

Behind the Cables

IS Team Building Connections

Ferl Howard

When Memorial Regional and Richmond Community launched ConnectCare in April 2010, Ferl Howard was there — for nearly three days straight. Changes of clothes were delivered to him.

Still, the Director of Information Services, End User Computing for Bon Secours Richmond, was thrilled at how well the launch went, given that he had been working since 2007 preparing Bon Secours Richmond for that day.

“It was so exciting,” Howard recalled. “You just wanted to be a part of Bon Secours’ journey into the electronic medical record age.”

Now, almost a year later as St. Francis Medical Center gets ready for its go-live, Howard said that he and his team are even more prepared and just as excited.

“Every lesson we’ve learned at Memorial Regional, Richmond Community, and St. Mary’s hospitals will be applied to St. Francis and hopefully we’ll meet all of the desired outcomes,” he said.

The Information Services team has grown from about 30 employees and contractors to more than 70 as the needs for the hospitals have grown exponentially. The team helped ensure all end user hardware, network infrastructure and information security was implemented using the industry’s best standards. That included the addition of 150 miles of cable, 800 workstations and more than 1,400 laptops in the last 18 months. To handle the additional equipment and the technical demands of an EMR (electronic medical record), End User Support staff is available around the clock at all acute facilities.

Howard, who came from a banking background, has found a completely different environment in health care.

“It’s 24/7. Downtimes are restricted to a two-hour window monthly, so the changes you make must be well planned and coordinated.”

Despite the challenges, Howard loves it. “The moment I came to health care I said, ‘I can’t believe I ever did anything else.’ This is so rewarding.”

St. Francis Medical Center is scheduled for its ConnectCare go-live on March 27. For the latest news on ConnectCare at St. Francis and more, be sure to visit www.connectcarebsv.com.

