



TRANSITIONING CARE WITH

TEAM SPIRIT

"If you stick your head out the door, three people will say, 'What do you need?' There is just that kind of spirit," said Kim Ames, R.N., Director of Critical Care Services at SSM Cardinal Glennon Children's Medical Center.

Glennon's Transitional Care Unit, TCU, cares for some of the most complex patients in a medical center that sees the most serious illnesses and injuries in pediatrics. Every day presents different challenges and needs for new processes. About two years ago, the unit's forty nurses were offered the opportunity to take responsibility for how they wanted their unit to be directed.

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"We turned it into primarily a staff-run unit," Ames said. "I am responsible for the budget and advisory issues but we created a shared governance team for our unit operations." Christened the TAG Team, an acronym for 'TCU Achieving Greatness,' the team handles many different aspects of operations as well as employee satisfaction. "They bring to the table all the issues that we have -- patient care, customer service, safety, scheduling, supply needs -- and we discuss and decide what we are going to do. I knew they had good ideas. This team provides a great forum for developing those ideas."

This 22-bed unit serves as a step-down for patients leaving Glennon's intensive care units. The nurses also care for patients on home ventilation or peritoneal dialysis when they are admitted to the hospital for treatments or surgeries. Neurology and neurosurgery patients also contribute to a large part of its census.

"We see patients from every service, from birth to 21 years old," Ames said. "We run full. It is a great place to be a new nurse because you learn so much."

There was a time when the TCU did not possess Glennon's highest patient and employee satisfaction scores. That began to change when its nurses were given ownership of their environment and unit processes. The team meets monthly with Ames and TCU Team Leader Becky Chambers, R.N., PNP.

"The TAG Team is a mix of all shifts and all people on the unit. It meets for two hours. It has changed the mentality of how we work together," Ames said. "Each team member owns a part of the processes. They know about safety. They know how we are doing financially. They know where we stand on patient satisfaction. They can talk to why we did well or what we are doing to improve."

The TAG team has brought new ideas to many of the countless processes that make up the unit's daily work. One example, Ames said, is the approach to the hourly visits that nurses try to make to each patient and family. A magnet board is used to tell all team members which patients are due for visits so nurses can visit any patient whenever possible.

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Left to right - back row: Nicole Havel, R.N., Ronita Clarke, C.S.N., Amy Decenso, R.N., Valerie Schaeffler, R.N., Emily Riley, R.N. front row: Rachel Luetkenhaus, R.N., Brooke Brothers, C.S.N., Becky Chambers, team leader, Kim Ames, Director of Critical Care Services, Amanda Myer, R.N.