Extraordinary Nursing

Nurses aren't just in hospitals. They also are helping in situations that may be unlike most people expect. We find out more about the important work several of them are doing.

BY LYNNE THOMPSON • PHOTOGRAPHY BY JASON MILLER

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ay the word "nurse," and many people picture a uniformed professional, stethoscope around his or her neck, working in a hospital or doctor's office. But nurses provide healthcare in a variety of other settings, from schools and prisons to manufacturing facilities and corporate campuses.

These men and women play a vital role in the lives of those they are hired to serve. They're the first to bandage a playground injury, perhaps the first to detect high blood pressure in a worker during a routine screening or notice a cough that may be a symptom of something more serious than the common cold. Betty Freund, president of the Greater Cleveland Nurses Association, notes they're often "the gatekeepers for further care" - the people who decide whether evaluation and treatment by a physician is necessary. In some cases they become a primary healthcare provider for those whose routine access to a doctor's office is limited by lack of medical insurance, money for copayments, transportation or time.

"They may be the only health professional that a child or an adult sees," Freund says.

For those reasons, a good nursing education and clinical experience is essential, according to Mary Lind Crowe, a faculty member at Ursuline College's Breen School of Nursing. She says some positions in nontraditional settings require additional training or certifications. School nurses, for example, "are not only licensed by the Ohio Board of Nursing, but they meet the educational criteria for teachers as well." That education and clinical experience helps them develop the knowledge and self-confidence to evaluate conditions and administer treatment. Indeed, many nurses seek out those jobs because of the greater independence and autonomy.

But Patti Reid, vice president of healthcare education initiatives at Cuyahoga Community College, points out all nurses have one thing in common, regardless of the environments in which they work: "Nurses are schooled to care about others," she says. "They carry that care and concern with them no matter where they go."

ELAINE EBOSE

ELAINE EBOSE TOOK A JOB as a nurse in the Cleveland Metropolitan School District out of sheer practicality. The duties described - checking vision, maintaining health records and calling parents to pick up their sick kids - sounded downright boring to a 28-year-old with experience in various hospital departments. But the divorced mother of two had discovered that it was hard to help with homework and attend her children's school functions while working a 3-to-11:30 p.m. shift in the intensive-care unit of St. Luke's Hospital.

"I thought, 'I really hate to let go of my exciting job with the sick patients to take care of kids who aren't even sick. But I guess I can do it,'" she remembers.

Twenty-five years later, the 55-year-old
JENNIFER TROCK, 25, IS A SELF-DESCRIBED PEOPLE PERSON. She likes meeting new people and making them happy, so nursing seemed like a perfect career choice. “It kind of came to me,” she says of her path. “I’m very good with patient interaction and critical thinking.”

Trock has worked in the medical field since she was 18 years old as a certified nursing assistant at Garfield Primary Care. She graduated from Ursuline College Breen School of Nursing with a BSN in December.

Trock says she loves every aspect of nursing. “I just love putting smiles on people’s faces and taking care of them,” she says. “Leaving at the end of a shift and listening to a patient thank me, and putting a smile on their faces at a bad time in their lives, it really makes me happy.”

Trock now works in MetroHealth Medical Center’s ER. She enjoys the discipline and variety the department offers. “It’s just the fast pace,” she says. “You have to be the smartest of the smart. Every day I learn something new, and I love saving people’s lives.”

Despite the need to act quickly in an emergency, Trock says the ER staff is actually quite methodical and calm. “They’re organized, and they are the best nurses I’ve worked with,” she says. “When a trauma comes in, everyone is very organized and knows what to do. But don’t get me wrong, it’s busy.”

Trock wants to continue in emergency medicine. “I love the ER,” she says. “I want to be a trauma nurse, get my master’s degree and become certified in trauma — maybe work on Life Flight.”