

September 8, 2015

Dear Friend,

Nursing is personal.

To me at least. You see, when I was in high school, my little brother, who was only seven at the time, died of leukemia. For six months solid, for my entire family, our lives were spent at the hospital. The entire week. The entire weekend.

I remember the compassion of the nurses. They were wonderful as they took care of my brother, but with small heartfelt acts they also looked after us – my mom, my dad and me. It was right then and there that I decided ‘this is what I have to do...I have to be a nurse.’

Twenty-five years later, here I am...still in the community I grew up in and working at Rouge Valley Health System. Today, I’m the Manager of Medicine. My job is to lead the team that works with a variety of different patients. Many of our patients – a lot of whom are elderly - are here for a long time because they aren’t ready or able to be sent home.

I wanted to write to you on behalf of our whole team to say thank you for being a supporter. Every day I see our staff using state-of-the-art equipment that you helped purchase but also witness the power of small kindnesses, made possible too by community donors like you. You help our hospital look after a patient’s wellbeing as well as their physical body!

That’s why I hope you will share your generosity again today with my patients and others in our hospital in need of a little boost, or a simple item to meet a basic personal need.

One of the things I love about Rouge Valley is the ‘small town’ feel of our hospitals, no matter how big they get. This caring and compassion combined with the expert medical care and latest hospital equipment and training is what makes Rouge Valley one of the very best community hospitals not just in the Toronto area, but in the country. We are able to balance the “high-tech” with the “high touch” when we look after our patients.

This personal component is something that's so important to me. And I know it is for our patients and their families, too. After all, we regularly receive wonderful letters thanking our staff for the care they offer, beyond just medical procedures or taking care of our patients' physical needs.

Your support is what allows us to make this difference in our patients' lives. Of course donors supply vital new equipment, help staff keep up with the latest advances in medicine and sometimes even help make sure new expansions and buildings are completed.

But today I want to tell you about something close to my heart that you also make happen but you might not know about... *the Compassion Fund*.

Many patients arrive at our hospital in an emergency and have absolutely nothing with them. This is often true of the loved ones who accompany them. You might even have been in this situation yourself.

And others, like most of the patients I work with, are here for an extended period, often months, while they wait to find a long-term home. And if they don't have close family or friends, they probably don't have the comforts of home or even simple personal care items.

It's not hard to imagine how much it is appreciated when a staff member can provide a personal care kit that might contain common items like a toothbrush and toothpaste, a comb, deodorant, shampoo, razor and even denture cream.

Staff have sometimes used their own money to purchase these types of items because they know that just being able to brush your hair – for example – can make someone feel so much better and help restore some of their dignity. Now, staff can access extra funds from the Compassion Fund to help them have these items on hand.

And there are other simple ways the Fund makes a difference by helping supply:

- a phone charger for the nurses' station so that a brand new father whose phone battery has run out can call everyone with the good news!
- t-shirts and sweat pants so that a patient who came in after a traumatic car accident and had to have their clothes cut off for an emergency situation can leave the hospital in a clean outfit;
- hand-knitted blankets from community volunteers, so that patients can have a homely snuggle;
- Christmas parcels that Foundation staff and volunteers put together for senior patients whose families are far away over the holiday season.

*...continued*

You'd probably be as delighted as I am to see the difference this Fund makes for the long-term patients my team and I work with everyday.

One elderly gentleman, Harold, used to be a welder. When our staff found out, they went out – on their own free time - and gathered some posters of welding machines and stickers from familiar equipment manufacturers. When they put them up in his room, he couldn't stop smiling!

Another patient, Evelyn, has Alzheimer's disease. She is waiting to find a place in a long-term care facility. It's difficult to watch her slowly slip away and each day have just a little less meaning in her life. But when one of my nurses went out and got her a cuddly little doll to care for, she came alive and her days became filled with purpose.

It's really our Alzheimer and dementia patients that hit home for me the most.

Having a little extra budget tucked away so that our nurses and personal support workers can create a special moment like a cupcake birthday celebration means the world to these patients and to our staff. I've seen so many times how many smiles this creates and it always brings a tear to my eye.

After all, for many of our patients there is little or no family contact, so our staff are the only ones offering crucial emotional and social connections.

I bet you can see how a small gesture can make a huge difference. It's this human touch that makes our hospitals so special and makes a hospital stay, especially a long one, so much easier on patients and family members. Let me tell you, the staff are grateful to have your support, too!

It doesn't matter about the amount. **Every little bit helps.** All the small bits come together to make something meaningful.

I can't tell you enough what it means to a patient who is lonely or feels they have nothing, to then receive a small little something. It can make all the difference in their recovery and their outlook on life. Knowing that there truly are people out there who care means so much.

So, will you please take a moment right now and share a generous donation with the Rouge Valley Health System Foundation?

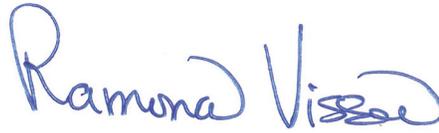
*please turn over*

A thoughtful gift today will make such a big difference. Your kind support will make sure our Rouge Valley hospital staff can rely on the Compassion Fund to take care of some of the simple personal care needs of our patients. And it will go a long way to help patients and their loved ones who find themselves in difficult and traumatic circumstances while at the hospital.

Of course, you may prefer to help with a convenient and budget-friendly monthly gift. You'll feel great knowing that your generosity is helping people like Evelyn and Harold all year long!

Thank you for making our hospital a caring and compassionate place for everyone who relies on us. I'm so grateful to have you by my side, willing to extend a helping hand in kindness to our patients, right when they need it most.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Ramona Visser". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Ramona Visser  
Manager of Medicine  
Rouge Valley Health System

P.S. Your donations do wonders to lift the spirits of our patients and help restore some of their dignity. Please share your gift today, so we can offer a small kindness to a patient, just when they need it most.

P.P.S. Please know that I changed the names of the patients I mentioned in this letter to protect their privacy and dignity.