

Week of August 3, 2009

Your Employee Survey Feedback in action!

As part of your 2008 Employee Survey feedback, you asked to hear more from the various executives in leadership roles at Harbor Hospital. In response, we have invited members of the executive team to write occasional columns. Last month we heard from Dave Pitman, our chief financial officer. Vice President of Human Resources Pam Williams continues the series:



PAM WILLIAMS

I went to Catholic schools. In days gone by, when I thought of “dress codes” it brought up images of school uniforms and saddle shoes.

Today, it has a very different meaning for me. At Harbor Hospital, our dress code is a primary means of how we distinguish ourselves as professionals. It reinforces to our patients, guests and colleagues, subtly but significantly, that Harbor is a place where we value quality and the best possible experience.

Many elements of our dress code are linked directly to patient safety recommendations. Others impact your safety and well-being. I often hear feedback from our associates about aspects of the code that displease them. I recognize that it’s impossible to please everyone, and that our personal tastes are as unique as we are. But the dress code isn’t about style. And enforcement of the dress code is not personal. The dress code is for and about all of us. Compliance with the dress code shows that you support a common set of standards that are based on a variety of considerations including: infection control, patient safety, associate safety, and professionalism.

Every element of the dress code has been thoroughly reviewed, deliberated and examined. The leaders of this hospital engage in ongoing dialogue about the dress code to ensure that it continues to be a code that exemplifies our mission and our values.

A stroll through the hospital on any given shift will offer many examples of violations of the dress code. This will no longer be tolerated. Beginning this week, managers will be reviewing the dress code with all associates. Compliance with these policies is essential for the well-being of both our patient and associate populations. As such, Harbor Hospital leadership will be actively enforcing all policies. We also ask your assistance by reminding your colleagues of our policies when you see a violation. This is a team effort, and one that is imperative.

Thank you for your commitment and dedication to our hospital and our values. With your support, together we will go from good to great.

Identity Theft Seminar

Thursday, Aug. 13, noon to 1 p.m.
Baum Teleconference Room

Harbor Hospital associates are invited to attend this seminar to learn more about the nation’s fastest-growing crime, as well as identity theft consumer laws.



Aug. 10 and Aug. 11, 8 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.
Baum Auditorium
Call ext. 3602 for an appointment.

Neonatal Resuscitation

Need to learn neonatal resuscitation, or just brush up on your skills? A neonatal resuscitation program will be held on **Thursday, June 25 from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.** in the Clinical Simulation Center, located in the LifeResource Center. Registration through SiTELMS is required and closes June 22. Registrants must read the textbook Neonatal Resuscitation, fifth edition, prior to attending the class. This text is available at Harbor’s Health Sciences Library. Please contact Belinda Clifford at ext. 3846 for questions regarding registration.

Uniform City

Scrub Sale

Wednesday, Aug. 5, 7 a.m. to 4 p.m.
Baum Auditorium

Sponsored by the
Harbor Hospital Auxiliary

Welcome

Sheila Rowe

the new patient care manager on NM6.

Look to the reverse side of this issue for a recap of the Town Hall on July 24.

“If I were president...”

Share your ideas for Harbor Hospital—large or small—with Dennis Pullin at HHPresident@medstar.net.

Door Prize Winners

5:30 a.m. — Linda Arnold, Sterile Processing

8:30 a.m. — Diane Faulcon, Pathology

Noon — Linda Putsche, Employee Health and Safety

Trivia Winners

5:30 a.m. — Terry White, NM6

Q: How many associates were hired in June, excluding the residents?

A: 18

8:30 a.m. — Marlene Moon, Quality Management; Charlene McLucas, Medical Transcription; Cynthia Payne, NM6

Q: How many Twitter updates did Mr. Pullin give his first week here?

A: 26

Noon — Barbara Benson, Pathology

Q: How many blood donors did we see at our last blood drive?

A: 55

Q&A

About Mr. Pullin and His Plans for Harbor

Q: How did Dennis Pullin end up at Harbor Hospital?

A: When the opportunity presented, Mr. Pullin was approached by Ken Samet, president and CEO of MedStar Health. He has a broad exposure to health care and he thought Harbor could be good for him and vice versa. Before making his decision, he visited Harbor and walked the halls. He liked the welcome feeling experienced here.

Q: What attracted Mr. Pullin to Harbor Hospital?

A: Harbor Hospital was a tremendous opportunity for him. It was a place he felt he could leave a mark and positively impact the community.

Q: Where does Mr. Pullin see taking the hospital in the future?

A: Harbor Hospital is uniquely positioned to have a great impact on the community. Mr. Pullin would like to extend Harbor's reach into the communities that surround Harbor. He also would like to see us become a destination facility for certain specialties.

Q: What has been Mr. Pullin's most prideful career challenge?

A: He says he knew he had arrived when his undergraduate alma mater, Texas Lutheran University, invited him to be its commencement speaker.

Q: What are Mr. Pullin's plans for reaching out to the community?

A: Harbor Hospital has a strong relationship with the community and Mr. Pullin looks forward to enhancing and extending our outreach. Mr. Pullin wants us to recommit to the community. For example, we sit in an area with a very high rate of lung cancer, he wants to look at growing our services to meet the needs of our communities.

Q: When Mr. Pullin says he wants to recommit to the community, which community does he mean? Baltimore City?

A: The community refers to our service areas, which include the southern region of Baltimore City, northern Anne Arundel County and eastern Baltimore County.

Q: With the inevitable organizational changes, will Mr. Pullin be able to provide staff with an organizational chart?

A: Yes. Currently he's in the process of assessing everything. There may be changes, but he doesn't know what they might be yet.

Benefits and Staffing

Q: How will increases be affected by the economy?

A: At this time, there isn't much to share with you. Mike Curran, MedStar Health's CFO, visited Harbor in June and reported that increases are planned. However, we don't know how large increases will be. They will likely be more modest than in years past.

Q: This year, the cost for medical benefits is frozen, but will this freeze result in significantly higher premiums in the future?

A: Unfortunately we don't have the answer to that question. Predicting the cost of benefits is like predicting the stock market. What we can tell you is that Harbor and MedStar always are looking at what is best for our associates.

Q: It seems like Harbor Hospital has a lot of surgeons who come and go. What gets surgeons to Harbor and what keeps them here?

A: We have a lot of physicians at Harbor who are "splitters," meaning that they work at Harbor as well as other hospitals. Splitters are not uncommon for any hospital. We will refocus our efforts to better understand our physicians, and revisit our strategic plan for recruiting and retention.

Q: Why do we continue to hire for the float pool when existing staff members are taking vacation time because they aren't needed?

A: We usually see a drop in the patient census around this time every year. Keep in mind, although it's July, fall is just around the corner. Fall and winter typically are very busy seasons for our clinical staff. Also, currently there are some areas where we are using a lot of overtime, which indicates that not all of our staffing needs are met.

Q: Why are more sitters being hired when existing sitters are having a hard time getting shifts?

A: The information needed to address this concern was not available during the Town Hall. But please discuss this issue with your manager and/or HR.

Finance

Q: How is the recession impacting Harbor?

A: Health care, and Harbor specifically, is not recession-proof. We have seen increases in bad debt, decreases in elective procedures and we've been impacted by the rising cost of doing business. MedStar Health has seen decreases in the organization's investment portfolio, which led to a cut in capital expenditures (e.g. new equipment, construction and development). Despite these things, Harbor had a fairly good financial outlook for fiscal year 2009 (July 1, 2008 to June 30, 2009).

Q: What will our length of stay strategy be?

A: The current strategy is working. During the past few months our length of stay has decreased significantly. We're not quite at our goal, but we are closer.

Health Care Reform

Q: With President Obama's health care reform, it looks like outpatient health care centers will become more prevalent. How is Harbor preparing?

A: An outpatient strategy will be key to Harbor's future. Fortunately, we are well positioned—we have an outpatient center in Pasadena, (the HealthPark and SurgiCenter). What we will need to do is look at how our outpatient facility can increase volumes for the hospital. We also will look at new ways to reach out into the communities.

Harbor Hospital Policies

Q: This year's flu vaccine will be mandatory; will that extend to the swine flu vaccine?

A: This year's flu vaccine will not include the H1N1 vaccine and H1N1 vaccines will not be mandatory for staff. In fact, the H1N1 vaccine currently is in the trial phase and testing has just begun on human volunteers. Until the trial phase is complete, we won't know if the H1N1 vaccine is safe.

Q: What if you've never taken the flu vaccine; will you be required to take it this year?

A: There will be a small percentage of staff who will not be able to receive the flu vaccine because of religious beliefs and/or allergies. All other associates, physicians, vendors and volunteers will be required to receive the vaccine.

Q: Will our tobacco-free policy ever be fully enforced? Often our patients are at the bus stop smoking.

A: Yes. We need to do a better job enforcing not only our tobacco-free policy, but a number of other policies, such as the dress code.

General Harbor Questions

Q: Are there special plans for this year's Harbor Hospital Week?

A: Yes! For this year's Hospital Week we have many things planned. Stay tuned to *The Compass* for a calendar of events and more information.

Q: Is it possible to have protection services be more visible in the parking lots?

A: There always are officers patrolling our parking lots. However, with eight lots, the officers can't be everywhere at once. If ever you have a concern about safety, please call ext. 3333 and protection services will be happy to provide you with an escort. Also, the call boxes throughout our campus are being updated to better serve you.

Q: It's great that we have a crosswalk, but when will the crosswalk lines be painted?

A: The city will be out to paint lines for the crosswalk when they paint the other lines in the newly repaved road.

Q: Are there any thoughts about bringing a van service back to Harbor for our patients?

A: We have just begun talking about the possibility to reintroduce a van service for patients in extreme weather conditions. We'll let you know what our conversations reveal.

Q: Can we be a more "green" hospital?

A: We can! We've already implemented many green initiatives and we look forward to implementing more.