

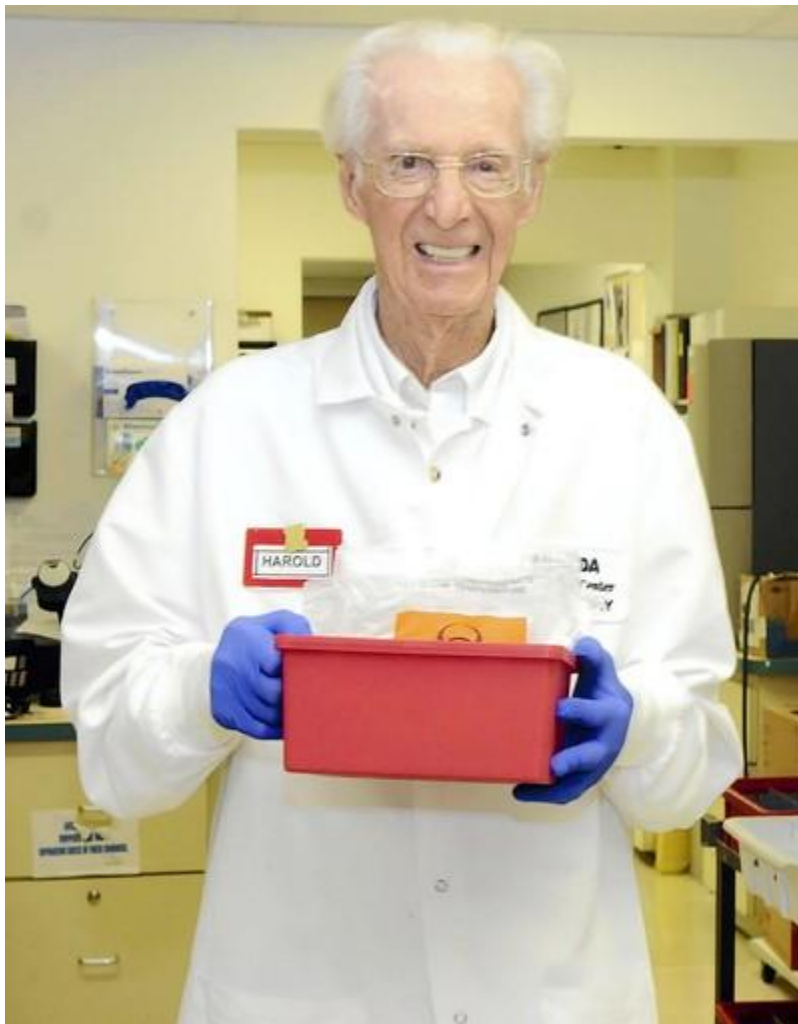
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### Man finds new science calling in his 90s

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Harold Morgenstern, 99, of Pompano Beach volunteers in the laboratory at Florida Medical Center in Lauderdale Lakes. One of his duties includes transferring specimens from the lab to the microbiology department. (Kimberli DiMare, FPG / November 29, 2011)

Wearing a white coat and flipping through his inventory catalog is a man that hospital staff affectionately calls "Grandpa."

Harold Morgenstern, 99, is a volunteer at the Florida Medical Center North Shore Campus' microbiology lab. For nine years, he has driven to the hospital from his home in Pompano Beach for almost a full work day of tasks and responsibilities. He'd rather do that than relax at home.

"One thing I really dislike people doing is playing cards around the swimming pool. I'd rather work," he said.

Morgenstern's biggest claim to fame in the lab is that he's a self starter. When he realized that the lab was throwing away a lot of supplies that had expired, he created an inventory system to ensure that the correct amount of items are purchased. Every week, he goes through the stock of supplies and records how many were used.

"He's an important part of the hospital," Chief Nursing Officer Mary Jane Damavandi said. "He takes ownership of his position."

Morgenstern was born and raised in Cincinnati, Ohio, to a family that was worked in the meat industry. He graduated from Miami University in Ohio in 1936 and hitch-hiked to Chicago with a friend. There, they walked up and down the meat packing district and learned that his degree in business would be more useful on the marketing side. At 26, he brought his wife to the Windy City and took a job as an office boy at a meat packing company for \$25 a week; eventually, he would become vice president of that company. In the '60s, the company was absorbed into the food giant Smithfield Foods.

Later, he moved south to Florida and switched gears, becoming the president of the Rare Fruit and Vegetable Council of [Broward County](#). Another member, who printed labels for the magazines, told him about volunteer opportunities in a microbiology lab where she worked at Florida Medical Center North Shore Campus.

"I wondered what it was all about; I couldn't imagine what it consisted of," he said of microbiology. "Now, it's my life. I really enjoy working in this particular field."

Morgenstern has taken on other responsibilities as well. When students come in for exams, he moderates and then uses an answer key to grade the tests. When an interesting article is published regarding a topic the lab wants to look into, he records it. He also makes trips to another lab down the hall to pick up samples.

He treats his volunteer position as a job. When he goes on vacation, he prefers to make up the hours he missed. When he's going to be late, he calls ahead of time. With so many responsibilities that he's taken on in the last nine years, he's become an integral part of the hospital.

"We cannot do without him," Lab Director Vivian Pernas said. "He actually goes and helps other departments when he doesn't have anything to do."

When he does give himself a moment to relax, he catches up with loved ones on Facebook. A father of four, he has 13 grandchildren and one great-granddaughter. He's also known in the lab as a jokester and a flirt; the female staffers joke that they're all his girlfriends.

"I have more fun being old than when I was working for a living," he laughed.

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