SUMMER
2011

ORGANIZED FOR THE PURPOSE OF BRINGING TOGETHER MEMBERS
OF THE MEDICAL PROFESSION IN MOBILE COUNTY

MEDICAL SOCIETY news

From the President

Humor and healing: A creative process

CHARLES B. RODNING, MD, PHD, FACS

Clinicians strive to promote health and wellness, to relieve suffering, and to achieve solace, be they responsible for primary or specialty care. For a patient, the physical, psychological, and spiritual trauma of disease and illness may be burdensome indeed, and a patient who establishes a contract with a physician seeks restoration of health, or, if that is not feasible, at least solace. Philosophically, these are profound and weighty matters for both a patient and a physician, since they deal with morbidity and mortality, states that are frequently perceived as representing failure. Ideally, a clinician by his or her demeanor and decorum communicates empathy, and the rapport thus established between a patient and a physician perpetuates a creative healing process and facilitates tolerance of morbidity and mortality. That humor and laughter play a primary role in this process and toleration is the thrust of this essay.

The word *humor* (humour), etymologically of Latin derivation, denoted "moistness" or "dampness." One of the earliest connotations of the term originated with Empedocles (c.490 -430 B.C.), a Sicilian philosopher and orator, who postulated a humoral theory of health and disease. He reasoned that four elements (fire, water, air, and earth) constituted the "root of all things." Hippocrates postulated that four fluids (blood, phlegm, yellow bile, and black bile, respectively) entered into the constitution of the body and determined by their relative proportions an individual's health and temperament. It is interesting that this concept pervaded medical thought until the mid-nineteenth century and to a certain extent has been adapted contemporaneously to hypotheses regarding hormonal secretion and the interrelationships and endocrinologic, immunologic, and neurologic functions.

Since then other connotations have been associated with humor, and two, developed by Arthur Koestler, are perhaps most relevant for this discussion. First, humor may be defined as a type of internal or external stimulation that tends to elicit a laughter reflex. Koestler has argued: *Humour is the only domain of creative activity where a stimulus on a high level of complexity produces a massive and sharply defined response on the level of physiological reflexes.*

Spontaneous laughter is perceived to be a motor reflex produced by the coordinated contraction of facial muscles in a stereotyped pattern and accompanied by altered breathing. The utilitarian value of " a laughter reflex" is uncertain, but several authors, including Koestler, have argued that at least one function may be to relieve tension—to relieve aggression and/or apprehension.

A second definition from both an intellectual and emotional perspective is that humor consists of the perception of a situation in two individually consistent but mutually incompatible frames of reference or associative contexts. Again, it is the emotional dynamics of this "bisociation" that provides the therapeutic element, as tension (aggression and/or apprehension) is relieved or discharged. All forms of humor, from the coarse to the subtle—practical joke, jibe, tease, tickle, anecdote, wit, irony, brainteaser, epigram, satire, parody, cartoon, limerick, pun, riddle, comedy—possess both intellectual and emotional components, varying only in their quantitative proportions. As Koestler has argued, the bisociation of a situation or idea from two mutually incompatible contexts within an individual's mind and the resulting abrupt transfer of a train of thought from one context to another ends the "tense expectations," and the accumulated emotion, deprived of its object, is left suspended and is discharged as laughter.

These connotations of humor and laughter suggest that they may be essential for wellness and restoration of health. Historically, however, humor and laughter have been derided as foolish, undignified, haughty, disdainful, and vulgar. Plato (c.428-348 B.C.) in the *Republic* implied that uninhibited laughter was improper in dignified men, that "persons of worth… must not be represented as overcome by laughter." William Congreve wrote, in *The Double Dealer* (1694), "There is nothing more unbecoming a man of quality than to laugh; Jesu, 'tis such a vulgar expression of the passion." And Lord Chesterfield, in a monograph entitled *Letters to His Son* (1748), recorded: "There is nothing so illiberal and so ill-bred as audible laughter. I am sure that since I have had the full use of my reason, nobody has ever heard me laugh."

Such thoughts seem extremely stifling and repressive, and I hold that such thoughts are a potential detriment to a creative healing process. Koestler has suggested that there is a similarity between humor and creativity as manifested by scientific or artistic endeavors, since one interpretation of the processes underlying all creativity is that they are essentially combinative – the combination of previously separate areas of knowledge and experience at the conscious and unconscious levels of thought. Intellectually, a scientist seeks synthesis, an artist juxtaposes the familiar with the external, and a humorist contrives a collision; and emotionally, discovery satisfies an exploratory drive (an "Aha! Reaction"), art induces a catharsis (an "Ah…reaction"), and humor initially arouses but then relieves tension (a "Haha reaction"). A key element of each endeavor is that the transition from one domain to another is continuous: wit blends with epigram, caricature with portrait, science with art. Comedy and tragedy, laughter and weeping, are extremes of an intellectual and emotional continuum. Extrapolating again from a historical perspective, the enduring popularity and classicality of the satire and parody of Francois Rabelais (c. 1494-1553) in *Gargantua and Pantagruel* or Jonathan Swift (1667-1745) in *Gulliver's Travels,* and the caricatures and cartoons of James Gillray (1757-1815), Thomas Rowlandson (1756-1827), and Honor'e Daumier (1808-1879), by exposing the fraudulent and by providing solace to the suffering, affirm humor and laughter as beneficial and therapeutic.

Continued Page 3

Your Medical Society *In Action*

By Sheree LaCoste
Executive Director

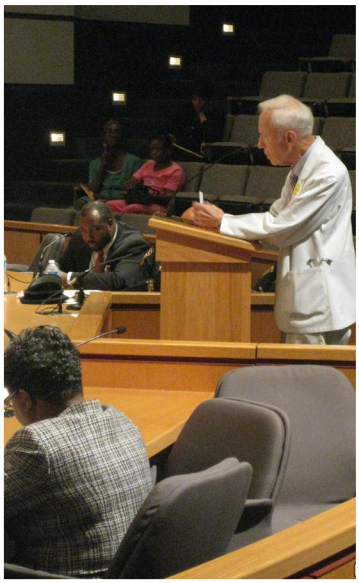
There is so much that you do as a Medical Society to make a difference to the citizens in Mobile, your patients. One such example has been your Board's active involvement in the effort to help Mobile become "Smokefree". By partnering with the Mobile County Board of Health's Anti-Smoking Coalition and the American Cancer Society (who held their legislative breakfast at our office in February), we have been able to speak out on behalf of health and safety.

On July 12th there was a public hearing held at the Mobile City Council auditorium downtown. Many of you showed up in your white coats to support the effort to make Mobile completely smokefree. You were given an opportunity to speak and you did. Despite the opposition and continued work that will need to be done, your Board has committed to assisting with this issue.

There are many other areas that you are being represented in this community. Whether the need is gathering supplies to send to the disaster in Japan (see page 6) or filling a shift at the MedShed at Camp Rap -A-Hope (see page 8), you always come through as bright examples of what the profession of medicine is supposed to be.

We continue to have a seat at the table with the Alabama Baby Coalition, who are working to reduce infant mortality. Additionally, we are partnering with SmartCoast to work on Bicycle safety and designated bike paths for the citizens of Mobile. Recently, an issue was brought to our attention about the response times from the Fire Department. As is typical, your Board researched the issue and took action by meeting with representatives from the Fire Department and writing letters to the Mayor and the editor of the Press-Register, in hope that response times could be improved.

All this is done, with your patients and their health and safety in mind. When there is a need, not only are you quick to action in the operating room or in your practices, you always assist when your Medical Society calls on you. Thank you for all you do.



Above Top:
Medical Society President Elect Dr. Elizabeth Manci, Board Member Dr. Ronald Franks, Vice-President Dr. John Russell, Board Member Dr. Elizabeth Minto, Immediate Past-President Dr. Leonard Rich, member Dr. Henry Koch, and President Dr. Charles Rodning were in attendance at the Public Hearing July 12th

Below left:
Retired Member Dr. William Daniels addresses the City Council
Below right: Medical Society Secretary-Treasurer Dr. Shaffer Wells takes her turn addressing the council members.

Organized Medicine at the State Level

MASA 's Vice-President Dr. Craig Kleinmann with current MASA President Dr. Jeff Terry (Both are Past-Presidents of our Medical Society)

MASA President Dr. Jeff Terry with sons (l-r) Miller Terry, Dr. William Terry (a Urology resident at UAB), and Gordon Terry

Medical Society Board Member Dr. Ronald Franks did not shy away from props and hats during his presentation at Annual Session.

...continued, President's article

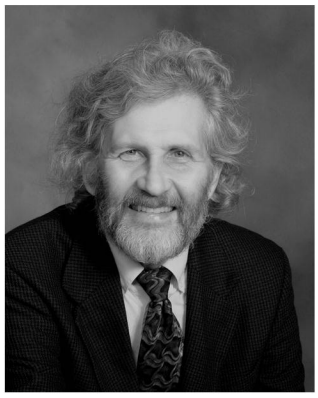
Solace to the suffering has great relevance in the context of a patient-physician contract. Patients who experience fear, frustration, anxiety, isolation, loneliness, helplessness, and hopelessness as a consequence of illness, and physicians who experience similar sensations if diagnoses and/or treatments are uncertain, unavailable, or unsuccessful, may be inspired, energized, and rejuvenated by humor and laughter. Humor and laughter may increase a patient's and a physician's receptivity to a creative process that, although it transcends rational control and analysis, mitigates repressive thoughts and emotions. More specifically, humor and laughter as a form of communication may facilitate establishment of interpersonal trust, integrity, rapport, and expressivity, and may help to diffuse the anxiety associated with fear, anger, ambiguity, and uncertainty. Humor and laughter accomplishes these things by juxtaposing the meaning and absurdity of human existence. *Humanum errare est.* (To err is human.) Humor intuits hope in the midst of despair by refusing to yield to failure. Humor acknowledges the reality and seriousness of failure, but also acknowledges the absurdity of taking failure too seriously. If failure is the redeeming feature of being human and since no one can achieve perfection, then it is absurd to be obsessed by perfection. Humor as an expression of faith exposes the foolishness of pretending that life is more than the certainty of human folly.

Humor also offers an alternative to the logic of anxiety and despair because it affirms the uniqueness, worth, and meaning of an individual and his or her role in the grand scheme of creation. Humor is life affirming, because it discerns that even with all the absurdities of life, there still exists a source of caring and acceptance. Exemplary of this primacy of self-acceptance and its foundation in faith are precedents from both Occidental and Oriental cultures. Conrad Hyers has written in the context of the Judeo-Christocentric tradition that without faith, humor becomes superficial, empty, and helpless. Laughter turns into mockery, banter into blasphemy, comedy into tragedy. Humor passes over into despair if it has no groundedness in the sacred, if it is not essentially and inwardly related to holy things. But if it has this foundation, it can play its own peculiar role in the inner dialectic of the sacred and the comic. Sigmund Freud, writhing from a humanistic and psychoanalytic perspective, stated: *Humor is the most self-sufficient of the comic forms; its process consummates itself in one single person and the participation of another adds nothing new to it. I can enjoy the pleasure of humor origination in myself without feeling the necessity [only the option] of imparting it to another.*

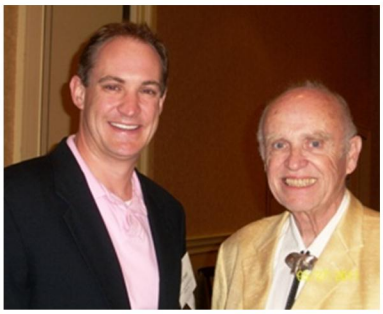
In a contemporary culture that stresses autonomy to the point of isolation, solitude and its accompanying *ennui* constitute the human condition. Humor in this context may engender contentment that may conquer loneliness, despair, isolation, anxiety, helplessness, and hopelessness. In Zen Buddhist precepts such contentment is referred to as *satori*, which connotes "an awareness that immediately grasps and celebrates the absurd as the inward realization of joy." By its playful disregard for *ought* and *should,* humor expiates guilt, and conveys a sense of self-acceptance, regardless of individual merit or moral weakness.

Perhaps, then, as suggested by William McDougall, who espoused a Darwinian theory of human behavior, humor and laughter evolved in the human race as an antidote to pity, a protective shield from the depressive influence of the shortcomings of ourselves and our fellowmen. Extrapolating this suggestion to the clinical situation, I would argue that humor and laughter, in the context of a patient-physician contract, ameliorates the *angst* associated with it and at least in part provides a solace that both seek. I would urge physicians to consider humor and laughter as a mechanism to cope with the physical, psychological, and spiritual stress associated with morbidity and mortality --- as a means to maximize healing.

> *Humour is odd, grotesque, and wild,*
> *Only by affectation spoil'd;*
> *'Tis never by invention got;*
> *Men have it when they know not.*
>
> *To Mr. Delany, 10 Oct. 1718*
> *Jonathan Swift*



President, Dr. Charles Rodning



At MASA's Annual Session, the Medical Society of Mobile County was well-represented. Dr. John Cranton was inducted into the 50 year Club, pictured with Dr. Kleinmann (immediate right). Sally Green (pictured with husband Dr. Byron Green) received the William Crawford Gorgas Award for her work with the Mobile Medical Museum. Dr. Robert Lightfoot (pictured with his wife, Tami) received the Samuel Buford Word Award for his work with Victory Health Partners. Dr. Stephen Lauten posthumously received the Ira L. Myers Service Award. Accepting the award were his wife, Nan, his son Brian, and his sister Leslie Lerner.

Collegiality for every stage of your Life

Past-President Dr. Leonard Rich, Medical Society Board Member Duncan Scott, and City Council Member Bess Rich.

Mrs. Mary Ellen Ferguson, Dr. George and Greta Massing, and Circle of Friends member Henry Fulgham with Saad Healthcare.

Dr. Conrad Pierce and Dr. Frank Long

The Medical Society holds 3 Quarterly membership meetings a year and 1 Annual Meeting.

President-Elect Dr. Elizabeth Manci with Mrs. Marsha and Dr. George Sutton.

Alliance President Julie Flotte with Alliance members and Past-Presidents Karen Alford and Peggy Salisbury.

Once a year, the Medical Societies of Mobile and Baldwin Counties come together for the Summer Social held at the 5 Rivers Delta Center.

Dr. Stephen Davis,, Mr. Charles Munderloh, and Mobile County Health Officer Dr. Bert Eichold

Dr. HSJ Walker, Jr., Dr. Howard Walker, III, and Past-President Dr. Don Muller.

Dr. Bill & Mrs. Marietta Urquhart with Circle of Friends members from Iberia Bank, Mrs. Margaret and Mr. Robbie Murray.

Making a Difference

To the Members of the Medical Society,

Please send our thanks to those who assisted with the procuring of the medical equipment for Kaoru. We were all overwhelmed by the generosity of so many!

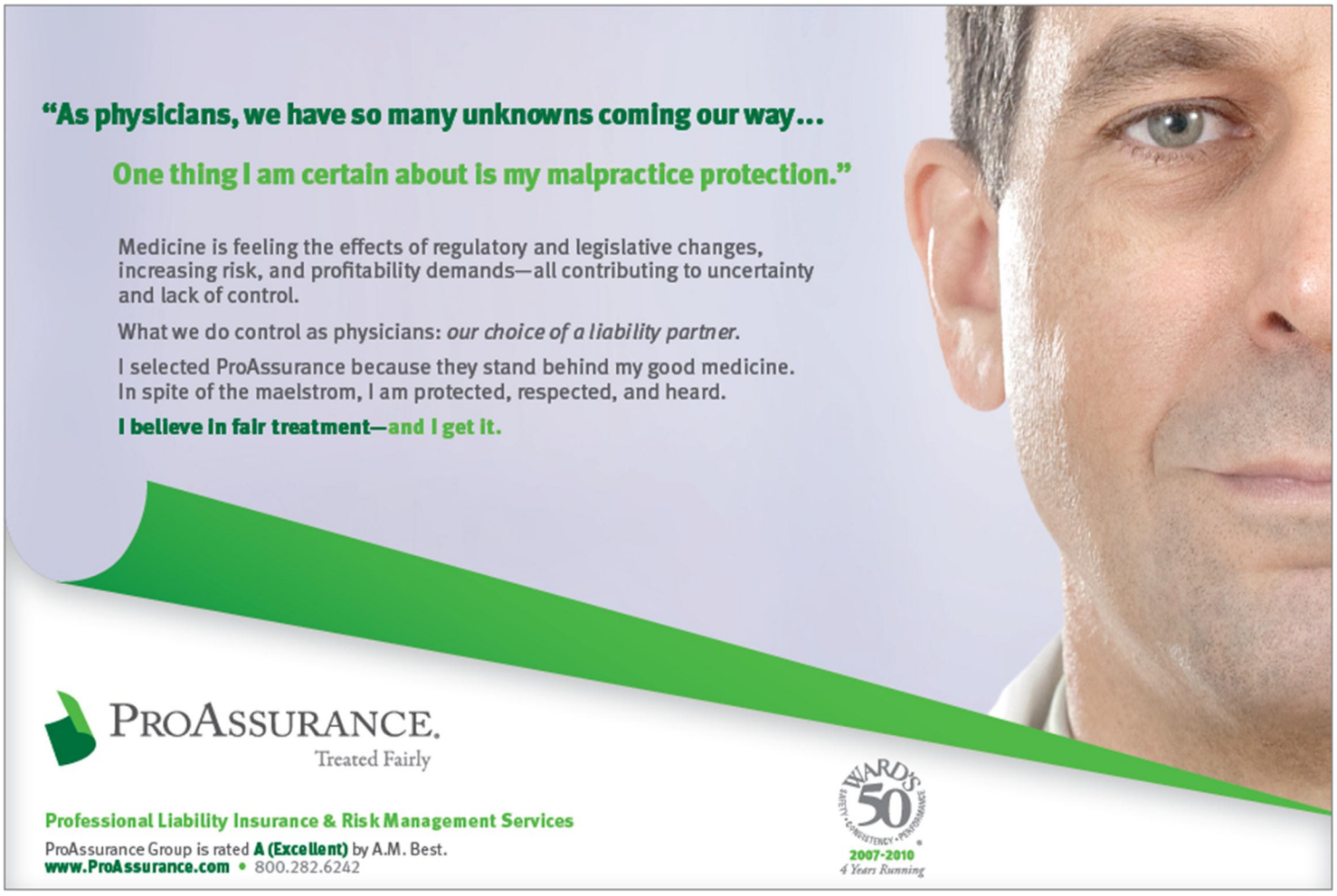
I have attached pictures of Mackenzie and Lauren Petersen sorting through and organizing the items for Kaoru Yamanoughi Ferraro and Yuko Jordan packing the items for her flight. We provided three large suitcases and one huge box - all of which Delta allowed her to take free of charge and marked priority!!

Kaoru will be joining a Japanese medical team for the next 10 days.

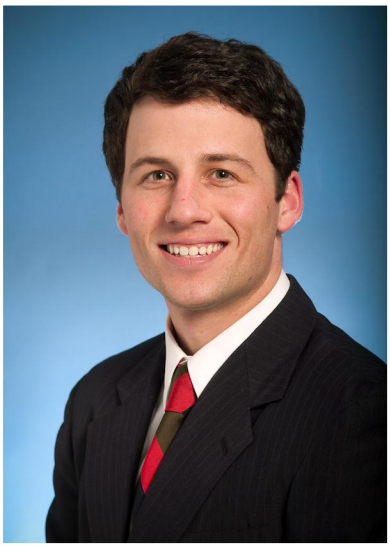
With Gratitude,
Cynthia Zipperly

Special Thanks to the following groups for their donations:

Blankenship General Surgery
Mobile Adult Care
Mobile Diagnostic Center
Mobile Heart Specialists
Obstetrics & Gynecology Associates
West Mobile Physicians Group



USA Resident & Student News



Each year the Medical Endowment Trust awards a scholarship to two 4th Year Medical Students. This years recipients of the 2011 Community Service Award are: Erica Pate (daughter of Dr. David & Mrs. Polly Pate) and Grant Zarzour (son of Dr. Robert & Mrs. Katherine Zarzour).

President Dr. Charles Rodning (l) and Dr. William Richards (r) with new Residents Erica Pate and Cathy Ho at USA's Match Day.

In Memoriam

Benjamin R. Busbee

Edmund C. Dyas, IV

Stephen G. Lauten

Jesse Littleton

Samuel P. Marshall

Joseph Miller

Brian K. Montgomery

John H. Prine

The Mobile County Sheriff's Office (251-574-2423) and the City of Mobile Police Department (251-208-1700) have partnered with Operation Medicine Cabinet. The goal is to provide a safe drug drop-off to rid your cabinets of unused, unwanted or expired drugs.
Call for further info.
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Protect our Waters

Tour deLADR Lower Alabama Doctors Bike & Run

Mark your Calendar
8th Annual Tour de LADR
(Lower Alabama Doctors)
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Grand Hotel, Point Clear
Saturday, April 31st
7am
For the latest info, visit

www.tourdeladr.com

To benefit Camp Rap-A-Hope &
The Mobile Medical Endowment Trust

Melissa McNichol Executive Director

Camp 2011 "Green Eggs and Camp" was a tremendous success - a direct result of your guidance, participation, and support! In our 26th year, we had the privilege of hosting 68 Campers – our most ever! What an amazing opportunity to change lives – not just the lives of the campers, but of their families, the counselors and staff, as well as the many volunteers that are part of the Rap-A-Hope family.

Each year we hear, "this was the best Camp week ever" – and each year it is!! It's certainly inspiring to watch returning campers improving the skills they learned the prior camp year and how they encourage new campers to join in the fun and the excitement of trying something new and challenging.

You'll read what your support really means in the words of a Camper and a Counselor:
Anna Gable, Camper age 17: I've been attending Camp Rap-A-Hope since I was seven years old. The way I would describe Camp Rap-A-Hope, or my experience here, would be perfect.

Keiran's Voice – First Time Counselor: When you are looking from a distance, you see more the illness or the heartache that comes with a cancer diagnosis. Even the camper profiles during orientation simply put a face to the unfairness that campers have…. the ensuing activities of a week at Camp Rap-A-Hope would give the illness and heartache a much needed backseat.

Thank you for helping to provide the "backseat" for cancer so that for one week a camper can experience "perfect".

Below: Dr. Elliott Foster and Camper Robbie Rainey

Above: Counselor Molly McGee (daughter of Dr. Tommy McGee) with Camper Jessica Weller

Special Thanks to the following Physicians who volunteered at Camp this year!

Lynn Batten
Fred Bodie
Maria Couto
Richard Duffey
Ted Flotte
Debra Gardner
Robert Green
Hamayun Imran
Daniel Lane
Joel Laughlin
Elizabeth Manci
Mark McCaslin
Thomas McGee
Jay Neumann
Richard Otts
Kitti Outlaw
Max Rogers
John Russell
Suzanne Russo
Edward Schnitzer
Stephen Sheppard
Abdul Siddiqui
Roger Tart
Prince Uzoije
James Walker
Suanne White-Spunner

The Alliance

By: Julie Flotte
Alliance President

The Alliance to the Medical Society of Mobile County just completed the new board installation this past May and will be holding the first new board meeting in August. We are excited to have received a $10,000.00 grant from the JL Bedsole Foundation to install our "Food for Thought" gardens in six local schools. This will help promote healthy food choices for our local school children and hopefully get them excited about gardening. We hope to have dates set soon for a resale event this year to help raise funds for our selected charities along with our annual wine tasting event. We hope to see you all there. We would like to encourage all new medical families to the area to check out our new website at www.themedicalalliancemobile.org or contact our new membership chair Adrian Dyer-Smith at adrianblumberg@yahoo.com for new member information. The Alliance is a wonderful way to help new families get familiar with the area, make friends, and have fun.

2011-2012 Alliance Board Members: Adrien Dyer-Smith, Sue Eways, Mary Ellingwood, Mary Galla, President Julie Flotte, Immediate Past-President Karen Alford, Melinda Holden, and Past-President Rene Wagnon

Alliance volunteers did not let the weather slow them down.

Dr. Fred Bodie and wife Judy were one of many physicians who took advantage of this great "perk" of being a Medical Society member.

On March 30th, for Doctors Day, the Alliance sponsored an event with Circle of Friends Member Iberia Bank. In honor of our physicians, free shredding services were offered to our members. Seen here with many of the boxes filled with items to be shredded, are Alliance volunteers Mrs. Melinda Holden and Mrs. Jill Johnson with Iberia Bank representative Laura Searcy.

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- Sale Price: $1,400,000
- Lease Rate: Inquire

Located just south of Cottage Hill Road on Hillcrest, this is an ideal property for an owner or an investor. Custom built metal stud, concrete and brick faced office building. Can be subdivided for multiple offices. Ample parking, with 57 parking spaces. Upscale interior with ceramic tile in the foyer and in the elevator. Energy efficient with insulated storm windows & R60 insulation, and 16 inches of concrete between exterior brick and interior walls.

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Upcoming Dates

Medical Society of Mobile County & Baldwin County Summer Social

5 Rivers Delta Center; August 30th, 6:30pm
RSVP to 251-476-9494

Camp Rap-A-Hope (details to follow)

Fall Family Fun Day; November 6th
Run for Hope 5K Turkey Trot; November 24th
Casino Royale; January 26th, 2012
Camp 2012; June 2nd-9th

Save the Date: Medical Society Events

Annual Meeting: December 6th, 2011

8th Annual Tour de LADR: April 31st, 2012

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