Reflections of Generosity: The Many Ways of Giving
Dear Friends of Mercy

As I reviewed the recent past issues of Partners magazine, the word generosity continues to be the prominent theme. For this issue, I want to focus on the “generations of generosity.”

For me, as a Sister of Mercy, the beginning of generations was with Catherine McAuley, the Foundress of the Sisters of Mercy in Dublin, Ireland, in 1831. Catherine saw the needs of those who were poor, sick or uneducated, and followed up by taking actions that would alleviate these needs. She reached out to aid the poor, to care for those who were ill and, with the assistance of others, began educating the uneducated, especially children and women.

What Catherine began in Ireland, Frances Warde and four other Sisters brought to America. Hospitals were established, schools were opened and the needs of the poor were addressed. The Sisters of Mercy began in Pittsburgh, moving on to Chicago and to Iowa, locating in Cedar Rapids in 1875. Mercy Hospital opened its doors in 1900 to serve the needs of people in the community and the surrounding areas. Filling the needs has continued through generations of people who were, and continue to be, in need.

Generosity is more than financial giving. In addition, we can be generous in other ways: by giving freely of our time and talents, as well as through empathy and our prayers. This was made clear in a quote by Catherine McAuley:

“...three things the poor prize more highly than gold, though they cost the donor nothing: the kind word, the gentle compassionate look and the patient hearing of their sorrows.”

Generations of generosity can apply to each and all of us. What has been done in the past can be continued, so that all of us will benefit!

With gratitude and sincerity,
Sister James Marie Donahue
Chairman of the Board

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Mission Statement
The Mercy Medical Center Endowment Foundation is a not-for-profit corporation organized and operated exclusively to support the mission and activities of Mercy Medical Center.

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Click on “Mercy Foundation,” note the “Your Touch: The Mercy Touch” icon and click on “Partners Magazine.”

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Her nickname was “Dolly” and, if you knew her, you’d know why. Darlene Hess was a gorgeous, petite brunette who could be described as a living doll. While short in stature, she was a formidable force with indomitable spirit loved dearly by her husband, Dr. Jack Hess, a retired radiologist, and their four beautiful daughters.

A native of Dyersville, Iowa, where her father was the local family practice physician, Dolly followed in his footsteps by receiving a nursing degree from Marycrest College. Her nursing career was put on hold to focus on raising her family, a source of pride and joy. She was active, vibrant and the picture of health. When she started experiencing puzzling symptoms, such as dropping things and not being able to turn a door knob, she sought help. In December 2011, the life-limiting diagnosis was made: a brain tumor.

It was devastating news, but Dolly persevered with grace and dignity. A devout Catholic, she turned to her faith and family for support and guidance.

Two defining moments changed the game: when the stress of the care became overwhelming and Jack needed a break; and when Dolly experienced a setback after falling. Their hospice nurse suggested respite care at the Dennis and Donna Oldorf Hospice House of Mercy.

“I balked at making that decision,” remembered Dr. Hess. “I thought it meant we were giving up hope. But once the decision was made, I felt an immediate sense of relief. The burden of care was off my shoulders and into the hands of compassionate professionals.”

Dolly was placed in respite care twice for observation, medication adjustments and rest. Daughter Tami Happel said, “Hospice House was a lifesaver during these times when Mom temporarily needed round-the-clock care.”

As agonizing as it was to watch Dolly’s decline, Jack and his daughters were assured that when the time came, the Hospice House would be there for them. On May 12, 2013, Dolly was admitted to the Hospice House for the last time.

Daughter Kim Witte stated, “I cannot say enough about how helpful the staff was during a very difficult and emotionally draining time in our lives. The facility itself is awesome, but the staff made the end-of-life process more bearable. Our family had never been challenged by something so devastating and each family member had unique needs during this process. Peace was given to us during a storm.”

The Hospice House provided all the amenities needed for a large extended family like the Hesses. Dr. Hess emphasized, “The house was designed with families in mind. It allowed us to be family – sharing memories and appreciating each other while being the focal point for our grieving.”

“Families need to know to use Hospice House for more than the final days and hours. The staff was amazing, the facility wonderful and our experience life-changing. Hospice House was a haven for our family.”

“A Haven for the Hess Family”

Hospice volunteers offer visits to patients, wherever they reside. Our ultimate goal is to develop relationships and provide support to patients and their families during a critical time in their lives.

Volunteers who give generously of their time are a key element of the support and comfort Hospice of Mercy provides to patients and their families during a critical time in their lives. This service is a tremendous help to families and yet another way The Mercy Touch is delivered. It is also rewarding, fulfilling work for volunteers.

To learn more about Hospice of Mercy volunteer opportunities, please call Hospice of Mercy Volunteer Coordinator at (319) 398-6628 or email mclapp@mercycare.org.

Hospice of Mercy Volunteer Opportunities

Generosity Heals
Leidigh agreed, saying, “All the comforts of home greeted us. The kitchen, dining area, library and chapel allowed the family to be close to mom and each other, but provided privacy. Mom’s own private outdoor patio was a wonderful bonus. It made us really feel at home.”

Happel added, “Having room for people to sleep in Mom’s room each night was comforting and a true blessing, too. It was definitely the most emotional time in my life. When I lost my mom three days before my daughter’s wedding, I had a week that included the saddest day of my life, as well as one of the happiest days of my life. When I lost my mom three days before my daughter’s wedding, I had a week that included the saddest day of my life, as well as one of the happiest days of my life. Knowing my mom was being treated with the utmost respect and compassion eased all of our anxiety.”

“The peace of mind having Mom at the Hospice House was immeasurable,” added youngest daughter, Dolly Witte. “The Hospice House was so warm and welcoming. It allowed our entire family to be present and yet not intrusive to the loved one’s care. Placing Mom’s care with the experts, allowed us to just be family, comforting each other and reflecting on life and memories shared. Without the Hospice House, there would have been a lot of unnecessary stress, worry and even sickness to our family.”

Another benefit of Hospice of Mercy is the music therapy. “Mom loved music and dancing,” Witte said. “My mom always enjoyed the visits from the music therapist. She knew my mom’s favorite songs, so on her last visit she made sure to play those favorites.”

To Dr. Hess, it was the outdoor meditation walkway and garden that provided much needed solitude and reflection. “There is something cathartic knowing that others too have been down this path,” he said.

Dolly died on May 22, 2013. When asked what advice they could give to families making a decision about whether to go to the Hospice House of Mercy, Jack and his four daughters did not hesitate.

“Families need to know to use Hospice House for more than the final days and hours. The staff was amazing, the facility wonderful and our experience life-changing. Hospice House was a haven for our family,” Witte said.

Leidigh summarized, “I would tell them not to be afraid, not to feel like they had given up on their loved one, but they lose them by letting go with dignity and respect... in a place where people understand what you are going through.”

They all agreed. The Dennis and Donna Oldorf Hospice House of Mercy brought them closer in a way that Dolly would have loved.

When Mercy Auxiliary co-leader and volunteer Joyce Klimes was in high school, she knew she wanted to work with people and had a hard time choosing between nursing and teaching. In the end, she chose teaching, primarily to have her summers free to volunteer at Mercy. That was 30 years ago and, today, Joyce is still contributing her time and talents to Mercy.

Joyce volunteers as a patient nursing assistant in Outpatient Surgery. She welcomes family members and/or support persons, shows them the way to a conference room to visit with the doctor and escorts them to the recovery room.

Joyce says, “It is very rewarding to help the family and keep them informed of the patient’s care and to make their wait in the outpatient surgery area as comfortable and worry-free as possible.”

Joyce currently is serving her third year as co-leader of the Mercy Auxiliary, an arm of the Foundation that promotes and advances awareness of Mercy throughout the community. Since its inception in 1923, the Mercy Auxiliary has donated more than $4.5 million, raised through fundraising events and projects, to Mercy Medical Center to support improvements in patient care. Joyce has co-chairs many Auxiliary events, such as last year’s successful change from an annual Christmas luncheon to a vendor market.

“Generosity does not always have to be in the form of financial contributions, but also the time and talent of the many volunteers and auxiliary members,” says Joyce. “Look around Mercy and see the volunteers in action helping patients and families. Whether you are getting a cup of coffee from a volunteer at the coffee corner, purchasing an item at one of the gift shops or a vendor sale, or purchasing artwork outside the cafeteria, you know that money goes directly back to Mercy Medical Center.”

Joyce, a former teacher at Coolidge Elementary School in Cedar Rapids, was raised on a farm near the small town of Earlham, Iowa. She and her husband (Don) of 37 years are avid Hawkeyes fans and love to travel.

It’s easy to see that Joyce enjoys keeping busy. Mercy is grateful that she makes time to be an integral part of the hospital’s healing environment through her generosity.

“To learn more about what your generosity could do or to learn more about Mercy Auxiliary, check out www.mercycare.org/ways-to-give.
Leading the Next Generation of Generosity

Isaac Lane Ipsan is a 12-year-old boy with a generous heart. A boy who thinks of others more than himself. A boy who celebrates his birthday by giving gifts to others. A boy who is just the right role model for the next generation of givers.

Like a lot of youths his age, Isaac often spends his free time on his phone or playing video games. But, unlike most people his age, Isaac also is focused on volunteering as much as he can, explaining, “I just want to make others’ lives as good as they can be.”

The Regis Middle School student contributed almost triple the number of community service hours required by his school this year and received the 2013 Outstanding Youth Volunteer of the Year Award through United Way (he was nominated by one of his favorite non-profits, Young Parents Network).

Beginning at age 5, the Ipsans became very involved with YPN. Isaac has served meals, helped at their annual Christmas parties, acted as one of the emcees at Broadway Maybies (YPN’s annual fundraising talent show), and has helped with the agency’s We Care Shop (located in Mercy’s Sister Mary Lawrence Community Center). Isaac also asks his friends to donate a toy to the YPN Christmas party instead of bringing him a birthday gift (his birthday is Dec. 3).

Isaac says, “I started giving back at a young age. It just makes your heart feel really good. I don’t even remember when I first started – and I have a good memory!”

He inherited the “giving gene” from his parents, Rachel and Mark Ipsan. That inherited trait blossomed the day he was born - literally. When Rachel was pregnant with Isaac 12 years ago, she and Mark knew they wanted their baby born at Mercy Medical Center - just like they both were. So when Rachel went into labor, Mark brought her to Mercy. A speedy delivery followed, but Isaac had swallowed amniotic fluid in the womb and was not breathing. He was whisked away to Mercy’s Neonatal Intensive Care Unit and was there nearly two weeks due to low blood sugar, low body temperatures and jaundice.

The NICU physician had a hunch his symptoms were related to his thyroid and referred the Ipsans to an endocrinologist at University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics. Within two weeks of Isaac’s birth, he was diagnosed with hypopituitarism, a condition affecting his pituitary gland and thyroid. His body wasn’t receiving the signals it needed to grow. Because it was recognized so promptly, Isaac was able to receive treatments sooner than most children with the condition.

Out of gratefulness for the high-quality care Isaac received at Mercy’s NICU, Rachel and Mark started a tradition of giving back even before Isaac was aware of it. Rachel explains, “We had his first birthday party and invited both sides of the family (that’s a lot of people!). We asked them to donate money instead of giving a birthday present. We do that every year now. Then, Isaac and I visit the Angel Tree at Mercy and pick names of kids. We use the money to buy and donate toys.” The Angel Tree is an annual program supported through the Mercy Auxiliary.

“Wanting to give back started very early for me,” says Rachel. “I’m one of eight kids and my parents instilled that very important value. Because of Mercy and Isaac’s early diagnosis, we felt incredibly blessed and filled with gratitude, and wanted to figure out a way to show our appreciation.”

Mark notes that other members of their families now often do the same thing for their children’s birthdays. He says, “Our hope is that this continues through the generations. It will be great to see more and more kids pay it forward.”

Together, Mark and Rachel have raised a son who understands the joy of giving. It really is better to give than receive – just ask Isaac.

If you’d like to learn more about supporting Mercy Medical Center’s legacy to care for the sick and enhance the health of the communities we serve, please contact the Mercy Foundation at (319) 398-6206. Together, we work to ensure a future of the highest quality of care for all members—even the smallest—of our community.

“Because of Mercy and Isaac’s early diagnosis, we felt incredibly blessed and filled with gratitude, and wanted to figure out a way to show our appreciation.”
It was 1977 and the Mercy Foundation had just been incorporated. Howard and Margaret Hall and Beahl and Irene Perrine made the first contribution and, with their generous commitment, the general endowment that would support the many needs of the hospital was created. Subsequent gifts from the Perrines’ estate in the 80s generously augmented this endowment and created a second endowment to support the work of the Hall Radiation Center. History had been made! The mission of the Halls and Perrines to support and enhance the health and well-being of their community became their legacy.

Grandparents, parents and children of all ages came together on a December afternoon for a special performance of Theatre Cedar Rapids’ Miracle on 34th Street. Proceeds went to benefit Hall-Perrine Cancer Center’s Hope Fund. While cocoa, cookies and a visit from Santa Claus helped set the stage for this holiday classic, no one could prepare for the impact the day’s events would have on those battling cancer. Several families with a member in active cancer treatment attended the event, thanks to the generosity of the event sponsors. For these families, the afternoon was a fun and memorable break from what oftentimes can be a stressful, scary and uncertain time. Play attendees had the opportunity to make a holiday paper chain of hope that was later hung in the Hall-Perrine Cancer Center. Words of encouragement and support had special meaning to those whose lives have been touched by cancer.

Nearly $10,000 was raised in support of the Hope Fund, which provides assistance to cancer patients in need.

Since this beginning of the Mercy Medical Center Endowment Foundation, generations of Mercy’s friends have given from their hearts, at all levels, to support the Foundation. Each gift speaks of a personal connection with the hospital, a willingness to lend a hand to help others and make an impact on the care that is given every day at Mercy. Whether young or old, wealthy or poor, entrepreneurs, neighbors or friends, each gift builds the Foundation, allowing us to do remarkable things for our patients.

Endowments:
The heart of generations of generosity

Today, more than ever, endowments are essential – not optional – and more critical than ever to Mercy’s stability and sustainability. We continue to build for the future. Giving to Mercy’s general endowment continues to support numerous areas of greatest need in terms of patient care.

In addition, you can establish an endowed fund with a gift of $15,000, directing your gift to assist a specific department’s work, patient need programs, equipment, or educational and research opportunities for clinical staff. A fund can be named after you or honor/memorialize someone close to you. Additional gifts to build your endowment are a great way to celebrate a birthday or anniversary and a nice opportunity for family and friends to participate in recognizing someone special. Once a fund is created, you also have the option to augment the endowment by making a consideration in your estate plans. With multiple ways to grow your own endowed fund at Mercy, your generosity touches the essence of what Mercy is all about. Come dream with us! Let’s explore how your gift can be a source of healing now and for the generations yet to come.
For generations, Mercy has demonstrated its commitment to providing the highest quality care for cancer patients by acquiring the most progressive cancer-fighting tools. Today, Mercy’s Hall-Perrine Cancer Center is taking the next major step in advancing cancer care by acquiring the first TrueBeam® Radiotherapy System (TrueBeam) in Eastern Iowa. This innovative, non-invasive treatment delivers hope by precisely targeting tumors.

Join the fight against cancer by donating to the Mercy Foundation’s Make Cancer the Victim fundraising initiative. Please call (319) 398-6206 or donate online at www.mercycare.org/ways-to-give.

“TrueBeam will give the cancer patient a highly focused treatment to fight the cancer and preserve the ability to live their lives.”

- Mary Quass, Breast Cancer Survivor and Chair-Mercy Medical Center Board of Trustees

Yesterday we fought... Today we fight harder... Tomorrow we **WIN**.

Learn more about the benefits of TrueBeam at www.hallperrinecancercenter.org/truebeam.