

Allegheny Valley Hospital
by
Raymond E. Muth

Valley News Dispatch 1/23/97 - Community Columnist

The projections began to paint a gloomy picture. Managed care was becoming a misnomer for managed cost. The Pittsburgh area had an over-capacity of hospital beds. The forecast for the future of Medicare payments was not good. A day of reckoning for health care was on the horizon as Congress inched closer toward socialized medicine.

It was against this backdrop that Allegheny Valley Hospital (AVH) had no choice but to make the gut-wrenching decision to merge with a larger partner if it was to survive in the rapidly changing health care environment. Although the merger was necessary and inevitable, something inside me felt sad.

AVH is a tremendous health care resource and likely will remain an important resource as a partner with Allegheny General Hospital. Most efforts accomplished by this excellent community hospital will continue to move forward. But as in any merger, changes will take place. Perhaps there is an intangible element that is a part of any good independent, community facility which will be missed.

When I think of AVH, I never think of a building. I never think of long hallways or rooms with beds in them. Instead, I think of community. I think of a group of people that cares. I also think of victory greater than all four Steeler Super Bowls combined. I think of the many people I know that have gone home victorious after their bout with sickness.

I also think of one great intangible - leadership. The community leadership as personified by AVH President & CEO Jack England has left its footprints throughout the valley. Like Jack, the hospital has been a strong, steady, vibrant force hosting seminars for the greater good and lending a hand with its facility wherever needed.

My first experience with the hospital came about 5 years ago. I was part of a highly underrated A-K Leadership program. I knew absolutely nothing about hospitals other than they seemed pretty impersonal to me. My perception was to change that day.

Jack England was there to meet us and he was careful to catch each of our names. His graciousness was ever-present. Although a very busy person, he spent the day giving us a first-rate tour. Equally impressive, doctors and technicians took time out of their day to discuss health care. They also demonstrated some amazing machines for us.

My next experience with AVH extended far beyond the hospital perimeter. A couple years ago, the Apollo area was in need of a clinic. Jack England and his staff participated in our economic charrette and they were there to pay more than lip service.

They made a commitment to the people in our region to bring their services closer to us. It wasn't an easy task. They had to find a suitable site and a doctor willing to set up a practice in Apollo.

Jack would call on numerous occasions trying to find a way to accomplish this. He organized meetings with a Doctor and he made frequent visits to the Apollo area in search of a building for a satellite clinic.

Eventually AVH found a building. Sparing no community detail, they asked for names of local contractors to refurbish the site. They called upon Glenn Bush Contracting of Apollo to make it happen and the results were excellent.

Today Dr. Kupas is an integral part of our community. He is also my Doctor.

I have no doubt there were areas more lucrative than ours to consider. But the vision that AVH shares goes beyond dollars and cents. The intangible leadership brought forward by the staff at AVH often goes the extra mile.

Providing health care means more than having a great facility with the best doctors. It means taking a genuine interest in people and making health care accessible to older and disadvantaged citizens where travel can mean the difference between life and death.

Change is the one constant in life. We have to hope this merger will continue to advance AVH's commitment to excellence especially in that important intangible called leadership.



[E-Mail Ray](#)

[Home](#) | [About Me](#) | [Family](#) | [Critters](#) | [Work](#) | [Articles](#) | [Archives](#)