

August 12, 2010

Dear Friends and Colleagues:

No component of NCH is more vital to our reputation than our outstanding *Volunteers*. These unsung heroes do so much to enhance our role and our name in the community. And at the heart of our relationship with our volunteers is the continuing educational mission of NCH to share our knowledge and experience with others.

We discussed this mission when I was invited by Director of Volunteers **Amanda Smith** and her associate **Lauren Turner** to address our young “Volunteens” at this summer’s closing celebratory lunch.

This summer, we have had some 102 high school student Volunteers contributing in many departments, learning about healthcare and how a hospital functions. They joined three college and law school summer interns, working shoulder-to-shoulder with senior leadership on important projects, such as the impact of Jackson Labs (**Brandon Perkovich**, Harvard senior), the duties and responsibilities of directors and executives within the system (**Brad Byars**, St. Louis University Law school and Masters in Health Administration Junior), and healthcare’s complex role in our community (**Marla Perez**, Harvard sophomore).

These students joined our year-round Lorenzo Walker LPN students, Edison and FGCU RN students, Wolford School of Nurse Anesthesia students, Nova Southeastern Professional Assistant students, Nova medical students, radiology technician students, and medical technology scientists students. We also have physical therapy, occupational therapy, speech therapy, and Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) students as well as advance degree nursing students.

Why so many students from so many different schools? First of all, because we will need more and more individuals to keep us healthy, particularly as healthcare solutions become more complex and sophisticated. But second, and even more important, the quality and safety of the system is stimulated by highly-motivated students wishing to join our noble profession. Indeed, a “noble profession” is defined as one in which *“the patient’s, student’s, supplicant’s interests are placed above the provider’s, teacher’s or religious leader’s motivations.”*

As the Medical Executive Committee and Board learned at a recent retreat, objective evidence shows institutions which pursue continuing education programs regularly deliver higher quality to their patients. Quality improvement, of course, has been priority number one at NCH for the past 10 years. And to reach the next level of quality delivery, we are seriously considering introducing Graduate Medical Education (GME) by recruiting more students—namely, interns and residents—at a later stage in their training.

GME can lead to better quality outcomes for patients. We’ve had great success “growing our own” with the Edison State College nursing program that has introduced to the community so many talented, compassionate and competent nurses. Likewise, I’m confident we can train interns and residents with a strong tendency to remain in the community and put down roots. As our friends and colleagues from the University of South Florida have noted, *“Well structured programs provide cost effective patient care, coverage, and access.”*

GME can be yet another transformational change for NCH and our community. Before we begin the journey, we will need to educate everyone—patients, medical staff, colleagues, our community—on both the benefits and challenges involved. I am personally excited about this particular educational challenge, which can yield lasting benefits to our system and our community that will dominate our culture for years to come.

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.