

July 2017

Dear Friends,

Paula Nedela was a Nurse at St. Joe's for over 30 years. Her career started with an RN Associates Degree. She then worked through her BSN at Eastern Michigan, and MSN at U of M. Throughout that time she remained full-time at St. Joe's, and worked her way up the ladder on her unit. She became Educational Coordinator, Clinical Nurse Specialist, and then Nurse Manager for the Ortho/Neuro Unit. When the unit split into two separate, she managed BOTH of them for nearly 2 years.

Paula's career as a caring nurse and super co-worker became well known. She helped with a Brain-Tumor Support Group for patients and families. As she continued her matriculation in education and career posts, she always encouraged others to pursue their education. I have been told by countless people, "Paula pushed me" and "If wasn't for Paula, I wouldn't have done this – thank you Paula". She has worked with staff to attend workshops and go for degrees. Even PA and MD degrees. She was ALWAYS there for them to lend an ear and give encouragement. She still is.

A few years back, St Joes celebrated their 100th year in a wonderful ceremony and Paula was invited to attend. The Director of Nursing's speech centered on the importance of Nursing to any hospital and the extreme reverence St. Joe's has for the Nursing Staff. Many people have told me that the care at St. Joe's is (as the ad says) "Remarkable" because of the Nurses. That was Paula's motto from the day she started in 1977. The director went on to clarify what a great Nurse does for people. Then, she identified Paula as a Nurse who stood for all the attributes and a Nurse who could stand as an example for all the Nurses at St. Joe's for 100 years. Quite an honor, I'm sure you would agree.

Paula attended the ceremony in her wheelchair accompanied by her caregiver. Paula was in a motor vehicle accident in 2009 and resultant injuries led to a massive stroke, ending her career. She was hospitalized for 15 months. During the first two months, while in ICU at UM Hospital, Paula's co-workers set up 4-hour shifts to sit with her. Visitors from St. Joe's poured in to give her their support. Many times UM staff recognized her during their work or, they heard she was a patient and came by to see her. They always mentioned what a joy she was to work with. A few of the MD's visited her. One surgeon from St. Joe's winked and said "she's my boss."

The first Mass at St. Joe's new Chapel was dedicated to Paula. Paula's picture is still on the board of her unit – after 8 years, testament to her importance to her co-workers. When a director of Nursing left St. Joe's shortly after Paula's stroke, she said "Paula is a great Manager and the BEST Nurse I've known."

Today, nearly 8 years after the stroke, Paula continues to share her knowledge of Nursing with her caregivers. She still has her "push" to encourage self-improvement in their careers. A few have become Nurses and they look back to Paula's encouragement as instrumental. One of them called Paula to let her know she was admitted to Nursing School – before she called her own mom!

Because of Paula's incredible service to the field, her display of the Spirit of Nursing, her belief in pursuing educational goals, and her encouraging words to others, I'd like to pursue an ongoing educational grant for Nursing in her name. My thoughts are to donate some of the money and also go out into the community for donations. I'm sure we could raise a substantial sum when I get to the people she has influenced and those who love her.

A pleasure to bring this to you,

Bill Nedela