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Hispanic/Latino philanthropy: Myth vs. reality

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Firsthand experience:

Doing is believing



By Jennifer Johnson, CFRE and Rick Bragga, J.D., FAHP



■ Jennifer Johnson, CFRE has been the assistant vice president of donor relations at Cook Children's Hospital in Fort Worth, Texas, for nine years. She manages a major gift portfolio and oversees donor relations, communication and community programs. Johnson is an active member of AHP and the Association of Donor Relations Professionals.



■ Rick Bragga, J.D., FAHP is a senior consultant with Corporate DevelopMint, Charleston, S.C. A past AHP Mid-Atlantic region director, Bragga is a two-time winner of the AHP Professional Paper Competition; he received the *AHP Journal* First Place award in 2002 and 2007; and was the 2008 recipient of the AHP Si Seymour award.

If seeing is believing, what is doing? In the case of Cook Children's Hospital in Fort Worth, Texas, and a number of other institutions across North America, doing is the best way to educate and create engagement. Through "day-in-the-life" visitation programs, hospitals are helping prospects and donors experience their organization's mission in a way that is unique and profoundly meaningful.

Many hospitals and foundations offer educational programs from speaker's bureaus and physician presentations to brief tours. Some even participate with a day at the hospital for community leadership programs such as Leadership Fort Worth. Few, however, offer a continuous, comprehensive and highly structured community relations effort designed to provide the opportunity to actually live the mission for a day at their hospitals. For those organizations that have made this last step, the experience for their donors has been transforming.

The Internship Program at Lakeland Regional Medical Center in Lakeland, Fla., has been in operation for nine years.



“In reality, it’s a full day visitation but we’ve continued with the original name because the program has such history and positive name recognition,” said Foundation Executive Director Ken Menefee, FAHP. “We see it as a great way to dispel the myths of health care and have our friends and leaders understand why health care is both complex and costly. Our day includes the traditional tours of surgery, cardiac services and the busiest emergency department in the state of Florida. It also incorporates a question-and-answer lunch with our hospital chief executive officer (CEO) and culminates with a tour of the cancer center and an open discussion about their experiences. Our groups are limited to about six but are held eight months of the year, excluding November, December, July and August.

Once every three or four years we’ll have a reunion and we’ve even had a couple come back seven years later to take the whole day over again, just to see the changes. They, as with first-time participants, were amazed.”

In Canada, a number of facilities have variations of these visitation programs. “Especially in these times, you can’t do enough cultivation. It’s very important,” said Pearl Veenema, FAHP, president and CEO of Hamilton Health Sciences Foundation in Hamilton, Ontario, Canada. “We don’t see any difference between the type of facility, whether for children, acute care or seniors, and the implementation of visitation programs. They work in each setting. Our program focuses only on donors as part of our cultivation, engagement and

education strategy. It is a major stewardship opportunity for us. From a cultivation aspect, we ask our board members and fundraising council members to invite prospective donors and volunteers. This allows people to get to know and support our local hospital. In that way, it’s so much more than a strict return on investment.”

Case study: Cook Children’s Hospital—Experience The Mission™

After learning about comprehensive visitation programs while attending a conference, Cook Children’s Hospital set out to create a similar program with three main objectives:

- Cultivate, educate, engage and steward donors, prospects and community leaders.
- Offer a transformational life-changing experience.
- Provide opportunities to involve physicians, clinical staff, hospital administration and gift officers.

In 2003, Cook Children’s created “Experience the Mission.” What follows is an in-depth look at the program and its results.

Selecting the participants

Participants for the Experience the Mission (ETM) program are chosen based on a number of factors including:

- Recommendations by an ETM alumnus.
- Suggestions by foundation or administrative staff.
- Physician or board member nominations.

A variety of criteria are used for selection, such as relationship to the hospital or key hospital leaders, ability to influence others and spread the message, philanthropic potential and/or being in a community leadership position.

The night before

This “day-in-the life” experience actually begins the night before. All participants attend a one-hour

orientation dinner where the logistics of the next day are discussed and an ETM alumnus talks about his/her experience from a peer-to-peer perspective. At the dinner, participants sign confidentiality agreements, photos are taken by a professional photographer, ETM scrubs are provided and members of the medical team are introduced.

Participants also are asked to refrain from using cell phones, pagers, personal digital assistants (PDAs) and other communication devices throughout the

next day. As you can imagine, this is a challenge for some, a hardship for others and an impossibility for a select few. David Kramer, senior vice president, Republic Title Company related his concerns over using a PDA during the day: "Like many professionals, I receive hundreds of e-mails a day. Being out of touch for an entire day really made me think twice, but I made the commitment to fully experience this program. During the day, I didn't step out and check my e-mails or messages. After the dinner,



phone and other messages were the least of my thoughts. All I wanted to do was to go home and hug my son."

Hospital CEO Rick Merrill speaks to those involved at both an opening and a closing dinner. A formal message from Merrill also is included in the preface of an experience journal provided to each participant: "You now join a select group of Experience the Mission alumni. The extraordinary memories you will build through ETM are reflections of our promise to improve the health of every child in our region."

During this orientation, participants are introduced to their guides. These volunteers are upper-level staff and administrative personnel who have been carefully selected by the foundation and have been through specialized guide training. They usually rotate in and out of active status based on the intensity of their schedules. Currently, there are 16 trained guides at Cook Children's and each session uses 10 to 12 guides.

The great day

New ETM programs are conducted four times per year in October, November, January and March. Going "back-stage" at the hospital begins at 7:30 a.m. with breakfast at the hospital. During this time, participants are provided a lab coat, pen, note pad and tissues. Following breakfast, guides escort their participants to selected sites for visitation. These sites are balanced between high-energy activities such as anesthesia, and calmer areas like the laboratory or in-patient and out-patient behavioral health (psychiatry). Other

When recruiting is tough...



...just call

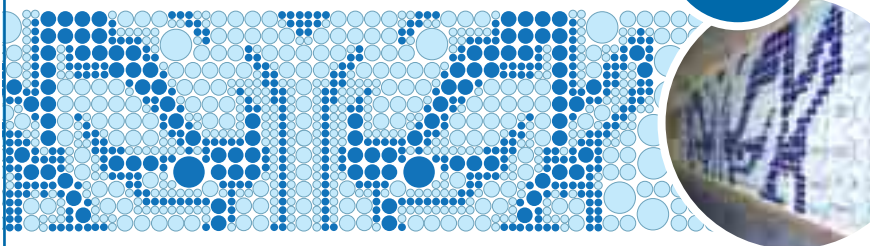
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examples include: surgery, neonatal intensive care, pediatric intensive care, hematology/oncology, cardiology, pulmonology, infectious disease, child life and the emergency department. In the morning, each participant rotates through two clinical areas. The various rotations are both touching and informative.

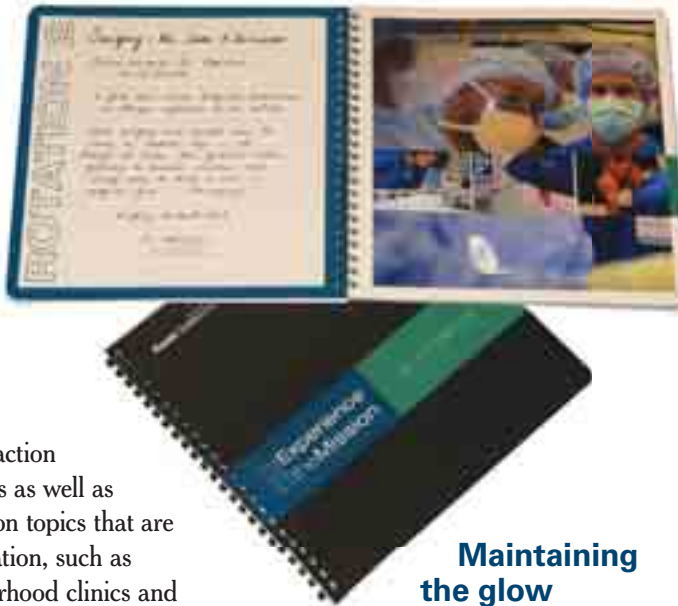
According to Joan Katz, a 2006 alumnus, "What an emotional day it is on so many different levels, and what an education!"

At lunch, there are opportunities for interaction among the participants as well as general presentations on topics that are inappropriate for visitation, such as pastoral care, neighborhood clinics and homeless initiatives. After lunch, participants are guided through two additional rotations. Throughout the day, guides take pictures and write in the journal of each participant. The journals are spiral bound and pre-printed with space available for guides to fill in the schedule and highlights of the day.

The big finish

At 5 p.m., prior to dinner, a reception is held adjacent to the dinner venue. Completion of ETM is celebrated with a "graduation" and recognition dinner which includes the participants and their spouses, guides, foundation staff, alumni and medical team members. This event is held at the hospital to minimize travel and time delays and to accommodate clinical staff who might be on call. During the festivities, participants are encouraged to share highlights of their day. At the close of the dinner, alumni are presented with a framed photo taken of them during the day's activities and the completed journal of their experience. Following his 24-hour immersion into

the world of Cook Children's Hospital in 2006, Chris Huckabee said "I was told it would be a powerful day. I had no idea that it would be a day that changed my life."



Maintaining the glow

Within 30 days of their experience, new alumni are visited by a foundation staff member who conducts an in-depth evaluation of their day. Also, during this 60- to 90-minute session, the participant is presented with a small, 5-by-7 inch photo album to commemorate their day. The album contains photos taken by the professional photographer and by their guide. A discussion is held at that time to determine if there are any other ways they would like to be engaged with Cook Children's Hospital.

In April or May of each year an alumni event is held. Alumni are seated with their guides and individuals from their original group. Spouses are also invited. Typical attendance ranges from 150 to 200 people.

The mission is in the living


There are many positive outcomes that have occurred as a result of Experience the Mission at Cook Children's Hospital. ETM participants:


- Tell families, friends, business colleagues and others they meet about the experience.

- Become advocates and ambassadors for Cook Children's.
- Refer additional prospects for ETM.
- Become volunteers and board members.
- Become major donors.
- Commit to planned gifts.
- Are moved to ask about other giving opportunities beyond their current giving.
- Experience a positive reinforcement of their prior gifts.

These quotes from the evaluations of two ETM graduates are typical of participants' experiences:


- "It was a life changing experience. Sign me up. I'm ready to go."
- "I had a great time and I cannot wait to share this with pretty much everybody I see."

According to Executive Director Ken Menefee, the Internship Program in Florida has seen similar results with stronger donor relationships, new board members and new or enhanced gifts. Whether you give tours, have internships or create your own opportunity to "experience the mission" of your institution, it can have a significant impact upon your donors and prospects. 



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Vice President

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