Quality of Healthcare Professionals Key to STAT Staffing’s Success

BY VANESSA ORR

For many hospitals and healthcare organizations, finding and hiring enough staff to meet patients’ needs can be a problem. One solution is to hire temporary or supplemental healthcare workers who can help fill the void caused by understaffing, long- or short-term disability leave, medical leave or vacations.

One concern, however, is whether these temporary workers are up to the task when faced with providing care in ever-changing venues. According to a recent article in the July issue of The Journal of Nursing Administration, nurses who work in a supplemental capacity provide the same quality of care to patients as full-time nurses on staff.

“The article reinforces what I always knew was true – that it’s all about quality when it comes to patient care,” said Tom Muscatello, CEO of STAT Staffing. “That’s why we put our nurses and other healthcare personnel through such an intensive interview process – we only send our clients people we consider to be strong, ethical experts.”

According to the article, supplemental workers provided the same level of care as those on staff, with less patient satisfied and improved patient outcomes. This is because nurses who are hired to provide care in complex environments have been trained and tested to deliver quality care.

The Cameos of Caring Program and Award Gala recently honored 62 nurses from 43 area healthcare facilities, nine schools of nursing, and one international facility located in Palermo, Italy. Over 1250 guests attended the black-tie event held at the David L. Lawrence Convention Center on Saturday, October 6, 2007. Mike Clark, news anchor for WTAE-TV, served as the emcee for the event.

The University of Pittsburgh School of Nursing created The Cameos of Caring Program and Award Gala in 1999 in response to the nursing shortage. “Two of the fundamental factors in the nursing shortage are recruitment and retention. The Cameos of Caring Program inspires more people to enter the profession by increasing awareness about all the opportunities available in nursing,” says Jacqueline Dunbar-Jacob, dean of the University of Pittsburgh School of Nursing. “In addition, the Cameos of Caring program helps increase job satisfaction by creating a venue for area hospitals to acknowledge and recognize the contributions their nurses make to quality health care,” says Dean Dunbar-Jacob.

Cameos of Caring awardees are nominated by their colleagues at each participating hospital in recognition of their profound impact on the lives of patients, family members and co-workers. To date, Cameos of Caring has honored 357 nurses.

Job satisfaction does not only lead to improved retention of nurses it also has a direct correlation to both patient satisfaction and improved patient outcomes. A study by the American Nursing Association shows there is a direct relationship between nurse staffing and patient outcomes and a study published in the Journal of the American Medical Association, concludes that more nurses at the bedside could save thousands of patient lives each year.

Responding to current studies that show a clear link between higher levels of nursing education and patient outcomes, the University of Pittsburgh School of Nursing established the Cameos of Caring Endowed Nursing Scholarship for registered nurses to continue their education. The program scholarship has grown every year. The Cameos of Caring Awards Gala has raised over half a million dollars for nursing scholarships, and fifty-eight Cameos of Caring scholarships have been bestowed over the past five years.

Recognizing that training nurses for today’s changing healthcare environment requires robust nursing faculty, the University of Pittsburgh School of Nursing added the Nurse Educator category to the Cameos of Caring Awards Program in 2006. This year nine schools of nursing have nominated outstanding nursing faculty from their institutions.

For more information, please visit www.cameosofcaring.nursing.pitt.edu, or call (412) 624-5328.

SEE PAGES 12-25 FOR CAMEOS OF CARING NURSE PROFILES
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I recently had a “near death” experience with the U.S. healthcare system—figuratively speaking—and I’m just glad I didn’t “cross over” during that time because I don’t think my family could have afforded the costs.

Bernie and I are in the process of relocating to Atlanta to be closer to our children. Since Bernie is a nurse who likes her job in a surgery center, her hope was to stay with her current employer but just report to a different location.

But Murphy’s Law reared its ugly head, and Bernie found no position waiting for her, at least not right away, which threw us into health insurance limbo for a short period of time that was just long enough to convince me the system is, as the younger generation is known to say, whack.

For the next few days, while we pondered Bernie’s future, I began an odyssey in search of reasonably priced health insurance. I started calling different companies and, I’ll be completely honest with you here, I started each conversation with, “Hi, this is Harvey Kart of Hospital News…” I’d pause to let the significance sink in, then continue. “… and I want to know what the deal is with your coverage.”

Perhaps I didn’t stress the Hospital News identification enough but you no doubt will be happy to hear that it bought me no special treatment whatsoever. They asked me about my general health status and I freely and honestly offered that I have a bad back and a touch of arthritis—not too unexpected for someone who has lived five decades already, right?—and the standard response was uh, wait. As in, I may have a waiting period until I can be rated.

So I found myself swelling that much ballyhooed statistic of 46 million, as in how many Americans do not have health insurance. A little perturbed and a lot panicked, I also figured I better order a 90-day supply of my prescription medication before our present health insurance ended, just to be safe and to make sure my wallet was empty of just about any piece of paper with a dead president on it.

Like most people caught in this type of situation, I put my mind in overdrive, grinding back and forth between self-pity and panic. The self-pity verbalized itself mostly empty of just about any piece of paper with a dead president on it. The panic prompted me to think about overreacting (and those who know me appreciate that I don’t need a big push in this area) as in planning to spend the next 90-days or so in my house and in bed. Such activities as cutting a cucumber or using a step stool to reach something overhead would be taboo. If possible, I’d encase myself like the Boy in the Bubble, although with my luck I’d end up suffocating myself. And I can’t afford the bill for attempted resuscitation, even if unsuccessful.

Finally Bernie’s employer informed her that, indeed, they could use her in a surgery center near our new home in Atlanta. We again were covered through our present plan. I’ll be brutally honest, if not altruistic: It didn’t take long—say about 30 seconds—for my passion for fixing the cracks in our healthcare system to largely subside. Hey, I’m covered, and I figure we’ll be okay for the next few years until we ease into Medicare.

But you know what? It’ll be awhile before I forget how it felt to be completely vulnerable to anything from an accident, to a flu bug, to a heart-stopping diagnosis of a major health problem and how any of those could have financially devastated my family. I don’t now the answer, but we’ve got to keep the question on the table until we find one.

Harvey Kart
You can reach Harvey Kart at hdkart@aol.com or (561) 482-1151.
**LEGAL HEALTH UPDATE**

**Don’t Let State Make End-of-life Decisions**

To pull the plug or keep her on life support? Who decides? When the Pennsylvania legislature passed Act 169 last year, its intention was to clarify who makes medical decisions when patients are too incapacitated to do so themselves. Doctors now finally have guidance in ambiguous end-of-life situations, whereas before the law passed, they didn’t. But by mandating a rigid system to determine the order of decision-makers, the state has created a very interesting, and delicate, “use it or lose it” situation for every Pennsylvania resident. Anyone who doesn’t take time to create an advance directive explicitly stating who will make life-and-death decisions in case of incapacitation is leaving the decision to the new law.

Under the new law, which took effect earlier this year, unless the patient designates otherwise, there is a hierarchy of decision-making power that gives priority first to spouses, then, in order, to adult children, parents, adult siblings, adult grandchildren and then finally close friends. But what if you’re particularly close to your cousin? Or what if your close friend is also your domestic partner in a state that doesn’t recognize them yet? Or the person you trust the most is your business partner?

The only way to change the order of decision-making imposed by the new law is to create an advance directive, which states your preference for healthcare decision-making if you are unable to do so for any reason. That person is generally called a healthcare representative or a healthcare agent. The advance directive only takes effect when the patient is incompetent. A patient of sound mind can reverse the decision of the agent or representative at any time.

The advance directive can come in two forms:

1. **A living will**, which is a statement telling people if and under what conditions you want the plug pulled from life-sustaining treatments.
2. **A healthcare power of attorney**, which is a document in which you appoint another person to make all your medical decisions for you.

Any advance directive must be a written statement signed by the patient and witnessed by at least two people over the age of 18. For patients unable to sign, the person legally acting in their behalf must sign the advance directive.

But having an advance directive is not enough. You also have to make sure that every physician involved in your case has a copy. When given a copy of an advance directive, healthcare providers have a legal obligation to place it in the patient’s file and follow its instructions. But when files get passed between physicians or you go to a new specialist or a different hospital, you must make sure that the advance directive gets into the new file, hopefully right next to the copy of your medical insurance card.

The reason that the tragic epic of Terry Schiavo’s last months commanded center stage in the news media is because virtually every family and every individual will face these difficult decisions. It is almost certain that at the end of life, you or a loved one will fall so ill that you are no longer able to make decisions on medical care. It was therefore prudent interest but heartfelt empathy that Americans felt as the Schiavo court drama played out.

Terry Schiavo did not have an advance directive, so her parents were able to claim that she did not want to be removed from life-support systems and thereby throw the matter into court. The new law makes it impossible for this situation to occur in Pennsylvania, because it tells doctors who has the legal right to make the decision in the event the patient can’t.

Now it is incumbent on people who do not want to automatically die to make decisions for you.

But by mandating a rigid system to determine the decision-making order of the law to act: They must review their personal legal documents such as wills and powers of attorney to make sure that these documents stipulate who they want to make medical and other decisions if incapacitated. Not to do so is to give up one of the basic freedoms of choice that is our birthright in a democratic society.

**End of Year Tax Planning for Physicians**

With the end of the year just around the corner, physicians and physician practice groups are beginning to consider how to reduce the income tax they will pay for the year. As high net-worth individuals operating businesses, physicians have a certain amount of flexibility in a number of areas, which can help to reduce their overall taxes. But it’s important not to go overboard in the pursuit of a lower tax bill. If there is not a compelling reason other than saving taxes to take an action such as purchasing equipment, it’s usually better not to do it.

Here are seven tips to reduce the tax bite for the 2007 tax year. As with most tax matters, though, it’s best to consult an experienced tax professional for help in determining if any of these tips are appropriate for your particular situation.

1. **As in any business, equipment needs should be assessed, especially as the year is about to close.** Purchasing furniture or equipment prior to year-end enables you to take the full deduction for the year (subject to certain limitations after full deduction for the year). Other factors being equal, the earlier a deduction is taken, the more valuable it is, because inflation will reduce the value of the deduction later you take it. But keep in mind that advancing the timing of the purchase by several months may not make economic sense. Again, if the only reason you have to do something is a tax reason, don’t do it.

2. **As cash basis taxpayers (not accrual), physicians may want to try to delay the receipt of funds to push them into the following year.** To ensure payment comes in 2008, however, may require delaying billing.

3. **Reimburse physicians for practice management, development, conference and related expenses.** This is a more valuable deduction than having the physicians face limitations and possibly the alternative minimum tax for deducting these same expenses on their individual income tax returns.

4. **As with any high-income individual, certain tax planning techniques should always be considered, such as charitable donations of appreciated securities, bunching itemized deductions and matching capital gains and losses.**

5. **Retirement plans should be reviewed, optimized or initiated, based on the physician and practice group’s needs.**

6. **In an age in which medical insurance costs are rapidly rising, a physician may want to institute a cafeteria, or section 125 Plan to mitigate the impact of having his or her employees share that rising cost of healthcare. Such a plan provides savings beyond the shared cost of premiums. An additional mitigation for the benefit of employees might be a commuting or parking reimbursement plan. If the office is open late some evenings, it may justify a meal money payment.**

7. **Consider investing in tax favored investments that also provide a future cash flow. Oil and Gas Well Drilling programs as well as certain Real Estate investments are prime examples.**

Paul K. Rudoy is a partner at the accounting firm Horwitz Rudoy & Roteman. He can be reached at (412) 391-2920.
Hope on The Horizon for Hepatitis C Sufferers

BY RON CICHOWICZ

“Y

Your tests results are back and they indicate that you have contracted the hepatitis C virus. Few words send as much fear and panic into a patient because, for those needing treatment, the cure for hepatitis C, or HCV, can seem worse than the disease itself. Simply, what is difficult with the current treatment for hepatitis C is that it can often cause significant side effects,” said Eugene Schiff, M.D., chief of the Division of Hepatology at the University of Miami School of Medicine and Director of the Center for Liver Disease. “For that reason, many do not want to be treated. That’s unfortunate, because we are able to cure this infection in many people.”

Hepatitis is an inflammation of the liver caused by viruses and other factors. Over time, hepatitis seriously damages the liver; eventually it can lead to hospitalization and even death. At least six different strains of the hepatitis virus have been identified, and HCV is considered the most serious strains and affecting the largest number of individuals. For HCV, six distinct genotypes, labeled 1 through 6, exist. In the U.S., about 70 percent of HCV patients have genotype 1, considered the most difficult to treat.

Among blood-borne infections, hepatitis C is the most common in America. Estimates say that about 4 million individuals—one in every 50 adults—is infected with HCV, making the disease more common than human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), which currently affects approximately 900,000 people in the U.S.

The most common risk factor for hepatitis C is an intravenous drug use; since intravenous drug users often share needles, the chances of using one contaminated with the HCV are great. Another risk factor is having received a blood transfusion before 1992, when blood screening for the virus began. Additional risk factors may be tattooing or body piercing; if the equipment is not properly sterilized, tainted blood can be passed from one individual to another.

Yet another avenue of transmission, albeit rare, is sexual intercourse, especially among those who participate in high-risk behavior, such as having multiple sexual partners.

“Testing can be a sensitive issue, but it is recommended for anybody who ever injected themselves with recreational drugs or who had a transfusion before 1992,” said Dr. Schiff. “Teenagers around the time of the Viet Nam War who shared needles while trying drugs had no idea they might have picked up hepatitis C, especially those who were not hard core users.

“Now, 35 years later, they go to the blood bank, or have a routine exam, and learn they have symptoms of HCV—elevated liver enzymes—and are shocked this has been going on inside them insidiously for so long.”

In fact, hepatitis C is often called the “silent epidemic” because symptoms develop in less than half of those infected and fewer than 30 percent of HCV-infected patients even know they carry the disease. Concern is usually raised with the patient’s neurologic system.

“Screw it, what is difficult with the current treatment for hepatitis C from their bodies. Treatment can run for as long as 72 weeks. “We can cure this infection, but not in all people,” Dr. Schiff said. “Maximally, for those with Genotype 1, which is the most common, we can cure about 40 percent. Those with Genotype 2 have a success rate up to 90 percent.”

“Once diagnosed, the issue becomes, once the patient has significant underlying scarring of the liver or, two, if he has a mild case, does the side effect profile outweigh treatment?” Dr. Schiff said. “In Genotype 1, if they have a low viral level to start with, we put them on pegylated interferon plus ribavirin. Many will achieve a cure after 24 weeks, although we don’t recommend stopping at that point.”

Ah, the infamous side effects. “You can feel pretty lousy,” Dr. Schiff said. “When someone finds out they have the virus, he will worry about it. Serious anxiety and depression can evolve. We are quick to use antidepressants to allow these people to stay on the medication. Some data exists to suggest that the virus works on the neurologic system.”

Additional side effects include a drop in white blood cell production and anemia, but often patients can be given medication to address this.

“A cure can come at a cost in many people who may suffer significant side effects,” Dr. Schiff said. “They need a lot of support.”

One example of support available is the Be In Charge® patient support program developed by Schering-Plough to provide information and help patients with chronic hepatitis C who are considering starting therapy or who are already taking PegIntron™ (peginterferon alfa-2b) Powder for injection combination therapy. A free service, Be In Charge® supplements the support and information a patient gets from his healthcare provider, offering 24-hour nurse support by phone, plus in-depth, easy-to-understand information about HCV symptoms, treatment, side effect management, and a Be In Charge® Web site (www.BeiInCharge.com.)

“For someone working full time, treatment can be difficult for them,” said Dr. Schiff. “But if they have significant scarring of the liver, it will progress to cirrhosis if untreated.”

“As for the future of HCV treatment, Dr. Schiff said the future appears bright.

“We’re living in a time of major advances in medicine,” said. “What you can anticipate in the next eight years are combinations of drugs specifically targeting the virus and these protease and polymerase inhibitors that will be administered orally. I don’t think you’ll need interferon then. Ideally, there will be fewer side effects, so we’ll see a major influx of patients now hiding in the background to avoid those side effects.”

But, Dr. Schiff warned, caution needs to be exercised. “In the interim, some patients with a mild form of the disease can wait. But those who need to be treated now cannot.”

Dr. Schiff can be reached at (305) 243-2325.

Don’t wait. Make health care your business.
In Leadership

S. Candy Mulholland  
Infection Control Coordinator  
John J. Kane Regional Centers – Glen Hazel

Education: BSN and MSN from Duquesne University.  
What skills do you need to succeed in your job: Nursing skills, surveillance skills, commonsense, communication, persistence, and prayer.  
Work habit you possess that you are most proud of: To be prepared.  
Most valuable lesson you learned in your career: Choose you battles.  
The toughest part of your job: Prevention of infections and politics.  
Your philosophy of success: Abe Lincoln- “Always bear in mind that your own resolution to succeed is more important than any other thing.”  

Glen Hazel

James E. Levin, MD, PhD  
Chief Medical Information Officer and Pediatric Infectious Disease Consultant  
Children’s Hospital of Pittsburgh of UPMC

Proudest accomplishment: Whatever our team accomplishes today in improving the health and health care experience for children and their families.  
First job: Working at my uncle’s hardware store in Milwaukee  
Education:  
College – Princeton University  
MD and PhD (Genetics) – University of Chicago  
Postgraduate pediatric, informatics and infectious disease training – University of Michigan and University of Minnesota  
What skills do you need to succeed in your job:  
Listening  
Creatively breaking down a long-term vision into small steps  
Understanding the jargon and cultural differences of the various groups that come together in a hospital – providers, clinical and technical staff, students, patients and families. A shared understanding needs to be created before we can move forward with any improvements.  
The toughest part of your job: Patience. Nothing happens as quickly as we need it, but often too quickly to get it exactly right from the start.  
Your philosophy of success: Success requires the ability to keep focused on the core of what is important while simultaneously being obsessed with details.  
One of your goals: To get home each evening in time to see the sun set from our back porch.  
Favorite books:  
Business – Everett M. Rogers, Diffusion of Innovations  
Jim Collins, Good to Great  
Medical – The Sanford Guide to Antimicrobial Therapy  
Home – I’m reading It’s A Magical World: A Calvin and Hobbes Collection with my son. It cracks me up.  
Biggest challenge confronting health care: Health care delivery needs to change from a solo act to a team sport, with the patient and family becoming increasingly active participants in their care. The wise application of information technology (IT) has the potential to help facilitate this transition, however, the safety, experience and efficiency benefits of IT systems won’t happen automatically. These benefits will need to be planned for, measured and managed into existence.  
What advice would you offer young people considering a career in health care: Wash your hands and cover your cough.

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University of Pittsburgh  
Graduate School of Public Health

Kimberly Haigy  
RN/RCC  
John J. Kane Regional Centers – McKeesport

Education: Associates degree from Community College of Allegheny County  
What skills do you need to succeed in your job: Organization, ability to communicate effectively, enthusiasm and a belief in the employees.  
Work habit you possess that you are most proud of: My work ethic.  
Most valuable lesson you learned in your career: Treat everyone you deal with in a professional manner.  
The toughest part of your job: Coaching my staff through a change in the organization.  
Your philosophy of success: No philosophy, just do what feels right.  
One of your goals: To have the staff and residents truly unified to accomplish the goals for care.  
Person you most admire: My mom.  
Biggest challenge confronting healthcare: Funding, costs.  
Suggestions on how you would solve a particular problem in healthcare: Have symposiums with front-line staff and utilize their input to solve problems.  
Your predictions on the future of health care: Socialized health care, not in the near future, though.  
Best thing about healthcare in Western PA: We have outstanding institutions for education and health care.  
Worst thing about healthcare in Western PA: The lack of care in today’s healthcare.
Marian Essey
Vice President, Performance Improvement
Celtic Healthcare, Inc.

Proudest accomplishment: My proudest accomplishment was developing and leading the Home Health Quality Improvement National Campaign. This was the first national initiative centered around home health quality. It was championed by industry leaders with over 3000 home health agencies nationally voluntarily participating.

First job: My first job was a Nursing Assistant at a nursing home during high school and college.

Education: Indiana University of Pennsylvania, BSN, 1985

What skills do you need to succeed in your job: I believe that the key ingredients to success are vision, enthusiasm, a great team, and commitment to making a difference. The skill is pulling these all together.

Work habit you possess that you are most proud of: I am most proud of my ability to pull people together to work toward a common vision.

Most valuable lesson you learned in your career: There are actually 2 lessons that stay with me. First, “there’s no job too big or too small.” There’s nothing too big that it can’t be done and nothing so insignificant that I can’t do it. Sometimes the smallest jobs or details open doors to uncharted opportunities. The second lesson learned is that you can’t have a great organization without great leadership. Without leadership, it is not possible to have a quality workforce that produces quality outcomes.

The toughest part of your job: The days are too short.

Your philosophy of success: Success in healthcare is having patients, families, and caregivers confident that they are receiving the very best care possible. It means having employees that have pride in their work and in their organization with everyone working together toward what is best for the patient.

One of your goals: I want to re-shape home health care by improving quality, improving efficiencies, using technology, and partnering outside the home health industry.

Person you most admire: I most admire Mother Teresa. She had a simple goal in her life and through her dedication and persistence, she was able to make a difference in not only the lives she touched directly, but in millions of lives throughout the world.

Favorite book: Live Your Best Life Now by Joel Osteen

Biggest challenge confronting healthcare: I think that the biggest challenge confronting healthcare in the U.S. is apathy. The quality of the care learned in my class is clearly sub-standard. Healthcare dollars are insufficient, coordinating care between settings is poor and often completely absent, and healthcare organizations that continually provide poor quality care are allowed to continue to exist. These are just a few issues plaguing healthcare today and we as a nation are not doing enough to combat the poor quality. We wouldn’t get on an airplane that didn’t pass all inspections, but we have no problem receiving healthcare from an organization that is less than stellar. With information available on healthcare quality from such sources as www.medicare.gov, we need to become better healthcare consumers and support quality. We also need to encourage our legislators to support healthcare quality issues.

Suggestions on how you would solve a particular problem in healthcare: I support Health and Human Services Secretary Leavitt’s plan for value-driven healthcare through communities of practice and collaboratives. Healthcare leaders, both at a local level and at a national level, should form collaboratives to engage providers in improvement; facilitate consumer decision making through public reporting; and promote effective public policies, payment policies, and consumer incentives that reward or foster better provider performance.

Your predictions on the future of healthcare: I believe with the growing transparency of healthcare and public reporting of healthcare quality, we will begin to see more of a survival of the fittest atmosphere among healthcare providers. Although this will be slow growing, I believe that the best will thrive and others will struggle to exist.

Best thing about healthcare in Western Pennsylvania: The best thing about healthcare in Western Pennsylvania is that there is a generally high commitment to quality. The outstanding colleges and universities in the area supply excellent healthcare workers in all possible specialty areas.

Worst thing about healthcare in Western Pennsylvania: Although this is not common to Western Pennsylvania, healthcare has what is known as the “silo effect.” Healthcare occurs in “silos” with one setting not communicating well with others when patients are transferred between settings. This is particularly an issue affecting long term care including home health care and nursing homes. Long term care is often at the mercy of taking whatever information comes their way and making the best of it. Of course, the quality of patient care suffers as does staff satisfaction. Nobody wins when care is not well coordinated across settings. This is an issue that permeates healthcare throughout the U.S., however, some parts of the country are starting to form collaboratives between settings to combat this issue.

What advice would you offer young people considering a career in healthcare: There are many opportunities in healthcare today as there are shortages in many areas of healthcare. Most people considering entering into the field would be to first consider your motives and goals. Although healthcare brings a certain degree of job security, healthcare should not be viewed in the same light as many other professions. Everyone in healthcare should remind themselves everyday that they are touching lives. For a healthcare worker, their commitment to ongoing education and improving quality of care must be unwavering as this will impact the lives they touch each and every day. Healthcare is not just a job, it’s a commitment.

Mark Katich
Director of Market Development
VITAS Innovative Hospice Care®

Proudest accomplishment: Marrying my beautiful wife and having three awesome boys.

First job: Dishwasher at a country club.

Education: BS in marketing from Robert Morris University.

What skills do you need to succeed in your job: Listening to our patients and referral sources so we can identify and meet all of their needs.

Work habit you possess that you are most proud of: Selling with INTEGRITY is important to me. I am always honest with my customers.

Most valuable lesson you’ve learned in your career: In an organization, you are only as strong as your weakest link. Every position matters and can contribute to exemplary customer service.

The toughest part of your job: Helping people understand the benefits of hospice and to refer patients early enough to reap the wonderful benefits our service has to offer.

Your philosophy of success: My philosophy is based on setting specific goals and developing a plan to achieve success.

One of your goals: Gaining my MBA with a focus on healthcare.

Person you most admire: I have true admiration for the men and women in uniform who have the courage and conviction to defend our country.

Favorite book: I have many, but one that continually resonates with me is Think and Grow Rich by Napoleon Hill.

Biggest challenge confronting healthcare: Balancing finite healthcare resources with an aging population.

Your predictions on the future of healthcare: I believe reimbursement will eventually change to consider the costs and cost structures of providers.

Best thing about healthcare in Western Pennsylvania: We are so fortunate to have world-class healthcare right in our backyard.

Worst thing about healthcare in Western Pennsylvania: It’s sometimes difficult to navigate our complex healthcare environment, particularly for seniors.

What advice would you offer young people considering a career in healthcare: Healthcare has a lot to offer young people, particularly in Western PA. Just be ready and willing to embrace change.
Pediatric Physician Recognized With Strickler Award for Excellence in Healthcare

The Medical Executive Committee of the Medical Staff at Mount Nittany Medical Center recently honored George M. McCormick, M.D., with the Jane M. Strickler M.D. Award for remarkable healthcare improvements in Centre County and all surrounding areas.

Dr. McCormick, a member of the Mount Nittany Medical Center Medical Staff since 1976, specializes in pediatrics and serves as a volunteer committee member for Children and Youth Services. A retired Navy veteran, Dr. McCormick also serves on the Medical Center's patient care committee and pediatric performance improvement committee. He is also the current chairman of the patient care evaluation committee. In the past, he served as chair of the department of pediatrics.

Joseph E. Imbriglia, M.D., Accepts Board Chair Position at The Children’s Institute

Joseph E. Imbriglia, M.D., F.A.C.S., a board-certified orthopaedic surgeon and Chair of the Board of the Hand and UpperEx Center in Wexford, has accepted the position of Chair of the Board of Directors of The Children’s Institute of Pittsburgh. Dr. Imbriglia has been a member of the Board since 1994.

In addition to his practice at the Hand and UpperEx Center, Dr. Imbriglia is the Director of the Hand Fellowship Program as well as Clinical Professor in the Department of Orthopaedic Surgery at the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine.

WVU Doctor Chairs National Environmental Health Board

West Virginia University physician Alan Ducatman, M.D., was selected by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to chair a prestigious environmental health board.

Dr. Ducatman will serve as Chairman of the Board of Scientific Counselors of the National Center for Environmental Health/Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry.

Ducatman is chair of the WVU Department of Community Medicine and board certified in internal medicine and occupational medicine.

Grove City Medical Center Welcomes New Physicians

Robert C. Jackson, Jr., Chief Executive Officer of Grove Medical Center recently announced that three new physicians have joined the hospital’s medical staff.

The three physicians are: Orthopaedic surgeon Philip H. Scaglione, D.O., Podiatrist Brian P. Spencer, D.P.M., and Cardiologist Armando D. Camara, M.D.

Lock Haven Hospital Welcomes New Radiology Department Physicians

Lock Haven Hospital welcomes six new Radiology Department Physicians.

Dr. Steve Rinehouse, Dr. Larry Braunstein, Dr. Scott Sauerwine, Dr. Thomas Bednarek, Dr. John Dawsey and Dr. Gisele Lafond.

Excela Health Welcomes New Physicians

Excela Health Orthopedics is pleased to welcome Martin J. Gillespie, M.D., sports medicine specialist and orthopedic surgeon, and Christopher Bellicini, D.O., orthopedic surgeon.

Prior to his recruitment to Excela Health, Dr. Gillespie was in private orthopedic practice in South Carolina, where he also served as team physician and medical director for Limestone College, Gaffney, SC, and Spartansburg Methodist College, SC, along with various area high schools.

Dr. Bellicini comes to Excela Health after completing a fellowship at Allegheny General Hospital in hip and knee surgery with an emphasis on revision joint arthroplasty and minimally invasive joint replacement techniques.

Heritage Valley Beaver Appoints New Medical Staff Officers

The Heritage Valley Beaver Medical Staff has recently elected John Wright, M.D., president of the medical staff. This appointment also requires Dr. Wright to serve on the Heritage Valley Health System Board of Directors. The president-elect is Jay Zdunek, D.O., and the vice president is Claudio Looffreda-Mancinelli, M.D.

Dr. Wright practices obstetrics and gynecology with Tri-State OB/GYN and has offices in Beaver, Bridgewater, Chippewa and East Liverpool, OH. Dr. Zdunek is also the chairman of Tri-State Medical Group.

Dr. Looffreda-Mancinelli is an anesthesiologist with Beaver Anesthesia Associates and practices at Heritage Valley Beaver.
The Children's Institute Welcomes New Medical Staff

The Children's Institute is pleased to announce the addition of three physicians to the medical staff.

Dr. Ewa Brandys comes to The Children's Institute from the Kennedy Krieger Institute at Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine. Dr. Laura Gorham was a member of research teams at UPMC Hillman Cancer Center and the University of Cincinnati and a medical volunteer with Shoulder to Shoulder. Dr. Maryanne Henderson was most recently on staff at Mercy Hospital of Pittsburgh as a clinical staff physiatrist, residency mentor and research mentor. She was a consulting physician for Select Specialty Hospital and UPMC Passavant.

Valley Urological Welcomes David A. Corral M.D., FACS

Valley Urological welcomes David A. Corral, M.D., FACS. The board-certified urologist previously worked at Triangle Urological Group. Corral also has taught at the Roswell Park Cancer Institute, the State University of New York at Buffalo and the Drexel University College of Medicine.

Hand, Upper Extremity Specialist Joins Tri Rivers Surgical Associates Practice

Tri Rivers Surgical Associates is pleased to announce the addition of H. James Pfaffle, M.D., Ph.D., a hand and upper extremity specialist, to its orthopedic surgery and physical medicine and rehabilitation practice.

Dr. Pfaffle studied mechanical engineering prior to entering medical school. He earned both his medical degree and his doctorate in bioengineering from the University of Pittsburgh.

New Neurologist Joins Excela Health Medical Staff

Excela Health is pleased to welcome Michael Mazowiecki, M.D., specializing in neurology, to its medical staff. Prior to joining the neurology practice of Louis Catalano, M.D., Dr. Mazowiecki was in private practice in Colorado.

Children's Hospital Psychiatrist Receives Prestigious NIH Award

Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh of UPMC psychiatrist Eva M. Szigidh, M.D., Ph.D., is among a select group of researchers who have been chosen by the director of the National Institutes of Health (NIH) to receive a prestigious New Innovator Award. Dr. Szigidh is one of only 29 recipients of the NIH Director's New Innovator Award (selected from more than 2,100 applicants). Dr. Szigidh is the medical director of the Coping Clinic, part of the Inflammatory Bowel Disease (IBD) Center at Children's Hospital. She also is an assistant professor of psychiatry and pediatrics at the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine. By working with young patients who have been diagnosed with Crohn's disease or ulcerative colitis, Dr. Szigidh is investigating the interactions among the brain, gut and immune system in how adolescents cope with chronic disease.
Lock Haven Hospital Announces Promotion

Carol Barner who had been serving as Interim Chief Nursing Officer (CNO) since December 2006 has been officially selected as Lock Haven Hospital’s CNO.

Barner’s tenure with Lock Haven Hospital started in 1979 when she worked as a staff nurse during the summer on the Medical Surgical Floor. Between 1979 and 1986, Carol served at Hahnemann University Hospital in Philadelphia, first as staff nurse in Cardiothoracic ICU and then was promoted to Assistant Head Nurse and Nurse Educator in Cardiothoracic ICU. Eventually, she served as Clinical Research Coordinator at Hahnemann University Hospital.

West Penn Allegheny Health System Names John Lasky Vice President of Human Resources

John Lasky has been appointed Vice President for Human Resources at West Penn Allegheny Health System. Lasky joined West Penn Allegheny as Senior Counsel in February 2006 and assumed the role of Interim Vice President of Human Resources in March 2007.

Before joining West Penn Allegheny, he was an attorney with Reed Smith LLP. Lasky received his undergraduate and law degrees from Duquesne University.

The Washington Hospital Welcomes New Manager of Diabetes Program

The Washington Hospital is pleased to welcome April Lombardo, RN, MBA, CDE, as the new manager of the Diabetes Education and Management Program. Lombardo started her career at the Youngstown Hospital Association in Youngstown, OH and then moved to West Virginia in 1972 to work for West Virginia University hospitals. She spent the last 34 years at Monongalia General. She obtained her nursing degree from Youngstown State University, a BA from WVU, and an MBA from Waynesburg College.

Gateway Rehab Names Patricia Orangis Vice President of Development

Patricia Orangis, assistant vice president for university advancement at Duquesne University, has been named vice president for development for Gateway Rehabilitation Center.

Prior to her position at Duquesne University, Orangis served as executive director of annual giving at the University of Pittsburgh. From 1993 to 1997, she was a development director at Carnegie Mellon University. Orangis received her bachelor’s degree from Indiana University of Pennsylvania and her master’s degree from the University of Pittsburgh.

The Washington Hospital

School Wide
November 13 (9 a.m.-11 a.m.)
December 4 (6 p.m.-8 p.m.)

The Campus School of Carlow University

Children of Spirit

Rebecca B. Biddle has been named Director of Development for Canonsburg General Hospital. Recently, Biddle was the Director of Annual Giving at the Medical and Health Sciences Foundation of the University of Pittsburgh and University of Pittsburgh Medical Center. She has also served in various development positions at $1 Energy Fund, WQED-Multimedia, Chatham College and Carlow University.

Biddle received both a Master of Science degree in professional leadership, training and development and a Bachelor of Science degree in business management from Carlow University.

Excela Health Names John C. Caverno Chief Human Resource Officer and Senior Vice President for Human Resources

David S. Gallatin, CEO of Excela Health recently announced the appointment of John C. Caverno as Chief Human Resource Officer and Senior Vice President for Human Resources. Caverno comes to Excela Health from Kennametal, Inc. headquartered in Unity Township where he currently serves as Human Resource Director for the forty-three-site Global Manufacturing footprint of that organization.

Director/Development Names at Canonsburg General Hospital

Rebecca B. Biddle has been named Director of Development for Canonsburg General Hospital. Recently, Biddle was the Director of Annual Giving at the Medical and Health Sciences Foundation of the University of Pittsburgh and University of Pittsburgh Medical Center. She has also served in various development positions at $1 Energy Fund, WQED-Multimedia, Chatham College and Carlow University.

Biddle received both a Master of Science degree in professional leadership, training and development and a Bachelor of Science degree in business management from Carlow University.

New Hires at WESTARM Physical Therapy

WESTARM Physical Therapy of Lower Burrell, PA announces the hiring of Cynthia L. Wernert, OTR/L and Ronna Hochbein, OTR/L.

Wernert has previous work experience in Inpatient and Outpatient Rehabilitation with extensive expertise in Hand Therapy, Work Hardening, Pediatrics, Home Care, and Aquatic Therapy. She received a Bachelors of Science (BS) in Occupational Therapy from the College of Misericordia in Dallas, PA.

Hochbein has been a practicing Occupational Therapist for 15 years and is certified in Therapeutic Listening, Advanced Listening and Level on Samonas Sound Therapy. She has over 400 hours in continuing education devoted to autism.

WESTARM Physical Therapy also announces the hiring of Shayne Cameron as an Exercise Physiologist / First Aid Responder for the Burrell School District. Cameron has worked for the past 2 years for the West Penn Allegheny Health System as the First Aid Responder for Highlands High School and also in the Allegheny Valley Hospital’s Outpatient Physical Therapy and Pulmonary & Cardiac Rehabilitation Departments. She also worked as a Personal Trainer for Bally Total Fitness in Wexford.

The Campisi School of Carlow University

Rebecca B. Biddle

Cynthia L. Wernert

Ronna Hochbein

Shayne Cameron

John C. Caverno

Carol Barner

Patricia Orangis

John Lasky

April Lombardo

Lock Haven Hospital

Rebecca B. Biddle

John C. Caverno

The Washington Hospital

Excela Health

WESTARM Physical Therapy

Gateway Rehab
**David B. Vincent Named Director of Information Systems**

David B. Vincent, of Houston, has been named the Director of Information Systems at Canonsburg General Hospital. Most recently, Vincent served as a business consultant for Trimillennium Consulting Services. His 19 years of information experience has also included working at Canonsburg General Hospital as the manager of Information Systems and the senior microcomputer specialist at The Western Pennsylvania Hospital.

**Gateway Rehab Names Two New Board Members**

Gateway Rehabilitation Center recently announced the addition of Nancy Armatas and Jack Manning to its Board of Directors. Armatas is the founder of the law firm, Armatas and Associates, LLC, in Chicago. Prior to founding Armatas and Associates, she was a partner for the Chicago-based law firm Popovits & Robinson. P.C. Jack Manning is the regional manufacturing director of NOVA Chemicals. Prior to his current position, Manning served as North American director of people services for NOVA Chemicals.

**UPMC Recruits Acclaimed Cardiac Researcher Kamuran Kadipasaoglu**

Kamuran A. Kadipasaoglu, Ph.D., a specialist in cardiac bioengineering, has been appointed executive director of cardiac surgery research for UPMC’s Heart, Lung and Esophageal Surgery Institute (HLESI), division of cardiac surgery. He also will hold dual academic appointments of visiting research professor in the departments of surgery at the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine and bioengineering at the University of Pittsburgh School of Engineering.

Prior to his recent arrival at UPMC, Dr. Kadipasaoglu worked as assistant director of cardiovascular surgery research at the Texas Heart Institute in Houston, where he helped develop mechanical circulatory assist devices, heart valves and stents.

**Heritage Valley Sewickley Foundation Board Announces New Member**

The Heritage Valley Sewickley Foundation Board of Directors has announced the appointment of Greg Smith to their board.

Smith joined American Eagle Outfitters, Inc. in April 2006 as Sr. Director of the Internal Audit Department. He most recently was with Dollar General Corporation in Nashville, as Sr. Director of the Internal Audit Department. He most recently was with Dollar General Corporation in Nashville, as Sr. Director of the Internal Audit Department.

**Altoona Regional Health System News**

Christi Wimer, R.N., B.S.N., C.E.N., C.N.R.N., recently accepted the administrative director position for the Department of Emergency Medicine at Altoona Regional Health System. Christel Grazier, R.N., B.S.N., C.N.R.N., has accepted the position of director of Surgical Services at Altoona Regional Health System. Grazier has been a member of the Surgical Services staff for 21 years. Nicole Corle, R.N., B.S.N., recently received her Master of Science degree in Nursing from the University of Phoenix. She graduated with honors and is a member of the nursing honor society, Sigma Theta Tau International. Corle works in the intensive care unit at Altoona Regional Health System and has been employed by the system for six years.

**Hospital Council Welcomes New Directors**

Hospital Council of Western Pennsylvania announces the addition of two directors: Robert Freeman, CPA, director of Payer Relations and Reimbursement and John Piazza, director of Business Development.

As the director of Payer Relations/Reimbursement, Robert Freeman works with Hospital Council members through several Committees, including the Accounts Receivable Committee, the Financial Management Committee and the Managed Care Forum. At the same time, he represents Hospital Council members to the managed care organizations in the region. Freeman has held several healthcare finance-related positions, including as a Chief Financial Officer for Corry Memorial Hospital and also for Metro Health Center. He also served as the director of Finance and Manager of Accounting for Hamot Medical Center. Most recently, he served as Manager-Cost Administration & Accounting Services for Erie Indemnity Company.

As director of Business Development at Hospital Council, John Piazza identifies opportunities for Hospital Council members to increase operating efficiencies and save money. Piazza surveys the membership to identify potential areas of member needs, then seeks business partners who can provide those services to members. Piazza joins Hospital Council’s staff with a wealth of experience in this area, including 18 years of experience at CHAMPS Management Services in Cleveland, Ohio. He held several positions at CHAMPS, including Vice President of Sales.
Amy L. Barry, RN  
HCR ManorCare

Amy Barry has been a valuable and irreplaceable employee of Heartland Healthcare Center for 10 years. Barry graduated from St. Francis in 1993 with a diploma in nursing and after two years of working in home health, accepted a position at Heartland as a medication nurse. “Amy sets high standards for her peers to follow,” says a colleague. Barry currently works on the 2 North nursing unit, often home to the highest acuity residents throughout the facility. She has also worked as a shift supervisor and a unit manager over her 10-year tenure. “My most enjoyable years at Heartland were on the hospice unit several years ago that has since been relocated,” she says.

Barry develops supportive relationships with her residents and provides them with compassionate care at the bedside. “Amy often orientates new nurses who join our team,” says a coworker. “Her nursing skills are considered to be a valuable resource not only by her peers on the unit but the staff throughout the facility.” Driven to provide the best care possible, Barry often stays late to make sure her work is complete, helps her peers through difficult situations and supervises when needed. “Amy is a team player,” says a coworker. “She deserves recognition for her dedication as well as the personal and professional sacrifices she has made that have enriched the lives of her residents, their families and her fellow employees.”

Amy S. Jacobs, RN  
West Penn Allegheny Health System, Canonsburg General Hospital

Amy Jacobs began her career as a staff nurse at Canonsburg General Hospital three days after graduating from The Washington Hospital School of Nursing 30 years ago. Jacobs chose nursing after observing the nurses who took care of her father when he was gravely ill. “When I was 14, my father was hospitalized for quite a long period of time,” she says. “I was inspired by the many compassionate and dedicated nurses who cared for him. They literally saved his life. I knew then that I wanted to spend the rest of my life helping others.”

Jacobs is a member of the “New Nurse and Nursing Assistant Orientation program” – a preceptorship program she helped to initiate. She is also one of four Custom Care nurses – a program that provides patients with pre-operative/post-operative instruction prior to surgery and is designed to allay fears. In addition, she helps staff blood pressure clinics, administers flu shots and teaches Safe Sitter classes.

The actual “hands on” patient care is the most satisfying part of her career, she says. “Even after all of these years, I still love bedside nursing. It is very rewarding for me to follow a patient from admission to discharge and to be an integral part of his or her care.”

Angela Dardi, RN  
UPMC Italy, Istituto Mediterraneo per i Trapianti e Terapie ad Alta Specializzazione (ISMETT)

Angela Dardi is a registered nurse in the intensive care unit at UPMC’s Istituto Mediterraneo per i Trapianti e Terapie ad Alta Specializzazione (ISMETT) in Palermo, Italy. She received her degree in nursing from a medical school in Verona, Italy. Dardi’s interest in health care came from her desire to help people who are in need and knew the best way to fulfill her desire was to become a nurse. She now devotes most of her time to her nursing practice.

In addition to her work at ISMETT, Dardi volunteers in a nursing home. “My unit requires constant education and training. Although sometimes I feel physically and mentally drained, I try to overcome these difficult moments by thinking of the outcomes,” she says. “When the patient feels better, the nurse feels better too.”

Dardi says being selected for a Cameos award is a result of the collaboration and trust she has built over time with her co-workers and patients. “One of my most memorable moments as a nurse was when I held a hand, shared a smile, and reignited the spirit and hope in a long-term liver transplant patient,” she says.

Ann M. Mitchell, PhD, RN, AHN, BC  
University of Pittsburgh School of Nursing

Ann Mitchell has shared her passion for psychiatric mental health nursing with students at the University of Pittsburgh since 1991. She has also held a secondary appointment as assistant professor of psychiatry, at the University’s School of Medicine since 1988.

Mitchell is active in a number of scientific societies and professional nursing organizations, locally and nationally, where she has served in many leadership positions. In addition, Mitchell has received numerous awards and honors on a local, state, and national level. “Ann is a role model to her students in terms of her community service,” says colleague Catherine Bender.

Professionally, Mitchell has shared her expertise globally, serving as an invited consultant, faculty scholar, and cultural exchange delegation member in Asia, the Caribbean, and most recently, in the Middle East. Her international experiences make her uniquely qualified to share a cross-cultural perspective with her students.

Mitchell draws people in with her style of inclusion. “She has been a crucial factor in the decision of many nurses to pursue further degrees in nursing – literally walking them to the registrar’s office and providing the support needed to make the decision to continue their education and advance in their chosen profession,” says Donna Beacom and Rebecca Abromitis from the Western Psychiatric Institute and Clinic. “Ann opens new horizons to nurses on a daily basis.”

Anne Marie Emanuel, MAEd, MSN, BSN  
Carlow University

Anne Marie Emanuel is an assistant professor for Nursing and the chair of the Bachelor of Science in Nursing Program for Registered Nurses at Carlow University.

Emanuel joined the faculty of Carlow University in 1988 following a 20-year career in the United States Navy Nurse Corps. She completed her service with the rank of commander, and earned medals for Meritorious Service, Overseas Service, and National Defense. During her Navy career as a family nurse practitioner and nurse administrator, Emanuel cared for Navy and Marine Corps service members and their families at Naval Hospitals in the continental United States and at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

“I love nursing,” says Emanuel, who is also a part-time nursing supervisor at Excela Health Westmoreland Hospital in Greensburg, Pa. “I love working with the future generation of nurses, as well as working with current nurses.”

The Irwin resident received her Bachelor of Science degree in nursing from Carlow University, where she was a member of the Navy Nurse Corps Candidate Program. She earned her Master of Science degree in nursing from The Medical College of Georgia, in Augusta, Georgia, and her Master of Arts degree in education and human development from George Washington University in Washington D.C.

Emanuel is a member of the Sigma Theta Tau International Nursing Honor Society, the American Nurses Association, and the Pennsylvania State Nurses Association.

Aurora Patterson, BSN, RN  
Indiana Regional Medical Center

Like many of her colleagues in the nursing profession, Aurora Patterson became a nurse for reasons both practical and inspirational. In the mid-80s, she was the mother of two school-age children, and needed to help support her family when her husband was diagnosed with a serious illness. Out of that difficult time came inspiration, and a bold new path.

Patterson was so moved by the nurses who took excellent care of her husband that she decided to become a nurse herself. She obtained her nursing diploma in 1989, and her Bachelor of Science degree in nursing in 2000.

“Children who are frightened with all the interventions we must do will calm with just her voice and touch,” says Deb Mikolic, RN Pediatrics Unit Manager at Indiana Regional Medical Center Patient Services (IRMCP). “Her caring also calms frightened parents who look to her for reassurance.” Patterson, a Certified Pediatrics Nurse, was praised by colleagues for her caring attitude toward patients, nursing judgement, critical thinking skills, patient care, and mentorship of nursing students.

“Cameos of Caring is really all about heart,” says Cindy Virgil, MSN, RN, Senior Vice President for IRMC Patient Services. “The first year we tried to develop measurable criteria. Nursing, of course, is art and science. But we realized that this program is primarily about the emotional side of nursing – the art of caring.”
Barbara Kabazie, BSN, RN  
West Penn Allegheny Health System, Allegheny General Hospital

Barbara Kabazie has had many opportunities to move into other nursing roles in the past 30 years, but she has chosen to stay on the front lines of nursing. “My heart is at the bedside, working with patients and families, and teaching new nurses,” says Kabazie, a staff nurse in Allegheny General Hospital’s Trauma Unit. “That’s where I can make the most impact.”

A resident of Shaler, PA, Kabazie earned her nursing diploma from the Citizens General Hospital School of Nursing and a Bachelor of Science degree in nursing degree from La Roche College. She began her career at Presbyterian University Hospital in 1977, and then briefly worked at Forbes Hospice. In 1980, Kabazie joined Allegheny General Hospital, where she has worked in the Trauma and Bone Marrow Transplant units. She also serves as a preceptor for new nurses in the Trauma Unit.

According to her colleagues, Kabazie’s compassionate demeanor and warm sense of humor help put patients at ease. “Trauma patients experience some very trying moments on their road to recovery,” says a colleague. “By lightening the spirits of her patients, Barbara helps make their healing process a bit more comfortable in their stress-filled environment.”

Barbara Schultz, BSN, RN  
UPMC Passavant

Barbara Schultz works as a registered nurse at UPMC Passavant Hospital. Schultz earned a Bachelor of Science degree in nursing from the University of Pittsburgh School of Nursing and joined the staff at UPMC Passavant in 2000.

“My first memories of wanting to be a nurse are from when I was five years old and received a nursing cap and apron for Christmas, made for me by my mother,” says Schultz. “As I grew, my ideas of nursing changed but my desires remained. I have always loved working with people and learning - nursing is a career where you can accomplish both.”

At UPMC Passavant, Schultz is very active in the orientation of new nurses. “Teaching and guiding new nurses, helping them meet their goals and develop to the best of their abilities - and knowing that you were a part of it – is very rewarding,” she says.

Schultz is highly respected among her peers for being passionate and truly committed to the well-being of her patients and colleagues. “She bonds with her patients,” says one co-worker. “She is an excellent teacher and her patients feel confident after she is with them.”

With colleagues, Ms. Schultz is a motivator. “She encourages you to be a more committed, caring, and compassionate nurse. She serves as a role model for newer and older nurses alike.”

Beth A. Rotto, RN  
West Penn Allegheny Health System, Alle-Kiski Medical Center

Beth Rotto is a clinical nurse on nursing unit 3E at West Penn Allegheny Health System, Alle-Kiski Medical Center (AKMC), where she has worked for over 18 years. She earned her LPN and RN diplomas at Butler County Community College. Rotto chose a career in nursing both because of the many avenues of opportunity in the field and to provide a humanitarian service.

Rotto treats her patients and families with respect and remains professional in the most trying of situations. “It is very satisfying to see someone so ill become well enough to go home,” says Rotto. As a preceptor to many students and new nursing employees at AKMC, she is serious about nursing but she also injects humor and fun into her day. Rotto promotes nursing by example in the community by always serving as “softball nurse”.

“Beth is a strong clinical nurse, well organized and extremely knowledgeable,” said Paula Fellers, unit manager. “She also uses her gift of humor as a healing tool.”

Becky A. Sease, MSN, RN  
University of Pittsburgh, Johnstown Campus

Becky Sease earned her Master of Science degree in family nursing, nursing administration from Indiana University of Pennsylvania, her Bachelor of Science degree in nursing from Gwynedd Mercy College, and her Associate degree in nursing from Mount Aloysius College. She teaches six nursing courses at the University of Pittsburgh Johnstown Campus and supervises clinical practicums in Health Promotion/Health Assessment and Community Health Nursing. An advisor in RN Options, pre-nursing, pre-licensure and independent study experiences to more than 30 students per year, Sease is an inspirational role model.

“Becky works diligently with students to assure they learn and attain their educational goals,” says Dr. Nancy Grove, recently retired associate professor of nursing and director of the RN-to-BSN program at UPJ. “Both coworkers and students think very highly of her.”

Sease is a member of Sigma Theta Tau International Nursing Honor Society and has published several study guides and book reviews. The Johnstown native is an American Heart Association basic life support instructor; National Safety Council first aid instructor; Humane Society of Cambria County member and volunteer; March of Dimes Mother’s Neighborhood March volunteer; American Cancer Society Daffodil Day and Cystic Fibrosis Foundation volunteer; Richland School Athletic Boosters member, and a volunteer for the notes to neighbors campaign, for the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society.

Karen J. Martin  
RN, BSN, MPM  
Mercy Hospital

Kathleen A. Shutsy  
RN  
Mercy Jeannette Hospital

The Pittsburgh Mercy Health System congratulates Karen J. Martin and Kathleen A. Shutsy for being awardees in this year’s Cameos of Caring.
Bobbi Jo Davis, BSN, RN
Excela Health, Frick Hospital

Bobbi Jo Davis, a mother of four small children, is never too tired or busy to help others. “She is a motivator by example and loves making a difference in the lives of people around her,” say colleagues. “She has an impact on fellow staff as well as patients.”

“As with any nurse, I wanted to help people and make a difference in someone’s life,” said Davis.

The Connellsville resident trained at Uniontown Hospital School of Nursing, where she provided oncology care for nearly 10 years. Davis recently marked five years of service at Excela Health, where she is a member of the IV Team at Excela Health, Frick Hospital.

Davis has a positive, energetic attitude that provides inspiration to all who interact with her. Always one to make time for any staff member or patient who needs her, colleagues say she is a source of inspiration to those around her. Davis displays in her everyday actions and behaviors a dedication to her patients and respect and collegiality toward co-workers.

“Davis embodies the attributes that make nursing a wonderful profession,” says one colleague.

“When people ask what I do for a living I proudly say I’m a nurse and a mom,” says Davis.

Carl A. Ross, PhD, MSN, BSN, CRNP, BC, CNE
Robert Morris University

Carl Ross is a professor of nursing at Robert Morris University (RMU) and founding director of the University’s international nursing program, which offers nursing faculty and students opportunities for global experiences in Nicaragua and Mexico. Ross also coordinates a faculty-student exchange program with the Universidad Politecnica de Managua Nicaragua and was the creator of RMU’s Test for Success, a comprehensive NCLEX success program with one of the highest pass rates in the Commonwealth. In addition, he organizes and directs an annual summer camp for middle and high school students interested in nursing as a career.

The Cranberry Township resident works as a nurse practitioner with Koman Genesis Medical Associates and provides gynecology care at Vincinian Home. In 2006, Ross received the Distinguished Nurse of the Year Award from the Pennsylvania State Nurses Association (PSNA) District 6. Ross is active in a number of local and international nursing organizations, including as a member and officer of PSNA, Sigma Theta Tau, and the National League for Nursing. Ross also serves as a consultant to the Ministry of Health in Nicaragua, where he opened the first men’s health clinic and was only the second American to receive the Ora Taylor de Deaz award for Outstanding Nursing Practice.

Ross earned a bachelor’s degree in animal science from Pennsylvania State University and a BSN from the University of Pittsburgh as well as a PhD in nursing, an MSN in nursing education, and certifications in family nurse practice and transcultural nursing, all from Duquesne University.

Cathy LaCava, BSN, RN, OCN
UPMC Cancer Centers

Cathy LaCava has been an oncology nurse for 19 years and currently works as a senior professional nurse at UPMC Cancer Center, New Castle, and UPMC Cancer Center, Beaver. She graduated from Indiana University of Pennsylvania with a strong interest science and the medical field.

LaCava chose to focus on oncology nursing after her father passed away from cancer while she was in high school. As a 10-year cancer survivor, LaCava feels she has a personal and unique perspective that allows her to truly relate to her patients. “It is satisfying to help patients get through their treatments with as few side effects as possible,” she says. Her patients acknowledge it is important to ‘finally find someone who understands how I feel.’ LaCava meticulously addresses patients’ and families’ needs. She pays special attention to managing side effects with safety and patient education her priorities.

She is a strong believer in mentoring new employees. Shani Weber, BS, RN, OCN, quality and performance improvement specialist, UPMC Cancer Centers, learned a great deal about oncology in the outpatient setting from LaCava. “What touched me was Cathy’s triumph over adversity and her ability to empathize with her patients,” says Weber.

LaCava participates in survivorship programs and raises money for oncology care when not at work.

Cheryl Lenhart, MSHRM, BSN, RNC
West Penn Allegheny Health System,
The Western Pennsylvania Hospital

Cheryl Lenhart is manager of the Medical Short Stay Center and IV Therapy Department. She graduated from Pittsburgh Hospital School of Nursing, earned a Bachelor of Science degree in nursing from Penn State University, and earned a graduate degree in human resource management from LaRoche College. Lenhart is certified in Ambulatory Nursing.

Lenhart attributes her career choice to an older cousin who was a nurse. “She talked so earnestly about her experiences with patients that I followed her footsteps into a nursing career,” she says.

This Pittsburgh resident serves on many Hospital and Nursing committees. She is on the editorial board of West Penn’s nursing journal Professional Paradigms and is editor of the Greater Pittsburgh Chapter Oncology Nursing Society’s Newsletter.

“I enjoy first-line management, involving daily interaction with staff, patients and families. Developing staff is a very fulfilling part of my work,” says Lenhart. “A highlight was when a very experienced nurse sat for her Clinical Nurse III advancement panel. Her portfolio contained wonderful examples of her professional growth and I can still recall how proud she was of having achieved that distinction and how proud I was of her.” Lenhart volunteers with the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society as a member of their Patient Services Committee and Team Captain for their annual “Light the Night” fundraiser event.

Chuck Bickert, RN
West Penn Allegheny Health System,
Allegheny General Hospital, Suburban Campus

Chuck Bickert has been a nurse in the Progressive Care Unit (PCU) at West Penn Allegheny Health System, Allegheny General Hospital, Suburban Campus for six years. He earned an Associate degree in nursing from the Community College of Allegheny County, North Campus.

Bickert worked as a paramedic in Ross/West View for 10 years. When health complications left him wanting a more predictable work schedule, he decided the time had come to get a degree. After careful consideration, and with the advice of friends and family, Bickert decided to embark upon nursing career.

“Most of the patients in the PCU are elderly, and it’s a hard thing for families to go through,” Bickert said. “I try to put myself in their shoes and see things from the patients’ and the families’ perspective.”

“Chuck does so many extra things for his patients. He will spend his lunch break eating with a patient to keep them company if they’re feeling lonely,” says coworker, Sandy Hall, RN. “As a preceptor, he teaches nursing students what it means to become a nurse. Students tell me they hope to become just like Chuck.”

We proudly recognize our award-winning graduates:
2007 Award winners:
Anne Marie Emanuel ’07
Susan Erin Gustafson ’06
Keli Ann Heiple ’96
Karen F. Little ’97
Mary Alice McLaughlin ’81
Lisa Schoch ’89
Ruth Zalonis ’05


Carlow’s School of Nursing received 10-year accreditation without any recommendations from the Collegiate Commission on Nursing Education in October 2004.
Cynthia A. Mueller, RNC
West Penn Allegheny Health System, The Western Pennsylvania Hospital

Cynthia Mueller has been a member of West Penn Hospital’s Neonatal Transport Team since 1986 and its coordinator since 2005. She earned her diploma from the West Penn Hospital School of Nursing and achieved Neonatal Nurse Certification in 2006. Mueller is chair of the NICU Policy and Procedure Committee and a member of the NICU Committee, Schedule Committee and Maternal-Child Health Pharmacy Committee.

The Emsworth resident chose nursing because of her grandmother, who was a nurse. “I watched her dedication and love for her patients and decided this was what I wanted to do,” says Mueller. “I enjoy all aspects of nursing, especially caring for sick babies and seeing parents through a tough time. I also enjoy mentoring new staff, medical students and peers.”

Mueller’s most vivid memory is caring for a 28-week infant born to a mom who was burned in a house fire. The mother was very sick and underwent multiple surgeries. Concerned about mother-infant bonding, Mueller asked Media Department staff to take pictures of the infant and then to set up a continuous live video feed for the mom, to help her bond with her baby during the critical early days of her infant’s life.

Outside West Penn, Mueller helps the Emsworth Volunteer Fire Department by providing CPR training and on-site support for firefighters and victims of fires or accidents.

Dale E. Heron, MSN, CRNA
University of Pittsburgh Physicians, Department of Anesthesiology

Dale Heron is a Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetist at UPMC Presbyterian Hospital and a member of the UPMC Trauma and Transplant Anesthesia Team. He earned a Bachelor’s degree from Edinboro University of Pennsylvania and a Master of Science degree in nursing from the University of Pittsburgh Nurse Anesthesia Program. Heron is a member of the American Association of Nurse Anesthetists and the Pennsylvania Association of Nurse Anesthetists.

“My personal goal has always been to provide optimal patient care throughout the entire operative course, from the initial anesthetic interview through the post-operative transfer of care,” says Heron.

Darlene Gattens, MSN, BSN
West Penn Allegheny Health System, The Western Pennsylvania Hospital School of Nursing

Darlene Gattens is a co-chair of the School’s Admissions and Progression Committee and a member of its Faculty Organization and Program Evaluation committees, as well as of the Hospital’s Research Committee and Staff Nurse Council.

Currently a resident of Aspinwall, Gattens has served as a board member of the Murrysville Area Soccer Association. She has also served as treasurer of the Pennsylvania League for Nursing (PLN) Area VI for two terms, and she is currently on the PLN Area VI ballot for president. She is a member of Sigma Theta Tau and an honorary member of the St. Francis School of Nursing Alumni Association.

Gattens volunteers at West Penn Hospital giving flu shots and TB screenings and assists with the mandatory competencies yearly. She also participates in career fairs to recruit new students to nursing.

“Nursing education has been a priority and love of mine for the past 30 years. It is an exciting part of the nursing profession,” says Gattens. “I love to watch the students grow as they progress through the curriculum and know I have had a part in it.”

St. Clair Hospital
Where our nurses are valued and their dedication appreciated

Congratulations Sally!
St. Clair Hospital is proud to honor Sally Mannella as it 2007 Cameo of Caring Recipient.

2007 Awardees:

- JODIE CONNELL Pulmonary/Telemetry
- JANET BROWN Mental Health
- LINDA ROBSON Orthopedics
- TERRY BENNETT Medical/Surgical
- LYNDI ROMAN Oncology
- ANN BOWLER Medical/Surgical
- JEFF STEWART CATH LAB
- DARLENE DUFFY Coronary Care Unit
- PATRICIA CURRIE CVSU
- ED HIRATA Emergency Department
- TONY FRANZETTA Endoscopy
- JENNIFER EWING Family Birth Center
- LYNN LEVISEUR Hemodialysis
- CHRISTINE PAULETICH Intensive Care/Nurse Intensivists
- CHRIS ROWER Intermediate Care
- JUDY DYER INFUSION CENTER
- CHRIS IGLAR IRU
- CHRISTY LOUGHAN Medical Imaging
- JANE ZIEMIANSKJ NURSING FLOATS
- DEBBIE BEHLING OPSU
- WENDY MCGINTY OR
- DEBBIE FLOCK PACU
- VICTORIA FITZPATRICK PEDIATRICS

Congrats to other Awardees!
**David J. Tunney, BSN, RN**  
VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System, Highland Division

David Tunney is the patient care coordinator at VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System (VAPHS) for Patient Care Services at the Highland Drive Division, where he has been serving veterans for numerous years. He earned his nursing diploma from St. Francis Hospital School of Nursing in 1985 and his Bachelor of Science in nursing from Waynesburg University in 2002. Tunney started his career at VA Pittsburgh’s University Drive Division, but he has found his niche at the Highland Drive Division working with patients who have behavioral and mental health issues.

“His years of experience make him a highly sought after resource by veterans, families, nurses, and physicians,” says a coworker. “He is the go-to clinical nurse. David embodies the soul of nursing – he is compassionate, empathetic, resourceful, knowledgeable, and a dedicated employee.”

**Deborah Dowling, BS, RN**  
UPMC Northwest

Deborah Dowling is a diabetes nurse educator in the Diabetes Care Center at UPMC Northwest. The Titusville, Pennsylvania resident holds an associate’s degree in nursing from Clarion University and a bachelor's degree in health administration from the University of Pittsburgh. She has been at UPMC Northwest for 31 years. Her skills are apparent in all of the areas of nursing that Cameos of Caring recognizes, but are most evident in patient education, to which Dowling now exclusively devotes her career. She is a driving force in the development of the Diabetes Care Center at UPMC Northwest, in which many patients, families, and physicians cite the positive impact her caring instruction and advocacy has on the well-being of her patients.

Dowling is renowned for going the extra mile. Her most rewarding extra effort was on behalf of a patient with out-of-control diabetes. Dowling did everything she could, from helping the patient overcome his fear of needles to persuading a drug company to provide him with inhaled insulin. “Words could not express his gratitude when he experienced a breakthrough,” she says. “Through hugs and tears, he knew he had a new lease on life.”

**Dwayne S. Wright, RN**  
Heritage Valley Health System, Sewickley Valley Hospital

Dwayne S. Wright works in the Critical Care Unit and the Emergency Department at Heritage Valley Health System, Sewickley Valley Hospital. He graduated from the paramedic training program at Community College of Allegheny County and earned his nursing diploma at Sewickley Valley Hospital School of Nursing, where he was awarded the Flora Guthrie Award for Excellence in Nursing.

The McKees Rocks resident was motivated to become a nurse because of events in his childhood. He was the last of five siblings living with his aging parents when his mother would periodically become unconscious. Not understanding what was going on, Wright naturally feared for his mother’s life and called an ambulance. When the EMS crew arrived and revived his mother, Wright thought that he had just witnessed a miracle. He decided to make it his goal to become a nurse for the sole purpose of taking better care of his mother and father.

“Very few people on this earth can say they have a job they like and are good at,” says Wright. “I often tell my son that it’s important to have something to get you up in the morning. My job does that for me.”

**Elaine L. Patalski, MSN, BSN, CRNP**  
UPMC Shadyside School of Nursing

Elaine Patalski is a teaching specialist, instructor, and course coordinator for the UPMC Shadyside School of Nursing. She attended Shadyside Hospital School of Nursing and obtained her bachelor’s and master’s degrees in nursing from the University of Pittsburgh.

During her 40 years in the nursing profession, Patalski has assumed roles in bedside nursing, management, and education. She became a nurse educator in order to have a positive influence on the practice of nursing. Patalski has been instrumental in establishing an honors course for senior transition nursing students to enable them to experience nursing in Palermo, Italy. She is helping to plan an exchange with the Palermo Nursing School that will bring students and faculty to Pittsburgh.

“I’ve chosen to concentrate in nursing education in order to train nurse leaders who will act as change agents, identify system-based process problems, and develop best practice solutions,” says Patalski.

Patalski, who currently teaches a course on the older adult for the University of Pittsburgh Institute on Aging, sees a need for more nurses trained in geriatric sensitivity. “With more than 50 percent of hospital beds filled with patients over the age of 65, we need more awareness of aging and more training in the needs associated with normal aging,” she says.

**Frank Kaiser, RN, CRNA**  
University of Pittsburgh Physicians, Department of Anesthesiology

Frank Kaiser is a staff nurse anesthetist at UPMC Shadyside. He earned his nursing diploma in 1976 at the L.S. Kaufmann School of Nursing at Montefiore Hospital and then earned his certificate in nurse anesthetics from the University Health Center of Pittsburgh School of Anesthesia for Nurses. He later went on to complete a bachelor's degree at California University of Pennsylvania.

Although Kaiser enjoys the technical challenges of his work, he clearly sees his role in the panorama of human interactions. When possible, he helps to transform family members from bedside bystanders to active advocates for the patient, and he enjoys mentoring students and young colleagues.

“Collegial respect for new nurses is one way to advocate for the profession,” he says. “We are all advocates, mostly in simple, ordinary ways.”

Although patients normally see very little of him, Kaiser’s dedication and competence do not escape the notice of his colleagues, including Anne Zapletal, CRNA assistant clinical director at UPMC Shadyside. “The total dedication and conscientious attention to detail that enhance his ability to deliver such superlative care is largely unknown to his patients,” says Zapletal. “So, the words of his colleagues will have to speak for them in saying, Thanks, Frank!”

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www.hospitalnews.org
Ferdinando makes it a point to know as much as possible about all of our patients so she is able to step into any position needed on the unit. She also spends time with nursing students. Her team members are always happy to know they are working a shift with Ferdinando and say, “We wish she could be cloned!”

“My favorite part of the job is the people,” says Ferdinando. “My goal is to enhance each patient’s health and well being.”

Ferdinando decided on a nursing career after working as a volunteer in her high school nurse’s office and shadowing a MVH nurse. “The experience made me believe I could make a difference in patient’s lives,” she says.

Ferdinando earned her nursing degree from The Washington Hospital School of Nursing.

“Gwen is always there when you need her,” say colleagues. “She is an inspiration in the way she cares for her patients.” One of Brown’s patients said, “I have been through the health care system and hands down, she is the best nurse I have ever seen. I admire her for the care she gave me and is giving others.”

“The highest compliment I can give a Nurse is to ask them to care for one of my family members, last September I had to do just that,” says Brown’s manager. “Gwen is an exceptional nurse and person. It is an honor to have her represent our unit and LifeCare Hospital.”

Jamey M. Ferdinando, RN
Monongahela Valley Hospital

Jamey M. Ferdinando, a member of Monongahela Valley Hospital’s (MVH) 5-East Med/Surg/Orthopedics Unit, is recognized by her peers for her commitment to the nursing profession and to her patients, experience and expertise.

Ferdinando decided on a nursing career after working as a volunteer in her high school nurse’s office and shadowing a MVH nurse. “The experience made me believe I could make a difference in patient’s lives,” she says.

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Jamey A. Roach, MNEd, BSN, ONC
UPMC St. Margaret School of Nursing

Janey Roach serves on the faculty at the UPMC St. Margaret School of Nursing. She received her bachelor’s degree in nursing from Kent State University in 1986 and her master’s degree in nursing education from the University of Pittsburgh in 1992. The following year, Roach became certified in orthopaedic nursing.

Roach has articles published in Orthopaedic Nursing, Journal of Nursing Staff Development, and Journal of Nursing Administration. She is a contributing author for an upcoming revision of ATI PN Content Mastery Series/Medical Surgical Nursing. In addition, she is the primary investigator for an IRB project, Assessing the Safe Resumption of Antihypertensive Medications Following Total Hip or Knee Arthroplasty Surgery.

Roach considers it important to have faculty in the clinical setting who can teach students to integrate the true compassion and caring philosophy needed at the bedside, in addition to teaching the technical skills. “I am fortunate to be a member of a nursing faculty who understands both needs and is committed to passing that philosophy on to the next generation of nurses,” says Roach.

A resident of McCandless, Roach volunteers as the nurse for her children’s swim team.

Heritage Valley Health System

Congratulations to the 2007 Recipients of the Cameos of Caring Award

Sandra McKinney, RN
Heritage Valley Beaver

Dwayne S. Wright, RN
Heritage Valley Sewickley
Jayne Wise, RN, CRRN, ACLS
HealthSouth

Jayne Wise is a Clinical Coordinator on the Neuroscience Unit at HealthSouth Harmarville where she has provided nursing care for over 20 years. She earned her LPN certificate and associate’s degree in nursing from the Butler County Community College, and a Bachelor of Science degree from the University of St. Francis.

Becoming a nurse was her childhood dream. “I wanted to make a difference in people’s lives,” Wise says. “The most satisfying part of my career is creating a positive learning environment for the patients and families in preparing them for discharge. It is gratifying to see the patient as a whole person when they return for a visit, and know I played a key role in this process.”

A lifelong learner, Wise takes the lead on learning new techniques and equipment, readily sharing these skills with colleagues. Her dedication to the nursing profession and the organization has been recognized by patients and their families, as well as by colleagues. The Indiana Township resident has been a member of the local and national chapter of the Association of Rehabilitation Nurses for the past 15 years. “I want all new nurses to experience what a satisfying and rewarding career nursing can be,” says Wise. “Every day, nurses can make a difference in the lives of patients they touch.”

Jaynee Reese, BSN, RN
UPMC Horizon

Jaynee Reese works as a registered nurse in the Emergency Department at UPMC Horizon. She earned her nursing degree from what is now known as Sharon Regional Health System School of Nursing and a Bachelor of Science degree in nursing from Penn State University.

Reese was drawn to nursing from a desire to care for her grandparents and elderly friends of the family while growing up. She remembers watching medical-themed television programs, which further fueled her interest in nursing.

Reese enjoys facing new challenges when caring for patients and is proud to use the knowledge and skills she has developed over the years to help her patients return to good health, both physically and emotionally. “I view my career as an important contribution to society,” she says. “I hope people see that I truly care about what I do.”

A patient who was initially diagnosed with lung cancer stands out for Reese. “During the months, we watched him deteriorate,” she says. “Through the process, we got to know him and his family. I was present the day he passed away and I felt very fulfilled when the patient’s wife said, ‘I’m glad you were here.’”

The West Middlesex resident is a member of the Golden Key National Honor Society. Reese plans to take the emergency nursing certification exam and pursue a master’s degree in nursing.

Joy M. Peters, MSN, MBA, BDN
West Penn Allegheny Health System, Allegheny General Hospital

“Without question, the nurse is the lifeline for patients and families during the worst times imaginable,” says Joy Peters, nursing director of the Coronary Care Unit at Allegheny General Hospital. “What better way to make a difference in the world?”

A graduate of the Western Pennsylvania Hospital School of Nursing, Peters also earned a BSN from Pennsylvania State University and a dual MSN/MBa degree from the University of Pittsburgh. Peters began her career at West Penn Hospital, where she worked in the Cardiac Progressive Care Unit and Coronary Care Unit. She also worked as a nurse manager in the Progressive Care Unit at Suburban General Hospital before assuming her present position at AGH.

Peters worked closely with the Pittsburgh Regional Healthcare Initiative using the principles of the Toyota Production System to help eliminate central line associated bloodstream infections. She has delivered many national presentations on that subject, including an appearance in the “Germs—The Dirty Dozen” segment of ABC’s “20/20.”

“Joy is a pioneer in process improvement activities to achieve superior outcomes for patients,” says a colleague. “She is the nurse you want if you are a patient and she is the nurse leader you want if you are a hospital CEO.”
Judy Welty, RN
Excela Health, Latrobe Hospital

Early on, Judy Welty recognized the diversity of the nursing profession—one that would allow her to exercise her many gifts, including public speaking, problem-solving, teaching, and most importantly her ability to empathize and guide patients and colleagues. She was looking for a career that would validate and appreciate her strong work ethic and commitment to service. Welty found an opportunity in psychiatric nursing.

Welty earned a bachelor's degree in finance from Seton Hill University and a nursing degree from Westmoreland County Community College. She began her nursing career at Monongahela Medical Center in Jeannette where she was named Nurse of the Year after 10 years of dedicated service. Her career advanced to the role of clinical coordinator of the Child and Adolescent Behavioral Health Inpatient Unit at Excela Health Latrobe Hospital, where she has worked for seven years educating nurses, health care teams, families, and patients. Welty believes being a voice for the safety needs of children who cannot speak on their own behalf is her most important advocacy role. “If you give the world the best you have, the best will come back to you,” she says. “I have given my best to nursing and the best has come back to me over and over again.”

Karen F. Little, MSN, RN
VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System, Heinz Division

Karen Little is a clinical manager at VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System (VAPHS) for the Heinz Division in the Palliative Care Unit. Little earned an Associate degree in nursing in 1993. She continued her education, earning her Bachelor of Science degree in Nursing from Clarion College in 1997 and her Master of Science degree in nursing from the University of Pittsburgh in April 2006 in Nursing Informatics with a focus in project management.

“Of the reasons I became a nurse is because of the appreciation you get from patients and their families,” says Little. “When you see a patient walking around town months later, and they tell their spouse or children, ‘she’s the one who saved my life!’ all the hard times just seem to disappear.”

Little is involved with many committees at VAPHS, including: Medication Reconciliation committee, Bar Code Medication Administration committee, Laryngectomy and Tracheostomy Work Group, JCAHO Tracer Methodology Committee, and the Journal Club. She also participates within her church and has five grandchildren who keep her on her toes.

Karen J. Martin, MPM, BSN, RN
Mercy Hospital of Pittsburgh

Karen Martin is a staff nurse in the Same Day Surgery Center at the Mercy Hospital of Pittsburgh. She earned her Bachelor of Science degree in nursing at Duquesne University and her Master of Public Management degree at Carnegie Mellon University. Martin has over 30 years experience as a registered nurse and has worked at Mercy since 1994.

“I always wanted to be a nurse,” says Martin. “My mother would often say, ‘You would make such a wonderful nurse.’ I always loved the excitement of the hospital.”

Martin is recognized by her peers and her patients for her exuberance and positive attitude. “Karen’s compassion and her warm, affable personality are ever-present. She takes nursing to a higher level. Karen is a knowledgeable, caring and hard-working professional who exemplifies all of the qualities that elevate nursing to a prestigious profession,” noted one former colleague.

The Mt. Lebanon resident is an active member of the Mercy Hospital Safety Committee. In addition her work at the hospital, Martin volunteers with the Mt. Lebanon Aquatic and the Family Adoption Center of Pittsburgh.

Karen Lee Stein, MSED, BSN, RN
Magee Women's Hospital of UPMC

Karen Stein is a critical care clinical nurse specialist at Magee Women's Hospital of UPMC, where she has worked for 23 years. Stein earned her Bachelor of Science in Nursing from the University of Pittsburgh in 1984, and Master of Science in Education from Duquesne University in 1998.

Stein has a commendable record of patient advocacy and achieving organizational initiatives. Most distinctly noted is her work in the development of an obstetrical crisis team, simulation training team, and Condition H (a system for family members to call for help).

“Karen has always displayed devotion, enthusiasm, and compassion in all of her endeavors,” says Marie Baldissera, MD, medical director at the intensive care unit. “These same qualities characterize her relationships with patients and colleagues.”

Stein is known for being a caring and kind person, as well as for her initiative and innovation in developing initiatives. Most distinctly noted is her work in many hospital committees and has authored or co-authored many presentations and articles relating to patient safety initiatives. “I am an advocate for the nursing profession because I am constantly communicating the needs of the nurses,” says Stein.

Kathleen B. McKenna, RN
UPMC Braddock

Kathleen McKenna graduated from the St. Margaret Hospital School of Nursing 30 years ago. She was recently named clinical coordinator of the UPMC Braddock Emergency Department. The West Mifflin resident is a four-time Camero of Caring nominee, a member of the UPMC Braddock Emergency Department Professional Practice Council, and an honoree designate in the nurses’ Who’s Who in Executives and Professional Women in Nursing and Healthcare.

“Love being a nurse in the ER,” says McKenna. “It’s a fast-paced and ever-changing environment that’s challenging both clinically and emotionally.”

McKenna recounts an especially meaningful episode early in her career. “In the days of nursing caps, mine was distinctive and earned me the nickname of ‘Peapod.’ A patient’s husband asked me to be with his wife when she received her diagnosis of a tumor. I held her hand and shared hope and comfort. She’s doing well and now, when they are both at the hospital, they stop by and ask if they can say hello to ‘Peapod’.”

McKenna is a nurse mentor to recent graduates and works with students in schools and shadowing programs.

Kathryn G. Sweeney, RN
Western Psychiatric Institute and Clinic

Kathryn Sweeney earned an associate's degree in nursing and graduated with high honors from the St. Francis School of Nursing in 1992. She is a charge nurse in the Atrium unit at Western Psychiatric Institute and Clinic, part of UPMC Presbyterian Shadyside.

Sweeney has an exceptional communication skills and a commendable record as a team leader and nurse preceptor. For the past five years, she has trained new nurses and student nurses in the preceptor program. Students have said their summer preceptorship with Sweeney made them better psychiatric nurses. “Psychiatric nursing allows me to use my communication skills with patients, families, and colleagues,” she says.

“Kathy demonstrates exceptional nursing judgment and decision-making skills,” says Elizabeth Fitzgerald, RN, clinical nurse manager at Western Psychiatric. “Kathy gives 100 percent to her job responsibilities and is a huge asset to the unit and institution. Her enthusiasm is contagious.”

Patients and families write letters about the positive experiences and excellent care provided by Sweeney. One family said, “Kathy gave us support and the reassurance to know we were not alone.” A patient's mother wrote, “Kathy went beyond excellence. I want to commend the compassion she had for my child.”

Her parents say Sweeney's career path was set when she was in kindergarten. After drawing a picture of a nurse, she put it on the refrigerator and said, “I will be a nurse someday.”

Kathleen A. Shutsy, RN
Mercy Jeannette Hospital

Kathleen A. Shutsy has been a nurse in the Skilled Rehab Unit at Mercy Jeannette Hospital since May of 2003. She received her associate's degree in nursing from Westernmont County Community College in 1997.

Shutsy knew she wanted to be a nurse in the seventh grade, when she checked out the book, So, You Want to Be a Nurse, from the school library. She belonged to the Future Nurses Club all through high school. Although her life took a different direction after graduation from high school, Shutsy knew deep in her heart that she still wanted to be a nurse. Once her second child was in elementary school, Shutsy went to nursing school, and never turned back. “I love the profession of nursing,” she says. “Caring for patients is very satisfying.”

“In addition to looking out for the needs of patients, nurses are teachers,” says Shutsy. “Everyday on my way to work I say a little prayer to keep my patients safe, and let me touch just one person’s heart.”

Karen M. Spiering, MSN, RN, CNRN
UPMC Presbyterian

Katherine Spiering is the primary nurse care coordinator in the Surgical Trauma ICU at UPMC Presbyterian. After graduating cum laude from St. Vincent College, she earned her associate’s degree in Nursing Education and Research. And Roxanne McWreath, unit director of the Surgical Trauma ICU, says, “Kate approaches potential donor families with such sensitivity and compassion during one of the most difficult times of their lives.”

The rewards of helping others are never often compensate for the demanding work of nursing. But not all patients can be saved. Spiering believes organ donation can turn a horrible tragedy into the precious gift of life.
Posthumous Award
Kelli Ann Heiple, MSN, RN, CRNP
Indiana Regional Medical Center

Kelli Ann Heiple’s selection for the Camocos of Caring Advanced Practice Award brings tremendous pride and fresh heartache. Heiple lost her battle with cancer in February 2007, at age 41. A loving wife and mother, Heiple left behind not only her husband and their two children, but many others who will never forget the “amazing light” that surrounded her.

“Kelli’s light was unique,” says Cindy Virgil, MSN, RN, Senior Vice President for Patient Services at Indiana Regional Medical Center. “People talk about the ‘inner light’ we all have - Kelli was closer to that of a halogen lamp!”

“Kelli was the most intelligent nurse I ever met,” says Imran Bajwa, MD. “She was also one of the most insightful people I ever will meet.” Heiple was Bajwa’s sleep lab coordina-
tor and the nurse practitioner in his pulmonary practice.

Heiple brought her fantastic energy, and complete commitment to everything she did. “She was the most incredible nurse any sick person could hope to have to help them back on the road to wellness,” says Bajwa. “Every single patient fell in love with her.”

Heiple was devoted to her patients. “I watched her hold the hand of a dying patient who had no family so the patient wouldn’t die alone,” says Susann Loveridge, RN. “Keli was the most unselfish person I ever met. She offered kindness so freely.”

Kelly M. Fulmer, BSN, CARN
VA Butler Healthcare

Kelly Fulmer earned an associate’s degree in nursing at Butler Community College, a bachelor’s degree in nursing at Waynesburg College and is a Certified Addictions Registered Nurse Certification (CARN). Fulmer is currently enrolled in the Psychiatric Primary Care Nurse Practitioner master’s pro-
gram at The University of Pittsburgh School of Nursing.

Fulmer is active on a number of committees at the hospital, including: Infection Control, Patient Education, Admissions Reviewing Committee, Speaking Committees, Certified Nurse Practice, and the JCAHO continuous survey readiness team.

Considered a leader by her peers, Fulmer is an invaluable asset to the residential and addiction treatment programs. She serves both programs in a dual role as staff RN and addiction treatment program admissions coordinator. Fulmer efficiently and effectively manages both functions while also serving on several medical center committees. “Kelly’s jovial, effervescent, and compassionate personality endears her to all patients and staff. She is the embodiment of the ultimate team player, never presented with a challenge that she is not willing to undertake in order to meet the identified need,” says Stephen R. Ward, Chief of the Domiciliary Residential Rehabilitation and Treatment Program. “Kelly is a special individual and employee.” Her coworkers agree, citing her easy going demeanor, and willingness to do whatever is needed. “Kelly is consistently kind and considerate in her interactions with veterans and staff,” says one coworker. “She is a model team player and has excellent trouble shooting skills.”

Kimberly M. Arenth, RN
UPMC South Side

Kimberly Arenth earned an associate’s degree in nursing from the Community College of Allegheny County. Arenth works as a registered nurse on the Brain Injury Unit at UPMC South Side.

From a very young age Arenth knew she wanted to work hands-on in the health care field. “I wanted to be an educator and make a difference in someone’s life,” she says. “I’ve always wanted to take care of patients. I knew that if I went to the bedside, I could make a difference.”

Arenth’s work on the Brain Injury Unit provides her with an opportunity to work with patients of all ages and diagnoses and also to educate patients and their families.

“There are many patients and families that have made a lasting impression on my heart,” says Arenth. “Each experience brings new knowledge and helps me improve my role as a nurse.”

Linda Schoch, MSN, BSN, RN, CCRN
UPMC Presbyterian

Linda Schoch is a primary nurse care coordinator on the Transplant Intensive Care Unit at UPMC Presbyterian. She obtained her bachelor’s degree in nursing from Carlow University and a master’s degree in nursing from the University of Pittsburgh.

“I have been a caregiver my entire life,” says Schoch. “I cared for my aunt who was physically handicapped and for my brother who was ill since birth.”

As a primary nurse, Schoch is a natural teacher and mentor for newer staff and seasoned colleagues who respect her nursing and patient management skills. She is known for her expertise and calm demeanor, especially in emergency situations. Schoch has the uncanny quality of spreading calm to those around her.

Certified in critical care nursing, Schoch is keenly sensitive to patients’ wishes and quality of life issues as they arise. “I love to see patients get better,” she says. “And I believe nurses still provide healing for patients who do not get better.”

Schoch is a member of several unit-based committees, including the Diabetes Committee, Education Committee, and Journal Club Committee. She is a yearly participant in Race for the Cure and the Diabetes Walk.

“I love the people I work with and the camaraderie that is formed by working so closely in such an emotional and physical work environment,” she says.

Lynn Baird, RN
UPMC Shadyside

Lynn Baird is a senior professional staff nurse in the Surgical Intensive Care Unit at UPMC Shadyside. The Murrysville res-

ident is a 1983 graduate of the Mercy Hospital School of Nursing.

Baird decided on a career in nursing as she helped to care for her grandmother following a devastating stroke. “I knew then that nursing was inside of me,” she says. bedside nursing remains the most rewarding aspect of Baird’s career. “My greatest satisfaction comes from the opportunity to participate in the recovery of patients who came to her unit with virtually no hope.”

Intensive care nursing is demanding work. But Baird knows it’s the life she was meant to live. “When I search her soul, I know that the one thing I have always wanted – and always will want – is to be at the bedside to see a patient recover,” she says. “When a patient is well enough to thank me for helping them recover, I know that’s all I need.”

Martha Kuhns, PhD, APRN, BC
Western Psychiatric Institute and Clinic

Martha Kuhns earned her nursing diploma Women’s Medical College of Pennsylvania Hospital School of Nursing, her Bachelor of Science in nursing from Duquesne University, and her master’s doctoral degrees from the University of Pittsburgh. Kuhns holds several certifications in psychiatric mental health nursing and nonviolent crisis intervention.

A nurse for 37 years and an advanced practice nurse for 23, Kuhns is active in a number of professional nursing associa-
tions. Kuhns advocates for nursing by being a role model and teaching nurses, patients, families, and the public about nursing. “Martha’s skills in diagnosing and treating the schizophrenic population are remarkable,” says Elizabeth Droske, MSN, RN, CRNP, certified clinical administrator, Regional Behavioral Health at Western Psychiatric.

“Martha exemplifies the multifaceted and integral roles of the Advanced Practice Nurse through her commitment to excellent holistic nursing care,” says Della Williams, MSN, RN, APRN-BC, psychiatric clinical nurse specialist at Western Psychiatric.

Her initial immersion into understanding cultural diversity stands as a significant career event. Kuhns risked ruining her red silk suit while herding a cow into a pen in an effort to save a man’s life. Because she understood his culture, Kuhns says, “I know this man would not have gone to the hospital if the cow had been loose.”

Kimberly Arenth, RN
Indiana Regional Medical Center

Arenth’s work on the Brain Injury Unit provides her with an opportunity to work with patients of all ages and diagnoses and also to educate patients and their families.

“There are many patients and families that have made a lasting impression on my heart,” says Arenth. “Each experience brings new knowledge and helps me improve my role as a nurse.”

Lynn Baird, RN
UPMC Shadyside

Baird decided on a career in nursing as she helped to care for her grandmother following a devastating stroke. “I knew then that nursing was inside of me,” she says. bedside nursing remains the most rewarding aspect of Baird’s career. “My greatest satisfaction comes from the opportunity to participate in the recovery of patients who came to her unit with virtually no hope.”

Intensive care nursing is demanding work. But Baird knows it’s the life she was meant to live. “When I search her soul, I know that the one thing I have always wanted – and always will want – is to be at the bedside to see a patient recover,” she says. “When a patient is well enough to thank me for helping them recover, I know that’s all I need.”

Martha Kuhns, PhD, APRN, BC
Western Psychiatric Institute and Clinic

Kuhns advocates for nursing by being a role model and teaching nurses, patients, families, and the public about nursing. “Martha’s skills in diagnosing and treating the schizophrenic population are remarkable,” says Elizabeth Droske, MSN, RN, CRNP, certified clinical administrator, Regional Behavioral Health at Western Psychiatric.

“Martha exemplifies the multifaceted and integral roles of the Advanced Practice Nurse through her commitment to excellent holistic nursing care,” says Della Williams, MSN, RN, APRN-BC, psychiatric clinical nurse specialist at Western Psychiatric.

Her initial immersion into understanding cultural diversity stands as a significant career event. Kuhns risked ruining her red silk suit while herding a cow into a pen in an effort to save a man’s life. Because she understood his culture, Kuhns says, “I know this man would not have gone to the hospital if the cow had been loose.”
It’s not the number of beds that make a health system great. It’s the people who stand beside them.

By that measure, we know our nurses are great. Because our Cameos of Caring honorees exemplify the character and compassion we value throughout our organization.

On behalf of the West Penn Allegheny Health System, we congratulate each of you for defining what great care really means.
Mary Lou Sirianni, BSN, RN
Magee Women’s Hospital of UPMC

Mary Lou Sirianni is a professional staff nurse in the Womencare Birth Center at Magee Women’s Hospital of UPMC. The Murrysville resident is a 1977 graduate of the University of Pittsburgh School of Nursing.

“Nursing is more than a career for Sirianni, it is a way of life. The seed was planted early, as she cared for her youngest sister, who was diagnosed with rheumatoid arthritis at the age of one. Sirianni saw the love with which the nurses cared for her sister at Children’s Hospital of Pittsburgh. ‘That’s when I first knew that I wanted to be like those nurses,’ she says.

‘To be a part of a patient’s birth experience is an honor, a privilege, and a joy,’ says Sirianni. ‘I like working with ‘difficult’ patients, who need more TLC. Even when she’s not working, Sirianni is a nurse. She completed a refresher course before coming to Magee-Womens Hospital of UPMC after a 20-year hiatus from her career. But she never stopped being a nurse during that time — to family, friends, and neighbors who called on her when anyone was sick or injured.

Coworkers say Sirianni is a living testament to the old proverb, ‘Once a nurse, always a nurse.’

Melissa Estep, RN
West Virginia University Hospitals

Melissa Estep is an oncology nurse, as well as an acuity and charge nurse, at West Virginia University Hospitals. Estep’s dedication to her profession has been recognized with numerous awards during her 15-year career at the hospital.

A native of Braxton County, WV, Estep earned an associate of science degree in nursing at Lake City Community College in Florida. “Missy’s focus is the holistic care of the cancer patient,” says a co-worker. “She is a true advocate for patients in today’s complicated healthcare system.”

“With the passing of her grandmother, who died of cancer, I wanted to be a nurse,” says Estep. “I’ve worked with Missy for several years and am still amazed at how she gives of herself – every day.”

Estep chose nursing because she loves helping people. “I knew from the time I was eight that I wanted to be a nurse,” she says. “My grandmother died a tough cancer death, and the nurses who took care of her were angels. I wanted to be an angel like the ones who helped her.”

“I love my profession,” she says. “Other than being a mother, there is nothing more rewarding.”

Michelle Dropek Raga, MSN, BSN, RN
West Penn Allegheny Health System, Citizens School of Nursing

Michelle Dropek Raga is a nursing instructor at the Citizens School of Nursing in New Kensington. She received both her bachelor’s and master’s degrees in nursing from the University of Pittsburgh School of Nursing.

As an instructor, Raga promotes the nursing profession by being a positive role model. She has developed creative teaching methods that are effective and has contributed questions to the 2nd editions of A Good Thinking Approach to the NCLEX and Good Thinking: Test Taking, Problem Solving and Study Skills for Nursing Students. Raga is also a consultant for the STAT Nursing Consultants, Inc.

“Michelle is well respected and sets high standards for herself and for her students,” says Lynne Rugh, director of the Citizens School of Nursing. “She has demonstrated interest in helping students who have difficulty with study and testing skills, and has invested much time and effort in this area.”

Raga was drawn to teaching when as a nurse she felt a sense of accomplishment each time she found herself in a teaching situation. “I feel great satisfaction knowing that I help touch a life by passing on my knowledge to someone that will help others,” she says.

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Pamela Malicki, BSN, RN
VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System,
University Drive Division

Pamela Malicki is a nurse at VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System (VAPHS) for the University Drive Division in the Oncology department. Malicki earned her nursing diploma from West Penn Hospital School of Nursing in 1989 and Bachelor of Science in nursing degree from Waynesburg College in 2004.

“I knew I wanted to be a nurse from the time I was in grade school. My mother was a nurse and her love for her profession inspired me,” says Malicki. “I could not imagine myself in any profession other than nursing.”

“Pamela is truly recognized as a role model for the profession of nursing,” says a co-worker. “She displays the essence of caring in her nursing practice.” Malicki is the Magnet Ambassador for the Oncology Department at VAPHS and is an active member of the Frontline Leadership Academy.

Ron Mennow, RN
UPMC St. Margaret

Ron Mennow is a level IV nurse clinician on Unit 6A at UPMC St. Margaret. While at UPMC St. Margaret, Mennow attended the St. Margaret School of Nursing and graduated in 1997. He earned bachelor’s degree in nursing at the University of Pittsburgh in 2007.

A resident of Russellton, Mennow looks forward to daily interactions with people. “Nursing is the perfect combination of my two greatest passions. I want a career where I have a positive influence on people’s lives and one that satisfies my desire for scientific knowledge,” he says. “My greatest desire is for patients to have the best possible outcomes.”

“Ron is a ‘people person.’ He loves being around people — patients, families, new hires, residents, and coworkers,” says Lisa Lehman, unit director, 6A. “Ron has a keen ability to identify a person’s strengths and the areas where there is room for improvement.”

Mennow currently volunteers with the hospital’s School Health Partnership Program where he offers education about puberty, sex education, non-smoking, and non-violence to preteens in Pittsburgh’s city schools.

Ruth Williams, RN
UPMC McKeesport

Ruth Williams is staff nurse on the 3 Mansfield Medical/Surgical Unit at UPMC McKeesport where she has worked for more than 30 years. A resident of Eighty-Four, PA, Williams earned her nursing diploma from the Washington Hospital School of Nursing.

Williams is the consummate bedside nurse who demonstrates excellence as evidenced by her positive patient outcomes. During her rounds on the night shift, she always finds a patient who is awake, usually scared, and vulnerable. A patient may wonder if he or she will make it through surgery or if the chemotherapy will work. Another patient may worry about how to cope with a mastectomy. “This is when a patient stops being a room number or a diagnosis, she says. “Time spent with a patient makes my job worthwhile. If I can make them feel better or less lonely, it is the greatest experience a nurse can ever achieve.”

Williams is a deacon in her church. She visits the homebound, participates in blood pressure screenings for the elderly, and helps provide meals for a homeless program. She is involved with the Haiti Mission at her church and coordinates sending packages to military soldiers during their overseas deployments.

“She is one of those unsung heroes of nursing that saves lives everyday,” adds Nora Evans, RN, unit director, UPMC McKeesport.

Ruth Zalonis, BSN, RN
Jefferson Regional Medical Center

Ruth Zalonis wears her white nursing cap with pride. She realizes she is one of the few nurses today who still dons the traditional cap that years ago was a required part of the nursing uniform and a respected symbol of the nursing profession. “When I first became a nurse in 1975, it was a big deal,” says Zalonis, who works in the Oncology unit, 4 North, at Jefferson Regional Medical Center in Jefferson Hills. “The capping ceremony was a big part of becoming a nurse.”

Zalonis graduated cum laude from Bloomsburg University with a Bachelor of Arts degree in sociology. She studied nursing at Somerset Area Practical Nursing School, Westmoreland County Community College, Penn State Fayette and Uniontown Hospital School of Nursing, where she graduated as valedictorian. She earned her Bachelor of Science degree in nursing from Carlow University, graduating summa cum laude.

“Colleagues say Zalonis does an excellent job of facing the challenges of being an oncology nurse. ‘You deal with people who have a devastating illness who are facing their mortality and often don’t know whether they will live or die,’ says Patty Luptak, director of Oncology Services. ‘As a nurse, you have to be there for them, not only to deal with the medical aspects of their lives, but the emotional and spiritual aspects as well. Those are challenges faced by oncology nurses — and nobody does it better than Ruth.’

The Cameos of Caring Awards program:
• Honors exceptional bedside nurses and nurse educators
• Increases awareness of nursing career rewards
• Helps recruit a new generation of nurses to offset the nursing shortage
• Inspires the next generation of nurses
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Sally Mannella, RN
St. Clair Hospital

Sally Mannella is a staff nurse on St. Clair Hospital’s 6E Medical/Surgical Nursing Unit. Mannella has been a team member at St. Clair Hospital for the past 28 years. The Bridgeville resident earned her nursing degree from the Ohio Valley School of Nursing.

A desire to help others inspired Mannella to become a nurse. “Directing positive energy to someone who is ill can and will help them reach their goal of being on the road to recovery,” says Mannella.

Outside the hospital, Mannella volunteers at Operation Safety Net, a community program dedicated to helping Pittsburgh’s homeless residents. S

Sandra Kustaborder, RNC
UPMC Bedford Memorial

Sandra Kustaborder has been a nurse for 40 years. She graduated from the Altoona Hospital School of Nursing in 1967 and has worked in Obstetrics for the majority of her career. Kustaborder joined the staff at UPMC Bedford Memorial in 2004.

Kustaborder was drawn to nursing after growing up in the country where she cared for animals and participated in their birthing processes. “Working in obstetrics for most of my career has been very satisfying,” says Kustaborder. “Participating in the miracle of birth is fulfilling.”

As a senior professional nurse at UPMC Bedford Memorial, Kustaborder writes educational pieces for the OB staff. She holds certifications in Inpatient Obstetrics, Electronic Fetal Monitoring, and IV Therapy.

“Sandy is very knowledgeable in her field. She continually demonstrates excellent clinical judgment and provides wonderful nursing care,” says Paula Thomas, vice president Patient Services, UPMC Bedford Memorial. “Sandy is hard-working and a mentor to many co-workers. She is willing to trade shifts, come in early, and stay late to accommodate the OB Department.”

Sandra McKinney, RN
Heritage Valley Health System; The Medical Center, Beaver

Sandra McKinney is a 1985 graduate of Community College of Beaver County where she earned an Associate degree in nursing. She works as a professional registered nurse in the GI Lab at Heritage Valley Beaver.

McKinney became a nurse because she likes being around people and enjoys “fixing” things – becoming a nurse to help people get better was a natural fit. She uses her clinical experience as well as evidence based practice to provide care to her patients and is an excellent role model for other nurses.

In addition to patient care, McKinney enjoys teaching her patients and their families. “Taking time to answer questions and make sure patients understand their care is one of the most important aspects of nursing,” says McKinney. “Whether I help other nurses or my patients, I feel comfortable and proud that I am a strong advocate for nursing. I try to put myself in the patients’ place and keep in mind their safety and comfort first.”

Sandra L. Zebrak, BSN, RN
Excela Health, Westmoreland Hospital

Sandra Zebrak, a pediatric nurse at Excela Health Westmoreland Hospital, experiences a sense of accomplishment through the accolades she receives from patients and families in the form of thank you notes, colored pictures and drawings, a plaster hand print and a paper icicle that she still hangs on her Christmas tree. “I love children and taking care of them,” says Zebrak.

The Greensburg resident is a 28-year veteran of the nursing field, with staff time at Children’s Hospital of Pittsburgh. With a husband in the military Zebrak has practiced at Bethesda Naval Hospital Pediatric Clinic as well as in Newfoundland, Canada, before coming to Excela Health five years ago. She is regarded by her colleagues as an informal unit leader who works tirelessly to improve the consistency of pediatric patient care by serving as a preceptor.

Zebrak earned her bachelor’s degree from the University of Pittsburgh and a nursing refresher certificate at Westmoreland County Community College.

She credits her mother with guiding her toward health care. “Mom thought I would be a good nurse since I was always caring for stray animals and sick family members. She encouraged me. So, I became a Candy Striper and I loved it,” says Zebrak. “The rest is history!”

Sherry Fields, RN
Uniontown Hospital

Sherry Fields’ life dream was to become a nurse – a dream she has fulfilled for 21 years.

“Each day when my shift ends I realize I have been a part of a human experience that touched me, my patients and their families,” Fields says. “I’ve been part of a team of individuals that promoted healing, relieved pain and responded to an individual’s emotional and physical needs at a most vulnerable time in their life.”

Fields considers education an integral part of the nursing profession. She worked as a Licensed Practical Nurse for many years before earning her Associate degree in nursing from Westmoreland County Community College. She earned certification in oncology nursing, is pursuing medical-surgical certification, and is participating in Uniontown Hospital’s Clinical Recognition Program.

In addition to managing a private physician practice, Fields has worked in both medical surgical and oncology nursing for six years at Uniontown Hospital. She prides herself on being an advocate for the nursing profession by taking part in recruitment activities and serving as a preceptor for both new graduates and student nurses.

Improving communications between staff and physicians is one of Fields’ priority challenges. Leading by example, Fields challenges her co-workers to stay positive with her calming influence and tactful methods for resolving conflict. Co-workers say, “Sherry welcomes every day with a smile which has a positive impact on her peers and her patients.”

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Stephanie Martin began her career at Somerset Hospital in 1982 as a licensed practical nurse. While continuing to work full-time, Martin attended the Allegany College of Maryland, Somerset Campus, earning her Associate degree in nursing in 2004.

“Stephanie stands out as a patient advocate but is also quite visible in the role of family advocate,” says Karen Geary, Unit Director. “She is a great teacher, a compassionate and attentive listener and an excellent care provider.”

Becoming a nurse had been Martin’s dream since childhood. Her greatest satisfaction comes from the opportunity to assist in the day-to-day progression towards the improved health of the patients she serves. Martin’s key to success is building relationships with patients, families and co-workers.

A resident of Friedens in Somerset County, Martin is a true advocate of nursing and has encouraged her daughter to pursue a career in the nursing profession. Martin has earned the Somerset Hospital Employee of the Quarter Award, was nominated for the Employee of the Year, and received Somerset Hospital’s We Care Award for customer service.

“The opportunity to give people hope fulfills the dream of my profession,” says Martin.

Susan Gustafson always had a strong desire to help others and care for people, so she knew nursing would be the profession for her. As a charge nurse in the Inpatient Rehabilitation Unit at The Western Pennsylvania Hospital – Forbes Regional Campus, Gustafson says the most satisfying part of her job is being part of an interdisciplinary team helping patients improve their quality of life. “Sensitivity is the strength that allows me to connect with my patients,” she says.

Many patients have touched Gustafson’s heart, but she will never forget one in particular—a teenager who had a traumatic brain injury as the result of an ATV accident. Physicians and specialists said there was no hope, but Gustafson thought otherwise. She spoke to him everyday she worked, talking about the weather, world events and how much his family loved him. Then one day, without any warning, the patient sat up and was able to communicate basic needs. After months of rehabilitation, the patient was able to walk out of the hospital without assistive devices, and able to speak and thank her.

Gustafson says his trust in her was all the thanks she ever needed.

Susan Jackson is a clinical leader on 10 North in the Orthopaedic, Neurosurgery, and Trauma units at Children’s Hospital of Pittsburgh of UPMC. She earned her Bachelor of Science degree in nursing from the University of Pittsburgh and received the 2007 Mary LeMoyne Page Award. Jackson started her nursing career at Children’s Hospital in 1987, but as early as high school was working in the health care field. As a freshman, she was a candy striper at Jeannette Memorial Hospital, and at times, the nurses allowed her to tag along. Stories from her aunt, a nurse at UPMC Braddock, also encouraged Jackson to enter nursing.

“The highest compliment any parent can give me is to say, ‘I trust you to care for my child,’’ says Jackson. ‘‘I will never take this responsibility lightly.’” The North Huntingdon resident also credits her fellow nurses as an inspiration and positive influence. A feeling her colleagues reciprocate.

“Susan is the silent hero of 10 North,” say her peers. “She goes about her day quietly, putting out fires and making the day better for the patients, families, and staff. She is a leader, patient advocate, and inspiration to all who work with her.”
October is National Breast Cancer Awareness Month, and the American Cancer Society continues to recommend mammograms for all women age 40 and older every year to help detect breast cancer early. Although breast cancer death rates among women have been decreasing steadily since 1990 due to earlier detection and better treatments, mammography rates are now declining according to a recent study. This raises cause for concern, as studies continue to show that one of the most important ways to make strides in the fight against breast cancer is to ensure that women continue getting their yearly mammogram, which can detect cancer at its earliest, most treatable stages.

Millions of women are missing potential lifesaving breast cancer screening due to lack of insurance. A recent study in CANCER, a peer-reviewed journal of the Society, shows that uninsured and Medicaid insured women were about 2.5 times more likely to be diagnosed with advanced breast cancer than women with private insurance. This study also found that African American and Hispanic women were more likely than white women to be diagnosed with advanced breast cancer, regardless of insurance status.

As critical as mammograms are, it is of great concern to make sure all women can get a mammogram without worrying about cost. The Mammogram Voucher Program is one program available that provides mammograms and follow-up diagnostic services to medically underinsured and uninsured women in Central, Northwestern, and Western Pennsylvania. Women can call the Mammogram Voucher Program at 1-888-MVP-0952 to see if they qualify under the program guidelines. The Mammogram Voucher Program is funded by a grant from Susan G. Komen for the Cure, Pittsburgh affiliate.

In addition to mammograms, the Society also recommends the use of magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) screening for some women at increased risk for breast cancer. For most women who have a 20 to 25 percent or greater lifetime risk of the disease, according to risk assessment tools based mainly on family history, screening with MRI and mammography should begin at age 30 years and continue for as long as a woman is in good health. The Society's guidelines are a critical step in helping to define who should be screened using MRI in addition to mammography, as women at very high risk of breast cancer can be diagnosed much earlier when combining the two technologies rather than mammography alone.

Up-to-date cancer information and referrals to local programs and other community resources can be obtained by calling the Society at 1-800-ACS-2345, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year, or logging on to www.cancer.org.

A free mammogram reminder is available for friends and family to encourage the women in their lives to get their yearly mammograms, and can be found at www.cancer.org/mammogramreminder.
Breast Care in the 21st Century

If there was a place where the highest science came together with the most intense human touch, what might that place look like? Read this as we describe the future of women’s care.

It would be housed in a place designed by women for women – a place where internationally recruited scientists will embrace you as a person, an individual, a special human being who represents the center of their scientific universe. They will work with you to create your personalized health prescription.

Your experience would include a choice of access to massage, acupuncture, reiki, personal trainers, dieticians, specially trained health professionals and female physicians.

This center would have cosmetologists on-site, specially designed breast gowns that acknowledge your personal need to allow you to maintain your dignity as an individual, mammography pads to reduce the discomfort of the exam and a loving, caring staff focused only on you and your needs.

The center also would embrace the highest quality, most sophisticated technology currently available: 3 Tesla MRIs with breast coil, 4D ultra sound, multiple digital mammography equipment, algorithms born through our national defense system used by our center to fuse together ultra sound with mammography to help eliminate missed diagnoses.

Female physicians will add to your comfort through real time diagnoses with stereo tactic mammotome, dexiscan and assisted by genetic, spiritual and psychological counselors to help you be you.

This center is not a dream. It is a reality that exists in the Laurel Highlands of Pennsylvania, The Joyce Murtha Breast Center at Windber Medical Center where over 10,000 women crossed our threshold last year alone and when they did, they discovered an ambiance that includes walls of fountains, fireplaces, healing garden labyrinths and beautiful wooded hills in surroundings that overlook a beautiful healing pastoral setting that cries out to you “why isn’t every women’s center like this?”

Nick Jacobs, currently president of Windber Medical Center and Windber Research Institute is currently writing a book, Who Put the Heal in Healthcare and will be a regular contributor to this publication. Nick can be reached at jacobsfn@aol.com or visit windbercare.com.

AGH Informed Decision Making Program Offers Peace of Mind to Breast Cancer Patients

Women diagnosed with breast cancer have many questions and face many options with regards to the best course of treatment for their disease.

What is the ideal treatment plan? Should one opt for a lumpectomy or a mastectomy procedure? What new cancer drugs may benefit them? The answers often get lost in the overwhelming amount of information a patient encounters from her doctors, nurses, family members and friends.

According to a recent survey conducted by the Kaiser Family Foundation and the Harvard School of Public Health of adults who had survived cancer or shared a household with a cancer patient, more than half acknowledged experiencing problems in the coordination of their medical care.

The survey suggested, among other things, that many patients are uninformed about the medicines they are prescribed, that one in five underwent unnecessary or duplicate diagnostic testing at some point in their care, and that one in four had received conflicting health information at one time or another.

Healthcare professionals at Allegheny General Hospital (AGH) agree that coordinating cancer care can be challenging. To help women recently diagnosed with early stage breast cancer make a more educated decision about the treatment they receive, AGH has established the Informed Decision Making Program.

“It used to be that cancer patients stayed in the hospital for days and weeks at a time, where they had immediate access to all of the healthcare providers involved in their care,” said Thomas B. Julian, M.D., a breast cancer surgeon and associate director of AGH’s Breast Care Center.

“Cancer patients today are treated primarily on an outpatient basis, spending less time with their medical team and more time navigating through a great deal of information relative to their disease and treatments for it. With the Internet and its wealth of both reliable and often unreliable information, it can become confusing and frustrating,” Dr. Julian said.

“The goal of the AGH Informed Decision Making Program is to better educate women who have been diagnosed with breast cancer and to make their therapeutic journey as manageable as possible during this difficult time in their lives,” said Harriet Guenburr, R.N., co-director of the Program.

For more information about the AGH Informed Decision Making Program and the Joyce Murtha Breast Center, visit windbercare.com.

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