Spotlight on Volunteers!

Quynh Luu

Quynh is a senior at Kempner High School and has been volunteering at MHSWH since February 2009. She often volunteers on the 5th, 9th and 10th floors, loves meeting the nurses and enjoys participating in hands-on activities. Her favorite part about volunteering is having the opportunity to help out her community. Although she is not sure about what she’ll pursue in college, she likes biology and is exploring other interests too. In addition to volunteering at the hospital, she works with school organizations and most recently volunteered at a local Chick-Fil-A that offered free flu vaccinations. In the future, she hopes to work at MHSWH in the pediatrics unit because she loves children.

Anam Sherali

Anam is a senior at Kerr High School. She has been volunteering in the ER for a year and a half. Her favorite part about the ER is that she learns many new things and gets the chance to meet new people every day. Since she is planning to pursue a career in nursing, volunteering has really helped her learn what it takes to work in the medical field. One experience she’ll always remember is when a woman was brought into the ER by a police escort. While this was a little unsettling at first, it gave Anam a lesson in the importance of staying calm under pressure. In addition to volunteering at the hospital, Anam is active at her church and community library.
Feature Story: Stroke Awareness

According to the National Stroke Association, strokes are the third leading cause of death in America and a leading cause of long-term disability in adults. A stroke occurs when blood clots in one or more of the vessels or arteries of the body or when a blood vessel breaks, preventing blood from reaching the brain and damaging numerous brain cells. These brain cells are then unable to accurately operate the body due to a lack of oxygen, which is why speech, memory and motor skills may be impaired. Approximately two million brain cells die every minute during a stroke, increasing the risk of permanent brain damage, disability or death. This means that timing is critical.

Here are the warning signs of a stroke:
F- Facial weakness, drooping on one side of face, asymmetrical smile
A- Arm or leg weakness, numbness on one side of the body
S- Speech slurred or altered; unable to speak
T- Time to act FAST- only 3 hours can elapse before treatment

There are two types of strokes. Ischemic stroke occurs when arteries are blocked by blood clots or by the gradual build-up of plaque and other fatty deposits. About 87 percent of all strokes are ischemic. Hemorrhagic stroke occurs when a blood vessel in the brain breaks, leaking blood into the brain. Hemorrhagic strokes account for thirteen percent of all strokes, yet are responsible for more than thirty percent of all stroke deaths. There are approximately four million Americans living with the effects of stroke. In addition, there are millions of spouses, children and friends who care for stroke survivors and whose own lives are personally affected. According to the National Stroke Association:
- 10% of stroke survivors recover almost completely
- 25% recover with minor impairments
- 40% experience moderate to severe impairments that require special care
- 10% require care in a nursing home or other long-term facility
- 15% die after the stroke

Approximately 14% of survivors experience a second stroke in the first year following a stroke. Still, a successful rehabilitation is possible depending on the amount of damage to the brain, skill of the rehabilitation team, the timing of rehabilitation, and the cooperation of family and friends. Caring family and friends is one of the most important factors in rehabilitation, and the earlier it begins, the more likely survivors are to regain lost abilities and skills. Although a majority of functional abilities may be restored soon after a stroke, recovery is an ongoing process. Reportedly, 795,000 strokes will occur this year in the U.S. alone.

Getting the Word Out

Volunteers Huy Bui and Vinh Ho did an outstanding job of assisting with Memorial Hermann Southwest Hospital’s recent Stroke Awareness Campaign. Huy and Vin worked hard decorating the bulletin boards at the staff elevator banks to remind everyone of important, life-saving information and the actions that should be taken in the event of a stroke. Thanks guys for all of your hard work!
The Junior Board wants to thank everyone who helped make our New Toy Drive a great success! Your generous contributions of new toys during this past holiday season are deeply appreciated. The toys will be given to needy children in our ER and Pediatric Units throughout the year to help make a stressful time a little brighter. Thank you MHSWH family for opening your hearts!

The Toy Drive was a Success!

The Deal from Debbie

Sooner or later, it happens to us all. Either we become a patient in a hospital, or someone we love does. Either way, it can be a frightening and helpless feeling. At times like this, it is so often a volunteer that makes the most lasting impression on the patient or loved one. As volunteers, we have the power to turn what might otherwise be a negative or stressful experience into a much more positive one with those three magic words: "Can I help?" Patients and visitors are often less intimidated by volunteers, and will sometimes approach us with requests they are too afraid to ask of their medical care providers.

Here are just a few recent examples of the thousands of ways our volunteers have helped make all the difference in the world to our patients, visitors and staff:

* E-mailing an employer at the request of a frantic patient with a general status update when their workplace couldn't be reached by phone.

* Arranging with a floor nurse for the exhausted spouse of an ICU patient to take a shower in an unused room.

* Acting as a way-finder for a lost physician who was running late in arriving for their first day on the job at our hospital.

* Giving a stuffed dog to a 3-year old big sister who apprehensively and tearfully had just met her brand new baby brother for the very first time. She got the biggest smile on her face and she literally danced around the lobby with joy!

The grateful looks on the faces of the people we help say it all, and the images often stay with us forever. These are the memories that come to mind when I think of what volunteering has meant to me. You probably have dozens of memories of your own. Your volunteer experience is what you make of it. The rewards are priceless!

~ Debbie Varner, Volunteer Coordinator
Hey guys! When was the last time I talked to you? November? December? Did you even read Nathan’s Picks last time? I know you did. If not, I’ll pretend you did. So anyway, we’re in winter now and the weather has been crazy! Hot one day and cold the next. After your volunteer shift is over for the day, what can you spend your free time doing?

- Go watch a movie. You can do this anytime…it’s always good! Check out Avatar if you haven’t seen it yet (gasp!)

- One of the good old classics is to build a mini fire, roast marshmallows, and have s’mores! Yum!

- Watch American Idol in its um…100th season? Who knows? At least listen to “Pants on the Ground!” Now that’s an instant hit and one of my personal favorites!

- With all the time you’re probably spending inside during the cold weather, learn something new — an instrument, dance, video game (everyone’s playing Modern Warfare 2). Hey, even look through your old stuff and remember the good times!

- Be bold! Go for a cold swim, play tag, jump for joy, just walk around your neighborhood and sing! Make people stare at you weirdly and act like you don’t care!

- If you don’t want to do anything yourself….watch the NFL playoffs and relax as other people throw a ball and run with it….yep that’s a good way to spend a day!

And if you’re tired of reading, do whatever you want! It’s your life, but it may be more fun if you take my suggestions. Just sayin’.

**Stroke Awareness Word Search**

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ENOCITATILIBEAGER
TNEREMMOMSYDHPHOS
BLOODCLOTRIIEW
MALCOHOLOSEEGKH
ARGLKCKZAKTEVAX
HIGHCHOLESTEROL
GYDAAABALENIQEB
GRBESTUOWHBTSDS
ROFNTCUBAYAAKPM
TMCECADERELIBPRS
REVRNEFSEIDLCFB
CMAKIRVINMDERKL
BCQPWBTAGECMZ
ERARUYSFCUHEB
EKZVEJOESEHPGNPM
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**Happy Valentine’s Day!**