duplicate Mailings?**

If your address has changed or if you receive more than one copy of our newsletter, please alert the Foundation office at (518) 382-4586 or [sunnyviewfoundation@sphp.com](mailto:sunnyviewfoundation@sphp.com) so that we can streamline our database.

Thank you!

## Welcome

Next year, Sunnyview Rehabilitation Hospital celebrates a major milestone: 90 years of helping patients recover from a disabling injury or illness.

Sunnyview's history is an amazing story of compassion and generosity ... and the vision of members of the local Kiwanis Club and Schenectady Fire Department. Founded in 1928 as a hospital for children fighting the crippling disease of polio, Sunnyview has evolved throughout the decades as a leader in care for orthopedics, rheumatology, scoliosis, and now a nationally recognized, state-of-the-art rehabilitation hospital. Our Neuro-Rehab Institute is one of only a handful of rehabilitation facilities across the country recognized as a center of excellence for the treatment of stroke, spinal cord injury and traumatic brain injury.

In this issue of Rehabilitation Insight, you will read about some of the things that set Sunnyview apart, our –

- Focus on research and innovation and its tremendous impact on patient care
- Cutting-edge technology, including the recent acquisition of a new Functional Electrical Stimulation bike
- Concern for patients' families and the help they are receiving at Jack's Place, a welcoming new hospitality house made possible by community members

You will also meet retired teacher and former Palenville Fire Department President, Ed Synan, who was injured in a swimming accident on the Jersey Shore. Ed completed his outpatient therapy at Sunnyview and says the transition from acute inpatient care in New Jersey to outpatient care at Sunnyview was "seamless" thanks to our advanced technologies and treatments, as well as the expertise of our experienced and highly skilled staff.

We're proud of our history and heritage ... and proud of what we've become. As always, thank you for your support of Sunnyview. Stay tuned for our exciting anniversary year, including a special 90th Anniversary Celebration next fall!



**Chip Eisenman**  
Chief Executive Officer

# Research and Innovation at Sunnyview

Over the last 10 or 15 years, evidence-based medicine has become increasingly important in a dramatically changing health care environment. Evidence-based medicine has been described by professionals as “the integration of clinical expertise, patient values and the best available evidence in making decisions about the care of individual patients.”

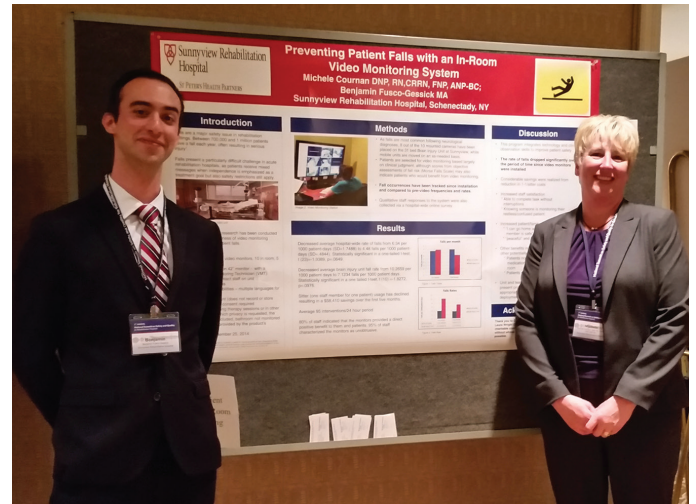
Robert Gillen, PhD, manager of Sunnyview Rehabilitation Hospital’s neuropsychology department, heads up the hospital’s research initiative. “The rise of evidence-based medicine is the result of the increasing expectation in today’s health care field that treatment procedures and methods of care will be empirically validated. That expectation can be attributed to external demands from insurance companies, regulatory agencies, and most importantly, patients and their families,” he explained. “It is through research that we can determine which approaches to patient care work best.”

Dr. Gillen credits Sunnyview’s administration with being especially supportive of and committed to research at the hospital. “In addition to providing acute clinical care to hundreds of patients each year, Sunnyview staff members are also involved in nearly a dozen research projects that are helping to improve patient care at Sunnyview and at other facilities across the region, state and country.”

“Sunnyview’s excellent patient outcomes, large volumes of specific diagnoses (such as stroke, traumatic brain injury, spinal cord injury), cutting-edge technology and proximity to research institutions, make it an ideal setting for a robust research program,” explained Dr. Gillen.

Several years ago, Ben Fusco-Gessick, MA, was brought on board as research associate

**Michele Cournan and Benjamin Fusco-Gessick presenting Preventing Patient Falls with an In-Room Video Monitoring System at 2016 AMRPA Conference. Sharing Sunnyviews work on decreasing falls using a video monitoring system.**



to help manage and keep track of the many on-going research projects underway at the hospital. He noted that projects cover a wide variety of topics and include staff from virtually all acute rehabilitation disciplines: physical medicine, nursing, physical therapy, occupational therapy, speech therapy, and neuropsychology.

Dr. Gillen and Mr. Fusco-Gessick emphasized that research has become part of the culture at Sunnyview. In fact, the hospital’s new clinical ladder program, designed to reward individual therapists who have displayed extraordinary efforts beyond their daily routine, requires participation in clinical research studies as one of the prerequisites for consideration.

Research projects currently being conducted at Sunnyview include:

- Methods of assessing unilateral spatial neglect (USN) in stroke patients, a multi-site study in collaboration with Kessler Institute for Rehabilitation
- Falls risk prediction
- Relationship of health literacy and cognitive status to medication management in cardiac and pulmonary patients

- Can the elderly benefit from acute rehabilitation
- Use of communication boards with ventilator-dependent patients
- Use of the bionic exoskeleton for gait training
- Rehabilitation outcomes for severe pediatric traumatic brain injury
- Effectiveness of body weight-supported treadmill training in traumatic brain injury patients

“Research and clinical trials are the best way for us to establish cause-effect relationships between treatment interventions and outcomes,” said Dr. Gillen. “We are very fortunate at Sunnyview to have patients and families who are so receptive to participating in our research initiatives.”

Dr. Gillen continued, “While it can be difficult to find the time to provide clinical care and still be involved in a research study, the staff is committed to our patients and to utilizing the best evidence based treatment options they can find. It’s what makes Sunnyview so special and such an interesting place to work!”



# Jack's Place Opens

New hospitality house offers families a home-away-from-home

More than a decade after an unthinkable tragedy, the Falvo family of Schenectady has embodied the well-known adage “something good will come out of all things.”

On July 17, 2005, 21-year-old Jack Falvo, III, died as a result of a watercraft accident on the Mohawk River. Soon after the tragic loss, the family decided to hold a fundraiser – an annual golf event with proceeds going to a local charity. The yearly tournament would be a great way to keep young Jack's memory alive and help others in their community.

That's when Ronald McClosky, of the Penitent Brothers of Our Lady of Sorrows, stepped in. A family cousin, Ron is also chaplain at the Schenectady Police Department and had served as a chaplain at Sunnyview Rehabilitation Hospital. In that role, he learned of a real need in Schenectady for a hospitality house, a home-away-from-home for families whose loved ones are patients at Sunnyview and Ellis Hospital.

The family soon put the wheels in motion, including establishing The Jack Falvo, III, Foundation of Schenectady, Inc. While their search for an appropriate location hit several snags, eventually the perfect property became available and things started to fall into place.



**Jacky Norman, President of the Jack Falvo III Foundation and Veronica May, house manager.**

After years of fundraising, planning, and hard work, Jack's Place opened in early March, 2017. Located at 17 Rosa Road,

the beautifully renovated 1920s-era home is directly across the street from both Sunnyview and Ellis making it ideal for families visiting hospitalized loved ones.

Eight guest rooms, including two handicapped-accessible ones on the first floor, all have private baths. Guests can use the spacious kitchen to prepare meals. Large televisions and comfortable furnishings in both a first-floor

living room and downstairs family room provide a cozy place to relax. Two washing machines and two dryers are also located in the basement. Sunnyview and Ellis share in the care and upkeep of the house and grounds, and Sunnyview staff regularly volunteer at Jack's Place.

Veronica May, house manager, spends about 20-25 hours each week at Jack's Place and said that in the first five months approximately 95 individuals had taken advantage of the free lodgings, about 80 percent of whom had family members at Sunnyview. Guests, who need to live at least 50 miles away, have come from throughout New York state, 11 other states, Puerto Rico and even Brazil.

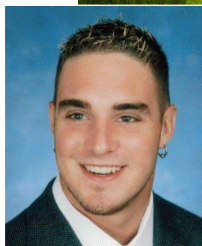
While the average stay is 15 nights, one grateful woman stayed for 66 nights.

“When you meet people who are so stressed and going through such a difficult time, you ask yourself, ‘what can I do ... how can I help?’ The best thing about working here at Jack's Place is knowing that I am helping, that I am making a difference. To be part of that is just amazing,” stated Veronica.

Community members have joined in the effort, too. Every Thursday evening, volunteers prepare a home-cooked dinner with plenty of leftovers in the fridge for the next day. Friday mornings are baking days.



**Jacky Norman, President of the Jack Falvo III Foundation.**



**Jack Falvo, III.**

“The delicious aromas of dinner cooking and goodies baking really help our residents feel at home,” added Veronica.

Jacky Norman, president of The Jack Falvo III Foundation and aunt of young Jack Falvo said the family has spent years raising money for the project which cost about \$500,000. In addition to the annual golf tournament in August, the foundation hosts a buffet breakfast each year on Super Bowl Sunday and a pasta dinner in the spring.

“There are so many organizations, businesses and individuals to thank,” said Jacky. She noted that the foundation received generous grants from IUE-CWA Local 301, Ronald McDonald House Charities of the Capital Region, UPS, and the William Gundry Broughton Foundation, as well as donated labor and materials from Lowe's, area developers and local retailers.

“The student carpenters and electricians from BOCES were especially invaluable during construction of the project,” she added.

“It's been an 11-year journey, but it's been worth every minute when you talk to our families. They are so appreciative. We're not only alleviating a financial burden for them, we're providing a place of comfort and compassion during a very difficult time in their lives. My nephew would be very proud.”

# Farewell, Dr. Holmblad

In February, Sunnyview Rehabilitation Hospital bid adieu to a dear friend and colleague, James E. Holmblad, MD. The longtime Schenectady orthopedic surgeon passed away quietly at his home in the Stockade at age 95.

Born in Aurora, Illinois, Dr. Holmblad was an Eagle Scout and remained active in scouting for many years. He attended Lake Forest College in Illinois before transferring to the University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine where he met his future wife, Evelyn. They married in 1946.

After an internship at Cook County Hospital in Chicago, Dr. Holmblad served two years as a flight surgeon in the U.S. Army Air Corps stationed in Goose Bay, Labrador.

Upon his discharge, he completed specialty training in orthopedics at Cook County Hospital and subsequently accepted a one-year fellowship in pediatric orthopedics with Dr. William Gazeley at Sunnyview Rehabilitation Hospital in Schenectady — a move that was the defining moment of his life.

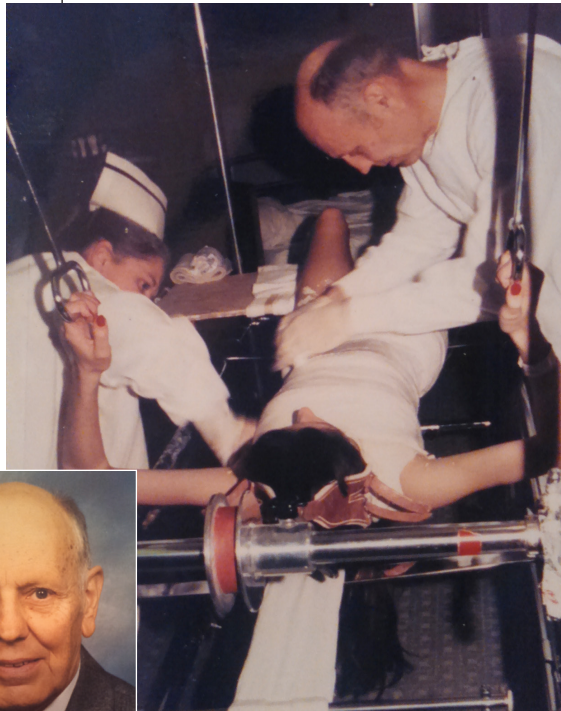
According to his daughter, Jone Jensen, MSN, RN, Dr. Holmblad found his passion in the care and treatment of children and teenagers with scoliosis.

Scoliosis, a sideways curvature of the spine, occurs most often during the growth spurt just before puberty and can result in spine deformities that continue to get more severe as the child grows. An especially severe spinal curve can affect the lungs and other vital internal organs.

Dr. Holmblad became the area's "go to" doctor for kids with scoliosis, even volunteering at clinics in Saranac and

Malone. He served as an early member of the Scoliosis Research Society, as well as numerous other professional organizations.

"My dad loved working with kids and often joked when he met a new patient that he could 'straighten them up,'" said Jone. Treatment usually involved surgery



and/or a brace and oftentimes a long stay at Sunnyview.

"Sunnyview was his baby ... he was very close to all the staff and nurses because he spent so much time there with his patients," noted Jone. "It was like a family."

"Many nurses at Sunnyview were very devoted to him because they saw how devoted he was to his patients, how he made such a difference," she said. "I think some may have been a little intimidated by him. He set the bar high for himself, his nurses and for us, his kids. He demanded the same level of effort from others that he always gave and believed his patients deserved the best."

Jone added, "There's no doubt he impacted many people's lives over the course of his

career." She told of a former patient, now a grown man, who came to a memorial service for her mom who passed away only several months after her dad. As an 18-year-old with scoliosis, the former patient credited Dr. Holmblad with providing him with a normal life.

Lynne Nicolson, MD, chief of physical medicine and rehabilitation at Sunnyview remembers Dr. Jim as truly 'one of a kind.' "I met him in 1986 when I began working at the hospital. He was welcoming and offered his support — of course accompanied by some requisite 'grilling' of the new doc," she laughed.

Dr. Nicolson believed his seemingly gruff exterior was simply camouflage for the incredibly large heart which lay beneath. "He was a wonderful mentor, a talented and deeply caring surgeon. He consistently put his patients first and had a deep love for Sunnyview and its mission. I feel truly fortunate to have come to know him not just as a colleague but more importantly as a friend."

After many years as a practicing partner at Schenectady Regional Orthopedics, Dr. Holmblad retired in his mid-80s. In his retirement he continued helping others by volunteering at the Volunteer Physicians Project in Schenectady, seeing people with back and joint problems who were otherwise unable to afford care.

Dr. Holmblad will be greatly missed, but his legacy lives on through his family, all of whom followed in his footsteps and devoted their lives to health care professions.

And, as Dr. Nicolson noted, "Dr. Jim's legacy continues and is reflected in the expertise, compassion and integrity of the doctors, nurses, therapists, and staff who care for our patients and families at Sunnyview."



# How can you make a direct impact on the work at Sunnyview?

Every year, Sunnyview Rehabilitation Hospital identifies critical needs that will help fulfill our commitment to bettering the lives of our patients and their families. These investments in care are important but can strain our not-for-profit budget. The Sunnyview Foundation is committed to fulfilling these needs through the generosity of grateful patients, their families, and generous donors like you.

*Thank you!!*

## **Bring Patients Some Fresh Air**      **\$250 - \$1,500** **(\$15,000 in total)**

Patients, families, staff, and volunteers have always found the courtyard at our café a refreshing respite from the busy hospital. We are upgrading the outdoor furniture for the first time to increase comfort and accommodate multi-sized patient mobility devices. Come visit our beautiful outdoor oasis!

## **Expand Sunnyview's Reach**      **\$500 - \$10,000** **(\$135,000 in total)**

This fall, Sunnyview will open a fifth outpatient office on Western Avenue in Albany expanding our scope of services beyond our offices in Schenectady, Latham, Guilderland, and Glenville. Your gift can help us outfit this office with needed therapy equipment and furniture.

## **Train a Therapist or Nurse**      **\$700 - \$1,500** **(\$30,000 in total)**

Continuing advances in care and new technologies adopted at Sunnyview require continuous training and upgrading of skills. Put your resources toward advancing the skills of one of our talented clinicians. Your investment will impact patients for a lifetime.

## **Make Each Night's Sleep Safer**      **\$1,000 - \$7,000** **(\$80,000 in total)**

Sunnyview is investing in lower beds to allow restraint-free sleep on our brain injury unit and other nursing units in the hospital. These beds lower to seven inches from the floor at night to prevent unnecessary falls replacing older high beds that require safety restraints. It is a safer and sounder night's sleep!

## **Recognize Great Caregivers**      **\$6,000 - \$10,000** **(\$80,000 in total)**


Patients and families regularly comment on the quality of our therapists and their sincere care. Sunnyview is recognizing our most advanced and talented therapists through our Clinical Ladder program. You can name an Advanced Senior Clinician or a Clinical Scholar with your gift.

## **Sponsor a Patient in Need**      **Any Dollar Amount** **(up to \$50,000 annually)**

Many Sunnyview patients don't have the income or the insurance to cover some of their therapies. Each year, Sunnyview makes up the difference to continue their care through Outpatient services in Cardio-pulmonary services, Post-Stroke Group, Visual Arts Program and Recreation Therapy. The Patient Needs Fund works to fulfill part of Sunnyview's mission to help us improve the lives of people with disabilities and the lives of their families.

## **Contribute Where Your Gift is Needed Most**      **Any Dollar Amount**

Each year, there are unforeseen needs that require immediate investment – technology upgrades, mandated safety equipment, or repairs to critical therapy technology. You can contribute whatever meets your budget, to help support our great patient care.



**Support Sunnyview Rehabilitation Hospital Foundation with the IRA Charitable Rollover**

Did you know you can support unsurpassed acute rehabilitative care in the Capital Region with your IRA? If you are 70 ½ years or older, you can avoid taxes on transfers up to \$100,000 from your IRA and support Sunnyview Rehabilitation Hospital Foundation!

For more information, please contact  
Kathie Ziobrowski, Director of Legacy Giving at (518) 525-1529 or [Kathleen.Ziobrowski@sphp.com](mailto:Kathleen.Ziobrowski@sphp.com).

# Palenville Man Regains Independence After Swimming Injury

*(Continued from page 1)*

During his month of inpatient rehabilitation, he worked on walking, going up and down stairs, feeding and dressing himself, and other activities of daily living. But, it was apparent that although he was ready to go home, he would need specialized outpatient therapy.

“I was aware of Sunnyview Rehabilitation Hospital in Schenectady ... we had friends and acquaintances at home who had rehabbed there. We suggested Sunnyview and my therapists agreed it was the best place for me to go,” he added.

In mid-October, Ed began outpatient physical therapy at Sunnyview. “It was a seamless transition from inpatient rehab

to outpatient therapy at Sunnyview,” said Ed. “The therapists at Sunnyview picked right up where the ones in New Jersey had left off. And, Sunnyview had all the same equipment and treatments, so there really was no adjustment at all.”

Mary Lamp, PT, remembers that “Ed was someone who had been very active and in good shape prior to his injury which certainly helped him. He was also very motivated and would do anything you asked him, including exercising on his own. She emphasized that Ed’s motivation, good information from the referring facility and a supportive family all contributed to his success.

Today, Ed is back to his old self: driving, walking several miles each day, playing golf, doing yard work, volunteering with his good friends at the Palenville Fire Department, and enjoying his seven grandchildren.

Ed summed it up this way. “The only negative thing that happened was the accident itself. Right from the point when I came out of the ocean, everything was so positive. Everyone who helped me along the way — from the lifeguards on the beach, to the hospitals and rehab facility in NJ, to the expert rehabilitation staff at Sunnyview — they gave me the best care I could possibly receive.”

## Sunnyview Acquires New FES Cycling System

During the summer, Sunnyview Rehabilitation Hospital acquired a brand new, state-of-the-art Functional Electrical Stimulation (FES) leg and arm cycling system to help treat patients with spinal cord injury (SCI), stroke, traumatic brain injury (TBI), multiple sclerosis (MS), and other neurological diagnoses.

This unique therapy tool uses FES to help patients pedal a stationary bike to help muscles in the arms, legs, and the trunk (core) to work. Acute therapy is required to reverse muscle atrophy, or wasting.

The new RT300 cycle, manufactured by Restorative Therapies, can stimulate one or both sides of the body and up to 16 leg, arm and trunk muscles at one time.

“The new FES cycle replaces the hospital’s previous stimulator bike that could only target six specific leg muscles and was used only with patients with spinal cord injury,” noted Karen Lenge, DPT, who serves as lead

therapist for the technology. “The exciting new bike has the ability to stimulate leg, arm, and trunk muscles on both sides of the body which means we can now treat individuals who are weak or paralyzed on one side after a stroke or traumatic brain injury.”

She added that this expanded functionality greatly increases the number of patients who can benefit from the technology. It is estimated that nearly 200 patients will use the cycling system annually.

FES is a well-established rehabilitation technique that uses pulses of electrical current to stimulate peripheral nerves and thus generate muscle contractions and patterned muscle activity. FES is applied using adhesive pads placed over the muscle to be activated.



With the cycling system, FES creates patterned movement in the arms, legs and trunk. In patients with weak or paralyzed muscles, FES enables muscles to work and perform the pedaling motion. In addition, even if the individual is not able to consciously participate, FES can facilitate muscle contractions and the pedaling activity.

The FES cycling system helps patients experience improvements in walking, balance, bone density, musculoskeletal strength and endurance, cardiovascular endurance, and muscle tone.

Purchase of the \$40,000 system was made possible through gifts from the Charles R. Wood Foundation and the Eddy Endowment Fund.

## Day at the Races

Sunnyview's Day at the Races was held on July 27, 2017. Nearly 200 individuals attended this year's event in an effort to raise money to support Sunnyview's mission to improve the lives of people with disabilities and the lives of their families. This year's event was the most successful yet with more than 30 sponsors and more than \$75,000 raised. The room was highlighted by beautiful centerpieces featuring Sunnyview



patient stories detailing their remarkable recoveries. Race five was named in Sunnyview's honor and a few lucky raffle winners had the opportunity to go into the winners circle! A huge thank you to our planning committee, sponsors and attendees for truly making this the best Day at the Races event yet. Your efforts are what help further our ability to serve the rehabilitation needs of our community.



**Race Five raffle winners pose in the winner's circle along with jockey, Irad Ortiz, Jr.**

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