

# Treating People Better

## Health System Prescribes Good Will

By **Symone C. Skrzycki**

It's a simple concept that has made a major impact at Hendricks Regional Health (HRH) and in the community – treat people better.

The non-profit health system serves Hendricks and surrounding counties, offering patient care in nearly 60 specialties. Based in Danville where its inpatient services (including 160 patient beds) and a variety of outpatient services are located, it has three additional campuses (in Plainfield, Avon and Brownsburg) and a physician's practice in Lizton.

President and chief executive officer Dennis Dawes joined the hospital just a decade after it opened in 1962. At that time, the organization was known as Hendricks County Hospital. The name changed several years later to Hendricks Community Hospital and in 2003 became Hendricks Regional Health.

"We felt it fit," Dawes recalls.

His commitment to Hendricks County is evidenced not only in the positive attitude he cultivates in the hospital, but also in his volunteer work with several organizations and associations. Among them:

- Hendricks County Economic Development Partnership (executive committee member and past chairman of the board of directors)
- Indiana Hospital and Health Association (government relations council and nominating committee member, past chairman of the board and winner of the Distinguished Service Award in 1990)
- Voluntary Hospitals of America Central Region (vice chairman of the board)
- Indiana Organ and Procurement Organization (vice chairman of the board and finance committee chairman)

**BizVoice®:** How did you begin your career at HRH?

**Hendricks Regional Health (the Plainfield campus is pictured) has a medical staff of 250 physicians. Dennis Dawes has served as president for 34 years.**

**Dennis Dawes:** "I've been at the hospital since 1972. I worked for two years as an assistant. In 1974, I became president. We had roughly 200 employees and now we have over 1,600. The hospital was located just in Danville (the facility currently is undergoing a 205,000-square-foot expansion)."



**BV:** Describe the other campuses.

**DD:** “The building in Plainfield has an immediate care center, laboratory, radiology services, physical therapy services, occupational medicine and general medical offices. Then we have a building in Avon (which offers similar services – including an immediate care center – as well as a sports medicine program and cancer center). Our main operating rooms are at the hospital in Danville, and we have a surgery center separate from that in Avon. Our Brownsburg medical building is the smallest of our buildings at this point, except for Lizton where we have a clinic.”

**BV:** How large is the Plainfield site?

**DD:** “Our Plainfield medical office building is situated on roughly 20 acres of land. We are using less than half of that acreage right now. We bought the land several years ago with the thought in mind that as the Plainfield community continued to grow, we would have ample acreage to grow on this site.

“We have just begun the work on putting in an MRI and a CT unit to augment our immediate care center. We’re looking at perhaps expanding the hours of our immediate care center as well. That has not been finalized at this point, but we are looking at doing that down the road.”

**BV:** When did the Plainfield facility open?

**DD:** “It opened in 2001. We’ve had office space in Plainfield for several years. When we were growing out of space, we decided to build this building. We have some empty space in the building, so we can put new doctors’ offices in as physicians want to locate here.”

**BV:** How does electronic medical record technology play a role in patient care?

**DD:** “In all of our practices (specialty and primary care), we have what’s called an electronic medical record. That system allows the doctor to enter the patient’s information electronically into the computer system (part of a wireless communication network). If he writes a prescription for the patient, it can immediately be electronically sent to the pharmacy the patient wants it sent to.

“It’s very convenient. Let’s say an internal medicine physician sees a patient and wants to refer that patient to a gastroenterologist for testing. The electronic medical record that feeds into the network of data is available for the gastroenterologist to look at. (And) if the patient goes to the immediate care center, the information is available.

“Physicians can actually look at the patient’s information on their home computer. They can go into the system, pull up the patient’s information, see what drugs the patient is taking, what things have been ordered and so on.”



**The hospital's annual Treat People Better Awards Dinner recognizes those individuals, groups or businesses in the community who demonstrate acts of kindness to others. Specially trained dogs visit patients at the Danville campus as part of its Paws to Pet program.**

**BV:** How is the information transmitted throughout the county?

**DD:** “It’s a fiberoptic cable that sends data back and forth at the speed of light. It’s a pretty neat system.

“We have almost 100 fibers that run through the cable. We’ve been selling some of those fibers off. The town of Plainfield has entered into a contract with us (for instance) so they can access the fiber optic cables. Some other businesses are looking at it as well. As we sell off some of the lines of fiber, it’s helping us pay for it.”

**BV:** How does your corporate philosophy – to treat people better – set the tone at the hospital?

**DD:** “Health care is a service business provided by people. We believe that we need to be treating people better all the time. It’s not just ‘getting people better.’ It’s treating people better. It’s become a part of our culture throughout the organization. The feedback we get – and we do ask for patient feedback – tells us we’re doing that and that we’re doing it well.”

**BV:** One way the hospital carries out that mission is through the HRH Foundation. Tell me about some of the work it does.

**DD:** “Our foundation is over 20 years old. It’s primarily involved in fundraising and giving back to the hospital to purchase equipment, for educational programming and so forth. We just

hired our first full-time director and her role will be to make the Foundation really grow.”

**BV:** How does the Foundation’s scholarship program help graduating high school seniors prepare for health care careers?

**DD:** “The Foundation – at least 10 years ago – felt that one way we could help our workforce needs in the hospital was to offer scholarships to local graduating high school seniors who were residents of Hendricks County going on to (seek) education in a health care career (e.g. nursing, physical therapy, speech therapy, practicing medicine). We are up to at least four scholarships a year that we give. They are \$8,000 each.

“We have seen some of these young people that want to go into medicine finishing college, going on to medical school and getting close to starting residency now (as a result of the scholarship program). Several recipients have been from the Plainfield school system. That’s been really good. They don’t have to sign anything that says they will come back and practice in Hendricks County, but the thought is that hopefully they’ll remember who helped them on their way.”

**BV:** Name some ways the hospital reaches out to younger children.

**DD:** “During the school year, the elementary schools bring

kids to the hospital in Danville and have kind of a ‘day at the hospital.’ They do some hands-on things like gowning themselves up or they put on a mask and rubber gloves. They leave with take-home (goody bags). The thought is that hopefully, if they ever need health care services in a hospital setting, they would be less fearful of that.

“We’ve had I don’t know how many thousands of kids come through the hospital through that program. And you never know, you take a little kid that maybe sees something that sparks an interest and pushes them into a health career. Maybe they become a nurse and then come back and work at the hospital.”

**BV:** What are some programs specific to Plainfield that you have supported?

**DD:** “As we began to look at the growth of Plainfield, we certainly wanted to place offices here that provided local services. We have helped sponsor some of the concerts (presented as part of a summer series) at Hummel Park and conduct several educational programs in the Plainfield community. We made a donation to help Plainfield High School with their new athletic field area.

“Plainfield has been an integral part of Hendricks County, and we want to be an integral part of Plainfield as well and be a good corporate citizen.”