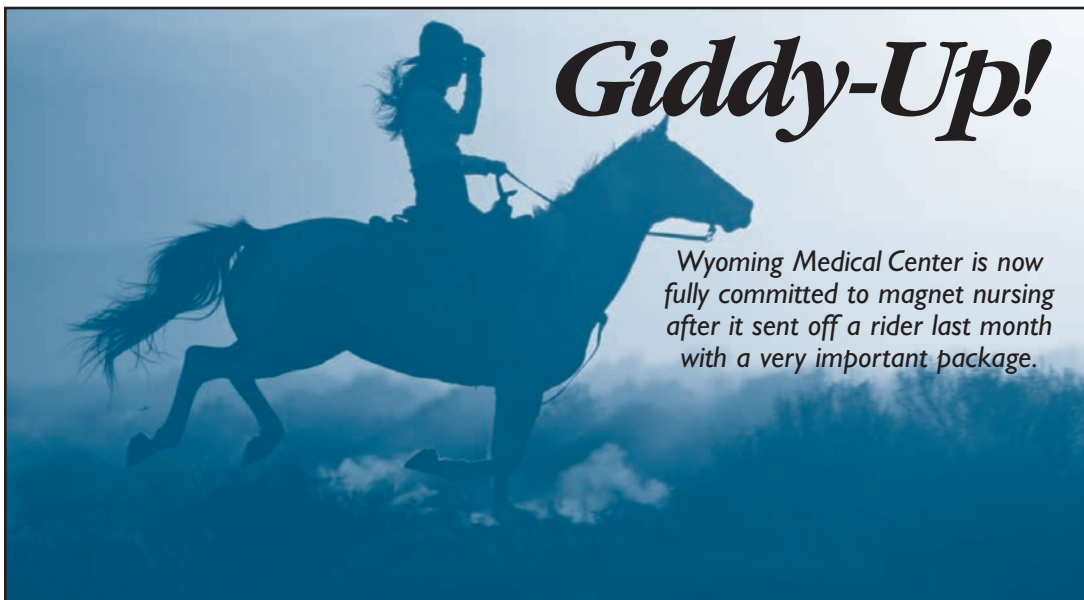


h ighlights

Monthly employee
newsletter

February 2006

Now on the Internet at www.wyomingmedicalcenter.com/empsvcs/



Giddy-Up!

Wyoming Medical Center is now fully committed to magnet nursing after it sent off a rider last month with a very important package.

The Pony Express rider left Wyoming Medical Center Jan. 6 with a small but very important package.

Inside was the hospital's magnet status application, or rather its magnet status invitation, inviting two surveyors to bring their white gloves and clip boards to Casper in March 2007.

The hospital sent off the package during a special ceremony in front of the hospital, but not before an analysis was conducted on all of the floors indicating Wyoming Medical Center was ready to attain the nation's highest nursing honor.

"The application itself was actually fair-

ly easy," said Director of Critical Care Julie Taylor-Cann, who is helping to coordinate the effort with Sandy Conklin. "What remains is a whole heck of a lot of work, with perhaps the hardest part being that we have to show them current data indicating that we are an innovative and dynamic organization focused on our patients."

Starting next month, the hospital will begin collecting that data and continue to do so up to the scheduled visit. The surveyors will then review the documents, and use what they read inside as the basis of their questions during their visit.

"As a whole, the documents must show how Wyoming Medical Center is living the 14 forces of magnet," Cann-Taylor said.

This includes hard data, staff meeting minutes, success stories and even a few of the failures related to each of the 14 forces.

Early in the visit, the surveyors will conduct short meetings with the nursing managers and administrators, however the rest will be spent with the eight nurs-

continued on page 7

LETTER FROM THE CEO

A surprise sitting on our doorstep

It's a real possibility that we could come to work one morning this month and find surveyors from the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations on our doorstep. They might even arrive before you read this letter.

Beginning this year, the Joint Commission announced that it will conduct its extensive three-day surveys any time! Without a heads-up, without a warning.

This is a change from past surveys which were conducted every three years with a visit date set several months prior. However as hospitals strive to make top-notch care and patient safety a part of their everyday lives, it only makes sense that they should be able to demonstrate these qualities at any time.

Fortunately, our periodic performance reviews (PPR) of all Joint Commission standards indicate that we are ready. By conducting weekly mock rounds, monthly tracers, and quarterly monitoring of JCAHO measures of success, we have placed ourselves in very good shape.

That doesn't mean there isn't work to be done, however. Some of the ways you can help prepare include:

continued on page 7



LEGISLATIVE HELP?

The Wyoming legislature will consider a bill this session to help hospitals with the high costs incurred in applying for magnet status. Although money is likely to be directed only to smaller hospitals with limited resources, the legislature has acknowledged the value of hospitals seeking magnet status.

**SERVICE AWARDS
FOR FEBRUARY**

25 YEARS

Gail Yeager, *Medical Records*
Elizabeth Marvel, *Sterile Processing*

5 YEARS

Kathy Causton, *Pathology*
Margaret Haller, *Laboratory*
Terri Wetzel, *Neuro*

NEW EMPLOYEES

Diana Dickerson, *Medical*
Andrew Hentzen, *Emergency Room*
Megan Berry, *Rehabilitation*
Christina Pedersen, *Patient Registration*
Andrew Lindgren, *Nutrition Services*
Staci Gilbert, *The Birth Place*
Ned Byrnes, *Nursing Administration*
Erin McDaniel, *The Birth Place*
Courtney Lythgoe, *Nutrition Services*
Joshua DeLeeuw, *Medical*
Lindsay Leake, *The Birth Place*
Kasey Falk, *Cardio Wellness*
Stephanie Gamroth, *Neuro*
Debrah DeGroot, *The Birth Place*
Nancy Jelsma-Brown, *Telemetry*
April Naab, *Nutrition Services*
Kathryn Cunningham, *Patient Registration*
Nina Roberts, *Neuro*
Doris Shields, *Float Pool*
Olesya Grabovskaya, *Nutrition Services*
Christina Willard, *Emergency Room*
Stephanie Howard, *Radiology*
Jennifer Stone, *Telemetry*
Kelly Santistevan, *Sterile Processing*
Yelena Tyshkun, *Nutrition Services*
Guy McCurdy, *Respiratory Care*
Matthew Parker, *Engineering*
Lisa Brandt, *Telemetry*
Peggy Wagoner, *Housekeeping*
Samantha Anderson, *Emergency Room*
Kassie Womack, *Surgical*

Hospital to help women live well

Local artists have donated their talents to help Wyoming Medical Center celebrate National Heart Month.

Designs for Life... Women Living Well will take place at the Nicolaysen Art Museum on Thursday, Feb. 9, from 5 to 9 p.m.

Those who attend the pink-tie affair will enjoy cocktails and hors d'oeuvres while bidding on live auction items and voting on the best shoe and best corset/bra entries.

The entries were created by numerous local artists and interior designers, including The



These are but two of the auction items that will be offered at *Design for Life...Women Living Well* on Feb. 9.

Flower Gallery, Lois Bernd, Cheryl Campbell, Sharon Wolford, Outpatient Radiology, numerous cancer survivors and the design classes at Kelly Walsh High School, Natrona

County High School and Dean Morgan Junior High School.

"Some of the themed entries include *Mardi Bras; A Little Touch of Heaven; Charmed, I'm*

continued on page 3

Farewell, gentle lady

A tribute by Patti Legler, RN

Wyoming Medical Center's Newborn Nursery lost a legend on Jan. 10, 2006. Helen Ideen was born on Dec. 17, 1923. She completed her Nursing Training at Denver Children's Hospital and worked there until her marriage to Warren Ideen. They eventually moved to Casper and she worked for pediatrician Dr. Walter Watson until she came to Natrona County Memorial Hospital in 1954. She was the Head Nurse in the Newborn Nursery for 28 years and then worked as a staff nurse for 15 more years in the nursery at Wyoming Medical Center. She retired in 1997 after 43 years of service as the longest-serving employee.

Those of us who knew and worked with Mrs. Ideen (we could never make ourselves call her Helen) remember her fierce dedication for her tiny patients. She trained during the devastating staph epidemics of the 1940s, which contributed to her absolute commitment to infection control. Those of us who were trained by her still find ourselves washing our hands every five minutes whether we've touched a patient or anything else. There is an itchy little feeling that those hands are dirty if they haven't been washed every few minutes. That itchy feeling is a part of Mrs. Ideen's legacy.

Several of us who worked with her sat around reminiscing after hearing about her death. One of the nurses remembered her own mother talking about Mrs. Ideen's care following her own delivery. Her mother had contracted a staph infection, and Mrs. Ideen was

appalled. She called her mom several times at home to see how she was doing. She taught us basic nursing skills that are sometimes overlooked today. Most of us agreed that when we make up a crib for a new baby, we must have those sheets so tight a penny will bounce and insist that not one single wrinkle be found — that's from Mrs. Ideen. She was happiest when coaxing a preemie to eat and chatting about her children and grandchildren while she listened to us chat about our own families. Family, both her own and everyone else's, was her center.

I remember lurching into the nursery one evening after spending at least an hour trying to get a reluctant infant to latch on and nurse. My back was aching and I was irritated that I couldn't get the child to eat. I bet Mrs. Ideen a dollar that she couldn't get the baby latched on either. She smirked, took the bet and strolled out. Ten minutes later she strolled back in with that little twinkle in her eye and held out her hand. Disgruntled, I went and got my dollar (yes, she expected it). I learned two important lessons that day: It is possible to get most any baby to eat, and never bet against the home team.

God Bless you, Mrs. Ideen. We know that you are in heaven's nursery now getting everything lined out. Your memory and your legacy will always be present in our nursery and in the hearts of the many nurses who trained and worked with you and in the thousands of families you cared for. ❖



Helen Ideen



One of Many Benefits

A monthly update from Human Resources on various employee benefits and services.

Walker passes national human resources exam

Join us for a celebration in Las Vegas

The banquet ends when Elvis leaves the building. Until then, hospital employees attending the 2006 Service Awards Banquet can enjoy dancing, gambling and the bright lights of Las Vegas.

The annual hospital event will take place Friday, March 3, at the Ramkota Inn with the theme Viva Las Vegas. A no-host cocktail hour will open the evening at 6 p.m. followed by dinner at 7 p.m. The menu will include a variety of tasty options to suit the many people in attendance.

After the festivities, the organizing committee has set up a casino where employees can gamble for prizes, along with a dance floor where they can enjoy music. We hope Elvis might stop by as well and pay a visit.

All employees and physicians who reached a five-year mark of employment during 2005 for five, 10, 15, etc. years of service, will receive an invitation in the mail which covers dinner for the honoree and one guest. Each honoree should have already received a certificate and pin on his/her anniversary date. Additional tickets for the evening cost \$12.

For the first time in its history, the banquet will take place on a Friday, so that employees can stay a little later and take part in the fun.

To accommodate that change, complimentary child care at the hospital's nationally accredited center will again be offered. The free service at the Next Generation Learning Center will be offered to all honorees with children 11 and younger from 5:30 to 10 p.m. This will allow our employees to enjoy their evening and not have to worry about finding a babysitter. Thank you to the Next Generation Learning Center staff for offering this service

To reserve a spot for your child, call NGLC Manager Camille Van Houten or Office Manager Lorie Van Neste at ext. 2990. To learn more about the banquet, call Jenn in Human Resources at ext. 2073. ❖

Free child care will again be offered for honorees until 11 p.m.

Mike Walker recently earned Professional in Human Resources (PHR) certification from the Human Resource Certification Institute (HRCI).

Walker had to complete a lengthy timed exam to earn his PHR certification, an exam that only has a 67-percent national pass rate.

To be eligible to sit for the exam, applicants must first work two years in an exempt-level human resources position. Walker has worked six of his eight years at Wyoming Medical Center as a human resources generalist. He started his career at the hospital in the Community Development Office.

To prepare, Walker used a 10-week study guide and completed approximately 50 hours of reading. Subject areas on the exam are strategic management, work force planning and development, human resources development, compensation and benefits, employee and labor relations, safety and security.

The examination features 255 questions and allows only four hours for completion.

HRCI is an independent, internationally recognized certifying body for the human resources profession. It is an affiliate of the Society for Human Resource Management. ❖

Heart ...from page 2

Sure; These Boots were Made for Walking; Casper Mountain; and many more fun and inspiring names," said Janet Smith of the hospital's Community Cancer Resource Center, who is helping to organize the evening.

To vote, the audience can purchase 50-50 raffle tickets. The winner will split the pot with the Wyoming Medical Center Foundation.

Light hors d'oeuvres catered

by Armours will be served as well as a fine chocolate fountain with fruit and other dippings. Poplar Wine and Spirits will provide a no-host bar.

"As a pink-tie event, you can wear whatever is special and comfortable," Smith said. "This could mean jeans along with a special jacket or perhaps a boa

scarf, or a lovely cocktail dress, or slacks."

Casper pianist Diane VonGunten will provide the entertainment for the evening.

Tickets are \$15 or four for \$50, and can be purchased at the Wyoming Medical Center Foundation, the Community Cancer Resource Center and Poplar Wine and Spirits.

Proceeds will benefit the Foundation's cancer and heart programs. To learn more, please call Janet Smith at ext. 2971. ❖

RED ROSES AND RED APPAREL

The hospital will kick-off National Heart Month with Wear Red Day on Friday, Feb. 3. The event will include a press conference at the hospital as well as a display in the lobby fea-

turing heart disease prevention and detection information along with a drawing for a dozen red roses.

Free red pins and healthy red apples will also be available.

A focussed assault on meth

TEA FOR NURSING WINNERS

The hospital hosted a celebration tea last month for those nurses recognized by the March of Dimes for Excellence in Nursing in 2005. Winners from Wyoming Medical Center included Phyllis Schultz, Cheryl Graff, Deborah Barella, Jan Backus, Jenea Goddard, Karen Dutton and Terry Brown. Other Wyoming Medical Center nominees were Lori Gutierrez, Kim Tyree, Gloria Yarger, Rose Braz and Mary Jo Daniels. The tea took place Jan. 31.

From 2000 to 2004, the Casper Police Department reported a 91-percent increase in adult drug arrests. Juvenile drug arrests jumped 104 percent.

Between January to June of 2005, 26 infants were born in this county who either tested positive for methamphetamine or whose mother was a known meth user, according to the Natrona County Health Department.

These are but a few of the statistics that motivated WMC Night Nursing Supervisor Kathy Woodward, RN, to serve last month on a community meth task force.

For two weeks in January, Woodward met each evening with other representatives from Natrona County to develop a plan that tackles the meth issue from several angles.

"The basis of our plan centers on prevention, treatment and law enforcement," she said. "More specifically, we need to focus greater attention on early intervention, community awareness and bringing all officials together who come in contact with the meth issue."

A FEW OTHER METH STATS

- The Natrona County Detention Center estimates that 25 percent of its inmates would benefit from a non-criminal justice detoxification center option. Many of these relate to meth use.
- Eighty-six percent of the county jail inmates treated under the public health program reported meth use.

This includes greater communication between health officials, police officers, school teachers, public service officials and the courts to stem this difficult issue.

Woodward, who also works as a psychiatric nurse at Wyoming Behavioral Institute, has witnessed first-hand what meth and other drugs can do to children and families.

"I have seen the heartbreak of meth left unchecked, and the improvements in a person's life if he can get proper treatment," Woodward said.

Woodward originally applied for the task force along with 74

other community residents, before she was selected to the 22-member committee. The final plan was sent to a steering committee on Feb. 1 for review before it travels to the Wyoming legislature later this session.

"This is the first time a community has come together in Wyoming and approached a problem like meth in this fashion," she said. "What we hope the legislature will do is look at our recommendations and provide funding for more treatment facilities, awareness campaigns and law enforcement capabilities."

Some of that funding might assist Wyoming Medical Center and other medical providers in their daily contact with meth, especially in identifying meth use in patients so that they can get treatment before the drug becomes a full-blown addiction.

"Meth production and use hits all of us in the community in some way," Woodward said, "which is why I believe that bringing such a diverse group together for these meetings will help us do something positive for the future." ❖

NOTABLE QUOTE

"Perpetual optimism is a force multiplier."
— Colin Powell

Take a walk down the French Quarter

Tickets are available for this month's annual Fat Tuesday Mardi Thaw hosted by the Wyoming Medical Center Foundation.

The best of New Orleans music, food and merriment will be brought to downtown Casper at the First Interstate Bank first floor parking garage during the annual Foundation event Feb. 28. The setting will

feature all of the sights, sounds and tastes of the Louisiana city, complete with French Quarter streets and balconies.

Tickets cost \$20 and are available in packages of 10 tickets for \$150. The money raised will help Hurricane Katrina victims and fund the Foundation's community health grant program.

The event will run from 5 to

8 p.m., with each guest having the chance to win exciting gift certificates and prizes. In addition, all guests will receive a mask, horn and beads at the entrance.

A live band will play New Orleans sounds while the guests can enjoy meals prepared by leading Casper restaurants.

Any employees who'd like to attend can contact Chandra Burgess at the Wyoming Medical Center Foundation at ext. 2973 to reserve their tickets. The Foundation will provide free delivery. ❖

For the two paramedics from New Orleans, it was easily their longest shift ever.

Employed by the City of New Orleans, Kim Weikum and her fiancé Luke Strack went to work Aug. 25, knowing that Hurricane Katrina was out there, but unaware like everyone else of the devastation that would follow.

As was customary with any hurricane watch, the engaged couple packed three days of food, water and basic supplies just in case. At the time, Katrina was a category-one hurricane approaching Florida.

By the time it arrived on Aug. 28, it had destroyed much of the coast of Mississippi, claimed more than 1,300 lives and climbing, and would leave 80 percent of New Orleans under water. Katrina would also lead Kim and Luke on a lengthy journey through the city, a shift that would last 25 days and end with their move to Casper and Wyoming Medical Center.

"As the hurricane worked through the Gulf Coast, it became apparent that it could greatly damage New Orleans," Kim said. "We prepared for the worst."

One day out, the couple was moved with 30 fellow paramedics to a local downtown hotel to wait out the storm. Katrina bashed and battered the city, though when Luke and Kim stepped outside the next morning, the initial damage didn't appear too bad.

"We were one mile from the water without any television so we didn't know what the rest of the city was facing," Kim said.

That changed as they boarded their ambulances and began rescuing people. They would pick up residents along the water's edge and take them to the Super Dome for care. Local fire fighters used their personal boats to pull people off roofs and out of second-story windows. With each ambulance trip, Luke and Kim noticed more and more people waiting beside water that was getting higher.

"We didn't know the levees had been breached, and had no communication with the outside world," Luke said. "By 8 p.m., it was clear that we would need to remain at the Super Dome which was the closest high ground."

When they awoke the next morning, they found several feet of water around the structure. Inside, the Super Dome was growing chaotic and talks with the National Guard and FEMA officials netted few answers. There were no plans for food, security or escape. Kim and Luke quickly realized that no one was in charge.

The 25-Day Shift



After Hurricane Katrina hit New Orleans, Kim Weikum and Luke Strack spent the next three-plus harrowing and heroic weeks trying to save their city.

Worse, Luke said that many of the gangs and criminals in New Orleans had remained behind and gathered guns and ammunition.

"You could hear gun shots in the distance," he said, "and there were many parts of the city that were now too dangerous to enter."

The couple remained at the Super Dome for two days as conditions worsened. There was little food, water or electricity, no working toilets, and growing lawlessness. They cared for the sicker people at the dome and huddled with the other paramedics for protection. The ambulances that had driven them there were now stuck, along with 25,000 people, on the cement island.

On day three, with the danger level rising, the paramedics were told they could move to a local aquarium. Kim traveled with a majority of the staff, while Luke stayed behind with the eight remaining paramedics to provide care.

When Kim arrived at the aquarium, the owner told the paramedics that he couldn't accommodate the large crowd. Kim said he shut and locked the doors. Plan B turned out to be a nearby hotel where some police were staying. They could provide protection.

Once there, they discovered that the hotel had a pool that was pristine and untouched

by the storm. After three days without a shower, the paramedics were treated to clean water. "It was my best swim ever," Kim said.

Throughout, she stayed in touch with Luke using a cell phone, though the signal was spotty. Unfortunately, word came of another levee break with nine added feet of water coming. With no one on the way to help them, the paramedics decided it was safest to leave the hotel and head to the city's West Bank where they knew the ground was dry. In the dark of night, they walked three miles through some of the most dangerous parts of town and across the Mississippi bridge to the dry west bank of the city. Numerous out-of-shape and middle aged co-workers, some with high blood pressure and diabetes, were part of the caravan.

"For a time, we were all cackling like hens, but then we discovered that we could hear the people in the neighborhoods around us and didn't know if they were friendly or dangerous. We kept very quiet after that," Kim said.

It was about then that Luke called to see how they were progressing.

"What's the plan right now?" he asked.

"I don't think this is the best time to talk," she whispered back.

On the bridge, they encountered fire fighters who were coming into New Orleans to get their trucks. When they returned, the fire fighters gave the caravan a ride to a local nursing home, which would be Kim's last residence in New Orleans.

Meanwhile, Luke tried to stay safe at the Super Dome. He spent the night sleeping in shorts and a T-shirt on a helicopter tarmac and awoke the next morning knowing he would have to leave. The water was now three-and-one-half feet high and too poisoned for a long journey on foot. Luke's plan was to walk the skywalk to a nearby garage where his truck was parked, and if he was lucky, start it up, return and carry the paramedics to the West Bank.

"Three of us went, and we split up. I was able to get my truck going while the other two were able to find an abandoned large postal truck," Luke said. "We were able to bring a lot more people with us than we first thought."

Luke found Kim safe at the nursing home, and they immediately began to assist the other 300 people living there to organize the small camp. Leaders were chosen. A safety parameter was set up. Those who had brought their personal firearms with them helped provide security and patrols.

continued on page 7

Team tackles two pneumonia projects

ALL FIRED UP

The schedule for the 2006 fire extinguisher training sessions has just been released. The annual hands-on training sessions will take place each Wednesday starting May

3. The classes last approximately 30 minutes and will take place on the dirt parking lot across the street from Occupational Health Management (245 S. Fenway).

Employees are required to complete the training once every three years. To register, call Human Resources at ext. 2456. You can also register online.

The full schedule is posted throughout the hospital. Various times are offered. The last class will take place Sept. 27.

The hospital's Community-Acquired Pneumonia Team has made dramatic strides this year on two quality improvement processes.

These are indicators from the National Hospital Quality Measures which were developed from evidence-based studies showing significant impact toward positive outcomes if followed.

Since forming two years ago, the team has tackled numerous improvement initiatives, completing successful work to improve treatment within the hospital. Two new processes took place this past year with sharp improvement in clinical numbers.

"We were able to increase our screening percentage from approximately 50 percent last year to more than 95 percent this fall."

—Valerie Cady

The first is a pneumococcal vaccination screening initiative, which worked to increase the number of at-risk patients who were screened for qualifying criteria to receive pneumococcal vaccination.

"We were able to increase our screening percentage from approximately 50 percent last year to more than 95 percent this fall," said Valerie Cady of Quality and Regulatory Management who chairs the Pneumonia Team.

The team worked with the pharmacy department, the nursing floors and infectious disease specialist Dr. Mark Dowell to develop a pharma-

The 10 members of the hospital's Community-Acquired Pneumonia Team include:

- | | |
|-----------------------|--------------------|
| • Valerie Cady, chair | • Laurie Sanftner |
| • Karen Dutton | • Gloria Yarger |
| • John Arross | • Dr. Mark Dowell |
| • Alice Lynch | • Dr. Ron Iverson |
| • Randy Wesnitzer | • Dr. Stuart Ruben |

cy/nurse initiated program. The team identified any hospital patient 65 or older as a potential candidate.

Pneumococcal vaccination is up to 75 percent effective in preventing pneumococcal bacteremia, which is a complication of pneumococcal pneumonia. All screening occurs when the patient is admitted to the nursing floor. The team expanded the reach of those patients interviewed to make sure that any at-risk patient would be screened.

"For example, in the past, a gentleman age 70 who came to WMC for knee surgery, would not have been screened and an opportunity to provide the vaccine would have been missed," Cady said. "Today, because he is part of the at-risk population, he is identified and given the vaccine if indicated."

The second project was to improve the hospital's smoking cessation education efforts.

Patients coming to the hospital are asked numerous health questions including "Are you a smoker?" In the past, identification was just that, now if the response is yes, this patient is asked if he/she would like help in quitting, then given counseling and treatment help in the hospital, plus cessation support referrals upon discharge.

"It is proven that face-to-face counseling with follow through are more effective in helping patients quit smoking than just dropping off a pamphlet," Cady said.

The team focused on educating the nursing floors and teamed with respiratory therapy and the Care Managers to assist with follow-up and referrals.

In the past year, the number of smokers who received a chance for cessation assistance during their hospital stay jumped from 40 percent to more than 90 percent this fall.

"Part of this rise is that we are also doing a better job with our documentation of education," Cady said. "We have often done things that we then forget to completely document. We are getting better here as well."

The eventual hiring of a Tobacco Treatment Specialist will also improve this important health care initiative. The position was recommended by the pneumonia and smoking cessation education teams.

"The reason any quality improvement team is successful is that it is able to identify the barriers to meeting its goals, and then develop a detailed plan to help bring down those barriers," Cady said. ❖

CEO letter ...from page 1

- Know the key points related to the national patient safety goals. All of the units have received this information.
 - Know the medication reconciliation and labeling of medications policies at the hospital. Your unit should have received this information as well.
 - Make sure all documentation is complete.
 - Know your patients. You will be expected to talk about them extensively.
 - Know your department's performance improvement data.
 - Know your department's processes, especially as they relate to patient hand-offs to other departments.
- Our biggest challenge in responding to Joint Commission's new method is to change past ideas that you must gear up

over time for the survey. Because these surveys are now becoming an annual event without forewarning, we must continue to make the Joint Commission standards part of our daily culture. Thank you for your continued hard work on this matter. I know we will have a great survey.

Sincerely,



Pam Fulks
President and CEO
Wyoming Medical Center

P.S. If you have questions about the next survey, talk to your unit manager or call Sandy Sienkiewicz of the Quality and Regulatory Department. She can be reached at ext. 2218.

Katrina ...from page 5

Local pharmacies were raided for antibiotics to care for the sick, while other patrols took advantage of the grocery and retail stores' willingness to open their doors and provide food and water. Each day, Luke and Kim went door-to-door around nearby homes to offer care and rescue to families. Soon the compound had approximately 1,000 residents, filled with firefighters and EMS staff from all over the country. The former nursing home was now the emergency operations center for New Orleans.

Within the week, conditions improved and National Guard soldiers from Puerto Rico arrived to provide protection. President George Bush stopped by during this time to check on progress and boost morale.

The never-ending work was a welcome respite, especially for Luke who didn't want to think about what had happened to his home town. This was where he'd been born and raised, where he'd gone to high school, where he had met Kim, where his entire family had lived. Now his family members were all homeless and traveling to Mississippi to renew their lives.

"I decided I didn't want to stay," Luke said. "New Orleans has a long history of incompetence and corruption. I knew it would be years before it would get better, and even though Kim and I felt a great loyalty to the city, I thought it would be best for us to have a fresh start."

Their shift ended Sept. 19 when they packed their bags and headed to Casper. Kim's mother, Lois Wright, works on the Birth Place and told her that Wyoming Medical Center was looking for experienced paramedics. Traveling with a box of photographs, the hard drive from their computers and a renter's insurance check — all else was ruined in their rented house — they drove to Houston to pick up their pets then to Casper to start their new jobs.

The transition has been a difficult one as they have adjusted to a more rural setting, missing the bustle of one of the busiest EMS services in the nation. On an average month, the city answered 5,600 calls.

Perhaps the hardest transition, though, is trying to decide on the future.

"I have no idea what we will do next, or whether we'll ever go back," Kim said. "I remember when I interviewed at the hospital and I was asked the standard question of 'Where do you see yourself in five years.' It's hard to answer that question when your next five years have been squashed."

For now, they are concentrating on their jobs and their upcoming marriage, which has been moved from early April to May 27. The original plan was to marry at the New Orleans Botanical Gardens, though that is not possible any more. The gardens no longer exist. ❖

Magnet ...from page 1

ing councils and on the floors talking with the nurses.

"Mostly they want to find out if what they read in the documents corresponds to what they are told on the floors. It's vital that all of our staff members know and understand magnet nursing," Cann-Taylor said.

The entire process is as detailed as a drug protocol, even limiting the document stack to no more than 15 inches high.

"This means we have to be clear in what we write and can't just flood them with numbers and information," she said.

Still, 15 inches is a lot of paper as Taylor-Cann discovered when she visited magnet hospital St. Cloud Medical Center in Minnesota and reviewed their 3,004 pages of documents.

All of which helps to explain why

only 130 of 5,000 hospitals in America have magnet nursing status. To earn this distinction, they must establish a system of shared governance, one that gives all nurses and clinicians a voice in how decisions are made at the hospital. They must give the floors more autonomy and establish high standards for ethics, quality measures and patient-focussed care. And they must establish 14 forces in their hospital, forces that must be ingrained on every floor.

Already, several large and well-known hospitals in the Rocky Mountain region have hosted magnet surveyors and been denied.

For her part, Cann-Taylor is undeterred. "By sending off the application, we are committing ourselves," she said. "We are the first hospital in Wyoming to send in our application, which means this time next year, we will be the first hospital in Wyoming to receive this high honor." ❖



The following table charts Wyoming Medical Center's healthy vital signs.

	Dec. 05	Nov. 05	Dec. 04
Discharges	808	807	856
Patient Days	3,249	3,588	3,584
Average Length of Stay	4.0 days	4.4 days	4.2 days
Births	90	90	83
WMC Surgery Cases	463	444	486
WMC Surgery Minutes	45,504	40,096	53,028
Occupational Health Visits	1,857	2,778	1,910
Emergency Room Visits	2,845	2,635	2,414
Ambulance Runs	469	427	391
Wyoming Life Flight	64	71	51

Highlights is published monthly by the Wyoming Medical Center Community Development Office. Article submissions for the **March** issue are due **February 21**.

If you have questions, comments or need more information, call 577-2388.

Editor — Mike Phillips

Employee Birthdays

Reminder: All Wyoming Medical Center employees may take a 20-percent discount at the Auxiliary Cottage Gift Shop during the month of their birthday. The discount may be used on any (one) day during that month. Most items apply.

February 1

Val Cady
Matthew Carey
David Mowry
Linda Toohey

February 2

Rhonda Barrett
Joshua Deleeuw
Azucena Obriant
Sheila Pesek
Donna Schiltz
Tanya Tewes

February 3

June Anderson
Curtis Bauer
Philip Baumann
Deborah Goudie
Rebekah Raugutt
Linde Woodward

February 4

Sharon Cooper
Martin Ellbogen

February 5

Jan Backus
Steve Cielinski
Bernadette Green
Heather Hahn
Rita Hubbard
Kim Weikum

February 6

Kristie Watson

February 7

Constance Feronti
Becky Kountz

February 8

Roberta Duesenberry
Sandra Feldick
Joan Noblitt

February 9

Susanna Pedry

February 10

June Niegisch
Melissa Smith
Brett Yarger

February 11

Mary Arellano
Eileen Taylor

February 12

Karen Stortz

February 13

Melissa Bell
Diana Jackson
Sharon Laceby
Chris Reilly

February 14

Lorna Atkinson
Davina Drazick
Dennis Matlack
Steve Murphy

February 15

Gail Gulle
Wendy Thaut
Brittney Weckwerth

February 16

Hillary Condict
Jenea Goddard
Jodi Jackson
Janie Luper
Chris Norcross
Jason Skinner
Heather Thompson

February 17

Amy Christensen
Russ Christiansen
Elizabeth Harsey
Stephanie Howard

February 18

Diane Kasler

February 19

Arianne Copper
Amber Feddersen
Laura Heuer

February 20

Devon Bodan
Sharren Nicholson

February 21

Nicole Alexander
Martha Jacobson
Merry James
Kellie Mulanax

February 22

Cheryl Olson

February 23

Mike Phillips
Patricia Scheuerman
Denise Siems
Sharry Woodworth

February 24

Sarah Clark

February 25

Jacqueline Bailey
Mary Jane Mitchell

February 26

Roy Hayford
Patsy McDonald

February 27

Nancy Badger
John Bean
Kathy Catania
Gail Chrisp
Natalie Cisneros
Mary Ann Gracey
Tammy Mann
Jill Martin
Connie Palato
Margaret Tageant
Lorie Vanneste

February 28

Candace Becker
Heather Edwards
Jennifer Sebesta