2015 NURSE EXEMPLARS
advocating caring
teaching supporting

Carle
The Carle Experience is about providing the best care and service for our patients and the best environment for our staff and providers to work within. Yearly we recognize Nurse Exemplars and Friends of Nursing, those who have modeled the best of the best to their co-workers and who have done their part to deliver on The Carle Experience. This year 26 staff are being recognized—all 26 nominated and described by their co-workers. Nurse Exemplars are the nurses who show how patient care can be done and how it should be done. They lead the way, exhibiting standards that other nurses aspire to. Each of the nominations include measures of their Mentoring, Expertise, Nursing Professionalism, Community Service, and Passion for Nursing. The nominations are scored by other nurses.

Friends of Nursing are those who support nurses caring for patients and families, showing excellence in care and service. They exhibit compassion, respect and courtesy in caring for patients, and collaboration with the whole patient care team. Without our Friends, we couldn’t achieve the high level of patient care that we do. It is an honor to present our 2015 Nurse Exemplars and Friends of Nursing. Patient care is teamwork. As you read the stories of the 2015 Nurse Exemplars and Friends of Nursing, you will see how each affected the patients, families and their co-workers. Carle and our communities recognize and thank each one of our Nurse Exemplars and Friends. We thank as well those who recognized the specialness of the Exemplars and Friends by nominating them.

A special thank you to Lisa Schwartzentraub, Laurie Vasta, Jennifer Plunk, and Anne Mikalik who put a tremendous effort into coordinating schedules and taking the photos of our winners. Stories presented are condensed from the original nominations.
NURSE LEADER EXEMPLAR

Loralie Tangy, CPN
Pediatric Subspecialties
(posthumously awarded)

ADVANCED PRACTICE NURSE EXEMPLARS

Morene Anne Christman, CNP
Adult Medicine Urbana on Windsor

Dianne Maxwell, APN
Convenient Care Champaign on Curtis

2015 FRIENDS OF NURSING

We also recognize these Friends of Nursing who have gone above and beyond in their support of the nursing staff.

Linda Brantley
Home Services

Rachel Filak, CCLS
Child Life Services

Rhonda Knight, EVS Certified Technician
Environmental Services
NURSE EXEMPLARS

Lori Camacho, RN
Hospice

Kris Elwell, BSN
Emergency Department

Tina Fehrenbacher, RNC
Labor and Delivery

Kimberly Grant, BSN
Ambulatory Orthopedics

Jennifer Gruber, BSN
Neuro Care Unit (Carle Tower 7 B)

Levi Hilliker, CCRN
Cardiovascular ICU (Carle Tower 6 A)

Teryl Hillsman, RN
Family Practice South Clinic

Chelsea Keller, RN
Inpatient Pediatrics

Deborah Martz, CGRN
Digestive Health Center

Amy Hammerschmidt, RN
North Tower 6

Melinda Morgan, RN
Care Management Services

Laurie Pettigrew, RN
Critical Care Unit (Carle Tower 7 A)

Tara Strack, MSN
Performance Management

Christine Wetzel, RN
Neonatal ICU (Tower 9)

Heidi McCoy, BSN
STAT Nurse

Sahibzada Usman Latif, MD
Gastroenterology Digestive Health Center

Nancy Mings, LCSW
Ambulatory Social Services

Douglas Morton, MD
Radiology

Brent D. Reifsteck, MD
Pediatrics

Stephanie Ronk
Convenient Care Champaign on Curtis
Always said “Yes” to patients and families
Nurse Leader Exemplar: **Loralie Tangy, CPN**

**Always said “Yes” to patients and families**

Loralie was an outstanding mentor, believing in the power of knowledge and sharing it with others. Guiding her staff to be their best improved our patients’ experiences. Her providers, staff, and peers always found her to model the Behavior Standards. An active member in the Nursing Shared Governance Councils, Loralie encouraged her nursing peers to become involved in the councils as well as pursue advanced education and certification.

Loralie was experienced in a variety of pediatric specialties prior to joining the team. Her experience combined with her natural leadership ability made her ideally suited for her role. While the nursing supervisor at Curtis, Loralie was instrumental in organizing and auditing the Vaccine for Children Program in Peds and Family Med. She developed standing nursing protocols for her departments based on best practice. As Primary Care began onboarding CMAs, Loralie assisted in the development and testing of unit based competencies.

Because of her Hematology/Oncology experience, Loralie was the resource for the lab and nurses at Curtis for drawing from lines and ports. This often meant that patients, particularly pediatric patients, could come to Curtis for lab work instead of having to go to the main or Expanded Care. She trained other nurses in the Curtis building to draw from lines and ports, developing a kit containing the necessary supplies for these draws.

Nursing professionalism looks like Loralie. She demonstrated her professionalism by pursuing and completing higher education, then earning and maintaining certifications. As a professional, she continued delivery of direct patient care – even once she advanced to leadership role. And most of all, she demonstrated a culture of ALWAYS. She was always positive, compassionate, approachable and kind, she always had a smile on her face, and she was always a patient advocate.

Loralie took care of MANY very sick children. She was passionate about taking care of patients that other nurses might shy away from because of the complexity of care needed or the emotional toll of taking care of a seriously sick child. From the outset of her nursing career, she knew she wanted to care for these kids. She had an innate ability to communicate with children and to convey comfort and support. Her demeanor with children often alleviated their fears.

Loralie always said “Yes” to her patients and families. Sometimes by arriving early or staying late or skipping lunch. Sometimes by spending hours researching resources for patients. One patient of hers required many hospitalizations and treatments, as well as in-home care. The patient’s family was quite poor, and Loralie was one of the nurses who volunteered to stay overnight at the patient’s home to care for him.

Even outside of work she continued to help with sick kids. She volunteered for the Camden Foundation. Camden was a pediatric oncology patient that Loralie cared for. After he died, his mother created a foundation to raise money for childhood cancer research. Loralie donated a lot of her time to this foundation. She also participated in fundraisers for autism awareness and cancer awareness and volunteered for Risk Watch and child safety events.

Her last living act demonstrates best why she is an exemplary nurse. She cared for many patients awaiting bone marrow transplants, and it was natural for her to want to be an organ donor after her death. It was just another way for her to advocate for patients. Loralie’s final selfless act has inspired many to choose to become organ donors. Her story, shared throughout Carle and on social media, increased awareness about the need for organ donors.

Prior to her death, the story of her involvement with Camden and how she cared for another cancer stricken child and his family, would have identified Loralie as an exemplary nurse and warranted nomination. It’s those stories coupled with her final story that make her an Exemplary Nursing Leader.

Nominated by Heather Hall, RN and Loralie’s colleagues
Morene is thoughtful, kind-hearted, and patient when a staff member asks her a question. Often she will look up the medical information and bring the staff member into researching the question with her. Question answered and learning enhanced.

Morene has more than 20 years of experience in internal medicine and she specializes in the care of the HIV/AIDS patient. She serves as a very special patient advocate through her involvement with HIV staff meetings – collaborating with multiple disciplines including Public Health to provide a plan of care that will optimize the patient’s health status.

What sets her apart is her advocacy for those most disenfranchised or those caught in the system. These patients may be barely visible to others as they cycle into and out of the healthcare system. The large majority of her patients, many who have the diagnosis of HIV/AIDS, have few, if any, support systems, resources, or places to turn for help. She sees beyond the initial assessment (one that may overwhelm most), to see the person. Because she sees a patient and not just a diagnosis, with effort and innovation, she establishes a level of trust and cooperation that facilitates mutually agreed upon and improved outcomes.

Here’s just one story of Morene’s dedication, professionalism, and respect for the patient. I was providing patient care to a young person who had been surprised by a new diagnosis of HIV; of course, this patient was very frightened. This person shared with me that she was comforted by Morene’s calm voice and her expert knowledge of her new diagnosis. This person went on to say that if it were not for Morene’s respect for her as a person she may have not been able to bear the diagnosis. Morene gave the patient options for a plan of care and shared that there are many resources for supportive care.
For many years Morene has volunteered to mentor nurse practitioner (NP) students from various schools. Many APNs do not want to work with students, but Morene enjoys mentoring them. She guides them as they do their patient assessments and expects them to do well with their studies. The NP students she advises and all the disciplines in Adult Medicine at Windsor receive the benefit of her wealth of knowledge.

Outside of work, Morene is involved at her church. She is a Eucharistic minister and she touches young lives by being active in children’s religious education. She currently is the Parish Council secretary. She volunteers her time to the St Vincent DePaul food bank.

Morene acts with unassuming confidence and dedication. Her dedication to patients with HIV/AIDS and her enthusiasm about mentoring NP’s and nurses is admirable. Morene makes a difference in the many lives of everyone she touches. She has worked long enough that she could consider early retirement, but she loves her profession and wants to serve the patients as long as she can.

Nominated by Debbie Stearns, BSN
Advanced Practice Nurse Exemplar: Dianne Maxwell, APN
Careful listener and natural leader

Over the past 32 years as Carle employee and a professor at Parkland College, Dianne has educated countless nurses. Those who have taken classes with her know what a gifted teacher she is.

For ten of those years she has been a provider at Convenient Care, where she cares for patients while teaching other APNs, nurses and techs.

Dianne was one of the first nurse practitioners (NP) to practice at Carle in the Emergency department. She set the bar for Acute Care NP expectations. When the ED NP positions were phased out, she began providing care in the ambulatory setting.

Her diagnostic skills are excellent. She picks up on significant issues that the patient may not even recognize as a symptom of high acuity rather than a ‘convenient level’ of care.

Dianne is ethical and she is professional. She adheres to Carle’s code of conduct. She respects patient confidentiality and always acts with integrity. She does the right thing for her patients and treats them with respect. She is just the kind of provider you want training new nurses and nurse practitioners, as well as caring for your patients when they are sick. Dianne consistently provides excellent, patient-centered, evidence-based practice to improve her patients’ outcomes.

Practically speaking, Dianne often works less desirable shifts (evenings, weekends and holidays) so others can be with their families. Once she makes a commitment, she follows through.

With her vast experience as a nurse and nurse practitioner coupled with her gifting as a teacher, Dianne is a natural leader in our group. She is an example for all Carle providers and staff. Dianne makes a difference every day she practices her career choice of nursing.

Convenient Care is a clinic designed to take care of patients with a minor illness or injury. It has grown and changed dramatically over the last
Nominated by Karen Eisenmenger, MD

12 years. Occasionally higher acuity patients make their way to Convenient Care, and Dianne has made a definite difference in their outcomes. Her excellence as a diagnostician stems from her listening carefully to her patients.

A few months ago, a male patient presented with chest pain. Dianne ordered his EKG, diagnosed him with acute coronary syndrome, and started initial treatment. She then coordinated his care so he was taken straight from our branch clinic to the cardiac catheterization lab.

Another patient of hers was a young male patient with vague upper abdominal pain. She delved into his history more and performed a thorough physical exam. This led to his diagnosis of a cancerous tumor.

Dianne’s excellence and wisdom are qualities for any nurse, novice or expert, to emulate.
Lori Camacho comes to Carle with prior hospice experience, bringing a wealth of knowledge to analyze and compare methods and processes. With her help, Carle can optimize care provided to our patients and their families. Lori has years of experience dealing with symptom management that can complement our current practices.

Lori mentors new hospice nurses. She often has University of Illinois Chicago and Parkland nursing students accompany her as she meets with patients and families at the hospital, in homes and in extended care facilities for referrals and hospice admissions. Lori demonstrates critical thinking and assertiveness – important concepts for new nurses to learn.

Her commitment to her profession, patients and co-workers is shown everywhere. Lori is the only nurse in Carle Hospice history to have completed the pediatric hospice and palliative nursing certification. She is scheduled to present on these topics to hospice nurses in Danville and Champaign and she prepared study notebooks for nurses in these offices to help staff care for our growing number of pediatric hospice patients.

When there are hospice referrals and admissions for children under age of 18, Lori applies her expertise. She meets with parents or guardians and advocates for patients with physicians, case managers and inpatient nurses. Because there are few pediatric hospice patients in central Illinois, Lori often must coordinate care with physicians outside of Carle in St. Louis, Chicago, Peoria, Springfield or Indianapolis. She has been asked to represent the hospice perspective at hospital case conferences so staff can better coordinate care and to educate others on how to promote comfort for young patients.

Lori is an angel on earth, helping keep people comfortable as they near end of life, honoring their lives with dignity and respect and remaining a strong advocate for them.
People expect older adults will die, but few people want to talk about a child or infant dying. This is a different emotional ballgame.

Several months ago, a pediatric patient was nearing end of life. It was a complicated situation for this patient’s family and for hospital staff. The patient had multiple physical and mental problems since birth and was a resident of a nearby facility for many years. Parents and siblings had relocated over a thousand miles away. Although the parents loved this child, the mother had other children, one of whom had multiple physical problems and needed her daily attention. This mother was torn. Hospital staff members are well-educated and experienced in helping keep children alive; however, it is difficult for them to withdraw treatment when a child is obviously dying and unresponsive to aggressive therapies. Lori worked with the inpatient staff, the family of the dying child and the residence where this child had been living to educate and facilitate care for a peaceful dying process in which this child no longer had to suffer.

Lori is an angel on earth, helping keep people comfortable as they near end of life, honoring their lives with dignity and respect and remaining a strong advocate for them.
Nurse Exemplar: **Kris Elwell, BSN**

Building the foundation for new nurses

Kris Elwell, the department educator for the ED, oversees the training of nurses new to the department. Beginning a new job can be stressful; when assigning preceptors to new employees, she strives to match nurses with mentors who will complement their personalities and experience, as well as challenge them to be their best. Kris also remains active in the department as an emergency staff nurse.

Kris gives of herself outside of her clinical duties as a Carle nurse. She is active in her community through her church, and she has traveled on mission trips to Third World countries to bring comfort to others affected by hardships.

As an educational leader, Kris brings a vast knowledge to the department. Her involvement in Partnership Committee and Performance Improvement increases her contact with others looking to learn more and improve their performance. Kris assists in establishing new guidelines for evolving trends in patient care. Other departments come to Kris when they have questions regarding the department and, specifically, emergency nursing.

She treats everyone, patients and staff alike, with respect.

Additionally, she remains calm, usually with a pleasant smile, even in the worst of conditions.

Whether as educator or nurse, Kris exemplifies professionalism through the level of competency with which she performs her duties. Her patient assessment and treatment skills are excellent. She treats everyone, patients and staff alike, with respect. Additionally, she remains calm, usually with a pleasant smile, even in the worst of conditions.

Regardless of the time of day, the volume of patients or the severity of injury or illness, Kris’s presence assures patients and families that they are in competent hands. Whether the patient is there for a heart attack or a toothache, she listens to the concerns. She keeps family members informed. She navigates this human interaction while simultaneously providing competent management of the patient’s medical complaints.
For example, EMS brought a patient to the ED complaining of abdominal pain. No special attention had been given to the patient’s complaint in the prehospital environment. When Kris and I arrived at the bedside, she cued in that there was more going on with the patient. Clinical indications, as well as her intuition, guided Kris to initiate ROMI (Rule Out Myocardial Infarction) procedure. After the EKG, there were major concerns. A physician confirmed this patient was experiencing a ST segment MI (STEMI). The Cath Lab team was notified and the patient was prepped for emergent percutaneous coronary intervention.

While this was occurring, Kris was calming the patient, explaining that while the patient’s condition was serious, the patient was in the right place at the right time to get the help needed. Kris kept family informed and allowed them to be with the patient though bedside space was at a premium. She even found time to politely discuss her findings with EMS and shared why she was initially suspicious of a more serious condition.

An exemplary nurse not only manages the science of nursing, she manages the humans involved.
Tina Fehrenbacher has been a labor and delivery nurse for more than 30 years. She is a Level IV nurse and a role model for every new nurse who comes to Labor & Delivery at Carle. She is also an instructor at Carle, teaching basic fetal monitoring to new nurses and teaching intermediate and advanced fetal monitoring to experienced labor nurses. Being an active member of AWHONN, an organization promoting the health of women and newborns, helps keep her up to date on current practice and research studies. Her mission is to learn and then share that knowledge with the rest of us. Also, Tina is involved in nursing peer review to elevate the practice in our department.

Our team works together to make sure every patient receives excellent care. A true team player, Tina helps with anything that needs doing, from a stat cesarean section to getting a patient on the birthing ball. With more than 30 years of caring for pregnant mommas (and sometimes papas), she knows nearly everything there is to know. And she knows to go straight to UpToDate when she doesn’t know.

Being a Labor & Delivery nurse is an amazing job and Tina loves what she does. She is dedicated to giving her patients the best possible birth experience. She is a “bedside nurse,” rarely leaving her patient’s side throughout her 12-hour shift. As one of her previous patients, I can speak from experience. Tina is the nurse you want by your side, especially when you are pushing for three hours!

Tina’s passion for what she does extends to her annual mission trip to Haiti with the midwives. She works with the midwives to educate women and caregivers on safe birthing practices, provides prenatal care and works in a birthing facility. She is also active in the Sisters of Mercy and Empty Tomb, faith-based organizations that help those in need.
When people know you are a Labor & Delivery nurse, you hear a lot of personal birth stories. It’s a monumental day in parents’ lives that they remember vividly … every single detail. A father I met a couple of years ago told me about the day his son was born and shared the amazing care he and his wife received from their nurse Tina and all of the “little things” she did for both of them to make them feel comfortable and cared for. His son’s birth took place more than 10 years ago! Ten years later, he still recalls every detail of that stay and how Tina made them feel. Since that day, I have told myself that I want to be “that” nurse, the nurse that my patients are still talking about 10 years later. Tina Fehrenbacher is a Nurse Exemplar to me, to those she works with, and clearly to this dad.
Kimberly Grant has worked with the Carle Orthopedic Trauma team since September 2010. She is a part-time nurse with full-time dedication. She is a resource and role model for passionate patient care. Kim serves as a department preceptor and mentor. She also worked as the sole Orthopedic Trauma nurse for a practice of three surgeons and three APNs for several months during RN vacancy periods.

Kim has played a lead role in the 180-degree turnaround of the Trauma work environment. Trauma patients often suffer multi-complex injuries affecting work ability, family obligations, financial burden and body image perceptions. Kim works one-on-one with patients and families to meet extreme needs, both real and perceived, ensuring each patient leaves with all their concerns addressed. Kim regularly coordinates with surgeons, surgery, nursing and MA/CMAs; she networks daily with support services such as Case Management, Therapy, Social Services and community benefit. Kim invests in the team working alongside her, sharing education and training. In some patient care situations, she will provide detailed explanations and education for plan of care.

Kim has received dozens of Way to Bes and several Gold Stars, evidence that she represents an elite level of nursing to co-workers as well as patients.

One measure of her professionalism is her adaptability. Kim adjusts her work days based on clinic schedules, adds hours to fill gaps, and volunteers additional hours to meet EPIC or Magnet needs.

Another measure of her professionalism is the way she interacts with patients. Patients respond positively to her strong clinical assessment and decision-making skills, always delivered with compassion. Kim demonstrates exceptional listening skills and her caring touch calms patients.

An obvious choice to act as Ortho’s Magnet tour guide, Kim helped make the 2015 Magnet site visit a success. She was on hand to support and assist team members. In addition, Kim was targeted by the surveyor to answer tough questions regarding quality indicators and Ortho’s challenges and solutions.
She supports the Ortho Trauma team in many ways. Kim served on the 2013-14 employee engagement team and created the Chariot Race event to encourage staff to engage by providing key ideas that impact and improve staff satisfaction. Kim offers suggestions and solutions during 1:1 rounding, all staff meetings and department pod meetings.

Off duty, Kim is an active member of the Christadelphian church and has contributed hours of time for several decades investing in the growth and support of others in ministry. She is currently training with her two daughters for the Illinois Half Marathon.

Her success at Carle seemed assured from the moment she interviewed almost five years ago. She clearly articulated her high patient care expectations; she meets those expectations each day and brings the Ortho Trauma team along with her. Kim provides the Ortho Trauma patient population world-class care.
Jennifer Gruber has been a nurse for seven years. She has achieved Level IV and is working on an APN degree. She is also co-lead of the mentor program on our unit, eager to help educate new nurses.

She is a role model for pure awesomeness. One day, each of our nurses arrived at work to discover special “nurse” bags with their names embroidered on the outside and goodies on the inside. They were from Jen, of course. One nurse recalls that on her first day of work at Carle she was greeted by Jen with a welcome card and a new “Cops for Coffee” travel mug filled with fresh coffee for the early morning.

Another recalls that on her first Code 99, Jen was the charge nurse and helped save her patient’s life. Jen was the first nurse in the room ready to use her ACLS training. She pushed medications just like they teach in class. Afterwards while debriefing, she explained that she was experienced with codes and she’s never afraid to jump in and participate. She not only provided emotional support for the new nurse, but advised her about how to become more competent and comfortable in these high stress situations.

Jen infuses her professionalism with a touch of magic. For example, in her lighthearted way, Jen explained that every day, she showers and shaves her legs. One day she didn’t was filled with pitfalls, so now she shaves her legs every morning.

Jen is passionate about her job. She cares about her patients’ and co-workers’ physical and emotional well-being. Pastoral care is familiar with Jen because she often consults them for patients who are feeling down.

Her good works and professionalism extend past the walls of Carle. Jen helped our unit secretary, a victim of the Gifford tornado, with useful donations. She frequently donates blood and is on the bone marrow registry.

She is a role model for pure awesomeness.
Once when Jen was charge nurse, she asked for an update on which patients were being discharged that day. There was one patient and family that could go home, but they wanted to stay in a nearby hotel for a night to avoid driving in bad weather. Jen recognized them as an elderly couple that she had seen at the gym near her home and she offered them a ride home from the hotel the next day because she was also going that way. The weather, on top of the patient’s new health condition, made this family very anxious. However, once Jen offered to help them, they were much more at ease.

The family was so appreciative of Jen’s kindness that they gave Jen a bouquet of flowers. These small acts of kindness come naturally to Jen every day.

Jen has been awarded multiple DAISY nominations, even taking home the entire bouquet last year. She is a Nurse Exemplar.
Amy Hammerschmidt is a day resource nurse for all North Tower 6 staff members. The resource nurse (RRN) is special - one must be approachable, encouraging, know the latest information, have great clinical skills and give recognition when it is due. Amy does all this. She makes frequent rounds to check on staff and patients and sends encouraging emails when she hears a good comment from a patient.

This resource nurse does not stand on the sidelines waiting for the staff to come to her. She makes rounds on all staff members, working to make sure they are keeping up with the tasks at hand. From helping out with medication passes, being a team player in codes, assisting with bed baths, starting IVs, answering call lights and assisting with taking vital signs, she is never hesitant to lend a helping hand.

The resource nurse also promotes positive change. Change is never an easy process, but having someone who brings vigor and energy to a new idea is the fuel needed to promote change. This past summer, Amy was champion of the “Call Light Challenge” our customer service team introduced to the unit. She helped pump up the unit to make answering call lights a priority.

Having worked on the unit for almost nine years, Amy brings perspective and experience working with our patient population, such as those in sickle cell crisis. She is skilled with IV starts and teaches nurses how to gain expertise. Furthermore, she offers suggestions to move the unit forward. This fall, she presented research articles at a resource nurse meeting on how the RRN role can be used more effectively in welcoming new patients to the floor. Her willingness to use best practice information and communicate that to her colleagues is evidence of her interest in advancing nursing practice.

Nurse Exemplar: Amy Hammerschmidt, RN
Combining traits to be the resource others need

*Her ability to be an effective and supportive team player, cheer the unit on during tough times and champion change makes her exemplary.*
Amy demonstrates professionalism by modeling the Carle Behavioral Standards. She is nationally certified in medical-surgical nursing; she is a Level III and has almost completed her Level IV portfolio. She takes pride in working on NT6 and loves to showcase the great work of our unit. As a testament of her desire and ability to collaborate with others, she was recognized this year by the hospitalist team because of her consistent and excellent practice of collaboration.

Amy’s commitment to nursing is evident by her many years caring for patients at the bedside, as well as her commitment to medical-surgical nursing. When the DNV surveyors visited Carle last year, she was the first one to volunteer to talk with the surveyors. She was even nominated for a DAISY Award by one of the DNV surveyors! She has had several DAISY nominations from patients and their families, and she has received many Gold Star compliments.

Amy promotes teamwork and collaboration. Her ability to be an effective and supportive team player, cheer the unit on during tough times and champion change makes her exemplary.

Nominated by Lacie Damhorst, MSN
Levi Hilliker is the epitome of what an ICU nurse should be. For example, when my patient, who had post coronary artery bypass graft (CABG), suddenly went into rapid a-fib and became unresponsive, Levi ran the code. He shocked the patient and infused medications with the code team doing CPR and the cardiac surgeon on the phone. The patient came back to life and recovered. The next morning, Dr. Cook came by and patted Levi on his shoulder saying “excellent job.” This is a dramatic example of Levi in action. But every day Levi’s calm demeanor, quick critical thinking and swift action saves lives.

Levi was my preceptor in CVICU. He explained complex things simply. When there was no patient for a certain procedure I needed to learn, Levi brought out the equipment and walked me through using it. He also taught me how to troubleshoot the equipment and the possible complications that may arise. He was never intimidating when he was my preceptor. Though Levi is an expert on many things, he is never condescending to newer nurses in the unit.

Many hold Levi in high esteem. He received the Cardiovascular Staff Excellence Award in 2014, an award nominated by CVICU surgeons and given to the person on staff who is over-the-top in providing care for CABG patients. Levi has also received DAISY nominations and is often mentioned by patients and families in appreciation for providing excellent care.

Levi’s Critical Care Registered Nurse (CCRN) national certification is evidence of his professionalism. Acquiring national certification requires dedication and ongoing commitment. Maintaining CCRN requires 100 hours of continuing education. He is also a member of the American Association of Critical-Care Nurses.

Levi’s ongoing education, certification and excellence in daily practice make him an ideal mentor. He does more than train staff – he mentors nurses to re-level, uplifting the standards

Levi Hilliker is the epitome of what an ICU nurse should be.
of nursing in general. Re-leveling requires years of experience, expertise, national certification, leadership, engagement and motivation, as well demonstrating a positive influence on others.

We had a very sick patient who required both continuous renal replacement therapy (CRRT) and extracorporeal membrane oxygenation (ECMO). Each shift, this patient required at least two or three nurses. Levi oriented me with the CRRT and another nurse managed the ECMO. However, the ECMO nurse was uncomfortable because she lacked experience. Levi helped her, too, and I heard Levi say to the nurse, “You are an excellent nurse. Do not second guess yourself. Be confident in what you are doing because right now what you do is exactly what should be done.” Since then, I have seen this nurse flourish in managing the ECMO machine and patients.

Levi is experienced in the requirements of handling a critical patient, teaching his colleagues, providing and encouraging excellent care and supporting his colleagues with dignity. Levi Hilliker is a Nurse Exemplar.
Teryl Hillsman came to Carle from a spinal cord hospital in Atlanta, GA. Her experience there has given her the tools to lead other nurses and staff in Family Practice in the South Clinic. Teryl has trained all the new nurses that have joined this department. The competence and expertise she gained from working in a big city hospital make her well qualified to educate others such as CMAs and nurses. She encourages co-workers to expand their education and includes them when a learning experience is available. Teryl recently achieved certification as an ambulatory care nurse as awarded by the American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC).

Teryl has taken multiple courses to develop her leadership skills and preceptor training and she is acting leader when the RN coordinator is out of the office. Teryl is the most popular resource our department has. Nurses and other staff look to Teryl as a leader and a great resource for any questions. She is proud and happy of the accomplishments of others.

Teryl thinks outside the box – but within her scope of practice – to provide her patients the medical care they need. For example, she has been working with a provider to care for a homeless patient with cancer. They have worked out a system to get him smaller supplies of medication so he does not have to worry about getting it stolen. They have also taken turns providing him with small amounts of food as they are able. Many employees collaborate in getting help for him. This is patient advocacy at its best. Moreover, Teryl is comfortable approaching our providers with patient concerns.

A co-worker said, “I will never forget when Teryl sat down with a patient who was confused about all his medications. She went through all of them, educating him on how and when to take each one and what each medication was treating. The patient was very grateful.” And the patient was surely more compliant.
Teryl is the first nurse to respond in any sort of urgent situation that happens in our department and the first to assist in codes that we have in the department. She reacts calmly and delegates responsibilities to other staff to safely care for patients’ needs.

She leads by example. Her outstanding nursing judgment supports her patients and models excellent patient care to her colleagues. Her patients’ needs are primary when she reviews their care plan or she schedules home visits. Outside work, she contributes her experience to her daughter’s Girl Scout troop.

Teryl has chosen to expand her horizons and skills by transferring to the Carle operating room. She is an outstanding nurse in both knowledge and training. We will miss Teryl, a Nurse Exemplar.

Nominated by Kristen Belanger and Joy Wilson-Sanchez, RN
Nurse Exemplar: Chelsea Keller, RN
Equally capable of caring for patients and families

Chelsea Keller is a mentor, preceptor, charge nurse, and staff nurse on the pediatric floor where we have more than just a patient to focus on. Family-centered care goes hand in hand with patient care on this floor. She advocates for both; she comforts both. She understands how strong an influence a family has on the child’s healing.

Chelsea is committed to our mentor program and to new nurses in Pediatrics. She praises them for the skills they are learning. She encourages them to talk with their preceptors, and she is a preceptor herself. Because each orientee had a different skill level, Chelsea incorporated different learning styles to make sure each of the new nurses completed orientation successfully. Recently, she has been the only night preceptor, and she is preparing to work with her fourth full-time orientee in the last six months. She also served as backup preceptor for one or two other nurses during that time.

As an experienced nurse, Chelsea serves on different committees throughout the hospital including Professional Practice, Social Committee, Mentor Program, and as a frequent sub on our Unit Partnership Council. Working on a specialized unit like Peds, she is able to bring new ideas to these committees. She helps committee members understand why an idea works for our unit, and provides suggestions on how it could work differently in another setting, such as adult care. While subbing for UPC, she brings her experiences to our unit and helps us vote on and decide new unit policies or norms. Chelsea also participated in three MAGNET meetings during the site visit.

Outside her work, Chelsea shows her passion for nursing by doing blood pressure screenings sponsored by her church. On a recent mission trip with her church, she went to Honduras to provide care and distribute items to families in need.

She is respected by management, co-workers, doctors, and other disciplinary teams. Chelsea touches every patient and their family’s heart.
Chelsea displays professionalism in every single way, and has a unique ability to create relationships quickly. She is a kind-hearted person who treats all her patients with dignity. Able to overlook rudeness or impatience, Chelsea doesn’t break stride and continues on with providing first-rate nursing to her patients and their families. Our chronic patients know Chelsea by name and often request her. One of our patients with Cystic Fibrosis has an inside joke with her involving trouble she had opening a pop can.

She works extraordinary well with her coworkers. Recently, a day shift position opened up on our unit, a rare happening. Chelsea was first on the list of several night nurses to decide whether she wanted to take the position. Although Chelsea wanted to come to days, she let another nurse who was desperate to switch to days take the position. This example is typical of Chelsea’s compassion and sense of teamwork.

She is respected by management, co-workers, doctors, and other disciplinary teams. Chelsea touches every patient and their family’s heart. She is a Nurse Exemplar.
Deborah Martz has more than 25 years of nursing experience. Although she has been in Digestive Health for just four years, she brought many skills, talents, and her passion for nursing from her previous experiences along with her - how fortunate for DHC. Previously a house officer, she demonstrates leadership and composure under pressure. Her work in the neonatal intensive care unit, labor and delivery, and the breast feeding clinic makes her a resource for our pediatric population. Her intravenous skills for our littlest patients are outstanding.

Deborah possesses a positive and uplifting “Team-Player” manner in DHC, assisting others with their workload and providing recognition for their hard work. Knowledgeable about the department’s policies and procedures, she is approachable when staff members need help. As a successful teacher with wide experience, she is one of our department’s preceptors for newly hired nurses. She creates educational presentations, handouts for meetings and email updates about new policies and/or charting guidelines.

Currently a Level III nurse, she is actively working towards advancing to Level IV. Her work on obtaining her GI national certification, attendance at annual GI conferences, service as president-elect of SGNA and as co-chair of the Professional Excellence Committee are all measures of her commitment to the nursing profession and to professional growth.

She is involved in projects that directly affect and improve the workplace, such as her work with the Registration and Patient Advisory departments to improve the Carle Experience by providing cohesive information from all departments to our patient population. As a member of the Minimal Charting workgroup, she works to improve charting and documentation for staff.

Her projects extend outside her job. She is involved with annual fundraising for local Catholic Charities and devotes time to community educational activities for colon cancer awareness and other GI related activities.

For Deborah, giving excellent care involves improving the patient’s experience throughout the visit. For example, delays occurred when female patients used the restroom prior to a procedure and then

Nurse Exemplar: Deborah Martz, CGRN
Understanding what it takes, delivering solutions

Her passion is nursing, and she is an exemplary model of the Carle Experience.
were unable to give urine samples. Deborah decreased wait times and avoided unnecessary phlebotomy costs by placing signs and specimen cups in the waiting area restrooms to notify patients of the need for a sample. Deborah and the staff have also addressed keeping patients informed and occupied during delays. She created scripting that staff uses to keep patients informed, and helped make magazines available for patients to read in all prep/recovery rooms.

While Deborah looks at the big picture, she also knows when to “sweat the small stuff,” which can be big stuff to the patient. When a patient had to transfer to a different department for recovery, Deb walked the family to the waiting room and sat with them until the family knew the ongoing plan of care.

A fellow coworker stated “She does so much for our department; I don’t know where we would be without her!”

Her passion is nursing, and she is an exemplary model of the Carle Experience.
Heidi McCoy is currently a STAT RN, always available to help. She has been a nurse at Carle for 10 years, having previously worked on the medical unit and CVICU. She shares her educational and professional expertise with both new and veteran nurses. She may be called to assist with a “Code Brown”, a patient in need of an IV, or to help with transportation to a procedure. She can be seen rounding on the floors or following up on patient and staff concerns, and she’s just a phone call away when needed. Heidi has the phenomenal ability to mediate between multiple people and keep everyone focused on the needs of the situation. She helps staff understand and troubleshoot almost anything that may be a concern - whether it is a patient that is declining, an unfamiliar disease process, using unfamiliar techniques or equipment during patient care, or just finding extra resources. Because of her extensive knowledge, experience, and expertise, it takes little time for her to access a plan and share it with staff. She is a mentor, resource, educator and a lifeline in a crisis.

Heidi has the phenomenal ability to mediate between multiple people and keep everyone focused on the needs of the situation. She can be stern and direct when necessary while remaining respectful in tone and attitude. She exudes confidence but never egotism. If a patient or family member is scared or difficult or rude, Heidi always finds the right tone of voice and body language to help make them feel safer and feel better. She remains calm during the most chaotic situations while keeping her focus honed on the patient in need. One time, an experienced nurse was working with a new nurse just completing orientation. They had five patients all who had significant problems; the senior nurse said, “Focus on keeping the patients safe and staying afloat.” One patient had an oozing femoral catheter site...
and an IV anticoagulant medication unfamiliar to the novice that was to infuse only for a specific amount of time once hemostasis had been achieved. Resource nurse Heidi came to the rescue. She took time to assess and then formulate an action plan to keep the patient safe and guide the nurse to contact the right physician and ask the right questions to resolve the bleeding. Heidi stayed with the patient. Heidi also placed the correct pressure dressing on the site after hemostasis, helped to change and bathe the patient washing off all of the blood on their body and getting the patient in clean dry sheets, explained everything she and the nurse were doing to the patient throughout the situation, and somehow managed to make small talk with the patient easing his anxiety. She did all of this with grace and finesse.

I think that I can speak for many of the floor nurses about how thankful and grateful we are to have access to Heidi through the STAT RN resource role and how much of a role model she is to us all. Heidi leads by example, which is why she deserves to be recognized as a Nursing Exemplar.
Melinda Morgan has 40+ years of nursing experience, all at Carle. Her knowledge of nursing is vast and she understands the workings of Carle. She can easily direct staff where to go for their concerns or problems. Since she was in management for several years, current managers come to her for advice. Her leadership abilities and experience make her excellent mentor to fellow staff.

Better known as ‘Morgan’, Melinda is a resource for nurses and healthcare professionals in both the inpatient and outpatient settings. She educates care coordinators, Carle staff, and skilled nursing facility nurses on the Cardiac Nurse Navigator program. Morgan is a professional even in the most difficult situations. She can diffuse angry physicians, listen to and counsel patients who are upset, and confront co-workers when needed. Morgan presents as a professional and people react to her as one.

Even after 40 years as a nurse, she still has a passion for nursing that we can see daily through her interactions with patients. She does everything in her power to make sure patients have what they need. We hear her verbalize concerns and worry about patients that she is following. She always makes more frequent calls than required to check up on these patients. We have seen her give her business card to patients that we are not following so they can call her if they have a concern or problem. She attends in-services to make sure she has the most current guidelines so she can better serve her patients.

Melinda empowers her patients, yet guides them through social services, case management, and medical issues to achieve the most out of their medical therapy and Carle experience. Her patient-focused approach and empathetic attitude are what has made her unforgettable to peers, co-workers, caregivers and patients. She has guided techs, nurses and other healthcare professionals through the years and diligently promotes patient advocacy.
A Cardiac Nurse Navigator must have communication skills, empathy, and excellent nursing skills to meet the needs of the most challenging patients with high-risk heart failure and MI. Melinda Morgan has it all. She listens to her patients and their caregivers so she can present the best options for therapy. She helped one patient and his caregiver through numerous transitions from home to hospital and skilled nursing facility. She helped manage his health therapy and monitored his chronic conditions but, most importantly, acted as a support system and resource for the both caregiver and patient.

Morgan has broken through barriers presented by patients who refuse therapy or education with her persistence and communicative style. As one patient huffed when he was told he was going to be followed by a nurse navigator again, “You mean the lady that made me weigh?” “Yes, Melinda Morgan, the lady that made you weigh.” And that’s what a Nurse Exemplar does.
My colleague and respected peer Laurie Pettigrew is an inspiration to all of us. She has made an exceptional journey from NT4 orthopedic floor to our current community of exceptional nurses in CCU, and has grown to be a respected role model for both the novice and experienced nurses. She is a Level III nurse and recently added the Trauma Nurse Specialist certification.

When I transitioned to CCU from CVICU, Laurie helped me by sharing her knowledge and expertise on the many facets of caring for pediatric ICU, neuro, and trauma ICU patients. Most of the time she has the best answer, sometimes she uses other resources to find it. She is approachable and always constructive when giving her feedback.

As my resource nurse, Laurie has helped me on many occasions from lending a hand to helping me find a better plan of care. We encounter families that are faced with very stressful situations. Another time, Laurie soothed a disgruntled family giving me more time to take care of the unstable patient’s needs. She helped the family calm down when faced with unsettling news of a very uncertain situation. On another occasion when I admitted a patient that was facing end of life, Laurie helped reach a family member with assistance from the house officer. With Laurie’s prompt action, we were able to give the family and patient time to make the appropriate decisions about the patient’s care and to say their goodbyes. Laurie is a recipient of DAISY nominations and the Gold Star award for going above and beyond in her nursing practice.

Laurie is the chair of the Performance Improvement Council which recommends changes and promotes

Laurie expresses her passion and love for nursing each day to the patients and their families. Her caring attitude stretches beyond of cultural differences and diversities.

Nurse Exemplar: Laurie Pettigrew, RN
Dedicated to finding the right answer

Laurie expresses her passion and love for nursing each day to the patients and their families. Her caring attitude stretches beyond of cultural differences and diversities.

Nurse Exemplar: Laurie Pettigrew, RN
Dedicated to finding the right answer
Nominated by Annabelle Maylas, RN

Laurie Pettigrew, RN

Dedicated to finding the right answer based on evidence-based practice. She has supported PI Council in becoming one of the vital parts of our MAGNET journey. Last December, she led the annual PI Poster Fair that showcases each department’s improvement projects both in patient and ambulatory services. She also participated in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of several PI projects for CCU, such as the use of Med Net to ensure safe medication programming and delivery, and Scrub the Hub, which played a major role in CLABSI prevention.

Laurie expresses her passion and love for nursing each day to the patients and their families. Her caring attitude stretches beyond barriers of cultural differences and diversities. She models great leadership, especially in her role as resource nurse. She recognizes that everyone matters.

I celebrate her unwavering and inspiring dedication that makes her truly an exceptional Nurse. It is an honor to nominate Laurie for Nurse Exemplar.
Nurse Exemplar: Tara Strack, MSN
Leaving the bedside, still keeping the patient first

Tara Strack brings a different perspective to the Performance Management department as the only nurse and one with more than 15 years of nursing experience. Since joining the department, she has guided nurses, providers, unit leaders, and support staff across Carle on projects such as the NICU cost savings, OR throughput, and ambulatory OB/Gyn workgroups. She leads organizational groups that address medication reconciliation and chronic disease management. In every project she tackles, she strives to educate nurses on the changes in care delivery to Carle patients.

Since her transition to Performance Management, Tara has developed an understanding for the care and services delivered in the ambulatory setting, new territory to her. Tara has quickly acclimated, developing relationships with ambulatory leadership and staff.

Her combined background of nursing and administration enhances how she sees operational issues, and she is adept at describing and identifying the current role of the nurse and incorporates this role into the new initiatives that are occurring at Carle. Tara conducts meetings, tackles sensitive issues, and mediates compromises with ease. She has an ability to channel her energy in a way that fosters positive results, not frustration. When providers are part of a workgroup, they look to Tara to help define the operational side of the nursing care a patient receives.

Though Tara is no longer at the bedside, she remains a nurse above all. The patient remains at the center of Tara’s passion to improve care delivered to Carle patients. She helps to clearly define the care expectations in both ambulatory and inpatient settings and advocate for nursing in the process. During meetings, Tara shares stories of her own Carle experiences, reminding leaders and work group members when care is delivered, that we must not forget about the person receiving the service. Patients are Tara’s top priority.

Tara has experience as an Intensive Care Unit nurse, House Officer, and now an Internal Consultant. While facilitating any workgroup, she is

Tara is an example of a Nurse Exemplar that incorporates her expertise of nursing and process improvement to make Carle and Carle employees world-class!
the one that guides the groups to address and create solutions. She is often required to redirect or table issues that are not directly related to the subject matter. Her speech is matter-of-fact but not intimidating or dismissive. Her trademark expression is “let’s return to the topic and address the current concerns at a later time.”

Tara often reminds workgroup participants to create ways to deliver care as if you were the patient receiving the care. This demonstrates how she incorporates nursing into the performance improvement process. As a Carle nurse and health care consumer of Carle services, Tara is able to share personal experiences she has had to improve the quality of care at Carle. Her goal through sharing her personal experiences is always clear. She loves to point out how the system worked well and also address areas that could be an opportunity for improvement. Tara is an example of a Nurse Exemplar that incorporates her expertise of nursing and process improvement to make Carle and Carle employees world-class!
Chris Wetzel is a certified neonatal ICU nurse, an International Board Certified Lactation Consultant, she has her Masters in Nursing and is the only Level V nurse at Carle Foundation Hospital…and she is ALL ours!

Knowing all that, you wouldn’t be surprised to know that she brings a spunky mix of passion, energy, and enthusiasm to her roles as mentor in NICU and clinical instructor for the University of Illinois. Her passion for Neonatal Nursing is contagious.

Chris has been a nurse for more than 20 years and most of her career has been spent in the NICU and the Breastfeeding Clinic. Building on her love for preterm babies and research, she developed a proposal to start the Breastfeeding Clinic which opened in 1996. Her main goals were to increase the rates of breastfeeding moms throughout the organization and to increase the number of moms providing breast milk for their premature infants.

The NICU had breastfeeding/pumping rates greater than 90 percent during Chris’s years in the clinic. For the remaining population that either wouldn’t or couldn’t provide breast milk for their infants, Chris prepared another proposal to solicit funding for donor breast milk. Donor breast milk became a part of the NICU’s daily feeding protocol in 2005.

She plays an active role on our NICU Vermont Oxford Network (VON) team. VON is a group of hospitals whose mission is to improve medical care for newborn infants and their families. In 2013, Chris and a colleague, Brittany Krisman, developed a tool to help identify risk factors that increase the infant’s incidence of NEC. Chris and Brittany were guest speakers at the NANN Conference in Nashville in the fall of 2013. The eNEC tool is now an assessment we chart on every shift. Currently, she is partnering with the U of I to collect data to validate the eNEC tool.

Chris takes her compassion for our patient population to a new level.
Chris takes her compassion for our patient population to a new level. She gives a voice to the baby in conversations that happen among physicians, colleagues, and family regarding the plan of care. She provides exceptional support to the parents of the baby, encouraging them to be involved in the baby’s care even when it may be scary for them and they feel helpless.

I have worked with Chris for 20 years. There is one story that will forever tug at my heartstrings. In 1996, a pregnant woman entered the hospital diagnosed with bacterial meningitis and her condition deteriorated. The family opted to maintain the mom on life support to further the gestation of the baby, and it was delivered at 28 weeks. Chris was the nurse who went to the OR that day to care for the baby, a little girl who named Christine, after her mommy and her nurse. Chris was able to get pictures of baby Christine with her mommy’s hand, the only photos this little girl would ever have of her and her mommy.

I am proud of the exemplary nurse Chris is and I am proud to call her my friend.
Friend of Nursing: **Linda Brantley**
Keeping the department running and making it look easy

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**Thanks to her dedication and persistence, improved documentation has resulted in much larger reimbursements for care provided to Carle Home Care patients.**

Linda Brantley is an asset to Home Health Services and the organization as a whole. As an admin secretary for a department that integrates Hospice, Carle Medical Supply, home care and infusion in Champaign, Urbana, Mattoon and Danville, there is a lot to keep on top of.

The first thing about Linda is that she keeps us on track. She schedules appointments, meetings, conferences, interviews, training, teleconferences and in-services. When it comes to supplies, she knows where it is or how to get it or routinely orders it. When it comes to computers, printers, fax machines, and projectors, she fixes it. When it comes to meeting room numbers, locations, the cost of a hyperbaric chamber (the home model of course), who’s who in other departments, she remembers it.

Linda also collects applications for Hospice Memorial Funds to pay for needed supplies and equipment that patients and families can’t afford. She prepares the staff meeting’s monthly PowerPoint presentation to include significant updates and graphs that illustrate census, growth and survey results. Best of all, she adapts to situations with humor, logic, practicality, initiative and innovation. There is a lot more she does but to list it all, well, we do not have enough commas.

In addition to all of those responsibilities, Linda has volunteered countless hours with Camp Healing Heart to help children who have lost loved ones. Her efforts have benefitted more than 100 campers and 300 volunteers. She has worked with the children, the adult volunteers who facilitate the work groups, and the buddies who accompany the children throughout the camp experience.

One of her most recent projects was significant. Linda worked closely with an outside auditing/coding agency to validate documentation for Home Health Care. Without proper documentation Carle Home Health...
will not be properly reimbursed for services provided. The auditors looked at 80 percent of the assessments over a three-month span. They checked billing, coding, and face-to-face compliance, which are all elements necessary for reimbursement for services rendered to patients.

To then improve documentation based on the audit, Linda worked diligently with our Home Care interim manager and 57 Home Care staff members for months. Those employees are now able to more accurately account for procedures, diagnoses and treatments because of more precise coding. That means Home Care visits appropriately capture all the patient care information that is delivered on a daily basis. The chart reviews, teaching and change in practice took hundreds of hours to accomplish.

Thanks to her dedication and persistence, improved documentation has resulted in much larger reimbursements for care provided to Carle Home Care patients. This is a monumental act of friendship to our department. And that speaks to the kind of dedicated person Linda Brantley is.
Rachel Filak is a child life specialist who makes herself accessible to the nurses, which means we can work together to improve each child’s care. We know her daily schedule, and she asks us to inform her when new needs arise. She comes to the morning unit huddle to learn what procedures she can prepare patients and families for. She checks on us throughout the day. Beyond our department, it helps that she is needed all across the hospital, because she keeps us informed of possible transfers from other units, possible admissions from the ER, scheduled surgeries and MRIs that might become admissions. This makes for good room preparation, staffing plans and a smooth admission process.

Another impressive talent is that Rachel can adapt to care for patients of all age groups. Her gentle nature and calm demeanor helps patients and families trust her, while easing their minds during procedures. With her natural lend-a-hand attitude, she answers phone calls, responds to call lights, changes a diaper and provides age appropriate activities for the patients. She will give a parent the chance to step out for a break one minute, and then listen to a patient, parent or nurse vent if necessary.

Rachel validates each patient or family member’s question, and she does it with warmth and kindness. The feedback she brings to the nurses is constructive and regularly produces good outcomes for the patients. She also collaborates with nurses and physicians by addressing the psychological and emotional needs of the patients and families. She assists by explaining procedures, describing how long it will take and expressing what to expect before, during, after, and how long it will take. She may hold hands with the patients, distract them with iPad games or talk through the procedure with a soothing tone.

_Friend of Nursing: Rachel Filak, CCLS_  
_Doing whatever is needed to support children and families_
In addition to her regular job responsibilities, Rachel sits on the committee for the Child Life Council to improve collaboration across all disciplines. She co-organized the Pediatric Health Fair last October to provide resources to the community. She also volunteers 22 hours a month at “Room at the Inn” a program through her church that finds safe shelter for the homeless.

By being a support to our patients, Rachel Filak is also an amazing Friend of Nursing. Maybe she tends to a patient with an unexpected procedure. Maybe she is present when patients are getting an IV start or an NG placement. Or maybe following a patient discharge she takes the family out knowing they are eager to leave and maybe she helps to carry out belongings.

There is no maybe about it. Her friendship to nursing is expressed much more in deeds than words.
Friend of Nursing: Rhonda Knight, EVS Certified Technician
Stepping up with pride to serve patients and staff

As Florence Nightingale brought to light, a clean environment improves health outcomes. Our housekeeper, Rhonda Knight, does an excellent job cleaning all rooms on our unit. Patients and families can’t help but respond to the sparkle, the shine and the freshness when she is finished cleaning each day. However, she is also a part of our patient care team in a larger way. When patients or families are in need, Rhonda helps them or finds the appropriate person for each request. We often see her placing a warm blanket on a patient or handing them the water that they could not reach.

Many of our patients like to cheer on the Illini, so on game days Rhonda dresses in orange and blue. She also knows the time of the game, what team Illinois is playing, and which channel the game is on.

While Rhonda does not spend much more than 10 minutes in each room cleaning, she often makes an impression. When she sees the same patients every day, she recognizes the patients and families – and they recognize her. Rhonda also regularly offers comfort to families. When she sees the patients improve, she applauds them and they light up. Her compassion is constant.

Every day you can see her love of the job and the pride she takes in it. When you watch the way she works, it is easy to see why all of her co-workers take notice of Rhonda. She smiles in the morning and greets everyone by name. She is a team player. If there is a problem with the stepdown cables getting cleaned between patients, Rhonda is there helping to clean them. Whether or not something

Rhonda Knight is more than extraordinary. She is a Friend to Nursing.
is her responsibility doesn’t enter into the equation. Instead, she just steps up to do the job. Sharps bin overflowing? Within 15 minutes after a nurse points it out, she has it replaced.

During one of the CT7B Unit Partnership meetings, we were about to draw for our monthly unit superstar when someone asked a great question. “Can a housekeeper be a superstar or is it just limited to nurses and healthcare techs?” After the vote, it was unanimous. Rhonda would be our next superstar of the month. When we asked her for a picture to post, she submitted a picture of her family. The picture was centered on a large bulletin and quickly became surrounded by positive words from her co-workers. Her manager was up the next day to view the board and take a picture to honor this extraordinary employee.

Rhonda Knight is more than extraordinary. She is a Friend to Nursing.
Sahibzada Usman Latif, MD, is available to the nurses. He provides insight on patient questions, listens to nurses’ concerns, and he will make changes to the plan of care when it is in the best interest of the patient. Dr. Latif sometimes turns interactions with the nursing staff into learning opportunities. During a procedure he may smile and say, “Quiz time!” One day, a nurse had a question about how to use a specific piece of equipment. He not only explained how to use it, but he brought the equipment out to the nurse’s station to demonstrate. The nurses in the Digestive Health Center all feel supported by him.

As a gastroenterologist and an advanced/therapeutic endoscopist, Dr. Latif approaches his patients with a calm, unhurried manner. He spends time with the patient before and after procedures to answer questions and make sure concerns are addressed. He is also quick to respond to nurses’ questions about care or orders needed in recovery.

Dr. Latif is a gentle soul, compassionate toward patients and staff. He will even make special accommodations for the needs of others. He has a positive attitude with both patients and staff. Sometimes there isn’t an obvious reason for GI symptoms, but he treats those symptoms any way he can to keep his patients comfortable. When he has to give a difficult diagnosis, his patients appreciate the compassion he displays. He also cares about the well-being of the nursing staff at the DHC. When a nurse is learning an advanced procedure, he is patient and effective in his teaching.

His collaboration skills are excellent with, staff, patients and other physicians. He also works with the
anesthesia department and offers input to fellow physicians. When we encounter a difficult procedure, Dr. Latif works with the nurses and will say, “Let’s figure this out together.” He also involves his patients in their plan of care and schedules office time for patients with many questions.

Recently, Dr. Latif performed an endoscopic ultrasound on a patient and spoke with the family about the results before he went off campus for a few hours. During recovery, the nurse had questions about his plan of care. He returned her call, listened to an update on his patient and adjusted the plan of care. He then came back and checked on the patient right away. Before the patient was discharged, he popped in to see how the patient was doing. After he left, the patient took this nurse aside. “I have never had a doctor take the time to listen and understand everything I have went through. He has helped me so much, and Carle has been wonderful,” the patient said.

What a Friend!

Nominated by Digestive Health Center nursing staff
Nancy Mings is a social worker and an important part of our interdisciplinary team within Family Practice at South Clinic. She is the core of continuum care for many of our patients. By that, we mean she offers effective resources to us as nurses so that our patients receive the best care possible. She helps the nurses arrange prescription assistance for patients who cannot afford their medications. She also coordinates transportation for patients when they have a difficult time getting to the office.

When we need help, Nancy comes to us because she knows our patients are the first priority. Since every patient is different, she works to meet the particular needs each one may present. If we have a patient that has a mental illness, she is always there for that person in a time of need. Nancy knows our office is a safe haven for the patient, so she will always come to meet with that person in our office.

One patient that has touched our hearts in this clinic is a seriously ill homeless man. Nancy has been there to help keep this patient on track with his plan of care. She has coordinated care between our department and Oncology to keep us both on the same page. She even helped this gentleman get a disability check that he had been trying to get for some time. After that she worked with a local shelter to come up with a plan for him to stay there. Next, Nancy worked with our nurse and an Oncology nurse, as well as both providers and local pharmacy to develop a workable plan for pain management. It was decided that the patient would receive pain meds on a weekly basis so he would not get robbed on the street.

Nancy is kind and shows that by helping the most difficult patients while remaining gentle.
Nancy Mings is nothing short of a miracle worker. When our patients have difficulties finding resources, she somehow knows just how to help. She has assisted our Crohn’s disease patients with funding for summer camp and even drove one patient to camp herself when there wasn’t another option. She has gone on home visits with our resident providers if a nurse is not available. She clearly steps up.

Nancy is amazing because her ability to help people is never-ending. She is amazing because she is able to get things done that nobody else knows how to do. She is amazing because she thinks about the patient’s needs ahead of time and is proactive.

Nancy is kind and shows that by helping the most difficult patients while remaining gentle. Every one of us has said at one time: “I don’t know how she does what she does.” Nancy Mings is a Friend of Nursing, always.
Doug Morton, MD, is professional, friendly and nonjudgmental. He speaks to us as a co-worker and knows that we have lives outside of work. The way he follows up with concerns about the patient proves that he is approachable and respectful. He listens attentively, addressing any issues the nurses may bring to him.

One thing about Dr. Morton is that he always enters the Radiology holding room the same way: enthusiastically and confidently. His respect for the patient translates into a higher level of comfort and ease in difficult scenarios. He listens to everything the patient says about health history, and he follows up with the patient after the procedure has been completed – when the patient is ready for discharge. It’s obvious that he leaves the patient feeling as if they have received special treatment, which they have.

Another noticeable trait is that Dr. Morton shows kindness to everyone he interacts with throughout the day, no matter if they are staff or strangers. He will ask about someone’s weekend or escort a lost patient to the cafeteria. Dr. Morton can sense if someone is having a bad day. He will come back and check on the staff, trying to help out when he can. He continually asks if there is something he can do to make the situation easier for the nurses. He is always there if anyone needs to talk, whether that is about a patient, an improvement, better communication or even about a personal issue.

Dr. Morton always acts in the patient’s best interest. For example, when a patient came in to the department for post sedation, he noticed that the patient had an allergy to aspirin. In this instance, Xanax is contraindicated. At this point, he called and emailed to correct the situation and keep the patient safe.
He will go the extra mile for both nurses and patients. When a patient has a reaction to contrast, the radiology tech calls a “Code Contrast” overhead. This brings a nurse and physician to respond. During one such instance, Dr. Morton responded quickly. The patient experienced increased breathing difficulties. But he stayed with the nurse at the bedside and then accompanied the patient to the emergency room. He then helped the nurse bring the equipment back to radiology.

In addition, Dr. Morton is a “by-the-book” kind of doctor. He follows the rules to the letter. When anyone asks a question, we know that what he says is the right answer. He is a constant reminder of why there are rules. He will often tell us: “There are reasons that this rule was put in to place.

Somewhere, someone had a patient that had this happen to him. The rules are put in place so that this doesn’t happen here to one of our patients.”

He is also consistent. Whenever we contact him, we know that when we pick up the phone, the conversation will begin, “Doug Morton, Radiology, how can I help you?”
Friend of Nursing: Brent D. Reifsteck, MD
Doing what is needed to make those he works with comfortable

Dr. Reifsteck is not just a Friend of Nursing. He is and a friend of patients and a friend of parents.

Brent Reifsteck, MD, treats pediatric patients in multiple settings, and those of us in the newborn nursery experience him interacting with the newborns he cares for and their parents. He has great rapport with patients, nurses, techs, social workers, OB doctors, etc. You can tell by the way he encourages staff to call him Brent and because he gets to know us all as individuals. He is also an excellent teacher and that makes him a better doctor.

One noticeable aspect of Dr. Reifsteck’s care is that he has a very thorough routine that he performs for newborn examinations and patient education, yet he never sounds scripted. Each time I round with him, I learn something new or have a better understanding of something because of the way he explains it. He is phenomenal with nursing students by encouraging them to watch, learn and ask questions during newborn exams and procedures. That makes them feel valued. He not only teaches as he goes, but he asks the nursing students questions to engage them in critical thinking.

Dr. Reifsteck doesn’t talk down to a parent, but finds a level where they can understand what is happening – which makes them listen better. After procedures, such as circumcision, he consistently goes back to the parents to let them know how the procedure went.

There is always one thing Dr. Reifsteck tells each patient or parent: “I’m never too busy to stop what I’m doing and come back if you need me.” Nurses provide initial education before he further customizes it based on the family’s experience and tailors it to their specific needs. Things that are common, everyday occurrences to us, can be new and scary for parents. But Dr. Reifsteck never downplays their concern. He praises them for showing concern for their infant and asking questions, which makes them comfortable going home with a newborn. He also gives parents all of the information they need to make
an informed decision, and then he supports the parents in their decision. He never pushes a new parent in any certain direction based on his own beliefs.

Our comfort level with Dr. Reifsteck has consistently been there. Not quite two years ago, a change was made. Instead of outpatient pediatric doctors rounding on babies in the nursery, the on-call pediatric hospitalist assumed that role. We had never met any of these doctors and were not sure how well it was going to work. But it was immediately apparent that Dr. Reifsteck would do what was necessary to make everyone around him comfortable in a time of transition. He got to know us and our routine, and he was flexible in working with us.

We all truly appreciate his work on our unit and we consider ourselves lucky to have him on our staff. Dr. Reifsteck is not just a Friend of Nursing. He is and a friend of patients and a friend of parents.

Nominated by Amanda Rock, RNC
Stephanie Ronk is our program assistant in Convenient Care. As such, she manages multiple provider schedules in several locations, answers the phones, and performs various administrative duties for our department.

One of her main responsibilities is to manage the provider schedules on a daily basis. To do so, Stephanie deals with approximately 22 provider schedules and must work to schedule them at four-to-five different sites daily. In addition, she organizes schedules for 25-30 PRN providers who pick up shifts. It is her goal to make sure we have adequate provider coverage at all sites every day to care for our large volume of patients. Meanwhile, she balances vacations, sick calls and scheduling requests.

Through her hard work, Stephanie has made an impression on our associate medical director, Charles Liang: “Stephanie has a vital role in Convenient Care. As our scheduler, she’s the one who makes sure everyone’s where they need to be, which is no easy task considering we have four different sites covered by more than 25 providers. She is referred to by our providers as a magician because the schedule seems to work just like magic.”

Beyond that, Stephanie is the front line for our patient phone calls, which impacts most all of the people we care for. These calls include questions about lab results, billing, etc. She knows when to transfer them to a nurse, or when to assist patients with prior authorizations. Stephanie has a wonderful phone voice and excellent communication skills. She
can calmly and politely find the words for a patient that is upset, confused or fearful. She always ends the call by asking if there is anything else the patient needs.

Since Stephanie is detail-oriented, she manages the statistics for our department. These reports are always accurate and timely. She faxes, mails and contacts providers for the nursing staff. She also puts together the weekend staffing sheet.

As if that wasn’t enough, Stephanie serves on our Unit Partnership Council, helps organize our adopted family and children at Christmas time, maintains our birthday list, and takes collections for staff gifts. Through her effort, we have created a family environment here at work.

All of us in Convenient Care rely on the many things Stephanie does for us. Her efficiencies, skills and knowledge lead to so many things being done well. That means we can give more time and concentration to our patients. That is a Friend to Nursing.

Nominated by Debbie Hill, RN
Congratulations to all of our winners