

EMERGENCY

B *BLESSING*
Health System

BLESSING HOSPITAL NURSING ANNUAL REPORT 2023

Fiscal year 2023: October 1, 2022
through September 30, 2023



Responding to emergencies takes HART

Meet the **High Acuity Response Team**

Back row: Tana Logue, BSN, RN;
Casey Jackson, MSN, RN; **Front row:**
Susan Cammack, BSN, RN;
Tea Cameron, BSN, RN;
Theresa Huddleston, RN

**LEARN MORE
ON PAGE 8**

NURSING MISSION STATEMENT

Nursing excellence—touching the lives of our
community one person at a time



NURSING MISSION

Nursing Excellence:

Touching the lives of our communities, one person at a time

NURSING VISION

Leading the way for professional excellence in nursing by:

Having a professional practice environment that attracts and retains highly qualified nursing staff

Being recognized for providing superior holistic care to the communities we serve

Striving for safety, excellence and quality patient outcomes through innovative nursing care with the advancement of evidence-based practice and research

NURSING EXECUTIVE TEAM

Evan Canfield, Susan Chenoweth, Chesley Graham, Annette Heinecke, Debbie Heinecke, Holly Jones, Jamie Kane, Hannah McNeff, Karla Paris, Britini Skirvin, Tim Tranor, Lori Wilkey

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Advanced Practice Providers
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Focus on integration, communication makes for a productive year

By Tim Tranor, DNP, MBA, RN, Chief Nursing Officer

The Nursing Annual Report is designed to highlight a few of the many nursing profession accomplishments and showcase the exceptional work of our nurses.

As I reflect on the many accomplishments of nursing over the last year, I think working as a team and integrating our nursing practices has provided a year filled with growth.

Communication between the nursing teams remains a focus, and the quarterly nursing newsletter was created to share achievements, upcoming professional opportunities and new developments throughout the health system. Whether the highlights come from the quarterly newsletter or this annual report, one consistent message remains evident—***Blessing Health System nurses are exceptional!***

Nurses have made strides in shared governance, evidence-based practice, nurse-sensitive quality indicators, patient satisfaction, clinical excellence and professional development throughout the last year.

Shared governance is growing and expanding throughout the health system, giving nurses an outlet for decision-making and a capacity to impact nursing practice in their units and organization-wide.

This past year, three new councils were developed to continue to support our nurses, providing the opportunity to participate in decision-making at the unit and system level. Shared governance continues to expand and include the ambulatory areas. It is important to me that Blessing Health System nurses have a voice, and I encourage you to get involved in your unit partnership or a system-wide council.

Other highlights of the fiscal year involving nursing included:

- Blessing Hospital, Illini Community Hospital, and all affiliated departments were awarded full certification in the ISO 9001 Quality Management System. ISO 9001 is the most widely-accepted quality management system in use around the world, and is quickly gaining acceptance among US healthcare providers as a foundation for quality and patient safety programs.
- Blessing Hospital, Illini Community Hospital, and all affiliated departments also retained DNV accreditation. DNV is a global, independent certification provider.
- Complimenting success in exceeding quality goals for the year, Blessing Hospital earned a grade “A” in patient safety from the Leapfrog Group for both survey periods in FY 2023.
- Blessing-Rieman College of Nursing & Health Sciences experienced a 15% enrollment increase across its program offerings.

Nurses are the driving force for our ever-changing health care landscape. Read on for stories from the service lines across the organization.

REACHING NEW HEIGHTS WITH MAGNET RE-DESIGNATION

Achieving Magnet status means different things to different nurses. The constant has always been that excellence in nursing is a key organizational priority at Blessing Hospital. The American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC) Magnet designation demonstrates alignment between strategic nursing goals and patient outcomes. As Blessing Hospital continues the journey to re-designation in 2026, a focus remains on nursing excellence, encouraging education and professional development opportunity for nurses!

The Professional Practice Model (PPM) is the driving force of nursing care (represented in the schematic below) to depict how nurses practice, collaborate, communicate and develop professionally to provide the highest quality care for those served by the organization. The bridge represents what connects us all in nursing.



At the center of the PPM are the three major groups that drive nursing at Blessing Hospital; the healthcare team, patient/family and ourselves. Blessing Hospital uses relationship-based care as our care-delivery model to establish a therapeutic relationship with patient and family, knowing the patient's individual needs and working to fulfill those needs. This care-delivery system includes the relationship with self and the healthcare team and is anchored as the base of the bridge.

The river below the bridge represents what connects us all at Blessing Hospital, creating True Human Connections with all we serve. These connections include patients, families and those within the healthcare team.

The blue cloud represents Blessing Hospital's values. "Patient's first, because ICARE" is a shared belief by all in the organization and represents Blessing Hospital's values of initiative, communication, accountability, respect and exceeding expectations.

The yellow sun represents professional development, which is essential to providing excellent nursing care. Blessing Hospital offers many ways for nurses to advance professionally through clinical ladder programs, certification programs and educational assistance for advanced degrees. ■



The Magnet Recognition Program® advances three goals within health care organizations:

- Promote safety and quality in a setting that supports the professional practice of nursing
- Identify excellence in the delivery of nursing services to patients/families through interprofessional collaboration
- Create a practice environment that supports professional development

Based on the research conducted in the early 1990s, the American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC) established the Magnet Recognition Program®. It recognizes health care organizations' efforts at recruitment and retention of Registered Nurses. As a result, an environment is created where the professional practice of nursing is valued and celebrated. The program also seeks to provide a vehicle for disseminating successful nursing practices and strategies.



New councils added as Shared Governance accomplishments grow

During fiscal year (FY) 2023, the impact of shared governance was felt across the organization. We continued to flourish in our Professional Practice, Nursing Care, Interprofessional Clinical Practice and Evidence-Based Practice and Research councils, and added three new councils. Here are the highlights of what has been accomplished this year.

The *Professional Practice Council* is working on increasing certified RNs and action planning around the 2022 RN Satisfaction Results. To increase autonomy, this council has formed a night shift council that also meets monthly.

The *Nursing Care Committee* met every other month to focus on acuity, nurse-to-patient ratios, staff policies and creating nursing reports. This council recently recommended starting a Charge Nurse Academy and ensuring that topics are consistently included in education.

The *Interprofessional Clinical Practice Council* reviewed and discussed the quality of care our patients receive. This team is focusing on bedside shift report and interprofessional communication.

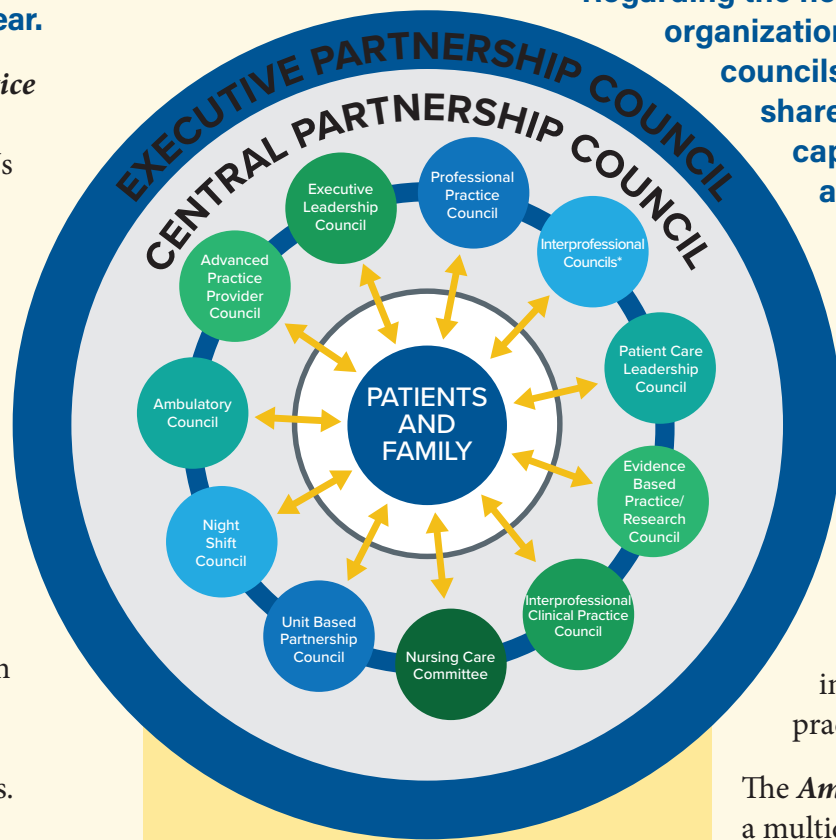
The *Evidence-Based Practice and Research Council* implemented an aromatherapy pilot and evaluated the data for organizational implementation. The council also supported DNP and nurse residency EBP projects and began working on a plan with goals and initiatives for FY24.

Regarding the new councils, as our organization grows, these councils focus on increasing shared decision-making capacity in many new areas and service lines:

The *Night Shift Council* is a specialty council that includes evening and night shift employees. Its main objective is to address and resolve issues faced by employees working off-shifts, which may impede their nursing practice or patient care.

The *Ambulatory Council* is a multidisciplinary council focusing on resolving problems specific to clinic and ambulatory departments.

The *Unit Secretary Council* comprises hospital-based unit secretaries who collaborate to ensure consistent practice across the hospital setting. This council also reviews processes and workflows that impact the unit secretary's role. ■



SHARED GOVERNANCE MODEL DEPICTING OUR COUNCIL STRUCTURE

*Inter-professional Councils include (but not limited to):

- Stroke Team
- Heart First and Chest Pain Committee
- Patient Safety Committee

CAREER CARE/PRIDE 2023

The **Career Care Program** is designed for clinical RNs, the **PRIDE Program** is for non-clinical RNs. Once again, 2023 saw many participants achieve their professional development goals. Congratulations to all!

CAREER CARE 2023

LEVEL 5

Alicia Ahern
Sarah Andrew
Hilary Bastert
Sarah Buck
Dawn Crabtree
Teresa Darnell
Debra Derhake
Kaylan Drebes
Amanda Edmunds
Bethany Haage
Angie Hancox
Dolores Haschemeyer
Jennifer Hermann
Erica Hilgenbrinck
Cynthia Hoewing
Ashley Huber
Lisa Kerker
Cassie King
Nicole Leerhoff
Stacy Leonardi
Angela Loos
Jessica Nuebel
Cindy Peters
Sarah Pruett
Robin Reis
Kayla Schachtsiek
Julie Smith
Brandy Tallman
Lauren Tallman
Wendy Walker
Nicole Walton
Diana Weatherford
Laura Wietholder
Shanna Winter
Beth Zanger

LEVEL 4

Blaklyn Benz
Kerigan Bland
Jessica Borrowman
Tea Cameron
Julie Cassens
Jonna Egan
Lisa Farrell
Amanda Fessler
Dawn Gamble
Alice Glasgow
Samantha Glover
Hanna Goudschaal
Heidi Harris
Kendra Harris
Caitlin Hoeltje
Lucas Hugenberg
Taylor Martin
Emily Mitchell
Emily O'Brien
Sarah Redington
Nichole Schaefer
Elizabeth St. Clair
Heather Stark
Kelli Terwelp
Karrie Voss
Macy Waterkotte

LEVEL 3

Lisa Liesen
Maria Hoskins
Rachel Pettitt
Allison Witte

LEVEL 4

Becky Charlton
Jenny Dickhut
Eydie Tipton

LEVEL 3

Michael Richard
Sheryl Sullivan

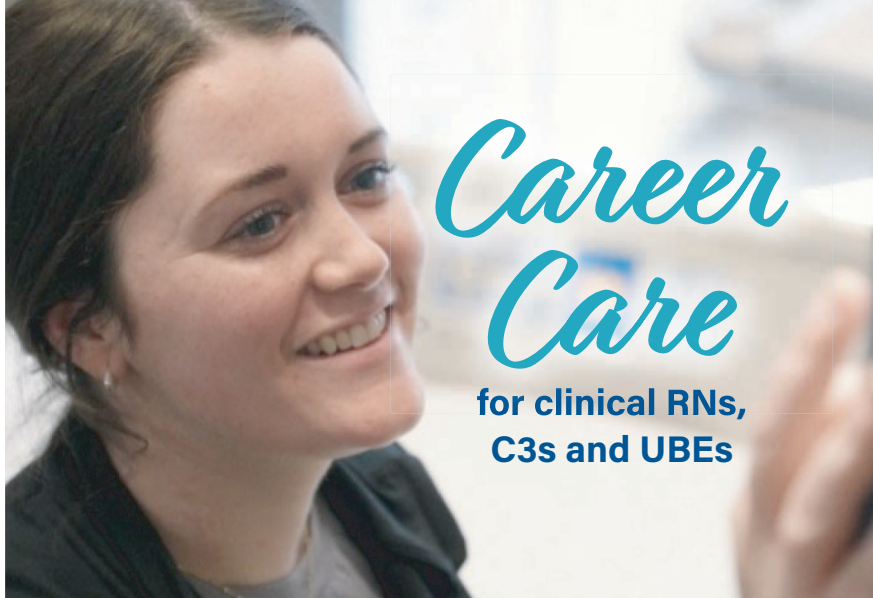
PRIDE 2023

LEVEL 4

Becky Charlton
Jenny Dickhut
Eydie Tipton

LEVEL 3

Michael Richard
Sheryl Sullivan



Career Care

for clinical RNs,
C3s and UBEs

CAREER DEVELOPMENT

1. Provide an opportunity for staff nurses to develop a career path which recognizes professional practice excellence.
2. Promote leadership and development of front line staff.

AUTONOMY

1. Expand nurses clinical accountability and decision-making authority.
2. Empower nurses through shared governance.

EDUCATION

1. Promote life long pursuit of expertise of the clinical nurse.
2. Encourage exemplary practice, new knowledge and innovation.

RECOGNITION

1. Attract and retain high quality nursing staff at the bedside.
2. Recognize and reward front line staff that engage in clinical inquiry, education, research projects and evidence based projects to improve empirical outcomes.

3. Compensations Recognition

Staff RN 3 \$1500 = \$.82/hr*

Staff RN 4 \$3000 = \$1.65/hr*

Staff RN 5 \$5000 = \$2.75/hr*

*over 26 pay periods on hours worked, total may vary based on FTE status.

For more information, please email
clinical.ladder@blessinghealth.org

BLESSING-RIEMAN COLLEGE FIRST IN STATE TO OFFER EDUCATIONAL OPTION

A group of Blessing-Rieman College of Nursing & Health Sciences students completed a first-of-its-kind nursing educational opportunity in the summer of 2023. Called the LPN Ladder Option, it allows students in the College's Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) degree program to be eligible to take the Practical Nursing licensure exam after completion of their junior year and an additional summer bridge course. Blessing-Rieman is the first BSN program in Illinois to offer the opportunity.



BLESSING-RIEMAN
College of Nursing & Health Sciences



The first Blessing-Rieman College of Nursing & Health Sciences LPN Ladder Option class.

First row, left to right:

Amanda Brant and **Brooke Walbring**, Quincy, IL; **Jada Summers**, Monroe City, MO; and **Brianna Butler**, Palm Harbor, FL.

Back row, left to right:

Deb Race, faculty; **McKayla Rosenburg**, Quincy, IL; **Stephanie Seidelman**, Barry, IL; **Chandler Waelder**, Hannibal, MO; **Erika Cookson**, Quincy, IL; **Lindsey Baugh**, Hannibal, MO; and **Susie Grist**, faculty.

The LPN Ladder Option benefits students and patients.

“This allows nursing students to work as an LPN while completing their senior year,” stated **Dr. Brenda Beshears**, President/CEO of Blessing-Rieman College. “This not only benefits the students’ earning potential, but also assists with the health care workforce needs in the region.”

“It allows us to gain clinical experience as we finish our degree,” added **Erika Cookson**, Blessing-Rieman student. “As graduates, we will have advanced knowledge of nursing practice due to the clinical hours required to complete the LPN Ladder Option bridge course and the knowledge and confidence we will gain working as LPNs before graduation.”

A team of Blessing-Rieman students proposed the LPN Ladder Option during their senior nursing leadership course. College administration then worked with faculty to develop content and clinical experiences for the bridge course, which provides knowledge that surrounds the scope of a practical nurse. The final step was completed when the Illinois State Board of Nursing approved Blessing-Rieman College’s LPN Ladder Option.

All nine of the students passed the NCLEX-PN on their first attempt to become licensed practical nurses. ■



Oh baby, how things have changed and how nurses are responding

Giving birth has changed over the years. New techniques and options allow families to be more involved with their care and plan their own experience. But not all recent changes have been as positive.

"Across the state of Illinois, we are seeing a statistically significant increase in women who have health risk factors including high blood pressure, diabetes and obesity," said **Jamie Kane, DNP, MBA, RN**, administrative director, Women's Health Services, Blessing Health.

The Illinois Department of Public Health reports that between 2010 and 2020, maternal high blood pressure increased 103%, maternal diabetes increased 68% and maternal obesity increased 33%.

"These conditions make women more at risk for complications when delivering a baby, and we are seeing those complications occurring," Jamie continued.

She says of the women from Illinois who deliver their babies at Blessing, approximately 34% have obesity as a risk factor, and greater than 11% have one or more of the following as a risk factor: high blood pressure, diabetes or a substance use disorder.

In response, Blessing Health's team—including the nurses who care for and help guide mothers through the birthing process—have created a program to respond to one of the complications affecting more women during the birthing process.

OB Rapid Response

Pregnant women are hemorrhaging more often than in the past. Maternity nurses say hemorrhaging is terrifying for moms and their care teams. In particular, postpartum hemorrhage (PPH) is a serious and potentially fatal condition. During PPH, large amounts of blood can be lost very quickly, causing a sharp drop in blood pressure, which can restrict blood flow to the brain and other

organs. This is called shock and can lead to death.

In response to more women at risk for hemorrhaging, the nursing staff of Blessed Beginnings birth center partnered with a number of other departments and hospital services to streamline the process used in cases of hemorrhage. It's called OB Rapid Response.

"We have protocols in place that are activated very quickly," Jamie said. "We are proactive instead of reactive—controlling the situation, minimizing the blood loss and giving patients the best chance for a positive outcome."

OB Rapid Response has reduced significantly the number of phone calls a nurse has to make to get all the resources needed at the bedside of a hemorrhaging patient.

"Now we make one phone call and get every resource that could possibly be needed in this critical situation," Jamie said.

The OB Rapid Response program has reduced the time it takes to begin hemorrhage treatment by as much as 84%.

The departments who worked with Blessed Beginnings to create the OB Rapid Response program are the High Acuity Care Team of nurses who are trained to respond hospital-wide to unexpected complications, the Laboratory/Blood Bank and Information Systems.

Blessed Beginnings has been recognized by Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Illinois with a Blue Distinction® Centers for Maternity Care (BDC) designation. To earn the designation, a facility must deliver quality care, safely and effectively. Based on data from the current designation cycle, facilities designated under the BDC program demonstrate higher quality care compared to non-BDC facilities. ■

EMERGENCY

THE HART OF THE MATTER



The entire HART nursing team, including support staff.

From left to right: Tracy Viers, MSN, APRN, AC-AGCNS; Kelly McMillan, BSN, RN; Susan Cammack, BSN, RN; Tea Cameron, BSN, RN; Laura Weigand, BSN, RN, CCRN; Theresa Huddleston, RN; Rachel Vogel, MSN, RN, SCRNP; Tana Logue, BSN, RN; Casey Jackson, BSN, RN.

What began years ago as a good idea at Blessing Hospital has become an exceptional program making a difference in patients' lives. The idea is called the HART program. HART stands for High Acuity Response Team. It is a team of registered nurses that—in various ways—helps care for Blessing patients facing a health crisis.

In addition to bedside consults, HART nurses respond to any emergencies as part of a multidisciplinary team within the hospital, including:

- Rapid Responses (sudden, unexpected decline in a patient's condition)
- Codes
- STEMI heart attacks
- Level I traumas in the Emergency Center
- De-escalations

When not responding to situations, HART nurses monitor patient condition tracking technology (Rothman Index/PeraWatch) for warning signs of clinical deterioration and crisis in patients throughout the hospital, and round on inpatient units.

"Most patients are going to be headed in the right direction. But when there is a concern, the HART program offers early intervention," said **Laura Weigand, BSN, RN, CCRN, TNS**, HART Program supervisor, Quality, and Performance Improvement.

The program is working.

"Because of changes made, we have seen more and more bedside consults rather than rapid responses," Laura observed.

The HART program began nearly a decade ago as the "Critical Care Consult Nurse" and was part of the responsibility of the Intensive Care Unit (ICU)

Charge Nurse. The ICU Charge Nurse was available to respond to Rapid Response calls and bedside consult requests.

As Blessing added sophisticated patient condition tracking technology in the following years, data showed this idea was delivering exceptional outcomes.

"Rothman Index technology has been able to show HART is reducing unplanned transfers to the ICU and length of stay for patients who are transferred," Laura said. "HART nurses are a vital component of this program's success."

It was imperative to find the right people for this role. HART nurses are frequently on the go and work alongside nurses throughout different departments in the hospital. It's an excellent fit for a nurse who enjoys an action-packed, fast-paced environment. The HART nurses work in multiple specialty hospital settings to assist nurses caring for young and old.

The success of this program has been driven by the nurses who function in the role daily and the vision of their leader, Laura Weigand. Laura has been working on this program since its inception and spearheaded the connection between nursing and technology.

Laura shared that, "technology is great, but you need the connection piece of nursing to analyze, evaluate and determine the actions needed."

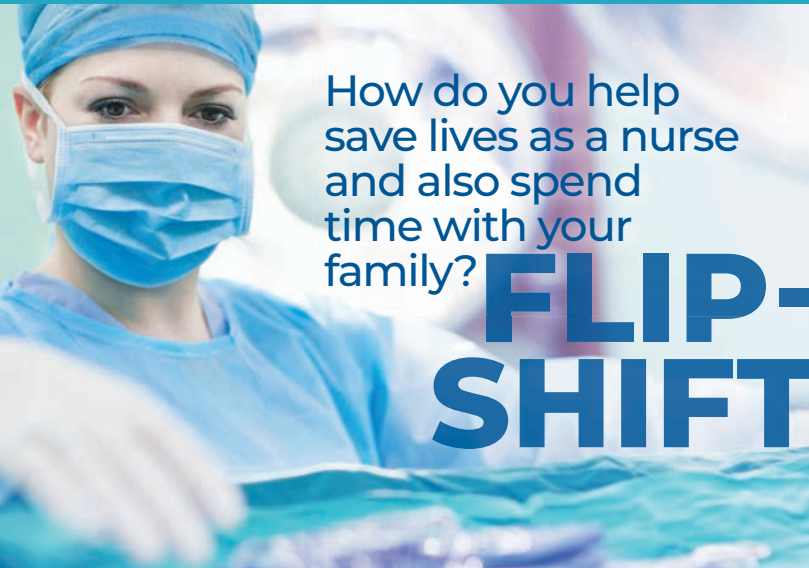
Because of the support of leaders and nursing, Blessing Hospital's mortality index and inpatient code blue rate have decreased over the last couple of years.

The success of this program proves that when you have the right people equipped with the right tools, you can impact the quality of patient care and outcomes for patients. ■

Because of the support of leaders and nursing, Blessing Hospital's mortality index and inpatient code blue rate have decreased over the last couple of years.

Missy Dahl wanted to be a doctor and was applying to medical schools when her mother fell ill and was hospitalized for three months.

“That’s when I started realizing how important the role of the nurse is. So, I changed my career plan.”



How do you help save lives as a nurse and also spend time with your family?

FLIP-SHIFT



Missy Dahl and family

Now, in addition to being **Missy Dahl, BSN, RN**— she is Missy Dahl, wife to Jonny and mother to young Blakley and Brecken. Thanks to a scheduling option in Blessing Hospital’s surgery department, Missy has accomplished the sometimes-elusive goal of work-life balance.

It’s called flip-shift because Missy works the 7 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. shift in surgery at the hospital one week, and the next week her schedule “flips” to on-call only, from 7 p.m. to 7 a.m. During on-call weeks, she gets paid for 40 hours that week, no matter how many hours she works. Missy has one of three flip-shift schedules in her department.

“It’s super nice with the kids,” said Missy of her flip-shift weeks. “They go to day care during the week most of the time. So, it’s the week that gives me time to do things for myself and household chores – do the dishes, get the laundry done, clean the house. Then, the next week, I can be normal—have evenings with my kids and go to soccer and tee-ball.”

Because Missy works a flip-shift, her husband does, too—sort of. Jonny can become the parent-in-charge at any moment during his wife’s on-call week.

“He is amazing about it,” Missy said. “I get really overwhelmed at bedtime when the kids don’t listen. He just does it so well.”

“I have told him, ‘If at any point this doesn’t work for you, just let me know and I can try to get back on a normal shift.’ But he knows the flip-shift arrangement gives me a lot of freedom during the on-call week, which makes me a better wife and mom when I have this me-time during the day,” Missy concluded.

The flip-shift offers benefits all around, said **Kate Westhaus, MSN, RN, CNOR**, nurse manager, surgical services/operating room.

“The goal is to improve daily staffing and staff/surgeon satisfaction,” Kate said. “Before flip-shift came about, daily staff were continually changing, as the staff who had been on overnight call were routinely needing to be cut due to the overnight workload.”

“The benefit to staff is tremendous if you are willing to give up some sleep, and surgeons appreciate knowing that they have a consistent staff to depend on,” she continued.

“The hospital’s dedication to this shift speaks to the value placed on work-life balance, customer satisfaction (our surgeons) and most importantly patient safety, as we no longer have staff providing care that may have been working 12 to 24 hours,” Kate concluded. ■

NURSE-PATIENT BOND LEADS TO LONG-TERM HEALING

Among the joys of nursing are the relationships made with patients. In cardiac rehabilitation, those bonds can be particularly strong because of the several months nurses and patients spend together as the patient learns how to improve their heart function and their quality of life.

Because of this relationship, Blessing Hospital's cardiac rehabilitation nursing team was able to help one of its patients overcome a challenge they faced after completing the program.

"When he came to us, he seemed pretty weak and needed to build some strength and endurance," **Tori Davenport, RN**, said of the patient. "We assessed him to see what machines he could safely use when it came to strengthening his legs."

With the help of the cardiac rehab team, the patient was able to improve his condition.

"He was one of ours that shed a few tears as he graduated from the program," Tori said. "He was grateful for the progress that he had made."

"He wanted to join a gym because he could see the difference that the three-days-a-week exercise program had made for him," she continued. "He needed a gym that was the perfect fit for him and that had the exercise equipment that he could safely use, like his favorite equipment in cardiac rehab, the Biodex. Unfortunately, our area gyms don't have this piece of equipment."

Fortunately, that is not the end of this story. The cardiac rehab team stayed in touch with their former patient and his wife after graduation and were aware of his challenge in finding a safe way to continue exercising.

"I was on Facebook and saw an estate sale with a piece of equipment similar to the Biodex that we have in the cardiac rehab gym," Tori said.

She sent a photo of the equipment to the patient's wife and told her if the couple was interested in the equipment, Tori would help find a way to get it to them.

"The patient's wife went to see the equipment. It was a heck of a deal and she bought it," Tori said. "That day after work, my husband, our teenagers and I went and picked up the equipment and delivered it to them. The next weekend I received a picture of him exercising on his new equipment."

That was September 2023. The patient's wife has kept in touch with the cardiac rehab team and reports that her husband continues to exercise and build his strength and endurance.

"It feels great when we hear from former patients and they share their success stories outside of cardiac rehab," Tori said on behalf of her coworkers. "Knowing that they have taken what we taught them and built on it motivates us. Patient success, that's our goal. Paired with the determination of this patient and his wife, the goal was achieved." ■



Tori Davenport stands by a piece of equipment similar to one she was able to find on Facebook for a Cardiac Rehabilitation graduate who needed it to continue his recovery safely.

HOW TO "TREAT" PATIENT FRUSTRATION



Karen Cheney, RN, enjoys working with senior citizens and understands their needs. So, when they need a medicine that is in short supply and hard to find—a common occurrence these days with drug shortages at a 23-year-high nationally—Karen is ready to help.

"Some elderly people don't know what to ask or say," Karen observed. "I will do the phone calling for them and try to find the medicine they need. It relieves their frustration."

The goal was the same when Karen helped a family of five arrange the genetic cancer testing each family member needed.

"It was going to be easier for them to make one phone call and to all be seen and tested roughly in the same time frame, so I gathered the information needed," she explained. "In getting everything the family needed gathered, I wanted to help get all their questions answered and keep their frustration level low."

"You have to keep the whole family in your thoughts. They were all involved and were very thankful and everything went smoothly."

Karen specializes in "treating" patient frustration. Other examples include her helping arrange for lab work to be drawn in a patient's home and identifying the providers of in-home therapies a patient needs, prioritizing Family Medical Leave Act/Short-Term Disability forms for patients and helping patients arrange specialty evaluations when needed.

Karen's love of nursing began young and runs deep.

"I always knew, from the time I was very young, that I was going to take care of people. That was an easy decision for me."

She began her career at Blessing as a CNA in 1995, eventually going to nursing school and becoming an RN in 2011.

"I felt I could make a bigger difference as an RN."

As an RN, Karen secured a job in the field closest to her heart—long-term care. Over the past 13 years, Karen has worked at various nursing homes, including Sunset Home in Quincy. While she still works at Sunset Home two or three nights a week, during the day you will find Karen helping family medicine patients at the Blessing Health Center 927 Broadway.

"It gives me the opportunity to take care of people—but I also get to be on the other end of the patient's care—making phone calls and working closely with doctors."

With nearly 30 years in patient care, Karen identifies two qualities of the exceptional nurse.

"You first have to be compassionate. You have to care about the person and be able to look at things from their point of view. Their perception is reality to them. It doesn't matter what the nurse sees. It is what the patient believes is happening. And then critical thinking is needed."

As for her future, it seems as clear to Karen as it was when she was very young.

"Just to keep doing what I am doing. I am happy right now."

And that's what happens when you do worthwhile work every day. ■

Celebrating teamwork & individual commitment

Nine nurses and a patient care team were honored for their skill and compassion during Nurse Week 2023.

Funds from the estate of **Lauretta M. Eno**, who spent 23 years shaping nursing practice at Blessing Hospital, are used each year for selected Nurse Week activities, including the Advanced Nursing Symposium named after her, and the cash award that goes to the nurse who receives the annual Eno Distinguished Nurse Award.

Lauretta was in the United States Navy Nurse Corps and on duty in Hawaii on December 7, 1941, when the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor. She was on the team that treated the first casualties of the attack that would lead the country into World War II.

After the war, Lauretta earned a bachelor's degree in nursing education and public health nursing, followed by a master's degree in nursing administration. After earning those degrees, she was hired as director of nursing services and nursing education by Blessing Hospital in 1957. In 1972, she was promoted to the position of the hospital's assistant administrator.



"Miss Eno" as she was known affectionately by her coworkers, shaped nursing education and practice at Blessing. Her accomplishments in nursing education include establishing a student loan program; admitting married students, male students, African American students and older, nontraditional students and the Blessing nursing education program earning full accreditation from the National League for Nursing in 1958.

Her accomplishments in nursing practice at Blessing included starting the intensive care unit, designing medication carts and the charting system, establishing a disaster plan and developing Blessing's Child Care Center, the first on-site center at an Illinois hospital. It was part of Miss Lauretta's effort to recruit nurses and continues to attract staff to Blessing today.

Lauretta retired in 1980 and passed away in 2005. She continues to touch the hospital with the donation from her estate that helps fund select Nurse Week activities. ■

The 2023 Nurse Week Blessing Health Excellence Award Winners

Lauretta M. Eno Distinguished Nurse Award

Mandy Edmunds, RN, Nursing Professional Development, and the late **Becky Bliefnick, RN**, Vascular Access Team

Illini Community Hospital Excellence in Nursing Award

Courtney Edison, RN, Outpatient Services

Licensed Practical Nurse Clinical Excellence Award

Christy Brinkley Beaver, LPN, Blessing Bariatric Institute

Blessing Health Hannibal Excellence in Professional Nursing Award

Kelly Shade, LPN and **Jamie Craven, LPN**

Year One Wonder Award for New Nurses

Delaney Brinkley, RN, Child and Adolescent Services

Team Award

The Blessing Emergency Center

Transformational Leader Award

Yvonne Goellner, RN, nurse manager, 3 Surgical

Partner in Caring Award for a Non-nursing Caregiver

Deana Hurley, medical assistant non-certified, Blessing Walk-In Clinic

Offering screenings in new locations helps improve the health of new populations



Expanding access to health screenings and education was the primary focus for community outreach in 2023. The combined efforts of Blessing Health nurse volunteers resulted in more than 400 individuals screened at nearly two dozen, no-cost community screenings offered through fiscal year (FY) 2023. In addition, valuable health education was provided at dozens of community events throughout the area.

Cholesterol screenings once again proved to be an in-demand service, providing participants with their LDL, HDL, triglycerides, total cholesterol and fasting glucose levels as well as the opportunity to have their results reviewed with them by a registered nurse. Blessing Health offered seven no-cost cholesterol screenings during FY 2023 with several screenings hosted at new locations, including Horizons Soup Kitchen & Food Pantry, the Quincy Senior & Family Resource Center and Illini Community Hospital.

An adolescent cardiac screening, men’s health screening, skin screening and multiple hemoglobin A1C screenings helped further cement Blessing’s commitment to ensuring access to care throughout the communities we serve.

The adolescent cardiac screening provided student athletes, ages 13 to 18, with a cardiac ultrasound to screen for Marfan syndrome (MFS) and hypertrophic cardiomyopathy (HOCM), both rare but potentially life-threatening conditions.

The men’s health screening offered participants the opportunity to receive a PSA screening, prostate screening exam, cholesterol, blood pressure and body mass index screening all within one visit.

“We wanted to offer men the opportunity to take advantage of a comprehensive screening event to help them better understand their own personal health and risk factors,” explained **Stephanie Willey, RN**, community education coordinator, Blessing Cancer Center. “We had great participation, and this screening is something we hope to continue offering in the future.”

The skin screening, hosted by Blessing Dermatology and the Blessing Cancer Center, offered consultations for potentially concerning skin spots or lesions.

The A1C screenings, hosted at a variety of locations throughout the year, provided participants with a better understanding of their glucose control as well as the opportunity to consult with certified staff from the Blessing Diabetes Center.

Blessing Health also participated in a number

of community events, including EMS Day, where education on sepsis, stroke, early heart attack care and hands-only CPR were offered. Hands-only CPR education was also provided at other community events and locations in an effort to ensure everyone has the opportunity to be prepared for a medical emergency.

"Cardiac arrest can occur anywhere and at any time. Unfortunately, when cardiac arrest occurs outside the hospital, 60 to 80% of the time it's fatal. But being able to provide hands-only CPR in the event of an

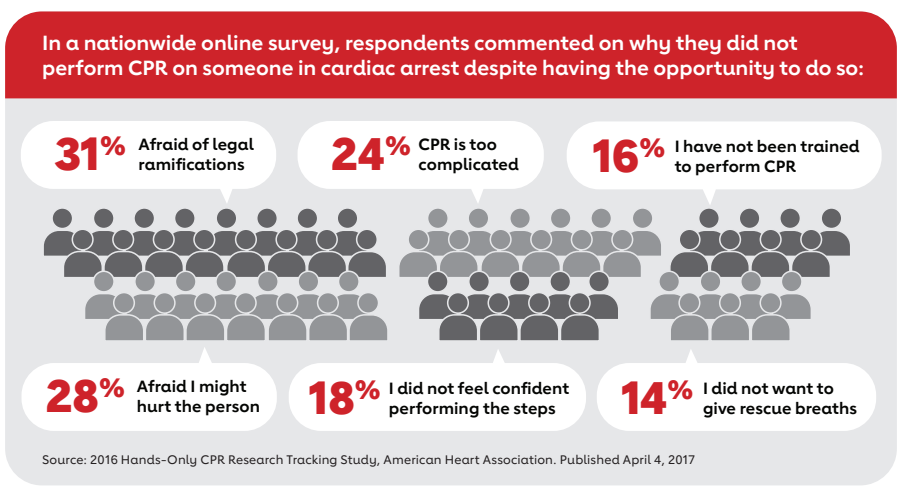
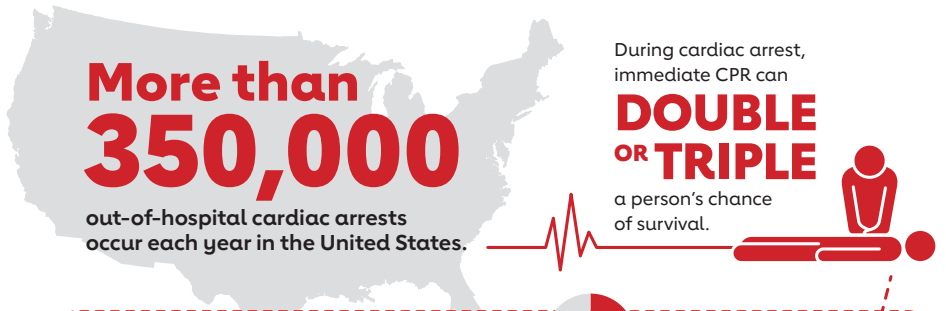
emergency can help increase a person's chance of survival. That's why it is so important we continue to offer this education throughout the communities we serve," explained **Laura Wietholder, MSN, RN**, community outreach coordinator, Blessing Health.

Moving into FY 2024, the expansion of outreach screenings and education continues to be a primary focus, with screenings planned at Illini Community Hospital and Blessing Health Hannibal as well as many events within the Quincy community. ■



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After 15 years working in a sporting goods wholesale warehouse, Kellie Hoener was in her mid-30s and looking for a change in her life. She found it one Sunday.

“We were at church and the pastor said, ‘It’s never too late. You are never too old to do something new and turn your life around,’” she recalled. “The first thing that came to me was, what better way to serve people than to be a nurse? I just went with it.”

“I didn’t even tell my husband what I was thinking at the time,” Kellie continued. “I applied to John Wood Community College and was accepted. Obviously, it was meant to be.”

Kellie Hoener, BSN, RN, PMH-BC (board-certified psychiatric mental health nurse), has spent the past 10 years sharing her passion for serving people with Blessing Hospital’s behavioral health patients.

When the work day is done, Kellie is known for igniting the passion of her coworkers and getting involved in community events related to mental health.

“The more I worked in this field, the more I saw the need to impact our community,” she said. “It shows our

RN
TAKES HER
PASSION
FOR
HELPING
PEOPLE
TO THE
STREETS

patient population that they mean something to us beyond the walls of the hospital. We see them as people and realize they have struggles. And

it’s Blessing’s goal to serve the community.”

Kellie and her coworkers were involved for the first time in Overdose Awareness Day in Quincy’s Washington Park in August 2023 and in the Out of the Darkness suicide prevention walk in September 2023.

For the Overdose Awareness event, Kellie organized a dozen coworkers to participate. Following the carnival theme, the Blessing team hosted a game and shared candy with people who interacted with them at their booth. Kellie called the experience “eye opening”.



“EDUCATION IS THE KEY.”
Kellie Hoener, BSN, RN, PMH-BC

“There were all kinds of resources there for individuals to have for free. Education is the key,” she said. “And the support that was available at the event to individuals who had survived overdose—and their family and their friends—they appreciated it. It was profound.” Kellie again joined with coworkers and the Behavioral Health Partnership Council at the Out of the Darkness walk. She has experienced the effects of suicide in her own life. She says even if a community event cannot reduce the number of suicides, it can and does, promote healing.

“Unfortunately, with the decline of society’s mental health, suicide seems to continue to escalate,” Kellie observed. “But does community service and awareness help in general? Yes, because survivors—either of a suicide attempt or their loved ones—when you see them, meet them and talk to them, you know they need support.”

The Behavioral Center’s “Stamp

Out Stigma” banner was a big hit at the event and an example of community partnership. “Individuals at the walk could paint their hand in a color that was meaningful to them and their participation in the walk, and leave their mark – their hand print—on the banner,” Kellie explained. “Hobby Lobby donated the paint and Refreshment Services Pepsi donated the blank banner.”

“A few different family members, who had lost loved ones to suicide but still had the dogs of the loved ones that passed, painted their dog’s paw and stamped it on the banner. Very touching to watch,” she added.

The Behavioral team also participated in the Walk’s silent auction by making baskets and hosted a t-shirt sale to raise more money. The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention uses the proceeds for local resources, including education within the schools.

Kellie says as busy as life is these days, it can be a challenge for people to find the time to participate in worthwhile community events. But she uses a secret motivational tactic.

“I hope to lead by example.” ■



Meet a nurse who has done *(and will do)* whatever it takes

As a young LPN working at the former St. Mary Hospital in Quincy, Penny Hustead's nursing instructor told her of a job opportunity—the Area Agency on Aging needed a case coordinator who was an LPN.

"All I saw was, 'Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.,'" Penny recalled.

But what she received from that experience would help shape her career for years to come.

"When I was doing social work, my nursing experience helped me to identify problems. As a nurse, my social work experience helps me identify resources for people."

Penny has spent 23 of her 35 years as a nurse with Blessing Health at various times. Currently, she serves allergy and endocrinology patients at Blessing Health Hannibal.

"I've learned a lot, particularly in allergy, about helping children deal with their allergies. The seasonal ones around here are terrible. I help with testing, identifying what they are allergic to, and we follow up on how they progress. That is the rewarding part, seeing such a big difference after treatment."

In addition to allergy and endocrinology, Penny spent 15 years in family medicine and has worked in rheumatology.

"I can work anywhere, any office and for about any doctor. And I am willing to do so. I like that variety and stepping up to be there for patients."

The challenge is learning the processes unique to each medical specialty. But Penny has always had coworkers willing to help her learn.

She feels her career has been filled with "wow" moments—memorable patient experiences.

Over the years, Penny has crossed paths with people for whom she cared during her years in family medicine at the former Hannibal Clinic office in

Palmyra.

"They would say, 'We miss you so much up there.' It just warms my heart. They are missing me as a person, not just a nurse."

"You go home and feel really good those days when you hear that, and that helps you get through the rest of the week. Sometimes, the rest of the month just having a special encounter with one patient."

"Nursing is rewarding. But you have to be willing

to be committed."

As a mother, Penny understands the importance of work-life balance, but feels the key word in that phrase is balance.

"You can still take care of your family but need a commitment to your nursing career, too."

One of Penny's four children, **Carley Sharpe**, is a registered nurse at Blessing Express Clinic and also has three years' experience in the Emergency Center.

"It was funny. When she first got her license she said, 'I could be your supervisor.' I said, 'I don't think so,'" Penny said with a laugh. ■



Penny Hustead, LPN (left) and her daughter Carley Sharpe, RN

Team finds their care, not technology, makes patients safer

Just as smoke detectors do not put out fires, tab alarms do not stop hospitalized patients from falling. That's what the Illini Community Hospital team learned.

Illini had used tab alarms on all swing-bed patients to reduce their risk for falling. Swing-bed patients are those who are in the process of transitioning from acute care to skilled care, but need more nonacute hospital level care before completing the transition. The federal government considers the general use of tab alarms on the swing-bed patient population as “restraints” because it limits their movement without a valid clinical reason.

With a fear that swing-bed patient falls would increase, Illini stopped using tab alarms on February 1, 2023, to comply with the regulation. But falls at Illini did not increase. In fact, they decreased significantly – from 9.97 per 1,000 patient days through January 2023 to 2.94 per 1,000 patient days post-February 2023.

“The alarms were kind of like a security blanket

for us,” said Alyssa Moore, MSN, RN, nurse manager, acute care. “When the security blanket was removed, we found out it was not needed.”

Illini consulted with Blessing Hospital’s Skilled Nursing Unit team, who had stopped using tab alarms previously with great success. The Illini team discovered they already knew how to reduce falls. The key was to be proactive – to conduct frequent checks on patients, including hourly rounding, to make sure their needs were being met – and if a patient was a high fall risk, move them closer to the nurse station.

“Our staff was taking those proactive actions before we stopped using tab alarms,” said Alyssa. “But they also had a level of comfort in thinking, ‘There is an alarm on that patient. So, when it goes off, I will immediately check on the patient.’ Now, with no alarm on the patient, staff knows they have to check on patients more often than every hour, and work with the patient to hardwire and reinforce the actions they had been educating all along.” ■



Illini Community Hospital's Acute Care team earned recognition for a decrease in patient falls.

DAISY Awards

Sometimes exceptional nursing involves more than medical care. Here are two award-winning examples.

Katelin Robertson, BSN, RN, Inpatient Care Coordination, received a DAISY award based on the nomination of the daughter of a patient that read, in part:

"When I came to be here for him, I discovered that his longtime love was also a patient. Dad is nearly 89 and his lovely lady is nearly 92. They have resided at different care facilities since March 2022. The two lovebirds hadn't seen each other in person for months.



Katelin Robertson
Inpatient Care Coordination

Katelin heard my story and navigated the necessary steps to arrange a short visit. Not only did she get the visit arranged, she stayed after her shift was over to accompany us. Many nurses came to see the event and were still talking about it the next day. I guess the hospital is named Blessing for a very good reason."

Blessing Health is proud of every nurse nominated by patients, families, peers and staff. Following are the other 10 nurses who received the award during fiscal year 2023. Unless otherwise noted, the nurses are on the Blessing Hospital staff.



Brogan McCutchan
Women and Children Unit



Carlee Jenkins
Gen Med/Observation Decision Unit



Mariah Rice
Women and Children Unit



Wilma Giesendorfer
Rehabilitation Services



Phil Renner
Emergency Room
Illini Community Hospital



Cassie King
Outpatient Care Coordination



Kalli Goewey
Progressive Care Unit



Robin Litt
Labor and Delivery



Katie Hildebrand
6 North Gen Med/
Oncology



Meredith Hyer
Centralized Staffing

The DAISY Award is a recognition program to say "thank you" to nurses everywhere. DAISY stands for "Diseases Attacking the Immune System." The family of a 33-year-old man, who died of an immune system disorder, began the program in 1999 to honor his memory by recognizing extraordinary nurses everywhere who make a difference in the lives of people by the work they do every day. More than 5,400 health care providers and nursing education programs worldwide participate in the DAISY Award program.

The mission statement for the DAISY Foundation is to "express gratitude to nurses with programs that recognize them for the extraordinarily compassionate, skillful care they provide patients and families. By honoring compassionate nurses, DAISY reinforces the importance of compassion in health care."

The Honey Bee Award is a Blessing Hospital-initiated program for support staff to complement the DAISY Award, because as we say at Blessing, "You can't have DAISYs without Honey Bees!" Honey Bee honorees personify Blessing Hospital's remarkable patient experience.

Congrats to the fiscal year 2023 Honey Bee Award winners!



Tana Logue
Intensive Care Unit

Tana Logue, BSN, RN, Intensive Care Unit, nominated by the daughter of a patient who was suffering from double pneumonia, a blockage in her left kidney, atrial fibrillation and sepsis. The nomination read, in part:

"All these words scared me to death. In the ICU, nurse Tana Logue was assigned to mom. Tana barely left my mom's side. She was there to care for her and save her life. Tana cared for my mom as if she was her own family member.

She knew how scared I was and went above and beyond to help me understand," the nomination continued. "Tana cared for me with her kind words, her caring hand and her whole heart. My mom was in the ICU for 12 days and received the absolute best care possible." ■



Mary Ripper
Integrated Care



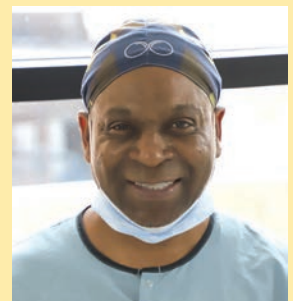
Sheri Ritter
Pharmacy



Terry Gumm
Cardiovascular Unit



Kylie Miller
Gen Med/Observation
Decision Unit



Theo Sexton
Environmental Services



Meghann Hagerbaumer
Patient Access



Lisa Kindhart
Food & Nutrition



Nicole Deverger
Emergency Center



Dena Heaston
Rehabilitation Services



Kourtni Shankland
Gen Med/Hospitalist/
Observation Decision Unit

APP Council works to increase patient access

In addition to the seven nursing councils whose members have the decision-making capacity to change practice and the practice environment at Blessing Health, is the Advance Practice Provider (APP) Council. The APP Council represents the organization's more than 100 advanced practice providers—including nurse practitioners, physician assistants and clinical nurse specialists.

The APP Council was established in 2019. Due to staffing changes in 2022, the council became inactive. In 2023, two family medicine nurse practitioners, **Sara Martin, APRN-FNP** and **Julie Barry** (now retired), brought the council back to life.

“The value of the APP Council is representation,” said Sara. “Our nurse practitioners make up approximately one-third of our providers in our health care system.

Through the council, we use our education and experience to help ensure policies and procedures, and how we train our future APPs, are done in the best way possible to ensure our patients get the best care.”

Tracy Viers, APRN-AC-AGCNS, Quality and Performance Improvement/Critical Care, is chair of the APP council.

“We are striving to support quality care, patient experience and provider well-being, while improving population health and lowering cost.”

The council's formal purposes include:

- Assessing, designing, delivering and evaluating patient care experience and outcomes

- Providing consultation to all health care professionals throughout Blessing Health System, based upon area of practice expertise
- Providing, supporting and developing an infrastructure for the collection and analysis of interprofessional health care data to promote nursing research and evidence-based practice
- Demonstrating initiative by professional development and mentoring of staff, students, new APPs and colleagues
- Promoting personal professional growth in knowledge and skills through lifelong learning

The council meets bimonthly, also coordinating two meetings per year that offer the ability to network, CE credit and an opportunity to meet the current employed students within the health system.



APP Council members Terry Thomas, Diane Nutter, Tracy Viers, Sara Martin

The council's vision includes development of strategies to implement care-delivery models that maximize and elevate the capabilities of each team member within the framework of

federal/state law (licensure), professional national/state regulations (scope of practice) and accreditation standards.

The council has four subcommittees:

- **Scope of Practice**—Monitor changes in scope of practice and Nurse Practice Act for Illinois and Missouri, monitor changes at a federal level, revise collaborative agreement language as needed and work in inclusive language throughout the health system for APPs.

- **Student Experience**—Create a formal process for clinical scheduling, develop a policy around student experiences/expectations, address barriers to the student experience, develop a student bootcamp/resource to help prepare students for the licensing/credentialing process following completion of school and retain high-quality students within the health system.
- **Recruitment & Onboarding** —Enhance the current APP mentor onboarding process, revitalize the transition to practice program, create a welcome packet for APPs joining the health system and enhance the onboarding experience.
- **Retention & Communication**— Enhance provider engagement, provide professional development opportunities such as skills labs and CME opportunities, provide ongoing communication through a newsletter and the HEART tab on the BRAIN and use feedback from the Peakon employee engagement survey to retain APPs.

Terry Thomas, APRN-FNP, Occupational Health provider at Blessing Health Hannibal, is chairperson of the Scope of Practice subcommittee, and served on a similar council at a hospital she worked at in Nebraska.

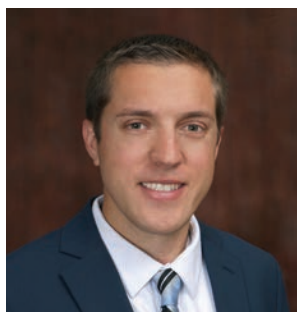
“Policy and practice don’t always meld at the same time. So, we are trying to remove barriers, trying to update hospital policies so that advanced practice providers can do the best job for their patients and provide the best care.”

Diane Nutter, APRN-FNP, Occupational Health and Walk-In Clinic, says over the years she has been a “sit-back-and-watch kind of cheerleader.” That changed when the council was reenergized in 2023 and she joined. She is now co-chair of the Scope of Practice subcommittee.

“If you want things to change, and you want things to be available to your patients, how else are you going to get things moving if you’re not part of the process?” The way health care is, and lack of access to it, we need to open that up. If we really want to bring access to the people, we need fewer restrictions and full practice authority.”

Brett Genenbacher, PA-C, RRT, FCCS, Critical Care Services/ICU, is chairperson of the Retention and Communications subcommittee.

“When the health system is better able to retain APPs it benefits our patients through continuity of care. NPs and PAs are vital to providing access of care, especially in a rural community such as Quincy,” Brett said.



Brett Genenbacher, PA-C, RRT, FCCS



Dacon Scott, PA-C

“Healthcare does not occur in a vacuum, we are all a part of the system that helps care for our communities and our families. This starts with our patients, but also includes our students, employees, medical providers, and the infrastructure we have built to help bring good care to our communities,” said **Dacon Scott, PA-C**, Orthopedic Trauma Surgery. He is chairperson of the Student Experience Sub-Committee. “When we improve any one of these components, our patients experience a corresponding benefit of improved satisfaction and improved outcomes.”

“Our mission as a council is to continuously improve these components in order to continue to provide outstanding care for our patients, so that when a patient has a healthcare need, their first choice for their care is the Blessing Health System, and when a medical professional is looking for the next chapter in their career, their first choice of places to work is within the Blessing Health System,” Dacon concluded.

The council receives support from the Blessing Health System Medical Staff Office. **Allison Housewright, MBA**, Medical Staff Office, serves as the liaison to the council.

“I have been able to see firsthand what a wonderful APP workforce we have,” she said. “They are dedicated to our patients and to continuous improvement opportunities among the APP workforce.”

“We have a great team of APPs who have come together and have already made significant improvements,” Tracy concluded. ■

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