

Straight Talk

A weekly update from management on the issues that matter most



March 18, 2010

Dear Friends and Colleagues:

Next week is Volunteer Appreciation Week. And boy, do we *appreciate* our 1,200 NCH volunteers! According to a recent article from the Division of Geriatrics of Johns Hopkins Medical Institution, individuals who are engaged in volunteer work “are objectively healthier” than others.

Our NCH volunteers, led by **Amanda Smith**, Director of Volunteers, and **Lauren Turner**, North Naples Volunteer Coordinator, are a diverse group, indeed, ranging from age 14 to 95. Some were born right here in NCH. Others hail from Russia, Japan, Switzerland, Canada, Philippines, England, Scotland, Haiti, and elsewhere. Last year, all these dedicated people volunteered for an astonishing total of 186,632 hours.

When we think of volunteers, we picture someone welcoming patients and visitors to the hospital or assisting with clerical work. But as Amanda and Lauren point out, our NCH volunteers are involved in many other creative activities, such as:

- “*Arts in Healing Program*,” where patients create anything from a painted silk scarves to a small craft project.
- “*Pet Therapy*,” among the most popular patient activities. I have been surprised to see Zeus, a very friendly and well behaved Doberman Pinscher benignly strolling through our halls.
- “*Music Therapy*” also remains extremely popular, with accomplished guitarist **Ray Griggs** enhancing the ambience of our downtown lobby.
- “*Clowns on Rounds*” leaves a cheerful smile with everyone touched. I’ve even been the proud recipient of one of our clown’s red noses.
- “*Nature in Healing*,” which promotes the healing process by getting patients outdoors into a natural environment, has recently organized excursions through the *Garden of Hope and Courage*.
- Home volunteers include diligent knitters, who create a hat and booties for each of the 3,400 babies born at the *Birth Place* each year. Our volunteer sewing team produces heart pillows, hysterectomy pillows and cough pillows for the approximately 500 open-heart patients each year and countless other post operative patients who find comfort hugging these decorative and functional devices.
- *Project Moses*, our nationally-acclaimed program that saves newborns’ lives by preventing suffocation, is another in which volunteers contribute. *Project Moses* was created to combat early childhood death by aiding parents, who couldn’t afford to purchase a crib or bassinet, forcing newborns to sleep in bed with their parents. Tragically, newborn babies can be inadvertently suffocated when sleeping in their parents’ beds. Through *Project Moses*, we use donated funds to purchase, at a discounted rate from Sunshine Ace Hardware, Rubbermaid storage containers to be used as bassinets. Our volunteers place a thick foam pad in the bottom, sew an attractive liner, and the newborn has a safe place to sleep.
- Finally, our *White Elephant Thrift Store* recycles donated merchandise, from rare antiques to gently-used clothing. One day last month, according to long-time volunteers **Thelma Hodges**, **Margarita Carbello**, and Manager **Cameron Johnson**, the store sold a record \$13,220 of merchandise, part of annual gross receipts of \$531,297.

NCH volunteers are a perfect example of people selflessly working together to serve our community—and “profiting” health wise in the process. Ralph Waldo Emerson once famously wrote, “It is one of the beautiful compensations of life that no man can sincerely help another without helping himself.”

We owe a great deal to our wonderful volunteers. I don’t know what we’d do without them.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Allen".

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.