

Opinion: Barton Auxiliary deserves recognition

By John Williams

In recognition of National Volunteer Month in April, Barton Health would like to take a moment to honor some frequently unsung heroes in the South Lake Tahoe community: The dedicated volunteers who make up the Barton Memorial Hospital Auxiliary.

Auxiliary members offer many essential benefits to the hospital and its patients in various capacities. They staff the hospital's front desk; provide assistance in the emergency department; assist in the skilled nursing facility; operate the gift shop in the hospital lobby; and sell thousands of "previously enjoyed" items in the Attic Thrift Store – the largest contributor to the Auxiliary's funds. Auxiliary members are an active, enthusiastic bunch. They host book fairs in the hospital, offer the festive Holiday Faire each November and don't forget those tasty famous Cheese Balls they create and sell each holiday season, along with the Barton Foundation's annual Festival of Trees and Lights.



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Barton's Auxiliary began before the hospital was built. The year was 1960 and the vision was that of a community hospital for our mountain township, by 24 Charter Members of the Barton Memorial Hospital Auxiliary. Three years later, after endless work and fundraising, Barton Memorial Hospital became a

reality.

In 2010, the auxiliary celebrated 50 years of giving and of these members, 89 dedicated 29,393 hours to the hospital—saving Barton more than \$600,000. Today there are more than 135 members who volunteer their time and talents each year to the Auxiliary's many endeavors. Barton Memorial's Auxiliary has given approximately \$800,000 in the last three-years to the renovation and expansion of the Barton Community Clinic – expected to break ground on June 4. Since that first year – and to date – the Auxiliary has donated approximately \$6 million to Barton Memorial Hospital.

The Auxiliary has been helping to save lives with Sacramento's BloodSource since 1966, by sponsoring and hosting six Community Blood Drives each year. The blood drives take place at Embassy Suites, between noon and 6pm, the first Monday of every other month. The next blood drive is slated for June 11. In addition, members also assist with year-round with flu and immunization clinics and Barton community health and wellness outreach efforts to help ensure the health status of the South Lake Tahoe community and beyond.

The Junior Volunteer Program has been an excellent opportunity for Auxiliary members to teach the younger generation in our community the value of giving of their time and exposing them to the healthcare environment— where they may find a future career path. Barton Memorial Hospital Auxiliary gave \$6,000 in scholarships, in June 2011, to students pursuing healthcare careers at a four-year-university. The awards were based on academic achievement, leadership qualities, participation in school and community activities.

A lot has changed since 1960 but not the dedication of Barton's Auxiliary members.

May their successes multiply and their spirits unify to celebrate teamwork and volunteerism.

John Williams is president and CEO of Barton Health.