

May 7, 2009

Dear Friends and Colleagues:

This week is Nurses Week and we honor those noble and dedicated individuals who lie at the heart of our mission—nurses.

We celebrate Nurses Week this year by recognizing **Erin Raney** as “NCH Nurse of the Year,” **H.L. Lawrence** as “Direct Patient Care Nurse,” and **Paul Farmer** as “Indirect Patient Care Nurse.” We also celebrate Jennifer Jenkins, and Jessica Palumbo, our “Thelma Hodges Nurse Mentors;” Jim Sanders, “Nursing Support Superstar Award” winner; and Amy Byal, the 2009 “Rising Star.” More than 100 nurses and support people this year were nominated by their colleagues and the students they taught.

They are heroes, every one. And we salute them all.

As keynote speaker at last night’s *Crystal Angel* awards banquet, I had the honor of sharing some thoughts with almost 200 nurses who honored both their colleagues and their distinguished profession of nursing.

I am well aware that most keynote speeches or graduation addresses are quickly forgotten. (And I have no illusions that my remarks might well be among them!) So I decided to share that rare inspirational message that I have remembered for many decades. I was about 10 years old (so I could spell) and the message came from a summer camp director. His simple, three-word advice—embodied in the acronym *ACE*—has stayed with me throughout my personal and professional life:

- **Attitude. Courage. Enthusiasm.**

Those three little words, the director said, account for most of one’s success in life. Last night, RNs **Linda Donaldson**, (Avow Hospice), **Carol Hughes** (Americare Home Health), **Ann Thornell** (Healthy Start Program), and **Roberta Wooster** (NCH School Nursing) shared their own stories, all of which illustrated the importance of *ACE*.

- *Attitude* is what we bring to our lives. What we see is often not determined by what is in front of our eyes but rather what lies behind them. RN Hughes told of arranging outpatient physical therapy and the installation of a safe shower with a grab bar for a hemophiliac who had a knee replacement. This may sound trivial, but Carol’s efforts made all the difference in the world to this one patient. RN Linda Donaldson cared for a 68 year old with terminal pancreatic cancer who desired to die at home in comfort. Pain management was difficult at home but Linda persisted by employing additional resources which culminated in 16 days at home in peace prior to his passing in the presence of his family. Linda’s attitude made the difference.
- *Courage* means not being discouraged by others who say it can’t be done. Nurse Thornell cared for a pregnant Haitian woman, whose first child was stillborn due to toxemia. With help from a translator, Ann encouraged the patient to do all the right things during this pregnancy. The result: a healthy baby girl delivered by C-section.
- *Enthusiasm* means enjoying what you do. Nurse Wooster, an experienced ICU and ER nurse at NCH, told of the time, as a school nurse in Immokalee, she suggested a repeat EKG for a patient, who appeared out-of-danger. The EKG showed early changes, which led to a stent to relieve a 90% potentially fatal blockage. Roberta’s enthusiasm had saved a life.

This week, as you make your rounds, think about nurse *ACE*’s. And think, too, about our wonderful nurses who mean so much to our institution and our community.

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.