



*Pursuing  
Professional  
Passions*



MeritCare  
Health System  
[meritcare.com](http://meritcare.com)

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2002-2003

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MeritCare

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Annual Report

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# Pursuing Professional Passions

## Many paths, one purpose

One of the most rewarding parts of my job is visiting with individuals who love their work — people who know their professional passions and live them fully. Alive with enthusiasm, they can't wait to tell you what they do, why it brings them joy, how it fits and why it matters. Their eyes sparkle as they talk.

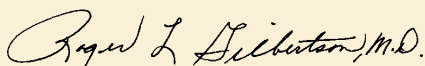
As you'll see in the stories in this annual report, career choices can take many paths, but all start with a spark. It may be an influential person, an engaging class, a childhood memory, an unforgettable experience or a natural talent. Indeed, the sources that spark an individual's dedication to their chosen life's work can be many.

At MeritCare, we set the stage for individual strengths and professional zeal to shine through supportive teams, mentoring and a positive work environment. Even more, we encourage individuals' passions for making a positive difference to unite for one collective purpose: To improve the health and quality of life of the people we serve. That's the MeritCare mission — our shared passion — and it's reflected in our daily work.

A mission that encompasses so much could not be achieved without

the combined efforts of our 6,100 associates, in more than 30 locations. Whether they're caring for patients, preparing meal trays, maintaining records or keeping the grounds safe, we applaud those who take pride in what they do and do the best job possible. No matter where they work, we deeply appreciate their dedication and professionalism. They light the way to a bright, healthy future for all of us.

Sincerely,



**Roger L. Gilbertson, M.D.**  
President and C.E.O.  
MeritCare Health System



### 2002-2003 BOARD OF TRUSTEES AND CORPORATE OFFICERS

Seated left to right: Ben Anvary, Secretary; Jane Sinner, Chairperson; Tom Dawson, Vice Chair  
Standing left to right: Pamela Anderson; David Glatt, M.D.; Wayne Gadberry, Treasurer;  
Patrick Benedict; Ellen-Earle Chaffee, Ph.D.; Jack Reynolds, Ph.D.; Nancy Jordheim;  
Steffen Christensen, M.D.; Roger Gilbertson, M.D., President & C.E.O.; Steven Clemenson, M.D.;  
John Jambois; Tim Monson, M.D.;  
Not pictured: Roxanne Newman, M.D.



**2002-2003  
MeritCare Health System  
Administrative Staff**

ROGER GILBERTSON, M.D. PRESIDENT/C.E.O.	GREGORY POST, M.D. SENIOR EXECUTIVE
JOHN DOHERTY SENIOR EXECUTIVE/C.F.O.	EVELYN QUIGLEY SENIOR EXECUTIVE/ CHIEF NURSING OFFICER
JOAN JUSTESEN SENIOR EXECUTIVE	PAUL RICHARD SENIOR EXECUTIVE/ GENERAL LEGAL COUNSEL
BRUCE PITTS, M.D. SENIOR EXECUTIVE	

## An Entire Network of Care

### MeritCare Medical Group

- Largest group practice in North Dakota
- 361 physicians<sup>1</sup>
- 23 other medical providers<sup>2</sup>
- 99 mid-level providers<sup>3</sup>
- 72 specialty areas of medicine
- Over 1.5 million patient visits per year
- Over 87,000 Walk-In Clinic visits (Adult & Pediatric)
- 11 locations in Fargo/Moorhead/West Fargo
- 14 regional locations in Minnesota
- 8 regional locations in North Dakota
- Service area that spans 250 miles west to east; from Jamestown, N.D. to Bemidji, Minn.

1 - Includes MD, DO, OD, DDS and DPM

2 - Includes DC, PhD, PsyD, EdD and AuD

3 - Includes PA and NP

### One Hospital, Two Locations MeritCare Medical Center & MeritCare South University

- Largest hospital in North Dakota – 583 beds at two locations
- 20,750 admissions per year

- 41,700 yearly visits to the Emergency Center
- 2,079 births
- 16,400 surgical cases per year

### MeritCare Medical Center

- 380 adult and pediatric licensed beds
  - Includes a 56-bed Children's hospital consisting of a 24-bed level III neonatal intensive care unit, 8-bed pediatric intensive care unit and 22 general pediatric beds.
  - Excludes 40 additional bassinets

### MeritCare South University

- 203 beds
  - 33 transitional care beds
  - 27 rehabilitation beds
  - 38 psychiatric beds including eating disorders



# MeritCare Health System and Subsidiaries Financial Summary

For the years ended June 30, 2003 and June 30, 2002 (in thousands)

Assets	2003	2002
Current Assets	\$160,396	\$145,355
Property, Plant and Equipment	193,793	180,538
Restricted and Other Assets	157,320	152,886
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>\$511,509</b>	<b>\$478,779</b>

## Liabilities and Net Assets

Current Liabilities	\$78,754	\$61,624
Long-term Debt and Deferred Liabilities	167,565	165,700
<b>Total Liabilities</b>	<b>246,319</b>	<b>227,324</b>
Net Assets	265,190	251,455
<b>Total Liabilities and Net Assets</b>	<b>\$511,509</b>	<b>\$478,779</b>

## Revenues

Net Revenues from Patients	\$497,633	\$435,528
Non-operating and Other Operating Sources	34,381	30,160
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>\$532,014</b>	<b>\$465,688</b>

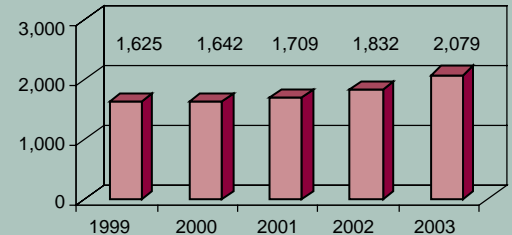
## Expenses

Salaries and Benefits	\$321,240	\$282,161
Supplies, Purchased Services and Other	154,412	123,181
Depreciation, Occupancy and Rentals	44,189	41,115
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$519,841</b>	<b>\$446,457</b>
Revenue in Excess of Expenses	\$12,173	\$19,231
Changes in Unrealized Investment Gains (Losses)	576	(194)
Transfers from (to) Restricted Assets and Other	501	(34)
<b>Increase in Unrestricted Net Assets</b>	<b>\$13,250</b>	<b>\$19,003</b>

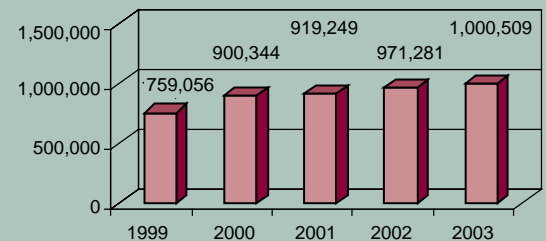
## Hospital Admissions



## Hospital Births

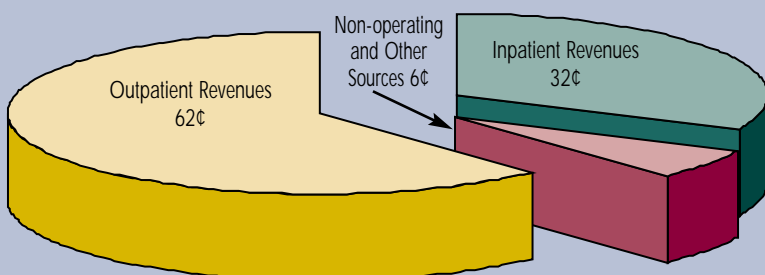


## Clinic Appointments



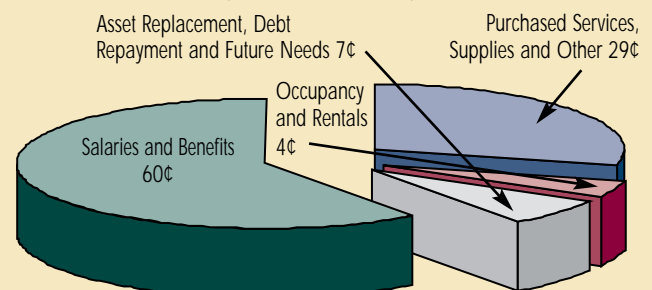
## Where We Receive Our Funds

(in terms of \$1.00)



## How We Put Our Funds To Use

(in terms of \$1.00)



# *Pursuing Professional Passions*

*What's your professional passion? If you're lucky enough to know, you realize that a professional passion can mean the difference between time meaningfully spent and drudgery. The difference between thriving and merely surviving. Every day, people from all walks pursue their individual professional passions at MeritCare. We hope you enjoy a few of the many stories of we have to share.*

## **Julie Blehm, MD**

### ***Looking deeper; asking why***

When Dr. Julie Blehm was in her early 20s, she got her first taste of what it's like to be a frustrated patient. Diagnosed with diabetes a year earlier and troubled by recent weight loss, she visited a doctor. The doctor had a quick answer: noncompliance with diet. "It upset me because I knew what I'd been eating and I knew this couldn't be right," she says. "My mother wisely advised me to go see another doctor. That's when I learned the real reason I'd been having trouble. I'd just passed the 'honeymoon phase' (an early phase in diabetes when everything seems to go well), and I needed my insulin increased."

The first doctor's unwillingness to look deeper had a profound effect on Dr. Blehm, prompting her to ask "why" many times over the next several years. One of her biggest "whys" relates to multi-specialty healthcare systems. "Why aren't they easier for patients? They're set up to be, yet occasionally they're not," says Dr. Blehm. "We frustrate patients, and too often they end up lacking the understanding they need to keep their care on course." Her knowledge comes from a variety of experiences. As a grown daughter, she helped her seriously ill father. In her 10 years as clinical coordinator of the North Dakota Health Care Review, she untangled complicated Medicare problems. Today at MeritCare she leads the Internal Medicine Resident Clinic, caring for patients and guiding residents.

Recently she's taken her passion to the next level. Along with oncologist Dr. John Leitch and internal medicine specialist Dr. Mary Jo Lewis, Dr. Blehm co-leads the MeritCare Coordination of Care Committee. "We're working hard to make the process of receiving care easier for patients," says Dr. Blehm. "It's a problem at healthcare systems nationwide, and if anyone can make it better, MeritCare can."



## Sue Hollister, clinical lab scientist

### *Accurately informing*

A microbiology class sparked Sue Hollister's passion. "That class sold me," says Sue. "I knew from that day on that I wanted to work in a medical lab." Today she not only works as a clinical lab scientist at MeritCare, but she serves as president of the North Dakota Society of Clinical Laboratory Scientists and teaches at North Dakota State University in Fargo. "I've been really lucky because ever since I joined MeritCare nine years ago, my managers here have supported me in my professional involvement and have encouraged me to be as active as I want to be," she says.

In all three roles, Sue's passion for accuracy plays an important part. At MeritCare, it translates to taking all the steps necessary to ensure reliable test results. In the state professional society, it means educating the public and various government entities about medical laboratory issues. At NDSU, it means introducing hematology and laboratory principles and practices to prospective clinical lab scientists and others.

Though lab professionals stay behind the scenes, Sue knows the work they do matters and it demands precision. "The specimen must be right, the equipment must be functioning well and the test must be done correctly. All these things contribute to the quality of the results provided to doctors, and it can make such a difference in the diagnosis," she says. She also has her own personal technique for keeping quality at the forefront. "In every test I do, I imagine the specimen is my child's or my husband's. I would want everything to be exactly right," she says. "That's what everybody deserves."



## Bev Carpenter, registrar

### *Joy in connecting*

Maybe it's growing up in a family of nine children, or being a mother to two teenage boys, or the sticky notes she puts behind her desk to help her remember familiar patients' names. Whatever the reason, Bev Carpenter is an expert in human relations — and loves it. "I take great joy in connecting with people," she says.

A Patient Services registrar for seven years at MeritCare Broadway clinic, Bev never tires of helping one person after the next, all day long. She answers patients' questions, guides lost-looking people to their appointments, even answers questions from other MeritCare associates. She's earned a reputation as a person who deals well with all patients, even those who are angry. "I try to stay calm, listen with complete attention, and let the person know I'll do all I can to help," she says. "In my 10 years of working at MeritCare, I've always tried to treat people as I want to be treated, and that rule has never let me down. It helps to smile and remain pleasant, too."

And those sticky notes? "On days when I know certain patients will come by, I put little notes behind my desk so I can make sure to greet them by name," she says. "You should see their faces light up. It's worth the extra effort."

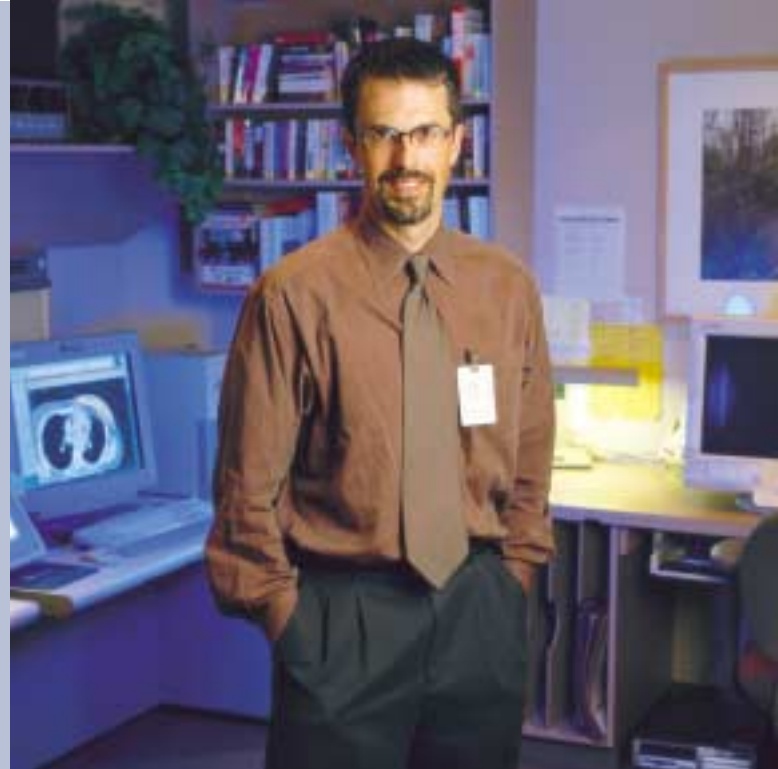
## John Pfund, radiation physicist

### *Advancing technology wisely*

The wise use of technology relies on good judgment. "It's really important to choose the right time to enter into a new technology," says radiation physicist John Pfund, who joined MeritCare Roger Maris Cancer Center 12 years ago. "You don't want to be too far out there, but you don't want to fall behind either. You want the 'latest and greatest,' but you always need to keep in mind what's best for the patient."

Today, as radiation physics manager and one of three MeritCare radiation physicists, John thrives on the broad spectrum his work entails. He reviews patients' computerized radiation plans, educates himself on the latest in technology and helps determine the best possible radiation-related purchases for the Cancer Center. He also troubleshoots problems, trains staff and serves as radiation safety officer at MeritCare. "I work with great people, and that's a big reason we're able to advance as we have," he says. IMRT — Intensity Modulated Radiation Therapy — is a recent example. A highly refined method of delivering radiation to a tumor, IMRT decreases the risk of damage to surrounding areas. For patients who receive radiation treatments to the head or neck, it can mean the difference between salivary glands that still function versus constant dry mouth due to radiation damage. "That's a real quality-of-life difference," John says.

Though John spends much of his time behind the scenes on a computer, he never forgets the heart of what he does. A painting of a farm scene in his hometown of Ada, Minn., graces the wall just to the left of his computer. "That painting is a great reminder for me," he says. "It reminds me that what we do here is all about people."



## Suzanne Sheldon, RN

### *A calm, quiet presence*

Professional passion has a voice all its own, and sometimes it's a soft voice of few words. "Suzanne was a calm, quiet, reassuring presence," says one family member whose loved one was hospitalized on MeritCare Hospital's Cardiac Intensive Care Unit following heart surgery. "She never talked a lot, but you knew she was extremely competent and conscientious. She really helped us through a tough time."

For seven years, Suzanne Sheldon has provided competent, conscientious, compassionate care for people who have undergone heart surgery or suffered serious heart problems. An advocate for patients, she's an anchor for family members, too, updating them and answering their questions. "Even though I've always wanted to be a nurse, this is an area I never imagined myself working in. But now that I do, I am really glad I'm here. The Cardiac ICU team really works well together," says Suzanne.

And the reason she's drawn to nursing? In her quiet, understated way, she explains it like this: "I just want to make a difference."

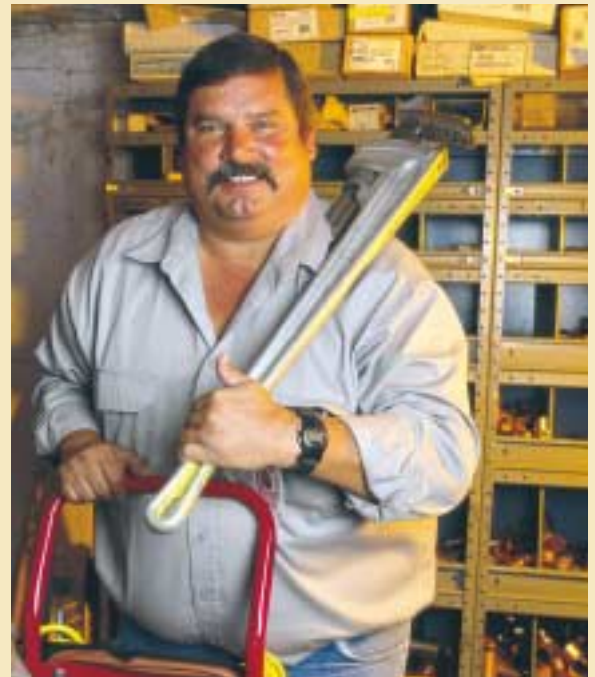
## Jeff Huseby, journeyman plumber

### *A love for fixing*

Even as a boy growing up in Casselton, N.D., Jeff Huseby loved to fix things. "When my parents would give me a gift, the first thing I'd do is take it apart so I could fix it," says Jeff with a chuckle. Today his love for fixing helps ensure MeritCare facilities operate smoothly and efficiently. A journeyman plumber, Jeff joined MeritCare 13 years ago, following 15 years of work with contractors.

"Plumbing is something I enjoy doing — something I'm good at," he says. "I take pride in the work I do here, and the work is well-appreciated." A big reason Jeff's work is appreciated is he's considerate, going out of his way to fix problems quickly and with as little inconvenience to others as possible. "The first thing I do on any project is figure out how it's going to affect patients and staff, then I let the charge nurse know," he says.

And when it comes to the actual fix, he has strong ideas. "First, I don't believe in cobbling things together. Even if people don't know the difference, that's not the right way to fix a problem," he says. "Basically I have two rules: You gotta get it done, and you gotta get it done right."



## Gail Aaby, RN

### *"A great day for the race"*

A simple saying of her dad's sticks with Gail Aaby, MeritCare Mayville. "When we were kids and Dad would come in and wake us up in the morning, he'd always say: 'It's time to rise and shine because it's a great day for the race.' 'What race?' we'd ask. And his answer was always the same: 'the human race,'" she recalls. "Dad's passion for life, for people and for their stories was such an influence on me. Now I view healthcare as a terrific way to make it a better day for the human race."

For 25 years, Gail has worked as a nurse in Mayville, attending the births of babies who today are all grown up and having babies of their own. "You really see the circle of life," she says. As lead nurse for the past eight years, Gail continues to provide patient care, but also serves as a resource to other nurses at MeritCare in Mayville, Hillsboro and Halstad.

"People often ask me how I can do this kind of work — work that to others may seem very challenging, but to me the answer is easy," she says. "There's always something I can do to help, whether it's putting on a bandage to stop the bleeding or helping a doctor fix a broken bone or comforting people when they get a difficult diagnosis. In a small community, everybody is like family and it's a privilege to be part of it."



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