

SUCCESS STORIES

NORTHEAST OREGON AREA HEALTH EDUCATION CENTER



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To find out what one is fitted to do, and to secure an opportunity to do it, is the key to happiness. - John Dewey

Success Stories, written in 2008, recalls the journeys of students who have passed through the youth programs of Northeast Oregon Area Health Education Center (NEOAHEC) and on to health careers. For some the journey was straight forward. Others traveled a more circuitous route. But all were seeking the career that fit, the key to happiness.

NEOAHEC developed *Success Stories* as a means to share the stories of a few of those individuals who found their way. We hope to inspire others who may see the way as difficult. We also want to encourage the continued sponsorship of NEOAHEC programs!

As with any life choice, career decisions should be based on knowing who you are – your interests, aptitudes, values, needs, strengths, and skills. Health careers offer such a wide variety of possibilities. Everything from technicians to therapist, direct care to laboratory work, public sector to private sector. A health career may require anything from a one-year training program to graduate-level education to post-graduate level education. Exploring what direction to take can help a student avoid needless expense and confusion. *Success Stories* shows how students in northeast Oregon used their opportunities to explore who they were and the adults they would become. We hope you find *Success Stories* inspirational and helpful. If you are interested on information regarding specific NEOAHEC programs, please contact us at office@neaheec.org

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Trisha Adams, MEDICAL STUDENT



First summer in medical school working in a family practice.

“Do something you love while you keep plugging for what you want.”

-Trisha Adams

What started with a work experience class at Heppner High School, led to involvement with an AHEC program and finally an internship in college for Trisha Adams, enabling her to work with medical professionals at the hospital in Pendleton.

Adams, a 2004 graduate of Albertson’s College of Idaho, was first exposed to internal medicine and obstetrics during her job shadowing experience at an internal medicine clinic in Pendleton. Later, she worked with a family practice clinic in Heppner and with high-risk obstetrics at Oregon Health & Science University (OHSU) in Portland. Adams also landed a obstetrics-gynecology college internship.

“It’s very hard for young people thinking about becoming health professionals to get the exposure they need in the field due to the legalities involved with job shadowing as a student, but it is important to be persistent,” Adams said.

Adams was not accepted

into OHSU the first time she applied, but that didn’t stop her.

“Don’t get discouraged, not everyone gets in the first time,” she advises. “Know who you are and what is important to you. Re-assess your choices and jump through the hoops, but keep your eye on the big picture. Make tough decisions based on your ultimate goals.”

Adams, now in her last year of medical school at OHSU, would like to set up a medical practice in rural Oregon in the Heppner area. Although she initially wanted to become a pediatrician or an OB/GYN, she decided on a career as a family doctor and plans to do an extra year of obstetric fellowship after her three-year residency.

“A family practice is a distillation of pediatrics, obstetrics and gynecology, and allows for a greater variety of ways to take care of your patients. I want to form relationships with my patients, be trusted by them and watch them grow.”

The doctors who mentored Adams taught her not to get lost in the details of being a healthcare professional, but instead reminded her to see the big picture.

“Having great preceptors at multiple points along the way helped to remind myself of my ultimate goals of being a physician and taking care of patients.”

*Trisha Adams
Medical School, Oregon Health & Science University*

Laurel G. Case, MD Award for Rural Experience;

B.S. Biology, Chemistry Minor, Albertson College of Idaho

MedQuest: 1997

Effective communication is something Rechelle Aylett believes is a critical component in the quest to improve regional healthcare. Aylett, a 2001 MedQuest camp participant and 2002 graduate of Hermiton High School, is working toward that goal at the Salem Hospital in the Process Engineering Office where she works as a project specialist.

“Currently, healthcare professions work in silos. The future of healthcare will need these professions to break down their silos and effectively communicate and work together,” Aylett said.

After Aylett completed her undergraduate degrees in Business Administration and Health Management and Policy from Oregon State University (OSU) in 2007, she was hired by Salem Hospital, in part, due to her work there as an intern. She has supported the leadership team with the implementation of several key initiatives and projects, including the workflow design for the hospital’s New Patient Tower, which opened in 2009.

“Salem Hospital has the busiest emergency department in Oregon. The New Patient Tower will enable the organization to expand its capacity and fit the needs of a growing population,” Aylett said.

Aylett is already making a difference in health management, but in the future she would like to help create strategies that enable the hospital staff to more effectively manage healthcare programs.

“The patient will ultimately experience better quality healthcare when the organization is run more efficiently,” she said.

Aylett advises other students to explore various professions through volunteering, shadowing, or becoming an intern. She also encourages those who want to work as health professionals not to limit themselves.

“Don’t let a bias prevent you from challenging the status quo.”

-Rechelle Aylett



Rechelle at her office.

“Study other related disciplines and get that master’s degree!” she said. “Having a degree doesn’t necessarily pave your path. Employers are looking for experience and diversity.”

Aylett has also completed her MBA with a Health Management option from Marylhurst University.

*Rechelle Aylett
Project Specialist- Process Engineering
Office, Salem Hospital;*

*MBA with Health Management option,
Marylhurst University; 2009*

*BS Health Management, BS Business
Administration, Oregon State University*

*MedStars: 2002
MedQuest: 2001*

Carrie Bailey, RN, CLINICAL INSTRUCTOR



Demonstration of injection into a central line.

“The favorite part of my job is that I help nursing students realize their dreams.”

-Carrie Bailey

Since childhood, Carrie Bailey knew she wanted to work in a medical field. Her mother and aunt are both health professionals and she had a lot of exposure to nursing growing up. To learn even more, Bailey completed several job-shadows.

“I was surprised at how many different specialties and places you can work in the field of nursing,” she said. “There are hundreds of different options, from an oncology nurse to an insurance nurse.”

Oncological nursing was Bailey’s first career choice. She graduated from Treasure Valley Community College (TVCC) with an Associates Degree in Nursing in 2001 and worked in the field for almost two years before medical complications from her own acute Leukemia prevented her from continuing.

Based on her own experience, Bailey believes that by taking the time to listen, a nurse can smooth over a lot of negativity.

“What you do as a nurse and what you give to the patient has an affect on them. I know that people working as health professionals can do so much to help. Being a nurse offers an excellent opportunity to see the good in people. Patients are inspirational.”

In 2006, Bailey completed a BS in Nursing from Oregon Health & Science University and is now the clinical instructor for the TVCC nursing program in Ontario. Her cancer has been in remission since 2002.

“I help train caring, compassionate, patient and hard working nurses,” Bailey said.

“Many students don’t know how to become nurses; there is so much more involved than just handing out pills and starting IVs. Nobody has the direct contact and constant presence with patients as nurses do.”

Bailey enjoys working as a clinical instructor.

“I help nursing students realize their dreams,” she said. “There is no way to know how great of an impact you can make in somebody’s life until you give them the opportunities they deserve,” she said.

Bailey offers this advice to students: “Once you make a decision to obtain your goal in healthcare, keep your goal in mind and stick to it. By the time you become nurses you are still only half way there...keep on keeping on!”

*Carrie Bailey, RN,
TVCC Clinical Instructor;*

*B.S. Nursing, Oregon Health & Science
University*

*A.S. Nursing, Treasure Valley Commu-
nity College*

MedQuest: 1997

RN, Ariel Pierron Battrick

Finding her passion took Ariel Pierron Battrick a little longer than she expected, but when she did, it was in nursing. As a sophomore at Sweet Home High School, Battrick observed a physical therapist, occupational therapist, nurse and a dietitian at the Lebanon Hospital.

"I tried every health professional field I could and enjoyed the variety," she said, "but I need a fast-paced, multi-tasking job."

Battrick's high school health teacher recognized her talents and abilities and referred her to AHEC's MedQuest camp. Battrick enjoyed the experience and later returned to MedQuest as a counselor.

"As a camper it was great to spend time with kids my own age that had the same interests," Battrick said. "As a counselor it was interesting to see how young students grew at camp. I made lifelong, good friends at MedQuest."

Battrick entered the nursing program at Linn-Benton Community College and graduated in 2005 as a registered nurse. She spent the next two years dipping her toes into every aspect of nursing. Her first job out of college was working in a pediatric/oncology unit at the Good Samaritan Regional Medical Center.

"It took a long time to find my passion in nursing, but I love my job," Battrick said. "I love to see patients walk out of the hospital when they couldn't even walk in!"

Battrick now works in the medical/surgery unit at Albany General Hospital.

"I love the team I work with," she said. "I feel like I make a difference. In one shift I can assist bringing a baby into the world in the labor and delivery unit, and then go

"I tried every health professional field I could and enjoyed the variety."

-Ariel Pierron Battrick



Ariel working as a traveling nurse in Seattle with her children on their first bus ride.

to another unit to help a different person peacefully complete their end of life experience."

Battrick suggests students should consider obtaining a license as a certified nurse assistant before deciding on a career. She found it difficult to interact with patients with ease while perfecting her medical skills.

"Because I did not work as a CNA prior to nursing school, I did not have any hands-on experience in the hospital setting."

Ariel Pierron Battrick, RN

A.S. Nursing, Linn-Benton Community College

*MedQuest: 2000, 2001
MedStars: 1999*

Amanda Becker, LPN



With hospice patient assessing heart and lung sounds.

“The more practical experience you gain, the better nurse you will be.”

-Amanda Becker

“I visit my terminally ill patients and provide respite for their families by providing the patient’s health care duties while the family gets to take a break out of the house,” Becker said. “My work is supervised by RNs who oversee the patient’s care. It’s not an easy job, but it makes me feel good to know that I can give comfort measures to my patients and make a positive difference in their family’s experience.”

After eight years of working in the nursing field, Becker is continuing her studies through an online RN alternative education program approved by the Oregon State Board of Nursing. The program provides an opportunity for LPN nurses to gain RN certification outside the traditional classroom setting.

“Students study the course books and class materials at their own speed, and then take a proctored written test,” Becker said. “Students also have three to four days of clinicals. In a way I am challenging the course. If I do well on the tests, I get the class credit without being a student in a traditional classroom.”

Becker knows there is more to being a good nurse than just getting an A on a written test.

“At nursing school I did learn that when people tell you that you can’t do something, work harder. Don’t be afraid to ask questions or ask for help,” she said. “The more practical experience you gain, the better nurse you will be.”

Persistence and hard work have paid off for Amanda Becker. While she always knew she wanted to be a nurse, being diagnosed with dyslexia forced her to overcome adversity and adapt the way that she studies.

“I learn things in a more functional, hands-on way, like the training you’d get in the military,” Becker said. “I got awesome marks on my hands-on clinical exams, but my written test scores were never higher than C+ in nursing school. My instructors told me to give up and drop out, that I would not be able to pass the license practical nurse board test, but I passed it on my first shot!”

In 2000 Becker became a certified nurse assistant and received her licensed practical nursing certification in 2005 from Linn-Benton Community College. She has worked for nursing homes and in outpatient recovery at Albany General Hospital and as a home health aide with Samaritan Evergreen Hospice. She also assists school nurses with student seasonal health and scoliosis screenings.

Amanda Becker, LPN

Completing LPN to RN Online Program, Excelsior College

LPN Certification, Linn-Benton Community College

MedStars: 1999

Even before graduating from high school at Klamath Falls, Peter Boyle began diligently prepping himself for a career as a health professional by attending the Berkeley Medical Conference in California and AHEC's MedStars camp. He also worked in a major food store pharmacy while he considered becoming a pharmacist.

"It felt like working behind the counter at Burger King. We pushed out prescriptions so fast," Boyle said.

Boyle completed his undergraduate work at Pacific University, graduating with a chemistry degree in 2003, and was hired at OHSU as a pharmacy technician.

"At the hospital pharmacy there was no interaction with patients," Boyle recalled.

He later left the pharmacy and accepted the challenge of working as a research coordinator at the Oregon Cancer Center. Boyle acted as a liaison between the industry-sponsored drug trials, healthcare workers performing clinical research, and the patients and their doctors. Boyle and 12 other coordinators handled all paperwork, data, scheduling, transportation, patient health, medical and FDA charts, and also completed all other required forms for four to five studies. He enjoyed the medical teamwork, but decided he could better fulfill his health professional goals by becoming a doctor.

Boyle didn't get into medical school the first time he applied.

"Many students may not get into medical school even after the second or third time they apply," he said. "People will tell you to give up, but keep focused. And after you are accepted keep an open mind. Love every rotation you do."

Boyle is currently in his second year in medical school at Midwestern University in Phoenix. He has an internship in the ER at the



Peter taking his father's blood pressure.

"People will tell you to give up, but keep focused."

-Peter Boyle

Maricopa County Hospital in Phoenix where many patients are low income, uninsured and resident aliens.

"I chose to work at Maricopa to gain a better knowledge of medical application and deal with unique pathologies," Boyle said. "Get out and get your hands dirty, find out where you want to work. Make sure medicine is what you really want before you spend all your time and resources just to apply to medical school."

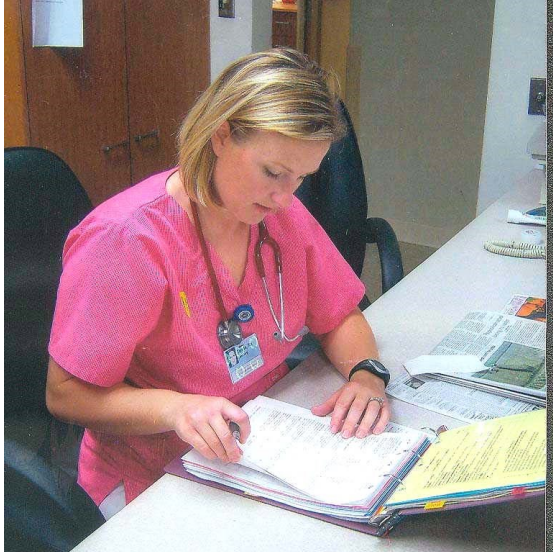
*Peter Boyle
Medical School, Midwestern University,
Phoenix, AZ*

Pharmacy Technician, OHSU

BS Chemistry, Pacific University;

MedStars: 1999

Teresa Woody Braseth, RN, STAY AT HOME MOM



Analyzing charts.

“No matter what the economy looks like you can always find a job as a health professional.”

-Teresa Woody Braseth

Hospital, Nampa pediatric/obstetrics unit, Umatilla County Public Health Department and St. Elizabeth’s Health Services in Baker City.

“I went anywhere I could to get the best experience,” Braseth said.

Following graduation, Braseth married, took her nursing boards and followed her husband to Iowa where she took her first nursing job.

A year later Braseth and her husband returned to northeast Oregon. She worked at St. Elizabeth’s Hospital in Baker in the medical/surgical unit and also for the Union County Public Health Department.

“It was a ‘good busy,’ but now I want to be with my children full time. In nursing I can stay at home and raise my children but still keep my medical skills up by accepting casual work,” she said. “When my children become school age I can go back to nursing part-time and work around the family’s schedule.”

Braseth encourages students to consider a health career.

“Working as a health professional is the way to go. No matter what the economy looks like, you can always find a job. If you want to live in a small town you will need a career where you can find work in a rural area, and health professionals are always in demand.”

Braseth points to her own family as an example. She has three sisters with degrees in other fields who were struggling to find jobs. Two of her sisters have switched their careers to nursing and her third sister has decided to become an ultrasound technician.

For Teresa Woody Braseth, choosing a career revolved around being able to meet the needs of her family and for Braseth, nursing was a good fit.

“Family has always been number one with me,” Braseth said. “My parents were very involved in my childhood and influenced my career choice. My mom was a lab tech and helped me study science and math while I was in school. She introduced me to the idea of becoming a health professional.”

A graduate of Imbler High School in rural northeast Oregon, Braseth left the state to attend the University of Idaho and studied nursing pre-requisites. She transferred to the Oregon Health & Science University nursing program on the Eastern Oregon University campus in La Grande where she graduated in 2003 with a BA in nursing.

Working as a certified nursing assistant during her first years of college helped Braseth make the transition to nursing student easier. She was able to complete clinicals at the Grande Ronde

Teresa Woody Braseth, RN

Casual nursing work while children are young.

BA Nursing, Oregon Health & Science University

MedQuest: 1998

RN, Molly Barrow Calhoun

Growing up on her family's farm near Ione, Molly Barrow Calhoun enjoyed the hands-on work it entailed.

"I always wanted to get my hands dirty," Calhoun said. "Even as a child I knew I did not want a desk job. We took care of our own animals and I also helped my mom physically deal with my grandfather's dialysis."

Calhoun's mother, who had studied to become a veterinary assistant, encouraged her interest in the health professional field and supported her attending MedQuest and other medical conferences for students.

"At MedQuest I obtained more information until I was 100 percent sure I wanted to be a nurse," Calhoun said. "I participated in an emergency medical training exercise that involved triaging victims from a staged mass car accident. Today I still use techniques I learned at MedQuest in my nursing job."

Before attending nursing school, Calhoun studied at Eastern Oregon University and Blue Mountain Community College where she graduated with an associate degree in science. When she got married she took a year off from school and moved to the Tri-Cities with her husband.

"I slowly went through nursing school and attended college here and there as I could. The unexpected challenges and surprises in my journey to become a nurse are too numerous to count."

In 2007 Calhoun graduated with an associate nursing degree from Columbia Basin College and became an RN. She found a job in a childcare center for children with behavioral and drug use issues.

"I was surprised when my employers mentioned how important a reference from AHEC was," Calhoun said. "It helped me get my first nursing job."

"I still use techniques I learned at MedQuest in my nursing job..."

-Molly Barrow Calhoun



Calhoun is now a registered nurse at Sacred Heart Hospital in Spokane.

"The best part of my job is getting to know the patients and helping them. I am always learning something new and I really enjoy the day to day changes."

Calhoun would like to go back to school eventually and get her medical surgery certification or become a nurse practitioner. Her experiences with various schools helped her realize how important it is to select the right program.

"Make sure to pick a college program to match your specific area of interest. Get as much information about healthcare careers as you can before you go into a specific field," Calhoun said. "As a nurse there are many different fields where you can get the most one on one time with your patients."

*Molly Barrow Calhoun, RN
Sacred Heart Hospital, Spokane*

A.S. Nursing, Columbia Basin College;

A.S. Science, Blue Mountain Community College

MedQuest: 1998

Jonathan Cartney, EMT



Jonathan (in black pants) answering an EMT call.

**“Start early.
Get involved.”**

-Jonathan Cartney

While he is adapting to his job as a health professional in a busy fire station and hospital, Cartney said he is challenged by an inability to perform as a fire department first responder with the same level of emergency medical service responsibilities he had as a medic in the National Guard.

“Most of my work was on the battle front dealing with traumatic wounds like gun shots and lost limbs, but I understand why I need to complete my certification first before working as a paramedic here at home,” he said.

Cartney loves being an EMT and helping people but finds downtime challenging.

“I enjoy not doing the same thing everyday,” he said. “I prefer the physical and mental problem-solving challenges that face busy emergency medical professionals assisting many different people with a variety of unique medical situations in the field.”

Cartney advises students considering becoming EMTs and paramedics to do what he did when he was in high school.

“Start early,” he said. “Get involved and do ‘ride alongs’ with your local fire department.”

Jonathan Cartney put his skills as a medic to the test for two tours of service with the National Guard in Iraq and Afghanistan. Today, he continues to pursue emergency medicine as a paramedic.

Cartney got an introduction to the healthcare field by riding along with the La Grande Fire Department paramedics when he was a student at Cove High School. He attended MedQuest as a camper in 2002 and returned as a counselor in 2004 after enlisting in the National Guard and again in 2008 when his active service was completed.

“The best part about MedQuest was watching young students reaching towards something they want, and taking steps to get there,” Cartney said. “I was fully impressed by that.”

Cartney had relocated from northeast Oregon to Salem to obtain a degree as a paramedic, but his studies were interrupted when he was deployed. Upon his return, Cartney still gravitated toward emergency medicine. He is completing a paramedic degree at Chemeketa Community College and works as a basic EMT with the Sublimity Fire Department and with Santiam Hospital, where he also drives an ambulance.

Jonathan Cartney, EMT

*Completing Paramedic Certification,
Chemeketa Community College*

National Guard Medic

MedQuest: 2002, 2004, 2008

Following his passion wasn't always easy for John Combe. His parents were unsure of his career choice, but when they recognized his dedication they supported his decision to become a message therapist.

Combe graduated from Central Oregon Community College with a Massage Therapy (MT) degree in 2000. Out of a class of 35 students only 10 graduated, and fewer became licensed. He was the only graduating male student and went on to become licensed and nationally certified in massage therapy.

Combe was one of NEO-AHEC's first MedQuest campers over 10 years ago and now has assumed the role of mentor and teacher for young students from rural Oregon seeking guidance and support for becoming health professionals.

He enjoys being a presenter at AHEC's MedQuest camp.

"The kids are dynamic and want to be there. I can give an honest reality about how a rural Oregon student becomes a health professional," Combe said.

After gaining experience working with other independent providers in a shared clinic for four years, he founded Combe's Wellness Center in La Grande and co-founded the Advanced Sports Therapy Institute.

Combe has now worked as a Nationally Certified Therapeutic Massage and Bodywork (NCTMB) massage therapist for over eight years and has studied with international therapists including an Olympic massage therapist. In 2005 he was awarded Oregon Licensed Massage Therapist (LMT) of the Year. He is the Past-President of the OR American Massage Therapy Association, and was the 2008 Oregon Delegate. In the future, Combe would like to serve as a massage therapist for the Olympics.

"Don't live someone else's dream. Be true to yourself!"

-John Combe



Coach, Shana Cox, and John Combe at 2008 Olympic Trials in Bend.

As a busy independent provider, Combe saw over 15 clients a day in the Wellness Center and also handled his clinic's business operations.

"Due to the physical demands on my own body as a career massage therapist, I am in the process of slowly transitioning from practical to education," Combe said. "In the future I will continue to work in my clinic as a massage therapist, but will see fewer patients per day while slowly refocusing my time and energy on teaching and mentoring health professionals and students locally, and operating regional and national seminars."

Students seeking a career as a health professional should not to be influenced by peers or family pressure, Combe said.

"If you have no passion in your work, your career will be short lived. The job market, the media, TV, colleges and generally our culture itself impacts a student's career choices," he said. "Don't live someone else's dream, be true to yourself!"

John Combe, MT, NCTMB

2000 AS Massage Therapy, Central Oregon Community College

1996 MedQuest

Rachel Corey, RN, HEALTH FACILITY SURVEYOR



Idaho State assisted living facility inspector team (Rachel center front, red shirt).

“We keep open communications with everyone, and always follow through...”

-Rachel Corey

on... it was a lot of fun for both the girls and the patients,” she said.

Corey also worked with an RN preceptor and as a nurse in the Veteran’s Administration Hospital in Boise. After she graduated with the “Top Ten Scholar” award in 2005, she worked at St. Luke’s Hospital in Boise for two years in the Women’s Unit, and the Medical/Surgical Unit.

“I left the hospital setting because I didn’t get to be the nurse I wanted to be,” Corey said of experience at St. Luke’s. “I learned to keep my career options open.”

Corey now works as an Idaho State Inspector assessing assisted living homes.

“Our team of RNs and social workers go into a facility to look for compliance issues,” she said. “We assess everything. We speak with patients, their families, staff and administration. We hold trainings and teach how to better the situation, and assist all parties with problem solving. We keep open communications with everyone, and always follow through... I know I make a difference.”

In the future Corey may go back to school to become a Nurse Practitioner in women’s health and in her free time, she competes in triathalons. Her wins have included a first in her age group in the Iron Girl triathlon and in the last Idaho Spudman triathlon.

Rachel Corey’s first introduction to the health professions was as a patient suffering from allergies and asthma.

“I was a sickly child and nurses took the time to really get to know me, made me comfortable and taught me about my own healthcare... that made all the difference to me,” Corey said.

Corey grew up in Weiser, Idaho. Before attending college she gained experience as a therapy assistant with disabled adults and as a caregiver for a woman with dementia. She went on to study pre-medicine at Albertson College for two years and then switched to nursing after hearing a presenter speak at MedQuest camp.

During her junior and senior years in nursing school, Corey took an internship in the Veterans Administration’s Nursing Veterans Affairs Learning Opportunity Residency Scholarship Program (VALOR). As part of the internship, Corey organized a 5K race at the Veteran’s Administration Hospital while acting as a coach in the local “Girls on the Run” program.

“The VA hospital patients could participate and cheer the girls

*Rachel Corey, RN
Health Facility Surveyor, Idaho Department Health & Welfare;*

Top Ten Scholar Award, Boise State University;

BS Nursing, Boise State University;

“Nursing Veterans Affairs Learning Opportunity Residency Scholarship Program” (VALOR) Internship, Veterans Administration’s;

*MedStars: 2001
MedQuest: 2000*

Alisha Craig began her college career with the goal of becoming a physical therapist, but she later realized it wasn't the right fit for her. Craig's next choice was nursing, specifically a labor and delivery nurse, so she enrolled at the Oregon Health and Science University school of nursing at Eastern Oregon University.

After graduating 2003, Craig's post-degree work experience has included two summers as an RN at a coed fitness/weight loss children's camp in San Diego, a year as a home health nurse, 18 months at a pediatric clinic and a brief stint in a Mother and Baby Unit at a hospital.

"As a new nurse, it was hard to find a job not in a hospital setting," said Craig, who now works for Lane County Public Health as a Community Health Nurse.



Working at the clinic computer.

has its ups and downs. Find work

"The health professional field is broad and wide open... Look for options. Keep at it till you find your special niche." -Alisha Craig

In her new position, Craig conducts home visits for pregnant women who qualify for state services. She enjoys working with children the most.

"In the future I may choose to go back to work in a pediatric clinic, or return to school to study public health and work with adolescents and their associated medical issues," Craig said.

Craig admits that nurses must learn to cope with both physical and mental stress. Her advice is to take one day at a time.

"It's important as a new nurse to build relationships with other people in the health professional field," she said. "Every job

with a good, supportive team."

Craig advises students looking to healthcare for a career to keep their options open until they find the right area.

"The health professional field is broad and wide open. Look for options. Keep at it until you find your special niche," Craig said.

"You may need to move to get the best opportunity, but there's lots of opportunity in the job market for nurses. You don't ever have to worry about your job disappearing, and you have great pay with job security. Nothing beats this career!"

Alisha Craig, RN

*B.S. Nursing
Oregon Health & Science University*

MedQuest: 1997

Anna Cronin, RN, FLOOR PRECEPTOR



Anna working at OHSU.

“I needed a fast paced and exciting work environment.”

-Anna Cronin

While growing up in John Day, Anna Cronin remembers becoming interested in healthcare while watching the TV show *ER*.

“A lot of childhood events helped me decide to become a health professional,” Cronin said. “My aunts were nurses, my brother was studying to become a doctor, and my family always had high expectations for us.”

When Cronin’s high school principal discovered her interest in becoming a nurse, he talked with her about his wife’s experiences as a nurse and encouraged her to become a Certified Nurse Assistant (CNA). Cronin, however, chose not to job shadow a nurse or work as a CNA while a high school student.

“I knew that I would definitely become a nurse,” she said. “I could handle the anatomy and blood. I just wasn’t sure what area of nursing I wanted to go into, but I needed a fast-paced and exciting work environment.”

Cronin attended MedQuest camp and said it was a “good base for exploring careers as a health professional.” She chose Azusa Pacific University based on its nursing program and while at college she also became interested in global studies and public health.

“I didn’t like nursing in college much,” Cronin said. “As freshman we were allowed to go into a hospital to interact with patients, but I did not have enough time to talk with people. It was a constant battle for me to stick with nursing until my senior year when I figured out where I wanted to

work.”

Cronin persevered and graduated in 2007 with a BS in Nursing. She worked as a nurse in a small Christian summer camp in California before accepting a job as an RN at Oregon Health and Science University.

“When I started working at OHSU I experienced a huge learning curve,” Cronin said. “I didn’t like the first six to seven months of work. But at the end of the day when you had time to talk with and listen to patients and understand their perspective, it’s very rewarding. Just a patient’s smile can make it all worthwhile.”

Cronin is now the RN Telemetry-Pulmonary Unit floor preceptor at OHSU hospital where she helps orient nurses new to the area learn the skills necessary to work in the cardio unit. She loves teaching but she is considering going back to school.

“I realize there are other opportunities for me in the health professions besides being a nurse in a hospital,” Cronin said. “I want to stay in nursing, but I may go back for my Master’s Degree in Public Health or in Nursing. I may pursue becoming a Nurse Practitioner or I may work for an overseas organization doing international public health work.”

Cronin believes exploration is a necessary component of choosing a career path.

“Gain experience, even negative experience, before picking your health professional field,” she said. “Talk to everybody you know and get a sense of what it’s about. And know that the reason why you are becoming a health professional should be to help people.”

*Anna Cronin RN, Floor Preceptor,
OHSU*

B.S. Nursing, Azusa Pacific University

MedQuest: 2000

Randi Gibbs always thought she wanted to go into nursing, but then she spent nine months shadowing a radiologist who mentored and educated her on site. One year after graduation from high school, she was able to use the experience to advance her career.

After Gibbs graduated from Pendleton High School, she attended Blue Mountain Community College (BMCC) and then transferred to Portland Community College (PCC) where she completed her Associate Degree in Applied Radiology Science.

“Through a community college you can obtain the book knowledge to pass your certification test and also gain workplace experience by job shadowing and being mentored on the job site by health professionals who may recruit you later,” Gibbs said.

“At PCC I received a tough but amazing education. The professors were fantastic! Through school I trained at Kaiser, Dormbecker, Oregon Health & Science University, Shriners and Emanuel hospitals. Get hired in your health professional career and then complete your BS degree while you work.”

Now as the PACS (Picture Archiving and Communicating System) Administrator at Bend Medical Center, Gibbs works with application, dispersing images to referring doctors and storing images for future reference. She enjoys the challenges associated with radiology and information technology work.

“Radiology is a huge, diverse field,” Gibbs said. “I have a passion for working in Computed Axial Tomography (CT). Each patient brings something new. The medical field is always full of surprises, and the technology is ever changing and evolving. When I first worked in imaging we ran film. Now everything is digital, and the

“The medical field is always full of surprises, and the technology is ever changing and evolving.”

-Randi Gibbs



Randi in front of a Computed Axial Tomography (CT) scanner.

CT scanners will continue to get much faster.”

Gibbs plans to complete her BS in Radiology from OIT while working as the PACS Administrator in Bend. While she has experienced some frustrations with continuing her education, she keeps a positive attitude.

“Life will hand you surprises and unexpected challenges, unplanned events,” Gibbs said. “Many work out for the best but you must have drive. If you are determined, you can do it.”

Gibbs advice to health professional students is to “Expose yourself to all healthcare fields through programs like MedQuest and job shadowing. Get into hospitals and work in your field. Do it before you commit in school to one course of study. There’s no other way.”

Randi Creason Gibbs, ARRT (PACS) Administrator, Bend Medical Center;

Completing B.S. Radiology, Oregon Institute of Technology;

A.S. Applied Radiology Science, Portland Community College

MedQuest: 1996

Alicia Frye Green, DOCTORATE of PHYSICAL THERAPY



Learning to walk by pushing a ball.

“The best thing about my job is seeing the changes in the kids and their families.”

-Alicia Frye Green

Alicia Frye Green’s desire to be a health professional began when she was in the fifth grade. She first experienced a clinical environment when she had lunch with a friend’s mother who is a physical therapy aide at the Grande Ronde Hospital in La Grande. Later her friend’s older sister, who was studying to be a physical therapist, also positively influenced her.

In high school Green took a health professional career class and began attending MedQuest camps. She later worked as a camp counselor, served on the AHEC Board and also volunteered as a student presenter at MedQuest.

After graduating from La Grande High School, Alicia attended Eastern Oregon University where she completed her BS in PE and Health with a focus on Athletic Training. When Green decided to go into physical therapy, people told her it would be very difficult.

Green’s mother, who is a phlebotomist, was there to offer encouragement and she pursued her dream by working on her doctorate in physical therapy at Northern Arizona University in Flagstaff.

As a doctoral student,

Green interned at the Shriner’s Hospital, a nursing home and two outpatient clinics.

“Working with disabled children is very challenging,” Green said. “I took the psychology courses and the pediatric class, but there were no college classes to teach us how to help parents deal with the news that their child is disabled and help them handle the grieving process.”

Green recommends that students thinking of becoming PTs should visit their local physical therapy clinic. Her advice to students in all healthcare fields is to “Study hard, but have fun time too. Don’t get overwhelmed.”

To reduce stress at school Green participated in athletics and became a dog owner. “Mercedes was a great stress reliever,” Green said of her pet.

Green now works at the Spokane, Washington’s Guild School and Neuromuscular Center as a Pediatric Physical Therapist with disabled children from birth to three years old.

“The best thing about my job is seeing the changes in the kids and their families,” she said.

Green is able to be a PT clinical instructor and would like to be involved with educating and mentoring health professional students and working with interns. Her future goals include sharing her experience with students as a medical professional presenter at AHEC’s MedQuest camp.

“Talk to everybody you can about a health professional career,” Green advises. “Start with your family doctor.”

Alicia Frye Green, DPT

Doctorate of Physical Therapy, Northern Arizona University/Flagstaff

BS Physical Education and Health, Athletic Training Focus, Eastern Oregon University

MedQuest: 1997

Alison Hammett-Cummings first worked in the OSSOM (Operation Student Safety on the Move) program as a student at Grant Union High School in John Day. Now she is the organization's executive director.

Hammett-Cummings' involvement continued at Oregon State University, where she chose to major in Public Health after volunteering with the campus OSSOM chapter. She also developed a student organization which partnered with the American Red Cross to run quarterly blood drives on campus.

After completing an internship with OSSOM and obtaining her degree in 2005 in Public Health Promotion and Education with a focus on Adolescence Health, Hammett-Cummings was ready to take on the challenges of becoming OSSOM's executive director.

"I love focusing on the prevention side of health, it just makes sense," she said. "Why wait for health intervention until someone gets sick or addicted? As a nation we need to focus more on prevention medicine and programs, rather than reactive medicine and recovery programs."

OSSOM students use the six CSAP (Center for Substance Abuse Prevention) strategies to create proactive prevention programs for their peers.

"OSSOM's mission is to educate, train, and support youth to be leaders in their communities by promoting safe, healthy and legal decisions," Hammett-Cummings explained.

Hammett-Cummings works with junior and senior high school students to support existing OSSOM chapters and start new chapters.

"Leaders come in all different ages," she said. "Kids can accomplish anything they set their mind to."

**"OSSOM's mission:
To educate, train, and
support youth to be leaders
in their communities
by promoting safe, healthy
and legal decisions."**

Hammett-Cummings points out that many of OSSOM's alumni have gone on to work in the prevention field. Some are working in the Office of National Drug Control Policy, the American Red Cross and as prevention specialists.

"We also have OSSOM alumni employed as teachers who act as the OSSOM chapter advisors for their schools," she added.

Hammett-Cummings currently runs the non-profit out of her home in Washington.

"As director, my long term goal is for OSSOM to grow into a national organization," she said. "I really think we can do it, because empowered kids are a powerful thing."

Alison Hammett-Cummings, Executive Director for OSSOM;

B.A. Public Health Promotion and Education with Adolescence Health Focus, Oregon State University;

MedQuest: 1998

Stephanie Hendriksen, MEDICAL RECEPTIONIST



Boot Camp graduation.

Stephanie Hendriksen, Medical Receptionist and former Navy Corpsman

Completing Masters in Education at Eastern Oregon University;

Navy Corpsman; EMT;

MedQuest: 2000

“Don’t limit yourself. Don’t be held back. If you want something, go get it.”

-Stephanie Hendriksen

For Stephanie Hendriksen, attending MedQuest camp helped open her eyes to all that becoming a radiologist would entail.

“I wanted to be a radiology technician, but it was not as glamorous as I had thought,” Hendriksen said. “Instead it was very repetitious and very competitive.”

Hendriksen planned to attend the Oregon Institute of Technology to study radiology technology when the 9/11 terrorist attacks occurred in 2001. Instead of starting college, she joined the military. When she learned that the Navy was going to take the medical lead for the armed forces after 9/11, she enlisted.

After boot camp, Hendriksen attended Navy corpsman school in Chicago and was then stationed at Portsmouth and Norfolk, Virginia where she served as a radiology technician in the base hospital. Hendriksen, who grew up in the small town of Prairie City, suffered from culture shock after the move.

“Norfolk is the largest Navy base in the world,” Hendriksen said. “It was very hard being away from friends and family; I grew up fast and matured quickly.”

Hendriksen eventually

gained a new perspective and appreciation for the military and the country. “I began to feel like I was a little piece of something bigger and every piece like me needed to work well together. I became part of an immediate family of five hundred people.”

Hendriksen served double duty as a general corpsman in the base hospital and as an emergency room EMT in the clinic. In the Navy hospital she was attached to different departments, but rotated through the ER and was on call for support. She completed the overseas and sea duty physical exams for military personnel being deployed or transferring to different companies. Hendriksen also went out on ambulance calls as an EMT and responded off base to medically assist Navy personnel, reservists, dependent family members and civil contractors. During Hurricane Isabel the base was evacuated and Hendriksen and her co-workers volunteered to assist local residents in trouble.

Hendriksen served in the Navy for three years and then decided to take her career in another direction.

“I discovered that working as a health professional was too stressful for me,” she said.

Hendriksen left the Navy and moved back to northeast Oregon where she is employed at Grand Ronde Hospital as a medical receptionist.

“I am using my medical training as a means to fund my further schooling,” said Hendriksen, who is completing her Masters in Education at Eastern Oregon University.

She encourages students to follow their dream, whatever it may be.

“Don’t limit yourself. Don’t be held back. If you want something, go get it,” Hendriksen said.

Growing up in Elgin, Lindzie Hintermeister was inspired by a family friend to become a dental hygienist. Her senior project in high school was even about dental hygiene. Like many students, she was surprised after further exploration to find she was attracted to a very different career.

“We create a celebration of life.”

“At MedQuest camp I changed my mind about dental hygiene, and after visiting the hospital I also knew I didn’t want to become a surgeon,” Hintermeister said.

-Lindzie Hintermeister

It was when she toured the Loveland Funeral Home in La Grande and talked with the owner that she found her true calling. “I realized how much grieving families need the professional help of a funeral director,” she said. “I knew I had found the health professional career I wanted.”

When the local funeral director realized that Hintermeister was serious about a career as a funeral home director, he hired her part-time. “My friends and family were shocked,” she said. “At first my mother refused to go into the funeral home, but now my family backs me 100 percent.”

Hintermeister attended Chemeteka Community College while working as an intern at Loveland Funeral Home. During the next few years she moved back and forth between Elgin and the Portland area where she worked in funeral homes and pursued her education. In college she studied grief counseling, psychology, mortuary law, business and accounting. She graduated from the Funeral Service Education program at Mount Hood Community College in June 2009.

“Since I also wanted to work as a certified embalmer, I took



Intern with Loveland Funeral Chapel

a very tough embalming class where I worked with the State Morgue embalming homeless people without families who had died on the street,” Hintermeister said.

Hintermeister credits the skills she has developed to her mentoring employer. “You can’t learn how to be a funeral director from classes,” she said. “The owner of the funeral home where I work is strict, but he is an excellent instructor. He has purposefully tested me with worse case scenarios to see if I can handle the job.” Hintermeister’s employer included her as part of the team handling the entire funeral. “My first week at work I helped remove bodies from a plane crash site and I assisted with embalming,” she said.

She identified the most challenging part of the job as talking with families in grief. “A big part of my job is helping families celebrate the lives of loved ones that died, and deal with their family’s emotional grief while physically completing funeral rituals needed for closure,” she said.

Lindzie Hintermeister,

*Funeral Service Education,
Mount Hood Community College;*

MedQuest: 2003

Jennifer Holliday, MD, MPH



Jennifer at work.

“It is an honor to be such a close observer of people’s lives.”

-Jennifer Holliday

Growing up in rural John Day, Holliday observed the relationship between high unemployment rates and the increased rate of substance abuse, family violence and suicide. Holliday wants to use her training in public health to identify specific community issues influencing the prevalence of substance abuse, domestic violence and other issues and help formulate community policies to address these problems while increasing the quality of life for her patients in their rural communities. “I will form lifetime relationships helping my patients,” Holliday said. “It is an honor to be such a close observer of people’s lives.”

Holliday believes there are multiple areas in which students can help make a difference. “If you have an interest in studying to be a health professional, go for it! It is never too late,” Holliday said. “But you must understand the commitment of time and overall cost to become a doctor. Realize there are other health professional careers, such as a physician’s assistant, which take less time and money to complete and are also important careers. There are many different health professional roles available; use job shadowing as a way to test drive them.”

Jennifer Holliday did not know until college that she wanted to go into a health professional career. “I was first interested in becoming a fish biologist, then in becoming a veterinarian,” Holliday recalled. “While working at a veterinary clinic, I discovered I enjoyed interacting with people more than animals.”

As a student Holliday volunteered to be an OHSU/AHEC Program Advisory Board member and counselor where she realized a “need to proactively work hand-in hand with public health to improve the community environment for all my patients.”

Holliday graduated from Stanford with a BA in Human Biology and from Oregon Health & Science University with a Doctor of Medicine and Master of Public Health in 2008. She is currently a family medicine resident in Boise. After she completes her residency, she and her husband hope to move to a small rural town near their families in the Pacific Northwest.

Jennifer Holliday, MD, MPH

Family Medicine Residency, Boise, Idaho;

Doctor of Medicine, Master of Public Health, Oregon Health & Science University

BA Human Biology, Stanford University

MedQuest: 1994

Caleb Hughes was raised in Summerville, a small, rural north-east Oregon town. He and his sister Chelsea attended school in the neighboring town of Imbler where he became intrigued by a Human Physiology and Anatomy class in high school.

“My science teacher saw I had an interest in biology and she referred me to the NEOAHEC MedQuest program,” Hughes said. “I attended MedQuest camp in 2005 and job shadowed a pharmacist and a radiologist twice.”

Hughes went on to study biology for two years at Eastern Oregon University (EOU) and also completed pre-radiology coursework at EOU through the Oregon Institute of Technology (OIT). But he became disillusioned about becoming a radiology technician.

“When I job shadowed a radiology tech through OIT,” he said, “I discovered that the radiology work seemed boring to me. I changed my mind about working in that health profession.”

Hughes also decided completing a degree in biology was not a good fit for him either. The degree required a lot of chemistry classes, something he was not interested in. “I had a change of heart after my second year of college,” he said. Hughes’ mother, who is a social worker and counselor, suggested he take a psychology class.

“I took social psychology for fun; for my own use,” Hughes said. “I discovered I did not miss a day of class! I became passionate about psychology. It did not feel like I was studying. I realized then that I always had an interest in psychology.”

Hughes transferred to Western Oregon University to pursue a BS in Psychology and a Master’s in Counseling. “I needed a change of pace” he said. “I wanted to do something new. My plan is to



Caleb developing a research project in the library at Western Oregon University.

work as a school counselor or in a small family practice.”

Hughes understands firsthand the importance of looking at multiple options before making a

“I really enjoy working with people.”

-Caleb Hughes

decision about which professional path to follow. “Keep an open mind. Through job shadowing, see if you will enjoy what you pick to be your career.”

*Caleb Hughes, Psychology Student
Western Oregon University*

MedQuest: 2005

Chelsea Hughes, RN



Chelsea with her parents at nurse pinning ceremony.

“I appreciate the closeness and family feeling the health professional staff shares on (my) hospital floor.”

-Chelsea Hughes

ing years of technique and hands-on knowledge while working side by side on the job with a professional.”

After Hughes obtains her registered nurse certification, she hopes to work as an RN in the Diabetic/ Renal section of the Medical/ Surgical Floor in the Providence Portland Medical Center. She was placed at Provi-

dence during her clinical rotation in nursing school and fell in love with the staff. “I knew I wanted to work in this hospital, on this floor, as an RN after graduation,” she said.

She later completed her last senior capstone rotation in the Diabetic/Renal unit at Providence. “Usually hospitals place senior nursing students in units where they may recruit you after graduation,” she explained. “In that way the hospital staff gets a chance to evaluate you for possible future employment while you are still in school.”

Long term goals for Hughes include becoming a nurse practitioner, moving back to a smaller community in eastern Oregon and working in a clinic or even setting up her own. “I may work part time as a nurse while studying to become a nurse practitioner,” she said.

Hughes believes students need to research all their options for obtaining a good education. She notes that the military may be a good option, as it will pay for schooling and training in exchange for service to the country for four years.

“I thought about joining the military,” Hughes said, “but you don’t get to pick where you will be sent and stationed.”

For Chelsea Hughes, narrowing down her employment options began with figuring out what she *didn’t* want to do first. “My Mom is a social worker,” she explained, “and I had been exposed enough to social work to know that career was not for me.”

While attending Imbler High School, Hughes participated in MedStars camp and had the opportunity to talk with nurses about their specific areas of expertise. Her interest piqued, Hughes crafted her senior project around job shadowing a nurse and completing a career focus on the medical/surgical floor in the Grand Ronde Hospital in La Grande.

“Mom’s best friend in high school works as a nurse manager at GRH and she mentored me.” Hughes remembered. “I even attended the same university where she received her nursing degree.”

Hughes graduated from the University of Portland in 2008 with a BS in nursing. She had the opportunity to job shadow a hospital nurse through the university’s Dedicated Education Unit. “It’s a similar situation to that of a student teacher working alongside a professional educator in a classroom setting” she said. “You get the benefit of learn-

Chelsea Hughes, RN

B.S. Nursing,
University of Portland

MedStars: 2003

Michelle Kopp was born into a family of healthcare professionals. Her grandfather was a doctor, her mother is a nurse and her father is an orthopedic surgeon. Throughout her childhood, Kopp’s house served as the unofficial Cove hospital.

“Neighbors would drop by so that Dad could check stitches on their injured kids or spouse,” she recalled. “He would either stitch them up or recommended they go to the ER.”

Kopp didn’t know if she wanted to become a health professional but she knew she didn’t want to be a doctor.

“My father was a presenter at MedQuest camp when I was in high school. He ‘persuaded’ me to attend camp,” she said.

Kopp attended Eastern Oregon University and discovered she en-



Michelle holding team work recognition award and holding DSM-IV-TR diagnosis book.

“I knew what to expect from a healthcare career.”

-Michelle Kopp

joyed working in the special education field. She graduated with a BS in Sociology/Social Welfare in 2003 and specialized in psycho socialization rehabilitation (PSR) of mentally handicapped adults and children. Her first job after college was with Human Supports of Idaho as a PSR Specialist teaching high-functioning mentally handicapped adults and children the skills they need to live independently.

“I wanted to keep them living on their own, and out of a state group home,” Kopp said.

Although Kopp may not stay in PSR, she sees herself in the same field with the same population of handicapped people for the long term.

“I would like to move back to northeastern Oregon and work in the La Grande area some day.”

Kopp’s strategy for success simple and straightforward. “Go with whatever career you want to do, look into it, volunteer to work in it, make sure it’s what you want. Don’t waste time and education on the wrong thing. Leave your work at work, don’t bring it home.”

*Michelle Kopp (PSR) Specialist
Psycho Socialization Rehabilitation*

*BS Sociology/Social Welfare,
Eastern Oregon University*

MedQuest: 1997

Brianna Kossler, EMT, AMBULANCE OFFICE MANAGER



With son Tristan by one of two ambulances needed for the Halfway-Oxbow 3,500 square mile coverage area.

Brianna Kossler, EMT-B

EMT Basic Certification, Blue Mountain Community College, Baker campus

MedQuest: 1998

Brianna Kossler was in the midst of studying to become a veterinarian when her step-father passed away. She put her education on hold to be with her family living in Halfway, an isolated town in northeastern Oregon.

“Life circumstances changed my career goal,” she said.

But Kossler’s need to be involved in healthcare did not dissipate. When the opportunity arose to become a volunteer ambulance driver with Halfway-Oxbow Ambulance, she jumped at the chance. Soon she had completed an EMT Basic class at Blue Mountain Community College (BMCC) /Baker and earned EMT Basic certification.

“Healthcare workers meet people on the worst day of their lives,” Kossler said. “You must decide if you are up to the challenge that day, and are physically and mentally able to help. And you must always have compassion.”

Kossler knew what to expect from the career. Both her moth-

er and aunt worked as healthcare professionals. She remembered her mother being on call 24/7. Kossler’s husband is also an ambulance driver.

“Now my husband and I are both on call 24/7,” she said. “Your loved ones know it is im-

“I see my rural community’s need for trained, compassionate and committed health professionals.”

portant for you to work as a healthcare professional, but it is a huge commitment. You need to be prepared to balance family and healthcare work.”

Kossler took time off after having a baby, but she still volunteers as an ambulance driver and an EMT Basic for the Halfway-Oxbow Ambulance. She also works as the ambulance office manager. “Our small community of Halfway supports and assists the all-volunteer ambulance crew, and understands the personal sacrifices made by the volunteer emergency first responders for the community and area visitors,” Kossler said. “I see my rural community’s need for trained, compassionate and committed health professionals.”

Kossler plans to complete the EMT Intermediate Course through BMCC/Baker. “After that I would like to become certified in ALS, and maybe even become a paramedic,” Kossler said.

During middle school, Steve Koza spent a lot of time in the dentist chair. He saw it as a chance to speak with his dentist and orthodontist at length about their careers as health professionals. They encouraged him to pursue his interest and he followed their advice. When he was a junior at La Grande High School, Koza participated in a careers class and job shadowed a dentist. He also attended the Dental Careers Institute with the help of a NEOAHEC scholarship.

“After I decided on pursuing a career in dentistry, I used any available resource to explore that career field,” Koza said. “AHEC really simplified the route to becoming a health professional for me.”

Koza completed his pre-dental coursework at Oregon State University and graduated with a BS in General Science. While still in college, he pursued summer jobs at dental offices. “I was willing to do any kind of work, including emptying out the trash or sterilizing instruments,” he said. Two dentists were impressed with Koza’s tenacity and hired him for the summer. “I did whatever office work they needed done, including data entry, and became familiar with all the dental terms and procedures, which really helped later when I was a dental student.”

Koza attended Oregon Health & Science University and obtained a Doctor of Medicinal Dentistry (DMD). “I was one of the two youngest students in my graduating class,” Koza said. “Most of the other students had already worked in other careers, like teaching, and

“I find working as a dentist very satisfying. I fix problems; I prevent or end my patients’ pain.”

-Steve Koza



Steve with his staff at the Koza Family Dental Care Clinic.

had not gone directly from getting their undergraduate degree into the DMD program like I had.”

After completing his one-year residency in Arizona, Koza returned home to the La Grande area and worked with an established dentist before opening his own dental practice and clinic, Koza Family Dental Care. “I find working as a dentist very satisfying. I fix problems; I prevent or end my patients’ pain. Every day is different and challenging.”

In addition to basic family dental care, Koza provides services like dental implants. Koza also works at the Oregon Dental School as a clinical instructor and chairs the Northeast Oregon Area Health Education Center board.

Koza understands the prospect of becoming a dentist may seem overwhelming at first. “Don’t be discouraged when looking at the long path you must take to become a dentist,” he said. “Do one step at a time, stick to you goals and work hard.”

Steve Koza DMD

Doctor of Dental Medicine, Oregon Health & Science University

BS General Science, Oregon State University

NEOAHEC sponsored attendance at Dental Careers Institute, OHSU

MedQuest Counselor for 4 years

Charlotte Kreger, RN



Charlotte posing by the Key Bridge in Washington, DC.

Charlotte Kreger, RN

Accepted -Health System, Administrator Masters Program, Georgetown University;

BS Nursing, Oregon Health & Science University

*MedQuest: 2002
MedStars: 2003*

Charlotte Kreger gained a basic knowledge of emergency medical services when she was in high school by volunteering as a first responder with the Long Creek ambulance crew. She expanded her understanding by attending Med-Stars as a camper and later as a Med Quest counselor.

Kreger continued to pursue her interest in healthcare by working as a certified nurse assistant while obtaining her undergraduate degree. She was also employed in the NEOAHEC office in La Grande and volunteered on the NEOAHEC Board.

On her first attempt, Kreger was admitted to the Oregon Health & Science University (OHSU) nursing program at Eastern Oregon University. “The school made it clear that they wanted only serious students and based admittance on GPA,” she said. “It was very competitive.”

Kreger graduated from OHSU with a BS in Nursing in

2006. Her RN experience includes having worked in the Critical Care Stepdown Unit and the Cardiac Catheter Lab at Good Samaritan Hospital in Puyallup, Wash. Her health professional career goals include working in a management position overseeing the nursing floor, and possibly working for a

device company to help develop new medical technology.

“Be very determined. Don’t let a single person, friend, or professor discourage you!”

Kreger currently lives in Washington, D.C. and works at Georgetown University Hospital in the Post-Anesthesia Care Unit (PACU). She

is pursuing a graduate degree through Georgetown University’s Health System Administrator master’s program.

Kreger advises students to stay on course, no matter what.

“Be very determined,” she said. “Don’t let a single person, friend, or professor discourage you!”

EMT, Daniel McGourty

Growing up in the remote town of Wallowa, Daniel McGourty remembers how his peers wanted nothing more than to escape the rural setting. "Many kids took any job they could find in other places just to get out," he recalled. McGourty on the other hand was thinking about working in emergency medicine. His mother, Celene Gay, encouraged his plans.

"A paramedic on the Wallowa (ambulance) crew, who also did search and rescue, mentored me."

- Daniel McGourty

"My Mom volunteered with the Red Cross and the Wallowa ambulance," McGourty said. "She motivated me to attend MedQuest Camp and pursue a health professional career. As a kid I hung out with the Wallowa ambulance crew. A paramedic on the crew, who also did search and rescue, mentored me. He inspired, supported and encouraged me."

In high school McGourty used his MedQuest Camp experience as the basis for his senior project. MedQuest got him thinking about becoming a physician or a nurse, but he decided to pursue a career that allowed him the most patient contact: physical therapy.

McGourty began studying athletic training at Eastern Oregon University, but the program was discontinued. "When I have something in my sights to work for I don't get distracted, but I had to face a total change in life plans, and I knew I would not be able to stay in the northeast Oregon area," he said. "I decided I needed more structure in my life and joined the Navy."

McGourty chose to be a Navy Rescue Swimmer and com-

pleted two tours of duty. "I'm the one who jumped in the water to rescue people," he said. "Back in the helicopter I assisted a corpsman who handled the medic responsibilities."

McGourty was in northern Indonesia when the tsunami destroyed the local hospital. He was involved with the Navy Medevac (Medical Evacuation) operation that transported injured civilians to a Navy hospital ship for treatment. He later served as a Navy Aircrewman on an Army Air Ambulance Mission in Kuwait and Iraq. "One of our duties was performing medic evacs for prisoners of war," he said.

McGourty is now pursuing a degree from Old Dominion University in Norfolk, Va. He is majoring in mechanical engineering and has been accepted to the ROTC program. "I enjoy seeing things all over the world," he said. "When I graduate I will be heading to flight school."



Standby to deploy swimmer; US Navy Rescue Swimmer.

Daniel McGourty EMT

US Navy Aircrewman Rescue Swimmer;

Completing B.S. in Mechanical Engineering, ROTC, Old Dominion University

MedQuest: 2000

Talia Minthorn McLaughlin, HEALTH SERVICES CLERK



Talia at her desk.

Talia Minthorn McLaughlin credits her mother for fostering an interest in health professions at an early age. “My mom has worked in medical data entry for 18 years and when I was young I hung out in her office,” she said. “Mom encouraged me to go to MedQuest camp.”

Subsequently, McLaughlin attended one of the earliest MedQuest camps in 1998. The experience affirmed her desire to go into a health professional field, but it was hard deciding which one. While a student at Weston-McEwen High School in Umatilla County, McLaughlin took a college prep health class that allowed her to job shadow a nurse.

“After that I knew I preferred administrative healthcare work,” she said. “My family, friends and teachers were supportive.” McLaughlin attended Apollo College and graduated in 2003 with an Associate’s Degree in Medical Administration. A member of the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla, she works in the Yellowhawk Tribal Health Center as the contract health services clerk.

“Yellowhawk’s purpose is

to develop responsive, cost-effective, high-quality healthcare services that meet the needs of the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation,” McLaughlin said. “My job is helping patients with insurance claims and assisting them with medical billing and concerns.”

McLaughlin enjoys her job, but she is considering data entry training to become a certified coder in the future.

“I feel like I am still on my journey as a health professional,” she said. “I enjoy the business part of healthcare and I want to stay in the medical field. It’s a challenge because everything is constantly being updated. Medical coding is changing, and Indian Health Service is changing.”

McLaughlin’s advice to health professional students is to “Take your time, don’t rush into a

“I feel like I am still on my journey as a health professional.”

- Talia McLaughlin

major. Keep exploring your options until you find the right field for you.”

Talia McLaughlin, Health Services Clerk, Yellowhawk Clinic

A.S. Medical Administration, Apollo College

*MedStars: 1999
MedQuest: 1998*

Erin Meeks' path to a health career was multigenerational. Her grandmother wanted to complete a degree in nursing, but was unable to attend school due to financial limitations and instead worked as a certified nurse assistant.

The day Meeks' acceptance letter to nursing school arrived, she proudly shared it with her family gathered in her ailing grandmother's hospital room. "My family made so much noise celebrating that the floor nurses rushed in!" Meeks said. "My grandmother did not live to see me graduate with my nursing degree, but I was able to share my acceptance letter with her before she passed away."

Meeks, who grew up in Ontario, recalled the obstacles she overcame while pursuing her goal at Treasure Valley Community College (TVCC). "I faced many challenges while in nursing school and I learned how to balance my family life with school demands," she said. "TVCC has a demanding nursing program, but as far as I was concerned there never was an option for me to fail to become a nurse. My family has always played a major role in supporting and encouraging me, especially my grandmother."

Meeks graduated from TVCC in 2002 with an Associate Degree in Nursing, the same week that her child was born. Her first post-graduation job was at the Weiser Memorial Hospital. "The hospital is a very small rural hospital. It has only 20 beds, but I gained lots of experience working in labor and delivery, medical/surgery, and in the emergency room and operating room," she said.

Meeks left the Weiser hospital after two and a half years to

**"Never give up!
Keep trying, even
though it may take
years."**

- Erin Meeks



Setting up for an endoscopic procedure.

work in a fast-paced operating room at the much larger West Valley Medical Center (WVMC) in Caldwell, Idaho. After three years there, Meeks gladly returned to Weiser Memorial and a slower paced lifestyle. "At Weiser Memorial Hospital we get great reviews from our peers," she said. "We can treat patients quickly, and when necessary, have a helicopter pad at the hospital to send patients off to larger trauma centers."

In December 2007, Meeks became a charge nurse in the operating room. She is also the employee health nurse for the hospital vaccinating program and oversees staff health. Her future goals include continuing her education. "I would like to complete my BS in Nursing and eventually become the Surgical Manager at the hospital," she said.

Meeks encourages students wanting to become health professionals to be persistent. "Never give up!" she said. "Keep trying, even though it may take years."

*Erin Meeks RN,
Operating Room Charge Nurse;*

A.S. Nursing, Treasure Valley Community College

MedQuest: 1994

Abigail Tracy Millisor, RN



Abigail at work in the Pediatrics unit.

Abigail Tracy Millisor grew up in Lakeview and observed her parents volunteering with the ambulance crew. At first she just hung around and watched the emergency response team, then she went out on runs, and eventually completed First Responder and EMT Basic certifications. “I always knew I wanted to be a health professional,” Millisor said, “and then I got interested in where health technology was going in the future.”

At MedQuest camp, Millisor shadowed technology lab staff who worked mainly with medical machines. The experience helped her realize that she didn’t want to pursue that type of career. “The exposure to different health professional fields at MedQuest saved me from wasting a lot of time in school studying the wrong thing,” she said.

Millisor used her time in college to choose between becoming a nurse or an EMT. Ultimately, she decided nursing was her calling and in 2004 she graduated with a BS in Nursing from Oregon Health & Science University at the Oregon Institute of Technology. “It’s

worth it,” Millisor said. “Becoming a health professional is expensive,

difficult, timely... but worth it.”

Millisor’s first job after college was working in the emergency department at Merle West

Medical Center in Klamath

Falls. “I got to work with paramedics in the emergency department and I never regretted my choice to become a nurse,” she said.

After

- Abigail Millisor two and a half

years at Merle

West, Millisor moved back to Lake-

view and got a job at Lake District Hospital. “Lake District Hospital is

small, but we do it all here,” she

said. “The emergency department in Klamath Falls was bigger and busier, but I feel like I am more prepared as a nurse here at Lakeview. I

feel that I could work in any hospital unit anywhere.”

Millisor also enjoys the family-oriented atmosphere and

work environment. She said she finds her job at Lakeview to be

“more soul filling” and plans to work there until retirement.

Self-confidence is something Millisor believes is critical in

achieving success in a healthcare profession. “Be prepared for self-

discovery,” she said. “You must not have many unresolved issues, and

you must be secure with yourself before you can take care of patients.”

Abigail Tracy Millisor, RN

B.S. Nursing, Oregon Health & Science University

MedQuest; 1999

Mandi Moncrief always liked science. When she was a teenager her interest leaned toward becoming a biologist, but Moncrief's mother, who worked as a surgery nurse at Wallowa Memorial Hospital (WMH), helped expose her to a different career choice.

Moncrief observed many surgeries and procedures and learned about the role nurses play in the operating room. She also spent four summers attending AHEC camps in La Grande and Portland as both a MedQuest camper and a MedStar's counselor, gaining a better understanding of possible health careers.

"AHEC's MedQuest program provides very important hands-on resources for students," Moncrief said. "The summers I spent in MedQuest and MedStars were a very positive experience for me."

When Moncrief first entered a large university as a pre-med student, she felt lost. "The environment was unfriendly, very competitive and unsupportive," she said. Moncrief didn't give up on her dream, but she did transfer to a smaller campus at Lewis and Clark State College where she received support and gained expertise from nurse mentors. "Nursing students should take advantage of their clinical hours," Moncrief said, "especially when they are paired with great nurses that have a lot of experience and knowledge to share."

Moncrief graduated with honors from Lewis and Clark in 2008 with a Bachelor of Science in Nursing. She looks forward to being a mentor for nursing students someday.

Moncrief recently began working as an RN in the Intensive Care Unit at St. Alphonsus Regional Medical Center in Boise, Idaho. After she gains enough career experience

"The summers I spent in MedStars were a very positive experience for me."

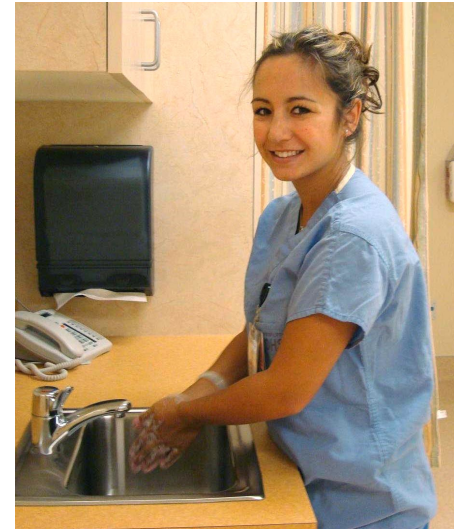
- Mandi Moncrief

she intends to become a nurse anesthetist through Oregon Health & Science University.

"I hope to work in a structured environment where I can interact with patients daily in a more direct, intensive and autonomous way," she said. "When you come home at the end of the day you feel like you have really made a difference. It feels good to be able to use science to help people."

Moncrief hopes to eventually move back to her hometown of Joseph in northeast Oregon and she looks forward to being a mentor for other nursing students someday.

"Students should expose themselves to different health professions by job shadowing and getting an understanding of the careers in which they have an interest," Moncrief said. "Don't give up on the goals you have set for yourselves, even if others are not necessarily supportive of them."



Cleaning up after exam.

Mandi Moncrief, RN

Magna cum Laude, B.S. Nursing, Lewis and Clark State College

MedQuest: 2003

MedStar: 2002, 2004

Fawn Pettet, NON-PROFIT DEVELOPEMENT AND SOCIAL SERVICES DIRECTOR



Interfaith Sanctuary Housing Services grand opening Nov. 1, 2007: Shelter Director, board members, and Development and Social Services Director Fawn (in red shirt).

*Fawn Pettet
Development and Social Services
Director for Interfaith Sanctuary
Housing Services;*

*Master Social Work, Boise State Uni-
versity;*

*Certificate in Intense Behavioral
Intervention, BA Social Work, Boise
State University;*

MedQuest: 1999

As a child, Fawn Pettet spent a lot of time in the Ontario hospital where her mother worked in the human resource office. “Mom and her friends exposed me to health professional careers in the hospital,” she said. “She was very supportive of me, especially about furthering my education.”

Pettet first considered becoming a dental hygienist or a physical therapist and in high school she volunteered in the physical therapy lab at the hospital. Yet, she wasn’t ready to commit to studying a specific career.

In her freshman year at Boise State University (BSU), Pettet found her passion. “I had a desire in me to help people,” she said. “I worked with disabled kids and I became passionate about working with youth on the street. I tell people that anybody can reach out and do some good.”

When she graduated from BSU with a BA in Social Work, Pettet continued in the masters program and studied developmental disabilities. She received a certifi-

cate in Intense Behavioral Intervention and traveled to Central America where she worked as the Service Coordinator in a developmental disability agency. Now she works at a non-profit shelter for the homeless in Boise as the Development and Social Services Director. In the future she would like to return to Central America to gain more extensive international work service experience.

Throughout her education, Pettet learned to deal with the stress and she advises other students to do

**“I had a desire
in me to
help people.”**

- Fawn Pettet

the same.

“As a college student the amount of information you will need to process is overwhelming. Become comfortable with being overwhelmed,” she said. “Make sure to get introduced to the tools you will need to help you get through the information overload.”

As the son of parents working as healthcare professionals, the idea was reinforced in Leif Ryman that there are many different kinds of health professional careers available. “Familial support and the AHEC programs helped me to pursue a career in the medical field,” Ryman said.

A graduate of La Grande High School, Ryman attended MedQuest camp in 2000 and he chose to study biology in college. Ryman remembers he was inspired by a faculty member. “I found motivation from a business professor who helped me see the option of combining science and business into a health professional career,” he said.

Ryman graduated from the University of Denver in 2006 with a BA in Biology, minors in Psychology and Chemistry, and with a focus on Cognitive Neuroscience. He is currently employed as a clinical research coordinator in the eye clinic at Denver HealthCare.

Ryman enjoys being direct-

“Familial support, and the AHEC programs, helped me to pursue a career in the medical health field.”

- Leif Ryman

ly involved with patients and helping their health and he appreciates the diverse patient base he serves. “I have thought about designing and selling medical devices in the future,” he said, “but for now I am



Sorting slides to be graded for severity of retinal disease.

focusing on working in clinical trials, and someday would like to work as a clinical research associate.”

Ryman encourages other health professional students to keep the door open to possibility. “Look at all your options, not just becoming a doctor,” he said. “You can use your undergraduate degree towards obtaining other health professional careers, not just to apply to medical school. I initially thought I wanted to be an anesthesiologist, but I did not realize where I was heading until this clinical research job fell into my hands.”

*Leif Ryman
Clinical Research Coordinator, Denver Health Ophthalmology Clinic*

BA in Biology, minors in Psychology and Chemistry with a Cognitive Neuroscience Focus, University of Denver, 2006

*MedStars: 2002
MedQuest: 2000*

Tove Ryman , INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC HEALTH ADVISOR



With a co-worker in Indonesia.

Tove Ryman, MPH

Centers for Disease Control, International Public Health Advisor;

Masters in Public Health, Emory University, 2005;

BA Spanish, University of Portland, 2002

MedQuest: 1994

Tove Ryman had the opportunity to explore an early interest in health careers through MedQuest, high school career intensives and volunteer work at her hometown hospital in La Grande.

Ryman did not, however, initially choose to pursue a health professional career. She was a sophomore studying business at the University of Portland when she took a hiatus from college to live with family friends in Ecuador for six months.

While in South America Ryman took some college classes and volunteered at clinics. She also traveled as a volunteer to the Amazon and helped a doctor who provided medical care in isolated villages. "I became aware of the positive effect an immunization program has on reducing childhood diseases in the more remote areas of the world," she said.

"...Try things out, get experience, even international experience, before you settle on a career."

- Tove Ryman

The trip inspired Ryman to change career goals and upon her return she graduated from the University of Portland in 2002 with a degree in Spanish and from Emory University in 2005 with a Masters in Public Health and an international focus.

Ryman is currently employed as a Public Health Advisor with the Global Immunization Division of the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in Atlanta. She is involved in reducing the rate of infectious childhood diseases, like measles and polio, in developing countries through effective immunization programs. She works primarily within southeast Asia and Africa.

Ryman believes students interested in the field should look at all their options before making a decision. "If you want to go into a health professional career, the field is very broad with lots of options," she said. "Students should try things out, get experience, even international experience, before you settle on a career."

As a child growing up in Ontario, Alissa Shaw had health issues and spent a lot of time in and around the hospital. She thought about becoming a nurse like her aunt, but changed her mind after undergoing a series of ultra-sounds and x-rays. "I thought it was amazing to be able to see what was inside of the body, and I wanted to become a radiologist."

"I feel like I don't have a job, I have a passion and a hobby ..."

- Alissa Shaw

Shaw attended both MedQuest and MedStars camps, enabling her to explore various healthcare professions. "I missed the opportunity to shadow a radiologist, and instead shadowed a respiratory therapist (RT) and interviewed a family friend who was an RT," Shaw said. "Instantly everything just clicked. I felt like I had a 'calling.'"

Shaw completed an Associate of Science degree from the University of Montana in 2007 after she rotated through clinicals at 13 different hospitals throughout Montana, Washington, and Idaho. A friend suggested she interview at Renown Regional Medical Center (RRMC), a locally owned, non-profit hospital in Reno. Shaw was offered the job three months before she graduated and continues to work as a respiratory therapist at there.

"I love going to work!" she said. "Actually, I feel like I don't have a job, I have a passion and a hobby that I get paid to do." As part of her work, Shaw specialized in cardio-pulmonary therapy. "I find it fascinating that the lungs have such a big effect on the entire body," she said.

Shaw's career goals continue to



Working at the Renown Regional Medical Center in Reno.

evolve. She hopes to complete training for pediatrics and neonatal and is also in the process of obtaining a BS in Respiratory Science to become an instructor.

The most challenging part of Shaw's job is helping patients and their families through the end of life process. "I build relationships with my patients; to me they are an extension of my own family," she said. "I have to be strong for the patient's family; they expect me to be professional and supportive. They trust me. I can't let my emotions interfere."

Shaw advises students to pace themselves to avoid becoming overwhelmed. "Set one goal at a time, than achieve it," she said. "One of my big goals in life is to have a positive effect on everybody I meet. Through my job I help people to breathe better. It is a great way to achieve that goal. I know I make a difference in people's lives by simply helping them breathe."

Alissa Shaw, Respiratory Therapist

AS Respiratory Therapy, University of Montana

*MedStars: 2004
MedQuest: 2003*

Katie Shaw, MEDICAL LABORATORY TECHNICIAN



PFC Shaw learning blood drawing techniques.

Katie Shaw, Medical Laboratory Technician National Certificate

United States Army Academy of Health Sciences;

Dental Hygiene pre-requisites, and AS Ranch Management, Treasure Valley Community College

*MedStars: 2003, 2004
MedQuest: 2001, 2003*

“...don't let anyone tell you that you can't do something.”

- Katie Shaw

Life on the farm in Ontario was good for young Katie Shaw. She spent 16 years in 4-H and she loved science, but it was difficult for her to focus on just one specific area of the field.

“I was home schooled,” Shaw said, “and as a high school student studying science it was frustrating for me because, unfortunately, our local public schools were not receptive to working with home school students and would not let us participate in any science classes or labs.”

But Shaw found other ways to explore her growing interest in science, including job shadowing her family dentist. She later attended MedQuest and MedStars camps where she explored further options and returned as a camp counselor with both AHEC programs.

“I planned to attend Oregon Health & Science University for their dental hygiene program,” Shaw said. “That is, until OHSU shut down the program. But don't let anyone tell you that you can't do something, no matter what it is. You

will never know unless you try and you may find that one door will open other doors with more opportunities.”

When Shaw was 17 she enrolled at Treasure Valley Community College (TVCC). She initially stayed in a more familiar environment and studied ranch management instead of jumping into the dental hygiene pre-requisites. The professors at TVCC were there to help and Shaw graduated from TVCC in 2004 with an AAS in Ranch Management and in the spring of 2006 she completed her dental hygiene pre-requisites.

She continued her dental hygiene studies at Oregon Institute of Technology (OIT) until the fall of 2006 when she reached a cross-road in her career.

“I decided I needed more adventure in my life, so I joined the Army,” she said. “The Army will provide healthcare training while you are serving your country.”

After three years in the service Shaw will have the opportunity to re-class and go back into a hospital setting as a dental hygienist, or even attend dental school. She is currently assigned to a deployable Chemical and Biological Warfare Testing Unit for the Army. She has had the opportunity to meet and work with individuals from all over the world and her unit works on ever-changing training exercises and projects with staff from many different government agencies, and prominent laboratories and hospitals.

“My motto has become: ‘Be sharp or be left,’” Shaw said.

Cassie Standiford is a first generation college graduate and the sole member of her family working as a health professional. Although her family was very supportive, Standiford had no mentors and had to find her own way through the myriad of career choices.

Standiford volunteered as a First Responder and obtained her CNA license while still in high school. She also attended MedQuest camp. "MedQuest allowed me the opportunity to observe operating room activities and job shadow an orthopedic surgeon," she said. "But doctors' orders won't get done without nurses." Standiford credits AHEC's MedQuest and Brain Awareness programs with helping her find "the absolute direction" she wanted to take in becoming a nurse.

Standiford studied abroad in Salzburg, Austria before graduating in 2005 from Oregon Health & Science University by way of the University of Portland and Eastern Oregon University. She now works as a surgical nurse in the cardiovascular operating room at St. Luke's Hospital in Boise.

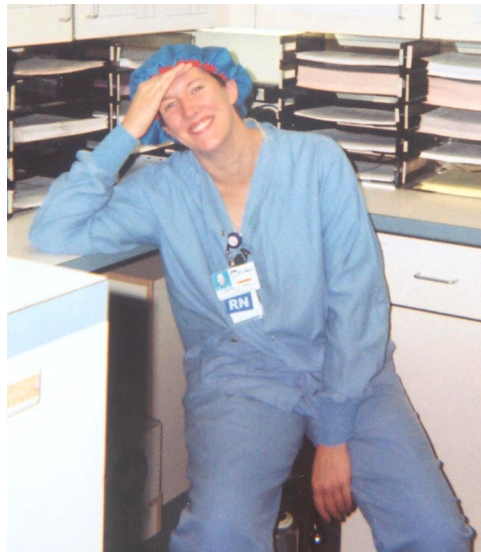
"My job involves doing everything in the operating room that is not sterile. I have all the materials and supplies available that the surgical staff and the patient might need, and I act as a patient advocate in surgery. I make sure the patient gets the right care."

Standiford likes to travel and loves to learn. In the future, she would like to work in open-heart surgeries and eventually return to Oregon to obtain a Masters in Nursing Education and teach. She also volunteered to be a presenter at MedQuest where she can share her experience with students.

"Get in and learn as much as you can, and what you can't learn

"Get in and learn as much as you can ... what you can't learn through college classes learn through exposure."

- Cassie Standiford



Cassie at work.

through college classes learn through exposure," Standiford said. "Don't be shy, test drive your areas of interest!"

Cassie Standiford, RN

B.S. Nursing, Oregon Health & Science University, 2005.

MedQuest: 1996

NEOAHEC Board of Directors: 2002-2005

Jennifer Stevens, RN



Jennifer at work.

“I enjoy working with youth. They have a chance to turn things around.”

- Jennifer Stevens

“I always wanted to be a doctor,” said Jennifer Stevens, who was first inspired by a neighbor who started out in nursing and later studied at Oregon Health & Science University to become a physician.

As a high school student in Ontario, Stevens participated in a senior class healthcare job shadowing project, attended MedQuest and MedStars camps, became a certified nurse assistant and worked in an assisted living facility. She went on to complete her Associates Degree in Nursing from Treasure Valley Community College (TVCC) in 2004.

“TVCC’s nursing program worked well with the local hospital,” Stevens said. “I worked as a LPN, received scholarship money for my RN studies and completed my RN clinicals – all at the same hospital!”

After she graduated from TVCC, Stevens was employed in the medical-surgical and pediatric ward and she also worked part-time as an occupational RN for the Union Pacific Railroad. Then Stevens relocated to Salem where she worked in a nursing home until the Oregon Youth Authority (OYA) offered her a job as an RN at the Hillcrest Youth Correctional Facility.

“I enjoy working with youth,” she said. “They have a chance to turn things around.” Hillcrest gave Stevens the opportunity to become more involved with youth as a mentor and she gained their respect in her role as a teacher. “I helped inspire a resident to want to become a nurse,” she said.

In 2008 Stevens transferred to the MacLaren Youth Correctional Facility. MacLaren has a full clinic with a doctor, dentist and four mental health doctors. Her involvement with the residents at MacLaren is different from Hillcrest. “The clinic is separate and I am not as involved with the kids outside the clinic as I was at Hillcrest,” Stevens said. “But I am part of a small, completely staffed medical facility where I am gaining experience interacting with many different health professionals.”

While working full-time Stevens has continued her studies. She completed a statistics class at Chemeketa Community College and then enrolled at OHSU in the “RN to BS” online curriculum. After she graduates she plans to apply to the OHSU medical school. “I would like to study internal medicine,” she said. “After I become a doctor I want to live in Oregon and start up a free clinic.”

Stevens will continue to work with OYA until she is accepted into medical school. She offers this advice to her patients and to young people thinking about a health professional career: “Stick with it! When times are rough and you want to give up, push through the hard times. There are wonderful rewards in the end and you will be a stronger person for it.”

Jennifer Stevens, RN

Completing “RN to BS” degree online, Oregon Health & Science University

A.S. Nursing, Treasure Valley Community College

MedStars: 1999

Autumn Bennett Strand wasn't always sure she wanted to be a nurse. "When I was a high school student I was thinking about becoming a physical therapist or a nurse," Strand said. "My sister is a nurse at Grande Ronde Hospital (GRH) and I volunteered and shadowed her in several departments."

Strand further explored nursing by working as a certified nurse assistant (CNA) at a nursing home. She finished high school early and spent six months working full-time as a CNA before starting college at Eastern Oregon University. "By the time I started pre-nursing classes I knew that I liked the field even though I didn't know what type of nursing I wanted to do," she said.

While completing her nursing degree, Strand continued working as a CNA in the GRH Home Health Unit, and also on the Medical/Surgery floor. "I found my passion during my first obstetrics (OB) rotation," she said. "I actually did not expect to like OB nursing, but I fell in love with the intense and emotional aspects of it. It is hands on, fast-paced and highly unpredictable."

When Strand graduated from Oregon Health & Science University in 2001 with a BS in Nursing, she was recruited by St. Luke's Regional Medical Center. After four years with St. Luke's, Strand obtained a certification in her specialty: obstetrics nursing.

Strand became one of seven nurses who were members of the Air St Luke's Maternal Transport Team. The team traveled to hospitals throughout Idaho, as well as some parts of Utah and Oregon,

"By the time I started pre-nursing classes, I knew I liked the field. . ."



Washing a newborn.

including GRH, to pick up high-risk pregnant patients and transport them back to St. Luke's for labor and delivery. "Most of the time having a baby goes smoothly but when things go wrong it can be the worst kind of emergency," Strand said. "My job is to know as quickly as possible if something is not right so I can tell the doctor. I am his eyes, ears and hands until he gets to the bedside. It is an incredible responsibility."

In 2007 Strand accepted a position in the Family Birthing Center at GRH. "I really liked the idea that diverse nursing opportunities were available almost everywhere, in big cities or small towns," Strand said.

Speaking from experience, Strand said it is important to consider all the healthcare careers out there. "Explore before you commit," she said. "Get hands-on experience in the field. Set your goals and work towards them. If you know what you want and why, any challenge is worth overcoming."

Autumn Bennett Strand, RN, INPT

Obstetric Nursing Certification;

Air St Luke's Maternal Transport Team;

B.S. Nursing, Oregon Health & Science University

MedQuest: 1996

Mindy Voigt, RN, TRAVELING NURSE



Mindy with her father.

“I love helping people, it is so rewarding...”

- Mindy Voigt

“Towards the end of my assignment, I apply for a new contracted position at a hospital of my choice. It’s a great way for me to gain experience and I enjoy meeting new people and the variety of my work environments.”

Voigt’s favorite work assignment so far has been St. Luke’s. “St. Luke’s has four different hospitals in Idaho,” she explained. “I worked in the clinical support unit for all four and supported a total of 12 units. I enjoy working in all areas of the hospital, but seem to spend quite a bit of my time working in the medical/surgical unit.”

Voigt would like to continue working as a traveling nurse for a few more years and possibly become a nurse practitioner. She would eventually like to return to her hometown of Prairie City in northeastern Oregon. “Nursing is a wonderful field with many challenges, but the small things make it all worthwhile,” she said. “I love helping people. It is so rewarding to enter the life of a stranger and help them through some of life’s worst experiences.”

Voigt’s advice for college students is to “Keep working hard and it will eventually pay off. Stick with it and you will be rewarded with a diverse and challenging career.”

Mindy Voigt gained invaluable exposure to health professional careers through AHEC’s MedQuest program, but it was a personal experience with the healthcare system that ultimately influenced her career decision.

“After I had knee surgery, I knew I wanted to become a nurse,” she recalled.

Voigt attended Eastern Oregon University where she completed her pre-requisites in nursing and worked as a certified nurse assistant (CNA) in the Grande Ronde Hospital (GRH) emergency room. She was then accepted into the Oregon Health & Science University nursing school and completed her BS in Nursing in La Grande.

As a student, Voigt worked at GRH and at St. Luke’s Regional Medical Center in Boise. She is currently under contract with an agency that sends traveling nurses out to cover temporary shortages in hospitals across the United States. “I usually work as a nurse from eight to 13 weeks at one hospital, but the hospital can extend my contract if needed,” Voigt explained.

Mindy Voigt, RN

*B.S. Nursing,
Oregon Health & Science University*

MedQuest: 2002

Healthcare and law enforcement have been Megan Ray Wade's two divergent interests since childhood. Wade was inspired by a family friend to become a nurse and while a student at Hermiston High School, she attended MedQuest camp and enjoyed the opportunity to explore many different health professional fields.

After she graduated from high school, Wade worked for two years as a Hermiston Police Department dispatcher and began to look for a way to merge her two interests. She attended Blue Mountain Community College (BMCC) as a nursing student while working with the Umatilla County Sheriff Department as a dispatcher. She also served with the Stanfield Police Department as a reserve deputy volunteering for public relations work and ride-a-longs.

"I completed nursing clinicals in various fields including day surgery, medical/surgical, home health and rehab, but my favorite rotation occurred at the county jail," Wade said. "I decided that one of my goals as an RN would be to work as a nurse in a corrections facility." Wade graduated with an Associate's Certification in Nursing and received her RN license in 2005. Her education has served her well, but eventually she said she would like to earn a BS in Nursing.

Wade's first job out of college was as an RN in the Umatilla County jail. She had been searching for a nursing job at several different locations but with little luck. "One day as I was walking into my dispatcher job, I met a woman wearing scrubs walking out of the county building," Wade said. "I casually asked if they were hiring nurses now downstairs in the jail. She told me they needed a nurse ASAP and to come in the next day before my dispatch shift and fill out paperwork. That woman was the jail's Director of Nursing."

"I got a good quality nursing education at a local community college."

- Megan Ray Wade

Wade worked full-time for two years at the jail and also worked part-time at an assisted living facility which eventually offered her a full-time RN consultant job. The position was much closer to home with flexible hours and offered the same pay as her job at the jail.

"I enjoy the perks of being an assisted living Facility Nurse Consultant: flexibility, occasional travel, educating and working with a great staff and getting to know the residents," she said.

Wade also worked for a brief period as a part-time Post Anesthesia Care Unit RN at a cosmetic surgery center. She is still on her journey to combine both healthcare and law enforcement into a satisfying career and she may return to corrections work in the future.

"I miss the fast-paced environment, being a hands-on nurse who interacts with a variety of ages, and who assists with resolving the different medical issues found within the inmate population," Wade said. "And I really miss the corrections staff."

Megan Ray Wade, RN

A.S. Nursing

*Blue Mountain Community College
MedQuest: 1995, 1996*

Richard Wick, MEDICAL STUDENT



Starting medical school at Creighton.

“AHEC is a great resource for students and shows students the current healthcare network.”

- Richard Wick

completes his schooling at Creighton, Wick hopes to return to the Northwest and complete his residency at Oregon Health & Science University. He understands the unique medical needs of rural areas and is thinking about returning to the Pendleton area if there is an opportunity for employment as a physician. Further along in his career, he may pursue becoming a general surgeon.

Wick credits the majority of his success and self-confidence to his family because they planned ahead financially and supported his aspirations.

“Handling the cost of becoming a health professional is very expensive and increases yearly,” Wick said. “Be prepared financially and plan ahead for a very costly education. Do not let the tuition on paper deter you. Focus on ways to offset that debt during school through scholarships and grants, and then use other services after school to pay off the remaining debt.”

Wick looks forward to the future of medicine.

“The healthcare field is always changing with advancing technology and new treatments, with the world becoming increasingly smaller and interconnected,” he said.

As a MedQuest alumnus, counselor and current medical student at Creighton University, Richard Wick believes AHEC paints a realistic and balanced picture for students interested in healthcare careers.

“I was lucky to have been a MedQuest counselor in 2004 and I am willing to help AHEC anyway I can now,” Wick said. “In the future I hope to play a bigger role in supporting NEOAHEC’s programs whether it be as a student, resident or physician in rural Oregon.”

Wick gained exposure to a wide range of health professions through NEOAHEC and the organization supported his mentorship with a local surgeon. He job shadowed the surgeon for over five years in Pendleton and was able to observe a surgery and experience first hand how an ER operates.

“AHEC is a great resource for students and shows them the current healthcare network in place that promotes and addresses the lack of professionals in rural areas of Oregon,” he said.

Wick graduated magna cum laude from Gonzaga University in 2008 with a degree in Biology and a minor in Philosophy. After he

*Richard Wick
Creighton University School of Medicine;*

Magna cum Laude, B.S. Biology, Philosophy Minor, Gonzaga University

MedQuest: 2003, 2007

Tami Zucker is no stranger to hard work. She financed her college education by holding down two full-time jobs in a psychologist's office and as a certified nurse assistant (CNA) at Samaritan Heart of the Valley.

When she was accepted into the nursing program at Linn-Benton Community College (LBCC) in 2006, she transferred to Samaritan Lebanon Community Hospital where she worked as a CNA tech in same-day surgery, acute care and infusion services.

Zucker had to cut down her hours when she started the nursing program at LBCC. She also moved back home. "My parents were very supportive," she said. "Nursing school was the hardest thing I experienced in my life. I went through a lot of tough changes during college, but a lot of good things happened also."

Zucker found two of her best friends in nursing school. She graduated from LBCC with an Associate's in General Studies and Nursing in June 2008. She left with more than friends and a degree. She forged connections to the world of nursing. "I did my nursing school clinicals through Samaritan at their Corvallis, Albany and Lebanon hospitals. When Samaritan hired me as an RN in May 2008 I had already worked for them for four years."

Zucker completed a six-week critical care internship with other graduates from five Samaritan hospitals. The internship involved spending time in a simulated health care lab (SIM lab), lecture and clinical work. After she completed the internship she began working at Samaritan Lebanon Community Hospital, spending time in the ER, critical care and acute care units.

**"Keep learning...
be happy where
you work, keep an
open mind."**

- Tami Zucker



In the Intensive Care Unit at Good Samaritan Regional Medical Center.

"My family has used the Lebanon Hospital consistently over the years," Zucker said. "As a child I always had a good feeling from the nurses at Lebanon. It's an amazing place to work and I am happy to be there."

Zucker's life beyond work is also flourishing. "I go to the gym to relieve stress and I am in a supportive relationship," she said. "I feel like my life just started, and I'm excited for what my future holds."

Zucker's advice to health professional students is to "Keep learning...be happy where you work, keep an open mind, and remember that the patients are why we do what we do."

Tami Zucker, RN

*AS Nursing,
Linn-Benton Community College*

MedQuest: 2001, 2004



Northeast Oregon Area Health Education Center

