

# LAWRENCE BUSINESS MAGAZINE

2024 Q4



## IMPACT *of* VOLUNTEERING

Fueling Growth, Connection, and Shaping Our Community

“ Even if it’s a little thing,  
do something for those  
who have need of a man’s help—  
something for which you get no  
pay but the privilege of doing it.  
For, remember, you don’t live in a  
world all your own. Your brothers  
are here, too.”

Albert Schweitzer

A HABITAT FOR HEALING

# KARIN REXRoad

## LMH HEALTH

Hospital volunteers are essential to not only the patients but also the doctors, nurses and other health-care workers who are focused on providing high-quality care.

by Tara Trenary, photo by Steven Hertzog



Volunteering in a hospital setting can be a deeply rewarding experience, both for yourself and for those you help. Spending time and energy supporting patients, families and health-care professionals contributes to the well-being of not only the people you help but also your community. Hospitals are always in need of dedicated people, and being willing to take on this unique role can improve your life while also helping others in need.

Karin Rexroad has been an active volunteer for some time, working with the Lawrence United Way program and serving on several of its boards, as well as volunteering in other communities through food banks, soup kitchens and other services. In 2017 while working from home full time, she ran across an ad in the Lawrence Journal-World seeking a gift shop volunteer at Lawrence Memorial Hospital (now LMH Health). Thinking it would be a great opportunity to get out of the house and meet people, she decided to apply.

The more she learned about the LMH Health volunteers program, the more Rexroad realized the vast organization offered myriad opportunities to volunteer. Because her mother died from cancer, and the facility where she received treatment needed additional volunteers, she decided to donate her time to the oncology department.

“Working with the oncology department allows me to give back to my community by not only assisting patients and families experiencing cancer, but also supporting the staff who provide treatment and care,” she explains. It also “allows me to give back to my community and interact with a variety of volunteers, staff, patients and families. It keeps me invested in experiences outside of my immediate life and provides me with a broader perspective of my community.”

Shane Heiman, LMH Health manager of volunteer services, leads efforts to recruit, engage and coordinate volunteers for the hospital. He says hospital volunteers play a crucial role in enhancing patient care and creating a positive healing environment. “Their impact on patients’ lives is multifaceted. Volunteers assist with nonclinical tasks, such as guiding patients to their appointments, delivering warm blankets or beverages, and helping with room turnover. These seemingly small acts of kindness contribute to a more personalized and comforting experience for patients and their families.”

By taking on tasks like restocking supplies, transporting patients and assisting with administrative duties, Heiman explains, volunteers free up nurses, doctors and other health-care professionals to focus on delivering high-quality medical care. “This collaboration ensures patients receive more timely and focused attention. Overall, hospital volunteers provide compassion, reassurance and practical help that make a lasting difference in patient experiences and outcomes.”

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## MAKING THE TIME

As a journalist for 34 years, Caroline Trowbridge had very little time to volunteer. She had worked in marketing and communications with the LMH Health Foundation staff right before retiring in 2019. Her retirement allowed her the time she needed to give back to her community.

Trowbridge began her stint as a volunteer at the Lawrence Public Library and then moved on to LMH Health, where she works at the hospital information desk on Thursdays. "At the hospital, we see people on the best days and the worst days of their lives—and every day in between. When I volunteer, I want to ease any burden they might have, if I can, by being as helpful, caring and calm as possible."

She says as an employee at LMH Health, she has seen first-hand how valuable volunteers are to the organization, and she's happy she can give back to her community. "I would encourage anyone who's thought about volunteering to pursue the idea. It feels really great to help other people."

The volunteers program makes it easy to become an active volunteer, Rexroad adds, providing various departments and special events from which a volunteer can choose with differing levels of time and patient impact commitments. It provides a variety of volunteer opportunities to both adults and students across Lawrence, as well as raising funds for the purchase of new and cutting-edge technology.

She says volunteering at LMH Health has become an avenue for sharing her time and connecting with other volunteers who inspire her with their commitment to helping improve the quality of care provided. "I think potential volunteers of all ages, not just future generations, should know that volunteering in your community is rewarding, greatly assists the agencies you support and leads to personal growth, as well."

Heiman agrees. "Volunteers at LMH Health give their time because they care about those who are in their community. Many times, out of experience of being in the hospital themselves, they act out of empathy and want to help those that are there." ▲

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TROWBRIDGE**  
LMH HEALTH

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