

Straight Talk

A weekly update from management on the issues that matter most



October 5, 2007

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

Many of us this week had a rare opportunity to hear from an inspiring lecturer.

Dr. Bertice Berry, author/scholar/TV personality, visited our North Naples and Downtown campuses for a series of talks. Dr. Berry's message, based on her life of growing up poor and succeeding against all odds, was simple: "*When you walk with purpose you collide with destiny.*"

In that context, Dr. Berry did her homework and was well aware of NCH's record in delivering the highest quality health care. She knew all about the 30-some awards we have received for quality and our local and national leadership in everything from hip and knee replacement volume to cardiology. She challenged us to continue as the "*showcase for how to deliver community health care.*"

Most of all, Dr. Berry reminded us of the value of what we do – caring for our friends and neighbors, every day. To paraphrase her parting words, "*Laugh, show your stress, turn it up a notch, and be yourselves as, together, you weave the quilt that makes NCH the place it is.*"

Dr. Berry's recognition and encouragement of NCH quality and teamwork stood in stark contrast to the union hearings that concluded in Miami this week.

Just as NCH was wrapping up two weeks of arguments as to why any union vote should be open to all of our staff RNs – not just the limited group proposed by the SEIU -- the union abruptly declared that it would present no witnesses (although it had several NCH nurses standing by) and would file only written briefs to support its case.

In other words, rather than either presenting its side before the National Labor Relations Board to answer our challenges or declaring at the outset to argue in writing, the SEIU caused all of us a colossal waste of time and money – by first insisting on Miami hearings and then, three-quarters of the way through, effectively calling the whole thing off.

My point is that this approach – distracting, changing signals, and denying one group's right to vote in favor of another's – reflects the very opposite of the kind of "*teamwork and cohesion*" that people like Dr. Berry recognize at the heart of NCH's success.

Dr. Berry nailed it. We do have a great institution that can be a model for healthcare in the nation. But to get there, we need to stay focused on the good we do. We need to minimize the distractions caused by outsiders, whose only real interest in our system seems to be in disrupting it while collecting lots of dues money should these outsiders win the election and our colleagues lose the election.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Allen".

Allen S. Weiss, MD
President and CEO