

Jan. 28, 2019

After 57 Years, IHA's Longest Serving Employee Retires
Normandie Brown Literally Came with the Building

Naperville— On Jan. 31, the Illinois Health and Hospital Association (IHA) will lose its longest serving employee Normandie (Norm) Brown to retirement. After 57 years of employment, this supervisor of administrative services has decided to retire at the age of 80. Although Brown will no longer be making her commute from Alsip to Naperville, her tenure at IHA will forever be part of its history.

"Normandie has witnessed the growth of our association and everything in between," said IHA President and CEO A.J. Wilhelmi. "Her commitment and dedication to the association is unsurpassed. She will be missed and we wish her all the best in retirement."

Brown's supervisor for the past 20 years Lori Contreras, Vice President, Operations, said, "Norm has kept day-to-day office operations humming for her 57 years here and will leave very big shoes to fill. The administrative services team and I will miss her and wish her a long, happy and busy retirement."

Brown's IHA story begins in May 1961, when IHA's offices were located at 840 N. Lake Shore Drive inside the American Hospital Association's headquarters in Chicago. She was hired through a temp agency to work in a three-person typing pool for an association staff of eight. Brown says that the job suited her well since she spent two years in the Army as a telegraph operator and assistant in the administrative services department. She was already familiar with typing, stenciling and mimeographing.

In May 1975, when IHA relocated to Oak Brook, Brown followed. In 1982, IHA moved to its current location in Naperville and once again, Brown followed. She continued to learn various administrative tasks and as her skills evolved, so did her role in the organization. Eventually Brown became responsible for all ordering of office supplies, maintaining office equipment and supervising mailroom services and offsite storage.

Brown said she stayed at IHA largely because of the employee benefits that were offered. "I was raising two boys on my own. IHA had more flexibility compared to other organizations," said Brown. "And I liked the job and the job liked me."

When asked about the most fulfilling part of her job, Brown said, "The fact that IHA let me stay 57 years." And while nearly six decades is a long time, she said it doesn't feel that long and she only started thinking about retiring two years ago. "I never really counted the years. I just kept on going."

As for her retirement plans, Brown is looking forward to "recharging her body" and volunteering. She has already looked into programs and day trips for seniors and plans on staying active.

Her advice for those looking to stay at one company for their entire career: "Mind your own business. Stay out of the gossip mill. Do your job thoroughly and be a team worker—don't be bashful about asking questions."

Background

Brown was born on Chicago's south side in the Washington Park area. Her family relocated to Moscow, Idaho for a job opportunity at the University of Idaho. Feeling out of place in a small city that lacked diversity, Brown decided to join the Army "to see the world."

She spent two years in the Army, and 18 years in the Army Reserves, which led her to bases throughout the U.S. and Korea. It was in the service where she met her husband and moved back to Chicago after being discharged.

After her marriage ended, Brown raised her sons, Gregory and Anthony, both of whom went on to serve in the Army. She has four grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.

Brown was an avid bowler, recently hanging up her bowling shoes due to a nagging injury. Although she never bowled a perfect game of 300, she's happy with her high score of 277.

Photos:

- Normandie Brown (center) with her family, L to R: Jennifer (daughter-in law), Anthony (son), Anthony Jr (grandson) and Gregory (son)
- Lori Contreras, Vice President, Operations and Normandie Brown, Supervisor, Administrative Services

About IHA

The Illinois Health and Hospital Association, with offices in Chicago, Naperville, Springfield, and Washington, D.C., advocates for Illinois' more than 200 hospitals and nearly 50 health systems as they serve their patients and communities. IHA members provide a broad range of services—not just within their walls, but across the continuum of healthcare and in their communities. Reflecting the diversity of the state, IHA members consist of nonprofit, investor-owned and public hospitals in the following categories: community, safety net, rural, critical access, specialty, and teaching hospitals, including academic medical centers. For more information, see www.team-ih.org. Like IHA on [Facebook](#). Follow IHA on [Twitter](#).

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