Longtime Mercy volunteer concludes more than five decades of service

By Elizabeth Lowe
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TIMONIUM –Anna Hergenroeder stopped working as a nurse at Mercy Medical Center in 1962 but her affection for the Baltimore hospital made her stick around.

"I just love the hospital," the 94-year-old said. "I love being around people who need help."

Hergenroeder ended a 52-year run as a volunteer at Mercy in June.

"I wanted to stop before someone told me to," she said.

Her volunteer duties varied and included the gift shop, information desk and post-anesthesia care unit (PACU). She was also involved with the women's auxiliary and bazaar.

Hergenroeder graduated from the Institute of Notre Dame in Baltimore in 1937 and Mercy's nursing school in 1942. She worked as a nurse at Mercy for nine months, then left the industry for two decades to raise a substantial family.

She and her late husband, Henry R. Hergenroeder Sr. (from the family that owns Woodlea Bakery in Baltimore and Bel Air), had nine children, including a set of twins, all of whom were born at Mercy. She has 16 grandchildren and 11 great-grandchildren.

In her 40s, Hergenroeder said she grew tired of mother's clubs and returned to Mercy. She worked as a part-time night and evening supervisor and then as assistant director for the department of nursing.

"I loved the operating room and I loved the emergency room," she said.

While she no longer volunteers at the hospital, she makes an effort to leave her Mays Chapel home daily.

"I stay active," said Hergenroeder, a parishioner of St. Joseph in Cockeysville whose family worshiped for 50 years at the Cathedral of Mary Our Queen in Homeland.

Phyllis Whelan, her sister, is not surprised by Hergenroeder's devotion as a volunteer.

"She just loved Mercy – period," said Whelan, 79, also a parishioner of St. Joseph in Cockeysville. "She gave it her all. She's just such a giving person. She would do anything for anybody."

Religious Sister of Mercy Elizabeth Anne Corcoran, assistant to the president for hospitality at Mercy, has known Hergenroeder for 70 years and is impressed by her dedication as a volunteer.

“She worked in the gift shop and did a beautiful job,” Sister Elizabeth Anne said. “She was unbelievable, and the time she would put in here. She’s been a great gift to Mercy.”

HERGENROEDER’S FOUR PIECES OF LIFE ADVICE:

1. Be kind
2. Help others
3. Live within your budget
4. Don’t give up

Volunteers play an important role in hospital life. Here’s a look at the number of volunteers serving area hospitals.

University of Maryland St. Joseph Medical Center, Towson: 310

Mercy Medical Center, Baltimore: 190

St. Agnes Hospital, Baltimore: 180

MedStar Good Samaritan Hospital, Baltimore: 140

Bon Secours Hospital, Baltimore: 24

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