

# Together We Can Do More

BY MICHAEL D. CONNELLY

**A**s I look forward to the next year as chair of the Catholic Health Association, my hope is that the members of CHA will pull together to make Catholic healthcare more visible and more influential. My predecessor, Sr. Doris Gottemoeller, RSM, emphasized our unity with the theme "CHA is us." Now we are positioned, by the solidarity we have built, to take a more active role in making a difference in society, guided by a new theme: "Together we can do more."

## NEW STRATEGIC PLAN

CHA has taken steps toward this active role. In a longer range approach to planning, its strategic plan for 1999-2002 sets goals in four areas: Catholic identity, health policy and initiatives, Church relations, and ministry transformation. These four strategic directions will be the focus of CHA activities for the next three years, though the degree of emphasis will vary from year to year.

Our success will require the active participation of all CHA members, as well as many other groups that are part of the Church's health ministry. The following overview provides a more concrete sense of precisely how CHA intends to pursue these four strategic directions.

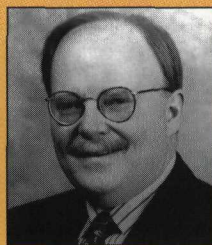
**Catholic Identity** The plan identifies specific projects that will strengthen our ability to understand, articulate, and act on Catholic identity, including:

- A common statement of Catholic identity
- A benchmarking process that will demonstrate how constitutive elements of Catholic identity are translated into operations and will determine measures for organizational performance

- A national communications campaign to increase understanding of Catholic healthcare

**Health Policy and Initiatives** This strategic initiative will involve CHA as a catalytic agent in moving the nation toward a national consensus on the need for accessible and affordable healthcare for all. Efforts include:

- Promoting grassroots advocacy
- Forming coalitions
- Initiating a communications campaign to build



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political support

- Continuing advocacy of incremental changes in health policy that promote community health and high-quality care, expand coverage, and strengthen not-for-profit healthcare

**Church Relations** This strategic initiative will focus CHA on creating new and improved vehicles for communications and collaboration among sponsors, bishops, and healthcare leaders. CHA will convene a national think tank for these three groups to develop methods for addressing vital issues that need to be better coordinated within these Church constituencies.

**Ministry Transformation** CHA will foster collaboration among Catholic healthcare organizations and other groups integral to the Church's healing ministry, such as Catholic Charities, housing, parishes, by:

- Developing a shared strategic vision statement for the health ministry
- Improving community health by promoting affordable senior housing and integration of acute and long-term care and by encouraging parish-based services

## WE NEED TO ACT TOGETHER

CHA's four strategic directions are integrally related to an overarching and urgent need: the need for all of us to become more focused on the just treatment of all members of our society. In particular, this year CHA will be pursuing more effective ways to reform our nation's fragmented healthcare system, which throws up insurmountable barriers to healthy communities and leaves thousands uninsured. We will be a more vocal voice for a new comprehensive approach to health policy.

In dialogue with many groups beginning this year, we will make it clear that healthcare can no longer be a private obligation for some and a governmental obligation for others. The U.S. model is not working. We must use our moral influence and collective strength to help the nation understand the human and financial costs of failing to correct our system's deficiencies. If we work together, the potential benefits are enormous. □