

# Sharing joy, sharing lives



## Bradford Village makes each season come alive

Melissa Wilson, RN, and director of nursing of Bradford Village created a winter wonderland for the residents at Bradford Village in Edmond.

by James Coburn - staff writer

After Christmas, people have their Christmas memories to shine in their hearts. A smile and laughter can go a long way, said Melissa Wilson, RN, and the director of nursing of Bradford Village Healthcare Center in

Edmond.

Residents don't have the opportunity to walk through a winter wonderland. But at Bradford Village Healthcare Center they were given the opportunity to

do just that. People connect with Christmas holidays of yesteryear and by creating new memories.

Wilson has tried to create memories

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## SHARING

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wherever she has worked. As a registered nurse, Wilson has served as the director of nursing of Bradford Village Healthcare Center for about 18 months. She and her daughter created a photographic memory during the Christmas season where residents and their families could pose by Santa and his sled.

She asked a maintenance man to save her large pieces of cardboard for creating the snowy wonderland. He brought her the biggest boxes he could find. The sleigh was a little too big for the trunk of her BMW. So, her daughter strapped it down in her truck to transport to Bradford Village.

Soon the time came when families gathered at a Christmas party to amid the backdrop. They could see the snow on the trees or ride on the sleigh.

"I'm a Christmas nut, I love Christmas, it's my favorite time of year," Wilson said. "I'm not the greatest craftsman, but it's about creating an opportunity for the family to get with their loved one to create that memory. It may trigger something that they might have done as a child and with their family in the past."

The experience reinforces a sense of home and belonging. After all, Bradford Village Healthcare Center in Edmond is their home. Residents and family members feel valued and loved that the staff would provide such a beautiful image for them,

Wilson said. They often say thank you.

"We have to help with mental health, too," Wilson said of being a nurse and uplifting the mind, body, and spirit. "You know if they're not healthy mentally, then they're not going to be healthy physically. And there's a lot of things that we can't fix quickly with a pill or medication, but we can make someone smile."

Bradford hosts a New Year celebration each year at midnight. Residents share non-alcoholic drinks as confetti is tossed. They also gathered at Thanksgiving. And they are grateful to return to activities after what some of them have endured during the COVID pandemic.

This new year, Wilson hopes for the health of her family, happiness for everyone, and no more COVID.

"Last year was difficult for our residents beyond measure. It was hard. You can't put a definition on how challenging it was for them. Even though many of them didn't say a lot of how challenging it was — you know that it was."

Celebrating the seasons makes a world of difference for those being cared for in the long-term. The feeling of home is back because their families are there, Wilson said.

For Wilson, her Christmas was with her daughters and husband. They enjoyed a small dinner and opened gifts. Her children are grown now, so the holiday is different from when they were youngsters, she said. She watched

her grand babies living out of state open their gifts on Face Time.

"It's a time of thinking back what your true blessings are, and that's having your family with you," Wilson said.

Some of her most precious memories of Christmas are of being young with her parents celebrating at her side. Wilson has lost her mother, so she gets teared up when thinking about her now.

"Having her here is my best memory," she said.

Today, Wilson likes the thought of adopting all the Bradford residents as her grandparents. It's very easy to do, she continued. She loves them all.

"There's some that you just want to cuddle all the time," she said. "So, you adopt them all as your grandma and grandpa," she said.

This love cannot be taught. But her compassion flickered along with other

nursing students ready to help the lives of others as students at Oklahoma Baptist University in Shawnee. She worked several years in Texas as a licensed practical nurse before earning her Bachelor of Science degree in Nursing. She continued course to achieve her master's degree online at California at Miramar University.

It was the reputation of Bradford Village Healthcare Center that attracted her to accept a position there. She wanted to work with the administrator and team spirit thriving at Bradford. The team of nurses sets the tone that she admires today.

"Knowing I was going to have a wonderful team — I was sold," she said.

For more information about Bradford Village Healthcare Center



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# OU Health Announces Chief Operating Officer of the Cancer Division

OU Health has named Tracy Cothran Chief Operations Officer of the Cancer Division. In this role, she will be responsible for development, growth and operations of Adult Oncology Services for OU Health Stephenson Cancer Center. Cothran will also lead teams to create and implement systems, resulting in strong partnerships, standardization and communication across oncology services.

Previously, Cothran was Vice President of Oncology Services and Operations Executive in the Cancer Division. Cothran has more than 25 years of experience in healthcare, joining OU Health University of Oklahoma Medical Center six years ago, where she has held a wide range of executive roles. She holds a master's degree in Business Administration and has extensive background in clinical service and training acquired at the OU College of Allied Health.

Robert Mannel, M.D., Director,

OU Health Stephenson Cancer Center, said, "I'm confident that the level of comprehensive cancer care offered at Stephenson Cancer Center will be further enhanced, given Tracy's skill and depth of experience. The standards in place under her leadership will ensure safe, efficient and effective care, with measurable impact on a range of essential quality outcomes. We welcome the energy and enthusiasm she brings to this exceptional leadership team."

Cothran and colleague Ben Ikard, MBA, OU Health Stephenson Cancer Center Director of Operations, are credited with a successful transition of the cancer center's infusion services in 2018, a strategic step in OU Health's integration efforts. In addition, their collaborative work introduced the 340B program, which allows qualifying providers to purchase outpatient drugs at discounted prices to help underserved and financially disadvantaged patients.



Tracy Cothran Chief Operations Officer of the Cancer Division at OU Health.

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# CAREERS IN NURSING

## NEVER LEFT ALONE: PROGRAM TRANSFORMS LIVES

by James Coburn - staff writer

Sara Brickey leads a company whose mission is revolutionizing care for seniors.

She was recently promoted to president of Valir PACE (Program for All Inclusive Care of the Elderly) after serving as executive director of the company she joined in 2015.

Brickey joined Valir PACE as the RN coordinator and advanced to the role of director of nursing in 2018 and then was promoted to executive director in 2019.

She received her Associates degree in Nursing from Oklahoma City Community College and then earned her Bachelor of Science degree in Nursing from the University of Central Oklahoma.

"We provide care for seniors in an all-inclusive setting which means we have providers here," she said from her office in

midtown Oklahoma City. "We provide them physical therapy, occupational therapy or speech therapy."

Valir PACE also provides nutrition through the expertise of a dietitian. It offers home care, social services, counseling, and assistance with housing. Primary care providers and RN care coordinators instill best practices. Licensed practical nurses offer care at the center and participants' homes. Valir PACE also collaborates with the Department of Human Services.

Transportation is provided by PACE to any of their clients outside appointments such as dialysis or other specialty appointments.

Valir PACE at Valir Health, serves individuals 55 and older who reside in the Oklahoma City metropolitan area within a 50-mile

radius.

"We are growing and expanding into other service areas as well," she said.

Valir PACE serves seniors who don't always have the ability and access to what PACE can assist them with. They can help participants who must choose between medicine or food. There is no copay for any medication provided by Valir PACE.

"Some of our new participants have not seen a physician for a very long time or they do not have their medication because they can't afford them," she continued.

Many participants have experienced enormous financial burdens because they must use what money they have for transportation to medical appointments. So, caregivers often thank the Valir PACE staff members for caring for

their loved ones.

"We have turned so many seniors into a positive lifestyle. They're as happy and independent as possible at home by being out of nursing homes or hospitals," Brickey said. "That is the goal of PACE. Participants are so thankful for the services that we provide. The goal of all seniors is to remain in their home independently. With our assistance and with the tools our team can provide, we are able to do that for many seniors."

Brickey commends the staff for their compassionate concern for the welfare of others.

"I don't even have the words for it — they have such a servant heart — they give 150 percent. They really care about the participants, their wellbeing, their

See PROGRAM Page 5

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# PROGRAM

Continued from Page 4

outcomes and how they're doing day-to-day," Brickey said. "Every one of them has that heart."

Small changes in a participant's stability are noted during home visits.

"We're able to assist them with that before it becomes something big," she explained. "And so, it's a team effort, especially for what all the staff has done through COVID with the flexibility to serve and continue to give to these participants. It puts me in awe. I am humble to be part of this team and thankful for what we do."

By working toward and achieving their personal best, seniors find freedom in knowing their navigation beyond hardship is supported by PACE's staff at their side. They are not alone in their journey.

"24/7, we have nurses and providers on call so we can assist them with their needs. And it gives them peace of mind in that regard as well."

Remote vital monitoring is

provided in homes. Tablets have provided virtual monitoring during COVID.

Peace of mind among clients becomes fuel for the soul of the team of staff members serving them, Brickey said.

"We see miracles. If you are in nursing or if you are in health care for the heart of making a difference and truly impacting seniors' lives, then this is the place to be because we get to do that every day," she said.

Some participants have been with Valir PACE for many years. Many of the participants enrolled in PACE stay with the program for life.

"There are some that really don't have a family. We have become part of the participants' family," she said. "We have housekeepers and staff in the home. We spend a lot of time with them, but it is all the different disciplines that can do that. We come together as a team."

To learn more about Valir PACE visit: [www.valirpace.org](http://www.valirpace.org) or call 405-339-0540.



Valir PACE President Sara Brickey has an altruistic mission of care supported by staff members with a heart for service.



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- **Thursday, Feb. 3**  
at Norman Regional Hospital Education Center
- **Thursday, March 3**  
at Norman Regional Hospital Education Center

*Applicants are encouraged to have their resumes ready as on-the-spot interviews and offers may happen at these events.* The system's unique virtual events allow job seekers to "shop" for a position among several departments and chat with leaders from across hospitals and clinics.

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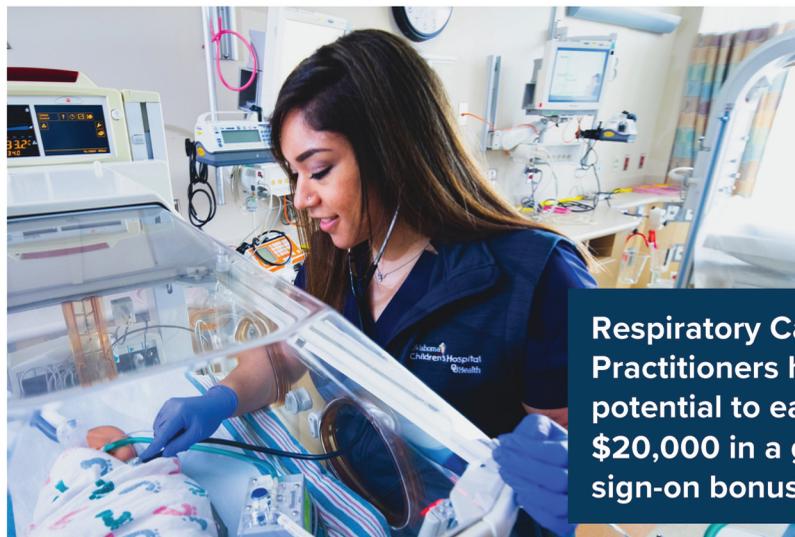
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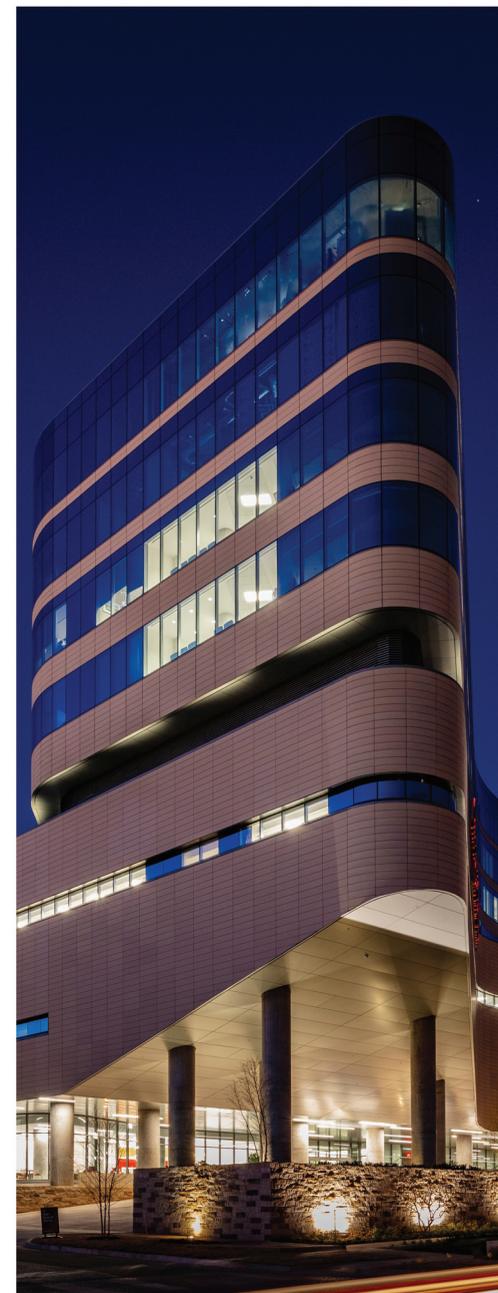
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# Long-time Northwestern Leader Announces Retirement Plans

Dr. Janet Cunningham, serving president in institutional Northwestern Oklahoma State University's 19th president and first woman to hold the position, has announced her plans to retire on June 30, 2022, after nearly 50 years of service in higher education.

"I have loved serving Northwestern in many capacities," Cunningham said. "But, I am excited for the future of Northwestern with new leadership and the opportunity to spend more time with my family."

The Regional University System of Oklahoma (RUSO) announced Cunningham as president in 2006. With 16 successful years as president, she becomes the second longest-

serving president in institutional history.

President Cunningham began her service at Northwestern as a student worker in 1973, continuing to advance as she earned her bachelor's, master's and then doctoral degree. Cunningham held various positions as a staff member, then taught for 11 years in the business department at both Northwestern and the University of Oklahoma. Prior to being named president, she transitioned from the classroom into an administrative role, initially as vice president for business affairs, then vice president for administration and later as executive vice president.



President Janet Cunningham (left) receives the presidential mace during her investiture ceremony in April 2007 (right).

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"RUSO extends our sincere thanks to President Cunningham for her leadership of Northwestern over the past 16 years," Regent Connie Reilly, chair of RUSO board, said. "Her vision and dedication have driven the last two decades of the university's growth. Not only has President Cunningham led Northwestern with integrity, but she has been an asset to higher education at the state level as well."

Through Cunningham's leadership, Northwestern was approved for its first doctoral program, which is a highlight of her career, she said. Since the program accepted its first cohort of students in 2017, the Wisdom Family Foundation Doctoral Program for Rural Nursing Practice (DNP) has graduated 20 students committed to improving healthcare access in rural Oklahoma and beyond.

Cunningham has led many other significant initiatives as well, most

recently the implementation of a new campus-wide information technology system that will serve the institution well into the future. During her presidency, the university has experienced an expansion of the number of nationally accredited academic programs and the successful effort to join the National Collegiate Athletic Association. Joining the NCAA prompted her to develop the Vision for Victory campaign that has provided new athletic facilities for student-athletes and Ranger fans.

During Cunningham's tenure, private giving to Northwestern has soared, including the establishment of 55 endowed faculty chairs and numerous scholarships. More than \$28 million was raised through the Imagine capital campaign. Cunningham has also placed a continuing emphasis on securing grants from both the public and private sectors. "President Cunningham has had an indelible

**CONTINUED NEXT PAGE**

# AHCA/NCAL Requests Extension Of Public Health Emergency

With the public health emergency (PHE) set to expire on January 16th, the American Health Care Association and National Center for Assisted Living (AHCA/NCAL) sent a letter to U.S. Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary Xavier Becerra to request an extension of the PHE declaration as long term care providers continue to fight COVID-19. The highly contagious Omicron variant is projected to spread at a high rate for weeks to come and continues to cause a surge in cases across the country - leaving vulnerable populations, such as those in long term care facilities, at serious risk. AHCA/NCAL President and CEO Mark Parkinson writes:

"Due to the ongoing and unpredictable battle long term and post-acute care providers must continue to wage against COVID-19, we strongly encourage you to continue to extend the PHE declaration and maintain the related Section 1135 and Section 1812(f) waivers, enhanced Medicaid FMAP to states, and state Medicaid policy flexibilities, such as the waiver for Medicaid redeterminations."

The letter further explains the unprecedented challenges the long term care sector is facing, including a historic labor crisis that has resulted in a 15 percent decline in its workforce since the beginning of the pandemic. This has caused nursing homes to limit admissions, putting more strain on overwhelmed hospitals that rely on nursing homes to free up beds. Parkinson writes that extending the PHE would help health care providers respond to this challenge:

"The COVID-19 pandemic has presented significant challenges to the entire health care continuum and specifically to the long term care profession. Nursing homes are facing a historic labor crisis, losing more than 230,000 caregivers or nearly 15% of the workforce since the beginning of the pandemic. This is the worst among all health care professions and is impacting the sector's ability to serve patients. More than half of nursing

homes are limiting new admissions at a time when overwhelmed hospitals need our assistance to free up precious beds due to the Omicron surge. However, with your help, health care providers, including those in long term care, can access key tools available through the PHE declaration to help respond to this unprecedented challenge."

In addition to extending the PHE, AHCA/NCAL also urged HHS to prioritize long term care for essential resources, such as tests, testing equipment and a separate allocation of COVID-19 treatments for long term care pharmacies. The letter continues:

"Along with extending the PHE, we implore the federal government to prioritize long term care for access to urgently needed resources, such as COVID-19 testing and treatments. Currently, long term care providers are left to compete on the open market for tests. We urge you to increase the number of shipments with tests and testing equipment supplied to long term care providers as well as ensure our staff and residents remain the utmost priority for testing."

Additionally, the federal government should set up a separate allocation of COVID-19 treatments that long term care pharmacies can access to supply our settings. At present, long term care providers must navigate the various cumbersome ordering process for treatments that each state has set up. This has resulted in delays in accessing life-saving treatments. Establishing a separate process for long term care pharmacies to order treatments directly and increasing the availability of testing in long term care would help our settings identify the virus quickly and save precious lives."



## RETIREMENT

Continued from Page 8

impact on Northwestern, Alva and all of northwestern Oklahoma," Regent Jane McDermott, RUSO board member, said. "Her commitment to providing our community with access to high-quality, affordable higher education is commendable and evident in the accreditations, partnerships and endowed chairs she has facilitated during her tenure. She will be greatly missed."

During the past 16 years, the university has also undertaken many improvements to its campus facilities. The university constructed a new campus building in Woodward in 2008, and major renovations have been made to several classroom buildings and residential halls in Alva. Other major construction projects include the Wisdom Agriculture Education Center, the Front Door entrance projects on the north side of campus, the replacement of windows in Ryerson Hall and the commissioning of "The Ranger" statues at the Alva and Enid campuses.

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(AS PUBLISHED IN THE 2021 EDUCATION GUIDE TO NURSING)

# 4 Ways to Join a Winning Program

Oklahoma Christian University boasts the fastest growing nursing program in Oklahoma, and there are lots of reasons why. The highly experienced Nursing faculty use advanced technology to offer online degrees, the new, spacious on-campus labs are cutting edge, and professors in the mission-focused BSN Nursing degree often remind students why they are pursuing a career that is all about caring for others.

"Dr. Gray and all of my instructors pray for us before each exam, and I have no doubt they pray for me outside of class too," said student Kyler Wilson-Walker.

There are 4 ways to join this winning program.

### 1. Online RN to BSN

Oklahoma Christian University offers the only online, competency-based, credit-awarding RN to BSN in

the country! This degree is designed for registered nurses who have some work experience. Students get to apply their experience to their degree and test out of skills they have already learned. This allows students to work at their own pace through a tuition subscription. For only \$4,000 students can take as many classes as they want in the four-month subscription period. One student even finished her entire degree in that amount of time! However, the average student requires three subscriptions or about one year.

### 2. INTEGRIS Partnership

Individuals with no experience can apply for a job as a nursing assistant with INTEGRIS Healthcare and enroll as an online student with Oklahoma Christian University. INTEGRIS even offers a \$1,000 signing bonus and tuition repayment! It's a great way to earn a paycheck and a degree



*"Dr. Gray and all of my instructors pray for us before each exam, and I have no doubt they pray for me outside of class too." Kyler Wilson-Walker, student.*

with a job that prepares you for class and classes that prepare you for your future.

### 3. Transfer From Another University

Students who begin college

Continued on next page

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**OC**  
Continued from Page 10

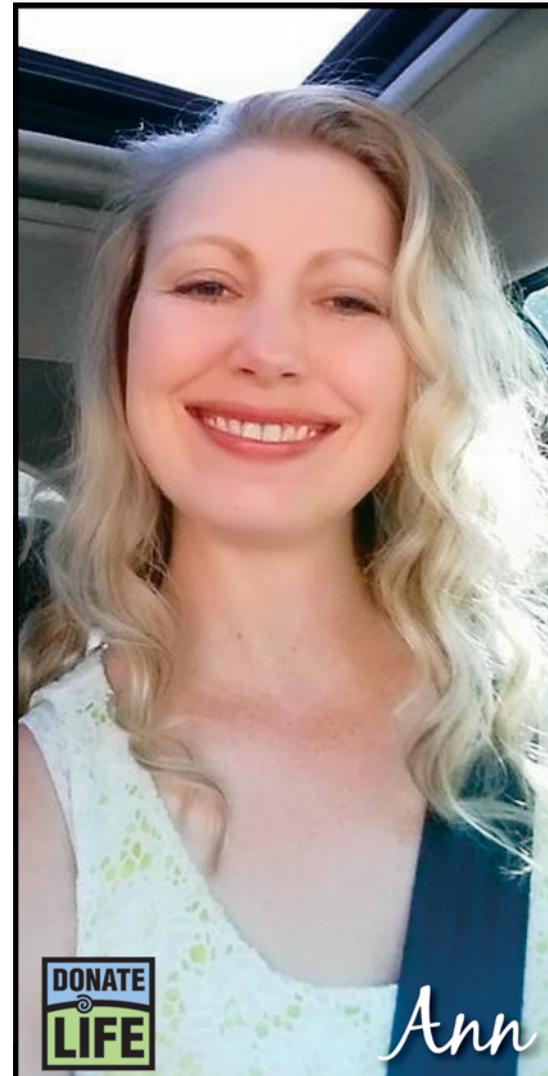
somewhere else and transfer to Oklahoma Christian University step into a community of instructors and students who are all about supporting one another. The tightly knit community is known for supporting others, honoring the creator through nursing, providing an environment designed for each student's success and having fun.

**4. On-Campus**

High school graduates who want to become a nurse find their home at Oklahoma Christian University. Students looking for the full college experience are mentored for spiritual,

mental and physical growth alongside the rigorous academic program. Living on campus allows students to become a part of the university's traditions, make friendships that last a lifetime and flourish under the guidance of excellent faculty.

Oklahoma Christian University believes students are more than their degree. It's a university dedicated to helping students learn exactly who they are called to be in a worldwide context. You can find them online at [oc.edu](http://oc.edu) or located at 2501 East Memorial Road in Oklahoma City. For more information visit: <https://www.oc.edu/academics/undergraduate-programs/nursing>.



I was 21 and healthy, I thought, until I suddenly found myself in complete liver failure. Within hours of the diagnosis, I slipped into a coma and my family was told I would die in a couple of days if a liver wasn't found. Thanks to the family of a sweet lady, who had my rare blood type, I'm alive and have a future again. I will never know how to thank them enough for giving me my life back.

Organ, eye and tissue donation saves lives. Please make your decision to donate life and tell your family. Register to be an organ, eye and tissue donor on your Oklahoma driver's license or state ID card or register online at [www.LifeShareRegistry.org](http://www.LifeShareRegistry.org). You may also call **800-826-LIFE (5433)** and request a donor registration card.

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## FROM OUR FRIENDS ON FACEBOOK

From Oklahoma Children's  
Hospital OU Health  
HAPPY NEW YEAR!



Meet Nayeli, born at 7 a.m. on January 1, she was the first baby of 2022 born at Oklahoma Children's Hospital. Her parents are celebrating the start of a happy new year snuggling with their little bundle of joy!

## SITUATION UPDATE: COVID-19

<b>COVID-19 Cases</b>	<b>737,593</b>
<b>New Cases</b>	<b>6,438</b>
<b>New Cases 7 day Average</b>	<b>4,094</b>
<b>Active Cases</b>	<b>39,051</b>
<b>CDC/NCHS Provisional Deaths</b>	<b>12,592</b>
<b>Acute Care OSDH Licensed Facilities/Location**</b>	<b>Recent 3 day Ave. Hospitalizations</b>
	<b>Cases (ICU)</b>
Region 1 (NW)	53 (16)
Region 2 (NE)	72 (23)
Region 3 (SW)	116 (24)
Region 4 (EC)	33 (8)
Region 5 (SE)	22 (2)
Region 6 (Central)	94 (20)
Region 7 (Tulsa)	299 (87)
Region 8 (OKC)	332 (82)
<b>Total</b>	<b>1021* (262)</b>
<b>Other Types of Facilities</b>	
Focus Facilities	36 (10)
Rehabilitation Facilities	4 (0)
Tribal Facilities	20 (5)
<b>Other Facilities Total</b>	<b>60 (15)</b>

\*Includes 21 hospitalizations in pediatric beds.

\*\*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 2022-01-07 at 7:00 a.m.

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# New Year's is the time for resolutions; resolve to become a Red Cross volunteer in 2022

*Join those heroic individuals who give their time to help those in need*

The American Red Cross of Kansas and Oklahoma needs your help in 2022 and asks that you consider making a New Year's resolution to become a volunteer.

Locally, more than 1,200 people volunteer with the Red Cross. These local volunteers are part of the almost 300,000 people across the country whose support enables the Red Cross to respond to an average of more than 60,000 disasters every year. They help train more than 4.6 million people in Red Cross lifesaving skills; help provide nearly 550,000 services to military members, veterans and their families; and to reconnect almost 9,000 families separated by war or disaster around the world. In addition, as many as 2.5 million volunteer donors give blood and platelets every year.

While some Kansans and

Oklahomans volunteering with the Red Cross are helping people affected by tornadoes in Kentucky and wildfires in Colorado, local volunteers frequently offer their help at home.

"Our Red Cross volunteers support their community and neighbors in need each and every day," said Jennifer Young, Regional Volunteer Services Officer. "In the last year, Red Cross volunteers provided food, shelter, comfort and hope to over 6,600 people affected by home fires and other disasters in communities

across Kansas and Oklahoma."

Here are a few positions we really need help filling: Blood Donor Ambassador, Disaster Action Team, Disaster Recovery Casework, Services to the Armed Forces Casework, Blood Transportation Specialists and Disaster Duty Officer. Find out more.

Training is free, but the hope you provide is priceless. Resolve to make a difference by turning tragedy into hope in 2022. Visit [redcross.org/volunteertoday](http://redcross.org/volunteertoday) to get

started today.

**COVID-19 AND STAYING SAFE**  
The need for volunteers is constant and continues to evolve as the Red Cross navigates the ongoing coronavirus pandemic. The safety of everyone is our top priority and our guidelines reflect the latest CDC safety recommendations. COVID-19 vaccination is required for in-person volunteer roles beginning Jan. 3, 2022. When considering volunteer opportunities, review the CDC guidance for people who are at higher risk for severe illness, consult your health care provider and follow local guidance.

The American Red Cross shelters, feeds and provides comfort to victims of disasters; supplies about 40% of the nation's blood; teaches skills that save lives; distributes international humanitarian aid; and supports veterans, military members and their families. The Red Cross is a nonprofit organization that depends on volunteers and the generosity of the American public to deliver its mission. For more information, please visit [redcross.org](http://redcross.org) or [cruzrojaamericana.org](http://cruzrojaamericana.org), or visit us on Twitter at @RedCross.



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