

From patient to pediatrician

She was too young to remember it herself. But when Marci Well, MD, throws on the stethoscope, she sometimes recalls stories told to her about her life-threatening illness half a century ago.

As an infant, Well spent a month at the hospital now known as OSF HealthCare Saint Anthony's Health Center in Alton, Illinois. She's sharing her story as part of the hospital marking [100 years of care](#) in 2025, and she even credits the ordeal – and the comfort from one generous Catholic Sister – with partially inspiring her to pursue a career in medicine.

Flashback to 1972

Carol Well, Marci Well's mother, says in February of 1972, the family was living in the Alton area when 15-month-old Marci got sick.

"She lost a lot of weight. Pneumonia-like symptoms. Low protein in the blood," says Carol Well, 81, who now lives in Lewistown, Illinois. "It was touch and go."

Aside from doctors and nurses, Marci Well's care team included Sister M. Leopolda Ording. Carol Well recounts Sister Leopolda holding Marci at the nurses station to comfort her crying.

"She was great with Marci," Carol Well says.

"I just remember the stories of family not having a lot of time to visit me," Marci Well recalls. "And being at the nurses station with Sister Leopolda and playing with her rosary."

"That was the Sisters' Mission," Marci Well adds. "They were caring for the sick and anyone who needed help."

The Sisters' impact

Sister Leopolda passed away in 1994 at age 81. But the impact she and the other Sisters made on OSF Saint Anthony's is still felt today.

Sister M. Christine Crowder began at the hospital in the 1960s and worked alongside Sister Leopolda.

"Sister Leopolda was so kind and hard-working but always for the Lord. She was so dedicated," Sister Christine says. "She would take the most difficult patients. The ones who needed the most care. If we were missing a nurse, she would put an apron on and give out medicine. If a housekeeper called off, she would start scrubbing floors."

"When I was working on the floor with her, I'd say '202 would like a pain pill,'" Sister Christine also recalls. "Sister Leopolda would say '202 is not a person. Mrs. Jones would like a pain pill.' That spoke to the respect and dignity she showed to our patients."

Marci Well then and now

Carol and Marci Well are still not sure of the exact ailment Marci caught in 1972. But she recovered with no lasting effects. And she quickly became intrigued by the medical field. Family photos of Marci as a child show her dressing up as a Sister and "playing nurse." Now, Well, 54, has been a pediatrician in Canton, Illinois, for more than two decades.

"I had Band-Aids on all my dolls and stuffed animals," Marci Well says. "It felt like I was destined to take care of people."

"It really touched my heart when she said that," Sister Christine says. "It's so meaningful to hear that one of our Sisters influenced a person to work in the medical field with children."

Learn more

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