

Real Best Practice

Champions and Legends: *The People Who Live the Values*

The art of storytelling is as old as civilization itself. Since the beginning of mankind, people have invented, handed down, and embellished the stories that make us who we are. We have used this powerful art form to tell about events and define the values of our families, communities, and cultures.

But perhaps one of the most significant values of storytelling today is sustaining an organizational culture. Strategic stories not only engage employees in a shared vision, but transmit the cultural beliefs and values of the healthcare entity. In addition, telling stories of service and operational excellence communicates expected behaviors. They reinforce the mission, vision and values and help the workforce “connect the dots.”

One of the ways that Baptist Health Care recognizes those who go above and way beyond to deliver extraordinary service is to bestow the title of Legend or Champion. Without prompting from a leader, these individuals took on projects, missions, and labors of love to help a patient, client, co-worker, or the community. As often as these acts were directly connected with employees’ work, there were just as many instances that took place outside of the healthcare setting.

The stories of these coworkers are shared and celebrated throughout the organization because they represent the very best of Baptist. These individuals are honored as Legends and Champions to inspire and motivate their team members. In addition, their stories of compassion, kindness, generosity, and/or hard work are shared with stakeholders, including board members, the community, and physicians.

The Process

Champions are selected throughout the year simply by being nominated by one who believes that person to be deserving of the honor. Leaders share the Champion’s story at departmental leader meetings and at monthly board meetings. The heart-warming accounts detail above-and-beyond behaviors. The Champion receives a framed plaque; his or her picture and story also is posted on the Champion Wall.

Each year administrators select Legends from the pool of Champions – the “best of the best.” For those hospitals in the healthcare system that do not use the Champion program, administrators work with department heads to select a worthy employee. At the system’s larger facilities, two Legends typically are selected. And when warranted, some hospitals have been permitted to choose more than the allotted number of representatives.

Legends are recognized at the annual meeting of the Baptist Health Care Board of Directors. The honorees are encouraged to bring a guest to the celebration (usually a family member attends.) All are transported via limousine to the meeting where they dine with their administrators and the board members. A video presentation showcases each Legend’s story. The Legends receive a copy of the video, a pin, a framed plaque, and Legends booklets. Announcing Legends in this venue allows the community board members to hear and see how the Baptist culture lives and breathes and transcends a written mission statement. The acknowledgement is a great source of pride for the Legends and their guests, leaders, and team members.

Legends’ stories and photographs are published in a booklet, several copies of which are presented to each Legend. The booklets also are given to the board members and plenty are made available to each facility. Color flyers with photo, name, and facility of all Legends are circulated throughout the organization for communication boards. Placards are sent to each facility with their respective Legends photo and story for display in public areas. In addition, local newspapers often cover the Legends’ celebration.

Best Practice Outcome

Champions and Legends perform an extraordinary service or deed purposefully, but without expectation of recognition or reward. Yet they are honored and deservedly so for their low-key dedication to making a difference in someone’s life. They represent the very best of Baptist Health Care through their commitment to living one or more of the organization’s Values, whether it be integrity, vision, innovation, superior service, stewardship or team work. Their behavior serves as a manifest source of inspiration to others in the organization and the community.