Volunteers celebrate incredible 40 years of service at Queen's Hospital Burton

By
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A unique couple have marked their commitment to volunteering at Queen's Hospital Burton by donating a special circular bench to be placed in the new Halo Garden built at the back of the hospital. The garden provides a quiet space for staff and visitors to rest, reflect and get a breath of fresh air.

Pauline and Bill Spratt have been volunteering at Queen's Hospital Burton for 40 years and to remember Bill, after he recently passed away at 79, Pauline wanted to mark their achievement and commitment to volunteering.



Bill, who fellow volunteers described as a kind and protective father figure, left a huge legacy at the hospital.

Reverend Alison Thorp, former Chaplaincy Manager at the hospital said, "Bill and Pauline Spratt were the face of Burton Hospitals League of Friends for over 40 years and were, in every

sense of the word, true friends to the Hospital and countless numbers of patients benefited from enhancements made possible by their incredible fundraising efforts. A chat with Bill always brightened my day, with his Geordie humour dispensed with a twinkle in his eye."

Reverend Alison was privileged to lead Bill's funeral service after he passed away at Queen's Hospital Burton in 2021. Reverend Thorp said, "The tributes made there highlighted that the greatest legacy- Bill had an enduring sense of warmth, friendship and a constant desire to make the lives of others better. I was delighted that his final gift to the hospital was used in the Halo Garden project, as it exemplified his social and caring character so well."

The couple, who started volunteering at the hospital in 1981, saw many changes over the years, with Pauline and Bill being some of the very first members of the Burton Hospital League of Friends in 1980" Speaking about Pauline and Bill's commitment, Pauline said, "The league was founded with the aim of fundraising for the benefit of the patients and staff at Queen's Hospital and Barton Cottage Hospital. We became members in 1981 and 3 years later I was elected as Volunteer Chairman. This was a role I held for the 40 years and I regularly saw Bill volunteering in the evenings, fitting it in with his day-job."

After being elected Chairman, the couple went on to establish Phoenix Hospital Radio and later obtained the space to have their own shop at Queen's Hospital Burton, which remains open to this day.

"In around 2018, the previous League of Friends Treasurer, Mr Ces Dawson, estimated that we had raised in excess of £1 million pounds, a staggering amount, that we were all very proud of", added Pauline.

"Being volunteers at the Trust has led to meeting lots of amazing people, staff and patients, alongside VIPS. I was fortunate to speak to the late Queen when she opened the new hospital, an honour I will never forget. Throughout this time, Bill was always behind me supporting and encouraging. We never expected that we would remain volunteers for over 40 years. The time went so quickly with the support of the League Volunteers. We enjoyed knowing we were helping to make life in hospital a little better for the patients and staff, 40 years went so quickly."

Ben Robinson – Burton Albion Football Club Chairman, has seen the impact the couple have had on the community. Ben said, "I have seen first-hand the hard work, dedication and determination of Pauline and Bill and to continue that over such a long period deserves the gratitude and admiration of the many people in Burton who have benefited as a result of their efforts."

The new Halo garden project at the hospital marks the Covid pandemic, with the circles reflecting the 2 metre social distancing guidelines.

Laura Waters, Air Arts Coordinator with Derby and Burton Hospitals Charity said, "We are delighted to have been able to install a Halo garden at Queen's Hospital Burton and we are the first hospital in England to do so. The gardens were developed by a Glasgow-based team of landscape architects who wanted to provide landscaping specifically designed to encourage distanced socialising during the pandemic. The circular designs and planting are really beautiful and has been placed in a previously blank patch of grass at the hospital. It has truly transformed the space into a peaceful and welcoming space for staff and patients".