Helping the poor in Mexico

Led by Sparrow surgeon Keith Apelgren, MD, a team of Sparrow associates including scrub tech Rebecca Evanski and Cari Colton, RN, spent a week in November in Playa del Carmen, Mexico, performing operations for the poor. Local arrangements were made by Angel Notion, a nonprofit organization serving Playa and surrounding villages. “This trip was possible only because of the support and enthusiasm of the entire Sparrow family on both campuses,” Dr. Apelgren said.

Each member of the Sparrow team paid their own airfare, Dr. Apelgren explained, but received assistance from many individuals and departments at Sparrow. Brian Skapsky and Mary Shaw in Central Supply provided surgical instrument sets. Surgery associates led by Junita Sibiski, collected outdated equipment and other supplies. The anesthesia team in OB/Gyn and the Pharmacy department donated medications. Dr. Imu Esmail and others provided financial support.

The team performed 13 surgeries at Sacbe, a local hospital, and four cases in the clinic of Angel Notion called Nicti Ha.

“We hope to make this a yearly event,” Dr. Apelgren said. “The needs are great, and in the future we would like to bring more supplies and recruit more team members, including a dentist, another surgeon, and an anesthesiologist.”
Physician Relations team opens new office

Sparrow’s Physician Relations Office on the first floor of Sparrow Hospital, across from the South Wing staff elevators is a great new resource for referring physicians. Manager Greg England and his team provide personal, two-way communication for physicians and serves as a contact to provide updates and information about issues or concerns that need immediate attention.

“The information gathered by our staff is used in the evaluation and planning of Sparrow services and programs,” England said. “Physician input is a key component in this strategy.”

Sparrow’s Physician Relations team services include providing efficient, effective support to community physicians and their patients; making physician office visits to discuss new programs, clinical services, and opportunities for process improvements; and identifying common interests and opportunities to partner.

You can contact the Physician Relations Office by calling 517.364.3200.

Obituary

It is with deepest regrets we announce the death of Joseph Melvin, Ph.D., on Dec. 18 at the age of 63. Joe served for more than 29 years in the Sparrow Hospital Laboratory, and was the technical architect behind Sparrow’s in vitro fertilization program that has helped literally thousands of area couples to have children. Most recently he served as technical director of the hospital blood bank. On behalf of the entire Sparrow family, the Sparrow News extends our condolences to Joe’s family, friends and colleagues.

Annual Gala scheduled

The Sparrow Annual Gala, an evening of live music, great food, dancing and casino-style games is scheduled for Saturday evening, Feb. 26, at the University Club of Michigan State University. Proceeds from this year’s Gala will benefit the Sparrow Cancer Center.

For more information call the Sparrow Foundation, 917.364.3680, or go to sparrowfoundation.org.

Sparrow gear online

Show your Sparrow pride and visit the new online Sparrow Gear Store today! You can now purchase all your Sparrow-branded items at: store.sparrow.org. The store offers baseball hats, comfy vests, sporty polo shirts, trendy tote bags and more – all at very reasonable prices. All you need is a credit card to make your online purchase. Questions? Contact Sparrow Personal Assistants at 517.364.4772 or at personalassistants@sparrow.org.

Stop by the SPA office in the lobby of the hospital to have a look at the gear in person.

People news

Olga Dazzo has been appointed by new governor Rick Snyder as the director of the Michigan Department of Community Health. Olga, who most recently worked as president of Health Reform Innovations LLC, in the Miami area previously served on the Sparrow executive team and as past president of Physicians Health Plan.

Brief mentions

Sparrow’s new Physician Relations team members outside their new office on 1-South. From left, Amy Ayers, Greg England, John Thelen and Anne Leiby-McMahon.
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Thanks is not a big enough word

Editor’s note: Tragedy struck in November, when longtime Sparrow associate Brenda Wojtacha’s son, Travis, was killed in a motorcycle accident in Florida. The following is her thanks to the Sparrow family for the tremendous love and support she received:

Saying thank you doesn’t really seem to be a big enough word to express my gratitude to all of the people that helped me get through the tragedy of losing my son, Travis. Your generous donations of vacation time, and travel money helped me begin the healing process. My family supported me, but they were grieving also. The support I received from my Sparrow family through cards and phone calls was the solid rock that kept me going. I don’t have the names of all who donated, but please know the appreciation that comes from my heart. Sparrow is a great place to work because of the people. And thank you to the stranger who works here who sensed that I just needed a hug.

Brenda Wojtacha

TCI earns Echo Lab accreditation

Sparrow’s Thoracic Cardiovascular Institute (TCI) was recently granted accreditation by the Intersocietal Commission for the Accreditation of Echocardiography Laboratories (ICAEL) for all of its locations in Lansing, Owosso, Mt. Pleasant and Eaton Rapids. An echocardiogram is a non-invasive test that uses ultrasound to examine the structure and functioning of the heart to determine abnormalities and disease. Accreditation status signifies that the echocardiography laboratories at TCI have been reviewed by an independent agency that recognizes the lab’s commitment to quality testing for the diagnosis and prevention of heart disease.

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Brenda Wojtacha

Holiday pops. Sparrow physician George Smith, MD, (center) and his colleagues on the Shiawassee Strings perform in the Sparrow Professional Building atrium in December. The orchestra played a medley of holiday favorites to the delight of visitors and staff.
Phasing in proximity readers. New, high-tech proximity readers for access control are being installed throughout the Sparrow and St. Lawrence campuses, as the Security Department phases out swipe card readers. Those with authorized access can simply touch or get within a few inches of the proximity reader with their ID badge to activate the device. Badge holders can make sure their badge activates the reader by checking them on the readers outside the Security offices on the Sparrow and St. Lawrence campuses. If it beeps, it works! If not, please visit or call Sparrow Security at x42000.

Operation Santa. Back row from left, Supply Management associate Rick Dravenstatt and helper Jake Kramer and (front row) Supply Management associate Connie Hudson, Marketing associate Cathy Potter and Supply Management associate Connie Denslow prepare to send a giant truckload of toys to families of 150 children from Bingham Elementary School as part of Sparrow’s Operation Santa program that targets underprivileged families in the Sparrow neighborhood. The gifts are all donated by Sparrow team members to fulfill wish lists submitted by the student’s families.