

LEADING BY EXAMPLE

THROUGH HER INSPIRING AND WARM-HEARTED APPROACH, PRESIDENT SUSAN BOLAND LEAVES A LASTING IMPACT ON RACINE.



On a cold Sunday morning, third-shift staff at All Saints' Women and Infants unit were preparing for the launch of a new hospital-wide electronic medical records system. It was around 2 a.m. when President Susan Boland came into the unit offering help and encouragement.

"I couldn't believe it," nurse Holly Anderson said. "I certainly didn't expect her to be here in the middle of the night. It was incredibly thoughtful of her."

Such off-hours activities were not uncommon for Boland, known for the kind of accessible, visible leadership that saw her taking on night shifts to serve holiday meals, deliver ice cream and volunteer her time. As she readies for retirement from Ascension All Saints Hospital, colleagues and others are at no loss for examples of how Boland inspired them professionally and personally. Whether interactions with her were quick encounters or decades-long professional associations, Boland displayed to many an integrity, interest and unwavering commitment to patient care and the greater Racine community.

"I adore Susan Boland," said Barb Tylenda, former Executive Director of the Health Care Network. "She's one of my favorite people in the world... She's not about politics, personal gain or power, but rather public service in its purest sense."

A true servant leader, Boland in her tenure developed a reputation for being laser-focused on delivering the best care to patients, all the while serving as a reassuring, stable mentor to associates in the ever-changing health care landscape. From ensuring that staff had enough printers to helping lost patients find their destination, Boland pitched in at all levels, all the time.

"Caring is not a strong enough word to describe Susan," said Dr. Darnella Gist. "She's phenomenal."

Even the briefest of encounters had an impact. Greetings in the hallway or cafeteria often took a personal turn, with a genuine "How are *you*?" Her staff introductions were not simple name introductions—she instead chose to succinctly extoll a person's virtues and accomplishments.



“Susan taught me the importance of greeting people,” Dr. Jennifer Brittig said. “To look up, make eye contact and address others makes a huge difference. It creates a more personal environment and says, ‘We care about you.’”

Boland’s leadership style fostered a culture of dedication and compassion that continues to influence managers and their staff across the hospital, noted David Boman, Director of Pharmacy.

“Who we are at the front end, all starts with her,” he said. “She lived the mission, and Ascension All Saints is a better place because of her.”

Many associates observing and absorbing her delivery and choice of words sought to emulate Boland in their own lives. Admired as a gifted communicator, Boland had a knack for effectively explaining complex topics and doing so with enthusiasm and passion. She was known to speak with a depth and clarity that inspired the All Saints community to embrace the mission at hand.

“When Susan stands before our associates and physicians, she speaks from the heart. It’s easy to know what she stands for and what she expects from us. It’s just one of her many gifts,” said Paul Mason, Chief Operating Officer of Ascension All Saints.

Clinical Nurse Specialist Cara Shaffer often referenced her interactions with Boland when faced with difficult work situations, asking herself, “How would Susan do this?”

Boman found himself attending several new-associate orientation sessions led by Boland, just to hear her speak.

“I always came away reinvigorated,” he said.

The greater Racine community also benefitted from Boland’s generosity of time and talent. She served on numerous boards, organizations and initiatives including Reach Out and Read, Higher Expectations, the Racine Art Museum and the United Way.

Rodney Prunty, President and CEO of United Way of Racine County, recalled how Boland’s authenticity, quiet strength and carefully chosen words led to a breakthrough in a three-hour board meeting to determine how the organization would define its strategic vision.

“She said, ‘Words matter,’” he recalled.

“And as such, we needed to be particularly cognizant of the issues affecting Racine... It was a watershed moment for the board, and it broke the impasse so we could move forward,” he said.

Uniquely skilled in large-scale strategy, Boland was also willing to go deep in the weeds of the intricate details. She intimately understood the complexities of health care delivery, said Mary Ouimet, Chief Nursing Officer and Vice President of Patient Care .

“She’s the master weaver,” Ouimet said. “She sees all the pieces of health care and knows how to weave them together. And through it all, she has selflessly given of herself wholly and completely in service to this community.”

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–Dr. Darnella Gist

Bruce Pepich, Executive Director of the Racine Art Museum, said Boland has the rare skill set of business acumen and clinical experience. She used both, he said, to become an effective administrator and a compassionate, nurturing leader who generously shared her talents.

“She’s been nurturing and patient-focused her entire life,” he said. “She didn’t leave her nursing experience behind as she rose through the ranks. She took that with her.”

Before devoting more than two decades of her life to All Saints, Boland worked around the U.S. in various nursing and leadership positions. In Illinois she met Mark Pelletier, then a registered nurse. Today Pelletier recalls the exceptional care his father received from Boland in the early 1980s.

Pelletier said he was moved by how Boland cared for his father holistically, helping him with his diet, involving the family and showing him that there was life beyond a cancer diagnosis.

“Susan had such an impact on my father that she became a saint in my household,” said Pelletier, now the Chief Operating Officer for Accreditation and Certification Operations for The Joint Commission. “My father was a tough cookie, so I knew then, if she could win over my father, she’s got to be good.”

Boland’s and Pelletier’s career paths crossed many times, allowing Pelletier numerous opportunities to see Boland shine in different roles.

“Sue always had it in her to be a leader,” he said. “I wish I had an ounce of her talent.”

Serving others, he added, came naturally to Boland, who Pelletier described as always fully engaged and committed to the patient.

“It’s her life’s work,” he said. “This is what she was born to do.”

