

FRIENDS *of* STRONG VOLUNTEER UPDATE

Spring 2021

*News & Updates for Strong
Memorial Hospital Volunteers*

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An Incredible Year

Dear Friends of Strong Volunteers,

It's National Volunteer Week and this would normally be a time for us to talk about all of the cumulative time and effort that all of you gifted to our organization—in person and on-site—throughout the previous year.

While the methods of your generosity may have changed during this past year, your support, no matter how much, has remained a heartfelt inspiration to all of us at Friends of Strong and Strong Memorial Hospital. Indeed, I want to personally reassure you of just how much we value and appreciate everything you do for our patients, families and staff, regardless of details.

Just over a year ago, none of us could have ever foreseen the year that would bring so much interruption to so many people throughout our community and our world. COVID-19 came along like a thief in the night and separated all of us from our loved ones and from each other.

But even though we have not had the chance to see many of you in more than a year, we want each of you to know how grateful we are for having you as part of our organization in the past, present and future. You've enriched our lives and made our work even more meaningful by having you here with us.

So here's to celebrating all of you this week in a virtual way, and counting the days when we can celebrate with all of you in person. We know that time will come!

Thank you for being part of our team and Happy National Volunteer Week!

*With respect and appreciation,
Sandy Arbasak
Director, Friends of Strong*

Every day. Every year. Every way you support Friends of Strong helps enhance patient- and family-centered care initiatives at Strong Memorial Hospital. Since 1975, we've given more than \$19 million to programs and initiatives throughout the hospital.



2021 High School Summer Program Canceled

Our traditional Summer High School Volunteer Program (May-July) is again suspended due to the pandemic's impact on our organization.

Please visit fos.urmc.edu for the latest updates on all of our volunteer programming.

Please call 585-275-2420 with any questions.

Upcoming Events on Hold

Many of our events and fundraisers remain postponed until it is again safe to gather together in person.

Volunteer Wayne Lee to Receive a Health Care Hero Award from RBJ

Rochester Business Journal has selected our own Wayne Lee as a 2021 Health Care Heroes Award recipient in recognition of his steadfast and dedicated service to Friends of Strong and UR Medicine.

Wayne and several other organization and individual recipients will be honored for making a significant impact on the quality of health care in the Rochester area during a ticketed online celebration on May 11.

Look for a full profile of Wayne and his volunteer service on our *Best of Friends* blog and in the next edition of *Volunteer Update*.



A year we'll always remember.
Amazing people we'll never forget.

Thank you volunteers.

Inclusion • Integrity • Compassion • Accountability • Respect • Excellence

Pandemic Perseverance: How Our Volunteers are Making an Impact

The pandemic has led to countless changes in our community, and the absence of more than 1,300 smiling people we're used to seeing in the Med Center—our compassionate volunteers who offer words of encouragement to patients, who participate in our fundraisers, who bring in pets for therapy, and so much more—is among the most significant for Friends of Strong.

While the number of volunteers has decreased dramatically since the start of the pandemic, a small number began to come back last summer. With strict safety protocols in place, an estimated 170 dedicated volunteers have logged more than 10,000 hours since June 2020.

Since the initial outbreak, FOS has worked hard to redesign the program and provide additional training to safely welcome back our crew of devoted volunteers. At Strong Memorial Hospital, including Wilmot Cancer Center and Strong West, our volunteers help at the front desk, direct patients and staff throughout the hospital, and support our vaccination efforts. In fact, thanks in part to their support, UR Medicine's Primary

Care personnel administer up to 1,000 shots per day at the Vaccination Center located in the Saunders Research Building.

"Many volunteers didn't want to leave their posts," says Friends of Strong (FOS) Director Sandy Arbasak. "They really wanted to help out in any way they can. When opportunities at Primary Care's Vaccination Center became available, they masked up, did their COVID tests, and their COVID training, and really took ownership of coming back."



Even those who haven't been able to return have donated handmade masks, much-needed PPE supplies, and purchased cups of coffee for doctors and nurses throughout the pandemic to show support in any way they can.

"It's remarkable that people are taking their own time and effort to help. Even making the effort to get here is admirable and impressive," says Karen Keating, interim volunteer program manager at FOS. "They're enthusiastic, they like being a part of the solution, and we always try to show our appreciation when we see them."

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Recognizing Our Donors

Friends of Strong

American Online Giving Foundation

Clark Breyman

Gary Combs

William Lewis

Suzanne Demay-McLaughlin

William Greer

Joseph Pacher

Roc the Day

Sharyl Snowden

In Honor of Susan Sullivan

The Kelso Family Fund

Jill Paladino, administrator and volunteer supervisor at Strong West, has nothing but good things to say about those who stepped up during the pandemic. “We’re honored to have such a fabulous group of kind, devoted, giving individuals and they really kept us going throughout the pandemic.”

From their Perspective

Mary Wagner has volunteered with us for more than six years. Before UR Medicine was able to allow volunteers back into the hospitals during the first lockdown in March, she was on the phone asking how she could come back.

Volunteering during a pandemic doesn’t come without its challenges. Mary explains that wearing masks can make it difficult to communicate effectively, and initially she was concerned about her and her husband’s safety while she volunteers at the hospital. “I feel comfortable now and I know that the hospital’s goal is to keep everyone safe. They ensure we have PPE and if there’s something I don’t feel comfortable doing, they’re fine with that.”

Mary says the pandemic has brought lemons and lemonade. One advantage? Getting a parking spot is easier than ever. She also notes that interacting with the smaller pool of volunteers has encouraged a stronger sense of comradery. “I feel like I’m part of a family. With COVID, there are fewer of us, and I’ve had the opportunity to get to know other volunteers more closely. I really feel like I’m a valued part of the team.”

Mary isn’t the only one. John and Sue Amon normally volunteer with the PETS Therapy Program but, since it remains paused, the couple has stepped up to help in other ways. They’ve supported



vaccination efforts at UR Medicine’s Primary Care Vaccination Center multiple times per week, despite never participating in a wayfinding or hospitality role before. Bobbi Lavoie, another volunteer from the PETS program, is also

helping support our vaccination efforts.

Terrance Anderson, a volunteer for more than eight years, sees volunteering during the pandemic as an opportunity to fulfill his purpose. “I strongly believe that everyone who walks this earth has a divine purpose in life and mine happens to be helping people,” he says. “I don’t view volunteering during the pandemic as a challenge, but as a privilege and an honor to serve.”

Paul Sugar, a volunteer at Strong West, is also happy to be back on the front lines. “It is absolutely awesome to be back volunteering,” he says. “It’s a very rewarding experience knowing that you can help others.”



Perhaps the most remarkable part of our volunteers going above and beyond to help the hospital is their unyielding enthusiasm. According to Wagner, “I am a people person. I get back double what I give. This is like food for my soul.”

Honoring their Service

Hazel Pugh, volunteer coordinator for Wilmot Cancer Center, describes the significance of their return in noting that during last year’s absence of volunteers in the Cancer Center, both patients and staff frequently asked how they were doing and when they would be able to come back. It speaks volumes to how much they were missed and appreciated.



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“It’s especially important for our patients to have our volunteers here again,” Hazel explains. “They’re always a bright light for patients, giving them an opportunity to have a brief friendly chat, an in-depth conversation or just get a little something to eat or drink during their time here. They’re great.”

All of the volunteers, whether they’ve been able to come back or not, are incredible assets to our organization. While our usual activities and celebration surrounding National Volunteer Week (April 18–24) are different this year, we hope that our volunteers still feel the gratitude we share for their selfless service to our community.

“If you see one of our generous volunteers throughout the hospital, at the Vaccination Center, or at an offsite location, please take a moment to thank them for their service,” Sandy suggests. “While we try to thank them every day and let them know how much we appreciate them, it’s still always nice to hear, and can really make anyone’s day brighter.”

Fast Facts

Where They Serve

Strong Hospital Lobby, Wilmot Cancer Center, Patient Discharge, Strong West, Primary Care Vaccination Center

When They Shine

- Volunteers have logged more than 10,000 hours since June 2020
- The Saunders Vaccination Center provides up to 1,000 vaccinations per day
- A rotation of 130+ volunteers have helped with wayfinding and hospitality at the Vaccination Center
- 14 volunteers are active at Strong West in Brockport
- Our volunteers typically serve one 3-4 hour shift per week

How They Prepare

- COVID Safety Training
- Daily COVID Screening
- Annual Mandatory Training
- Safe Patient Handling Training
- Wheelchair Safety Training
- Universal Gloving Training
- ICARE Training
- And More!



Happy National Volunteer Week

With National Volunteer Week upon us, we want to share our heartfelt appreciation with each and every one of you.

To those who have not yet had the opportunity to return to your previous volunteer role, we miss you dearly. Although you remain at home, we still feel your good will and well wishes from afar. Your phone calls, letters, photos and gifts to comfort our frontline health care staff have truly been amazing.

To those who have returned, please know how much we appreciate your service during these challenging and historic times.

We are so deeply appreciative of all of you and your steadfast support of our patients, their families and our staff.

You truly inspire us!

*Sincerely,
Your Friends of Strong Team*

