



Helping Babies Grow

Ben Taub volunteer gives 475 hours

By Beth Gullett

For the past five years, Harris County Hospital District Volunteer of the Year Sandy Griffith has spent Friday mornings volunteering in Ben Taub General Hospital's Level II High Risk Nursery -- rocking, changing and feeding premature babies. She has donated 475 volunteer hours, an invaluable gift for the Hospital District and the infants she tends to.

"It takes a special person to be a volunteer," said Jennifer Vitera, director of volunteer services for the Hospital District. "For years, Sandy has selflessly dedicated her time and affection, working side by side with hospital staff to help families she doesn't know and may never meet."

"I'm not doing anything compared to what the nurses do for these babies," Griffith said. "I say a blessing over every baby I hold. This is important to me because I have no idea what will happen to them."

Though not her own children, Griffith finds comfort in knowing her nurturing is helping the fragile infants grow and get better, little by little.

Many times, parents with hospitalized babies have jobs and other children to care for so they are unable to stay at the hospital. Griffith helps tend to these babies when their mothers can't. This is important to her because 15 years ago, she gave birth to a premature son.

Griffith's compassion and devotion are evident in how she interacts with the infants, affectionately smiling and talking to them as she gently takes them from their incubators to rock them and rub their backs in a way only an empathetic mother could.

"I was fortunate to be with my child. But it became clear that other babies weren't able to have their mommies stay with them," Griffith said. "I told myself that if I ever had the luxury of time to stay with the babies, I would because I knew I'd want someone to do that for me."

Griffith is an active volunteer in her church as well. Through this affiliation, Memorial Drive Presbyterian helped create a sibling play room in Ben Taub Hospital's nursery area, complete with colorful bookshelves, toys and books. It's an entertaining and safe place for siblings to go while mothers spend time with their premature babies.

Griffith also enlisted help from her church, a \$25,000 donation, for the development of the nursery's Care by Parents Suites. The suites help prepare mothers to care for their special needs babies at home. Parents can stay in the hospital suites to practice feeding, changing and caring for their children under the guidance of medical staff.

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