



Hospital staff goes go to school at work

By Jeff Troth MEDDAC PAO

Employees of Evans Army Community Hospital are going back to school. But they will not have to leave the hospital to garner their education. They will be attending the hospital's new "school" – EACH University.

The "university" is a low-cost, internal training program that was the brain child of Evans' employee Toni Chatman, a logistician whose duties at the hospital involve property management and hand receipt management.

"I am a military spouse and this is the sixth MTF (medical treatment facility) that I have worked at," said Chatman. "I noticed that names and faces changed from MTF to MTF, but there were similar needs at all of them."

She saw that at all the places she worked there were classes and training for the medical staff to sustain their medical proficiency, but limited classes for non-medical support staff. Chatman said that she then came up with the idea for a training program for hospital staff that focused on building and empowering them. Over the years she worked on her idea, but never brought it to any of the hospitals' commands until this year.

"Lt. Col (Eric) Poulsen (Evans' deputy commander for administration) said that he was looking for ideas on how to improve the facility, improve patient relations and improve staff morale," Chatman said. "And I thought this was the perfect place and the perfect opportunity to pilot my idea."

She presented the concept of an EACH University to the hospital commander and hospital leadership during Evans' Strategic Planning Seminar in April.

"I was shocked at how well they responded to it and how quickly it has been implemented," Chatman said. "Sometimes you get ideas like this and there is no traction, but it had traction almost immediately; this was the right time and the right place for my university idea."

But, the idea for the university and its curriculum wasn't just to improve employees' performance at the workplace, but to enhance their overall lives also.

"This has to do with making someone a better person and in turn a better employee," she said. The university was designed to be organizationally driven. The hospital staff and command will work together to determine which classes will be most beneficial to Evans. This will be different than the Department of the Army or Medical Command directed training that is conducted within military units around the globe, or within other Army hospitals.

"What Irwin (Army Community Hospital at Fort Riley, Kan.) or Madigan (Army Medical Center at Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Wash.) for their staff may not be what Evans needs," Chatman said. The week of July 14, EACH University held its first classes. More than 400 staff members attended customer service classes, which focused on improving the care experience patients receive at Evans.

"One of our core focuses at Evans is patient and customer service," said Lt. Col Eric Poulsen, Evans' deputy commander for administration. "And that service depends a lot on how we interact with each other. How our doctors, nurses and administration staff function and support each other to make the best possible patient care experience."

Those who attended the customer service classes were given tools to create a positive care experience and maintain it. They also discussed conflict resolution when things don't go the way a patient expects.

"We can't meet everyone's expectations every time, but it doesn't mean that we shouldn't do our best so that someone doesn't feel like a number," said Mark Greene, the class facilitator.

"The goal for service excellence is always doing our best to create a positive experience for everyone who walks through our doors."

He told the class that hospitals are in the problem solving business. That when patients come to the hospital, the staff works hard to find out what is going on with their health and how to make them better. Greene said they should take the same responsibility when there is something non-medically related.

Other classes that Chatman is working to get into the EACH University curriculum include team building, email etiquette and using computer programs.

"You'd be surprised at how many people do not know Microsoft Office programs," said Chatman. "So we are looking at having beginner, intermediate and advance classes. So no matter what your skill level is you will still learn something.

"The possibilities on what classes will be taught are endless," she added.

The future of EACH University is also endless.

Chatman is hoping to have more than 2,000 staff members walk through the doors of EACH University classes and to come up with a reward system for those who attain a certain number of university "credits." She would also like to see other military hospitals have their own university modeled after EACH University.

"My advice to anyone who has an idea that would improve the workplace is to take ownership and find a way to get it in front of your command," said Chatman. "If you really care about your organization and want to make it better find a way to give your idea a voice."



During a customer service class at Evans Army Community Hospital, Mark Green, of the Arbinger Institute, discusses seeking solutions with hospital staff, July 17. He told them that hospitals are in the problem solving business and when patients have an issue we should be ready to help them even when it is not medically related. (U.S. Army photo by Jeff Troth)