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Celebrating National Nurses Week 2019
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From head to toe, here and there, at UnityPoint Health, our amazing nurses help our patients go from getting well to living well.

Thank you for your dedication to our patients, families and the communities we serve.
Any day is a good day to celebrate America’s nurses. After all, every day patients enter medical offices and facilities and spend more time with nurses than any other health care provider.

But since 1993, the American Nurses Association has set aside a week to celebrate and elevate the nursing profession. This year, National Nursing Week is set for May 6-12 and features a host of events to honor the four million nurses across the country for the work they do.

A special day set aside to honor nurses began in 1965 with Nurse’s Day, with the intent of raising public awareness of the important role and contributions nurses make to society, according to Nurses.com. An unofficial Nurses Week stretches back a decade earlier in 1954 to mark the 100th anniversary of Florence Nightingale’s mission to Crimea.

Then, as now, nurses are on the front lines of a caring profession. On-duty around the clock 24/7, nurses are the caregivers we most rely on in almost any health care environment.

“One of my favorite sayings about nursing is our ordinary is actually extraordinary. We provide an amazing service to the public, whether in hospitals, clinics, long-term care or in the community,” said Jennifer Mensik, a nurse who wrote about how she celebrates her calling in an article on Nurse.com.

“Being a nurse is not something we turn off completely at any time. It doesn’t stop at the end of our shift like many other professions,” Mensik wrote. “We are there to help at a moment’s notice because we care. That perspective of caring is always with us and we believe we are doing what any other person might do in the same situation — that it was our job.”

Unfortunately, there’s a nursing shortage. According to a report in the American Journal of Medical Quality, a shortage of registered nurses is projected to spread across the nation through 2030, with the South and West begin most affected.

On the upside, registered nursing is listed among the top occupations for growth opportunity into the next decade, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. In other words, there’s never been a better time to enter this challenging and rewarding career field.

Nurses are truly the unsung heroes of the health care profession. They are dedicated to healing, compassionate care and touch the lives of millions with their devotion and skills. So if you encounter a special event in your community during National Nursing Week, don’t hesitate to attend and thank them.

“Being a nurse is not something we turn off completely at any time. It doesn’t stop at the end of our shift like many other professions.”

Jennifer Mensik, nurse
Dubuque’s original visiting nurse took messages left for her at a drug store, then set out each day to perform a public health care role that has essentially continued for 109 years.

Jessie M. Keys’ arrival in May 1910 launched what would become the Dubuque Visiting Nurse Association, the Telegraph Herald reported.

According to a 1910 report in the Telegraph Herald, Keys arrived in Dubuque from Cleveland, and had been a charter member of the Chicago Visiting Nurse Association.

During her first days on the job, Keys kept a small office at a Dubuque drug store. She only spent an hour of each work day at the office and spent the rest of her time attending to the sick and frail in their homes.

This summer, the agency successor to Keys’ nursing efforts will leave its home of 40 years and move to the former site of Anytime Fitness.

“In terms of history, this is part of our evolution in meeting needs in the community,” said Nick Thompson, chairman of the VNA board of directors. “It’s going to allow us to better serve our clients. The facilities themselves will be better suited to patients’ needs.”

Stacey Killian, executive director of the VNA, said she and her staff expect to move in late June.

“We will be packing up files and transferring files,” Killian said. “We have a lot of program equipment — things that the nurses, social workers and dental hygienists use when they’re out in the community and in people’s homes. That stuff will be moving with us.”

As she prepares for the move, Killian has found scrapbooks and other items that provide details of the organization’s history and its continuing role in the community.

A yellowed contract shows the VNA moving in 1979. Another contract shows the organization housed in another building. Articles appearing in the Telegraph Herald tell of the VNA being based in a bank and at Dubuque City Hall during the course of the agency’s history.

Since 1996, the VNA has operated as a subsidiary of Finley Tri-States Health Group Inc., which is the parent organization of UnityPoint Health—Finley Hospital in Dubuque. The organization also has an office in Elkader, Iowa.

“We’ve been such a part of the community and public health has remained a top priority,” Killian said. “We still provide health services to the community, just as we have over the years. We serve infants through elderly. We have over 30 programs, all targeting different things.”

The agency’s services include HIV case management, breast and cervical cancer early detection, follow up for communicable diseases, maternal and child health programs, lead testing and immunization for children who are covered by Medicaid, are uninsured or underinsured.

Killian said the agency’s role has changed with the times.

“We’re always looking at the gaps in the community,” she said. “We’re looking at how can we better maximize the health of the communities that we serve.”

Care for tuberculosis patients was a VNA priority by 1942, when a TH story noted that nurses had made 749 home visits related to the 99 cases of the disease throughout Dubuque County.

“Twenty years ago, when I started here, we were doing more direct service. We performed well-child exams, we partnered with the city medical clinic that was at the Dubuque Rescue Mission. We have moved away from a lot of those direct services.”

Stacey Killian, executive director of the VNA
ROLE OF SCHOOL NURSES

Many will remember the school nurse’s office as a place where you went to lay down if you felt ill and to wait for a parent to pick you up. The nurse might also have checked your temperature and dispensed an aspirin. But today’s school nurses do so much more.

According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, modern school nurses:
- Assess health complaints, administer medication and care for students with special health care needs.
- Develop contingencies for managing emergencies and urgent situations.
- Manage health screening, immunizations and infectious disease reporting.
- Identify and manage chronic health care needs.

As more children with special health care needs enter schools, the school nurse becomes a vital link helping both students and families to reinforce treatment during and after the school day. Many children enter the school system with such issues as attention-deficit or hyperactivity disorder, diabetes, life-threatening allergies and seizures. School nurses, often working with a school pediatrician, develop medical recommendations and administration in the school environment and often beyond.

School nurses are also the first-responders to students suffering injuries incurred during sports or extracurricular activities. In the event of an emergency, such as a school shooting, school nurses may be among the first to treat any wounded students. They also play a critical role identifying parental non-compliance with medical home goals, the Academy reports, or if neglect or abuse is suspected.

It’s clear that times have changed dramatically since the first school nurse was appointed in New York City in 1902. That nurse, Lina Rogers, tended to the health care needs of more than 8,000 students in four schools. Because of her success in reducing absenteeism, the system added 12 more nurses and all but eradicated absences due to medical conditions.

Although their duties and mandates have expanded since that time, the core role of the school nurse hasn’t changed: Attendance is key to academic achievement. Keeping students healthy helps ensure they achieve success and develop healthy practices during the school years and well into their adult lives.

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When Carole Tolley was a little girl, she begged her parents to take her to the hospital when they had family or friends to visit.

“I was the kid who sat in the waiting room all day in awe of the nurses,” Tolley remembered. “I loved the atmosphere, and I would look at the nurses and think, ‘that’s who I want to be someday!’”

Currently, Tolley is a nurse at Genesis Silvis working in the outpatient care center, a job that she said, gives her the best opportunity to practice what she loves while also getting to spend time with her family.

“June will mark my 25th year as a nurse, and I love what I do every day,” she explained. “I truly have a passion for helping surgical patients, and throughout my career, I’ve always come back to that kind of care.”

Immediately out of high school, Tolley got married and started a family, putting her desire to be a nurse on hold. But, when her youngest was about to enter school, she knew that there was only one career path she could follow.

“My friends still giggle at the memories of me being at my son’s baseball game with my nursing school books,” Tolley laughed through a smile. “They’d nudge me when he was up to the plate so I wouldn’t miss his at-bat.”

That is the essence of Carole Tolley: a woman whom loves her family and a woman whom loves being a nurse. When she heard she was nominated as a Quad-City Times Celebrating Nurses honoree, Tolley couldn’t believe it.

“I was shocked to say the least,” she explained with emotion evident in her voice. “The woman and her husband who nominated me have become my friends, and when they talked about me staying late after a shift to assist with his surgery, it really was a no-brainer. I did it because I knew it would make him feel more comfortable, and I was so happy I could be there for him.”

I have specific training in pain management, a skill I think is incredibly valuable in today’s world.

Carole Tolley

Carole Tolley has spent almost all of her career helping surgical patients: a role she believes was meant for her.

“I’m passionate about helping people who come to us in so much pain,” she said. “I have specific training in pain management, a skill I think is incredibly valuable in today’s world. But most importantly, I have the honor of working with patients so they can go home to their families feeling like themselves again.”

Her career has led her into numerous operating rooms, patient rooms, and through a few mergers, but even after 25 years, Carole Tolley is happy nursing still gives her the ability to continue to learn and grow.

“Through all the years and all my experiences, it makes me feel so good that people remember that I was part of their journey to recovery.”

What does a marine do after completing 6 tours in Afghanistan, serving 20 years total, and then retiring?

“I met this beautiful girl who was a nurse. We became friends. Now, she’s my wife and the mother of our three beautiful children,” John Lanning said. “She suggested I become a nurse so we could do it together, and 20 years later, I’m still doing it.”

‘Marine John,’ as some of his patients call him, is a charge nurse at UnityPoint Rock Island with a background that’s uniquely his.

He’s thankful that after retiring from the Marine Corps, he was able to choose a career path and earn a degree that allows him to help people in a different way.

“We [nurses] work hard, you know, and it’s nice to have an opportunity to reflect on that,” Lanning said. “I like nursing because it’s about solving the puzzle to heal patients. It’s very gratifying knowing I’m truly helping people out.”

Lanning landed at UnityPoint after being a traveling nurse for 10 years, working in ICUs and ERs throughout southern California. In fact, all of his children were born in Santa Cruz. He said the time in California was much different than his time in the Corps, where he was a drill sergeant and bomb dog handler.

“You know, it’s very difficult to make the transition sometimes after being around destruction almost daily,” he reflected. “The civilian life doesn’t have the structure and boundaries of the Marine Corps, so you definitely have to find your way. I run a tight ship on my floor, but it’s my nature, and I love my fellow nurses.”

Working on the cardiac and respiratory floor comes with its own everyday stressors, even though patients may not have acute illnesses. Lanning believes the tense situations are where he can truly thrive.

“I love being able to put people at ease,” he explained. “I’m very good at diffusing situations when somebody’s agitated or incredibly sad. There’s a very particular way of doing that, and sometimes, it’s extremely tricky.”

Lanning knows that his time in the Marine Corps and his experiences as a traveling nurse have helped shape him into the nurse and leader he is today. His team describes him as efficient and organized and notes that he treats his patients with the utmost respect and diligently explains every situation and diagnosis.

One of the nominations Lanning received was from a grieving woman whom wanted him to know that his presence, calm demeanor, and determination mattered in her mother’s last days.

“A lot of veterans have those qualities,” he explained. “I have a buddy who was an airplane mechanic in the Marine Corps, and now, he’s a nurse. To be a nurse, you either have it or you don’t, and the veterans I’ve seen who have gone into this field make a difference for sure.”

There’s no doubt that anyone who meets John Lanning on the 7th floor at UnityPoint will be thankful for his service and for the way he serves his patients.
Demand for nurses has never been higher. It’s a career, and a calling, that is enduring an ongoing shortage into the next decade, if estimates are correct. That’s why more men are being encouraged to enter a field traditionally dominated by women.

Only 9 percent of the estimated 4 million nurses in America today are men, according to the Kaiser Family Foundation. But those numbers are growing, with the number of active male RNs enrolled in graduate or doctoral programs increasing three-fold since the turn of the century.

Why aren’t more men becoming nurses? Studies point to both stereotypes and barriers to gender diversity. In fact, in one recent study attempting to identify the few numbers of men in nursing, 70 percent of respondents cited stereotypes as a major challenge.

But in this new era, those challenges are beginning to change.

“Patients are much more receptive to health care providers of similar cultural and ethnic backgrounds, and that may well translate to gender as well,” said Vernell De-Witty, deputy director of New Careers in Nursing, a program funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation in an article on the foundation’s website.

“All the data and statistics point toward a challenging and lucrative career for men in nursing, where average salaries top $60,000. Now is an excellent time for men to consider careers in nursing — and to get over the stigma.

“Forget about the stigma,” Jorge Gitler, an oncology nurse manager, told The New York Times in an article focused on men who had left other careers to pursue nursing. “The pay is great, the opportunities are endless and you end up going home every day knowing that you did something very positive for someone else.”
JOAN MCCANN
FROM DELIVERING BABIES TO EMPOWERING NURSES

Joan McCann worked in obstetrics for 32 years. She took care of mothers after they delivered, babies in the delivery room, and then babies in their first days. This was all while nursing part-time at an elementary school and adjunct teaching at St. Ambrose University.

“What can I say? It’s a great career, and I’ve had quite a journey,” McCann remarked. “But, I’m certainly not done yet.”

This month marks McCann’s 42nd year as a nurse, and currently, she leads the ANCC American Nurse Credentialing MAGNET mission at Genesis Health System.

“I love what I do, and it’s challenging and exciting every day,” she said. “The MAGNET designation is really the gold standard for nursing quality in the United States, and my job is to look at the practice of nursing, the quality indicators we can control, and find ways to help our nurses here at Genesis advance their educations and certifications.”

Reflecting on her career thus far, McCann said she never thought she would be a person standing up in front of others speaking, but she does it quite frequently now, whether it’s at national conferences discussing Genesis projects or to a group of nurses right here in the Quad Cities. Her confidence comes from her education and experience.

“I’m so proud to work at Genesis because I know that we have implemented programs and policies that other health systems haven’t,” she explained. “We prioritize evidence-based practice and ensure that we are following the industry’s best practices.”

Through all of her nursing experiences and roles, McCann feels that, above all else, the human connections you form during your time as a nurse make the most profound impact. She couldn’t believe it when she found out about her Quad-City Times Celebrating Nurses nomination.

“I was like, ‘oh my gosh, I can’t believe someone did that for me.’ It was truly touching,” she said. “I tell new nurses all the time that they are now part of one of the most honorable professions they could ever choose. You have an opportunity to learn and grow, but more importantly, you are given the chance to truly make an impact on another person’s life.”

“I love what I do, and it’s challenging and exciting every day.”

-Joan McCann

JENNIFER TURNER
A BEACON OF EXCELLENCE

The 6th floor of UnityPoint Moline is home to a charge nurse whom is described by her team as the calm in a storm and a constant beacon of excellence.

Growing up as the daughter of a pharmacist, Jennifer Turner has been immersed in the medical field her whole life.

“I never wanted to be a pharmacist, even though I was always in my dad’s pharmacy,” she laughed. “I knew I wanted to work in the medical field, but I wasn’t sure in what capacity.”

After spending some time working in another industry and starting a family, Turner realized it was time to go back to school and do what she believed was her life’s calling.

Turner graduated from nursing school and was immediately presented with the opportunity to work at Mayo Clinic Health System. “It was an incredible learning experience for me, especially as a new nurse,” Turner reflected. “Working there right out of school gave me the ability to see a lot of different situations early on.”

Her transition back to the Quad Cities led her to UnityPoint and the recovery care unit, where she has worked with patients during their recoveries from orthopedic and GI surgeries for the last 8 years.

“Being a charge nurse is great when you have a team that works together like ours,” Turner said. “There are a lot of high-pressure situations that happen during a day, and if you come to it with the right attitude and everyone works together, it can be a great experience.”

What makes a great nurse? Turner believes the best nurses demonstrate patience and are focused on seeing every patient through to recovery. She understands that progression is different for everyone and patients depend on their nurses for support.

“When you meet someone who has just had surgery, they’re in a pretty vulnerable state,” Turner explained. “I love seeing patients get better. When you can help someone get up and walk again after a knee replacement, it’s very rewarding.”

With more than 13 years of nursing under her belt, Turner loves how her career can change with her.

“My life is different than it was 10 years ago, and I love that within the field of nursing, you have the ability to work in a variety of settings,” she said. “That is also what I would tell a nursing student. Your first job out of nursing school will be a real eye-opener, and it may not be for you, and that’s okay.”

Whether you’re a school nurse, a parish nurse, or a nurse in the operating room, Turner said you should always know you are making a difference.

“I was surprised when I heard they [co-workers] nominated me to be a Quad-City Times Celebrating Nurses honoree because they make me better every day,” she beamed. “Everyone I work with is always willing to be a second or third set of eyes, and we lift each other up.”

“I was like, ‘oh my gosh, I can’t believe someone did that for me.’ It was truly touching,” she said. “I tell new nurses all the time that they are now part of one of the most honorable professions they could ever choose. You have an opportunity to learn and grow, but more importantly, you are given the chance to truly make an impact on another person’s life.”
Cassie Beard

FINDING THE ‘BIG JOY’ IN NURSING

Nursing on the NICU at UnityPoint Rock Island is Cassie Beard’s dream job.

“I love working with babies and always knew I wanted to work with children,” Beard beamed. “My first job out of nursing school gave me a ton of experience on a busy floor, but as soon as I got to the NICU, I knew I was in the right place.”

When she found out she was nominated as a Quad-City Times Celebrating Nurses honoree, Beard said it was the most wonderful surprise and that she wanted to cry.

“I’d tell any first time nurse that when you find the specialty you’re meant for, you start to form incredible lifelong bonds with your fellow nurses and the physicians,” she explained. “In the situations we’re put in sometimes in the NICU, you have to trust your co-workers completely, and I definitely feel that trust where I am.”

Right out of high school, Beard became a hair stylist and then gave birth to one of her daughters. Being a nurse was always a career for which she felt suited, but that calling intensified as her family continued to grow.

“I went to visit some family members in the NICU and saw a medical situation unfold before my eyes,” she said. “The nurses were awesome, and I knew I wanted to be part of that comradery.”

Beard says being a mother has helped her relate to her patients, as she always tries to put herself in their shoes, understanding the stressful situations in which they find themselves can be really scary.

“I try to explain everything to my families in a way that would make sense to me if I were them,” she said. “They aren’t immersed in the NICU every day, and they certainly weren’t planning to spend two months (in some cases) here. But, I love forming relationships with those families the most.”

When families and babies leave the NICU, Beard is thrilled if they send updates and photos to the nurses whom helped them. She enjoys seeing pictures from first birthdays because those success stories provide her motivation through some of the tougher days.

Even on the difficult days and her days off, Beard still cares for patients.

“I’ve never had a traditional 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. job, and on my off days, I work as a home health nurse and even substitute as the school nurse in Bettendorf, where my girls go to school,” she laughed. “I’m go with the flow, and I’m a hard worker, so for me, it just makes sense.”

Her work ethic for the last four years has certainly made a difference to the patients in the NICU at UnityPoint. Beard knows that some days aren’t easy for her patients or for her, but she takes comfort knowing she gave them the best care she could.

“You have to give up some of your family time to be in this career, but the big joy it brings makes it all worth it.”

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KELLY LYONS
EXPERIENCED AND RESOURCEFUL

Kelly Lyons is a charge nurse in the inpatient surgical unit at UnityPoint Bettendorf. She took on the role a little less than one year after starting work on the floor. “I honestly hadn’t been in a leadership role like this, and it’s definitely been a transition,” Lyons explained. “I love it, and I feel support from everyone in the department who pushes me and makes me a better leader.”

Lyons definitely possesses leadership qualities, like asking her staff how she can support them and being willing to learn every day. Lyons knows that her co-workers are the reason she’s been able to balance being a relatively new nurse and a charge nurse.

When she graduated high school, Lyons worked in a factory for seven years, knowing her heart was really not in the work.

“When my youngest child started kindergarten, I realized I needed a change,” she said. “I always wanted to work in the medical field and felt it was the time to make it happen.”

So, she got a job in housekeeping. Then, she moved to a job in environmental services and then became a CNA, and the rest is history. By the time she became a nurse, Lyons certainly was not new to life in a hospital.

“That was the atmosphere in which I needed to work,” Lyons reflected. “So, I started back to school and became an EKG tech while I was taking nursing classes in Missouri. Now, I’m so proud to say I’m nurse. I literally worked my way through the medical system to get where I am.”

All of those experiences have helped shape Lyons and have given her a very holistic picture of the inner workings of a hospital.

“I know where my resources are at all times because of the work I’ve done,” she noted. “It was especially helpful right when I started, as I felt like a fish out of water in the surgical unit. Before returning to the Quad Cities, I worked in a cardiac step-down unit.”

Lyons credits UnityPoint for being so accommodating to her. After passing her nursing boards in Missouri, Lyons moved back to the Quad Cities and planned to work at UnityPoint Rock Island in the cardiac step-down unit. However, delays in paperwork and licensing transfers prevented her from doing so. Instead, UnityPoint offered her a job in the inpatient surgical unit in Bettendorf.

“I fell in love with it immediately, and they let me stay,” Lyons gushed. “I just love that I can go home every day feeling good and knowing I made a difference. Nursing is wonderful because of that. I love all the direct patient care.”

That being said, she knows that no matter where she works, she is now, and will always be, a nurse.

“The profession is timeless,” she said. “Your age doesn’t matter. If you have a giving heart and enjoy doing selfless work, you’ll thrive in the environment and impact many, many lives.”

MARY GLOECKNER
PIONEERING OSTOMY CARE

Mary Gloeckner turns 66 years old this year, marking five decades of patient care.

“When I turned 16, I went to the nursing home to get a job taking care of patients because I had wanted to be a nurse my whole life,” Gloeckner regaled. “I’ve literally been nursing from age 16 to 66.”

The medical field has advanced incredibly during her time as a nurse, and Gloeckner is thankful and proud that she has been able to help pioneer the field of enterostomal therapy nursing.

She explained, “My first job out of college was at the University of Iowa Hospital, and I was treating a patient whose colostomy bag ruptured just all of a sudden, and I remember thinking, ‘What did I do wrong?’”

Upon her request, the next week, her supervisors sent her to MD Anderson for an intensive course about the emerging field of enterostomal therapy. Gloeckner was the first ostomy nurse employed at the University of Iowa Hospital in 1976. She has been treating ostomy patients ever since.

“The field has changed so much since then,” Gloeckner reflected. “I facilitate an ostomy support group in the Quad Cities, and I’ve been doing it since 1983. Last week, I did a talk on the last 50 years of ostomy care and showed the old pouches people had to wear, and we were all just in awe by the improvement in the products.”

Working with and caring for ostomy patients is Gloeckner’s passion, and it’s an all-encompassing duty that she takes very seriously.

“Many patients are their own advocate,” Gloeckner said. “I love that I can learn, the better nurse you’ll be. That’s why I’ve been a PRN to assist when other ostomy nurses are on vacation. I’ve had a wonderful career, and reading through the nominations for this honor was just phenomenal.”

Gloeckner believes caring for an ostomy patient’s mental and emotional health is so important that she even wrote her master’s thesis on sexual adjustment of ostomy patients and researched the diagnosis’s affect on body image.

She has shared that knowledge with nurses around the world, giving presentations about ostomy care and wound care in places like Amsterdam, Holland and Florence, Italy, as part of an international group of ostomy nurses.

“They changed our specialty in 1992 to incorporate wound and continence care as well,” she explained. “But, I think it’s great because I always believe the more you can learn, the better nurse you’ll be.”

Gloeckner plans to retire in October, but will remain a PRN to assist when other ostomy nurses are on vacation. “I’ve had a wonderful career, and reading through the nominations for this honor was just phenomenal,” she noted.

“Nursing is hard work, physically and mentally, and I just think it’s wonderful that the Quad-City Times is honoring our profession in this way. I only represent one nurse, but I share this award with every single nurse out there.”
Nurses are at the ❤️ of our excellence in care and service.

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National Nurses Week is a time for everyone – individuals, employers, other health care professionals, community leaders and nurses – to recognize the vast contributions and positive impact of nurses.
Ally Holub never knew that bringing a taco salad to one of her patients in the transitional care unit (TCU) made such an impact, until she read about it in her Quad-City Times Celebrating Nurses nomination letter. It’s one of many stories that demonstrate her compassion and commitment to caring for others.

“I’m in my 50’s, and I’ve been nursing for two years,” Holub said. “Life took me on a roller coaster ride, and I’m so happy to say that I don’t feel forced to go to work every day anymore. I absolutely love what I do.”

What she does is provide short-term skilled care for patients after their surgeries or strokes.

“My first experience with the TCU was when my mom fell last year, and I spent time on that floor with her,” she reflected. “The nurses were wonderful, and I knew that’s where I wanted to be. Now, I love that I get to spend that extra time with my patients and see them improve every single day. It’s pretty awesome to witness my patients and see them improve every single day. It’s pretty awesome to witness and to help them regain their strength and mobility.”

Before going to nursing school, Holub spent a career in the financial and real estate industries while she raised a family. It wasn’t until her mother-in-law and step-father fell ill at the same time that she began to consider going back to school. When she was spending time with them at the hospital, she actually encountered a nurse whom mistook Holub for a nurse. That’s when Ally knew it was time to make a change.

“I have a saint of a husband; let me tell you,” she gushed. “He saw me through a lot of hard times during nursing school. I can’t imagine achieving my dream without the support of my family!”

Holub wants everyone to experience the connection of a family, even if they don’t have loved ones close by to care for them. She believes her compassionate heart helps her patients heal, especially when they may be recovering on their own. Holub’s daughter can attest to this as well.

She is a CNA at UnityPoint Rock Island and also wrote a nomination letter for her mother, saying no matter whom the patient is, Ally Holub treats them like family. “I feel like I have a different perspective because I’m finally doing what I love a little later in life,” Holub said. “I love that I can make a connection with all of my patients since they spend between one and three weeks with us.”

Holub’s perspective also allows her to appreciate her colleagues at UnityPoint Rock Island. Having access to nurses and managers who are supportive and encouraging isn’t a given in every work environment.

“UnityPoint is amazing, and I work in a small unit where I’m surrounded by phenomenal nurses,” she said proudly. “My story is different than many other nurses, but I’m so happy to go to work every day with people I consider family.”

At 17 years old, Monica Banfield took on the role of a health occupation student and nursing assistant at Lutheran Hospital in Moline. A connection was made that has lasted four decades.

“I started at [what is now] Unity-Point as a senior in high school, and I’ve never left,” Banfield said. “I literally can’t find the exit.”

In her 40th year as a nurse, Banfield has seen the transformation of hospitals and care of pediatric patients in the community where she was born and raised.

“We’ve been through three merges, and I’ve survived them all,” she said. “UnityPoint is great, and I just love nursing. My family and my career are both here, and I’d never consider doing anything else. It’s just my life.”

After spending the first few years of her career working in adult respiratory medicine, Banfield said the birth of her son really helped her make the transition to caring for pediatric patients.

“I spent some time floating on the pediatric floor, and I thought it was really cool,” she explained. “After my son was born prematurely, and we experienced the roller coaster of emotions during his first few months of life, I shifted into pediatrics permanently, and I have loved it ever since.”

It’s in Banfield’s nature to be inquisitive and to be a ‘helper person.’ In class, she was the kid who always wanted to know why things were the way they were and that quality lends itself perfectly to working with children.

“Sometimes, kids can’t really explain what’s wrong with them in a specific way,” Banfield noted. “So, my job is to be a detective and collaborate with the doctors and other staff to help each child and his or her family.”

A woman with seemingly endless energy and a heart of compassion, she has no intention of retiring any time soon.

“People tell me all the time, ‘Monica, you’ve been doing this a long time; aren’t you ready to retire?’ The answer is no way,” she affirmed. “I love what I do, and as long as I am succeeding at what I do, retiring isn’t even on my radar.”

Banfield received four nominations to be a Quad-City Times Celebrating Nurses honoree. When asked about the comments and stories her prior patients shared, she was truly humbled.

“It just makes me so proud of what I do and the effort I put into it,” she said emotionally. “I tell students when they come to me that if they’re going in to this career for any other reason than helping people, they will be disappointed. You have to be a helper person or you will burn out.”

Banfield’s helpful nature is her guide every day.

“My heart is driven by compassion, and my heart is driven by God,” she explained. “He gave me the talent to share it with my patients, and after 40 years, I’m still going. What a joy.”
Take Care of Those Who Take Care of You

Nurses
The Heart of Healthcare

100+ nominations
3,000 votes
11 honorees

Nursing professionals make an impact on our lives, our loved ones and our community every day. The Quad-City Times would like to thank the community for the opportunity to honor exceptional professionals who have inspired with their comfort, skill and dedication.

The Quad-City Times thanks our sponsors, Genesis Health System and UnityPoint Health, all those who nominated and voted online, as well as every nursing professional in the Quad-Cities area. We look forward to celebrating nurses for years to come and rallying the community around these remarkable individuals.
NICOLE KLEMME
ONE OF A RARE BREED.
THE ED NURSE.

Going to the emergency room is never an enjoyable experience. But, if you have the pleasure of being cared for by Nicole Klemme, it may not be as bad as you imagined.

“In the nine years I’ve been nursing in the Genesis East Emergency Department, it’s gotten busier, but the nursing and the level of care patients receive has stayed the same,” she stated proudly.

Klemme’s family told her that when she was a child, she would always run to a person whom was sick or hurt. She laughed at the thought, since she always assumed she would be an OB nurse or work on a pediatric floor.

“That’s what we do as ED nurses though,” she said. “We run toward situations from which most people would run. There’s a camaraderie among ED staff that is definitely different and very special.”

The Genesis East ED was Klemme’s first job out of nursing school, as she found there were no availability in other units.

“I’ve been here my entire nursing career,” Klemme reflected. “I couldn’t leave, and I can’t imagine leaving. Every patient is different, and every day is different. You truly never know what you’re going to get.”

Her abilities to react quickly and practice empathy landed her on the list of 100 Great Iowa Nurses in 2017. Klemme explained that her compassion and ability to relate to her patients stems from her time in the hospital with her son when he was young.

“He was sick a lot as a little kid, so I know what it’s like when a family brings in their little ones,” she said. “The nurses I work with know that I can be a calming presence to these people, because I’ve walked in their shoes. It’s definitely something I’m passionate about.”

Klemme also believes the staff in the ED is its own breed. In fact, people often tell her so.

“Working in the ED is a completely different environment,” she explained.

We run toward situations from which most people would run. There’s a camaraderie among ED staff that is definitely different and very special.

“Nicole Klemme

“"The teamwork is amazing, and we work like a well-oiled machine. Everyone knows exactly what they’re doing when it gets chaotic, and you never have to say anything. We also have a really close relationship with our physicians, because we are with them the entirety of the shift.”

Klemme is fueled to show up every day by her patients and their families. Putting in the extra time to talk with them and getting to know their families is how she makes a difference.

“We deal with a lot of bad situations, and I never want anyone to be a stranger with me,” she said. “When I have one patient who says ‘thank you’ or pays me a compliment, it brings me back every day to do it again and help someone else.”

ALLYSON CORDONI
FORENSIC NURSE.
FOREVER NURSE.

For 30 years, Allyson Cordoni has paved her own way as a nurse in the emerging field of forensic nursing. Cordoni’s list of accomplishments tells a greater story of dedication and collaboration, and it runs a mile long.

“I was talking to a college friend a few weeks ago, and she asked if I ever thought I’d be doing what I am,” Cordoni said. “I said ‘absolutely no way.’”

Her career began in Peoria, working in primary care, and now, she is being honored with the Quad-City Times Celebrating Nurses Career Impact Award for her contributions to forensic nursing.

“My husband was one of the first pediatric hospitalists at St. Francis in Peoria, and the Pediatric Resource Center (PRC) requested help,” she noted. “The PRC is responsible for the medical needs of abused and neglected children, and they needed a nurse. I realized that it was my calling, and I’ve never looked back.”

Since that time, she has traveled across states and countries, training other nurses in forensic nursing procedures and helping people whom have experienced trauma and abuse.

“I just love working with the kids and adults, and this is my niche,” Cordoni said. “When I started, it was a developing field, and not a lot of people knew about it. The PRC really started the practice of using nurse practitioners and nurses to do these kinds of exams.”

One thing about forensic nursing that really stands out to Cordoni is the collaborative and supportive nature of the field.

“I work with multi-disciplinary teams, which is really incredible and the most important aspect of what we do,” she explained. “I’m able to work with and train first responders, forensic interviewers, local medical providers, and law enforcement about what they’re going to see and what we do as nurse practitioners. We all work together for these kids.”

In the course of her career, Cordoni has seen more than 650 kids for sexual abuse and more than 2,000 kids for abuse and neglect. Forensic nursing is a tough world.

“If it weren’t for the support of my husband, my son, and those who work in this field every day, I wouldn’t be able to do it,” she stated proudly. “My son has been on a medical mission trip with us and been in more hospitals waiting on me. He knows that if I have to miss his game or event, it’s because I’m helping someone.”

After 30 years, Cordoni does think about slowing down. But, those thoughts fade quickly because to her core, she is a nurse.

“I love helping in depositions, giving talks at conferences, and helping train other nurses,” she remarked. “I can’t imagine not doing what I’ve done for the last three decades.”

Mentorship is particularly important to Cordoni and, in her opinion, forensic nursing. That’s why she said being nominated for this award by a nurse she trained, whom is now working in Europe, is truly special.

“We’re on call 24/7, and a lot of her training took place in the middle of the night,” Cordoni explained. “For her to continue on this path after her time with me and to feel the same calling I did for forensic nursing is just awesome.”
Celebrating 150 years of nursing care.

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