

Tour of John H. Stroger Hospital of Cook County September 8, 2017

Along with Jerry Butler's Chief of Staff Vanessa Dennis, 24 members from the LWVs of Chicago, Evanston, Homewood/Flossmoor, the La Grange Area, Oak Park/River Forest and Winnetka-Northfield-Kenilworth were treated to an informative, nearly three-hour tour of Stroger Hospital. The tour began with a Power Point presentation clarifying the mission of the Cook County Health and Hospitals System (HHS); the impact of Medicaid expansion on revenue and services; the continuing health and housing needs of many HHS patients; and the services to be offered in the 22,000 square foot, nine-story clinic and administration building currently under construction.

In two groups, led by HHS Communications Director Caryn Stancik and Media Director Alix Normanton, we visited a medical/surgical unit; the now nearly deserted "bus station-like" Fantus outpatient clinic, due to close in October; the ER; the trauma center, treating life-threatening afflictions, where specialists must be available to meet every critical need; the outpatient pharmacy; and central registration. At the end of the tour, we viewed the ongoing construction of the nine-story clinic and administration building.

My own observations:

- Stroger Hospital is CLEAN! Floors were gleaming, no dirt or litter to be seen anywhere.
- Staff are considerate and quiet; the hospital is not noisy.
- The outpatient pharmacy uses large boxlike robots to package meds, which are then sorted into bins for each patient and distributed by number as patients appear to collect them, filling 1.9 million prescriptions annually.
- Dr. Shadur in the ER helped us understand how patients are "triaged" according to severity and need for care. He emphasized that, with 300 patients per day, the unit is considered among the most "desirable" for fellows and interns due to the severity and diversity of afflictions. Translators are available to assist in many languages.
- The trauma unit serves 500 patients per month, and treats 900 gunshot wounds annually. The chaplain spoke movingly of the many complex needs of many trauma unit patients, requiring intervention on many levels for healing.
- The tour was well-organized and professional with no glitches; staff were prepared to speak with us and answer our questions.
- At the end I asked Caryn if HHS might consider a tour of Provident Hospital and an ACHN clinic. (Oak Forest is due to be downsized into an ACHN clinic next year, so would not need to be included.) Caryn hesitated due to transportation issues if more than one location is involved, but said a tour of Provident could be arranged.

- Submitted by Linda Christianson