

# NEWS

**GUNDERSEN**  
HEALTH SYSTEM®

**Quarterly Newsletter for Gundersen Health System's Partners & Volunteer Services**  
July/August/September 2018

## From the director

By Lori Van Lin, director, Volunteer Services



I am amazed every day by the many examples of kindness and caring shared by you when you volunteer at Gundersen Health System. It takes a special person who willingly shares their time in a healthcare setting caring for folks who may truly be facing life or death situations. When you take the time to be present for our

patients and families, to treat them in such a way that they feel you are there only for them and will spend as much time as is needed to help them, it is incredible! You see our patients when they are vulnerable and

overwhelmed, and your interactions with them or your support of what our employees do so they can spend more time directly with them, can greatly influence their experience.

Your acts of compassion change the lives of our patients, families and staff. You have no idea how much you are impacting others. Our area has many different organizations in need of volunteers to achieve their missions and support our communities. Thank you for choosing us to be where you dedicate your time. You have my gratitude!

My thanks,  
Lori

## *Volunteer Recognition Event 2018*

Our annual Volunteer Recognition Event was held on Tuesday, April 17 at the Integrated Center for Education (ICE House). This year's theme was "Volunteers, Living the Spirit of Service". We were entertained by Viterbo's male acapella group and the Onalaska High School girl's acapella quartet. Both were excellent, and we could have heard more! The photo booth was back for one more year. Lots of zany photos were taken, and everyone was invited to "let their hair down."

Scott Rathgaber, MD, CEO, spoke on the future of medicine, Gundersen's community involvement in disease prevention and the key focus areas and vision statement - Enrich Every Life. Mike McKee, vice president of operations, thanked the volunteers for their dedication to helping others. Onto the award ceremony, Jan Schneider was again the big winner with donating 9,000 hours of Gift Shop volunteering; a total 112 volunteers were recognized for their contributions.

**Next year's Volunteer Recognition Event will be held on Thursday, April 11, 2019, in the ICE House.**

## **Did you know:**

La Crosse County Health Department reported the Medication Drop Boxes at Gundersen Health System collected 6,252 pounds total. The Main Clinic drop box collected approximately 2,940 pounds, Onalaska collected 2410 pounds, and our East building box collected 827 pounds. Our Cass St Pharmacy drug box collected 75 pounds.

## The Marsh View Trail: For your enjoyment and good health

### Community and Preventive Care Services

Take in the beauty of nature, clear your mind, exercise, meet friends or take a break. Whatever the reason, the Marsh View Trail is a scenic, peaceful retreat close to the Gundersen Onalaska Campus.

If you walk to the Marsh View Trail's end and return, you've walked about one mile. Healthcare experts recommend walking 10,000 steps a day, which is about 5 miles.

### The Health Benefits of Walking

The Marsh View Trail offers many benefits—something different for everyone. Walk alone for the solitude, or walk with a friend for encouragement and good conversation. Few exercises are as enjoyable and beneficial as walking.

### Walking:

- Requires only a good pair of walking shoes
- Is affordable
- Requires no special training
- Is fun for people of all ages and fitness levels
- Reduces stress and fatigue
- Increases strength and endurance
- Clears your mind and rejuvenates you
- Strengthens your bones and heart
- Adds years to your life and life to your years

### Show your support of the Marsh View Trail

Everyone is welcome to use and enjoy the walking trail. Please remember to properly dispose of your trash and pick up after your pet. For more information about wellness programs, call Gundersen Community & Preventive Care Services at (608) 775-4717 or email [wellness@gundersenhealth.org](mailto:wellness@gundersenhealth.org).

### Sympathy to:

Jane Amundson on the death of her son.

Nancy Schmidt on the death of her mother.

Rita Sanchez on the death of her husband.

Beth Hoth on the death of her husband.

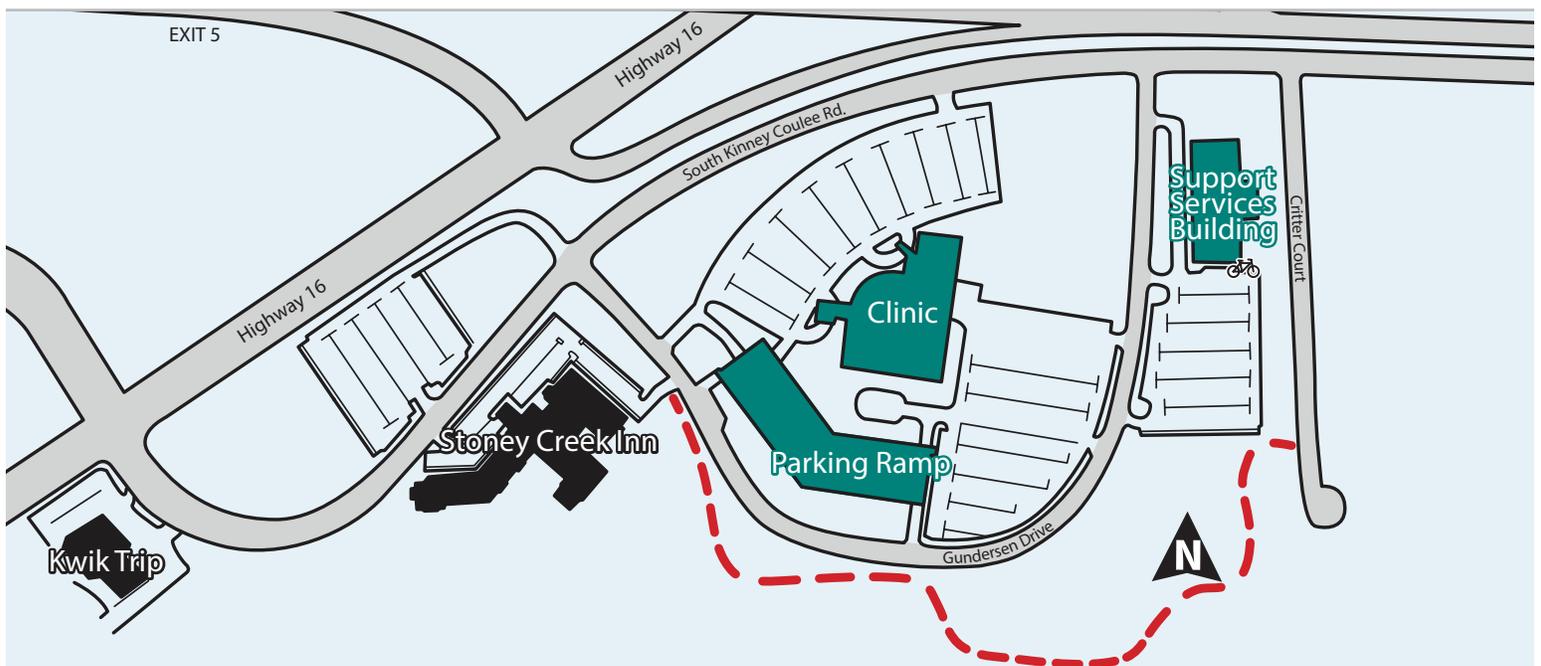
Chris Ross on the death of her mother.

Family and friends of Grace Hanson.

Debbie Ray on the death of her mom.

Karen Dunn on the death of her brother.

Family and friends of Joyce Burzinski.



## Teen Corner

By Karol Fox, program coordinator

When this newsletter arrives at your home by email or mailbox, our seniors will have graduated and closed the final chapter of their high school lives. This year, there were 24 high school volunteers who will have graduated and moved onto pursuing their adult dreams of attending college and/or working. Some are saving up for college for a year or two, and others are headed straight to college in the fall.

At Gundersen, high school student volunteers deliver mail and flowers to hospitalized patients, discharge patients from Level 2 of the Legacy Building, assemble kits for the nursing staff, volunteer in the Gift Shop, help at community events and at our information desks, among many other tasks. All volunteer roles are

important to the organization as it assists in the patient's overall experience. At our Volunteer Recognition luncheon, Dr. Rathgaber spoke about our vision statement—Enrich Every Life. Our volunteers do this each time they come in and donate their time. Our volunteers signed on to assist where needed and to lend a hand to families, patients, visitors or staff. Their patience and presence is appreciated. On page 4 you will read an article by Maria Martell, one of Gundersen's high school volunteers who recently graduated from La Crosse Central High School. I asked Maria to compose an article for our newsletter because she has been someone who I could count on to show up for their volunteer shift, sets a true example of giving and is an overall outstanding young lady in many ways.



enrich  
every life

## “More than a Resume Builder”

By Maria Martell, high school volunteer

Nothing has taught me more about service and selflessness than volunteering at Gundersen Health System. As a senior in high school, I've spent a lot of time reflecting on the past four years. For some, volunteerism is simply something to put on a resume, but for others, it means so much more. I can say with total honesty that volunteering at Gundersen has been one of the most meaningful experiences I've had in the last four years.

My interest in the medical field inspired me to volunteer at Gundersen beginning in 2015. I had previously been involved in Health Adventures, which was a program for eighth graders considering a career in the health sciences. The program has since been discontinued, but I will always credit it with helping me launch my path to a career in medicine. At the end of our year together, Karol Fox, the teen volunteer coordinator who also happened to be helping out with Health Adventures, informed us of all the volunteer opportunities at Gundersen. As an eighth-grader, I was not aware of the massive importance of volunteerism during high school and beyond, so I didn't act on her offer right away. However, after a wake-up call of its importance during my freshman year, I nervously called Karol, and the rest was history. Over the past two and a half years, I have volunteered in everything from mail and flower delivery and assisting MRI technicians in the imaging department to volunteering at Gundersen's Wellness Festival and mentoring middle school students at a health career day camp. I am especially proud of my work in the Imaging department, as I was one of the first volunteers in that area. I eventually trained other volunteers, and the program grew! I am especially grateful for Karol's flexibility in the teen volunteer department. She understands the immensely busy schedule of the average high school overachiever and is conscious of making sure we are never overworked. On even the worst days at school, I can always count on Karol and the rest of the volunteer staff to cheer me up (and maybe offer me some candy).

Volunteering at Gundersen has been especially impactful for me because it has helped solidify my interest in the medical field. I've found that helping others is my true passion. There is nothing better than delivering flowers to a new mother or comforting a nervous patient before his or her MRI scan. This experience has greatly increased my compassion for others and desire to help those who may



*\*Maria received a four-year scholarship to University of Minnesota-Twin Cities. She is too humble to mention that fact, but as her volunteer supervisor, I'm not. Maria is very deserving of this scholarship.*

be suffering. As a student, it's easy to become so focused on school that we sometimes forget about others, but these experiences have helped me understand that everyone has a story - that it's best to be kind because it's impossible to know what others are going through at times. I would recommend volunteering at Gundersen regardless of whether a student is interested in healthcare or not because it has the potential to be truly life-changing.

Not only has volunteering at Gundersen shaped my career path and character, but it has had wonderful benefits for my academic success. Senior year has revolved around applying for college and scholarships, and I'm thankful to have had so many strong volunteer experiences to include on my resume. This fall, I will be attending the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities in the College of Biological Sciences\*, and I believe my volunteerism played a pivotal role in both my admission to the university and in receiving scholarships that made my decision to attend such an esteemed institution possible.

Overall, my volunteerism at Gundersen has helped me step outside of my own life and make a greater change in my community. It has meant so much more to me than just being a requirement to get into National Honor Society. As Mahatma Gandhi once said, "The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others." In a world where it is becoming increasingly harder to find a place and distinguish oneself, I believe service is incredibly important in finding one's purpose. I know I have: helping others.

## Join Gundersen's family of volunteers

Gundersen has hundreds of dedicated Gundersen volunteers, ranging from age 14 to 100 (yes, 100!). These volunteers support our patients and organization in ways that often go unnoticed, but we are so thankful for the important role they play within our walls every day.

Volunteer Transport Services is just one of the volunteer groups at Gundersen, and many of their duties, aside from simply escorting patients around the hospital, may surprise you! These volunteers may be transporting a bag of plasma to a patient going through chemotherapy, or they may be serving as a witness to a patient signing an advance directive. They can be found delivering flowers to patients' rooms, while they may also be seen transporting specimens between departments. Simply put, these volunteers do it all.

Ken Isler, a regular volunteer, described the job well: "It can get real in a hurry. We might have to deliver clothing to a patient who was just in an accident, and then another transport takes you into a room where patients are going through chemotherapy. It's serious stuff."

Despite the unpredictable nature of this volunteer role, the regular Friday morning Volunteer Transport Services crew keeps coming back. For Dick Wieser, it's the camaraderie with his team that keeps him volunteering here. Joyce Potter, a former Gundersen employee of 33 years, said it's also the people that make this experience unique and fun. "No matter how fast or slow the day is, you always have your team," she adds.

Linda Stark found her place at Gundersen as a volunteer after she was able to retire and had time to do something for the community. She explains, "You feel like they really need this service you're providing. I have been blown away by the number of personnel—nurses, physicians—that will stop us and say how appreciative they are of what we do for the organization. It really makes you feel like 'I'm needed.'"



**The regular Friday morning Volunteer Transport Services crew includes (back, L-R) Dick Wieser, Bob Thompson, Abby Zimmerman, Deb Talle, Ken Isler; and (front) Joyce Potter and Kathy Christensen. Not pictured: Linda Stark.**

Abby Zimmerman, radiation therapy student at University of Wisconsin-La Crosse; Deb Talle, former Gundersen employee of 27 years; Bob Thompson, former Gundersen shuttle driver and volunteer of four years; and Kathy Christensen add to the Friday morning group.

Together, this dynamic group of individuals make up what looks and feels like a family, a family that works together every day toward one common goal—to get you there.

If you or someone you know might be interested in joining Gundersen's family of volunteers in Transport Services or Outpatient Surgery, please contact Lori Van Lin, director, Volunteer Services, by email at [lavanlin@gundersenhealth.org](mailto:lavanlin@gundersenhealth.org) or call 608-775-3697.

# Partners News

## From Gundersen Partners president, Mary Jo Klos



Greetings,

I hope that the long-awaited sun is shining happily upon each of you! As always, things are busy within the Gundersen Partners organization!

I have great news to share – we have a new Partners office assistant! Sheila Erickson accepted

our offer to join us and started on Monday, June 4. Sheila brings to her role at Partners seven years of experience in management of a non-profit organization, serving as the executive director of the La Crosse Builders Exchange Inc. In addition to supervising office staff, Sheila maintained office procedures, ensured the best use of membership revenue, prepared financial reports and maintained corporate records. She also organized and participated in monthly board meetings and prepared board meeting minutes. Sheila has a background of over 20 years of legal experience in a broad variety of legal arenas. Sheila has also been a volunteer at Gundersen since July 2017, serving in Volunteer Transport Services and in the Surgery Waiting Room. Sheila's office hours are Monday through Thursday from 8:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. She will do an excellent job supporting our work as board members and serving as an ambassador for Partners as a whole. Welcome, Sheila!

Sheila's support will be so important to Partners, as our work contributes to so many important and worthwhile activities! We may not realize how our significant our impact is. Recently, Eileen Wiltinger, Gift Shop leader, came to the Board of Directors with a suggestion to create a poster that highlights the impact of Partner's work so folks would know where their contributions are going. The Gift Shop provides a significant percentage of our funds, and the board agreed that a poster placed in the Gift Shop would be a great idea. As with all good

ideas, of course, that has grown into a bigger project. We will now be placing posters in various locations to share this great information. The poster contains the following message:

Thank You!

Gundersen Gift Shop volunteers and customers allowed Gundersen Partners, the Health System Auxiliary, to make donations to the following events, organizations and programs in 2017:

- Gundersen Employees' Children Scholarships
- Baby Dolls for Restless Souls
- Diversional Activity Kits for hospital patients
- Family & Children's Center – Healthy Families
- Health Adventures
- Kits for Kids – coordinated by La Crosse County
- New Horizons
- Place of Grace
- St. Clare Health Mission
- Teen Volunteers Merit Awards
- Viterbo – Mental Health Assessment Kit
- Voices in Recovery
- Drive for Hope Lung Cancer Research Event sponsorship

When you purchase a gift at the Gundersen Gift Shop, it is a gift that gives twice.

This message is for all of you. The work you do to support Partners through your time, talent, treasure – be it your donations, the hours you spend here helping out, the money you spend when you support our fundraising activities or the positive support give us through well wishes—it all matters. Just look at the impact you are having on the organization and the community! It is amazing. I end this message with gratitude for each of you and the positive impact Partners has had through the years and continues to have on the organization and community.



**GUNDERSEN** giftshop

## A thank you from Partners of Gundersen/Mary Patros Scholarship recipient:

Dear Patros Family & Partners of Gundersen,

I would like to start by saying thank you for not only granting me this amazing gift but also for your continued generosity in helping to support students like myself during our journey to achieve a higher education. I am honored that you have selected me to be the recipient of the Partners of Gundersen/Mary Patros Scholarship.

For me, education has always been the catalyst for helping to turn my passions and dreams into a reality. As I continue on my path as a first-year student in the CPT Program at University of Wisconsin-La Crosse, the financial responsibilities that go along with this dream continue to grow. Your generous scholarship has given me the means to lighten the burden and the

hope to continue to work towards this passion. As a kid who grew up on a small family farm, I have come to understand the true meaning of hard work. This scholarship also represents the hard work of those who have made it possible, and I look forward to making the most of it by continuing to grow in my academics and in my character as a person.

It has been said, "To whom much has been given, much is required." I am truly grateful for this support, and I will continue to strive to inspire, encourage and bring hope to all those I meet, just as you have done for me.

Thank you for believing in me,  
Garrison James

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## Where are they now?

By Marilyn McElligott, Partners historian

Gundersen Partners has been awarding scholarships to children of employees for 15 years. This is one of the many scholarship programs which Partners has offered for over 60 years. Recipients will be highlighted to keep the membership and others aware of the important support of healthcare education.

### **Stefania Jessen, daughter of Vicky Jessen, Community and Preventive Care Services**

Stefania Jessen attended the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire and received a Bachelor's of Science Degree in Communication Sciences and Disorders. She attended

the University of West Georgia and received a Master's of Education in Speech Language Pathology.

She is currently a Speech Language Pathologist for Fairview Health Services, specializing in Pediatrics, in New Hope, Minn. Stefania says, "My passion and goal as a Speech Therapist is to help children grow and learn new skills, while having fun in the process. I enjoy building relationships with not only my patients, but their families as well, and celebrating every success, no matter how great or small."



## Calendar of Events

### July

- 4 Independence Day, Volunteer Services closed
- 5 Partners Board Meeting
- 9-11 Blood Drives - La Crosse Campus, Lower Level Legacy

### August

- 2 Partners Board Meeting
- 9 Blood Drive - Onalaska Campus
- 20-21 Blood Drives - La Crosse Campus, Lower Level Legacy

### September

- 3 Labor Day, Volunteer Services closed
- 6 Partners Board Meeting
- 11 PRN Shoe Sale - Lower Level Legacy
- 24-26 Blood Drives - La Crosse Campus, Lower Level Legacy
- 26 Hands on Health Day for Teen/High School Volunteers

### 2018 Upcoming Blood Drives

#### La Crosse Campus

December 3, 4, 5

#### Onalaska Campus

October 4 and December 13

**FYI:** The Blood Center is the only supplier of blood to 50+ hospitals. Organizations like Gundersen Health System help keep these life-saving efforts possible. Each day the Blood Center needs to collect more than 800 units of blood, fifty percent of that total comes directly from mobile drives such as the one that Gundersen Health System supports.

### Save the Date for the 2019 Volunteer Recognition and Appreciation Event

The ICE House (Integrated Center for Education) is reserved on Thursday, April 10, for our annual Volunteer Recognition and Appreciation Event.

### Contributors to Volunteer News

Karol Fox  
Mary Jo Klos  
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### Volunteer Services

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### Partners

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