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## Father Martin's Ashley Havre de Grace, MD



# Natural Fit: Crothall Just Gets It

Health recovery begins in a peaceful, ordered environment. Father Martin's Ashley, a private substance abuse facility, perches on 147 acres off Maryland's Chesapeake Bay. The campus has 85 beds in a 110,000-square-foot facility with six major buildings, the oldest dating from the 1700s. In maintenance and housekeeping, its needs resemble an upscale hotel—a bright and inviting facility needing daily housekeeping, even laundry service.

### A NEW DIRECTION

For Ashley to live up to its reputation, it needed a fresh approach to maintenance and housekeeping. "We took a look at what we were doing," said Dan Berardi, Vice President of Support Services at Ashley, "and we weren't doing a very good job of delivering those services." To Berardi, outsourcing was a natural choice, but the maintenance and housekeeping departments made up 15% of Ashley's 200-person staff. Ashley needed the right people to bring a change without sending Ashley into culture shock.

Crothall caught Berardi's eye with a one-two punch: a strong reputation in health care and a proposed Environmental Services director who, according to Berardi, "blew him away." "Luna Williams gets it—understanding the sense of urgency, understanding the environment," Berardi said. "She's aces."

With Luna on board, Crothall rounded out the team with Plant Operations & Maintenance director Steve Griffith.

Greg Edwards, Crothall sales director, knew the importance of people. "The expertise we brought in allowed us to have a vision for the facility that it was hard for them to have for themselves," he said.

### SIMPLE BUT EFFECTIVE SOLUTIONS

With a health care facility, the details matter.

On the EVS side, the biggest improvement was expert scheduling. "It's the key component, that finesse of how we do staffing," Williams said. "Before, if a housekeeper was out, chances are that area wouldn't be covered."

Williams describes EVS like a ballet, understanding the pace of patient flow and service tasks. "To be effective, you have to have the customer service background," Williams stated. "To be efficient, you need to know how staffing patterns play a role in organizing the work."



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Williams looked for new people who were both approachable and proactive, who could learn customer needs. “The best employee I’ve brought on was a hair dresser,” said Williams. “She gets it. We gave her training to teach her how to perform the housekeeping duties. The ‘people’ part—she brought it.”

In POM, Crothall focused on bringing work home to a department that had relied heavily on contractors. “They contracted out too much of what needed to be done,” Griffith said. “Vendors were taking advantage of them beyond belief.” Crothall brought in dedicated general-skills workers to free up skilled employees for skilled tasks—increasing individual worker efficiency without overextending their employees.

Griffith also introduced the POM department to a work order system to track incoming maintenance requests and regular preventive maintenance. “Before, they would put in the request three or four times,” he said. “Sometimes, they had to wait for a contractor to be called in.” Response times dropped from weeks to about a day. “We would get this reaction: ‘You’re here to fix that already?’”

Griffith focused on low-cost, quick-impact changes for maximum benefit:

- The equipment for one building was housed in a basement. Condensate leaks and leaky valves caused so much humidity that pallets and 2x4s made a path on the floor. Crothall installed dehumidifiers to remedy the problem.
- HVAC usage was insufficiently monitored. Often, heating and cooling systems would run simultaneously while occupants attempted to adjust to a comfortable temperature.
- The lecture hall had 40 90-watt incandescent floodlights running 14 hours a day. They replaced them with 26-watt compact fluorescents, which lowered energy use.

- Previously, sprinklers ran in summer to cool the ground for the geothermal units. Crothall cleaned and serviced the coils so air and water could pass through.

### **UNEXPECTED SAVINGS, IMPROVED SATISFACTION: THE RESULTS ARE IN**

“Most of the time, it’s hard to find large savings in a small place,” Edwards said, “but they were outsourcing heavily.” The new efficiencies that Crothall introduced saved a lot of money:

- Slashing overall electricity use by more than 5% saved \$20,000.
- Cancelling all contract services saved over \$66,000 per year.
- Performing major maintenance in-house saved \$115,845.
- Reduced EVS and POM staff numbers by 25% saved \$180,000 yearly in payroll.

**That’s over \$375,000 in savings for a facility with an operating budget of \$15,000,000.**

These changes also improved the performance of the EVS and POM departments:

- Internal customer satisfaction is 91%.
- Patient satisfaction is 93.5%—the highest ranking for all support services.
- POM completes 275 work orders a month, plus 200 preventive maintenance orders. The previous in-house department closed 40 work orders a month, with no preventive maintenance.

More important, Crothall has integrated into the tight-knit Ashley community. “Greg, Luna, Steve—they were very interested in our organization,” Berardi said. “We haven’t lost our identity in this process. I can tell that every client means an awful lot to them.”