

# Goshen Health System: Cure for the Common Workplace

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Large Companies

By Symone Salisbury

Long before earning a Best Places to Work in Indiana designation, Goshen Health System (GHS)



**GOSHEN HEALTH SYSTEM**  
*True. Care.*

demonstrated that colleagues were among its most valued commodities.

Principles of equality are resonant in the hospital's management approach.

GHS promotes communication between upper management and staff members – and works to remove hierarchical barriers between them. “We have no employees here, only colleagues,” stresses Joe Gavan, vice president of marketing and corporate development. “That’s part of our philosophy.”

All-staff meetings blend business-related updates and input from staff. Held twice a year, they are offered during six different timeframes to accommodate the varied work schedules.

According to Gavan, employee morale and job satisfaction set GHS apart from other organizations. He points out, for example, that it boasts the lowest turnover rates of Indiana’s hospitals.

“I think the other component that makes us unique,” he adds, “is that we have shared values and those values are lived daily. Not only do we speak them, but we see them in action.”

Much of GHS’ success can be attributed to The Uncommon Leader (TUL) program, which challenges individuals to personalize their positions and actively contribute to the organization. “The Uncommon Leader Program is the cultural glue that keeps us together,” contends Gavan, “and our theory is that if we have satisfied colleagues, then we’re going to have satisfied patients, and that is the most critical component of our health care delivery.”

All new hires are required to develop a Just Do It (JDI) or Do It Group (DIG) idea within their 90-day probationary period. Then, they must continue to submit proposals annually. Unlike JDIs, DIG concepts usually require interdepartmental collaboration in one of the hospital’s four focus areas: customer satisfaction, quality, cost effectiveness and best people.

President and CEO James O. Dague advocates mixing business with pleasure.

“Health care can be very intense, and if we lose perspective, it’s easy to get burned out,” Gavan observes. “His personal philosophy is ‘live your personal mission, do the best that you can do and make sure you’re having fun.’”

One way Dague incorporates fun into the workplace is by joining a rotating list of 12 to 15 randomly selected colleagues for breakfast. In addition, an annual awards ceremony honors innovative ideas, many of which begin as JDIs or DIGs.

Presented by the Management Action Council (MAC), the MACademy Awards are patterned after cinema’s Academy Awards. Winners receive Oscar-themed trophies in categories such as “Best Team Player,” “Best Idea for Customer Satisfaction” and “Best Patient Safety Initiative.” Also at the event, individuals epitomizing the hospital’s mission receive a President’s Award.

“We like to think it simply reflects the environment in which we work,” Gavin says in reference to the Best Places to Work in Indiana designation. “We want to spread that word so that others will know about it. We didn’t change anything to attract or win this award. All we did was simply report who we are.”



## Goshen Health System

**Description:** Goshen Health System is a not-for-profit provider of health care services. It serves a four-county service area with a population of approximately 171,000. The community is diverse in culture and ethnicity, with growing Amish, Hispanic and Ukrainian populations. The health system is also an affiliate partner of Clarian Health, which includes Indiana University Hospital, Methodist Hospital of Indianapolis and Riley Hospital for Children. This partnership offers our community a direct link to the resources of our state’s finest major medical centers.

**Primary Indiana location:** Goshen

**Web site:** [www.goshenhealth.com](http://www.goshenhealth.com)

**Full-time employees in Indiana:** 816

**Part-time employees in Indiana:** 483

**Average salary (non-exempt):** \$47,424

**Average salary (exempt):** \$147,636

**Job applicants last fiscal year:** 2,316

**Job hires last fiscal year:** 68