

AHVRP 2017 Award of Excellence



Kay Steward-Wright, Manager, Guest Relations, Volunteer and Auxiliary Services, University Hospital and Clinics, Columbia, MO
Nomination submitted by Paula Gangel, Director of Volunteer Service, The University of Kansas Health System, Kansas City, KS

Kay has been a member of our professional membership group, MAHVRP (Midwest Association for Healthcare Volunteer Management) since 2004. Since that time, Kay has served on the board of directors for this association, serving as the Policy and Procedure/Bylaws Chair, and the Educational Development Chair. This year, even though she is in charge of Policies and Procedures & the Bylaws, she is helping with the Fall Conference sponsored by MHA, the Missouri Hospital Association. She is developing the educational workshop for the conference even with a demanding job and multiple service lines she oversees at The University of Missouri Hospital. Kay oversees the Gift Shop in two hospitals, supervises the volunteers and Auxiliaries, the Information Desk, Interpretive Services, Valet and Chaplains. She also used to supervise the Patient Relations department, or the "complaint department." Most of the Support Service departments report up to Kay, and though she should be called "Director" or "Vice President" with her responsibilities, she is called a manager. Kay is passionate about helping others, and keeping the patients' experience in mind is her number one priority. A Volunteer Director in an academic medical center myself, I have had the pleasure of knowing Kay for the past ten years.

Kay has initiated new programs, utilizing volunteers to improve the patient experience. Kay implemented a program for teen inpatients, a "game night" where teens can play board games and socialize. They also are allowed to order pizza or any other take-out food as a treat and a break from institutionalized cooking. Not only did Kay think of this volunteer program, she also volunteers herself each Wednesday evening. She is a servant-leader who leads by example! She also supports the Ellis Boutique for cancer patients, a special retail shop that specializes in providing wigs, scarves and hats for those who have lost their hair due to chemotherapy treatments, jewelry, inspirational message-items and "bling" such as jewelry and hand bags. The shop was designed to bolster the self-esteem of those dealing with cancer. In this shop patients can find items that help them look better, and feel better. Kay oversees this and is very passionate about it because she knows such a retail endeavor has such a positive impact on patients undergoing cancer treatments.

Kay is very active on the regional level, hosting regional conferences for those in our personal membership group. She participates in AHVRP by being an active member and participating in the annual conference. Kay is also instrumental in encouraging those in the profession to join AHVRP for the many educational and networking benefits garnered from being an AHVRP member. Once at national conference, Kay often organizes a special dinner or lunch event so that all of those from our Midwest region can come together and share the experience while at the national conference. She is very inclusive, and has an innate talent for making new members feel welcome!

Kay volunteers in the teen program mentioned above, and also volunteers in her hometown of Columbia, Missouri, to provide food for veterans and other underprivileged individuals in her community. Although she commonly works 50-60 hours per week as a Volunteer Manager, she gives back to others by volunteering herself. She is very giving and compassionate, and can be counted on to complete any board assignment in a timely and professional manner. She's worked at The University of Missouri Hospital for 30 years, and has touched countless lives with her professionalism, compassion, empathy and concern for the patients and their families. Kay exemplifies everything that's good and honorable about healthcare volunteer management, and is very deserving of the Award for Excellence. She embodies patient-centered care, and also cares deeply for the volunteers she works with. She is supportive of her paid staff, a positive and effective mentor, a reliable sounding board for her colleagues, and a professional who takes pride in her work on the board of directors! She has a definite passion for her work, and it shows in everything she does, and has done for the past three decades.