

2006 Wisconsin Health Care Employee Pride Program



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The 2006 Wisconsin Health Care Employee Pride Program

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When I began my career in the health care field in 1976, I was a very young 18 years old. At the time I felt the need to care for others and did not really know what I was in for. At times I felt overwhelmed with the duties of being a CNA and knew in my heart that the people I cared for were so important. I continued to broaden my knowledge and attended many educational opportunities to do the best job of caring for the elderly. I worked the night shift with my mother and felt that I was nurtured along the way. I wanted so much to become a nurse and help others. I continued to work in the nursing home setting for four years, and being a young person in need of adventure, moved to the city to work at General Hospital in orthopedics. At this job I learned a whole different side to taking care of people as the ages varied and I worked with people with. I worked in the hospital field for four years and decided I had enough of the city life and wanted to come home and work in the rural health care area.

I started as a CNA at Medical Care Facility in 1981. We are a small 44-bed long-term nursing facility. The minute I walked in the door I felt I was at home. There were residents sitting there to greet me and to share some stories with me. I started to work 40 hours per week on the day shift. My favorite times were sharing the holidays with our residents as these times were often lonely and the residents needed extra TLC. In 1989 we had an opening in the Activity Department for an assistant position. I applied and this job turned out to be exactly what I wanted to do for the rest of my life. It is such a joy to see the smiles and joy in someone's eyes because you have helped them improve their quality of life. The director of the Activity Department quit work because of personal issues in 1991 and then I was thrown into the job of becoming a supervisor. I felt like the "shoe" fit and decided to attend state approved classes to do the best job I could for my residents. I have never regretted ever making this decision.

Everyday I get up excited to go to work, I love my job. My residents have grown to be my family and they have taught me so much in the 25 years I have worked here.

My reaffirming decision in my career happened in 2003. My 19 year old son Cory died in a tragic car accident. At least half of my residents attended the visitation and they gathered a memorial gift of money to my family, some of which was their bingo winnings. So many things were such a shock to me, but I felt I needed to return to work. I have great co-workers and was in need of their support. So after being home one week I returned. I went directly to my office and eventually word was out that I had returned. Many of the residents asked to see me and greeted me with all the love and support I needed. They have shown me compassion and shared in my grief and helped me to overcome the worst time in my life. I will forever be grateful to be part of their lives and hope they know how important there are to me.

I think I have the best job in the world and hope to continue to be in this position for sometime.

Toni Rochon
Activity Coordinator
Upland Hills Nursing and Rehab Center, Dodgeville

A feeling of belonging is a core aspect of human nature. There are fewer things in life that bring greater pleasure than to bring happiness to another person. This is a simple lesson learned in infancy when a baby first learns that smiling causes someone to smile back. It is perhaps the most powerful lesson. It is why some of us continue to persevere, even when life is difficult.

Communication is another unique aspect to humanity. Our ability to speak and understand each other with complex language is uniquely human. Language, both expressive and receptive, helps us share ideas, develop, love, and continue to grow even when we are one hundred years old.

Mouths help us talk, ears help us listen, and our hearts all inspire us to belong to each other. This is why being an audiologist makes me smile every day. Each day that I can help restore communication to a 100-year-old great-great-grandmother, or help a baby to smile when he hears his mother's voice for the first time, I am doing my small part to foster the gifts that make us so beautifully human.

As an audiologist I have many unique opportunities to assist people to hear well. I spend much of my day educating patients in ways that they can preventatively conserve their precious hearing or improve their communication strategies or apply augmentative communication in cases of hearing loss. Diagnostic opportunities are continuous and allow me to apply my education and problem solving skills in a dynamic environment, as all humans are unique also from each other. Above all else, nothing is better than a daily hug of gratitude from someone who had been despondent from hearing loss, and can hear once again.

Lorelei Karcz Vincent
Audiologist
Divine Savior Healthcare, Portage

Why work in healthcare? The answer many people give is to help people, but help people how? I am a nurse and have been one for the past five years working at Aurora. I love my job and the organization I work for, they care about me as an employee and my opinion does count. I am currently working as a Breast Care Coordinator and have made this change after I myself have battled breast cancer. I have lived what my job entails and it has given me true empathy for the patients I care for. I have undergone surgeries, chemotherapy, radiation, etc...everything my patients may be facing in their future. I know how it feels to hear the word "CANCER." My career goal and life goal is to help as many women as possible face this disease. I want them to know that they are not alone and I can help them through it with information and direction as their treatment begins. With each patient contact my decision to take this position is reaffirmed by the many women I speak with and who tell me "thank goodness you were here to talk with me." There is nothing more rewarding in life than to know you have truly made someone's life a little better. I will remain educating and helping women here at Aurora for as long as I am able.

Leslie Biernat
Cancer Care Coordinator
Aurora St. Luke's Medical Center, Milwaukee

I started working at Jefferson Meadows (now St. Clare Meadows Care Center) in 1994 as a certified nursing assistant. Today I am working at St. Clare Meadows "Meadow Lane" as a CBRF Facilitator.

I look back today and never imagined I would be working in the health care field. I was going to college hoping to go into social work with children. I knew I had always enjoyed helping others.

While in college, I was looking for another job and saw a program for a CNA and thought I would try it out. Well, I fell in love with working with the elderly. They were so spunky at times, you'd never know what your day would be like working with them.

It's a great feeling to look at the end of your day and know you helped make a difference in someone else's life in some way, even if it was a very small task. Deep down, they appreciate everything you do, even if they don't say it or show it, you just know.

I have learned a lot about myself as a caregiver through the years such as patience, compassion, and you have to take care of yourself just as much as you care for your residents. They need you, and if you miss a day with them, they worry and let you know it.

On Meadow Lane, we are a small facility and you become very close to the resident and their families, kind of like an extended family. There is a wonderful connection you develop. It's sometimes hard to explain, but I can say every person I have cared for through the years has left me with some memory of them that is with me forever.

My health career field has helped me face some everyday personal experiences such as caring for my grandmother and great-aunt when their health was failing. I would definitely recommend someone to try and work in the health career with the elderly. Working as a CNA or CBRF Facilitator is like a stepping stone, there is always room to branch out. There are many wonderful careers in the health field but I would recommend starting where I am and the rewards are worth every memory. For this I am proud to say that I have worked all these years for St. Clare Meadows Care Center and every experience and memory was worth it all.

Keri Jo Schmidtke
CBRF Facilitator
St. Clare Hospital, Baraboo

My work as a Massage Therapist was truly a gift that was given to me. It is up to us when we are given a gift to see it as that. Take it, appreciate where it came from and then pass it on.

As a Massage Therapist my days are full of variety, challenges and joy. I have the opportunity to be with people as they enter this world and have been given the gift to be present when some leaves this place. I would not be successful if I did not take pride in what I do. Dignity, value and self-respect, things that the dictionary defines pride as, are traits that I feel fortunate to have. More importantly these are what I help others feel about themselves.

A particular experience that has changed how I look at my profession and life in general was the time I spent with a woman living with cancer. She asked me if I would be with her when it was her time to go. I knew what she meant. The day before she died I said my good-bye to her. I spent that evening and early morning with her and her family. The greatest gift I was able to give her and her family was not only my touch but to teach them to touch her in a way that brought her comfort and gave them a sense that they were helping her, and by doing this, easing some of their pain and fears. She died with her husband and daughter holding her hands and I was touching her feet. I will never forget that experience and I am changed forever because of it.

Look at the gifts you've been given and maybe you should consider passing them on.

LeeRae Coenen
Certified Massage Therapist
Aurora Medical Center Manitowoc County

My Heart Belongs to Healthcare

My love for the health care field started when I was 12. I admired my aunt who worked at the Sauk County Healthcare Center for many years. She would tell me of her love for her patients and how she never wanted to work anywhere else. It was then that I first hoped to find an occupation that was so rewarding that I would never want to leave.

I have experienced health care in numerous settings including nursing homes, hospitals and clinics. I found my niche in the health care world in the clinic setting working for Boscobel Area Health Care at Riverside Family Practice. There are not many occupations in the world where hugs are a normal part of your day. At the end of my day, I reflect on each of my patients to make sure that everything they need was taken care of before I left. I do this not as an obligation of my job but for the love I share with my patients. They have become a part of my family. I worry about them and they worry as much about me. It's very rewarding to look back on your day and say, "I did everything I could today to help people." It is stressful, busy and sometimes downright frustrating taking care of the billing, records and health care needs, but the people you come to care about make it ALL a good thing.

Why am I happy to work in the health care field? The answer is one word....Love. In my yearbook from high school, the saying under my senior picture says...

"Some say Love is for the birds...So give me a pair of wings!"

As a Certified Medical Assistant in a small rural health setting.... I finally found my wings.

Dawn Stephenson, CMA
Certified Medical Assistant
Boscobel Area Health Care / Riverside Family Practice

I was working in the factory when my aunt had a massive stroke back in 1999. Never had I heard of hospice. Upon my visit to her bedside, I was struck by the ambience. It was serene; peaceful. No tubes or machines attached. My aunt looked so beautiful. I was overwhelmed by the experience. Something touched me deeply and it ignited a flame within my being. I needed to become a part of this movement. The decision to change careers was frightening, but I was compelled to follow a beckoning that was echoing so loud in my mind. I could not ignore it.

Opportunities presented themselves to become a hospice volunteer. During a summer shutdown at the factory I took a CNA course and became a certified nursing assistant. On weekends I worked at a nursing home; the factory during the week and volunteered at the hospice in my free time. After 24 years I left the factory. I was offered a position at Hospice Home of Hope where I volunteered. I have been there for four years. Hospice has provided me with the opportunity to touch hearts and souls. This is a labor of love. Love permeates this work. Touch is amazing! It comforts. It soothes. It heals. Tender loving touch is so powerful. I am so humbled by this work. The dignity of the individual is held intact up to and beyond the moment of their death. To be witness to this passage is transforming. It is not frightening. It is sacred. I am so honored to be a part of this incredible journey that each and every one of us will take someday. I am fulfilled, grateful and exhausted at the end of each day. But most of all content to have found my purpose in this lifetime.

Kathleen Gardipee, CNA
Certified Nursing Assistant
Agnesian HealthCare

I need to thank my grandma for encouraging me to become a CNA. When I was growing up, she had me go around the neighborhood, fixing the older ladies' hair. When my grandpa got sick with colon cancer, I was his #1 "nurse." The same was true when it was time to take care of my mother-in-law, dad, and grandma, when they got sick and passed away. I was there for them and did whatever I could.

My grandma encouraged me to take the CNA class, as she felt I could make a difference in lives. Who can become any closer to a resident than a CNA? We know when they don't feel well, when they want an extra five minutes of visiting, or simply want to hold my hand or get a hug. CNAs can provide residents with unlimited joy from basic gestures of kindness.

I receive joy from residents too. For example, when talking to a resident about farming and encouraging him to overcome speech impairments (after suffering a stroke), I get an empowered feeling in my heart too. That is why the resident-CNA relationship is meaningful.

I care for one resident, who, when I walk into her room, she automatically knows me as the "turkey lady." She knows she'll hear about the turkeys on my farm, and she can participate in the conversation...and feel like she is contributing.

How could I not be happy? I improve people's daily lives, just by doing the waltz or polka, holding residents' hands, or giving them hugs. It takes so little effort by me, but brings about countless smiles from residents.

Twenty years later, and I'm still a CNA, with my mind and heart so full of these special memories. This is why being a CNA is important to me.

Marie Heck, CNA
Certified Nursing Assistant
Memorial Medical Center, Neillsville

Making a Difference

Making a difference is what life is all about. Sometimes when you least expect it, it happens.

I had been taking care of an elderly gentleman on my morning shift. As I helped him with his ADL's, he started to chat. He told me about his kids, how proud he was of them and how he didn't want to be a burden to any of them. I pulled up a chair next to him and held his hand as he talked some more. When he had finished, he thanked me for taking the time to help and listen to him. We exchanged hugs before I left the room,

Throughout the day as I tended to other patients, I kept checking in on the gentleman. It was shortly after lunch that the nurse had gone in his room. The patient had quickly and quietly passed away. (His family had just gone downstairs for a bite of lunch).

After giving the family time to grieve, I knocked on the door and asked if I could come in. I told them what their father had shared with me and they were grateful. They were glad that he felt he could share those feelings with someone at a time that seemed just right for him.

Did this patient sense what was to come? I don't know, I just know that I followed my heart and took those few extra minutes to totally BE THERE for him. I'm so glad that I did.

Nancy Joch, CNA
Exercise Assistant
Saint Joseph's Hospital, Marshfield

My name is Tina Melnarik, and I've been a Certified Nursing Assistant for 15 years, and I wouldn't trade it for any job in the world!

My job is hands-on. I'm the eyes for the nurses because I spend the most time with the patients. I provide personal cares for patients that can't do it for themselves, or lend a helping hand to those that need simple things like a back wash or some lotion on their backs for a simple back rub.

With these cares, I need to be on continuous lookout for any breakdown on their skin or bruises or cuts. Anything I find, I have to report to the RN's. We are all team players, and being a team makes for providing excellent health care, no matter what health care setting you're in!

I love being around people of all ages -- lending a hand, sharing a smile and laughs, and hearing many family stories. I believe I was given a purpose to help others.

When I was only a few years into my career, my beloved grandmother was hospitalized – with what, we didn't know at the time. On the second day of her stay, we were told she could go home in a day as long as she had someone to come and take care of her. I was right there, ready to stay with her and help her out. I was ready to take leave from my job to make sure she got back on her feet. Needless to say, after my grandmother agreed, she passed on.

I find my love for others very rewarding. Just seeing my patients get stronger everyday is awesome! And, it keeps my respect for what I do strong.

To have patients in my care that come in from illnesses or accidents or surgeries, I know that they really don't want to be there. This is when I place myself in their shoes and I try my hardest to give them as much love and respect as they can stand. Smiles are really contagious, and I make sure I give lots away!

When my patients respond with love and smiles back is when I know I'm helping to make their stay a little more pleasant. And, I know I'm doing my job to the best I can when I have family members happy of the care their loved ones are getting.

I've been called an Angel of Mercy. And, I've been told that it takes a special person to do what I do. But, I feel that it takes special patients to make us special caregivers!

Tina Melnarik, CNA
Certified Nursing Assistant
Community Memorial Hospital, Oconto Falls

Building Something Beautiful

I work behind the scenes in health care, but I take great pride in my work at Sacred Heart Hospital because my work contributes to the service and quality provided by employees on “the front lines” of patient care. I also take pride in being part of the continued mission and vision of my city’s first hospital, established 117 years ago by the Hospital Sister of St. Francis. These factors motivate and inspire me each day.

Years ago, Christopher Wren, one of the world’s greatest architects, put on a hard hat and strolled unrecognized among the workmen that were building St. Paul’s Cathedral in London. He designed the place.

“What are you doing?” he inquired of a workman. The man replied, “I am cutting stone.” He put the same question to another man and he replied, “I am earning five shillings a day.” To a third, he addressed the same question, but the man answered, “I am helping Sir Christopher Wren build a beautiful cathedral.”

Even though I work far behind the scenes, the Hospital Sisters’ mission is something I help build—along with every Hospital physician, employee and volunteer. Like the cathedral workmen, we are all helping the Hospital Sisters of St. Francis continue building something beautiful that will continue to serve the health needs of generations to come. Although the physical presence of the Sisters has diminished, their Mission remains the “architectural” guide to our work—providing healing and hope to all regardless of race, religion or financial means.

The Sisters’ hospital mission is built upon the values that every person is a treasure, every life is a sacred gift, and every human being is a unity of body, mind and spirit. I can think of no better inspiration and foundation for providing compassionate care for the sick.

David Mortimer
Communications Department
Sacred Heart Hospital, Eau Claire

Prior to working in health care, I would have never considered it as a career path for an engineering student. Now I know there is no better opportunity. Engineering in health care is so diversified that it offers you the ability to excel regardless of your specialty or interest. From biomedical engineering to mechanical systems design, no other occupation offers as rich of a selection in one place.

I was in Engineering College working numerous part time jobs. I took a summer job at Community Memorial Hospital. Immediately I was struck by the caring attitude of the people I worked with. Unlike the other places which I had worked, I was treated as an equal, not looked down on as the “college kid.” When the school year began I applied for part time night work so I could stay working with the close friends I had made throughout the summer. Following school I moved to full time. That was 30 years ago and I have never regretted it.

I have many friends in engineering. Most work in cubicles, on narrow focus projects, accounting for “billable hours.” Every time I visit them in their workplace I again realize how fortunate I am to have selected the path I did in health care. I not only get to work with people but some of the very best people in the world. No other engineering field comes close to offering the variety of interesting activities combined with the wonderful co-workers and the satisfaction of helping people in need.

Dale Scherbert
Director of Facility Services
Community Memorial Hospital, Menomonee Falls

The “Wow” Factor of St. Joseph’s Community Health Services

At 14, I started my journey with St. Joseph’s as a Candy Stripper. During high school, I worked as a Nursing Assistant in the nursing home. Those years cemented my determination to become a nurse. I still have very fond memories of the staff with which I worked; many became role models for me. I also got the opportunity to work with the Franciscan Sisters that worked here at the time, which was about the coolest thing that could happen!

Throughout my years of marriage and raising children, I have returned several times to St. Joseph’s. I have worked as a Candy Stripper, Nursing Assistant, EMT, and Registered Nurse. When working at St. Joseph’s, I have always felt a wonderful feeling of team work throughout the facility.

Once again, I find myself at St. Joseph’s as the Director of Nursing in the nursing home. My first week back was like embracing an old friend. Many of the staff has been here 20 years or more continuing to deliver the excellent care that they have always delivered. Now, there’s a “wow” factor!

I am amazed at the things St. Joseph’s has accomplished and the exciting things yet to come. The state of the art technology that has been brought to this small community based facility and the strides St. Joseph’s has made in the services we offer makes for another “Wow” factor!

I feel honored to be a part of this wonderful family of dedicated professionals, and I am very excited to play an active role in the projects that we have planned for the future. No matter what challenges each working day brings, I always go home with a smile on my face and looking forward to the next day. Now, that really is a “wow” factor!

Marita Shaker, RN
Director of Nursing – Long Term Care
St. Joseph’s Community Health Services, Hillsboro

The Gift of Compassion

Compassionate care to be given to all
As a health care worker, I have answered the call
Nurturer, comforter, guiding light
To be a nurse was my goal in life

With a promise of hope to fight despair
The courage to brave the pain and care
The triumph of life when the fight is won
The acceptance of death when their day is done

From the RNs in scrubs to the docs in greens
24/7 we are on the scene
Warriors all on our varied posts
Watching, waiting, giving our most

Going home at the end of the day
Worrying, wondering on our way
Will she make it at home, will he walk again?
Caregiver, listener, teacher, friend

Great champions of patient rights
Ready to challenge, fit for the fight
Armed with knowledge and fueled by beliefs
Advocate, confidant, witness to grief

Compassionate care is given to all
As health care workers, we have answered the call
Its not one department, its not just one role
It takes a team to make patients whole

Linda Charles
Director of Senior Services
Moundview Memorial Hospital & Clinics, Friendship

As a young boy, I thought that it would be pretty cool to be a doctor. The concept of being able to apply science with compassion was appealing to me. But as a teenager, how do you really know what matters in life?

I was offered an excellent opportunity to gain training through the American Red Cross, and Wisconsin Emergency Medical Services. Within a couple of years, I completed a variety of courses and became a member of the National Ski Patrol and an ambulance service. This allowed me to work my way through college pursuing my dream.

The first hand experience got me hooked. Being able to intervene in a crisis and provide compassionate care was fulfilling. Whether it was on the ski hill treating a broken leg or attempting to resuscitate an elderly person, the reward was the same. I was able to make a difference in someone's life, whether better or worse.

There was no question that a career as a physician was my ultimate goal. As any student, I was met with a lot of challenges along the way. My commitment to Emergency Medicine remained foremost in my life and I realized my goal in 1990, joining the medical staff at Saint Michael's Hospital-Ministry Health Care, Stevens Point.

My career has been very personally fulfilling. As a Stevens Point native, I have been able to give back to this wonderful community both professionally and philanthropically. When I teach students about medicine, I emphasize the importance of being able to diversify one's career. I challenge them to continue to enrich themselves through personal growth, while providing excellent medical care. But, they must be active leaders in their community providing personal and financial support to programs that will allow others to grow and realize their dreams.

Randal F. Wojciehoski, D.P.M, D.O.
Emergency Dept. Physician
Saint Michael's Hospital, Stevens Point

Why People Like You Have Chosen This Field

There was an opening so Blanche Smith helped me get my job. I had her to help me. I have been working at the hospital for 32 years on March 29, 2006. I started in the nursing home at Sacred Heart Hospital. When they closed the nursing home they gave me a job in the hospital. I have been working in the housekeeping department ever since. You have to clean all the bathrooms, sinks, dust mop and wet mop the floors. You wash all the flat furniture and wash windows too.

I love it very much, you get to meet a lot of nice people. It is hard work but I love it because I worked hard at home. I saw a lot of housekeepers come and go. I am proud to work with so many employees and coworkers. I had some nice supervisors over the years. It is a very nice place to work. At times, I think of the people who were in the nursing home. Now I work part time and clean the clinic on the P.M. shift. I miss working days and seeing my coworkers. The clinic is harder work but I love it very much. The manager is happy with my work.

This is how I would inspire others to join this field. It is hard work but you get to meet a lot of nice people and patients too. I work very hard, but it is a very nice place to work. If there was no one to keep the hospital and clinic clean people would get infected and sick because of the dirt and germs. That is why we need to keep the hospital and clinic clean.

Pamela S. Lohmeier
Environmental Services Aide
Sacred Heart – St. Mary's Hospitals, Rhinelander

My Job, My Life

When I started working in Environmental Services (formerly Housekeeping) in 1983, I never thought that I would still be here more than 23 years later. Seeing blood and catheter bags, and noting the foul smells, made me think “What am I doing in a job like this?” Today, I know *exactly* why I am still in this profession.

When our youngest child went off to kindergarten, I decided that I needed something more than staying home and caring for my home and family. I didn't know what kind of job I was looking for, but there just happened to be an opening at the Medford Hospital in Housekeeping, so I decided to give it a try. At first, I wasn't sure that this was the job for me, but as the years went by, I learned to appreciate the value of having a medical facility in Medford. My job in Environmental Services brings me into direct contact with many different people. I clean the patient rooms daily and make sure that the hospital is a safe and clean environment to be in. However, my job means so much more to me than that. Whether it is bringing a smile to some unfortunate patient, bringing them a warm blanket or whatever the need may be, it is my job to see that our patients are as comfortable as possible and treated as our guests. I want those rooms to be as clean as if I were to occupy them.

In addition, several lifetime experiences, including a serious car accident my daughter was involved in, and a disabling accident my husband had, made me realize, even more, that clean hospital rooms and the caring individuals that maintain them are very important. Hospitals could not survive without them.

Sharon Vesnefsky
Environmental Services Aide
Memorial Health Center, Medford

Health Information is one of the many growing areas in health care today. The need for trained, skilled employees is in great demand. At Our Lady of Victory Hospital, we are encouraged to give back to the community and one way that we help is to take students that are in the health information program from Chippewa Valley Technical College. I believe internship is an important part of the student's education. It's their opportunity to put their practice to use in the "real" working world.

Working with the health information students and helping them complete a part of their education is very rewarding. I think that it also gives the students a greater appreciation and respect for what is involved after working with medical record staff and all that they do after the internship experience. We are a smaller facility but I believe it gives them the diversity that larger facilities wouldn't be able to offer and allows them to have a well rounded experience. It is also an added bonus to have someone come in with new perspective on things and may have fresh ideas.

Helping mentor a student is not just one person's job, it takes an entire team! Everyone who is involved in this experience takes it seriously and works to help that student have the best experience. They become a part of our department for that time that they are here. We encourage them to let us know after internship where they find a job. We have even gone on and have hired quite a few graduates ourselves!

Becky Herman, RHIT
Health Information Manager
Our Lady of Victory Hospital, Stanley

Giving and receiving in the Wisconsin Health Care industry

Speaking to a group of students, I would describe how my career is still evolving in the health care setting. I continue to team as I grow in this ever-challenging atmosphere. I have worked as Patient Registrar, Nursing Assistant, and Health Unit Coordinator. I am currently studying for my Nursing degree part-time while I continue to work full-time. It is attainable and well worth the effort. My attraction to the health care field is natural. My mother and aunt are both nurses. I grew up with it! I receive satisfaction from the job I do.

I would inform them how rewarding my job is to me. My job as a Health Unit Coordinator entails multi-tasking and constant communications with all disciplines such as doctors, nurses, cardiopulmonary techs, patients, and visitors. The list goes on and on. I answer phones, relay messages, assist nurses with doctor's orders, file patient data, census, computer skills, faxing information to doctors and clinics, and any other duties as assigned.

I entered the Army in the middle of my health care career. I needed time to evaluate my priorities in life. I was stationed in Heidelberg, Germany. When the war in Iraq broke out, I found myself in the "front lines." I had two tours of duty in Iraq. I saw death, transported prisoners of war, and delivered food and water rations at 3 a.m. to my unit in Baghdad. It was dangerous. I have a hard time talking about this.

The significant event that changed my life happened when I was put on an extra-duty mission. In the course of duty, a 200 pound chunk of marble fell three stories from a palace, striking me down. I was almost unconscious, but remember paramedics responding in minutes. I was taken swiftly by a Blackhawk helicopter to the main hospital in Baghdad where I was evaluated swiftly by doctors and nurses. I was impressed by how well they worked together. I was so stressed that I had difficulty comprehending all the events happening so fast.

The doctor informed me I was going home and I was lucky to be alive. I had an acromium fracture in my right shoulder (along with being pretty bruised all over). He also stated that if I had been struck two more inches to the left, I would have been dead. He told me to take the hint and "go home." This has reaffirmed my decision to work in health care. I am honored to dedicate my life to the health care industry.

Laurie Carlson
Health Unit Coordinator
Memorial Medical Center, Ashland

My name is Sarah Corbett, and I am pursuing my dream of becoming a nurse. My desire to help others has been with me since I have been a little girl and the satisfaction of knowing that I can make a difference fuels that desire everyday.

While attending middle school I had the opportunity to help my mother, who is a Respiratory Therapist, as she assisted people in their homes and in nursing homes. The compassion that she had as she administered oxygen and breathing treatment, re-affirmed what I already knew.

In my junior year of high school, I became the first Dane County youth to participate and complete a two-year program in the health field. Dane County did not have an apprentice program at the time, so this meant traveling to a hospital in Rock County for my training. It was during this training that I fell in love with nursing. My job placement brought me to Stoughton Hospital, where I am still employed today. I am currently a certified nursing assistant and occasionally asked to help out in different areas of the hospital including the ER. I find this very rewarding.

Approximately two years ago I cared for an elderly gentleman in his home. Through my daily care, his desire to stay at home with his wife has fulfilled his dream and has helped me realize that I can make a difference. His appreciation and kind words regarding my patience makes me pray everyday that I too can fulfill my dream of becoming a nurse. This experience was both professionally and personally rewarding for me. The nursing field affords me the opportunity to explore many different areas of health care. I have not only expanded my knowledge of the pathophysiology of many different illnesses and diseases but have come to appreciate the human side of these illnesses.

Sarah Corbett, CNA
Health Unit Coordinator
Stoughton Hospital Association, Stoughton

“HUC,” what a funny little word for such an exciting position. When people ask, “What do you do?” How does one begin to answer?

I am the hands, which enter the orders that come from the doctors, nurses or other departments within the hospital. The hands that answer the phone and direct the calls to all persons in need of contact. The hands that comfort the newborn in an overflowing OB while nurses diligently attend to other mommies and babies. The hands that document all information in an extreme emergency for the ER, OR, OB or Med Surg units. The hands that contact rescue and medical flight units for transfers, accurately preparing needed information, having it packaged and ready to go when units arrive for transport. I am the hub of all activity within a working health care unit.

I understand the importance of smooth operation within the hospital. I understand the significance of communication between all medical staff and outlying facilities, keeping information accurate and up to date for the well being of all patients. I understand the necessity to direct accurate information to other hospitals via the phone or fax machine for those in need of emergent care. I understand the magnitude of family and their concern for the best care of their loved one.

I am the comfort zone for staff members, families and outside resources. Comforting staff through difficult moments on the floor with a positive attitude and dependability so they can better initiate their jobs. Comforting with knowledge to accurately answer questions, giving direction to different areas within the hospital so others can receive valued care. The comforting voice that answers the lifelines call to reassure that elderly caller that all is “OK” or help is on the way. The comforting hand that guides a family during a difficult loss of a loved one by providing food and beverages for their physical comfort, a quiet place to make a phone call and a constant tool in the communication between medical staff and family members. I am a comforting hug, a warm smile, a crazy laugh, or the friendly voice that reflects the warmth and care provided by a rural hospital.

I am the “hands,” the “understanding,” the “comfort zone.”
A Health Unit Coordinator? I am a “HUC” and extremely honored to be one.

Lois “Chipper” Wyss
Health Unit Coordinator
Black River Memorial Hospital, Black River Falls

Employee Pride

When you think of health care, you usually think of people like doctors, nurses and technical staff. Not everyone is destined to fill these professional positions nor has the ability to attend college. There is a great need for those support staff people that work in areas like laundry, housekeeping and dietary. When our medical team is busy saving lives and improving people's lives, the support staff is there, quietly folding laundry, scrubbing floors and washing dishes. We are there to support them. We are there to help them make their jobs easier.

Two people that influenced me were Jim Weber and Gerald Stemper, both former employees of Howard Young Medical Center. Jim, the head of the laundry department at that time, encouraged me to perform extra tasks that he saw needed to be done. He gave me the chance to prove to myself and others that I could accomplish the work that needed to be done. Gerald gave me the opportunity to work full time and helped me develop a positive work attitude. I have been working at Howard Young Medical Center for 15 years, almost ten of which have been full time. I would like to let those that are interested in working in health care know that there are many jobs and many areas that could be waiting for them. If not in a medical position, perhaps in a support position. There is a place for them in health care. They can and will make a difference in a supportive role.

I work in the area of floor care. When publicity pictures of our "Wall of History" were taken the floor just shined because we took care of them the night before by washing and buffing them. It was a coincidence that it happened that way, but the pictures showed an example of our hard work and attention to detail. I know that people appreciate our work, but it is not always acknowledged. Our supervisor, Kathy, wrote us an email about it the next day. I save those things.

Roddi Franck
Housekeeping Department
Howard Young Medical Center, Woodruff

Employee Pride

When I was 16 years old I was offered a position as a Food Service Worker at St. Vincent Hospital in Green Bay. For a high school student, the hours were great and the money was good. If someone would have told me then that I would still be working at St. Vincent Hospital 26 years later, I would not have believed them.

The past 26 years seem to have passed like yesterday. It is with great PRIDE that I say I am honored to be a member of such an outstanding organization. An organization which embraces the values of “Respect, Care, Quality and Joy” and where employees are aware of the difference they make in the lives of others.

From the CEO to the Food Service Worker, everyone is working together toward the same goal of providing the best quality of patient care available to those in need.

In an organization where the patient is Number 1, the employee runs a close second. Our patients are not the only people treated with dignity and respect—so are the employees. St. Vincent Hospital believes in developing their employees to their fullest potential. Everyone has the same opportunity to be the best they can be.

Twenty-six years later, after five promotions and establishing a family, St. Vincent Hospital is the place where I want to be. My career in health care has been rewarding, exciting, challenging, and ever changing.

When asked where I work, it is with great PRIDE that I say St. Vincent Hospital.

Mary Pliner,
Human Resources Representative
St. Vincent Hospital, Green Bay

I have been employed at Tri-County Memorial Hospital & Nursing Home for 16 years. In my current position I work in Patient Accounts and work with Medicare, Medicaid and insurance billing issues. These are all challenging programs in which I feel I make a difference. I say this because of the rapidly changing payment scenarios as well as the overall importance to the facility and its cash flow needs. My challenge is to learn these systems and keep up with the frequent changes as well as maintain a high degree of accuracy.

In 2001 I took the Nursing Assistant course. While in class, my father was a resident of the facility. It was this gift that Tri-County gave me that I will always be grateful for. Once I became certified, I was allowed to care for my father. He had Alzheimer's and was at times not responsive. I was able to give him a gift of care and love. I wondered if he would find some recognition in my voice or touch, to be able to interact with him in this way was a blessing, which gave me a sense of satisfaction to be involved and to understand how debilitating this disease is.

In the last few days of my father's life, I felt satisfaction knowing the care he received was outstanding and I was a part of that. I was able to say "good-by" and know his journey was complete.

Every Christmas I share a reading with the nursing home residents and during the Love Light ceremony we honor and remember those who have passed. It is a way for me to remember fondly that time I spent with my father, and it has become a tradition to do this at Christmas time.

Working at Tri-County ~ we get to be like family, we're a small facility, and we take care of our neighbors, friends, and yes even relatives, and we do this with care and expertise.

Paulette Fox Beardsley
Insurance Clerk
Tri-County Memorial Hospital, Whitehall

Why Did I Become a Nurse?

I think I knew I'd be taking care of people somewhere around eighth grade. We had to write down what we thought we'd be doing for the rest of our lives. I put down that I would either be taking care of animals or become a nurse. Growing up on a farm, taking care of things, new life and death and hard work were learned early. It wasn't cemented in my mind that taking care of people would be my calling until my dad became very ill with lung disease when I was in high school. I watched as this incredibly dignified man became weaker and required more care as time went on. I watched as my mom not only gave him the care that he needed, but also the love and dignity that he deserved. I knew that there were so many more people out there who didn't have someone at home who was able to give them that kind of love, respect and care that my mom was able to give to my dad. I think that in all nurses, there is a need to be a rescuer to rescue souls, dignity, hope-and somewhere somebody needed that and that I could hopefully provide it. Eighteen years later, that need and desire to help is still there, strengthened every time I have a patient that has no one to give to them after they have spent their lives giving to others. Do this for the rest of my life?

Absolutely.

Ce Ce Olson, LPN
Licensed Practical Nurse
St. Marys Care Center, Madison

What Nursing Means to me.....

Nursing is an adventure, something new everyday, constantly learning. Every day I am given the chance to learn something new, my knowledge base continues to grow, and I can never say I know it all in the nursing career. With the new knowledge I obtain I have the chance to improve my skills, which will ultimately help me to give better care to patients and residents.

I am given the opportunity to make a difference in people's lives everyday. I find working with people extremely rewarding. Having someone come in feeling down and leaving with a smile is wonderful! This job is taking the time and hearing, not just listening but truly hearing, what people are telling me. Sometimes not speaking a word but giving a hug makes them feel better, and I am blessed to be able to take the time and do that. Nursing is so much more than medicine; it is taking the time and being there for people when they need you.

Nursing is excitement; you never know what the day will bring. What you may think is a simple case and/or procedure can lead to so much more. This job can be challenging and your skills can be tested at a moment's notice.

If you have a desire to be with people, make a difference in people's lives, never stop learning and have knowledge and skills that can be used anywhere and everywhere, nursing is the career for you!

N – nurturing
U – unbiased
R – ready
S – skillful
E – eager

Nursing is making a difference!

Brenda Rachner, LPN
Licensed Practical Nurse
Burnett Medical Center, Grantsburg

My motivation to work in healthcare...

On March 30, 2000, I was the victim of a serious life-altering car accident. Med-Flight transported me to UW Hospital in Madison, where I was given a very poor prognosis. I suffered a broken arm, a fractured pelvis, multiple open wounds from glass and metal, but most severe – traumatic brain injury.

I was in a coma for three weeks and under close monitoring with MRI's every hour. From the ER I went directly to surgery – then to the Trauma Unit. I was a patient in Neuro ICU, where they prepared me for rehabilitation. Once the swelling in my brain was reduced, I was moved to the Neuro Rehab Unit. I was ready for the challenge of Physical and Occupational Therapy. Not only did I have to learn the basic skills of feeding myself, brushing my teeth, and bathing, I also had to learn how to walk again and talk in normal conversation, things that most 21-year olds take for granted. It was the most humbling experience of my life.

I had an excellent medical team taking care of me and my family was beside me every step of the way. They encouraged me every day, even when I wanted to give up. After a year of inpatient and outpatient treatment and therapy, I was discharged. I left the hospital knowing that I wanted to have that positive effect on someone's life.

I applied to Madison Area Technical College's nursing program and was put on the "wait list" until they had an opening. I didn't let that stop me from achieving my goal. I took classes towards my degree and also a class in phlebotomy. I received my certification in phlebotomy and worked as a Phlebotomist for two years until I was accepted into the nursing program in August 2004.

Since the time of my car accident I got married and was eight months pregnant when I graduated from MATC in May 2005. Currently, I am an LPN in Pediatrics at Monroe Clinic. I hope to have a positive effect on someone's life – if even to give a mom reassurance or make it easier for a child to have a throat culture.

I love knowing that every day I come to work, it's different than yesterday. There will always be new challenges to face and new faces to take care of. I know that not everyone is going to have a positive outcome, but I'll give 110% and the best care possible.

Catherine M Ebbert-Seffrood LPN
Licensed Practical Nurse, Pediatrics
The Monroe Clinic, Monroe

Someone asked me why I became a nurse. It brought back a flood of memories.

Our second baby, Dennis, developed jaundice. He was four weeks early, so I wasn't alarmed – concerned, but not alarmed.

One morning my doctor came into the room with a grave look. He never sat but stood at my bedside to tell me Dennis had a bowel obstruction and aspiration pneumonia. The surgery wasn't difficult, but he couldn't have surgery until the aspiration pneumonia was clear. By evening, Dennis developed pneumonia in both lungs. The doctor advised me to visit him in the neonate unit.

My little boy wasn't breathing on his own and looked helpless and pitiful. I wasn't able to hold him because of all the equipment needed to keep him alive. I went back to my room heartbroken and devastated. How could a little boy so fragile ever pull through?

Dennis died on October 18th.

When my doctor told me, he left as soon as he could. He told the nurse “get her a hypo to calm her down.” Calm me down? I was in a daze, mystified over what happened. The nurse gave me the hypo and left. I lay there not able to cry, numb, with no one to talk to.

A few minutes later, a nurse I hadn't seen before came in. She said nothing – only took me in her arms and held me while the tears flowed, holding me for the longest time. I don't remember her letting go.

When I awoke, I realized what a gift she gave me. She was there for me and me alone. I knew I wanted to be there for someone who needed compassion and decided to go into nursing.

During clinical training, I was given the opportunity to comfort someone for the same reason. What a rich and blessed experience it was to give back what was given to me! I gave her a shoulder to cry upon as I was given a shoulder to cry upon. No words needed to be spoken.

Often I think of these two experiences and know I was meant to be a nurse. I have the privilege to pray with my patients, offer comfort, and give a shoulder to cry upon. I am fortunate to do what I know God intended for me.

Marge Vande Hei, LPN
Licensed Practical Nurse
St. Mary's Hospital Medical Center, Green Bay

My prior work experience had been working in the highly competitive and very stressful field of sales and marketing for two different manufacturing corporations. During this time, while visiting family or friends in the hospital – and while being a patient myself – I was always very impressed with the hospital staff. They always seemed so friendly and eager to help. I remember the hospital work environment seemed to have a special “aura” which gave me the desire to become an employee of a hospital.

In 1999, when I was hired by Memorial Hospital of Lafayette County, I was very excited. After seven years of working at MHLC, I continue to appreciate and enjoy my job, work environment, and the special group of coworkers I spend my days with!

My position of Materials Management Supervisor allows me to work with all departments in ensuring they have the necessary supplies and equipment required to care for their patients. This position has given me a sense of dedication and pride as I have never experienced with any of my previous employers. Knowing I am playing a part in healing a sick person, making a dying patient’s last days comfortable, or even saving a life makes it more rewarding than any other workplace could be.

Reaffirmation to all this came one day several years ago when my son’s 92-year-old great-grandmother was brought to the emergency room with heart problems. If not for this local hospital, she would have died. I witnessed my coworkers revive her, get her stabilized, and transported to an intensive care unit at a larger hospital where she was fitted with a pacemaker. I was so proud of MHLC when the attending cardiologist at this larger hospital stated, “Whoever took care of this woman at MHLC did an excellent job of saving her life.”

Therefore, the best part about being a health care employee is the feeling of pride and satisfaction you have for what you do and where you work!

Cindy K. Humphrey
Materials Management Supervisor
Memorial Hospital of Lafayette County, Darlington

My name is Ellen Marie Anders. I am a wife, a mother, a grandmother, and also a medical technologist. I have worked in the blood bank department of the clinical laboratory at Waukesha Memorial Hospital for over 26 years.

The mission statement of Waukesha Memorial Hospital is: To promote health and deliver extraordinary health care in the communities we serve.

The blood bank department at Waukesha Memorial Hospital achieves this mission and the vision of providing hospital services of the highest value by working jointly with the Blood Center of Wisconsin.

As a medical technologist, I never thought that I myself would someday need blood.

About 3 years ago, I went into cardiac arrest when I was at work in the laboratory. I was whisked upstairs to the Waukesha Memorial Hospital Emergency Room where I was revived – and given a reprieve from death.

Within two weeks of my near death, I had open heart surgery, with a mitral valve replacement.

During the course of my cardiac surgery and recovery, I received a total of 11 units of blood products.

For me to receive 11 units of blood, a unity of effort must occur – the process begins with the blood donor, travels a pathway through the Blood Center of Wisconsin, my physician, the blood bank at Waukesha Memorial Hospital, and ends with ME, the patient who needed the blood transfusions.

I would not have survived my crisis without the incredible staff at Waukesha Memorial Hospital. I am honored and proud to be a part of the workforce.

I speak from the bottom of my heart when I say that I will be eternally grateful to all of the health care workers who helped save my life.

I cherish each moment, each hour, and each day that has been given back to me.

Ellen Marie Anders
Medical Technologist
Waukesha Memorial Hospital

Employee Pride

It is on rare occasion that you cross paths with individuals that truly impact your life and shape your character on an everyday basis. I am proud to state that I get that chance every day. Being part of Eagle River Memorial Hospital's laboratory team has given me the opportunity to have direct patient care with its many patrons and gain a rapport that is unlike any other institution that I have worked for. I have become the source for clarity and information, an ear to listen, hand to hold, and friend to console to countless individuals. I have aided in the diagnosing and treatment of many of these people and their family members on a repeat basis, which has in part led to seeing many conquer and defeat, as well as those that are overtaken. It is a true blessing that I am able to have become a confidant and have my life enriched by so many. So thanks to the community for those who have trusted me, this institution who has given me so many possibilities to meet new people, and to Ministry Health Care; *where caring does make the connection.*

Alicia Rouse
Medical Technologist/Microbiologist
Eagle River Memorial Hospital

My first impression with SLSS was when it was called Trinity. It was not a happy note that made me familiar with the hospital, but because of the treatment my family member and myself received, it was easier to handle. You see, in 1976 my mother was diagnosed with breast cancer. I was devastated. It seems like yesterday. I was sitting on a bench watching down the hallway and I saw a nun walk towards me. I was scared and started crying. Sister sat with me during this scary time in my life. After this experience I wanted nothing more than to work in health care at this hospital.

In 1995 a marriage and two children later, I started working in Admitting. I worked multiple shifts and areas, even in the Gift Shop. I found employees treated each other with respect and compassion. Everyone was and is helpful and works together.

Our administrator takes time out of his busy day to walk to different departments to see how you are doing or just to say, "Good morning." He may even ask your opinion on something. That says something for our hospital. Yes, we are a small hospital, but a caring hospital, not only for the patients, but also for the people we work with.

This is just a small example of employee relations at SLSS. Don't get me wrong; the job is very challenging and trying at times. There are new challenges everyday, but these make it exciting. It is important to have a job in your life that you don't mind getting up in the morning for, and I have found it.

From 1976 to 2006 two things are true. My mother has been cancer free for 28 years, and Aurora Health Care is still a great place to be a patient and employee!

Bonnie Henneman
Patient Access Representative Lead
St. Luke's South Shore, Cudahy

Patient Advocate

Health care runs in my family – you might even say it runs through my veins. My grandmother was a nurse, my mother is a nurse and I have seven aunts and two uncles who are nurses as well. From the time when I was very young I knew I wanted to work in health care. I would listen to the stories my family would tell about saving lives, being with an individual during their final days or just showing compassion to a scared patient and I would think to myself, “I want to do that too!”

As a Patient Advocate, people ask me all the time what my job entails and I explain to them that it is about working on patients’ behalf and making sure they are happy with their health care and if they’re not, doing whatever you can to make them happy. I think I have the greatest job in the world. I have the opportunity to make life better, the opportunity to make improvements, the opportunity to make a difference – all for the patient.

Some days the job gets tough and it is hard to put a smile on my face. However, I try to remember that this might be the only place a patient might get a smile and it could mean the world to them. As a Patient Advocate I may not be saving lives, but I have the opportunity to show our patients a little compassion which can make a difference.

As health care providers, we have the opportunity to change the lives of our patients and the responsibility to treat them with dignity and respect. I believe the employees of St. Michael Hospital are examples of this and make a difference in our patient’s lives.

All of this makes me proud to say I work in health care!

Erin J. Schulte
Patient Advocate
St. Michael Hospital, Milwaukee

In this field I have found not only a feeling of satisfaction with what I do, but also a profound sense of accomplishment. I not only have a greater appreciation for my fellow man; I have found myself to be less judgmental of others and, in the process, more sympathetic for them as they face the challenges of illness and even impending death.

I take care of people in vulnerable physiological and psychological states under the care of a cadre of dedicated and inspiring nurses. As a patient care assistant at Columbia Hospital in Milwaukee, I feed those who cannot feed themselves, hold the hands of the dying, clean the bodies of those who have soiled themselves, and I bring smiles to the faces of those who feel like they are at the end of their ropes.

In the past I had worked in health care in the long-term setting. At that time, however, I was unable to see past the performance of tasks. Lacking any job satisfaction, I became a truck driver instead. In the shadow of September 11 that I began to seriously question my role in society. It was then I heard the call to serve others. I began coursework to become a registered nurse, and decided to deepen my skills by taking a job at Columbia a year ago this February.

The thing that separates this job from any job I've ever had is the fact that I always feel satisfied with the work that I've done. I take from this job a deep sense of gratitude for having been given the chance to improve the lives of those who are in a vulnerable state. I recommend this field to anyone who wants to serve humanity and feel a profound sense of pride and a purpose fulfilled.

Eric A. Goin
Patient Care Assistant
Columbia St. Mary's, Columbia Hospital Campus, Milwaukee

Why?

The alarm clicks on. I quickly shut it off before it wakes anyone else. I hate mornings. I love to sleep. I hurry around getting ready quietly to make sure I don't wake my family. Off to work I go. It's time to catch up from yesterday. I scramble to finish documentation, charts, and charging. I rush to look up a few things in reference materials.

The day officially begins. Patient after patient comes in with pain, complaints, requests, and questions. Charts pile up. Run here, run there. Grab the phone and call a doctor. Listen to the list of voice mails to return. Exercise with the patients. Explain for the 699th time why they should exercise at home. Listen with empathy to the anger of those who feel wronged by society. Listen to one after the other coming in stating "today is a bad day." Grab a quick lunch while jotting some notes, answering some calls. Worry about why "Mary" just can't seem to get more range of motion, more strength, less pain. Struggle to obtain insurance reimbursement, appeal denials, justify treatment, and detail medical necessity. The negativity is wearing.

The work day comes to an end. Rush out the door. Walk in the house to get supper together, books read, hugs given. Create quality time in the few hours before sleep. Pick up an article belaboring society's tendency to sleep too little, rush too much, not spend enough time with the children.

As I kiss my curly haired miracle good night I wonder: why? Why do I do this? As I lay my exhausted head back on the pillow the images begin to flood behind my closed eyes. I see the 21 year-old man with a head injury who is joyfully going to get rid of his cane. There is the chubby grin of the 18 month old stroke victim taking his first steps. There is the relief on the face of the single mother of four who can return to work now that her back pain is gone. A wrinkled hand grasps mine in gratitude. There are my coworkers who I am proud to work next to, who are also my friends. I see the birthday card on my table from the 87 year-old woman who has never forgotten me. Calm sets in. I know why I do this. I am blessed to have an opportunity in life to make a difference. It gives me purpose and peace.

I set my alarm for tomorrow. I need to be rested.

Pamela Schubring, PT
Physical Therapist – Lead
Mercy Health System, Janesville

Why I Am Proud Of My Career

I have been working in the field of nutrition for 25 years now. I feel blessed to have found a field that continues to excite me. To begin with I grew up in an era where fast food and convenience foods were booming. Healthy eating was just something we didn't talk about, and my health was not where it should have been. When I reached my late teens I became aware of the power of good nutrition and how it makes such an impact on our health, well being, and self concept. That was the catalyst which led me to go to school and become a Registered Dietetic Technician.

In addition to the personal rewards I get from my job, I am constantly challenged and excited by the advances in the science of nutrition. When dealing with health and disease, how we eat is one area we have so much control over and it can make an enormous impact in our lives.

My field eventually led me to work in a hospital setting where each day is a new experience. I never know what kind of contacts I will be making each day. I recall talking with a diabetic patient who had multiple medical and social problems who had not been able to understand his diabetes. After talking with him at a level he could understand he stated, "Wow, no one has ever explained to me that way, I get it." Or the patient whose spouse needed reassurance and a hand held when his wife was too sick to eat. These are the things I take home with me. When I leave the building knowing I have connected with someone, I know I have chosen a very rewarding career.

Nancy Fastner
Registered Dietetic Technician
St. Joseph's Hospital, Chippewa Falls

Why I Am a Nurse

As a child, I dreamed of one day becoming a nurse. I didn't know where the idea came from at the time, as I really had little understanding of what "nursing" actually entailed. I read Florence Nightingale and Clara Barton's biographies over and over again. Looking back, I must have been drawn to the nursing profession because of the caring involved. I absolutely love people and enjoy allowing God to show His love to others through my life. Working as a nurse in the inpatient hospital setting involves physical assessment, medication administration, and intravenous monitoring, among other tasks. But nursing is much more than that. Although I enjoy using my nursing skills, including starting IVs, inserting feeding tubes, removing staples, and changing wound dressings, it's the patient care and advocate role I like best.

As patient advocate, I coordinate the care of each of my patient with other disciplines. Because the nurse is immediately available for the patient 24 hours a day, critical thinking and collaboration are essential to optimum patient care.

However, I find the patient care role to be the most rewarding part of my profession. Nursing means being present when a patient has no one else to comfort them. Nursing means holding a hand when a patient is scared of what is to come. Nursing means praying with a patient who can't fall asleep at night. Nursing means calming an anxious patient or family member by listening to their needs.

Now I know why I always wanted to be a nurse – there's a reward in nursing that can be found nowhere else. As to where the idea came from – in my life, nursing came as a calling from God.

Angela Acker, RN, BSN
Good Samaritan Health Center, Merrill

What is Pride? To me it is a satisfaction and proud feeling I have as a nurse. It is my reward for my job. It is essential for job satisfaction. Health care today is an exciting place to work. So many advances occur every year, so many roles you can choose. The environment of health care today is not only challenging, but also fun.

I have experienced not only being a nurse, but a housekeeper, secretary, coordinator and mentor. I have overwhelming pride and passion for my profession and my patients. Every year I learn more about being a better nurse and learn advanced techniques to better care for my patients. Health care is never boring. But I've learned some of the best lessons in the first year as a nurse.

I realized that caring is what health care is all about. No other profession can match the compassion health care workers have. The listening, compassion, empathy and making sure our patients know we care, even if we cannot fix every problem. Whether I see a new baby come into this world, walk the hallways with a surgical patient or hold hands with a scared pediatric patient, I realize the power I have as a health care worker to make a difference in the life of another. I always think about how that transcends throughout the health care system. No matter what your role or job is in health care the caring and compassion we all have is unmatched anywhere else. That is why health care is a great place to work.

I think about why I have chosen to stay in health care. It is knowing that I can go anywhere and be anything I dream of being and still have pride and passion for my job and my role in caring for others. What other profession can make that statement. The greatest reward of working in the health care profession is that at the end of the day, the lives we have touched have also touched our own for the better.

Jennifer Andler, RN
Registered Nurse
Oconomowoc Memorial Hospital

My name is Janet Bergum. I have been a registered nurse for 22 years. There has not been one day in which I have regretted the decision to follow this path. It is for this reason I am completing this application for the "Pride Program."

My decision to go into nursing occurred after my brother spent several weeks in the hospital following a serious motorcycle accident. My family was thrown into the health care environment. It was a frightening world of foreign language, ominous equipment, and unfamiliar smells. My brother laid disfigured and not himself. There were many people coming and going in and out of his room. Who were these people and how did I know we could trust them to help my brother? How did I know he was getting the best care he could receive?

As weeks passed, I spend time observing these people. In any health care setting it becomes apparent who is there doing a job, and who is there because they really care and have a passion for the work they do. I watched, listened and learned. I soon got a sense for who those passionate people were and how important they were in getting my family through a very scary time. I wanted to be one of those people.

After earning an AND, I was so anxious to get out there and save some lives! I had a lot of growing pains to go through! The real world of health care is hard, is forever changing, and yes sometimes scary! The responsibility we hold every day is sometimes overwhelming. But through those growing pains, I have never wanted to be anywhere else. I feel beyond the baseline importance of being technically competent, the characteristic that makes you a very good health care provider is to ask yourself on every occasion, "How would it feel to be the person I am caring for and how would I want to be treated?" "What do I really need to do to help these people in this situation to best get them through?" These have been my tools throughout my practicing years.

I have spent the last 18 years of my career with kidney patients. I work with patients at every different phase of their disease process. It has been an honor for me to have spent so many years with this chronic population. Everyone has their own personal story. Being in health care is a privilege. We have the opportunity to truly help people at some of the most scary and vulnerable times in their lives. How we practice can truly make a difference in how people move forward with their health care needs.

I have been an employee of St. Marys for five and a half years. I am very proud of this place! I feel St. Marys genuinely cares about the needs of the people we treat. The dialysis experience is the best in can be for the renal population, both technically and in the expertise and emotional support our staff provides. This happens because of the support from the hospital and the desire to give top notch quality care. I sincerely am so proud of what we do here. Thank you St. Marys. It is a great place to be a nurse!

Janet Bergum, RN
Registered Nurse
St. Marys Hospital Medical Center, Madison

The Gift of Being a Nurse

Grateful as I was to have a job, I remember sitting at my desk of a low paying, dead-end job, asking myself, "Is this all there is?" Thoughts of who I was and where I was going began to swim in my head. I did know that I was deeply moved by the human spirit of everyday life; however, I needed something spectacular to spark my interest in humanity. I loved learning, so I felt an education would guide me in reaching my unknown goals. I was most happy when I gave of myself to others, especially to those in need and less fortunate than myself. I wanted to extend my wealth of love and compassion for human kind beyond what I provided my immediate family. Making a difference in people's lives was essential to my well being. Through my education, I found all these desires to be fulfilled in the career of nursing. I have learned to love strangers as I do members of my own family. I appreciate and am grateful for the bountiful gifts in my own life when taking care of the less fortunate. I've experienced every human emotion from anger to sadness, to ultimate elation in life processes with the people I now truly respect as my brothers and sisters. I have seen the power of love and courage and how it affects well being and survival of the human spirit. I have soothed the broken soul with the human touch and through the simple skill of listening. My passion for learning is always fulfilled. I am honored to share my knowledge through patient care and education, knowing I truly am making a difference in people's lives. Being a nurse is an honorable and respected career. I know what it is to be human and to be humane. To be a nurse is truly a gift.

Amy Brandenburg, RN
Registered Nurse
Beloit Memorial Hospital

The Legacy

Opening the old, brittle cardboard box from my grandma's attic revealed a wonderful surprise, my grandma's nursing uniforms. As I unpacked the yellowed material, pleasant memories washed over me, and I was transported back in time – back to the 1950's and 60's when my Grandmother Margaret wore the uniforms as she performed her nursing duties at the Jefferson County Home. I remembered the compassion and love she demonstrated to her patients.

As a little girl I was fascinated with the uniforms, and dreamed of the day when I would be old enough to wear one. There was no definite point in time that I decided to become a nurse, it was just something I wanted to do for as long as I can remember. I always enjoyed caring for others when they were sick. As my grandmother laid on her hospital bed, I had the privilege of caring for her. I am grateful for the woman who had been such an inspiration to me, the woman who planted a seed in the fertile soil of my young heart that was the beginning of the long journey of my dreams.

Now my days are filled with comforting those who grieve, lending a listening ear to those who need a shoulder to cry on, encouraging those who need hope, letting them know they are wonderfully made and loved by the God who created them. Seeing those uniforms reminded me of the dedication of my Grandma, and the legacy that is being carried on.

I am thankful I chose the path I did, the path my Grandmother Margaret walked before me.

Thanks, Grandma.

I would like to give credit to Mary Lawell for the support and encouragement she gave me while writing this article.

By Shirley M. Brown, RN and Mary Lawell

Shirley Brown, RN
Registered Nurse
Fort HealthCare, Fort Atkinson

I remember driving to work on a Saturday morning feeling a little down because I was going to miss my son's basketball game. When I arrived at work I was approached by one of my peers. "I have a patient for you," she said. She told me about a young woman, alone and afraid, who had just lost her three-month-old baby unexpectedly. It felt great that she thought I would be of some comfort to this patient.

I wanted to go to her right away. I spent most of the morning with her, providing emotional support, grief counseling; listening to her share the story of the baby she desperately loved. I have never felt more needed by someone. I was impressed with how my peers stepped up to cover my other patients offering to help in whatever way they could. Teamwork, trust, flexibility, and support are critical to nursing.

Nurses are experts in human interaction and family dynamics. We are there to assist with the unique needs of each patient/client and his or her family. Nurses celebrate their patients' achievements in the promotion and restoration of health and grieve with their patients and families in response to loss of life.

I am proud to work with a caring, professional staff that is committed to providing patient centered care. Special relationships develop between patients and staff who are committed to reaching common goals.

So I didn't get to see my son's game that day. Instead I was right where I was called to be, making a difference in someone's life, blessed to be given the chance

Tricia Jene, RN
Registered Nurse
Aurora Sinai Medical Center, Milwaukee

As nurses, we.....

Combine compassion with dignity and respect.

Advocate for our patients while preserving integrity and safety.

Improve and maintain health by providing individualized care in collaboration with others.

Enter lives and make a difference.

See life begin and end, wipe away tears and share in laughter.

Embrace tradition while forging our own path.

See you through every success and hold you through your failures.

Lead the way to health, through the evolution of nursing.

Samantha MacDonald, RN

Registered Nurse

Amery Regional Medical Center, Amery

My family fell to tragic times. My 33 year old husband was suddenly diagnosed with thyroid cancer in October of 2000 and had a thyroidectomy with numerous radiation treatments to follow, while I was hospitalized with high risk pregnancy complications. In December 2000, my family was rear ended in a car accident by an uninsured driver. In January 2001, we delivered our second son and thought our lives were turning around. However, I developed a streptococcus infected blood clot and had open heart surgery within 3 weeks.

I was an ER nurse for 13 years and went back to my job. The saga continued on 2/11/02. I was working in the trauma rooms in the emergency department and two firemen that work with my husband came in and held my hand. They informed me of my 40 year old brother's traumatic drowning only three miles away.

I gained a deep appreciation of the roles many individuals played in improving my overall health and well-being. My commitment to being a nurse is what has driven me and kept me going in the face of so many obstacles. All of these experiences have not only solidified my commitment, but have also taught me how essential it is that nurses and physicians be sensitive to emotional as well as physical needs.

The love and support our family, friends, physicians and nurses had shown my husband, children and I during this difficult time, helped me to solidify and reaffirm my passion for nursing.

I feel powerful, not in the same way as millionaires or politicians, but as a nurse who can provide comfort, touch a life and heighten my sensitivity to others.

My feeling about the future is that if I didn't remain in nursing, I would be wasting something – namely, my compassion, commitment, and potential to contribute to an utmost vital profession.

Sarajane Moucha, RN
Registered Nurse
Saint Clare's Hospital, Weston

My first job was at Columbia Hospital on a medical-surgical floor. I was very focused on my new role as an RN. I checked and rechecked my orders and followed them perfectly. I carefully watched lab work, reported to the doctors and looked up every medication. I was pleasant and kind to my patients, but I had my “work” to do – knowing their medical history, the results of all their diagnostic tests and their current vital signs.

Then I met Doris and Harvey. Doris was very ill with many health problems, very frail and the sweetest person you ever met as was her husband Harvey. They were married over 50 years and very devoted to each other. They liked to take long drives and trips together, but because of Doris’ health they were not able to do as much anymore. They loved to reminisce and tell me their stories. I started to plan my shift so I could work in a few extra minutes to sit with them and got to know them pretty well.

After Doris died, Harvey came to see me. He told me how much it meant to him and Doris that I would visit with them. He told me that Doris wanted me to have a music box from her collection which he had brought for me.

In the end it was Doris and Harvey who gave me so much more. They taught me how to really be a good nurse. I still see Harvey, a few times a year we meet for breakfast, we’ve been doing this for 10 years now and I still listen to his stories.

Amy Mueller, RN
Registered Nurse
Orthopaedic Hospital of Wisconsin

Nursing, It's Who I Am

How do you put into words something in your heart that you were called to do? Ever since I was a child growing up all I ever wanted to be was a nurse and help other people. Whenever anyone would ask what I wanted to be when I grew up, without hesitation the reply was, "I want to be a nurse."

Thirty one years ago that dream became a reality. I can still recall my first night on the job, scared to death yet confident I could make a difference in someone's life.

Over those 31 years I have worked in many different areas of the hospital setting. They have all been rewarding each in their own way. From holding the hand of an elderly patient as they left this world, to watching the entrance of a new born as they entered. Giving hope and comfort to those who were receiving their first or last chemotherapy and survived the odds. Comforting the ones left behind, whose loved one we so desperately tried to save after a severe accident.

Yes, there have been good times and bad times, happy times and sad times, yet I would not have traded them for any other career. It has taught me to care, share and hold onto those we love.

As I continue my life as a nurse, I can only hope I make a difference to my patients, because I know they have made a difference in my life.

If you ask would I do it all over again, without hesitation the answer is yes.

Carol Philipps, RN
Surgery Nurse
Langlade Memorial Hospital, Antigo

My Inspiration

The Kindergarten teacher asked the class, “What do you want to be when you grow up?” Without hesitation my answer was, “why a nurse of course.” I didn’t give it another thought, but my mother, my inspiration had. With her prayer and guidance she instilled a desire to learn and to always do my best.

I turned 13 and my inspiration was hospitalized. She had found a lump and was diagnosed with breast cancer. Tables switched on my mother and me; you see I had to start being the caregiver. The hardest lessons I learned were thorough her; the pain associated with radiation treatments, the nausea and vomiting that chemotherapy brings. I was that shoulder to cry on when she looked at her disfigurement or when her hair started falling out. I grew up fast that year with lessons on empathy and compassion. Lessons that molded me into the nurse I am today.

My mother improved and I could go back to being a self-centered teenager where only friends and school mattered. Through it all I continued to have my mother’s prayers, guidance, and encouragement. I was accepted at UW-Oshkosh where I continued my goal in nursing.

College brought lots of new experiences, but that first semester I got an eye opener. My inspiration had a set back, she learned that the cancer had spread to the liver. Once again I was the caregiver. I hadn’t yet had any clinical experience, but I had learned the meaning of dying with dignity. I tried my hardest to abide by my mother’s wishes. Kept her clean, comfortable, and allowed her to do as much as possible. She ended up dying on my watch. Hopefully she knew how much I loved her and what an inspiration she was and still is.

Jamie Phillips, RN
Ambulatory Nurse
St. Joseph Regional Medical Center, Milwaukee

A nurse, since third grade that is all I ever wanted to be. I have to be honest and say my vision, as a nine year old was to be a singing nun, who happens to be a nurse. Never the less a nurse is what I wanted to be. But my main purpose was to help people and make a difference. Of course my vision has evolved through the years. Being married and a mother of four, it is obvious I am not a nun. But I am a nurse and never regretted my decision. And I know whatever frustrations and challenges come my way, I can make a difference.

Nursing is more to me than an occupation; it is a vocation, a calling. There have been many changes in my 30 years of nursing. But with these changes there have been choices and opportunities. I have had opportunities to grow, learn, and teach and to be involved in the changing field of nursing. My primary choice has been direct patient care. My happiest moments are in holding a patient's hand, helping a family through crises, and giving hands on care. Also I have the privilege to be involved in the decision-making and policy creating committees that define and mold our practice. To help train new nurses and mentor peers to achieve a high quality of care. To be involved in volunteer and community projects. I can take it a step further and give part of myself in everything I do. I do make a difference.

I doesn't matter what role in nursing we pursue. We cannot be afraid to change and make a change. We are a force that gets involved and we make a difference.

Kathleen G. Roethle, BSN, CEN
Registered Nurse
Aurora Medical Center of Washington County, Harford

If you've ever been there...weak and afraid, vulnerable, in unrelenting pain, despairing over a fatal diagnosis, with expectations disappointed, having to rely on others to take care of your basic needs, control over your life at the mercy of someone else. Then you know, you know the difference a caring, compassionate health care worker can make. Having personally experienced the above circumstances, I realize first-hand why it's so important for me to be...

A caregiver who says to you, with genuine empathy, "I know you're in pain, and *I'm* not going to rest until *you* are able to rest."

A caregiver who sits by the side of your bed, at eye level, communicating, not only with my voice, but with my whole person, that I care, I have time for you, your needs are important.

A caregiver who weeps quietly alongside you, when you've suffered a loss so great, the heartache in your chest makes you feel as though it's too painful to even breathe.

A caregiver who is delighted and rejoices with you in the realization of a dream come true... the birth of a new baby, healing accomplished, independence regained.

A caregiver you can hug good-bye, who with a sincere smile requests you come back and visit, only next time, you needn't be granted permission from your doctor to come in and say "hello."

I love being a health care provider at St. Nicholas Hospital, where our vision and value statement encourages me personally, to daily make people's needs and concerns my own. To compassionately touch hearts, and renew hope that life matters, where our shared mission of "being dedicated to suffering humanity for His sake" is impacting the world, changing it for the better, one person at a time.

Cori Salchert, RN
Registered Nurse
St. Nicholas Hospital, Sheboygan

When I was 26 days old I was very sick. The doctors at Marshfield Hospital said I had Hirschsprung's disease. I needed surgery in order to live. I ended up with only three inches of my large intestine and a colostomy for 1.5 years. I had died three times during the procedure, and the doctors didn't give my parents much hope.

When I was older my mom would tell me stories about how sick I was and how I had to stay at the hospital for many months. She would always tell me how caring and empathetic the nurses were, how they would care for me just like I was their own. My mom also told me how they would let her help with my cares and when she thought something was wrong with me, the nurses would listen to her concerns and make sure the doctors knew and would come in. They were not only my advocate but my parents' advocates. My mom said the nurses always had a smile and talked to her like she was one of them. My mom had so many wonderful stories about the nurses. She also had some stories about the doctors, the main one was that the doctors that took my case worked very hard to keep me alive. As I got better the doctors would come into the room and would smile and tell my mom how happy they were to see how well I was doing.

When I got older I kept thinking about how the doctors and especially the nurses made my mom feel and the care they gave both of us. I knew that was what I wanted to do, to be a part of people's lives, to help them through difficult times and to make their stay a little nicer. Every time I walk into a room I remember the stories my mom told me and I always have a smile on my face.

Sarah L. Schaefer, RN
Med/Surg
Lakeview Medical Center, Rice Lake

Recently, I had to give an introductory speech about myself to members of my community. I spoke, of course, about my family, how long I had lived in the community, and what I had to offer my community. I also felt compelled to state with pride that I considered myself very fortunate to have a job that I truly love. I then told them I was an RN and worked in the ICU at Elmbrook Hospital. I realized that if I was going to describe myself to people I had to include that fact.

That got me wondering, given the broader opportunities that exist today for women compared to when I was leaving high school, what would I chose to do if I were a 2006 high school graduate? As much as I think about other professions, I know deep in my heart that I would still chose to become an RN. The reason being, my profession allows me to do what I love which is combining knowledge with respect and caring for my fellow human beings.

There were two cases recently that required the use of assessment and verbal skills, knowledge of drugs, anatomy and physiology, team work and the ability to rely on the “gut feeling” that nurses have about their patients. All these came together and resulted in the survival of these two patients. When I spoke with my co-workers we agreed we could take pride in what we accomplished and that we made a difference in the lives of these two people.

It has been 28 years since I graduated from nursing school. My daughter graduates from high school this year and she will be pursuing a career in nursing. I hope she will love her chosen profession as I do. I believe she will.

Julie Scheibe, RN III
Registered Nurse
Elmbrook Memorial Hospital, Brookfield

Being a NURSE . . .

is a privilege and honor that I have been granted. I am proud to say I am a nurse. If I had to do it over again, would I choose nursing as a career? Absolutely YES! Nursing is not just a job; it is a way of life for me. Nursing is a part of my life that I will always respect and cherish. I cannot imagine going to work not liking the job I am doing. If you love what you do, it's not really work, it's satisfaction.

Nursing is about people and being a nurse gives me great satisfaction knowing I am helping someone in their time of need. Nurses can and do make a difference. As nurses we learn about disease and how that disease affects the patient and the patient's life and family. Nursing is not only caring for patients but nursing care encompasses the families of patients. Nursing is about caring, compassion, empathy, honesty, joy, love, and respect. Nursing is a very difficult job at times but also very rewarding. The personal rewards definitely outnumber the difficulties.

I have received great personal satisfaction from being a nurse. Nursing has given me more than I could possibly ever give back to mankind. My decision to be a nurse was reaffirmed many times this past year of 2005. My family and I were faced with several personal tragedies. These personal difficulties have repeatedly given me the most precious gift of knowing what matters most in life. As a nurse I can empathize with patients going through similar experiences. Patients appreciate hearing they are not the only ones to deal with a particular tragedy. A kindred spirit is developed which helps give them comfort in their time of need.

Lynn Spiegel, RN
Registered Nurse, Medical-Surgical Unit
Shawano Medical Center

“One Last Camping Trip”

The tent was pitched among the trees. Inside were two young brothers. There was a flashlight, campfire and camp food complete with s'mores.

A typical camping trip? Yes, because it had all the trappings of a typical camping trip...but no, because this camping adventure happened inside a Gundersen Lutheran hospital room.

We had a patient, about 40 years old, who was losing her battle with breast cancer. She had two sons about eight or nine years old. We learned they loved to go camping together before their mom got sick.

We wanted to give the boys some sense of normalcy in their young lives. We didn't want their memories of their mom to be just a sad, scary time in the hospital. The boys were coming to visit on a Friday night, so we decided to turn it into a special weekend camping trip.

As a hospital, we're not exactly equipped for camping so we had to get creative. We had a tent. We borrowed potted plants and trees from the solarium, rounded up a flashlight and even crafted an artificial campfire. We arranged for a family meal to be served up camp-style and we made s'mores...in the microwave.

The patient was very appreciative of this special time they all had together. They got to spend the night, sleeping in the tent.

With cancer, life becomes so interrupted. We were glad to give them at least a semblance of a normal family life...even if it was for just a weekend. We see patients as so much more than their medical conditions. We know it's important to treat the entire family. And with that camping trip, we did just that.

And that's why I'm a nurse, helping patients and families, on their journeys.

Cindy Vieth, RN
Care Manager
Gundersen Lutheran Health System, La Crosse

Nursing: Compassion And Dedication

My profession is not only my livelihood, but it is also my lifestyle.

I grew up in the tumultuous '60s and had no idea what I was to do in life. I was then called to military service during the Vietnam Conflict. Being a member of the Army Medical Corp, helping save precious lives, gave me satisfaction I never experienced before. So, after "Uncle Sam," I pursued my training, became an LPN and then later earned my RN degree.

During RN training, I married Rita, and became very close to her parents. Joseph was suffering from Alzheimer's disease and his loving wife could no longer manage his care at home. He was placed in a long-term care facility. I became involved as a patient advocate, giving support to his wife Mary, in helping her become an active participant in Joseph's care. Making end-of-life decisions for Joseph was an emotional experience for Mary. I was able to show her compassion and respect for her feelings in those difficult times.

Recently, a rare form of cancer threatened my wife's life. Through this trying time, I supported her physically and emotionally, and helped her understand the purpose and need for her treatments. I encouraged her through every positive step achieved.

I support my Nursing profession in the community as well, by writing informative articles in a faith-based newsletter promoting good health awareness.

For 38 years, Nursing has been my calling and my lifestyle. As a member of a team of highly trained professionals, it is a privilege to give of myself daily to patients who place their trust and lives in my hands. Given the honor of such trust, I cannot do less than provide compassionate and dedicated service.

William Westphal, RN
Registered Nurse
Flambeau Hospital, Park Falls

Like most people who graduate with a nursing degree, I dreamed about finding the “perfect job.” For me, this job would be challenging, rewarding and would bring me a sense of accomplishment and joy. I knew I wanted to help people, but I was not quite sure what that job would look like or what the title would be. After experiencing multiple roles in the nursing field, I was able to find this “perfect” job about 2 ½ years ago. I joined a team of professionals who work at UW Cancer Center, Aspirus Wausau Hospital.

I am a radiation oncology nurse. At the time I did not know what an impact this job would have on my life. I work with patients and families that are dealing with a cancer diagnosis. These courageous individuals help me understand how important attitude is in everyday life. They have the ability to put things into perspective and help others realize what matters most. I know that when I go to work, it will not be just another day. It will be an exceptional day. I know this because I choose to believe it. I work alongside amazing people all with the same goal, which is help our patients make each day as enjoyable as possible. My co-workers enjoy being here. I can tell this by the conversation I hear and the interactions I observe.

As a radiation oncology nurse, I have the pleasure of seeing my patients on a daily basis as they come in for their treatment. I get to share a moment of time hoping to make their day a little better. We get to laugh and sometimes cry together. We experience real life with true emotion. For me, taking this journey with a patient and their family is a privilege and responsibility that I embrace. If I can lift someone’s spirit with a hug, smile or just lending an ear, then I can understand part of my purpose in being here. What my patients don’t know is how much they lift me. My job is to inspire others, but my patients and coworkers inspire me to become a better person. I realize that it is nice to be important, but it is more important to be nice! What I give to others, I get back tenfold. I know that kindness is an essential ingredient of success. We truly benefit when we are kind to others. We are taught to find something we love, and figure out a way to earn a living doing it. I was able to do just that. This type of nursing may not be for everyone, but I know it is for me. If home is where the heart is, then I know that I am home.

I am proud to say I am a nurse, because of the exceptional people I work with and the exceptional work that is being done here. I am proud to say that I am a nurse at UW Cancer Center Aspirus Wausau Hospital.

Lynn Yaeger, RN
Radiation Oncology Nurse
Aspirus Wausau Hospital, UW Cancer Center

I love working in the health care field. I guess the comfort of the hospital, nurses and doctors came to me as a child. I was born with Tetralogy of Fallot. I was diagnosed just five days after birth. I had three heart surgeries by the time I was 13 years old. During those first 13 years, I had various hospital stays, tests, and many doctor visits. I came to know all my cardiac doctors as part of my family. My cardiac doctor at Children's Hospital was Dr. William Gallon. I think I was his favorite patient, or at least he treated me like it. I grew up learning how giving and caring everyone was. When I was five years old and had to say goodbye to my parents at night, and left alone in a strange town with strange people, in a new hospital, it was very scary. The love and compassion by the staff got a frightened child through it all.

When I grew up and was in high school and had to start thinking about a career, I thought maybe a cardiac nurse would be a fit. I was 17 when I graduated from High School. Young and not sure if I was ready for the hospital environment (this time not as a patient). I learned medical terms, how to transport a patient the right way, and many more things. I started taking nursing classes, then at 17 decided I wasn't ready yet, so I dropped out. Which I later in life regretted doing.

In 1979 I was fortunate to get hired at what is now All Saints Healthcare. I started out in pharmacy, and have been in various positions throughout the hospital during my 27 years so far. Growing and learning with each new experience. I love the health care field, and feel I can now give back the love and compassion to our patients that I received throughout my many years as a patient. It's been and continues to be a very rewarding field to grow and work in.

Jan Leischow
Rehabilitation Technician II
All Saints Healthcare, Racine

Employee Pride

So Much Care...So Close
is the statement Vernon Memorial Healthcare boasts.

Cutting edge care
with professional staff that is there
To fix your aches and pains,
or help pick out your baby names.

I always wanted to be a nurse
but decided to marry and have a family first.
Going back to school was quite a struggle...
kids, work, farming, many different jobs to juggle.

My father died of cancer near the end of all this
It made me work even harder, and him I still miss.

I am proud to say I am a nurse here at VMH
I specialize in dialysis care and also like to teach.

We help our patients learn all they can about their illness
More than nursing, more like family – I will give no less!

The health care field is “Where it’s at!” The variety is endless
Therapy, lab, x-ray, nursing...just find what fits you best!

This place is like my second home,
something comforting to me
Can’t think of another place to work
where I would rather be!

Janet Stalsberg, RN
Renal Dialysis Care Manager
Vernon Memorial Healthcare, Viroqua

What Respiratory Therapy is and What it Means to Me

As a child, I can remember my grandmother battling with her COPD and with everyday activities. I would watch her use her inhalers and eventually nebulizers. I did all I could do to help her and I vowed to her and to myself that I would someday work in a hospital. Unfortunately, my grandmother died at a very young age of 59 but she is still my inspiration today.

As a respiratory therapist, I have grown as a professional and as a person. My job is to care for those who have or may develop breathing difficulties in the hospital setting. As an RT in a smaller institution, these duties vary from helping a newborn take his/her first breath to holding the hands of someone who is ending their journey here on earth. I truly love what I do and I enjoy many of the new friendships I gain along the way.

I believe that my purpose here on earth is to take care of people. I tend to become close with my patients and their families, which is also one of the hardest parts of my job. I must say, there is no greater feeling than when you walk into a room and the patient's face lights up when they see you. A familiar face and a smile can help even the sickest of patients.

In conclusion, I am very proud to be a respiratory therapist and to work for the Sauk Prairie Memorial Hospital. I truly believe in our mission-

Extraordinary healthcare from the heart – one person at a time

Thank you for this opportunity.

Beth Ann Zick
Registered Respiratory Therapist
Sauk Prairie Memorial Hospital, Prairie du Sac

You Have to Have Heart

To be a good health care worker you need to feel love in your heart for the person that is depending on you for all their needs to be met. You need to have compassion and show respect at all times. If you are able to have these qualities then you will leave your job each day and feel rewarded for the services you've performed.

Our smallest challenge may be the biggest challenge they've had, but with compassion, kindness and encouragement, those challenges may become much smaller. Pleasant words of praise will make their load so much lighter.

Entering a residents room with a smile on your face and a song in your heart will make your day go easier and certainly will encourage the person you're caring for to feel better.

I've always wanted to work in health care and have done so for nearly 32 years. I have many sad memories of times I've sat and held their hand or stroked their hair and read verses from the Bible during their final moments. On a happier note I have wonderful memories of all the fun times, sharing moments of their lives when things were sunny and bright. I've kept a scrap book to remind me of all the treasures of caring. I've worked in long-term care all of my career and wouldn't change it for anything.

Everyone is on this earth for a reason and I believe mine is to care for people in need. I plan on doing so as long as I can and give back to others the love and respect my parents instilled in me.

Thanks mom and dad. (They are both gone and I miss them very much.)

LaReta Dischler, CNA
Restorative Aide
Reedsburg Area Medical Center, Inc.
Reedsburg Area Senior Life Center

UWHC Health Care P.R.I.D.E.

(People - Respect - Initiative - Dedication - Everyday)

Pride in the dictionary is defined as “A sense of one's own proper dignity or value; self-respect. Pleasure or satisfaction taken in an achievement, possession, or association.” After reading the definition, I am assured that I truly do take pride in working for University of Wisconsin Hospital and Clinics. Although my role within the organization is not directly related with patient care, I feel compelled to share my experience and opinion.

A lifelong family friend was a transplant recipient at UW Hospital. Throughout his journey, our friend was comforted by extraordinary and compassionate health care from doctors, coordinators and staff members. The care given to the patient, and to the patient's family, was well respected. I took this to heart.

When offered an opportunity to join the transplant (administrative) team, I was elated based upon UWHC's public reputation and my personal perception. I've always been fascinated by organ transplant and am amazed by transplantation development and success, and knowing that the UW is ranked at the top, makes it even more exciting.

The UW provides outstanding patient care, as well as outstanding employee care, which I find quite impressive. After being in a health care environment on a daily basis, I have a much better understanding of the plethora of people it takes to make a successful health care facility, realizing that transplant is only one small part of this organization.

Motivation is knowing I have my family, health, and a job I sincerely enjoy, with a friendly and devoted atmosphere. I am dedicated to do the best that I can because I am a part of a group that works together to strive for excellence. My definition of pride is more concise than the text book version; to me pride is UWHC.

Carrie Sparks
Senior Administrative Secretary
University of Wisconsin Hospital & Clinics, Madison



WISCONSIN HOSPITAL
ASSOCIATION

A Valued Voice

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