



**NEWS RELEASE – FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Thank you, NHH volunteers!**

***National Volunteer Week celebration honours hospital's amazing volunteers***

**NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY, Thursday, April 27, 2017**—From fund-raising to governance, way-finding to quality improvement, spiritual care to a heart-warming hello, volunteers of all ages play an essential role in making NHH the compassionate and high quality hospital it is today.

National Volunteer Week is being recognized in Canada now through April 29<sup>th</sup> and yesterday (April 26<sup>th</sup>) volunteers from across the hospital came together in the Northumberland Hills Hospital (NHH) Education Centre for an annual celebration of volunteers and volunteering at NHH.

Illustrating the ever-changing face of volunteering at NHH, this year's celebration included a panel of representatives from a cross-section of volunteers who shared, in their own words, what they do and why they choose to volunteer their time at NHH.

**Louise Stevenson** represented the Foundation's 75+ volunteers, sharing how she has participated in numerous Foundation committees in her many years of service with the organization. Chair of the Foundation's Caring for Generations Society Committee for six years and, for three years, co-chair of the Foundation Gala, Stevenson has served on the NHH Foundation Board of Directors since 2006, and currently leads the Board as Chair. In the past year alone the NHH Foundation has provided NHH with more than \$1.8 million in community donations—dollars that go to support much-needed equipment necessary to provide care and, as the audience also learned, clinical education, including the purchase of new mannequins for advanced life saving cardiac training.

**Wanda Smith**, a St. John Ambulance Therapy Dog volunteer, spoke about her work at the hospital. Smith and her Jack Russell Matilda have been visiting patients at NHH since 2008 and Matilda, one of the youngest dogs to join the program, is often said to be the calmest Jack Russell Terrier to ever participate. Smith shared her experience as both a volunteer and a patient at NHH, highlighting her belief in giving back to the community and the reward it brings to her in return through the personal satisfaction she receives through meeting through helping others.

**Gayle Metson** represented the NHH Auxiliary's 300+ volunteers. A past President of the Auxiliary, a member of its Board, coordinator for the volunteer's Day Surgery services and a weekly volunteer at the Inquiry Desk in the front entrance of the hospital, Metson shared personal stories from her decade of service to the hospital.

"I'm humbled every day that I'm here," Metson said, remarking on the talent within the Auxiliary team, and the generosity to share it. "We have 300 active volunteers today—that's 600 feet on the ground—and we could use another 30 or 40 more to fill all the roles asked of us," said Metson, highlighting the Auxiliary's current recruitment campaign.

NHH Auxiliary volunteers support virtually every department of the hospital and offer thousands of hours of volunteer service each year. Their fund-raising role has also increased through the years, with close to \$215,000 being raised in the past year alone through their retail operations (Petticoat Lane, the Auxiliary thrift shop on Munroe Street in Cobourg, and The Little Treasure Shop, the gift shop at the hospital) and other fund-raising efforts for the hospital's high priority equipment needs.

**Rev. Dr. Ewen Butler** spoke on behalf of NHH's 10 spiritual care volunteers. A chaplain with the Church on the Hill, Butler said that the NHH role "fell into his lap" approximately seven years ago, when the hospital's network of volunteer spiritual care volunteers was being formalized.

"It has been a really fulfilling experience," he said. Assigned to the medical/surgical floor (inpatient beds), he visits patients who are in hospital when requested, but these visits, he explained, "are not always spiritual in nature, not in a narrow sense... sometimes I'm called on to simply be another person in the room, to talk and to listen, and I have found that very rewarding too."

Butler said he views his time at the hospital as a personal contribution—not a formal, required part of his job as chaplain, but part of his calling.

**Rhian Catton** shared her perspective as one of the many student volunteers active at NHH today. Joining first when she was a student at Queen's University, Catton is a volunteer in the very successful Hospital Elder Life Program (HELP) which works with older patients while they are in hospital to minimize cognitive decline sometimes associated with long hospital stays. In this she has had the opportunity to work alongside NHH's team of Allied Health professionals (including Occupational and Recreational Therapists) and she said that it has been this experience that "showed her the field she wants to work in." Catton is continuing to volunteer while she awaits acceptance into graduate studies in Occupational Therapy.

**Pam Went**, who chairs the NHH Board's Governance and Nominating Committees and recently chaired the steering committee for the hospital's forthcoming 2017/18 – 2020/21 Strategic Plan, concluded the panel presentation by highlighting the role of the NHH Board of Directors and community committee volunteers.

"I knew my husband and I were going to need the hospital's services someday, and I wanted to know how it was run. In the three years I've been here, I've learned a lot, and I've been very impressed."

Through the course of many meetings each week, Board volunteers donate hundreds of hours of service to the local governance of the hospital in order to meet the province's requirements related to strategic direction, quality care and financial stewardship.

The newest group of volunteers at NHH was also recognized at the event and thanked for their contribution: NHH's Patient and Family Advisory Council. Formed last year, the seven-member Council meets quarterly as a team to provide the hospital with input, with individual members also serving directly on departmental Quality and Practice Committees.

"It is often said that it takes a village to raise a child," Went noted. "I believe it also takes a community to support this hospital. The work is often incredibly hard, but incredibly important as well, and it is our privilege to do it."

Happy Volunteer Week to all our volunteers. Thank you for all you do!

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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, chemotherapy, dialysis and 16 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 60,000 residents, west Northumberland comprises the Town of Cobourg, the Municipality of Port Hope and the townships of Hamilton, Cramahe and Alnwick/Haldimand. NHH employs approximately 600 people and relies on the additional support provided by physicians and volunteers. NHH is an active member of the Central East Local Health Integration Network. For more information, please visit [www.nhh.ca](http://www.nhh.ca) or follow us on Twitter [@NorHillsHosp](https://twitter.com/NorHillsHosp).

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