



# Virginia Ilch Celebrates 50 Years at Alton Memorial

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ALTON, IL – If you think working for 50 years at the same place could get boring, ask Virginia Ilch. Alton Memorial Hospital has remained a leader in excellent health care for all of her 50 years here, and Virginia has been on the cutting edge for much of that excellence.

“I’ve done so many different things here for 50 years that it could never get boring,” she said. “At one point I had seven different departments reporting to me. That was probably a little too much, and the Joint Commission helped with that, but that variety is what has kept it interesting all that time.”

Officially, Virginia will be honored at this year’s AMH Employee Banquet as a 10-year employee. That’s because she officially retired in 2004 after 40 years on the job. But she returned a few months later on a per diem basis and has spent the last 10 years in Quality Improvement. In fact, the award given out each year at the banquet to one of the hospital teams is the Virginia Ilch Excellence in Quality Award.



Born in East St. Louis but raised in the Alton-Godfrey area, Virginia graduated from Alton High School in 1956 and got her nursing degree from the Deaconess School of Nursing in 1959. She began at AMH in 1960, left for a couple of years but returned to stay in 1964. Virginia began on the First Medical floor, then was evening house supervisor and the OR supervisor before beginning the Infection Control Department in the 1980s. The Employee Health (now Occupational Health) and Quality Assurance departments soon followed.

“Infection Control came about in the 1980s right when the AIDS virus began to spread,” Virginia said. “That’s when we really became much more aware of blood-borne diseases and the need to wear gloves all the time when working with blood. That really changed so many things about how nurses did their jobs.”

For the past 10 years, Virginia has worked per diem in Quality Improvement and also continues her work with the twice-monthly Grief Loss Change support group at AMH.

Widowed since 1974, Virginia has two daughters and one son, plus seven grandchildren. All of them live in the area. In fact, her two daughters live on either side of her in Godfrey.

“I have worked with so many great people at Alton Memorial,” Virginia said. “They all have so much talent and compassion.”

Those co-workers can say exactly the same thing about Virginia.

**Virginia Ilch, right, along with Alton Memorial Hospital parish nurse Judy Roth during the annual daffodil sales at the hospital that benefit cancer patients.**