

# Volunteer Newsletter

Winter 2026

## Robotic Whipple Surgery for Pancreatic Cancer

When you hear “robotic surgery,” you might think of science fiction. But for patients with pancreatic cancer, it’s reality. The fully robotic Whipple procedure, a complex surgery for treating pancreatic cancer, is offering new hope for patients facing this challenging diagnosis.

“The fully robotic Whipple procedure represents a significant advancement in pancreatic cancer treatment,” says [Akhil Chawla, MD](#), a surgical oncologist at Northwestern Medicine. “It allows us to perform this complex operation in a minimally invasive way, which can lead to better outcomes for our patients.”

The Whipple procedure is a surgical treatment for pancreatic cancer and other conditions affecting the pancreas, bile duct and small intestine. Traditionally, this surgery is performed through a large incision in the abdomen. But with robotic technology, surgeons can now perform the entire procedure using small incisions and robotic instruments.

Read more about this minimally invasive procedure on [HealthBeat](#).

## Take Care Tips

### Is Red Meat OK to Eat?

For many people, eating red meat is part of their everyday diet. Red meat is high in protein and packed with vitamins and minerals like iron, zinc and vitamin B12. But can eating too much red meat raise your risk of heart disease?

Research shows you can have an increased risk of heart disease and other medical conditions when you eat processed and unprocessed red meat. But that doesn’t mean you can never eat red meat again.

Learn about the link between red meat and heart health and how to make healthier protein swaps on [HealthBeat](#).



### Volunteer Spotlight: Lisa Chieppa

**PT/OT Gym Volunteer and Milestones Clinic Volunteer, Woodstock Hospital**

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

I have learned that anything I can do to brighten someone’s day also brightens mine.

#### How has your volunteer experience impacted you personally?

Interacting with patients while transporting them to and from the rehab gym at the hospital can make a difference in their day. That is what I enjoy most as well as getting to know the therapists. They always thank me for helping, which makes me feel I’m part of the team.

As a retired elementary teacher, I feel very much at home also helping at Milestone Clinic. The therapists have so many challenges while working with their pediatric patients. I am happy to help with tasks that free up time for them to spend on their patients.

## By the Numbers

### 7 Northwestern Medicine Hospitals Earn 'A' in Fall 2025 Leapfrog Hospital Safety Grade

- Catherine Gratz Griffin Lake Forest Hospital
- Central DuPage Hospital
- Delnor Hospital
- Huntley Hospital
- Kishwaukee Hospital
- McHenry Hospital
- Northwestern Memorial Hospital

The Safety Grade is published twice a year by Leapfrog, an organization that rates hospitals on a number of measures, such as safety practices, patient experience and hospital-acquired infections.

[Learn more.](#)

## 2025 Volunteer Excellence Award Winners

The Volunteer Excellence Award recognizes two volunteers for their passion for service and significant support of patients, visitors and staff. Volunteers are nominated by staff members for demonstrating commitment, exhibiting kindness and serving as a positive influence.

### Noel Storm

For more than two decades, Noel Storm has led a Northwestern Medicine Living Well Cancer Resources support group and provided one-on-one support to women experiencing a mastectomy due to breast cancer. Her commitment to caring for others and to the *Patients First* mission has made her a trusted resource.

Missy Petty, lead counselor, Living Well, says, “I know that she personally makes such a difference in these women's ability to process and cope with their cancer and their surgery.”

Storm also volunteers at the front desk, greeting participants and helping them learn about available services.

“These are often patients with a new cancer diagnosis who are anxious and afraid, and Noel calmly and expertly guides them through all the services we offer. It helps make the process less scary for them,” says Petty. “I am so grateful for her ongoing roles at Living Well and for how generously she gives of her time and herself.”

### Kraemer Family

Jack and Linda Kraemer, along with their therapy dog Cosmo, enjoy bringing smiles to patients' faces at Catherine Gratz Griffin Lake Forest Hospital. Cosmo's enthusiasm brings comfort to patients in the Emergency Department and on inpatient units in tough times.

Linda Kraemer has been volunteering in the ED for more than six years. She has contributed nearly 700 hours of service by cleaning rooms, stocking supplies, rounding with the Comfort Cart to provide pillows and blankets to patients, and more.

“There are not enough words to describe the positive impact that Linda has when she is here,” says Kylie Mizialko, BSN, RN. “She never stops moving and continues to take on additional responsibilities to help the flow in the ED. She is so proactive and will address whatever needs to be done as quickly as possible. Linda is efficient, professional, knowledgeable and kind. The ED staff know that they can rely on her to help with anything they need.”

Jack Kraemer and Cosmo have been volunteering at the hospital for more than two years, completing over 260 patient visits and spending countless hours brightening employees' days.

“Jack is always very friendly and gracious with both employees and patients,” says Rosalia Garcia, BSN, RN, clinical shift coordinator. “What a great thing it is to watch Jack and Cosmo come onto a unit and immediately see our teams and patients smile and relax. Many times, Cosmo will return the smile! Their presence here is truly medicine for our patients and staff.”



Noel Storm received a Volunteer Excellence Award for her service with Living Well Cancer Resources.



Jack, Linda and Cosmo Kraemer received a Volunteer Excellence Award for their service at Catherine Gratz Griffin Lake Forest Hospital.