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"For more than 25 years we've collaborated with O&G and created some iconic jobs," Michael Zengan says. "We've worked closely with Craig Studer on many outstanding projects as well. However, for the creative design and spirit that this project is dedicated, it stands apart from the rest."



PROJECT: The Foundry, Pittsburgh, PA
DESIGN: LaQuatra Bonci Associates
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MARIA FARERI CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL

In a scene from “Louder Than Words,” hospital administrator and visionary Bruce Komiske, played by Timothy Hutton, is asked what the wildly ambitious project he’s been hired to develop is all about. After a pause, his reply: “It’s about building a feeling.”

The 2013 movie tells the bittersweet story of how the Maria Fareri Children’s Hospital came to be. The uniquely family-centric, hope-filled facility in Valhalla, New York, is a new addition to the Westchester Medical Center that serves severely ill children from New York, Connecticut and beyond.

Greenwich builder and developer John Fareri and his wife, Brenda, lost their thirteen-year-old daughter Maria to rabies, contracted unbeknownst to anyone, including Maria, on a family camping trip. It was not discovered until symptoms appeared. By then it was too late to do anything but watch her decline. “I was a basket case,” said John (played by David Duchovny in the movie) in an interview with PEOPLE.com. “I’m a builder and a developer and I couldn’t do anything for Maria, but I channeled my grief into what I know.”

The couple discovered that Maria had made a wish in her last school project for “the health and well-being of all the children of the world.” Despite not having any experience in the many facets of health care construction, Fareri determined he would indeed develop a children’s hospital. It would honor Maria’s wish, and it would be designed and operated with an emphasis on including families as an essential part of the healing process – something the couple found woefully missing in their experience with their daughter.



A section of the lobby area features a magical children's stage in an enchanting and colorful environment.

With vision and a persevering energy they brought the facility to life. Teaming with Bruce Komiske, who had developed the innovative Hasbro Children’s Hospital in Providence, Rhode Island, and Westchester Medical Center executive Kevin Spiegel, the Fareris navigated the foreign land of bureaucratic red tape. Then, with the support of 20,000 members of the community raising



From left to right Timothy Lynch, Dean Pushlar, Sean Walters, Craig Studer, and Marty Paganini

tens of millions of dollars, construction began. Fourteen years after its dedication, the Maria Fareri Children’s Hospital stands today as one of the leading pediatric hospitals in America.

Fulfilling a Wish

It was in 2016 that the hospital turned its attention outdoors, looking to add a children-oriented garden and play space. The new space would provide families and their ill children an oasis where they could escape to enjoy a bit of the normalcy that hospitalization denies them.

John Fareri reached out to award-winning landscape architect Craig Studer of Studer Design Associates in Ridgefield, Connecticut, to develop the project. Studer believed in John, his vision, and the new children inspired outdoor space, and embraced the project wholeheartedly.

The space Studer envisioned would be elliptical, in the shape of an egg. He’d seen it in a small Parisian plaza



Brenda and John Fareri and family during the 2015 John F. Helmerdinger Lifetime of Service Award.

and thought that the egg, reminiscent of new life, would be an appropriate contour to define the area. Graceful, gentle curves are everywhere, leading families around the space.

Each part of the garden carries its unique meaning. One area, for instance, centers around a big, fiberglass teddy bear that had once stood outside F.A.O. Schwarz in Manhattan. Damaged in a severe storm the teddy bear was lovingly put back together and is now a feature within the garden. There is seating on curved benches sheltered by tall, arching “shade sails” that resemble protective white wings. There is a hopscotch area and a giant chessboard with pieces, just for fun.

Fiber optic lighting along the paths is loosely based on constellations. Serendipitously, perhaps spiritually,

Studer clustered the lighting in 13 places to create 13 brighter “stars” – 13 being a number he arrived at by combining Maria’s birth date and day. He learned afterward from Brenda that 13 had been her daughter’s favorite number.

And at the center of it all, springing from the lawn, is a lively tripartite bronze of Maria running, chasing her soccer ball, chased by her dog. This whole place, says Studer, revolves joyfully around Maria, “drawing children into her world” and delighting their hearts.

O&G’s Masonry Division has enjoyed a long and productive working relationship with Studer. When he approached the company, Division President Kara Oneglia was only too happy to supply him with custom blends of pavers, the granite sculpture, and a dedication plaque. “We are a family company, in our fourth generation, and family is at the center of the things we do,” says Oneglia, “so we were honored to support the hospital and its mission. This is a great addition to their grounds, and we are delighted to have played a part in such a thoughtful project.”

The contemporary black, grey, and white paver blend chosen for this project was supplied by Unilock, a

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leading supplier of interlocking paving stones and wall products. Michael Zengen represented the company. “For more than 25 years we’ve collaborated with O&G and created some iconic jobs,” he says. “We’ve worked closely with Craig Studer on many outstanding projects as well. However, for the creative design and spirit that this project is dedicated, it stands apart from the rest.”

“I can’t stress enough how invaluable O&G’s help in selecting the right materials and guiding us in the proper installation has been,” Studer reflects. “As large

a company as they are, they still work like a family and treat you like a family. This project was no exception. Communication was great. There were no issues or delays, from getting just the right blend of materials I wanted, to the installation in the field. It was all very gratifying.”

Both Studer and O&G architectural sales representative Marty Paganini, who worked closely with Studer, agree: to have been invited in to work with the Fareri family in such a redeeming and healing project was an honor they’ll never forget.

Ranked among the country’s best, Maria Fareri Children’s Hospital offers children and visitors a welcoming and holistic environment. From the interior to the exterior Maria Fareri Children’s Hospital is unlike facilities that embrace an institutional and sterile environment. The Fareris say its atmosphere is uniquely happy: There is pet therapy, music therapy, poetry, and an art neighborhood. All of the rooms are private, and all have space for family members to stay with their child.

