

2007 Wisconsin Health Care Employee Pride Program



The 2007 Wisconsin Health Care Employee Pride Program

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Where Have They Gone?

A disturbing thought nagged at the corners of my mind.
My stomach was in knots.
I used to dream of people.
People I admired, looked up to, wanted to be like.
Icons.
But dreams can empty.
There was no one I wanted to be like.
No one to admire.
My past heroes had made news headlines dripping with wretched negativity.
They gave up their souls for money, fame, drugs, under the table deals, political gain. The world looked dark.
Depressing.
I focused my concentration.
My brain began to search.
I thought of my life.
The lives of many.
I did not succumb to a dream.
I faced reality.

Clearly heroes had not passed away, only hidden.
You have to look for them.
Sometimes they are right under your nose.
People who hold out their hands to embrace the needs of others.
Numerous caregivers who risk their own health and injury,
to help fulfill the need of the less fortunate.
The ones who are not asking for recognition, fortune or fame.
They ask only for the opportunity to serve.
These are the ones who slip into their homes at night with no Paparazzi at their heels.
The ones who have troubled dreams.
They wonder if they gave their best that day. If they helped improve lives of strangers.
The ones who continue to remember people who have soon forgotten them.
There is no need to memorize their names.
These are unselfish people.
People who continue to give...mostly of themselves.
People I admire, I look up to, I strive to be like.
People who do not seek out the words, "Thank you."
People who quietly embrace the title, Caregiver.
These people are the Aspirus
Unsung Heroes.

Linda Larson
Anesthesia Monitor Technician
Aspirus Wausau Hospital, Wausau

Helping Others

I have the privilege of working as an athletic trainer with one of the most under served populations in the sports medicine world: the high school athlete.

I am, in many times, the first person athletes encounter in the health care community. I get to evaluate and treat their injuries, answer their questions, calm their concerns, and educate them on how to prevent injuries from happening again. I can also help athletes and their parents decide if they need to seek additional medical care. Being the first person to see the patient and beginning treatment within 30 seconds of an incident is fascinating to me.

I knew nothing about the athletic training profession when I went to college. My love of competition and interest in health care, my appreciation of the lifetime values that sports teach, and love and curiosity about how the body works and moves is probably what drove my decision to pursue the athletic training profession.

The athletic population I work with doesn't pay me any money. They pay me with a smile, a thank you, or a candy bar they used their lunch money to buy just for me. People ask me why I do a job with such odd hours. The "why" is the box of thank you cards I keep from my athletes, acknowledging the great job I've done for them not only as their athletic trainer but as their friend, confidant, and mentor who has helped them become an adult. The "why" is when a parent tells me, "Thank you for all you do for my child."

Susan Long
Athletic Trainer
Fort Healthcare, Fort Atkinson

A Career at Aurora Health Care 2007

At this time in 2002 and 2003, I submitted essays to the WE CARE: Wisconsin Health Care Employee Pride Program, and was chosen to represent Aurora Health care both years at the recognition receptions. I was employed approximately six months and 1½ years, respectively.

To summarize my past essays, my motivation for coming to work at Aurora was to have the opportunity to grow as an individual, and continue to develop and improve practices everyday to provide the best possible care to the community. I enjoyed the work I did because not only was I providing services to the patient, but also it was made known to me that I was respected and valued as a person and an asset to Aurora Health Care. I felt that when you are made to feel important and appreciated, you are more likely to respond positively and take pride in your work. I still believe that more than ever today.

I can think of two major accomplishments within this past year alone:

- 1) The FDA recently approved an investigational medication that I had conducted several studies on about 3 years ago. I see the TV commercials for this medication all the time now!
- 2) In 2003, Aurora was chosen as a site to conduct the largest HIV/AIDS clinical trial in the world, which is sponsored by the National Institute of Health (NIH). Two Aurora physicians and I were given the opportunity to participate as investigators on this multi-national study. In November 2006, The New England Journal of Medicine published the results (so far) of this study, which is still running, and our names were listed, along with hundreds of others, as investigators of this important trial.

I have now been working in the Clinical Research Department for approximately 5½ years, and have felt each year how much Aurora has helped me grow as an individual and a professional. I never thought how much helping our local community could impact the entire world, and it is one of the best feelings!!!

Stacie R. Snap, CCRC
Clinical Research Coordinator
Aurora Sinai Medical Center, Milwaukee

Employee Pride - Completing the Circle

For over thirty years, I took care of young families as an obstetrics nurse. I have always felt lucky to be in such a happy place; working with parents so thankful for my help. Living in a small town, I would often run into those parents—weeks, years, and eventually, decades later. They would come up to me, point to their baby or introduce me to their grown child, and say, “she was there and helped us when you were born.” The rewards of my job were many and I couldn’t dream of anything else I would rather do.

In 1989, my focus and direction suddenly changed. At the young age of 39, I was diagnosed with colon cancer. With surgery scheduled for the day after my diagnosis, I had little time to prepare myself. I found myself pouring through my old nursing books, reading anything I could find to better understand what I was about to go through. This was before computers in every home, before Google and reliable health websites. It was a scary experience. I thought then if I could do something to assist women in any way, to help them make informed healthcare choices and provide support and education, then that was what I wanted to do!

In 1998 I finally had the opportunity to fulfill this dream. A new source of funding for the hospital and area nonprofit organizations was developed. I took a chance, applied for a grant and was awarded one. The program “Women’s Circle of Care” was born. The grant allowed me to furnish a new women’s health resource center in the hospital, complete with educational materials, a women’s healthline and programming for women in the region. My husband and I created the library, cataloged the books and designed the marketing for the first women’s heart event. I was off and running. The response to the first community event was overwhelming, and the hospital’s education center was packed. Fortunately, the foundation liked the first year’s results and continued to fund the program for 3 more grant cycles.

Seven years and some 40 programs later, we have grown to a fully staffed department of marketing and education professionals. A position in the community education department has allowed me to assist in public relations, marketing, and education and to collaborate on many community projects with numerous devoted and talented people. We are able to do amazing things!

Women’s Circle of Care has come full circle for me. I hope that in some small way I have answered a question, referred someone to a book, inspired or encouraged someone to make a lifestyle change or seek care for a problem. The cover of our first Women’s Circle of Care brochure rang true for me in those early years and continues to inspire me today: “Resolve to be tender with the young, compassionate with the aged, sympathetic with the striving and tolerant with the weak...because sometime in your life you will have been all of these.”

Jan Pejsa RNC
Community Education Specialist
Women's Circle of Care Coordinator
Red Cedar Medical Center

Employee Pride

One of my biggest fears, when my kids were little, was encountering a medical emergency and not knowing what to do. An elderly man crumples to the floor in the grocery store. Instinctively you want to help, but how? A young woman carrying a lifeless child runs into your office crying for help, are you helpless? Is dialing 911 enough? I've never been a bystander. I like to get in there and help but I want to do it right.

One day I saw an ad in the local newspaper wanting volunteers to participate in First Responder training. I was surprised that the need was so great. I live in the middle of three volunteer squad service areas, so naturally, I joined all three. I learned a lot and formed friendships with people who experienced life and death decisions side by side with me. My desire to do more and to know more motivated me and got me through EMT training and volunteer service with our local rescue squad. It was only natural that my next step was to work as an Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) in the emergency room. I literally learn something new every day. My experience is typical of many of my co-workers. We entered into emergency medical service as volunteers and are fortunate enough to be able to turn that into a career. We're entrusted with caring for people from our community, always with compassion, always with respect.

What amazes me are the nurses and doctors who have been practicing emergency medicine all their lives. At the end of a work shift, they make it a point to say thank you. I always feel appreciated.

I may be a small fish in a big pond, but I know that I make a difference in peoples lives. I am an important link in the chain of survival.

Ann Anderson, EMT
Emergency Medical Technician – Emergency Department
Vernon Memorial Healthcare, Viroqua

When I close my eyes, I can still see the white, crisp uniform that my mother wore each day. I can smell the bleach and see the shiny pins upon her lapel and nursing cap. I recall funny stories she would tell about her patients. I remember the tears she shed for the dying patients. As a child, I remember telling people that I was going to be a nurse when I grew up. I wanted to be just like her. . .

Time passed, as an adult I made different choices that led me down another path. I still longed to work in the medical field, and was unable to fulfill that dream until quite late in my life. I had the opportunity to go to tech school and become a C.N.A. Shortly thereafter, I knew I had finally found a career that I loved. I discovered I was able to fulfill the strong need to help others.

I was seeking employment at the hospital and was hired as a Health Unit Clerk and C.N.A. I questioned if this was the position I was searching for. Over time I have learned that my clerical skills and people skills have made my job a joy to be in. I have been blessed to work with a wonderful group of nurses, whom I laugh and cry with. Each day offers something new to be learned. I have discovered that in all areas of the healthcare field, we can offer care, compassion, love, and hope to all who are in need.

My dream of becoming a nurse still looms in the distance, but I feel confident that I have carried on the most important qualities that made my mom such a wonderful nurse and mother.

Elaine Langdon, C.N.A.
Health Unit Clerk
St. Mary's Hospital Medical Center, Green Bay

I believe it was my calling to go into the field of patient care. I love helping people. I want to be the one they can lean on, to listen to their fears and concerns – letting them know “it’s okay to feel this way.” You need to love, give and listen to truly appreciate this job. When I get a laugh out of a Hospice patient . . . that is another moment of living. To wash a woman’s hair and have her say “I feel pretty” – for that moment, she is not feeling ill. The smiles returned or the hug I receive when they leave to go home tells me that I have made a difference in their life, but they have also made a difference in mine. I took care of a patient that suffered multiple strokes during her stay. She was a gentle woman who loved life and her family. I became very close to her and her family, sharing tears and hugs. After her passing, I received a call from her daughter who wanted to stop by with a little something from her and her family. It was the most beautiful picture – the sun rising over a hill through the morning mist and purple lupine flowers in a field. In the top left corner they had it personalized and it read this:

Dear Brenda –

As welcome as the sunshine and warm breeze.
Our mother embraced your charm and quick wit.
May you know that your kindness and loving care
are felt by many other than just the receiver.
May you always find the strength and grace,
to do the wonderful caring work that you do.

Thank you –

If there is ever a day of doubt or question on why I do what I do, I read this... and I know.

Brenda Hentsch
Patient Care Tech
Black River Memorial Hospital

In 1976 I began my career as a Radiation Therapist. What drew me to this field was the experience of witnessing my mother being treated for breast cancer when I was in my teens. Each person my mother encountered was kind, patient and loving. This example made a lasting impression on me and was how I wanted to live my life and do my work.

Throughout my career I have treated approximately 10,000 patients with cancer. I can only hope and pray that I have given them as much as they have given me. From them I have learned love, patience, kindness, compassion, extreme appreciation, laughter, anger, forgiveness, mercy, strength, weakness, perseverance, pain, suffering, hope, how to live, and how to die. I have witnessed miracles and the wonders of advanced technology.

My ultimate test as a cancer care provider was when my husband was diagnosed and treated for cancer. Not only did I go through this as a spouse, but also as a clinician. Through this experience I learned how to be a better wife and hopefully a better Radiation Therapist for my patients.

My career has been very challenging, but also very rewarding and I love my patients with all my heart.

Julie Girard, R.T.T.
Radiation Therapist
Oconomowoc Memorial Hospital, Oconomowoc

Health care is, and always has been, a part of my life. From birth when I had orthopedic issues, to spending months at a time in the hospital being fit with braces or having surgery, to my first profession in occupational therapy, to finally finding my niche as a social worker, health care has been at the forefront of my life. I want to see others have the opportunity to become active members of their communities, despite health challenges they may face.

I work at Boscobel Area Health Care as the medical social worker and program director of our acute care mental health unit. That means I can help people stay at home rather than go to a nursing home. WOW! I can help people normalize a new lifestyle after a stroke or other medical illness. WOW! I can educate families about living a normal life with a mental illness! WOW! These are awesome things that have a lasting impact on the lives of others.

I recall one of the first people I worked with at Boscobel who had just had an amputation. I was able to help and support this person get the type of care and services she needed to continue her recovery and be successful. Months later I saw her in the community. She explained to me what an inspiration I was to her and how it gave her the support, courage and motivation she needed to move forward and accept the new changes and challenges she would be facing throughout her life. The physical therapy and home care I helped arrange gave her the resources she needed to accomplish her goal.

I also recall a friend of mine being very ill with a serious and persistent mental illness. Her family was devastated to learn she had bipolar disorder. Along with staff at the psych unit, we helped her and her family learn about and manage the illness. After a period of recovery, she is now working part time and successfully raising her family. What a blessing to see the support and guidance her family provides for my friend. I had a small part of that success.

I remember the nurses and doctors who cared for me as a child. I wondered how they could work day after day with people who struggled on a daily basis to make measurable progress. Now I know. It is the passion! Seeing someone return to being an active, vital part of their community and seeing someone successfully live with a chronic mental illness are tremendous rewards . . . like gas filling my internal gas tank to keep me inspired.

I love working in health care. Being a part of the team that helps others in crisis is what I have dreamed about my entire life. I am comfortable in a hospital setting in part because I spent a great deal of time in them as a child. I am a social worker. A proud social worker! I love to see the people I help at the grocery store, a restaurant, the post office or other places, as it means they are active and involved in the community. Maybe, just maybe, I had a small part of that success. WOW!

Cheryl Ketelhut, MSW
Program Director, Acute Care Mental Health Services
Medical Social Worker
Boscobel Area Health Care

Why I became a Speech Pathologist

When I was younger, I was fascinated with reading about individuals who had to overcome great odds. Specifically I remember reading about Helen Keller, the blind and deaf girl, who achieved great things. I put myself in the shoes of the teachers. Years later it would occur to me why I was so fascinated. It was what I was meant to do. Both of my parents are teachers and wished for all of their children to follow in their footsteps. Though none became school teachers, I like to think that being a speech therapist is similar to teaching in that you are required to teach (skills lost), listen (to determine communication breakdowns), counsel (when questions and concerns arise), and educate (staff, family and individual) in an effective and understandable way.

I also have a special place in my heart for the older population, again a trait instilled by my parents. As a therapist at St. Mary's Care Center, the gains may seem generally small, but no less important than a child who is finally able to say his sounds correctly. I have found that effective communication with this population can be achieved with a smile, an eye gaze or a touch of a hand when verbalizing is not possible. As a speech therapist I am fortunate to *give* of the knowledge I learned in school to bring about change, but just as importantly I also *receive* knowledge from a generation that has experienced much more than I have. That makes my job all the more special.

Mary Fisher
Speech Pathologist
St. Mary's Care Center, Madison

Wisconsin Health Care Employee Pride Program

Why did I choose to go into health care? I believe it was a calling. As a child, I knew I wanted to be a nurse or a teacher. The technical challenge of nursing appealed to my intellect while the satisfaction of helping others appealed to the rest of my being. During my years of study to prepare for a career in nursing, I realized my desire to teach would be readily incorporated into the work I would be doing. It was exciting to think of doing both.

Even though I was thrilled to be learning about the human body and how to care for people, my passion has always been babies. During my work as a nursing assistant and during clinical rotations, I discovered the nursing I liked best was post-surgical and obstetrical (no surprise there!). My first job after graduation was working on a post-surgical floor. I couldn't have been happier! I worked in a Catholic hospital, where health care delivery would not conflict with my personal beliefs and the spiritual aspects of patient's care could readily be addressed.

Within a year, I was able to transfer to the obstetrical floor, working with newborns in the nursery, mothers on post-partum, and finally working with families in Labor and Delivery. My job allowed me to incorporate all the things I loved to do. Every day I was privileged to work with babies; newborns in the nursery some days, babies waiting to be born on other days. Patient teaching was a part of almost every interaction. When I worked with mothers who had a cesarean birth, my post surgical skills were utilized. It was so rewarding to help families at this special time in their life!

Marriage and family influenced my move to St. Vincent Hospital in Green Bay. Now my role is to educate expectant mothers about their diabetes and to monitor their unborn baby's growth. One evening a week I teach childbirth class to first-time parents. Not only have I been able to continue working with unborn babies, I also teach their parents. Even after more than twenty years as a nurse, I am still awed by the miracle of life.

Over the years, I have come to realize how much health care is enhanced by how it is delivered. At St. Vincent, under the guidance of our founders, we are asked to conduct ourselves professionally and personally in accordance with the core values of the institution: care, joy, quality and respect. The expectation is that the highest quality care will be joyfully delivered with the utmost respect for the individual. As a Catholic Christian, I can go to work and joyfully perform the tasks required. My work, and that of my peers, is enhanced by being in an environment where we are expected to treat the person in front of us and those alongside of us with dignity and respect. Here at St. Vincent, we serve anyone who comes to our door. There is tremendous fulfillment and personal satisfaction in being able to do what I believe I have been called to do. I am extremely grateful to work in maternal child health and proud to be employed by an organization that puts people first.

Mary H. Georgia, RN
Women's Health Educator
St. Vincent Hospital, Green Bay

Wisconsin Health Care Employee Pride Program 2007

My mother took me to a doctor when I was eleven and they needed to do a blood test. I had never had a blood test, and though I don't remember being scared, I did suffer from reverse peristalsis (I threw up) and passed out. The lab person unsympathetically took me to another room, informed me I made a mess, and that she would try again. I remember telling my mom, "When I grow up I'm going to work in a lab and when some little kid comes in and gets sick I'm going to be nice to them... not mean."

Several years later, I earned my degree in Medical Laboratory Science and began my career as a medical technologist. I work in the lab and it's amazing what I can tell you from a drop of blood.

- Are you diabetic?
- Have you been keeping your sugar under control in the past 3 months?
- Is it possible you've had a heart attack?
- Is it Congestive Heart Failure?
- What's your cholesterol ratio?
- Do you have a viral or bacterial infection?
- Could it be appendicitis?
- What's your blood type?
- Are you pregnant?
- Is your blood thinner working well or maybe too well?

I'm also a member of our system wide Customer Service Initiative. We teach an employee that being courteous is a very valuable asset in health care. It's about *first impressions, communication and customer satisfaction*. It's about drawing blood from little kids, "*and being nice to them... not mean.*"

Life in the lab is not a glamorous life, nor is it a life where you receive oodles of recognition. In fact, most people don't even know what a medical technologist is. Even so, I am very proud of what I do, and after 20 years I still find it satisfying and stimulating.

Shelley Janke
Medical Technologist, Pathology
Bloomer Medical Center-Luther Midelfort, Bloomer

What My Job Brings to My Life

I have always had an interest in the medical field, from being a CNA to an EMT. But my current job as a phlebotomist in an oncology department brings a quality to my life that I truly embellish.

It is a challenging, but always rewarding choice of departments to work in. The patients can bring such a multitude of emotions to my life. Some are hard, but others are wonderful. Sharing the tears of joy over good news from the Doctor, or sharing a cry with a patient or a family member, sharing a hug of happiness or sorrow. Offering words of encouragement and learning the fragility of life are all blessings in disguise. It can bring immense joy knowing that I can make a difference in a person's life by doing something as small as bringing a smile to their face. I know that my actions and words can maybe make a difference in someone's life.

The medical field can offer so many things to an individual. It can be rewarding to know that you are needed and you can make a difference in or touch someone's life. There are so many different paths you can choose, and the opportunities for growth are plentiful. You meet so many different and interesting individuals, and no two days are the same.

Someone once told me that I made an impression on them when I had them as a patient, and they thanked me for helping them choose a career goal. I thought to myself that I was the fortunate one for having an opportunity to meet them, and to have the blessings bestowed upon me from each individual that has come into my life. It has taught me so much about life and what the important things really are.

Molly Keuken
Phlebotomist/Occupational Health Technician
Community Memorial Hospital, Oconto Falls

Going Home

We had done daily portable x-rays for George, but today he was going to come to us. Knowing he was attached to many devices I thought, "This is going to take a small army." But, there he was with no equipment attached. We stood "Danced" and pivoted into the wheel chair. I snuggled him in with warm blankets and off to x-ray. George had not been out of bed for weeks. We laughed and joked on our long awaited field trip, chatted about his daughters, life and the weather. I held George's arms and hands for his x-rays and thought how bright and alive his eyes were.

Back to ICU, one more "Dance", pivot, and back in bed. Thanking George for the "Dance", my heart felt happy.

Later that day a "Code Blue ICU" was called. "Bed 9". Not George! Just a few hours ago we were laughing and "Dancing". His room was filled with staff. George looked a bit agitated with all the attention; his eyes caught sight of me. I reached for his hand, he held mine with a tight grip and I hugged him, placing the film under his back. George lifted his oxygen mask and said, "Let me go home. Please, just let me go home." I replied, "George, it is okay, you can go Home". With those priceless words, George began to relax.

Later that day I learned the Lord had truly called George home. With tears streaming down my face, I would have never imagined that I would be George's last "Dance."

At the end of each day, I pray that I have made a difference in bringing, hope, comfort and perhaps a little joy to each patient I have been fortunate enough to care for.

"DANCE like no one is watching"

Jacqui Sullivan
Radiologic Technologist
Monroe Clinic, Monroe

My Career in Health Care

My mother suggested many times while I was growing up that I should become a nurse, “just like her.” I usually listen to my mother, but the thought of sticking people with needles, looking at blood, etc. didn’t appeal to me. I know she was happy when I told her I was going into the health care field, even if it was not nursing.

That was a “few” years ago, but I have never regretted my decision. To say the least, my job is challenging and rewarding. It certainly has changed a lot over the years, which I think is the thing I like best about being a health information manager. If you are starting to get bored with something, just wait a month or a year; things are bound to be different!

There’s a great feeling of satisfaction when you have helped a patient or a member of their family find their way through the maze of paper generated during a health care visit, or assisted a co-worker in finding the exact information or statistic they need to complete a project. The business of health care continues to grow and the area of health information management is growing right along with it. Being on the team of a smaller suburban hospital offers me the opportunity to “wear many different hats” on a given day.

I believe, however, that the thing that makes me most proud to be a member of the health care team is my co-workers. Each member of the team demonstrates his or her dedication to health care and their commitment to our patients and to the Stoughton community every day.

Bonnie Anderson
Health Information Manager
Stoughton Hospital

The Christmas Child

It was a cold December day in Ontario, Canada. It was the evening of the annual OR Christmas party. The department was empty except for myself as Charge Nurse, a Surgical Technician, an Anesthesia Resident and a Pediatric Surgeon. A dear friend of mine, Doctor Jacob Langer, whom my son would be named after, was an extremely talented surgeon and well respected by his peers.

The child was an 18 month old male whose parents I had developed a relationship with over the several surgeries that they had painfully been audience to. This time it would be his final surgery. Born at 26 weeks gestation, he had become one of the “special ones” for myself and the rest of the neonatal team.

The surgery would be performed to correct respiratory strider. We would make a tiny incision and tack the trachea to the posterior sternum to prevent it from prolapsing. The case went well and when the dressings were on and the OR back table had been cleaned and disassembled; we waited for the child to awaken. We sat talking about the party that evening that we were anxious to attend as the baby awoke. As he began making attempts at breathing, he offered a minimal cough. The next several minutes were to make me the nurse that I am today.

Arterial blood shot from the child’s chest like a geyser. As we looked at one another, I knew that we were in serious trouble. The blood was arterial and was filling the baby’s chest. The instruments were no longer sterile. We had no blood in the OR. There was no one to call for help. My baby was dying in front of me. I told the tech to get a scalpel blade and put in on a hemostat, I delivered suction tubing and a tip to the field. This would be essential if we were to find the source of the bleeding, I told her to suction for Jack so he could see and at the same time, find the needle driver and load a suture I knew we would need to fix the tear. Once the chest was open, it was clear that one of the repair sutures had been stitched to the aorta. When he coughed, the suture had torn from the aorta. Babies die quickly from both blood loss and hypothermia so I knew I had to act quickly.

The blood bank, only steps away, seemed miles from where I was at that moment. I burst in the door and asked for all the O-negative pediatric units they had. I was not in a position to give additional information. She handed me 8 units, without question. I was back in the OR in less than 3 minutes and began the task of pushing blood into these tiny helpless hands. I was blessed to find an additional vein and started a second IV line. Doctor Langer quickly found the hole and had put his finger in it to stop the massive bleeding. Now it was a matter of resuscitation. The child had lost a significant amount of his blood.

We worked on the child for more than an hour and transferred him up to the NICU. That was the easy part. Walking out to the waiting room with Doctor Langer would be the most difficult thing that I would do in my career.

Caught off guard, the parents sensed the gravity of the situation as we entered the room. As the lead nurse of neonatal and pediatrics, it was customary for me to accompany the surgeon to speak with the parents. As expected, the news was shocking. The child was now unresponsive and ventilated.

This relatively minor procedure had turned into a tragedy. The child that had survived a severely premature birth and several subsequent surgeries would now have to muster the will to survive yet one more insult to his frail little body. His parents had fought for the life of this child

since he was born 18 months earlier at only 700 grams. He had survived the usual complications of that and had gone home to await this final procedure.

This day would be a turning point in my professional career. I realized how fragile life is and how quickly and horribly it can be taken away. As a parent, I felt the excruciating pain of this couple expecting to take their baby home the following day. I also realized what a group of people can do if they are focused and committed to their patient and one another. I learned what it meant to be part of a team. A team so talented and professional that they were able to react to an unexpected situation and find a solution that would eventually save the life of a precious child.

I am a better nurse for having had this experience. I am a better mother for feeling the anguish of another mother in crisis. I am a better human being for having realized just how blessed we are to be part of a race that puts human life above all else and who finds the strength and courage to face challenge with an open mind and unending determination.

Sherie Ponting, RN
Director of Surgical Services
The Wisconsin Heart Hospital, Wauwatosa

Why I chose to be a nurse

In 1964 a young girl from a small town in Northern Illinois decided to become a nurse. That young, very naïve, girl was me. I had fallen in love with Jessie Brewer, RN on TV's *General Hospital*. I was totally entranced, not with what a nurse was, but with that blue cape and white cap that Jessie wore everyday and gained her so much respect. She was a vision, like an angel, as she walked out of the hospital

In 1968 I entered nurses training. My Mom was so proud and told everyone that her daughter was going to be a nurse. I was also proud and anticipated that day when I would have that white cap and blue cape of my own.

My first clinical day, after our "capping" ceremony, I went to the hospital floor floating on cloud nine. Of course I was wearing my new white nurses cap and proud to show everyone that I was now a real nurse. What a day I had – after all everyone knew I was a nurse just by my appearance. When I walked out of the hospital that day, still donning that white hat, I personally found out how sacred it was to leave that cap in its place. I was devastated when a very seasoned nurse (or should I say – older nurse) told me that I had to remove my cap; it was for the clinical area only. How would anyone ever know I was a nurse if I didn't have my cap on? After all Jessie Brewer, RN wore hers all of the time.

Well that was nearly 40 years ago. Caps have come and gone and much to my disappointment, I never did own the blue cape. But this is not what a nurse really is- not a figure, but a caring - giving person who cares for others with respect and honesty in a nonjudgmental way. Who is there to guide, instruct, care and sometimes even cry with their patients as they make their way through the continuum from birth to death.

I still proudly hold my head high, and today brag about the fact that I am a nurse. I work with an incredible group of individuals everyday, who give 100% plus to be their patient's advocate in surgery. We hold our patient's hand, wipe away their tears, answer their questions and encourage them through their surgical procedures. We are challenged to operate very technical equipment. We stand shoulder to shoulder with the surgeons to deliver care and ensure a positive surgical outcome. We are a team.

It's a joy for me to have nursing students come to surgery for their clinical rotation. I see their enthusiasm for practice that I remember so well. I only hope that now as a very seasoned nurse (or should I say- older nurse) I can encourage, lead and provide that same vision and inspiration of Jessie Brewer, RN that I so adored.

Doris Ruitter, RN, BS, MSHSA
Director of Surgical Services
Lakeview Medical Center, Rice Lake

WHA Employee Pride Program Story

As Volunteer Services Director at Saint Joseph's Hospital, I have the distinct pleasure of working with 600 adult and teenage volunteers ranging in age from 13 to 95 years of age. My volunteers inspire me to keep working at a job I love.

I admire my adult volunteers for often overcoming personal difficulties in order to come to the Hospital to volunteer, including: cancer treatment, visual and hearing impairment, an ill spouse, transportation difficulties, etc. I admire my teenage volunteers who seem to be involved in every sport, school and church activity, excel academically and work part-time, yet make serving others a priority in their lives and show up for their weekly volunteer service. Because of the exposure these young people get to healthcare, many choose to go to college to pursue a healthcare career. These are the kids I want taking care of me when I'm old!

While we're only a department of two people, we are 600 people strong. We're the other "human resource services" department in the Hospital! My volunteers serve in 40+ areas and provided more than 62,000 hours of service last year.

Sure, I could work someplace else, but where else would I have the opportunity to recruit, train and recognize some of the best people in the community. People who believe in our mission and whose values are the same as the Saint Joseph's. Working here exposes me to both sadness and joy on a day-to-day basis. The sadness keeps me "grounded" and the joy gives me hope.

I am extremely proud of the work I do and of the service my volunteers provide. I love to see them appreciated and respected for the time and talents they donate throughout the "house." They make this house a "home" for our patients, their families and our staff.

Jean Doty
Volunteer Services Director
Saint Joseph's Hospital-Ministry Health Care, Marshfield

WHA Employee Pride Program Story

I started my career at St. Michael's Hospital in 1990 as a summer nurse tech. It was fantastic! I learned so much! One of the things that I learned was that after graduation I wanted to continue my career at St. Michael's. I was thrilled when I was accepted as a graduate RN. I spent my first 5 years on the surgical floor caring for the needs of post-op surgical patients. I spent the next 5 years in the ICU building my technical skills, and for the past 6 years I have been working in the Oncology Dept. While I enjoyed all areas that I've worked, I believe that I have found my passion working in the Oncology Dept.

I can honestly say that being a nurse was THE BEST thing that I have ever done in my life. Taking care of people's physical, mental and spiritual well being is a blessing and it's my life's work. I have learned so much about passion, courage and strength from my patients and their fight for recovery. I am honored to be a part of their lives and for the ability to help them to improve. I am also honored to be part of helping people die with dignity and grace.

I am so grateful for the opportunity Ministry health Care/ St. Michael's hospital has given me. It has been very fulfilling to be a part of the growth of St. Michael's/Ministry throughout my 17 years as an employee. I hope to spend my entire career with Ministry Health. The people of St. Michael's/Ministry have helped me nurture a career in a very supportive environment. I wholly recommend Ministry to anyone with interest in learning state of the art technology while caring for people in a pleasant supportive atmosphere!

Kathleen (Kosha) Konopacky RN, BSN, OCN
Medical Oncology Supervisor
St. Michael's Hospital, Stevens Point

“It’s a Process”

Reading the considerations for a qualifying essay, I thought, “If I answer this honestly, who’ll find it inspiring?” As a divorcee with two children under the age of four and a high school diploma as qualifications for a job, my options were slim. I was feeling painfully out of control of my situation (difficult for a Type A personality).

With supportive parents, and guidance from the staff at Nicolet Area Technical College, I found myself in the ADN program. As I progressed through the program, I went from feeling like a helpless single parent, to a capable, confident adult. Though I struggled with self-doubts in the technical skills arena, I felt empowered with the knowledge that I was strong in customer service and compassion. I had found my “niche” as a nurse. After graduation, I held a variety of nursing positions. While I appreciated each experience for what it taught me, I was not feeling challenged.

One day, I received a phone call about an opening at St. Mary’s Hospital. I was excited, scared, and determined. Upon hire, I was paired with a compassionate, skilled preceptor. She patiently groomed me for my new position over the next three months. I felt confident with her direction, and received an “experience-rich” orientation. I felt ready to fly solo....

10 years later, I have found that you never fly solo as a nurse. Team work and perpetual learning is always the course in nursing. A career in nursing has helped me to grow personally in confidence and self worth and professionally with opportunities for continuing education and advancement. Ministry Health Care truly cares for the communities it serves. Our hospital has provided a venue for community members, such as me, to grow, succeed and in turn give back to the community.

Pamela L. Snyder, RN
Nurse Manager
Sacred Heart-Saint Mary’s Hospitals-Ministry Health Care, Tomahawk and Rhinelander

Nursing...Why?

In the summer of 1996, my grandfather was diagnosed with lung cancer. He was a smoker for 20+ years but had quit for the last 20 years or so. He also worked in the old mines in the Cuba City area before he became a farmer. Six months prior to being diagnosed with cancer, my grandfather, Carl Sweet, kept going to the doctor for his annual checkups and would complain of being short of breath and was always told, "It's just because you have emphysema and you smoked all those years." I talked with my grandparents and never once was there a chest x-ray ordered or offered. I think that if there had been a nurse involved, my grandfather might have had a chest x-ray done. It probably would not have changed the outcome, but we may have had grandpa with us longer.

Nurses are our patients' biggest advocates and it is something that I feel very strong about and it is why I choose to go into nursing. I believe patients need to be fully informed of all of their options when it comes to their treatment and preventative health measures. In my current practice, I have had many opportunities to inform patients of additional options that they may not have been aware of and it is amazing to see the look of power in their face when they realize what you have just given them.

Nurses are voices of advocacy, compassion, comfort, reassurance, patience, and sometimes authority. If there was only one thing I could tell anyone that is going into nursing it would be to never lose your voice; at times you are your patients' only voice.

Karla Vosberg
Nurse Manager – OB
Memorial Hospital of Lafayette County, Darlington

I have worked for the Wheaton Franciscan Healthcare system for a total of about 4 years in varying positions. My job title now is Patient Care Coordinator, or RN. I thoroughly enjoy my job for many reasons. First of all, I enjoy that nurses are to care for how a patient reacts to a disease, so our care is to be holistic. I became a nurse to care not only for the physical needs of my patients but also their emotional and spiritual needs as well. I enjoy being able to help patients cope with some of the hardest times in their lives. I have chosen to work for the Wheaton Franciscan Healthcare system because they value holistic care as demonstrated by their Mission Statement.

Second, I truly enjoy that nurses are also teachers. They teach their patients about their disease processes, treatments, etc. I enjoy that I also get to work with nursing students and teach them. Nurses also get to be taught. Working closely with doctors, we get to learn more about our patients and their diseases by listening and asking questions. I get to do two things that I enjoy everyday: I work and teach.

Third but not last, nursing is critical thinking. Critical thinking is thinking through each aspect of the patient-their diagnoses, labs, vital signs, medications, assessments and tests to determine the best plan of care. I enjoy critical thinking; pulling all aspects of the patient together to see the whole picture of what is really going on.

These few things are only a few things that people could enjoy about nursing but these are my favorite. I hope that many other people become nurses so that we can have the staffing at all times to care for those in need, not only in the hospital but also in the community and world.

Melissa Hansen
Patient Care Coordinator
Wheaton Franciscan Healthcare-All Saints, Racine

The Other Side

Before I tell you why I enjoy working in healthcare, I will share a story that will help to explain my commitment.

The night of December 23, 1980 it was very cold and snowy. I was on my way to work the night shift at a community hospital in Illinois. One of the few memories that I have of that day was waking up to loud sound of the ED sliding open. I remember the nurse that was taking care of me said, "Hey, I think I know you." I answered him with, "Yes, I work in Respiratory." I was hearing a loud wheezing noise and experiencing a sharp pain on my right side—that's the last thing I remember saying to him until I was brought back to consciousness in the ICU with my breathing tube being suctioned. Suddenly I was on the other side—it turned out I had a chest tube and the wheezing noise was a collapsed lung. This experience is the foundation for my commitment to working not only in Respiratory Therapy but health care for the last 28 years. I realized how important it is as a provider to talk with your patient at all times. I knew first hand how important it is to keep them informed of what you're going to be doing during a procedure or treatment, and when you're all finished continue talking with them to be sure they're okay. I cannot count the times I have seen a tear on a person's cheek that needed to be wiped or hand that needed to be held perhaps more than ever before. These are the times that I reflect back to when I woke up in the ICU—I was so helpless. I remember the person that drove through a snowstorm to be at my bedside—we had only been on one date. Now, for almost 24 years she is still the one that holds my hand. She taught me commitment but most of all she taught me compassion and that's why I love respiratory therapy and working in health care. I have committed myself to not only helping through my work as a therapist but also by being an advocate for the person. Whenever I get the opportunity to work with someone that is new to health care I always stress to them that the person they are treating is someone's father, mother, cousin...always think about how you would want your family to be treated and let that be your guide.

Bob Raganyi, BS, RRT
Respiratory Care Manager
Langlade Memorial Hospital, Antigo

WHA Employee Pride Program Story

Question: what does a person struggling to breathe, a prematurely born infant, and person with asthma have in common? Answer: they all will benefit from care provided to them by a Respiratory Therapist. Today there are 35 million Americans living with some form of lung disease. This tells me that there is a lot of work for Respiratory Therapists to do. I have been working in Respiratory Therapy for 19 years and it has offered me countless opportunities to help people, of all ages.

I went into Respiratory Therapy because I have asthma. I know full well how terrifying it can be not to be able to breathe, to feel as if this breath may be your last. That is a very powerless way to feel. Thankfully, I also know the strength that knowledge can bring. I benefited from the teaching I received from a Respiratory Therapist. She taught me about my triggers, medications, how to do breathing exercises and when to call the doctor. I gained independence from the fear of living with asthma. I still had the disease, but now I also had knowledge about how to be an active participant in my own healthcare. That was a very powerful way to feel.

Over the years, I have always tried to give that power back to my patients, and their family members. It has been extremely rewarding. Even if I can't remember their names, I still can picture their faces when they gained the key pieces of understanding they needed to take back control. They would leave the hospital having control of their illness instead of the illness controlling them. What a blessing it is to be able to share that kind of freedom with a fellow human being. What a wonderful way to make a living.

Jude Stevenson
Respiratory Therapy Manager
Howard Young Health Care, Inc.-Ministry Health Care, Woodruff

My name is Jean Dimeck and I am a nursing assistant at the Tomah VAMC, in Tomah, WI.

I became a certified nursing assistant because I enjoy taking care of people and I try my best to make each and every Veteran that I care for feel happy and comfortable.

I do not think of my job as work but rather as caring for people as their family would if they could. In my job I try to provide the time for special one on one activity or just make time in my busy schedule to just sit and listen, which I think is important.

After I became a certified nursing assistant working on the night shift, I was given the opportunity to take care of a gentleman who could not sleep. He asked me to hold his hand and sit with him a while which I did. He told me that he was afraid of being alone and he was afraid of dying alone, so I held his hand and sat with him. Shortly after I did so this kind gentleman passed away and I was happy that I could be there for him and comfort him as he passed away and it reminded me of how I took care of my parents and my sister-in-law and how gratifying it was for me to do this for them.

Our priority and focus is the resident and this should always be the focus for us. The angels walk with us and with our residents and God gives us the strength to help others. It is our sacred duty to provide the strength and the love necessary to protect and care for our residents. It takes a special kind of love and understanding to provide compassionate, considerate care to these residents and their families. These duties are what nursing assistants do on a daily basis on the job as they provide these essential cares for the residents.

Nursing assistants provide a much needed service for the elderly and those in need. The gratification on the job comes from the effort nursing assistants expend not what they get paid; it comes from knowing they have done a good job making the resident safe and comfortable and cared for.

Jeanne Dimeck, C.N.A.
Certified Nursing Assistant
VA Medical Center, Tomah

A Friend

If I had to describe my work to a group of students, I would say it was a job like no other. It's not like helping people by bringing them their food at a restaurant. In health care, you help them with life. At a nursing home, residents need to be assisted with daily activities.

Healthcare is the most rewarding job I have ever had because every day, I make a difference in someone's life, even if it is just assisting them to brush their teeth.

Working in healthcare can be a humbling job. But if you love helping people, it is the perfect place to be. Especially at a nursing home, sometimes the health care worker is the only personal contact a resident has. Some residents, unfortunately, have no family coming to visit. Residents can become lonely and depressed, and as a health care worker, I have the ability to prevent that. Sometimes, all they want is someone with whom they can talk, so that's what I do.

I have always enjoyed helping people; that is what drew me to healthcare. As a CNA, I have learned that I want to be a doctor where I will have patient contact. I love laughing, and sometimes crying with residents and their families. When you work with residents on a daily basis, they become part of your family. Nothing is more rewarding than helping a resident overcome an illness or hardship. Making someone laugh is one of the most important things I do as a health care worker.

I want to dedicate my life to helping people. I want to be there for residents, no matter what their needs. If all someone wants is a friend, I will be there for them.

Crystal Trunkel C.N.A.
Certified Nursing Assistant, Long-Term Care
Memorial Medical Center, Neillsville

Technology is a wonderful thing and health care has made great advances over the years, but to me it is still that human touch and compassion that means so much. It is what happens on a daily basis. Sometimes it is the small things we do that people remember most and can be the most rewarding. It's that new patient you just admitted who has never been in a hospital before. You reassure them, make them as comfortable as possible making them feel that they are your first priority. It could also be that dying patient down the hall who does not have anyone to be with them in their last hours of life, you hold their hand or just sit quietly by.

Coming from a small community hospital you may see certain people admitted more often, they may say "Here I am again, I'm so glad you're here I remember you from the last time I was here." How good does that make you feel?

Down the hall there is a "code blue" going on and will go to be with a grieving family. In the next room there is an elderly woman who is confused and needs your assistance to the bathroom; you help her find her way there. In another room your surgical patient tells you a joke he just heard and it makes you laugh. Across the hall an elderly man is calling out for his wife, he is crying because he knows he can not return home, she is unable to care for him any longer by herself. As his wife arrives and walks through the door; he tells her he wants to come back home, she turns to you and says, "I never thought he cared so much." You hug her and I cry right along with them.

These episodes reaffirm my decision for being in health care on a daily basis. Always have a passion for your work. Never forget about compassion for people. It's heartfelt. People are your biggest reward.

Pamela Voigt, LPN
Licensed Practical Nurse
Watertown Area Health Services

Employee Pride Program 2007

After years of being a hairdresser, teacher's aide and waitress, I searched for a profession to be fulfilled. I also needed a job that kept me moving all the time, as I had broken my lumbar vertebrae in a toboggan accident in the 70's.

While I was in the hospital for two weeks with a broken back, my father died after having lived a life 'less than ordinary' at the Milwaukee Veteran's Hospital for twelve years. He died a broken man. His mind had remained sharp but his muscular and nervous systems betrayed him in full. He was unable to sit, walk, eat or do any other tasks that keep you alive. I cared for my father on and off for twelve years. I also fed all the other men in his ward, who were angry and confused Veterans of World War II. They deserved better care.

After my father's death, I made a decision to go on to nursing school. This led me to Waukesha Memorial Hospital, where I have provided patient care for nearly 30 years. Every time I care for an elderly or young man, I pray that God will give me the heart and the strength to give this patient the care my dad deserved.

Janet Gruenwald, L.P.N.
Licensed Practical Nurse – Day Surgery
Waukesha Memorial Hospital, Waukesha

Why Am I a Nurse?

I am a nurse and I am very proud to say that I am an advocate, a teacher, and a care provider for my patients and their families. I treat the responses of my patient's medical diagnoses. I collaborate with the staff to ensure good quality, holistic and continuity of care. I strive to make a difference in my patient's life. I worked for a seating manufacturer for the sum of twenty-three years. I thought that I enjoyed designing seats for various airlines, sub-ways, trains and buses. I thought comfort while commuting was important. I asked travelers about the comfort of their seat while traveling; most times the response would be "It was okay". Sometimes I would get the answer "I don't know, I don't even remember the color or style of the seat". I felt that my forty to sixty hours of devotion a week to my job was somewhat in vain. Getting a paycheck was not enough for me. I wanted to go to work knowing that I was going to help someone. I began to think about changing careers.

My mother was hospitalized at various facilities. The last two months of her life were at St. Joseph's Hospital. The nurses and the staff were wonderful. They did all that they could to care for my mom and my family. My family and I were so pleased with the service that we received, I went back to school and changed careers.

I enjoy going to work. Being a nurse is hard work. However, I work with a delightful group of people. As a team we strive for excellence. Many of our patients and family members express that gratitude for the service that they receive. I am a nurse because the nurses at St. Joseph's Hospital made a difference in my life.

Burnita Bartlett, RN
Wheaton Franciscan Healthcare-St. Joseph, Milwaukee

2007 Wisconsin Health Care Employee Pride Program Finding Better Ways

Why I Am Blessed To Be A Nurse:

My Mother was a nurse. I grew up watching her interact with others as a nurse. I learned from her that being a nurse is not just what you do, but it is also an integral part of who you are. It is a gift to be a nurse. We are blessed to be able to make a positive impact on the world around us.

When people are sick, hurt, frightened and vulnerable, they turn to us. They trust us with their lives and the lives of their loved ones. I know that as a nurse, I make a positive impact on others. As nurses we have much to offer: comfort, support, hope and compassion, and it is given freely and without hesitation. Most often, nurses don't even know the impact they have had, but the people whose lives you have changed will never be the same. They are better for knowing that nurses are always ready with a kind word, a warm blanket, a listening ear, knowledge and access to resources, years of experience and knowledge, whenever they are needed.

What I received back from my patients and their families is the most precious gift there is. I have been allowed to share in these people's lives. I have had the incredible honor of being present during the last moments of a person's life, and in the first moments of a new life coming into the world. I cannot imagine a more fulfilling way to live my life. I am the luckiest person in the world!

Nita Catalano-Plank
Registered Nurse – ICU/Stepdown
Aurora Medical Center Manitowoc County, Two Rivers

WHA's Health Care Employee Pride Program

Looking back on my 30 year nursing career, I can truly say it has been challenging and rewarding. In contemplating why I chose the health care field and why I chose to go to Bellin School of Nursing right out of high school, one word comes to my mind: Dad.

My father was a rural, small town family physician and his profession affected my whole family. I grew up one block from my dad's clinic, so being there was a regular occurrence. On numerous occasions, I (and my younger brothers and sisters after me) would go to the clinic after hours to help in cast applications, assist with sutures, or anything else that was needed.

I also remember patients coming to our house seeking care. Many family events were interrupted with the call of duty. The main memory I have from these early experiences is my father's compassion and gentleness. Under sometimes less than ideal circumstances, he always remained calm and patient, dealing with whatever came his way. He treated everyone who crossed his path with dignity and respect, no matter where they came from or where they were going.

My dad was a man of great faith, which he demonstrated in all areas of his life. I realize now my father treated the whole person, not just their physical ailments. He spent countless hours listening to people, trying to uncover the true cause of many problems. His treatment encompassed the Mind, Body, Spirit connection long before it was *en vogue* in medicine.

I found this philosophy especially helpful during my years as a Hospice Nurse. Sometimes, working with patients and families dealing with end of life issues, I felt I should be doing more. An attentive ear to listen to their fears and emotional concerns was frequently their greatest need. The families were always grateful, provided the reassurance that they were caring for their loved ones in the best way possible.

I would be remiss if I did not also give credit to my mother for her influence—then and now. As the mother of eight, with a husband who was not always around due to his career demands, she demonstrated and passed along many skills needed to keep her family thriving.

My parents fostered the attributes of service, compassion, and self-reliance, which I use daily in my nursing career. They are and have been my greatest mentors and teachers.

Michele DeBaker, RN, BSN
Bellin Home Health, Green Bay

Why I am Proud to Be a Health Care Worker

It is often said that the eyes are the window to the soul. Discovering the truth of this statement has provided me with rewards that go far beyond any compensation that my employer could provide.

One of my first health care assignments was to feed a resident that could not speak. However, when I looked into her eyes I realized that she was speaking with me. I could sense her satisfaction in knowing that someone was sitting with her, looking into her eyes and seeing her as a unique person. Not a word was ever spoken between us, but seeing her eyes light up when I sat down spoke volumes to me about how much could be communicated by sincerely looking right into someone's eyes.

Years later I was helping a mother through a long and difficult labor. She was starting to become very afraid, so I knelt down to look her in the eyes. After a few minutes, I got back up to do my charting. "Wait" she said, "I need to see your eyes." It was a very humbling moment to know that by focusing on my gaze, she was able to summon her own courage.

I have also learned this lesson from being a patient myself. During an unexpected surgical procedure I found myself feeling afraid, alone and very vulnerable. My nurse's face was masked, but I could see that her eyes held so much concern. As I drifted off to sleep, I knew I would be fine.

Health care has taught me that compassion goes much beyond the spoken word. In our busy lives we have so few opportunities to really see beyond the superficial. Health care gives us the unique opportunity look into another person's soul and at the same time look into our own.

Teresa Field, RN
Reedsburg Area Medical Center, Reedsburg

Essay for the 2007 Wisconsin Health Care Employee Pride Program

Thirty years ago I made a decision that surprised me. I decided to go to nursing school. Originally, nursing seemed like such a stereotypical women's occupation to me...and that wasn't how I envisioned myself. I was young, idealistic...and rather naïve. Some warned that my views would change over the years. Of course they did...and yet they didn't.

I wanted to be a world changer, to help bring an enlightened image of local and world events into clear view, so that more people would base their decisions on fact rather than misassumptions or misinterpretations. So I thought the world of broadcast journalism might be for me, or something equally exotic.

I'm not so young, not so naïve, but in many ways still pretty idealistic. I just came to realize that people are impacted at least as much by how they feel at a sensory level as by what they know intellectually. I also know that nursing is one field where you CAN have it all. You can truly use your heart, your hands and your intellect to make the world a better place. One person at a time, one day at a time, right here, right now.

Sometimes it's as I help a laboring woman by staying right by her side, showing her ways to find her own strength, gently nurturing her so she will not fear the giant step she is taking into motherhood. Sometimes it is when I help a non-English speaking patient and family feel not so strange in this new land they have come to. Sometimes it is when I'm pulled to another part of the hospital and sit at the side of elderly man or woman and listen to their confused ramblings as the night closes in around them and they long for their own bed...and their younger bodies and minds. Sometimes it is when I'm learning the latest in technological developments or when I help interpret the complicated lingo of the medical world to those who don't speak it. And sometimes it is when doing the most menial of tasks, like bathing someone's feet or cleaning that which they can't any longer.

From the simple to the complex, it's always worth it. I made a good choice...and I did get the opportunity to be a world changer.

Maria Hansa, RN, BSN, IBCLC
St. Clare Hospital & Health Services, Baraboo

My first experience in nursing was working as a nursing assistant in hospice homecare as I was finishing school. I remember my grandfather asking me on his own deathbed, "My girl, why would you choose such a sad and hard career? This is just so depressing." Despite working in hospice at the time I responded, "It's not always sad", but I didn't have enough experiences to validate my response. I just knew there was something about this career that the unique pleasant times were going to outnumber the stressful ones.

In my three years of nursing thus far, everyday I am reminded by my patients that I am needed—that I make a difference. I have experienced more lessons about life than I can count. The holistic aspect of nursing has allowed me to laugh and cry with my patients, to listen and empathize with them, to be an advocate for them - this is why I chose nursing.

My co-workers, nurses and other specialized fields, offer an abundance of knowledge. Each individual experience with them helps to enhance my ability to care for my patients. Nursing is a coordination of care; each experience of learning and observing from other professionals is valuable to my own growth as a nurse. Everyday is a new challenge - this is why I chose nursing.

Nursing offers many opportunities; nurses are everywhere, and are needed everywhere. Experiences encountered as a nurse help build confidence, believing in yourself that you have a unique gift. A gift that enables you to act calmly in a moment of panic to save a life, and a gift to change a life. I now can validate my reasons for being a nurse. It's not just another job, but a passion of mine.

Natalie Hanson, RN
Aurora St. Luke's Medical Center, Milwaukee

WHA Employee Pride Program Story

To say that I have PRIDE in my profession is an understatement. Many questioned me when I announced at age 47 that I was going to nursing school. At the time I had a very lucrative profession and was very happy in my job – but – lurking in my heart was the need to follow a dream that began when I was 17 years old and a patient in the hospital.

Let me explain – I was told upon discharge from the hospital that I was a very lucky young lady to be able to tell my story as I was apparently very sick. I remember lying in my isolation room waiting for anyone to visit me, especially the nurses. I remember thinking that they were the luckiest people in the world to be doing what they were doing. Little did I know how hard they were working then, and how different nursing would be when I entered the profession. In 1967 I believe nurses did a lot more “hands on” bedside care of patients and not as much critical care of patients as we see today. Maybe in my simple 17-year-old mind I thought their “job” was to give baths, talk to patients, and make them comfortable, and the doctors took care of their medical needs.

Yes, they did all of that and I wanted to do it too. So shortly before I turned 50 years old I became a nurse and have vowed to be that shining light in every person’s life that I touch. I can only tell you that the happiest moments in my career have been when a patient or family member say “thank you” whether it is because I made them feel better, explained something they didn’t understand, or was just there on Christmas morning when they came to the ED because they didn’t feel well.

I am very PROUD to say I am a nurse!

Kathy Herbst, RN
St. Clare’s Hospital-Ministry Health Care, Weston

When I was little, I lived on the grounds of a VA hospital.
My father tells me I greeted him one day after a long day at work.
“Did anyone get well and go home today?”
He paused and thought and then,
“Well, yes, I do believe so...”
And then I asked
“Were you glad?”
Fifty years later, I go home after a long day at work
and now I contemplate what did I do?
And then I think
respect,
care,
competence,
joy
Are they just words or are they true values
and what do I do to make real what we profess?
To respect our patients and families...to acknowledge the need for reciprocal respect
To care for our patients and families and colleagues...to understand health is a spectrum of
response in an environment of care
To maintain competence in the chaos of disease
And finally to know joy
that every day I go to work I can find joy in the small and big miracles we call life.
And now I can tell my father, “I’m glad, I am so glad that the work I have chosen really truly
makes values more than just words.

Maryann Hurtt, RN
St. Nicholas Hospital, Sheboygan

Becoming A Nurse

When I dreamed of becoming a nurse, it was always about saving lives. After 12 years, I realized just the other night that it is not always about saving a life but also about helping one realize that it is time to let go and supporting the patient and their family through one of the toughest time in their lives.

My story begins while I was caring for Mary. Her labs had just came back and showed she was having a heart attack and death was imminent. We informed the family and they were in shock. I sat by her daughter's side as they watched the most important person in their life pass away. Mary took her last breath when her youngest son took his first step into her room. He was devastated. However, I had the opportunity to tell him that she knew he was on his way and only let go once he was there. They stated I helped them so much just by giving them the opportunity to be there with her till the end. They left the Emergency Department sad, yet in peace.

I plan on leaving bedside nursing and I said to one of my nurse coworkers, "This is what I will miss the most." She looked at me and said "people dying?" I said not the patient's death, but the opportunity to touch people and help them through an experience in life that they will remember forever. That ability to make the experience just a little bit better because you were there to help them through it makes me love being a nurse.

As a nurse you have so many opportunities to touch a life, some you will never know and others you will never forget.

Yvette Karweik, RN
St. Luke's South Shore, Cudahy

My name is Christa, and I've been a nurse for 17 years. When I first saw the WHA Pride Program application, I didn't think my story was all that interesting. There was no major epiphany that led me to nursing school, no childhood fascination with the vocation, or even parents who worked in the field. I haven't used my degree to serve the homeless, starving children, or AIDS patients in Africa. My work setting would never appear on any television drama, and I've never been published in a nursing journal or worked in management. I'm just your "average" nurse.

Despite the above, the Pride Program application never made it out to my recycling bin. Instead, it got shuffled around the various piles of papers I have in my home. It reappeared whenever I would go searching for a clipped recipe, bills that were due, or some item needed to file my taxes. Each time I held it in my hand, I would reflect on my work in health care. I have worked at different places, on different units, and with different populations over the past 17 years, but certain things have always remained constant for me. I think that is why I have stayed motivated in my work. So, maybe I do have a story worth sharing....

I found that nursing came very naturally to me. Perhaps it was all the baby minnows, birds, and mice I tried to save as a young girl. Dropper feedings, fresh bedding in the shoe box, makeshift slings, and flying trials easily translated into dressing changes, getting medication into unwilling children, crutch training, and hospital corners. I had a soft spot for those who were hurting, and it was natural to be helpful, encouraging, and comforting.

It was also natural to be interested the people I was caring for. Talking about the various procedures, medications, and treatments is always necessary. But my patients are also farmers, school cooks, pipe fitters, grandparents, students, ex-military, and sports fans. Talking about the non-medical has helped me connect with these wonderful people. I have heard stories of travel, hardships, the Great Depression, children's children, and triumphs over disease. I've learned the best location to plant my roses, how to cook fresh green beans, where the fish are biting, and who has the best meat cuts in town. These people have helped me grow Dahlias, build my own bookcase, and fillet fish without so much waste.

Nursing is something that has enriched my life by much more than an income. My co-workers, in all departments, inspire me every day in how they work to support this team of caregivers. What we do is not just a "job," it's an expression of genuine concern for others. Whether we clean the rooms, prepare the meals, file the papers, fix the faucets, or give the actual "care," we all find it natural and rewarding to be of service to those in our care.

I have cared for lots of people over the past 17 years. Many stick out in my mind, all for different reasons. But I will close by telling you a story about a patient who literally changed my life. I don't remember his name, but he was very ill with cancer. I had been a nurse for three years, married for one, and trying to work all I could to save money for a house. He was perhaps 55 years old, a well-to-do executive in the Twin Cities. I was on a six-night stretch and had been caring for him for several days. He was weak, needing help to turn in bed, reach his water, etc. One night, as I helped him get comfortable in a new position, he said, "Guess how many vacation days I have..." Turns out, he hadn't taken any vacation time for years, and he had 180 hours on the books. Now he was near death. I remember him grabbing my hand and saying, "Use your vacation, Christa. Working too hard doesn't pay off."

This patient helped me see that to continue caring for others, I need to take care of myself. I take vacation days instead of carrying them into the next year. I plant Dahlias, grow fresh vegetables, take long walks in the fall, and enjoy life.

Christa Kilen, RN
Spooner Health System, Spooner

Why I am Proud to Work as an RN in the St. Mary's Community

Ever since I was a little girl, I wanted to work at St. Mary's Hospital. My Mom was a nurse for 40 years and worked here briefly. My two youngest siblings were also born here. And while attending Edgewood High School in the early 1970's, I volunteered as a candy striper and worked weekends and after school in the dietary department, making friends with peers. Even then, St. Mary's was a good place to work. People always seemed happy. Smiles were everywhere. Those memories stayed with me throughout the years, packed away, waiting to be opened again at the right moment.

That moment came 20 years later when I found myself happily married with four little boys. I finally decided what I wanted to be when I grew up! I graduated from nursing school 41 years young. I wanted to work in a hospital, and the only hospital I would even consider was St. Mary's.

I remember walking into the hospital with a handful of resumes, my mission to hand deliver one to each Unit Director. Every face I encountered had a smile! The feeling of caring and friendliness overwhelmed me. All those warm feelings I had of this place as a child and young adult came forward. This was and still is the place for me!

I am just coming into my tenth year at St. Mary's. The recent sentinel event here shocked and saddened us all. It made us think about what we do and how it affects everyone around us. We mourned together as a community. It helped me reaffirm my pride and commitment to both my profession and St. Mary's to know that my administration was there beside me, supporting me and our little community, doing whatever was needed to help us through this devastating event.

Mary McNulty, RN
St. Mary's Hospital, Madison

I have been a nurse for over 20 years. There was no revelation or particular drive for this calling in life. When I was in high school, my guidance counselor recommended nursing because I liked biology and I agreed.

Since then I have worked in the same community I grew up in and I have taken care of that guidance counselor as a patient at Hartford Hospital, which was full circle for me.

So at 19 years old I became a LPN and worked at a nursing home. I was truly amazed at some of the nursing assistants and how they seemed to genuinely care and respect these patients who were confused, combative and drooling. They don't know this but they taught me by example what it truly means to be a nurse—to work hard, to not be judgmental and to do whatever it takes to meet patients' needs. To care enough to treat patients the way you would want to be treated, **BOTTOM LINE.**

I have gone back to school since then and I got my RN degree. I'm also a certified med/surg nurse. I have gotten star awards and had the opportunity to go to the Magnet conference in Florida. But nothing has taught me more than the genuine caring and respect I have been blessed to witness with my fellow nursing staff. I have had the wonderful fortune of being able to witness and absorb the abilities around me, nursing and nursing assistants alike.

It is just like what I heard Dr. Phil say, "It's not what you do for a living that makes you successful, and it's how well you do it."

I have gotten more from my patients than I could ever give to them. To be able to be a nurse for just one day of my life justifies why I'm on this earth. It matters that much.

Susan Miller, RN
Aurora Medical Center of Washington County, Hartford

I remember being only 12 years old, walking into the ICU, despite signs reading, “no admittance to those under 16 years of age,” and seeing my oldest brother lying lifeless, in a coma in his bed, with tubes and wires coming from everywhere imaginable after being in a motor vehicle accident. I also remember the nurse who turned her back on me pretending not to notice that I was not 16 years old, only after she explained what every machine, tube and wire was doing for my brother. I still remember having the feeling that I would never see my brother alive again. I then remember my brother coming home only one month later and believing that it was that nurse who saved my brother’s life.

Since that time, I have chosen to join the nursing profession knowing that I wanted to impact someone’s life as this nurse had done for me. Every day I know that I make a difference in the lives of people when I am personally thanked by my patients for taking time to listen or showing someone I cared about them, or being thanked by parents of an 18-year-old child for doing everything I could despite the fact that his life was taken prematurely.

I remember not too long after I graduated from nursing school as an RN, my youngest brother looked at me and asked, “So, you are a real nurse now?” I replied, “YES I AM!” He then asked, “So you can really save someone’s life?” I replied, “Yes, I can!” I knew at that moment that one day I would be someone’s hero just as that ICU nurse had been mine when she saved my brother’s life so many years ago.

Suann Mitchell, RN
Agnesian HealthCare/Waupun Memorial Hospital

Wisconsin Healthcare Employee Pride Program My Career in Nursing

What's new in nursing? I guess the answer would be change. Change is the only constant from day to day. This is the age where patients are thought of as consumers of health care, the Internet provides patients with plentiful resources to keep them informed, and time is of the essence when patients are treated. Phrases like "door to doc time" and "throughput" are commonplace.

So why stay in nursing? The answer is simple: to care for the sick, troubled, and dying; to make a difference in someone's or their family's life. Here are some of the small miracles not seen daily or even monthly, but when they occur, they humble me and affirm that I am in the right profession.

A young family came to the hospital with a seriously ill toddler who had to be transferred out. Their parents had no gas money to get to the receiving hospital, so a respiratory therapist passed the hat from floor to floor and raised over \$100 to get them there.

A six-year-old girl who came to the Emergency Room on Christmas morning with no coat, slightly unkempt, with a sore throat. When asked by a nurse if she got everything she wanted from Santa, she looked down at the floor and shook her head no. By the time she left, she had not only treatment for her sore throat, but a paint set, a doll, treats from the nursing station, and a smile on her face and her father's.

An infant arrives in the Emergency Room in full cardiac arrest. Everyone is in motion trying to use all that modern medicine offers to save the infant's life while her parents stand by numb. Pastoral Care arrives, a priest on his knees by the mother's side. The priest is 79 years old and this year marks his 39th year of pastoral ministry to patients and their families at Sacred Heart Hospital. We offer a chair for the priest but he refuses, replying, "I'm where I should be now."

All of these are examples of the small miracles that we as nurses have the privilege to see and take part in. This is why I stay in nursing. In the fast pace of modern medicine, there is always a place for compassion, touch, prayer, kindness, and empathy. This coupled with technology and knowledge allows nurses to make a big difference in our fast-paced, 24/7 world.

Michaelene Nye, RN
Sacred Heart Hospital, Eau Claire

Eleven years ago, I chose nursing as a career, and I have not regretted my decision since. Daily, I have the ability to make a difference in people's lives. Nursing is not just about giving medications or taking blood pressures. Being a nurse is holding the hand of a frightened patient, sitting with family as they watch their loved one die, and wiping tears from a child in pain. There are days when you return home from a long shift and can't find the energy to return for another day. Then you receive that arm around your shoulder and a voice saying, "Thank you for everything," and the strength returns. We have the beautiful opportunity as nurses to touch the soul of another being in a way no other person can. For that reason, I am proud to be a nurse.

Lisa Wanless, RN
The Richland Hospital, Richland Center

Wisconsin Health Care Employee Pride Program

Growing up in a small rural community, I've always felt the closeness that comes with knowing your neighbors. In these tight-knit areas, friends, neighbors, even strangers tend to come together in times of celebration, tragedy or sickness,

My choice to become a nurse was greatly influenced in 1999 when my family and I encountered our own tragedy. I was married less than one year and 21 years old when my husband contacted high voltage and was severely burned at his job. After a month-long hospitalization and longer rehab, I spent days at his bedside and once home was a vital part of his wound cares, doing sterile dressing changes twice daily until his healing was complete.

While at the hospital, I was so impressed with the care he received, the close relationships he started with his health care workers, and how they made a difference to his recovery and me. In time I realized that I wanted and could be the person to make a difference in someone else's life.

In May I will be a Registered Nurse for four years. In that time so many things have reaffirmed my decision for becoming a nurse. I take pride in the small hospital I work in, taking care of family, friends and neighbors I've know all my life. I hope that I can be that special person to make a difference, offer a smile or a gentle hand to them and their families. I've witnessed and assisted in the delivery of infants in this area and have been with families of patients in their last days. All is heart touching, though not always easy, however, it is ever-so rewarding.

I am committed to being a good nurse, a kind person, and an integral part of the team of excellent healthcare workers I work with at Flambeau Hospital in Park Falls. A life-changing event brought me here and had it not; I'm not sure where I'd be today.

Nicole Weik, RN
Flambeau Hospital, Park Falls

The Perfect Mentor

While growing up, I was exposed to the medical field through my mother who was a licensed practical nurse. I would go with her to the nursing home every day after school and listen to her discuss various medical situations.

A few semesters into my mother going back to school to become a registered nurse, I was diagnosed with Hodgkin's disease. For that, she quit her pursuit of education for me. I was 23 and the doctor told me that I had Hodgkin's Lymphoma. He gave me a 50/50 chance of survival. With one nurse after another taking care of me, I soon discovered that there were good nurses and bad nurses. I told my mom that someday I was going to be a nurse and be more compassionate.

She nursed me through the next year with a tear in her eye most of the time. She never gave up on me and was always there to drag me to my chemotherapy and radiation appointments. We did much research together on my disease and I found that I really did enjoy the medical world. A year later, I was diagnosed as in remission (I was a survivor)!

Many years later and life lessons learned, I received my degree as a registered nurse. At my graduation, my mother was the proudest mom in the group knowing that I had just received what she had given up for me.

Although I have chosen a different track for my nursing career, I feel that my mother has given me the basics that all nurses should have, that of compassion, caring, kindness and putting yourself in the other person's shoes when caring for them. Today, we are both fortunate to work at MHC where we can share an occasional lunch, patients and what it takes to be a good nurse.

Renee Zenner, RN
Memorial Health Center, Medford

“WE CARE”: The Wisconsin Health Care Employee Pride Program

Throughout history, health care professionals have been empowered by their patriotism, caring, and ethical advocacy. From the battlefields of Iraq to the corridors of our local hospitals, health care professionals are continually fueled by their desires to make a difference—to create changes in the provisions of health care.

Medical technology continues to reach astounding new heights with breakthrough surgical and diagnostic techniques; but the power of human touch and compassion continues to reach hearts and souls.

The cultural diversity in health care today enriches the environment and allows us to serve the multicultural society we live in. Cultural attitudes are a challenge, but with the collaboration of a diverse health care team, individualized treatment plans can make an impact on a patient's health outcome.

Why work in the health care field? Workers of the future will face a different work environment. It is likely that they will have over four different jobs during their careers. Health care allows you to thrive in a changing environment that provides the support necessary for success and growth, while enjoying high levels of respect and public confidence.

Health careers touch peoples' lives—whether you enter the field for deep personal reasons or for a lucrative career. Health care spans the history of humankind, and we have provided care and comfort since the dawn of civilization. Health care careers allow individuals to have more than “pride” in their occupations; they allow us to “touch” one another with our own special gifts to provide love, hope, and motivation.

I am proud to be in health care at Columbia-St. Mary's hospital. We have a “Passion for Patient Care.”

Karen Dulin, BSRN
Clinical Nurse 2
Columbia St. Mary's, Milwaukee

The pride I feel for nursing comes from within and is
Strengthened by those I meet.
To me, Nursing is...

A Love Affair

It happened by chance and I never looked back. Fourteen years later I am still here, committed more deeply than I ever thought possible. The passion I initially felt wavers at times, with daily chores seeming to encompass my entire being. But then the unexpected happens. Eyes meet, a hand is held, comfort is given, a tear is shed, pain is relieved, understanding is achieved. The passion returns.

How I became involved is not important. Maybe it was truly altruistic, or purely economical, or just plain convenient. More importantly are the reasons I found to stay ... things I didn't learn in school and things my mother couldn't teach me. They are the feelings I have at the end of the day and again at the beginning when it is time to start over. It is the knowledge that my being "here" makes a difference. It is the commitment I have to putting my heart and soul into this relationship because I know I will get just as much in return.

It isn't always easy. There is hurt and sorrow and grief for which we have no explanation. But healing takes place and we are stronger and wiser from the experience. It is these thoughts and others that carry me through the days when mundane tasks and banal conversations dominate. Because I know that "this" is worth holding on to.

When asked about my life and what I wanted for my future, I searched within myself to find the answer. I committed to the passion. I said, "Yes!" The affair changed my life and I will never look back.

Kimberley Williamson, RN, BSN, CCRN
Nurse Clinician, PACU
UW Hospital and Clinics, Madison

WHA Employee Pride Program

My name is Jodi Struzynski, and I am a surgical nurse with Community Health Network. I began my career as a nurse's aide, next became a licensed practical nurse, and continued my education to become a registered nurse. I am close to completion of my Bachelor of Science degree in Nursing.

My career choice has opened many doors for me. My work isn't a job; it is a passion. The ability to help people facing many different situations and circumstances, along with the continuing education process, is what renews this passion daily.

I appreciate the nursing position I have, as it allows me to also be very involved in the communities that we serve. I have the opportunity to go out into different areas and showcase the variety of services offered at CHN. It is always rewarding to tout the technology and services we provide.

My desire to help others carries over into other areas of involvement. Our organization developed a program many years ago called the "Keep Me Warm" tree. At Christmas time, two trees are displayed in our lobby areas that don family needs, including ages and sizes. As items are donated, a select group of us coordinate all the items, wrap them, and distribute them to the many families we are helping. I have spearheaded this program for 10 years and it is such a remarkable experience and feeling to be a part of something so good, it has made a difference in the lives of not only the many adults and children we have helped, but mine as well.

While the science of medicine advances each day, the need for compassionate care remains a constant. I treat every patient as an individual, and meeting their need is an ongoing learning experience that I am honored to be a part of.

Jodi Struzynski, RN
Surgical Nurse
Berlin Memorial Hospital, Berlin

Being a Nurse

I love being a nurse, even more so since I've experienced being a patient often in the last few years. I realize how great of a difference I can make in a patient's life. Fifty-one years ago, I was born into a loving family and became the oldest of six kids as my father went to medical school and became a surgeon. I had the opportunity to look at his medical books and decided at the age of five that someday I would take care of sick children. I grew up, married my high school sweetheart and went to nursing school. For the past thirty years I have had the opportunity as a nurse to take care of OB/GYN and nursery patients. What a blessing to be there when parents experience the miracle of birth. There's nothing quite as awesome as to be part of helping new parents feel successful at accomplishing their goals and to watch the parents' expressions as they see their newborn take its first breath. It also means a lot to me to be able to comfort someone who's lost a child, or someone who faces changes in their image of themselves through illness or surgery. As a nurse, there's the opportunity to share in someone's most intimate emotions. How we care and encourage people makes all the difference. We can help people begin to take a step forward from where they are, in a positive way.

In 2002, I experienced the death of my mother and grandmother, was in a motorcycle accident that left me on a ventilator initially, had the diagnosis of breast cancer, which ended in a bilateral mastectomy, then chemotherapy due to the cancer in the lymph node. Many surgeries later and after lots of physical and occupational therapy, I can honestly say I am a survivor.

There's a saying asking, "Is your cup half empty or half full?" I've had another chance at life thanks to God. But also, thanks to the doctors, therapists, nurses, co-workers, family, friends, my church and many others, I had the encouragement I needed to heal. My cup is truly full. The kindness that I received from the nurses and everyone who cared for me, when I was hurting and unable to move meant a lot to me and made me want to give back in the same way to others.

I would encourage young people who are trying to decide which field to study to highly consider nursing. There are so many opportunities for leadership and interesting career choices. A few years ago, I decided to finish a goal I had for many years. I returned to school to further my education in nursing. I found out that you're never too old to learn. It's been exciting to share what I've learned with others and apply it to my nursing.

Just to listen, when someone needs to talk is important. I realize we are all vulnerable as human beings to fears and anxieties about events that are outside of our normal activities. I'm thankful that I am a nurse who has had the chance to make a difference in someone's life. Recently, someone came up to me at work and said, "I know you. You were so kind and helped my friend. Now my wife is here as a patient and we feel good about being cared for here." It's wonderful to help a person get through a life-changing event and hear that person say, "Thanks for your kind care and encouragement. You've helped me believe that I can do it!"

Julie Klug, RN
Registered Nurse III
Wheaton Franciscan Healthcare-Elmbrook Memorial Hospital, Brookfield

The 2007 Wisconsin Health Care Employee Pride Program

The nursing profession to me was a natural choice. I didn't decide to become a nurse; I believe the profession chose me. As a child, I cared about others. It may have been family, friends, or acquaintances, but I truly cared how they felt. I always wanted to make a difference. As an adult this caring evolved into my nursing career.

I was very excited to accept a staff RN position in Froedtert's Labor and Delivery. In the past 10 years I have learned much more than clinical knowledge and skills. I have learned to be assertive as a patient advocate. I have learned to be patient with those who may never have patience with themselves. I have learned not to judge and to be professional even in circumstances where it is difficult. I have learned it is acceptable to cry with patients and hug patients. In the midst of nursing assessments and interventions you develop a bond with your patients. You become a chapter in their life story. They look to you with trust and believe that you are going to help them through this emotional and physical process. It is my honor to take care of these patients.

Thinking about my career brings an array of feelings, but mostly a feeling of pride. Realizing I made a difference was defined during one moment. It was a day when many medical teams collaborated together to deliver, emergently, preterm twin babies because the mother had started to bleed internally. This day my assessments, experience, and nursing skills helped alert physicians that this patient was in danger. After the delivery of two babies and stabilization of the mother, the Chief of Obstetrics told me, "You saved some lives today." It brought tears to my eyes as I thought: I was only doing my job.

There are no days in Labor and Delivery that aren't special. Every day is a celebration, whether it is of life or of knowing a life for just a short while.

Robyn Baken, RN
Staff RN Educator, Labor & Delivery
Froedtert Hospital, Milwaukee

Employee Pride Essay

My career in the healthcare field wasn't exactly planned. Most of my past experience has been in Human Resources in a retail setting where the bottom line is the most important issue of concern. Everything is "margin" and "profit", little "caring" or "compassion" is ever recognized. Training or advancing an individual employee within the organization is of a very low priority. Employees come and go quickly sometimes even leaving during a shift, never to return. My life had focused itself on my job. I worked 40-50 hours a week and had to miss some of the really important things in life, like school presentations, sporting events, vacations, weekend outings. My cell phone rang non-stop during evening and weekend hours and, after more years than I would like to admit, I'd had enough.

An opportunity presented itself in the Sunday paper. I applied, skeptical that an interview would even be considered, and was delighted when I received a call. My decision to leave the retail world behind was a good one. My family has gotten the chance to see me much more often and my stress level has decreased tremendously.

Working in a hospital setting exposes me to other individuals who want to help others. Their genuine concern about patients and their families is an inspiration. I've learned that you don't have to dread getting up and heading out the door for work, it's a privilege and an opportunity. I enjoy each and every day that I pass through the doors.

I've always admired those who chose the medical profession, at 18 years old when you are planning your career it takes a special person to commit to a career of healing, standing by the sick in their time of need, and bringing babies in to the world. I feel like I've wasted so many years NOT working in the healthcare field. If I could go back and make my choices again I would plan to walk a different path. Although I don't have direct patient contact, I feel that by being able to support the staff that saves the lives, I can make a difference. I am very fortunate to have this opportunity to work in healthcare!

Joyce Gajewsky
Colleague Support/Services Division Secretary
St. Joseph's Hospital, Chippewa Falls

I walk the long trek from the employee parking lot each morning, never dreading the day ahead of me, never looking for reasons to stay home and watch game shows. The full email mailbox, completed patient satisfaction surveys for review, the red light indicating voicemail messages, and my mound of uncompleted paperwork welcome me. This is the environment of customer relations. My job is one that many of my employment partners state they could not be paid enough money to perform.

Hearing an elderly woman's confusion turn to understanding, sensing the smile in her voice.

Listening intently to the ramblings of a man many people misunderstand because of mental illness. Spending time until his troubled mind runs out of thoughts, then politely thanks me for solving his problem. I never exactly determine what way I helped or what problem he wanted me to solve.

Expressing empathy and reassurance to a crying mother. The mother feeling a physician was rude to her recently sexually assaulted 15-year-old daughter.

Offering suggestions and providing assistance to management so their part of the service recovery process and patient satisfaction goals improve or reflect positively.

My tools are not scalpels, gurneys, medications, and determining diagnosis. My tools are a phone, computer, and providing an ear, a heart, and genuine concern for the perceptions of our patients.

Why do I work in health care and in a department that hears negativity, anger, and frustration? As I described above, for the one smile in someone's voice, bringing one person's inner voice to temporarily be silenced for a short moment, drying tears for one mother, and making the day a little easier for one manager, director, or vice-president. As Albert Einstein said, "Only a life lived for others is worth living."

Jason Dowd
Customer Relations Specialist
Mercy Health System, Janesville

Every day, patients pass through the doors of the clinic and the mission of Aurora Health Care comes alive as doctors, nurses, customer service representatives, lab/x-ray technicians, medical records, switchboard, maintenance staff, etc strive to meet the commitments that have been made to our patients. We move forward together on a journey towards excellence. I am proud to be a part of the collaboration of finding better ways to provide quality healthcare in order to meet the growing needs of our patients and their families.

In 2003 I attended a bible group that focused on working our professional calling as opposed to simply working a "job." I was so inspired by the thought of making a difference in the health and well being of other people that I immediately enrolled in nursing school. I became a C.N.A. and while still in school, had an unfortunate accident that didn't allow me to pursue completion of the nursing program. However, I replaced my office job with that of a home health care/hospice aid allowing me to provide elderly and disabled with motivation, services, and support to help them lead safer, healthier, more productive lives.

My decision to come to work at Aurora in July 2006 had much to do with the extraordinary employee benefits and their widespread reputation for finding better ways to build healthy communities. I found the vast treatment options and the continuity of advanced technology to be impressive. The settings are convenient and comfortable. It is evident that great detail goes in to humanizing patient care from the smiles on the faces of the staff to the genuine compassionate exemplary practices of involving patients with their care.

Achieving results by ensuring positive health care experiences for our patients; who wouldn't want to be a part of that excitement?

Genell Baun
Customer Service Representative
Aurora Health Center, Jackson

The Internet states a coder “serves as a qualified technician in analyzing and classifying medical data. Using universally recognized coding systems, the Certified Coding Specialist assigns codes to diagnoses, injuries and procedures found in the records of patients.”

What it doesn't say is that coders often “see” diagnosis codes in license plates, cash register receipts and various other sets of numbers strung together. I also tend to put my work to song or rhyme.

(To the tune of “The Monkees” theme song)

Here I come
Walking in the door
Sometimes I wonder
What I'm doing it for

Hey, Hey, I'm the coder
People say that's my fame
I'm too busy analyzing
To me it's a numbers game

I code whatever I have to
ER and urgent care
There's surgery, lab and x-ray
Inpatients everywhere

Hey, Hey, I'm the coder
People think I'm ca-razy
I get to work at my own pace
There's no time to be lazy

I'm just tryin' to be precise
What happened to Jack or Jill?
Find the right diagnosis
Before they send out the bill

Hey, Hey, I'm the coder
I'm confident you will agree
As intense as the job is
It seems to be my cup of tea

(To the Tune of Mary Had a Little Lamb)

BMC has a coder
She's really “in the know”
And all the claims that are sent out
Are diagnosed just so

The coder views charts every day
(You'd think she would go mad!)
It keeps the dollars rolling in
Which makes the billers glad

And so the office manager,
HIM boss and CFO
Do appreciate their coder-
They know that she's a pro

Co-workers know she likes her job
It's easy to surmise
Still they ask "How do you do it?"
"I'm anal," she replies

Laurie Zimmerman
HIM Analyst/Coder
Burnett Medical Center, Grantsburg

Health care is not an industry that a person just decides to work in one day. It's not a job that anyone can do. A health care professional has to be a person who is dedicated and cares more about others than themselves. A career in health care is unlike any other profession because it allows us to change people's lives.

Patient care is ultimately what the health care industry is all about. My job entails more than preparing the patient's paperwork for their visit. I must be able to reach out and comfort the patient who was just diagnosed with cancer at the age of thirty and is nervous about the test that they are coming in for, or to make that one phone call an elderly person will receive that day, and all they would like to do is talk. It is both rewarding and humbling to be able to listen to our patients. The life stories that are shared on a daily basis make you stop and appreciate what you have in life. Those are the moments that you will cherish when working in this industry. Every position in the health care field affects patients one way or another, but there are many situations that affect those working in health care as well. The wonderful moments that one gets to experience in this career can change you for a lifetime.

If you are thinking of working in health care, be prepared to give all of yourself to others. Be prepared to listen to those around you, to share experiences, to laugh, to cry and most of all, to care. Nobody said the job is an easy one, but it is the one I enjoy because I can make a difference in someone's life.

Noelle Dahlke
Patient Access Representative
West Allis Memorial Hospital, West Allis

Many people may think that working behind the scenes has little impact on patients but that's not true. My job as a Patient Financial Specialist (PFS) is both challenging and rewarding. As a PFS my responsibility is to help patients understand their insurance benefits, assist them with State, County or Hospital programs and to negotiate payment arrangements.

A significant event that has had the most impact on me was when my parents both became ill and literally accumulated hundreds of bills. Their frustration level was at its highest. Not only did they not understand what their benefits were but they were so overwhelmed with all their EOB's and the insurance jargon that they didn't know where to turn. Unfortunately, the majority of the population has faced or will face a medical procedure in their lifetimes and encounter the same frustrations. I am no different, but thanks to the many years I've spent in the medical/financial field, I was able to successfully make sense of the information I was receiving. This is the real reason why I feel it is so important to continue to work as a PFS. Staying informed helps to enable others to deal with the many facets of the financial impact medical treatment encompasses.

As a PFS one of my responsibilities is to process the applications for the Community Care program the hospital offers. It's this process that reaffirms why I do what I do. The frustrations of the job disappear when you hear those simple words "**THANK YOU, I CAN'T TELL YOU WHAT THIS MEANS TO ME!**" and on occasion there are no words just **TEARS**, and that in the end, **SAYS IT ALL.**

"Extraordinary healthcare from the heart-one person at a time," That is what I think of as I assist each patient at SPMH.

Debra Roznos
Patient Financial Specialist
Sauk Prairie Memorial Hospital, Prairie du Sac

The Wisconsin Health Care Employee Pride Program

The job of administrative assistant might be considered work; to me, what I do at Wheaton Franciscan Healthcare is both a calling and a mission. Although I have worked in many different professional environments and have benefited from my experiences, I was drawn to healthcare because no other industry touches and transforms as many lives. Healthcare affects every single individual, from birth until that final journey, in profound and personal ways. In sickness and in health, as a patient or as a family member or friend, from those we visit to those we hold vigil with, we all are impacted by healthcare.

As a Philanthropy Assistant I do not perform hands-on patient care, but my work affects patients and their families nonetheless. The Foundation for St. Francis raises funds for life-saving projects and services that provide our patients with world-class healthcare located in their own neighborhoods. As one participant in this mission, I believe I am not only serving a hospital, and a healthcare system, but also my community and, ultimately, the greater good of us all.

It is one sad reality of our society that access to healthcare is not always equal; however, the Foundation for St. Francis upholds and supports, in a very practical sense, the mission of its founding Felician Sisters. I feel gratified, believing that my work for the Foundation helps provide essential services to our community.

All work in the healthcare field is a genuine vocation with opportunities to nourish the bodies, minds, and spirits of those we serve. The talents and training of committed healthcare workers bring healing, health, and hope to our communities and our patients every day. We serve those who need us; we also serve our own Greatest Good when we learn from our positions, our coworkers, and those we serve.

Bekye Walker
Philanthropy Assistant
Wheaton Franciscan Healthcare – St. Francis, Milwaukee

I've had many roles in the health care field. At age 19 I became a nursing home certified nursing assistant. In 2001 I was hired by Hudson Hospital as an OB tech. Then two years ago I took a full time position as a surgical/GI scheduler and registrar.

To be honest, I find my current position more fulfilling than I had ever imagined. I not only schedule appointments for patients, I am their source to the information they forgot to ask, didn't think to ask, or felt too silly to ask their doctor.

I was in the 7th grade when I had my first surgery. It was a diagnostic mystery that ended in a hip surgery. The next year I had my appendix removed the day after Thanksgiving. My first two children were born by Cesarean Sections followed by 4 Vaginal Births, of which one was a twin birth. These events all have one thing in common. The health care staff I encountered gave me the opportunity to excel in my role as a front line health care worker. From the moment a patient walks into a facility, each person they come in contact with will leave an impression that is connected to the health care field.

Every day I encounter at least one person, one patient, one family member that I can say I made a difference for. In some instances it is as easy as helping someone find their way. In others it is coordinating a surgical date with a pre-op appointment after speaking to four different insurance representatives to give patient the piece of mind that we are in network and that this procedure will be covered. Now matter how big or small my effort, it is the look in their eyes that says it all: Thank you.

Lacinda Nichols
Scheduler
Hudson Hospital, Hudson

In January of 2002, Hayward Area Memorial Hospital and Hayward Nursing Home offered me the opportunity to develop a volunteer program.

Ten years before, I was an employee and had retired (or so I thought). My attachment to the facility was strong due in part to the consideration given me when there was a long-term illness and death in my immediate family. So I considered it a privilege to be worthy of re-hire after so many years. The big question was, how to go about such a job where none had existed before. Believe it when I say there were lots of prayers involved, and with God's help, we started.

We needed to find out where volunteers were needed and ask department heads what they wanted and where a volunteer would benefit them. This was no easy task. Since they were not accustomed to having "free" help, staff was not sure they needed such a service.

I visited small hospitals with similar programs and talked with their coordinators to develop ideas regarding where volunteers would serve and job descriptions had to be written. The next step was to join the state volunteer organizations to learn what being a volunteer coordinator entailed. Obviously, we needed people and I spoke to the local civic organizations to explain what we were about.

Now, comes the exciting part. My prayers were answered. The volunteers just came out of the woodwork. We have never had to advertise and all positions are usually filled on a daily basis. It now takes approximately 55 bodies per week to fill all the positions and we have 138 active volunteers. Our people work in PT, Inpatient and Outpatient Depts., ER, Information Desk, Health Information, Energy Program, Transportation and the cafeteria. In the resident care facility, volunteers help with passing mail, beauty shop transport, nail care, hand massage and help serve meals. There is a new program starting in Radiology. Our latest program is a group of much needed Spiritual Care Volunteers. They mean so much to our patients and families.

When I am asked to speak or asked about my job, the first thing I say is, "how much time do you have?" This is without a doubt the most rewarding thing I have done in my many years and something I never dreamed I would ever do. The Lord gives us opportunities and abilities that we do not know we are capable of. The people that have come to our program are the most amazing group that I have ever known. The caring, dedication and reasons they are here from all walks of life is remarkable in itself. We have teachers, former employees, housewives and we even had a volunteer who was a vaudeville performer, students, ministers, authors and nurses. The list goes on and on. This is true in all volunteer programs, I am sure. Just to me it is so remarkable that all of these people have just stepped forward when there was a need.

As I mentioned earlier, orientating our staff to use volunteers was a job in itself and now you should hear them when their volunteer is missing for a day. Seems they just cannot operate without this help.

Am I proud of this job and am I thrilled to work for Hayward Area Memorial Hospital and Hayward Nursing Home? You bet I am. Tears come into my eyes when I think and talk about it. Also, you should know just how much support I receive from my supervisor and the administration. They have all offered encouragement and help in the 5 years our program has been growing. I am not a young person and am a grandmother many times over. Hopefully, I will be allowed to keep this job for some time yet and when for some reason I do have to leave it, it will be with great reluctance.

Sara Seitz
Volunteer Coordinator
Hayward Area Memorial Hospital, Hayward

My name is Cory Frederick. I grew up in rural western Wisconsin. I have had Cerebral Palsy all my life. As a result, I have been aware of the need to have rehabilitation available in rural areas since I was little. My desire to be independent in all aspects of my life has been with me since then as well. If I could not do something like everybody else, I usually figured out a way to get the job done in my own way. This knowledge of disability and the ability to problem solve has served me well in my career as an Occupational Therapist.

As an Occupational Therapist, it is my job to assist people with new disabilities in regaining the ability to independently perform the basics of daily life, like feeding, dressing, toileting, bathing, cooking, and working. If I cannot restore function in the injured area, I will start adapting things to maximize independence.

After earning my degree at the University of Wisconsin-Madison in 1992, I knew I wanted to return home to rural western Wisconsin to care for and meet the needs of what I felt was an underserved population. I have been at St. Joseph's Community Health Services in Hillsboro, Wisconsin ever since. I take pride in offering care to my friends and neighbors, which is equal to, and in some cases better than, what they might get 1-2 hours away in a larger city. Proximity to the patient's home allows me to do things the therapist further away cannot, such as home safety modifications and job site visits.

I feel like I make a difference in people's lives every week. I hope to spend the majority of my career in rural practice if the Lord is willing, and that is just fine with me.

Cory Frederick
Occupational Therapist
St. Joseph's Community Health Services, Hillsboro

My career in health care started 15 years ago. I knew I wanted to work in a service industry. I discovered my profession in Occupational Therapy with my research of health care professions. I wanted a career that involved helping people heal mentally and physically but without blood or needles.

People feel better when they are comfortable in their surroundings. This comfort and trust carry over from their healthcare providers, allowing them to heal faster and feel better sooner. Occupational Therapy assists with their activities of daily living skills utilizing energy conservation and work simplification techniques, we help them feel better quicker and the road to recovery is shorter. Occupational Therapy helps people regain strength, refine motor skills to regain daily living skills to improve or maintain their quality of life. This allows them to do the things they need to do and have enough energy to do the things they want to do. This gives me great personal satisfaction knowing they have returned to their own environment as independent as possible.

I feel each employee at Ripon Medical Center is an ambassador for our facility. Overall we have the perfect size facility for the patient to feel trust and ownership in their healthcare and we as Healthcare providers hold their comfort and wellbeing in our hands.

In closing, I am very proud to be a Ripon Medical Center Employee! I am privileged to come to work everyday in a job I love, at a facility I respect, helping people daily feel better mentally & physically, after leaving Ripon Medical Center to continue everyday life.

Wendy Hanson, COTA
Occupational Therapist
Ripon Medical Center, Ripon

Why I Went Into Health Care

My family has a neuromuscular disease called FSP. This disease causes the leg muscles to be weaker and tight. My mother, who has this disease, is an excellent, successful nurse. She has been an inspiration for me as a woman, and a professional. When I was a freshman in high school, my younger brother, who is afflicted, had his hamstrings and heel cords lengthened. We as a family helped him recuperate. I would take him outside so he could walk with his walker and made sure he did his exercises. This is when I knew I wanted to join the health care profession.

In high school, I took anatomy and physiology—I was intrigued by how the human body works. At the end of high school, I was not sure what part of health care I wanted to go into. I decided to go to MATC for the Physical Therapy Program. My thinking was, if I did not like this career, I could always go back to school. Twenty years later, still a Physical Therapist Assistant, I love helping rehabilitate people from their various ailments.

On a more personal level, my thirteen-year-old son is also afflicted with this disease. My background has allowed me to help him through two major orthopaedic surgeries. We both need to exercise daily. With my experience, I am able to not only perform stretching for him; I can encourage him how to be more independent with exercising on his own.

I have worked in many different settings throughout my twenty-year career, from acute care to home care. I have seen many changes in health care throughout the years from technology to the business end. However, the one thing that will remain the same is the reason I went into health care—to help people.

Gynevra Benson
Physical Therapist Assistant
Orthopaedic Hospital Of Wisconsin, Glendale

WHA Employee Pride Program Story

There are many professions that apply customer service on a daily basis: your mechanic, the check out person in the grocery store, or the person who takes your order at McDonald's. I don't know if those people receive the same internal gratification of helping someone as much as those who work in health care. I chose health care/physical therapy to help people when they need help the most. I am able to help patients throughout their recovery stages.

I get to help a patient get stronger to stay in their homes a little longer. I help people recover from all types of injuries so they can get back to their lifestyles. I assist people with things as simple as a pulled muscle and sprains to as complex as learning to walk again after a stroke, amputation, or other life changing events. It is very rewarding to work with a patient and see them overcome their challenges. The smiles on their faces speak volumes.

I love the variety that my career offers. I work with all types of diagnosis and a wide variety of ages from children to elderly. Patients are not always the same. My education gave me the tools to use with different diagnosis, but because not everyone is the same I can use my creativity to adapt to each individual's needs.

I am proud to have a place to go to each day where I am able to make a positive difference in someone else's life.

Alise Shore
Physical Therapist Assistant
Our Lady of Victory Hospital-Ministry Health Care, Stanley, WI

Respiratory Therapists make a real difference

My career as a Respiratory Therapist (RT) was inspired by a therapist named Stuart. He worked at the hospital where my son was born. Adam was a 29-week gestation infant and had multiple health problems. He had a tracheostomy tube to help him breathe, and a feeding tube placed to help him eat. It took the skill and dedication of all the hospital staff, especially RT's, to help with his recovery.

After a long hospitalization it was finally time to take Adam home! Unfortunately, he became very distressed and short of breath after only a few days, and we had to take him back to the hospital. His condition improved, and we were discharged for the second time.

Stuart unexpectedly stopped on his own time the day we arrived home, to evaluate our home medical equipment. He quickly assessed what the problem was, and was able to fix it. Adam was never hospitalized for the same symptoms again! I was very impressed and grateful for Stuart's knowledge and dedication in helping us keep Adam home.

In those first months, I was able to see what a vast impact Respiratory Therapists made in Adam's progress toward discharge. They are experts when it comes to assessing and treating respiratory diseases. I am proud to be a part of this profession, and it's a great feeling every day to make a difference in people's lives.

Today it is my privilege to know my son, who just turned 18 a couple months ago. He recently passed his driver's test, started his first part time job, and is doing well in school. He is an awesome person that I would not have gotten to know without the dedication of Respiratory Therapists like Stuart.

Mike Lindner
Respiratory Therapist
Divine Savior Healthcare, Portage

2007 Wisconsin Health Care Employee Pride Program

“Wouldn’t have it any other way”

Just a few years ago I wasn’t quite sure where my life was headed or what my future held. Since graduating from high school I had attended two different Universities and had pursued a handful of majors that never felt right for me. I was frustrated and scared that I was going to be stuck in a continuous cycle, which would leave me with an enormous school debt and a career I wasn’t truly passionate about. Once I decided to pursue a health care degree my life changed dramatically. Every day now I think of how lucky I am to have a secure job, a promising future, and a profession that leaves me 100% satisfied at the end of the workday.

I had become a Respiratory Therapist in what felt like a blink of an eye. My studies were so interesting and intense that my schooling just flew by. Finding a job was easy, the choices were endless and each inviting in their own way. I joined a winning team with my hometown hospital and was prepared to meet the new challenges head on.

I love my job! There’s nothing more thrilling in this world than to help save peoples lives. Every day, right down to every minute is different. I can go from taking care of a newborn who’s a minute old, to comforting an elderly person who’s near the end of life. I work right along side many brilliant and compassionate people, from doctors, to nurses, to my fellow colleagues. I’m humbled with the experiences I encounter and truly care about the patients, as well as their family and friends.

I wasn’t sure what to expect from my career, but I wouldn’t have it any other way. There are many different opportunities in health care and each, I guarantee, is rewarding.

Franz Schuttenhelm, RRT-NPS
Respiratory Therapist
Gundersen Lutheran Health System, La Crosse

With Our Hearts and Minds, We are Touching Lives

Our hospital logo “with our hearts and minds, we are touching lives” is so true to all the families that step into our hospital. I found this to be evident while working in Registration.

One evening a call came in that a young child had been run over by a tractor. The child would be coming to Grant Regional Health Center and the child’s condition was unknown.

Before long the entrance door opened and a pale faced woman carrying a child wrapped in towels came in. I put my hand on the mother’s shoulder and escorted her to the emergency room. The woman laid her child on the examination table and unwrapped the child for the nurse to examine. Tears filled her eyes as she turned to me and asked if her child was going to be okay. What my words couldn’t say, my hug could. The mother felt cold and was shaking when I hugged her. I spoke comforting words to her while the busy staff was attending to her child. I assured her that our staff would take very good care of her child. I left as she watched over her child.

As I left the emergency room I felt tears in my eyes as I am a mother too. Later the mother came out of the emergency room and told me that her child was going to another facility that deals with the kind of injuries her child had sustained. She thanked me for comforting her.

“With our hearts and minds,” we do touch lives of so many, every day here at Grant Regional Health Center. I am proud of this philosophy and proud to be a part of this hospital.

Pamela Dressler
Housekeeper
Grant Regional Health Center, Lancaster

I feel privileged and blessed to work at Tri-County Memorial Hospital and Nursing Home. My job is in environmental services and it's a great place to work.

Many years ago, I would have never thought I'd be working in a hospital one day!! Coming from an Amish background, I was very limited to opportunities that would enable me to grow as an individual. It's wonderful to be free and able to be a part of something that seemed so distant back then.

One never knows what lies ahead in life, but I was ready when that opportunity became possible. I'm an explorer, and I like to try different things. We grew up on the farm where my husband and I raised our 10 children. All but one is gone from the nest. Loretta will be graduating this year from high school. As our family grew up and left home, I started doing housecleaning for other people. I did that for many years prior to going to work at a lefse factory. I later decided to try something else so I applied here at Tri-County and I was hired almost immediately.

I thought working at a hospital sounded pretty amazing, and amazing it is. It is a wonderful place to work with opportunities to grow and learn something new everyday. We have a great staff of doctors, nurses, nursing assistants, dietary workers, environmental service workers, office personnel, and the list goes on and on. We are definitely a team that works together to make our facility a wonderful place to work, as well as a wonderful place to receive medical care when needed.

I am proud to be a part of the joining hands and hearts that help make a difference at Tri-County Memorial, and thankful to have been given the opportunity to be a player on this great team.

Dora Lambright
Environmental Services
Tri-County Memorial Hospital, Whitehall

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In 1995, I was chosen to be the new computer operator at Beaver Dam Community Hospital.

I had gone to college to learn a job specifically where I did not have to deal with people. As a child I was an introvert. I was first called to speak in front of people in an English class in high school. I panicked. There were tears rolling down my face and I read my essay off the paper rather than facing the students. It was the worst experience I can remember growing up.

When I first started working at the hospital, I worked graveyard – so my contact with other employees was minimal. It was great!

A month later, the main Help Desk person quit and a job opened up in the day. I applied to the new position and was accepted. I had much difficulty relating to anyone on the job. Within the first month, I was basically confronted and warned that I needed to learn how to communicate with people – or think about moving on – and maybe I was working in the wrong field or environment. Wow, what an eye opener that was!

I will never forget that day. Back in those days I forced myself to go out of my way to communicate where I thought I couldn't. I would go out of my way to help visitors find their way to patient rooms or back to the lobby. I would go out of my way to help a visitor pick up all the papers they dropped on the way into the hospital.

When I first decided to do something about my life – just for the sake of keeping my job – it was tough.

But twelve years have passed, and today is here and I still work for Beaver Dam Community Hospital. I no longer force myself to talk to people, to help a visitor, to help a patient's family member - to communicate - with anyone - at any time - on any level. I no longer force myself as it has become a natural thing - for me to do all these things. I have found that in the past several years that I have learned that I actually enjoy being able to help other departments and to help patients and their families. I feel like I have really accomplished something special - each and every time I am able to help or solve a problem – whether it concern our patients – or our medical staff – who do touch the lives of patients. My attitude (whether good or bad) with a co-worker in patient care may affect their interaction with patients for the rest of the day.

As I have moved to web development, I thought of a great new program to brighten the lives of our patients – Ecards! What a wonderful thought. We have had this for a few years now and send to patients and our long-term residents. And they always smile when they receive one.

After all, isn't this what it is all about?

Christine Perry
Information Services Webmaster
Beaver Dam Community Hospital, Beaver Dam



WISCONSIN HOSPITAL
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A Valued Voice

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