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## Reaching Goals with Determination



Jamie Ellis, RN is the Director of Nursing at Vitality Living Village, where you will find excellent care for your loved ones.

by Vickie Jenkins, Staff Writer

Vitality Living Village is located in NW Oklahoma City in the Village. They opened March 2021. Their goal is to provide you or your family member with a community that quickly becomes your home. They enable independent living by offering a range of experiences that inspire you to continue finding joy, purpose, and well-being in everything you do.

With a staff of professionals, Jamie Ellis, RN is the Director of Nursing. She has worked at Vitality Living Village for five months now, since the opening. She also works in the field of deployment or travel

nursing. "I like what I do," Jamie said. "Plus this is such a wonderful place to be plus the surroundings here are beautiful," she added.

"My typical day depends on which facility. Here at Vitality Living Village, being the Director, I oversee all things that deal with nursing. That ranges from physician orders, care plan meetings to organizing staff. There is no routine as the day determines the workload. That is also true with travel nursing. You

See ELLIS Page 2

## Innovative Initiatives Strengthen Nursing Workforce



To address the shortage of nurses at OU Health and drive solutions for the future of healthcare, OU Health is launching several initiatives within its Oklahoma City facilities to strengthen the nursing workforce.

Healthcare facilities around the nation are experiencing a critical shortage of nurses, and OU Health is no exception. According to the federal Bureau of Health Workforce, Oklahoma has 44,200 nurses, which translates to 11.1 nurses per 1,000 people. Across OU Health hospitals, there is a 19% nursing vacancy rate and a 47% turnover rate. OU Health Interim Chief Nursing Executive Julie Hoff, Ph.D., MPH, RN, is leading the effort to transform the nursing enterprise in ways that address the shortage, improve patient care, and create a better work-life balance for nurses.

"Nurses play a critical role in the care of each patient, and healthcare systems operate best when we have a full staff of highly educated, compassionate nurses working in a collaborative setting," Hoff said. "As we transform our nursing workforce in the new OU Health integrated academic healthcare system, we are rolling out incentives and creating a roadmap for growth. Being a nurse today can be difficult, and we will continue to face challenges as we respond to an increased demand for healthcare services as well as the COVID-19 pandemic. Together, we are creating an atmosphere at OU Health where nurses feel valued and ready to come to work each day to care for their patients."

To launch the initiatives, OU Health is providing retention bonuses to its current nursing workforce. Nurses across the enterprise have worked diligently

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ELLIS

Continued from Page 1

never know what circumstances you will run into," Jamie said. "We have a sixty bed facility with a Memory Care unit which allows me to spend more time with my patients."

"I have been in the nursing field for ten years now and have been an RN for five years. Growing up in Salt Lake City, Utah, I remember wanting to be a professional singer when I grew up. It didn't take me long to learn that singing professionally requires a God given talent; a talent that I didn't possess. At least, that was what I was told," Jamie said with a laugh.

Born in Salt Lake City, a few years later, Jamie's family moved to Oklahoma. "I wanted to get into the medical field and become a nurse. At the end of the day, I want to know that I made a difference in someone's life, however how small or big that gesture might be. I work at Vitality Living for balance. The geriatric community has always held a close place in my heart. Today, everyone is always on the move. We always seem to be in a constant rush. For me, the geriatric community reminds me to slow down and enjoy

every day of life."

"Currently, I am attending OUHSC. My goal is to be a Psychiatric Nurse Practitioner. I feel like it is important to stay focused on accomplishing my goal. I want to give credit to several people that influenced me to grow in my position as a nurse. Janice Rhodes RN, Barbara Jones, MSN RN, Kim Jeong MSN RN, are all women that I want to thank for allowing me to advance my career farther," Jamie commented.

Asking Jamie to describe herself, she replied, "I would describe myself as an alpha female. I am self-assured, determined and a leader. I have a strong desire to work hard and I believe in my career. I began as a certified nurse's assistant and will finish with a degree as a Psychiatric Nurse Practitioner. The road that I have paved is unconventional but it's my road. As a leader, I aspire to be an example of what determination mimics. No matter what the circumstances are, or the cards we are dealt with, perseverance is essential."

"My biggest reward of being a nurse is the feeling of being able to help others, making a difference in their lives. There are so many areas of nursing to choose from and I would tell someone to choose wisely. Explore

several areas until you find the right one. I love my job and the biggest reward that I get from it is knowing that I have touched a life in a positive way, Jaime said. In my opinion, every nurse should be knowledgeable, punctual and honest. There is always the other side of things. Sometimes, the biggest problem for a nurse is the fact that we are not just a nurse. At times, we are everything a patient needs; a counselor, paster, family and all of the above. Sometimes, we forget to take care of ourselves first."

Jamie likes to spend time with her significant other Corey Dizer and her son Justis A. Jones. Her hobbies

include reading and traveling. "I make it a point to travel two times a year, pre pandemic of course," Jamie commented.

Asking Jaime what three words sum up her life, she replied, "Determination, Strength and Love."

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## WORKFORCE

Continued from Page 1

in their hospitals and units, with the additional challenges of COVID-19, and they deserve a boost, Hoff said.

Another innovation, called OU Health Travel at Home, provides current nurses the option of being paid like a traveling nurse – receiving a higher hourly rate in lieu of receiving a benefits package, unless required by law. In some cases, depending on the 401(k) plan, retirement benefits may be paid. The program is open to new hires and to all existing OU Health nurses who want to change how they are compensated. There are a limited number of opportunities for this program.

The new OU Health Weekend Program is designed to increase weekend nursing staff at OU Health University of Oklahoma Medical Center, Oklahoma Children's Hospital OU Health, and OU Health Edmond Medical Center. Nurses who commit to working four 12-hour weekend shifts in each two-week pay period (48 hours) will be paid for 72 hours. In addition to new hires,

this program is open to existing OU Health nurses and OU College of Nursing Faculty. Nurses can also choose to split a weekend shift with a colleague. Slots are limited for each hospital.

Hoff, who also serves as Dean of the Fran and Earl Ziegler College of Nursing at the University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center, said the academic component of OU Health will play a major role in nursing recruitment and retention. Through the OU Health and OU College of Nursing Degree Accelerator Program, OU Health nurses wanting to continue their education will have two options. They can receive tuition reimbursement of \$5,250 per year for any accredited nursing program, or they can apply for scholarships in three different degree programs: RN-to-BSN; Master's in Nursing Administration (MSN); and post-master's Doctorate in Nursing Practice focused on Nursing Administration (DNP).

The OU College of Nursing graduates a significant number of students each year – 287 for spring 2021 – but intends to grow the number that are educated at higher levels. "Evidence suggests that higher

nurse education is associated with lower risks of mortality and failure to rescue in acute-care hospitals," Hoff said. "In collaboration with the OU College of Nursing, OU Health is committed to establishing seamless academic progression pathways for OU Health nurses."

Hoff, who came to OU Health in January 2020, brings decades of nursing leadership experience in academic healthcare systems, including at the University of Illinois in Chicago and at Children's Hospital Colorado. In previous roles, her efforts have led to the achievement of American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC) Magnet Designation, an advanced level of nursing excellence with a culture of mutual respect, autonomy and shared values.

"As a comprehensive academic healthcare system, we have a tremendous opportunity to transform our nursing enterprise," Hoff said. "The OU College of Nursing is the largest nursing college in Oklahoma, and we bring many resources to the challenge of growing and retaining the nursing workforce, not only at OU Health but for similar institutions across the country."

According to the American Nurses

Association, there will be more registered nurse jobs available through 2022 than any other profession in the United States. Many factors contribute to the increased need. An aging population is driving demand for healthcare services, and nurses who are baby boomers are rapidly approaching retirement. Long working hours and high stress levels lead to burnout, which has been especially evident during the COVID-19 pandemic. As the state's comprehensive academic healthcare system, OU Health treats a higher percentage of patients with complex diseases, requiring an increased bedside presence and skill level.

"Nurses are the backbone of healthcare, and there is a connection between adequate numbers of nurses and the quality of patient care," said Ian Dunn, M.D., OU Health Interim Chief Physician Executive and Professor and Chair of the Department of Neurosurgery at OU College of Medicine. "I am confident that we can build our nursing workforce and reduce turnover by creating an environment where each nurse is supported and valued as they provide high-quality care to our patients."

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# CAREERS IN NURSING

## FROM IT TO NURSING: NORTHWEST NURSING CENTER

By Vickie Jenkins, Staff Writer

As though hidden away in the neighborhood, you will find Northwest Nursing Center, located at 2801 NW 61. Finding a professional staff, one particular nurse is Shane Guinn, ADON RN. A facility offering skilled nursing and rehabilitative care at it's finest, along with traditional long-term care services.

Growing up in Plano, Texas, Shane knew what he wanted to be when he grew up. He wanted to be a Marine Biologist so he could study crazy organisms found in the deep sea. "I don't know what I was thinking because I really didn't like the thought of being down in the water with sharks," he said with a laugh. "Apparently, my plans changed as I got older, but my first career was in IT." He left that job to pursue his career in the medical field. "I wanted to become a nurse for three reasons; I wanted a job that would actually

make a difference in lives of other people, my mother was a nurse and I saw first hand how it made her feel more confident and last, but not least, I knew I would always have job security," Shane explained.

Shane eventually moved to Oklahoma and received his degree in Nursing at Oklahoma City Community College. He has been a nurse for ten years where his first job was working at Mercy Hospital in Neuro ICU. "I've only been at Northwest Nursing Center for a short while but things are going great right now," he commented. "I'm hoping that all continues," he added.

As a nurse, Shane is an independent thinker and is able to solve problems on the fly. He has compassion for the patients but also knows the value of setting boundaries with them when needed. These are all good qualities of a nurse.

Asking Shane what his biggest reward is that he receives from being a nurse, he replied, "The biggest reward for me is knowing that everything I do is helping to make a difference in the lives of my patients. Either being able to help them directly or by finding the help they need," he said. "One of the reasons that I wanted to pursue a career in the medical field," he added.

According to Shane's co-workers, he is considered an easy going person with a great sense of humor. "I am always willing to help out where I can. I like to see everyone happy so I like to think I am a little part of that," Shane said with a smile. According to Shane, he is a shy person at first and then he really opens up.

Since Shane grew up with a mother that was a nurse, (and still is)

she had the most influence on him with his career change. "I consider myself a follower and I would like to think I am following in her footsteps as a nurse," Shane commented.

Shane's typical day at work keeps him hoppin'. "I usually see about fifty-two patients a month. When I get to work, I care for the patients, taking care of each individual, along with putting out a few fires," he smiled. "Those fires don't happen too often. That's when I usually realize how hungry I am and that I haven't eaten breakfast," he said with a laugh. "I get something to eat and continue my work, caring for the patients and then I go home. Doesn't that sound like the typical day in the life of a nurse?" He asked. "Once I go home, I am all about relaxing even though it's hard to do, I try to leave my work at

See GUINN Page 5

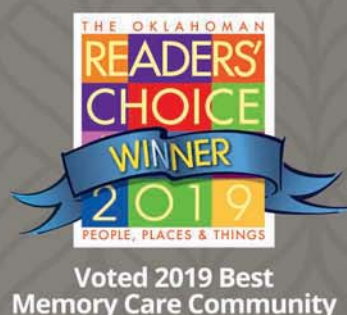


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## GUINN

Continued from Page 4

work. Home is for relaxing!"

What advice would you give to someone going into the medical field? "I would say that boundaries are very important. Set your boundaries with both, the patients and your peers. Don't let things get to you. You will get through it!"

Always thinking of helping someone in time of need, Shane has been an example to others. When Shane attended high school, he volunteered his time, helping children with physical and mental disabilities with their physical therapy on horseback. "I love helping anytime I can," Shane said.

How did the Coronavirus change your life? "It was rough for me to stay home a big portion of the time but like others, I stayed away from older relatives to help keep them safe," Shane replied.

Summing up his life in three words, he answered, "Quiet, friendly and helpful."

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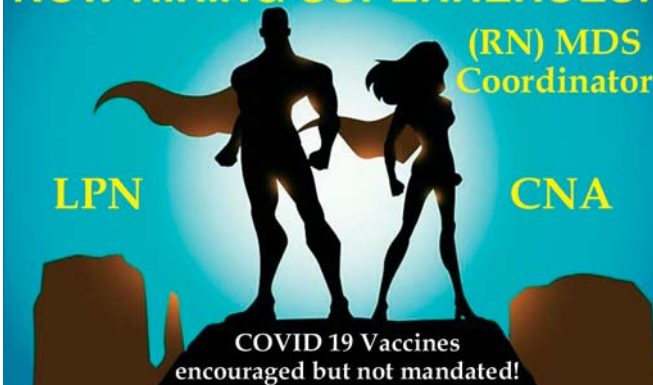
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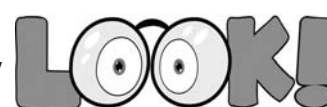
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*I would choose John F. Kennedy because of the way he would handle Covid-19.*



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# Standing in the Gap

## *Northwestern forging tomorrow's nurses*

Nursing has always been a profession that has stood in the gap, taking care of those who need it the most.

So when the Covid pandemic came, leaders at Northwestern Oklahoma State knew their students needed their education now more than ever.

"One of the things we've been able to do since the pandemic is we're continuing to forge ahead and maintain face-to-face classes and clinicals," said Shelly Wells, PhD, MBA, APRN-CNS, ANEF, Division of Nursing Chair & Professor. "That's in all three of our programs."

Tight-knit clinical partner relationships coupled with one of the state's lowest student-to-

faculty ratios kept Northwestern students in the classroom and at the bedside during a once-in-a-lifetime event.

Long-known as one the most affordable nursing programs in the state, Northwestern features nationally-award-winning faculty and small class sizes.

It's no wonder there's such high interest in the school's three different options.

The traditional BSN program is offered at four different sites including Alva, Enid, Woodward and University Center in Ponca City.

The online RN to BSN program offers a 12-month cycle with no clinical hours and a liberal course transfer policy. It was rated the #1 RN-to-BSN program in Oklahoma in 2020 by [www.intelligent.com](http://www.intelligent.com).

The hybrid BSN to DNP program has also taken off. "There's been a lot of demand for both online and hybrid," Wells said. "We are one of only two public universities that offer a family nurse practitioner emphasis and we are the only program in the state that has an emphasis on rural nursing and the needs of rural

communities."

The decision to stay in class and the hospital came with much planning and cooperation.

**Continued on next page**



# Northwestern<sup>TM</sup>

## OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY

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**The online RN-to-BSN is a 12-month online program with no traditional clinical hours requirement and no campus visit requirements.**

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SITUATION UPDATE: COVID-19	
COVID-19 Cases	508,834
New Cases	2,814
New Cases 7 day Average	2,122
Active Cases	19,352
CDC/NCHS Provisional Deaths	8,851
Acute Care OSDH Licensed Facilities/Location**	Recent 3 day Ave. Hospitalizations
	Cases (ICU)
Region 1 (NW)	34 (11)
Region 2 (NE)	112 (29)
Region 3 (SW)	112 (29)
Region 4 (EC)	76 (18)
Region 5 (SE)	64 (10)
Region 6 (Central)	66 (22)
Region 7 (Tulsa)	461 (136)
Region 8 (OKC)	300 (75)
Total	1225* (330)
Other Types of Facilities	
Focus Facilities	53 (18)
Rehabilitation Facilities	3 (0)
Tribal Facilities	45 (12)
Other Facilities Total	101 (30)

\*Includes 52 pediatric hospitalizations

\*\*Focus, Rehabilitation and Tribal Facilities numbers are not assigned to a specific region as their patient populations reside across the state. Information provided through survey of Oklahoma hospitals as reported to HHS as of the time of this report. Response rate affects data. Facilities may update previously reported information as necessary.

Data Source: Acute Disease Service, Oklahoma State Department of Health. \*As of 2021-08-13 at 7:00 a.m.

## NORTHWESTERN

Continued from Page 10

A Nightingale Award of Nursing Excellence recipient from the Oklahoma Nurses Association, Wells takes pride in her low faculty-to-student ratio and the relationships her faculty has forged at healthcare facilities across northwestern Oklahoma.

Allowing students to learn in their communities creates a natural draw.

“Part of it is because we are offered at four different sites so we have limited numbers at each site,” Wells explained. “We’re able to maintain that social distancing in the classroom. Part of it is the partnerships we’ve established with our clinical agencies.”

This spring some of those clinical agencies are supporting paid internships for senior nursing students.

“The hospitals are paying these students to do their clinical hours,” Wells said.

The BSN programs are accredited by the Accreditation Commission for Education in Nursing, Inc. (ACEN) and is approved by the Oklahoma Board of Nursing (OBN). The BSN-to-DNP program is accredited by the Commission for Collegiate Education in Nursing (CCNE) and approved by the Oklahoma Board of Nursing.

With more than 30 years of teaching experience in nursing, Wells has closely followed the national trend calling for more BSN-prepared nurses.

“All the hospitals we have talked to in Oklahoma prefer to hire BSN-prepared nurses and they are encouraging their staff to go back and complete their BSN,” Wells said. “We’re seeing those numbers increase.”

For More information visit:  
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# Governor Signs Domestic Violence Bill Based on OU College of Nursing Research



**Governor Kevin Stitt is surrounded by supporters as he signs Senate Bill 17 into law on Wednesday, August 4, 2021.**

Oklahoma legislation recently signed into law that aims to provide better protection and quicker services for victims of domestic violence. The legislation is based on decades of work and research by Janet Wilson, Ph.D., R.N., a nursing scientist at the Fran and Earl Ziegler College of Nursing at the University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center.

Senate Bill 17 legislates an intervention conducted by all Oklahoma law enforcement when they respond to calls of domestic violence. The intervention takes the form of an 11-question screening that assesses the level of danger, the threat of death, and whether someone needs immediate help. If the victim scores high on the screening, police call a collaborating crisis center or social service agency for immediate help. The law goes into effect Nov. 1.

"It is exciting to see this legislation signed into law and to know that

it will connect women and children to domestic violence services for their safety," Wilson said. "It wasn't so many years ago that society didn't talk about domestic violence. Or if people knew about violence that was occurring, they would tell the woman to just leave the relationship. It's never been that simple. The intervention that was just signed into law has research behind it to show that it increases the number of domestic violence victims getting the help that they need."

The legislation is the culmination of a 50-year career for Wilson, who is retiring this year from the OU College of Nursing. In 2001, her years of work led to the creation of the Oklahoma Domestic Violence Fatality Review Board. The group, now part of the Office of the Oklahoma Attorney General, analyzes the circumstances around each death caused by domestic violence, continually improving the method

of helping victims of violence and increasing the likelihood that they will stay alive. The approach was novel at the time because it brought together many different groups working on domestic violence issues, including social services, police, healthcare providers, advocates, academicians and others.

"The idea of interprofessional teams was new then," Wilson said, "because all the agencies involved in responding to domestic violence were in siloes. They weren't talking to one another. By coming into alignment, we were able to collaborate and coordinate services and offer pragmatic suggestions for reducing injuries and preventing deaths. We also invited families of victims to come to the fatality reviews so they could give us suggestions of what we could do better."

Soon after the board was established, Wilson began working on the intervention that was just

signed into law. In years past, when police responded to calls of domestic violence, they gave victims a card with contacts for various services. However, it was incumbent upon the victim to seek help and a low number did so, Wilson said. She believed that police needed a tool — officially called a lethality assessment — to determine how much danger a person is in at the moment.

"That was the key to it — it had to be done immediately or women would fall through the cracks," she said. Wilson identified an existing lethality assessment protocol, developed by Jacquelyn Campbell, Ph.D., R.N., of Johns Hopkins School of Nursing, and obtained a research grant to study its effectiveness. Working with a large team that included professionals from the OU Health Sciences Center, Johns Hopkins University, Arizona State University,

# OMRF to investigate link between viral infection, autoimmunity

The National Institutes of Health has awarded the Oklahoma Medical Research Foundation \$480,000 to investigate the long-term effects of viral infections on autoimmunity.

OMRF scientist Umesh Deshmukh, Ph.D., received the two-year grant to study how viral infections such as Covid-19 can influence the development of autoimmune diseases. Specifically, his lab will study the effects of a hyperactivated immune system on salivary glands that can ultimately lead to Sjogren's syndrome.

In Sjogren's syndrome, immune cells attack moisture-producing

glands, leading to painful dryness and decreased ability to produce tears or saliva. Common symptoms include severe dry eyes and mouth, fatigue, arthritis, and memory problems.

Sjogren's may affect up to 4 million Americans, according to the Sjogren's Syndrome Foundation. While its causes are not fully understood, environmental triggers, such as viral infections, are believed to contribute to the development of the disease in individuals who carry certain genetic risk factors.

"We are learning more every day about the long-term side



OMRF scientist Umesh Deshmukh, Ph.D.

## BILL

Continued from Page 12

the Oklahoma State Department of Health, the Office of the Oklahoma Attorney General, several police departments, police advocates and others, Wilson and her colleagues studied whether the lethality assessment would result in more women seeking help than they did when police simply handed them a card.

When the data was analyzed, Wilson discovered that the lethality assessment indeed resulted in more women connecting with services to keep them and their children safe. The 11 questions that police ask to determine the risk level include, for example, whether someone has used a weapon against the victim or made threats with a weapon; threatened to kill the victim or her children; tried to choke the victim; and is violently or constantly jealous.

Wilson is retiring having seen her research come full circle. "It has been a step-by-step process," she said. "Perseverance and bringing domestic violence service providers and victims together to reduce deaths and injuries is the main thing. This was certainly



Janet Wilson, Ph.D., R.N., nursing scientist at the Fran and Earl Ziegler College of Nursing at the University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center.

not recognized as a public health problem when I started, but I feel like we've raised awareness about intimate partner violence for better protection for families and communities.

"People have sometimes asked me, 'Doesn't this work depress you?' I say, 'No. Every woman's story and every family's story is a story of resilience.' That has been a big motivator for me."

effects of SARS-CoV-2 infection, and specifically, we have learned the virus has found a niche in the salivary glands," said Deshmukh, who joined OMRF from the University of Virginia in 2013. "While most people associate the virus with the lungs, we continue to see more areas of the body that are impacted in the long term. Salivary glands appear to be one of the organs at risk."

Deshmukh said they are particularly interested in seeing how the "cytokine storm" the virus can cause in the body activates genes and immune factors that already put certain individuals at risk for Sjogren's.

A cytokine storm happens when the body senses danger and rapidly generates a class of proteins, called cytokines, that help the immune cells to kill invading viruses or bacteria, explained Deshmukh.

"When the body overproduces these cytokines, it can lead to

unintended damage," he said. "This response is what causes a fever when you are fighting infection. It's a good thing, but you can, unfortunately, have too much of a good thing."

To understand the effects of cytokine storms downstream regarding autoimmunity, Deshmukh and his lab will mimic viral infections in research models. They will then monitor the activation of genetic risk factors for Sjogren's and other autoimmune diseases.

"We are seeing that many Covid-19 patients have an autoimmune response already initiated," he said. "With diseases like Sjogren's, they can take years to emerge, so we need to hit the ground running now to get out ahead of a potential problem down the road."

The grant, R21 DE031166-01, is funded by the National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research, a part of the NIH.

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