Janet Baker—Janet was excited when the Senior Accountant position for the Mercy Medical Center Foundation was created. It allowed her an opportunity to combine her love of accounting with her vast not-for-profit background. Jan has a rich volunteer career. She is past president of the Junior League of Cedar Rapids and Young Parents Network. She was also actively involved in the capital campaign for the Madge Phillips Center. For eight years Jan was executive director of the local Camp Fire Council. It was her work with Camp Fire that led her to get an accounting degree from the University of Iowa. Jan’s responsibilities include serving as accountant and assisting with the financial management of the Foundation. She can be reached at 398-6281.

When away from the office, Jan enjoys reading, golf and attending her daughter’s athletic events. She is married to David, a recently appointed Iowa Supreme Court Justice, and they reside in Cedar Rapids with their two daughters, Elizabeth and Catie.

Julie Potter—Prior to becoming part of the Foundation team, Julie was a Manager for Administrative Services, Security and Facilities with Yellow Book USA. During her 18-year tenure, she handled all aspects of property management for the Yellow Book facility, administrative operations, event planning and budget coordination. Prior to her responsibilities at Yellow Book, she worked for Telecord USA and McLeodUSA in a management capacity for administrative services.

An avid reader and wine enthusiast, Julie and husband Mark stay consistently busy with their two boys Raleigh and Nolan and their sport activities.

Contact Julie at 221-8770 for article ideas or features you’d like to see highlighted in a future Partners magazine.

New Faces to the Foundation...
The Mercy Foundation warmly welcomed Janet Baker and Julie Potter with the Mercy Touch shortly after the New Year.
Dear Friends:

It has been a long, brutally cold winter and at last spring has sprung upon us with bulbs bursting forth through the soil and bringing us flowers with beautiful blossoms in living color. What a joy it is!

In today’s world we talk much about “cultivating a culture of caring.” We want children and adults to become compassionate, charitable and gracious individuals. But how do we do this? It may be developed in many different ways. Perhaps it is the simple way we hold a door for another, or offer to help elderly neighbors shovel their drive or mow their lawn. It could be saying thank you or the kind smile to the cashier or the check-out person at the grocery store. It could be volunteering at the hospital or funding an endowment for a scholarship for nursing students or students in other health-related areas.

Through these kinds of actions we are setting an example for others to see and follow. It is going above and beyond the necessary, going the extra mile that really is not expected. It is doing what Catherine McCauley initiated with the early Sisters of Mercy so many years ago, and has been carried on down through the ages. It is the Mercy Touch that we know today and see in your own way while you go in the finest of ways day after day.

The necessary, going the extra mile that really is not expected. It is doing what Catherine McCauley initiated with the early Sisters of Mercy so many years ago, and has been carried on down through the ages. It is the Mercy Touch that we know today and see exemplified by the staff, volunteers, administration, donors, and board members of Mercy Medical Center. Through the Mercy Touch we are very deliberately “cultivating a culture of caring” in the finest of ways day after day with every person with whom we come in contact.

May each of you, our friends, carry out the Mercy Touch in your own way while you go about seeing and enjoying the fragrance of the new blossoms of spring. God bless you always.

Gratefully,

Sister James Marie Donahue
Chairman of the Board
Hal Van Nest (affectionately known as “Van”) was 94 years old. His wife of 71 years, Alberta, had been his attentive and loving caregiver. When the physical demands became too great, it became apparent that it was time to search for an alternate place to care for Hal’s needs. That place was the newly opened Dennis and Donna Oldorf Hospice House of Mercy. It turned out to be the perfect solution for Hal, Alberta and their entire family.

“We are forever in debt to the entire community for bringing this Hospice House to our area,” expressed Ann Van Nest, Hal’s granddaughter.

“It not only relieved my grandmother’s burden of care, but it allowed us to share some special times together as a family.”

The Oldorf Hospice House, the area’s first hospice facility, opened in late May 2007 after a successful, broad-based community capital campaign raised $7 million. For the Van Nest family, it filled a huge need and allowed the family to create some lasting memories with their loved one.

“Meal times were the best time to reminisce,” Ann said. “My grandfather was an amazing storyteller and an avid reader. He’d tell us stories about the times he caddied for Father Flanagan at Boys Town or engage us in conversations about current events. One time our family made his favorite pork chops in the beautiful hospice kitchen. Congregating around the large dining room table made it feel just like home.”

The homelike setting of the Hospice House was ideal for Hal. During his 4-week stay he was able to take advantage of the many amenities. Listening to the player piano in the Music Room was a treat. Going outdoors in the interior courtyard to enjoy the tranquil beauty of the gardens and fountain brought him great joy.

In the words of his granddaughter, Kerrie Giegerich, “I traveled from New Zealand to spend a week with my grandfather at the Hospice House. I cannot sing the praises of the Hospice House and their staff highly enough. They were kind, respectful and sincere. They treated him like a king, and made his last days comfortable and peaceful. For that, we are forever grateful.”

Kerrie spoke further. “It was a privilege to stay at the Hospice House. A computer with internet access was extremely beneficial to me and allowed me to keep my fiancé in New Zealand updated on my grandfather’s condition. There was free coffee any time of day or night, a well-stocked refrigerator, and laundry service. The Hospice staff accommodated my needs, my family’s needs as well as my grandfather’s.”

It was the extra special touches that impressed the Van Nest family also. Knowing that Hal was a World War II vet, the Hospice staff planned a special 4th of July celebration to honor his service. His wife, Alberta, dressed him in red, white and blue. “He loved it. What a special memory,” Ann recalled.

For the family, their main priority was Hal’s comfort and wanting to preserve his dignity in his final days. Filling those days with memories, comfort and love was a fitting tribute to this kind, gentle man who always saw the good in everyone.

His daughter, Sandra Giegerich, sums it up. “Thank you seems so inadequate a word, but it’s all I can say. Thank you to everyone who made the Hospice House a reality, but more importantly, to the people who work there. They are truly angels for everything they do.”

The Dennis and Donna Oldorf Hospice House of Mercy opened its doors to the community on May 29, 2007. Since that date many patients and families have received end-of-life care, respite care and bereavement services.

Number of patients served = 303
Average length of stay = 10 days
Average daily census = 8 patients
Number of memorial gifts made to Hospice of Mercy and/or Hospice House = 2922
Number of new volunteers at the Hospice House = 16
Number of new volunteer chaplains = 7
Number of families joining new children’s grief group = 10

The following story provided comfort to the Van Nest family. It comes from a booklet, entitled “The Dying Experience” by Barbara Karnes. Hospice staff provide this as a meaningful resource to families during their loved one’s end-of-life journey.

Gone from my Sight
I am standing upon the seashore. A ship at my side spreads her white sails to the morning breeze and starts for the blue ... watch her until at length she hangs like a speck of white cloud just where the sea and sky come to mingle with each other. Then someone at my side says: “There, she is gone!”

“Come where?”

“Gone from my sight. That is all. She is just as large in mast and hull and spar as she was when she left my side and she is just as able to bear the load of living freight to her destined port.

Her diminished size is in me, not in her. And just at the moment, when someone at my side says: “There, she is gone!” There are other eyes “Here she comes!”

And that is dying.

- Henry Van Dyke
Volunteering is a family value in the Bill and Pat Elkington household. Bill Elkington was looking for a volunteer opportunity when he first moved to Cedar Rapids from Florida to pursue a career with Rockwell Collins in June of 2003. Bill says that he “believes that community involvement is the responsibility of all citizens.”

After he first moved to Cedar Rapids, Bill commuted between Cedar Rapids and Orlando, where his family continued to live for a time. During a flight to Orlando Bill met a hospice nurse from Orlando. She said she had been working in that capacity for 16 years and couldn’t imagine doing anything else. She didn’t believe that any other work would be as meaningful and rewarding.

After a two-hour plane ride with the nurse, Bill became convinced that becoming a hospice volunteer was what he should do. Bill eventually led a community wide petition in 2005 that obtained over 3,500 signatures for a Hospice House project, and he ended up being a member of the steering committee for Mercy’s successful “Sharing the Journey” capital campaign, which raised over $700,000.

In his petition Bill wrote “I am imagining a hospice house that is more like a home than a care facility. A place that is comfortable for both patients and families. A place where volunteers would be welcome, where we would be an integral part of the operation of the place. A place where dying people would be cared for by people who know how to provide this unique care, who do it well, with compassion, gentleness and respect.”

The Dennis and Donna Oldorf Hospice House of Mercy was completed in 2007, thanks to a lead gift of $1,000,000 from Donna Oldorf as well as contributions from community businesses, charitable institutions, and individuals who gave so generously to the campaign that a $1.5 million endowment fund was also created.

After the Elkingtons move to Cedar Rapids, Pat, who has a bachelor of science in nursing, decided to return to school in 2006 and began work on her master in social work. In the summer semester of 2007, Pat needed a field practicum site. Being in the Integrated Social Work curriculum, Pat was extremely interested in how the community would respond to a new service (the Hospice House). Pat completed hospice volunteer training, shadowed many social workers and nurses, and developed a new children’s bereavement program during her practicum.

With the completion of the practicum, Pat was reluctant to give up the coordination of the children’s program, so she obtained a part-time bereavement counselor position at the Hospice House.

Her goal is to increase bereavement services and resources (such as youth-appropriate reading material on grief and death) available to community children. She is offering family support groups, and is sharing information and experiences with adults and youth in organizations, schools, and churches.

The greatest thing that Bill and Pat have learned through their volunteer work with the Hospice House is how “indefinitely courageous, gracious and loving patients and families can be during this challenging period of life.”

For more information or to become a Hospice Volunteer contact Tara Youells, Hospice Volunteer Trainer at 319-398-6496. If you are interested in learning about Hospice House contributions, contact the Mercy Foundation office at 319-398-6206.

Reflecting on the last 85 years of service by the members of the Mercy Medical Center Auxiliary, it’s apparent that a huge commitment has been made by hundreds of individuals to support the patient-care services of the hospital.

When the Auxiliary was established in 1923, it’s purpose was to sew for the hospital and “to take steps in time to furnish a room in the new hospital annex under construction.” So began the wonderful legacy of legions of talented women committed to supporting the hospital’s mission.

Plenty of hard work and perseverance compelled this group to take on specific, fund-raising projects to benefit the hospital. Through their efforts, the Auxiliary has raised well over $4 million in financial support.

Over the years, Auxiliary volunteers have given and continue to give of their time in a variety of ways. Opportunities to serve include the gift shop, the Christmas and spring luncheons, the angel tree, heartlights, the coffee corner, children’s tours, the bridge marathons, art exhibits, and vendor sales. Another area open to involvement is through service on the auxiliary board.

Today, membership totals over 500. A recent membership survey conducted by the auxiliary provided a good picture of the current membership and where they would like to grow in the future. According to the comments from 135 respondents, years of service range from 11 to 20 years, and their primary reason for joining the auxiliary is to support the hospital through a variety of projects.

Current Auxiliary president, Sue Pearson, noted, “I never cease to be amazed at the level of commitment of our members and their longevity of service. Being a member of the Auxiliary is part of who they are and what they do.”

The Mercy Auxiliary board has been devoting time to address the future needs of the organization, especially engaging the participation of younger women. The board wants to find ways to accommodate working women’s busy schedules so that volunteering is more of an option.

The board is also exploring ways to encourage more women, of any age, to step into board leadership positions. Reflecting on this issue, Sue Pearson noted, “We sometimes experience a reluctance from some women to assume leadership roles so we’re working on ways to encourage them to consider serving on the board.”

From the beginning, the Auxiliary has been all about the hearts and hands of many women giving their time and talent to support Mercy. Interested in becoming a part of this vibrant organization? Contact Sue Pearson for more information at 398-6286, or email her at auxiliary.president@mercycare.org.

The Auxiliary Executive Board L-R, Angie Panagos - Special Projects, Sue Pearson –President, Mary Ann MP-Comes – Secretary, Barbara Erickson - Treasurer (not pictured)
Beth, a Cedar Rapids native, graduated from Luther College and has a bachelor of science in nursing from Mount Mercy. She received her masters of science and nursing at the University of Iowa.

Beth worked at Mercy in the medical surgical area from 1977 to 1980. She was an office nurse and eventually a manager of patient services at OB-GYN Associates until 1994. She began with the University of Iowa Hospital & Clinics as a staff nurse in radiology and was recently their clinical director family care from 1996-2007. She was named Vice President for Nursing of Excelling at Mercy in 2007.

Beth and her husband, Kevin have two children: Zach, who is working and going to school in Boulder, Colorado, and Keeley, a senior at Luther College.

What attracted you to the position here at Mercy?

I’ve followed the work transpiring at Mercy over the years and been impressed by how progressive this organization is both in developing their people and in technological advancements. But the main thing that attracted me to Mercy is the people. What a wonderful, caring group of staff we have.

After being at Mercy for several months now, what impresses you the most?

The progressive nature of the organization and the wonderful people are extremely impressive. But most impressive is The Mercy Touch. It’s real and palpable. I felt it the first time I came to interview for this position, and I continue to experience it every day.

What are the biggest challenges facing the nursing profession today?

With an aging workforce, nurses in key positions are retiring. There are diminishing numbers of nursing faculty, bedside care nurses, and nurses in leadership positions. With fewer nurses we must rethink our patient care delivery processes. We need to create systems and processes that optimize nurses’ time at the bedside and maximize technological support for them. Mercy continues to be a leader in this effort.

What are the immediate and long range goals/priorities in your position?

To lead the effort to build more effective patient care delivery models. As a profession we have sometimes been seduced by the latest and greatest advancements and that actually adds more burden and layers to nurses’ work. Finding ways to support, recruit, and retain our nursing staff is a priority.

Beth also added “the Mercy Foundation has been an amazing partner in helping to fund initiatives that benefit our patients.”

“Encountering the many individual patients along the way that have touched my life along the road…I am very humbled by the award.”

Beth Houlanh, Vice-President for Nursing Excellence

Mercy’s Kris Sargent, RN, OCN

Kris Sargent, RN, OCN, a nurse educator for the Mercy Regional Cancer Center and an unsung, dedicated cancer advocate recently became a recipient of the Lane B. Adams Award for Quality of Life. The Lane W. Adams Award rewards caregivers who innovatively and consistently provide superior, compassionate care to cancer patients and their families.

This award has become the nation’s most prestigious multidisciplinary award rewarding excellence in cancer care.

Christy Thirman, Community Relations, American Cancer Society, originated Kris’ nomination for her unparalleled accomplishments within the cancer arena. She was supported by Ann Collins-Harrity, Director of Mercy’s Regional Cancer Center and Sue Rowbotham, Nurse Manager Neurosurgery/Oncology/Medical Unit at Mercy.

In her support nomination letter, Ann says “Kris has had a longstanding relationship with the American Cancer Society in her 25 years of nursing. She has served on the Board of Directors for a number of years … she has donated numerous hours to Relay For Life, Daffodil Days and Cancer Survivors Day…Kris is the key facilitator for all of our patient support groups…Kris invests personally in many patients and makes it a point to get to know their concerns, interests and needs. Without reservation, Kris Sargent is the perfect candidate for this award.”

Kris is only the fourth Iowan to receive the Adams award. Kris has been with Mercy Medical Center for over 23 years and has served on the Linn County Board of American Cancer Society in various capacities.

Kris says “It’s an honor for me to be selected for this award…”, when asked what her career highlight so far is, Kris simply responds “encountering the many individual patients along the way that have touched my life along the road…I am very humbled by the award.”

Kris and her husband Mark, have two children: Matt, a freshman at the University of Northern Iowa and Kelsey, a freshman at Xavier High School. The Sargents will be attending an award presentation in Los Angeles, at the May 8 meeting of the American Cancer Society’s Board of Directors.

Congratulations to Kris on behalf of the Mercy Foundation and Mercy Medical Center for a well deserved honor!
Walter and Evelyn Badger
Enjoying the benefits of gift annuities

During a recent visit with Walter and Evelyn Badger, it was easy to sense how much they care about helping other people in their own, quiet way. Living in Cedar Rapids for over 60 years, they have accomplished much good.

After graduating from college, Walter from Cornell and Evelyn from Grinnell, the couple married in 1944. Walter served in the Navy and began his career as an accountant with McGladrey, Hansen and Dunn, now RSM McGladrey, in December 1946. His career with the firm spanned 37 years.

The couple love to travel and have explored many ports of call, especially in China, Africa, and Europe. They raised two children, Mark and Nancy, and lost their son and one of their two granddaughters to cancer.

Because of their appreciation for the level of care they have experienced at Mercy and their desire to help others, the Badgers have supported the hospital and the Mercy Foundation. Evelyn commented, “we’ve always had a good experience at Mercy when we’ve needed health-care services.”

“A gift annuity is wonderful way to supplement our retirement income while supporting one of our favorite charities,” explained Walter.

A gift annuity:
• Provides a generous charitable deduction for the gift.
• Allows for life-time annuity payments for one or two individuals at a favorable rate that can supplement retirement.
• Can help to decrease the amount of capital gain owned on an appreciated asset when the stock is used to fund the gift.

For a free no-obligation illustration, please call Sue Hawn CFRE, President of the Mercy Foundation, at 398-6278.

Once again the Mercy Foundation was privileged to host its annual Founders’ Society event. On September 18, 2007, 28 new members were honored for creating a planned gift, an endowed fund or giving significant lifetime gifts to Mercy. The theme was “Night with the Stars” featuring our own “Wall of Fame” as well as lively entertainment from SPT Theatre. During the sixth annual event, the newest Founders’ Society members were recognized and given a framed drawing of the original Mercy Hospital. We are humbled and grateful for the generosity of our newest members. They are:

LeDonia Asmussen
John & Anne Cunningham
John Joseph Dieter
Sue & John Hawn
Kenneth L. & Mildred* M. Johnson
John D. & Patricia J. Kerr
Cecil H. Petersen & Bernice* L. Petersen
Bill & Kay Pitlik
Merrill & Harriet Pitlik
Dr. David & Mary Jo Rater
Albert & Martha Ruffalo
Joe & Lynda Schanberg
Laurie & Robert Silber
Frank & Ruth Ann Volesky
Joe & Greer Whitters
*deceased

A Night With Our Stars

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*deceased

What the Mercy Touch Means to Me...

“The Mercy Touch means compassion, a loyalty to faith and a community that cares.”

Ann Van Nest, family member of a former patient

“The Mercy Touch encompasses all that is best for the patient and their families — compassionate care, private rooms, excellent staff and state-of-the-art technology.”

Peggy Meek, Mercy Foundation Board Member