



## Two worlds merge thanks to the efforts of staff and local community.

**Tri-Ward Clinic and Hospital straddles two worlds: One world is the charming and picturesque town of Bernice, Louisiana, a small town situated in the northwest corner of Louisiana. Bernice is a quiet friendly community of approximately 1800 people, many of whom are life long residents, employed in either the timber or poultry industries, or commuting to larger cities like Ruston.**

Opened in 1970, Tri-Ward is a nexus of this tightly knit world, and as one of Bernice's life long residents herself, Charolette Thompson, Tri-Ward's CEO-CFO, knows and loves this place well. A warm and outgoing administrator, she says her favorite part of the job is all the contact she has with people. "Getting to see the parents and the grandparents and the kids—that's what I like the most."

But Tri-Ward must also operate in another world—the much colder, crueler world of the healthcare marketplace, in which stark realities and a challenging economic climate mean a small hospital, particularly one like Tri-Ward with its high population of Medicare patients, must work harder and smarter than ever before. Denied the economies of scale enjoyed by larger facilities, Tri-Ward must nonetheless compete with bigger hospitals, maintaining the same advanced standards of care on a significantly leaner budget. This demanding marketplace is a world Thompson has come to

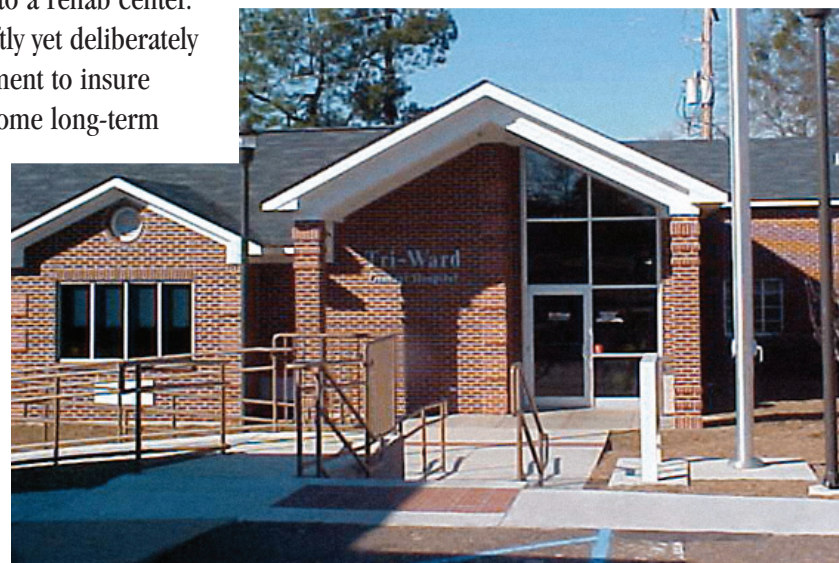
know well and to navigate with agility over the course of her nearly 30 years with Tri-Ward. (She started work for Tri-Ward in 1973 as an accounting consultant with several years experience and a B.S. from Louisiana Tech. She became CFO in 1989, and accepted the dual position of CEO-CFO a decade ago when approached by the hospital board.)

During her tenure, Thompson has learned to squeeze the most out of hospital resources, scouting out grants and low-interest loans for improvements and enhancing revenues through outside-the-box thinking like the leasing of unused hospital space to a rehab center. She moves swiftly yet deliberately in staff recruitment to insure employees become long-term assets. And she depends on her staff for high performance. "I have great department heads," she

says. "Everybody knows their job, and everybody likes doing their job."

She also depends on long-term high performing suppliers like Custom Software. It was November, 1989, when CSS (then called AHS) installed the hospital's first system—for payroll, general ledger, accounts receivable and medical records. As a small hospital licensed for only 11 acute/swing beds, the hospital might have been expected to delay the implementation of such a large-scale conversion, but Thompson credits her administra-

*(continued on back)*



# Two worlds merge *(continued from front)*

tive predecessor for having the foresight to move ahead and include automation in the budget. "He was retiring, but he knew we would eventually have to submit all our claims electronically, and he planned for it."

Bids from two companies were considered, and Thompson, who was then CFO, admits she initially favored the CSS competitor. "But the administrator asked me to take a closer look before I made up my mind."

Thompson decided to see the programs in action at two different hospitals. At the facility using CSS, Thompson met Jeanette Moore, who was then working in hospital administration. Moore was a knowledgeable and enthusiastic user of Custom Software (so enthusiastic she would later move from the client side to become a CSS Customer Support Specialist). When Moore showed Thompson what CSS had done for her hospital, and how easy it was to use, that sealed the deal for Thompson.

"I could see there was just no comparison," she says.

"You'd have to be a lawyer to understand the other company's program," she adds with a laugh. **"Our people were going to have to have something simple to use, and Custom Software was so easy to use."**

Over the years, ease of use has also included ease of updates, thanks to the responsiveness of

Custom Software to industry needs and to the particular needs of Tri-Ward. "We've been able to say, 'look here's what we need,' and they've provided it," Thompson says. Tri-Ward has gradually expanded its automation to cover its outpatient clinic, pharmacy, radiology and an electronic medical record. Recent upgrades will allow local and wide area network access to the electronic medical record.

"We've done all of it in phases and steps, and CSS has always worked with us to make it financially feasible." In fact, working with CSS has been "marvelous," says Thompson. **"We've had very good service. There's no doubt about it. They've been a partner in our success, and it's a comfortable partnership that's helped us to help our patients."**

The benefits have been important: Custom Software Systems has meant that insurance claims are processed speedily, a great relief for patients, and for the hospital, the reduced turnaround time has been a huge advantage in cash flow, an especially critical issue amidst rising cuts to Medicaid and Medicare.

In spite of those cuts, Thompson and Tri-Ward moved into the twenty-first century with confidence. In 2003, the hospital expanded its

pharmacy, and added a well-child clinic that serves as an overflow to the ER, a new waiting room and a

***"There's no doubt about it. They've been a partner in our success, and it's a comfortable partnership that's helped us to help our patients."***

remodeled front entrance. In the near future, Thompson expects Tri-Ward to focus the hospital's automation efforts on clinical areas such as nursing service and the laboratory.

The town of Bernice is also enjoying a resurgence, with old grain warehouses being converted into new businesses. And as this world of small town friends and neighbors continues to meet the world of modern healthcare with all its opportunities and challenges, Thompson expects Tri-Ward will be able to answer the needs of both—in part, thanks to the world of difference that Custom Software Systems has made and continues to make in Tri-Ward's efficiency and service.



**Custom Software Systems, Inc.**

7012 Westbelt Drive  
Nashville, TN 37209

1.800.344.8053

[www.css-corporate.com](http://www.css-corporate.com)

**Be sure to check our website frequently for the latest documentation. The latest manuals can be downloaded at <http://www.css-corporate.com/customers/manuals.htm>.**