



NEWS RELEASE

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From 45 Cents to 60 Years of Service: Celebrating Mary Hart's Legacy at Phoebe Putney Memorial Hospital

Albany, Ga, - In 1965, life in Georgia was strikingly different than it is today. Gasoline was just 31 cents a gallon, the Vietnam War was intensifying, and Lyndon B. Johnson was the President of the United States. At Phoebe Putney Memorial Hospital, 21-year-old Mary Hart began working as a secretary in the Dietary Department, now known as Food and Nutrition Services, earning 45 cents an hour with no overtime. Phoebe was a single-building hospital reliant on manual payroll processing, typewriters, and handwritten records. For Mary, this modest beginning marked the start of a remarkable 60-year journey defined by hard-work, commitment, adaptability, and service.

Originally from Virginia, Mary and her family moved to Albany in 1959 when her father, a firefighter, was transferred to the Marine Corps Logistics Base. After graduating from Lee County High School, Mary joined Phoebe on January 4, 1965. Two years later, she transitioned to the Personnel Department (now Human Resources), where she worked under Mary Baggett. It was there that Mary's career flourished. Under Baggett's mentorship, she advanced to Assistant Personnel Director and later took on the responsibility of managing employee benefits.

Mary's professional growth paralleled Phoebe's transformation. When she began, the hospital employed around 500 people. By the time Mary was working alongside Janet Wills, Human Resources Vice President, Phoebe had grown into a regional medical center serving all of southwest Georgia.

Reflecting on those early days, Mary recalls the strong sense of camaraderie among employees. "Departments worked together closely, like family. We celebrated holidays, overcame challenges, and supported one another," said Hart. She also remembers significant moments in Phoebe's history, such as the tragic 1972 payroll robbery during which a security guard lost his life.

Mary's roles evolved over the years, extending to Guest Relations and the Spiritual Care Department. She began working with Chaplaincy in October 2007, forming close relationships with employees, clergy, and hospital chaplains. Her experience coordinating with 14 volunteer chaplains and interacting with families from diverse faiths taught her how to provide compassionate support in challenging times. "It's like a full-

circle moment. I've worked with employees, patients, and clergy, and I've learned how to meet the unique needs of each group," said Hart.

Mary's dedication extended beyond her professional roles. She supported her late husband, Melvin Hart, whom she met while working in food services, and her son George's education. Melvin was by her side until his passing in 1994 after 24 years of marriage.

A resident of Lake Blackshear since 1991, Mary has always been deeply connected to her community. She played an instrumental role in fundraising for Phoebe's hospital chapel, ensuring it remains a spiritual haven for all. For two years, she volunteered to play piano during chapel services, finding joy and solace in music. She also led Golden Key Trips, creating memorable experiences for senior citizens.

Mary expressed her pride in Phoebe's growth, from a small hospital to now, a major hospital on the cusp of opening the new Trauma & Critical Care Tower and incorporating advanced innovations and technologies such as the Living and Learning Community and Simulation & Innovation Center. "I never dreamed we'd come this far. "I'm waiting to see what Phoebe will accomplish next," said Hart.

Through it all, Mary has maintained a deep appreciation for her work. "You have to love what you do," she said. "If you give 100 percent every day, you'll feel satisfied knowing you've made a difference," said Hart. She credits her mentors, like Mrs. Baggett and Phoebe Chaplain Rev. Joey Holland, for her personal and professional growth. "I've always had good bosses. They made my job easier and more fulfilling," said Hart.

Her words of wisdom to others? "Enjoy your work and make it meaningful. The joy you find in your job will reflect in your efforts," said Hart.

Mary's story is a testament to how dedication, adaptability, and a positive attitude can create a legacy. From typing newsletters on typewriters to witnessing the digital transformation of healthcare, her 60-year journey mirrors Phoebe's evolution into a modern medical hub.

Phoebe honored Mary Hart's extraordinary career with a special surprise reception on Monday to highlight her impact on the Phoebe family, and the unwavering spirit of service she exemplifies.

"Mary's dedication and compassion have made a lasting impact on so many lives during her sixty years at Phoebe. Her work in Chaplaincy reflects the true spirit of our mission serving others with care and kindness during their most vulnerable moments. We are grateful for all she has given to our Phoebe family and our community," said Joey Holland, Phoebe Chaplaincy Manager. Her legacy inspires us to move forward with the same dedication and resilience she has displayed for six decades.

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