

## A caring heart RN grateful for behavioral health career



Brandi Williams brings knowledge and kindness to her role as a behavioral health nurse at SSM Health St. Anthony-Midwest, located in Midwest City.

Story and photo by James Coburn, Staff Writer

Brandi Williams, RN, prays every morning for God to send her the words to speak to her patients, she said. She has spent nearly a year serving in the behavioral health unit at SSM Health St. Anthony-Midwest.

"Because I put the Lord before me in my work, I feel like he guides me through it. I don't have a ton of problems talking to my patients and I feel it's because God helps me," she said.

Williams wanted to go to medical school or become a nurse when she was in high school. She was fascinated at a young age with how the human brain functions and how genetics and environmental issues cause behavioral problems.

In 1999 Williams earned her nursing degree at OSU/OKC. She has spent most

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## OCU receives gifts for endowed faculty

*Freede family  
establishes music and  
nursing professorships*



A family of philanthropists has established endowed professorships at Oklahoma City University in the Bass School of Music and the Kramer School of Nursing to advance educational efforts in two of their primary passions.

The Josephine Freede Endowed Professorship in Instrumental Music and the Josephine Wyndham, Margaret Wyndham and Catherine Annette Freede Professorship in Gerontology will both impact critical areas of study at OCU.

The Freede family created the instrumental music professorship to support the training and education of future music educators. Margaret Freede, daughter of Josephine, started the endowment in honor of her late mother, who passed away in 2020 at the age of 93.

"Josie was born and raised in England, where classical music was an important element of her culture," Margaret Freede said. "She was a classically trained pianist. She understood the inspirational and artistic value of classical music as well as its ability to enrich the lives of everyone who heard it. Her philanthropy and fundraising in Oklahoma City for almost 70 years were focused on the arts and music. This gift is made to continue the work she devoted her efforts to perpetuating over the course of her life."

The recipient of the endowment, which will be selected by the dean of the Bass School of

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## WILLIAMS

Continued from Page 1

of her career working in labor and delivery except four years in the ER and her last two years in behavioral health.

"It's been an interesting change," Williams said.

Pregnant women are eager to talk about all aspects of being an expectant mother, deriving an infant, and caring for the baby after leaving the hospital. So, Williams said unlike labor and delivery, she does not assume that her behavioral health patients want to get to know her.

She found that some patients who were court ordered to be hospitalized for treatment and evaluation do not want help, Williams said.

Many of her patients are mandated for treatment and observation for a certain length of time.

Williams said it's easy to forget that behavioral health differs from many other areas of nursing. She emphasized that many mental and emotional disorders need to be dealt with in the forefront of one's care.

"To be able to focus on it has been really unique," she said.

Mind and body are closely related in any area, she continued. Behavioral health includes organic issues in the brain and chemical imbalances that require mental health medications, she said.

"Those are even more unique though because it's interesting to see how the brain functions while malfunctioning," Williams said. "Some of these things like people seeing things that are not there — that's a malfunction of the brain. But the brain functions around it. And some people can't deal with it well."

She approaches her patients where they are in life, she said. Some of the disease processes her patients live result in making them very blunt. They will categorically say they won't answer any more of her questions, Williams said.

"The brain is very complicated and is not understood the way some other things are," Williams said.

So, she reaches for a higher power. God guided her decision to become a nurse, she said. Williams was 21 years old and without a career path when she gave birth

to her oldest daughter. Her nurses made her feel like she was the only person in the world having a baby, she said. They made her feel special. And she credits them for recruiting her into nursing by the loving way they treated her.

What enriches her life as a nurse witnessing the positive impact that healthcare makes in patient centered care.

There are times when she feels she is not connecting with her patients. However, Williams will return to work after two or three days away from the hospital. She notices definite changes.

"I come back, and they are like, 'Hi,' or 'Hey Ms. Brandi.' It's so gratifying to watch them come back to themselves," Williams explained. "It's like watching them wake. They're looking in your eyes and they're talking to you."

Depression is a major problem in the United States. Antidepressants help, she said. People struggling can call the Mental Health Hotline at 988 for help.

"Depression can make people non-functional, almost as much as an organic brain problem," she continued. "They won't shower,

anything, just simple things. Everyone has felt like that at some point, whether chronically if you've got an issue, or a week or so."

Williams said human dignity and kindness are essential for being a behavioral health nurse. Nursing knowledge about medications and all the processes for treatment is vital.

"As a human to do my job, you need to have a respect for human life," Williams said.

She brings peace to her life by reading the Scriptures.

"It makes me calm and feel safe, so that's my safe spot," she said.

Williams likes to focus on her three kids and a grandson. She likes yard work, going to the lake in the summer and attending football games with her family.

For more information about SSM Health St. Anthony-Midwest, visit: <https://jobs.ssmhealth.com/us/en>



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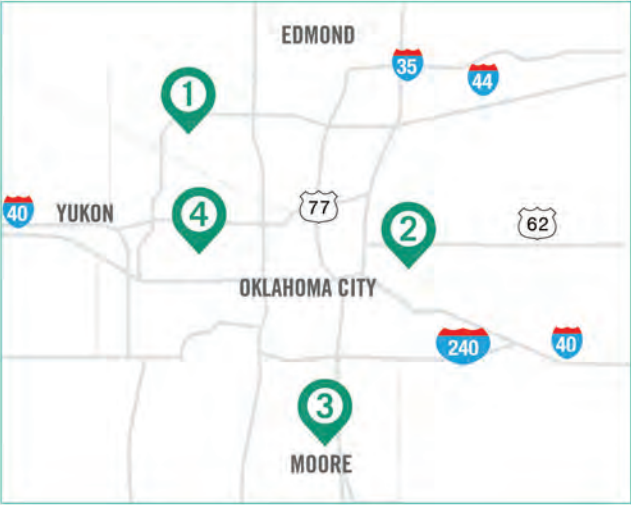
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# APPs may fill in gaps due to growing shortages of physicians, nurses

by Richard Payerchin

Advanced practice providers (APPs) may fill in staffing gaps left by shortages of physicians and nurses.

Health care experts predicted staffing would be a challenge in 2023 and those forecasts appear to be coming true, according to surveys that analyzed various aspects of the labor market in recent weeks. Along with a projected growing national physician shortage, a nursing shortage is becoming apparent in health care.

## Adding APPs

Among medical groups, 65% said they will APPs in 2023, according to an April 11 poll by the Medical Group Management Association (MGMA) and STAT. APPs include certified registered nurse anesthetists (CRNAs), nurse practitioners (NPs), physician assistants (PAs), and certified nurse midwives (CNMs).

Among those who said no, "a significant number of them told MGMA that the reason they aren't adding APP roles is because they've already successfully recruited for their needs, often finding 'top-performing'

candidates to help cover many different specialties, and engaging them with monthly lunch-and-learn sessions alongside the compensation packages of pay and benefits offered," the MGMA report said.

The APP job categories are expected to grow through 2031, with 38,400 new PA jobs, a 28% increase, and 118,600 new CRNA, CNM, and NP jobs, a 40% increase. MGMA cited the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) Occupational Outlook Handbook for those figures.

## In need of nursing

At least two reports this year project dire needs for nursing in health care organizations.

About 100,000 registered nurses (RNs) left the workforce during the COVID-19 pandemic due to stress, burnout, and retirements. Another 610,388 RNs reported an "intent to leave" the workforce by 2027 for the same reasons, including 188,962 RNs younger than 40.

The figures were part of the study "Examining the Impact of the

COVID-19 Pandemic on Burnout & Stress Among U.S. Nurses," published April 13 by the National Council of State Boards of Nursing (NCSBN).

"The data is clear: The future of nursing and of the U.S. health care ecosystem is at an urgent crossroads," Maryann Alexander, PhD, RN, FAAN, NCSBN chief officer of nursing regulation. "The pandemic has stressed nurses to leave the workforce

and has expedited an intent to leave in the near future, which will become a greater crisis and threaten patient populations if solutions are not enacted immediately. There is an urgent opportunity today for health care systems, policymakers, regulators, and academic leaders to coalesce and enact solutions that will spur positive systemic evolution to address these challenges and maximize patient protection in care into the future."

## 'A major crisis'

The figures are good for job seekers and the economy, but bad for health care organizations trying

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APPS  
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to maintain adequate staffing while controlling costs, according to another report.

Health care remains “a bright star in our economy,” projected to add 2 million jobs for 13% growth by 2031, according to BLS figures. That outpaces other job groups, said a statement from Brian Colosi, MBA, president of recruiter NSI Nursing Solutions Inc.

In 2022, hospitals added 975,000 employees, recapturing 5.65% of the talent lost in the “Great Resignation”

during the COVID-19 pandemic. But RNs had a slower rate of return to the workforce, according to the “2023 NSI National Health Care Retention & RN Staffing Report” published last month.

“While supply varies geographically; on a national level, a major crisis is evident and deteriorating,” Colosi said in the report. “The questions remaining are: How do we protect our human capital investment and how do we staff while controlling labor costs?”

As published in Medical Economics <https://www.medicaleconomics.com>

OCU  
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Music, must have a track record of excellence in performance and teaching.

The gerontology professorship celebrates the legacy of the Freede family’s work to advance health care. All three of the individuals it’s named for worked in health care-related professions — Josephine received her charter society in physiotherapy degree before training at an orthopedic hospital in England; Margaret managed several clinical trial sites and helped gastroenterology patients get access to medications; and Catherine worked as an orthopedic surgical nurse alongside her father, Henry, for nearly 50 years.

The gerontology professorship recipient, who demonstrates nursing and teaching excellence, will be selected by the Kramer School of Nursing dean, with preference toward a faculty member who specializes in gerontology and additional preferred consideration for candidates who have experience in rheumatology.

“We are grateful for the generosity of Dr. Freede,” OCU nursing Dean Gina Crawford said.

“With the increasing numbers of older adults, it is critical to educate nursing students about the unique health and wellness needs of this population. This endowed professorship will provide opportunities for curricular support and faculty-led research in the field of gerontology.”

The Freede family has contributed to several causes in Oklahoma City that have helped improve the health, wellness and cultural offerings for its residents, including the Henry J. Freede Wellness and Activity Center at OCU and the Freede Theatre at the Civic Center Music Hall in downtown Oklahoma City. OCU President Kenneth Evans noted the Freede’s commitment to philanthropy has helped shape the culture at OCU.

“Dr. Margaret Freede’s unwavering support will play a crucial role in attracting and retaining the best faculty from around the country,” Evans said. “This will ultimately have a tremendous impact on generations of music and health care students at OCU.”

For more information about the Oklahoma City University Kramer School of Nursing, Visit: <https://www.okcu.edu/nursing/home>

OMRF accepting  
applications for Teen  
Leaders program



Some of the Oklahoma Medical Research Foundation’s Teen Leaders for the 2022-2023 school year.

The Oklahoma Medical Research Foundation is seeking applications for its 2023-24 Teen Leaders class. Applications are due May 15.

Now in its 11th year, the program is open to high school students entering sophomore, junior and senior years. OMRF’s Teen Leaders program provides group activities, panel discussions with foundation scientists and state civic leaders, and new in 2023, more time in the foundation’s labs.

Students leave with the leadership skills and tools to be change-makers in their communities. They also learn how to become advocates for medical research and improving human health.

“Nearly 400 of Oklahoma’s young leaders have passed through our doors as Teen Leaders,” said OMRF Development Director Caroline Allen, who coordinates the program. “In response to their feedback, we’ve updated the sessions to include more time with our scientists. We hope that with even more access to real-world research, they’ll be inspired to become greater advocates for medical research.”

Selected students also learn the fundamentals of nonprofit fundraising and development, board structure, networking and creating impactful social media content. Teens also work together on a special event to cap off program activities each spring.

Group sessions will begin in September and continue through the 2023-24 school year, generally on the second Tuesday of each month. Applicants must demonstrate good academic standing and attend school in Oklahoma. There is no cost to participate.



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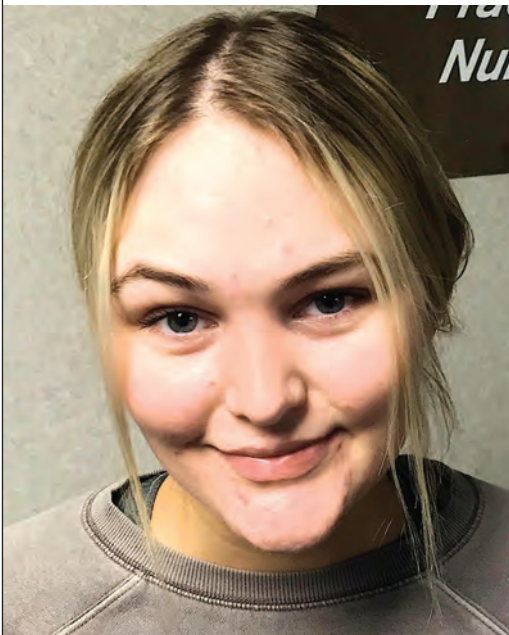
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*"Mostly homework right now. Other than that, I like to spend time with my family."*



Abatail Wynn, nursing school student

*"As nursing students it's hard to prioritize our time with school and homework first, but in my free time I spend it reading."*



Allie Whittkopf, nursing school student

*"My hobbies other than school are hanging out with my friends and family, going to the gym."*



Jayden Nichols, nursing school student

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# Ranger Pride *Northwestern grows healers*

Leslie Collins, DNP, MS, RN still remembers the conversation with her Northwestern Oklahoma State University mentor.

"They said you educate every day and I think you could make a difference in students' lives," Collins recalls.

From there, she took a job in her alma mater's nursing program skills lab. Thirteen years later, she's chair of **Northwestern Oklahoma State's Charles Morton Share Trust Division of Nursing**.

And she couldn't be more proud of the impact her faculty has on students.

"I love it because of our ability to make a difference, to be one-on-one with the student and really help them," Collins said. "I stay here because of the faculty and our administration. Our administration's support is like no other."

"It was a starting point for me and I love being that starting point for students."

**Northwestern Oklahoma State University** is a public regional university that has received national acclaim for its combination of

a high quality academic program and affordability. While Northwestern primarily serves the vast geographical area of northwest Oklahoma and the Panhandle, its students come from more than 40 states and 20 countries.

Northwestern offers a bachelor's of science in nursing, an **online RN-to-BSN program**, as well as a hybrid BSN-to-DNP program.

Collins matriculated from Northwestern not only debt-free but with a solid nursing foundation forged by instructors who poured into her.

"I think it makes all the difference in the world, specifically when it comes to nursing," Collins said of the personalized instruction she received. "It's something we do at Northwestern across our degrees and programs and it makes a difference in the student. It makes them know they are more than a number. It's about their education and what they need."

"We find more and more students need to know the way they learn so they can continue to be lifelong learners, far past their graduation. That's so important for nursing and we can work with them one on one to help them be more successful. Caring

is a component that is threaded throughout our program, we feel it is important for students to be caring in nature and to learn resiliency in this process. We hope this, and have seen in the past, will translate into what type of nurse they become."

Collins said many Northwestern students go on to practice in rural settings, but others go on to larger facilities.

There's a common thread in the employer feedback Collins receives.

"They speak on how well-prepared our graduates are," Collins said. "Also, they speak about how professional they are, how caring they are and how they work well with the teams. Not only are they a good nurse, prepared and ready for patient care but they're also good team members and ready to make a difference in the nursing world."

Collins said the university is looking at expanding its offering to help meet existing needs throughout

healthcare, in whatever setting that may be.

"I feel like we do a really good job of ensuring students put patients and their families first and we also include how to have self care as a nurse and how important that is," Collins said. "For so long, it's been all about the patient and the client and it should continue to be, but we also have to remember we have to care for ourselves as well."



For more information about Northwestern Oklahoma State University, visit <https://www.nwosu.edu/school-of-professional-studies/nursing>



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3. 1887 Nurses must daily \_\_\_\_\_ their ward

5. Florence's work inspired Jean Henri Dunant to found \_\_\_\_\_

7. Florence insisted on adequate lighting, diet and \_\_\_\_\_

8. 1887 Nurses must not frequent \_\_\_\_\_

10. Where was Florence Nightingale born

11. Florence was called "The Lady \_\_\_\_\_"

12. Where did Florence set up her Training School for Nurses

14. 1887 Nurses would \_\_\_\_\_ to keep the ward well lit

Down

2. Florence wrote "Notes on Hospitals" explaining how to \_\_\_\_\_

4. Florence's high standards helped transform nursing into a respectable \_\_\_\_\_

6. Florence was known to keep a \_\_\_\_\_ in her pocket

9. Florence is buried in East Wellow \_\_\_\_\_

13. How old was Florence when she died

14. 1887 Nurses would care for \_\_\_\_\_ patients

15. Florence never did \_\_\_\_\_

ANSWERS ON PAGE 13 By Joanna Rodriguez

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# Program Leads to Sustained Improvements in Nurses' Moral Resilience

A program developed by Cynda Hylton Rushton, PhD, RN, FAAN, and her team from Johns Hopkins University led to sustained improvements in nurses' ability to effectively address ethical challenges, according to research published in American Journal of Critical Care (AJCC).

"The Mindful Ethical Practice and Resilience Academy: Sustainability of Impact" examines the long-term impact on nurses who completed an experiential educational program designed to improve their skills in mindfulness, resilience and competence in confronting ethical challenges.

The Mindful Ethical Practice and Resilience Academy (MEPRA) consists of six, four-hour workshops conducted over 12 weeks. The curriculum includes facilitated discussion, role play, guided mindfulness and reflective practices, case studies and high-fidelity simulation training.

Rushton serves as principal investigator for the program is the Anne and George L. Bunting

Professor of Clinical Ethics at Johns Hopkins University Berman Institute of Bioethics and School of Nursing in Baltimore.

"It's increasingly important that we address ethical concerns in a sustainable way and support the integrity and well-being of nurses. In our sample, more than 95% of participating nurses reported confronting ethical challenges in their workplace, but only 15% had previously received formal ethics training," Rushton said. "Our findings offer a promising path forward in strengthening the skills, tools and resources for nurses to address moral adversity in clinical practice and to amplify their moral resilience."

Current threats to the nursing workforce require targeted interventions with long-term impact, and many interventions are one-time programs that have not been systematically evaluated or been accompanied by efforts to sustain the gains that were made.

Through an academic-practice partnership, Rushton's team developed,

implemented and evaluated MEPRA's impact on cultivating the components of moral resilience in direct care nurses. It takes the unique approach of combining education with mindfulness and experiential learning to address the complex moral and ethical issues confronted by nurses at the point of care.

The study involved surveys of 245 nurses at four points during the intervention: at baseline, immediately after completing the program, and at three and six months afterward. This work was performed at Johns Hopkins Hospital, Baltimore, and Sibley Memorial Hospital, Washington, D.C.

The results of the intervention were generally sustained for months afterward. The most robust improvements were in ethical confidence, moral competence, resilience, work engagement and mindfulness, and decreased emotional exhaustion, depression and anger. Turnover intentions were reduced initially and at three months, but improvements were not sustained



Cynda Hylton Rushton, PhD, RN, FAAN.

at six months. Some outcomes, including anxiety and empathy, were not improved immediately after the intervention but were significantly improved at three months.

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# Liver Transplant Recipient Devotes Life After Transplant to Paying It Forward

Lorrinda Gray-Davis, relocated back to Oklahoma City in August 2016 with hopes of a fresh start. Exactly one year later, she was diagnosed with inoperable liver cancer and end stage liver failure.

Not knowing anyone who had previously had a transplant, she began the daunting process of getting on the transplant list feeling lonely, terrified and hopeless; but, she was willing to do whatever it took. Many weeks later, she received a call about a possible liver match and finally began to feel some relief. However, there are times when the organ is not healthy or is otherwise not a good fit, and the transplant has to be canceled. This is known as a "dry run" and this was exactly what happened to Gray-Davis.

The next week she received a call from the pre-transplant coordinator about another possible

match. Vivek Kohli, M.D., the director of transplant and hepatobiliary surgery at the INTEGRIS Health Nazih Zuhdi Transplant Institute at INTEGRIS Health Baptist Medical Center, spoke to Gray-Davis about the potential liver. He informed her the organ was high risk and said she would need to commit to various precautions after the transplant. A high risk organ carries a very small risk of transmitting infection or cancer. "I knew I wanted to live. The liver they were offering me was better than what I had so I jumped at the offer," says Davis. Her successful liver transplant took place on August 8, 2018.

As Gray-Davis began to heal and move forward, she made it her mission to support candidates experiencing the ups and downs of waiting for a transplant. "I get to visit patients, talk to them and tell them it's okay. When you go through a transplant, you're going to have all these feelings; highs and lows and you don't know what to do," Gray-Davis claims. "Your only option is to trust your transplant team, because they are going to do everything they can to help you."

For the last four years, she has been supporting, counseling and guiding transplant patients and their families. Gray-Davis was the founder of Transplant Recipients International Organization (known as TRIO) in Oklahoma and currently serves as the group's president. TRIO is an independent, not-for-profit, international organization committed to improving the quality of life of transplant candidates, recipients, their families and the families of organ and tissue donors.



Lorrinda Davis and INTEGRIS Health Social Worker, Sarah Eggers, LSW.

"I am forever grateful to the INTEGRIS Health Nazih Zuhdi Transplant Institute and my amazing transplant team for what they have done for me," says Gray-Davis. "Not only do I have a new liver, but also a new outlook on life. Nobody should have to go through this difficult journey alone. The transplant community is strong, resilient and TOGETHER we can be a success story."

## HILLCREST MEDICAL CENTER - Patient Experience Week spotlight: Vickie Barrett

During Patient Experience Week (April 23-29), Hillcrest Medical Center spotlighted patient experience coordinator Vickie Barrett. Barrett started at Hillcrest in 2013, working as a senior care coordinator before her role evolved to focus on patient experience. Her work takes her all over the hospital, helping connect patients and families to services and providers throughout the Hillcrest HealthCare System. Barrett said her focus is, "facilitating clear and compassionate communication."

Barrett works as an effective third party when patients don't want to speak with their provider, health team or management; they want someone in between. She can often be seen with the dedicated patient experience mobile phone, nicknamed "the bat phone."

"From compliments to concerns, this role provides me the opportunity to help address patient and consumer needs while supporting those delivering care," Barrett said. "I work to connect individuals with the

right person, department or provider so that questions or concerns are appropriately addressed."

"When we have an opportunity to improve or provide greater clarity, I work directly with staff, the patient and their families," said Barrett. "I believe our success is founded on the great relationships built with the staff, and at times, having a good sense of humor."

Another important part of patient care is to ensure they are connected to a primary care provider. Barrett helps connect patients to our Utica Park Clinic physicians, often setting up an appointment for them.

Barrett uses her experience from taking care of her mother, who had Alzheimer's, to shape the way she interacts with patients. She said sometimes, this helps her diffuse tension with a patient and family by relating to their situation.

"I visit military patients and provide them with a poster of an American flag to thank them on

**Continued on next page**



Vickie Barrett, HMC PX Coordinator, Hillcrest Medical Center - Tulsa.



BARRETT

Continued from Page 12

behalf of the entire hospital for their service,” said Barrett. “We have also learned through the years that simple things like sitting with them and listening to what they have to say, offering a patient a pair of reading glasses or acknowledging their birthday can make such a

difference in their stay.”  
“My favorite part of this job is interacting with the staff, meeting with a patient or family member and them expressing how I have helped them,” said Barrett. “I hope they get as much fulfillment from me as I get from them.”  
For more information about Hillcrest Medical Center, visit: <https://jobs.ardenthealth.com>.

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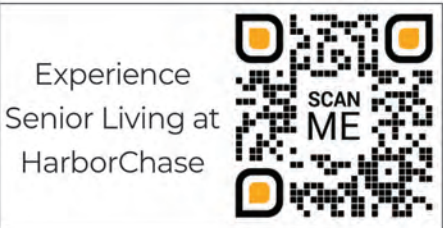


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