



CASE STUDY: WOMEN & INFANTS HOSPITAL OF RHODE ISLAND

Creating and Sustaining a Focused Culture of Caring

Located in Providence, Rhode Island, Women & Infants Hospital of Rhode Island (WIHRI) is the premier health resource in the region for newborn children and women of all ages. It has the tenth largest obstetrical service in the country, with more than 9,700 deliveries last year, and serves as the regional perinatal center for southeastern New England.

Founded in 1884 as the Providence Lying-In Hospital, today more than 70 percent of all newborns in Rhode Island are delivered at Women & Infants. A founding hospital of the Care New England Health System, Women & Infants is also the primary teaching affiliate in obstetrics, gynecology and newborn pediatrics for Brown Medical School.

In the year 2000, former CEO Thomas G. Parris, Jr. was faced with rebuilding relationships between union and management staff, after a labor dispute the previous year had clearly divided the two groups. It was time to bring everyone back together and renew the organization's focus on care of patients and their families. At that time, patient satisfaction scores were hovering in the 60th percentile. Improving patient satisfaction would lead to an enhanced reputation, increased demand for hospital services, and the ability to continue attracting the best and brightest in the medical profession.

Tom saw that it was time to bring in experts to help facilitate the culture shift. He had been inspired by a *Disney Institute* presentation he had seen, and invited a *Disney Institute* Consultant to come to the hospital and speak to anyone who wished to attend. People were energized by what they heard and this enthusiasm was reinforced by a handful of managers who had already participated in *Disney Institute* open-enrollment programs. Based on Disney's reputation as a leader in service excellence and their ability to benchmark service levels, WIHRI was convinced *Disney Institute* was the right partner. To prepare the proposal, the *Disney*

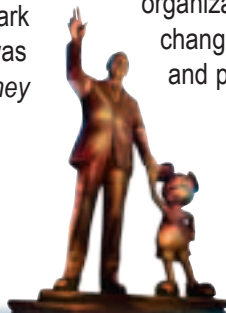
Institute Consultant spent two days on site, interviewing employees and identifying the program elements that would be most relevant to WIHRI. This information was used to customize the Disney experience, which became known to WIHRI as Enhancing The Culture of Caring. This four-day intensive program combined proven success principles and real-world examples with visits "behind the scenes" and many small group discussions. Emphasis was placed on areas that the *Disney Institute* Consultant had determined to be most strategic for WIHRI, including increasing patient focus, enhancing the physical environment, leveraging the strength of diversity, and setting performance standards.

The first wave of 50 individuals from the hospital went to *Disney Institute* in September 2000 and consisted of executive leadership, board members, doctors, front line patient care and support service staff. Over the past five years, this multi-disciplinary and multi-level approach has proven highly successful for WIHRI, as individuals gain greater understanding and appreciation for the roles and challenges of other functional areas. Since the program's inception, more than 500 of their 2,800 staff have participated in the *Disney Institute* program, although the program

has changed over the years to reflect changing priorities. This is something that WIHRI's current President & CEO, Constance A. "Connie" Howes, can attest to. Connie, then Executive VP at WIHRI, was in the first wave of

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Disney Institute participants and has attended every single wave since then, a total of 12 trips. Each time, she makes it her mission to interact individually with every member of the team and listen to his or her ideas and concerns. This action by their leader speaks volumes to WIHRI staff about their executive's commitment to the program and to service excellence. "*Disney Institute* is a model of service excellence. They have been responsive to our organization's needs and have modified the program over time, changing the focus of learning experiences to match the needs and priorities we have at the time," says Connie Howes.



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What sustains the momentum once people return to Rhode Island? Participants are asked throughout the program how they see themselves applying the Disney principles. Discussion is constant, as people bubble over with ideas. Once back on the job, WIHRI has a powerful system for moving from ideation to execution. The Futures Initiatives Coordinating Committee has played a very strategic role in ensuring that ideas are transformed into actions that drive service excellence. This steering committee reviews each project proposal, provides guidance and resources to project teams, and works with a dedicated communications team to communicate the projects and their status hospital-wide.

The number and types of projects that have been generated as a result of the *Disney Institute* experience are too numerous to list. They range from significant capital expenditures like a major renovation of the hospital lobby to make it a welcoming and comfortable setting for patients and their families, to the launch of a greeter program that is staffed by employees who volunteer one hour a week to welcome and direct people arriving at the hospital. One of the significant culture-changing projects involved the development of the STAR Standards of Performance, focusing on service, teamwork, attitude and responsibility. These behavior-based standards are consistent across all staff, and make up 30% of each individual's performance appraisal rating. The hiring process and new employee orientation programs have been radically altered to reflect heavy emphasis on the right attitude and clear understanding of what's expected of every employee of Women & Infants. A service recovery program and employee recognition program were born from the *Disney Institute* experience, as well as the "Silent Hospital" initiative which has greatly decreased overhead paging of staff, who now use beepers to reduce the noise.

Nervous family members no longer have to wonder and worry about the status of their loved ones, based on a position called Patient Family Liaison, which came from one of

these project teams. Now, the Liaison's role is to be the information conduit between the medical staff and the families awaiting news.

What has WIHRI learned along the way? Culture change takes time. They have had the discipline to stay the course and as a result have seen tremendous results. Press Ganey patient satisfaction scores have gone from the 75th percentile in Q2 2002 to the 95th percentile in Q4 2005. Longevity of staff has increased from 9 years in 2001 to 9.23 years in 2005. Employee turnover rates have dropped from 8.6% in 2000 to 8% in 2005. (The national average turnover rate for health care is 20%.) The quality of medical services is excellent. The hospital was recognized by U.S. News & World Report magazine's "2004 America's Best Hospitals" survey. Recognizing the leadership role the hospital has taken in women's health care, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services named Brown University and Women & Infants a National Center of Excellence (CoE) in Women's Health. Focusing on patient care has elevated the hospital to the status of employer of choice in the region, having been named "Greatest Place to Work" in the state of Rhode Island by Providence Business News for 2004-2005.

Women & Infants Hospital has created and sustained a focused culture of care by taking thoughtful and disciplined actions, based on proven principles of service excellence provided through *Disney Institute*. This change in culture has led to success in all areas and the results have been dramatic.

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What challenges lie ahead?

Connie Howes' answer is: "We have come a long way on the path of excellence. We are now focused on moving beyond patient-centered care to family-centered care. *Disney Institute* continues to be our guide on this journey."

To learn more about how *Disney Institute* can help your organization visit www.disneyinstitute.com or call (321) 939-4600.