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# Celebrating National Nurses Week

## THE NAPA VALLEY REGISTER

Nurses are special people. They care for us when we're sick or hurt; they care for us as we are born; they care for us as we die. They're in our schools, our homes, our hospitals, and all through our lives.

And this last year, we found we needed nurses more than ever. They were the indispensable front line of our fight against the COVID-19 pandemic.

Since 1993, the American Nurses Association has celebrated National Nurses Week in the second week in May, winding up with the anniversary of the birth of Florence Nightingale, perhaps the most famous nurse of all.

There are some 4 million Registered Nurses in the United States, covering a wide array of specialties and areas of care.

To honor the nurses here in Napa County, The Napa Valley Register decided in 2019 to make an annual event out of honoring these standout members of our health care community. This is our second edition—we had to skip 2020 because National Nurses Week fell in the turbulent and uncertain first months of the pandemic.

This is not intended to be the definitive list of the best nurses in Napa County – that would take far more pages than we could ever produce. Rather, we decided to pick five who represent the dedication, professionalism and care of all their colleagues in the nursing profession. Next year, we will pick five more to honor.

So how did we choose these five honorees? We asked the public, soliciting stories of excellence from friends, colleagues, patients, physicians, and anyone who had come in contact with these special people.

We received dozens of submissions from patients, friends and colleagues. They spanned a wide range of the profession, from our largest hospitals to small health clinics, from schools to hospices, in private care and public service. Every one of them had something special to offer.

It was a tough task to whittle them down, but our staff picked 10 finalists, looking for people with notable stories of heroism, generosity, or above-average care and customer service.

We took this finalist list to a distinguished panel of local notables, who joined senior staff from the Napa Valley Register in coming to a consensus on this final five.

So congratulations to all our finalists – we appreciate your service and dedication and the care you show for us all in our times of need. Thanks to our guest judges and all of you who took the time to tell us about a special nurse who has touched your life. Thanks to photographer Bob McClenahan, who provided the striking portraits of our finalists, and writer Rachel Raskin-Zrihen, who told their stories so beautifully.

Most of all, congratulations to all nurses in our community. We thank you and wish there was time to celebrate you all in the way you deserve.

## OUR JUDGES

### INTERIM NAPA POLICE CHIEF SYLVIA MOIR

Sylvia Moir took over the Napa Police Department early in 2021. She is tasked with assessing the candidates for permanent chief and helping the city manager select the department's next leader. Previously, she was chief in Tempe, Arizona, and El Cerrito, California. She spent much of her career with the Sacramento Police Department, where she held a variety of senior roles.



### NAPA MAYOR SCOTT SEDGLEY

Scott Sedgely was elected mayor of Napa in 2020. He previously served as a city council member and a trustee at the Napa Valley Unified School District. A Napa native, he spent more than 30 years with the city fire department, retiring as a captain in 2011. He serves in a variety of community organizations, including on the board of the Napa Valley Opera House and as president of the Napa County Historical Society.



### NAPA VALLEY COLLEGE PRESIDENT RON KRAFT

Ron Kraft has been head of Napa Valley College since 2012, first in an interim capacity and later as president. Prior to coming to NVC, he worked more than 20 years in a variety of higher education-related positions, including serving as CEO of companies specializing in community college management. He also has served as president and CEO of Southern California University of Health Sciences in Whittier.



### NAPA VALLEY REGISTER PRESIDENT AND DIRECTOR OF LOCAL ADVERTISING DAVIS TAYLOR

Davis Taylor has headed the Register since 2018. Previously, he was publisher of the Hanford Sentinel. Prior to joining parent company Lee Enterprises in 2013, he served as sales and marketing director for Gannett Co., Inc.'s Times-Delta Media Group. His publishing career of 36 years includes sales and marketing executive positions at the Oakland Tribune and Media News Group, San Jose Mercury News and Harte-Hanks Communications.



### NAPA VALLEY REGISTER EDITOR SEAN SCULLY

Sean Scully has been editor of the Register and director of news content for its associated weeklies since 2014. He has worked more than 30 years in journalism, including working for the Press Democrat of Santa Rosa and The Washington Times and teaching journalism at Cal Poly Pomona.



# RETURNING THE GIFT OF LIFE



Registered nurse Lizzy Murphy, left, gives the second dose of COVID-19 vaccine to her mother, Lynn Griesmaier, who is also a nurse, at Northwestern Memorial Hospital.

YOUNGRAE KIM PHOTOS, CHICAGO TRIBUNE



Registered nurse Lizzy Murphy, left, asks questions as she checks in her mother, fellow nurse Lynn Griesmaier, before giving her the second dose of COVID-19 vaccination at Northwestern Memorial Hospital in Chicago on Jan. 8.

## Oncology nurse receives COVID-19 vaccine from her nurse daughter

HEIDI STEVENS | Chicago Tribune

As soon as the COVID-19 vaccine became available to her department, Lynn Griesmaier, nurse coordinator for breast medical oncology at Northwestern Memorial Hospital, jumped at the opportunity.

“I took the first available spot,” Griesmaier said. “I said, ‘I’ll go anywhere, at any time.’”

As soon as administering the COVID-19 vaccine became an option, nurse Lizzy Murphy, education coordinator at Northwestern Memorial Hospital, jumped at the opportunity.

“We’re just so excited to have a vaccine,” Murphy said. “I was like, ‘As many hands as they need. Let’s get this in people’s arms.’”

Griesmaier signed up to receive her first dose of the vaccine at 9 a.m. on Dec. 18. Murphy signed up to work one of Northwestern’s vaccine tables all day on Dec. 18.

Griesmaier is Murphy’s mom. The two have leaned on each other and drawn strength from each other and shared tears and the occasional lunch (when there’s time) and rides to work (masked, with the car windows down) as the novel coronavirus crashed through our lives, infecting more than 1 million Illinoisans.

“At the beginning I was keeping a log, ‘How many patient exposures do you think you had today?’” Griesmaier said. “And then I was checking it against the statistics on TV. I mean, it was nuts. I was really so worried about how things were going for her.”

Griesmaier was in awe, she said, of her daughter’s calm, and her lightning-fast mastery of COVID-19 protocols and personal protective equipment needs and severe respiratory illnesses.

“I’ve been a nurse for a very long time,” Griesmaier said.

**‘I gave birth to her. And she’s going to keep me alive.’**

(Forty years, to be exact.) “I just kept thinking, ‘How does she know all of this? How is she doing all of this?’”

Working at the same hospital was a tremendous relief, Griesmaier said.

“Not only because I had such confidence in her,” she said. “But because I still felt like I could make sure she’s OK.”

Murphy was supposed to get married on May 30. She and her mom had been planning the big wedding for more than a year.

“At the beginning it was like, ‘It’s going to be fine by May,’” Murphy said. “And then the realization of it all finally hit us. So that emotional side of canceling your wedding, my mom was there for all of it.”

And then, as the year like no other drew to a close, a vaccine arrived.

And Griesmaier was scheduled to receive it on the day her daughter was scheduled to administer it.

“I knew my mom was coming that day, but there were 18 stations,” Murphy said. “The chances of all of it happening just right ...”

Murphy had received her first dose Dec. 17, the day before her mom was scheduled to receive hers. Murphy knew the drill, and she also knew the emotions. Griesmaier felt them

all, the moment she walked into the hospital to receive her shot.

“It felt so reverent,” Griesmaier said. “I’m just so grateful we’re getting to do this. I was in awe of the moment.”

Then Murphy’s table had an opening. And it was Griesmaier’s turn.

“I thought, ‘I gave birth to her. And she’s going to keep me alive,’” Griesmaier said.

Murphy administered the shot, which Griesmaier says she barely felt. On Friday, three weeks after that first shot, Murphy administered her mom’s second dose.

“It feels sort of full circle,” Murphy said. “I wouldn’t be a nurse without my mom. I owe my work ethic and everything and the opportunity to go to nursing school and have a great education to my parents.”

“I always feel like I can never repay her for everything she’s done for me,” Murphy continued. “This I feel like is the greatest gift I could give her.”

“I’m just so proud of her,” Griesmaier said. “She’s done such beautiful work. Her heart is just — she’s a nurse, true and true. And it’s just amazing. Here’s your child. Here’s your daughter. How this all came together, it’s just amazing.”

Griesmaier helps patients who’ve been diagnosed with breast cancer. She sees fear and hope every workday, pre- and midpandemic.

“I’m just amazed at the resilience,” she said. “The strength and courage that my patients have and their families have, I’m always just amazed.”

The arrival of this vaccine, she said, gives her hope for their futures, for their ability to ward off a dangerous virus while their immune systems are already severely taxed.

“It’s a good powerful moment between us,” Murphy said. “And it’s also a sense of hope that we’re all moving in the right direction.”

# DENISE FOSTER

QUEEN OF THE VALLEY  
EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT

## Nursing is like hitting one out of the park

RACHEL RASKIN-ZRIHEN

Queen of the Valley ER nurse Denise Foster said she can most closely compare a successful day at work to a baseball player hitting it out of the park.

"I like to make people feel better, whether that means relieving their pain or making them calmer. It makes me happy that that's what my job is," she said. "Like when my kid hits a ball out of the park. That happiness and pride – that's what I can compare it to."

But, Foster said, it is always a team effort.

"I couldn't be successful in my job without my coworkers. We are definitely a team," she said.

Colleague Lois Husted said that as an emergency department nurse at Queen of the Valley Medical Center, Foster "is a real go getter and does not shy away from any situation."

"During most of our disaster responses (earthquakes, fires, pandemics), she has been on the front line," Husted said. "When the surge tent was set up to expand patient care areas – on two separate occasions – to deal with the influx of patients with COVID symptoms, she was the first one to volunteer to suit up and help these patients. Her compassion for her patients and making each one feel special and cared for is amazing."

Husted added that as a relief lead nurse, Foster "has been at the helm of the emergency department many times when we have had multiple trauma patients all at once, making sure everyone's needs are met."

Foster also "can be counted on to preceptor paramedic students from the local colleges paramedic programs," Husted said. "Her enthusiasm and willingness to educate and train our future first responders is much appreciated by all of her students and the faculty at the schools. If someone can be a firecracker on one hand, but the calm in a storm in the other, that would be Denise."

### Denise Foster

**Age:** 49

**Lives in:** Sonoma

**Works:** Queen of the Valley Emergency Department

**Grew up:** In San Francisco until age 5, then Sonoma

**Type of nurse:** Emergency Department nurse

**Nursing degree:** Associates degree in nursing plus two national certifications in Emergency Nursing

Foster said she may have been destined to become a nurse.

"Ever since I was a little girl, I've been fascinated with the human body and how it works," she said. "My dad supported that; he bought me anatomical books and puzzles. I always knew I'd be in the medical field somewhere. Also, I had an ER nurse as a neighbor who I thought was the coolest chick ever. I guess I was almost born interested in the medical field."

Foster said she finds working with people the most rewarding work there is.

"I love working with people. I love to focus on trying to take their minds off their current situation," she said. "We're a team – myself and the patient – to make them feel safe and secure and know we're going to try to figure out what's going on with them and make them feel better."

Foster said she's tried to approach the coronavirus pandemic pragmatically.

"I try to share with my nervous co-workers that we've learned in nursing school how to treat patients with infectious diseases, and we have to apply that multiple times a day now instead of multiple times a year. I remind people that we have to remember not to become complacent. We have to stay healthy to take care of our pa-



BOB MCCLLENAHAN

Denise Foster

tients who aren't."

Besides attending to patients, Foster said she enjoys working out, as well as hiking, biking fishing, going to the river or the beach, and "spending time with my two sons and all the sports they do."

But nursing is where her heart is.

"I've been a nurse for around 20 years – always in the ER – and I still love my job every day," she said. "I have great coworkers; I love working with patients. I couldn't imagine doing any other job."

# Medical setbacks fuel passion for nursing career

**CAITLIN HEANEY WEST**

The Times-Tribune (Scranton, Pa.)

Madison Jarocha knows her life would look much different if illness had not touched her.

From an autoimmune disease that shook up her world as a teenager to broken bones to a cancer diagnosis in her final year of college, the 21-year-old has faced — and survived — more than some people do in a lifetime.

Madison, of South Abington Twp., Pennsylvania, is studying for a nursing degree from University of Central Florida. As a student in Abington Heights School District, however, Madison thought she'd one day study mathematics. That, along with much more of her life, changed when she was 16.

A basketball and field hockey player, Madison initially thought she was having issues with asthma when she started getting out of breath and passing out at practice. When her mother, Nicole Jarocha, saw Madison for the first time in a few weeks, her intuition kicked in.

"She walked into the house, (and) I turned to my sister and said, 'There's something wrong with her,'" Nicole Jarocha recalled.

Madison, who lost about 20 pounds over two months and felt seriously fatigued, had seen doctors for a few months, but nothing came of the appointments. Her mother pushed for bloodwork and other tests, and Madison ended up getting admitted to Geisinger Medical Center in Danville, Pennsylvania.

"I had to stop everything," Madison recalled. "I can't walk up a flight of stairs without getting out of breath."

Madison learned she has acute systemic scleroderma. The more common variety causes the skin to produce too much collagen, but in Madison's case, her body produces too much collagen internally, which the body thinks of as foreign and then starts attacking her muscles, tissues and organs.

Overall, the disease led to at least 10 hospitalizations, several surgeries and

procedures, numerous trips to Baltimore and the possibility of needing a double lung transplant one day.

"The nurses that I had, I feel like I definitely would not be where I was without them," Madison said. "I kind of want to do for other people what they did with me."

## Switching paths

Madison realized going into her senior year at Abington Heights that nursing was the career for her. Ready for a fresh start, she headed to Florida and plans to graduate this May with a nursing degree. She's had research published, made dean's list each semester and was picked to participate in a research study.

Madison expects to stay in Florida for another year after college before hitting the road to work as a travel nurse. She's considering a career in bone-marrow transplants or oncology, having done clinical work in an adult oncology clinic last year that showed her how much she enjoys caring for patients in a critical setting. Eventually, she'd like to move into nurse education.

"There's a lot you can do with nursing after school and everything," Madison said. Early in college, while raising money for the Arnold Palmer Hospital for Children through the Knight-Thon, she collapsed and was taken to that very hospital for treatment. She went blind for more than a month, her mother said, as doctors suggested that flareups from Madison's disorder could have affected the connective tissues in the eyes. While Madison regained her eyesight, she is legally blind without her glasses.

Then last year, Madison was riding on the back of a moped with a friend when the vehicle crashed into a pole at 55 mph. Thrown more than 20 feet but miraculously alive, Madison had a concussion and broke

several bones in her foot.

Still, she pushed forward through her recovery, and then another setback came: cancer.

In June, she noticed a lump on top of her rib cage but thought it was just a cyst, which she gets often. By October, however, she realized it had almost doubled or tripled in size. Doctors diagnosed her with leiomyosarcoma, a cancer of the connective tissues and muscles.

Madison underwent surgery on Nov. 30, during which doctors removed the affected area and tissue surrounding it. Subsequent testing showed she was clear of cancer and did not need chemotherapy. She said she feels a lot better with the cancer behind her.

"I got really lucky," Madison said.

## Showing strength

Both Madison and her mother see how much she has taken away from these experiences, especially when it comes to nursing.

"I know what it's like to be a patient

in the hospital," Madison said. "I've had some good nurses and bad nurses. And I kind of know how I want to be treated in a hospital. ... I'll be able to sympathize and also empathize with my patients and know what situation they're in."

"She's going to be the nurse that everyone wants," Nicole Jarocha said. "I think first and foremost, as a nurse, the empathy and compassion is like 90% of the medicine. I just don't think empathy can be taught or compassion can be taught; you either have it or you don't. ... I just think that her empathy and compassion is going to have a lot to do with the helping of her patients."

Madison just tried to focus on getting through whatever she faced at that moment, knowing it would soon pass. And believes everything happens for a reason. Trials can make her a stronger person or give her more insight into her career.

"I just realized how resilient I was," Madison said. "I have a really good perspective on life. No matter what happens, I just try to keep a positive attitude."



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# From New England to the front lines of COVID-19 battle in Los Angeles

**JILL HARMACINSKI**  
The Eagle-Tribune (North Andover, Mass.)

LOS ANGELES — Right before Christmas, Mary Ellen Devine received her first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine.

“Your frontline workers are EXHAUSTED ... This a small light in the longest and darkest tunnel,” wrote Devine, 25, in a Facebook post announcing her vaccination to family and friends.

Devine, a 2013 graduate of Salem High School in New Hampshire and a registered nurse, is among frontline workers in Los Angeles — where COVID-19 infections and hospitalizations are soaring.

California remains at or near the top of the list of states with the most new cases per capita. Even with vaccines now being administered, albeit slowly, it is expected to take time to slow the virus.

In Salem, Mary Ellen’s mother Sue Ann Devine couldn’t be more proud of the work her daughter is doing on the West Coast.

Mary Ellen previously worked as a cardiac care nurse at Cedars-Sinai hospital in Los Angeles and is now primarily assigned as a labor and delivery nurse there.

Sue Ann said she tries to speak with her daughter by phone as often as possible but said she and her co-workers have all been working long hours to keep shifts filled and help patients.

She said Mary Ellen, who has lived in California for several years now, usually comes home for Christmas or family goes to see her in California.

But this year, along with COVID-19 precautions regarding travel, Mary Ellen and

her hospital co-workers were prohibited from using vacation time due to hospital volume.

“The hospital is really stretched at this time and they are all being asked to fill in when needed,” Sue Ann Devine said.

In early January, 10 of Mary Ellen’s co-workers tested positive for COVID-19 and Cedars-Sinai ran short on oxygen supply for patients, she noted.

While a graduate of Quinnipiac University in Hamden, Connecticut, Mary Ellen has long said the health occupation classes at Salem High were vital in preparing her for a nursing career.

“That’s where she really got her spark for nursing,” her mother said.

Sue Ann said she knows her daughter is taking all the necessary COVID-19 precautions and she “has peace” about her work.

“This is her calling. This is her sparkle. This is what she was meant for,” Sue Ann said. “I know she is helping people and this is where she needs to be right now. I have serenity in that. I am very, very proud.”

The past year did have a huge bright spot for Mary Ellen. She and her boyfriend, Brandon Loureiro, got engaged to be married. The couple lives in Manhattan Beach, California.

“So 2020 wasn’t all horrible for them,” Sue Ann said, with a laugh.

She said her daughter’s advice to the family includes wearing masks, frequent hand washing and social distancing. She also said not to attend “social gatherings or get-togethers with extended family,” Sue Ann said.

“She is very optimistic about the vaccine and is hoping that will help turn the corner,” she said.



# HILLARY HOPPE

NAPA VALLEY MEDICAL GROUP. ADVENTIST HEALTH ST. HELENA, URGENT CARE +TELEHEALTH—NAPA

## Giving back to her home town through nursing

RACHEL RASKIN-ZRIHEN

Described as a dedicated medical professional who is never “off the clock,” Hillary Hoppe says she’s happy to be working to improve the lives of the people in the town where she grew up. She said it was practically destiny that led her to nursing.

“I was always interested in the science, the biology and studying medicine,” she said. “I’d been exposed to the field by family and friends being cared for, and wrestled with what part of the medical field to go into, and it seemed that nursing was the perfect fit for me. It combines my love of science and my love of working with people and wanting to make an impact on people’s lives.”

Helping people get through a tough time may be the most rewarding part of the job, she said.

“It’s pretty incredible. You meet people often in their darkest time, and often you can help make it better,” she said. “There are few places in life you can make that kind of impact.”

Having grown up in St. Helena, Hoppe said she’s pleased to be able to apply her education and skills in her hometown.

“It’s a pleasure to come home and work in the town I grew up in,” she said. “I feel it’s a way of giving back. I have people come in and say things like ‘I knew your grandparents.’ Not everyone has that opportunity.”

Hoppe describes the COVID-19 pandemic, which hit during her first year as a nurse practitioner, as “an adventure.”

“I’ve learned flexibility is my best friend,” she said. “Working in the full (PPE) suit and treating people from their cars to keep everyone safe, for instance. Trying to keep up with ever-changing data. I think everyone’s doing the best they can and plugging along.”

Colleague Christopher Morisoli goes further yet, describing Hoppe as especially dedicated during a year of particularly challenging adversity.

“Hillary Hoppe is one of those selfless

### Hillary Hoppe

**Age:** 29

**Lives:** St. Helena

**Works:** Napa Valley Medical Group. Adventist Health St. Helena, Urgent Care +Telehealth—Napa

**Grew Up:** St. Helena

**In the Business:** Been a nurse for 7 years, Nurse Practitioner for almost 2 years

**Type of Nurse:** Family nurse practitioner at Napa Valley Medical Group and Urgent Care + Telehealth, emergency room registered nurse at Adventist Health.

**Nursing Degree:** Doctorate of Nursing Practice, Family Nurse Practitioner (Medical University of South Carolina, 2019) Masters of Science in Nursing (Medical University of South Carolina, 2019) Bachelors of Science in Nursing (Boise State University, 2014)

professionals that we are exceptionally fortunate to have serving in our community,” Morisoli said. “After completing her doctorate of Nursing Practice in 2019, Hillary willingly passed on higher-paying jobs in other locations to return to the community she felt most connected to.”

She took on extra work when the Adventist Health St. Helena became understaffed and needed added providers, “volunteering to work weekends and often nights after clinic, Hillary helped staff the Emergency Department during critical provider shortages,” Morisoli said.

But, Hoppe’s true dedication to the community emerged during the 2020 Glass Fire, he said.

“After receiving a call from St. Helena Hospital administration shortly after evacuation orders were issued, Hillary and a skeleton crew evacuated tens of patients



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Hillary Hoppe

in only a few hours,” he said. “By the late afternoon, she and her team closed the hospital down as fire had jumped over Sanitarium Road and was burning uncontrolled toward the hospital’s helipad. Hillary and her team left with barely enough time before Deer Park Road became completely impassable due to downed power lines, burning trees and falling rocks.”

Though caring for patients consumes

most of her time, Hoppe said she also has other interests.

“I enjoyed travel, pre-pandemic, and I’m happy to see that starting to come back,” she said. “And I got a Lab puppy. Also, I run a podcast with another local individual on local crime, which is pretty non-existent, so it’s mostly comical and we talk about wine. Wine and crime. And, since there’s virtually no crime, it’s mostly about wine.”

# USING ART TO COPE

Facing helplessness and fatigue, some health care workers seek out creative outlets

**MAKEDA EASTER**  
Los Angeles Times

**L**OS ANGELES — “COVID Fatigue” is how surgeon Dr. Frank Candela titled his painting — a weary blue face enveloped in a cloud of black. During the winter COVID-19 surge in L.A., Candela sent the painting to Times health reporter Soumya Karlamangla, who tweeted: “When I asked him what inspired the image, he said, ‘my colleagues faces.’” As the pandemic stretched toward the one-year mark, with about half a million deaths in the U.S. alone, health care workers were increasingly burned out and traumatized.

For some, staying creative is a form of escape, a way to cope with stress or a strategy for sharing a message of hope with their community. The Times spoke to five health care workers — who are also a painter, a choreographer, a photographer or an illustrator — to learn more about how the pandemic has affected their artistry.

## **C. Michael Gibson:** interventional cardiologist, researcher, educator, painter

In Dr. C. Michael Gibson’s oil painting “The Last Shift,” a line of dark, floating silhouettes drifts off into a hazy light. Gibson shared the painting, which was auctioned for \$25,000 to support health care workers, on Twitter last March, adding: “Welcome home to all of our courageous #CoronaHeroes who made the ultimate sacrifice.”

The isolation of the pandemic has meant more time to look inward. For Gibson, “The Last Shift” is a meditation on spirituality and vulnerability, “not afraid to talk about it, knowing that so many other people were probably facing the same concerns about where’s everyone going after this. Are they going to be OK? All those issues we all struggle with.”

As a practicing physician, Gibson spends one day each week doing procedures, opening up people’s arteries. It’s a visual job, he said. “You’re looking at a screen and finding these blockages and making them better, so we’re kind of visual athletes. And being a painter has always made me a better visual athlete.”

In addition to his work as a cardiologist, researcher and educator, he paints most nights and weekends at his studio in Natick, Massachusetts. Art is his way to communicate nonverbally and “allow a lot of all those feelings, emotions and right sided things that are all pent up in there to come out.”

During the pandemic, Gibson has created about 10 paintings. About half are directly related to the pandemic. He was particularly inspired by a nurse in a Dove commercial, struck by her exhaustion and the marks the mask left on her face. He said it captured “not just the outward appearance but the inward appearance of so many health care workers who’ve been traumatized by the violence.”

Other paintings have been more abstract, but still the pandemic showed up in subtle

ways — like the increased use of grays, red and blues. “They’re not very happy paintings,” he said.

A recent ray of light: He helped to administer vaccines one weekend in Central Falls, Rhode Island. “It reminded me why I was a doctor. It was a really good experience.”

## **G. Sofia Nelson:** pulmonologist and choreographer

As a physician who specializes in the respiratory system, Dr. G. Sofia Nelson splits her time between clinic and hospital settings in Oxnard and Camarillo, California. When making hospital rounds before the pandemic, Nelson typically saw about 15 patients each day. But during the recent COVID-19 surge in Southern California, Nelson saw between 50 and 60 patients every day.

Nelson, 33, would often return home from work, not because she had treated every patient, but because she was exhausted. There was also triaging, she said, deciding which patients could benefit from continued treatment.

Flow arts, a form of dance that involves prop manipulation, such as hoops, or juggling, was one way Nelson coped with the stress.

“It’s been long days, but it’s very powerful having something to come home to, for which I can pretty much shut off my brain. I can just really focus on my body,” Nelson said. “The more I’m working my mind and the more I’m thinking, the harder my job becomes, the more I actually have to dance to maintain that balance.”

She’s also the director of Lumia Dance Company, which she launched in 2019 as a way to give back to the arts community. In December the company premiered its debut show virtually, “Light Through Darkness,” featuring dance, aerial arts and fire spinning — all filmed in an empty North Hollywood theater.

Nelson choreographed three dances in the show over several months, typically rehearsing on Zoom during evenings and weekends. One dance was a post-apocalyptic hoop piece about the pandemic experience, another was inspired by what she described as the government’s increased militarization and fascism, and a duet explored the pitfalls of social media.

Now that the show is over, Nelson mainly dances at home as a form of movement meditation, reaching the same type of head space many surgeons use in their practice, she said. “It’s really important that we create a culture where physicians are encouraged to have creative outlets like this.

We create a society in which not just physicians, but anybody, really has that kind of opportunity.”

## **Chip Thomas:** family physician and photographer

For the last 33 years, Dr. Chip Thomas has worked on the Navajo Nation, the largest reservation in the U.S., spanning parts of New Mexico, Arizona and Utah, and also among the hardest hit by COVID-19. As a family practice physician, Thomas, 63, has treated generations of families in the area. Also a street photographer who goes by “jetsonorama,” Thomas says art and medicine go hand in hand.

“When I see people in the clinic, I’m attempting to create an environment of wellness within the individual. And when I am putting art up in the community, (I’m) reflecting the beauty of the community back to people.”

In 2009, Thomas began creating public installations of his photography, using spaces throughout the Navajo Nation as a way to share messages. Some of Thomas’ prior work focused on public health awareness, including commentary on people’s food choices.

During the pandemic, he created large-scale public service announcements posted on abandoned buildings and billboards encouraging residents to wear a mask and stay positive despite the tough times.

Last November, Thomas published a 115-page multimedia zine called “Pandemic Chronicles, Volume 1,” inviting visual artists and poets to respond to how the pandemic disproportionately affected their communities. Thomas shot much of the photography in the zine during weekends and his time off work.

One image, of an older woman and child in a masked embrace, is a family Thomas has worked with since 1987.

The young girl in the photo is about 9. “I started photographing her when she was 6 months old,” Thomas said. “One of the things I love about that image, other than the fact that they’re both wearing masks, is they’re touching. ... With social distancing and the emphasis on mitigation measures, a lot of people don’t have an opportunity to touch and embrace like that.”

Thomas was recently invited to create a project funded by the United Nations, working with activists to create an art-based response on the Navajo Nation to the mental health challenges caused by the pandemic. The project’s title, “Pandemic as Portal,” is based on an essay of the same name by Indian author Arundhati Roy.

### Tessa Moeller: nurse and painter

Working as a nurse in a Miami trauma burn unit during the early days of the pandemic, when personal protective equipment ran low and there were many unknowns about COVID-19, was terrifying for Tessa Moeller.

Painting was an outlet to handle the high stress of the hospital, where she typically worked three days a week. "Sometimes I would come home, especially after a particularly scary day, and I would shower (and) go right to painting."

When Moeller, 29, wasn't working in the hospital, she juggled commissions and created art to express how she felt in the moment.

Last March, she began a COVID-19 series of paintings of nurses she knew, including one of a colleague who works in ICUs inserting catheters and another who became infected with COVID-19 while studying to become a nurse anesthetologist.

Last May, Moeller moved to Portland, Oregon, and began working in an oncology unit.

In the early days of the pandemic, the fear and confusion of last spring emerged through her use of bright reds and expressive brushstrokes. After moving, Moeller's paintings became more detailed and controlled with "a lot of neurotic brushstrokes," she said.

"That really sort of portrays how I was feeling, and I think a lot of nurses were feeling, from the frantic beginning to them just becoming very careful and controlled and anxious and making sure that everything is very — trying to exert control, when you don't have control on your situation."

Now based in Boston, Moeller has completed about 20 paintings in her COVID-19 series and is preparing to enter an MFA studio art program at Syracuse University.

### Bing Li: medical resident and illustrator

Drawing was part of Dr. Bing Li's life before she considered studying medicine. Last year, as a medical resident who works in a Brooklyn emergency room, Bing turned to art as a way of managing the grueling hours and pervading feeling of helplessness while New York was the epicenter of COVID-19.

Drawing landscape pieces and comics is a relaxing escape, a way to "feel like I have control and creating something that feels productive that's also fun," Li said.

Maintaining an art practice is crucial for the 32-year-old. "We all see a lot of suffering that doesn't necessarily have a meaning," Li said. "But then the desire to make



JAY L. CLENDENIN,  
LOS ANGELES TIMES  
VIA TRIBUNE NEWS SERVICE

Dr. G. Sofia Nelson, a pulmonologist who sees dance as a way to keep balance in her life, uses dance hoops in her Newbury Park, California, backyard.

art is kind of like a desire to put a meaning into something"

Although most of Li's art practice doesn't intersect with her work in health care, she made a comic last November based on a conversation between medical residents working through COVID-19. "I'd like to maybe eventually make more stuff that's related to what we're experiencing in health care, but it also feels like you're kind of re-living the moment, and you may not feel necessarily ready for that."

Since the pandemic began, Li has made close to 30 pages of a lighthearted web comic described as being "about adventure, friendship and a weird squishy creature."

Although the pandemic doesn't show up directly in the work, experiences of the last year are often prioritized in the storytelling — themes of working collectively for the greater good, Li said, and "having a society that will care for each other, rather than a selfish society where people care just about their individual comforts."

# Congratulations

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# JENNIFER PAYNE

## QUEEN OF THE VALLEY

### 9/11 led to career in nursing

RACHEL RASKIN-ZRIHEN

Queen of the Valley Medical Center nurse Jennifer Payne said when the COVID pandemic hit, she knew she was on the front lines of a historic episode.

"I realized I was a nurse in the trenches during this thing – this is our 9/11; our Pearl Harbor," she said. "I definitely thought of that."

But, that's what Payne signed up for when she left the corporate world to become a nurse, she said.

"I went to Cal Poly, and graduated, and was working in business, and then 9/11 happened, and I made the switch into nursing," she said. "I also had nurses in my family, and it felt like it would be more of a fit for me, and it turned out I was right."

The most rewarding part of an overall rewarding career, Payne said, is working in her hometown.

"I grew up and live in Napa, and when I graduated, I wanted to work at the Queen because I wanted to work with people in my community," she said. "And I find it rewarding to be able to give back to a family member of a friend or something – to give that extra personal touch to someone I'm connected to. I was offered jobs in Solano County when I graduated, but I decided I wanted to work with my community instead."

Payne said she credits the teamwork among co-workers and the support of her family for making the hard work bearable, especially during the pandemic.

"The COVID unit – the teamwork there – was outstanding; I couldn't have done my job without everyone else doing theirs; the respiratory therapists, the CNAs, everybody," she said. "The support of my family was also outstanding. Without the support of my husband Greg and my two kids, I don't know if I could have done it."

As a "float pool" nurse, Payne said she is assigned each day to wherever she's needed most, so, once the pandemic hit, that became the COVID unit.

"When COVID started, I wasn't really face-to-face involved, but by the summer, we opened a COVID unit, and I was assigned there every day until they closed the unit around February," she said. "It was

#### Jennifer Payne

**Age:** 45

**Lives:** Napa

**Works:** Queen of the Valley

**Grew up:** Napa

**In the business:** Became a Registered Nurse in 2005, worked at the Queen the whole time.

**Type of Nurse:** Float Pool—work on different units each day depending on need.

**Nursing degree:** Associates Degree (ADN), Napa Valley College in 2005; followed by Bachelors Degree (BSN), University of Texas. Prior, Cal Poly, Ag Marketing Degree.

hard. Physically, it was hard because you can't go into a room to help your patient until you get into all your PPE (personal protection equipment), and that takes minutes. Even if they need you right away, you have to do that first. It was also hard because some people came in very sick and no matter what you did they got sicker. The hard part was having to transfer them to the ICU and you see them intubated the next day. One day we had a mother and daughter together. It was really hard. Hard all around."

It's Payne's ability to overcome those sorts of hurdles that impresses colleague Anna Kim.

"Jen is a versatile nurse who is always willing to help," Kim said. "She was one of the first nurses to volunteer to take the first COVID patients. When we were all filled with the fear of the unknown, she stepped up."

Payne asked her husband before accepting her first COVID assignment, Kim said.

"Do you trust me?" she asked him," Kim said. "It wasn't so much about asking for his permission as it was a statement of her concern for how he felt about his wife taking on a challenge that was proving fatal to healthcare workers in hard hit regions at a disproportionate rate."



BOB MCCLANAHAN

Jennifer Payne

Even among medical professionals, there was trepidation and the fear of the unknown, Kim said.

"Among nurses there was a lot of hesitancy," she said. "It was new and looked very scary as things began and she was just willing to just step up from the get-go. Every time I went to the COVID unit, there was Jen. Always smiling, and always helping, because that's who she is."

But a dedicated nurse is not the only thing Payne is.

"I'm a mom and a wife," she said. "My son graduated from Vintage in June, and my daughter is now a freshman there. So most of our days outside of work are usually involved with sporting events and other kid-related things. Also, when I get some down time, I really like to read, and work out and try to stay healthy."



LYNDA M. GONZALEZ, DALLAS MORNING NEWS VIA TRIBUNE NEWS SERVICE

Nurse Natalie Salazar held the hand of an intubated COVID-19 patient in the Tactical Care Unit at Parkland Memorial Hospital as he received a chest tube placement to re-expand a punctured lung on Feb. 10.

# After young mom's death brought COVID unit to the breaking point, NURSES SEEK HOPE TO FIGHT ON

SHARON GRIGSBY  
Dallas Morning News

**D**ALLAS — Once, it was death upon death. Then, surge upon surge ... upon surge, until the deaths began to blur into one another.

Not when the dying is happening — the nurses in Parkland Memorial Hospital's COVID-19 unit give each dwindling life the absolute, loving devotion it deserves. But too soon that death is subsumed in others, in the sheer, numbing endlessness of it all.

I have been interviewing Parkland nurses who care for the sickest of the sick in Dallas since just after the hospital took in its first COVID case in March 2020. I've watched as the initial wave of adrenaline subsided, till they were running on fumes of fumes.

Theirs is a combat bond; together, they've seen a lot of bad things.

On this visit, I felt a raw heaviness from caregivers who allowed themselves to be vulnerable in a way I hadn't seen before. While the rest of us talk about vaccines and the future, these nurses labor in a purgatory of exhaustion, stress and grief, sometimes overwhelmed by the scale of suffering.

The seven weeks ending Feb. 13 marked the most COVID deaths at Parkland — 111 victims — since the pandemic began. The previous seven-week high, during the summer's surge, was 74 deaths. In this early 2021 spike, 21 Parkland patients died in each of two back-to-back weeks.

One nurse confessed that she feels guilty occasionally going out to eat — despite her yearning to “be normal” for just one night. Another spoke longingly, if fancifully, of becoming a Sherpa in the mountains of Nepal. Another described trying to “pour from an empty cup” when she's home with her children.

Each death eats away at them a little more. Too often it feels like they put everything they have into slaying this monster of a disease and it doesn't flinch.

Although it's the relentlessly growing numbers that have worn down the caregivers, it's the individual deaths that grab their insides and give a vicious twist.

Then comes that one death that is just too much, the one that threatens to drag the whole unit over the edge.

A 22-year-old woman, far along in her first pregnancy when she was admitted, showed all the signs of a COVID patient who would recover. A happy ending was in reach.

But complications in the unborn child forced the mother to be placed on a ventilator so the baby could be delivered by C-section. Even amid the emergency hustle to the operating room, nurse Hannah Ramsey made sure the terrified patient could stay on the phone with her own mom.

Ramsey is usually a strong compartmentalizer; she calls it a necessity of being a COVID nurse.

But not this time. Ramsey's last words to the young woman still echo in her heart and mind: “You're going to be a great mom.”

At first, as the newborn thrived in the NICU, the mother also seemed to be recovering — ever so close to coming off the ventilator.

Then she began to slip away.

For days, at each 12-hour shift change, every caregiver's first question was whether the young mother was still alive in that ICU bed.

“She was just not getting better and not getting better,” Ramsey said. “When she passed away, every single nurse who had cared for her felt just devastated.”

The baby went home the day after the mother died.

## “I don't think it was that patient specifically — it was hope, right? So now who is your new hope? And does the team have enough strength to come back and find hope again?”

**Samantha Rowley**, the Parkland executive in charge of the Tactical Care Unit, the three floors housing the hospital's most critically ill COVID victims.

“This patient brought the unit to the breaking point,” said Samantha Rowley, the Parkland executive in charge of the Tactical Care Unit, the three floors housing the hospital's most critically ill COVID victims.

A nurse herself, Rowley had watched her team toggle for weeks between hope and grief over the 22-year-old's fate.

Rowley has witnessed many moments in the past year when a caregiver struggled mightily to come back from a particular death. But this was different.

“I don't think it was that patient specifically — it was hope, right?” Rowley said. “So now who is your new hope? And does the team have enough strength to come back and find hope again?”

Somehow, they go on. But for how much longer? How many more bites can this pandemic take out of their souls?

### ‘They all hurt’

The entire team has felt like it was drowning in deaths in recent weeks. But they remain steadfast, Ramsey said, in holding those last hours and minutes for the patient and family “with the sacredness with which it deserves.”

Sometimes the nurses play religious music for a dying patient; other times they pray over a victim. “It takes an emotional toll on the nurses, walking that with them again and again,” Ram-

sey said.

Parkland has lost 336 patients to COVID since March. While coronavirus cases have declined in recent weeks, the death toll and the number of patients requiring the most intensive care remain high.

Nurse Bianca Castillo still can talk only haltingly about standing at the bedside of a dying father as his son came to say his goodbyes one Saturday in June.

“He brought his high school diploma to show him that he graduated,” Castillo said as she struggled to resume her story after a long silence broken only by weeping. “He was just talking to his dad, telling his dad, ‘I hope you are proud of me.’”

Nurse Byanka Ponce's heart still breaks over an older man whose health wasn't good even before he contracted the coronavirus.

She recalled him grabbing her hand and saying, “I don't want to die from this. Please tell me I'm not going to die from this.” She tried her best to encourage him: “I just need you to keep trying your hardest for as long as you can.”

When Ponce returned to his room soon after, she learned he was about to be intubated. “I had to run to the bathroom and I just had to cry because I knew that man was going to die.”

The women and men I've met at Parkland — like those fighting COVID at hospitals everywhere — went into nursing to be healers. But as they battle on behalf of those patients closest to death, too often their work is performing the post-mortem care of the deceased's body and witnessing the devastation of a family exhausted after weeks of praying for a miracle.

“When someone passes, it still hurts a lot. Each one hurts differently,” Ponce said. “They all hurt.”

Steven Vela, a certified registered nurse anesthetist, still feels a shock each time he comes on duty and learns of an unexpected COVID death. His first thought is always, “Wait, I needed more time. We needed more time to fix you, and I was never given the opportunity.”

When the post-holiday spike in COVID cases forced Parkland to resort again to using its operating rooms to house patients, nurse Lola Fatoyinbo's reaction was “Oh my God, not again ... we are back at ground zero.”

“It's been tough — and rough,” she said. “I've seen so many deaths ... I try not to take it home but personally, sometimes I can't help it.”

In the early months of the pandemic, nurse Sam White said, he could recall the name and face of every person who died. “I remember some patients back near the beginning more than now just because ... there's just such bigger numbers.”

“After 11 months of it constantly, we are kind of numb to the crazy things — like the post-mortem care and putting bodies in body bags,” he said.

Ramsey said White's words jolted her into considering how many post-mortem care cases the two of them have worked together. “There's a heaviness. People are really sad. But we're all supporting each other to be able to get through some very, very tough shifts,” she said.

### Months of combat medicine

Even for those of us not on the front lines, pandemic fatigue is already a beat-up cliché. We are sick of this topic, sick of thinking about it.

The miserable sameness of every challenging, distressing, anxious day has become a torment of the spirit.

But imagine what it's like for nurses. While the rest of us are busy vaccine shopping and fantasizing about life after COVID, these caregivers are still looking at death every day.

“It seems like yesterday, and it seems like 10 years ago since this started,” said Dr. Matt Leveno, the Tactical Care Unit’s medical director.

He is all too aware that the surging COVID deaths that Parkland has coped with — most recently the record totals of the past seven weeks — are numbers that have overwhelmed hospitals across the nation.

“We’ve had the numbers ... we’ve had the acuity,” he said. “We shouldn’t have been able to handle this.”

Leveno credits Parkland for creating a sturdy bulwark — the spaces, the staffing, the equipment and the training — against the chaos of this unprecedented crisis. That, in turn, has allowed the caregivers to never lose sight of the individual victims of this catastrophe.

But he said it’s the core COVID team, including the nurses in the room with us that recent Wednesday morning, “that kept us moving forward.”

No one can be at his or her best every day, Leveno said. “There are definitely days when I can’t get out of bed, when I can’t face it ... I can’t be the person who makes sure that you’re OK and you’re OK and you’re OK,” he said.

“But when I can’t, he can do it, she can do it, they can do it,” Leveno said, gesturing to various team members.

The nurses also talked about the days on which they would like to hand someone else their supposed superhero cape and not come back.

Nurse White told me that despite caregivers’ stoic protests that they are fine, “you can see it in people’s body language. You know it’s a bad week when their shoulders are just constantly slumped.”

While White, who has spent his entire young nursing career in the COVID unit, sees nothing remarkable about his own existence in this world of COVID — “I walk across the street to my apartment, fall asleep, get up and come back to work” — that’s not the life 23-year-olds, or anyone else, should have to live.

As the fight grinds on, Castillo asks herself several times a week why she is a nurse. The answer props her back up for another day: Born at Parkland herself, she loves this hospital, her colleagues and her patients.

The bilingual nurse feels the added weight of helping those from her own Hispanic community. “I see my mom in all those patients,” she said.

But Castillo also senses the flashes of burnout, anxiety, fear and depression among herself and her co-workers.

Nurse Fatoyinbo said there’s little time

to process each death because there’s always another patient on the edge who needs her attention. “You can’t go into a room ... and be sad,” she said. “It can be very emotional.”

Fatoyinbo said she copes by spending as much time as possible with a friend who has two young girls. “They make everything go away until I have to come back.”

Nurse Ramsey saw in Parkland’s call to arms against the pandemic the urgent need for volunteers willing to do combat medicine. “How could I not do that for my community?”

Exhausted at the end of every shift, she worries about what little of her is available for her own kids. But she would never consider not coming back. “How can I tell my children to think of others before themselves, if I’m not practicing that?” she said.

### Numb to the outside world

Airway expert Vela feels the doom and gloom of the COVID floors, but he also senses “this insane optimism that we are still trying to put a dent in this thing.”

“We’re not stopping,” he said. “Despite it all, we are still trying.”

When I asked each of the nurses for the single most important thing they hadn’t gotten the chance to share with me, each echoed some version of Vela’s sentiment: Please tell the community that we are still here fighting our hardest for these patients every single day.

Ponce told me she’s here both for her colleagues and, like Castillo a bilingual nurse, for “my community. It’s the Hispanic community who’s been hit the most.”

Even when she thinks she can’t do this for another day, Ponce knows that, “I want to do this. I want to be here.” She also takes pride in having grown immeasurably as a nurse — even though it’s been at a great cost.

The large number of deaths have left her mostly numb to anything outside the hospital walls. “Even to being happy,” she said.

“All I think about when I get home is that I want to eat and sleep,” Ponce said. “And what time and what energy and

what mental space do I have for my child? Very short. But I try.”

Ponce has difficulty squaring the heavy sadness inside the hospital with the many people outside Parkland whom she sees going about their lives unencumbered. But she also yearns for that sense of normalcy.

It’s tough, she said, to always have to be the example of responsibility for others. “I want to go out and I want to see people,” Ponce said. “I’m actually the social butterfly.”

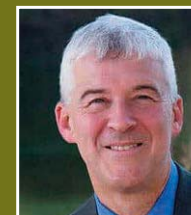
But not these days. “When I have gone out to dinner or with friends, I think, ‘I shouldn’t be doing this’ and I feel guilty,” she said. “Then I feel very bad and selfish

for feeling alone ... when I just go home.”

Ponce, like all the nurses I’ve interviewed this past year, doubts her life will ever be normal again. It’s not normal to see what they’ve seen.

But in a pandemic too often defined by the numbers — the tallies of cases, tests, infection rates, vaccines and deaths — these nurses have been steadfast that their patients not be dehumanized.

“We’ve made sure everyone was still an individual and reminded each other that, even among the mass numbers, it wasn’t OK to take that away from patients,” executive and nurse Rowley said. “That was still someone’s mom, or sister, or child, or loved one.”



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# KAREN GOOD

NAPA KAISER CLINIC

## A sign from above led to a new career in nursing

RACHEL RASKIN-ZRIHEN

**K**aren Good says nursing is her calling — one that came early but needed a little push to fulfill, and that the final nudge came from the Almighty, Himself.

“I’ve always wanted to be a nurse, since I was young, but I never felt I was smart enough,” she said. “When my mother was dying of cancer, I realized the desire in my heart was to be a nurse, and when I came back home, there was a packet in the mail from Napa Valley College about their nursing program. I hadn’t asked for it, so I took that as a sign, and at age 42, I went through the nursing program.”

It’s been even more rewarding than she expected it to be, she said.

“I feel so blessed to be able to fulfill this dream,” Good said. “I told God, ‘If you let me practice medicine even one day, I will be satisfied.’ It’s been 17 years.”

Good works at Kaiser Permanente in Napa. She said this past year, with the pandemic, has been an especially difficult one.

“It’s been a very emotional, scary time, but this is the profession I’m in. I’m called to provide care to my patients, so I had to overcome my own doubts and fears and even putting my own family at risk, but that’s my job, and I love my job,” she said. “We never closed the clinic. We had to figure it out together.”

The fear has dissipated as more people recover and are vaccinated, she said.

“I have no fear now,” she said. “We’re picking up being busy like it was before 2020, so we’re getting back to normal.”

Like in her professional life, Good’s personal life is also wrapped up in God.

“My main interest is to get the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the world; that’s my mandate from God,” she said. “I try to serve others and to shine my light in the darkness; to be hope for the hopeless as the Bible tells me to. To have empathy and compassion; to put others above myself and care for them. That taught me a lot through this pandemic. I learned a lot in the last year about what’s important.”

### Karen Good

**Age:** 61

**Lives:** Napa

**Works:** Napa Kaiser clinic

**Grew up:** Southern California, moved to Napa 32 years ago

**In the business:** Registered nurse for 17 years, went back to school for a nursing degree at 42.

**Type of nurse:** Registered nurse in adult/family medicine

**Nursing degree:** Associate of Science, Napa Valley College, 2004

Good’s friend Claire Daw said that like Good, many medical professionals begin their careers at a medical clinic, where the nursing staff tends to be underappreciated. She said she wanted to make sure to recognize Good and her co-workers for the vital work they do.

“The nurses there have to be ready to meet any kind of case that comes in the door. And these RNs are often left thankless for the work they do,” Daw said. “Karen is an inspiration for the work she does at Kaiser Permanente in Napa. She provides care in the Nurse Clinic, managing the cases sent by the doctors for her to assess and follow. Some of these situations are very long term, returning frequently, yet she greets each person with optimism and skill.”

Daw added that Good “is always empathetic, cheerful, and helpful, and also very skilled at her job and duties. She has been on the front line all during this pandemic, smiling despite her mask and face shield.”

Good appears to be unconcerned about what recognition she may or may not get. “Patient safety is the main concern and taking care of the whole person, and I think that clinical nurses don’t get the same



BOB MCCLENAHAN

Karen Good

amount of attention, but we usually live in our community, and we’re advocates for our patients and for each other.”

One of the main things Good said she’s learned as a nurse is that a sense of humor is essential.

“Also, being that National Nurses Week

is about giving recognition to Florence Nightingale, and I have a quote: ‘Let us never consider ourselves finished nurses. We must be learning all of our lives,’” she said. “Also, she said, ‘How very little can be done under the spirit of fear,’ and think that sums up a lot.”



# KATE SCUDERO

NAPA VALLEY UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT, ACMS, CANYON OAKS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, DONALDSON WAY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, NAPA JUNCTION ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

## Tending to the needs of American Canyon students

RACHEL RASKIN-ZRIHEN

**K**ate Scudero, a Napa Valley Unified School District nurse, chose her profession for what she called “purely practical reasons,” which she says have worked out even better than she’d hoped.

“My grandmother was a nurse, and I knew it was a great career I could go anywhere in the world with; that it could flex with me,” she said. “I was also always interested in health care and thought this is a great, stable career that can move with me through time to give me satisfaction and challenge in whatever phase of life. And it has done that and more so.”

Among other things, nursing has provided “great opportunities to work with smart and talented people from all walks of life and all over the world,” she said.

Scudero said one of the aspects of her career she finds especially rewarding is the way it has of “empowering people to make the most of their specific situation and take control of their life and health; supporting people so they can go on to be as great as they should be.”

Scudero describes the COVID-19 pandemic as an opportunity for professional and personal growth.

“It was a really incredible year so far, of growing and doing as much as I can for the communities I live and work in,” she said. “For me, it was about being part of a team of which I was the healthcare representative; working to create the safest environment possible to keep our kids and staff safe.”

Not content, however, just to work at her job, Scudero also volunteered to apply her skill set in other areas of need in the community during the health crisis.

“I also volunteered at the Cal Expo site in Napa at the beginning of the pandemic, doing COVID testing for several months on Saturdays, to do what I can for the community,” she said. “Maybe there was a little guilt in there because I wasn’t working in a hospital!”

Scudero said she has enjoyed her profession wherever it has taken her so far.

“I love working in schools” she said. “I

### Kate Scudero

**Age:** 55

**Lives in:** Napa

**Works:** Napa Valley Unified School District, ACMS, Canyon Oaks Elementary School, Donaldson Way Elementary School, Napa Junction Elementary School

**Grew up:** Glendale

**In the business:** Since 1990 (31years)

**Type of Nurse:** Credentialed School Nurse, private practice as an FNP. Started out working as a Med-Surg nurse at both UCSF and UC Davis Medical Centers, working with transplant patients.

**Nursing degree:** BSN from University of San Francisco 1990; MSN, FNP from Sonoma State University 2001; School Nurse Credential CSU Sacramento 2011

also absolutely loved working in hospitals. It was absolutely rewarding, fun and challenging. So is working in schools, in a different way.”

When she’s not dealing with the health issues of school populations, she’s dealing with her own kids, of which there are three, Scudero said. They are her main other interests in life, but there are others, as well, she said.

“I’m a mom, and the kids keep me busy. They’re pretty fun,” she said. “And I love being outside — gardening, camping, hiking, anything that gets me outside.”

The best part of nursing for Scudero may be the teamwork aspect of the job.

“In every place I’ve worked, it’s been about the team I worked with. Now, it’s the school staff and the other school nurses, and the public health department, and that’s been a really amazing partnership,” she said. “I feel fortunate to be able to work with these incredibly dedicated people. I’m also in awe of what teachers have done the past year.”

Her colleagues seem to appreciate Scu-



BOB MCCLLENAHAN

Kate Scudero

dero’s contribution to the workplace.

American Canyon Middle School colleague Amy Whorrall credits Scudero with helping school staff and students stay safe.

“Kate has led the way in guiding our organization through the health protocols necessary while serving our student and staff needs,” said Whorrall, an assistant principal at American Canyon Middle. “Her contributions are invaluable in keeping us up-to-date, safe and healthy.”

Whorrall describes Scudero as someone

dedicated to the health and safety of those she’s charged with looking after.

“During the pandemic, she was a member of our COVID-19 safety leadership team, playing an essential role by staying up-to-date with federal and local guidelines that helped us to plan and be prepared for any possible situations that may have arisen,” Whorrall said. “She not only serves the education population, she works hard serving the community whenever a need arises.”



# Georgia WWII veteran, NURSE TURNS 100

**SHANNON BALLEW**  
Marietta Daily Journal, Ga.

Inez Long of Marietta, Georgia, one of Cobb County's few surviving World War II veterans, celebrated her 100th birthday in January.

"It's good to be alive," Long said before the approaching milestone.

Born Minnie Inez Scurry on Jan. 30, 1921, in the south Georgia town of McRae, Long said her older sister became a nurse despite their father's insistence that she be a teacher. She followed in her sister's footsteps, and graduated as a registered nurse from Emory's Crawford W. Long Hospital School of Nursing, according to family records. That hospital is now Emory University Hospital Midtown.

She worked a little over a year as an industrial nurse in a Savannah shipyard, enlisted in the Army Air Corps in 1943 during the Second World War.

"The war was on, and that was it," she said of her decision to use her skills in supporting the war effort.

Inez went through basic training in Greensboro, North Carolina, and Santa Ana, California, and spent the rest of her time stationed at the hospital at Numa Army Air Field in Arizona. There, she tended to patients, administered medicines and shots, and worked on the floor, doing whatever the doctors needed her to do. She especially loved helping with surgeries, she said.

It was at the Numa base hospital that she met her husband, Ed "Bud" Long, who served as a B-17 bomber pilot.

As the family story goes, the two lieutenants first met when Ed Long was waking up from a tonsillectomy.

He was just as struck by Inez's beauty as he was by the punches she was landing on him, forcing him to breathe.

Edward Long, who died in 2016, would later tell people that he chased the young Inez all over the hospital

for the rest of his stay there, according to an article from their church, Maple Avenue United Methodist Church in Marietta.

The couple married in Yuma in 1944 and would be together for 72 years. Inez Long was discharged when she was pregnant with their first child and moved back to McRae. She waited there for about a year, and when the war was over the Longs and their daughter, Georgia, moved to Marietta.

In Marietta, they had a son, Ed Long, Jr., and Inez continued her nursing career at a local doctor's office and later became an assistant at a dentist office, while her husband worked at Delta and Lockheed Martin.

Long Jr. remembers his parents being the hosts to many parties on their front porch and in their backyard, always loving to have company. His mother was always active in their church, selling baked goods for church fundraisers at the old fairgrounds. One favorite was pecan tarts.

"I told her when she was selling them at the bazaar at church, she was selling them too cheap. They were always gone," he said.

Inez Long could also often be found tending her garden, and she loved to can the vegetables she grew, especially mustard pickles. Her son said she also loved pranking her children, and would often spray water at him or play other jokes.

"They were just good parents. We didn't have much when we were coming up, but they always seemed to provide," Ed Long Jr. said.

Life has been quieter in recent years for Inez Long. She doesn't remember as well since a stroke a few years ago, and she is hard of hearing. But she still enjoys walks and having company, though the pandemic has curtailed visits by family and friends. The one place she and her son go out together is the occasional trip to the beauty parlor for a haircut.

"One of the doctors said she was a tough old bird, and she is," her son said.

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