



# A GROWING UNDERSTANDING

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**H**ospitals and health care systems everywhere are growing in their understanding of our interrelationship with Earth and the gift of healing it brings. All parts of creation communicate some aspect of the Divine Mystery, and must be vital and functioning for every other part to be vital and functioning. Making this connection is key to our survival.

This may be a good time to ask ourselves some critical questions: How much waste and greenhouse gas do our facilities emit? How do the products we purchase, their side effects, and the methods we use to dispose of them affect our environment? Are we promoting safe and cost-effective alternatives? What kind of buildings are we constructing?

These are spiritual and strategic issues woven into the very fabric of how we provide health care and how we do business. Our answers to these questions reflect our values as much as do the compassion, skill, and

respect we extend to our patients and one another.

The environmental movement in health care is gaining momentum. No doubt about it. It's taking hold in unimaginable and creative ways. Individuals, health systems, group purchasing organizations, vendors, and environmental organizations are collaborating to keep the momentum going, to create models of health care that work, and to nurture the ecological sensitivities that are sorely needed in the 21st century. Opportunities to engage one another in this daunting yet breathtaking mission abound! Everyone's wisdom, voice, and commitment are needed more than ever to make the leap into a sustainable future.

With this special section, *Health Progress* furthers the dialogue with articles that describe the connections between human health and environmental quality and focus on critical partnerships that promote our healing mission. □

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