

University Health Care System, Augusta, GA

Quality is Key

University Hospital is one of the oldest and most prestigious hospitals in Georgia. With quality as its focus, the hospital has earned the coveted 'Magnet Designation' by the American Nursing Credentialing Center, ranking its care among the best in the nation. In 1995, when University Health Care System was seeking a partner to provide key support services: House-keeping, and Plant Operations and Maintenance, it turned to Crothall Services Group, whose 'best-in-class' reputation matched the hospital's own.



Over ten years later, University Health Care System's relationship with Crothall has expanded to include Laundry Processing and Linen Distribution services, and the hospital has transferred most of the support services employees to the Crothall pay-

roll. "Crothall brought savings, efficiency and quality," says Kyle Howell, University Hospital's long-serving Vice President of Support and Facilities Services. "They have taken care of our support needs, allowing us to focus on caring for our patients and growing our business."

Developing Existing Talent

In fact, Crothall's Plant Operations and Maintenance program, under the leadership of Director Dennis Primrose, has provided close collaborative support on the many expansion and modernization projects the hospital has undertaken. Dennis is especially effective in this role, for prior to Crothall's arrival at University in 1995, Dennis had already served for ten years with the hospital as the POM Department Director. "We are delighted that Dennis stayed," says Kyle Howell. "He embraced the change, welcomed Crothall, learned the company's systems, re-emerged as Director, and with support from Crothall has continued to grow. Dennis is a unique asset to both University and Crothall—he is loyal to both, understands both, and integrates the resources and skills of both organizations to effect the best results for both. It's a win."

For some in-house Directors, the arrival of a contract service firm would be most unwelcome. Dennis Primrose, immediately recognizing the value Crothall could bring to both him and the hospital, embraced the company. He voluntarily served a

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year as assistant to Crothall's initial POM Director, and then stepped forward once he had absorbed the company's systems and programs. "I supported the change," recalls Dennis. "Crothall has fantastic operating systems, cutting edge technology, learning-friendly educational programs, and technical resources that we needed. Together, we have built a far better program—for our patients, for our staff, and for me. The company has embraced me, provided training and career mentoring, and then helped me develop my team here at University."

Increased Efficiency, Workload, and Savings

Dennis Primrose has been effective in his role, leading a team of nearly four dozen professionals who provide an array of plant services—engineering, maintenance, capital replacements, minor renovations, biomedical engineering, grounds, and energy management—for 1.5 million square feet on two separate campuses. The large, modern University Health Care campus requires capable personnel and support systems. It can be a challenge for an outside vendor to achieve a thorough enough understanding of such a complex facility to be effective,

but Crothall has been up to the task. Continues Kyle Howell, "They are more productive and effective than ever. Our productivity rate is now in VHA's top tenth percentile; more efficient staffing in POM alone has saved us \$250,000 annually."

Even as the number of engineers has declined over the years as operational efficiencies have been gained, the POM staff has taken on additional responsibilities. For example, they were able to eliminate an expensive biomedical contract, bringing the work in-house, and saving another \$100,000. And Dennis Primrose proudly reports that his team registers an enviable 95% on-time completion rate on the nearly 1,900 work orders processed monthly. Concludes Kyle Howell, "The quality of their work is first-class. Our campus's buildings and grounds are magnificently maintained; the engineering behind the walls is superbly tuned; and we have consistently impressed our Joint Commission surveyors. Crothall fully integrated into our facility, taking our staff onto their payroll and even our manager as their own. We have combined the best of in-house and contracting to produce the best results for our hospital and patients."

SPRIT OF PARTNERSHIP



❖ University's Kyle Howell (left) and Crothall's Dennis Primrose (right) inspect the hospital's boiler room. The two men—and the two organizations—have forged a close and effective partnership, resulting in savings, quality, and rising patient satisfaction

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