

## **Unique Jobs Program Keeps Joplin Employees on Payroll** *95 percent of Mercy's hospital co-workers are back to work*

*When I saw how Mercy stepped in and helped – without considering the costs – it made me want to work harder for Mercy in that same spirit.* – Randal Morris, St. John's Mercy clinical pharmacist in Joplin, temporarily working at Mercy Medical Center in Rogers, Ark.

**Midwest U.S.** – Standing outside St. John's Mercy in Joplin just hours after a tornado ripped it apart, Scott Watson, vice president of the hospital's human resources, looked up in dismay and wondered for a minute if he still had a job. Just hours later, he had the biggest job of his life.

"The first thing Mercy president/CEO Lynn Britton told me was to start finding our people jobs. It seemed an impossible task – how do you come up with more than 2,000 jobs in a town missing a hospital, a high school, a Walmart, a Home Depot, banks, doctors offices and more?" said Watson. "But under his direction, a plan emerged. Anyone willing to be flexible and do meaningful work would keep their same wage with benefits and seniority intact – plus the promise of a brand-new hospital to work in one day."

Mercy's commitment to keep all Joplin co-workers on the payroll spawned a unique "talent sharing program" that has already put all but about 100 co-workers back to work.

More than 30 companies, mostly health and human services related, have signed talent sharing contracts with Mercy. These "host" companies requisition employees as needed. They then pay the co-worker's regular hourly wage while Mercy picks up the cost of benefits and all travel or lodging expenses needed for the co-worker to complete their job.

To date, about 95 percent of Joplin's hospital co-workers are back to work.

- 218 at non-Mercy facilities
- 162 at Mercy facilities in Missouri, Kansas, Arkansas and Oklahoma
- 1,240 at St. John's Mercy in Joplin either in the mobile hospital or in other functions like security, finance or the central business office
- 330 at St. John's Mercy Clinic locations in the Joplin area

These numbers are particularly significant following the lessons learned post-Hurricane Katrina where the destruction of hospitals and physician clinics in the New Orleans area led to an exodus of doctors and nurses that the area is still struggling to recover from today.

"We have made an almost \$1 billion commitment to rebuild in Joplin," said Lynn Britton, president and CEO of Mercy. "While bricks and mortar are important, it's our health care professionals who are irreplaceable. They are the soul of Mercy. They are the people who care for our communities and without them, there is no Mercy. We must keep our co-workers engaged so they are standing by to care for patients in Joplin the day our facilities reopen in full."

Today, many Joplin co-workers commute an hour or more each way to their new job site in the talent sharing program. Others work 12-hour shifts three or four consecutive days and then return home for a week or so. It's not an easy schedule but Mercy's commitment to doing what's right has created a fierce loyalty among co-workers.



September 20, 2011

## NEWS RELEASE

There are now Joplin co-workers throughout the four states Mercy serves. Here are just a few of their stories.

### **In Arkansas**

Amber Dodson graduated from nursing school the day before the tornado hit and had not yet worked a day as a registered nurse. However, Mercy had already extended a job offer and was determined to keep that commitment. Today, she's completing her nursing orientation at Mercy Medical Center in Rogers, Ark.

"It has been wonderful in Rogers. Everyone has been so welcoming and helpful. My supervisors on the telemetry floor have been fantastic teachers. They have been so patient with me," said Dodson. "As I continue in Rogers, I know I will gain in knowledge and confidence. I am so glad to have been put in a community that loves having us and to learn from people with so many years of experience."

### **In Kansas**

Theresa Ukena worked in the finance department in Joplin. Today, she and five other co-workers carpool two hours each day to Mercy Hospital in Fort Scott, Kan.

"I am blessed to have a job and blessed to be paid. I could have been let go on the spot but I wasn't," said Ukena. "Everyone here at Mercy in Fort Scott has made me feel so welcome. They treat me like family."

### **In Missouri**

Stephanie Kinsch, a physical therapy assistant, went to four funerals in the week following the tornado, including one for a friend of her 9-year-old son. The first seven weeks after the disaster she didn't have a place to work.

"I thought I was going to go crazy. I needed to be working; I needed to be with my patients, treating people," said Kinsch. "I'm so glad that Mercy found a place for me in the physical therapy department in Springfield. Everyone has been absolutely wonderful."

### **In Oklahoma**

Rita Jens, an experienced ICU nurse, found a temporary home at Mercy Health Center in Oklahoma City in the neonatal intensive care unit. For Jens and other, Mercy has been a rock.

"Mercy treated us just like family," said Jens. "They showed up and they provided us peace of mind. They said, 'You have a job. You have income. Don't worry about that. Take care of yourself and your family first.' I work for someone who has my best interests at heart and I work for someone who is going to take care of me."

*Mercy – Sisters of Mercy Health System – is the eighth largest Catholic health care system in the U.S. and serves more than 3 million people annually. Mercy includes 29 hospitals, more than 200 outpatient facilities, 36,000 co-workers and 1,300 integrated physicians in Arkansas, Kansas, Missouri and Oklahoma. Mercy also has outreach ministries in Louisiana, Mississippi and Texas. For more about Mercy, visit [www.mercy.net](http://www.mercy.net).*