

Thomas Health System Meets Increased Clinical Engineering Needs through ISS Solutions



"I would recommend ISS Solutions to other hospitals and health systems for several reasons. I think they're very approachable and easy to work with. I find their technicians very knowledgeable, and I appreciate their work ethic."

— Dan Lauffer, Chief Operations Officer,
Thomas Health System

Snapshot

Company: Thomas Health System

Headquarters: South Charleston, WV

Business: A healthcare organization serving West Virginia's Kanawha Valley with advanced technology and a comforting touch.

Overview

Challenge: Find a flexible clinical engineering services provider that could tailor services to fit a changing organization.

Solution: Collaborate with ISS Solutions to meet the dynamic needs of Thomas' newly-expanded health system.

Benefits:

- Accommodated changing needs of a growing system
- Provide quality diagnostic imaging support
- Connected with Geisinger Health System
- Put patient care first

It can be difficult to decide how to handle increased and new clinical engineering needs after a healthcare organization grows and changes.

In 2007, Thomas Memorial Hospital and St. Francis Hospital, both care providers in South Charleston, West Virginia, joined forces to create Thomas Health System, greatly increasing the scope of their clinical engineering service needs.

Despite the fact that ISS Solutions was already providing clinical engineering services to one of the hospitals prior to the merger, the Thomas team nonetheless had to re-evaluate the clinical engineering needs of their newly-formed health system. Thomas Health System Chief Operations Officer Dan Lauffer said, "Initially, when the merger came together, we had two separate clinical engineering vendors, and we weren't comfortable with making a decision. However, our working relationship with ISS Solutions and their technicians, and the work that they did at Thomas Memorial Hospital, made the St. Francis Hospital staff also feel very comfortable."

Accommodated changing needs of a growing system

The healthcare field is anything but static. And like the medical industry as a whole, each healthcare organization is continually transforming patient care as research findings and new technologies emerge. Thomas Health System needed a clinical engineering organization that they could trust to adjust services to match the changing needs of their growing system.

Once ISS Solutions began to work for the larger Thomas Health System, they faced new challenges with helpful, dynamic energy. ISS Solutions' clinical engineering technicians participated in decision-making as the system continued to flourish, offering their professional expertise during the planning and opening of the \$70 million New Clinical Pavilion that opened at their Thomas Memorial Hospital campus in 2010. This six-floor addition provided additional private rooms, an obstetrics unit, and a surgical center, making the hospital simultaneously more family-friendly and more capable of meeting patient needs. "The ISS Solutions team helped us to select and install new equipment," said Mr. Lauffer. "They trained our employees and educated us about equipment care." ISS Solutions' clinical engineering team members helped make Thomas feel safe and comfortable with equipment changes.

Provide quality diagnostic imaging support

Being on the cutting-edge in regional healthcare is an important part of the Thomas legacy. Thomas Health System was the first hospital in West Virginia to offer open field MRI systems, dual PET/CT scans, and digital mammography—advanced equipment that effectively detects everything from cancer, heart diseases, and neurological disease to potential strokes and muscular issues. Offering leading diagnostic imaging services means keeping all the complex equipment in top shape. To achieve this goal, Thomas Health System turned to ISS Solutions.

Some people don't understand exactly how critical diagnostic imaging is to modern-day healthcare. "Depending on what's needed at the time, having imaging equipment down could be life-threatening," said Brian Lilly, Director of Medical Imaging, Emergency Preparedness, and the Vascular Lab at Thomas Health System. "Any time the imaging services are down, we're not able to provide needed services to the patient, so it's extremely important that our equipment is up and running." Mr. Lilly, who helped make the decision to switch diagnostic imaging preventative maintenance and repair to ISS Solutions, was ultimately happy with the new service provider. ISS Solutions kept imaging equipment uptime within the 98.5% - 99% range, as well as providing immediate assistance if the equipment ever faltered. "Entrusting ISS Solutions was a leap of faith for me," said Mr. Lilly. "Now I believe switching vendors was a good move for the system as a whole. I've been very pleased that they have maintained our high level of service."

Connected with Geisinger Health System

Thomas Health System initially decided to go with ISS Solutions after seeing their work in action at Geisinger Health System of Pennsylvania, a multi-billion dollar nonprofit healthcare organization and ISS Solutions' parent company. ISS Solutions manages all of Geisinger's 60,000+ clinical devices. Mr. Lauffer especially appreciated ISS Solutions' connection with a reputable not-for-profit organization, one similar to Thomas Health System. "The missions of our hospitals are not unlike the mission of Geisinger in that we all want to serve our community in the best possible way," commented Mr. Lauffer. "Geisinger is well-known throughout the country and around the world, so it certainly made an impact to think that ISS Solutions could join our team at Thomas Health System."

According to Jackie Carnefax, Thomas' Director of Medical Surgical Services, a site visit to Geisinger's Danville, PA campus was crucial. Thomas Health System administrators visited Geisinger and spoke one-on-one with their counterparts in Facilities, Safety, and Nursing. "The ISS Solutions staff members were knowledgeable and well-educated," said Ms. Carnefax. "They knew what they were doing, and they were very positive about the program that they had developed at Geisinger."

Put patient care first

Thomas Health System employs "The Thomas Promise", which encompasses customer service, patient care, and concern for people. Their commitment to compassionate quality healthcare goes hand-in-hand with ISS Solutions' commitment to service excellence.

"The interesting thing about customer service in the hospital setting is that you don't need to be a direct caregiver to impact patient experiences," said Mr. Lauffer. Thomas Health System recently was named a Blue Distinction Center for Knee and Hip Replacement, a national honor for their outstanding quality of care and patient results. Afterward, Steve Dexter, Thomas Health System's President and CEO, attributed part of the honor to the behind-the-scenes technicians who contributed to Thomas' culture of caring.

"Culture drives healthcare systems' success. Culture has to encourage patient quality and safety," Dan Lauffer explained. He believed that ISS Solutions' clinical engineering technicians valued and encouraged Thomas' culture of caring. "The technicians that work for ISS Solutions realize that they are members of a healthcare team. The culture that they bring to our facility is important to our healthcare professionals." All in all, Thomas Health System appreciated ISS Solutions' caring technicians, who don't just use mechanical or practical knowledge, but also bring out the healing, human side of clinical engineering equipment management.

