Chief Pharmacy Officer Linda Tyler loves to take the stairs, but she often feels pretty lonely. Few University of Utah Health staff follow her example as she walks up and down stairs to and from meetings.

Tyler seeks out stairwells so frequently that she can tell you some with the best views and art in Salt Lake City. They haven’t been at University Hospital.

So when Imagine Perfect Care asked her for innovative ideas, improving the stairwells quickly came to mind. And it’s not just about improving staff health — although that’s always a good idea too.

“If we’re taking the elevators when our patients need them, what does that look like?” she asked.

Starting in June, the hospital’s main stairwell next to the lobby elevators will be transformed with colorful, five-foot high vinyl wall hangings covered with motivational quotes and art.

University Health wants to spread the message of “One up, two down” to encourage staff to walk up at least one flight and down at least two rather than using the elevator. The hope is that the wall coverings may help make all those steps more enticing.

“I think any time you can add a little bit of fun or color to a place that is usually very boring, this makes the workplace a little bit more lively,” said Molly Gaughran, administrative services coordinator for Imagine Perfect Care.

Fewer staff on the elevators will make it easier for patients to get on and off not to mention getting to their appointments more easily. Elaine Stowell, the aesthetics and standards coordinator, has seen patients struggle to get on and off the elevator because of the number of staff using it around lunchtime. Fewer staff on elevators will also make it easier for visitors to see sick family.

This is not to say staff should never use the elevator. Many employees are on their feet much of
the day, Stowell acknowledged. That’s why the “One up, two down” slogan sticks to a moderate number.

“If they’re comfortable doing more, we encourage it,” she said. “They’ll see more of the sayings and discover more of the stairwell.”

The main stairwell is a test project. If feedback is positive, staff hope to change up the sayings and expand the project into other stairwells.

The project team is open to suggestions of other motivational quotes, poems and other ways to brighten the stairwells.

As for Stowell, you might catch her trying to follow Tyler’s example.

“If I’m the main person working on this project, I better take the stairs,” she said.

By Julia Lyon