

# A career of caring

A conversation about your impact on nursing with retiring Chief Nursing Officer Margo Bykonen.



Margo Bykonen, RN, and volunteer caregivers are vaccinating our community thanks to you.





You made it possible for Margo and her colleagues to react quickly to the challenges of COVID-19.

In 1980, Margo Bykonen, RN, worked her first shift at Swedish as a junior student employee while finishing up her nursing degree. She never left, and over the past 41 years she's been there for countless patients, both at the bedside and as our Chief Nursing Officer. At the end of June, she'll embark on a well-earned retirement. In between vaccine clinic shifts, we caught up with her to ask how she prepared our nurses to respond to the difficulties of the last year, as well as her thoughts on the future of nursing.

**2020 was a challenging year, especially for our nurses. Looking back, what are you most proud of?**

I'm so proud of how all our nurses and all our teams worked together to face a pandemic like we have never experienced before to take care of our community. And we still have patients

with COVID-19 in the hospital.

Our nurses have hung in there. Despite their fears and their concerns for their own personal health, we worked together to minimize risks as much as possible and take care of the people who were very sick—including those who recovered and those who didn't—and continued to show up to do that work.

We also leaned into things that were not as familiar to us, like community vaccination clinics, and figured out a way to use our knowledge of nursing, medicine and systems to actually create something that has become a model for other organizations.

**How did philanthropy-supported programs help during this time?**

As things were rapidly changing, our RN Unit Education Champions—experienced nurses who provide hands-on training and





## RN UNIT CHAMPIONS ACROSS SWEDISH IN 2020

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You're giving our nurses the opportunity to learn new skills and benefit from their colleagues' experience.

**3,362** learning experiences with **71** nursing units across **5** campuses

### Our nurses' most requested topics from their RN Unit Champions

- Heparin management
- Patient-controlled epidural opioids
- Tracheotomy care
- IV techniques

mentorship—helped frontline nurses stay up to date on changing policies and procedures around COVID-19. It's an essential role during normal times, but especially during a pandemic when things are changing rapidly. So many nurses learn best with hands-on training, where they can work through new skills with someone right there to answer questions.

And it's also a great professional development role for staff nurses who want to have variety in their work and share the experience and skills they've developed. It's been a great use of resources, and we hope to grow the program because it is invaluable to our frontline staff.

We also received a huge outpouring of support and donations of food, protective equipment and tablets to help patients stay connected with their family. When patients were facing the end of their life with no visitors,

having technology made that experience a little bit better for everyone involved, from the families who couldn't visit to the nurses at the patients' bedside.

### Why did you want to become a nurse?

I was in and out of hospitals quite a bit as a child for a respiratory disease. I've experienced healthcare from the other side, and I always wanted to do something to make a difference for people who are ill.

I love nursing. I love taking care of people; one of the hardest parts about going into administration and leadership was being removed from the bedside. But I've done things to continue that connection, like be a volunteer cuddler for babies in the NICU. After I retire, I plan on doing more volunteer work directly with patients.

**How have things changed over your 41-year career at Swedish?**

There was much more of a hierarchy when I started. It was unusual for a nurse to ask a clarifying question about orders that were written, for example, because the doctor was right. I think we've realized over the years that having a team approach and cross-checking each other and being able to respectfully ask questions is beneficial. It really makes it safer for our patients if we're all looking out for each other in that way.

**How does the future look for nursing at Swedish with Kristy Carrington, RN, taking the reins as CNO?**

I have a lot of hope for nursing at Swedish. I know we have administrative teams that appreciate nursing, that acknowledge the role that nursing plays in the outcomes of our patients and the importance of nursing in our organization. I've worked with Kristy since she was hired at Swedish—I actually hired her! I know her heart, and I know she'll do a great job.

When I started as a nurse, it was all about inpatient care. But that's changing. Health for Good isn't just about health for good in the hospital. That's a component, but there's so much more we can do. I think our mobile vaccine clinics are a great example of that. We're working with community partners to bring the COVID-19 vaccine directly to vulnerable communities. We're also working with Plymouth Housing to support what's foundational for patients experiencing homelessness: food, shelter and caregivers that are able to meet them where they're at.

And when everything changed last spring we were able to deliver care to patients where they were most comfortable, through virtual visits. Swedish is always looking at ways to help us think differently about health and healthcare and the technology that can push things forward. There will always be challenges, but if we focus on our mission, I think we will continue to be in a place to make a difference in our community.

## Protecting the public

Within 10 days of Gov. Jay Inslee's New Year's Day request that every hospital in Washington state begin vaccinating 500 people against SARS-CoV-2 per day, we launched a vaccination clinic at Seattle University capable of administering five times that many doses.

And we couldn't have done it without support from donors like you.

Leading the effort was **Renee Rassilyer-Bomers, DNP, CMSRN, RN-BC**, who at the time was our regional director of nurse education and clinical practice. "It was a massive project, but it was also very successful," says Renee, who has since become our Chief Quality Officer. "In fact, folks from other organizations toured it and began replicating the design."

That's right. Philanthropic support popped up a vaccine clinic almost overnight, leading the way in protecting our community against COVID-19 and becoming the model for other clinics around the city and state. Thank you for being there for our caregivers so they could be there for the public.



# Taking care of caregivers

**During this unprecedented time, you've made it possible** for nurses to step away from the everyday busyness of their roles and process their experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic. "Harmony Hill retreats give nurses the tools to re-engage and be compassionate day after day," says Margo Bykonen, RN. "I've had nurses email me after attending to say that they were ready to leave the field, but they stayed because of this retreat."

Our nurses need this resource now more than ever. Thanks to you, they can attend a retreat right here at Swedish Cherry Hill. Designed specifically to address the emotional trauma that so many caregivers are now experiencing, this one-day workshop will give our nurses a space to share their stories, connect with one another and build skills for maintaining well-being.



## SWEDISH NURSES ATTENDING HARMONY HILL RETREATS

2019	47
2020	30
2021	150 (Projected)

### FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

## Continue your support for nurses at Swedish

Nurses have been the glue that holds our hospitals and clinics together during the COVID-19 pandemic. Here are a few ways you can continue to support their vital work and well-being.



### Harmony Hill retreats

Renewal retreats have helped many of our nurses reconnect with their passion for nursing while giving them the tools to continue providing compassionate care and avoid burn-out. But thousands of nurses have not yet had this opportunity.

You can make renewal retreats at Harmony Hill possible for more nurses.



### Innovative education

Our nurses are always looking for opportunities to improve patient care. You can give them the tools by supporting educational opportunities like the simulation center, where nurses can practice placing IVs or managing complications in a realistic environment, among other vital skills.





## Thank you for investing in the health and well-being of our community.

To learn more about how you're providing patients compassionate, knowledgeable bedside care by supporting nursing at Swedish, please contact:

### **Swedish Medical Center Foundation**

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Almost 200,000 people have been vaccinated at Lumen Field and other Swedish vaccine clinics.

