

# Oklahoma's Nursing Times

## OU Nursing Teams Earn Excellence Awards

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# OU Health Nursing Teams Earn Four Workplace Excellence Awards

*Awards recognize teams in pediatric critical care, pediatric nursing education, early-phase cancer research and transitional care.*

OU Health nursing teams earned four of the five Oklahoma Nurses Association (ONA) Excellence in the Workplace Environment Awards for 2026, statewide honors recognizing work environments that support nursing practice and advance patient care.

The awards recognize teams at Oklahoma Children's OU Health, OU Health Stephenson Cancer Center and care coordination services across the health system, reflecting the diverse settings in which OU Health nurses care for patients and families, advance their practice, and contribute to clinical care, education and research.

## The four OU Health recipients are:

Pediatric Intensive Care Unit, Oklahoma Children's Pediatric Education Team, Oklahoma Children's Phase 1 Nursing Team, Stephenson Cancer Center Transitional Care Management, OU Health

"I am incredibly proud of our nurses and the teams that support them every day," said Stefanie Beavers, DNP, R.N., NEA-BC, chief nurse executive at OU Health. "When we invest in our nurses and support them in their practice, we strengthen the care we provide to patients and families. This recognition from the Oklahoma Nurses Association reflects the dedication, innovation and relentless pursuit of excellence that define our nursing workforce."

The ONA presents the Excellence in the Workplace Environment Award to organizations that create positive work environments for nurses. Recipients must demonstrate an innovative and effective program, approach or work environment that promotes excellent nursing care and supports nurses in their practice.

## Nurses Advancing Care Across Specialties

From pediatric critical care and nursing education to cancer research and care coordination, the four award-winning teams support patients, families and fellow nurses in different ways across OU Health.

The Pediatric Intensive Care Unit cares for critically ill and injured children whose conditions can change quickly. Its nurses work alongside physicians and pediatric specialists while keeping children and families at the center of care.

The Pediatric Education Team helps nurses at Oklahoma Children's build skills, expand knowledge and stay prepared to care for children with specialized needs. The team supports nurses who are new to pediatrics as well as those advancing their expertise.

At Stephenson Cancer Center, the Phase I Nursing Team cares for patients participating in early-phase clinical trials. The work requires close adherence to research protocols, interdisciplinary collaboration and patient education as researchers study new cancer treatments.

The Transitional Care Management Team helps patients move from the hospital to home or another care setting. By coordinating follow-up care and communication, the team helps patients and families navigate a critical stage of recovery.

As the University of Oklahoma's academic health system, OU Health supports nurses across specialties and career stages, with opportunities to contribute to patient care, education and research while advancing their knowledge and professional practice.

The 2026 ONA Nursing Awards were presented Sept. 10 at the association's annual awards luncheon in Tulsa.

For more information about nursing careers and leadership opportunities at OU Health, visit [OUHealth.com/Nursing](https://OUHealth.com/Nursing).

## ON THE COVER

Oklahoma Children's Pediatric Education Team





Oklahoma Children's Pediatric Intensive Care Unit



ABOVE: Phase 1 Nursing Team  
Stephenson Cancer Center



LEFT: OU Health  
Transitional Care Management

# OMRF Flu Shots Protect Against More Than Influenza

Undecided about whether to get a flu shot this fall? If you're on the fence, studies linking flu shots to diminished rates of dementia may help you make the call.

Research led by the University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston found that people ages 65 and older who received the flu vaccine have a significantly lower risk of developing Alzheimer's than those who didn't.

"No one seems to know exactly why this is," Hal Scofield, M.D., a physician-scientist at the Oklahoma Medical Research Foundation. "We do know that a severe infection like the flu can cause systemic inflammation, which can travel to the brain and damage brain cells over time. So, the prevailing theory is that preventing the severe infection also protects your brain against dementia."

In the Texas study, published in 2022, researchers examined data for nearly 1 million senior citizens nationwide, with study subjects evenly split between those who were vaccinated and those who weren't. None showed indicators of cognitive impairment before the study began.

Researchers found that 8.5% of people who were unvaccinated developed Alzheimer's over the next four years, compared to 5.1% of those who'd received the flu shot.

"That equates to a 40% lower risk," said Scofield, an immunologist at OMRF who also serves as associate chief of staff for research at the Oklahoma City VA Medical Center.

A subsequent study by the same team found that a high-dose flu shot provided even greater protection against Alzheimer's.

"For most people, the immune system becomes less effective at fighting infection around age 65," Scofield said. "That's why the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends a high-dose flu vaccine at that age. The high-dose version is four times stronger than a regular flu shot."

Alzheimer's is the most common form of dementia, affecting more than 7 million Americans ages 65 and older. That number, reflecting 1 in 9 people in that age group, is expected to double by 2050.

Hal Scofield, M.D. is a physician-scientist at the Oklahoma Medical Research Foundation



Turns out, another vaccine also reduces dementia risk. A landmark study of health records of nearly 300,000 older adults in Wales found that those who received the shingles vaccine had a 20% lower risk of developing dementia over a seven-year follow-up period. Subsequent studies have made similar findings.

Again, scientists can't say precisely why. However, they suspect that preventing shingles avoids nerve inflammation, blood vessel damage and micro-strokes, all of which raise the risk of cognitive decline. Like flu shots, the shingles vaccine appears to stimulate the immune system more broadly, which might help the body manage neuroinflammation more effectively.

"I suspect future studies will try to better understand this phenomenon," Scofield said. "But the evidence seems clear: Getting vaccinated is one of the best things an older person can do to avoid dementia."

## OMRF receives \$3.2 million to study common cause of heart failure

With a new \$3.2 million federal grant, an Oklahoma Medical Research Foundation scientist will search for a nonsurgical treatment for a degenerative heart valve disease that primarily affects older adults.

In aortic stenosis, the aortic valve narrows to about one-third its normal size, preventing normal blood flow from the heart to the rest of the body. According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, it affects 5% of Americans age 65 and older, with disease prevalence increasing to 1 in 8 by age 75.

Currently, the only remedy for aortic stenosis is replacement of the aortic valve. The OMRF lab of Jasim Ahamed, Ph.D., has studied the disease for more than a decade. He has found a major culprit to be a protein called TGF-beta, which becomes activated by high shear stress caused by diseases like aortic stenosis.

The National Institutes of Health has awarded Ahamed a five-year grant to continue investigating the protein's role in the disease. The grant is a renewal of a previous five-year NIH award.

"Too much TGF-beta can cause the aortic valve to become increasingly narrow and stiff," Ahamed said. "We hypothesize that aortic stenosis begins a cycle in which TGF-beta is overactivated. As aortic stenosis progresses without intervention, the valve opening continues to shrink, and over time the heart itself becomes scarred and can no longer pump normally. Eventually this leads to heart failure."

With this new funding, Ahamed will investigate the underlying mechanisms that prompt TGF-beta to become overactive and cause aortic stenosis. Ultimately, his research could pave the way for a drug that would prevent the protein from becoming activated.

Dr. Courtney Griffin, OMRF's vice president of research, said Ahamed's research could shift the understanding of aortic stenosis – and how to treat it.

"Dr. Ahamed's experiments will test whether you can slow or even halt the disease by blocking TGF-beta," said Griffin. "While it's still relatively early, his research has game-changing potential."



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# Treating the Heart as Well as the Patient

By Vickie Jenkins, Staff Writer

As a child, Justin Jeffers dreamed of becoming rich and famous. Whether starring in movies, performing on Broadway or singing like the rest of his musical family, he imagined a life in the spotlight. Today, he has found something even more meaningful, a career dedicated to making a difference in the lives of others through compassion, kindness and laughter.

Justin has served at Mercy Hospital Logan County in Guthrie since October 2022. He also works shifts at Mercy Hospital Oklahoma City and Mercy Hospital Kingfisher, but says the smaller hospital in Guthrie offers something special.

"I've always enjoyed making people feel good about themselves," Justin said. "I think smiles and laughter are just as important as medicine. I always tell my patients, 'I promise I'm a very good nurse, but I believe laughter helps people heal.'"

Originally from northeast Missouri, Justin attended North Central Missouri College in Trenton before beginning his nursing career. His first nursing position was at Pleasant Valley Manor, a long-term care facility in Liberty, Missouri, where he spent 10 years caring for residents.

"Most of my career has been in geriatrics," he said. "I love the elderly population. They have stories, and they are the keepers of history. I love sitting down and listening to their experiences because they've lived through things I'll never experience."

Growing up as one of eight boys had a tremendous influence on the nurse he would become. His mother, a registered nurse, taught her sons lessons that continue to guide his life today.

"She always told us, 'Treat everyone with kindness because you never know when you're entertaining angels,'" Justin said. "I've carried that with me my whole career."

He believes nursing is about much more than medical knowledge. "You have to have empathy," he said. "People are in the hospital during some of the hardest moments of their lives. If they're grouchy, I don't take it personally. I'd probably be grouchy too. You have to put yourself in their situation."

Justin is known for doing the little things that make patients feel cared for. After attending cosmetology school following nursing school, he often cuts patients' hair, trims beards and gently untangles long hair for those unable to care for themselves.

"I would hope that if I were ever sick, someone would be kind enough to help me shave, wash my clothes or fix my hair," he said. "If my patients don't have someone to do those things, then I will."

Those acts of kindness have not gone unnoticed. Justin has received the prestigious DAISY Award twice during his time at Mercy. His first recognition came after quietly taking a patient's clothing home to wash because the patient had no family nearby. His second award followed a nomination from a patient who wrote that Justin "treated my heart, not just my illness."

"I don't do it for recognition," he said. "I do it because it's the right thing to do."

Justin describes himself as dependable and hardworking. "My strength and my weakness are actually the same," he said with a laugh. "You'll never hear me tell someone no. Even when I'm overwhelmed, if someone needs help, I'm going."

His faith is woven into every aspect of his life. Raised in a Methodist home by a preacher father and parents who sang in a gospel quartet, Jeffers says those early years built the foundation for who he is today.

"I've prayed the same prayer every morning for 24 years," he said. "I thank God for giving me a job and for giving me a body strong enough



Justin Jeffers, LPN, brings compassion, and laughter to every patient he serves at Mercy Hospital in Logan County in Guthrie.

to work. Then I ask Him for wisdom, courage and knowledge to be the best nurse I can be, and I always ask Him to let me bring a smile to someone's face."

His close-knit family remains one of his greatest blessings. Whenever they gather, they often end the evening around the piano singing gospel music together.

"My mom raised her boys right," he said. "She taught us to work hard, never judge people because you don't know their story, and always treat others with kindness."

Justin shares his home in Guthrie with his husband, Brian, and their two beloved 15-year-old Yorkshire Terriers, Charlie and Bayla. On his days off, he enjoys cleaning, organizing and decorating his home, even operating a small organizing business because, he says, creating order is relaxing.

Looking ahead, Justin has begun working toward his Bachelor of Science in Nursing and hopes to continue advancing his education. Yet no matter what titles he may earn, his greatest goal remains unchanged.

"I want people to remember me as someone who was kind, hardworking and just overall a good person," he said.

After spending time with Justin Jeffers, it is easy to understand why patients, coworkers and families remember him so fondly. His compassion reaches far beyond medicine. Whether sharing a laugh, combing a patient's hair or simply offering a listening ear, Jeffers lives out his belief that the best nurses don't just care for illnesses—they care for people.

# NURSE TALK

## Mercy Hospital Guthrie

*What is the most daring thing you've ever done?*



"Parasailing in the Bahamas!"  
Teresa Barney, RN



"Becoming a nurse."  
Andrew Allen, LPN



"Jumped out of a hay loft to tackle a fugitive!"(Bounty hunting)  
Brina Haddy, RN



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# THE SURVIVAL OF THE SNO CONE MAN

## A Liver Transplant Success Story



For as long as he can remember, Phillip Eagleton of Claremore, Okla. has been known as “The Sno Cone Man” by the locals in his hometown. “I typically work a thousand events a year,” he claims. “Making sno cones for schools, businesses, churches, birthday parties – you name it.”

It has been his passion project of sorts, turning him into a local celebrity over the years. But these days, Phillip is celebrated for something else – overcoming a devastating medical diagnosis that almost took his life.

**Liver Disease**

Phillip has a family history of liver disease, claiming the lives of both his father and younger brother. But he says it’s always shocking when it happens to you. “I thought I was just gaining weight,” he laughs. “But as my belly got harder and more swollen, I knew it was something more serious.”

He was diagnosed with late-stage cirrhosis of the liver, meaning a significant amount of his healthy liver tissue had turned to scar tissue, preventing his liver from working properly. “I had a bout of hepatitis in my 20s,” he reveals. “They think that is when this whole thing started. I just didn’t find out about it until I was in my 60s.”

Paracentesis is a minimally invasive procedure that uses a needle or catheter to drain excess fluid from the abdominal cavity. “It got to the point that I was needing to have this procedure done on a weekly basis,” admits Phillip. “Each time, they would remove approximately eight liters of fluid from my body.”



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His doctors told him he needed a liver transplant, or he would die. They referred him to the Nazih Zuhdi Transplant Institute at INTEGRIS Health Baptist Medical Center in Oklahoma City.

Transplant or Die

His first meeting with Joykumar Patel, M.D., a transplant hepatologist at INTEGRIS Health, happened on Oct. 21, 2025. “When I first met Phillip, he was critically ill with advanced liver disease. His condition had progressed to the point where a liver transplant was truly his only chance for survival,” remarks Patel. “I told him he needed to go directly to the emergency room and we began testing that day.”

The MELD (Model for End-Stage Liver Disease) score is a numerical scale ranging from 6 to 40 used to assess the severity of chronic liver disease. It estimates a patient’s risk of dying within the next three months and is the primary tool used by transplant networks to prioritize adults on the liver transplant waiting list.

“My MELD score had gone from a 14 to a 29. That’s how sick I was,” Phillip remembers. “I knew it was do or die time. I was in desperate need of a transplant.”

He didn’t have to wait too long. An organ became available in about two months’ time.

Phillip received his liver transplant on Dec. 16, 2025. John Duffy, M.D., is a hepatobiliary and abdominal transplant surgeon. He performed the procedure.

“Phillip was extremely sick, but the transplant went very well. The donor liver was an excellent match and seeing him back to enjoying life is exactly why we do this work,” states Duffy.

Giving Back

More than six months post-surgery, 64-year-old Phillip says he

feels better than he has in years. “I feel like a 20-year-old again,” he exclaims. His main focus now is giving back to the care team and the community that supported him and living a life worthy of the second chance he was so graciously given. “I owe somebody a huge favor and big hug in heaven. I have written to my donor family and hope to hear back from them one day, if and when they are ready.”

As for his sno cone stand, Phillip sold the company in 2024 when he got sick. But he’s back at it today, volunteering to make sno cones for any and everyone who wants one. “It’s the least I can do for the people who cared for me, prayed for me and helped me pull through this ordeal. I feel I owe it to them. I owe them my life.”



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# WISDOM WHERE IT COUNTS

## RN helps families and patients

By James Coburn, staff writer

Omari Harris is all about family and helping senior adults live their best. He did not do a traditional RN path in the beginning of his career.

"After I finished high school, I said I'm going to stick to my gut. And I'm going to be able to take care of my mom. I'm going to take care of my grandma. I said, 'I think if I go to nursing school, I could take better care of my family. I could give back more to the people around me who've helped me to get where I am,'" Harris said.

Born and raised in Oklahoma City, he became an LPN after graduating from Central Oklahoma College. Two years later he enrolled in the LPN to RN career ladder program at Oklahoma City Community College.

"It was a rough journey, but I enjoyed it very humbly," said Harris, 30.

Today, Harris is a registered nurse serving as case manager/infection prevention, at Wildewood Skilled Nursing & Therapy, located in Oklahoma City. This is his fourth year serving Wildewood.

"It feels good to work here. Occasionally, I come across teachers that I've known throughout the community, or even family members of family friends," Harris said.

He aspires to go into management with corporate owner Bridges Health. There is much he can learn at Wildewood Skilled Nursing & Therapy on a daily basis by being around his management team. One of his colleagues recently advanced from being a registered nurse to a nurse practitioner. She and several RNs and LPNs inspire Harris, he said.

"We always share a lot of knowledge amongst each other. And so, it feels like a respectful rivalry. They keep me going. They keep me motivated," Harris said. "And then, you have the actual residents in this facility that are some of the funniest and wildest people that I've ever met."

They tell him stories about their lives, all the things they remember and funny moments.

"I just really enjoy that — hearing their history. Some of it is similar to my grandmother's history because she grew up in Oklahoma, too," Harris said with a smile.

Many of the residents need advocates, he continued. Some have outlived their close family members who would otherwise participate and care for them.

"They meet people here. And I like what I do, and it does keep me here," Harris said. "But respectively, in the future I feel like I will move on and further my education and look for opportunities or move up in management."

He said his experiences at Wildewood Skilled Nursing & Therapy will always be a driving factor in how he treats every client or resident he meets in life. Harris will always be an advocate.

He may meet the strongest grandma, auntie, or uncle, whoever it may be. And they might not have the courage to say to their family what they really feel, Harris explained.

He met a resident who loved her family, her home, and grandchildren. The woman was there for rehabilitation. She wanted to be at home but knew being at home could cause issues she could not handle on her own. Her family wanted to



Omari Harris, RN, Wildewood Skilled Nursing & Therapy is a man for all seasons as a nurse.

care for her at home. But they couldn't always be at home with her when working five days a week to keep a roof over their heads and provide food in the house.

But the grandmother knew going home would likely be a burden, even if her family loves her. She also knew that being a resident in the long-term care setting would give her 24-7 care. Her family could visit frequently, and she could still have peace of mind.

"She just couldn't really bring herself to explain that to her family," Harris said.

Harris said it is not easy for him to relate the grandma's choice to her family not to live at home anymore.

Harris explains that Wildewood Skilled Nursing & Therapy is there for days when patients and families face uneasy realities of life.

"You're not hurting anybody. You're not doing anything wrong by allowing your loved one to stay here," Harris said.

Wildewood Skilled Nursing & Therapy provides an environment for residents to live at their personal best with compassionate care and safety.

"We have activities. We get our residents up. We try to make them move every day," he said.

Some residents may require less stimulation. And options are available within Bridges Health.

"I love and enjoy educating the families about the things we can provide," he said.

# NURSE TALK

## Wildewood Skilled Nursing & Therapy

*What do you love about serving the elderly?*



“Really enjoy providing care and learning about their history.”

Teila Taylor, RN, assistant DON

“I enjoy helping them with their daily living, making them smile, laugh, sing with them.”

Lowanda Frasier, CNA/CMA



“I enjoy being with them until the end of their life and being like family with them.”

Caitlyn Williams, RN

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The poster features a witch with red curly hair and a black robe on the left, casting a golden spell from a cauldron. The background shows a city skyline at night with a large circular building labeled 'SAMIS FAMILY EDUCATION CENTER'. The EPIC logo is in the top left, and the text '44th ANNUAL CONFERENCE' is in the top right. The main title 'HOCUS POCUS' is in large purple letters, with 'Disappearing Infections' in a cursive font below it. A banner in the center contains the text 'Epidemiologists and Preventionists in Infection Control' and the website 'www.epicokla.org'. At the bottom, there are three boxes with icons and text: a calendar icon for 'FRIDAY, OCTOBER 23RD, 2026', a clock icon for '7AM - 5PM', and a group of people icon for 'LEARN. CONNECT. EMPOWER. MAKE AN IMPACT.'. A QR code is on the right with the text 'REGISTER TODAY! SCAN THE QR CODE' and 'Scan to Register Attendee Registration'. A banner at the very bottom reads 'DISAPPEARING INFECTIONS. PROTECTING TOMORROW. TOGETHER.' with a small 'Let's Enhance' logo on the left.

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Answers on page 15



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# The Career He Never Expected to Love

By Vickie Jenkins, staff writer

As a child, James Ventress knew one thing for certain: he did not want to work in healthcare. “I said people are gross, and I don’t want to deal with that,” James recalled with a laugh.

Today, after more than a decade in nursing, James can appreciate the irony. Nursing became not only his profession, but a career he has grown to genuinely enjoy.

At Purcell Municipal Hospital in Purcell, Oklahoma, James wears several hats. He serves as Med-Surg charge nurse and nurse educator and continues working in the emergency department. He joined the hospital in January 2023.

Raised in Oklahoma and a graduate of Norman High School, James originally considered becoming an engineer like his father. Architecture also interested him, but he realized a career spent primarily working alone would not suit him.

“I needed to have some person-to-person, some human interaction,” he said. Nursing provided that interaction along with something else he enjoys—problem solving. “Nursing is basically all of that,” James said. “Interacting with people all day, every day, and solving problems the whole time.”

He also saw nursing as a practical career that offered opportunities almost anywhere. After watching his father, an experienced engineer, face a layoff and difficulty finding another position because of his specialized background, James recognized the value of choosing an in-demand profession.

James became an LPN before earning his RN. His first nursing position was at an urgent care in Blanchard. After becoming an RN, he worked in the emergency department at Norman Regional Hospital.

Asked what quality is particularly important for a nurse, James points to patience. “Things everyone can say, compassion and caring, but I think a lot of what we do takes a lot of patience to not try to rush the patient,” he said.

That includes recognizing each patient’s unique circumstances and understanding that healthcare can be frightening and stressful. His compassion extends to fellow healthcare workers as well.

At this point in his career, James considers genuine compassion for both patients and coworkers one of his strongest qualities. People bring personal struggles to work, and he believes understanding one another can make a difference in a demanding environment. “The compassion isn’t just for the patients,” he said. “It needs to be for people you work with too.”

Interestingly, James also influenced someone close to him to enter nursing. His mother returned to school at age 58 to pursue her RN degree after her son became a nurse. She later worked at Oklahoma Heart Hospital and has also pursued travel nursing.

James knows the adventure of travel nursing firsthand. In 2016, he left Norman Regional and began taking assignments along the West Coast. “That’s probably one of the coolest things I’ve done,” he said.

His travels took him from Seattle through Oregon and California. During one assignment, he worked at San Francisco General Hospital while living in Marin County. His commute took him across the Golden Gate Bridge, sometimes aboard his motorcycle.

Motorcycling remains a favorite pastime. James owns three motorcycles and has been riding for about 15 years. His father rides too, and the two occasionally enjoy riding together.



James Ventress, RN leads with love and compassion as he wears many hats at Purcell Municipal Hospital in Purcell, Oklahoma.

Working in emergency medicine has made James keenly aware of motorcycle risks, so he takes safety seriously, wearing a helmet, jacket and gloves.

He also enjoys photography, an interest that paired perfectly with travel nursing and opportunities to photograph national parks, cities and landscapes.

At Purcell Municipal Hospital, his responsibilities extend well beyond bedside nursing. His charge nurse duties include scheduling, hiring, staff management and rotating on-call responsibilities. He also assists with outpatient IV therapy, including iron infusions, blood transfusions and fluids.

James’ advice for new nurses reflects wisdom he once received from a professor. Beginning a healthcare career can be intimidating because new nurses are surrounded by situations they have never encountered. “You don’t know what you don’t know,” James said.

With time, knowledge and experience replace much of that fear. Nurses learn to recognize when something does not seem right and develop confidence in their judgment. “Learn to trust yourself,” he said.

For someone who once declared healthcare was the last place he wanted to be, James discovered nursing offered exactly what he was looking for, human connection, challenges, problem solving and a career with purpose.

# NURSE TALK

Purcell Municipal Hospital

What is your greatest fear?



“Missing something on a patient.”  
Amber Goff, RN

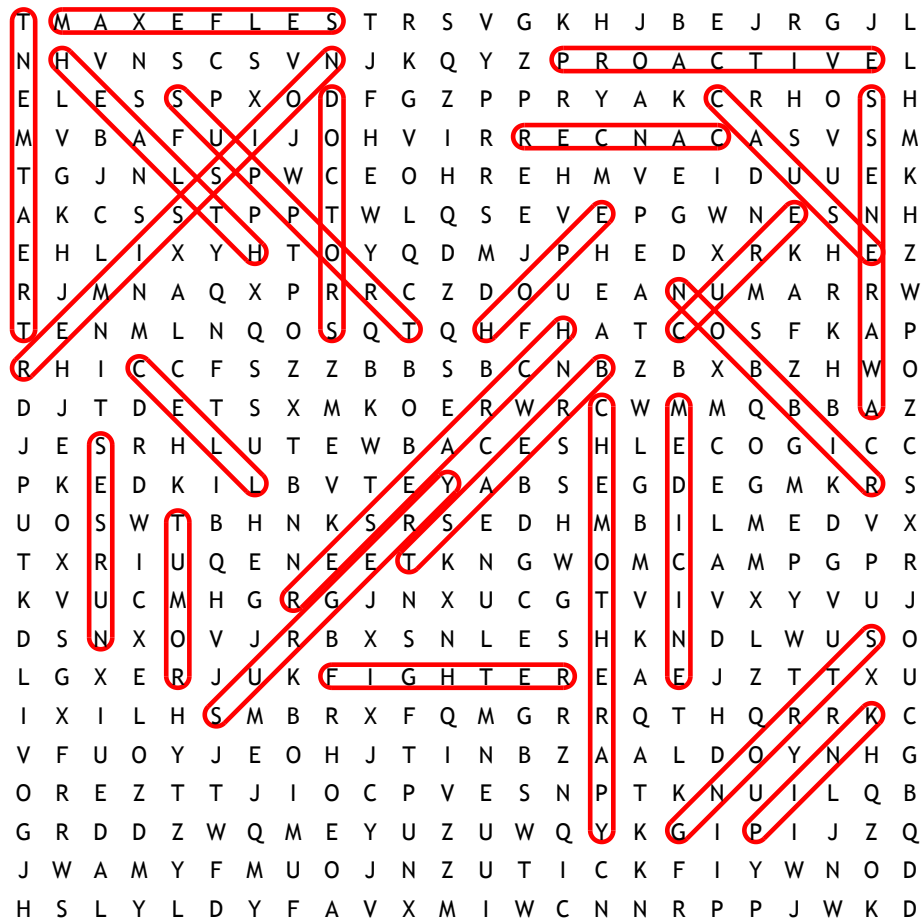


“My biggest fear is failing as a father.”  
Tristan Pounds, NREMT-P



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# Humorous Novel Finds Laughter in Hospital Life

Award-winning author Bob Adamov has received the 2026 Literary Titan Gold Book Award for his humorous novel, *Alone At The Hospital*, a lighthearted look at hospital life through the eyes of cantankerous 80-year-old George Ivers.

The Literary Titan Book Award honors fiction exhibiting exceptional storytelling and creativity, recognizing authors for compelling narratives and memorable characters.

In *Alone At The Hospital*, George Ivers discovers that a trip to the hospital can be anything but routine.

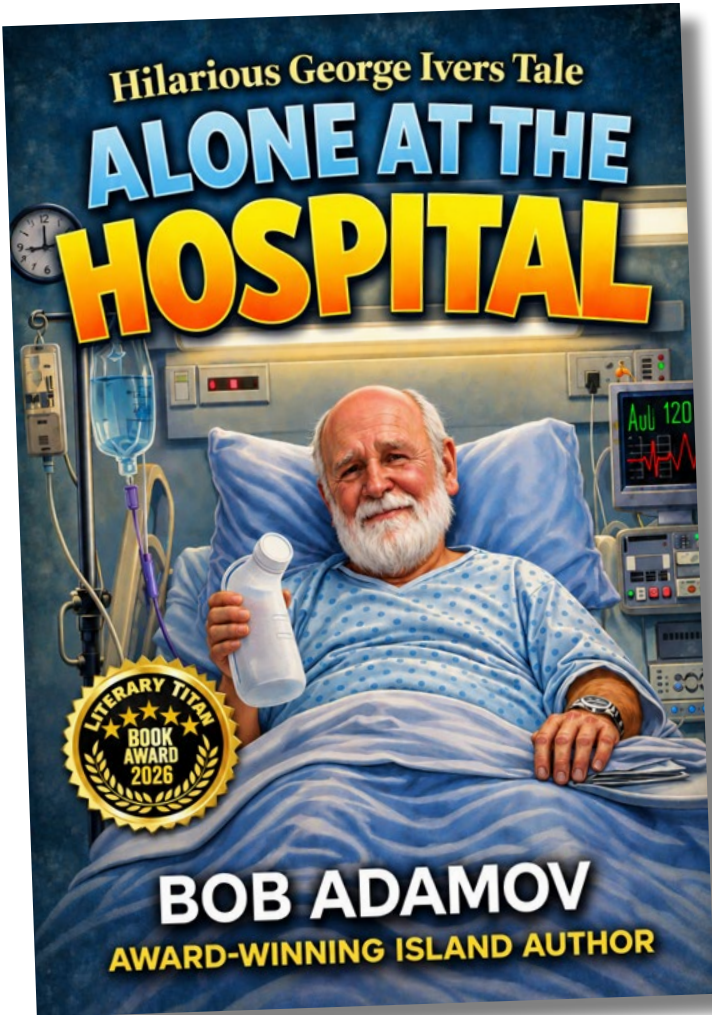
After a fall from a stepladder lands him in the hospital, George faces an assortment of tests, procedures, nurses, doctors, hospital food and unexpected visitors. But George isn't about to endure his stay quietly. Armed with an endless supply of wisecracks and a talent for turning ordinary situations into comic disasters, he matches wits with the hospital staff while creating his own special brand of chaos.

Think Archie Bunker meets Fred Flintstone with a touch of Mr. Magoo—then put him in a hospital gown.

Although the story is told from the patient's perspective, Adamov says healthcare professionals are an important part of the book's humor and heart.

"Anyone who has spent time in a hospital knows that there are plenty of serious moments," Adamov said. "But there can also be laughter. I wanted George's hospital stay to be funny while showing the patience, professionalism and good humor healthcare workers demonstrate every day."

The novel mixes senior humor, family relationships and the sometimes-uncomfortable realities of being a hospital patient





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KEYNOTE SPEAKER  
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with George’s determination to find something funny in nearly every situation.

The Gold Book Award adds another honor to Adamov’s growing collection of literary recognition. The longtime author has written numerous novels ranging from humorous stories to mysteries, romantic mysteries, and his popular Emerson Moore adventure series.

Adamov hopes *Alone At The Hospital* will particularly resonate with nurses, doctors, healthcare workers, seniors, caregivers, and anyone who has ever experienced hospital life from either side of the bedrail.

“Healthcare professionals deal with people during some of the most difficult moments of their lives,” Adamov said. “If George Ivers can give them a few laughs after a long shift, then he has done his job.”

*Alone At The Hospital* is available at [amazon.com/dp/B0H8T8ZDJF](https://amazon.com/dp/B0H8T8ZDJF) and booksellers.

About the Author

Bob Adamov is an award-winning author of 26 novels that combine humor, mystery, adventure, romance and memorable characters. A Kent State University graduate, Adamov grew up in Northeast Ohio, and resides in Wooster, Ohio. His books have earned numerous literary honors, and his stories frequently draw inspiration from the people and places he has encountered throughout his travels.



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(AS PUBLISHED IN THE 2026 EDUCATION GUIDE TO NURSING)

# Excellence Recognized: Four Stillwater Medical Nurses Named Finalists

*Four nurses from Stillwater Medical were named finalists for the 2025 March of Dimes Nurse of the Year, a statewide recognition that honors peer-nominated nurses for excellence in care, compassion, and professionalism.*

The nominations reflect a collaborative nursing environment in which high standards are reinforced through teamwork, mutual respect, and strong professional relationships.

Across departments and roles, nurses at Stillwater Medical work closely together, and many cite the support of their colleagues as a meaningful part of their day-to-day practice.

This year's finalists include Kyla Davis, RN, Same Day Surgery; Jessica Kennedy, APRN, Stillwater Pediatrics; Tammy Parr, LPN and case manager for Stillwater Medical Blackwell and Perry; and Sarah Schram, RN, resource nurse at Stillwater Medical Center. For Davis and Parr, the peer-nominated recognition was described as both humbling and affirming of the work they do alongside their teams.

For Davis, nursing runs deep. Her mother first encouraged her to pursue the profession, and throughout nursing school, she helped her study, grow, and build confidence in her calling. "I have always loved being able to help others," Davis said. "Nursing allows me to care for people while constantly learning and challenging myself."

Davis began her journey at Stillwater Medical in 2017 working as an emergency room tech before earning her nursing degree. Although she briefly moved away, she returned to Stillwater Medical's intensive care unit in 2020 and joined same day surgery this past April. Through it all, she says the heart of her work has remained the same: the patients.

"At the end of the day, the most fulfilling part of my job is the interactions with the patients I get to care for," she said. "The conversations, the laughs we share-I hope I'm able to brighten their day and ease their anxiety in a place where people are often scared or hurting."

Davis is proud to work in a hospital environment where high-quality, compassionate care is a shared standard. Being nominated for the March of Dimes award, she says, reflects not just her own work but the collective effort of Stillwater Medical's nursing staff.

"We have so many talented nurses here who work incredibly hard for our patients," she said. "I am honored just to be part of a team that puts patient care first."

For fellow finalist, Parr, the path to nursing began at 17, when she took a job as a nursing home aide. Although she once imagined becoming an attorney, she soon realized nursing allowed her to combine her love of advocacy with the hands-on ability to help people.

Over the last decade, Parr has served as an LPN and case manager for Stillwater Medical Blackwell and Stillwater Medical Perry-two rural communities with unique challenges. Limited transportation, financial barriers, and access to care often impact her patients in ways many urban areas never see. Parr meets those challenges head-on with compassion, creativity, and a deep sense of responsibility.

"It's not always direct bedside care," she said. "But everything behind the scenes makes a difference, too."

Her work includes helping patients find transportation, securing medication assistance, and navigating complex insurance needs. In 2018, Parr co-founded the Blackwell Outreach Program, which provides funds-donated by employees-to help patients pay for prescriptions, gas, and other essential needs. The program has supported families in crisis, including



Kyla Davis, RN was among finalists for the 2025 March of Dimes Nurse of the Year.

helping parents travel to be with sick children and assisting vulnerable patients with safe transitions home.

Parr's nomination was what she describes as deeply meaningful. "I was humbled and honored," she said. "To know that who I am and what I do matters-that means so much."

Stillwater Medical has been named one of the Best Places to Work by Modern Healthcare, a news organization that identifies and recognizes outstanding employers in the healthcare industry nationwide. They are the only organization in the state to receive this distinction for 14 years in a row.

Brad Horst, vice president of human resources, says one of the organization's keys to success is the shared commitment of staff to creating a culture of excellence.

"These peer nominations really line up with what our employee surveys tell us," said Horst. "Two of our highest-scoring statements are 'I enjoy my coworkers' and 'I find purpose in my work.' When nurses recognize one another in this way, it speaks to the strong relationships they have with their teams and the meaning they find in the work they do every day."



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(AS PUBLISHED IN THE 2026 EDUCATION GUIDE TO NURSING)



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