

The *spirit* of Giving

FALL NEWSLETTER 2026

VOLUNTEERS PLAY A SPECIAL ROLE AT ASCENSION ST. ELIZABETH HOSPITAL

For almost 70 years volunteers have been part of the fabric of Ascension St. Elizabeth, offering their time and talents to help provide patients with compassionate care.

The hospital's volunteer program dates back to 1958, when 21 women came together to form the group. Early volunteers served as hostesses, assisted patients, maintained medical records and supported departments throughout the hospital.

While the program has evolved, that spirit of service remains.

Today, nearly 100 volunteers help with wayfinding, patient transport, hospitality, in the cancer center and other areas throughout the hospital.

"Our focus is on the patient, and we have a formal program, so patients receive the care they deserve. It's also about the volunteer; they have to feel good about what they're doing so they can take ownership," said Renee Trzebiatowski, manager of Volunteer Services at Ascension St. Elizabeth.

Some of the most sought-after volunteer shifts are in the neonatal intensive care unit (NICU), where volunteers nurture and hold babies.

Jeff, one of the hospital's volunteers, discovered the opportunity in the Ascension St. Elizabeth NICU during COVID and has been volunteering ever since. He has contributed more than 1,500 hours.

Volunteering in the NICU brought Jeff back to the work he loved. Decades earlier, he served as a Navy hospital corpsman who often cared for NICU babies.

"I just love being there. The babies need love, and I get a whole lot back from being there with them. When I think about the things I've loved most in life, holding babies is one of them," Jeff said.



Jeff holding two babies in the NICU during one of his volunteer shifts.

Sharon, a fellow volunteer, started with the program after she retired from a career as a flight attendant. For the last three years, she has spent Wednesday afternoons driving the hospital's courtesy cart, helping patients and visitors navigate the campus.

"Hospitals can be intimidating, and you realize that people come in feeling a little lost," Sharon said. "I love being able to help them get where they need to go. It gives me so much satisfaction, and I'll continue doing it as long as I can."

PATIENT IMPACT

TWINS TAKE A PROACTIVE APPROACH TO BREAST CANCER

Growing up as identical twins, Stefanie usually went first. When Samantha was nervous about new things, like a trip down the water slide or getting sixth-grade shots, Stefanie would leap, and Samantha would follow. Decades later, the sisters found themselves facing something much bigger — cancer.

This time, Samantha went first.

Samantha had a proactive approach to her breast health because she had dense breast tissue. Through Ascension Wisconsin's Cancer Prevention and Wellness Program at Ascension St. Elizabeth, she received personalized screening and prevention recommendations based on her cancer risk.

In January 2026, a breast MRI detected an area of concern that warranted further testing. On February 24, she learned she had stage 0 ductal carcinoma in situ, or DCIS. The tumor was growing quickly.

The next day, Samantha met with breast surgeon Dr. Judy Tjoe, who spent hours answering her and her family's questions and explaining treatment options.

After understanding the options, Samantha chose a bilateral mastectomy with reconstruction. Throughout surgery and recovery, Dr. Tjoe was a trusted partner.

Stefanie before heading in to her final reconstruction surgery



"When she's your doctor, she is your biggest supporter," Samantha said. "I trust her with all my heart."

Samantha's diagnosis changed what breast cancer risk looked like for her identical twin. Stefanie joined the Cancer Prevention and Wellness Program, completed additional screening and learned her estimated lifetime risk was about 42%.

"Dr. Tjoe made us feel like everything was taken care of, no question ever felt like too much."

— STEFANIE

Although her screenings showed no cancer, Stefanie decided to have a preventive bilateral mastectomy.

"I watched my sister go through something incredibly difficult and still knew I wanted to do it with the same team," Stefanie said. "Dr. Tjoe made us feel like everything was taken care of, no question ever felt like too much. Although she knew me from my sister's case, she made sure that my plan was individualized."

Stefanie stayed beside Samantha throughout her cancer journey. After surgery, Stefanie recovered at Samantha's home. Samantha already knew how to help with drains, dressings and the challenges that come with recovery.

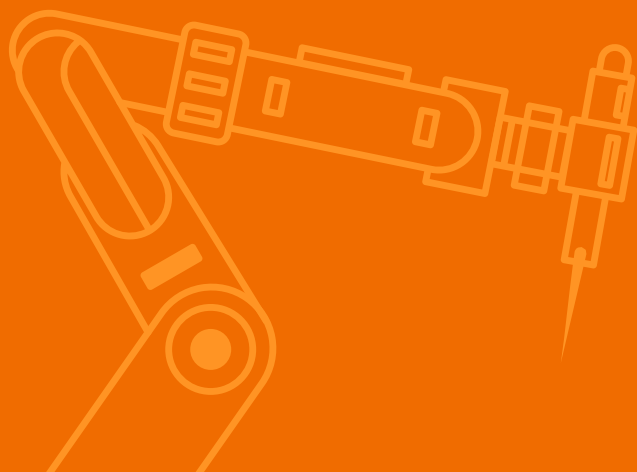
"I was always the one who went first when we were kids," Stefanie said. "This time, she went first for me. She showed me what to expect and made it less scary."

Stefanie braiding Samantha's hair before surgery.



FUNDING HIGHLIGHTS

UPGRADING SURGICAL CARE AT ASCENSION ST. ELIZABETH



As medicine continues to grow and advance, access to innovative technology is crucial to providing high-quality surgical care. Thanks to donor generosity, a **da Vinci 5 Surgical System** was purchased to upgrade surgical offerings at Ascension St. Elizabeth.

"We want to make sure we have the resources and technology needed to best support our community members," said Mike Bergmann, president of Ascension St. Elizabeth. "The purchase of the da Vinci 5 will make robotic-assisted surgery more accessible for a larger range of patients, including those in need of routine procedures. We are truly grateful for the generous donors who made this purchase possible."

The da Vinci 5 gives surgeons enhanced visualization, precision and control during routine procedures. This \$2.5 million investment will help expand access to robotic-assisted surgery, allowing more patients to benefit from advanced surgical care close to home.

INTEGRATIVE THERAPIES FOR PATIENTS WITH CANCER



Patients navigating their cancer journey at Ascension St. Elizabeth have a new service available to them – acupuncture and massage.

Made possible through generosity from the **Spierings Cancer Foundation**, the new integrative care services are available to patients depending on financial need and the symptoms they experience.

Individuals eligible for the acupuncture services may receive up to eight sessions in a three month timeframe, and massage services include up to four sessions.

Thank you to the Spierings Cancer Foundation for making this program possible.

LETTER FROM YOUR FOUNDATION PRESIDENT



Racheal Faulks



I hope you've enjoyed reading our latest edition of *The Spirit of Giving*. Your generosity makes these stories possible, and I am honored that you choose to support Ascension St. Elizabeth Hospital.

Our surgeons are equipped with the da Vinci 5 Surgical Robot, allowing them to use the latest and up-to-date technology in the operating room.

Patients in need of hope and healing can turn to our care teams at the Ascension St. Elizabeth Cancer Center for support.

Volunteers at Ascension St. Elizabeth are making a positive impact for patients who walk through our hospital doors every day.

And so much more.

Today, and every day, we are truly grateful for your support. If you ever have questions, please do not hesitate to contact us at giveAWF@ascension.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Racheal Faulks".

Racheal Faulks

President, Ascension Wisconsin Foundation

A legacy gift doesn't have to be complicated. For many people, it starts with one simple decision: including Ascension Wisconsin Foundation in a will, trust or beneficiary form alongside the people and causes they value most. Some choose to give a percentage of their estate. Others designate a retirement account or life insurance policy. The form matters far less than the intention behind it.

A legacy gift is a meaningful way to ensure the compassionate care you value today continues for future generations while reflecting the people, places and causes that have been important throughout your life.

Your gift can support whatever matters most to you at whichever Ascension Wisconsin hospital means the most to you.

Questions about legacy giving? Contact Maria Betts, Planned Giving Officer, at maria.betts@ascension.org or 414-454-9495.

Learn more at giveAWFlegacy.org



Ascension
Wisconsin Foundation