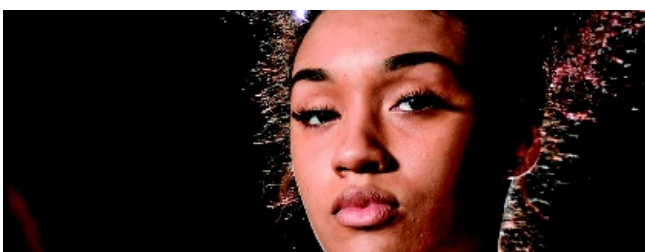


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The Dispatch • Argus The Rock Island

MOLINE, ILLINOIS

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Brenda Stalkfleet, RN, prepares a postoperative (postop) area for a patient at the Genesis Medical Center East in Davenport on March 26.

KEVIN E. SCHMIDT photos / kschmidt@qctimes.com

Need for nurses

Q-C colleges, health care providers work to meet growing demand

MATT ENRIGHT AND MEGAN VALLEY menright@qctimes.com MValley@qctimes.com

We're always going to need nurses. That's what many Quad-Cities college students hear while picking a career.

Baby boomers — a large portion of existing nurses — are graying, and upcoming generations aren't large enough to completely replace them in the workforce. And as health-care needs expand, nurses are in high demand.

"I can say, for myself, that I've never been without a job," said Kathleen Andresen, chair of the nursing department at St. Ambrose University in Davenport. Even while holding that job, she often receives unsolicited job offers.

To meet the high demand, local colleges have introduced creative solutions, including a nursing program at St. Ambrose that accelerates course completion if nursing is the student's second career. And local hospitals have partnered with colleges to focus on recruiting and retaining nurses, which has helped the Quad-Cities region avoid the dire shortages seen elsewhere in the U.S.

Several factors are causing or exacerbating the nursing shortage, but a lack of interested stu-



First-year physician assistant students take turns checking pulse and respiration in the lab/exam room at the St. Ambrose University Center for Health Sciences Education.

dents is not one, at least in the Quad-Cities. According to census estimates, nursing was the fourth most commonly awarded college degree in the Quad-Cities in 2013. That year, 8.1 percent of all degrees awarded were nursing degrees. The top three degrees were business administration, criminal justice and psychology.

By 2015, the share of nursing degrees had nearly doubled — up to 15.5 percent — and shot to the top of the list of most commonly awarded degrees. Nursing programs are offered

at many area colleges, including St. Ambrose, Eastern Iowa Community College and Black Hawk.

As the number of nursing degrees has soared, the increase has directly helped the Quad-Cities.

According to data from St. Ambrose, nearly 400 students have graduated from the school's nursing program since 2014, with 75 percent reporting that they work in Iowa or Illinois.

"We are not having a shortage of interested students," said Andresen.

IN DEPTH

Each Sunday, the new feature IN DEPTH takes a deep dive into issues that affect the entire Quad-Cities region. Building on daily reporting, these stories are driven by trends, data and observations that warrant a closer look.

SECOND CAREERS

St. Ambrose is preparing to enroll its inaugural cohort of students in an accelerated Bachelor of Science nursing program this fall. The 16-month program is a combination of online and night classes for students who already hold a different bachelor's degree and have a solid foundation in science.

The primary BSN program at St. Ambrose is two years long, and it's taken after students have completed two years of general education requirements to prepare them for the rigor and content of the latter half of their college experience.

The state of Iowa has a low — and strict — required student-to-faculty ratio for clinicals: 8 to 1. Recruiting practicing nurses to become instructors can be difficult, Andresen said, adding that "most people go into health care because they want to work with patients."

See NURSES, Page A3

'Bitter salt in an open wound'

2nd Illinois State Trooper in 3 days killed on highway

CAPITOL NEWS ILLINOIS

On Tuesday, March 26, Illinois State Police held a news conference about the alarmingly high rate that squad cars are hit on highways and interstates — 14 at the time, including one fatality.

"This information is obviously extremely concerning," acting ISP Director Brendan Kelly said Tuesday at the capitol in Springfield.

Two days after Kelly said that, Trooper Brooke Jones-Story was killed. Two days after that, Trooper Gerald Ellis was killed.

"This loss is bitter salt in an open wound," Kelly said Saturday.

Ellis, 36, was killed early Saturday when a wrong-way driver struck his squad car at about 3:25 a.m. in Green Oaks on Interstate 94 in northern Illinois, state police said. The vehicle was driving eastbound in the westbound expressway lanes. Ellis died at a hospital at about 4 a.m.



Ellis

See TROOPERS, Page A6

Number of asylum seekers sent back over border to grow

COLLEEN LONG

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Border officials are aiming to more than quadruple the number of asylum seekers sent back over the southern border each day, a major expansion of a top government effort to address the swelling number of Central Americans arriving in the country, a Trump administration official said Saturday.

It was the latest attempt to ease a straining immigration system that officials say is at the breaking point. Hundreds of officers who usually screen cargo and vehicles at ports of entry were reassigned to help manage migrants.

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