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## Calming influence

Heather Martinez, RN, has found a place to grow her nursing career at Valir Rehabilitation Hospital in Oklahoma City.

### *Supervisor helps Valir nurses blossom*

by Bobby Anderson, Staff Writer

When Valir Rehabilitation Hospital Administrator Greg Welch sees Heather Martinez, RN, at his door he knows it's for something important.

The visits aren't frequent from the weekend house supervisor, but when they do occur Welch knows something good usually comes out of them.

"What I like is that she does some good critical thinking and she looks at what is right and best for the patient, not necessarily what's right and best for me but let's stay focused on the patient," Welch said. "She always comes to me with ideas and I listen to them because they're pretty much spot on."

Martinez is working on two decades in nursing. And for the last five years Welch says she's brought a calming influence to both Valir hospice and rehabilitation patients.

"It's that understanding and commitment to patient care, that's what she brings to the staff," Welch said. "She's a great educator for staff as well as families."

Martinez spent 14 years in hospice nursing before deciding she needed a breather.

A new mom at the time, Martinez found that breath of fresh air helping rehabilitate patients.

"I loved Valir so much I didn't want to leave the company," said Martinez, who initially joined Valir in the hospice division. "My family was pretty good with it. My daughter thought my job

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## Nursing Partnership *Therapy and care*



Jean Ann Widdifield and Lilly, pictured at Russell-Murray Hospice, where Widdifield is long-time director of corporate compliance.

by Traci Chapman, Staff Writer

Jean Ann Widdifield might not be your average nurse - like many people, she does moonlight separately from her regular "day job," but it's what she does in that second endeavor that is a bit different. Widdifield has a partner named Lilly.

And, while Lilly might not have a nursing degree or even be able to speak, she certainly has something special - and she spreads joy and healing to all she comes in contact with.

Lilly is a therapy dog, someone who has transformed not only Widdifield's life and nursing career, but also the days and memories of countless others who have benefited from her warmth and calm presence.

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## LILLY

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Long before Lilly came into Widdifield's life, though, nursing has been an integral part of everything she is, she said. Now celebrating her 31st year in the field, the long-time Russell-Murray Hospice director of corporate compliance attended Redlands Community College back when it was El Reno Junior College, earning an associates degree in nursing. She became an RN in 1986.

Getting that particular degree was not exactly what Widdifield had planned. Growing up, the young girl always wanted to be a teacher; when she had the chance to go to college, she chose nursing, in part due to the inspiration of her grandmother, who was a nurse.

"I looked at it as I could become a nurse and still teach," she said. "As a nurse, you are always teaching a patient/family member something - I also did some teaching with the LPN students with their clinicals, I really enjoyed that but didn't have enough school to do that full time but had enough that I could teach clinical with LPN students."

Widdifield began her own career as a nursing assistant at Parkview Hospital - now Mercy El Reno Hospital - while still attending classes. After graduation, she remained at Parkview until 1991, when she made the move to Russell-Murray.

The two sides of Widdifield's nursing life are very different - her administrative role at Russell-Murray is very focused on that hospice organization's staff and volunteers.

"Being corporate compliance director is actually fun - I keep all of the employee files up to date, make sure we are following the HIPPA, OSHA and labor laws, I assist in orientation of new employees," Widdifield said. "I am

also the director of volunteers, and I am always looking for new volunteers."

But, with Lilly, Widdifield's focus is much different. Together, the pair visit patients of all ages and with all kinds of health challenges and conditions, from children in the hospital to hospice patients facing their last days. Widdifield and Lilly are regulars at Mercy Kingfisher Hospital and Canadian Valley Integris Hospital, she said.

Lilly is also a favorite at El Reno's Lincoln Learning Center, where special needs students learn through spending time with the gentle sheltie and her "mom."

Wherever they go, Widdifield said she can sense a difference in those who come into contact with Lilly.

"It is a proven fact that petting a dog will help a person relax and will lower their blood pressure - and, she always gets a smile from them," she said.

Widdifield became involved in therapy dog treatments in 2010, when she started utilizing her first love, Daisy. Russell-Murray had a request for a therapy dog, and the hospice didn't have access to one - so Widdifield volunteered to take Daisy to visit the patient, and that was it - both were hooked. "She was a natural at it and loved visiting everyone," she said.

After Daisy passed away, Widdifield said she was not only heartbroken to lose her friend and companion - she didn't want to stop providing the care and joy that came with therapy dog treatments.

"When Daisy died, I missed her so much and was lost without a dog," she said. "I checked the newspaper daily and friends kept giving me websites to check for shelties - I finally found



Sarah Spurek, registered nurse at Cancer Treatment Centers of America, received her Daisy Award from CTCA president & CEO Jay Foley in October.

Lilly through a site called Pure Bred Breeders."

It seemed to be fate - Lilly was in Broken Arrow. Widdifield drove there to pick her up and bring her own. She was eight weeks old and weighed five pounds. That was in January 2014.

"She has been making visits since the day I got her," Widdifield said.

Her long-time employers at Russell-Murray have been instrumental in the success of Widdifield and Lilly's therapy efforts, she said.

"I am blessed to work for a company that allows me so much freedom in what I do, like taking Lilly out to see people," Widdifield said. "They don't have to be a hospice patient for Lilly to visit - she will go

visit anyone that wants a visit from her and me."

While Widdifield said she planned to retire as a full-time hospice nurse sometime in the next three or four years, she had absolutely no plans to leave her volunteer work with Lilly behind - and, in fact, she plans to expand their visits as they have more time.

"I want to just volunteer with Lilly, visiting the hospice patients, nursing home patients and hospital patients," Widdifield said. "I've been really lucky in my career - to have a career I really enjoy working as a hospice nurse, and having lots of fun taking Lilly to visit, I'm just really fortunate."



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## MARTINEZ

Continued from Page 1

was being always in my car or on the phone. She was kind of shocked and surprised I had more of a set schedule."

Martinez makes the hour-and-forty-five minute drive in to the city from the Stratford area for her weekend day shifts.

"Dedication," she laughs when asked about the drive.

Martinez says weekend census runs between 30 and 35 patients. And working with rehabilitation patients has opened up a new world for her and her patients.

"I was scared to death at first because I had been out of the hospital so long. I had to refocus myself and I think confidence is something you have to have," Martinez said. "The move has been really educational because you get accustomed to certain things in nursing and you get specialized in that area that you work. I came over here and started building on the skills I fine-tuned in hospice but building them in a different direction. I started building more on disease process in the opposite way versus the end of life. It was

retraining and re-educating."

Martinez has worked for Valir for nearly five years, beginning in the hospice division.

She worked hospice for 14 years at another company before needing a change.

"I really just loved the company," Martinez said of Valir. "I liked the core values because I really lived by them."

Welch says Martinez has a calming influence on the staff.

"It was a little bit of change in the mindset but in all honesty nursing is nursing and that's what I love about nursing," Martinez said. "Here it's an advocate for a different range. The advocate for hospice is for comfort and end of life. Here it's being an advocate for the patients and being a voice for the families. A lot of times families feel (their loved ones) should be at 100 percent. We think that just because this happened they can go back to 100 percent."

For the first time in a long time Martinez began actually discharging patients to go home.

That energized her like she never expected.

"It was a whole different thing," Martinez said. "Here it was a focus

on getting better and on discharge to go home. It was a complete turnaround.

"Here it's more inspiring patients to be able to go home and be comfortable with the changes they have to face."

Valir's passionate and highly skilled treatment teams work with patients and their families to develop customized plans of care. Using an interdisciplinary approach, physicians, nurses, neuropsychologists and dietitians work in concert with respiratory, recreational, physical, occupational and speech therapists to create personalized treatment programs.

Valir Rehabilitation Hospital is Oklahoma's only rehabilitation hospital that is accredited for Parkinson's disease.

And as Martinez prepares to be a mother yet again she's thankful that she's found a place that will help her grow.



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# Southwestern College allows registered nurses to earn their BSN from the comfort of their own home

The flexibility of nurses can be one of their greatest assets, so why not choose a program to advance your career that is as flexible as you are?

Abbey Elliott, DNP, MHA, RN, CEN, CHSE, is the director of nursing at Southwestern College in Kansas and has been in charge of growing the online program for more than a year now with one thing in mind.

"I think what we do really well is we are very student-centered in our approach," she said.

Established in 1885, the Methodist-affiliated college is open to students of all backgrounds and faiths looking to pursue their nursing education.

More than a decade ago, Southwestern College became one of the first schools to offer a 100% online RN-BSN program, attracting students from across the nation. Registered nurses with a diploma or an associate degree in nursing may earn a Bachelor of Science degree from Southwestern College Professional Studies.

The RN to BSN program builds on previous nursing education and experience and is designed to position graduates for leadership roles and career advancement in a variety of healthcare settings.

In recognition that nurses are broadly educated and have transferable knowledge and skills, the Southwestern College RN to BSN program provides the opportunity for further study in nursing professional practice including leadership, community health and evidence-based practice.

Elliott says incoming students are paired with an individual advisor that works with them through every aspect of their education from scholarships they want to attain all the way through registration and eventually graduation. It's one of the many more personal benefits of working with a smaller college.

"We also have a small group of faculty members in the nursing program that work closely with the students and guide them if they are struggling," said Elliott.

Southwestern has also long been a higher-education hub for students from nearby McConnell Air Force Base in Wichita. The school prides itself on its flexibility with military learners and carried that knowledge over to its online RN to BSN program.

"We're not a large program, but we're not the smallest," Elliott said. "We are able, with smaller class sizes, to provide more of an intimate setting or working with them and helping the students through."

And attending class online means no out-of-state tuition at the Wichita, Kansas institution.

"Students never feel like they're alone in the process of going to college whether it's been a year or 20 years," Elliott says. "It's not as scary going through



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Southwestern because we are so student friendly."

Learners coming back to school after a layoff find a welcoming entry point. Elliott says students also are pleased to find that Chemistry isn't a required course.

"That's a big seller for our learners," Elliott explained. "When they finish their ADN, we accept those credits. There's not a lot of general education they have to complete before entering our program, so we waive that."

The depth of faculty experience is also a big draw at Southwestern. With an online program, that means Elliott is able to draw faculty from around the nation whether it be in Florida or Las Vegas. From backgrounds in the medical surgical floor to the ICU, faculty are well-rounded and bring that real-life working experience to students.

"What's nice is students get a different perspective of what nursing is like," Elliott said. "This provides different ideas and thoughts about what nursing is like not just in Kansas, Oklahoma or the Midwest, but in other parts of the country."

Still, working in the field allows instructors to better relate, especially when it comes to evidence-based practice instruction.

"Our faculty work in different fields of nurses and are academically prepared from different universities," Elliott says. "They bring all these different parts they've learned at different universities to how they teach. All of our faculty are at least master's prepared and I think that brings in some different pieces, too, and some helpful thoughts of those thinking they may go on to a graduate degree."

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# Norman Regional receives the 2018 Women's Choice Award® for bariatric surgery, stroke

Norman Regional Health System has been named one of America's best for Bariatric Surgery and Stroke by the Women's Choice Award®, America's trusted referral source for the best in healthcare. The award signifies that Norman Regional is in the top 9 percent for bariatric surgery and top 8 percent for stroke centers of 4,812 U.S. hospitals and stroke centers reviewed.

"This is the second year in a row for Norman Regional Health System to be a Women's Choice Award recipient for both bariatric surgery and stroke. We are incredibly proud of our healers for their hard work and dedication to patient care, safety and satisfaction," said Richie Splitt, President and CEO of Norman Regional Health System.

## One of America's Best Hospitals for Bariatric Surgery

The methodology for the bariatric surgery award is unique in that it combines national accreditations, Hospital Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems (HCAHPS) survey results and hospital outcome scores with primary research about women's healthcare preferences. It is the only award recognizing excellence in bariatric surgery based on robust criteria that consider patient satisfaction and clinical excellence.

Norman Regional achieved the America's Best distinction in bariatric surgery by meeting the following criteria:

- \* Accreditation by the American College of Surgeons and the American Society for Metabolic and Bariatric Surgery joint-sponsored Metabolic and Bariatric Surgery Accreditation and Quality Improvement Program (MBSAQIP)

- \* At least 72 percent of patients reporting on the HCAHPS survey that they would definitely recommend the hospital

- \* A high patient safety ranking

based on 11 Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services' measures of infection and complication rates

Norman Regional is one of 422 award recipients representing the hospitals that have met the highest standards for bariatric surgery across the U.S.



"As the FDA approves more bariatric procedures and treatment options increase, the Women's Choice Award is helping women make educated, confident decisions about where they should go to get the very best care,"

said Delia Passi, founder and CEO of the Women's Choice Award. "There are many women who struggle with their weight, especially as they age. For some, diet and exercise alone aren't enough and they need to turn to bariatric procedures to reduce their weight for their overall good health."

An American Society for Metabolic and Bariatric Surgery study found that the risk of death from any cause is considerably less for bariatric patients than for individuals affected by severe obesity who have never had the surgery. The data shows that cancer mortality is reduced by 60 percent for bariatric surgery patients and death as a result of diabetes and heart disease is reduced by more than 90 percent and 50 percent, respectively.

## One of America's Best Stroke Centers

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, one in five women in the United States will have a stroke in her lifetime. Nearly 60 percent of stroke deaths are in women, and stroke kills twice as many women as breast cancer. Most alarming, the percentage of strokes in women under age 45 is increasing, with studies showing these women are more likely to be misdiagnosed.

"Timely diagnosis and effective care are critical to preventing disability and improving chances of

recovery," Passi said. "Our award educates women about where they—and their loved ones—have the best chance to return to a full life following a stroke."

A stroke center must be certified by the Joint Commission Stroke Certification Program as an Advanced Primary Stroke Center and/or Advanced Comprehensive Stroke Center to be considered for the award. It is the only award recognizing excellence in stroke care based on robust criteria that considers patient satisfaction and clinical excellence.

The methodology used to select Norman Regional as one of America's Best Stroke Centers is unique in that it evaluates 30-day stroke mortality and readmission rates and Hospital Consumer Assessment of Healthcare

Providers and Systems (HCAHPS) survey results along with primary research about women's healthcare preferences. Hospitals must also score in the top 80 percent of all hospitals in the following areas:

- \* Percent of patients receiving Head CT scan results within 45 minutes

- \* Percent of patients receiving Thrombolytic therapy

Norman Regional is one of 405 award recipients representing the hospitals that have met the highest standards for stroke care in the U.S. by the Women's Choice Award.

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# Sleep or exercise: Which is more important?



OMRF President Stephen Prescott, M.D.

Jobs. Kids. Commutes. Spouses.

With wall-to-wall daily schedules, it's tough to carve out time for healthy habits. Too often, packed days claim two victims: adequate sleep and exercise. But if you're forced to choose between the two, should you hit the gym or the pillow?

"That's like asking whether food or water is more important," said Oklahoma Medical Research Foundation President Stephen Prescott, M.D. "Both are cornerstones of good health."

Still, he said, "If we could get everyone exercising regularly, we would be better off as a society than if everyone was getting eight hours of sleep nightly." Working out helps stave off the effects of aging, fights heart disease and type 2 diabetes, and controls obesity, which has reached epidemic levels.

That certainly doesn't make sleep less important, though, said Prescott. Adequate sleep helps maintain a healthy immune system and, like exercise, plays a role in maintaining healthy weight. "Most of all, it keeps

us alert and allows us to concentrate, whether at our jobs or while driving," he said.

Indeed, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration estimates that drowsy driving is responsible for 72,000 accidents in the U.S. each year. An analysis found that those who'd had 5 to 6 hours of sleep in the previous 24 hours were twice as likely to get in an accident as drivers who'd slept for 7 hours or more.

"Sleep needs vary by individual, but most of us fall somewhere between 7 and 9 hours a night to get all the health benefits needed," said Prescott.

Hitting that 7-hour mark, he said, is crucial. But, perhaps, he suggested, once you reach that mark, if you have to choose between an extra hour of sleep and exercising, getting up to hit the gym could be worthwhile.

"If you can do this and not suffer any consequences from it—falling asleep during the day, disrupted metabolism, reduced energy—then I believe it's a worthwhile pursuit," said Prescott.

"Still, I don't like the having to pick between the two," he said. "And if we're really honest with ourselves, most of us don't have to sacrifice one for the other. We can find the time if we make it a priority."

"I would encourage anyone with

a 15-minute window to get up and do something," said Prescott. "Even if you can't make it to the gym, take a quick walk. Go up and down the stairs. Do something that gets your heart rate up and makes you work."

These quick bursts of exercise aren't optimal, said Prescott, but they're preferable to inactivity.

"Once you start any type of regular exercise, you'll sleep better," he said. "And better sleep means more energy. It's a wonderful cycle of positive effects; you just have to commit to finding the time."

## INTEGRIS Works with Lawmakers to Create Community Paramedic Program

For people living in rural areas, health care needs far outnumber health care options. These communities already include disproportionate numbers of elderly citizens, impoverished families and those in poor health. Residents must often travel great distances to receive basic care.

The Community Paramedic program closes the gap by expanding the role of licensed and experienced paramedics. The program connects underutilized resources to underserved populations, allowing EMTs to provide home visits to post-hospital patients.

Former Representative Douglas Cox, who is also an emergency room physician at INTEGRIS Grove Hospital, initiated the legislation after visiting a model site in Arkansas. He knew implementing the program here in Oklahoma would require legislation to expand the scope of services allowable by a paramedic.

INTEGRIS Director of Legislative Affairs Anne Roberts recruited Senator Rob Standridge to be the Senator author. He is a pharmacist, and at the time, was the Chair of the Senate Health and Human Services committee.

"Community paramedicine is a proven methodology that helps improve coordination of care," said Standridge. "This model involves training paramedics to play a more preventative role in the patients' home post discharge from the hospital, long-term acute care or nursing facility. By focusing more on prevention, fewer patients are readmitted to the facility, coordination is improved between the patient and physician, patient health improves and health care costs are reduced for the patient as well as the health system."

The legislation became part of the INTEGRIS legislative program in 2016, and was successfully passed and signed into law by the governor. But it wasn't until recently that INTEGRIS received the grant to officially begin the project.

The Community Paramedic program requires EMTs to complete an authorized training program, and work under the supervision of a medical director as part of a patient care plan developed by the patient's primary care physician.

Similar initiatives in the United States have resulted in fewer hospital readmissions, as EMTs are able to check on patients recently released from a hospital to make sure they are taking their medications and following their physician's after-care instructions.

In Oklahoma, as more and more rural hospitals are facing budget shortages and having to eliminate or limit services, the Community Paramedic program offers an opportunity to keep medical resources within reach of their residents. Organizers hope to start offering paramedic home visits as early as March. INTEGRIS Grove Hospital in Delaware County will be the first to implement the program with 17 EMTs equipped to serve as community paramedics.



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Wayne Ph: 405-449-3391 Ext 265

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[www.mid-del.tec.ok.us](http://www.mid-del.tec.ok.us) Midwest City Ph: 405-739-1713

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3. McAlester Campus Phone: 918-302-3607

Murray State College [www.mscc.edu](http://www.mscc.edu)

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## Oklahoma City Community College

[www.okc.cc.ok.us](http://www.okc.cc.ok.us) Oklahoma City Phone: 405-682-7507

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[www.osuokc.edu](http://www.osuokc.edu)  
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Rogers State University [www.rsu.edu](http://www.rsu.edu)

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Rose State College [www.rose.edu](http://www.rose.edu)

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Bacone College [www.bacone.edu](http://www.bacone.edu) Muskogee Ph: 918-781-7325

Northeastern State Univ. [www.nsuok.edu](http://www.nsuok.edu)

Muskogee Ph: 918-781-5410

## Oklahoma Panhandle State Univ.

[www.opsu.edu](http://www.opsu.edu) Goodwell Ph: 580-349-2611 Ext 269

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**Vicki L Mayfield, M.Ed., R.N., LMFT**  
Marriage and Family Therapy Oklahoma City  
*If you would like to send a question to Vicki, email us at [news@okcnursingtimes.com](mailto:news@okcnursingtimes.com)*

**Q.** Is it possible to be intelligent, hard working, financially secure; find "Mr. Right" and now after two years of marriage find myself in debt, losing interest in everything I once enjoyed and miserable? It must be possible because this is my life. What can I do? --- Kellie, RN

It is so important that you do not continue to lose yourself, your energy and your ability to make some changes before you literally cannot get out of bed.

What have you done so far to work on the problems? For example:

---- Have you and your husband discussed couple counseling?

---- Are you currently in counseling?

---- Have you taken the time to journal questions like, "What has happened to me since marriage?" "What have I gained, what have I lost?" "Why am I drinking more on a daily basis?"

The one thing that is almost written in stone is our inability to change someone who doesn't want to be changed. Maybe you didn't see some of your differences or maybe you thought the way he managed (or didn't) manage money would not be a problem. Or maybe you were just too giving because you wanted to please him.

The loss of ourselves is insidious. We usually don't know the day we started reaching for other things to escape our reality but it really is very much a snowball affect. The snowball rarely stays baseball size. So as the snowball begins to take up more of your space, ask yourself why you are not moving out of range. Who is keeping you in this situation?

**"Well I know it wasn't you who held me down**

**Heaven knows it wasn't you who set me free**

**So oftentimes it happens that we live our lives in chains**  
**That we never even know we have the key'**

You have the key. The last thing you can afford to do is continue down this path. You have way to much to lose. Perhaps you chose the wrong man. Perhaps you chose the wrong reason. You are describing a slow emotional death, perhaps leading to a physical death if you don't take action.

When you reach for the Vodka tonight, stop for a minute (if you can) and ask yourself if this will fix your problems. It won't!!

**"Me, I'm already gone, and I'm feeling strong**

**I will sing this victory song, coz I'm already gone."**





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*The best thing I like is getting to work with the children and families and you become part of their lives.*



Tammy Kain, RN,  
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