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## **Not-for-Profit Boards Make a Vital Difference in Our Community**

By

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It's hard to imagine that the founders of the San Diego Hospital Association (SDHA) could have envisioned what has transpired since their efforts more than 60 years ago to raise funds for a desperately needed new community hospital for San Diegans. The hard work of these concerned citizens eventually led to the opening of Donald N. Sharp Memorial Hospital in 1955, but that was only the beginning.

Over the years, community-led boards in Chula Vista, Coronado, La Mesa and San Diego made similar efforts to establish hospitals in their respective communities and eventually joined with SDHA to become San Diego's largest health care system, Sharp HealthCare. Today, Sharp includes four acute care hospitals, three specialty hospitals, two affiliated medical groups, and more than 14,000 employees, 2,600 affiliated physicians and 2,000 volunteers who touch the lives of more than three-quarters of a million people each year.

While it's certainly an honor to be named a director of the year by the Corporate Directors Forum, the award is actually an acknowledgment of the outstanding work that all of Sharp's board members, physician leaders and staff have accomplished throughout each hospital's history. Together, they have been consistently driven to ensure that not-for-profit Sharp HealthCare continues to fulfill its mission to improve the health of those we serve with a commitment to excellence in all that we do.

To oversee the successful operation of San Diego's largest private employer, Sharp's boards are comprised of private citizens from all walks of life. The Sharp Board members do much of their work through active committees such as finance, audit, governance, quality, marketing, litigation, construction, advocacy and information technology.

Board members' diverse backgrounds, depth of knowledge and responsibility to the community at large have helped guide Sharp in achieving state, national and international recognition, including being named a 2007 recipient of the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award. Sharp was the first health care system in California and the eighth in the nation to receive the Baldrige Award, the nation's highest Presidential honor for organizational performance excellence. And among the many honors awarded to each Sharp hospital, Sharp Grossmont and Sharp Memorial have received the prestigious Magnet designation for their excellence in nursing practices and quality care.

Significantly, Sharp's boards have also helped direct the recent opening of the Stephen Birch Healthcare Center at Sharp Memorial Hospital, the first new hospital facility in San Diego in more than 15 years, as well as the opening of three floors and 90 new beds in the Emergency and Critical Care Center at Sharp Grossmont Hospital.

Sharp's board members have also helped shape and support The Sharp Experience, the organization's journey to transform the health care experience by striving to become the best place to work, practice medicine and receive care. The foundation for this vision can be found in Sharp's six pillars of excellence – quality, service, people, finance, growth and community. By consistently reaching for and achieving excellence in each of these areas across the Sharp system, the organization has realized great gains in setting community standards and exceeding the expectations of staff, patients and the community. I am very proud of this commitment, and I am privileged to work with community board members who truly do make a difference in the lives of so many residents across San Diego County.

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