

South Florida Hospital News[®] and HEALTHCARE REPORT

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HEALTHCARE REAL ESTATE, CONSTRUCTION, DESIGN & FACILITY PLANNING

It's Not Your Grandfather's Sign

BY BARBARA R. FALLON

For those of us who consider ourselves navigationally challenged, directional signs are obviously a reassuring wayfinding assist to reach a destination on time minus the anxiety of feeling lost. However, add to that an eyesight handicap or wheelchair-bound height or distracted thoughts of impending medical procedures and then signs become a crucial lifeline. That's a common scenario when you are traversing hospital corridors which can be intimidating for visitors and patients, adding to an already stressful situation.

For more than 35 years, Baron Sign Manufacturing has ushered hospitals through a turn key design, fabrication and installation process for custom interior, exterior and wayfinding signage. From budget and planning through engineering, installation and evaluation, Baron's experts collaborate with the hospital team on a signage plan to support an environment of caring and concern.

The Measurement of a Good Sign

A sign's worth may be measured in patient satisfaction, staff productivity, ease of entry, readability, branding, high flexibility and low maintenance, aesthetics or compliance with environmental, local and ADA accessibility guidelines, and even lifesaving guidance.

In terms of patient satisfaction, a sign's value may be judged by smiles and frowns, or by the patients' readiness for care. People trying to find a department without good signage may interrupt and commender several staff away from their tasks to help them find the right path. Even worse, the patient may arrive at the destination late and misplace his frustration toward staff because of a wrong turn.

Baron Sign CEO Sandra Foland explains that patient attitudes can be directly influenced by more than wayfinding benefits. Sometimes, the goal is to have the reader feel like ... I'm here and I'm comfortable.

"At the University of Miami Hospital, the role of Baron signage in a children's waiting room was more than just directional but also a welcoming graphic display to help calm and reassure kids and their parents as they prepared for procedures," she said. Color coded signage, translated from medical terminology to user friendly language and recognizable symbols can also enhance understanding in multicultural communities.

Hospital signage often reflects model environments that encourage



Sandra Foland

health promoting behaviors among employees, patients and visitors such as healthy food choices or physical or spiritual activity. Using photos, graphics and symbols to help communicate a range of positive steps toward healthy living; hospitals, clinics and physician offices have considerable potential to influence mental and physical health-promoting behaviors among their employees, patients, visitors, and residents of surrounding communities.

For example, Baron Sign incorporated an LED lighted color palette that would allow a hospital client to not only endorse their brand colors 24/7 but also to GO PINK for breast health awareness and display other colors for advocacy and recognition programs in support of community campaigns with a full spectrum of colors. The reach of hospitals is substantial. Every

year, hospitals across the United States serve millions of employees and patients who may use clinical services, wellness programs or even cafeterias and vending machines.

In some cases, safety concerns are signaled because without proper signage guides there could be life threatening consequences. For example, at Delray Medical Center when a new tower was added emergency flight traffic was re-routed. The signs needed to redirect incoming emergency flight professionals to a new route and entrance and also connect with existing facility services.

Foland emphasizes that the secret to a good sign is advanced planning. Whether it is signage for a new building or a retro-fit, Baron Sign insists on walking through the purpose and impact of signage with architects, builders, facility directors, clinical and promotional staff and consumer representatives at the table to determine accurate communications, image, colors, materials, efficiency and quality. Additionally, a commitment to future generations is visible through use of durable, sustainable, low maintenance material which is eco-friendly and weather resistant.

"We count on our decades of experience and best practice along with a finger on the pulse of innovation to help our customers address signage challenges and plan their budgets wisely. Together we customize a complete roadmap that incorporates the science and art of signage planning, Foland concluded.

For more information, email sandie@baronsign.com or call (561) 721-0691.