

Volunteer Services

April, 2019

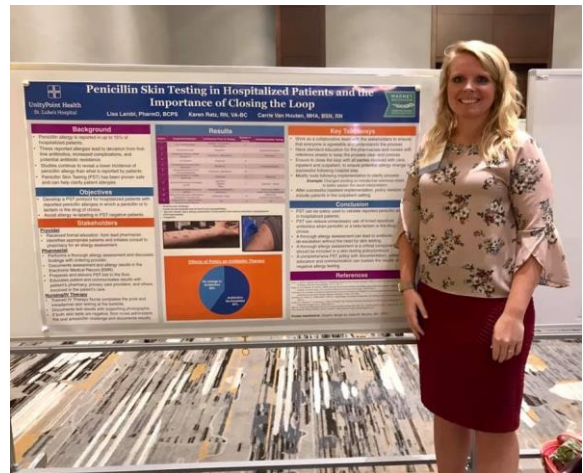
Enhancing Patient Experience through Volunteer Gifts of Time and Talent

St. Luke's Volunteers: Where Are They Now?

Meet Carrie Van Houton, a former UnityPoint Health St. Luke's volunteer and currently an Advance Practice Nurse for the Acute Adult Division, helping with education, competencies, projects and other initiatives. Carrie talked recently about her journey at St. Luke's from a High School Volunteer to an Advance Practice Nurse.

Education and Career Path

Carrie was a huge fan of science and math as a student at Prairie High School, and looked for volunteer opportunities in the area. As soon as she had her driver's license, she started volunteering at UnityPoint Health St. Luke's helping patients and families at the West Desk. Carrie had her first experience with nursing when she participated in the Health Science Academy at Kirkwood Community College as a senior. Her hands-on experience at the Academy made a huge impact on her and solidified her desire to be in the healthcare field, and the medical terminology portion was invaluable and gave her an advantage going forward. In 2008, Carrie took a break from volunteering while she pursued her nursing degree at Mount Mercy University. While at MMU, she took a job at the Hiawatha Care Center as a Certified Nurses Aid (CNA) and in 2010 was hired on at St. Luke's as a Patient Care Tech on 5C. When she graduated from MMU in 2012, she was hired immediately as a Registered Nurse on 5C.



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Desire to Have a Broad Impact

Carrie is driven to make a difference and wanted to have a broader impact on the nursing field, and she received her Master of Arts in Healthcare Administration from the Master's Program at Ashford University. When Carrie graduated from Ashford, she was hired for her current position

as Advance Practice Nurse for the Acute Adult Division. In this position she troubleshoots and improves processes to make a bigger difference for nurses on the front lines and their patients. She is especially proud of introducing non-pharmacological modalities at St. Luke's. As an advocate of the power of healing touch, Carrie felt it was important to introduce practices such as massage therapy and the relaxation channel on the St. Luke's TV system.

Impact of Volunteering at St. Luke's

While volunteering at St. Luke's from 2005 - 2009, Carrie clarified her desire to be in a hospital environment and positively impacted her decisions about college and career. To gain broader experience, Carrie held a number of different volunteer positions. She helped families and patients at the West Desk, did clerical work at Work Well, and pulled supplies and made carts in Supply Distribution. *Because of the*



kindness and support she received as a volunteer, she fell in love with St. Luke's and thought, "I hope I can work here someday." Later, she said, a staff member encouraged her to come back and work at St. Luke's. Carrie was an outstanding leader during her time as a volunteer, and she helped to train and mentor new volunteers. For her contribution to St. Luke's, she received the Excellence in Volunteering – Excellence in Mentoring Award in 2008.

Advice to Current UnityPoint St. Luke's Volunteers

Carrie's advice to other volunteers and interns: "Never take any opportunity for granted and make the best of every experience. There may be times you don't find value or joy in what you are doing, but it will become part of your personal experience. Participate in a variety of opportunities. You never know how an experience might impact you down the road." She added, "Know how much of a difference you make even if you don't hear it every day."

Let Your Volunteers Know They Matter – Make Them Part of the Team!

Do you know someone who would like to volunteer? They can fill out a volunteer application at <https://www.unitypoint.org/cedarrapids/volunteers.aspx>. Who knows what impact they could make in the future of healthcare!