

Straight Talk

A weekly update from management on the issues that matter most



November 27, 2008

Dear Friends and Colleagues:

My message to the NCH family on this Thanksgiving Day is just that—*thanks*. While our uncertain times create substantial stress, we at NCH have so much to be thankful for in terms of our institution's financial strength, quality, and the colleagues with whom we share our daily challenges. Let me talk about each.

- **First, NCH remains strong financially—perhaps the strongest major institution on the west coast of Florida.**

Our net worth has increased \$60 million to an all time high—an increase of 22 % in just two years. Our portfolio investments have lost less than 2% of their value since the downturn in the financial markets. This performance isn't pleasant, but it's far better than many others. And despite the steady drumbeat of economic challenges, NCH continues as a beacon of financial strength.

- **Second, our service quality continues to be recognized for steady improvement.**

While we are still by no means perfect, we have made remarkable strides in the last eight years with respect to quality. There's a reason we are 6.4 % busier than we were during the same time period last year. No one wishes sickness on anyone else, particularly during the holidays. But if you do get sick in southwest Florida, your first choice is NCH. As proof, a recent statistically significant study of our area by Consumers Choice found that NCH was the first choice in nursing care, physician care, quality and reputation.

One reason our quality stands out is because we work hard to *prevent* illness. We have two Wellness Centers, with almost 10,000 members in peak season, more than 170 group classes, and over-subscribed educational classes. Typical was Dr. Fred Buechel's recent lecture on hip and knee replacements in Telford, which drew a capacity crowd of 175 and a commitment to repeat the talk for the many others turned away.

Our strong financial and quality positions enhance our own job security and job satisfaction—both pillars, along with purpose, professionalism, pride and passion that we are embracing in *Operation Nightingale*.

- **Third, our dedicated base of 3,416 employees comprises an extraordinary group of healthcare professionals.**

We appreciate what you do and the stresses you encounter on a daily basis. That's why we offer several expert resources to employees and their families, including our Employee Assistance Program, Partners in Caring, and our local United Way Agencies. Soon, Fidelity Investments will have additional presence on campus to help employees deal with retirement plans and home finances. Please contact Human Resources or visit our internal MyNCH website for details.

In closing, let me recognize all of you who have made NCH such a great success in serving our community. Speaking personally, it is my great privilege and honor to be associated with such a caring and committed team. I do hope you have a wonderful Thanksgiving celebration. And on this day in particular, let me offer you all my most heartfelt thanks.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Allen".

Allen S. Weiss, M.D.

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