



Lenore Hansen helps a guest check out at the Hospital Gift Shop, which is managed by the Hospital Auxiliary volunteers.

A Mission of Comfort and Care

THE HILTON HEAD HOSPITAL AUXILIARY

Article by Kitty Bartell

Powered by the efforts of 187 volunteers, the experiences of thousands of individuals coming through the doors of the Hilton Head Regional Healthcare facilities every year are made better under the direction of The Hilton Head Hospital Auxiliary. Founded in 1974, the 401(c)(3) organization coordinates the services and fundraising endeavors of the team of people who do it for the love of the work, and the desire to provide comfort and care where medical treatment is needed.

That is the short and simple description of what The Auxiliary does. How the organization impacts the community goes deep—touching patients, medical professionals, facility staff, visitors, family, friends, and acquaintances wherever help is needed. “The Auxiliary does a lot of things, but our primary function is

to provide and support the volunteers,” said Dave Hales, president of the group. “The auxiliary is the vehicle that provides assistance to the hospital for special projects they cannot provide, or to supplement existing programs.”

The Auxiliary serves the Hilton Head Regional Healthcare community, including Hilton Head Hospital, Coastal Carolina Hospital, Bluffton-Okatie Outpatient Center, and the Bluffton Medical Campus. That’s a lot of square footage and a substantial number of individuals for this relatively small army to

serve. Which speaks to the need for getting the word out that, for anyone seeking a way to help in their community, The Auxiliary may be a nice fit. “We can always use more volunteers,” said Terri Green, volunteer services manager.

They extend an open invitation to women, men, and young adults ages 14 and up to apply. “It begins with filling out an application, which can be found on the hospital websites, the Auxiliary website, or picked up at the hospital. Once I get an application I schedule an interview, and we talk about their areas of interests and what we have available, to make sure we are a good match.” Following an orientation session, a background check, a medical review that requires a two-step TB shot and a flu shot, the applicant goes into his or her assignment and trains with another volunteer.



Karen Middleton, another volunteer, makes beds in the Emergency Room wing of the hospital.



Leslie Poole, a volunteer with the Hospital Auxiliary, welcomes guests to the Hilton Head Hospital.

TYPICALLY, VOLUNTEER SHIFTS ARE FOUR HOURS, ARRANGED TO MEET THE VARYING SCHEDULING NEEDS OF THE VOLUNTEERS. AREAS WHERE VOLUNTEERS ARE ASSIGNED INCLUDE COMMITTEES, FUNDRAISING, AND SPECIAL PROJECTS, THE HOSPITAL GIFT SHOPS, EMERGENCY SERVICES, FOOD SERVICES, GREETERS, PATIENT SERVICES, RADIOLOGY, SURGERY WAITING ROOMS, AND THE TROLLEY.

Typically, volunteer shifts are four hours, arranged to meet the varying scheduling needs of the volunteers. Areas where volunteers are assigned include committees, fundraising, and special projects, the hospital gift shops, emergency services, food services, greeters, patient services, radiology, surgery waiting rooms, and the Trolley. "One of the things I do is drive the courtesy shuttle, which we reverently refer to as the Trolley," Hales said. "Once a month or so, someone will try to tip me. I tell them I cannot accept it ... it would void my social security. I tell people I have the best volunteer job at the hospital, because I get to go out there and spoil people. What do volunteers get out of it? I think it's simply helping people."

Along with supporting the volunteers, fundraising is a significant part of The Auxiliary's role. Money is raised throughout the year and includes their annual golf tournament (one round of golf on Harbour Town Golf Links, and one in Wexford Plantation, along with food and a whole lot

of fun). The \$285 ticket for the whole shebang is a golfer's win-win-win. In addition, the gift shops, the annual Holiday Boutique & Bake Sale, the Holiday Caring Tree, and the uniform sale, provide funding for needs and programs throughout the Hilton Head Island, Bluffton, Okatie communities, and beyond.

The primary beneficiaries of The Auxiliary fundraising efforts include scholarships for students entering healthcare studies; the care and keeping of the Children's Memorial Garden at Hilton Head Hospital, where children who have passed are remembered; the operational needs for the Trolley; the Breast Health Center, including funding for educational literature, informational programs; and meeting special needs, and funding for A.C.T., the Auxiliary Caring Touch program, which helps patients without the ability to pay for prescription medication and durable medical supplies. "Without these funds we would have people coming back to the hospital who aren't getting well because they're not able to get the medication they need," shared Auxiliary member Dee Judge, volunteer newsletter/art director.

Of course, funds are welcome from any direct donor. "Recently, a patient at the women's breast cancer center wanted to make a donation, and she wanted it to go for gowns. We brokered that through The Auxiliary," Hales said. The Auxiliary's programs also benefit from corporations who support the volunteer efforts of their retirees, donating funds in recognition of these individual's volunteering efforts. "Exxon is one of these companies, along with a few others, where if their retirees verify their volunteer hours, the companies donate to the charity of their choice."

The volunteers each bring with them a wealth of experience and a desire to help, and despite the lack of monetary compensation for their time and efforts, the rewards can be great. "I had a lady come in the gift shop one day, almost in tears," said volunteer Jo Anne Barrs, who also assists on the publicity committee. "She had just been diagnosed with breast cancer and needed somebody to listen to her. So, I stood there for almost 30 minutes and listened, and then gave her the information about our breast cancer center. The Auxiliary funds the books that we hand out. She was very grateful for that. It benefited me too, because I am a retired nurse, and it was rewarding for me to be able to help her."

The power generated by The Auxiliary's volunteer workforce is enough to reach into the furthest corners of need within the Hilton Head Regional Healthcare community, and there is a great deal of enthusiasm for the possibilities ahead as their resources grow, Hales said. "If something new comes along, we would love to jump right in, and, of course, we have no problem expanding on what we're doing now." 2

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