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Nurses are with us through our entire lives, often from the moment we enter the world to the moment we leave it. They give us comfort, care, and compassion. In fact, the word “nurse” itself comes from late Middle English, meaning “to nourish or nurture.”

Today, we share the journey of some extraordinary nurses whom truly are nurturing our community, especially during this pandemic. They were nominated by those whom witness their commitment and compassion on a daily basis.

Their chosen professions demand extraordinary skill and dedication. They all exhibit abundant drive and determination, but first and foremost, a desire to make a difference. Each nurse recognized in today’s tribute demonstrates a true passion for patients’ health and well-being, as well as a compassion that soothes the ill and their loved ones.

These are difficult times for health care workers, who’ve proven now more than ever that they deserve our thanks. That includes a special thank you to Genesis Health System and UnityPoint Health for partnering with us to recognize and share the stories of these incredible nurses. And finally, thank you to all of our health care workers and frontline responders. Throughout these pages, we have included messages of gratitude for their work.

This pandemic has shown one thing to be certain: Our first responders will be there when we need them most. This tribute is our way to show the Quad-Cities is there for you, too. On behalf of all of us, thank you.



Debbie Anselm  
Quad-City Times Publisher

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# MARY NELSON RN, BSN

## NELSON'S PHILOSOPHY: EVERYONE WILL BE SEEN

BY JESSICA KAROLCZAK

Sometimes you have to push harder and dig a little deeper.

This is the motto Mary Nelson lives by as a mother and nurse. She not only finds care for patients as a triage nurse for Community Health Care, but also ensures care for her family. Her drive and determination even saved her daughter's life.

When her daughter was eight years old, she began drinking an excessive amount of fluids. This can be a sign of diabetes, so Nelson took her to a doctor. When results came back negative, Nelson wasn't ready to give up. She pushed for months to find a doctor with an answer.

Later, she remembered a disease she had learned about in school: diabetes insipidus. Though this is a rare disease, it can be serious and even fatal. After much prayer and fighting for her daughter to be tested for the disease, the results came back positive; they had found the cause.

"The radiologist pulled me in two years later and said the swelling [the disease] was gone and said he couldn't explain it. I said, 'That's the power of prayer,'" Nelson said.

This story of dedication and perseverance demonstrates the passion Nelson has brought to her 37 years as a nurse. As a triage nurse, she evaluates patients' symptoms, schedules appointments and occasionally refers patients to the emergency room. She often receives 35 to 40 patient calls per day, and last year, her team answered over



7,000 phone calls.

"In my position now when people call us, in general, they want to be seen. I want to get the patient in," she said. "I want the patient to be seen because that's what they want. I know if they see me, they're going to be seen."

Nelson said one of the hardest aspects of her job is convincing people to take action. Yet, she

insists until the patient agrees to an appointment with a doctor.

In one recent instance, she received a call from a lady with a sick baby. Nelson convinced the mother to go to the hospital, which ended up saving the baby's life.

"You have to listen to the parents because they are constantly with their kids," she said. "I feel like patients want to be lis-



tened to. You have to listen to what they're really saying and go from there."

She grew up with a close great aunt who was a dedicated nurse. Nelson also liked science in school but originally wanted to become a veterinarian. Later, she decided to become a nurse instead, so she pursued her bachelor's degree in nursing from Marycrest College in Davenport.

After college, she began as a medical-surgical nurse before moving to an orthopedic position for a few months. She then worked in a family unit that included a range of patients from the nursery to pediatric.

After her husband was transferred to Davenport, she obtained a job at Genesis Conve-

nient Care, which she held for about 18 years. This experience taught her numerous skills and introduced her to some of the duties of a triage nurse due to a bad flu season one year that brought an influx of patients. For the last five years, she has held her current position with Community Health Care.

"I like triage because I have a pretty big background in different areas," Nelson said.

Despite her dedication, she said the award is an honor and unexpected.

"When it [receiving the award] happened, I cried. It's great for Community Health Care because we do a good job in the community," she said. "It justifies your work. It just recognizes that you're doing a good job and making a difference."

Nelson said she would like to thank her teams, past and present, and a nurse she met in college whom helped her form her current philosophy of care. She is also grateful for her family, which includes three kids and five grandkids.

"She has comforted, treated, cared for and saved thousands of patients. She does it with the best touch and always has the person's best interest," Nelson's daughter said while nominating her mother for this award. "I am proud to say that the best nurse out there is my Mom!"





# Thank You, Nurses!

We see you and we appreciate all that you do today and every day.



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# RACHEL POHL

DIRECTOR OF PATIENT SERVICES

## LEADING NURSING HEROES TO SUCCESS

BY JESSICA KAROLCZAK

One accident may have changed her life.

While in college, one of Rachel Pohl's family members was hospitalized at the University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics. By visiting her relative daily, her eyes were opened to the impact of nursing. Since then, she has pursued a nursing career.

Pohl is the Director of Patient Services for UnityPoint Health—Trinity in Muscatine. Every day, she manages the daily operations of the medical-surgical, intensive care, obstetrical (perinatal) nursing, emergency and cardiac rehab units. She also offers continual support to her staff as they care for patients.

"I try to keep the mentality that if the frontline staff is taking care of the patients, I need to try and take care of the frontline staff. This is the favorite part of my job," Pohl said.

She said she has had many memorable experiences while a nurse, especially of her team and patients overcoming challenges. Specifically, she cherishes when previously critical patients return to show their progress and healing.

"Just to see them improve, heal and come back and visit us would make me especially grateful to be a nurse and be able to witness their stories play out," she said.

She also said another favorite aspect of her job is seeing a team work together to endure a tough shift and when a team member finds his or her "niche" and excels.

As a director, her job is to care for the staff and ensure their needs are met. Yet, she takes this responsibility above and beyond.

"Rachel is a phenomenal leader," Pohl's co-worker, who nominated her for this award, said. "She manages a very diverse



group of nurses here. She connects with them on a professional and personal level so that her staff is engaged in providing exceptional, evidence-based care to all our patients. She always has a smile on her face and cares about everyone she touches and our community."

After finding her calling to nursing, Pohl

earned her Bachelor of Science in nursing from the University of Iowa. After graduating, she worked in the intensive care unit at University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics (UIHC). She said the nurses she worked with and leaders she had at UIHC have left a lasting impression on her life that have helped her see the importance of leadership in nursing.

"The leaders that I first worked with made a huge impact on me by helping me see that leadership within nursing was its own specialty, in a way, and wasn't necessarily something you needed to wait to try and pursue," she said. "Rather it's something I could start working on early in my career."



This knowledge has led her to her current position. She said she has come to love being a leader and having the opportunity to work with and help many other fellow nurses.

"I think that is the reason that I love leadership in nursing so much—because I just have so much respect for the work that nurses do and love being able to try to

help support them through their careers," Pohl said.

As a director, she continually reminds her staff to stay present in their work and take on one challenge at a time. She also reminds them to be willing to adjust to the job at times and to assume their co-workers have good intentions, even during disagreements. Most importantly, she prompts nurses to look out for each other.

Pohl is proud to receive this award while recognizing the many nurses she has worked alongside.

"I think now more than ever—with everything occurring with the current pandemic—the compassion, resiliency and overall strength of nurses is being noticed by so many people. So, I feel really proud of this award but especially proud to be a nurse alongside so many of my peers doing amazing work right now," she said. "I think that awards like this are important because they are able to highlight even just a small portion of all the wonderful work of nurses everywhere and acknowledge the impact the profession as a whole has on our communities."



# 2020 DECLARED YEAR OF THE NURSE

## GREEN SHOOT MEDIA

In honor of the 200th birth anniversary of Florence Nightingale, the World Health Organization declared 2020 as the year of the nurse.

According to the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics, the health care field will add 3,059,800 new registered nursing jobs between 2018 and 2028, a growth rate of 12%.

In support of nurses, WHO suggests the “Triple Impact” to give these professionals the tools they need to excel in patient care: better health, stronger economies and greater gender equality.

With these tools, nursing experts are given the opportunity to receive a formal education, enroll in training programs and enter a career that stimulates the economy and health care field.

## Who was Florence Nightingale?

Florence Nightingale is widely known as the founder of modern nursing. During the Crimean War, she oversaw providing care for the British and allied soldiers in Turkey. Sometimes called, “The Lady with the Lamp,” Nightingale would go on to found the first scientifically based nursing school in London in 1860.

She was also responsible for instituting training for midwives and nurses who practiced in workhouse infirmaries. Her work continues to inspire medical professionals today and led to her birthday, May 12, being designated to commemorate International Nursing Day each year.

## Reports and campaigns

As part of the 2020 celebration for nurses, WHO will release its first State of the World’s Nursing Report. The docu-



ment will describe how the nursing workforce can help deliver Universal Health Coverage and Sustainable Development Goals. It will also highlight new areas for policy growth over the next three to five years.

2020 will be the final year for the Nursing Now campaign that was started in 2018. The movement focused on five areas:

- A more prominent voice in health policy making.

- Greater investments in the nursing workforce.

- Recruiting more nurses in leadership roles.

- Conducting research to find where nurses can have the most impact.

- Share of the best nursing practices.

You can help spread the message by sharing the Nursing Now campaign across social media, hosting local events or advocating for the nurses in your community.

# We support all our front-line workers and healthcare providers!





# BEV BLAKE

RN, PARISH NURSE

## FULFILLING THE SPIRIT AND BODY THROUGH HEALTH MINISTRY

BY JESSICA KAROLCZAK

"I think it's a ministry. I feel like I'm touching many lives every day, which is what I think nursing is about."

Beverly Blake is part of the UnityPoint Health Parish Nursing Program. Though it started as a volunteer position, she now works part-time for St. John's Lutheran and First Lutheran churches in Rock Island and St. Mark Evangelical Lutheran Church in Davenport. Every week, she not only provides health care and support but also helps parishioners with spiritual care.

"The key thing about the parish role is we are able to take the spiritual dimension a little further where we can reach out to the parish family and make sure their spiritual care is fulfilled," Blake said. "Every day is different. I think that's one of the beautiful things about health ministry."

In the churches she covers, she provides care and assistance to older population. So, her job includes a variety of tasks such as taking parishioners to doctor's appointments, offering monthly worship services at Good Samaritan, providing wellness classes for the elderly and supporting families through difficult transition periods.

"A lot of folks don't have family nearby, so I kind of act as the person that keeps that communication open," Blake said.

She said there are two particularly impactful opportunities she offers to those she serves. One is a healing service for



the sick during which they are anointed with oil. The other is a discussion group called Life Together. This uses community support and love to help people through difficult transitional periods, such as the death of a loved one. She said she does best in one-on-one settings and enjoys being able to visit patients and their loved ones and meet their needs in her role.

Blake also offers CPR training, nurse supervision at all religious services in case of an emergency

and communion to the homebound. Yet, certain aspects of her ministry truly impact her and her patients.

"When I'm allowed to sit with folks that are dying and in hospice, that is a time that's very special," she said. "Even though it's very sad, I feel as though I've really helped."

During her over 40 years of nursing, Blake has seen the spectrum of life to death. Ever since she was little, she knew nursing would be her career. She



received her registered nursing diploma from Lutheran Hospital School for Nurses in Moline.

She then worked as a medical-surgical nurse in Iowa City for a few years before going to the nursery in St. Luke's Hospital. She eventually worked in the nursery and intensive care nursery at Genesis Health System before transitioning to pediatrics. She then did prenatal care at Edgerton Women's Health Center for 17 years before finding her current position with UnityPoint Health.

"I find it very fulfilling," Blake said. "I think it's a calling. I always think I get more back than I give. It's a really nice way to end my nursing career."

Though she said she could re-

tire, she finds she isn't ready yet. She said her love of the job and its fulfilling nature keep her going to work every day.

"I plan to continue as long as I can," she said.

Her dedication has not gone unnoticed either. She is known to volunteer whenever someone needs help. For example, she volunteered to be an RN for a free clinic that helps uninsured families receive care.

"Beverly Blake is a beautiful woman inside out. Be it rain, snow, sunshine, she is there to help the underserved with a smile at work," the person who nominated her for this award said.

Blake said she is both humbled and shocked to receive recognition. She is grateful for all the nurses she has worked with through the years, especially the parish nurse from St. Mark whom she steered her to her current position and her UnityPoint Health supervisor.

"There are so many outstanding nurses out there doing so many great things," Blake said. "There are so many wonderful nurses that I hope I represent."

For now, she will continue bringing her passion to work and bringing her ministry to others. Yet, she will always make time to be a grandma, especially now that she has been blessed with her second granddaughter.





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# JESSICA TAPIA-MIER RN, BSN

## BRINGING HEART TO CARDIOLOGY

BY JESSICA KAROLCZAK

The word “heart” can have many definitions. Sometimes it refers to the complex organ that gives bodies life. Often, it relates to love for others. Other times, it’s used to describe someone’s passion, dedication and drive.

No matter the meaning, the word “heart” fully applies to Jessica Tapia-Mier. She is the manager of invasive cardiology at UnityPoint Health - Trinity. Not only is she fascinated by the heart, but she also puts her heart into everything she does.

Since Tapia-Mier began her current position in October 2019, she educates her staff, schedules procedures and solves any problems that arise daily. She also oversees various committees and tries to keep her skills sharp in case staff members need help.

“Being the manager, I can manage all the people that have the direct impact,” she said. “When we have emergencies, in minutes we help save someone’s life and being a part of this is one of the most gratifying things I’ve ever done.”

Every day, Tapia-Mier has various commitments, including caring for her two children. Still, she makes time to help those in need, even if it means staying at work late.

“She is constantly wearing different hats in her department and completes each task with a smile on her face,” the person who nominated her for this award said. “Her big heart for cardiology is shown each day by her compassion and dedication. Jessica will make time to help people, even when she has her hands full with other commitments. Her outstanding work ethic and desire to make a difference makes her stand out among her peers.”

Tapia-Mier grew up with her mother and grandmother working in a hospital setting. This led to her passion for nursing.



At age 16, she worked as a patient transporter, which involved moving patients from one department to the next. She hasn’t left the career since.

“I would’ve never thought I would’ve liked it. It instead made me want to stay and do it even more,” she said.

She later earned her associate and bachelor’s degree in nursing from Trinity College of Nursing. While in school, she worked as a certified nursing assistant and on a cardiac medical floor, during

which she helped take care of patients who had procedures.

After graduation, she worked in a cardiac unit for two years before moving to a cardiac catheterization “cath” lab department. She eventually became the head of this department. Before obtaining her current position, she became a cardiac clinical educator, which allowed her to use her love of teaching.

When asked about how she found her love of cardiology, she said, “The heart

just intrigued me. I knew the first or second day I was there [in the cardiac unit] I was never leaving. The heart is amazing and so complex, and we do so much to help sick people. It is a very gratifying.”



Even during busy or difficult times, she finds her family, work team and patients keep her motivated. She is also grateful to a hard-working nurse she met while in school. Tapia-Mier said this nurse is constantly who she aspires to be. She said they have especially helped her through the transition of becoming a manager.

“I want them to see the differences I make and what a strong, hard-working woman can do and how much they impact people,” she said. “I love taking care of patients and talking to them and their families and maybe making their day a little bit better - even putting a smile on someone’s face or helping make their stay a bit better than it was.”

Tapia-Mier was both surprised and honored to receive this award. Though, she said there are many other deserving nurses as well. When she received her honorary award, she was surprised by an entire room of her co-workers and supervisor to congratulate her at work.

“Nursing overall is a very thankless job,” she said. “To be among some really amazing nurses and peers, it’s an honor. It means a lot because it shows that hard work and dedication and wanting to do the right thing and go above and beyond doesn’t go unnoticed all the time. I think nurses should be celebrated more.”



# Thank You

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# CHERYL AKIN RN

## LEARNING TO MOVE MOUNTAINS

BY JESSICA KAROLCZAK

“What cancer cannot do: It cannot cripple love. It cannot shatter hope. It cannot corrode faith.”

This saying is displayed proudly in the Infusion Center in Genesis Medical Center-Silvis. It serves as inspiration for all cancer patients and their families as they endure treatment.

The saying was developed by registered nurse Cheryl Akin. She works in the Infusion Center and the Outpatient Surgery Procedure area. She helps prepare patients for surgical, catheterization lab and radiology procedures while also assisting with chemotherapy, blood transfusions and injections for cancer patients.

While educating those undergoing the cancer process, Akin came up with the saying. She said she realized how overwhelming this process is for families and loved ones.

“Educating them is so important, and they are eager to know what’s going to happen. They have so much fear of the unknown,” she said. “Here is where my compassion, support and words of what cancer cannot do gives them hope, faith and perseverance to move this mountain and show others it can be moved.”

She also implemented a small celebration for patients when they finish chemo. Each patient gets to ring a brass bell and choose a painted rock made by one of the staff while everyone cheers for him or her. This is to offer hope and determination.



Though one of her duties is now to educate, Akin also said she strives to continually learn in every position she’s held. Over her 24 years as a nurse, there’s been a lot to learn as she’s explored different professions and aspects of nursing.

She began as a hairstylist before deciding to take a different path. Her sister, Joni, who is an obstetrics nurse, encouraged her to try nursing. After all, Akin is one of 13 children, and two of the sisters are nurses. Also, her father and one brother served as

paramedics. Since she was one of the younger siblings, she observed her family in the medical field.

Then, she earned her bachelor’s degree in nursing from Trinity College of Nursing in their first ever graduating class, one of her greatest achievements. She worked as a registered nurse at Illini Hospital in the telemetry unit. Since then, she has been in a variety of positions.

“I can honestly say I have worked in just about every unit of this



Silvis campus with the exception of the OB [obstetrics] unit,” she said. “Every day, I strived to learn all I could about diagnosis, nursing implications and the factors that affect patients. I gained knowledge and skills to provide a caring response to the physical, emotional and spiritual needs of patients.”

As one of three nurses, Akin helped start the first cardiac cath lab at GMC-Silvis, where she learned one of her most important lessons: being a patient advocate. She also served in the operating and recovery room for 18 years.

“It was here where I gained the ability to understand the diverse needs, experiences and talents of those around me,” she said.

“I always made sure to let them know I would take very good care of them.”

No matter her position, Akin said she strives to give her best every day at work and to help her patients physically and mentally. Sometimes, she feels her responsibility is simply to hold a patient’s hand or calm their anxiety.

“She is always supportive of her co-workers and willing to go above and beyond to meet the needs of the patients,” Akin’s co-worker, who nominated her for this award, said. “She is a shining example of the profession of nursing,”

And Akin strives to be that example. “Every day, when I come to work, I want to give 110%,” Akin exclaimed. “I want my patients to feel the compassion I have while taking care of them.”

Akin said she is honored and humbled to receive this award. “24 years ago, I never would have thought this would happen to me,” she explained. Still, she wants to thank her family, which includes three children, other great nurses in the area and her strong patients.

“It’s the patients that are my inspiration, and I strive to share with them my knowledge, trust hope and heartfelt compassion to move this mountain they face,” she said.






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This year's National Nurses Week recognition is more important than ever as nurses around the globe work on the front lines, caring for our communities during the COVID-19 pandemic. Their dedication and sacrifices are awe-inspiring, and will always be remembered.



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# MELISSA STEWART

RN, BSN

## BRINGING LOVE AND SUPPORT TO LIFE

BY JESSICA KAROLCZAK

Every morning at 5 a.m., she wakes up to her assignment for the day. She then drives the 30 minutes to an hour to work where she helps bring new life into the world and ensures they are taken care of.

Melissa Stewart is a nurse on the clinical resource team for OSF Healthcare. For the last three years, she has assisted three different hospitals with the delivery and neonatal, or post-birth, process. Whether it's teaching pain control and relaxation techniques to a mother in labor or teaching new moms how to care for and feed their newborn, Stewart stays busy and assists whichever hospital has the most need for the day.

"I like it because I get to do different things every day," she said.

When asked her favorite part of the job, she said, "Just seeing new life come into the world and getting to experience that special part of someone's life. You get very close to people while [working] in labor because you earn their trust and become part of their family while you're there."

Yet, not every day offers the constant joy of new life. During one particularly memorable experience, Stewart helped a mother through the loss of her stillborn son. After discovering the baby had died, she took extra steps to ensure the family was cared for. Specifically, she gathered a keepsake box of the son's hand and footprint, hair clippings and pictures for the family, knowing the family would later treasure these. While the family grieved, Stewart made arrangements with a funeral home and helped with paperwork to allow the family time to spend with their son.

"She was so strong for our family, helping us when we could barely function," the mother of the woman who lost her son said while nominating Stewart for this award. "She was our rock, and my



person to cry and talk to during this terrible time."

Four years later, the family and Stewart still stay in touch to this day, which is a testament to the care and compassion that Stewart provided during such a difficult time. To Stewart, she was just doing whatever it took to take care of the family.

lives Stewart has touched. Since earning her Bachelor of Science degree in nursing at St. Francis College of Nursing in Peoria, Illinois, she has spent almost 30 years in the field of nursing. She said she knew it was her calling since she was five years old and has pursued it ever since.



As a college nursing student, she interned in a neonatal and care unit, which sparked her love for working with pre-term and sick babies. After graduation, she worked in a pediatric intensive care unit for about five years before going to Galesburg Cottage Hospital to work in labor and delivery. Eventually, the hospital's birthing center closed, so Stewart found her place on OSF Healthcare's clinical resource team.

"I have always wanted to be a nurse and help somebody in their time of need," she said. "It's what drives all nurses forward."

Stewart said her mom has inspired her and helped her get where she is today by being so caring and compassionate. She considers her mother "someone who always takes care of everybody," which Stewart carries with her to work. The care runs in the family as well because Stewart's brother, his wife, and his daughter all are nurses.

Whether bringing life into the world, supporting families in their time of need or reassuring new parents, Stewart's compassion continues to leave an impact wherever she goes.

As her nominator said, "She was caring, compassionate and went above and beyond for my daughter and grandson Isaiah...We will never forget how she took care of our precious grandson. She is truly one in a million!"

"In that moment in time, family is around too, but they also need somebody who is apart from the family to help them make it through the grief process," she said. "You become one with the family when you go through a tragic event, and it just stays with you. I bonded with that family, and we still have kept in touch."

This is only one example of the many



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# BETSY HARPER

RNC-OB

## THE MOTIVATION WITHIN THE MIRACLE

BY JESSICA KAROLCZAK

For years, she watched her grandson endure cancer and chemotherapy. Now, her grandson motivates her daily as she volunteers and serves as a nurse.

Elizabeth “Betsy” Harper is a registered nurse in the labor/delivery unit at UnityPoint Health -Trinity in Moline. She helps train in new nurses alongside her many other responsibilities. Every day is different for her as she helps deliver babies and save babies that need operations.

“That’s probably my favorite part. No day is the same, no delivery is the same, no labor is the same, no mother is the same [and] no newborn is the same. I function as a triage nurse, a labor nurse, an operating room nurse and a recovery room nurse,” she said.

Still, she finds time to volunteer at St. Jude, for the local Make-A-Wish committee and as a sexual assault nurse examiner (SANE nurse). Last year, she collected hundreds of gifts to personally bring to St. Jude children in Peoria. She said all her extra effort is motivated by her grandson, Caiden.

At three-years-old, Caiden was diagnosed with acute lymphoblastic leukemia. For two and a half years, he went through intense chemotherapy, but he pushed through with the promise of a trip to Hawaii at the end. The trip was possible because of the Make-A-Wish Foundation.

Now, Caiden is a seven-year-old childhood cancer survivor. Harper said this is all thanks to the doctors and researchers at St. Jude.

“Anybody who knows me, knows Caiden,” she said. “Caiden motivates me to give back to the organizations who helped him, so they can continue to help others. I will no doubt spend the rest of my life giving back to St. Jude and helping Make-A-Wish grant wishes for the



smallest sized superheroes.”

With Caiden out of treatment, Harper finds renewed energy to help even more. This is why she is currently training to become a SANE nurse for the emergency departments.

“It felt like a calling when I first heard of the need, so I went with it,” she said. “I am fulfilling a need and continuing to take care of women in our community, just in a different way.”

She continues to make an impact in her

daily career as well. Somedays, the job is full of joy and new life. But there are also many tragedies and losses that occur. Still, every victory keeps her going.

Eight years ago, Harper struggled to keep a new mom alive after her delivery. Through CPR and determination, she saved the woman’s life. A few weeks later, the mother came back to personally thank Harper.

“I will never forget the way I felt when she spoke those words. It still brings tears to my eyes today,” Harper said.

These experiences along with her supportive and loving family provide her the motivation to continue giving back. She said her daughters, mom and sister gave her the strength and drive to become a nurse in the first place.



In 2002, she earned her nursing degree from Black Hawk College. Her first position was in the Surgical Intensive Care Unit at UnityPoint Health—Trinity in Rock Island. Thanks to the nurse whom helped deliver her second daughter, Harper found her current job.

“The nurse told me afterward that they had job openings, and 12 weeks later, she was orienting me to my new job,” she said. “It was a big leap of faith but obviously meant to be!”

Harper said she is humbled to receive this award, especially since she has worked with many other deserving nurses throughout her years. She said it is a nice reminder that she and other nurses are making an impact in the community.

“I appreciate the recognition, not just for myself, but for our profession as a whole,” she said.

Just as Caiden motivates her, Harper will continue to serve as a leader and helping hand to inspire others.

“Betsy is a labor & delivery nurse who, hands down, sets the gold standard in nursing care,” said a nurse she orientated, who nominated her for this award. “Betsy has given so much of herself at work, at home and in the name of health-care, and she deserves to be recognized as an exceptional nurse!”





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# JAMIE ALLERS RN

## GUIDING THE NEXT GENERATION OF NURSES

BY JESSICA KAROLCZAK

Though nurses have a direct impact on patients daily, one nurse also inspires her peers to be their best each and every day. Through guidance and positivity, she empowers a new generation of nurses to give quality care.

Jamie Allers serves as the night shift change nurse for Medical-Surgical Three at UnityPoint Health -Trinity. Every day, she takes up to six patients, creates shift and patient assignments and solves any problems that may arise. In addition, she is one of the main instructors for students and new graduate nurses.

"I was one of the many lucky new nurses to have her guidance as I started my career," one of Allers' mentee nurses who nominated her for this award said. "Jamie has been a positive role model for me and really set the bar high for what I hope to excel in as a nurse in the future. She is always willing to help out when needed or offer some advice."

Allers encourages nurses to help out in any way that they can. She said she finds every experience offers the opportunity to grow, especially when working with other people.

"Always jump at the chance to do something," she said as advice to new nurses. "Treat your CNA/PCTs [certified nursing assistant/patient care technician] with respect; they aren't here to do our dirty work. Take those few minutes and do that minimal task that can be delegated to them."

She said this not only helps other nurses whom are busy and may have more patients but also makes patients grateful for the attention and additional care they are receiving. She said it also could help nurses gain knowledge that may be useful in the future.

Her patients are what motivate Allers to bring her best every day. She said her dai-



ly goal is to help patients feel better and maybe even smile or laugh.

"Just helping patients get better and achieve their goal to get back home is pretty great," she said. "My motivation to keep going is that there are people that need my help when they are at one of their most vulnerable and helpless times of their lives."

Allers' journey as a nurse began with her

stepdad. He has been in the medical field for most of his life, and she said he and his stories inspired her to become a nurse.

She started in the medical field and at UnityPoint Health—Trinity at age 19. Her first medical job was on the Acute Rehab floor at Trinity in Rock Island. After seven years and becoming a registered nurse, she moved to her current location in Bettendorf. She earned her CNA, licensed practical nurse and associate degree from

Scott Community College.

Throughout her 13 years as a nurse, Allers has been grateful to her co-workers, especially Sara Berger.

"I feel that she has helped me ton through my career as a nurse and has shown me what it's like to be a great nurse too," Allers explained.

As an experienced nurse, Berger has been a role model and great friend for Allers.

"I feel this award is important because the nursing field can be underappreciated," Allers said. "So, this is a great way to show your support for all the amazing nurses we have here locally."

Though this award came as a surprise at first, she said she appreciates knowing that her work and dedication has not gone unnoticed.

"She puts patients first to ensure they are cared for with the highest level of care but also to empower and encourage others around her to do their best and be their best as well," Allers' mentee nurse that nominated her said. "I believe she is truly a positive influence on the patients she cares for, the families involved and her coworkers."

lies involved and her coworkers."

As Allers continues to train new nurses, she also leaves a lasting impression that will be carried on throughout time. Setting a high quality for nursing when training her mentees, she both encourages and provides guidance to her peers to get there.

Being an instructor for new nurses is extremely rewarding for Allers. She said one of her favorite parts of her job is, "I love watching students and new nurses blossom into their own."



# Be sure to thank a nurse

## GREEN SHOOT MEDIA

If you or a loved one has ever faced a life-threatening situation or a tense moment under medical watch, a licensed nurse likely assisted.

Their compassion and knowledge are effective in overcoming emergencies and making patients feel comfortable as they recover.

If someone in the nursing field impacted your life, take the time to thank them for their service.

Thanking a nurse doesn't have to cost a fortune. A small token of appreciation can be significant and encourage a professional to excel when working in a high-stress environment.

If you're struggling to show a medical ex-

pert how their presence changed your life for the better, consider thanking them with these ideas.

### Handwritten note

A personalized, handwritten note is an excellent way to show your gratitude for a nurse. In your letter, reflect on the situation you faced and how the nurse's assistance made you feel comforted.

You should consider using high-quality paper or a durable card so the nurse can look back on the note when they face challenges throughout their career.

### A healthy gift basket

While nurses dedicate their lives to improving the health of others, sometimes their own wellbeing gets overlooked. You can provide them with high-protein snacks like beef jerky or nuts and as well as a variety of fruits to boost their energy.

Many nurses also rely on small levels of caffeine to get through rigorous shifts. Consider gifting them with a gift card to a local coffee shop or a bag of freshly ground beans.

### Comfortable clothing

Nurses are on their feet for an extended por-

tion of their work day.

Check the hospital gift shop or your local outlet store for a pair of universal compression socks. Pressure from these stockings promotes blood flow by enhancing the efficiency of blood vessels.

If you know the nurse's approximate shoe size, you can also consider gifting them with a pair that uses memory-foam padding or a comfortable insert. You may also find unique scrubs at a uniform shop that showcases their personality.

Whether you buy a gift for your nurse or draft a compassionate letter to show your appreciation, your gratitude will be appreciated.



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# STEPHANIE MEADOR RN

## A GUIDING LIGHT TO THE END

BY JESSICA KAROLCZAK

Not all nurses help physically heal patients and improve their health. Some simply offer love and support in the face of scary, inevitable situations.

Stephanie Meador works as a registered nurse for VNA & Hospice, Home, Out-patient and Senior Living Services with Genesis Health System. Day to day, she visits the terminally ill in their homes or living facilities to comfort them as they reach their end. She sees six to seven patients per day and strives to walk with them at the end of their journey.

“We try to make their life more fulfilling and make sure the end of their life is as happy and comforting as possible,” Meador said.

It’s not always an easy job because Meador sees patients of all ages and often helps patients who are struggling with anger and negativity. In these cases, she said she simply “pushes harder” so that they like her.

“I can’t let anyone down,” Meador said.

A patient’s wife nominated her for this award, because Meador made such a lasting first impression. “She won him over her first visit,” Meador made him “comfortable, and he so enjoyed her coming and battering with him. She was always available to do anything she could,” her nomination explained. “She is so caring and definitely in the right profession.”

“They’re at the worst time in their lives. They have every right to be mad and upset,” she said. “In hospice, we do a lot of hugging and touching, and that’s what they need – someone to say, ‘Okay, we’re going to be there with you.’”

Her duties also include educating, training and comforting families whose loved ones are in hospice. She guides families through the process and reassures them that hospice provides the best quality of



sistant classes at Good Samaritan and worked there for almost 13 years. She also took classes at Scott Community College.

Good Samaritan hosted some hospice patients, which introduced her to the idea of becoming a hospice nurse. She said she loved the idea of guiding and being there for patients through their difficult time.

“I like to build relationships,” Meador said. “I got pulled to them and their families. I’ve been here for three and a half years and wouldn’t think of doing anything else.”

She said her patient interactions and the relationships she builds fill her with gratitude and humility. Despite the difficult time, many families and patients “open their hearts and their homes” to her and put trust in her. She said this award humbled her even more because a patient’s wife nominated her, which showed the impact she is making.

Yet, she also wanted to emphasize the importance of showing appreciation to others. She said her current medical director, Dr. Ann O’Donnell, has left a positive impact on her life by always being a “go-to” person.

“She just gives you the best advice and always knows what to tell you,” she said.

Meador feels receiving this award herself also highlights the work of all other nurses. Though shocked by being chosen out of numerous nominees, she is still honored and grateful.

“It shows me I’m doing what I’m supposed to be doing,” she said. “We [nurses] go to school to make a difference, and this award goes to show that we are making a difference in this world.”

life for the terminally ill.

This education includes teaching people not to fear hospice. Meador said many people have misconceptions about it, which leads to patients refusing hospice care.

“I just wish that a lot more families and patients knew that we’re here for them more than just at the very end,” she said. “They think they’re not ready for hospice because they’re not dying right now. We’re not just here for you when you’re dying, but we’re here for you when you

have a terminal illness.”

Still, Meador strives to share her love with patients every day. Her compassion for caring for others began at a young age. When she was 17, she worked in the kitchen of a nursing home. Occasionally, she was asked to help residence, which sparked her passion for helping the elderly.

“I fell in love with the elderly population,” she said.

Eventually, she took certified nursing as-





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# AMY BROMWELL RN

## GOING THE EXTRA MILE TO DO WHAT'S RIGHT

BY JESSICA KAROLCZAK

"Amy is the guardian angel to our patients. I truly don't know what we would do without her. She goes above and beyond literally every day she works," one of Amy Bromwell's co-workers wrote while nominating her for this award.

Bromwell is a resource nurse in the Cardiovascular Stepdown Unit (CSU) at Genesis Medical Center in Davenport. In this position, she discharges patients, provides them with instructions, assists other nurses with general care and answers patients' questions.

"I sometimes describe it [my job] like an air traffic controller for CSU," Bromwell said. "My favorite part of the job is being able to use my skills as a detail-oriented nurse to provide concise and accurate instructions to people as they leave our care. These instructions are important to help keep people well and out of the hospital."

However, she is known for doing more than just her typical duties. Often, she is seen paying for patients' medications if they can't afford them or dropping off forgotten items at people's homes or their hospital unit.

"Even when her workload is full, she always goes the extra mile to help out our patients, staff members or even just a visitor in the halls," her co-worker said in her nomination. "Amy Bromwell is an exceptional nurse and an outstanding human being."

When asked why she makes the extra effort, she said, "It is the right thing to do." She said helping simply feels good, and that she is fortunate enough to be able to help. If she would ever be in need, she'd hope someone would do the same for her.

Bromwell has also had experiences on the job that bring her joy and gratification for what she does. One of her most memorable experiences was participating in the honor walk for a patient that was an organ



donor. Though it was a time of grief for the family who made the difficult decision, there was a sense of celebration for the life saved thanks to the donor.

"Being present to celebrate the very difficult decision the patient's family made so others could live was something I will never forget. It was a very humbling experience," she said. "A member of my own

family has been an organ recipient two times, and I know how it feels to finally get that call. So, the opportunity to experience it from the donor point of view was life-changing."

Despite her love for the profession now, Bromwell didn't always know what career path she'd choose. She was considering teaching, but after talking to a nursing

student while working at the city pool, she set her mind on the medical field.

"The more she talked about it, the more I could see myself doing it," she said. "I enrolled in the program, and the rest is history."

She earned her associate degree from Scott Community College. Later, she went to St. Ambrose University to get her bachelor's degree in nursing. Now, she has worked as a dedicated RN for the last eighteen years for CSU.

Throughout her career, her mom Lori has been her inspiration. Bromwell said her mom has supported her and her brother in all they do.

"She is a strong-willed woman who fights for what she believes in and never backs down from a fight. She is definitely my number one fan, and I always know she has my back," Bromwell said.

Bromwell is the Quad-City Times 2020 Readers' Choice honoree. She is also very thankful for her co-workers, whom she said do great work every day. She is humbled that her co-workers got together to write a compelling nomination of her for this reward, as well as vote for her every day, especially from such a large group of people.

"I work with some of the greatest human beings I have ever met, and their recognition and support mean so much to me," she said. "I think it's important to recognize those in our community doing their best to make the world a better place. Nurses have been doing that for what seems like forever, and it is nice for our profession to be highlighted. Nurses are the infrastructure of our Healthcare System and should be acknowledged as such."







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