

HOSPITAL'S NEW VP OF NURSING ENGAGES STAFF IN DECISION-MAKING

ROME (March 2004) – When Durinda K. Durr, R.N., M.S., was named vice president of nursing at Rome Memorial Hospital, she focused her initial efforts on gathering data to understand the hospital's people, systems and culture.

Working side-by-side with the nurses on the floor, Mrs. Durr experienced each shift on each nursing unit. "I believe in and practice participative leadership," Mrs. Durr said, citing her leadership style, direct communication techniques and staff development skills as her strengths.

"The intricate undertaking to attain a working level of participative leadership is gaining staff trust and helping them to understand the high level of accountability and responsibility associated with participative leadership and management and the commitment they must make for it to be successful and rewarding," she explained.

She plans to engage staff in the decision-making process by first engaging them in learning and practicing the fundamentals of participative management, and through this process, develop leadership qualities of staff at all levels.

"Participative leadership starts with productive direct communication," Mrs. Durr said. "It's creating an environment where people are encouraged to provide constructive feedback and take responsibility for advancing solutions to problems."

Mrs. Durr has more than 20 years of leadership experience in healthcare. Before accepting the position at Rome Memorial Hospital, she was the director of Patient Care/Support Services at Bassett Healthcare in Cooperstown. Mrs. Durr received her bachelor's degree in nursing from Syracuse University and her master's degree in nursing administration from SUNY IT.

She is a member of the Central New York Organization of Nursing Executives, Otsego LTC Advisory Board, Utica College Advisory Board and SUNY Morrisville Nursing Division Advisory Committee.

Mrs. Durr said she was attracted to Rome Memorial Hospital because she "heard good things in the community about the hospital's leadership." The interview process convinced her that it was a great place to work. "I was impressed with the thoroughness of the process. I met many people throughout the organization and they were open, candid and relaxed."

As a new leader in the organization, Mrs. Durr said her goal is "to expand upon an already intact patient care delivery system with a goal towards excellence in our community based healthcare system."

Hospital pursues 'Magnet' recognition



Pursuing "Magnet status" is one of the tools the Nursing Department will utilize in its pursuit of excellence. Only two percent of hospitals nationwide have earned the honor of being Magnet hospitals. The Magnet Recognition Program was created following a study of what factors led some hospitals to be more successful at recruiting and retaining nurses.

"The purpose of going through preparation and achieving Magnet Status is to promote a quality environment that supports professional nursing practice and provides a framework to build programs of nursing excellence in the delivery of care to our patients," Mrs. Durr said.

"This is a journey and an investment that will take time and concerted effort from all. The process began before my arrival and is progressing at a slow, but steady pace, which is to our advantage," she said. "What I mean by that is all good things come in time, this isn't something that can be accomplished on paper only, and it must be a lived experience with active leadership and staff participation and commitment."

The expected outcome is a shift in organizational culture to one of increased stability in patient care systems across the organization and recognition within the community for excellence in nursing services.

With the national nursing shortage, recruiting and retaining staff is a major priority for hospitals. "I plan to engage our best resource, the nurses themselves, as ambassadors, recruiters and retainers," Mrs. Durr explained. "If they are satisfied with their work environment and the quality of care they provide to our patients they will convey that to others who may be seeking employment in healthcare."

The Rewards of Nursing

When Mrs. Durr chose to become a nurse, it was a decision by default, but one she doesn't regret. "I had originally aspired to become a physical education teacher, however at the time there was an overabundance and my mother suggested nursing," she said. "I'm very happy she pointed me in that direction because I have had a fantastic career in nursing. It has afforded me many rewarding opportunities."

Mrs. Durr shared the following story as just one example of the rewards nursing offers.

"I was working at Scottish Rite Pediatric Hospital in Atlanta, Ga., as a float RN, which I loved since it allowed me to care for all ages and illnesses. I had always had a passion for pediatrics because children give back so much more than they receive and they are so versatile and resilient under the most devastating circumstances.

"One morning I was going through my usual routine with an 8-year-old boy who had diabetes insipidus and a neurogenic bladder. The routine first consisted of a bath, during which, I would have to firmly and repeatedly stop him from drinking his bath water. Individuals with this condition often have an unquenchable thirst and will drink any liquid available.

"I would then proceed to catheterize him, give him an injection and literally blow about 2ccs of a hormonal preparation through a tube up his nose. He was a very active boy despite his situation, and dressing him was almost as much fun as trying to stop him from drinking his bath water and blowing medication into his nose. It took a bit of firm, but gentle coercing, and only after I had plucked him out of the air as he jumped around his bed, taunting me with 'you can't catch me' was I usually able to dress him.

“One day when we had finished this harried routine and I was dressing him on his bed he was standing at near eye level with me when he put his arms around my neck, gave me a peck on the cheek and said ‘I really love you’. I nearly died on the spot from overwhelming joy.

“Only a child could offer a reward of such value after being tormented with a catheter into his bladder, a needle in his leg, a tube up his nose, denial of sought after water, and being plucked out of the air while pretending to be superman. I knew at that moment I had made the right choice.”

Mrs. Durr lives in New Hartford with her husband, Nicholas.