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Hospital's super volunteer bows out

Volunteer stalwart John Johnson has retired after decades of dedicated service at South Tyneside District Hospital.

His face has become familiar to patients, visitors and staff through his involvement since the 1980s with The League of Friends of South Tyneside Hospitals and, in recent years, the greeters' brigade.

South Tyneside NHS Foundation Trust Chief Executive Steve Williamson said: "We're very grateful to John for everything he's done for the Trust over many years. His selfless commitment to supporting his local hospital has been fantastic and we will miss seeing him around."

Mr Johnson, 85, and wife Betty, 83, who at one time was a medical secretary at the hospital, were members of The League of Friends for many years and served as chairman and secretary respectively. They were instrumental in helping the group to raise hundreds of thousands of pounds to buy items to benefit patients and help staff in the course of their work. In recent years, Mr Johnson, of South Shields, headed the team of greeters formed in 2005 to welcome patients and their families and carers to Outpatients.

Mr Johnson, who also worked on the hospital's radio station, said: "I am very sorry to have to call it a day for health reasons. I have really enjoyed meeting so many people and I have been lucky to work with some super colleagues. People don't want to come to hospital and as a volunteer I've seen it as my job to try to put a smile on their faces."

Mr Johnson worked for the Port of Tyne Authority, formerly the Tyne Improvement Commission, joining as a clerk in 1947. He was in charge of the printing and stationery department when he retired but he also carved a niche as their photographer and he was 'official' photographer for The League of Friends. As an authority on the River Tyne, he has given talks for the National Trust and has also provided commentaries for river trips.

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Pictured above: Members of staff and fellow volunteers at South Tyneside District Hospital say farewell to John Johnson, whose wife Betty is by his side

Issued on behalf of South Tyneside NHS Foundation Trust by Kay Jordan

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