

# Environmental News And Notes

## Providing Quality Care For Patients...And The Planet

(NAPSA)—Increasingly, saving the planet while saving lives is becoming part of the mission of health care institutions. This is true at Sacred Heart Hospital in Eau Claire, Wis., where the institution's leadership has emphasized environmentally responsible, "green activities." They believe that this has helped to position the organization as an industry leader in environmental initiatives.

"Quality care for our patients is our primary goal, but taking care of the environment also is a top priority," explains Steve Ronstrom, chief executive officer. "We strive to integrate green programs because we recognize the fundamental link between healthy people and a healthy environment.

"We are dedicated to protecting the environment in every way possible," Ronstrom adds. "Our green initiatives are big, but they are easy to implement. Any organization can adopt similar efforts, and we encourage it."

Sacred Heart Hospital is focused on green activities day in and day out. For instance, extra food is packaged into meals and delivered to a local food pantry every day.

"It is a win-win situation," says Rick Beckler, director of hospitality services and chair of the hospital's Green Team. "People in need are given fresh, nutritious food, and Sacred Heart Hospital is able to reduce costs associated with leftover food being thrown out."

Leftovers may be small amounts of food each day, but over time—the impact is significant. In 2008, 46,800 pounds of food were given to the St. Francis Food Pantry, Inc.,



**This healing garden uses nature's beauty to promote relaxation, in a peaceful setting with benches and walkways, as part of the healing process.**

located in Eau Claire.

"The support from Sacred Heart Hospital is incredible," says Michelle Gribble, executive director of the St. Francis Food Pantry. "Families who receive the healthy meals, which are prepared, packaged and delivered by the hospital, are extremely appreciative."

In addition, scrap food also is given to a local animal ranch for feeding—totaling 9,000 pounds last year. However, food donation is but one of many initiatives. Various hospitalwide green efforts are practiced, all of which are managed by the Sacred Heart Hospital Green Team—focused on protecting the environment, preserving natural resources and reducing energy consumption.

The Green Team is composed of leaders throughout the organization who help to assess past progress, review current status and set benchmark goals for reducing, reusing and recycling.

"It may be more convenient to dispose of old items, but we recycle everything from medical equipment, including surgical tools and wheelchairs, to everyday items like lightbulbs and paper," Beckler explains. "During a recent two-floor renovation, we even recycled the porcelain sinks."

During the past two years, the hospital has contributed more than 37,000 pounds of surplus medical-related equipment valued at more than \$200,000. Part of the Hospital Sisters Mission Outreach Partners in Recycling Program, these items have been used in needy health care facilities in various countries around the globe.

Beyond recycling and reusing, preserving nature's natural beauty is another environmental initiative for Sacred Heart Hospital. Rooftop and healing gardens are maintained for the enjoyment of patients, their loved ones and staff.

Loyal to its Franciscan tradition to respect creation, safeguard its people and practice good stewardship, Sacred Heart Hospital's efforts have not gone unnoticed. Recently, the hospital was one of only six nationwide to be awarded the Environmental Leadership Award (ELA), presented by Practice Greenhealth.

"The ELA distinguishes Sacred Heart Hospital as being among the best in the country for green efforts," Beckler says. "It recognizes our innovative programs that set industry standards for waste reduction and pollution prevention. We are leading a trend that can benefit communities and inspire hospitals throughout the country."