

CHAT ROOM



MARY RODRIQUE

Sunday is day to honor all special women

Of all the special holidays in a year, the one I found most difficult to bear after losing my much-loved Mom in 1993 was Mother's Day. Not Thanksgiving, or Christmas or her birthday, though those were hard days, too. But Mother's Day was the one day where the focus was front and center on mom — all that she was, all that she will be lovingly remembered for.

It took several Mother's Days to come to terms with her passing. To not dwell on an empty void but to celebrate a life that was well lived; a role model of unwavering faith, honesty, and compassion for others. That is what I will recall and be grateful for this Sunday. I'm also grateful for the gift of motherhood — for two healthy daughters, now 14 and 16, who have all given far more pleasure than pain.

Mother's Day should also be a day to remember all of the special women in our lives. People like the moms who are leaving the comfort of home and traveling across the country to Washington, D.C., on Sunday to be a part of the Million Mom March against gun violence in America. Thank you also to the wonderful women behind Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) for making our legislators realize that it really is criminal to get behind the wheel of a car and drive while intoxicated.

Special role models

Also remember the women on Sunday who aren't mothers but play important roles in the lives of our children. Three such women immediately come to mind. One is my friend, Helen, who has always been there for my daughters ... godmother of Janice, confirmation sponsor of Emily. She has been everything from baby sitter to cheerleader to role model.

Then there's Amy, who was the teenage baby sitter from heaven. She first arrived at age 14 with a briefcase in hand. I'll never forget repeatedly saying bye to our two little girls who ignored us and sat mesmerized at Amy's feet, waiting to see what was inside her briefcase. It was all the materials necessary to make stocking puppets. That was the beginning of a long and wonderful relationship.

Amy, now in dental school in London, Ontario, still keeps in touch with the girls through e-mail. Our Farmington editorial receptionist, Katie, plays the same positive role in the lives of her four young nieces — the daughters of her sister. She is giving them the most important gift of all — her time and attention. Long after the last Barbie doll is abandoned, those girls will remember the special days spent with Aunt Katie.

While living in Canada as a new mom, with no family or support group nearby, my wonderful neighbor Lillian became someone I could rely on 24 hours a day. This grandma and mother of four grown children would come over to my house on a moment's notice to baby-sit one child while I cared the other one off to a doctor's appointment or play group. When I went into labor at 1 a.m. with baby number two, she was the one I called to stay with my then 2-year-old daughter. Daily my daughter would beg me to go to Lillian's house. I probably had the only toddler in town whose best friend was a woman in her 60s.

Cousins, aunts, grandmas, neighbors, friends, baby sitters ... remember these special women this Sunday. Honor them. Say thank you. And have a happy Mother's Day.

Mary Rodrigue is the community life editor of the Farmington Observer.

Come chat with us

The Chat Room is an open forum available to all members of the Farmington/Farmington Hills community. If you would like to write a column, contact Mary Rodrigue at (248) 477-5450.

Hats off to RNs — industry backbone

■ This is National Nurses Week, and Botsford General Hospital RNs explain how the field has changed over the years.

By MARY RODRIQUE
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If your image of a nurse still conjures up a mental picture of Florence Nightingale tending the battlefield wounded, get with the times.

National Nurses Week May 6-12 is set aside to honor the 2.6 million women and men who work as registered nurses in the United States.

And while the majority may still work in hospitals ranging from community medical centers to large teaching institutions, nurses are branching out into home health care, hospice centers, senior residences, schools and many other areas.

"We've had a lot of changes from the standpoint of furthering education and have seen a lot of changes in the profession," said Marge Hasler, administrator for nursing services at Botsford General Hospital in Farmington Hills. "There are specialties today that didn't exist a decade or two ago."

Nurses play much more than a passive bedside role today, with nurse specialists assessing patient needs, interacting with physicians, taking active roles in areas such as cardiology and women's health issues, Hasler said. In all 50 states, advanced practice nurses can prescribe medications. A recent issue of the Journal of the American Medical Association reported the results of a study that revealed

patients fared just as well when treated by a nurse practitioner as they did when treated by a physician.

"In general, beginning pay for most registered nurses is between \$20 and \$30 an hour; that's a base rate for day shift. Alternate shifts and weekends would be higher," Hasler said. Botsford employs more than 600 registered nurses.

"Many have associate's degrees or bachelor's degrees or a diploma," Hasler said. "All are licensed by the state board. Advanced practice nurses must have master's degrees. Case managers have bachelor's degrees. Some nurses, such as those working on the general medical floors, have broad knowledge. Others, such as labor/delivery, have very specific expertise. They work in one specialty and get internal training."

Hasler has been in her administrative post for nine months and has worked at Botsford 11 years.

"One of the big issues now is that we don't see as many young people coming into the field. Average age of today's RN is 46, with surgical nurses slightly older," Hasler said.

Projected need grows

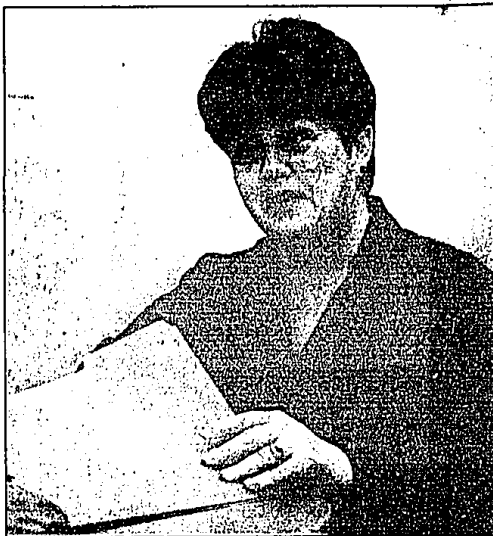
The Bureau of Labor Statistics lists nursing as one of the top 40 growth jobs for the next 10 years. It projected a need for 800,000 more working registered nurses by 2005 than today.

"The biggest dilemma is to get more (nurses) into the field. Nursing is still perceived as a women's profession. And a lot of the women who would have chosen a nursing career in the past are instead going to medical school. Opportunities have opened up for women, and half of the medical school classes today are comprised of women."

Nursing remains the backbone of the

health care industry. According to a 1989 study published by the New England Journal of Medicine, hospitals with more registered nurses on staff

and a higher ratio of nurses to patients had 6.3 fewer deaths per 1,000 patients than hospitals that did not have those characteristics.



STAFF PHOTO BY BILL BASKIN

Administrator: Marge Hasler, Botsford nursing administrator, notes that nurses today play a more active role in patient care.



Comforting touch: Lisa Pierce, a certified nurse practitioner, comforts a cardiac patient at Botsford Hospital.

Help through crisis

Imagine just being told you have a serious heart problem. You're in the hospital and a cardiologist is giving you the medical lowdown in somewhat clinical terms. Feeling scared, confused and overwhelmed? You bet.

That's where certified nurse practitioners like Lisa Pierce of Botsford General Hospital fit into the picture.

"Definitely being able to help the patient and his family through one of the most crucial periods of their life is a big reward of this type of work," said Pierce, a Novi resident and registered nurse for 14 years.

Pierce holds a master's degree and national certification to perform her chosen career.

"Nursing is a tough field, but there are a lot of rewards to it. There are a lot of options today. It's a large field with many specialties to choose from."

Pierce had performed educational and administrative work in nursing but missed the human contact of dealing with patients on a day-to-day basis. She has been in her current role for two years now at Botsford in Farmington Hills and served a similar function for a year prior to that at Henry Ford Hospital in Detroit.

"I function as a nurse who helps patients get through their hospital stay. I bridge the gap between the system, the family, and the doctor to make (the patient) more comfortable. We do preventive cardiology here, cardiac rehabilitation, and controlling the risk factors."

She works a Monday to Friday schedule, 9 a.m. to 6 p.m.

"I like the continuity of dealing with the same patients on a day-to-day basis," she said.

'Late bloomer' nurse enjoys varied job roles

Carol Wilson, RN, "wears a zillion hats and is never bored" in her job as nurse educator/clinician at Botsford General Hospital in Farmington Hills.

In the 23 years she has been a nurse, the downtown Farmington resident has enjoyed a spicy variety of roles. From bedside nurse to educator, she has worn many hats.

"I began as an educator for maternal health care — that included pediatrics, the nursery, post-partum and delivery," she said.

Training also qualified her to be a lactation consultant, working one-to-one with new-breast feeding moms. She is involved with continuing education of the Botsford nursing staff through the Michigan Nurses Association.

"It's a very interesting, busy career," she noted.

Raised family first

Wilson calls herself a "late bloomer," having come to the career after raising a family. She began in nursing with an associate's degree, then later earned

bachelor's and master's degrees. She earned the master's degree in women's health issues two years ago.

"Right now, we're trying to implement women's health into something called 'service without walls' to assist women to find medical and educational resources in the community," she said.

"Nursing is not only fulfilling, but there are so many opportunities. You can really make the job whatever you want it to be."

She has been on staff at Botsford for the past 18 years.

"I find Botsford nursing administration wonderfully supportive. They're willing to take risks with my ideas."

Wilson thinks showing young people the opportunities in the field can help curb an expected nursing shortage in the next few years and beyond.

"The key to not having a shortage is to make young people aware of the wonderful possibilities. We do outreach with the Farmington Public Schools. The job shadow program lets students see what it's all about. It's very helpful."



Tiny patient: Carol Wilson checks on a baby in her care.