

PARTNERS OF WHA is committed to advocating for the health of our communities and advancing the success of local health care volunteer organizations, through the coordination and provision of volunteer education, development resources, and leadership opportunities for health care volunteers and their organizations.

A Message from the Partners of WHA President

Today's Dream, Tomorrow's Reality



Sharon Scott

On the Partners calendar, October signals convention. I am so happy 137 attendees representing approximately 30 local organizations gathered to share hugs, meaningful conversations, laughter, networking and learning opportunities during our “Today’s Dream... Tomorrow’s Reality” themed convention. Whenever a group such as ours gathers, one can be sure “shenanigans” happened, memories were made and the promise to see one another next year was made.

Our keynote speaker, Tom Thibodeau, certainly set the tone with “Servant Leadership.” His messaging technique brought laughter, tears, and a deeper understanding that we “serve” because of love—we felt the love during the remainder of our convention. How fortunate to have Terri Donlin, a dedicated Partners member herself, close the convention with “Positive Intelligence,” a focus on staying positive and recognizing the “saboteurs” that try to derail us.

Although only two CEO panelists were able to join us this year, they both reiterated the value and importance of volunteers within their organizations and shared pertinent information ranging from the increase in COVID cases to the ongoing mergers of so many health care entities. Our WAVE recipients shared their amazing insight for projects that truly make a difference in the lives of others. Congratulations Aspirus Wausau Hospital Volunteer Services, SSM Health St. Mary’s Madison Volunteers, Aspirus Merrill Hospital Volunteers, and Partners of Marshfield Medical Center, Ladysmith.

During the annual membership meeting, Julie Steiner was unanimously elected president-elect. Congratulations Julie. Also, the bylaws language change “may be contracted” regarding the parliamentarian was unanimously approved.

Celebrating Partners 70th anniversary was made special with the reflections of four past presidents—Mark Schaefer, Bonnie Olson, Jan Molaska, and Peg Larson. Thank you Jaci Fuller for sharing your poem, To Our Past Presidents.

Our convention closed with a special invitation from 2024 Convention Co-Chairs Sheree Schaefer and Jan Molaska inviting us

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A Message from the President-elect

Practice Perseverance

Thank you all for your votes of support as I assume the duties of president-elect for Partners of WHA. I have been truly humbled by the congratulatory emails, words of encouragement from our membership, and the sincere “thank you for stepping up” comments I received from our Partners past presidents at state convention. It was an honor to celebrate the 70th Anniversary of Partners.



Julie Steiner (left) was installed as Partners President-elect by President Sharon Scott.

Partners of WHA is truly an organization of servant leaders, as we heard from our convention opening speaker, Tom Thibodeau. Thibodeau explained that servant leadership is “the ability to engage and inspire others to work for a greater good every day.” I believe as members of Partners that’s exactly what we strive to do, whether it’s in our local, district or state organization. Let’s all focus on putting the

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Happy 70th Anniversary!

Partners of WHA celebrated its 70th Anniversary at convention. President Sharon Scott summarized the history of Partners through 2010. Past Presidents Mark Schaefer; Bonnie Olson; Jan Molaska; and Peg Larson spoke about the organization during their terms. Each emphasized different aspects of Partners with the common thread being the joy of friendships formed by working together.

The formation of Partners began in 1952 with a committee of three women appointed to explore the possibilities of an organization connecting hospital volunteers across the state. Forty-three auxiliaries responded and 16 organizations requested input and assistance in forming an auxiliary. This is the foundation of our purpose. By sharing our successes, failures, and ideas, we grow all the volunteer programs across the state.

Local organizations have strengthened their hospitals by raising funds for equipment, programming, and scholarships. Partners has provided a place to connect with other healthcare supporters to share ideas, information, and best practices to improve the service of volunteers to their communities. Partners have been strong advocates for healthcare in their local communities, at the state level in Madison, and the national level in Washington, DC.

In 2018, Partners of WHA, the Minnesota Association of Hospital Volunteers, The Iowa Hospital Association, and the North Dakota Hospital Association began a collaboration resulting in the “Power of Connection” workshop series. During the pandemic, this group began providing virtual seminars and a virtual conference. This has further expanded the networking opportunities for Wisconsin’s volunteers and volunteer services professionals.

In October of 2019, Partners passed a new set of bylaws allowing for virtual meetings. What timing! In 2020, the spring board meeting and tour was cancelled and we were introduced to Microsoft Teams. What a pleasure to be able to see each other’s faces! Over the next three years we learned the value of online and in-person meetings. For some things online is perfect; for others in-person is the gold standard.

The Partners presidents said that working together to build the health of communities throughout Wisconsin is gratifying. However, the friendships created with volunteers throughout the state is the lasting reward. May those who follow experience the same blessings.

Peg Larson, Partners Past President; Email: pegvoluntr@hotmail.com



Partner’s Past Presidents: Mark Schaefer, Bonnie Olson, Jan Molaska, and Peg Larson

A Message from the President... continued from page 1

to the Holiday Inn and Convention Center, Stevens Point October 1-3. Our theme will be Volunteers... Diamonds in the Rough.

In a very short time, we will be gathering with family and friends for two beautiful holidays. May I take this opportunity to extend my deepest appreciation for all you do for your local, district and state Partner organizations. Your gifts of talent and time are immeasurable.

Sharon Scott
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A Message from the President-Elect...cont'd. from page 1

needs, aspirations, and interests of our members above our own. By functioning in this fashion, we can all grow healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, and more likely to be better servants for our hospitals and patients.

An amendment to the Partners by-laws, adding a provision to allow for a contracted parliamentarian was adopted at convention. Discussion of a proposed by-law change to reinstate a member-at-large category continues to be reviewed. This would allow individuals no longer affiliated with a local organization to continue as a Partners member. There is language to review and concerns to be addressed before a formal proposal is presented.

Congratulations to the 30 local organizations who received 2023 District Honor Point Awards. Your perseverance is admirable at a time when many are witnessing changes in hospital leadership and struggling with retention of volunteer groups. I look forward to working with our district chairs as we tackle these issues and strive for membership growth. It will take all of us, volunteers, Directors of Volunteer Services, and hospital executives working together to make this happen.

Thank you to Betty Oddo and her West Central District Convention Planning Committee for organizing a fantastic 2023 state convention. The speakers, workshops, and purse bingo were all very enjoyable. The Stevens Point Holiday Inn and Convention Center venue and staff provided us with a very pleasant and satisfying experience. I look forward to returning to Stevens Point for next year's convention, October 1-3, 2024.

Julie Steiner, Partners President-elect; Email: steinerfam@mwt.net

What is Your Why?



Leigh Ann Larson

I want to extend a sincere THANK YOU for the opportunity to join you at your annual convention in Stevens Point. It was wonderful to see you, in person, and to hear about the great work you are doing in your respective hospitals. I especially enjoyed looking over the hospital displays and silent auction items. Partners of WHA does not have a shortage of creative and inspirational leaders.

One of the speakers at convention talked about "Knowing What Your Why is." Simply put, why do you get up and out of bed every day? Why do you volunteer? Why do you choose to live your life a certain way? This got me thinking about what my Why is. For most of us, there is more than just one thing that is our Why. Our friends, family, partner, church, community, etc.

I decided to focus on my career and the work I do with WHA, the WHA Foundation and all of you.

As far back as I can remember, it has been a foundation in my life that I didn't want "just a job." That no matter what I decided to do for my life's work, that it was important to me that it meant something. Meant something to the people I interacted with, to myself, and for the small impact I could make in this big and wonderful world. I was raised to believe, and still do to this day, that this looks different for every person. For some, it means being a CEO for a company. For others, it means being a customer service representative at a clothing store. For someone else, a teacher. Different fields of work, but ALL with the same value and potential for impact.

In one of the management classes I used to teach, I talked a lot about "modelling the way." One can't simply say that people should be kind and considerate, but rather they must model those actions in order for others to adopt similar behavior. I think this is the heart of volunteering. Being a volunteer is modelling to others the goodness that can come from all of us, if only we took the time and energy to devote ourselves to it. This is something you do every day, and we are all the better for it.

I challenge you to ask yourself – What is my Why? Keep this at the heart of everything that you do and, I believe, you will never lose your way.

I hope you have a happy and healthy remainder of 2023.

Leigh Ann S. Larson

WHA Vice President of Education and Marketing; Executive Director of the WHA Foundation; Partners of WHA Liaison

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Mergers, Membership & Conventions

Members of the Strategic Planning Committee are continuing to work on goals established for 2023-24.

Our first goal is developing a process for district mergers when numbers of local organizations in a district are too small to support the district. A combined district meeting between two districts was held in Cumberland in August 2023. Attendees were given opportunities to discuss a potential merger. Worksheets recorded strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities.

STRENGTHS:

- Merging may encourage members to take on leadership roles and provide opportunities for leadership development
- Greater opportunity to network with new volunteers and form strong relationships
- Expand knowledge and volunteer strengths with volunteers of various backgrounds working together
- Joining districts could make smaller groups stronger by utilizing the strengths of each hospital

WEAKNESSES:

- Travel distance of in-person meetings could be a challenge
- Communication challenges
- Too many reports for small groups to comply
- Hospital corporations and lack of administrative support

OPPORTUNITIES:

- Work to accommodate younger people's schedules
- Recruit retirees from each healthcare organization and encourage more attendance at Advocacy Day
- Focus on older volunteers and adapt to volunteer's situations
- Learn from each other

Considering the input from volunteers, the committee will develop a procedure/process as a guideline for districts to follow if faced with a need to restructure.

The second goal is reviewing convention planning, process, and structure. A survey was developed and made available on the Partners' website. Results of the survey, along with comments from spring district meetings and the October convention will be reviewed and summarized so that questions can be addressed. Are there ways to increase numbers of convention participants? Financially, what do we need to keep holding conventions?

The third goal is to consider a change in membership structure to possibly include members at large. Research will be done before the 2024 spring board meeting. Discussion of the concept of member-at-large and possible bylaw changes will be done by the committee at the next board meeting.

If you have questions, suggestions, or comments on the strategic planning goals, please contact any committee member.

Terri Donlin and Sherry Jelic

Co-chairs of Partners of WHA Strategic Planning Committee

It's a Wrap

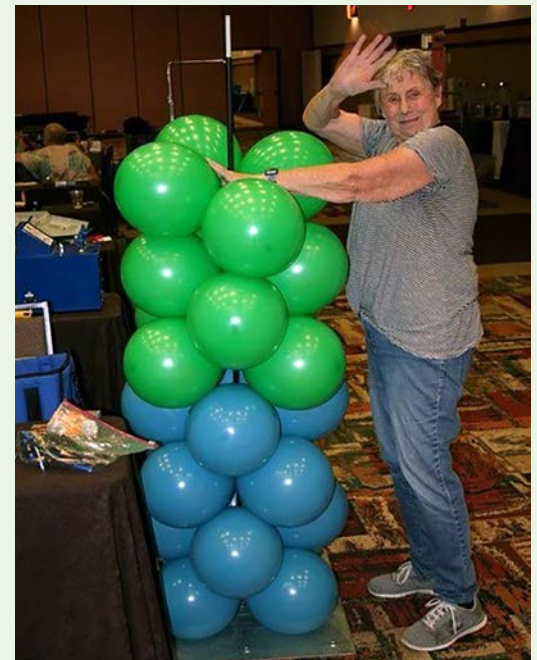
Our convention, "Today's Dream... Tomorrow's Reality" is over. Our committees worked hard to provide an interesting and informative program, interjected with fun, while trying to be budget conscious. I have read each survey and was uplifted by all the positive comments. Robert Schuck put it in perspective: "You sure know how to throw a party."

There were some hiccups, main frame computer crashes, which made registration a nightmare; venue telephones down, which made booking rooms a little difficult; and speakers having to cancel, BUT with the help of many people, too numerous to mention, it happened.

Thank you to everyone who attended and participated. I have met so many people through this organization, who I am happy to call "friend." I look forward to seeing you all again next year.

Betty Oddo

2023 Convention Chair



Convention Chair Betty Oddo prepares the balloon arch which hung above the platform and podium.



2023 Convention Committee members (l to r):
 Betty Oddo, Vivian Dahl,
 John Tully, Terri Hutson,
 Jan Giedd, Pat Bertrand,
 Mary Rose Willi,
 Char Pagenkopf, Sue Wymimko,
 Marge Geissler, Ellen Kiefer,
 Donella Christianson, and
 Jaci Fuller

WAVE Awards Presented at Convention

Community Service Program



Aspirus Wausau Hospital Volunteer Services
 "ASPIRUS FAMILY HOUSE"

Fundraising Program



Aspirus Merrill Hospital Volunteers
 "YULETIDE LADIES NIGHT OUT"

In-service Hospital Program



SSM Health St. Mary's Madison Volunteers, Madison
 "WHEELCHAIR TRACKING DEPOT"

Community Outreach and/or Collaboration



Partners of Marshfield Medical Center, Ladysmith
 "LUCAS III CHEST COMPRESSION"

Congratulations to the Partners of WHA 2023 Honor Point Award Winners!



Convention 2023



Jaci Fuller reading the poem she wrote in recognition of Partner's 70th anniversary



Mark Schaefer and Jan Molaska raise the banner announcing the theme of Partners 2024 convention



Green Beanie, Roger Elliot, with Partners of St. Joseph's Hospital in Chippewa Falls presented a workshop on how volunteers can start, maintain, and utilize the produce from a community garden.



John Tully with Donna Nelson, one of the 50/50 raffle drawing winners



Keynote Speaker Tom Thibodeau, Associate Professor at Viterbo University, inspired us to listen deeply to other people, consider the impact our behavior has on others, and take time for self-care and contemplation as we practice servant leadership.



Seated at the head table as convention 2023 convened were: (l to r) Keynote Speaker, Tom Thibodeau; President-Elect, Julie Steiner; State Treasurer, John Tully; Parliamentarian, Robert Schuck; President, Sharon Scott; and State Secretary, Iva Mulhern



Terri Hutson, President of Partners of HSHS St Joseph's Hospital and Ellen Kiefer, Past President welcomed members and delegates to convention.

Convention 2023



Jeni and Krista, advocates from Family Support Center's Domestic Violence Program presented a workshop explaining the common dynamics of violence and how to help survivors process their trauma.



The presentation of colors.



Sheree Schaefer and Brandy Sikora prepare for the Partners raffle



State President Sharon Scott, a winner in purse bingo



Closing Speaker and Partners member, Terri Donlin offers tips on how to better handle the stresses and challenges of our careers and volunteer work while also taking care of our own mental and emotional well-being.



John Tully, Patricia Franks, Terri Donlin, Sherry Jelic and Cindy Hermel chatting before dinner



Peg Larson, Jon Hoelter and Kari Hofer preparing for the HEAT workshop

Finances and Workforce Concern Hospital Execs

Following is a summary of the key questions asked of our CEO Panel at convention.

What is the current financial picture in our hospitals, now after COVID?

Certainly, the answer to this question at last year's convention would have been particularly more negative, as most facets of expense, wages in particular, were way outside the norm. One of the primary impediments to controlling wage inflation was the exorbitant salary cost for "traveling nurses." Coming out of the pandemic, wage costs have been reduced by some reasonable measure as the need for the traveling nurse population has been reduced. In fact, a portion of that population have become full-time employees at some hospital locations. Many hospitals are up to 70% in the red for labor costs.

Inpatient care costs were dramatically increased due to the inability to move patient populations out of the hospital into a nursing home. In some rare instances, patients stayed more than a month in the hospital setting.

Are hospitals recovering from the "Silver Tsunami"?

During the pandemic more than 25% of nurses left their profession. The consensus is that recruitment for this profession must start at a younger age, even before high school. "Brain drain" is happening, placing the nursing profession in a one to two year low entry point and a serious loss of some "experts" in the field. In visiting with a UW-Eau Claire senior nursing student recently, I was amazed to hear that her freshman class of nearly 300 will likely graduate about 50%. One major negative impact on graduates is the shortage of nursing instructors. There has been a call for international nurses to fill the void until we can grow enough of our own! Once graduated, the lag time in licensing is 90 to 120 days.

Volunteer numbers

Without question, the volunteer population has downsized considerably! In some instances, volunteers become part of an auxiliary. As we know, many volunteer organizations began in that fashion and later evolved. This is the reality of today. Suggestions from the panel include introducing the "volunteer concept" at younger ages, working to identify the key drivers/passions of a younger population, and reducing the level of formality of traditional volunteer work. Why does Viterbo University in La Crosse have such a wonderful servant leadership program?

Recent "up-tick" in COVID cases

COVID is a respiratory disease and needs to be treated, in most cases, as we do influenza. The new dimension is to treat it as post-acute health care. If identified early on we need not expect the surge experienced earlier, affecting many critical access hospitals of under 15-20 beds. Much needs to be done here, particularly in the structure of nursing homes, health care regulation and reimbursement.

Remote workforce

Telehealth offered significant value during the pandemic, particularly in rural America. As technology evolves, it appears that some components of medical care can continue to be affected in remote settings. Our panelists suggested telehealth improved job satisfaction in many instances.



Bill McCullough



CEO Panelists Jeffrey Wicklander, Aspirus System Senior Vice President and President of Aspirus Wausau and Aspirus Merrill Hospitals, and Deann Thurmer, President of Ripon Community Hospital answered questions posed by Moderator Jon Hoelter, WHA Vice President, Federal and State Regulations.

Bill McCullough, PPE Chair; Email: webirish2gmail.com

Community Health Education Report

Mental Health Self Care Strategies



Cindy Hermel

Stress is a common condition for millions of people. There are a number of things individuals can do to deal with stress and enhance mental health. First and foremost, staying physically healthy can maintain and/or improve one's mental well-being. The CDC recommends eating a healthy diet including fruits, vegetables, lean protein and whole grains; getting seven or more hours of sleep each night; and maintaining a regular exercise routine.

Meditation is an effective tool to deal with stress. According to Melanie Greenberg, author of *The Stress-Proof Brain*, meditation can recondition your brain to become more stress tolerant over time. Stress can cause increased levels of cortisol in the body, causing inflammation. This can disrupt sleep, promote anxiety and/or depression, increase blood pressure and contribute to fatigue. Research studies show eight weeks of mindfulness meditation led to noticeable improvements in stress and anxiety levels.

Maintaining relationships and connecting with people is important to one's physical and mental health. The Cleveland Clinic advises staying connected with people who you enjoy, make you happy, provide emotional support and give you a sense of belonging.

According to the Mayo Clinic's, "Stress relief from laughter? It's no joke," a good laugh can increase your intake of oxygen which stimulates many body organs resulting in a flow of endorphins making you feel more relaxed. Laughter can also stimulate circulation and aid muscle relaxation which can help reduce some of the physical symptoms of stress. Negative thinking creates chemical reactions in the body which increase stress and weaken the immune system, while positive thoughts and laughter can release neuropeptides that help combat stress, enhancing the immune response.

Volunteering provides many benefits to both mental and physical health. According to [HelpGuide.org](https://www.helpguide.org), volunteering helps counteract the effects of stress, anger and anxiety. The social contact that occurs with helping and working with others can have a huge impact on one's psychological well-being. Nothing relieves stress better than a meaningful connection with another person. Studies measuring hormones and brain activity indicate that helping others provides a sense of satisfaction and pleasure to the volunteer. Volunteering provides a sense of purpose and often results in increased self-confidence. Whatever one's age or situation, volunteering can take your mind off your problems and keep you mentally stimulated.

Stress is a part of modern life. Awareness of these strategies provides the tools to manage stress symptoms and lessen the emotional load that can affect both physical and mental health. Let's nurture relationships with family and friends, laugh every day, volunteer frequently, meditate often, and stay active.

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Reaching Out Deadlines

<u>Issue</u>	<u>Deadline</u>
February 2024	Friday, Jan. 12, 2024
May 2024	Friday, April 12, 2024
August 2024	Friday, July 12, 2024
November 2024	Friday, Oct. 11, 2024

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