



TEXAS HEART<sup>®</sup> INSTITUTE

*at St. Luke's Episcopal Hospital*

# Project Heart

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**Activities for the Classroom**

# Spotlight on...

**Dena  
Houchin,  
RN**



**Dena Houchin grew up** in a small town, so small that when a flower shop came to town, it was big news. Ms. Houchin dreamed of traveling to faraway places. She wanted to be a flight attendant, but unfortunately, she grew too tall. Her height did come in handy for basketball, a sport that was her everything in school.

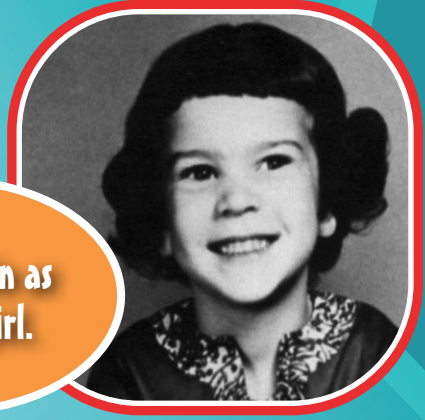


**Mrs. Houchin  
in grade school.**

# Ms. Houchin's biggest inspiration

was her great aunt, a director of nursing at a hospital in the big city. She remembers many delightful days of exploring her great aunt's hospital, navigating the maze-like halls and wondering what exciting thing would happen next. She found hospitals absolutely intriguing!

Mrs. Houchin as a young girl.



# One time, the hospital cafeteria was struck with food poisoning.

Ms. Houchin remembers with great fondness when she and her great aunt had to go to a local drive-in to get dinner for the entire staff in the middle of the night. “I need 50 ham sandwiches, 50 cheese sandwiches, and 4 sodas,” her great aunt said. With great confusion, the drive-through attendant asked, “Ummm...do you need all of that to-go?” Ms. Houchin still laughs when she thinks of that crazy night.



**Nurse Houchin with  
her great aunt.**

## At first, Ms. Houchin went to college for a career in business,

but after working part time at a local hospital, she decided to go to nursing school. She was better with words and art, than science and math but her great aunt's encouragement helped her get through the tough parts of nursing school.

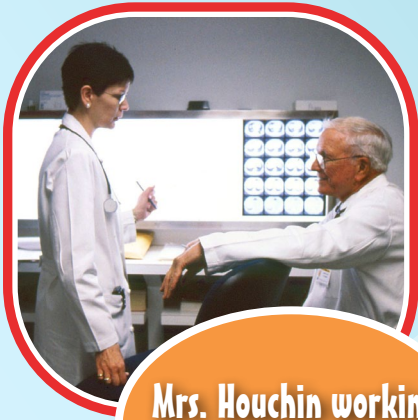
She found learning about cardiovascular health particularly challenging but fascinating too.



**Mrs. Houchin as a young nurse.**

**Today,** Ms. Houchin is the Administrative Director of Cardiovascular Surgery for the Texas Heart Institute and Dr. Denton Cooley's right-hand-man. She's worked at THI for more than 30 years and

still tells new THI recruits, "You're going to love it here!"



**Mrs. Houchin working  
with Dr. Cooley.**

