

May 6, 2010

Dear Friends and Colleagues:

"We are the care you give, the attention you pay, the courtesies you extend. Thank you for all you are doing."

With those words from Connie Merritt, RN, an author and our keynote speaker during National Nurses Week, we honored our 1,623 colleagues in the nursing department—nearly half our total employees, and the heart of NCH.

At the core of this week's celebration was a "State of the Union" address from Chief Nursing Officer (CNO) **Michele Thoman.** Along with Associate CNOs **Laurie Zone-Smith** and **Mariann Cashin,** Michele reviewed a year of achievement and advancement. The highlights included:

- In a year of significant changes, a nursing strategic plan was created and is progressing nicely into the implementation phase. The Professional Alliance Council and committees on Professional Development, Shared Governance, Recruitment/Retention/Recognition, Quality, Nursing Model, Technology, Communication, Research, and Community are either already functioning or about to start. The overall goal of shared governance means having nursing lead and manage nursing care. Both patients and nurses benefit when those who spend the most time with a patient and their family lead and manage the care.
- Included among our colleagues in nursing are 821 RNs, 250 Care Technicians, 39 LPNs, 145 Unit Secretaries and many others with diverse duties ranging from techs to therapists to managers to educators. During 2009 we added 351 colleagues, and the RN vacancy rate has dropped in half to 5% from slightly over 10% six months ago.
- We do a confidential employee survey assessing nursing satisfaction. The survey shows good results relating to meaningful work, staying at NCH, recommending NCH to family and friends as well as feeling accomplished. Shared governance should enhance those positive feelings.
- One current focus in nursing quality is restraint avoidance along with pressure sore, fall, central line, and ventilator-associated pneumonia prevention. All hospitals face these serious challenges, and our patients are doing well on these, with excellent nursing care supported by the latest in technology and "best practices."
- Including our busiest month of March, patient satisfaction has taken an upward trend since January when a task force started working in departments which affect our overall rating and "likelihood to recommend."
- The next mile on the journey includes career ladder development, a staffing/scheduling system accessible from the internet, both an internal and external website, and more input from nursing to continuously improve the quality and comfort of the patient experience. Cerner technology including telemetry enhancements and IV pumps which download information seamlessly are just a few of the tools coming on line to help nurses stay at a patient's bedside.

Let me close with more words from this week's keynote speaker, Connie Merritt, again saluting the outstanding intelligence and caring of our nursing colleagues:

• "You are what people see when they arrive here. Yours are the eyes they look into when they're frightened and lonely. Yours are the voices people hear when they ride the elevators and when they try to sleep and when they try to forget their problems. Yours is the intelligence and caring that people hope they'll find here."

Respectfully,

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

P.S. Feel free to share *Straight Talk* and ask anyone to email me at <u>allen.weiss@nchmd.org</u> to be added.