

January 22, 2009

Dear Friends and Colleagues:

This week at his historic inaugural, President Obama called for a renewed sense of community and shared sacrifice, for people to pull together to serve the common good.

That's precisely what has been happening here in Naples, as all of us continue to be adversely affected in one way or another by the economy and the forces around us. But let me share just three examples of NCH nurses who are making a difference in this community that we all serve and enjoy.

• Last week, **Connie Blackwell**, RN and Barron Collier High School nurse, was honored as the *State of Florida School Nurse of the Year*. This prestigious award is based on excellence in school nursing practice and leadership in school health. Connie has been trusted, admired and respected by the 1,710 students and teachers at Barron for the past eight years. Says Erica Szilagyi, a science teacher at the school, "*Connie has become an integral part of Barron*."

Connie is part of an NCH effort to serve the students in the 53 Collier County Public Schools that began in 1996. Last year the 31 School Nurses and 4 School Health Assistants cared for 90,000 students with issues ranging from bumps and scrapes to asthma attacks to control of diabetes and seizures. NCH school nurses also possess the specialized skills to ensure that special needs students have the medical support they need.

• Last week, I also received this letter from a grateful patient, who wrote about one nurse in particular.

"I am in the hospital at least twice a year. The nurse I will speak about is named Andrea [Almodovar]. She is always on the go and makes you feel like you are the only one she has to take care of. When you ring your bell she answers right away. She stays on top of your meds, and comes to you just before it is time to get more pain pills to see if you want them before you ask so you get them on time. She does the work of three people... She makes sure all your needs are met before she goes home at night. I have to let you know she is the best nurse and person I have taking care of me. You should think this hospital is lucky to have her."

I responded to our grateful patient, that we do indeed feel we're "lucky" to have nurses like Andrea.

• And then there's night ER Clinical Coordinator **Eric Macino**, RN, and his ER colleagues, who remind us that service and teamwork can also be fun. Eric and his mates received a 2nd place trophy in the local softball league at Fleishman Park, which caused him to email me, "We had our ups and downs but most of all, this united a group of professionals from techs to nurses, physicians, and secretaries. We went from a last place team to a team that lost the championship by one run. In the stands, we had the support of our families, peers, directors and you." He's right. I did see them play, and they are good. The team did suffer one casualty—Stacie Germain, star second baseman, broke her wrist sliding into third base. Her teammates reunited with Stacie in the ER for a group picture right after the game. (Not many softball teams have such easy access to an ER, but this team has clout!)

We are so fortunate to have nurses like Connie, Andrea, Eric and Stacie. Helping others is a fun, satisfying and noble task. And serving the needs of others is also a wonderful way to overcome the stresses from outside factors, like the faltering economy, which are largely beyond our control.

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.