

Catholic hospital employees in diocese honored for service

By JOSEPH O'BRIEN
Catholic Times Correspondent

EAU CLAIRE – As far as Diane Zakopyko (Zak-ah-peek-oh) is concerned, providing healthcare is a package deal. When she treats a patient in the catheterization laboratory (“cath lab”) at Sacred Heart Hospital, Eau Claire, where she serves as a registered nurse, she makes sure to do what she can for each patient – body *and* soul.

Apparently this approach to practicing health care is exactly what the doctor – and nurses and other health care professionals – ordered. On May 7, the Wisconsin Hospital Association (WHA) of Madison honored Zakopyko and 76 other health care employees around the state at the 2009 Wisconsin Health Care Employee Pride Program recognition dinner at the Kalahari Resort, Wisconsin Dells.

Other employees from Catholic hospitals in the Diocese of La Crosse honored that day were Catherine Kromrie, RN at St. Joseph's Hospital, Chippewa Falls; Kevin Dean, emergency services coordinator at St. Joseph's Community Health Service, Hillsboro; JoAnne Damschke, RN and CNRN in neu-

rosurgery at Franciscan Skemp Hospital, La Crosse; Kelly Friesen, RN at St. Joseph's Hospital, Marshfield; Jared Davis, physician recruiter specialist at St. Michael's Hospital, Stevens Point; and Kris Contois, housekeeper at St. Clare's Hospital, Weston.

Zakopyko was selected from a pool of applicants at Sacred Heart who had composed essays on why they chose to work in the health care profession.

“When I'd heard that I'd been selected, I felt so honored and so blessed,” she said. “I really feel that the Lord had helped select my essay because it has touched so many other health care providers. I think that's the proudest part for me about this essay. ... Having the award has just been the pinnacle of my career.”

In her essay, Zakopyko wrote that the work of a health care professional, especially at a Catholic hospital, is to treat the whole person, body and soul. In her work at the cath lab, Zakopyko assists in the catheterization process for heart patients at Sacred Heart.

She related the story of how she had helped calm one of her patients by offering to pray with him during his treatment. After-

wards, the patient invited Zakopyko to a presentation he gave at his local church on “growing old.” “Then, during his talk, he stopped and asked me to share something of my experience (as a nurse) with his audience,” she wrote. “I stood up and put it simply: The hospital does indeed harbor miracles within its walls. I explained I felt privileged to have the opportunity given by God, through my work to ‘minister to my patients’ and care for their families. I have been blessed to be a nurse and to care for people in their time of need.”

A non-denominational Christian, Zakopyko considers herself prayerful with a devout faith in Jesus Christ, and she said she chose to work at Sacred Heart Hospital because of the opportunity to share her faith with others there.

In her previous place of work, she said, she was actually reprimanded for praying with and for patients. “Within that next week (after that incident), I came looking over here at Sacred Heart,” she said. “They always say there is a feeling over here at Sacred Heart and I have to tell you that feeling hit me the moment I walked in the front



CT/Sacred Heart Hospital
Diane Zakopyko and poses with Clarence, the patient she helped calm by offering to pray with him during his treatment. Zakopyko later spoke during a presentation he gave at his church on “growing old.”

door. I knew it was something I wanted to be part of because that's the way I live my life and I wanted to be able to practice medicine that way.”

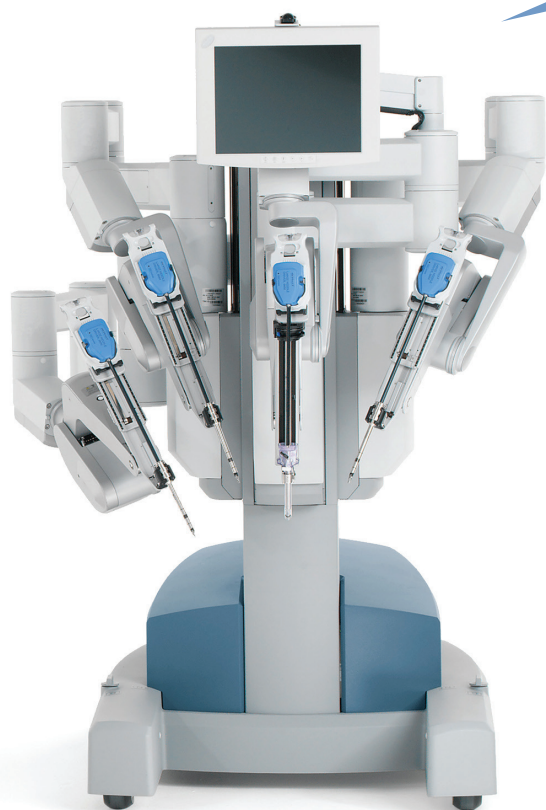
According to Faye Deich, chief operating officer for Sacred Heart, Zakopyko is precisely the kind of employee that contributes to Sacred Heart's reputation for quality service.

“We are grateful for Diane's care and presence to her patient

in this particular situation as well as on any given day,” said Deich, referring to the incident she related in her essay. “This is the type of compassion and connection given to patients every day at Sacred Heart Hospital by our staff, physicians and volunteers.”

Editor's note: Zakopyko's and the other honoree's winning essays can be read in their entirety online at <http://www.wha.org/workforce/pdf/2009pridebook.pdf>.

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