



Pauline Olsen, MD of Farmington

A Legend in Her Own Time

If you are a woman in the Greater Hartford area, or you know a woman in the Greater Hartford area, then you no doubt know Dr. Pauline Olsen – or at least, you know of her.

That's because in the field of women's health, Dr. Olsen is a legend. It's not just that she has delivered thousands of babies, each one with a delight and joy that makes it seem like it's her very first. It is also because she invests an uncommon and most sincere and personal interest in every single woman she has treated. She knows their fears, their excitement, their grief; she knows their husbands and fathers and cousins and, now, their grandkids. And remarkably, she somehow remembers all of them, in exquisite detail, with a memory that is extraordinary for a woman of 85.

But this is not why Dr. Olsen was nominated to be a Wonder Woman. Indeed, her selection seems to fly in the face of the criteria traditionally used in this process – namely, that “Wonder Women” are people from the outside community, rather than those who work or volunteer for Malta House of Care itself.

Although Pauline Olsen is indeed well known as a founder and current medical volunteer of the Malta House of Care Clinic, the truth is that her nominator focused on all the other reasons that she deserved this honor.

She has participated in medical mission trips to Haiti and served on the Board of the Haitian Humanitarian Network. She founded the Kate Kuhn Memorial Lecture and Run, in memory of a beloved St. Francis Hospital colleague who passed away prematurely. She's won awards beyond counting, including Papal Honors in 2019, the AARP Andrus Award for Community Service in 2014, the “Healthcare Hero” award from the Hartford Business Journal in 2015, and the L'Oréal Paris Woman of Worth award in 2010.

Just to name a few.

But the chief reason she was nominated was because of what she did in 2012, when she realized how much food insecurity was contributing to the poor health of patients she was seeing at the Malta van. With some like-minded friends, that year she founded the Malta Food Pantry, located in the North End of Hartford at St. Justin's Church. Each Saturday morning, Dr. Olsen and her volunteers distribute thousands of pounds of donated groceries to neighborhood families – now, as a result of the pandemic, in a drive-through set-up. Despite the protestations of other volunteers, Dr. Olsen is usually at the front of that assembly line, lifting the heaviest bags into the recipients' cars.

“Dr Olsen is an ‘Angel of Mercy’ who shares her kindness, patience, and exceptional skill with all around her,” her nominator eloquently stated.