

A SPECIALTY PUBLICATION OF THE RICHMOND TIMES-DISPATCH



NURSES

*the **heart** of health care*

CELEBRATING NATIONAL NURSES WEEK – MAY 6-12, 2021



Nurses: The Heart of Health Care is a specialty publication of the Richmond Times-Dispatch. Direct questions to Stephen Summerell at (804) 649-6182.

STORIES: As told to Doug Childers and Ben Swenson

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Stories of compassion and commitment

The Richmond Times-Dispatch is marking National Nurses Week in May by recognizing extraordinary registered nurses who deliver high-quality care in our region.

Amid the daunting challenges of the pandemic, the impact of nurses — on their patients and our community — has never been more poignant. They have been on the front lines in battling COVID-19, facing great risk while caring for patients and families.

The first observance of what became National Nurses Week was in 1954, the 100th anniversary of Florence Nightingale's mission to provide care during the Crimean War. Nightingale is considered the founder of modern nursing, and today, millions of women and men in the field bring the same spirit of compassion to their work.

The registered nurses recog-

nized in this keepsake section are representative of their colleagues' widespread commitment in the Richmond region. In late winter, The Times-Dispatch sought recommendations from the public of nurses who put patients and our community at their center of their care.

We then asked the following panel to identify a collection so that we could highlight the nurses' personal stories of connection to their work:

- Dr. Tanya Satterwhite, central Virginia chapter president, Virginia Nurses Association;
- Misty Woodward, vice president and chief nursing officer, Sheltering Arms Institute;
- Dianne Johnson, executive director, Anthology of Midlothian senior living community;

- Dr. Baxter Perkinson, founder, Virginia Family Dentistry; and
- Jamie Dumas, marketing manager, WellcomeMD concierge medicine practice;

We thank Anthology of Midlothian for serving as presenting sponsor of our National Nurses Week program. We also thank Sheltering Arms Institute as our supporting sponsor. And we thank our gift sponsor, Hand & Stone Massage and Facial Spa.

And in the stories of our highlighted caregivers, we hope you appreciate the care and compassion that they and all nurses bring to the Richmond region. During National Nurses Week — and every week — we salute their service.

ONLINE: Read about our highlighted nurses — and share their stories — at [Go.Richmond.com/Nurses](https://www.go.richmond.com/Nurses)

THANK YOU NURSES



All of our nurses make us better in so many ways!

It has been an unforgettable year!

You helped open a new hospital designed to reinvent rehabilitation while navigating through a global pandemic.

And through all of it, you continue to put your patients first.

Thank you for the tremendous effort, courage and positivity you gave your team and your patients over the past year. We are so proud to work alongside you!

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HAPPY NURSES WEEK!

THANK YOU *for your selflessness, passion, and commitment.*
THANK YOU *for all that you do!*

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CRYSTAL AIKEN

Lives we touch mean the world to us

When I was 18, my brother Kent died from a preventable disease. He was 27. As a child, he did not receive proper treatment for rheumatic fever, and that caused heart damage his entire life. He died several weeks after receiving heart valve replacements.

When I realized that he could have been saved as a child just by getting the correct course of antibiotics, I felt driven to be a pediatric nurse. I never wanted to miss any important signs or symptoms in my patients.

I'm approaching 30 years in nursing, and that thoroughness has been my goal all along, even with COVID-19. The procedures have changed; we all wear more personal protection than we used to. But my goal every day is to see, hear and meet the individualized needs of our patients and their families.

I work in the Pediatric Hematology and Oncology Clinic. Our patients and their families battle some of the scariest diagnoses: childhood cancers, sickle cell disease and many other hematology issues.

The most valuable thing I've learned over the years is that everyone has different communication styles, personalities, cultural practices and beliefs. You have to meet them where they are. For example, parents who are demanding or appear angry are usually just afraid of what their child is facing. They need consistency, timely information and reassurance.

During the pandemic, we began to offer home labs for our patients. I volunteered to take on this duty. Going to patients' homes allowed us to gather the clinical data we needed and to lay eyes on them, a critical part of treatment to make sure they're doing OK. These visits also limited exposure to COVID-19 — not only for the patients, who often have weak immune systems, but for the families as well, who often must bring along other school-age siblings.

Seeing that bigger picture is important because there's a lot involved in caring for people. It's not just the patient we're treating. We are healing the family, too. We are treating a community that wants nothing more than for the patient to grow up and live a healthy, normal life.

And they often do. My proudest moments are when former patients reach out to find me.

One heart transplant patient found me on Facebook, and I was thrilled to discover she is now married with a child. Another young trauma patient I cared for in nursing school has kept in touch with me all along. Her experience compelled her to join the rescue squad as a teenager, and she became a physician's assistant, touching the lives of others.

Sometimes you never know the impact you had on your patients. But sometimes you do, and that knowledge means the world to me.

MEET CRYSTAL

Hometown: West Point

In Richmond region: 1985

Family: husband Will; daughters Riley, Lindsay and Emerson

Became an RN: 1992

Employer: Children's Hospital of Richmond at VCU

Thank You, nurses

of Henrico County Employee Health Services and Henrico County Public Schools!



***You are wired for compassion and driven to serve.
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community safer, stronger and forever grateful.***



John A. Vithoukas
County Manager



Dr. Amy E. Cashwell
Superintendent of Schools



MINDY REYNOLDS The toll can be heavy, but it's worth it

It might sound a little strange, but I decided to become a nurse through casual conversation.

I'd graduated from college with a management degree, and I was working at a staffing agency that specialized in finding jobs for nurses. The nurses would talk about their experiences, and I especially loved the stories of the ER nurses. So I decided to quit my job and go back to school to become a nurse. I waited tables to pay my bills.

I've spent most of my nursing career in the ER. I appreciated the autonomy I had there, and I enjoyed helping people in critical moments. But the stress and workload became overwhelming during the pandemic. I spent a lot of time quarantining from my family when I thought I might have been exposed, and I missed them terribly.

As careful as I tried to be, my husband and I both got COVID. I'm so lucky to have an amazing husband

who supports me, and it hurt me to know I almost certainly brought the virus home. Eventually, I realized I had to leave the ER. It was a painful decision because I loved my ER patients and my fellow nurses. They're an amazing group of medical professionals, and they don't get the credit they deserve.

For four months, I worked as a travel nurse at a hospital in Maryland. Travel nurses work for hospitals and medical offices on a temporary basis, often to fill in for understaffed facilities. Given how badly the pandemic impacted the medical profession, it's not surprising that there's a great demand for them.

I enjoyed the work, but I really needed to spend more time with my family. So I'm starting a new job with a local home health care company. I'll be checking in on patients who have returned home after medical procedures and making sure they're well and

can heal at home.

No matter where I'm working, I enjoy the connections I make with my patients. I love hearing their stories and interacting with them.

Often, the experiences are tremendously moving.

I recently took care of a 65-year-old grandfather with leukemia. He was in the ER, and his wife was waiting in the car because the hospital had to limit visitors during the pandemic. He was worried about her, so I called her cell phone and let them talk. They were so concerned for each other, and I could feel the love between them.

As he left the ER, he told me he was going to beat leukemia for his wife and grandkids. It was a special moment because I could feel how determined he was. And I believed him when he said he'd never give up. Moments like that make me realize how gratifying it is to be a nurse.

MEET MINDY

Hometown: Dallas, Pa.

In Richmond region: 2000

Family: husband Lee; children Piper and Pierce

Became an RN: 2005

Employer: James River Home Health

Thank you for all that you do!

Commonwealth Pediatrics is grateful for our nursing healthcare heroes,
who change lives by caring for others with their hearts, hands, and minds.



Wednesday, May 12
International Nurses Day 2021

Cynthia Aldridge	Amy Bradley	Carissa Brown	Shannon Cannon
Kelsey Carroll	Lauren Carroll	Chontrese Coleman	Chelsey Engle
Stephanie Flores	Daricka Gaines	Erin Haalman	Gail Hall-Mottley
Holly Holston	Carter Hunter	Kristen Keiter	Sarah Kirchner
Mandy Lupo	Heather Moody	Brittany Musik	Shannik Pinnix
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BRANDERMILL WOODS



JAMEKA WILLIAMS

Heart of a partnership is listening

I knew I wanted to be a nurse at the end of my father's life.

During his time of need, I listened to him and did what I could as his illness advanced — he had chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, emphysema and lung cancer.

The nurses who provided his care were great. They were there for us and for my father, and they made a painful process a little more bearable for everyone. It was touching.

Watching him go through the process of dying changed me forever. I felt like I had no choice but to offer this same level of respect and attention to others.

I realize now that an important part of being a nurse is building trust, because that opens communication. Remember, when someone is in the hospital, the people taking care of him or her are strangers. It is a very vulnerable moment. People naturally become defensive. Clear communication can help break barriers.

It's important to let patients know that I am advocating for them and fighting for their care. I start by explaining how I feel and what I'm thinking based on the patient's vital signs, pain assessment and lab work.

This helps accomplish two goals. First, we want to resolve the issue that has brought them to the hospital. But also, these interactions can lead to early interventions that prevent

complications. We take active steps to make sure things don't get worse, and that saves lives.

Communication is teamwork, a partnership. So while I tell patients how I'm feeling based on what I observe, I have to listen carefully to how they're feeling. I work to make sure they agree that we are providing the best care that will benefit them.

A big part of being a successful nurse is actively listening to patients. As nurses, we are constantly on the move, but if I've learned one thing, it's that we have to stop and listen.

Often the communication is nonverbal. For example, sometimes I go into a room and something just doesn't look right. Even then, the patient is telling me something. I might do a whole head-to-toe assessment, call for an X-ray or get the doctor to the bedside.

Even simple, nonverbal gestures go a long way toward building trust. Holding a patient's hand is something that is small but also rewarding. We are showing that we trust one another.

There are simple ways to emphasize a truth about nursing: Patients are our No. 1 priority. Trust and communication are vital to the healing process. And through those interactions, patients understand that there is someone who truly cares for their well-being.



MEET JAMEKA

Hometown: Richmond

Family: husband Henry

Became an RN: 2020

Employer: Bon Secours Memorial Regional Medical Center



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Thank You, *Chesterfield County Government Nurses!*

***This National Nurses Week,** we thank the nurses of the Chesterfield County Juvenile Detention Home, Chesterfield County Jail, Chesterfield County Department of Mental Health Support Services and the Chesterfield Employee Medical Center.*

Each day, you show an unyielding dedication to the health and well-being of our residents and employees. Your skill, commitment and selflessness have provided a constant ray of light even during the darkest days of this pandemic.



Chesterfield Employee Medical Center
Brittany Albiston, NP
Laura Jensen, NP
Binita Lamichhane, NP
Portia Thelwell, NP
Nicole Bragg, LPN
Shellie Davis, LPN
Tasha Taylor, LPN
Stephanie Williams, LPN

Chesterfield Juvenile Detention Home
Denise Kelly, RN
Mary Kaitlyn Roskam, RN
Kathryn Rovinski, RN
Chesterfield Mental Health Support Services
Stella Bizmana, RN
Nie'cole Debates, RN
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Michelle Jones, LPN
Leonette Marion, LPN
Nicole Mathis, LPN
Daphanie Monroe, LPN
Brittney Ragsdale, LPN
Shawnza Scott, LPN
Kischa Smith, LPN
Chesterfield County Jail
Jacquelline Hamlin, RN



ANGELE LACKS Sometimes, giving of ourselves is literal

It's very gratifying to make the call. As a kidney transplant coordinator, I get to contact patients on the waiting list when a kidney becomes available. When they accept, there are often tears. Sometimes they are speechless. I've done it many times over. It never gets old.

I had an idea I'd be doing this back when I was a senior in high school and I took a job as a nurse's aide to earn a little money. I loved the feeling I got just from being there. I was providing care, but it was more than that. I could be an ear when patients just wanted to talk, and that made them feel a little better.

Now, many years later, I'm helping patients get the life-saving kidneys they need. I'm proud that I passed the exam to become a certified clinical transplant coordinator and that I've been cited for excellence in nursing by

VCU Health System. And I'm happy to have helped so many people get transplants that saved their lives.

Nevertheless, it's an uphill struggle. There are nearly 100,000 people waiting for kidney transplants — but only about 18,000 donors annually. The odds are not good.

That's why I decided to donate one of my kidneys. In 2016, I decided to be an anonymous donor for a co-worker. A couple days before the transplant was to occur, however, this person got a perfect match from a deceased donor and decided to take that kidney.

Evidently, it was meant to be. The following year, at age 58, I was ready to donate to a friend I had known for years. But as it turned out, my friend got a different kidney, and I got paired with a stranger whose story on the local news generated interest from others — including from a person who

was matched to a child in need. So in this chain of events, three people got kidneys. Last year, I presented the story of my donation at the International Transplant Nurses Society annual conference.

Transplant recipients and their families appreciate that donors are both living and deceased. I called someone not long ago to offer a kidney from a deceased donor, and the patient expressed sadness for the person and the loved ones. The patient realized a truth about transplants — that often they're a mixed blessing.

What you do in your own life can make a difference in the life of a stranger. And one thing I have learned is that even when things seem like they are at their bleakest, you have to look on the bright side. You have to keep striving and keep going. You can't give up.

MEET ANGELE

Hometown: McRae, Ark.

In Richmond region: 1990

Family: husband Robert; daughters Erika Liptrap and Megan Stafford; three grandchildren

Became an RN: 1995; was a licensed practical nurse for 13 years previously

Employer: VCU Health

ANN HOPPER

Our job doesn't end with the shift

Two of my sisters are RNs, and when I was in high school, I worked in a retirement community as a certified nursing assistant and loved it. But I took a detour before finding my dream job.

First, I worked in mortgage lending. After I had my third child, I switched to construction lending. But it was just a job, and it didn't feel personal.

Then in 2005, my mother was diagnosed with cancer, and I watched her rapidly transition from hospital to rehab to hospice care. In those three months, I saw many good nurses. After that, I knew that working with the elderly was my calling.

I'd always felt close to the elderly, almost as if they were my parents or grandparents. And I thought I could help them live more fully and comfortably. So after discussing it with my husband — we had three young children to consider — I went to nursing school and became an RN.

That was nine years ago. Now I'm the clinic manager at Cedarfield in western Henrico County, and my staff and I make sure our 400 residents lead healthy and safe lives in their independent-living apartments and cottages.

We do a little bit of everything. We change dressings for patients who have had procedures done and assist doctors who see residents in the clinic. We handle emergency calls and help families when our residents are in the hospital. We try to keep the residents independent

as long as possible.

The pandemic made my team's work over the past year more complicated — and pressing. Residents had to isolate in their apartments and cottages when the campus was shut down. During this time, my team provided comfort as well as information to residents, most of whom were scared of COVID-19.

But the pandemic didn't fundamentally reshape how I see my job. In many ways, the most important part of being a nurse at Cedarfield is developing that special bond with a resident. In fact, I feel like each of our residents helps and teaches me more than I help and teach them. It's like we need each other.

That's why being a nurse is never just a job, and my responsibility to my residents doesn't end when my shift ends.

I remember one Friday evening when I was talking to a resident. He was 98, and I could tell he was short of breath. He really treasured his independence, but I was worried. So I called his daughter.

When I came back to the office on Monday, I learned he'd gone to the hospital and had been diagnosed with pneumonia. After he was discharged, he became one of my buddies, and he once said, "You don't realize the impact you have on people. This is what you were made to do."

It always stuck with me. Every day I want to make a difference in somebody's life.



MEET ANN

Hometown: Bay Shore, N.Y.

In Richmond region: 1989

Family: husband Cameron; children Lauren, Meredith and Cameron

Became an RN: 2012

Employer: Cedarfield



MALLORY HUDSON Changing lives every day – even our own

I always knew I wanted to do something in the medical field. I thought I was going to be a doctor, or a music therapist.

Then, when I was 16, I volunteered in a hospital's mother-baby unit and saw how nurses interact with patients and their families, how they move mountains. I knew that nursing was for me.

I started my career in neonatal care at Children's Hospital of Richmond at VCU. In 2015, an infant girl came into the neonatal intensive care unit and needed a foster home. My husband, Ryan, and I decided to help. That was my proudest moment in nursing. If I had not been in the NICU at that moment, our lives would have turned out much differently.

It's hard to foster a medically needy child. Plenty of people tried to sway my decision. They knew the complications. The girl didn't have a great

outlook. But she has done 110 percent better than most people expected.

Making her part of our family was something my husband and I talked about, and it made sense. We had all the support in the world from friends. Today, she is our 6-year-old daughter, Amera.

The fostering and adoption experience has certainly given us an opportunity to be patient with ourselves and each other. It has been very humbling having a child with these needs. Bringing Amera home asked a lot of us and of our other children, but everyone has been flexible, agreeable, patient and, most of all, loving.

Personally, Amera gave me a different perspective on my life and my career.

I cut my hours at work, often staying home to take care of her. It has been nice to spend time with her and my boys. Amera has two biological sisters

taken in by our good friends, and it's been great for all of us to help each other on our journey.

I hope that our experience has been a lesson. Many people feel like they wouldn't be able to do what we did. But our daughter should serve as an example that it's possible to foster and adopt no matter your personal circumstances.

Now I am a school nurse with Hanover County Public Schools, and I am proud of the work I do. I think that every day is a cause for celebration when you're in health care.

Amid the pandemic, I think we were too stunned this time last year to fully recognize the work that nurses do, so this is a great year to celebrate. Nurses are the foundation of the best medical care. They build relationships with patients and families and collaborate with other disciplines. I'm honored to offer this care.

MEET MALLORY

Hometown: Chesterfield County

Family: husband Ryan; children Derron Cooke, Luke, Jack and Amera

Became an RN: 2006

Employer: Hanover County Public Schools



LAURA JENSEN Building relationships is time well-spent

I've known pretty much all my life that I wanted to care for people. As a college student, though, I had to decide whether I wanted to become a doctor or a nurse.

I chose nursing, in part because I thought I'd be able to build better relationships with my patients as a nurse — rather than as a doctor who had to rush from one patient to the next.

After becoming a nurse practitioner, I followed a fairly conventional path, working first in a family practice and then in urgent care. In 2009, I began working at the Chesterfield Employee Medical Center, which provides medical care to the county's 14,000 government and school employees.

My workload was still pretty conventional, even if the scale was a little larger than I was used to. My focus was officially family medicine, but it also included occupational health and urgent care.

Then COVID-19 hit. And in the middle of the pandemic, I was promoted to practice manager.

My daily workload changed dramatically. I led the team that wrote guidelines for how the county should respond to the threat. And I kept it updated as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention shifted its recommendations in the early, uncertain days of the pandemic.

I also updated the county's travel and quarantine policies, and I led its vaccine program, with help from our fire and EMS division. The vaccine program was especially challenging. We had a week to train our school nurses to give shots to teachers. We're still administering vaccines and COVID tests, of course, as well as keeping track of who got which vaccines.

Working with my team to help others get through the pandemic might be my proudest experience as a nurse.

Through it all, I still spent time with my patients, albeit remotely.

Often, I could hear the fear in their voices, especially in the early days. One patient I spoke with cried for 40 minutes.

Our team was busy 24/7, and we sometimes faced a workload that seemed impossible. But it was important that I spend time with one patient like that.

As a nurse, you have to listen to your patients, no matter how busy you might be. If you can't feel what they're going through, you're not going to find what they need.

Taking on a management challenge and learning to make quick decisions changed me in the course of a year. My ultimate goal now is to grow as a leader and help make administrative decisions for our center.

But as a nurse, I'm looking forward to seeing my patients in person again!

MEET LAURA

Hometown: Roanoke

In Richmond region: 2004

Family: husband Joshua; daughters Kayla and Jocelyn

Became an RN: 2004

Employer: Chesterfield County Employee Medical Center

RACHEL GRACE REISINGER

A deep commitment to others

As a college sophomore, I was majoring in nutrition. But then I took a class in anatomy and physiology. I realized I wanted to switch my major and become a nurse.

These days, I work in VCU Health System's interventional radiology unit — we combine minimally invasive procedures and live fluoroscopy to treat diseases and injuries. With a relatively stable patient, the work can be fairly quiet.

In the past year, though, our work has become more complicated as we treat COVID-19 patients. Most of them are acutely sick, and simply getting ready to receive them in the procedure room is pretty involved.

Before the patient arrives, I get all my equipment ready. Then I put on shoe covers and a lead apron that weighs 12 pounds. I slip a large gown over the apron, which covers my arms and legs. I also wear an N95 mask and a face shield, as well as a cap over my hair. Finally, I pull on two pairs of gloves, so I can safely pull off one set if they become soiled.

The procedures take 30 minutes to three hours, and I stay with patients the whole time. After the patient leaves, there's a strict procedure for taking off all the protective equipment. I have to roll up my gown a certain way, and someone monitors me to make sure I'm not contaminating myself.

Before the pandemic, I never worried about my job affecting my health or my husband's health. But early on in the outbreak, when we were running out of supplies and didn't know exactly what the disease was, it was scary.

Once vaccinations became available, I began volunteering to give shots on my days off. In one day, we vaccinated 2,000 people. I've volunteered 50 hours since January, and it has elicited so much joy in me. I'm seeing a light at the end of the tunnel. My most profound moment came when I vaccinated my husband. I literally had tears in my eyes.

Nursing offers many moments that reaffirm my commitment to others. I remember working in VCU's intensive care unit, and one of my patients had been in a hospital room for a year. He was chronically ill, and I could see he was getting very depressed.

So I decided to take him to the healing garden outside VCU Massey Cancer Center. I had to get permission to move him, and I had to bring emergency medication and monitor him as we traveled there. Once he was outside, he had the biggest grin on his face, and his eyes welled up. His wife held his hand, and they looked up at the sky together.

He was discharged a couple weeks later. I like to think the garden visit made a difference in his recovery.



MEET RACHEL

Hometown: Midlothian

Family: husband Curtis

Became an RN: 2012

Employer: VCU Health

NURSING STATS —

- ◆ Nursing is the nation's largest health care profession. In October 2019, there were **4.1 million** registered nurses and **921,000** licensed practical nurses/licensed vocational nurses in the U.S.
- ◆ With more than **three times** as many RNs in the U.S. as physicians, nursing delivers an extended array of services, including primary and preventive care by nurse practitioners with specialized education.
- ◆ There are more than **290,000** nurse practitioners licensed in the U.S.

SOURCES: American Association of Colleges of Nursing, National Council of State Boards of Nursing, Bureau of Labor Statistics, American Association of Nurse Practitioners, Gallup

THANK YOU LAURA!



From testing to vaccines, **Laura Jensen**, nurse practitioner and practice manager at the Chesterfield Employee Medical Center has been the go-to person for 12,000 Chesterfield County Government and Public Schools employees on all things COVID-related since the pandemic began in March 2020. Chesterfield County appreciates Laura's dedication and commitment to the medical care of county and schools employees, as this committed workforce serves the county's 350,000 residents each day!



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TRACEY MALLORY

Small gestures leave lasting marks

I've always been a nurturer. As a kid, I graduated from bottle-feeding baby squirrels that had fallen out of their nests to giving my grandfather insulin shots.

When I was in middle school, my best friend and I would ride our bikes to the nearby nursing home, where we befriended two residents.

And after my uncle was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis and became bedridden, I helped with his care.

Even after I earned a business degree, I found myself drawn to nursing. So I changed my career plans, became an RN and spent almost 11 years as a nurse in general surgery before moving to pre-op.

It became my passion because I get to meet my patients before surgery, and I often see them as they're discharged. Facing surgery can be frightening, and I always make a special effort to comfort anxious patients. My co-workers say I have a calming way with words.

Understanding and sympathizing with my patients has been my top priority as a nurse. I wear my heart on my sleeve, and that can be a drawback sometimes. I can't tell you how many times I've come home and cried about a patient.

In nursing, I've learned that not all things can be fixed. But no matter what, we can show empathy and compassion to others in their most vulnerable moments.

Even in the worst cases, small gestures can help.

I remember one case in particular. I was working with a patient who had been newly diagnosed with cancer, and her husband and her daughter were in the hospital room with her. As I spoke with them, the daughter mentioned that it was her parents' 53rd wedding anniversary.

I peeked in on them throughout the morning, and every time, my patient's husband was sitting next to her, holding her hand and comforting her. On my lunch break, I got balloons and sparkling cider, and I asked the cafeteria if they had any cake.

When it was time for dinner, I spread a flat bed sheet over the bedside table and set the balloons and sparkling cider on it. And the cafeteria brought up slices of cake for the family. It made a bad time a little easier to bear.

Two days later, my patient's husband was killed in a car accident. Shortly afterward, my patient passed away. I went to the viewing, and the couple's caskets were side by side.

Even in that overwhelmingly sad occasion, the couple's daughter made a point of telling me how much she appreciated our efforts to recognize her parents' devotion to each other. And I was so glad I'd been able to do that for them.

I still have the card their daughter sent.

MEET TRACEY

Hometown: Bowling Green

Family: husband Ashley; children Nolan and Emerson

Became an RN: 2006

Employer: Bon Secours Memorial Regional Medical Center

NURSING STATS —

- ◆ Most registered nurses today enter practice with a baccalaureate **degree** offered by a four-year college or university or an associate degree offered by a community college.
- ◆ In 2018, **17.1%** of the nation's registered nurses held a master's degree.
- ◆ Registered nursing is among the top occupations in terms of job growth through 2029. The government projects **176,000** openings for RNs each year, accounting for nurse retirements and workforce exits.

SOURCES: American Association of Colleges of Nursing, National Council of State Boards of Nursing, Bureau of Labor Statistics, American Association of Nurse Practitioners, Gallup

APPRECIATION



THANK YOU

Covenant Woods salutes our **nurses and healthcare workers** for their exemplary service. Our residents enjoy a secure and caring community thanks to the unwavering compassion and professionalism of our healthcare heroes.

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Nurses are Heroes

Grafton nurses are heroes every day. That has never been more true than during COVID-19.

Thank you - and nurses everywhere - for keeping us safe and well during this challenging time.

"I can't imagine working anywhere else! Grafton is such a special place."

- Grafton Nurse Manager

www.Grafton.org

KRISTIN JOHNSON

More than what we do, it's who we are

The thing I love about nursing is that it's not a one-person job. There's the saying, "It takes a village to raise a child." Well, it also takes a village to help a patient.

I've been on the same unit, acute care medicine, for nine years. The reason I've stayed for so long is the team. Nobody does anything alone – especially during this pandemic. We've learned to lean on one another to get through.

I'm honored to say I work with professionals who offer the best care available anywhere. I work beside people who have changed the region for the better. I wouldn't be anywhere today if it weren't for the nursing staff I've worked with these past nine years.

I was a teenager when I first thought about becoming a nurse. My grandmother had been a certified nursing assistant, so I had vague understandings of the profession. But then my grandfather went to a nursing home, and my grandmother got cancer. And that's when I started paying attention to the people in scrubs caring for my family. I thought, "That would be a cool job."

But as important and impressive as it looks from those direct interactions, few people have an understanding of everything that happens behind the scenes.

A big part of nursing is ad-

vocacy. You are a voice for the patient, providing a link between them and the doctor. We collaborate with other professions, such as speech therapy, occupational therapy and nutrition. And we work as a multidisciplinary team to come up with the best possible action plan.

The past year has been one of the most eye-opening challenges I've faced in health care. In March of 2020, we took our first COVID-19 patient, and soon afterward we became a complete COVID-19 unit. I felt the strain personally, because I am a mother, wife and daughter. I didn't see my mom for three months.

But it's the impact on patients and families that has been the biggest strain. I've held the hand of a COVID-19 patient as life slipped away. We lost three members of the same family. The sadness and tears are unlike anything I've ever seen before.

What's been most impressive through all of this is the resilience and strength of everyone, from nurses to the environmental workers who fight this pandemic – regardless of the risk to themselves and their families.

Even with my job being as difficult as it is, I still wouldn't want to do anything else. Nursing is not something you do; it's who you are.



MEET KRISTIN

Hometown: Varina; now lives in Charles City County

Family: husband Shawn; twin sons Logan and Lucas

Became an RN: 2019; was a care partner at VCU Health for seven years previously

Employer: VCU Health

NURSING STATS

- ◆ In a 2019 survey, for the **18th year** in a row, Americans rated the honesty and ethics of nurses highest among a list of professions that Gallup asks U.S. adults to assess annually. In the poll, **85%** of Americans said nurses' honesty and ethical standards are "very high" or "high."
- ◆ The percentage of men working in nursing is growing. The 2018 National Sample Survey of Registered Nurses found that men constituted **9.6%** of the nursing population, an increase from **7.1%** a decade earlier.
- ◆ U.S. nursing schools turned away **80,407** qualified applicants from baccalaureate and graduate nursing programs in 2019 due to insufficient number of faculty, clinical sites, classroom space and clinical preceptors, as well as budget constraints.
- ◆ Student **enrollment** in baccalaureate, master's and doctoral nursing programs increased in 2020 despite concerns that the pandemic might diminish interest in nursing careers.

SOURCES: American Association of Colleges of Nursing, National Council of State Boards of Nursing, Bureau of Labor Statistics, American Association of Nurse Practitioners, Gallup

THANK YOU

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ALL of our HEALTHCARE WORKERS.
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keep our campus safe and healthy.



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Happy Nurses Week



Thank you, nurses!

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Thank you to the nursing educators, students and practicing nurses at VCU Health and beyond for your continued strength, courage, selflessness and resilience. Our community is a better place because of you.

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