Woman's Hospital: Celebrating 15 Years of Service to Baton Rouge

The employees' dedication was obvious from the beginning, when many of them worked several weeks without pay until the hospital was able to pay them. Their dedication paid off. Woman's Hospital is now one of the largest hospitals in the nation devoted to the care of women and newborn infants. Woman's Hospital was only the second hospital for women to be built in the United States, and the 20 obstetrician-gynecologists practicing in Baton Rouge at the time worked hard to sell the idea to the community. Their efforts began in 1956. The property on which the hospital stands was purchased the next year for $64,000. The obstetrician-gynecologists, and several business and professional leaders in the city, established a foundation to handle hospital business, ensuring that the hospital would be a not-for-profit institution, giving no financial gain to any of the foundation members. After 10 years of fundraising by the foundation members, construction began. Thirteen months later, on Nov. 18, 1968, the hospital opened with 90 beds. At 11:40 a.m., the first child was born at Woman's Hospital. She is Marguerite Wingle, the daughter of Mrs. June Babin. She celebrates her birthday every year with the staff of Woman's Hospital. Of the employees who were at Woman's Hospital on opening day, 21 are still working today. The original employees have seen many changes in 15 years, and have many warm memories of the 15 years they have shared with Baton Rouge families.

"Of course, a lot of things have changed over the years, but I think one of the most important changes is that we have all become more accepting of other peoples values," said Betty Holloway, RN, now the director of Education. "We are seeing people as they are, and we are accepting them as people. This is particularly important in a hospital where we see so many people for such a short time. I know I'm more accepting than I was 15 years ago, and I think we all are."

"People are much better educated today, much more knowledgeable about health care," Mrs. Holloway said, "but they demand better, more up-to-date information from us."

Mrs. Alvena Johnson has been working as a nurse aide in the hospital's Second Floor Nursery since the day operations began. Her memories include caring for the more than 80,000 babies who have passed through her nursery.

"People have sent me many nice cards and letters saying how much they appreciated the care I gave their baby. And I have kept every single one. They mean so much to me," Mrs. Johnson says.

Central Supply supervisor Dot Martin, RN, was one of the first nurses to join the hospital staff. She came three weeks before the hospital opened to help unpack supplies, stock the shelves and establish policies and procedures.

"There were people in Baton Rouge who never thought the hospital would succeed, and I can't say that we didn't have a few doubts. But we were so enthusiastic, we really didn't have time to worry about it. And, things went so well that in six months we were talking about an expansion program."

"It's really very gratifying to know I was a part of the growth and success of the hospital. I'm very proud of the hospital and the people I've worked with all these years."

People are the focus of another 15-year employee, Ruth Mosley, a technican assistant in the Radiology Department.

"We've always been so close knit at the hospital. We all work hard to make sure each patient is treated as an individual, no matter how many cases we see each day. It makes all the difference in the world to patients."

It is to these and all of the Woman's Hospital employees that this 15th anniversary is dedicated. They have seen many changes in medical and nursing care and in technology. They have seen the hospital grow and prosper, from 90 beds to 225 beds. And they have met one of the most difficult challenges in the health care industry: they have ensured that the level of warmth and humanity in the hospital is as high as the level of technical sophistication. Our first 15 years in Baton Rouge have been rewarding, enjoyable and exciting. And we're looking ahead to a future even more exciting.

We hope you will give us your ideas and suggestions of ways we can better serve our community. Please call our Public Relations office if you have any suggestions or questions, 927-1500.