

## Continuing the Legacy of Member Leadership

If only Helen Gillespie could see the Georgia Hospital Association now. Hired as the association's first-full time employee in 1952 with an annual salary of \$4,200, Ms. Gillespie, for the next five years, was the GHA staff. She worked on issues like abolishing sales tax for non-profit hospitals, nursing licensure and indigent care. I would imagine she was GHA's president, government relations director, financial analyst and public relations director all rolled into one person.

What a difference 53 years make. Today, GHA is the professional home to more than 50 employees in its parent office and about 20 employees in its affiliate organizations, Health Care Insurance Resources (HCIR) and Allied Claims. Over the years, GHA has evolved from a one-person shop to a one-stop shopping venue for Georgia hospitals and health systems offering services from the traditional association fare such as advocacy and education to newer value-added features such as patient safety education, teleconference services, group purchasing and insurance products. As a long-time employee of one hospital, I know that GHA's overall value to us has grown as the external challenges continue to mount.

But GHA's value to its members is not determined by the *quantity* of people who are on staff there – it's the *quality* of people. As your chairman in 2004, I've had the opportunity to spend a lot of time "backstage" at GHA and get to know a lot of the people who put so much into serving Georgia hospitals and health systems. What I have found is that like Helen

Gillespie, today's GHA employees are driven by a desire that goes way beyond working a 9-5 schedule and collecting a paycheck — they are truly passionate about protecting and preserving hospitals. The mixture of passion and amazing professional competence continues to make GHA one of the shining stars among hospital associations nationwide.

In this season of thanks, I would encourage the entire GHA membership to extend appreciation to GHA President Joe Parker and his excellent staff for their continued service and dedication to Georgia hospitals and health systems. Even in years where our association is not as successful on the legislative front as members would have hoped, I've never met a Georgia hospital executive who didn't think that he/she was receiving enough value in return for their GHA dues dollars. In this high-stakes legislative arena that hospitals are forced to operate in, we are blessed to be represented by so many competent, passionate men and women who believe in what we do and sacrifice so much to help us.

It'd be easy to look at the past 75 years of GHA and credit the staff for the association's longevity and continued success. But remember, it took 23 years before GHA had its first staff member and more than 30 years before it had its own office. Like any association, the heart and soul of GHA has been and always will be its members.

In 1929, during a time when hospital officials throughout the state were struggling with how to address a growing indigent care burden (some things never change), it was the men and women on the front lines of patient care who decided that hospitals needed a single, unified voice to communicate with state and federal lawmakers. It was the realization that the sum of the hospital community could be much stronger than any single one of

its parts.

Much has changed since that cold February day in 1929 in Macon when the

Georgia Hospital Association was officially formed. But the one constant in the proud history of our association is the strength and unity of its hospital members. GHA, like any successful association, has always been member-driven.

Thanks to the great leaders of yesteryear

like Dan Barker, Bill Pinkston and Damon King and to those who lead the way today like Larry Sanders, John Henry and Ken Beverly, GHA remains one of the most respected, trusted voices in the state and federal advocacy arena. That's why it's so important that today's Georgia hospital executives continue to build on that legacy of leadership and invest their time and resources into the Georgia Hospital Association.

With only days remaining from the 2005 Georgia General Assembly, I don't have to tell you what's at stake for Georgia hospitals and health systems. For some GHA members, it's a truly a matter of survival.

In 2005, let's convene under the big tent that is the Georgia Hospital Association and fight like crazy to protect Medicaid and pass meaningful tort reform. Let's be there to provide leadership and support for our dedicated GHA staff and make a bold statement to our elected officials that the Georgia hospital community is united like never before.

Indeed, we're fortunate to have one of the best hospital association staffs in the country working for us. But they can't be effective without us. More than ever, they need our support and participation in 2005.

Despite limited time and resources, in our own institutions, we have to be committed to do our part. Can we count on you? I look forward to seeing you under the Gold Dome during the coming months.

**Don Faulk, Jr.**  
2004 GHA Chairman

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