

## Hospitals need to show that they deserve their communities' trust



Memphis-based Baptist Memorial Health Care finds many ways to serve communities across western Tennessee, northern Mississippi and eastern Arkansas. More than 10 years ago, Baptist Memorial partnered with the city of Memphis to offer free health care services to Memphis-area homeless residents. The service grew into the "Baptist Operation Outreach" van, which travels weekly to a local homeless shelter and residential treatment and counseling centers and last year provided more than \$1.6 million in health care services to homeless residents.

That sort of community commitment runs through the entire 15-hospital Baptist system. A few examples from the past year: In Tennessee, Baptist Memorial Hospital-Union City staffers helped stage the Home-town Walk of Hope to raise money for a local cancer agency. Baptist Memorial Hospital-Golden Triangle in Columbus, MS, hosted various support groups and offered free prostate cancer screenings, first aid and CPR classes and childbirth classes. Baptist Memorial Hospital-Memphis offered free community health education seminars, support groups and free



**BUILDING A HEALTHIER FUTURE.** Baptist Memorial Healthcare employees earlier this month built this "Habitat for Humanity" house for a family of nine in Binghamton, TN. Baptist donated \$60,000 plus workers to cover 480 building shifts at four-and-a-half hours per shift. Employees also donated money to purchase housewarming gifts for the new homeowners.

prostate and vascular screening events.

Baptist Memorial Health Care knows how to build healthier communities, and what the organization has learned can help others. We recently spoke to Baptist Memorial Health Care CEO Stephen C. Reynolds about his organization's strong community connections.

**AHA News:** How will strengthening public trust and creating channels for community outreach be key to the future of the nation's hospitals?

**Reynolds:** People are demanding that

hospitals prove their value to their communities. More and more people now can choose where they go for care, and they are making that decision in part on which hospitals have done the most for the community. In addition, many people, from politicians to private citizens, are asking hospitals and health care organizations to be more transparent about their community benefit activities. These developments tell us people are looking for hospitals to behave in a trustworthy manner, and that's something we're committed to doing at

Baptist. Providing high-quality, accessible health care has been part of our mission since our doors opened nearly 100 years ago. Every year, we send community reports to residents throughout the three-state area we serve so they know exactly what we're doing to help provide much-needed support and care in the Mid-South.

**AHA News:** *How does the range of services you provide outside the walls of the hospital help demonstrate accountability to the community?*

**Reynolds:** I believe it shows our commitment to making our communities even better. Through our community benefit efforts, we help tackle a host of important issues – from infant mortality to homelessness. We believe we have a responsibility to

help address our communities' needs, and we make sure we do that both inside and outside our hospitals.

**AHA News:** *Does the community recognize the breadth of services you provide and appreciate what your presence means to them?*

**Reynolds:** Yes. We're committed to working with community organizations to meet the needs of the populations they serve. We believe we have done that when our partners thank us for our help and when organizations recognize us for our efforts. We were humbled to receive Volunteer Memphis' Outstanding Project of the Year Award at the 2008 Corporate Neighbor Awards last fall.

**AHA News:** *How does your governance*

*structure help strengthen your "community connections?"*

**Reynolds:** We are governed by a board full of dedicated, intelligent leaders from every area our organization serves. They represent all walks of life and bring their unique perspectives to our board meetings. When we meet to discuss the direction of our organization, they ask questions to make sure we're doing what's best for the people in their communities. Because they are community leaders, they understand their areas' needs. They are passionate about making sure we address those needs however we can.

*To learn more about Baptist Memorial Health Care's community connections, contact Baptist Memorial's Ayoka Pond at [ayoka.ponda@bmhcc.org](mailto:ayoka.ponda@bmhcc.org)*