Hartford Hospital’s Nursing Professional Practice Model

The Nursing Professional Practice Model was developed by nurses from Hartford Hospital to reflect our current values. It is a visual representation of the scope of nursing practice and nursing’s role in enhancing the human health experience.
For the past 170 years, Hartford Hospital’s agility and dynamic processes have led the way in healthcare. We have evaluated clinical tools to practice evidenced-based care, we have focused attention on communication and coordination to support extensive hand offs, and we’ve pursued innovative technology — all of it done with quality and safety in mind. Our evolution and excellence have gone hand in hand to propel our profession and the organization.

Our continuous effort to drive outcomes is a conduit to clinically transform and meet the changing needs of our patients, their families and our staff. The result of this commitment reveals itself in the recognitions of being named best in the nation for quality, cardiovascular surgery and kidney transplant, among others.

As you can see by the content of this magazine, quality and safety is the focus and we are evolving our strategies to be innovative while evolving work flows and improving decision making. Our culture of knowledge sharing, increased flexibility and agility allows nurses to practice at their full scope and be efficient in their work while ensuring care for larger numbers of highly complex patients.

I am sure the best is yet to come, through the partnership with MIT, our technology-enabled artificial intelligence, investment in educational partners and small tests of change all to continually improve the care we provide. At the center of it all is our humanity - treating every patient and their family members with individualized and personal care while honoring our past and embracing the future.

Cheryl Ficara, MS, RN, NEA-BC
Senior Vice President, Operations
Hartford Region, Hartford HealthCare

How do you reach the pinnacle of success and gain recognition as the “best of the best?” It can only be achieved by having the best team members. That’s what we have at Hartford Hospital.

Our focus is more intentional than ever, honing in on working together to advance patient care. The relationships we build are critical to promoting health and healing in our community and within our own workplace. It’s not any one person but the collective efforts and commitment of our teams that bring out the best in us.

The theme of this magazine issue is “Pride, Passion and Partnership.” The three elements are echoed in Hartford HealthCare leadership behaviors and values. When our core values — caring, equity, excellence, integrity and safety — are exercised, there is no limit to our potential. The best innovations, the best outcomes and the best cultures are a product of the pride, passion and partnership of the individuals who join forces to deliver exceptional patient care.

Hartford HealthCare’s mission is “to improve health and healing of all.” This mission includes not only our community, patients and their families, but ourselves. Our well-being is central to our ability to serve and heal others. Our advances and contributions to the field can only be accomplished by working together fairly, with respect, caring and trust in each other.

I hope you see yourself within the pages of this magazine. Your commitment to our patients, community and each other is evident in the innovations, programs and contributions of every nurse at Hartford Hospital.

Laura J. Bailey, MSN, RNC-OB
Vice President, Patient Care Services
Hartford Region, Hartford HealthCare
The Visiting Nurse Association of South Central Connecticut created the Nightingale Awards for Excellence in Nursing in 2001 as a gala program to celebrate and elevate the nursing profession. The Nightingale Awards pay tribute to Florence Nightingale for her dedication and service to her patients. She devoted her life to nursing and improving the quality of life for those she treated. Nightingale’s lasting contribution has been her role in founding the modern nursing profession by setting an example of compassion, commitment to patient care and thoughtful hospital administration.

Please join us in congratulating Hartford Hospital’s 2024 Nightingale Award Recipients!

Jenna Frederico, BSN, RN
Medicine

Wei Low, BSN, RN
Periop/OR CORE

Patricia “Trish” Luce, BSN, RN, CEN
Emergency Department

Piros Mar, BSN, RN
Bone & Joint Institute

Alicia Perry, BSN, RN
Inpatient Rehabilitation Unit

Elizabeth “Beth” Reeve-Lewis, BSN, RN
STAR Team

Melissa Reynolds, BSN, RNC-OB, IAP, MNN, C-EFM
Women’s Health/Labor & Delivery

Marianne Rizio, BSN, RN
Institute of Living

Roberta “Kate” Robinson, BSN, RN
Cardiovascular Services

Mario Rucci, Jr., BSN, RN
Critical Care

Alexander Thomas, BSN, RN
Ayer Neuroscience Institute
A walk through the New England Minority Nurse Leadership Conference (NEMNLC) reveals a powerful sight. Hundreds of nurses of color in one place, with a common goal of connecting to advance nursing diversity, leadership, education and equity in the workplace.

The conference, which will celebrate its 10th annual event this fall, is a collaboration between eight New England chapters of the National Black Nurses Association, Inc., National Association of Hispanic Nurses and National Association of Nigerian Nurses of North America. Locally, Hartford Hospital Med/Surg Nurse Educator Marlene Harris, MS, RN, and STAR Team Nurse Educator Kimberlee Perez, BSN, RN, CCRN serve on the conference’s planning committee.

“The are nurses that look like them and are going through some of the same experiences. It’s relatable and they feel a sense of comfort and inspiration.”

— Marlene Harris, MS, RN

The conference is open to current or aspiring nurses — everyone is welcome. The one-day event features vendors, hospitals, nursing schools, speakers and breakout sessions, all designed to support nurses in any phase of their careers. Topics and speakers are chosen based on trending and timely topics facing nurses of color and help attendees realize their potential to advance their careers.

A big part of the conference is mentorship. Newer nurses can be paired with mentors and those relationships can last throughout a nurse’s career. “I personally wouldn’t be here if it wasn’t for a mentor, especially a nurse of color,” remarks Harris. “Nurses of color deserve a seat at the table, and mentors can reinforce that.” Perez says she is grateful for the mentorship provided by Harris, who has given her guidance and support during her career.

Harris is quick to point out that the event brings a sense of comfort to nurses of color. “We hear often that attendees see themselves,” she says. “There are nurses who look like them and are going through some of the same experiences. It’s relatable.”

Perez lights up when asked about the energy at the conference, stating, “From the very start, it’s extremely inspiring and uplifting to network with so many people. You leave with a renewed sense of joy in nursing. This conference fills your cup.”

Attendees are asked to evaluate the experience at the end of the conference and the takeaway is clear, with words like “rejuvenated,” “heard,” and “represented” among the descriptors.

For questions about the conference or the host organizations, please contact Marlene.Harris@hhchealth.org or Kimberlee.Perez@hhchealth.org.
Laura Bailey

The Hartford Region’s Vice President of Patient Care Services Laura Bailey, MSN, RNC-OB, joined Hartford HealthCare in the fall of 2020, when hospitals worldwide were mired in COVID-19. Nursing magazine sat down with her to talk about entering her role at such a tenuous time, where we are now and what the future holds for nursing.

NURSING: You came to Hartford Hospital in September 2020, in the midst of a pandemic. What were your immediate impressions and what will you remember from that pivotal time in history?

Laura Bailey (LB): In the depths of the pandemic, there was something unique about the positive energy that was palpable throughout the organization and it was that energy that drew me to Hartford Hospital. The sense of teamwork, commitment and connectedness to the common cause was clear to see, even in the midst of the unknown. The teams were in survival mode, but there was such a strong “can-do” attitude. I still feel that every day when I walk in to the building. Initially, one of the biggest challenges was connecting to the teams in a way that I wanted to — it was hard to start my role without the ability to meet people face to face — we were connected by Zoom, but separated by masks. I had to find different ways to connect with the teams that felt authentic.

NURSING: In overcoming challenges like the nursing shortage, burnout and workplace violence that are impacting the industry, what do you think is necessary to turn the tide for nursing?

LB: As leaders, we need to be mindful of the differences and priorities of our current workforce and adapt to that. While work/life synergy is not a unique desire in our profession, employees have made it abundantly clear that it is not just a “nice to have,” it is a “must have.” I see some really positive trends where our colleagues are finding their own way to achieve that balance. Flexible scheduling, part-time opportunities, making it easier for colleagues to participate in councils and committees through virtual platforms, are all things that our colleagues tell us help keep them engaged. The partnership between leaders and frontline staff is essential to addressing the challenges. Collectively we need to continue to work very closely, aligning goals to drive the desired outcome which is a healthy and robust workforce that finds meaning in their work.
NURSING: What are the keys to nursing recruitment and retention?

LB: There is a lot of data on our current workforce indicating where we need to focus our efforts. Feedback from our employee engagement surveys and the many focus groups we held this past year show trends similar to what is seen in the national landscape. Supportive leadership, market-competitive compensation, career growth and development potential are vital to retention.

Focusing on an individual's growth must be intentional and deliberate to that end, we have increased financial support for education with our student loan debt forgiveness program, as well as enhancements to our tuition reimbursement program. We have a clinical ladder for our nursing colleagues and this past year added a clinical ladder for our Patient Care Techs. We’ve strengthened our preceptor program and we now have a systemwide evidence-based nurse residency program that provides the support needed for our new graduate nurses as they transition into their professional nursing roles.

We are already starting to see positive results from these efforts. At the peak of COVID our first-year turnover was 32.4% and last year it decreased to 25.4%. Pre-COVID it was 14.7%. We have also seen a significant decrease in our overall nurse vacancy rate.

There is still a lot to do but I feel like we are headed in the right direction.

NURSING: What makes a positive workplace culture?

LB: I think a positive workplace culture for nursing is characterized by several key elements. Effective leadership is paramount, with managers who prioritize communication, collaboration, and transparency, creating a sense of trust and respect amongst the team. We need to ensure that we have open lines of communication that allow nurses to voice concerns, share ideas, and provide feedback, ensuring their voices are heard and valued. Additionally, a culture that promotes teamwork and camaraderie and encourages collaboration among multidisciplinary teams is key to enhancing patient care outcomes and job satisfaction. Recognition and appreciation for nurses’ contributions, whether through formal acknowledgment programs, peer recognition, or celebrating achievements, reinforce a sense of value and purpose and also contribute to a positive workplace culture for all.
NURSING: The theme for this issue is “Pride, Passion & Partnership.” What makes you proudest of the work done by nurses at Hartford Hospital?
LB: We’ve been recognized by many organizations and entities for our achievements in quality and our clinical programs. We’ve done it during very difficult times. It wouldn’t be possible if we didn’t have teams that are passionate about what they do. They believe in the mission of the organization. The accolades that are highlighted in this issue of the nursing magazine are a reflection of the outstanding work done here and how that work improves patient outcomes. It’s not any one person, it’s the collective efforts and commitment of our teams. There is so much to be proud of and I really want our nurses to appreciate the significance of their work.

NURSING: As you approach your four-year anniversary with Hartford Hospital and 26 years as a nurse, what do you see, or hope to see, for the future of nursing?
LB: What I see is an amazing team of nurses committed to our patients and our community. Every day, I am inspired by their resilience, advocacy and their focus on quality and safety in their practice. Going forward, my hope is that we can continue our conversations about the workforce, be inclusive of how we (nursing) can shape the future of the profession and healthcare overall by driving innovation, harnessing new technology and developing new care models. My hope is that every nurse here is proud of what they do — because what they do every day matters.

NURSING: What is your passion and how does it drive your work here?
LB: I am very passionate about nurses working to the full scope of their license, that their voices are heard and that our foundation of practice is evidence-based. An environment that supports nurses engaging in the work that will elevate the profession and improve outcomes for our patients is very important to me. I’m committed to making sure that we are not creating “work-arounds” and that we provide nurses with the tools and the resources that they need to care for our patients.

NURSING: What would you like us to know about you personally?
LB: I thrive on connecting with new people and delving into their unique journeys and passions. Music is my ultimate remedy. It serves as my go-to tool for shifting my mindset whenever necessary. Its cathartic power enables me to intentionally redirect my focus, providing much-needed clarity. Recognizing the challenges inherent in hard work, I’ve learned the importance of equipping myself with personalized strategies for resilience. We all have our own methods for navigating tough times and resetting, and for me, that beacon of strength is music.

NURSING: What is your passion and how does it drive your work here?
LB: I am very passionate about nurses working to the full scope of their license, that their voices are heard and that our foundation of practice is evidence-based. An environment that supports nurses engaging in the work that will elevate the profession and improve outcomes for our patients is very important to me. I’m committed to making sure that we are not creating “work-arounds” and that we provide nurses with the tools and the resources that they need to care for our patients.
LPNs offer another set of hands in oncology

The nursing shortage is nothing new and it’s clear that out-of-the-box thinking is imperative to staffing hospitals and delivering safe, quality care. The oncology unit on CB2 has taken this challenge to heart and is confident that introducing licensed practical nurses (LPNs) to the team will help nurses and patients alike.

Heidi Cutter, BS, BSN, RN, OCN, CNML is the nurse manager on CB2. She is very candid about the nursing shortage and its impact the oncology unit. “CB2 administers a large amount of chemotherapy and takes care of acutely-ill, often complex, oncology patients. It is vital for us to have the proper resources and clinical mix,” she says. “I’ve promised my team since I arrived that we were going to work together to get what we needed. When a director shared information about the potential to integrate LPNs, we were open to try this team-based model.”

The unit hired two LPNs who have undergone a thorough 12-week orientation and training program. Each LPN is matched with two registered nurses who have a higher acuity patient assignment. At the start of the shift, the trio meets to discuss and create a care plan. Throughout the day, they remain in contact, keeping each other apprised of each patient’s status. The LPNs are also paired with preceptors on the unit who are clinical leaders and chemo-trained.

“Having this extra level of support is so important,” says Assistant Nurse Manager Blaire Baldwin, BSN, RN, OCN. “It takes a little burden off our nurses so they can safely sit down and spend the time that needs to be spent to make sure our patients and their care plans are aligned.”

The LPN roles and responsibilities were clearly defined and shared with the CB2 staff to promote the patient care team’s new structure. They are able to perform many tasks - specific medication management, measuring and monitoring vital signs, wound care and ostomy care, just to name a few.

Cutter is optimistic that the LPNs will bring much-needed support and have a positive influence on the unit. “This will help retention, reduce burnout, and allow us to give high quality safe oncology care while improving patient experience. We can be more efficient when everyone is working to the top of their license.”

“LPNs can be the hands for RNs. This is a great opportunity to gain more knowledge and I look forwarded to growing here. I love that Hartford Hospital is a teaching hospital. I know that if I have any questions, there is no shortage of people who are willing to help me.”

—Danielle Lanagan, Licensed Practical Nurse

“My mom had multiple myeloma and was treated here at Hartford Hospital, so this is personal for me. My role helps nurses with their heavy load. We can help them to work more efficiently. I’m grateful that Hartford Hospital offers this experience and support as I grow in my career.”

—Myeisha Smith, Licensed Practical Nurse
Imagine a gigantic Rubik’s Cube, but instead of nine movable blocks on each side of the cube, there are dozens. And every time the blocks are shifted, any order on the other side of the cube is disrupted.

This is, in effect, what scheduling nurses in the Hartford Hospital Emergency Department (ED) was like for Nurse Manager Audrey Silver, MSN, RN, NE-BC, CEN and Assistant Nurse Manager Nicole Vogt, BSN, RN and their team of nurse leaders. It was a painstaking process that took hours, until a game-changing partnership with the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) detangled the complex process and provided a program that saves hours and optimizes nurses’ schedules, training and work/life balance.

Scheduling nurses in the complicated world of the ED was no easy task. “On average, 88 hours per six weeks of scheduling was shared between several nurse leaders and our scheduler,” says Silver. “The mathematics and exercise of placing nurses according to competency and preference was time consuming and challenging on a number of levels.”

Breaking new ground in AI technology
Enter Professor Dimitris Bertsimas, associate dean of analytics at MIT’s Sloan School of Management. Bertsimas and his team came to the Hartford Hospital ED and toured the department, learning as much as they could about the unit, the levels of care and the proficiencies of the nurses working in each unique area. That, combined with the copious information provided to them by nurse leaders, was enough to create a program designed to simplify scheduling and trim hours off the process.

A lot of the data was already in hand at MIT — they knew volume, census and acuity metrics before the visit. What came during their stay was a comprehensive look at the department’s nurse staffing structure. They returned to MIT with a clear understanding of the many layers that complicate the task of scheduling efficiently, effectively and fairly.

This new scheduling tool comes on the heels of Hartford HealthCare’s (HHC) recently launched Center for AI Innovation in Healthcare, the first of its kind in New England and one of only a handful in the country.
At its unveiling, HHC’s leadership was energized by its potential to change healthcare. “AI stands poised to profoundly reshape healthcare delivery, impacting access, affordability, equity and excellence,” says Barry Stein, MD, HHC’s chief clinical innovation officer and leader of the center. President and CEO Jeffrey A. Flaks says HHC is transforming healthcare by taking new approaches to innovation, noting, “This center is poised to unlock the full potential of AI, ensuring that every algorithm is not just intelligent, but empathetic and ethical,” says Flaks.

**More predictability in unpredictable situations**

The team at MIT drew upon data collected during and since COVID, with an eye on volume, census and acuity. When added to specific competencies and preferences of nurses, the program generated a schedule that puts the appropriate number of nurses in the right place at the right time, matched with their qualifications.

Silver and Vogt note that the AI technology helps the department stay ahead of what’s coming. “The unpredictability of the ED was a challenge to staffing,” says Silver. “What we’ve done is build a program that looks at the data of our volumes and census to project what we should be staffing on any given day, depending on the time of the year and the historic data trends, to make us better prepared for what’s coming through our doors.”

“The data showed us that we were able to increase our staffing numbers from 11 a.m. to 11 p.m.,” shared Vogt. “When we looked at our volume and the demands of the department, there was opportunity to hire more nurses for that shift to support that incoming volume.”

**Added benefits to the nurse**

While creating a more efficient scheduling tool was the immediate goal, the new tool has gone a long way in helping enhance the work/life balance for nurses. Shift preferences, which nurse managers previously stored on an Excel spreadsheet and committed to memory, are now part of the data.

“We were able to transition nurses from working every other weekend to working every third weekend sooner in their career, which is a benefit to a nurse’s work/life balance,” says Vogt. It also provides a fair and equitable sharing of responsibilities, removing any perception of favoritism and bias in scheduling.

Historically, integrating education and preceptorship during the work week was challenging for schedulers, given the dynamics and volume of the ED. The program can identify available timeframes and will preschedule nurses for education during their normal shift.

“Anything in this day and age you can do to retain a nurse is vital,” notes Director of Patient, Family and Colleague Access Patricia Ann Marie Veronneau, MSN, RN. “We have no travelers, there are very few open positions at this moment in time and we have great engagement. This program is a reflection of the hard work, dedication and commitment of Hartford Hospital Emergency Department nurses to improve the nurse and, in turn, the patient experience.”

**Paving the way for other departments**

One year after the program was launched the ED, there is potential for rollouts in other departments at Hartford Hospital and systemwide. Nicole Vogt says, “We built this from the ground up to align with our needs. I can only imagine what the MIT team can do for other units.”

An unexpected benefit of the program is clear to see on the floor. Nurse leaders have gained significant time back to reinvest into the staff. Audrey Silver says the result is palpable. “Our nurses gain the benefit of us better aligning our resources to be there for when we need them the most. We are definitely on a positive path and look forward to further benefits as we continue to develop this innovative program.”
Nurses Honor Their Own with Touching Tribute

A nurse dons a uniform, familiar and foreign at the same time. It doesn’t resemble contemporary scrubs worn today, but conjures an image from our shared ancestry — a starched cap and whites topped with a navy-blue cape adorned with a nursing pin. The nurse heads out the door and is soon met by other sisters and brothers in the profession to take part in a solemn rite of passage, honoring a vocation that doesn’t end at retirement or even death.

The Connecticut Nurses Honor Guard was formed in 2021, after former Hartford Hospital nurse Athena Mains, BSN, RN saw the work of honor guards elsewhere in the country. She knew the initiative could be well-received in Connecticut and set out to organize local chapter. With the help of Maria Cusano-Sanzo, DNP, RN, Shaina Hamel, CPT, RMA, LPN and others, the CT Nurses Honor Guard presented their first tribute in October of that year.

Once a nurse, always a nurse
The honor guard’s premise is equally simple and profound. Upon word of the death of a nurse, the group coordinates attendance at the deceased’s visitation or memorial service. Nurses in the group are notified via email or a private Facebook page and given an opportunity to volunteer.

Once at the memorial event, the nurses pay their respects to family and friends and present a brief ceremony which includes the reading of the Nightingale tribute. Attending honor guard nurses lay a single white rose by the nurse and a lamp is presented to the family in commemoration of the nurse’s noble service.

Perhaps the most powerful moment comes when the honor guard releases the nurse of her duties by symbolically ringing a bell three times. It’s a moving ceremony that resonates with both loved ones and the honor guard members themselves.

Recognizing service and sacrifice
While speaking with four members of the honor guard, it was easy to see the compassion and respect for fellow nurses and their surviving families. Tears were shed during our conversation, illustrative of the emotion these ceremonies stir up even beyond the funeral rites.

“The magnitude of what we nurses do is recognized in this moment,” says Nursing Supervisor Cheryl Mitchell, MBA, MSN. “We can see the appreciation and the meaning behind the recognition on the family’s faces.”

“Nurses do such a great job caring for people in the physical world,” says Nurse Manager Maria Segarra MSN, RN. “This is one more way to support the nurse. It’s an honor to be there for such a beautiful and meaningful moment.”

Hartford Hospital School of Nursing class of 1973 alumnus Marilyn Miller, RN, is a retired nurse and says membership in the honor guard has provided a sense of connection since her work in the hospital setting has ended. “I miss the camaraderie of nurses
The Nightingale Tribute

Nursing is a calling, a lifestyle, a way of living. Nurses here today honor Mary Smith and her life as a nurse.

Mary is not remembered by her years as a nurse but by the difference she made during those years by stepping into people's lives.

By special moments, Mary was there.
When a calming quiet presence was all that was needed, Mary was there.
In the excitement and miracle of birth or in the mystery and loss of life, Mary was there.
When a silent glance could uplift a patient, family member or friend, Mary was there.
At those times when the unexplainable needed to be explained, Mary was there.
When a gentle touch, a firm push or an encouraging word was needed, Mary was there.
To witness humanity — it's beauty, in good times and bad, without judgment, Mary was there.
To embrace the woes of the world, willingly, and offer hope, Mary was there.
The next time you find yourself singing “Sweet Caroline” at a Red Sox game, Mary is there.
And now that it is time to be at the Greater One's side, Mary is there.

Mary, we honor you this day and give you a white rose to symbolize our honor and appreciation for being our colleague. I would like to invite any nurses present to stand as we do a final roll call:

Mary Smith. (ring triangle)
Mary Smith. (ring triangle)
Mary Smith. (ring triangle)

We officially release you from your nursing duties. (The lamp is extinguished)
Cardiology Quality and Safety Pilot Reaps Benefits

Implementing top safety and quality standards is an ever-evolving process and impacts patients and colleagues alike. For Hartford HealthCare’s Senior Vice President of Operations Hartford Region Cheryl Ficara, MS, RN, NEA-BC, ensuring those measures means continually evaluating the care model based on the changing landscape of the workforce. “The goal is to support positive outcomes for patients as well as the growth and development of the nurses and other members of the health care team through teaching, coaching and mentoring of best practices,” she notes. To that end, a pilot program was initiated in cardiology with a focus on quality and safety.

How it started
"We identified four points of opportunity," shared Nurse Supervisor Nicole Haefner, MSN, RN. "COIN (continuous observation and intervention by nursing) safety, decreasing falls and falls with injury, staff safety and improving compliance with AirStrip."

The pilot takes an around-the-clock approach which meant a change for nurse supervisors. Historically, their shift has been from 3pm to 7am. Now the supervisor works during the day and hands off to the evening and overnight shifts, providing 24/7 support to patients.

Nurse supervisors play a critical role in the pilot and worked closely with cardiology leadership to develop best practices. Director of Patient, Family and Colleague Access Patricia Ann Marie Veronneau, MSN, RN explains, “The role of the supervisor has evolved over the past year to be a quality and safety role. They lead the team in hands-on critical thinking, developing processes for safety and working them into practice.”

As with any successful initiative, communication is key. In-depth conversations between supervisors and team members delve into the “whys” of safety issues and what can be done to reduce them. There is a lot of rounding and communicating with nurses in the moment. “We round on each COIN patient in cardiology on every shift, three times a day,” shares Haefner. “During that time, we identify safety opportunities.” Those opportunities can include determining that a suicidal patient has a potentially dangerous item in the room, or an obstacle exists for a patient who is a fall risk.

How it’s going
The pilot rolled out in December and so far, the insights are positive. “What’s most effective about this pilot is that when a supervisor is rounding and opportunities are identified, he or she is giving them immediate feedback,” says Director of Nursing for Cardiovascular Services Jamie Houle, BSN, MSN, RN. “Constant in-the-moment feedback is giving colleagues the tools they need to keep the patient and the caregiving team safe. It is a very collaborative approach focusing on best practice. Sometimes audit gaps can be construed as failures by the bedside team — this pilot is more about sharing the tools for value-based care for the patient and teams than it is about highlighting gaps.”

Before the pilot, AirStrip compliance was at 51%. Currently, compliance stands at 85%. Increased rounding on patients with COIN orders has led to earlier intervention to reduce risk. Consults are done earlier and length of stay has decreased, as well.

Beyond the constant stream of communications, there are also more tangible changes to the process, as Haefner explains. “We previously did audits for falls, but we are not necessarily sticking that audit
on a board — we are having immediate discussions to evaluate things like bedside hand-off. We are continually pivoting to address the best practices by looking at root causes.” The team has also expressed the importance of completing electronic telemetry strips by educating on the meaning and reasoning behind the practice. Reminders have been built into Epic to help remind colleagues.

Hospital leadership is pleased with the pilot and has an eye on the future. “A broader adoption of this pilot will allow us to be agile to meet the changing needs of the patient care units by addressing changes in practice, quality and safety,” says Cheryl Ficara. “I am very proud of the work this team has implemented and believe our learnings will significantly improve the care of our patients and the support of our colleagues.”

To celebrate and honor the outstanding work and dedication of our colleagues in patient care services roles, several generous donations will subsidize the purchase of scrubs for every nurse, PCT and PAA at Hartford Hospital. With more than 4,000 on staff, this generous donation is greatly appreciated.

Gift cards for the scrubs are distributed during Nurses Week.

Hartford Hospital Philanthropy and leadership wish to acknowledge and thank the following individuals and organizations for their generous donations:

- Tallwood Institute
- Esther Pryor
- James Marzi
- Pia Rosenberg
- Ross Hollander
- Eric Zachs

Denise D’Ascenzo Foundation
Mr. and Mrs. Ginsberg
LAZ Parking
All Waste
Sign Pro

Left to right: Hugh Rowe, PCT/PAA; Nnenna Nwankwo, BSN, RN; and Angel Ayala, PAA

Left to right: Cardiology Quality Pilot Workgroup: Nick Coutant, MSN, RN, Nicole Haefner, MSN, RN, Janet Louie-Johnson, BSN, RN, Patricia Anne Veronneau, MSN, RN, Jamie Houle, MSN, RN
Managing a schedule, high patient acuity, multiple concurrent emergencies — these are just a few of the day-to-day challenges of a nurse manager, creating a complicated and unpredictable environment. To help ensure best practices throughout the day, a new pilot program in the Medicine cluster has been initiated and the results are positive.

“The goal was to design a structure utilizing the quality resources we already have in place to prioritize three key performance indicators (KPIs) — safer mobilization and fall prevention, COINs, and cardiac monitoring standards to ensure best practices,” says Medicine and Quality Safety Nurse Jennifer Williams, BSN, RN, MPH.

The nurse manager, assistant nurse manager and nurse educator ensured that best practices were integrated into clinical practice. The next strategy was to formulate a structure that would support hardwiring these practices.

Active engagement by nurse leaders is key to its success. Director of Nursing Medicine Services and IV Therapy Susanne Yeakel, MSN, RN, NEA-BC, CNML says the involvement of managers in planning is evidenced in our outcomes. “As the owners, the managers have been part of the process and design,” she says. “It’s been slow and steady but we’ve seen improvements in all KPIs.”

The pilot provides a framework which builds in accountability on the unit level. “We defined who the managers’ resources were,” says Williams. “From there, we built a structure for 24-hour accountability leveraging the off-shift nurse educators, unit-based educators, assistant nurse managers and the nurse manager on the floor.”

The three KPIs are incorporated into one REDCap audit tool, where the nurse managers can see daily data trends then report out at the end of the month.

A critical aspect of the pilot provides nurse managers with protected time, a practice reinstated by Laura Bailey, MSN, RNC-OB, Hartford HealthCare’s Regional Vice President of Patient Care Services in the Hartford Region. From 8 am to 10 am, nurse managers and directors have no meetings scheduled, allowing them time to work on the quality plan and round on staff and patients. “It is very easy for a manager’s day to get away from them with all of the competing demands,” Bailey says. “This pilot is an example of the type of infrastructure that is needed to support our nurse leaders in a role that requires 24/7 accountability.”

Director of Quality and Safety, Patient Care Services at Hartford Hospital Jennifer Ash, APRN, MPH says, “It will improve patient care by ensuring that best practice standards are integrated into practice, that we are holding ourselves and each other accountable and we are removing any barriers to those standards in the name of safety and quality.”

Yeakel says that the benefits are far-reaching and impact all colleagues, too. “It helps staff see that quality isn’t “extra” — it’s how we practice. By keeping a finger on the pulse on the unit in terms of quality, we can pave the way to continuous improvement.”

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<td>CB2</td>
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All routine strips captured in the last 24 hours
Telemetry box verification performed
All RNs have signed into the care team
Nurse Scientists Laura Cox Dzurec, PhD, PMHCNS-BC, ANEF, FAAN (Hartford Hospital) and Jennifer Hehl, PhD, RN, CNOR, ONC (Bone & Joint Institute) are recipients of the 2024-2026 Association for Leadership Science in Nursing (ALSN) & American Nurses Foundation Joyce J. Fitzpatrick Leadership Research Award.

Their study, entitled “Linking Nursing Leadership and Workplace Bullying Science to Strengthen Nurse Leader Empowerment,” examines how bullies use subtle communication ploys to demean others in an effort to disrupt workplace inclusion, damage co-workers’ reputations and self-esteem and elevate their own personal status. By working closely with nurse leaders, the duo is confident that steps can be taken to reduce bullying in the workplace.

With the $20,000 grant award, Dzurec and Hehl’s goal is to create an instrument that can be used to recognize, assess and monitor workplace culture to enable future researchers and leaders to measure the success of implementations designed to combat bullying in all of its subtle or overt forms. 

Drs. Dzurec and Hehl note the importance of nurse leaders in the study. “Leaders play a crucial role in shaping workplace dynamics,” they say. “Through our study, we hope to better inform leaders about the subtleties of workplace bullying — potentially that information will help them to address bullying head on.”

We congratulate these Hartford Hospital nurses on their recent achievements.

Ambulatory
- Lisa Buckle, RN, Diabetes Life Center, was promoted to RN3

The Bone & Joint Institute
- Jamie-Lyn Malone, RN earned her Bachelors of Science in Nursing.

POSTER PRESENTATIONS


Hayes, K., Pearson, M., Hehl, J. Opening the OR Doors to Foster Culture Change and Fill Vacancies.


Lenk, E., Sinclair, M., Knight, K., Murphy, L. Healing Power of Patient Education: Improving Access to Pre-operative Education Class.


Murphy, L. Enhancing healthcare equity: Improving access to care for the underserved Orthopaedic population.

Kosma, K., Lenk, E. Closing the Osteoporosis Treatment Gap for Fragility Hip Fracture Patients.


In February, KellyAnn Kosma, DNP, APRN, NP-C hosted ‘Osteoporosis Walk to Wellness’ at the Westfarms Hartford Healthcare lounge. This discussion focused on understanding Osteoporosis risk factors and ways to optimize bone health through non-pharmacological and pharmacological therapies.

Cardiology

The Cardiac Rehab team partnered with their patients to collect new and used winter gear. More than 40 coats, many pairs of shoes, boots, hats, gloves, scarves and warm clothing both new and used were donated for patients in the Emergency Department.

Critical Care

B11I: Sarah Duff, RN obtained her CCRN
Devon Valenti, BSN, RN, CRRN earned her Masters of Science in Nursing

B7I: Kyle Bolduc BSN, RN obtained his CCRN
Lesya Lyuba, BSN, RN obtained her CCRN
Sarah Kozikis, RN earned her Bachelors of Science in Nursing

C8I: Lindsay Krodell, RN advanced to RN3

Department of Geriatrics

Poster presentation at the 2024 Association of Safe Patient Handling Professionals Safe Patient Handling and Mobility Education Event in San Diego, CA: First Steps Towards Moving to a Culture
of Mobility: Implementing Low Beds for Patients at High Risk for Injury, Anna-Rae Montano, PhD, RN, MEDSURG-BC, OCN, Ming-Jhuan Wang, RN, MSN

Podium Presentation at the American Delirium Society 2024 Conference in Sacramento, CA: A Multifaceted Approach to Delirium Care in an Urban Level-One Trauma Center, Michelle Nai, MSN, RN, GERo-BC, Ming-Jhuan Wang, RN, MSN, Anna-Rae Montano RN, PhD, MEDSURG-BC, OCN

PUBLICATIONS
Waszynski C, Kessler J, Chhabra J, Nowicki T, Greco S. Nurses’ Knowledge, Confidence, Detection and Actions Related to Delirium Care in the Post-Acute Setting. Delirium Communications. Published online February 3, 2024. doi:10.56392/001c.92213


WEBINARS
Christine Waszynski, DNP, APRN, GNP-BC, FAAN participated in a national webinar sponsored by NIDUS (Network for Investigation of Delirium: Unifying Scientists) in January entitled “Bringing Evidence Into Practice: Implementing Delirium Care”. Hartford Hospital Delirium Care Pathway was featured.

She also held two webinars per request of the American Hospital Association discussing the “Mentation” component of the 4 M framework related to age-friendly care. These were attended by healthcare professionals from around the country.

Emergency Department

Allison Crockett, RN obtained her CEN

Alexander Yeakel, RN earned his Master of Science in Nursing with a concentration in Education.

Heart & Vascular Institute

Christine Cosgrove, APRN of the Heart Failure Clinic earned her Doctorate in Nursing Education.

Christopher Warrington, MSN, RN, CCRN, CMC, CSC obtained his NPD-BC.

Alexis Klemka, RN, CV-BC, RCES of the Electrophysiology Lab earned her Master’s Degree in Nursing Education.

Kristen Pelkey, BSN, RN of the Electrophysiology Pre/Post earned her advanced certification – CPAN

Heart & Vascular Institute colleagues presented 5 posters at the American College of Cardiology (ACC) Quality Summit in Orlando, Florida on October 11 – 13, 2023.

POSTER TITLES:

Burke-Martindale C, Patali H, McKay RG, Ingrassia J. Optimizing treatment of Patients with Complex Coronary Artery Disease with a Multidisciplinary Heart Team Approach: The Hartford HealthCare CHIP Program. American College of Cardiology Quality Summit 10/23. (Carolyn Martindale, APRN)


PUBLICATIONS

Christopher Warrington, MSN, RN, NPD-BC, CCRN, CMC, CSC; Jessica Albrycht, PA-C; Dominick Mariconda, PA-C; Carolyn Burke-Martindale, MSN, APRN, ACNP-BC

Continued on page 20
Inpatient Rehabilitation Unit
- Patrick Krecidlo, MSN, RN, NE-BC received his CENP
- Kerri Ybarra, MSN, RN, CRRN, received her CNML

The Institute of Living
- POSTER PRESENTATIONS
  Posters Accepted for the American Psychiatry Association annual conference in May, 2024:
  Restraint, Seclusion, and Workplace Violence: Exploring correlations to census and milieu acuity in an inpatient psychiatric setting
  Ellen Blair, DNP, APRN, PMHCNS-BC, NEA-BC, CPHQ, FAAN, Javeed Sukhera, MD, PhD, FRCPC, Tess M. Atkinson, MA, RSS, Paul Paseos, RN, MBA, Richard Little, MBA, PMP

Participatory Policy Co-Design: A new approach to interprofessional collaboration for policy development in a psychiatric setting

Interventional Radiology
- Tara Nastri, BSN, RN became a Clinical Leader.
- The following nurses advanced to RN3:
  – Jo-Ellen Beam, RN
  – Todd Doody, RN
  – Egle Sierkeviciene, RN
  – Melinda Kingsley, RN
  – Brooke Kehoe, RN
  – Elpiniki Braghirol, RN

Medicine
- Susanne Yeakel, MSN, RN, NEA-BC, CNML received the Organization of Nurse Leaders President’s Award for Excellence in Nursing Leadership in June 2023 and the Connecticut Nurses Association Mary Jane M. Williams Diamond Jubilee Award for the Lifetime Achievement in Nursing in Nov., 2023.

Neurology
- POSTER PRESENTATIONS
  Two posters were presented at the International Stroke Conference in Phoenix, Arizona in February:
  “Improving Nurse Retention Through Orientation Restructuring, Planned Professional Development and Leadership, Employee Support – One Unit’s Journey.”
  Jocelyn Hewitt, BSN, RN, SCRN; Shailyn Wilder, BSN, RN; Kirsten Fazzino, MSN, RN, NE-BC, SCRN, CPA; Catherine Thresher DNP, RN, MEDSURG-BC, PCCN, CRRN, NPD-BC, CBIS; Sarah Hong, MSN, RN, CNRN, MEDSURG-BC; Brady Cooper BSN, RN, SCRN.

  “Proven Strategies for Educating Staff and Reducing Hospital Acquired Pressure Injuries in Hospital Stroke Units.”
  Kirsten Fazzino, MSN, RN, NE-BC; SCRN, CPA; Jocelyn Hewitt, BSN, RN, SCRN; Sarah Hong, MSN, RN, CNRN, MEDSURG-BC; Staci Beamon, BSN, RN; Catherine Thresher DNP, RN, MEDSURG-BC, PCCN, CRRN, NPD-BC, CBIS; Jenna Hovey, BSN, RN, SCRN; Shailyn Wilder, BSN, RN; Karen Sher, BSN, RN, SCRN, CRRN.

- Article “What’s Next for Me? Developing an Eighteen-Month Structured Pathway to Increase New Nurse Retention” will be published in April 2024 in the Journal of Nursing Administration.
  Catherine Thresher DNP, RN, MEDSURG-BC, PCCN, CRRN, NPD-BC, CBIS; Jocelyn Hewitt, BSN, RN, SCRN; Shailyn Wilder, BSN, RN; Kirsten Fazzino, MSN, RN, NE-BC, SCRN, CPA.

Nursing Centralized Education
- Shannon Fortini, MSN, RN, CNL obtained her NPD-BC
- Cheri Cronin, MSN, RN, NPD-BC obtained her NEA-BC
POSTERS & PRESENTATIONS


PUBLISHED PAPERS


Oncology

Brianna Lynes, MSN, RN obtained her OCN

POSTER PRESENTATIONS

Posters accepted for the Oncology Nursing Society Congress in April, 2024:
Shaping the Future of Oncology Nursing Through Specialty Content and Resiliency Building: An Oncology Nurse Residency Pilot Program, Emily Boucher, MSN, RN, OCN

Spotlight on Oncology Care: One Team’s Interdisciplinary Approach to Education, Brianna Lynes, MSN, RN, OCN

Surgery

Bliss 8:
- Katlin Dipietro, MSN, BSN, RN graduated with her FNP.
- Deborah Oppong, BSN, RN completed Geriatric Resource Nurse training.
- Nadine Taylor, PCT completed Geriatric PCT training.

Women’s Health Services

Crystal Buckley, RN (N8) completed her Bachelors of Science in Nursing

Tetyana Svystun, RN (Nurse Manager for Bliss 6 Maternity & Newborn Observation Unit) completed her Masters of Science in Nursing.

Hartford Hospital Women’s Health Services re-designated as a Baby Friendly Hospital by Baby Friendly USA.

Hartford Hospital’s Women’s Health Services celebrates the renewal of the hospital’s Baby Friendly designation.

The following nurses earned certification in Inpatient Obstetrics:
- Bailey Bourque, RN
- Caitlyn Cole, RN
- Samantha Garesio, RN, CL
- Courtney Hanks, RN

Continued on page 22
The following nurses earned certification in Maternal Newborn Nursing:
- Ashley Guittare, RN, CL
- Kaitlyn May, RN
- Melissa Reynolds, RN, CL

The following nurses earned certification in Inpatient Antepartum Nursing:
- Anna Riley, RN
- Melissa Reynolds, RN, CL

The following nurses earned certification in Electronic Fetal Monitoring:
- Ruby Amara, RN
- Bailey Bourque, RN
- Caitlyn Cole, RN
- Samantha Garesio, RN, CL
- Courtney Hanks, RN
- LaShaan Knox, RN
- Meagan Kubicko, RN
- Lisa Laporte, RN, CL
- Anna McCabe, RN
- Alexandra Perron, RN, CL
- Melissa Reynolds, RN, CL
- Anna Riley, RN
- Dominika Wejda, RN
- Jordan Young, RN

Anna Riley, RN is now certified in Obstetric & Neonatal Quality & Safety.

Jennifer Trowbridge, PNP is now an International Board-Certified Lactation Consultant.

The following nurses have earned certification as Lactation Counselors:
- Dominika Adamczyk, RN
- Shardei Vega-Miles, RN

The following nurses are now certified in End of Life Nursing Care (ELNEC):
- Melinda Dasher, RN, C-EFM
- Beth Steider, RN
- Sherry Strimike, RN

Stephanie Ingills, RN is now certified in Wound Care.

PROMOTIONS:
- Bailey Bourque, RNC-OB, C-EFM to RN3
- Renata Kalinowski, RN to Assistant Nurse Manager
- Jennifer McCarthy, RN to Assistant Nurse Manager (nights)
- Lisa Laporte RN, C-EFM to Assistant Nurse Manager (nights)

Francie Penny, Ph.D., MSN, MPH, and Mary Marshall-Crim, MSN, FNP, BE, IBCLC were published in the Journal of Human Lactation in the November/December 2023 issue, “Use of A Supplemental Feeding True Device and Breastfeeding at 4 Weeks.”

Jennifer Dowe, BSN, RN; Sarah Quadrato, MSN, RN, NPD-BC, C-EFM; Amy Schroder, MSN, RN, CNML, CCE and Kate Yoder, MSN, RN, CLC, C-EFM presented a poster on “Respectful Maternity Care: Incorporating Tips Into Multidisciplinary Staff Training and Education” at the Synova Perinatal Leadership Forum in Tucson, AZ.

Wound Team

Poster Presentation at Mayo Clinic Wound Symposium, Rochester, MN in February titled “Sustainable Success: Implementing an Infrared Thermography Scanning Protocol in Acute Care.” Lisa Q Corbett, DNP, APRN, CWOCN; Kellie Buccetti, BSN, RN, CWOCN; Kimberlee Cheney, BA, BSN, RN, CWOCN; Barbara Falkowski, BSN, RN, CWCN; Suzanne Miller, BSN, RN, CWCN; Roxanne M O’Sullivan, BSN, RN, CWOC.

In the Community

Daileann Hemmings, MSN, RN, CLC, CCM served as moderator of a panel discussion following a screening of AfterShock, a documentary surrounding black maternal mortality at the University of Hartford. Additionally, she moderated a community conversation, sponsored by Samaritan House, on navigating equity in maternal health at Connecticut College.
College. Daileann also presented her Maternal Health Equity Program Director role and maternal health disparities at Bay Path University.

- Maria Segarra, MSN, RN has joined the Connecticut Nurses Honor Guard
- Laura Dzurec, PhD, PMHCNS-BC, ANEF, FAAN is a Master gardener and works with adjudicated adolescents and staff members at Natchaug Hospital to foster the connection between gardening and mental health. She serves as a site visitor and program review committee member for National League for Nursing Education Accreditation as well as an editorial board member for the Journal of Nursing Education.

March 19 marked Certified Nurses Day, honoring the dedication and expertise of certified nurses nationwide. Certification demonstrates a nurse’s commitment to excellence and ongoing professional development. By maintaining up-to-date knowledge and skills through certification, nurses can provide high-quality care, contribute to better patient safety and enhance overall healthcare delivery. Recognizing certified nurses not only acknowledges their hard work but also underscores the vital role certification plays in ensuring optimal patient outcomes.

CELEBRATING CERTIFIED NURSES!

Morgan Slater, MEDSURG-BC

Sarah Hong, CNRN, MEDSURG-BC

Jarrett Lautier, CNL

Deb Bass, PCCN and Marlena Garza, CCRN, TCRN
As the Alumnae Association of Hartford Hospital School of Nursing edges closer to dissolution, it is with increasing clarity that we see our beloved school as much more than the sum of clinical and academic training. What stands out to us is the sisterhood that developed while we trained and nothing projects this sisterhood better than our “Caregiver” — the six-foot, 800-pound bronze statue who stands proudly in the lobby of Hartford Hospital, greeting everyone who enters its front doors. Besides doctors, nurses and visitors, this young student nurse also pays tribute to the 4,715 graduates of the school of nursing that existed for more than a century.

The great distinction between this bronze student nurse and the nurses she honors is that, while she stands alone, the nurses of HHSN have always stood together, bound by invisible but powerful ties of love and respect for one another. These connections were forged in each and every class since 1877 and can be the only explanation for the endurance of our association for the half-century it continued, beyond the school’s closing in 1976.

These iron-clad friendships have lasted lifetimes and will, perhaps, last into eternity, for it is these friendships that created our beloved bronze statue.

A tightly-woven unit from the Class of 1969, led by Marilyn Godlewski McKeon, were the women who planted and germinated the seeds of our bronze student; not in a board room or CEO’s office but, rather, while vacationing on the sandy dunes of Cape Cod on a hot July day in 1995. After many hours of sketching out their ideas, these nurses presented a plan to the Alumnae Association and in true partnership, a “Statue Committee” was formed, charged with bringing a bold idea to reality. This gritty and determined group traveled a long and difficult five-year road but pride and passion for their esteemed school was the fuel that carried them to the statue’s unveiling on Sunday, April 13, 2000.

This bronze student, with hand extended, radiates the pride that we hold for our beloved school, of the passion we hold for our nursing profession and the partnership we have shared with our revered hospital and our fellow nursing sisters.

This replica of our student nurse is not simply made of bronze, it is made of Hartford Hospital PRIDE, PASSION, and PARTNERSHIP ... and a great deal of love.

Mary Jane Densmore MS, BA, RN (HHSN ’69)
President, Alumnae Association of the Hartford Hospital School of Nursing

Let Us Hear From You!
We would love to receive photos and news from HHSN alumnae. Please mail information to the Alumnae Association of the Hartford Hospital School of Nursing, 560 Hudson Street, Hartford, CT 06106 or e-mail patciarcia@snet.net.

Give A Lasting Gift
Your contribution today will make a difference to our nursing education program. Mail your gift to Hartford Hospital, Fund Development, 80 Seymour Street, Hartford, CT 06102. You can act now and show your commitment to nursing education forever by including Hartford Hospital and/or the Alumnae Association of HHSN Inc. in your estate plans. For more information, please contact Lynn Rossini, Vice President, Philanthropy, at 860.972.6282 or at lynn.rossini@hhchealth.org.
Growing up in Hartford’s South End, young Dolores Cain aspired to be a librarian or a Latin teacher. “I think the idea of nursing came gradually to me,” she shares.

When she was old enough to work and get paid, she got a job at Hartford Hospital and enjoyed being around nurses and nursing students. “I decided on Hartford Hospital School of Nursing (HHSN) and nowhere else,” she says emphatically. “My classmates are like sisters.”

While maybe not the first, Dolores recalls being the only Black nursing student at the school at that time. Dolores’ mother, who worked as a dietary aide at Hartford Hospital, knew her daughter would be scrutinized more than her peers. “I was on my best behavior, because I knew my mom would get wind of bad behavior,” Dolores says.

Dolores formed strong bonds with several other classmates who have become lifelong friends. None of them were “morning people,” and Dolores remembers they would get their food in the morning, sit at a table and not utter a word — talking would happen at lunch!

For six years on C9W, Dolores cared for patients who were sometimes homeless and with no insurance. She found great reward with those patients, whom she remembers as both vulnerable and appreciative of the compassionate care.

“This is where I’m going to be.”

After a visit to a former Hartford Hospital doctor in San Diego, Dolores made a decision. “I bought a one-way ticket and shipped my meager belongings,” she says. “I had my parakeet in his cage and my tennis racket.”

Dolores thrived in San Diego, working in a variety of roles. She earned her BSN and public health nurse certification. Along the way, she learned the insurance side of healthcare, too, and helped train physicians about diagnosis-related groups and coding, spending a good deal of her career in that field.

With a goal to get her Master of Arts degree before she turned 50, Dolores went back to school to study organizational management. For 17 years she worked as an adjunct professor at the University of Phoenix while working in healthcare management.

In 2006, Dolores moved to Florida to care for her mother. There she would remain until her mother passed away.

“I wouldn’t change a thing.”

Dolores is now settled in Gilbert, Arizona, where she lives with her two chihuahua mixes and two exotic birds. She works as a caretaker, assisting a child with cerebral palsy while they attend school. She is active in her church and upon retirement looks forward to resuming violin lessons, tennis and bike riding.

About her time at HHSN, Dolores says, “If I had to, I would do it over again and I wouldn’t change a thing.” One of her proudest moments came on graduation day, when she received the school’s John Butler McCook award, given to the nurse who most exemplified an HHSN nurse. “I was laughing and crying at the same time. My parents were so proud.”
Born in Hartford and raised in Windsor, Kathleen “Kathy” Boyd had all the best traits of a nurse. She had a deep interest in science and was warm and sociable, known to engage strangers in lively conversations even during the shortest of elevator rides.

Her time at the Hartford Hospital School of Nursing (HHSN) would be spent learning, forging friendships and having fun. Her connections with classmates were strong and the friends she made would stay with her throughout the decades.

Upon graduation in 1969, Kathleen joined the United States Army Nurse Corp., along with HHSN classmate Della Pappalardo. During training in Washington State, she met a fellow soldier, Charles “D’Arcy” Didier. They fell in love and were married in a small ceremony in Hawaii, with Della standing by her side as maid of honor.

Kathy served in Vietnam from 1970 to 1971, where she worked in an orthopedic ward, taking care of soldiers and villagers, too. Over the years, she and D’Arcy moved many times, following D’Arcy’s career wherever it took him.

Their first child, Jay, was born in Virginia and baby brother Ben joined the family when they settled in Connecticut. At that time, Kathy was working in the cardiac ICU at St. Vincent’s Medical Center in Bridgeport.

A health crisis presented a setback for the family, when D’Arcy was diagnosed with hepatitis. He was in need of a liver transplant. During that time, Kathy explored other options beyond nursing and went back to school for her bachelor’s degree, leading to a career in pharmaceutical sales, specifically medication for the treatment of blood disorders.

Moving to Farmington in 2003 brought great rewards to Kathy. She was happy to be an active member of the HHSN Alumnae Association, serving on both the Board of Directors and the scholarship committee.

Kathy was adept in the kitchen and will be remembered at Thanksgiving for her famous cornbread sausage stuffing. Sister Nancy Teed says, “Kathy was fantastic at creating gluten-free dishes many years before gluten-free products were readily available.” D’Arcy had been diagnosed with celiac disease in the 1980’s and Kathy took to the kitchen to make delicious dishes despite his dietary limitations.

In 2016 Kathy was diagnosed with lung cancer. She was a part of three clinical trials, the second one gaining Kathy the notoriety of being a hero of the study, advancing the work of her doctors and researchers and living years beyond her prognosis.

As Kathy’s cancer progressed, HHSN classmate and loyal friend Karen Mazzarella was by her side, living with Kathy until she passed away on April 17, 2023. This lifelong friendship between classmates is illustrative of the bonds Kathy made with her fellow nurses at HHSN. She connected and reconnected with many friends over the years, and will be remembered fondly as a person who touched lives everywhere she went.
The Class of 1973 celebrated their 50-year anniversary since graduating from Hartford Hospital School of Nursing. Saturday, Sept. 16, 2023, prior to the Sunday banquet, Hartford Hospital Department of Nursing hosted a lovely luncheon at the former school of nursing on Hudson Street in Hartford. There were approximately 30 members from the Class of 1973 who attended to celebrate their 50-year reunion. Hartford Hospital Vice President of Patient Care Laura Bailey hosted the event.

Scholarship recipient Molly Jacques with her mom Kimberly. Molly is the granddaughter of HHSN Class of 1961 alum Joan Haines. Molly received her MSN from the University of New Hampshire in September 2023.

Scholarship recipient Michael Donovan with his aunt, HHSN Class of 1961 alum Christine Johnson and his mother Susan. Michael has a BS degree in Allied Health and received his Associate Degree in Nursing from Three Rivers Community College in December 2023.

Scholarship recipient Sophia Walker with her mom Deb Walker, APRN, who works at Hartford Hospital. Sophia is attending Sacred Heart University College of Nursing in the BSN program.

At the September 2023 Nursing Banquet five nursing scholarships were awarded to nursing students of HHSN alumnae graduates or HH employees. The monetary sum was $27,000.

Class of ’73 socializing at the Alumnae Banquet while wearing their graduation caps.

CLASS OF 1949

Muriel Williams Lessner ’49 celebrated 74 years since graduating from HHSN.

CLASS of 1950 and CLASS of 1955

Euphemia Gardiner Serpliss ’50 and Carmella DiPasquale Kenney ’55 enjoy each other’s company.

CLASS of 1952 and CLASS of 1953

Ethel Mlynar Tomolonis ’52 left and far right Alice Green Judd ’52 sit with the Class of 1953 who were celebrating their 70th HHSN anniversary. Those present included: Georgia Clark Erickson ’53, Corky Carlson Lavieri ’53, and Barbara Quilitch Gordon ’53.

CLASS OF 1957

Cindy Johnson Pavano, Lois Kraszewski Dailey and Sue Howard Hebert celebrate their 66-year anniversary. The Class of 1957 made a generous donation to the Scholarship Fund of the Alumnae Association.

CLASS OF 1958

Dale King Chagnon, Patricia Rinaldi, Irene Skinner Barter, Ida Johnson Anderson and Carol Moss Meehan celebrate 65 years since graduating from HHSN.
CLASS of 1960


CLASS of 1963

The Class of ’63 celebrating 60 years. Left to right: Sandra Fowler Sinkewicz, Beverly Pilkin Babel, Linda Carey Sullivan, Etta Hummel Robillard and Jerrilyn Saltus Sicaras.

CLASS OF 1968


CLASS OF 1975

Several alums from the class of ’75 traveled to Florida for an impromptu get together. Hosted by those living in Florida, travelers came from Utah, Florida, Pennsylvania and Vermont. The group had lunch at the beach and also enjoyed a dolphin cruise. The highlight of their 3-day trip was catching up on each other’s lives. They are already planning their next get together in 2024. Left to right: Pat Ottoline, Kathi Kearney Reaves, Karen Crawford Held, Wendy Higgins Aarnio, Sue Davidge Stine and Don Stine.
More moments from the Alumnae Banquet

See you in September!
In Memoriam

Miriam Sihvonen ’40
Evelyn Deming Green ’46
Norma Salley Lundquist ’48
Alice Draghi Sabo ’48
Jean Canfield Hill ’53
Lesley Prentice McGrath, RN ’61
Karen Stinson Mazzarella, BA, RN ’69
Sheila Rowell, MS, BSN, RN ’67
Diane Leggio Labedzki, BSN, RN ’75
Mary Jane Malone, MLA, BA, APRN ’68

Executive Director of Alumnae Affairs
Patricia Andreana Ciarcia, MSN, RN ’62

Board Treasurer
Jane Wallace Lasher, BSN, RN ’74

Vice Treasurer
Theresa Gwozdz, APRN ’76

Join Your Alumnae Association

Become one of the more than 600 HHSN graduates who belong to the Alumnae Association of the Hartford Hospital School of Nursing. Membership dues are only $10 per year and include membership in the Alumnae Medical Fund. Members are allowed to apply for scholarships.

To join, simply mail your $10 non-tax deductible check (payable to the Alumnae Association of HHSN Inc.) to the address below. Include your full name, class year, mailing address, telephone number and e-mail address.

For more information, please contact Pat Ciarcia, executive director for alumnae affairs, at: patciarcia@snet.net or visit: www.hhsnalumnae.org. You may also write to the Alumnae Association of the Hartford Hospital School of Nursing, 560 Hudson St., Hartford, CT 06106.

STAY CONNECTED! If your email address changes, please notify Pat Ciarcia.

Physicians
Grant R. Golub, MD Internal Medicine/Oncology
William J Hewett, MD OB/GYN
Merwood M. Jones, MD OB/GYN
Richard C. Newell, MD Internal Medicine
Arthur Phinney, MD Cardiology
The Class of 1940 proudly pictured in their graduation white uniforms, caps and pins.

Courtesy of the Hamilton Archives of Hartford Hospital