A DESIGN FOR BETTER, MORE HOSPITABLE CARE

Deans Michael Johnson and Alan Mathios at the CIHF inauguration ceremony. Photo by Lindsay France/UPhoto

Imagine a facility with a multipurpose atrium—occasionally used for weddings—that houses a meditation garden and an organic food and tea kiosk. Among its other functions are cooking classes, yoga, and free concerts. What comes to mind: A hotel? A community center? Probably not a hospital. But Henry Ford West Bloomfield Hospital, in Michigan, is one of a growing number of facilities and services blurring the lines between hospitality and healthcare. Nurse Next Door, a senior homecare services company co-founded by John DeHart '96, seeks to deliver "happiness" to its clients. The Ritz-Carlton Leadership Center brings the hotel's legendary service principles to healthcare organizations, transforming their cultures and dramatically improving patient satisfaction.

Founders of the newly established Cornell Institute for Healthy Futures (CIHF) hope to make such occurrences the norm rather than the exception.

CIHF, a joint initiative of the School of Hotel Administration and the College of Human Ecology (CHE), is believed to be the world's first academic center to combine hospitality, health policy/management, and design—areas in which Cornell has unique strengths. The institute was officially launched November 2 with panel discussions featuring industry leaders and a ribbon-cutting ceremony at the CIHF suite in Martha Van Rensselaer Hall.

Although the words "hospital" and "hospitality" evoke very different emotions, they stem from the same Latin word, *hospes*, meaning "guest" or "host." DeHart, the institute's first industry fellow, sees a natural confluence between the two. "People who work in hospitality and people who work in healthcare share a passion for taking care of others—at their core, that's who they are.

The CIHF leadership team, from left: executive director Rohit Verma and associate directors Brooke Hollis and Mardelle Shepley. Photo by Jason Koski/UPhoto

"But healthcare," he said, "has a lot to learn from the hospitality industry. The culture of healthcare is attuned to what's wrong, not to what's working—it doesn't embrace wellness or happiness, as the hotel industry does. The best hospitality companies understand how to deliver guests' unexpected needs. More importantly, they know how to scale the guest experience so that, when you go to any Ritz-Carlton or Four Seasons around the world, you get the same kind of experience."

DeHart expects to see "a massive crossover" between hospitality and healthcare in a decade, as baby boomers start to turn 80 and require greater care. "Boomers won't stand for today's healthcare system—this will give the hotel industry an unprecedented opportunity to cater to them," he said. "CIHF is coming to the fore at just the right time to have a big impact on both industries. This is where the thought leadership will take place."

CREATING A NEW DISCIPLINE

CIHF, which aims to enhance service excellence in healthcare, wellness, senior living, and related industries, is led by executive director Rohit Verma, a professor of services operations management and Singapore Tourism Board Distinguished Professor in Asian Hospitality Management at SHA. Mardelle McCuskey Shepley, CHE professor of design and environmental analysis, and Brooke Hollis, MBA '78, associate director of CHE's Sloan Program in Health Administration, are associate directors. Underscoring the schools' joint leadership, Michael Johnson, the Bradley H. Stone Dean of the

An inauguration-day panel discussion on November 2. Photo by Lindsay France/UPhoto

School of Hotel Administration and E. M. Statler Professor, and Alan Mathios, the Rebecca Q. and James C. Morgan Dean of the College of Human Ecology, are co-chairs of the governing board.

Although the institute is new, the close working relationship between the two schools is not. Over the last eight years, SHA and CHE have collaborated on roundtables and courses (Quality Systems and Processes, taught by Verma, and Planning and Operations of Senior Living and Related Facilities, taught by Hollis) and cosponsored panel discussions, both on and off campus, to address the growing overlap between hospitality and healthcare. "Executives in each industry have been looking to the other to gain a competitive edge," explained Verma. "Hospital administrators are incorporating hospitality principles to enhance their level of service, while hospitality leaders are adding health to their offerings. That's a new way of thinking for both industries, and both have sought our assistance in making the transition."

To deliver on its mission, CIHF will support educational programs, conduct and disseminate research, and host roundtables and conferences for industry executives.

This spring Verma, Hollis, and Shepley are co-teaching a new one-credit course, Hospitality, Health, and Design Industry Immersion Seminar. Within the next few years, they plan to introduce a health and design concentration for SHA students and a hospitality concentration for CHE students; a university-wide minor linking health, hospitality, and design; the equivalent of a graduate-level concentration or minor; dual-degree master's programs; and an online certificate program. "We hope this leads people to start choosing career paths they otherwise would not have thought of," said Hollis.

More than 30 faculty members—from SHA, CHE, ILR, and the Johnson Graduate School of Management—have joined the institute as faculty fellows. "The fellows will become our intellectual base for conducting research," said Verma. "Each has committed to at least one project that overlaps with the institute's mission." CIHF will support those projects with small grants and other resources. "Since we're an institute of healthcare design, hospitality, and health administration, we'll be looking at a research agenda that supports those three concepts rather than one individually, because there are other funding sources that support those things independently, but there's very little—or anything at all—that supports all three simultaneously," said Shepley. In addition to publishing scholarly articles in journals and other academic publications, the institute will disseminate results of its research and share best practices through managerial reports, case studies, blogs, videos, podcasts, and other information posted on its website (ihf.cornell.edu) and through periodic newsletters.

Industry engagement takes several forms. The institute's corporate members—currently the American Seniors Housing Association, Delos, Mercy Medical Center, Six Senses Hotels Resorts Spas, Cancer Treatment Centers of America, PwC, MindFolio, and the Ritz-Carlton Leadership Center—provide resources and are represented on the advisory board. The new one-credit course, modeled after SHA's Dean's Distinguished Lecture Series, features executives from the health, hospitality, and design industries. An industry roundtable will take place in April, and the institute has its first conference or a second roundtable tentatively scheduled

for October. CIHF also plans to host visiting researchers and industry fellows, who will give presentations and meet one-on-one with students. Along with healthcare entrepreneur John DeHart, industry fellows joining the institute are John Rijos '75, founding operating partner of Chicago Pacific Founders; Meredith Oppenheim, A&S '95, business advisor for Oppenheim Architecture; and Satish Devapatla, medical director of the neonatal intensive care unit and past president of the medical staff at Cayuga Medical Center. "All these activities will bring us closer to industry," said Verma. "We'll get to see what they are doing, and they'll benefit from our research and from interactions with faculty and students."

Shepley describes CIHF as "more than interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary. We're not just collaborating among disciplines or operating in parallel," she said. "The work we're doing is 'transdisciplinary'—we're creating a new discipline out of three specialties."

AHEAD OF THE TRENDS

The convergence of hospitality and healthcare will result in new career options—particularly for those trained in this new discipline. "We envision a variety of alternative career paths for Hotelies in the healthcare world," said Hollis. "Whether running the 'hotel' functions (dining, housekeeping, maintenance) or coordinating hospitality/customer experience in hospitals, senior living communities, or outpatient clinics, Hotelies should have many opportunities to help improve quality and customer service. Other opportunities will exist with health plans, wellness organizations, medical travel/tourism, and outsourced service firms that work with healthcare organizations. Similarly, design and health management students will have new opportunities to apply what they learn from hospitality to their work as consultants, managers, and designers."

Given the tectonic shifts coming in healthcare and senior living, CIHF is poised to have maximum impact.

Healthcare organizations are taking a new look at design, in accordance with research showing that design innovations can foster healing and drive perceptions of service quality. "We know that certain aspects of the physical environment can reduce stress," said Shepley, a national leader in evidence-based design. "Features that allow you to manipulate your immediate environment, for example, give you a greater sense of control, while views of nature or access to social interaction promote positive distraction."

John DeHart '96. Photo by Lindsay France/UPhoto

At the same time, Hollis said, "massive increases in the older population will require innovative approaches and new models for how we care for the elderly." According to projections by the National Investment Center for Seniors Housing and Care, the 82-plus population will increase from 9.6 million today to 15.1 million in 2030—a growth rate of almost 60 percent. "In the senior living world alone, there's a huge amount of work to be done," said Hollis, noting that, unlike the hotel industry, the senior living sector is recession-resistant and can provide an alternative career track for Hotelies. "In many ways, senior living communities are like hotels or resorts for older Americans—it's only when you get to the end of life that it becomes a more medical model."

Also expected to see rapid growth are outpatient care, including home-based care and services like those provided by DeHart's company, Nurse Next Door; medical travel/tourism and the concierge-level services it has fostered; and a variety of related industries.

"CIHF is at the forefront of these changes—bringing together thought leaders from healthcare and outside the industry to provide fantastic learning opportunities for both students and practitioners," said DeHart. When he lectured in Hollis's Senior Living course last semester, he was impressed by the students' knowledge of healthcare and entrepreneurship. "The questions they asked were ones I would expect from my leadership team," he said.

Jill Guindon-Nasir, senior corporate director of global learning solutions and organizational development for the Ritz-Carlton Leadership Center, a CIHF corporate member, believes, "In addition to its influence on today's healthcare system, CIHF's greatest impact may come from educating tomorrow's healthcare leaders, who will understand that clinical excellence and service excellence can—and should—coexist. They are the ones who will truly transform the industry."