

Volunteer Program News

This quarterly newsletter highlights volunteer programs and Northwestern Medicine news. To all of our NM volunteers, thank you for your ongoing commitment and dedication! In 2023, volunteers devoted 145,650 hours to supporting our patients, visitors and staff. Please share your volunteer experiences with family members and friends, and encourage them to join us. What *better* way to start 2024 than meeting new friends and serving your community?

The Ross Procedure: Healing Your Heart With Your Own Parts

In the United States, only a few surgeons are trained to perform the complex Ross procedure, including [S. Christopher Malaisrie, MD](#), a cardiac surgeon at Northwestern Memorial Hospital.

“I became a cardiac surgeon because I was fascinated by the physiology of the heart and all of its parts — from the valves to the muscles to the electrical system and functions,” says Dr. Malaisrie. “To be able to do the Ross procedure, the surgeon has to be an expert in aortic valves and pulmonary valves since we are working with both parts. The way the Ross procedure repairs the heart is very unique and leads to really compelling results.”

Read more about the Ross procedure on [HealthBeat](#).

New Hub to Accelerate Medical Discoveries 9 Chicagoland Institutions Collaborate to Bring New Treatments to Patients Faster

A new partnership involving the [Comprehensive Transplant Center](#) at Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine and eight other Chicago healthcare institutions will help the city’s leading academic biomedical scientists deliver innovative treatments and technologies faster to patients who need them most. Challenges such as insufficient funding and a lack of available data can keep medical research from moving out of the lab and to the bedside. This unique collaborative effort is designed to help overcome those challenges and help more patients benefit from medical breakthroughs.

Read more about the new hub on [HealthBeat](#).



Volunteer Spotlight: Mark Oefelein

Emergency Department
Huntley Hospital

What has your volunteer experience taught you?

It’s made me think more about my own health and not take it for granted. Seeing the challenges others face has made me feel pretty lucky.

How has volunteering impacted you personally?

Volunteering and supporting the ED staff have been very fulfilling. Knowing that I can play a part in making a positive experience for the patient has been rewarding. Also, I have a greater appreciation for the importance of compassionate care.

2023 Volunteer Excellence Award Winners

Established in 2023, the annual Volunteer Excellence Award recognizes two Northwestern Medicine volunteers for their passion for service and significant support of patients, visitors and staff members. Volunteers eligible for this award are not employed by NM and have served at least 100 hours.

Having served more than 300 hours as a volunteer since September 2022, **James Beutjer** has become a key volunteer in providing a *Patients First* experience at Marianjoy Rehabilitation Hospital. In his role, Beutjer visits with patients, occupying their time with conversation and activities when they are not receiving care. As a former Marianjoy patient living with a brain injury, Beutjer knows how injury and illness can bring upon feelings of uncertainty.

“James has been fabulous with our patients with brain injury,” says Lizzie McSherry, BSN, RN, nursing clinical coordinator, 2 East at Marianjoy. “It’s always a pleasure to see him on our unit. He is gentle and kind with patients, and he listens well.”

From playing cards to planning imaginary trips across the world, Beutjer makes it a priority to not just learn about a patient’s case, but to learn about them as an individual. After discharge, many families note the impact that he made during their experience at NM, proving his positive spirit is genuine and widespread.

Volunteering at Marianjoy a few days a week, Beutjer is also the mentor for new volunteers and a speaker for the Teen Brain Injury Support Group.

As a retired nurse, **Mary McLaughlin, RN**, knows what it means to put our patients first and serve with excellent care. Since January 2022, McLaughlin has volunteered more than 500 hours at Palos Hospital.

In her role, she assists the Rehabilitation Therapy team with patients needing physical, occupational or speech therapy. In addition, she helps with administrative responsibilities, such as copying and restocking supplies.

“Mary does it all to help us. It’s a good day when she shows up,” says Physical Therapist Christopher Dela Rosa. “She makes sure we have linen for the day and even the days after, that supplies are replenished, the garbage is taken out, and our work area is cleaned and sanitized. She also extends her help to Wound Care.”

“Mary’s willingness to share her expertise has improved morale and efficiency in our department,” says Andrew Farrell, resource coordinator, Rehabilitation Services. “She has a proactive approach to everything she does and is regarded with the highest level of respect.”



James Beutjer



Mary McLaughlin, RN

NM Grant Funding in Action

NM serves patients across a 10,000-square-mile area in communities with a diverse range of needs. To help address disparities in individual communities, NM provides funding to local organizations that understand what residents need the most.

In fiscal year (FY) 2023, this funding included more than **\$15 million in grants** to more than **100 nonprofit groups**. Here’s a snapshot of some of the work local organizations are doing with FY23 NM grant money*:

- **48** organizations are improving access to care
- **50** organizations are providing community engagement
- **13** organizations are supporting economic and workforce development

**Figures do not include multi-year grants.*

Encourage your friends and family to join our volunteer team. They can learn more at nm.org/volunteer.

Take-Care Tips

Healthy Meal Planning

Meal planning saves time and money. Because you’re planning your meals and snacks ahead of time, it can also help you consume fewer calories. Meal planning empowers you and your family to forge a healthy relationship with food.

Read [5 Tips for Healthy Meal Planning](#) on *HealthBeat*.