

# Maira Zuniga-Chavez, RN

### Compassion Exemplifies Giving at Oklahoma Center for Orthopedic & Multi-Specialty.

story by Van Mitchell, Staff Writer

Being there for someone to help them feel better is what Maira Zuniga-Chavez cherishes about her nursing career at OCOM North (Oklahoma Center for Orthopedic & Multi-Specialty Surgery, LLC). She came to OCOM about two years ago during the pandemic and has never strayed.

Angela Beddor, RN, said Chavez's compassion exemplifies giving by the way she serves people. Chavez came to OCOM from an ICU setting. She is bilingual and does a lot of volunteer work in the community including a Big Brother Big Sister program for underserved schools. And she volunteers her time at Tulakes Clinic, which is a part of the Tulakes Neighborhood Ministries, consisting of the clinic, a food resource center, and a community church. It is

located in an area of Warr Acres where she grew up. The food pantry gives people the feeling they are shopping for groceries, Chavez said. The clinic is run by clinic director Kim Bryan, a nurse practitioner, who has been in the field for 25 years.

"They offer care to people in underserved communities," Chavez said. "It's a small area with lots and lots of apartment complexes. Most of the people there are of low income in single family homes."

Zuniga immigrated to the United States from Mexico and didn't have access to health care and things many people in Oklahoma take for granted.

"I actually found out about this free clinic from a friend and started volunteering there," Chavez said. "It was like a full circle where I could connect."

She also does a mentorship

program called Emerge at Tulakes Church that helps children growing up in the Tulakes area to see that life has so much more to offer. She volunteers with her 5th grade teacher. It's a blessing for Chavez to know what a big difference her teacher made in her life. Chavez wanted to play the role of Big Sister for somebody, too.

"It may seem like you're in a bad situation, problems at home or you don't have money. It seems like life is tough and rough. I grew up with that and I came out of that, so I like to volunteer with the kids and set an example, like I was in the same shoes you are, and I didn't let life determine that's all there is to offer." Chavez said.

Chavez's childhood gave impetus to her nursing career. She is a 2020 graduate of nursing school at Northern Oklahoma College, located in Enid. She began her journey to nursing school at age 16 as a CNA. She worked in a nursing home for two years and earned her CMA certification. And she worked as a nurse tech while in college.

She learned about OCOM from a coworker while working in the ICU of another facility. Chavez had worked in the ICU for three years

but felt the burnout associated with working in a sad environment. Her work had been enriching, but she needed a change.

"We know that we were making a difference in the ICU because we cared for some really sick patients, but the outcomes weren't always what we hoped for," Chavez said. "And here it's really refreshing having that good outcome. Patients are leaving here happier, feeling better, and they're going to get better."

She loves being around the nursing staff. They are all funny with great personalities, she said. It's always nice for her to have a great boss and great coworkers to make the day better and fun, she explained.

Nurses don't have a lot of idle time at OCOM North where an average of 50-75 surgery cases happen weekly. About 13-15 nurses care for patients at any given time. Three operating rooms at OCOM North run Monday-Friday for outpatient procedures. OCOM South has inpatient beds for total joint replacements that are not provided at OCOM North. The medical team at the 11,000-square-

See MAIRA Page 5

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Maira Zuniga-Chavez, RN, OCOM North (Oklahoma Center for Orthopedic & Multi-Specialty Surgery, LLC) is a mentor of hope for people improving their lives.

### **MAIRA Continued from Page 2**

foot OCOM North facility specializes in outpatient oral surgery, GYN, orthopedics, general surgery, ophthalmology, podiatry, pain management, plastic surgery, and urology. Zuniga said that OCOM performs a lot of outpatient surgeries.

"They are all just really happy to get their problem fixed," Chavez said. "We get a lot of young sports teams. And so they're like, 'I'm just ready to get back to playing.' And we're ready to get this done."

Being a nurse has added a fresh perspective to her life.

"You may think you're going through something, but someone else is going through something worse," she said.

Some of her patients have had chronic joint pain for many years. So, she is thankful for her health.

"It makes me feel grateful for what I have. And, it makes me feel grateful that I'm able to help people," Chavez said.

For more information about Oklahoma Center for Orthopedic & Multi-Specialty Surgery, LLC visit https://ocomhospital.com/



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# Celebrating a Half-Century of Growth in Nursing Education

As the Tulsa Day Center's clinic director, Leslie Petty feels that the doctor of nurse practitioner degree she received from The University of Tulsa has helped her better serve underserved and vulnerable populations. "I am better able to design outcomes and articulate those outcomes to meet the community and funders' questions regarding the challenges of working with the homeless population," she said. "My doctorate took me to the next level beyond clinical care. I am equipped to conduct quality and process improvement projects and studies, which has been of great benefit in my role as clinic director."

Although Petty (BSN '83, DNP '20) has worked at the Tulsa Day Center for 12 years, she said the decision to get her doctorate was a no-brainer. "The TU nursing program is state of the art, ahead of the curve," she said. "The faculty and university strive to ensure the students have what they need to be successful. In addition, they actively work with community partners to identify health care concerns and how they can better prepare the students to meet health care challenges."

This year, the TU School of Nursing celebrated its 50th anniversary. "We've been graduating BSN prepared nurses for 50 years, which is a little bit unusual for nursing," said Bill Buron, who has served as director of the school since 2020. Historically, most nursing programs focused on diplomas and associate degrees in nursing.

In the early 1970s, the School of Nursing was forward thinking and helped establish the importance of a bachelor's of science in nursing degree for professional practice. Today, the university is fortunate to build on that strong foundation and 50-year history.

In 2015, the university added a doctoral degree, like the one Petty obtained. In addition to two three-year DNP tracks (adult-gerontology acute care and family), the School of Nursing launched a new nurse anesthesia program in 2020. The first nurse anesthetist cohort graduated in August. TU's NA program is the first and only in the state of Oklahoma.

The School of Nursing continues to grow and plans to offer several new online nursing programs within the 2023-24 academic year, including postmaster's, DNP specialist, and adult-gerontology acute care nurse practitioner certificates; an RN-to-BSN degree; an accelerated BSN degree; and online master's degree with four tracks (public policy, nursing informatics, nursing education, and nursing leadership).

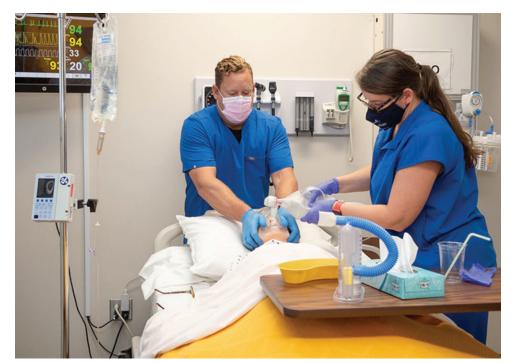
The accelerated BSN program will be designed for second degree students who are interested in nursing. This online program is unique in that students will complete clinical rotations in their home areas, wherever they are in the country.

Online opportunities will open the door to many new nursing students. "Maybe they're not ready to move, they are unable to come to Tulsa, but they see the value in nursing education at TU," Buron said. "If you look at our unique approach to student success and strong academic outcomes, I think it's easy to see the value that stems from a TU education."

What sets TU apart from other schools is the faculty, more than 65% of whom hold doctoral degrees in nursing. Additionally, the university's Oxley College of Health & Natural Sciences has teamed with local hospitals to provide clinical faculty, so students are learning from instructors who practice in hospital settings.

The university has also started a virtual reality in nursing education program and is one of the leaders in the field. "We actually look and see how students are responding to clinical situations in a virtual environment. We can then debrief on their experiences to help students gain confidence in their critical thinking and clinical judgment skills," Buron said, adding that they are also working closely with faculty and graduate students in the university's Tandy School of Computer Science to develop nursing skills training software in the virtual world, technology that does not currently

"Virtual practice, in addition to high-tech laboratory practice in our state-of-the-art facilities, provides additional clinical preparation for TU





students in realistic, simulated clinical environments," he said. "We have expanded into new programs and specialties and grown with changes in health care, including increasing our creative use of technology to expand learning opportunities."

Recent graduate Daesung "Joseph" Kim (BSN '23) said he was always passionate about helping others and making a positive impact on people's lives. "Nursing provides a unique opportunity to combine my compassion for others with my interest in the medical field, allowing me to provide care and support to those in need," Kim said.

He said nursing is not just a profession, but a calling to serve others with compassion, empathy and skill. "It's a dynamic field that constantly evolves with advances in health care, and I'm committed to being a lifelong learner in order to provide the best care possible," Kim said. "I'm excited about the journey ahead and the positive impact I can make as a nurse, and I'm grateful for the support and opportunities provided by TU's nursing program."

For more information about the Oxley College of Health & Natural Sciences visit

https://healthsciences.utulsa.edu/nursing/

# Murray State College, Fastest Growing OK College or University

Murray State College has the highest percentage of enrollment growth of any public Oklahoma college or university for Fall 2023, with an 18% increase to 2,627 students.

Murray State focuses on four centers of excellence: online, nursing, gunsmithing and agriculture. By concentrating resources and expertise in these areas, the college can enhance its educational offerings, foster collaboration and innovation, and better serve its students and the community.

"There are several pieces of the puzzle that contribute to this increase," said Becky Henthorn, Murray State College's Vice President of Academic and Student Affairs. "Our academic and activity programs are growing in record numbers."

Murray State's online college alone contributed 54% of the total enrollment growth, with 2,286 students using the online modality.

"Murray State is becoming the fastest growing institution in Oklahoma," said Chancellor Allison Garrett. With President Faltyn's innovative and strategic leadership, and degree offerings in key areas, Murray State is providing Oklahoma with highly skilled graduates who are prepared to strengthen our workforce."

In May 2023, Murray State's Nursing Program (#1 Career Mobility program in the nation) expanded to Duncan Regional Hospital, adding 17 students. Now, the nursing program covers all of southern Oklahoma with the three additional locations: Ardmore, Durant and Tishomingo. The program currently has its largest group of 215 students.

On October 23, Murray State held a groundbreaking for the new gunsmithing building. The facility will accommodate the added Bachelor of Applied Technology in Gunsmithing program with a cohort of an additional 20 students. With the existing associate's degree program, the gunsmithing program will serve 90 students each year.

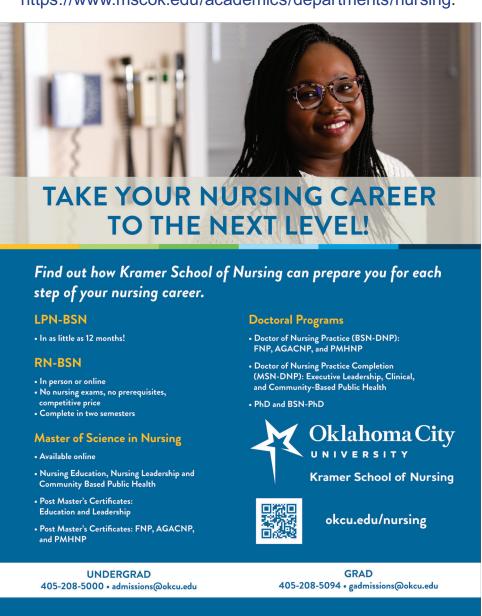
This year, Murray State's agriculture program has seen a large increase in numbers with 101 students majoring in agriculture. In 1924, the College began as the Murray State School of Agriculture.



"We focus on the areas that we are good at instead of trying to be everything to everyone," said Dr. Tim Faltyn, Murray State College President. "These enrollment increases are because of the focus and effort that our faculty and staff put on quality student education."

For more on the Murray State College Nursing Program visit https://www.mscok.edu/academics/departments/nursing.





# IN THE SECOND SOLUTION OF THE SECOND SOLUTION

What do you hope for in the New Year?

"I hope for a better understanding world-wide of current issues and how we can better come together and support each OTHER."



Angela Beddor, RN

"For the New Year I hope for happiness and wellbeing for patients and everyone around me."



Maira Zuniga-Chavez, RN

"I'm having shoulder surgery so I hope that goes well."



Chelsea Watson, RN

# OKNT CROSSWORD: Cancer Medicine (Oncology)

### Across

2. Replication of cells

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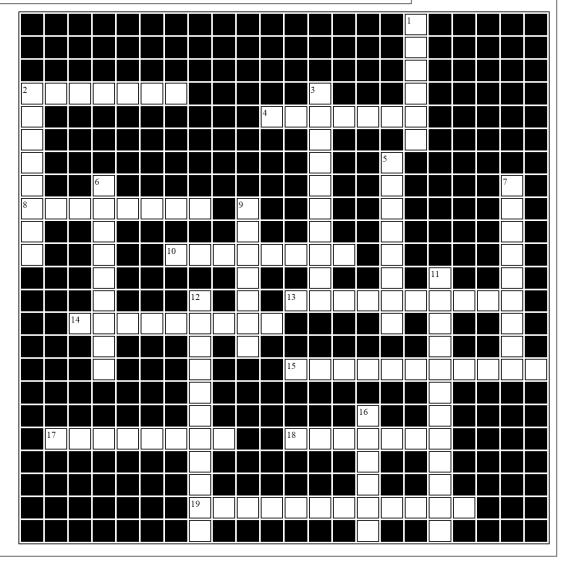
Specialty Surgery, LLC)

- 4. Evaluating the degree of maturity of tumor cells
- 8. Having the ability to enter and destroy surrounding tissue
- 10. Containing dead tissue
- 13. Spread of a malignant tumor to a secondary site
- 14. Cancerous tumor made up of cells of epithelial origin
- 15. Agents that cause cancer; chemicals, drugs, radiation, and viruses
- 17. Detailed plan for treatment of an illness
- 18. Return of symptoms of disease
- 19. Treatment with drugs

#### Down

- 1. Noncancerous tumor
- 2. Change in the genetic material (DNA) of a cell
- 3. Relieving but not curing symptoms
- 5. New growth; benign or malignant tumors
- 6. Invasive tumor
- 7. Partial or complete disappearance of symptoms of disease
- 9. Cancerous tumor derived from connective or flesh tissue
- 11. Treatment of tumors using radiation
- 12. Chemical substances that inhibit the growth of cells
- 16. Disease caused by abnormal and excessive growth of cells in the body

**ANSWERS ON PAGE 12** 



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(AS PUBLISHED IN THE 2023 EDUCATION GUIDE TO NURSING)



**Graduates Among** Best in State, Nation

For more than 50 years, the University of Central Oklahoma (UCO) has provided Oklahoma with highly skilled and educated nurses. Graduates of UCO's nursing programs are among the best prepared and most sought after in the state and the nation.

Fully accredited by the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE), UCO bachelor's and master's programs prepare tomorrow's leaders in nursing through a variety of settings, which helps meet the demand at all levels of nursing services needed in Oklahoma. Central offers traditional and nontraditional programs to support any student who wants to pursue a career in nursing or further their nursing education.

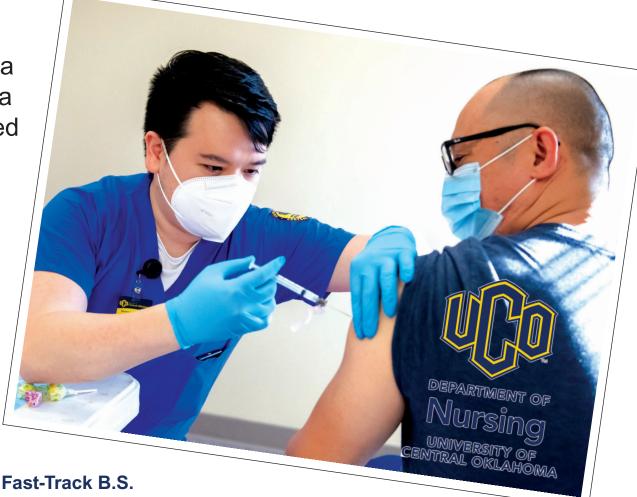
### **Traditional Nursing Program**

Central's traditional, on-campus nursing program is for students who are not yet licensed to practice nursing as an RN.

### Online RN to B.S. in Nursing Track

Central's RN to B.S. track is available 100% online for RNs who want to further their nursing education. Upon successful completion, nurses earn a Bachelor of Science in nursing. With both part and full-time options available and for as low as \$8,500, Central's program is designed to provide flexibility for students, with the option to complete the track in as little as 10 months.

When Rachel Jones, nurse manager for IMC at Integris Baptist, knew she wanted to pursue nursing she would need a program that was focused on flexibility and the success of students. "I appreciated the flexibility of the online program -I was running a COVID-19 + only unit in the middle of a pandemic, working two jobs and raising two kids while trying to get my B.S.," she said. "The online program at UCO provided the flexibility I need that allowed me to work when I could. At UCO. I knew the standards I would be held to would help make me a better nurse and stronger leader."



For those who have earned a traditional bachelor's degree in another field and are ready for a career in nursing, Central's Fast Track in nursing is for them. Upon successful completion, students will have earned a B.S. in nursing. The fast-track program can be completed in just 16 months and provides the flexibility of hybrid courses.

Garrett Collins graduated from Central's fast-track program in 2022, he currently works as a nurse resident at Integris Baptist in the transplant ICU. For Collins, the clinical opportunities available gave him first-hand insight into hospital culture and specialties. "Having the opportunity to do clinical hours at different hospitals across the metro prepared me for deciding where to apply for work," he said. The clinical rotations also helped me learn how to apply the skills I was learning in class to real life."

### Online M.S. in Nursing

The Master of Science in nursing degree program at UCO offers working RNs flexibility through fully online courses with both partand full-time options available. The program can be completed in as little as 16 months, if pursued full time. The online Master of Science in nursing can be completed for as little as \$15,000. Nursing graduate students

can choose from two tracks nursing education or nursing leadership.

Kiersten Snider is a registered nurse at OU Children's Hospital in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit. After receiving her B.S. in nursing from UCO in 2020, she began pursuing her master's in nursing at UCO in nursing education. To Snider, the passion the faculty have for success is unparallel. "You are more than just another student to the faculty members in this program," she said. "They strive every day to think of different methods they can use to improve the content they are providing to ensure that each student holds a high standard of knowledge that will be used in their careers."

### The Future of Nursing

All UCO nursing programs offer real-world instruction from supportive nursing faculty who are experts in their field of nursing. Graduates from UCO nursing programs are recognized within the health care community for their knowledge, professionalism and leadership potential. Central prides itself as a smart investment for success and for preparing future leaders in an opportunity-rich environment. For more information about Central's nursing programs, visit: https://www.uco.edu/nursing.



# Talea Powell: Navigating Dreams and Making a Difference in SNU's PTA Program

Originally from Weatherford, Oklahoma, Talea Powell is making her educational dreams a reality as part of the first cohort of students to enroll in the Southern Nazarene University (SNU) Physical Therapist Assistant program. Talea initially started her higher education at SWOSU, where she even held the esteemed role of president of a local sorority. However, life's twists and turns led her to a new chapter, prompting Talea to relocate to the vibrant OKC area and pursue her studies at SNU.

In the quest for the right PTA program last fall, Talea found herself navigating changes in her previous school's program. Sharing her concerns with a co-worker proved serendipitous, as this colleague happened to have worked with Dr. Loren McElroy, SNU's PTA Program Director. With a recommendation from someone who knew the program firsthand, Talea seized the

opportunity, applied, interviewed, and soon found herself on a journey she describes as "truly a blessing."

From the get-go, SNU stood out for Talea. She emphasizes, "I love that I have such a good connection with my peers and my professors. This is what has set SNU apart." The program's strong support system, includina advising, enrollment assistance, and a network of local clinicians as faculty members and guest lecturers, further enriched Talea's educational experience.

Talea's passion for physical therapy was furthered by a personal injury and the need for rehabilitation. In March, she tore her ACL while basketball, undergoing playing extensive physical therapy for recovery. Spending ample time in the PT office, Talea witnessed firsthand the transformative power of the profession. This experience led her to take on a tech job at PT offices, solidifying her commitment to the



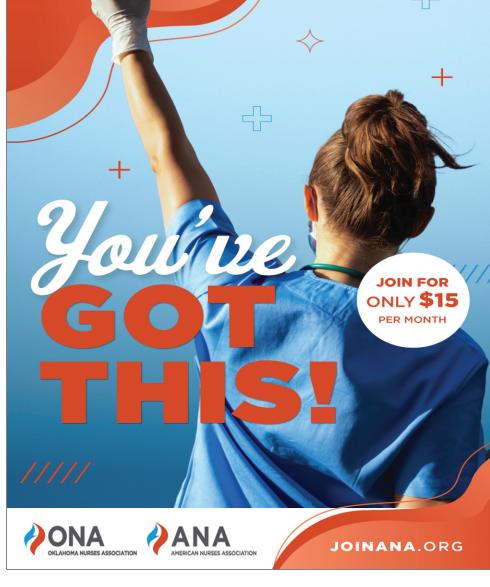
Talea Powell is among the first students to enroll in the Southern Nazarene University (SNU) Physical Therapist Assistant program.

field.

Then, in October, Talea and her classmates were able to participate in one of many service learning opportunities embedded within the program. PTA students were invited to assist a local running club with stretching and myofascial interventions. During this experience, Talea was able to work with the runners, under supervision, and learn to differentiate the techniques that worked well for them. The runners were grateful for a good stretch after running so many miles, and Talea greatly enjoyed her time working with them.

Director, commented, "Talea's energy and attitude light up any room. She exemplifies the spirit of our program through her desire to learn and her passion to serve patients and the community."

As Talea eagerly anticipates her graduation in 2024, her recent participation in the SNU Service Learning Project adds another layer to her dedication to making a positive impact beyond the classroom. This involvement aligns seamlessly with the program's mission of producing competent, ethical, and self-directed healthcare practitioners who embody professional core values within a Dr. Loren McElroy, PTA Program Christ-centered community.



For more information about Southern Nazarene University School of Nursing visit https://www.snu.edu/major/school-of-nursing/

# Redlands Celebrates First-Generation Students

Pursuing a college degree can be challenging and overwhelming, especially for students whose parents didn't take the same path. To support and encourage these students, Redlands Community College hosted a panel of first-generation students and graduates, including members of the college's faculty and staff.

"We appreciate and understand how difficult and lonely college can be for first-generation students, grappling with an unfamiliar experience and limited guidance," said Redlands President Jena Marr. "Sixty-eight percent of Redlands students are first-gen, and many of our own faculty and staff were in the same



Jalelah Abdul-Raheem, Head of the nursing department at Redlands Community College.

situation, including myself. It's rewarding to be a part of their journey, and the Redlands family is committed to helping our students every step of the way."

This Fall the college was the recipient of the First-Generation College Celebration Grant awarded by the Center for First-generation Student Success and the Council for Opportunity in Education. The grant supports events and activities that recognize these students who are pursuing their educational goals. First-generation students are identified as those whose parents or guardians do not have a bachelor's degree.

Several faculty and staff who are first-generation college graduates shared their experiences on the college's social media platforms, and others participated in the panel discussion. Students, employees and guests were invited to the panel discussion to learn more about the challenges and successes of first-generation students and graduates. Panelists included students Trevon Adderley, Chase Kingery, and Yolanda Robb, and psychology professor Paul Simon and TRIO Student Support Services engagement specialist Tori Davis.

"The reason I chose to come to college as a first-generation college student is because I wanted to make a better future for myself and make my parents proud," said Kingery. "The advice I would offer a first-generation college student is that at first it is scary but it does get better, you get more familiar. Ask questions. People, especially here at Redlands, are here to help you."

Since many of the college's faculty and staff are also first-generation college graduates, they are able to provide specialized assistance and support that better meets the needs of students. Dr. Jalelah Abdul-Raheem, head of the nursing department, is proud of her first-generation status since she is able to represent a minority background which helps her establish rapport with students.

Tori Davis values her capacity to engage with students, a sentiment rooted in her status as a first-generation college graduate. As a student engagement specialist in the TRIO Student Support Services (SSS) program, she works with many of the college's first-generation students to help them navigate academic challenges and encourage them as they work to overcome other obstacles.

"The most important piece of advice I would give is just to know your why and what's motivating you to be here. Always have that in the back of your mind because it is not always easy but in the end it's worth it," Davis said.

In addition to the Student Support Services program, Redlands offers many opportunities for first-generation college students to access valuable resources and services and connect with faculty and staff who provide critical support. Recognizing the distinctive challenges encountered by these students is crucial for the enhancement of support programs and services, and conducting this panel event provided an opportunity to engage in thoughtful discussions that revealed valuable insights in the unique needs of first-generation college students.



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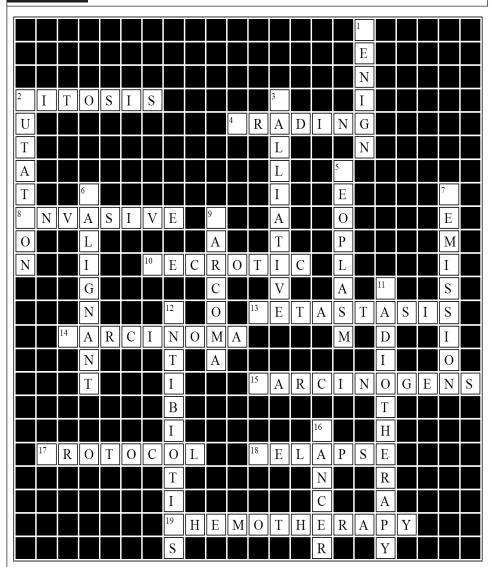
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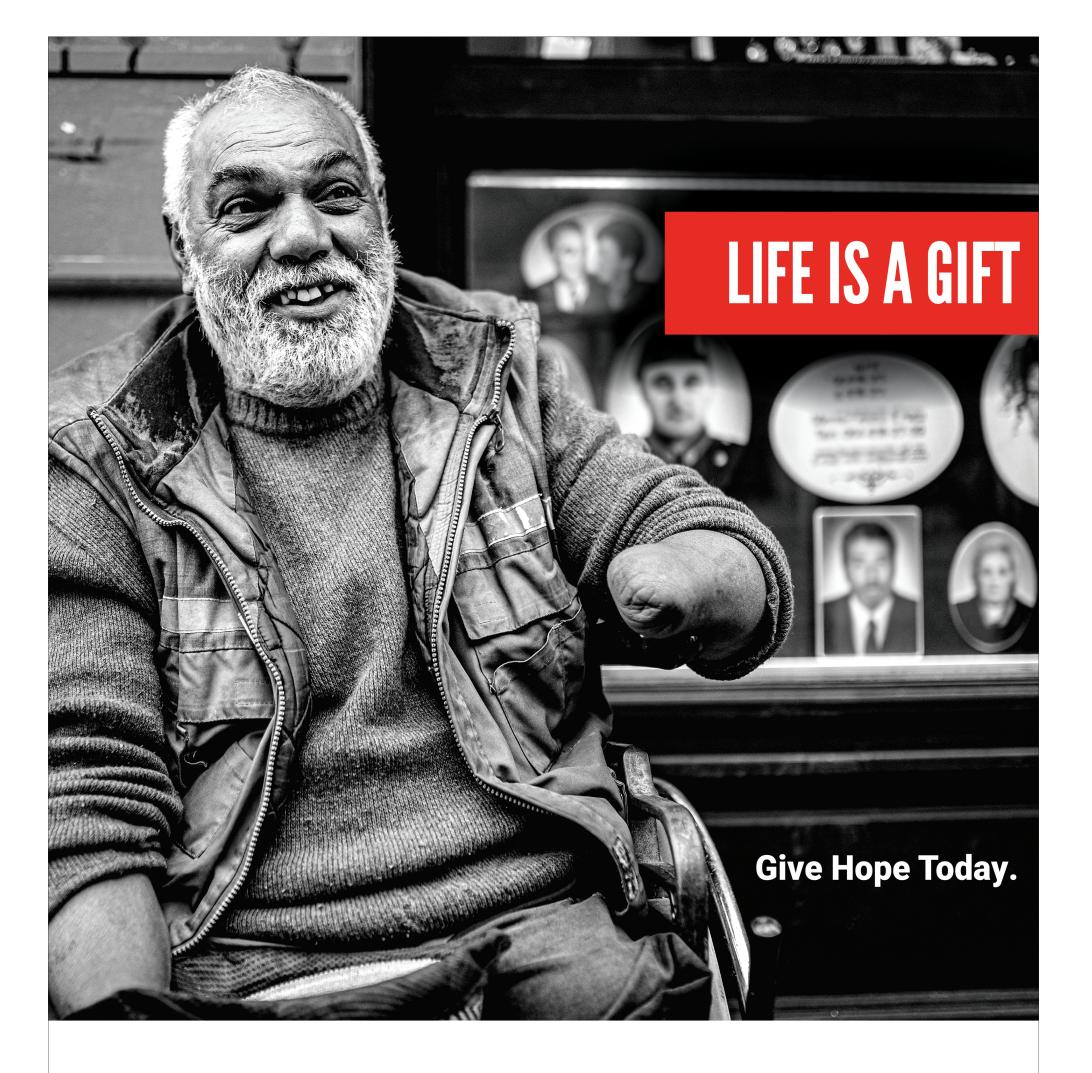
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