

## Volunteer Program News

This quarterly newsletter highlights volunteer programs and Northwestern Medicine news. April 21 to 27 is Volunteer Week, a time we pay special tribute to those who give their time to our patients, visitors and staff.

To our more than 1,200 volunteers: thank you for your dedication and service! Watch for details from Volunteer Services staff about Volunteer Week activities.

## A Message From Howard B. Chrisman, MD, President and CEO, Northwestern Memorial HealthCare

As we head into Volunteer Appreciation Month, I want to share my gratitude for the role you play in making Northwestern Medicine such a special place to give and receive care.

Your selfless dedication and hard work make a significant impact every day on our patients. Whether you support our patients and visitors directly or have a behind-the-scenes role supporting our staff, each of you generously gives of your time to care for others. You embody the spirit of service and making a difference.

Thank you for your dedication to the Northwestern Medicine mission and those we serve.

## Implanted Device Stimulates Nerves and Alleviates Pain

### Treating Acute Nerve Pain With Electric Zaps

Night and day. That's how Brenda Sharp describes the difference between before and after getting a spinal cord stimulator implanted to help her manage her debilitating pain thanks to the medical team at [Northwestern Medicine Center for Pain and Spine Health Bloomington](#). Based on that success, the 50-year-old Kirkland, Illinois, resident was able to return to work and can once again do the things she loves. She is full of energy and is no longer taking opioids to treat nerve damage in her spine.

Read more about spinal cord stimulation and Brenda's journey on [HealthBeat](#).



### Volunteer Spotlight: Doris Miller

Patient Access  
Valley West Hospital

#### What has your volunteer experience taught you?

My volunteer experience has taught me how much people appreciate a smile and a greeting when they walk in the door.

#### How has volunteering impacted you personally?

Volunteering has impacted me personally by meeting so many friendly people, and I hope I am making their experience at the hospital a pleasant one.

## A World-Class Cardiovascular Clinic for Veterans

Many veterans face healthcare challenges such as financial insecurity, housing instability and lack of access to transportation. These can all have a negative impact on their health. Veterans also often have high rates of diabetes, high blood pressure, obesity and heart failure.

To help address the needs of this population, [Sarah E. Chuzi, MD](#), a cardiologist at [Jesse Brown Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center](#) (VAMC) and [Northwestern Medicine Bluhm Cardiovascular Institute](#), established an advanced heart failure clinic for veterans at Jesse Brown VAMC. This collaboration is a continuation of a longstanding relationship between the two organizations. For more than 77 years, medical residents from Northwestern Medicine have rotated through the Jesse Brown VAMC during their medical training, the longest academic affiliation in the VA system.

Read how the clinic helped Navy Vet Dwayne Patterson go from heart failure to heart transplant on [HealthBeat](#).

## Drill Gives Neurosurgeons Quicker and Safer Access to the Brain

Neurosurgery is one of the most advanced fields of medicine, but one neurosurgical tool seemed rudimentary to a student at Northwestern University. While studying neuroscience as an undergraduate, Casey Qadir, the 24-year-old chief executive officer of [Hubly Surgical](#), learned that ventriculostomies, a surgery involving drilling a hole into the skull to drain fluid, are typically performed using hand-powered drills. The device initially reminded her of primitive surgical tools one might see in a museum.

In a graduate-level course called [NUvention Medical](#) offered by [The Farley Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation](#), Casey teamed up with two neurological surgery residents to form Hubly Surgical and to modernize the cranial drill.

Read more about the new drill and how this advanced technology was implemented at Northwestern Medicine on [HealthBeat](#).



John Kim  
McHenry Hospital



Kay Ginalski  
(left) and Barbara  
Ryan (right)  
Lake Forest Hospital

## Outreach Team Connects Patients With Resources

Every patient at a Northwestern Medicine Primary Care clinic receives a social determinants of health (SDOH) assessment. Since June 2022, more than **445,000** screens were completed, and **9.3%** of patients identified an SDOH need. SDOH are broadly defined as social and environmental factors that can affect health. When patients indicate a need and a desire for assistance, the Outreach Team — including community health workers, registered nurses and social workers — connect them to timely resources.

In the first five months of Fiscal Year 2024, **1,690** needs have been addressed including:

- **803** mental health needs
- **260** food security needs
- **248** medication affordability needs
- **175** housing instability needs
- **172** transportation needs

Since June 2022, the Outreach Team has assisted more than **18,000** patients.

## Take-Care Tips

### The Lowdown on Sodium

Nearly everyone can lower their blood pressure, even people currently on blood pressure-reducing medication, by lowering their sodium (salt) intake, according to a new study from Northwestern Medicine, Vanderbilt University Medical Center and the University of Alabama at Birmingham.

Read [The Lowdown on Sodium](#) on [HealthBeat](#).