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Karissa Pruitt, RN works at Medical Plaza Surgery Center at Integris Baptist Hospital. Her bright smile and TLC is just what the patient needs before surgery.

by Vickie Jenkins, Staff Writer

It's easy to see why Karissa Pruitt, RN likes her job and the patients like her. Friendly, bubbly and a smile on her face shows. "If you have a job, you need to like it, and I happen to like my job very much," Karissa said.

"I spent a lot of time in the medical field in the past; I worked as a medical

assistant and Phlebotomist; working in home health, Urgent Care of Edmond and Urology Associates of Oklahoma. I like this job. In fact, I would like to go on to work in the OR and surgery in the future. I like the diversity of the age ranges, pediatrics to geriatrics and the different kinds of surgeries." Karissa commented.

On a personal note, Karissa thinks that every nurse should have plenty of

compassion for people. "There is a certain desire inside that comes naturally by taking care of someone. To love others, you need to love yourself, and the love will always show through," she said. "My favorite part of my job is when I get to interact with the patients. Learning about the patient gives me the anchor to them. Most of the patients are stressed out when they get here. I want to be See PRUITT Page 3

Mercy Celebrates Major Milestone in **Construction of Hospital** in South Oklahoma City

Mercy celebrated a major milestone Tuesday in the construction of a hospital in southern Oklahoma City. Crews lifted the final steel beam into the frame of Mercy Hospital Oklahoma City - South. The hospital will be the first new hospital Mercy has built in the city since 1974 and one of only a few new hospitals in the metro area in the last 50 years.

The \$150 million project is on track to open in summer 2020. The six-story patient tower will serve a community with a growing demand for health care.

Features and services will include:

A six-story, 228,000-square-foot • patient tower

• 36 beds for Mercy patients with

space to add 36 beds in the future • 16 beds to serve Oklahoma Heart Hospital patients

• Surgery and endoscopy suites

 Outpatient imaging for X-rays, ultrasound, radiography, CT scans and MRI

- Laboratory services
- Exam and procedure rooms
- Cancer and infusion services
- Inpatient pharmacy
- Chapel

In addition, Mercy will initially offer inpatient and outpatient general, orthopedic and gynecological surgery, ear, nose and throat, pain management and urology services.

"We feel so fortunate to be able to serve this incredible community and bring the high-quality health care



Mercy is known for to a growing area," said Jim Gebhart, president of Mercy Hospital Oklahoma City and regional strategy officer for Mercy. "One of the most exciting aspects of this new facility is that we will have the ability to quite literally grow with the community. This hospital will have the space to be able to double our inpatient capacity in the future and expand services to meet the community's needs."

Mercy Hospital Oklahoma City -South is being built on the campus of Oklahoma Heart Hospital South at South Sooner Road and the I-240 Service Road. Built in 2010, the heart hospital will also undergo renovations for an expanded emergency room and heart catheterization lab. Mercy

will have additional beds to serve cardiac patients in its tower. The heart hospital has been Mercy's partner in providing cardiology services for nearly 20 years.

"We saw a need for additional health care services at our location in south Oklahoma City," said Peggy Tipton, chief operating officer for Oklahoma Heart Hospital. "We knew this was a great opportunity to expand our partnership with Mercy and better serve our patients and community."

Around 125 employees will work at the new hospital in addition to physicians. Mercy already has seven primary care and urgent care locations within 15 miles of the new hospital and has plans to expand locations in the future.

OCU Nursing Expands **Program to Comanche County**

Oklahoma City University will CCMH. expand its satellite nursing program at Duncan Regional Hospital to include the Comanche County Memorial Hospital in Lawton, starting with the fall semester in August.

The program in Comanche County will work jointly with the one at Duncan Regional Hospital and will include similar incentives for students, where they may take nursing classes free of tuition if they agree to work at Comanche County Memorial Hospital for at least three years after graduation.

Students will enter the juniorlevel nursing courses. Classes will be held three days per week in the Learning Center at Duncan Regional Hospital, and clinical rotations will take place two days per week at

Lois Salmeron, dean of OCU's Kramer School of Nursing, said the expanded program is a significant step for improving nursing education in southwest Oklahoma.

"This is a win-win for those who desire to become a nurse and are not able to leave the community to do so. It is a win-win for rural health," Salmeron said.

Up to 20 scholarships for each cohort in the Bachelor of Science in Nursing program are available.

The Kramer School of Nursing started its joint program with Duncan Regional Hospital in 2016, where qualified students can complete their nursing degrees in two years. The hospital provides tuition expenses See OCU Page 5

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www.okcu.edu/nursing

OCU pledges to recruit, select and promote diversity by providing equality of opportunity for all persons

PRUITT **Continued from Page 1**

that nurse that calms them down, eliminating their anxiety. I feel like making the patient and their families feel comfortable is a big help to them. After a while, I see the patient relax and a smile come through," Karissa added.

Karissa grew up in Oklahoma, attending school at OSUOKC. "When I was a little girl, I wanted to be a Speech Pathologist. At that time, I watched my mom and aunt take care of my uncle and my grandmother. I saw the struggle they dealt with; I decided to go into nursing. Even at a young age, it was as though I was meant to take care of others. Now, I know that I was being prepared to do the job I have now as an RN. I can't wait to see where I will be led next. I know that being a nurse was a real calling for me," she said.

What advice would you give to someone going into the medical field? "I would tell them to study, study, study and never

give up! I'll admit it, school can be brutal but with a good support group and study group, you will succeed."

"One special person, Debbie Crow was a great mentor of mine. She was a team leader and was an advocate for all of us in nursing school. She was amazing. She taught me how to love someone even when I don't even know that person! Do you know how hard that is to do? She taught me how to grow as a nurse and as a person. Plus, my support group was awesome." Karissa said. "We were there for each other, encouraging each other on. In fact, I have a feeling we are all going to be friends for quite a while. We just got back from a girls trip over the weekend. It was a blast." she added.

Karissa is married to her wonderful husband, Ryan. They have a little boy, Rylee who is four years old. When Karissa is not working, she likes to spend her time hanging out with her family. "We love going to the park, Of course, Rylee likes to play with our dog, Oliver. Oliver is a Rhodesian Ridgeback. Most people have never heard of that kind of dog so I will say Oliver is not a purebred dog and is actually a cross between a Rhodesian Labrador and the Labrador Retriever. He is a friendly dog and Rylee just loves to play with him, "she said with a laugh.

Karissa's biggest asset at work is the way she can be friendly

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zoo and the Children's Museums. to anyone. "The patients are the ones having the bad day," she said. "I feel like the minute I get to work and I am ready to take care of the patients. I try to make them feel comfortable; setting that as my goal and making sure I can make them smile. If I can make them happy for just a moment, I have done a good job. Every day, when I leave work, I feel like I am fulfilled," she said.

Summing up her life with one word, Karissa said it would have to be the word: BLESSED.



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Our son, Curtis, wasn't breathing when he was born. The first 30 days of his life in the hospital were a fight for survival. As his little body began to 'wake up', he finally came out of the coma.

Curtis defied all the odds. We watched him grow and develop. We remember when he ran on the field with his glove for his first t-ball game.

But Curtis' kidneys eventually failed, and he started dialysis when he was 12 years old. He was at the top of the transplant waiting list when we got the call in October 2009.

When he received his new kidney, it saved his life and now he has been crowned Prom King and is graduating from High School!

We learned that his donor was Mariee, a softball star from the University of Oklahoma. Mariee's donation not only saved Curtis, but she also saved the lives of five others.

Organ, eye and tissue donation saves lives. Please make your decision to donate life and tell your family. Register to be an organ, eye and tissue donor on your Oklahoma driver's license or state ID card or register online at www.LifeShareRegistry.org. If you don't have a license or state ID card and do not have internet access, call 800-826-LIFE (5433) and ask for a donor registration card.



PASSION IN NURSING ENCOURAGING WORD MAKES DIFFERENCE

by Vickie Jenkins - Writer/Photographer

Dr. Michael Crawford, MD is an internal medicine specialist in Oklahoma City, OK and has been practicing for 33 years. He graduated from University Of Oklahoma / Health Sciences Center in 1983 and specializes in internal medicine. His office is located in N.W. Oklahoma City, OK.

Meet Alissa Westbrook, who enjoys her job as medical assistant at Dr. Crawford's office. "I love my job here. I check in the patients and perform the different tests on them; EKG's, Spirometry, stress tests, and assist Dr. Crawford with anything he needs help with," she said.

Alissa has been in the medical field for several years as she worked in Home Health Care. "I prefer working in a doctor's office much better," she said. "I like working in a doctor's office and getting to know the patients. There is such a variety of people and all of the patients are so nice," she added.

Alissa's favorite part of her job is interacting with the patients. "All of the patients are very interesting. This is a great place to work because I learn something new every day. I want to keep learning more so I can go farther with my medical career," she said.

Asking what Alissa's biggest challenge with her job was, she replied, "When we have new patients, I want to get a good flow going between us. I think it might be hard for some of the patients to open up about their medical problem. Most of the time, they will tell me but sometimes, they want to wait and talk to Dr. Crawford. I can understand them wanting to wait but sometimes, it can be a little difficult if they don't want to tell me anything." What qualities do you think make a good medical assistant or nurse? "Definitely, they need to have empathy and be compassionate. They need to know what they are talking about and make sure the patient understands them. They need to be able to communicate with the doctor and the staff and be able to assist when needed," she said.

Alissa is motivated by praise. "I think if someone is doing a good job, all they need is an encouraging word to make that person want to give it their all. I like to make people smile and I try to look on the bright side of things. I like to be happy and I try to make others happy," she commented.

If Alissa was to give advice to someone in the medical field, she would tell them to work hard and not give up. "If they can get some hands-on experience, it is very helpful. Sometimes, there might be something that you don't really want to do because you are scared that you might do it wrong. They should face their fears and learn from their experience."

Describing herself, Alissa said, "I tend to be happy most of the time and I look on the bright side of things. I try to be positive and like to remember those special people that encouraged me with my wanting to be in the nursing field. It was one of my Science teachers in school that influenced me to keep on going! I always loved Science and it was always so interesting. My teacher took notice of my interest and kind of suggested I look into the medical field so I did. I am thankful for that Science teacher."

On a personal note, Alissa See WESTBROOK Page 5



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2) network/share pertinent information on recruitment and retention of healthcare professionals.



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Alissa Westbrook, Medical Assistant enjoys her job working for Michael Crawford, M.D. Alissa likes to keep a positive attitude in everything she does.

WESTBROOK **Continued from Page 4**

enjoys spending time with her six year old daughter, Frankie. They love playing and caring for their pet hedgehog, Oliver.

Alissa's hobbies include cooking, sewing and trying new restaurants. "I also like going to some concerts," she said. "I just got back from The Beatles show and it was just awesome, "she added.

Asking Alissa to describe herself with one word. She said, "It will have to be the word, SILLY. I guess I am in such a positive mood all the time and it is nothing to catch me going around the office singing. Singing keeps me on my toes. I don't think anyone minds and if they do, they need to let me know or join in on my singing," she said with a laugh.



OCU Continued from Page 2

for students who agree to work there following graduation. The program is to address an ongoing need for baccalaureate-prepared nurses that hospitals rural serve communities.

OCU faculty reside in the Duncan area to teach classes and labs. The program also utilizes an innovative Polycom Communications online platform so that students in Duncan can participate and interact with classes in Oklahoma City in real time.

Kramer School of Nursing OKLAHOMA CITY UNIVERSITY

An OCU admissions counselor will be at Comanche County Memorial Hospital each Tuesday in May from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. to provide program details and enrollment information.

The Kramer School of Nursing consistently exceeds state and national averages on the RN licensure exam. The school boasts several alumni who are practicing in every major health field. For more information, visit the program's page on the school's website at okcu.edu/nursing.

American Cancer Society of **Tulsa Attacking Cancer Through Relay For Life Event**

in

On Friday, June 14, local participants will join together at the annual Relay For Life of Tulsa at University of Tulsa's Dietler Commons to help beat our biggest rival - cancer. The event begins at 5:30 p.m. with a Survivor Dinner, followed by the Opening Ceremony at 6 p.m. and the Luminaria Ceremony at 10 p.m.



"Relay For Life is the signature fundraising event of the American Cancer Society," said Christie Gibbs, Community Development Manager for ACS-Tulsa. "We are proud to bring our community this moving and impactful event each year. We have a long tradition in the Tulsa area of uniting people in their passion for this cause to raise funds that are invested in the best research proposals out there and high impact access to care efforts."

The theme for this year's event is "Lights! Camera! Cure!" Local food trucks will be on-site, as well as live music from local bands. Kids can enjoy a bounce house, face painting and balloon animals, and everyone can participate movie trivia and a celebrity look-alike contest.

"Anyone who participates in Relay For Life is contributing to the largest nationwide community effort to save lives from cancer," Gibbs added, "and we are so excited to be doing our part right here in Tulsa!"

The American Cancer Society (ACS) is the only organization fighting cancer on every front. Funds raised from Relay For Life events allow the ACS to attack cancer in dozens of ways, each of them critical to achieving a world without cancer - from developing breakthrough therapies and innovative research, to building supportive communities that come together to help those affected by cancer with access to treatment. The ACS provides empowering resources to deploying activists to raise awareness and develop game-changing approaches to address the cancer burden for all people.

Founded by Dr. Gordy Klatt in Tacoma, Washington, in 1985, the Relay For Life movement of 3.5 million participants across the world unite at more than 4,500 events to celebrate people who have been touched by cancer, remember loved ones lost, and take action for lifesaving change. Symbolizing the battle waged around the clock by those facing cancer, the event can last up to 24 hours and empowers communities to take a stand against cancer. Since 1985, Relay For Life events in the U.S. have raised more than \$6.3 billion. Join or donate to the Relay For Life of Tulsa: www.relayforlife.org/ **TulsaMetroOK**

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NURSING

Page 7

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Marathon Man: Senior still running

by Bobby Andedrson, RN, staff writer

On Monday, April 29, Bill face.

Burrows showed up for his regular 2:30-11 p.m. shift at the engineering plant at Norman Regional Health System just like has been doing for the previous five years.

A little stiff, a little sore, Burrows went on about his day like always.

Not bad for a 68-year-old who had just run a half marathon with half a lung.

"It was pretty good," Burrows said. "Kind of the first time out so I didn't know how I would do. I was kind of optimistic so I wouldn't know until I did it.

"It went well. The temperature was good and I moved along pretty well considering my physical condition."

Not bad at all considering just three years earlier he was staring a lung cancer diagnosis right in the BUMP IN THE ROAD

The Norman resident and

Norman Regional Health System employee, trained this past winter for the Oklahoma City Memorial Half Marathon—his longest run since conquering lung cancer.

Burrows previously completed six full marathons and three half marathons before his lung cancer in 2016.

He has since ran one 5K this past fall but nothing like the distance he covered the final Sunday in April.

Burrows was diagnosed with lung cancer after seeing one of Norman Regional's internal promotions for their \$79 lung scan. The low-dose computed tomography (CT) scan is a noninvasive and painless way to screen for lung cancer.



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Norman Regional Hospital's Bill Burrows, 68, completed the half marathon course at the recent Oklahoma City Memorial Marathon.

Burrows said he decided to have the scan since it was a good price and would only take about 10 minutes.

Since he was a healthy runner he expected no problems to show on the scan, but his doctor called and said he wanted to have a specialist look it over just to make sure everything was fine.

Burrows had a stroke in 2010 and made it back from that so he figured this was nothing.

"I got it and they saw something," he said. "I had a previous scan years before and this wasn't there then."

Burrows met with Norman Regional's interventional pulmonary specialist Sergio Garcia, MD.

A biopsy was taken which revealed he had non-small cell carcinoma.

Soon after the news, Burrows was contacted by Norman Regional's oncology nurse navigator Sherri Jo Johnson, R.N, who explained his diagnosis, the steps to deal with it and helped guide him throughout the treatment process.

Next Burrows had surgery to remove the top right lobe of his lung and became cancer free. Since the cancer was detected before it spread anywhere else in his body, Burrows did not need further treatment such as radiation or chemotherapy.

"Mr. Burrows is a prime example of why the lung screening program offered at Norman Regional Health System is very important," Dr. Garcia said. "It provides early detection. This one simple scan saved his life."

"I knew I would run again," said Burrows, who helps maintain the system's infrastructure. "I knew some day I was going to run from my house back to room 5207 at the Healthplex and back. That was a goal. The first year or so I was afraid to do too much because I didn't want to blow anything up."

When Burrows decided he wanted to run another half marathon, he knew it wouldn't be easy.

Functionally, 50% of his total lung capacity remained.

Things would have to advance slowly.

He bought a \$50 used treadmill and set it up at his house. He'd run for a few minutes, walk for a few See RUNNING page 10

Saint Francis Health System Provides Learning Opportunities

Saint Francis Health System actively encourages its nurses to grow professionally

Saint Francis Health System, Oklahoma's largest healthcare provider, has more than 10,000 employees at more than 90 locations throughout eastern Oklahoma. Nurses in the Saint Francis Health System network-which includes Warren Clinic, the state's largest physician group-can pursue careers in large communities (Tulsa, Broken Arrow, McAlester, Muskogee) and small (Vinita, Glenpool, Coweta, Owasso, Sand Springs).

Wherever they choose to work, nurses can enjoy the benefits of a locally owned, locally operated, not-forprofit health system that is dedicated to high-quality, patient-centered care. To this end, Saint Francis Health System has established a wide range of programs and services to help its nurses grow professionally, which ultimately serves to help maintain the health system's high standards of clinical excellence. In short, the success of Saint Francis Health System and the quality of its nursing program go hand in hand.

The Pursuit of Excellence - Nurses can take advantage of Saint Francis Health System opportunities even while they're still pursuing a degree.

The health system offers a registered nurse scholarship that funds up to \$8,000 of education at an accredited school of nursing. There is also the Saint Francis Extern Program, a nineweek shadow program designed for students in their final year of an accredited RN program. Both the RN scholarship and the extern program are great ways for aspiring nurses to get their foot inside the door.

Making the Transition from School to Vocation - Once accepted into the Saint Francis Health System nursing program, new nurses embark on a yearlong nurse residency program (NRP), a sophisticated program that is designed to help recent graduates transition from the classroom environment to clinical bedside experiences and realworld professional nursing practice. The NRP consists of professional nursing orientation, unit-specific orientation with a preceptor, specialty classes and a variety of nurse residency seminars.

The NRP is tailored specifically to the education needs of newly licensed

nurses, and is based upon Quality and cardiac classes); nurse residency seminars Safety Education for Nurses (QSEN) competencies. During orientation, new nurses become familiar with Saint System policies, Francis Health equipment, and procedures and participate in specialty classes specific to the patient population they will be caring for.

Help Along the Way - Once an RN position is accepted, Saint Francis Health System offers a free NCLEX (National Council Licensure Exam) review course, as well as: specialty classes offering patient-focused content that emphasizes application of clinical knowledge and principles relevant to individual specialties (e.g., pediatric, ICU and

that focus on communication and teamwork, critical thinking, patient/ family-centered care, case management and discharge planning, plan for selfdevelopment, evidence-based practice and quality improvement; continuing education classes, including both baccalaureate- and graduate-level courses; and a wide range of national certification programs, including IABP, CRRT, LVAD and ECMO.

Saint Francis Health System invests heavily in its nurses and encourages them to grow professionally in order to fulfill its mission: To extend the presence and healing ministry of Christ in all we do.

Education Opportunities in Action

Susan Roach, RN, is grateful to have taken advantage of Saint Francis Health System's many educational opportunities. In 2011, while in nursing school, she started working as a nurse technician, which allowed her to take advantage of a Saint Francis scholarship that helped pay for her education. She was a nurse extern during her final year of nursing school, an experience that helped her develop a strong interest in labor and delivery. After graduation, she was hired into the nurse residency program by her labor and delivery manager. She is currently a member of the labor and delivery department and has worked up to clinical ladder III.

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RUNNING Continued from Page 8

more.

His main reasoning for wanting to push himself to run another half marathon and full marathons in the future is that he wants to do it for those who can't—those who are going through chemotherapy, those who have a terminal diagnosis, and those who were unable to conquer their cancer.

After hearing about Burrows' desire to run the half marathon, Dr. Garcia, Cardiothoracic Surgeon Kyle Toal, MD; Chief Nursing Officer Brittni McGill and Norman Regional's Pulmonary Rehabilitation staff came together to provide Burrows an exercise plan and offer him the support he needed to ensure he was able to run safely. Part of his exercise plan was monthly visits to Dr. Garcia's office for cardiopulmonary exercise testing (CPET) – a non-invasive procedure where a patient uses a treadmill while monitored by their physician or a respiratory therapist.

"I'm addicted again," said Burrows, who plans on running the full marathon next April.

Quitting was never an option for the the Navy vet and New Jersey-born Burrows.

"I didn't have the breath but it seemed like my muscles and legs were working," he said. "I wasn't going to stop. I just went mile by mile."

One by one the miles added up as Burrows was counting them down.

"I'll keep going," Burrows said. "I refuse to get old."

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OMRF donors get crash course in research



Sharon Neuwald tries her hand at pipetting at the annual Oklahoma Medical Research Foundation Loyal Donors Reception.

Earlier this month, a group of donors gathered at the Oklahoma Medical Research Foundation to get a better understanding of how the Oklahoma City nonprofit was using their gifts. But instead of the customary speech from a podium or PowerPoint, these OMRF supporters engaged in an evening of "scientific speed dating."

In 15-minute intervals, the donors—125 long-term givers to the foundation—rotated through five different interactive lab stations hosted by OMRF scientists. Along the way, they learned how to use cheek swabs to gather DNA from inside a person's mouth. They also peered through microscopes to examine heart tissue and saw frogs and tiny fish eggs that researchers use to study basic biological processes.

At one stop, scientists used liquid nitrogen from OMRF's ultra-cold biorepository to flash-freeze Boba, the tapioca balls used in drinks. The crowd then sampled the delicious frozen treats, which resembled Dippin' Dots. "It's so much fun to see the research going on, and they make it so accessible," said Sharon Neuwald of Oklahoma City, who's been giving to OMRF since 2005. "It makes science come alive."

The event was OMRF's way of honoring the members of its Loyal Donors Society. Established in 2015, the Society recognizes those who have made donations to the nonprofit institute for at least five straight years.

And many have given for considerably longer, including retired Maj. Gen. Stanley Newman of Oklahoma City, who's made a charitable gift to OMRF each year since 1973.

"I like the history of OMRF and that it started with regular people funding it," said Edmond's Lura Fabian, who began supporting OMRF in 1995 with her husband, Robert. "It's sort of a hidden jewel, because many people aren't aware that it's here. But the quality of this facility is just phenomenal."

"For us to be healthy, research is just one of those things we have to have," said Robert Fabian. "Why wouldn't you support research? It's necessary for all of us."

Long-term, consistent giving is the key to ensuring that scientists can make strides against disease, said OMRF Vice President of Development Penny Voss.

"It takes vision and faith to support something whose payoff won't come today or tomorrow," said Voss. "This group of donors understands that, and tonight was just our small way of saying thank you to them. They make everything we do at OMRF possible." Oklahoma's Nursing Times

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