

# Straight Talk

A weekly update from management on the issues that matter most

November 20, 2008

Dear Friends and Colleagues:

One of the marks of a great hospital is the dedication and commitment of the people who serve its patients. And one way to assess that commitment is through the longevity of the staff. At NCH, we are fortunate, indeed, to have many dedicated colleagues who have been here for many years.

Recognizing that dedication for long-term service is among the nicest things we do for each other. This past Friday night, at a wonderful dinner at the Naples Grand, we honored nearly 500 colleagues, whose service to NCH stretched from five years all the way to—believe it or not—40 years. Those special individuals who received 40-year pins were Mrs. Evelyn Huggins and Mrs. Marcia Pipponen.

This magnificent—and fun—occasion should remind all of us that caring for one’s fellow man and woman is as noble a profession as any in our society. The core of what we do, as a team, is promote, maintain and restore health to those we serve. Obviously, we all must have salaries and benefits to provide for ourselves and our families, but money and security can be obtained in many different occupations. The healthcare profession, like education or the ministry, has an additional calling—namely, to help others. That’s what distinguishes all of us and what we do for a living. Let me cite just two examples from the 500 on display the other night.

- Michelle Barrett, a respiratory therapist at North Naples, was one of eight *Super Stars* recognized as exemplifying the passion to help others. Michelle was assigned to care for an abused three-year-old, admitted for injuries. Michelle took it upon herself to go out to buy clothes and personal care items for this little girl, who was so appreciative and proud to have someone give her something of her own for the first time. Michelle, after winning the *Super Star of the Year Award* of a \$1000 check and a \$2,500 travel voucher, kept repeating, “*This wasn’t necessary.*” Our *Super Stars* do the right thing because they feel they must. And we are duly proud of all of them.
- Then there is the story of John D’Zurilla, by day a 2N Unit secretary and by night, a nursing student, in addition to being a full time husband and father. John was driving to work early one morning about a week ago and saw a middle-aged person down by the roadside. He pulled over, recognized the individual had a cardiac arrest, called 911, and began resuscitation. While many cars drove by—thus avoiding “getting involved”—John tried vainly to resuscitate the individual. John’s caring action is exemplary of how NCH people don’t think twice about getting involved, even though we can’t always save everyone.

At the other end of our caring spectrum is the Health Information Management (HIM) team, the group responsible for NCH getting paid for the services we render. The fact is our institution can’t care for patients if we don’t get paid and maintain our own financial health. At lunch last week with about 25 HIM members, I learned they were already coding yesterday’s discharged patients. Coding one-day old charts is unbelievably fast. The faster we bill, the sooner we get paid. And these coders, by the way, are all working remotely, some even in other states. This is one of the advantages of moving toward digital medical records.

As I like to say, “*We are all in this together*”—those who care directly for patients and those who support them. And we couldn’t be more proud of this extraordinary group, many of whom have spent their working careers at NCH, dedicated to serving others.

Respectfully,



Allen S. Weiss, M.D.