

Volunteer News

Quarterly Newsletter for Volunteer Services and Gundersen Partners

January/February/March 2024



Eileen Wiltinger
Manager, Volunteer Services

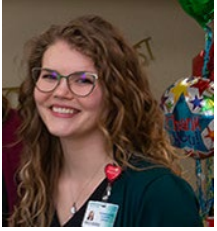
Happy New Year to everyone!

My new year's wish for 2024 is that you feel valued and appreciated for the service you provide to the Bellin/Gundersen Health System. "Volunteers carry great responsibility as a critical contact point for those engaging in healthcare, and they help fill the needs of organizations in an expanding capacity in a lean operating world", Beryl Institute.

As we begin 2024, the Volunteer Services department has added a team action board in our department. It is in the hallway on the left-hand side as you head toward the transport office. This board will contain department goals, spotlight volunteer roles and needs, volunteer birthdays, safety topics, and other department updates. If you are in this area, please look at it and talk to one of us if you have questions. We want all of you to feel involved in how the department operates.

Highlighted on the action board this month is a culmination of the work performed by you, our volunteers, the past year. GHS volunteers served over 29,143 hours in 2023. To relate this to paid positions here is some math that truly shows the impact of your work: $29,143$ (# of hours served) X $\$17.52$ (Avg. GHS min. pay) = $\$510,585$. This is a substantial amount of money your donated volunteer hours save the organization and contribute to the 2024 target of increased operating margin.

I hope you all enjoy our first newsletter of 2024. We have highlighted some volunteers and their experiences. We also included news from the Gift Shop, Gundersen Partners, assignments looking for volunteers, and health and safety information. If you have any feedback on the newsletter, please reach out to the Volunteer Services staff. We would love to hear from you!



Career Development Corner

Erica Borde, Volunteer Program Coordinator

We want to extend a **BIG** congratulations to volunteers who have started careers at Gundersen in 2023!

- Connor Gishkowsky became a CNA in the Surgical unit
- Maddie Buck became an EMT in Emergency Services
- Delanie Johnson became an Intern with the Office of Population Health team.
- Mackenzie Caya became a Cardio Testing Tech
- Kelsi Handel became a Rehabilitation Tech in Onalaska Sports Med
- Madeline Quick became a CNA in the Cardio Pulmonary unit
- Morgan Myers became a Hospital Scheduling Specialist in PT and OT
- Hannah Ketterhagen became a Recreation Therapist in Inpatient Behavioral Health
- Brooke Presny became a CNA in the General Medical unit
- Erin Govier became a Registered Nurse in the Surgical unit
- Jenna Nichols became a CNA in Rehab
- Kelsi Knoll became a Teacher in the Child Care Center

We are grateful you have chosen to continue serving patients and families as a Gundersen staff member!

If we missed you on our list, please let us know so we can celebrate your achievements!

Did you know Gundersen Health System offers five training and certification programs? There programs include Central Service Technicians, Certified Nursing Assistants, Medical Assistants, Pharmacy Technicians, and most recently added, Paramedics! For more information check out <https://www.gundersenhealth.org/careers/training-programs> or stop by Erica's office to chat.



While we hope you always feel comfortable coming to us with feedback, sometimes it's nice to have a quick, anonymous way to share your thoughts! Please take 5 minutes to share your experiences with volunteering at Gundersen this year: <https://forms.office.com/r/AswsGbqhzk>



ASSIGNMENT FOCUS - Assignments Looking for Volunteers

Paige Pedretti, Volunteer Program Coordinator

As we look back at 2023, we have substantially grown our volunteer program at Gundersen. We started the year off with 178 active volunteers and are ending the year with 396 volunteers! We regularly evaluate the volunteer assignments to determine ways we can better serve and support patients, families, and staff. Below are a few assignments we're currently focusing on. If you know anyone interested in volunteering, please have them fill out a volunteer interest form on the Volunteer Services website <https://www.gundersenhealth.org/careers/volunteer-services> or email us at ghsvolunteerservices@gundersenhealth.org to inquire.

Community Resource Connectors (CRCs) – Access to healthy food, safe housing, transportation, financial resources, and social connections directly impacts our health. These social and environmental factors, also known as *Social Determinants of Health*, are one of Gundersen Health System's public health priorities. Gundersen is taking an active role to understand and address patient needs outside of our doors, as we know this impacts patient health and well-being. CRCs work in partnership with Gundersen staff and community organizations to help patients get connected to resources that address their social needs. This volunteer team is a mix of retired adults, working adults, and college students who all have a passion for helping others access needed resources

Surgery Family Waiting Area Support (Legacy 2nd Floor) – Our volunteers act as a liaison between persons in the waiting room, the patient, and medical staff throughout the surgical process. Volunteers make themselves aware of the needs of persons in the waiting area, working to provide a comfortable and welcoming environment. Our volunteers help address the needs of family and loved ones while the patient is in surgery. Patients can feel assured that their loved ones are receiving prompt communications while waiting.

Winona, MN Wayfinding Support - Volunteers help provide a warm welcome to patients, families, and visitors arriving at the clinic entrance. Volunteers provide wayfinding and wheelchair transport assistance, engage with visitors, answer questions, and work with patient attendant staff throughout the day. We take pride in offering an outstanding patient experience to all who enter our doors. Our volunteers help make guests feel supported and cared for from the moment they enter our doors.

Isolation & Exposure to COVID-19 & a Positive Test

The Center for Disease Control (CDC) does not recommend isolating or quarantine after being exposed to COVID-19 as long as the exposed individual remains asymptomatic. They should, however, continue to wear a mask in any public setting for 10 full days after exposure as an active infection can still manifest in that time period.

Volunteers who are exposed to COVID-19 may continue to volunteer after an exposure **if** they remain symptom free as long as they comply with GHS masking guidelines. (continued)

If you have symptoms of Covid, testing is required (**cost of test is paid by volunteer**). GHS no longer offers complimentary testing.

Testing options:

1. At home antigen test – if test results are negative, test again in 48 hours
2. Request a test through MyChart if you are a Gundersen Patient
3. Request a test through your Primary Care Provider

After testing positive, you must stay home for 5 days after your positive test result (date of first symptom is day zero). When returning to volunteer, you will need to wear a mask from day 6-10, even if you obtain a negative test result. Please contact Employee Health Services at 608-775-3747 to report any positive test results.

We want you to heal as quickly as possible. Get plenty of rest and stay hydrated. If symptoms worsen over time, you have trouble breathing, persistent pain or pressure in your chest, get immediate care.

As you volunteer, remember to wash your hands or use hand sanitizer, avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth, stay home if you have a cold, and wear a mask if you have any respiratory symptoms while volunteering.



GUNDERSEN GIFT SHOP UPDATE

Jessica DeRuyter, Gift Shop Supervisor

Greetings from the gift shop! I hope you were all able to spend quality time with family and friends this holiday season and made wonderful memories.

The holiday season in the gift shop was amazing! This was my first Christmas season at Gundersen, and while it was stressful at times, it was a fun one. 😊 Sales were strong throughout October and November, but December is where we really shined, recording over \$65,000 in sales for the month. We do not like to pat ourselves on the back too much 😊, but that was a gift shop record in monthly sales! The volunteers and staff worked so hard, and I am so proud of every one of them and what we achieved as a team. With such strong sales comes strong profits, this year we were able to contribute \$35,000 in profit dollars to Gundersen Partners! Partners will use the profit to support needs within our organization, as well as within our community. It makes my soul happy to know that the work we are doing in the gift shop will in turn benefit so many people.

This year will bring personnel changes to the gift shop. Noelle recently accepted a position outside of Gundersen and will be leaving us. We started on the same day and went through our training together,

learning side by side. She has been an integral part of the gift shops success and we are forever thankful for her. While she will be greatly missed, we wish her luck and prosperity in all her new endeavors.

With Noelle's departure, we will be welcoming a new employee to our team. Chanisa Wilkerson will join on team effective January 8th. Chanisa has years of retail experience, we are extremely excited to see what she brings to our team! If you have time, stop down and say hello. 😊

Thank you to everyone who helped make 2023 such an amazing year for the gift shop and cheers to a wonderful 2024!

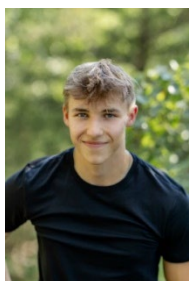
Volunteer Spotlight



“A new volunteer program was recently started at Gundersen Winona. There is a small group of volunteers that are now providing a front door service. We smile, greet, open doors, assist with wheelchairs, stay with the patient while their ride parts the car, etc. For me, volunteering has been very enriching, and I always feel fulfilled when I leave. The smallest gesture can change someone’s day in a positive way. Although I am there to help others, it is the patients/visitors who are rewarding me. My heart is full!”
Candi - Wayfinding Winona MN

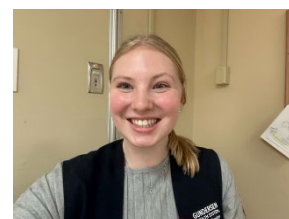


“Child life Specialties is truly a wonderful experience. You see children in all different situations. We do our best to provide children with a positive experience and being able to see them smile despite being in the hospital is very rewarding!” –
Neenah - Child Life Specialties Volunteer



“Hello, My name is James! I have been volunteering in the gift shop for about two and a half months and it has been an amazing experience! When working in the gift shop it has allowed me to meet and interact with many new people along with giving me a chance to learn a bit about inventory and working in customer service. Everyone at the gift shop is extremely friendly along with very welcoming to anyone who sets foot in the shop. I have enjoyed working with everyone and being a part of the volunteer family!”
James – Gift Shop Teen Volunteer

Hi, I’m Anna Rautiola. I have been with Gundersen’s Volunteer Services for over four years. I started helping in Mail and Flower Delivery and Surgery and Operations during high school and now I assist with Transport Services during my college breaks. I will graduate from the University of Iowa next December and I’m on the path to becoming a PA-C! I am passionate about providing meaningful patient care to everyone I interact with at Gundersen Health System. My favorite hobbies include trying new recipes, hiking, and traveling to new cities!



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“I came to the Community Resource Connector (CRC) volunteer role after retiring from Gundersen where I served as Hospice Bereavement Coordinator for 18 years. I have been involved in outreach services, both volunteer and professional, my entire life. However, the CRC role is unlike anything I could have dreamt of. It is an absolute privilege to provide a significant connection to our patients, especially at their request! The comprehensive online process which equips us to easily provide multiple resources, addressing patients’ areas of critical needs, makes this a wonder. It truly feels like Christmas every day and as a volunteer, I have a very hard time staying away!”
 Marcia – GHS Community Resource Center



“Hi, my name is Gracie! I have been a volunteer at Gundersen for six months. There has been nothing but pleasant experiences at the Gundersen gift shop. The other volunteer staff have been very welcoming and kind to work with. After every volunteer shift, I feel an overwhelming sense of pride that I am providing for my community! This opportunity has allowed me to grow as a person and become more compassionate to individuals in the hospital.”
 Gracie – Gift Shop Teen Volunteer

“Surgery, no matter how large or small the procedure is, can be really hard on not only the patient, but also their loved ones. Spending time in the surgery waiting room has given me the opportunity to learn so much about human connection and how little actions can make someone who may be feeling extremely anxious or stressed feel so much better. One of the most rewarding feelings I have gotten from this experience is when I get to walk with someone from the waiting room to see their loved one and the instant relief and joy they begin to feel and express. I’ve had a lot of fun with this assignment and am excited to spend more time in it!”
 Ellie - Surgery Family Waiting Area Support (Legacy 2nd Floor)



“Hello, my name is Grace Ellingson and I volunteer in the Emergency Services Department at Gundersen. I am attending the University of Wisconsin La Crosse to become a Physician Assistant. I am originally from De Pere Wisconsin!!! One thing I love about volunteering for Gundersen is the variety of people I get to work with every time I come in. Everyone is very friendly and willing to help me learn more about a hospital environment and what it means to be a part of this tight knit community! Thank you for the opportunity to be in the Volunteer Spotlight!!!”
 Grace – Emergency Services

If you would like to be featured in our Volunteer Spotlight next quarter or have a great volunteer to spotlight, please email ghsvolunteerservices@gundersenhealth.org with a short paragraph about your experience or the volunteer you would like to spotlight with a picture!



CARBON MONOXIDE POISONING

Fast Facts

- Carbon monoxide is an invisible, odorless, colorless gas created when fuels (such as gasoline, wood, coal, natural gas, propane, oil, and methane) burn incompletely. **
- Each year, carbon monoxide poisoning claims approximately 480 lives and sends another 15,200 people to hospital emergency rooms for treatment.***
- Each year over 200 people die from carbon monoxide produced by fuel burning appliances in the home including furnaces, ranges, water heaters and room heaters.****
- A person can be poisoned by a small amount of CO over a longer period of time or by a large amount of CO over a shorter amount of time.**
- Carbon Monoxide can have different effects on people based on its concentration in the air that people breathe, and the person's health condition.****
- CO poisoning can be confused with flu symptoms, food poisoning and other illnesses with symptoms including shortness of breath, nausea, dizziness, light headedness or headaches. High levels of CO can be fatal, causing death within minutes.**
- Consumers die when they improperly use gas generators, charcoal grills, and fuel-burning camping heaters and stoves inside their homes or in other enclosed or partially-enclosed spaces during power outages. ***

Preparedness Tips

- ✓ Install a carbon monoxide (CO) alarm (also called detectors) in the hallway of your home near sleeping areas. Avoid corners where air does not circulate.
- ✓ Follow the manufacturer's instructions to test the CO alarm every month.
- ✓ Do not use a CO alarm in place of a smoke alarm. Have both.
- ✓ Before buying a CO alarm, check to make sure it is listed with Underwriter's Laboratories standard 2034, or there is information in the owner's manual that says the alarm meets the requirements of the IAS 6-96 standard.
- ✓ Make sure all household appliances are installed according to manufacturer's instructions and local building codes. Most appliances should be installed by professionals.
- ✓ Have heating systems (including chimneys and vents) inspected and serviced annually, checking for blockages, corrosion, partial and complete disconnections.
- ✓ Only burn charcoal outdoors, never inside a home, garage, vehicle or tent.
- ✓ Always make sure to turn off any gas-powered engine, even if the garage door is open.
- ✓ Do not use gas appliances such as ranges, ovens, clothes dryers for heating your home.
- ✓ Know the symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning: headache, dizziness, weakness, nausea, vomiting, sleepiness, and confusion. If you suspect CO poisoning, get to fresh air immediately, and then call 9-1-1.
- ✓ Treat the alarm signal as a real emergency each time. If the alarm sounds and you are not experiencing any symptoms described above, press the reset button. If the alarm continues to sound, call the fire department.
- ✓ Visit www.redcross.org/homefires for more information.

Sources: American Red Cross,* U.S. Fire Administration,*** the National Fire Protection Association,**, and the US Consumer Product Safety Commission.****



Gundersen Partners Highlights By Jill Blackbourn, President

Hello everyone,

As the new President of Gundersen Partners Board of Directors, I thought I'd start this greeting with a little introduction. I'm a retired nurse and practiced for 43 years, with the last 34 years at Gundersen Health System (GHS). I worked in Postpartum/Nursery in the hospital for 19 years and then moved to the Department of Nursing as

a Nursing Systems Specialist for the next 14 years. I can say without hesitation that my career decision to practice nursing was one of the greatest joys of my life. In retirement, I love having the time to spend with family and friends - I am fortunate to have two of my three children and all four grandchildren living close by. And I am replenished through activities such as reading, music, and travel.

When I was asked to consider the position of President-Elect, I found myself making this decision based on several things. First, Lisa Biondo, Board President in 2022 and 2023, would be continuing in a Past-President role. Lisa is an exemplary leader who has led this group with great wisdom and insight. Anyone who knows Lisa is aware of her compassion and kindness. I am so grateful for her expertise and her willingness to guide and support me in this work. Second, each member of the Board is amazing! Working alongside such dedicated individuals whose only desire is to do good and support others is extremely heartwarming. Third, I am delighted to continue my connection with an organization I love and respect through my work with Partners. In the end, it was an easy decision. Being part of this work as a steward of the generosity of others and witnessing its impact is a joy.

A new year brings additional changes to our team. We are excited to welcome Lori Van Lin and Ellen Gianoli to our Board as new Directors this year, both familiar faces at GHS. Lori served as Director of Volunteer Services and worked closely with the Partners Board from 2000 until her retirement in 2021. Ellen has served GHS for many years and currently works in Patient Experience. We also welcome Community Health Educator Lara Zimmerman, who is a Social Worker and member of the Care Coordination Team at GHS. And we thank Sarah Havens and Chris Lau, retiring Board Directors, and Max Heckman, who served as Community Health Educator. We are grateful for their contributions.

This month you will be receiving your annual membership renewal information in the mail. Included is our Impact Report, which shares some of the contributions Partners has made in the last year. Please take a minute to read this and recognize how your donations have made a difference for GHS and our community! Others are noticing too. During the Gundersen Medication Foundation's Gratefully, Gundersen event, Gundersen Partners was honored with the Outstanding Philanthropic Organization award, having raised over \$1 million in the last 73 years! Fundraising efforts have supported scholarships for employees' children, backpacks and additional financial donations to the La Crosse Area Retired Educators Association who support area school children in need, and much more. [Click here](#) to view a short video that showcases Partners' philanthropic history and charitable works.

In this mailing you will also find a membership questionnaire; we ask that you please complete and return it by the end of February. One of our goals in the upcoming months is to embrace our culture of "love, trust and connection" (from Gundersen Patient Experience) and connect with our members, getting to learn more about you, your interests, and how you would like to connect with Partners. Your response will help us accomplish this.

A few final highlights: we are bringing back our Valentine's Day Carnation Sale on February 14 on the main campus in La Crosse and will be hosting a Discovery Toy Sale on March 20 and 21; watch for more information. And we're starting to gear up for the 75th anniversary celebration of Partners in 2025!

I look forward to seeing you in the New Year. May it be one of love, peace, and hope.

Warmly,
Jill Blackbourn, RN, Caritas Coach
Gundersen Partners President (2024)
Email: gundersenpartners@gundersenhealth.org

"Maybe this one moment, with this one person, is the very reason we are here on earth at this time." Jean Watson



WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

By Marilyn McElligott, Gundersen Partners Past President and Historian

As of 2024, Gundersen Partners has awarded merit scholarships to children of Gundersen Health System employees for twenty years. In 2004, Board member Colleen Shaw suggested initiation of such a scholarship. Colleen served as the first Chairperson, and with her committee developed scholarship policies, procedures, and criteria, all of which were approved by the Gundersen Partners Board of Directors and Gundersen's Legal Department.

In this issue, Partners is excited to share Lauren Lansing's story. Lauren is the daughter of Dr. Kim Lansing and Paul Lansing, PharmD. and a past scholarship recipient.

I attended Central High School and during that time, served as a teen volunteer at Gundersen Health System. My involvement was delivery of mail and flowers as well as music presentations. I volunteered at school events through the Environmental Club and the National Honor Society.

I am continuing my healthcare volunteering with a free clinic run by the University of North Carolina (UNC) students where I assist with the Syringe Safety Program. I also volunteer my time with various organizations including the Student Global Health Committee, Public Health Leadership Student Association and assisting with planning the Minority Health Conference.

My experience in research, internships and volunteering inspired me to choose a career in healthcare. I knew I wanted to work in healthcare since high school when I started volunteering at Gundersen Health System and took courses in psychology, biology, and health. My interest evolved towards public health and research throughout college as I collaborated with clinic and hospital administrators and researchers through internships with Area Health Education Centers (AHEC) and the CDC. I was drawn to public health due to the integration of systemic factors and preventive methods to promote well-being and health equity.

At UW-Madison, I pursued a dual degree of Biology and Global Health with honors in research. At UNC, I am studying public health with a concentration on global health. Currently, I have a research focus on women's health within global health. I will graduate with my Masters in Public Health in the Spring of 2025.

After I graduate, I plan to work in the public health sector with a state or national agency to promote well-being through health program design and evaluation. I will use a combination of research and community engagement to determine how well existing programs are functioning and ways in which they could grow to serve their communities.

I am grateful to Gundersen Partners for their support of my undergraduate education and for the opportunities to develop my interest in health and service.

THANK YOU VOLUNTEERS

