



Quarterly Newsletter for
Volunteer Services and
Gundersen Partners

April/May/June 2025



Eileen Wiltinger,
Manager, Volunteer
Services

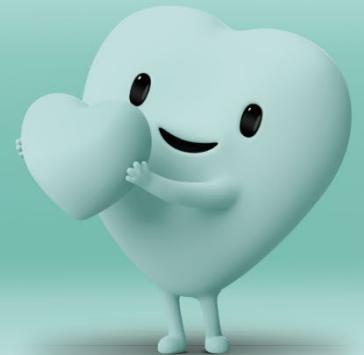
Happy Spring Volunteers! I am happy to share with you our second volunteer newsletter of the year. This is always one of my favorites to put together because we get to celebrate all of you! As you are all aware, we celebrate National Volunteer Week in April each year. This is our opportunity to reflect on our volunteer program and the impact our volunteers make in the organization.

Our theme this year is **Volunteers Impact Lives**. No matter how you serve within the organization, you are making an impact in someone's life. By donating your time, you enrich our patients, visitors, and staff's lives with the care you provide. The compassionate service you deliver helps to elevate the quality of healthcare experiences for everyone.

By the numbers in 2024 Emplify Health by Gundersen, volunteers in our region served over **34,000** hours, an increase of 4,800 hours over the previous year. Our Hospice program increased volunteer engagement by 36% and Community Resource Connectors increased their service hours by 20%. Both programs serve a population of patients who rely on the volunteers that support them.

Volunteers assembled over **68,000** patient education folders and packets. Our transport volunteers completed over 12,507 transports. We onboarded 215 new volunteers in 2024, allowing us to extend our reach and serve more departments. We have volunteers serving in over thirty different areas of the organization including our main hospital, critical access hospitals, senior living centers, clinics, and community outreach. You are impacting lives with your service.

Welcome to healthcare
that's all about caring



Impact and Appreciations from some of our Sites

Physical Therapy, Kay Lee, Rehabilitation Technician

Being in the PT, OT & Rehab inpatient side can be very busy at times. Welcoming our volunteers to help in our gyms has been such an amazing and rewarding experience. We appreciate all the time they dedicate to helping us in many ways.

From assembling PT walkers, to stocking laundry and helping the techs out with tidying up the gym, they are willing to do whatever we ask of them. They help our therapists with their sessions; whether its wheelchair following with our patients or playing kick ball around the gym. We always have a fun time here. Our patients enjoy seeing new faces and smiles. It's wonderful to see what our future faces of PT will look like some day!

Hospice, Dr. Larry Skendzel, Hospice Medical Director

Hospice volunteers 'transform hope' in the purest sense of the word for the people they serve. They go to the bedside, or they come into the office to help support, to listen, to say to the people around them 'you are important!' Volunteers are miners of the truth of an experience of illness for those they visit. They get to hear the stories and to let the person who is talking come to new insights in the very telling of the tale. Volunteers 'journey with' in a nonjudgmental way. There is an openness and a curiosity that can occur alongside a genuine friendship. I once had a volunteer tell me that the reason they liked to visit hospice patients was that there was such honesty in the interaction. There wasn't time for the ways we wear masks in many social situations. "No bs!"

One of my favorite stories from a volunteer who was a great mentor to me was that he was visiting a man who had accepted his coming death and just wanted to 'go to God.' He became increasingly frustrated by the fact that he was still very much alive week after week for their visit and he talked out his anger in real time with his volunteer who listened and didn't try to solve the mystery of why he was still here. Finally, one day the volunteer came by for a visit and the volunteer greeted him with a smile and said, "I figured it out!" The volunteer asked for more information. "I figured out why I am still on this earth! I'm here for you! I've still got a few things to teach you before I die!" The volunteer smiled and rolled up his sleeves and said to the man, "Let's get to work my friend!" That is the core of what hospice volunteers do everyday for our community. They are the thread that holds the hospice team together. They are rooted in service and in the love of befriending others. I am so honored, humbled and so inspired to work alongside such dedicated people! A big thank you to all of the hospice volunteers who continue to grace us at Gundersen!

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Community Resource Connector – Danielle Wnek, Manager, Office of Population Health

Volunteers play a crucial role in transforming lives, particularly through the efforts of the Community Resource Connector (CRC) volunteer team. These dedicated individuals focus on addressing the social needs of patients who may face various challenges, such as transportation barriers, food insecurity, financial difficulties, and housing instability. In 2024 alone, the CRCs made a significant impact by sharing resources and information with over 1,100 patients! By connecting individuals to various resources like local food pantries, transportation services, and utility assistance programs, the CRCs are not only providing immediate informational assistance but also empathizing with patients as they share details of their situation.

One touching example of the CRCs' impact involved a volunteer who engaged with a patient struggling with severe food insecurity. The patient shared that she had not eaten in two days, prompting the CRC to take swift action. On the same day, the volunteer connected her with community health workers from the Southwestern Community Action Program, who delivered food from a local pantry and assisted her in enrolling in FoodShare assistance. This immediate response not only alleviated the patient's hunger but also opened doors to ongoing support, showcasing the profound difference that CRC volunteers make in the lives of those they serve.

Thank you, CRC volunteers, for all you do!





A Word From Our Gift Shop Assistants

Hi there! I'm Chanisa Wilkerson. I have been working with the Gundersen Gift shop for a little over a year now. Before coming to Gundersen I was a stay-at-home mother to my, now, 6-year-old son! During my free time I love to go for walks, read, paint & cook. My favorite part about working with the Gundersen Gift shop is interacting with our volunteers!

Working with our Gift Shop Volunteers has been such a wonderful experience. Getting to know each volunteer has been an absolute pleasure. I always look forward to working with such cheerful and upbeat individuals. I have learned so much about life and about Gundersen from getting to know you all! I appreciate everything you do, and I look forward to growing with you!



I started working at the La Crosse Gift Shop in what seems like only a couple of years ago, however, it has been such a delight to share this mission with my co-workers and all of the wonderful volunteers that it is going on 8 years now! I come into the gift shop a couple of evenings a week and on the weekends to merchandise and take care of our customers with our college and teen volunteers. I do love to pick up some extra hours during Christmas break and summers because it is such a treat to work with the daytime volunteers, as well.



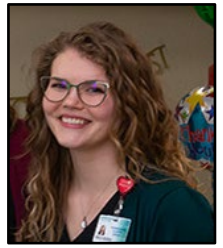
I work a full-time job with kids during the day as a librarian assistant and paraprofessional with the Onalaska School District during the school year. I had previously had about 20 years of experience full and part-time in retail sales and merchandising with Prange's/Youngers and Kohls department stores. I have been extremely inspired by all of the volunteers who have dedicated so many hours and years of service to this wonderful shop and truly feel so fortunate to be a part of this team!

My husband Mike and I have lived in Onalaska for 23 years now, and we have a daughter and a son who are both married. I do keep pretty busy with work, but in my down time I love to walk the bike trail by Lake Onalaska with my husband, golf with some lady friends, and for the last year and a half spend as much time as possible with my little granddaughter! My parents are in the Marshfield area, and I try to get up there as regularly as possible to spend time with them, as well.

Thank you gift shop volunteers and all of the volunteers throughout our health system for bringing your special spirit of giving to this community! You truly make a difference in the lives of our patients and staff!! We hear the appreciation every day from the people who come into our shop and from the patients we are lucky to bring a smile to when we deliver a gift from their loved ones to their hospital rooms!

Connection Corner: Volunteers Impacting Social Health

Erica Pichette, Program Coordinator



Hello everyone, thanks for reading! As dedicated volunteers and members of the Emplify Health community, your commitment to enhancing patient care goes beyond the walls of our facilities. This quarter I'd like to highlight an aspect of our volunteer program you may not be aware of and share about its direct impact on the social health of our patients.

Community Resource Connector volunteers, or CRCs for short, work with our Office of Population Health team every day to assist patients with their social needs. Patients are screened for social drivers of health (nonmedical factors that influence our health - think access to healthy food, reliable transportation, safe housing, healthy relationships, etc.) while they are within our walls for annual wellness exams and other appointments. If the patients shares they are struggling with a nonmedical need and they consent to being offered assistance, a CRC volunteer calls that patient within a few days of their appointment.

Conversations vary by patient but always start with a listening ear and plenty of empathy. CRCs learn about the patient's circumstances and identify needs. Volunteers then find appropriate resources in a database called CommunityLink. Last year, the CRC volunteers connected **1,129** patients to resources and helped to improve the social health of our community!

CRC volunteers share that they enjoy the opportunity to speak with patients and feel good knowing they are helping someone feel cared about beyond just their physical health. Volunteers reconnect with a patient the following week to learn if the resource was helpful and explore other resources they may need. Building these trusting relationships helps combat feelings of isolation and can make our patients feel more comfortable asking for help if they need future assistance.

After several years of success in the Gundersen region, we are excited to share that the CRC volunteer role is being replicated at Bellin! Thank you, CRC volunteers, for your incredible work serving our community and being a powerful example of the impact volunteers can have!

Want to learn more? Click the link to watch a brief video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k7BHbj2oCKo>



Hello from Bellin Region Volunteers!

Bellin Health Volunteer Services began with the Bellin Health Auxiliary in 1934. Although the Auxiliary has since been dismantled, volunteering remains strong at Bellin Health, extending across various areas throughout the hospital and expanding into other clinics and services throughout the Bellin region. Our Gift Shop at Bellin's Green Bay hospital is entirely run by volunteers, some of whom are former Auxiliary members.

Another significant part of our history is the Concerned Hearts Club, which was run entirely by volunteers at Bellin Health. The Concerned Hearts Club consisted of family members and individuals affected by heart surgery through Bellin Health. These members managed the ICU Desk outside the waiting area for families, providing support and guidance to families and patients undergoing heart surgery. Although the Concerned Hearts Club has been dismantled, the ICU Desk continues to be staffed by volunteers, many of whom are cardiac patients themselves, performing the same duties as the Club. Pictured below, are two of our Concerned Hearts members and longtime volunteers – Joe and Audrey Leisgang.



Today, the Bellin region has 249 active volunteers, who are the soft touch of our hospital. Our volunteers serve in various roles, including Hospital Support in our main hospital and the Surgical & Specialty Center, Service Assistants on our hospital floors, and at the Ashwaubenon Clinic, Marinette Clinic, Oconto Hospital, and Bellin Psychiatric Center. We also have volunteers at the Bellin Cancer Center, who run the Amy Eliason Bellin Expressive Arts in Medicine (BEAM) program, as well as pet therapists. Below, you can see a bit of the BEAM art room, with BEAM volunteers Ann Pillsbury and Karen Reis. To the right of them, is a longtime volunteer pup, Tinker.



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Volunteer Services at Bellin Health extend beyond patient-facing roles. We have Patient & Family Advisors, as well as knitters and sewers who create blankets, hats for cancer patients, toe caps for orthopedic patients, and NICU hearts for our NICU babies.

To celebrate our wonderful volunteers, we host a yearly Appreciation Celebration in the spring at Lambeau Field. This year, we will be hosting breakfast in Johnsonville Tailgate Village on Lambeau Field grounds. This celebration includes Packer-themed raffles.

We also feature Volunteer Spotlights, highlighting volunteers who have shown exemplary service to Bellin Health. These spotlights are featured on social media and in our quarterly newsletter for volunteers, "The Bellinteer." Additionally, we celebrate each volunteer's birthday with a birthday card and a gift certificate to our Bellin Hospital Gift Shop.

Volunteer Services is a direct service component of The Bellin Health Foundation, aligning perfectly with our mission to bring community health to life through donor time, talent, and treasure. Dawn McCole serves as the Volunteer Manager through The Bellin Health Foundation, while Kimberly Sommers, Donor and Marketing Specialist, assists with Volunteer and Foundation communications [Click here](#) to learn more about our region's Foundation.



Celebrating Years of Service Milestones

1 Year

Henry Van Pietersom – Lobby
Melissa Tillman – Pet Therapy
Kay Rutherford – Healing Arts
Whitney Rucker – Pet Therapy
Luke Jambois – Healing Arts
Caleigh Gaustad – Nuclear Medicine
Zoey Carlson - Ophthalmology
Lynn Smiezek – Surgery Waiting
Veronica Sheehan – Emergency Serv.
Ashley Schlauderaff - Peds PT/OT
Josie Plut – Child Life
Madison Lessard – Gift Shop
Janean Lang – Library Support
Rich Krause – Eye Clinic (Onalaska)
Megan Kelly - Transport
Maureen Jacobson – Healing Arts
Natalie Hulett – Gift Shop
MonRaye Ermis – Surgery Waiting
Sarah DeLacy – Pet Therapy
Lori Van Lin – Gundersen Partners
Megan Schipper – Child Life Spec.
Helen Onyeabor – Gift Shop
Kate Nevin – Gift Shop
Andrea Long* – Pet Therapy
Katie Hintz – Physical Therapy
Brent Dwyer - Transport
Terri Daley-Mack – Patient Companion
Petyon Cappelle – Physical Therapy
Sarah Zelhofer – Pediatric PT/OT
Ginny Wonderling – Gift Shop
Morgan Sommerfeld – Gift Shop
Lydia Schult – CRC
Emma Schueller – Child Life Spec.
Diya Patel – Gift Shop
Aaron Miller - Hospice
Jessica Mahlum - Gift Shop
Cheryl Lang – Hospice/Eucharistic
Brooklyn Boushack - Physical Therapy
Kathy Waldera-Manka – Gift Shop (Tri-Cty)
Dena Schaaf - Transport
Maggie Pawlenty - Transport
Grant Hamilton - Transport
Katie Gerovac – Steady Strides YMCA
Clair Coleman* – Pet Therapy
Valentina Torres – Steady Strides (Winona)
Luke Schneider - CRC

Alyssa Putnam – Imaging
Eden Jacobson – Emergency Serv.
Carol Hanson – Gift Shop (Tri-Cty)
Grace Gruska – Nuclear Medicine
Dawn Fitzmaurice – Healing Arts
Arie Bachmann* – Pet Therapy
Neenah Stinson – Child Life Spec.
Nancy Schultz – Lobby (Winona)
Gracie Redfearn – Nuclear Medicine
Shae Pigarelli – Child Life Spec.
Ashley Moses - Hospice
Haley Moore – Gift Shop
Madeline Laferriere – Physical Therapy
Angela Klaeser – Patient Companion
Dave Jacobs – Lobby (Winona)
Adrian Jackson - Healing Arts
Caden Hauser – Transport
Joni Beinborn – Healing Arts
David Tarr – Infusion Pt. Hospitality
Ann Schiefelbein – Gift Shop
Ann Lubinski – Hospice/Lobby
Candi Kohner – Lobby (Winona)
Courtney Daniels-Burke* – Pet Therapy
Ryan Burke – Pet Therapy
Mary Lou Baumgarner – Hospice Shawls
Emma Anderson* - Pet Therapy
Laura Tomasko – Gift Shop (Tri-Cty)
Leyna Sonnenfeld – Child Life Spec.
Maks Kopish - Hospice
Sarah Graves – Pet Therapy
Heath Graves – Pet Therapy
Lucas Go - Transport
Gracie Duncanson – Gift Shop
Ellie Zhovtis – Surgery Waiting
Isabel Zdroik - Surgery Waiting
Linda Watson – Pet Therapy
Kari Ranallo – Gundersen Partners
Makena Musty – PT (Winona)
Merry Kocar - Special Projects
Mary Menne – Surgery Waiting
Margelyn Berndt – Patient Companion
Linda Arneson* – Gift Shop (Tri-Cty)
Victorianna Applin – DVSA
Madeline Bauman – CRC
Jon Freisinger – OSC
Gao Yang – CRC
Lexi Valeri – Child Life Spec.
Elise Berry – Lobby

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Celebrating Years of Service Milestones

5 Years

Henry Van Pietersom – Lobby
Jerry Johnson – OSC Transport
Michael Amundson - Transport
Jim Bugge – Transport/Lobby/Gundersen Partners
Sharon Loomis - Transport
MacKenzie Caya* - CRC

10 Years

Sandy Drexler - Transport
Ed Biddick - Transport

15 Years

Monica Stanek - Hospice
Marilyn Schreiner - Transport
Chuck Kulas – Infusion Hospitality
Maribeth Phillips – Gift Shop

20 Years

Darla Severtson - Transport
Jane Rada – Office Support/Gundersen Partners

25 Years

Marilyn McElligott – Hospice/Gundersen Partners

Key

CRC - Community Resource Connector
DVSA – Crime Victim Advocate
OSC – Outpatient Surgery Center
Lobby Ambassador
* - Emplify Employee Volunteer



Gundersen Partners Highlights

Jill Blackburn, Partners President

Dear friends,

It's a big year for Gundersen Partners! Our organization celebrates 75 years of service and giving in 2025 and will be sharing stories in a variety of ways of how Partners has made a difference in our organization and community. As our Partners Board members look back on the years of dedication from all who have served before us, often learning things we had not known before, we are heart warmed to see how many lives Gundersen Partners has touched over the years!

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For instance, did you know that Gundersen Partners was instrumental in bringing education on organ donation and procurement to Gundersen Health System when they collaborated with the Department of Nursing and hosted "Gift of Life," an organ donation fair, in 2007? Prompted by encouragement to focus on organ donation from Tommy Thompson, then Secretary of Health and Human Services, and Partners of Wisconsin Hospital Association (WHA), this event was held at Gundersen for the medical center staff, Partners' members, volunteers and the community. The program offered a conference for physicians with a notable presenter from University Hospital of Madison's Organ Donation medical staff as well as certification for nurses, social workers and other staff involved in organ procurement. In 2010, Gundersen Partners received a WAVE Award for this collaborative program from Partners of WHA. Over the years, Gundersen has created a very successful program, recognized and honored nationally.

Technology has come a long way! In the 60s and 70s, "TV Lady" Jean Davis, as she was known, a member and President of the Junior Auxiliary (1970), helped raise funds for the Auxiliary by signing up patients who wanted to rent TVs!

To all the volunteers reading this who are inspired by Partners' work, we would love for you to join our organization! You already share your gifts with Emplify Health, our patients and families, and becoming a Partners member is just one more way to do so. To join, simply complete an application through our website: <https://www.gundersenhealth.org/gundersen-partners> or call Sheila Erickson at 608-775-3602 and ask for an application form. We would welcome you with open arms!

Thank you for all you do!

Warmly,
Jill

Gundersen Partners Recent Impact

"We would like to thank you once again for your generous bedding kit donations. Having these on hand allows us to continue the Christmas spirit throughout the year. SHP and the kids are truly blessed to have your generous support."

Pictured right: The "500 Club." The SHP crew that delivered the 500th bed.

Sleep in Heavenly Peace



"Your generosity has made a meaningful impact on the lives of the kids we serve. Because of you, we're able to ensure every child who walks through our doors has access to nutritious, delicious meals, giving them the energy they need to learn, play, and grow. Thanks to your donations in 2024 we were able to serve more than 10,500 free meals to kids in our community."

Pictured right: 2024 Thanksgiving Gathering at The Good Fight





Upcoming Events

April 2025

8-9 – Gundersen Partners Discovery Toys Sale, Main Clinic Lobby

9 – Wisconsin Hospital Association Advocacy Day, Madison, Wisconsin

16 – Hospital Inpatient Therapies Bake Sale, Moka

19-25 – National Volunteer Week

21-25 – Earth Week

22 – Volunteer Bake Sale, Moka

24 – Volunteer Appreciation Luncheon, The Nature Place, Myrick Park (Please RSVP 608-775-3602)

24-25 – Versiti Blood Drive, Legacy Lower Level, La Crosse

28 – May 3 Patient Experience Week

May 2025

12-16 – Healthcare Week

21 – 37th Annual Joint Luncheon and “Style on the River”, The Cargill Room, tickets \$35 available in the Gundersen La Crosse Gift Shop

27-28 – Versiti Blood Drive, Legacy Lower Level, La Crosse

June 2025

16 – Gundersen Partners 2025 Gundersen Employees Children’s Scholarship Application Submission Deadline

17 – Gundersen Partners 75th Anniversary

23-24 – Versiti Blood Drive, Legacy Lower Level, La Crosse