

SSM Health Rehabilitation Hospital: Enabling Individuals to Return to Their Best

Read Molly's story on page 2

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Molly Moon, RN

Partnerships bring rewards rehab hospital and developing YMCA prove it

story by James Coburn, Staff Writer

People value experiencing SSM Health's dedication to community and personal health. December's opening of SSM Health Rehabilitation Hospital has been a smooth transition after the purchase of Valir Rehabilitation Hospital in midtown Oklahoma City.

Select Medical Corporation and SSM Health formed a joint venture partnership to operate a 50-bed inpatient rehabilitation hospital - only a quick walk south of SSM Health St. Anthony Hospital.

Additionally, SSM Health is partnering to build a new YMCA in walking distance from SSM Health St. Anthony - Midwest.

Employees, physical therapists, and nurses that were at the Valir facility, opted to stay when SSM offered to secure their positions. Individuals that were at

St. Anthony moved to the facility as well, said Stacy Coleman, president of SSM Health St. Anthony Hospital - Midwest. She is also the vice president of SSM strategy and business development.

Select Medical Corporation is a national inpatient and outpatient company. SSM has partnerships with Select in its St. Louis market that have worked well, Coleman said.

"When we were looking to expand our inpatient rehab program, we talked with Select because of the positive relationship we have with them in St. Louis," Coleman said.

SSM Health St. Anthony Hospital needed to expand beyond their 12 inpatient-rehab beds. They learned that Valir wanted to sell its rehabilitation hospital while keeping Valir PACE

and its hospice programs. "This allowed us to move into a bigger facility that's dedicated just to patient rehab," Coleman said. "It's right down the street from St. Anthony. They're on the same EPIC where physicians can continue to monitor their patients while they're in inpatient rehab, just as they would in the hospital. We're able to have a 50-bed hospital now."

Molly Moon, RN, nursing manager, said she found a long-tenured, dedicated nursing staff when joining the SSM Health Rehabilitation Hospital team. Some of the nurses have worked for Valir for 10-19 years.

"I'm super excited about the transition. I think it's going to benefit the patients in many ways," Moon said. "I'm really excited about all of the policies, protocols, and education we get to use with SSM to make our staff more competent in delivering patient care. They have a very high standard of training and orientation, a very thorough and robust fall program. All of those things go into providing better patient outcomes."

Education opportunities by Select Medical results in a higher competency rating for patient outcomes, Moon said.

Moon said nurses choose the field rehabilitation because it's enriching to see patients get better.

Rehabilitation enables individuals to return to their personal best. "We want to get people back to their



Stacy Coleman president of SSM Health St. Anthony Hospital - Midwest.

Continued next page



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SCAN ME



Molly Moon, RN, has found her niche at SSM Health Rehabilitation Hospital

MOON
Continued from Page 2

community and back to their lives,” Moon said.

Coleman loves the revitalization SSM Health has brought to the midtown area, the metroplex and the partnerships in Midwest City that are funding a new YMCA. The City of Midwest City, Mid-Del Schools, SSM Health, St. Anthony Hospital - Midwest, and the YMCA of Greater Oklahoma City agree to construct a 74,000 square-foot facility at the intersection of Parklawn Drive and National Avenue, just a few steps away from SSM Health St. Anthony Hospital.

“It’s a great thing for a school district to have a competitive aquatic facility that they don’t have to manage all the time,” Coleman said. “We are so excited they have chosen to build the new YMCA in close proximity to the hospital.”

The YMCA will be great for SSM employees who already have a portion of their YMCA membership paid by SSM.

“That’s going to be great in

proximity for the employees who work at the hospital,” Coleman continued. “Plus, we’re adding childcare to the YMCA, so there will be dedicated spots for employees at the hospital that need childcare that will be 300 yards away from the hospital.”

Additionally, SSM Health is in the planning stages of having an outpatient rehab program at the YMCA.

“That way, people who are needing outpatient physical therapy will be able to use that lovely facility,” Coleman said.

She has been with SSM Health for 30 years, which includes two years at SSM Health St. Anthony Hospital - Midwest.

“There’s a lot that keeps you at SSM,” said Coleman, who started with SSM while earning her MHA at the University of Oklahoma and went on to work in the SSM business office. “I love the mission of SSM Health, ‘Through our exceptional health care services we reveal the healing presence of God.’”



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Galloping Through Life: A Nurse's Journey of Care, Business, and Rodeo

story and photo by Vickie Jenkins, Staff Writer

Kari Harman is a nurse, successful businesswoman and lifelong horse enthusiast who has mastered the art of balancing healthcare and horsemanship. With over 22 years of nursing experience, she is the co-founder of HealWell Wound Care Solutions, a company dedicated to transforming wound care with expert, compassionate treatment. When she's not leading her team of healthcare professionals, Kari can be found in the arena, team roping and riding horses, a passion she's had since childhood. Whether she's tending to patients or training in the saddle, Kari's dedication, resilience and work ethic shine through in every aspect of her life.

HealWell Wound Care Solutions is your trusted partner in wound care, where compassion and expertise come together to support patients on the healing journeys. Dedicated to improving access to quality wound care, they focus on serving patients in communities across Oklahoma.

"With a commitment of bridging healthcare gaps, we provide expert wound care," Kari said. "We serve patients in Shawnee, Norman, Ardmore, Durant and Tulsa. By bringing essential care closer to those who need it the most, we make a meaningful impact on the well-being of communities throughout the state," she added.

Founded in March of 2022 by experienced nurses Randi Jones, Chief Clinical Officer, and Kari Harman, Director of Clinical Services, HealWell Wound Care Solutions was built on a shared vision of transforming wound care with expertise, innovation and compassion. With a deep understanding of the challenges patients face, they set out with accessible, high quality wound care, delivering personalized treatment directly to those who need it most.

Kari Harman first established Wound Wise Consulting in August 2018, which laid the foundation for what would become HealWell. Through years of dedication and hands-on experience, she recognized the critical need for specialized wound care in underserved areas. Her commitment to improving patient outcomes, combined with Randi Jones' leadership and clinical expertise, helped shape HealWell into a trusted provider of comprehensive wound care solutions. Today, their mission remains the same; to ensure every patient receives the highest standard of care, empowering them to heal with confidence and dignity.

HealWell Wound Care Solutions has rapidly emerged as a community leader, transforming the way wound care is delivering patient-centered solutions directly to patients in the comfort of their homes. With a strong commitment to education and empowerment, their approach goes beyond treatment, providing patients and their families with the knowledge, resources and tools they need for long-term healing and improved quality of life. Their dedicated team of professionals, often referred to as "wound care heroes," ensures that every patient receives compassion, confidence and independence throughout the recovery process.

"We offer expert care from our team of experienced providers, who are dedicated to delivering personalized treatment plans and ongoing monitoring for optimal healing," Kari said. "We go beyond standard assessments by continuously evaluating each patient's progress. This approach not only ensures a more effective recovery, but also promotes faster, more comfortable health experience."

"From a young age, I had a deep desire to help both people and animals," Kari said. "Whether it was caring for an injured pet or lending a hand to someone in need, I always felt a strong pull towards making a difference. That passion only grew stronger over the years, shaping my path in both healthcare and my love for horses."

"Raised in Oklahoma, I grew up surrounded by horses," Kari said. "My parents, Ron and Jana Harrison came from five generations of raising high-profiles horse prospects, which became the foundation of



Kari Harman, RN, is the co-founder of HealWell Wound Care Solutions. She leads her team of healthcare professionals as they share a vision of transforming wound care with expertise, innovation and compassion.

their equine athlete program," she continued. "Horses have always been a part of my life, and that passion has never faded," Kari said with a warm smile. "No matter how busy life gets, I always find a way to stay involved with my horses." She paused for a moment before adding, "Today, my husband and I own 21 horses and I've named every single one of them," she said. With a laugh, she said, "If I had to pick a favorite? That would be Jimmy Carter."

Kari is also the VP of Business and Clinical Development. Attending Seminole State College, she received her Associate Degree of Nursing. Since receiving her degree, she has worked as a Charge Nurse, Case Manager, Wound Management Sales Account Specialist, Nurse Case Manager, Wound Education Specialist, and most recently a Director of Wound Management. She is an ambassador for ABWM, (American Board of Wound Management) and has been a guest speaker at multiple conferences, and is involved in several wound care professional associations. She will be graduating in August with her BSN.





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TALK

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Willow Creek Health Care

"If I had a talent, it might be that I could teleport just so I could be in places faster."



Sally Canales, CMA

"I've always wanted to play a guitar and play music, just something mellow."



Jessica Smith, CNA/CMA

"Reading or writing music and playing an instrument because I've always danced my whole life."



Brittney Calvillo, CNA

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SSM Health St. Anthony Hospital First Hospital in Oklahoma to Offer New PET/CT Imaging Technology



SSM Health St. Anthony Hospital leaders, physicians and imaging team members officially launch the hospital's new PET/CT system.

SSM Health St. Anthony Hospital held a ribbon cutting recently to present the most advanced level PET/CT imaging system currently available.

The Oklahoma City hospital is the first in Oklahoma to install the latest innovation in PET/CT imaging. Combining advanced PET with proven CT technologies, this system enhances diagnostic precision, streamlines workflows and improves patient experiences—setting a new standard in molecular imaging to meet the growing healthcare needs of patients.

“Our physicians and surgeons are immensely skilled in diagnosing and treating patients with the most complex conditions,” said Tammy Powell, President, SSM Health St. Anthony Hospital and Bone & Joint Hospital at St. Anthony. “We are incredibly grateful to our generous donor, who has given these physicians access to the latest technology to ensure even better outcomes for our patients.”

PET/CT scans are considered more accurate than PET or CT scans alone, helping doctors determine the best treatment for a patient. This new system, produced by Siemens Healthineers, delivers high-quality images and more to support a wide range of medical fields, including oncology, cardiology and neurology.

AI-based features on the new system optimize workflows by automating steps in the PET/CT imaging process. This results in faster scans, greater consistency and less manual effort, allowing care teams to focus more on their patients.

Patients benefit from a safe and comfortable imaging experience with this new technology. Its patient-centered design, including mood lighting, helps create a more relaxing atmosphere. Additionally, the new system has a compact footprint, automated energy-saving capabilities and scalable on-site options. This makes it a cost-effective and sustainable investment.



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CROSSWORD: INFECTION PREVENTION AND CONTROL

Across

2. Type of Mask used for Droplet Precautions

6. VRE is the abbreviation for Vancomycin-Resistant _____

8. Antiviral used to treat influenza illness or exposure

10. Respiratory protection required for entry in airborne isolation rooms (5 words)

11. Use this hand hygiene method for C DIFF

13. An example of high-touch surface in patient's environment

16. _____ Healthcare workers can spread the flu to coworkers and patients

17. C DIFF _____ are known to survive at least 90 days in the environment

19. Pandemic flu is caused by this type of influenza virus

21. Contact precautions require _____ upon entering the patient's room

23. Precautions used for known/suspected TB

25. Preferred specimen for detecting VRE colonization

26. This infection causes diarrhea

27. When decontaminating hands using a waterless alcohol product, hands should be rubbed together until they feel _____

28. Type of precautions which assumes everyone is infected

Down

1. Precautions used for C DIFF

2. Vaccination, hand hygiene, PPE use, and safe handling of soiled linen and sharps are _____ measures

3. Methicillin-resistant staph aureus abbrev

4. You should wash your hands at least this many seconds

5. An infection that requires droplet precautions

7. Skin prep agent for line insertion

9. Most effective measure to prevent spread of infection

12. Number of negative specimens required to D/C airborne precautions

14. Healthcare workers should receive this series of vaccines

15. Hepatitis A and C DIFF are spread by this route

18. Most common site of MRSA colonization

20. Tamiflu must be started

within 48 hours of the flu _____ to be effective

22. A Patient with salmonella gastroenteritis requires this type of precautions

24. Hepatitis B & C, and HIV are spread by this

Newsweek Names Stillwater Medical as World's Best Hospital for 5 Consecutive Years

Five years in a row, Newsweek, one of the nation's leading magazines, has ranked Stillwater Medical among the World's Best Hospitals, achieving special recognition as the No. 1 hospital in Oklahoma for patient experience in 2025. "It is incredible to see how our commitment to excellence provides positive outcomes for our patients and creates an environment of superior care. This award is evidence of our employees' tireless dedication to serving the healthcare needs of north-central Oklahoma," said Denise Webber, president of Stillwater Medical.

Stillwater Medical has received the World's Best Hospital designation since 2021 and achieved its highest ranking yet in 2025 as No. 221 in the nation. While six Oklahoma hospitals have been recognized as World's Best, Stillwater Medical received the highest rank in the state for patient experience.

Newsweek and Statista partner to analyze performance of hospitals to determine rankings. The ranking, according to Newsweek, is based on an extensive evaluation process, including an online survey of thousands of medical experts, patient experience data, hospital quality metrics and a Patient-Reported Outcome Measures (PROMs) Implementation Survey. PROMs are defined as standardized, validated questionnaires completed by patients to measure their perception of their functional well-being and quality of life.

"I've been at Stillwater Medical for over 15 years, and I've always appreciated how we work as a team. We talk about our patients' needs and interests and integrate that into our care," said Katie Jones, director of rehabilitation services.

It is this patient-centered care



that has contributed to Stillwater Medical's consistent high rankings in patient experience, exceptional nurse communication, and outstanding rural and community healthcare.

In addition to World's Best Hospital, Stillwater Medical has received other distinguished awards from Press Ganey, Healthgrades, Women's Choice and more. The health system has been a Modern Healthcare Best Places to Work recipient for 13 consecutive years.

Stillwater Medical is a not-for-profit community health system powered by nearly 2,000 employees serving patients across north-central Oklahoma. To learn more or explore career opportunities visit www.stillwatermedical.com.

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Upcoming: 17th Annual Statewide Stroke Conference

Health care professionals are invited to INTEGRIS Health's 17th Annual Charles H. Morgan Interdisciplinary Stroke Conference on Thursday, May 1, 2025, from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. at Moore Norman Technology Center in Oklahoma City.

The conference will feature expert-led sessions on stroke prevention, pre-hospital care, new guidelines, and rehabilitation strategies. It is designed for nurses, physicians, therapists, case managers and EMS providers, with continuing education credits pending approval.

Registration is required, and seating is limited. The event is free to attend.

INTEGRIS Health Edmond Hospital Begins Construction on New Catheterization Lab

State-of-the-art technology will enhance cardiac care in Edmond

INTEGRIS Health Edmond Hospital is proud to announce the construction of a new, cutting-edge cardiac catheterization lab, reinforcing its commitment to providing high-quality, life-saving heart care to the Edmond community. The project, which officially begins this month during American Heart Month, is expected to be completed by late April. During construction, the hospital will continue operating out of its second cath lab, ensuring uninterrupted care.

"At INTEGRIS Health Edmond Hospital, we are dedicated to partnering with people to live healthier lives," says Jon Rule, chief hospital executive. "Our new cardiac catheterization lab brings the latest technology to enhance diagnosis and treatment, ensuring faster, more precise cardiac care. Combined with our team of top INTEGRIS Health Cardiovascular Physicians, this investment strengthens our commitment to providing advanced cardiac care close to home."

This expansion is a response to the growing demand for cardiovascular services, increasing the hospital's capacity to care for patients while introducing next-generation technology that enhances procedural precision and patient comfort. The increased patient volume will also allow for expanded availability of procedures and the addition of new caregivers, further strengthening access to cardiovascular services in Edmond.

New Lab Features Cutting-Edge Technology

The new catheterization lab will feature the Philips Azurion 7 C20 system, which includes advanced imaging, navigation and procedural tools designed to improve efficiency and patient outcomes. This addition will also expand overall capacity, allowing more patients to receive timely cardiac treatments at INTEGRIS Health Edmond Hospital.

Key features include:

- **Better Imaging Angles:** The table can tilt to give doctors clearer views of the heart.



- **Sharper Images:** Provides high-quality, detailed scans for better diagnosis.

- **Real-Time Guidance:** Helps doctors navigate with precision during procedures.

- **Hands-On Control:** Doctors can manage the entire procedure from the bedside without interruptions.

- **Safer X-rays:** Reduces radiation exposure while keeping image quality high.

- **3D Views:** Creates detailed 3D images to help doctors work more accurately.

- **Smarter Treatment Decisions:** Uses advanced tools to guide doctors in choosing the best treatment.

- **Versatile Use:** Designed for multiple heart and blood vessel procedures.

"Adding this new heart cath lab at INTEGRIS Health Edmond Hospital is not just an investment in infrastructure and advanced technology. It's an investment in the lives of our community. It ensures timely care, being able to provide life-saving interventions close to home, which can make a difference in improving patient



outcomes and saving lives," says Santosh Prabhu, M.D., board-certified interventional cardiologist with INTEGRIS Health Cardiovascular Physicians.

INTEGRIS Health Cardiovascular Physicians continue to provide the most advanced heart care for Oklahomans. Should a patient require more specialized treatment, we can seamlessly and promptly provide access to advanced therapies such as ECMO and LVAD. This comprehensive approach ensures that patients

receive the highest level of cardiovascular care, whether they require routine procedures or complex interventions.

INTEGRIS Health Edmond Hospital looks forward to unveiling the new cath lab in April and continuing to deliver exceptional, patient-centered cardiovascular care.

For more information related to cath lab construction, please contact INTEGRIS Health Cardiology Edmond at 405-552-2820.

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A Family Legacy in Caring for Others: OCCC's Nursing Sisters

For three sisters — Cindy Milam, Kay Wetmore, and Robin McMurry — health care education is more than just a career; it's a family calling. Since joining Oklahoma City Community College's (OCCC) Health Professions division, the sisters have worked side by side, teaching and mentoring thousands of students who now serve in essential roles in patient care across Oklahoma and beyond.

Last spring, their efforts culminated in graduating the largest nursing class in the college's history. Now, with Milam preparing to retire in the coming months, the sisters reflect on their family's journey at OCCC.

Where it all began

The sisters' story begins with their parents, Judy and Jim Archer, who instilled a strong sense of service, hard work and family values in their children. Growing up, they all worked together in their family's office supply store, learning the ins and outs of business.

Their mother, Judy, was the first in the family to attend college at OCCC, earning her business degree and inspiring a path for her daughters to follow.

Today, three of the four daughters — Dr. Robin McMurry, Professor Kay Wetmore, and Assistant Dean and Director Cindy Milam— are nursing faculty members at OCCC. The fourth, Chris Eskew, is a librarian at a Yukon elementary school.

From students to teachers

Each of the sisters began studies at OCCC, with McMurry graduating from the nursing program in 1997, Wetmore in 1998, and Milam completing her prerequisite courses before transferring to a four-year institution.

Wetmore, who began her teaching career at OCCC in 2005, specializes in obstetrics, operating room and general medical-surgical nursing.

In 2006, McMurry returned to OCCC as a nursing professor to give back to the college that helped her succeed.

"I decided to work here because I graduated from the program, wanted to give back to students, and the schedule was a great fit for me," she said.

McMurry later encouraged her older sister, Milam, to join the college as well. Milam came aboard in 2011 and now serves as the assistant dean of the Health Professions division and the nursing program director.

With the state of Oklahoma facing a critical shortage of nurses and other health care professionals, the sisters stepped up to meet the challenge by training the future workforce.

"There's a critical shortage of nurses and respiratory therapists," McMurry said. "The pandemic highlighted just how serious the need is, and we're working hard to help Oklahoma improve its position."

A lasting legacy

Together, the Archer family has made a difference in Oklahoma's health care industry, teaching hundreds of future nurses and passing on the family's passion for helping others.

"I love seeing the students after they graduate in the hospitals where they work," McMurry said.

In 2018, OCCC established the Jim & Judy Archer and Ed &



Eva Pope Nursing Scholarship in honor of the late Jim and Judy Archer.

"We just wanted to do something to pay tribute to the life that he lived, which was continually in the service of others, and we felt like it was a good way to honor him and my mom," McMurry said.

What started as a single student award soon grew into a network of students and faculty. Starting in January 2025, 15 OCCC nursing students will be awarded \$1,000 toward their tuition.

"Seeing students make a difference in the community is what I love most about working with them," Wetmore said.

Passing on the torch

After more than a decade of service, Milam is set to retire from OCCC in Spring 2025. Her leadership and dedication to her students have played a key role in shaping the careers of countless health care professionals. In 2021, Milam received an OCCC Employee of the Year award, recognizing her commitment to excellence in education.

Wetmore's daughter, Madalyn Wetmore, also works at OCCC and shares her mother's passion for helping those in need. She serves as the project coordinator for the Office of Student Affairs, managing the Higher Education Prevention Services (HEPS) program. In this role, she advocates for substance abuse prevention and recovery services as a vital community resource.

"Our family legacy lives on in the students we produce," McMurry said.



OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY

NEWS RELEASE

Oklahoma State University, Oklahoma Nurses Association announce new program for nurse leaders

In a unique partnership with the Oklahoma Nurses Association, Oklahoma State University will provide advanced education in business, management and leadership skills designed for emerging and experienced nurse leaders.

Set to launch in Fall 2025, this visionary program leverages expertise from across the OSU system in a first-of-its-kind collaboration between academic and industry leaders from OSU Nursing, the Spears School of Business, the Center for Health Sciences and the ONA.

The OSU Nursing Leadership Program offers two innovative learning opportunities to help nurses bridge the clinician-to-executive gap. Both are aligned with American Organization for Nursing Leadership competencies and can be taken independently or in succession to build upon previous knowledge.

The first track, the Nurse Empowerment Series, is a micro-credential program that equips nurses with essential nursing leadership skills, including administrative leadership, innovation, and workforce and financial management. Learners acquire nursing leadership competencies in a time-efficient and cost-effective way, through both online and in-person experiential learning opportunities that foster networking with peers. The Nurse Empowerment Series is accessible to nurses with or without an undergraduate degree.

For a more in-depth experience, the Nursing Leadership Graduate Certificate provides advanced leadership training. This graduate certificate can serve as a springboard to a master's or doctorate, or as a valuable, standalone achievement that facilitates professional growth.

"ONA is excited to partner with OSU on two nurse leadership opportunities," Oklahoma Nurses Association Jane Nelson said. "We want to support nurses in developing their skills to become good leaders."

ONA and OSU received two grant awards totaling \$30,000 from Upskill Oklahoma to support the program's creation. Upskill Oklahoma, a program of the Oklahoma Regents for Higher Education, forges partnerships to tailor education to Oklahoma's market needs and aims to elevate the state's talent pipeline through targeted learning with micro-credentials.

The Nursing Leadership Program is the catalyst for creating long-term relationships across OSU colleges and between OSU, the ONA and Oklahoma's hospitals and health care employers. These collaborations will have a positive impact on Oklahoma's nursing workforce and health care outcomes. OSU's game-changing partnership with the ONA will establish OSU as the state's premier authority on nurse leadership and management training.

The team developing the program includes Jane Nelson, CEO of the Oklahoma Nurses Association; Diane Cannon, assistant professor, and



White Coat Ceremony

Alana Cluck, director of OSU Nursing, from the OSU College of Education and Human Sciences; Bavette Miller, chair of the School of Health Care Administration at the OSU Center of Health Sciences; Bryan Edwards, professor of management, and Marjorie Erdmann, director for the Center of Health Systems Innovation from the Spears Schools of Business.

"Because nurse leadership demands a diverse skill set - including managing personnel and finances, overseeing clinical care and compliance, and driving strategic improvements - nurses often seek training from multiple sources," Erdmann said. "Our approach brings together experts from ONA and across OSU to consolidate the best leadership practices into a single, streamlined micro-credential or graduate certificate."

In short, the goal of the OSU Nursing Leadership program is to equip nurses with practical, immediately applicable leadership skills through a high-impact program.

"The nursing profession is facing significant challenges both globally and within Oklahoma, characterized by critical shortages impacting health care delivery," Cannon said. "Leadership training plays a crucial role in addressing the nursing crisis by equipping nurses with the skills needed to improve health care systems, support their teams, lower costs and improve patient outcomes."

The OSU Nurse Leadership Program builds on a Bachelor of Science in Nursing launched on the Stillwater campus in 2023 to help address a nursing shortage in Oklahoma and across the country. The first class of OSU Nurses will graduate in May 2025.

For more information about the OSU Nursing Leadership Program, contact Diane Cannon at diane.cannon@okstate.edu or visit <https://okla.st/NurseLeader>.

OU Health Sciences Opens Innovative Lab Space

The University of Oklahoma Health Sciences recently announced the opening of more than 29,100 square feet of new laboratory space at University Research Park in Oklahoma City. The innovative facility represents an \$11 million investment in OU's strategic plan to become a top-tier research-driven academic health center.

"By strengthening our campus-wide research infrastructure with investment in new laboratory space, in parallel with advanced technology, we are ensuring that the University of Oklahoma academic health system continues to be at the forefront of scientific discovery," said OU Health Sciences Senior Vice President and Provost Gary Raskob, Ph.D.

The space includes four large open-concept laboratories and 86 workstations, often called benches, to support as many as 144 scientists. There are



OKNT Puzzle Answers: Infection Prevention and Control

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dedicated areas for microscopy, cell culture, ultra-low temperature storage and specialized instrumentation. A conference room and collaboration areas are designed to foster interdisciplinary teamwork, teaching and mentoring.

The lab space is designed to support team science, which is quickly becoming the future of research.

"This new space reflects a modern approach to research, intentionally structured to bring together researchers, clinicians and students in a shared environment that accelerates discovery and its translation into real-world applications," said OU Health Sciences Vice President for Research Darrin Akins, Ph.D.

Expanding research infrastructure is also an investment in people, said OU College of Medicine Executive Dean Ian Dunn, M.D., noting the college recently welcomed the founding chair of the new Department of Molecular Genetics and Genome Sciences.

"This facility will allow us to not only advance knowledge and accelerate the path to new therapeutics, but will it help us attract top-tier researchers, postdoctoral students and graduate students to Oklahoma, as well as retain our world-class faculty," Dunn said. "This new space is an investment in our future."

The facility is made possible by a \$55 million bond, approved by the OU Board of Regents, to renovate and modernize 96,000 square feet of laboratory space across OU Health Sciences.

In fiscal year 2024, OU Health Sciences researchers earned over \$217.5 million in sponsored awards, including \$75.2 million from the National Institutes of Health. Last week, OU Health Sciences announced its new Blue Ridge Institute ranking of No. 102 in the nation for NIH funding, a rise of 20 spots from the previous federal fiscal year. This places OU Health Sciences among the top 3.6% of all 2,838 institutions and entities that receive NIH funding.

OCU's Kramer School of Nursing Helping Address Nursing Shortages

story by
Van Mitchell, Staff Writer

Nursing shortages continue to affect every state, especially in the southwestern United States, where schools like Oklahoma City University's Kramer School of Nursing have taken innovative steps to help stem that shortage gap.

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Oklahoma ranks 46th in the U.S. for nurses per capita with just 7.5 nurses per 1,000 residents. 2022 statistics indicate there were 30,320 RNs statewide. In comparison, there are 9.22 nurses per 1,000 population in the U.S. to respond to the growing needs of the aging population.

"Oklahoma is ranked 46th in nurses per capita, so we're on the bottom end of having qualified licensed nurses to serve the population," Casey Cassidy, Ph.D., RN, CHSE, Associate Dean & Associate Professor at OCU's Kramer School of Nursing (KSN) said. "We rank below the national average in a lot of areas of our health outcomes as well."

"A lot of it right now, sadly to say, it's left over from the pandemic," she said. "A lot of nurse's report that they've had increased workload due to the pandemic, and that causes high turnover rates. It's projected that about 20% of licensed nurses will leave the workforce within the next five years. Cited reasons for leaving the workforce include retirements, but also younger nurses leaving due to insufficient staffing and burnout. Additionally, the AACN states the demand for registered nurses is continuing to grow due to emphasis on preventative care, the baby-boomer population living longer, and increased rates of chronic conditions."

"There's a lack of nurse educators across the nation, and it's hard to find qualified faculty, and so that narrows the pipeline," she said. "I think you're seeing, because of those two reasons, the shortage persisting."

Cassidy said OCU has launched several degree programs, trying to attract more students to the nursing profession.

"In 2024, we started our 12-month accelerated Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) program



Oklahoma City University's Kramer School of Nursing provides hands-on training for its students (pictured) to prepare them for their nursing career.

so students with a previous degree (associate's or a bachelor's) can, if they're qualified, start the program, and graduate within a year, and be ready to sit for licensure," she said.

Due to the intensity of the accelerated BSN, it is recommended that students do not seek employment for the duration of enrollment in the program.

Students will need to commit an average of 32 hours per week to class, and lab/clinical/simulation time. Students should also account for additional study time outside of class and lab/clinical/simulation.

Cassidy said OCU is committed to also preparing nurse educators.

"In 2024 we started our Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) nursing education option, so nurses can come and learn those skills to be educators and build on a previous master's degree that they already have," she said.

The Nurse Educator track admits nurses who hold master's degrees in nursing. The track is focused on further development of professional nurse educators to guide and monitor the preparation of diverse learners to enter the profession.

Program tracks range from 30-32 credit hours, post-master's, and include practicum hours centering on adding depth to the nurse's area of practice. The DNP empowers the advanced practice nurse to lead innovative application of evidence into practice to address system-level issues, improve health outcomes, and/or strengthen health care systems.

Cassidy said KSN has seen an increase in enrollment from the two new degree programs.

"We did see an increase in 2024, and we're hoping to carry that momentum forward in 2025," she said. "We want to prepare high quality RNs for the workforce."

Cassidy said OCU continues to look at ways to prepare the next generation of nurses.

"I think that our workforce and higher education is constantly changing,

and in order to meet the demands of both sectors, it is important to stay innovative," she said. "Whether that's looking at how degree plans are created, looking at what the student population is saying what they want, but still maintaining high quality standards of our curriculum."

Cassidy said higher education is sometimes not attainable because of financial reasons.

"Another thing that we've done recently is we've lowered the program cost, and Dean Gina Crawford has secured additional scholarships," Cassidy said. "And that's really to take the burden off our students."

Cassidy added, "Here at Kramer, we have focused on addressing potential barriers for students in a holistic manner. This past year, we helped students be successful and enter the workforce faster by implementing innovative curriculum design, student support services, lowering the cost of the program, and providing additional financial support through transfer scholarships and/or donor scholarship."

(AS PUBLISHED IN THE 2024 EDUCATION GUIDE TO NURSING)

REDLANDS COMMUNITY COLLEGE PREPARING NURSING GRADUATES FOR WORKFORCE

A common desire among nursing students is to help others.

A common desire among nursing students is to help others.

"I chose to pursue a career in nursing because of my innate desire to assist others in any way possible," said Kassidy Brinlee, a Redlands nursing student and a student ambassador. "Witnessing my grandmother's battle with dementia deeply impacted me and highlighted the importance of helping others facing similar challenges."

Redlands Community College in El Reno, Okla., gives these students the start toward a successful and fulfilling career in the health care field where they impact the lives of patients and families every day. With a 100% job placement rate, Redlands offers a two-year degree program that prepares graduates to successfully take the National Council Licensure Exam (NCLEX) for licensure as a registered nurse and to enter the workforce immediately.

"The benefit of earning an associate degree in nursing at Redlands is that graduates are well-prepared for the licensure exam that will allow them to begin working quickly," said Dr. Jalelah Abdul-Raheem, director of Redlands' Nursing Program. "Once they have completed this stage, they are able to focus on their career as a registered nurse or continue their education at a university to earn a bachelor's of nursing degree."

Redlands has two nursing program options: the traditional RN program and a track for Licensed Practical Nurses (LPNs). Students who are enrolled in the LPN-to-RN cohort earn articulation credits in the first semester, allowing them to graduate in three semesters instead of four. This helps get them out of the classroom and into the community where they can do the most good.

Hollye Edmonds has taken a different path to the nursing field. After spending 15 years as a pre-k teacher, Edmonds decided to pursue a new career that still allows her to help others.

Returning to school can be daunting, but Edmonds has found a supportive environment at Redlands. "From the beginning, I was offered help and guidance from enrolling in courses to securing financial aid when needed and every area in between. Redlands has made the process of being a student easy and has mapped out clear pathways to success and supports their students on their journey."

Redlands is a solid, affordable choice for students because of the scholarships available as well as the personal attention and opportunities it provides. The college's partnerships with several area health facilities provide students with challenging, hands-on experience during their clinical rotations.

"Fortunately, our location just outside of Oklahoma City gives our students the opportunity to serve in both rural and urban areas, exposing them to the different types of nursing care available and helping them figure out what is the best fit for them" Abdul-Raheem said.

After spending a decade in pre-hospital health care, Jeremy Pool was ready to expand his experience with a greater focus on patient care. He had previously earned an associate degree from Redlands as well as other medical certifications, so he wanted to complete the college's nursing program.



Redlands Community College nursing students gain valuable experience in the campus' simulation lab.

"I find the staff very helpful and down to earth and my college credits transferred seamlessly here," Pool said. "The faculty goes above and beyond to make sure you have the tools and resources to succeed in the program. They are with you every step of the way to answer questions, address problems or concerns, and assist with test taking strategies and note taking."

With a Cooperative Arrangement Development Grant from Native American Serving Non-Tribal Institutions (NASNTI) Part A to support outreach and retention efforts and additional funding to update campus simulation labs, the Redlands Nursing Program is providing a high-quality learning experience led by dedicated and well-trained faculty.

"At Redlands, everyone is friendly, and the faculty is excited to be part of students' lives," said Dr. Abdul-Raheem. "We are committed to helping our nursing students succeed, and our faculty and staff are dedicated to supporting them throughout their time in the program."

Pool agreed, saying "I feel the faculty I work with daily make an impact on my success in their own way. Professor Newell makes lectures and test prepping always engaging and interesting, while Danaee, my success coach, keeps me accountable of my work and gives me great advice on how to approach my test taking and time organization."

The five-year cooperative grant is designed for Native American and low-income students and is 100% funded by the U.S. Department of Education as part of the NASNTI program.

Visit <https://redlandsc.edu/nursing-program> for more information and to apply for the program and scholarships. The scholarship application is due May

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(AS PUBLISHED IN THE 2024 EDUCATION GUIDE TO NURSING)

Inaugural White Coat Ceremony Celebrates OSU Nursing Students

Twenty-six OSU students commemorated the start of their professional nursing education at the university's inaugural White Coat Ceremony.

The ceremony, held on April 3 in the Great Hall of the Nancy Randolph Davis Building, marked a significant milestone for the students and the nursing program at OSU. The program, developed to address a nursing shortage in Oklahoma and across the country, welcomed its first class of professional nursing students in the fall of 2023. In remarks given during the ceremony, Nursing Program Director Dr. Alana Cluck said the ceremony was meaningful to both the nursing students and OSU.

"This official White Coat Ceremony symbolizes the start of your education in the science and art of nursing," Cluck said. "When you put on your white coat, wear it with pride as you are not only representing Oklahoma State University but furthermore the nursing profession."

Although the nursing degree program is still in its first year at OSU, Cluck said she expects the 26 students recognized to be the first of many OSU-educated nurses. Eighty-six students are enrolled in the program for the fall 2024 semester, and Cluck expects the program to grow to 300 students by its third year.

Students pursuing a nursing degree must complete an additional application and pass prerequisite courses and take an exam. Cluck said the process will ensure admitted students are more likely to complete the program and pass the National Council Licensure Examination, which is required to become a licensed nurse.

Once admitted, students spend their final two years in the professional program at OSU studying and gaining hands-on experience. The program is rigorous, and by graduation, professional nursing students will have gone through two years of in-lab simulations and clinical rotations focused on critical care, medical-surgical nursing, pediatrics, obstetrics, community and leadership.

"They spend time in the lab learning and practicing skills, as well as working through simulation patient care scenarios with manikins and virtual reality," Cluck said. "Clinical rotations include long-term care facilities and hospital settings."

For students, the White Coat Ceremony represented the beginning of their health care education. However, Cluck noted that the students' new white coats carried on a decades-old tradition in the medical field and symbolized knowledge, professionalism and hope.

"These coats are worn by a multitude of medical providers as a classic symbol of medical knowledge," Cluck said. "It's as if to automatically say to a patient, 'I am here to help.'"

Learn more about Oklahoma State University's Bachelor of Science in Nursing at <https://okla.st/BSN>.



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