

Dr. Kamilla Jewell Buddemeier

This week we are happy to name Dr. Kamilla Jewell Buddemeier as the 126th inductee in Marshfield's 150: Heroes and Leaders, Past and Present register. Dr. Buddemeier was nominated by Jane Kennedy.

Dr. Kamilla Jewell Buddemeier joined Marshfield Clinic in 1994, moving with her husband and two small children. She is the clinic's first -- and so far -- only female interventional cardiologist.

Her journey began in Chicago, IL. Kamilla's father worked for a major manufacturing company, so every promotion meant a move every few years to another Midwestern city. Each move also meant a farewell to the familiar and a hello to the challenge of learning to navigate a new school and a new clique of kids who likely knew each other since "forever." These frequent moves taught her to be flexible, but also to cultivate a personal fortitude that equipped her to accommodate change. Mom and Dad were extremely supportive, planting the belief that she could become anything she wanted to be. Being a female child was never presented as any kind of obstacle, so Kamilla grew up knowing for certain that men had no advantage she herself did not have. She was capable of any task to which she might commit.

Her first degree was in Medical Technology which granted ready access to a good job and financial independence, but after seven years, bigger challenges and the desire to make a bigger difference in the world started to call. Her first attempt to enter medical school was met with rejection because of having been outside of institutional learning for a few years. Rather than accept defeat, Kamilla dug deeper by taking a year of the most difficult medical science courses she could find, committed to acing each of them. She did. And Indiana University Medical School finally saw the jewel they were offered. Internal Medicine residency followed in Madison, which introduced Kamilla to the charms of Wisconsin, one of which was Marshfield Clinic. But a Cardiology fellowship would come first which meant another move, this time back to Chicago where this story began.

With her Cardiology fellowship at Rush Presbyterian St. Luke's Hospital coming to an end, Kamilla decided once again to dig deeper and seek one of two highly coveted and very competitive fellowships in Interventional Cardiology. At the time, interventional cardiology was a rapidly-evolving science that treats patients by directly entering the arterial system with catheters to diagnose and open blockages in the heart's blood supply. It is a high-risk



procedure that can literally save the life of a patient in the process of dying. Kamilla was advised that a non-invasive career would allow an easier schedule, especially for raising a family, but she decided to follow her passion. She was granted one of those two spots and excelled as St. Luke's first female Interventional Cardiology fellow.

Though the hospital in Chicago tried to retain her, Dr. Buddemeier chose Marshfield Clinic for its excellent reputation and family-friendly community. She quickly earned the respect of her colleagues and the love of her patients. Kamilla crashed the glass ceiling, as less than 5 percent of Interventional Cardiologists are female. She was a model for female residents and students, leading by example rather than activism. She recalls no patients being put off by her gender, rather they were encouraged by her confidence, expertise and compassionate approach to care. She was central Wisconsin's first Interventional Cardiologist to perform a complex case live during a webinar for an audience of medical professionals, an event previously seen only in major national cardiology meetings.

Her most rewarding personal achievement was to develop the first heart attack transfer program in central Wisconsin. She led a team to organize "Rescue 1," a network of independent and normally competing regional medical institutions to minimize the time from a heart attack to treatment to maximize the life-saving benefits of cardiac catheterization. Many people are alive today because of this effort.

Kamilla saw a number of patients return with the same life-threatening symptoms, so she began a study of additional ways underlying disease can be treated. She explored meditation which led her to a rigorous Zen practice, becoming a Zen monk in 2008. Retired from active medical practice since 2019, Kamilla continues to synthesize her entire experience, traditional and otherwise. More fully exploring the body's innate wisdom, becoming an ally of that wisdom, she sees the future is wide open as new possibilities emerge, and is working out how this can be offered to Marshfield and beyond. She remains dedicated to assisting her community in seeking the health and wellness of all.