

December 21, 2007

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

There's a good reason why all of us in healthcare enjoy connecting to and helping people, not only over the holidays but all the time. All year long, we nurture the relationships that keep us together and make life worth living.

Why do we cherish these feelings?

Austrian philosopher and mystic Martin Buber, a focus of the keynote address at the recent Institute for Healthcare Improvement annual meeting, had a good answer. In 1939, Buber introduced the concept of "*I-You*" versus "*I-It*."

We experience the *I-You* relationship when we connect with another human. The warm feelings of empathy and compassion are perfect examples of the *I-You* bond that makes for lasting friendships, great teams, wonderful caregivers, effective parents and highly functional organizations.

In stark contrast, the *I-It* relationship is characterized by emotional indifference and remoteness. *I-It* types don't connect, because they are insensitive, opportunistic, or just plain selfish. People who "use" others for their own gains and agendas are prime examples of the *I-It* mentality. They intrude into our day-to-day activities and depart as soon as they get what they wanted from us. Long term, these *I-It* relationships lead to strife and unhappiness.

The *I-You* connection can be triggered at any time and in any place, as I experienced this week. As I walked out of Publix, I was struck by the extremes in our community – with the abundance of food for sale inside the store and the Salvation Army collecting for the less fortunate at the entrance. The smell of the warm flavors inside the market stood in sharp contrast to the sight of the kettle outside the entrance, signaling the plight of all those who are struggling in our community.

All of us at NCH are fortunate to have the resources to share and create an atmosphere where the *I-You* relationship can flourish. There is something rewarding and rejuvenating about what we do to help the sick. This warm feeling among colleagues and those we serve – that is so apparent during the holidays – needs to be continually nurtured throughout the year.

I-It has no place at NCH. It's true we cannot cure everyone, but we can make everyone more comfortable. By working together – embracing the *I-You* relationship – we will all feel and be better as we continue to receive and to give.

Best wishes for a joyous holiday season,



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