



Finding Joy Through Volunteering

Klein helps patients have the best hospital experience possible by being a patient liaison volunteer.

As a Holocaust survivor, Marianne is no stranger to heartache and loss. She was orphaned at age 12 in Budapest, Hungary, during the Nazi invasion. Eventually, she found her way to Canada where her husband took off with their two children. Seven years passed before Marianne would see her kids again. Marianne did eventually meet the love of her life, Leonard, in America. They were married for 33 years. But it was his death five years ago that led her to want to help others by volunteering at UCLA.

What is the role of a patient liaison?

I visit the patients to find out about their overall hospital experience. I want to know: Is their bed comfortable? Are the nurses kind and caring? Do the doctors meet their expectations? Do they like the food? Do they have any suggestions that would improve their hospital stay at UCLA?

If a patient is unhappy about something or has a concern, I work with the nurses or a volunteer coordinator to resolve their issue. This might be something like ordering special meals, providing reading materials, getting a religious consultant or a social worker, ordering an animal therapy visit or moving items in the room so the patient can more easily reach them. I'd say 95 percent of the time, I hear nothing but great things about the hospital and staff. Patients tell me they feel like they're staying at a five-star hotel!

What is your typical day like as a volunteer?

Every Thursday morning, I check in with the volunteer coordinator who gives me a list of patients to visit. Then, I talk to the head nurse on each floor to make sure the patients on the list are up to talking with me. If a patient has had a rough night or isn't doing well, I'll skip their

room. Each visit takes anywhere from five to 20 minutes, depending on how chatty a patient is and their concerns. If a patient seems lonely or sad, I might spend a little more time in the room sharing stories, telling jokes and even singing! Depending on the day, I usually can visit with 10 to 20 patients during my 4-hour volunteer shift.

Why did you decide to become a volunteer?

I worked in a hospital in Montreal for seven years and always enjoyed being around the patients, doctors, nurses and staff. When my husband died, I felt a terrible void. I needed something to fill up my days and give my life some purpose. When I thought back to past jobs that really made me happy, I kept coming back to the time I worked at the hospital. So I went to UCLA Medical Center to see what volunteer opportunities were available. The patient liaison role is perfect for me because I get to interact one-on-one with patients and with the staff.

What do you love most about volunteering?

It's a blessing to be able to help out others during their time of need. It feels good to be able to make a patient or their family more comfortable, even if it's something as simple as getting their bedding changed. I also love working with the volunteer coordinators at the hospital. Eduardo Arambula and Anne Parker are both exceptional people. They make volunteers feel special and really value you as part of the UCLA team.

Do you have a favorite volunteer story?

Truly, everyone is usually so appreciative and thankful for the care they're receiving. One man whom I visited was in a lot of pain. There wasn't anything I could do about that, but I spent some

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time listening to his stories about his earlier trips around the world. As I was leaving, he told me I was his angel because I'd helped him forget about his pain for a while. It makes me feel really good whenever I can help someone like that, whether it's a patient or a patient's family member.

What are some of your interests and hobbies?

My husband always wanted me to write a book about my life story. When he died, I felt it was the one last thing that I could do to honor his memory. In my memoir, *All the Pretty Shoes*, I recount what it was like when the Nazis invaded my hometown of Budapest in 1945.

In addition to the book, I've written a couple of screenplays. I also studied at the School of Fine Arts in Montreal. I create mostly impressionistic paintings using various mediums, including acrylics. My work has been featured in shows both in Canada and Los Angeles. I am also a board member and a volunteer with the Lorraine Jackson Foundation, which provides college scholarships to children who have lost a parent to breast cancer.