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Health Care District CEO Darcy J. Davis shadows Lakeside's Annette Rivera



Annette Rivera, EMT-P, Lakeside Medical Center Emergency Room

As I do with everyone when I start a “Walk a Mile” experience, I asked a few background questions about Annette. One of the more powerful stories she shared was her experience as a paramedic in New York City on September 11, 2001.

She was there. She heard Mayor Giuliani’s call for all off-duty first responders to report to the city to assist with the casualties. Without hesitation, she responded.

She isn’t easily moved, I could tell, but this had a very powerful impact on her professionally and personally. I could see it in her face and in the way she told the story. She was immediately moved to “hero status” in my book. TOP

Front Lines

At Lakeside, the first person that someone will encounter when they walk in to the Emergency Room is Annette, or one of her counterparts. Not all hospitals use the same staffing model, whereby a trained clinical professional is the first one to see the patient.

Sometimes the registration person is more clerical in nature, but the model at Lakeside ensures that someone who comes in is immediately screened for severity of symptoms before any additional demographic or financial information is gathered.

This is a staffing model that shows the commitment to putting the patient's well-being as the highest priority.



Psychological First Aid

I sat with Annette and patiently awaited our first encounter. The first gentleman came in with a physical issue that he wanted to get checked out. When Annette immediately started speaking to him in Spanish, it dawned on me that language could be a huge barrier when someone is seeking emergency treatment.

I could see that the gentleman was immediately put at ease by her fluency in his language. He was not confident in his English and clearly did not have all the English words he needed to describe his ailment. He was relieved and comforted by her right away.

She asked a number of questions and determined that his condition was not life-threatening, so she began the registration process. Once complete, she assigned him to a room in the back.

We escorted him to this room and she took his vitals, all the while continuing to ask probing questions that would assist the provider with his diagnosis and treatment. She briefed the attending nurse and we were quickly out of his room and back in the front awaiting the arrival of the next individual.

Multitasking

The next patient that arrived appeared to be in labor, which even I, as a non-clinical person could tell was the case. When that circumstance occurs, Annette immediately notifies the OB department, puts the patient in a wheelchair and off we go to the second floor.

We made a little small talk in the elevator, mostly niceties, since the assessment of the patient takes place by the OB experts. In this case also

[TOP](#)

though, Annette's positive demeanor was clearly comforting to this mom-to-be as she was obviously anxious about what was to come next.

We weren't gone too long, but I wondered what happens if someone arrives to check in to the emergency room while Annette was taking vitals or escorting someone to the care providers. In those cases, which happen occasionally, the security guards who sit behind the desk with her will cover and get the patient to complete a demographics form with their chief complaint. Once Annette returns she will address those patients right away.

Just doing her job

When I arrived to begin my shadowing experience, Scott Chase, the ER Manager, pulled me aside to make sure I knew that Annette had recently been recognized as the Employee of the Month for Lakeside.

It seems that a visitor who was waiting for someone in the waiting room began to choke. Annette sprang into action and performed the Heimlich maneuver, dislodging the candy from the individual's throat.

Once the visitor was clearly recovered from the incident, Annette went back to work. She had just saved a life, but for her it is just another day at Lakeside.

Annette loves her job and considers it part of her duty to serve. Working in Belle Glade is much different than her days in New York. At Lakeside she has a family in both the employees and patients.



Richard Roche, VP & Chief Administrative Officer/Hospital Administrator presents Annette Rivera, EMT-P with Lakeside Medical Center's "April 2016 Employee of the Month" award.

Making a lasting impression

As I was preparing to end my experience with Annette, I asked her what her most memorable encounter was. Surprisingly, it was not a situation that occurred at Lakeside.

She proceeded to tell me about a day when she ran a personal errand on her lunch break to a local business. She took some of her watches to have the batteries replaced. The owner of the store immediately

[TOP](#)

recognized her from a visit he had made to the Lakeside ER.

He had been treated so well by her, and Annette had made such a positive impression on him, that he did not charge her for the work on her items. He expressed his gratitude for her service at Lakeside and for the important work she does in the Glades community.

Annette was appreciative of his generosity and truly unaware of the impact she had made, while just doing her job. Annette is one of many at Lakeside and across the District who make a lasting difference in people's lives every day.

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