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Expanding Horizons Med/Surg Nurse Enthusiastic to Learn

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EDUCATION SHOWCASE



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Melanie Cheap, RN, Medical/Surgical Supervisor

Earned her Bachelor of Science in Nursing degree at Oklahoma City University Kramer School of Nursing.

story and photo by James Coburn, Staff Writer

Melanie Cheap chose med/surg nursing because she likes learning, she said. Compassion is to her nature.

"We're seeing a lot of different patients, disease processes and different surgeries," said Cheap, RN, a medical/surgical supervisor at OU Health Edmond Medical Center. "After being here for three and a half years, I still feel like I've seen something new every week and I'm learning something. It keeps me interested and it's exciting."

Med/surg lets her practice all the nursing skills she learned in nursing school. Cheap earned her Bachelor of Science in Nursing degree at Oklahoma City University Kramer School of Nursing and came to OU Health Edmond Medical Center nearly four years ago. The smaller

classes at Kramer School of Nursing provided a comfortable learning atmosphere, she explained.

"I knew all of my professors and was able to go to them for help with questions," Cheap said. "We also got clinical experience at hospitals in the area. That was nice seeing how different hospitals in the area work in different ways. It was a really good experience."

It takes a special nurse to work in med/surg, she said. It's different from a lot of other units. A drive for hard work coupled with a desire to get things done is essential for efficiency. Med/surg nurses are on their feet all day. So, it takes a special person who is willing to do that, she tells nursing students about what to expect if they choose med/surg.

"For me and for new nurses I think OU Edmond is a great place. I don't think there is another

unit where you can learn as much as you do by being in med/surg," Cheap continued. "It's a great place to start and I think it's a great place to stay."

Cheap is grateful for the longevity of the nursing staff who shared their best practices when she came to the hospital.

"I was lucky to be trained by a nurse who had been here for several years and is still here. And I think you don't see that everywhere," Cheap said. "And I think that makes it feel good about where you're at in those situations."

As a leader she visits with patients to ensure patient care is meeting their every need. This communication ensures each patient is pleased with the staff and the care they are receiving. A big part for a nurse leader is making sure the staff is doing everything possible for patient centered care. Cheap will ask patients if there is anything the nursing staff may provide to make their hospital stay better.

Cheap said she mirrors many nurses in the sense that they became nurses because they have a passion in life for providing care. The longer she learns about

nursing, the more she loves it. Customer service is a major aspect of nursing that she enjoys.

"On our unit we see a lot of different stages of life and a lot of different surgeries. A lot of these orthopedic surgeries - they can really change someone's life. Somebody who's coming in and is fairly healthy needing their hip or knee replaced - they will spend the rest of their life being able to get around better and do more doing the things they like to do," Cheap said. "I think that you get to see people change by what we're doing here."

Med/surg nurses receive thank you cards often from patients and family members thanking them for their care. Cheap said these expressions of gratitude and kindness make nurses feel good and appreciated for doing a good job.

"I think we see some really tough situations sometimes," Cheap said. "Everybody deserves medical care and deserves to be treated. We see the homeless population and we see addiction patients. We see cancer patients that are coming from hard

See CHEAP Page 3

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Melanie Cheap, RN, medical/surgical supervisor at OU Health Edmond Medical Center.

CHEAP

Continued from Page 2

situations. Every once in a while, when you have one of those sick patients or difficult patients, it just reminds me how lucky I am not to be in their situation now. I think that affects the care that you provide.”

Even when someone is grumpy or having a bad day, Cheap reminds herself of the situation her patient is in.

Being a nurse is an enriching calling in life. It’s something she’ll tell anyone considering a nursing

career.

“There is such a need for good, caring nurses. It’s not something everybody can do,” she said.

“But there’s so much flexibility in nursing and you get to see so much. There are opportunities all over the place.”

Nursing is an endless career, she said.

“There is so much that you can do.”

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CAREERS IN NURSING: SCHOOL NURSE - A CHILD'S SUPERHERO

story and photo by Vickie Jenkins, Staff Writer

Located in southwest Oklahoma City, is Esperanza Elementary School, home of the Esperanza Foxes. With Pre-K through 4th grade, you will find Dakota Arms, RN,BSN, school nurse. This is Dakota's fourth year as an RN and third year as a school nurse at Esperanza.

Growing up in Moore, OK, Dakota wanted to be a paleontologist when he was little. "I really liked dinosaurs and always wanted to find a velociraptor in my backyard," he said with a smile.

As time changed, he focused on the medical field, attending Oklahoma City Community College for his Associates in Applied Science degree in Nursing, and then Southwestern Oklahoma State University for his Bachelor of Science in Nursing.

"I enjoy being a school nurse," Dakota said. "I am a nurse because I wanted a career to advocate for others and I have a passion for learning about how I can nurse people back to health. The reason I pursued school nursing is that I really enjoy the patient population and I know that I am making a difference in their lives. Children are so inquisitive, so it makes it very easy to teach those foundational levels of health literacy that can shape their lives going forward," he commented.

A typical day for Dakota varies from seeing thirteen children a day or as many as thirty-five, but roughly seventy to eighty per week. The day usually begins by checking his email from leadership and then, children begin making their way into his office with a variety of complaints. There's pink eye, fever, headaches, tummy aches, coughs, sore throat, etc. Then screening for vision and hearing and whoever needs to be referred. Certain children have a daily medication, along with



using an inhaler. Assessments and charting is done on all students.

Throughout the day he never knows what lies beyond his clinic door; broken arms, big lacerations to the head, items in ears and noses, bee stings and all sorts of rashes. That includes the ongoing emergencies of scraped knees, limping, teary eyes or just a Band-Aid to magically heal the invisible scrape. No matter what it is, the children leave smiling and walking just fine. The children are fortunate to have such a caring nurse to take care of them.

Asking Dakota what his greatest reward as a school nurse is, he replied, "Watching the students thrive after giving them the proper resources to do so. As a school nurse, I have a lot of impact on their education even though it is a different way than a traditional teacher. It might be referring a child to get glasses that is having difficulty in seeing the board, or it could be lending a listening ear to a student who may need time to express themselves to be heard, or a child with a chronic health condition managing their disease at school. All of these can impact a child's education and it's very rewarding to be able to help in any way that I can."

Dakota's advice to someone thinking about going into the medical field, would be to SHADOW. He finds shadowing



Dakota Arms, RN,BSN attended Oklahoma City Community College for his Associates in Applied Science degree in Nursing.

is a great way to find exactly what you want to do. Another word of advice is to LISTEN. He would also encourage them to continue to seek knowledge, never quit learning and be an advocator for yourself and others.

Dakota attributes his decision to pursue a career in healthcare to the influence of his aunt, who was a nurse at the time and later, became a PA. During his high school years, he realized his passion for the medical field and looked up to his aunt as a guiding light. She served as his mentor instilling in him the desire to follow in her footsteps. Another influential figure in Dakota's journey is nurse Patty Currey who oversees the school nurses at OKCPS. She also stands out as one of the sweetest, funniest people Dakota has ever met.

Listing a few personal qualities about himself, Dakota said, "I am a smart, funny, kind-hearted, consistent person and I enjoy laughing, having fun and bringing a smile to others."

Dakota's hobbies include reading, shooting hoops and watching NBA basketball. He also volunteers for the Oklahoma Regional Food bank.



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NURSE TALK



What is your favorite type of food?

"I love Mexican food. We have a tech who makes authentic Mexican food. Sometimes she does Christmas parties, get togethers and baby showers."



Tara Smith, RN

"I love spicy things and I love jalapeños. Anything you put a jalapeño on tends to be Mexican. So I like Mexican."



Lora Dysinger, RN


"Italian, anything Italian - spaghetti, pasta, and anything else."



Lisa Moody, RN

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46 New Nurses in RSU Graduating Class



Rogers State University honored its 41st graduating class of nurses at the annual Nurses Pinning Ceremony, held Friday, May 10 at First Baptist Church in Claremore.

Dr. Carla Lynch, associate dean of the School of Nursing and Health Professions, started the ceremony with the welcoming of students, guests and audience members.

"Graduates, I'm so proud that each of you is here today," Dr. Lynch said. "I know you've been challenged in so many ways since you started the (nursing) program in 2022. I know you've been challenged and expanded, but you've risen to the test, you've achieved, and you've earned what you've needed to earn time and time again, so congratulations – you've done a great job."

"Now that you're a nurse, you will forever and always be a nurse, you will always think like a nurse, you will never not be a nurse," she said. "I can personally say that being a nurse is one of life's greatest privileges. It will open doors for opportunities that most people never get. It provides a sense of making a difference every day as you go to work and help people, so I hope that – like me and the other faculty here – becoming a nurse is one of the best decisions you've ever made."

"With this in mind, I just want

to share three things with you – three important nuggets of advice for how to have a happy life as a nurse," she said. "Number one – use kindness. Be generous in your dealings with others and assume the best about people. Number two – do the work. As each of you know, you must do the work to get where you're at, and number three – we're all on the same time. You cannot do nursing or life by yourself. It's not a competition."

Lynch then introduced RSU President Dr. Larry Rice, whom she described as a "strong advocate and supporter of the nursing program" throughout his tenure as president.

"Graduates, families and distinguished guests, what a privilege it is for me to be here," Dr. Rice began. "Nurses, I know how hard you worked to get here. I've been here 16 years as president – was here a few years before that in other capacities, but throughout my time in higher education, I've always had the honor of witnessing how hard it is to become an RSU nurse and how high the standard, how high the bar is for you and for those who came before you."

"I'm so old that I was here when the Nursing program was getting started," he said, "and – from that first class of 1983, I had the privilege of working with one of those individuals. The bar was set very high by the previous faculty



and students, so I know how hard it is to earn those pins that we're going to pin on you today. I just want to say that bar is set so high that the RSU nurse is a brand, and I have no reservations in saying that this class will continue to set that bar high for those to follow."

Rice touched on the personal relationships he's had with nursing graduates, including a particularly personal relationship with one in the class of 2024 – his own granddaughter – concluding with words of encouragement, reiterating that the RSU nurse is a "strong brand" and jokingly added he hoped not to

see any of them in their professional career any time soon.

"God bless you. Go Hillcats," he said.

Following Rice's remarks, assistant professor and undergraduate program coordinator Samantha Rhea recognized instructor Amber Sanchez as the recipient of the Faculty Service Award, after which instructor Sheryl Klenovich presented Rita Byfield with the Clinical Adjunct Award.

Dr. Cassandra Barrow then took the podium to acknowledge family and friends' support of the nursing

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applying knowledge from OKWU's DNP program to influence the future of nursing.

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Tess Clemens Appointed CEO for Mercy Oklahoma City Rehabilitation Hospitals

Clemens will lead 66-bed Mercy Rehabilitation Hospital Oklahoma City and 36-bed Mercy Rehabilitation OKC South

Mercy and Lifepoint Rehabilitation, a business unit of Lifepoint Health, together announced Tess Clemens as market CEO for the two Mercy rehabilitation facilities owned and operated as part of a joint venture in Oklahoma City. Clemens previously served as CEO of Mercy Rehabilitation Hospital Oklahoma City South, a position she's held since 2021.

"We are excited to see Tess assume this leadership role in our Oklahoma City market," said Sharon Smeltzer, regional vice president, Lifepoint Rehabilitation. "With nearly 20 years in health care and more than five years in leadership roles for rehabilitation hospitals, Tess has proven her ability to lead multidisciplinary teams and drive colleagues toward ambitious quality and patient experience goals. We know she will continue to champion

the people-first and evidence-driven care our Oklahoma City rehabilitation hospitals are known for, promoting a safe and healing environment for our patients."

Over the last three years, Clemens has led strategic operations for Mercy Rehabilitation Hospital Oklahoma City South, where her responsibilities included quality care measures, regulatory compliance, people services and access to care. Prior to serving as CEO for Mercy Rehabilitation Hospital Oklahoma City South, Clemens worked at Baptist Memorial Rehabilitation Hospital in Germantown, Tennessee, from 2014 to 2021. During her tenure, she served as the director of pharmacy, director of quality and risk and, most recently, as chief operating officer. She has more than eight years of experience in pharmacy management

and an additional seven years of experience as a pharmacokinetic/pharmacogenetic analyst.

"Tess is an exceptional leader, and we're so grateful for her vision to serve patients and co-workers in Oklahoma City," said Zack Dawson, chief operating officer of Mercy Hospital Oklahoma City. "The need for more health services, including rehabilitation care, continues to increase in our fast-growing region. Tess' ability to build the right teams and a strong workplace culture will help us serve more patients."

Clemens earned a bachelor's in chemistry from The University of Memphis in Memphis, Tennessee, and a doctorate degree from the College of Pharmacy at The University of Tennessee Health Science Center in Memphis, Tennessee. She is a member of the American College of Healthcare Executives and the Oklahoma Hospital Association.

"I am honored to lead our rehabilitation teams in Oklahoma City as we continue to provide and expand access to critically needed inpatient rehabilitation services in our region," said Clemens. "I am eager to leverage the capabilities of our market team to support our quality and recruitment objectives, and I look



Tess Clemens, CEO for the two Mercy rehabilitation facilities.

forward to all that we will accomplish together to advance our mission of making communities healthier."

Mercy Rehabilitation Hospital Oklahoma City is located at Memorial Road and MacArthur Boulevard in northwest Oklahoma City. With 66 beds, it provides inpatient rehabilitation services for patients recovering from strokes, brain or spinal cord injuries, amputations, complex orthopedic injuries and other conditions.



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SCAN ME

PINNING

Continued from Page 7

students.

Honor graduates were then acknowledged by Amer Sanchez, who recognized Madison White as Outstanding Graduate, and nursing instructor Dr. Connie Nelson recognized Kerston Simpson as Distinguished Graduate.

BSN pins were then presented to graduating nurses by Rebekah Inman, with the assistance of nursing faculty.

Those receiving their pins were: Xoe Alexander of Owasso, Elizabeth Bippus of Owasso, Kayla Brown of Claremore, Aubrey Campos of Fayetteville, Ark., Addison Catlett of Broken Arrow, Rachel Clump of Bartlesville, Alexis Crosier of Collinsville, Hayden Day of Owasso, Cloe Dennis of Claremore, Elysha Foster of Pryor, Charlesey Fromme of Claremore, Grace Gabel of Claremore, Kaitlyn Gaskins of Salina, Kristina Gibson of Claremore, Megan Gill of Tulsa, Kimiko Graham of Owasso, Mckenzie Helm of Claremore, Branden Hilderbrand of Broken Arrow, Amanda Howe of Claremore, Kristen Hunt of Hulbert, Skyler Jones of Tulsa, Alyssa Knight of Broken Arrow, Brandi Lindley of Dewey, Cheyenne Litterell of Bixby, and Sarah Maras of Haskell.


Also receiving their pins were Jonathan Matthews of Tulsa, Maria Eduarda Mota of Claremore, Caroline Ndiritu of Tulsa, Abigail Persson of Claremore, Kimberly Rabang of Claremore, Ashley Rangel of Tulsa, Donna Reed-Gabriel of Miami, Ashlynn Reynolds of Owasso, Clarissa Rodriguez of Tulsa, Logan Rotramel of Chouteau, Jenna Scheckel of Owasso, Riley Sellers of Skiatook, Kerston Simpson of Oologah, Reagan Spiva of Ripley, Ella Suiter of Pryor, Avery Taylor of Catoosa, Dakota Teel of Skiatook, Kourtne Weierman of Broken Arrow, Kailey White of Claremore, Madison White of Owasso, and Rylee Williams of Noble.

Following the presentation of pins, assistant professor of nursing Tonya Ballone led the students in the recitation of the Florence Nightingale Pledge: "I solemnly pledge myself to practice my profession faithfully, do all in my power and maintain and elevate the standards of my profession, and to dedicate myself to the welfare of those committed to my care.

During her closing remarks, Dr. Lynch congratulated the newly pinned nurses and wished them much success in their chosen profession.

For more information about Rogers State University's nursing program, visit <https://www.rsu.edu/nursing>.

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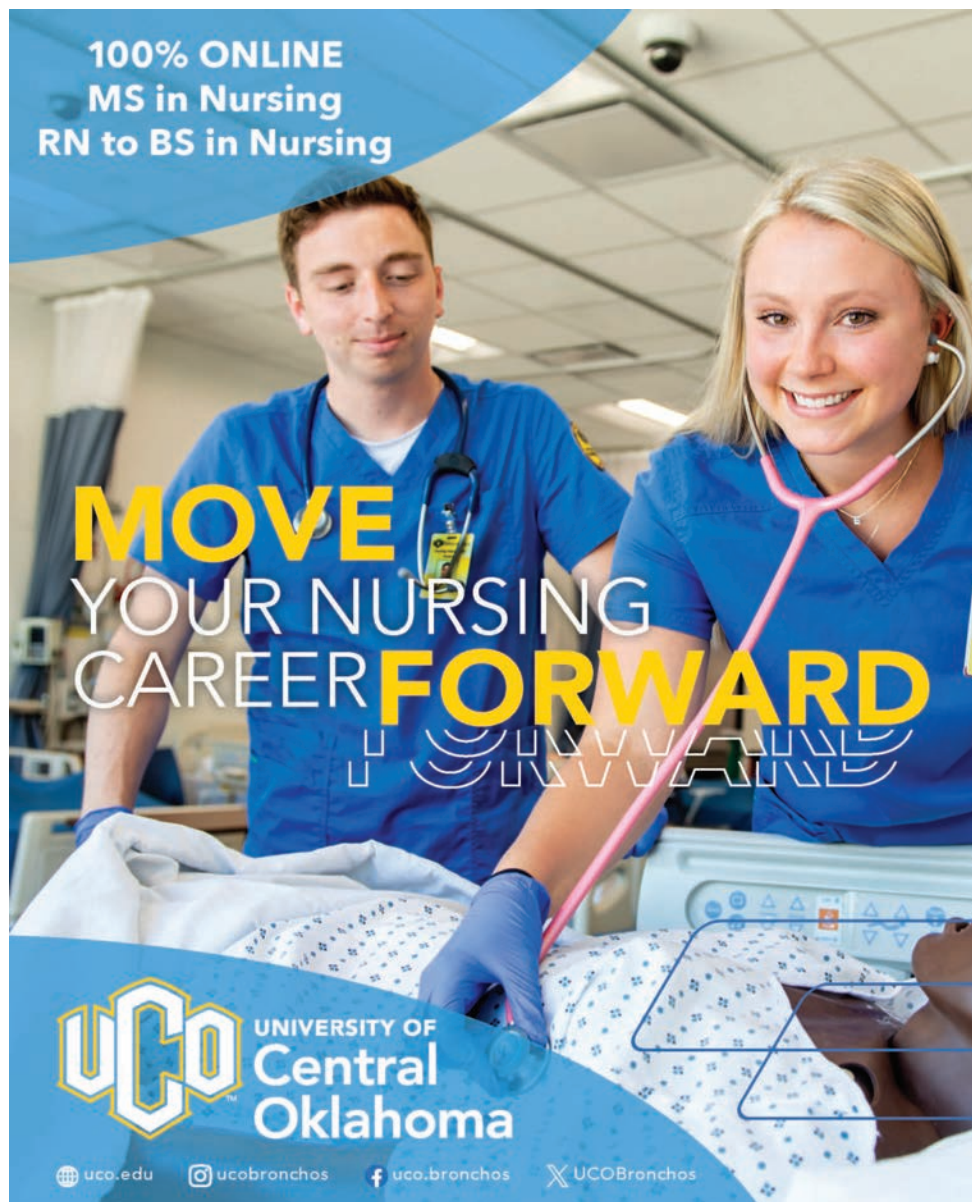
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Mayo Clinic and Mercy Reach First Major Milestone in Data Collaboration

Mayo Clinic and Mercy are making a significant advancement in their global, first-of-its-kind 10-year collaboration agreement signed in the summer of 2022. As founding members of Mayo Clinic Platform_Connect, the two organizations will now be working together to analyze de-identified patient data as they search for new ways to diagnose, treat and prevent disease, providing better outcomes and lower costs of care.

Mayo Clinic Platform_Connect is a distributed data network that provides secure access to de-identified clinical data. Previously, Mercy and Mayo Clinic could use Connect to analyze data from their own organizations, but as of today, each organization can safely and securely analyze de-identified patient data from either health system. This significantly larger data set allows researchers and innovators to better identify risk factors, predict illnesses and provide earlier treatment with the potential to positively impact millions of patients' lives.

"Mayo Clinic Platform is enabling

innovation to change how care is provided. At its core, Platform relies on our distributed data network to make available data that has depth, breadth and spread, and which can help create new ways to diagnose, treat and care for patients no matter where in the world they might live. Today represents a significant milestone, demonstrating the power of collaboration in transforming healthcare," said John Halamka, M.D., president of Mayo Clinic Platform.

Mayo Clinic Platform recently announced the addition of three healthcare organizations to its global collaboration: Seoul National University Hospital in South Korea, Singapore's SingHealth and UC Davis Health in California. This expansion brings the total number of Mayo Clinic Platform_Connect members to eight, including founding members Mayo Clinic and Mercy, Brazil's Hospital Israelita Albert Einstein, Israel's Sheba Medical Center and Canada's University Health Network, who joined in 2023. The alliance now spans seven countries across three



continents, representing diversity in genetics, demographics and lifestyles to provide a massive repository of analyzable data.

"This is a major step toward moving healthcare from being reactive to proactively addressing the biggest concerns of patients and the communities we serve," said Joe Kelly, executive vice president, chief transformation officer for Mercy. "This unprecedented data set allows us to harness the power of artificial intelligence to develop algorithms and validate treatment plans effectively for complex patient populations. These algorithms, integrated directly into everyday clinical workflows, can help us predict the likelihood of chronic diseases and help to better proactively assist patients earlier in their care, improving outcomes and reducing costs for both patients and health systems."

Each organization will be able to look for trends, indicators, risk factors and more while retaining control over its de-identified outcomes through Mayo Clinic Platform's Data Behind Glass[1] approach. Mayo Clinic and Mercy will develop products, algorithms and tools for their health systems that can be made available to other health systems for use in the same transformative way, potentially impacting the practice of medicine across the globe.

"After more than a year in development, we now have a platform that permits insights from Mercy's own data and that of Mayo Clinic. This data will improve patients' lives by helping us find diseases earlier and supporting more personalized care," said Byron Yount, chief data and AI officer for Mercy. "This will significantly deepen partnerships, broaden the scope of discovery, quicken the speed of innovation and ultimately improve care for patients everywhere. We are already learning with our new

health care collaborators and reimagining how we approach health care challenges and opportunities. The way we produce the world's most impactful solutions is evolving, and Mayo Clinic Platform is going to enable it."

Founded on Mayo Clinic's dedication to patient-centered care, Mayo Clinic Platform enables new knowledge, new solutions and new technologies through collaborations with health technology innovators to create a healthier world.

Mayo Clinic is a nonprofit organization committed to innovation in clinical practice, education and research, and providing compassion, expertise and answers to everyone who needs healing. Visit the Mayo Clinic News Network for additional Mayo Clinic news.

Mercy, one of the 20 largest U.S. health systems and named the top large system in the U.S. for excellent patient experience by NRC Health, serves millions annually with nationally recognized care and one of the nation's largest and highest performing Accountable Care Organizations in quality and cost. Mercy is a highly integrated, multi-state healthcare system including more than 50 acute care and specialty (heart, children's, orthopedic and rehab) hospitals, convenient and urgent care locations, imaging centers and pharmacies. Mercy has over 900 physician practice locations and outpatient facilities, more than 4,500 physicians and advanced practitioners and 50,000 co-workers serving patients and families across Arkansas, Kansas, Missouri and Oklahoma. Mercy also has clinics, outpatient services and outreach ministries in Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi and Texas. In fiscal year 2023 alone, Mercy provided more than half a billion dollars of free care and other community benefits, including traditional charity care and unreimbursed Medicaid.

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OBU Recognizes Employees for Years of Service at May 6 Event

OBU recognized employees for milestone years of service during a recognition event on Monday, May 6, at the Geiger Center on the OBU campus.

Teri Walker, assistant registrar/degree counselor, was honored for 40 years of service.

Dr. Bret Roark, chair of the Division of Behavioral and Social Sciences, Ralph and Marie Barby professor of psychology, was honored for 30 years of service.

Dr. Brad Jett, James E. Hurley professor of biology, was honored for 25 years of service.

Three employees were honored for achieving 20 years of service. They include Debbie Alt, secretary of advancement and university relations;

Terry Banta, groundskeeper; and Jason Young, facilities services supervisor for trades.

Four employees achieved 15 years of service including Lisa Cook, senior student financial services counselor; Mike White, head women's soccer coach; Jeffrey Wiseman, reserve police officer/armed security officer; and Dr. Tony Yates, professor of science.

Employees honored for 10 years of service include Darla Kasterke, tech support specialist; Adam Nickerson, wireless network administrator; Kelly Chlouber, administrative assistant for business; Dr. Paul Donnelly, associate professor of criminal justice and Dr. Cherith Tucker, chair of Mathematics and associate professor of mathematics.



Employees honored for reaching five years of service include Lysie Watkins, athletic trainer; Damon Seymour, web development and digital marketing director; Dr. Nathan Drake, associate professor of mathematics; Dr. David Gambo, Reverend A.E. and Dora Johnson Hughes chair of Christian Ministry, assistant professor of Christian ministry; and Dr. Patricia Nelson, chair of the Division of Music, associate professor of music education.



UCO's Online Nursing Program Named Among Top by Forbes Advisor

The University of Central Oklahoma's RN to B.S., Nursing program has been named as one of the best online B.S.N. programs of 2024 by Forbes Education.

This ranking affirms the exceptional quality and prominence in nursing education at Central and reflects the unwavering commitment to excellence and achievements in producing top-tier nursing professionals.

The RN to B.S., Nursing track at UCO is designed for registered nurses aspiring to elevate their education while managing professional and personal commitments. The 100% online program allows completion in as little as two semesters, accommodating both part- and full-time schedules.

UCO's RN to B.S. program was also ranked as a top institution in Oklahoma by RNCareers in its eighth annual Nursing School Awards earlier this year.

Accredited by the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE), UCO stands as a beacon of excellence in nursing education with a legacy spanning more than 50 years. Renowned for producing highly skilled nurses, UCO's nursing programs epitomize



innovation and embrace cutting-edge technology, catering to both traditional and non-traditional students. Offering bachelor's to master's degrees, these programs align with society's critical healthcare demands while nurturing future leaders in nursing. UCO's nursing programs proudly hold approval from the Oklahoma State Board of Nursing, further solidifying the institution's esteemed status.

For more information about UCO's nursing programs, visit

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