

Nurses Week

May 6-12, 2024

*18 Heartfelt Stories
From Local Nurses*



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Inside This Issue

- 5 Fraternal Twins
- 6 Gratitude and Growth
- 8 Pediatric Care
- 9 Quality is a Habit
- 10 Fulfilling Dreams
- 11 Nurse Who Keeps Building
- 12 How to Save a Life
- 13 Beacon of Compassion
- 14 Men in Nursing
- 14 Bedside Leadership
- 15 Promoting Safety
- 18 Appreciation for Hard Work
- 18 Heart of Healthcare
- 19 Second Career
- 19 A Journey of Resilience
- 20 Benefits of Small Hospital
- 20 How to Win
- 22 Judgement Free Care

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Hannah and Isabella Gorrell

Fraternal twins share identical passion for caretaking

Story and photos contributed by PenWest Edinboro

Hannah and Isabella Gorrell have shared a lot of big moments – from taking their first steps to starting kindergarten, celebrating birthdays and finishing high school in the midst of a global pandemic.

On May 4, the Gorrell twins reached another milestone as they walked across separate PennWest stages to earn Bachelor of Science degrees in nursing.

Both Hannah, who attended PennWest Edinboro, and Isabella, who attended PennWest Clarion, took an interest in joining the helping professions at a young age.

“I’ve wanted to become a nurse since I was a little girl,” Hannah said. “When we were about eight, our grandmother used to take care of our great-grandmother, and we would help her do things. That really guided me.”

At 15, the Pittsburgh natives started working as pantry aides at a local nursing home. They later gained hands-on experience as certified nursing assistants while also competing in multiple sports at North Hills High School.

When the time came to select a college, Hannah felt at home in Edinboro’s state-of-

the-art patient simulator labs. Isabella, who continued swimming at the collegiate level, immediately bonded with members of the Golden Eagles swim team during her visit and was impressed by Clarion’s nursing facilities and the recently redesigned Waldo S. Tippin Natatorium.

“Whether it was sports or friendships, we’ve always been side by side. So, we were a little sad to be separated at first,” Isabella said. “But we were still always there for each other 100% of the time, no matter what happened. Even though we were separated, we did it together.”

Through professional nursing courses and clinical experiences, Hannah and Isabella learned to treat human responses to health and illness through the application of scientific knowledge. Both sisters credited PennWest’s expert nursing faculty and a tight-knit community of nursing students for preparing them to step into professional nursing roles.

“During clinicals, I saw so many things. They were great learning experiences, and I gained a lot of good friendships,” Hannah said. “Even when I struggled, Dr. [Vicki] Hedderick motivated me to keep going, study and know my material. That really helped me gain confidence.”

“The moment that confirmed my decision to become a nurse was sitting with a patient who was passing away,” Isabella said. “I sat there with this patient all day, and I just knew that was what I was supposed to do. I always try to put myself in my patients’ shoes and treat them the way I would want to be treated.”

In July, the Gorrells will join a team of medical professionals providing care to patients undergoing medical procedures in the med-surge unit at UPMC Passavant. Isabella hopes to eventually transition to the emergency room, and Hannah is interested in labor and delivery or postpartum nursing.

“Nursing is hard, but it’s so rewarding. Just knowing you’re there to help people every day is special,” Hannah said. “You don’t always know what people are going through. No matter what you do, just be there, help them and make them feel comfortable.”

PennWest’s career-ladder approach prepares the highest quality professional nurses at the baccalaureate, master’s and doctoral levels to meet the local and global holistic health-care needs of individuals, families and communities. **NW**

Nurses Week 2024 UPMC Hamot

Nurses provide care for patients. That's a fact. Lesser known is the breadth of the nursing field and the diverse opportunities it offers, providing people with careers that align with their interests and ambitions. Beyond direct patient care, nurses can specialize in areas like education, research or administration. Some nurses work in

fast-paced units, caring for critically ill patients, while others prefer delivering babies or caring for the elderly. The stories below about several UPMC Hamot nurses showcase the range of environments and approaches within nursing.



A Box of Joy, Gratitude and Growth: Meet Nurse Gabriella Ennis, UPMC Hamot

By Autumn Bellan, UPMC



Gabby Ennis and her great-great aunt, Ester Messerknecht (right)
- with old nursing photo



Gabby Ennis and grandmother Deborah Ennis



Inspired by two strong women in her family, Gabriella Ennis knew she wanted to be a nurse early in her life. When Ennis was in middle school, she visited her grandmother in the hospital frequently. “I got to see how the nurses impacted her progress,” said Ennis. “I got to see that you can make a positive change in patients in the most vulnerable time of their lives.” She recalled the small moments where a nurse would explain a complicated topic, make her grandmother smile, or hold her hand.

During those days visiting the hospital, Ennis would think of how her great aunt, who was a nurse, supported patients just like her grandmother. “She is 91 years old now, and she gets so excited to talk about me following in her footsteps,” said Ennis. She shared how her great aunt calls Ennis her ‘baby nurse’ and gave Ennis her original nursing pin to wear on her graduation cap.

“I went to Kent State University to get my bachelor’s in nursing,” said Ennis. “After I came home, I looked at different hospitals. I chose UPMC Hamot because they have so many opportunities available to their nurses.” She appreciated the resources and programs they offer staff to learn and grow, whether it be through management opportunities, further education or more.

As a nurse, Ennis strives to look out for the best interests of her patients, advocate for their needs, and be there for them when they are unable to be there for themselves. “At some point during my 12-hour shift, I always try to make a point of sitting with the patient to chat about how they feel and what they’re going through,” said Ennis. “They’re uncomfortable. They’re scared. They do not know the language of the medical field so I explain it all in layman’s terms. It makes a world of difference.”

Recently, Ennis reached one year at UPMC Hamot, her proudest achievement in her career so far. “I feel like I progress and grow every day, finding more confidence in my skills,” said Ennis. “If I’ve learned one lesson, it is to communicate.” Now, she is more comfortable speaking to doctors, reaching out to other nurses and more.

As she reflected on her career so far, Ennis glowed with gratitude. “I couldn’t be more grateful for my unit director, Courtney Ratajczak, and clinician, Karen Virgilio,” said Ennis. “They are a big part of where I am today in my career.”

While Ratajczak and Virgilio have made a difference in Ennis’ career, they take any opportunity they can to praise Ennis too. “Gabby stands out in her short time at UPMC Hamot,” said Virgilio. “She provides comfort for our patients and their families, establishing a trusting, empathetic relationship, but she is more than a comforting presence. She is an advocate, and we are proud she chose 3 South at UPMC Hamot.”

“I am thankful for all my coworkers,” said Ennis. “Our floor has what we call a ‘joy box,’ where we put motivational notes to our coworkers. At the end of the month, our leaders put the notes in our mailbox as a kind gesture.” When she reads her notes, Ennis feels appreciated and welcome, looking forward to all the small pieces of paper and kind words to come as she continues to make a difference in the lives of her patients. **NW**

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Your endearing nature inspires the health and wellness of patients and their families. This week and always, we recognize the impact that you have on our entire organization.

Happy Nurses Week

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Advancing Pediatric Care

By Abbey Averitt, ED & ICU service lines clinical director, UPMC Hamot

Noelle Delycure has a bachelor's degree in nursing and works in UPMC Hamot's Emergency Department. She began her nursing career on the pediatric unit in August 2018, after graduating from Gannon University.

Delycure enjoyed caring for the most acutely ill children on the unit; the challenge of being able to quickly and critically think and to make a difference in some of the most fragile patients' lives gave her a sense of fulfillment. In September 2020, she transferred to the emergency department (ED) to experience new challenges and learn new skills.

"In the ED you see and learn so many things, and I love that about it; it's never

'just another day' as every day is totally different and unexpected," said Delycure. "I feel like the ED opens the doors to so many opportunities for growth as a nurse."

Delycure takes pride in developing others individually, as a team and at the system level. She serves as a preceptor for nursing students and new graduate nurses just beginning their nursing careers. She facilitates their development as they work toward independently being able to provide safe, efficient and compassionate care. She contributes to nursing retention and satisfaction as the chair for the ED's Practice Environment and Employee Recognition Council that strives to provide meaningful appreciation of staff.

In early 2021, Hamot began to work closely with UPMC Children's Hospital in Pittsburgh to expand pediatric services right here in Erie County through an ED affiliation. Pairing her previous pediatric experience with her current emergency nurse position, Delycure enthusiastically took on the role of pediatric nurse champion to be a part of the team to steer initiatives such as care protocols to align and expedite care and acquiring necessary pediatric specific supplies. Recently, she further stepped up as the Pediatric Emergency Care Coordinator, serving as UPMC Hamot's nursing lead as we continue to provide the best pediatric care in the region.

Delycure takes pride in increasing the emergency department team's knowledge and skills related to pediatric care. Together with Dr. Kristen Juhasz, she develops and leads pediatric medical simulations where the multidisciplinary team provides care for an interactive life-like mannequin, enhancing their critical thinking and teamwork in a risk-free environment so that the team remains ready to provide care to any pediatric patient who presents to the ED. "What I enjoy most about working in UPMC Hamot's ED is working with and as a team," said Delycure. "Dr. Juhasz and I are currently working with UPMC's corporate quality department on a pediatric readiness quality improvement collaborative with the goal of providing enhanced pediatric education to staff and resources for the care of pediatric patients."

Delycure's most recent accomplishment was successfully obtaining her Pediatric Emergency Nurse certification, demonstrating her expertise, specialized knowledge and skills in the care of pediatric patients. Having a certification has given Delycure the opportunity to promote to the next step in UPMC's robust career ladder as an expert nurse. She continues to set goals to challenge and validate her nursing skills. Her talents and drive are transforming care at UPMC Hamot. **NW**



Noelle Delycure

“Quality is not an act. It is a habit.” ~ Aristotle

By Shannon Wienczkowski and Tina Wagner, quality nurse coordinators, UPMC Hamot

What does it mean to be a quality nurse coordinator? To us, it means caring for people, for the community and for each other. Sometimes, nursing is described as a calling, but it is also a passion. We, as nurses, have core values of human dignity, integrity, autonomy, altruism and social justice, aligned with the words of the Florence Nightingale Pledge that we took when we graduated nursing school.

We started our nursing careers naïvely, wanting to take care of people and make a difference. Soon, we learned that being a nurse is difficult, with ups, downs, happiness and sadness. Being a quality nurse coordinator means using our experience and our passion to support evidence-based best practices. We work with the UPMC system to create better processes and workflows that lead to better outcomes.

Meet Shannon Wienczkowski, quality nurse coordinator: the importance of change.

From before I can remember, I never wanted to be anything else. My sister was a nurse, so as I observed her as a young girl, I knew I would become a nurse one day too. In 1991, I started as a nurse, working in both inpatient and outpatient settings since. I have seen and participated in many changes, piloting four different Electronic Medical Record (EMR) systems.

As I grew in my career, I learned a lot of lessons. By trying to make improvements, we identified more fragmented processes and gaps in care important to fill for our patients to be healthy. These improvements included ways to identify problems early, like being up-to-date with preventative health care measures.

I saw that changes needed to happen to lead to better quality initiatives. We needed to identify how to communicate the importance of early and frequent screenings for chronic illnesses. To me, being a quality nurse means helping people to the greatest extent, as the quality of our care impacts many patients.

Meet Tina Wagner, quality nurse coordinator: understanding the ‘why.’

I always wanted to help people, but I did not know what I wanted to do until I joined a group at my high school that focused on exploring health care careers. In that group, I realized I wanted to be a nurse. I started my career as a nurse in 1993, working in a variety of settings: inpatient, outpatient, procedures and more.

I gravitated toward initiatives that would make our processes better. I wanted to know the ‘why’ behind what is done, to understand what we do so I could trouble shoot and fix issues. I wanted to help my patients and my coworkers understand the foundation of our work, enjoying the challenge of learning how equipment worked and communicating what

I learned to others.

Our Patients: the number one priority.

When we found the quality team at UPMC, we found our people, working and collaborating with coworkers that have a passion for meaningful change. We focus on advocating for patients, working with providers, insurance companies and more to ensure they get the best care.

Our number one priority is our patients. We analyze data, brainstorm creative solutions and decrease gaps in care while controlling cost. We challenge each other, leveraging all our resources to improve the health of our patients and communities. **NW**



Tina Wagner left and Shannon Wienczkowski

Fulfilling my dreams: From Shaving Cream to the Operating Room

By Nicole Lingo, clinician fellow,
surgical scheduling & operations, UPMC Hamot

My first memory of UPMC Hamot is in their pediatric unit. I was in the playroom, an IV in my arm, playing with a can of shaving cream. I squished the shaving cream through my fingers, making a mess. I played, unafraid because I wasn't alone; I had a candy striper, an older, cooler teenager who volunteered in the hospital with me as my own personal chaperone. In that moment, I knew I wanted to work in health care one day like her.

When I grew older, I became a candy striper at Saint Vincent, enjoying my work

at the front desk and delivering flowers to patients, alongside a friend who went on to become a nurse just like me. Once I decided I wanted to work in medicine, I enrolled in the surgical technologist program at the Great Lakes Institute of Technology. I loved learning about anatomy, physiology, surgical instruments and more.

Soon, I applied to UPMC Hamot. I still remember how excited I was when I got the phone call that I was hired. Working as a surgical technologist in the operating room for eight years, I learned to scrub for all specialties, from general surgery to cardiovascular. I wanted to do more, starting nursing school at Penn State Behrend in 2010. Going to school full-time as an adult learner while I worked full-time was challenging, but I was so grateful UPMC Hamot could accommodate my work schedule to fit my new normal: being a college student. In 2012 I graduated, transitioning to my role as a staff nurse. The operating room was like a home to me, and I knew I didn't want to be anywhere else.

After several years, I was itching to do more when an opportunity to go on a mission trip came. Headed by Dr. Jeffrey Nechleba, I was lucky to be on the first UPMC Hamot orthopaedic mission trip to Valladolid,

Mexico in 2017. It was a dream come true to provide care to those in need where the love and energy was palpable. I learned to adapt, communicating with other nurses who did not speak the same language as me, observing how the villagers lived and more.

As my career evolved, I became the team lead for Tri-State Neurosurgery, ensuring smooth cases and positive patient outcomes. During this time, I decided it was time to fulfill another dream of mine: to become a pediatric nurse. I worked at another hospital for four years, treating every child as our own just like I was treated at UPMC Hamot in the pediatric unit. We sang to children while they were scared, put dressings on their stuffed animals' arms to show them it would be okay, and carried them into their surgical suites in our arms.

Now, as a clinician fellow at UPMC Hamot, I reflect on a fulfilling nursing career. Every day, I continue to learn about what it means to be a leader from my clinician colleagues. While my memories of UPMC Hamot have evolved since the day I decided I wanted to work in health care, hands covered in shaving cream, I am looking forward to what the next twenty-plus years will hold. **NW**



Nicole Lingo



A Nurse Who Keeps Building

By Karen Beardsley, UPMC

While Sarah Johnson was busy building her nursing career, she also managed the local Build a Bear store. While completing her undergraduate degree in biology, Johnson worked at the retail store and continued to do so as she entered nursing school. In addition, she was a patient care technician (PCT) at UPMC Hamot.

Her ambition has led her to her current position in UPMC Hamot's Medical Intensive Care Unit (MICU), an environment that she calls "fast-paced and challenging," like what she had done juggling two jobs and nursing school.

Six years ago, Johnson began working in the MICU as a PCT to gain experience while attending nursing school at Gannon University. She adeptly balanced the

demanding nursing school curriculum while working in the MICU.

"Sarah's work ethic was evident from the start," said Mike Olszewski, MICU director. "She always has had a can-do attitude and friendly smile for everyone. When she graduated from nursing school in 2019, we were fortunate that she joined the MICU as a full-time staff nurse."

But Johnson didn't stop there. She's been promoted to a senior clinician, graduated with a master's in nursing in 2023 and, for the past two years, she's served as an adjunct professor at her alma mater, the Villa Maria School of Nursing at Gannon University.

"I love teaching the students and watch

things click in their brains," said Johnson. "And I love working in the MICU where each day when I arrive, I'm not sure what I'll be doing."

Most of all, she likes to work at the bedside because of the teamwork. "There's never been a moment I've felt alone, including during the pandemic," she said. "We have a very experienced team with more than 1,000 years of experience among all of us in the MICU."

Johnson loves both the clinical and teaching environments. "Sarah is a natural at teaching others and her talent is well-known throughout UPMC Hamot," said Olszewski. "Her drive is an asset to the MICU and UPMC Hamot. The MICU stands behind Sarah and everything she does; we are proud to have her as one of our leaders."

Additionally, Johnson is the chair of the hospital-wide evidence-based practice, education and professional development council. She also teaches the new ICU nurses the Essentials of Critical Care and the Certification for Critical Care Nurse (CCRN) for the senior nurses. Since inception of the class, there is a 100% pass rate, according to Olszewski.

Johnson has genuinely built a career of which she can be proud, both as a nurse and an educator. **NW**



Sarah Johnson with Gannon University nursing student Brooke O'Donoghue

How to Save a Life

By Amanda Rekitt, nursing instructor,
UPMC Jameson School of Nursing at UPMC Hamot

Saving lives and nursing are often synonymous, but it isn't always evident how this occurs. In recent years, nurses have been referred to as superheroes; however, their bravery, resilience and investment in health care may not be fully evident to the public.



Margaret Henderson was presented with the Daisy Award, an international recognition program that honors and celebrates the skillful, compassionate care nurses provide every day.

So how do nurses save lives? Several attributes and skills applied by nurses daily answer that question. Highlighting those characteristics is senior faculty, Margaret Henderson RN, at the UPMC Jameson School of Nursing at UPMC Hamot.

Henderson began her career in health care as a research assistant at the University of Pittsburgh and completed her nursing studies at UPMC Mercy. She currently works in the Trauma/Neuro Intensive Care Unit (ICU) at UPMC Hamot and is recognized for her expertise, patience and passion for education throughout the hospital and school of nursing. Her innovative thinking and excitement for education allow for a positive and robust learning environment.

How did Henderson save a life? She took her knowledge, skills and attitudes and applied them to a purpose, improving patient care and outcomes. She is actively involved in the National Sepsis Campaign whose goal is preventing deaths from overwhelming infection by recognizing changes in hospitalized patients' health. This includes monitoring vital signs (heart rate, blood pressure, temperature, oxygen levels, etc.) and patient alertness amongst others. The significance of noticing changes in patient status equates to decreased mortality. Henderson took this knowledge, her years of experience and expert nursing skills and applied it to the hospital and clinical environments by educating health care associates (students and nurses) about the principles of sepsis.

Additionally, several students at the school of nursing were enlisted in a project to aid in conducting research regarding this education. Under Henderson's watchful eye, they developed their nursing practice based on evidence from globally conducted research to ensure patients received the best possible care. This included understanding how to monitor, respond, treat and advocate for patients suffering from sepsis and listening to anecdotes from sepsis survivors via podcasts. Her multimedia approach made the information current and relatable to the students.

As a result of Henderson's investment in sepsis education, a student working as a patient care technician at UPMC Hamot recognized a patient experiencing the beginning stages of sepsis and felt empowered to advocate for further life-saving care. Nurses flawlessly execute extraordinary work daily through their knowledge, skills and attitudes--their "yes" to nursing saves lives.

Henderson exemplifies those principles and invests in growing future generations. That is one way to save a life! **NW**



Chris Cain, CRNP:

A Beacon of Compassion and Dedication in Erie's Healthcare Landscape

Written by
DaWayne Cleckley for Community Health Net



Over the last six years, Chris Cain has distinguished himself through unparalleled empathy and dedication to health service as a Certified Registered Nurse Practitioner (CRNP) at Community Health Net (CHN). His entry into healthcare, spurred by early experiences based on patient feedback and the difference he could make in their lives as a nurse's aide as an 18-year-old, evolved into a genuine mission to make a meaningful difference in the lives of others.

Choosing CHN was a deliberate decision for Chris, motivated by a commitment to confront and learn from the multitude of challenges within underserved and underinsured communities. His approach to healthcare transcends the traditional, guided by a philosophy of service over outcomes and the importance of presence and effort over the anticipation of specific results. "You show up. And do the best that you possibly can. What comes of it simply is," Cain muses, emphasizing a 'what you put into it, you get out of it' approach.

This ethos extends beyond professional boundaries, influencing Cain's personal growth and community involvement, notably his participation in the Master Gardeners program, which addresses food scarcity and promotes sustainable gardening practices that directly affect Erie's food deserts. His understanding of community health is deeply nuanced, informed by a genuine connection to Erie and encounters with patients, including migrant farmworkers, immigrants, and refugees, which have provided him with a personal understanding of individual challenges faced by the residents and the indispensable value of understanding and compassion in healthcare. His dedication is rooted in a belief in the transformative potential of primary care through methods that tackle social determinants of health and promote a culture of activity and well-being. "Trying to pull people into the primary care model in a way that actually fits into their life...to circumvent barriers," as Chris put it, is important to him.

One of his most profound realizations during his tenure at CHN is the impact of being present for his patients and showing empathy, a hallmark of culturally competent care. Cain recalls, "Just by listening, patients felt as if I was doing things [for them] at a greater level." The impact of his style of health care was best expressed by something that touched him and underscored the deep connections and trust he has fostered: the trust placed in him by the community, particularly when family members of patients are recommended to him. "Once I realized the impact of listening to them, focusing on the simple acts [of kindness] meant so much more to me," he acknowledges, emphasizing the significance of the relationship between healthcare providers and patients.

As he looks forward, Chris Cain envisions an Erie community where comprehensive and empathetic healthcare is accessible to all, regardless of their background or circumstances. As an example, he shares a compelling story of healthcare challenges faced by Erie's residents, like that of a migrant farm worker from Mexico who hadn't received treatment until he met Cain, illustrating the complexities of healthcare accessibility and the importance of compassion, respect, and dignity to all.

Chris Cain, CRNP, is a true healthcare hero in Erie. His work and philosophy exemplify the highest ideals of commitment to health service and provider/patient relationships that improve the lives of people and contribute to the health and vitality of the Erie community.

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May 6-12, 2024 | Nurses Week | 13

Men in Nursing

By Jean Lindenberger, MSN, RN CCRN
Nurse Manager of
AHN Saint Vincent
Intensive Care Unit

Men in nursing are no longer an exception. Ten percent of the nursing workforce in the country consists of men.

In the ICU at Saint Vincent, men make up 25 percent of the nursing staff.

They chose a nursing career for multiple reasons, as evidenced by the stories of male nurses on the ICU unit.

AHN Saint Vincent ICU nurse, Matt Weaver's mom was a nurse who encouraged him to pursue nursing.

Our nurse, Hunter Sage, has multiple family members who are nurses.

Dylan Marsh pursued nursing because he saw it as a respectable job with lots of opportunities.

Nick Sobina was active in EMS at an early age, completed the Combat Life Saver training in the army, and then pursued a nursing degree at Mercyhurst.

Ilya Kharkovoskiy, Brandon Haylett and Brett Boyer just wanted to help others.

Terry Darcangelo wanted to make a difference in people's lives, rather just making money for a corporation.

These men chose nursing for the challenge and the rewards.

They are intelligent, caring individuals. They provide complex care to critically ill patients, identifying and addressing their physical and emotional needs. They provide comfort and information to families, helping them deal with stressful situations. They collaborate and support teamwork on the unit, ensuring quality care for all the patients. The connections that they have with their patients and families truly make a difference.

We are thankful that they chose nursing! **NW**

The Importance of Bedside Nurse Leadership

By Patricia Donnelly, MBA-HA, BSN, RN, CCRN
Magnet Program Director, AHN Saint Vincent

A typical definition for a nurse leader is that they can influence.

Florence Nightingale readily comes to mind for her ability to inspire others and create forces for change.

A history of the nursing profession reveals countless nurses who have significantly contributed to patient care. These individuals were flexible, had a "can-do" attitude, saw the big picture, identified needed change and motivated others to follow. These characteristics can also describe a nurse leading at the bedside.

Bedside nurses have significant influence but often don't see themselves as leaders. Yet, they directly influence nosocomial infections, falls, pressure ulcer development, pain management, quality improvement and safety. They also influence the length of stay, complications, mortality, patient satisfaction and the resumption of the activities of daily living.

By acting as leaders, bedside nurses influence their patients and the organization's outcomes.

The goal at AHN Saint Vincent is to help bedside nurses understand that they are leaders and to focus their personal development on enhancing or acquiring leadership skills.

Gaining good skills doesn't mean leaving the bedside.

Every leader needs to understand their leadership characteristics and skills. Mentoring is a critical component in professional development. Being willing to ask the mentor for direction is crucial.

Nurses here at AHN Saint Vincent show their leadership skills by bringing evidence-based ideas to their units through networking to establish interprofessional relationships and building partnerships to strengthen the health care process.

Challenging others' negative behaviors, such as bullying, chronic tardiness and negative attitudes, helps to hold peers accountable.

When nurses find a problem, they provide a solution, looking for answers in multiple places, such as literature, other units and other hospitals.



AHN Saint Vincent ICU staff members, including front row (l-r): Nick Sobina, Hunter Sage and back row (l-r): Matt Weaver, Brett Boyer, Brandon Haylett, far right Terry Darcangelo

Changes in Nursing to Promote Safety and Improve Outcomes

By Chairmaine Rohan,
MSN, RN, CNOR

Many of our nurses take on the organization of task forces to help improve quality improvement projects. This rewarding strategy demonstrates to others that a work process can be modified and care delivery improved. Identifying a problem, discussing it with your supervisor, engaging those involved, and reshaping the work environment to improve outcomes are excellent ways to enhance patient care. Nurses lead in every direction, share the patient's goal, seek input on implementation and evaluate the plan. The results are more effective performance.

Nurses should not sell themselves short. They are leaders at the bedside, drivers of patient outcomes and necessary resources for patients, families and organizations.

AHN Saint Vincent nurses capitalize on their strengths and gain control over their career journey.

Leadership attributes are essential no matter where your career path takes you. Here at AHN Saint Vincent, our nurses are leaders! **NW**



ACNO Grove City / Saint Vincent Hospital and Director, Cardiac Services Saint Vincent Hospital

When I graduated from Villa Maria College in 1986, there was no way I could have ever imagined the changes that would be experienced over the years.

Back then, medication orders (often illegible) were written by physicians, transcribed by a unit secretary and verified by the nurse. The thought never occurred that an error could happen anywhere in that process that could compromise the safety of the patient.

Medications were documented as given or not given. A piece of card stock with the medication, dose, route and time was written out. When a medication was administered, initials were placed under the appropriate time. Not much in the way of safety checks existed, other than the nurses' skills and knowledge.

Were these examples the only things that were different than today? Definitely not!

Documentation of a nurse's shift was based on task completion and telling the story of the care provided to the patient. The first step in computerized charting arrived about 1987. It was called medical information system or MIS.

Medication order entry was the first item to be computerized. There was no writing to decipher at that point, but nursing knowledge was still required to consider things such as side effects, interactions and tolerances. We were taking steps in the right direction. As a matter of fact, we were ahead of the curve as patient safety didn't really move full steam until the late 90s. Although this was one of the first changes of many to follow -- like electronic medical records, physician order entry and hard stops in documentation.

What we realized as nurses was that not everything in nursing as a science needed to change.

The basic tasks of nursing didn't change. Why? Because they didn't need to.

As nurses, there was an enormous sense of pride when your patients were clean and safe at the end of a shift. We didn't worry about safe staffing ratios because we assigned patients according to acuity.

When we were short-staffed and were unable to find coverage, we used critical thinking to make assignments that were fair and safe.

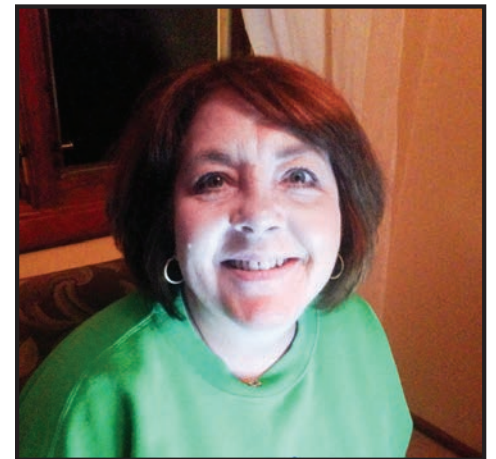
We were independent thinkers who chose the profession or, perhaps, were the chosen.

The sense of pride instilled in a completed shift often kept us full until the next shift.

These nurses are the heroes who adapt to change but keep patient safety consistently in the center. Those of us who had to learn tasks we never thought we would did learn to improve the safety of care provided.

While changes seen over a career can seem enormous, the basic principles always remain the same.

Good nurses provide good care. **NW**



Chairmaine Rohan

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Nursing student's appreciation for hard work shaped by her childhood as a refugee of war

Story and photos contributed by Mercyhurst University

In 2000, Amira Sabic fled war-torn Bosnia with her parents and siblings. As the baby of the family, she was only 6 at the time and accustomed to being taken care of by her five sisters and one brother.

Today, that experience is a mere memory, but certainly not the traits that those early years engendered in her.

"Being a refugee has made me appreciate life more," Amira said. "I think coming from a background where our upbringing was very tough and resources were limited, has made me appreciate the process of working hard and maintaining my success."

Like others in her family, Amira grew up inspired by the idea of nurturing and healing others. Eventually, she followed in the footsteps of her older sisters, Nermina, Alma, and Edina, all of whom graduated from the nursing program at Mercyhurst University and are currently working in the field. Amira looks forward to



Amira Sabic

graduating in May and accepting a job at Erie's Saint Vincent Hospital. Her long-term goal is to join Alma and Edina as traveling nurses.

"We are all very passionate and love to help people," Amira said of her sisters. "We got into this field for two reasons: Our mother has some health issues, and we wanted to be knowledgeable and better able to help her and, well, there's something very rewarding about helping people."

From her childhood as a refugee of war to growing up in a family challenged by starting over in a foreign country, Amira has learned to be understanding of all people and their circumstances.

"Being a Muslim myself, I have had instances where my religion has been a target," she said. "I think through that experience I have learned not to be judgmental of anyone's circumstances or where they come from. I'm determined and selfless because of my upbringing. Being a child of seven has taught me to be kind, to be patient and to always be present."

"When I think of a nurse, I think of a person who is all those things for their patient." **NW**



Mercyhurst student Amira Sabic is flanked by her sisters, Alma, at left, and Edina. All three earned their nursing education at Mercyhurst University as did their oldest sister, Nermina.

Nursing: The Heart of Health Care

By Sallie Piazza,
BSN, MS, CNML, CNOR
Chief Nursing Officer,
AHN Saint Vincent



Nursing is the cornerstone of health care.

At Saint Vincent Hospital, nurses embody compassion, expertise and resilience.

Our value extends far beyond the confines of the hospital and clinics. We touch the lives of individuals, families and our community.

At its core, nursing is about caring for others in their most vulnerable moments, providing comfort, support and healing.

Nurses are holistic in their approach to patient and family care. We tend to physical ailments but also address emotional, psychological and spiritual needs. We help to build trust with our patients and advocate for their wellbeing, serving as their voice in our very complex health care system.

Nursing is instrumental in promoting health and preventing illness. Nurses educate patients about healthy lifestyle choices, disease prevention and management strategies. We empower our patients to take control of their health outcomes.

Nursing fosters innovation and advancement in health care. We are at the forefront of implementing new technologies and developing best practices to improve patient outcomes and enhance the quality of care.

We are invaluable to society. We represent not just a profession, but a true calling.

Nursing is a noble endeavor that helps to shape the future of health care and touches countless lives with compassion and healing.

Nurses deserve to be proud of what they do and know that they change lives every day.

Please, when you see a nurse, make sure you thank them for all the care they give their patients.

Nurses make this world a better place. Happy Nurses Week. **NW**

Nursing as a Second Career

By Matthew Holmes, BSN, RN-BC

AHN Saint Vincent Hospital Nurse Manager, 8 North

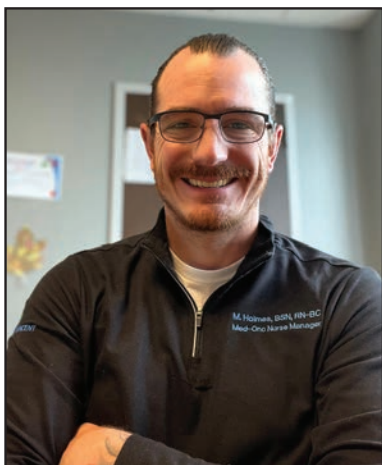
Nursing is my second career, and it has allowed me to bring a diverse skill set, experiences and a different perspective to the field.

The journey for most, in the field of nursing, is one of service. We look to ensure that the patients we care for get the best care possible.

I have always felt that nurses were a great resource to the physicians we work alongside in order to accomplish the goal of excellent care delivery. My first experience working at multiple facilities in Erie has only grown to solidify that belief.

Nurses truly do care for the patients, and we care about their outcomes. The experience that patients have within a hospital is going to be primarily based on their experience with nursing since nurses will be the staff spending the most time with them throughout their hospital stay.

I am especially proud of the nursing staff I work alongside with every day on 8 North at AHN Saint Vincent Hospital and the quality of care we can provide to our patients. **NW**



Matthew Holmes, BSN, RN-BC

A Journey of Resilience and Compassion

Article written By Almedina Kalabic, LPN

I came to the United States of America in 1993 from Bosnia. Before becoming a licensed practical nurse, I worked as a quality inspector. However, I knew this was not a career for me. From an early age, I was drawn to making a positive difference in people's lives during vulnerable moments. I have always dreamed of becoming a nurse.

Nursing school was difficult because English was not my primary language. But despite the challenges, I did not give up because I knew nursing was my calling. I graduated from Mercyhurst, Northeast, with my Licensed Practical Nurse certificate in 2009.

Nursing, to me, represents more than just a profession; it embodies a calling to serve and advocate for the well-being of others, especially those who may be unable to care for themselves fully. The nursing home environment, in particular, holds a special place in my heart because it is where individuals often spend their final years, seeking comfort, companionship and dignity in their twilight days.

Almost 15 years ago, I began my first job as a nurse at Sarah Reed Senior Living, and I have been there ever since. As a nurse in this setting, I am granted the privilege of being a source of solace, companionship and expert care for residents struggling with physical ailments, cognitive decline or simply the challenges of aging. The bonds I have forged with the residents and my coworkers at Sara Reed Senior Living hold a special place in my heart.



Almedina Kalabic LPN

Through my role as a nurse, I strive to embody the values of empathy, integrity and professionalism, recognizing that each resident deserves to be treated with the utmost respect and dignity. In essence, my nursing journey has brought me a deep sense of fulfillment, and I am grateful for the personal connections I have made throughout the years. Nursing is an amazing profession, and I am proud to call myself a nurse. **NW**

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Where Everybody Knows Your Name – The Benefits of Nursing at a Smaller Hospital

Submitted by Melissa J. Dixon

Pursuing excellence and setting high standards drives Shawna Hedderick, R.N., BSN, to conquer her career. This active mother of five, wife and recent DAISY Award nominee, appreciates the contributions she gets to make and the consistent support she receives at LECOM Health Corry Memorial Hospital, a critical-access hospital in rural Corry, Pa.



Shawna Hedderick and daughter Hannah

Submitted by Melissa J. Dixon, director of communications and marketing for LECOM Health Corry Memorial Hospital, Millcreek Community Hospital and Medical Associates of Erie and director of internal communications for LECOM and LECOM Health Affiliates.

Earning an associate degree in respiratory therapy, Bachelor of Science in business management focusing on the supply chain and Associate in Arts in accounting, Hedderick started out in respiratory therapy at Presque Isle Nursing and Rehabilitation (now LECOM Health Nursing and Rehabilitation Center) and then transferred to Corry Memorial Hospital in 2019.

Three degrees would seem adequate for a driven individual, but Hedderick has big goals and an insatiable appetite for learning. And, most importantly, a desire to inspire her newest coworker.

When her daughter Hannah graduated high school, Hedderick recommended she try nursing as a career path. In a surprising twist, Shawna's coworker encouraged Shawna to do the same, recommending the accelerated Edinboro bridge program where she could earn a Bachelor of Science in Nursing in 15 months.

Corry Memorial Hospital allowed Hedderick to fulfill full-time hours every Friday, Saturday and Sunday so she could attend school Monday through Thursday. Three semesters later, Hedderick had completed her fourth degree and started working as a nurse in the ED. Her daughter later graduated from nursing school and recently joined Shawna as an R.N. at Corry Memorial Hospital Emergency Department.

"I don't train her, but sharing little tips with her is an experience like no other," Hedderick said. "It's fun when she discovers my methods work! We are such a small community so it's nice to see my daughter accelerate and grow — and to grow with her is amazing."

Living in Union City, which is only a few miles from Corry, her whole life, Hedderick enjoys helping her community and knowing the patients who come into the hospital.

"I love making a difference in someone else's life and helping family members of patients handle situations," she said. "In the two years I've worked in the ED, every day has been different, and I love it."

Her 10 years of experience in respiratory therapy didn't necessarily boost her confidence in nursing initially, but it did empower her to help strengthen the skills of her team.

"I've had an opportunity to help educate our other ED nurses on how to use ventilators, which makes us better nurses overall."

Education also helps to boost her confidence as a nurse, and it is encouraged at Corry Memorial Hospital, with certification costs being covered.

"I like reading new articles on theories getting proved or disproved, what's recommended or not. If a patient asks a question, you should follow up with an answer and learn about it, not only for that patient but for yourself."

Hedderick offers this insight to anyone considering becoming a nurse:

Make a difference. With so many nursing fields, you can get a nursing job you love. Trial and error what department works for you.

There is job security in nursing.

"You have to hold your head high and watch out for your partner. There is always a nurse who is overloaded, and you have to be there to support each other. I love that about our hospital. I see what my coworkers need, and they see what I need. We help each other in ways we couldn't at big hospitals. They know my name and my stressors." **NW**

How to Win: Watch Them Walk

Submitted by Melissa J. Dixon

Sometimes life hits us with unexpected changes. Few people have the honor of helping facilitate a patient's return to home after an acute debilitating illness. This privilege has fueled the 20-plus-year nursing career of Kevin Lis, RN.

"When we get rehabilitation patients who can't move or can't walk, I enjoy caring for them, knowing the medical terminology, developing a personalized plan for them and initiating it, and then watching them walk out the door fully cured," Lis said.

While Lis was working as a paramedic with Millcreek Paramedic Service, his neighbor encouraged him to go back to school to become a registered nurse because he already had a degree and could finish the program within two years. Following that advice led Lis to become a graduate nurse at Millcreek Community Hospital in 2002, then a nurse aide, a nursing supervisor, the inpatient rehabilitation unit leader and now the assistant director of nursing.

A typical day does not exist for Lis because he can work — and has worked — in every unit of the hospital. Reviewing reports, leading meetings, completing paperwork, taking patients when needed, overseeing 18 staff members in the IRU as well as all the hospital nurses can be daunting, but none of that supplants the joy he finds in his meaningful work.

Stress can certainly accompany the pressures of nursing, but Lis implements strategies to help his staff stay informed and motivated. He touches base and meets face to face with them as often as possible. He asks how they're feeling. He jumps in to help with patient care as needed. He visits each floor and, when he steps in as nursing supervisor, he carries the phone and responds promptly to any code calls.

To alleviate burnout and schedule overtime hours when requested, Lis strives to spread shifts around. He also gives people vacation because "they need breaks," he said.

During peak COVID-19, Lis struggled to manage minimal staff with a maximum number of patients who were very sick.

"Going in, not knowing what to expect ... it was all new to us. Isolation precautions, ventilators, new medications, new techniques, we had to lie patients on their chest to increase ventilation. A lot of nurses were coming down with COVID themselves, and they were out for 10 days. The restrictions were very difficult."

Lis has always steeled himself in the knowledge that there is a light at the end of the tunnel — at least at home.

"I can talk to my wife in tough times," he said.

His wife, Amanda, is the social work manager at Millcreek Community Hospital and has also been in the role for over 20 years.

"I work very well with her, and she's a very good resource for me. We met on Unit 3 at the hospital. I was a nurse's aide and saw her across the hall, and I asked her out on a date, and that was that. Now our four kids always cheer me up with stories about their day at school and events. They have really great personalities."

Lis appreciates working at a smaller hospital (Millcreek Community Hospital employs a total of around 610 clinical and clerical staff) and having a supportive team.

"We can provide better patient care because no one is just a number here. And the IRU staff has been together for eight to 10 years. We're a very close-knit unit," he said.

The winning strategy for Lis is simple: Listen to people, prepare a plan and help put them on the path to wellness. [NW](#)

Submitted by Melissa J. Dixon, director of communications and marketing for LECOM Health Corry Memorial Hospital, Millcreek Community Hospital and Medical Associates of Erie and director of internal communications for LECOM and LECOM Health Affiliates.



Kevin Lis

Putting judgment-free care into practice at Adagio Health

By Adagio Health

Natalie Miller, vice president of clinical operations and integrated services at Adagio Health, is an experienced certified nurse practitioner who champions eliminating implicit and explicit bias in health spaces. At Adagio Health, nurse practitioners and medical staff attend trainings, have open minds and treat patients with well-rounded care.

“Addressing bias in healthcare should be a top-tier priority in any practice organization. Conducting screenings or care based on appearance, gender, equality, manner of dress or speech, for example, is so dangerous to the patient,” said Miller. “We may over or under screen or treat based on these conscious or subconscious thoughts, and our patients will suffer.”

“Having open and ongoing conversations with providers is crucial to challenging biases and putting into place as many universal measures as possible,” said Miller. For example, if all patients should be screened for STDs, then everyone should be screened – not just patients based on appearance or behavior. Miller said, “What does someone with syphilis look like? Ask yourself and answer it. You probably just demonstrated your own bias.”

At Adagio Health, Miller implements best practices for staff, which include making sure providers are knowledgeable of what both explicit and implicit bias is. When providers can identify bias and acknowledge their own behaviors, it fosters more efficient improvements in the healthcare space. Miller also describes taking the provider and patient out of the care equation for a more neutral perspective.

“The tattooed, mohawk young adult needs the same screenings as a well-dressed married woman. Marital status, hair and tattoos do not create an equation for screening and treatment modalities; however, many of us may presume things about their behaviors based on these factors,” said Miller. “That is bias in a nutshell.”

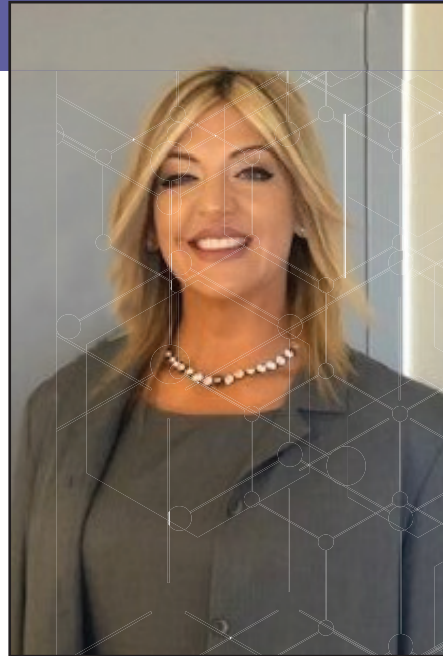
Additionally, Miller advises all providers to have hard stops in place. This means having roadblocks that cause providers to stop and offer the same screenings to everyone in a particular class.

There is also reverse bias, where providers will not conduct a recommended universal screening because the person appears clean, well-dressed, professional or married. Miller describes this concept as the biggest lie propagated in healthcare.

Miller recalls an experience Adagio Health providers had with a woman in her 50s who recently went on a cruise and felt embarrassed about her sexual behavior. “After the patient opened up, our provider reminded her that we are here to help and keep her safe, not render judgement. That we are her safe place to share and receive care,” said Miller.

After building a rapport with Adagio Health providers, the patient felt comfortable enough to receive the care she needed – judgement free.

Challenging biases in healthcare is an ongoing process, but Miller leaves providers with this to think about: “Work on yourself in the space in which you provide care. Do your due diligence. Take care of everyone.” **NW**



Natalie Miller

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