

March 31, 2011

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

It's been a significant week for our community and for NCH in three notable ways.

- **First:** Yesterday's front page *Naples Daily News* headline, "Collier Still No. 1 in Health Rankings," shows where you live *does* matter to your health. These new rankings confirm once again that all of us are fortunate to live in a great place; specifically, that Collier County has the best health outcomes in the 67 counties in Florida. Let me give you three perspectives on this excellent news.

As a *physician*, I tend to think about all the work we still have to do... in promoting better nutrition, fighting obesity, and in smoking cessation, just to name a few. I also tend to take pride in such milestones as the better-than-state-average infant birth weight statistics. At yesterday's *Doctors' Day*, I discussed this with Dr. **Wally McLean**, one of the original obstetricians responsible over 11 years ago for organizing the Foundation to care for mothers and infants who were previously uninsured. Today, most have Medicaid coverage, which helps with prenatal care, ultrasounds and everything else necessary to point to a good outcome for all concerned. Wally, too, was justifiably proud.

As a *hospital leader*, I applaud the efforts of the 3,740 remarkable people at NCH, who are committed to continuing to improve health quality for the wellbeing of everyone who lives in southwest Florida. And we should applaud the efforts of our competitors in the county, who also do such a fine job.

And as a *community member*, I appreciate the efforts of all of the social agencies and healthcare colleagues who make a difference. Last fall, we convened more than 100 local representatives of the major organizations in town to discuss areas needing improvement. Thirteen working groups were formed and reported back to Dr. **Joan Colfer**, Director of the Collier County Health Department. One example of the synergy created by this collaborative is the Safe and Healthy Children's Coalition of Collier County, which has formed a working plan to prevent pre-school children from drowning. NCH is the lead partner of this collaborative of 31 agencies and non-profit organizations. Chairman of Pediatrics at NCH **Dr. Todd Vedder**, Assistant Director of the Emergency Department RN **Jayne Roberts**, Director of Women's and Children's **Pat Read** and Vice President of the NCH Foundation **Jim Martin** are representing NCH on this initiative. We're all in healthcare together in Collier County, and it shows in our performance.

- **Second:** NCH sold \$102 million of bonds in two days this week. That's remarkable. These bonds, sold at favorable rates, help insure the financial future of NCH—and in turn, all of us and our community's well being—for decades to come. The executive director of Morgan Stanley who assisted with this complex transaction, told me, "*You have an exceptionally capable finance team—Vicki Orr, Noble Arrington, and Jerry Markham were terrific throughout the process. Their dedication to getting the credit analysts up to speed in the last few days was instrumental to today's pricing and they should make you feel very confident and happy.*" Our financial team served NCH and our community with distinction.
- **Third:** Yesterday, we received news that our colleagues who previously acted to support an outside union organizing effort at NCH, have decided to drop these efforts, citing increased management attention to communication and shared governance. I can tell our nurses and all our colleagues that management is, indeed, committed to listening to you and working to make our hospital better for all. The closing sentence in the memo from these nurses read, "*Let's make NCH the very best hospital it can be because 'This is our hospital too!'*" To which, I can only say, "*I could not agree more and thank you.*"

Respectfully,



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

P.S. Feel free to share *Straight Talk* by emailing me at allen.weiss@nchmd.org to be added; and join us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/nchflorida.