

NEWS RELEASE/FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NHH honours its many dedicated volunteers with annual National Volunteer Week celebration

NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY, Friday, May 2, 2025—In celebration of National Volunteer Week—held annually during the last week of April—Northumberland Hills Hospital (NHH) hosted an appreciation luncheon for all hospital volunteers.

Held at the Best Western in Cobourg on May 1, the event welcomed over 170 guests and saw a diverse representation of volunteers from NHH's Board of Directors, the NHH Foundation, Spiritual Care, Patient and Family Advisory Council (PFAC), and NHH Auxiliary.

The festivities commenced with the reading of NHH's territorial land acknowledgement by Graeme Bakker, Interim Manager, Volunteers.

Jennifer Gillard, Vice President of Patient Experience, Public Affairs and Strategic Partnerships—who served as the event's master of ceremonies—then opened the festivities by sharing highlights from the hospital's inaugural volunteer experience survey, conducted at the end of 2024.

"While NHH has long surveyed staff, physicians, midwives, and of course patients on the quality of their experience, we had never, until this past year, surveyed volunteers to see why they choose to bring their time and talents to NHH," explained Gillard.

Key findings from the volunteer survey, which was recently [highlighted by the Ontario Hospital Association](#), showed that **94 per cent** of NHH volunteers 'agreed or strongly agreed' that they felt valued for their contributions at NHH. Additionally, **98 per cent** 'agreed or strongly agreed' that they would recommend NHH as a place to volunteer, a sentiment reflected in volunteer teams' positive recruitment efforts over the past year.

Highlights of each volunteer team's unique contributions to the hospital were shared, beginning with the largest volunteer group: the NHH Auxiliary.

Gillard shared that combined—inclusive of their two retail operations—NHH Auxiliary volunteers contributed, in the last calendar year, over **30,000** hours of volunteer service.

“Auxiliary volunteers are everywhere,” said Gillard, emphasizing how much their presence contributes to a positive experience for patients and caregivers as well as the hospital team. “They manage Petticoat Lane—a thrift shop run by the Auxiliary on Munroe Street in Cobourg—and the Little Treasure Shop, the Auxiliary’s retail operation within the hospital—where all proceeds over \$200,000 a year—also go to support NHH patient services. They greet people with a smile and help them find their way when they walk in the front door – or as they enter Cancer and Supportive Care or Women’s Health. They support triage and communication to patients and families within our extremely busy Emergency Department. They support the Post-Acute Care Program’s Hospital Elder Life Program. They operate an extremely important hydration program delivering fresh cold water to every inpatient room.”

Also recognized were the tremendous contributions and support from the Northumberland Hills Hospital Foundation, which currently has more than 75 active volunteers supporting its critical work.

In September, the NHH Foundation celebrated the successful conclusion of the largest fundraising campaign in Northumberland County’s history. Through the *Exceptional Community, Exceptional Care* campaign, led by Campaign Chair Hank Vandermeer and a dedicated volunteer Cabinet, an incredible **\$26.3** million was raised.

Another dedicated group of volunteers recognized at the celebration was NHH’s volunteer Board of Directors. The Board, and its community committee volunteers, dedicate hundreds of hours of service to the governance of the organization each year, monitoring strategic priorities, quality and fiscal health.

NHH’s Patient and Family Advisory Council (PFAC) also received a special shoutout for their contributions to many operational tables and working groups throughout NHH. PFAC plays a critical role in bringing the lived experience of patients and their caregivers into the hospital’s service planning and process improvement. In the last 12 months, they contributed over **800 hours** of volunteer service.

Many other generous individuals support NHH beyond the larger groups of the Foundation, PFAC, Auxiliary and Board volunteers and all were recognized at yesterday’s event, including student volunteers, volunteers with NHH’s growing network of spiritual care volunteers and the dedicated volunteers with the local St. John Ambulance Therapy Dog program who visit NHH weekly with their pets.

Following lunch, Cheryl Athersych from the Ontario Age-Friendly Communities Outreach Program and the Centre for Studies in Aging & Health at Providence Care, in Kingston, delivered a powerful speech about ‘The Power of Volunteerism.’

Drawing on recent research, Cheryl highlighted the positive impacts of being a volunteer, including the many personal and community-wide benefits, such as:

- Increased social capital that builds trust and networks in communities
- Enabling intergenerational bonds

- Delayed progression of memory issues, such as early onset Alzheimer Disease, and
- Reduction of stress, depression, and anxiety for those who volunteer

Cheryl congratulated the community and NHH for its strong culture of active volunteerism, stating, while many communities are seeing a decline in volunteers, “your community is a great outlier in this regard. Your volunteer engagement at NHH is actually increasing over the last few years and those additional volunteers are having profound impacts on the community. It’s a testament to all of you in the room, and to your goal of being a **People First** environment for not only clients, but staff, physicians and volunteers. I tip my hat to those who really focused on fostering an environment where that could happen.”

“It is our hope that the experience of volunteering enriches your lives as much as it enriches the experience of care at NHH,” said Gillard in concluding the event. “Your community is grateful for you. NHH is grateful for you. On behalf of every member of our team, thank you for all you do!”

Find photos from the event on NHH’s social media feeds and website and in our upcoming community newsletter, *In Touch*.

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About Northumberland Hills Hospital – Located approximately 100 kilometres east of Toronto, NHH delivers a broad range of acute, post-acute, outpatient and diagnostic services. Acute services include emergency and intensive care, medical/surgical care, obstetrical care and palliative care. Post-acute specialty services (PASS) include restorative care and rehabilitation. Mental health care, cancer and supportive care, dialysis and other ambulatory care clinics are offered on an outpatient basis through partnerships with regional centres and nearby specialists. NHH offers a full range of diagnostic services, including magnetic resonance imaging (MRI), computed tomography (CT) and mammography. The hospital serves the catchment area of west Northumberland County. A mixed urban and rural population of approximately 67,000 residents, west Northumberland comprises the Town of Cobourg, the Municipality of Port Hope, Alderville First Nation and the townships of Hamilton, Cramahe and Alnwick/Haldimand. NHH employs more than 850 people and relies on the additional support provided by physicians, midwives and volunteers. NHH is an active member of Ontario Health (East)—formerly the Central East Local Health Integration Network—and the Ontario Health Team of Northumberland. For more information, please visit nhh.ca or follow us on Facebook [@northumberlandhillshosp](https://www.facebook.com/northumberlandhillshosp) and LinkedIn [Northumberland Hills Hospital](https://www.linkedin.com/company/northumberland-hills-hospital).

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