

# BLESSING HEALTH SYSTEM NURSING ANNUAL REPORT 2021

Fiscal year 2021: October 1, 2020  
through September 30, 2021

**Hilary Bastert, BSN, RN,** got her first taste of nursing as a teenage volunteer with the Blessing Youth Corps program. One of the departments she worked in at that time was One Day Surgery, the department where she works as a charge RN today.

## **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

Lori Wilkey, John McDowell, Cesar Lopez, Jessica Booth, Annette Heinecke, Debbie Heinecke, Tim Tranor

## INSIDE THIS REPORT

Shared Governance  
**Pages 5-6**

Quality by the Numbers  
**Pages 16-17**

Awards and Accomplishments  
**Pages 15 and 18**



# OUR TIME TO SHINE

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

**As I reflect back on our Magnet journey, I am so proud of the many accomplishments of nursing, and now is the time to celebrate!** Magnet is the highest level of recognition a hospital can achieve for excellence in nursing and is considered the gold standard in the nursing world. Magnet signifies the valuing of staff nurses by their leaders and by the organization, and the strength of knowledge they contribute, individually and together, to advance nursing practice.

We are coming to the end of our long-awaited Magnet journey. Our site visit dates are June 8-10. It's nursing's time to shine, to let everyone know how exceptional we are and the difference that is made in so many lives. We are at the end of our journey because of each one of you. You are the reason we are on this journey, you are what Magnet embodies, and each of you are exceptional. We look forward to having the Magnet appraisers on-site so they can "feel" the Blessing Difference—the teamwork, the care and passion we have for our patients, families and community. ■



# MAGNET®: A JOURNEY NOT A DESTINATION

Over the past 2 years, Blessing Hospital's Magnet journey has been focused on the submission of the Magnet document to the American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC). On February 22, 2022, the official Magnet document was submitted for review. **Sara Sullens, MSN, RN**, practice manager says, "Magnet is not just an award for the hospital. It is a celebration of nursing excellence. It's the story of nursing at Blessing and the exceptional care that is provided to our patients, families and community."

Although the final destination of becoming a Magnet organization is upon us, the journey to Magnet designation has proven Blessing Hospital remains committed to the culture of excellence, team-building and nursing professional development. Blessing Hospital has robust infrastructures that support shared governance, quality improvement, peer review, evidence-based practice and elevating the nursing profession. **Tim Tranor, DNP, MBA, RN**, chief nursing officer, is proud of the submission of the written document and looks forward to welcoming on-site appraisers to Blessing Hospital.

"Our written document highlights nurses' commitment to compassionate care, quality outcomes and teamwork," he said. "I look forward to appraisers speaking with staff about their success with providing exceptional care."

Magnet recognition is a true celebration of success. Success takes a team, and together Blessing Hospital will continue to achieve elevation of the nursing practice and nursing culture. ■

## 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.



AMERICAN NURSES  
CREDENTIALING CENTER



# The Return of Community Outreach



## Slow and cautious in the beginning, community outreach events returned to the region in 2021, offering Blessing Health System nurses numerous opportunities to give back to the communities they serve.

Fall and winter 2020 closed with a series of virtual education events focusing on a variety of topics, including breast cancer and diabetes. During these virtual events, Blessing nurses presented health information and answered viewer questions, ensuring community members maintained access to timely and accurate health information despite continued COVID-19 restrictions.

In addition, nurse leaders embraced innovative methods to share critical health education. Debbie Heinecke, administrative director, Blessing Heart & Vascular Center and **Kathy Jochem, clinical nurse specialist** (former stroke coordinator, Blessing Health System), were featured on *Act II and You*, a local radio program. During the radio interview, Heinecke and Jochem shared information on heart attack and stroke, including how to recognize and respond to each condition.

In February 2021, the health system hosted its first in-person event since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. More than 50 community members attended a no-cost community cholesterol screening, hosted at the Quincy Town Center (former Quincy Mall).

“Ongoing COVID-19 restrictions and precautions led to some minor changes to the event, but nurses worked hard to ensure community members still received the highest quality care and service,” explained **Laura Wietholder, MSN, RN, community outreach coordinator**, Blessing Health System.

“We had to modify some of our early events by spacing out appointments, requiring masks and doing enhanced cleaning, among other precautions,” Laura stated. “Our nurse volunteers worked hard to make sure our patients and attendees had a great experience at every event and screening.”

After the success of the cholesterol screening in February, the health system hosted a number of other screenings throughout the year, including several no-cost diabetes screenings and two adolescent cardiac screenings.

*(Continued on next page.)*

(Continued from previous next page.)

Spring and summer 2021 saw the return of outdoor events and health fairs, including EMS Day and Blues in the District, where hands-only CPR instruction and stroke education took center stage.

Blessing also added several new events to its calendar. In June and July, Blessing sponsored two Summer of the Arts events hosted by the Quincy Society of Fine Arts at the Jackson-Lincoln Swimming Complex. In addition to the featured activities and entertainment, nurse volunteers provided sun safety education and distributed

sunscreen to Summer of the Arts attendees. No-cost hemoglobin A1C and blood pressure screenings were also offered, as well as take-home colorectal cancer-screening kits.

In total, Blessing nurses volunteered more than 100 combined hours at nearly 50 community events through fiscal year 2021.

“After more than a year without events, our nurses are excited to be back in the community volunteering,” Laura concluded. “These events would not be possible without their help.” ■

“HE WHO WISHES TO SECURE THE GOOD OF OTHERS, HAS ALREADY SECURED HIS OWN.”

CONFUCIUS

## SHARED GOVERNANCE



# B BLESSING HOSPITAL

## SHARED GOVERNANCE MODEL DEPICTING OUR COUNCIL STRUCTURE

\*Interprofessional Councils include (but are not limited to):

- Falls Committee
- Stroke Team
- Heart First and Chest Pain Committee



# Guide to Shared Governance Councils at Blessing Hospital

\*All meetings are preferred in person but have a Teams option for participation\*



## Professional Practice Council

When: 2nd Monday every other month (odd months) from 8:00-9:30 AM

Purpose: Nurtures the growth of the nursing professional practice environment as defined by the Five Components of Magnet including the implementation of nursing standards of practice, nursing specialty certification, attainment of BSN and higher degrees, and the healthy work environment. This council also focuses on recruitment and retention of nurses.

## Nursing Care Committee

When: 2nd Monday every other month (even months) from 8:00-9:30 AM

Purpose: This council works to strengthen the voice of the RN through input into staffing considerations and staffing variations. This council works to update and edit the hospital wide staffing plan and work with the CNO on staffing recommendations. This council requires 55% membership of RN's from direct care areas.



## Interprofessional Clinical Practice Council

When: 2nd Monday of the month from 9:45-11:45 AM

Purpose: The council is multidisciplinary and works to continuously improve the care and service provided to our patients and their families. The council focuses on hospital-wide improvements based on strategic goals and how to best coordinate patient care and nursing standards between departments and councils.



## Nursing Review of Practice

When: 2nd Monday of the month (as needed) from 12:15-1:15 PM

Purpose: This council works to review issues or concerns with nursing practice to understand trends or process improvement opportunities to implement changes. The council reviews cases submitted and recommends actions to improve the delivery of patient care in the organization.



## Evidence-Based Practice and Research Council

When: 3rd Monday of the month from 10:00-11:00 AM

Purpose: Builds and maintains the organizational infrastructure for evidence-based practice and research. The council's goal is to improve patient care through innovation and support nurse residency evidence-based practice projects.



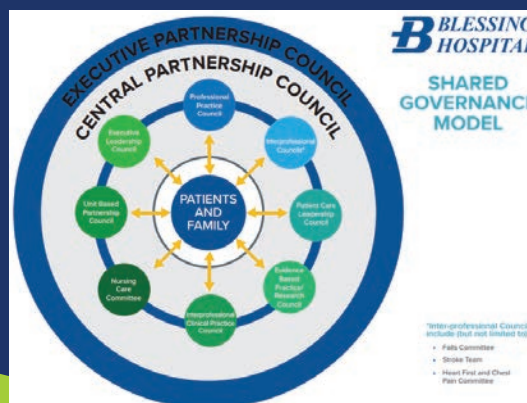
## Central Partnership Council

When: 3rd Wednesday of the month from 7:00-8:30 AM

Purpose: Is a way to collaborate with interprofessional team members and to reduce siloing throughout the organization. The chair or co-chair from each unit's partnership council attends.



Follow us on Facebook  
@ Blessing Hospital  
Shared Governance for  
updates!



For questions,  
contact  
Sara Sullens, MSN,  
RN  
Practice Manager  
ext. 6385

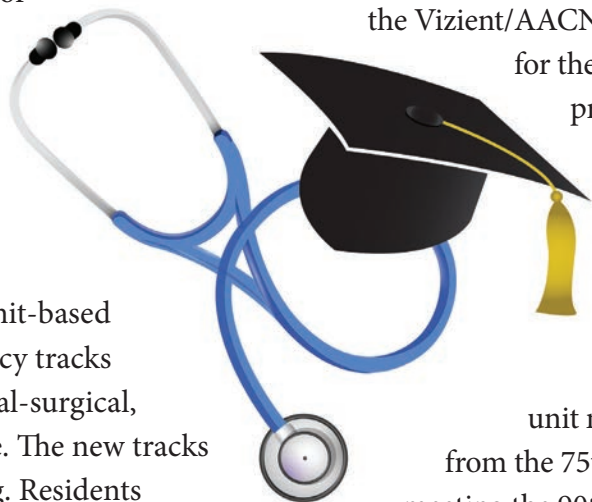
# FEEDBACK IMPROVES NURSE RESIDENCY PROGRAM



The Blessing Hospital Nurse Residency Program has continued to flourish. In 2021, we evaluated how the program could best meet the needs of the new graduate registered nurses as they transitioned into their new roles.

The nurse residency coordinator at the time, **Amy Wingerter, RN**, reviewed feedback from past residents and found that the residency program had the opportunity to create specialized tracks for nurse residents.

After collaborating with the unit-based educators, specialty-based residency tracks were made for critical care, medical-surgical, psych services and post-acute care. The new tracks take a hybrid approach to learning. Residents spend part of the residency seminar learning from various content experts and then learning specialty-specific content from their unit-based educator. Feedback from the residents has been positive for the new approach.



During the graduation of each cohort, nurse residents present their evidence-based practice projects. As Vizient/AACN Nurse Residency Partners, our residents have the opportunity to submit an abstract to the yearly nurse residency conference. In 2021, Blessing Hospital Nurse Residency RNs **Brooke Ebbing, Jennifer Haerr, and Brianna Murphy** were chosen for a podium presentation at the Vizient/AACN Nurse Residency Conference for their evidence-based practice project, “Words to Remember”. The residents’ project focused on using key words during patient education about post-anesthesia side effects at key times. Using key words at key times was effective, and their unit moved their OAS CAHPS scores from the 75th percentile to consistently meeting the 90th percentile.

Unfortunately, due to COVID-19, the conference was unexpectedly canceled. However, we hope there will be an opportunity for the residents to present their work at the conference at a later time. ■

# Nurses play key role in operating new life-support system

National statistics from the height of the COVID-19 pandemic showed that 50%-60% of patients placed on the life-support system known as ECMO, short for extracorporeal membrane oxygenation, survived at least 90 days.

Blessing Hospital has two ECMO systems it began using in 2021 that were part of the treatment of five patients with COVID-19. While the national statistics on ECMO and COVID-19 do not sound encouraging, ECMO-trained nurse, **Shane Stanford, RN**, Cardiovascular Unit, witnessed one of the success stories.

"One of the patients had a couple of little kids, a beautiful family. It was hard to watch them struggle through all this," Shane said. "The fact that he made it through was heartwarming. The last I heard he was doing well."

ECMO does the work of the heart and lungs, taking the blood from a patient's body, oxygenating it while removing the carbon dioxide and returning it to the body. ECMO reduces stress on the heart and lungs of a critically ill patient.

"Because of ECMO, these five patients were able to stay at Blessing for their care, instead of being transferred elsewhere—if there were beds available at another hospital at the time," said another of Blessing's ECMO-trained nurses, **Brandi MacArthur, RN**, Intensive Care Unit. "Often, there were no ICU beds available elsewhere during the pandemic."

ECMO has uses other than for patients with COVID-19.

"After a heart attack, the heart's function can



Shane Stanford, RN



Brandi MacArthur, RN

decline for as long as 48 hours," Shane explained. "ECMO can bridge the patient for that time to let the heart rest, until their heart function recovers on its own or, if it doesn't, they may be a candidate for heart transplant down the road."

The life-support system is also used when the care team is unsure of the disease process causing a critically ill patient's heart and/or lungs to fail. By doing the work of the heart and/or lungs, the system provides precious time for the team to determine a diagnosis.

"ECMO differs from ventilators," said **Shanna Winter, RN**, critical care nurse educator. "Ventilators help the lungs. ECMO, in addition to the ventilator, can essentially help take the place of the lungs and/or heart when they are failing. It is not a cure, but gives the body more time to heal."

Blessing has a team of specially trained ECMO nurses, with a second team currently in training. Training for ECMO specialist nurses is extensive and requires many hours of study and hands-on training.

"ECMO patients must be monitored intensely at all times," Shanna stated. "There is never not an ECMO-trained nurse in the patient's room."

"And this is not something they do only during their regular shift. These nurses are on ECMO call also. Call can be in addition to their regular shifts. If a patient is placed on ECMO, that nurse is coming in to run it," she said.

Brandi and Shane welcome the responsibility.

"I've been with Blessing 10 years and you never stop learning," said Brandi. "When they bring in something that can help save more lives, of course I want to learn all about it. I want to be the expert on it."

*(Continued on next page.)*



(Continued from previous page.)

"It felt like this was the next step in my career, and it felt right to take that leadership step as one of the more experienced nurses in the unit," Shane added. "Besides, I naturally gravitate to the sickest patients."

Nurses are not alone in trying to save lives with the help of ECMO.

"While ECMO-trained nurses have much responsibility, use of the system requires a team including respiratory therapists, multiple physicians and other providers, pharmacists and lab team members. The entire critical care team is on deck when it comes to ECMO," Shanna concluded. ■

## BLESSING HOSPITAL 2 NORTH: Strengthening the bond

### Blessing Health System caregivers focus on the bond of the physical, mental and spiritual aspects of a person when restoring them to their best health.

On 2 North at Blessing Hospital, caregivers work to make that bond stronger.

Patients with behavioral health issues frequently have physical health issues that need care simultaneously. The issues could be the result of a chronic illness, such as diabetes, or related to substance use disorder or a failed suicide attempt.

Whatever a behavioral patient's acute medical need, standards of care say they cannot be admitted to a behavioral unit until their medical need is stabilized. This can take anywhere from a few days to more than a week. At Blessing Hospital, those patients are admitted to 2 North.

In health care as in all aspects of life, time is precious, from treating someone for a heart attack or stroke to addressing behavioral needs. 2 North staff understand that, too.

"If we wait to start moving those wheels (behavioral care), patients can get anxious," said **Kristen Inman, RN, 2 North**. "They start thinking about what their stay in the behavioral unit will be like. They can overthink that."

"And depending on why a patient is medically unstable, say it is an overdose or suicide attempt,

therapy needs to begin quickly. Patients need that support," she continued.

Kristen has lived this experience. She was a psych tech at Blessing before earning her nursing degree.

So 2 North has begun a program through which behavioral patients can meet regularly with a psychiatrist and social worker while they are being medically stabilized. These patients also have a full-time "psych sitter" and other special accommodations in their rooms for their safety while on 2 North.

"I have had a patient who said she was very grateful we took the time to make sure she was safe and that we did a wonderful job talking to her," Kristen reported.

Kristen believes other members of 2 North feel as she does, caring for different patient populations is an opportunity, not a challenge.

"I love having the opportunity to take care of behavioral patients and medical patients at the same time," she said. "I was a psych tech and I thought I wanted to be a behavioral nurse. I find that I enjoy both worlds."

"As a psych tech, I gained the skill of developing a relationship with a patient, talking them through what they are experiencing," Kristen concluded. "It's not all giving pills. It's human to human. I love that and I am good at it." ■



Kristen Inman, RN

PROGRESSIVE CARE UNIT (PCU)

# THIS TEAM “OWNS” IT



Ashley Kincaid, RN

## There was a time, not long ago, when the Blessing Hospital Progressive Care Unit (PCU) had one certified nurse.

PCU nurses earn Progressive Care Certified Nurse (PCCN) status. It validates a nurse's knowledge regarding care of acutely ill adult patients and promotes continuing excellence in progressive care nursing. Requirements for the certification include at least 1,750 hours of practice as a registered nurse in the direct care of acutely ill patients over the previous 2 years before taking and passing a written examination.

To increase the ranks of PCCNs, department leaders asked the PCU Partnership Council to help raise awareness among the unit's RNs of a free study course that was available to them. **Ashley Kincaid, RN**, was chairman of the council at the time.

"Our Partnership Council was hopeful of reaching a goal of increasing certified nurses on PCU by 10%," Ashley said. "It's a very in-depth class, but we had a lot of interest in it."

"PCU nurses exceeded expectations," she continued. "We started with one nurse certified and now have 11 certified."

That's a 1,000% increase.

Ashley says among the reasons for success in the growth of certifications on PCU is chemistry.

"We work well as a team and push each other. That's one of the things I love about PCU," she said. "We hold each other accountable for our individual practices and for being part of a team."

Certification is a source of pride and a demonstration of how important patient care is to us. We owe it to our patients to grow in our education."

Certified nurses on PCU also hope to serve as role models for new nurses on PCU.

Ashley earned her certification as part of the first group that accessed the free study course. In addition to the course, the health system reimburses nurses for the cost of the certification exam.

"Personally, it increases my confidence," she said. "I know I have grown professionally in my three years at the bedside full time, but it is nice to have that confirmation on paper."

*"We started with one nurse certified and now have 11 certified."*

**THAT'S A 1,000% INCREASE.**

*Here is how Ashley prepared for the PCCN certification exam:*

1. Took the study course
2. Spent about 15 minutes a night doing practice questions
3. Understood what she didn't know and focused her attention on those topics
4. A week before the test, increased study time as much as possible

"Work hard and own your own practice. One of my clinical instructors taught me that, and it stuck with me," she said. "It means do the right thing. Take care of your patients, yourself and your team, and do what it takes to accomplish that."

PCU owns it. ■

# Surgery and orthopedics team up to provide patients a unique opportunity

## Blessing Hospital is among an elite group of providers when it comes to total knee replacement.

According to the National Institutes of Health, approximately 5% of these procedures are done on an outpatient basis currently. Blessing is among that exclusive group of providers because of the space and technology available in the new surgery center. Patients who meet the guidelines can get their knee replaced at the Blessing Surgery Center and go home the same day.

“When the doctor told me that it was going to be outpatient and I can go home the same day, I thought, “That doesn’t happen,”” said Richard Reese, who had outpatient knee replacement at Blessing. “But, it’s what happened, and it worked tremendously.”

Success requires the skill of the Blessing orthopedic and sports medicine team and the surgery and anesthesia staff.

“Dr. Mary Kussman (anesthesiologist) performs a nerve block in pre-op for better pain control during the recovery process,” said **Amanda Molohon, BSN, RN, PACU**. “Additionally in pre-op, to reduce the risk of surgical-site infections, the patient undergoes a nasal swab, use of CHG wipes, and a blood sugar test is performed as high glucose can delay healing.”

Amanda went on to say the patient is also seen by physical therapy to ensure they have the strength and mobility to go home safely the same day.

“Patients have been doing very well with optimal outcomes,” she concluded.

Just over a month after surgery, Richard was back in the gym, on the elliptical and doing a mile-and-a-half every day.

“I mean it’s just incredible,” Richard proclaimed. “I am back to leading an active life, and I am so thankful.” ■



**From left to right:** Richard Reese is one of a growing number of patients who had outpatient total knee replacement surgery at the Blessing Surgery Center; The space and technology in this operating room in the Blessing Surgery Center accommodates outpatient total knee replacement surgery; National statistics predict that the demand for total knee replacement will grow to 3.4 million procedures by 2040, a more than 200% increase from today’s demand for the procedure.

# How Blessing nurses reach the next level of their careers

**Hilary Bastert, BSN, RN**, One Day Surgery, started volunteering through the Blessing Hospital Youth Corps beginning in 2007. Little did she know that decades later she would become a registered nurse in the One Day Surgery department. Hilary states, “I still remember wiping down surgery charts in the nurses’ station.” Now Hilary is a highly trained and skilled professional who provides surgery patients with exceptional care.

Hilary has been a nurse for 7 years at Blessing Hospital. Most recently, she took advantage of professional development opportunities and participated in the Career Care Clinical Ladder. Hilary found her experience with the Career Care Clinical Ladder valuable and full of resources.



“I was able to meet with coordinators and other staff that have participated in prior years. This guided me through the process and gave me the resources to ensure I completed all the necessary steps. I applied for and received level 5. I was already doing all the work with volunteering within my unit and other Blessing Hospital opportunities. I just put it all together in a portfolio and showed what I had been working on.”

The Career Care Clinical Ladder Program has been growing, with more participants each year. While the program is designed for clinical RNs, the PRIDE program is for non-clinical RNs. Many participants achieved their professional development goals in the last year. ■

## CAREER CARE 2021

### LEVEL 3

Lisa Farrell  
Caitlin Hoeltje  
Lucas Hugenberg  
Sarah Redington  
Elizabeth St. Clair  
Brandy Tallman  
Jill Wiemelt

Kendra Harris  
Erica Hilgenbrinck  
Ashley Holland  
Ashley Kirlin  
Brandi Macarthur  
Sarah Mittelberg  
Robin Reis  
Ryan Schumacher  
Ben Thompson  
Karrie Voss  
Dakota Wand  
Hilary Wells  
Keith Wilson

### LEVEL 5

Stacy Adams  
Alicia Ahern  
Callie Asmann

Hilary Bastert  
Julie Cassens  
Dawn Crabtree  
Teresa Darnell  
Deb Derhake  
Kaylan Drebes  
Mandy Edmunds  
Bethany Haage  
Angie Hancox  
Dolores Haschemeyer  
Kellea Hendrian  
Jennifer Hermann  
Cindy Hoewing  
Ashley Huber  
Laurie Jansen  
Lisa Kerker  
Cassie King

Angie Loos  
Jessica Maggart  
Lisa Neisen  
Tonya Newell  
Lacy Nichols  
Jessica Nuebel  
Cindy Peters  
Rita Schaefer  
Julie Smith  
Shane Stanford  
Wendy Walker  
Nicole Walton  
Diana Weatherford  
Laura Wietholder  
Amy Wingerter  
Shanna Winter  
Beth Zanger  
Helen Zimmerman

## PRIDE 2021

### LEVEL 3

Michael Richard  
Sheryl Sullivan

### LEVEL 4

Jenny Dickhut  
Eydie Tipton

# THE GREATEST SHOW *on Earth*

**Each Nurse Week celebration at Blessing Hospital is built on a foundation of its history of nursing excellence, as the excellence of the current staff is honored.**

Funds from the estate of Laretta 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.

Laretta (seen in photo at the right) 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 Two.

After the war, Laretta earned a double major in nursing education and public health nursing, followed by a Master 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, non-traditional 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, design of medication carts and the charting system, establishing a disaster plan and developing Blessing's Child Care Center, the first onsite center at an Illinois hospital. It was part of Miss Laretta's effort to recruit nurses and continues to attract staff to Blessing today.

Laretta 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. ■



# Excellence Award Winners



## Lauretta M. Eno Distinguished Nurse Award

*Angie Hancox, RN—C3, Care Management, Blessing Hospital*

"From the beginning of her Blessing career, Angie has always been an idealistic representation of nurse leadership. She worked as a registered nurse throughout the hospital. She not only has ICU experience, but is a black belt in Six Sigma and a C3 for care management. Angie is not only intelligent but has mastered sharing her knowledge with others.

Before ICARE standards were introduced at Blessing Health System, Angie always held herself to her own care standards. She is efficient, compassionate and committed to her patients. Patients and patient families are aware of the extra compassion, humor and efficiency that Angie can bring.

Angie is loved by her patients and admired by her coworkers. She is the perfect example of what excellent nursing is and proves it in all aspects of her career."

*Congratulations to ALL the Blessing Health System RNs nominated for the 2021 Eno Distinguished Nurse Award!*

## Licensed Practical Nurse Clinical Excellence Award

*Carrie Gramke, LPN—Pediatrics, Blessing Physician Services*

"Carrie is a great person to work with, always coming into work with a smile and a positive attitude. She also is loved and appreciated by her patients' parents, always staying a bit late to finish phone calls and contact parents back who are waiting on test results, or to answer a question. Many times, I have answered the phone, and parents request to speak to Carrie because she is their "go-to" person. She knows these families and can always find a way to comfort a concerned parent.



Her way with patients is also something special. When Carrie comes out to get them, we have had kids get excited that she gets to take them back to their room, or kids walk in talking about Carrie.

Carrie deserves this, not only because she is a fantastic nurse, but the way she connects with her patients and their parents is what really draws people to our office, and through positive word of mouth and experiences that are the result of her character and dedication to her job."



## Partner in Caring Award (for non-nursing caregiving staff)

*Christy Wellman—Surgical Tech, Blessing Surgery Center of Quincy*

"Christy is certified and has been active with the John Wood Community College Surgical Tech Advisory Council to help recruit qualified students into the surgical tech program.

We have a new specialty, and Christy has stepped up to learn these cases and has become a mentor.

She has received compliments from physicians and from peers how helpful and supportive she is to the team."

# DAISYs

## Nothing stops excellence

**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 the extraordinary nurses everywhere who make a difference in the lives of people by the work they do every day. More than 4,500 health care providers worldwide participate in the DAISY award program, and to date, more than 135,000 nurses have been recognized with the award.

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.”

Blessing Hospital is proud of every nurse nominated by patients, families, peers, and staff. Following are the nurses who received the award during Fiscal Year 2021, and a portion of their nomination:

**Tammy Ruths** — *Infection Prevention*

*During the pandemic Tammy answered calls on Blessing Health System’s COVID-19 Hotline. She helped a woman secure a rapid virus test so she could see her ailing mother in a nursing home before the woman passed away. Tammy’s coworkers wrote: “Tammy called the very tearful and very grateful woman at 7:47 pm, 15 minutes after taking the initial call, to inform her to head to the testing site for her rapid test.”*

**Lauren Tallman** — *OB*

*“Becoming a new parent is scary. She made the process one we would want to experience again.”*

**Dakota Wand** — *ICU*

*“She is truly an angel and one of the most compassionate nurses I have encountered.”*

**Kelli Terwelp** — *Emergency Department*

*“She is a great example of the kind of nurse you want representing Blessing Hospital.”*

**April Grattan** — *Hospice*

*“I can’t thank her enough for being a special person to my grandma in her final months of life.”*

**Beth Jones** — *Centralized Staffing*

*“This beautiful nurse arranged for us to stay at the Quincy Hospitality House. Then, after her shift on her way home, she brought us dinner. She was our angel.”*

**Jennifer Masker** — *Women’s & Children*

*“I felt at complete peace talking to her and she was extremely personable which is helpful when you don’t have a loved one that can stay with you over the evening hours.”*

**Kayla Hurt** — *Behavioral Medicine Services*

*“She did not just treat me as a patient, but as a real person. You can tell being a nurse is not just a job to Kayla. She really cares about her patients.”*

**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.



### Congratulations to fiscal year 2021 Blessing Hospital Honey Bee Award winners!

**Valerie Pryor** — *Respiratory*

**Tyson Snyder** — *Environmental Services*

**Tara Althoff** — *Inpatient Care Coordination*

**Denise Sangoi** — *Rehab*

**Trista Neisen** — *Hospice*

**Brooklynn Vaughn** — *Women’s & Children*

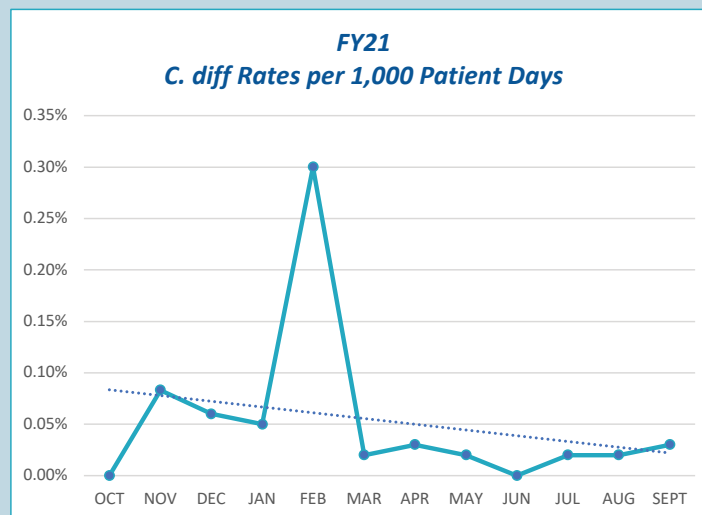
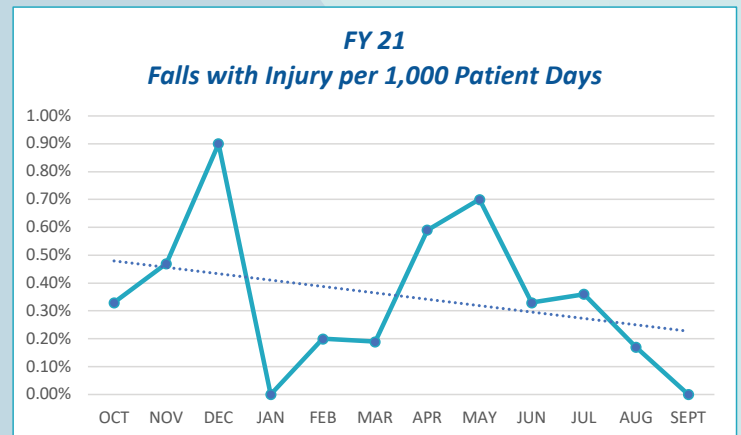
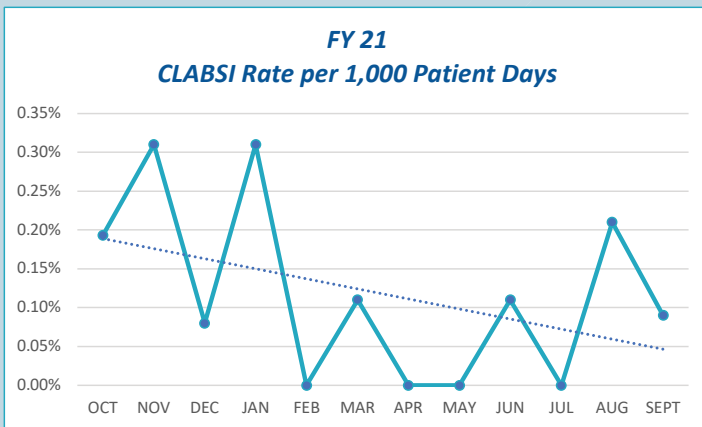
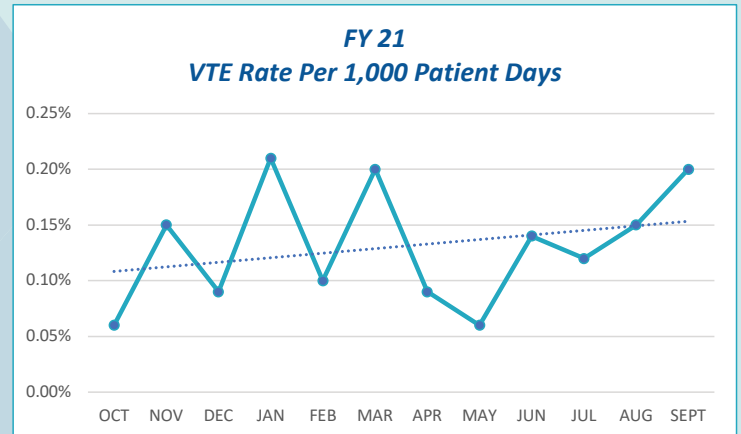
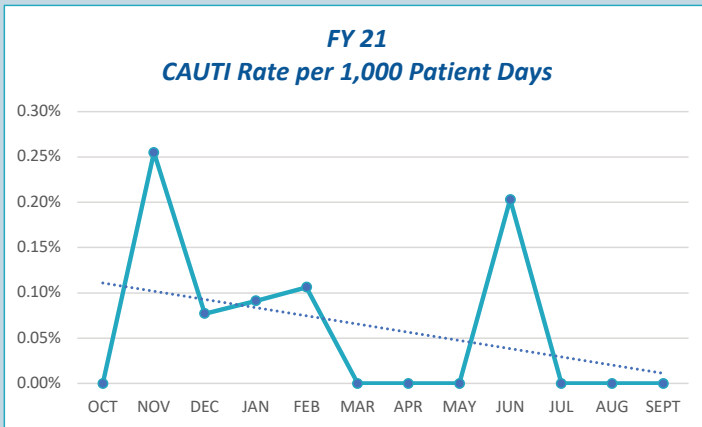
**Ryan Washington** — *5N*

**Brian Young, Steven Billington, Josh Wilson** — *Security*

**Jenny Sheely** — *Inpatient Care Coordination*

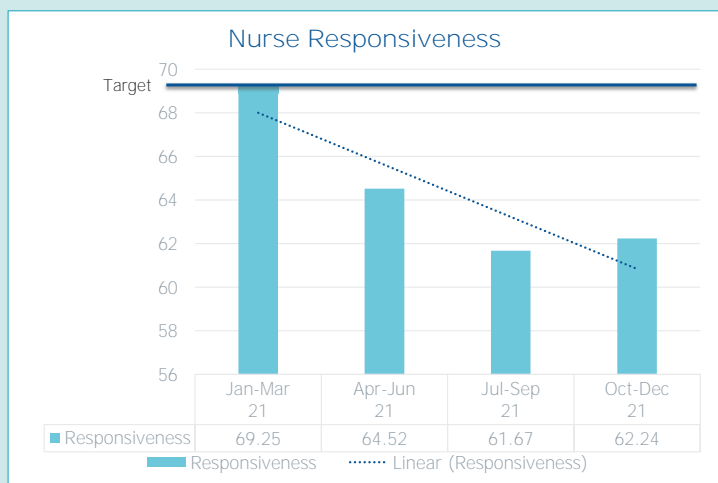
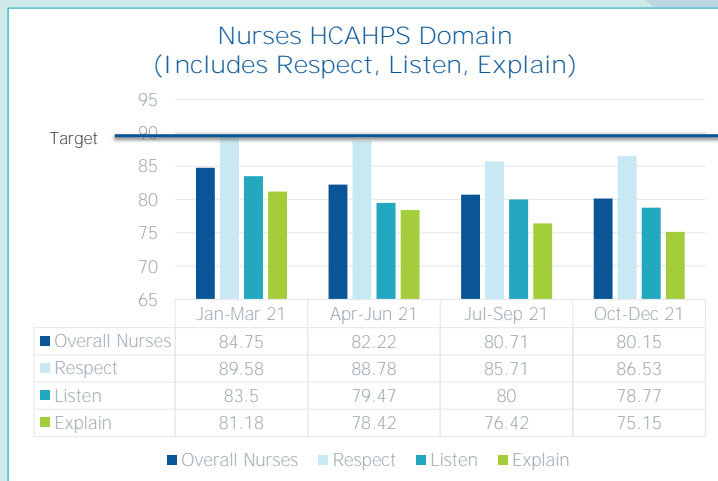
## Nursing-Sensitive Quality Indicators FY2021

Nursing-sensitive indicators are patient care and patient outcomes that are directly affected by nursing practice.





# DIFFERENCE IN THE LIVES OF OUR PATIENTS



## Nurses answer COVID's call

**Randi Donaldson, APRN, FNP-C**, (pictured below) is the essence of the "frontline" COVID-19 health care provider. When the pandemic took hold in March 2020, she was part of the original team who provided testing at the Blessing Flu-Like Illness Screening Center at the Blessing Conference Center, 28th and Chestnut.

"We did not know anything about COVID. It was just a scary thing," Randi recalled.

Scary was not going to keep Randi from helping meet the need. So she adapted. Blessing COVID-19 caregivers excelled at adapting.

"I have people with health conditions in my home. We decided that I would live in a camper. I did that for three months," Randi related.

She rejoined her family in their home after three sometimes lonely months and now provides care at Blessing Express Clinic.

**Kelly Maisel, RN**, was a coworker of Randi's at the Screening Center and is now her one-up, manager of the Walk-In Clinic and Blessing Express Clinic.

"Being a nurse during the pandemic was exciting," Kelly stated. "My goal was to try to help as many people as I could, to calm people's fears and make them feel comfortable."

"If this was going to be successful (the Screening Center and Express Clinic), I wanted to be a part of it," she continued.

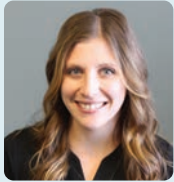
Kelly and Randi agree that the Screening Center and Express Clinic gave the region a fighting chance against COVID-19.

"I am not sure where all of these people would have gone to get their care," Randi said. "A lot of people would have missed out on the good care that they needed. We were able to provide that care for them."

"People would not have had access to care as quickly as they did," Kelly added. "We would have seen people driving far and wide to get COVID tested and to have access to care when they needed it. It would have had a huge impact on the community to not have the Screening Center or Express Clinic." ■

# Certifications, publications and other accomplishments

Congratulations to the following nurses on their successes. If you have a professional accomplishment to share, call or email Sara Sullens, Practice Manager, Nursing Administration.



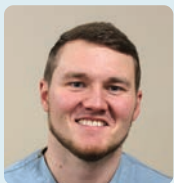
**Sarah Andrew, BSN, RN**, cardiothoracic and vascular surgery, earned the status of cardiac vascular nurse-board certified (CV-BC) from the American Nurses Credentialing Center.



**Ashley Chbeir, BSN, RN**, clinical research coordinator, earned certification in chemotherapy and immunotherapy administration from the Oncology Nursing Society (ONS) and Oncology Nursing Certification Corporation (ONCC).



**Shaylin Dugal, RN**, Blessing Cancer Center, earned her associate degree in nursing from John Wood Community College/Blessing-Rieman College of Nursing & Health Sciences, and her license to practice as a registered nurse by passing the National Council Licensure Examination-R.N. Shaylin was a licensed practical nurse when she joined Blessing Hospital in 2017.



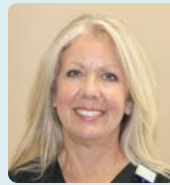
**Jordan Hahn, BSN, RN**, cardiac catheterization lab, earned the status of progressive care certified nurse (PCCN) from the American Association of Critical-Care Nurses.



**Eydie Tipton, DNP, RN, CCRN-K, CNML**, nurse researcher, Nursing Administration, and **Kellea Hendrian, MSN, RN, CCM**, certified case manager, Nursing Administration, had their research, “Decreasing Hospital Falls with Injury Utilizing Shared Governance and Multidisciplinary Empowerment,” published in the online publication, Nursing Management.



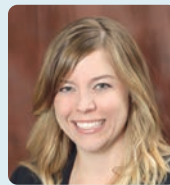
Blessing Heart & Vascular Center registered nurses **Jody Figge** and **Naomi Schenk** earned the status of registered cardiac electrophysiology specialist (RCES) from Cardiovascular Credentialing International. Electrophysiology (EP) involves the diagnosis and treatment of malfunctions in the heart’s electrical activity that controls the timing of heartbeats.



**Jenna Koster, MSN, RN**, had her research paper, “Identifying Self-Care Practices in Heart Failure Patients,” published in The Nursing Voice.



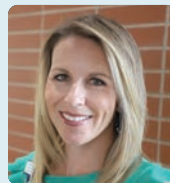
**Lisa Lake, BSN, RNC**, non-invasive cardiology, earned national certification in cardiac-vascular nursing from the American Nurses Credentialing Center.



**Andrea Leone, DNP, APRN, AGACNP-BC, FNP-C**, cardiothoracic surgery, earned adult-gerontology acute care nurse practitioner national certification from the American Nurses Credentialing Center. She is also a certified family nurse practitioner.



**Lacy Nichols, BSN, RN**, Blessing Beginnings, the birth center of Blessing Hospital, earned the status of Neonatal Touch and Massage Certified (NTMC) nurse. She is one of 1,400 professionals worldwide who provide care to newborns to hold this certification.



**Laura Wietholder, MSN, RN**, community outreach coordinator, earned her master of science in nursing degree from Blessing-Rieman College of Nursing & Health Sciences. She also holds a bachelor of science in nursing degree from Blessing-Rieman.

# How Blessing's Express Clinic team handled COVID surges



**The Blessing Express Clinic team will likely never forget January 2022. They saw more than 6,000 patients over those 31 days, mostly for COVID-19 testing due to the omicron variant.**

How was the team—including 2 RNs, 3 LPNs and 2 CMAs—able to meet that demand?

“We changed our workflows,” said **Kelly Maisel, RN**, Walk-In Clinic/Express Clinic manager. “The Adams County Health Department took over our COVID vaccine program so we could focus on testing. Then, we staffed each of the Clinic’s four drive-thru lanes with a provider and a nurse. We were able to do that because providers and nurses from other departments came to help us when they could. Then, Security responded to handle traffic control, helping patients know what lane to use for the care they needed.”

“The change of workflow was huge,” she stated.

The team was used to ever-changing workflows. It began nearly 2 years before the delta and omicron surges—when the Express Clinic’s forerunner opened at the start of the pandemic to help reduce the spread of COVID-19 by testing people with respiratory illness outside of the traditional clinic setting. That place was called the Blessing Flu-Like Illness Screening Center at the Blessing Conference Center at 28th and Chestnut.

“We had to adapt from the beginning,” said Tena Awerkamp, director, Primary Care Services. “The staff redeveloped workflows very quickly and revisited

the workflows regularly to adjust to the changing environment that came with COVID.”

“We just keep reinventing ourselves,” she continued.

The Flu-Like Illness Screening Center recorded 15,849 patient visits between the day it opened on March 16, 2020 and the day it closed at the end of that year to move and become the Blessing Express Clinic.

With the Blessing Express Clinic seeing 200 to 300 cars a day during the height of the delta and omicron surges, Tena said the timing of the change was perfect.

“Had we not created Blessing Express Clinic, I don’t believe the Screening Center could have handled the delta or the omicron surges,” she concluded. “Could you imagine hundreds of cars snaked throughout the neighborhood at 28th and Chestnut?”

COVID-19 is not the only reason patients come to the Blessing Express Clinic. The staff provides testing and care for a variety of non-life-threatening illnesses. From its opening day, January 4, 2021, through January 31, 2022, Blessing Express Clinic recorded 22,368 visits.

“What makes Express Clinic successful is that it is geared toward the expectations of today’s patient,” Kelly observed. “People want health care quickly. They don’t want to have to get out of their vehicle, go into a clinic and wait. They feel this is a faster process and see this as a huge benefit. It also helps with some of the fear factor, for kids especially.”

“It exceeds our patient expectations,” Kelly concluded. ■

# “EXCEPTIONAL CARE” What does it look like?

## Exceptional care looks different through the lens of each Blessing Health System affiliate.

At Illini Community Hospital, exceptional care is being in the top 10% of critical access hospitals (CAHs) in the country for exceptional care transitions for all emergency department transfer patients, as recognized by the Medicare Beneficiary Quality Improvement Program (MBQIP).

“We are very proud of our team for achieving this level of excellence in health quality,” said Kathy Hull, chief of small rural hospitals, Blessing Health System. “This is truly a team effort that recognizes our dedication to delivering a health care experience of which our patients and staff can be proud.”

The Federal Office of Rural Health Policy requires CAHs to participate in the MBQIP and measure at least one of four domains to be eligible to apply for a benefit called Flex funding. The four domains are Patient Safety/Inpatient, Patient Engagement, Care Transitions and Outpatient Measures. While Illini was recognized for its outcomes in care transitions, the hospital goes above and beyond, reporting its outcomes in all four domains.

“We like to know where we are at with all of our data, and we want to have that national comparison,” said Jennifer Mowen, administrative director, performance improvement and management services.

Strong emergency patient care transitions are important to Illini. As a CAH, it is not uncommon for Illini’s emergency patients to require transfer to the next level of care.

“We’ve done a lot of work to make sure we are prepared whenever a patient is transferred,” said **Lexy Damon, RN**, nurse manager, Illini emergency department. “To get to the level of compliance we are at today, we’ve made sure thorough documentation and clear communication with the receiving provider are priorities to the Illini emergency center staff. Every staff member plays a role in our process and our success.”



*Front Row (left to right): Cheryl Syrcle, RN; Becky Peters, RN; Megan Jacobs, RN; Heather Smith, RN, and Ed Smith, RN.*

*Back row (left to right): Destiney Smith, RN; Phillip Renner, RN; Dr. Thomas Cliatt; Lexy Damon, RN Nurse Manager and Dr. Robert Thomas.*

*Not pictured: Amanda McDonald, RN; Jane Thomas, RN; Amy Martin, RN; Gayla Risley, RN; Dr. Stuart Pyatt and Kerensta Graham, RN, clinic quality specialist, quality management.*

**Kerensta Graham, RN**, clinic quality specialist, quality management, works very closely with the Illini emergency

team to report outcomes and identify opportunities for improvement. She audits 15 charts per month and reports those findings to the federal improvement program.

“The team does a good job in documentation,” she said. “Not only is everything signed and documented by the doctors, the nurses are also documenting consistently, and all the essentials are sent to the next provider with the help of the techs on staff.”

“I am very appreciative of the quality management department we have here at Illini,” Lexy added. “We would never be able to be where we are if they were not doing the legwork for us to look at the process improvements that need to be made.”

“I know where we used to be,” Jennifer said of Illini’s emergency patient care transitions outcomes. “I congratulate the emergency department team and Kerensta for the improvements made in the emergency department care transition process.” ■

# Tough decision leads nurse down new path



*Pam Booth, LPN, and Laura Schwieter, LPN*

## **Pam Booth's nursing career has touched the lives of more patients than she could ever have imagined.**

She is a licensed practical nurse and informatics specialist at Hannibal Clinic, one of two people responsible for the support of the clinic's electronic health record (EHR) system and training staff to use it.

"Hannibal Clinic experienced nearly 225,000 visits in fiscal year 2021," said **Alicia Shaffer, MSN, MBA**, director, clinical operations, Hannibal Clinic. "Those visits don't happen without the hard work of Pam and Laura."

**Laura Schwieter, LPN**, is the clinic's other informatics specialist responsible for its EHR.

Pam's career began just where she hoped when she joined Hannibal Clinic 11 years ago, as a nurse in the surgery department. Six years into her job, the nurse who had been in charge of training clinical staff on the EHR left the organization. Clinic leadership asked Pam if she would take the position.

"It was a very tough decision," Pam said. "You want to be a nurse to care for patients, so you're thinking, 'I don't want to be with a computer all day.'"

But Pam loves Hannibal Clinic and its family atmosphere.

"You do what you have to do to help the clinic," Pam said. "And, the more you learn, the better off you are."

In addition to EHR system support and training new providers and clinical staff on use of the system, Pam and Laura play key roles in Hannibal Clinic's quality program.

"We are graded against other health care facilities on data coming out of the EHR that feeds into the quality measures of the accountable care organization we are in," Alicia said. "It's really important we are able to do that accurately for Medicare reimbursement and to help us to know we are taking the best care of our patients."

"Pam and Laura help make sure we have accurate quality data coming out of the EHR, and they are willing to dig and figure out if we've missed something," she stated.

Pam did not come into her EHR role with any specialized knowledge. When it came to technical know-how, Pam had taken a few computer classes in high school and learned the rest on the job.

"Pam and Laura have really had to learn a lot in their role," Alicia observed. "It's phenomenal how much they have taught themselves."

"Their nursing background helps," she continued. "It allows them to talk to the doctors and nurses and keep the record as simplified as possible with not too many clicks. They understand what clinicians need to be efficient."

Pam not only followed a different career path than she imagined, but she also almost did not get in to nursing at all. Pam began her LPN studies at the age of 36, after the automotive factory job she held was outsourced overseas.

"It's weird how things work," Pam said.

It's also wonderful in this situation for the patients and staff of Hannibal Clinic. ■

# One nurse's journey to the bedside



**Bev Armstrong's path to a nursing career began late in life, with the arrival of her granddaughter. Born in Keokuk, Iowa, with a hematoma, the baby was transferred to the neonatal intensive care unit in Iowa City.**

"The nurses were amazing. They were so kind, gentle and caring," Bev recalled. "I said, 'Maybe one of these days I'll go back to school.'"

She did. When the job Bev had at the time was eliminated, she used the opportunity to apply to nursing school, was accepted and became a registered nurse at the age of 51 years old.

Bev joined the staff of Blessing Health Keokuk after graduation and remains there today. She has touched the lives of many patients over the past 18 years, working in behavioral medicine, medical-surgical, ambulatory OR, ambulatory infusion, wound clinic and critical care.

"The more I work in different areas, the more training I get," Bev said. "My supervisor says I can never retire because I know too much."

Bev gladly shares her knowledge with new coworkers, particularly through "cheat sheets" she created. They include simplified steps for admissions and discharges, and proper documentation.

"I managed a convenience store for more than 8 years. The profit line is very important," Bev stated.



*"I wish I would have done it earlier."*

*Bev Armstrong, RN*

"I try to encourage new nurses when they do their documentation to be specific so the patient is taken care of, and we and the hospital are taken care of."

## Another life-changing event

Four years ago, at the age of 64, Bev was diagnosed with a terminal lung disease, idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis. Medication slows its progression. However, someday Bev will be on oxygen and a lung transplant list.

But today, she gladly remains on the job.

"I have a positive attitude," Bev declared. "I continue to care for patients and I enjoy it."

Except for the 10 days she was off work to recover from COVID-19, Bev worked through the pandemic.

"I am a tough old bird. Mind over matter. You have to want to go on," she said.

Bev does have plans to retire and join her husband in seeing the country from their motorcycle.

"I can have the worst day possible, and I'll call my husband and say, 'Hey! Let's ride,'" she exclaimed. "No more than 10 minutes into the ride, the 'wind therapy' eases my mind. It is awesome."

Until then, Bev will be at the bedside at Blessing Health Keokuk.

"I feel I owe them a lot," Bev said of the hospital that hired her as a rookie nurse at the age of 51. "People have to have loyalty." ■

# Meet a gardener who also wears a lab coat



Sara Martin

## What do you get when you mix a love for the land with a passion for helping people? You get Sara Martin, APRN-FNP, Nurse Practitioner, in Blessing's Family Medicine Department.

Born into a farming family, her parents continue to garden, Sara enjoys spending time with her family, tending to her home garden. What she doesn't grow at home, Sara purchases from local farms. It is important to her to know that the food she eats is fresh, and how it was grown and cared for. A healthy diet provides the foundation for a healthy life.

Sara also works with a team of Blessing volunteers who tend the Quincy Rotary Club/Lowe's/Blessing Community Garden. Planted in the garden's three dozen growing boxes each season is a variety of produce that is given patients of the Blessing Diabetes Center, to give them convenient, no-cost access to healthy food to help manage their diabetes. Last year, the community garden produced nearly 300 pounds of fresh produce for patients.

The American Diabetes Association recommends following the Diabetes Plate Method as an easy way to teach nutritional changes to patients with diabetes. The Diabetes Plate Method encourages filling half of the plate with non-starchy vegetables, a quarter of the plate

with starchy vegetables or fruit, and the other quarter of the plate with protein.

"Unfortunately, some patients have barriers that limit their ability to follow a diabetic diet, increasing their long term risks for complications due to poor control of their blood sugar," Sara said. "For these patients, transportation to the grocery store and the cost of produce makes these recommended foods out of reach."

"The Quincy Rotary Club/Lowe's/Blessing Community Garden fills that need by providing hundreds of pounds of fruits and vegetables to our patients each season, allowing them to pick up produce from the Blessing Diabetes Center, along with recipes that incorporate the produce, at their convenience," she continued.

New in 2022 courtesy of Lowe's, Blessing Diabetes Center patients could receive seed starting green houses and seeds at no cost.

"With these gardening kits, we are providing instructions on how to start the seeds, many of which are a variety intended for container gardening, to make it easier to grow their own garden anywhere," Sara said.

"Being able to gift Blessing Diabetes Center patients with the ingredients for their favorite homemade salsa or salad is rewarding and important to help them achieve life-changing health improvements," she concluded. ■



## Blessing-Rieman nursing grads make the grade!

Blessing-Rieman College of Nursing & Health Sciences 2021 nursing graduates delivered a nationally-ranked performance on the National Council of Licensure Examination (NCLEX):

- The December 2021 class posted a perfect pass rate. At the time the national first-time pass rate average was 86.5 percent.
- Earlier in the year, the 2020-2021 grads posted an 86% first-time pass rate, equal to the national first time pass rate at that time.

*“Our graduates are among the best in the nation as evidenced by their stellar performance on the national licensure examination,” said college president and professor Brenda Beshears. “In addition, they have qualities not measured by a test — compassion, critical thinking, and resilience. The College community is incredibly proud of all graduates.”*

