

Lost & Found

When we talk about leadership, we speak of the qualities that inspire others, clarify direction for them and appreciate them for a job well done.

But leadership is not defined by a title. It's about doing your job in a way that inspires others to say, "That's who I want to be."

And sometimes that means being prepared to dig through 20 bags of dirty linens.

When Joel Reed, Assistant Nurse Manager, Emergency Department, Egleston, learned that a patient's mother lost an antique diamond wedding ring in his ED, he knew he could count on co-workers to help with the search.

The patient's mother did not realize she'd lost the ring until hours after the family left the room and the hospital. This tired woman, who had been focusing all of her emotional energy on her child in the hospital, now had to worry about a missing family heirloom.

"When Joel first told me about the missing ring situation, I thought 'He's really thinking outside the box on this one,'" said Laura Jones, Manager, ED. "He notified all the right people, contacted the right teams and still did a great job managing the ED, which happened to be very busy at that time."

Luckily, the patient's room remained unoccupied. "It's unusual for that room to be empty for so long, but we hadn't had a patient in Room 11 since the family with the missing ring," said Joel. Joel's good luck was just beginning. "I called

Environmental Services to help me search, and Dorothy Smith came right away."

Dorothy, Environmental Services Technician, quickly began a thorough search of the room. In the crevices of the bed. Behind door frames. Under furniture. No ring. But she didn't just go back and say, "Sorry, I can't find it." She thought through what could happen to the ring, based on what she knew about our clean-up procedures.

"I've lost things before. I know how stressful it can be, and I knew the mother would be missing that ring," said Dorothy.

With the search of the room complete and still no ring, Dorothy—with the help of Michele Creedon, Environmental Services Supervisor—turned to the room that houses the ED's dirty linens.

"I thought it was a longshot," said Michele. "There were at least 20 bags in there, each full of soiled linens from bed sheets to gowns to towels. We were prepared to go through every last one of them."

Dorothy tore into the first of the dirty linen bags and, with a few hearty shakes of bed sheets, out tumbled the ring. She brought the ring to Joel, who then had the honor of calling the patient's father to share the good news.

"That's a phone call I'll never forget," said Joel.

A phone call Joel was able to make thanks to his co-workers' willingness to take the lead. ☎

6:55p.m.

Panicked patient family reports lost heirloom

7:05p.m.

Emergency department enlists help from Environmental Services

7:10p.m.

Search of patient's exam room begins

8:05p.m.

Search through bags of dirty linens begins

8:20p.m.

Joel calls patient family with good news