Karen Yech Receives Annual Leo Soorus Leadership Award

Karen Yech, RN, Division Director of Patient Care Services and Clinical Director-Quality, was this year’s recipient of the annual Leo Soorus Leadership Award. The award recognizes one Lakeland associate, supervisor, manager, or director who demonstrates exemplary leadership qualities. The award was developed through the Lakeland Health Foundation in honor of Leo Soorus’ many contributions to southwest Michigan. Throughout his career as a Lakeland executive, Soorus volunteered countless hours and led many community and professional organizations.

“I’m very humbled by the award,” said Karen. “I knew Leo, and I knew he was focused on quality. It means a lot to me.”

Karen began her career at Lakeland in 1979 and began her work in management in 1980. In 1995, she started the Care Management Department, where she began to discover her passion for quality and process improvement.

“I have a passion for quality process improvement, and I’m always looking for a new challenge,” she said. “I’m motivated by knowing I made a difference in the community, and especially by seeing Lakeland listed as one of the top 100 hospitals.”

Karen felt the award was a representation of what Lakeland accomplished this year.

“It’s not mine… it’s Lakeland’s,” she said. “Lakeland is not a place that tolerates being mediocre or average. The challenge now is to stay in the top 100.”

Karen has two daughters who work for Lakeland and a son who works for the Berrien County Sheriff’s Department. She also has eight grandchildren in the area, and an elderly aunt.

“My family continually reminds me that Lakeland is about providing quality care to everyone,” said Karen.

Best of the Best Celebration!

During the Forums we announced some pretty exciting news. Lakeland HealthCare has reached a system score of the 95th percentile in patient satisfaction, and now as promised, it’s time to celebrate!

On Wednesday, July 24 all associates, physicians, and volunteers are invited to an outdoor event from 12:00 (Noon) to 8:00 p.m. at Riverview Park in St. Joseph located at 2927 Niles Road, to recognize your hard work and efforts. We’re cooking up a day of FREE food and fun for all, so come hungry.

- Enjoy barbeque brats, chicken, hamburgers or veggie burgers, and hotdogs
- Sample delicious desserts and fresh fruit
- Enter to win amazing door prizes, winners will be announced every half hour
- Challenge co-workers in a game of softball or volleyball
- Wear your logowear to work, and to the celebration for extra chances to win
Message from the President
Loren B. Hamel, MD
President & CEO

Anonymously Yours

Usually when I receive letters it is pretty clear who wrote it. This letter came anonymously. But the message is, fortunately, similar to most of the letters I get from patients. It is grateful. And that gratitude is directed at those who provided such compassionate care.

Our patient came to Lakeland Community Hospital, Niles for a surgery. She has not had many experiences as a patient and was understandably anxious. Now, she didn’t say she was anxious. But it was pretty obvious as she expressed her gratitude toward Loretta Howell, RN. She described Loretta as “Amazingly calming . . . she explained everything . . . and even remembered to tell me her ‘why’!"

The gratitude doesn’t stop there. It was also focused toward Ann Climer, RN; Brittnay Collier, RN; Josh First, NA; and Dr. Mike Schuhknecht.

She described Ann and Brittnay as: “attentive, kind, and compassionate. They both did an excellent job – I felt lucky to have them caring for me.” She noted that Josh and “all the other nursing assistants acted with kindness and gentleness, even humor at times.”

Dr. Schuhknecht was described as follows: “His obvious intelligence and sense of humor are a rare treat. He was respectful of my wishes and did . . . a fabulous job. He is a gem.”

This was our patient’s first-ever surgical procedure and it was predictably a very significant and very memorable drama. It was clear from her letter that our patient felt deeper respect and compassion from our team than she was used to receiving, and maybe more than she had expected.

It was also apparent from her letter that our healthcare team had developed and delivered something that is mission critical to great care. Something that restores hope, improves outcomes, and creates fond memories. Our team created a healing relationship.

We’ve talked about the benefits of that healing relationship many times. It can help turn anxiety into confidence, pain into comfort, and risk into safety.

Creating healing relationships was the true goal of our recent Bring Your Heart to Work effort. The 90th percentile patient satisfaction score was just how we chose to measure our results.

And I know you are helping to create those healing relationships every day. I know you are because I hear stories about it from grateful patients. I also know it because our overall patient satisfaction scores are now in the 95th percentile.

I’ll never know who sent in today’s grateful letter. But I am very grateful that she received such exemplary care. Thanks to each of you who care for each patient – even if you’re meeting them for the first time ever – just like family.
Lakeland Care Donates 20 AEDs to Local Law Enforcement

In the case of a heart attack, an automated external defibrillator (AED) can save a life. According to Melissa Schultz, RN, Employer Services Supervisor, Lakeland Care, Inc., when someone has a heart attack and becomes unresponsive, their heart has either stopped or gone into an irregular rhythm. Since heart muscle is triggered by electrical currents, administering a quick shock via AED can help return a person’s heart to its regular rhythm.

“AEDs can increase survival by up to 50 percent,” explains Melissa.

Because AEDs are so important in increasing chances of survival, Lakeland Care recently donated 20 AEDs to nine local police and sheriff departments. The new AEDs will replace outdated models.

“Area first responders are the first to deliver that level of care, and we want to make sure they have the right equipment, the right tools, and the right resources so they’re able to do that,” said Melissa.

According to Berrien County Sheriff Paul Bailey, officers take the AEDs with them for every shift and in every car they send out. Because officers are out in the community patrolling, they often arrive first on the scene for a medical emergency. “Every second counts when someone’s down and not breathing,” said Sheriff Bailey. “The faster you get there, the more likely you’ll save someone’s life. We are very grateful to Lakeland for the upgraded AEDs.”

The AEDs distributed were LIFEPAK® 1000s, the latest, most heavy-duty models. The units “talk,” giving the user audible instructions on how to place electrodes and deliver a shock. “They also tell you if a person needs a shock or not, and that’s very helpful,” said Sheriff Bailey.

The new AEDs are also compatible with the models area emergency medical responders are currently using. Because the units have the same manufacturer, the electrodes from the LIFEPAK 1000 can travel with the patient and be transferred to the Emergency Medical Services’ (EMS) machines and, later, to the hospital’s machines. The electrodes can also give medical responders important information such as whether or not any shocks have been given and what the patient’s heart rate has been.

“This continuity of care—from the first responders, to the EMS, to Lakeland—increases survival as well,” said Melissa.

Lakeland Care is a Physician-Hospital Organization that provides medical care access to businesses and represents over 350 area physicians. Every year, Lakeland Care supports a project they hope will benefit a large number of people in the community.

Pictured in this photo from left to right: Officer Bryce Schadler, Lincoln Township; Director of Public Safety Mark Clapp, City of St. Joseph; Sgt. Ken Field, City of St. Joseph; Christopher Chiu, MD, Cardiologist, Great Lakes Heart & Vascular; Tim Fenderbosch, Manager St. Joseph Charter Township; Jerome Kuhnlein, MD, Cardiologist, Great Lakes Heart & Vascular; Roger Seely, Supervisor, St. Joseph Charter Township; Chief of Police Ross Bates, St. Joseph Charter Township; Officer Eric Wolff, St. Joseph Charter Township.

Journeying with Your Parents

Are you struggling to help your parents manage the delicate balance of aging gracefully? If you need a little extra support, join the Area Agency on Aging Region IV for a free educational program titled, “Journeying with Your Parents as they Age.”

The program covers practical solutions to common problems facing our older family members. Information will be provided on basic medical and legal topics, stress and the caregiver, and understanding family dynamics.

The class is held in two-hour blocks over three weeks. To register or for more information, contact Dona Billey-Weiler, Certified Master Caregiver Trainer, at (800) 323-0390.

Upcoming Free Class
Lakeland Community Hospital, Niles
Thursdays, July 11, 18, 25
5:30 to 7:30 p.m.
A Good Night’s Sleep is Essential for Everyone’s Health

Going into a diagnostic test is unnerving when you don’t know what to expect. That is why the Lakeland Sleep Disorders and Treatment Center has released a new video explaining the sleep study process. This two-and-a-half-minute video shows patients what they can expect during their scheduled polysomnogram. The video is designed to reduce uncertainty and anxiety.

Lakeland Sleep Disorders and Treatment Center has two locations: one at Lakeland Regional Medical Center, St. Joseph and one at Lakeland Community Hospital, Niles. The centers are accredited by the American Academy of Sleep Medicine.

The video was produced internally and can be viewed on Lakeland HealthCare’s YouTube channel at www.youtube.com/lakelandhealthcare

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Lakeland Continues to be Recognized for Clinical Excellence

Leadership Award for Clinical Excellence. Only 40 hospitals out of VHA’s more than 1,350 member hospitals were recognized for achieving national performance standards in clinical quality, safety, and patient experience as tracked by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS).

VHA is a national network of nonprofit hospitals that work together to improve their clinical and economic performance.