

July 9, 2009

Dear Friends and Colleagues:

Abraham Lincoln once said, “If I had eight hours to chop down a tree, I’d spend six hours sharpening my axe.”

So it was with our nurse leaders and managers, who last week took time to hone their skills at **Nursing Boot Camp** with Dr. Leah Curtin, a noted nursing educator and leader. This first-ever, week-long training was the inspiration of Linda Gipson, our Chief Nursing Officer, and it was underwritten by the Southwest Florida Workforce Development Grant program.

In this time of profound change in healthcare, it is urgent that all of us continue to develop skills, learn how to manage, and lead in implementing healthcare change. Such continuing education benefits each of us individually, our community, and our nation. No matter how technically competent one is, without strong leadership, teamwork and resource sharing, very little can be accomplished.

At NCH, we are a “team” of more than 3,000 strong—1,000 nurses, 1,000 direct patient care supporters, and 1,000 support staff. Each of us, in the current environment, needs to freshly examine how we can do more with less—in terms of providing care, receiving care, and paying for care. Specifically, we are focused on key processes, such as dietary/nutrition, environmental service, engineering, and revenue cycle—all of which we can directly impact on the ground here in Florida. Beyond these areas, none of us knows what will happen in Washington over the coming months with respect to healthcare.

What we can do is continue to learn, as did those at last week’s Nursing Boot Camp. For example:

- RN **John Rogers**, OR Manager praised the “take homes” regarding new methods in such key areas as budgeting and staffing.
- RN Clinical Coordinators **Jessica D’Agostino** from 4N, **Helen Einer** from 6S, and **Linda McDowell** from 2N, along with others praised the expertise shared at the session, as an important complement to the nursing requisites of compassion, competence, and clinical experience.
- Dr. Curtin emphasized the necessity of *doing the right things* along with *doing things right*. To ensure that such a philosophy pervades an organization, leaders need first to instill in everyone a common vision and then, lead by empowering others to take charge. This was illustrated through a video, *The Art of Possibility*, (http://www.enterprisemedia.com/product/00032/leadership_art_possibility.html?gclid=CJKntfubxpsCFQVuswodWQdqAA) in which an orchestra conductor acknowledged that he doesn’t create one sound, but rather empowers others to come together to make beautiful music. The point being: Never doubt the power of others to do the right things when they are well organized and working together for a common goal.

On the last afternoon of the Nursing Boot Camp, two additional points-to-remember were raised: (1) Don’t take yourself too seriously, and (2) Be able to lead from wherever you stand. What this means is that regardless of one’s formal position in the organization, he or she can and should lead by example.

At NCH, we are blessed with individuals of enormous talent, experience, competence, compassion, and ambition. As all of us continue to learn individually, we will enhance our collective capacity to fulfill our community’s healthcare needs.

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.