

Age 90 and Going Strong

Kokomo Woman Enjoys Full-time Hospital Work

By Tom Schuman

Lois Wilson's former employer had gone out of business. She was a few months shy of her 56th birthday when, as Lois recalls, her niece asked her, "Why don't you come to the hospital?" Lois responded, "Maybe for a little bit." That was in August 1976. The 90-year-old Wilson remains a valued full-time member of the St. Joseph Hospital team to this day. So valued that when her supervisor was interviewed in May, he explained that Lois was in line for some additional duties.

"We're in the process of giving her some more responsibilities up on the floors so she can have some time directly with the patients," explains Chaoch Seidensticker, director of Food and Nutritional Services at St. Joseph. "Patient ambassador, we're going to call it. After being down on the service line for breakfast, she'll go up on the floors, have a list of all the new admits for the past 24 hours. "She'll let them know more about what we have to offer in terms of the patient service menu, how to order, anything special we want them to know about. Everyone loves to see Lois on the floor – both associates here in the hospital as well as the patients."

Lois works on the tray line, something she did 35 years ago when she started. She has had other roles during her time at the hospital. While she shares that she may have to caution her co-workers at times to "quit talking and get back to work," she enjoys being on the job and her interactions with the patients.

"Listen to what they want to say," she describes as the key. "Doing that, I think I can help and really see what they need. A lot of them don't have any people come and visit."

Seidensticker says Lois not only listens but takes matters into her own hands to help care for patients.

"Not too long ago she was talking to a patient and the patient was saying how much she would like watermelon," the supervisor reveals. "That's something we don't have on the menu. Lois went out of her way to go to the store, picked up some watermelon, brought it back to the hospital, cut it up and took it to the patient because she knew that would make that patient's day."

Lois was the youngest of five girls (with younger twin brothers) growing up in rural Miami County. "I was raised in the country, and we always had to get up early. That's the reason I don't sleep in."

She was employed at several grocery stores and worked in manufacturing at both Delco and Chrysler during World War II. Lois, who lives near the hospital and usually drives herself to work, takes trips to Michigan to visit her nieces and nephews, and sheepishly admits enjoying visits to some of Indiana's casinos.

As for any advice for others, Lois believes people are "better off working" than being at home where they might not get the needed exercise. Personally, she adds, "I feel like I'm helping people. I've worked all my life. I have no immediate family. I might as well work instead of sitting at home and looking at the four walls."



Lois Wilson has no plans to slow down from her food service role. She admits enjoying her 90th birthday party, which included more than 1,000 guests, at the hospital in October 2010.