

Surging With Emotion

Life Care's Corporate Plaza is surging with emotion today as the 2004 annual management meeting officially gets under way. Executive directors, regional and divisional leadership from around the country -- with the exception of Florida -- have made their way to Cleveland, Tennessee, for one great get-together. Abounding are joy over the common mission of service that we share, faith in the God that we serve, love for friendships fashioned across the years, hospitality for new friends being formed and a hope for a brighter future assured by determination and hard work.

A decision was made this past Friday for the leaders of our Florida facilities, facing the onslaught of the third hurricane in four weeks, to stay in place to direct preparations for the storm and to offer shelter for residents of sister facilities who could be affected by it. When that announcement of the Florida team's unity and commitment to what lay before them was made by Chairman Forrest L. Preston, the audience erupted in an enthusiastic applause of appreciation.

Management meeting attendees arrived by automobile and airplane -- and one couple came on a motorcycle -- Saturday. Sunday began with a breakfast and a program of music and inspiration led by Ric and Sara Paulson Brummett, whose closing rendition of "Amazing Grace" drew a strong standing ovation from the audience. Sunday afternoon was devoted to activities that included whitewater rafting, golf, a visit to the Tennessee Aquarium and Imax Theatre, a duck tour and shopping. Sunday evening's entertainment centered around an islands theme, with contests for best costume, limbo and hula hoop.

Today was initiated with opening ceremonies that included a presentation of the colors by the Cleveland Fire Department Color Guard and singing of the National Anthem by Sara Paulson. Keynote address was by Rita Davenport, a longtime favorite motivational speaker for Life Care, whose address was entitled "Laughing Your Way to Success." The first in a variety of educational sessions over the next three days was called "Partnerships" and included presentations by Life Care, American Lifestyles, Life Care at Home and Garden Terrace. Six breakout sessions were on the agenda for this afternoon and Tuesday.

As I look out over the audience during these times together, I stand in awe at the impact the group assembled in the Professional Development Center has on the lives of hundreds of thousands of residents and family members, and, indeed, upon the nation as a whole. It truly is incredible what one group of dedicated people can accomplish when engaged in the same mission.

--Beecher Hunter