

Linda D.L. - Hospital Elder Life Volunteer



North York General Hospital (NYGH) has been Linda and her family's community hospital for generations. Linda says, "I've always been comfortable at NYGH, when I began volunteering here, I felt like I fit, I belonged."

After 35 years as an educator, Linda knew she wanted to continue to give back to her community. Fascinated by our elders and all that you can learn from them, Linda was drawn to a volunteer role where she could support the senior population, be challenged, and tap into her creativity.

Linda was offered a volunteer placement in the Hospital Elder Life Program (HELP). HELP is an award-winning, evidence-based, comprehensive program supported by volunteers, which has been proven to enhance the physical, emotional, and social experience for seniors during their stay in the hospital while preventing confusion and progressive weakness. NYGH's Elder Life Specialist, Sarah Carney, provides volunteers with specialized training in the delivery of specific interventions and volunteers gain the unique opportunity to have direct contact with patients in an in-patient care setting.

Before Linda began volunteering, she was a little hesitant, but under the caring guidance of Sarah, it was not long before Linda was discovering on her own how best to engage her assigned patients. "As a volunteer with the HELP, I feel like I make a difference with every visit. Sometimes I sing, sometimes I dance, but I almost always make the patient laugh!"

For five years Linda has visited patients in-person at the General site, and it was a shift to engage patients virtually. "With each visit, you must be patient, and continue to try new techniques. Recently, I was having a challenge engaging a patient, but once I started signing 'You Got the Whole World in His Hands', the patient responded immediately with a surprisingly huge smile and a rhythmic sway. It was very fulfilling to see the patient enjoying herself."

Linda, thank you for ensuring that people come first in everything you do!

