

February 9, 2012

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

You may not have heard of Joyce Foley, but she's one of the great ones. She's also a "*Momma Bear*." Joyce and 100 friends are responsible for the "Joy Bear Program" now in its fourth year, which bestows decorated stuffed bears to chemotherapy patients in our two Outpatient Infusion Centers (OPIS), the Bill and Sue Dalton Inpatient Oncology Unit and our Infusion Center at the North Naples Campus.

Joyce told me that a friend was first inspired to action when Joyce was undergoing seven-hour chemo treatments, three days a week for ovarian cancer. Her friend, Mary, felt that creating a decorative bear in honor of Joyce and calling it "Ms. Joy Bear" would be a comforting distraction for chemo patients. Today, 1,250 bears later (there are now Mr. Joy Bears also), word about the "Ms. Joy Bear Program" has spread and more people are signing up to help on a monthly basis. "We have a community here at Heritage Bay Golf and Country Club with good people who want to give back," Joyce explains. Thank goodness there are people like Joyce, her friends and neighbors and, of course, the 1,200 NCH Volunteers, who perform so wonderfully on behalf of our patients.

I found out about Joyce and the "Joy Bear Program" through **Manager Sheryl Voivedich**, the leader of our 26 OPIS colleagues (17 RNs, 4 Certified Nursing Assistants, and 5 Administrative Assistants), who man and woman the front lines, caring for up to 100 patients every day.

A few weeks ago on January 25, we celebrated National IV (Intravenous) Nurses' Day. In that context, I dropped by the beautifully redone downtown Infusion Center, donated by the Magnolia Ball patrons, next to the Garden of Hope and Courage. The team proudly stated, "Anything that can be infused, we infuse. We do heavy-duty chemo, antibiotics, blood transfusions, osteoporosis treatment, from eight in the morning until we are done weekdays, weekends, and holidays. We never miss a day and we care for everyone, whether they can pay or not." That kind of "can do" spirit typifies our wonderful nurses at NCH. On weekends and holidays, we administer infusions at the North Naples Campus, which will be renovated this summer, thanks to the strong and generous support of the most recent Magnolia Ball led by Mrs. Jackie Bearse.

We are tremendously proud of our OPIS team, with its low turnover and high level of devotion to patients. Many of these patients are treated several times per week, for hours at a time. Many are physically, mentally and spiritually at the nadir of their lives, battling a dreaded disease. We know that the way in which a patient is supported and comforted is an extraordinarily important aspect of treatment and recovery. We've got the A-team at OPIS, and that's true throughout our hospital.

The net result of all these efforts made by our nursing staff, Volunteers, "Joy Bear Program" helpers, and all the others who tend to our patients at NCH is a culture of caring that permeates our hospital and differentiates us from other similar institutions. Our community is noted for its generosity, and that's demonstrated every day at NCH. We are so fortunate to be part of this wonderful place, where each of us cares for the other. We are, indeed, all in this together. And that's a good thing.

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.