Our Volunteers Go The Extra Mile!

With hard work and dedication, the sky is the limit! - Nicholas Joseph

(Scored a Perfect 2400 on the SAT)

As I was leaving the hospital one day after my volunteer shift, I noticed an elderly woman who looked lost in the parking garage. She didn’t remember where she had parked her car. After 30 minutes of searching, it felt great that I was able to help her find the car, repark it in a more convenient lot, and personally escort her to her relative’s nursing station. - Jenina Marie Bernardo

The extra things we do as volunteers, like distributing hand-made Valentines and Halloween decorations, are the most memorable. That feeling you get when you know the patients appreciate you never gets old. - Loyda Gavia

Once during my volunteer shift, I was asked to locate a lost specialty wheelchair for the Patient Transportation Department. It took almost four hours for me to search three different buildings, but I finally found it! Memorable days like this and the friendships I have made with other volunteers are the best part of the job. - Quang Nguyen

Once I was asked to assist with feeding an elderly patient. I first cut his BLT into small slices for him so that it would be easier for him to bite and chew. He couldn’t have been more appreciative and it made my day! - Jennifer Chopra

Seeing the joy of mothers with their newborns and the excitement they have for spending the rest of their lives with their child is what motivates me to continue volunteering. By assisting these patients, we get to be a part of one of the best days of their lives.

- Andre Obimah

~ Marissa Harrison, MHSWH Junior Board Treasurer
Colorectal Cancer Awareness

Colorectal cancer, despite popular misconceptions, affects both men and women. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, it is the third most common cancer in women as well as men. The American Cancer Society estimates that colorectal cancer will cause over 50,000 deaths this year alone.

Colorectal cancer affects the digestive system. Thus, symptoms include pain and tenderness in the lower abdomen, weight loss with no known reason, blood in the stool, and changes in bowel habits including diarrhea and constipation. However, the presence of polyps (which are clumps of noncancerous cells) tends to produce very few symptoms, if any. Treatment for colorectal cancer may involve the surgical removal of cancerous cells, chemotherapy, and/or radiation therapy.

As the old saying goes, prevention is the best medicine. Colonoscopy screenings allows physicians to detect polyps and remove them before they can become problematic and often before symptoms arise. Thanks to early diagnosis and improved treatments, there are now 1 million colorectal cancer survivors in America! Following a healthy lifestyle that includes frequent exercise and a sensible high-fiber, low-fat diet is perhaps the best method of prevention.

You should consider getting a baseline colonoscopy screening if you are older than 50 years of age, are of African American descent, have a family history of colon cancer, or eat a lot of red or processed meats. Consult your physician if a first-degree relative has been affected by colorectal cancer, as they may recommend earlier or more frequent screenings. Spring is the season for colorectal cancer awareness, so urge any of your family members and friends with the preceding risk factors to play it safe. Notably, Memorial Hermann Southwest Hospital offers colonoscopy screenings through the Direct Access Program for those that qualify, so be sure to go online for more information.

~ Rida Khan, MHSWH Junior Board President

Interested in Medical School?

Many persons decide they want to pursue medical school at a very young age. Conversely, others decide to start their pursuit after realizing their current profession is not for them. Irrespective of your age, there are many steps you can take now to help you reach your goal. Of course the earlier you decide you want to pursue medicine, the more time you'll have to take those small steps towards becoming a physician. Having been recently accepted to attend medical school, here is a small description of what I feel are the most important factors that will help you attain your goals.

By far, the most important criteria that will help increase your chances for admission to medical school are good grades and a high MCAT score. It is not of huge significance whether you attend a public or private college, nor a well-known vs. a lesser-known college. Taking lighter semesters, such as 13 semester hours instead of 18 hours, can help increase your GPA. If you don't have the grades, the admissions committee will not even look at your application, so take your college grades very seriously.

Once the medical schools have determined that your grades are competitive enough, they start looking at everything else. Research experience is very highly regarded but not absolutely necessary. Volunteering at hospitals, clinics, and nursing homes was very helpful in giving me valuable experience and topics of discussion during my interviews. Quality matters more than quantity, so stick with your volunteer organizations for multiple years wherever possible. Physician shadowing as well as developing professional relationships with professors and doctors will assist you in finding someone to write your recommendation letter. Although there is not an exact recipe for how to get into medical school, if you follow the advice mentioned in this article, you'll put yourself in a very good position for success.

~ Syed Anjum, MHSWH Junior Board Secretary
Preparation is the key to success in so many areas of life. Here is some practical news you can use to help you make the most of your volunteer experience at MHSW Hospital!

- Always remember that “200% hand washing” is the best way to prevent the spread of germs in a hospital. This means washing your hands thoroughly with soap and running water both before and after direct contact with a patient.

- Always wear gloves when transporting specimens or helping to make up patient beds.

- Always report spills or leaks immediately. Try to stay close to the spill until help and/or a caution sign arrives to warn others.

- Always call Ext. 3333 for “man-down” assistance with slips and falls. Call Ext. 5555 (Page Operator) for security assistance with an imminent or potentially volatile situation. Memorize these numbers!

- Always check first with the nurse and wait for permission before assisting a patient in obtaining food from the cafeteria or Gift Shop. Also remember that the patient must provide the funds in advance for these special purchases of food.

- Never enter a closed patient room without knocking first. If a curtain is drawn, speak clearly through the curtain and wait for permission to enter. If a physician or chaplain is with the patient, please return later to complete your task.

- Never enter an Isolation Room under any circumstance.

- Never whisper in the presence of a patient. We don’t want for patients to mistakenly think we are discussing them or their condition.

- Speaking of speaking in a hospital setting, never forget about HIPAA Privacy and Security Rules. Under the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act, everything you see and hear pertaining to patient care services is strictly confidential. When in doubt...close your mouth! Only those who must know about patient information to do their job have the right to access confidential patient information.

- If someone looks lost or in need of help, never hesitate to offer assistance. Nothing sounds sweeter in the hospital than these three little words: “May I help?” If a patient, physician, visitor or guest is unsure where their destination is located, please take them there. It is often easier to do so than to try to explain complicated directions and it is so very much appreciated.

- Never clip an armband on a patient or infant under any circumstance.

- Never forget to apply the brakes before helping someone into and out of a wheelchair.

- Never push anyone in a wheelchair past the curb at the entrance to the hospital for the person’s safety and yours. This instruction applies to both the circle drive at the main entrance to the hospital off of Beechnut as well as to the valet entrance to Medical Plaza 1.

- Always carry yourself with confidence, smile, speak assertively, and treat everyone with respect at all times.

- Always wear your uniform with pride. When in uniform, always conduct yourself in a manner that reflects well on both you and the hospital.

- Always go with your gut. Trust your instincts, but never hesitate to check first with a supervisor in responding to unusual requests or anything that makes you feel uncomfortable.

- Always remember that in the hospital—and everywhere—a positive attitude and patience are more than half of the battle!

Think of these tips as Volunteer Survival Strategies! You’ve probably thought of a few of your own along the way. I’d love to hear about them, and I’ll bet your fellow volunteers would too. I think that the Memorial Hermann Southwest Hospital Volunteer Family is the Best of the Best and with your continued help and support, we keep getting better all the time!

~ Debbie Varner, Volunteer Supervisor
Healthier Banana Bread

Ingredients:
* 2 Bananas
* 1-1/4 Cups of Almond or Soy Milk
* 1/4 Cup of Maple Syrup
* 2 Teaspoons of Vanilla Extract
* 2-1/4 Cups of Whole Wheat Flour
* 1 Tablespoon of Baking Powder
* 1 Teaspoon of Baking Soda
* 1/3 Cup of Chopped Walnuts

Directions:
Preheat oven to 350 Degrees F. Coat an 8” by 8” glass pan with non-stick cooking spray. Mix the first four ingredients in a large bowl. Combine the dry ingredients and walnuts in a separate bowl and then slowly add into the bowl with the wet ingredients. The mixture will be very thick. Spoon the batter into the prepared pan and bake for 30—35 minutes. It doesn’t get better than this!

~ Anam Sherali, MHSWH Junior Board Publicity Liaison

Krav Maga

A particularly challenging fitness program that is rapidly growing in popularity is Krav Maga. Originally a self-defense system developed for the Israeli Defense Forces, Krav Maga combines techniques from various martial arts specialty programs, such as Muay Thai, Judo, Jiu-Jitsu, and several others. The focus is on preparing for the worst-case scenario and/or survival situation that one may encounter. It is known for its relative brutality but immense effectiveness. In Krav Maga, defense is centered on countering the opponent in the quickest and most efficient way.

Fundamental lessons in Krav Maga revolve around the proper techniques for swift counter moves and preemptive maneuvers, emphasizing the weakest and most vulnerable points in the body. Efficiency in neutralizing an opponent’s moves is also a key focus, along with learning to maintain control and awareness of the environment. Because Krav Maga was originally designed for use as a form of self-defense or in combat situations, there are no strict rules to this genre as there usually are for boxing or most other forms of martial arts. Scrimmages against an opponent are designed to be won as quickly and efficiently as possible.

In response to its growing popularity, there are some workout programs that have been structured to allow physically fit persons to practice Krav Maga in combination with other forms of cardio exercise. For newcomers, the moves can be a bit complicated and there is a learning curve, but by taking an introductory class and with enough practice, anyone can pick it up. The workouts will engage and challenge the entire body. Practicing Krav Maga will likely result in soreness, especially after the first few lessons, so be sure to allow for adequate recovery time. For anyone looking to learn a new self-defense technique or a super-challenging and unusual workout program, Krav

~ Vinh Ho, MHSWH Junior Board Social Director