2024 MERITER FOUNDATION IMPACT REPORT

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LOOKING BACK ON 2024 WITH GRATITUDE

Your generosity is improving the health and quality of life of people right here in our community. The achievements celebrated within this report are YOURS. The appreciation expressed each day by patients, families, community partners and our healthcare teams BELONGS TO YOU.

Thank you for being an exceptional partner in this important work.

ABOUT UNITYPOINT HEALTH – MERITER FOUNDATION

THIS WORK BEGINS WITH OUR VISION:

A healthy community for everyone.

THIS VISION FUELS OUR MISSION:

To improve the health of the people and communities we serve through inspired giving.

These values drive the Meriter Foundation team to work to address the unmet healthcare needs in our region. Collaborating with donors like you, we are dedicated to upholding excellence in quality, safety and service–ensuring that high-quality healthcare remains accessible to every patient and neighbor in need. Together, we provide care and support for patients, families, caregivers and our community.

unitypoint.org/meriterfoundation



Meriter Foundation Team Members

Rebecca Madson Foundation President

Kate Allen Rubin UnityPoint Health System: Sr. Director of Philanthropy, Outreach, and Engagement **Colleen Altenbernd** Associate Director of Philanthropy

Lindsey Giese Director of Philanthropy

Cristie Jacobs Executive Assistant **Ryanne Mobry** Operations Coordinator

Lisa Urban Director of Philanthropy -Grants and Programs

Bri Yanke Senior Director of Philanthropy

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Katie Schmitt, MD Medical Director, Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, UnityPoint Health - Meriter

John Sims Senior Vice President/Senior Private Banking Relationship Manager, U.S. Bank

Tony Sullivan (Board Vice Chair), Project Executive -Healthcare, J.H. Findorff & Son

Matt Vanderloo (Board Treasurer), CPA, CEO/Principal, SVA Certified Public Accountants

Pam Wetzel, MD Chief Medical Officer, UnityPoint Health - Meriter

Meriter Foundation's 2024 impact report is dedicated in loving memory of our dear friend and colleague, Lisa Urban, who served as Director of Philanthropy - Grants. For over twenty years, Lisa poured her heart into her work at Meriter, leaving a legacy of kindness, dedication, and unwavering compassion. She touched countless lives-patients, families, colleagues, and future caregivers-and her impact is immeasurable.

YOU MATTER A Message from Rebecca

Rebecca Madson, President, UnityPoint Health – Meriter Foundation



In 2024, something extraordinary happened-because of you.

Your generosity brought healing, comfort and hope to the most vulnerable in our community. Because of you, compassionate care reached more people in more meaningful ways than ever before through Meriter Foundation.

In the pages that follow, you'll read powerful stories of lives transformed-tiny newborns in the newborn intensive care unit being given a strong start, kids facing mental health crises beginning their journey to wellness and neighbors experiencing homelessness being connected to critical care and resources. Each story reflects your kindness and belief in a better world.

You made 2024 the most successful fundraising year in Meriter Foundation's history, not just because of the numbers but also because of the impact your gifts made. You showed what's possible when a community believes in health, healing and one another.

Thank you for being the heart of this work. Because of you, the future of healthcare is bright.

With heartfelt gratitude,

Rebecca Madson President UnityPoint Health - Meriter Foundation

"You showed what's possible when a community believes in health, healing and one another."

– Rebecca Madson, President, Meriter Foundation

2024 BY THE NUMBERS Your Generosity

RECORD BREAKING YEAR

You made 2024 the most successful fundraising year in Meriter Foundation's history.

TOTAL CONTRIBUTIONS \$3.6M TOTAL # OF DONORS

678

OF NEW DONORS **199**

TOTAL ASSETS **\$27,051,056**

YOUR IMPACT

Here's a glimpse of how your generous support through Meriter Foundation has made a meaningful impact on the lives of patients, families, caregivers and neighbors.

A LIFELINE for Patients and Neighbors

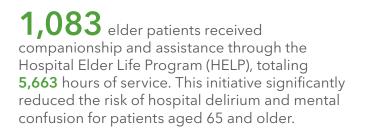
352 neighbors facing housing insecurity and homelessness were served by the Health Outreach Program. The

program's respite apartment accommodated patients for a total of **346** days, providing them with a safe, quiet and comfortable place to recover from medical procedures.

Over **636** patients entrusted Meriter's Adult Psychiatry services for comprehensive mental health care, compassionate support and transformative healing.

1,547 patients with substance dependence were cared for through **NewStart Addiction Treatment**. Of these, **148** patients enrolled in **Intensive Outpatient Services**. Additionally, **272** patients visited the **walk-in clinic** at NewStart, which welcomes all who are seeking addiction treatment.

482 survivors of sexual assault and intimate partner violence were provided with compassionate medical, mental and emotional care through the **Forensic Nurse Examiner Program**.



COMFORT AND CARE to Tiny Patients and Their Families

5,025 babies were delivered at UnityPoint Health - Meriter.



668 tiny patients (along with their loved ones) received care in the **Newborn Intensive Care Unit (NICU)**, including those born as early as 22 weeks gestation.

Over **15,000** patients received care in the **Center for Perinatal Care**, which provides ultrasounds, diagnostic testing and care for high-risk pregnancies.

1,523 nights of accommodation were provided at Ronald McDonald House for families of infants in the NICU.

530 scent hearts were sewn for the Meriter NICU by Meriter



for the Meriter NICU by Meriter Volunteers. These scent hearts allow NICU babies to smell their parents when

separated, promoting the release of happy hormones and supporting sensory development.



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275 reduced-cost infant car seats were provided for newborns and their families through the **Baby & Family Care Program**. The need for infant car seats has **DOUBLED** since 2021.

5 community partner doulas through Harambee Doula Care received Certified Lactation Consultant training. This program aims to provide culturally sensitive support for breastfeeding.

2024 BY THE NUMBERS

HOPE AND HEALING to Kids in Mental Health Crisis

773 kids and adolescents received inpatient care at Child & Adolescent Psychiatry (CAP).

Each CAP inpatient received a takehome art kit to provide opportunities for creativity and self-expression.

Each patient also received a take-home safe kit to offer comfort and reduce self-harm.

108 adolescents were enrolled in CAP's **Intensive Outpatient Services** (**IOS**) **Program**, which offers day treatment for adolescents with primary psychiatric concerns who do not require inpatient psychiatric hospitalization.

IOS utilizes a care model that enables participants and their families to improve overall wellness, increase community involvement and acquire important life skills.

2 parent support groups were offered for families with kids at CAP.

SUPPORT for the Next Generation of Healthcare Professionals

29 individuals were provided healthcare career and advancement opportunities through Meriter Pathways Programs, with 66.7% of phlebotomy students and 80% of Certified Nursing Assistants retained as Meriter team members.

450 caregivers trained at the Jeff Levy Education Center, a state-of-the-art healthcare learning center for team member education, hands-on training and collaboration opportunities.

20 local high school seniors planning a career in healthcare received college scholarships through the Healthcare Scholarship program at UnityPoint Health - Meriter.



• Meriter Volunteers studying for a career in healthcare received college scholarships.



Baby Kashmere

YOU SUPPORT Meriter's Smallest Patients and Their Loved Ones

Your support helps ease financial burdens and logistical challenges for every family in the newborn intensive care unit (NICU). No matter their unique circumstances, parents can focus on what truly matters: their precious baby–like baby lvy.

Ivy's Journey: A Tiny Fighter's Triumph

When Ivy was born 17 weeks premature, she weighed just 1 lb 2 oz–small enough to fit into the palm of your hand.

"At first, it was really scary. I didn't know if they would be able to save her," Ivy's mom, Jazmine recalled. "I didn't know if I was going to be able to take my baby home." The fear was paralyzing. In those first few hours, Jazmine and Antonio watched as the NICU team worked to stabilize their daughter. Every breath was a battle. Every moment was a question of whether their little girl would make it to the next.

But amid the fear, there was something unexpected—a sense of comfort, a feeling of being held up by the people who surrounded them.

Ivy had access to advanced, life-saving technology and to an expert NICU team ready to fight for her every breath in a comfortable, calming environment. "They made it really comfortable. They're really like a family," Jazmine said.

For more than six months, they found comfort and connection in an environment intentionally designed to ease the stress of a NICU stay. From soft lighting and warm-colored walls to the gentle hum of music, every detail helps create a calming space for healing.



Baby Ivy in the NICU

Because of you, the smallest touches make a big difference. Your generosity funds the materials volunteers use to create scent hearts, which allow parents and babies to bond through scent–even when they're apart. These tiny hearts promote happy hormones and emotional connections during long days and nights in the NICU. You also provide recordable heartbeats, giving infants the calming sound of a parent's heartbeat even when they can't be held.

You help families like lvy's and countless others care for their babies while still caring for themselves with things such as reclining chairs for late-night cuddles, quiet rooms for rest, journals to process emotions and warm meals to nourish them when they are tired.

"They have nice meals for parents and pods for privacy when you need to do work or schooling," Jazmine shared. These everyday comforts-and the meaningful moments they create-are all made possible because of you.

199 Days of Love, Strength and Tiny Victories

After 199 days in the NICU, the day lvy was discharged was a celebration—a moment filled with joy, gratitude and recognition of the deep bonds that had formed between her family and the Meriter team.

Ivy's loved ones weren't just leaving a hospital; they were saying goodbye to the people who had become an extension of their own family. They knew the housekeepers by name, the nurses who had watched over Ivy night after night and the neonatologists who had monitored every milestone. These were the people who had cheered every ounce of weight gained, every new breath Ivy took on her own, every hard-fought victory the family made together.

When the moment finally came, the hallways of the NICU filled with staff-nurses, doctors, therapists, housekeepers-all gathered to send Ivy off with the same love and care that had carried her through those first fragile days. Everyone lined up holding small bottles of bubbles, and as Ivy's family walked down the hall, laughter and cheers echoed through the unit.

Jazmine recently reunited with the NICU staff, along with several other parents, at a Friday afternoon support group where families find comfort in knowing they are not alone on this journey. Because of you, they have a place to share their fears, celebrate milestones and offer encouragement to one another.

One parent wrote to another, "Remember, you are a warrior, just like your little one. No one prepared you for the NICU. Yet, here you are, handling it as best you can!"

"They made it really comfortable. They're really like a family,"

– Jazmine, NICU parent and proud mom of Ivy

Your support makes these moments of connection possible, reminding families that they are never alone in this journey. Because of you, they have a community that walks beside them every step of the way.

BECAUSE OF YOU, Every Stitch Brings Comfort and Love

This may look like a simple crocheted octopus, but it's so much more. Used in therapy, these cuddly creations have a calming effect on premature babies, as the soft tentacles mimic the feel of an umbilical cord. They offer Meriter's tiniest patients a sense of comfort and keep little hands from tugging on monitoring cables, infusions and feeding tubes. From therapy tools and support groups to advanced equipment, you're helping to give these tiny heroes the strongest start possible.



A LEGACY OF CARING FOR KIDS: Celebrating 20 Years of Care at Child and Adolescent Psychiatry

Child & Adolescent Psychiatry (CAP) at UnityPoint Health - Meriter celebrated an extraordinary milestone: 20 years of providing compassionate care for children and adolescents at its current campus. Over the last two decades, CAP has grown from humble beginnings into a nationally recognized leader and is considered a top children's mental health program in the United States.

This transformation has been fueled by your support, enabling the care teams at CAP to deliver innovative programs and therapies to over 800 kids each year within a warm, nurturing environment. CAP's compassionate team of caregivers focus on our young patients' overall wellness, incorporating art, music, movement and nutrition to help them cope with stress and difficult emotions.

You are an integral part of our story, and together, we can continue to ensure hope and healing for kids in our community–always.

COURAGE TO DREAM

To honor this incredible milestone, our generous partner Lea Culver and her daughters made an extraordinary announcement: the creation of the Courage to Dream Endowment–a bold new fund to ensure every child can access compassionate, expert mental health care at CAP.

With a \$3 million goal and the \$1.5 million lead gift

from the Leola Culver Family Foundation, the dream is within reach. This endowment will help ensure CAP's extraordinary care remains strong for the next 20 years—and beyond.

Because every child needs the chance to heal and begin again. And every dream needs the space-and the courage-to grow.

LOOKING BACK WITH GRATITUDE



2004

The Child & Adolescent Psychiatry Hospital

opens with eight child beds and 12 teen beds, totaling 20,000 sq. ft.

The Movement-Based Therapy program is introduced.



2018

The Child & Adolescent Psychiatry Hospital expansion fundraising campaign launches, with the aim to bring a children's wing, yoga room, outdoor walking track, Mimi's Kitchen, and more.

This is made possible through more than \$3 million in donor support.





2023 Over 100 adolescents enroll in CAP's Intensive

Outpatient Services (IOS)program. The CAPable Caregiver Support Group and four-hour Intensive Outpatient Program (IOP) launch, focusing on trauma.

1988

Adolescent Psychiatry begins at Meriter.

2006

Family gifts a gazebo marking the beginning of CAP's unique approach to connecting young patients with the healing power of



nature-based interventions.

2015

The Healing Garden for young inpatients officially opens.



2019



The first "Love is Love" event is held, supporting LGBTQ+ genderaffirming patient resources and caregiver training at Meriter.

2024

Music therapy and support groups, led by behavioral health therapists specializing in LGBTQ+ affirming care, are launched.



A NEW BEGINNING A Note Of Gratitude From Dr. Katie Schmitt



Every day, I have the profound honor of caring for kids who are in mental health crisis. Over these tumultuous past few years, it has become increasingly clear that our children need our help-and hope-now more than ever.

You make this hope possible. Your generous support ensures that our care teams are there for these kids and their families when they need us the most, especially when they feel they have nowhere else to turn.

Mental health touches our lives in profound and sometimes unexpected ways. To truly understand what it means to be admitted to our Child & Adolescent Psychiatry (CAP) program, I want to share the words of a former patient who bravely wrote this note for other kids:

"I know it's scary, but trust me, you can do this. You have the most amazing team here with you. Just believe. Please know it gets better. Everyone here loves and cares for you. It will be okay. If you're seeing this, then welcome to a new beginning." - Former patient at CAP

Your loving support empowers our caregivers to show children that mental health treatment isn't something to fear. Instead, it can be a hopeful and healing journey toward wellness—and a new beginning.

At CAP, treatment goes beyond medication and psychotherapy to include experiential therapies that reinforce the importance of movement, healthy sleep habits, community building, nutrition, and family support and education.

Because of donors like you, CAP provides exceptional mental healthcare to children and their families. 'Thank you' hardly seems enough for the life-changing and lifesaving impact you have made on children and teens in our community.



Damian with his parents at the "Love is Love" event.

HEALING Through Love

At times, half of our young patients within UnityPoint Health - Meriter Child and Adolescent Psychiatry's (CAP) program identify as LGBTQ+. Every child is welcomed with open arms. They are recognized by their chosen names and pronouns. Every young person is celebrated for exactly who they are, in the moment they need it most.

Kids like Damian found more than just mental health treatment at CAP: They found hope, strength, and a path forward.

"Being afraid for your child's life is the most difficult thing I faced in my entire life. The powerlessness of a parent in that situation is horrifying. That's why I think we are so fortunate to live in a place where we can access resources to help."

"CAP was unbelievably supportive to us as parents, giving us a path when we didn't know what to do. They provided structure, guidance, and the reassurance that it's just one day at a time, to keep your mind open and loving without preconceptions."

"I am most grateful to CAP because they armed Damian with tools to manage his mental health, celebrated him as a trans kid, and put him on the path to self-acceptance. CAP gave him the structure to spring forward into his life and move forward." – Jennifer, Mother and Damian, former patient at CAP

YOUR SUPPORT Brings Life-Saving Care To Those Without Housing



Health Outreach Program: Delivering Care and Resources to Our Neighbors Without Housing

When someone is focused each day on finding food, water, warmth and safety, healthcare often becomes an impossible priority. Many in our community who are without housing lack health insurance, a regular doctor or even a way to secure medical appointments. But because of you, those barriers don't have to stand in the way of lifesaving care.

Because of your kindness, people affected by housing insecurity can access the medical care they need, when and where they need it. You make it possible for Meriter's dedicated team members in the Health Outreach Program to bring vital care directly to our most vulnerable neighbors.

Rooted in the Street Medicine model, this grassroots approach ensures that no one is left behind, meeting individuals on their own terms.

In 2024, you helped provide care and medical resources to 352 neighbors through the Health Outreach Program.

Thanks to your generosity, the program has expanded with the purchase of an outreach van, efficiently delivering essential medical supplies, survival gear and compassionate care to those who need them most.

Because of You, Michael's Life Changed Forever

The impact of your generosity can be seen in stories like Michael's:

"We met Michael on his first day at a local men's shelter, after he suffered a traumatic injury to his foot from a hit-and-run in another community. He was uninsured, and his prognosis was grim– amputation seemed inevitable. Understandably, Michael was shaken and afraid.

But because of you, we were able to connect him with a primary care provider, offer daily wound care and secure a place for him to stay during his recovery. Today, his foot is completely healed.

These stories of hope and healing are only possible because of you." – Matthew Julian, MSW, LCSW, Social Worker, Health Outreach Program.



Matt Julian showcased new van to the Meriter Foundation Board of Directors



Pathways students celebrating their graduation

THROUGH THE PATHWAYS PROGRAM, You Make Career Dreams in Healthcare a Reality

Through the Meriter Pathways program, you support career education for the next generation of healthcare workers. These training programs help fill high-demand healthcare roles while building a sustainable, diverse workforce trained to meet the growing healthcare needs of our community.

Students in Pathways gain real-world experience that complements their classroom learning. They're excited to take what they learn at school in four critical program areas–Certified Nursing Assistant, Medical Assistant, Phlebotomy and Surgical Technologist–and instantly apply their skills to support and care for patients at Meriter.

Alli's Path to Nursing Began with Your Support

When Alli Fee walks through the halls of Meriter, she isn't just a student employee; she represents the future of healthcare. Thanks to you, Alli has gained hands-on experience, tuition assistance and a network of mentors at Meriter. She is a future registered nurse because of your belief in building her career through Meriter's Pathways program.

Alli's inspiration to pursue a nursing career comes from several family members, including her mother, who has been a registered nurse for nine years, with six of them in various roles at Meriter. "I knew I wanted to work in healthcare," Alli said. "My mom has been a nurse at Meriter for a long time, and I've seen how fulfilled she feels in helping others. That has been really inspiring to me."

Alli's journey started in high school when she applied for a healthcare scholarship made possible by your generosity. This scholarship covered her Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) and Phlebotomy training at the Certified Health Education Specialist training facility–education that set the foundation for her career.

Learning Side by Side on the Front Lines

One of the most valuable aspects of the Pathways program is the opportunity for students like Alli to immediately apply learning to real-world settings. Instead of simply watching videos or listening to lectures, she learns side by side with experienced nurses and other healthcare professionals. "You go from the classroom to the hospital almost immediately, and you're right there with the nurses or CNAs, seeing exactly what they do. It makes everything click so much faster," she said.

Through her work in phlebotomy, Alli has gained exposure to nearly every department in the hospital—an experience that has shaped her career aspirations.

"I've been working in phlebotomy for almost two years now, and it's helped me figure out where I want to be. Right now, I really want to work in the ICU. The nurses there have such a tight-knit team, and I love the way they support each other." - Alli



Market President James Arnett volunteering his time to help phlebotomy students























YOU HELP CAREGIVERS Heal in Nature

Every day, Meriter team members dedicate themselves to the health and well-being of patients and our community. The work can be demanding physically, mentally and emotionally. But thanks to generous donor support, more than 500 team members received a Wisconsin State Park Pass in 2024, giving them the chance to disconnect from stress and reconnect with nature, family and themselves.

Interest in the State Park Pass program has grown significantly. Meriter team members aren't just stepping away for fresh airthey're creating moments of joy, lifelong memories and family firsts.

From hiking wooded trails to kayaking on peaceful waters, camping under the stars and taking long walks with a beloved dog, Meriter team members find meaningful ways to decompress, connect and renew their energy–all because of generous donor support.

This gift helps Meriter team members restore their energy, prioritize their own well-being, and return to patients feeling refreshed and renewed. You give them more than just a pass to the outdoors—it's a gift of healing, connection and joy.

The top three Wisconsin State Parks chosen by Meriter team members:

Devil's Lake
Governor Dodge
Lake Kegonsa

Your support means the world to our team and helps them reset, and restore, while exploring Wisconsin's beautiful parks!

WORDS OF GRATITUDE

"I try to make it to a state park on the weekends, and when I can't, I take long walks on Ice Age Trail segments or around my neighborhood. Nature brings out the best in me." – Meriter R.N. "I take my dog for long walks every day, and I even got a book about exploring Wisconsin's state parks with your dog!"

Occupational Therapist

"Spending time outdoors has always been what fills my cup, and I'm fortunate to share this passion with my family. We regularly enjoy activities like horseback riding, boating, swimming, hiking, kayaking, golfing and fishing. The list is endless." – Michael, Human Resources

YOU SHARED YOUR TIME & TALENT

Volunteer Services at UnityPoint Health - Meriter

From offering kind words to lending a helping hand, Meriter Volunteers play a vital role in creating a welcoming and supportive environment for patients and families. Working alongside our healthcare teams, they bring comfort, compassion, and connection to every corner of the hospital. Their dedication strengthens the care we provide–ensuring every patient feels seen, supported, and valued.

2024 HIGHLIGHTS

505 volunteers supported **over 45** different areas in our hospitals and clinics.

55,087 hours were recorded by volunteers in 2024–the equivalent of **23** full-time employees!

5,991 hours spent in the NICU holding babies, hand hugging, pacifying and doing laundry.

5,333 hours spent visiting hospital patients over age 65 through HELP (Hospital Elder Life Program), providing companionship, meal assistance, light activity and mobility support, thus reducing the risk of hospital delirium and mental confusion. **671** hours spent visiting patients under age 65 through the Team UP (Unit Partner) program, closely mirroring the successful HELP model to improve inpatient physical and mental wellness.

331 hours spent sharing music, conversation and connection through the inpatient music therapy program, Healing Beats.

6 Blood Drives hosted, collecting **296** units.

20 scholarships at \$1,000 were provided to high school students interested in healthcare careers.

Volunteer Crafters Made and Delivered:

- ▶ 34 Baby Blankets crafted for NICU families.
- ▶ 7,167 Baby Hats given to babies born at Meriter.
- 66 Bereavement Gowns lovingly created for families of pre-term babies.
- ▶ 102 Comfort Blankets designed for longer-term patients or those going home on chilly days.
- 4,000 Fall-Prevention Kits prepared to help ensure the safety of all patients who present a fall risk. Kits include nonslip socks, a gait belt, a wristband and signage.
- ▶ 1,624 Eyeglass Holders developed for patients to keep their glasses safe during surgical procedures.
- 100 Heart Pillows designed for cardiac patients to help reduce pain.
- ▶ 460 NICU Crib Sheets created to add comfort to the NICU cribs.
- 530 NICU Scent Hearts sewn, allowing NICU babies to smell their parents when separated, promoting happy hormones and sensory development.
- ► 523 Patient Cards designed with heartfelt messages, cheerful drawings, and photos to lift spirits and brighten days.
- 495 Recycled Tote Bags, made from unused surgical drape and filled with a blanket, word puzzles, pens, and kind notes, were delivered to patients to help make their stay more comfortable.
- ▶ 84 Tie Blankets created for children as a comfort when they have surgery.

HELPING HANDS, BRIGHTER FUTURES: A Volunteer's Journey

Kendra brought smiles and comfort while volunteering at the Meriter DeForest Pediatric Clinic

When Kendra first stepped into Meriter's DeForest Pediatric Clinic as a volunteer, she knew she was stepping into a place that would shape her future. A university student on the path to becoming a physical therapist, Kendra's motivation to volunteer came from a deeply personal place: Her younger sister, Karina, suffered a stroke at the age of two.

"Growing up with all those therapists in my sister's life-that's my inspiration to become a physical therapist," Kendra said. "It was incredible to watch how their support and guidance helped my sister regain mobility and confidence. That's what inspired me to pursue physical therapy myself." -Kendra

Volunteer Services at Meriter opens doors to more than 500 volunteers each year. Volunteers like Kendra gain critical hands-on experience while making a difference in the lives of patients and their families. Meriter's volunteer program offers opportunities for compassionate individuals like Kendra to give back to our community, working alongside the dedicated healthcare team to enhance the care delivered to patients. Their selfless contributions and unwavering dedication amplify the impact of our healthcare services, ensuring that each patient receives the comprehensive support they need.

Kendra started volunteering at Meriter in May 2024, gaining valuable insight into pediatric physical therapy. "I learned how crucial a supportive environment is in therapy," she reflected.

Kendra was inspired by the great communication among the Meriter team. "Patients respond so much better when they feel encouraged and understood."

Wanting to make her own meaningful impact, Kendra helped create a "graduation tree" at the pediatric clinic. When a young patient completed their therapy, they added their name to the tree, marking a significant milestone in their recovery. "When kids were discharged, they got to put their name on the tree. It reminded me of how important it is to celebrate every achievement," Kendra said.

Kendra's journey serves as a powerful reminder that every act of kindness–whether from a therapist, a volunteer or a donor–creates ripples of compassion, shaping lives in ways that extend



far beyond the walls of the clinic.

Kendra is prepared to continue her studies at the University of Indianapolis in the fall of 2025. The impact of health care on her own family continues-her sister Karina, now 16, has been inspired to pursue a career in occupational therapy. "Maybe one day, we'll even work together," Kendra says with a smile. "It would be incredible to help people as a team, just like the therapists who helped Karina when she was younger."

"Patients respond so much better when they feel encouraged and understood." - Kendra

CLARE'S COMPASSION LIVES ON: Clothing Patients in Comfort and Dignity



For 26 years, (Mary) Clare Skelton cared for patients at Meriter with deep compassion. As a nurse, she saw the quiet, often overlooked moments–like when a patient was ready to go home but lacked a warm coat, clean clothes, or the medical equipment they needed for recovery. Some had no jacket or gloves to face the

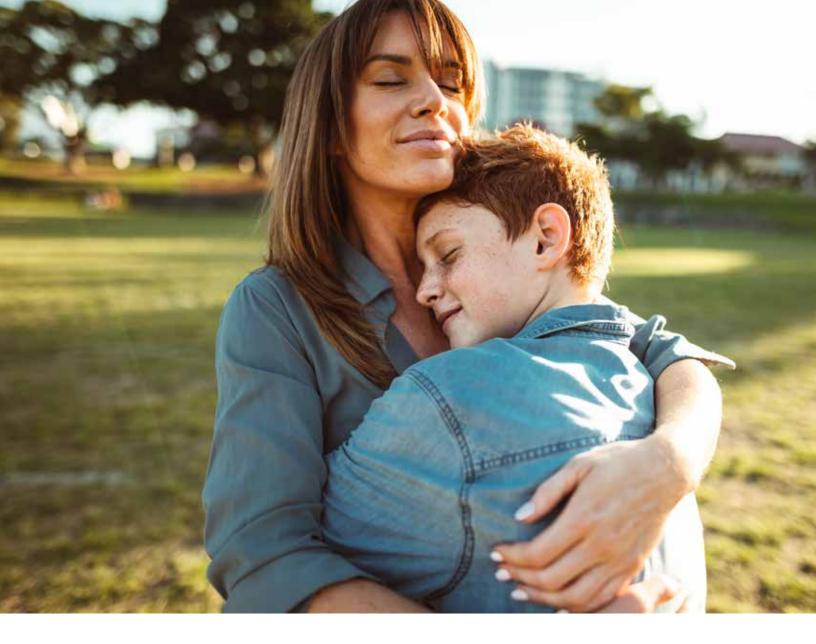


Wisconsin cold. Others left in clothing that was cut away in an emergency, or in garments that were worn or soiled. At times, patients were discharged needing walkers or compression stockings they couldn't afford.

Clare carried those moments with her.

Through a heartfelt bequest, she created a lasting legacy that brings comfort and dignity to patients in their most vulnerable moments. Her gift now helps provide clean clothing, warm outerwear, and essential items so no one has to leave the hospital feeling unprepared or unseen.

Because of Clare, every step toward healing is wrapped in kindness.





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