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May 9, 2021

# NURSES

*the heart of health care*

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## NURSES: THE HEART OF HEALTH CARE

Superheroes indeed. Tirelessly dedicating their lives to helping others, nurses say, “it’s just their job” – we know it’s much more. Each day, thousands of nurses bring skill, attention, care and love to patients in our area. The dedication to their craft has never been more evident than during this yearlong pandemic, and they deserve our thanks and recognition especially during National Nurses Week which kicks off this week. For the third consecutive year, The Post-Star is honoring that work with the Nurses: The Heart of Health Care program. This program is a reader-submission campaign and section that is supported by presenting sponsor Glens Falls Hospital, title sponsors Bare Bones Furniture & Mattress, Saratoga Hospital, and award sponsors All-American Properties and The Log Jam Restaurant.

During this remarkable time, we have all had contact with a deserving nurse. Think about the nurse who has lovingly cared for your parent in a nursing home when you weren’t allowed to visit. Maybe it’s the school nurse who is tirelessly performing daily temperature checks to ensure your child’s wellness, or the COVID ICU nurse who puts themselves directly in the line of fire. It could even be the virtual nurse who steps you through your symptoms and answers your health concerns. Be sure to thank a nurse today.

## AND THEN THERE WERE 10:

The contest began with a call for nominations in February. We encouraged the public to nominate nursing professionals who made an impact on the lives of loved ones and the community at large. The community answered with over 110 nominations. These nominations were then narrowed down to 10.

## JUDGING THE TOP 10:

Three judges: Ben Rogers, Laura Pfeifer and Kim Hedley, reviewed all nominations and chose nine winners. The 10th winner was chosen by our readers. Read about each winner within this section and online at [www.poststar.com/special-section](http://www.poststar.com/special-section).

## THE AWARDS:

Unfortunately, due to COVID-19, we were unable to plan an in-person awards breakfast. However, due to the generosity of our sponsors, we will provide lunch gift cards for each honoree to enjoy.

With May being National Nurses Month, we celebrate the remarkable spirit of our nurses at Saratoga Hospital. More persistent, more relentless than the overwhelming challenge we’ve all witnessed this last year, in all its shapes and forms.

And they have done this as individuals, as a team, and as a force to be reckoned with. We’re moved to recognize the resilience and compassion of every nurse across our region as they stood up and faced this once-in-a-lifetime challenge, bringing the strength of their self-sacrificing commitment to the care of our patients, and each other.

With respect and appreciation,

*The Board of Trustees and Leadership Team of Saratoga Hospital*



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visit [saratogahospital.org](http://saratogahospital.org)



# OUR JUDGES



**KIM HEDLEY**  
PHD(C), MS, RN, CPHQ

Kim Hedley is an Associate Professor of Nursing and Chair of the Health Sciences Division at SUNY ACC. Kim has been a faculty at SUNY ACC since September 2019. Prior to joining SUNY ACC, Kim was the Assistant Dean and faculty at Excelsior College from 2002-2019. Kim has an associate degree in nursing from Junior College of Albany, and a BS and MS in nursing from Sage Colleges. Kim enjoys the outdoors, travelling, reading, and spending time with family and friends.



**LAURA PFEIFER**  
MS, RN, CGRN, NEA-BC

Laura Pfeifer is the Director of Nursing Excellence and the Magnet Program at Glens Falls Hospital. Laura has been a full-time employee of Glens Falls Hospital for 15 years and previously worked as an ICU nurse for 17 years in New Haven, Connecticut. Laura holds a bachelor's degree from Southern Connecticut State University and a master's degree from Excelsior College. She is board certified in gastroenterology nursing and advanced executive leadership. Laura has been on the selection committee for the Star Nurse Award in Washington DC, an abstract reviewer for the American Nursing Credentialing Center, and a manuscript editor for Sage Open Nursing Journals. Laura enjoys traveling, decorating, and experiencing live music concerts. Laura lives in Saratoga Springs with her husband Craig, and their dogs, Luna and Bella and is the proud mother of three adult sons and one daughter-in-law who happily, still live nearby.



**BEN ROGERS**  
THE POST-STAR

Ben Rogers is the president and director of local sales and marketing of The Post-Star.

Prior to joining The Post-Star in 2019, Rogers was publisher of magazines and niche publications for Swift Communications' Sierra Nevada Media Group in Reno, Nevada. His career also includes publisher of the Sierra Sun and North Lake Tahoe Bonanza in Truckee, California, and general manager of the Grand Junction Free Press in Grand Junction, Colorado.

## THANK YOU



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**HAPPY NURSES WEEK!**

A huge **“THANK YOU!”**  
to our nurses for the  
**dignity, comfort  
& peace**  
provided to the families we  
serve and their tireless  
dedication to end-of-life care.

**HIGH PEAKS  
HOSPICE**

*We appreciate you today and always.*

# 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.

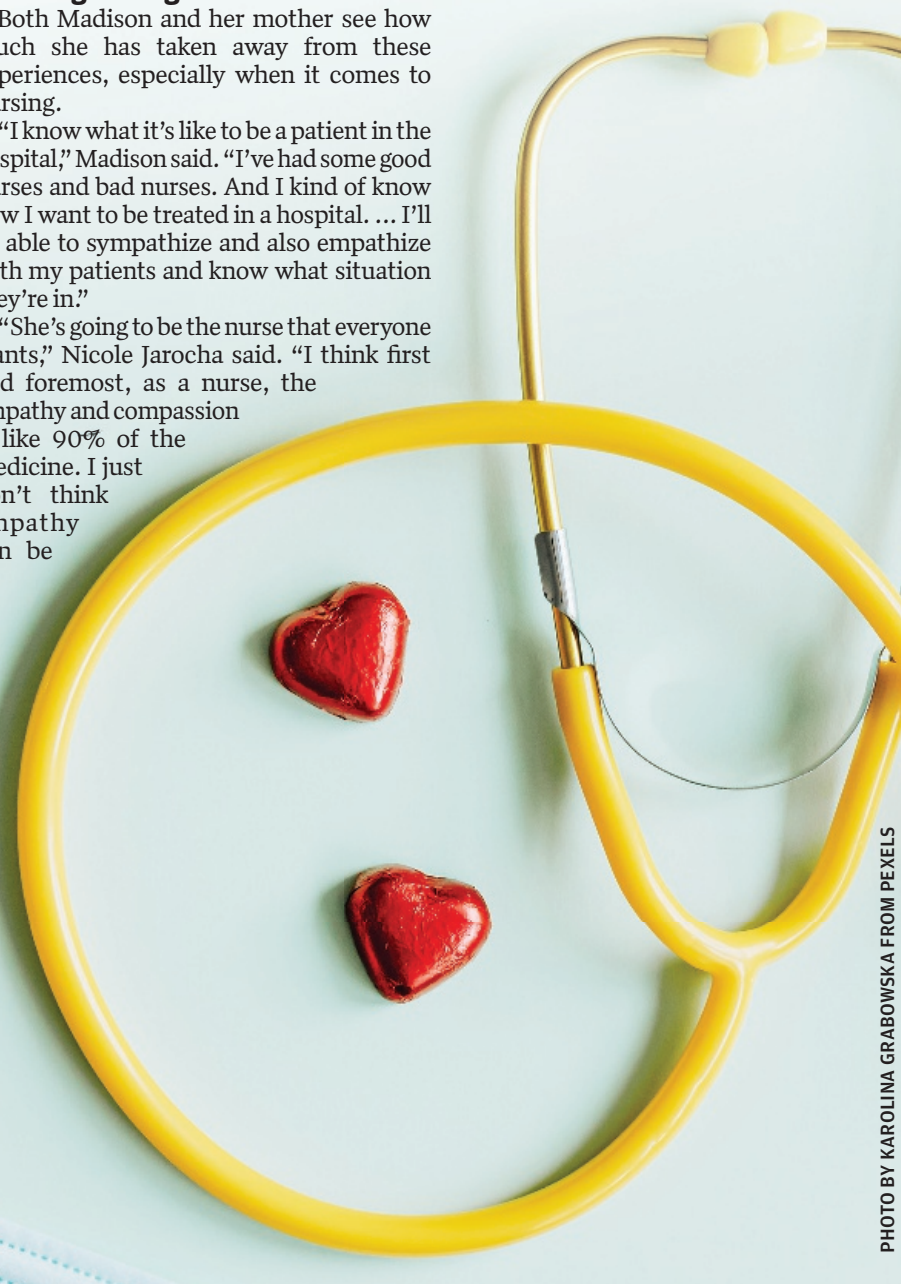
"I know what it's like to be a patient in the hospital," Madison said. "I've had some good nurses and bad nurses. And I kind of know how I want to be treated in a hospital. ... I'll be able to sympathize and also empathize with my patients and know what situation they're in."

"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."



# NADIR BABCK

RN on the Oncology floor , Glens Falls Hospital

“I was deployed for four years in Afghanistan and Iraq, working in the Marines Special Forces speaking foreign languages. In a short period of time, I was shot, I lost my job, I returned home to a divorce, and I lost my house,” said Nadir Babck.

Nadir is an RN on the Oncology floor of Glens Falls Hospital. He also works on the pre-teen unit of Four Winds in Saratoga Springs.

“It was a very, very tough few years,” he said. “I started thinking I needed to take some classes, otherwise I would lose my track of life. So I went to school at SUNY Adirondack.”

Nadir was excelling in classes like Anatomy & Physiology, pulling grades like 98 and 100. A friend of his knew he cared about people, and suggested that he pursue nursing as a career. While taking classes in the science department, Nadir also built a great working relationship with Professor Holly Ahern and Professor Ann Miele.

“I adore and love Professor Ahern and Professor Miele,” said Nadir. “They have both been a huge love and support to me. They encouraged me a lot.”

Nadir worked full-time while taking 18+ cred-

its a semester, while going through a devastating divorce.

“It was a very hard time in my life,” said Nadir. “I also support my siblings, so I knew I couldn’t give up. I just had to work non-stop.”

As a child, Nadir grew up in refugee camps over-sees, fleeing from place to place with his family.

“All my life, my family and I fled to many places trying to stay safe. In my background, the culture taught me that when you provide medical care to another person, it is never about money—it is about providing care to those who are need. When I look at my patients now, I look at them as if they were my parents, my brother, my sister, my siblings. I provide the best care I can,” he said.

Nadir credits his great team of co-workers with workplace excellence.

“I’m so grateful for the people I work with, and especially all of the nursing assistants. Without nursing assistants, nurses would not be able to provide care to their patients. We have outstanding PCA’s on Tower 2 at Glens Falls Hospital. It really is all about my patients and all about the team that I work with,” he said.



# DONNA BRINER

Senior elementary school nurse,  
Corinth School District

“I’ve been an RN for almost 37 years, and I’ve been a school nurse for 22 of those,” said Donna Briner, the senior elementary school nurse at the Corinth School District, in the K-5 elementary school building.

“There used to be a little tiny hospital in Corinth, and I worked there as a nurses’ aide in the emergency department while I was in college,” she said. “When that hospital closed, I went to work at Saratoga Hospital in the emergency room for another 12 years.”

By that time, Donna had 4 children. A school nurse job sounded very appealing, particularly in the same school district where her children went to school. When the position opened up in Corinth, she went for it.

“I planned on doing it until my kids grew up,” she said. “Now 22 years later, I’m still there. School nursing really grew on me. My grandchildren attend the school I work at now. I’m on the second generation of students now. I have the children of the children I treated years ago.”

Donna was raised in and graduated from school in Corinth, then returned to work there as an adult.

“Those kids are a little more challenging, but they make me laugh and smile a lot,” said Donna.

“One of the biggest challenges over the past year has

been not being able to utilize some of my nursing skills. I’m used to keeping kids in school, not sending them home. I can no longer try the palliative things I’ve tried in years past. If a kid has a complaint, we’re required to send them home as soon as possible, even if it’s a transient complaint like a headache or a stomachache. It’s challenging to have to call a parent to come get their child whose had a headache for 10 minutes,” she said.

“The second week of school this year, I saw an entire kindergarten class walking down the hallway. When kids are in line, the way they social distance is by putting their arms out in front of them. I saw this little five-year-olds walking down the hallway with their masks on and their arms out in front of them. This is their very first year of school. They don’t know any differently—they think this is just how we live. I went back to my office and cried,” said Donna.

“I have a lot of connections with families. I know them really well. I live in Corinth and work in Corinth. I’m from Corinth. My family runs the Little League program. I love the town and I love kids—that hasn’t changed over the years. Our kids are rockstars,” said Donna.

“I have the most amazing staff in the elementary school building. We’re a team. We work really well together. No school nurse does it alone,” she said.



# EMILY GOODRICH

Assistant Nurse Manager, Glens Falls Hospital

“My grandmother was diagnosed with Alzheimer’s when I was in high school. Seeing her disease progression made me want to go into nursing. I had originally planned to go to school for teaching. Once she really started to go downhill, I knew I wanted to go into healthcare and help people,” said Emily.

Emily received her bachelor’s degree from Hartwick College in 2017, and played field hockey while in school. She immediately started working on Tower 6 at Glens Falls Hospital after graduation, and has been there for four years now. She is now the Assistant Nurse Manager of her floor.

Emily is currently in school for her master’s degree to become a Family Nurse Practitioner, attending SUNY Polytechnic Institute out of Utica.

“I’m on the heart floor, so I see them come in with cardiac arrhythmias, or a stroke, or congestive heart failure. You see them come in at their absolute worst, and you see the progression of healing. You get to be part of their transition back to being better, and being able to be discharged home,” said Emily.

“Sometimes, particularly after a stroke, a patient isn’t able to walk or talk at all,” she said. “You slowly see them get better, until finally we’re able to send

them over to rehab.”

Emily wants to stay with the hospital after she is a Family Nurse Practitioner. Eventually, she’d like to get into cardiology or neurology, her primary focuses of study.

“It has been so hard watching patients not be able to have their family’s at their bedside,” said Emily. “It’s our biggest struggle right now. We get a lot of phone calls, every day. It’s hard that they aren’t able to see positive progression that we’re able to see first-hand every day.”

The floor is opening up to family members soon.

“It’s hard for me to see patients come in really, really sick, and they don’t truly understand how their life choices have impacted their health,” said Emily. “You may have someone come in after a massive heart attack or stroke, and their adamant that they won’t stop smoking. You’re there to help them, educate them, get them to be the best version of themselves. It’s my biggest challenge.”

Emily is married and lives in Queensbury.

“I wouldn’t be able to be the nurse that I am today without the support of my loved ones and my colleagues,” said Emily. “I love going to work every single day because of them.”



# KRYSTLE KENT

Clinical Nursing Manager, CR Wood Cancer Center

“My mother passed away from Metastatic colon cancer 9 years ago,” said Kerry. “She fought a long battle, and was a warrior throughout. When she was first diagnosed, I was with her at Glens Falls Hospital. The care and compassion both inpatient and outpatient oncology showed her was really no comparison to anything I had ever seen. It was that moment when I said I wanted to be a nurse.”

Krystle was inspired in particular to work on the inpatient side of oncology. In 2010m she began her career as a Registered Nurse with her first nursing position on Tower 2, the inpatient oncology floor of Glens Falls Hospital.

“Missing accomplished,” she said.

A year after that, she moved into outpatient oncology and hematology as a clinic nurse, receiving her oncology certification and bachelors degree. She graduated magna cum laude from SUNY Delhi. For the past four years, she has been the Clinical Nursing Manager at the CR Wood Cancer Center.

“This past year my team and I have certainly run into challenges with a global pandemic,” she said. “But we persevered--as us nurses always do, despite

**“This past year my team and I have certainly run into challenges with a global pandemic. But we persevered--as us nurses always do, despite conditions. It’s what we do.”**

Krystle kent

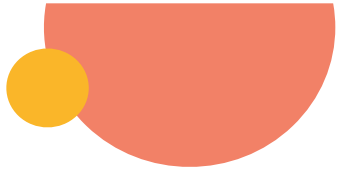
conditions. It’s what we do.”

Krystle enjoys being outdoors, participating in competitive sports, and spending time with her family and friends. She was born and raised in Whitehall, New York.

“And I’m the mother of two beautiful children, Brady and Izabella. They are my world,” she said.

“I have only ever been in oncology and could never see myself in anything else,” she said. “I love what I do. I love the patients and staff I work side by side with. They make it worthwhile. Being an oncology nurse is extremely rewarding and I wouldn’t change a thing.”





“Our nurses stepped up to face these challenges head-on, and their innovations, courage and compassion are simply astonishing.”

**Donna Kirker, MS, RN, NEA-BC**  
Vice President of Patient Services and Chief Nursing Officer



# Celebrating Nurses!

This year, more than ever, we salute our nurses for their exemplary practice and commitment to providing world-class care in every encounter and every setting.

As we celebrate Nurses Week, we want to thank all of our nurses for their dedication to our patients and our community! We would also like to congratulate all of the nurses who were nominated as well as all the final recipients of the *Nurses—The Heart of Healthcare* initiative, from Glens Falls Hospital and the surrounding area!

**A special congratulations to the Glens Falls Hospital recipients:**

- Nadir Babck**
- Emily Goodrich**
- Krystle Kent**
- Courtney LeBarron**
- Alison Prunty**



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# COURTNEY LEBARRON

Ambulatory nurse, Salem Medical Center of Glens Falls Hospital

Courtney LeBarron lives on the south side of Cambridge, in Eagle Bridge, New York with her husband and three daughters. She grew up in the Cambridge area, and knew from a young age that she wanted to serve her community in a professional capacity.

“Once I got into nursing, I took so much joy in doing things for the people I grew up with,” she said. “I treated their grandparents, their parents, their siblings—it was a wonderful feeling to be taking care of my community. I’ve continued to stay very local throughout my career.”

Courtney was an LPN for several years before completing the RN program at Vermont Tech in Bennington, Vermont. Though she had no desire to build a career in long-term care, the first job she applied for out of college was a long-term care facility.

“I didn’t want to limit myself. I wanted to give it a try. I was hired almost immediately, and it ended up being my home for almost 8 years. They were so good to me,” she said.

Courtney soon became the Nurse Manager at the facility, and then the Director of Nursing. She was the

Director of Nursing for 4 years.

Courtney is an ambulatory nurse at the Salem Medical Center of Glens Falls Hospital, rooming patients and working collaboratively with Dr. Rubinstein

“Everything I’ve done in my nursing career, it’s been clear that I was meant to be there at that time,” said Courtney. “Working with geriatrics is my absolute passion. I love working with older people. My transition to ambulatory care is the best move I could have ever made. I absolutely love what I do. I am meant to do what I am doing right now.”

“People are vulnerable. They’re handing over their care to you. They’re trusting you,” she said. “Most people who are sick are also scared and have limited access to your family and friends. This year has been very different and very difficult for our elderly population. They have been isolated, even more than the rest of the world. I love that they are willing to give us so much trust, in such a vulnerable time. I treasure that.”

“It’s a gift to be a nurse,” said Courtney. “It’s what I’m meant to do, and I’m fortunate to be able to care for my community.”



# ALISON PRUNTY

Nurse manager on Tower 5, Glens Falls Hospital

“From the time I graduated nursing school, I knew I wanted to do critical care. After a couple years of med-surg nursing, I was lucky enough to break into critical care and be accepted into a fellowship they had down there,” she said. “It was a lot of intense training. I’ve been a critical care junkie ever since then!”

Alison Prunty, the nurse manager on Tower 5 at Glens Falls Hospital, has been a nurse for 15 years, the last 11 of which have been in some kind of critical care capacity.

“One of the reasons I believe nursing is a great field is that there are so many different avenues of nursing,” she said. “You can reinvent yourself all the time. You can grow your skill set in any specialty. You always have opportunities.”

Alison moved to the Glens Falls area in 2010. She spent the first 5 years working in the St. Peter’s ICU as a charge nurse, working closely with case management and clinical care manager. When a nurse manager position opened up at Glens Falls Hospital 5 years ago, she went for it.

“I knew from the very first time I walked into Glens Falls Hospital that this was a place I really wanted to be,” she said. “The opportunity to serve in the community in which I live has really impacted my life in a number of ways. There’s not a day I go into work where I don’t know every single person that I see when I walk down the hallway—most of them on a first name basis. It is a privilege to care for those people and their loved ones.”

“I believe in what I do, I believe in my team, and I believe in Glens Falls Hospital,” said Alison. “Teamwork is

important in any work setting. But in critical care, where it is literally the difference between life and death, teamwork is extra important. We all work so closely together. I’ve never experienced a level of teamwork as I have at Glens Falls Hospital. I feel privileged to lead the nursing team on Tower 5.”

Alison lives in Glens Falls with her husband and 8 kids ranging in age from 5 to 16 years old.

“Andre, Amaya, Aiden, Arielle, Alex, Ava, Aalijah and Zyaire are the lights of my life,” she said. “Every waking moment that I’m not dedicating to the patients at the hospital, is dedicated to them. They are fabulous children. I am super proud of all of them.”

“My husband Andrew has been so supportive of my educational and career goals,” she said. “A lot of things he’s wanted to do, he’s put on the back burner to allow me to pursue my goals. My parents too—they followed the grandkids up to Glens Falls, and they’ve been such a support to me.”

“I truly work alongside some of the regions most talented, nurses, doctors, Respiratory Therapists and support staff. None of them could have imagined they would be living and providing care during a global pandemic. Yet they show up each day. They keep going on weekends, holidays, birthdays, stormy weather, 24/7, 365. They keep coming back to provide care to the most vulnerable of patients in need, the critically ill. And for this, they truly deserve all the credit,” said Alison.



# KELLY SMITH

Hospice & Palliative Care Certified RN Case Manager at HCR Home Care

**K**elly Smith started as a Certified Nursing Assistant in 1993 at Glens Falls Hospital, and started nursing school in 2000. In 2003, her husband and the father of her daughter was killed in 2001. Her daughter was 3 years old.

"I quit nursing school because I needed to work more and be home with my daughter," said Kelly. "As she got older, I slowly started going back to nursing school little by little."

After years of working and going to school, Kelly graduated as an LPN in 2009, and continued on to earn her RN degree.

Now, Kelly is a Hospice & Palliative Care Certified RN Case Manager at HCR Home Care.

"I've always found great satisfaction in helping people," said Kelly.

Kelly said she sees a lot of benefit to starting as a nurse aide and going through the LPN program before completing the RN program because it makes her very appreciative of nurse aides and respectful of the difficult work they perform.

"Nursing is a very gratifying job, and it's where I feel important," she said. "I feel like I make a difference every single day."

Kelly said she performs all the tasks and procedures she could perform in the hospital, for patients in home care.

"A lot of our patients, sometimes I'm the only person they see that week. I really like giving them that one-on-one care. I find it very fulfilling, to make their day and make them feel better.

Kelly makes herself available 24/7 for her patients. Several weeks ago, a patient called Kelly on a Saturday. The patient was having blood pressure issues, and her cardiologist was not in the office because it was a weekend. All weekend, Kelly worked with the patient to check her blood pressure and hold her medication accordingly. That next Monday, the patient hugged her and said, "You saved my life."

"I know it's a big deal to them, but to me, it's not a big deal—I'm just doing my job," said Kelly. "The little things mean the most to my patients."

Some of Kelly's patients don't leave her home at all. Kelly brings iced coffee to a few of her homebound patients.

"In home care, it's a challenge to be alone," she said. "When you take a dressing off and it's not at all what you were expecting, or someone falls, or someone goes into cardiac arrest—you don't have a team to call on. There is no respiratory team—there's only you. You're doing the CPR, you're calling 911, you're calling the doctor to make sure they're getting care. You're making sure they're safe and healthy at home afterwards. That can be challenging. But we do it, and we're good at it."

"My daughter Cheyenne is my biggest inspiration," said Kelly. "She's my whole world. She's 22 years old, finishing her first year of grad school right now for forensic psychology and social work. She's just amazing. When I feel like things in the world aren't right, I just call her. She's proud of me being a nurse. She's my biggest cheerleader!"



# ANN MARIE TOMASKI

Clinical Specialist,  
Emergency Department of St.  
Peter's Hospital

"I love nursing. I've been in it for 50 years. I'm going to be 68 years old and I can't even think about retiring. It's just who I am. It's my soul."

Anne Marie Tomaski knew from an early age she wanted to be a nurse. As a young kid, her parents gave her a nurses' cart. She would wheel it around the house taking blood pressures and temperatures.

At age 15, she started as a nurses aide at Glens Falls Hospital. Shortly after, she was transferred to the Intensive Care Unit.

"I didn't know if I was going to make it—a few times I went down and hit the floor. Age 16 is awfully young to work in a burn unit and critical care unit. They would take you that young back then," she said.

Now, Anne Marie works primarily as a Clinical Specialist in the Emergency Department of St. Peter's Hospital. Her biggest role in that capacity is taking new grads and inspiring them to love nursing and want to continue.

"I want people to be as successful as they can be," she said.

She is also an Administrative Supervisor at Glens Falls Hospital on a per diem basis. She has worked in various capacities with Glens Falls Hospital for 50 years.

Anne Marie taught nursing when her children were young, and at times would bring them with her. Her chil-

dren would bring in nursing paraphernalia to show and tell at their schools. When Anne Marie would teach Advance Cardiac Life Support classes, her young daughters would accompany her. She would teach them how to defibrillate and intubate the dummy patients. Now grown, both daughters are in healthcare fields.

"That one-one-one relationship you have with that patient every day is so consistent and lasting. It's not diagnosing. You actually make their lives different. You impact their entire family," she said.

"You see them on the worst days of their lives. And you can make it one of the best days of their lives, depending on your relationship with them."

I cry with my patients. I cry with my families. And I ever lose that, it's time for me to get out. And that's what I pass on to the nurses that I educate every year," she said.

"I used to work in oncology. I would hold my patients' hands as they were dying. I wanted it to be positive. And I've been able to do that for my family too. My mother, my father, my aunt... I was able to hold their hand and help them through to the other side. That's the hardest part for me. But it's also the most meaningful part," she said.

"This has been my life's work. This has been what I have dedicated my life to," said Anne Marie.



# COLLEEN TAFT

Alzheimer's Unit, Fort Hudson

“I started my nursing career while I was in high school,” said Colleen Taft, LPN at Fort Hudson Nursing Home in Fort Edward. “I took my first year of nursing classes while I was a senior.”

Colleen graduated as an LPN in 1988, and immediately started working at Fort Hudson. She briefly took some time off when she had her daughter. She has been there since 1995. She currently works on the Alzheimer's Unit.

“I love it,” she said. “I've always worked with the geriatric patients. Once they opened up an Alzheimer's Unit, that was my niche. I love the people. I just love that every day is a different day. You laugh, you cry—everything. It's something different every day.”

Colleen said being short-staffed is an ongoing struggle in nursing, particularly over the past year.

“It's been challenging,” she said. “But there's so many rewarding aspects—too many to count.”

“It's rewarding to be able to be there for people who can't really speak for themselves because they are non-communicative,” she said. “Especially with patients with Alzheimer's. They can't always express themselves. You have to figure out what they're trying to say or do, and figure out what they need. You really get to know people when you're with them day in and day out. You're their voice. You know them very well, and you know what they need.”

“I just love being there,” said Colleen. “I've met some really great families, some of whom I am still friends with even after their loved

**“I've always worked with the geriatric patients. Once they opened up an Alzheimer's Unit, that was my niche. I love the people. I just love that every day is a different day. You laugh, you cry—everything. It's something different every day.”**

Colleen Taft

one has passed on. It was meaningful to know that, while we were there during COVID, our patients' families trusted us to take care of them when they couldn't be there themselves.”

“I love working at Fort Hudson. We're like a small family. We've watched each other's kids grow up. We've watched them get married and have babies and build families. I've been there 26 years this run, and 6 years before that. I've been here at Fort Hudson for three quarters of my life,” said Colleen.

Colleen lives in Fort Edward with her 3 dogs and 26 year old daughter.





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**FORT HUDSON HEALTH SYSTEM**  
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## READERS' CHOICE AWARD

Each year, the readers of The Post-Star choose one of our nominees to be celebrated as the readers' choice. Starting this year, the award is being renamed the Kristen L. Stevenson Readers' Choice Award. Kristen was a nurse in the cardiac catheterization lab at Glens Falls Hospital when she lost her life in a tragic accident this past January.

"She made an incredible impact on her patients, colleagues and everyone who knew her. She will be remembered as a role model for nursing excellence," said Chief Nursing Officer Donna Kirker.

In her honor, we'd like to announce the Kristen L. Stevenson Readers' Choice Award winner this year is Kerry Brush.

Kristen L. Stevenson Reader's Choice Award

# KERRY BRUSH

Registered Nurse, Health Services Specialist  
at Community Work & Independence, Inc.

Kerry Brush is a Registered Nurse, working as a Health Services Specialist at Community Work & Independence, Inc.

After graduating high school, Kerry went to SUNY Albany to pursue a Bachelor's degree in psychology. She withdrew from the program due to a family emergency and started working as a direct care staff with developmentally disabled adults for the YAI, National Institute for People with Disabilities out of Westchester, New York. She was soon promoted to management.

"Being in direct care exposed me to the medical world, and I learned I was rather good at it. I had a natural instinct for caring for people," she said. "I worked in management for 9 years, and the further up the management chain I moved, the more I realized it was not what I wanted to do. I missed doing direct care. That was where my true passion was."

In 2012, Kerry's grandfather was diagnosed with dementia. Her grandmother was struggling to care for him alone. They lived in Queensbury right down the street from SUNY Adirondack.

"My mom made me an offer," said Kerry. "She said if I moved in with them and assisted with their care, I could attend nursing school at SUNY Adirondack. So I did."

Kerry graduated in the fall of 2016 from SUNY Adirondack as a Registered Nurse.

"I was not sure exactly what area of nursing I wanted to get into," she said. "Then at the graduation breakfast, an alumni nurse came to speak.

**"One of my favorite things about nursing is that you are constantly learning and growing. Medicine is always changing, and we need to change with it."**

Kerry Brush

She talked about working for CWI. I've always been very passionate about working with intellectually and developmentally disabled population. I spoke to her about CWI and applied shortly thereafter. I have been working here ever since."

"One of my favorite things about nursing is that you are constantly learning and growing," said Kerry. "Medicine is always changing, and we need to change with it."

Kerry lives in Queensbury. She has a sister who lives locally, with the rest of her family being spread out between New York City, Westchester and Vermont.

"I am the oldest of 6 siblings--4 sisters and 2 brothers. And we are freakishly close," she said.

Kerry said she loves teaching and is able to do a lot of training with the direct care staff to ensure they are equipped to care for the individuals in their care.



# Minnesota nurse looks back on a long career with HUMOR

**CURT BROWN**  
(Minneapolis) Star Tribune

**O**n a 20-below-zero night in 1965, nurse Caroline Rosdahl explained to a patient that he couldn't legally leave Hennepin County General Hospital because he was on a psychiatrist hold.

"Next thing I know, he's running down the third-floor hall with me right behind him," she recalled. "He crashed right through the window, landed unhurt on a snow-covered bush and didn't miss a beat — running down 7th Street in downtown Minneapolis."

Rosdahl called police, who asked how to identify the AWOL patient.

"Well, he'll be the only one running with an open-backed hospital gown and paper slippers," she said with a laugh. "It didn't take long before they brought him back."

That's just one of the anecdotes in Rosdahl's new self-published memoir, "The Naked City" — a title inspired by that night in the psych ward. (It's available on Amazon at [tinyurl.com/NurseRosdahl](https://tinyurl.com/NurseRosdahl)).

Rosdahl, 83, recently retired after more than 50 years as a nurse, educator and textbook author. She used her pandemic isolation to chronicle a career that started as a teenage nursing aide in her hometown of Sauk Centre, through her years as Wright County's lone public health nurse in the early 1960s and the ensuing decades on hospital floors from Hennepin County to the University of Minnesota. Her cutting-edge use of behavioral objectives in nursing education in Anoka County led to 11 editions of "Textbook of Basic Nursing" — a widely used tome for student nurses.

"Textbooks are putzy; this project was a lot more fun," she said from her home in Plymouth.

At a time when appreciation for nurses — and the need to laugh — are both justifiably sky high, Rosdahl's tales prompt chuckles while offering a firsthand glimpse from health care's front lines.

There are plenty of awful memories, like

an auto mechanic's blowtorch explosion that left him horribly burned. Or the autopsy she witnessed that revealed a young woman hadn't been pregnant, but thought she was — dying from drinking too much quinine to induce an abortion in the 1950s before the procedure was legalized.

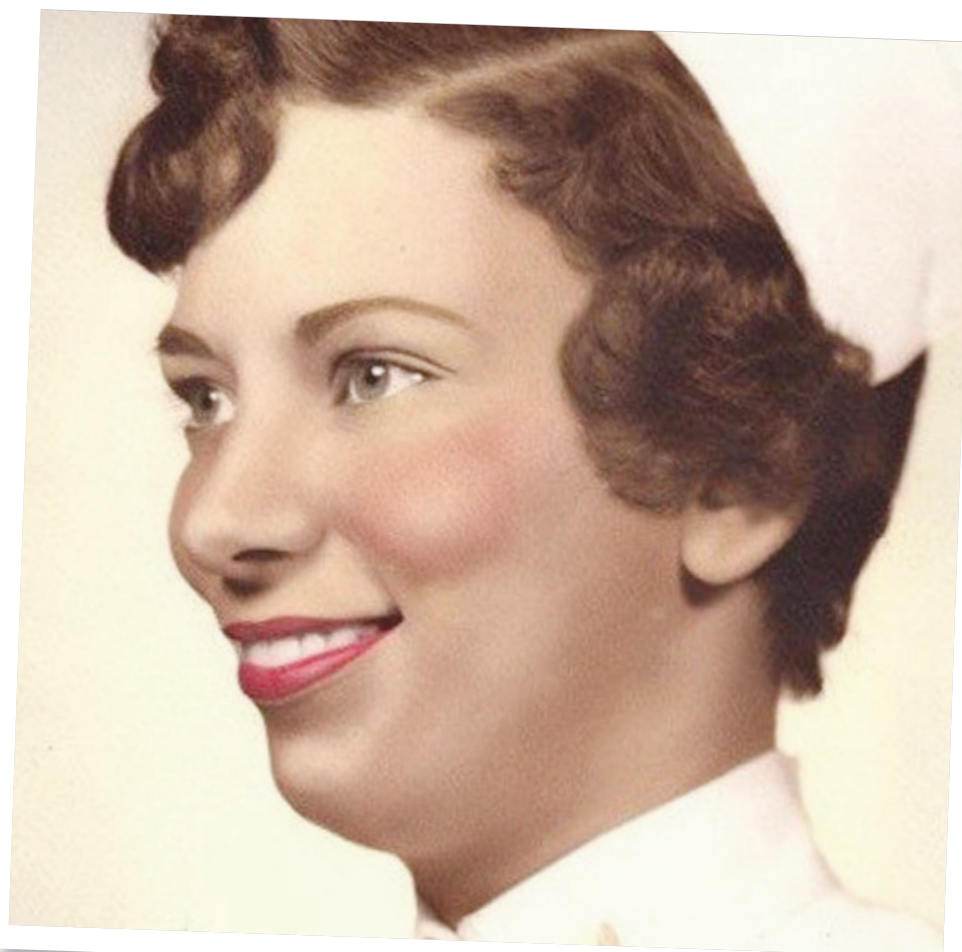
Her humorous memories offset the heavy stuff. As a school nurse in the northern Minnesota town of Waubun, population about 400, she asked students to fill out index cards with their birth dates, parents' contact information, allergies and other basic information. In the small box labeled "Sex," where students were supposed to put "male" or "female," one girl jotted down: "Once in Waubun."

**"If you don't have a sense of humor, it's almost impossible to work as a nurse because things often turn so sad"**

**Caroline Rosdahl**, who recently retired after more than 50 years as a nurse, educator and textbook author.

Writes Rosdahl: "It was a good thing it was only once, because that space on the card was very small."

Years later, admitting a woman to the hospital, Rosdahl ran through routine questions about last bowel movements and menstrual periods.



STAR TRIBUNE VIA TRIBUNE NEWS SERVICE

"When I asked her the next question on the list, 'Are you sexually active?' she looked around and then looked thoughtfully at the ceiling for several seconds. She then replied, in all seriousness, 'No, I pretty much just lie there!'"

Humor, Rosdahl insists, is as important a trait for nurses as compassion and anatomical know-how.

"If you don't have a sense of humor, it's almost impossible to work as a nurse because things often turn so sad," she said.

An only child, Rosdahl was born Caroline Bunker in 1937. Her father, Frank Bunker, dabbled in poetry and served as a Sauk Centre postman. He knew everyone in town — including Sauk Centre's literary lion, Nobel Prize-winning writer Sinclair Lewis and his father, Dr. E.J. Lewis, a town doctor.

Her introduction to nursing came as she suffered rheumatic fever at age 4. Idolizing her nurse, Mrs. Runion, little Caroline dreamed of following in her "Cuban-heeled white shoes."

Her father suffered a heart attack when she was 16. The principal pulled her from gym class, but a nun barred her from entering St. Michael's Hospital because her

gym clothes were deemed inappropriate. Quietly seething, she went home to change.

She had applied to be a nursing aide at the hospital, which at the time was hiring only Catholic girls despite its standing as the Sauk Centre community hospital. One of the nuns, soon after the heart attack, called to offer her a job — saying later how the teenager impressed her by staying calm despite her fear and anger. Key nursing attributes.

"I was mad, but I must have been polite because I became the test case — the first Protestant girl hired as a nursing assistant," Rosdahl said.

She was on her way, literally writing the book on nursing through her popular textbooks. Twice married with one son and three stepchildren, Rosdahl is famous for more than nursing.

She always wanted to play saxophone or clarinet in a marching band, which wasn't possible for women when she first went to University of Minnesota in the mid-1950s. Back at the U, working on her doctorate in her late 30s, Rosdahl became the band's elder member in 1975 and still plays the clarinet.

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