

Exceptional Care. Strong Community. Vital Future.

Your Unity at 45

A decade after World War II, Central Avenue in Fridley sported two lanes and dirt shoulders; River Road was an obstacle course of mud and puddles after it rained. Young families moving into new homes in Fridley or Spring Lake Park didn't let a few splashes and bumps faze them – unless there was an emergency.

Case in point. Little Randy Wall, home with his family in Mounds View after tonsil surgery, began hemorrhaging. The boy was scooped up by his terrified parents and began a harrowing drive on uncertain roads to a downtown Minneapolis hospital.

Randy got better and, over time, so did the roads. However, Randy's mother, Betty, vowed that future north metro residents would receive hospital care in their own community, close to home.

By the early 1960s, Betty Wall and others active in the newly-formed North Suburban Hospital District held public meetings, walked door to door gathering support for a new hospital, sold bonds, broke ground, and, on May 1, 1966, dedicated Unity Hospital. The Unity Hospital staff saw their first patients on May 23.

Today's Unity, as never before, reflects the power of its name – the "unity" in "community." The hospital's top technology and outstanding care continues to serve residents of its traditional communities, such as Fridley and Mounds View, while welcoming new residents from fast growing communities, such as Blaine, which has more than doubled in size in the past few decades. Through the North Suburban Hospital District, which founded Unity, five communities continue to financially support the hospital: Blaine, Fridley, Hilltop, Mounds View and Spring Lake Park. The Hospital District, and these communities, are among Unity's most important traditions.



Credit: Lee Brothers, Minnesota Historical Society

Heading for the north metro in 1955 – growing families, country roads, and no hospital.

The Unity Hospital staff saw their first patients on May 23.



Unity Hospital - Fridley, Minnesota DEDICATION MAY 1, 1966

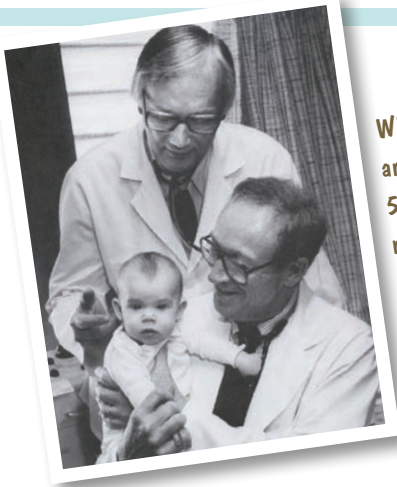


"[On the day we opened] we didn't have a tape measure to measure the first baby and we had to call maintenance and borrow theirs. We had all the other instruments but somehow, we overlooked the tape measure."

Joyce Backlund, RN, is retired and lives two blocks from Unity; at night she still looks at the lights on the hospital's fourth floor "to see how busy we are."

The Unity Hospital Auxiliary was founded in March 1966.





William Carr, MD, holding a new patient, and Donald Dummer, MD, were among 52 charter physicians on Unity's original medical staff. Today the medical staff of Unity numbers more than 600.



Joann Meyer, Nutrition Services, clowns for the camera (circa 1980)

Unity grew rapidly along with its communities. Between 1971 and 1986, Unity's beds grew from 150 to 275; a medical office building, a new emergency room and additional surgery suites were added.



Unity's 24-hour community pharmacy opened in 1986, one of the first 24-hour pharmacies available to north metro residents.



Radiation Therapy Center opened in April 1992, providing outpatient cancer treatment close to home.

In 2003, Unity offered new cardiovascular catheterization facilities and upgraded diagnostic equipment; North Suburban Hospital District, Unity's founding organization, made a major contribution to the project.



Randy Wall, whose troublesome tonsils more than 50 years ago showcased the need for a community hospital, is an accomplished pianist who volunteers his time playing for patients and guests at Unity.



Emergency care is a basic, community need. Open seven months in 1966, Unity had 3,239 emergency room visits. In 2010, emergency visits numbered 45,266.

