

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Auxiliary volunteers celebrate 100 years of dedicated service

NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY, Tuesday, November 14, 2023—On Friday, November 10, the Northumberland Hills Hospital (NHH) Auxiliary celebrated 100 years of hospital service and volunteerism at a special gathering filled with stories and mementoes from years past, messages of congratulations from near and far and a proud toast to the future.

Held at the Best Western Plus Cobourg Inn & Convention Centre, the centennial milestone included a ceremonial cheque presentation to NHH for the sum of \$5,005,018.00: the cumulative total that the Auxiliary has raised over the past century through donations and a broad range of fundraising efforts including, in most recent decades, two thriving retail operations, Petticoat Lane and The Little Treasure Shop.

Auxiliary volunteers—both past and present—were recognized for their tremendous dedication to NHH and its legacy hospitals and their indelible impact on patients, caregivers, staff and the very culture of NHH as it exists today.

Displays and memorabilia—including a traditional candy striper uniform, volunteer tabards, scrapbooks, newspaper articles, and photographs—lined the event space and served as an interactive timeline of the Auxiliary’s last 100 years.

A special message sent from Her Excellency the Right Honourable Mary May Simon, the Governor General of Canada, on the occasion of the Auxiliary’s anniversary was among the items on display, reading, “Since the Ladies’ Auxiliary held their inaugural meeting in 1923, the NHH Auxiliary has grown into one of the most active hospital auxiliaries in the province today. Throughout its history, its members have upheld a spirit of community, investing their time, energy and kindness to support patients, their families and hospital staff.”

Serving as Master of Ceremony was long-serving volunteer (and past NHH Auxiliary President) Laura McCracken Ebbrell, who chaired, the Auxiliary’s 100th Anniversary Planning Committee.

“So much has changed since November of 1923, when that small group of women joined forces to launch this very special organization,” said Laura McCracken Ebbrell, who shared stories of her own parents’ volunteering work with the Auxiliary. “We have changed, we have adapted to a changing world and a constantly evolving health care system. As Auxiliary volunteers, the depth and breadth of our service spans a century. We have endured the test of time. We are here this afternoon to

celebrate a century of giving with our hearts, but also to remember all of those who came before us and blazed the trail for us to follow.”

NHH Auxiliary Board Vice President Rick Riley delivered remarks on behalf of the NHH Auxiliary Board’s current President, Selena Forsyth, who was unable to attend the celebrations. “Today we are here to celebrate because in 1923, a group of dedicated women began what, in my estimation, is one of the most amazing hospital auxiliaries anywhere,” said Rick Riley for Selena Forsyth. “Counting back from our very first days in this region, as the Women’s Hospital Auxiliary supporting the work of one of NHH’s predecessors, the Cobourg General Hospital, the Auxiliary has raised millions of dollars, started numerous ventures from Polar Dips to Poinsettia Teas to Spring Fevers to Fashion shows, not to mention giving thousands upon thousands of hours to help in any capacity wherever needed by patients, staff, and visitors, in every department of the Hospital.”

NHH Board Chair Dr. Elizabeth (Beth) Selby shared greetings with the volunteers on behalf of the NHH Board of Directors. Dr. Selby reflected on the successful longevity of the Auxiliary, saying, “100 years of service—by any measure—is a remarkable achievement. This success did not happen by chance, it happened by design—and a lot of dedication and hard work—and this community is stronger for it.”

Looking to the future, Dr. Selby added, “From a governance perspective, I am particularly proud of the way our Boards work so well together today – and I include in that our partners at the NHH Foundation Board, of course. We are united by a common goal: a strong, caring and well-equipped hospital. The NHH Auxiliary is well positioned for the next 100 years, resting on the roots of all the dedicated and fierce Auxilians who came before.”

NHH President and CEO Susan Walsh recognized the Auxiliary’s strength as well. “You are thriving, growing by close to 50 new volunteer applicants alone in the past quarter, recovering slowly and steadily from the pandemic years when, unfortunately, much of your good work had to be paused.”

“You should be very proud of your 100 years of achievement and the very important work you have done and continue to do to enhance the quality and the experience of hospital care in this community,” Walsh added. “At NHH, we pride ourselves on living the core values of quality, respect, teamwork, compassion, and integrity. You really do bring those values to life every day with all the work you do. You really, truly are the heart of our organization.”

On behalf of NHH’s medical staff, Chief of Staff Dr. Mukesh Bhargava spoke about the impact of volunteers and their presence across the hospital, “You are the lighthouse when it comes to the hospital. You are the first faces that people see when they enter our hospital. Thank you for what you do because you do it with style, grace, and majesty.”

NHH Foundation CEO Rhonda Cunningham celebrated the unwavering spirit of the NHH Auxiliary volunteers, stating, “Undoubtedly, there has been significant change with the Auxiliary over ten decades, but the constant is your caring, your

commitment, and your dedication. The incredible work that you have accomplished and the impact that you have made collectively is impressive.”

In addition to words of congratulations and thanks from the Premier himself, individual certificates on the occasion of the 100th anniversary were presented by local Member of Provincial Parliament, the Honourable David Piccini, to every NHH Auxiliary volunteer on behalf of the Province of Ontario. Speaking to the group, Minister Piccini highlighted the critical role that NHH Auxiliary volunteers play in the community, noting, “You are, very much, what sews our community together. You are the very fabric of our community. Thank you for your time and thank you for all that you do for our community to keep our hospital the special place it holds in our collective hearts.”

The ceremony concluded with cake, a toast to the future, raffle draws and fellowship.

Interested in exploring adult or student volunteer opportunities with the NHH Auxiliary? There is an opportunity for almost everyone. For details, please visit the [Volunteers tab](#) of the hospital website.

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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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