

September 12, 2013

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

NCH nurses celebrated well-deserved recognition last week, as they received the “*Pathway Designation*” from the American Nurses Credentialing Center, saluting NCH as a practice environment where nurses excel.

Our visionary Chief Nursing Officer **Michele Thoman** described NCH nurses by quoting St. Francis of Assisi, “*Start by doing what’s necessary, then do what’s possible; and suddenly you are doing the impossible.*”

And that pretty well says it all about NCH nurses.

Nursing at NCH has undergone a transformation over the past four years as we have embraced a “*shared governance*” approach, which empowers the front-line nurse. Historically, the medical field has been a top-down, military-style organization with “command and control” leadership. Now as a matrix organization, we are able to take everyone’s ideas of how best to care for patients, and share these good thoughts across our system.

In today’s challenging healthcare environment, we really cannot afford the “*good old days*,” where we spend twice as much per person on healthcare as other developed nations and have similar outcomes. The old attitude of entitlement and self-centeredness has no place at NCH, or at any hospital that plans to survive, much less thrive. Here at NCH, as Board Vice-Chairman **Tom Gazdic** noted at the celebration, we have had a nurse and a non-nurse colleague representative on the Board of Trustees for years. Inclusiveness must be our watchword.

Michele Thoman reminded the group that her role began in January 2010 with a “listening campaign” to find out what was necessary. She asked four key questions of her colleagues: *Who are we as nurses? What are we most proud of and don’t want to change? What do we see as our biggest opportunity for change? What do we want for nursing in the future?*

Part of the answer was summarized in strategies to give front-line nurses a louder voice, among them empowerment, creating opportunities for professional development, recognizing successes, investing in nurse leaders, developing the structure that allows nursing to be fiscally responsible while meeting the demands of patient care, and other goals mutually beneficial for nurses, patients, and everyone in the institution.

Just as St. Francis of Assisi foresaw, after determining necessity and declaring possibilities, we achieved the “*impossible*.” NCH’s “shared governance” best practice is being presented at national and international meetings; we have developed quality outcomes better than some of the best academic institutions; we eliminated our use of traveling agency nurses (first-time ever without nurses who would work only during peak months); we increased specialty-trained nurses from 10% to 40% and bachelor-degreed nurses from 19% to 30%; and we established a vibrant Aspire program for continuing education. All this was achieved in a culture where we have had the lowest turnover and vacancy rate ever in nursing. In fact, we have a waiting list of nurses desiring to be employed.

As RN leaders **Jon Baldia, Elizabeth Foster, Deb D’Orazio, and Amy Yates** repeated at the celebration, all the recognition corroborates that nurses at NCH are appreciated and make a real difference to patients. Our community is blessed to have such competent and caring and committed nurses. No question now but that NCH truly means “*Nurses Care Here.*”

Respectfully,



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

P.S. DO YOU HAVE A COLLEAGUE OR FRIEND WHO WOULD BE INTERESTED IN THESE UPDATES?

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