

December 22, 2011

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

'Tis the season to be thankful—and boy, do we have many colleagues and friends to thank as NCH completes another highly successful year for our institution and our community. Allow me to mention just a few.

- Last week, we began a new tradition—the first annual *Medical Diplomats Holiday Dinner Party*—hosted by Chief Development Officer **Jim Martin**'s team and attended by more than 170 generous supporters. Our NCH *Medical Diplomats*, 400 strong, have raised close to \$5 million since the program's inception in 2004. Singled out for special mention were *Lifetime Members* in attendance **Jay** and **Patty Baker, Mary Jane Briggs, Robert** and **Connie Eaton, Robert** and **Mariann MacDonald, Raymond** and **Peggy Pettit,** and **Stephen** and **Lety Schwartz** for their selfless efforts on behalf of NCH. The contributions of these wonderful people and all the other *Diplomats* help differentiate NCH as the quality provider it has become for the 36,000 patients we serve each year.
- We also honored our extraordinary team of 1,200 hospital volunteers, with luncheons hosted by Director of Volunteers **Amanda Smith** and Volunteer Coordinator **Lauren Turner**. As I have shared many times, our volunteers are often the first NCH representatives that patients or guests meet when visiting one of our campuses. The volunteer-run Gift Shops and White Elephant sales this past year helped purchase an interoperative neurosurgical imaging instrument costing \$280,000 and pediatric equipment for \$25,675. Volunteers serve in the cafeteria, transport patients, refresh bedside stands with water, help in Admitting, and do so much more. This past year, NCH Volunteers contributed 185,652 hours of their time to make our hospital what it is. The NCH Volunteers *are* NCH. And we are most grateful to each one of them.
- We are grateful also to our talented medical staff of 652 which covers the emergency room round-the-clock, caring for 60% of patients who never expected to spend their night in a hospital. These dedicated professionals are directly responsible for the low mortality and morbidity (complications) rates, which enabled Collier in 2011 to repeat as the healthiest county in Florida, according to the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, and also for having the nation's longest life expectancy for a woman and second longest for a man, according to the University of Washington.
- Finally, of course, we are truly grateful for every one of our NCH colleagues, who have literally changed the face of healthcare in southwest Florida over this past decade. Every day and every night all year long, a full team of competent, compassionate caregivers stands ready to perform complex surgery, alleviate pain, and help address any other medical, surgical or psychiatric need our patients may have. The range of expertise and care, of skills and abilities is vast. The employees of NCH are second to none. They comprise the *heart* of our hospital. And we are fortunate, indeed, to have them. We are also distributing a holiday gift check of \$50 to each of our 3,983 colleagues as an expression of our gratitude.
- And all of this progress and growth wouldn't be possible had we not been blessed with the unstinting efforts of a dedicated 22-member Board of Trustees, who help guide our institution each step of the way. These 22 volunteer leaders embody a community that takes pride in the quality of its healthcare. And for that, too, we are grateful.

Yes, it truly is the season to give thanks. And as the chief executive of this wonderful institution, I couldn't be more proud or thankful. From my family to yours, have a most joyous and peaceful holiday season. And thank you again, one and all.

Respectfully,

Allen S. Weiss, M.D., President and CEO

P.S. Feel free to share Straight Talk and ask anyone to email me at allen.weiss@nchmd.org to be added.