

RELATED ARTICLES

“Ray Shoemaker Makes a Difference with
‘Sky’s the Limit’ Attitude”

Mississippi Medical News - January 2007

At age 34, Ray Shoemaker already has an impressive resume and list of accomplishments.

But he’s nowhere near ready to rest on his laurels. As CEO of Tri-Lakes Medical Center in Batesville, he has achieved a stunning record in just four years.

He has served in several capacities with the medical center, including COO, and program administrator and director of behavioral health services. During his tenure, revenues have increased 278 percent from \$23 million to \$64 million at the once struggling hospital, and a further increase to \$90 million is expected this year. He was responsible for an increase in profit of 63 percent in a nine month period.

Also, organizational charts have been revamped, strategic plans have been developed and implemented, a long-term acute care unit has been opened, rural health clinics have been established and numerous new services have been added.

Several factors inspired Shoemaker to enter healthcare administration.

“I watched my grandmother die of Alzheimer’s 20 years ago and I wanted to make a difference,” he recalled. “I still have a passion for what I’m doing. Healthcare is an integral part of our society, and I certainly take it seriously. It’s something that can’t go overseas. We must provide healthcare for our communities.”

Six years of service in the Army also influenced Shoemaker’s career decision. Following graduation from the University of Southern Mississippi with a bachelor’s degree in sports medicine, he was commissioned as a second lieutenant. While in the Army, he earned a master’s degree in healthcare administration at Webster University in St. Louis, Mo. Certain of this career path, he also completed an MBA in finance and healthcare from Webster University in Millington, Tenn. in 2006.

Shoemaker’s Army career was also stellar. He attained the rank of captain, supervised 35 senior level supervisors, had overall responsibility for 146 personnel and was responsible for managing the maintenance and upkeep of more than 14,000 soldiers and equipment. He was accountable for new equipment worth \$32 million and maintained a \$200 million budget.

His philosophy is that if he can make it, anyone can.

Growing up in the rural community of Walnut Grove in Leake County, he had none to little resources and was the second oldest child from a broken home.

“Growing up like that was the biggest turning point for me,” he said. “I’m nothing special, but from God’s watching hand and grace I was able to move ahead.”

Considered a rising star in healthcare, Shoemaker was recently named a 2006 “Up & Comer” by Modern Healthcare Magazine. The remarkable revenue growth of Tri-Lakes Medical Center was listed among his accomplishments in meriting the award. Also, he prepared and submitted numerous certificate of needs applications as part of the hospital’s strategic plan; completed development of the hospital’s management structure to include policy and procedures, employment practices and other daily operations; was responsible for the introductions and budgeting of various programs; and developed hospital core strategies centered on patient care.

He was hired to take an unused hospital building and convert it to a freestanding behavior health facility. In the process of doing so, he rose rapidly in the Tri-Lakes Medical Center organization, first to COO of the entire medical center in 2004 and then to CEO in November 2005. The medical center operates two campuses with 110 beds and more than 600 employees.

Not content to become complacent, Shoemaker will continue to do his part to improve healthcare.

“It’s been embraced by the community, and we really owe the success we’ve had to the employees and the physicians,” he said. “They’ve gotten behind it. I’m all about the team.”

He said the biggest thing the medical center has done is to provide services the community needs.

“I’m most proud of the uniting of the hospital and the community,” he said. “We go out to meet the community and are involved with them.”

The main thing accomplished at Tri-Lakes is the improvement of patient care. “That’s the most important part of it. We treat every customer — anybody coming in — like VIPs,” he said. “We’ve added a host of services.”

Those services include valet parking, a greeter service and the “five foot rule” that requires any employee within five feet of a customer to speak and escort that customer to their location if needed.

When asked about his leadership style, Shoemaker repeated that he is all about teamwork.

“I view everyone’s opinion as valid. I like their input and insight,” he said. “I rely on their ideas and experiences. I like to lead that way. I believe with the right people, we can move mountains.

“We can always get better. That’s the challenge.”

If he had not chosen a career in healthcare administration, Shoemaker would have become a coach.

“It may be odd, but that’s what I would do,” he said. “Coaches can motivate people to go beyond what they think they can do and inspire (them). I like that.”

With many achievements under his belt, Shoemaker keeps looking ahead. He’s well versed in politics.

“I have aspirations to move into politics and develop a healthcare chain somewhere,” he said. “The sky’s the limit!”

Noting that he wants to be where he can make a difference, Shoemaker said he may be involved with politics on the state and national level. He may even run for governor of Mississippi someday, he hinted.

Although he routinely works 12 to 14 hours a day, Shoemaker enjoys spending time with his family on weekends. That includes his wife, Shanae, five year old son Ray and four year old daughter Kendall. He also works out religiously and reads a steady stream of business books.

Professional and civic involvement includes membership in the Rotary Club, American College of Healthcare Executives, board of directors of the state Alzheimer’s Association, Health Financial Management Association, Mississippi Behavioral Health Society, Mississippi Hospital Association, Society for Health Care Marketing & Public Relations, Mississippi Rural Health Association, and the Mississippi Economic Council.