Perfecting patient care

Automated pharmacy system aims to ensure a higher quality of care
“Once you choose hope, anything’s possible.” This quote from the late actor Christopher Reeve epitomizes the same spirit that sustained James Kruse as he dealt with much adversity in the last 18 years of his life.

James died on November 15, 2008 at the age of 72. He was a Cedar Rapids native born at Mercy Hospital. According to his three daughters, he was a valiant fighter and a loving father with a “unique gift of smiling eyes.” He battled several bouts of cancer facing each diagnosis with dignity, quiet strength, and a sense of humor. Even when he suffered a stroke, James did not give up the fight.

That’s why it is so fitting that his daughters – Elaine Behrens, Jennifer Weber and Kyl Gorman – chose to honor his memory by creating Mercy’s Cancer Hope Fund. The memorial gifts they received in his name provided the seed money to reach out and help other cancer patients.

“He would be pleased to know he was helping other people with cancer,” Kyl said. Jennifer explained, “It was his determination and sense of hope that kept him going all these years. He would want others to have that same fighting spirit.”

Mercy’s Cancer Hope Fund will provide hope through financial assistance for patients with emergency needs who are receiving treatment at Mercy Medical Center and Hall Radiation Center. Battling cancer can be difficult physically and emotionally, so providing necessities like nutritional supplements, dressings, medical equipment or transportation assistance will lessen the burden of patients and their families in need.

Thanks to the generosity of James Kruse and his family, hope will be spread to those needing it at difficult times in their lives. As Elaine reflected, “Helping alleviate cancer patients’ worries and giving them hope at the same time would please my dad. I feel comforted knowing his legacy of hope lives on.”
Ann Royer was shocked and saddened by the devastation of the 2008 floods in our community and, like many, she felt compelled to do something. Unable to meet the physical demands needed for sandbagging, moving, cleaning or hauling, she gave in her own special way.

As days progressed and the totality of the damage became apparent, it suddenly was clear to Ann how she could help. Royer, a local and nationally renowned artist, felt her works of art could provide comfort and hope to peoples’ lives. She chose Mercy Medical Center as one of the recipients of her donated paintings.

On Wednesday, December 3, 2008, a reception was held to unveil the first colorful abstract aptly entitled “Hope” (painting on the far left). It hangs in the newly refurbished Lundy Pavilion, an area severely impacted by the flood. Then, in a surprise move, Royer presented President and CEO, Tim Charles, a second painting, entitled “Joy” (painting on the near left).

Under Royer’s guidance, “Joy” will be hung in the newly renovated employee.
The devastating flood last summer and the overwhelming support for those in need were examples of Mercy’s mission to care for the sick and enhance the health of communities we serve guided by the spirit of the Sisters of Mercy.

Kyle Skogman, a Mercy Board Member, saw first hand the devastation. With his direction, Skogman Homes established a program to build 15 new homes in a neighboring area of Oak Hill near Mercy Medical Center. This not only helped with community-wide recovery efforts, but it also provided a direct benefit to some Mercy employees including Linda Beltz, Environmental Services Supervisor and new home owner.

As Skogman explained “Linda is a great example of why my company decided to build homes that would help flood victims move on with their lives. Linda had to fight through month after month of delays in obtaining her financing for the new home. If you haven’t had to work with SBA, FHA, and FEMA you can’t appreciate all the red tape she had to deal with. At the same time she is more appreciative of her new home than most any buyer I’ve worked with in the past 35 years. From Skogman Homes perspective and, as a Mercy hospital director, I can’t think of any one who was more worthy of our support.”

Linda, a Mercy employee since 2001, and her family of rescue cats: Tippy, Fluffy, Hooty, Baby and Dock moved to their new home in February. It has energy efficient appliances and her very first dishwasher. Her daughter teases her that Linda will probably use the dishwasher for storage, not for washing dishes.

Linda noted that the first few weeks following the disaster were a “blur.” “Sister Susan O’Connor was there for me every step of the way, just like Kyle Skogman. At one point I was given Mr. Skogman’s personal cell number. He is a business man that sincerely cared about my well-being along with my Mercy family. Without the support of the Employee Relief Fund, I don’t know what I would have done. Mr. Charles — everyone at Mercy has been so caring” she said.

Like most others impacted by the destructive flood waters, Linda still has the responsibility of her original
home that she resided in for 20 years. During the flood of 1993, that home in the Czech district escaped water damage, but the June flood left 8.5 inches of water damage on the first level.

Linda’s advice to those in similar situations:
“Be patient and be relentless. I wish I could just walk away, but I know it’s no one’s fault and I understand that not all properties can — or will be bought out. This is new ground for Cedar Rapids and our officials are doing a lot to bring folks together. Just like Mercy did, this community will also rise above this.”

“It has been an honor and a privilege for me to be able to assist the Mercy employees affected by the flood. To see and hear the heartache and pain that so many of our colleagues experienced brought tears many times, but to also witness the incredible strength and courage that my fellow co-workers exhibited left me in awe.”

Deanna Glass, Social Worker, Social Services

• 221 Employees significantly affected by the flood
• 142 Employees initially assisted
• 52 Employees received additional “Phase II” assistance (based on specific need criteria)
• 11,075 hours of paid leave were donated by Mercy employees, totalling over $20,000
• To date $238,399.50 has been donated to the Employee Relief Fund

Left, top: Linda Beltz with her very first dishwasher.

Left, bottom: Linda Beltz outside her Skogman-built home.

Mercy Employee Flood Fund

We regret that the following individuals were omitted from Partners 2008 Annual Report. These employees also provided contributions towards the Mercy Employee Flood Relief Fund.

Kent Ambler
Sandra Cain
Craig Canvan
Jeffrey Colbert
Laurie Colebank
Susan Desmet
Marcia Dircks
Bridget Dunlay
Jennifer Engel
Lisa Fleming
Kathleen Gretter
Mary Jo Hammonds
Elaine Hansen
Connie Hauskins
Marian Hegland
Kelly Heikkinen
Bettye Hite
Sheila Janda
Natalie Kleis
Margaret Leahy
Catherine Miller
Megan Mrachek
Kelly Murphy
Tom Nassif
Molly Newhouse
Robert Olberding
Julie Potter
Diane Reist
Melinda Rhodes
Jacqueline Robertson
Susan Rogers
Lori Santel
Judith Shimek
Kathryn Smelser
Susan Sweeney
Christine Thompson
Sara Todd
Kayla Ward
Jaesanette Warren
Cecelia Young
Grassroots Giving

Frank and Ruth Ann Volesky have called Cedar Rapids their home for over 40 years. Both grew up on farms in Iowa, Ruth Ann on a century farm near Cascade and Frank on a farm outside of Shueyville.

Their career paths took different routes but eventually both came to Cedar Rapids. Ruth Ann graduated with a teaching degree from the University of Dubuque, taught school (all eight grades), in a small rural school. She also taught in Sidney, Neb. before returning home to begin a 21-year career as an auditor at the Roosevelt Hotel in Cedar Rapids. Reflecting on her career she commented, “Those were exciting times and I met many interesting people who were coming to Cedar Rapids.”

Frank spent three years in military service in Iceland, England and France. After the war, he completed an accounting degree at the former Cedar Rapids Business College and spent the next 20 years managing office equipment sales at Burroughs. The following 16 years of his career were spent at Lefebure as a branch manager in sales. He shared, “I was at Lefebure long enough to see the transition from mechanical to electrical office equipment!”

Thinking globally, Frank and Ruth Ann became world travelers. They have traveled through Europe, Africa, the Middle East and the British Isles. They’ve also enjoyed salmon fishing near Ketchikan, Alaska, and experienced a week-long hiking and sailing trip aboard an 80-ft. schooner on Lake Champlain in Burlington, Vt.

Closer to home, Ruth Ann and Frank have

If you’d like to know more about the benefits of charitable gift annuities, please contact Sue Hawn, Foundation President, at 398-6278.
Both Frank and Ruth Ann Volesky and Esther and Don Vorel share things in common— they have close ties with Mercy Medical Center, are long-time Cedar Rapidians and have enjoyed extensive world travels! We bring you their stories.

volunteered their time at Mercy for over 20 years, supporting numerous projects and activities. As a member of the Mercy Auxiliary, Ruth Ann assisted in the production of the Mercy (Auxiliary) newsletter and Frank has logged in over 4,000 hours working in the Pastoral Care office. He particularly enjoyed being a Eucharistic minister, and enjoyed working with the Hallmar residents.

As they have supported Mercy with their time and talent, the Voleskys have also generously contributed to support the area of greatest need at Mercy. Sharing their thoughts on giving, Ruth Ann noted that making a gift through a charitable gift annuity provided the benefit of supporting the hospital, while receiving life-income payments in return that supplement their retirement.

Frank explained, “This is something we wanted to do. When you walk into the hospital, you know that people care and you’ll receive excellent care; I can personally vouch for that!” They both agree, there’s more to the Mercy touch!

**Charity with Clarity**

Like the Voleskys, Esther and Don Vorel, share a rich Czech heritage, have enjoyed living most of their lives in Cedar Rapids, traveled extensively and have been long-time supporters of Mercy Medical Center. Married for 60 years, Esther and Don grew up in Cedar Rapids. Don worked at Collins Radio, then later at Mutual Fire and Automobile Insurance Company for

If you would like more information about sponsoring a private patient room, a nurses’ station, family or staff lounge, or artwork, please contact the Mercy Foundation at 398-6206.
Esther built her career at Rockwell Collins, and, after 35 years retired with seniority as one of the top assembly employees.

Esther and Don decided early in their lives to see the world, traveling throughout Europe and more distant places in the Middle East and Asia. Visiting with them, they shared stories about all the places they’ve visited. Their visit to Israel was especially memorable as they were baptized in the Jordan River and renewed their marriage vows at the “wedding church” in Kafir Kanna (a pilgrimage site believed by many to be the site of the Biblical marriage at Cana). They have also traveled through all 50 states. As Don looked back on all their travels, he shared, “We loved to travel, had some wild taxi rides and stayed at some of the best and worst hotels over the years.”

Both Esther and Don have been Mercy volunteers. Esther’s talent for flower arranging has been put to good use for over 20 years at the hospital and Don has graciously donated countless hours volunteering. Both feel very much at home at Mercy.

The Vorels understand the need of others experiencing quality hospital care. They have generously supported the Dennis and Donna Oldorf Hospice House of Mercy and three patient room sponsorships that help to cover the cost of private patient room renovations. Esther shared, “Mercy is a wonderful place and it’s a family to us. We were pleased to be able to share this feeling of family with others through our gifts.”

On Saturday, February 28, the former Mercy School of Nursing came down. Crowds showed up to witness the first ever building implosion in the history of Cedar Rapids. Mercy employee, Mike Lane, was the winner of the raffle to set off the implosion.

As Sister James Marie Donahue led the crowd in the countdown, Lane and his 16 year-old-son, Chris, pushed the button to set off a series of blasts. Within ten seconds, the 63-year-old building had collapsed into itself.

The Foundation and Auxiliary sold 294 raffle tickets and raised $1,470. The proceeds from the raffle as well as the brick sale go toward the newly created Mercy School of Nursing Endowed Scholarship.
Own a Piece of History

The former Family Practice Building on 8th Street SE is now history. What once was the original Mercy School of Nursing from 1904 to 1971 became another casualty of the unprecedented floods of 2008. During those 67 years, 1,188 nurses were trained and graduated from the school.

After the nursing school shut its doors, the building became a valuable resource to the community. The Family Practice Residency program trained hundreds of new family practice physicians and operated a clinic for underserved patients. Non-profit agencies such as Variety — the Children’s Charity, Juvenile Diabetes Foundation and The National Kidney Foundation also had offices in the building.

To honor the legacy of the nursing graduates and pay tribute to the building’s history, the Mercy Foundation has established the Mercy Medical Center School of Nursing Endowed Scholarship.

For gifts of $65 or more, an original brick with a commemorative plaque will be given to the first 500 people who donate. All proceeds will benefit this new scholarship supporting the future educational needs of nursing students affiliated with Mercy Medical Center.

Mercy School of Nursing Endowed Scholarship

Gifts can be sent to:
Mercy Medical Center Foundation
701 10th Street SE
Cedar Rapids, IA 52403

Please indicate that you want your donation to go to the Nursing Scholarship. For further information, please call the Mercy Foundation office at (319) 398-6206.
In August of 2007, Mercy Medical Center committed to taking the hospital’s nursing program to a new level of excellence. Based on top national models, the New Graduate Nurse Residency Program establishes Mercy as the first hospital in Iowa to implement such a program.

- Nationally, high turnover rates in employment among first-year nurses has been a critical concern, and transitioning nurses nationwide from nursing school to clinical practice has been challenging. Mercy's New Graduate Nurse Residency Program is designed to address this problem and ease the transition nurses make from graduation to their first year of employment. Hospitals with a nurse residency program have demonstrated a significant drop in nursing staff turnover. The goal of the program is to:
  - Transition program participants from nursing school to professional practice
  - Guide new graduates or nurses with limited work experience
  - Require all new graduates hired at Mercy to take the course, enhancing critical thinking, professional skills, and professional commitment

The first “pilot” class began in August 2008 and will soon be completing its 12-month program. The second class began coursework in February. Participants in the pilot program expressed satisfaction with the program, noting the importance of finding a hospital that focuses on their continuing learning and growth as a nurse. They also noted how valuable their training through skills labs, online learning and clinics is to becoming an integral part of the Mercy nursing team.

Beth Houlahan, Senior Vice President of Nursing said, “This program is intended to aid our new nurses to evolve from novice to expert practitioners. We are very pleased with the caliber of this first group of new graduate nurses participating in the new graduate residency program. It has been exciting to see their growth and development in the first 6 months of the program.”

Mercy deeply appreciates the financial assistance of the Rohde Family Charitable Trust in support of the New Graduate Nurse Residency Program.
Translating Your Values Into Actions: Supporting the Mercy Touch

During the past year I’ve come to fully appreciate the meaning of how we do our work by living and sharing the Mercy Touch. It’s demonstrated in simple and complex ways, touching every aspect of the work that’s done on a daily basis. At Mercy, we think a lot about what the Mercy Touch means, how we translate it into our work and how we challenge ourselves to new levels of service and delivery in patient care services.

Over the past year, you have responded to Mercy and the Mercy Touch and your gifts have made a tremendous difference. Your gifts supported our employees devastated by the June 2008 flood through the Employee Flood Relief Fund, the area of greatest need at the hospital, the Hospice of Mercy program, the Dennis and Donna Oldorf Hospice House of Mercy, endowed scholarship fund benefiting nursing education or a specific department.

You have joined hands with others in literally changing and saving lives, even during a time when the economy is under great duress.

Giving during a current economic downturn forces all of us to reflect and evaluate how we will meet our philanthropic needs. Here are several suggestions to consider as you consider ways to continue your giving during the upcoming year.

Consider charitable gift annuities.
For many individuals, gift annuities provide an advantageous way to both give and receive, providing annuity rates that are much more attractive than current CD rates. Gift annuities also bear serious consideration given the consistent, unchanging nature of payments back to the donor. They remain an excellent way to fulfill your charitable wishes and receive an income tax deduction if you itemize along with a fixed return on your investment.

Remember Mercy Medical Center in your estate plans.
Perhaps now is the time to consider making a provision in your estate plans for Mercy, or designating the Foundation as a beneficiary of an insurance policy or retirement account. For many of us, the most significant way we can provide assistance is through a gift from our estate. A planned gift creates an ongoing legacy of support whether for the area of greatest need or, more specifically, for a program, department or endowed nursing scholarship. Now is a good time to either review your current will to see if it meets your wishes, or to put a new will into place.

Both charitable gift annuities and bequests are different tools included in your charitable toolbox and can enhance your current giving. In addition, either of these gift arrangements for Mercy makes you a member of the Mercy Foundation’s Founders’ Society. The Founders’ Society includes individuals who have made a planned or endowed gift to the hospital or who have $50,000 in cumulative giving.

Translating values into actions through giving, especially during hard times, asks us all to dig a little deeper and consider some of the other options available when it comes to charitable giving. The Mercy Foundation supports the mission and needs of Mercy Medical Center and the thousands of people we serve. Your generosity translates into tangible acts of kindness that affect every area of Mercy and, in a more specific context, change and save lives.

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Sue Hawn, CFRE, President, Mercy Foundation

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Charitable Gift Annuities Rate Chart
Effective February 1, 2009—June 30, 2009

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Provided by American Council on Gift Annuities. Annuity payments are fixed and guaranteed for life for one or two individuals. This illustration is for education purposes only and is merely to provide information based on certain assumptions.
Mercy’s Commitment to Excellence Continues

- Mercy Medical Center is only one of seven hospitals in the nation that offers CryoSpray Ablation Cryotherapy as a minimally invasive treatment that uses extreme cold to freeze and destroy diseased tissue including cancer cells.

- The Sisters of Mercy received the Benjamin Franklin Award as part of the National Philanthropy Day celebration. The award recognizes those committed to philanthropy and is not given out every year.

- Mercy Medical Center’s Echo Lab is the first and only one in Cedar Rapids to receive accreditation from the Intersocietal Commission for the Accreditation of Echocardiography Laboratories for its quality echocardiographic services.

- Mercy Medical Center received the Gold Performance Award for sustained coronary artery disease care.

- Mercy Medical Center earned Chest Pain Center Accreditation. The accreditation by the Society of Chest Pain Centers means the hospital met or exceeded quality-of-care measures based on improving the process for the care of heart attack patients.

- The Institute for Healthcare Improvement (IHI) recognized Mercy Medical Center for outstanding results in clinical quality, cost effectiveness, patient satisfaction and financial security. Mercy Medical Center was one of 16 exemplary facilities identified in the study from several hundred U.S. hospitals.

- The Pursuit of Excellence award from Baxter Healthcare was bestowed upon Mercy Medical Center for its home dialysis program. Mercy Medical Center is the first in Iowa to receive this award.