February 28, 2008

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

Let me be the first to wish you, one day early, a happy Leap Year!

And in the spirit of the season, I'll start this week by reviewing the tremendous "leap" we've made in our Pediatric Program.

The number of Pediatric in-patients has increased by 44%, year over year, including transfers from other area hospitals, when they were at capacity. We are pleased to receive from and transfer to Lee Memorial, whenever it is in the best interest of the children. We also anticipate increased surgeries for children in Pediatrics. In the past, about 50% of the children needing hospitalization in Collier County were sent out of town. We hope to get this down to about 10%. Obviously, being close to home is better for the patients and their families. And that's our goal.

One reason for our growth and optimism is Dr. Deborah Lopez, a Pediatric Intensivist/Hospitalist, who has had an enormous impact on our program since arriving a year ago. Other significant contributors are our clinical coordinator, Jamie Roberts, along with Pediatric Clinical Educator, Deborah Schlief. They have helped make NCH nurses the most competent in the area in serving sicker children.

We're in the process of sprucing up the 3rd floor of the Baker Tower, home to 24 pediatric rooms, a playroom and all support facilities. We're transforming the floor into an underwater playground, with new wallpaper filled with starfish, seahorses, octopus, and all sorts of fun aquatic creatures. Soon the lobby wall will be changed to an aquarium, giving the appearance of a fish tank without the fish. Check it out when we're finished in a few weeks, and don't forget to bring your goggles!

The community also is involved, with donors invited to name each of the children's rooms, marked by ocean-oriented décor – a manatee room, dolphin room, whale room, etc. All of these efforts in Pediatrics are designed so that children and their parents will enjoy the scenery and have a more cheerful experience of being in the hospital.

We've also taken great "leaps" recently on the international front.

This week, we welcomed a senior delegation from the People's Republic of China, which reviewed our PowerChart clinical computer system. The group, led by Retired General Fu and representatives of the China People's Liberation Army General Hospital and Fuzhou East Hospital, spent a morning with our IT department learning how to use computers to improve healthcare. Our own Paul Yang, a lab stalwart, served as a translator.

General Fu thanked us and said he hoped that, like NCH, his hospitals, too, would someday rank in the top 5% for overall clinical quality. We responded that as we share, we help all of those we serve. The world is getting smaller everyday.

All in all, a good month for healthcare "leaps."

Respectfully,

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