

Calling forth the spirit of leadership: Pathway to organizational transformation

Sister Mary Jean Ryan, President/CEO, and Ms. Paula Friedman, Corporate Vice President, Strategy & System Improvement, of SSM Health Care based in St. Louis, MO, USA, visited the APO Secretariat on 14 March 2005 and gave presentations to staff members of the APO Secretariat and Japanese experts associated with the APO.

Sr. Mary Jean has been President/CEO of SSM Health Care for the past 18 years. Under her guidance, the firm, which is one of the largest Roman Catholic health care systems in the USA with 23,000 employees and 5,000 affiliated physicians serving in 20 hospitals and three nursing homes, in 2002 became the first health care organization to win the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award (MBNQA), the nation's premier award for performance excellence and quality achievement. She will also assume the presidency of the MBNQA Foundation in the autumn of 2005.

(Continued on page 5)



(L-R) Friedman and Sister Mary Jean at the head table. Standing is Ken Inoue, Director, Industry Department, APO

Sr. Mary Jean spoke on "Calling Forth the Spirit of Leadership: Pathway to Organizational Transformation." She first recalled her own experience of "the awakening," the moment of truth when she realized that SSM Health Care was not being managed as well as it could be. She thus determined to improve the organization. She explained how she decided that participation in the MBBQA was the method to achieve that improvement. It offered SSM Health Care a way to evaluate the entire organization systematically and understand the links between the hundreds of processes that make up the health care experience. The first step was rearticulating the mission statement, which is now "Through our exceptional health care services, we reveal the healing presence of God." Then, the organization began to apply the principal methodology of the MBBQA: define, measure, and monitor. Finally, she referred to the intangible aspects of management as a spirit of leadership or "heart." The moving story of a nurse's brave decision making while caring for a baby born with multiple severe birth defects who later died at an SSM-managed hospital was recounted to illustrate the principle

that everyone at SSM Health Care is a leader. Sr. Mary Jean believes that the calling forth of leadership qualities ultimately transforms organizations.

Friedman supplemented Sr. Mary Jean's points in making a presentation on "Baldrige as a Business Model in SSM Health Care." She explained the four main aspects of MBNQA assessment: leadership; strategic planning; focus on patients, other customers, and markets; and organizational performance results. The importance of defining measurable objectives stemming from the mission statement was emphasized.

The audience was deeply impressed by both presentations and thanked the two women for visiting the APO Secretariat. They also delivered similar presentations at various seminars organized by the Japan Productivity Center for Socio-Economic Development in Tokyo, Thailand Productivity Institute in Bangkok, and Development Academy of the Philippines in Manila. Their Asian tour was funded by the APO TES Program.