

HEALTHY KATY
FAMILIES

Junior volunteer positions are in high demand at CHRISTUS St. Catherine



Heroes of the Hospital

Katy's Candy Stripers

Written by Gabrielle Browne
Photos by Kenzie de la Torre

*F*Katy is home to two hospitals and has three more on the way. CHRISTUS St. Catherine and Memorial Hermann Katy provide local residents with excellence in healthcare, so there's no need to travel far to find quality treatment.

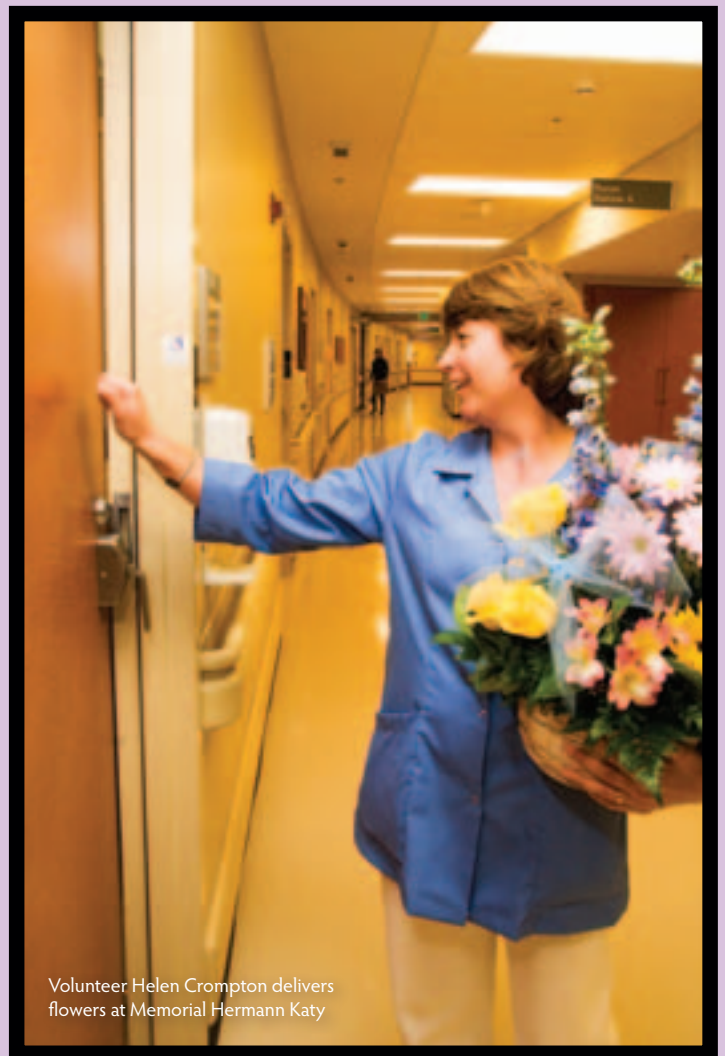
With such growth comes a need for volunteers to make each patient's hospital stay as smooth and comfortable as possible. Volunteers are of great importance to both individual patients as well as to the hospital staff. For Katy residents looking for a way to give back to the community, volunteering at one of our hospitals is a great place to start.

A Call to Serve

Vickie Reeve is the president of the volunteer group at CHRISTUS St. Catherine. She has been volunteering at the hospital for almost four years. "My favorite part of volunteering? Oh, so many favorites," she claims. "I think the underlying favorite is thinking that you might sometimes make, if ever so small as it may be, a positive difference in the lives of those around you. That would include patients, visitors, family members of patients, the hospital staff, other volunteers, everyone you might come in contact with."

Many others of all ages share her view. "We have a high demand for volunteer positions in our community by students," explains Neresa Williamson, Volunteer Coordinator at CHRISTUS. "Each summer we have around 150 or more applicants for 25 Junior Volunteer positions."

Memorial Hermann Katy also has a large number of youth candy striper volunteers. In addition to 125 adult volunteers, they have space for about 50 high school students during the summer. Applicants must be 15 or older, complete an application and interview, commit to one year of service, be willing to work a four-



Volunteer Helen Crompton delivers flowers at Memorial Hermann Katy

So Many Reasons to Live



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hour shift once a week, and complete the orientation and training. In addition, both hospitals require volunteers to pass a TB test and background check and adhere to their uniform dress codes.

Finding a Niche

Coordinators strive to place each individual volunteer in a situation where the volunteer's talents and preferences can be met. "Volunteers spend as little or as much time as they want in certain areas," Williamson says. "You really find out what you enjoy doing."

Volunteers can be found in all aspects of the hospital life. They help out with patients' physical therapy, work in the gift shop, do clerical work, visit with patients and their families, and help transport patients around the hospital. At Memorial Hermann Katy, there's even a pet therapy program.

Helping Others, Helping Yourself

Williamson acknowledges that one of the major benefits of volunteering in a hospital setting is the variety of people one can meet. "I've met a novelist, athletes, and some of the sweetest people," she says.

Volunteers know that they're part of a team. Even if they work alone, there are many others dedicating their time for the same cause. "I'm fortunate to have met so many good people and have formed life-long friendships with some. There's a great sense of



Jerry Gipson wheels new mom Kristi Wees and baby girl out to her car



Shirley and Judy Stark
volunteer in the flower shop
at Memorial Hermann Katy

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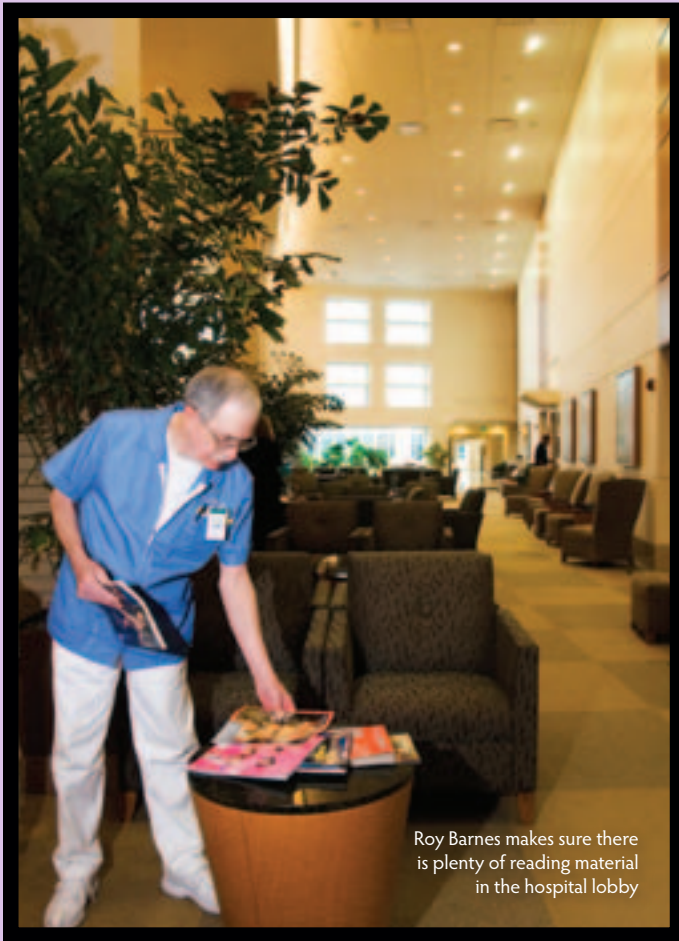
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Roy Barnes makes sure there is plenty of reading material in the hospital lobby

camaraderie among the volunteers, and a feeling of belonging to this mission of serving. I have a joyous time,” says Reeve.

There are tangible benefits as well. Memorial Hermann Katy offers a discount in the gift shop, recognition parties, and free flu shots and TB testing. For teen volunteers, the hospitals provide reference letters and keep track of the hours each candy striper serves. The hospitals also provide a free meal in the cafeteria on days of service. “For our senior volunteers, meals with friends mean the world to them,” Williamson says.

Students involved in the volunteer program learn about life in the medical field from all angles. CHRISTUS also offers one scholarship each year to an outstanding candy striper.

Reeve encourages other Katy residents to try their hand at volunteering. “Becoming part of CHRISTUS St. Catherine’s volunteer organization is truly one of the most rewarding experiences of my life. And I believe we volunteers could all attest to the thought that helping others is a sure cure for so many burdens and ills that we may feel we have.” **KM**

GABRIELLE BROWNE, her husband, and son live in Katy. She spends her time teaching, writing, and watching her toddler grow.



THE ORIGIN OF *Candy Stripers*

East Orange General Hospital in New Jersey proudly claims that the country’s first candy striper program originated at their hospital. In 1944, a high-school civics class chose the hospital as its class project. The teacher provided a red and white striped fabric, and the girls sewed the uniforms. Because of the fabric, these volunteers were labeled candy stripers.



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