

NATIONAL NURSES WEEK MAY 6 – MAY 12, 2024



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who make a difference!*

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Aside from a parent, family member, or caregiver, there's nothing more reassuring during an injury or illness than a nurse by your side. After all, it's rare to get through your whole life without needing a nurse. They are everywhere. Whether in hospitals, schools, nursing homes, hospice facilities, or private homes — nurses are the backbone of health care.

Nurses are essential workers who play a fundamental role in providing indispensable care and services to patients and their families. They work tirelessly to ensure their patients receive the best possible treatment, often going above and beyond to meet someone's needs.

According to the American Nurses Association, National Nurses Week begins each year on May 6 and ends on May 12, Florence Nightingale's birthday. Nightingale is considered the founder of modern nursing, and her birthday is an appropriate date to acknowledge and celebrate nurses. This week acknowledges the tireless commitment nursing professionals provide all year long. It's an opportunity for employers, patients, and our community to recognize their contributions.

Throughout Montana, nurses help provide the baseline of care in our communities, serving at the front line of public health. There's no overstating the importance and significance of the care they provide. This year, we're celebrating 10 nurses nominated by the surrounding communities.

It can be challenging to narrow down a list of qualities that great nurses exhibit. Yet, some characteristics rise to the top for those who excel at nursing. The nominated nurses in this section shared similar traits such as compassion, empathy, patience, unwavering commitment, and being a jack-of-all-trades, to name a few. The public was encouraged to nominate nurses who exemplified those attributes and made a difference in the lives of others.

Nurses: The Heart of Health Care is a celebratory section dedicated during National Nurses Week, May 6-12, 2024. This annual tribute recognizes the dedication of America's nurses and admires them for taking care of us in our most vulnerable moments. It's an entire week dedicated to the professional nurse — honoring them for delivering the best compassionate care.



Dear Nursing Colleagues,

National Nurses Week is May 6-12 and a time to honor nurses across our state and nation! We see the beautiful way you care for our community, and we want to say thank you! You provide hope and healing to our most vulnerable. You inspire, teach, advocate, and champion. Your care, compassion, and dedication to excellence make a difference every day.

Nurses serve in hospitals, surgery centers, correctional centers, nursing homes, assisted living, ambulatory practices, home health, hospice, schools, higher education, telemedicine, and more. Your commitment to lifelong learning and continuous improvement provide the best care possible. You conduct research that changes how we provide care and why. You are a beacon of light during storms of life.

From birth until death, nurses stand with us. You demonstrate grit, leadership, and love through emergency situations, global pandemics, and quiet, devastating diagnoses. We honor you for your dedication to the care of others. We honor you for your commitment and sacrifice.

During this special Nurses Week, we ask you to reflect on the lives you have touched. We challenge you to recognize the difference you make. We are grateful for you, the nurses who care for us and our families.

Happy Nurses Week and thank you for all you do!



Shannon Holland, MSN, CENP, CPHQ
Chief Nursing Officer
Billings Clinic



Melissa Filter, MSN, RN, NE-BC
Chief Nursing Officer
Intermountain Health St. Vincent
Regional Hospital

AUSTIN BOURASSA

BSN, RN
Billings Clinic

BY JENNIFER L. MASON

Brand Ave. Studios Contributing Writer

For the last 10 years, nurse Austin Bourassa has been working with cancer patients. It seems fitting since his mom was a hospice nurse for her entire career. Growing up, he remembers meeting her colleagues and even some patients along the way. He even spent some time visiting a hospice house.

"You can imagine ... there were lots of conversations at home because of the field my mom worked in," Bourassa said. "I've always been around nursing. It's what I grew up with."

Bourassa was in high school when he narrowed it down to nursing. Engineering was on the table briefly as an option, but he continued to be drawn to the nursing field. He knew it would be a great way to serve others and provide him with continuous learning and job security.

"I started at the Billings Clinic as a certified nursing assistant (CNA) working on the inpatient cancer care (ICC) floor and never left," Bourassa said. "When I took that job, I didn't necessarily know that was the area I wanted to stick with, but there was no turning back. I felt God calling me to stay in the ICC unit, so I did."

Bourassa has evolved quickly in his 10 years on the cancer floor. He went from a CNA to a floor nurse to a charge nurse, and now he is the nurse manager. The ICC floor is a 27-bed inpatient hospital unit that treats patients of various stages of cancer diagnoses.

"Over the last four years with Austin as the nurse manager, he has truly transformed the culture of our ICC floor," said Amanda Haithcox, director of medical surgical services at Billings Clinic. "Austin's ability to build trust, listen to his team, bring staff into decision-making, and maintain a safe, accountable, fun work environment makes it a place where nurses want to work. We currently have a waiting list of nurses who want to apply."

Bourassa believes caring for cancer patients is one of the most rewarding jobs and considers it a privilege. He credits his staff and applauds them for being an incredible team.

"The nurses on my team have a very high standard of who works with them and how they care for patients," Bourassa said. "Cancer patients are some of the most humble and thankful people you'll ever take care of, even when they're so sick."

While Bourassa isn't at the bedside on a day-to-day basis in his managerial role, he finds joy and purpose in coming alongside his staff who work on a difficult floor. Some nurses experience despair or heartbreak occasionally in their work, but cancer nurses experience it daily.

"It could be a brand-new diagnosis, chemotherapy treatments, oncologic surgical procedures, or caring for the patients because the chemotherapy has made them so sick — or worst of all, end-of-life care," Bourassa said. "So, each patient is at a different stage in their illness, and that's hard on all of us, especially when we see it repeatedly. I'm there to walk alongside my nurses who may be struggling and support them while helping them grow."

His way of doing this is to love God and love others. Some may call it a mantra or guiding philosophy, but for Bourassa, it's what he's called to do as a Christian. He tries to run his conversations and decisions through that mindset — love God/love others.

"It can make for some pretty rewarding moments, whether at the bedside with a patient or with an employee who's struggling," Bourassa said. "Another tool, if you will, that I try to use is a quote a pastor once shared with me. He said, 'Leaders take in chaos, give back calm and inspire hope.' There's a lot to consider when you're leading others, but I try to love others well and inspire them so they can take care of our sick and vulnerable patients."



STATS

NURSING PROGRAM:
Montana State University

FOCUS: Inpatient Cancer Care

YEARS OF SERVICE: 9

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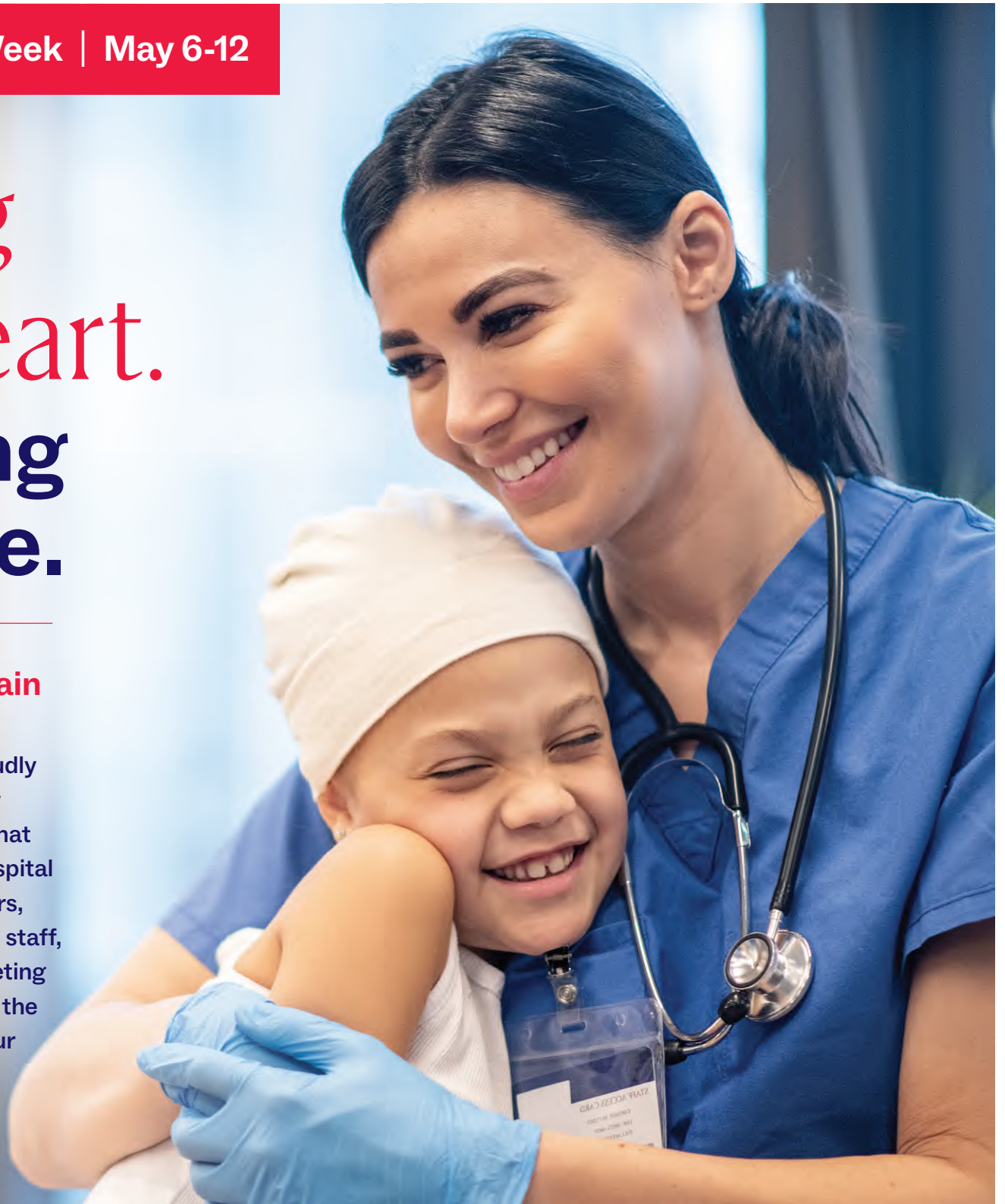
Austin Bourassa

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**St. Vincent
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BOBBI COX

LPN, Rehabilitation
Hospital of Montana

BY JENNIFER L. MASON
Brand Ave. Studios Contributing Writer

Bobbi Cox has a secret sauce. It gives her the heart and drive to persevere through life and make things happen. She has pushed through challenges, bounced back from disappointments and served our country for six years.

These days, serving and caring look a little different than when she was on the USS Saipan. Personally, Cox and her husband run a nonprofit and professionally, she's a licensed practical nurse (LPN) at the Rehabilitation Hospital of Montana.

"I think I was a teenager when I realized I wanted to care for others," Cox said. "My grandmother was diagnosed with breast cancer when I was 16, and then later on, my mom was also diagnosed with breast cancer. I remember taking care of my grandmother in her last days."

Cox grew up on a ranch and shared that there weren't a lot of extras. Her grandfather encouraged her to join the military, and so she did. She served in the Army for two years and the Navy for four years. She worked for NATO and later worked in supply and maintenance and on the airfield. After she was discharged from active duty, she remained on the Ready Reserve for four years.

"After the military, there's always a huge transition for veterans, but I knew what I was striving for," Cox said. "I enrolled in college and knocked out my prerequisites and then enrolled in nursing school and became an LPN."

Throughout her nursing career, she's worked in various fields, including private practice, nursing homes, public health, pediatrics, and most recently at the Methadone Clinic. In her current role at

the Rehabilitation Hospital of Montana, she enjoys the variety of care and the ages she treats.

"I love it because rehab is for anyone," Cox said. "I see a lot of cardiac, stroke and car accident patients. I have the privilege of seeing them on day one when they're at their absolute worst. Most have come directly from a hospital. They enter rehab after some type of injury or traumatic event. When they get discharged, they're like a whole new person with hope in their eyes, and I get to be a part of their journey."

With that same drive and determination to help others in rehab, she also provides a glimmer of hope to those in her community during the holiday season. Cox and her husband started a nonprofit during the height of COVID. Project Christmas Miracle provides Christmas trees and decorations to those in need. In 2023, the nonprofit helped 110 families.

"So many organizations give out gifts in some capacity, which is great, but sometimes it's not about the gifts; it's about making memories," Cox said. "And, having a Christmas tree and the decorations like a tree skirt or tree topper or lights or even stockings to hang — creates beautiful memories. It's where the family comes together to laugh and share stories. We love giving back to the community and making someone smile."

It doesn't stop there for Cox. She's back in school to become a registered nurse and will graduate in May 2025. She has the heart and drive to care for people and never stops — she has that secret sauce.

"It's never been about a paycheck for me," Cox said. "I treat my patients like they are my loved ones, providing the best care and compassion I can. To me, it's about building relationships."

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Bobbi Cox



STATS

NURSING PROGRAM:
Montana State University - Billings

FOCUS:
Rehabilitation

YEARS OF SERVICE: 17

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MITCH DEAN

RN, Intermountain Health,
St. Vincent Regional Hospital

BY JENNIFER L. MASON
Brand Ave. Studios Contributing Writer

Mitch Dean has been in the medical field for quite some time, but it wasn't always in nursing. After high school, Dean went on to attend Dallas Baptist University, and when he wasn't studying, he worked as an EMT. By the time graduation rolled around, he was equipped with his bachelor's in business administration and had also earned his EMT certificate.

"I thought that a career in medicine might be fun, so I did that as an elective and worked — and sometimes volunteered — as an EMT during college," Dean said. "I enjoyed the adrenaline and the fast-paced decision-making."

As Dean progressed in his career, he landed in the pharmaceutical field selling insulin and other diabetes medications. After several years in that industry, he realized he was only talking to providers about the patients but never talking to the patients. Even though he was helping patients indirectly, he didn't have any hands-on interaction and missed his time as an EMT. The writing was on the wall for Dean.

"I eventually left my career in pharmaceutical sales and began my journey into critical care," Dean said. "I decided to go to nursing school, and while I was enrolled, I worked as a nurse assistant and a phlebotomist at a critical access hospital. When I became a registered nurse, I started in the emergency department ... so, I haven't known anything other than critical care or emergencies."

Dean was at the bedside for almost four years before taking on his current quality specialist role as a clinical sepsis coordinator at St. Vincent Regional Hospital. He and his team oversee the way they approach care, ensuring their patients receive the highest quality of care — in every area of the hospital because, unfortunately, sepsis can interact with all of them.

"I spend a lot of time on various floors with the nurses, looking through charts, understanding where we're at in treatment, and working with providers to make sure that the timeliness of interventions happens appropriately," Dean said. "I could be in the emergency department, the surgical floor, or the intensive care unit — wherever there's a case of sepsis, I'm there."

Sepsis is not only a serious illness; it also comes with a slew of regulations and steps to follow, which makes Dean's job even more complicated. He makes sure nothing

is missed ... leaving no stone unturned. He loves to look at a complex puzzle and organize the pieces. It's his job to make sure all the pieces are there so he can begin to solve the problem. His ultimate goal is to ensure his patients receive the best care possible.

According to nurse Jena Huck, he excels at this. Huck, director of critical care services, hired Mitch as a new graduate.

"Mitch is a pleasure to work with and is committed to providing the best possible care for our patients," Huck said. "He loves to spend time and build relationships with those he works with, as well as his patients."

According to Dean, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, along with some insurance companies, drive a lot of the regulations for sepsis, and it's his job to understand those regulations proficiently and put them into clinical practice.

"Unfortunately, that's modern medicine," Dean said. "It gets complicated though because patients don't follow a set of rules ... patients are people. They're human beings that require an individualized treatment plan."

As a man of faith, Dean is especially sensitive to his patients and the care he provides. He said it's not about him or anyone else — it's about the patient only. He strives for kindness, compassion and excellence in everything he does. So, it's no surprise Dean has multiple Daisy nominations and other leadership roles under his belt.

"I believe we are all placed on this earth for a purpose, and that purpose is outside our realm of understanding," Dean said. "So many times in medicine, we forget that it's a person we're dealing with. We see the problem, but that problem is attached to a human being."

Dean does his best to try and maintain that relational aspect of care. He believes we are all linked together.

"Mitch lives and breathes our mission to reveal and foster God's healing love by improving the health of the people and communities we serve," Huck said.

Dean shared how he believes nurses are all things to all people. Whether that's an advocate, a translator, an expert, or an assistant to a doctor ... whatever the situation, he said that nurses are the one person that get to touch all the different facets of the patient experience.

"It's the best job in the world," Dean said. "If people are your jam and you think medicine is kind of cool — you need to join us in the trenches."



STATS

NURSING PROGRAM:

Bismarck State College

FOCUS: Quality Specialist - Clinical Sepsis Coordinator

YEARS OF SERVICE: 5

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DANA DUGAN

BSN, RN, Intermountain Health,
St. Vincent Regional Hospital

BY JENNIFER L. MASON
Brand Ave. Studios Contributing Writer

A People's magazine article is what swayed Dana Dugan to pursue nursing. She initially enrolled in college with a plan to study special education.

"After reading an article on neonatal intensive care ... it just sparked my interest, so I switched to nursing," Dugan said. "I later found out through school that it was easier to care for babies inside the mom — rather than outside."

After graduation, Dugan wasn't sure which area she wanted to focus on, but she knew it was with mothers and babies. She began her career on the 'mother newborn' floor and in the nursery.

"I wasn't sure about labor and delivery until I did my preceptorship and experienced my first birth as a nursing student," Dugan said. "From that moment on, I knew that's what I wanted to do. Witnessing the miracle

of a baby is incredible and one of the best things about my job."

Dugan also shared her other love — working alongside her team. Her labor and delivery floor is an interactive and inclusive group that works and plays together on and off the clock.

"Sometimes we'll play music and dance," Dugan said. "We also take advantage of our cafeteria's happy hour when sodas are a dollar. I consider myself positive and like to bring out the fun on the floor."

Nurse Melissa Jennings agrees wholeheartedly. Jennings, director of women's and children's services at St. Vincent shared, "We can always count on her to bring joy to her team (and patients) with her dancing, laughter and lively spirit."

Dugan and her labor and delivery team take the time to celebrate each pregnant person on their floor by hosting a baby shower. She shared how everyone is friends with one another

and will often meet up at the park with their kids to have playdates.

"We have an amazing team ... from our doctors, midwives, technicians, case managers, housekeepers — it takes a village," Dugan said. "There's a lot of people that make all of this work. We have something special on our floor."

She also has a passion for encouraging nurses to invest in their 401(k). Dugan has even set up an outside get-together to explore their retirement funds on a higher level for those interested. She tries to be helpful and share any knowledge along the way.

"I often bring it up at staff meetings," Dugan said. "It would be great if everyone could invest 15%, but not everyone is in that position. If they can do the match, that's a great place to start, but I always encourage them to bump it up when they can."

It could be her patients or her teammates; Dugan always strives to bring out the best in them.



STATS

NURSING PROGRAM:
Montana State University - Bozeman

FOCUS: Labor and Delivery

YEARS OF SERVICE: 28

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ELLIE HANSEN

LPN, Rehabilitation
Hospital of Montana

BY JENNIFER L. MASON
Brand Ave. Studios Contributing Writer

When Ellie Hansen graduated from college with her associate's degree in nursing, she went straight to work but not in a role she was anticipating — she became a full-time nurse and caretaker for her parents. Her mom, who has multiple sclerosis, had an unexpected turn in her health, plus Hansen's dad was diagnosed with a brain tumor requiring him to have a craniotomy.

"My mom has progressive multiple sclerosis, and she's had it for more than 30 years," Hansen said. "She's been in a wheelchair my entire life, and her health continues to decline. My dad made a full recovery, and he's doing great today. While not ideal, and I'd never want my parents to be ill, the timing of my graduation was perfect, and I'm so thankful I was equipped to care for them."

After caring for her parents for two years, Hansen landed at the Rehabilitation

Hospital of Montana. She got the idea to work in rehabilitation after her mom had a fall and broke her femur. While in the hospital, a representative from the rehabilitation area came and spoke to the family to go over the next steps.

"We weren't sure what was going to happen with my mom's recovery while we were in the hospital, so it was a comforting conversation when the representative came by to speak to us," Hansen said. "My mom ended up being in the rehab hospital for 10 days, and that's when I made the decision, and so, I applied and have been here a year."

While some may dwell on the obvious, Hansen took the bull by the horns. She absorbed and learned from her mother's care team during her childhood and especially throughout her teenage years. She dug in and learned everything she could about her mom's disease.

"Taking care of my parents is definitely a part of my story and my nursing career, and I'm just getting started as I'm only 25,"

Hansen said. "I can remember when I was a teenager, certain nurses being so helpful and taking the time to explain things, and I just soaked it all in. They weren't always the easiest conversations, but they helped me understand what was going on with my mom's body and helped me set realistic expectations for the future. It also led me to becoming a nurse."

Having the courage to face the unknown and the tenacity to press on in unprecedented circumstances are common traits of nurses ... and Hansen is at it again. Currently, she hopes to enroll in school to earn her license as a registered nurse license (RN).

"I'm still young and have so much ahead of me," Hansen said. "I'm looking forward to becoming an RN and hopefully working in more of a leadership role. Nursing has been challenging thus far and yet so rewarding. I'm fortunate to be surrounded by some of the best nurses at the rehab hospital, and they've taught me so much; I'm forever grateful."



STATS

NURSING PROGRAM:

Dickinson State University

FOCUS:

Rehabilitation

YEARS OF SERVICE: 3



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BRITTNEY JOHNSON

BSN, RNC-OB, Intermountain Health,
St. Vincent Regional Hospital

BY JENNIFER L. MASON

Brand Ave. Studios Contributing Writer

Nursing is all Brittney Johnson has ever known. Her mom has been a nurse her entire career and has her doctorate as a nurse practitioner.

“Even though my mom has been a nurse my whole life, I never really thought I wanted to follow in her footsteps,” Johnson said.

It wasn’t until Johnson was a junior in high school and her dad was diagnosed with cancer that she got the idea that nursing could be her path forward.

“Leaving my dad in the hospital was so hard, but knowing there were nurses that loved on him and took such great care of him, especially at night when we weren’t there, meant the world to us,” Johnson said.

She didn’t realize her path right away, but when Johnson began applying for colleges and was trying to decide what path to take, she reflected on her dad’s care, and it became clear that she wanted to help others.

Johnson’s whole career has been at St. Vincent’s. She’s been a labor and delivery nurse for seven years, but that’s not where she started. When she began her nursing clinical rotations, she thought the neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) was where she wanted to work, but there weren’t any positions open when she graduated.

“I ended up applying to a few different medical-surgical units and landed in the neuro medical-surgical unit,” Johnson said. “I worked on that floor for about a year and then moved to the mother newborn floor and hoped to have a better opportunity of getting into the NICU from there.”

That time never happened. However, the labor and delivery (L&D) floor had an opening, and her manager encouraged her to try it out and was convinced Johnson would love it.

“I was hesitant at first,” Johnson said. “I wasn’t sure L&D was for me, but something nudged me to go for it, and I did. I can’t imagine being anywhere else. I love it!” ➔



STATS

NURSING PROGRAM:
Montana State University -
Bozeman

FOCUS: Labor and Delivery

YEARS OF SERVICE: 10

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BRITTNEY JOHNSON, continued

Johnson describes her role as a labor and delivery nurse as being the helping hands and feet of the doctors. She shares how the birth of a baby is unlike any other — a sheer miracle, and she gets to be a part of it.

“It’s also the most joyful floor to work on because it’s the happiest day in someone’s life,” Johnson said. “I consider it a privilege and honor to help a mom bring life into this world and witness the first breath of their baby. It’s incredible and so rewarding.”

Johnson goes on to share how she’s the mom’s biggest cheerleader. She makes it a point to get to know her patients on a deeper level, which includes learning about their every need during labor.

“Each patient is so different, but I love coming alongside the moms and helping them have the best experience possible,” Johnson said. “I also get to educate them and share helpful tips for themselves and their newborns. At the end of the day, I want my patients to know they can do it ... they are strong and have what it takes.”

“Brittney is an amazing nurse and a great asset to our team,” said Julia Lennick, nurse manager of labor and delivery and mother newborn at St. Vincent Healthcare. “She handles complex situations with determination, grace and compassion. She’s a natural leader and brings a positive attitude and smile to our team. St. Vincent’s is very lucky to have her on our team.”

“It’s also the most joyful floor to work on because it’s the happiest day in someone’s life.

I consider it a privilege and honor to help a mom bring life into this world and witness the first breath of their baby. It’s incredible and so rewarding.”

Brittney Johnson



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TRACEY LABER

BSN, RN,
Billings Clinic

BY JENNIFER L. MASON
Brand Ave. Studios Contributing Writer

Tracey Laber enrolled in college as a premedical student. And, as so often happens, while in school, she found love. She knew if she pursued that route, it would most likely take her out of state for medical school or residency, and she didn't want that.

"I remember asking my school advisor what I could do with all of my nursing class credits, and she asked if I had considered nursing," Laber said. "Because of her guidance, I enrolled in the nursing program."

Laber started her career at the Billings Clinic and has been employed there for 35 years — 34 of those as a registered nurse. While still in school, she was a certified nursing assistant and later a nurse intern. She started on the ortho/neuro unit as a staff nurse and moved up to a charge nurse.

"After ortho/neuro, I worked in the general and cardiovascular surgery departments," Laber said. "That led

me to a leadership position in a newly created program — at the time. It's called administrator on duty or AOD. It's a nurse that supervises the entire hospital during off hours."

Laber was an AOD until her youngest child started attending school full time. At that point, she started looking for a role that was days only and didn't need to be away from home at night. She landed on the medical-surgical floor (med-surg) in 2006.

"The nurse manager position happened to be open at the time in the pre- and post-operative care and recovery room, and I've been on this floor ever since," Laber said. "I supervise approximately 70 employees."

The med-surg floor at the Billings Clinic primarily cares for patients who have scheduled elective procedures for the main operating room, catheterization laboratory or radiology; however, they also receive unexpected patients that come directly from the emergency department.

Laber enjoys helping her teams in all

capacities and doesn't think she's above anyone. It can include helping to get a patient ready for surgery, looking for supplies or getting medicine.

"While I'm technically no longer at the bedside, I still love being an extra set of hands," Laber said. "I'm here to help, and that includes problem-solving and removing obstacles for my frontline nurses. I want to equip them with everything they may need so they can give our patients the best care possible."

With a tenderhearted spirit, she finds joy in taking care of patients and also finds joy in watching her team care for patients. She shared how sometimes she gets goosebumps watching her nurses care for others, especially when it's a critical situation.

Laber strives to be a servant leader, empowering others while fostering an inclusive environment.

"As a Christian, I attribute my joy to my faith in God," Laber said. "After all, today's worries take away tomorrow's peace."



STATS

NURSING PROGRAM:

Montana State University

FOCUS:

Medical-Surgical

YEARS OF

SERVICE: 34



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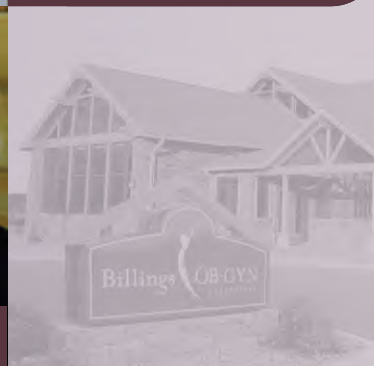
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BRYNN LAROCHE

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BY JENNIFER L. MASON

Brand Ave. Studios Contributing Writer

Brynn LaRoche has always had a love for nursing. She didn't have any family in the medical field or a life event — she just always knew. So, once she graduated from high school, she had no hesitation in deciding what she wanted to study.

"I don't remember having a pivotal moment as a child or teenager that drove me to nursing; it was just in me," LaRoche said.

LaRoche began her career as a licensed practical nurse and worked in an ENT clinic. She then went on to work in the float pool at St. Vincent, which provided her with a variety of experiences.

"I enjoyed working in different areas of the hospital and learning about each department," LaRoche said. "Once I became a registered nurse, I went to the women's and children's departments. I've worked in NICU, pediatrics and mother newborn."

After a long stretch in women's health, LaRoche switched it up and moved to the surgery plus floor, which handles outpatient

surgeries.

"I love all things women and babies, but it's been great getting to have all ages, from newborns to geriatrics," LaRoche said. "The surgeries are also so varied — gall bladder, heart catheterizations, endoscopies, and so many more."

LaRoche works in phase two of recovery. After a patient leaves the post-anesthesia care unit, they come to her. She reviews discharge orders and ensures her patients are well-prepared to care for themselves when they get home.

"I enjoy caring for people in their most vulnerable times," LaRoche said. "I often joke with my patients as it makes harder situations a bit lighter. Life is too short. One of my favorite quotes is ... 'Life is not measured by the number of breaths we take, but by the moments that take our breath away.'"

"I'm not surprised Brynn was nominated," said Amber Marsicano, surgery plus supervisor. "She brings knowledge, compassion, humor, and coffee to each shift, which makes her a great team member and provides excellent care to all her patients."



STATS

NURSING PROGRAM:

City College at Montana State University - Billings

FOCUS:

Surgery Plus

YEARS OF SERVICE:

18

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At your fingertips

4 of the best mobile apps for nurses

EBONY WILLIAMS | The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

Nurses stay busier than just about anyone. So it's only natural that they turn to the many apps that offer a little help organizing and streamlining their duties. In recent years, there has been a huge increase in the development of mobile apps designed specifically for nurses. From apps that help improve accuracy in care to those that promise increased efficiency, there are plenty of apps to consider.

Here are four of the most popular mobile apps for nurses. All are free and available in the Apple and Android stores.

Nurse.com app

This app is the only social networking app that's exclusive to nurses. While using the app, fellow health care workers can build a community specifically designed by and for nurses. The app also provides an array of educational tools and resources.



My Shift Planner

If you're worried about your constantly changing schedule, the My Shift Planner app will send direct updates in real time, and allows you to see when your co-workers are working. It can also help with payroll issues and HR concerns.



Adni

The Adni app is perfect if you're looking for community and where to get the latest gear in the marketplace. Used to sell and buy products, the Adni app is a digital resource for clinical tools, resources and shopping.



Medscape

This app is designed to provide immediate clinical answers, the latest clinical news, tools, and information on diseases and drugs. The app offers step-by-step videos on procedures and safety information on more than 9,200 prescriptions.



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Help for night shifters

Study suggests light exposure can have a huge impact on nurses who work evenings



DRAGOS CONDREA

HUNTER BOYCE
The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

According to a June 2023 study published in *Sleep Health*, a multidisciplinary journal of the National Sleep Foundation, nurses exposed to at least 40 minutes of bright light before beginning their night shifts feel less fatigued and make fewer errors on the job.

The bright light exposure also led to nurses having better sleep after their night shifts.

To perform the study, 57 full-time nurses who work “rapidly rotating” shifts participated in a randomized control trial featuring evening light exposure and morning light avoidance. Every morning and evening for 30 days, the nurses measured their fatigue, work-related errors, sleepiness, moods, sleep duration and sleep quality.

“Health care workers are experiencing high levels of fatigue due to staffing shortages, difficult schedules and heavy workloads,” Jay Olson, an author of the study, told McGill University. “Further, the cost of medical errors has been estimated at tens of billions

of dollars per year in North America. Our study shows that feasible changes, such as getting light exposure before the night shift, may help reduce fatigue and its effects on performance at work, something which could benefit both the nurses and their patients.”

During initial observations, nurses working rotating shifts made a number of work-related errors including wrong medication dosages and accidental needle pricks.

The nurses who were exposed to at least 40 minutes of bright light before their night shifts experienced 67% fewer work-related errors, less fatigue, a small improvement in mood and a small increase in sleep duration.

“Interventions like the one we studied are relevant to a large population of workers, since between a quarter and a third of the world’s employees do some form of shift work,” Marieve Cyr, one of the study’s authors, told McGill University. “Although we focused on nurses working rotating schedules, our results may apply to other types of shift workers, as well.”



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KATRINA LUTHER

MSN, RN, Miles
Community College

BY JENNIFER L. MASON
Brand Ave. Studios Contributing Writer

Most people don't think of appendicitis as an exciting time in their lives, but for Katrina Luther, it was. At age 16, she was in the hospital and treated by nurses and various staff, and she remembers thinking it was the coolest experience ever.

"Being in the hospital was definitely influential," Luther said. "I knew from that moment I was going to be a nurse. I also had three cousins who graduated from nursing school, which probably helped too."

Luther has worked in all areas of a hospital, but the first part of her career focused on labor and delivery, postpartum, nursery and intensive care nursery — anything related to women's health care.

She pivoted in her career after earning her bachelor's in nursing in 2007. She was now in a position with the credentials to teach and had always wanted to give back to nursing by becoming an instructor. She was tapped for a faculty position at Miles Community College after the director of the program kept hearing great feedback from students during their clinical rotations at the hospital where Luther was currently working.

"I teach Theory and Foundations of Nursing, which is during the student's first semester coming into the program," Luther said. "I also teach Adult Health I and II, which is their sophomore year before graduation. The Management of Care course I teach also includes clinical rotations for the students where I oversee them working at the patient bedside at various facilities. In addition, I work with nursing students in the simulation and clinical labs so they can learn new skills and patient care techniques."

Luther went on to say that eastern Montana is very rural, and many of the hospitals in the area are considered a frontier hospital. It makes the mission of the Miles Community College nursing program even more important because the goal is to train individuals to become nurses, and the hope is that they stay in these small communities to help keep rural health care facilities in operation.

"I'm very passionate about our program," Luther said. "I love helping my students grow and reach their potential before graduating."

"All of my students come with a story — we all do. I come alongside them as a mentor and speak truth into their lives ... for example, believing in themselves and telling them that they deserve accolades and other things that come their way. The best part is watching them grow in confidence and develop a deep passion for nursing."

When she was a nurse at the bedside, she was the patient's advocate and much more. Now, as a faculty instructor, she's building up these young nurses to be confident, well equipped and successful. The way she makes others feel is ever-lasting.

It comes as no surprise to learn that Luther has the following Maya Angelou quote on her office door ... "I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel."

"Katrina's dedication, compassion and expertise is evident in all aspects of her teaching and mentorship," said Dr. Lynette Svingen, dean of nursing at Miles Community College. "Her commitment to nurturing future nurses and instilling excellence in patient care is truly commendable, making her an asset to the academic community."

**"All of my students come with a story — we all do.
I come alongside them as a mentor and speak truth
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and telling them that they deserve accolades
and other things that come their way.
The best part is watching them grow in confidence
and develop a deep passion for nursing."**

Katrina Luther



STATS

NURSING PROGRAM:
Miles Community College and University of Mary-Bismarck

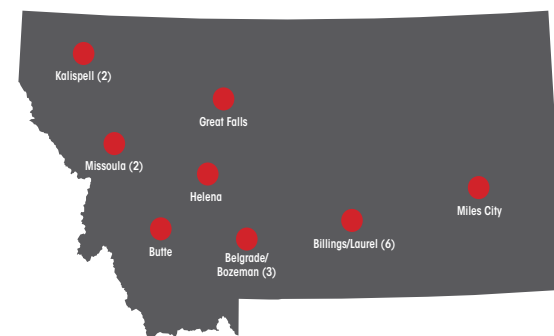
FOCUS:
Nursing Faculty

YEARS OF SERVICE: 39



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WENDY SHOEMAKER

RN,
RiverStone Health

BY JENNIFER L. MASON
Brand Ave. Studios Contributing Writer

To believe in your dreams, you need to have a clear vision. Wendy Shoemaker remembers such a vision when she was a little girl helping animals. She was always caring for others and loved it.

"I may not have known when I was little what path I would take to care for people, but I knew I would in some capacity," Shoemaker said. "It wasn't until I was a teenager that I pinpointed the nursing profession."

Shoemaker became a licensed practical nurse (LPN) after high school but dreamed of becoming a registered nurse (RN). However, she met the man of her "other dreams" and fell in love with an Air Force service member. They got married, started a family and she traveled the world as a military wife. Her dreams of becoming an RN were put on hold.

"It was worth it," Shoemaker

said. "We got to see the world and experience different states. I also got to experience working in several fields of nursing as an LPN. When we would move, I just picked up a different job ... I was always learning."

When it was time for her husband to retire after 20 years of service, her kids were older, and it was finally time for Shoemaker to make her dreams happen. She had put a lot on hold and made many sacrifices, as many moms do. She's a big believer in finishing what you start and also loving what you do.

"Follow your dreams ... just follow your dreams," Shoemaker said. "No matter how hard it is or how old you are. I'm in my 50s ... so, I get it. Going back to school was difficult, but I got through it and so can you."

Shoemaker became a registered nurse in 2022 and has worked at RiverStone Health Clinic - Joliet for six years. She enjoys the different

areas of practice that come her way each day at the clinic, which includes everything from pediatrics to women's health to geriatrics.

"I've always loved family practice because I get the overall picture and have the privilege of taking care of so many different types of patients ... from the young to the old," Shoemaker said.

Shoemaker states she was born to be a nurse - it's just in her blood. She treats her patients like a family and strives to be a difference-maker; she believes we are here on earth for a greater purpose.

"Wendy exemplifies the graceful compassion and grit anyone could hope for in a nurse, coworker and friend," said Kaci Jansma, a physician assistant at RiverStone Health Clinic - Joliet and Bridger. "She is kind and genuine at her core and demonstrates this through her tireless devotion to every single one of her patients."



STATS

NURSING PROGRAM:

Northwest College, Wyoming

FOCUS:

Family Practice

YEARS OF SERVICE:

25



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2024 NOMINEES

Nominee	Place of Work	Nominee	Place of Work
Lisa Maria Allen	Indian Health Service	Debbie Rang	Intermountain Health
Kendall Eliasson	Billings Clinic	Cristina Rivera Feliciano	Indian Health Service
David Field	St. Johns United	Annie Shaver	Intermountain Health
Kari Fox	Billings Clinic	Shelly Tenbrooke	Billings Clinic
Kayla Lemire-Phillips	Billings Clinic	Anne Van Ballegooyen	Intermountain Health
Sunny Lone Bear	Fort Washakie Health Center	Leah Vossler	Billings Clinic
Kallie Lusk	Billings Clinic	Kari Waleri	DCI Big Sky
Pamela Power Barr	Intermountain Health		



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