

## In remembrance of Mark McNelly

By Carrie McDermott • Daily News [carriem@wahpetondailynews.com](mailto:carriem@wahpetondailynews.com) | Posted: Thursday, February 20, 2014 3:00 pm

Mark McNelly, 63, a former hospital administrator at St. Francis Healthcare Campus in Breckenridge, Minn., passed away at his home Saturday, Feb. 15 in Battle Lake, Minn., under the care of Lakeland Hospice. He was diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis in 2005.

McNelly spent his career in the healthcare field. He was hired in 1986 at St. Francis and worked there for 11 years. He was a well-loved member of the Twin Towns community during the years he lived here, and his former colleagues agreed to share their memories of him.

“Mark was a great colleague and well respected in the health industry,” said David Nelson, president and CEO of St. Francis Healthcare Campus. “Mark and I go back a long time; he encouraged me to apply for the position he held here at St. Francis. I consulted with Mark several times for various health care projects through the years. He was insightful, witty, sociable and a true friend to all those he met. Mark cared for those in need and truly lived by his convictions of caring for others. He never put his own needs ahead of others. Family was very important to Mark. He brought his girls to meetings and our families enjoyed spending time together while we dads worked.”

Scott Hansen and Brent Differding, plant operations at St. Francis, shared their memories of McNelly.

“I had the privilege of working with Mark for about two and a half years,” Differding said. “In that short time, I came to realize what kind of person Mark was. I considered him very down-to-earth and someone who treated everyone equally.”

Differding said McNelly was just one of the guys.

“Some of my fondest memories of Mark are when he would come down to our maintenance shop and have dinner with us, which usually consisted of deer sausage, chips and bread. He always said he knew when it was time for dinner by the smell of the deer sausage in the hallway,” Differding said. “The time that we were able to spend with Mark as just one of the guys will never be forgotten.”

“Mark was the CEO for the first 10 years of my employment with St. Francis,” Hansen said. “I remember he always came down to our maintenance shop to find out how everything was going. Mark always had a smile on his face and always liked to make people smile, also.

“One time he wore those goofy hats that made it look like he had long hair to one of the employees of the month recognitions. Everyone was laughing until we had tears in our eyes. He will be greatly missed,” he said.

Sue Roehl, now with Eide Bailly in Fargo, worked as a hospital coder when McNelly was at St. Francis. She said he possessed the “true Franciscan spirit.”

“He was a humble man, a family man, and a worker with the Franciscan nuns,” she said. “He was concerned for the patients as well as the employees. He was an administrator who knew the names of the employees, and frequently visited the departments of the hospital to just check in and see how everyone was doing.”

Her favorite memory was when the Medical Records Department decided to make a confidentiality video for their annual in-service day.

“The actors were all employees, and Mark played Detective Joe Friday,” Roehl said. “I think his only line was ‘Just the facts, ma’am,’ but he had such a hard time keeping a stern face. A little smile kept popping up, and we would have to start over.”

Mary Jacklitch was McNelly’s assistant at St. Francis, who said she had the honor of working with him for more than 11 years, and described him as a good and gentle boss.

“He was a man who gave so much to his work and community — his talents were given freely, and he never asked for recognition for anything he did. He was very humble, and was a mentor and a friend to me,” she said.

McNelly led the organization through difficult times, she said, including the 1997 flood.

“His house was in the flood area as well, but his first duty was to the organization,” she said. “He always had a smile, and you couldn’t help but be happy around him.”

She added that he was a loving husband to his wife, Patricia, and devoted father to his children.

“Mark had a great heart and will be greatly missed,” she said. “We have one more angel in the sky.”