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Destination Diversity champions a diverse workforce and fosters an inclusive culture that delivers quality care to a diverse patient population. We support the creation of a multicultural environment that works for everyone and capitalizes on the diversity of all employees.



Program Report

Continuum Pilots Mentoring Program

Right from the start, mentoring was identified as a key priority of Continuum Health Partners' *Destination Diversity* initiative. It also is an integral element of the organization's long-term strategy for cultivating the next generation of leadership. With this in mind, a pilot mentoring program is now under way.

"This formal mentoring program illuminates the value Continuum's leadership places on developing its next generation of leaders, retaining talent within the system and opening the opportunity for career advancement to a diverse array of employees," explains **Tanya Straker**, Director of the *Destination Diversity* initiative.

Elena Quitcon, Education/Program Manager at Beth Israel, led a research effort to identify other companies and health care providers with mentoring programs that affected diversity retention and promotion, before preparing the mentoring plan for Continuum. The Continuum mentoring plan — which is based on voluntary participation from both mentors and mentees — offers three models:

- **standard mentoring**, which gives the most structure, is based on one-to-one pairing, and requires two two-hour meetings every month;
- **flex mentoring**, which requires the same pairing and meeting frequency, but varies with regard to location to provide social networking opportunities; and
- **group mentoring**, which assigns a mentor to a small group of mentees on the same level, and promotes the sharing of knowledge and exchange of ideas.

The Site Diversity Councils will each be responsible for overseeing the mentoring program at their designated locations within Continuum, and will



Diversity meeting participants discuss the rollout of Continuum's new mentoring initiative, which aims to strengthen diversity while developing the organization's next generation of leadership. The year-long pilot program kicks off this July.

select the appropriate mentoring model and tailor it according to available resources. They will then match managers interested in being mentored with more seasoned professionals who volunteer to serve as mentors. Mentors will be drawn primarily from middle and senior management, either one or two levels above their mentees.

The program, which kicks off this July, will last one year. Surveys, focus groups and interviews with participants will be conducted at the conclusion of the mentoring cycle to measure the program's success.

"We are very excited about the new mentoring initiative, because we strongly believe that it is going to strengthen Continuum diversity-wise, particularly among our middle manager-level staff who are going to be the leaders of this organization in the future," says **Carmen Suardy**, Assistant Vice President for Labor and Employee Relations and the Chair of the Mentoring Committee of

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Program Report

Managers to Lead a Changing Workforce

Senior management plays an important role in staff development and education. For this reason, Continuum is looking to its directors and up to help increase diversity awareness and advance the *Destination Diversity* initiative. Through a new program called “Leading a Changing Workforce and Customer Base,” senior managers will be provided with both practical advice and tools to educate staff about the initiative’s goals and objectives.

“We want to link *Destination Diversity* with day-to-day operations at Continuum,” says **Pamela Abner**, Assistant Vice President for Human Resources and Cochair of Continuum’s Diversity Corporate Council. “To do this, we are going to provide senior-level employees with actions they can take to foster diversity and inclusion.”

To get “Leading a Changing Workforce” under way, **Tanya Straker**, Continuum’s Diversity Director, will present at senior-level staff meetings. The presentation defines diversity, and encourages senior managers to mentor others and take the lead in recruiting



Tanya Straker, Continuum’s Diversity Director, discusses the “Leading a Changing Workforce and Customer Base” program, designed to help senior management increase diversity awareness.

from a diverse slate of candidates when hiring. Overall, the goal is for senior managers to seek out bright, young and diverse talent in the organization whom they can share knowledge with and nurture for advancement.

“The bottom line is to educate our targeted audiences about diversity and get everyone on board using the same approach,” Ms. Abner says. “It’s about diversity to be sure. But it goes beyond that. It’s really about being facilitative in the workplace.”

Revamped Recruitment Under Way

A recent report on the number of minority employees in leadership positions at Continuum revealed that, while diversity has increased in the top tiers, there is room for further improvement. Toward this end, voluntary guidelines have been developed to assist middle and senior managers in finding, interviewing and hiring diverse job candidates.

“This is good standard Human Resource practice in general and important if we are to be viable in the marketplace,” says **Marvin A. Russell**, Continuum’s new Senior Vice President and Chief Human Resource Officer (see article on his appointment on page 5). “By posting jobs internally and making sure that a variety of people are interviewed, we can create a truly competitive environment and know we’ve gotten the best employees for our hospitals.”

Continuum’s hiring protocol calls for an open and transparent recruitment process, facilitated throughout by Human Resources’ Recruitment Division. Managers looking to fill vacancies start by developing criteria against which all candidates are to be assessed; such criteria include the qualifications and experience required to perform the job, as well as the qualities deemed necessary for success in the position. Whenever possible, the Recruitment Division, in conjunction with the

manager, prescreens diverse candidates and helps arrange secondary interviews with the position’s top candidates. The division then obtains feedback from all the interviewers and, cooperatively with the hiring department, selects a final candidate to whom it will make a job offer.

Recruitment tools range from search firms to advertisements to postings on Continuum’s own Web site: www.chpnyc.org. Those interested in learning about available positions can visit the site, click on “Career Opportunities” in the lower right corner, and follow the prompts from there accordingly.

Employee Profiles

Reflections of Diversity: Four Members of the Continuum Community Celebrate Their Roles in Health Care Delivery

Donna Mendes, MD, FACS

Senior Vascular Surgeon and Past President of the Medical Board
St. Luke's and Roosevelt Hospitals



Being both female and African American, says **Donna Mendes, MD, FACS**, makes her distinct in the field of vascular surgery. "My gender alone makes me somewhat unique in vascular surgery, which is a male-dominated medical specialty. Fortunately, the people that I've met throughout my career have embraced me, and my experiences have been positive overall. Now I'm able to

serve as a role model for others. In fact, there have been two female surgical residents at St. Luke's-Roosevelt who have gone on to become board certified vascular surgeons, and felt I have been a mentor to them."

Dr. Mendes is further distinguished by being the first African American female certified by the American Board of Surgery. Clinically, she ensures there is appropriate blood flow to all the body's organs, except the heart and brain. As a vascular specialist, she accomplishes this with open surgery or with minimally invasive procedures that involve balloons or stents to mend aneurysms, primarily to salvage the lower extremities. Additionally, she collaborates with internists to treat risk factors for vascular disease, like high blood pressure, diabetes, heart disease and high cholesterol.

Dr. Mendes was an intern and resident at St. Luke's and Roosevelt Hospitals. After her fellowship, she returned to start her practice. She was Chief of Vascular Surgery at SLR from 1992 to 1998 and Chief of Vascular Surgery at North General Hospital, when it was associated with St. Luke's, from 2002 to 2004. Presently, she is a Senior Vascular Attending and Associate Clinical Professor of Surgery at Columbia University. She became President of the SLR Medical Board in 2006; her term just ended this past May.

Although she devotes much of her time to medicine, the payback is always worth it. "I do work really hard. But when I am in the OR and I am helping a patient, it is extremely rewarding. There is nothing like it."

A resident of Englewood, New Jersey, Dr. Mendes has been married for 21 years. She's up at 5 am every day to exercise, which, she reminds everyone, is so vital to good vascular health.

Debbie Visconi

Senior Vice President of Administration
Beth Israel Medical Center



Among **Debbie Visconi's** most noteworthy accomplishments at Beth Israel Medical Center is her work in extending BI's outreach services into various neighborhoods that the hospital serves, including the Asian and Latino communities of Lower Manhattan. Ms. Visconi has held numerous leadership positions during her 16-year tenure at BI, including Administrator of

Diagnostic Pathology and Laboratory Medicine, Executive Director of the Department of Medicine and the Heart Institute, and Vice President of Operations. She started out in health care as a phlebotomist and medical technologist and today, many promotions later, is Beth Israel's Senior Vice President of Administration.

In her current position, Ms. Visconi works closely with Beth Israel President and CEO **David J. Shulkin, MD**, and other members of his senior leadership team to prioritize and approve capital requests, manage staffing, and develop growth plans and other community outreach programs. Her efforts to date have helped improve clinical efficiency and raise patient satisfaction scores.

Ms. Visconi, who is Latino, says that growing up in an underserved community humbled her. In order to achieve what she set her mind to do, she had to learn to be more assertive. "I think that is part of our nature as Latino women," she says, smiling. "I have always pushed hard to prove myself. But because 'I've been there,' I feel I relate well to Beth Israel staff and to all of our patients, particularly those from minority communities." To illustrate her point, she recalls a meeting when she shocked a group of Latino lab technicians by speaking with them in Spanish instead of English. "I understand their social and ethnic issues," she adds, "and, hopefully, I have been able to serve as a role model for them."

Ms. Visconi resides in Bergen County, New Jersey, with her husband of 21 years and her 15-year-old son and ten-year-old daughter. *Be careful—Debbie is an avid kick-boxer!*

Employee Profiles

Edwin Jovellanos, RN

Director, Perioperative Services

Long Island College Hospital of Brooklyn



It was 25 years ago when **Edwin Jovellanos, RN**, was recruited in his native Philippines to be a nurse at Long Island College Hospital of Brooklyn. Mr. Jovellanos worked his way up the nursing ladder, from RN to Assistant Nursing Care Coordinator to Clinical Coordinator to Nurse Manager, before leaving LICH in 2002. He returned in 2005 as Director of Perioperative

Services, and now manages the hospital's 16 operating rooms as well as its presurgical testing unit, ambulatory surgery unit and recovery room, in addition to the Sterile Processing Department and OR Materials Management. He and his staff see upward of 1,000 patients each month.

Mr. Jovellanos recalls having some struggles in adapting to the American culture, but attributes his strong work ethic to helping him realize his career potential. "I remember watching a lot of American movies and thinking I could come here and make a life for myself," he says. "Filipinos are hardworking people."

At LICH, "no matter your nationality, you can build a good reputation," adds Mr. Jovellanos, a self-described workaholic who spends ten to 12 hours a day on the job. "I appreciate the opportunities that have been given to me."

Taking care of others runs in the family, as Mr. Jovellanos' wife is a nurse at another hospital. They commute into the city from Valley Stream, Long Island, where they live with their two teenage daughters.

David Woods

Director of Patient Accounts

The New York Eye and Ear Infirmary



For two years now, **David Woods** has been in charge of The New York Eye and Ear Infirmary's financial reimbursement from private insurers, Medicaid and Medicare. Before coming on board full time, he served as a consultant at NYEEI for two years, also in financial reimbursement as well as revenue cycling management. Since his appointment, he has

updated the department technologically, established new protocols, and reorganized staff.

Mr. Woods oversees about 25 people in Patient Accounts. It is an extremely diverse group of employees, which attracted him to the directorship and compelled him to volunteer for NYEEI's *Destination Diversity* Site Council.

"We do a lot of social things to foster camaraderie, and we work very well together," he says of his department. "I felt that, given we are a diverse workforce at NYEEI, participating on the Site Council would be a great way to promote what we already have."

Originally from North Carolina, Mr. Woods today lives near Lincoln Center, which enables him to easily indulge in his love of the musical arts. He, himself, has been a classical musician for some time and plays the tuba, trombone and french horn in a brass quintet.

Program Report

Continuum Pilots Mentoring Program *(continued from page 1)*

Continuum's overarching Corporate Diversity Council. "We look forward to seeing a year from now how effective this effort has been and, more importantly, if we have better identified how we can help staff advance within the organization."

"Through *Destination Diversity* we seek to create a culture of mentorship not limited by our formal program," Ms. Straker stresses. "We encourage everyone to nurture talented employees and support them in moving up in the organization."

Welcome

Marvin A. Russell Named Senior Vice President and Chief Human Resource Officer for Continuum



Marvin A. Russell

Marvin A. Russell was recently named Senior Vice President and Chief Human Resource Officer for Continuum. He officially started in his new position on February 19.

Mr. Russell comes to Continuum with more than 25 years of experience leading human resource initiatives at nationally and internationally renowned corporations in a wide variety of industries, including health care. He enjoys an outstanding reputation in many key areas, including strategic planning, succession management, compensation and benefits, leadership development, labor management and cultural diversity.

“We are confident that he will make an immediate, positive impact on our employees.”

— Gail F. Donovan

Most recently, Mr. Russell served as Senior Vice President for Human Resources for Ascension Healthcare, headquartered in St. Louis, MO, the country’s largest not-for-profit health care system with 70 hospitals and 106,000 employees in 38 states. Prior to joining Ascension, he served as Vice President for Organizational Management and Human Resources for Alpharma, Inc., an international pharmaceutical company based in Ft. Lee, NJ. Prior to that position, he spent

eight years in Paris, heading up the human resources departments for two international manufacturing companies. In addition, Mr. Russell spent nine years with United Technologies Corporation in Hartford, CT, in progressively responsible positions, including Director of Human Resources and Labor Relations.

Mr. Russell received his undergraduate degree from The University of Notre Dame and holds a Master’s degree in Public Administration from Indiana University. He is presently working toward a PhD in organizational development at Century University.

“We are delighted to welcome Marvin to the Continuum community and are extremely excited by the wealth of experience and the level of enthusiasm that he brings to the organization,” says **Gail F. Donovan**, Continuum’s Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer and Cochair of *Destination Diversity’s* Corporate Council. “His hiring comes at an important time for our health care delivery system, particularly as we embark on initiatives in several areas in which Marvin has valuable insight, expertise and passion, including associate and leadership development, education and training. We are confident that he will make an immediate, positive impact on our employees.”

welcome

News Items

Site Diversity Council Updates

Destination Diversity's Site Diversity Councils are helping to spread the word on diversity at their respective locations. Here's a glimpse at what some of them have been up to:

- **The 555 Site Council** has begun drafting its mission statement and charter and expects to finish shortly. It also plans to recruit new members in the coming months.
- **Beth Israel Medical Center** is finalizing its charter, creating a vision statement, and developing ground rules for its meetings. In addition, it is establishing a membership committee to define the terms and conditions of participation.
- **Long Island College Hospital of Brooklyn** is creating its mission statement, and using its employee suggestion box system to introduce the council to employees and solicit their ideas for developing the LICH Diversity Initiative.
- **The New York Eye and Ear Infirmary** has finalized its charter. Additionally, it is creating ribbons or badges to be worn by council members so they can be identified by their coworkers.
- **Roosevelt Hospital** is concentrating on promoting respect and increasing visibility of the council. Its subcommittees are meeting with one another to coordinate future activities.
- **St. Luke's Hospital** has completed its charter and adopted the classic guide, "Robert's Rules of Order," to ensure that meetings are conducted fairly and smoothly. It also has formed committees on communication and diversity education.

Glossary

Common Diversity Terms

- **Affirmative Action:** A legal mandate that attempts to correct the social injustice of denying certain populations opportunities for jobs and promotions.
- **Cultural Competence:** A set of behaviors, attitudes and policies that enable a system or professionals to work effectively in cross-cultural situations.
- **Equal Employment Opportunity:** A legal protection built into the system that protects all employees from discrimination and harassment.
- **Managing Diversity:** The art of balancing the needs, aspirations, contributions and unique qualities of the organization with those of each individual in the organization.
- **Workplace Diversity:** People with different characteristics brought about by life experience, race, age, culture, gender, religion, physical abilities, work experience, sexual orientation or other unique qualities.



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