

Gone Green

First and foremost, with a New Year has come an exciting new affiliation for the MHC. Through a collaborative effort and mutual interest, the MHC has joined MISHE, the Michigan Society of Health Care Engineers. The MHC board explored and agreed to the merger so that its membership can take advantage of shared resources, and we anticipate that both organizations are opening the door to a much wider membership base. Many thanks to John Hohman, Jeannette Glen and the respective board members who made this affiliation possible! When you get a chance, please visit the MISHE website at MISHE.org. Click on "Affiliations" in the lower right hand corner.

So anyway, there's a bunch of talk these days about going GREEN. Unfortunately, there's not much talk about how to get more GREEN in our 401Ks, 403Bs or wallets for that matter. Having said that, I'll stop whining and preserve that right for those who have something to really whine about, of whom there are far too many in our state and nation.

As some of you may know, I had the pleasure of spending a few months at a hospital in Vermont – a very GREEN state in many ways. The hospital I worked with, Fletcher Allen, (FA), has been doing a fair measure of recycling for some time, but has most recently started recycling in Patient Rooms. And just last week they completed a pilot program inside the Surgical Suites. I had a couple of my surgical services folks join me on a conference call and we are planting some seeds to pilot something in the ORs here at WBH Troy.

But I'm getting ahead of myself so let me step back just a bit. I came back from my months at FA with some new enthusiasm and new ideas on how to GREEN up WBH. Like many hospitals we have been recycling some things for years; paper (actually this is our confidential materials destruction process,) xylene and some other chemicals, batteries, paints, and some building materials. And some departments have had their own little recycling programs for plastics and other items. But we didn't do a very good job of letting people know what we were doing or what other departments are doing. We (I) was getting more and more contacts from staff and the community – some very critical – like why we don't provide a place for outpatients to rinse out and place their empty barium bottle for recycling - and a lot of "why don't we do this or that" type of phone calls and letters.

And with all of the global warming talk, Al Gore movies, cost reduction activities, tons of press on LEED certification and a growing throng of local tree-huggers, I figured it was time to really organize the GREEN efforts and put some structure in place. With one of the primary goals – shared responsibility and getting it off of the backs of housekeeping and materials management to implement and sustain. I wanted an overarching campaign to align efforts of the various departments and eco-friendly practices already taking place.

So, I had our public relations department put out a message to our 3,000 staff volunteers and physicians that a GREEN

TEAM is being assembled and is looking for interested parties. The message was that all are welcome, but...

I need drivers, not passengers.

I got quite a few people, maybe 20, to the table for the first meeting in August 08. Since then, our boardroom fills every month and we currently have 82 volunteers, staff and physicians on our core committee and sub-committees. We fashioned a mission statement and charter, the former being: **Beaumont Hospitals' Green Team is committed to implementing cost-effective solutions to reduce waste, conserve energy, educate employees on conservation and direct them to resources where they can learn more about environmental issues.**

I start every meeting welcoming new members, and we now have two members of our community on the team (one wrote a letter, one I met while I was Leader Greetering in our lobby (subject for a later newsletter.) I thanked them for their comments but asked them both to "put your green where your mouth is." They have and are part of the core team.

The remaining agenda for the meeting is very simple. The sub-committees meet off-line at least once a month as well, and bring their ideas to the core-committee for discussion, support and resources. We have four sub-committees: the Three Rs, Energy Awareness, Construction and Materials, and Communication and Education, the latter having a presence on all of the other sub-committees. The Education and Communication sub-committee also helped us build a web-site with links to the sub-committees and tips and eco-friendly ideas for staff to use both at home and at work.

But again, the mantra is that we are all **drivers**, so we limit discussion on half-baked ideas at the core group. The sub-committee chairs are required to bring answers and process. And the plans need to include participation at the grass-roots level. For example, we are recycling plastic bottles, but departments must make sure the bottles are rinsed and then get one of the staff to get them to the holding area on the loading dock.

And it's true that these types of efforts need support from the top. So when I presented to the chairman of the board of directors, his thumbs up gave us a full head of steam to propel us forward. I hope you all have success in your GREEN endeavors (we will be discussing at a one day conference in May.)

But for now, I have to excuse myself. It's my turn to take the plastic bottles to the dock.

mvm