



Atrium
Medical Center

FOUNDATION

LEGENDS

FROM THE HILL TO THE ATRIUM

*A Tribute to the Men and Women
Who Made It Happen*

ISSUE 6

Atrium Auxiliary Middletown

The year 2014 marks Atrium Auxiliary Middletown's centennial anniversary. Over the past 100 years, the Auxiliary has given the hospital countless hours of service; raised more than \$1 million to help purchase major medical equipment, furniture, landscaping and other necessities; and awarded more than \$670,000 in scholarships to Atrium employees, medical staff, volunteers and their families.

Close your eyes and imagine that it's 1914. Babe Ruth makes his baseball debut, and President Wilson establishes Mother's Day. The first transcontinental phone link is made between New York City and San Francisco. WWI begins in Europe.

On a November evening in Middletown, Ohio, where plans for the community's first hospital are underway, Sara Geneva Verity, 20, sits with her parents at the dining table in the Verity home. As founder and president of ARMCO (American Rolling Mill Company), Sara's father, George, is an esteemed businessman and a prime mover behind the new hospital; her mother, Jean, is prominent among the city's cadre of leading women.

This evening, Sara is presenting her idea for a new project to her parents: She wants to organize a group of girlfriends to raise funds to assist others who are less fortunate. Happy to support Middletonians, George and Jean approve of Sara's plan, and the Girls Welfare Association – also known as “Daddy Verity's Girls” – is born.

The association's mission is simple: “to create funds and dispense them for the benefit of needy individuals, as well as to give personal hours of service wherever needed.” In the early years, membership is limited and by invitation only. Regular members pay a fee and are expected to attend meetings and do their fair share. Patroness members pay a larger fee and are not obliged to work.

Early Work

In the group's early days, the girls drove home-service nurses to their appointments and assisted them with patients. They sewed for the Social Service Bureau and, later, for the hospital. Their early fundraising efforts – flower and rummage sales, Christmas bazaars, raffles, concerts, dances, fashion shows, readings, lectures, and card and garden parties – raised money to furnish a room and add landscaping, sidewalks and a fountain to the new hospital. The association also launched a surgical dressing unit, which later became a Red Cross chapter.

Having made tremendous progress toward her mission during five years as president, Sara Verity, now Mrs. Newman Ebersole, turned over the helm to Mrs. Fred Tobitt in 1919. Sara would serve as president again in 1930 – but this time the group would have a new name. In 1924, the Middletown Civic Association took over all welfare and community service work in the city. The Girls Welfare Association then narrowed its focus to fundraising and became the Welfare Auxiliary to the Middletown Hospital.

In 1927, the Nurses Home on the hospital campus – which was later christened Verity Hall in memory of Sara's mother, Jean – became the Auxiliary's headquarters for monthly meetings and other get-togethers.



The Auxiliary took a special interest in the young nurses by refreshing the landscaping, updating décor and hosting social events. Many years later, in 1966, the Auxiliary formed the School of Nursing Advisory Committee to offer recreational activities including bridge and dancing lessons, as well as sessions on good taste in home furnishing, the etiquette of weddings, and hair care and styling.

An 'Inside' Job

Auxiliary members stepped up to serve as nurse's aides in the hospital in response to the shortage of nurses during World War II. No longer needed in the hospital after the war, they returned to their fundraising mission. The nurse's aide experience, however, motivated the Auxiliary to seek other ways to assist health care providers and patients in the hospital. A decade later, Auxiliary members began serving as "play ladies" in the pediatric unit. This in-hospital service proved to be just the beginning.



In the mid-1960s, hospital administration asked the Auxiliary to develop a volunteer program. Twigs, as the group was called, began with the job of volunteer receptionist. For years, the Auxiliary oversaw the burgeoning volunteer program, but eventually turned it over to a paid hospital staffer to manage. Today, more than 300 adult and teen volunteers serve in positions from admission/registration, clerical assistance and dietary to surgery, emergency, ICU-CCU and more. In addition, the Auxiliary established a Telecare program to check on older people living alone. It also initiated a Meals-on-Wheels program with food prep in the hospital food service department and meal delivery provided by volunteer drivers.

Time and Treasure

As health care becomes more complex, the ability to stay at the leading edge is critical. Through its innovative fundraising over the past century, the Auxiliary has helped the hospital invest in major medical technology to ensure continued progress and excellence in patient care. For example, over a three-year period the Auxiliary donated \$100,000 to help the hospital purchase a da Vinci surgical robot in 2010.

In 1947, the Auxiliary launched a gift shop, one of its most successful fundraising ventures ever. The Gift Nook, the original shop, was joined by the Added Touch in the late 1960s. As the hospital expanded, the shops adapted. In 1979, the Hilltop Gift Shop opened under the leadership of co-chairs Joan Davies and Del Thorn and moved to Atrium when the hospital opened in 2007. Today's Hilltop is a vibrant, growing enterprise that enables the Auxiliary to award a number of annual scholarships and fund hospital projects. Unlike most hospital gift shops in the region, Hilltop is still run by volunteers, which saves a significant amount of money for the hospital.



In 1965, the Auxiliary premiered the High Fever Follies – a legend-in-its-own-time, song-and-dance amateur variety show that became a biannual event. The show was directed professionally, but the cast was composed of Auxiliary members, doctors, nurses, hospital staff and volunteers, and Middletown citizens. The High Fever Follies was an immediate success; proceeds from the first show topped \$9,500. In 2000, the Auxiliary and hospital administration decided to “leave ‘em laughing” and retired the Follies.

In 1970, in response to its dual purpose as a fundraising organization and a volunteer group, the Welfare Auxiliary changed its constitution to become Middletown Hospital Auxiliary and, subsequently, Atrium Auxiliary Middletown. Today, a special patch worn on the front of their uniforms identifies Auxiliary members working as volunteers in the hospital.

A Dream Come True

Currently, almost 200 of the hospital's more than 300 volunteers are Auxiliary members. A board of 18 provides leadership for the group, which raises funds through the Hilltop Gift Shop and a variety of specialty sales throughout the year.

In addition to providing financial support, the Auxiliary serves patients by supplying children's books and volunteer-made dolls for the Emergency Trauma Center; furnishing yarn for hats for newborns and chemotherapy patients; and making hospital stays more pleasant with reading material, games and patient visits through the Friends Program.

When Sara Verity sat with her parents that evening in 1914 and asked for their help to achieve her dream, could she have imagined we would still be talking about her effort today? Would she have expected her "association" to have achieved so much for the hospital and the patients and families it serves? Atrium Medical Center is strong today — and for the future — thanks to the vision and selfless giving of so many Auxiliary members over 100 years.

Thanks to Patricia Miller Gage, Martha Oches and Joyce Burnett for their assistance with this issue of Legends.

This article is the sixth in a series of profiles celebrating the 2017 centennial anniversary of Atrium Medical Center (formerly Middletown Hospital and Middletown Regional Hospital). The series honors men and women whose civic-mindedness and genuine caring for others helped Greater Middletown grow and contributed to establishment of the first-class medical center the region boasts today.

Past Legends focused on:

Paul Galeese, *Issue 1*; E.O. Bauer, MD, and John L. Bauer, MD, *Issue 2*; Educating Our Caregivers, *Issue 3*; Russell L. "Rusty" Malcolm, MD, and Albert S. Malcolm, MD, *Issue 4*; Ann and Arthur Bidwell, *Issue 5*.

Special thanks to the W.E. Smith Charitable Trust for partial funding to produce Legends.



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F O U N D A T I O N

One Medical Center Drive | Middletown, Ohio 45005 | 513-420-5144
Foundation@AtriumMedCenter.org | www.AtriumMedCenter.org/Foundation