

Starke Memorial Hospital Auxiliary Scholarship Fund

Making a trip to the hospital as either a patient or a visitor can be associated with troubling and emotional experiences. During those times, comfort is so important and valuable. At the Indiana University (IU) Health Starke Hospital in Knox, comfort is offered in a variety of forms by the Starke Memorial Hospital Auxiliary. This group of volunteers has made it their mission to offer kindness and a sense of ease to patients and visitors to make their experience at the hospital more pleasurable and comfortable.

The Auxiliary was founded in 1951 by a group of individuals who dedicated themselves to their cause. At that time, the hospital was called the Starke Memorial Hospital, until it later became a part of IU Health. The group was very active and raised their initial funds by raffling a pig that was donated by a local farmer. They continued to raise money by holding fundraisers, such as fish fries and port-a-pit chicken sales.

With their proceeds, the Auxiliary has purchased equipment for the hospital, such as hospital beds, sliders to transfer patients to hospital beds from ambulances, television sets, ER equipment, X-Ray equipment, and more.

The group of 15 members currently runs their gift shop in the IU Health Starke Hospital. In the past, they have held bake sales for hospital employees and visitors, as well as uniform sales in which they sold hospital uniforms in a variety of designs. They have also raised funds by participating in Books Are Fun and by selling Amish pies and candy from the South Bend Chocolate Company. The group raises most of their money in proceeds from their gift shop. They have reduced their fundraising to two craft shows held by The Moose Lodge and Psi Iota Xi Sorority around Christmastime. The Auxiliary members bring their gift shop items and gift baskets to the shows and typically come close to selling out!

Donna Bailey, the President of the Auxiliary for many years, remembers when their gift shop consisted of candy and a few books and magazines. Today, they sell a large variety of items, such as hats, scarves, toys, and much more. The shop used to be in a small room in the hospital, but when the hospital added a new wing, the Auxiliary received a new shop that was better suited for their needs.

All of the money that the Auxiliary earns is used to bring comfort to patients and visitors and to support community needs. In addition to providing mammograms for people who cannot afford them and clothing for patients in the ER whose clothing may be taken or damaged, they have bought flowers and three benches to make the exterior of the hospital more beautiful and welcoming, and they gave a quilted baby blanket to every baby born in the hospital. One year for St. Patrick's Day, they gave carnations to every patient, and one patient, who was an older gentleman and was a bachelor, insisted that the flower was an orchid. He was absolutely thrilled to have been given a flower for the very first time!

The group gave \$1,500 to programs that support pre-kindergarten education, \$1,500 to the Lil' F.I.S.H. Program, which teaches students about safety, health, and hygiene, and they have given many gift cards for gas to families who are visiting their loved ones, especially around the holidays. Before the hospital had a cafeteria, the Auxiliary would also give visiting family members gift cards to restaurants so that they could eat a nice meal together.

The Auxiliary additionally supports graduating Starke County seniors pursuing a degree in the medical field through three scholarships, one of which was established through the Starke County Community Foundation in 2014.

Through the Auxiliary's selflessness and generosity, countless patients and visitors have been given comfort and a sense of hope, and students who wish to one day serve these patients will be supported in their education. The impact that this group of volunteers has had on the Starke County community since 1951 is immeasurable and never-ending.