

NATIONAL NURSES WEEK MAY 6 – MAY 12, 2026

missoulian.com
Missoulian


RAVALLI REPUBLIC
ravallirepublic.com

PRESENTING SPONSOR

 **Providence**

 **NURSES**
the heart of health care

STATEWIDE SPONSOR:



**BlueCross
BlueShield**
of Montana

SUPPORTING SPONSORS:



Bitterroot Health



**COMMUNITY
MEDICAL CENTER**



NURSES WEEK 2026

Best. Nurses. Ever.

Nurses Week holds an especially prominent place in our hearts as we thank those who give so much.

Please join Providence Montana in thanking our nurses, today and every day, for their compassion and commitment to care for all.



MARY MCINTYRE

ZOE BUCHLI
For the Missoulian

Mary McIntyre recently relocated to Missoula from the East Coast, but has quickly become a fixture in Missoula's local health care community.

McIntyre works at Community Medical Center's two urgent care clinics in Missoula. As a nurse practitioner, she's on her feet, staying busy.

"We manage a lot of different things," she said. "Basically, people come here when they're having a bad day, and we try to make it better."

McIntyre is often the sole person a patient sees at a clinic. She decides what sort of testing a patient might need, their follow-up care and if emergency attention is necessary.

Because of the nature of her position, McIntyre is used to seeing familiar faces.

"People will come back to get care for themselves or a family member, and sometimes we take care of an entire family," she said.

When she moved to Missoula from Virginia in 2023, McIntyre brought with her a wide swath of medical experience. When she was growing up, both of her parents were doctors.

"Sometimes they would have to drag me with them to work, and I was always very comfortable and familiar in a health care setting because of that," McIntyre said. "I never imagined myself doing anything other than working in health care."

When she finished her undergraduate education, McIntyre said she wasn't sure what field of the health system she wanted to pursue. She eventually found nursing and hasn't looked back since.

"As soon as I started nursing school, I immediately knew this was the right fit for me," she said. "I love just being human with people and getting to see them in vulnerable moments, and hopefully making those tough moments a little bit easier."

She graduated in 2019 from the Bon Secours Memorial College of Nursing in Richmond, Virginia. While she was in nursing school, McIntyre ended up working for her dad in an orthopedics office.

There, she learned plenty about inju-

ries and care, but practicing how to talk to patients and watching her father's bedside manner ended up being the most meaningful part.

"How to talk to people, how to make them feel comfortable, safe and not embarrassed was the biggest thing I learned," she said.

"Beside manner is the reason he's been so successful while also being a great surgeon."

McIntyre sometimes catches herself making corny dad jokes at work, something that reminds her of her time with him.

"They're my lifeline," she said of her parents. "I'm so lucky to have them, I've learned so much."

McIntyre worked at a COVID-19 ICU in Virginia as a new nurse. It was an experience that at times felt overwhelming, she said, but left her with a strong sense of camaraderie and a unique skillset that informs her work as a nurse practitioner today.

"It was an emotional time, it was a challenging time, but I felt like I was part of something important and I'm proud of my experience," she said. "I felt privileged to be able to take care of people and be the one communicating with their families and coming up with creative ways to see each other when we couldn't have visitors."

She moved to Missoula in 2023 when her husband started law school at the University of Montana.

"Every part of my journey in nursing has been special," she said. "But I like getting to be here and be available for people when they're having a tough time."

McIntyre recently welcomed a daughter who is her main focus when she's not at the clinic, along with exploring Missoula, hiking and yoga.

"It's been really special getting to live in the most beautiful place in the world," she said.

"Every part of my journey in nursing has been special, but I like getting to be here and be available for people when they're having a tough time."

Mary McIntyre



ROSEMARIE LARSON

ZOE BUCHLI
For the Missoulian

Rosemarie Larson was drawn to nursing through her sister's cancer diagnosis.

"I spent a lot of time with her in hospitals and saw experiences with good and bad nurses," Larson said. "That really was why I decided I needed to be a nurse, so I could be the person my family needed when my sister was battling cancer."

Her sister's colon cancer diagnosis was roughly 20 years ago. Her sister passed away, but Larson stayed by her side and spent as much time with her sister as she could following the diagnosis.

Before she was a nurse, Larson practiced at the Paul Mitchell hair school.

"I tried helping by doing things that made her feel more beautiful," Larson said of her sister. "She spent the last several months in a hospital. She was very strong-willed."

Now Larson is a clinic nurse at the Hamilton branch of Partners in Home Care. She's been with Partners since 2022 and occasionally travels to the Missoula location as needed.

Her daily work focuses on helping patients with CPAP machines, a common treatment for sleep apnea. Larson helps patients with machine orders and set-ups. Her team devotes their time to ensuring people know how to use their machines at home.

"We try to keep in touch with patients and touch base," she said. "We do everything we can to get them a solid foundation with getting used to the therapy."

Larson's favorite part of the job are the success stories, she said.

"Even the shyest of individuals sometimes want to give me a big hug, patients and family members alike," she said. "Having sleep apnea really negatively impacts people and their quality of life."

Seeing before and after photos of patients with the CPAP therapy is another highlight of her work, Larson said.

In her nomination letter for nurse week, a colleague wrote, "Rose exemplifies the highest standards of professional nursing practice. Her depth of expertise is matched by her commitment to patient-centered care and measurable outcomes.

In her current role, providing sleep therapy support to respiratory patients, Rose ensures patients fully understand complex treatment protocols, equipment use, and insurance compliance requirements—translating technical standards into clear, actionable guidance for her patients."

Larson has seen changes since the pandemic when it comes to how people interact with medical staff, but she emphasized how important it is to meet all her patients where they're at.

"I love everybody regardless of their background or affiliation," she said. "I greet everyone with open arms and just try to help them with whatever they need."

Larson started nursing in her 40s. She attended nursing school in 2009 and eventually landed her first job as a critical access nurse at the Columbia Memorial Hospital in Astoria, Oregon.

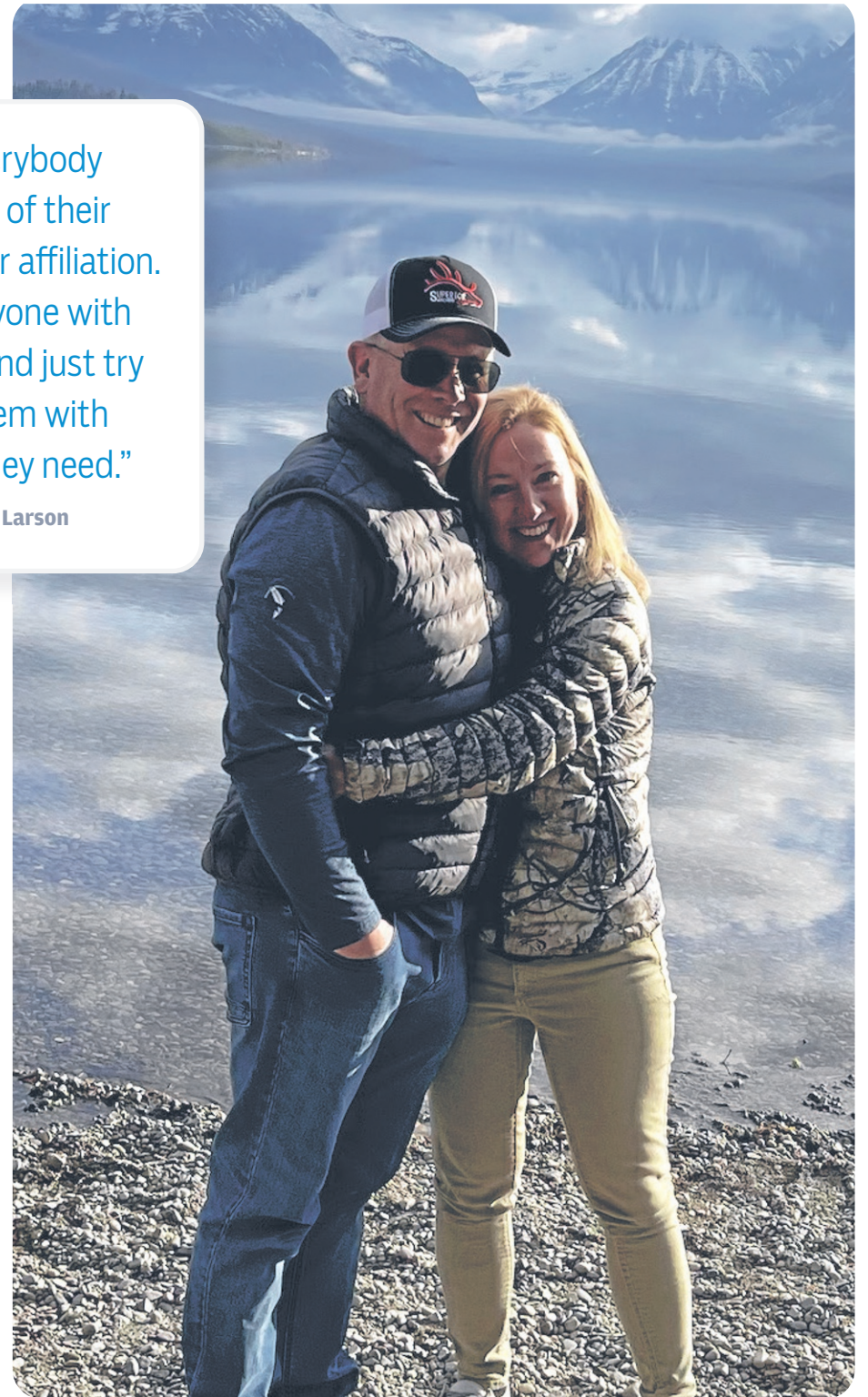
When her family moved to Montana, Larson worked at Community Medical Center and the Northern Rockies Orthopedics clinic. She ultimately landed on Partners because she wanted to transition to a 9-to-5 work schedule, and had heard great things about their clinic.

Since then, she's settled into her role overseeing CPAP treatment for Montanans.

"What distinguishes Rose is her rare ability to combine clinical rigor with authentic human connection," her colleague wrote. "Patients regard her as their trusted authority and advocate—responsive, knowledgeable, and deeply invested in their success. Her leadership elevates those around her and strengthens the overall standard of care within our organization. Rose is an exceptional nurse and to know her is to love her."

"I love everybody regardless of their background or affiliation. I greet everyone with open arms and just try to help them with whatever they need."

Rosemarie Larson





Nursing is a diverse field

Nursing is a wise career choice for people looking for a challenging yet rewarding profession. Significant nursing shortages continue to pose a challenge within the health care industry, as the United States was expected to have a deficit of around 295,800 nurses by the end of 2025.

Nurses work in many different facilities and can focus on an array of specialties. Nurses may be categorized by their levels of education. Each level has a different scope of practice and responsibility. Those considering nursing as a career, or patients preparing to see a nursing provider for care, can explore these types of nurses.

Please see **NURSING**, Page 13



Your Health, Our Mission.

Our Services:

- Hospice
 - Home Health
 - Palliative Care
 - Infusion Therapy
 - Home Medical Equipment
 - Home & Community Based Services
- Hope Hospice Center Clinical Care Provider*



JUANITA CONVERSE

ZOE BUCHLI
For the Missoulian

In her 28 years as a licensed practical nurse, Juanita Converse has never strayed from a clinic setting.

"I wanted to be a nurse from the time I was 11," she said. "I just always wanted to help people."

Converse is a family practice nurse at Bitterroot Health's Darby Scripps Clinic. The facility treats patients of all age ranges, from newborns to elderly people.

"We do same-day appointments, I do vaccinations, I do splints and breathing treatments," she said.

Her background is 16 years in urgent care in Redding, California. Converse attended nursing school in Redding, where she graduated and subsequently found her first clinic job.

In an urgent care setting, Converse honed her screening skills. If a patient came in from a fall, broken bones or with a sore throat, working in urgent care for 16 years taught her how to assess immediate patient needs and decide what follow-up care was needed.

Converse moved to Montana in 2014. She worked as a Darby school nurse for one year before finding a position at the Darby clinic in 2016.

The Darby Scripps Clinic's location in a small Bitterroot town gives Converse the chance to get to know her patients and co-workers on a personal level.

"They become family," she said.

Throughout her decades of nursing, Converse has stayed in a clinical setting rather than pursue hospital work.

"Sometimes that's getting prior authorization for their medications, sometimes that's helping them get from the car to the clinic," she said. "And it's just being a friendly face when they come to the Darby clinic. The Darby community, as small as we are, we see our patients at the grocery store and the post office."

In hospital and emergency settings, there's less opportunity to bond with patients, Converse said, but the way the Darby clinic is set up lets the care team get to know a patient and their family.

"A lot of my patients have watched my daughter grow up here at Darby high school playing basketball and softball, and now they ask how she's doing at college," Converse said.

"That connection to patients is what you get in a clinic that you don't get in a hospital, and it's probably why I stayed in the clinic all these years."

Converse is attached to her patients, but the small setting of the Darby clinic has let Converse develop close relationships with her co-workers, too.

"The best memory is the friendships I build with my co-workers," she said. "You cry together, you laugh together, you share family photos together."

In her time at Darby Scripps, her small team of co-workers has become like a second family to her as well.

Converse has four children and three grandchildren. She takes advantage of the Bitterroot's rich outdoor landscape by going on hikes with her husband and co-workers.

"As a registered nurse, at a rural health clinic, her ability to wear so many hats, and be available to so many make such a difference in this community," a co-worker wrote in her nomination letter. "She always has a smile on her face and her sense of humor makes the difference for all the people she works with and cares for her."

"The best memory is the friendships I build with my co-workers. You cry together, you laugh together, you share family photos together."

Juanita Converse



COURTNEY ROBERSON

ZOE BUCHLI
For the Missoulian

Before settling in Missoula, Courtney Roberson spent her time as a travel nurse, working across the country.

Roberson went to nursing school in Spokane, where she worked in an ICU for about two years, before finding a job as a travel nurse. Roberson's years as a travel nurse took her all over the country, from Alabama to Washington state, where she worked in the kidney and liver transplant department at Seattle's First Hill Swedish location.

"I think that travel nursing made me a well-rounded nurse, and I was able to learn so much," she said. "I've worked in almost every unit of the hospital."

As a child, Roberson watched her brother, who was 9-years-old at the time, battle and overcome a tumor that doctors said was likely going to end his life or leave him paralyzed. The tumor was benign, but large, and put pressure on his nerves that triggered issues with his nervous system. Her brother not only overcame the diagnosis, but now leads a successful life as an athlete and personal trainer.

"We had amazing care, doctors and nurses alike, who took care of him," Roberson said. "Watching that made me want to be that for other people. I always want to take care of my patients the way I would want my family taken care of."

Now, as a surgery nurse at Providence, Roberson helps with pre and post-operation care.

"I love working with people, I love medicine and I love critical care and being on my toes," she said. "I love watching people get better and being able to care for them."

As a nurse during the pandemic, Roberson was introduced to many special patients who have stuck with her over the years. The specialized care and limitations imposed on visitation during COVID-19 generated unique, close connections Roberson formed with the people she took care of.

"Those are the moments that stick with me the most," she said.

In her nomination letter, a colleague wrote, "Courtney is one of those nurses that you always remember because she makes that much of an impact on you. She treats all her patients as if they were her family member. She advocates on your behalf when you feel like you aren't being heard. She is one of those people that was absolutely made to do this job."

Roberson is deeply in love with her 3-year-old son, Bodhi, who takes up her time when she's not at the hospital.

"It was hard to leave my son when I went back to work," she said, "But the call hours are so awesome because they're overnight, so he doesn't even know that I'm gone."

"I think that travel nursing made me a well-rounded nurse, and I was able to learn so much. I've worked in almost every unit of the hospital."

Courtney Roberson



ADOBE STOCK

This is
**Our
Community**



Our nurses are the beating heart of our hospital. They offer comfort in times of joy and sorrow. They provide essential treatment, from emergency care to wellness check-ups and everything in between. Through their skill and compassion, our nurses transform our hospital into a community of care.

This Nurses Week, we want to share our gratitude for all the exceptional caregivers who have devoted their hearts and their minds to patients across Missoula and beyond. Every day, you make our community a better place. Thank you.



CommunityMed.org

© 2025 1545850, EOE

KARA GRIFFIN

ZOE BUCHLI
For the Missoulian

From a young age, Kara Griffin knew she wanted to work in medicine. Now she is a charge nurse in the medical-surgical unit at Bitterroot Health hospital in Hamilton.

“Nursing has changed me,” she said. “You see a lot of stuff and there’s burn-out, but you learn how to cope with it, and that’s left me better off.”

Griffin earned a degree in biology before returning to school for nursing. She completed an accelerated program at the University of Nebraska Medical Center and graduated in 2013. She is the first nurse in her family.

Originally from Libby, Griffin worked in home health in Missoula before deciding she wanted hospital experience.

Some of the hospital’s older patients have made the biggest impression on her.

“They share the best stories, and they’re always so happy to see you,” she said.

In the middle of a busy shift, Griffin said, those patients often tell stories from their many years in Montana. Because she also comes from a small town, they sometimes discover shared family names or connections.

“I’ve definitely built a little community here, you get to know everyone,” she said.

In a nomination letter, a colleague wrote that Griffin “focuses on ensuring that the day runs smoothly, is continually putting out small fires and organizing the day to make it the least chaotic for the rest of the nurses on the unit. Anyone who works on a MedSurg floor knows how difficult her job can be, yet she handles it with compassion, dignity and grace. Kara has a heart of gold, is cool in tough situations and always gives the job her all. If anyone deserves this award, it is her.”

“Nursing has changed me. You see a lot of stuff and there’s burnout, but you learn how to cope with it, and that’s left me better off.”

Kara Griffin



JULIA WIEDER

ZOE BUCHLI
For the Missoulian

As a home health nurse in Lake County, Julia Wieder puts hundreds of miles on her car each year to care for patients.

Wieder works out of the Partners in Home Care office in Ronan, but the job takes her throughout Lake County, from Dixon to Hot Springs to Ravalli and Arlee.

"I do a lot of traveling, sometimes I'm driving 45 minutes to get to a patient," she said. "My car is my office, my supply cabinet and my lunch room."

As a home health nurse, Wieder helps patients transition from the hospital back to their homes after a serious medical event. She describes herself as a rehabilitation case manager.

The work can be demanding and unpredictable, she said, because it often requires caring for people with limited background information. A big part of the job is helping patients understand a new diagnosis and avoid returning to the hospital.

Wieder said nursing also means providing emotional and mental support.

"It's not just the medicine you give them and the resources you set up for them, but trying to help them realize they're still a valuable person and there are things they can do," she said.

The work is personal to her. On days off, she still worries about whether patients have ended up back in the hospital or are getting the care they need at home.

"Those sorts of things bother me while I'm eating dinner," she said.

Her patient list changes often, but because she works in a rural area, she frequently runs into former patients and their families at local stores and bars after her care ends.

One of her favorite parts of home health, she said, is the chance to see patients in the context of their everyday lives.

"I really get to help people within the context of their own lives," she said. "In the home health setting you get to help them within their own cultural values, their own abilities."

Wieder said she enjoys the challenge of nursing. It is not a job she does because it is easy, but because it fits who she is.

"It's really grown with me through my life," she said.

"My nursing experiences have paralleled my life experiences. There's been so much emotional growth that's happened in my own life, but also as I'm helping other people."

Originally from California, Wieder said she started moving north after high school. She has been a nurse for about 12 years.

Nursing was not her original plan, but after years in caregiving roles, she realized it was a natural fit for her science background.

She enrolled in the nursing program at Salish Kootenai College and landed her first nursing job at Clark Fork Valley Hospital in Plains, where she stayed for six years.

"I loved it because it's a critical access hospital, so I could float from medical-surgical to the emergency room to labor and delivery, so I got to learn a lot and get a broad base," she said.

Her career has also included work at Hot Springs Health and Rehab, St. Joseph Hospital in Polson and, briefly, a COVID-19 intensive care unit.

"I really value the various settings in which I've worked," she said.

Wieder and her husband own land in Charlo, where they have 20 horses, 15 cows and 18 chickens. She also keeps a large garden and cans fresh produce.

"We live on 80 acres, and we try to be as self-sufficient as possible," she said. "We butcher our own chickens and eat our own beef."

"It's not just the medicine you give them and the resources you set up for them, but trying to help them realize they're still a valuable person and there are things they can do."

Julia Wieder



STACY SCHMIDT

ZOE BUCHLI
For the Missoulian

Stacy Schmidt said she knew from a young age that she wanted a career centered on caring for others. Nursing offered that, along with stability.

Schmidt is a registered nurse in Providence St. Patrick Hospital's psychiatric unit, where she has worked for 10 years.

She is originally from the Midwest, where she went to nursing school before working as a chemical dependency nurse in Portland. She felt drawn to the mountains and eventually ended up in Montana.

"The place I find the most meaning is just being outside and in these wilderness areas," she said. "I love some silence and a little bit of solitude in the outdoors."

As a psychiatric nurse, Schmidt helps provide a safe environment for adults experiencing an acute mental health crisis. Some patients arrive in the middle of a psychotic episode, with suicidal thoughts or while trying to heal from trauma.

"From patient to patient, that looks different," she said. "Our daily job is providing a safe environment for someone to make sense of whatever crisis has ensued in their life."

Her commitment to patients is evident in the way she talks about care and about shared humanity.

"I didn't necessarily seek out psychiatric nursing, but when I started working at Providence, I was taken aback by the human capacity for resilience," she said.

She said her job is to create a safe space for patients to work through and endure a crisis.

"In our day-to-day lives, we see so much darkness and pain," she said. "And working in psychiatric nursing has taught me that we are human beings, and are all a complex mix of brain chemistry and life experience."

A colleague wrote in a nomination letter that Schmidt's heart is what sets her apart.

"She treats each patient with dignity and compassion, meeting them where they are and helping them feel safe, respected, and cared for," the letter said. "Her ability to blend professionalism with authentic human connection makes a profound difference in the lives of those she serves."

Schmidt said the most rewarding part of her job is simply being present for patients. People often come to the hospital in very dark places, and she finds hope in helping them move through those moments.

"Working in psychiatric nursing has taught me that we are human beings, and are all a complex mix of brain chemistry and life experience."

Stacy Schmidt



AMANDA FOWLER

ZOE BUCHLI
For the Missoulian

If you have received orthopedic care in the Bitterroot Valley, there is a good chance you have met Amanda Fowler.

Fowler is an orthopedic nurse at Bitterroot Health, where she has worked for eight years. She handles a wide range of responsibilities, but patients and co-workers alike point to her steady commitment to care and attention to detail.

In Fowler's nomination letter, a co-worker wrote: "Amanda takes the time to truly see her patients as people, celebrating birthdays with thoughtful birthday bags for both new and established patients to bring encouragement during what can often be a difficult recovery or time in their life. In addition to her exceptional patient care, she is always willing to pick up extra shifts or work late to support her team and ensure that no patient goes without the care they deserve."

Fowler assists with surgery and clinic care and works with orthopedic surgeon Dr. Joel Walthall. She also serves as his scribe, removes sutures and pins, and takes on nearly any task she can in the clinic.

"I'm a lead without being the lead," she said. "I've kind of been the one that's a constant and knows how to do a little bit of everything."

Fowler began her professional life as a paralegal and real estate agent.

"I realized quickly it wasn't fulfilling, and I wanted to do more with people," she said.

Her path into nursing was also shaped by personal experience. As a child, she watched her mother struggle with addiction and liver disease and saw both compassion and judgment from hospital staff.

"I wanted to help people because I saw how she was treated in the hospital," Fowler said.

That perspective shapes the way she cares for patients, especially when they are scared, in pain and

unsure what comes next.

"You're seeing them at their worst, they're scared and not feeling well, but when they're healed and leaving the clinic they're an entirely different person," she said.

Fowler was also diagnosed with serious health conditions in recent years, giving her firsthand experience as a patient.

She said she understands how stressful it is to sit with unanswered questions, which is why even a brief phone call can make a difference.

"I hate that for patients and I hated it when I was a patient," she said. "It's scary not knowing what's going on and not knowing the questions to ask, and so if you have people who are there to take the time and listen, that's the most important thing — just to be heard and not feel like you're a number in a system."

Sometimes, she said, she stays at work until 9 p.m. to finish patient phone calls and make sure questions are answered.

"If you don't advocate for your patients, who will?" she said. "It's not a burden, that's why I'm in this profession."

After finishing her bachelor's degree, Fowler hopes to remain in orthopedics. Earning a nurse practitioner degree, she said, would allow her to help even more at her current clinic.

Her faith is a guiding force, and she hopes more education will open new opportunities, including mission work and continued training.

"I just want to be able to go and lend a hand, and the more education you have the more you're able to help," she said.

"I just want to be able to go and lend a hand, and the more education you have the more you're able to help."

Amanda Fowler



ERIN O'LEARY

ZOE BUCHLI
For the Missoulian

Inspired by her mom, Florence nurse Erin O'Leary decided to join the nursing field for its versatility of work options.

"There are so many things you can do," O'Leary said of nursing.

Like many nurses at rural clinics in western Montana, O'Leary said one of the main benefits of her role is connecting with patients and establishing longstanding relationships with them.

"You really get to know them," O'Leary said.

O'Leary initially started as a nurse at Missoula's Providence St. Patrick Hospital but eventually relocated to the Florence clinic in 2018.

Guiding patients through the oftentimes confusing health care system, and advocating for their care in general, is part of what makes the job so fulfilling for O'Leary.

"It's a hard system to navigate, people get overwhelmed," she said. "So whenever I help them the best that I can, whether that's with treatment or referral, it means a lot to me."

Because of its setting in the Bitterroot, the clinic sends out several referrals, but O'Leary and her team see and treat a full mix of conditions people come to the clinic with, from serious bleeds to chest pain.

The clinic stays fairly busy, seeing roughly 18-20 patients a day and keeping its providers on their toes.

"The nice thing about clinic care versus bedside is you see these patients all the time, and that lets you follow through with them on things," she said. "There are plenty of people who are mostly seeing the RNs."

O'Leary trained at Montana State University's Missoula campus.

Nursing runs in the family for O'Leary. Her mom worked as a nurse in Bozeman and later in Idaho before retiring.

In a nomination letter, a colleague wrote O'Leary is someone who consistently "goes above and beyond for their patients, ensuring not only that clinical needs are met but that each



person feels heard, respected and supported during their care."

"Her dedication to teamwork and willingness to step in wherever needed (makes) a meaningful difference in our clinic," the letter said.

"The nice thing about clinic care versus bedside is you see these patients all the time, and that lets you follow through with them on things."

Erin O'Leary

Nursing

From 5

Licensed practical nurse (LPN)

LPNs are health care professionals responsible for basic patient care and comfort. They typically are a patient's primary point of contact and relay information to the rest of the care team. One can think of LPNs as entry-level nurses, although their responsibilities are no less important than other medical professionals'. LPNs typically work under others' direct supervision and assist patients with eating, dressing and bathing. LPNs also take vital signs and administer medications. The American Nursing Association says becoming an LPN or a licensed vocational nurse requires a high school diploma or GED and a vocational training course, and a passing grade on the National Council Licensure Examination for Practical Nurses is necessary.

Registered nurse (RN)

RNs require a higher level of education than LPNs and they can provide more complex and comprehensive care for patients. RNs often handle a wider range of patient services and take on more responsibilities



than LPNs. The ANA says two college degree paths available to aspiring RNs are an Associate Degree in Nursing (ADN) and a Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN). A BSN requires a greater financial commitment and a four-year undergraduate program takes time to complete. Many employers zero in on candidates with a BSN.

Nurses who have advanced degrees are called Advanced Practice Registered Nurses. They have specialized training beyond that of a typical registered nurse and have

broader scopes of practice. They may work with greater autonomy in certain specialties.

Certified nurse practitioner (CNP)

A CNP is a health partner of choice for many people. The American Association of Nurse Practitioners says CNPs are clinicians that blend clinical expertise in diagnosing and treating health conditions with an emphasis on disease prevention and health management. Advanced education, like a master's or doctoral degree, is

required to become a CNP. He or she is able to prescribe medications, order diagnostic tests and manage chronic conditions.

Certified nurse-midwife (CNM)

CNMs provide gynecological and low-risk obstetrical care. These advanced practice registered nurses focus their study and practices on gynecology, family planning, prenatal, labor, and postpartum care. In addition to an advanced degree, CNMs must complete an accredited midwifery education program and pass a national certification exam.

Certified registered nurse anesthetist (CRNA)

CRNAs have specialized training in anesthesia. The Cleveland Clinic notes CRNAs can administer anesthesia for procedures and surgeries. These professionals work with surgeons, anesthesiologists, dentists, podiatrists, and other providers. CRNAs often are the sole anesthesia providers in hospitals in rural areas and the U.S. armed forces.

Nursing is an extensive field with many opportunities for individuals to find their niche.

“Nurses dispense comfort, compassion, and caring without even a prescription.”

—Val Saintsbury



OFFERING MISSOULA
AN ALTERNATIVE

406-363-1111

CHARIE WALBECK

ZOE BUCHLI
For the Missoulian

Charie Walbeck is an emergency department and charge nurse at Providence St. Joseph Hospital in Polson. She's worked in the role for 10 years, since 2016.

She was drawn to the nursing field for its stability, she said. Walbeck has worked in many nursing roles in northwest Montana, including at Logan Health Medical Center in Kalispell.

When she's not at St. Jo's, Walbeck works at Polson's Health and Rehabilitation Center, a 54-bed nursing home where she is one of three nurses.

"It's not uncommon for me to see the same patients from the rehab center, and for them to recognize me if they come to St. Jo's," she said.

As an emergency room nurse, Walbeck sees people in moments of crisis, but she said seeing patients go home is what makes her day.

Because of the hospital's location in a tourist-heavy area, Walbeck and her team are also introduced to many visitors and out-of-towners seeking medical help.

"I just love getting to know people," she said.

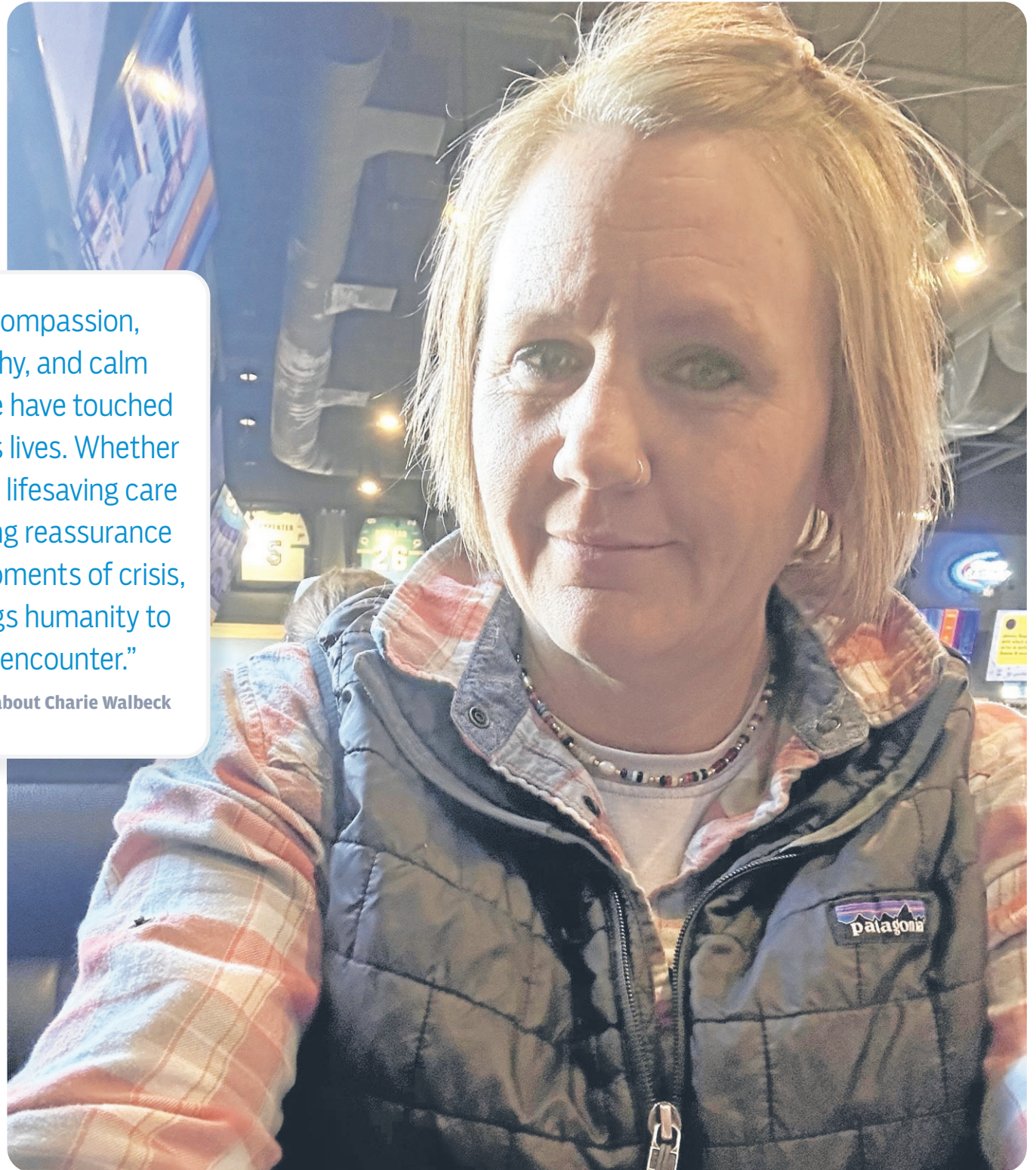
Walbeck fills her time outside of work with family and time on Flathead Lake. Her five children and seven grandchildren also live locally.

"Charie embodies the highest standards of nursing practice and the true spirit of compassionate care," a colleague wrote in Walbeck's nomination letter. "In our critical access Emergency Department — an environment that demands adaptability, resilience, and exceptional clinical judgment — Charie consistently rises to the challenge and makes even the most difficult days look effortless. Charie is unwavering in her dedication."

"Charie cares for her community as though it were her own family," the letter said. "Her compassion, empathy, and calm presence have touched countless lives. Whether providing lifesaving care or offering reassurance during moments of crisis, she brings humanity to every encounter."

"Her compassion, empathy, and calm presence have touched countless lives. Whether providing lifesaving care or offering reassurance during moments of crisis, she brings humanity to every encounter."

A colleague about Charie Walbeck



A large graphic featuring a blue stethoscope with a white chest piece and a blue tube. The tube forms a heart shape around the text. Medical icons like pills, a bandage, and a heart are scattered around the stethoscope.

Celebrating NURSES Week

Bitterroot Health honors our nursing staff for their unwavering commitment to patients and their families.

You are vital to our future and we couldn't care for our community without EACH of you.

Congratulations

to the following

Bitterroot Health nurses

who have been recognized by the community!

Thank you!

Bitterroot Health Featured Nominees

Juanita Converse



Juanita is a family practice nurse at Bitterroot Health's Darby Scripps Clinic. The facility treats patients of all age ranges, from newborns to elderly people.

"The best memory is the friendships I build with my co-workers. You cry together, you laugh together, you share family photos together."

Kara Griffin



Kara is a charge nurse in the medical-surgical unit at Bitterroot Health hospital in Hamilton.

"Nursing has changed me. You see a lot of stuff and there's burn-out, but you learn how to cope with it, and that's left me better off."

Amanda Fowler



Fowler is an orthopedic nurse at Bitterroot Health, where she has worked for eight years.

"I just want to be able to go and lend a hand, and the more education you have the more you're able to help."

Congratulations



Bitterroot Health

1200 Westwood Drive, Hamilton, MT
(406) 363-2211 • bitterroothealth.org



BlueCross BlueShield of Montana



Nurses are always on the front lines of health care.

We thank you for your courage, compassion, resiliency, and your commitment to helping people in need.

With you. For you.

Through It All[®]