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Cultivating Purpose & Meaning in Health Care Employees: A Case Study of Spirituality Integrated Within an Organization

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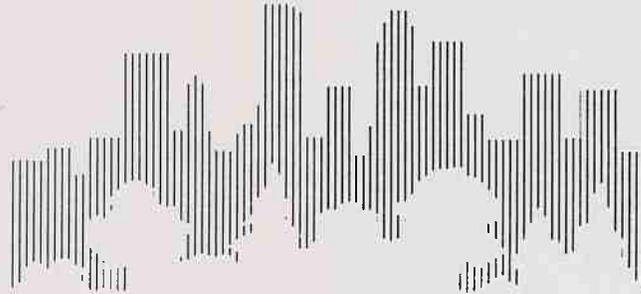
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**MASTER OF ARTS IN LEADERSHIP
THESIS**

Denise Cleveland

**Cultivating Purpose & Meaning in Health Care
Employees: A Case Study of Spirituality Integrated
within an Organization**

2002

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**Cultivating Purpose & Meaning in Health Care Employees:
A Case Study of Spirituality Integrated within an Organization**

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**Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirement for the degree of
Master of Arts in Leadership**

**AUGSBURG COLLEGE
MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA**

2002

MASTER OF ARTS IN LEADERSHIP
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MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA

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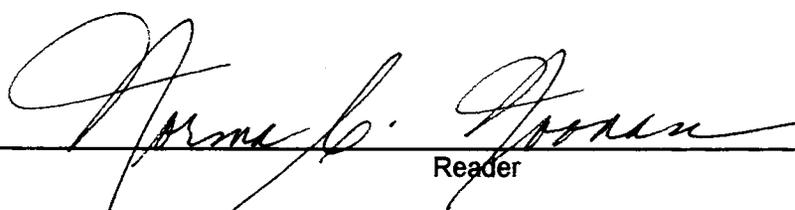
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ABSTRACT

**CULTIVATING PURPOSE AND MEANING IN HEALTH CARE EMPLOYEES:
A CASE STUDY OF SPIRITUALITY INTEGRATED WITHIN AN ORGANIZATION**

DENISE CLEVELAND

2002

Non-thesis (ML 597) Project

This case study explores the impact of spirituality between an organization and employee. The literature supports a growing interest among leaders in the idea of integrating spirituality into the workplace. Many leaders are recognizing the role of spirituality in fostering the human spirit to create relationships and systems that allow people to feel valued and supported. These values contribute to a sense of community within the work environment. This study seeks to understand more about the attributes, characteristics and outcomes of an organization that integrates spirituality throughout its organizational culture.

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Introduction

September 11, 2001--a date that will forever be etched into the minds of many around the world as a date when terror, tragedy, and the unthinkable occurred to create new chaos and uncertainty in the United States of America. In the days and weeks following the events of September 11, 2001, one thing in particular stood out among the many messages and images present. Various aspects of spirituality were publicly demonstrated and supported in the gathering of diverse public officials and religious leaders. It was remarkable to witness the public outpouring of compassion and support that created connections to the human spirit. Kathleen Krebs (2001) writes, "It has been predicted that our greatest advances in the next decade will not come from technology but from our deeper understanding of what it means to be a human, spiritual being" (p. 55). George Gallup Jr. (quoted by Krebs, 2001) reinforced this view at a conference on Spirituality and Healing in Medicine at Harvard's Mind/Body Medicine Institute, "If the focus on the 20th century has been on *outer* space, the focus of the 21st century may well be on the *inner* space. We are entering a new era of discovery--not of the world around us, but of the world within" (p. 55). The events of September 11, 2001 have caused people to look within their heart, mind and spirit bringing to the surface the search for human purpose and meaning, as well as the need for human connection and community.

Before the events of September 11, 2001, a groundswell of interest was present and growing in the area of spirituality as individuals collectively began to search for deeper purpose and meaning in their work environments. This study will explore spirituality in the work environment in what is being referred to as the "...newest paradigm that's floating onto the business horizon" (Laabs, 1995, p. 60). HR Magazine (August 1998, p. 46) states, "Yesterday's business motto was 'lean and mean.' Today's business motto is 'lean and meaningful' " (Ashmos & Duchon, 2000, p. 134). Beginning by defining spirituality and discussing the origins of this growing phenomenon in business, this paper will compare it to other leadership practices such as empowerment, stewardship and the practice of servant leadership. The literature review will explore why spirituality in the workplace is gaining the attention of leaders and identify some outcomes that have resulted from this connection. The core of this paper will present the findings

of a qualitative case study that has been approved by the Augsburg College Institutional Review Board: IRB # 2001-41-2. The study presents an example of spirituality in an organization that reflects the characteristics described in the literature review. This study attempts to understand the impact and practical manifestations of employees within a spiritually integrated organization and the impact of leadership in contributing to organizational culture.

The focus of study is a healthcare organization. Healthcare organizations currently struggle with recruitment and retention in most of the staffing areas such as nursing, dietary and environmental services. Will an organizational focus on spirituality make any difference in these personnel issues? Are employees more committed and respectful of one another? Is a sense of community and teamwork evident within the organizational culture? These questions and many others are explored in this case study. This qualitative study will collect data through interviews and observations of employees and leaders within a healthcare organization. The intent of the study is to learn about the attributes and potential outcomes of an organization that integrates spirituality within the work environment.

Defining Spirituality

The literature agrees on two things related to the definition of spirituality. First, spirituality is not the same as religion. Second, spirituality is not universally defined (Konz & Ryan, 1999, p. 201). In most written sources on this topic, a general framework for spirituality is presented to provide common understanding since this word evokes meaning from individual perception and experience. If we are to discuss spirituality in the workplace, some common understanding of what this is and is not is the essential and relevant starting point for any organization. Craigie (1998) states, "It is a challenge, in both secular and religious organizations, to define the word in ways that will be meaningful and also widely interpretable and acceptable" (p. 26).

Three important themes seem to emerge in establishing the common ground of spirituality-- that of wholeness, meaning and purpose, and connectedness. Some examples will demonstrate these themes. Graber and Johnson (2001) state, "Spirituality implies an inner search for

meaning or fulfillment that may be undertaken by anyone, regardless of religion" (p. 40). Krebs (2001) states, "Spirituality is referred to as the practices, beliefs, and attitudes that an individual might have toward God or a higher power, or supernatural forces in the universe. It is our search for 'wholeness' that gives meaning and purpose to our existence" (p. 56). Dossey, Keegan, and Guzzetta (2000) define spirituality in this way: "The essence of our being, which permeates our living and infuses our unfolding awareness of who and what we are, our purpose in being, and our inner resources; and shares our life journey" (p. 91).

In a study by Mitroff and Denton (1999, Sloan Management Review) where senior executives, human resource executives and managers were interviewed, spirituality was defined as "the basic feeling of being connected with one's complete self, others, and the entire universe" (p. 83). In Mitroff and Denton's book, *A spiritual audit of corporate America: A hard look at spirituality, religion, and values in the workplace*, they write, "Contrary to conventional wisdom, the respondents in our study did not have widely varying definitions of spirituality--most had a definite notion of what it is and what it is not. There was nearly unanimous agreement on the definition of spirituality and on the importance it plays in people's lives. In brief, according to our respondents, spirituality is the basic desire to find ultimate meaning and purpose in one's life and to live an integrated life" (p. xv). Their study appears to reflect the views of spirituality by most leaders. Mitroff and Denton's (1999) respondents more specifically defined spirituality in the following ways: in contrast to conventional religion, spirituality is not formal, structured, or organized, spirituality is not denominational, it is inclusive, universal, timeless, the ultimate source and provider of meaning and purpose in our lives, it is the deep feeling of the interconnectedness of everything, it is integrally connected to inner peace and calm, and provides an inexhaustible source of faith and willpower (p. 23-25). The participants in Mitroff and Denton's study reflect the common framework of spirituality as it is discussed in the literature relating to the workplace.

Despite some common understandings of what spirituality is and is not, some may argue it remains too vague a topic for discussion and it cannot be measured like most other tasks in the workplace. Certainly, the spirituality at work movement asks more questions than it answers. Shelly Paul, spiritual formation manager for World Vision International in Monrovia, California

summarizes well why spirituality lacks a universal definition, "The dominant culture seems to value what can be counted. If it cannot be categorized, systematized and counted, then it does not have value. Perhaps spiritual development is an area where we need to leave space for ambiguity and agree that spirituality can't be talked about in the same way we talk about other elements of the workplace. If we try to squeeze spirituality into our existing molds to validate it, we may squeeze out the very gifts--including challenging our paradigms--which spirituality in the workplace can give us" (Laabs, 1995, p. 62). Craigie (1998) also agrees with this idea. He states, "It is important to attempt to develop a reasonable common language of spirituality, but not to be too particular or restrictive about what spirituality and spiritual well-being mean. People need to define these concepts in a meaningful way for themselves.... Defining spirituality may be less important than experiencing it" (p. 27). Defining spirituality in the workplace is not concrete or specific; however the common understandings presented here are sufficient as a starting point. Part of the nature of spirituality is to be open to the richness of diverse definitions and perspectives.

Literature Review

Origins of Spirituality in the Work Place

"The intersection of spirituality with business leadership is currently the most published new topic in business school literature," states Andre Delbecq, Professor of organizational change management at Santa Clara University's Leavey School of Business (Leigh-Taylor, 2000, p. 20). "Spirituality in the workplace is exploding," declares Laura Nash, a senior research fellow at Harvard Business School (Gunther, 2001, p. 58). "Spirituality is the philosophy of choice for managing 21st Century health care institutions," writes Leland Kaiser (2000, p. 9). There is little doubt of the growing interest and attention given to spirituality in the work place by both leaders in business and healthcare. What has contributed to this discussion? Many factors are cited, however the literature seems to support three possible explanations for the origins of spirituality in

the workplace: a hunger for community, a fragmentation of self with a hunger for unity and wholeness, and a dispirited workforce. The common theme surrounding each of these factors is the search for purpose and meaning in our life.

A Hunger for Community

According to Brandt (1996, p. 83), one of the first persons given credit for introducing the idea of a spiritual community into the workplace was Jay A. Conger in his book, *Spirit at work* (1994). The purpose of this book is the discussion of two fundamental changes--"the ascendancy of the workplace as a primary community and our growing inability to satisfy needs for connection and contribution" (p. 3). Conger (1994) writes, "The civic community that once nourished our needs for contribution has fallen prey to cynicism and apathy and to lives that are too busy" (p. 2). Conger continues, "Yet our needs and longings for spirituality, for community, and for contribution have not diminished. Instead they have, for most of us, simply slid into neglect. This neglect is in turn creating a growing hunger" (p. 2).

In 1996, Michael Novak wrote a thought-provoking book, *Business as a calling*. Novak emphasizes how critical this connection between business, ethics and virtues is to the long-term success of the organization. Novak writes, "Business has a vested interest in virtue. It cannot go forward with realism, courage, wisdom, honesty, and integrity without a highly motivated and virtuous work community.... A nation's moral culture is even more fundamental than its physical ecology" (p. 115). Bolman & Deal (1995) agree with this point. In their book, *Leading with soul: An uncommon journey of spirit*, they write, "To summon spirit and care for the soul, we must relearn ancient lessons. There is truth beyond rationality. The bottom line is not the ultimate criterion.... Spiritual bankruptcy ultimately leads to economic failure. The deeper cost is a world where everything has a function yet nothing has any meaning" (p. 146). Richard Barrett, business leader who writes and leads discussions on spirituality in the workplace states, "If we're ever going to live a sustainable life on this planet, it's the workplace that's going to create that, because nation states are no longer in control of the world economy. Business is in control. And

unless we can shift the business world to a new value system, we've lost it" (Laabs, 1995, p. 64). In the sense that morals derive from religious and spiritual beliefs; there is a strong connection between the role of spirituality and leadership in the work environment.

If Conger is correct in his argument that work is becoming a sense of community for more individuals, it makes sense that leaders should establish a community of higher principles and practices, as this will further hasten success in business. These works and others (Covey, 1991, *Principle-centered leadership*, and O'Toole, 1996 *Leading change: The argument for values-based leadership*) begin to establish the groundwork as to why it is beneficial for organizations to create relationships and systems that allow people to feel valued and supported. These values contribute to a sense of community within the work environment. An environment that contributes to personal growth and creativity will enhance commitment to the mission of the organization. It appears to be in the best long-term interest of organizations to integrate spirituality into the organizational culture.

A Fragmentation of Self with a Hunger for Unity and Wholeness

Charles Handy in his book, *The hungry spirit: Beyond capitalism: A quest for purpose in the modern world* (1998) gets at the essence of this search for meaning when he writes the following: "A headstone in the graveyard that records the millions made by the body buried there impresses none of the passers-by. It is what was done with the millions that counts. The imprint we leave on the world is the only form of temporary immortality of which we can be sure. In the end, that is where we find our true identity" (p. 120). A desire to make an impact or a difference in the world gets at the other factor of why spirituality in the workplace is growing. It seems there is a collective awareness and search for more meaning from life that just "putting time" in at work (Butts, 1999, p. 328, Konz & Ryan, 1999, p. 200). This awareness stems from the desire to integrate our whole self into our daily work. Craig Neal, founder and president of the Heartland Institute, an organization that fosters social and spiritual transformation in the workplace believes this movement originates in the awareness and search for something larger than self. He states,

"People now want to find purpose to their lives in general and their work in particular, and there is a growing awareness that what we do all day has some bearing on ourselves as individuals, on our communities, and on the world" (Leigh, 1997, p. 28).

Another book that reinforces this view is Let Davidson's book, *Wisdom at work: The awakening of consciousness in the workplace* (1998). Davidson proposes that the biggest challenge we each face is the integration of wisdom and work, the spiritual and the practical. If these fragments can be united in some manner, then Davidson suggests a meaningful and fulfilled life is possible. Alford and Naughton reinforce this message in their book, *Managing as if faith mattered* (2001) when they state, "People do not want more separation and more privatization, and consequently less meaning; rather they aspire to lives whole and clear of even a hint of fruitless division, of a 'split personality' " (p. 13). This fragmentation of work from self is widely noted in the literature under the theme, "...people bring their whole selves to work, not just their minds and bodies" (Voci, 2000, p. 12).

Andre Delbecq says the frequent response executives provide regarding their interest in spirituality is the lack of integration between work and self. He states, "The most prevalent reason [for interest] is a daily feeling of conflict between the inner journey and the professional role. The participants report that a lack of integration has started to bog them down and impair their effectiveness" (Leigh-Taylor, 2000, p. 21). Graber and Johnson (2001) also support this theme that one's spiritual growth need not be separate from one's work, "Because we spend the majority of our time in organizations, we are of necessity challenged to build a bridge between the 'personal, subjective, and even unconscious elements of individual experience' and the rationality, efficiency, and personal sacrifice demanded by organizations" (p. 40). In their book (1999), Mitroff and Denton demonstrate support through the results of their study. They write, "Being forced to split off fundamental parts of oneself at work, being asked to give more of oneself without having one's whole self acknowledged in return, being asked to care for the soul and its concerns on one's own rather than on company time--these and similar laments were refrains we often heard throughout our research for this book" (p. 4-5).

Each of these examples supports the inner discontent that is now being discussed in the workplace. The literature indicates a growing awareness that an individual's actions flow from an inner spirituality. Perhaps recognition is emerging that spirituality gets at the core of sustainable change. Stephen Covey, well known author in the study of leadership, is not surprised by the interest in spirituality and does not see this as another trend to accomplish change. He says, "Something very, very profound is going on. It is a true metamorphosis inside our society. I haven't any question about it at all. People have had it with giving their whole lives to a business. I'm sensing a lot of imbalance, an awareness of a hollowness in people's lives" (Lee & Zemke, 1993, p. 24). Out of this discontent in the American workplace, perhaps we are witnessing the slow and gradual awareness that human connection and community are once again essential to meaningful lives.

The focus of the literature is to examine what opportunities and outcomes are possible. Ashmos and Duchon (2000, p. 137) and Mohamed et al (2001, p. 644) describe a lack of study in the organizational science literature regarding this focus. Study needs to support what is intuitively recognized about the power of spirituality in the workplace. Harrington (1998) writes simply of the potential power of wholeness, "If we clearly recognize that the place where work happens exists in order to enhance and enrich the place where life happens, then our ethical decisions will be made within an appropriate context" (p. 7). Parker Palmer (2000) also summarizes the importance of unity and wholeness, "When we are obsessed with bottom lines and productivity, with efficiency of time and motion, with the rational relation of means and ends, with projecting reasonable goals and making a beeline toward them, it seems unlikely that our work will ever bear full fruit, unlikely that we will ever know the fullness of spring in our lives" (p. 105). This hunger for unity and wholeness has played a role in the origins and growth of spirituality in the workplace. This "hunger" is not openly discussed in workplaces, yet seems to lie at the heart of this phenomenon that researchers must continue to study.

A Dispirited Workforce

The third factor contributing to the origin of spirituality in the workplace is what I call a dispirited workforce that has been influenced by technology, global competition, downsizing, and reengineering (Ashmos & Duchon, 2000; Brandt, 1996; Cash & Gray, 2000; Lee & Zemke, 1993). "Managers face the dilemma of being forced by cost-cutting pressures to let employees go and yet accomplish the same amount of work in an insecure, unstable environment...The resultant fear, frustration, anger, and isolation that many workers experience have led significant numbers to no longer trust business, feel as though they have no anchor, and believe employers treat them as objects expendable in the process of maximizing profits" (Cash & Gray, 2000, p. 124). All these pressures contributed to an insecure work environment causing people to raise the question, "There must be more than this." Margaret Wheatley, management consultant believes the current interest in spirituality is the reaction to extreme materialism during the 1980's. "The search for the spiritual was a search for answers to the question, 'How do I connect through my life with something greater than my life?'" (Giganti, 1995, p. 31).

One other important point is noted in an article in *Fortune*. Gunther (2001) says, "The spiritual revival in the workplace reflects, in part, a broader religious reawakening in America...The Princeton Religious Research index, which has tracked the strength of organized religion in America since World War II, reports a sharp increase in religious beliefs and practices since the mid-1990s. When the Gallup poll asked Americans in 1999 if they felt a need to experience spiritual growth, 78% said yes, up from 20% in 1994..." (p. 59). Clearly, there is a growing interest in spirituality that is beginning to cross the unwritten lines of the workplace.

Another reason for increased interest in spirituality has been the recent research on the connection between spirituality and positive health outcomes (Graber & Johnson, 2001). Many healthcare organizations are attempting to weave spirituality into clinical care with an emphasis on mind, body and spirit (Daaleman & VandeCreek, 2000). As spirituality becomes integrated into clinical care, a growing number of leaders are looking to spirituality for other reasons than its connection to positive health (Agnew, 1999; Bazan & Dwyer, 1998; Galen & West, 1995;

O'Donohue, 1998). The importance of integrating spirituality into the culture of an organization is gaining recognition and acceptance for many positive reasons.

Many factors contribute to the origins and current growth of spirituality in the workplace. These include a hunger for community in the workplace, a hunger for unity and wholeness within self, and the previously described factors contributing to a dispirited workforce. Leaders are recognizing these factors and more studies are needed to build evidence of the positive outcomes related to a spiritually integrated organization. Understanding the forces that contribute to the current interest in spirituality is important in trying to discuss and develop organizational principles and practices.

Comparisons to Current Leadership Practices

Empowerment

The empowerment movement in leadership is one effort to share decision making, responsibility and accountability among all levels within an organization. Peter Block (1993) summarizes this practice well in his book, *Stewardship: Choosing service over self-interest* when he states, "Empowerment embodies the belief that the answer to the latest crisis lies within each of us and therefore we all buckle up for adventure. Empowerment bets that people at our own level or below will know best how to organize to save a dollar, serve a customer, and get it right the first time" (p. 6-7). When employees are trusted and valued to make decisions with integrity, will this contribute to a sense of purpose and community within the organization? How is empowerment different from spirituality?

Randall White at the Center for Creative Leadership says, "In leadership training, and in the most progressive organizations, the emphasis has shifted from looking at knowledge, skills and behaviors to examining values, attitudes and beliefs" (Lee & Zemke, 1993, p. 24). In this way empowerment and spirituality are connected. They are differentiated in that spirituality takes empowerment to another level. Christopher Neck, a management professor at Virginia Tech

University says, "This [Spirituality] is an extension of the participatory management movement in the 1980's, which evolved into the empowerment trend of the 1990's. This is not something that came out of the blue. This is the next level" (Palmer, J., 2001, p. 16). Laabs (1995) writes, "While empowerment has been a popular business practice, and has for the most part been successful in bringing more shared power into organizations, applying such spiritual principles as trust and cooperation to the workplace takes empowerment to another level" (p. 66). "Spirituality goes beyond empowerment. It's not just giving people decision-making authority; it's allowing people to live their values at work," says Pattakos, president of Renaissance Business Associates which is a nonprofit, international, educational network with the goal of valuing and enhancing integrity and ethics in the workplace (Laabs, 1995, p. 66). Spirituality is a leadership movement that cannot be ignored, nor is it likely a short-lived phenomenon. Gunther (2001) writes, "...the core principles of spirituality--the belief that all individuals have dignity, that we are all interconnected, and that a transcendent being or force defines purpose in human affairs--dovetail with contemporary management thinking about what drives great companies" (p. 70). In the future, spirituality will no longer be a taboo subject. Spirituality will be integrated in leadership because higher performing organizations are created.

Stewardship

Stewardship is another leadership principle advocated by Peter Block (1993). Block believes stewardship is an important part of empowerment (Lee & Zemke, 1993). How is stewardship different from empowerment and spirituality? Actually, they are connected in the emphasis on serving others. Empowerment is the process of allowing others decision-making responsibilities. Block (1993) describes stewardship in this way: "Stewardship begins with the willingness to be accountable for some larger body than ourselves--an organization, a community. Stewardship springs from a set of beliefs about reforming organizations that affirms our choice for service over the pursuit of self-interest. When we choose service over self-interest, we say we are willing to

be deeply accountable without choosing to control the world around us. It requires a level of trust that we are not used to holding" (p. 6).

Stewardship is part of spirituality. Block states, "And in letting caretaking and control go, we hold on to the spiritual meaning of stewardship: to honor what has been given to us, to use power with a sense of grace, and to pursue purposes that transcend short-term self-interest" (p. 22). On an even deeper level, spirituality gives the sense of trust and connection to something larger than self and in this way, may actually provide the foundation for which stewardship, empowerment and servant leadership may evolve in practice. Most literature now supports the growing recognition that spirituality is the cornerstone or foundation of effective leadership behavior (Mohamed, Hassan & Wisnieski (2001). One organization that particularly advocates this is the Heartland Institute. They believe, "The convergence of values-centered, spirit-infused ideas to improve the business environment and the efforts to have business take on more responsibility for nurturing the human soul are becoming known as the 'conscious business movement' www.heartlandinstitute.com. They also write, "The conscious business movement aligns the best interests of companies with the spirits of employees, making it possible to bring one's real self into the work environment" (Neal, P., 2001). Empowerment, stewardship, and servant leadership are all leadership principles that are part of the deeper movement of spirituality, or rephrased as the conscious business movement.

Servant Leadership

Servant leadership is a model based on a spiritual foundation that is finding a home in the secular world of the corporation. Servant leadership has been a growing leadership model since Robert Greenleaf developed this philosophy in his book, *Servant-Leadership* (1977). Lee & Zemke (1993) summarize well why servant leadership is a growing model of leadership. "Servant leadership emphasizes service to others, a wholistic approach to work, personal development and shared decision making--characteristics that place it squarely in the mainstream of conventional talk about empowerment, total quality and participative management" (p. 21).

Greenleaf identified ten characteristics of the servant-leader as summarized in Spears (1998): listening, empathy, healing, awareness, persuasion, conceptualization, foresight, stewardship, commitment to the growth of people, and building community (p. 4-6). The characteristics of a servant-leader seem to be what is "hungered" for in creating community in the workplace.

Is it possible that more servant leaders are needed to further expand and develop spirituality in the workplace? This is an area for more research. Are most spiritually integrated organizations following the model of servant leadership? The servant leadership model may be what is effective in creating a moral culture where a sense of community, personal growth and creativity are present thereby contributing to the long-term success of an organization. James Conley and Graya Wagner-March write a chapter in Spears (1998) titled *The integration of business ethics and spirituality in the workplace* where they discuss the belief that organizations of the future will need a spiritual center. "Two of the essential duties of this center would be: 1) to infuse all organizational members with the vitality, enthusiasm, and spirit needed to acquire true excellence, and 2) to give every organizational member a true sense of meaning and purpose" (p. 254). They also believe servant leadership is the model to accomplish these goals. They state, "We contend that spirituality and ethics complement each other and that the spirituality movement could produce a dynamic synergistic effect within the organization when combined with the organization's concern for ethical performance. In a spiritually based organization, the leader's role is to be servant-led" (p. 255). Servant leadership is a growing movement and only recently is the power of servant leadership gaining recognition as necessary and effective to leadership. Greenleaf was visionary for the time he wrote his ideas. The following demonstrates how his belief is reinforced in the current writings on spirituality in the workplace in that the desire to serve others is at the heart of a better society.

I believe that caring for persons, the more able and the less able serving each other, is what makes a good society. Most caring was once person to person. Now much of it is mediated through institutions--often large, powerful, impersonal; not always competent; sometimes corrupt. If a better society is to be built, one more just and more caring and providing opportunity for people to grow, the most effective and economical way, while supportive of the social order, is to raise the performance as servant of as many institutions as possible by new voluntary regenerative forces initiated within them by committed individuals: *servants* (Fraker & Spears, p. 51).

Servant leadership is an enduring powerful model that has the potential to create significant and sustaining changes. It is a model that provides the foundation for effective leadership in a world that needs a renewed sense of human connection and community.

Potential Outcomes from a Spiritually Integrated Workplace

With all the relentless change that is prevalent in an organization, many CEOs and owners might think it is impractical to cultivate a culture of trust and spirit. In addition, as discussed previously, spirituality cannot be measured as directly affecting the bottom line. What motivation is there for leaders to integrate spirituality into the workplace? Many advocates would point to an indirect or intangible impact on the bottom line resulting from greater productivity and profitability.

Some organizations are beginning to describe the outcomes they are witnessing as a result of a spiritually focused environment. Leigh (1997) writes, "Values-oriented companies (such as Ceridian and Land O'Lakes) can point to real dollars-and-cents results, along with payoffs in productivity and in product and service quality" (p. 29). Lawrence Perlman, CEO of Minneapolis-based Ceridian Corporation, is an advocate of the spirituality movement. He says, "Ultimately, the combination of head and heart will be a competitive advantage" (Galen & West, 1995, p. 82). In addition, Perlman states, "The real difference between the companies that compete and win, and the ones that do not, will be the quality of the workplace" (Leigh, 1997, p. 28). For Ceridian, the quality of the workplace has impacted the bottom line with positive employee morale, as well as positive recruitment and retention efforts. Fel-Pro, an automotive-product manufacturer, has a strong 25-year history as a values-oriented company. They have demonstrated an annual turnover rate of 1.6 percent compared to the national average of nine percent (Leigh, 1997, p. 30). Rebecca Pribus, vice president of HR for World Vision describes the positive outcomes they have seen. "Allowing employees time to enhance their own spiritual quests benefits the company in many ways. It increases employees' energy levels. They seem to have a more positive attitude and a higher creativity level. We also have seen dramatic changes in their mental, emotional and physical health" (Laabs, 1995, p. 69). Galen & West (1995, p. 82) also identify the

companies that are attempting to focus on spirituality in the hope of demonstrating positive outcomes: Boeing, AT&T, Lotus Development, and Medtronic. Richard Barrett summarizes why spirituality is advantageous to organizations: "As you implement these new values leaving behind competition, promoting cooperation, making people equal and allowing them to live in a fear-free environment, you'll engage not only people's intuition and creativity; you'll also engage their ownership of the organization" (Laabs, 1995, p. 65).

Some business organizations are demonstrating positive outcomes, however there are few outcomes of a spiritually integrated work environment in the healthcare industry. I am particularly interested in the outcome of employee retention and my study will look at this within one healthcare organization. My experience in working with others in healthcare has been a high level of burnout, turnover and cynicism. Andre Delbecq writes, "Unless a leader feels his or her organizational role is a 'calling,' then the burdens of leadership become separated from the spiritual journey, which contributes to burnout and cynicism" (Leigh-Taylor, 2000, p. 22). I wonder if this is not only true for leaders, but for all employees within an organization. Graber and Johnson (2001) ask the question, "Could spirituality be a potential, motivating factor for healthcare employees--one that helps them find meaning in their jobs and communicate with and provide the best care for the sick and disabled? The literature on this question is meager; on the organizational/managerial level, it is virtually nonexistent" (p. 41). Mohamed, Hassan and Wisniewski (2001) also agree in their literature review that research on the impact of spirituality in the workplace has been lacking. They state, "The management field and organizations may pay a heavy price for its oversight of spirituality. First, the frustration of spiritually hungry employees with their non-spiritual or anti-spiritual workplace will increase. Consequently, organizations that do allow for spirituality may develop a competitive advantage over their rivals. Second, management theories and models that ignore the spiritual dimension will remain incomplete or incorrect." The outcomes of a spiritually integrated healthcare organization are not known and this is opportunity for further study.

Case Study

The interest for this study evolved out of recent research supporting the influence of spirituality on improved health outcomes. In the past ten years, there have been numerous books and a limited number of empirical studies demonstrating a positive connection between spirituality and health outcomes. As a healthcare professional, these findings connect to my interest in health and wellness and lead to my further interest in exploring spirituality in the workplace—specifically in a healthcare organization. If spirituality may influence health, what implications are possible for employees within the workplace?

Currently the healthcare industry struggles with issues such as quality, innovation and customer service, similar to those of other industries. A particular barrier to innovative change exists in the long-term care industry in the extensive regulatory environment. This is the second most regulated industry in the United States (nuclear energy is first) (Gilkey, 1999, p. 201). "Even though the existing regulatory environment may seem to preclude such innovation, a true fundamental change in the nature of leadership can and should overcome this barrier. Certainly, at the individual facility level, there are enormous opportunities for empowering staff to solve problems and respond to customer needs and expectations creatively" (Gilkey, 1999, p. 201). Within long-term care, there has been an increased focus on spirituality of the resident (Kimble, et al., 1995, Kavanaugh, 1997), however I believe there is also opportunity for leadership to create a culture of human connection and community that appears lacking. In Ian Morrison's book, *Health care in the new millennium* (2000) he writes, "It is clear that there is a leadership crisis in health care. The crisis extends from the level of values and ethics to the politics and practices of individual institutions" (p. 34).

In my work within various long-term care facilities, I have observed the struggle that administrators face with quality, service, regulations, and the significant staffing issues of recruitment and retention. These issues contribute to an overall culture more focused on finances than people, which is ironic given that the intent is care for the elderly. The practical matter of financial viability cannot be ignored; however the emphasis can be so strong that

financial decisions and concerns can overshadow the value of human care, compassion, and relationships. I share these observations to increase understanding of why the facility chosen for this case study is unique and worth further study. My study will demonstrate how exceptional the entire operation and mission of this facility are within the healthcare industry. The leadership is based on the integrity, care and compassion for others. Other healthcare facilities may also describe these values in their mission statements, however as you will see in this study, this organization's mission is clearly evident and practiced in the every day moments of patient care and staff interaction. In describing the leadership and staff of this organization, my hope is not just to present an isolated exception to most other healthcare facilities, but instead to present the aspects and characteristics that are possible for any facility to consider. I hope that looking beyond the "normal" and "usual" ways of providing care gives insight and hope that creative change is possible.

The facility chosen for this case study is a skilled nursing facility that is licensed for 40 beds. It is surveyed for compliance with state and federal regulations like all other facilities, however this is essentially where the similarities with other skilled nursing facilities end. The facility's mission is to "nurse incurable cancer patients providing them with a free home where they can spend their final days in dignity" (organizational brochure). The founder of this organization made a conscious choice that all care is free. From this vision, a philosophy emerged regarding finances. To provide care and compassion to all, money was not accepted from members of patients' families to eliminate the influence that money might have on level of care. In addition, money was not accepted from family in an effort to reduce additional burden on the family and most importantly, to allow the patient to feel totally free, relaxed and not worried about this issue. A conscious decision emerged which is that fundraising or other outward expressions of monetary requests would not be undertaken. The organizational history (over one hundred years now) is rich in describing the numerous struggles and accomplishments that occurred in meeting this mission (Joseph, M., 1965). The organization is run by a religious community that has succeeded in growing to seven homes in six states. How these facilities function without appeals

for money will be presented shortly, however this is one of the many significant differences from other facilities.

My interest in this facility began through the connection of my grandparents. My grandfather chose this facility for my grandmother when she had incurable cancer and then several months later, my grandfather was accepted here with incurable cancer. I share this connection as a source of potential bias in my analysis due to my strong feelings of the wonderful care and compassion my grandparents received. Although my grandparents were in this facility several years ago, I distinctly remember the positive feelings I experienced at every visit. This led me to go back and request permission for study to learn more about what it is that makes this facility so different and exceptional from other skilled nursing facilities in which I have worked.

Procedure

The process of this qualitative research study is data collection through observation of the public behavior of employees and leaders within the organization as well as interviews of employees and leaders. After permission for the study was discussed and obtained from the Superior/Director of Nurses, this study proceeded upon approval from the Institutional Review Board of Augsburg College. The letters describing the study along with a postcard for staff to check off their choice for participation in the study were provided to the Superior/Director of Nursing (see appendix to review these forms). She distributed the letters, which were in a sealed envelope to all staff¹. Staff identified their choice for participation on the postcard and this was placed in a box for collection later. Then interviews were scheduled through phone calls with each of the staff that agreed to participate in the study. Interviews were conducted individually in a quiet meeting space away from patient care. The script was used for initial contact with the participants to describe the study. The consent form was reviewed with participants and a copy provided to each staff member. Interview questions were then asked and notes recorded as the participant talked; no audiotapes were taken. All interviews were completed during the day and arranged around patient care activity while the participant was working. One participant chose to

come in for the interview during a scheduled day off. The responses followed my questions, however some participants shared more stories and information than others did and some questions were omitted because they were answered in response to previous questions. I found all participants very willing to share their thoughts and the length of the interviews usually surpassed my estimated time frame of fifteen minutes. Twenty to thirty minutes were typical periods for the interviews. The only task participants were asked to do is spend time answering questions in an interview. Interview responses for each question were grouped together to identify patterns and themes. The same process was used with the religious leaders and kept separate from the responses of staff.

Observations were recorded in a notebook. Patients were not the focus of observation within the facility. Staff were observed in public areas such as the activity lounges on each floor or at the nurses station interacting with each other. Observations regarding the physical environment were also noted as well as my personal reactions and feelings about the things I observed. I was present in the facility during days on both weekends and weekdays. No observations were collected during evenings or nights. I walked through the halls of the facility recording observations, and then I sat in a quiet space to expand on what I observed. Due to the small size of the staff, most were familiar with why I was there and what I was doing and this was accepted without questions. When I first came onto the floor, staff would ask if they could help with anything or if they needed to get someone in particular for the interview. All staff were helpful with whatever questions I had.

I chose this organization for study based on my belief that it is an example of a spiritually integrated organization. Due to my previously described personal experience, I also believed the characteristics of a spiritually integrated organization as stated in the literature review would be present in this organizational culture. Spirituality is not a tangible thing to find in an organization. Dehler & Welsch (1994) use this metaphor to describe the presence of spirituality: "But, just as the wind itself cannot be seen, we nonetheless know it exists because it provides a 'vital flame'-- the energy source that creates a wind chime's music" (p. 19). Spirituality in the workplace is felt in the presence of community and interconnectedness, which play an important role in the

purpose and meaning of an individual's life. Leadership creates the culture for a values-based community. As I will describe shortly, from the viewpoint of the staff, a strong community is present. In addition, staff recognizes the influence of leadership in sustaining this values-based community and so I find my beliefs are confirmed that this is a spiritually integrated organization.

The purpose of this study was to learn more about the role that spirituality plays in making connections between the organization and employee. What characteristics and outcomes can be described when an organization integrates spirituality throughout its culture? This research is relevant to understanding the views of those who work in a spiritually integrated organization. It also contributes to the study of leadership in learning more about the influence a leader plays in creating organizational culture. Insights may be revealed about potential outcomes of a spiritually integrated work environment.

Study Findings

Observations

Before I present an analysis of my findings, let me share some observations of the organizational environment. Upon entering the facility, the senses are immediately calmed from the outside busyness of the world with the soft sound of a gurgling fountain, the vision of green plants and fresh flowers everywhere, the soft chimes of a beautiful grandfather clock, the comfortable sofa and coffee table all give one an immediate feeling of welcome in a calming, homelike environment. An immediate welcome is offered along with a "How may I help you?" This reception area overlooks a beautiful outdoor courtyard that is very well maintained. I am aware of an overpowering sense of calm and peace in this space unlike that I have ever experienced in another facility. I am aware that these feelings surface within me at every visit.

As I walk through the facility, this sense of order, calm, and peace are not limited to the reception area, but pervade throughout. The entire facility is amazingly clean, halls are uncluttered and there is a pleasant absence of any smells, an absence of chaos; again,

observations that are unlike any I have seen from the facilities in which I have worked. There are no telephones ringing, unanswered call lights, noise or loud activity. This environment relates to the purpose of the mission--it supports dignity, care and compassion. It feels pleasant--not at all depressing as some may describe a facility where people spend their last days. I reflected upon the words I would use to describe my perceptions: simplicity, peace, calm, order, serenity, beauty, clean, welcoming, quiet, acceptance, peace. The power and influence that this physical environment plays to create a calm, peaceful space cannot be overlooked as a possibility for any facility to consider.

This facility is divided into two floors. One floor may have twenty men and one floor twenty women; however current capacity is twenty-two patients and there is a waiting list for admission. The Sisters do the entire nursing for the women, and this is the number of patients they can support. Each patient room has large windows overlooking the beautiful courtyard or surrounding grounds. There is a large day room on each floor with a large screen television, sofa, table, and outside enclosed patio for those patients who choose to smoke. At the end of each floor is another sitting area where there is a beautiful stained glass window taken from the original building. A chapel is located at the end of the floors and can be accessed through both the first and the second floor. I observed Halloween and Thanksgiving decorations as well as green plants and flowers located throughout the building--even in the stairwells.

After spending some time within this facility, let me share a personal reflection which relates to a theme shared by most staff. As I walked through the beautiful spaces of this facility, I became aware of a pressure I usually feel in my work at other facilities. I usually feel driven by the constraints of time to accomplish a large amount of work in a short period. As a result of this, I have the unconscious practice of walking quickly through the halls of a facility. I have even been told by resident's, "Hey you, slow down." I became aware that suddenly it did not feel right for me to walk quickly. I realized that in my focus on tasks, I was not always taking the time to build relationships in small, simple ways. In this organization, relationship building is valued and gets at the core of what makes this organization unique.

Common themes identified by the staff

Thirty-three staff (includes the Sisters) work in this facility. Eleven staff were interviewed, two long-time volunteers were interviewed and six of the religious leaders (Sisters) were interviewed for a total of nineteen completed interviews. Staff from each department were represented in the interviews with the exception of maintenance. Each individual interviewed was very open and willing to share their thoughts on each question asked. It was easy to feel the commitment each individual felt toward the mission of this organization. Analysis of the staff responses did reveal many common themes. In reviewing these responses, it becomes easy to identify why this is such a unique facility in many, many ways.

The first question asked is the following: *Please describe how your employment at ----- is different from other organizations you have worked in.* This question elicited more lengthy responses than any other question. It is evident that staff feel positive about their working experience here. The responses to this first question repeat in responses to the other questions and emerge as the following common themes. My analysis of these common themes all supports the presence of strong servant leadership. Greenleaf's characteristics of the servant-leader--listening, empathy, healing, awareness, persuasion, conceptualization, foresight, stewardship, commitment to the growth of people, and building community (Spears, 1998, p. 4-6)--all are reflected in the individual responses.

A significant commonality expressed by every staff person interviewed is the description of a family-like atmosphere: "We are all treated like a family here." Certainly the small size of the staff and patients contributes to the family environment where relationships are created and sustained (longevity is significant among staff here and will be discussed later). Small size is a significant factor. Staff are observed to laugh and relate with one another as in a family. Many stated a preference for working in a small facility over larger organizations previously worked in. Building community as expressed by a feeling of family is fostered in several ways. One example are the free home cooked meals provided to all staff working that shift, who all eat together gathered around a large table, like a family.

In addition to feeling like a family as described by many staff, there are literally family connections here. For example, there are husband, wife, mother, daughter, son-in-law and other family connections among staff that make this organization unique. Other healthcare facilities may have policies against hiring family members or discourage the practice. Here, it is accepted and welcomed. The leaders and staff verbalize no problems with family employment practices here. When a job position becomes available a staff person tells their family members, and this is how many job openings are filled. It is rare that advertisement is used to fill a job opening. Word of mouth from current staff members quickly fills positions. In this way, employee recruitment is not a problem, reflecting again the overwhelmingly positive feelings expressed by those interviewed toward this organization.

In addition to the strong perception and presence of family, there is common expression among staff of being treated well. This treatment encompasses many things. Not only does staff recognize that they are treated well with competitive benefits and salary, free uniforms, meals and bonuses, but also express being treated well as a person. Staff felt empowered to make decisions and be supported in those decisions. Trust and respect are two common words that staff used to distinguish this organization from others. Many also felt valued, supported and appreciated by the Sisters. One person stated, "Here they let you do your job--they trust employees to do what they are supposed to do." Another said, "They treat us with fairness and empower us by having the confidence in us that we will do our jobs well. I think people will rise to the occasion when they are expected to do so." In particular, the male nurses shared agreement regarding the autonomy they are given with nursing care. One staff member stated, "The Sisters are not controlling in the way that a nurse case manager would be in other facilities." Another said, "There is no hierarchy here. I feel I can easily affect change by seeking input from our director without going through layers of supervisors to obtain a decision for change." Autonomy, trust, respect and empowerment are terms staff use to describe differences from other facilities.

Listening, empathy and commitment to the growth of people are other characteristics of the servant leader as described by Greenleaf. Staff also express these characteristics as reasons why they feel treated so well here. The literature describes one of the origins of spirituality in the

workplace as a hunger for wholeness that stems from the desire to integrate our whole self into our daily work. Through listening, empathy and commitment to the growth of people, this organization makes people feel whole. By this I mean individuals are valued for their whole self and not just for showing up and doing a job task. Here are some examples described by staff. "There is flexibility here to work with balancing the needs of my family." "We are allowed to be who we each are—each of us come with talents, strengths and weaknesses that complement one another and there is a recognition of that." "There is a strong value of listening here. When conflict or problems arise, things are worked through with listening and then conversation." In an interview with the Director, this view was reinforced in her comment, "We recognize the aspect of the whole person and when problems present in an individual's life, these are not ignored, but listened to. This contributes to a sense of wholeness in how the individual is treated."

The small size of the facility does seem to contribute to a family/community environment, but there is another intent—to maximize the best possible care to all the patients. There is an intentional decision to have a low ratio of nursing staff to patients (four patients per nurse). The intent is to provide excellent care as well as allow time to build meaningful relationships with patients and family members. An example of relationship building was observed on one of my visits when a staff member was playing cribbage with a patient in the activity lounge. Also, when family members came to visit, they were welcomed and made to feel comfortable. I realized that in a hospital or long term care facility, family may feel like an outsider with staff rushing around not explaining what and how things are occurring. This feeling was certainly not demonstrated in staff interactions with family. Every effort is made to reduce any burden on the family, make them feel comfortable and to accept where the family are at with the dying process. The desired goal is for peace with the patient and family. Every function and job purpose is focused on this mission of providing for the comfort and dignity of the patient. Here are some other examples of how this mission is practiced. Food service will attempt to provide whatever food the patient wants. If a special mattress is needed to prevent skin breakdown, it is provided regardless of cost. Individual shopping for patients is done to meet their needs. Nothing is withheld from the needs of patients. Their comfort and dignity are the primary concerns and this is reflected in all

organizational decisions. It is evident from the collective responses of staff that each individual clearly understands, supports and is committed to the mission of this organization. Many stated that this clear mission of "putting patients first," which is really practiced in every function of the organization, is what makes this organization different from others.

Another significant difference from other healthcare facilities is the requirement that no additional medical interventions be initiated. Before a patient is admitted to the facility, the family must decide to stop all medical treatments. One staff member explained it this way, "It is difficult for families to come to this decision, but once they do, the focus changes to the gift of death instead of the focus on the medical." Our medical system is task oriented to promote a return to health and when medical interventions are renounced, or there are no other treatments to provide, the healthcare system essentially ends, with the exception of the hospice movement which is a relatively recent addition to our healthcare system. In the medical system most interactions focus on the "doing" instead of the "connecting." It seems ironic, but the medical system appears to counteract relationship building in healthcare. Physicians are expected to have shorter clinic visits with patients to increase the number of patients seen in a day and this inhibits relationship building with the patient. Acute care is a system of performing a procedure, medical treatment or intervention and then quickly returning the patient home or to another facility for additional care as needed. Long term care is most likely to promote relationship building with the resident, however more and more residents in this system have significant cognitive impairment making meaningful relationships difficult; and secondly, chronic staffing shortages do not allow the time for one on one care and attention that was clearly observed and provided in this study. The 4:1 ratio of patients to nurse here is exceptional and specifically designed to allow relationship building with the patient and family. Herein lies a significant difference from other healthcare facilities. The relationship building not only contributes to patient and family care in a uniquely positive way, but also encourages a sense of community and connection among staff. Staff members clearly recognize and appreciate the presence of this important element in their workplace.

Greenleaf includes stewardship as a characteristic of a servant leader. Stewardship is used in the context of placing service over self-interest. As previously stated, the philosophy of this organization is to accept no money from the patient or family for the care provided and this is a significant example of stewardship. Not having the focus on money or burden of cost allows freedom for the patient and family and this fosters the emergence of peace. The founder of this organization believed that those suffering from the effects of cancer should not be left alone to die. Compassion, comfort and dignity are the right of all regardless of financial status (Joseph, 1965).

What does this philosophy mean for staff? In very practical matters, there is no budget and no budget constraints. The financial pressure to "do more with less" does not exist here unlike other facilities. Several staff members identified the lack of financial pressures as an important difference from other facilities. One staff member commented, "No money exchanges hands here and usually money influences care decisions in some shape or form. However, this is not an issue here." There are no departmental budgets. Although staff are expected to avoid waste, there are no limitations for patient needs. There is a belief that what is needed will be provided and this view reflects back to the founder of this religious order. There are no fundraising or outward appeals for money. Operational costs are met through memorials, estates/wills, other organizations, and the investments of funds.

The important difference in financial operations and philosophy is significant as it relates to staff. A culture is created where the focus is on relationships, human connections; not finances. Money is a powerful influence over patient care and staffing decisions. Economic priorities and decisions have influenced our entire healthcare system. The reality of other healthcare facilities is that the system for operational funding comes largely from third party payers and government funding which is difficult to creatively change. The facility in this study does not have all the paperwork and procedures to follow for reimbursement from insurers and government funding such as Medicare. The financial freedom from government and insurers is a unique characteristic of this facility. Financial aspects also connect to this facility's requirement for no additional medical interventions. Specialized treatments and interventions do play a role in increased

medical costs. When these interventions are absent, allocating limited resources for patient care and staffing become less of an issue.

It is recognized that other facilities are bound to play by the financial decisions of others and the facility in this study also requires funding to remain in operation, however it cannot be emphasized enough what a significant point these financial differences make on patient care and staff. Patients are not deprived of anything that would improve their comfort. Relationships are the focus over finances, and from these relationships the funding will come. Let me share an example that indirectly relates to money through the gift of time. I interviewed two long time volunteers (one volunteer had been helping since the age of seven when he came here with his father). Each volunteer described such positive feelings of family and community that each make it a priority to be here every week. They assist with patient care in the following ways: delivering snacks, passing water and coffee, decorating for the holidays, and visiting with patients. These volunteers are also unique individuals, however they are representatives of other volunteers who choose to provide stewardship of their time largely because of the culture of the organization. Each volunteer described the facility is this way, "I want to be a part of this place and I want my children to be part of this family." This theme was also reiterated frequently throughout staff member's interviews. When relationships are the focus over finances, people will choose to give financial support, will choose to give of their time, and will choose to sustain committed employment.

The last common theme identified from staff interviews is the presence of meaning and purpose in each job. All staff interviewed are here because they want to be here and they believe it is in some way a calling for them to be here. Several staff reflected upon personal circumstances that they believe contributed in some way to why they work here today. There is a sense of job fulfillment present among all staff interviewed unlike that I have witnessed in other facilities. These examples reflect their inner spirituality: "It fulfills that need in me to be part of helping others," "I am where I feel I am supposed to be," "It is a privilege to be here," "They could pay me less and I would still work here." Daaleman and VandeCreek (2000) state, "Terminally ill patients acknowledge a greater spiritual perspective and orientation than both non-

terminally ill hospitalized patients and healthy patients" (p. 2515). Does this factor influence the spirituality of staff? Does this factor contribute to an environment among co-workers of inner awareness of meaning and purpose that relates to their individual life or the collective spirit of the organization? It could be argued that the nature of hospice attracts committed, caring individuals and therefore the staff is an exception rather than the rule for having a committed, caring staff. However, it may be argued that the culture of the organization contributes to the freedom of individual expression of spirituality. The literature supports the idea that purpose and meaning may be derived from work and this may occur whether the work is hospice, manufacturing or any other industry. The organizational culture may play a role in the awareness of personal fulfillment, meaning and purpose. Both the nature of hospice and the organizational culture seem to contribute to the awareness of a strong sense of calling or vocation among staff. Interviewed staff certainly expressed deriving meaning and purpose from their jobs in this organization.

In addition to the common themes identified above, interviewed staff also expressed common agreement that spirituality should play a role in the workplace. Some stated, "In hospice it is critical to have a spiritual component to care." One stated, "It makes sense in the workplace. There is a connection to every human life and we need an element that we are all connected. There needs to be consideration of how human life is affected, a need for the human element that only humans can give in decision making." Another stated, "Yes, when you have this spirituality within yourself, it will naturally show in your actions to others and come out through respect for others." Another commented, "Creating a sense of community, connecting with others, dignity of others—these can all apply to other organizations." The interviewed staff recognize the role spirituality has in creating human connections and relationships both with patients, family and one another. Staff recognize the presence of spirituality as a distinction from other organizations. There is not a conscious effort or program that focuses on spirituality for staff. It is woven into the culture in such a way that the perception is "that is just how it is here." In fact, when the administrator was approached to discuss the possibility of this study, she stated, "I must tell you we do not have a program of spirituality for staff." Basic values such as trust, respect, gratitude, integrity, compassion and honesty are integrated and "lived" on a daily basis.

What outcomes are observed from this spiritually integrated workplace? Through interviews and observation, five outcomes are identified--teamwork, employee retention, longevity, respect and a sense of community/family. When staff members are asked why they choose to continue employment here, teamwork is a common response as well as responses that support the previous themes stated above: "Morale is good," "We are respected," "I like the feeling of family," "It fulfills that need in me to be part of helping others." One commented, "Yes, there is a strong sense of teamwork in all departments. It is amazing to see how the teamwork comes out in ways you don't expect." Observation demonstrated a lack of the attitude, "That is not my job." Teamwork was observed to be exceptional, as was respect for one another with an obvious focus on the needs of the patients. A strong sense of family among staff was evident through the observations of conversations about each other's family. It is likely this feeling of family contributed to the observed teamwork and respect.

Employee retention and longevity are desirable outcomes in most organizations. Kavanaugh (1997) states, "An unfortunate reality of working in nursing homes is the emotional drain of seeing residents pass away, often leading to employee burn-out and high turnover" (p. 30). This is not the case at all in this facility. There is unusually low employee turnover and the longevity of staff is significant. Almost every staff commented on this point. One individual stated, "There is low turnover among staff and the Sisters may have turnover, however the philosophy is constant and there is a continuity of purpose that has survived and sustained 101 years now." One Sister interviewed has worked at six of the seven other facilities in the United States and she said each of the facilities she was at had very low employee turnover, significant longevity among staff and employed family members without problems. Despite a lack of specific numbers for retention and longevity for comparison to other organizations, this remains a significant outcome that is desirable, particularly to most healthcare facilities in the current environment.

Common themes identified by the leaders

Alford and Naughton (2001) state, "Like gardeners, managers may cultivate the conditions for growth, but these conditions cannot guarantee that employees will take advantage of them. Good organizational conditions can only provide the possibility for human development to occur" (p. 46). Cultivating the conditions for growth in a humble manner that models servant leadership is a common theme that resonates from each of the leaders of this organization. Each of the responses reinforces those of the interviewed staff. In some organizations, the leaders may have their ideas and approaches for how they want the organization to function and the staff may have a very different perception of the values and functions of the organization. In the study of this organization, it is easy to see there is alignment between leaders and staff on the goals, values, and practices that exist. Dehler & Welsh (1994) define alignment as "the meshing of organizational purpose with organizational practice" (p. 22). The organization studied is relatively flat without layers of hierarchy in the organizational structure. The Superior/Director of Nurses oversees the nurses and departmental managers. The departmental managers oversee the front-line staff. Although there are two layers of hierarchy, the organization is so small that most staff appear comfortable going right to the Superior for any ideas, concerns. Dehler & Welsh (1994) believe this flatter flexible structure is a prerequisite for a successful operation because "Aligned individuals or teams understand their contribution and see it as consistent with the organization's larger purpose. The result is both lessened competition and enhanced co-operation between groups" (p. 22).

An example of this alignment is the idea that staff are treated like family. This was a common theme shared by staff as well as a common theme of the leaders. Here are some examples from the religious leaders that reflect this: "We create a family like environment--we are here for them. We listen if there are problems." "We believe that treating others the way you want to be treated is very important." "We have daily communication with the staff and are involved with the staff on a personal level. We listen, support and really create a family environment." "Working here is more than a job--we treat staff like our own family." "We have daily interactions with staff and this

is how we acknowledge, build relationships, listen, support and teach through our daily interactions." The intentional unified efforts of each of the leaders have accomplished the feeling of family or community among staff as evidenced by the same theme described by interviewed staff.

Another example of this alignment is identified in how well the staff is treated. Through the interviews, it is easy to identify that basic values such as respect and trust permeate the actions of the leaders. Their actions and behavior are modeled to staff and influence the positive teamwork and respect staff demonstrate for each other. Here are some responses that describe this: "We treat each staff person like an individual." "If you are good to them [the staff], they reciprocate back. We offer them a lot of benefits and they repay us by being good to the patients." "We respect the staff." "We are interested in the whole staff as a person, not someone who just does a job." "Respect helps foster teamwork, they'll do it out of respect, friendship of one another." "Respect is an essential component of care." "How things are said to others is also important--say things with respect and dignity to others." "We acknowledge the staff, volunteers, and family. How we treat others influences how the staff treat each other and the patients." In this organization, it becomes easy to see what a powerful impact a leader makes on others when basic values are brought to life in daily actions, behaviors, and decisions. A ripple effect is prevalent in how the actions of one influence the actions and behavior of others. When basic values such as trust, respect and dignity are consistently practiced among the leadership it is remarkable to see the positive effects.

One other common theme emerges from interviews with each of the Sisters. There is common agreement and emphasis that the purpose of this facility is to serve patients with incurable cancer. A strong and united purpose is easily understood among staff. How many times have organizations developed strategic plans and an organizational mission and then failed to communicate to staff what these are, or failed to communicate how an individual's job relates to the organizational strategy and mission? All staff through their statements and actions observe alignment with the organizational purpose.

The Sisters lead by example. They are the nursing staff for the women patients. The Sisters live the mission of the facility through their actions, commitment and behaviors. The staff perceive themselves as an extension of the Sisters and therefore, each are individually strongly committed to the purpose. It has been my experience that this alignment between leaders and staff on the organizational mission is not a common occurrence in other healthcare facilities. Let me share some examples from the Sisters that emphasize the priority of patients: "We have the view that if this were your home how would you want it?" "Patients come first and we treat them the best way possible." "We instill the idea that each patient should be treated like the suffering Christ." "Because money is not discussed or an issue here, we feel it allows the patients to feel totally free, carefree, relaxed and not having to worry about this issue or the impact it has on the family." "It is important to remember not to talk about the patient as if they are not here. They are a human being and require our respect at all times." "We try to make it a happy place for the patient, not a sad and dreary place. The patients do not want pity."

After interviewing the staff and Sisters, I am left with a strong sense of humility for the work each does. They do not see themselves as remarkable or extraordinary. They do however recognize the unique organization in which they work, and appreciate and understand that this environment or culture is not typical among most healthcare facilities. There is a feeling of service not only to the patients, but also to one another demonstrated through respect and teamwork. There is a great acceptance for how people deal with the dying process. Peace pervades the environment from the moment one enters. Morrison (2000) writes, "Birth, illness and death are spiritual events. Part of the reason for the rapid growth in alternative and complementary medicine in recent years is that people are thirsting for a spiritual connection to their healers" (p. 166-167). The environment and culture of this organization allow the patient and family to make connections to their spiritual healer in an open and accepting manner. In the same regard, staff build relationships, are treated as whole and unique individuals for the strengths and gifts each bring, and in return, staff find meaning and purpose through this work. There is open communication with leaders, a focus on relationships instead of finances, and alignment between leaders and staff on the goals, values, and practices that exist. Positive

outcomes include teamwork, employee retention, longevity, respect, trust, autonomy and empowerment. Is this facility an example of spirituality in the workplace? I believe it is a wonderful example of what is possible when spirituality is integrated within an organization. Ashmos & Duchon (2000) would agree. They write, "A workplace in which people see themselves as part of a trusting community, where they experience personal growth as part of their work community, where they feel valued and supported, would be a workplace in which spirituality thrives" (p. 137).

Conclusion

"Every person must ask, 'What is work doing to me as well as for me, and for others?' Work is a self transforming activity, and therefore, an inherently moral and spiritual one" (Alford and Naughton, 2001, p. 128). Spirituality in the workplace is a growing phenomenon in business and healthcare stemming from the desire for meaningful work. The lack of a universal definition of spirituality has not deterred people from looking within their heart, mind and spirit in the timeless search for human meaning and purpose. In the United States, work may play a large role in an individual's life requiring more time commitment to the job than ever before. The average worker in the United States has less vacation and overall time off than do workers in most European countries. Leigh-Taylor (2000) writes, "The organization is the contemporary 'village' and each day it is the most formative and influential 'culture' outside of the family" (p. 22). Often the rapid pace of business, the financial focus and trying to "do more with less" creates this hunger for human connection and community, which lie at the heart of the spirituality in the workplace phenomenon.

In the past ten years, there has been renewed interest in holistic care--care of the body, mind and spirit. As healthcare begins to provide holistic care, the question is asked, "How can a healthcare organization deliver spiritual healthcare and create a culture of healing?" (Agnew, 1999, p. 66). Healthcare is a unique industry with the focus on helping others, and yet those who are care providers are too often left feeling fragmented and dispirited within a culture that does

not contribute to individual holistic health. "Healthcare organizations not only determine the quality of service for patients, but also the quality of the work environment for providers" (Leigh-Taylor, 2000, p. 22). This is where leadership can make significant contributions toward building a values based culture. These values contribute to a sense of community within the work environment that fosters creativity, innovation, and care and commitment to the mission of the organization. "Leaders have a special role in building culture and maintaining a healthy organizational climate. Leadership sets the tone for a culture that can either be an oasis of goodness or a destructive hyper-competitive setting of darkness" (Leigh-Taylor, 2000, p. 22). Bazan and Dwyer (1998) state, "Organizations may not directly meet the spiritual needs of their employees, but they create environments that enhance or impede their people's inner spiritual work" (p. 22). Integrating spirituality into the culture of an organization is gaining recognition and acceptance because higher performing organizations are created.

Morrison (2000) believes there is a leadership crisis in health care (p. 34) and an absence of vision (p. 242). He states, "The health care industry needs to innovate. We need to encourage new experiments in policy and in the marketplace. Ideally, in the new millennium we will have a wave of reform that leads to a new U.S. health care system--a system that is compassionate, innovative, effective and sustainable" (p. 243). The "vision thing" as Morrison calls it is important to creating change. Agnew (1999) reinforces the belief by stating, "An organization with a common vision of spiritual healthcare, and whose members thoroughly understand its importance, is well on the way to fashioning a culture of healing" (p. 66). This case study is an example of an organization that has created and sustained a culture of healing not only for the patients and families they serve, but also for staff. There is not an absence of vision in this organization. Strong leadership creates a culture where staff and volunteers choose to be part of the mission.

The organization studied has created an environment that enhances individual's spirituality and builds community. This case study is a real example of an organization that applies the characteristics of servant leadership and spirituality as described in the literature review. This organization is a role model for cultivating purpose and meaning in healthcare employees as well

as an example of how spirituality may be integrated within an organization. In my reflections, I ask the question, "Can the environment or culture described in this case study be duplicated without the presence of a religious order?" Bazan and Dwyer (1998) believe, "High-quality services cannot be delivered by organizations or people who are not spiritually grounded" (p. 22). In this organization, the Sisters are spiritually grounded through prayer, reflection, meditation, and through community and vocation. From this spiritual leadership flows the actions, behaviors and decisions that create a culture of values. Respect, trust, autonomy, empowerment, dignity, compassion and relationships, are all operating principles and practices that flow from a servant leadership model. Positive outcomes in the form of consistently exceptional care to individual patients and families are a natural outgrowth of this culture and an outcome that is desired in all healthcare organizations.

An organization may not have the presence of a religious order, however it does require spiritual leadership for long term success. The literature is only beginning to discuss how significant this point may be, however it is likely that religious orders have long understood this message. Historically, religious orders have played a significant role in the leadership and influence of healthcare. If leaders lack this inner spirituality, can a culture be created where positive relationships are built and sustained based on the values of trust, respect, compassion and dignity? I believe this inner spirituality is an essential component of an effective leader and from this an environment or culture is created where people feel united and committed to a common purpose or goal. Kaiser (2000) states, "Organizational unity is the key to organizational power. Love, nurturance, reduction of ego, and a profound respect for all people are necessary ingredients for any unified organizational effort" (p. 10). These values are found in the organizational case study and contribute to the unity and commitment each staff has toward the purpose of the organization. Harrington (1998) reiterates this message, "While business is an important part of life, it is only a small part. Corporations must find ways to charge individuals within the workplace with the explicit responsibility of contextualizing decision making. Boards of directors and corporate management must articulate core values that affirm the primacy of respect for the human person and the implications inherent in this respect. This is the role of

spirituality in business" (p. 10). Applying these core values in the workplace is one step organizations can consider for themselves. This case study has provided insights into the positive outcomes and results that may be possible in the workplace.

One of the many insights that I believe could be duplicated in other organizations is a return to the simple and basic value of respect for human life. Within most organizations, how often are individuals acknowledged, respected, treated with compassion and dignity no matter what the skills, knowledge level or hierarchical level? It would appear there are times when respect for the person is overshadowed by the expense of meeting financial bottom lines and goals. When these become reversed, and relationships are the focus over finances, positive outcomes are still possible. Teamwork, respect, open communication, employee retention, longevity, autonomy and a family-like community are all significant outcomes desirable in most organizations.

My enthusiasm about such a unique facility may be a limitation of this study. My personally positive perceptions of the facility during my grandparents' stay may have influenced my overall observations. In addition, it is important to note that observations were limited in that they did not occur on all shifts and not all staff participated in the interview process. Potential for bias may be present from the self-selection of staff. Also, I did not observe any staff meetings nor other formal means of communication among staff and leaders. All observations were informal and conversational in nature.

Ideas for consideration of additional study may include additional qualitative studies of other spiritually integrated organizations to identify if similar observations are noted. What patterns or themes are identified in other organizations that include aspects of spirituality in its culture? Certainly the small size of the facility and flat organizational structure were significant to the staff. Are size and reduced hierarchy necessary elements of the themes described at this facility and if so, how can other facilities consider the application of these elements into their structure? This particular case study provides insights into how spirituality can be present in an organization. Additional studies will identify other themes to learn more about potential characteristics and attributes of a spiritually integrated organization and what positive outcomes may occur.

In this case study, the servant leadership model is present and effective as demonstrated by desirable outcomes with staff and exceptional patient care. The servant leadership model has been effective in this organization for one hundred and one years and its long-term sustainability has been demonstrated. I believe more servant leaders are needed to further expand and develop spirituality in the workplace. The need for human connection and community is enduring. Robert Greenleaf reminds us of our ability to make a positive difference, "The choice any of us can make, no matter how intolerable our own lot, is to use what little freedom and resources we possess to make the lives of those around us more significant and rewarding. The choice to make life more tolerable for others, in all of our relationships, is open to all of us. Too often, by reacting to the treatment we receive, rather than choosing how we will act when the initiative is ours, we compound someone else's error rather than creating our own good" (Fraker & Spears, 1996, p. 163-164). Our ability to make a positive difference in others centers on our individual spirituality. Our thoughts and actions toward others flow from this spiritual core within each of us. Delores Ambrose (Maggio, 1998) summarizes well the necessary connections between leadership and spirituality: "True leadership does have a strong spiritual component. Our organizations are only as good as the people who run them. Preparation for effective leadership, then, involves preparing the *soul* of the leader. We must continually examine our motives for leading. The responsibility of leadership is one of shaping our own and others' lives, hopefully for the better" (p. 9).

¹ The intent of this process was for staff to learn about the study from this letter and then independently choose without coercion from the study investigator, their choice for participation on the enclosed postcard. I later learned from the administrator that she personally encouraged staff to participate stating, "You remember what it was like when you have a project to complete...Let's help her out." I do not feel she intended to coerce staff to participate, just encouraged their participation, although this could be construed as such. This is important to include not only to describe the variance from intended procedure, but this statement also provides an example of the caring leadership present. The administrator personally made sure I was provided with whatever information I needed for the successful completion of this project. In addition, out of convenience for me, she also arranged interviews with the other religious leaders at a time that was mutually convenient for both the participant and myself. She was gracious and accommodating of my time in the facility and this example reflects the genuine concern and care I observed with all individuals in the facility.

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Consent Form

Title of Study: Cultivating purpose and meaning in health care employees: A case study of spirituality integrated within an organization

You are invited to be in a research study regarding spirituality in health care organizations. You were selected as a possible participant because of your employment through [name of organization ---]. I ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to participate in the study.

I am conducting this study as part of my master's degree requirements in Leadership at Augsburg College in Minneapolis.

Background Information:

The purpose of this study is to learn more about the attributes and outcomes of how an organization integrates spirituality throughout its organizational culture. Through studying these important relationships, other organizations both inside and outside the health care industry may benefit from any insights this case study presents.

Procedures:

I will ask you some questions that will take approximately 15-20 minutes. In addition to responding to interview questions, interactions with other employees and residents will be observed as part of this study. The observational process consists of attention to individual and group activities, events and social interaction in an effort to learn more about the culture of this organization. Written notes on the above observations are taken and the information will be reported in a paper describing the phenomenon studied. Confidentiality of the observations will be protected using a number code to keep track of individuals throughout the duration of the study. This paper is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Arts degree in Leadership.

Risks and benefits of participation in the study:

This study has minimal risks of participation. There are no direct benefits to participation in the study such as money, etc. Indirect benefits of participation may include an increased awareness of the culture of this organization and personal reflection may occur as a result of questions asked. There are no physical or psychological risks involved in this study.

Confidentiality:

The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of paper published, I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify you. Research records will be kept in a locked file; only the researcher will have access to the records. Raw data will be destroyed by June 2002.

Voluntary nature of the study:

Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with the College or with [name of facility ---]. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships. If you agree to participate and then change your mind, you may withdraw by simply stopping the interview. You may skip a question and still remain in the study.

Augsburg IRB# 2001-41-2

Contacts and questions:

The researcher conducting this study is Denise Cleveland. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you may contact me at 651-210-1936. My advisor's name is Dr. Ruth Enestvedt and she may be contacted at 612-330-1211.

You will be given a copy of the form to keep for your records.

Statement of consent:

I have read the above information or have had it read to me. I have received answers to questions asked. I consent to participate in the study.

Signature _____ Date _____

Signature of investigator _____ Date _____

I consent to allow use of my direct quotations in the published document.

Signature _____ Date _____

Lay Summary

Title of Study: Cultivating purpose and meaning in health care employees: A case study of spirituality integrated within an organization

Recent research is demonstrating a positive link between spirituality and health and there is a growing emphasis on this connection in the medical community. Many health care organizations in particular are attempting to weave spirituality into clinical care with a renewed emphasis on mind, body and spirit. This growing body of research in spirituality and medicine has occurred at the same time that spirituality in the workplace is becoming a significant area of interest for leaders. As spirituality becomes integrated into clinical care, a growing number of leaders are beginning to understand the importance of integrating spirituality into the culture of an organization. Many leaders are recognizing the role of spirituality in fostering the human spirit to create relationships and systems that allow people to feel valued and supported. These values contribute to a sense of community within the work environment. This fosters creativity, innovation, and a sense of care and commitment to the mission of the organization. Through the case study of an organization, I am interested in understanding the role that spirituality plays in making connections between the organization and employee. This is the phenomenon I am interested in exploring for my Plan B paper as part of the requirements for the Master of Arts in leadership degree.

I have chosen an organization that I believe, based on personal experience, does integrate spirituality as part of its organizational culture. I would like to explore this organization as a case study. The purpose of this study is to learn more about the characteristics of procedures and outcomes when an organization integrates spirituality throughout its organizational culture. My research question is "What impact does weaving spirituality into organizational life have on employees?" This research is relevant to understanding the effect spirituality in an organization has on those who work there. It also contributes to the study of leadership in understanding what the leader's role is in creating organizational culture, and understanding potential outcomes that may occur when spirituality is integrated within a work environment.

Presently, long term care facilities struggle with recruitment and retention in most of the staffing areas--nursing, dietary and environmental services as examples. If employees have a sense of meaning and purpose in their job and feel part of the workplace community, positive outcomes such as reduced turnover, teamwork, and respect of one another are more likely. I want to explore how spirituality affects the development of shared meaning and purpose among employees in an organization. Any insights gained from a study of how spirituality is integrated throughout the organizational culture, the leader's role, and the possible effects related to employees, may benefit other organizations in the health care industry.

The process of this qualitative research study will be data collection through observation of the public behavior of employees and leaders within the organization as well as interviews of employees and leaders. Approximately two weeks of time will be spent on site interviewing and observing employees and leaders throughout the organization to describe how this phenomenon exists within this organization. Subjects (employees) will be observed in the natural work environment. Patients will not be the focus of observation within the facility. The only task subjects will be asked to do is spend time answering questions in an interview (see attached interview questions). This will be at the consent of the subject whether participation occurs for the interview. Time spent interviewing a subject is not intended to interfere with the subject's job duties or patient care responsibilities.

This study has minimal risks of participation. There are no physical or psychological risks involved in this study. Confidentiality of all participants will be maintained. Any information that may reveal the identity of the organization will be omitted. The identity of staff will be protected from their supervisors within the organization.

Data analysis will consist of analyzing data for themes and patterns that can be used to describe and explain the phenomenon studied. Findings will be communicated in a paper submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Arts in Leadership.

Specific script for initial contact with the subject

Hello. My name is Denise Cleveland and I am a graduate student at Augsburg College in Minneapolis. As part of my final project for my master's degree in Leadership, I am here today doing a study within this organization with permission from your administrator. I am doing a case study of this organization to learn more about the connection that spirituality plays between an organization and an employee. My study consists of observations within this facility and interviews with staff. The interview will take approximately 15-20 minutes of time. You may choose or not choose to participate in this study and your decision will not affect your relationship with your employer [name of facility--] or the College. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without affecting your relationship to the College or your employer. If you agree to participate and then change your mind, you may withdraw by simply stopping the interview or you may skip a question and still may remain in the study. Are there any questions?

October 26, 2001

To the staff of [name of facility—]:

My name is Denise Cleveland and I am a graduate student at Augsburg College in Minneapolis. As part of my final project for my master's degree in Leadership, I am doing a study within this organization with permission from [facility leader]. I am doing a case study of this organization to learn more about the connection that spirituality plays between an organization and employee.

My study consists of observations within this facility and interviews with staff. I would like to invite the participation of all staff in this study, as your insights in answering some questions would be very valuable and appreciated in this study. The interview will take approximately 15-20 minutes of time and is not intended to interfere with your job duties or patient care responsibilities.

There are no direct benefits to participation in the study such as money, etc. Indirect benefits of participation may include an increased awareness of the culture of this organization and personal reflection may occur as a result of questions asked. All information is confidential. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your relationship with your employer or the College. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without any negative consequences.

Your participation in this study would be greatly appreciated. If you are interested please check "Yes, I would be willing to participate" on the enclosed card along with your name and phone number where you could be reached to schedule a confidential meeting at [name of facility —]. Then place the card in the box labeled "Research Study."

If you have any additional questions, please feel free to contact me at 651-210-1936.

Sincerely,

Denise Cleveland
Augsburg College graduate student

