

## Message from the President

**T**hroughout our history, the Sisters of Mercy Health System (Mercy) has demonstrated a passion for self-improvement. As healthcare providers, we possess an inherent need to continually improve how we do things, whether through the adoption of new procedures, technologies or medicines.

By their very nature, the organizational improvement tools we use also have undergone change over the years. While healthcare providers are on the forefront of medical advances, we aren't always the first to develop or deploy the best techniques for organizational improvement. Fortunately, we are in a position to learn from others and adopt tools and methodologies that have stood the test of time in other disciplines and by other organizations. Our decision to base our organizational improvement model on the tools and techniques that have contributed to the success of General Electric (GE) is an exciting step forward for Mercy, and particularly for those we serve. GE Healthcare's success in teaching and transferring their knowledge about organizational improvement – particularly the well-known Six Sigma process improvement tool – provides us an opportunity to move our organizational improvement efforts to a new level.

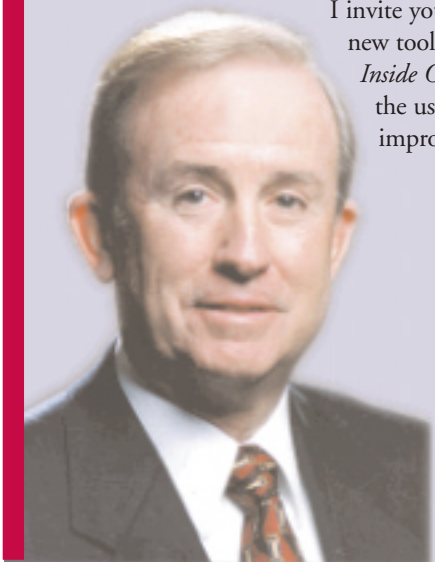
I invite you to learn more about our progress in adopting these new tools by reading the article, "Improving Mercy from the Inside Out," beginning on page one of this issue. Through the use of these methodologies, our path to self-improvement holds great promise.

Sincerely,



**Ron Ashworth**

President and Chief Executive Officer  
Sisters of Mercy Health System



### Improving Mercy continued

had the most opportunity to employ them and they have found that CAP enables their teams to move past historical sticking points, helps co-workers to be more actively engaged, and gives them a constructive outlet to express concerns regarding the impact of change.

In addition to this success, Mercy in Oklahoma City has had excellent results with Work-Out™. "We had been working on one issue for six months to no avail, but once we used the Work-Out™ tool we were able to come to a solution in only two days," said Jim Best, co-president of Oklahoma Heart Hospital.

### New Roles Support Roll-out

As a part of the initial implementation of the new organizational improvement tools, 125 co-workers throughout Mercy are being trained as "Change Agents." This designation means that they are able to facilitate meetings using the CAP and Work-Out™ methodologies. From these 125 Change Agents, four have been certified as Master Change Agents, who – in addition to facilitating meetings – can mentor current Change Agents and train additional ones in the future. All of these co-workers will take on their new responsibilities in addition to the duties of their present jobs.

In preparation for the first round of Six Sigma projects, eight "Black Belts" are being trained in the Six Sigma methodology. These individuals will assume their new

roles on a full-time basis and will be dedicated solely to leading Six Sigma projects. In addition, a team of "Yellow Belts" – subject matter experts in the area of the current project – will be trained to support Six Sigma projects on a part-time basis. Three Yellow Belts will be used per project. The first Six Sigma projects at SSUs began in January and will conclude in August, when another group of eight Black Belts will be trained and a second round of projects will begin.

### A Pathway to Solutions

A growing national focus on healthcare quality and public reporting provides strong motivation for Mercy to take this next step toward improving clinical and operational processes. "But organizational improvement is not something we undertake simply because improvement is desirable; we do it because it is the right thing to do for our patients and for the organization," said Ron Ashworth, Mercy president and chief executive officer.

The new organizational improvement methods promise to be powerful transformational tools because they actively involve all levels of co-workers. "The tools allow the people closest to the process to share their knowledge, while enabling leaders to see problems not as roadblocks, but rather in light of heading toward a solution," said Sherry Kwater, Mercy executive director-clinical excellence. "With everyone working together, a pathway to solutions becomes clear." •

### The Language of Change continued

work by a designated project team. Because of the time and level of work involved, Six Sigma is reserved for issues that are critical to our customers, physicians and fellow co-workers. Six Sigma projects will transform how we provide patient care, both clinically and operationally.

**Change Agent** – Team/meeting facilitator who plans and helps the team leader/members build an effective team process, provides coaching on the application of CAP tools, and helps the team progress toward recommendations and solutions. Change Agents are trained by taking a CAP tools class and Work-Out™ training.

**Master Change Agent** – In addition to the responsibilities of Change Agents, Master Change Agents train and mentor new Change Agents within the organization.

**Black Belt** – An individual who leads Six Sigma projects and is trained in the Six Sigma process as well as the statistical tools utilized in the methodology. Black Belts are project leaders who are responsible for defining, measuring, analyzing, improving and controlling key processes in the organization.

**Master Black Belt** – In addition to the responsibilities of Black Belts, Master Black Belts train and mentor new Black Belts within the organization. From the initial group of 16 Black Belts across Mercy, two Black Belts will be selected for further training to become Master Black Belts.

**Yellow Belt** – A subject matter expert who is trained in the basic Six Sigma methodologies and supports projects on a part-time basis. •



More than 2,000 people participated in Springfield during the 25th annual Sunshine Run.

## Fundraiser Unites Springfield Residents and Troops in Kuwait

**I**magine planning the 25th anniversary of a local wellness event and ending up organizing an international fundraiser. That's exactly what happened when St. John's Foundation for Community Health began planning its annual Sunshine Run in Springfield, Missouri.

The Sunshine Run is a tradition in Springfield, dating back to a 1980 health program for St. John's co-workers. It would have taken place locally last October just as it has for the past 25 years, if not for the determination of a Nixa resident stationed at Camp Arifjan, Kuwait. When Sgt. Bobby Bunting realized that his duty to his country would force him to miss the event, the soldier – a regular Sunshine Run participant – decided to run the 10K in Kuwait and keep track of his time in order to compete with his sisters who were participating in Springfield. He decided it would be especially meaningful for him to run at the same time that the event was taking place back home. Word of his idea spread and others expressed interest in participating. Soon the Army had approved the "International St. John's Sunshine Run at Camp Arifjan" and approximately 430 of Sgt. Bunting's fellow troops from both the Army and the Navy signed up to join him.

On October 9, at 8:15 a.m. in Springfield and 4:15 p.m. at Patton Air Field in Kuwait, more than 2,400 people joined together to mark the quarter-century anniversary of the Sunshine Run. Satellite technology enabled Springfield residents to view the starting line in Kuwait and audio feeds transmitted both ways, allowing troops to communicate with their loved ones back home. Once the race began, runners and walkers in Springfield took advantage of fall temperatures, while their counterparts in Kuwait struggled though 106-degree heat to reach the finish line. After all the exertion was over, awards were given out at both locations.

The event helped to boost the morale of soldiers stationed far from home. "The Sunshine Run gave me the chance to get away and do something fun with my buddies," said Chad Classen of the 1075th Transportation Corps. Joshua Wessel, also of the 1075th, added, "It lets you know what you're fighting for."

Springfield residents as well as those stationed in Kuwait were grateful for the simulcast of the event, which was shown three times throughout October and November on a local cable access channel.

"It was amazing to see the emotion and dedication of participants on both sides of the Atlantic," said Mickey Moore, director of development at St. John's Health System and the race director. "The fact that so many people in two different countries voluntarily came together for this event shows the strength of the Mercy spirit in our community."

The 2004 Sunshine Run raised more than \$14,000 and attracted the largest turnout in the event's history, partly due to the troops' involvement. Proceeds from the 10K run, 5K walk/run and a one-mile walk benefited St. John's Burn Center, the Breast Cancer Foundation of the Ozarks, St. John's Breast Center, and Springfield public and Catholic schools. The unique circumstances of this year's run also garnered local and national media attention. The story was picked up by the Associated Press and will be recognized in an upcoming story in *Runners World* magazine.

Mike Peters, executive director of St. John's Foundation for Community Health, is proud to have been a part of such an extraordinary event, but hopes the scope won't become part of the tradition. "While we enjoyed this international event, we hope that everyone will be back home for the next race. We have a special place reserved for the troops here in Springfield next year." •



## New Product Contracting Strategy Emphasizes Quality, Cost Savings

**T**he Sisters of Mercy Health System's (Mercy) Group Purchasing Organization recently introduced a new product contracting strategy designed to deliver the highest product quality at the best price. The "ROiAligned" program, which is managed by Mercy's Resource



Optimization & Innovation (ROi) operating division, unites the efforts of Mercy hospitals, physicians,

clinicians and other purchasing decision-makers in the selection of products used across the System.

"Roialigned is an innovative approach to product contracting that aligns the needs of Mercy hospitals and other ROi members with specific contracting strategies," explained Gary Kane, ROi vice president-group purchasing. "Through this new program, we are able to leverage Mercy's size

ROiAligned segments the products Mercy purchases into four categories that define the level of contracting effort and clinical impact:

■ **Commodity** – products that are easily interchangeable with equivalent products.

■ **Clinical commodity** – products that are interchangeable with equivalent products yet warrant clinical evaluation due to intended use.

■ **High Preference** – specialty products requiring clinical/physician input and significant degree of evaluation.

■ **High Cost/High Preference** – highly specialized products with strong levels of preference by physicians.

*continued on back page*