

# THE Importance of Caring

MARCH 2022

my journey into volunteering



## Harlan Broekemeier

WAY-FINDING AND DELIVERY VOLUNTEER

In every season of his life, Harlan Broekemeier has found a way to interact with and help others.

At 18, he enlisted in the United States Army to serve in the Korean War.

**“After I returned home from Korea, I had some time left on my enlistment, so I was assigned to work at the military hospital on the base in Fort Carson, Colorado,”** Broekemeier said. **“That was my first experience being around patients. Assisting around the hospital on base allowed me the opportunity to serve the veterans who returned to the hospital as patients.”**

This experience led Broekemeier to pursue work in the health care field later in life.

**“I did not have any experience in a hospital before my assignment at Fort Carson,”** he said. **“At the hospital, I was responsible for managing the veterans’ information when they would come in for care. I enjoyed being around people and doing what I could to help out given their situation — it was a good experience.”**

After completing his enlistment, Broekemeier returned to his hometown of Columbus, where he opened Coast to Coast — a hardware store franchise. He owned and operated the retail store in downtown Columbus for many years before retiring from the retail industry. He then pursued work as an independent investment operator.

**“Now that I am fully retired, I thought Columbus Community Hospital would be a great place to volunteer,”** Broekemeier said. **“I enjoy being around people. I built my career on meeting and helping the public, which is what I continue to do as a volunteer.”**

Broekemeier first started volunteering at the hospital when the new building opened in 2002. He was one of three volunteers to work as a hospital guide, and he has been helping patients and visitors navigate their way around the hospital ever since.

As a way-finding and delivery volunteer, he is one of the first people patients meet when they arrive. He welcomes each patient to find out where they need to go and assists them in getting to their destination.

**“When I arrive for my shift at 6:45 a.m., the first thing I do is check in with the registration team and receive a roster of patients so I can help direct them where they need to go,”** he said. **“The hospital also trained us on providing wheelchair assistance, so when we experience a situation where one is needed, we know what to do.”**

Broekemeier is thankful for the support he has received from the hospital. **“I’ve enjoyed working in the hospital for the past 20 years,”** he said. **“The hospital has supported us and has given us work to feel helpful.”**

**For more information on volunteering opportunities at the hospital, visit [www.columbushosp.org](http://www.columbushosp.org).**