

Anchorwoman Gives Caregivers a Whale of a Thank-you Gift

By Diane Bell

It's not uncommon for grateful former patients to deliver See's Candies, homemade cookies, flowers and tear-evoking thank-you notes to hospital caregivers.

But the doctors, nurses, medical assistants, radiologists, technicians, therapists and secretaries at Scripps Memorial's cardiac care unit in La Jolla — all 80 of them — each got a San Diego Bay cruise for two from one grateful patient and his family.

The CCU of Scripps Memorial Hospital,

La Jolla, Calif., featured in the July 14 San Diego Union Tribune, received a 2009 AACN Beacon Award for meeting evidence-based standards of excellence and patient safety. The award represents the first such honor for an area hospital.

CCU/MICU manager Noida San Antonio credits "the passion and commitment" of staff nurses Trish Wragg, Lisa Breedlove and Hermes Garma with meeting award criteria, saying they "worked to create a healing environment through healing touch and palliative care. This was the start of our Beacon Journey," she adds.

Wragg, Beacon Committee spokeswoman, says, "Our journey was totally staff-driven and supported by managers and directors. The application guided us to ask questions, network with colleagues and look at our work from different angles.

"We evaluated our processes and patient outcomes and looked at how we cared for staff. I was amazed at how much everyone learned (on the journey), even those with more than 20 years of experience," she notes.

Wragg says, "Receiving the award and being the first Beacon ICU in San Diego is a huge honor, one that inspired other ICUs to apply." She encourages other adult and pediatric critical care and progressive units to embark on this journey, saying, "Our Beacon Committee is the most positive and rewarding group I have ever been a part of."

"We wondered what we could do that was exactly the opposite of the high-stress job that they're used to — something peaceful and calming," says KNSD/Channel 39, Cable 7 news anchorwoman Susan Taylor. The answer was a sunset cruise for two aboard Dennis Conner's 139-foot schooner *America*. The grateful patient was Taylor's father, Robert Lichtman, who nearly died Dec. 4 during heart-valve-replacement surgery.

For two months, he was in a medically induced coma and remained hospitalized nearly seven months before being discharged July 3. "That was his Independence Day," Taylor



says. In addition to her brother and her mom, Vivien, Taylor was often at her dad's side between her 6 and 11 p.m. newscasts and after midnight.

Hospital spokeswoman Lisa Ohmstede said Lichtman's complex recovery was among patient cases that earned the unit a recent award from the American Association of Critical-Care Nurses.  Copyright San Diego Union-Tribune. Used with permission.