

VITAL SIGNS

The Newsletter of Aspirus Merrill Hospital Volunteer

WINTER 2026



PRESIDENTIAL TEAM MESSAGE

Welcome to 2026!

We welcome Jane Bentz, our volunteer liaison, back after a two and one-half month absence following surgery!

Short update on past activities/events:

October 7-8 Six board members attended the WHA conference in LaCrosse. It was very

interesting, informative, and good to network with state volunteers.

October 15 and 22 We had annual Aspirus Mandatory Compliance Training, which was well-attended. Thank You!

October 30 Pumpkin Judging Maxine Tlusty, Sharon Anderson, and Diane Marnholtz judged the hospital departments' pumpkin contest. It is always a challenge, as all the pumpkins are very creative.

Unfortunately our Ladies Nite Out event was cancelled. However, we look forward to holding this fundraiser in 2026.

Holiday Quilt Raffle - Volunteer Vicki Hilfiker designed, made, and donated the beautiful quilt for our raffle. Tickets were sold by our volunteers. Thank You! The drawing was November 25; the winner was Marcy Barney.

The Love Light Tree was put up and decorated by Jean Ravn, Nancy Dabbert, and Marcy Barney. Thank you to everyone purchasing a tag for the Love Light Tree!

Volunteer board meetings are held every first Wednesday of the month on the third floor at 1:00 p.m. All members are welcome.

Thank you to each member that says "Yes: when asked to help at an event/activity. Thank you also for the donations to the Smile Cart, ER closet, raffles, and our Love Light Tree. These

items are greatly appreciated by patients and hospital staff.

Thank you to Nancy Dabbert for the generous donation of clothes to the Discharge with Dignity Closet. Your donation will be greatly appreciated by patients that are in need or in case of serious accidents. Any questions regarding the closet may be directed to Ramona, Linda Holdorf, or Jane Hanson.

Let's look forward to 2026 with enthusiasm and continue to keep our volunteer organization strong and active. Thank you for your dedication and caring.

We wish each volunteer a wonderful Christmas and a blessed New Year!

Ramona, Jane, and Linda

Birthdays to Remember:

January 3	Karleen Bebel
January 14	Ramona Hornischer
January 22	Carol Crevier
January 30	Diane Marnholtz
February 8	Kathy Sheridan
February 20	Jane Hanson
March 5	LeeAnn Lindquist
March 7	Mary Ann VanDerGeest
March 18	Sharon Lee
March 26	Peggy Berndt

Events to look forward to in 2026:

February 25, 2026 - Advocacy Day in Madison

North District Spring Meeting in Medford - date to be announced.

If any member is interested in attending either event, please contact Ramona, Linda Holdorf, or Jane Hanson.

NEW VOLUNTEER:

A warm welcome to our newest volunteer, Carol Crevier!








Public Policy Education

Wisconsin Hospital Association Advocacy Day will be February 26, 2026 in Madison this year. I encourage each of you to become a member of HEAT where you will receive updates so we can advocate for our hospitals on critical healthcare issues. Believe it or not, our voices matter to lawmakers when voting matters! It is easy to join, takes very little time on your part, and the impact volunteers make is HUGE. Reach out to Ramona for information or questions. A group of volunteers from our hospital plan to drive to Madison to be part of this year's event. We would love to have any of you join us, call Ramona (715-551-3720)





COMMUNITY HEALTH UPDATE

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Wisconsin has the highest fall death rate in the United States.

Wisconsin winters contribute to fall risks. There are special precautions we all can take to keep safe.

-  Choose boots with rubber soles, treads or grips for extra traction. Attach snow grips to your shoe; carry sand or kitty litter for icy spots. To prevent slippery conditions, remove snow and ice from footwear before entering buildings. Remove traction devices when you go inside, as they can be slippery on smooth surfaces.
-  Walk slowly! Take shorter, deliberate steps to maintain your center of gravity over your feet. Waddle like a penguin. Bend slightly forward, keep feet flat and shuffle with small steps for stability. Point your feet out slightly to create a wider base of support. Don't keep your hands in your pockets, use them for balance or to hold handrails. Tap suspicious spots with your toe to check for slipperiness before committing your weight. Carry a cane or walking pole to help with balance and support.
-  Clear paths. Shovel snow or apply salt or sand to walkways, driveways and steps. If needed, ask for assistance. Always use handrails on stairs and ramps. Ensure outdoor and indoor areas are well lit.
-  Check weather forecasts; avoid going out during hazardous conditions. Don't rush. Allow extra time. Take time to get out of a vehicle. Use the door frame and steering wheel for support and place both feet on the ground before standing up fully. Carry a cell phone and keep it accessible.
-  Stay active. Regular activity improves strength, balance and coordination. Talk to your health care provider about medications and health conditions that may increase your risk for falls.

Immediate action if a fall occurs:

-  If you feel yourself falling, try to relax your body and toss any items you are carrying. Attempt to fall on a fleshy part of your body rather than your wrists, knees or spine. Try to tuck your head forward if falling backward.
-  Don't get up right away or let anyone help you up immediately. This avoids the potential of causing further injury. Don't worry about feeling embarrassed. Rather, take your time, lie there for a moment and assess how you are feeling.
-  After making an assessment of your injury status, if you can get up, roll to one side. Bend your knees toward you, push up with your arms and then use your legs to stand up the rest of the way.
If someone assists you to your feet, ensure that he or she doesn't get hurt too.
-  Call 911 if needed.

Resources: CDC, Wisconsin EMS Report, Mayo Clinic, Web MD