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Learning on the front lines



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Already an experienced nurse, Verena Turner is furthering her career in public health by pursuing her bachelor's degree in nursing through OSU's online RN to BSN completion program.

Her passion for serving patients who need her most has been elevated amid the coronavirus pandemic. Turner, who is typically a nurse in a neurology intensive care unit (ICU), transitioned to caring solely for coronavirus patients over the last several months. The day-to-day patient care is an opportunity to apply her coursework.

"I love being a nurse, although I wouldn't say being a COVID nurse was my goal for this year," Turner said. "Seeing these patients recover, getting text messages and cards and emails from families of patients we've seen at the absolute worst and not knowing if we're going to keep them alive makes it all worth it."

Due to isolation restrictions, Turner said she may be the only person her COVID patients see for 13 hours. She endures layers of uncomfortable personal protective equipment (PPE) to spend extra time with the patients.

"Our patients a lot of the time are intubated and sedated, but they know there's somebody there," Turner said. "This has definitely opened my

eyes that nurses have a really big impact."

Serving in a COVID care unit builds on Turner's past work as a licensed professional nurse on a surgical floor and more recently in the ICU. Not only does she apply hands-on experiences from working full time to her coursework, but she also learns from classmates who are working in diverse healthcare environments.

Dr. Mary Malaska, OSU RN to BSN program coordinator, said the OSU curriculum, which consists of eight nursing classes and two health classes, is specifically designed to enhance nurses' professional skills.

"Students expand their professional nursing lens from the practical, foundational skills they learned to become a registered nurse," Malaska said. "Our coursework provides higher level thinking that teaches the 'why' behind their past education."

Students are challenged with topics ranging from leadership and goal-setting, to public health policy and nursing theory. During the COVID pandemic, the epidemiology course has been especially applicable.



"Factors like causation, testing and data analysis are key tenets of the course," Malaska said. "Their application now in a global pandemic just underscores the relevance of our program."

Balancing COVID nursing responsibilities with classwork has certainly not been easy. Some OSU RN to BSN students working in COVID units travel to as many as four healthcare facilities in one metropolitan area tending to patients, in addition to managing coursework and responsibilities at home.

Malaska is working with Dr. Alana Cluck, RN to BSN clinical faculty, to study the impact of COVID on nurses' mental health. While respondents reported positive aspects, like spending more time with family due to canceled personal events, they also reported increased stress.

"Many nurses feel like they are placed in impossible situations, having to decide which patient to tend to first when two patients are crashing at the same time," Malaska said. "This isn't a decision nurses usually have to make."

Oklahoma State nursing faculty understand that stress, and they are committed to supporting their students academically and professionally. As the world continues to social distance in

order to combat the spread of coronavirus, nursing faculty have remained connected to students through weekly video updates and discussion boards.

This is part of a culture of support Turner observed even before the COVID pandemic, something she is thankful for as a full-time working mom. The 100-percent online program also added flexibility.

"My professors realize we're all in this together and have been super flexible and supportive," Turner said. "They even send emails checking to see if we're safe and okay."

For Turner, who expects to graduate in May 2021, the hands-on experience of caring for COVID patients during a pandemic as well as the healthcare applications learned from her RN to BSN program are preparing her to achieve her dreams.

"I think COVID is going to be something we're dealing with for a long time," Turner said. "The experience of working on a COVID floor, coupled with the higher-level concepts I am learning in the RN to BSN program, will shape my career."

For this nurse - whether treating COVID patients or furthering her education - each task is a labor of love.

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"I was truly blown away by the level of professionalism and commitment from the faculty and staff. The knowledge and support I received are unparalleled."

- Kayce (Tuter) Brown, RN to BSN student



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New Frontiers

Hospice provider continues growth

Frontier Hospice has been rapidly growing this year with expansion outside of Oklahoma City, into Edmond and Shawnee. Service will be provided to the Lawton and Tulsa areas in the coming months.

And that's because the quality of care delivered by one of the state's oldest hospice agencies continues to be sought-after.

Frontier Hospice Executive Director Mandi Schulz says it's nurses like Amy Nix Smith, PCM, RN, BSN who are helping lead the way.

The Hospice Foundation of Oklahoma agrees and recently awarded Nix Smith with a prestigious Khader K. Hussein Award.

These awards are made in honor of Khader K. Hussein MD, who served as Volunteer Medical Director for Hospice of Oklahoma County, Inc., from its inception in 1990 until December of 1995.

This award program is designed to recognize and encourage graduating medical and nursing students who demonstrate an interest in palliative care and end-of-life issues. The annual

awards are presented to a graduating medical student from the University of Oklahoma School of Medicine and a graduating nursing student from the University of Oklahoma School of Nursing, Oklahoma City University's Kramer School of Nursing, the University of Central Oklahoma Department of Nursing and the Southern Nazarene University School of Nursing.

"Palliative and hospice care mean something different to everyone," Nix Smith said. "To a large percent of the population, it is something unspeakable or to be feared. To families who have walked a loved one through the process of hospice, it is an unexpected blessing they often knew little about before utilizing it. To other clinicians that I meet, it is something to pity that I work in hospice. To me it is everything."

Nix Smith started her nursing career as an associate's degree nurse in the ICU of a rural hospital.

Death and dying washed over her.

"I remember crying in my car

before a shift because a neuro patient who was either not going to survive their condition or be left with no quality of life if they did would still be on the ventilator when I walked in," she remembered. "Patients with mortal trauma or terminal conditions passed in the cold environment of the ICU rooms behind glass walls and doors."

It was there in that ICU Nix Smith met her first hospice nurse and their patient.

"His hospice nurse was with him for most of the night, and she was full of peace and care for this patient," she said. "He was surrounded by family, and comfortable in his bed without IV drips or machines to help him breathe."

"Even in death, you could tell this was a patient who had died peacefully and comfortably. That's when I knew that hospice wasn't something to be feared but something to be encouraged and destigmatized."

It's this peace and dignity that Nix Smith and her coworkers help bring to Frontier patients.

And each will tell you it works both ways.

"Working in hospice has brought me so much peace and a feeling that I'm truly making a difference in people's lives," she said.

The quality of nursing care is above and beyond and each nurse



Amy Nix Smith, PCM, RN, BSN found her calling with Frontier Hospice.

that works for Frontier has the mission and vision of excellent hospice care in their hearts, says Schulz.

"I'm beyond proud to have the privilege of working along-side each of our colleagues, loving on our patients and families," she said. "The Frontier Family is unique in every way and I'm so excited for what the future holds for all of us."

For more information visit: <https://www.frontierhospice.com>



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Uniform Shoppe dedicated to customer needs *Tulsa and OKC stores differ in tastes*



From left: Owner Jody Weise, Amy Mays, Renita Dearman, Melissa Buffington, and Traci Johnson understand the latest fashion trends in nursing at the Uniform Shoppe, located in Tulsa.

A fashion haven of comfort and style continues to flourish at the Uniform Shoppe in Oklahoma City and Tulsa, said Sherri Stallings, manager of the Uniform Shoppe in Oklahoma City.

The Uniform Shoppe is located in the Park Plaza Shopping Center at 6044 S. Sheridan Road, just west of Sheridan in Tulsa; and in Oklahoma City at 10503 North May Avenue, between Hefner Road and Britton Road.

Customer service at the Uniform Shoppe has been an enduring presence for the nursing industry ever since Elaine Weise and her late husband, Albert, purchased the Uniform Shoppe in 1965. By doing so, they established a new location in Oklahoma City. Her sister and brother-in-law started the

business in 1962 in Tulsa. This was when the color white was standard for nurses to wear at the time.

One thing is certain. The Uniform Shoppe has always provided its customers what they want.

"Our customers mean a lot to us and we take care of them," Elaine Weise said. "We sell fine merchandise at competitive prices."

She and her staff have made several friends through the years. The original store was located at 10th Street and Walker. Weise said she has enjoyed interacting with new and loyal customers through the years. It's part of her life and she can't think of doing anything else.

Weise has noticed a contrast in fashion has developed between what



The staff at the Uniform Shoppe in Oklahoma City includes from left: Ericka Branham, owner Elaine Weise, Brenda Young, and store manager Sherri Stallings.

customers purchase in Oklahoma City and Tulsa. The differing tastes has been developing for a few years.

A jogger pant is more in demand at the Oklahoma City store, Stallings said. It's all about how durable and soft the fabric is, she said of the streamlined product.

"Mostly all of your uniforms are going to be the new fabrics. And also, it's all about the color. Our top color here in Oklahoma City is black, navy, and grey," she said.

Jody Weise, co-owner of the Uniform Shoppe in Tulsa said it's unusual that what is popular in one city doesn't sell in the other city when they are 100 miles apart.

"I don't think it is a brand thing. I think it is a style thing," Jody said. "I think it may really come down to the enthusiasm of our salespeople."

It's not the pricing or brand name, Jody said.

"When they really love something and they really believe in it, I think that's what makes it go," Jody explained. "But part of it is, we will bring in beautiful groupings in both cities. And sometimes, it will just sit in one city and we'll sale a few pieces. But the other city wipes it out."

The demographic doesn't seem to be different in the two cities. And Jody can't say that one city sells more expensive items than the other.

The staff is equally excited about

fashion options.

Both cities sell similar colors. A lot of hospitals chose certain colors of garments for their nurses, she said.

"Sometimes it doesn't matter what it looks like. If it's the right color, it's going to sell," Jody said.

Jody said both cities seem to cater to a jogger pant or a straight leg pant with flex panels on the sides. It's easy to move around with extra pockets.

Another brand, Landau, has a popular grouping in Oklahoma City. In Tulsa, the product was moved around in display, but it didn't sell well, she said.

"Landau came out with another new grouping. It looked different. It had a lot of the same properties. It would stretch and easy-care fabric and colors, and both cities just blow it out the door," Jody said.

But in the groupings, certain styles sell better in Oklahoma City, but Jody said they stay in the store in Tulsa.

"It's the weirdest thing," she said.

Groupings that cannot be found online are doing well in the stores.

"People are finding something that is uniquely styled, priced right and durable," Jody said. Shop the categories online at <https://theuniformshoppe.com> or visit us at us in OKC at 10503 N May Ave. Mon - Sat 9:30am - 6pm or Tulsa at 6044 S Sheridan Rd. Mon - Fri 10am - 6pm and Saturday 10am - 4pm.

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OU students ready for the world

Daniela Dial is headed to Edmond. Josh Meggett is destined to land in Duncan.

Rendi Nichols will follow her passion and wind up in Okmulgee.

Upon graduating from the University of Oklahoma Fran and Earl Ziegler College of Nursing, the three will scatter to the four winds to begin their respective nursing careers.

But no matter how far their careers take them they will always remember where they started and the education that got them there.

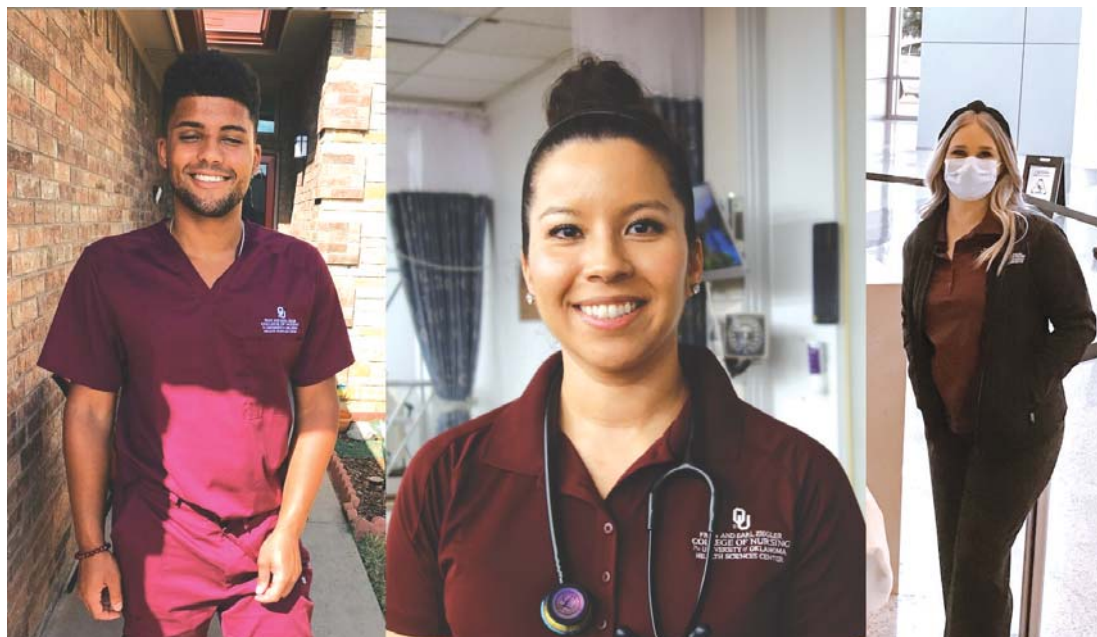
Julie Anne Hoff, dean of the Fran and Earl Ziegler College of Nursing, beams with pride when OU Nursing students head out into the world.

"These students demonstrate the compassion, curiosity, and courage of OU nurses," she said. "Despite COVID, they each successfully persevered in their studies and job search. I am so proud of the academic and personal accomplishments OU nursing students achieved the last year and a half. I know each will contribute to our 110 year legacy of improving health sooner."

This year during National Nurses' Month, thousands of nursing students across the country will begin their transition into a role they've only dreamed of.

"It's difficult to put into words how exciting it is that I am almost a registered nurse," said Meggett, who plans on working at Duncan Regional after completing his degree at OU's Lawton campus. "The sense of accomplishment and feeling of gratification of almost being at the finish line is the greatest reward for all the late nights studying and the early mornings waking up for clinical." As he nears the finish line, Meggett has a sense of the gravity of what he's about to undertake.

"Becoming a nurse is important to me because we as nurses get to be there in arguably the worst times of an individual's life and get to make a positive impact in their life, to celebrate with our patients when we see improvement and to celebrate again when the patient gets to discharge and return to their



University of Oklahoma College of Nursing Seniors Daniela Dial (center), Josh Meggett (left) and Rendi Nichols (right) are ready to begin their careers this spring.

normal life," he said. "The impact of a great nurse on a patient's hospital experience can completely change a patient's life for the better and I strive to be that great nurse."

Dial plans on working for OU Health Edmond after graduating from the OKC campus. She's equal parts excited, overjoyed and overwhelmed as she begins her nursing career.

"I am beyond excited to graduate, but terrified at the same time," she said. "I am currently working in the ER for clinicals and it is scary. My professor said working in the ER means you're a jack of all trades but a master at none and she is absolutely right."

"I love it though, the people are the ones who have made all the difference. OU Health Edmond is such an incredible place. Everyone feels like family and goes out of their way to make sure I understand

what I am doing and help each other out. The ER nurses really want me to succeed and are absolutely the best people."

For Nichols, her journey through the College of Nursing's Tulsa campus will end as a registered nurse at Muscogee Creek Nation Medical Center in Okmulgee.

The Ponca Tribe member feels reverence in what she's about to embark on and looks back in awe at what she's accomplished.

"I am very confident in the education I have received at the University of Oklahoma," she said. "OU provides numerous opportunities which allowed me to gain new skills and knowledge through simulations, labs, clinicals, and the Bedlam clinic."

"OU professors are dedicated to each student succeeding. I am certain I will provide the utmost, quality

nursing care thanks to my OU education."

Looking back, Meggett knows he had a lot of people pulling for him.

"The faculty here at OU Nursing's Lawton Campus have been nothing short of miracle workers in their ability to educate us and always be there for us when a problem arises," Meggett said. "I came to this program and faculty as an unsure, unbelievably nervous pre-nursing major and - with their assistance - have grown into a confident and competent student registered nurse ready to take on whatever the shift may throw my way. I can't thank the faculty enough for the time and work they invested into making us great."

And support like that will follow OU nurses wherever they go.

For more information visit: <https://nursing.ouhsc.edu/>



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Happy Nurses Week!



This Nurses Week, we express our sincere gratitude to our OCU Kramer School of Nursing Alumni and all nurses who have spent the past year caring for patients during a pandemic. Your skills, compassion, and leadership have made a lasting impression on countless patients and their families. Thank you for your endless dedication to the nursing profession, you are an inspiration to us all.

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The Kramer Way, A Driving Force in Health Care

A shining star in Oklahoma nursing education, Oklahoma City University's Kramer School of Nursing continues to prepare tomorrow's health care leaders.

"Completing my doctoral degree at KSN was an authentic life changing experience for me, said Patrick McGough, DNP, and executive director of the Oklahoma City-County Health Department. "The unending support from the faculty, and the content and rigor of the program, culminated in my pursuit of an ever-evolving and expanding practice of genuine leadership. The core values of the now internationally known 'Kramer Way,' influence my role every day."

One constant in an ever changing health care environment is the crucial need for highly skilled nurses, not only at the bedside, but at clinics, specialty practices, and in research and academia. Whether you envision a future in nursing education, leadership, research, or patient care, OCU's graduate nursing programs educate and develop leaders in health care.

The Kramer Way is modeled and shared with nursing students across the globe.

Graduates of the PhD in nursing are teaching in universities across Oklahoma, as well as Texas, Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, Missouri, California, Kentucky, and Arkansas. Internationally there are alumni in China, Thailand, Iraq, and Jordan.

Alumni hold many roles that have a local and global impact on nursing practice and education.

OCU's Kramer School of Nursing is well known for providing programs that support students and meet the needs of an evolving health care environment. The MSN and PhD programs offer an online component, along with in-person instruction.

The flexibility makes it possible for students to still work full time if they wish. The in-person instruction encourages relationship building with other students and with faculty.



The BSN-DNP program provides in person classroom instruction to educate future nurse practitioners. Graduates from the KSN, BSN-DNP program work in a variety of practice settings including primary care, urgent care, acute care, and specialty practices.

Graduates may own and operate their own clinics or work within a larger healthcare organization as part of an interdisciplinary health care team. Overall, graduates enjoy the benefits of a quality, in person education as well as opportunities to practice in settings that complement their passion and area of expertise.

Kramer faculty go beyond educating students and develop strong mentor relationships with students that continues long after graduation.

Faculty are able to connect students and alumni in opportunities for community service, research, post-doctoral fellowships, and employment. Dr. Vanessa Wright appreciated the value of these connections, so much so she returned as the school's MSN program coordinator.

"My educational experience at Kramer School of Nursing transformed my nursing practice," Wright said.

"Faculty genuinely cared about students and provided flexibility whenever possible."

Wright was able to work full-time and be present as a mother as she advanced her education at Kramer. It was such a positive experience, she decided to keep going, pursuing her MSN and eventually earning the title of Dr. Wright in 2017.

"I always envisioned my place at the bedside but my experience in the MSN program was transformational," Wright recalled. "I fell in love with nursing theory and research because of the mentorship and kindness I experienced from my professors. I altered my path and decided to become a nurse educator because I wanted to impact nursing students in the way my mentors and KSN faculty impacted my educational experience."

"Obtaining my graduate degree at Kramer is undoubtedly one of the best decisions of my life."

Sara Bootenhoff benefited from

those relationships and is proud to call herself a graduate of the BSN to DNP program in 2020.

"Earning my BSN and DNP at Kramer was truthfully one of the best decisions I have ever made," she said. "I owe my professional success to the educational and clinical foundations that KSN provided me. After graduation, I felt truly prepared to start my career as a Family Nurse Practitioner."

Now working in a primary care clinic, Bootenhoff realizes how the Kramer Way positively impacted her preparation as a health care provider.

"I would not be where I am today without the professors and faculty at KSN," she said. "They were more than just professors; they were mentors, too, and now I get to call them my friends and colleagues."

You can find out more about OCU's Kramer School of Nursing graduate programs at the monthly virtual Information Sessions: www.okcu.edu/nursing

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Integris nurse finds home, family

Had Mallory Helstowski put together a list of units to work upon while in nursing school, the neonatal intensive care unit would not have even made the cut.

But little did she know the people she would meet at Integris Health would change everything she thought she wanted out of nursing.

"I love our patient population," Helstowski said of her career home at INTEGRIS Southwest Medical Center. "I really enjoy getting to help them. We get to be the people that are there to help them with resources and teaching them how to care for their babies. Being able to be the person there in the delivery and seeing the joy on their face and helping a new mom learn how to take care of their newborn baby is such an honor."

The NICU can be a scary place for moms and dads, even seasoned parents cower at the thought of their child spending time there.

There was little apprehension for Helstowski coming to Integris Southwest out of nursing school after she worked on the floor as a student.

"It wasn't so scary for me because I had a really great support system," Helstowski said. "Our preceptors on our unit made me feel like this was my home and they were going to take great care of me."

She can't remember what she needed that first time she had to call a doctor, but she does remember her co-workers standing there to provide support during this nursing milestone.

"We are truly like family," she said. "I wasn't nervous. I wasn't scared because I felt like my coworkers had my back and were there for me and that made the transition so easy."

Helstowski was helped along on her path by the INTEGRIS Health Careers program, which provides tuition assistance to community members and employees pursuing a career as a registered nurse.

Students accepted into the Health Careers Education Assistance Program are awarded assistance for books, tuition and fees up to a maximum of \$6,000 per year.

"They help pay for you to get through nursing school if you can work with them after you graduate," she said. "Being in that program you kind of get first dibs of where you want to work."

During her residency portion of the program she chose the NICU because she knew her next semester at East Central University would be obstetrics.

She'd heard it was one of the toughest semesters and wanted to be ready.

"I had no intentions of falling in love with it, no intentions of wanting to do anything like that," she said. "But as soon as I started my preceptorship within the residency program I absolutely fell in love with it."

The work, the people - it all just seemed to fit.

"Getting to walk them through that is really special," Helstowski said. "I absolutely love my job and everything about it. Our patient population is a really great opportunity to be able to really, truly invest in someone's life. I feel like I'm a lot of help to them."

INTEGRIS Chief Nurse Executive Kerri Bayer loves hearing stories



Mallory Helstowski, found her passion in the NICU at INTEGRIS Southwest Medical Center.

like Helstowski's from across the health system.

She knows with as many opportunities Integris offers, people are sure to find their niche.

And she's proud of how so many have stepped up this past year in the most daunting of circumstances.

"I am truly in awe of the nurses and all of the healthcare workers who have come in day in and day out and taken care of the sickest of the sick patients," Bayer said. "It will be a year that has changed my life forever so to be a nurse and be able to lead the nurses within our organization... people say they're heroes but what they do every day is beyond heroic."

"It's phenomenal." For more information about careers at INTEGRIS Health visit <https://integrisok.com/careers>

Celebrating National Nurses Month 2021





Dr. Rosa Ketchum prepares students to achieve their calling as a nurse at Oklahoma Wesleyan University, located in Bartlesville.

Students are meaningful at the School of Nursing at Oklahoma Wesleyan University.

"They are more than a number. They have a name and story that matters," said Dr. Rosa Ketchum, RN, a director in the School of Nursing at Oklahoma Wesleyan University.

"They have a name, a story, and because of the size of all of our programs — that name and student matters to the faculty."

Located in Bartlesville, Oklahoma Wesleyan University offers students three programs.

- OKWU had a total of 954 total degree seekers this past fall. 545 traditional on campus students and 409 in the graduate & professionals studies.

- OKWU has 42 students in the traditional pre-licensure BSN program (this includes traditional BSN admission and LPN-BSN students).

- There are 70 students in the Graduate and professional online program (this includes the RN-BSN and MSN).

The School of Nursing is always starting new cohorts in both their Masters and Bachelor programs.

"We do have an LPN to RN program," she added. "We also, with that have a night to weekend program."

Flexibility is key in fitting active lifestyles and schedules, she said.

"Especially considering the working adult or realizing that some people have to work and go to the school at the same time."

The Bachelor of Science in Nursing program is based on pediatrics, community health, medical surgical, critical care, and all learning experiences to prepare an RN for a nursing career. The university also offers an RN to BSN program which is for the already practicing RN focusing on community health, leadership and ethics, that are not part of an associate degree program.

"We have a graduate program that has two tracks. There's a nursing education track to help hospital nursing educators or academic nurse educators. And then the other track is administration, which is focused on nursing management. Hospital administration is what we're preparing those nurse leaders to do," Ketchum said.

Smaller cohorts cover all of the programs. The students are more than a number at the School of Nursing at Wesleyan University.

"I feel like because of the size of our school, and the mission of our school, and that being faith based — the faculty is in a place where

Connecting to community

Nursing students thrive at Oklahoma Wesleyan University



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they can really care for the students," Ketchum said. "They see them not just as a nursing student but as a person who is going to be a nursing professional, but also a person who has interest and value. I think because of our class size and the mission of the school, that's really important."

Oklahoma Wesleyan University has maintained hands-on clinical experiences among the nursing students during the COVID-19 pandemic, Ketchum continued.

Students have adapted to wearing masks and social distancing as a precaution. But virtual simulation experiences have increased to help the students meet their clinical learning objectives. Nursing care related to the pandemic has been a prominent theme of graduate students. Many of them have investigated ways to prevent burnout and fatigue due to the pandemic.

"I feel like nursing is a calling," Ketchum said. "It's not just a profession, it's not just a job, but it truly is a vocation. And so, whenever you get to meet students who feel that calling to serve nursing, to serve others in ways that are not easy, you get to meet really special people."

Ketchum began her nursing career as an associate degree nurse. She earned her Bachelor in the Science in Nursing degree at Oklahoma Wesleyan University in the RN to BSN program. Her Master of Science in Nursing degree was earned at Indiana Wesleyan University before receiving her doctorate at Grand Canyon University.

Being called to nursing is a special passion that not everybody has embedded in their careers. There is a selflessness by placing others first, she said.

"We serve them wherever they are, and I think that is really beautiful," she said. "People who are called to nursing are beautiful to me — they make you better."

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*Thanks to all the Nurses,
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Healers helping healers

Any given year, Erin Barnhart's role as director of the Norman Regional Health Foundation is to help fill in hospital needs where she can.

But 2020 wasn't any given year.

The 200th anniversary of Florence Nightingale's birth coincided with the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Year of the Nurse saw long days turn into long weeks and long months.

The need was ever-present and as staff reached their breaking points Barnhart and her staff did what they could to remind those healers they were not alone.

"In a typical year our goal is to raise funds we can reinvest back into the health system through grants, scholarships and certification reimbursements," Barnhart said. "(In 2020) the thing we wanted to do was take care of our healers, take care of our front line working in the trenches exhausted. We asked how we could support that."

The community did its part bringing food, drink, personal protective

equipment and encouraging messages.

"I really wasn't surprised because of the outpouring because our communities step up when they are faced with a tough time and they really went to another level," Barnhart said. "We thought March, April and May and we had been through the worst of it."

It slowed only briefly.

As cases continued to rise that was when the hospital's leaders formed a Healers Helping Healers committee to focus directly on the needs of staff.

"We realized that this wasn't going away and it was going to get worse before it gets better," said Barnhart, who has been with the foundation since 2014.

That's when things like virtual yoga and chair massages began rolling out. Additional counseling resources came online as the hospital looked inward focusing on staff working directly with the Covid-19 population.

Meals and snacks were brought to floors by leaders checking in on front-line staff.



With the help of the local community, the Norman Regional Health Foundation supports its healers.

During December, entrances were illuminated with five-foot letters that spelled out HOPE.

Keeping the light on at the end of the tunnel was the goal of Norman Regional's leadership.

"Just different things like that to let them know we see them and we want to take care of them," Barnhart said. "Just really being there and providing some type of what seemed like a minor piece of support."

"I think it was just a nice relief and a pause 'somebody is looking out for us and taking care of us.'"

Barnhart said it never felt like enough in comparison to what everyone was going through. But the simple acts of kindness let healers know they

weren't alone.

Those acts continue this year. In February, each of the system's 3,400 employees received a Hope gift box loaded with items.

"It's been a lot. Everybody's roles have changed or intensified and we wanted to do a little something that was uplifting," Barnhart said.

During the first week of May the system will distribute more than 2,000 notes and drawings of encouragement from Moore Public Schools elementary students.

And hopefully, with the continued outpouring of support, everyone can see the light at the end of the tunnel.

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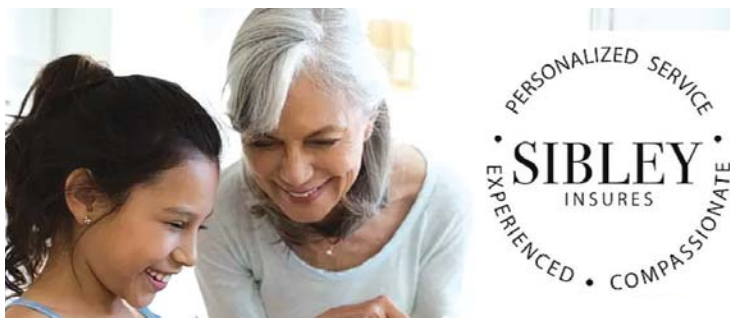
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Shift Happens: Transitioning Away from Hands on Care

By Christina Sibley BSHS, NREMT, RMA (AMT)
Licensed producer Life and Health OK, KS, TX

2020, the year of the Nurse and Midwife. It was also the year many Nurses and other healthcare providers found themselves stretched to the breaking point, leaving or seriously considering leaving the profession. And while we all hope that 2021 will be an improvement, for many the damage is done. So, what does a born caregiver do when they still have the heart to care for people, but they need a different pace or environment?



While I am not a nurse myself, I know a bit about trying to find my way as a healthcare provider and caregiver when my chosen path wasn't in God's plan for me. I learned over the course of the last 20+ years that there's more than one way to save a life, including my own. Now, I wouldn't have it any other way.

Back in the late 90's I started my path in EMS training. It was the first time in my life I felt like I knew what I was meant to do. I was sure of it, more than I'd ever been of anything, but I ended my training as a single working Mom and 24-hour shifts were not an option going forward.

Over the years, my path would twist and wind many times. On the recommendation of a lady Paramedic I knew, I was asked to go to work as an assistant in a physician's office. When an opportunity for advancement

would come my way, I wasn't afraid to take it. I would get to work for and eventually become regional supervisor for a private at-home-care company. I'd eventually become an allied health instructor/program director, teaching medical assisting and phlebotomy at a community college.

Then, in 2015 I'd marry a man who'd steal me away to Oklahoma City. It was my husband who suggested I try health insurance, particularly Medicare, since my degree had a gerontology emphasis. At the time, I was skeptical, it sounded very boring and "desk jobby" to me. As it turns out, it was the best professional decision I've ever made.

He really should have led with the fact that I'd get to spend my days visiting with senior or disabled clients in their homes and petting their dogs and cats.



By Christina Sibley Lic. Insurance Producer, Bachelor of Science Health Studies/Gerontology.

I don't get in trouble for talking too long, getting too personal, or doing things that are outside of my job description, like helping with a Medicaid application. I run my own show, own my own business, make my own schedule. The income is the best I've ever had personally. While the insurance stuff, the easy part, pays the bills, it also opens my schedule to do the real work, the stuff I love the most, helping people in any way I can.

More often this year, I've found myself helping people who don't have computers (or have no idea how to use one) do online applications because government offices are closed. Sometimes, I'm the professional voice on the other end of the phone line when they need someone to stand up for them. Sometimes, I'm company for the lonely; lifesaving at its simplest.

I always feel like what I do makes a difference and sometimes it does save a life, literally. I recently had a client, who lives alone, tell me that her emergency response button, that I helped her get, was the only way she got help when she had COVID and collapsed when she couldn't breathe.

Stories like hers, and those relationships, are why I love what I do. It's why my goal going forward is to help others learn, to mentor caregivers who want to transition into a fulfilling career, where they can be as independent and autonomous as they want. No manager looking over their shoulder. Support and help when you need or want it. If you are a caregiver needing a change, even part-time, but still want to be able to use your skills and heart to help others, please reach out. The coffee is always on me.



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Health Care Training is a Core Area of Francis Tuttle

Among the most highly regarded of the many career training programs offered at Francis Tuttle Technology Center are those in the health sciences. From programs for adults looking for a new career, to those designed to prepare high school students to earn a living while exploring other health career options, there are many available to choose from to help people who are considering pursuing a career in the helping professions of health care. Francis Tuttle has experienced faculty who have worked extensively in the industry, with state of the art equipment used in health and medical facilities throughout the metro area and around the country, and a dedicated focus to help fill a looming skills gap. Below is a brief description of each of Francis Tuttle's program offerings.

The **Pre-Nursing** program for adult and high school students is an exciting opportunity to begin

exploring a health care pathway and see what careers are available with additional training. Students gain knowledge about the broad spectrum of health professions. Through the program, students can obtain certification as a Nurse Aide (CNA) and an Advanced Unlicensed Assistant (AUA).

The unique **Respiratory Care** program for adult students works cooperatively with Oklahoma City Community College, whereupon completion, students receive a Certificate of Completion from Francis Tuttle and an Associate of Applied Science degree from OCCC. Students are trained to assist with the treatment of individuals with pulmonary and cardiac disorders, and obtain eligibility to take the national examinations to earn a Registered Respiratory Therapist (RRT) credential and apply for an Oklahoma Respiratory Care Practitioners License.

The **Practical Nursing** program prepares adult students to provide quality health care in a variety of settings. Three enrollment options are available to best fit student needs: full-time, blended online, and the 1+1 program. Upon completion, students are eligible to take the National Council Licensure Exam (NCLEX) to become a Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN).

The unique **Orthotic & Prosthetic Technician** program, along with certification in Pedorthics, each for adult students, is a hands on program to prepare students to assist the disabled by fabricating the orthopedic braces (orthoses) and artificial limbs (prostheses) necessary for their rehabilitation. Pedorthics offers specialized training to manage comprehensive pedorthic patient care for all injuries and pathologies involving patient feet. Upon completion of the program, students are eligible to take the American Board of Certification (ABC) national certification exam to be recognized as a Certified Technician in Prosthetics and Orthotics (CTPO). After training and one thousand hours of work experience, students may take the Pedorthic Certification Exam (ABC or BOC) to be a Certified Pedorthist (C.ped).

The **Dental Assisting** program



prepares adult students to become members of the dental health care team. Dental assistants have the opportunity to enhance the efficiency of the dentist in the delivery of oral health care. Upon completion of the program, students can obtain certification as a Dental Assistant (CDA).

Each program offers the potential for a high paying career and Francis Tuttle is dedicated to serving the growing demand for a highly qualified workforce in the health care industry. If you're interested, or know someone who is looking to expand their horizons through the expanding field of medical care, check out these and other programs at www.FrancisTuttle.edu and get started on your future today!

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Cholera to corrections: RN serves on the frontlines

CoreCivic Clinical Supervisor Mary Ngonomo has served as a registered nurse and licensed midwife for nearly 40 years in countries across the world, including Zambia, Wales, and now the United States.

She has first-hand experience dealing with health crises, having treated Cholera patients during her time in Africa.

Now she's helping treat a pandemic closer to home.

Lending her professional skillset to help those in her care at the facility, Ngonomo was recently named a "Top Nurse" by the International Nurses Association.

Ngonomo took time to answer a few questions about what it means to work at CoreCivic and the how she helps treat her patient population during the current pandemic.

Q: What does your everyday job look like as a clinical supervisor?

Ngonomo: As a nurse, I focus on providing my patients with the highest quality health care. This means that every day, I listen closely to patients' needs, so that I can provide them with the care they need to be healthy and thriving individuals.

Q: COVID-19 is top of mind for everyone right now. How does it feel being a nurse at this historic time?

Ngonomo: COVID-19 reminds me of my time in Africa treating Cholera. I think that experience gives me a unique perspective. It is important to keep a level head and use the information at your disposal. We have good information and follow the CDC's guidance. Red Rock has expertise in infection control, and we're actually very well prepared.

Q: How are you keeping yourself, staff, and inmates safe from COVID-19?

Ngonomo: First of all, we have made education a priority, making sure our staff and inmates know correct preventative measures. The medical team is well-versed on COVID-19 screening protocols. We also make sure staff and inmates are educated on proper use

of personal protective equipment (PPE). We've been successful with that.

Q: What is your favorite part of your job?

Ngonomo: What I love most about my job is the opportunity to mentor new nurses, especially those who have just started working in corrections. I try to encourage new nurses to further their education to become RNs from licensed practical nurses. Many of my coworkers ultimately do become RNs, enabling them to assist with more complex medical procedures.

Q: What is it like working in correctional health care?

Ngonomo: It is no different from a hospital setting, really. I see my patients as regular people who have health care needs; my patients are individuals who are worthy of respect and care just like any other person.

Q: What is your approach providing compassionate health care in a correctional setting?

Ngonomo: It is imperative that you have a listening ear with your patients. When you listen well to those in your care, you gain their trust and they will be more inclined to listen to what medical recommendations you may have for them.

Q: Do you have any advice for someone who is considering correctional health care as a career?

Ngonomo: Patience is necessary for a career in nursing, and correctional nursing is no different. Sometimes, a patient may refuse your professional medical recommendation, even though it is what's best for them. You have to be patient. Additionally, I would advise someone who is interested in correctional health care to remember that there are multiple avenues and opportunities to grow professionally in a correctional nursing career.

Q: How do you feel about being selected as a Top Nurse by the International Nurses Association?

Ngonomo: It is an honorable recognition, and I am grateful to have been named a Top Nurse.



Mary Ngonomo, RN, treated Cholera in Africa, now she's an award-winning correctional nurse at CoreCivic.

I really strive to be the best I think I could be doing anything can be in my job and I guess better in my career.

that my work has proven to be successful. What's better, though, is how much I enjoy my job. I don't

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I think one's feelings waste themselves in words; they ought all to be distilled into actions which bring results. -Florence Nightingale

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Nurses! YOU Make a Difference!

Nurses Month to Kick-off New RNconnect Program

By Jane Nelson, CAE, ONA CEO

May is a big month for celebrations. Usually you think of graduations, Mother's Day and hopefully Florence Nightingale's Birthday - but as we all know, this year has been different. After the year nurses have had we're extending nurses week again this year to include the entire month of May as a celebration of nurses including a well-deserved extension through 2021 as "The Year of the Nurse," from the American Nurses Association. The theme for this year's Nurses' Month is, "You Make a Difference." This theme was selected as a nod to the massive number of nurses that had an unparalleled impact on patients and health care during this fight against the pandemic. This theme also provides the public with an open invitation to #ThankaNurse for enriching the lives of so many and fighting to make a difference in our ever-changing world.

The news is full of articles and stories about what nurses need and how they are coping in the light of this pandemic. Two such articles are American Nursing is Having a Crisis published in The New York Times, and Lessons from the COVID-19 Crisis: Overcrowding Hospitals Cost Lives!, from NPR. Both articles do a great job in sharing the reality of what nurses have faced over the last year and what those battling for the profession truly need. While much of this isn't new to you, it is the general public - and its information they need to know.

When you take the longtime shortage of nurses in Oklahoma and combine the impact on nurses due to the fight against the pandemic, we are left with a vital industry on the edge of crisis. The American Nurses Foundation has conducted a number of surveys this year with the most recent one in February 2021, Pulse on the Nation's Nurses COVID-19 Survey Series: Year One COVID-19 Impact Assessment www.nursingworld.org/practice-policy/work-environment/health-safety/disaster-preparedness/coronavirus/what-you-need-to-know/year-one-covid-19-impact-assessment-survey. The statistics from this survey reflected the year nurses had and the toll that COVID-19 is taking on this dedicated profession.

The study reported that of the nurses surveyed, 51% reported being exhausted, 43% reported being overwhelmed, 23% are depressed, 22% are angry and a mere 21% are optimistic about the future. While these

results are vivid and hard-hitting, even more impactful are the stats on how nurses are handling the stress and strain of the pandemic. Only 24% reported having sought professional mental health support and of the nurses that haven't, 52% say they haven't needed mental health support, 36% believe they should be able to manage it themselves and 30% site a lack of time.

These staggering statistics are just part of the reason why ANA and ONA have increased the time to recognize Nurses from a week to a month and why it's more important than ever to encourage nurses, individuals, employers, other health care professionals and community leaders to recognize and promote the vast contributions and positive impact of America's nurses. Through sheer numbers and wide-ranging roles, nurses have an unmatched perspective on prevention, wellness and delivery of health care services. Stories of strength, resilience and determination while navigating an ever-changing and complex health care landscape reinforce how nurses make a difference. The goal for having a different focus each week is to inspire nurses to engage in activities that make a positive difference in their own health, well-being, professional development and community.

Here is the breakdown for each weekly theme in Nurses Month:

- Week 1 - Self-care (May 1-9)
- Week 2 - Recognition (May 10-16)
- Week 3 - Professional Development (May 17-23)
- Week 4 - Community Engagement (May 24-31)

A new, free webinar for Nurses Month is planned for May 19th with a focus on the updated Scope and Standards of Nursing, 4th edition. Register for the free webinar, "Redefining Nursing - Reaffirming Our Practice: Introducing the Nursing Scope and Standards of Practice, Fourth Edition" by visiting the newly updated and improved Year of the Nurse website.

If you want to share how you made a difference as a nurse or know a nurse who made a difference, share your story here, along with a photo or video. Your story could be presented in ANA's new and improved digital storybook, To Be A Nurse, one of the newest features on the Year of the

Nurse website.

Follow ANA Enterprise on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn to share and retweet inspiring content during Nurses Month and all year long. New this year, born out of a partnership with the American Nurses Foundation and the Arizona Nurses Association is the launch of a free program built to help ensure all Oklahoma nurses have the mental and emotional support they need. The program is called RNconnect.

The RNconnect program allows nurses to easily integrate well-being into his or her day by receiving twice-weekly tips on how to de-stress, strengthen mind and body and prioritize self-care. The helpful text messages will connect nurses to available resources such as counseling, easy self-care activities and opportunities to connect with other nurses facing the same challenges.

Everyone knows the hardship the pandemic has placed on our country's nurses. What many don't know is how deep that hardship has hit. The American Nurses Foundation survey reported that 40% of nurses indicated they have considered leaving their employer, citing that work is affecting health and well-being; staffing issues, stressful workplace environment and concerns about keeping their own family safe. It is more important than ever that nurses lean on each other and the institutions that are here to serve nurses. I feel that with ANA and ONA programming, faith in each other, prioritization of self-care and the vaccine - we will make it through this long dark night together.

Chief Executive Officer-Jane Nelson, CAE was named the CEO of the Oklahoma Nurses Association in March 2002. She has more than 30 years of association management and marketing experience with a variety of organizations. She holds a bachelor's degree from Purdue University and a master's degree from Michigan State University. Nelson is a member of the American Society of Association Executives and the Oklahoma Society of Association Executives.



ONA Executive Director Jane Nelson.



OKLAHOMA NURSES ASSOCIATION

Join Us for Nurses Month 2021!
Nurses Month is right around the corner and we want **YOU** to get involved!

	<p>Week 1 - Self Care Share Your Wellness Tips</p> <p>We want you to share wellness tips on our social media to help encourage nurses to prioritize their wellness.</p>
	<p>Week 2 - Recognition Show Appreciation and Give a Gift</p> <p>Show a nurse you care by nominating them to receive a gift of Kendra Scott jewelry.</p>
	<p>Week 3 - Professional Development Review a CV & Ask a Question to the Board</p> <p>We would like to provide members with an opportunity to have their CV reviewed and their questions answered.</p>
	<p>Week 4 - Community Engagement Educate Our Community</p> <p>It is important to educate the general public about the hard-work, dedication & sacrifices required every day for nurses.</p>

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Every day is a new day

Nurse manager embraces career

Andrea Hampton has been a registered nurse at the Oklahoma Center for Orthopedic & Multi-Specialty Surgery (OCOM) for nearly 10 years. And there's a lot that keeps her inspiration pumped.

"I love that we are very family oriented," said Hampton, clinical manager at the outpatient and inpatient surgery center in Oklahoma City. She celebrates the many successes of the nursing staff.

The company focuses on making sure the employees are having their needs met for exemplary patient care, she said. New nurses are accepted as part of the extended family of professionals who work so well together.

Hampton loves getting the day going. She arrives at work to check on all the departments and tracking the staff.

"I start helping people with needs whether that is talking to doctors and getting issues resolved with their patients or contacting pharmacies," Hampton continued. "I do whatever I can to help the staff make their experiences smoother for patients."

Being a nurse is a loving way for Hampton to help people and solve their problems, by caring for people who truly appreciate the care given to them.

Listening to patients compliment her about the staff makes her proud to be a manager and leading nurses to carry out best practices.

Life experiences instilled an

interest in nursing for Hampton as she grew up. Her mother was in and out of the hospital when Hampton was a child.

"I actually had a couple of injuries myself, and just enjoyed the orthopedic aspect of things," Hampton said.

One of the founding physicians of OCOM was her attending doctor when she broke her arm as a 10-year-old. Surgery, recovery, and her discharge process embedded in her memory.

For anyone considering a nursing career, Hampton would encourage them that their opportunities are endless. She is a graduate of the University of Oklahoma College of Nursing. Studies there were intense, Hampton said. She saw the light at the end of the tunnel when it was close to the end, she added.

"Get your feet wet and, if it's something that doesn't feel right — move on to the next," she said. "Continue until you find something that you love."

Some nurses have paused or left their careers during the COVID-19 pandemic. Others, like Hampton, have maintained and moved forward stronger than ever. Every day is a new day.

"Just because COVID happened doesn't mean the rest of the world stops. People still need to be taken care of. So just being able to be here to help them with their needs, you have to continue on," she said. "You do what you have to do to protect yourself as well as the patients and provide the best care that you can."

For more information visit: <https://ocomhospital.com/>



Andrea Hampton, RN, serves the clinical manager of the Oklahoma Center for Orthopedic & Multi-Specialty Surgery in Oklahoma City. She enjoys her leadership role as a way for the nursing staff to achieve their personal best.

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