

Taking care of employees helps them take better care of your patients

BY KENNETH L. SHUR

[Editor's note: Waynesboro (PA) Hospital last fall topped Modern Healthcare magazine's 2008 list of the "100 Best Places to Work in Healthcare." The 64-bed hospital's commitment to employee and patient satisfaction also has received high marks from VHA Inc. and "Best Places to Work in Pennsylvania," an awards program sponsored by state business and community groups – among others. Kenneth L. Shur, the hospital's vice president and chief operating officer, describes his organization's recipe for success.]

As a rural hospital in Pennsylvania, we struggle every day to overcome the challenges that many American hospitals face, including physician shortages, declining reimbursements, aging facilities and access to capital. Yet, in the face of those challenges, we continue to excel thanks to the culture created by our team. We're fortunate to have great people who give great care – to patients and to each other.

We accepted our award as the top employer on *Modern Healthcare's* list of the "100 Best Places to Work in Healthcare" last October at a banquet in Chicago. We were asked what we do that is different from other hospitals.

We have a simple answer: We don't believe we do anything different or special. We just try to do the right thing every day and place a strong emphasis on care. From service excellence training that's emphasized in new employee orientation sessions to the culture itself, doing the right thing and treating people with respect is weaved into everything we do. We believe that taking care of our employees helps them take better care of our patients. These are some keys to our suc-

cess – values that are standard in our culture.

It's about the team, not the individual.

At each level of the organization, every person is considered an essential part of the team. Everyone's input is welcome and everyone feels comfortable helping others. Our employees are Waynesboro Hospital. When our patients feel good about the care they received here, it was because of the service our employees provided.

We lead at all levels. We try to lead the organization from two directions: bottom up and top down. We believe that input from front-line staff allows managers to get the essential information and input necessary to make informed decisions. This empowers our employees, gives them ownership of decisions, and promotes consensus.

All levels of leadership are visible every day. We ask questions and receive a lot of feedback from staff. Our managers interact with their employees and build strong relationships with them.

We're serious about developing leaders. We invest in developing current leaders in the organization, and we also actively identify future leaders who receive formal development training.

We don't practice "assembly line" medicine. Clinical staff members have time to get to know the patient and relate to them on a personal level. We believe this is key not only to patient satisfaction, but to the overall healing process. And when our patients feel better, we feel better.

We have a great support system. We enjoy a tremendous amount of support



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from the members of our medical staff, our volunteer board of directors, our auxiliary and our hospital volunteers.

We interview and hire around our core values. We use a behavior-based interview process to identify people who can embody integrity, compassion, service and excellence.

We hire from within. Whenever possible, we aim to fill open positions by promoting employees from within the organization. In addition to the opportunities this opens for our employees, the payoffs in continuity and stability are priceless.

We provide educational opportunities. Our staff is encouraged to learn new skills, so we provide a variety of training as well as tuition reimbursement and degree-earning options.

We pay well. From a human resources perspective, we're proactive in paying staff at competitive market rates instead of taking time to catch up to changes in pay rates within the market.

We practice the people side of leadership. Task-oriented leadership is necessary because the work has to get done. Understanding the people side of being a leader – how to relate to and motivate employees, becoming emotionally intelligent, learning how to collaborate to reach consensus – we've found this to be essential to our success.

At the core of all these is listening. We listen to each other. We listen to our patients. And if you listen closely, you can still hear the buzz of excitement at Waynesboro Hospital where great people are the key to great care.

For more on Waynesboro Hospital's commitment to building a thriving workforce, visit www.summithealth.org and click on "Waynesboro Hospital."