

Ongoing CHA Project Addresses Lay Sponsorship

BY JOANNE ELDEN BEALE & SR. BARBARA McMULLEN, CDP

This month marks the first anniversary of a Catholic Health Association effort to help sponsors understand changes affecting the Catholic health ministry and their implications for future sponsorship. This column is a "progress report" on CHA's project. As the column shows, the project has changed over the year as it has been shaped by sponsors' input, and it will continue to evolve.

FIRST STEP: SPONSOR FORUM

In January 1997, the Catholic Health Association, prompted by an article by Sr. Helen Amos, RSM ("A Moral Quandary for Sponsors," *Health Progress*, January-February 1996, pp. 20ff) and guided by its strategic plan and members' requests, convened an invitational Sponsor Forum to explore sponsorship's theological foundations (see *Health Progress's* report, "Sponsorship: With Radical Change Comes Opportunity," March-April 1997, pp. 14-16). At the forum, Catholic sponsors and ministry leaders (see **Box**, p. 14) met to examine how evolving concepts of sponsorship would continue to affect the Catholic health ministry.

Theological Groundwork CHA enlisted the expertise of Sr. Patricia Talone, RSM, PhD, and John A. Gallagher, PhD. Sr. Talone, who is ethicist, Unity Health System, St. Louis (she was then ethics consultant, Mercy Health Corporation of Southeastern Pennsylvania, Bala Cynwyd), and Gallagher, vice president for systems organizational integrity/ethics, Holy Cross Health System, South Bend, IN, provided theological groundwork for discussions on the current understanding of sponsorship and the internal and external forces affecting it. Their presentations and ensuing discussions were meant to help forum participants articulate sponsorship's core elements and create a common vision of sponsorship.

Realities Affecting Sponsorship With Sr. Virginia Gillis, RSM, EdD, a Phoenix consultant, as facilitator, participants and presenters spent the



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forum's three days in dialogue about sponsorship's changing structure for the new millennium. Participants agreed that sponsors are experiencing healthcare realities in various ways: in tensions between mission and business, in new types of partnerships, in shifts in traditional relationships, and in threats to an organization's Catholic identity and presence. The challenge, they said, is addressing all these realities while confronting the idea of a changing sponsorship.

Common Concerns of Religious and Laity As the forum ended, participants realized they had only begun to address the ambiguous and complex issues of sponsorship and ministry, particularly in relation to the shift to greater participation by the laity. With this new realization, they voiced the need for a theology of sponsorship. They also reaffirmed the notion that both religious congregations and the laity share the belief that healthcare is a ministry of the Church. We need "to name more clearly and develop more explicitly the commonality" of religious and lay perceptions of sponsorship, noted Gallagher.

DIVERSE VIEWS EMERGE

In the following months, it became clear that further reflection on the theology of *ministry* and its implications for sponsorship would be beneficial to sponsors—current and future. If CHA was to facilitate a foundational understanding of sponsorship, sponsors first had to reach consensus on exactly what they are sponsoring.

Thus Sr. Jean deBlois, CSJ, PhD, CHA's vice president of mission services, composed a draft paper titled "Toward a Theology of Ministry," which included discussion questions about the meaning of ministry. Reflecting on healthcare as a ministry of the *Church*, the paper prompted dialogue about how future sponsorship would support and enhance this ministry.

CHA used this paper as the basis for a breakout session on sponsorship at the June 1997 Catholic Health Assembly. The large attendance confirmed the great interest in this topic. To con-

PARTICIPANTS AT CHA SPONSOR FORUM, JANUARY 1997

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Health Facilities
Austin, TX

Sr. Eileen Croghan, SP

Provincial
Sisters of Providence
Spokane, WA

Sr. Beverly Dunn, SP, JCD

Canonical Consultant
Archdiocese of Seattle
Seattle

Sr. Pat Eck, CBS

Chairperson of the Board
Bon Secours Health System
Marriottsville, MD

Sr. Dorothy Ettling, CCVI

Director, Interconnections
Visitation Health Ministry
San Leandro, CA

Sr. Nannette Gentile, DC

Visiatix
Daughters of Charity of
St. Vincent De Paul
St. Louis

Br. Cornelius Hubbuch, CFX

Vicar General/Director of
Formation
Xaverian Brothers Generalate
Baltimore

Sr. Ruth McGoldrick, SP

President
Sisters of Providence
Holyoke, MA

Diane Moeller

Formerly President/CEO
Catholic Health Corporation
Omaha

Sr. Mary Mollison, CSA

General Superior
Congregation of Sisters of
St. Agnes
Fond du Lac, WI

Sr. Nancy O'Connor, CSJ

General Superior
Sisters of St. Joseph
Orange, CA

Sr. Kathleen Popko, SP, PhD

Executive Vice President,
Northeast Division
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Holyoke, MA

Rita Raffaele

Formerly Corporate Director of
Mission Values
SSM Health Care System
St. Louis

Sr. Sharon Richardt, DC

Vice President, Mission Services
St. Vincent Hospitals and Health
Services
Indianapolis

Sr. Christine Riley, SSJ

President
Sisters of St. Joseph of Wheeling
Wheeling, WV

Sr. Pat Smith, RSM, PhD

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Sr. Rosemary Smith, SC

Director, Women's Advocacy
Sisters of Charity of the
Incarnate Word
Houston

Br. Edward Walsh, CFA

Provincial
Alexian Brothers United States
Province
Elk Grove Village, IL

tinue the Sponsor Forum dialogue, Gallagher and Sr. Talone presented material from their papers, followed by highlights from "Toward a Theology of Ministry." Session attendees then reacted in small groups and open-floor discussions and, on evaluation sheets, indicated their level of agreement with proposed elements of sponsorship.

The dialogue in the breakout session, as well as the evaluation sheets, yielded mixed responses. Some participants were disappointed that the session did not provide a definitive document on the theology of sponsorship. Others were frustrated that the project still focused on ministry aspects of healthcare and urged CHA to move on and address more specific sponsorship concerns. Still others wanted further dialogue on ministry before making a statement on future sponsorship.

From this mixed feedback, CHA concluded that how to ensure Catholic health ministry in the future and how to facilitate strong lay sponsorship remain controversial topics.

COMMITTEE PROVIDES DIRECTION

To address the needs of a constituency with such a wide range of opinions about ministry and sponsorship, CHA staff sought guidance from its Sponsor Services Committee (see **Box**, p. 15). Chaired by Sr. Doris Gottemoeller, RSM, president of the Institute of the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas, the committee's purpose is to recommend ways that CHA can meet sponsors' needs through education, collaboration, and advocacy. At the fall 1997 committee meeting, these sponsor leaders offered guidance to CHA on the project's future direction.

The committee agreed that continued research and writing on the theology of ministry would be premature, considering sponsors' diverse responses at the assembly sessions. Committee members emphasized the need for further dialogue with laypersons about their role as ministry leaders to help determine the competencies necessary or desirable for future sponsors.

NEXT STEP: MEETING FOCUSING ON LAY LEADERS


The committee recommended that CHA invite a select group of lay executives to identify, through dialogue with committee members, the experiences that contributed to their preparation and formation as ministry leaders. A unique one-day meeting in January 1998 will focus on the knowledge, skills, and abilities required to succeed in sponsorship now and in the future. The group

will explore what it means to be *accountable* for a ministry and what resources should be available to lay leaders for their personal and ministerial development.

The meeting will begin to identify the core elements sponsors must value, regardless of the "who" or "how" of sponsorship. One of the core elements of sponsorship may well be a deeper grounding in the theology of ministry. But CHA, rather than assuming this, will respond with appropriate resources after the needs are identified by the process.

The January meeting will also incorporate the foundational work accomplished at CHA's Sponsor Forum a year ago. We believe that, although it is tempting to

seek quick answers, facile responses to complex questions about ministry and sponsorship are likely to be unproductive in the long run. CHA's role is to facilitate an evolving process (after all, the Church has debated questions regarding ministry for centuries). We believe that careful exploration of the skills and experiences of successful sponsors will provide a strong foundation to sustain healthcare as a ministry of the Church into the next millennium. □

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SPONSOR SERVICES COMMITTEE, 1997-1998

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PRICE PRESSURES

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much kindness will cost them." Hence the attraction of capitated managed care, where one can tell the politician what healthcare costs to expect. Reinhardt bolsters his case by pointing to the growth of Medicaid managed care: "Until that deal came along, Medicaid didn't expand. Now it's expanding in some states."

However, all predictions, even those made by seasoned policymakers and expert policy observers, are fraught with risk. "I had predicted the number of uninsured would go down," Reischauer wryly observed, "so I'm still smarting from being wrong."

As we enter 1998, the message from Washington policy observers seems to be:

- Redouble your efforts on cost cutting
- Watch closely to see what impact all the reforms in the BBA have on the health system
- Do not expect any major policy changes anytime soon

Incremental reform continues to be the watchword. The healthcare reform debate on universal coverage "was a very bitter experience for a lot of people on both sides of the issue," said Cox. But, ever hopeful, Cox suggested that if the Medicare Health Care Reform Commission set up by the BBA really does delve into the issue of reforming health insurance for the elderly, "it may not be able to avoid getting back into larger discussions of the uninsured." □

NOTES

1. Robert A. Connor, Roger D. Feldman, Bryan E. Dowd, and Tiffany A. Radcliff, "Which Types of Hospital Mergers Save Consumers Money?" *Health Affairs*, November-December 1997, pp. 62-74.
2. Cara Lesser and Peter J. Cunningham, "Access to Care: Is It Improving or Declining?" *Data Bulletin*, Center for Health System Change, Fall 1997.
3. Peter J. Cunningham and Ha T. Tu, "A Changing Picture of Uncompensated Care," *Health Affairs*, July-August 1997, pp. 167-175.
4. Joyce M. Mann, et al., "A Profile of Uncompensated Hospital Care, 1983-1995," *Health Affairs*, July-August 1997, pp. 223-232.