

Nursing at Cheshire Medical Center

Making a Difference



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Health

Cheshire Medical Center

Sara Gilbert: Supporting behavioral health in our community



Sara Gilbert, PMHNP-BC

Nationally, rates of patients in crisis seeking mental health care in Emergency Departments have risen dramatically since the start of the pandemic, and the Monadnock Region is no exception. This trend makes the work of Sara Gilbert, PMHNP-BC, a psychiatric nurse practitioner overseeing Cheshire Medical Center's Behavioral Health Team, even more vital.

"One of the things I've tried to do at Cheshire is to integrate medical and psychiatric care," Gilbert says, highlighting the different approaches some take while caring for people experiencing symptoms of psychiatric and physical illnesses. "We don't want to have psych in one box and medical in another, with the two disciplines never really being coordinated."

Gilbert achieved this, and much more, in her 30 years at Cheshire. Starting as a psychiatric technician in the former mental health unit with a Master's degree

in Clinical Counseling Psychology from Assumption College, she could see where psychiatric patients could be better served by more intentional integration. She was inspired to pursue a nursing degree from River Valley Community College, after which Gilbert became an Emergency Department (ED) nurse.

"I wanted to give myself more options to care for patients, so I went to nursing school," Gilbert says. "My first rotation was in the ED, and I realized just how many patients needed psychiatric care there. I just fell in love with the ED and immediately knew that's where I needed to go."

When Gilbert started working in the ED, she noticed that many patients seeking psychiatric care assumed they would be treated badly. She found that their prior experience in EDs led them to be mistrusting, anxious, and potentially

agitated or aggressive—an unsafe situation for both the patient and staff.

"At conferences, I learned a lot about what happens to psych patients in other EDs and would hear horror stories from some of the nurses," she says. "The sad thing was that they did not understand that these were horror stories. Some of the punitive techniques they used, such as catheterizing patients who would not give a urine sample, were just really terrible."

Presenting at nursing conferences—such as the Emergency Nurses Association, American Psychiatric Nurses Association, and the International Association of Forensic Nurses—was an eye-opener for Gilbert. She found a huge gap in knowledge about psychiatric patients in EDs, leading to misunderstandings and mistreatment, and set out to close that gap with her presentations. Using analogies to medical diagnoses, such as comparing

chronic psychiatric illnesses with chronic conditions like diabetes, she was able to reach her audience.

“We need to use the same nursing process with psychiatric patients that we do with medical patients, starting with an accurate assessment and good evaluation of whether our interventions are working. For psychiatric patients, our interventions are often our interactions,” Gilbert says. “It is easier, safer, and we have better outcomes when we raise our standards for psychiatric care to the same level we have with medical patients. This mindset totally made sense to nurses at the conference, and they understood what they needed to do differently.”

Gilbert’s presentations and workshops were so well received that she was asked by the editor of *Advanced Emergency Nursing Journal* to write 2 articles about appropriately caring for psychiatric patients in the ED. She went on to receive her Master of Science Nurse Practitioner (NP) certification from Rivier College and launched Cheshire’s Behavioral Health team with psychiatrist Judith Olson, MD, about 7 years ago. Staffed by Master’s level clinicians, the team facilitates the care of ED psychiatric patients, integrates psychiatric care for medical inpatients, and educates staff on the care of psychiatric patients.

“When I started this role, people were surprised that I had different expectations and treatments for patients for different psychiatric presentations, such as psychosis, mania, anxiety, and depression,” Gilbert says. “Staff have a better understanding now. We don’t treat every patient who comes in with shortness of breath the same way. We find out what is causing the symptoms and how best to manage them. It should be the same kind of treatment model for psychiatric symptoms.”

The Behavioral Health Team initiated more effective coordination of care with Monadnock Family Services, the local community mental health provider where Gilbert did clinicals during her NP certification. They managed to decrease

the number of patients struggling with psychiatric symptoms in the ED and their lengths of stay.

“When I began working as an NP in the ED, I would collaborate with patients to initiate medications to stabilize them while they were waiting for hospitalization,” Gilbert says. “They were in less distress in the ED because of that intervention, and many times I was able to discharge them versus them being admitted. It’s also safer for the patients—and for the staff.”

Matt Dove, FNP-BC, PMHNP-BC, a psychiatric nurse practitioner working on the Behavioral Health Team says, “Sara has been a pioneer in the idea of serving people where they are in the Emergency Department, versus letting them languish there waiting for care. I’ve worked in 5 states, and I’ve seen lots of emergency departments, and what Sara introduced was very unique at the time. As we see an increasing psychiatric crisis in our country, and we continue to see increasing demands on the emergency department, Sara has already built a solution that I think will become a standard of care.”

Gilbert has worked hard to change the ED’s culture and to train staff to recognize psychiatric symptoms and respond appropriately.

“I really want to focus on early intervention for prevention of aggression,” she says. “So I’ve done education around intervening when a patient is anxious: how to talk to the patient, calm them down, and de-escalate. Anxiety is often the precursor to agitation, which can lead to aggression. It is easier to intervene when the patient is anxious.”

Jim Suozzi, DO, associate medical director and EMS director at Cheshire, says that Gilbert’s role has been a critical one to fill, as the behavioral health system in New Hampshire “has been at a breaking point for years.”

“We are at a point now, where both children and adults may wait days or weeks in the Emergency Department for a bed at the state facility,” he says. “Sara’s work with the Behavioral Health Team has allowed us to

treat these people while they are waiting, so we are able to start treatment, manage medications, and provide counseling services at a level that is rare to find elsewhere in the state.”

Gilbert says she tries hard to advocate for patients, which minimizes their anxiety even if they don’t like the final outcome. “It’s about understanding what is happening with the patient,” she says. “Not just seeing them as a ‘psych patient,’ but as a person who has needs, has rights, and has things happening in their life that might be stressing them, then trying to meet those needs so we can take better care of them. Over the years I’ve been doing this, we have helped many patients gain trust in us, and that’s not something that happens in every ED.

“I am extremely appreciative that Cheshire gave us the opportunity to develop this team because it’s been a substantial asset to the hospital and, more importantly, to our patients and the community. I could not have accomplished what I have without the support of Dr. Olson and the rest of my team. I love my patients, and it’s so great to have the opportunity to care for them in a way that is beneficial to them and others.”

Gilbert adds, “There are still things I want to do with the role, but they haven’t given me a magic wand yet.”

Sam Field and Ryan Hornblower: Answering the call of nursing at Cheshire



Samantha Field

The nurses at Cheshire Medical Center are known for their dedication and the quality and compassionate care they provide. Many Cheshire nurses have known this would be their calling from an early age, but not all. Samantha Field and Ryan Hornblower are two current staff members who were inspired by the passion and commitment of their nursing colleagues to shift careers and become nurses themselves.

“The nursing supervisors here have all inspired me to hopefully be a really good nurse someday,” says Field, who worked until recently as the central staffing officer at Cheshire. She is now a patient sitter mobility technician, and on her way to being a licensed nursing assistant (LNA). A recent graduate of Keene State College with a bachelor’s degree in biology, Field had intended to go into genetic counseling. But her positive experience at Cheshire has made her change course.

“After working with all the amazing nurses here, I got inspired to go into nursing rather than genetic counseling,” Field says. “It seems to me that nurses get to have more direct patient care. They are hardworking and passionate about their jobs, and that’s really what I want for myself.”

Field plans to start the nursing program at Keene State in 2024, and she should be able to complete the program in 2 years because of all of the prerequisites she took as part of her biology degree. In the meantime, an LNA licensure course at Cheshire will give her a lot of hands-on clinical experience, which is not required for the nursing degree but, she says, “will make me a better nurse in the end.”

At Cheshire, Field is most inspired by the staff members in the Women and Children’s Health Unit (WACHU) and hopes to ultimately work in labor and delivery nursing.

“I really love the idea of women helping women, lifting each other up,” she says. “Women have been historically oppressed, especially during the birthing process. I want to help patients discover the power within them to be strong and give birth the way they want to give birth, in the environment that they want.”

“Cheshire is a great place to work,” says Field, “There’s a very strong community between the staff members, and I’ve gotten nothing but support, accolades and empowerment. Everyone is super supportive.”

Like Field, Hornblower’s experience at Cheshire inspired her to pursue nursing, but as a mid-career change. Although she has been an EMS and emergency management coordinator at Cheshire for 4 years, she has worked in emergency medicine as a paramedic for 15 years.

“I have been thinking about nursing for a while, as a long-term plan,” Hornblower, MS, MA, NRP, says. “I knew at some point I



Ryan Hornblower, MS, MA, NRP

wouldn't want to work on an ambulance all the time, getting up in the middle of the night and doing calls at all hours. I do like that contact with patients, of course. I meet people on possibly the worst day of their life, and provide comfort, and I enjoy that. But someday, I will want to do something with more stable hours."

Hornblower has been taking the prerequisites she needs at Manchester Community College but plans to complete her nursing degree at New England College (NEC) in Henniker, allowing her to continue working full-time at Cheshire. She received her bachelor's degree in political science at NEC, and worked there for years as a resident director and area coordinator before becoming an EMT. She also has two master's degrees from NEC, one in public policy and another in management with a concentration in strategic leadership, which add all the more depth to her background.

"Emergency medicine is always going to have a place in my heart, so I hope to still be in this role that I'm doing now, but maybe with some extra responsibilities," Hornblower says. For instance, she has enjoyed working on quality assurance and would be interested in doing more community outreach through a mobile integrated health unit. "I want to do what I can to help Cheshire in many ways because I really do enjoy working here."

Hornblower has worked at other hospitals, but like Field, has found a home among the nursing staff at Cheshire.

"The atmosphere here is just great—like a family," she says. "People take care of each other. They look out for each other, and they genuinely care. I like that it's a community hospital and that working within the community is the focus. There's so much potential here."

"I want to do what I can to help Cheshire in many ways because I really do enjoy working here. People take care of each other. They look out for each other, and they genuinely care."

Ryan Hornblower, MS, MA, NRP

Certified nurses: Gaining specialized skills for exceptional care



Bridey Shepardson, RN, Tamika Marciniac, BSN, RN, CPAN, Danielle Drigotas, BSN, RN, Nicole Cusack, BSN, RN, are perioperative nurses pursuing certification together.

As a nurse, becoming certified in an area of your expertise and interest enhances your professional growth, career development, and patient care. With more than 180 distinct certifications available and a plethora of courses and resources online, certification can be a fascinating and fulfilling—yet accessible—undertaking for a lifelong learner. The recognition of your achievement is a source of pride that earns you trust and respect from your colleagues and patients.

“I chose to become dual certified in Inpatient Obstetrics (RNC-OB) and External Fetal Monitoring (C-EFM) to validate my specialty knowledge and commitment to

my career development,” says Jennifer Osborne, BSN, who was recently dual-certified. “The continued education requirements for my certifications also allow me to take the best care of my patients with the most current information.”

Cheshire Medical Center encourages all clinical staff to pursue certifications in their areas of interest, as it elevates both the patient experience and your career satisfaction. The Nursing Education department supports a range of certification programs, often for whole departments.

“Recently, we supported Cheshire’s OR, Pre-op, and Case Management teams in

pursuing specialized certifications,” says Heather M. Palmer, Cheshire’s nursing education director. “They build confidence and open diverse opportunities. If you want to take your career in a new direction or want a new challenge, that ability is a great thing about nursing.”

Demonstrating your advanced knowledge and expertise can open up opportunities, such as higher-paying positions, specialized roles, or leadership positions. At Cheshire, some specialized roles require certification or will allow you to gain the certification once in the role.

This spring, nurses in perioperative services are scheduled to take exams

There are a variety of nursing roles at Cheshire



Nurses at Cheshire Medical Center are found in almost every department, from every aspect of patient care to specialized roles outside of patient care, and are leaders at every level of the organization. Each nurse brings specific strengths, passions, and expertise to health care. We seek deeply compassionate, highly skilled nursing professionals to join our community.

Licensed Practical Nurse:

Clinic, Ambulatory
Informatics Procedural Specialist
Inpatient
Operating Room Scrub
Workforce Development Instructor

Advance Practice Registered Nurse:

Hospital Medicine
Midwifery
Clinic, Ambulatory
Surgery
Inpatient Psych Services

Registered Nurse:

Baylor (weekends only)
Behavioral Health Specialist
Cardiology Procedures
Case Manager
Childbirth Educator
Ambulatory, Clinic
Clinical Documentation Specialist
Clinical Informatics
Critical Care & Emergency Services
Device Specialist
The Doorway
Ear, Nose, & Throat (ENT) Therapy Consultant
Employee Health
First Assist, Operating Room

Float
Health Care Coordinator
Infection Preventionist
Inpatient
Lactation Consultant
MOAB RN Instructor
Nurse Educator
Patient Care Coordinator
Quality Assurance Data Abstractor
Radiology
Risk Management & Quality Assurance Specialist
Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner
Workforce Development Instructor

Nurses at Cheshire hold positions of leadership in areas such as:

Accreditation & Regulation Compliance Leader
Administrative Clinical Supervisor
Ambulatory Services
Nurse Manager

Clinical Practice and Education
Critical Care & Emergency Services
Informatics
Inpatient Services
Kingsbury Cancer Care
Quality Assurance and Safety
Surgical Services

Learn more at www.cheshiremed.org/careers/nursing-cheshire

to achieve Certified Post Anesthesia Nurse (CPAN) the Certified Ambulatory Perianesthesia Nurse (CAPA) status, after Cheshire provided financial support for their preparation courses and exam registrations.

“Our board-certified registered nurses have achieved an outstanding accomplishment,” says Jess Barbarow, MPH, BSN, RN, CEN, nurse manager of Cheshire’s pre-operative unit. “Through investing in their professional practice and expanding their knowledge of perianesthesia nursing, they can provide the best care possible to our patients and community.”

Using the latest research to acquire the knowledge and skills can enhance your

clinical judgment, critical thinking, and decision-making abilities. Certification proves you use current, specialized, evidence-based practices, allowing you to confidently provide exceptional patient care and truly be the best, where it matters most.

“Through investing in their professional practice and expanding their knowledge of perianesthesia nursing, our team can provide the best care possible to our patients and community.”

Jess Barbarow, MPH, BSN, RN, CEN

Mike and Kylee West: Finding love and adventure in the Monadnock Region



Mike and Kylee West summiting Mount Flume and Liberty

It's safe to say that Mike West, RN, lives life one adventure at a time, whether it's hiking, snowboarding, rock climbing—you name it. So working as a travel nurse in the shadow of the Rocky Mountains should have been his dream job. But when faced with deciding where to put down roots, it was the people—one in particular—that called him back to Cheshire Medical Center.

Mike, a Nottingham native from the Seacoast area of New Hampshire, spent 10 months in 2019 working on Cheshire's inpatient Thompson Unit as one of his first travel nurse positions.

"I loved the people there," says Mike, who attended Great Bay Community College in Portsmouth. "It was a good floor to work on. I felt at home pretty quickly."

He even struck up a friendship (and text thread) with another nurse on the Unit, Kylee Ojala, RN. Both outdoor enthusiasts,

Mike and Kylee began to get to know each other outside of work, including taking a trek up nearby Mount Monadnock.

"Monadnock is a true gem in this region. The views are awesome, and there are so many different trails to explore," Mike says. "This is a great area for hiking."

But still in his early 20s, Mike wanted to see the world, so he signed a 6-month traveling nurse contract that landed him in Colorado Springs, Colorado, where he enjoyed all that the Rocky Mountains had to offer: hiking, snowboarding, rock climbing.

In between texts to Kylee, of course. "She was always in the back of my mind," he says.

In the spring of 2020, Mike was approaching the end of his contract at Parkview Medical Center in Pueblo, Colorado, when COVID arrived and put

a fork in the road: Extend his contract in Colorado or return home to the Granite State. Return to Kylee.

"To be honest, when he left for Colorado, I wasn't sure if I would ever see him again," Kylee says. "When I heard he was coming back to New Hampshire, I was giddy with excitement."

So Mike returned to NH, took up a contract at Alice Peck Day Memorial Hospital (another member of Dartmouth Health) in Lebanon—and reconnected with Kylee.

"That's when we really started spending more time together," he says. "We're very outdoorsy, so we hiked quite a bit. It took a few nudges for us to be 'officially dating.'"

Halfway through that contract, he found an apartment in Jaffrey, about 5 minutes from Mount Monadnock, "so I can hike just about whenever I want," he says—and decided to return to Cheshire.

This time, for good.

“One of the things I enjoy most about Cheshire is the close-knit community of staff. So many people were so excited when we got engaged.”

Mike West, RN

Soon after, Mike and Kylee went on their “real” first date. You guessed it: They went hiking, conquering the summits of Mount Flume and Mount Liberty in the White Mountains of northern New Hampshire.

“We only work three days a week, leaving us plenty of time to explore,” Kylee, 26, says. “Once, when we knew there would be fresh snow overnight, we brought our snowboards to work and left directly after our shift for a day on the mountain.”

One year and countless adventures later, Mike and Kylee were married on Sept. 18, 2021, in a small ceremony in Greenfield, New Hampshire.

“One of the things I enjoy most about Cheshire is the close-knit community of staff,” Mike, now 27, says. “It was cool to see how many people were so excited when we got engaged.”

And while Mike’s traveling career has taken him to much larger hospitals, he thinks Cheshire is the perfect fit for him. It’s big enough to have the advantages of a large medical center but small enough to allow for familiarity with your co-workers.

“I like to know who I’m working with,” he says. “During a shift, I often need to transfer a patient to a different department, order an X-ray, or refer to Specialty Medicine which involves interacting with co-workers. It’s nice to know those people and have a relationship with them.”

Since Mike’s return, he’s worked in Cheshire’s Emergency Department—at the absolute height of COVID—and on the Kingsbury Unit, another one of Cheshire’s

inpatient departments. Now, he serves the entire Medical Center as a nursing supervisor, a role he embraces.

“As nursing supervisor, I get called by every floor to help out, whether someone has questions and needs guidance or needs me to grab supplies for them,” Mike says. “My experience working in different hospitals and on different floors has definitely helped out.”

As far as that itch to travel and try new things, Mike says he’s actually found that can be fulfilled within Cheshire.

“It’s crazy how versatile being a nurse is,” he says. “You can stay in a hospital and work in 10 different departments over the course of 10 years—or until you find your home.”

Conversely, Kylee—now Kylee West—has worked in the same department for more than 4 years. “I guess we just balance each other out,” Mike says.

Mike and Kylee usually work similar shifts on the same days, so they can commute in one car—a black Jeep Cherokee with the license plate “HIKE” that they recently fitted with a rooftop tent for overnight trips. They say their managers have always helped align their schedules so they can maintain a great work/life balance.

“Not everyone gets to work the same days, same hours, and at the same place as their spouse,” Kylee says. “We’re lucky. We get the same days off during the week to adventure. It’s like working the same days as your best friend. We get to commute together, which saves on gas. Plus, I get to be chauffeured to work every other shift, which is quite nice, I must say.”

Looking toward the future, Mike says he’s considering pursuing his CCRN, a critical care RN certification that includes 2 years of acute care (such as Emergency Medicine nursing) and a certification exam. If he does go back to school, he knows Cheshire will be there to support him with programs such as scholarships and loan forgiveness.

And while New Hampshire doesn’t offer a quick trip to the Rockies, the couple enjoys exploring all the Monadnock Region has to

offer, including afternoon mountain biking right in the city of Keene at Drummer Hill Conservation Area.

“We can get off work, hop on our mountain bikes, and do some runs,” he says. “I know quite a few docs who do the same.”

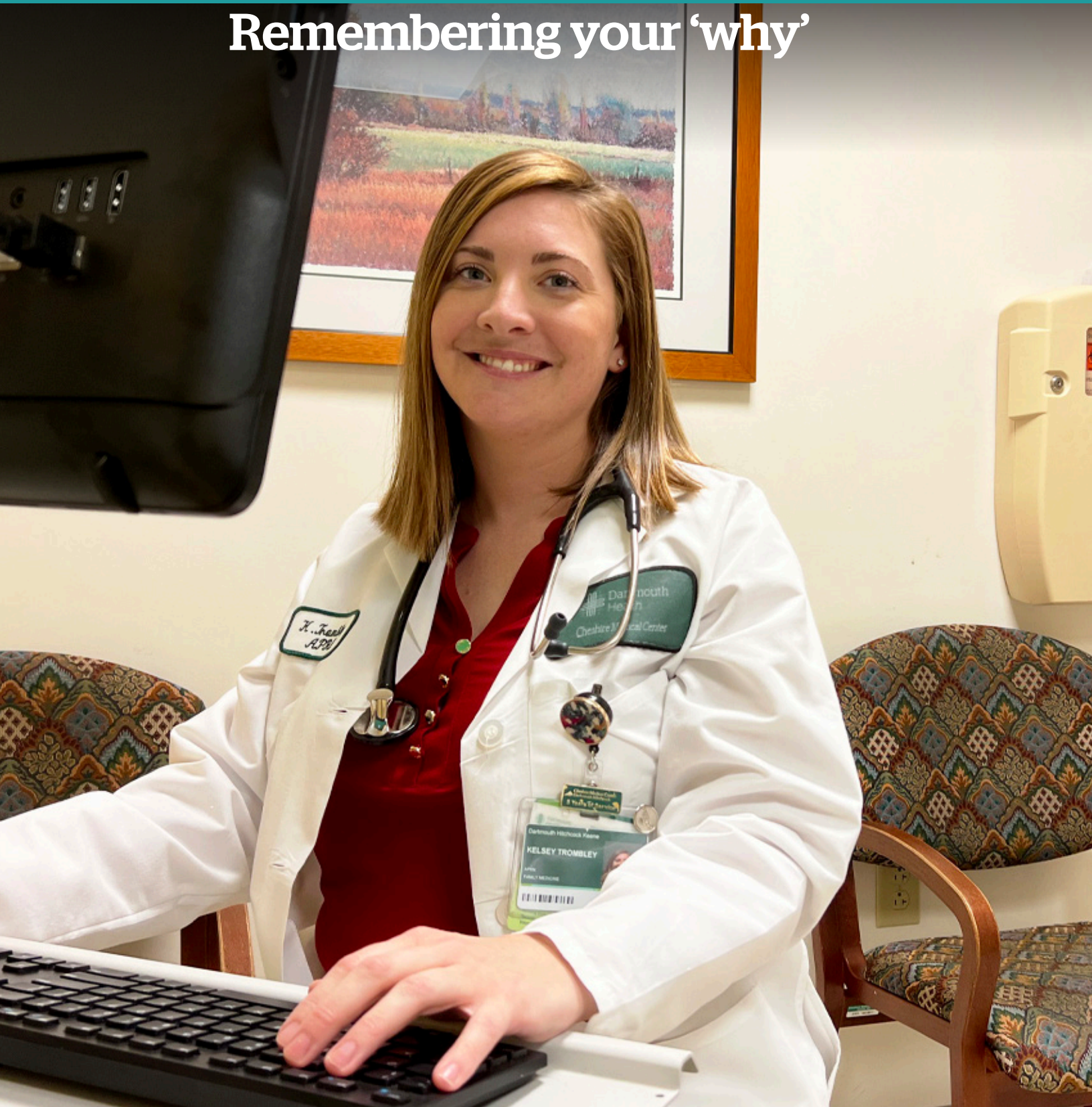
As for their hiking exploits, Mike is on the verge of joining New Hampshire’s Four-Thousand Footer Club, climbers who have summited all 48 of the state’s 4,000-foot mountains.

“I’ve actually completed 42 of them,” Mike says. “Kylee has done a lot of them with me too. My goal this summer is to complete the rest.”

See? Always looking for the next mountain to climb.

“We’ve both always been very adventurous, but the adventures have only gotten better since we met,” Kylee says.

Kelsey Trombley: Remembering your 'why'



Kelsey Trombley, MSN, APRN

As a child, Kelsey Trombley's stuffed animals and baby dolls always knew she would take good care of them. Should they tumble out of the toy box or take an unscheduled ride through the washing machine, Trombley would meet them with Band-aids, plenty of love, and an already fledgling desire to care for others.

"I was very lucky and have always known that I wanted to be a nurse," Trombley, MSN, APRN, says. "I couldn't imagine being in any other profession."

Raised in Keene and Swanzey as one of five children to former Cheshire film librarian Amie Trombley, Kelsey has spent most of her career within Cheshire Medical Center's four walls. A Monadnock Regional Middle/High School graduate, Trombley worked as an LNA at various area nursing homes. She then obtained her LPN and RN before eventually becoming an RN hospice case manager with Home Healthcare Hospice and Community Services. In 2017, Trombley returned to Cheshire as an RN in the Nurse Clinic and the Wound Care Clinic.

And then, she decided she was ready for her next challenge: getting her master's degree and becoming an Advanced Practice Registered Nurse (APRN).

"I started my nursing career at 17 as a nursing assistant and have gradually progressed over the years, so this seemed to be the next logical step for me," Trombley says. "My older brother holds a master's degree in mechanical engineering, so I couldn't let him be the only one in our family with a master's degree."

Trombley worked with Cheshire's Education team to identify which school best suited her and with Heather Palmer to navigate the process of submitting requests for clinical rotations and scheduling them.

"Heather was amazing," Trombley says. "I was lucky enough to be able to do all my rotations here at Cheshire and didn't have to travel far."

"I am so grateful for all the support I received from Cheshire. From the encouragement of my team in the Nurse Clinic and providers—thank you Dave Segal, Amaris Weller, and Katelyn Ahern—to the

scholarships and tuition reimbursement, I felt very supported by the organization."

Trombley graduated with her Master of Science in Nursing, Family Nurse Practitioner, from Walden University in May 2022 and transitioned to the role of provider here in Cheshire's Family Medicine department in November.

What began as an instinct to care for Teddy and Barbie has turned into a career where Trombley cares for patients.

"I am very much enjoying my new role," she says emphatically. "There is so much to know, and some days it can be overwhelming, but I'm so grateful for the support of everyone within the organization for answering my million questions."

"The biggest difference is that I cannot say, 'Let's ask the provider!'"

Ahern is happy to have Trombley as a colleague and called her "a joy to be around."

"Kelsey is a shining light as an overall human being and provider," Ahern says. "Her hard work, determination, and heart of gold have gotten her where she is today! I feel blessed to have been on her education journey and now to be her colleague and friend!!"

Outside of work, Trombley has also discovered a love of volunteering in recent years. "It fills my cup," she says.

She's helped out at area road races such as the Red Cap Run and Clarence DeMar Marathon and Half Marathon and is part of the Recycled Percussion "Super Team" that assists at various community events, including coat drives, Thanksgiving meal pick-ups, and holiday toy drives.

"I have also tried to make a positive impact on those around me," she says. "So being a part of coat drives and food drives have allowed me to help those in need but have also allowed me to make connections within the community which then allowed me to be more aware of local community resources."

When volunteers were sought to help administer the COVID-19 vaccine at the state-run site on Krif Road in January of

2021, Trombley jumped at the chance to help.

"My divorce was finalized just prior to the pandemic, so volunteering was also very therapeutic in my own healing, and helped give me a sense of purpose but also helped me remember my 'why' during those challenging times," she said.

Nowadays, when she's not seeing patients, Trombley can be found hiking, traveling, taking long walks (around Target), and enjoying time with family and friends. She's also encouraging any other fellow nurses to chase their dreams—and fill their cups.

"Find what recharges your soul and do more of it," she says. "And don't forget your 'why.'"

**"Find what recharges
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Kelsey Trombley, MSN, APRN

Donna Beckwith: Caring for patients, pugs, and everything in between



Donna Beckwith, RN

Donna Beckwith, RN, has always been an animal lover. Her co-workers call her an animal whisperer. And pugs, with their trademark short-muzzled, wrinkled faces and curled tails, have been a lifelong favorite. But all four-legged friends have a special place in her heart.

And, if needed, a place in her home.

"I got my first dog when I was in grade school. My neighbor had a pug, and I just fell in love with her," says Beckwith, who has been at Cheshire for 19 years and now works as a utilization review case manager in Care Management. "He put in his will that when he passed, he wanted the dog to go to me. My mom wasn't interested in me having any animals, but she couldn't refuse because it was willed."

At Cheshire, her shared office is full of pug paraphernalia, including pug mugs, figurines, and a "Doug the Pug" calendar that draws a crowd when the month

changes, says officemate Alex Davison, an administrative assistant in Care Management.

"Anyone who stops by our office loves to look at her collection and exchange stories about the dogs they've loved," Davison says. "Some of her stories are sad, but most will have you laughing so hard your stomach will hurt."

Beckwith volunteers at events for the Green Mountain Pug Rescue and has helped drive rescue transports through New Hampshire and Vermont. She even owns a pug Christmas sweater. "I will always have a pug in my household," she says. "They love everybody and everything."

But her love isn't contained to just pugs. She estimates she's owned between 15 and 20 pets throughout her life—"All rescues," she notes—and most of them are middle-aged or elderly and battling health issues when they come into her care.

"I've saved a couple of mice," she says. "Hamsters. I've had birds. I've had cats on inhalers. I've used all my nursing skills on animals. I really should be an honorary vet."

She even lovingly makes her own dog food and attributes her dogs' rejuvenated and sustained health to her recipe.

Currently, she has a cat named Kirby, who's old enough to vote, and a Pony of the Americas named Buttons, who she doesn't ride but is "more of a pasture pet." Then there are the dogs, of course.

Let's see. Maylie and Bea are 6-year-old Labrador mix sisters known as "Heinz 57s" because of their extensive blend of breeds. There's Baxter, a 15-year-old black pug who, at this point, is "more white than black."

And don't forget Susie, a pug/chihuahua mix she received from a former co-worker when a couple she knew separated and no longer wanted the animal. She showed



Maylie and Bea are 6-year-old Labrador mix sisters



Suzie, a pug/chihuahua mix

Beckwith took a photo of the dog and brought Susie to the office to meet her.

“She spent the day with me at work, and she’s been with me ever since,” Beckwith says. “It was a sign from the universe that I’m supposed to take this dog.”

Three of Beckwith’s dogs are from her neighbor, who was also a patient at Cheshire. When Beckwith moved to Hinsdale about 5 years ago, she quickly befriended an elderly couple with three little dogs and four cats.

“The wife was a dog lover like I am, so we immediately connected,” she says.

When the neighbor had appointments at Cheshire, she always stopped to say hi. Shortly after that, the neighbor was diagnosed with lung cancer. Choosing to receive her care here at Cheshire, her visits increased and soon included inpatient stays.

“I never saw myself with a chihuahua, but I’ve got one,” Beckwith says of her “little princess” Chloe. “She didn’t bond with many people, but she bonded with me, thankfully.”

“The last time she came in, she was with us for a bit of time,” Beckwith says quietly and with purpose. “I had gotten to know her dogs and her husband. She was clearly at the end of her life and wouldn’t let go. So, I talked to her and said, ‘I know you’re not leaving because you don’t want to leave your animals.’ I said, ‘I promise you; you can go, and your animals will be cared for.’”

From then on, Beckwith would go to the neighbors’ house every day after work to feed their cats and walk Oreo, a shih tzu, 15; Ladybug, a mixed breed, 10; and Chloe, a chihuahua, 12. When the lady’s husband began dealing with his own health issues and—following a few stays as an inpatient at Cheshire—moved into an area nursing home, Beckwith took the trio home for good. Oreo has passed, but Ladybug and Chloe are part of the Beckwith pack.

“She went that night.”

When it comes to providing a caring, healing environment for animals and people, there’s little difference, Beckwith says—“It’s all therapeutic.” And she would know, having worked in healthcare for most of her life, beginning as an aide, an LPN, and an RN at Thompson House Nursing Home in Brattleboro before coming to Cheshire two decades ago. Here, she began as a medical surgical nurse, then helped develop the patient care coordinator role before moving into Care Management close to 10 years ago. In her current role, Beckwith collects and assembles all aspects of a patient’s care journey and sends it to insurance companies for payment.

What’s easier, though, taking care of a person or a pug?

“It depends on the pug,” she says with a wide smile. “I had a pug named Ginger. She ended up being a one-eyed, elderly paraplegic pug. She was not easy to take care of!”

Her pet passion blends with her job at Cheshire in other ways. For instance, Cheshire’s discharge planners, who share her pug-adorned office, find a frequent concern of people needing hospital admission is leaving their animals unattended. Beckwith’s team will call the Humane Society to make sure the pets are taken care of.

“Her motto, ‘Do the next right thing,’ has resulted in acquiring animals who need emergency placement or hospice care in their final days,” Davison says. “Donna has been known to stop for injured animals on the highway, risking her own safety in some cases, all for the good of the creature.”

“She even stopped for fake ducks once,” Davison says. “But you’ll have to ask her about that in person sometime!”

When she’s not at work or caring for her animals, Beckwith plays the flute for the Brattleboro American Legion Band. And when the weather’s right, you can usually find her on her Harley Davidson Softail motorcycle.

“That’s my life,” says Beckwith. “I come to Cheshire. I take care of my animals. I ride my motorcycle.”

Nursing at Cheshire: In their own words

Exceptional nursing is at the heart of Cheshire Medical Center's quality care, with over 500 nurses in myriad specialties and at every level of leadership. We seek deeply compassionate, highly skilled nursing professionals to join our community.

With countless opportunities from ICU bedside and perioperative nursing to ambulatory specialty care and clinical informatics, each team can offer you a unique feel, educational experiences, and daily work.

Some benefits of working at a smaller community medical center are the ability to practice the full scope of your clinical skills and the collegial relationships you'll form with people in every department you interact with. We know and support each other as a community here. Cheshire provides more specialties than are typically available in other rural hospitals and recent graduates will find more opportunities in those areas than at larger institutions.

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Don't just take our word for it, head to

www.cheshiremed.org/careers/nursing-cheshire

to find more information about nursing at Cheshire, including some videos of some of our nurses—the lifeblood of medical care at Cheshire. Or, simply scan the QR codes below to go directly to those videos.



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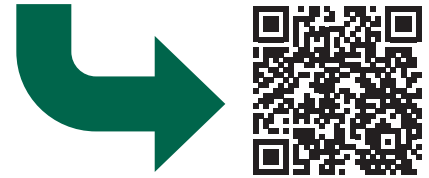


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Noah Clay, RN



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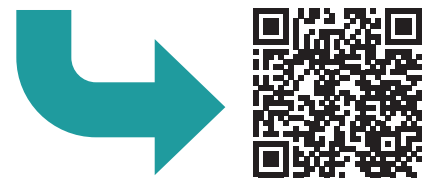


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Tamika Marciniiec, RN, BSN, CPAN

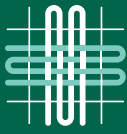


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Katelyn Bemis, RN



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