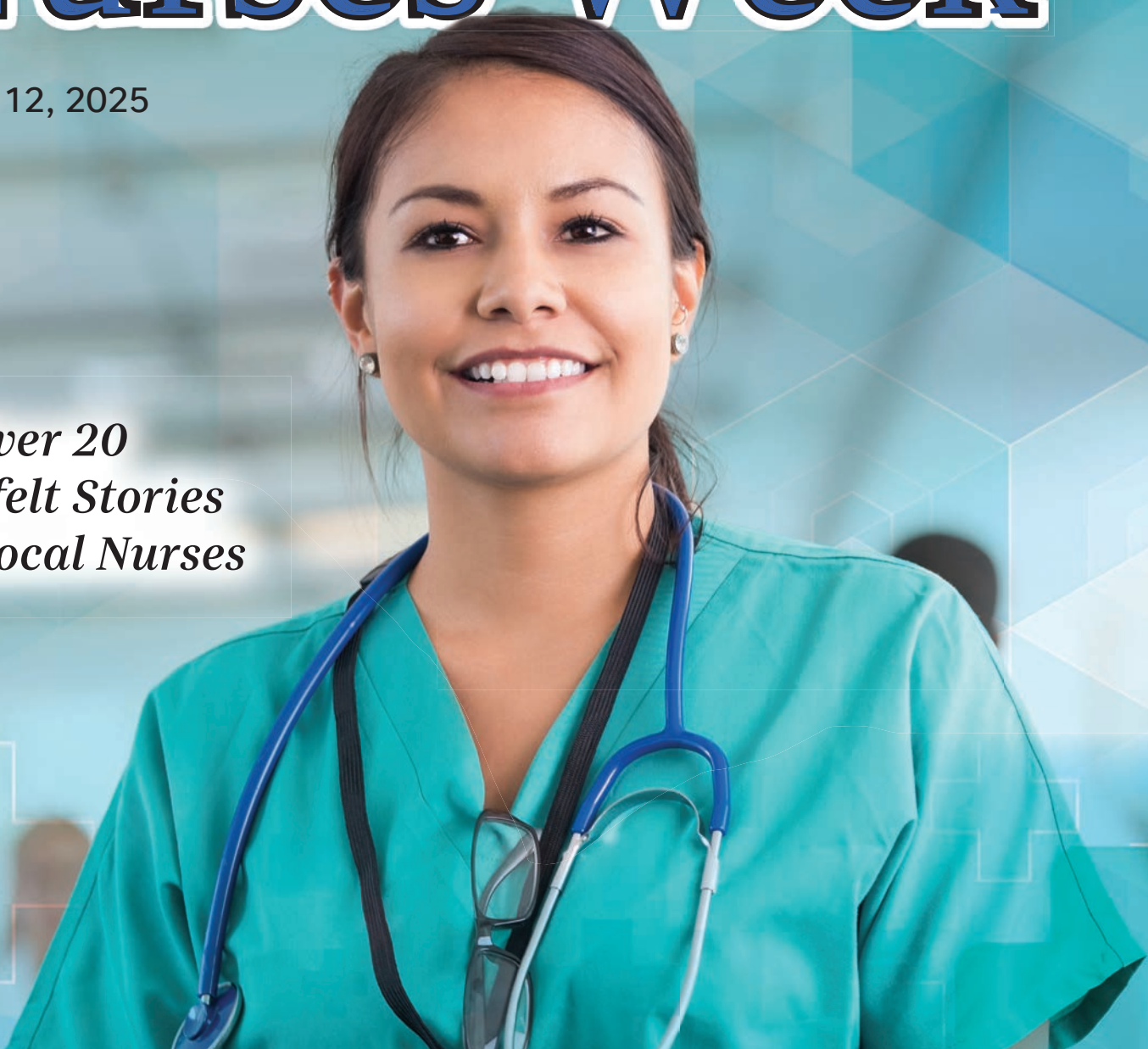


Nurses Week

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A Q&A on a Nurse's Perspective on Community Health

By Adagio Health



Paula Young, NP

Q: Please tell us about your background and how you have found yourself working in women's health care.

A: I've always had a deep passion for health care and helping others, which led me to pursue a career in nursing. I was drawn to community health because I wanted to make a tangible difference in peoples' lives. Women's health became a focus for me after seeing the unique challenges women face in accessing care, education, and support. Working in this field allows me to be an advocate for women at all stages of life, ensuring they have the knowledge and resources to make informed decisions about their health.

Q: Nurses often have a profound impact on their patients' lives. Can you share a story or experience from your time as a nurse?

A: One experience that has always stayed with me involved a young woman who came to Adagio Health feeling overwhelmed and uncertain about her reproductive health. She had never had a wellness exam before and was anxious about what to expect. By taking the time to listen, answer her questions, and walk her through the process, I could see her anxiety ease. Months later, she returned not only for a follow-up but also to bring a friend who was also nervous about care. **Moments like these remind me that compassionate, patient-centered nursing can create a ripple effect in the community.**

Q: What are some of the most rewarding aspects of working with women in a community health setting, and how do you see your role contributing to their overall wellbeing?

A: One of the most rewarding aspects of working in women's health is the ability to provide education and empowerment. Many women come to Adagio Health with limited access to health care or misinformation about their health. Being able to offer them accurate information, preventive screenings, and compassionate care allows them

"I see my role as a bridge — connecting patients with the knowledge and services they need while offering a safe, supportive space where they feel heard and valued."

~ Paula Young, Adagio Health Nurse Practitioner

to take control of their well-being. I see my role as a bridge — connecting patients with the knowledge and services they need while offering a safe, supportive space where they feel heard and valued.

Q: Given the variety of services Adagio Health offers, from reproductive health to preventive wellness screenings, how do you ensure that each patient feels heard and supported throughout their care journey?

A: It starts with active listening and patient-centered care. Every patient comes to Adagio Health with unique concerns, and it's important that they feel respected and understood. I take the time to engage in open, judgment-free conversations, ensuring they feel comfortable discussing their health. Additionally, collaboration with our interdisciplinary team helps us provide well-rounded support, addressing not just immediate medical needs but also long-term wellness through education, resources, and follow-up care.

Q: What advice would you give to someone interested in a nursing career focused on women's health, especially in a community-centered environment like Adagio Health?

A: I would encourage them to develop strong communication skills, a deep sense of empathy, and a commitment to lifelong learning. Women's health is a dynamic and evolving field, and staying informed about best practices is essential. Working in a community health setting also requires flexibility and cultural sensitivity, as you'll be caring for diverse populations with varying health care needs. **Most importantly, always approach your work with compassion — small acts of kindness**

and understanding can have a profound impact on a patient's experience.

Q: What is the lasting impact you hope to have on your patients, and what motivates you to continue making a difference every day?

A: I hope to leave a lasting impact by empowering my patients with knowledge and confidence in managing their health. Whether it's helping someone take charge of their reproductive health, guiding them through a difficult diagnosis, or simply providing a listening ear, I want each patient to feel supported and valued. What motivates me daily is knowing that my work has the potential to create positive change — whether big or small — in someone's life. Seeing patients return to Adagio Health with a newfound sense of confidence in their health care decisions is what keeps me going.

Paula Young, MSN, APRN, FNP-BC, is a board-certified family nurse practitioner at Adagio Health with a wealth of experience in both primary care and gastroenterology. Graduating with honors from Chamberlain University, Paula's journey in health care began as a Trauma ICU registered nurse, where she honed her expertise for over 11 years. Now, as part of the Adagio Health team, Paula brings her passion for women's health and her commitment to providing exceptional, patient-centered care to the office. You can book an appointment with Paula - through Adagio Health's website. She practices at Adagio Health Erie, located at 3530 Peach Street, Suite 120, in Erie, Pennsylvania. [NW](#)

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Emily Barron's Healthcare Calling:

Breaking Barriers and Transforming Lives

Written by
DaWayne Cleckley for Community Health Net



For Emily Barron healthcare isn't just a profession—it's a calling. Since joining Community Health Net (CHN) in January 2024, Emily has been unwavering in her mission to provide compassionate care and break down barriers to healthcare access for Erie's most vulnerable residents.

Emily's journey into healthcare began long before becoming a Certified Registered Nurse Practitioner (CRNP). She started as a certified nurse's assistant, where she quickly learned that quality care is as much about kindness and connection as it is about medicine. Working in nursing homes and later at Saint Vincent Hospital, she developed a deep respect for the resilience of her patients. Inspired to do more, she pursued her nursing degree, graduating from Mercyhurst University's RN program in 2014 before earning a Master of Science in Nursing with a specialization as a Family Nurse Practitioner from Frontier Nursing University in 2023. Emily later obtained her HIV Specialist credential from the American Academy of HIV Medicine in 2024. She is also an active member of the American Academy of Nurse Practitioners and Nurses for Sexual and Reproductive Health.

Choosing CHN was more than just a career decision for Emily—it felt like coming home. During her clinical rotations, she experienced firsthand the power of community-based care. She saw patients receiving the support they needed, not just in treatment but in overcoming life's challenges. "I always wanted to work in an environment where I could make a difference," she reflects. "CHN allows me to connect with patients who might otherwise face barriers to care, and that's incredibly rewarding."

Emily's approach to healthcare is full of empathy. "Even though I've lived in Erie almost my whole life, I thought I knew the community well. But working here has opened my eyes to just how much adversity people are facing—things I never realized before. It's been a huge eye-opener," she shares. She believes that healthcare is a human right and strives to empower her patients, particularly those dealing with chronic conditions like HIV, diabetes, and mental health challenges. "It's not just about treating conditions but about empowering patients to take charge of their health," she asserts.

Beyond her clinical duties, Emily is passionate about Erie, the place she calls home, and is deeply committed to her community. She envisions a future where no one in Erie feels alone in their healthcare journey—whether that's a young person struggling with an HIV diagnosis, someone battling addiction, or a family navigating a chronic illness. "We need to meet people where they are and provide resources that truly make a difference," she explains. "I want to be part of that change."

Emily's dedication to her patients and the community embodies the core values of Community Health Net. "Even on the hardest days, the reward of making a difference outweighs the stress. The connections with patients, the chance to help—it makes it all worth it," she reflects. Her unwavering commitment to compassionate care continues to inspire those around her, making a profound impact on the lives she touches.

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Happy Nurses Week

UPMC LIFE
CHANGING
MEDICINE

Back at the Bedside

By: April Murphy, Clinical Director of Nursing Administration and Medical/Surgical Service Line

I would like to take a moment to recognize all our medical-surgical nurses who work at UPMC Hamot. Medical-Surgical nursing is truly a specialty that requires time management, collaboration and a high attention to detail. These nurses can juggle, not only multiple patients' care simultaneously, but continually ensures all physicians and families are kept informed. Our nurses do this with a level of expertise and compassion that is unmatched. During Nurses Week, I'd like to recognize one nurse in particular.

Brooke Posten is a nurse at UPMC Hamot who began her career in 2003 as a medical-surgical nurse working with trauma patients. She is a wife and proud mother of six children. After honing her skills for several years, Brooke transitioned to different types of nursing specialties, including Labor and Delivery, outpatient healthcare, public health, school nursing and home health care.

In December of 2024, Brooke returned to UPMC as a medical-surgical bedside nurse. When asked what brought her back to inpatient, Brooke said she missed the teamwork and skills leveraged in an acute care setting.

Since returning, Brooke has quickly been recognized as a strong resource for newer nurses, passionate patient advocate, and a positive energy that fills the unit with joy. "Being back at the bedside has made me feel appreciated and proud to be a nurse again," she said.

Brooke works full-time at the hospital while balancing her own business, Mattress by Appointment Erie. We are so fortunate to have Brooke and so many nurses like her on our team! Happy Nurses' Week! **NW**



Brooke Posten, BSN

We Are Family

By: Jitsel
Miranda, RN



Blanca, RN, Melanie, Jitsel, RN

I have been a nurse for almost three years. I'm a first-generation college graduate and I started my nursing career as a new grad nurse on the 8th floor at UPMC Hamot.

I think my sisters and I must have had a true calling and passion for nursing seeing as all of us have made nursing our profession. I have an older sister, Blanca, who is a nurse in the Post-Anesthesia Care Unit at UPMC Hamot and a younger sister, Melanie, who is in nursing school at Gannon University and who also works as a patient care technician at UPMC Hamot.

The reason why I love nursing is as cliché as it sounds: I love nursing our patients back to health. Many of our patients on 8 East are surgical patients so I get to see them from the very beginning of their admission and up until their discharge. To see the progress, they have made just gives me a sense of fulfillment knowing that I played a small part in nursing them back to health.

Another reason why I enjoy nursing is because of the relationship we build between our patients and their families. At times, patient's admissions do last up to a couple of weeks, so as a nurse we are able to get to know patients better and their life stories. We meet patients and their families at some of the lowest points in their lives and I would like to think that we were able to shape their experiences and make their time on 8 East more comfortable through empathy and kindness. I love being my patient's cheerleader as they take their first couple of steps after major surgery or the sheer joy on my patient's face as they were finally able to accomplish a goal that was barely feasible a couple of days ago. It's things like this that make nursing fulfilling for me.

With nursing, it just feels like family. Through nursing I was able to gain another community of supporters and friends. We spend so much time with each other at work because of the 12 hours shift that we do. It's only natural that we get close and create bonds that sometimes extend beyond our time as bedside nurses. I also know that during medical emergencies my fellow nurses will be in my corner in an instance.

Lastly, through nursing, my sisters and I have been able to make our parents proud. So, I appreciate all that nursing has been able to give me because without it I wouldn't be able to show my gratitude for my parents' sacrifices. I want to thank all the patients that I have had the privilege to take care of, all of you have shaped me into the nurse that I am today and strive to be. **NW**



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Why now? Well, why not! – Pursue Your Happiness

By: Amanda Rekitt, Advanced Educator
UPMC Jameson School of Nursing at UPMC Hamot

As we collectively celebrate nurses' week, we are often asked why we chose to become a nurse. Each nurse's origin story and career path are distinct. Who doesn't love a good original story? At the UPMC Jameson School of Nursing at UPMC Hamot, we would like to offer an atypical perspective into the motivation for going to nursing school for three nontraditional students with an already established life.

James "Jamie" Baranowski enjoyed his work as a husband, father, and local chiropractor for the past 25 years. His nursing origin story involves encouragement from his sister, a nurse practitioner, to become a nurse. Jamie felt a strong desire to help others beyond his chiropractic practice and enjoys working

in the hospital setting. Additionally, for Jamie, the 16-month nursing program and the many job opportunities available for nurses was enticing.

Amanda Farr begins her nursing story as a wife whose husband served in the military, the mother of five children, and a previously earned degree in Kinesiology from Penn State. Over the years and time spent in various locations up and down the east coast, Amanda could not shake the feeling that she should become a nurse. She fondly recalls the wonderful nursing care she received when delivering her children and felt deeply that she had the compassion to help those who are struggling and suffering. Amanda appreciated how the flexibility of the program allows her to study on non-school

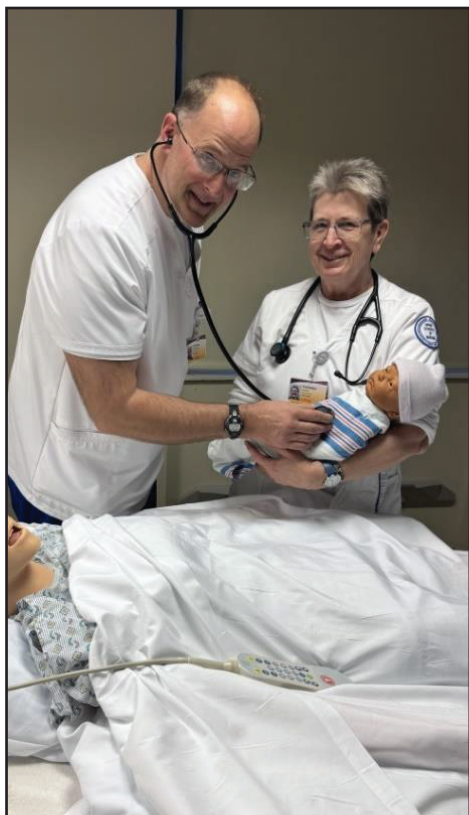
days while managing her family.

Kathleen "Kat" Haibach's nursing origin story begins with earning a biology degree. Kat worked in quality assurance within the food and beverage industry which included managing and establishing laboratories that performed chemical, biological and allergen testing in the state of California. Kat passionately believes in patient care and envisioned a very different second career of helping others as a nurse. Kat genuinely conveys her thoughts on nursing by simply stating, "If you like making a difference, then go for it!"

All three students conveyed their life experiences that helped to prepare them for the rigors of nursing school and empathetically caring for patients. Likewise, there is unwavering support, acceptance, and sense of belonging from fellow students as they are all embarking on the same path. The friction amongst different generations, often sensationalized by social media, simply does not exist within the confines of nursing school. About nursing, all are welcome to pursue their happiness as each unique journey is fostered by preceptors, mentors, peers and families.

This week, take the time to celebrate the science, art and extraordinary humane work of all nurses from the student learning the craft to the retiree giving back to our community through volunteerism. Being a nurse is an odyssey full of challenging adventures that don't end with nursing school. The opportunities for life-long learning and patient care are endless. As my late beloved mentor Anne Pedersen RN would say, "Let's go to work!"

NW



Jamie Baranowski & Kat Haibach



Amanda Farr

Worth Every Step: Finding Your Potential as a Nurse

By: Rachel Weist, RN



Rachel Weist, RN

Becoming a young mother at 18 years old came with a new set of challenges, responsibilities and sacrifices but also a powerful sense of motivation to cultivate a stable and fulfilling career for a successful future.

I knew I was interested in the medical field and wanted to make a difference in the lives of those that I cared for from an early age. After touring at Great Lakes Institute of Technology and seeing what healthcare career options were offered, I began to further research the role of a surgical technologist. I enrolled the following day and began classes in February 2015. During the 21-month program, I immersed myself in anatomy and physiology concepts, the process of surgical procedures within multiple specialties and an abundance of surgical instruments and their functions.

Upon graduating with an associate's degree in surgical technology, I was fortunate to gain employment at UPMC Hamot in the main operating room in August 2016. Becoming a surgical technologist gave me a front-row seat to life-saving procedures and I took pride in being an integral part of the surgical team. As a surgical technologist, I thrived in the

fast-paced environment: anticipating the surgeons' next moves, passing instruments with precision and ensuring the operating room functioned seamlessly. The ability to maintain a sterile field, assist the surgeon efficiently and ensure patient safety became part of my daily routine.

After three years as a surgical technologist, I wanted to be more involved in patient care beyond the sterile field and enrolled in nursing school at Mercyhurst University. UPMC Hamot was very accommodating during my time in school, allowing me to balance the responsibilities of working during the day and attending nursing classes in the evening and weekend. I learned about disease processes, pharmacology, patient assessments and critical thinking in ways I had never encountered before. I now had the opportunity to see the full spectrum of patient care. I graduated in December 2021, thanks to my amazing family support system and transitioned into a circulator role immediately.

Becoming an operating room nurse with a surgical technology background has been a unique advantage. My previous experience in the operating

room gave me an edge in critical thinking, attention to detail and understanding of surgical procedures in depth. While I still appreciate the structured environment of the operating room, my role as a circulating nurse has become multifaceted as I serve roles of being an advocate, educator and caregiver in every sense.

My journey from surgical technologist to nurse has been one of growth, challenges and self-discovery. It has reinforced my belief that healthcare goes beyond technical skills and encompasses human connection. I am proud of where I started and am excited about where I am headed as I can continue to advance within the operating room at UPMC Hamot. I am now a Senior Professional Staff Nurse and Team Lead Registered Nurse for the transplant specialty in UPMC Hamot's operating room.

For those considering a similar path, I say this: If you feel the calling to do more, follow it. Growth comes from stepping out of your comfort zone, embracing new challenges and believing in your potential. The journey may be difficult, but the rewards are worth every step. **NW**

2024 Mary Desin Honor Award Recipients

By: Ashlee N. Skarzenski, DNP, RN, CPAN, CEN, NEA-BC
Clinical Director, Surgical and Perioperative Services UPMC Hamot

At the UPMC Hamot 7th Annual Nursing Symposium, the OR received the first ever, annual Mary Desin Honor Award. The nomination for this award particularly mentions the extraordinary efforts of Sarah Pollick, RN, CNOR and Becca Skrypzak, LPN, ST on a particular night shift when the CORE team needed the OR to act quickly and expertly. Because of Sarah and Becca's remarkable efforts, the team was able to recover organs from a 25-year-old gunshot wound victim, which ultimately saved the life of a 55-year-

old male who was extremely sick with end-stage liver disease and number four on the national donor list. With this award, we commend the efforts of both Sarah and Becca that night. We also reflect on all the times that others on our team have gone above and beyond to serve our patients. The OR team members may not always hear the outcome of their efforts, but they truly make a positive difference in the lives of tens of thousands of patients every year! Congratulations to the entire team, and especially to Sarah and Becca! **NW**



Rebecca Skrypzak, LPN, ST and
Sara Pollick, RN, CNOR

Meet Aimee Horcasitas: A Champion of Transcultural Care at UPMC Hamot

By: Autumn Bellan and Aimee Horcasita, RN

When Aimee Horcasitas leaves UPMC Hamot after a long shift, she is thankful for the opportunity to form genuine relationships with patients and their families. “The bonds that form when patients feel seen and heard are what makes my job so meaningful,” said Aimee, a bilingual nurse who came to the United States from Mexico to immerse herself in a different healthcare system and broaden her understanding of how nursing practices adapt to diverse cultural contexts.

“Being embraced by the local Spanish-speaking community has been incredible,” said Aimee. They have helped her navigate her new life in Erie, by inviting her to join their family celebrations for Thanksgiving and Christmas. “My ability to speak Spanish allows me to bridge gaps in care for our diverse patient population. I can feel the sense of relief and trust when



Aimee Horcasitas, RN

patients see that I understand them not only in language, but in culture.”

Aimee earned her Bachelor of Nursing degree from the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM), graduating with an outstanding GPA of 9.95, equivalent to a 4.0 in the U.S. grading system. Aimee was awarded her degree with Academic Excellence, being honored as the top graduate of her class.

In her career, Aimee is a leader, empowering future nurses, promoting equitable healthcare access and elevating the role of nurses in shaping healthcare policies worldwide. In Mexico, she served as the National President of the Nursing Students’ Association in Mexico. Now, Aimee represents Sigma Nursing at the United Nations and serves as the Americas Co-Chair for the Nursing Now Challenge.

“Nurses are the backbone of healthcare, and their voices, expertise and well-being must be uplifted and supported,” said Aimee. “I want to help create a world where nurses have access to education, resources and opportunities that allow them to fully realize their potential.”

At UPMC Hamot, Aimee works towards that goal by connecting with her fellow nurses, staff, patients and families. “UPMC Hamot is a place of vulnerability and trust,” said Aimee. “Being a nurse is not just about providing care. It’s about understanding the stories, the cultures, and the lived experiences of those I serve.” **NW**



Jamie Woodard, MSN, RN, WCC

I always knew I wanted a career that would allow me to make a difference in the lives of others; however, I never thought I would become a nurse. I heard a saying before: “If you want to make God laugh, tell Him your plans.” I’m sure He finds me to be quite hilarious!

When I first started working as a home health aide in 2002, I certainly never imagined that I was taking the first step toward such a rewarding career. Today, I am proud to say I have a Master of Science in Nursing degree specializing in Nursing Education, a wound care certification, and a Personal Care Home Administrator License.

I entered my healthcare career as a Home Health Aide after moving to West Virginia.



Daniel Eaton, DNP, RN

Erie, Pa. – The transition from patient-facing care to teaching wasn’t a stretch for Daniel Eaton, who joined the nursing faculty at Penn State Behrend in 2015.

“All nurses are teachers,” he said. “We teach patients how to care for a wound or manage a chronic condition. We teach family members how to support and advocate for someone they love.

“In any medical setting,” he said, “teaching is a huge part of the job.”

At Behrend, where the nursing program is part of the Penn State Ross and Carol Nese College of Nursing, Eaton teaches in the classroom and in the Nursing Technology Lab and Simulation

Jamie Woodard - My Journey To Becoming A Nurse

By Jamie Woodard, MSN, RN, WCC

Initially, I was skeptical of my first assignment working with a quadriplegic man because this was new to me; however, we grew to become more like family. This is when I realized I wanted to pursue a career in nursing. He always told me to become a nurse.

I moved back to Erie in 2005. I remember hearing about how great Sarah Reed Senior Living was to work at, but I was hesitant to apply because it was hard, and they seldom hired. Once they were in, they stayed! I decided to apply anyway and was called for an interview. The interviewer said she saw something special in me. I began my career as a Personal Care Assistant at Sarah Reed Senior Living in their Personal Care Facility in 2005. Later, I was selected for the HVA course and became a Certified Nurse's Assistant. The DON and my peers recognized me as someone who exemplified leadership qualities, and I became

the CNA shift team leader. I looked up to many nurses, especially the ones who took the extra time to show they cared for the residents, the families, and their team. I was inspired and encouraged to finally enroll in nursing school while working as a CNA.

In 2009, I was accepted into Gannon University's Nursing program. This was one of the most challenging journeys of my life being a working single mother of 3 and a full-time student. Many people were rooting for me, but some people thought I wouldn't make it. I was told I wouldn't succeed in nursing school because I was a single mother. I was even told to stay a CNA because I was good at it! I'm glad I didn't listen to the negativity and responded with, "Watch me do it!". Through hard work, my children motivating me, and trusting God, I became an RN in 2013.

I've worked in various healthcare settings and roles as an RN, expanding my nursing knowledge and skill set. My commitment to being a lifelong learner and dedication to making a positive impact in the lives of others has led me to where I am on my professional journey. Every experience has shaped me into the nurse I am today. I am the Personal Care Nurse Manager at Sarah Reed Senior Living, where I can continue to grow and develop my leadership skills, educate the clinical team, and advocate for the residents.

My advice to future nurses or individuals who are considering going into the nursing field but are afraid is to never stop learning, never stop challenging yourself to be your best version of yourself, never compare yourself or your journey to anyone else, and if you're afraid—do it scared. You never know how far you can go when you push past your fears! **NW**

Behrend Instructor Preps Next Generation of Nurses

By Robb Frederick, Penn State Behrend

Center, which is equipped with high-fidelity patient mannequins. The lab was expanded in 2019 after a \$950,000 investment by community partners, including the Orris C. and Beatrice Dewey Hirtzel Memorial Foundation.

In clinical rotations, which are still an essential component of nursing programs, learning opportunities often are limited to the illnesses or injuries the medical staff encounters on a given day. Simulation labs allow instructors to model a wider range of experiences and introduce more variables into the simulated treatment plan, said Eaton, who also has taught at Edinboro University of Pennsylvania, Fortis Institute and Erie Business Center.

Simulations prepare students for the patient-facing experiences that follow, he said.

"In a hospital, if it's your first time doing something, that pressure can be overwhelming," he said. "Simulations and the class discussions that follow them, in what we call the debriefing, are an opportunity to practice, and to learn from your mistakes without directly affecting the patient."

In the lab, and in his supervision of clinical rotations, Eaton encourages his students to think and talk like a teacher.

"I always say, 'Explain it to me in terms the patient is going to understand,'" he said. "Don't give me the textbook answer. Translate it, using your own words. When

you can explain it, that's when the deeper learning occurs."

Eaton, who holds a doctorate of nursing practice, has continued his patient-facing work. He is a mental-health nurse at UPMC Western Behavioral Health at Safe Harbor. In the summers, he is a standby RN, contracted through EmergyCare, at Presque Isle Downs & Casino, where he works with jockeys.

"There are so many different things you can do as a nurse," he said. "I'm always talking about that with my students. I want them to explore, and to see all the different opportunities that are available to them. That's how you find the right fit." **NW**

"There are so many different things you can do as a nurse," says Daniel Eaton, an associate teaching professor of nursing at Penn State Behrend.

THANK YOU, NURSES!

IT TAKES SOMEONE SPECIAL TO BE A NURSE

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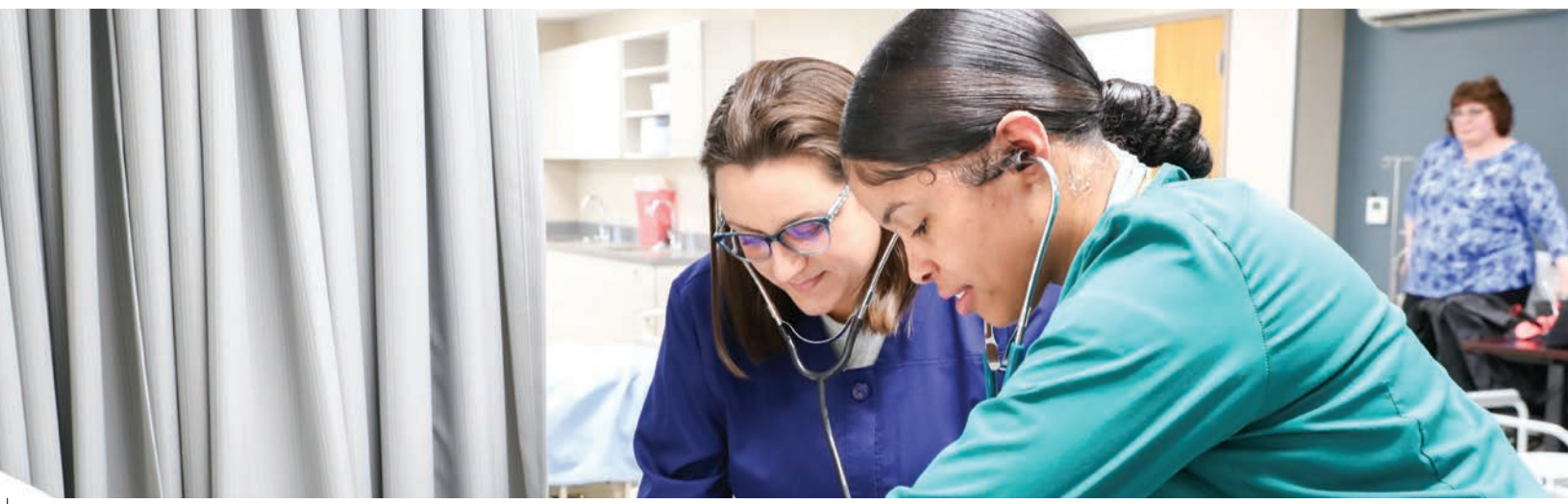
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A Century of Loving Care

**By Michael Grizanti LPN,
Jodi Miller LPN
and Heather Heitzenrater RN**

For more than a century, the nurses at Pleasant Ridge Manor have been transforming lives through their compassion, expertise, and unwavering commitment. As we honor all our incredible nurses, we're proud to spotlight the experiences of three remarkable individuals, who together bring 58 years of dedicated service, enriching the lives of our residents every day.

Michael Grizanti LPN (10 year)

Approximately a decade ago, I made the transition from manufacturing to nursing, and it has proven to be an incredibly fulfilling career path. I've found great personal satisfaction in knowing that my care has positively impacted the lives of my patients. Working at Pleasant Ridge Manor has been a truly rewarding experience, offering both exceptional care for our residents and a supportive, collaborative environment for our dedicated staff.

Jodi Miller LPN (17 years)

Becoming a nurse has always been my dream, for as long as I can remember. The most fulfilling aspect of my role is the deep connections I've formed with my residents- they truly feel like family to me. Whether it's offering a comforting hand to hold, being a source of support during emotional moments, or sharing laughter and lightheartedness, I cherish every opportunity to be present for them.

Heather Heitzenrater (31 years)

From a young age, I always felt a strong desire to help others and was naturally drawn to caring for those in need. Initially, I decided to follow in my mother's footsteps and pursued secretarial science during my early college years. However, my perspective shifted profoundly when my sister was diagnosed with Hodgkin's Lymphoma at just 19. Witnessing the unwavering compassion and care provided by nurses during this challenging time deeply impacted me and my family. Their dedication inspired me to change my major to nursing, so I could support others through some of their most difficult and vulnerable moments.

I earned my Bachelor of Science degree from Gannon University in May 1993 and began my journey at Pleasant Ridge Manor later that year in November. My career started as a floor nurse, providing hands-on care to our residents, which was an incredibly rewarding experience. Over time, I transitioned into administrative roles, and I now focus on Utilization Review, managing residents' insurance and ensuring compliance with federal and state assessment requirements.

My career as a nurse has been incredibly fulfilling, allowing me the opportunity to connect with and care for so many wonderful individuals. I believe my cheerful, positive, and compassionate nature has left a lasting impression on both the residents I've cared for and my colleagues. In turn many of the residents have deeply touched my life, enriching my journey in ways I'll always cherish.

NW

Nursing student's appreciation for hard work shaped by her childhood as a refugee of war

Story contributed by Mercyhurst University.
By Debbie Morton



Goma at work.

In Nepali culture, family is the cornerstone of life, and elders hold a revered place in it. This deep sense of duty and respect guides Mercyhurst University nursing student Goma Kuikel, 21, whose life decisions remain rooted in her ancestral homeland despite spending most of her life as a citizen of the United States.

Goma and her multi-generational family—her mother, Dahn Maya Kuikel, and younger sisters Ayusha, Arpana, and Aryana—moved to Erie in 2023, settling into an eastside apartment. As the family's primary breadwinner, Goma balances her first semester in Mercyhurst's Associate of Science in Nursing program with a demanding job as a patient care technician at Saint Vincent Hospital, working two 12-hour shifts on weekends. Her education is partially funded through Allegheny Health Network's (AHN) Talent Acquisition Program (TAP), which provides financial aid and mentorship to aspiring healthcare professionals.

Though her schedule is grueling, Goma never complains. Instead, she sees it as fulfilling a greater purpose.

"I am living my mother's dream," she said, beaming with joy. "She wanted to be a doctor or a nurse, but it didn't work out. Now, I'm doing it for her."

Goma's aspirations extend beyond her own success. In line with Nepali values that emphasize collectivism over individualism, she hopes to specialize in geriatric nursing—a decision shaped by her experience caring for her grandfather when he fell ill.

"I like older people, and I want to give them support and care," she said.

Her passion aligns with a growing national need. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the number of Americans aged 65 and older is expected to rise from 58 million in 2022 to 82 million by 2050,

making up nearly a quarter of the population. Healthcare experts warn that this shift underscores an urgent demand for more professionals trained in geriatric care.

Despite the challenges, Goma credits Mercyhurst with helping her navigate her rigorous schedule, providing mentors, tutors, and resources that support her academic journey.

Her ultimate dream? To buy a house for her family—something they have never had since immigrating to the U.S.

"I want to give them a home," she said. "A place that's ours." **NW**



Goma's family picture, featuring left to right: Aryana, Dahn Maya Kuikel, Arpana, Ayusha, Goma, and Grandpa



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'A Mile Deep and 100 Yards Wide'

By Melissa J. Dixon, director of communications and marketing for LECOM Health.

Working on a 911 ambulance in the Philadelphia suburbs for a decade would indicate that unpredictability, high stakes and a compulsion for heart-racing endeavors rev the internal engine of Brian Schwarz, RN ADN. How fitting, then, that he now serves as the clinical supervisor of the new cardiac catheterization lab at LECOM Medical Center and Behavioral Health Pavilion.

He's also a singer, guitarist, gym rat, bow hunter and motorcycle enthusiast, deflecting the mental tolls of nursing and opportunities for burnout.

"Many people will tell you that nursing is a calling," said Schwarz. "I disagree. It's a skill that can be learned. We aren't saints or martyrs; we're people dedicated to doing a good job. Compassion for others and empathy are very human traits, and anyone can cultivate them with practice."

He chose nursing because he wanted a career path that was more flexible. He also wanted to train to a higher level than was available in Emergency Medical Services.

"I'm grateful for the experiences EMS gave me. I learned how to remain calm under pressure, which helps me a lot in the cath lab," he said.

How flexible has nursing been for him compared to working in EMS? For starters, he spends a solid portion of his cath lab life on call, responding from home for emergencies.

"EMS is an inch deep and a mile wide. As a cath lab nurse, I'm a content expert in my field. It's more like a mile deep and 100 yards wide. People come in off the street trying their best to die. Inside 90 minutes, we fix them and send them on their way. We win a lot more than we lose. I know there are people alive today that wouldn't be if not for my team."

For those wins to happen, good training is required. Part of that training came from his EMS experience, but he also earned his Associate in Applied Science from Montgomery County Community College in Blue Bell, Pa., 15 years ago.

Moreover, he has had the luxury of working with renowned interventional cardiologist Matthew C. Becker, MD, for the past 10 years.



CathLab Team

Dr. Becker recruited Schwarz to be on his team.

Schwarz has an obligation to take care of himself and stay informed and motivated. Being genuinely interested in what he does and wanting to be good enough to teach new nurses is what inspires him.

Featuring the latest innovations — including the groundbreaking renal denervation procedure performed by Dr. Becker — and cardiac diagnostics, interventional cardiac catheterization, and advanced vascular procedures, the brand-new cath lab offers plenty of opportunity for learning and staying at the top of his game.

"In medicine, it's the bad and the funny that always sticks in your mind. They help balance one another. The biggest challenge is learning how to not take the job home with you."

As far as living in Erie compared to Philadelphia, he appreciates the summers and living close to the water.

"The summers in Erie are the best. Waiting for the gray winter to end and for summer to arrive ... not so much. I try to make the most out of the summer and fall. The traffic is much better here, too." **NW**



Brian Schwarz, RN ADN

Gratitude is the Attitude for Nursing

"Many times, when I'm walking out of work after a long, hard day, I think to myself how proud I am of myself," said Tracy Long, RN, who works at LECOM Health Corry Memorial Hospital. "And although I can sometimes feel defeated and exhausted, my heart is full."

Some people enter the nursing profession without any doubts. Some start out with a fear of failure. Either way, the pressure can be daunting: People's lives are literally in their hands.

"Providing love and care for people when they are at their worst and seeing them get better is my favorite part of nursing. I rely on discipline to keep myself going. Nursing can be a draining job, both mentally and physically. I believe that my desire to serve and care is what keeps me going. It's an honor to serve God's people every day," she said.

Long has been a nurse for nine years, joining CMH in recent months. She attended nursing school as a single mother needing a stable job. The more she learned, the more her passion grew.

"While earning my Associate of Science in nursing, or working as a new nurse, I was always worried that I would fail or not know what to do, but then I think of the incredible things that I have done as a nurse, and that I'm brave enough to do



Tracy Long, RN

By Melissa J. Dixon, director of communications and marketing for LECOM Health.

The Most Rewarding Experience

By Melissa J. Dixon, director of communications and marketing for LECOM Health.

hard things and to love people on their hardest days,” said Long. “There is so much to learn, and I learn something new every single day. The medical field is intriguing! People will never understand what we really go through every single day, but we do it anyway and with a good attitude. My best memory is choosing to see the good.”

A typical day for her includes assessing patients, checking vital signs, assisting with acts of daily living (ADLs), administering medications and trying to make everyone smile.

Most, if not all, nurses can attest to the looming cloud of burnout and mental toll of the job, but Long has found a way to make peace her priority.

“I try to be conscious of not picking up too many extra shifts, and I am selfish with my time off. I also make sure I get adequate sleep.”

Days off are important for another reason: She also operates a teeth-whitening business (Brighten Up) out of a home office in Spring Creek, Pa.

“These appointments take place at my house so I am still able to do things that I would normally do on my days off like dishes or laundry – and having people come to my house forces me to keep my house clean! I can control my availability, but it also helps create structure on my days off. Teeth whitening is my ‘fun job,’ and it’s a nice way to make some extra money.”

As for advice for anyone interested in nursing, Long offers this:

“Nursing is a noble profession, but it’s not for the weak. Evaluate why you truly want to be a nurse and make sure you’re doing it for the right reasons. It really is a great career and there are so many opportunities and so many different paths you can take.” **NW**

How important is workplace culture? Abigail Proctor, Licensed Practical Nurse at Union City Rural Health Clinic, is proud to share her view.

Being a full-time mom to a rambunctious 2-year-old and pregnant with her second child, while serving as caregiver for her husband who was convalescing at home after knee surgery, Proctor quickly understood the benefits of having a supportive team in her new role as a full-time nurse.

“We make a really good team here in Union City, so I’m proud to have an opportunity to work here. Everybody – including the patients – seems to be supportive of everything. Anything I’ve needed, the girls have been awesome about helping me, or giving me a day off when my husband had surgery. The doctors and nurses are always willing to jump in if I need a moment to myself. When I’m at home, my husband is very good about letting me have that time.”

Proctor received her diploma certification from Venango Technology Center in Warren, Pa. Prior to nursing school, she worked in registration at LECOM Health Corry Memorial Hospital. With full intention of returning to the LECOM Health system, she graduated, took her state boards, and started working at the rural health clinic two weeks later.

Her inspiration came from her mother, Alisha Miller, a clinical lead nurse at Corry Rural Health Clinic, who completed the same program at Venango Technology Center in 2012.

“When I was growing up, my mom was a nurse, and watching her made me want to do the same thing she was doing. I liked seeing the relationships she was making with all the people she worked with, and I liked meeting the people she was taking care of and hearing how much they loved her. Now, if I have a question about something, I know I can go to her and she’ll be able to help me through it.”

Proctor’s regular duties include checking vital signs and helping with wellness visits. She enjoys being the first point of contact after patients check in so she can help them

get comfortable or calm down if they’re nervous.

“I love the relationships, connections and trust that I’m able to make with my patients.”

It may not be everyone’s preference, but one of her favorite tasks is drawing blood.

“I’m good at it! I’m IV certified through school, and I watched Brittany Polley, nurse practitioner here at Union City Rural Health Clinic, draw a couple of times before I decided to try it myself. I had her watch me the first few times I did it. I was nervous at first, but I’ve definitely grown more confident with it. I now do it on a daily basis.”

When it comes to nursing challenges, she said the hardest part was the actual schooling.

“The courses got more difficult as the program advanced, and time management became a struggle because I have a 2-year-old. I found out I was pregnant with my second child while I was in school.”

Now, managing it all, she could grow discouraged, but she always remembers, “My patients need me.”

“Coming to work is always fun. It’s exciting to know I’m coming into a good environment every day. It isn’t easy, but if you keep your head in the right place, you’ll see nursing is the most rewarding experience. Remember that wherever you choose to work, you are on a team. A good work environment makes life so much easier.” **NW**



Abigail Proctor, LPN

What's Happening with the Nursing Profession

By Patricia Donnelly, MSN, MBA, RN, CCRN

Happy Nurses Week! The future of nursing is brighter than ever. Here are five exciting trends shaping the profession:

- **Smart Technology, Compassionate Care:** Artificial intelligence is helping nurses deliver even better care. Imagine technology that flags potential risks and suggests personalized treatment plans, freeing nurses to focus on what they do best: connecting with patients and providing empathetic support.
- **Addressing the Nurse Shortage, Creating Better Jobs:** We're finding new ways to make nursing a rewarding career—with flexible schedules, telehealth options, and greater support for nurses' well-being.
- **Telehealth: Connecting Care Closer to Home:** Thanks to telehealth, nurses can connect with patients in remote areas, providing convenient and proactive care.

- **Investing in Nurses' Well-being:**

We know how demanding nursing can be, so we're prioritizing mental health resources, work-life balance, and support programs to ensure our nurses thrive.

- **Healthy Planet, Healthy People:** Nurses are leaders in making healthcare more sustainable – reducing waste, conserving energy, and educating patients about healthy living.

The demand for nurses is high, offering competitive salaries and a fulfilling career. AHN Saint Vincent Hospital is committed to building a healthier, more sustainable future for both our nurses and our community. Thank you to all nurses for your dedication

NW



Because of you, care has no limits.

Thank you, nurses, for giving your all every day.

Your tireless dedication, steady hands, and kind words leave a lasting impact on every life you touch. We celebrate you because behind every healing moment, there's a nurse.



On Being a Nurse

By Sallie Piazza, BSN,
MS, CNML, CNOR

AHN Saint Vincent Hospital Chief Nursing Officer

What does it mean to be a nurse? Being a nurse is an honor. We get to take care of you and your families. We are the eyes and ears of physicians.

Being a nurse, you will never be bored. You will always have challenges even on your best days. There is so much to do and so little time.

Nurses carry immense responsibility. Nurses take that responsibility to our hearts. It weighs on us. When we leave for the day, we review in our minds everything we did that day.

Patients will bless you and curse you. Nurses see their patients at their best and at their worst. Nurses are amazed every day at people's capacity for love, courage and endurance. We see life end and life beginning. Nurses experience resounding triumphs and devastating failures. We cry a lot and laugh a lot. Nurses know what it is to be human and humane. At the end of the day, nurses make a difference.

Every May, we celebrate nurses for the work nurses do. If you know a nurse, take the time to thank them for their hard work and dedication.

Happy Nurses Week and Hospital Week. **NW**



Sallie Piazza, BSN, MS, CNML, CNOR

A chapter closes at AHN Saint Vincent Hospital

By Patricia Donnelly,
MSN, MBA, RN, CCRN

After years of unwavering dedication, Chief Nursing Officer, Sallie Piazza, BSN, MS, CNL, CNOR, is retiring.

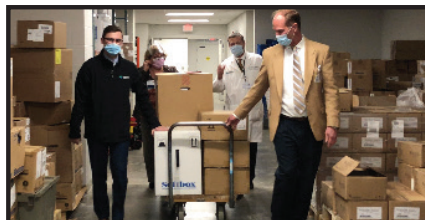
More than just a title, Sallie was the beating heart of the hospital, a steady presence that guided countless nurses through the stormiest nights with a blend of steely strength and profound compassion.

Her journey from 2N nurse manager to CNO wasn't merely a climb; it was an epic testament to her leadership, a journey marked by both the unwavering precision of a master craftsperson and the boundless empathy of a true healer. Her legacy transcends mere titles; it's etched in the lives of the nurses she inspired, a culture of collaboration she cultivated, and the countless acts of kindness she gifted.

Built on wisdom, unwavering resolve, and a spirit that never faltered, her influence extends far beyond the hospital walls. The silent tears that speak volumes of her impact are a poignant farewell, a testament to an irreplaceable mentor and friend.

While the Buffalo Bills undoubtedly celebrate a new superfan, AHN Saint Vincent will feel the absence of its true leader, a leader who left an indelible mark on every heart she touched.

While we appreciate all she has given, we will miss her but want to wish her all the best in her retirement! **NW**



Sallie Piazza, second from left is shown as part of the team that received the very first COVID vaccine supply at AHN Saint Vincent. Also shown, left to right are Steve Henderson, Director of Pharmacy, Piazza, AHN Saint Vincent President, Dr. Chris Clark, and the late Jason Roebuck, Chief Operating Officer at the time of the start of the pandemic.

Tribute to a Visionary Leader

By Angela
McLeod
MSN, RN,
NE-BC, CNL

Iam writing this

to honor Jean Lindemberger, MSN, RN, CCRN, the ICU and CCFP Manager at AHN Saint Vincent – a titan of compassion, a visionary leader, and a true champion.

For more than three and a half decades, Jean has not merely worked here; she has built a legacy. A legacy woven from countless lives touched, countless challenges overcome, and countless acts of unwavering dedication. Hers is a story not just of service, but of transformative leadership.

Jean's profound empathy, palpable in every interaction with staff and patient alike, has created an environment of excellence.

The hospital's 4 South ICU recently won a Silver Beacon award from the American Association of Critical Care Nurses. This award is not merely recognition, but a testament to the collaborative spirit Jean has cultivated and the relentless pursuit of excellence she inspires in her team.

From groundbreaking CORE initiatives to the intricacies of critical care and the life-affirming world of cardiac nursing, Jean's influence is felt throughout our hospital. She has orchestrated impactful conferences, igniting transformative improvements in nurse engagement and driving exceptional quality scores.

Unwavering in her commitment and boundless in her energy, Jean has consistently placed the patient and their family at the heart of her mission. Outside of work, she is found supporting her beloved Penn State Nittany Lions and spending time with her grandchildren.

We are so pleased to celebrate not only her career, but the enduring impact of her compassion, her vision, and her unwavering dedication. Jean, your legacy will resonate through the halls of Saint Vincent for generations to come. **NW**



Angela McLeod MSN, RN, NE-BC, CNL, RN, NE-BC, CNL and Jean Lindemberger, MSN, RN, CCRN,

Bryce Adams: A valuable nurse resource at AHN Saint Vincent

By Jody Garich, MSN, RN, CNOR

Bryce Adams, BSN, RN, is an integral part of the surgical team at AHN Saint Vincent, delivering compassionate care and expert support in cardiothoracic and peripheral vascular procedures.

As a Surgical Nurse and vascular surgery resource, he has a strong foundation in both circulating and scrubbing for complex surgeries.

Bryce has assisted in over 200 procedures during his externship and is an integral part of the surgical team at AHN Saint Vincent, delivering compassionate care and expert support in cardiothoracic and peripheral vascular procedures.

On one occasion, Bryce proactively identified and addressed a potential post-operative hemorrhage in a patient, quickly alerting the surgical team and assisting with interventions that prevented further complications, demonstrating his commitment to patient advocacy and acute observational skills.

Bryce's dedication to nursing began as a nurse extern at AHN Saint Vincent, where he gained over 200 hours of experience assisting surgeons across diverse operating room settings, including cardiovascular, orthopedics, gynecology, general, neurology, and urology. This experience honed his proficiency in sterile technique, equipment management, and patient assessment, positioning him as a skilled and well-rounded surgical nurse.

He is well-respected by his peers and colleagues. His strong work ethic and clinical skills promise to make him a highly effective member of our team for years to come. **NW**



Bryce Adams, BSN, RN

Nurse embodies the subtle alchemy of nursing

By Patricia Donnelly, MSN, MBA,
RN, CCRN

The fluorescent lights of the ICU hummed a nervous symphony, mirroring the frantic beat of my own heart. My first shift. New nurse. Totally overwhelmed. Then she appeared – Michele Rebich, RN, CCRN, a whirlwind of controlled chaos in scrubs, her eyes holding a surprising warmth amidst the sterile environment. She wasn't just a preceptor; she was a battlefield medic leading a rookie through a war zone.

Michele didn't just show me the charts; she showed me the patients' stories, etched in the lines on their faces, in the tremor of their hands reaching for mine.

Her explanation of the complex IV drip wasn't a lecture, but a narrative – a battle against the disease, a dance between precision and hope. She wasn't merely teaching me procedures; she was forging in me a compass that pointed toward empathy. I'd stumbled through a ventilator adjustment, my hands sweating, and instead of a scolding, I heard her calm, steady voice guiding me, each correction a lesson interwoven with understanding.

The years blurred into a montage of shared anxieties and triumphant victories. I saw her soothe a grieving family with a gentle touch that transcended language, and watched her hold space for a silent patient, her presence radiating a peaceful strength. She taught me to read the unspoken pleas in a whispered moan, the desperate clinging of a weak hand, the faint flicker of hope in a drawn, weary face.

More than clinical skills, Michele instilled the subtle alchemy of nursing – transforming technical proficiency into an art form woven from intuition, courage, and unparalleled compassion. It was less a lesson, and more a baptism by fire in the heart of the ICU, a baptism Michele presided over with grace and unwavering dedication. She was the calm amidst the storm, a lighthouse in the night.

Now, looking back, Michele isn't just a name etched in my memory; she's a beacon. The impact she had extends beyond my nursing career. She showed me the power of compassion, the resilience of the human spirit, and the transformative potential of a single, guiding hand. Her wisdom wasn't just taught; it was lived. It was infused in the quiet strength of her touch, in the subtle understanding behind her kind eyes. She's a mentor, a colleague, a friend, and a symbol of the compassionate leadership I aspire to every single day. **NW**

A Lifetime of Heartfelt Service: Jane Sicker, BSN, RN, Retires

By Rob Tobin BSN, RN, CEN, CFRN,
PHRN - AHN Saint Vincent Manager
of Hospital Operations



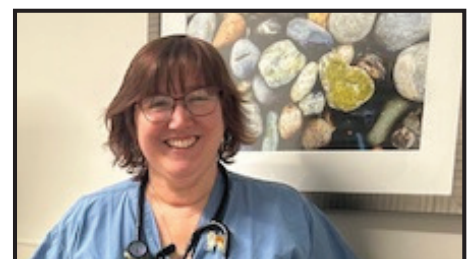
Jane Sicker, BSN, RN

After many years of dedicated service, Saint Vincent Hospital is saying a heartfelt goodbye to Jane Sicker, BSN, RN, a highly respected MHO who has played an integral role in the hospital's success. Her retirement marks the end of a distinguished career marked by unwavering dedication and a consistently positive impact on the hospital and its patients.

Known for her approachable nature, quick responsiveness, and unwavering responsibility, Jane has been an invaluable asset. She consistently demonstrated a commitment to excellence, excelling in a wide variety of multidisciplinary projects and consistently delivering outstanding results. Jane's reliability was unparalleled – you could always count on her to get the job done, and to do it well.

Beyond her impressive work ethic, Jane built strong relationships with colleagues, always ready to lend a helping hand and offer support. Her collaborative spirit made her an indispensable member of numerous teams.

While we celebrate Jane's well-deserved retirement, she will be deeply missed by all at AHN Saint Vincent Hospital. Her legacy of dedication, competence, and collegiality will remain a guiding principle for years to come. We wish her all the best in her future endeavors. **NW**



Michele Rebich, RN, CCRN

Dedicated Care for AHN Saint Vincent's Tiniest Patients

By Kim Amon, MSN, MBA, RN, LCCE, CHCQM;
Diane Brace, RN, CBC;
Danielle Eden, MSN, RN, RNC-NIC, and
Diane Marzalen, RN

AHN Saint Vincent's tiniest patients benefit daily from the dedication of four extraordinary Neonatal Intensive Care (NICU) nurses, Anita Alloway, BS, RN, RNC, Cindy Arnamen, RN, NCC-NICU, Diane Brace, RN, CBC, and Diane Marzalen, RN.

Their dedication to infants in the AHN Saint Vincent NICU is unwavering.

Anita Alloway, BS, RN, RNC, is a highly accomplished and dedicated NICU nurse at AHN Saint Vincent Hospital, bringing over 30 years of experience to her role. Her commitment to providing the most current, evidence-based care is evident in her leadership on numerous projects and initiatives.

In addition to her direct patient care, Anita serves as a LEAD STABLE instructor, sharing her expertise both within AHN Saint Vincent and at other organizations. She is also a renowned preceptor, mentoring new nurses and students, and she acts as the unit's newborn safety instructor and certified car seat safety technician.

Anita is respected for her collaborative spirit and her ability to work well with multidisciplinary teams. She provides compassionate support to families facing the anxieties of caring for an ill neonate. Furthermore, her role as a transport nurse underscores her commitment to ensuring the best possible outcomes for these vulnerable patients by safely transporting them to AHN Saint Vincent for specialized care.

Diane Brace, RN, CBC, is a highly valued member of the NICU team, serving as a skilled preceptor for nursing students and a thorough orienteer for new nurses. Her expertise in pediatric and neonatal care is complemented by a deep passion for her patients, their families, and children in general.

Diane's responsibilities extend beyond direct patient care to include the crucial task of overseeing the NICU schedule, ensuring 24/7 coverage, 360 days a year. She is proactive in identifying and addressing operational needs, consistently striving to

improve NICU efficiency and anticipating future requirements.

Beyond her professional dedication, Diane is known for her generosity and kindness, sharing her baking talents with the staff and her leisure time with her grandchildren. Furthermore, her certification as a car seat safety technician underscores her commitment to the well-being of infants beyond their hospital stay, ensuring their safe transport home. She teaches neonatal resuscitation and is a Unit CARES patient experience representative.

In short, Diane Brace is an invaluable asset to our NICU team, a true leader, and a dedicated professional whose contributions far exceed her job description.

As the content expert and lead instructor for the Neonatal Resuscitation Program (NRP), **Diane Marzalen, RN**, is not just teaching a skill; she's empowering a life-saving force.

Her passion for neonatal resuscitation ignited a transformation, driving the adoption of the Resuscitation Quality Improvement (RQI) program—a program that has demonstrably improved neonatal outcomes at AHN Saint Vincent. The impact is profound: staff now approach resuscitation with significantly increased confidence and comfort, equipped to provide this critical care with unwavering skill.

But Diane's contributions extend far beyond

the NRP. She tirelessly tackles numerous projects, championing staff engagement through initiatives such as vital feedback surveys—her commitment improving not only the care provided, but also the work environment itself.

Diane is the very essence of invaluable contributions to the NICU, an integral force in nurturing both the infants and those who dedicate their lives to caring for them.

For years, **Cindy Arnemann** has been a beacon in the AHN Saint Vincent NICU, a tireless guardian of the tiniest lives. Her commitment to lifelong learning isn't just a professional aspiration; it's a fierce dedication that she generously shares, mentoring colleagues and shaping the future of neonatal care.

Cindy's passion isn't simply a job; it's a profound love for the fragile infants entrusted to her care and a deep empathy for their families navigating the storm of a neonatal journey. She's a relentless pursuer of evidence-based practices, constantly updating her knowledge to ensure her precious charges receive the very best, most up-to-date care.

Cindy is the embodiment of excellence in the NICU, her tireless dedication a crucial element in the extraordinary outcomes achieved by her team. Her presence is a testament to the unwavering spirit of compassion and expertise that define exceptional neonatal nursing. **NW**



Left to right are Anita Alloway, BS, RN, RNC; Diane Marzalen, RN; Diane Brace, RN, CBC; Cindy Arnemann, RN, NCC-NICU

Fighting Scot prepares for a career helping patients fight cancer

By Kristin Brockett at PennWest



Maddie Quinn, May 2025 Graduate of PennWest University's Nursing Program

During her time as a nursing student at PennWest Edinboro, Maddie Quinn demonstrated that service takes many forms. Whether representing the campus in a classic red Highland Ambassador blazer, rallying the crowd in a Fighting Scots cheerleading uniform, raising breast cancer awareness in the signature Zeta Tau Alpha turquoise and gray or honing her clinical expertise in medical scrubs, Quinn approached each role with unwavering dedication and infectious enthusiasm.

Now she is poised to bring that same level of commitment to the patient care team at UPMC Shadyside in Pittsburgh, where she will specialize in oncology as a bone marrow transplant nurse.

"Nurses are truly the backbone of patient care," said the New Kensington, Pennsylvania, native. "We are the ones communicating to doctors, to families, to patients. We are administering medications, performing procedures, providing education and assisting doctors or advanced practice providers. We do everything in between."

Quinn's journey to the medical field was more than just a career choice. After being diagnosed with Type 1 diabetes the summer before her senior year of high school, a week-long hospital stay provided an eye-opening look at the nursing profession. What could have been a setback became a defining moment.

"I remember the first night I went in, and I was like, 'This is exactly what I want to do – direct patient care,'" she said, reflecting on her experience in the hospital. "That was a turning point for me."

Her father, a nurse himself, also served as a source of inspiration.

Camaraderie among her nursing cohort, patient interactions during her clinical experiences and an internship on the bone marrow transplant unit reinforced her career path.

"Patient progress reassures me that I'm doing the right thing and that I'm in the right place," she said. "It's so worth it to help someone get better, to put a smile on someone's face every day."

Guided by personal experience and fueled by a steadfast commitment to patient care, Quinn feels ready to embark on her professional journey.

"I've loved every second of my Edinboro experience," she said. "I'm definitely sad to leave, but I know that through my organizations and just through my time here, I've grown so much as a person." **NW**

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