

Cathy Wagner Earns AMH Leadership Award

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ALTON – Although Alton Memorial Hospital was unable to hold its annual Employee Awards Banquet again this year because of the pandemic, the hospital was still able to honor several of its top staff members during the recent Health Care Week.

Cathy Wagner, manager of Surgical Services and the Cardiac Cath Lab, won the 2021 Leadership Award, as voted on by AMH senior leaders.

“Cathy checked many of the boxes in 2021,” said AMH President Dave Braasch. “She demonstrated characteristics in getting results, integrity, continuous improvement and building customer-focused teams. During the most recent COVID surge, she routinely jumped in to lend a hand in staffing where needed. With all the disruptions, Cathy dealt fairly with everyone and listened to everyone’s input before making the final decision. Her response was poised and deliberate, always putting the patients first.”

Wagner said that winning the award was a surprise to her because of all the great work she sees by other teams around the hospital.

“I appreciate the opportunity that was given me by Brad Goacher (AMH chief operating officer) to join this great team,” she said. “The past two years have been a blur for me and my team. We’ve had multiple shutdowns of elective surgery, various supply interruptions and staffing challenges, all while onboarding new physicians, procedures and staff. I feel this award belongs to all the amazing team members of Cardiology and Surgical Services. Together we were able to navigate all the ups and downs the pandemic has thrown our way. I count it both an honor and a privilege to serve these amazing teams. Also, the collaboration opportunities the AMH leadership group provides has helped me not only grow as a leader but also on a personal level.”

Wagner credits the leadership in both Surgery and Cardiology, particularly Heidi Noel, Jeffrey Zacha, Suzi Johnes, Amy Darr, Melissa Hane, Misty Gibbs, and Beth Stephan.

“This departmental leadership team works tirelessly to ensure the staffing needs of the department and the hospital are met,” she said. “During the pandemic they focused on being fair in making staffing decisions and assignments. They helped fill vacancies where needed and onboard our new team members into their new roles. Knowing that they are there to help me is what motivates me to keep pushing through the many challenges we face. I look forward to the continued growth and expansion within our teams and departments.”

Braasch said that Wagner embraced change by growing robotic surgical procedures by 30 percent from the year before, and also adding pulmonary services to surgery -- all the while two surgical teams down.

“Patient Experience in her areas is top decile across the board,” he said. “And in her ‘free’ time, Cathy helps lead our Military Connection group in BJC, spearheading the annual BJC Baby Shower for military families. Recently, she helped set up a scholarship program where two local students were awarded tuition support through our affiliated foundation.”

The Leadership Award is given to a member of management who exemplifies the AMH values and serves as a role model to his or her peers. Nominees must meet strict criteria, including accomplishing significant results for the organization, promoting continuous improvement and energizing others.