



Participants find Board Mentor Program valuable



Jeanette Mills, board mentor, meets board member Judge Walter Williams

Following initiation of the Board Mentor Program last October, staff designated as “board mentors” were paired with St. Barnabas board members. Eric Boston, St. Barnabas president and CEO, encouraged mentors to arrange a meeting with their respective board member and share their stories.

Jeanette Mills, central supply, and board member Judge Walter Williams met in February; both said they learned much from their encounter.

“I didn’t understand the challenges central supply faces every day,” said Judge Williams. “When you have these many residents with their numerous needs, you have to stay on top of things. Jeanette really knows what she’s doing.”

Ms. Mills said this was the first time she’s actually talked with the Judge.

“Of course, I’d heard lots of stories – how busy he was, how involved in the community, his work in the legal system. He’s been very productive!”

The interchange revealed some interesting facts. For instance, Judge Williams learned that Ms. Mills is not only responsible for central supply, but that she’s also a CNA who helps out on the floors as time permits.

“I was impressed with her willingness to do whatever needs to be done,” he said. “As board members, it’s important to know that the staff is willing to go the extra mile.”

For her part, Ms. Mills said she hadn’t realized Judge Williams’ long connection to St. Barnabas. While sitting on the bench, he would send offenders to perform community service at St. Barnabas as part of their

sentence. Though he’s now retired, he continues to serve on many boards and is active in his church.

During a recent board mentor meeting, other staff compared notes on the interactions with their own board members.

“Keith Sanford met me at the apartments for a complete tour,” said Mark Chalker, maintenance director. An important aspect of Mark’s responsibility is nursing along the old heating equipment, and the St. Barnabas finance committee chair had a first-hand look at this daunting challenge.

“Mr. Sanford had never been in the basement before,” said Mark. “He was amazed that the original equipment was still working, way beyond the useful life expected.”

Dr. Dennis Stohler, St. Barnabas board chair, spent four hours with his board mentor, Activities Director Melinda Kinsey. He helped with Bingo, did assessments, and talked with individual residents.

“Dr. Stohler’s conversations with residents revealed information I didn’t know about some of them,” said Ms. Kinsey. “We can gain a fresh perspective of our environment from these kinds of interactions.”

Just so, say both Ms. Mills and Judge Williams: The Board Mentor Program contributes to a

greater understanding and appreciation of roles. Judge Williams pointed out that board members often make decisions affecting staff members. Without knowing just what it is they do, it’s hard to gauge the likely effect those decisions will have on staff ability to do their jobs.

“Even as a practicing judge, I would visit the clerk’s office once a week because I wanted to know the implications my decisions would have on administrative functions,” he said. “It’s very important to have an open flow of communication.”

Ms. Mills said she couldn’t agree more.

“There’s usually not enough communication in organizations,” she said. “It’s always a good idea to hear others’ perspectives, because we can learn so much from each other.”

