

How volunteering at Scottish Rite fostered a heartwarming friendship

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Nick Bloczynski (left) and Tom Shehan pose for a portrait at the Scottish Rite Hospital in Dallas where they volunteer Jan. 6, 2025. (Azul Sordo / Staff Photographer)

A friendship between two volunteers at Scottish Rite for Children Orthopedic Hospital in Dallas has not only enriched their lives but they say it has also become a beacon of inspiration for others at the hospital.

Nick Bloczynski, 24, who has developmental differences and a history of being treated for scoliosis, began his volunteer journey in 2019 alongside his mother, a volunteer in the hospital's Supply Chain department.

While there, Bloczynski met Tom Shehan, a seasoned, 62-year-old retiree from Texas A&M, who volunteers in the hospital's mail room.

Shehan quickly became a mentor to Bloczynski, guiding him through the responsibilities of delivering and shipping mail within the hospital — and beyond.

“Nick and I work in the mail room and our work is to deliver the mail that comes into the mail room, and then also the mail that needs to go out from the hospital to other parts of the country or the world,” Shehan said. “We can send mail all places!”

Their shared mission to support the hospital's operations is driven by a mutual desire to bring joy to children. Bloczynski said his motivation stems from his own experiences as a former patient.

He was diagnosed with scoliosis when he was 9 years old.

“I needed surgery eventually, because I had to wear the back brace,” said Bloczynski. “And then I was in the hospital for a few days.”

While at the hospital as a patient, he said he interacted with the volunteers after his surgery. That fueled his own desire to serve as a volunteer.



Nick Błoczynski (center) and Tom Shehan make their mail rounds at the Scottish Rite Hospital for Children in Dallas where they volunteer Jan. 6, 2025. (Azul Sordo)

“I get influenced by the patients, because I was one of them, and I know what they’re going through,” Błoczynski said. “I don’t have the same thing as they do, but I was once a patient like they are, and the reason why I want to do this is because I want to make the patients happy.”

Together, the two men navigate the complexities of the hospital’s mail system, often engaging in lighthearted banter about the occasional machine mishaps.

“Every time the machine breaks, it’s his fault,” Błoczynski joked, pointing at Shehan.

“And every time the machine breaks, he usually says, ‘We need a new machine,’” Shehan said through laughter in response.

Beyond their volunteer duties, Błoczynski and Shehan have discovered common interests in food, which have further strengthened their bond.



Tom Shehan (left) and Nick Bloczynski make their mail rounds at the Scottish Rite Hospital for Children in Dallas where they volunteer Jan. 6, 2025. (Azul Sordo)

Bloczynski's confidence has flourished under Shehan's mentorship, allowing him to expand his social circle within the hospital. Once shy, Bloczynski now knows many staff members by name, engaging in lively conversations and building connections.

"One of the reasons we wanted to volunteer here was for socialization," said Stephanie Bloczynski, Nick's mother. "He and I used to do it before at the Supply Chain department and not he is with Tom (and) he has like 10 friends all over the hospital. He knows everybody's name. Everybody in the hospital talks to him and he just build that community, and Tom has really been like a bridge to build that."

The duo's weekly interactions often include sharing stories about their weekend outings , recapping their attendance at concerts or dining at local restaurants.

Bloczynski has advice for those considering whether to volunteer or not.

"Enjoy what you do, and help other people," he said



Tom Shehan (left) and Nick Bloczynski sort and process mail at the Scottish Rite Hospital for Children in Dallas where they volunteer Jan. 6, 2025. (Azul Sordo)

Volunteers at Scottish Rite for Children help support staff, patients, and their families in the public areas of the hospital, according to Ashley Givens, vice president of development and special events at the hospital.

Volunteer opportunities include hospitality-based roles such as greeting and guiding patients when they arrive, operating the popcorn cart and checking patients in for appointments. To become a volunteer and learn more about the program, visit their [website](#).