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**MORE THAN 130 NORTHEAST GEORGIA HEALTH SYSTEM VOLUNTEERS  
HONORED AT ANNUAL LUNCHEON**

GAINESVILLE, Ga. – Patients who visit one of Northeast Georgia Medical Center’s (NGMC) campuses are likely familiar with Northeast Georgia Health System (NGHS) Auxiliary volunteers – always donning their red shirts. They can be seen at information desks, in waiting rooms, walking the halls with volunteer therapy dogs and doing crafts with pediatric patients. They provide comfort and guidance to patients and visitors every day, and for that, they were recognized this week at the 2023 Volunteer Appreciation and Auxiliary Membership Luncheon, held at the Ramsey Conference Center at Lanier Technical College.

Awards included the Marjorie Covington Smith Auxilian of the Year Award, presented to Sally Veatch. Veatch, a member of the auxiliary board and Marketplace committee, serves most often in the NGMC Gainesville Window Shops, assisting customers and making them feel welcome. She began volunteering almost 16 years ago and has contributed over 4,000 hours of service.

“The greatest attributes of our Auxilian of the Year aren’t measured in hours of service,” said Diane Stephens, past president of the NGHS Auxiliary. “They are measured by the laughter she inspires, the joy she gives through her storytelling, her willingness to help with any project and her absolute love for the health system. Sally embodies those most important traits.”

Gordon Rink was recognized with the Joan Kosmala Volunteer of the Year Award, named for a long-time volunteer who served as a member of the auxiliary board as both vice

president and president. Inspired to serve after the passing of his wife of 46 years, Rink has served with Hospice of Northeast Georgia Medical Center (NGMC) since 2016. He is known for his quiet demeanor and warm smile, as well as his willingness to fill any role.

“Gordon will say yes to any task,” said Jennifer Sorrells, supervisor of bereavement services with Hospice of NGMC. “Grief seminars, remembrance services, administrative tasks, bagging kitty litter for medicine disposal, cutting ribbons and tying hundreds of bows – these are just a few of the services he has provided throughout his time with hospice.

Diane Champa was awarded the Nell Wiegand Patient Friend Award, named for Nell Whelchel Wiegand, who was instrumental in helping bring NGMC Gainesville to the community and served in many volunteer roles including president of the NGHS Auxiliary and founding chair of the NGHS Foundation. Champa was recognized for exemplifying NGHS’ core values; respectful compassion, responsible stewardship, passion for excellence and deep interdependence. She has served as a patient friend in the emergency department at NGMC Braselton since 2016.

“It gives me such joy, visiting with patients, giving comfort to them when they are anxious or worried,” Champa said.

Champa is known for approaching each shift with joy, extending a warm and kind smile, a cheerful greeting, words of encouragement and an attitude of empathy.

NGHS volunteers serve in a number of ways at NGMC’s Gainesville, Braselton, Barrow and Lumpkin hospital campuses. In total, 131 volunteers reached service milestones during the past year, including Lee Highsmith for 40 years of service and Virginia Benefield for 35 years of service.

For more information about volunteering with NGHS, call 770-219-1830 or visit [nghs.com/volunteer](http://nghs.com/volunteer).

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### **ABOUT NORTHEAST GEORGIA HEALTH SYSTEM**

Northeast Georgia Health System (NGHS) is a non-profit on a mission of improving the health of our community in all we do. Our team cares for more than 1 million people across the region through four hospitals and a variety of outpatient locations. Northeast Georgia Medical Center (NGMC) has campuses in Gainesville, Braselton, Winder and Dahlonega – with a total of more than 750 beds and more than 1,200 medical staff members representing more than 60 specialties. Learn more at [www.nghs.com](http://www.nghs.com).