



SPREADING OUR STORIES

Ascension's Focus on Values

BY SR. DANIELLE BONETTI, CSJ

St. Mary's Hospital,
Amsterdam, N.Y.

The values cherished by an individual hospital or a larger system — in our case, Ascension Health — are more than just expressions of high ideals. The values embody the motivational attitudes that translate into specific concrete behaviors for each associate's work. They drive the work of integrating mission into the day-to-day operations in a hospital and directly shape the care of our patients.

Ascension Health's six core values are: service to the poor, reverence, integrity, wisdom, creativity and dedication. At St. Mary's Hospital, the spirituality and mission committee made operationalizing the values into our healing work a year-long project goal.

The committee began by first measuring our associates' actual awareness of the values. In an informal cafeteria survey, "can you find our values," associates were asked to select Ascension Health's six core values from among 20 positive words. The committee was surprised when survey results revealed that only about 20 percent of those surveyed recognized all six core values.

Based on this information the committee created a multi-focused plan to increase values awareness. It included:

- Featuring bi-weekly articles in the associate newsletter, written by a variety of hospital leaders, addressing one of the values and how this value shaped their ministry
- Using a train-the-trainer approach to empower managers to facilitate a "values awareness" exercise at department staff meetings. It included a prayer, and a brief PowerPoint presentation on the meaning of each of the core values.
- Approaching values as deeply held attitudes that drive behavior, presentation points included

the meaning and significance of each core value, followed by discussion aimed at eliciting the behavioral implications of each value for a given department's work. The exercise concluded with each department creating a "values-in-action" poster.

- Professionally producing and framing the posters, featuring the actual words and picture of associates, and hanging them throughout the hospital and all clinical service centers

Ascension Health's six core values are: service to the poor, reverence, integrity, wisdom, creativity and dedication.

Over 80 percent of our associates participated in the department level discussions in a six-month period. At the conclusion of the project the committee conducted another informal cafeteria survey and the results showed that value recognition had risen to about 90 percent.

The spirituality and mission committee rates this project among the most satisfying and effective work the committee has done. Managers and associates have begun using "values language" more frequently and, therefore, the connection between values and mission-inspired behaviors occurs more naturally and more often.

This work is not just another completed project; it is the core to the work of mission integration. The challenge now is to find new ways to keep the values alive and integrated as new associates are hired, new projects begin and new services are developed.

SR. BONETTI is vice president of mission integration at St. Mary's.