

The Greatest Healer in the Neighborhood

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In a Chicago neighborhood, the local neighborhood organization decided that there were people called “disabled” in group homes in their neighborhood, but nobody knew them. A couple of neighbors decided to see if they could meet some of these people and get to know them. When they did this, they found that each of these people who had been labeled “disabled” had some skill, talents, abilities or gifts.

One of the neighbors thought that a group home resident named Paul was especially joyful. He always had a great smile and talked very loudly with great enthusiasm. So the neighbor thought, where could a person who is joyful be a contributor. She and her group concluded that it would be a gift to a hospital if they could involve a joyful person. Therefore, they introduced Paul to the administrator of the local hospital and suggested that if Paul were around people in a hospital they might feel happier. The administrator agreed on a trial in which Paul would deliver the mail of each patient to their room each day – a function that had long been in practice. When Paul was given responsibility for delivering the mail from a mail cart, he began walking down the hall and stopping at each

room where he would say loudly and joyfully to each patient, “Hi, I’m Paul. What’s your name?” Then he would loudly ask, “How are you doing?” While some people would say they were “fine” most would say, “not so good.” To those who said, “Not so good,” Paul responded, “That’s wonderful!” It was his standard answer. When he delivered the mail the next day he would ask the same question and those who responded “not so good” Paul would say, “That’s wonderful!” About the third day, when the patients had learned Paul’s routine, they began to say “Well, I’m getting better.” Paul responded, “That’s wonderful.”

Because Paul didn’t come every day, the nurses reported that many of the patients asked, “Where’s Paul?” Pretty soon, Paul became a part of the life of each patient – the smiling, joyful man who thought they were doing “wonderfully.”

After Paul had been delivering the mail for a couple of months, the head nurse said, “You know, we have 73 doctors here and one healer. The healer’s name is Paul.”