

@ HEALTH & WELL-BEING ISSUE

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FOCUS: NURSING IN CENLA



*Burton Michot, RN (left)
emergency room nursing
staff supervisor with Cindy
Vanlangendonck, BSN, RN,
director of nursing at
Huey P. Long Medical Center
in Pineville.*

NURSES Florence Nightingale and More

They are on the frontlines of healthcare.

Whether working at a critically ill patient's bedside, or checking a child's temperature at school, or teaching classes at a university, nurses are in the vanguard as deliverers of medical intervention and education.

In Central Louisiana, nurses can be found in a variety of traditional as well as non-traditional roles. They are working in the typical places you would expect – hospitals and doctors' offices – but nurses are also important employees in business and industry, public health, schools and universities, and mental health facilities. Many nurses, practicing, retired or non-practicing, are serving community nonprofit agencies and religious organizations as leaders and advocates who bring a valuable healthcare perspective to projects.

(continued on page 2)

Nursing in Cenla

Nurses

(continued from page 1)



Jo Lynn Wallace, RN, MSN, (standing) vice president and chief nursing officer at Rapides Regional Medical Center meets with Marsha White, RNC, MSN, (left) and Paula Bailey-Stokes, RN, BSN.

"Nursing is the broadest, most flexible career you could have," said Jo Lynn Wallace, RN, MSN, vice president and chief nursing officer at Rapides Regional Medical Center. Today's nurse can choose from among many different jobs, depending upon his or her education and experience. Besides the traditional jobs, there are specialized occupations such as nurse practitioners, anesthetists and other positions that can mean greater responsibility and higher salaries. The Rapides Foundation recognizes the importance of nurses as partners in fulfilling its mission to promote the health and well-being of Central Louisiana communities. "Nurses contribute so much to our area's quality of life in many, many ways," said Joe Rosier, president and CEO of The Rapides Foundation. "Many

Foundation-funded projects have benefited from the leadership of nurses, and we want this involvement to continue. In addition, we want to address issues that affect the area's nursing workforce, both today and in the future."

Issues such as recruitment and retention of nurses, as well as educational opportunities, are of particular interest. Like the rest of the nation, Central Louisiana is currently experiencing a shortage of nurses. According to the American Nurses Association, a recent report from the Bureau of Labor Statistics says more than a million new nurses will be needed by the year 2010. The numbers warn of a double whammy for the future: too few young people are entering the profession, and nurses are approaching retirement age at an alarming rate.

"The average age here for RNs is 45 years old, and even higher in some other places," explained Jo Lynn Wallace. In her job at Rapides Regional Medical Center, she deals with the challenges of filling hospital nursing slots and retaining experienced nurses.

"In the literature, it's predicted that by the year 2010, we will have half the RNs we'll need to serve our population nationwide." And it's not just hospital nurses that are in short supply, said Wallace. Nursing faculty positions, which require master's degrees, are also going begging in many areas.

How to recruit and retain nurses? Educating students in elementary and high school, as well as the general public, about the opportunities in nursing is a good start, agreed both Wallace and Cindy Vanlangendonck, BSN, RN, director of nursing at Huey P. Long Medical Center in Pineville. A recent national poll Vanlangendonck referred to showed that young students do not

Nurses rank No. 2 in recent Gallup "Honesty and Ethics" poll

The nation's nurses ranked second for their honesty and integrity in a CNN/USA Today/Gallup Poll conducted in late November. Eighty-four percent of Americans rated them "high" or "very high," just behind fire fighters. Nurses had previously rated first for two years in a row, after being added to the list of choices in 1999.

American Nurses Association

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Nurses

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perceive nursing as an occupation they would consider pursuing; respondents saw nursing as “scary, stressful, technical, and a woman’s job without career advancement opportunities.”

There are local efforts underway, joining local hospitals, The Rapides Foundation and higher education officials, to look at the current and future nursing workforce needs of Central Louisiana.

Besides creating better awareness of the value of a nursing career, enhancing the work environment and compensation for nurses must be addressed by those who employ healthcare workers.

“The institution has to have attractive features for all workers, not just nurses,” said Wallace. Those factors include such issues as workload, management and supervision and financial compensation. “They have to like their supervisor, and to feel like at least 75% of their job is rewarding.”

Salary (which for RNs in Louisiana averages from \$35,000-45,000 per year) is not the number one reason nurses give when they leave a post in a hospital setting, according to Wallace. The more compelling issues apparently revolve around workload and satisfaction with supervisors.

“If you don’t have a strong management team, then you’re going to lose nurses.” Additionally, when the patient/nurse ratio exceeds more than six to eight patients per nurse, job satisfaction suffers. Recent nurse strikes in hospitals in Oregon and New York State have centered on dissatisfaction over high patient/nurse ratios, as well as compensation and retirement benefits.

Another incentive to keep hospital nurses in clinical work is to offer a compensation ladder that rewards nurses for increasing their clinical expertise. “Once nurses become experts, you want to motivate them to stay at the bedside,” said Wallace. “We have salaries for bedside nurses that are equal to or greater than those for nurse managers.”

“We need sharp, intuitive people as nurses,” pointed out Huey P. Long’s Vanlangendonck. With advances in technology and medicines, she believes that a hospital nurse’s job today is more challenging than ever.

She has been a nurse since the mid 70s, and in her nursing director’s job at HPL she’s responsible for the management of about 170 nurses, which she acknowledges is a “constant juggling act.” It’s her job to “provide patients with the highest quality of nursing care” while at the same time addressing the needs and desires of employees and keeping an eye on her budget. “I am the resource for the nurses to get the job done,” she said.

Both the U.S. House of Representatives and the Senate have recently passed versions of the Nurse Reinvestment Act (HR 3487 and S 1864), legislation aimed at recruiting and retaining more nurses into the nursing workforce. Both bills provide authority for scholarships and loan repayments for nursing students, and public service announcements to promote nursing as a career. These two bills will be conferenced in 2002.

American Nurses Association

Vanlangendonck has seen the nursing profession change over the years. “It’s become more of a business,” she said. “Nursing care has always been a service, but we are more mindful of the business aspect now.” Additionally, she said, there is more movement in the workforce among jobs and even careers.

Both Wallace at RRMC and Vanlangendonck at HPL pointed out how the typical hospital patient profile has also changed over time. Many procedures and minor surgeries are handled on an outpatient basis now that once would have required a hospital stay. Thus, those people who do end up hospitalized are sicker, and need more of a nurse’s attention.

Nursing, while not an easy occupation, has its own unique rewards. “You have to work hard, but you get so much gratification from doing it,” said Wallace. “The ability to help someone in distress – it’s just hard to beat that.”

Heading the Hour of need



Burton Michot, RN, emergency room nursing staff supervisor at Huey P. Long Medical Center in Pineville.

Burton Michot's path to becoming an emergency room nurse wasn't a straight shot, he admits. He's worked as a prison guard and then as an emergency medical technician (EMT) at the state penitentiary at Angola. Watching nurses at work there piqued Michot's interest, and a new career was born.

"I began to see the roles nurses played, and thought that looked much more exciting than being an EMT," he recalls, so he went to nursing school at LSUA while continuing to work fulltime at the prison.

Entering a field that has traditionally been, and continues to be, dominated by women didn't faze Michot, whose calm, empathetic demeanor is an asset in a hospital setting. He believes giving young people the chance to directly observe what nurses do might help encourage more interest in nursing careers for both genders.

"That's what's really rewarding – being right there in someone's hour of desperate need. That's what I became a nurse for."

Burton Michot, RN

Today Michot has the job of supervising the emergency room nursing staff at Huey P. Long Medical Center in Pineville. Working in an emergency room can involve everything from treating minor abrasions to life-threatening gunshot wounds, he explains, and it produces high stress with resulting high turnover rates for employees.

Yet Michot feels he's in the right place, pointing to the invigorating atmosphere of the emergency room, as well as the respect and satisfaction of providing hands-on help to patients. "That's what's really rewarding – being right there in someone's hour of desperate need. That's what I became a nurse for.

"I really can't see doing anything else now."



Chawn Texada, RN, ADN, school nurse at South Grant Elementary School.

School nurse job blends Health & Education

Chawn Texada always liked the teaching aspect of nursing, even when working as an emergency room nurse and later as a public health nurse.

"If you better educate people about their healthcare, they're more likely to comply with health advice given by professionals," she said.

She gets ample opportunity to blend nursing and education in her present job as school nurse at South Grant Elementary School, a K-6 grade school in Dry Prong. Her days may involve everything from giving hearing and vision screening tests to demonstrating proper hand washing techniques and good dental health practices.

Texada juggles multiple tasks, helping kids with head lice and headaches, broken bones and

shot records, colds and counseling. And she loves what she does.

"The kids really boost me a lot – they are so appreciative and loving."

She has been a nurse for 11 years, choosing the career because, "something was pulling me toward that," she remembers. After graduating from LSUA in 1990, she worked as an emergency room nurse and later as a public health nurse. When Texada went to work for the Grant Parish School Board, she was the sole nurse in the school system there.

"It was overwhelming at first," she said, dealing with nine schools scattered throughout the parish. Now there are three RNs employed by the board, and Texada is assigned to one school.

Still, there is much to do in that one school.

(continued on page 6)

Nursing in Cenla

Nurses in traditional roles

School nurse job (continued from page 5)

"I've seen 876 sick kids since school started, checked 700 children for head lice and done 250 vision and hearing tests."

Those vision and hearing screenings are important, she said, and grant funds from The Rapides Foundation helped to purchase several of the testing machines used in the schools. Additional grant money to purchase health videos and equipment used by the school nurses was obtained from the Cabrini Hospital Foundation.

As a school nurse, Texada interfaces with not only parents, teachers and students, but also doctors, public and mental health professionals and sometimes child protection officials. The needs of children with special or serious health conditions must be addressed within the school setting.

"More kids are attending school now with



more complex medical conditions than ever before," explained Texada, citing feeding tubes and catheters as examples. "People must be trained to work with them."

She also works within her professional group, the Louisiana School Nurses Organization, serving on the board and as treasurer, staying on top of issues relevant to her career. Texada further broadened her perspective recently by participating in The Rapides Foundation's 2001 Leadership for a Healthy Cenla class. "It was extremely helpful," she said. "Before, I had no idea of all the resources we have here. It's exciting to know there are ways to do big things, projects that can affect our community forever."

Right now, Texada is happy to be in a position to affect the many little people who come in the schoolhouse door every morning.

"This job gives me the satisfaction of knowing I've touched these children's lives in some way, to be kind to them and to serve as a positive role model that may affect them down the line."

The Rapides Foundation is a philanthropic organization that provides grants to organizations throughout an 11 parish service area that share the Foundation's mission to improve the health and well-being of Central Louisiana.



THE RAPIDES FOUNDATION
www.rapidesfoundation.org





Cindy Hilger, BSN, RN, supervisor of Children's Special Health Services (Region VI) for the Louisiana Office of Public Health.

Public Health Nurse Focuses on Families

Children's health issues are also central to the role Cindy Hilger, BSN, RN, plays as supervisor of Children's Special Health Services for the Louisiana Office of Public Health. Her responsibilities cover Region VI, an eight-parish area of Central Louisiana, and the program is currently housed in the parish health unit building on Texas Avenue in Alexandria.

"We do medical clinics for children – from birth to age 21 – with special health needs," she explained, "and we provide multi-disciplinary support services and referrals for the families." The program contracts with physicians locally and from throughout the state to provide patients specialized medical care in regularly scheduled clinic sessions.

"My role here is to coordinate all these services," she explained. "Basically, it's kind of like the offices of many different medical specialties all rolled up into one." Because of transportation and financial problems, most of the families served by the program would have difficulty accessing these specialists whose offices are in New Orleans, Shreveport or other distant cities, she added.

"This is a wonderful program that a lot of people don't know about," she said. "We see children with serious diagnoses, such as muscular dystrophy, cerebral palsy, and cardiac conditions. Our patients are getting a benefit that most people who don't qualify for the program can't even get in Alexandria."

There are income guidelines to determine eligibility for the program's services; if a family qualifies for Medicaid or LaCHIP (the state's children's insurance program), they are automatically eligible.

Hilger believes she and her fellow nurses in the program are dispensing education as much

as medical care to the families who come seeking help.

"They look to us for much of the information they get, so we are an important source to them. You are very much a teacher here; you have to stay knowledgeable to pass the information on to the patients and to answer their questions."

Hilger, who has been with the Office of Public Health since 1990, said she chose to pursue a nursing career as a high school senior, after her mother developed a serious condition that required a long hospital stay. She was impressed with the nurses who cared for her mother, and she knew she needed to stay close to home. After obtaining an associate degree from LSUA and working for a time, she later went to NSU and got her BSN.

She believes that nursing continues to be a good career choice for those who have the "right motivations," and who "are willing to work hard."

"The monetary rewards are not bad, and you feel good at the end of the day, most days, about what you did." She pointed out the opportunities in education, schools, and home health – "just so many things you can do that aren't what people traditionally think of when they think about nursing. There are so many different kinds of ways to nurse."

But, she cautioned, "I do think we need to worry about the future of nursing because we really are getting short again."



Jayne Heath, RN, CS, FNP, in front of her 40-foot Bluebird bus/office.

Healthcare on Wheels

Her office is a 40-foot Bluebird bus and her clients come to her on bicycles, in wheelchairs, by foot and even once on a riding lawnmower.

It may look a little unconventional, but for the medically-underserved in Rapides Parish, the rolling clinic Jayne Heath, RN, CS, FNP, operates is a welcome sight each week.

"The bus is customized to be a doctor's office and medical clinic, with an exam room, lab area, admitting room and hearing screening booth," she explained. A program of CHRISTUS St. Frances Cabrini Hospital in Alexandria, the mobile clinic has been operating for five years, with service sites now in Cheneyville, Deville and the Clifton-Choctaw Community between Alexandria and Leesville.

"We see everything," said Heath, who holds certification as an advanced practice nurse and family nurse practitioner, "both acute and chronic problems, from sore throats, to backaches, to gastrointestinal problems and high blood pressure." She and a mobile unit coordinator travel four days a week, and see anywhere from 12 to 25 patients a day. Along with treating patients, the two collaborate with patients' physicians and monitor follow-up visits as needed.

"We want to treat people holistically," she explained, with an understanding of family health history and social dynamics that influence a patient's health and well-being. Most of their patients do not have cars, and some don't have electricity or phone service.

(continued on page 15)

Finding the Rewards of Research

Combine medical knowledge, nursing experience, information technology, a relentless curiosity and altruism, and what do you get?

Annelle Tanner, RN, MSN, EdD, physician's wife – a woman who is embracing the changing face of the nursing profession.

"The world of nursing is exploding into so many more areas – it's phenomenal," she said. Tanner, whose early nursing career focused on maternal

"I really like to deal with questions for which you have to go dig for the answers – and then see it all put together in the end."

Annelle Tanner, RN, MSN, EdD

and child health and education, now sees herself as a researcher. She is currently working on a project funded by The Rapides Foundation that is studying barriers to healthcare access in Central Louisiana. The project is directed by the Central Louisiana AHEC office (Area Health Education Center), in collaboration with University of Louisiana, Lafayette and the Louisiana Rural Health Access Program out of LSUHSC-New Orleans.

Tanner's duties, in addition to coordinating the overall project, have included conducting interviews to gain information about experiences people have had in getting the medical care they need, including issues of transportation, insurance, medication costs, and others. Details about providers, demand, institutions and utilization are being gathered. Once the research is complete, the data, along with any



Annelle Tanner, RN, MSN, EdD, works on her laptop to help find the answers she needs.

analysis and commentary, will be presented to the Foundation for its further use. The project, she said, mirrors "Healthy People 2010," a national effort to develop health indicators in communities all over the country.

Tanner, whose husband Martin is a local obstetrician and gynecologist, is also currently working on a study of fetal and infant mortality and morbidity in Rapides Parish, a project that has

(continued on page 14)

Home visits help diabetics



Jennifer Brady, RN, checks on a diabetic patient.

explains, toting up the costs of test equipment and supplies and medication. The costs of staying on top of the disease can be staggering for people of limited means. With diabetes, too much sugar stays in the bloodstream, and, without proper management, the disease can wreak havoc throughout the body, damaging the heart/blood circulation, kidneys, eyes, feet and teeth.

Brady works with Huey P. Long Medical Center to identify patients who may benefit

Jennifer Brady, RN, exudes enthusiasm when she talks about her work in a new public health project designed to help diabetics manage their disease.

Working from an office in Hope Development Center, a faith-based childcare center serving low-income children in Alexandria, Brady spends her days seeking out, educating and assisting people who have type 2 diabetes and are having problems associated with their condition. She visits patients in their homes, bringing them test kits to check their blood glucose levels, educational materials and plenty of compassion.

"I do a lot of teaching," she says. A grant from The Rapides Foundation is funding Brady's work, in association with The Extra Mile, state Office of Public Health and Huey P. Long Medical Center.

"Diabetes is a very expensive disease," she

"With diabetes, too much sugar stays in the bloodstream, and, without proper management, the disease can wreak havoc throughout the body, damaging the heart/blood circulation, kidneys, eyes, feet and teeth."

*Jennifer Brady, RN
Diabetic Management Program Nurse*

from the home visitor program; she then contacts them to determine how she might offer help. That may mean bringing them a glucometer and test strips to check their blood sugar, or assisting them with obtaining low-cost medicines through CMAP

(continued on page 15)

Identified in a recent newspaper article as a “community mover and shaker,” Daisy Dempsey hasn’t let retirement from a long nursing career slow her down. In fact, she’s a woman in perpetual motion, from moving senior citizens toward healthier lifestyles to moving public officials forward on needed projects.

departments, but enjoyed bedside nursing best.

She liked working with other healthcare professionals to give patients the best outcome possible. “No one person does it all; it takes everybody working together.”

Her experience as a nurse, as well as her continued desire to help others, brings Dempsey naturally into volunteerism today. She has worked with the Red Cross, the American Heart Association, Central State Hospital and her church, True Vine Missionary Baptist Church in Alexandria. She was honored in 1990 with a volunteer worker award by the Rapides Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP).

It’s in the context of her church that she has become a leader in starting wellness and senior citizens’ programs. Called SAGE (Seniors Aging with Grace and Energy), the group received a grant from The Rapides Foundation about a year ago; there are now regular exercise classes, speakers on health-related topics, CPR classes and other services geared to seniors.

“There are a lot of seniors out there who want somewhere to go,” she says. “It’s really nice. This gets them out of the house.” The program, she



Daisy Dempsey (above), retired LPN, organizes elderly physical fitness classes at True Vine Baptist Church in South Alexandria.

From Nursing to Volunteerism

All that forward motion began at an early age. Growing up in the rural Rapides Parish community of Poland, Dempsey remembers her mother helping strangers who found their way to her family’s door, giving them “hoecakes, scrambled eggs, bread,” whatever she had. That spirit of giving, she says, “was instilled in me” at an early age, and probably helped lead her to become an LPN later in life.

“I always wanted to become a nurse,” she says. “I liked helping people.” After finishing LPN school in 1967 (attending the first integrated nursing class at Huey P. Long Medical Center), Dempsey went to work at Central State Hospital, where she stayed for 27 years. She worked in several different

says, has helped people control their weight, reduce their blood pressure and address other health problems.

Dempsey also has been at the forefront in the development of a new multi-purpose community resource center being built by the City of Alexandria on a Broadway Avenue site near her church. The senior wellness program now housed at True Vine is expected to move into the community center when completed. “We’ve been working on that for six years.”

Though her work no longer puts Daisy Dempsey at a patient’s bedside, she’s a nurse who continues to stay on her feet, putting service to others in motion.

Community leadership in **mental** **health**



Charlot Pitts Morrison (right), BSN, RN, community volunteer works with Herbie Lou Flynn, Executive Director of The Extra Mile, Region VI, Inc.

As a young nursing graduate in the 1960s, Alexandria native and community volunteer Charlot Pitts Morrison, BSN, RN, worked in an acute psychiatric unit in Seattle, Washington.

That early experience was gratifying. "In nursing school, (at Texas Women's University in Denton) my favorite rotation of study and work was in psychiatry," she said. After marriage and travel in the Air Force

with her physician husband, Morrison moved back to Alexandria. In the late 1970s, she became a volunteer with local mental health organizations.

"It seemed to fall into place here in our community to volunteer in areas of mental health, since I had experience in this field and felt comfortable volunteering in it."

"It's given me great satisfaction being a mentor and friend to mental health consumers over the years."

Charlot Pitts Morrison, BSN, RN

Morrison joined the board of directors of the Alexandria Guidance Center, which later evolved into the Mental Health Center of Central Louisiana, a state agency in the Office of Mental Health. She still serves on this committee, now called the Region VI Mental Health Advisory Council, and recently was its chairman. She also serves as a representative from Region VI to the Louisiana Mental Health Planning Council, which oversees allocation of federal block grant funds earmarked for mental health.

Morrison says her training and experience as a nurse, even though it came long ago, has helped her be a more effective leader, mother, contributor and advocate for health-related issues and projects.

"It's given me great satisfaction being a mentor and friend to mental health consumers over the years," she said. "Without my knowledge and nursing experience, this would not have been possible."

(continued on page 14)

Going beyond the ER



Shawn Lacombe, RN, BSN, emergency room nurse at Rapides Regional Medical Center and co-chair of the local Operation Heartbeat committee.

(AEDs) for cardiac arrest victims.

The focus of both her day job and volunteer work is fast medical response to save lives.

Through teaching and administering continuing education coursework, she says she enjoys seeing nurses improve their skills and knowledge, so they can go back to their communities and make a difference.

"It makes us feel we're helping them to progress," said Lacombe. That's especially important for nurses in rural areas where medical facilities and professionals may be scarce.

Improving access to emergency medical care is also at the heart of the volunteer work Lacombe does. She is

co-chair of the local Operation Heartbeat committee, a group working with the American Heart Association and The Rapides Foundation to get portable AED equipment and training into Central Louisiana communities. She shares that committee leadership role with Dr. Emmanuel Witherspoon, an emergency room physician at Rapides Regional.

"The AED program has been very, very beneficial to the community," she said. As more and more of

In her job as education coordinator for the emergency room at Rapides Regional Medical Center, Shawn Lacombe, RN, BSN, helps ensure ER nurses have the training they need to give prompt, excellent care to patients in the hospital.

As a volunteer, she is helping improve emergency treatment outside the hospital through the distribution of automated external defibrillators

(continued)

Nursing in Cenla

Beyond the ER

(continued from page 13)

the lifesaving units get used by fire fighters and policemen, and “when the public sees people being saved by the AEDs, the community will begin to really see the value of the program.” The device is used to administer an electric shock to a heart attack victim in order to restore normal heart rhythm.

Besides her work on the AED committee, Lacombe’s leadership skills also come into play in other areas. She teaches CPR classes both in and outside the hospital, serves on a nurse recruitment and retention committee within the hospital, and is president of the state organization of emergency room nurses.

She is concerned with getting more nurses into the field, and retaining those already in the workforce. “We have to find ways to make nursing more enticing to students. I think we need to get them when they’re young, even before college,” she said. Important issues include salaries and working conditions, she said.

For Lacombe, her career choice has been a good one, with satisfactions unique to the emergency room.

“In the emergency room, we often see critical cases in which there are not always good outcomes,” said Lacombe, who has been a nurse at Rapides since 1988. “But when the outcomes are good, that’s very rewarding.”

“Emergency room nurses have to be real adaptable, to be able to adjust and shift gears quickly. It’s not suited to everyone. But for me, the more I got into it, the more I found my place and I knew that was what I was supposed to do.”

Research

(continued from page 9)

blossomed into a new program sponsored by Region VI of the Louisiana Office of Public Health to promote healthier pregnancies and babies.

“I really like to deal with questions for which you have to go dig for the answers,” she said, “and then see it all put together in the end.”

The bottom line of these projects, she said, is to

improve the quality of life for families in our area. “I want to see individuals get the healthcare they need,” she said. “A lot of my concern is for children, whose chances for healthy, fulfilling lives can be negatively affected early in their lives.”

Tanner believes nurses “impact so many different aspects of life in a positive way.” Traditionally, “nurses are able to work with patients at a more holistic level, responding to a lot of different needs.”

Nurses can typically always find positions in the workforce, and today, there is so much more variety in the kinds of jobs available, says Tanner. She points to the new field of “nursing informatics,” which blends the sciences of nursing, computers and information management, as an exciting, emerging career track for nurses. Jobs in this area deal with statistics, databases and demographics to analyze health issues or present consumer information in an electronic format. She has taught classes on this topic at NSU, ULL and Louisiana College.

“It’s really on the cutting edge of healthcare.”

Mental Health

(continued from page 12)

“It has been very rewarding working toward bringing about much-needed changes,” she added, “especially to help crush the stigma associated with mental illness.” She noted that a grant from The Rapides Foundation to The Extra Mile helped fund an “anti-stigma” mental health public awareness campaign about three years ago.

There are also ample opportunities for nurses in the field of mental healthcare, she said, with both paid and volunteer positions available in social service agencies, hospitals and private clinics, for example. “I have frequently encouraged a nursing assistant or licensed practical nurse to reach out and return to nursing school when I see the potential is there for them to become an RN.”

“Nurses can serve as role models for young people, offering them the spark they need to follow their path.”

Healthcare on Wheels

(continued from page 8)



Jayne Heath, RN, CS, FNP, receives patient information from her healthcare office on wheels.

Heath, who got her BSN in Iowa, worked at Cabrini Hospital for a number of years in telemetry, ICU, cardiology and preventive medicine, moving up into management positions as time went on. Yet a desire for more autonomy and more direct patient care led her to go back to school and get a master's degree as a nurse practitioner and certification in advanced practice nursing.

Nurse practitioners in Louisiana have limited prescriptive authority, can order tests and can diagnose and treat patients, according to Heath. "We can do about 85 percent of what a family practice physician can do," she said. "But we can spend more time educating patients, which is nice."

"We've had patients tell us they don't know what they would do if we were not here," she said. "They seem to acknowledge the need and appreciate our presence."

Home visits

(continued from page 10)

(Cenla Medication Access Program), also a project of The Rapides Foundation.

The people she sees "are so grateful," says Brady. "These are people who are really struggling."

The rewards of helping such patients improve their quality of life are great, she says. "I really feel good about what I do." Brady says she enjoys being able to use her nursing training to "recognize the disease process, to evaluate and assess and problem-solve."

Brady, who chose nursing after marriage and motherhood, has experience in hospital nursing as well as in public health. She says her job now is similar to that of the home health nurse, though it's a free service to patients and involves more advocacy work.

It's a non-traditional role for a nurse, she admits, but one that fits her well. "I love what I do."



Jennifer Brady, RN, spends her days seeking out, educating and assisting people who have type 2 diabetes and are having problems associated with their condition.

The Rapides Foundation Grants from October - December 2001 *

Initiative Grants

Louisiana Technical College (Alexandria)	\$40,000	1 yr
Total Quality Management training for collaborative project with Procter & Gamble, Watkins Engineering and Inland Industrial Contractors		
Northwestern State University Department of Continuing Studies	100,000	1 yr
Matching funds for expansion of CLIMB Network with Alliance Compressors and ConAgra to include internships and fellowships		
Village of Forest Hill	75,000	2 yrs
Establishment of web site and trade show by nurseryman's association		

Mini-Grants and Technical Assistance Grants (one year or less)

Arts Council of Central Louisiana	\$7,000	
Develop and implement youth and adult educational efforts in support of Fiddler on the Roof production		
Avoyelles Parish Medical Alliance	3,800	
Support volunteer-led school-based health education efforts		
Central Louisiana Girl Scouts	10,000	
Pilot program for junior high girls facing risky situations (drug and alcohol use, smoking, teen pregnancy)		
First United Methodist Church, Pineville	10,000	
Matching funds for volunteer-led home repair program		
New St. Mark Baptist Church	5,000	
Tutoring program for students enrolled in Alexandria/Pineville schools		
Pineville Concerned Citizens for Lakeside/Wardville Communities	7,000	
Community awareness and educational activities		
Task Force for Children's Arts	5,000	
Matching funds for development and maintenance of web page for youth art display		
Town of Pollock	10,000	
Technical assistance for feasibility study of museum structure and organization		
Town of Urania	10,000	
Matching funds for establishment of walking trail		
True Vine Missionary Baptist Church	10,000	
Pilot program for teen pregnancy reduction effort		

Responsive Grants

Inner-City Revitalization Corporation	\$500,000	3 yrs
Matching funds for affordable housing subdivision in partnership with Habitat for Humanity		
Legal Service of Central Louisiana	60,000	2 yrs
Expansion of paralegal services for women seeking orders of protection to include Evangeline Parish		
Rapides Children's Advocacy Center	93,000	2 yrs
Intensive volunteer recruitment and retention program focusing on recruitment of minority volunteers		
Southern Mutual Help Association	225,000	3 yrs
Establishment of nonprofit affordable housing efforts in Avoyelles and Evangeline Parishes		

*Health Initiative Grants were not considered during this time period.



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 a legacy of community healthcare
 initiated in 1903.*

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