

LORAIN

A duty and a privilege

Worker serves in hospital, abroad

By Richard Payerchin
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Service is a duty and a privilege for a Mercy health-care support staff member who has a heart for patients in Lorain, area youths and the poor in Haiti.

After graduating from Lorain High School, Thomas Hoerrle applied for a job at the hospital at 3700 Kolbe Road.

Since then he has become environmental services coordinator at Mercy Regional Medical Center. He has experienced hospital care as a worker and a patient, and his volunteer efforts extend to area basketball courts and the impoverished island nation.

Keeping Mercy clean

As a leader in hospital housekeeping, Hoerrle has gotten to know every room, every closet, just about every square inch of the 500,000-square-foot Mercy facility in Lorain, said Shelley Dongarra, director of environmental services.

"I've been here all 40 years, roaming these halls," said Hoerrle, 58, a Cleveland native who grew up in Grafton before moving to



ERIC BONZAR — THE MORNING JOURNAL

Tom Hoerrle has spent 40 years working as an environmental services assistant for Mercy Regional Medical Center.

Lorain.

"It's doubled in size," he said. "I tell everybody I've seen half of it put together and half of it hauled away because there was some de-

molition work here."

Mercy has about 50 staffers working over three shifts to keep it clean.

"Basically we are a group of professionals that are

trained to make sure the hospital's cleaned and sanitized," Hoerrle said.

Given the size of the hospital, it is no small task.

One day, on a recent visit

in August, the daily census of patients was 194, not counting the dozens of doctors, nurses, support staff, visitors and vendors going in and out.

The domain of environmental services includes patient rooms, operating rooms, emergency rooms, conference rooms, offices

DUTY » PAGE 3

21st ANNUAL LORAIN COUNTY ORGANIZED LABOR LABOR DAY FAMILY CELEBRATION

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 4, 2016 - 421 BLACK RIVER LANDING, LORAIN, OH

EVEN MORE FUN THINGS TO DO AND SEE

- ▶ CLASSIC CAR SHOW
- ▶ KIDS RIDES
- ▶ PONY RIDES
- ▶ FREE GIVEAWAYS @ UNION ROW
- ▶ KIDS' FINGERPRINTING BY L. C. SHERIFF'S DEPT.
- ▶ 50¢ HOT DOGS, CHIPS, POP, WATER
- ▶ FOOD COURT
- ▶ FREE PRIZE RAFFLE (GREAT PRIZES FOR THOSE 18 & OVER)
- ▶ FOOD DRIVE FOR L.C. LABOR AGENCY (DROP OFF DONATIONS AT EITHER \$.50 TICKET BOOTH)
- ▶ LIFESHARE BLOOD DRIVE
- ▶ SURPRISES

LIVE BANDS



THE AGENDA



OTIS & THE SHOREWAY SAINTS

In conjunction with
Lorain County Labor Agency

LABOR DAY 2016 SCHEDULE "BLACK RIVER LANDING"

Sunday, September 4th - FREE ADMISSION

MAIN STAGE

- 12:00pm - Welcome & Introductions • Master of Ceremonies - Ben Davey - UAW Local 2000
- NATIONAL ANTHEM & PRESENTATION OF COLORS • Army Junior ROTC Color Guard, Lorain High School
- National Anthem - Angelica Davilla • Invocation - Janice Williams UAW 2000

MAIN STAGE:

12:30pm - 1:30pm THE AGENDA
 1:45pm - 2:45 OTIS & THE SHOREWAY SAINTS
 3:00pm - 4:30pm 10 from 6
 4:30pm - 5:15pm GUEST SPEAKERS
 OHIO REP. DISTRICT 56 - DAN RAMOS
 PRESIDENT LCCC - DR. MARSHA BALLINGER
 U.S. SENATOR SHERROD BROWN
 5:15pm... PRIZE RAFFLE

ENTERTAINMENT:
 12:00pm - 5:00pm RIDES & THINGS - EXECUTIVE EVENTS & ENTERTAINMENT
 PONY RIDES - GOTTFRIED PONY RIDES
 12:00pm - 5:00pm
 12:00pm - 6:00pm CLASSIC CAR SHOW - ART THOMAS - IAM & AW FAMILY & FRIENDS

ALSO:
 1:00pm - 3:00pm FACE PAINTING
 12:00pm - 5:00pm LORAIN COUNTY SHERIFFS' - CHILDRENS' FINGERPRINTING LORAIN COUNTY METRO PARKS (THIS SCHEDULE IS SUBJECT TO CHANGE)

FOOD DRIVE - LORAIN COUNTY LABOR AGENCY (TURN IN DONATION AT EITHER \$.50 TICKET BOOTH)
 (THIS SCHEDULE IS SUBJECT TO CHANGE)

LORAIN

Serving the underserved

Nurse incorporates faith in health

By Kaylee Remington
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Norva Ross is the parish nurse and pastor of Full Gospel Ministries Church, giving herself a different kind of role as an employee of Mercy Regional Medical Center.

While she does help people with their health and overall wellness and healing, she also adds values, beliefs and practices of the faith community.

Ross, of Lorain, who has been at Mercy since 2003, said she is responsible for mapping and managing the health promotion for more than 200 clients. She is a part of Mercy Parish Nursing Program which started in 1994. The program focuses on a team approach with a pastor, a congregation and the staff nurses. The staff works with a church to make and support a health council. Volunteer nurses will then be chosen from the church to carry out health screenings, exercise classes and other wellness programs.

"I'm very passionate about it. I think it's just an excellent way for a nurse to promote health and wellness in the context of the church," Ross said. "I love it."

Since a church interacts with people in a lifelong process, transition, change, health, illness, crisis, it's a wonderful way to merge the spiritual faith in healing, she said.

"Our target audience is mostly the congregations,



Norva J. Ross, nurse for Mercy Parish Nursing Program, stands in her church Aug. 18. Ross focuses on promotion of health and healing with the context of the values, beliefs and practices of the faith community.

the faith communities, and so what we do is we go in and we work with the pastors or the priest and we look at developing a health

council, health cabinet and we can do blood pressures; we're a prevention program, in other words we don't do physical hands on

care," Ross said, who works with the urban area in the county.

"I remember having five churches in my area," she said. "I now have 58. We have a total of 102 congregations that we facilitate."

No day is ever the same for Ross. Some days, she said, she's on the Mercy campus and other days she is visiting the churches she serves.

"We're advocates for health, we refer, we case manage and we actually help them plan their yearly activities in the calendar," Ross said.

"So my thing is that, if I'm going to spend time I'm going to figure out how we can do something; whatever they dream, each of our churches are different according to the capacity that they have."

Whatever a church's vision is, she said she is determined to get them there.

Ross loves to see people's growth and process towards health, she said, and wants to get everyone back to a healthier level.

"I've had pastors say 'My hospital visits are less,' and we have many many sacred stories," Ross said. "One of the other things that's rewarding is when you do

"I think the position as a parish nurse affords me to use every single bit of education, every calling that I believe that the Lord has given me to be able to share with the community; I'm a community person."

— Norva J. Ross, nurse for Mercy Parish Nursing program

these screenings and the abnormal labs come back, we case management that we follow up, we send information to the physicians."

While it is a parish nursing program, she said she welcomes the community at large. With insurance and high co-payments, Ross said, the program offers free labs to the community members.

"I think the position as a parish nurse affords me to use every single bit of education, every calling that I believe that the Lord has given me to be able to share with the community; I'm a community person," she said.

Ross' emphasis is on the poor and the underserved, especially in the urban area, she said. Some people might not know anything about lab work or his or her

belief system, Ross said.

Faith has been in her blood since she was little, growing up in Oberlin and attending Mount Zion Baptist Church. Since she moved to Lorain, her church is the only church she knows. But, she said, she has relationships with pastors and churches in Lorain.

Ross is also a part of the Lorain County Domestic Violence Task Force and developed the faith subcommittee of the task force. She said wanted to see how the task force could get into churches.

Any congregation that would like to start a program at their church can contact Beth Finnegan, director of the Mercy Health Ministry/Parish Nursing Program, at 440-989-3905.

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LORAIN

A dose of heart in the ER

Doctor has served in emergency room since 2009

By Keith Reynolds
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When Dr. Gilbert Palmer graduated valedictorian at Lorain High School he was interviewed by a local station and asked if he planned to come back to the city after he finished medical school.

"Why would I not?" he reportedly said. "Of course I'm coming back."

And he did; serving as an emergency room doctor at Mercy Regional Medical Center since 2009.

"Mercy is my hometown hospital," he said while sitting in a consultation room so newly renovated, that you could still faintly smell the errant paint fume. "I received care here as a child and after I completed my training in Youngstown, I'd been looking to come back home."

Palmer said that his decision to become a doctor was made between the ages of 5 and 10.

"I had a lot of hearing impairments and had to go through a lot of surgeries, reconstruction on the ear and that sort of thing," he said. "That got me ac-



Dr. Gilbert A. Palmer has served as an emergency room doctor at Mercy Regional Medical Center in Lorain since 2009.

quainted with the field of medicine. I realized that, perhaps, I'd like to be a doctor to help people the way I was helped by physicians."

Later, when presented with various challenges, Palmer was torn between studying medicine and becoming a priest.

"My career choice came down to what was calling

me the strongest," he said. "I felt I could affect the greatest amount of community, and I thought I was pulled to do medicine. I was called to do medicine; a vocation if you will."

He had started his training as a family practitioner, but he said that he sort of fell into emergency medicine.

"I felt I could bring cer-

tain attributes to emergency medicine that sometimes weren't there; compassion, empathy, calling, purpose, as well as the enjoyment of the fast pace of the medicine," he said.

Palmer said that he feels that his work as an emergency room doctor is informed by his early interest in joining the clergy.

"It's not uncommon that

"I felt I could bring certain attributes to emergency medicine that sometimes weren't there; compassion, empathy, calling, purpose, as well as the enjoyment of the fast pace of the medicine"

— Dr. Gilbert A. Palmer

a patient can sense your interest in them is genuine," he said. "I think that comes somewhere from inside. A lot of those skills can be taught, but there's something about the human being or the human entity that is important to me on multiple levels. I think that allows me to provide that level of care to patients."

According to Palmer, hospitals are not only having trouble finding emergency room doctors who are able to provide that level of care, but are having trouble finding emergency room doctors at all.

"There are not enough emergency room physicians," he said. "The population's demand for physicians and the physicians needed to service them are not keeping pace with each other."

"People might be dissuaded from going into medicine with the changes in medical care," he said. "People might feel a sense or another calling. It's not as strong as it used to be."

While Palmer is a jovial man, he acknowledges that the stress of working in such a high-tension field can take a toll on people, and said that he uses gardening to escape from work.

"Every time you have a tough case, you always want to work to move on to that next case," he said. "You know that you've done everything you could do and you do have to let go."

"You have to develop those other interests," he said.

"I lived in Lorain, I enjoy boating, I enjoy the water, I enjoy cutting my grass, I especially enjoy tending to my yard. Those are all ways to decompress, and those are the things I really enjoy."

Duty

FROM PAGE 1

and hallways, Hoerrle said.

The 10-step process to disinfect patient rooms should be the most visible part of the job, Hoerrle said.

"One of the major things I stress is, the patient sees you," Hoerrle said.

"You can come in there, thoroughly clean the whole room top to bottom," but if the patient is gone for lab work and does not see it, they don't think the room is clean, he said.

"The room is cleaned thoroughly, the patient sees you and I don't get a phone call, a complaint," Hoerrle said. "So far, no complaints."

Life as a patient

Hoerrle described his leadership style as hands-on and he encourages the staff to view the patient rooms as if they were patients themselves, or family members of someone admitted for care.

Hoerrle gained his own experience that way last year. On Valentine's Day 2015, he experienced the "widow maker," a severe heart attack that left him hospitalized at Mercy Regional Medical Center.

"So I know how the patient feels," Hoerrle said. "That's what I tell the crew: Imagine you're the patient: What are your expecta-

tions?"

A member of Lorain Lighthouse United Methodist Church, Hoerrle explained how he relied on his faith and spirituality to deal with his illness.

"God said, Tom, it's not time to retire yet, I need you down here. I need you in Lorain and in the mountains of Haiti."

Due at court

Away from work, Hoerrle is a basketball coach and coordinator for Upward Sports, a national organization that started in 1995 as a Christian youth sports provider.

In four years, the local winter basketball league has grown from 30 to 110 youths in kindergarten through eighth grade.

"I'm at all the games," Hoerrle said. He has an 82-game streak of perfect attendance and his health did not keep him from the court.

Just days after the heart attack, Hoerrle understated his condition as "slightly incapacitated." At least one adult friend chastised him for exerting himself, but Hoerrle insisted on going to the next game to show the children he was all right.

"I needed to be there to start my recovery," Hoerrle said. "I didn't want to just sit around the house and feel sorry for myself."

Hoerrle has returned to work and coaching but said

he needs one more step to complete his recuperation.

On a mission

A few years ago, Hoerrle launched a Facebook drive to collect uniforms for youths in Haiti.

He got responses and donations from around the nation. That effort later grew into mission trips to Haiti with Mission Possible, a Findlay-based ministry that started in 1979.

"I look at my mission trips as part of my mercy mission, serving the poor and underserved with the healing touch of Jesus," he said.

Hoerrle made two, week-long trips there in 2013 and 2014. He said he found a beautiful country with people who are materially poor but spiritually rich - the opposite of some people in the United States.

Construction workers, medical staff, leadership guides all work with their Haitian counterparts to empower the residents of that nation, Hoerrle said.

"We don't go down there for relief work, we go down there to help the Haitians help themselves," he said.

Many Haitians speak French or Creole, Hoerrle said. He communicated with youths through the international language of soccer, working as "Coach Tom," and as a fill-in player as needed.

"They see the Upward

star, they know who I am," Hoerrle said. "They call me the kid magnet on the team."

After the heart attack in 2015, Hoerrle asked people to pray for his recovery. One of the most encouraging messages came from a colleague who assured Hoerrle, his return to Haiti was not "if" but "when."

Another encouraging

message came from the Mercy Foundation of Lorain County, which named Hoerrle a recipient of the Dr. Dennis A. Radefeld Humanitarian Award. Radefeld was a mainstay of Lorain County's medical community who also led 57 mission trips to the Dominican Republic.

The award will cover Hoerrle's travel costs and daily

expenses for his next trip to Haiti.

In October, he will make his third venture to the island, flying to Haiti's capital with his wife, Laurie, who will make her first mission trip there.

"Once I step off the plane into the Port-au-Prince airport, my recovery will be complete," Hoerrle said.

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