

To the Rue du Bac, by Way of the Internet



Ed Giganti is senior director, ministry leadership development, Catholic Health Association, St. Louis.

Every two years, Fr. George Hazler, vice president for leadership formation at the Daughters of Charity Health System (DCHS) in California, leads a group of executives on a heritage pilgrimage to France. They tour important sites in the lives of St. Vincent de Paul, St. Louise de Marillac, and St. Catherine Laboure in towns around the country as well as in Paris. Of course, in Paris their pilgrimage includes a visit to the motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity on the Rue du Bac.

The pilgrimage can be a profound formation event in the lives of these leaders, but logistics limit the number who can participate. But now, thanks to the Internet, DCHS is able to “send” leaders at all levels in the system’s six health ministries on a heritage journey.

“Journey” is the metaphor that is central to Spiritus, the system’s leadership formation program, which Fr. Hazler calls “a macro way of forming leaders.” Spiritus (Latin for breath of life, inspiration, spirit) includes a variety of experiences—retreats, conferences, the heritage pilgrimage—and formation “journeys.”

Through the journeys, some online, some in-person, the leaders, or “travelers,” will capture the spirit of the Daughters of Charity that has characterized their health ministry. “The question is, how do we keep the mission and values of the Daughters alive?” Fr. Hazler told me when I visited him at the DCHS headquarters in Los Altos Hills, CA. “We conducted a needs assessment three years ago and asked our associates about their knowledge of the Daughters’ heritage. Many of our people had joined our organizations during the years when they were part of Catholic Healthcare West. Those people had little or no idea who the Daughters were.”

“The Daughters have always had lay leaders

working with them since their foundation in 1633,” Chris Condon said. Condon is director of organizational development for DCHS and its O’Connor Hospital in San Jose. He has been a principal developer of Spiritus along with Fr. Hazler. “Fr. George had a vision of Spiritus as a program for grooming lay leaders to carry forward the mission and values of the Daughters.”

ONLINE JOURNEY

Not surprisingly then, as Fr. Hazler, Condon, and others began developing the Spiritus program, the heritage of the Daughters of Charity was the topic of the first formation “journey.” Created by Condon as an online learning module, the Leadership Heritage Journey begins with a creative, game-like tool that invites interactivity. Once signed on to the Leadership Journey’s site, a user encounters an animated figure of St. Vincent de Paul that can, by using the mouse or keyboard, be moved up, down, right, or left. As the figure is moved, a map of Paris is revealed. When the user moves the Vincent figure onto certain spots on the map, lessons are launched. First is a brief animation that asks the question, “Were you always a leader?” A video of Fr. Hazler describing the history of the Daughters comes next, and with it an invitation to carry on their spirit by leading with “a servant heart.” Another lesson includes an interactive life chart to stimulate the user’s reflection on his or her own call and participation in ministry. “There is a lot of introspection sought throughout,” Fr. Hazler said. Other lesson elements deliver additional history about St. Vincent and the Daughters by way of video and text. Condon said it should take a user about one hour to complete the Leadership Heritage Journey module.

Condon is developing four initial journeys. In addition to the heritage module, there will be Servant and Leader, Leading beyond Yourself, and A Holistic View of Leadership. The design is



"blended learning," he told me. "The first and second modules you do in front of your computer. What comes after are face-to-face meetings and action learning experiences."

An important component of the journeys is online dialogue, Fr. Hazler added. "'Journeys' is a platform for thinking and discussion to allow the learning to happen among participants." Facilitators within each of the system's local health ministries monitor the online dialogues and serve as resource people for the participants.

DCHS rolled out the Spiritus program in January, and a pilot group of 60 leaders from the system's headquarters and local ministries completed the first journey in February. As the program continues to grow, groups of "travelers" will move through the modules, in-person meetings, and action learning experiences to a "teacher-learner" phase in which they will serve as facilitators for future groups. "This teacher-learner model is self-sustaining," Condon said, "and the only way for the spirit of the Daughters to truly continue in the hospitals."

INFRASTRUCTURE TO IMPLEMENT

The Spiritus program has been created by Fr. Hazler and Condon working with a Leadership Formation Council made up of representatives from each of the system's six local health ministries in California: O'Connor Hospital, San Jose; St. Louise Regional Hospital, Gilroy; Seton Medical Center, Daly City; Seton Medical Center Coastsides, Moss Beach; St. Francis Medical Center, Lynwood, and St. Vincent Medical Center, Los Angeles. Representing human resources, clinical areas, and executive leadership, most of the members of the Leadership Formation Council have served since its inception three years ago.

Additionally, these people serve on leadership formation teams within their local ministries, along with other associates appointed by the facilities' CEOs. These local formation teams provide facilitators for the online dialogues that occur as part of the journeys.

Condon engaged the learning management provider, Learn.com, to program and host the online modules. He estimates the system's investment in the "journeys" at \$250,000.

For more information on Spiritus and the Leadership Formation Journeys, contact

Fr. Hazler at FrGeorgeHazler@dochs.org or
Chris Condon at ChrisCondon@dochs.org.

NEW REPORT ON EMPLOYEE LEARNING

The Center for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL) recently published the results of its study of employee learning and development practices in health care organizations. The study was funded by a grant from the U.S. Department of Labor. Several Catholic hospitals participated in the study: Saint Alphonsus Regional Medical Center, Boise, ID; St. Mary's Health Center, St. Louis; St. Clare Hospital and Health Services, Baraboo, WI; and St. James Mercy Hospital, Hornell, NY.

Recognizing that many health care organizations offer employee learning and development programs, the CAEL study was designed to identify factors that make such programs particularly effective. The research identified eight exemplary practices that are helping health care organizations reach their organizational learning goals and meet current and future workforce needs. CAEL found that each organization has its own approach and that an institution can accomplish a great deal even with only a few of the practices. Here are the eight practices identified by the study:

- Leadership promotes education and training through vision and commitment.
- Employee learning and development are aligned with business goals.
- Leadership development is emphasized at all levels of the organization.
- Structured, individual career development and growth is emphasized.
- Internal structures are developed for informal learning and knowledge management.
- There is strategic use of technology for meeting learning objectives.
- Alliances with external partners are central to learning strategy.
- Assessment of impact is emphasized.

An executive summary of the study findings, titled "Employee Development: A Prescription for Better Healthcare," is available from CAEL. For more information, contact Phyllis Snyder, regional vice president at CAEL, at psnyder@cael.org. ■

An important component of the "Journeys" is online dialogue.

JOURNAL OF THE CATHOLIC HEALTH ASSOCIATION OF THE UNITED STATES

www.chausa.org

HEALTH PROGRESS®

Reprinted from *Health Progress*, May-June 2005
Copyright © 2005 by The Catholic Health Association of the United States
