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MIZZOU

Changing Charging

Mizzou alumna hosts fundraiser for cellphone-charging station at Columbia hospitals.



Regina Ruppert, center left, and Lea Wood, center right, join with University Hospital staff to dedicate the first cellphone-charging station.

Story by Kelsey Allen

Photos courtesy of Regina Ruppert

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When Regina Ruppert, BS Ed '78, received a phone call with the news that her husband, Lee, was having a heart attack, she dropped everything and rushed to University Hospital. By the time she got there, she realized that her cellphone had died and she didn't have a charger.

“It's not something you plan for,” Ruppert says. “And I needed to reach [our daughter] Lea [Wood].”

Wood, BSN '09, MS '13, DNP '14, is the director of the clinical simulation-learning center in the Sinclair School of Nursing. Ruppert left her husband's side to walk through the hospital corridors to the nursing school to track down their daughter. By the time she got back, her husband was already in surgery.

“I felt helpless,” Ruppert says.

That was in fall 2012. Since then, Lee has recovered, and the Rupperts have hosted two fundraisers to put cellphone-charging stations at University Physicians Urgent Care and in the University Hospital and Women's and Children's Hospital emergency department waiting rooms. Each cellphone-charging station costs about \$1,500.

On Aug. 23, they are hosting a Summer Family Fun Festival at Serenity Valley Winery in Fulton, Missouri, to raise funds for a charging kiosk at Harry S. Truman Memorial Veterans' Hospital.



Regina and Lee Ruppert host fundraisers at their winery to raise money for cellphone-charging station at Columbia hospitals.

The Rupperts have owned Serenity Valley Winery since 2006, and in 2011, they moved the winery from a strip mall in O'Fallon, Missouri, to 60 acres of land in Fulton to be closer to their daughter.

Wood has already benefitted from one of the charging kiosks at the hospital. In summer 2014, she rushed Lee Ruppert to University Hospital for a kidney stone, and before long, her phone ran out of battery.

“We don't live in a society where we memorize people's numbers,” Wood says. “If your phone won't turn on, you can't access your contacts, so even if you find another phone, you wouldn't be able to call anyone.”

Luckily, she was able to use the cellphone charger in the emergency department waiting room and make the necessary phone calls.

The Summer Family Fun Festival is from 3 to 9 p.m. Aug. 23 at 1888 County Route 342. It includes food and craft vendors, kids activities, a silent auction, a band, a performance by comedian David Graham, and, of course, wine tastings.



Lee and Regina Ruppert opened Serenity Valley Winery in 2006.

Regina Ruppert's goal is to have a charging kiosk in

every hospital in central Missouri.

“This won’t be the last fundraiser,” she says.

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