

# Oklahoma's Nursing Times

JANUARY, 2025  
VOL. 26 ISSUE 01

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**2025**

## Caring Beyond the Call: Life as a Nurse in Close-Knit Community

Read Jamie's story on page 2

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# Jamie Fisher, LPN

## From Dream to Reality: Jamie Fisher's Journey to Nursing Excellence in Lawton's Family Medicine Hub

story and photo by Vickie Jenkins, Staff Writer

In the heart of Lawton, Oklahoma, among the small-town community, you'll find the family medicine practice of Francois J. du Toit M.D. Though modest in size, the office's reputation for exceptional healthcare is well-known in the area. From the moment you step through the door, you're met with the warm smile of the front desk staff, a welcoming beginning to the care you are about to receive.

It was here that I first met Jamie Fisher, a compassionate and dedicated LPN whose journey to nursing is as inspiring as the care she provides. Born and raised in Oklahoma, Jamie grew up with a deep appreciation for the people and the spirit of her home state. She attended Great Plains Technology Center, where she

earned her nursing degree and began her path towards helping others in her community.

When asked what qualities make a good nurse, Jamie paused thoughtfully before replying. "I think honesty plays a big role in being a good nurse. Positivity is very important too. If a nurse has both of these qualities, they're bound to be great at what they do," she said with confidence.

Jamie then reflected on her own strengths. "I'd say my strongest quality is a mix of both honesty and positivity. I always give it to the patient straight, and I think that's just as important." Her genuine approach and optimistic demeanor shone through, reassuring the very traits she believes make an exceptional nurse.

Ever since she was a little

girl, Jamie knew she wanted to be a nurse. "My mom is still a nurse here in Lawton," she shared with pride. "I guess I just wanted to follow in my mother's footsteps." Growing up in Cache, Oklahoma, Jamie noted, "There weren't a lot of job opportunities for nurses," she laughed.

After earning her nursing degree, Jamie started her career working with a urologist in pre-op. Eventually, an opportunity opened at Dr. du Toit's family medicine office, where Jamie found her true calling. "In family medicine, we meet the needs of both adults and children," she explained. "We treat common conditions such as diabetes, high cholesterol, and allergies. We also refer patients to specialists for further testing when needed. Beyond that, the clinic provides physicals, vaccinations and even perform some in-office lab testing. Jamie's role here allows her to make a meaningful difference in the lives of her patients every day, just as she always dreamed.

Jamie also offered words of encouragement for those going

to nursing school. "It's going to be hard, no doubt about it, but don't quit. It will be the best decision you ever make, and the rewards will follow," she said with a warm smile. Reflecting on her own work, Jamie expressed her love for her job. "I absolutely love working here. I feel like we're a family. There are six of us in the office, and even though we are a small team, we get the job done. We have excellent teamwork, and we all get along so well."

Asking Jamie what advice she would give to someone going into the medical field, she replied, "I would tell them to make sure they have a true desire to help people. I know that's such a cliché but they need to have a heart for others. Since there are so many different paths a nurse can choose from, I would tell them to try different areas and see what they like the best. It's almost like you will have a calling for that job. Nursing school will be hard, but don't quit. It will be the best decision

Continued next page

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Jamie Fisher, LPN can be found at the office of Francois J. du Toit, M.D. family medicine practice in Lawton, Oklahoma. Jamie enjoys helping care for others in the close-knit community.

**FISHER**

Continued from Page 2

that you make and your reward will follow.”

“I love working here. Our team consists of six people, and while we may be a small office, we work efficiently. We have great teamwork and genuinely get along with one another. On average, we see about 50 patients a day which keeps us super busy. Our patients appreciate coming to our office for care instead of making a trip

to the hospital and we take pride in providing them with quality, accessible service.”

When asking Jamie what she would like to share with others, she replied, “Being a nurse is such a rewarding job. I love helping others and it makes me feel good knowing that I have helped people that need me. Giving to the patients makes it all worthwhile.”

For more information about Francois J. du Toit M.D. Family Medicine call 580-699-7500 or visit [www.dutoitmd.com](http://www.dutoitmd.com)

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*And Thank You!*

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# CAREERS IN NURSING:

## RN FOCUSES ON EVERY DETAIL

story and photo by James Coburn, Staff Writer

Patients rely on nurses to help them feel safe. They find the comfort of emotional support at SSM Health St. Anthony Hospital - Midwest.

Patients meeting their nurses for the first time want to know more about procedures to boost their confidence. Patients need to know they can depend on their caretakers. The patient is part of the teamwork of physicians, nurses, and medical professionals.

Patients and families welcome direct, open, and honest information spoken in a way they can understand.

People do not always realize how hospitals and disease processes work, said Abe Peters, RN, SSM Health St. Anthony Hospital - Midwest, where he focuses on med/surg and the ER.

Located in Midwest City, SSM Health St. Anthony Hospital - Midwest serves the health care needs of eastern Oklahoma County and surrounding communities.

Every lifesaving professional at the hospital is mobilized and ready to go with rapid imaging and medication.

Explaining to patients what to expect through the process eases their fears of the unknown. The many words of thanks from family members reinforces Peters' will to provide excellent care.

Listening skills are maximized. Understanding body language helps nurses get to know their patients.

"I like to see people and develop relationships, I like to do both," Peters said. "You meet them where they are in life and try to bring a sense of calm and peace back because they're anxious. And to me it's choosing the presence of God while I'm doing my labs to bring a calm presence and be reassuring to patients. Last year when my dad had cancer it opened my eyes to how important it is to educate families," he explained.

Most of his career has been in emergency care. Peters earned his Bachelor of Science in Nursing degree in 2020 from Langston University during the COVID pandemic. He then accepted an emergency position in the emergency room for two years at Stillwater Medical Center followed by two more years at the Veterans Administration Hospital in Oklahoma City.

Peters' past experiences as an ICU nurse gave him a comprehensive understanding of each patient's diagnosis.

Peters is grateful to work in a career that helps patients heal and reach their personal best in recovery. Being a nurse lets him see the importance of how mind, body, and spirit work together.

"You can address every part of their life to make an impact," he said. "That's the reason I went into nursing, so I could be a blessing to people and make an impact on families."

Peters was inspired to become a surgeon in his youth. When that seemed improbable, he realized that nursing could fulfill his altruistic drive. Seeing people deal with sickness has deepened his perspective in life without becoming jaded. Being an ER nurse is more than working fast to go through the motions, Peters said. He said that nursing has taught him to think of the one patient before him. He follows God's pace, he said.

"You slow down and think, 'How can I be a blessing to this person?'" Peters explained.

SSM Health St. Anthony Emergency Medical Service originated from the oldest and largest hospital-based ambulance service in Oklahoma, and it provides emergency response to Midwest City, Choctaw, Nicoma Park, Luther, Spencer, Hickory Hills, Harrah, Jones, Newalla, Forest Park and southwest Lincoln County. The emergency room is located on the ground floor of the hospital. Persons who are experiencing a medical emergency, please dial 9-1-1 or visit your nearest emergency room.

There is a lot to admire about the team-oriented group that works with Peters. Patients might have underlying health conditions needing attention.

SSM makes every effort in keeping the hospital well-staffed and have all the tools needed to complete their job efficiently.

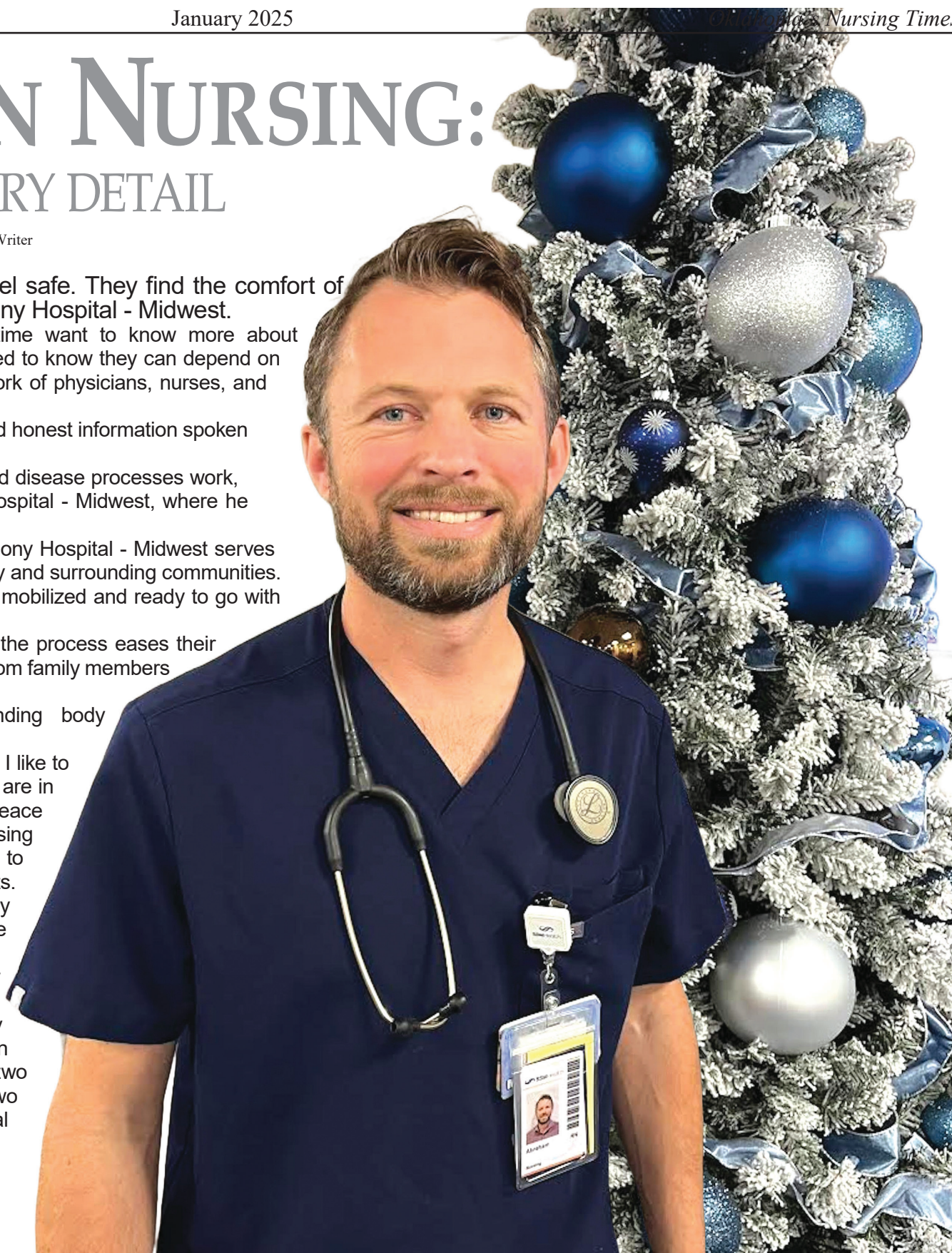
The cooperative team of nurses is willing to help one another with the goal of benefiting patients.

Patients are individuals and not a number, Peters continued. Don't assume anything but learn about their story, he said.

Peters follows the hospital's motto, "Through our exceptional health care services, we reveal the healing presence of God."

He balances his life by spending time with his three children and training for his goal of running his first marathon. He trains by running a 5-k or 10-k several times a week.

"It gives me a chance to kind of debrief every day," he said. "It's a way to reset your body with all these good endorphins. Physically you feel better because you accomplish something. You notice your body starts working better. Your heart rate is lower overall. It impacts everything in your body."



Abe Peters gives his heart to God as a registered nurse at SSM Health St. Anthony Hospital - Midwest.



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# NURSE TALK



What is your least favorite season and why?

*"My least favorite season is flu season. There is an influx of immunizations and sick patients!"*



Deanna Lutonsky, CMA

*"My least favorite season is the back to school RUSH for late vaccines and school physicals."*



Gina Lytle, CMA

*"My least favorite season is the back to school rush! With last minute needs for physicals and vaccines."*



Michi White, LPN



Francois J. du Toit, M.D.  
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## OKNT CROSSWORD: Medical Terminology

### Across

1. The change in the type of adult cells in a tissue to a form that is not normal for the tissue
5. Pertaining to the ileum and cecum
7. Excessiva amt of cholestrol in blood
8. The part of the pharynx that lies above the level of the soft plate
10. Abnormal multiplication or increase in the number of normal cells in normal arrangement in a tissue
11. Formation of white spots or patches on the mucous membrane of the tongue or cheek
13. Unable to control excretory functions
15. Local and temporary deficiency of blood supply caused by obstruction of the blood flow to the part
16. Pertaining to or compromising the skeleton and the muscles
17. Formation of an area of coagulation necroses in a tissue

caused by local ischemia

20. A transparent slightly yellow liquid of alkaline reaction, found in the lymphatic vessel and derived for the tissue fluid

21. Pertaining to the myocardium

23. Irrigation or washing out of an organ such as the stomach or bowel

### Down

2. Disease of the lymph nodes

3. Enlargement of the liver and spleen

4. Pertaining to the neurology or the nervouse system

6. Excision of the posterior arch of a vertebra

9. Elevated concentration of any or all of the lipids in the plasma

12. Roentgenography of the mammary gland

13. Situated between the ribs

14. Gliding

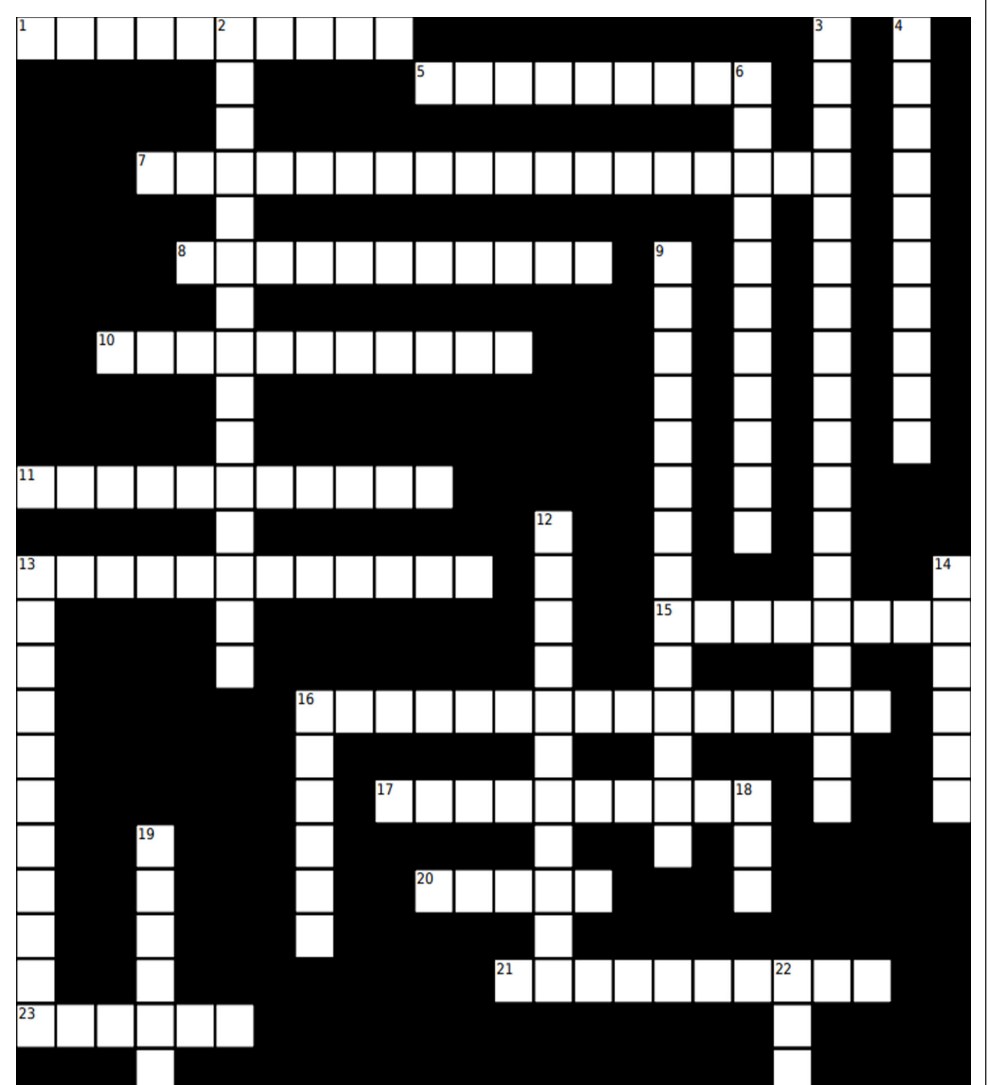
16. A mucous membrane

18. No known allergies

19. Pertaining to loins

22. Intravenous pyelogram

ANSWERS ON PAGE 14





story by  
Amanda Reeves

Twenty-four registered nurses from INTEGRIS Health were selected as finalists for the 2024 March of Dimes Nurse of the Year Award. Of those, six were named winners at the annual gala held in November.

Winners and their respective categories were Stacey Purinton, Charge Nurse; Madison Brady, Emergency; Tina Edwards, Nursing Management; Jess Mathews, Critical Care; Dakota Clayton, Rising Star; Aaliyah Herron, General Medical/Surgical.

Finalists included Jennifer Bales, Michele Bradshaw, Tonya Carver, Terra Collie, Amy Deimel, Shirley Font, Amber Hobbs, Tami Inman, Tayler Mize, Matthew Newcomb, Angela Ramming, Molly Reyes, Stacy Sargent, Brenda Southwell, Linda Suderman, Kimberly Wall, Kelly Westfahl and Candace



Zerger.

"Congratulations to all of our finalists and winners," says INTEGRIS Health Chief Nursing Officer Pidge Lohr. "Your dedication, compassion and excellence in nursing inspire us all and make a lasting impact

on our patients and communities. We are proud to celebrate your achievements!"

According to the March of Dimes, nominees for the award must exemplify an extraordinary level of caring and compassion in the delivery of patient care

services, be perceived as a leader among peers and affect positive change in the profession, workplace and community. Winners are selected by a committee of health care professionals who review each confidential nomination.

# The Spiritual Side of Nursing

## Faith Community Nurses Association is an affiliate member of ONA

story by  
Denise McGough, RN, MEd, FCN

As nurses, we are privileged to accompany our clients and their loved ones during some of the most pivotal, vulnerable, and transformational moments of life: birth, death, struggling with the unknown. Together, we encounter all the peaks and valleys in the wellness journey: moments of hope, despair and acceptance. We also journey with them in the mundane, yet essential tasks: how do I remember to take these pills, and why should I bother? What should I eat? How can I get to the bathroom? As any nurse knows, these tasks have a spiritual component for both the nurse and the client. A valuable resource for nurses and health ministers in navigating the spiritual side of health care is the Faith Community Nurses Association of Oklahoma (FCNA OK)

Although spiritual care is a part of

all nursing practice, it is the primary focus of a Faith Community Nurse (FCN). Faith Community Nursing is a specialty that embraces the intentional integration of the practice of faith with the practice of nursing so that people can achieve wholeness in, with, and through the community of faith in which Faith Community Nurses serve. It is recognized by the American Nurses Association as a specialty practice area for registered nurses who have completed an endorsed training program. It is an independent nursing practice which has "intentional care of the spirit" as its function and does not involve "hands-on," task-oriented nursing care.

Faith Community Nurses can be found in congregations of every denomination and faith tradition in rural, urban, and suburban settings. The nurse actively promotes wellness, wholeness, and preventive health. As the faith community needs are assessed, the FCN may provide care to an entire community, member groups, or individuals. Often the FCN collaborates in partnership with community agencies and healthcare

systems to meet the needs identified. The form of spiritual care will depend on the beliefs and practices of the faith community and the individuals, and always honors the individual's personal choices and belief system. The FCN may serve as a health advocate, personal health counselor, health educator, referral agent, facilitator of volunteers or support groups, and integrator of faith and health.

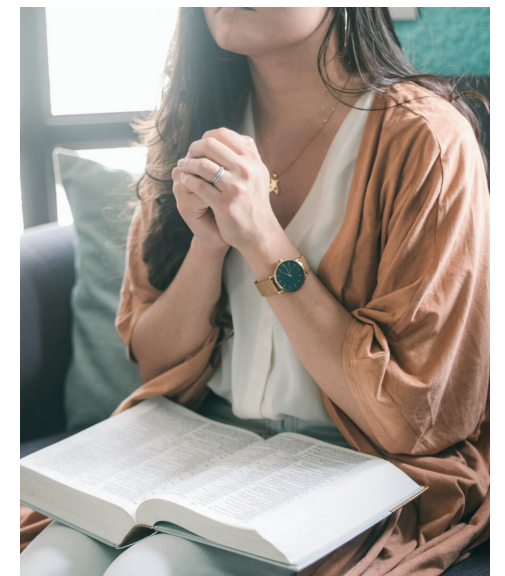
I was inspired by a colleague who reminded me that as an FCN we care for the person from the "cradle to the grave." With this broad call to action, there is no limit to the myriad ways an FCN may serve.

The membership of the FCNA OK is a diverse group of nurses, from multiple specialty areas, with a broad level of experience. FCNA OK provides support and resources for faith community nurses of all faiths to promote spiritual development and best practices. Quarterly meetings are available in-person or virtually, and always include a continuing education component. The annual conference occurs in March with topics to enhance your nursing

practice. FCNA OK also provides retreats and activities to encourage and support a member's personal spiritual formation.

FCNA OK invites anyone interested in joining to contact us via email at [fcnaok@gmail.com](mailto:fcnaok@gmail.com). More information is available at [www.fcnaok.org](http://www.fcnaok.org). Follow FCNAOK on Facebook.

*Originally published in The Oklahoma Nurse, May 2024. Reprinted by permission of ONA.*



(AS PUBLISHED IN THE 2024 EDUCATION GUIDE TO NURSING)

# The Uniform Shoppe Staff Make the Difference

Jody Weise grew up in the back of a station wagon, traversing highways and byways as her parents built The Uniform Shoppe brand.

She remembered at the time the last thing she wanted to do was grow up selling scrubs and apparel.

But what she didn't know was all those trips and those relationships her parents forged would leave a lasting impression.

Sixty-two years later, Weise says her company's lasting success is the result of those relationships, in particular, the ones the family has with their employees.

"Our Customers like that we offer a wide variety of brand names, styles, prices and colors," Weise said of customers. "A lot of people also come because they like to shop with the people who work with them when they come in."

"They can get the uniforms anywhere. If they need navy blue they can go anywhere to get navy blue. We get a lot of comments and reviews about when walking in to The Uniform Shoppe our associates make it such an easy way of finding what they need. They don't have to do anything but walk in and they get personal attention to help find what they are looking for."

"Many of our customers come back because of our employees."

Large stores and large selection have always been the hallmark of The Uniform Shoppe as trends continue to evolve.

"But it's our employees that really keep them coming back," Weise said. "I think our most important product is our employees. It's been like that for a long time. I've been doing this for 44 years and it was happening before that."

Weise says it's her mom and dad that started that personal touch philosophy when they traveled to hospitals and clinics sizing employees and offering them an outstanding selection.

"My parents went out and made connections with people, established relationships with people. Long-time customers trust what we do. They have confidence in that we're not going to steer them in the wrong direction or take advantage of them in any way," Weise said.

Nowadays, there's not a lot of customer service out there. It's buyer beware.

"I have such a wonderful staff of dedicated employees," Weise continued. "There's so much devotion and loyalty our staff has for the company."

Since 1962, The Uniform Shoppe has been a family affair.

Albert and Elaine Weise opened The Uniform Shoppe in Tulsa and Oklahoma City.

They traversed the Oklahoma highways and backroads bringing comfortable, affordable quality to nurses at their facilities.

Riding in the back seat was Jody.

She learned the business from the best and now co-owns and manages the Company.

While the styles on the rack may change, little else has changed about this Oklahoma gem.

The Tulsa location moved around the corner to 6044 S. Sheridan Road a while back and the Oklahoma City store is still located at 10503 N. May Avenue.

The Uniform Shoppe has hands-down always had the largest stock of scrubs for nurses, health care workers, day care workers - every profession that requires durable yet professional attire while working with people.

Service has always been the focus.

"We work with many schools to get their students started on the right track - nursing, dental, cosmetology, culinary, veterinary, physician assistants, physical therapy, chemistry, health careers and information, paramedics, lab tech, nutrition, occupational therapy, pharmacy, radiography, respiratory and surgical," Weise said. "We've even had quite a few adolescent classes of 'future leaders' going into scrubs and lab coats".

And behind it all is the staff. All told, there is decades of experience at your service whenever you walk through the doors.

Even growing up watching her mom and dad and her aunt and uncle,



Lori, Traci, Chloe are among the folks in Oklahoma City and Tulsa ready to help with your needs.



Service and selection have made the difference at The Uniform Shoppe for more than 60 years. Photos provided.

Weise never really believed she would go into the family business.

Every time the family took a trip there would have to be a stop at a uniform company or store. Working her way to the top of a big company in Houston, Weise always felt something was missing.

A fire at one of the Tulsa stores brought her back home.

"I've been here ever since and every day is a new day," Weise said. "Who knew we would be in business this long. Who knew a mom and pop like this would endure during the good and bad, the pandemic, the economy - who knew we would still be in the business with our same family."

The Uniform Shoppe is located in Tulsa at 6044 S Sheridan Road, and in Oklahoma City at 10503 N May Ave. or visit online at <https://theuniformshoppe.com>.

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# OCU Nursing Student Passionate About Working in Community Health Setting

story and photo by Van Mitchell, Staff Writer

Brooks Winn is passionate about working in a community health setting, where he can address the unique mental health needs of diverse populations.

The Perkins native is currently enrolled in Oklahoma City University's Kramer School of Nursing (KSN) Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner (PMHNP) track. He is scheduled to graduate in July 2025.

"I wanted to do psych from the beginning," he said. "However, I wasn't sure what I wanted to do post-grad. There for a while, I thought I might want to be a Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetist or go on and get a Family Nurse Practitioner degree. I had a friend who was in the FNP program at OCU and told me that they were going to start a psychiatric mental health nurse practitioner program and thought that I would be good at it and strongly encouraged me to apply for the program, and so I did."

The Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner (PMHNP) track presents education focused on improving mental health care for patients across the lifespan. Emphasis is on the promotion of mental health through assessment, diagnosis, and treatment of behavioral problems, mental disorders, and comorbid conditions in a variety of healthcare settings. Practice settings may vary but include inpatient care in hospitals or outpatient care in other clinical settings.

All BSN-DNP program tracks have minimal residency requirements. Coursework is delivered in a variety of formats including online, synchronously, asynchronously or a mix of both, and in person in the classroom.

Winn is currently a Registered Nurse in Care Management at Mercy Hospital in Oklahoma City, where he collaborates with interdisciplinary teams to develop and implement individualized care plans, focusing on both the medical and social aspects of patient care.

"What I do with this job is I work with doctors, I work with physical therapists, occupational therapists, nurses, patients and their family members," Winn said. "I've been trying to help identify any needs the patient might have upon discharge, so that we can get those needs met before the patient leaves the hospital, so that patients and their families feel comfortable and confident in their discharge and feel like they can go home and be successful in the continuity of their care."

Winn graduated from Perkins-Tryon High School in 2013, and enrolled at Oklahoma Baptist University, before transferring to Oklahoma State University.

"I was in biochemistry, molecular biology, pre-med, and from there decided to go into nursing and transferred to the University of Central Oklahoma, where I graduated with my bachelor's in nursing in 2019," he said.

Winn started his nursing career at Mercy in 2020 before being accepted into the DNP program at OCU.

Winn credits his supervisors at Mercy Hospital with allowing him to work and go to school.

"I have an amazing support system. I mean, I wouldn't be able to do any of this without my supervisors at work, and my professors. I make sure that I am communicating with them regularly, asking for help when I need it, and I just know that I can only do so much and do the best that I can."

Winn said family played a part in influencing him to pursue nursing as a career.

"What drew me into the medical field is my father Eddie Winn, who is a pharmacist with the Iowa Tribe of Oklahoma," he said. "What really made me want to be a doctor or a nurse was spending the time in the hospital when my grandmother was sick with cancer and interacting with those nurses and those doctors on a weekly basis, and just seeing how wonderful they are and how much of a difference they can make in one's



Brooks Winn is currently enrolled in Oklahoma City University's Kramer School of Nursing (KSN) Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner (PMHNP) track.

life." Winn said he enjoys being a male nurse in a female-dominant field.

"It's a privilege to work with women who are strong and do so much for their families and their patients, and I think that it's an awesome experience to kind of be sort of the outlier," he said. "It's a privilege to be a piece of the diversity in the field."

Winn said he has enjoyed his time at OCU and encourages anyone interested in nursing to look at the Kramer School of Nursing.

"The experience has been great. The professors are wonderful. They constantly go above and beyond for all the students," he said. "I have some awesome people that I get to see every day in the program that work hard as nurses, parents, friends, that continue to push me through the program. Anybody who is even thinking about going to get their advanced nursing degree, I would highly recommend considering Oklahoma City University as their first choice, because the staff and the environment is so conducive to learning, and they are going to ensure that you succeed. It's a wonderful program."

For more information about Oklahoma City University's Kramer School of Nursing (KSN) call 405-208-5917 or visit [www.okcu.edu/nursing](http://www.okcu.edu/nursing).

# OCU PT Program Receives Noble Grant

The Oklahoma City University Doctor of Physical Therapy program is the recipient of a \$50,000 grant from The Samuel Roberts Noble Foundation, school officials announced today.

The grant funds will support a variety of initiatives within the program, with the ultimate goal of assisting the university in producing graduates who can help address the shortage of physical therapy practitioners in the state.

"The OCU Physical Therapy program and the university as a whole are grateful that the Noble Foundation has recognized this important need," program Director Maria Jones said. "We are committed to preparing the next generation of physical therapists, and this generous grant will help us achieve our goals."

Data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics shows that the shortage of licensed physical therapists may only get worse in the coming years. Thousands of openings are expected as experienced practitioners reach retirement age. At the same time, demand for physical therapy should increase due to a large number of adults staying active later in life and

the growing prevalence of chronic conditions like diabetes and obesity.

Jones said OCU Physical Therapy program leaders plan to use the funds to upgrade equipment and incorporate additional state-of-the-art technology into student's learning. Staying up to date is vital in ensuring students are prepared for the evolving demands of the health care industry, she said.

Grant funds will also be used to support service-learning initiatives within the program, including a partnership between the Physical Therapy program and OCU's Ann Lacy School of American Dance and Entertainment.

Gina Crawford, dean of the College of Health Professions at OCU, said the grant funds will help add another layer of support within the Physical Therapy program, where the university already assists students by providing books and multimedia material, student memberships to professional organizations, tools used in practice, and licensure exam preparation materials at no cost.

"We know in the years to come OCU students will provide health care that will have a profound positive



Oklahoma City University Physical Therapy program

impact in communities around the state," Crawford said. "That's why support from organizations like the Noble Foundation is so vital - it truly highlights our shared goal of advancing quality care for all Oklahomans."

The Samuel Roberts Noble

Foundation was created in 1945 by Oklahoma oilman Lloyd Noble. The foundation aims to shepherd Noble's legacy of philanthropy by making charitable grants to nonprofits that cultivate good health, support education and build stronger communities, primarily in Oklahoma.

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# Hospitals Recognized for Efforts to Improve Outcomes for Mothers and Babies

Twenty-six Oklahoma hospitals recently received awards for providing excellence in perinatal care from the Oklahoma Perinatal Quality Improvement Collaborative. The awards were presented at the 10th annual summit of the Oklahoma Perinatal Quality Improvement Collaborative (OPQIC) on Nov. 19 in conjunction with the Oklahoma Hospital Association annual conference. Approximately 200 providers and advocates of maternal and infant care came together to acknowledge efforts and celebrate progress toward improving outcomes for Oklahoma's mothers and babies.

Hospitals receiving the "Spotlight Hospital Awards" were recognized for achievement in the areas of low rates of early elective deliveries (inducing labor or scheduling cesarean births before 39 weeks without a medical reason), certification by Cribs for Kids as a Safe Sleep Hospital, achieving breastfeeding Baby-Friendly designation, implementing



From left to right: Barbara O'Brien, OPQIC director; Kari Newport, MS, RNC-OB, Clinical Nurse Supervisor; Susan Duthie, MSN, RNC-OB, Manager, Womens Services; Joyce Marshall, Oklahoma State Department of Health

## OKNT Puzzle Answers: Medical Terminology

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TeamBirth (a shared decision-making process for communication), Joint Commission Advanced Perinatal Certification designation, screening and testing for maternal substance use disorders, and meeting quality standards for screening newborns for genetic disorders.

"At OPQIC, we are deeply grateful for the dedication and hard work of Oklahoma hospitals in providing exceptional care for moms and babies across the state. The Spotlight Awards give us the opportunity to publicly celebrate these hospitals for their unwavering commitment to improving maternal and infant health outcomes," said Barbara O'Brien, MS, RN, director, OPQIC.

### Receiving "Spotlight Hospital" awards for 2024 were:

**Gold Level:** • Chickasaw Nation Medical Center, Ada • Comanche County Memorial Hospital, Lawton • INTEGRIS Health Baptist Medical Center, Oklahoma City • INTEGRIS Health Canadian Valley Hospital, Yukon • Norman Regional HealthPlex and Stillwater Medical Center. **Silver Level:** • Duncan Regional Hospital • INTEGRIS Health Edmond Hospital • INTEGRIS Health Ponca City Hospital • INTEGRIS Health Woodward Hospital • Jackson County Memorial Hospital, Altus • Mercy Hospital Ada • Mercy Hospital Oklahoma City • Oklahoma Children's Hospital at OU Health, Oklahoma City • OSU Medical Center, Tulsa • Saint Francis Hospital, Tulsa • Saint Francis Hospital South, Tulsa • SSM Health St. Anthony Hospital - Oklahoma City and St. Mary's Regional Medical Center, Enid. **Bronze Level:** • Bailey Medical Center, Owasso • Claremore Indian Hospital • Hillcrest Medical Center, Tulsa • INTEGRIS Health Enid Hospital • Lakeside Women's Hospital, Oklahoma City • Southwestern Medical Center, Lawton and SSM Health St. Anthony Hospital - Shawnee.

In addition, Joyce Marshall, MPH, director of Maternal and Child Health Service, Oklahoma State Department of Health, received the Warren M. Crosby Champion for Maternal and Infant Health Award for going above and beyond to display exemplary effort to improve outcomes for mothers and babies in the local community and statewide. Partners in the Oklahoma Perinatal Quality Improvement Collaborative include: Oklahoma State Department of Health, Oklahoma Health Care Authority, Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services, Oklahoma Hospital Association, the George Kaiser Family Foundation, the Oklahoma Birth Equity Initiative, Oklahoma birthing hospitals and others.

# Milk Bar Provides Breastfeeding Support Group Setting

story and photo by  
Van Mitchell, Staff Writer

The Milk Bar Lactation Support Group at INTEGRIS Health Edmond Hospital is a breastfeeding support group open to all mothers regardless of the facility in which they delivered.

It's designed to be a safe place for moms to come together and share their breastfeeding experiences and knowledge or seek advice.

They meet every Wednesday from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. at INTEGRIS Health Edmond Hospital on the 4th floor in the Women's Center. This is a come and go event, free of charge with no registration required.

They also have a weekend Milk Bar that meets the third Sunday each month from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m.

"We serve 20 to 25 momma/babies every Wednesday in our free community lactation support group called the Milk Bar," said Angela Kersh, RN, CBC, CLC (Certified Lactation Counselor). "We have patients that deliver all over the state come see us every Wednesday and the third Sunday of the month. It's my favorite day of the week! We also have a Facebook page where moms can ask questions and the three of us (RN's) answer."

Connie Barta, RN, IBCLC, and Milk Bar facilitator, said they have mom's from across the state come to the Milk Bar.

"Some of our babies were delivered at Mercy, or OU, Lakeside, Baptist, Stillwater Medical Center," Barta said. "We'll have patients that drive in from Shawnee, Mustang, Yukon, Guthrie, Cushing, Perkins, Stillwater, Enid, and even Alene in northwestern Oklahoma."

Barta said the Milk Bar is a community outreach program that INTEGRIS Health offers.

"We've had 900-1000 women in attendance (total) over the last 12 months (at INTEGRIS Health Edmond Hospital)," she said. "Many come weekly and sign in each week, so it's not necessarily 900 newcomers, but still impactful."

The Milk Bar at INTEGRIS Health Edmond Hospital is led by Barta, Kersh, and Tera Oss RNC-OB, CBS.

Kersh teaches breastfeeding classes, labor and delivery, childbirth classes, comfort measures, CPR, newborn classes at INTEGRIS Health Edmond Hospital.



The Milk Bar Lactation Support Group at INTEGRIS Health Edmond Hospital is a breastfeeding support group open to all mothers regardless of the facility in which they delivered. Pictured left to right: Angela Kersh, RN, CBC, CLC; Connie Barta, RN, IBCLC, and Tera Oss RNC-OB, CBS.

She said they work hard to welcome and make mothers/babies comfortable at the Milk Bar.

"We'll come sit down and talk to them, kind of go over what's going on with them and their baby, offer any suggestions, help and support that they need," she said.

Kersh said before and after breastfeeding, each baby is weighed, and they inform the mothers of the weight, and how much they need to transfer (breastmilk).

"After they feed the baby, they go back to the scale. And when they're back at the scale, we do the math and tell them what they're able to transfer," she said. "A lot of times when breastfeeding, they don't really know how much the baby's eating. So here, we can tell them exactly what their baby's able to transfer, and we track week by week their progress. We can tell if a baby has adequate weight gain or not, and we help make plans accordingly, and make outpatient appointments if we need to see them more one-on-one."

Oss is a certified breastfeeding specialist.

"Our goal is to help troubleshoot any concerns," Oss said. "I would say my role, I usually weigh the babies, and I help feed whenever there's concerns, and then flag one of them to

say, "Okay, Angela or Connie, come help troubleshoot." And they help with latch, or repositioning, figuring out why we're not gaining appropriately. So yeah, I would say they're worthy experts."

Oss said she enjoys working with her Milk Bar team and helping educate mothers.

"I'm a labor and delivery nurse and I started doing this," she said. "I enjoy this so much that I wanted to become certified in lactation because I feel like it would make me a better nurse on the floor for my labor and delivery patients. I just love it, and I feel like it's helpful for the patients to have somebody that's supporting them on the labor and delivery side, too. We love each other. I feel like we've got a sisterhood bond."

Oss said she was fortunate to have a support system after giving birth.

"It was not easy," she said. "I didn't have a group like this, but I had somebody there every day, check in, walk with me because it was really challenging. And that is kind of the goal of this group, to let people know they are not alone, it's not always easy, but you can do it, and you can do hard things."

Barta said there are benefits to mothers who breastfeed.

"It helps decrease the woman's risk of breast cancer, ovarian cancer, osteoporosis, helps her get back to pre-pregnancy weight quicker because they're burning calories as they breastfeed. It's convenient. You don't have to wash any bottles," she said.

Barta said the benefits to babies who are breastfed are decreased risk of diabetes, obesity, asthma, chronic ear infections, pneumonia, diarrhea, lymphoma, sicknesses like RSV because they're getting those antibodies from the milk.

Oss said there are emotional impacts to women after giving birth and breastfeed.

"People don't understand the things that happen the first several months (after birth) for women," she said. "It impacts how they think about themselves forever. "If we can help them have a positive experience breastfeeding and giving the encouragement that they need to meet their own goals, then we've helped the family unit, we've helped our society, we've helped our country, and the health of our country as well."

For more information about the Milk Bar contact the INTEGRIS Health Edmond Hospital Women's Center at 405-657-3250.

# More Than Medicine: The Human Side of Healthcare

By: Kirsten Hubbard,  
Care+Wear Community Member

## A Patient's Story That Touched My Heart

In my years working in healthcare, I've come across many patients and families who have profoundly touched my life. One experience stands out vividly. While working in the ICU, a patient who had suffered a terrible accident was admitted to my unit. Though he couldn't speak during those initial moments, I did my best to care for him, keep him aware of his situation, and simply be by his side.

Over the next few days, as I continued to care for him, I met his family and found myself in frequent conversations with them. I learned his story, their story, and felt that I was truly building a bond with them. By the time I returned for my next set of shifts, the patient was able to communicate with me. He was doing much better than when I'd last seen him. Both he and his family thanked me for the care and support I had given them.

What they didn't realize was how much they impacted me in return. Seeing him recover enough to leave the ICU and connecting with his family reminded me why I became a nurse. Moments like these fuel my passion for healthcare.

## The Importance of Building Bonds with Patients

The connections we create with patients and their families are more than just meaningful—they're vital. They form a foundation of trust, which I believe is essential for healing. When patients feel that they're not just being "treated" but genuinely cared for, they're more likely to open up about their concerns and challenges.

This openness allows healthcare workers to tailor support in ways that truly meet each patient's needs. Often,

it's the human connection and empathy that give patients the courage to follow through with treatment, make lifestyle changes, and maintain a positive mindset during recovery.

## How Small Gestures Make a Big Difference

Building trust with patients isn't about grand gestures—it's about consistency and compassion in every interaction. Personally, I focus on listening first, ensuring patients feel heard and understood. I strive to explain things in clear, simple terms and remain transparent about what they can expect.

Small actions—like maintaining eye contact, remembering details about their life, or even sitting down to be on their level—go a long way. These gestures might seem small, but they build the trust that's critical to effective care.

## Advice for New Healthcare Professionals

To those new to healthcare, I encourage you to remember that every patient is a person first. It can be easy to get caught up in tasks and outcomes, but even a few minutes spent connecting on a personal level can make a world of difference.

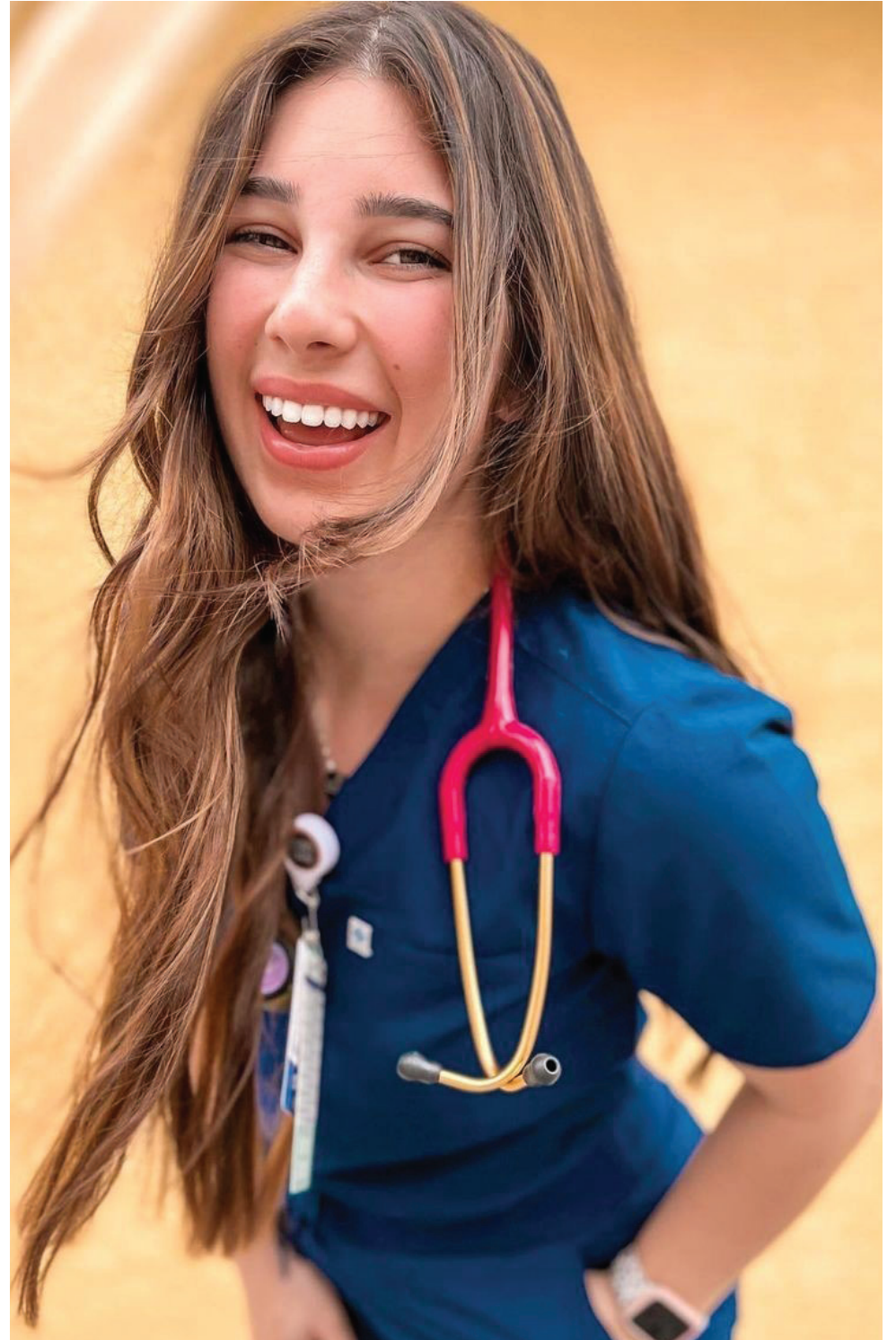
Patients often feel vulnerable, and showing empathy—even through a kind word or gentle tone—can help them feel cared for and reassured. These small acts of kindness are just as important to their healing journey as the treatments we provide.

## Conclusion:

### Why Connection Matters

Experiences like the one I shared are what keep me going in healthcare. They remind me that while medicine can treat the body, compassion and connection heal the soul. For me, these bonds are what make this work not only fulfilling but truly meaningful.

Author Bio: Kirsten is a registered nurse. Since beginning



Kirsten Hubbard, RN, Accepted into a top-rated MSN program to become a family nurse practitioner.

her nursing school journey, she has shared her experiences online, connecting with thousands of nurses and healthcare workers. She started her career in the neuroscience ICU, where she built a strong foundation and gained invaluable knowledge. In addition to her ICU work, Kirsten also cared for pediatric patients at a surgical center, supporting little ones immediately after their surgeries.

Driven to further her nursing

education, Kirsten was accepted into a top-rated MSN program to become a family nurse practitioner. She has since transitioned to outpatient nursing, where she provides care to patients with chronic illnesses and infections. Kirsten remains committed to sharing her nursing journey with her audience, building meaningful connections, and making a positive impact throughout her career.



# NESA Consortium Selects InPlace Network to Streamline Clinical Placement Management and Build the Future Healthcare Workforce

InPlace, a leading hospital clinical placement management software provider, announced today its selection as the official vendor of the NESA Consortium (Nursing Educators and Service Administrators for Central Oklahoma), a coalition of 11 Oklahoma Hospital Networks and their 65 higher education partners. This partnership is preparing the next generation of healthcare professionals through streamlined, secure, and efficient placement management.

InPlace was overwhelmingly selected after an extensive vetting process for its ability to deliver a seamless experience for both hospital and higher education partners. All 44 hospital sites are set to transition fully to the new platform by the 2025 academic year. The phased implementation has already seen success, with four hospitals launching in August 2024 and the remaining scheduled to be implemented by

the end of 2024.

"We are honored to collaborate with the NESA Consortium in advancing Oklahoma's nursing workforce. NESA's choice of InPlace Network underscores their forward-looking dedication to equipping nursing students with invaluable, hands-on clinical experience. Through this partnership, students gain essential real-world exposure, preparing them to navigate and meet the evolving demands of modern healthcare," said Michele Maynard, North American COO of InPlace.

"The InPlace team has a deep understanding of our consortium's goals and unique dynamics," said Tonie Metheny, MS, RN, CNE, and Co-Chair of the NESA Consortium. "Working with them has been a rewarding experience, and I am incredibly pleased with our choice. I'm grateful to everyone who has invested their time and expertise



OU Medical Center Patient Tower

to make this project successful. For a complex change management initiative like ours, InPlace has made the process seamless and effective."

As the NESA consortium and InPlace continue their partnership, they are excited

to contribute to developing tomorrow's healthcare workforce. Together, they will enable more efficient operations, better data security, and a stronger pipeline of skilled healthcare professionals to meet the industry's future demands.

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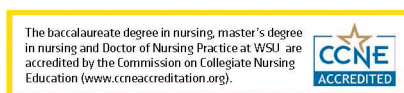
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# Nursing Student Finds Support and Success at TCC

Tulsa Community College honored its most recent class of nursing graduates, celebrating the achievements of 115 students during a pinning ceremony in December.

TCC's Nursing program continues to add capacity each semester through Fall 2027 to strengthen the nursing workforce in Northeast Oklahoma. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, employment for registered nurses is expected to grow 6 percent from 2022 to 2032, faster than the average for all occupations. Demand for healthcare services is expected to increase due to an aging population that has more complex medical needs.

Among this year's TCC nursing graduates is Rachel McCain. McCain returned to school in her 30s to pursue her dream of becoming a nurse while raising her young daughter. Through personal loss and life challenges, McCain found strength in her professors and classmates at TCC, many of whom became her lifeline during tough times.

Originally from Southwest Missouri, McCain earned her GED while living in Florida, where she was caring for a biological parent. When that relationship came to an end, she moved to Oklahoma to be closer to family. She met and married her husband, and they had a daughter.

"I really wanted to go back to school, and I was talking to my husband one night and he said, 'For as long as I've known you, you've wanted to be a nurse,'" says McCain. She soon enrolled at TCC.

During her first semester, McCain was adopted by her aunt and uncle, who had helped raise her in Missouri. But shortly after, her uncle, whom she regarded as a father, tragically passed away during finals week.

"It rocked me to my core. But I'm so happy he got to adopt me and see me get into nursing

school," says McCain.

Amid this difficult time, McCain found strength in the community she built at TCC. Classmates brought her meals and professors checked in on her regularly.

"Nursing school got me through the hardest time of my life," she says. "The friendships I've made at TCC have been life changing. They've shown up in times when I didn't know if anyone else would."

Rachel's passion for nursing comes from her deeply held belief that everyone deserves care and love.

"I want people to know they are loved," she says. "I think when most people hear the word 'love', they think of a romantic love. But you can love somebody just because they're human and they deserve common decency."

This fall, McCain accepted a position at Tulsa Spine and Specialty Hospital, where she will work with patients recovering from surgery. Her next goal is to earn her Bachelor of Science in Nursing by 2026. She hopes to one day become a Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE), caring for survivors of sexual violence.

McCain has embraced opportunities to grow as a leader and mentor at TCC. In addition to being a True Blue Lead student ambassador, she's a member of Phi Theta Kappa and graduating from TCC's Nursing program with honors.

Her advice to perspective students is simple. "Don't be afraid to try something new. Don't let fear hold you back from the community you could be a part of," says McCain. "Push through the fear, and you'll find people who will support you every step of the way."

As she prepares to start her career as a nurse, McCain hopes her journey inspires others to pursue their dreams, no matter their age or circumstances.



TCC Nursing Graduate Rachel McCain Finds Strength in Community and Achieves Her Dream of Becoming a Nurse.

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