Western Pennsylvania Hospital News

THE REGION’S MONTHLY HEALTHCARE NEWSPAPER

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Sick Society

Somebody stop me. I feel a rant coming on and I can't hold it in any longer.

Al Gore, the guru of global warming, likes to jet around the country to tell anyone who will listen that our earth has a temperature. Well, I'm no Al Gore, but I'd like to add a diagnosis of my own: Our society suffers from a severe mental disorder characterized by selfishness and narcissism.

In other words, we have become a nation of jerk-worshippers. (Notice I didn't say we have become a nation of jerks; I don't think we're that far gone yet. But we are most definitely getting there.)

The evidence is overwhelming and if I were to cite every symptom I could probably fill this publication. But to highlight just a few, let's begin with the obvious: pseudo-celebrities like Paris Hilton, Lindsay Lohan, and Britney Spears, whose chief claim to fame seems to be willingness—to set an ever-lowering standard for raunchiness.

Lest anyone think this is a girl thing, let's not forget the antics of those wacky guys who play sports—at least when they're not in jail. The Cincinnati Bengals come to mind. Or what about those whose ego outshines their ability (Terrell Owens) or whose drive to succeed—and reap the financial jackpot that should bring—a puff of smoke blown in its face, a blast of loud music in its cage, a small piece of garbage tossed onto its floor. At the end of the year, both birds were still alive. Then the bird that had been kept in pristine conditions was exposed to all the filth and abuse the other endured, but this time it all happened at the same time.

The experience killed the bird and the conclusion was that living creatures can absorb a lot of degradation if it is doled out in small doses.

I believe that's true not just of the body but the spirit. We are following an ever downward spiral of lowered standards: in our elected officials, our sports heroes, our business leaders, our culture (in the form of music, television, and movies), and—most tragically—in ourselves.

Think I'm being a little harsh? Then explain the Internet petition to free the aforementioned Ms. Hilton from serving time after flaunting the law after receiving a DUI? Or the real possibility people in Allegheny County who depend on mass transit will be encouraged to celebrate their team? (Until Clemens and so many other mercurial mega-rich mega-stars live off of lavish pensions? Or that Roger Clemens can hire his arm out to the highest bidder in baseball and, should he help win a pennant, the hometown fans will be encouraged to celebrate their team? Until Clemens and so many other mercenaries sign on with someone else's team next season.)

This malady of twisted priorities and selfishness permeates all of society, including health care. The question is: can we find a cure in time? Do we even want to?

Hey, I'm sure there have been days when YOU haven't been happy at work. So why didn't you call a news conference to let the world know how underpaid and unappreciated you are?

It's as if we truly are living in Superman's Bizarro world, where everything is backward, yet we're too close to the situation to see it. I once heard of an experiment, where two similar birds were kept in separate but equal cages. One bird was well cared for a year; the other, however, was exposed to small bits of degradation each day—a puff of smoke blown in its face, a blast of loud music in its cage, a small piece of garbage tossed onto its floor. At the end of the year, both birds were still alive. Then the bird that had been kept in pristine conditions was exposed to all the filth and abuse the other endured, but this time it all happened at the same time.

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Harvey Kart

You can reach Harvey Kart at (412) 856-1954 or hdkart@aol.com.

History

For nearly 30 years, VITAS has been a leader in the American hospice movement, helping to define the standards of care for hospice and working to ensure that terminally ill patients and their families have ready access to compassionate and effective end-of-life care through Medicare and Medicaid:

- In 1979, VITAS’ co-founders worked to secure passage in Florida of the first hospice licensure law in any state. In 1981, VITAS’ co-founders served as leaders of the National Hospice Education Project, a grassroots campaign conducted in every congressional district that led to congressional passage of the Medicare Hospice Benefit.
- Two decades ago, VITAS was a pioneer and leader in advocating for the rights of residents of nursing homes to access hospice services under the Medicare Hospice Benefit. More recently, VITAS has led the movement to bring hospice care to America’s seniors aging in place in assisted living communities. VITAS, in fact, is a preferred provider of hospice services for the nation’s largest assisted living company.
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Harvey with granddaughter Mackenzie and grandson Karter

By Harvey D. Kart

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**Children’s Hospital of Pittsburgh of UPMC**

**Community Service**
Kimberly Stevens, RN

When Kimberly Stevens, R.N., was 16, she went on her first mission trip with her church. Ever since, she has devoted her free time to volunteering while working full-time as a staff nurse at Children’s Hospital of Pittsburgh of UPMC since 2006.

Her first mission trip was a weeklong trip to Linares, Chile, where she, along with a group of others, built 15 houses for underprivileged families. Since then, Stevens has continued to participate in weeklong volunteer trips to underserved areas.

Her destinations have included Bangkok, Thailand; Johannesburg, South Africa; and Mexico City and Tijuana, Mexico. Her most recent trips have required her to act as a healthcare provider to the youth of the impoverished areas.

"It’s easier for the youths to listen to me because I am a peer," Stevens said. "The conversations feel more like a group of friends talking about important things like AIDS rather than a lecture."

In addition to traveling abroad to volunteer, Stevens also works as a wish granter for the Make-A-Wish Foundation.

As a child, Stevens role-played with her friends, many of whom wanted to be doctors. But Stevens had already decided what she wanted to be when she grew up.

"I always wanted to be the nurse," Stevens said. "I guess my passion has always been helping people."

Although her passion was always nursing, she was unsure of what specialty to go into. While attending nursing school at Duquesne University’s School of Nursing, Stevens was torn between psychiatry and pediatrics. An eight-week clinical rotation at Children’s helped her decide on pediatrics.

After graduating in May 2006, Stevens joined Children’s as a staff nurse in the Limited Stay Unit (LSU). Tracey Weifenbaugh, unit director of the LSU, knew that Stevens’ caring nature serves her well as a nurse and volunteer.

"Kim is truly an asset to our staff given her nurturing and caring character," Weifenbaugh said. "It takes a special kind of person to give so much of herself to others and we are proud to have her at Children’s."
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Mentoring
Lori Josefczyk, RN

Working in pediatrics was always a top choice for Lori Josefczyk. But it was good-natured prodding by her college roommate that helped her on her way to Children’s Hospital of Pittsburgh of UPMC.

“My roommate would come home and tell me about how amazing the kids are,” said Josefczyk. “Her experiences made me want to be at Children’s also.”

After receiving her nursing degree from Indiana University of Pennsylvania, Josefczyk came to Children’s. She has been working on the 8th floor for the past four years, caring for children and adolescents with metabolic disorders.

One year into her nursing career, Josefczyk’s passion for teaching was so evident she began to train new staff, working as a guide for new nurses who shadow her during her daily routine.

“When Cindy Retort, R.N., 8th floor unit director, envisions a mentor, Josefczyk immediately comes to mind.”

“Lori’s professionalism, leadership and patience have made her a role model to staff on her entire unit,” Retort said. “She is often requested directly by new staff and students who have heard how great she is.”

Patient Advocacy
Dawn Thomas, RN

Dawn Thomas, R.N., is the supervisor of the IV Team at Children’s Hospital of Pittsburgh of UPMC, a group of trained staff nurses who are on call 20 hours a day to respond to requests for intravenous starts, blood draws and much more.

Children’s IV Team was established in January 2005 and is an essential part of the hospital, performing more than 11,000 procedures in 2006. Although the IV Team is a great resource for other hospital staff members, it is not always looked upon kindly by patients who tend to associate the team with pain.

“If a child sees us coming into the room they are going to get nervous,” Thomas said. “Nobody likes to get pricked by a needle, but because of our experience, we are able to make it as easy and painless as possible.”

Thomas uses various techniques to minimize pain, including the use of topical anesthetics and non-traditional techniques. In her 23 years at Children’s as a nurse, she has picked up a few tricks along the way, like using the Child Life department or music therapist to calm a child.

“Many times it’s the parents who need calming, if they are nervous about a procedure being done on their child.”

“I enjoy taking care of the entire family,” Thomas said. “When a young child is hospitalized, their parents and siblings need just as much comforting as the patient. I make sure that the family is comfortable and knows what is going on during procedures because it makes them much less anxious.”

Durae Vincze, R.N., unit director for the medical unit at Children’s, appreciates Thomas’ family-centered approach to care.

“Dawn is the consummate advocate for patients and families,” Vincze said. “She listens to their concerns and does her best to address them, whether it is a parking issue or access to a needed patient service.”

Teaching
Elizabeth Lazzaro, RN

Elizabeth “Libby” Lazzaro, R.N., didn’t always want to be a pediatric nurse, but after a nursing internship at Children’s Hospital of Pittsburgh of UPMC during her junior year of college, she discovered that working with kids was her passion.

Lazzaro graduated from the University of Pittsburgh School of Nursing in 2003 and prepared her nurse’s aide position into a full-time staff nurse position in the Pediatric Intensive Care Unit (PICU).

“I knew I wanted to be a nurse, but until I had the opportunity to intern at Children’s, I hadn’t specifically thought about working in pediatrics,” Lazzaro said. “The nurse I shadowed spent the majority of her time in the Intensive Care Units, so it felt natural for me to step into the PICU.”

Lazzaro spends her time working as a nurse preceptor, training new nurses as well as nursing students from area colleges. She is also back at Pitt working on her master’s degree in nursing and will graduate in April 2008.

An opportunity became available to Lazzaro in 2005 when Amy Biddle, R.N., nurse manager of the PICU, approached her with the idea of traveling to UPMC ISMETT (Instituto Mediterraneo per I Trapianti e Terapie ad Alta Specializzazione) in Palermo, Italy, to share her pediatric expertise with Italian nurses.

“The nurses in Palermo are extremely talented and experienced, but at the time they had very little pediatric training,” Lazzaro said. “I was excited to have the chance to help them learn to care for kids.”

Biddle sees Lazzaro’s effort paying off in Palermo. “Libby has made significant contributions to pediatric transplant nurse education at UPMC ISMETT,” Biddle said. “She has been an excellent teacher and ambassador to our friends in Palermo.”

“It has been a really rewarding experience,” Lazzaro said. “Knowing I have helped teach nurses how to care for pediatric patients is a great feeling.”
**Clinical Care**

Susan Karaffa, RN

Thirty years ago, Susan Karaffa joined the team at Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh of UPMC and has been offering patients and their families comfort and care ever since. She has worn many hats over the years, including spending time as a nurse educator, and found her way to Same Day Surgery (SDS) in 1987. Karaffa received her nursing degree from the University of Pittsburgh School of Nursing and immediately came to work at Children’s, where she has excelled in delivering excellent clinical care.

Karaffa recently received the Children's KIDS First award, which is awarded to staff members who demonstrate service excellence above and beyond normal job expectations. “The clinical leaders in SDS nominated me, I think partly because of the way I interact with the families,” Karaffa said. “But I just look at that as part of my job. I am here to make their child's experience as comfortable and smooth as possible.”

Following patients through their entire surgical experience is something that Karaffa takes very seriously. Before surgery, she completes the pre-surgical assessment and is in constant communication with the surgeons and the anesthesiologists to make sure the patient is ready for surgery. After the operation, she sees the patient through the recovery room and gives the discharge instructions to the family.

“Children’s offers a unique experience because you work with the entire family,” Karaffa said. “Everyone needs to be kept apprised of how a surgery or recovery is going. I’m there to help ensure that the same day surgery experience is successful for them.”

It is that level of caring and dedication that Beth Mastrangelo, unit director of SDS, says makes Karaffa invaluable to the families and staff who work with her every day. “Sue goes above and beyond when caring for patients and families on Same Day Surgery,” Mastrangelo said. “On a daily basis she does the extra little things, from spending time after her shift to assist a patient through the peri-operative admission, to assisting a staff member who needs an extra hand.”

Karaffa recently received the Children's KIDS First award, which is awarded to staff members who demonstrate service excellence above and beyond normal job expectations but her dedication has been critical for ensuring competent nursing practice with the professional staff of hematology/oncology.

**Innovation/Creativity**

Heather Ambrose, RN

Heather Ambrose, R.N., joined Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh of UPMC's Training and Education Department to help staff keep up-to-date with training, certifications and continuing education. But Heather's creativity has made ongoing staff education something to look forward to rather than a requirement.

Ambrose began her service at Children's in 2000 as a recent graduate from Thiel College in Greenville, Pa. She worked as a staff nurse and later as a clinical leader on the hematology/oncology unit. She now trains the hematology/oncology staff nurses she once worked with.

“I really enjoy working in the hematology/oncology unit here,” Ambrose said. “I loved it when I worked directly with the patients, and I still like being involved by making sure the rest of the staff is educated about the most recent advancements in the field so that they can provide the best care possible to the kids.”

To ensure that the best care is provided, Ambrose helps organize the annual Carnival Fair, a hospitalwide training and education event. The weeklong event is a requirement for all hospital staff. A number of booths represent a different aspect of caring for patients and also teach and reinforce hospital goals.

Ambrose also offers training for nurses who deal directly with hematology/oncology patients on a daily basis, including APHON (Association of Pediatric Hematology and Oncology Nurses) and CPON (Certified Pediatric Oncology Nurse) certification. “I thought it was a great idea to offer a quarterly class to other nurses who want to receive the CPON certification,” Ambrose said. “It is not a requirement, but earning the certification shows excellence in your practice and an excellent knowledge base. These classes help our nurses take superior care of our hem/onc patients.”

Bonnie Dean, Ph.D., R.N., director of Training and Education at Children's, believes that Ambrose is an asset for the entire hospital. “Heather truly has a passion for what she does,” Dean said. “Her dedication has been critical for ensuring competent nursing practice with the professional staff of hematology/oncology.”

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Congratulations to St. Clair Hospital’s 2007 Cameos of Caring Award Recipient!

Sally Mannella

2007 Cameos of Caring Award Recipient

Unit nominees: Debra Behling, Terry Bennett, Ann Bowler, Janet Brown, Jodie Connell, Patricia Currie, Darlene Duffy, Judy Dyer, Jennifer Ewing, Victoria Fitzpatrick, Debra Flock, Tony Franzetta, Ed Hirata, Christine Iglar, Lynne LeViseur, Christy Loughran, Wendy McIntyre, Christine Paulletich, Linda Robson, Lynda Roman, Christine Rorer, Jeffrey Stewart, Jane Ziemienski

St. Clair Hospital
Teaching
Serene Chamberlain, RN, BSN, MSN

As a Pediatrics Instructor at The Western Pennsylvania Hospital School of Nursing, Serene Chamberlain, RN, BSN, MSN, not only teaches her students well, she helps her fellow faculty members become better teachers.

She recently initiated a “lunch-n-learn” session for faculty, in which instructors meet to eat and talk about a predetermined topic, sharing ideas and concerns with open, purposeful dialogue. It is a “wonderful, informal time of faculty interaction,” said Nancy E. Cobb, Director of the School of Nursing.

Chamberlain “epitomizes the role of the lifelong learner,” Cobb said. “She has a thirst to learn and is not afraid of change.” Her teaching is consistently praised by both students and her faculty peers.

Clinical Excellence
Millie Mills, BSN, RN

When it comes to excellence in clinical care, Millie Mills, BSN, RN, has it all. Technical knowledge, teaching ability, interpersonal and communication skills, intuition, dedication to community service and administrative know-how all come together in Mills’ Clinical Nurse III in the Ambulatory Surgery Center at The Western Pennsylvania Hospital.

Her co-workers say they have watched as Mills turns a stressful situation with anxious patients and families into a valuable learning experience. They see how physicians rely on her observational skills and nursing judgment.

After 35 years in nursing, Mills says she reflects on her career and asks herself, “Have I been an asset to my chosen profession? Have I strived to achieve one of my most cherished goals, to become the best nurse I could possibly be?” Her patients and co-workers would certainly answer yes.

Patient Advocacy
Bob Monteverde, BSN, RN, IBCLC

If Bob Monteverde, BSN, RN, IBCLC, has a fault as a nurse, it’s that he can’t say no, said his supervisor Paula Lacher, RN, MSN, CNAA, Director of Maternal-Child, Women’s Services at The Western Pennsylvania Hospital. But then, that is also one of his greatest strengths.

“He is without a doubt a patient advocate,” Lacher said. “If it’s for babies, if it’s for patients, if it’s for mothers, he can’t say no.”

As Maternal Child Health Outreach Coordinator at West Penn, Monteverde visits referring community hospitals to teach RNs and MDs many topics including stabilization of neonates and neonatal resuscitation. He also organizes educational conferences, including a yearly “Nurses Who Care For Special Babies” event that attracts around 100 people. He provides backup support for the transport team and coordinator, as well as for the coordinator of the infant apnea center.

But even knowing Monteverde’s outstanding clinical skills and passion for his work, Lacher was surprised when he told her one day that he wanted to learn more about lactation.

He became certified by the International Board of Lactation Consultant Examiners and for the past several years has been helping new mothers breastfeed. They affectionately refer to him as “Breastfeeding Bob.”

“He is just so easygoing,” Lacher said of his success with new mothers. “He just doesn’t get upset over little things.”

Monteverde said his passion for caring for infants and premature babies was ignited when he transported a sick baby while on duty with the Air Force in Biloxi, Miss. He remembers seeing a bewildered older nurse holding the premature baby.

“I discovered that the most important thing to me, as a nurse, was education,” Monteverde said. “In order to be an effective patient advocate, I had to be knowledgeable about the patient’s disease process. I then had to be able to communicate that knowledge to the family of the patient in a manner that they could understand.”

Leadership
Sherry Zisk, MNEd, RN, CNAA

As Chief Nursing Officer at The Western Pennsylvania Hospital, Sherry Zisk, MNEd, RN, CNAA, has the power to simply decide and act. But that’s not what leadership means to Zisk.

“It is her core belief that it is her responsibility, and the responsibility of all nurse leaders, to always involve the staff,” said Jacqueline Collavo, director of the Magnet Recognition Program at West Penn. On a daily basis, Zisk can be seen engaged in conversation with a nurse in the hallway, or shadowing nurses on their daily duties.

“Sherry makes you feel that what you are doing is very important,” said Anna Marie Pozyczki, BSN, RN, Clinical Nurse III and a 18-year veteran at West Penn. “She asks us, ‘What do you need?’ She is concerned about what we need to function and is able to make a difficult situation better.”

Her nurses believe her attitude comes from the heart, from a genuine interest and concern for staff members and patients. If she is questioned about something she did, her response is sure to be something like this: “Because it is the right thing to do for nursing and for patient care.”

Zisk’s leadership style took West Penn Hospital to new heights in 2006, when West Penn became the first and only hospital in Pittsburgh and Western Pennsylvania to achieve Magnet Recognition status from the American Nurses Credentialing Center. Magnet is the highest recognition a hospital can receive for nursing excellence.

And in April 2007, West Penn leadership showed the hospital’s faith in Zisk by promoting her to vice president and chief operating officer.

“Sherry’s past successes in leading the nursing department have prepared her for this next step in her career as a successful health care executive, said Mark Palmer, West Penn’s President and CEO.

Patti Black, MSN, RN, CCRN
Jacqueline M. Buccilli, BSN, RN, CCRN
Susan Librich, RN
Jane Kelly, BSN

Patti Black, MSN, RN, CCRN, has been involved in several research projects at The Western Pennsylvania Hospital, so it’s a bit surprising to hear her say she doesn’t like doing research.

But what she does like is finding solutions to problems that affect patients, and that’s what research has enabled her to do.

As manager of the medical/surgical intensive care unit at West Penn, she had noticed inconsistencies in the way patients on ventilators were sedated. So Black and her team – Jacqueline M. Buccilli, BSN, RN, CCRN; Susan Librich, RN, Clinical Nurse III and Jane Kelly, BSN, Clinical Nurse II – embarked on a review of the literature.

Based on their findings, they decided to begin using the Richmond Agitation-Sedation Score as a way of ranking patient alertness. That led to a nurse-driven protocol on when to stop sedation.

What’s up next for the team? More research. They believe through anecdotal evidence that they have improved patient outcomes with the new system, but now they are trying to quantify that improvement.

May 22, 2007
Nursing is both an “art and a science,” and there are abundant opportunities for nurses to pursue a wide range of careers within the field. Hospital Council of Western Pennsylvania recognizes the vital role of nurses throughout the continuum of care in the region. Hospital Council’s initiatives for nurses and its members include providing support for chief nursing officers, continuing a workforce development program and assisting members with transitioning young nurses into leadership roles.

“Nursing is an art,” said Jane Montgomery, BSN, MBA, vice president of Clinical Services and Quality for Hospital Council, “because nurses spend the most time with a patient – often nurses are the closest person to a patient. Nurses use their communications skills and training to really talk to patients and then, in turn, share information with physicians. Nursing is also a science because nurses are always assessing a patient. Patient safety and quality of care are always in the forefront of a nurses’ mind. Nurses truly work towards doing the best for their patients all of the time.”

One of the roles of Hospital Council is to engage chief nursing officers from throughout the region in a forum designed for the highest level of nurse administrators, said Jane Montgomery. To do this, Hospital Council created a Chief Nursing Officers Forum for CNOs on to share information and best practices as well as to develop common responses to pending legislation and regulations.

“Workforce development is one of our top priorities,” Montgomery said. “Hospital Council works with guidance counselors and hospitals to reach middle school and high school students interested in health career fields, including nursing. We offer scholarships as well as a special publication aimed towards students. In addition, we are working at making a better connection between the educational community and healthcare employers.”

These efforts are designed to assist the region’s healthcare providers with recruiting and retaining clinical employees, including nurses. There are so many career options for nurses, Montgomery said, that even within a hospital, there are multiple specialties to explore. She noted these fields in a hospital setting include everything from working as a floor nurse to nurses specializing in obstetrics, surgery, medicine, orthopedics and pediatrics, among others. In addition, within a hospital, nurses can specialize in intensive care fields such as neurology, cardiology, trauma, and neonatal ICU. In addition, there are many opportunities for nurses in the operating room including first assistant nurses, circulating nurses and certified registered nurse anesthetists. Other opportunities for nurses include utilization review and case management.

“Beyond a hospital, there are many, many other opportunities for nurses, including home health, long term care long term acute care, behavioral health, ambulatory care, and working in physician practices. There are also opportunities for nurse educators,” Montgomery said.

Nursing is “high tech/high touch,” Montgomery said, noting that technology is changing the way nurses do their jobs. New technology makes information much more accessible to everyone involved in patient care, she noted. In ICU environments, nurses use technology to help assess and treat patients.

Hospital Council is also assisting hospitals with ideas on how to transition younger nurses into leadership roles within their organizations. “One of the key issues our healthcare organizations are facing is that we have many senior nurses and nurse leaders who are nearing retirement age. Hospital Council sees this as a trend and our goal is to help our members prepare younger nurses to take on leadership roles.”

Hospital Council of Western Pennsylvania is a regional association representing a continuum of healthcare providers including hospitals, long-term care facilities, long-term acute care providers and specialty hospitals in a 30-county area.

Pat Raffaele is Vice President for Hospital Council. For more information, contact Jane Montgomery at mongomj@hcwp.org or visit Hospital Council’s website at www.hcwp.org.

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Pennsylvania State Board of Nursing Approved
Kathy McPherson Completes Nurse Navigator Fellowship Program

Alle-Kiski Medical Center is pleased to announce Kathy McPherson, RN, BSN, CEN, completed the 2006 Nurse Navigator Fellowship Program, the first of its kind in the area. McPherson was among nine Pittsburgh area nurses who participated in the year-long Fellowship. The focus was to provide professional nurses with quality engineering and safety science skills to improve patient outcomes.

The Pittsburgh Regional Health Initiative (PRHI) and the Jewish Healthcare Foundation set out to teach nurses how to employ the Pennsylvania coalition's Perfecting Patient Care curriculum. Perfecting Patient Care was developed for healthcare settings and is based on the Toyota Production System model of work redesign. It involves engaging front-line workers in the improvement process using evidenced-based knowledge to redesign and improve care delivery.

McPherson's project focused on eliminating excess medical/surgical supplies in the Emergency Department. “Through observation and mapping pathways, I was able to identify waste and inefficiencies. Based on the findings, the department cleaned and made workspaces and patient care areas more efficient. As a result, we were able to save over $18,000 in supplies,” said McPherson. “One of the most exciting outcomes was we improved patient care at the provider level.”

The Nurse Navigators met monthly and had coaches and mentors throughout the program. They also had opportunities to visit other facilities such as Medrad, to see the model work in different settings. According to Debra Thompson, MSN, RN, CNA, chief nursing officer for the PRHI and the Jewish Healthcare Foundation, “This is a way to impact patient care outcomes, by learning to use data. Nurses are very engaged in doing what is right for patients. I think this is a wonderful opportunity to grow and develop nurses in our community.”

Michael Harlovic, vice president, patient care at AKMC, commented, “Kathy exemplifies the ever-evolving role of nurses today. Not only does she make quality patient care a priority, she understands the necessity of cost saving and efficiencies needed in health care.”

Reta Caputo, RN
AKMC Nurse Invited to Attend Leadership Summit

Reta Caputo, registered nurse, at Alle-Kiski Medical Center (AKMC) was recently invited to attend J.A.Thomas Associates (JATA) Third Annual Leadership Summit in Atlanta, Georgia due to the success of the compliant documentation management program (CDMP). Caputo is the CDMP leader and was responsible for working with JATA to develop and implement the program. West Penn Allegheny Health System (WPAS) system facilities engaged JATA to perform an assessment of its chart documentation and coding.

This led to the implementation of a program designed to provide compliant documentation in the medical record that more accurately reflects the severity of illness of patients with a goal to receive the appropriate reimbursement for services provided.

While coders are experts in coding clinic guidelines, they are not able to look at cases from a clinical standpoint as would a nurse or doctor. The CDMP involves the expertise of a registered nurse clinical documentation specialist (CDS) on the front end reviewing concurrently and the coding specialists coding the chart with more accurate, complete and compliant documentation prior to discharge. The collaboration between the CDS and the coders is essential for the program's success. CDMP focuses on the common goals of physicians and hospitals, bringing them together in a mutually beneficial alliance. This results in documentation that truly reflects work effort, resource utilization, severity of illness, and complexity of patient care.

Caputo commented, “Hiring the right nurses for the job is essential. The CDS nurses have to be clinically proficient as well as proficient typists.” Caputo led the team and was responsible for ensuring communication with physicians, setting up in-services, doing physician office educational visits, providing oversight and education to nursing and other health care professionals at AKMC.

According to Caputo, the program has been very successful thanks to the teamwork of the CDSs, physicians, coders and administration. “It is an honor for me to be representing AKMC and WPAS at the summit. I am looking forward to meeting and networking with other leaders from across the country. I wish I could take the entire AKMC team with me because if it weren't for their excellent work, I wouldn't have been chosen.”

Children's Home Nurses Enhance Clinical Care at New Facility

The Children's Home of Pittsburgh's staff of 53 highly-experienced, pediatric registered nurses has provided excellent care, both individually and as a team, to infants and children for more than 20 years. Their skill and compassion help children and families thrive, and their clinical capabilities are even stronger now thanks to the opening in March of The Children's Home of Pittsburgh & Lemieux Family Center on Penn Avenue.

This new facility houses the expansion of both Child's Way and the 28-bed Pediatric Specialty Hospital, as well as Adoption, the founding program of The Children's Home. In this one location, the organization's medical programs can more easily share a variety of resources, including the nursing staff's expertise.

Child's Way provides skilled nursing in a day care setting for up to 60 medically fragile children, ages birth through 8. Registered nurses work as a team with child care associates, visiting therapists, and a child development specialist in Child's Way's dynamic, preschool-like environment.

Multiple, custom-designed rooms allow staff to focus on the developmental needs of various age groups, including infants, toddlers, and older children. Oxygen, medical air, and suction are piped in through most walls, so nurses can treat a child whether he is busy at the craft table or playing with toys on the heated floor.

The Children's Home's Pediatric Specialty Hospital also offers multiple new features that assist nurses, all with NICU and/or PICU experience, in providing excellent clinical care. The acute care hospital includes an expanded Transitional Infant Care (T.I.C.) unit for premature and high-risk infants and the new Transitional Pediatric Care unit for older medically fragile children.

Nurses provide families with “hands-on” education about how to care for their children's medical needs, including the use of home medical equipment, so they can confidently make the transition to home. An expanded family living area - complete with eight private bedrooms, shared living rooms and kitchens, and Austin's Playroom for siblings - facilitates teaching opportunities while giving families more privacy.
AGH Nurses Proudly Serve Country Abroad

As a member of the United States Air Force Reserves, Jim Compliment, CRNP Allegheny General Hospital (AGH), is one of thousands of nurses around the country who have been called upon to serve their country in this time of war, applying his expert nursing skills in war zones across the globe. As recently as a year ago, Compliment served in Iraq as part of new type of medical response force called Expeditionary Medical Support, or EMEDS, which consists of four-person teams that rapidly deploy to inpatient field hospitals. There are EMEDS operating in Iraq and in 11 other countries. Prior to his duty in Iraq, Compliment served for six months in Kuwait between 2003 and 2004.

“My biggest concern is always about being away from my family,” Compliment said. “But we do a lot of good work and this is my way of giving back to our country.”

Compliment currently works with kids in AGH’s Division of Otorhinolaryngology, and has previously worked as a LifeFlight nurse and in the AGH Trauma Intensive Care Unit.

In addition to Compliment, some other AGH nurses who have served or are currently serving the country include Bob Lefler, who is a Unites States Army officer in charge of the Emergency Medical Treatment (EMT) section in the 339th combat support hospital. Lefler has been deployed twice: once for nine months to Afghanistan in 2002, and once to Kosovo for 1 1/2 years in 2003. There, he not only oversaw the EMT, but also ground and air transport.

Lefler said that the main similarity between his work at AGH as a clinical education specialist in Trauma Intensive Care Unit, and overseas is the young age of the patients, though the cause of the injury differs.

“Here, we see a lot of young victims of car accidents. There, we saw a lot of young victims of the battlefield,” Lefler noted.

According to Lefler, 96 percent of soldiers who are injured survive their injuries, making him feel good about the work that he does. “What’s most gratifying is when a soldier says thank you, and you hear that he or she returned home from the war.”

Both Compliment and Lefler don’t have any plans to return overseas soon, but as they said, “that could change at any moment.”

* Forbes Hospice *

Leslie Pelkofer, R.N. (left), and Maria DePasquale, R.N.

Forbes Hospice wishes to recognize both Leslie Pelkofer, R.N., Manager of Home Care Hospice and Maria DePasquale, R.N., Manager of Inpatient Hospice, for successfully meeting the requirements to be a Certified Hospice and Palliative Nurse from the National Board of Certification of Hospice and Palliative Nurses. This is an accreditation of the American Board of Nursing Specialties. They both worked hard to attain this accreditation and we at Forbes Hospice are proud of them!

We Salute You

As one of the nation’s largest healthcare providers, we know that our nursing professionals are critical to our success. Our excellent outcomes would not be possible without the dedication of those providing the high quality care within our facilities nationwide. It is during Nurses Week that we have the opportunity to recognize those that work as a part of our nursing teams to care for our community.

healthsouth.com
Pittsburgh Mercy Health System Salutes Nurses for Exemplifying Mercy's Mission & Core Values

“Nursing: A Profession and a Passion.” Anyone who knows or who collaborates closely with nurses knows how passionately they are about delivering high quality care to their patients and that their profession is more than a job – it's their life's work. And anyone who has studied the rich history and tradition of health care in Pittsburgh knows that the first nurses at The Mercy Hospital of Pittsburgh – a Pittsburgh's first permanent hospital and the first Mercy Hospital in the world – were its founding seven Sisters of Mercy. The Sisters of Mercy were invited by Bishop Michael O’Connor to Pittsburgh to care for the health care needs of the Pittsburgh's growing and diverse population, especially the underserved. On January 1, 1847, the Sisters of Mercy opened Pittsburgh's first Mercy Hospital, The Mercy Hospital of Pittsburgh to care for the health care needs of all in the Catholic tradition. The Sisters dedicated their lives to the physical, emotional and spiritual care of their patients – and 160 years later, their proud tradition continues.

PMHS joined other religious and secular hospitals and health systems nationwide in celebrating National Nurses Week, May 6-12, 2007. This year Nurses Week coincided with Mercy's Founders Week celebration. PMHS saluted its nurses for not only fulfilling their professional responsibilities with passion, but for keeping the promise made by our founding Sisters of Mercy by living Mercy's mission and placing its core values at the forefront of professional practice and patient care each and every day. The Mercy Hospital of Pittsburgh hosted a special luncheon on May 9 in the Sister M. Ferdinand Clark Auditorium to honor the 19 registered nurses who were nominated for the Mercy Hospital 2007 Nurse of the Year/Cameos of Caring Award. The award was given to Karen Martin, RN, Same Day Surgery Center. In her nomination of Karen for the award, Adrienne Miller, RN, CNH, a Same Day Surgery Center staff nurse and colleague wrote, “Karen's warm, compassionate and affable personality is always present, helping to alleviate and making her patients and families very comfortable. She always seems to find something in common with each patient. Patients often comment about how nice she is and how she made their stay a more pleasant experience…Karen takes her nursing to a higher level. She is a knowledgeable, caring and hard-working professional. She exemplifies all of the qualities that elevate nursing to a prestigious profession.”

Other nurses nominated for the Mercy Hospital 2007 Nurse of the Year/Cameos of Caring Award were:

- Sara Hijazi, RN, NF/Rehabilitation Services and Acquired Brain Injury Unit
- Sue Cobaugh, RN, Nursing Administration
- Sue Coynar, RN, BEOncology Unit
- Michelle Fontana, RN, Trauma Services
- Victor Harding, RN, Intensive Care Unit (ICU)
- Suzanne Heckert, RN, Neurology/Neuro Continuous Care Unit (NCCU)
- Sue Horn, RN, Risk Management
- Kathy Johnston, RN, Intensive Care Unit/Birmingham Trauma & Burn Center (ICU/TBC)
- Beth Liptak, RN, Same Day Surgery Center
- Melanie Mountain, RN, 12E/Medical Progressive Care Unit
- Kirsten Peroney, RN, Cardiovascular Intensive Care Unit (CVICU)
- Barbara Phlilage, RN, MercyLink and 7F/Neuro-Trauma Unit
- Andrea Pitchman, RN, Same Day Surgery Center
- Celeste Plunkett, RN, Department of Emergency Medicine
- Janet Ringbloom, RN, 7E/Oncology Unit
- Dan Warhola, RN, 7E/Cardiac Progressive Care Unit
- Melissa Willtout, RN, Intensive Care Unit/Birmingham Trauma & Burn Center (ICU/TBC)

The luncheon opened with a welcome and remarks from PMHS President and CEO Ken Eshak and Vice President of Nursing Mary Anne Foley, RN, MSN. A special prayer for Mercy nurses was offered by Sister Carolyn Schallenberger, RSM, RN, MSN. The luncheon concluded with Foley reading “The Magic of Caring,” a touching poem by an anonymous author about the many rewards of the nursing profession.

Other special Nurses Week events at The Mercy Hospital of Pittsburgh included special lunches for the intentions of Mercy nurses; blessing of the hands for nurses; chair massages; drawings for themed breakfasts; dessert breaks, chair massages; drawings for various prizes, and visits by WTAE-TV Medical Editor Marilyn Brooks, news anchors Mike Clark and Andrew Stockey – a both of whom participated in an impromptu CPR contest.

In a separate recognition ceremony held May 4 at Mercy Jeannette Hospital, Kathy Shutsy, RN, Skilled/Rehab Unit, was named the Mercy Jeannette Hospital 2007 Nurse of the Year/Cameos of Caring Awarde. Marcia Cook, RN, RN, BSN, MPM, chief nursing officer and Cheryl Price, RN, manager of the Skilled/Rehabilitation Unit, presented Kathy with an award certificate.

“Kathy is an outstanding nurse for many reasons,” stated Cook. “Kathy is a leader as well as a supporter of her peers. She is very knowledgeable, and empowers her fellow co-workers to be better individuals on and off the job. Kathy always has a smile on her face, and goes out of her way to answer questions. She has earned the staff’s respect. Kathy is an ‘Angel of Mercy.”

Other special Nurses Week events at Mercy Jeannette Hospital included a display of baby photos where nurses had to guess who was pictured. Special gift baskets made by the Nurse Leadership Team were also awarded. As the Mercy Hospital and Mercy Jeannette Hospital Nurses of the Year award recipients, Karen and Kathy will represent Mercy at the 9th Annual Cameos of Caring Awards Gala on October 6, 2007 at the David L. Lawrence Convention Center.
Dannette Marbella, R.N. (right), reviews a patient’s chart with colleague Joni Guzzy in Allegheny General Hospital’s Coronary Care Unit.

Deborah McNamara, R.N., administers medication to a patient in Allegheny General Hospital’s Emergency Department.

Deborah Irwin, R.N., talks with patient Melissa Boles on Allegheny General Hospital’s Labor and Delivery Unit.

Sherry Stutz, R.N., talks with patient Mark Kaugher about his upcoming heart transplant in Allegheny General Hospital’s Cardiovascular Institute.

Julie Brown, R.N., advises fellow nurse Mary Ann Cowgill on lactation equipment on Allegheny General Hospital’s Maternity Unit.

Kelly Berton, R.N., Allegheny General Hospital Dialysis Unit, instructs patient Todd Duncan on how to use his home dialysis equipment.

Heather Kennihan, R.N., greets patient Luis Lacouture on Allegheny General Hospital’s Oncology Unit.

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Mentoring
Angela Kudlawiec, RN

Starting a new job can be intimidating. For Carol Plowcha, who’s been working as a registered nurse for Conemaugh Home Health’s (CHH) Ebensburg office since March, the transition has gone very smoothly thanks to the help of one devoted mentor.

For the past few years Angela Kudlawiec, R.N., has been helping new home health nurses learn the ropes of CHH’s Mentoring Program. Anywhere from three months up to a year, new employees meet with a mentor each day to shadow them in the home.

“I’ve been in nursing for more than 20 years, and Angela is one of the best nurses I’ve ever encountered,” says Plowcha. “She’s very knowledgeable, conscientious, kind, courteous and truly an exemplary nurse. In her role as a mentor, she always makes herself accessible to us.”

Angela, who is currently mentoring four new employees, says those being mentored aren’t the only ones reaping the benefits of the program. “I’ve grown a lot as a result of working with new employees,” says Kudlawiec. “It constantly reminds me that there is more than one way to solve a problem and shows me just how far I’ve come since I started in this profession, which is a confidence builder.”

In addition to confidence, Kudlawiec is also sharing her knowledge and experience with those she mentors. “Home health nursing is intimidating when you’re new,” says Plowcha. “There are so many different rules and governmental regulations that don’t apply in other clinical settings, therefore having someone like Angela, who is a wealth of knowledge, is a vital resource.”

Kudlawiec says, “This career is very gratifying. When we discharge a patient it’s because they’re healthy, whereas, when I worked in a hospital that wasn’t always the case. And my supervisor, Joni, and Conemaugh Health System in general, are very supportive about encouraging opportunities for professional growth and advancement. As a result of this support, it encourages you as a nurse, to give back and assist however possible. It wasn’t that long ago that I was in their place and am just glad that I’m now able to help new nurses learn and grow as I have.”

Patient Advocate
Linda Petak, RN

“When you’re a nurse, your patients will know if you sincerely care,” says Linda Petak, an RN on Good Samaritan’s 5th Floor medical inpatient unit at Memorial Medical Center in Johnstown. “That’s why I try to always treat patients like family.” Having been a nurse in acute facilities for 33 years, Petak has just about seen it all, but she says no matter what the situation, she remains focused on providing high quality patient care, and her coworkers agree.

“Linda is the kind of nurse who will do just about anything to make the patient more comfortable and at ease,” says Kathy Quinn, RN, Nurse Manager. “She goes above and beyond for her patients everyday. She treats each person as an individual and tailors their care based on their individual needs, which means so much to not only the patient, but to their family.”

“My personal experiences have shaped the way I approach my job,” says Petak. “My father was very ill with heart problems, my mother fought cancer and my brother was in and out of the hospital regularly from the time he was born suffering from kidney problems. So I know how important it is for the hospital to tend to not only the patient’s needs, but to serve as support to the family as well.”

One example, explains Quinn, happened just recently. “A 96-year-old woman was brought in and there was some uncertainty about whether she could endure surgery. The patient’s children were on their way and wanted to see their mother in order to decide what action should be taken. Linda convinced the surgical team to wait until the family arrived and got to see their mother and make that decision before taking her to the OR stat as intended. She was a true advocate for the family.”

“When I actually saw the woman with her daughters, I was reassured I had made the right decision. This was a life or death matter to them, and they wanted to see their mother and make sure they were doing the right thing. Whenever possible you have to give that to the patient and their family,” says Petak.
Education

Mike Contrillo, RN

“Rehabilitation nursing is different than other areas of nursing. These nurses not only have to take care of patients, but they also have to teach patients how to take care of themselves.” Those words from Mike Contrillo, a registered nurse and Certified Brain Injury Trainer, explain Contrillo’s insight and commitment to helping provide educational resources for these nurses with a unique job.

Approximately 50 percent of the patient population at Crichton Rehabilitation Center, an entity of Memorial Medical Center in Johnstown, is made up of patients who have suffered from either traumatic or acquired brain injuries. In light of this statistic, Contrillo is leading a Brain Injury Core Team. Currently 33 healthcare professionals, the majority from the Rehabilitation Center, are participating in the training, and approximately 23 of the participants are expected to sit for the certification exam to become Certified Brain Injury Specialists.

Contrillo says, “It’s a holistic approach. We’re teaching our staff about the anatomical and physiological aspects of the patient’s condition. If they understand what part of the brain is injured, they can then know what to expect in the way of recovery. For instance, a traumatic brain injury tends to be more global, affecting many parts of the brain, therefore oftentimes you’re dealing with a patient who exhibits inappropriate behavior or may have periods of agitation. When the staff is armed with knowledge, they will know how to better deal with these particular behaviors.”

Mary Ashbaugh, R.N., has worked with Contrillo for the past five years. “Mike is not only an excellent nurse, but he is also very knowledgeable and readily shares his knowledge with everyone. He is such an asset.”

In addition to the Brain Injury Core Team, Contrillo is also looking to expand other educational initiatives such as the Community Reentry Program. This program focuses on helping patients with relearning higher cognitive skills that are needed to function in the community, such as balancing their checkbook or obtaining groceries. His ultimate goal is to integrate a complete and comprehensive program with the hospital’s inpatient units and outpatient rehabilitation services.
Innovation & Creativity
Jeanne Walters, BSN, RN

Jeanne Walters, BSN, RN, is an off-shift supervisor at VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System (VAPHS). As a Patient Care Coordinator (PCC), she is administratively and clinically responsible for the overall functioning during the off-shifts. She is the first contact when a death occurs during her tour of duty and effectively guides the staff and physicians in processing the required documentation. One aspect is communication with the Center for Organ Recovery and Education (CORE).

Walters was frustrated as she continually had to call CORE to convey that a death had occurred but was bound by rules and regulations not to discuss any medical condition nor share any personal information. She transferred this frustration to becoming an advocate for “changing how we do business.” Walters requested to participate in a newly formed interdisciplinary Donor Advisory Committee. As co-chair of the Committee, she was instrumental in instituting revisions to VA policies and procedures associated with organ donation. According to Jeff McBreen, a CORE representative, “By rewriting the policy and aggressive patient and staff education, VAPHS has become the gold standard in the VA system for organ donation.”

As a PCC, Walters routinely approaches families of deceased veterans to discuss potential organ donation. She consistently uses a therapeutic approach to obtain permission from the family to begin the process of presenting a potential organ donor to CORE. She treats the families of the deceased veteran with the utmost respect and kindness in this critical time and provides the emotional support needed to assist.

Walters has also promoted Donor Awareness in the community. She recently set up an information booth at a Health Fair where she had the opportunity to interact with veterans and their families to educate them about the potential “Gift of Life” through organ donation. In addition, she assisted with an information booth at VAPHS for National Donor Awareness Month where she spent time educating the staff and veteran population.

Walters feels very strongly that it is important to give someone with a potentially terminal disease another chance at a healthy and productive life.

Community Service
Anecia Thibodeau, RN, MSN

Anecia Thibodeau, RN, MSN, is a Clinical Nurse Specialist at VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System. While working full-time and going to school, she dedicated time to Operation Safety Net (OSN), a homeless medical outreach program operated by Mercy Hospital. OSN is recognized as one of the nation’s first full-time street medicine programs and continues to set the standard for this unique form of health care. Program activities include Street Outreach which encompasses clinical volunteers of physicians, nurses, and paramedics who walk the streets in an assigned geographic area to provide care to the homeless. Anecia participates on a weekly basis for two to three hour sessions to reach out to the homeless to meet their health care needs. On average 10-15 homeless people are sought out with much focus on providing food and hygiene supplies.

Being a registered nurse brings to the forefront a unique set of challenges for Anecia, including the lack of rapid medical response. Being a former critical care nurse, Anecia provides for and demands that others participate in delivering high quality, technically competent skilled care. When asked what motivates her to continue, Anecia is quick to relate, “It’s the people. They don’t need much nor want much but they demonstrate that the human contact is so vital to survival. I have met millionaires (truly those with stock brokers) who choose to be homeless. I receive more from them than they from me.”

Another aspect is the continuous striving to encourage an individual into rehab. Although one repeatedly offers assistance, the offer is rebuffed or ignored. Not to be dissuaded, Anecia continues down that path recognizing that previous success can translate to future occurrences. The best success story surrounds a recent homeless husband and wife with an addiction. Given that the wife had medical technology skills and was off of drugs for days, they recognized the value of following through with the community resources offered by Operation Safety Net. Anecia was successful in obtaining affordable housing and job offers. As Anecia notes, any one of us are a hair away from being homeless at any given time.

Teaching
Joyce Clohecy, MN, Ed.

VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System is on the Magazine Journey. This certification of nursing excellence has comprehensive “forces” that must be addressed in the application process, and direct caregivers must be able to articulate application of forces at the bedside.

Joyce Clohecy, MN, Ed., is a Nurse Educator who provides continuous orientation for ALL nursing staff and specialized education for med/surg.

Clohecy fosters Force 11 which describes nurses as teachers. Through Clohecy’s initiative, a robust Nursing Grand Rounds program was developed. This monthly educational offering provides an opportunity for the staff nurse to investigate, develop, design, and present a nursing topic to all acute care nursing staff. She encouraged two nurses to volunteer to present Congestive Heart Failure. Through her patience and guidance, these novice nurses “wowed” their peers and set the gold standard for Grand Rounds. Subsequent to the initial presentation, a total of 12 different topics have been presented by 24 staff. Not only is Force 11 being addressed through this initiative but Force Eight, Consultation and Resources, is also strongly represented.

Clohecy suggested that on pertinent topics presenters collaborate with the content experts in leading the audience through a physiologic review of involved body systems. As such, less experienced staff has a venue for incorporating current evidenced-based findings in delivering quality care to our veteran patients.

Clohecy was not satisfied with limiting Grand Rounds to Patient Care Services and expanded the idea to other service lines, thus enhancing collegiality among the staff. She diligently pursued broadcasting pertinent topics to the Long Term Care and Behavioral Health staff with the first Virtel Grand Rounds being conducted in February on Evidence-Based Practice.

This snapshot of her involvement does not adequately describe her commitment and devotion to staff education. Frequently one hears “I am too busy” or “I don’t have time.” Nothing could be further from the truth in the case of describing Clohecy. While her current functions in education could be perceived as overwhelming for many, Clohecy makes the time to advance staff along the path of learning.
Community Service
Donna Freiters, RN

At 6:30 a.m. on a typical day at ACMH Hospital in Kittanning, PA, Donna Freiters is found in the Cardiac Rehabilitation Department getting ready to start her day: preparing the crash cart for emergencies, cleaning exercise equipment, and preparing to greet the first cardiac rehab outpatients as they arrive by 7 a.m. Treating an average of 40 outpatients would more than fill each day, but Donna has also helped to develop a three-day-a-week after school program called “Kids’ Fun & Fitness.” Starting as a pilot program in 1996 and offered first to hospital employees’ children, it was then opened up to children ages 6 to 16 in the community recommended by their physicians to receive help with exercise and diet. With a positive emphasis on fun, Donna leads the children with educational games, aerobic exercises, taste testings, and plenty of camaraderie. Weather permitting, they are on the lawn playing outdoor games or walking around the building. During the winter months, they use the cardiac rehabilitation department to do floor exercises and walk laps around the area. Donna feels developing children’s self-esteem is very important, and a huge step toward that goal is providing participants with a positive atmosphere and a safe environment in which to learn healthy diet and exercise habits they can use for a lifetime. Her enthusiasm has extended to her daughters, Nikki and Kelly, who both volunteer with the Kids’ Fun & Fitness program.

Donna’s dedication to improving the health of the community led her to begin a training program for the Fun & Fitness children, their parents, and their pets to prepare for a 2K walk sponsored by the hospital last September. The response was so favorable that she offered them the option of continuing the training after the event was over, and they are now preparing for the next 2K walk.

Donna is also involved in a mentoring program at Lenape Vo-Tech, working one-on-one with a student who is interested in pursuing a health career. Some of the persons she has helped through Cardiac Rehabilitation have grandchildren who became part of the Fun & Fitness program, and some of the children are now college students who hopefully will continue the healthy lifestyles Donna has tried so hard to instill in them.

Submitted by Geraldine Hansotte, Volunteer Services Liaison

Innovation/Creativity
Cindy Scoccimerra, RN, BSN, OCN

Cindy Scoccimerra is the Nurse Manager of the Outpatient Oncology Department at the Richard G. Laube Cancer Center at ACMH Hospital, Kittanning, PA. Cindy’s innovative approach to patient treatment includes complementary therapies that incorporate wellness of mind and body with traditional cancer care treatments. Under her direction, classes in Tai Chi, Reiki, therapeutic touch, and meditation have been offered to patients to explore the mind-body-spirit connection in the wellness process. She is part of the Cancer Care Team, a group that provides services to the community and to the oncology patients. The Cancer Care Team works closely with the American Cancer Society to provide programs such as “Look Good, Feel Better.” Other programs provided include onsite private fittings for wigs and breast prosthetics with professional consultants, onsite pastoral support for patients undergoing treatment several support groups and free cancer screenings yearly.

Cindy was instrumental in implementing the Cancer Genetics Program through teleconferencing with Allegheny General Hospital. Patients can meet locally with a genetics counselor, have testing completed, and confer with a genetics physician via teleconferencing, all at the local facility. Much of Cindy’s outside activities reflect her deep devotion to oncology patients. She is very active with the American Cancer Society’s Relay for Life team, the Barracudas, and participates in the Society’s annual golf outing, the cow patty bingo fundraiser, and the Relay for Life’s 24-hour Walk for Cancer held every Father’s Day. Her two children, Emily and Jacob, have also been participants in the walk since they were babies. New Year’s Day 2007 marked Cindy’s first jump into the freezing Allegheny River as part of the Polar Bear Club, raising money for cancer research. Cindy finds her work with cancer patients very rewarding but very difficult to leave behind at the end of the day. Following a patient’s progress through treatments forges a deep connection with the person and his or her family, and Cindy’s aim is to focus on the “well” part, even helping bereaved families to see the death of a loved one as a healing experience.

Submitted by Geraldine Hansotte, Volunteer Services Liaison

In celebration of our nurses…….

With a caring heart and healing hands,
you comfort pain and put worry to rest.
Thank you for all that you do.
We appreciate you!

MVH Monongahela Valley Hospital
Michelle L. Kurtz, RN, Patient Care Coordinator Two Southeast
2001 Jameson School of Nursing Graduate, began as staff nurse Pediatrics Unit and became Patient Care Coordinator April, 2007.

Roy Hamett, RN, CCRN, Patient Care Manager Coronary Care Unit
Received CCRN certification from the AACN Certification Corporation. Began his career in 1989.

Diana Cupec, RN
Patient Care Coordinator, Pediatrics
2003 Jameson School of Nursing Graduate, began as staff nurse Pediatrics Unit and became Patient Care Coordinator April, 2008

Kate Mazzei
Director of Assisted Living at Jameson Place
April, 2007 earned her Nursing Home Administrators License and Medication Administration Trainer License. Employed at Jameson for nine years.

Deborah Martell, RN, BSN, COWCN
Enterostomal Therapy Nurse
Graduate of Montefiore Hospital School of Nursing. Worked as staff nurse in ICU, Cardiac Rehab, JVNA (home health) and Cardiology. She is a certified Enterostomal Therapy nurse.

Madeline Melidona, RN
Patient Care Manager Maternity
Worked as labor and delivery nurse for three years, received associate degree in nursing from Youngstown State University and served as maternity supervisor for nine years at Youngstown Osteopathic and Forum Health as a labor and delivery nurse. She became Patient Care Manager Maternity in 2006.

Kate Mazzei
Director of Assisted Living at Jameson Place
April, 2007 became Patient Care Coordinator on Two Southeast.

Diana Cupec, RN
Patient Care Coordinator, Pediatrics
2003 Jameson School of Nursing Graduate, began as staff nurse Pediatrics Unit and Two Northeast.

April, 2007 became Patient Care Coordinator April, 2008.

Roy Hamett, RN, CCRN, Patient Care Manager Coronary Care Unit
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A Salute To Nurses

Special people become nurses. Special nurses come to Mercy. We see your rare qualities every day. Your tireless devotion. Your boundless compassion. Your uncompromising professionalism. As the nation celebrates Nurses’ Week, know this: no nurses are more celebrated than Mercy nurses. By your administrators. By your peers. And most importantly, by the patients who flourish under your care.

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May 22, 2007
“We make a living by what we get. We make a life by what we give.”

– Winston Churchill

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**ORT J. KANE REGIONAL CENTER – GLEN HAZEL **

**Mentoring**

Cecilia Koontz, RN

Cecilia “Cil” Koontz has been with the Kane family since January, 1985. She is from Hazelwood, born and raised, and attended St Stephens and St. Rosalia High School. She is a graduate of Mercy School of Nursing and attended Duquesne University. While working as a head nurse at Mercy Hospital, she met and married her dearest husband, Harry; then was blessed with three children and seven grandchildren. Cil has traveled the world and when and if she retires, plans on traveling. Bonnie is being nominated because every contact she has with staff, residents and family members – everyone leaves feeling positive. She is a valuable asset to Kane, in that, she nurtures and helps others to grow. Kane Regional Center is proud to recognize Cil for her outstanding efforts and dedication to her profession.

**Leadership**

Bonnie Yorke, RN

Bonnie has been in nursing for 47 years; a supervisor in acute care then in long-term care. Bonnie advanced from a unit supervisor position to that of an assistant director of nursing. Bonnie came to Kane in 1994 as an assistant director of nursing then moved to Registered Nurse Assessment Coordinator in 2003. She has five children and 10 grandchildren. Bonnie hopes her years of nursing service have made a difference. Cil is being nominated because every contact she has with staff, residents and family members – everyone leaves feeling positive. She is a valuable asset to Kane, in that, she nurtures and helps others to grow. Kane Regional Center is proud to recognize Bonnie for her outstanding efforts and dedication to her profession.

**Clinical Skills and Mentoring**

Krista Johnson, RN, BSN

Krista Johnson is an RN and clinical care manager overseeing the day-to-day management and coordination of a 60-bed long-term care unit as well as facility wide administrative and managerial duties for the 314-bed Kane Regional Center. She has been an RN since 1995 and recently earned a BSN from the Waynesburg College. Krista began her nursing career at the Kane Regional Center in 1995 and continues her professional growth through academic and experiential work and experience. She is a wealth of knowledge and an exceptional example of professional excellence. Krista is a leader and mentor for all nursing personnel. She willingly shares her knowledge and expertise as a mentor and leader and delivers expert quality care to the residents of the facility. Krista is highly respected by her peers and the medical staff. She is an extraordinary nurse and manager. The Kane Regional Centers recognize Krista for her outstanding clinical abilities as well as for her superior mentoring skills with nursing personnel. She is an integral part of our success and we are so very fortunate to have her on our team.

**Teaching**

Sue Burns-Cmar, RN, BSN

Sue Burns-Cmar is an RN and oversees staff development and training at the John J. Kane Regional Center in Scott Township. Sue’s witty and interactive approach to teaching is highly effective and successful in securing outstanding retention results for the materials presented to personnel while making their learning experience very enjoyable. She has made significant contributions to the development of nursing professionals by promoting very successful mentor, career ladder and preceptor programs. She creates and encourages learning and professional development. Sue earned a BSN from Villanova University and has held various nursing positions in acute care, long-term care and home health settings. She has headed staff development and training activities for the Kane Regional Center in Scott Township for two years. The Kane Regional Centers recognize Sue for her continued dedication and support of nursing professionals as well as ancillary staff in our center. She is an integral part of our success and we are so very fortunate to have her on our team.

**Leadership**

Melissa Barcic, RN

Melissa Barcic, Directress of Nursing at the John J. Kane Regional Center in Scott Township, exemplifies nursing leadership. Melissa is responsible for the administration of the entire nursing services program and coordinates nursing services in a 314-bed facility. Her team of nursing and ancillary staff provides and coordinates a comprehensive range of care and services to meet the physical, social, and emotional needs of people who are chronically ill or disabled, as well as people with short-term post-acute rehabilitation needs. Melissa brings to her position a combination of clinical experience and guidance which has led her facility in being recognized as a premier destination for long- and short-term nursing care needs in the South Hills. Nursing care at the Kane Regional Center in Scott Township is known to be the best in the area and the center has received exemplary reviews by all regulatory agencies. She began her career at Kane as a nursing assistant while attending nursing school and rose through the ranks of nursing leadership after receiving her nursing degree. Melissa has held the position of Directress of Nursing for five years and has demonstrated an outstanding commitment to vigilance in the provision and delivery of consummate quality nursing care. The Kane Regional Centers recognize Melissa for her leadership ability and skill and congratulate her on an extremely successful career in the nursing profession.

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Leadership

Janet Massimiani, RN
Director of Nursing

Janet has worked in the Kane system for 14 years. She was a 3-11 house supervisor, unit supervisor, Assistant Director of Nursing, and has been the Director of Nursing for the past 6 years. She leads by example and is dedicated to the residents and staff alike. Janet has been a mentor to many and faces daily problems with confidence and assurance. We are extremely grateful to have Janet leading our team with her experience and commitment.

Innovation/Creativity

Christine Miller, RN
Asst. Director of Nursing

Chris has worked in the Kane system for 20 years. She was a staff nurse, unit charge nurse, a unit supervisor and is currently the Assistant Director of Nursing. Chris has made significant contributions to our Wound Care Program. She heads the Wound Care Team and makes recommendations to the doctors concerning treatment of wounds. She is currently working with Wound Care Champions on every unit and shift to improve wound care. Development of this program has encouraged innovation and promoted creativity among our interdisciplinary teams. We greatly appreciate the efforts and contributions Chris makes to our facility.

Mentoring

Kay Szczublewski, RN
RNAC

Kay has worked in the Kane system for 20 years. She is the Ross facility RNAC and the mentor for the MDS Resident Care Coordinators. Kay is a positive influence for the nurses. She guides them, supports them and is a great role model. We acknowledge Kay for her dedication and exceptional efforts.

Teaching

Carol Spera, RN
Staff Development

Carol has been in the Kane system since December, 1979. She is highly involved with the development, improvement and teaching of new policies and procedures. Carol also promotes the preceptor program and is an advocate for our Clinical Ladder Program. We salute Carol for her dedication and contributions to the development of our team.

Clinical Care

Rosanne Bonivich, RN
MDS RCC, Pain Champion

Rosanne wears many hats during her day. She completes all MDS functions on the 3 East Unit including writing and updating care plans and conducting care conferences. She covers the unit when the Resident Care Coordinator is not available. She is a member of the Wound Care Committee and is our Pain Champion. The Kanes are involved with the CMS STAR Project and since Rosanne has been the Champion at the Ross facility, our pain management score is 2.9 points below the state average and 4.1 points below the national average. This is one way Rosanne assists in providing quality care to all of our residents. We are very happy to have Rosanne on our team.
HealthSouth Nurse Volunteers for Missionary Work

Diana DuPont, R.N., recently traveled with her mother and the Philippine American Medical Society of Western PA (PAMS, Inc.) to Batangas, Phillipine for their annual medical surgical mission. This was her first experience working with the PAMS. DuPont was part of the surgical team that performed almost 200 major and minor surgeries over a 5 day period. Her mother, an 81 year old resident of Pittsburgh and a Phillipine native was part of the medical team that saw approximately 2,750 patients over a four day period. DuPont was not prepared for what she saw during her week in Batangas. “I am a hard worker and am used to 'toughing it', yet when I saw the conditions this community lived in, it was a real awakening for me. The people are desperate for medical supplies and they are very poor. The value system of the community seemed to evolve around the basic needs of food, shelter and safety.” DuPont goes on to say “We take so much for granted here in the US. We are very fortunate to have good healthcare. It is one thing to see such poverty on TV, yet another to get in there, roll your sleeves up and try to do something about it”. DuPont reported that the people of Batangas were extremely grateful for the mission’s work and care for their community.

DuPont and her mother later traveled to San Marcial to visit her extended family. She plans to return in 2008 for the next mission. DuPont is a graduate of CCAC, Boyce Campus and has worked at HealthSouth Hospital of Pittsburgh since 1993. She also holds her BS in Health, Physical Education and Recreation from the University of Pittsburgh. She resides in Monroeville with her 3 children.

HealthSouth Pittsburgh congratulates Diana DuPont on her dedication and determination to help those in need. She is a true example of a caring and compassionate nurse.

Maxine Vargo, RN

If there is one person at Family Hospice and Palliative Care that has worn many clinical hats, it is Maxine Vargo. First she has the distinction of being the most senior clinical employee – joining Family Hospice and Palliative Care when it began in 1980. Since then her dedication and compassion is obvious with each patient and family she has cared for. Maxine has worked in triage, as an on-call nurse, and as a case manager. For many years she worked as one of the Nurse Liaisons with local hospitals. In this role she helped to educate the hospital staff about hospice and palliative care. At the hospital she was often called upon to talk with patients and families about hospice care. Sometimes being the first to address in detail end of life choices for the patient and family. Because of her years of experience and great sensitivity, Vargo is often asked to precept other nurses. Most recently, she has taken on the role of staff nurse at Family Hospice Manor. Family Hospice and Palliative Care's inpatient hospice facility. Although she has cared for hospice patients in many different settings, Vargo is always able to see the thread that runs throughout all hospice and palliative care patients – compassionate, comfort, and care. No matter how hospice care might have changed over the years, Vargo continues to profess the basic principles of hospice care with each one of her patients and families.

Carrie Benedict, RN

The three Cs of hospice care – commitment, compassion and competence – describe perfectly Carrie Benedict’s approach to hospice nursing. In order to increase the accessibility of hospice and palliative care services to long term care patients, Family Hospice and Palliative Care placed Benedict exclusively at one long-term care facility. Her professional and friendly nature has allowed her to change the staff’s perception and understanding of palliative and hospice care. Through her work, she has been able to gain the confidence of the medical and nursing staff and create a trusting relationship between the two organizations. The patients and families in the facility have benefited greatly from Benedict’s advice, care and education of the staff. Through her work, Benedict’s has offered more and more patients the comfort of hospice care.

When caring for a patient, Benedict is actively involved in all aspects of her patient’s care – physical, emotional and spiritual. She approaches each case as if they were her own family – giving them the personal care each person wants during this final journey. Benedict has made a tremendous difference in the lives of her patients and families by bringing hospice care to them no matter where they reside.

Caryn Wayman, RN

When Caryn Wayman joined Family Hospice and Palliative Care in 1995, it served about a fourth of the patients it serves today. Over the years, Wayman, has trained and mentored many hospice nurses. Her excellent assessment and clinical skills, coupled with her dedication and compassion, make her an obvious preceptor for new nurses. She has demonstrated that a nurse who provides the technical skill to help a patient is a competent professional, but the nurse who builds a relationship with the patient and family is a true companion during this final journey. She has shown them that hospice nurses must bring warmth and understanding as well as knowledge and skill to the patient’s bedside. In addition, her patience, flexibility and respect for others make her a welcoming host for new staff. Wayman has the ability to explain the overall goals of care for a particular patient while at the same time not losing sight of all the details needed to achieve that goal. Her encouragement and training gives these nurses the necessary confidence to visit patients on their own. She leads by example, showing others how to utilize the talents and skills of the entire hospice team to meet the patient’s needs. She also models for others how to be an effective team member. Finally, Wayman has also extended herself as a leader by working with the organization’s administration to outline the details of a new extended hour shift. Everyday, Wayman, not only makes a difference in the lives of her patients, but she also touches all those patients whose nurses have had the privilege of training with her.
Team Approach Enhances Nurses’ Role

When it comes to caring for children in a hospital setting, nurses have always been on the front line. But as technology and treatment protocols have become specialized, nurses have become integral parts of medical care teams designed to enhance the effectiveness of patient care.

Over the past few years, the patient care staff at the Shriners Hospitals for Children – Erie, has focused its attention on the development of Specialty Care Teams. Also known as Centers of Excellence, these teams focus on developing world class expertise in those medical areas that have significant clinical impact for a large number of orthopaedic patients seen at the Erie Shriners Hospital.

These multidisciplinary Specialty Care Teams are comprised of nurses, physicians, therapists, dietitians, care coordinators, orthotists and other professionals. The hospital currently has teams for Cerebral palsy, Myelodysplasia/Spina Bifida, Osteogenesis Imperfecta, limb deficiencies and spinal deformities. Many of the teams are coordinated by nurses.

The decision to develop Specialty Care Teams was derived from the desire to centralize talent and time, since having too many priorities may erode effectiveness. Although the hospital continues to treat all types of orthopaedic and neuromuscular problems, by emphasizing a few key medical areas, the staff is attaining a level of expertise that will enhance patient care and result in superior outcomes and cutting edge treatment practices.

According to Gina Lesoski, R.N., coordinator of the Cerebral Palsy team, the team is available to provide each CP patient with individual assessments and planning. Every month, a CP Multidisciplinary Clinic is held at the hospital to address the unique needs of CP patients. Each child may not need to see each member of the team during clinic visits, but all team members are always available to CP patients as needed.

"The team members work together to enhance the overall health and well being of each patient," Lesoski notes. "For example, the doctors and nurses assess the patient’s medical needs while the dietitian may address the child’s nutritional strength and the care coordinator helps the family access necessary services in the community."

In addition to studying the way the hospital cares for these specialized patients, the teams also study professional journals, work done by other Shriners Hospitals and hospitals throughout the world that are known as experts in the specialized care of these specific ailments.

"Nurses at the Erie Shriners Hospital have been very instrumental in the development of these Specialty Care Teams," Lesoski points out, "but the decisions made about the patient’s care are a team effort."

This team effort is the result of post-clinic conferences where all of the Specialty Care Team members collaborate to develop a plan of care for each patient.

"We make every effort to understand the roles of all the team members. No member is more important than another. As a result, our role as nurses is enhanced by the expertise of everyone on the team."
Nurse Executives – Helping Shape the Future of Healthcare

BY BECKY AMBROSINI

Rapid change and increasing complexity in healthcare has challenged nurse leaders to be courageous innovators as they evaluate, redesign, and implement “futuristic” patient-centered care delivery systems. Uniquely qualified by experience, position of influence, and a passion for delivering top-notch patient care, nurse executives no doubt have the ability to convert these challenges into opportunities.

In today’s healthcare organizations, nurse leaders face issues such as patient safety and quality outcomes, health personnel shortages, creating a work environment that fosters professional nursing practice, large building projects, work flow redesign, reimbursement issues, new technologies, and the integration of clinical information with technology. These issues are even more important in cardiovascular services where competition for patients is on the rise and technology changes are prominent.

But, Corazon believes this plethora of challenges has given nurse leaders the opportunity to make major contributions to the future of healthcare through the creation of strategic partnerships with physicians using evidence-based solutions for improving patient care, with health policy makers who are beginning to understand the vital role of nurses in healthcare; with educators in order to support research and create bridges for novice to expert practice; with communities for prevention and health maintenance strategies; and with computer experts to hardwire patient safety and improve the work environment.

While all of these strategic partnerships are essential for a successful future in the delivery of quality patient care, partnerships with information technology specialists have transcended the others in its effectiveness to achieve rapid clinical transformation. Indeed, the nurse executive’s partnership with Information Technology (IT) has resulted in clinical information systems that contribute unique solutions to many of the issues plaguing hospitals and cardiovascular service lines. Patients today are supported by an extraordinary array of complicated systems, advanced technology and pharmaceuticals, along with an armada of highly-skilled professionals. While these advances can improve the overall hospital experience, they also introduce a complexity of care that is difficult to manage with human intellect alone.

The commitment of nurse leaders to an IT vision that facilitates provider access to patient information, ensures uniform standards of evidence-based care, and integrates clinical processes and work, has resulted in solutions for some of these key healthcare issues. In fact, nurse executives have been instrumental in activating Cardio Information Systems (CIS) that have improved patient safety and quality, increased efficiency and patient satisfaction, improved recruitment and retention of talented clinicians, and employee satisfaction.

Many hospitals aspire to achieve “Magnet” status—a quest that has nurtured and accelerated the much-sought-after collaboration between nursing education leaders and the leaders of nursing practice in hospitals. An important component is partnering and building relationships with physicians, along with education; so, now more than ever, nurse executives have become personally involved and have frequent interactions with faculty and nursing students to explore opportunities for collaboration.

Such involvement has led to the identification of funds for nursing scholarships from hospital auxiliary boards, hospital-based skills laboratories, individualized orientations with quality preceptors, and programs to socially assimilate new staff into the organization’s nursing culture. These efforts have developed strong bonds and open communication between hospital administrative staff and the faculty of nursing programs, which will be important to addressing difficult issues and challenges in the future.

It is evident that nurse executives have and will continue to transform care and influence the future of the healthcare industry through self-dedication, individual commitment and passion, as well as knowledge to address critical issues of patient care. Let us all congratulate and praise these professional nurses that passionately care for patients at the bedside as well as those nursing leaders that passionately create an environment for the delivery of quality patient care, not only on this annual week celebrating nurses, but every day.

BY BECKY AMBROSINI

Becky Ambrosini is a Senior Consultant at Corazon, a national leader in specialized consulting and recruitment services for CV program development. For more information, call (412) 364-8200 or visit www.corazoninc.com.

“An important component is partnering and building relationships with physicians, along with education; so, now more than ever, nurse executives have become personally involved and have frequent interactions with faculty and nursing students to explore opportunities for collaboration.”
Dana Green Receives Protin Award at MVH

Dana Green, R.N., honored for a strong commitment to work and the goals and ideals of the health care system, is the 2007 recipient of the Edward J. Protin Memorial Award at Monongahela Valley Hospital.

Dana, a staff nurse in the Progressive Care Unit (PCU), received the honor at the hospital’s 35th annual Service Awards Dinner at the Willow Room in the Mon-Vale HealthPLEX in Rostraver.

The Protin Award is one of the hospital’s most prestigious honors and the recipient is not named until the night of the event.

Green, whose career at Monongahela Valley Hospital spans more than 17 years, received a standing ovation from the audience.

“I just can’t believe that you can get an award for doing something that you love to do,” she said in accepting the award. “Being out on the floor in the hospital I see what all of you do every day. I admire every one of you. If I could, I would give an award to all of you. You are all so kind. I am honored to have the privilege to represent Monongahela Valley Hospital and deeply appreciate the support I receive from my team every day.”

Tom Wilson, last year’s recipient of the Protin Award, made the presentation to Green.

Mary Lou Murt, Assistant Vice President of Nursing, emphasized that Green “certainly meets the criteria for this honor – for many reasons.”

“In addition to leading by example,” Murt continued, “Dana has consistently demonstrated a strong commitment to patient care and her dedication is irresistible. She has mentored many new employees and students and our part-time employees ask when she is working so they might work with her.

A 1976 graduate of Charleroi Area High School, Green did not pursue a nursing degree right out of high school. She did not begin her career at MVH until 29 years of age.

She graduated from the Washington Hospital School of Nursing in 1987 and three years later received her Bachelor of Science degree in nursing from California University of Pennsylvania. She was the valedictorian of her graduating class at Washington Hospital School of Nursing and also received the Washington County Chamber of Commerce outstanding student award in 1987.

*The Butler VA Medical Center Salutes Their Nurses*

The Butler VA Medical Center honors the dedicated men and women we in the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) consider to be the compassionate backbone of the veterans’ health care system – our nurses.

The theme of National Nurses Week 2007 is “Nursing: A Profession and a Passion,” and no one puts more passion into the health care profession than VA nurses. VA is the nation’s largest single employer of nurses and VA nurses lead their profession in education and training, clinical responsibility and research. But their passion comes from VA’s mission – caring for our veterans.

VA nurses are integral and equal members of our health care team of professionals. No health care professional is closer to the veterans we care for than a VA nurse. Our patients rely on them for their compassion and the VA relies on them setting the highest clinical care standards. That reliance is well placed. VA’s recognition as a leader in health care, patient safety and research is due in large part to its nurses.

I am deeply proud to be associated with the nurses who serve veterans at the Butler VA Medical Center and of all of our nation’s 2.9 million registered nurses who work tirelessly to keep us well and save lives around the clock every day.

Submitted by Patricia Nealon, Director, Butler VA Medical Center.

*Windber Surgery Center at Windber Medical Center*

**Patient Advocacy, Nate Sann**

Nate helped to establish a bariatric program that integrates the multidisciplinary approach to care. He developed a cohesive program that puts the patient at the center, tailoring not only to the surgical weight loss, but enhancing outcomes by ensuring support and education are at the forefront of the program. Nate continues to act on patients’ behalf spending countless hours writing appeals to get the surgeries authorized when insurance companies denied the procedure. He is instrumental in educating the hospital staff, community and patients on the benefits of weight loss as well as preparing the hospital to be more bariatric friendly. He performs monthly sensitivity training for new hospital employees that mirror the Planetree Philosophy. Nate strives to continually improve the program, incorporating data tracking and research into the program.

Nate also serves his country and will be leaving in the near future for his military training.

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hospitalnews.org

May 22, 2007
Combining Nursing with Technology is a Profession and a Passion

During vacation bible school at the young age of 4 years old is when Andra Roig, Registered Nurse and Telehealth Coordinator for Celtic Healthcare, discovered her life’s passion and career path. When allowed to play “dress up” in a costume of what they wanted to be when they grew up, Andra chose a nurse’s outfit. She loved the crisp white hat with the big red cross on the front, the little white tights and shiny clean white shoes, the white cotton dress, and best of all the stethoscope. “It is one of those days in my memory that I remember so vividly. I’ll never forget it,” comments Roig. “I just always knew from that day forward, I was going to be a nurse.”

Roig, a single mom, is raising four children on her own (her “single, greatest accomplishment”). “As a ‘life trainer,’ instilling morality and ethics in my children has actually helped me become a better person and a more compassionate nurse. When times were hard, my children kept me going. I had to be there for them,” says Roig. “I learned to go the extra mile and do what it takes for the betterment of my family, and have taken that an applied it to my nursing career.”

Realizing that Celtic Healthcare, with its passion for technology teamed with the absolute best healthcare, was the perfect match for her passions in the nursing field, Roig joined the Celtic team in March, 2007 and is extremely excited about her duties as Telehealth Coordinator. She jumped at the opportunity to join this innovative, patient-caring, and technology-motivated company. The goal for Celtic’s Telehealth Program is to develop a program so that patients can be monitored more closely, improve their quality of health, use it as a means to keep them out of the hospital, and increase Celtic’s productivity as well.

Roig’s first tasks include developing policies and procedures, proper documentation, best practices, researching grants to be able to develop the program further, meeting with Celtic’s Information Systems team to develop documentation on providers’ laptops, and quality assurance with regards to outcomes measurements. “Building a solid foundation for Celtic Healthcare to be the Telehealth homecare leader” is Roig’s number one goal. “My second goal and ultimate hope is that as we prove our outcomes, it will ultimately grab the attention of the insurance companies for future reimbursement of Telehealth services.”

When asked about her experience so far at Celtic Healthcare, Roig just can’t say enough. “I love the whole experience. The thing that I love the most is how supportive everyone is, they are very upbeat and have great attitudes. Everyone made me feel welcome and important to the team.”

Homecare nursing has been an important part of Roig’s life as single mom. “Homecare is wonderful because you have one on one contact with patients, spend time with them, have the opportunity to make a difference, and it fits so well into my family’s lifestyle by giving me the flexibility and autonomy that I need to ultimately keep my family first. Once I stepped into homecare, I just loved it and didn’t want to do anything else!”

Nursing: A Profession and a Passion

Nursing has long been respected as a profession. It is an autonomous body that draws on a well-defined knowledge base, uses scientific research (evidenced-based practice) to increase that body of knowledge so as to enhance the service it delivers to all customers and provides multiple opportunities for professional development. It educates its students in a variety of settings from hospital to university and is guided by specific policies and codes. It is a lifework that contributes to society anywhere in the world.

One “Google” search defines a profession as an “activity that involves a responsibility to serve the public … has standards for admission, and has a need for public confidence.” Sounds like nursing. Our customers EXPECT the academy of improving the scientific approach to patient care. That’s where the public confidence comes in.

What they DESERVE is the delivery of that care with passion – the emotional zeal, fervor and excitement with each contact, an advocate that can be depended on when the customers can’t speak or act for themselves. Without passion nursing becomes just a job, just a paycheck. With it nurses exhibit a pride that is easily seen in their actions and statements. It’s the sparkle in the eyes of a nurse describing what she did to make a difference in the care of a dying patient or how with such pride he articulates why a new piece of equipment will speed recovery.

Nurses with passion love what they do. It is the drive that keeps them returning to the workplace while still managing to balance a busy home and social life. Liken the passion of nursing to the sports fan exhibiting an ardor returning to the workplace while still managing to balance a busy home and social life. It is a lifework that contributes to society anywhere in the world.

Submitted by Charlotte Foster, BSN, RN, a charge of nurse recruitment at VAPHIS and can be reached at (412) 365-4815 or Charlotte.Foster@va.gov.

Andra Roig

Charlotte Foster

The Children’s Home’s 28-bed Pediatric Specialty Hospital offers Transitional Infant Care (T.I.C) and Transitional Pediatric Care units, therapeutic environments providing complex sub-acute care with an emphasis on parent teaching. Pediatric hospice care also provided.

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Nursing may be defined as an art and a science. And it is so much more. Nursing has grown into a profession that requires a deep dedication, commitment and passion to serve others in such a unique role.

Whether someone chooses to become a bedside nurse, teacher, administrator or researcher, and whether someone chooses to be a nurse in the hospital, office, university or home, each of these unique opportunities requires a special individual with special talents. The one common trait in each of these nursing endeavors is a passion to care for others and a commitment to improve their well-being.

Bedside nurses serve in a most important role for patients and families, staying by their side 24 hours a day, seven days a week, not only as a caregiver, but as an advocate. Whether there to assess a patient’s most critical but most subtle change in physical status, or simply to hold a patient’s hand at his or her most lonely moment of the night, it is the nurse who typically provides the support and comfort that makes such a difference.

As teachers, nurses combine their clinical expertise and passion for teaching to help educate the next generation of caregivers. Today, as we face an ongoing shortage of nurses in this country, our nurse educators and nursing faculty play pivotal roles in providing mentorship to our students and to new graduates as they prepare to enter a career in nursing. After several years at the bedside, professional staff nurses are educated and prepared to serve as role models and mentors to new graduates.

Just as critical as our bedside nurses and our teachers are our researchers, nurses who are continually exploring ways to advance our nursing knowledge and our practice in hopes of better outcomes and improved standards of care for our patients.

As nurses advance in their profession, many choose the path of leadership and serve as administrators. Nursing administrators are continuously challenged today with the nursing shortage as well as the demands placed on hospitals that provide care for critically sick and injured patients. They also are faced with the demands of ensuring that nurses are well prepared to adapt to the advancements in technology and treatments that allow us to provide the best care possible for patients.

As the chief nursing officer at Children’s Hospital of Pittsburgh of UPMC, it is my responsibility to provide the nurses of Children’s with the tools to excel in the best work environment possible. These are responsibilities I take pride in and treat with the utmost importance.

Each and every day at Children’s, I hear many stories of gratitude from the parents and families we care for. It is with pride and honor that I say many of these families view our nurses as the “heart and soul” of Children’s.

—DIANE S. HUPP

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DIANE S. HUPP, RN, MSN

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