

Finding Purpose in Retirement

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“Why do I give back?” asks Wanda Williams, past president of the Langley Memorial Hospital Auxiliary, “because it just feels so good.”

Like many of today’s auxiliary members, Wanda retired after a full career in the business world. Searching for a meaningful way to serve her community, she volunteered to work for the gift shop in the Langley Memorial Hospital lobby, and so began her commitment to the Langley Memorial Hospital Auxiliary.

“Nine of my ten grandchildren were born at Langley Memorial, two of my daughters were candy strippers, and my mother, who suffered from congestive heart failure, was in and out of the hospital until she finally passed away.”

Wanda remembers the care and compassion her mother received in her mother's final days.

“Our mother was in a private ward at Langley Memorial for her last three days before she died. Our family was grieving, and the staff were respectful and kind and gave us the privacy and support needed to say our goodbyes. After I retired, I wanted to stay busy and have purpose and meaning in my days, so I chose to give back to the hospital that has been so good to me and my family.”



From cottage industry to thriving business—the Langley Memorial Hospital Auxiliary.

The Langley Memorial Hospital Auxiliary was started by a small group of industrious women in 1947. The women were primarily housewives with excellent sewing, baking, and hospitality skills and soon proved outstanding at organization and raising money.



Fort Langley Auxiliary – Raised \$2,000 Relaxing over a cup of tea are the ladies of the Fort Langley auxiliary had raised over \$2,000 and were the first group to complete its project to furnish a four-bed ward in the hospital. Ladies at this gathering are Mrs. W.T. Rogers, Miss Lillian Rogers, Mrs. D. Carson, Mrs. I. Neilson, Mrs. E. I. A.E. Roberts, Mrs. Don Reid and Mrs. John Coward. Serving were Mrs. B. Keet and president Mrs. D.C. I. photo.

They initially established four committees quaintly named Sewing, Ways and Means, Social and Publicity. A team of ladies did mending and sewing for the hospital, and money was raised by rummage sales, bazaars, bake sales and teas, coffees and donuts, raffles and whist sales.

Their sewing and mending were prolific, as was the money raised, and today the Auxiliary is a registered charity successfully running two social enterprise businesses and providing a range of services to the hospital and community, supported by an extensive network of volunteers comprised of 250 men, women and teenagers from ages 16 to 90 years of age. The Auxiliary officially started tracking its donations in 1914; since then, it has raised \$11 million.

“I am very proud of the money we have raised,” says Wanda Williams, who has served consistently on the board in different roles as secretary, vice president, and president since 2017. Wanda volunteers at both Penny Pincher and the gift shop.

The first thrift shop, Superfluity Shop, was opened in 1956, followed by Penny Pincher in 1977. Today Penny Pincher achieves an annual revenue of \$1 million and owns the building. Wanda, who spends every Saturday morning at the shop, says that Penny Pincher is their biggest moneymaker. People are amazed when we tell them we are volunteers; all the money goes to Langley Memorial Hospital.

The gift shop started in 1965 as a small nook assigned to the Auxiliary on the hospital's main floor. Auxiliary members would load a cart with goodies and books from the gift nook and take it around the wards twice a week. Its popularity grew, and the nook expanded into a shop in 1975 and has since been further expanded and renovated.



“I didn’t realize how important the gift shop was to staff, patients and visitors until we reopened after five months of closure during the COVID pandemic in 2020. We got such a welcome when we re-opened. People come in and out of the shop to pick up a gift, candy, or something to read and chat with the volunteers. We get to hear many stories in the gift shop,” chuckles Wanda.

It is women like Wanda whose ongoing commitment as an auxiliary member has raised significant funds to purchase urgently needed medical equipment and even fund a recreational bus for residential care. Their dedication has also greatly contributed to renovations - to the maternity outpatient clinic and 1.5 million dollars towards the new Emergency Department.



Auxiliary volunteers provide Christmas gifts to residents in long-term care and comfort items to patients in acute care. It supports scholarships for those wanting to pursue a career in healthcare.

“For more than 75 years, the Auxiliary has worked hard to make significant improvements to the hospital,” says Wanda. “It is inspiring to see how the community rallies around the hospital. On a personal level, volunteering is a healthy thing to do. It has kept me connected to people and has brought friendship and laughter into my life.”

Fundraising Highlights

- \$9,000,000.00 for much-needed equipment for the hospital and a bus for the Residential Care Units.
- \$432,000.00 on items for the comfort of patients and residents who use the Langley Memorial Hospital and Residential Care Units.
- \$500,000.00 in 2014 was donated to the Langley Memorial Auxiliary Maternity Outpatient Clinic
- \$1.5 million towards the new ER opened in 2021