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Connections: November 1990

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UH BENEFITS: 'You Choose' open enrollment under way

November is open-enrollment month for the Hospital's 'You Choose' Flexible Benefits Program. Booklets containing new prices, benefit changes and enrollment applications are being mailed to employees early this month, according to Benefits Manager Betty Green. Forms needed to change medical coverage are not included in the booklet and can be picked up directly from the Benefits Office on the second floor of the Old Evans Building (D-2).

Employees are asked to read over the information carefully, says Green, who notes several important benefit changes. One such change will make it possible for employees to pay for long-term and short-term disability insurance with pre-tax dollars. This means that employees could potentially take home more money in their pay checks, says Green.

Open enrollment will end on Friday, Nov. 30. All changes

Six honored as UH's '91 Black Achievers

Six Hospital employees have been named as Black Achievers for 1991, and will serve as role models to Boston youngsters throughout the course of the upcoming year.

The UH honorees are Norris Cornish, Materials Management Department, Hazel Chevannes, Department of Nutrition Services, Doria Perry and Delia Thomas, Patient Financial Services, Toni Velasquez, Nursing, Atrium 6-West, and Barbara Waters, Admissions.

The winners were nominated by their managers or supervisors, and were selected by members of the Affirmative Action Advisory Group. "There were a total of 18 nominees this year and the selection process was extremely difficult," said the Hospital's Affirmative Action Advisory Officer Tina Lawson. "All of those nominated are simply wonderful people."

Under the Black Achievers Program, businesses and corporations sponsor individuals to spend 40 hours of "on-the-job" time working with youngsters in the community. This year marks the sixth year that the University Hospital has participated in the program.

On Tuesday, Jan. 22, Black Achievers from UH and the Medical Campus will be recognized along with other Boston-area honorees at a black-tie dinner at the Marriott Hotel at Copley Place.

OPERATIONS GROUP: Getting to the heart of the matter

In an institution as large and diverse as the University Hospital, the work of one department naturally impacts the work of another. On those occasions when systems fail—ultimately causing negative experiences for patients and users of Hospital services—finger-pointing and "blaming" can supercede the problem-solving process.

With this as their premise, members of an interdepartmental operations group are attempting to address conflicts directly and get to the heart of certain matters. The group, which is cochaired by Operations Vice Presidents Linda Burns and Michael Higgins, is charged with devising practical solutions to key interdepartmental functioning issues. continued on page 8
The caring you showed us is greatly appreciated!

(Howard Burke, a former UH employee, died recently at the Hospital after a prolonged and complicated illness. The following is a letter from his family.)

To the Editor:

Our sincere gratitude is extended to everyone at UH and the Medical Center, who were so supportive of us when we needed it most. Numerous individuals reached out to love all of us and shared in our pain during this very difficult time. The warmth and concern from our UH friends made everything a little more tolerable and bearable for us as a family. The caring you showed us is greatly appreciated.

A special thanks to the extremely professional MICU staff for giving such outstanding care to Howard, as well as to his large family. It was a bearable and appreciated during this overwhelming time of need.

Once again, thank you.

The Burke Family

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Fill 'em up, Phil: Pharmacy pull pusher puts UH into forefront of dispensing technology

by Susan H. Plumb

Phil: This is the deal: Do this thing for us: Save us money, and improve quality. Do the thing faster so we aren't as accurate by then any human ever could do. Oh, and by the way, Phil. Pay for it.

From a machine the size of two large bookcases, tiny dial-controlled dispensers are automatically counted and dispensed from deep-colored containers into long plastic strips, which are then fed out of the machine. The work is done single-handedly by the newest addition to the UH Pharmacy, a machine named "Phil."

"Phil," technically called the Baxter ATC-312 (for Automated Tablet Control), is a robotics device that went to work in the pharmacy earlier this fall. Considered state-of-the-art equipment in automated dispensing, the ATC machine fills medication orders speedily and flawlessly. And, it is one of only three in New England.

Dial x6368 for "Phil."/forms/pull pusher at the Baxter plant in Bridgewater, manager for pharmacy operations, said: "The Baxter plant wanted to reduce Hospital costs and improve quality. By using this device, we are able to dispense 212 different solid oral dosages to fill orders that we receive from inpatient case uses. These drugs come out of the machine individually packaged and labeled with the name of the tablet and the patient's name." The new robotics device is actually part of an intricate system made up of the ATC machine, a printer, a personal computer and an interface. The interface is a specially developed interface software program that allows the ATC machine and the mainframe computer to communicate. In fact, "Phil" is the first robotics device in the country to be integrated with a pharmacy computer system for online processing and dispensing of medications.

Many applications

Using the new system, pharmacy staff can review all the drugs dispensed at UH and then select the 212 most requested medications. Interestingly, the drugs dispensed represent 85 percent of all Hospital patient medications. In addition to dispensing individual drugs, the ATC machine also has an automated tablet tray which enables the pharmacist to package other drugs that come by bulk at any given time.

"Traditionally, pharmacy medications were filled by night-shift staff who had to read patient medication orders and then write labels, put drug labels on patient identification bands, and then fill the drawers. The ATC machine has almost completely eliminated this process and given the department the opportunity to reassess night-shift workers," said Susan H. Plumb, an editorial assistant in the Office of Publication Services.

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Section of Critical Care to host annual Smithwick symposium on Nov. 30

The Section of Critical Care Medicine is this year's host of the Fifth Annual Smithwick Symposium to be held in Keeler Auditorium on Friday, Nov. 30, from 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. "Critical Care of the Seriously Ill Patient" is the theme for the day-long program, which will focus on recent developments in surgical critical care. Acclaimed critical care director Richard C. Dennis, M.D., chief of the Section of Critical Care Medicine and director of the Surgical Intensive Care Unit at UH, will present the keynote address.

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Former POW delivers inspirational message to UH

By J. Scott Abercrombie Jr., M.D.

A former U.S. Marine two men and physically appears to be accepted by increasing numbers of people. Over the past several years, the Hospital and Medical Center have made available a number of options that fit into the health and wellness category. For instance, our Occupational Health Program offers每月 activities, including "Ask a physician," an annual symposium, a program entitled, "Stress and the Working Parent," and weight loss and smoking cessation programs. Additionally, some departments sponsor activities on their own, demanding physicians' quick reviews, nutrition services' clinics on healthy eating habits and your own department's lunchboxes.

"There is nothing extraordinary about me. We all have the same sources of strength from which to draw. We're all made from the same clay, have the same spirit. You would have come just like I did."

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Letters

'You Choose'

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made by employees will take effect on January 1. For further information, visit the Benefits Office at x8578 (638-8578).

Benefits Fair

UH employees who wish to learn more about their benefits are invited to attend a Benefits Fair on Wednesday, Nov. 14, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. in Function Rooms A and B of the SkyLight Dining Pavilion. Representatives from a wide variety of benefits plans will be present and enrollment forms will be available.

BUMC patrons of the SkyLight Dining Pavilion will soon be able to add Vietnamese in addition to their choices for lunch or dinner, with the opening of a new vendor, as of Monday.

Effective Tuesday, Nov. 13, employees and staff can dial "MENU" (x6368) to hear a pre-recorded message of daily offerings, including soup du jour, hot entrees and special options, as well as weekly specials. The service will be available Monday through Friday. For further information, visit the Benefits Office at x8578 (638-8578).

Editor’s note: x6368 was formerly assigned to financial counseling. x8578 is now x6368.
California Express: Visit California this fall during the Second Annual Harriet Abramson Golf and Tennis Tournament at the Spring Valley Country Club in Sharon, including, from left to right, Donna butterfly, Barbra Levy and Harriett Abramson, co-chairs of the event, TV personality Diane Page, and WRKO's Pegi Gough. Abramson, a UH trustee, will donate the proceeds to complete state-of-the-art chemotherapy suite at UH. Her husband, Harry, was a patient of the hospital's oncology staff.

Ocational Health programs promote healthy lifestyles for BUMC staff

If you'd like to quit smoking, stop overeating or combat the flu this winter, you might check out the various health programs offered through the Occupational Health Program. Sponsored by UH's Employee Health Service, the following programs and services are specifically designed to encourage healthy lifestyles among employees:

- Flu vaccine: Protect yourself and others from the flu this season. Stop by the Employee Health Service office on the second floor of the Old Evans Building (D-2), across from the Human Resources reception desk to receive your free flu vaccine, which is being administered through the month of November subject to availability.

- Smoking cessation program: Don't go cold turkey! Then attend an orientation meeting on Tuesday, Nov. 15, from noon to 1 p.m. in the Atrium B Conference Room. A representative from the American Lung Association will discuss a seven-week "Freedom From Smoking" program, which will be offered at the Hospital during lunchtime for a nominal fee.

- Great American Smokeout: Smokers across the country will attempt to refrain from smoking for 24 hours or for life, during the Great American Smokeout on Thursday, Nov. 15. In keeping with the Hospital's promotion of a smoke-free environment, all employees—smokers and non-smokers alike—are encouraged to celebrate this day. UHers are encouraged to visit a display table on Atrium 2, where Employee Health Service staff will offer further information and answer your questions on kicking the habit.

- Overeaters Anonymous: Do you eat when you're not hungry? Do you go on eating binges for no apparent reason? Is your weight affecting the way you live your life? If you've answered yes to any of these questions, then you might want to attend free Overeaters Anonymous meetings held every Friday, from noon to 1 p.m., in the first floor conference room of the Preston Family Building (F-1).

For further information on any of these programs or services, contact the Employee Health Service at x6400 (638-6400).

Singers and musicians wanted for BUMC Choir

Can you sing or play a musical instrument? If so, you are needed by the Medical Center Choir. Under the direction of Chief Pathology Assistant Vernon Truell, the choir performs as a host of UH events, most noticeably perhaps during the holiday season, singing Christmas carols in the Hospital's Interfaith Chapel, or on the annual Martin Luther King Jr. "Black Achievers" celebration in January. Rehearsals are under way for the annual holiday show, and are being held on Tuesdays and Thursdays, from 5:15 to 6:15 p.m., in the chapel on Atrium 2. The rehearsals are open to all, and interested persons are encouraged to join in the choir.

For further information, contact Vernon Truell, x3512.

Don't miss your Connection

The deadline for Connections is the Friday of each week. The deadline for the December issue is Nov. 6. All story or photo submissions to Connections must be received by 4 p.m. (B-7), or call x6462 (638-6462).

CLT: Will it help or hinder the state's economy?

A widely debated Citizens for Limited Taxation (CLT) petition—a proposal that could alter the Commonwealth's tax and spending policies—will be decided on Election Day, Nov. 6. According to the Massachusetts Taxpayers Foundation, whose data is cited by both proponents and opponents, Question 3 in addition to repealing tax cuts and increasing state spending, would "immeasurably worsen the state's deep fiscal problems." The creativity and ingenuity time and again required to resolve these fiscal problems is why local aid voters will be asked to cope with the conflicting economic policies approved by voters.

UM President J. Scott Abercrombie Jr., M.D., says it is up to the state's new administration—President-elect Michael Dukakis—to right the campaign. Will Question 3 be repealed by voters?

BUMC to take part in canned-food drive

Nobody should go hungry, especially during the holiday season. This Thanksgiving, you can make a difference in the fight against hunger by participating in the Boston Can Share Drive from November 1 to 14.

Drop-off sites at the Medical Center will be located in the Hospital at the B-12 bridge, as well as in the lobbies of the School of Medicine and the Goldman School of Graduate Dentistry. BUMC employees and staff, who receive a contribution annually to the Commonwealth's drive, donated an impressive 451 cans during the 1988 drive.

The food drive, administered by the Development Department, allows both sides of the issue. For Question 2, a yes vote would make the proposed changes in laws concerning state fees. A no vote would not make the proposed changes in laws concerning state fees and taxes. For Question 5, a yes vote would establish the proposed allocation of state aid to cities and towns. A no vote would not establish the proposed allocation of state aid to cities and towns.

Thanksgiving dinners for on-duty staff

Complimentary turkey dinners complete with all the trimmings will be served to UH staff on duty Thanksgiving Day, Thursday, Nov. 22. The meals will be served from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. and from 4 p.m. to 7 p.m. in the Skylight Dining Pavilion. Employees must present their identification badges to receive their complimentary meals, otherwise the cost is $5.95 per meal. Items also can be purchased a la carte. Tickets will be distributed at the Medical Center and can be obtained from departmental supervisors.

Employees who work the evening shift, 11 p.m. to 7 a.m., will be served a complimentary cold bullet. Thanksgiving dinners for guests and visitors will be delivered to patient rooms for a request at a cost of $5 per meal. For further information, contact the Department of Nutrition Services at x6404 (638-6404).
UH's Alan Tibbetts lets his photography speak for itself

Although he doesn't claim to be an environmental watchdog, UH's Alan Tibbetts hopes to heighten people's awareness of the environment through his photography.

The Hospital's acting manager for environmental services, Tibbetts is a contemporary photographer who holds a degree from the Massachusetts College of Art. Recently, two of his photographs were published in Atrium, a prestigious publication within the hospital.

TIBBETS behind the lens

Photography—real or virtual—was taken in South Boston—are part of a portfolio entitled "Hidden Costs: Photographic Observations of Wastes Disposal," which deals with man's relationship to the land.

"Successful art shows us something we haven't seen before. If my art causes people to think differently and consequently, to act differently, then that's more than I could hope for," says Tibbetts.

"I'm not trying to tell you anything through my art, but I am raising questions."

It's not a hobby!

While working on "Hidden Costs," a project he began in 1986, Tibbetts has visited Super Fund waste sites and contaminated neighborhoods throughout New England, New Jersey and Illinois. His latest venture took him to Louisiana, where he captured on film the devastating aftereffects of environmental illness.

"For me, photography is a means of coming to terms with a chaotic world. It also represents a chance for me to learn first-hand about these things and not depend on the media for my education."

Tibbetts has been behind the camera lens for 19 years. In fact, during a two-year stint with the U.S. Army from 1972 to 1974, he served as his battalion's photographer/reporter, while stationed in Germany. When he completed his service, he went back to college full-time, earning a living part-time in limousine/houskeeping.

Then he worked his way up the career ladder, while pursuing his photographic interests on the side. "I couldn't have been a commercial artist, but I felt it would have drained my creativity."

So the UH manager spends his weekends and vacations out in the field, in the darkroom or writing various grant applications. One night a week he can be found at the head of the class, teaching photography at the Boston Architectural Center. "I become concerned when people call my interest in photography a 'hobby.' It isn't a hobby, it's my spirit."

Lately, Tibbetts has been hitting the pavement, knocking on the doors of local museums and universities, in the hopes of booking an exhibition or two.

"One of the things I've learned about being an artist is that it's a long haul to recognition. But the way I look at it, every little bit helps."

Published photos—Tibbetts' photos are part of a portfolio he is compiling on man's relationship to the land—in this case, scenes of environmental waste. The top photo, entitled "Trees Bordering Scrap Metal," was taken in South Boston, the bottom photo, entitled "130th Street," was taken in Chicago.

UH's Jon Butterworth on benefit to feed the hungry, homeless

Environmental services staff member Jon Butterworth is doing something to fight hunger and homelessness in his own neighborhood—namely, the Brazilian neighborhood, in the Dorchester section of Boston.

"A Concert for Living" is being sponsored by Saturdays/Sunday's Bread, in association with the Church of all Nations, 333 Tremont St., Boston. Tickets are $10 each.

According to Butterworth, Saturdays/Sunday's Bread, a weekend soup kitchen, has fed more than 100,000 people in the past seven years. "We're hoping to raise between $8,000 and $18,000—anything over that will be a plus," he says, adding that he and his wife hope to make the concert an annual event.

"The show will be enlivened by WHDH radio personality Leon Caso, and will feature stand-up comedian Tony Rose, an HBO regular, Boston City Council member Albert "Dapper" O'Neil, lam­ bda himan Tom D'Angera and Arus Cabral, and Gospel performer Andre Crouch, to name a few. Butterworth will take centerstage that evening, perform­ ing one of the more than 100 songs he has composed in the past. Butterworth is no stranger to the stage. In fact, for years he was a member of The Holidays, a vocal trio, which performed during the 1950s in area res­ taurants and nightclubs.

PUBLISHED PHOTOS—Tibbetts' photos are part of a portfolio he is compiling on man's relationship to the land—in this case, scenes of environmental waste. The top photo, entitled "Trees Bordering Scrap Metal," was taken in South Boston, the bottom photo, entitled "130th Street," was taken in Chicago.

The Case of the Lost Visitors

Dear Focus,

I was on my way to a meeting recently when I noticed an elderly couple clearly in need of some direction. I stopped to ask if I could be of any help. I would have been happy to give them directions, but they asked me to escort them to their doctor's of­ fice. I did so, but not until I was called by my employer, go in this type of situation.

Sincerely yours,

J. Tuohey
Operations group continued from page 1

"Our focus is on understanding and addressing the causes of operational problems," says Burns. "The end result is improved patient care, and greater physician and patient satisfaction with our services."

Says Higgins, "The members of this group come to us as critical thinkers who are willing to lend creativity, not criticism."

Group member James Saunders, director of Imaging/Therapy Services, calls the group a "clearing house" for information and problem identification. "Oftentimes, decisions can be made in a vacuum, and that can impact negatively on other departments. The group serves as a good forum for issues to be resolved in a participatory manner by individuals in a cross-section of departments."

Delays in patient transport are a recurring problem, which affects not only the patients, but also a significant number of employees and staff across the Hospital who use the Transport elevators. "It's not just the Transport staff who cause the delays, but those staff who utilize transport services," Saunderson adds. "Transport operates under a lot of constraints from other departments. For example, employees who use the Transport elevators are impacting upon Transport's ability to do its work efficiently."

"I think there are many things we do routinely in our jobs that we don't think about, which ultimately impacts upon others," Viano concludes.

Because of the need for improvements in patient transport, members of the operations group and Transport are examining in more detail the causes of the delays in patient transport, as well as potential solutions. Transport Supervisor Suzette Hannon reports that the group is making progress, and expects to make recommendations to the larger interdepartmental operations group by the end of the year.

Higgins notes that group members are pursuing other issues to further enhance the delivery of quality, patient-focused care. "We're looking for systematic problems here. Problems that are really tough to address, and that need a team approach," he says. "There are no easy fixes, but when we fix a problem, it'll remain fixed."

Burns and Higgins feel that departments ultimately will work more in synchronization with one another, will be accustomed to communicating openly about difficult issues, and will know their roles in the Hospital's mission.

These accomplishments, they believe, will greatly help the Hospital improve its day-to-day functioning.

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SHAPe UP—Members of the Medical Center of Boston staff got in tune with their bodies during an October 4 fitness fair, held in celebration of National Physical Therapy Week, from October 1-6. In above photo, Catherine Mann, M.S., P.T., gives Isabel Clark of the Post Anesthesia Care Unit the results of a postural screening, at right, Juliana Nagy, M.S., P.T., oversees an unidentified staff as she takes a lung-capacity test.

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T'IS THE SEASON—Flu season is here, and in preparation for it, Home Medical Service staff recently instructed School of Medicine students on how to administer the flu vaccine. Here Marilyn Park, R.N., demonstrates the proper way to inject a needle. UH's annual flu-shot program of the operations under way is the largest program in the area that offers free flu shots to Boston elders.

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The University Hospital
November 1990