

2008 Wisconsin Health Care Employee Pride Program



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The 2008 Wisconsin Health Care Employee Pride Program

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Why I Work in Health Care

Do you know what it is like to be in the pit of hell? Where your life has hit rock bottom and at times you don't even want to go on living? Drug and alcohol addiction steals your soul and consumes your life. It becomes an obsession; you try not to think about it but you know that you can't live with it and you can't live without it. I know because I have been there. When I found there was another way to live, I knew it was my purpose in life to help others discover that "YOU DON'T HAVE TO LIVE THAT WAY IF YOU DON'T WANT TO!"

I am the inpatient clinical substance abuse counselor at the St. Clare Center. To me, coming to work every day is not coming to "work." I am coming to do what I was meant to do with my life. I have a purpose in life, a passion, and a reason to live; much different from the time when I questioned why I even wanted to live.

When patients come to St. Clare Center, they are often in the worst shape of their life. Many have lost everything-their sanity, their jobs, their self-respect, their family, their dignity. They are looked down upon and often asked by others, "Why can't you just quit?"

At the St. Clare Center we teach them and their loved ones that addiction is a disease just like diabetes or heart disease; that they are not bad people or stupid or crazy. In addition to reducing their shame and the stigma of addiction, we teach them the tools to enter recovery and live happy, joyous and free!

I love working in the health care industry because seeing people regain hope, spirit and strength means more to me than any paycheck.

Christina Wilke, MA, CSAC, CSIT
Clinical Substance Abuse Counselor
St. Clare Hospital & Health Services, Baraboo

Finding Better Ways

There is nothing more rewarding than watching an injured athlete returning to the game. Sometimes it does not happen overnight and it takes work by both you and the athlete. You will rarely hear an athlete thank the athletic trainer during the post game interview or newspaper article when they hit the big shot that won the game, but that is not what we are looking for. It is nice when we hear “thank you,” but the greater reward is helping that athlete get the opportunity to hit that shot, score that goal, or make that play that achieves victory. An athletic trainer’s day starts well before the game starts and ends when the court is clear and after the fans have gone home. You will not find us in the box score, the recap, or the highlight reel, but if we have helped an athlete get there, then our job is done. Our best day is when we have nothing to do and every athlete is healthy and playing. Our hardest day is to see an athlete go down and not get up. Our most rewarding day is to see that athlete back out there and just play. You will only see us on the court when there is an injury. As an athletic trainer, our goal and hope is that you never see us, but know that we are always there.

Shawn Bloyer
Athletic Trainer, Sports Medicine
Aurora Medical Center Manitowoc County, Two Rivers

“Why I Chose Health Care as a Career”

Currently, I am a registered nurse at Boscobel Area Health Care, working as the cardio-pulmonary rehabilitation coordinator. I assist cardiac and pulmonary patients with healing while improving their quality of life. I enjoy helping patients and families heal and transform into healthier individuals.

I chose health care as a career because I wanted to make a difference. About 10 years ago, a close friend, Ruth, was diagnosed with terminal pancreatic duct cancer. Ruth was a sister, mother and wife who'd always maintained her composure in the presence of family. Due to her illness, this was very difficult. I was the only person that she would accept assistance from during her worst moments. She allowed me to help her do things that she wouldn't allow family to do, for example: helping her in the bathroom, cleaning up bodily fluids, and witnessing her fear along with sadness. While taking care of Ruth, she told me that I would make an excellent nurse. Ruth was spiritual and believed that god had sent me as her angel, to help ease the cancer. I wasn't sure about this, but with Ruth's opinion and constant persistence from a younger sister, already a nurse, I decided to enroll in nursing school.

Nursing school was extremely challenging and with the roles of student, mom, wife, sister, daughter and part-time certified nursing assistant, I found it difficult to find balance. I later learned this was my preparation for the nursing field.

To me, every day in health care is a reaffirmation of deciding to become a nurse. Nothing is more rewarding than assisting a patient maintain dignity and pride during the process of death, witnessing a mother give birth, assisting sick patients transform into healthier individuals or just providing support for patients and their families.

Theresa Braudt, RN
Cardiac Rehabilitation Coordinator
Boscobel Area Health Care

Alcoholism is a disease; a disease that affects more than just the alcoholic. This disease impacts all the lives around the alcoholic.

Alcoholism is a treatable disease. It cannot be cured, but it can be managed. Through treatment an alcoholic can recover. Through applying the 12 steps of Alcoholics Anonymous an alcoholic can literally change his own life, and in effect change the lives of those around him. If an alcoholic gets treatment there is a domino effect and many lives are improved not only physically, but emotionally and spiritually as well.

I grew up with an alcoholic father who never completed treatment. It was an awful, miserable life. My home was filled with anger, hitting, yelling, loud tirades followed by long silences, and then isolation. My four sisters and I lived in abject terror most of the time. It was better when dad was gone to work and we were home with just mom. Whenever dad wasn't around we could breathe a little easier. But the sad fact was that mom couldn't be a good parent either because she was constantly preoccupied with taking care of dad's alcoholism, preparing for the next outburst, or manipulating the situation in the relentless hope that the next tragedy would be avoided. But it was inevitable. Something always came down – hard, fast and painful. I learned to listen and look for the signs of impending doom. This hyper vigilance robbed me of a carefree childhood, filled me with anxiety and daily consumed my thoughts and actions.

It wasn't until my early 30s that I began to deal with the impact of this disease on my life. I began to attend Adult Children of Alcoholics and Al-Anon. Here I discovered the 12 steps of Alcoholics Anonymous and the serenity that comes from living according to their precepts. Today I work as a counselor in Hudson Hospital's Programs for Change. This is an outpatient drug and alcohol dependency treatment program. I work here in hopes that other families' lives will be better than mine ever was. I cannot change what happened to me while growing up, but I can teach and guide those that come through our treatment program to live in recovery and therefore positively impact the lives around them. I now listen and look for the signs of sobriety, loving relationships, gratitude, contentment and life satisfaction.

Two years ago, at the age of 87, my father wrote me the letter I had been waiting for all of my life. He wrote to acknowledge and apologize for his cruel treatment of me and for his lack of appropriate parenting. He asked for forgiveness. He died one year later. But we had one good year together as father and daughter. That gives me great hope that people can change no matter how long they have been entrenched in the disease of alcoholism. Hence, Hudson Hospital's Programs for Change is the ideal place for me to work right now.

Sandra Larson, MSE, LPC, SACIT
Counselor, Programs for Change
Hudson Hospital

Some people choose to work with **things**. Some people want to work with **ideas**. Others have the privilege to work with **people**. I am in the last category and that decision has been the best choice of my life.

While there can be great pride and satisfaction in creating things, there is nothing that can compare to the satisfaction that my job creates. Every time I meet with patients, I have the chance to help them have a better life. I am grateful for this chance and I am well rewarded for it as well. There is no better payment that I receive than the tentative smile after a tear or two is wiped away or the heart-felt “thank-you” quietly spoken or even the nervous laugh followed by the words, “that wasn’t nearly as bad as I thought it would be!” when a patient leaves my office after his first insulin injection.

And for those people who want to work with ideas, I am grateful to be able to use the fruits of their labor in my job. In health care, I see ideas put into practice. Health care is never stagnant; there is always change and innovation. My patients benefit from these changes whether it is a new computer system that makes medical records more accessible and care more cohesive or whether it is the design of a new product that make injections less painful. My job skills are constantly expanding to benefit my patients.

My relationships with patients have allowed me the opportunity to give them a chance at a healthier happier life. Hopefully, this will allow them to continue to work with **things**, or **ideas** or even better, with other **people** in the health care field.

Pat Celek RN, CDE
Diabetes Educator
West Allis Memorial Hospital

“You’re not supposed to get emotionally attached to the patients.”

“Yeah, sure. Like THAT’S gonna happen.”

I recall the day I wrote that sentence. I was in class with seven other radiation therapy students, being told to detach ourselves from the folks afflicted with cancer. Not to get “close.” It wasn’t meant to be insulting. It was just a bit of advice to help us deal with the emotional roller coaster that one can ride in the oncology field. The advice was wrong. VERY WRONG.

How can I not walk into the waiting room and give “Mrs. Smith” a hug, especially after she shared her fabulous fudge recipe. Or laugh when “John Doe” cackled with delight at my expression as he told one of his famous Ole and Lena jokes. Should I distance myself when the resident “grandma” asks about my kids, while she sits knitting her third potholder for the week? Should I avoid the celebration the family holds in the lobby for their Packer fan when he graduates from treatments and skip the green and gold cake? When these wonderful people visit us for 5-6 weeks, how can you NOT get attached? Why would you not WANT to?

I’ve worked in the oncology field for 24 years. The people I’ve met over the years are the most resilient, warm-hearted people you could ever hope to acquaint yourself with. The business of health care must not be overlooked but the enthusiasm and delight comes from getting to really know those patients we have had the fortune to meet and care for.

As my career has evolved, I have less patient contact but I am still an ardent “cheerleader” for working in the field. Just ask any student who bumps into me.

Besides, I want that green and gold cake!

Colleen Brogan-Raasch
Dosimetrist, Radiation Oncology
Gundersen Lutheran Health System, La Crosse

I work in the Emergency Room as a technician where I assist the nurses and doctors with patient care. I use skills that I learned as an EMT-IV tech with my local ambulance service as well as skills I have learned here on the job. I work with a wonderful group of people that truly understand how strong a unit can be as a team. I have the opportunity to make a difference in someone's life every shift that I work. Things happen daily that reaffirm my decision to work in health care. The middle-aged woman battling cancer throughout her body who is more concerned about ruining an outing with friends, than the horrible illness that is taking her life. The pre teen boy, badly burned, who trusts me enough to let me hold his hand and comfort him through a lot of really painful procedures. The elderly lady in the last chapter of her life who hugs me and asks God to bless me for the simple act of bringing her a warm blanket and tucking her in.

This career affords me the opportunity to pull from within myself things that I was never aware I contained, for this I will be eternally grateful. It challenges me to be the best "me" that I can be. How many people get to leave work at the end of a shift and know that they made a difference, no matter how small, in someone's life? You may have eased a pain, quelled a fear or even comforted a loss? Maybe you just listened or gave a smile, but you got to connect.

I am proud of the facility and people I work with. The commitment and dedication that I witness on a daily basis shines a light in what can sometimes be a very dark world.

Lanny Harder
Emergency Room Technician
Red Cedar Medical Center, Menomonie

Hospice & Homecare

If someone would have told me five years ago that I would work with the elderly I would've thought that they were crazy. I was always a little scared of them, but I always liked helping people. Working with Hospice and Homecare has changed my life and is now leading me to a new career.

Helping people is what I do. In my mind, lending a helping hand is one of the most important things a person can do in the world. I work in the Hospice and Homecare Department at Black River Memorial Hospital and I get to help people more and more every day. I get to help them continue their normal daily routines, meet their personal needs, help them achieve goals, help them live at home with support, or be comfortable until their time comes.

To tell you the truth, I was always scared of the elderly. One day I decided that I would just try and see what it was like to work in an assisted living, just because I've always loved helping people. It turned out that I love my job and it made me want to boost my career into becoming a Registered Nurse. I am in the process of becoming a Registered Nurse right now. I am a full-time student at the Western Technical College.

Everything I do in my job reaffirms my decision about my career. Helping people, making people smile and laugh, helping people live on their own so they don't have to leave the comforts of their own home, helping the sick ones stay at comfort, and making one at peace; all of these reaffirm my decision to work in the health care field.

Ashley Huber
Home Health Aide
Black River Memorial Hospital, Black River Falls

When I graduated from high school in the seventies, I went to college for a degree in communications. I never considered nursing as a choice at this time. I thought you had to be one of those “science people.”

The wonderful care I received at the birth of my third and fourth child ignited a little spark of interest, but the demands of my family didn't allow me to pursue this. Within the next two years however, I was to find myself the main financial support for my children. Remembering that little spark from years ago, I investigated the field of nursing.

From my first experiences on the post-partum unit to a wonderful role as a home visitor for moms/babies, I learned how to teach. Then, an opportunity was given to me by a mentor to supervise a group of quality high-risk maternity nurses.

Later, I found myself again in home care with the Aurora Visiting Nurse Association. This was an amazing opportunity to learn new skills and spend quality time with our patients. After another stint as nursing supervisor, I find myself beginning a new journey as an infection control coordinator. More learning, more teaching, more ways to impact the health of our patients ...

I can truly say that I can't imagine another career where I would have been given the chances to impact so many lives in a positive manner. When I think back to my high school days and my dreams, I am not disappointed. Rather, I think I have accomplished more than I could have imagined.

I hope you will consider nursing as a career. Take the opportunities presented to you and tell yourself what an intelligent decision you made!

Laura Grant, RN
Infection Control Coordinator
Aurora Medical Group

At St. Vincent Hospital our mission is to carry out the healing ministry to those in need. As a 21 year employee, having worked in various roles, I've found the job I love as a massage therapist. I care for those facing life threatening illnesses with adult/pediatric palliative care.

Most of the patients and families I see are facing a difficult situation, are worried, anxious, and often times have pain. They understand that I am there to try and help them, to lessen their burden, and be at peace for a while. It's a unique job I have, to do hands-on work, while having the time to listen, share, pray or just provide a quiet caring presence. The opportunity is there each day to truly make a difference.

I often hear comments like: "Your favorite person is here, I've been waiting for you, look how relaxed mom or dad looks, this cheered me up, I forget about the pain when you're here."

I'm especially honored to provide care to the end-of-life patients. Some patients have just enough strength left to smile or nod hello. Family members can see how their loved one responds to the peaceful touch. I'm able to share with them the techniques I've used so they can continue when I'm not present. I receive many hugs, blessings, and thank you's for the compassionate act of comfort massage.

I also get to visit the joyous rooms of the newly delivered moms and their babies, who are just as anxious to get some needed relief.

It's rewarding to me and a privilege to meet or sometimes say goodbye to so many...as **every person is a treasure, and every life is sacred**. I'm pleased to work for a hospital providing this valuable and needed service.

Marilee Petasek
Certified Massage Therapist
St. Vincent Hospital, Green Bay

I feel like one of the luckiest people I know as I have found a career in which I wake up every morning and look forward to going to work. I am currently a Medical Assistant in a rural clinic setting with a wonderful doctor. There are so many things that I have learned and continue to learn every day. This position has taught me to be a patient, caring, and compassionate person. I have the opportunity to work with a doctor whom has taught me to see the best in people and give them the benefit of the doubt no matter what their current situation.

I truly have the best of all worlds in the nursing field. Every day we see patients of all ages and many different backgrounds. We see them for a variety of reasons from general checkups to life changing diagnosis. It is very rewarding to watch infants grow as they come in for their monthly check-ups and later in life, their yearly physicals. There is nothing more rewarding than to have a little one run down the hall for a hug when she walks in the door.

In what other profession can you touch so many lives the way you can in health care? It can range from just a simple "good job" to helping patients find programs to pay for prescription medications they would not otherwise have the means to afford. We change lives every day in many different ways.

While working in a rural clinic, there is rarely a dull moment. New patients come in every day and we never experience the same day twice. We even have the occasional injury walk in the door and many times we have the opportunity to treat them right in the office.

So, what motivates me? Touching patients lives, possibly assisting in the prevention of a life leaving before it's time, and the love we feel every day for our patients.

Heather Jahnke
Medical Assistant
Berlin Memorial Hospital

My Career in Health Care – Nursing

I was in the 8th grade when my mom became sick with cancer. As my mom lost more and more weight and pain got worse, I would give her back rubs with her favorite lotion, Oil of Olay. She told me it was one of the only things that seemed to help.

To this day I remember that, and try to offer my patients back rubs when they can't seem to get comfortable. These personal times spent with patients, trying to make them more comfortable, are the most rewarding for me.

Working at the Madison Veterans Hospital has helped me see what an impact nurses can have on patients, families and organizations. Nurses get passionate about the care they provide and are always working to make things better.

During my 21 plus years at the Veterans Hospital, I have had the privilege to get to know so many wonderful people (patients, their families and health care staff). People often say, "It feels so good to help people get better." But they often forget, not all patients get better. I've rubbed the backs of dying patients and helped patients relearn to walk after surgery. Helping patients get better is always rewarding, but just helping them, even if they don't get better, is sometimes more rewarding; getting to share a part of their life with them is what nursing is all about for me. Health care is all about relationships.

Lucy Altwegg, MSN, RN, ONC
Nursing Education Coordinator
William S. Middleton Memorial Veterans Hospital, Madison

Coming from a mortuary family background, I learned compassion quite early. I learned at a young age that we are here on this earth to help each other in whatever way we can. I have been through many different avenues of employment and the one that keeps coming back to me as rewarding is one that is in being of service to others.

While visiting my elderly relatives in my younger years, my sister and I would play “nurse.” She would pass out the candy pills and I would tuck them into bed, fluff their pillows and make sure all their needs were met. A nurturing mother at home and a father whose occupation as a funeral director was to minister to families in the loss of their loved ones, enabled me to learn compassion from both parents.

At all stages of life, whether grieving or in meeting others’ unmet needs, whether giving a glass of water to the thirsty, or putting a cool wash cloth on the forehead for comfort, or a few words said from the heart, allow me that sense of pride, knowing I’ve done my best and am at peace with myself. They might remember your face and sometimes your name, but they never forget how they felt when you took care of them. And when you leave to return home, you smile and you are reminded that a rewarding day has taken place today. It is then that I am most fulfilled.

A working clock must keep good time. We always need the second hand on the clock to keep the right time. As the one that oversees the need of others, call me the “second hand” in time. Keeping balance is a necessity of life. What a privilege it is to serve others!

Catherine Willger
Patient Care Technician 1, Med/Surg Dept.
Lakeview Medical Center, Rice Lake

It seems kind of silly to talk about why I like being a physician assistant, because it seems so obvious. When I was applying for physician assistant programs, one piece of advice was given: "Don't say you want to be a PA because you want to help people." Some say it is a rhetoric that is overstated and has lost its meaning. However, I don't believe it has lost its meaning. Most of us in health care are driven to the field because of our desire to care for others. We are people that genuinely want to improve the lives of others.

I am in the most awesome profession. I love to see an overweight patient look at the scale and say they've lost weight. I like going to the grocery store and seeing the carts of my patients filled with healthy items. I smile when little kids say they "love you" because you were kind to them and talked about their "green boogers." I appreciate telling a depressed person that they are not alone, and helping them see the light at the end of the tunnel and deciding how to bring that light closer. I am glad to see a patient I diagnosed with late stage bladder cancer, one year later, cancer free. I enjoy the investigative work of a difficult case.

I love teaching future health care professionals, and feel rewarded when they enjoyed their time with me so much they choose to do an elective rotation with me again. Teaching is probably the biggest reward. I learn how much I truly know, and I get to see fresh inspired faces just entering the field that I enjoy. So, I guess I enjoy what I do because I love helping people. Cliché or not, it's the truth.

Amanda Westmoreland (Kettner), MS, PA-C
Physician Assistant, Family Medicine
Bellin Health Systems, Green Bay

Pride

I remember the first time that I walked into St. Joseph Hospital of Milwaukee. I was seventeen and my younger sister was pregnant. That may not seem unusual in today's standards but, in 1974 and in my family it was a really big deal. We entered on Chambers because the emergency department was there at the time. I was impressed by how efficient the registration people and nursing staff were. It reminded me of what and how I saw things on TV "Doctor Ben Casey." Except what I saw was a chalky-skinned patient with IV tubes, 2 bloody nosed men sitting in a corner of the room and a mom holding a crying baby in her arm. I looked over to my very scared and in pain sister and said "I want to be a nurse."

It was not the patients that I saw sitting in the waiting room—it was how the staff took care of the patients that I was looking at.

I started working at St. Michael Hospital from 1978 through 1981. I then came to St. Joseph Hospital in April of 1982 and currently still here. My career started in the Emergency Department as and ED Tech. I was the first in that role. I did all non-invasive procedures from splinting to irrigations, CPR to blood draws. I loved patient care and wanted to be a patient advocate for good health care. I am a cancer survivor and have a clear understanding why it is important to talk to your patients and not about your patients.

In 1998 I graduated from Alverno with a major in Communication and Business all the while working full time 12 hour days and being a single mom. I am now the Coordinator of the Save A Life Foundation here at St. Joseph Hospital but reaches all of Southeastern Wisconsin. We train bystanders to become first responders. We also train both professionals and non-professionals in CPR.

My decision to work in health care was made on my very first visit to St. Joseph in 1974 but, my career decision was affirmed through the many years of seeing good community care provided by the nursing staff at Wheaton Franciscan Healthcare.

Gloria Singleton-Young, RN
Save a Life Coordinated
Wheaton Franciscan Healthcare – St. Joseph, Milwaukee

Social Workers, Not a Profession for Just Anyone!

Hello, my name is Katie Graf; I have been a Social Worker for Door County Memorial Ministry Hospital for over 23 years.

In March of 1970 our small town called Sister Bay, which is about 30 miles north of Door County Memorial Ministry Hospital, had its worst snowstorm of the year. I was thirteen years old and was experiencing my first life threatening Asthma attack. In those days our small town did not have an ambulance department. The country doctor came to you and if you needed to go to the hospital in a hurry the local mortician picked you up and gave you a ride. Needless to say this is what happened. I came very close to losing my life that night. Had I needed to go any further for treatment I would have. Thankfully I don't remember a lot of the experience, but what I do remember is the wonderful, compassionate care that I received. I vowed then to someday work in the health care field.

When I arrive at work each day at DCMH I never know what the day will bring. But what I do know is that I will be busy and never dull. In addition to working closely with patients, their families, doctors and other staff throughout the hospital, the Skilled Nursing Home, Women's and Children's Center, our four outlying clinics, and the Cancer Center, I also have the great honor of coordinating the Ministry Fund, sometimes referred to as the "Katie's Fund." This is where I get so much satisfaction out of my job. I thank God every day for the blessings that I have, but most of all for his guidance in allowing me to make a difference in so many peoples lives.

Katie Graf, CSW
Social Worker
Door County Memorial Hospital, Sturgeon Bay

Do you get to spend time talking to a 16-year-old who just gave birth and is considering an adoptive home for her newborn? I DO. Do you get to counsel family members on what options they have to consider in order to find an appropriate nursing home for their loved one? I DO. Do you have the opportunity on a daily basis to see a team of doctors, nurses, and other health care professionals give compassionate care to seriously ill individuals? I DO. I am privileged to experience all of these situations because I am a medical social worker employed at Wheaton Franciscan Healthcare – St. Francis Hospital.

I chose to work in the medical field because of my strong desire to help people, to be a resource to others, to make a positive impact (even if a small one) on people's lives, and to be part of a Catholic health care organization that promotes the healing ministry of Jesus Christ.

It's my job to be with patients and families during their struggle, be a resource of information and present options, be a comfort to them, to listen to them, to try and ease the anxiety of what they are experiencing, and to let them know I do care.

I truly believe that God has placed me at St. Francis so that I can be of service to Him by thus serving others. I can't tell you how many times I've been getting ready to leave at the end of the day and decided to answer the that last phone call only to find myself being called to be with a patient or a family member who is in great need of comfort and support. He puts me where I need to be.

That's what medical social work is all about.

Ellyn Laessig, MSW
Social Worker
Wheaton Franciscan Healthcare – St. Francis Hospital, Milwaukee

Who's Helping Who?

When I was in college my goal was to work at Children's Hospital of Wisconsin because I love kids! What I didn't realize is that once I was hired, all the formal education in the world could never have prepared me for the life changing experience I was about to encounter. The concept of having a "bad day" took on a whole new meaning for me as my eyes were opened to a perspective of what really matters. I was instantly humbled by the grace and immeasurable faith I observed. My heart was touched by the strength of these children and their families.

Never did I think I would stand beside a mother about to say good-bye to her child taken off life support. Never did I think I would be brought to tears as I witness a mother's joy when she heard her child say, "I love you" for the first time after having a brain tumor removed. Never would I have understood the breath-taking amazement of seeing a child transition from a coma to walking down the hall for a visit after being discharged from the hospital. Never would I have realized the blessing of seeing a teenager in Oncology who cleverly decorated his balding head for Halloween just to make everyone smile.

Never could I have imagined the impact of receiving a letter from a family member after their child had died, thanking me for all that I did...It was at that moment I realized, it was all of them who helped me. My life has been enriched. Yes, I work at Children's Hospital because I love kids... and for so much more!

Lori Ann Johnson, MS, CCC/SLP
Speech/Language Pathologist
Children's Hospital and Health System, Milwaukee

Working in health care is a great source of pride for me. I love to share my experiences and growth with the people around me. I am a Registered Nurse on a Palliative Care and Sickle Cell inpatient unit at Froedtert Hospital. Some people outside of health care may wonder how I can possibly have chosen that area of expertise. The truth is that it chose me. When my grandfather was diagnosed with a terminal illness, I watched as my mother brought him into our home and cared for him. As he lived his final days, he suffered tremendous pain and I saw how the nurses attended to his needs. I realized, even at a young age, that no matter who you are, where you are from, or what situation you are in, you deserve the best possible care at the end of life. I have since been a part of many final days, but I have always sought to maintain a peaceful and caring place for patients and families to say goodbye. There have been difficult situations in my career, especially when I cared for a young mother of five as she made her final journey. Nothing has compared to the feeling of reuniting an elderly couple as she was saying goodbye at the end of her life and he was in the hospital still fighting for his own. The memories of my patients stay with me and keep me going. It is those rewarding experiences that let me know I am in the right place at Froedtert doing the right thing for my patients.

Colleen McCracken, BSN, RN, CMSRN
Staff RN/Educator
Froedtert Hospital, Milwaukee

Today, I am proud of what I have done to help others. My day started by assisting a neurosurgeon repair a man's back by placing screws and a rod in his spine. As a surgical technician, my job is to setup and organize the two big tables with the needed equipment and instruments in the order they are used.

After lunch, I was told to rush to the Cesarean section room. I am there just long enough to get the instruments and supplies organized and counted before the new mom is rushed to the room. She is crying, shaking and very scared. I try to offer a word of comfort. I witness a baby take her first breath of air and a parent cry with joy over a miracle they have waited so long for.

I leave for the day, only to be paged back to work 3 hours later. I am needed to 2nd scrub a heart surgery. I rush in; scrub my hands, gown and glove, and step up to the operating room table. I place my hands on a woman's heart to hold it in a certain position to allow the cardiovascular surgeon to sew on the bypass vein graft with the hair-like suture. Any movement of my hand, even millimeters can affect this process.

Allowing this woman a second chance at life, I go home feeling like I have helped a few patients today in my humble but very important job.

Rhoda Dorshorst
Surgical Technician
Saint Joseph's Hospital, Marshfield

I have worked as a phlebotomist for just about 21 years at Memorial Medical Center in Neillsville, WI. Oddly enough, I explored a career in phlebotomy because I was looking for a way to overcome my negative reaction to seeing my children's blood whenever they'd get hurt! I enrolled in a phlebotomy class, and somehow, not only overcame my "fear" of blood, but found a new purpose in my life.

I love my job and being with the patients. To me, drawing blood is a small part I play in helping doctors heal our patients, but yet an important part.

I pray every morning when I wake, that God continues to give me the steadiness in my hands and the love and kindness in my heart to understand and do excellent work in healing our patients. When I go to bed at night, I think of the tears that may have been shed or the comforting words that were spoken between a patient and myself during that day. I ask God to be with those patients and their doctors throughout their healing process.

It makes me feel good when a patient says, "I sure like the way you draw my blood. It seldom hurts when you draw me." When putting a needle in someone's arm, it is never my intention to hurt them or cause distress. My intentions are to help the doctors make the patient get better.

To see patients walk away with a smile on their face or a look of encouragement, I know that I did my job well and contributed to the overall good of someone's life. It is an honor to play this role here at Memorial Medical Center, and to be part of the world of health care.

Sandra Schumacher
Phlebotomist
Memorial Medical Center, Neillsville

PRIDE

Some people have asked me, "Why did you go into health care? Did you just wake up one morning and say, 'I'm going to do mammograms all day'?" My answer to them is no, but when I was sixteen years old I had foot surgery in La Crosse and spent the summer going back and forth for follow-up x-rays and tests. One day I asked the person who was doing my x-rays what her title was and she said, "I'm a radiologic technologist." I asked her what other exams she did and if she liked her job. She said that she loved it and especially loved working with patients. She was extremely helpful, offering a tour of the radiology department and carefully explaining the types of tests I would see first as a student then as a technologist.

After I graduated from radiology school I was hired by The Richland Hospital, where I have worked for almost 23 years as a registered radiologic technologist and a mammographer. In Mammography patients come to the Medical Imaging Department with a lot of anxiety and fear which can be very distressing to them. By visiting with them and making them feel comfortable and instructing them that you are going to do this exam together and not to them is crucial to a good relationship between the technologist and patient. I find they are more willing to cooperate with you to get the views needed for a good exam to submit for a diagnosis. What motivates me? "Patients."

I love my job as a radiologic technologist and I encourage students in high school to go out and job shadow the different departments and conduct interviews with staff. This would be a good first step in directing oneself into "a lifetime of happiness working in health care!"

Marsha Jones
Radiologic Technologist
The Richland Hospital, Richland Center

How are you? Can I help you? How was your day?

When we order a cup of coffee, purchase a pair of shoes or walk into our own homes these common phrases are often exchanged. Courteous and considerate words we hear every day, in every walk of life, spoken in every language.

But in health care these kind words take on their own meaning. The words, though simple, will be spoken through a caregiver's heart, which in turn will care for yours. With compassionate hands and a heartfelt love for your work, a health care career is not just associated with caring for the sick in need. The caregiver will not be the only person you meet when receiving care as a patient. We are everywhere. You, or a passerby, may not recognize who polishes the floors, but we notice their absence. Nor the gentle voice of the lab technician who comforts the fear of a non-English speaking patient with soothing words in his or her own language.

We do notice the doctor who stops just once more to check on the status of their patient, delaying their final drive home once more that week. The volunteer who offers directions, a technician who brings a warm blanket, or the smiling eyes behind the surgical mask. A career in health care requires your heart and soul. My part may be small or go unnoticed, or it may be of great regard, but in all it still requires the same compassion and love for my work. It is this hope that my presence, my small corner of caring each day, is the part that heals in health care. It is why I chose the medical profession. And in turn, someday it may be your compassionate hands, soothing words, or unnoticed presence that heals my heart and soul.

Dawn M. Voland RT(R)
Radiologic Technologist
Aurora Sheboygan Memorial Medical Center, Sheboygan

Radiography became an extremely stimulating and challenging field for me after losing my manufacturing job of 23 years due to outsourcing. I became especially interested in radiography after observing my daughter endure numerous back x-rays during her teen years due to a growth abnormality. Watching her experience emotional and stressful procedures and hoping to become more involved, I was inspired to enroll at Bellin School of Radiography. This career change involved the entire family sacrificing time and money for my education at a time when I had one daughter attending UW Madison, another daughter in high school and a wife that had to take over my duties supporting the family's needs.

There were several overwhelming moments throughout my education and training that remain very vivid memories, but I would not change any of my trials and tribulations to have the opportunity to be working in radiography. Every day I look forward to arriving at one of the finest facilities in Rhinelander and working with the first-rate professional staff at Saint Mary's Hospital. It is with great pride that I work side by side with people who practice health care needs at all levels.

My utmost motivation in attaining a health care career is my family. Without their support, I would not be given this opportunity to serve my community by helping others and I look forward to both of my daughters joining the health care field. My older daughter is currently in Mexico serving as a volunteer for physically and sexually abused children and will pursue a graduate public health degree after completing her two years of humanitarian service. My younger daughter is a medical scholar at UW Madison.

Alan Vander Wielen
Radiology Technician
Sacred Heart-Saint Mary's Hospitals, Rhinelander

I always knew I was destined to work in health care, but was never sure just what I wanted to do. As a young high school student, indecision led me to a semester of college and work that I never really enjoyed. At the age of 21, I returned to Madison Area Technical College with hopes to be accepted into the Radiography Program. Fascinated with biology, anatomy, psychology, and physics... I had found my niche. Enjoying every minute of college life, clinical rotations and rapidly changing technology, I graduated with an Associate's Degree in Applied Science and soon after took my Radiologic Technology board exam. As a Registered Technologist of Radiology, I began my career at Memorial Hospital of Lafayette County (MHLC) in Darlington in 1994. At a rural hospital, my training and experience has surely been a diverse one—technology and equipment changes, new procedures and modalities, and getting to know many patients one on one. I found myself having a passion for helping people, and being a Registered Mammography Technologist as well, I felt I could make a difference by giving women a positive experience through mammography.

When an opportunity for a career change became available in June of 2006, I had to make a very challenging decision—leaving the comforts of a 12-year career in direct patient care to one of Public Relations and Community Outreach. I am truly enjoying every day of that decision, being able to still be in the same facility where I began my career and to have the privilege to promote the quality health care that is provided by everyone here at MHLC. I do truly miss the one on one contact I had with patients on a day-to-day basis, but I feel that as the Community Outreach Director of MHLC, I can now use my creative side along with my clinical background to contribute to the success of my new career!

Kristine Roelli
Community Outreach Director
Memorial Hospital of Lafayette County, Darlington

I have always felt compelled to care for others. As a young child, I can remember spending a lot of time in the nursing home where my mother, an LPN, worked. My brother and I interacted with the residents and raced wheelchairs down the hallway.

I became a caregiver through babysitting and caring for my mother after kidney surgery. In high school, I had volunteered in the nursing home because the joy you can bring to another person's life for something as simple as a five minute conversation is priceless.

Starting college, I became a CNA and applied at St. Mary's Care Center. I became a mentor and Lead CNA. As my graduation came closer, other students said, "Why don't you go work in the hospital?" I replied, "The nursing home is where my heart and soul is. I love all the relationships I have made there, and I wouldn't want to lose that. A nursing home is a great place to work, and many people need my help there."

As a registered nurse, I climbed the ladder from charge nurse to Medicare Coordinator to Director of Therapy. Through all of those years, I have made many friends. I hold all those who have touched my life, both resident and co-worker alike, very close to my heart and consider them family. My job is a second home to me, and I love working there.

Recently, a resident and close friend passed away. I realize that I couldn't have had any of these experiences, both joys and sadness, if I had not found the Care Center. I wouldn't even be standing here today if it weren't for the love and support of my mother, my true mentor, and the values and experiences I gained from being a part of St. Mary's.

John Galewski
Director of Therapy
St. Mary's Care Center, Madison

Hope is the beginning of all victory.

Being unable to attend to patients' emotional and psychological needs during my years in the medical and surgical fields left me frustrated.

As a medical nurse, whenever I spent five minutes at the bedside of a lonely and worried person, their appetite and motivation to recover would be greatly enhanced. Often, I found that patients and family members in the midst of their crisis often needed to "tell their story" to someone caring. I found it difficult to leave a wounded person untouched with compassion and sensitivity.

In 2000, a friend suggested I apply to Rogers Memorial Hospital. While I did not think I would be hired without psychiatric nursing experience, I discovered that I had been practicing as a "psychiatric nurse" all along.

People are multidimensional. I can use my hands and head, but without a heart of compassion, I would be nothing but a machine. I can care for people's souls as well as their bodies in any setting – this is the essence of nursing. I have had patients tell me that I have given them HOPE. Hope is the beginning of all victory.

Today, I teach nursing students in mental health settings. My desire is to impart them with compassion for people in crisis. There is nothing I would rather be doing! My students tell me their eyes and hearts have been opened to the needs of vulnerable people struggling with psychological anguish. My students realize these needs are universal wherever they practice.

At Rogers Memorial, I have the pleasure and immense satisfaction to practice nursing with people across all ages and at all stages of life.

Joan Neave, RN
House Supervisor
Rogers Memorial Hospital, Milwaukee

My Health Care Career Story

Ten years ago, I would not have guessed that I'd be working in health care. I began working in computer manufacturing. I went back to school to study computer information, with no intention of seeking a career in health care. I found that a new programmer didn't have many opportunities; companies wanted somebody with experience.

I began in home care, and then applied for a position in a hospital. Could I apply manufacturing quality experience to health care? I thought manufacturing moved quickly. Guess what? The information age has hit health care too.

Health care and manufacturing seemed worlds apart. My first month in this position, I experienced a Joint Commission survey (which began my third day on the job), a meeting with medical staff, a board meeting, a quality council meeting and many others. My challenge was applying product manufacturing to health care quality. This means teaching caregivers how to trend data. My part of patient care is reporting opportunities to improve the process.

When I first worked at the hospital, I would hear, "That is just a holding place for the morgue," or "I drove my husband 35 more miles just because I won't stop there for care." This scared me, and gave me determination to educate the community. I coached on the benefits of having the connection with a health care system: additional resources, better technology and ongoing process improvements. Now I hear, "Did you hear about the 18 year old kid they flew meds in from Mayo to save his life?" and "My doctor recognized my needs early and helped me connect to the best care."

As I learned about National Patient Safety Goals and Sentinel Events, I was able to follow my mom's care better. Thanks to my coaching when asked her name and date of birth, mom replies, "I sure am glad you asked me that."

There are so many aspects of patient care that never touch or see a patient, but that can influence change and opportunity.

Lisa Short
Quality Resources Director
Luther Midelfort Chippewa Valley – Mayo Health System, Bloomer

Being raised in the city of Marshfield beneath the shadow of the Marshfield Clinic in a family with a severely handicapped sibling destined me to seek a career in health care. Resources to care for handicapped people were limited in the 60's. The options were to institutionalize my sister or care for her at home. A wonderful pediatric neurologist took my family under his wing and showed us how to help my sister. While my mother bore the majority of my sister's care, I was immersed in "caring" from very young on.

I have officially been in health care 32 years, first in neurodiagnostics and now sleep medicine. I still find a great deal of satisfaction from helping someone find the answers to the questions they have concerning their sleep health. No one wants to admit they snore or stop breathing at night. In fact, the influence of a significant other is usually how people end up in the sleep lab. When you can show someone the roller coaster their blood oxygen levels and heart rate are on when they are supposed to be "resting," it is hard to deny they have a problem. That, however, is not the reward. The reward comes after a patient is put on CPAP. The smile on their face, the check mark in the box "much improved" when rating their sleep, the hug or thank you in the morning is what it is all about.

Recently, I started doing follow up calls one month after a patient has been on CPAP. Patients struggling on CPAP challenge you to find a solution, and those succeeding on CPAP rave they "feel like new." This has reaffirmed to me that what we are doing can provide a dramatic improvement in a patient's quality of life.

Marjean Schuelke, RPSGT, R. EEG T.
Coordinator, HYMC Sleep Lab
Howard Young Medical Center, Woodruff

A college professor always gives the same essay question for his last test. The professor warns that he is looking for just one answer.

He asks simply, “Why did you choose your profession?”

As it turns out, the answer he is looking for is, “**Because I just can’t imagine doing anything else.**” He wants his students to love what they are doing so much that they just can’t **imagine** doing anything else.

* * * * *

For people who want to make a difference by helping others, working in hospitals/health care can be a wonderful, fulfilling career; a career to say, “I just can’t imagine doing anything else.”

With a health care career, we basically have so much--stability that is currently labeled as “recession proof;” educational and advancement opportunities, working with cutting-edge technology.

But this is the real bonus: It’s the way you **feel** when your focus is helping fellow human beings, often at crucial times of their lives. It’s about giving a friendly smile, assisting visitors, helping co-workers who are having a bad day; it’s listening to that older person relive a special memory.

In short, health care jobs have that special sizzle – I call that sizzle **the privilege of helping others.**

At the end of your day or the end of your career – it’s **knowing** you made a difference in people’s lives.

As Sister Thesesa said, go out into the world today and love the people you meet. Let your presence light new light in the hearts of people.

You see, I’ve worked in health care for 20 years; and I’ve got that above question nailed, **I really just can’t imagine doing anything else!!**

Barb Andresen
Supervisor, HIS/Registration
St. Mary’s Hospital of Superior

It's More Than Pride

Before I can tell you how I feel about pride in my work, there are a few things you need to know about me. While in school I struggled because of a learning disability. Things that came easy to most were hard for me to grasp. We all learn differently, and yes, you can function and live a normal life with a learning disability, but it's a restraint that holds you back and leads to low self esteem. Working through the difficult times made me want to help others. I've always been interested in health care and realized it even more when my Great Grandmother went into the nursing home. I felt compassion for her and could see sadness in her eyes, it made me want to help. My Mother worked in the activities department at that time and I had fun spending time with the residents in the nursing home, this sparked my interest even more. On September 4th I was hired by H.A.M.H. as a bed maker in the nursing home and this is where my story begins. During the year I worked as a bed maker I watched the nurses and CNAs work and decided to take the CNA class. Becoming a CNA has been a wonderful learning experience. I love working with the elderly, and I always respect those who are older and wiser than me. When working with the elderly in the nursing home you become part of their life just as they become part of yours. I have learned so much doing this work and even more from the residents. Caring for the elderly can be a challenge sometimes because of the many things that can happen with the mind as we grow older. In those tough times I find myself looking into their eyes and wondering what they were like when they were young and what their lives were like. Every Christmas the nursing home has Adopt a Grand Parent; the names of the residents are put on a tree for anyone who would like to take one. Well, I picked the name of an elderly gentleman; I knew he had a wife that lived at the sunset nursing home. I thought to myself what can I get this man? Then it came to me—a homemade dinner. I'll make a meal and he and his wife can have a nice dinner together. I asked the man, if you could have anything you want to eat, what would it be? A nice cold beer he replied. We agreed on the meal and picked the night. I set the table with candles, brought his wife to the room and served them their candle lit dinner. Fixing the meal was a simple thing, but to see them enjoy it so much was truly a wonderful feeling. Sometimes the little things mean the most. For me working with people has been a gift. I'm trying to write this in a way you might feel what I feel, but it's hard. I can honestly tell you that I love what I do and it's amazing when you think how the little things can mean so much. Two years ago I had to make a very hard decision. I had an opportunity to take a position at the Hayward Hospital, and it was hard to leave the residents and my coworkers. For me this was a chance to overcome my fear, an opportunity to continue learning. It's very different from the nursing home. I'm seeing and learning new things and that makes me want to help and do more. I've been given the opportunity at an even more exciting position working in Endoscopy, and to be doing these things is more than I could have imagined. It all goes back to going to school and the hard time I had. I'm so grateful for all the help I've been given by the people I work with. They've helped me overcome the fears that have haunted me for a long time. I take pride in the fact that I've been able to push my fears aside in order to help others, it's very fulfilling. For the first time in my life I feel confident and for me it's awesome. I know things can be hard sometimes, but if you just open your heart and your mind you can work through it. I still get nervous at times, but when that happens I just take a deep breath and really let the fear go. I can do this because this is where my heart has lead me, my heart tells me I must help others, because in doing so I'm also helping myself.

Jennifer Thorhaug, CNA
Certified Nursing Assistant
Hayward Area Memorial Hospital

My mother was a nurse and as a child I was always so impressed with her abilities to handle any crisis and care for any illness or injury. I had always thought I would follow in my mother's footsteps and become a nurse, but I initially pursued other professions that seemed more glamorous or exciting.

However, at 32, I finally answered my true calling to the profession of nursing and realized that I had entered the only profession that allows one to so intimately know the life and being of another while honoring the need for dignity, respect, compassion and healing. In the past years, it was my mother who, in her illness and death, again taught me most fully why I had answered the call to nursing.

As a hospice nurse, I am invited each day into the lives of those facing the end of life. For the patient and family, it is a time of great emotional upheaval, physical discomfort, spiritual questioning and social demands. For the nurse, it is a time of continual personal exploration, knowing and growth, and great professional demands and reward. When the demands of the end of life and the knowledge, skills and compassion of the hospice nurse meet, the process of dying evolves into a comfortable, peaceful and affirming celebration of life.

When my mother entered the hospice in December 2006, I learned the greatest lessons of my nursing career. As my mother, family and I became the recipients of care, I learned about the importance of providing privacy and a quiet environment, of asking before assuming if one's presence is desired, of allowing the family to participate in care-giving and to be at the bedside whenever they need to be, and when to speak and when to be quietly present.

This personal experience has greatly enhanced my ability to support other families in hospice and to anticipate what their challenges may be. While one learns much in nursing school, perhaps the greatest lessons are taught when illness and death touches one personally, or when caring for those who are going through the immense demands of living and dying.

I am frequently asked how I can do such difficult work and I respond, "I can't imagine doing anything else!"

Katherine M. Lange-Nohr
Clinical Nurse 3
Columbia St. Mary's, Milwaukee

I was so proud the day I graduated in my nurse cap and white uniform—the symbols of who I was! A few years later, I was bemoaning the wild array of scrubs and lack of caps at the new hospital where I was working. The little Texan I was complaining to drawled, “Honey, they know I’m a nurse by what I do, not by what I wear.” Words I live by still—I’m a nurse because of what I do.

Only three hundred words to describe thirty years of experiences that cause me to swell with pride when I say “I am a nurse.” I need three thousand words to describe a medi-vac by helicopter from the Sumatran jungle to Singapore...it involved a German speaking patient, a French speaking pilot, me and a bag with a 10mg syringe of Valium and \$10,000 dollars cash!

How many words are needed to describe delivering a baby girl in Wyoming and adopting her five days later? Or the everyday nursing of sitting, holding the hand of an alert, 86 year old who was near death and his only request was “just stay with me ‘til I’m gone.” I was young then and that experience had a profound effect on me.

Now that I’m older and “settled down,” I find my peace in home care. I used to think home health was for burned-out or lazy nurses. Well, I’m neither of those and I find this to be my most rewarding nursing yet. To take an extra five minutes with a lonely, isolated farmer, knowing I may be his only visitor that week. How can I hurry when he put on a pot of coffee after I called to say I was on my way?

The end of my career is near, yet I know for certain, when I am old and near death, there will be a nurse there, to hold my hand and just sit with me “til I’m gone.”

To limit me to three hundred words to describe why I do this is to stifle my joy in a life well lived aided by a career well chosen!

Barbara Koppes
Home Health RN
St. Joseph’s Hospital, Chippewa Falls

My Story begins in 1962. I graduated from Mary D. Bradford at 17 years of age wondering what to do with my life. I decided to go be an LPN. I wanted to take care of people. After finishing KTI and getting my license I worked at St. Catherine's Hospital for awhile, then went to Milwaukee at Lutheran Hospital, living in a one-room apartment across the street. Very dismal and lonely, I worked all three shifts and never met many new people, but made friends with the RN students. It was a hard job, and one day 6 nuns came knocking on my door from St Catherine's and said Carrie, do you want your job back, I said yes. My time card was there; I went back to work at St. Catherine's and stayed there for 30 years. I worked critical care for 25 years, and telemetry, and psych. I loved my job but dealing with death and dying every day took its toll. I have been to more funerals than anyone and this is before the HIPPA law. I have many experiences in how life is so important and I am an advocate for life. I always gave my patients respect and dignity no matter who they were.

I worked at a nursing home for a year plus St. Catherine's Hospital and a halfway house for 15 years until I had a CVA. Then I had to slow down. My extra jobs – I quit. I learned to talk all over again. I appreciated life even more. When St Catherine's ended I went to St. Lukes Hospital where I am employed now in Behavioral Health. I am an advocate for life and we have an excellent staff and I am very happy to be a team member there. It's not an easy job but I smile and listen to others issues every day and try to give hope and make a difference in this world today. I try to give patients that kindness of care, because sometimes a thank-you is from their heart and they really mean it. My career is almost over, but I'll never quit I'll become a Casual Nurse, because my heart is taking care of patients.

Carrie Jewell, LPN
Wheaton Franciscan Healthcare – All Saints, Racine

As a little girl I wanted to be a nurse and admired an aunt that was an RN. I would play nurse with my brothers and sisters wearing a nurse's cap that my aunt made that resembled hers. Graduating 32 years ago as an LPN I still wear my cap that is symbolic to a nurse, receiving many compliments from patients and visitors.

I enjoy being a hospital nurse. Nursing is the gentle art of caring that encounters caregiving, compassion, dedication and a depth of feelings in the daily activities. These experiences vividly portray the integrity, compassion and intrinsic rewards of the nurse patient relationship. It is a good feeling when patients get well and return home. Some patients require more gentle compassionate care and understanding that only a nurse can give. When patients say good bye and thank you for all their care, at times with hugs and tears, you experience a variety of emotions and realize how rewarding nursing can be.

Laurie Meyer, LPN
Fort HealthCare, Fort Atkinson

As I reflect on my long term employment at St. Elizabeth Hospital, I am amazed by the bond that develops between one's peers while providing quality care to our patients, which includes ancillary departments as well.

Because I worked OB/GYN/Pediatrics and taught a variety of childbirth and parent education classes for over 35 years, I had the privilege to care for couples, moms, dads, babies and children from prenatal life through late adulthood, in many varied capacities.

Nursing has been much more than a "job." It has been a passion, commitment and a dedication of my life. It defines who I am and will continue to be.

Many times the work was difficult, but the rewards far outweigh the difficulties. Nursing has become a monumental part of my daily living. I love to go to work. What more could one want?

Roxann Miller, RN
Affinity Health System/St. Elizabeth Hospital, Menasha

When I was a little girl, my grandmother became ill. I spent many hours at Langlade Memorial Hospital. I was impressed by the care my grandmother received. I told my mom that someday, "I would sit behind that desk and help people like the nurses that helped Grandma."

After my first year at college, I became pregnant and chose to leave school. My husband wanted to start his own business, so I committed myself to my family. Years later, I knew that I still wanted to work in health care, so I enrolled in the CNA course. Upon graduating from the class, I had the opportunity to work in a nursing home, where I enjoyed working with the elderly.

At age 46, my career of caring was put on hold once again, when I felt a lump in my breast. I was hesitant to get it checked since I didn't have health insurance. I saw an ad for a free mammogram so I decided to make an appointment. I was diagnosed with breast cancer and had gone through surgery, chemotherapy, and radiation. I once again appreciated the high level of care. I found it refreshing that staff could relate to what I was going through and took time to listen and address my concerns from my treatment plan to how I was going to pay my bill. I had a new sense of appreciation for taking extra time to listen to concerns of patients and addressing their concerns.

Today I am a nursing assistant at LMH. Fulfilling my childhood dream, I am sitting behind that very same desk that I told my mom I would be. Every day, I try to help my patients have a little bit better day. There is nothing more rewarding than having a patient or family member thank you for the wonderful care they received or having a seriously ill patient be able to go home well again. This is a special satisfaction that you can only get in health care and I am glad after waiting all those years that I am able to do it. For those of you that enjoy caring for others, you will not be disappointed if you choose to work in health care.

Nancy K. Arrowood
Nursing Assistant
Langlade Memorial Hospital, Antigo

If someone asked me why I became a nurse, my answer may surprise them. It wasn't because I wanted to help people, nor did I have a tremendous desire to care for the sick or injured. I was drawn to nursing for the excitement and thrills, the blood, the guts, the cool equipment, the laughter and tears, and of course the stylish white uniforms.

As a young girl I remember visiting grandparents in the hospital. It was never a boring trip. As soon as I entered the huge glass doors, I smelled that "hospital smell," saw groups of people in white coats walking down long corridors, and patients in wheelchairs with jars of clear fluid hanging on a pole next to them. There was the colorful flower cart, and that friendly lady at the front desk who always knew what room my grandma or grandpa was in. I felt very comfortable and excited.

In high school, several of my older friends worked as nurse aides at the local hospital. Maureen, Cindy, and Ann always had funny, touching, and exciting stories about their experiences at the hospital. I knew I'd be missing out if I didn't follow in their footsteps. I enrolled in a CNA course and within a few months I was employed as a nursing assistant. I treasure those days and my memories of them. It was during this time that I realized I wanted to make nursing my career.

That's why I got into nursing, but what keeps me in the profession? There are several things--plentiful job opportunities in multiple settings, good pay, and respect. However, the thing I enjoy most about nursing is the people. It is an honor to be a part of their experience, to hear their stories, to help them, and to learn from them. Some people push me to my limits while others share their laughter, joy, tears, wisdom, and love. It's definitely the people.

Jan Mulhern, RN
Patient Advocate
St. Nicholas Hospital, Sheboygan

Making a Difference

Being a nurse has taught me so much, mainly about life's fragility and that we all basically want the same in life; to feel cared for and to feel that our existence matters. It also has instilled in me a sense of gratitude for all the little things I used to take for granted, basic needs such as breathing freely, being able to eat, and walking pain free, that I see many patients struggle with. Seeing what my patients go through puts everything in perspective for me.

To be a nurse is to experience almost every emotion humanly possible, and many times, all in one shift. At times, I feel that I am running on adrenaline and am exhausted by the end of my shift. But, the satisfaction of working as a team and helping a patient pull through brings me back for more. Then there are times when, despite our best efforts, it's never enough, and I have to accept that.

Every day, a nurse has to bring her compassion, knowledge, and skills to work with her, along with a sense of humor. With an open heart and mind, and a desire to provide the best care for my patient, I try to earn their trust and respect. It is a privilege being entrusted to their care and being their advocate while they are in this vulnerable position. Each and every patient is precious to someone, whether that person can be with them at this time or not.

Nursing is a challenge and can be an emotional roller coaster, but being able to meet the challenge and make a difference in someone else's life gives my life purpose and meaning.

MaryAnn Eidem, RN/IPC
Watertown Memorial Hospital

“It’s a hard job, but the best job.” One of the finest nurses I know said those words to me one busy night. They are so true.

Health care providers are privileged in many ways. I work as an RN, but the joys of providing care belong to all who work in the field, from the secretaries to the doctors.

Patients come to us for many reasons - sometimes planned, more often due to a health crisis. It may be a simple cold, or a frightening disease such as cancer. They put trust in health care providers to help them through the challenges illness brings to their lives. It is an honor to say “We will help you through this.”

When people face a health crisis they are vulnerable and often afraid. As we step in and offer support, care, teaching, and healing, they are grateful. Our patients teach us about courage, the blessing of life, the power of love, the magnitude of faith and the strong will to live. Sometimes our job involves not healing but helping them walk from this life to the next. It is a privilege indeed, to help someone navigate these deep waters.

We learn that life is a gift and that we are not in control of when it will end. As we acknowledge our lack of final control over our patient’s destiny, we have control over what we offer them of ourselves, and we can choose to give them our best.

The cost to be a health care worker can be great at times. The rewards are greater. I am truly blessed to have a job that I feel so passionate about, and cannot imagine working in any other field. I am thankful that Ministry Health Care’s core values of service, vision, presence and justice are pillars that support my actions and decisions.

Ruth Glodowski, RN
Medical Oncology
St. Michael’s Hospital, Stevens Point

I am a seasoned nurse in the autumn of my nursing career. I knew I always wanted to be a nurse. I have spent 37 years cross-trained in all areas of rural hospital health care. My special niche, direct bedside nursing care, it was there that I knew I belonged.

It is the personal 'hands-on' care that our patients remember years later. An elderly lady recalled I had set her hair in rollers so she could look nice when her family visited - not that we had saved her life earlier with a dopamine infusion and intensive care. Many moms in the Birth Center remember the back rubs I have given at bedtime to relax them into sleep – not that we controlled their postpartum hemorrhage or gave oxygen to their newborns.

I was truly rewarded by the richness of their recognition of those small moments they remembered. I will take these memories and stories with me as I leave my profession in the next few years. It was always with pride that I introduced myself on each shift to my patients, "My name is Pat and I will be your nurse."

As my four year old grand-daughter looks up at me as we play nursery with her dolls and says "I want to be a nurse and take care of the babies, just like you Grandma," I nod knowing that I have come a full circle in my profession.

Patricia Haugh, RN
Registered nurse – birth center
Reedsburg Area Medical Center

Becoming a registered nurse was something that I wanted to do from childhood on. Unfortunately, I got a little sidetracked and my path changed somewhat. After high school, I turned down acceptance into nursing school and went for Medical Assisting instead. I also became an EMT. Both gave me a solid foundation of medical knowledge that greatly helped me in obtaining my RN. I worked as an MA for 18 years before deciding to pursue my RN.

As an RN, I have learned how to provide medical care for the patient physically and holistically. I have learned how to not only treat their condition, but also question how their condition progressed. I have learned to ask why, and to not be satisfied with a simple answer. I have learned to look at the disease, body, mind, and spirit and see how they all intertwine. I was told by my instructor that the more you learn, the more you want to learn. And learning is something that you will never stop doing in nursing. And we need to learn from both the good and the bad experiences to provide the best care that we can at all times.

Seeing someone go through the emotional roller coaster of life and helping them through this incredible journey is so rewarding - from holding a newborn child and celebrating life, to holding a patient's hand and providing comfort as they close their eyes for the last time, letting a patient cry on my shoulder, or just having a patient smile at me and say thank you. The motto of our hospital is "Neighbor's caring for neighbors, body, mind and spirit." If we apply this to every patient we come in contact with, then we truly will make a difference in the lives of many.

Robin Haugh, RN
St. Joseph's Community Health Services, Hillsboro

Pride in Wisconsin Health Care

I was a 'late bloomer' in the health care field, obtaining my associate degree in nursing at age 39. I always felt pulled to the health care field, doing either volunteer work or CNA work at various local facilities. It was the work and dedication of the staff I worked with that prompted me to become a nurse.

I came to realize that life is not all about a cure. When a cure is not possible, then the emotional health of a patient takes precedence. Holistic health and physical health are linked through the aging and disease process. Monetary compensation is not my motivation for giving quality health care. The joy or thanks that come from my patients and their families are what motivate me in my quest for my own happiness. You can be rich with money and have a disease that no amount of money can cure, or you can have your health and be thankful.

After the loss of my father, I learned some valuable lessons. He taught me what life is really about. Take care of yourself first because without 'you' there is no 'us'; focus on those around you who need your help. You'll be surprised how little effort it takes to make another person smile. Providing care to someone in need provides self-gratification with little to no effort. You will realize, after years of being in health care, that there is a broad spectrum of needs. Now that I have come full circle I am glad to be a part of the health care system in Wisconsin. Most of life's lessons I have learned from my patients, so not only have I given, I have also received. At some point, we all need health care, let's make a difference!

Merilyn Jilek, RN, AD
Tomah VA Medical Center

I believe my nursing career, my "calling," began when I was very young. I remember as a small child sitting on the floor by my father's legs as he relaxed in his recliner. A vivid memory was my amazement at how I could push my thumb into his ankle and how my thumbprint would stay there! Years later, I realized this was my first lesson in Congestive Heart Failure. Walking home while in the 7th grade, I saw my big brother driving and noticed dad was in the passenger seat. I waved and that was the last time I saw him alive. He died two days later of heart disease (in 1961 twelve year olds were *not* allowed to visit in my small town hospital). From that day I knew I would grow up and be a nurse.

If I were asked to speak to a group of students and describe my work and its meaning, my initial thought is a desire to make a difference - one person at a time. On a daily basis I feel the impact of my work and a sense of satisfaction and gratitude for the opportunity to serve. Sometimes the challenges create some negatives, but the positives are far more common and a reaffirmation of my 40+ year career. No, there has been no magic moment or sudden realization, but rather a daily recognition that my health care position was and is a correct life choice for me. I have never regretted becoming a nurse. In more recent years, I've fallen in love with mentoring new graduates. My passion for what I do and how to do it combines with a desire to share with a new generation the profession I love.

My first position upon graduation in 1970 was in a burn unit at a large county hospital. In 1972, a young army medic showed up on Saturday for weekend reserve training. He called me on Sunday evening and we went to dinner on Monday. The next morning, he bought a diamond ring. That ring has been on my finger for 35 years! So you see, I owe my wonderful life, both personal and professional to nursing.

Kathleen Lee, RN
St. Mary's Hospital, Madison

Why Become a Nurse

Why become a nurse? This is a question that has many different answers. The answer could be to help, make a difference, the jobs are plentiful or the pay is good. For me the answer is to make a difference.

I first became aware that this is the field for me when my mother got cancer. I did not know anything about how to help someone this ill. I would sit with her through chemotherapy and talk, take pictures to show her and hold the bucket when she started to vomit. These small acts made me feel I was helping her. It also helped me decide to start CNA classes. Being a CNA allowed me to help care for her during her illness. I knew how to change the bed and move her inflicting the least amount of pain possible. The rest of the family would look to me for guidance. She was able to die at home. I realized how much help this tiny bit of knowledge was. This was when I knew I would become a nurse. The path is hard and the journey is not without sacrifice, but is rewarding. Becoming a nurse has given me the opportunity to help people and to make a difference in their lives and at times, their deaths.

It is very rewarding and I take pride in being a Monroe Clinic Hospital nurse. I feel I make a difference in the lives of the patients I have. Take pride in your position, whether a CNA, secretary, EVS, dietary worker, nurse or doctor, because together we are the Monroe Clinic Team and we care.

This is my story.

Kim Rae Matzke, RN
Monroe Clinic

My Chosen Career

Since I was 6 years old, I knew that one day I would be a nurse. Another career never swayed me from this original desire. I always had the need and desire to help and assist people in feeling better. My parents enhanced my need, by buying me toy nurse and doctor kits as a child. My sister and I would play for hours, curing all our stuffed animals.

Today, I work as an Emergency Department RN, here at the Wisconsin Heart Hospital. On a daily basis, I care for patients both emotionally and physically for whatever complaints they present with. The gratification of assisting a patient whom presents in differing levels of all types of diseases and providing the care and medication to comfort and relieve these ailments is intoxicating at times. The ability to sit at the bedside and calm an anxious patient, who presented to the Emergency Department with chest pain and now must go for a stress test or cardiac catheterization. I'm there to relieve their fears with a caring and gentle touch of compassion and knowledge of what each test will show and provide them with the information on what to expect. The gratitude these patients have for us is often shown in letters that are sent after discharge or frequently expressed, while at their bedside.

In a world that moves at a head spinning pace, I feel an inner peace and satisfaction knowing that I made a difference in someone's life and ability to heal. There is no other truly selfless act or career to share with another human being.

Dana Monreal-Blando, RN
The Wisconsin Heart Hospital, Wauwatosa

Something Beautiful for God

Life is a precious gift and only comes around once. As I grew up, it became important for me to share this precious gift with others. When I was a teenager, nursing appealed to me as my mother was a nurse and was someone I looked up to and respected.

I also was drawn to becoming a Catholic sister and did find an appeal for those religious who cared for the sick and poor. In my journey to find my niche, I attempted to join the Missionaries of Charity started by Mother Teresa of Calcutta and found this to be very challenging work. It was not my calling but it did have a great influence on me. I learned compassion and empathy that I never knew before from the loving sisters I worked with.

I remember Mother Teresa's words she often shared with others...to make your life something beautiful for God. I continued to pursue nursing with this in mind as I wanted to help my fellow human beings with compassion and empathy.

As a registered nurse at Saint Clare's Hospital, I find the opportunities to give to the patients we serve and at the same time am touched by all their lives. It is a daily reinforcement on how precious each life is and how important each person is.

In the midst of their difficulties and illnesses, as a nurse I can alleviate, heal and nourish others to some degree. I truly value and enjoy this work because of this.

I treasure the opportunity to live the mission and vision of Ministry Health Care started by Mother Frances Streitl and the Sisters of the Sorrowful Mother which is carried on today.

In this health care environment, I feel that I do make my life something beautiful for God.

Monica A. Schmidt, RN
Medical/Pediatrics
Saint Clare's Hospital, Weston

It is astonishing to realize that I have spent my entire nursing career of 41 years at Ripon Medical Center.

The saying is true that one can run, but they cannot hide from problems. In 41 years, I have certainly experienced an enormous amount of change in the delivery of health care and with change sometimes come problems. At RMC it has never been an option for me to run or hide.

Working at RMC has bought me in touch with the most important aspect of human life....relationships.

I have been honored to find friendships that will never end, a place in the heart of a once perfect stranger, and a face that is looked to for comfort and understanding each and every day.

I work in the Emergency Department of Ripon Medical Center, and more importantly, I live in the city in which I work.

It is a comfort for my patients, who may be from church, or friends of friends, or business people to see a caregiver and know that they are not just another barcode entering the health care system. It is an honor when people say, "I'm so glad you're here."

It has been my purpose, and my passion to share my heart with patients, families, and also my colleagues during times of healing and times of great loss and sorrow, during good times and bad times.

I take great pride in being a part of RMC and the importance of its presence in our community.

I share my pride of caring for patients with a phenomenal group of colleagues.

In the dictionary, (pride) can also be translated to "a group of lions"
So may I say I take great pride in being a part of a strong but gentle (*pride.*)

Joann Strandell, RN, CEN
Ripon Medical Center

Let's face it. Nursing is not a glamour job. It has long hours, mandated overtime and some days you are literally running your whole shift.

So why do people go into nursing and even more curious is why do they stay?

I didn't know the answer to either of those questions when I became a nurse but it soon became apparent that I had not chosen a career. I'd chosen a profession.

Not long ago, in the ED, I was triaging a young, college age boy with a broken wrist. His parents were whispering and his mother turned to me and said, "Have you worked here long?"

"35 years," I responded.

"I thought so!" she said. "You were the nurse that helped us when our baby was SO sick and almost died."

"How is your baby now?" I inquired.

She pointed to her 21 year old son and said, "Fine. "I'm glad I saw you again because I never thanked you. I'm sorry for being SO late."

I don't remember that mother or child but what she did for ME that day made me so proud of the profession I chose. I should have thanked her for making me realize that what becomes routine to us can make a lasting impression on people's lives and many times we only have one chance to make that impression. Not too many careers can boast of that.

Every day, there is someone, patient or family, that needs our care, whether it be physical help or emotional support. We should come to work looking for that person who may give us a reason to be proud of what we did that day and keep us coming back for more.

Cris Sturm, RN

Wheaton Franciscan Healthcare – Elmbrook Memorial, Brookfield

Growing up on a dairy farm, I was raised to be caring, respectful of others, and honest. Spending 24 hours a day with my family working, playing and the sharing of every thought, need and desire—our family became very tight. This taught me to appreciate my family, health and life itself.

My mom said I was a very sensitive girl, and that showed through on many different occasions. I always tried to bandage cuts or wounds on the farm animals which didn't always work, and I was the first to cry at any sad news, hurt feelings of others, or the death of an animal.

One particular day I was visiting with the milkman when he suddenly cut his finger. (Probably due to my distraction.) I felt bad and immediately ran to the house to gather bandages. Upon return, I insisted on wrapping the finger myself which I remember being a bit bulky. Feeling proud of myself and thanked by the milkman, he went on his way finishing his route. The next day my dad handed me the ticket each milkman hangs in the milk house identifying how many pounds of milk was hauled that particular day. To my surprise the milkman wrote in big words "Thanks Nurse" on that ticket. It was then I determined I wanted to be a nurse and help people when I grow up. I still have that ticket some 25 years later. My desires never wavered. When I graduated from high school, I attended Northeast Wisconsin Technical Institute. I graduated in 1983 as a LPN, then returned to the bridge program and graduated as a RN in 1991.

I have worked my entire nursing career of 24 years at Shawano Medical Center, formerly known as Shawano Community Hospital. My choice of careers or employment has never disappointed me. Working in a rural community hospital has given me the opportunity to take care of people from newborn to 101 years of age. The diversity of each individual in personality and diagnosis has broadened my knowledge and enjoyment in nursing. Each individual has special needs—depending on the age of my patient, I see a member of *my* family.... a brother, a sister, mom, dad, or grandparent. I treat each one as I would my very own family and believe with this philosophy, I can't go wrong. I leave each day feeling gratified that some form of "warm fuzzy" was personally given to each patient and pray each night for their speedy recovery. *I cannot* imagine a more satisfying career!!!!

Holly Zimmerman, RN
Shawano Medical Center

My job as a lactation consultant and registered nurse is definitely my “dream job.” Working as a staff nurse in labor and delivery, newborn nursery and postpartum for 12+ years has always been fulfilling, never boring, and a CONSTANT learning experience.

In November of last year, my job status changed to totally working as a lactation consultant helping with the breastfeeding moms and babies, both inpatient and outpatient. Helping breastfeeding moms and babies with few challenges and some more specialized breastfeeding situations offer a wide variety and lots of job satisfaction. I love working with people and especially love working with people who are willing to learn and do the best for their babies, themselves and community. Working at Beaver Dam Community Hospital has given me the outstanding opportunity of devoting my time to breastfeeding support and education.

Our first daughter Sarah was born in 1988. The nurses during my hospital stay definitely inspired me to pursue a nursing career. Later that same year I shared with my husband my desire to change careers and go to nursing school. After seven years of schooling and part-time working (with the birth of another daughter Rachel added in), I earned my BSN. Every cent and second of time were well worth it!

Imagine what it would be like to go to work every day and HATE your job! I cannot even imagine it because that is how much I LOVE my job!! Each time I work with a mom and baby, complete a project, finish a stack of follow-up telephone calls, or discuss a case with a health care provider, I feel even surer the right decision was made to return to school. Being a part of Beaver Dam Community Hospital has helped me to realize my dream!

Janet Godshall, RN
OB-Women’s Health
Beaver Dam Community Hospitals, Inc.

Making a Difference One Telephone Call at a Time

“Great opportunities to help others seldom come, but small ones surround us daily.”

Sally Koch

I met with Ruth and her husband to discuss their billing concerns. While most of my patient contact is handled by telephone, Ruth wanted to meet with someone in person. She began the conversation by pointing out that she was not going to be pleasant. She had over \$6,000 of medical bills that her insurance should have paid. As our conversation progressed, I discovered Ruth was dying of cancer. Ruth handled the billing matters in the home and was frightened to leave her husband with her large bills unpaid. This accounted for her guarded attitude.

I cannot tell you the amount of hours that were invested in Ruth. Her continuing medical treatment provided an increasing balance. Her insurance carrier repeatedly denied her chemotherapy charges. Countless hours were spent on the telephone with her insurance company asking to have charges reconsidered for payment.

Ruth came to meet with me regularly. We knew our conversations could have been handled over the telephone but I think both of us needed the contact. I am proud to say, when Ruth passed away, her balance with Mercy Health System was \$0.00. After her death, Ruth's husband told me in a card that Ruth had come to consider me an extension of their family.

I choose a career in Customer Service because I desire to make a difference. The mission of Mercy Health System is to provide “healing in the broadest sense.” I believe that I am able to assist in the patient's healing process. I know I am not able to make a difference to each patient that enters Mercy Health System but I can make a difference to the one at the other end of the telephone.

Names in this story have been changed to protect the privacy of the individual.

Marci Johnson
Customer Service Team Leader
Mercy Health System, Janesville

I am not a nurse, I am not a doctor but I have eased concerns and reduced stress and worry for our patients and their families. My job is Patient Financial Counselor; I work with underinsured and uninsured patients to find funding for their health care needs.

I work with patients whose medical needs exceed their ability to pay. I have learned of various qualifications for State Aid, Veterans Benefits and Franciscan Skemp's own Charity program. The relief they feel when I am able to assist them in obtaining Medical Assistance, Veteran's Benefits, or even a partial reduction of the billing under Charity Care makes my job worthwhile. I also arrange payment plans where they can make monthly payments rather than paying for all services while they are receiving care.

As a division of Patient Financial Services Department, I also provide Customer Service for those with insurance problems. The experience I have obtained in my personal life offers clear direction in assisting patients. Working to straighten out an insurance problem with a patient offers a sense of accomplishment for both the patient and me.

I choose to work in health care for selfish reasons; I want good health care coverage for my husband and I, and I like knowing I can help others. What I do may not save a life but it does make life easier when financial burdens can be lifted or reduced.

Cheryl Crawford
Patient Financial Counselor
Franciscan Skemp Healthcare, La Crosse

I began working for Good Samaritan Health Center about a year and a half ago. There are three reasons I enjoy working in health care, especially at a faith based facility:

- 1) The employees who work here are all friendly, from the housekeepers, to the medical staff. Everyone has a smile and a genuine interest in how your day is going. This includes the patient care that is received here also.
- 2) The daily prayer from our Chaplain, Sue Kruger. In a world where it's politically incorrect to say "Merry Christmas," it's refreshing to come to work each day knowing you can have your spiritual needs fulfilled as well. I don't think we realize how lucky we are to be able to come to work each day and be able to pray without any consequences.
- 3) The mission and vision statement of helping the poor in the communities we serve. The employees who work at Good Samaritan Health Center give tirelessly of their money and time to help the less fortunate. Since I have been employed here, I have seen numerous community programs benefit from the Relay for Life, Free Clinic, and HAVEN, just to name a few.

I know why health care is my chosen field now – because it makes me feel like I'm truly making a difference in the lives of some of the less fortunate people in the community. I have also witnessed the patient care provided here and can tell you that even though we are a small hospital, the quality of care is extremely high. In order to make a difference, you have to be involved and the employees of this facility certainly are.

Brenda Jones
Executive Assistant
Good Samaritan Health Center, Merrill

It began a little over ten years ago now. I was working for an insurance company on the west side of Madison and found out they were closing their Madison office. I was offered a position in Appleton; however, with a 1 ½ year old child at home and a husband with a good job, relocation was not an option. I stayed through the closing there, but kept my eyes open for possible job leads. Then, I saw in the paper that Stoughton Hospital needed a Medicare Biller. Wow, what an opportunity it would be to have a job in my hometown and have the ability to do something more challenging. I doubted my ability to get the job since I did not know a great deal about the billing end of things, but I knew I knew how to read the claims, that there was a professional and facility claim, and most importantly, I knew how to read a Medicare Explanation of Benefits so I applied anyway. The job wasn't hard, it was just a bit more challenging, which is what I really wanted at that time. Not to mention the pay was better and I would receive benefits right away which were pretty comparable to what I had from the insurance company. What more could a person ask for!

When I first started at the Hospital, I considered myself quiet and someone who didn't want to make waves. That has changed immensely. I can't say that I want to make waves or cause trouble; however, I don't mind sharing my opinion anymore. I've become more involved in Hospital initiatives like the Customer Service Task Force which with Excellence Together is now known as the Customer Experience Team. On my team, I have volunteered to speak at the Town Hall Meetings. I wouldn't have guessed I would do that as I get very nervous speaking in front of a large number of people. Currently, I am going through the Leadership Stoughton program which is an amazing learning experience. Who would have thought that I would have that much more to learn since I grew up in Stoughton? There are many things I didn't know before that I know now! Then, there is Relay For Life, an event that I have worked on tirelessly for the last 11 years. In 2004-2005, I took on being captain of the Hospital's team and to my surprise, was asked to be the chairperson for the entire Stoughton, Oregon, and McFarland Community event for 2005-2006! This was quite the accomplishment and undertaking for the person who when I started here didn't like speaking in front of large groups. I was proud to do it. It is such a worthwhile event and everyone from the Hospital was very supportive no matter how nervous I was.

The more I have gotten to know my job, the more I began enjoying it. Meeting the patients and knowing I could help them has always been gratifying. Even when a patient is upset or frustrated, no matter how mean they may have gotten, I have always known and believed that we are here to help them the best that we can. Every job has its ups and downs, but this is what brings all of us together to work as a team! As for my co-workers, there are no others that I think are better. The support that I have received since I have been here is WONDERFUL! Everyone here genuinely cares about what they are doing for patients and what we do as employees. This is very important. Over the past 10 years, the progress, upgrades to technology and facility would not have been possible if each of us as employees didn't believe in the care that we provide. This is what inspires and motivates me to work at Stoughton Hospital.

Kristine Annen
Lead Patient Financial Services Representative
Stoughton Hospital

Medical Transcription – More Than Just Typing

Sometimes people ask what I do for a living, and I feel so proud to say I work as a medical transcriptionist. Their next question is usually, “What’s a medical transcriptionist?”

I briefly explain that we listen with headphones to physicians and other medical staff as they dictate medical reports, and we basically put their spoken word into “written” form, using the latest and greatest computer software.

Then their response is something like, “So, you just sit and type all day?” And that is where I have a hard time finding the words to describe how really interesting my job is. It is so much more than “just typing all day.” We have standards to meet and guidelines to follow, yet we can still kind of “set our own goals for the day.” I have never worked in another position where I learn so many new things every single day.

It is perhaps kind of “behind the scenes” type of work, but we would be missed if we were not working.

I love working in a professional environment. We work as a team, but still kind of as an individual, and many people like this. Many transcriptionist work from home, where you can create your own work atmosphere, while still working closely with coworkers via email, etc.

I very much enjoyed listening and learning the medical “lingo” as my older sisters studied while in nursing school. But since I have not been blessed with their cool, calming personality, I knew early on that a career in nursing would not be for me, and I believe I have found my niche in doing medical transcription.

I love talking about things that I am passionate about, and this is one of them. Thanks for listening.

Kathy Waldron
Health information Management Transcriptionist
St. Mary’s Hospital Medical Center, Green Bay

Working in health care

*Is the job I like to do.
So listen carefully and I'll
Tell you why,
In a line or two.*

*The gratification of a patients' smile
Knowing you helped them,
Makes your life worthwhile.*

*No matter if you're a doctor,
A nurse, or like me,
You sit at a desk,
The patients can be confident
That all of us,
Give our best.*

*Twenty-four hours a day,
Seven days a week,
The public can count on us,
When health care is what they seek.*

*The hours may be long,
And not all jobs are great,
But a career in health care
To me, is top- rate.*

*Thank you for listening
To my little rhyme.
I wrote it up
(But not on my work time!)*

*So, if you're looking for a career;
And your talents to share,
You'd be very happy to work
At Franciscan Skemp Healthcare.*

MARS, 2008

Marlene Martin
Office Associate II
Franciscan Skemp Healthcare, Sparta

After graduating, I enrolled in MATC and completed an Administrative Assistant Associate degree. I was fortunate enough to do my internship at St. Luke's South Shore. As luck would have it, they hired me in the Admitting department. Who knew it would be the beginning of many openings and opportunities for me? After witnessing the kindness and compassion that hospital employees gave towards patients and each other, I knew this was the place I wanted to be. When I became a mother, I was able to do a job transfer to the Day Surgery department. As a secretary in Day Surgery, I was able to see up close the effect professional, caring nurses had on their patients. Inspiration from the nurses was a key motivator to better myself. I went back to MATC in the fall of 2005 for nursing. It was a bonus that my hospital offered a tuition reimbursement program to help pay for school. When my supervisor and co-workers found out that I was going back to school for nursing they couldn't have been more supportive. They root for me with every test I have to study for, even offering me days off so I can study. I have my very own cheerleading section. I am so blessed to work in such a "family-like" department. I am very excited to finish school and start my nursing career. I want to affect the healing and recovery process of patients just like the nurses that I admire so much do. In the process of going to school, I have also motivated my two young daughters to study hard and do their best. Who knows, with the kind of mentoring I received, we might just have two more future nurses on our hands.

Stacy Parsley
Patient Access Representative
Aurora St. Luke's South Shore, Cudahy

Working in the medical field is an ultimate customer service job. We constantly meet patients on a daily basis paying attention to their personal health requirements and treating them with respect, consideration and compassion. Treating each person - man, woman or child; young, old, weak or strong; rich or poor, big or small, critical or just sniffles, with the same quality assistance.

What I appreciate about this job is the diverse challenge every day in maintaining a high level of pride in the way our patients are treated. Making sure each patient is focused upon and their needs for accommodation are met. Every day there are unique situations and challenges that require patience, knowledge to properly register and direct the patients in a specific direction and in a timely manner, all the while taking into consideration that most patients cannot or should not be rushed because of their condition or illness. Above all, keeping a positive attitude. Our patrons are ill or require treatment or are receiving not so encouraging results from tests taken. I like to be able to give just a little consult to each patient that I encounter, as we register them for either a checkup, illness or a surgery, letting them know we think their condition is important and requires attention.

If you have an open heart the medical field has a place for compassion. Do we see this in other career fields? Yes, but in the medical field it is a must as patients depend on and require this and should never be treated lightly or unimportant. Most of the time they are ill and very vulnerable seeking medical assistance. A person's dignity is something very personal.

Do unto others as we would like done unto us is a strong motto for the medical field because sooner or later we all require some type of treatment and want the same respect dealt to us.

Joann Mueller
Patient Registrar
Baldwin Area Medical Center, Baldwin

J. The Magic Typist
(To the Tune of Puff the Magic Dragon)

I'm the Magic Typist; I type all day long
I fuddle through and muddle through so I don't type it wrong
Hyper-, Hypo- What did you say? It's not clear enough
Enunciate! Pronunciation! So my job's not so tough

The doctors sometimes yawn or sneeze or chew food when they speak
They mutter and they stutter and sometimes their voices squeak
So could you please clarify: Did the "fellow sneeze"?
"No, my dear, I'm sure I said that he 'fell to his knees.'" Oh--

I'm the Magic Typist; I type all day long
I fuddle through and muddle through so I don't type it wrong
Hyper-, Hypo- What did you say? It's not clear enough
Enunciate! Pronunciation! So my job's not so tough

This phrase makes no sense to me--"He was a shifty shoe"?
I viewed the chart and I found out, "He weighed one sixty-two!"
And just what do you mean by "He was well-read and wise"?
"That's not what I meant at all"--"He had swollen, reddened eyes.'

If you knew how you sounded, you would understand
Why my job transcribing is in such high demand
It can be a challenge--not always black or white
I get great satisfaction when I know I heard it right! Oh--

I'm the Magic Typist; I type all day long
I fuddle through and muddle through so I don't type it wrong
Hyper-, Hypo- What did you say? It's not clear enough
Enunciate! Pronunciation! So my job's not so tough

Janelle Zastrow
HIM Transcriptionist
Burnett Medical Center, Grantsburg

I have spent all of my life in small towns. My mother befriended elderly people, maiden ladies, couples without children, and visited elderly relatives, so I grew up with older people as a part of my life.

I graduated from Taylor County Teacher's College in Medford, Wisconsin, marrying before I graduated. We had two daughters whom I stayed home to raise. After our third child, a son, was old enough for school, I decided it was time to find a job. My mother-in-law recommended the Nursing Home as a CNA—her daughter had worked at the Medford Nursing Home in the 60's.

When our oldest daughter was ten, she was diagnosed with Acute Lymphocytic Leukemia. As a result, I received a medical education I wish I had obtained differently. She went through appendicitis, diabetes (caused by L-asparaginase), chemo drugs, parasitic pneumonia, record-book sized shingles, blood counts, weekly visits to the Dr., baldness, spinal taps, bone marrow tests, nuclear medicine tests, radiation, and much more. I'm happy to report that she is now 38 years old.

I enjoy my work at Memorial Nursing and Rehab Center very much. The residents tell stories about their lives. We compare stories about small town/rural America. They are thankful for even small things you do for them. They are a living part of our heritage.

I feel like I have made a difference at work as Unit Clerk for the past 25 years. It is challenging to keep up with changes in health care, labs, and delivering mail. I really enjoy the visiting I get to do with the residents when I take them to appointments. I help the nurses, the CNAs, and I can usually find answers for a doctor if the nurse is unavailable. No two days are ever alike.

Patricia Lewis
Unit Clerk
Memorial Health Center, Medford

I started working in the Admitting Dept at CMH in 1990. When registering chemo patients, I felt uncomfortable in what to say during the process. What do you say to be positive, when they are going through so much?

I recall a particular person I had registered and how awkward I felt. She was close to my age and had the type of cancer that was difficult to cure. I always tried to treat her with concern and care. At the end of her treatment, I did her registration. When I took her to her room, she turned to me and gave me a big hug. She told me that she was so happy that I was the one who registered her each time. I replied that I didn't do anything out of the ordinary. "She said that I made her feel very important and that I had genuine concern for her. I never knew what happened to her, but I often think of how it's the small things that make a difference in others lives.

Another patient who came on a regular basis; she even had her own room. She had a rare condition and had been through a lot. She spoke German, which I also speak. I made a point to visit her every time she came. Occasionally her husband would come, so I would try to raise his spirits. When she passed away, I went to her funeral. Her husband told me how appreciative he was that I was there for them.

It's always been my philosophy that we're on this earth for a purpose and our job reflects who we are. The hospital's mission statement wants the employees to be customer focused and that we all have an important part in patient care.

Ernestine Kender
Admitting & Registration Specialist – Women's Health Center
Community Memorial Hospital, Menomonee Falls

When I was four years old, if asked what I wanted to be when I grew up, I would have said I wanted to join the Peace Corp. My whole life I have wanted to help those who were less fortunate, which is why I chose social work as a profession. Although my career path has led me away from the Peace Corp, it has led me into a very rewarding career working in health care.

Through my role as a social worker and program coordinator for the Community Link program at Our Lady of Victory Hospital, I have the opportunity to help patients, community and staff members with a multitude of needs. As an information and referral provider, people come to me looking for resources to help them with their unique situations. I help them find what they need and give them direction if they are not sure where to start.

One of the most valuable things I do is to help patients who apply for our charity care program obtain on-going health insurance coverage through programs like BadgerCare, Medical Assistance and similar programs, or get help with their Medicare premiums, deductibles and co-pays through programs like Medicaid Qualified Medicare Beneficiary or the Part D Low Income Subsidy. I also coordinate the Prescription Drug Patient Assistance Program to help patients access their medications at little or no cost through pharmaceutical company indigent programs, saving each patient an average of \$2,000 per year.

The programs I coordinate complement each other and work together to help people meet some very complex health and financial needs. Because of the work I do, patients are able to get necessary medical care and follow their prescribed treatments, thereby improving outcomes and quality of life.

I love my role at Our Lady of Victory Hospital and am proud of the work that I do. I know that I make a difference in the community and in the lives of the people I serve.

Jill Pollert, BSW
Community Link Coordinator
Our Lady of Victory Hospital, Stanley

I Make a Difference

Through my work as an Aurora Health Care employee I get a tremendous amount of satisfaction and pride in being able to touch my co-workers lives in very personal ways. I have had the opportunity to make a direct impact on my co-workers health when all Aurora employees were offered the opportunity to participate in a Health Risk Appraisal.

I work for Community Outreach at The Aurora Medical Center and also for Total Health providing wellness screens. Testing cholesterol, glucose and doing blood pressure screens lets me provide actual test results on the spot. Then I get a one-on-one chance to help people understand their results, and help them make choices to improve their lifestyles. When dates and times were scheduled for screening here at the hospital in Hartford, as well as at the clinics in Hartford and Slinger I negotiated so I would be able to provide the screening in my community. I provide personal service to each of my customers at every screening. I listen carefully to each person and try to be responsive to their individual needs so I can spend most of the time focusing on what would help them the most.

I am proud of the work I do; I know I make a difference in people's lives. One of the employees I tested was an RN I have known for many years. She acknowledged my ability and after the screening she shook my hand and told me I did an excellent job. She wondered where I learned all the information I shared and complemented me on my teaching skills.

The employee I feel I had the most impact on is a male employee, married, with a young family. His results were a surprise to both him and me. The results I shared with him come from genetics. I encouraged him to schedule an appointment with his physician so they could come up with a game plan just for him. Months after his screening he told me he did follow through with a doctor and was making life-style changes so he would be around to see his children grow up. Stories like this affirm the reason why I have worked in health care my entire life.

Through examples like these, I feel I make a difference. I am very proud I work in health care. Health care offers so many opportunities and I have been fortunate to have such a variety of ways to influence peoples' lives.

Joan Hove
Community Outreach Coordinator
Aurora Medical Center, Hartford

I am a housekeeper at Aurora Sinai Medical Center. I have been a housekeeper for thirteen years. Aurora Sinai Medical Center not only allows me to help care for the patient by keeping the hospital clean and safe, I am also allowed to help care for patients, their families and visitors because Aurora Sinai recognizes that every employee is a caregiver.

While I was growing up, I never thought I would be working in a hospital. When I moved to Milwaukee, I started working at Aurora Sinai Medical Center. It felt like home. The people were friendly and caring. Everyone smiled and said hello to each other. I love my job because I am able to help care for our visitors and patients.

I am assigned to clean the lobby areas and get the chance to meet different people. It makes me feel good to be able to help care for patients and visitors and try to bring a smile to their faces through kind words and acts to help them feel better. Sometimes I give candy to the small children in the lobby area or help escort patients to where they need to go. I love to see the patients and visitors happy.

I am proud to be a caregiver and help our patients heal by keeping their rooms clean and safe and by talking with them and listening to them. When a patient or visitor comes into the building and says, "You are doing a good job," nothing makes me happier. I know when things are clean, it helps them feel better and I know that I am important part of the care team at Aurora Sinai.

Betty Frazier
Environmental Assistant
Aurora Sinai Medical Center, Milwaukee

The Many Faces I See

My position in the health care field is one not of direct patient contact. I am, so they say, on the other side of the fence providing a smile, friendly voice and compassion to the employees and patient's family members when they have a chance to "get away" for a few minutes. Maybe it's a snack, a soda or a meal that they come to the cafeteria. Before they leave they see me, their "lunch lady," the cafeteria cashier.

I am there not knowing what kind of day they're having. I see many faces that are happy, sad, anxious, excited, angry and scared. I only hope that my smiling face and friendly voice give them a break from the hustle and bustle on the unit, or a moment away from thoughts of their loved one while they're in the cafeteria. I'll be honest, I chose to work in the health care environment for job security. But I soon realized that my customers are the reason why I'm here and the reason why I hope to stay in the health care field. Being happy, smiling, and making someone else's day is me, and I love to do that for you, my customers! I guess I could say that is my mission.

I see many people every day, employees and visitors. Frequently when I'm out in the community, I see family members that remembered my smile and compassion. Or employees, who see me every day, stop to chat in the store. Maybe I've made their day once or twice and now they have just made mine!

So Lori, Tom, Paula and Fred, when I smile and say "have a great day" to you, you're making me smile and then it's a great day for me too! And that is why I love my job.

Mary Utecht
Food Service Team Leader
Aspirus Wausau Hospital

My name is Perry E. Berndt; I have been a “Lead” at St. Joseph’s Hospital for approximately 3 months. The lead position is basically a supervisory/support position in the Food & Nutrition Department. My position gives me the opportunity to work and coach F&N employees, speak with guests, St. Joseph’s employees and our patients.

I have been in the restaurant/food service industry for over 30 years, working in all facets and concept types, including having owned a “supper club” for almost 9 years, which was a very rewarding experience. However, NOTHING compares to working in the health care industry and more specifically, St. Joseph’s Hospital. It has taken me several dozen jobs, and the better half of my life, to find a job (and this really is not a job as much as it is a place to go every day and enjoy life and the people & GET PAID for it), that I cannot wait to get to every day, because of the caring environment of the staff towards our patients and guests. But the caring attitudes shown to each other, from the president down to the part-time employees and the time they take to communicate is truly refreshing and appreciated. But what makes me know that I have “found my calling” is that I feel like I am helping others and it is appreciated, not only by our staff and administration (which I plan to retire with St. Joseph’s, because I think it would be impossible to be part of a better team), but by the many people/patients that I talk to and deliver trays to.

It is so rewarding to know that you are helping someone and comforting them in some way. I have coached and played many types of sports in all age groups, because I love the camaraderie and sense of accomplishment that comes with these activities - which is why I love working at St. Joseph’s and being part of a winning team.

Thank you to ALL who have given me this opportunity.

Perry E. Berndt
Food and Nutrition Services Lead
SnyergyHealth St. Joseph’s Hospital, West Bend

When most people think of a health care setting, they think of doctors and nurses. Often times the clerical aspect of health care is forgotten. As important as doctors and nurses and direct care providers are, I believe it all stems back to who screens these employees, hires them, and takes care of them. In Human Resources we make sure that we are hiring the best of the best when they walk through our doors. We make sure that they are 100 percent qualified to take care of our patients. We take care of our employees so that they can in turn take care of our patients.

I have been working at MMC for almost four years now and I can't think of another place or setting I would rather work. Just knowing that every day I am taking care of those employees who take care of our patients and community gives me a great sense of pride.

Every day in my position as a human resources assistant I work with employees' dental insurance, health insurance, short- and long-term disability insurance, pension, and various other elements that assist in taking care of our employees. It is my responsibility to make sure all employees are treated fairly and with respect and have the tools they need to accomplish their goals.

I would highly recommend a health care career, specifically a clerical health care career, to anyone that takes pleasure in helping others, wishes to work in an office setting, and enjoys feeling a strong sense of pride. To me there's no job as rewarding as a career in health care.

Jaimee Lipske
HR Specialist/Accounting Specialist
Memorial Medical Center, Ashland

Passion Can Drive Your Profession

Whether it took place today or even 20 years ago, practically everyone has been struck with that Monday morning moment of questioning: Why do I work here? The element that is lacking for many American workers today is passion. If you aim at being positively successful at your job you need to be passionate about it. Your passion can take many forms: working with people, problem solving for a high-end organization, performing, or building that better model. My passion is helping others.

Working in health care can make a difference in people's lives. I'm a housekeeper at Flambeau Hospital and I assist in keeping the facility clean for patients daily. I greet each person I meet and help them find their way around the hospital with a friendly smile on my face. I cherish the favorable reactions that I receive from our customers. The other day a kind elderly man gave me two blow-pop suckers and told me that I was very pleasant and helpful. All I did was show him the way out and tell him to have a good day. It's fun to interact with different people every day, including our patients, doctors, and medical staff. Every friendly smile and satisfied customer makes my day worthwhile.

I never would have known that I wanted to be in the health care industry if it wasn't for my father. He has worked in health care for almost 25 years now and has influenced me to do the same. As the Director of Plant Operations, he doesn't directly work with patients but he unceasingly helps his staff. He is always understanding and compassionate towards his coworkers and employees, and I can only hope that I am as valuable to my coworkers and the hospital's customers.

In health care you never know what is going to happen, and you have to stay on your toes, solve problems, and make good decisions. Every day is different.

Samantha Pflanz
Housekeeper
Flambeau Hospital, Park Falls

“Teaching in the Health care Setting”

I remember, as a young girl, having a desire to become a nurse. As it turned out, I pursued a degree in education. I taught high school English for several years, but my desire to work in health care stayed with me and I gravitated toward work in a hospital setting. My current position as a Human Resources Assistant satisfies both my desire to teach and my desire to help people in the health care field.

On a daily basis, I get great satisfaction in helping people within the hospital. My “customers” include employees of the hospital, patients, visitors, and potential employees of Sacred Heart. People come to our office with the anticipation of working in a hospital setting and I get to share with them my enthusiasm for our special mission here. We really do change people’s lives and give them hope. Educating prospective employees about our mission and values is a big part of our job in Human Resources, and it is rewarding to meet so many people who are eager to join our mission-oriented team at Sacred Heart.

When we conduct orientation for new employees, I know I’m putting my training in education to good use. We get to “teach” employees about not only things like benefits and safety, but also the Service Excellence Standards that drive our hospital to being a leading facility in terms of patient satisfaction. As hospital chaplain Monsignor Klimek often reminds us, “Happy employees lead to happy patients.” We take pride in being a hospital that puts employees and patients first.

The caring attitude that often brings people to the health care field serves potential employees well not only in nursing but also in non-clinical areas, such as Central Sterilizing, Registration, Housekeeping, and Financial Services. The health care field is a natural fit for caring people who desire to help others in a variety of ways. I’m so glad I learned this and was able to merge both my love of education and my appreciation for health care into a very satisfying career.

Peg Soukup
Human Resources Assistant
Sacred Heart Hospital, Eau Claire

August 7, 2002 was the worst day of my life. That day has also been my career inspiration for the past three years. In short, I work in health care because no one should have to die because they were too afraid to go to the doctor.

My dad called me at around 7:00 a.m. on August 7, 2002 to tell me that my mom was in the hospital. At first the doctors were not sure what was wrong with her. As the day went on we learned that my mom was suffering from congestive heart failure. I rushed to get to her, but I was too late. My mom passed away that afternoon and I did not get the chance to say goodbye.

We didn't know my mom was sick. She hated going to the doctor, so she avoided it at all costs. Bad health care experiences from her past kept her from seeking medical care and this avoidance was eventually her demise.

There was a time when I also disliked hospitals. Like my mom, I associated hospitals with sickness and death. But when I became an employee at Aurora St. Luke's Medical Center in August 2005, I experience a profound change in thinking. Thanks to the wonderful people of St. Luke's and my own personal Planetree journey, I have learned that hospitals are a place that you go to heal.

Planetree is a philosophy of patient-centered care that teaches employees to look at patients as whole people – mind, body and spirit. In my time at St. Luke's I have had the great fortune to meet people who have ignited within me a passion for compassionate care. I write for St. Luke's employee newsletter, so I have the opportunity to meet some amazingly inspiring people.

I have interviewed patients who have triumphed through devastating illnesses. I have spoken with caregivers with extraordinary dedication and compassion for their patients. Not only have these people made me want to be a better person, they have inspired me to share my passion for patient-centered, compassionate care with others. They make me proud to be an employee of Aurora St. Luke's Medical Center.

My hope is that through storytelling in our newsletter and by teaching the Planetree principles to new employees, I can ignite that same passion in others. By inspiring compassionate care, I hope that I can ensure that people will have positive experiences so they will continue to seek the care that they need. Because no one should have to die because they were too afraid to go to the doctor.

Meghan Marsden Parsche
Internal Communications Coordinator
Aurora St. Luke's Medical Center, Milwaukee

Have you ever had a barium enema in a foreign country where you barely speak the language? I have and honestly, it was a rather scary and uncomfortable experience where my day to day Spanish proficiency didn't make a dent anywhere—unless you count that I could confirm my name and date of birth before we started. You could consider it a seminal event in my career choice. I'm proud of having spent the last 10 years working as a Spanish interpreter at UW Hospital.

Sometimes an interpreter makes a dramatic difference in a life changing event or diagnosis. More frequently it is fairly low-key—a rather understated role. But, each encounter presents unique challenges and satisfaction.

Even if my day has been a series of “routine” appointments, my participation is significant for both patients and providers. After all, how can a provider get to the root of a health problem and offer a valid treatment option if they have difficulty understanding the patient? How can a patient make an informed decision about their health care and be aware of their options without fully understanding the language? How can the patient and provider develop a relationship that works toward the best possible outcome without the key component of language?

One day I was in the clinic for a routine appointment with a doctor who has seen the patient several times. The patient shared a humorous story about her children. The provider responded back with a funny remark of his own. A huge laugh exploded from the patient and all three of us just began to laugh all together. With a big grin on his face, the doctor looked at me and said, “You have no idea how much I love it when this happens!”

You know, doctor, I think I do.

Beth Bredlau
Medical Interpreter Senior
UW Hospital and Clinics, Madison

I didn't realize how truly blessed I am until I sat down to reflect about my 32 years of service at Divine Savior Healthcare, in Recreational Rehab and Medical Records.

On September 8, 1975 I started working with a great group of people. I completely immersed myself into my new job to learn all I could and become part of the team. I quickly was accepted into my new "family" at Extended Care.

One of my most heartfelt special memories is of a resident I will call Mary. She was the perfect grandma—five feet tall, beautiful white hair worn in a bun and round wire rimmed glasses. She taught me so much about living. She was vibrant, outgoing and helpful. She met life head on accepting whatever came her way with a positive attitude. I admired her more than she will ever know. At day's end I told her "good night" and "I'd see her tomorrow." She quietly smiled and said, "I won't be here." We parted ways.

The next day I learned that she had passed away, just like she had known she would. I felt devastated and angry. I learned to accept God's will and take each life and treat it with respect while providing a high quality of life.

She motivated me to continue on and use her as a model in my daily life, along with all the other happy and sad memories I've encountered with my "extended family."

I am so grateful for every one of my 32 years and hope many others will follow my path.

Lynn Martin
Medical Records Clerk
Divine Savior Healthcare, Portage

Change. Life is about change, especially in the health care field. I have been at Vernon Memorial Healthcare since 1979. During this time I have witnessed plenty of changes, both in my job and throughout our health care facility. I work in the Patient Accounts Department. My job is to file all Medicare claims. Some may ask why I have stayed with this particular job for so long. It's because of change that I have. Medicare requirements change almost daily it seems. I have enjoyed keeping up with these changes and the challenges they present. From DRG's to APC's to Critical Access, from UPIN's to NPI's, each new requirement becomes a new job. My most recent undertaking involves educating myself on the many Managed Care Plans offered by Medicare. While very challenging, it becomes another new job that I can add to my list.

My work and that of my co-workers in the Patient Accounts Department is very important to our facility. We need to keep the cash flow rolling in order for our organization to run smoothly. We have to keep up with the many requirements involved with getting claims paid promptly.

There have been many challenges and I have experienced many changes in both my job and personal life. My children are grown and my husband and I are now Grandparents! My parents are on Medicare (which I thought would never happen).

I have watched Vernon Memorial grow into a unique, "state of the art" hospital which serves my family and the community in which I live. I like to think that maybe, in some small way, I have contributed to this growth and change. I am proud to be an employee of Vernon Memorial Healthcare.

"Life is precious, pass it on – be an organ donor."

Ann Keenan
Patient Service Representative III
Vernon Memorial Healthcare, Viroqua

How would I describe my work to a group of students? Very rewarding.

I really love what I do. I am not a nurse or a doctor, but a registration clerk at Waupun Memorial Hospital. My job allows me to interact with patients every day. I know that we make the first impression of our hospital the moment we greet someone, answer the telephone or register someone for their visit. I love being able to chit chat with them and send them on their way with a smile on their face. Then there are other times when there are tears, not smiles. Being able to lend an ear to listen or to help them make a phone call, just to let them know that you really do care, can make such a difference in someone's day. Not too long ago, I had a patient at my desk, so discouraged, not knowing where to turn. I listened, and helped her fill out a form. For me it was a few minutes, for her, it really meant a lot. She called me her "little angel." I am far from an angel, but I went home that day feeling like I made a difference. Sometimes if we just take those few extra moments, kind words, a smile it costs us nothing, but can mean so much.

I lost my dad to a lung disease 7 years ago. I know personally how much it means to be treated with kindness and compassion. Like I said before, I am not a doctor or nurse, but I know, in some small way, I can make a difference. I feel God has put me here for a reason, some days, I'm not so sure why. But, there are others when I know.

Angela M Wierenga
Registration Clerk
Waupun Memorial Hospital - Agnesian HealthCare

Eighteen years ago I interviewed for the position of Volunteer Coordinator at Sauk Prairie Memorial Hospital and Clinics. My qualifications included a degree in Recreation and experience organizing recreation programs, working with paid staff and volunteers, and 10 years of degree-related jobs. As I left the interview, I felt a true sense of chemistry had occurred and I was optimistic about my chances of being hired. I was offered the job and accepted it without hesitation.

Over the years until today at SPMHC, I've constantly been reminded of how lucky I was to get that interview and be offered that position. Every day I have the privilege of meeting volunteers who come from all walks of life, with many interests and talents, and ranging in age from 14 to 90+. It's never a dull moment as we get to know one another and determine the volunteer position they feel most comfortable having and set up the orientation and training they need before starting. I sometimes tell people that I'm a matchmaker and believe it or not, the process almost always has terrific results. Our employees have the best results because volunteers help us with tasks that we really need done at a specific point in time and the volunteers have the best results because they get to do things that they really enjoy while helping others.....tah dah!!!!

So what makes it work? Why do people want to volunteer in a hospital? What do they give us and what do we give them? To me, it all boils down to mutual respect and admiration, a sincere desire to help others and a caring attitude. Our hospital mission statement is "*Extraordinary health care from the heart, one person at a time.*" Those aren't just words.....that's not just a snazzy way of saying something.....it's real and sincere and it happens every minute of every day here at SPMHC. It comes from deep within us all.....employees and volunteers. For the most part, it comes natural to us and we do it because we want to, not because anyone requires us to. And the best thing is that it's contagiousone thing that we do allow to become contagious in our hospital!

I have been asked to make a 15 minute presentation at our monthly new employee orientation meetings. The newbies hear about volunteer services from me as well as good customer service and a few other pertinent points. My introductory comment is this: *Good morning and welcome! I have good news and bad news for you. The good news is that you have a job at Sauk Prairie Memorial Hospital and Clinics. The bad news is that I have the Best Job Here because I get to work with all our wonderful volunteers!!!*

Cheryl Anderson
Volunteer Services Coordinator
Sauk Prairie Memorial Hospital and Clinics
Prairie du Sac, Wisconsin



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