

## **Growing a Third Hand**

By Todd Wheeler - Hospital Concierge of America

### **When you need extra help balancing work and life, try a concierge. Concierges aren't just for hotels anymore**

Teri Fouts, RN, really knows how to take care of others. As a registered nurse in the outpatient infusion center at Littleton Adventist Hospital in Colorado, Fouts provides chemotherapy IVs for patients with cancer, blood transfusions and post-transplant care.

The work continues beyond these medically related tasks. Fouts takes care of a multitude of needs for patients. She helps patients with family issues, recommends books to read and helps them figure out how to pay their bills.

That's a lot for anyone to handle in a day and doesn't leave much energy or time to deal with factors outside the hospital doors. Fouts isn't alone in this.

#### **Balancing Act**

Many nurses find themselves stretched almost to the breaking point when trying to balance everything they do for their patients, fellow nurses and other hospital staff with everything they need and want to do for their families, friends and themselves.

The administration at Littleton Hospital recognized this and stepped up to the plate to take care of employees such as Fouts.

The administration is making a concerted effort to develop a culture that supports employees, both professionally and personally, because they know that:

- Nearly 50 percent of all U.S. workers feel overwhelmed by a growing number of job tasks and longer working hours, according to Families and Work Institute;<sup>1</sup> and
- 88 percent of employees say they have a hard time juggling work and life, according to a survey from AON Consulting.<sup>2</sup>

The administration at Littleton Hospital believed if it could help its staff maintain a healthy work-life balance, then employees such as Fouts would continue to have the energy required to provide top-tier service to patients.

## **Finding a Solution**

When Littleton's administration explored offering a work-life balance program, it became apparent that the challenge was finding something that would truly help employees reduce stress, gain time - and ultimately become more engaged in their work. The goal was to find a program that would make a visible difference beyond mission statements and motivational phrases.

They turned to a concierge service.

While Littleton offers a number of work-life balance benefits, the concierge service that enables employees to complete personal errands, from grocery shopping to dry cleaning to car care and more, has become one of the most popular benefits among employees. In essence, the service is designed to take care of the nurses, physicians and staff, who in turn, take care of sick patients. Perhaps even more important, the service helps employees gain the time, energy and enthusiasm to be, happier, more productive and effective while on the job.

## **How It Works**

Concierge programs come in different shapes and sizes to fit various employer needs. Some programs enable employees to take advantage of an on-site concierge service for an unlimited variety of daily errands. Others are limited to just a few of the most popular functions. Some concierge services are staffed by an on-site professional while others conduct all business online.

Typically, employees who use the concierge pay only for the services or products purchased and never pay a premium charge. Employers pay an annual fee.

## **Stress Reduction**

As a single parent working two jobs, Fouts knows firsthand what a benefit this service is. Fouts, a 36-year nursing veteran who recently received the Colorado Nightingale award, has used the service to complete a variety of tasks such as going to get gifts at the airport for flying lessons, dry cleaning, oil changes, car maintenance, mailing packages, and locating and picking up hard-to-find dog food and veterinary items.

"The concierge service has eliminated huge amounts of stress and I no longer worry about all the errands I have to do after work and on weekends. I can go home and run earlier, get to exercise classes at the local YMCA on time or walk my two dogs. This service has made a huge difference in my life," Fouts said.

Catherine Bartley, manager of volunteer services at the hospital, also uses the service frequently. She routinely drops off a list of her errands, which includes anything from going to the post

office to shopping at Costco to organizing a tea party for her daughter, and simply knows the tasks will be completed at the end of the day.

"I can focus on what I need to do at work and not worry about the errands I have to do. I can focus on my job and the needs of the hospital and that is a great thing," Bartley said.

Offering the concierge service certainly helps Littleton take care of the caregivers and allows employees to have more of a work-life balance. Feedback from associates at Littleton has been very positive regarding the concierge.

*Todd Wheeler is the founder and president of Concierge Colorado and Hospital Concierge of America a Colorado based company that partners with hospitals to create optimal work/life balance. The result is greater employee retention, enhanced recruitment, profitability and ultimately better patient care.*

## **References**

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