

# The Columbus Dispatch

## Nurses are Woven into the Fabric of Our Lives

by Kris Kipp, Chair, Nurse Executive Council, Ohio State Wexner Medical Center; Cynthia Latney, Chief Nurse Executive, OhioHealth; Jerry Mansfield, Chief Nursing Officer (Ohio), Mount Carmel Health System; and Lee Ann Wallace, Chief Nursing Officer, Nationwide Children's Hospital



At this very moment, not far from where you're reading this article, a nurse is making a difference in someone's life.

As the nursing leaders of central Ohio's four hospital systems, we're proud to celebrate all nurses today, the beginning of National Nurses week, who practice in hundreds of different locations and dozens of roles across our region.

You work in nursing homes, hospitals, doctors' offices, urgent care clinics, and in growing numbers in patients' homes. You are at the center of health care delivery, often spending more time with patients than other health professionals. You listen, you're there when patients face their triumphs, and you support them during their setbacks.

We celebrate the work you do every day, and we feel blessed to practice beside you.

There are few professions that have such an intimate relationship with the people they serve, who are so tightly woven into the fabric of their lives. We suspect that each person reading this article can recall a nurse in your past who made a difference in your life or the life of a loved one or who simply made you feel better by something they said or did at a time you needed it.

That's what attracted us to nursing, why we chose it as our life's work, and why we continue to love it as our profession today: to have these kinds of relationships with other people, to help them through tough times and help them celebrate the good ones.

It's hard work, but also rewarding work. It takes a combination of knowledge and caring to help our patients get back to where they want to be and to give them the confidence they need to continue their lives in better health.

For 21 years, nurses have been the number one most trusted profession in Gallup's annual Honesty and Ethical Standards poll. We believe nurses earn this respect because of the way

we're educated and also because of the way we treat every patient we encounter at a vulnerable moment in their life. We accept each person for who they are, regardless of their history, life situation or mental state. We know they're entrusting us with their care. Our solemn oath is to keep them safe and comfortable, and to determine how best we and the other members of our team can restore their health.

Even with polls showing overwhelming public respect, most nurses don't know how appreciated they are. We're too busy serving to think about that. It's our work, it's what we love. We do it today, and we'll do it again tomorrow. It becomes normal, in a way, to help a patient or family through a crisis. We don't often stop to realize how rare of a gift it is to listen to someone, to show compassion for another person's pain, and to help in every way we can.

National Nurses Week starts May 6 and ends on May 12, the birthday of Florence Nightingale, a nurse leader in the mid-1800s who studied conditions in the British military hospitals where she worked, then fought for better staff hygiene and patient nutrition. Her efforts dramatically reduced infections and deaths. Her skills of detailed recordkeeping, attention to patient needs, and a willingness to lead change are still hallmarks of the nursing profession today.

This may be Nurses Week, but the moments we describe happen every hour of every day, and we should celebrate the work that nurses do every day. We're happy to pause for this moment, though, to thank our nurse colleagues throughout Ohio for all they do, and to let them know how blessed we feel to practice beside them.

## **There's Never Been a Better Time to Be a Nurse**

Do you know a teenager or young adult who's interested in science, and enjoys helping others? If yes, then they possess the core attributes of every nurse, and should explore nursing as a possible career.

There has never been a better time to become a nurse. The pay, flexibility and variety of work settings have never been greater. There are also more than 1,500 nursing positions open within our hospital systems alone.

There are more programs than ever that introduce middle-school and high-school students to careers in health care. Interested students can also volunteer at a health care organization or simply talk to a current nurse. All of us were influenced to become a nurse by a relative, neighbor or acquaintance we admired, who was also a nurse.

There are dozens of two-year and four-year training programs in Ohio. From them, graduates are able to choose the work setting and schedule they want from literally dozens of opportunities. Many health employers will pay a nurse's fees to acquire additional skills and certifications and allow them to try out different roles and settings. The possibilities are virtually endless.

## How to Make a Nurse's Day

**1. Be open and honest with us.** We're here to help you, and there is very little we haven't heard (or seen). We also know you may not be in your best mood or as articulate as you want to be when you're not feeling well. We expect that.

**2. A simple thank you goes a long way...** in the moment, or in a note later. Our nurses are blown away whenever we forward thank-you letters to them from patients and families. They're touched to know that someone took the time to acknowledge them and their work. It's never too late to say thank you, either. See our note and email addresses at the end of this story.

**3. Share your stories about caring nurses.** Whenever you tell a story about a caring nurse, you acknowledge the goodness in others. You reveal the qualities in others that make you feel comfortable and respected. These may also be the stories that encourage an interested young person to find their calling, and their life's work in nursing.

*Thank a nurse: If you've been meaning to, but never found the time to thank a nurse or a group of nurses who did something meaningful for you, even if you can't recall their names, it's never too late. Here are our email addresses; send us a note; we'll pass it along to them:*

*The Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center, Kris Kipp, [kris.kipp@osumc.edu](mailto:kris.kipp@osumc.edu)*

*OhioHealth, Cynthia Latney, [cynthia.latney@ohiohealth.com](mailto:cynthia.latney@ohiohealth.com)*

*Mount Carmel Health System, Jerry Mansfield, [jerry.mansfield@mchs.com](mailto:jerry.mansfield@mchs.com)*

*Nationwide Children's Hospital, Lee Ann Wallace, [leeann.wallace@nationwidechildrens.org](mailto:leeann.wallace@nationwidechildrens.org)*