



NURSES

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HONOREES REPRESENT ALL NURSES

I have heard it said that a nurse is not a job, it's not what someone does, but it is who they are.

Earlier this year, The Daily News partnered with PeaceHealth St. John Medical Center, as well as title sponsors Koelsch Senior Communities and Lower Columbia College, to honor a demanding profession with more challenges faced in 2021 than ever before due to COVID-19. Collectively, we ask that today, during National Nurses' Week, you join us in celebrating these 10 amazing nurses across the Lower Columbia region who exemplify just that.

This process started in February when the public was encouraged to nominate a nurse who had an impact on their lives.

Nominations were open for a month before moving on to the judging panel for review and selection. All nurses in the region were eligible, regardless of who employs them or what type of health care setting they work in, whether it be a hospital, medical clinic, dentist's office, assisted living facility, nursing home, school or home health service. All nominees also were put forward for a public vote; as one honoree was chosen by vote to join the nine selected by the panel. This year's judging panel was made up of representatives from sponsor organizations and The Daily News.

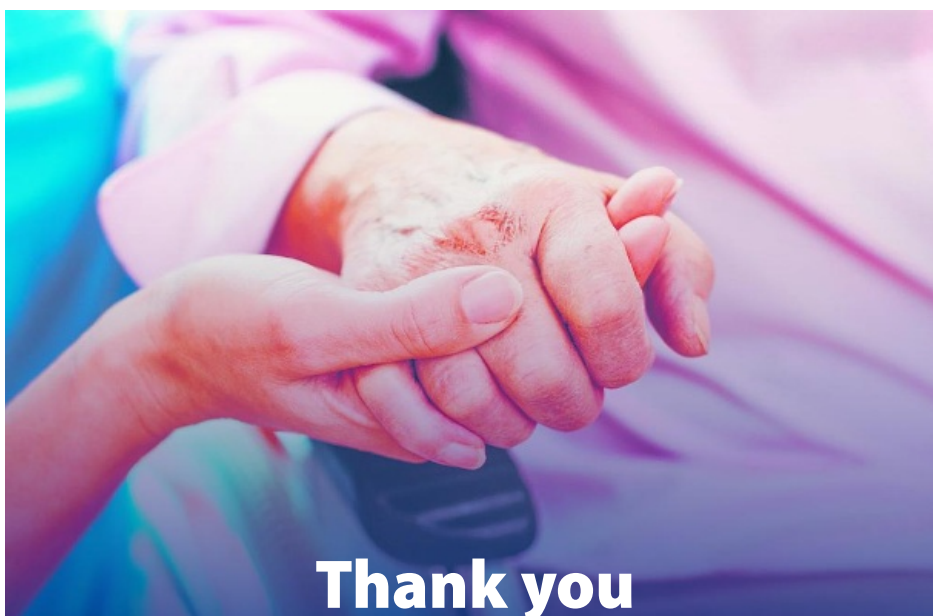
The panel certainly had its work cut out for them, but ultimately landed on a very deserving slate of honorees. Today, 10 nurses are recognized; and each will receive a plaque and gift basket in honor of their service.

Congratulations to our honorees and thank you to all of the amazing nurses in our community.

Dave Cuddihy is General Manager of The Daily News and tdn.com. He can be reached at 360-577-2505 or dcuddihy@tdn.com.



DAVE
CUDDIHY



Thank you

Nurses, you gave us the strength to get through this.
Thank you for your dedication, compassion and care.

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MEGAN LEAKE

MALLORY GRUBEN
Special to The Daily News

Megan Leake takes the “care-taker” portion of her job seriously.

A surgical nurse at St. John PeaceHealth, Leake tends to patients before and after a variety of surgeries. She manages their medicines, helps alleviate pain and takes care of their basic needs. Most importantly, she sits and talks with her patients to make sure they don’t “just feel like a sick person in the hospital.”

“I’ve watched her with patients, and she just cares so much. She will do everything and anything she can to help them,” said Lorena Bulard, a surgical certified nurses assistant who has worked with Leake over the last year. “She’s not the kind of nurse who only comes in when things are due to be given. She checks on them constantly.”

Although the COVID-19 pandemic has presented new challenges to caretaking, such as restricting in-person contact between patients and their family members, Leake’s colleagues say she has continued to work tirelessly to care for each and every one of her patients through it all.

Leake also tries to help her patients better understand COVID-19 rules, especially amid changing guidelines and circulating rumors. She said one of the toughest parts of the job right now is countering wrong information people have heard about the virus.

“It’s been a lot of education. ... There are a lot of misperceptions out there, so patients get told from certain family members certain things,” she said.

She stays informed about the latest science to ensure what she shares is accurate, and she doesn’t include her opinions. Her general advice usually is the same and quite simple: Get the vaccine and wear a mask.

“I know what the science says, and that’s what I share,” Leake said.

When she can, she tries to find ways to make the COVID-19 rules easier to follow. Like many nurses, she’s helped patients access tablets or smartphones so they can video call their family members while in-person visitation is restricted. She also makes time to regularly sit down and talk to her patients about non-medical things. Leake said those conversations can boost a patient’s mental health and help them feel less like a hospital patient and more like a normal person.

“She’s not just there to give them Tylenol ... and I think a lot of patients talk to



her about their stuff because she’s so open and friendly. They can tell she genuinely cares,” Bulard said.

Bulard added she often sees Leake holding patients’ hands while asking, “What

can we do to make you more comfortable? What helps when you’re at home?”

It’s not uncommon for Leake to ask a CNA to wait briefly while she sits and talks with each patient.

Megan Leake

AGE: 29

RESIDENCE: Longview

WORKPLACE: PeaceHealth St. John

HOMETOWN: Clatskanie

TIME IN HEALTH INDUSTRY: 4 years

TYPE OF NURSE: Surgical nurse

NURSING DEGREE: RN from Western Governors University

“Where in other instances it might be above and beyond, this is her always. To me, she’s always above and beyond. She’s always bending over backward to do the best she can to get all these patients taken care of.”

Lorena Bulard, surgical certified nurses assistant

“The patients have said, ‘Oh, you’re not back tomorrow? I’m so sad. I wish you were back tomorrow,’” Bulard said. “I’ve had a lot of people tell me they really love when she’s their nurse.”

Leake’s caretaking tendencies also shine through in her willingness to take on simple tasks that might otherwise be assigned to a CNA. If a patient needs help getting up to go to the bathroom, Leake will take them. If they tell her they are feeling uncomfortable in bed, she helps change their position to a more suitable one.

“There are a lot of nurses that rely on the CNAs a lot. ... Megan doesn’t do that,” Bulard said. “I know that if she’s asking me to do something, to take over, it’s because she really needs help.”

In many ways, her tendency to handle those small tasks herself shows just how much Leake cares for her coworkers, too. She knows that the CNAs and the other nurses are busy, and she’s happy to lighten their load where she can, Bulard said.

“Where in other instances it might be above and beyond, this is her always. To me, she’s always above and beyond,” Bulard said. “She’s always bending over backward to do the best she can to get all these patients taken care of.”

MISTY BURCKHARDT

MALLORY GRUBEN

Special to The Daily News

Misty Burckhardt's decision to pursue a nursing career late in life has twice been confirmed.

The first confirmation happened 14 years ago, when she started working as a phlebotomist at PeaceHealth St. John, leaving behind a 13-year career in business. She knew "right away" nursing was a better fit, she said.

The second confirmation occurred more recently, with the COVID-19 pandemic.

"It was almost like this (pandemic) was the test of our calling," said Burckhardt, an emergency department nurse at PeaceHealth St. John in Longview. "It was a rough eye opener, but for me, it solidified that this is where I'm supposed to be."

Burckhardt's job requires her to tend to patients with a variety of emergency medical needs, from trauma, to illness-induced sepsis. She knows how to "switch tracks quickly" between caring for an ear ache and responding to a heart attack.

That trait served her well when the pandemic first started, bringing with it a flurry of unknowns.

"You just didn't know how bad this virus was going to hit our area. How will it affect us as caregivers? Are we going to have the resources we need?" Burckhardt said. "You heard stories in New York that they were running out of equipment."

The emergency department saw "a lot of sick people, a lot of worried people," Burckhardt said. And she and the other nurses worked through their own fear and uncertainty to ensure their patients were taken care of. One of her colleagues recognized Burckhardt specifically for doing her job no matter what obstacles she faced.

"She has had to self-quarantine away from family several times over the last year and has missed many holidays and birthdays to ensure her family stayed safe," the colleague wrote. "She even worked with a partially torn meniscus for over a month due to her devotion to the community, her coworkers and her department."

Burckhardt barely acknowledged the personal hardship that came with her job during the pandemic in an interview earlier this month. Instead, she focused on how COVID-19 made life more difficult for patients — and how she and her coworkers stepped up to ease some of those burdens.

"The hardest for me in this pandemic is the restrictions for families of patients to be there when they need each other the most,"



Burckhardt said. "That was heartbreaking for me ... because I put myself in their position, and I would want to be right there (as a family member)."

So, the emergency department nurses found work-arounds. They rolled in iPads on stands so patients could video chat with their families, and they sanitized the phones between uses to ensure a line always was open and available for patients to call loved ones.

Burckhardt's positivity rarely faltered,

and she continued to "suit up and go out there to do what she had to do," said her husband, Tom, who also is a trained nurse. She stayed upbeat partly through her personality and partly through hard work.

"We all have our days when we are so tired physically and mentally, but how I look at it is if I'm not there, if I don't show up for work, that puts a bigger strain on my team," Burckhardt said. "They will have to pick up my slack, and I can't do that to my team members."

Misty Burckhardt

AGE: 46

RESIDENCE: Longview

WORKPLACE: PeaceHealth St. John.

HOMETOWN: Clatskanie

TIME IN HEALTH INDUSTRY: 14 years

TYPE OF NURSE: Emergency Dept. Nurse

NURSING DEGREE: Associates in nursing from Breckinridge School of Nursing in Portland.

"We all have our days when we are so tired physically and mentally, but how I look at it is if I'm not there, if I don't show up for work, that puts a bigger strain on my team. They will have to pick up my slack, and I can't do that to my team members."

Misty Burckhardt

Burckhardt said her "big break" in life was getting a job at the hospital in 2008. Prior to that, she had worked in business, "but I didn't feel like my heart was in it."

After she lost her business job in a round of layoffs, she decided to return to school to pursue nursing. Her husband helped keep her confident through the process, continually encouraging her to apply for medical jobs she wanted or pursue more advanced nursing degrees.

"She talks about how she wants to do something ... and there are so many ways you can talk yourself out of being able to do something. I just tell her, 'Do it!'" Tom Burckhardt said. "She was interested in (nursing) from when she was younger, and then life happened. But certainly it's her calling."

And now on the days when she questions whether she's supposed to be an emergency department nurse, Burckhardt says can look to the last year as a reminder that she passed the greatest "test" of her calling.

"I think since the pandemic has hit, we (nurses) are being recognized more and more for what we do, but it's not any different than what we were doing before. ... We all just jumped in as a team."



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ROSE LELEVICH

LIZ GOLD

Special to The Daily News

Rose Lelevich has been a Registered Nurse since July 2019, but has worked at Community Home Health & Hospice for three years – first as a Certified Nursing Assistant and then as a Licensed Practical Nurse before taking on her new role – and she absolutely loves it. The agency has been a special place for Lelevich because of her own experience with a loved one's death.

Inspired by her grandmother Julia Blaszczak, who was a nurse during World War II, Lelevich said she got into healthcare after Blaszczak fell ill with Alzheimer's Disease.

"I always wanted to be a nurse and I was dragging my feet to get there, Lelevich said. "I fell into healthcare when my grandmother got sick and I was taking care of her. She helped me go back to school so I could pursue nursing. I took care of her throughout the end of her life and she enabled me to get my nursing degree."

It was when her grandmother got really sick with the disease that she had her own experience with end of life care – talking with a hospice liaison who advocated for moving her into the care center facility at Community Home Health & Hospice. Initially, Lelevich was against it, because she had cared for her grandmother for nearly three years at home and was skeptical about anyone being able to provide the care she had been giving. Ultimately, her family decided to bring her grandmother to the care center, which Lelevich describes as "a beautiful experience."

"It allowed me to sit back as her granddaughter and not her caregiver, she said. "It was better than what I could give her in the home. I left there and I wanted to do that. They just changed my perception."

Lelevich went to nursing school after her grandmother died and as part of her education participated in clinicals at different nursing homes in the area. She realized she wanted more experience being able to care for some of the patients she encountered so she decided to take a CNA position at Community Home Health & Hospice and worked there throughout nursing school. Lelevich chose Community Home Health & Hospice because of the positive experience she had there with her grandmother and has been there ever since.

At the care center, Lelevich provides symptom management and relief for patients who experience severe symptoms such as pain, respiratory distress or nausea/



vomiting as a result of a terminal or life-limiting illness.

"The care center isn't just about death and dying, it's about figuring out how to manage these awful symptoms and provide the best quality of life possible for the individual."

Unfortunately, the onset of COVID-19 brought new patients to hospice – people who normally would not have been there. Guidelines permitted only one person at bedside when death was imminent, as compared to the usual overabundance of loved ones present, and Lelevich found herself holding Zoom calls with families to say goodbyes.

"That was heartbreaking," she said.

"At the beginning of the pandemic it was scary because we hadn't seen it right off the bat, we were hearing what bigger cities

were going through so we were bracing ourselves," she said. "We were worried about meeting the needs of the community. All of my coworkers are fantastic. There was this air of, 'We are going to do this no matter what? We provide comfort to people at the end of life. If it's cancer or COVID that we could catch, we are dedicated to providing that comfort. So, I leaned on my coworkers and friends and family."

Early on, Lelevich said staff faced a shortage of PPE but once word got out, donations from community members in Longview and Kelso provided N95 respirators and face masks.

"We've been very lucky that we've been very well protected," she said. "That made me feel good with all the negativity of people dying and people getting sick. We had people stepping up to help. That was

Rose Lelevich

AGE: 29

RESIDENCE: Longview

WORKPLACE: Community Home Health & Hospice

HOMETOWN: Longview

TIME IN HEALTH INDUSTRY: 4 years

TYPE OF NURSE: RN; Hospice Nurse

NURSING DEGREE: Lower Columbia College

"Rose amazes me all the time with her dedication and her empathy and everything she does. I just thought she deserved to be recognized. She'll give up personal time to go into work. Anytime they call and need somebody she's always quick to be there, cancel plans. She worked a lot of overtime last year. I feel like I barely saw her. She loves what she does."

Rachael Schlien

something that gave me a lot of strength."

Lelevich said because there are so many misconceptions about death, the one thing she tries to help people understand is that it is a natural part of life. That though it can be scary, it doesn't have to be.

"We can make it a much more comfortable and easy process," she said. "All you can do is act in their best interest."

Lelevich was nominated for recognition by Rachael Schlien, her best friend, after seeing Lelevich work long hours and cancel plans when called into work unexpectedly to cover staff shortages.

"Rose amazes me all the time with her dedication and her empathy and everything she does," Schlien said. "I just thought she deserved to be recognized. She'll give up personal time to go into work. Anytime they call and need somebody she's always quick to be there, cancel plans. She worked a lot of overtime last year. I feel like I barely saw her. She loves what she does."



Connected for good

NURSES WEEK, MAY 6-12, 2021

Thank you to our nurses for connecting their expertise as clinicians, advocates, innovators, collaborators, educators and leaders to the PeaceHealth Mission. This past year you've lived the hardest parts of representing our Values and have made us so proud to be by your side as we've weathered a pandemic and served our communities.

Thank you for all you do!

Join us in thanking our nurses, for all the good they do each day.



MELANIE KLIMAS

LIZ GOLD
Special to The Daily News

Melanie Klimas has found her calling.

As a Hospice Nurse at Community Home Health & Hospice, Melanie visits patients who are dying at their home. She is so dedicated to her patients that when she had a new job opportunity in Vancouver two years ago, she wasn't able to leave.

"I tried to leave, I had a job that I actually accepted and I couldn't do it, I couldn't leave my patients," she said. "We have some patients that pass very quickly and then we have the ones that we have for a while. Every time I think of leaving, I can't. In my line of work, just one nurse sees the patients. We see them from the time they step in to the time they pass. I have fallen in love with what I do. I can't leave in the middle of that. I have just accepted that this is what I am supposed to be doing."

At the beginning of her career, Klimas wanted to be a labor and delivery nurse at a hospital. While in the nursing program at Lower Columbia College, she was married with four children under the age of 12 at home, including a baby under six months.

"Every new nurse has to start somewhere," Klimas said. "You start typically in a facility and work your way up to the hospital because you have to gain some experience. I thought I was using hospice as a stepping stone seeking labor and delivery in the hospital and I never left. I found my niche. I didn't think I was going to be at the end of life, I thought I was going to be at the beginning of life but it didn't turn out that way."

Klimas has been at Community Home Health & Hospice for seven years. Currently, she carries a case load from 12-20 patients and typically visits them twice a week unless more frequency is needed. Sometimes she can see a patient for up to three years. She becomes part of her patients' schedule, knows their families and the goal is to keep people in their homes as long as possible.

This year was different. With the outbreak of COVID-19, routines changed with strict protocol on visitors and social distancing. Whereas before, a patient who had just gone into hospice may have been able to go to their primary doctor, church or the grocery store with their spouse or loved ones, now they had to stay at home to limit exposure. Spouses also had to be careful whenever they went out of the house because of the risk of bringing the virus home. The pan-



demio also meant fewer visits from friends and community members and grandchildren – which for many patients brings much needed joy to the home.

Just communicating with patients one-on-one and showing compassion posed a challenge due to all the required protective gear.

"It's been especially difficult because I serve a lot of elderly individuals and wearing a K95 and face shield in my interactions with my patients – a lot of them can't read

lips well," Klimas said of the masks. "It's hard to read body language and see your smile and that is considered comfort care. Physical touch of the hand when you are comforting someone is important. It's just distanced everybody."

The risk of catching COVID and bringing it back to a patient forced many healthcare professionals to limit their own personal liberties. It's part of what is required when working daily with a vulnerable population. For Klimas, she stuck

Melanie Klimas

AGE: 47

RESIDENCE: Longview

WORKPLACE: Community Home Health & Hospice

HOMETOWN: Gresham, Oregon

TIME IN HEALTH INDUSTRY: Since 2007

TYPE OF NURSE: Hospice Nurse

NURSING DEGREE: Lower Columbia College

“Her big heart, empathy and compassion for her patients and their families helps through that last hard journey. A gentleman used to call her his angel and that’s what she is every day. She is a mother, grandmother, friend and compassionate care giver.”

Barbara Boss

to her “small, small clan.”

Klimas describes working in hospice as “gratifying” and said it’s necessary to have compassion and empathy for others in this work. “You have to be able to sympathize and not let it go, per se, but not hold onto everything we are exposed to with death and dying daily.”

In her time off, aside from spending time with her children and babysitting her two grandkids, Klimas writes in her blog, Beautiful Life, Beautiful Soul, as a way to process some of her emotions from her work. “It’s one way I can just put it down and move on, otherwise I’d carry all this grief along with me. Some people go to support groups, I just write.”

Barbara Boss, a relative, wrote in her nomination, “Her big heart, empathy and compassion for her patients and their families helps through that last hard journey. A gentleman used to call her his angel and that’s what she is every day. She is a mother, grandmother, friend and compassionate care giver. Through her writing, she helps us on the outside understand what being a hospice nurse feels like, how challenging and how enriching it is to ease patients through their last transition.”

KATELYN MAUHAR

LIZ GOLD

Special to The Daily News

“I’m honored,” said Kate Mauhar when she learned she was an honoree for this year’s Nurses Week.

Mauhar is a long-term care nurse working at The Canterbury Inn. She spent more than eight years as a Certified Nursing Assistant, received her Licensed Practical Nurse credentials in May 2019 and became a Registered Nurse in January.

Even though Lower Columbia College prepared nursing students for getting “your hands dirty,” Mauhar said nothing could have prepared her for this year with the outbreak of COVID-19.

“It was kind of a shell shock because I’m still fairly new in my nursing career,” she said. “I had to take it day by day. There is nothing else you really can do when facing something like this.”

Depending on the day, Mauhar sees between 15 and 40 residents, most of whom are elderly. When she starts her shift, she sees if anyone is on alert or in an acute situation, passes out medication, updates charts, and collaborates with doctors, physical therapists and family members. Restrictions on visitation this year brought additional challenges.

“You are not just a nurse, you are a friend to these people,” she said. “They haven’t been able to see a lot of their family this past year. We are kind of the no. 1 go-to for everything.”

Initially, the facility didn’t allow visitors. If there were special circumstances – like a resident on hospice – one visitor would be allowed for that family if they were close to passing, she said. But only if they were COVID negative.

“We had some who got COVID and passed and it was awful because their families weren’t able to be there,” she said. “For their family’s safety they weren’t allowed to sit with them at bedside. Now it’s a little bit less restricted. It’s definitely a strange time. It’s getting better but it’s nowhere near our prior normal.”

Originally, Mauhar wanted to be a veterinarian. However, the longer Mauhar worked as a CNA, she knew she wanted to pursue nursing and go up the professional ladder. She points to being fascinated by her dad’s service as a Corpsman in the Navy and the stories he would share. She also had a soft spot for geriatrics.

“I knew that I needed to be in a field where I could help people,” she said. “I just wanted to make a positive impact on some-



one’s journey, whether that’s long term care or it’s a respite stay. There are some people, you hear someone talk about their hospital stay or a stay somewhere, and they might say, ‘I just had this one nurse that was so great, or that one nurse that was so mean’ and I always wanted to be that positive nurse that made someone’s day.”

During nursing school, Mauhar was raising her young daughter, working the night shift as a CNA and going to school full time. She described LCC as “probably one of the hardest things I’ve ever done program-wise.” Halfway through school, she became an LPN. Once she graduated and became an RN, she knew quitting wasn’t an option.

Now, Mauhar has four children between

her and her fiancé – which made it tough when she had to work overtime due to staff members who were sick or had COVID symptoms.

“Our main priority is protecting our residents and sometimes you have to pick up extra hours that would take away time from your family,” she said.

Receiving cards from residents’ families or moments like this – when she’s selected as a Nurses Week honoree – is most rewarding for Mauhar. “Really, I’m just doing my job. As tough as a nursing career is, it’s very rewarding to always hear that positive feedback from those you are taking care of. Other than my passion for helping people and wanting to be a helper, that’s

Katelyn Mauhar

AGE: 28

RESIDENCE: Longview

WORKPLACE: The Canterbury Inn

HOMETOWN: Sequim

TIME IN HEALTH INDUSTRY: 10 years

TYPE OF NURSE: RN; Long-term care nurse in assisted living facility

NURSING DEGREE: Lower Columbia College

“To say Kate is an amazing nurse would be an understatement. Through COVID and staffing shortages, Kate always showed up and did her job with a smile on her face and a positive attitude. She worked insane hours which took away from her time with her babies and she never complained. Kate is a true leader and everything I aspire to be as a nurse someday.”

Kaitlyn Wallaker, CNA

what makes it worth it.”

Kaitlyn Wallaker, a former CNA at Canterbury Inn, nominated Mauhar for this year’s Nurses Week, after working with her for two years.

“To say Kate is an amazing nurse would be an understatement,” she said in her nomination. “Through COVID and staffing shortages, Kate always showed up and did her job with a smile on her face and a positive attitude. She worked insane hours which took away from her time with her babies and she never complained. Kate is a true leader and everything I aspire to be as a nurse someday. She was always willing to help us out on doing care when we were really busy and she didn’t have to do that and she did. I just love her.”

Mauhar said she expects to start a new position at Assured Home Health this month.

LORI SHAW

LIZ GOLD
Special to The Daily News

When Lori Shaw and her husband, David, followed her parents from California north to Castle Rock in 1990 with four children and one on the way, Shaw started thinking about a career that would support a large family.

She went to Lower Columbia College to see what was offered and as a people person, she chose nursing. At age 30, Shaw completed all her prerequisites and entered the nursing program.

As she approached the fourth year to become a Registered Nurse, she decided that instead she needed to devote more time to her kids. Shaw had only been a Licensed Practical Nurse for a year before starting at Canterbury Gardens, a memory care community in Longview. This November, she'll celebrate 25 years.

"Lori is the sweetest nurse ever!" Deziray Weikum, a family member of Shaw's and an employee at The Daily News, said in her nomination of Shaw for Nurses Week. "She has devoted her life to taking care of people in the memory care unit at Canterbury. What she does takes a special person to do. She's dealing with people who can't remember anything and are scared every day and don't know what's going to happen. I think that takes an incredible human to do that every day."

When Shaw came to Canterbury Gardens, she had to learn all about Alzheimer's disease and dementia. She credits the parent company of Canterbury Gardens, Koelsch Senior Communities, for sending her to an Alzheimer's conference in her first year so she could learn as much as possible.

"If Koelsch wasn't Koelsch, I wouldn't have this going on today," Shaw said. "I wouldn't have the knowledge I have, the administrative staff all of them are super people. A couple of them I've worked with as long as I've been there."

This year with the outbreak of COVID-19, Shaw said Canterbury Gardens did a "really great job warding it off." When the facility experienced a couple of positive cases nine months into the pandemic, she expressed pride with how the staff handled the ordeal.

"Getting it right was really super important," Shaw said. "Live-or-die important. That was how serious in our brains it was. We did the very best we could. The toll it's taken on everyone ... we just had to pull together as a team."

When staff tested positive with COVID,



that meant not just a couple of days off but 10-14 days in quarantine, which made others like Shaw – who did not get it – take on extra hours.

"It was tough, everyone worked over and above," she said. "When you work with people with dementia, it's very hard to keep your mask over your mouth because they can't understand you. For the residents, it was very taxing. Just because they didn't get ill from the virus, they still had different manifestations over the year – not seeing their family has taken a huge toll. It was a long process."

Shaw said it was challenging to stay distanced from her residents because her work requires hands-on interactions.

"We can't just put their pills down, we have to be close," she said. "We have to be able to talk to them and let them know and reassure them because they forget every day. I think that part for nurses was just really difficult but of course we did it. Absolutely."

Shaw had her own fear of getting COVID and bringing it home to her husband, who is 10 years her senior and battles terrible asthma. "Putting on that PPE every day, the mask, the shield, the gown. You don't realize how taking those things on and off many times a day, after you see a person, was extremely strenuous."

Still, Shaw is grateful. Her most rewarding moments are with the residents. Their smile,

Lori Shaw

AGE: 61

RESIDENCE: Longview

WORKPLACE: Canterbury Gardens

HOMETOWN: San Diego, California

TIME IN HEALTH INDUSTRY: 26 years

TYPE OF NURSE: LPN

NURSING DEGREE: Lower Columbia College

"She has devoted her life to taking care of people in the memory care unit at Canterbury. What she does takes a special person to do. She's dealing with people who can't remember anything and are scared every day and don't know what's going to happen. I think that takes an incredible human to do that every day."

Deziray Weikum

their hand when they reach out for her.

"Some of the things the residents say either make you laugh or cry," she said. "They are just so kind, even when they are upset, you know that's not the real person. I love the old adage, 'Treat people like you want to be treated.' I treat people like they are my family."

Canterbury Gardens provides consistent care all the way through end of life, and for Shaw, that is special.

"It's an absolute honor to be with them and know in your heart they are going to a better place – where there is no pain, no suffering, no memory loss and they aren't going to wonder, 'Why am I here?'" she said. "I have changed my ways of thinking in 25 years."

When she's not working, Shaw is busy with her 11 grandkids, seven of whom live in town. If she's not at their sporting events, she's sleeping. "I love my bed. I can give it all day long then have to come home and take a couple-hour nap. Then I'm ready to go," she said.

Honoring Our Nurses

Nurses have been on the front lines facing the global pandemic for the past year, caring for patients and making a difference every day. To the 63,000 nurses within Kaiser Permanente and the 4 million nurses across the nation, we thank you for your unwavering strength, your service, and your sacrifices.

Thank you for all you bring to our patients, members, and communities:

Hope and healing
Devotion and dignity
Empathy and education
Innovation and inspiration
Courage and commitment
Hard work and humanity

We honor and celebrate you this Nurses Month, every day, and always.



Greg A. Adams
Chair and Chief Executive Officer
Kaiser Permanente

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MINDY KLEINE

LIZ GOLD
Special to The Daily News

For Mindy Kleine, it takes a village – literally. As nurse and owner of The Villager Inn, an assisted living facility, it's her community that matters.

"I love what I do and I love caring for people," Kleine said. "Being a nurse isn't a job, it's who I am and it takes a whole community. I couldn't do what I do without my caregivers, staff, husband and children supporting me. It's not just me. It's a community coming together to care for people."

That's why her daughter Casie, 13, and husband, Brian, nominated her for Nurses Week. Casie said she wanted her mom to be recognized for her hard work. For all the times she's up answering phone calls from families at 2 a.m., trying to make everything better, Brian added.

"She goes above and beyond for not only her residents, but her family, friends and employees," Casie wrote in her nomination. "Mindy has/will go out of her way to run into town in the middle of a busy day, just to buy a resident some food from a local restaurant that they might be craving, or a coffee for her employees as a thanks for just being there. Mindy has developed a very close relationship with all of her residents. Every now and again, you can catch her playing music and dancing for the residents to brighten their day and put a smile on their face."

Kleine grew up in Castle Rock and The Villager was next door from her middle school and church. She started volunteering at The Villager at the age of 12 and fell in love with all "the grandmas and grandpas." From that experience, Kleine knew she wanted to be a nurse and own The Villager someday – and every career choice she made led to that goal.

From in-home care to being a phlebotomist to a telemetry residency to obstetrics and gynecology to working the medical



unit at the Frontier as a Licensed Practical Nurse, Kleine has been in the healthcare industry for nearly 25 years.

"I feel it's important to have the full life cycle," Kleine said. "If you are going to care for people at end of life, you want to know how it starts."

Kleine had already been working at The Villager as a Registered Nurse since 2010 and then became the administrator before she bought the facility in 2016.

She employs 17 staff members and can house up to 34 residents. As the only RN for The Villager, she serves as the manager of care, coordinating doctors' appointments, medication assistance and communicating with clients' families and doctors' office, or hospice care team. Decisions about when to transition to hospice services and when to go to the hospital all are a part of her every day.

"If you think about how you

"Throughout this pandemic I have found that I am not only the doctors' eyes and ears I have been the families' as well. Communication has become more important than ever. Technology has been a bigger part of the communication between doctor offices and families. My state licensors and Cowlitz County health department nurses have been my biggest support on all things COVID. Without their knowledge and encouragement I would have been lost in this pandemic. They truly have been my heroes and have kept me educated and focused."

Mindy Kleine

Mindy Kleine

AGE: 41

RESIDENCE: Castle Rock

WORKPLACE: The Villager Inn

HOMETOWN: Castle Rock

TIME IN HEALTH INDUSTRY:
23 years

TYPE OF NURSE: RN; Owner
of Assisted Living Facility

NURSING DEGREE: Lower
Columbia College

run your household, you worry about your husband and children, medications and schedule, doctors' appointments, groceries and laundry – I do that for 34 people," she said. "People need to feel loved until their very last breath."

This year was more difficult than most with the outbreak of COVID-19 and the impact had a ripple effect on The Villager community.

"When COVID hit ... having to isolate our residents, that was life-changing," Kleine said. "The biggest change that COVID has had was the isolation and the sacrifice from me and my employees to make sure our residents were safe."

Aside from wearing the appropriate protective gear, there were

various required checkpoints, as well as the directive not to touch and interact with residents as much as normal. In addition, residents' visitations with their families were limited. But Kleine and her team got creative, setting up window visits, using a donated iPad for Facetime and playing games with social distancing.

It was especially challenging when the facility experienced an outbreak a year into the pandemic. Kleine was putting in 16 to 18 hour days and then coming home not wanting to expose her family. "I was testing negative, but not kissing your kids good-night – even though that was short-lived – I think that was the biggest impact on our family," she said.

"Throughout this pandemic I have found that I am not only the doctors' eyes and ears, I have been the families' as well. Communication has become more important than ever. Technology has been a bigger part of the communication between doctor offices and families. My state licensors and Cowlitz County health department nurses have been my biggest support on all things COVID. Without their knowledge and encouragement I would have been lost in this pandemic. They truly have been my heroes and have kept me educated and focused."

TRACIE BOEHLAND

MALLORY GRUBEN

Special to The Daily News

When Tracie Boehland explains her job as a charge nurse to people outside of the medical field, she describes it as the “air traffic controller” of the hospital.

She directs patients to and from hospital beds, guiding them to the medical departments best suited to take care of them. She also creates staffing assignments, resolves concerns from family members and troubleshoots any matter of problems that might arise on the in-patient medical floor of PeaceHealth St. John Medical Center.

“Sometimes you feel like an air traffic controller because there is so much going on, so many people coming and going and finding beds for people,” Boehland said.

In the last year, though, as she’s adapted to new job requirements due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Boehland has felt more like a “gateway keeper.”

“(The charge nurse) had to be sure that anyone who was admitted to the floor had a COVID test” Boehland said. “If it was a test positive, then they go in the COVID unit. If it’s negative, they stay on the other side of the unit.”

Hospital staff sealed off half of the in-patient medical floor at PeaceHealth St. John for COVID-19 patients. This allowed nurses to keep coronavirus-positive patients separate from those to reduce the risk of spreading the virus. Patients with more severe cases of COVID-19 are taken to PeaceHealth Southwest in Vancouver, where the hospital system’s COVID intensive care unit was set up.

Boehland said the Longview hospital prepared to handle as many as 1,000 COVID patients. On average, nurses saw closer to five per day.

“So in Cowlitz County we were very fortunate not to have as many people admitted,” Boehland said. “A lot of people were just sent home. They weren’t sick enough to be admitted, so the volume was a lot less.”

For the patients who needed direct medical attention, Boehland said her team “really stepped up” to administer care. She led them as they worked, even through long hours without food or drink because they had to keep their masks on at all times.

“I was really proud of our medical unit for stepping up and getting the job done,” she said. “There are so many changes. You would have a way of doing things, and you’d



come back the next shift and it was just different. The more information we got, we would change our processes to keep people as safe as possible.”

A friend who nominated Boehland for recognition wrote that she is “one of those people who lives her life nursing people in different settings and different capacities.” Outside of the hospital – and in the days before the pandemic – Boehland organized an annual Ladies Day of Refreshing with food, crafts and inspirational speakers for

the women at her church.

“I believe Tracie pays for a good chunk of the things offered that day,” the friend wrote. “She does it because she loves nurturing the spirit and fostering friendships old and new.”

Boehland also invites friends and family to her home once a month for a quilting group, and she typically provides lunch and dinner for her guests. Likewise at work, she helped organize the semi-regular “bunco and painting party” potluck with the hos-

Tracie Boehland

AGE: 63

RESIDENCE: Castle Rock

WORKPLACE: PeaceHealth St. John

HOMETOWN: Kelso

TIME IN HEALTH INDUSTRY: 20 years

TYPE OF NURSE: Charge Nurse

NURSING DEGREE: Registered Nurse–Associate of Nursing from Lower Columbia College.

“Sometimes you feel like an air traffic controller because there is so much going on, so many people coming and going and finding beds for people.”

Tracie Boehland

pital staff on her floor.

“I have a passion for gathering people, which has been really sad during COVID. ... It has kind of put a stall to that,” Boehland said. “We can’t share food or drinks or anything at this point, so that’s been kind of hard for staff to be encouraged.”

As charge nurse, Boehland often sets the tone for the rest of the staff, she said. If she’s upset or in a negative mood, then the rest of the staff will be, too.

“The challenge is to stay positive,” she said.

Boehland relies on her faith to keep her spirit up. She sees her job at the hospital as a way to “carry on the mission of Jesus” by caring for others. Faith is what set Boehland along the nursing track in the first place.

“I really wanted to do short-term mission work, like go into third-world countries on a short-term mission. ... But you have to have a trade,” said Boehland, who worked in the customer service industry for almost a decade before becoming a nurse. She went to nursing school to gain a skill she could use for mission work.

She never ended up going on a short-term mission. Instead, she found a way to use her training to positively influence the lives of others – and to keep friends, family and coworkers cared for.

“I just do it here at home,” she said.

JONNA HOOPER

MALLORY GRUBEN
Special to The Daily News

By her coworkers' accounts, Jonna Hooper starts almost every night shift in the PeaceHealth Southwest Medical Center intensive care unit with "La Cucaracha."

After her 90-minute drive from Castle Rock, Hooper clocks in, grabs her clipboard for charting assessments, and begins to hum the opening bars of the traditional Spanish folk song.

"It makes us all have that song in our heads the entire time, so we have to search for a different song to get stuck on," said Joan Ngarachu, another ICU nurse who has worked with Hooper for the last seven years.

Hooper's musical habit makes her fellow nurses smile, despite the stress of working in the emotionally and mentally demanding environment of the ICU. And during the COVID-19 pandemic, her proclivity for singing "La Cucaracha" became an essential tool for enduring the most difficult challenge of those nurses' lives.

"I don't think she realizes it, but Jonna has been a solace, especially in the last year," Ngarachu said. "She has a kind of intuition about you and where you are emotionally. I have really relied on her the last year to really cope with the abject sadness and horror that has been COVID."

A portion of the regular ICU at PeaceHealth Southwest has become a designated area for severely ill COVID patients during the pandemic. Certain beds are walled off, and nurses must wear full isolation gear while working in the unit. That means wearing masks and other protective equipment for 12 hours straight.

Hospital staff also tries to limit the number of people working in that area to reduce the risk of spreading the virus. The nurses inside the COVID ICU say they have adapted to working with smaller staffs.

Hooper said the nurses also "learned together" how best to take care of COVID patients. For example, during certain "waves," the volume of people in the ICU was so great a commonly used automated system for turning patients in their beds to prevent bed sores didn't work, Hooper said.

"There were just too many people who needed that, so we as a unit learned how to manually put on everybody," she said.

Often when case counts peak, work in the ICU becomes "just traumatic, in a way, because it doesn't matter what we do, and



people still end up dying," Hooper said. Ngarachu described working during the pandemic as a seemingly insurmountable obstacle for even the most experienced nurses.

"You know how your career defines you as a person? Now (imagine) you're 10 years

in, or you're 15 years in, and here comes this one little thing that makes you fail over and over again. What do you do with that? How do you even respond? And it's a failure where people are dead," Ngarachu said.

To process the experience, Hooper

Jonna Hooper

AGE: 39

RESIDENCE: Castle Rock

WORKPLACE: PeaceHealth SouthWest

HOMETOWN: Federal Way

TIME IN HEALTH INDUSTRY: 17 years

TYPE OF NURSE: Intensive Care Unit Nurse

NURSING DEGREE: Bachelor of Science in Nursing from the Intercollegiate College of Nursing overseen by Washington State University.

"I don't think she realizes it, but Jonna has been a solace, especially in the last year. She has a kind of intuition about you and where you are emotionally. I have really relied on her the last year to really cope with the abject sadness and horror that has been COVID."

Joan Ngarachu

sought support from the only people she knew would totally understand: her coworkers. In return, she checks in on her colleagues to make sure they are doing OK, too.

Ngarachu called Hooper the "den mother" of the ICU. Hooper is "honest when she's struggling," and she has an "intuition" for when other people need a boost, Ngarachu said. Whether consciously or not, her singing lifts her coworkers' spirits by forcing them to share other songs to stop themselves from getting "La Cucaracha" stuck in their heads.

Hooper's singing eases the emotional burdens of the job, if only for a moment.

"We start singing Jason Derulo songs, or the latest songs," Ngarachu said. "Then she's like, 'Oh, I heard a new song we can listen to!' She's a stress reliever. When I say she's a den mother, she will do the little things that will just kind of break the stress. And it always starts with 'La Cucaracha.'"

CHRISTINE MITCHELL

MALLORY GRUBEN
Special to The Daily News

As far as nurses go, Christine Mitchell is a Swiss Army knife.

Each shift she works as a float pool nurse takes her to nearly every department of the hospital. She's trained for the general medical floor, surgical floor, cardiac floor and intensive care unit and she excels in each area.

"I just wanted to broaden my horizons and give myself an extra challenge," said Mitchell, who originally trained as a "heart nurse" in the telemetry department.

Her ability to be an "all in one" nurse frequently landed Mitchell in the COVID unit at PeaceHealth St. John Medical Center over the last year, sometimes by staffing necessity, but more often by choice.

"Christine actually, she really rarely takes any time off. She rarely calls in sick. She's a really hard worker. And she will stay over (shift)," said Jacqui Gross, a charge nurse on the telemetry floor who has worked with Mitchell for nearly seven years. "She will volunteer to stay in the COVID unit. ... She doesn't mind staying over in the COVID unit."

The Longview hospital "built the COVID unit from scratch," buying special equipment and sectioning off a portion of the medical floor to keep coronavirus-positive patients separate from other people, Mitchell said. Once built, the hospital sought volunteers for nurses to staff the unit.

"They didn't want to put anybody in there that might have people who might be immunocompromised at home ... or people who might have two different jobs where they work with somebody who might be immunocompromised at their other workplace," Mitchell said.

To reduce the risk of spreading the virus, the hospital limited how many staff members would work in the COVID unit at a time. That meant no Certified Nursing Assistants were allowed in.

"So it was the nurses doing pretty much everything," Mitchell said. "Everybody would be in there helping every patient to make sure everybody was getting the absolute best care they could."

Despite the extra workload, several nurses stepped up to the task, Mitchell among them. The decision came with extra precautions at home, to keep her family safe, too.

"Nobody is allowed to hug mommy when I get home," Mitchell said. Instead, she showers right away and puts her dirty



clothes in an area away from other laundry.

Still, Mitchell enjoys work in the COVID unit. She holds a particular interest in emergency medicine and acute care.

Gross said Mitchell is "particularly confident" in an emergency, and that quality makes her a stand-out nurse. She also knows how to cheer up patients and explain sometimes complicated medical

concepts to them.

"She's colorful in the way she dresses. She wears really brightly colored scrubs and headbands, with big bows on them. She's kind of quirky," Gross said. "And people like that, surprisingly enough. Patients like a cheerful appearance."

And for Mitchell, the patients are the most rewarding part of the job. She said

Christine Mitchell

AGE: 39

RESIDENCE: Longview

WORKPLACE: PeaceHealth St. John Medical Center

HOMETOWN: Longview

TIME IN HEALTH INDUSTRY: 10 years

TYPE OF NURSE: Float Pool Nurse

NURSING DEGREE: Master of Nursing from Western Governors University

"COVID has kind of changed how healthcare is looked at, but I don't really think it's changed how nursing is. I think the focus and priority has been on both patients and staff, and it has always been one of those fields where you have to quickly adapt."

Christine Mitchell

she enjoys sitting at their bedsides, holding their hands or joking with them, depending on what they are most comfortable with.

"I just talk about anything it is they want to talk about, especially right now with everything that is going on. We are wearing masks all the time, and they can't have visitors, so just trying to be able to relate with them ... is something that goes a long way when you're trying to care for somebody," Mitchell said. "It's a scary time for them, and you just have to try to make it as least stressful for them as possible. As long as you can get a smile out of them, it's worth it."

In that regard, the pandemic hasn't changed much for Mitchell. She still shifts to different departments as needed, and she still loves connecting with her patients.

"COVID has kind of changed how healthcare is looked at, but I don't really think it's changed how nursing is," Mitchell said. "I think the focus and priority has been on both patients and staff, and it has always been one of those fields where you have to quickly adapt."

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