



# Growing through shared leadership



# 2019 WellStar Nursing Excellence Award Winners

Nurses change lives every day, bringing hope and healing to members of our community. Their dedication is an inspiration. Nurses whose work elevates their profession are recognized annually with the WellStar Nursing Excellence Awards. Below are the names of the 2019 winners and their clinical partners.

## **Atlanta Medical Center**

Professional Practice Star Nurse:  
**Alicia Sawyer, RN**

Rising Star in Nursing:  
**Brittney Besley, RN**

Nightingale Nurse:  
**Jacqueline Johnson, RN**

Innovations in Professional Practice Nurse:  
**Lashundra Watson, RN**

Preceptor:  
**Laurine Harris, RN**

Leadership:  
**Crispen Lott, RN**

Provider Partner in Excellence:  
**Bamidele Adeyemo, MD**

## **Cobb Hospital**

Professional Practice Star Nurse:  
**Olivia Harris, RN**

Rising Star in Nursing:  
**Jacob Shartar, RN**

Nightingale Nurse:  
**Friederike Bale, RN**

Innovations in Professional Practice Nurse:  
**Julie LaFontaine, RN**

Leadership:  
**Katie Ibar, RN**

Preceptor:  
**Diane Brose, RN**

Provider Partner in Excellence:  
**Tod Rubin, DO**

## **Douglas Hospital**

Professional Practice Star Nurse:  
**Jennifer Craddock, RN**

Rising Star in Nursing:  
**Brett Hall, RN**

Nightingale Nurse:  
**Jem Doane, RN**

Innovations in Professional Practice Nurse:  
**Margaret Giles, RN**

Preceptor:  
**Etheleen Kickler, RN**

Leadership:  
**Shannon Hill, RN**

Provider Partner in Excellence:  
**Kathy McMinn, MD**

## **Kennestone Hospital**

Professional Practice Star Nurse:  
**Nancy Dorsey, RN**

Rising Star in Nursing:  
**Maddie Richards, RN**

Nightingale Nurse:  
**Sharon Hornbuckle, RN**

Innovations in Professional Practice Nurse:  
**Becky Falkins, RN**

Preceptor:  
**Vinezia Leveque, RN**

Leadership:  
**Signe Gilbert, RN**

Provider Partner in Excellence:  
**Brenda Carey, APP**

## **North Fulton Hospital**

Professional Practice Star Nurse:  
**Christine Ali, RN**

Rising Star in Nursing:  
**Sarah Smith, RN**

Nightingale Nurse:  
**Cindy White, RN**

Innovations in Professional Practice Nurse:  
**Monique Dillon, RN**

Preceptor:  
**Boris Vaserman, RN**

Leadership:  
**Shanta Bunkley, RN**

Provider Partner in Excellence:  
**Tony Ambrose, MD**

## **Paulding Hospital**

Professional Practice Star Nurse:  
**Britney Whaley, RN**

Rising Star in Nursing:  
**Lauren Rase, RN**

Nightingale Nurse:  
**Michelle Silwa-Glaser, RN**

Innovations in Professional Practice Nurse:  
**Cori Kelly, RN**

Leadership:  
**Janelle Stewart, RN**

Preceptor:  
**Sandy Bobb, RN**

Provider Partner in Excellence:  
**Steven Bailey, MD**

## **Post-Acute**

Professional Practice Star Nurse:  
**Mindy Styer, RN**

Nightingale Nurse:  
**Leigh A. Freeman, RN**

Innovations in Professional Practice Nurse:  
**Barbara Bianchi, RN**

Preceptor:  
**Colleen Jones, RN**

Leadership:  
**Ricky Messer, RN**

Provider Partner in Excellence:  
**Manouchka Joseph, MD**

## **Spalding Regional Hospital**

Professional Practice Star Nurse:  
**Rene Spafford, RN**

Rising Star in Nursing:  
**Joe Gorman, RN**

Nightingale Nurse:  
**Ginger Lifsey, RN**

Innovations in Professional Practice Nurse:  
**Sara Kruczek, RN**

Preceptor:  
**Christen Kennedy, RN**

Leadership:  
**Sally Scheuermann, RN**

Provider Partner in Excellence:  
**Inder Tandon, MD**

## **Sylvan Grove**

Professional Practice Star Nurse:  
**Nicki Butera, RN**

Rising Star in Nursing:  
**Brittany Hayden, RN**

Nightingale Nurse:  
**Melissa Stewart, RN**

Preceptor:  
**Maja Lee, RN**

Leadership:  
**Erica Fishell, RN**

Provider Partner in Excellence:  
**James Carter, MD**

## **West Georgia Medical Center**

Professional Practice Star Nurse:  
**Elizabeth M. Nelson, RN**

Rising Star in Nursing:  
**Kaitlin Smith, RN**

Nightingale Nurse:  
**Peggie Ward, RN**

Innovations in Professional Practice Nurse:  
**Karen Summers, RN**

Preceptor:  
**Lacey Manning, RN**

Leadership:  
**Lindsey Perkins, RN**

Provider Partner in Excellence:  
**R. King, MD**

## **Windy Hill Hospital**

Professional Practice Star Nurse:  
**Lissa Watson, RN**

Rising Star in Nursing:  
**Morgan Davis, RN**

Nightingale Nurse:  
**Floristina Burke-Davis, RN**

Leadership:  
**Charlene Mitchell, RN**

## **WellStar Medical Group**

Professional Practice Star Nurse:  
**Shelby Fields, RN**

Rising Star in Nursing:  
**Kimberly Carter, RN**

Nightingale Nurse:  
**Jenny Gifford, RN**

Innovations in Professional Practice Nurse:  
**Lashonte T. Shaw, RN**

Provider Partner in Excellence:  
**Avril Beckford, MD**

## **WellStar Shared Services**

Professional Practice Star Nurse:  
**Cortney Johnson, RN**

Rising Star in Nursing:  
**Jessica Hairston, RN**

Nightingale Nurse:  
**Denise Hanselman, RN**

Innovations in Professional Practice Nurse:  
**Courtney Dunson, RN & Natalie Jones, RN**

Provider Partner in Excellence:  
**Avril Beckford, MD**



## Shared Leadership: The WellStar Way

This year, some three million members of our community were cared for, comforted, educated, or inspired by a WellStar nurse. The *2019 Nursing Report* reflects their role as compassionate healers, accomplished scholars, and engaged team members.

Across our System, the voice of the clinical nurse drives data-based decisions. WellStar nurses are empowered to find new solutions to healthcare challenges, while contributing to their profession through research and innovation. Their engagement in shared decision-making and strategic partnership with leaders not only advances their practice, it contributes to exceptional patient outcomes. The critical role our nurses have played in our growth is reflected in our story on page 22 about the legacy of WellStar Douglas Hospital.

We encourage the successful transition of new nurses and invest in the ongoing growth and professional education of experienced nurses—a mark of cultural excellence. As well, we use innovative approaches to guarantee a strong nursing future in our state by supporting the aspirations of area students. A story on page 15 illustrates this priority. You'll also read about efforts to create a supportive work environment that keeps nurses strong and resilient.

It is an honor to partner with and lead this team. Their impact on the health and wellbeing of patients, families, and our community is truly extraordinary.

*Jill Case-Wirth*

Jill Case-Wirth, MHA, BSN, RN  
Senior Vice President and Chief Nurse Executive  
WellStar Health System

### WELLSTAR PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE MODEL



## Vision

WellStar nurses will be recognized as national leaders in the practice of nursing by promoting:



Holistic patient  
and family  
centered care



Quality and  
innovation



Education



Evidence-based  
practice



Nursing  
research





# Professional Development



## PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE PRIORITY:

In an increasingly complex healthcare environment, nursing is a rich profession that offers a wide range of specialties with lifelong learning at all levels of practice. WellStar is committed to supporting our nurses in their pursuit of ongoing education and professional growth. By adopting evidence-based practice and participating in nursing research, we will advance the nursing profession and cultivate careers. Participation in professional organizations is valued and encouraged.

WELLSTAR PAULDING HOSPITAL

## A Journey of Strength: OR Is CNOR Strong®

**In 2019, the WellStar Paulding Hospital OR received the national CNOR Strong® designation, which acknowledges proficiency and excellence in surgical nursing. The prestigious designation is offered by the national Competency & Credentialing Institute (CCI).**

The process began in 2017 with a gap analysis conducted by the Perioperative Shared Leadership Council and the departmental educator. The goal was to determine a baseline certification rate, set a certification goal, and develop an action plan to reach it. At the time, only three eligible OR nurses, excluding the manager and the perioperative nurse educator, were CNOR certified. Andrea Joseph, MSN, RN, CNOR, explained, "Barriers identified included the fear of failure, lack of support from some colleagues, lack of knowledge about certification, procrastination, and cost."

The OR members of the Shared Leadership Council set a goal of increasing the number of certified RNs by 1% by 2018. The perioperative nurse educator offered essential support, reviewing certification requirements and providing access to CNOR® study materials and prep classes. Leadership set aside funds to accommodate reimbursement of certification fees and provided nurses with time off for preparation and testing.

The OR team exceeded the original goal and reached a 50% certification rate in 2018, which inspired a new goal of .5% for 2019. CNOR Strong® designation requires a team certification rate greater than 50%. In 2019, the Paulding Hospital OR received the national CNOR Strong® designation with a certification rate of 72%. ■



OR members of the Shared Leadership Council



WellStar Paulding  
2018  
CNOR certification rate:  
**50%**



WellStar Paulding  
2019  
CNOR certification rate:  
**72%**

WELLSTAR ATLANTA MEDICAL CENTER

# Mindfulness Research Suggests Benefits for Leaders

**Nurses Kat Roberts, BSN, RN, Caritas Coach, and Christi Jordan, BSN, RN, HNB-BC, LMT, CCAP, at WellStar Atlanta Medical Center have conducted a study on the effect of mindfulness on healthcare leaders. The study was approved by the Institutional Review Board, which provides ethical oversight on research projects.**

The research looked at the impact of a “mindfulness moment” on burnout (stress, anxiety, etc.) among hospital leadership. The study included a baseline survey, a teaching and guided meditation/ mindfulness practice at the beginning of every safety huddle, and a post-study survey of burnout.

Respondents, 38 for the pre-study survey and 31 for the post-study survey, included leaders, supervisors, and nurse managers who regularly attended the daily safety huddle.

Researchers found that a three-month mindfulness practice had a marked effect on participants. Respondents reported a decrease in feelings of exhaustion related to work, as well as an increase in energy for family and friends. The

results were surprising to many who were initially skeptical about participating.

The findings correlate with other research that addresses the role of the mindful leader in employee performance, emotional exhaustion, and work-life balance.

“In a challenging environment such as health care, leadership and management are sandwiched between administration and direct-care staff,” said Roberts. “This can lead to stress, anxiety, and feelings of powerlessness, especially when also balancing the needs of patients, staff, and administration.”

Other results included reduced interest in seeking other employment and a stronger

sense of working in a supportive environment. Some 90% of respondents said they would like to continue, while 97% said practicing mindfulness had a positive impact on their day. Notably, 74% reported increasing their practice of self-care since starting the mindfulness practice.

Theresa M. Glomb et al. provides detail regarding the work-related effects of mindfulness practices that address those concerns. Notable to healthcare management are improved response flexibility, affective regulation, empathy, increased self-determination and persistence, and more accurate affective forecasting. These qualities contribute to enhancing the relationship between supervisor and staff members and potentially increasing resilience for both populations. ■

*Reference:*

Glomb, T., Duffy, M., Bono, J., and Yang, T. (2011). *Mindfulness at work. Research in Personnel and Human Resources Management, Volume 30, 115-157*

## 90%

of respondents said they would like to continue mindfulness practice

## 97%

said practicing mindfulness had a positive impact on their day

## 74%

reported increasing their practice of self-care since starting the mindfulness practice



## It Takes a Village

For Carolyn and Jack Walker, winemaking is a labor of love. This past summer, the Paulding County couple was looking forward to harvesting a bumper crop of prized muscadine grapes and sharing their homemade wine with friends and family. Those plans changed in a heartbeat when an accident with a faulty range used in the process sent Jack to the inpatient burn unit at WellStar Cobb Hospital in critical condition.

With 40% of his body burned, Jack's focus was recovery. Carolyn was right there with him, supporting him and forming bonds with the incredible burn unit staff. During Jack's recovery, Carolyn voiced a worry to Jack's nurse, Katie Compaan, BSN, RN. She lamented the fact that she and Jack could not harvest the grapes and they would go to waste. Later that day, the nurse came back to Jack's room to report that they had recruited some friends to pick the crop! That fall, nurses joined Carolyn and some friends for a day of harvesting.

Carolyn was amazed and deeply appreciative of the compassionate outpouring of help. She recalled, "The staff here has lifted me. We have laughed, cried, and shared so much. This is my family and I love them very much."

### WELLSTAR KENNESTONE HOSPITAL

## New Certification Program Nurtures Expertise

**Nurses are lifelong learners. That's why it's essential for them to have the tools to advance professional growth at all career stages. Kennestone Hospital's Congestive Heart Failure unit devised an innovative way to advance nurses' professional development while increasing the number of nurses with specialty certifications.**

The Congestive Heart Failure Novice to Expert Nursing Education Plan—Bridge to CHFNC Certification is a two-year program that provides nurses with opportunities to review current research, attend classes, complete CBLs, and participate in shadowing experiences in the hospital and the community.

Completing the program gives a nurse the required knowledge base and CEUs to sit for the CHFNC certification. Currently all nurses and leaders on G5W, the congestive heart failure unit, are involved. Several nurses who transferred to other units at the hospital are continuing in the program, recently noted as a best practice by the Joint Commission. The first cohorts will complete the program on July 1, 2020. The unit has already noted improved trust scores around professional development. ■

### WELL-DESERVED RECOGNITION

- **Get with the Guidelines**
- **Gold Plus Target Stroke Honor Roll Elite Plus**
- **International**
- **1st in the state of Georgia to receive Joint Commission, Comprehensive Cardiac Certification**



Unit Celebration of Cardiac Award



# Shared Leadership



## PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE PRIORITY:

Embracing shared leadership fosters a culture that is rooted in team member engagement, collaboration, and trust, resulting in an enriched work environment that promotes nursing excellence at all levels of practice. By adopting the principal tenets of equity, partnership, accountability, and ownership, our nurses are empowered to influence their professional practice through our shared decision-making structure across the continuum of care. Performance excellence is attainable through a consistent and thoughtful focus on caregiver wellness, coupled with an emphasis on the appropriate allocation of resources and support to achieve both clinical and financial objectives.



WELLSTAR NORTH FULTON HOSPITAL

## Nurses Successfully Identify Safety Gap

**Patient safety is the highest priority for nurses practicing at WellStar facilities. When an interprofessional team at WellStar North Fulton Hospital reviewed their high-risk medication error rate, they immediately wanted to identify opportunities for improvement.**

The Clinical Practice Council (CPC) invited additional interprofessional team members to participate in identifying and developing a “test of change” to improve patient safety and clinical outcomes. As a high reliability organization, the CPC and team discussed the aspects for improvement owned by both the organization and the nursing practice.

“While there are several variables that go into Heparin infusion errors, our CPC isolated a possible gap in accountability and follow up related to the required dual sign-off process,” said Jaimi Allers, MSN, RN. “Despite having a double check and sign-off policy, medication errors were still happening. So we had to ask, ‘Do our nurses understand how to complete a dual check?’”

Members of the Clinical Practice Council, using evidence to support their work, developed a competency validation tool for double check prior to medication administration that included process steps to ensure accuracy and gap closure

Upon investigating, the CPC team identified several inconsistencies in how staff were completing the double check. Members of the CPC, using evidence to support their work, developed a competency validation tool for double check prior to medication administration that included process steps to ensure accuracy and gap closure. They identified a high risk/low volume Heparin unit and piloted the Infusion Double Check Competency, focusing on Heparin infusions. Nurses were reeducated on high-risk infusion double-check expectations and then completed competency validation to show understanding, accuracy, and accountability.

Through practice ownership, accountability, and teamwork, clinical nurses were able to identify a safety gap in clinical practice and address the issue to support patient safety using best practice standards to improve a process and patient outcome. The WellStar North Fulton CPC will continue to trend Heparin errors, post education, and monitor both the process improvement work and the Heparin infusion error rate over time to determine next steps. The goal is to ensure zero defects in the medication administration practice of nurses across WellStar. ■

WELLSTAR DOUGLAS HOSPITAL

# Code Lavender: Caring for Our Co-workers in Their Time of Need

During the spring of 2019, several nursing team members at WellStar Douglas Hospital lost loved ones. As usual, their nursing colleagues, leadership team, and the hospital chaplain rallied in support. Following one especially traumatic event, leaders decided to look for a better way to respond to the death of a loved one, the loss of a patient, or even a particularly stressful day.

During a Pathway to Excellence® webinar, Melissa Box, MSN, RN VP, CNO, and Professional Practice Manager Elizabeth Berrier, MSN, RN, learned about Code Lavender. The initiative was being used by other healthcare facilities to bring physical, psychological, social, and spiritual support to caregivers during times of high stress. It seemed the type of practice that could enhance the healing environment at Douglas Hospital and encourage self-care among staff.

In September, information about Code Lavender was shared with leaders of the hospital's Unit-Based Councils (UBCs), who were asked to present the concept to council members and get their feedback. The direct care nurses were also encouraged to submit other ideas

about how to best support staff during difficult times.

At the next Clinical Practice Council meeting, members agreed to move forward with the initiative. A subcommittee was formed to develop a Code Lavender process. The group included:

- **Elizabeth Berrier, MSN, RN,** Manager of Professional Practice
- **Bunny Albin, BSN, RN,** Women's Center
- **Mel Dewbre, BSN, RN,** Professional Educator Nursing
- **Steven Lambert,** Manager of Behavioral Health
- **Amy Nichols, BSN, RN, CMSRN,** Professional Educator Nursing
- **Tiffany Johnson, MSN, RN, CCRN-K,** Professional Educator Nursing

The response among participating team members has been overwhelmingly positive. "It was a touching moment to see that WellStar Douglas cares so much about the emotional well-being of our staff. I felt supported by my managers and fellow co-workers throughout the entire experience," said Savannah Taylor, BSN, RN (3 North direct care nurse and Code Lavender participant). ■



## Code Lavender Kits: Initial Intervention

Purple battery-operated tea light to be placed in view on nursing station counter (or other decided upon area)

Organza bag with the following items:

- Lavender bracelet
- Lavender essential oil
- Dark chocolate
- Affirmation/quote or relaxation technique

Based on severity or type of stressor, there may be follow-up services such as debriefing, chaplain support, chair massage, and music or pet therapy

## ED Redesign Yields Dramatic Improvements

This year, ED staff nurses and the department's Shared Leadership Council led a redesign of the front-end process at Atlanta Medical Center's Emergency Department to improve patient flow. Integrating several evidence-based practices resulted in shorter wait times and decreased length of stay. The initiative rolled out with a minimum of construction and relatively little disruption in care.

The first major change was to put a nurse in charge of patient check-in, rather than a member of the patient-access team. This makes the patient's first point of contact an RN who can obtain a heart rate and pulse oximeter and determine acuity.

As well, an Advanced Practice Provider (APP) was moved to the triage area so that patients could be medically screened and care initiated directly on arrival. A split-flow ED model was created by designating a vertical care space for ambulatory patients who did not require a room in the main ED.

Other changes included integration of nurse-driven protocols, such as the use of i-STAT machines, and more efficiency using a "swarm team" approach that moves more staff and resources up front.

Unit shared leadership council directed every aspect of the redesigned process. A blueprint was created to indicate rearranged care spaces, which were then "walked" in the path of the patient and in the path of the nurse. Lean principles were used in the selection and placement of equipment, such as the i-STAT machine and lab label

printer. Processes were hardwired by training engaged ED staff as key stakeholders on each shift to the front end, gradually rotating in and orienting other team members.

Results of the remodel were dramatic and measurable. After the first month, key throughput metrics had improved markedly compared to the previous year. Door-to-doc time decreased 68%, while "left without treatment" patients decreased 73% year over year. The ED's door to triage decreased from 13 minutes to 1 minute, and the length of stay for discharged patients dropped by 42%. Use of nurse-driven protocols reduced the time for a provider to make a disposition decision by 33%. Since implementing the changes, AMC's patient experience rating has moved from the first percentile nationally to currently trending in the 73rd percentile. ■

# 68%

decrease in  
door-to-doc time

# 73%

decrease in patients  
leaving without  
treatment

# 42%

reduction in  
discharged patient  
length of stay

CARING COMPASSIONATELY

## Patient Rests Easy Knowing Puppy Is Safe



While rounding on patients, WellStar Cobb Hospital Patient Flow Coordinator Megan Middleton, BSN, RN, encountered a patient, a long-distance truck driver, who was to be admitted to ICU. The patient was brought to Cobb Hospital by ambulance and was very worried because his five-month-old puppy Sheeba had been left in his truck.

Megan jumped into action and enlisted the help of manager Brittany Thompson, BSN, RN, CEN. Brittany got a ride with security to a large truck lot where she was able to locate the truck and rescue Sheeba. Over the next several days, Sheeba was cared for by various staff members and was returned to her owner upon his discharge. He was thrilled with the care he and Sheeba received and promised to "tell the entire world how great WellStar Cobb Hospital is!"



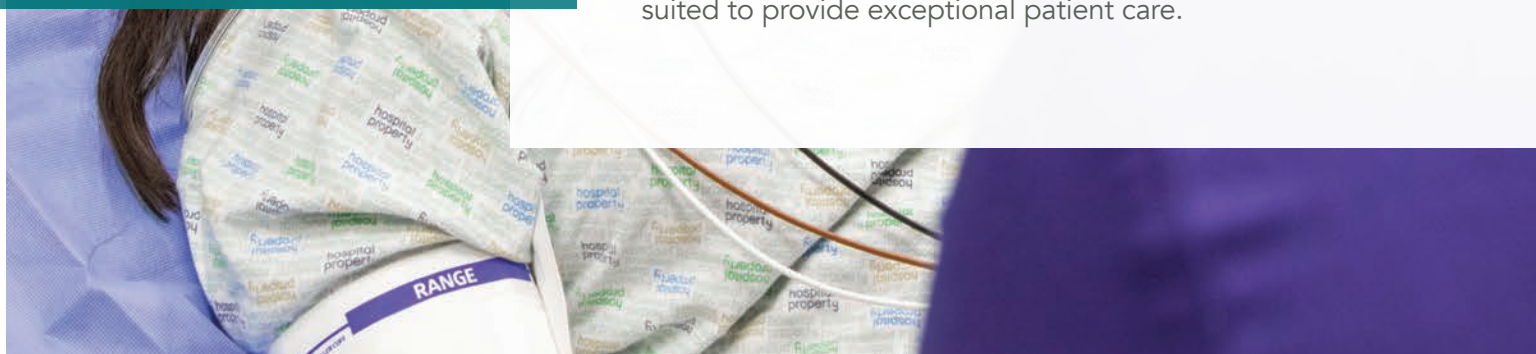


# Teamwork



## PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE PRIORITY:

Through teamwork, communication, and interdisciplinary planning of care, WellStar nurses deliver safe, high-quality healthcare. Nurses at all levels are involved in decision making, which enhances collegiality among team members. An engaged team that shares ideas and best practices is best suited to provide exceptional patient care.



## Focus on Metrics Aids Patient Understanding

The push for excellence is a driving force in the WellStar culture. The degree to which we succeed, as reflected in patient satisfaction, is captured in CAHPS and NRC scores. Monthly, nurse leaders and clinical nurses at Sylvan Grove Hospital, a critical access hospital, discuss these results and brainstorm ideas for improvement. It's not just a matter of analyzing scores, but also requires a deep dive into care processes to identify opportunities to make each patient's stay a more positive experience.

In 2018, Sylvan Grove Hospital began a focused review of metrics around medications, traditionally an opportunity for improvement. The team tracked three leading measures over a period of 24 months:



Patients counseled on discharge medications compared with patients discharged per week



Patients counseled on medications upon admission compared with patients admitted per week



Patients counseled by pharmacy during interdisciplinary team rounds compared with patients receiving rounds

As well, the team reviewed a lagging measure, patient CAHPS scores for the questions addressing Communication Regarding Medications.

Focused work on medication understanding was implemented

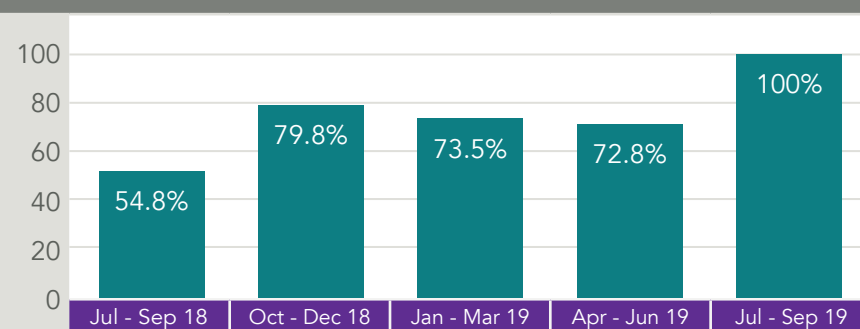
in September 2018, with a patient satisfaction score of 40% as the baseline and a goal of improving this percentage. Two questions from the patient CAHPS survey were used to identify, develop, and implement practice changes.

1. How often did hospital staff tell you what the medication was for?
2. How often did hospital staff describe possible side effects in a way you could understand?

Nursing implemented the practice of explaining every medication to every patient at every medication pass. Starting in August 2018, pharmacy partnered with nursing to provide discharge medication counseling to every applicable patient. Two months later, the nursing and pharmacy collaborated to implement providing medication counseling upon admission. In June 2019, the pharmacy began partnering with nursing and rehab during interdisciplinary rounds to educate patients and families on medications.

Outcomes of this interprofessional work are exemplary. The practices in place to sustain positive gains at Sylvan Grove involve weekly interdisciplinary rounding (IDR) by nursing (to explain medication and side effects) and by pharmacy (to conduct medication counseling upon discharge). These initiatives have had a significant positive impact on patient satisfaction and have enhanced trust among patients and family members with the care team. ■

Communication about Medicines



## WELLSTAR HOME HOSPICE

## Epic Alignment Improves Patient Safety

**Proper documentation is essential to ensure that every WellStar patient receives the best care every time.**

When the WellStar Windy Hill Hospital home hospice Shared Leadership Council realized that nursing care plans in Epic, the electronic medical record, did not match Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) documentation options, they felt it was critical to close this documentation gap. This was

considered to be a high priority as it could impact patient care and regulatory practice standards.

To resolve the issue in a timely manner, nurses and CNAs collaborated with the Performance Improvement and Information Technology teams to revise care plans and visit notes. Thanks to

their hard work, documentation is congruent and information flows properly.

This enhancement promotes patient safety, accurate documentation, and team member satisfaction. The project was highly successful and had a significant impact on home-hospice nurses and CNAs. ■

## WELLSTAR WINDY HILL HOSPITAL

## Volunteers Reach Communities in Need

**Reaching out to the larger community is part of the WellStar culture, including at Windy Hill Hospital, where team members participate in MedShare Volunteer Day as part of National Nurses Week activities each May.**

Atlanta-based MedShare delivers surplus medical supplies and equipment to communities in need around the world. The organization relies on more than 20,000 volunteers to help with repackaging, sorting, and distributing the items.

Team members at Windy Hill's Progressive Care Unit (PCU) look forward to the annual opportunity to give back. Said Sarah Meffert, MSN, RN, CNL, "It allows us to spend time with each other and our families outside of work and lets us

serve our community in a different way. We've been doing it for the last four years."

The PCU volunteers donated more than 100 hours of service to the organization collectively over the years helping to package supplies for shipment to more than 30 countries, including Kenya, Ecuador, Ethiopia, Lebanon, Uganda, and Nigeria. ■



PCU volunteers donated more than 100 hours of service, helping to package supplies for shipment to more than 30 countries.



# Shared Leadership Success Outside Hospital Walls

**Shared Leadership Councils are a best practice for nurses at WellStar hospitals and facilities. For the first time this year, shared leadership was adopted at an outpatient location, Kennestone Hospital's Comprehensive Care Clinic.**

This first-of-its-kind site was created to reduce readmission rates and improve quality of life for patients with heart failure. The interprofessional clinic is also the outpatient home of WellStar's Left Ventricular Assist Device (LVAD) program, as well as the System's only outpatient Palliative Medicine clinic. Clinic staff includes diverse health care professionals, including registered nurses, clinical pharmacists, social workers, dietitians, and ancillary and support staff.

In August 2019, Comprehensive Care team members developed the first outpatient Shared Leadership Council (SLC). The journey was based on the Great Place to Work survey results, which revealed that team members wanted greater decision-making authority. While shared leadership seemed an ideal framework for guiding the team, there was concern that a nursing Shared Leadership Council in a multi-disciplinary environment

would exclude many team members and might not promote trust within the entire team.

Collaboration with interprofessional disciplines has strengthened the team and improved the sense of ownership among all members.

The council chair is an RN, and members from various disciplines serve in other council leadership positions. The council has oversight for staff education, process improvement initiatives, and care delivery decisions, in collaboration with the physician and advanced practice partners.

The SLC has been well received. "In the short time the council has been at work, members have made remarkable progress," said Michelle Kimrey, MSN, RN, CNL, NE-BC, Nurse Manager,

WellStar Comprehensive Care at Kennestone. "That includes refining workflows to improve efficiency and patient experience, developing educational programs, participating in clinical research, creating treatment protocols, and participating in community service initiatives."

Using the framework provided by the WellStar Shared Leadership Councils, the team aligned goals and activities with System objectives, which elevated nursing practice in the work environment. Collaboration with interprofessional disciplines has strengthened the team and improved the sense of ownership among all members.

The Comprehensive Care Clinic's SLC shows effective shared leadership can be highly successful in unique environments and aligns with WellStar's mission and the nursing professional practice model. ■



## Creative Innovations



### PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE PRIORITY:

Nursing practice and care should be based on evidence-based practice, research, and industry standards. Resources to obtain the most current information are readily available and used to guide better patient care. Continuous improvement methodologies encourage our nurses to be open minded to change, as well as foster creative and innovative solutions, resulting in excellence.

WELLSTAR HEALTH SYSTEM

## A New Program to Support Students' Path Toward Nursing Careers

**WellStar Health System is participating in the WellStar Nursing Career Pathway, an industry-driven initiative designed to address the statewide need for nursing assistants, licensed practical nurses, registered nurses and registered nurses with a bachelor's degree in nursing. Hiram, Marietta and McEachern High Schools are planning implementation of the program beginning fall 2019.**

The WellStar Nursing Career Pathway provides an opportunity for rising ninth grade students with an interest in nursing careers to enroll in college-level nursing courses at Chattahoochee Technical College while still attending high school. Students will progress into a 26-hour nursing prerequisite for dual college-high school credit and earn state nursing aide certification. In addition, WellStar will provide onsite clinical experience throughout the duration of the program.



Once students complete their high school education, the college-level courses will count towards their nursing degree. Students will also receive clinical placements at WellStar and will have the opportunity to interview with WellStar upon graduation.

"We look forward to identifying students who have a passion for healthcare, nurturing this interest, and equipping them with the skills they need to succeed in a nursing role." - Jill Case-Wirth

"We are excited to implement this program as one solution to the state's shortage of nurses," said Jill Case-Wirth, SVP and Chief Nurse Executive, WellStar Health System. "We look forward to identifying students who have a passion for healthcare, nurturing this interest, and equipping them with the skills they need to succeed in a nursing role."

The alignment of resources through the HOPE Scholarship, HOPE Career Scholarship, and WellStar's Tuition Assistance Program is intended to provide participating students the opportunity to complete their college education with little or no tuition cost.

"This is a real model for how schools, colleges, and businesses can come together to forge clear pathways," said Stephen Pruitt,

President of the Southern Regional Education Board.

The WellStar Nursing Career Pathway was inspired by Sen. Lindsey Tippins and is an ongoing partnership between the lieutenant governor's office, WellStar Health System, the Technical College System of Georgia, the University System of Georgia, the Georgia Department of Education, Cobb, Paulding and Marietta City Schools, the Georgia Board of Nursing, and the Southern Regional Education Board. ■



WELLSTAR WINDY HILL HOSPITAL

## Patients Drink to Their Health

**Jemini Dethose, BSN, RN, CMRSN, was intrigued to read about an Ocean Spray study suggesting that cranberry juice might actually reduce UTIs in women who drink eight ounces per day. She was inspired to partner with the popular consumer brand to conduct her own research in the Progressive Care Inpatient Unit (PCU) at WellStar Windy Hill Hospital.**

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), catheter-associated urinary tract infections (CAUTIs) are the most common healthcare-associated infections. Preventing them is especially challenging in long-term acute care patients, due

to multiple comorbidities and the presence of an indwelling urinary device.

An interdisciplinary team assembled at Windy Hill included an infection prevention nurse, a staff nurse, the Clinical Nurse Leader, a dietician, a unit manager, and

a Nutrition and Food Services manager. The team established the parameters of the trial, which included a twice-daily Ocean Spray supplement, Cranberry + Health™, for all patients with an indwelling urinary catheter.

The Ocean Spray study, published in the American Journal of Clinical Nutrition, cited a 40% reduction in UTIs. The Windy Hill CAUTI team partnered with Ocean Spray on a three-month trial that saw an 83% decrease in CAUTIs from the previous three months, and a 54% decrease over a year. ■

ORIGINAL STUDY RESULTS:

# 40%

reduction in UTIs  
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WINDY HILL TRIAL:

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WINDY HILL TRIAL:

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WELLSTAR NORTH FULTON HOSPITAL

## Evidence-based Changes Improve Rapid Response

**When a patient starts to deteriorate, every minute counts. That's why the team at WellStar North Fulton Hospital worked to fine-tune their Rapid Response Team (RRT) this year. The team rushes critical care to the patient's bedside.**

"Failure to plan, communicate, and recognize when a patient's condition is deteriorating can be key contributors to in-hospital mortality," explained Elizabeth Hall, MSN, RN, and ICU leader. "When we can identify challenges in a timely fashion, we can often significantly improve patient outcomes."

To help decrease hospital mortality rates, length of stay, and failure to rescue, the North Fulton RRT identified several opportunities to improve processes and made significant practice changes. The team took a proactive stance and implemented evidence-based changes, such as clarity of RRT roles; created

professional development materials; implemented Standard of Work practices; and use of communications, patient surveillance, and outcome measurement tools. These changes have yielded an increased ability to round on patients, before crisis strikes, and reduce RRT calls and medical emergencies. ■

# OR Supply Innovation Saves Time and Money

**Patient safety, efficiency, and precision are goals of every operating room team. To accomplish these aims, surgical staff must have the supplies needed to complete scheduled cases.**

At WellStar Paulding Hospital, the Surgical Services department uses preference cards that identify supplies and instruments unique to each case and surgeon. Historically, multiple staff members, including anesthesia technologists, perioperative nursing assistants, surgical technologists, and nurses, assisted in gathering supplies and instruments prior to each surgical case.

"In 2018, our team noted a significant number of items were missing or selected incorrectly during the 'picking' process," said nurse Sandy Bobb, BSN, RN, CNOR. "Each time this happened, the circulating nurse had to leave the surgical suite to retrieve the needed item, which had an

impact on the efficiency and cost-effectiveness of that case."

Bobb recommended creating a new position known as a Sterile Core Liaison, a team member dedicated to picking items on each preference card who would be available as a runner for needed supplies during cases. This could significantly reduce the risk of missing and/or incorrect surgical items.

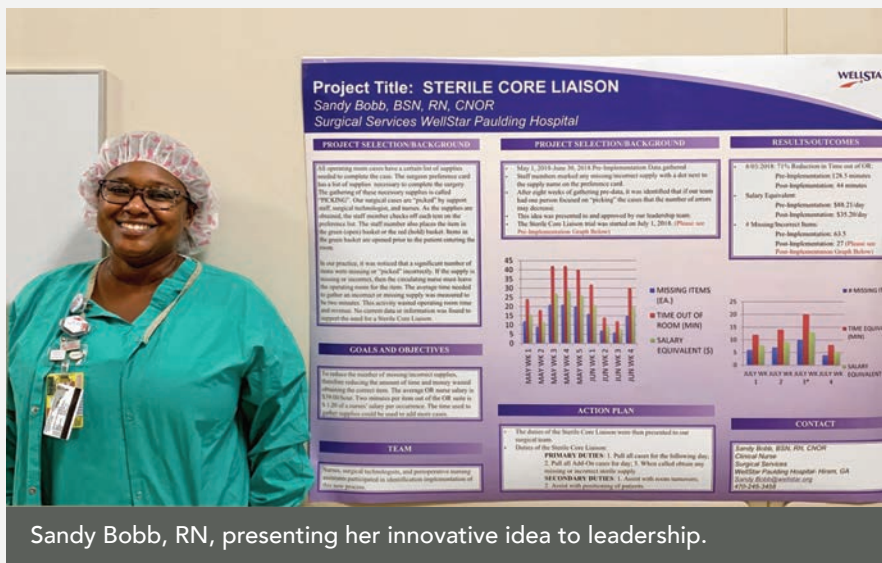
Her research found nothing about a comparable position. She presented the innovative idea to leadership and started collecting information. Said Bobb, "The data collection phase revealed the average time spent out of the operating room by the circulating nurse was two minutes per missing

or incorrect item." The cost of two minutes out of the operating room equated to \$1.20 of an OR clinical nurse's hourly salary.

Bobb and the leadership team discussed the potential financial impact of this new model and concluded that the unit would need to use existing staff to participate in the trial, to avoid adding cost. This would require adjusting the schedule of the chosen staff member to permit a four-week trial. Freed from other duties, the Sterile Core Liaison could focus on obtaining the needed instruments and supplies.

Post-implementation data showed a 71% reduction in RN time out of the OR gathering instruments and supplies. This translated into an RN salary equivalent reduction from \$88.21 per day to \$35.20 per day, and a reduction in the number of missing or incorrect items from 64 to 27 during the trial period.

This innovative idea yielded financial savings by addressing efficiency of workflow and time management for OR cases, big wins for nurses, surgeons, and for Paulding Hospital. ■



Sandy Bobb, RN, presenting her innovative idea to leadership.

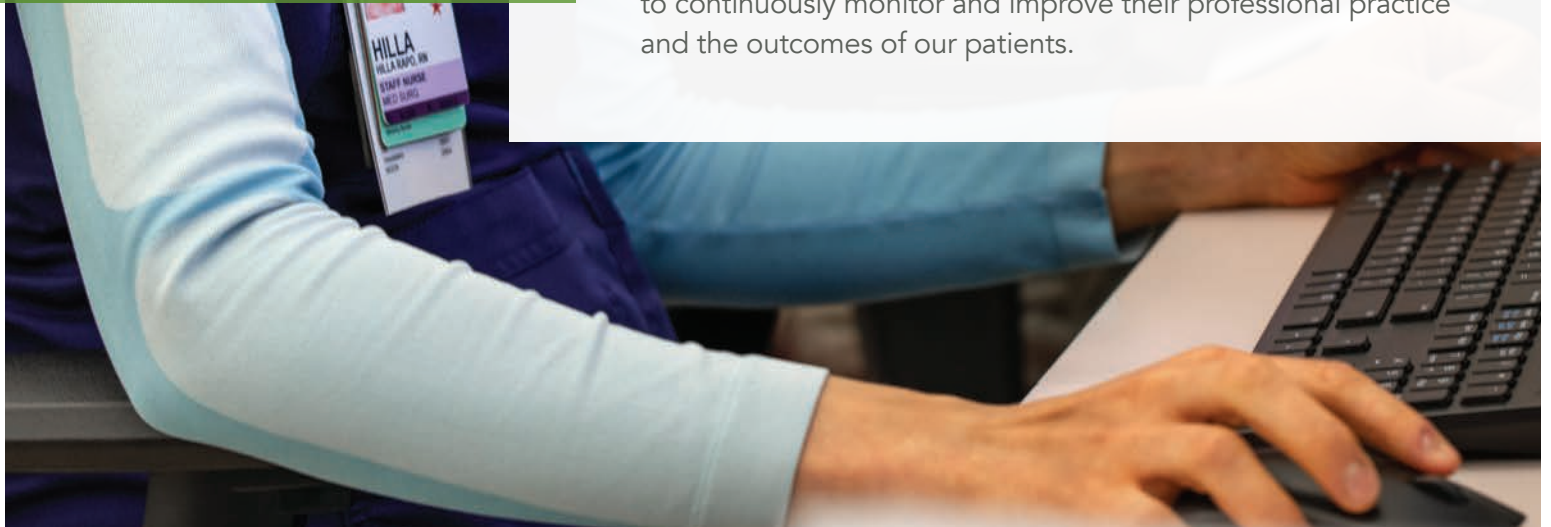


## Exemplary Practice



### PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE PRIORITY:

With exemplary practice, WellStar nurses are positioned as national leaders in the nursing profession. Each team member and practice group has the goal of providing the highest standard of care to all patients. By empowering innovation through collaboration, our nurses are afforded the opportunity to continuously monitor and improve their professional practice and the outcomes of our patients.





WELLSTAR WEST GEORGIA MEDICAL CENTER

## Team Recognized for Improving Patient Experience

**The WellStar West Georgia Medical Center Emergency Department was recognized this year for outstanding performance and overall improvement in patient flow processes.**

Debbie Ritchie, managing director in Huron's Studer Group, said, "This recognition highlights the department's dedication to improving the patient experience and achieving excellence in health care." Huron's Studer Group is a consulting group that works closely with healthcare organizations to improve patient satisfaction and quality of patient care.

Excellence in Patient Care awards are presented annually to a select group of partner organizations from Huron's Studer Group. To be eligible for this award, an organization must demonstrate overall improvement in areas including patient satisfaction and employee and physician engagement.

"This recognition highlights the department's dedication to improving the patient experience and achieving excellence in health care."

- Huron's Studer Group

The West Georgia ED improved door-to-provider times from a fiscal-year 2018 baseline of 33 minutes to 16.8 minutes in 2019. This was achieved through an interprofessional team's strategic work supporting efficiency and effectiveness, resulting in improved patient throughput.

Multiple workflow changes were implemented, including moving the triage nurse into the lobby during peak times (11 a.m. to 11 p.m.). Apollo MD collaborated on the project and supported scheduling a Nurse Practitioner, an Advanced Practice Provider, in a screening room to assess patients waiting for an ED room. During peak times, an ED paramedic was also added, allowing lab work to be done while patients waited to be seen. ED paramedics recommended moving their area closer to the waiting room and carried out this transition. The changes resulted in reducing the patient flow time by 50%, which impacted satisfaction with care by patients and family members, as well as nurses, physicians, and nurse practitioners. ■

WELLSTAR SPALDING REGIONAL HOSPITAL

## Making a Difference in Life's Final Moments

**After coding during dialysis, a patient was admitted to the Spalding Regional Hospital ICU where nurse Brian Cook, RN, was on duty.**

"Brian's exemplary practice offered the patient's family comfort in their difficult time," said Sara Patrick, MSN, RN-BC. "He updated them every two hours and provided detailed information, explaining what had happened, the medications and reactions the patient might experience."

Brian's compassionately delivered updates helped console family

"Brian's exemplary practice offered the patient's family comfort in their difficult time."

and friends, assuring them that the patient was in good hands. Earlier in the day, the patient's wife had made the difficult decision to request a

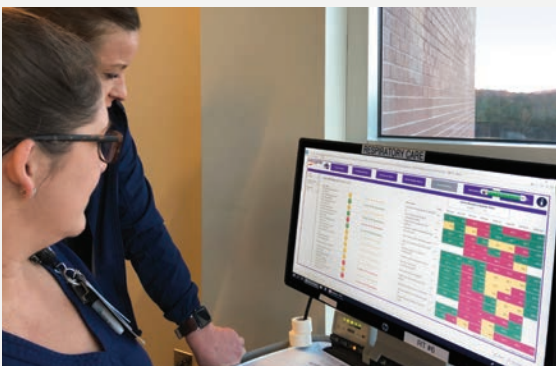
Do Not Resuscitate. Brian patiently explained DNR and the possible results of repeated resuscitation.

Though devastated, the family was filled with appreciation for Brian and the compassion he showed throughout their ordeal. The incident was a clear example of WellStar's nursing practice model, "Caring Compassionately, Practicing Professionally," in action. ■

CENTER FOR NURSING EXCELLENCE

## New Dashboard Enhances Practice

**A culture of nursing excellence is reflected in highly engaged nurses and interprofessional partners who collaboratively create and sustain a vision of an exceptional professional practice and work environment where patients and families are engaged partners in care and experience exceptional clinical outcomes.**



Creation of the Nursing Outcome Dashboard (NOD) was based upon this foundation, supporting clinical nurses' ownership and accountability of nursing practice and outcomes of their care.

The NOD was created in partnership by WellStar's Center for Nursing Excellence (Rachel Baxley, MBA, Sharlene Toney, PhD, RN, LeeAnna Spiva, PhD, RN) and Business Intelligence (Brent Smith, MBA, Miracle Colquitt, MS, Charlese Johnson, BS). The dashboard, created for easy access to data for clinical nurses and nursing leaders, provides professional and clinical outcome data at unit, hospital, and system levels.

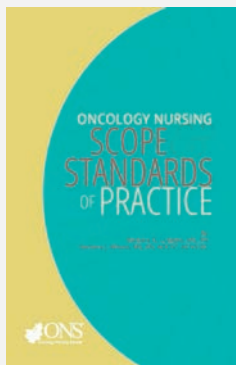
NOD data is viewed as one measure of nursing excellence based on clinical and professional outcomes. The standard for nursing excellence is defined as the majority of indicators on the majority of units (by hospital) exceed the benchmarked mean, median, or other measure provided by the organization's national benchmark vendor for five of the most recent eight consecutive quarters. The dashboard is used by nurses to identify opportunities for focused process improvement work and clinical practice projects. ■

# Meet an Innovative and Dynamic Nurse Leader

**Transformational leaders have the ability to influence and inspire, making the path easy for others to follow. Barbara (Barb) Wilson, MS, RN, AOCN, ACNS-BC, is certainly a transformational leader, not only within WellStar Health System, but for oncology nurses nationally and internationally.**

Wilson is the Director of Oncology Professional Practice for WellStar Health System. She is an exceptional nurse scholar, educator, researcher, practitioner, leader, collaborator, and nursing practice advocate.

Wilson's passion for oncology nursing and advancing nursing knowledge is evident in her daily



work as she touches the lives of nurses, cancer patients, and their families across the WellStar hospitals and clinics. She is a prolific

writer and authored chapters in the Oncology Nursing Society "Chemotherapy and Biotherapy/ Immunotherapy Guidelines and Recommendations for Practice." In 2019 alone, Wilson contributed to the following book publications:

- Wilson, B.J. (2019). Myelosuppression, 273-292. In Olsen, M.M., LeFebvre, K.B., & Brassil, K.J. Eds. "Chemotherapy and Immunotherapy Guidelines and Recommendations for Practice."
- "Study Guide for the Core Curriculum for Oncology Nursing" (Sixth Edition). Mahon, S.M. & Bell, R. Eds. (2019) Elsevier.

Most recently, Wilson was selected to represent the Oncology Nursing Society (ONS) membership at large to co-author the "Oncology Nursing Society Scope and Standards of Practice" that was released in March 2019. This publication serves as the foundation for excellence in oncology nursing practice, addressing practice requirements and competencies for oncology practitioners (RN to APRN), as well as the oncology nursing role, ethics relevant to practice, and current trends in oncology and oncology nursing. ■

## CARING COMPASSIONATELY

### Nurses Help Reunite Ailing Couple

In July 2019, a patient was transferred to a medical-surgical vascular floor from the WellStar Cobb Hospital ICU following a vascular procedure. The recovery was difficult, with multiple complications. The patient's family was supportive, especially her elderly husband who was at her bedside daily. The hope was to discharge the woman home with hospice care.

One morning, the patient's husband arrived for his visit; the couple's daughter was already in the patient's room. Suddenly, nurses attending a safety huddle heard cries from the room, "Help! My dad's having a stroke." They ran to the room and confirmed the daughter's fear. The hospital's Rapid Response Team arrived immediately and transferred the husband to the emergency department, where code FAST, a stroke alert, was activated.

His condition deteriorated quickly. The couple's son and the ED physician came to the wife's room to update her, and to ask if she could be moved to the ED to see him. Unit nurses jumped into action, rolling her to her husband's bedside. Plans were initiated to move the couple to a suite at Tranquility, the hospice facility on the Cobb Hospital campus. Unfortunately, the husband passed away within hours and never made it there. The wife was transferred to Tranquility, where she died two weeks later. Spending precious moments together as their lives were ending was an incredible blessing for this loving, inspirational couple.



WELLSTAR DOUGLAS HOSPITAL

## A Legacy of Nursing Excellence

**The history of nurse-driven excellence at WellStar Douglas Hospital began before the hospital existed. It started with a midwife who, out of concern for the safety and welfare of the women she served in the community, petitioned the Douglas County commissioners to establish a community hospital.**

She was persuasive and in 1948, the 15-bed Douglas Hospital opened its doors. Fast forward to 2013 when CNO Melissa Box, MSN, RN, put into action a strategic plan to support the voice of nurses and to build an infrastructure that would continue to support nursing excellence.

The plan was built on a platform of shared leadership that encourages nurses to participate in decisions regarding their clinical practice. The nursing process review committee allows direct care nurses to make recommendations on processes or education opportunities that will improve patient care. Nurse leaders support professional development through attending conferences and advanced certification.

Nurses are encouraged to set and achieve professional goals through succession planning. They participate actively on committees and work interprofessionally to achieve quality outcomes for their patients. This year nurses led the adoption of Code Lavender, which offers direct support to team members experiencing difficulty.

The positive work environment continues to grow due to the dedication of the nursing staff and support of nursing leadership. In August 2018, WellStar Douglas began the formal process of applying for the Pathway

to Excellence® Designation. The challenging process has already led to improvements to the culture. The Pathway document is now being reviewed. In addition to meeting the intent of all

The process has been challenging and led to even more improvements to the culture as we work to meet the standards set forth by Pathways to Excellence® organization and the American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC).

standards, WellStar Douglas RNs will participate in a voluntary survey administered by the American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC). After successful completion of the survey, the hospital anticipates Pathway designation in the Spring of 2020.

Our journey to nursing excellence is best exemplified by our motto, "It's not about the destination, it's about the journey." Thanks to the nurses, nursing leaders, nursing personnel, interprofessional partners and administrative leaders at WellStar Douglas Hospital for whom excellence is everything. ■



## Working Mother & Working Father of the Year

We are proud to announce our WellStar 2019 Working Mother & Working Father of the Year! Chosen from more than 200 nominations received describing many deserving team members, these dedicated, hard-working parents represent the best of WellStar—on and off the job. They each are committed to their families, communities, profession, and co-workers, who can attest to their amazing efforts and devotion.



**Renecha Abrams** is a *clinical nurse specialist* in Shared Services at the WellStar Development Center (WDC). She has a 10-year-old daughter, who describes her mother as “respectful, courageous, never quits, there for everyone, and even saves lives.” Such words are fulfilling to hear as Renecha embraces the role of a working mother without compromising either of her greatly appreciated responsibilities.

Observing this working mom in action, her manager shared that Renecha “never goes small on anything” and develops trusting relationships with her team members like it is a “part of her central being.” She immerses herself 100% into her role, but is “first and foremost a mother, a wife, and a champion in her community.”

Cancer survivor, graduate, mentor, nurturer, and colleague, Renecha defines a working mother as one who achieves set goals without guilt, knows her true worth, and reaps her rewards. She says she learned over the years to prioritize her working parent obligations by leaving work at work and reserving her home for family time.

Renecha is thankful for WellStar as “it is so rewarding to work for organizations and leadership that truly support and encourage family/work life balance by giving such recognitions.”



**Timothy Bass** is a *registered nurse* at WellStar Kennestone Hospital (3-North ICU) and is recognized as our first ever Working Father of the Year—a very notable accomplishment. He is a father of five, ranging from 6 months to 14 years old, who “bends over backwards” to make each of their dreams, ideas, and wishes come true.

His wife describes him as the overall team player at work, home, and on the field (coaching). Everything he does is in the interest of others and for the greater good. He can always be counted on no matter what, and gives credit to others and does everything in his power to ensure they

succeed. “Our family, both at home and at work, would not be who/what we are without him,” she says.

Timothy’s commitment to career and family doesn’t go unnoticed. “He is an exceptional father and an excellent nurse, colleague, and friend,” a team member said. He is a firm believer that if you focus your energy on family, it will allow you to become a better person, which will cross over into your work life. It’s not unusual to witness Timothy’s inspiring conversation with co-workers about how to be their best at work, as well as more present and engaged at home.

Timothy is very grateful that WellStar has benefits that support him and his family. He was excited to utilize paternity leave for his daughter’s and youngest son’s births and is currently using WellStar’s tuition reimbursement program to further his education. ■

