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Read Warfel's story on page 2

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Heather Warfel, RN Mercy Hospital

Oncology Nurse With 17 Years of Experience.
Worked in Chemotherapy for Eight years.

story by Vickie Jenkins, Staff Writer

Mercy Coletta Building is located at 4401 McCauley Blvd in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, offering the latest advancements in cancer treatments. The cancer patients have access to the most current drugs and therapies as well as cutting-edge diagnostic technologies. Compassionate care is provided to both the patients and their family members.

Here, you will find Heather Warfel, RN, a highly qualified oncology nurse with 17 years of experience as a nurse. She has worked in chemotherapy for eight years. "My first job as a nurse was working in Surge Med as an LPN at St. Anthony's Hospital, then, as an RN, I worked at Mercy ER. I've always wanted to be in the medical field, helping others. Even as a

young girl, I wanted to grow up and be a nurse. I guess I've always had that desire to help others, and some things never change. I still have that same desire to help others, especially in my community," Heather added.

Asking Heather if there was a different type of training for an oncology nurse to work in chemotherapy, she replied. "Yes, we have to be licensed, and are given tests and exams which need to be updated every two years," she replied. "We also have workday education, and we have to keep our CPR updated. Since oncology nurses have a sensitive nature of their work, we should be natural caregivers with plenty of patience," Heather added.

An oncology nurse working

in chemotherapy coordinates chemotherapy orders with physicians, prepares and administers chemotherapy, hydration and other medications as prescribed. They also document nursing assessments, provide patient instructions, administer fluids and medications, perform venipunctures, access implanted ports and maintain central line catheters.

"There are 12 nurses that work in chemotherapy each day. Between all of us, we typically see at least 100 patients daily," Heather commented. "Of course, each patient is different, and each medication administered varies with different doses," Heather added.

Heather's work hours are 10 to 12 hour shifts. "The patients keep me motivated. It's nice to talk to them, giving a kind word or a listening ear can make all the difference in the world."

Heather's biggest challenge as an oncology nurse is managing the frequently changing medications. Each chemo patient is different and new medications need to be approved by the doctor. "It can get a little frustrating when we learn a new medication, and then, it's

suddenly changed," Heather said. "On the other hand, my biggest reward is doing something that I love, being a nurse and helping people to the best of my ability. Here at Coletta, we strive to make our patients feel as comfortable as possible during their chemo treatment." Heather said. "Some patients treatments are 30 minutes, while others are up to eight hours. We provide warm blankets, lunch, drinks, and snacks, making the patient feel as comfortable as possible."

"I've worked as an oncology nurse for eight years now, and I prefer chemotherapy over other areas of the hospital because it is incredibly rewarding to know that I am helping so many people beat cancer," Heather explained. "When a patient finished their chemo treatments, they get to 'ring the bell.' Hearing that bell ring is a heartfelt moment. Working in chemotherapy can be very challenging, but it is also very rewarding and that's why I continue as an oncology nurse."

When asked if she had received any awards or recognition over the last few years, Heather

Continued next page

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Heather Warfel, RN is one of the outstanding oncology nurses working in Chemotherapy at Mercy Coletta Building.

WARFEL

Continued from Page 2

replied, "Here at Mercy Hospital, we have something called, 'Mercy Praise Recognition.' When we take care of a patient, they can provide feedback on how they were treated. I've received quite a few recognitions over the years. When we are recognized, we can choose various gifts. I think it keeps us all on our toes," she said with a laugh.

When asked about her plans for the next five years, Heather

replied with a definite answer, "I'm, going to be right here. I love my job and I can't imagine being anywhere else. I'm not going anywhere!"

When Heather is not working, she enjoys spending time with her husband and two children, ages eight and nine. "I love doing arts and crafts, especially making wreaths. Of course, there is also shopping," she said.

For more information about Mercy Coletta Building:
<https://www.mercy.net>

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Thomasson Feels at Home Working at OKC VA

story by Van Mitchell, Staff Writer

Dustin Thomasson, R.N. previously worked in the private sector as an assistant nursing director and nursing director, before serving as Nurse Manager for the Community Living Center at the Oklahoma City VA Medical Center.

It is a place the Louisiana native is glad to call home.

"I came to the VA two-and-a-half years ago from the private sector," said Thomasson, an Oklahoma City Community College graduate. "I've had a lot of friends that worked here and they told me about the different geriatric programs, the CLC (Community Living Center), and I knew that was something that really intrigued me and I wanted to be a part of that."

Thomasson said working in the private sector wasn't for him.

"I was tired of being very profit driven, more worried about profits than patient care," he said. "I just got to the point where that was no longer enticing me and I wanted to go somewhere where I felt like there was a stronger drive towards doing the right thing for the patient, and that's what I heard from several people, friends that I've had at the VA, and that was one of the big draws. It was not about money, it was more about being able to sleep at night, giving a good quality of care and knowing that I felt good about going home at night for the job that I did."

A Community Living Center (CLC) is a VA Nursing Home. Veterans may stay for a short time or, in rare instances, for the rest of their life. It is a place where Veterans can receive nursing home level of care, which includes help with activities of daily living and skilled nursing and medical care.

There are over 100 Community Living Centers across the country.

Thomasson worked his way up the VA ladder to his current position including working in the VA's Behavioral Health Department which offers both

inpatient and outpatient services, including telehealth appointments.

They provide consultation, evaluation, and treatment for a variety of issues impacting emotional well-being. Services include:

- Psychiatry
- Psychology
- Homeless Veterans services

"Treatment for addictive disorders, including residential rehabilitation treatment programs

"Transition and care management for returning Veterans (OIF/OEF/OND)

"My entire background is mostly long-term care such as nursing home, DLNs, quality assurance, wound care," he said. "I started out in the psych unit. I was about six months into it, when I walked into an assistant nurse manager role and then last year became the nurse manager for the community living center, which is the long-term care facility here at the VA."

Thomasson said the CLC also has a palliative care unit.

Palliative Care uses comfort care with a focus on relieving suffering and controlling symptoms so that you can carry out day-to-day activities and continue to do what is most important to you. Palliative care aims to improve your quality of life - in your mind, body and spirit. Palliative Care can be combined with treatment that is aimed at curing or controlling your illness. It can be started at the time of your diagnosis and may be provided throughout the course of the illness.

"It's a 31-bed unit," Thomasson said. "Eight of those beds are flexed through our palliative care veterans who are seeking such as symptom management, pain management. It's not always about the end of life."

Thomasson said the Oklahoma City VA has worked hard to fill open positions to help give veterans the best service possible.

"I would say one of the things



Dustin Thomasson, R.N., serves as the Nurse Manager for the Community Living Center at the Oklahoma City VA Medical Center.

that we're most proud of down there was we had a large gap in our staffing that we've closed," he said. "We've had zero turnover in the last year with our staffing. Our last two annual surveys have been amazing. We will be one of the only CLCs once our (latest) survey posts to have five stars in all three areas of staffing quality. We have access to our leadership every morning through our communication. The communication here is second to none."

Thomasson said those

positive survey results are part of a team effort.

"That's the staff out there on the floor," he said. "It's those nurses believing in what they do, taking care of those veterans. It's watching those people grow a fellowship among themselves who want to work together as a team very cohesively to provide the best care possible and the best outcomes possible. It's about doing the right thing for that veteran and that's what we're going to do."



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NURSE TALK



How do you plan to have fun this summer?

"I love hanging out with my family and friends."



Evelyn Omondi, RN

"This summer I'm going to travel when I'm not here at work."



Lexi Sparks, RN

"I do a lot of outdoor stuff, so hiking and backpacking wherever it is nice in the woods."



Matthew Gresham, RN



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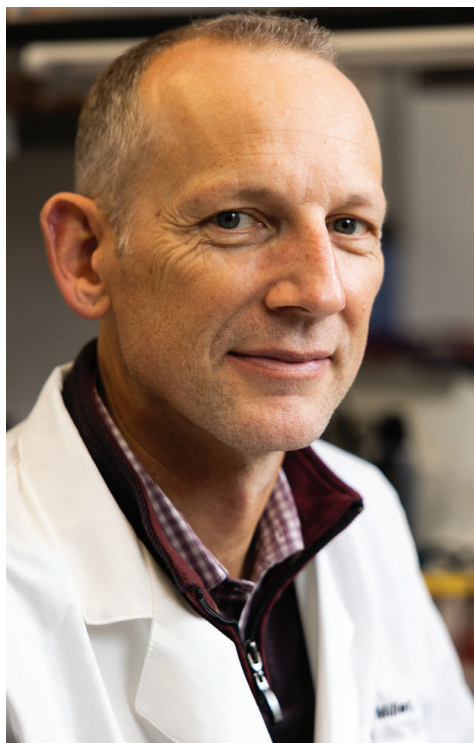
OMRF Adds new Scientist in its Aging Research Program

This month, the Oklahoma Medical Research Foundation added Jon Iker Etchegaray, Ph.D., to the faculty of its Aging and Metabolism Research Program.

Etchegaray studies how changes in metabolism affect the development of diseases such as Alzheimer's and age-related vision loss.

"Dr. Etchegaray helps strengthen our focus on the aging of our nervous system," said OMRF Aging and Metabolism Research Program Chair Benjamin Miller, Ph.D. "He has studied metabolism in the eyes, which are windows to the brain, and he will apply these findings to the brain to benefit aging individuals and those with neurodegeneration."

Etchegaray joins OMRF as an assistant professor. He received both his bachelor's degree and a doctorate in neurobiology from Boston University. He comes



Scientist Benjamin Miller, Ph.D.

to OMRF from the Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis, where he completed his postdoctoral training.

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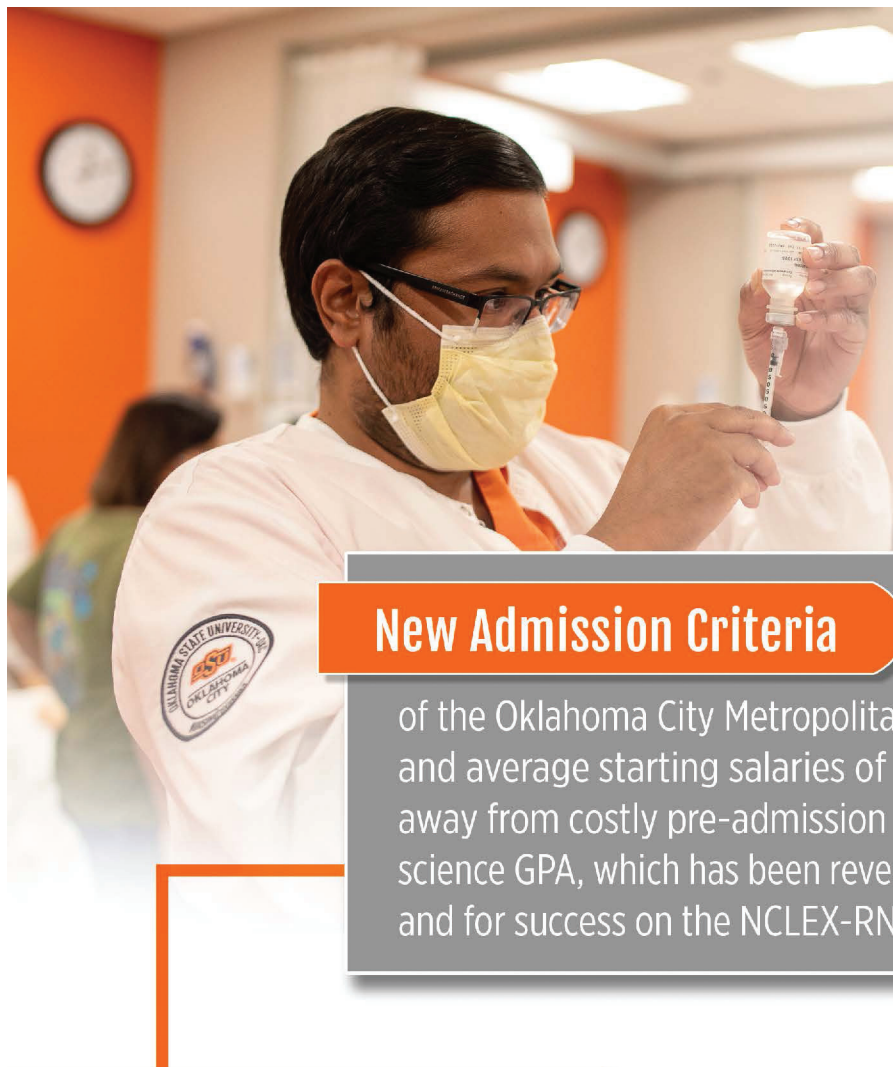
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Career Ladder & Traditional

OSU-OKC welcomes LPNs and Paramedics looking for a pathway to being eligible for Registered Nurse licensure. With proof of active, state licensure and required prerequisite courses, LPNs and Paramedics will complete a transition course, then the final two courses in the program. Upon successful completion of the transition course, students are awarded 17 credit hours of advanced standing credit for their licensure. The coursework for this pathway is provided online. Students come to campus for testing, simulations, and laboratory experiences on Fridays. Students will complete clinical experiences on the weekends. This hybrid design was at the request of our program advisory committee to meet the needs of working adults.

Simulation Center

OSU-OKC boasts having one of the largest and most sophisticated simulation facilities in the metro area. Students will experience realistic hospital environments with simulation mannequins that can mimic human patients. The goal was to make the learning environment as close to an actual hospital as possible to increase students' comfort when they enter our partners' facilities and begin to take care of patients. This decreases student anxiety and boosts student confidence in their ability to care for patients.

Interprofessional Simulation

OSU-OKC nursing students, OSU-OKC paramedicine students, and OSU-Center for Health Sciences resident physicians come together to rescue, triage, and treat patients with a variety of injuries and illnesses. The goal is for these different groups to learn to work together as they will in the actual healthcare arena. Student volunteers and staff take on the role of patients and may simulate suffering anything from a traumatic injury requiring being rescued by our paramedic students to a mental health crisis and any other healthcare emergency in between. Not only do students learn to work together as a team, but they will also learn to prioritize care based on the severity of the simulated patient.

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For more information, including program outcomes, program costs, admission points, and general contact information please visit osuokc.edu/nursing.

CARL ALBERT STATE COLLEGE CELEBRATES THE PINNING OF THE GRADUATING CLASS OF NURSES

Carl Albert State College (CASC) proudly announces the recent pinning ceremony of its latest graduating class of nurses. This significant milestone marks the transition of our dedicated students from nursing education to professional practice, ready to contribute to the healthcare workforce in Oklahoma.

"In light of the current shortage of healthcare workers in the state, CASC is honored to play a crucial role in addressing this pressing issue," said President Jay Falkner. "Our graduates are well-prepared to make an immediate impact in various healthcare settings, bringing with them the knowledge, skills, and compassion essential for high-quality patient care."

Carl Albert State College has been recognized as the best nursing program in Oklahoma. This prestigious accolade is a testament to our commitment to excellence in nursing education. Our program boasts an impressive NCLEX pass rate of over 92% over the last four years, reflecting the exceptional preparation students receive and their readiness to excel in their nursing careers.

"We are incredibly proud of our nursing graduates and their achievements," said Becky Sanders, Director of Nursing at CASC. "Their dedication and hard work have not only earned them their degrees but also the ability to positively impact the healthcare community in Oklahoma. We are confident that they will uphold the highest standards



of nursing and continue to enhance the quality of care in our state."

CASC offers a comprehensive nursing program that combines rigorous academic coursework with hands-on clinical experience, ensuring that our graduates are among the best-prepared nurses entering the workforce today.



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Children's Health Foundation Celebrates Gift From Sam's Club #4731 for Preschool Autism Program

Children's Health Foundation is pleased to announce a \$1000 gift from Walmart #3403 in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma to support the Early Foundations program for children with autism. Early Foundations is a program of the Oklahoma Autism Center that provides services designed to each child's unique needs to prepare children with autism to enter pre-K with their same-aged peers. CHF celebrates Walmart's generous partnership to sustain this essential program.

Oklahoma is currently facing a significant shortage of certified autism specialists, and families often face extended wait times or long-distance travel to have their children assessed and treated. To increase access and begin services as soon as possible, Early Foundations is open to any child with a developmental delay. The program is free of charge, has no income requirements, and does not require a diagnosis. Providing services as soon as a delay is identified improves long-term outcomes for children.

Early Foundations uses

evidence-based interventions to serve children 18 months to age five. Children with autism often struggle to communicate and interact with peers. At Early Foundations, students learn these skills in an age-appropriate, early-learning environment. Goals include learning to communicate wants and needs and interacting with same-aged peers.

Children's Health Foundation Executive Director Kathy McCracken says, "We are very grateful for the ongoing support of Walmart and Sam's Clubs to ensure that critical programs like Early Foundations continue. With the support of Walmart #3403, children with autism in Oklahoma will have access to life-changing services as soon as possible. We are incredibly grateful for this gift that will help prepare children with autism to enter pre-K."



To support Children's Health Foundation, please call 405-384-4446, or visit <https://www.chfkids.com>.

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TACKLING SHOULDER PAIN AND INJURY: Valir PT Helps Avid Golfer Get Back in the Swing of Things

Warmer weather has always been synonymous with golf for Josh Cline, but time playing golf gave way to time at Valir Physical Therapy Deer Creek.

It all started with a golf swing that didn't go quite right.

"I was playing golf and on my follow through I felt something, and I was like, 'That's not right,'" Cline said. "And so, I tried to walk it off and just not think about it. I played golf a couple more times and it was just like, 'Okay, this isn't good.'"

It was not good. It turns out the pain Cline was feeling was emanating from not one but two injuries. He had suffered a torn rotator cuff and a bicep injury too. After surgery and over a month in a sling, Cline turned to Valir physical therapist Austin Inskeep to help him recover.

"Our goal is to help get patients back to full use and full mobility, and that's different for each patient. Josh is a big golfer. He's very active and likes to work out. So, our goal is to get him back to doing those things," Inskeep said.

For Inskeep, the shoulder is perhaps his favorite joint because it is one of the most complicated joints in the body. Perhaps it is no wonder then that almost everyone over the age of 18 will have a shoulder issue at some point in his or her life.

More than two million Americans will experience rotator cuff injuries each year. Rotator cuff tears can happen in people of all ages but are more common in adults.

"Your rotator cuff is made up of four different muscles and then those help move the joints through different planes. And over time, those can wear out," Inskeep explained.

He added that physical therapy can help some patients with rotator cuff injuries avoid surgery altogether, especially with less severe injury.

"We see a lot of people who go to the doctor and get x-rays and MRI's, and everything looks great, but they might have some fraying of the rotator cuff. We can get them



on a program to help strengthen their shoulder muscles and prevent further decay of that joint and often help get them back without having to have surgery," Inskeep said.

In fact, studies have shown that a properly designed physical therapy program can help as many as 75 percent of patients with rotator cuff tears not caused by trauma avoid surgery altogether. Physical therapy also has been shown to benefit patients who restore the rotator cuff after a surgical repair with satisfaction levels and clinical outcome scores that compare well with surgical treatment.

With or without surgery, physical therapy for a Rotator Cuff injury and other shoulder injuries typically starts with passive range of motion.

"That's followed by active assisted range of motion where the patient uses the other arm to help move that arm through different points often with a pulley, cane or different apparatus."

Next, patients like Cline move to active range of motion exercises. In those, Cline uses his shoulder joint and the muscles that surround it. The final phase of therapy focuses on strengthening muscles, including the shoulder, the back and the core because all play a role in shoulder stability and injury prevention.

Inskeep and the team at Valir PT Deer Creek work with Cline in the clinic a couple of times a week, and there is homework too.

"It's imperative that he does exercise outside, works on the different motor coordination, the

range of motion things that I give him outside of here to be the most successful," Inskeep said.

A sports fan, Cline knows the value of teamwork, and he and Austin are a team in this recovery process.

"He's not just checking the boxes, you know," said Cline. "He's really ingrained in seeing you through and wanting you to get to that that end goal of yours. So, we talk about that, you know, where do you want to be in the next few months or what do you want to be doing by this month?"

The Valir Physical Therapy team is focused on Cline's goals too, helping him put shoulder pain and injury behind him and get back into the swing of things again, which, of course, includes golf.

INTEGRIS Health Heart Hospital Set to Open This Month

The excitement is building as construction crews put the finishing touches on the soon-to-open INTEGRIS Health Heart Hospital on the INTEGRIS Health Baptist Medical Center campus in Oklahoma City. The impressive six-story building now stands as a symbol of renewed hope for all Oklahomans.

"We have been performing what we consider state-of-the-art medicine for a long time," explains Craig Elkins, M.D., a long-tenured cardiothoracic and transplant surgeon with INTEGRIS Health Cardiovascular Physicians. "Now, what is wonderful is we are going to have a state-of-the-art facility to go with that state-of-the-art medicine."

INTEGRIS Health Heart Hospital is the only center in Oklahoma to offer the full spectrum of advanced cardiac care support. Whether a patient needs advanced heart failure care, LVAD, ECMO, total artificial heart or transplantation, INTEGRIS Health Advanced Cardiopulmonary Care is the only program in the state that can offer Oklahomans all of these options.

"INTEGRIS Health provides the most comprehensive cardiac care in the state. The professionals who



are here have more experience caring for the most complex cardiac patients than anywhere else in the state," declares Jeffrey Sparling, M.D., the president of INTEGRIS Health Cardiovascular Physicians. "I think this new heart tower helps to continue to put us on the map both regionally and nationally, as a place people can come to for the absolute best care. They don't have to leave the state to find it, it's already right here."

The 209,000 square foot building includes 64 ICU beds, multiple cardiac catheterization labs, cardiovascular operating rooms, hybrid operating rooms, electrophysiology heart labs and convenient cardiac diagnostic testing areas.

Elkins is proud to be involved with what he considers a major accomplishment for our state. He sees the new INTEGRIS Health

Heart Hospital as a gift to Oklahoma. "INTEGRIS Health has reinvested in their community. They haven't just stood on their laurels. They've reinvested and built something that will help countless patients for generations to come."

The INTEGRIS Health Heart Hospital will officially open on Tuesday, June 18, 2024. INTEGRIS Health is actively recruiting for a variety of positions.



We look forward to seeing you!

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