

Modern Healthcare

THE ONLY HEALTHCARE B

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Outliers

ASIDES & INSIDES

NCFE exec may find posse that's looking for her is getting larger

In a sure sign of true notoriety—and a rare event in healthcare—former National Century Financial Enterprises executive Rebecca Parrett has made the list of “America’s Most Wanted.”

In a “Web exclusive,” the Fox TV show last week put its audience on the lookout for Parrett, who didn’t show up for her scheduled ankle bracelet fitting in Carefree, Ariz., in March and has been on the lam ever since. As the Web site notes, the grandmother is facing up to 75 years in prison and a \$2.5 million fine for her involvement in the 2002 collapse of the healthcare accounts receivable financing firm that “bilked” investors out of billions.



Parrett, on the lam, may have changed her name and look.

Parrett’s crimes seemingly pale next to the other convicted felons featured on the Web site, including the man who allegedly threw a Molotov cocktail into an apartment in a Gypsy family feud, but the show notes that the FBI, referring to NCFE, “compares it to the more notorious collapses of the publicly held companies Enron and WorldCom.”

The Web posting warns viewers that Parrett, who has residences in Ohio and Arizona, “is a woman of means because of her involvement with the criminal financing at NCFE.” She could be hiding out under one of six different aliases—Ayers, Green, Kunzi, House, May and Robinson—which are all names of former husbands, according to the *Columbus (Ohio) Dispatch*. One of them, Donald Ayers, a former NCFE vice chairman, chief operating officer, director and owner, was convicted along with his ex-wife and three others in March. Ayers and two others had their bond revoked last month based on an informant’s claim that all the NCFE defendants, who had originally been released on bond pending sentencing, had plans to escape to Aruba if convicted.

Parrett, 39, is 5 feet tall, blond and blue-eyed, although she may dye her hair to disguise her identity, according to the Web site. She has a parrot tattoo on her left shoulder, and “may have plastic surgery to alter her appearance.”

Inteligent strategy

Employers are often portrayed as the bad guys when it comes to healthcare—passing on ever-rising premiums and related costs to their workers, or yanking coverage altogether. But one company is looking good these days.

In Arizona, a contract termination on April 25 between health insurer Cigna Corp. and Catholic Healthcare West left many local patients in the lurch. However, employees of Intel Corp. can rest easy. The computer-chip manufacturer is subsidizing the cost differences to ensure no disruptions of care. Intel says all Arizona employees covered by Cigna will have their claims processed as if they are in-network through 2008. Intel has about 10,000 employees in Chandler, Ariz., and offers health insurance from several carriers.

“No employee should be turned down, regardless of the facility they go to,” Intel spokeswoman Dawn Jones told the *Arizona Republic*.

Well, it's one solution

A reeking waiting room and “blood, bone and globules of fat on the walls and floor and stuck to wheels of carts” while nurses prepare for surgery is how the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* describes conditions at John Peter Smith Hospital, the heart of JPS Health Network, the public hospital system in Texas’ Tarrant County. And that’s just the first paragraph of the first story in a six-part series.

Fort Worth-based JPS officials’ quick response? They blocked access to the *Star-Telegram.com* Web site, preventing employees from reading the series while they’re at work, the newspaper reports. According to an April 29 *Star-Telegram* article, CEO David Cecero and CFO Gale Pileggi made the decision to cut off Web access.

“It was a decision that was discussed with the administration, being Mr. Cecero and Gale Pileggi, and how to deal with news issues and how many people have the right to read and do things during the workday,” Robert Eatley, senior vice president of public affairs and advocacy, told the paper.

Calling the facility a hospital “flush with cash and rife with problems,” the article says the system has accrued hefty surpluses, including nearly \$97 million last year, because it receives tax funding that other hospitals don’t receive.

JPS officials did not return repeated calls from *Outliers* for comment.

A new command

Gary Harrell doesn’t expect any trouble making the transition from helping lead special operations forces in the U.S. Army to leading business development for Pacer Health Corp., Miami Lakes, Fla. “The medical field and the military are alike because they’re both people businesses, or they better be,” he says. “If you lose track of the fact that you’re taking care of people, you might have gone astray.”

Harrell retired from the army as a major general in March after more than 30 years on active duty. Harrell worked in numerous leadership positions within the army’s special operations, including most recently as deputy commanding general of the Special Operations Command at Fort Bragg, N.C. The focus in special operations is on solving problems with creative, unconventional thinking, Harrell says, and he believes that will serve him well as vice president of business development for Pacer, which operates three rural hospitals in three states.



Harrell’s time in Somalia was subject of “Black Hawk Down.”

Keeping physicians from starting competing facilities is a big part of business development these days. Physicians in private practice may prove trickier to deal with than those in the Army. “I have had the privilege of having some very good ones who worked for me, who I worked with and who worked on me,” Harrell joked.

Maybe Harrell’s star power will help. Harrell was the ground force commander of the special operations forces in Mogadishu, Somalia, that were chronicled in the book and movie *Black Hawk Down*. Shortly after the movie was released in 2005, he was stationed in Afghanistan. Members of Congress who visited his installation told him he was a lot bigger than he appeared to be in the movie. “I had to explain that that wasn’t me in the movie,” Harrell says.