

Hospital volunteers receive Call to Service Award

More than two dozen honored

BY JENNIFER BAYLIS

Twenty-eight volunteers at Richardson Regional Medical Center have reached a milestone, receiving the President's Call to Service Award for dedicating 4,000 hours of service or more over their lifetime.

"Volunteers are the heart of the hospital," said Heather Rojas, volunteer services director at Richardson Regional. "These outstanding individuals truly deserve this recognition for their commitment to helping others."

In 2002, President Bush issued a challenge to all Americans to make time to help their neighbors, communities and nation through service.

He created the Volunteer Service Award program as a way to thank and honor Americans who inspire others to engage in volunteer service.

Rojas presented them with a lapel pin and certificate of achievement from the President's Council on Service and Civic Participation during their holiday luncheon at the Prestonwood Country Club in Dallas. This annual event is a chance to introduce the volunteer auxiliary's new officers and say thank you to all Richardson Regional volunteers for their year of hard work.

But the ones who have served the longest weren't expecting recognition from the Oval Office.

"It really blew me away," said Lynda Abbott, who has volunteered

at Richardson Regional for 11 years. "It's a great honor. I've always been proud to be a volunteer, but even more now."

The hospital has 185 active volunteers from Dallas and Collin counties who donate about 35,000 hours of service each year - nearly the equivalent of 17 full-time employees. But, their work doesn't stop there. They also hold several hospital fundraisers throughout the year. They just reached their goal of raising \$60,000 to the "Cancer Will Not Have the Last Word" capital campaign to help build a new comprehensive cancer center at the hospital's Bush/Renner Campus.

At the luncheon, Linda Armstrong Kelly, honorary co-chairwoman of the capital campaign and mother of seven-time Tour de France winner Lance Armstrong, accepted the auxiliary's most recent \$10,000 gift on behalf of the hospital. Armstrong Kelly talked about her son's battle with cancer and how she learned from his example. She has been involved with the hospital for about seven years.

"Lance taught me the importance of giving back," said Armstrong Kelly. "You also have opened your hearts to help this hospital because you care. Together, we'll see this new cancer center become a reality. In 2008, we'll open those doors, and we're going to give people hope."

Jennifer Baylis is public relations coordinator for Richardson Regional Medical Center.



PHOTO SUBMITTED BY JENNIFER BAYLIS

Jackie Palmer has volunteered at Richardson Regional Medical Center for more than three decades. For more information about volunteering at Richardson Regional, visit RichardsonRegional.com/Volunteers.

AWARD WINNERS

Richardson Regional Medical Center Auxiliary volunteers recognized for 4,000 hours of service are:

Richardson:

Carol Blamire, Jeanne Boynton, Yolanda Cowley, Gordon Dempsey, Nel Detz, Marie Drury, Beth Echerd, Judy Fowler, Gladys Hart, Linda Lewis, Jan Matzdorf, Ruth McCormick, Martha Otts, Jackie Palmer, Martha Presley, Mary Ray, Elodia Reyna, Mary Jayne Ringham, Audrey Swanson, Norma Tippit, Bonnie Valliant, Nancy Wall and June Woodward.

Far North Dallas:

Lynda Abbott, Bev Aschenbrenner and Jane Paschal.

Lake Highlands:

Jay Godsey

Other:

Brenda Bearden

Woman marks 34 years as volunteer

BY JENNIFER BAYLIS

Jackie Palmer is celebrating her 34th year at Richardson Regional Medical Center, having become a dedicated volunteer in 1973 after a friend encouraged her to get involved.

"We happened to go to the same beauty shop and she came in there wearing a pink uniform," Palmer said. "I was curious, so she told me more about her volunteer work at Richardson Regional. I told her when I get the time, that's what I want to do."

So a year after she retired as a bookkeeper, Palmer joined the group of volunteers known then as the Pink Ladies.

"I wanted to be active in the community and get to know more people," Palmer said. "Whenever I would head to my shift, my husband would tell me this is the day you play Florence Nightingale."

Through the years, Palmer has formed many lasting bonds with fellow volunteers and has witnessed the hospital's growth and expansion. She also has seen the quality of care the hospital provides - firsthand when she unexpectedly became a patient herself. In December 2004, she had quadruple bypass surgery at Richardson Regional.

"It was right before Christmas," Palmer said. "There was a tightness in my chest when I was raking leaves. I just didn't feel like myself."

Her doctor found four clogged arteries and immediately admitted her into the hospital. "I was flirting with real trouble and I didn't even know it," she said.

Palmer is grateful for the doctors and nurses who brought her back to health. She is now back to a full and active life, enjoying gardening and reading and attending church, where she also volunteers her time.

She's also passionate about music. She started playing the violin in grade school and had season tickets to the Richardson Symphony for many years. Her husband died 17 years ago, but she is fortunate to have close sisters in the area. And she considers the Richardson Regional Auxiliary a second family.

"It's a nice affiliation to be connected to," Palmer said. "Once in awhile, when I think maybe it's time to move on, I think I'd miss it. The idea that I'm doing something to help other people is very satisfying and rewarding."

Jennifer Baylis is the public relations coordinator for Richardson Regional Medical Center.



Sue MacHendrie, left, Richardson Regional Auxiliary president, presents a check to Linda Armstrong Kelly, honorary co-chairwoman of the hospital's "Cancer Will Not Have the Last Word" campaign, for the new cancer center. The auxiliary has donated \$60,000 to the campaign.