

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Volunteer contributions celebrated at NHH Auxiliary Annual Meeting

NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY, Tuesday, July 29, 2025—The Northumberland Hills Hospital Auxiliary hosted their Annual Meeting on Thursday, July 24, in the Peter B. & Mary T. Smith Community Education Centre at Northumberland Hills Hospital (NHH).

The meeting had a strong turnout of attendees, including Auxiliary volunteers, volunteer coordinators, Board members, NHH senior leadership and representatives from both the NHH and NHH Foundation Board of Directors.

Hosted by **Selena Forsyth**, the meeting marked the conclusion of her three-year term as the Auxiliary's President.

Forsyth spoke to four Auxiliary achievements from the past year, which included:

- **Auxiliary governance:** In addition to growth and succession planning across the Board of Directors, which now includes representation from both retail and patient care contributors, the Board completed, with support from Pam Went, local governance expert, a fulsome review of Auxiliary Bylaws, approved by members at the meeting, to ensure compliance with governance best practices.
- **Recruitment and retention and operational support:** With the support of a dedicated staff member, provided by the hospital, the Auxiliary now has over 325 volunteers who support in-hospital and retail activities with all Coordinator positions filled, communication channels strengthened and a new mechanism for monitoring volunteer experience and feedback.
- **Retail/fundraising achievements:** Through their two retail operations, the Little Treasure Shop in the hospital and Petticoat Lane, a thrift shop on Munroe Street in Cobourg, the Auxiliary donated \$225,000 in the past fiscal year to NHH to support the purchase of new privacy curtains that surround patient beds. This donation—which was made in addition to the Board's annual Dixie Mikel Scholarship, which went in 2024 to student volunteer Jacob Kim—exceeded the Auxiliary's target and marks the Auxiliary's second largest annual donation to the hospital in its 101+ year history.
- **Joint communication and community engagement:** Forsyth expressed appreciation for the Auxiliary's continued participation in NHH's Joint Communication and Community Engagement Working Group, alongside NHH, NHH Foundation and Patient and Family Advisory Council representatives, supporting consistent and timely communication and

engagement across the inter-related teams and the community to ensure all are rowing “in the same direction”.

Forsyth concluded her remarks by reflecting not only on her experience as President, but the entirety of her volunteerism with the Auxiliary, saying, “This year, I will mark 23 years of service to the Auxiliary—I started at the legacy Cobourg site and spent the majority of my volunteer time here at NHH. In that time, I’ve had the opportunity to volunteer in almost every area of the hospital. I have an immense gratitude for all I’ve had the opportunity to volunteer with.”

Forsyth also took the opportunity to formally welcome **Rick Riley**, who was announced as the Auxiliary’s incoming President, stating, “When my successor, Rick Riley, takes up the President’s gavel, I’m looking forward to continuing my service in the capacity of your Past President, in the 2025/26 fiscal year. Thank you for the privilege to serve, and the kindness, as we work together to make NHH as exceptional as it can be!”

Following the President’s remarks, **Jennifer Gillard**, NHH’s Vice President, Patient Experience, Public Affairs and Strategic Partnerships, provided an update on Volunteer Operations, and NHH’s unique shared governance model, thanking **Graeme Bakker**, NHH’s interim Manager, Volunteers, for the work completed in recent months to introduce standard operating procedures to support volunteer recruitment, orientation, onboarding and day-to-day operations, and welcoming **Rachael Milne**, who assumes the role of interim Volunteer Lead this month.

“Volunteer support of this magnitude is, sadly, on the decline at many Ontario hospitals. Here at NHH, volunteers and, particularly, Auxiliary volunteers, are literally everywhere.”

Echoing praise shared by President and CEO Susan Walsh, Gillard said: “Volunteers are critical to our ability to deliver the best human experience for all. At last year’s annual meeting, a volunteer asked if we could quantify the number of hours Auxiliary volunteers contribute to NHH, in addition to highlighting the wonderful dollars the two retail operations raise. While this figure is an estimate, the Auxiliary commitment to NHH this past year, measured in terms of hours of time volunteered, now sits at over 42,000 hours—that’s 129 hours per year per volunteer (on average) or 10 hours/each a month. That is incredible! We are, truly, in your debt.”

The keynote address provided insight into patient experience at NHH, as measured by recent patient experience surveys, with **Courtney Shields**, NHH’s Director, Health Information, Patient Experience, and Privacy, delivering the update and thanks to the Auxiliary volunteers’ important role in patient, family and staff experience.

Graeme Bakker led the traditional moment of silence in remembrance of active and former Auxiliary volunteers who passed away in the last year. As shared in a [July 24 news release](#), the Canada flag, located at NHH’s main entrance, was also flown at half-mast for the day in memoriam.

In the business portion of the meeting, **Richard Holland**, NHH Auxiliary Director, Finance provided details of the Auxiliary’s 2024-2025 fiscal year results.

Holland applauded the continued success of the Auxiliary's two retail operations. Thanks to their efforts, a \$250,000 pledge to NHH for 2025-2026 was moved and approved.

Other notable highlights from the Auxiliary's Board's year-end financial report are provided below:

- **The Little Treasure Shop** increased their annual sales by **11%** for an overall contribution of **\$67,000** in the last fiscal year. Their total dollars raised over a **67-year** period is over **\$1.3 million**.
- **Petticoat Lane's** annual sales increased by **6%** for an overall contribution of **\$155,000** in the last fiscal year. Over a **57-year** period, they have raised almost **\$3.1 million**.
- Collectively, the NHH Auxiliary has raised **\$5.4 million** during its 101 years in existence. Of the **5.4 million**, over **3.7 million** has been raised since NHH opened at 1000 DePalma Drive in 2003.

The 2025-2026 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, **Marilyn Routly**; Director at Large, **Karen Lingard**.

Derrick Cunningham was thanked for continuing to support the Board in the role of Recording Secretary.

The Annual Meeting concluded with recognition for the 2024-2025 long service recipients. Thirty-one Auxiliary volunteers received service pins ranging from 5 years to 40 years. The names of those recognized is provided below:

40 years: Delia Catton, 25 years: Fran Varden-Ruttle, 20 years: Roberta Armstrong, Sharyl Ann Milligan, 15 years: Merise Ash, Linda Currie, Winnie Finnie, Erma Fraser, Catherine Holmes, Lisa (Teresa) Irving, Carol Johns, Norma Stoffers, Eleanor Vardy, and Penny Watson, 10 years: David Broome, Teresa Finch, Lynda Hart, Jean Irvine Jim Keill, Susan Keill, Joan Kemp, Sandi MacDonald-Wangen, Lynda Macklin, Linda Russell, and Mary Woods, 5 years: Frank Burns, Bas (Basil) DeMattos, Deirdre Finnan Wendy McAllister, Barbara Pemberton, Debbie Reid, and Rita Zeran.

Interested in learning more about the NHH Auxiliary? Visit the Auxiliary page on nhh.ca for more information about available opportunities, news updates, and volunteer applications.

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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. Whether delivering water jugs to patients, helping in various

service areas throughout the hospital, taking shifts in the Auxiliary's two retail operations (The Little Treasure Shop, at NHH, and Petticoat Lane, on Munroe Street in Cobourg) or providing a warm welcome at the main entrance, Auxiliary volunteers play a critical role in strengthening the quality of care and experience at NHH. For background information on the Auxiliary, please visit <https://nhh.ca/Volunteers/NHHAuxiliary> or follow us on Facebook [@northumberlandhillshospitalauxiliary](#)

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