



# NORTH MISSISSIPPI MEDICAL CENTER

## NMMC: Community communications as a wellness issue



Top photo: Area students learn from Patients Please and other interactive exhibits at HealthWorks! The curriculum-based, interactive health center enhances health and science curricula for area schools and helps effect lifelong change for healthier lifestyles among area children.

### Overview

Located in rural Mississippi, the North Mississippi Medical Center (NMMC) is the flagship hospital and tertiary referral center for North Mississippi Health Services, a nonprofit, integrated healthcare delivery system that serves 24 rural counties in northeast Mississippi and northwest Alabama. At 650 beds, NMMC is the largest non-government hospital in Mississippi and the largest rural hospital in the United States.

NMMC was the recipient of the prestigious 2006 Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award\*, the nation's highest presidential honor for organizational performance excellence.

### Social Responsibility Issue

NMMC's mission and vision—to continuously improve the health of the people of the region—is woven into its organizational culture and governance. It's a critical need: The state is ranked in last place for healthcare among all the states, according to the Commonwealth Fund. Assessing current and future health issues of Tupelo and the surrounding communities is a constant challenge.

### Solutions

One key is strong communications, according to John Heer, president and chief executive officer of North Mississippi Health Services, parent company of NMMC. "The community owns us, and we take their concerns very seriously," Heer said. He oversaw an expansion of the medical center's outreach through development of large community boards. More than 180 community members bring community concerns and help provide direction as NMMC seeks to improve its critical success factors: people, service, quality, financial, and growth.

NMMC listens and learns from its customers through a rigorous satisfaction survey process, a community relations facilitator, regular community health assessments, and a comprehensive complaint management process.

"We send a weekly e-mail to thousands of people all over the area," Heer said. "We offer praise where praise is due, but we also indicate where we're having problems. We have the direct support of the board. It's not sugar-coated."

The audience includes some 6,000 employees and physicians and the news media in an effort to provide transparency. And as the first institution to voluntarily become fully integrated, NMMC makes a conscious effort to reach all audiences and mirror the community. People are encouraged to respond and ask questions, thus creating a culture of openness.

## SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

**Company name:** North Mississippi Medical Center

**Location:** Tupelo, Mississippi

**Web site:** www.nmhs.net

**Founded:** 1937

**Scope:** Local

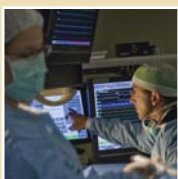
**Employees:** 6,260

### Measurement

In 2009, NMMC provided community services to more than 203,000 people through health fairs, screening, health education classes, and immunization clinics held in rural churches, area industry, schools, and other locations. Information about NMMC's community service is available at <http://www.nmhs.net/communityreport.php>.

### Other SR Involvement

Through the Health Care Foundation of North Mississippi, NMMC provides medications and nutritional support for needy patients; life saving equipment and training for medical students; and community health and wellness programs, especially those that improve children's health services. For instance, in 2008, the community donated \$6.2 million to develop HealthWorks!, a curriculum-based, interactive health education center that offers hands-on learning to area schoolchildren from kindergarten through 8th grade. For more information, visit <http://www.nmhs.net/hcf.php>.



\* ASQ is the administrator of the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award Program.