



NNY Health

A Watertown Daily Times and Malone Telegram publication

Daily updates: NNY360.com

May 2026

FREE

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Two Samaritan Medical Center nurses provide care to a child in the hospital's pediatric ward. National Nurses Week is in May. Photo courtesy of Samaritan Medical Center

PIPELINE FROM JEFFERSON COMMUNITY COLLEGE SUPPLIES MAJORITY OF NEW HIRES AS HOSPITAL REACHES 110 NURSES IN THREE YEARS

A partnership between Jefferson Community College and Samaritan Medical Center is helping stabilize the region's nursing workforce after pandemic-era shortages, with the hospital hiring 110 nurses over the past three years.

Hospital officials say the collaboration

has created a steady pipeline of new nurses, with most recent hires coming directly from Jefferson Community College's nursing program.

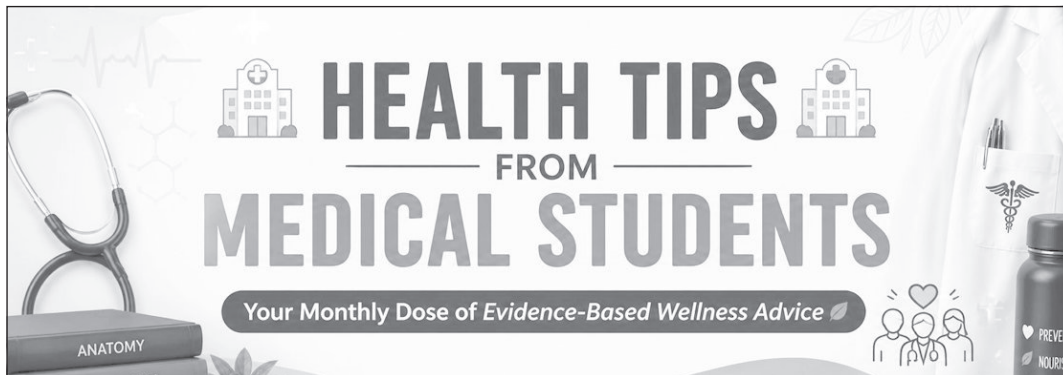
In May 2025, the institutions reported closer alignment between the college's curriculum and the hospital's patient care needs, a shift that has helped streamline hiring and workforce development.

The American Association of Colleges of

Nursing reports that nursing is the largest health care profession in the United States, with 4.7 million registered nurses nationwide. About 89% of licensed nurses are employed in their field.

Locally, that demand has translated into consistent hiring.

Leslie DiStefano, Samaritan's director of communications and public relations, said



Preventing suicide in gun owners without selling your firearms

Kellen Bertrand

SUNY Upstate Medical University

Gun ownership in the North Country is much higher than many regions in New York State due in part to our excellent hunting and sporting. Unfortunately, our suicide rates are also higher than many regions in the state. When my brother Alan took his own life during my third year of medical school, I became deeply involved in learning everything I could to help other families prevent the same tragedy. Alan, like many military veterans, valued his right to protect his property with his trusty sidearm, often kept on his kitchen counter or bedside table.

Traditional approaches to suicide prevention include screening and treatment with medication and therapy. These can be effective for people with recurring or persistent thoughts of suicide. But what about someone in a suicide crisis: a sudden and overwhelming urge to end one's life. Many of these crises subside within 10 minutes, but access to highly lethal means like firearms may not give someone the opportunity to change their mind. The majority of completed suicides are firearm related. In fact, most firearm fatalities are suicides. The lethality of firearms can turn a brash decision made in a suicidal crisis into a life-ending choice in an instant.

The safe storage of immediate means of suicide such as firearms can have life-saving effects. Firearm ownership triples the risk of suicide for everyone in the home, meaning



Kellen Bertrand

the gunowner is not the only person at risk. Additionally, suicide risk has been shown to be higher in those who store their firearm loaded and unlocked in a place like a bedside table. Three recommended safety steps add extra layers of protection and the opportunity for a second thought when in crisis:

1. Store a firearm unloaded and locked with cable/trigger locks, which are often found at local gun shops. Organizations like Project ChildSafe and Suicide Awareness Voices of Education (SAVE) offer free locks on their websites, and local Veterans Affairs offices also provide free gun locks.
2. Store cable-locked firearms in a locked safe or gunbox.
3. Store ammunition in a separate locked location.

Having a plan for safer storage and sharing that plan with family members or your trusted support system is also an important step in suicide prevention. Some life challenges can be predictive of suicidal thoughts or crisis, such as military and first-responder experience, changes in em-

ployment, relationship status, financial standing, worsening mood, and increased use of drugs or alcohol. When faced with these troubles, and especially if experiencing suicidal thoughts or crisis, an important step is temporary storage of firearms. Options for temporary storage may include, but are not limited to, local gun shops or ranges, local law enforcement, and trusted family, friends and neighbors that are able and willing to safely store firearms. My brother Alan sought and received help at a time of crisis. He voluntarily gave up his firearms to a friend and made strides toward a healthier lifestyle. Upon reclaiming his firearms, he continued with them unlocked and accessible until he found himself in crisis again.

Protecting ourselves and our loved ones from access to firearms in a moment of crisis protects families from spontaneous, hasty decisions that destroy lives. Asking someone about their gun storage should be no different than asking if they wear a seatbelt. Having a plan in place for firearm storage and communicating that plan with friends and family is like having an insurance policy. We can't be afraid to address these questions because there may not be another opportunity for that conversation.

If you or someone you know is experiencing suicidal thoughts or crisis, help is available 24/7 by dialing the suicide helpline, 988.

More than a patient: How orthopedic excellence keeps 10th Mountain climbing

By Warren W. Wright Jr.

Guthrie Army Health Clinic public affairs

FORT DRUM, New York – For the Soldiers of the 10th Mountain Division (LI), peak physical performance is a prerequisite for the mission. But the same grit required to navigate alpine terrain and high-tempo operations often comes at a steep physical cost.

When "Mountain Tough" meets the reality of musculoskeletal strain, the Orthopedic Services team at Guthrie Army Health Clinic steps in – not just to treat injuries, but to restore the combat power of the Army's most deployed division.

"We support the warfighter," said orthopedic physician Maj. Kyle J. Klahs, Guthrie AHC's orthopedic department chief, and acting deputy commander of clinical services. "We have so many musculoskeletal injuries, knees, ankles, hips, (and) shoulders, from the way that the 10th Mountain Division trains and fights. And so, we directly support that, either surgically or nonoperatively."

According to the Defense Centers for Public Health, more than 95 percent of military injuries are musculoskeletal injuries, most of which are caused by cumulative microtrauma, known as "overuse" injuries.

While a civilian physician may prioritize general mobility or comfort, the stakes at Fort Drum are measured in mission readiness. For Klahs, a lingering knee injury or a torn ligament is more than a personal setback; it is a deficit in the 10th Mountain Division's combat power. This reality compels his team to treat every musculoskeletal injury with the precision of sports medicine, viewing the Soldier not as a standard patient, but as a

tactical athlete whose performance is essential to the unit's success.

"I think military medicine is awesome, especially military ortho, because we see every Soldier as an elite athlete, their ability to perform at the top of their capabilities on the battlefield is paramount to us making sure they get the right treatment," Klahs said. "We do procedures that reinforce things. We do procedures that civilians simply do not have access to. The (military) is awesome, and they grant us that ability to really take care of Soldiers, the way that college and professional level athletes are treated."

The Fort Drum medical model is unique compared to similar Army installations. While other installations with combat divisions have the support of an on-post hospital, Guthrie AHC relies on the support and partnership of civilian healthcare facilities to fulfill its medical mission. The synergy between Fort Drum and the North Country is most visible within the Orthopedic Services team, where ongoing partnership agreements allow military surgeons to provide high-quality care right in the local community.

"We are extremely fortunate in the support we receive from our partners," Duque said. "We heavily rely on our North Country partners to provide us the space, skilled (operating room) personnel, and equipment to ensure our orthopedics team can provide the full spectrum of orthopedic care."

Klahs further explained that those relationships with North Country healthcare partners are incredibly vital to the success of the orthopedics mission.

"If we don't have the are-

See DRUM H6

PROFESSIONAL CONNECTION

is featured each Wednesday, Saturday as well as in NNY Business. This is found at your local Chamber of Commerce and in the third Thursday of each month's Watertown Daily Times.

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Rochester Regional Health welcomes new nurse practitioner

POTSDAM — Rochester Regional Health is pleased to welcome Leanne Benware, DNP, APRN, PMHNP-BC, to its Gouverneur Hospital Behavioral Health clinical team as a Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner.

Benware will provide

comprehensive mental health care, including psychiatric evaluation, diagnosis, medication management, and evidence-based therapeutic interventions tailored to each patient's individual needs.

As a board-certified psychiatric mental health nurse

practitioner, Benware specializes in the assessment, diagnosis, and treatment of mental health conditions across the lifespan. Her practice focuses on supporting emotional wellness and improving overall quality of life through individualized, patient-centered care.

"Mental health care should feel safe, collaborative, and empowering," Benware said. "My goal is to meet my patients where they are, and collaboratively develop care goals and work together to achieve these goals."

She provides treatment for a wide range of behavioral health concerns, including anxiety disorders, depression, mood disorders, trauma-related conditions, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), and other psychiatric conditions.

In addition to medication management and comprehensive evaluations, Benware incorporates evidence-based therapeutic approaches into her care.

"I strive to provide holistic, individualized, and comprehensive care to my patients," she said. "I am so excited to partner with my patients to support a meaningful and lasting change in their lives."

She is also a trained accelerated resolution therapist, utilizing this highly effective technique to help patients experiencing difficult-to-treat mental health disorders, particularly those related to trauma.

Benware recently completed her Doctor of Nursing Practice as a psychiatric mental health nurse practitioner at the University of Cincinnati. She also holds a Bachelor of Science in nursing from the University of Cincinnati, an Associate in applied science in nursing from Trident Technical College, and a Bachelor of Technology in health care management from the State University of New York at Canton. She is licensed as a registered nurse in both New York and South Carolina and is certified as an accelerated resolution therapist.



Leanne Benware

Prior to stepping into her new role, Benware served as a nursing supervisor with Rochester Regional Health, where she coordinated facility operations, supported clinical staff, and ensured the delivery of high-quality patient care. Her background also includes experience as a registered nurse and charge nurse in high-acuity settings, including a Level I Trauma Center Post-Anesthesia Care Unit (PACU) and a Neuro-Spine unit, as well as quality and compliance leadership in hospice care.

Benware's strong clinical foundation, leadership experience, and advanced psychiatric training position her to play a key role in expanding access to mental health services and supporting the well-being of patients and families throughout the community.

To learn more about our behavioral health services, visit:

<https://www.rochesterregional.org/services/behavioral-health>

To learn more about Leanne Benware, visit: <https://www.rochesterregional.org/providers/leanne-m-benware>

NURSES WEEK 2026

The Power of

NURSING

This Nurses Week, we honor the compassion, expertise, and dedication our nurses bring to our community. At the bedside or behind the scenes, you show up in moments that matter most, offering not just care, but comfort, reassurance, and strength. To our nurses, thank you for your kindness and the vital role you play in uplifting those we serve. We are grateful for the difference you make every day.

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North Country EMS Spring Fling Draws 120+ Providers



Debbie Singleton, REMSCO Chair, James “Jim” Deavers, recipient of the Richard Beebe Award for Educational Excellence, Mark Deavers, REMSCO Vice Chair, and Jonathan Cole, FDRHPO EMS Program Agency Director, stand for a photo at the 2026 EMS Spring Fling Conference awards dinner. Contributed.

WATERTOWN — The North Country REMSCO Spring Fling Conference, co-hosted by the Fort Drum Regional Health Planning Organization’s (FDRHPO) EMS Program Agency, celebrated a significant milestone on April 17-18, 2026, marking 25 years of enhancing emergency medical services education and collaboration across the North Country and New York State. The event took place at the Edgewood Resort & Conference Center in Alexandria Bay, attracting more than 120 EMS providers for comprehensive training and networking opportunities.

“For a quarter century, Spring Fling has served as a cornerstone event for EMS professionals at every level, offering accessible, relevant education while strengthening the regional EMS system,” said Jonathan Cole, director of FDRHPO’s EMS Program Agency. “This year’s conference continued that legacy with expanded learning tracks for both Basic Life Support (BLS) and Advanced Life Support (ALS) providers.”

Sessions at the conference addressed a variety of critical

topics, including neurology, toxicology, respiratory distress, endocrine emergencies, traumatic brain injury care, and the role of media and social media in rural emergency response.

The event also featured the presentation of Regional EMS Awards, recognizing individuals and organizations whose dedication has significantly improved patient care and the EMS workforce. Award recipients included:

ALS Provider of the Year: Patrick O’Connell

BLS Provider of the Year: Heather Lipczynski

Agency of the Year: Evans Mills Volunteer Ambulance

EMS Educator of Excellence: Robert Storm Cilley

Registered Nurse of Excellence: Dave Lyndaker

Physician of Excellence: Dr. Ryan Coates

EMS Clinical Partner of Excellence: Brittany Bickel, PA

Richard Beebe Award: James Deavers

Lifetime Achievement Award: Ronald Smith

Patrick O’Connell, honored as ALS Provider of the Year, was recognized for his clinical skills, leadership, and commitment to ongoing

education. Having started his EMS career as a driver in 2013, he rose through the ranks to become a paramedic, known for his compas-

sionate patient care and role as Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) Manager at Indian River Ambulance.

The Evans Mills Volunteer Ambulance Squad, named Agency of the Year, was recognized for its exceptional service in the Towns of LeRay and Pamela. The agency operated with both volunteer and paid staff and responded to a record 1,101 calls in 2025.

James “Jim” Deavers received the Richard Beebe Award for his decades of leadership in EMS education and mentorship. Beginning his career in 1980, he was a

key figure in establishing one of the first ALS training initiatives in the region and has continued to shape generations of EMS professionals.

The 25th anniversary of the Spring Fling Conference underscores the strength and resilience of the EMS community in Northern New York, serving as a vital platform for clinical advancement, professional recognition, and collaboration. For more information about the FDRHPO EMS Program Agency and this year’s award recipients, visit www.fdrhpo.org/news-publications.

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Family Practice physician Dr. Pisaniello to retire

LOWVILLE — After a successful 37-year career at Lewis County General Hospital, Dr. M. Lynn Pisaniello is retiring. She has served generations of patients, providing holistic primary care, including maternity care.

“Dr. Pisaniello has been a cornerstone of healthcare in Lewis County, positively affecting countless patients and families who trusted her for compassionate, individualized medical care,” said Gerald R. Cayer, chief executive officer. She played a vital role in reopening the maternity service at Lewis County General Hospital.

Dr. Pisaniello earned her undergraduate degree in Molecular Biology and Biochemistry from Northwestern University in 1982 and her M.D. from Mayo Medical School in 1986. She completed her Family Medicine Residency in Duluth, Minn., before moving to Lowville in 1989. She is board-certified in family medicine and a Fellow of the



Dr. M. Lynn Pisaniello, center, receives an achievement award and proclamation from Michael Young, Lewis County Healthcare Systemn Board of Managers president and Gerald Cayer, right, LCHS chief executive officer.

American Academy of Family Physicians.

Dr. Pisaniello has held many medical staff leadership positions, including Chief of Service for Family Medicine, past president of the medical staff, chair of Maternal-Child Health, and served as chair of numerous medical staff and hospital committees.

For years, Dr. Pisaniello served as a dedicated preceptor for the Upstate Medical University Rural Medical Education (RMED) Program, and in 2016, she earned the President’s Award for Outstanding Voluntary Faculty Service. The RMED program offers medical students valuable opportunities to work, learn, and engage directly with rural communities under the guidance of family physicians and other specialists. According to Upstate RMED officials, students have consistently praised their experience in Lowville, highlighting both the warm welcome and caring attitude of Dr. Lynn Pisaniello, as well as

the exceptional quality of education in her practice.

Dr. Pisaniello loves the Lewis County community.

“I raised my family here, and my patients have truly become an extension of it,” she said. “While I look forward to this next chapter, I will deeply miss the daily privilege of caring for you and the unique bonds we’ve shared. Thank you for trusting me with your lives and for making these decades the greatest honor of my career.”

Dr. Pisaniello’s last day at the facility is April 23, bringing to a close her distinguished tenure that began in 1989. Lewis County Health System is grateful for her decades of dedicated service. Dr. Pisaniello’s contributions — from delivering babies to providing skilled, compassionate care — have made a lasting and meaningful difference in the lives of patients, colleagues, and the entire Lewis County community.

Rochester Regional Health welcomes new hospitalist

POTSDAM — Rochester Regional Health’s St. Lawrence Region is pleased to welcome Manjinder Pannu, MD, as a hospitalist serving patients at Canton-Potsdam Hospital.

Pannu is an experienced internal medicine physician who specializes in hospital-based care. As a hospitalist, she will care for patients during their hospital stay, coordinating treatment plans, managing acute medical conditions, and working closely with nurses, specialists, and care teams to ensure high-quality, patient-centered care.

“I am thrilled to join the St. Lawrence Region team of Rochester Regional Health,” Pannu said. “Providing high-quality care to patients in a community so close to my roots in Canada is incredibly meaningful. I look forward to collaborating with colleagues to ensure every patient receives compassionate,



Dr. Manjinder Pannu

coordinated care.”

Pannu brings more than a decade of experience across numerous hospitals throughout the United States. In her previous roles, she provided daytime and overnight hospital coverage, responded to rapid response

and code situations, and managed complex inpatient cases in medical-surgical and critical care settings. She has also contributed to medical education as an adjunct clinical assistant professor with the Department of Clinical Medicine at Pacific Northwest University of Health Sciences.

She earned her Doctor of Medicine degree from Ross University School of Medicine and is board certified in internal medicine by the American Board of Internal Medicine.

Hospitalists at Rochester Regional Health St. Lawrence Region work closely with primary care providers and specialists to ensure patients receive coordinated, high-quality care from admission through discharge.

For more information about the Hospitalist program in the St. Lawrence Region, visit rochesterregional.org/services/hospitalists.

Drum

From H2

na to take care of Soldiers, Soldiers will not get taken care of,” he said. “The system would collapse without them.”

Operating alongside civilian providers in local facilities fosters a unique exchange of clinical knowledge and surgical expertise. While many military physicians are confined to the distinct environment of an on-post hospital, Fort Drum’s orthopedic team benefits from the collaboration with North Country specialists, sharing best practices that elevate the standard of care for both Soldiers and civilians alike.

“The relationships they establish by working alongside our civilian partners truly enable us to get the patient to the right provider easily and allow for sharing best practices,” Duque said. “This helps ensure that the

orthopedics providers, both military and civilian, are providing the highest standard of care for our Soldiers and Family members.”

It is important to note that while the warfighter may be the priority for Klahs and his team, Orthopedics Services also provides the same level of care and services to Fort Drum’s family members as well.

“The biggest thing that I want people to understand is that we have ortho here (on Fort Drum),” Klahs explained. “We don’t have a hospital, so there are a lot of patients who go to one of these outside emergency rooms or an urgent care, and they’re referred to the network, and they just don’t know that we have that here. And so, they get trapped up going far away and seeing other providers. But we have all that here. We have same-day walk-ins. We’re never going to turn away someone in terms of orthopedic injury.”

Samaritan home health agency tops state, national satisfaction scores

WATERTOWN — Samaritan Home Health exceeded state and national averages for patient satisfaction in 2025, according to survey data released this week.

The Jefferson County provider scored 90% in overall patient satisfaction, beating the state average of 86% and national average of 87%, according to data from Strategic Healthcare Programs.

The agency also outperformed benchmarks in specific categories. Its "Care of Patients" score reached 92%, compared to state and national averages of 89% and 90%. Its "Communications Between

Providers and Patients" score hit 90%, above state and national averages of 87% and 88%.

The results place Samaritan Home Health in the upper quartile among more than 3,300 home health providers nationwide, based on Home Health Care Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems surveys.

"Patient satisfaction is at the core of everything we do," said Mariah Sech, the agency's administrator and director of patient services. "Our team works hard to ensure each of our patients receives excellent care that is tailored to their

unique needs."

Samaritan provides in-home services including medication monitoring, wound care, IV therapy, diabetes education, chronic disease management and physical, occupational and speech therapies. The services allow patients to stay home while accessing round-the-clock nursing support.

The agency recorded 15,089 patient visits in 2025, averaging 42 visits daily.

More information is available at samaritanhealth.com/home-health.

Nurses

From H1

of communications and public relations, said the hospital hired 54 nurses in the past year alone.

"In 2025, we hired an unprecedented 54 graduate nurses and invested in their training and orientation, giving them the start they need to become long-term Samaritan caregivers," DiStefano said.

The hiring effort required additional short-term spending on traveling nurses so experienced staff could train new graduates. But hospital officials say the investment paid off.

Samaritan retained 91% of those new nurses and met its goal of hiring 110 graduate nurses over three years.

Not all new hires come from Jefferson Community College, but most do, according to John Green, the hospital's chief nursing officer.

"JCC is vital. They are our main feeder," Green said.

Students in the college's nursing program complete about 500 hours of clinical training at Samaritan, where they provide direct patient care, much of it at the bedside.

That experience gives them a head start once they are hired, Green said.

By the numbers

110
Nurses hired in three years

54
Nurses hired in past year

91%
Retention rate for new hires

"They are already familiar with our environment and have built relationships with staff," he said. "These nurses thrive. It has many benefits."

Jefferson Community College expects to graduate between 50 and 60 nursing students this year. Students will be formally pinned and graduate in May.

Pamela Dixon, the college's chief spokesperson, said the program emphasizes hands-on training and strong connections with local health systems.

"Jefferson continues to provide future nurses with state-of-the-art, hands-on training and connections to our local health care systems," Dixon said.

The college's two-year associate degree nursing program has consistently ranked among the top in the state. Student pass rates on the NCLEX-RN licensing exam have exceeded

95%.

JCC Director of Nursing Kady L. Hoistion said the partnership with Samaritan benefits both institutions.

"The partnership we have with Samaritan provides great value to our program," she said. "It's great to see nurses choose to work there after they graduate."

A nationwide nursing shortage has created a job market where most graduates quickly find employment. Hoistion said JCC's job placement rate for students actively seeking work is 100%.

"Any student seeking employment will have a job," she said.

For many graduates, Samaritan offers a chance to stay in the North Country, including those who grew up in the area or completed military service nearby.

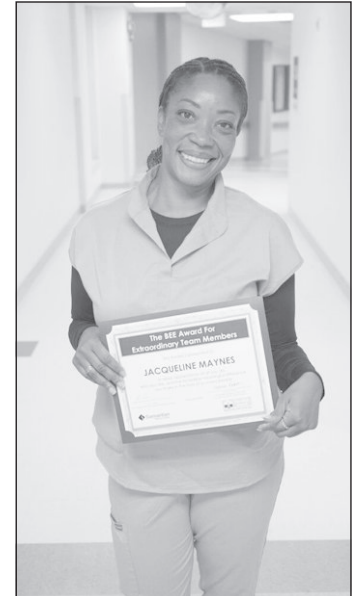
"Most of them are embedded here, have roots here, and want to be part of a thriving hospital," Green said. "They strengthen our mission. These nurses are local, and that translates into better patient care and a better patient experience."

DiStefano said Samaritan has also invested in long-term training tools, including the Vizient Learning Academy, a web-based education platform designed to support new nurses with consistent instruction and communication.

Samaritan Medical Center nurses honored as DAISY and BEE recipients



Nichole Covell, RN.
Contributed.



Jacqueline Maynes, NA.
Contributed.

WATERTOWN — Samaritan Medical Center announced its DAISY and BEE award recipients for February 2026.

The DAISY Award for Extraordinary Nurses honors exceptional nursing staff, while the BEE Award recognizes other outstanding team members who demonstrate excellence at the hospital and in outpatient clinics.

Nichole Covell, a registered nurse and lactation educator at Samaritan's Car-Freshner Center for Women and Children, received the February DAISY Award. Nominated by a patient, she was recognized for her professionalism and compassionate care. The patient said Covell's attentive approach provided comfort and reassurance.

The DAISY Award is an international award backed by the DAISY Foundation. Covell received a certifi-

cate of recognition, a DAISY Award pin and the "A Healer's Touch" sculpture — hand-carved by artists of the Shona Tribe in Zimbabwe. A larger version of the sculpture has been installed in Samaritan's Healing Gardens to honor all current and future DAISY and BEE award winners, funded by the Samaritan Auxiliary.

Jacqueline Maynes, a nursing assistant at Samaritan's Progressive Care Unit, received the February BEE Award. Maynes was nominated by a patient who highlighted her personality and ability to make the patient feel comforted.

Maynes received a certificate, a BEE Award pin and a gift bag.

The awards are presented year-round. Patients, families and colleagues can submit nominations at samaritanhealth.com/daisy-bee.



Thank you, Nurses.

For 145 years, Samaritan nurses have been the heart of compassionate care in the North Country—guiding, comforting, and leading through every moment of our shared history.

Across generations, they've cared for the community, embraced innovation, and shaped the future of healthcare in our region. Through changing times, advancing technology and unexpected challenges, Samaritan's nurses have been community leaders in care and patient advocacy, making critical, sometimes life-saving decisions, gaining life-long human connections that matter.

Samaritan nurses.
A legacy of care since 1881—and a future built on it.

Celebrate National Nurses Week
Wednesday, May 6 - Tuesday, May 12, 2026



**Samaritan
Nurses**

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