

With Attached Photo: Southeast Georgia Health System Volunteer, Paulette Austin; Teen Volunteer, Jordan DeRatto and director of Volunteer Services, Kristin Doll, CDVS.

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A Life-changing Experience Awaits Volunteers April 20-26 is National Volunteer Week

BRUNSWICK, Georgia: April 14, 2025 – When Jordan Deratto volunteered at Southeast Georgia Health System at age 17, she didn't anticipate the impact she would have on those around her. Deratto served in the pediatric therapy unit at Wolfson Children's at Southeast Georgia Health System on the Brunswick Campus. "Pediatric therapy holds a special place in my heart; I had therapy and a series of casts there when I was younger. I was excited to work with my former therapists since I wouldn't have to be the patient this time." Deratto says. Walking into the unit one



day, she saw a boy undergoing the same procedure she had gone through. "I shared my experience with the boy and his mom and answered their questions." Deratto didn't have a medical degree, but she comforted the family in a way no one else could have.

A second volunteer assignment took Deratto to the Maternity Care Center. "It was an inspiring atmosphere that allowed me to explore a career in maternity," Deratto says, adding, "The entire volunteer experience was really cool. I'm glad I got to be part of it."

Summer Opportunities for Teens

Applications are now available for teens, like Deratto, who want to explore health care careers, help others and earn service hours for college scholarships. Teens can volunteer in both clinical and non-clinical areas within the Health System. Graduating high school seniors who have completed a minimum of 20 hours of volunteer service in our Teen Volunteer Program and plan to pursue a health care degree after graduation are eligible to apply for a \$1,000 scholarship. To apply online, visit sghs.org/teen-volunteer or call the Volunteer Services department at 912-466-3157. Teen applications are due by April 18, 2025.

Making a Difference at Any Age

Volunteering isn't just for teens. "You can make a difference at any age; there's always something you can do to assist others," says Paulette Austin, a retiree who volunteers in the Cancer Care Center. "Volunteering increased my confidence and improved my health. I am no longer a couch potato." Science backs up her claim, says Kristin Doll, CDVS, director of Volunteer Services. "Studies show that volunteering benefits physical and mental health and enhances social connections. I have seen adults and teens gain confidence through volunteering. It is wonderful to watch them grow and see their care for others surpass any apprehensions they previously had."

Reflecting on her experience, Austin says one patient stands out in her memory. “I welcomed my first male patient receiving treatment for breast cancer and his caregiver. There are not a lot of resources for male breast cancer patients, but we shared information on what it’s like for a man receiving chemo for breast cancer.” Austin says her presence comforts patients and gives nurses more “hands-on time” with patients. “I feel I am an asset to patients and the staff. I look forward to providing a needed service.”

“Volunteers provide non-clinical support to patients and staff and assist with administrative tasks,” explains Doll. “Our goal is to match volunteer assignments with each applicant’s talents, abilities and interests.” One volunteer applicant was recovering from a stroke. “She had mobility challenges and walked with a cane but wanted to improve her balance and walking. Her assignment became pushing a cart to waiting areas, refilling brochure holders and greeting patients. The cart provided the stability she needed, and she took breaks to chat with patients and visitors. Eventually, she didn’t need her cane at all. She credits volunteering as an important component of her recovery,” shares Doll.

In our high-tech age, volunteerism, Doll says, is especially relevant. “Technology has us more connected yet feeling more alone than ever; volunteering allows us to truly connect with others by looking beyond ourselves and caring for those around us.”

To learn how you can make a difference, call Volunteer Services at 912-466-3157 or visit sghs.org/volunteer.

ABOUT SOUTHEAST GEORGIA HEALTH SYSTEM

Southeast Georgia Health System is a not-for-profit health system comprised of two acute care hospitals, two Cancer Care Centers and multiple specialty care centers, including orthopaedic and spine care, joint replacement, breast care, maternity, outpatient rehabilitation, sleep management and wound care. The Brunswick Campus Cancer Care Center is accredited by the American College of Surgeons Commission on Cancer and is one of the few centers in Georgia to offer CyberKnife® M6 with MLC. Additionally, the Brunswick Campus is accredited by The Joint Commission as an Advanced Primary Stroke Center and the Camden Campus is accredited as an Acute Stroke Ready Hospital. The Southeast Georgia Physician Associates medical group includes more than 160 providers working in 20 different medical specialties at more than 40 locations. The Health System is part of Coastal Community Health, a regional affiliation between Baptist Health and Southeast Georgia Health System, a highly integrated hospital network focused on significant initiatives designed to enhance the quality and value of care provided to our contiguous communities. For more information, visit sghs.org.

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