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Meridian Technology Center LPH Coordinator Delores Cotton loves to see students understand

by James Coburn, Staff Writer

The new year will mark a special anniversary losses and things like that. It's a pleasure to for Delores Cotton, RN, practical nursing coordinator at Meridian Technology Center, located in Stillwater. She will celebrate her 30th year as an instructor there.

family, everybody helps each other out. We care for each other, celebrate successes and understand

come to work every day," Cotton said. "I know I can balance my home life and my work life here, and it's just been a positive experience."

She likes the people she works with and the "It's a wonderful place to work. It's like a facility, she said. Thirty-three nursing students

RURAL, TRIBAL **HEALTHCARE BENEFIT FROM** PARTNERSHIP **Redlands** Community College, Western Oklahoma State College awarded \$2.75 million

Healthcare in rural Oklahoma continues to be impacted by a lack of providers, but a five-year federal grant totaling \$2.75 million awarded to Redlands Community College in El Reno and Western Oklahoma State College in Altus is designed to address the healthcare shortage.

Redlands, designated a Native American Serving Non-Tribal Institutions (NASNTI) program, partnered with Western to submit a proposal for the NASNTI Part A Cooperative Arrangement Development Grant. Through targeted outreach and recruitment, success coaching, the development of a cultural competency micro-credential and offering of a Health Careers Edventure program, the two colleges plan to use the funding to increase the number of nursing graduates and expand tribal partnerships in their 10-county service areas.

"Redlands has been a historically strong NASNTI partner, and we're excited about this opportunity to use this funding to collaborate with Western," said Redlands President Jack Bryant. "Our primary service areas encompass many rural communities and tribal areas, so we are anxious to get this initiative implemented so we can begin attacking this healthcare crisis."

The partnership between Redlands and Western is designed to address the nursing shortage by increasing student capacity in both colleges' nursing programs as well as address the level of care provided to Native American tribes. Through the NASNTI grant, a director will oversee success coaches and outreach specialists assigned to each campus who will assist with student retention, persistence and completion. They will also focus on recruiting and creating pathways for more students, including those with local tribes and nations, to pursue education and careers in healthcare.

According to The Commonwealth Fund, Oklahoma's health system is ranked 49th in the nation. Oklahoma also ranks 5th for states with the most rural hospital closures since 2005, and nationally, according to the Bipartisan Policy Center, over 100,000 nurses left positions in hospitals in 2021. Between hospital closures and a shortage of nurses, rural areas and tribes are finding it difficult to meet the needs of its citizens.



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MERIDIAN Continued from Page 1

comprise the cohorts designed to train licensed practical nurses upon their graduation from Meridian Technology Center. Meridian Technology Center is a 12-month program that teaches all aspects of being a safe and confident LPN. Some schools offer 18-month programs. Students in the Stillwater 12-month program need to complete some prerequisites before enrolling at Meridian Technology Center.

Because the program is for adults, high school graduates who have completed the health careers course have earned the prerequisites to enter the program.

The faculty consists of three instructors and the LPN nursing coordinator.

There are nine theory classes and four clinical classes. Students are eligible to take the licensure exam upon their completion of the program. Graduates earn the credential of LPN after passing the test.

Last year's passing rate was 94 percent. But there have been several years of 100 percent passage. Cotton said students at Meridian Technology Center typically score above the national and state average. The records are based on the firsttime students taking the test. Most students will pass the test on their second attempt if they do not pass it on their first attempt. Passing the test after two attempts does not go on the record by the board of nursing, Cotton said.

"It's very rewarding for me when a student comes back and tells me what they're doing and how they're growing in nursing," she said. "They are appreciative of what we've taught them. It's just very self-fulfilling for me."

Many LPNs work in nursing homes, hospitals, public health, hospice, home health and all kinds of places, she said. The LPN became more in demand during the COVID crisis.

"Our students are getting more opportunities for employment in lots of different places. Within these last few years, the opportunities for LPNs have really risen," Cotton said.

Being an LPN offers a stable career with a range of opportunities to advance in a career. Some LPNs advance as registered nurses. Many nurse practitioners began their careers as licensed practical nurses.

"You can stay as an LPN and you can even grow in what you do as an LPN, like being an assistant director of nurses at a long-term care facility," Cotton continued. "Some of

For more information about Meridian Technology Center visit: http://meridiantech.edu/major/practical-nursing/

them do school nursing or do things in education as an LPN."

Her career as a registered nurse began in the medical surgical unit at Stillwater Medical Center before moving to the maternal unit to care for mothers and their babies.

"And then I was a nursing supervisor. So, I was all over the hospital before I came here," she said.

She credits her mother with inspiring her career. Her mother always sought to help others in life by putting them first. Cotton always wanted to become a teacher or a nurse.

"I wanted to do that. I wanted to help other people and make a difference in people's lives," she said.

Cotton earned her Master of Science in Adult Education degree at Oklahoma State University. She also earned a Master of Science in Nursing Education at the University of Oklahoma.

Technology has brought change to the nursing industry during her 30 years at Meridian Technology Center. She finds that students are more apt to want to use technology in their curriculum. So, Meridian Technology Center has adapted to the need for the latest electronic resources as well as traditional textbooks. The internet has made information more accessible.

"The equipment they use in clinical areas has changed so much," Cotton said. "I think obviously students are at least a little bit more aware of what goes on in healthcare now than we were 30 years ago."

Some things have remained the same but the way it's delivered is different. Teaching students requires instructors to adapt to the difference in generations. Younger students prefer electronic communication such as conversing by text or email.

"Back in the day we called everyone on the phone to talk to them that way," Cotton said. "But now we're going to use different types of communication."

A mentorship program is available to help students between the two cohorts. Older students will mentor younger students. As older students graduate, the mentee becomes a mentor.

The programs have been successful with positive interaction.

Cotton loves the moments when students who have been struggling suddenly absorb what it takes to be an LPN.

"You kind of see the light bulb go on. They're understanding now and that's definitely a big thing for me, too," she said. "I'm very proud of them when they work hard, and they are able to meet their goals."

AWARD Continued from Page 1

"Quality healthcare is pivotal to the sustainability of rural Oklahoma. NASNTI funding will allow us to enhance our efforts already placed on rural nursing and add a new focus on the success of nursing students in tribal areas," said WOSC President Chad Wiginton. "Partnering with Redlands Community College on this critical initiative will impact 10 rural counties inclusive of nine federally recognized Native American tribes and nations. We are excited about the opportunity and honored to be a part of this timely collaboration."

In addition to the lack of access to healthcare, there are other barriers for Oklahoma's Native American tribes and nations, including lack of cultural added, "As we saw during the COVID understanding in healthcare. Developing a better understanding of the cultures in different tribes and nations will enable healthcare providers to better meet the physical, mental and spiritual needs of Native Americans. To address the need for cultural competency in healthcare, Redlands and Western nursing staff will collaborate with healthcare experts in local area tribes and nations to develop culturally relevant curriculum.

"This NASNTI grant and partnership with Western will provide a significant boost to initiatives recently put in place to address a growing shortage of

nurses in Oklahoma. This initiative not only provides the ability to train more nurses, but address a critical shortage in rural and tribal areas of Oklahoma," said Redlands Board of Regents Chair Janie Thompson. "The academic support and recruitment elements included in this grant go beyond providing additional training positions for nursing students, but also provides for success."

While targeted outreach and recruitment of adult students is the focal point of this grant program, there is also a need to provide more information about healthcare careers to youth, specifically Native American children. Through the creation of a Health Careers Edventure program, outreach about careers in healthcare will begin at earlier ages.

WOSC Board Chair Debbie Cox pandemic and continue to see to this day, our healthcare system cannot operate effectively without quality nurses. Western Oklahoma State College is proud to be one of the state institutions that is a pipeline for this essential career field. The NASNTI grant with Redlands is a wonderful way to join forces and expand our current efforts."

This five-year grant is designed for Native American and low-income students, and is 100% funded by the U.S. Department of Education as part of the Native American Serving Non-Tribal Institution (NASNTI) program.





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applicable law, including protected veteran or disability status. AA/EOE.

CAREERS IN NURSING: CARING AND UNDERSTANDING - HOME ASSISTS INTELLECTUALLY DISABLED

by James Coburn - staff writer

Parents may worry that if they pass away, where their son or daughter living with intellectual it's not us, it's us thanking them disabilities would live.

Providence House and Guthrie Cottages (Faye's Place), located on a 3-acre site in west Guthrie, helps to comfort families' anxieties, said Karen Vandegrift, LPN, and director of nurses.

"It's truly heartwarming. I get more hugs than I've seen in my entire life," Vandegrift said.

The campus homes specialize in the care of persons living with intellectual disabilities. Faye's Place is for residents who need more help with activities while Providence House cares for the residents who are more independent.

Both the cottages and Providence House are separated by a fire wall, and both have 16 rooms with two beds each. Knowing that parents and families trust Providence House and Faye's Place to care for their loved ones

is phenomenal, Vandegrift said.

for letting us take care of their kids," Vandegrift said. "We range in age here from 27 to about 72. We had one mom come in and she wasn't doing well. She wanted us to care for her baby son. She was really worried about what was going to happen to him when she passed away."

The residents are unselfish and kind. But they can get angry just like anyone else. However, they calm down once they realize a staff member is there to help them at that moment.

"I have definitely learned I have a lot more patience," she said of what she has learned during her tenure at Providence House and the cottages. "You have got to have patience because you can ask someone 10 times, 'Will you please go and change your shirt?" she said.

Before coming to Providence "They thank us every day. But House, Vandegrift didn't pay attention to how many people in society are intellectually disabled.

"But since I started working here, I notice more. This weekend I went to a fundraiser they were having in Okarche with a facility up there. And I was just amazed." There was a time in society

when the intellectually disabled were placed in insane asylums and not treated well, Vandegrift said.

"To help them live their lives and live their life in full — they all have jobs - they work to recycle. We have a little outback where they shred paper," she continued.

They launder clothing and work in a thrift shop. Residents may work Monday through Friday and receive a paycheck. Newer residents usually ask for a picture of them receiving their first paycheck to show their brother or sister just to let them know of their accomplishment in earning money.

Vandegrift is on call 24 hours a day. She has been a licensed practical nurse for 30 years since she graduated from Meridian Technology Center, located in Stillwater. Her nursing experience includes 22 years of long-term care. When Colonial Estates in Guthrie closed eight years ago, she and the current administrator, Clara Duehning, of Providence House and Guthrie Cottages were recruited to work there.

"Once they realized we were going to be a stable part and we were really going to make some changes and get them to trust us, it became really nice," Vandegrift said.

The two women have worked with the residents to understand money management with each penny and dime, especially if they ever venture out in the community.

See VANDEGRIFT Page 5



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Providence House and Guthrie Cottages in Guthrie provides a caring place to live with dignity and respect for residents living with intellectual disabilities, says Karen Vandegrift, LPN, DON.

VANDEGRIFT Continued from Page 4

"They call Clara, Money Mama, because she takes care of everyone's money," she added.

There are consequences to every choice people make in life. So, Vandegrift emphasizes the consequences of the residents' choices if they go to a public setting.

"They need to know how to manage their money," she said. "And our big thing is wants and needs."

Developmentally disabled direct care aides are certified to work with the developmentally disabled. An LPN works part time at the facility and does double duty on weekends.

"She does a marvelous job at Valley Hope in Cushing. But she does fill in, when need be," Vandegrift explained.

A quality improvement specialist

(QIS) is available for monitoring the developmental disabilities program for compliance and quality of care. Long-term care CNAs and certified medicine aides serve there to respond to residents' needs. All the residents' medications are locked within their rooms.

"We do all of our cooking here with the assistance of residents. And we do all our housekeeping with the assistance of the residents," she said. "It's just one big family here. Some of the guys will call you mom because they haven't seen their mom in a long time."

The state recently inspected Providence House and the cottages and scored them with zero deficiencies.

"It's very, very exciting when you go through a state survey," Vandegrift said.

For more information about Providence House and Guthrie Cottages (Faye's Place), visit: https://www.guthriecottages.com/



(AS PUBLISHED IN THE 2022 EDUCATION GUIDE TO NURSING)

Integris make practice transition easier

a nurse's career can be one of the most stressful.

With so many questions from daily practice to advancement of skills to self-care where is a new nurse to turn?

Integris Health realizes that firstyear may be difficult. That's why there's a nationally-accredited Nurse Residency Program in place to not only ease the transition to practice but to help you thrive.

"We try to help them recognize they aren't going to know everything right out of school and that's OK," said Sandy Hill, MSN, RN, NPD and Integris manager for Transition to Practice. "We're going to help them get there. We also help them learn about their specialty or populationspecific patients they are caring for because in some settings they don't get a lot of experience in specialty areas during school."

Transitioning to RN practice can be difficult and evidence supports

Without a doubt, the first year of Nurse Residency programs increase retention and job satisfaction among newly graduated RNs.

> That's why Integris Health hosts a year-long Nurse Residency Program for RN graduates and those with less than six months of licensure as an RN.

> The Nurse Residency Program is an expanded orientation designed to help the new RN graduate make a smooth transition from student to a professional member of a healthcare team. This program is designed to help nurses more fully contribute to delivering the Most Challenging Healing.

"There are other people like you in the same situation and there are resources we can direct you to if you are starting to feel overwhelmed or uncertain," Hill said. "The nurse residency does focus not only on the skills but also on that emotional and wellbeing journey in what I consider probably the hardest year of your nursing career."



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Recently the Integris Health Nurse Residency Program was awarded Accreditation with Distinction as a Practice Transition Accreditation Program (PTAP) by the American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC). Left to Right: Kerri Bayer, MSN, RN-CNL Chief Executive Nurse INTEGRIS Health; Sandy Hill, MSN, RN, NPD, Manager, Transition to Practice; Lisa Benfield, MSN, RN, NPD Supervisor, Transition to Practice.

Hill has been with the nurse residency program since 2007, giving Integris the distinction of having one of the longest-running residency programs in the state.

"I think we're doing a good job with that," Hill said. "I think we really are helping them learn the practice of nursing not just the tasks of nursing. We can see that our retention has improved because they are feeling more comfortable in their role.

"I think it has helped with retention in the profession and in our facility."

Recently the Integris Health Nurse Residency Program was awarded Accreditation with Distinction as a Practice Transition Accreditation Program (PTAP) by the American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC). The distinction is the highest recognition awarded by the ANCC's Accreditation Program.

With the ongoing Covid pandemic, nurses entering the profession are faced with obstacles many of their predecessors never had to face. That's why special importance is placed on taking care of the whole nurse.

"The wellbeing and resiliency portion of what we try to encourage and try to provide resources for has increased during Covid," Hill said. "We also have in place some nurses where transition to practice is their title and those nurses are specifically for those new grads right after they come off orientation with their to help continue to preceptor... support them.

"We've seen that really blossom and take off as a much-needed and appreciated role."

Hill said the transition-to-practice nurses are available to round on their new nurses and provide an extra set or eyes or simply serve as a sounding board for what the new employee is going through.

And to help make that first year as easy as possible.

For more information visit: https:/ /integrisok.com/careers

(AS PUBLISHED IN THE 2022 EDUCATION GUIDE TO NURSING)

NWOSU continues to turn heads

The hits just keep on coming for Northwestern Oklahoma State University when it comes to national recognition of its nursing programs.

The past year has seen the school's nursing program recognized by several groups for everything from flexibility to accessibility to cost and reputation.

"We've had some really great recognition nationwide," said Dr. Shelly Wells, professor of nursing and chair of the Charles Morton Share Trust Division of Nursing. "Those are just a few. We're working hard."

Northwestern Oklahoma State University's hybrid BSN-to-DNP nurse practitioner program was recently named the best in the country out of 203 accredited colleges and universities in the nation evaluated by Intelligent.com.

Criteria used for the ranking included flexibility, faculty, course strength, cost, and reputation.

Intelligent.com created a Top 35 Nurse Practitioner Programs list from their evaluations.

Other factors Intelligent.com used to evaluate each program included program strength, student readiness, return on investment, cost, and student engagement.

According to their website, they looked at how easy it would be to earn back the cost of each degree program. They calculated the average weekly wages of the occupations that a particular degree leads to versus the cost of the program.

Northwestern is one of only two public universities in Oklahoma to offer a Family Nurse Practitioner program, was the first public university with a BSN to DNP offering, and the only program in the state with an emphasis on nursing in rural communities.

Wells, a former March of Dimes Nurse of the Year and Nightingale Award of Nursing Excellence recipient from the Oklahoma Nurses Association said the school's faculty is the driving force in its success.

"We have a very caring faculty. Being a small program, our faculty know our students - across all our programs," Wells said. "We're known for our faculty quality, caring and one-on-one relationships with students and that's what I think leads to our success." This past year also saw NWOSU rated in the top 100 for affordable RN to BSN programs in the country by UniversityHQ.org.

Registerednurse.org tabbed NWOSU as the No. 1 RN to BSN program in Oklahoma.

Mometrics.com put Northwestern in the top 30 among all programs in the Southwest based on affordability.

Wells - who also serves as ONA's President - pointed out the NWOSU Nursing program is among the top in the state in terms of national RN licensing examination (NCLEX) pass rates.

The most recent BSN-DNP Family Nurse Practitioner class boasted a 100-percent pass rate on all certifications and 100 percent job placement.

"Maybe that's how we're getting all this recognition," Wells laughed. "We lay a foundation of unique needs for rural nursing care and providership. We start on day one with that and go throughout the program focusing on those unique needs."

A diverse, caring faculty is the backbone for it all.

"We are extremely proud of our faculty and staff members who work hard to give our students the best experiences to maximize learning," said Dr. Janet Cunningham, university president. "Receiving affirmation from outside sources shows that our students learn from the best through an affordable program, and gain employment after graduation."

Wells stressed the availability of funds for traditional nursing students and the university's long history of philanthropy and scholarship that yields many students graduating with little to no debt.

For more information visit: https://www.nwosu.edu/school-ofprofessional-studies/nursing

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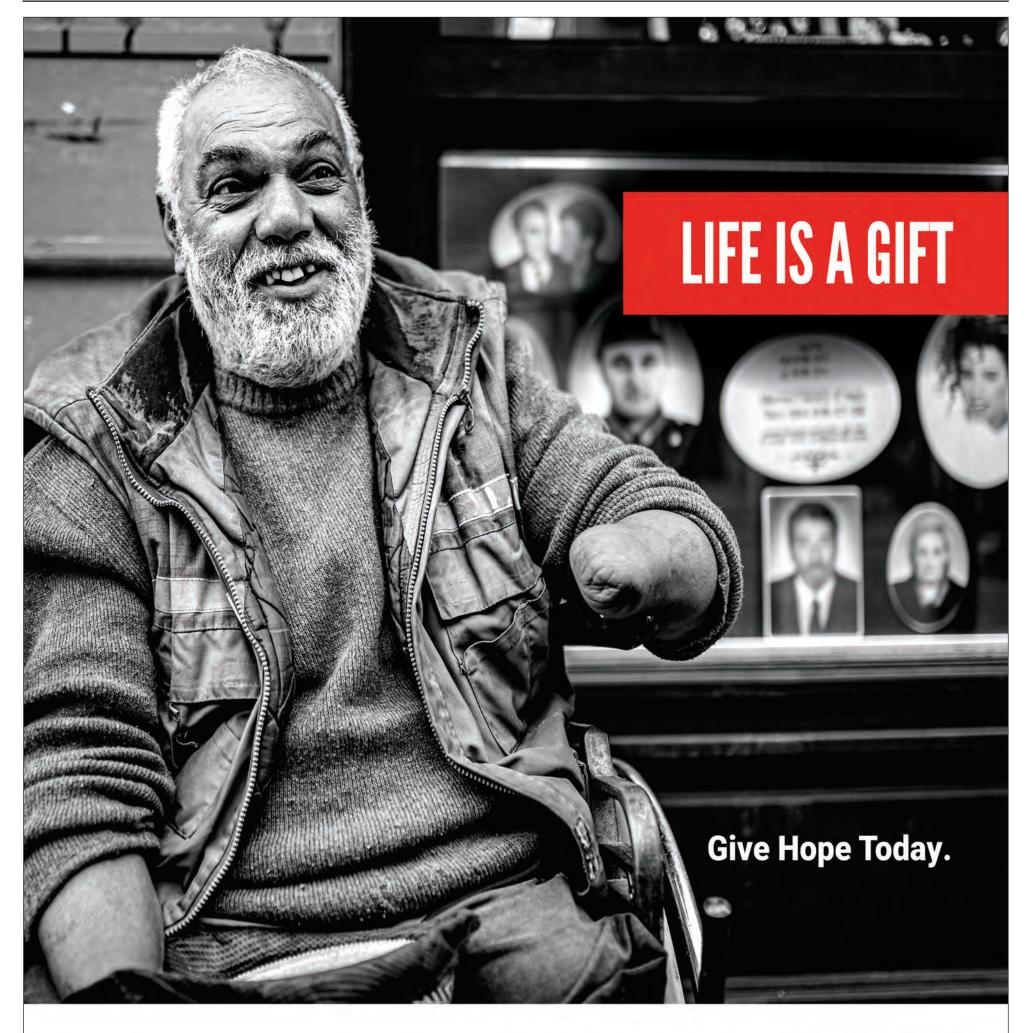


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December 12, 2022

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What inspires your nursing career?

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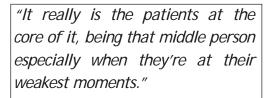


Diana Turner, RN, ICU

"I'm a caretaker. I've always

liked to fix things. For me,

"Taking care of patients and seeing them get better drives me to do more of it."





Muhammad Hussnain, ICU student nurse intern



Seena Mathew, RN, ICU



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21. tx bone marrow depression, cause anemia and decrease WBC count 1. chew well, no water, hypercalcemia 2. risk for infection, do not give with grapefruit 3. man boobs 4. pain at injection site 6. stops estrogen/ progestrogen, can cause

facial hair, hypercalcemia 9. tx solid yumors, toxic to kidneys, antibiotic 11. swollen gums and

gingival hyperplasia 13. give with full glass of H2O, s/e muscle spasms, blurry vision 15. antidiarreal, dry mouth

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Oklahoma's Nursing Times

U.S. News & World Report Names Mercy Oklahoma City a Best Hospital for Maternity Care

U.S. News & World Report named Mercy Hospital Oklahoma City for women of all ages a 2022-2023 High Performing hospital for maternity care. The award is for women recovering the highest honor a hospital can earn for providing safe

maternity care from the organization and comes as Mercy is expanding services for women in Oklahoma.

Mercy Hospital Oklahoma City was one of only four hospitals in the state of Oklahoma and the only hospital in Oklahoma City to receive this "High Performing" recognition designed to help expectant parents make informed decisions about where to receive care during pregnancy, labor and delivery. More than 2,700 hospitals across the country offer

maternity services, and around 300 hospitals were named a Best Maternity Hospital.

This is the second year U.S. News and World Report has released the maternity rankings and the second year Mercy Hospital Oklahoma City has been recognized.

"The care our entire team provides at our birthplace creates a special experience for patients welcoming babies into the world," said Dr. Tori O'Daniel, OB-GYN and medical director of women's health services at Mercy Hospital Oklahoma City. "Women and families in our community have come to expect safe, top-notch care at Mercy. That exceptional care has resulted in exponential growth and a record number of deliveries year after year."

The hospital's labor and delivery and postpartum services have been at capacity for years, limiting Mercy's ability to serve more patients. The new Love Family Women's Center is under construction on the hospital campus and scheduled to be complete next year. When the women's center opens, the facility will have an obstetrics emergency department, the state's first hospitalbased low intervention birthing unit and total of 73 patient rooms, increasing the capacity for deliveries by 40%. The new facility will feature services



and include a dedicated area from surgeries, outpatient therapy services, pelvic floor therapy, as well as support groups and classes on everything from childbirth, infant care, CPR and more.

The Tom and Judy Love family, for whom the center is named, gave a \$10 million lead donation to kick off the

project, inspiring another \$33 million total in donations toward the Love Family Women's Center.

The U.S. News Best Hospitals for Maternity Care methodology is based entirely on objective data such as C-section rates in lower-risk pregnancies, newborn complication rates, exclusive breast milk feeding rates, early elective delivery rates and vaginal birth after cesarean rates, among other measures.

"When expectant parents are considering their options for welcoming a baby to the world, the Best Hospitals for Maternity Care are designed to help them identify hospitals that excel in delivering babies for uncomplicated pregnancies," said Ben Harder, chief of health analysis and managing editor at U.S. News. "A hospital that has earned a High Performing designation may be a good option for parents, in consultation with their medical provider, to consider."

Earlier this year, Newsweek and The Leapfrog Group, an independent watchdog group, together named Mercy in Oklahoma City to its list of Best Maternity Hospitals for 2022.

Mercy Hospital Ardmore and Mercy Hospital Springfield in Missouri were also named to the Best Hospitals for Maternity list.

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OU Health **Announces Chief** Human Resources

search, Jimmy Duncan, SHRM-SCP, SPHR, has been selected as the inaugural chief human resources officer for OU Health, Oklahoma's only integrated, comprehensive academic health system.

Duncan comes to OU Health from UC Health in Cincinnati, Ohio, where he has served as Senior Vice President/Chief Human Resources Officer since 2020. UC Health is the premier academic/ research healthcare system in Cincinnati and is affiliated with the University of Cincinnati (College of Medicine and University of Cincinnati Physicians Group).

Duncan has worked extensively human resources leadership in in healthcare including Arkansas Children's Hospital, Wellstar Health Tenet Healthcare System, Corporation and Banner Health. He will begin his role in Oklahoma City in late January. He will

After an extensive national be responsible for developing and executing human resource strategy in support of the overall business plan and strategic direction of OU Health, specifically in the areas of talent management, total rewards, human resources operations and diversity, equity and inclusion.

"Jimmy brings a wealth of experience to OU Health as a human resources executive in healthcare. He is uniquely qualified to take on this important role as the first-ever CHRO for the entire OU Health clinical enterprise as we focus on becoming an employer of choice statewide and nationwide. His record reflects his ability to generate transformative strategies that enhance engagement through a culture of inclusion, personal optimal accountability and operations," said Richard Lofgren, M.D., MPH, president and CEO of OU Health.

Duncan joins OU Health as

a member of the executive team, reporting directly to Lofgren. He will have oversight of human resources for the entire healthcare enterprise and will be the first CHRO to span the newly integrated organization.

a comprehensive "Having culture and people strategic plan is an essential priority to achieving Dr. Lofgren's vison of OU Health becoming a highly integrated, high performing academic health system for Oklahoma and the region. I am excited to join the vibrant Oklahoma community and collaboratively champion this effort with all stakeholders who support our tripartite mission of academic, research and clinical care," said Duncan.

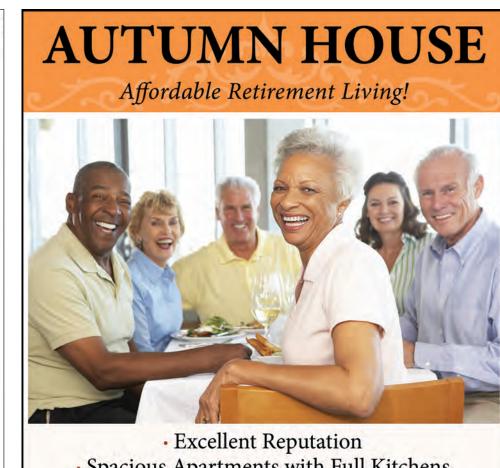
Duncan has a diverse background of business acumen gained from various industries including energy, healthcare, higher education, manufacturing and mining. He earned a bachelor's degree in journalism at University of South Carolina and a master's degree in organizational management at Southern Wesleyan



Jimmy Duncan, SHRM-SCP, SPHR, chief human resources officer for OU Health.

University. He served as adjunct professor in the School of Business at Southern Wesleyan University teaching human resources management, strategic planning, leadership development and marketing.

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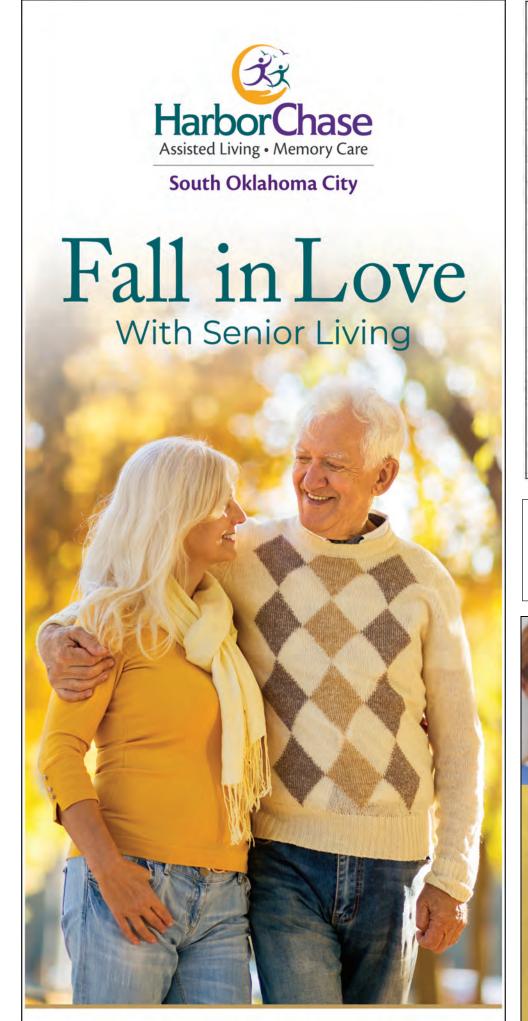
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