

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Volunteer contributions celebrated at NHH Auxiliary Annual Meeting

Service pins presented to 23 dedicated volunteers marking 5 to 55 years of service

NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY, Friday, July 24, 2026—The Northumberland Hills Hospital Auxiliary held their Annual Meeting at the hospital on Thursday, July 23. A celebration of another successful year, the meeting—held in the Peter B. and Mary T. Smith Community Education Centre—was chaired by Auxiliary President, Rick Riley.

Following Riley's opening remarks and introductions, greetings were delivered by NHH Board Chair, Michael McAllister, and NHH Foundation CEO, Rhonda Cunningham. Both thanked Auxiliary members for their partnership and commitment to NHH and the community served.

NHH President and CEO Susan Walsh delivered the meeting's keynote address, reviewing the many projects completed by the hospital over the last fiscal year with volunteer support, including capital equipment renewal and service expansion. Thanking volunteers for their critical role at NHH, Walsh said: "Volunteers are essential to NHH. Our shared purpose of *People First* is about more than delivering exceptional clinical care; it's creating an environment where every interaction helps to foster a positive relationship with patients, families, staff, providers and partners. NHH wouldn't be NHH without volunteers and the support, creativity, compassion and energy that you bring to our hospital."

Riley thanked Susan Walsh for her leadership and commended the 319 Auxiliary volunteers who currently support eighteen service areas at NHH. He also thanked the Board for their governance work, the volunteer coordinators for their role in supporting program leadership, and the large teams of volunteers who support the Auxiliary's two retail operations, the Little Treasure Shop and Petticoat Lane.

"We've had another remarkable year as a volunteer team," said Riley. "Thank you to my fellow Directors for your hard work, particularly in the areas of Board governance, which we continue to review and refine, and our two retail operations, which the Board plays a direct hand in overseeing. The Little Treasure Shop, led by Coordinator Dale Hodge and team, hosted a fantastic fashion show this spring in partnership with the Rotary Club of Cobourg and Palisade Gardens, and Petticoat Lane, our thrift operation on Munroe Street in Cobourg, co-led by Marilyn Routly, Joan Kemp and Jean Irvine, has also been thriving. Together these operations have supported our contribution to the hospital this fiscal year of an incredible \$240,000 dollars that enabled NHH's purchase of a new 'HUGS' system to support newborns."

Recognizing the hospital staff who support the day-to-day operations of the large Auxiliary, Riley said: “A hospital Auxiliary really is a joint effort and I want to thank NHH leadership, staff and each and every volunteer who gives of their time and talent to the work we’re called on to do,” said Riley.

Following the President’s remarks, Jennifer Gillard, NHH’s Vice President, Patient Experience, Public Affairs and Strategic Partnerships, provided an update on volunteer operations.

“We have designed, together, what is proving to be a unique and effective shared model of governance and support,” said Gillard. Speaking to the hospital’s efforts to ensure a positive experience for volunteers, Gillard said: “In the past year we have continued to fine-tune our standard operating procedures for volunteer processes, including recruitment, orientation, onboarding and day-to-day support. We also conducted our second volunteer experience survey, to monitor how we’re doing against volunteer expectations, and opportunities for the future.”

Thanking individual staff who contributed to volunteer support over the past year, Gillard recognized Rachael Milne, who served for a portion of the year as Interim Volunteer Lead, Brooke Galonski-Landry, Volunteer Manager, Graeme Bakker, Patient Experience Lead, and Courtney Shields, Director of Health Information, Patient Experience and Privacy.

Speaking to Statistic’s Canada’s 2025 report, *Volunteering and Charitable Giving in Canada, 2018 to 2023*, Gillard spoke to the tough challenge many hospitals are facing with declines in volunteer support, and the ripple effect on patient experience.

“Despite national trends in the other direction, the NHH Auxiliary is growing and stronger than it has ever been. Volunteers and, particularly, Auxiliary volunteers, are literally everywhere. Services are well supported, with the addition of Saturday hours of operation introduced for the Little Treasure Shop, ICU volunteer service now resumed, and volunteer supports in Community Mental Health now being piloted. NHH—and the patients and families we serve—are grateful for all you do and we would not be NHH without you,” said Gillard.

In the business portion of the meeting, Vice President Deb Smelko walked members through the Governance Committee’s annual review of [Board policies](#), with minor updates approved.

Richard Holland, NHH Auxiliary Director, Finance provided details of the Auxiliary’s 2025-2026 fiscal year results, noting that the Little Treasure Shop increased their annual sales for an overall contribution of \$75,000 in the last fiscal year. Petticoat Lane’s annual sales were \$155,000 in the last fiscal year, with the balance of the \$240,000 2025-2026 Auxiliary donation coming from the General Fund.

Thanks to the retail efforts, a pledge to NHH for \$240,000 in 2026-2027 was also moved and approved.

Collectively, Holland noted, the Auxiliary has raised \$5.6 million during its 100+ years in existence. Of that, close to \$4 million has been raised since NHH opened at 1000 DePalma Drive in 2003.

The 2026-2027 Auxiliary Board was confirmed as follows:

- **President**, Rick Riley
- **Vice President**, Deb Smelko
- **Past President**, Selena Forsyth
- **Director, Business Services**, Susan Spicer
- **Director, Finance**, Richard Holland
- **Director at Large**, Karen Lingard, and
- **(incoming) Director at Large**, Grace Rivers.

Derrick Cunningham was thanked for continuing to support the Board in the role of Recording Secretary, and outgoing Board Director at Large Marilyn Routly was thanked and received a special round of applause for her Board service.

Brooke Galonski-Landry introduced and thanked the many Coordinators and Co-Coordinators who have committed to supporting Auxiliary service areas in the coming year and led the room in a moment of silence to honour 13 active and past Auxiliary volunteers who passed away in the last year. As shared in a July 22 [news release](#), the flags, located at NHH's main entrance, were also flown at half-mast for the day in memoriam.

The Annual Meeting concluded with recognition for the Auxiliary's 2025-2026 long service recipients. Twenty-three Auxiliary volunteers received service pins to mark their years of service ranging from 5 years to 55 years.

Vera Wellman was recognized for her 55-years of volunteer service and thanked the Auxiliary and her fellow volunteers, stating: "Volunteers, may you be proud of the work you do, the person you are, and the difference you make."

The names of all those recognized for long service are provided below:

- **5 years:** Wyske Bertsch, Jamie Finan, Laura Garton, Ann Hancock, Mary Robson, Kathy Rosskopf and Cathy Sullivan.
- **10 years:** Mary Henry, Joanne Power, and Mary Witty
- **15 years:** Celia Crangle, Margaret Darrah, Dianne Graham and Maria Widdifield
- **20 years:** Judy Benne, Dale Hodge, Carole Houston, E. Lorraine Mansey, Linda Sedgewick-Girard, Linda Smith and Marlynne Warling
- **25 years:** Lori Bernstein
- **55 years:** Vera Wellman

Interested in learning more about the NHH Auxiliary? Please visit the Auxiliary page on nhh.ca for more information including Auxiliary Policies, service areas and adult and student volunteer application forms.

About Northumberland Hills Hospital Auxiliary

The Northumberland Hills Hospital Auxiliary volunteers are dedicated individuals of all ages who work alongside hospital staff, physicians and midwives supporting the work of virtually every department. NHH volunteers welcome patients and guests upon arrival, provide wayfinding assistance, deliver water to patient rooms, and offer support and companionship to patients and families throughout the hospital, including the Emergency Department, Day Surgery, Diagnostic Imaging waiting room, Intensive Care, Palliative Care and Cancer and Supportive Care areas.

Specially trained volunteers also engage in patient therapeutic activities through the Hospital Elder Life Program to help prevent delirium and functional decline during hospitalization.

Beyond direct patient support, NHH Auxiliary volunteers operate two retail operations: the Little Treasure Shop gift shop, located in the main entrance of the hospital, and Petticoat Lane, their community thrift store on Munroe Street in Cobourg. Together, the NHH Auxiliary dedicate thousands of hours of service each year and have contributed more than 5 million dollars to support capital equipment needs, enriching the patient, staff and visitor experience while helping raise funds for essential capital equipment that strengthens care for the entire community. For more information visit: <https://nhh.ca/Volunteers/NHHAuxiliary> or follow us on Facebook [@northumberlandhillshospitalauxiliary](#).

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