

SOURCE: Louisville (KY) Courier–Journal
AUDIENCE: 403,177 [provided by Nielsen//NetRatings]
DATE: 08–02–2009
HEADLINE: Padgett keeps hospital off sick list

Source Website

August 1, 2009

Padgett keeps hospital off sick list

Nurses, housekeepers, pharmacists, people seemingly from every department had Martin Padgett's back. Their boss asked last month for a \$52 million loan for their employer, *Clark Memorial Hospital*.

Two hundred or more hospital workers crammed the County Council meeting room and spilled into the hallway. They cared because CEO Padgett cares. He did not have to ask they be there, and he hadn't.

"The leadership of Martin – that definitely brought that group together," said Fred Horlander, a hospital vice president.

The state still must approve the aid which a council majority endorsed. Even with it, though, the hospital cannot coast. For those desperate for a villain in the edgy health–care debate, look elsewhere. The hospital's expenses nearly keep pace with its income. Padgett puts the in–the–black margin at a mere 1.5–2 percent.

"We have to work at it every day," he said.

Padgett works at it with a sharp mind. His training and experience are in numbers, in accounting. He was the hospital's main money man before being promoted 41/2 years ago. Padgett maneuvers like few can through the minefields of insurance reimbursements and Medicare and Medicaid restrictions.

His also is indeed a kind heart, though. Approachable, unassuming, Padgett is quick to take blame but to share credit. "He's really too honest for his role," said Kathy Neuner, another vice president.

Padgett reduced his pay when he put through other cost cuts. He is known to ask for ideas before offering ideas. TC Baker, a nurse technician, said Padgett is never too busy to listen. Passed on once for the top job, Padgett is right where the hospital needs him, according to Baker.

"I knew all along he would be the man," Baker said.

The crew–cutted Padgett, 44, devotes early mornings to YMCA workouts and warm weekends to waterskiing with his family. He plays sax in the hospital band. He's a regular churchgoer nearly as committed to one of his alma maters, the University of Kentucky. If facing elected officials is not Padgett's idea of a fun evening, he fended respectfully their occasional vitriol.

"I just look at it maybe they don't understand," Padgett said. "They get emotional."

Bloggers reacted copiously, some critically, to the County Council's loan OK. Padgett chose not to read their beefs. He agrees regardless that health care is a complex, confounding issue. No wonder reform is politically dicey; the cure could prove worse than the disease.

"Americans are preyed upon because of the confusion," Padgett said.

Padgett hopes for a better focus on preventative care. Not surprisingly, he would like those providing service to make out better than do insurers. He opposes rationing. Anyway, it's just like him to count on an improved

system.

"Good prevails over evil," he said.

Padgett had been likewise optimistic that the County Council would come through on money needed in large part to afford a computer system upgrade without dipping into reserves. Padgett appreciated too not just the quantity of employee support that meeting night, but the quality of it. No outbursts, no shows of disrespect. Padgett called it a reflection of how patients likewise are treated. "It's what we try to sell," he said.

Padgett has overseen the openings of satellites in Sellersburg, Charlestown, Clarksville and Henryville. He has bumped up the number of hospital employed physicians to 15.

Padgett instituted broad-based employee retreats, meant to inspire as well as to train. Padgett recognized Clark Memorial cannot move ahead standing still. In turn, he was installed recently into the hall of fame of Studer Group, a national health care consulting firm.

"I can see him getting better and better," Neuner said of Padgett. "It's been a thrill to watch him blossom."

Dale Moss' column appears on Sundays, Wednesdays and Fridays. Reach him at (812) 949-4026 or

dmoss@courier-journal.com . Comment on this column, and read his blog and previous columns, at www.courier-journal.com/moss .

Highlights: Clark Memorial Hospital