Nurses are at the heart of the compassionate, people-centered care we provide every day at St. Peter’s Health Partners.

In our hospitals and urgent care facilities, in our nursing homes and rehabilitation centers, in our primary care offices and surgical suites, nurses are critical to our goal of providing the highest quality health care to the communities we serve.

We could not do what we do without the expertise, talent, and dedication of the nearly 3,500 nurses who work across the diverse clinical settings of St. Peter’s Health Partners.

This is why we are proud to once again sponsor the Salute to Nurses, in partnership with the Times Union.

At St. Peter’s, we recognize that nursing is grounded in a dedication to patients, families, and community, with a commitment to providing and improving care for all. Nursing’s strength is its ability to join science with art, where caring is demonstrated through human acts based on scientific knowledge and expertise.

Nurses are caregivers and communicators. They are patient advocates and teachers. They are technologists and problem solvers. Nurses are also proficient learners, who look for opportunities to expand their knowledge and technical skills.

It would be impossible to overstate the importance of nurses in providing positive outcomes for our patients.

To thank nurses for all they do, every day, and to help celebrate National Nurses Week, the St. Peter’s Health Partners community would like to take this time to salute those nurses who have given so much to their profession, to their patients, and to the community.

Sincerely,

James K. Reed, MD, President and CEO
We are honored to celebrate all the dedicated nurses in the Capital Region, and are especially proud to recognize our St. Peter’s Health Partners nurses being saluted for nursing excellence.

2017 Nurses of the Year
Kathleen Borges MS, RN, C-MNN, CNE, Samaritan Hospital School of Nursing, Faculty
Julianne Catlin, LPN, Sunnyview Rehabilitation Hospital, Brain Injury
Karen Austin-Spinelli, BSN, RN, Manager, St. Peter’s Hospital ALS Center

2017 Nurse of the Year Finalists
Carol Crucetti, MS, RN, CPHQ, HRM, NE-BC, Chief Nursing Officer of Samaritan Hospital & St. Mary’s Hospital
Michelle Murray, BSN, RN, CWON, Eddy VNA, Certified Wound Ostomy Care
Anneesha Smith, RN, St. Peter’s Hospital, Acute Cardiac Care
Beth Woods, RN, Albany Memorial Hospital, 5th floor Medical Surgical Unit

A Commitment to Excellence in Nursing
At St. Peter’s Health Partners, we offer opportunities to practice in the most diverse nursing settings in northeastern New York. We offer and encourage ongoing professional development opportunities while recognizing the need to build flexibility into the lives of our nurses and staff.

To learn more about opportunities within our organization, please call us at (518) 525-2382 or visit our website at www.sphp.com/employment

We believe in the power of nursing.
When Andrew Palm, a registered nurse, first considered going back to school, there was only one option in his mind: Excelsior College. He had earned an associate degree in business from the distance learning institution in 1991, back when it was known as Regents College, so he trusted that his advanced degree from Excelsior could open new career pathways.

In 2012, he enrolled in the RN to BS in Nursing program, which helped him expand his nursing knowledge and attain a broader perspective on the issues facing the industry. After graduating in 2014, he enrolled in the Master of Science in Nursing program to gain the skills and expertise to teach in hospitals, community colleges, nursing schools, and health care organizations. With the help of his “capstone” mentor, Palm learned what it took to serve as a role model and teacher, and developed research skills.

He now serves as an adjunct faculty member at Excelsior and looks forward to assisting other adults realize their educational dreams.

Palm is an example of a nurse following a rather traditional path from practitioner to educator.

As the Affordable Care Act expands opportunities for nurses, many of his colleagues are pursuing options within the communities they serve. Others are feeling inspired to pursue careers as administrators.

These individuals are returning to school to learn how to navigate complex health care systems, build supportive work environments, leverage new health care technologies, and manage interdisciplinary teams. They seek knowledge and skills to affect change on a larger scale after seeing up close the impact — for good or ill — that policy decisions can have on patient, and population, health outcomes.

Debra Fields, the director of access, capacity, and demand management at Saratoga Hospital, is one such individual. She has worked in a variety of health care roles over the past 39 years, with each serving as a stepping stone to new and exciting challenges. Fields saw administration as a path to directly impact the care she was delivering as a nurse.

“This is an exciting time in health care, especially as an administrator,” says Fields. “Administrators are able to directly impact the care we deliver to our patients by empowering our staff with the skills and tools needed for improvement. We play a direct role in providing more efficient, effective, equitable, timely, safe, and patient-centered care.”

In her role, Fields is responsible for patient-flow operations – making sure that hospital systems and processes are working effectively and efficiently, which leads to better outcomes for patients. She strongly advocates for collaborative approaches and believes good administrators keep communication channels open with those directly involved in patient care.

“I have…learned a great deal from the creativity of my staff,” says Fields. “Our frontline staff can give us amazing insight into the ways things are done and help us create the future state of health care.”

Fields, who earned a Master of Science in Nursing from Excelsior in 2015, credits her education for preparing her to take the next step in her career. It provided her with the opportunity to hone communication, relationship-building, and leadership skills, and to develop business acumen.

“My master’s degree helps me develop strategies for how an effective leader can create a comprehensive vision and motivate their organization [to become] a patient-centered, value-driven provider of efficient and effective health care.”

For Palm and Fields, a master’s degree in nursing prepared them to be health care leaders. And their experience as a nurse, in particular their ability to make each and every person feel valued and important, continues to serve as the foundation of their success to this day.

“When you look at the hallmark skills of leadership, most often two things come to mind: people skills and vision,” said Patricia Cannastri, assistant dean of the School of Nursing at Excelsior.

“Being able to ‘read’ people, to listen deeply, to understand and value people, the ability to work toward consensus and advocate. That’s what sets nurses apart.”

Fields elaborates on this point and says, “We have the capacity to improve the lives of our patients, as well as our community. I can’t think of anything more rewarding.”

The Excelsior College School of Nursing is accredited by the Accreditation Commission for Education in Nursing Inc. (ACEN). The institution has been designated a Center of Excellence in Nursing Education, 2016–2021, by the National League for Nursing. This is the fourth consecutive designation.
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We wish to congratulate all the Salute to Nurses nominees and winners.

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Excelsior College has helped thousands of nurses return to school and directly impact the lives of those they care for.

"My master’s degree helps me develop strategies for how an effective leader can create a comprehensive vision and motivate their organization [to become] a patient-centered, value-driven provider of efficient and effective health care."

DEBRA FIELDS, MS IN NURSING, 2015

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For more information, call an admissions counselor at 888-647-2388 or visit excelsior.edu/nursing.
With the concentration of hospitals, healthcare facilities and educational institutions in the area, the nursing profession is an important part of the Capital Region.

This recognition of those area professionals is sponsored by St. Peter’s Health Partners and Excelsior College.

The selection process involved a panel of five healthcare, education and community relations judges who chose a representative sample of the nominations received in an attempt to highlight the variety of skills and areas in which Capital Region nurses excel. The nominating period began in January and ended on March 13.

Out of hundreds of eligible nominations from their patients, families, friends and peers, 22 were chosen to represent nursing excellence in the Capital Region in this Salute to Nurses — but all deserve praise for the daily dedication they demonstrate to their patients and their profession.

A DAY AT THE SPA FOR THE WINNING NURSES
The top 10 selected nurses were treated to a day at Complexions Spa for Beauty and Wellness in Colonie, and celebrated at the Salute to Nurses luncheon held on May 12 at the Albany Marriott.
KATHLEEN BORGE
Samaritan Hospital School of Nursing
Nurse Educator/Adjunct Instructor
Nominated by Susan Birkhead, Administrator

Kathy has been a nurse educator (professor of nursing) for 20 years, working first at the Memorial College of Nursing, and for the last 11 years at the Samaritan Hospital School of Nursing. Ask any graduate of these schools of nursing, and they will tell you that Kathy is the best teacher they ever had. She holds a very high standard and fosters professionalism in students; she helps them transform themselves into nurses. Her classes and learning activities are creative, lively, interesting and well-organized.

Kathy is encouraging and empathetic in her approach to each individual student. When students complete the course that she teaches, they feel a strong sense of accomplishment and pride. As one student put it, “Kathy is excellent and provided a supportive environment which promoted learning and growth.”

Other students describe her as “awesome” and “outstanding.” Henry Adams said, “A teacher affects eternity; he can never tell where his influence stops.” As a nurse educator, Kathy has touched thousands of lives in the Capital Region because she has mentored hundreds of new nurses who are now practicing nurses in our community.

JULIE CATLIN
Sunnyview Rehabilitation Hospital
Nursing/ LPN
Nominated by: Deborah LeMonds, fellow nurse

I would like to nominate my friend and coworker Julie Catlin for Nurse Of The Year. Julie has worked at Sunnyview Rehabilitation Hospital for 7 years and is one of the kindest and most compassionate nurses I’ve ever met. I remember her being so kind and supportive of me when I was the new nurse on the unit and the proverbial “stranger in a strange land.” To our patients, she is an absolute ray of sunshine. She is known by our unit as “the singing nurse” because she often makes up funny little songs when passing meds. When she’s stressed, she never shows it and always finds a way to make a difficult day better. Julie always finds time to help her coworkers, even if that means putting herself further behind schedule. She is both an amazing nurse and an awesome friend, and I couldn’t think of a more deserving person for this nomination.

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Hewitt’s would like to say Thank You to all of the nurses in the Capital Region.

CONGRATULATIONS to the winners.
Albany Med attracts caring and compassionate nurses who offer an unparalleled level of care to our patients.

Congratulations to the four Albany Med nurses recognized as among the most exceptional nurses in the region, and thank you to our more than 2,500 nurses who provide excellent care every minute of every day.

Special recognition, from left:
Clifford Estaris, RN
Rena Rovere, FNP
Rebecca Lally, RN
Robbie Allerton, RN
DOREEN COLLINS
Saratoga Hospital
Clinical care coordinator for ICU
Nominated by: Ashlee Podolec, fellow nurse

Doreen epitomizes what nursing is all about. She is compassionate as well as professional. She truly treats every single one of her patients as if they were a part of her family. Whether she is ambulating a post-op patient or holding a patient’s hand as they take their last breath, she always exhibits kindness and aplomb.

As a staff nurse, I feel comforted every time I work with Doreen, whether she is in charge or working alongside me on the unit. I just know that I will have the support and backup that I need. It isn’t only in patient care and charge duties that Doreen shines.

She is also an amazing teacher; she puts a lot of time and energy into making sure that the ICU nurses are up to date on competencies and educated about new policies and procedures. With 42 nurses working in the unit, this is not always an easy feat. On top of making sure that all of our practice-based competencies and education are complete, she also continuously encourages us to become certified and seek out continuing educational opportunities so that we can improve upon our practice.

Personally, Doreen motivates me to be the best nurse and the best person that I can possibly be. She truly embodies excellence in the nursing profession.

KATHLEEN DEFRUSCIO
Green Meadow Elementary School
School Nurse
Nominated by: Shaneh Bielawa, patient

I have a kindergarten daughter with Type 1 diabetes. I was terrified when school started to leave my baby under another person’s watch. The care for this disease is extremely time consuming and very difficult. I could not have asked for a better person for the job. Kathy went above and beyond by calling us and meeting with us prior to the start of the school year. When Hannah would cry about being in school, Kathy would hold her and love her until she was better and send her back to her classroom.

Hannah was having some difficulties with her vision one day due to changing blood sugars and Kathy did an eye exam and recommended a pediatric ophthalmologist for her. Kathy also recognizes how tough it can be for the parents to care for Hannah and will offer to come over and watch her while we go out to dinner.

Kathy is not only an amazing nurse and caregiver for our daughter, but Hannah truly loves Kathy and I know that Kathy loves Hannah. This is what true nursing is. I have been in Kathy’s office when several kids are in for various reasons and the front desk is calling her for something while she also has a parent on the phone. My daughter is thriving at school and a large reason behind this is because of Kathy and the collaboration she does with the school staff. I can not thank her enough for all that she does.
JOHN DIERNA  
Saratoga Hospital  
Orthopedics  
Nominated by: Jessica Malloy, fellow nurse

John has been a nurse for less than two years and is very motivated to enhance his career and the role he takes in the nursing profession. John joined the hospital’s Skin Care team and not only became a member but an active participant by running a meeting when one of the Chairs was unavailable. He helped develop an educational presentation with the new terminology of pressure injury instead of pressure ulcer, and conducts monthly patient skin rounds to observe for pressure injuries and educate staff. John also helps educate the total joint patients by presenting the pre-operative class. John is very flexible and is willing to switch shifts or pick up extra time when needed.

The most important thing I notice with John is the positive attitude he exudes everyday. I am the charge nurse on this unit and when conducting patient rounds or doing call backs after discharge I receive many compliments on John’s care, patience, listening skills, knowledge and kindness.

BARBARA MCDERMOTT  
Glens Falls Hospital  
Cardiovascular Manager  
Nominated by: Mary Radloff, fellow nurse/ Michelle Grover-Wilkins, administrator

Barbara is the manager of a very busy Cath Lab/ IR unit. Not only does she manage our unit, she also is the manager of our Critical Care Unit, Radiology and Telemetry. Barbara is supportive of her nurses by providing endless time and dedication to improving the quality of care in our units. She goes above and beyond by making sure staff has all the resources they need to be successful at their jobs. She manages not only with her head but also with her heart. She has an open door policy addressing the patients and staff challenges. She is often the first in the door and the last one to leave at the end of the day. She respects the needs of her unit patients as well as staff.

Any one of these areas Barbara oversees is a highly demanding dynamic area of nursing practice. I’ve never worked for a manager that strives to such great lengths to help her staff find work/family balance. She supports higher education and life-long learning for her staff. She never asks her staff to do something she can’t or will not do. Barb works longer hours than anyone; she arrives first, and leaves last. You can find her on busy days helping with patient care in the lab or pushing a stretcher — whatever the need is she fills it.

“In these challenging days of health care it is a privilege to work for a manager who truly embraces the art and science of nursing,” said Michelle Grover-Wilkins. “Barb McDermott is a true champion of Nursing Care here at Glens Falls Hospital, and those who are privileged enough to work for her are the better for it.”
There are many colleges that can teach you the skills of nursing. But to go far in nursing, you need more. You need to be able to solve problems, communicate effectively and lead others. And that’s the Maria Advantage. We do more than just prepare you for your first job. We give you the foundation to take your career to the highest level.

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How do the nurses in our state compare with nurses elsewhere?

- Registered nurses “constitute the largest healthcare profession in the United States,” according to a Profile of Active Registered Nurses in New York by the Center for Workforce Studies. Here’s what else the study found:
  - Nursing supply in New York and the U.S. is projected to exceed nursing demand through 2025.
  - There are about 273,800 licensed RNs in New York.
  - The majority of New York’s active RNs are employed in hospitals.
  - The median age of active RNs in New York is 47 — 2 years older than the national median.
  - The proportion of active RNs who are 50 or above is slightly higher in the Empire State than nationally.
  - The percentage of RNs with master’s and/or doctorate degrees is greater in New York than nationally.
  - Active RNs in New York are more ethnically and racially diverse than RNs nationwide.
  - Nearly 64 percent of licensed RNs in New York are working here as RNs.
  - Nine percent of New York RNs are men.
  - The average active RN in New York has been licensed for just over 19 years.

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KAREN SPINELLI
St. Peter’s Hospital ALS Center
Director of the ALS Center
Nominated by: Marie Olsen, ALS Committee member, and Kelly Ragan, wife of patient

Karen has touched so many people’s lives through the selfless work she does at the ALS center.

She has a way about her that makes everyone love her and want to help in the fight against ALS. Every year at the ALS Pro-Am Invitational, Karen will auction off gourmet dinners for 10 which has brought in $2,300 per dinner (since we had two bidders, Karen said she would cook two dinners). This she gives of her precious time, preparing, cooking and serving the dinners at the winner’s home.

She has helped countless people who are sick, helping them, befriending them and assisting the patient and their family navigate through their illness (cancer, ALS, etc.) until the end. I have always been proud and admired Karen for her knowledge, dedication and compassion towards those in need. She is soft spoken and has a quiet demeanor but do not mistake her kindness for weakness. She will fight with such persistence and tenacity for her cause of which has been her patients and the ALS center since it’s inception.

She has her family fighting in the cause against ALS right there with her, helping at the many events that are held as they have been brought up with fundraising as a way of life.

I personally have known Karen for over 40 years and have stood by her for over a decade-securing donations and making the ALS Pro-Am the outstanding event and huge success it has become. I couldn’t be more proud of her and am honored to call her my friend. She has touched my life and has taught me so much just by being her.

“Karen Spinelli was a life line during my husband’s battle with ALS,” said Kelly Ragan.

“Her dedication to her patients, caregivers and staff goes above and beyond anything I have ever witnessed. She has such a kind and gentle way of guiding you through the whole illness and even death of a loved one. She is an angel on Earth. It’s amazing that she has helped families dealing with a devastating and horrific illness for over 25 years.”

JAN WINTSCH
Ellis Hospital Mental Health Clinic
Psychiatry/Staff Nurse
Nominated by: Sue Ciarmiello, Melissa Cunningham, Dan Dzembo, Alice Scheer and Sonja Stracke, fellow nurses

Jan is a nurse’s nurse. She has worked at the clinic for many years and is a cornerstone to the clinic’s successes. She has knowledge of the patients cared for at the clinic and is someone who doesn’t hesitate to get the job done. She works hard and I have never heard her say “no, I can’t do it.”

Jan is dedicated, compassionate, patient care-focused and always willing to take the extra effort to help wherever needed. She goes above and beyond to ensure our underserved and high-risk population is provided with the best care possible. Jan is a joy to work with and doesn’t receive enough recognition for what she does to make her patients’ and coworkers’ lives better. She will be retiring this year and deserves to be named Nurse Of The Year for her numerous years of providing excellent service.

Jan has worked here for years doing excellent service to our patients. She is loyal, dependable, tolerant of the multiple demands on her, and extremely hard-working. She is also available in assisting others especially in times of crisis.

She works with an extremely difficult population; cases ranging from Schizophrenia, to anxiety, depression and developmental delays, and she handles them all with poise. She teaches classes on medication management and helps those experiencing side effects, and through it all she is unflappable.

Jan is strong but calm force within the mental health clinic. She takes on tasks way beyond those she is required to do. She works well with staff of all disciplines and titles. She is compassionate with the patients while also challenging them to better themselves a little at a time. Staff come to her for all manner of questions and advice and she is always willing to lend a hand. The clinic would truly be lost without her compassion, strength, and wisdom.
Our nurses of the year

Pictured: DOREEN COLLINS, RN, BSN, Clinical Coordinator (Top 10) and JOHN DIERNA, RN, Staff Nurse (Top 10)
Finalists Include: MICHELLE LITTLE, RN, HEATHER JANSEN, RN, AND MARGARET FLANAGAN, RN, BSN

We’re pleased to have five members of our team recognized by Times Union Salute to Nurses for the exceptional level of care that they provide. This honor is particularly meaningful to us, because as a hospital with Magnet* designation for nursing excellence, we set very high standards.

For more information, visit: saratogahospital.org
ROBBIE ALLERTON  
ALBANY MED MICU UNIT RN/ ANGEL  
Robbie deserves this title because he took care of my husband while he was dying. Robbie gave us hope and was so positive and upbeat while we were beaten down. My husband was brought in with sepsis shock and was told he was going to die overnight. He survived only to die seven weeks later. My husband died with dignity with the help of Robbie Allerton. (Nominated by Kathleen Salluce.)

AVERY COOK-WALKUP  
GLENS FALLS HOSPITAL, OPERATING ROOM NURSE MANAGER  
Avery came to our facility probably 6 months ago and has made this place a wonderful place to work again. She is outgoing, intelligent. She’s approachable, and easy to talk to, even about difficult things. She’s respected, and stands up for her staff and what is best for not only the patients as well. She is a great leader and is a great asset to this team. (Nominated by Melissa Werm.)

CAROL CRUCETTI  
ST. PETER’S HEALTH PARTNERS – TROY ACUTE CARE, CHIEF NURSING OFFICER  
In 2015, Carol assumed the responsibility of Chief Nursing Officer for both Samaritan and St. Mary’s Hospital. She has been instrumental in the transition of nursing services for both. She has been a visible leader in the transition and has maintained a presence in the clinical areas. Carol is a transparent leader with her decision making and has truly embraced the Shared Governance Model of Nursing. (Nominated by Brenda Williams.)

CLIFFORD ESTARIS  
ALBANY MEDICAL, PICU  
Cliff recently lost a long time patient of his. I later learned that the family of the patient was texting Cliff and Cliff was checking in with the family to make sure they knew he would be there for them during this difficult time. It’s not every day that you see someone in the medical field care enough about their profession and their patients that they bring work home with them. (Nominated by Sarah Prediletto.)

PEGGY FLANAGAN  
SARATOGA HOSPITAL, EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT- BSN, CEN, RN  
Peggy is a leader, a mentor, a friend and an incredible nurse. The emergency room is a fast-paced, high stress environment and in the worst possible cases you can find Peggy at the head of the bed leading the team in delivering the best possible care to those who need it most. Peggy is the nurse I aspire to be: caring, compassionate, competent, courageous and committed. (Nominated by Sarah Prediletto.)

HEATHER JANSEN  
MALTA MED EMERGENT CARE, EMERGENCY MEDICINE, RN  
“Though She Be Little, She Be Fierce” It is often said that the only expectation staff can rely while working in emergency medicine is each other. Heather’s experience, teaching technique and desire to better herself through continued education have lent to creating a stability that may never exist in emergency facilities lacking a strong and competent leader. Heather not only strives for personal acumen, but is able to quietly influence those around her to ensure standards of care are not only met, but far exceeded. (Nominated by Emily Evans.)

REBECCA LALLY  
ALBANY MEDICAL CENTER CHILDREN’S HOSPITAL, PEDIATRIC NURSE  
Rebecca is gifted with such a love for her patients and compassion that is felt by those she touches. She goes the extra mile to comfort and bring joy to her kids and families. She takes the time to interact with each child and discover their likes, dislikes and most importantly their fears. She goes over and beyond and finds unique and personal ways to touch each child. Although many nurses provide excellent care, Rebecca delves deeper to provide heartfelt care. (Nominated by Donna and Robert Lally.)

MICHELLE LITTLE  
SARATOGA HOSPITAL, CLINICAL COORDINATOR, D1 TELEMETRY/NEPHROLOGY UNIT  
Michelle epitomizes the attributes of a great nurse in every aspect of her work. Michele is the Clinical Coordinator on the telemetry unit at Saratoga Hospital. She displays a dedication to the highest standards of patient care, treating each patient as if they were her own family member. As a clinical coordinator she is able to apply clinical judgment and skillful comportment in the domains of reasoning-in-transition, skilled know-how, response-based practice and perceptual acuity. (Nominated by Debra Fields.)

KATHLEEN MATTICE  
CAPITAL CARE MEDICAL GROUP, PRIMARY CARE/AMBULATORY CARE CHIEF CLINICAL OFFICER  
Our Chief Clinical Officer is innovative, compassionate, intelligent and resourceful. She possesses the ability to advocate for the advanced role the ambulatory care nurse can play in the primary care arena. Her efforts in practice transformation and implementation of the care team have directly impacted thousands of patients throughout the Capital District. Her dedication, resilience and motivation make her a natural leader and role model for nurses in our organization. (Nominated by Jamie Brock.)

MICHHELLE MURRAY  
EDDY VISITING NURSE ASSOCIATION, HOME CARE/RN, CWON  
Michelle does not know the word “No” or “I can’t.” The patients always come first. The patients feel at ease with her and appreciate her dedication, experience and sense of humor. Many specifically ask for her when they require subsequent care. Michelle makes sure the patient has everything they need as well as a complete understanding of all instructions she presents to them. Her dedication to her profession has earned her respect among her peers as well as Physicians. (Nominated by Margaret Fahrenkopf.)

ANNEESHA SMITH  
ST PETERS HOSPITAL, CARDIAC TELEMETRY  
Anneesha is truly compassionate. She has been at SPH on the cardiac floor for 16 years and she continues to be as dedicated as she was from day one. Anneesha is warm and caring, she treats all of her patients like there were her own family. She advocates for their needs and she keeps them informed along the way. I’ve heard nothing but excellent things from patients and families about her. (Nominated by Aleftina Turner.)

ELIZABETH WOODS  
ALBANY MEMORIAL HOSPITAL, CHARGE NURSE 5TH FLOOR SURGICAL/ORTHOPEDIC UNIT  
Beth has worked on the unit for over 20 years. She has touched hundreds of lives, not only of our patients/families, but also of coworkers. Beth frequently makes a personal connection, and goes above and beyond in her relationships with patients. She exemplifies the true meaning of nursing and I am proud to share this profession with her. (Nominated by Kathleen Mosca.)

Do you know a nurse who is deserving of Nurse of the Year?  
Nominations will be open January 2018
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*Students must meet eligibility requirements for a Healthcare Profession Opportunity Grant

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Spreading the light

NURSING NOW IN THE CAPITAL REGION

BY LAURIE LYNN FISCHER
Special to the Times Union

Back in the 1800s, Florence Nightingale turned nursing into a respectable profession. “They called her the Lady with the Lamp because she carried an oil lamp while making rounds during the Crimean War,” explains Patricia Washco, Department Chair of Practical Nursing at Mildred Elley’s Albany campus. “To this day, an oil lamp is a symbol of nursing.”

In the Capital Region, 13,461 men and women continue to spread the light. As of January 1, 2017, there were 9,823 registered nurses, 3,037 licensed practical nurses and 601 nurse practitioners in Albany, Rensselaer and Schenectady counties combined, according to statistics from the New York State Education Department. What are the latest developments in their profession?

The biggest trend in nursing, says Samaritan Hospital School of Nursing Director Susan Birkhead, DNS, MPH, RN, CNÉ, is implementation of the Triple Aim goals set by the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act of 2010. Those objectives are: 1) improving the patient’s experience, quality of care and satisfaction 2) improving the health of populations and 3) reducing the per capita cost of healthcare.

Because more than 30 million Americans gained insurance coverage under the Affordable Care Act, more nurses are needed to contribute to their health care, states the American Association of Colleges of Nursing. “The U.S. is projected to experience a shortage of Registered Nurses (RNs) that is expected to intensify as Baby Boomers age and the need for health care grows,” states the association.

An “up and coming” trend in medicine is telehealth - using telecommunications technology to expedite care, says Deborah Elliott, Executive Director of the Center for Nursing at the Foundation of New York State Nurses. Nurses are also assuming greater leadership roles in population care and health, she says. “Nurses are becoming more cognizant, involved and engaged in promoting healthy communities,” says Elliott. “Patients who would have been hospitalized 10 or 20 years ago now can be serviced in outpatient or community settings. St. Peter’s Health Partners, Albany Med and Ellis all have been seeking more opportunities to do this. They have partnerships with physicians groups.”

Celeste DesChamps, RN, MS, NEA-BC, is Interim Chief Nursing Officer at St. Peter’s Hospital. Last year, the hospital’s parent organization, St. Peter’s Health Partners, opened a Clifton Park medical campus. “As we expand into the community more, there are more job opportunities outside of the hospital, especially care management and care coordination,” DesChamps says. “More is going into the outpatient arena to meet the needs of patients. Physicians and nurse practitioners are doing house calls. Some patients with mobility issues are too sick to go to a provider’s office. Outpatient care usually has a lower cost than inpatient care. If you can deliver care in the setting that is best for the patient, there is less risk of in-patient issues. You’re not as exposed to germs. You’re in a less risky environment in your own home.”

Mergers between providers are on the rise in the Capital Region, says DesChamps. “It’s been going on for more than 20 years,” she says. “Over the last four or five years, you’re seeing an increased amount of it. St. Peter’s Health Partners Medical Associates is an arm of our organization that runs urgent care centers and private physician offices. Many of them want to be under a larger organization’s umbrella. Albany Med does the same thing.”

Increasingly, nurses are coordinating patient care, DesChamps observes. “One of the roles for a nurse is as a care coordinator – to know all the needs of the patient and make sure that there’s communication between different specialists, the patient and the primary physician.”

“Technological advancements are changing the way we work,” DesChamps adds. “Some hospitals have had to change the way they’re doing things. In the past, you would have to fill out paperwork on the computer. Now, you can use barcoding. It’s fast and accurate. Technology is playing an increasing role in nursing.”

Technology is playing an increasing role in nursing, DesChamps says. “Homecare associations are using technology to monitor patients with chronic health problems in their homes,” she says. “More and more different devices are being utilized. For psychological complication of a stay in the critical care unit that Ms. Moore excelled,” he wrote. “On every shift she motivated my will to survive by helping me deal with bad news and setbacks and cheering victories no matter how small, like sitting up longer than I had the time before, or later doing one more lap around the nurse’s station. At shift change, when I saw that Jen Moore had been assigned my case, I was determined to survive for at least the next eight hours, because I knew that she would expect or accept nothing less.”

It takes compassion to be a good nurse, stresses Moore. “You can be incredibly skilled, but if you do not care for your patients, they won’t get better,” she says. “That, in essence, is what I feel nursing is about. It’s not a job; it’s a vocation.”
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Learning to lend a helping hand

NURSING EDUCATION OPTIONS EXPAND IN THE CAPITAL REGION

BY LAURIE LYNN FISCHER
Special to the Times Union

To help people. That’s why most students want to become nurses, says Mary-Jane Araldi, MSN, RN, Director of the Memorial College of Nursing.

“It’s hard to imagine a nurse being replaced with a robot,” says Susan Birkhead, DNS, MPH, RN, CNE, Director of Nursing at the Samaritan Hospital School of Nursing.

Job security isn’t the only reason nursing is a good occupation. New graduate nurses are being paid about $25 an hour or more, depending where they live. “There are tons of so many opportunities,” Birkhead says. “Nurses work everywhere from hospitals to elementary schools to ski areas to prisons. They work for insurance companies and at big industrial companies in occupational health; they work for state, county, local and federal health departments. They work in the uniformed services. They can work on cruise ships. Almost anywhere people are found you can find nurses.”

“If you get to a point where you feel that you need a new challenge, you can work in another area,” says Celeste DesChamps, RN, MS, NEA-BC, Interim Chief Nursing Officer at St. Peter’s Hospital. “Nursing gives you flexibility in terms of working hours and shifts. It always gave me gratification as a staff nurse when I made a positive impact on someone’s life.”

“Nursing is challenging and rewarding,” says Elizabeth J. Heywood, PhD, RN, Maria College Nursing Chairperson and professor. “In the Capital Region, we’re lucky to have a range of educational options available for individuals interested in nursing careers.”

Practical nurses work primarily in nursing homes, clinical settings and doctor’s offices, says Patricia Washco, Department Chair of Practical Nursing at Mildred Elley’s Albany campus. They’re restricted when it comes to administering intravenous medication and they can collect data, but they’re may not perform assessments, she says, noting, “A registered nurse can do everything a licensed practical nurse can and more.”

Mildred Elley’s Albany campus offers a 68-week practical nursing course. “When you pass, you get a Practical Nursing Certificate (PNC),” says Washco. “When you pass the state exam, you become a Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN). In the coming decade, 16 percent growth is expected for LPNs.”

Bureau of Labor Statistics employment projections place registered nursing among the top occupations in terms of job growth through 2022. “The standard point of entry into registered nursing is earning either an associate’s or a bachelor’s degree,” Birkhead says. “The associate’s degree takes two years and at least 60 credits. The bachelor’s degree takes four years and 120 credits. Both degrees combine nursing with liberal arts and sciences courses.

Proposed legislation would require new nurses to have four-year degrees, Birkhead says. The push is on to increase the number of bachelor-prepared nurses in the workforce because it has been related to “better patient outcomes,” she says.

Only a two-year associate’s degree is needed to take the NCLEX exam and gain licensure as a registered nurse (RN). Area schools offering two-year associate’s programs include: Memorial College of Nursing, Samaritan Hospital School of Nursing, Hudson Valley Community College, Maria College, Belanger School of Nursing at Ellis Medicine, Adirondack Community College and Columbia-Greene Community College.

Admission can be competitive. Applications to thes Memorial’s associate’s degree program at Memorial are “robust,” Araldi says. “We have anywhere from 80 to 100 applications for 30 slots,” she says. “We admit twice a year; we graduate in December and May. Usually 100 percent find employment within three to six months. Most area hospitals are demanding demand that they sign an agreement that they’ll complete matriculated in a bachelor’s program within a year, and that they will complete their bachelor’s of science in nursing degree within five years.”

Offering both face-to-face and online instruction, Maria College offers three nursing programs: a practical nurse certificate program (LPN), an associate’s degree in nursing program (RN) and a baccalaureate in science degree. Almost 140 people became Maria graduates this spring.

Maria and SUNY Schenectady County Community College have recently joined forces so that students can finish the Certified Nurse Aide or Home Health Aide program at SUNY SCC and seamlessly transition into Maria’s practical nursing program.

“Collaboration and strategic partnerships between healthcare organizations and academic programs are critical to ensuring that new graduates are well prepared for entering the healthcare workforce,” says Heywood. “Maria College is working to create barrier-free pathways between public and private academic institutions and clinical partners to facilitate getting people to their goals sooner.”

Through another alliance approved in April, Siena College and the Belanger School of Nursing in April are launching in April launched the area’s first dual-degree nursing program. “It’s the best of both worlds,” says Lisa Flack, Director of Nursing with Siena College’s Baldwin Nursing Program. “They’re having the four-year experience. They’re also earning the associate’s degree along the way, so they can sit for the board exam at the end of their third year.”

The first year is spent exclusively at Siena, taking bachelor’s degree arts and sciences courses. The second and third next two years focus primarily on associate’s degree work at Belanger, part of Ellis Medicine, with one or two courses back at Siena. During senior year, students take upper division nursing courses at Siena and go out into the community to do public health nursing.”

“A hundred percent of our students are non-traditional,” Flack says. They’re not 18- to 22-year-olds-year-olds who live in a dorm. They’re older; they have some college under their belts; they may have degrees in other disciplines.

It is rare that we get people straight out of high school. The majority of our students range in age from 20 to their mid-30s. I’ve had students in their 60s. I’ve had policemen and firefighters who retire and come to nursing school, women who have been home with small children who want to create a career for themselves. We have all kinds of people.

At the Sage Colleges, students live in dormitories. Sage offers both bachelor’s and master’s degrees in nursing. The master’s degree is needed to advance to the level of nurse practitioner.
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