

Thank you for the opportunity to nominate a great pediatric cardiac nurse, Kelly Gray. Allow me to introduce you to an incredible individual. She is an outstanding teacher, an exceptional role model, and a true leader in the nursing profession. She serves her community generously. In addition to her nursing degree, Kelly has a Masters degree in Nursing Administration with a post certificate in education. Her love for congenital heart nursing is evident by her compassion. The nursing profession is fortunate to have such an amazing nurse.

Role Model

Being a nurse for over 30 years has allowed this individual to touch so many lives. She is outstanding as a bedside nurse. Her peers emulate her nursing characteristics and verbalize a desire to be like her. She serves as a crucial resource and a fountain of information to those around her. As a masters prepared nurse, she serves as a fountain of information to those around her. For the last seventeen years, she has partnered with her nursing and physician leaders to pursue the united vision of a world class heart program at Medical City Children's Hospital. Through her hard work and perseverance this dream is now a reality. She has played a critical role in the building and growing, from the ground up, this superior program. Kelly was one of the nursing bedside leaders when the heart program at Medical City Children's began in 2005, and she has remained a core member of the cardiac team ever since inception of the program. She was one of the premier PICU nurses who was asked to transition to the newly opening separate CICU. She served as a leader in building a pediatric cardiac program, and was quickly promoted to nursing supervisor and eventually an additional role as clinical educator for the pediatric CICU. Additionally, Kelly served as interim manager for the CICU from April 2019-January 2021. Despite her supervising and administrative roles, Kelly continues to this day to serve as a bedside nurse primarily.

She has built bridges in multiple areas of the hospital to engage and unite other pediatric units, improving communication and positively affecting patient care. This year, amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, she led the education and onboarding of over thirty new nurses to meet the demands of a growing cardiac program. This created a 50% influx in her team's nursing staff with a sustained 9% turnover rate. Encouraging excellence, she created a Certification Guidebook to help her peers prepare for the pediatric CCRN exam. As a result, her unit now has an internal goal to have 100% certification. Beyond her own institution, this nurse now shares her knowledge and extends her core cardiac curriculum to the network of congenital heart programs across her division. Due to her teaching, other centers and their nurses are able to offer optimal care to our complex heart patients. This remarkable work is done while also serving in the bedside nurse role for that is her true passion, to touch the lives of heart babies and their families. She is an active member of numerous organizations: PCICS, AACN, and TNA.

She is one of the key nursing preceptors of her CICU. She has played a critical role in the building and developing of new pediatric cardiac nurses. She takes a new nurse, focuses on her strengths, yet acknowledges the areas requiring improvement; educates and molds this individual to provide superior patient care. She holds herself, and those around her, to the highest standard of practice.

Leadership

Serving as an educator on her unit, this nurse leads by example. Her passion to teach others led this bedside nurse to create courses that focused on her cardiac specialty. Over the last fifteen years, she has developed and taught pediatric cardiac nursing courses, such as Congenital Heart Defects, Single Ventricle Class, Advanced EKG, Pharmacology and the Cardiac Patient, and a Hemodynamic Monitoring Class. In these courses she educates nurses on care and management of the CICU patient, along with nursing implications. She enlists the entire multidisciplinary team to assure a collaborative approach to education is optimized. She is also directly involved in the education of experienced nurses, as well as nurse interns. Advocating for the nurses, she took the course a step further and now the nurses receive continuing education hours for her class. Sections of the courses have now grown and filtered to all areas of the pediatric hospital. She is continuously seeking ways to improve herself. Over the last two years, a new highly specialized pediatric ECMO team was created that includes perfusionists, nurses, and respiratory therapists. Kelly was selected as one of the few nurses of this elite team which requires extensive dedication and determination, and she is now one of the primary nursing leaders on this team of specialists. She guides, mentors and teaches others to provide the highest level of care to our heart patients.

Service to the Community

This amazing individual has served as Camp Nurse with two organizations over the last 8 years. One camp has a 42 year history of serving its community and this nurse has selflessly helped nurse up to 1000 adults and children. Additionally, she serves at a Children's Camp where she nurses 240 kids. She takes so much pride in being able to serve as a nurse and give back to her community. This nurse actively participates in local fundraisers, such as the March of Dimes, Family Place, and Amazing Little Hearts. The most significant way she touches the community is her never-ending compassion to her patients and families.

Compassionate Caregiver

She is the exemplar of compassionate nursing. She builds strong trusting relationships with her patients and families. The families seek her out throughout their hospitalization. I can recall one instance when an infant expired on her unit. It was late at night; the mother was exhausted and filled with grief. She did not want to leave her baby's bedside and she did not want the baby to go to the morgue. This nurse promised the mother that she would stay with the baby until the funeral home arrived. The mom trusted this nurse so much that she agreed to go rest. While soft music played in the background, and tears filled her eyes, this nurse held that baby in her arms and rocked her for half an hour until the funeral home arrived. A heart filled with compassion and love...this is what I see in this nurse.

Significant Contribution

As I have listed above, her passion and commitment to excellence speaks for itself. Encouraging excellence, she created a Certification Guidebook to help her peers study for the certification exam. As a result, her unit now has an internal goal to have 100% certification. She is well respected by her peers and all physicians. She is a true advocate of the nursing profession. Serving at the bedside, educating and mentoring other professionals, excelling in her own professional growth are just a few of her contributions to the profession. This nominee displays the characteristics of a Great Nurse, and is deserving of the inaugural 2020 Pediatric Cardiac Intensive Care Society Bedside Nursing Award. Thank you for the opportunity to submit. Your consideration is appreciated.