

# The BREATHER

## Smoke-free HCHD Coming Soon

By John F. Martinez

Starting Sept. 1, the Harris County Hospital District becomes smoke-free, meaning smoking will not be allowed on the premises of any district facility. The initiative will create a smoke-free zone in and around all hospitals, health centers, eligibility centers, mobile health clinics, the HCHD administration building, parking lots, parking garages and common areas on district premises.

To facilitate the transition, all current outdoor areas designated for smoking will become smoke-free on Aug. 1. Additionally, management staff and others soon will be wearing no-smoking buttons to remind everyone of the district's smoking ban initiative. Posters and banners also will be placed at all facilities.

"Up to Sept. 1, people will be given friendly reminders about our smoke-free initiative," said Michelle Galindo, director of health promotion/employee wellness. "We want to promote a healthy environment in the work place. We're not saying people can't smoke; but if people want to quit smoking, we want to help them."

Taking advantage of the opportunity to quit is Lucretia Lemon White, a patient call center representative, who's smoked for more than 30 years. At the height of her habit, she smoked about a pack and a half a day.

Since March 5, White has cut down her habit to an occasional cigarette once a week.

"It's been very hard for someone who's smoked as long as I have to quit," she said. "Thanks to the district's support, I'm well on my way to kicking the habit. I've made up my mind and pray about it and know I can beat it."

The hospital district offers staff who wish to quit smoking a variety of options, such as smoking cessation classes, "quit smoking" kits and a free one-month supply of nicotine replacement patches. Additional patches are available at discounted rates. For information about these programs, call the Employee

Wellness Program at 713-566-2000.

Galindo said staff will continue to walk up to smoking employees with business-card reminders with the date of the ban and support information. Once the ban takes place, the district will actively enforce a no-smoking policy for all staff, patients and visitors, she added.

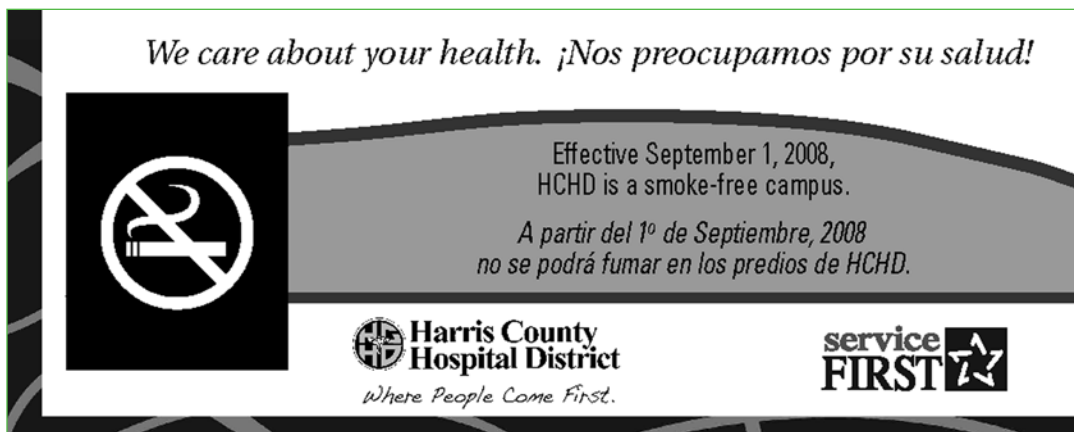
"As a health care organization, we have the responsibility to create a healthy environment for all patients, visitors and staff," said David S. Lopez, president and CEO. "We appreciate the help of every employee in enforcing this

be a smoke-free environment, we can help everyone get ready for the change. We do have to balance our message by also providing them with information about the services available to them through the district to help them quit smoking."

The district joins M.D. Anderson Cancer Center as the only completely smoke-free campuses in the Texas Medical Center. The TMC adopted a smoking-free initiative a few years ago. There's limited smoking allowed at Memorial Hermann, Methodist and St. Luke's. However, the latter three facilities are

moving toward a smoke-free status.


"We are interested in helping all of our employees improve their health by providing smoking cessation materials and support, if they want to quit smoking," said Dr. Margo Hilliard, senior vice president of community services.




*We care about your health. ¡Nos preocupamos por su salud!*

Effective September 1, 2008,  
HCHD is a smoke-free campus.

*A partir del 1º de Septiembre, 2008  
no se podrá fumar en los predios de HCHD.*

 Harris County  
Hospital District  
*Where People Come First.*



policy, thereby making the Harris County Hospital District a healthier place to visit and work."

In June, HCHD adopts a Smoke-Free Environment policy that states that all employees "must inform a person smoking on district facilities that smoking is prohibited and that the facilities are smoke-free." Employees who violate the smoking ban will be subject to the district's disciplinary action outlined in the Human Resources Employee Discipline Policy (No. 6.20).

"When it happens on Sept. 1, it will be everyone's responsibility to make sure we're smoke-free because it's the right thing to do," Galindo said.

HCHD also plans to educate patients and visitors to its facilities through smoke-free notices in its patient and visitor information guides. Also, notices will be included in the district's patient newsletter, banners, on-hold telephone messaging and reminder cards.

"We all need to be sensitive to this change for patients, visitors, and guests who frequent our facilities for services," said David Riddle, director of Patient/Customer Relations. "By politely informing smokers that we will soon

Nationwide, an estimated 21 percent or 45 million adults smoke, according to the American Cancer Society. The health risks of cigarette smoking, as well as the harm caused by secondhand smoke, are well established. Each year, 440,000 Americans die from tobacco use – nearly 20 percent of all deaths in the country.

Since the kick-off of the district's smoke-free effort, symbolically on Nov. 15, 2007 (nationally recognized as the Great American Smoke-out):

- 51 employees have contacted Employee Wellness for information, a quit-smoking kit or a month supply of patches.
- 44 employees have received a one-month supply of nicotine replacement therapy patches.
- 94 employees have attended an HCHD-offered smoking cessation class.

Aetna health plan members also have access to the Simple Steps Smoking Cessation Program, which is available on its Web site at [www.aetna.com](http://www.aetna.com). The American Cancer Society also offers a smoking cessation guide on its Web site at [www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org). ■

# HCHD Joins List of Public Reporting Hospitals

By Bryan McLeod

Three years ago, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) launched its "Hospital Compare" Web site ([www.hospitalcompare.hhs.gov](http://www.hospitalcompare.hhs.gov)) to allow consumers to compare hospitals on a variety of key medical quality indicators.

During March 2008, CMS also began reporting information on the patient's experience in hospitals, otherwise known as patient satisfaction scores.

Public reporting of patient satisfaction scores in 2008 is considered voluntary, so some hospitals are reporting while others are not. Beginning in June of this year, the Harris County Hospital District joins those other participating institutions in sharing this information with the public.

"Although there was an opportunity to report publicly in March, hospitals were also given an option to suppress their data," said Lesa McLeod, manager of patient satisfaction and customer service. "Roughly half of all the nation's hospitals, including the district, chose the latter option because there were some

accuracy issues with the initial release of scores.

"Since this is the first time that patient satisfaction data is being reported, we wanted to make sure our information was as accurate as it could be. We are comfortable with the numbers that will be reported during the next update."

When the CMS Web site is updated with information in late June or early July, it will feature the district's scores among the other participating hospitals. This will allow consumers to compare the district with other hospitals based on feedback from patients about their health care experiences with hospital staff.

The scores are reported in composites as follows:

- Communication with Nurses
- Communication with Doctors
- Responsiveness of Hospital Staff
- Pain management
- Communication about Medicines
- Discharge Information
- Hospital Environment Items
- Overall Rating of this Hospital
- Willingness to Recommend this Hospital

The district's data on the patient experience comes from questions on the Hospital Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems (HCAHPS) survey, a 27 question survey that is mailed directly to the homes of recently discharged adult inpatients from Ben Taub and Lyndon B. Johnson hospitals.

Consumers will be able to compare three hospitals at a time and also measure them against state and national average scores. The next set of scores to be reported will reflect patient experiences from the time period of October 2006 through September of 2007. The scores are updated each quarter to reflect a year's worth of information.

"Our scores will reflect what we have known for a while, the district has many opportunities for improvement," stated McLeod. "One limitation with the Web site is that the data being reported is dated. Once our data is out there, you will be able to track improvements that were previously implemented as well as those currently being implemented." ■



## HCHD Celebrates National Nurses Week

Harris County Judge Ed Emmett (second from left) declared the week beginning May 6 as Nurses Week in Harris County. Emmett presented Beth Cloyd (L-R), Dana Bjarnason and David S. Lopez, with the proclamation that honored all HCHD nurses, and asked the public to thank and recognize all the nurses for the contribution to the community. During the week HCHD honored the nursing profession with a variety of activities throughout the hospital district.

# People's Health Center Launches Open Access for Pediatric Patients

By Nicole M. Benningfield

When Lorenza Escutia called for a follow-up appointment for her daughter, she and Mitzy were in a pediatric exam room at People's Health Center two days later.

That's quite a difference from four months ago, when getting an appointment so soon would have been difficult.

But thanks to a new way of working at People's Health Center, parents of pediatric patients are calling to schedule an appointment and often get one the very same day or within 48 to 72 hours of calling.

Launched in March, Pediatric Open Access provides patients with convenient access to their pediatrician.

"When a child is sick parents want them to be seen as soon as possible," said Yolanda Gloria, People's director. "Open access provides just that – convenient, easy access to their doctor."

The first three months of open access has proven successful.

Patients are getting in sooner, no show rates are dropping and patient satisfaction is increasing.

Before open access, appointments were booked three months in advance. Like with any appointment booked out that far, parents sometimes forgot, and the no-show rate was often more than 40 percent.

To compensate, staff double booked appointments. Drop-ins were triaged by the pediatric nurse who determined who really needed to be seen and who could wait. Staff "squeezed" the sickest patients in for an appointment.

Now, patients are given a reminder card, and are encouraged to call the unit for an appointment on the day they want to be seen or within 24-72 hours.

Patients see their same doctor, which enhances their continuity of care. On average, the pediatric clinic sees 30 to 40 patients per day.

Unlike before, the furthest out an appointment can be scheduled is three weeks.

Now, half of the appointments are used for regular appointments, while the remaining half are open for call-in appointments.

During the first month, the no-show rate dropped from 40.1 percent to 19.2 percent. In April, it dropped from 41.3 percent to 20.9 percent. For May, it decreased from 40.2 percent to 20.1 percent.

As for patient satisfaction, Escutia raved about the convenience.

"It's so much better," Escutia said. "I wish I could schedule all of my appointments like this." ■

# HCHD Welcomes Director of HCHD Leadership Institute

By Bryan McLeod

During April, the Harris County Hospital District welcomed Gretchen Gemeinhardt as its director of the long envisioned HCHD Leadership Institute.

Gemeinhardt brings a Ph.D. in Organizational Behavior and more than 20 years experience in leadership training and development to the hospital district. Most recently, she served as the director of education at the Memorial Hermann Texas Medical Center, where she was instrumental in creating and delivering their patient safety program. Gemeinhardt also serves as a senior examiner for the Baldrige National Quality Award, and helps create and deliver the training that is performance-improvement

focused for the Baldrige National Quality Program.

Starting from scratch in building a new program resonated strongly with Gemeinhardt, as The BEAT sat down with her recently to ask some questions about what lies in store for the HCHD Leadership Institute and its leadership development mission.

*Q. For those who don't know anything about the development of the Leadership Institute, what is it designed to do?*

A. If you go back to what the mission is, it's to inspire new and seasoned leaders to support the goals of the organization. It's really to provide an opportunity for leaders at all levels to grow so that they are excellent in their current roles, and that they have the potential to grow in the future into other roles.

Part of what you do in the training of leaders is to move the culture of the organization to a different place. Part of your leadership program's development is to align leadership vision of the organization and move them in a common direction so that they create and promote a culture of excellence.

*Q. What is important about the development of leadership within an organization like the hospital district?*

A. First, it is the right thing to do for employees. An organization wants to partner with employees to develop its current and future leaders. To have a great source of internal leaders is in your best interest as an organization. If you don't have a good source of leadership you have a difficulty being successful as an organization.

Every organization has challenges that need to be addressed, and leadership plays a critical role in that, and so that's why it's important to develop that aspect of the organization.

*Q. If you had to pick one word to describe*



**Gretchen Gemeinhardt**

*your vision for the hospital district's fledgling institute, which word would you choose and why?*

A. "Cultivate." It goes back to part of the reason I took the job, because it didn't exist before. It's the chance to create something from scratch. To use the garden analogy, it's basically a brand new bed, and we get to till the soil. The conditions are just right in this organization for planting new seeds of leadership. And the advantage to being in this organization is you get a long growing season. That's because I believe people are going to stay with the organization longer than many other places. This provides the opportunity to see leaders grow and bear the fruit of success within the organization.

*Q. Do you have any specific goals for the Leadership Institute this year?*

A. The specific goals are to establish and implement the fellowship program for leaders, and then to offer development to a broader base of employees through a series of leadership training classes. We also are looking at defining leadership competencies for the district so that we select, hire and promote people based on those competencies.

*Q. You've been here just a short while, but what impresses you about HCHD's present environment?*

A. I think there are two things that are unique to this organization where it is positioned right now. First of all, it is a matrix structure, and it is important to understand what are the roles and responsibilities of managers in functional areas versus managers in actual health care settings. I think it provides some unique challenges in how you approach the collaborative practice model where we all have to work together to be successful. Secondly, I think this organization is positioned for a lot of change, and so there is an opportunity for leaders to understand their role in supporting change in the organization.

*Q. What do you see as the standard of success in regard to HCHD's current and future leadership development efforts?*

A. The program will be viewed as successful when we can say a majority of our leaders exhibit exemplary systems thinking and interpersonal skills. The ability to think from a broad perspective that includes seeing overall structures, patterns and cycles rather than specific problems. and what is the impact solutions will have on the system as a whole. To ask the questions: How's it going to affect the results, and how is it aligned with our mission? It means you look at the holistic view of the organization. ■

## Celebrating National Hospital Week



**Betty Prince, staff coordinator for Nursing Administration at LBJ Hospital takes a spoonful of ice cream during an ice cream social held at the hospital in recognition of National Hospitals Week, May 11-17. According to the American Hospital Association, there are nearly 6,000 hospitals and more than 5 million dedicated staff members caring for our communities nationwide. Similar ice cream appreciation events were held across HCHD.**

## Potential Nurses from HCHD's Nursing Discovery Day



**Nurse My Linh Thi Le of unit 4A at Ben Taub Hospital demonstrates the proper method to take a blood pressure to Girl Scouts during the may 3 Nursing Discovery Day. The Nursing Discovery Day is hosted by the Harris County Hospital District to inspire an interest in the nursing profession and to help members of the Girl Scouts of San Jacinto Council earn their nursing discovery interest project award. During the event, the scouts learned about the history of nursing, and also learned technical skills by taking pulse readings, and doing blood pressure and temperature checks.**

By Nicole M. Benningfield

Three individuals who exemplify the ServiceFIRST standards of Friendliness, Integrity, Responsibility, Satisfaction, and Teamwork are being recognized this month.

**Jinumol Mathew** – Ben Taub General Hospital

After a recent hospital stay, a patient cared for by nurse Jinumol Mathew exclaimed about the care she received from Mathew.

The patient wrote, “Her skills exceeded my expectations. I can sincerely say that this lady is the best role model for employees. She knows how to treat patients and she has great qualities, almost too numerous to mention.

“She is professional, incredibly kind, gracious and compassionate. She listens and always brings a smile.

“She could teach workers on how to treat patients properly, and it would make a tremendous difference and at the same time make patients feel better.”

**Timeka Green** – Ben Taub General Hospital

At lunch time, the Ben Taub cafeteria is busy and packed with hungry people. And every day, Cashier Timeka Green checks guests



**Timeka Green**

out with a wonderful ServiceFIRST attitude.

Recently during lunch, an elderly woman in Timeka’s line struggled with her food, while trying to hold on to her walker.

“Tamika was very patient and courteous,”

wrote Jennifer Barnes, director of volunteer and guest services, who was in line behind the lady.

After Green completed the sale, she told Barnes that she’d be right back, and proceeded to carry the lady’s food and drink to a nearby table. She made sure the woman was comfortably seated before returning to her register.

“Tamika went above and beyond to assist this guest, and was not only very polite to her, but to me as well,” Barnes wrote. “I believe our cafeteria staff rarely get recognized for their hard work, so I wanted to take the time to commend this young woman. She didn’t have to assist this guest, she could have assumed someone else might do it. But she didn’t. She is truly a ServiceFIRST Hero.”



**Aaron Cotton**

**Aaron Cotton** – Lyndon B. Johnson General Hospital

Aaron Cotton, LBJ Hospital emergency center nurse, is trained to expect the unexpected.

Recently Cotton cared for a patient who was severely disoriented.

The patient would burst into song, speak incoherently and would not stay in bed.

“I think at any other hospital, this patient would have ended up in restraints because he wouldn’t stay in bed,” wrote Dr. Richard Bradley, chief of LBJ Emergency Medicine. “I wanted to let you know how impressed I was by the care given by Aaron Carter.

“He did a great job of keeping a close eye on this patient. Aaron, in his calm and competent style, reassured me and the rest of the team that he would keep the patient in bed.

“Even though his area was full, he was able to treat this patient with dignity and respect while maintaining good patient care and safety. And he did all this with a smile on his face.” ■

## ACCOLADES

**Sabrina Cazares**, CCS, of Patrick Henry School Based Clinic, has been accepted into the LVN program at San Jacinto College North for August 2008.

**Susan Crouch**, senior physical therapy assistant (PTA), at Quentin Mease Hospital, was prominently featured in an article in the January issue of “PT Magazine” on the physical therapists and physical therapy assistants seeking advanced educational opportunities.

**Tuwana Holness**, RN, CPN, an 11-7 nurse from 5E pediatrics, received her pediatric nurse certification from the Pediatric Nurse Certification Board (PNCB).

The **HCHD School of Diagnostic Medical Radiography** received accreditation for its radiology school program from the Joint Review Committee on Education in Radiology Technology. The accreditation is good for eight years.

The **Harris County Hospital District** received two 2008 Safety Net honors from the National Association of Public Hospitals and Health Systems: Category – Patient Centered Care – Winner for Innovation Network Yields Improvement in Patient Care; and Category – Reducing Health Care Disparities – Integration of Community Psychiatry into Primary Care Centers in Harris County.



**The Harris County Hospital District's 2007 Annual Report received the Gold Award recognition in the 25th Annual Healthcare Advertising Awards.**

Several **LBJ Hospital** and University of Texas Medical School doctors recently participated at the Texas College of Emergency Physicians annual conference The Woodlands, Texas. They were: Dr. Rick Robinson, education committee chair who was elected to the TCEP’s board of directors; speakers – Drs. Jamie McCarthy, Antonio Muniz, Lisa Grossheim and Arlo Weltge; session coordinators – Drs. Joanne Oaks, Greg Press and Sara Miller; and research poster presenters – Drs. David Robinson, Christine Koerner, Robin Williams and Carlos Roldan, who won first place for poster presentation.

Sister **Maria Ochilli**, RN, a nurse on unit 2B at LBJ Hospital appeared on the front page of the April 2 issue of *The Houston Chronicle*. She was featured as part of the opening of the new catholic co-cathedral in downtown Houston.

**Melanie Panganiban**, RN, CPN, assistant nurse manager of 5F Pediatric ICU, received her pediatric nurse certification from the Pediatric Nursing Certification Board (PNCB).

**Patricia Perez**, LVN of Smiley School Based Clinic, and **Lorena Gonzalez**, LVN of Patrick Henry School Based Clinic, have been accepted into the RN program at Kingwood Community College for August 2008.

**Dr. Lois Ramondetta**, LBJ physician and director of the division of gynecologic oncology at the University of Texas Medical School, recently published the book, *The Light Within*. *The Light Within* is about the extraordinary friendship between Ramondetta and a patient, Deborah Rose Sills, who were brought together by cancer.

Clinical Poster Award Winner at AORN 55th Annual Congress in Anaheim California, *Establishment of a Nursing & Allied Health IRB*: **Julia A. Thompson**, PhD, RN, CNS, CIP, CNOR, and **Marilyn Dix**, BS; Harris County Hospital District, Houston, TX.

**Karen White**, nurse director of ambulatory services at LBJ Hospital, was elected as chairman of AORN National Nominating Committee at the 55th Congress held in Anaheim, California. The organization has more than 41,000 members.

## June Service Standard: Responsibility Control Noise Levels

1. Keep noise levels down in your work area.
2. Speak quietly in hallways and patient care areas.
3. Set phones and pagers on vibrate.
4. Close doors to patient rooms to eliminate outside noise.
5. Be a quiet advocate to encourage a peaceful, healing environment for our patients.

The Beat is published by the Harris County Hospital District’s Department of Corporate Communications.

For comments or questions, e-mail [news@hchd.tmc.edu](mailto:news@hchd.tmc.edu)