



RAMAPO COLLEGE OF NEW JERSEY
Office of Media and Public Relations
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Nursing Alumnus and Co-Workers Show America They've Got Talent

Jonell Robles (BSN '13, MSN '19) is an Assistant Nurse Manager on a surgical telemetry unit at Lenox Hill Hospital, one of 23 hospitals in the Northwell Health system, New York State's largest healthcare provider and private employer. The New Milford, N.J., native transferred from Bergen Community College to Ramapo College in the fall of 2011 for his junior year and received his bachelor of science in nursing in May 2013, returning for graduate studies and earning a master of science in nursing in 2019.

Robles also is one of the 18-member Northwell Health Nurse Choir that auditioned recently on America's Got Talent (AGT) and, after an overwhelming response from the show's judges, will get a shot at the big prize. We caught up with him after the initial audition, which can be viewed here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MsPlyMrD9Gk> (Robles is front-and-center at minute 4:30.)

How did this Nurse Choir come about and how did you get an audition for AGT?

The choir was brought together virtually for a 2020 Thanksgiving Day fundraiser called 'Nurse Heroes Live.' We met for the first time in-person in March 2021. Our virtual performance for 'Nurse Heroes Live' caught the eye of someone in Hollywood. Through this performance, the Northwell Health Nurse Choir was invited to audition for the upcoming season (season 16) of America's Got Talent.

Who selected the music you performed?

Northwell has been supportive, and surrounded us with all of the tools we needed to succeed on AGT. We have been working with an amazing vocal producer who crafted the mash up of "Stand by Me/Lean on Me." It was a perfect song choice for the group. It is amazing how the power of music can bond us together. When we stand by and continue to support and lean on each other, we come out stronger than ever. We know we can get through and do anything.

What was going through your mind when you folks took the stage? And were you surprised when [AGT judge] Howie Mandell hit the golden buzzer for an automatic trip to the live show?

I was immensely excited we made it to America's Got Talent, but nervous at the same time. Just taking it all in - the stage, the lights, the cameras, the panel of judges. Before we performed in front of the judges, we had to channel what we experienced the past year, the lyrics of the song, and the message we wanted to convey to the world. As frontline workers, we went through an absolute challenging and stressful year. When we were at our lowest moments, music was always there to support and uplift us, giving us the healing and comfort that we needed. We wanted to show America that despite the pain, we know there is a light at the end of the tunnel and things will be okay. Singing and dancing on stage with my friends felt so incredible – it was an absolute joy!

Initially, I did not want to anticipate or get my hopes up. However, after hearing the judges' comments, Howie hitting the golden buzzer was absolutely incredible. Gold confetti filling the air – it was such an emotional experience. Everyone hugging, jumping up and down, celebrating, tears of joy falling. It was truly an unforgettable moment shared with my friends.

Did you previously have any singing experience?

I grew up singing in the church and at school, both as a soloist and a choir member, including the Bayanihan Filipino Seventh Day Adventist Church Choir, the New Milford High School Choir, New Jersey Bergen County Choir, North Jersey Regions Mixed Choir, and the New Jersey All State Mixed Choir.

Now what happens?

Since we received the Golden Buzzer from Howie, we are going straight to the live shows in Hollywood this August. We are very excited to return to California. To get more updates and exciting things we have planned, stay tuned and follow our journey on @northwellhealthnursechoir on Instagram.

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Established in 1969, Ramapo College offers bachelor's degrees in the arts, business, data science, humanities, social sciences and the sciences, as well as in professional studies, which include business, education, nursing and social work. In addition, the College offers courses leading to teacher certification at the elementary and secondary levels, and offers graduate programs leading to master's degrees in Accounting, Business Administration, Creative Music Technology, Data Science, Educational Technology, Educational Leadership, Nursing, Social Work and Special Education, as well as a post-master's Doctor of Nursing Practice.