



**BLESSING
HEALTH
SYSTEM
NURSING
ANNUAL
REPORT
2025**

Fiscal year 2025: October 1, 2024
through September 30, 2025

**TIME TO
TOAST!**

Blessing nurses celebrate
Nurse Residency Program
earning a rare distinction

Learn more on
pages 8 and 9

**NURSING
MISSION STATEMENT**

Nursing excellence—Touching the lives of our
communities, one person at a time.



NURSING MISSION

Nursing Excellence—Touching the lives of our communities, one person at a time.

NURSING VISION

Leading the way for professional excellence in nursing by:

Having a professional practice environment that attracts and retains highly qualified nursing staff

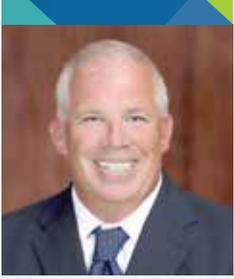
Being recognized for providing superior holistic care to the communities we serve

Striving for safety, excellence and quality patient outcomes through innovative nursing care with the advancement of evidence-based practice and research

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2025: A Year of Progress

By **Tim Tranor, DNP, MBA, RN**

Executive Vice President/Chief Operating Officer/Chief Nursing Officer

Fiscal Year 2025 was a year of meaningful progress for Blessing nursing, guided by the priorities of the Nursing Strategic Plan. As **Blessing Hospital** celebrated its 150th anniversary, I was reminded how much our history was—and our future will be—shaped by the exceptional nurses and clinical teams who serve our patients and community every day.

Since stepping into the chief nursing officer role in December 2015, I have had the privilege of serving alongside you through challenges, growth and transformation. I remain deeply grateful for your professionalism, your resilience and the unwavering compassion you bring to the bedside.

People progress

Throughout FY2025, we continued to invest in the development of our people. Nurses across the system earned advanced academic degrees and specialty certifications and strengthened leadership skills through **Shared Governance, Charge Nurse Academy, Career Care, Be Best** and a wide range of internal education programs.

Our **Nurse Residency Program** earned Accreditation with Distinction, reaffirming our commitment to supporting new graduates with evidence-based transition-to-practice resources and building a strong, sustainable pipeline of future leaders.

A sustained focus on strengthening workforce stability and team cohesion contributed to a more supportive, connected work environment. The nurse internship program, **Nurse Connect**, expanded clinical student engagement, and enhanced onboarding processes supported smooth transitions into practice and encouraged long-term growth within Blessing. These efforts reinforced internal pathways that help retain talented caregivers and maintain strong, unified teams.

Process progress

We also made meaningful progress in advancing quality and zero harm. Evidence-based practice, reliable use of care bundles and strong interdisciplinary collaboration contributed to reductions in preventable harm, including falls with injury, CAUTI, CLABSI, surgical-site infections, pressure injuries, VTE, sepsis alerts and stroke response. These improvements reflect the clinical excellence of our frontline nurses, whose vigilance and dedication continue to shape safer, more reliable care.

Enhancing the patient experience remained central to our mission. Nurses elevated bedside communication, strengthened the consistency of handoffs through expanded SBAR use, and supported smoother transitions throughout the continuum of care. Many departments achieved exceptional performance in the HCAHPS Nursing Domain, demonstrating the compassion, clarity and professionalism our patients and families experience every day.

Nurses also played a vital role in improving access to care across the health system. Efforts to support emergency department and inpatient follow-up processes, optimize referral pathways and enhance coordination with ambulatory partners helped ensure patients received timely, appropriate care.

Nursing insight was essential as we prepared for the **Blessing Health System Epic go-live** on March 21, 2026, guiding workflow development, documentation standards and training priorities that will strengthen communication and continuity across all settings.

Community progress

Outside of our walls, Blessing nurses extended our mission through community service, free screenings, volunteerism and support for behavioral health and wellness initiatives—demonstrating our commitment to improving the health of the region we are privileged to serve.

Planning for future progress

As we look ahead, we remain focused on our Magnet re-designation journey, with document submission planned for 2026. We also welcomed **Brigid K. Toyne-Barfoot DNP, RN, NEA-BC**, as chief nursing officer on February 9, 2026. Her leadership and passion for advancing professional nursing practice will strengthen our teams and support the next chapter of our strategic work.



Brigid Toyne-Barfoot
DNP, RN, NEA-BC

To every nurse and clinical team member— *Thank you*

The progress we made in FY2025 is a direct reflection of your dedication, skill and compassion. Serving alongside you since 2015 has been one of the greatest honors of my career, and I am profoundly grateful for all we have accomplished together for our patients, our colleagues and our community. ■

Following our “Bridge” to Magnet® Re-Designation

Blessing Hospital is preparing to submit its Magnet® re-designation documents in summer 2026, an important achievement reflecting the strength and dedication of the nursing and clinical teams. Magnet recognition represents the gold standard in nursing excellence, honoring organizations that deliver outstanding patient care, champion professional practice and consistently elevate outcomes.

Magnet is really about this—The exceptional care at Blessing Hospital is made possible by the remarkable people who show up with skill, compassion and commitment every single day.

Our Professional Practice Model—The Bridge That Connects Us. The Professional Practice Model (PPM) is the driving force of nursing at Blessing Hospital. Represented through a bridge schematic, it illustrates how nurses practice, collaborate, communicate and develop professionally to provide the highest quality care.



- At the center of the bridge are the three groups that guide our work—the **Healthcare Team**, the **Patient/Family** and **Self**. Through relationship-based care, we build therapeutic relationships with patients and families, understand individual needs and work as a team to fulfill them.
- The river beneath the bridge symbolizes what unites us all—creating **True Human Connections** with patients, families and one another.
- The blue cloud represents Blessing Hospital’s values—**Patients First, because ICARE**—Integrity, Compassion, Accountability, Respect and Excellence guide how we serve.
- The yellow sun represents **Professional Development**—an essential part of excellent nursing care. Blessing Hospital supports nurses through clinical ladder programs, specialty certifications and educational assistance for advanced degrees.

As we continue our journey toward Magnet re-designation, our focus remains the same—supporting nursing excellence, empowering professional growth and delivering exceptional care for every patient, every time. ■



The Magnet Recognition Program® advances three goals within healthcare organizations:

- Promote safety and quality in a setting that supports the professional practice of nursing
- Identify excellence in the delivery of nursing services to patients/families through interprofessional collaboration
- Create a practice environment that supports professional development

Based on the research conducted in the early 1990s, the American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC) established the Magnet Recognition Program®. It recognizes healthcare organizations’ efforts at recruitment and retention of registered nurses. As a result, an environment is created where the professional practice of nursing is valued and celebrated. The program also seeks to provide a vehicle for disseminating successful nursing practices and strategies.

Together We Lead—Empowering Voices, Shaping Care

Our nurses, clinical staff, and support teams drive decisions that enhance patient care, improve quality, and strengthen our culture of collaboration

Our vision, **Together We Lead**, reflects a core belief: The best ideas come from those closest to the work—our nurses, clinical staff, and support teams. Your insights, expertise, and commitment are shaping the future of care across every level of our organization

Over the past two years, this vision has come to life in powerful ways. In 2023, Shared Governance expanded across the entire health system, launching three new councils—Night Shift, Ambulatory, and Unit Secretary—and strengthening our culture of collaboration and shared decision-making.

In 2025, we built on that momentum. More voices. More leadership. More opportunities to influence practice and elevate patient care. Together, we are not only leading—we are transforming the way care is delivered for years to come.

Why Shared Governance?

Because your voice matters. At many non-Magnet hospitals, clinical staff are not given paid time to participate in governance. But at Blessing, we do things differently. Our executive team fully supports and encourages

your involvement by providing paid professional time to participate in councils that enhance patient satisfaction, improve quality of care, and strengthen employee engagement.

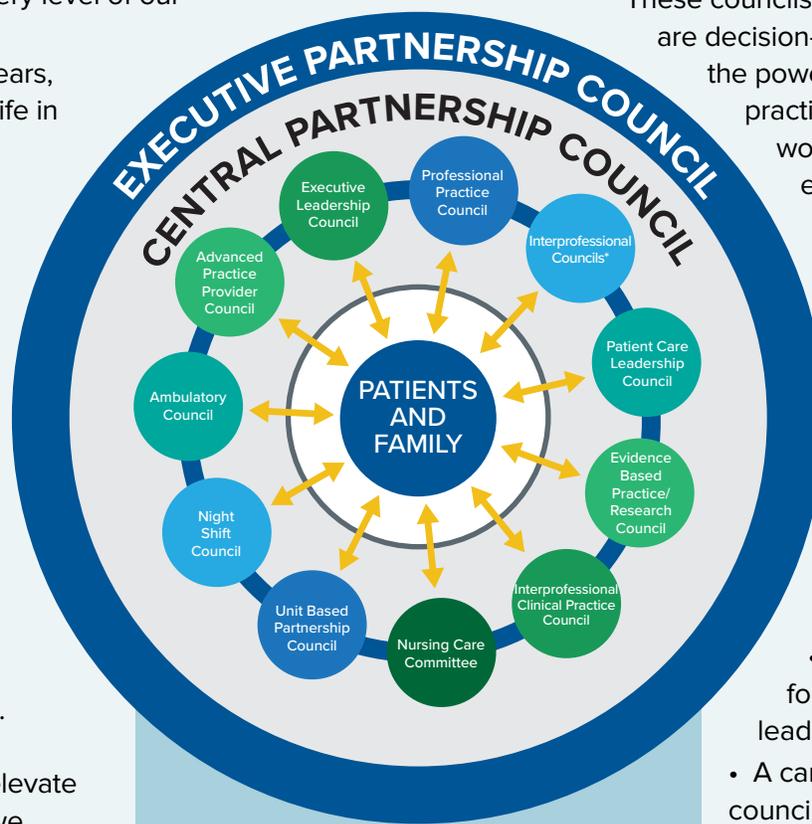
These councils are not symbolic. They are decision-making bodies with the power to influence clinical practice and improve the work and patient care environment. Each council has a unique purpose—and all are growing, evolving, and making a difference.

What was new in 2025?

- A renewed focus on in-person engagement, with continued TEAMS access as needed.
- Expanded opportunities for membership and leadership.
- A campaign to celebrate council achievements and invite new voices to the table.

A heartfelt thank you

To those who joined a council—thank you for stepping forward. To those who were already serving as council chairs or culture champions—your leadership helps shape the future of Blessing Health System. Your time, energy, and commitment are deeply appreciated. **Together We Lead.**



SHARED GOVERNANCE MODEL

Depicting our Council Structure

*Inter-professional Councils include (but not limited to): Stroke Team, Heart First and Chest Pain Committee and Patient Safety Committee

Recognizing 2025 Professional Practice Excellence in Nursing

The **Career Care Program** is designed for clinical RNs. The **Be Best** program is for non-clinical RNs. The year saw 70 nurses achieve their professional development goals. **Congratulations to all!**



CAREER CARE 2025

LEVEL 5

Alicia Ahern
Sarah Andrew
Hilary Bastert
Sarah Buck
Katy Clark
Dawn Crabtree
Deb Derhake
Mandy Edmunds
Lisa Farrell
Kathy Harland
Kendra Harris
Dolores Haschemeyer
Jennifer Hermann
Erica Hilgenbrinck
Caitlin Hoeltje
Cindy Hoewing
Ashley Holland
Ashley Huber
Nicole Leerhoff
Rachael Long
Angie Loos
Jessica Nuebel
Cindy Peters
Sarah Pruett
Kayla Schachtsiek
Julie Smith
Brandy Tallman
Lauren Tallman
Kelli Terwelp
Wendy Walker
Nicole Walton
Hilary Wells
Laura Wietholder

Shanna Winter
Beth Zanger
Shannon Zanger
Blaklyn Zenner

LEVEL 4

Jessica Borrowman
Sarah Brown
Tea Cameron
Julie Cassens
Jenna Disseler
Abby Elbus
Amanda Fessler
Dawn Gamble
Alice Glasgow
Samantha Glover
Heidi Harris
Haley Haugh
Lisa Kerker
Taylor Lewis
Lisa Liesen
Taylor Martin
Rachel Pettitt
Nichole Schaefer
Elizabeth St. Clair
Karrie Voss
Camille Walker
Diana Weatherford
Keith Wilson
Allison Witte

LEVEL 3

Ashlynn Bennett
Missy Dahl
Katelyn Uhlmeyer

BE BEST 2025

Jenny Dickhut
Erin Elmore
Ashley Kirlin
Katie Ludwig
Michael Richard
Eydie Tipton

CAREER DEVELOPMENT

1. Provide an opportunity for eligible staff nurses to develop a career path which recognizes professional practice excellence.
2. Promote leadership and development of front line staff.

AUTONOMY

1. Expand nurses clinical accountability and decision-making authority.
2. Empower nurses through shared governance.

EDUCATION

1. Promote life long pursuit of expertise of the clinical nurse.
2. Encourage exemplary practice, new knowledge and innovation.

RECOGNITION

1. Attract and retain high quality nursing staff at the bedside.
2. Recognize and reward front line staff that engage in clinical inquiry, education, research projects and evidence based projects to improve empirical outcomes.

3. Compensations Recognition
Staff RN 3 \$1500 = \$.82/hr*
Staff RN 4 \$3000 = \$1.65/hr*
Staff RN 5 \$5000 = \$2.75/hr*

*over 26 pay periods on hours worked, total may vary based on FTE status.

For more information, please email clinical.ladder@blessinghealth.org

100% NCLEX Pass Rate Highlights Banner Year for Blessing-Rieman Nursing

Blessing-Rieman College of Nursing and Health Sciences Class of May 2025 nursing graduates posted a 100% first-time passage rate on the National Council Licensure Examination (NCLEX). The latest national and state figures available—the 2024 pass rate for all first-time, U.S. BSN-educated students taking the NCLEX-RN exam—was 91% nationally with the state of Illinois average of 87%.

“A 100% pass rate is not just a statistic—it is representative of the dedication of our graduates, the excellence of our faculty and the strength of our clinical sites,” said **Brenda Beshears, Ph.D., RN, president/CEO**. “It reflects our vision of being recognized as a caring and engaged learning community, committed to preparing healthcare leaders for success.”

“I am very proud of this group of students and their dedication to not only finishing their nursing degree but also their preparation to provide excellent nursing care to their future patients,” added **Brandi Venvertloh, Ph.D., RN, BSN** program coordinator. “One large aspect of this preparation is in passing this exam. It is challenging, so I think it’s important to give recognition for their hard work.”

“Our nursing faculty provide excellent, high-quality nursing education in the classroom and through clinical experiences, along with an unwavering commitment to support and mentor our students, including their preparation to take the NCLEX-RN exam,” concluded **Jan Akright, Ph.D., RN**, academic dean.

Double-digit enrollment increase

The College registered a year-over-year increase of 11% in student enrollment. The 2025-2026 school year total enrollment reached 331 compared to 2024-2025 enrollment of 298.

The largest area of increase was in the Direct Transfer pathway, which had a 67% increase from the 2024-2025 school year. The Direct Transfer pathway allows students to directly transfer to Blessing-Rieman

after completing prerequisite courses at an accredited institution of their choice.

“As the number of high school graduates decreases, Blessing-Rieman is seeing record enrollment in all programs,” said Dr. Beshears. “Personalized care and attention that students receive at BRCN make a huge difference in the student’s success. As students and their families look for value, they recognize an investment in nursing or healthcare education isn’t just preparing students for a career but for a lifestyle of making an impact on the community by shaping the next generation of healthcare.”

Affordability also plays a role in drawing students to Blessing-Rieman. Students who qualify can access the Blessing Education Revolving Fund (BERF) loan program, which pays 100% of tuition and fees. This loan will be forgiven for students who choose to stay and work for Blessing Health System.



PREPARING
STUDENTS NOT
JUST FOR A
CAREER, BUT
FOR A LIFE
OF IMPACT IN
HEALTHCARE

MSN program earns reaccreditation

Blessing-Rieman’s Master of Science in Nursing (MSN) program was awarded a 10-year reaccreditation, the maximum for continuing accreditation by the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE).

The accreditation process included faculty and staff preparing an extensive self-study report about the program followed by participating in on-site surveys by CCNE representatives.

Officially recognized by the U.S. Secretary of Education as a national accreditation agency, the CCNE is an independent accrediting agency, contributing to the improvement of the public’s health. CCNE ensures the quality and integrity of baccalaureate, graduate and residency programs in nursing.

“Accredited programs are a hallmark of institutional integrity. They signal to students, employers and society that the education provided is not only current and competitive but also accountable to continuous quality improvement,” concluded Dr. Beshears. ■

Sharing Lifesaving Skills and Building Life-Changing Confidence

Blessing nurses shared lifesaving CPR skills with community members during the 2025 EMS Day event.

SAVING A
LIFE CAN
START WITH
TWO HANDS
AND THE
COURAGE
TO ACT



Blessing nurses use their skill and compassion to change lives while treating patients at Blessing and educating people at community events, like EMS Day. At the **2025 EMS Day** event, **Laura Wietholder, MSN, RN, ACE**, community outreach coordinator, planned a booth to teach hands-only CPR. Nurses from across the health system immediately stepped up to participate.

They spent the day teaching community members how to act confidently in an emergency—using manikins, demonstration pads and easy-to-understand guidance to show visitors that saving a life can start with two hands and the courage to act.

For many who stopped at the booth, it was their first-time learning CPR. The nurses broke

down barriers by meeting people where they were, answering questions and offering reassurance. Their approachable style and genuine enthusiasm created a welcoming environment that encouraged even hesitant visitors to participate.

Throughout the event, the team worked side by side to make sure every person received personal attention and left feeling more prepared to help someone in distress. The group's efforts reflected what Blessing nurses do best: empower, educate and lift up the communities they serve. Their presence turned a community event into a moment of confidence-building and lifesaving skill sharing—the kind of impression that stays with people long after the day ends. ■

Blessing Nurses Who Participated in the 2025 EMS Day Event Included:

Rachel Vogel, MSN, RN, SCRNP, clinical quality coordinator, Quality and Performance Improvement

Teresa Darnell, BSN, RN, CV-BC, registered nurse, Non-Invasive Cardiology

Matthew Wontorcik, BSN, RN, associate nurse manager, Emergency Department

Erin Roberts, BSN, RN, CEN, NE-BC, EMS manager, Emergency Medical Services

Nurse Residency Program Earns Highest National Distinction

The ANCC's highest honor recognizes organizations demonstrating exceptional standards in supporting and developing new nurses



The Blessing Hospital Nurse Residency Program, designed to help support and mentor newly licensed registered nurses and reduce the turnover rate, was awarded Accreditation with Distinction in 2025.

Accreditation with Distinction is the highest recognition awarded by the American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC) Accreditation Program. Only 43% of accredited hospitals nationwide and 38% in Illinois had this prestigious distinction in 2025. The honor is reserved for those meeting the rigorous national standards and demonstrating exemplary and innovative practices across various accreditation criteria.

“Blessing’s accomplishment in obtaining this distinction signifies a commitment to excellence and innovation, setting a benchmark for others in the field,” said **Eydie Tipton, DNP, RN, CCRN, CNML, EBP-CH**, program director, Nurse Residency Program, Blessing Hospital.

The reaccreditation was granted for four years. Blessing began its program in 2015, receiving initial accreditation in 2021. To date, nearly 600 registered nurses have completed the program.

The ANCC certifies and recognizes healthcare organizations that promote nursing excellence and quality patient outcomes while providing safe, positive work environments. Blessing Hospital’s Nurse Residency Program is one of 295 nationwide to hold ANCC accreditation.

Nurse Residency programs, also known as Transition to Practice programs for newly licensed registered nurses, aim to bridge the gap between

academic training and clinical practice. These programs provide structured support and mentorship, helping new nurses develop confidence and competence in their roles. Additionally, they enhance patient care quality by ensuring that nurses are well prepared to handle the complexities of the healthcare environment; in turn, these initiatives reduce first-year turnover.

National figures show as many as 30% of registered nurses will change jobs or even professions within the first year after graduation, and approximately 50% leave their first job within two years. The double-digit turnover rate can affect delivery of patient care and labor costs.

“Our fantastic achievement puts us at the forefront of nursing education, helping us attract top talent and build a culture of continuous learning and professional growth,” Tipton added. “The vision and dedication to nursing excellence of our Nurse

Residency Advisory Board and support of our organization have been key to our ongoing success and recognition. They ensure we’re providing top-notch training and support to our newly licensed registered nurses.”

“Our team is committed to ensuring that the curriculum is comprehensive, engaging and tailored to accommodate diverse learning styles,” said **Amy Oshner, MSN, RN, CNOR, NE-BC**, site coordinator, Nurse Residency Program, Blessing Hospital. “This recognition reflects the immense dedication, effort and meticulous planning that our team invests in developing, implementing, evaluating and refining the curriculum for each cohort of nurse residents.” ■

“
This distinction signifies a commitment to excellence and innovation, setting a benchmark for others in the field.”

Eydie Tipton

Is There a Better Way to Help Our Patients Feel Safe and Calm?

Nurse residents created sensory support boxes that help patients feel calmer and more supported during care



That's exactly the mindset nurse residents (pictured above, left to right) **Kelli Lehenbauer, RN** (Women & Children), **Lauren Dixon, RN** (Gen Med/Neurology), **Dayanara Schorr, RN** (Gen Med/Oncology), and **Lee Austin, RN** (Gen Med/Neurology) brought to the bedside when they asked a simple but transformative question—Is there a better way to help our patients feel safe and calm?

This led to the creation of sensory support boxes, thoughtfully designed tools that reduce anxiety, soothe sensory overload and help patients feel grounded during care.

These nurses were just beginning their careers, still learning the rhythm of the units and finding their professional footing. But what set them apart was what they noticed. Across departments, they saw patients struggling with stimulation and stress, including children panicking before IV starts, adults pacing in noisy rooms and neurodivergent patients shutting down during routine assessments.

Instead of accepting those moments as unavoidable, the residents chose to act.

They reflected on the patients they couldn't forget, focusing on real fear, real distress and real opportunities to do better.

With mentorship from Blessing Hospital's nurse researcher, the team curated sensory items that could offer comfort without complicating care. They tested the boxes, trained their peers and built confidence across units.

Then the stories started coming in.

Children once frozen with fear stayed engaged. A patient with autism completed a full assessment without distress. An older adult squeezed a soft stress ball during a dressing change and later said, "I didn't know something so simple could help this much."

What began as a small idea quickly became a cultural shift.

These nurse residents didn't just introduce a new tool. They reframed how care is delivered. Their work reinforced a powerful truth, showing that patient-centered care doesn't always require high-tech solutions. Sometimes, it starts with empathy and imagination.

That approach earned grant funding, leadership support and expansion across 21 departments. Today, sensory support is embedded in daily care throughout Blessing.

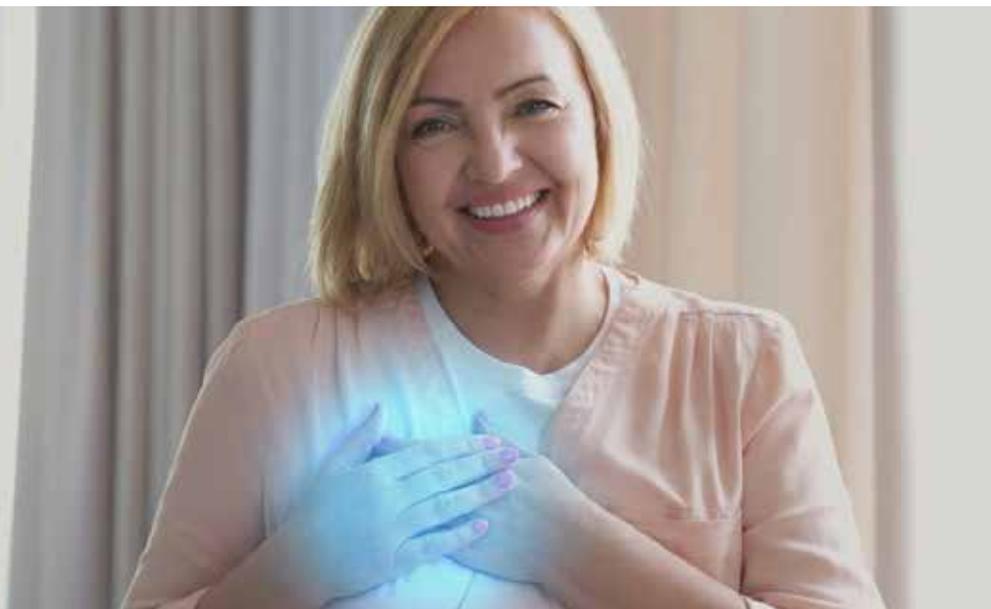
And perhaps the most remarkable part?

These nurses changed the patient experience before completing their first year of practice.

Their story is proof that innovation isn't tied to titles or tenure. It comes from noticing unmet needs and believing you can make a difference. Because of their courage and creativity, Blessing is a calmer, quieter and more compassionate place for patients when they need it most. ■

One Nurse’s Insight Leads to a Better Recovery for Patients

When a Blessing nurse saw a pattern in post-sternotomy complications, she helped lead a change that improved recovery for women



**ONE
OBSERVATION
LED TO A
MEANINGFUL
IMPROVEMENT
IN PATIENT
HEALING**



**Sarah Andrew,
BSN, RN, CV-BC**

Sarah Andrew, BSN, RN, CV-BC, is a nurse in the **Quincy Cardiothoracic Specialist Clinic**, but also a medical detective. She noticed a concerning pattern among women who had undergone a sternotomy—a surgical procedure that makes an incision through the breastbone for surgery in the chest area. The complication Sarah noticed was a separation of the surgical incision post-discharge.

Sarah brought her concern to the other members of the care team, **Andrea Uhlmeier, DNP, AGACNP-BC, FNP-C**, cardiothoracic nurse practitioner; **John Arnold, MD**, cardiothoracic surgeon and the purchasing team, **Tom Sante** and **Jim Walton**, to explore how they could make recovery easier and safer for patients.

What the team discovered was simple but meaningful—many women didn’t have access to a comfortable, supportive post-surgical bra. Without the

proper undergarment, movement caused discomfort that could jeopardize healing. Sarah researched specialty garments, gathered patient input, compared styles for comfort and support and worked with the team to ensure the best options were stocked and readily available.

Introducing new bras to meet the needs of women recovering from sternotomy was the first step. That was followed by nurses helping patients understand how the garment supported their healing and guiding them in selecting the right size and style for their needs.

Sarah’s leadership made all the difference. The improvement was remarkable.

Patients reported greater comfort and confidence. Nurses saw smoother recoveries. And the team knew they had removed a barrier that once stood in the way of healing.

What began with one nurse’s insight grew into a meaningful modification in how Blessing supports women through open-heart surgery recovery. ■

A Symphony of Safe, Patient-Centered, High-Quality Care

Illini Community Hospital caregivers achieved two consecutive years of zero harm events through teamwork, coordination, and a culture of safety



Illini Med Surg day shift team holds daily huddle

Delivering patient care is comparable to playing a complex symphony. In the healthcare setting, the orchestra consists of talented caregivers with diverse skills, each needing to hit their notes (perform their tasks) on time and in tune (without error) to play the symphony perfectly. This must be done on every shift, every day, for every patient. In addition to skill, achieving such a world-class performance requires exceptional commitment and coordination.

The performance of the orchestra of caregivers at **Illini Community Hospital** deserves a standing ovation. For the second year in a row, the hospital's team delivered care to every patient on every shift, every day with zero harm events.

Holly Jones, RN, MSN, NEA-BC, vice president/administrator, **Illini Community Hospital & Denman Services, Inc.**, credits the six steps below for the success of Illini caregivers in addressing patient harm events.

Illini Caregivers' Six Steps For Success in Addressing Patient Harm Events

- 1. Culture of safety:** Fostering an environment where staff feel empowered to speak up about safety concerns, learn from errors and prioritize patient safety.
- 2. Systems thinking:** Recognizing that harm often results from system failures rather than individual mistakes and implementing changes to improve processes and workflows.
- 3. Best practices:** Adopting and implementing evidence-based practices to prevent harm, such as hand-hygiene protocols, medication-safety measures and fall-prevention strategies. Nurses huddle each day to discuss upcoming needs and patient-harm events.
- 4. Patient engagement:** Involving patients in their care, encouraging them to ask questions and actively seeking their feedback on safety concerns.
- 5. Learning from errors:** Implementing mechanisms for reporting, analyzing and learning from both near misses and actual harm events. Conducting root cause analysis when needed for near misses.
- 6. Leadership commitment:** Top-down support for zero-harm initiatives, with leaders championing safety and ensuring that resources are available for improvement efforts. Illini leadership also celebrates hospital-wide each quarter that the Illini team does not have a patient-harm event. **Bravo, Illini. Play on.** ■

Nurse Advocacy in Action—A Voice That Reaches Beyond the Bedside

Terry Thomas brings her experience as a family nurse practitioner to state and national conversations, shaping policies that expand access to care.

**NURSING
INFLUENCE
REACHES FAR
BEYOND THE
BEDSIDE—
POLICY SHAPES
THE CARE OF
TOMORROW**



For more than two decades, **Terry Thomas, MA, MSN, APRN, FNP-BC**, has been a trusted advocate for patients, for nurses and for access to care. As a family nurse practitioner with **Blessing Health Hannibal Occupational Health**, her influence doesn't stop at the exam room. It extends to state and national conversations shaping the future of healthcare.

At the American Association of Nurse Practitioners Health Policy Conference, Terry joined nurse practitioners from across the country to confront the challenges patients face every day, including provider shortages, barriers to care and regulatory limitations that no longer reflect modern healthcare needs.

On Capitol Hill, Terry brought rural Missouri to life for lawmakers. She shared stories from the communities she serves, where long drives, provider shortages and delayed care are daily realities.

Her voice carried the weight of experience, grounded not only in policy expertise, but also in years of listening to patients who depend on timely and convenient access to care.

That advocacy continued back home. Terry participated in Missouri Advocacy Days, met directly with legislators and contributed to critical conversations about strengthening practice environments and expanding access to care across the state.

Her leadership is a powerful reminder that nursing influence reaches far beyond the bedside. By speaking up where decisions are made, Terry helps ensure that the realities of patients and healthcare professionals alike are reflected in policies that shape the care of tomorrow. ■



**Terry Thomas, MA,
MSN, APRN, FNP-BC**

Exceptional Service Celebrated During Nurses Week

Seven nurses, one team, one certified medical assistant and one secretary were honored with Excellence Awards during the observance of National Nurses Week 2025 at **Blessing Health System**. Following are the nine award categories, which received 102 nominations, and the winners:

The 2025 Nurses Week Blessing Health Excellence Award Winners

Illini Community Hospital Registered Nurse Award

Amanda McDonald, Emergency Room

The Advanced Practice Registered Nurse Award

Emily Feenstra, Illini Rural Health Clinic in Pittsfield

The Year One Wonder Award for a new registered nurse

Kealey Atkinson, Gen Med/Neurology

Licensed Practical Nurse Clinical Excellence Award

Lisa McDonald, Family Medicine

Partner in Care award for a non-nursing staff member

Lynette Russell, secretary, Blessing Surgery Center

Illini Community Hospital Partner in Care Award

Jessica Schnepf, CMA, Illini Rural Health Clinic

The DAISY Team Award

The winners were staff from five departments (**PCU, ICU, Gen Med/Oncology; Cassidy Miller, Samantha Bengé and Lisa Kindhart of Food & Nutrition and Robert Mixer of IS**) who worked together to arrange a wedding ceremony in the hospital for a terminally ill patient.

The DAISY Transformational Leader Award

There was a tie and two winners—**Connie Vermeire**, director, Outpatient Surgical Services and **Laurie Brink**, clinic office manager RN, Orthopedics.

Funds from the estate of **Lauretta M. Eno**, who spent 23 years shaping nursing practice at **Blessing Hospital**, are used each year for selected Nurses Week activities, including the Advanced Nursing Symposium named after her, and the cash award that goes to the nurse who receives the annual Eno Distinguished Nurse Award.

Lauretta was in the United States Navy Nurse Corps and on duty in Hawaii on December 7, 1941, when the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor. She was on the team that treated the first casualties of the attack that would lead the country into World War II.

After the war, Lauretta earned a bachelor's degree in nursing education and public health nursing, followed by a master's degree in nursing administration. After earning those degrees, she was hired as director of nursing services and nursing education by Blessing Hospital in 1957. In 1972, she was promoted to the position of the hospital's assistant administrator.

"Miss Eno" as she was known affectionately



**"Miss Eno"—
the legendary nurse
who helped shape
Blessing's nursing care**

by her coworkers, shaped nursing education and practice at Blessing. Her accomplishments in nursing education include establishing a student loan program; admitting married students, male students, African American students and older, nontraditional students, and the Blessing nursing education earning accreditation from the National League for Nursing in 1958.

Her accomplishments in nursing practice at Blessing included starting the intensive care unit, designing medication carts and the charting

system, establishing a disaster plan and developing Blessing's Child Care Center, the first on-site center at an Illinois hospital. It was part of Miss Eno's effort to recruit nurses and continues to attract staff to Blessing today.

Lauretta retired in 1980 and passed away in 2005. She continues to touch the hospital with the donation from her estate that helps fund select Nurses Week activities. ■



What Exceptional Care Looks Like

Blessing nurses were honored with international DAISY Awards for delivering extraordinary, compassionate care to patients and colleagues



We are proud of every nurse nominated by patients, families, peers and staff. Following are the nurses who received the award during fiscal year 2025. Unless otherwise noted, the nurses are on the Blessing Hospital staff. Pictured, left to right are:

- Maria Hillebrenner** Surgery Center • **Kayla Hudson** Women & Children • **Nick Kelley** Progressive Care Unit
- Lorenz Orig** Surgical • **Daffany Pugh** Adult Psychiatric Unit • **Abigail Tranor** Surgical
- Tina Womack** Blessed Beginnings • **Michelle Summy** Intensive Care Unit • **Kelli Lehenbauer** Women & Children
- Rachel Jones** Emergency Center • **Rebecca “Becky” Walston** Office Orthopedics

Spoiler alert—Nursing is a tough job. And when a patient lives with developmental challenges, it adds a layer of complexity to providing care. **Lexy Ghrist**, knows exceptional care requires looking beyond the sometimes daunting task before her in these situations to also see the person in need. For her exceptional care of two developmentally challenged patients requiring surgical care at **Illini Community Hospital**, she was nominated and won the international DAISY award.

“With an extraordinary level of compassion, she took the time to engage with the patient in a way that met them where they were emotionally and cognitively,” one of the nominations stated.

“It’s not just about providing care. It’s about forming a connection rooted in respect, patience and dignity,” Lexy said upon receiving her award.

The DAISY Award is a recognition program to say “thank you” to nurses everywhere. DAISY stands for “Diseases Attacking the Immune System.” The

family of a 33-year-old man, who died of an immune system disorder, began the program in 1999 to honor his memory by recognizing extraordinary nurses everywhere who make a difference in the lives of people by the work they do every day. More than 5,400 healthcare providers and nursing education programs worldwide participate in the DAISY Award program.

The mission statement for the DAISY Foundation is to “express gratitude to nurses with programs that recognize them for the extraordinarily compassionate, skillful care they provide patients and families. By honoring compassionate nurses, DAISY reinforces the importance of compassion in healthcare.”

Sometimes exceptional care occurs during a seemingly common interaction between coworkers. That’s how **Tea Cameron** earned her DAISY Award. This **Blessing Hospital High Acuity Response Team (HART)** nurse went the extra mile for a coworker in a stressful and potentially critical situation.

Continued on next page.



Lexy Ghrist Surgery,
Illini Community Hospital

Tea Cameron
High Acuity Response Team

What Exceptional Care Looks Like

Continued from previous page.

“I found myself in a scenario where my gut was telling me my patient was deteriorating, but there was no clinical evidence to back it up. I called Tea, and she arrived at the bedside within minutes. As she did, the patient declined. It quickly became apparent that a CT would be needed in addition to a transfer to a higher level of care. Tea selflessly accompanied the patient to

the test and then transferred them, allowing me to stay on the floor and take care of my other patients.

I am able to consistently give my patients 100% because of nurses like Tea Cameron. Her skills and expertise are unmatched. I can’t explain the impact her support had on me as a new graduate RN,” wrote the floor nurse in her nomination. ■

You Can’t Have DAISYs Without Honey Bees! Meet the 2025 Winners

Celebrating other members of the Blessing team who keep compassionate care in full bloom.



The Honey Bee Award is a Blessing Health System–initiated program to complement the DAISY Award. Honey Bee honorees are a vital part of the foundation of an exceptional patient experience.



Here are the fiscal year 2025 Honey Bee Award winners. Unless otherwise noted, the winners are on the Blessing Hospital staff.

Top row, left to right:

Marcia Anderson Blessing Health Hannibal Gastroenterology • **Jim Beard** Illini Community Hospital Security

Jon Bradshaw Information Systems • **Kiran Datar** Inpatient Physical Therapy

Amber Hudnut Progressive Care Unit

Bottom row, left to right:

Dennis Johnson Purchasing • **Justin McDermott** Risk Management

Mel Peters Blessing Health Hannibal Cancer Center Laboratory • **Katelyn Smart** Radiology

Mary “Claire” Thomas Cardiovascular Unit