St. Luke’s Medical Center
A Century of Innovation, Leadership and Caring
1903 - 2003
You Are the Heart of St. Luke's

How St. Luke's has changed over the past 100 years! That's naturally the first thought that comes to mind on this milestone anniversary. But facts and figures about our “outside” transformation from a private hospital and office addition to Dr. Malone's residence in 1903 to a world class medical center in 2003 are only part of the history. St. Luke's Medical Center is so much more than bricks and mortar and medical advances. To really understand the story of St. Luke's, look in the mirror... To our employees, doctors and volunteers both past and present, you are the heart of our history. You are the story of St. Luke's.
The original St. Luke’s on Madison Street had two operating rooms and two exam rooms — all with no doors, just privacy curtains. There were beautiful wooden floors and stairs throughout the building. On the last day the facility was open, only a few obstetrics patients were left, and they were being transferred to the new St. Luke’s. I saw the last one out and closed the door for the final time. That was the first of many moves I went through at St. Luke’s, and it seems as if 45 of my 46 years here have all been under construction! I was part of every addition, including one where I had to work with my boots and jacket on because the front entrance was only covered in plastic. The admitting area was a cold and windy place to work that winter!

Geri Mitchell began as an admitting clerk at the Madison Street hospital in 1956. She is currently coordinator of Surgery Services.
I was the day supervisor at the old Madison Street facility which was the original St. Luke’s Hospital. In 1952, the building on 29th and Oklahoma was just completed and I had the privilege of selecting the first patient to be transferred to the new hospital. There were specific instructions from Miss Larson, the director of nursing. It had to be a patient of the chief of staff, and it had to be someone who didn’t need anything like x-rays or a special diet. I went through my roster and found the perfect patient for the move and the photo ops that went with it. It was a proud and exciting day for all of us!

Eleanor Rice

Eleanor Rice served as a nurse at St. Luke’s for 32 years. She retired in 1984 and now volunteers with her husband David, in Same Day Cardiac Services and in the Orthopedic Outpatient Department.
"I came to St. Luke's in 1962, one of only three pharmacists on staff at the hospital. We were open from 8:00 am to 4:30 pm, and if someone needed drugs after hours, the night nursing supervisor had a key to a locked 'drug room' about the size of a closet. She would take what was needed and leave a note for us to restock the closet the next day. As the cardiac and cancer programs grew over the next few years, so did the need for pharmacists. In 1970, St. Luke's became the first hospital in the Milwaukee area to have 24-7 pharmaceutical services. Today, we're up to nearly 60 full- and part-time pharmacists, and we have pharmacists who specialize in cardiology, kidney, organ transplantation, oncology, ICU, psychiatry and nuclear medicine. We have computers that alert us to drug interactions and a robot named 'Bart' who fills unit doses. We're high tech now, but the pharmacy still offers personal touches to provide the best possible patient care. Just the other day, in fact, one of our pharmacists was compounding a medication for a patient who was having difficulty swallowing."

Mary Jane Zeppelin, RPh served as a pharmacist at St. Luke's for 40 years. She retired in 2002 and lives in Whitefish Bay.
I was 22 years old and I remember my first day at St. Luke's like it was yesterday! It was the night shift on Madison Street. I reported to duty, someone handed me a key to the medicine cupboard, gave me the report and left. That was my orientation. I went home in the morning and told my mother I wanted to quit! She told me one shift just wasn’t enough time to make that kind of decision. Well, here I am today, talking about my 40 years at St. Luke’s. And I have absolutely no regrets . . .

“I can still taste the coffeecakes at the Madison Street hospital. Cook used to bake them every Saturday for patients while we, the nurses, had cereal. As the night supervisor, I always felt obligated to my staff to sneak into the kitchen, take a coffeecake, and carefully arrange the others so the cook wouldn’t realize one was missing. Years later, when I transferred to the new hospital, the cook commented that she could now make one less coffeecake each week! She always knew and never let on.

My connection to St. Luke’s began at birth. My nine brothers and sisters and I were all born at the hospital! St. Luke’s continued to be part of my life through my wonderful aunt and mentor, Ruth Muhich, a longtime nurse. From the time I was a little girl, Auntie Ruth always spoke so highly of the hospital, her job and the people she worked with. She inspired me to become a nurse.

“When I was in nursing school and would get overwhelmed, I always knew I could count on Auntie Ruth to pick up my spirits with some funny nursing stories. I’d call her late at night and she’d tell me something absolutely wonderful and hilarious and interesting about nursing and how much she loved her job despite the hard work. Those stories helped me get through nursing school! When I graduated, the nursing shortage had begun and I could’ve worked anywhere. I chose St. Luke’s because it felt like home to me.

Ruth Muhich, RN joined St. Luke's as a staff nurse at the Madison Street facility in 1942. Over the years, she served the hospital in several supervisory positions, retiring in 1980.

Jane Hammond, RN joined St. Luke’s as a staff nurse in 1989. Today she is the supervisor of Diabetes Education for the Aurora Metro Region.
One of the most remarkable stories involving Philanthropy happened about five years ago. There was an elderly gentleman who used to stop to chat with our staff every Friday on his way to the coffee shop for his weekly treat—a hospital fish fry. His clothes were always quite shabby and worn, and we knew from others that his home was in major disrepair. One day, the man’s two sisters appeared in Philanthropy to inform us that their brother had died and left a substantial monetary gift to St. Luke’s. They told us that he was wealthy, and that his generosity to St. Luke’s was a token of appreciation for our friendliness and ‘great fish fries!’

I always felt that part of my responsibility as a director was to be an advocate for my department as well as for the hospital. In the last few years of my ministry, I became increasingly concerned about all the budget cuts in health care around the country. Chaplains from other hospitals were telling me that their departments were being deeply affected. I wanted to make sure that didn’t happen at St. Luke’s. Before I retired, I worked closely with Philanthropy to establish an endowment fund for pastoral care. I am proud to say that the Siebert Lutheran Endowment is now worth nearly $5 million.
Before the Knisely Building opened in 1975, the Labor and Delivery Unit was located on our floor in the center building, and post partum was one floor above us. In those days, dads didn’t go into the delivery room. They had a waiting room right in the middle of our medical unit. Things were really different then, and we would see and hear all kinds of things when the doctor came to tell dad he had a new baby… or two.

Back then, twins were usually a total surprise because there was no ultrasound. In addition to our own med-surg patients, we sometimes ended up taking care of dads who passed out! I remember one dad in particular was so nervous while he was waiting for his wife to deliver that he followed our nurses around everywhere. In fact, he absent-mindedly followed one of us right into that tiny little bathroom between the elevators!

Barb Linton is a registered nurse on 7GHJK. She has been at St. Luke’s for 30 years.

1985

Mikhail Gorbachev becomes general secretary of the communist party in the U.S.S.R.

Became first hospital in nation to offer Transmyocardial Laser Revascularization (TMLR) to restore blood flow to damaged heart muscle.

Dedicated new Brian Cervenka Memorial Library.

1986

The Space Shuttle “Challenger” explodes after lift-off, generating national mourning and a setback for the U.S. space program.

Implanted Wisconsin’s first Jarvik-7 artificial heart as a bridge to transplant.

1987

A new step occurs in United States and Canada relations, as the two countries sign a free-trade agreement.

Opened Kidney Stone Center featuring treatment of stones without major surgery.

Opened Endocrine Diabetes Center to provide education and treatment in one location.

Reopened Obstetrics Unit.

St. Luke’s Samaritan Health Care, Inc. becomes Aurora Health Care, following a merger between Mount Sinai Medical Center and Good Samaritan Medical Center.

Became Wisconsin’s first hospital to use the drug TPA for emergency treatment of heart attack victims.

Established St. Luke’s Immunotherapy Program and became Wisconsin’s first hospital to offer cellular immunotherapy to stimulate cancer-fighting cells.
My story begins in the late ’40s when my husband and I bought a lot on South 29th Street. We noticed the sign on the corner, “Future Home of St. Luke’s Hospital.” Little did we know at the time how the hospital would grow and become so much a part of our lives! I began volunteering in 1960 before there was a formal volunteer department. There were only five of us and my weekly job was to call the church pastors of all the patients. Back then it only took a half-hour to contact everyone. The hardest part was finding a phone… There was such a shortage of them in the hospital. I usually ended up making my calls from the chapel or from an unoccupied intern’s bedroom. I’ve been here for 43 years now and still enjoy every minute of volunteering at St. Luke’s. The little time I give is returned to me a hundred-fold.

Delores Honeyager

Delores Honeyager is the longest serving volunteer at St. Luke’s and currently works in Nursing Education. Her husband Robert also volunteered for many years, and at age 80, he continues to help the hospital by driving Delores to St. Luke’s every Wednesday.

1990
NELSON MANDELA IS RELEASED AFTER 28 YEARS OF BEING IMPRISONED FOR OPPOSING APARTHEID.

Performed 100th heart transplant operation since initiating the program in 1968.

Became Wisconsin’s first hospital to receive Medicare approval for heart transplants.

Became Wisconsin’s first hospital to send patients home with semiautomatic defibrillator system.

Established Autologous Bone Marrow Transplant Program.

1991
PERSIAN GULF WAR BEGINS UNDER THE LEADERSHIP OF NORMAN SCHWARZKOPF.

Established St. Luke’s School of Radiation Therapy.

Became Wisconsin’s first hospital to insert a “stent” into a patient’s coronary artery to prevent collapsing.

Received United Network for Organ Sharing (UNOS) approval for lung transplantation and performed the first lung transplant operation.

1992
BILL CLINTON IS ELECTED PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES.

Expanded Electrophysiology Department.

Opened Health Sciences II Building.
"I started a week before Christmas in 1972 and as the new girl, I was scheduled to work on December 25. That day, a man in a suit walked into our department. When I asked if I could help him, he replied, ‘No, I just wanted to wish you a very Merry Christmas,’ and he left. When I mentioned it to my co-workers the next day, they told me it was Mr. Knisely, the president of St. Luke’s, and that he came to the hospital every Christmas Day to make sure employees knew they were appreciated, especially for working the holiday. His gesture confirmed the good feeling I already had about St. Luke’s. I knew I would like it here!"

Mary Ann Heitl has worked in St. Luke’s Medical Records for 31 years and is currently a medical record coder serving at the St. Luke’s South Shore campus.

"I remember back in the 1960s when we first started coronary bypass surgery and it was a long, involved procedure. Today, these procedures are only a few hours and patients are home in a few days. Then, of course, we have the successful heart transplant program, our involvement in the development of the totally artificial heart and other cardiac assist devices... I am so proud to know that St. Luke’s played such a significant role in these advancements. This occurred because of our dedicated groups of nurses, administrators and physicians. We are a team... It is heart-warming to know that this dedication will be at the forefront of our care of cardiac patients into the 21st century."

Alfred Tector, MD has been a cardiovascular and thoracic surgeon at St. Luke’s Medical Center for over 35 years. He was instrumental in the establishment of the Heart Transplant Program nearly 20 years ago. He currently serves as the director of the heart transplant program.

1993

CLINTON SIGNS BRADY BILL, RESTRICTING HANDGUN USE, NAMED FOR THE MAN SHOT IN THE REAGAN ASSASSINATION ATTEMPT.

Completed new outpatient facility and medical center main entrance.

1994

MAJOR LEAGUE BASEBALL PLAYERS STRIKE. BASEBALL OWNERS END SEASON AND CANCEL WORLD SERIES.

Opened Madison Street Outreach Clinic in partnership with University of Wisconsin Department of Family Practice and Health Care for the Homeless of Milwaukee.

1995

THE FIRST RENDEZVOUS OF A NASA SPACECRAFT WITH THE RUSSIAN SPACE STATION MIR.

Acquired Trinity Memorial Hospital, which was renamed St. Luke’s South Shore.
The Gamma Knife delivers a concentrated dose of up to 201 gamma rays, pinpointed through a helmet, to target and destroy brain tumors or abnormal blood vessels deep within the brain. Circa 2000

Robot performs minimally invasive thoracic surgery. Circa 2002

The Flight for Life helicopter used to land in the field west of the hospital where the church now stands. When we’d get the call that a chopper was coming, two nurses and a security guard would grab a cart and oxygen tank and run across the parking lot to get the patient. One day, for whatever reason, the helicopter had to land across the KK Parkway on the west side of the bridge. It was August. Hot and muggy. And a long way from the hospital. We all went tearing down the parkway with the cart and O₂ tank, picked up the patient and had to run up the side of a hill, down the road and back to the hospital. By the time we were done, we needed oxygen more than the patient! Years later, the Knisely Building went up and a heliport was put on the rooftop. When we saw it for the first time, I could’ve kissed it!

Jan Schwaiger, RN accepted her first nursing job in 1966 and has spent her entire career at St. Luke’s. She has been a clinical nurse coordinator for over 25 years.

1996
AT AGE 20, TIGER WOODS WINS THE UNITED STATES AMATEUR GOLF TOURNAMENT FOR THE THIRD YEAR IN A ROW AND TURNS TO A PROFESSIONAL CAREER.
Opened Karen Yontz Women’s Cardiac Awareness Center.

1997
EL NINO, A LARGE-SCALE PERIODIC WARMING OF THE TROPICAL PACIFIC OCEAN AFFECTS THE WORLD CLIMATE.
Announced major expansion of Vince Lombardi Cancer Clinic marking the beginning of a network of 10 clinics opened by 2003.
Established Institute for Cardiac Rhythms.
Established Sleep Disorders Center.
Ranked first among all Milwaukee Hospitals in cardiology, oncology, orthopedics and overall care by America’s Health Network.

1999
PANAMA GAINS CONTROL OF THE PANAMA CANAL FROM THE UNITED STATES.
Opened the Ophthalmology Surgery Center.
Performed 300th bone marrow transplant.
Received UNOS and Medicare approvals for kidney transplantation.
Performed first multiple organ (heart-kidney) transplant operation.
Became Wisconsin’s first hospital to offer Gamma Knife technology for non-invasive treatment of brain disorders.

1998
Became first hospital in the Midwest to implant a permanent ventricular assist device.
Received UNOS approval for liver transplantation and performed the first liver transplant operation.
Established Cancer Counseling Center.
I have a lifetime of memories from my 25 years at St. Luke's. The baby that was delivered on the front lawn of the Madison Street facility... being the first hospital in the world to use electric patient beds... Mr. Knisely hand-signing each payroll check... the first heart valve operation and all the news media...

"But I will never forget Mrs. Anick and her historic heart transplant surgery. Her miraculous recovery and her wonderful personality and gratitude... One of my most treasured possessions is a letter I received from Betty after she moved to Florida. She wrote, 'I will love you forever.'"

Bernice Larson served as the nursing administrator from 1948 at the Madison Street hospital until her retirement from St. Luke's in 1974.

St. Luke's nurses earn the prestigious Magnet Award, the highest level of recognition that can be given to nursing in a health care organization. Circa 2000

Bernice Larson

I was impressed with St. Luke's hospital and medical staff while interviewing there in 1975 and remained impressed over the next 25 years. It is there that I was privileged to complete my family practice residency, practice medicine and serve as chief of the medical staff. One of my proudest moments happened at a Medical Executive Committee meeting that I was asked to chair. At the very last minute Nursing added an agenda item and I soon discovered why. To my surprise I was presented with the first Nursing Partnership Award. Of the awards I have received, it remains my proudest.

“I am currently living and practicing medicine in northern Nevada. However, my heart will always be with St. Luke’s Medical Center and its medical and nursing staff. Best wishes St. Luke’s on your 100th anniversary.”

Robert S. Chudnow, MD

2000
- Cuban Boy Elian Gonzalez Reunited with Father.
- Opened Perinatal Assessment Center.
- Performed first live donor kidney transplant operation.
- Nurses earned the Magnet Award from the American Nurses Association.
- Became first hospital in the country in install breakthrough "open" MRI.
- Began work on Heart Care Center and Patient Tower to be completed in 2004.

2001
- September 11, Two Hijacked 757 Airliners Crash into the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center in New York City.
- Opened Regional Epilepsy Center.
- Purchased robotic surgical system to perform less invasive surgery.
- Became nation's first hospital to use microwave ablation to treat atrial fibrillation.
- Named one of top 10 hospitals in nation for volume of adult heart transplants and best one-year survival rates.

2002
- Former U.S. President Jimmy Carter was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.
- Opened Regional Multiple Sclerosis Center.
- Relocated obstetrics services and staff to new Aurora Women's Pavilion.
- Performed first robotic surgery, involving the removal of a tumor behind the heart.
- Performed Midwest's first closed-chest coronary bypass surgery with robotic surgical system.

2003
- U.S. Engages in Operation Iraqi Freedom.
- Harley-Davidson celebrates its 100th Anniversary.
- Performed 500th heart transplant surgery.
- Performed Wisconsin's first ceramic-on-ceramic hip implant.
- Administered the 5,000th dose of cellular immune therapy.
Looking Toward the Future

As St. Luke's Medical Center enters the next century, it is exciting to think that we are creating the foundation for what happens over the next 100 years. It is part of our great tradition to constantly redefine excellence in health care to better meet the needs of the people we serve. It is the strength of that vision that will give us our focus as we move forward into the future.

As Aurora's premier tertiary care hospital and a provider of leading-edge tertiary services to the people of eastern Wisconsin, we must continue to find new and better ways to provide the most advanced treatment options and best care for life-threatening illnesses while maintaining our commitment to our local community.

By recognizing that our true strength lies in the combined talents of our people, we must continue to harness the collective wisdom of the finest specialists, nurses and other staff to strive to deliver the highest quality of tertiary care – the best outcomes and the quickest recovery.

We must never forget that at St. Luke's we care for some of the sickest and most vulnerable patients and their families.

It is essential that we continue to find and provide what is important to each person we serve in a warm and compassionate way.

We cannot know what the next 100 years will bring for St. Luke's Medical Center. We do know, however, that by working together and keeping our vision alive, we can provide an environment that supports our caregivers in doing what they do best – saving lives and restoring health and hope.