No margin, no mission.” These were the words uttered by the administrator of a large hospital system during a meeting around the boardroom table. It was a response to an ongoing debate about what was more important: fulfilling the mission of the hospital system or focusing on making a positive bottom line. It would be easy to read these words and get the vision of the speaker as a hard-nosed, penny-pinching hospital administrator. It would be easy to get that impression, but then there is the rest of the story …

These were actually the words of Sister Irene Kraus of the Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul, a woman who spent her life caring for others. She was born into a family of seven children and loved trains (her father was a railroad executive). She started her career as a school teacher and later became a nurse before moving into the field of hospital administration. Before passing on in 1998, she offered a simple response when queried regarding her goal in life: “To help those in need.” Perhaps this background sheds light on Sister Kraus …

Skiff baby wins $1,000 college savings giveaway from state of Iowa

State Treasurer Michael L. Fitzgerald awarded a $1,000 College Savings Iowa account to Jackson Riney, the most recent winner in the Baby 529 Giveaway. Jackson was born on Dec. 14, 2009, at Skiff Medical Center, to parents Casie and Matthew Riney of Newton.

The College Savings Iowa BABY 529 Giveaway awards this special gift each month to a single baby, selected at random, from all entries received statewide. Sixty-six Iowa hospitals are currently participating in the program.

Participants in the College Savings Iowa BABY 529 Giveaway ceremony on Wednesday afternoon were, left to right, OB nurse Vicki Schut, big sister Alex Riney, father Matthew Riney, OB nurse Carla Johnson, mother Casie Riney, baby Jackson Riney, family physician Dr. Min Pak, State Treasurer Michael L. Fitzgerald, board chair Debby Pence, CEO Steve Long and interim OB Director Nancy Burke.

“I am pleased that Skiff Medical Center joined our effort to increase awareness about the benefits of saving (continued on page 6)
Abel welcomes granddaughter

Congratulations to Cindy Abel, CMA, of Monroe Health Services, on the birth of her granddaughter, Caylei Ann, measuring 5 lbs., 5 oz.

Bag/tote sales to benefit military families

Loretta Bowman of IT is currently selling messenger bags and pocket totes made from military uniforms for $35 each. All proceeds go to the Home of the Brave Quilt Project. To learn more, call Loretta at (641) 417-8332.

Under-18 visitor restrictions lifted

Due to low H1N1 activity, Skiff Medical Center is lifting the current restrictions on visitors. Previously, visitors were asked not to bring in children under 18 unless they were being treated, were visiting a sibling in OB or were visiting a Hospice patient.

Skiff birthdays

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tiffany Ahn</td>
<td>Jan. 31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhonda McCray</td>
<td>Jan. 31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cindy McDermott</td>
<td>Feb.  2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sara VanMaaren</td>
<td>Feb.  3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robert Hauber</td>
<td>Feb.  4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rachel Marks</td>
<td>Feb.  4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melissa Ziesman</td>
<td>Feb.  4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ami Swank</td>
<td>Feb.  6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tamara Nook</td>
<td>Feb.  6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karri Woody</td>
<td>Feb.  7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angie Barnes</td>
<td>Feb.  7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lisa Hopkins</td>
<td>Feb.  7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Ron Charles</td>
<td>Feb.  7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christine Larson</td>
<td>Feb. 10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thanks for great emergency and inpatient care

I work in the Emergency Department and was on the other side of it on Jan. 15 when my granddaughter Alviah Ross was brought over from the Newton Clinic with breathing difficulty. The staff worked with speed to get her comfortable. They quickly got her ready for the Blanks peds ambulance to pick her up. She was in Blanks Pediatric Intensive Care Unit until Sunday afternoon, then transferred to a regular room.

She is home now and doing great, it is so good to have our smiling, happy healthy-looking Alviah back. Thank you, everyone, for your prayers and words of encouragement. What a blessing we received.

Our family wanted to thank everyone working that day. All of you did a wonderful job. Great teamwork! Thanks to Dr. Paul Ruggle and Dr. Tariq Mallick, Vicki Gunsaulus, Sandy Van Zee, Linda Chrismore, Lisa Dobbie, Cindy McDermott, Scott Pline, Cindy Ahn, Amanda Goode, Grant Worthington, Lorna Marter and anyone we’ve accidentally left out.

In addition, thanks to Dr. Ruggle, Dr. Reinertson and Dr. Jeff Wright and all the staff who cared for me while I was an inpatient Jan. 8-11. Everyone was so kind, caring and compassionate. We truly have great people working here at Skiff.

— Deb Huysen and family

Divine Desserts Cooking Class

6 p.m., Tuesday, Feb. 9
HyVee Club Room

Join Jenny Thompson, RDLD, CDE, in this free class, where you’ll learn how to make sweets that aren’t too sinful. Participants will earn credit toward their Healthy “U” report cards. Recipes and samples will be provided.

Seating is limited, so please call HyVee at (641) 792-7030 to register.
Donations requested for wounded U.S. soldiers overseas

Jeff Lemley of Radiology is asking people to join him in his ongoing support of wounded soldiers at Landstuhl Regional Medical Center (LRMC) in Germany. This facility is where the majority of injured U.S. soldiers are transferred to when serving in the Middle East, Persian Gulf areas and Europe. “With the surge in Afghanistan, more and more soldiers are being wounded,” Jeff said. “They arrive at LRMC daily.”

Donations of the following items would be greatly appreciated:

- Burger King gift certificates (the restaurant is near the hospital)
- international calling cards
- sweat suits (sizes small through extra large)
- fall and winter jackets (sizes medium through extra large, both men’s and women’s)
- undershirts (green or tan, sizes medium through extra large)
- small, battery-operated alarm clocks
- socks (black, olive green or white; cotton or wool)
- patriotic accessories (U.S. flags, state flags, bandannas, baseball hats, football jerseys, banners, etc.)
- small, battery-operated alarm clocks
- undershirts (green or tan, sizes medium through extra large)
- fall and winter jackets (sizes medium through extra large, both men’s and women’s)
- undershirts (green or tan, sizes medium through extra large)
- fall and winter jackets (sizes medium through extra large, both men’s and women’s)
- small, battery-operated flashlights

TASC debuts new service request process

The new service request process is in place for TASC (Total Administrative Services Corporation).

Please submit any future questions using the new on-line Service Request, using the following steps:

- Login to MyTASC (www.tasconline.com) using your 12-digit ID and six-digit PIN.
- Click on Contact Us in the upper right-hand corner.
- Click on Submit a Service Request. This will open a new page with the e-mail submission form.
- Select a Main Topic and a Sub-Topic.
- Use the free-form text box to ask your question or describe your Service Request.
- Submit the question and save the Service Request number you receive in your e-confirmation.
- Refer to that number in future communication about the email you submitted.
- Expect a reply within 24-48 hours.

E-mails sent to service@tasconline.com are currently receiving a response within three to five business days. E-mails submitted through the new online Service Request process will receive a 24-48 hour response time. Hands down, the new method is faster and easier.

If your question is extremely time sensitive, please contact the Customer Service Department at (800) 422-4661 for assistance. Representatives are available to speak with you from 8 a.m.-5 p.m. on Monday, Tuesday and Thursday, and 9 a.m.-5 p.m. on Wednesday and Friday.

---

Grateful words from Melody’s family

There aren’t enough ways or words to express the many thanks that need to be said to cover all the many blessings we have received during this difficult time with the illness and death of our beloved Melody. Thanks for helping with even the smallest of details, words of comfort, flowers, food, memorial donations and attending the beautiful service by Rev. Tenny Hinshaw. The huge amount of support we received truly shows us how many lives Melody touched.

– the Family of Melody Wright

Thank you for the outpouring of support

Our Radiology family would like to thank everyone here at Skiff for the outpouring of support during the past seven weeks. We are so appreciative of all the kind words, generous donations and many offers to help. It has been such a difficult time for all of us and we are more thankful than ever to be part of the Skiff family.

– the Radiology Department
The Pulse (continued from page 1)

what Sister Irene meant when she coined this phrase that is famous in hospital leadership circles. Sister Irene was indicating that the ability of the hospital to meet its mission of providing care for patients would not be possible unless there was funding to support that mission. The funding comes from the ongoing operations of the hospital, so it is imperative that the hospital is in a positive financial situation.

In order to meet the health-care needs of our community, we must have a margin which supports our operations.

This idea – no margin, no mission – applies equally well to Skiff Medical Center. In order to meet the health-care needs of the members of our community, we must have a margin which supports our operations. The last few years have been difficult financially. The current year is the worst so far. Our loss so far this year is nearly $3 million. The month of December alone had a loss of $500,000. Sounds grim, doesn’t it? But let’s look a bit closer. We are only a few months past a very painful reduction in force and are just beginning to see the positive impact of these expense reductions on our financial statements. We have recognized more bad debt on our financial statements so far this year than in any other past year. Bad debt is an expense associated with personal balances owed to our hospital by patients. Bad debt has increased due to the economic downturn, as well as the lack of oversight on collecting these accounts due to turnover in hospital leadership during the past few years. Had we recognized the traditional $300,000 per month in bad debt in December rather than more than $800,000, we would have essentially broken even for the month.

Our current projections indicate that, going forward, we should be able to continue operations without reaching into our reserves each month to cover our losses. To use a comparison to our personal finances: For the last year we have been living off our savings, but we have now improved to the point where we are living from paycheck to paycheck. What we need to do is get to the point where the cash coming in is high enough to cover the cash going out, plus put money away in savings to replace aging facilities and equipment (putting money away is called depreciation). Our ultimate goal is to end each year with a positive margin of 5 percent that can be used to fund future programs to support our patients.

Our expense reduction efforts have bought us the time we need to focus on growth through physician recruitment and encouraging members of our community to seek care here rather than going to Des Moines. We have bought the time to incrementally match our expense structure to our volumes through attrition rather than across-the-board reductions in force. I am certain that during the course of the next 18-24 months, we can return to long-term profitable operations, but only by working together to find better ways of providing care and by reaching out to our community and encouraging them to seek their care from us.

We can return to long-term profitable operations, but only by working together.

On Tuesday I was interviewed by a reporter from the Newton Daily News and was asked, “What do you need to do to boost employee and physician satisfaction?” My response was that in the first seven business days on the job, I have learned that the employees and physicians in this medical community are friendly people of passion, hope, optimism, ambition, innovation and perseverance. Along with physician recruitment, those are key ingredients for growth and getting our margin back.

Our paradigm has shifted. We each need to do our jobs a bit differently. Like an elite athlete with the game on the line, a person’s heart, character and mental toughness are just as, if not more, important as their ability to get the job done.

We are not out of the woods yet, but we can see the light through the trees!

---

EMS refresher course to offer 24 hours of continuing ed.

The Jasper County EMS Association is hosting a 24-hour National Refresher Course the weekend of Feb. 20-21. This course, which is an excellent opportunity to obtain up to 24 hours of continuing education credits, will be offered free of charge for Skiff physicians, nurses and EMTs working within Jasper County. The class will be held in the Skiff Inservice Room from 8 a.m.-8 p.m. each day, with food provided.

Additional information on specific sessions included will be coming soon. You do not need to attend the entire weekend to obtain credit. You will receive credit for the hours you are there, so you can choose which topics interest you.

Advanced registration is needed, so if anyone is interested, please call Stephanie Machin at Ext. 4814 no later than Thursday, Feb. 11.
**Pharmacy to hold drawing**

The pharmacy will be holding a drawing to give away old reference books. Please stop by the pharmacy to sign up. Names will be drawn on Feb. 11.

**Changes to payroll deduction programs**

As Skiff continues to work to improve our finances, effective immediately we are no longer offering payroll deduction for the purchase of Dell products or the Obagi product line.

Please note that the Dell employee discount program will continue to be offered. However, arrangements for the actual transaction and payment will be between the employee and Dell. An employee can apply for a credit through Dell. If approved, Dell offers 12 months interest-free on your purchase. Another option is to pay in full at the time of purchase with a personal credit card.

More information for the Dell purchase program is located on Skiff’s Intranet by clicking on “IT” with a link to Dell’s Web site.

Skiff will continue to honor the payroll deductions for those individuals currently in the program until payment has been made in full.

**How to walk safely through a winter wonderland**

Slips, trips and falls are the second most common cause of accidental deaths in the U.S. each year, second only to traffic accidents. While fatalities are rare outcomes, painful, sometimes debilitating injuries can result from slips, trips and falls. Many of these injuries are preventable through simple safety precautions:

- Transition risk – use special care when entering and exiting buildings or vehicles; use handrails or the vehicle for support.
- Parking lots – almost 80 percent of slips and falls due to snow and ice occur in parking lots and on sidewalks, with more than 50 percent occurring between 6 a.m. and noon.
- North-facing entrances – these tend to remain icy, so when possible, avoid north-facing entrances to buildings.
- Appropriate footwear – rubber and neoprene composite boots and shoes will give more traction than leather or plastic.
- Slick surfaces – when walking on slippery surfaces, slow down, bend knees slightly, take small steps, walk flat-footed and keep a hand free for balance.
- Be smart – don’t carry heavy items that can impair your balance (including children). Slow down and watch for hazards. Use handrails where available.
- Indoor risks – wet surfaces are a huge risk, so be careful when entering buildings.

**Condolences**

Our thoughts are with surgeon Dr. Gary Richardson following the recent death of his mother.

**Update on Live Healthy Iowa**

So far, five teams and 35 employees have registered for the LHI 100-Day Challenge. They’ve lost one pound (and counting) and logged 22 hours of activity.

- Way to go!
- Slick surfaces – when walking on slippery surfaces, slow down, bend knees slightly, take small steps, walk flat-footed and keep a hand free for balance.
- Be smart – don’t carry heavy items that can impair your balance (including children). Slow down and watch for hazards. Use handrails where available.
- Indoor risks – wet surfaces are a huge risk, so be careful when entering buildings.

Information courtesy of the Iowa Department of Public Health.
**A note of thanks**

I want to thank Dr. Teressa Van Zee, Dr. T.Y. Chan and all of the rest of the great nurses and aids who made my stay at Skiff on Sept. 14, 2009, a safe and pleasant one.

Thanks to all who make our hospital a great one to go to.

– Barb Miller, Newton

**Donations**

(continued from page 3)

designated box in the cafeteria or contact Jeff in Radiology.

“I want to thank everyone who has already donated items to be sent to the injured soldiers at LMRC,” Jeff said. “These young men and women are fighting for our freedom.”

**College savings** (continued from page 1)

for college,” Fitzgerald said. “We want families to get a jump start on saving from day one because while the value of a college education is priceless, the cost of it can be overwhelming.”

College Savings Iowa is a state-sponsored 529 plan designed to give families a tax-advantaged way to save money for college. Investors can choose from 13 Vanguard investment options. Iowa taxpayers can deduct up to $2,811 in contributions per beneficiary account from their adjusted gross income in 2010, and there are no income or residency restrictions. Withdrawals used to pay for qualified higher education expenses including tuition, books, supplies, and room and board are free of state and federal taxes. Funds can be used at any accredited college, university, community college or technical training school in the United States or abroad. For more information on College Savings Iowa, call [888] 672-9116 or visit www.collegesavingsiowa.com.