

# Helping Hearts

## THE VOLUNTEERS OF Lexington

## Medic

They can be found in almost every area of the expansive health care complex known as Lexington Medical Center (LMC).

Identifiable by their red or pink vests, their roles are as diverse as their individual interests.

Whether delivering flowers, manning the gift shop, stocking supplies, pushing a courtesy cart, checking patients in or out, or comforting a hurting heart, these volunteers all have one unifying purpose – to share their own talents, experiences, and intuition to help others in their time of need.

“I’m very proud of the volunteers for the way they are,” says Ann Bethea, the current director of Volunteer Services at Lexington Medical Center. “I get comments just like every other department... about how they (patients) were treated... I would say 98 percent of the time, the comments I get are ‘your volunteers were great! They made us feel welcome.’”

Director Bethea has been employed by the hospital for 32 years, and half of her career has been within Volunteer Services. She describes her position as “by far the best” because “you get to come here and work with people who actually want to be here and do good things. They are here because their hearts are big.”

LMC’s volunteer program began the same year the hospital opened in 1971 with a team of 80 active members. Since then, several volunteers have served for more than 40 years, and one of the founding members is still delivering flowers to patients today. By 2016, that small army had grown to about 300 volunteers, and these unpaid workers had contributed a total of more than 60,000 hours of service during that year.

Not all of the volunteers are human, and arguably one of the most favored is a friendly black therapy and service dog named Scrappy. His partner, Robert Michelsen, is a retired high school teacher, and together, they have worked as a team at LMC for the past four years.

Their relationship began when Mr. Michelsen requested the “biggest, wildest, black dog” from an animal shelter with the intension of training him so he could become adoptable. Right away, the two embarked upon an exciting journey when Mr. Michelsen rescued



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Robert Michelsen and Scrapy, a therapy and service dog



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the dog from nearly drowning, and by the time the pooch had completed several canine training courses, the pair had developed an inseparable bond. They then enlisted the expertise of Lew Jernigan with Therapy Dogs Incorporated “to help them become a pet therapy team which... visits Lexington High School special needs students, Lexington Medical Center, and Lexington Extended Care,” explains Mr. Michelsen. Furthermore, Scrappy has since revealed a hidden talent for alerting his owner, who has Type 1 diabetes, when his blood sugar levels are dangerously high.

Scrappy is welcomed on almost every floor by patients, visitors, and even hospital staff members who enjoy hand feeding him ham and cheese or a bit of peanut butter. His weekly routine includes acting as a “positive diversion” for patients in the infusion center and accepting hugs from hurting families and friends in the hallway, and he has also been known to deck out as a “Santa Paws” during the holidays. “It has been very rewarding to feel the satisfaction of helping people get better, feel a little more at home, and feel better in times of need,” says Mr. Michelsen.

Another retired teacher, Jo Ann Hudson, was reading the novel, *A Dog’s Purpose*, about a year after her husband had passed away. The self-reflection inspired by the book led her to consider the special care that she and her husband had experienced at Lexington Medical Center in his final months. One specific incident she relates involved a gentleman pushing a courtesy cart who offered her a notebook and pen,



Volunteer, Jo Ann Hudson

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<b>First Grade</b>	$11 + 12 = \underline{\quad}$
<b>Second Grade</b>	$1 + 2 + 3 + 4 + 5 + 6 + 7 + 8 + 9 + 10 = \underline{\quad}$
<b>Third Grade</b>	How much is 99 plus 99 plus 99?
<b>Fourth Grade</b>	Count by $1\frac{1}{2}$ from 0 to 7.
<b>Fifth Grade</b>	Which is greatest: $\frac{17}{20}$ , $\frac{23}{30}$ , or $\frac{18}{19}$ ? (Explain how you got your answer.)
<b>Sixth Grade</b>	Halfway through the second quarter, how much of the game is left?
<b>Seventh Grade</b>	How much is $6\frac{1}{2}\%$ of 250?
<b>Pre-Algebra</b>	On a certain map, 6 inches represents 25 miles. How many miles does 15 inches represent?
<b>Algebra</b>	When you take 3 away from twice a number, the answer is 8. What is the number?
<b>Geometry</b>	What is the Absolute Value of the point (3, 4)?