

# Bridgeport Hospital Foundation

Philanthropic Achievements: Driving Community Wellness | 2023



Yale  
NewHaven  
**Health**

Bridgeport Hospital  
Foundation



## ON THE COVER

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As Bridgeport Hospital continues to offer world-class medical care, we have also expanded our community wellness programs to keep individuals and families healthy. Beginning with newborn care through specific geriatric services, we remain ready to address the dynamic healthcare needs of our region. The snapshot of a healthy, active life depicted on our cover is one that the support of our loyal donors helps us to encourage and promote.

## A Message from Hospital Leadership

Yale  
NewHaven  
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### Dear Friends,

The events of the past two and a half years have greatly altered our lives. As we feel and view the pandemic's presence throughout the United States, on a local basis, Bridgeport Hospital continues to adapt, transform and move through the turbulence this virus has created. With a fluctuating COVID positive census, our medical staff and employees have demonstrated remarkable flexibility, taking on roles of inspired innovators and courageous caregivers.



Our loyal donor community has contributed more than \$5.8 million over the past year to advance the hospital's mission to serve our patients, families and community. These contributions speak directly to our theme for this year's report: Philanthropic Achievements: Driving Community Wellness. The hospital's leadership team is focused beyond excellent hospital operations, emphasizing the overall wellness of our community. On the following pages, we are delighted to share stories about some of the important patient-centered programs the Foundation supports. You will also learn about four donors and volunteers, who explain why they support Bridgeport Hospital:

- Patricia Cervone, retired Bridgeport Hospital nurse now giving generously to support mental health services on the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit where she worked;
- Claudia Elmslie, breast cancer survivor and dedicated volunteer for the Norma Pfriem Breast Center;
- Dr. David Esposito, accomplished vascular surgeon and enthusiastic advocate for Bridgeport Hospital Milford Campus;
- The Elizabeth M. Pfriem Foundation, major benefactor of Bridgeport Hospital's community health initiatives, following the legacy of its namesake.

We thank you, our donors, for your extraordinary support during one of the most challenging times in our history. As we look to the future, you will see inside a section "Bringing Technology to Life", which describes our initiative to bring more lifesaving technologies to the hospital and community in the next two years.

On behalf of our entire staff, please accept our heartfelt appreciation for your continued loyalty and generosity.

Sincerely,



**Stephen M. Jakab, CFRE**  
*President, Bridgeport Hospital Foundation*



**Anne Diamond, JD, DHL**  
*President, Bridgeport Hospital*

# The Fay Fund

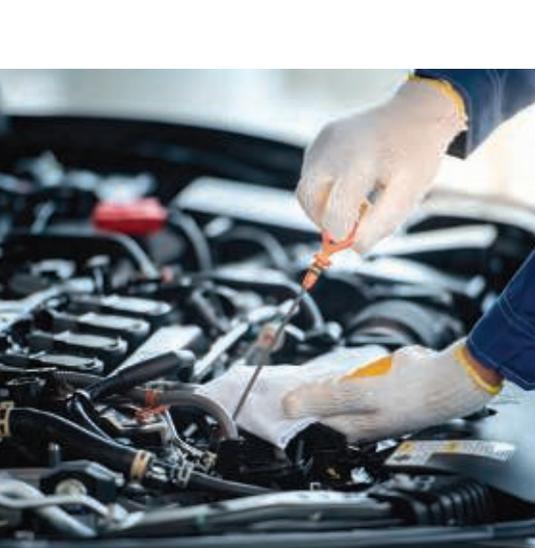
## Supporting patients' non-medical needs

Established in 2014, the Fay Fund was named after a family friend of a donor who fell upon hard times and needed assistance. His love and devotion to the friend who helped raise his children motivated him to create a resource to help people maintain their dignity in the face of difficult situations.

The fund is used to support needs of patients outside the hospital when the patient and family cannot afford them. These include rent, utilities, funeral/cremation expenses, transportation/travel expenses, as well as durable medical equipment and medical supplies to be used at home.

Uses of the fund have included repair of an automobile so patients can get to their medical appointments; payment of an electric bill for a family to bring their mother home and the purchase of clothing and food. The Fay Fund allows Bridgeport Hospital to expand its impact in the important area of patient social services.

*The Fay Fund allows Bridgeport Hospital to expand its impact in the important area of patient social services.*



# REACH

Addressing patients' mental health before a crisis

**R**EACH is an interdisciplinary outpatient mental health program for children, adolescents and adults. Using evidence-based treatments delivered with compassion, REACH is part of a mental health continuum of care for patients requiring more comprehensive and intensive therapy. Supported by our donors, REACH is an alternative to the emergency room for young people in crisis.

Using highly skilled staff to provide measurable and sustained improvement, REACH combines individual therapy with support groups, allowing patients to learn skills, strategies, techniques and interventions. These skills enable patients to live safe, healthy and more productive lives. The REACH program serves almost 2,000 patients every year.

*REACH is part of a mental health continuum of care for patients requiring more comprehensive and intensive therapy.*



2,000

On average, the REACH program serves almost 2,000 patients every year.

# Men's Health Program

## Reaching Out and Educating



# 37%

Men's Health Program has successfully scheduled 37% of patients contacted.

**B**ridgeport Hospital Men's Health program is educating a distinct segment of males concerning their physical and mental wellness, while explaining it is as important as anything else in their lives. With a patient universe of 8,000 and ages ranging between 20 and 40, this program provides essential information and tools to assist males in practicing a preventative lifestyle while treating health problems early. Men are encouraged to get health screenings and to address medical conditions identified by health care providers before they become serious.

The Nurse Navigator working with the Men's Health Program is supported by our benefactors. She has successfully scheduled 37% of patients contacted. There is great potential for participants to reap healthy rewards.

*This program provides essential information and tools to assist males in practicing a preventative lifestyle while treating health problems early.*

# OB Wellness

## Post-Partum Wellness Checks for New Moms

**P**ost-Partum wellness checks deliver healthier moms, babies, and results.

Because of a generous gift from a donor family, new mothers are scheduled to return to the hospital 7-10 days after discharge for a follow-up visit with an obstetric APRN and registered lactation consultant. Based on the results of the visit, the mother and/or infant will be connected to a network of support services to address a range of issues including breastfeeding, proper infant nutrition, high blood pressure and postpartum depression.

Since inception in 2019, this program has reduced Emergency Room visits by new moms and their babies by 29%.

*Wellness checks have reduced Emergency Room visits by new moms and their babies by 29%.*



# Integrative Medicine and Support

## Patients find joy in the moment

For an increasing number of cancer patients, medical treatments provide the intended result – a cancer free future. However, the journey through treatment is often grueling and debilitating. Fortunately, donor support of the Norma Pfriem Breast Center provides patients access to integrative services to relieve the side effects of treatment while also promoting healing. Some of the services provided at little or no charge include: massage, acupuncture, counseling, naturopathy, yoga and Tai Chi. A licensed music therapist offers a wide range of free classes. As one patient stated, these practitioners provide “a space where someone who has had a bad day, can find joy in the moment.”



## COVID-19

### Containing the Spread

Yale New Haven Health utilized its vast research capabilities to help develop lifesaving patient protocols for effectively treating patients while sharing its resources, staff and medical expertise with others during the pandemic. With donor assistance, many supportive programs were put in place to assist our valuable healthcare workers.

The introduction of Coronavirus vaccines in early 2021 allowed Bridgeport Hospital front line employees and medical staff to be among the first to roll up their shirtsleeves when the FDA granted emergency use to several vaccine manufacturers. As a next step, our hospital joined the statewide effort to bring the vaccine to the public. In a continuing effort to protect our patients and

staff, all members of our workforce were required to be vaccinated.



Other parts of our program included a vaccination awareness and education program to demonstrate the safety and efficacy of the vaccine; and, the development of pop-up vaccination clinics throughout the Bridgeport area, which allowed us to reach the community outside of the hospital. Bridgeport Hospital was one of the first in the state to offer lifesaving monoclonal antibody therapy for people at risk for hospitalization from COVID.

# Primary Care Center

## A National Leader



The work of Bridgeport Hospital's Primary Care Center (PCC) is life altering and life sustaining. The PCC establishes strong patient rapport and trust, lowers barriers and increases patient access to care. Care Coordination and

Chronic Care Management teams help decrease hospitalizations and emergency department visits, reduce hospital length of stay and help guide patients to a path of life-long wellness. The Coronavirus crisis created unprecedented challenges for the underserved community. Generous donor support enabled us to offer a high level of attention to our patients, and resulted in better outcomes from COVID-19 than reported in Fairfield County, the State of Connecticut and the nation. An important focus is to improve behavioral health and provide preventative care. The Primary Care Center helps remove healthcare disparities and factors that contribute to these inequities.

# Geriatric Carts

## Providing Care and Comfort

Studies have shown that patients respond positively to actions that make their hospital stay more comfortable.

With help from donors at both Bridgeport Hospital and Milford Campus, geriatric carts provide low-cost, non-pharmacological assistive devices such as hearing aid batteries and amplifiers, reading glasses, coloring books, large font word games, blankets and stuffed animals directly to patients.

Specific Geriatric Medicine interventions along with these patient-friendly carts contributed to both campuses earning Level 2 recognition from the American College of Emergency Physicians as Geriatric Emergency Departments.



# Patricia Cervone

## Connecting with a cause close to her heart

**F**or Patricia Cervone, it's always been about the babies.

As soon as the last of her four children started elementary school, Cervone decided to enroll in a nursing program. After graduating from the University of Bridgeport, she got a job in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) at Bridgeport Hospital. That was in 1980. She would spend the next 31 years taking care of babies – and their parents.

“This is so close to my heart. It makes me feel good to know that the emotional well-being of parents and families is being taken care of in all ways that I tried to help them.”

*“This is so close to my heart. It makes me feel good to know that the emotional well-being of parents and families is being taken care of.”*

Her interactions with the parents especially resonated with Cervone. Many were overwhelmed by the reality of an infant who was hospitalized for possibly months at a time, which forced them to juggle job absences and financial concerns, often while parenting additional children at home.

“It's often worse on the family than it is on the baby who is in the NICU,” she said.

Cervone tried to help the parents as best as she could. She did research to find available resources when parents asked what to expect when their baby came home. She also attempted to coordinate a support group to give parents the opportunity to gather together.

“I did the best I could, but it wasn't my field. I'm not a social worker. I'm a nurse,” she said. “I always felt like I was falling short and that I could have done more, but I didn't know how. I was out of my element.”

This year, she got her chance. When she received a fundraising appeal from the Bridgeport Hospital Foundation, a specific section caught her eye. Bridgeport Hospital was seeking funds to start a structured NICU Mental Health Program. Cervone knew immediately that this was a cause she and her husband, John, would support with a donation.

The NICU Mental Health Program is spearheaded by Noa Fleiss, MD, a neonatologist at Yale New Haven Children's Hospital NICU and the Bridgeport Hospital NICU. Dr. Fleiss had witnessed the power of such a program at New York Presbyterian Columbia University Medical Center, where she completed her fellowship in neonatal and perinatal medicine. She was eager to bring it to the Bridgeport Hospital NICU.

“Mothers of NICU patients are at an increased risk for postpartum mood and anxiety disorders, at a rate that is nearly double to that in the general population,” Dr. Fleiss said. “We want to improve outcomes and provide preventative interventions early, before the stress becomes too much for them to bear.”



Before the program was implemented in June 2021, mothers who were identified by NICU medical staff as being “high risk” received referrals for counseling and support. However, there were concerns that there were mothers who were silently struggling and not showing any visible signs of distress.

“We knew that we might be missing people who needed help, so we wanted to make sure the screening is universal and systemized,” said Elisabeth Schneider, licensed mental health provider and program coordinator.

The program is designed to identify parents who may be struggling financially and emotionally while their babies are in the NICU. Every mother receives a questionnaire when her baby has been in the NICU for 14 days and another screening again at two months.

While the survey is administered to the mothers, Schneider asks fathers who are present for the screening to reflect upon the questions and report how their baby’s NICU stay is impacting them as well. The survey screens for depression and anxiety, and identifies areas where a family may need referrals to community resources that range from post-partum depression and financial concerns to babysitting worries and transportation issues.

“We look at the whole system and plug any gaps so parents can bond with their babies and feel good about their roles,” Schneider said. “We make sure parents aren’t left to struggle alone with their trauma.”

And for Pat Cervone, that’s what it’s always been about. “This is so close to my heart,” she said. “It makes me feel good to know that the emotional well-being of parents and families is being taken care of.”

# Claudia Elmslie

## A cancer survivor's journey to give back and help others

Claudia Elmslie still remembers the day in January 2006 when she received a diagnosis of stage 1 breast cancer at the age of 44. “You don’t ever think you’ll hear that news. You don’t believe it when they tell you that you have cancer,” she said. “But then your mind goes into the zone of thinking ‘what do I have to do to get rid of this?’” Elmslie immediately went into battle mode, undergoing months of surgery, radiation and physical therapy. At the time her two young daughters were attending elementary school in their hometown of Fairfield, so Elmslie and her husband, William, made the decision to keep the full details about her illness from them.

By May 2007, she had completed her treatments and begun learning how to navigate life as a cancer survivor. As part of her recovery process, she sought genetic testing to assess any health risks that her daughters might inherit. This led her to The Norma Pfriem Breast Center at Bridgeport Hospital. The Breast Center, part of Smilow Cancer Hospital, was the first freestanding community breast center in Connecticut to offer one-stop coordination of care, patient navigation and rapid diagnosis. More than 38,000 women throughout the region have received comprehensive services and programs from the Breast Center over the past two decades at locations in Bridgeport, Fairfield and Trumbull. “The staff at the Breast Center were so wonderful. They

helped me emotionally, and they stepped in when I needed help getting the insurance company to cover the cost of the genetic testing,” Elmslie said.

Her experience at the Breast Center was such a positive one that she decided to call the center a few years later to ask about volunteer opportunities as a way of giving back. “I reflected upon my journey with breast cancer. I had a tremendous amount of support from family and friends. I was

lucky to have good insurance,” she said. “I thought about all the other women who were going through it without that support. I wanted to be there for them. When you’ve been through cancer, there’s a bond you have with other survivors.”

Over the years since then, Elmslie has worn a number of volunteer hats at the center. She has done everything from organizing educational packets for high school information

sessions and making blankets for women who are undergoing chemotherapy to serving as a member of the President’s Council and as coordinator for volunteers. “Everything I did made me feel like doing even more,” she said. “Any time any help is needed for anything at the center, they ask me. I want to be included in everything I can. It’s a special place. I can’t imagine not being a part of it.” If there is one single message that Elmslie wants to spread, it is to urge women to schedule their annual mammogram. “My lump was small enough that I couldn’t feel it, so I’m forever thankful

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for the technician who picked up on it,” she said. “Breast cancer isn’t a death sentence anymore. There are treatments if you catch it early enough.” In 2022, it will be 16 years since Elmslie received her diagnosis – a milestone that she does not take

for granted. “When you are diagnosed with cancer, you don’t know what the future holds,” she said. “I am able to be here today to help my daughter plan her wedding. That’s a gift that I cherish every single day.”



# David Esposito, MD

Preserving culture, community and care at Milford Campus



If ever there was a cheerleader for the Milford Campus of Bridgeport Hospital, it would be David Esposito, MD.

Throughout his childhood, Dr. Esposito's mother was a nurse in the operating room at the former Milford Hospital. "She was there for 40 years, so I feel like I grew up in Milford Hospital," he said.

"I loved it. I love the culture and the community aspect of it."

So much so that he returned to Milford after completing his medical training and set up his own practice as a surgeon and co-founder of the Milford Vascular Institute. He is the chairman of the department of surgery and chief of cardiovascular

*“Bridgeport Hospital has a culture and a community that has been a good fit with Milford, and we’ve embraced it.”*

and thoracic surgery at the Bridgeport Hospital Milford Campus and is one of only approximately 130 surgeons in the United States to be board certified in three specialties: general surgery, vascular surgery and thoracic surgery at Bridgeport Hospital.

Because of his long association with the organization, Dr. Esposito is the first to admit that he was not an early supporter of the formerly independent hospital being integrated with Bridgeport Hospital as that facility’s second campus in June 2019. “The thought of the small community hospital that I love becoming part of a large health system didn’t appeal to me. I was afraid that the culture that made Milford Hospital so special would be lost and become just another cog in a giant wheel,” he said.

Today, Dr. Esposito is happy to say that the integration has been a success.

“Bridgeport Hospital has a culture and a community that has been a good fit with Milford, and we’ve embraced it,” he said. “If you liked Milford Hospital before, you will love it even more now that we have all of the resources of Yale New Haven Health behind it. I’m thrilled that the Milford Campus is being included in plans for the future. There are a lot of innovative and thoughtful things happening here now, and it’s very exciting to be a part of Yale New Haven Health’s expansion of services.”

The Milford Campus also played a special role throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, having been designated as a COVID-free campus and used to free up beds at the main Bridgeport Hospital campus.

Given the importance of the campus to Bridgeport Hospital and the Milford community as a whole, the Bridgeport Hospital Auxiliary organized a Centennial Celebration last April to mark the 100th anniversary of the hospital’s founding in 1921. Funds raised will benefit a variety of renovation and improvement projects across the Milford Campus.

Dr. Esposito and his partners at the Milford Vascular Institute believe that is a cause worth celebrating. Their generous gift to the Foundation will be earmarked for the purchase of equipment and improvements to the Operating Room and other locations throughout the hospital.

As the Bridgeport Hospital Milford Campus looks ahead toward the next 100 years, Dr. Esposito is confident that it will remain a vital thread in the fabric of the community.

“The presence of a high-quality hospital is part of what makes Milford such a great place to live,” said Dr. Esposito. “I will do anything to see that it succeeds and thrives. This hospital is part of who I am.”

# Elizabeth M. Pfriem

## One woman's commitment to children and families yields a lasting legacy

Elizabeth M. Pfriem, known to her friends as “Betty,” is remembered for her longtime support of Bridgeport Hospital, which led to major improvements in neonatal intensive care, the cardiology hybrid operating suite and the children’s emergency department. Since 2019, the foundation that bears her name has also been a key partner in the hospital’s community health efforts by funding the innovative and impactful work of the Primary Care Center (PCC), which recently achieved prestigious federal recognition as a Patient-Centered Medical Home.

Mrs. Pfriem died in 2017, but her legacy has been carried on by the trustees of the Elizabeth M. Pfriem Foundation. That legacy is synonymous with high-quality, sustainable programs that are essential to the health of the Bridgeport community, particularly those that improve the wellbeing of the city’s most economically challenged and most vulnerable patients at the PCC.

“Elizabeth Pfriem was deeply committed to child advocacy, public education and community health throughout her lifetime,” said Tony Montalto, executive director/co-trustee of the Elizabeth M. Pfriem Foundation.

The patient-centered medical home (PCMH) model is an approach to delivering high-quality, cost-effective primary care. The PCMH model coordinates culturally appropriate patient care across the health system while building better

relationships between patients and their clinical care teams. The model has been associated with effective chronic disease management, increased patient and provider satisfaction, cost savings, improved quality of care and increased preventive care.

“Dealing with our patients’ complex needs requires so much more than providing medical care,” said Primary Care Center Medical Director Manisha Gupta, MD. “We must also address their social needs and care for the patient in a broader, holistic way. Our patients experience improved well-being as their health and other needs are addressed. We are keeping patients out of the hospital and from seeking emergency care as their health improves.”

The Elizabeth M. Pfriem Foundation recently awarded the Bridgeport Hospital Foundation a \$250,000 “Challenge Grant.” The gift aims to encourage other donors in the community to support the PCC’s Health Maintenance and Preventive Care Program, a new initiative that focuses on lowering the barriers of care for the underserved by connecting them to local resources to improve the rate of breast, colorectal and cervical cancer screenings for early detection. The goal of the program is to save lives and detect disease early when it is most treatable.

“With this challenge grant, we’re asking others in the Bridgeport community to join us in supporting this very worthy cause,” Montalto said.



*“Elizabeth Pfriem was deeply committed to child advocacy, public education and community health throughout her lifetime.”*

The challenge grant comes on the heels of an initial \$500,000 grant that the Foundation made to support the development of the PCC in 2019. “We saw the importance of supporting such a facility. There is a tremendous need in the Bridgeport community to provide direct services for the underserved,” said Montalto.

“Betty Pfriem was concerned about children and families in need and wanted to ensure that

they could get services in the area where they lived,” he added. “She was someone who never wanted to receive attention about the things she was doing – she just wanted to do good and see the results. What we’ve seen happening in the past few years with the Primary Care Center at Bridgeport Hospital – I think Mrs. Pfriem would be very satisfied.”

# The Susan Hubbell Legacy Society

## Honoring those who have made planned gifts to Bridgeport Hospital

The Susan Hubbell Society recognizes members who have made a commitment in their estate plan to provide enduring support for Bridgeport Hospital.

In the 1870s, Susan Hubbell bequeathed \$13,500 and one acre of land at the summit of Mill Hill for the construction of Bridgeport Hospital. According to the provisions of her will, “an equal amount was collected from citizenry in order to validate her gift.” Two other generous women, Catherine Pettengill and Frances E. Pomeroy also made notable contributions.

When Bridgeport Hospital opened on November 12, 1884, a local newspaper at the time extolled the virtues of philanthropy: “One lives longer in the grateful memory of one’s associates by leaving memorials that can be of service to humanity and fellow citizens. Money any man or woman intends leaving for community purposes can be dedicated to no higher, nor more vital, humanitarian end.”

Legacies from friends and donors are essential to fulfilling the healthcare mission of Bridgeport Hospital. Membership in the Susan Hubbell Society offers you a wonderful opportunity to leave a lasting legacy, telling a story about what really matters; allowing you to help define the future of Bridgeport Hospital and make a difference in countless lives that come after yours.



It would be most beneficial to our planning if we could accurately document your gift and welcome you to the Susan Hubbell Society. Please let us know if you have already included Bridgeport Hospital in your estate plan through:

- Your will
- An Insurance policy
- Retirement plan assets (IRA or other)
- A trust arrangement or other gift instrument

To join the Hubbell Society, please send us an e-mail at [giftplanning@bpthosp.org](mailto:giftplanning@bpthosp.org) or call the Bridgeport Hospital Foundation Office at (203) 384-3522. Please visit [givetoynhh.giftplans.org/record-bridgeport](http://givetoynhh.giftplans.org/record-bridgeport) for more information about our planned giving programs.

# “Bringing Technology to Life”

Capital Campaign will support life-saving cardiac and stroke care

With exciting recent advances in neurology and interventional cardiology, Bridgeport Hospital is ready to chart the future of healthcare by expanding access to the latest, new lifesaving technology and procedures, which will dramatically improve patient outcomes.

The hospital’s Board of Trustees has endorsed a \$25 million investment in new cardiovascular and neurovascular systems to support cardiac and stroke care. The Bridgeport Hospital Foundation is proud to support the hospital with a \$4.5 million capital fundraising campaign, “Bringing Technology to Life”.

Specifically, with new technology and the outstanding expertise of our highly-trained physicians, we will completely modernize more than 15,000 square feet of clinical and patient care space at Bridgeport Hospital. The plan consists of two components – a Neurovascular Center of Excellence and new Interventional Cardiology Labs to:

- Reduce the effects of 400-500 severe strokes over five years, giving patients the best opportunity for recovery. The importance of rapid stroke care close to home cannot be understated. Stroke care is unique among other serious health concerns. When a stroke occurs, each minute of delay in treatment can result in a 1% loss of brain function. Bridgeport Hospital is a Primary Stroke Care Center with a team of experienced physicians and the highest volume of stroke patients in Fairfield County.



- Provide significantly expanded access to patients seeking lifesaving interventional heart procedures, including nearly double the current number of patients seeking care for atrial fibrillation, the most common heart rhythm disorder.

You can make a difference. By making a gift, you can help overcome life altering changes in the health of your family members, friends and neighbors; you will help save lives and allow many to maintain their quality of life. Your generosity can raise the bar – enormously improving the level of care received by potential stroke victims and cardiac patients.

The Foundation invites you to support the hospital’s efforts to deliver extraordinary care close to home. For more information or to assist with our Capital Campaign, please visit [foundation.bridgeporthospital.org](http://foundation.bridgeporthospital.org); or call the Foundation office at 203-384-3522.

For more good news from the Bridgeport Hospital Foundation, visit  
[foundation.bridgeporthospital.org](https://foundation.bridgeporthospital.org).

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