

Volunteer Services Newsletter

March 2025



From all of us in Allina Health Volunteer Services, we hope your 2025 is off to a great start.

Spring is here, and then it's not, but one thing is clear, our volunteers show up every day to make Allina Health a better place in service of our mission to all who entrust us with their care.

We hope you enjoy learning about your fellow volunteers across our many locations.

Be sure to check out the Get Involved section for more ways for you and your friends and family to engage in our community!

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Top employee recognition for Kelly Woitel, Volunteer Coordinator

The Allina Health Annual Award is the most prestigious employee recognition presented by our organization. For 2024, six individuals and one duo were recognized for ensuring safety, celebrating diversity, supporting our financial recovery and more.

Kelly Woitel, Volunteer Coordinator at Mercy Hospital in Coon Rapids, was one of the 2024 recipients. We are grateful for her leadership and generous spirit that makes the volunteer department an integral part of the care team at Mercy Hospital. [Watch her story here.](#)



Meet Kelly and hear about what inspires her in this short video.

Teen volunteer gains confidence while helping others



Eldijana Lilic, volunteer at Mercy Hospital in Coon Rapids

Eldijana was born at Mercy Hospital in Coon Rapids, and now she's volunteering there.

[Watch her story](#) to find out what inspired the teen to give back to her community in this way.

Did you know? The minimum age to volunteer with Allina Health ranges from 15-18 years old, depending on the volunteer position. Ask your Volunteer Coordinator about ways for young people to volunteer at your location or program!



Eucharistic Ministry volunteer receives Spirit of Caring Award

Phil Biwan, a Eucharist Ministry volunteer at St. Francis Regional Medical Center, received a Saints Foundation Spirit of Caring Award, which is part of the grateful patient program at St. Francis and Benedictine Living Community. A care team member receives this award when a patient donates in honor of them.

Phil was recognized by a patient's family, who received communion during a recent visit. The patient's family was so grateful for the communion service Phil provided as the patient responded very well to it.

As Phil was leaving the patient's room, one of the patient's family members, who was in the room at the time of the service, followed him out to graciously thank him with a donation.



Hospice 11th Hour volunteers

Allina Hospice Volunteers often provide support for patients in the final days and hours of their lives. This type of support is called 11th hour.

The reasons for requesting 11th hour are due to:

- Patients not having family members or friends
- Patients whose family members live out of town
- Family members who are local but not able to be at bedside
- Family members who need a break

Volunteers stay at a patient's bedside, often for hours at a time, and can provide gentle touch, reading, music, prayer, and quiet presence.

Recently, we received a unique request. The patient's daughter lived out of state and had no local support. She had been at her mother's side for days, afraid to leave her even for a moment and was sleep deprived—her fear, only heightened in the middle of the night.

Volunteer Coordinators assembled a team of volunteers to be with her over four nights. They provided reassurance, emotional support, and gave the daughter an opportunity to reminisce about her mother's life. They provided a space which allowed the daughter to be a daughter.

The patient's daughter was appreciative of all the hospice staff, but especially the volunteers who stayed with her during the evenings.

Heather Lownds, one of the volunteers, shares her experience here:

“My most recent 11th hour shift with Allina was particularly impactful. ...I had the privilege of speaking with the patient's beloved daughter. Through the stories she shared about her mother, I gained a much clearer picture of the wonderful woman she had been. Seeing the deep affection between them moved me profoundly. In the chaos of daily life, it's easy to lose sight of our shared humanity. This experience reminded me to be more grateful—for life itself and for the love we share with our friends and family.”

Our deepest gratitude to the volunteers who supported this family:



Heather Lownds



Kathy Altman



Joxery Mezen-Camacho



Eric Taylor



Christine Wade



Jan Edin-Gaffney

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Attentive volunteer speaks up for a patient in a time of need

Kathy Peacock was volunteering at Coon Rapids Clinic on her regular Monday afternoon, when a patient came in wanting to know how to find Urgent Care. Kathy escorted her to urgent care and went back to volunteering.

Later that day, Kathy saw the same patient in a wheelchair at the front entrance, looking like she was waiting for her ride. A little while after that, Kathy looked back over at the patient and saw she was hunched over - something didn't look right.

Kathy went to the patient and asked if she was ok. The patient said no, that she felt worse than when she came in and was in a lot of pain. Kathy went to the front desk staff and they called a rapid response. The medical team took her back to Urgent Care and eventually the patient left by ambulance.

Thank you, Kathy!



Kathy Peacock, volunteer at Coon Rapids Clinic



Rita Dauka, volunteer with Courage Kenny Adaptive Ski & Snowboard

Rita Dauka, 2024 Susan Hodder Volunteer of Excellence Award recipient

Courage Kenny Rehabilitation Institute is honored to announce Rita Dauka as the recipient of the 2024 Susan Hodder Volunteer of Excellence Award.

Rita has been a dedicated volunteer with Courage Kenny's Adaptive Ski & Snowboard program for nearly 19 years.

Rita shows compassion to each and every student by giving her best, learning more about their unique preferences and treating everyone with the utmost respect and kindness.

[Read more about Rita and other award recipients here.](#)

Get Involved

Volunteers invited to join the Allina Health Policy Action Network

It is no secret that healthcare is a heavily regulated industry and the actions of local, state and federal government shape how we fulfill our mission at Allina Health. Did you know that the Health Policy and Government Affairs Team, also known as Public Affairs, leads and represents Allina Health's interests with legislators, policymakers, and external stakeholders to support our mission and strategies?

Want to learn more about policy and advocacy? Volunteers are welcome to join the Allina Health Policy Action Network. By signing up for the Policy Action Network you will receive educational materials on policy and legislation as well as session updates and details on how you can engage with elected officials to make your voice heard.

[Learn more here or sign up to get involved](#)

2025 Ski-A-Thon for Courage Kenny Adaptive Ski and Snowboard

Even though the sun is trying to melt the snow, it's not too late to get involved or donate to Ski-A-Thon, the annual fundraising event for the Courage Kenny Adaptive Ski and Snowboard program for youth and adults with disabilities.

Consider donating to help keep the slopes accessible for everyone!

[Click this link to donate](#)

Allina Health volunteer opportunities:

- Hospitals & Clinics
- Rehabilitation
- Aquatics & Fitness
- Hospice
- Adaptive Sports & Recreation
- Youth Vision Screening

You are our very best volunteer recruiters!

[Find volunteer opportunities near you](#)

Now Accepting Applications for the EMPOWER Scholarship

Application deadline is April 30, 2024.

The EMPOWER Scholarship is for applicants with plans for education related to direct patient-focused healthcare. Courage Kenny Rehabilitation Institute recognizes the importance of encouraging culturally diverse students to enter a patient focused healthcare field. Due to the generosity of the David M. Hersey family, recipients of this scholarship will receive \$2,000.00 toward their higher education.

[Learn more and apply here.](#)

Featured Volunteer Opportunities

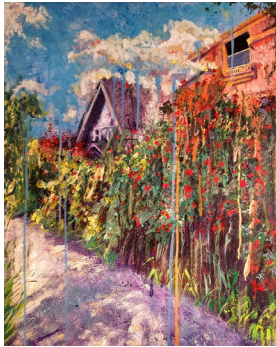


The National Veteran Wheelchair Games

Join us for a great event with our friends at the U.S Department of Veterans Affairs and Paralyzed Veterans of America!

- July 17-22, 2025, Minneapolis, MN
- 20+ different events and 600+ attendees
- Veterans from all over the country to compete and showcase their skills

Volunteer registration: www.wheelchairgames.org



2025 Art of Possibilities

The Allina Health Foundation is excited to host the 62nd annual Art of Possibilities Art Show & Sale on Wednesday, **May 28 from 5:30 -7:30 p.m.** at Courage Kenny Rehabilitation Institute in Golden Valley, MN. [Art of Possibilities volunteer sign-up](#)



Courage Kenny Rehabilitation Institute

- **Aquatics:** if you like kids and enjoy the pool, come volunteer in our Children's Learn to Swim Classes!
- **Neurosplash:** assist adults in the pool in a light exercise class, Stillwater and Golden Valley locations
- **PT & OT students:** do you know anyone going to PT or OT school who needs volunteer hours? We are currently taking applications for summer volunteer opportunities a several of our Courage Kenny Rehabilitation Institute locations throughout the metro.

Contact: Eileen McCarthy Harness at Eileen.Harness@allina.com

volunteer@allina.com

Allina Health launches new volunteer recognition platform

Thank a Volunteer is a hit with Care Team Members

In a clear acknowledgement of the value volunteers bring to our work and communities, Allina Health recently launched **Thank a Volunteer** as part of our Allina Health Recognition Program toolkit.

Thank a Volunteer is an easy and meaningful way for employees to celebrate our amazing volunteers who share their time and talents to help our Allina Health hospitals, clinics, hospice, therapies, and community programs thrive.

Abdulbaari is one of the best members from the Volunteer Services team at Abbott - always eager to help - and always smiling and cheerful.

Rick's constant smile and warm personality add joy to our dept at Mercy.

Megan - Every day you're in the unit is a better workday and a better experience for the visitors.

Amanda is always a step ahead and really helps our workflow.

Avital - You are so creative, and I know your Valentine's brightened the day of many patients!

Ron - As the first point of contact at Buffalo Hospital, you set the tone for an exceptional experience for all who enter.



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