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A leader by example

McBride Orthopedic Hospital manager excels with extra effort.



photo by James Coburn

Acute Care/ER Manager Jeremy Podany, RN, sets a good example for the nursing staff at McBride Orthopedic Hospital in Oklahoma City.

by James Coburn,
Staff Writer

Whenever someone at McBride Orthopedic Hospital tells Acute Care/ER Manager Jeremy Podany, RN, what a great job he is doing, he always turns that recognition back to his staff.

"They put the hours in; they do the hard work to take care of these

patients to the best of their ability," Podany said. "I shine the light back on them to reflect what a great job they've done."

Podany earned his Bachelor of Science in Nursing degree at the University of Oklahoma. And in the fall he plans on pursuing his master's degree in Health Care Administration at Oklahoma State University in the fall or spring.

"Hopefully, that will lead me to chief nursing officer position," he said.

His career began 10 years ago at Norman Regional

Hospital in the surgery department. After five years Podany decided to specialize in orthopedics. He is grateful the leadership team at McBride hired him in 2012.

"I was in surgery for four

Denney's Sense of Adventure Leads to VA Hospital



Leann Denney is pictured in the chemotherapy ward at Oklahoma City's VA Hospital, where she serves as a nurse navigator.

story and photo by Traci Chapman

Leann Denney has always had a sense of adventure and a love of life — it's something that's served her in good stead as she helps patients through the challenges of chemotherapy.

Denney's sense of adventure led her to Oklahoma City's VA Hospital, where she works as a chemotherapy nurse navigator. While cancer and chemotherapy are, of course, nothing new, nurse navigators are a relatively new idea, something the VA Hospital has embraced in its "whole health" treatment of veterans.

"It's something that's evolving, in a way a different way of looking at nursing," Denney said.

An official definition of nurse navigator is educator and


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MCBRIDE

Continued from Page 1

years, and I've always been interested in the management side of things," Podany continued. His talent did not go unnoticed. In November, 2015 the leadership team at McBride took him under their wing to invest in his leadership potential.

"They knew my interest. Since I didn't have any management experience, they gave me an internship to see if I would like it -- if I was able to do the management side," he explained.

After six months of internship, on May 1 of 2016, his current position opened up. They liked what they saw in Podany and promoted him.

Nursing is a diverse field, he said, with many areas to concentrate on. Podany loves a new challenge, especially when it will continue to serve the betterment of patient centered care. Orthopedics combines all the skills he honed when galvanizing his career in Norman. And today he flourishes with confidence.

He graduated from Ida Bell High School in 2000. At first he was a pharmacy major at OU, but was called to nursing, and is glad he never looked back after being accepted in the nursing school program.

Nurses are sometimes overlooked for the hard work and dedication they give from their heart and learning path, he said. They are dedicated.

"Being on this floor in the acute care setting, there's someone with these patients 24/7," he said. "So it's a never ending focus."

It is important to Podany to recognize the nursing staff daily for the hard work they do while in a constant spiral of learning. The staff is educated to recognize other health problems patients have that interplay with orthopedic surgery. They do it with kindness and grace. Problems such as high blood pressure and diabetes are always considered.

Patients arrive for surgery with a good understanding of what to expect. Classes are available to them preoperatively to educate them according to their surgery and follow-up care.

"We keep the staff educated to the utmost level of care they can provide to these patients," he said. "And most patients are very satisfied and happy by the time they leave."

Podany became the Acute Care/

Emergency Care manager at a time of rapid growth and development. A new three-story medical/office building is under construction on campus. All of the McBride Clinic from downtown will be in the new building next to the McBride hospital. He anticipates the new clinical center will be completed in the fall or winter of this year depending on the weather. The transition of staff should begin in January.

"There will be a better collaboration between the clinic and the hospital," Podany said of the streamlined approach.

This is a good time to be an orthopedic nurse in Oklahoma. As the baby boomer generation ages, the need for more nurses grows accordingly. Oklahoma is not the healthiest state, but McBride is helping to raise the bar.

"Bones get weaker as we get older and someone is going to need a total joint replacement," he continued.

Knowing he is making a positive difference through the most difficult of days, Podany said it's always nice to see patients during therapy walking and making progress.

"We have a great group of people that work with these patients with the proper encouragement to push themselves to see the results," he reflected.

He couldn't ask for a better, more qualified group of nurses to work with him.

"I have an open door policy," he said. "In order to be successful in this position you have to be willing to put in the extra time and effort."

He spends 10-12 hours a day doing what he loves.

"I take care of the staff, and when the staff sees I put in the extra time, effort to make sure they're taken care of -- and I show them they're supported 100 percent -- they're going to give me in return the hard work back," he said.

He likes to relax and have fun with his family during his leisure time. Podany likes to golf and go hunting.

He thanks Mark Galliard, CEO; Krista Reyna, COO; and the McBride physicians for giving him a leadership role.

"I'm very appreciative for this opportunity and most importantly humbled. I want to be the best of the best, and I strive daily to make McBride the best of the best," he said.

VA

Continued from Page 1

advocate for patients and caregivers, but Denney and her fellow VA colleagues know it is so much more.

"In navigation — it's not in your job description, but you're chasing a lead," Denney said. "It's a growing thing, and every day is different."

Cancer innovations might change some things, but the difficulties of both the disease and its treatments remain. For some patients, chemotherapy and other resources might be more difficult for a patient to physically tolerate than the cancer itself, Denney said. The all-encompassing nature of the disease impacts not just the patient, but everyone around them, she said.

"There is so much to chemotherapy — we work through their regimens, go through their general care, side effects and how we can help them treat them, here are the tools you have at home," Denney said. "The whole family is involved and when things come up they call me — I'm a sounding board, but it also allows me to make sure they get other treatments when they need them."

These include things like nutritional counseling or psychotherapy for patients that are facing perhaps

the biggest challenge of their life. Depression can be common, both for patients and their families, Denney said.

"It's interesting because people don't think of women as veterans, but there's more and more of that, so we have breast cancer as a condition we're treating," she said.

No matter who the patient might be, Denney said each one — and their families — become part of her department's own extended family.

"We get to know each other and we come to care so much for them, and it's returned, which is very special for us," she said.

As Denney and other health providers assist their patients through their difficult journey, they in turn receive many resources from American Cancer Society, she said. ACS provides meetings for both caregivers and patients, as well as offering wigs to female patients who lose their hair during chemotherapy and more.

"They really are a huge resource for us," Denney said.

The help is appreciated by a nurse navigator who can see 15 to 20 patients in a day — treating, educating, counseling, helping them to find resources and more, Denney said.

While Denney said she can't see ever wanting to leave the VA or her patients, her path to that position started very differently — and many miles away. Living in East Texas, Denney majored in journalism and that's where she started, as a reporter for the Lufkin Daily News.

It was there she had an assignment that would change Denney's career trajectory, she said.

"I interviewed Dr. (Michael) DeBakey, the heart surgeon in his lab in east Texas and my next story was about the nursing shortage," she said. "I had a roommate who was a nursing student, and I helped her study — I just decided to move back home and go to nursing school."

In her senior year clinicals while attending the University of Texas at Arlington, Denney worked in the kidney/liver transplant at Baylor University. After her graduation, she knew she wanted to be a traveling nurse, something that would impact every facet of her life.

"My first assignment was in Miami, Florida, and they put me in this apartment that wasn't ready — it needed to be painted, the furniture was all jumbled up — and they offered for a surgery assistant they had there to come help me," Denney

said. "I said OK, and that was my future husband."

Together, the couple traveled as visiting nurses, going from Florida to Reno, Nevada and more, Denney said. Eventually, they moved to Kansas City, where Mark Denney could continue schooling to become a physician's assistant; they moved to Oklahoma City in 1999.

For a time, Denney worked nights while her children were small but finally achieved her goal of joining the VA Hospital in 2013.

"It was like coming home," she said.

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CAREERS IN NURSING

KIND HEART: LPN RETURNS TO NURSING AFTER RETIREMENT

by James Coburn - Writer/Photographer

Judy Rush says she has been blessed to work as a nurse with long-term care residents. She has a myriad of services under her belt at Golden Age Nursing Center in Guthrie.

"It's my whole life, just about," she said.

The former administrator there came out of retirement to return to the nursing profession she values highly. A licensed practical nurse, Rush works part time as a staff nurse.

"My mother has been here for six years," Rush said. "And they take really good care of her. I wouldn't have her any place else."

Golden Age is family. Rush first came to Golden Age in 2000. She already had an administrator's license when she was hired as an MDS coordinator. Golden Age Director of Nursing Phyllis Bagwell was hired that same year as a staff nurse.

"When I became administrator a

little after that, she became DON. So she and I have worked as administrator and DON together," Rush said.

Rush served three years as the administrator before the parent company Companion Health Services asked her to be an administrator at another facility.

Rush retired from family owned Companion Health Services in 2014, but couldn't resist the offer to come back.

"Golden Age is my favorite," she said. "I had to come back because I got bored at home after I retired as an administrator and I quit. I was in Perry at that time."

She called administrator Linda Smith and asked, "Can I come feed people?" And Smith replied, "No. I have a perfect job for you."

Her face lights up when talking about the nursing staff there.

"We have younger girls and we have middle-age girls," Rush said.

"Right now the team that we have -- we work as a team. I mean I could not do it without them."

She appreciates the communication among the staff from the laundry staff, nurse aides, dietary personnel and nurses for noticing the subtle changes in the health of a resident. Nurses are informed right away.

"They go around hugging the residents. They say, 'I love you.' And the residents tell them back," Rush said.

Nursing has enriched her life since graduating from nursing school in 1976 in New Mexico. She worked in a hospital in a rural area near Santa Fe doing medical surgical nursing for six years. She also worked in a drug abuse treatment program at the University of New Mexico. Her first venture in long-term care came next, still in Santa Fe.

"We think we know nursing so

well, but do you know how much we learn from the elderly when we take care of them?" Rush continued. "A whole lot. They're amazing. They have stories you wouldn't believe."

She's cared for artists, doctors and all types of beautiful people, she said. One guy was a pilot is WWII.

"They're awesome. Their lives are amazing," she said.

It is a blessing for Rush that she has had opportunities to meet people from all walks of life. The pleasure of taking care of them and knowing them has flowed like chapters in a book.

"We have really nice families, too," she said.

Moments of being a nurse have touched her life, flowing like chapters in a book.

She recalls one lady at Golden Age living with a terminal case of breast cancer. She was in a lot of pain.

Continued on next page


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Judy Rush, LPN, Golden Age Nursing Center, has enjoyed each year of her career that began in 1976. And she has a lot more to give.

They got to talking and learned they had a common friend who owned a store in Stillwater. Rush and the lady began talking about homeopathic medicine.

"She was the sweetest lady. And she would always smile when I walked into her room. She just made you smile although she was very ill," Rush said.

She had a lot to give. And many of the residents at Golden Age continue to shine, regardless of facing moments of uncertainty.

"I think of people even when I worked in med/surg back in the

1970s that were real special," Rush said. "I had one lady who was very ill. And she said, 'You need to have a baby so I can take care of it for you. That's how special people are. They really appreciate your kindness and the love that you give them.'"

Rush knows as a nurse to also be kind to herself. She remains engaged in life with days spent at botanical gardens in Oklahoma City or going to the zoo, especially on Wednesdays, when the zoo offers a discount for seniors 65 and older, she said.

She also likes to explore Oklahoma with her niece. Life has been good.

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St. Gregory's University honored nursing students at pinning ceremony

On May 4, the St. Gregory's University community gathered in the St. Gregory's Abbey Church to honor its five senior nursing students in a pinning ceremony. The pin given to each student serves as a reminder to the nurses the overall purpose of their chosen career path – to care for the sick and vulnerable. The ceremony itself serves as a symbol of the important level of care and devotion nurses provide to their patients.

The pinning ceremony was a proud moment for the St. Gregory's community.

"We have five of the most amazing, persistent, tenacious, intelligent and professional individuals on the verge of graduation as the first traditional nursing class of St. Gregory's School of Nursing. What an honor and a privilege it has been to be part of their journey," said Dean of the School of Nursing, Dr. Susan Barnes. "This journey has not been limited to

nursing faculty, but has been the result of the entire St. Gregory's community. Whether anatomy or art, math or micro, theology or ethics, faculty from all across the ranks at St. Gregory's pulled together and contributed to the formation of these students."

Keynote speaker Cyndi Lepley, RN, Ph.D., offered students great deal of encouragement as they prepare for this next chapter in their lives.

"You are now ready to take on the the career and work life of a nurse. I was thinking just the other day, when a new person comes on board in a new job and joins a team of people who have been together for a while, the new person needs attention," said Lepley. "You may be worried about this, but, believe me, we are so happy you are here; we have needed you for so long. Let us care for you as we have cared for our patients in the past, so that you can care for your patients, wherever



Back: Dalton Leatherman (l), Mark Legako (r) Front: Alyssa Jackson (l), Dusti Creecy (m), Maureen Myrvold (r).

they are from, using a heart-centered approach."

The pin for St. Gregory's nursing program represents the uniqueness of the program itself. The pin was inspired by a window in the chapel of St. Gregory's Abbey that depicts a lamp with rays of light extending

beyond the borders of the art. The philosophy of the nursing program – think, do love – is captured around the perimeter with the pin. The center of the pin is marked with a diamond, which symbolizes the enduring meaning of light, truth and a life of service.

Special to the Nursing Times

What I have learned in the U.S.

By Mohammed Baqer Al-Jubouri

Being a student in the United States has been my dream since I was in the high school in Iraq. I studied hard to be the highest ranked student in undergraduate nursing program and the master program in Baghdad University in order to get a scholarship. After a hard competition with thousands of Iraqi students, I got a scholarship to complete my doctorate degree in nursing at Oklahoma City University (OCU) in the U.S. The first few months in the U.S. were very difficult for my family and me to live because of a new culture, language, people and even food. Stress was at its higher level. The main challenge after arriving to the U.S. was the English language. I was afraid to speak English, and it was challenging my educational journey. However, after spending five months in the English Language Center at OCU, I began my doctorate program in fall 2014 in Kramer School of Nursing.

In fact, every beginning is hard for everyone, and the first month in the PhD program was really hard



Mohammed Al-Jubouri, PhD.
Kramer School of Nursing,
Oklahoma City University

for me to understand the educational system in the U.S. Over time, I have become used to the teaching and learning styles in the U.S. Learning modern styles of teaching strategies, leadership, and research have added a lot to me. Also, I loved to compete

See SPECIAL page 9

FOREST VIEW

EST. 2015

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Alpha Hospice: 7512 N Broadway Ext., suite 312 OKC, 405-463-5695 Keith Ruminer/volunteer coordinator/chaplain

Autumn Bridge Hospice: 405-440-2440

Autumn Light Hospice: 580-252-1266

Carter Healthcare & Hospice: OKC - OKC Pat McGowen, Vol. Coordinator, 405-947-7705, ext. 134; Tulsa - Samantha Estes, Vol. Coordinator, 918-425-4000

Centennial Hospice: Becky Johnson, Bereavement Coordinator 405-562-1211

Choice Home Health & Hospice: 405-879-3470

Comforting Hands Hospice: Bartlesville: 918-331-0003

Companion Hospice: Steve Hickey, Vol. Coordinator, Guthrie: 405-282-3980; Edmond: 405-341-9751

Compassionate Care Hospice: Amy Legare, Bereavement/Vol. Coordinator, 405-948-4357

Cornerstone Hospice: Vicky Herrington, Vol. Coordinator, 918-641-5192

Crossroads Hospice: Elizabeth Horn, Vol. Coordinator, 405-632-9631

Cross Timbers Hospice: Ardmore-800-498-0655 Davis-580-369-5335 Volunteer Coordinator-Shelly Murray

Excell Hospice: Toni K. Cameron, Vol. Coordinator 405-631-0521

Faith Hospice of OKC: Charlene Kilgore, Vol. Coordinator, 405-840-8915

Frontier Hospice: Kelly Morris, Vol. Coordinator, 405-789-2913

Golden Age Hospice: 405-735-5121

Good Shepherd Hospice: 4350 Will Rogers Parkway Suite 400 OKC OK 73108 405-943-0903

Grace Hospice Foundation: Sharon Doty, Dir of Spec. Projects - Tulsa 918-744-7223

Harbor Light Hospice: Randy Pratt, Vol. Coordinator, 1009 N Meridian, Oklahoma City, OK 73107 405-949-1200

Horizon Hospice: LaDonna Rhodes, Vol. Coordinator, 918-473-0505

Heartland Hospice: Shawnee: Vol. Coord. Karen Cleveland, 405-214-6442; OKC: Vol. Coord. Tricia Woodward, 405-579-8565

Heavenly Hospice: Julie Myers, Coordinator 405-701-2536

Hope Hospice: Bartlesville: 918-333-7700, Claremore: 918-343-0777 Owasso: 918-272-3060

Hospice by Loving Care: Connie McDivitt, Vol. Coordinator, 405-872-1515

Hospice of Green Country: Tulsa: 918-747-2273, Claremore: 918-342-1222, Sapulpa: 918-224-7403

INTEGRIS Hospice, Inc. & the INTEGRIS Hospice House: Ruth Ann Frick, Vol. Coordinator, 405-848-8884

Hospice of Owasso, Inc.: Todd A. Robertson, Dir. of Marketing, 877-274-0333

Humanity Hospice: Kay Cole, Vol. Coordinator 405-418-2530

InFinity Care of Tulsa: Spencer Brazeal, Vol. Director, 918-392-0800

Indian Territory Home Health & Hospice: 1-866-279-3975

Interim Healthcare Hospice: 405-848-3555

Image HealthCare : 6116 S. Memorial Tulsa, Ok. 74133 (918) 622-4799

LifeChoice Hospice: Christy Coppenbarger, RN, Executive Director. 405-842-0171

LifeSpring In-Home Care Network: Terry Boston, Volunteer and Bereavement Coordinator 405-801-3768

LifeLine Hospice: April Moon, RN Clinical Coordinator 405-222-2051

Mercy Hospice: Sandy Schuler, Vol. Coordinator, 405-486-8600

Mission Hospice L.L.C.: 2525 NW Expressway, Ste. 312 OKC, OK 73112 405-848-3779

Oklahoma Hospice Care: 405-418-2659 Jennifer Forrester, Community Relations Director

One Health Home Health in Tulsa: 918-412-7200

Palliative Hospice: Janet Lowder, Seminole, & Sabrina Johnson, Durant, 800-648-1655

Physician's Choice Hospice: Tim Clausing, Vol. Coordinator 405-936-9433

Professional Home Hospice: Sallisaw: 877-418-1815; Muskogee: 866-683-9400; Poteau: 888-647-1378

PromiseCare Hospice: Angela Shelton, LPN - Hospice Coordinator, Lawton: (580) 248-1405

Quality Life Hospice: 405 486-1357

RoseRock Healthcare: Audrey McCraw, Admin. 918-236-4866

Ross Health Care: Glenn LeBlanc, Norman, Chickasha; April Burrows, Enid; Vol. Coordinators, 580-213-3333

Russell Murray Hospice: Tambi Urias, Vol. Coordinator, 405-262-3088; Kingfisher 405-375-5015; Weatherford-580-774-2661

Seasons Hospice: Carolyn Miller, Vol. / Bereavement Coordinator, 918-745-0222

Sequoyah Memorial Hospice: Vernon Stone, D. Min. Chaplin, Vol. Coordinator, 918-774-1171

Sooner Hospice, LLC: Matt Ottis, Vol. Coordinator, 405-608-0555

SPECIAL Continued from Page 8

with domestic students in terms of getting high grades. In 2016, my grades were amazing, and they were higher than even domestic students. In fact, my goal changed from passing the PhD program to be the first ranked student in the PhD program.

In time, I was used to living in the U.S. and arranged my time to study and live. My son was enrolled in kindergarten, and I started to play soccer with American people. Also, I became an official referee at Soccer City in March 2015, and this increased my charisma. As a result of adapting to the new life in the U.S., stress has been decreased, but my wife, my kids, and I are still missing our families, relatives, and friends in Iraq.

At the end of spring 2017, I got my doctorate degree with a high standing level. This ended the journey that I began three years ago, which was full of bumps. In fact, I consider my life in the U.S. as an open buffet that I should take whatever I want; put them in my luggage and take them back to my country. I should eat and I should take to go as much as I can. In fact, whatever I have learned is not a knowledge that belongs to me, it belongs to Iraqi people, too. The Iraqi government paid my salary and tuition from people's taxes, so it is my responsibility to share what I have gotten from the open buffet with Iraqi people. This thought made me learn

more; not just for myself, but for my country. Cultural diversity was one of the dishes in the open buffet. I learned how to be honest with people because I noticed that most people in the U.S. tell the truth. Also, I noticed that people in the U.S. do not say scandal. They do not care what you wear, eat, drink, ride, etc. Furthermore, I have learned that law is law for everyone, and everyone should respect it even if it is not forced. Indeed, no community is perfect, and the American community is not without bad things. Therefore, I take whatever I like from the open buffet, and for sure I will leave the rotten food.

Now, I am ready to go back home to share what I have learned in the U.S. with Iraqis. I will miss my friends in the U.S. especially in Oklahoma. They made Oklahoma my second home, and I really appreciate their help and support. Thank you all!

Mohammed Baqer Al-Jubouri, an international student from Iraqi, is a recently graduated from Kramer School of Nursing at Oklahoma City University with PhD. Dr. Al-Jubouri started his journey in March 2014 and finished it successfully in April 2017. He published many studies and participated in many conferences. He is a faculty member in the College of Nursing at Baghdad University in Iraq. Dr. Al-Jubouri will go back soon to serve the Iraqi people with the knowledge and practice that he have earned in the U.S.

ANA Applauds Appointment

ANA applauds the appointment of Sylvia Trent-Adams, PhD, RN, FAAN, to the position of Acting U.S. Surgeon General. Dr. Trent-Adams, a fellow of the American Academy of Nursing, was appointed to this position on April 21, 2017. Previously, she served as Deputy Surgeon General in the U.S. Public Health Service (USPHS) Commissioned Corps.

"Throughout her career, Dr. Trent-Adams has been a champion for public health with a clear focus on improving access to care, particularly for poor and underserved communities," said ANA President Pamela F. Cipriano, PhD, RN, NEA-BC, FAAN. "As a nurse, she brings a unique set of perspectives and experiences to the public health arena. We congratulate her and are pleased to continue to work with her in this new capacity as we pursue our mission to improve health for all Americans."

Dr. Trent-Adams served as Chief Nurse Officer of USPHS from November 2013 through May 2016. In this role, she advised the Office of the Surgeon General and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) on the recruitment, assignment, deployment, retention, and career development of Corps nurse professionals. Prior to joining USPHS, she was a nurse officer in the U.S. Army.

Dr. Trent-Adams received her Bachelor of Science degree in Nursing from Hampton University, a Master of Science in Nursing and Health Policy from the University of Maryland, Baltimore, and a Doctor of Philosophy from the University of Maryland, Baltimore County. She became a Fellow in the American Academy of Nursing in 2014.

The Hospice Directory above does not represent a list of all Hospice facilities statewide. For a complete list visit www.ok.gov/health

OKCU Addresses Nursing Faculty Shortage

New Tuition Makes Degree More Affordable, Accessible

In an ongoing commitment to address the nationwide shortage of nurses and nursing faculty, Oklahoma City University's Kramer School of Nursing announced a new, lower tuition rate for those pursuing the Doctor of Philosophy in Nursing. Tuition for the Ph.D. program will be \$590 per credit hour, a 40 percent reduction in credit hour tuition for Ph.D. coursework.

Since 2015, the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN) has reported that tens of thousands of qualified baccalaureate and graduate nursing program applicants nationwide are denied entry annually due to a shortage of faculty. With predictions of increased numbers of retiring faculty expected in the next few years, there is a heightened need for new faculty, according to the AACN. Compounding these issues is that higher salaries in clinical and private-sector settings often attract potential nurse educators away from teaching.

Liz Diener, assistant dean and professor at Kramer School of Nursing, stated that the reduction in tuition was motivated by efforts to overcome the financial barriers to earning a terminal degree.

In addition to a traditional post-master's program, Kramer School of Nursing also offers a B.S.N.-Ph.D. program, which enables nurses who have earned a bachelor's degree to move directly to a Ph.D. and allows graduates to be competitive for faculty positions nationwide.

Diener stated that "our programs, coupled with the new tuition rate, make earning a doctoral degree more affordable for more people." She also noted that doctoral alumni can already be found teaching in institutions worldwide, and such portability may be attractive to those considering a career in nursing education.

For more information about Kramer School of Nursing and its programs, visit okcu.edu/nursing or call 405-208-5960.



**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*

I just finished reading Eric Clapton's autobiography. It was a very candid and honest sharing of the ups and downs of his life. He was addicted to heroin and an alcoholic for many years, in fact he did not get clean and sober until age 42. The following are some highlights about both his life and the ravages of addiction.

Eric Clapton did not know his father. His mother was 15 at the time of his birth and he was secretly born in the upstairs back bedroom in his grandparents house. At the age of 9 he learned that his "sister" was really his "mother" and his "parents" were really his "grandparents." There always seemed to be secrets. But one thing was not a secret, Eric was illegitimate. That would haunt him for many years.

In the making of an addict/alcoholic you will find significant pain and sometimes trauma. No one plans this life, it sneaks up on you. The basic premise is the following, "If I am in pain and I find something that numbs that pain then I will do it again." This applies to physical pain as well as emotional pain. Not rocket science.

Eric Clapton had many unsuccessful relationships and affairs. The most famous with Patti Boyd who was married to George Harrison when Eric announced he was in love with her. At this time he was heavily using heroin. And would for several years. Perhaps a very good explanation for why his relationships failed. When he and Patti finally married he was heavily drinking. He had several affairs during this marriage and the divorce was not a surprise.

It is impossible to have healthy, intimate relationships when you are an addict or if your partner is an addict. The intimacy is with the drug. It is the thing you crave. There is no room for an intimate relationship with another human being.

Eric Clapton was inpatient twice for addiction treatment. Not uncommon for more than one treatment stay before "it clicks." He attended 12 step meetings and sought the help of a therapist. Recovery for drinking and drugging is the first step. Then codependency education is needed to understand how all the dots connect.. Family of origin work is crucial to recovery. It helps focus on the really bad choices we have made with our relationship and sexual behavior.

Eric was 54 when he was finally in a relationship that was built on healthy intimacy, fidelity and love. It was foreign and he was clumsy until he finally began to find the blessing that recovery had brought him.

Speaking publicly, Clapton on several occasions has credited his sobriety with not only aiding him in surviving tragedy but aiding in his self-awareness.

To all the newly sober people out there, not that it has to be this way but let Eric Clapton be an example of what you can face, overcome and remain clean and sober.

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