

## Old friends honored for separate awards at St. Clare's gala

BY MATT MANOCHIO • STAFF WRITER • March 22, 2010

Sandy Waran and Tom Ferguson met about 30 years ago and remain close to this day. One man saving another's son's life does that to people.

Both were honored Friday in West Orange during St. Clare's Health System's Annual Gala at the Pleasantdale Chateau. Ferguson received the Leadership Award, while Dr. Waran got the Physicians Award.

Ferguson, a former New Vernon resident, had taken his son, Tom Ferguson Jr., to 15 different doctors to try to correct a seizure disorder. He found Waran, a pediatric neurologist, who recommended investigative brain surgery on Ferguson's then 9-year-old boy, and took him to Montreal's McGill University, a leading epilepsy center at the time. Doctors removed a small lesion from the child's brain, improving his quality of life. But the relationship didn't end there.

Only six months later, Ferguson's son was hit by a car while riding a bicycle. Ferguson took his son, whose skull was fractured, to Waran, who was again able to help Tom Jr. heal with no lasting complications.

"He had a helmet on, but he was in a coma for nine days or so at Morristown Memorial Hospital," Ferguson said of his son, now 40, during a Thursday phone interview from his Spring Lake, Fla., home. "He should've died," Ferguson said. "He broke about 40 bones in his upper body. It was a hell of a mess."

Ferguson became so impressed with Waran, he went out of his way to support the doctor's entrance when he began working at St. Clare's. He donated \$500,000 to the hospital system's pediatrics program.

Later, after Ferguson's first wife died, he helped raise an additional \$3.5 million for the Denville hospital to open the Roberta C. Ferguson Pediatric Center in April 2008 in memory of his late wife.

Waran, of Morristown, in addition to his work in the pediatrics/neurology unit, travels to Sri Lanka to raise money for post-tsunami relief efforts to build schools there.

The Sri Lankan native said he's traveled to India to work on similar humanitarian causes and said he's honored Saint Clare's took the time to note his work.

"I feel good in that they recognize . . . the work the physicians do — besides serving people, but serving those who really . . . are disadvantaged, who don't have the means to afford medical help or whatever help that they need," Waran said Friday.

Waran said he came to America in 1969 and joined the staff of Morristown Memorial Hospital in 1977 before moving on to Saint Clare's, where he runs a free clinic for children's pediatric needs.

"He's my pal. We're really good friends. We do a lot together," Ferguson said of Waran. "And I wouldn't be hanging with him if he wasn't the incredible person that he is."