

Health Focus 2022



*These stories and
more inside*

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Versailles woman speaks about her work as a doula

'These women need someone in their corner'

BY JOHN MCGARY
WOODFORD SUN EDITOR

A few weeks after Tara Brown obtained her certification as a doula in November 2019, she found her first client: Laura Sheffield, a friend from high school who was scheduled to give birth the following April.

"... She had just become a doula, so she just kind of asked me if I would be a client of hers for the experience and stuff," Sheffield said. "Listening to her talk about all the different techniques ... so instead of going to the doctor to get nausea medicine, she had other techniques for nausea or things of that nature. I just felt comfortable asking her questions, too."

Then came the pandemic, in February 2020, so the fellow 2007 graduates of Woodford County High School began to communicate virtually, or by text or phone call.

With the pre-labor assistance of Brown, Sheffield gave birth April 23, 2020 to a healthy and quite large (nine pounds and 13 ounces) girl she named Shelby.

Of course, none of these things occurred quite the way either woman had imagined.

Brown said growing up, she was always interested in health care.

"Even when I was in high school, my major was the medical sciences, and I was going to do nursing and actually pursued a nursing degree for a few years ... and it was just kind of one of those things like, I was just wasn't sure if it was a good fit. I've always been more of a holistic kind of person and (nursing) was just kind of out of the realm of what I really wanted to do," she said.

Brown said she wanted to help people "more naturally," and her research led her to massage therapy.

"... And I was like, 'Hmmm – I could try that,'" she said.

Brown became a state-licensed massage therapist in May 2015.

"I've loved it ever since, and I'm glad that I did that," she said.

Still, Brown, who'd also been a nanny, kept searching.

"I've always like children, I've always liked babies, I've always been fascinated with pregnancy – all of it. And then I started seeing things about women who were in labor and them just not being heard (about) what they wanted with their childbirth. There's some pretty horrific stuff out there. And I was like, 'What in the world?' These women need someone in their corner to help them and kind of be like an advocate for them, especially when they don't know different things. So that's part of what a Doula does ..." she said.

According to americanpregnancy.org, "The doula is a professional trained in childbirth who provides emotional, physical, and educational support to a mother who is expecting, is experiencing labor, or has recently given birth. Their purpose is to help women have a safe, memorable, and empowering birthing experience."

Brown said her typical client takes part in three interviews and two prenatal visits – the first at 32 to 33 weeks and the second at 37 weeks.

"We'll meet and kind of go over her birth plan – what she's wanting, what kind of support she wants, and there's also continuous communication throughout the whole pregnancy. Usually they'll text me, or message me and ask different things like, 'What



PROUD DOULA TARA BROWN held Shelby, the daughter of high school friend and first doula client Laura Sheffield, about five weeks after the baby's birth. (Photo by Laura Sheffield)

should I do? Should I go to my doctor?' That kind of thing," Brown said.

Brown said she believes 80 percent of her job is providing emotional and education support, with the physical portion coming during labor. She said she hasn't had a doctor object to her presence in the delivery room, "But I've heard stories from other Doulas."

During labor, Brown puts her other skills to good use.

"Massage is also a form of pain relief and it can be used during labor to help with pain relief, so I have that, and I'm also a Reiki master, so I can use that as well."

According to clevelandclinic.org, Reiki is "an energy healing technique that promotes relaxation, reduces stress and anxiety through gentle touch. Reiki practitioners use their hands to deliver energy to your body, improving the flow and balance of your energy to support healing."

Reducing the anxiety of a woman in labor can make the experience less painful, Brown said.

Thanks to the pandemic, Brown couldn't be in the delivery room with her high school friend. Still, Sheffield said their chats made Shelby's birth easier.

"She helped me get through that," Sheffield said. "Just easing any kind of anxiety, giving me relaxation techniques ... how to handle stress, and if I was having pain in a certain area, she could help me relieve the pain."

That's what she likes about her work, Brown said – helping women when they need it.

"I like being able to be someone that they can turn to when they have questions. It's not like you can call your doctor about every little thing. So I'm just that extra support person they can reach out to and be like, 'Hey, should I be concerned about this? What should I do?'" she said.

Brown, who moved into her new "Phases Doula & Massage" office at 202 Frankfort Street last June, said most of her practice still consists of massage therapy. She hopes the doula portion, where she can use all the skills of her head, hands and heart, grows.

"Everyone's got their own birth plan and I try to help them stick to it," she said with a chuckle.



TARA BROWN, left, shared a laugh recently with Laura Sheffield in Brown's Frankfort Street office. Sheffield said while, thanks to the pandemic, Brown couldn't join her in the delivery room in April 2020 when her daughter was born, Brown's work as a doula made Shelby's birth easier. (Photo by John McGary)

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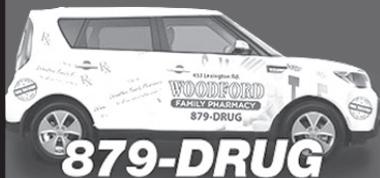
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How the pandemic changed sports

BY BILL CAINE

WOODFORD SUN SPORTS

As spring sports are scheduled to resume this month, Woodford County athletes are rejoicing at the prospect of a full schedule of games this year. Two seasons ago, the entire spring season was lost to COVID-19. High school sports throughout Kentucky were shut down in the spring of 2020. Fields were closed. Gyms and weight rooms were locked. Campuses were empty as classes were moved online. Families whose lives revolved around youth sports were left confused and uncertain about the future.

The impact of the shutdown for youth sports in Kentucky changed the landscape of sports as we knew them. As weeks became months, athletes across the state wondered when they would be able to suit up and compete.

WCHS 2020 graduate Abby Moffett said lessons learned from the shutdown helped her understand how special the time spent playing high school sports was, especially after losing her senior season to the pandemic.

“Cherish every last moment that you have with your friends/teammates,” said Moffett. “I never truly understood what that meant until it all got taken from us. I would also say (it taught me) to never take anything for granted.”

The debate over sports and the safety protocols attached to them sparked anger and frustration for some, but both sides agreed that every kid wants to play and do so safely.

In 2021, most teams played a shortened schedule followed by post-season play. It was a start. The short schedules were not ideal, but the kids got to compete and the progress from 2021 paved the way for a full slate of competitions this season.

Amateur athletic associations began to talk about the possibility of

adding extra time for students who lost a season due to the pandemic or played under a revised schedule and weren't able to properly showcase their skills.

“The Supplemental School Year Program” (SSYP) was made possible by Senate Bill 128, a law that allowed students from kindergarten to 12th grade to repeat last year's grade level because their “normal” school year was impaired by COVID. Only students in districts that approved SSYP could retake their 2020-2021 course load and keep their eligibility for sports. Woodford County was one of the districts that approved SSYP, and dozens of students repeated their previous year due to academics and athletics.

Many students struggled with online learning for various reasons, including not having face-to-face interaction with a teacher every day. Lack of high-speed internet also presented a huge problem in Kentucky's online learning, as the state ranks 40th nationally in broadband access according to kyyouth.org.

The extra season also presented an opportunity for athletes looking to have their best shot of being noticed in hopes of playing sports at the university level. The extra season would provide more chances to be seen and extend their chance to compete.

“I took the extra year, so I could play WCHS football longer,” said Grant Garrison. “Also, so I could capitalize on a better athletic scholarship for either track and field or football.”

According to the National Federation of State High School Association, participating in high school athletics has long-lasting, definitive benefits, especially when athletic leaders create an environment that challenges and rewards the growth mindset.

The University of Wisconsin conducted a study in 2020 to identify the impact of playing a sport during the COVID-19 pandemic on student athletes' health. The research concluded that re-initiating sports participation may significantly improve mental and physical health for adolescents during the pandemic. School sport participation is one of the essential factors for life-long physical activity and health. Continuing sports for students as we go through the COVID-19 pandemic is complicated and requires consolidated efforts, but it is essential, according to the study.

The spring season will be full of games with open gyms and weight rooms to help promote our students' mental and physical well-being. Lacrosse will begin the season, hosting the WC Jamboree Friday, Feb. 25, at Falling Springs Center. All other spring sports will start competing soon after.



WCHS 2020 graduate Abby Moffett, shown here during her junior year, said losing her senior sports season due to the pandemic helped her realize how special the time spent playing high school sports was. “I never truly understood what that meant until it all got taken from us. I would also say (it taught me) to never take anything for granted.” (Photo by Bill Caine)

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'Extremely draining' to be caregiver for loved one with dementia, according to memory care director

BY BOB VLACH
WOODFORD SUN STAFF

Being the caregiver for a family member with dementia presents many challenges, according to Kelly Pelston, director of nursing for Pathway Memory Care at Daisy Hill Senior Living in Versailles.

Often, the caregiver is a spouse or an adult child who must overcome established boundaries that can't remain in place for the safety and security of a family member as his or her dementia progresses, she explained.

"It's particularly hard when it's a parent-child relationship, when the (adult) child has to take over the role of really being the parent," said Pelston. That typically means taking away a parent's keys to the car and independence to keep them safe, which is a difficult transition for an adult child, she said.

When someone is the caregiver for a spouse with dementia that may lead to anger and aggressive outbursts, which can be very, very hard to manage, Pelston said. For the caregiver of a spouse with dementia, it's difficult to move on after those emotional moments, she added.

"Caregiver strain is a real thing," said Pelston. "To try and be the one person that is responsible for that person with dementia, it's extremely draining.

"They (the caregivers) don't end up getting to sleep. They don't end up getting any rest period. There's no time out." She said a trip to the grocery store results in the caregiver being worried about what's happening at home.

A family's ability to manage the care of a loved one largely centers on how advanced and what type of dementia they're facing, Pelston said.

Moreover, Pelston said it's easier if the primary caregiver is someone outside the family, but that's not always an option.

Memory care facilities like Pathway are an option, but most are private pay, so families with limited finances may instead explore hiring a part-time caregiver to give them a break, she said. Adult day programs are another option, she added.

Also, Pelston said, "I think support groups are really, really important (for caregivers) – finding other people that can relate to your struggle."

Conversations with someone who has dementia, she said, are very different. They involve repeating yourself and answering the same question over and over and over again, she added.

Dementia typically starts when someone begins forgetting to turn off the stove or put on a coat when it's cold outside. And depending on the severity of

the dementia, it can progress to the loved one getting lost at night, according to Pelston.

An early sign of dementia may be mismanaging finances, said Pelston. She cited her grandmother purchasing four vacuums and 30 magazine subscriptions as an example.

An inability to grocery shop or plan meals and weight loss due to not eating proper meals are other signs of dementia, Pelston said.

Having spent about 12 years as a private case manager for families with loved ones who have dementia and currently overseeing the care of dementia patients at Pathway Memory Care, Pelston understands the value of tapping into early childhood memories.

"... In my caregiver experience," she said, "those are the moments that have been my favorite ... talking about childhood memories and siblings and games that they played. And just trying to tap into the things that they did that were important."

That's why caregivers at Pathway want to learn about new residents, Pelston said. What were their occupations? What were their hobbies? What did they enjoy doing? "So that you can see that light inside," she said.

For Pelston, being the caregiver of someone with dementia is something "I care very deeply about." That began with her grandmother and continued while being the case manager for seven years of Linda Cooter who became a dear friend, she said.

"Those moments that you get to bond with people and just get to know their soul and their spirit, and just help them find ways to enjoy life are just immeasurable and they're invaluable," said Pelston.

She said her memories of spending time with Linda will never leave her. "We had really hard days, but we also had some really fun days, just some great times," she said.

That's why Pelston appreciates being able to offer quality memory care at Pathway for people with dementia, so they can have quality moments with their loved ones. "That's the rewarding part for me," she said.

Even though Pelston and her nursing staff are trained to provide care to people with dementia, they like other caregivers need to take a breather when they start feeling frustrated or overwhelmed, she acknowledged.



Kelly Pelston



KELLY PELSTON, right, cares deeply about providing care to people with dementia, she said. The director of nursing at Daisy Hill Senior Living's Pathway Memory Care said that passion began with her grandmother and grew while she was the case manager for Linda Cooter, also pictured. (Photo submitted)

WCMS teacher, husband face brain cancer together

BY BOB VLACH

WOODFORD SUN STAFF

Jessica and Sam Coleman were married for three years and had an 18-month-old son, Wyatt, when Glioblastoma entered their lives.

Only 5 percent of the people diagnosed with this aggressive, fast-growing brain cancer survive for more than five years, but Jessica was determined to defy those odds.

"We're going to be fine," she told her doctors, looking at Wyatt, "... I'm not going to die from this because of him ..."

Nine-year-old Wyatt is now a fourth-grader at Hometown Elementary School – and his mom is still there for him and Sam.

"God put us together for a reason," said Jessica of her marriage to Sam, "because not many men would have stayed."

Sam said they got married later in life because God was preparing them for each other and this journey.

"It's different, but it's our life," he said. "We've laughed through the whole COVID thing that people keep talking about that new normal ... Our new normal changes every time we go get a new (brain) scan ... Our new normal can change every two months ..."

"You just roll with whatever comes." And he rolls through the stressful times in their life with laughter. "I always tell stupid jokes," he said, "... That's my job."

"You become grateful," added Jessica, "for every single thing, whether it's good or bad. You're grateful that you have that moment because there's a purpose for it, there's a reason for it."

Through a surgery and her many treatments after an MRI revealed a golf ball-size tumor on the right side of her brain nearly nine years ago, Jessica's also been determined to be there for her students at Woodford County Middle School – especially her cheerleaders and their families.

Because of the relationships Jessica builds with her cheer families, Gina Kemp said the coach will continue being a big part of her family after her 14-year-old daughter, Aubrey, an eighth-grader, moves onto high school. That's because she's been much more than a coach or a teacher to her daughter.

"She puts those girls before her own needs," said Susan Tracy, an assistant principal and athletic director at WCMS. "She just works through anything. And all of us take for granted how strong she is and how many plates she balances all of the time because she does it with so much grace."

"Her normal is harder than most people's bad days," she added, "and she does it with a smile every day ..."

Jessica credits her survival to God. "He put me here for a purpose and I'm still here. We pray every day. God is great and prayers are answered," she said.

While battling cancer and getting treatments, Jessica has continued to coach her cheerleaders and go with them on annual trips to Nationals in Florida because their parents have always had her back, she said.

"I have really supportive cheer parents," said Jessica.

"She's always had really good cheerleader parents," added Sam, "and a really good administration that's always been behind her at school too."

Jessica's been at WCMS – her "first and only" teaching job – since 2005, she said. She taught health and seventh-grade earth science before teaching sixth-grade science, but has always coached the WCMS cheerleading team.

Tasha Richardson coached alongside Jessica at WCMS for several years, so she un-

derstands her level of commitment to students. "They just love her," she said.

When Jessica's name comes up in conversation, Richardson describes her as "an amazing human."

"I don't know if I could do what she does. I don't know if I would do what she does," said Richardson. "Her passion is those kids – teaching and cheerleading – and she will not step away no matter how sick she is. It doesn't matter if she's had chemo. It doesn't matter if she's had a brain surgery ... She hates to miss."

Through all of her treatments, Jessica has only missed the spring semester of one school year and takes off a half-day every other Monday for chemotherapy.

"She's just amazing," said Kemp. "... Even when she didn't feel good, she was there" for her cheer-

leaders and students.

At the end of the 2012-13 school year, Jessica, then 34, said her left side felt like it had gone to sleep.

A trip to the hospital was followed by a visit to a neurologist and a brain scan that revealed a golf ball-size tumor. Within a week after her MRI, Jessica had surgery on June 24, 2013.

Diagnosed with Grade 4 Glioblastoma or GBM, Jessica says she was referred to an oncologist and radiologist.

She was told the life expectancy of someone diagnosed with GBM was in months – not years. But she has never forgotten the words spoken to her by one of her doctors: "You're young and you're healthy, and this is the only thing wrong with you."

She was also told other people who share her diagnosis have a slew of other health

I couldn't do it without him," said Jessica. "We're a team."



JESSICA COLEMAN, husband Sam and their son, Wyatt, are pictured at Disney World. Sam still remembers what Jessica told doctors when they asked her to set a goal on their initial visit to Duke after being diagnosed with glioblastoma in 2013. "I want Wyatt to know me as mom," she told them. (Photo submitted)

issues. Even so, the average person diagnosed with glioblastoma survives for 12 to 18 months, with only 25 percent surviving for more than one year.

Jessica and Sam did their research on where she should get her treatments, and agreed Duke University Medical Center was where she needed to go. She was excited by the cutting-edge clinical trials, treatments and research happening at Duke, and he wanted his wife to receive care from doctors who treated North Carolina State basketball Coach Jim Valvano and former U. S. Senator Ted Kennedy.

Jessica and Sam now go to Duke every other month for scans. Their son joined them on one of those trips, and saw an MRI showing a reoccurrence of his mom's brain cancer, they said.

"He's had to be more of an adult than any 9-year-old I've met. And that's tough, sometimes," acknowledged Sam.

Because Wyatt worries about his mom, Jessica said she calls Huntertown from Duke so she can ask his principal, Elaine Kaiser, to tell him, "Mommy's scan is fine."

Sam still remembers what Jessica told doctors when they asked her to set a goal on their initial visit to Duke. "I want Wyatt to know me as mom," she told them.

Duke's goal, according to Sam, was "give you enough tools and enough therapies that we can keep you alive until we can cure this thing, because right now we can't cure it."

Jessica's initial treatment included 18 months of chemotherapy and 30 straight days of radiation, Sam said. She had a clean scan – "they could not find any cancer" – after completing those treatments in January 2015, he added.

In order to coach her cheerleaders at Nationals in February, Jessica was told by her doctor at Duke that she had to finish a checklist of what she needed to do in order to get a medical release. "It took her six days to get through that ... including walking three laps ... by herself with no help," said Sam.

Again, she was determined. "They (her cheerleaders) were the motivation," she said.

Three years later in July 2018, a reoccurrence of the cancer meant additional treatment, Sam said. He noted the initial tumor and its subsequence re-growth have all been located near the area of the brain that controls the motor skills on the left side of her body.

Even now, Jessica deals with problems on her left side. And because she writes left-handed, her writing is not always the best. So sometimes, her students need to ask her, "What does that say?"



A SCAN revealed a golf ball-size tumor in the back right area of Jessica Coleman's brain. She had surgery June 24, 2013 and now receives chemotherapy after being diagnosed with glioblastoma nearly nine years ago. (Photo submitted)

"It just has a different sensation," she said of her left side. "Balance is off some," but she doesn't use a cane "because I don't want to." And other people have told her, "You hide it very well," when they find out she has cancer affecting her left side.

Jessica said she was not a candidate for an experimental treatment at Duke using a modified polio virus to treat GBM, noting it would have caused her brain to swell and led to permanent damage.

Instead, Jessica had three rounds of radiation beginning in October 2018 with doctors using a CyberKnife to focus the treatment on the affected area of her brain. A subsequent biopsy in January 2018 paralyzed the entire left side of her body temporarily, she said.

Since July 2019, when there was new growth – the second reoccurrence of Jessica's brain tumor – she has received an IV infusion of a specialized immunotherapy.

Developed at Duke, it restricts blood flow to the area of her brain affected by the tumor.

Jessica said she typically takes a half-day off of school "as late as possible" in the afternoon every other Monday, drives herself to Baptist Health Hospital to get this chemotherapy and then goes to cheerleader practice. Sam has been unable to go with her during the pandemic, and that's been tough because he'd always been there for her. "COVID," he said, "hit hard."

Jessica said her cheerleaders know her story and she hopes they're motivated by what she's had to overcome and what she still does to be there for them and especially her family.

To keep their extended family informed, Sam takes a lot of photos, which they post on Facebook along with updates on her brain tumor and treatments.

She's also Facebook friends with other people who've been diagnosed with glioblastoma, "so they can follow my journey and I can follow them," she said.

Their conversations sometimes include Sam sharing his experiences as his wife's caregiver. "I couldn't do it without him," said Jessica. "We're a team," repeating her husband's words.

Looking back on her family's journey so far, Jessica said she and Sam have made the most of everything in their lives and refuse to dwell on the negatives.

"Every day's a blessing," said Sam. "Jessica's a miracle ... a walking miracle."

"... I put it in God's hands and said, 'Take care of me.' And He has," Jessica said.



JESSICA COLEMAN and husband Sam are pictured on their honeymoon in Alaska. "One of the best vacations we have shared," said Sam. He proposed to Jessica on the cheer mat at Woodford County Middle School, where she's coached since 2005. They moved to Versailles five years ago. (Photo submitted)

The Glioblastoma Foundation

The purpose of Glioblastoma Foundation is to transform the standard of care for glioblastoma by supporting the development of drug therapies for glioblastoma. Researchers have found that each glioblastoma is different, and as such a targeted approach to therapy may be necessary. Glioblastoma Foundation focuses on supporting the development of targeted therapies, those based on the molecular features of each tumor. It is likely that no one therapy will be enough to beat glioblastoma. Multiple drugs will inevitably be needed to block the many molecular signaling pathways present in glioblastoma, thereby disabling the cellular machinery that allows tumors to recur.

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VPD officers, employees go for the gold (and silver and bronze)

STORIES BY JOHN MCGARY

WOODFORD SUN EDITOR

Under the Versailles Police Department's (VPD) new fitness and health program, officers and dispatchers have another motivation besides pleasing their boss to be physically fit: paid time off.

As noted in the *Sun* last November, when the new Versailles Police Department (VPD) station opened in May 2020, a few things were lacking – among them, equipment for a fitness room on the lower level. A \$5,000 donation from the Joe and Debbie Graviss Foundation paid for items like a treadmill, dumbbells, a bench press, Olympic weights, a squat rack, a speed bag and heavy bag, medicine balls and a “big heavy rope,” Chief Mike Murray said.

“It means a lot, because to do this job, it takes a certain level of fitness. ... The average life expectancy for an officer after retirement is five years, so we invest in our people,” Murray said.

The first incentives Murray offered were giving employees up to an hour per shift, duties permitting, of paid time in the fitness center. Even then, though, he, Assistant Chief Rob Young and Officer Scott Bobbitt, whom Murray eventually charged with running a new program, were making plans for something bigger.

A Jan. 28 inter-office memo with the subject line “Health Improvement Program” gave the details. The aim of the program is to “incentivize voluntary participation” and participants are “encouraged to work throughout the year towards meeting the standards in this policy in an effort to improve their quality of life and job performance.”

Bobbitt, a native of Versailles who's been with the department for 14 years and the school resource officer at Woodford County High School, said such things had been discussed in the department for much of his career. Asked why he was selected for the job of physical fitness coordinator, Bobbitt said he believed it was

because he's always had a consistent approach to exercise. When he was at the police academy, Bobbitt led the class in that area and even won an award.

“I'm not sure if I know how to ... motivate them to do it for themselves,” he said of his fellow officers, “but I've been self-motivated when it comes to that, I guess I would say.”

Asked about the fruits of their labor, Bobbitt stressed longevity in a job that – action movies and TV cop shows notwithstanding – doesn't always involve a great deal of physical labor.

“A lot of times, we sit a long time in our cruisers, and it adds up on the body,” he said.

The department policy states that Health Improvement Program participants must undergo a physical exam and submit a memo to the physical fitness coordinator spelling out which activities they'll engage in. Annual fitness tests consist of push-ups, sit-ups, a 300-meter run and a



OFFICER STEPHEN JOHNSON took a stroll on the treadmill last week while Officer Scott Bobbitt took the stationary bike for a spin and Sgt. Brent McGee went for a climb. (Photo by John McGary)

1.5 mile run, with specified rest periods between each event, are where they win the awards. Bronze winners get one day of paid leave and part-timers get a \$50 equipment allowance; silver winners get two days of paid leave and part-timers a \$100 equipment allowance, and gold winners get three days of paid leave and part-timers a \$200 equipment allowance.

With three children, Bobbitt, who is married to Woodford Economic Development Authority member Anna Beth Bobbitt, usually works out in his home garage, often at 4:30 a.m., he said. At that time of the morning, the garage has felt more like a freezer than a gym lately, but Bobbitt still lifts kettle bells and does other body-weight exercises like pull-ups.

“It's more functional fitness, is what I go for, and it's more of a longevity thing,” he said. “I used to be into gym muscles in my 20s, and it's added up to some shoulder injuries and things like that, which I've been able to fix by doing just body weight (exercises).”

Plenty of those types of work-outs are available in the VPD fitness center, along with a recently purchased massive tire that can be pushed around and flipped behind the station. On a mid-morning last week, officers Stephen Johnson, Casey Whittle, and Ben Hartley (Bobbitt's assistant) and Sgt. Brent McGee met there to do some of what they do when they're not patrolling the county. They take off their vests and some of their equipment, but the uniforms remain, so they'll be ready in seconds if called to duty.

A few minutes later, they were joined by Bobbitt and Young. A few good-natured jibes ensue, including one about the low height of the speed bag, which one suggested was presently set up for Young. Young, not among the tallest officers in the department, didn't deny the allegation.

After a few sets on the bench press, Whittle said he believes the new fitness program will help him work out more often – and be a better officer.

“I know, me personally, I tend to make excuses for not coming in here when there's really not any good excuse,” he said. “... Being (at) peak physical performance is a necessity, not only to keep us safe, but to help us be able to protect the citizens every day. If we're in shape, it helps everybody.”



ASSISTANT POLICE CHIEF Rob Young shows some of the exercises VPD employees engage in to reach levels of physical fitness that will earn them paid time off or money for equipment. (Photo by John McGary)

Health Improvement Program participants must undergo a physical exam and submit a memo to the physical fitness coordinator spelling out which activities they'll engage in. Annual fitness tests consist of push-ups, sit-ups, a 300-meter run and a

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Alzheimer's disease, the most common form of dementia, is often mistaken as something that only affects aging men and women. While the Alzheimer's Association® notes that age is the biggest risk factor for Alzheimer's, the group also warns that even men and women nowhere close to retirement age can develop the disease. In fact, the Alzheimer's Association reports that, in the United States alone, roughly 200,000 people under the age of 65 have early-onset Alzheimer's disease. According to the Alzheimer's Association, many people with early-onset are in their 40s and 50s. Recognizing that Alzheimer's is not just for retirees but capable of affecting younger men and women with families and careers is important, as the Alzheimer's Association points out that healthcare providers typically do not look for signs or symptoms of Alzheimer's in young people. In such people, symptoms of Alzheimer's may be incorrectly attributed to stress. Adults who suspect they might be suffering from early-onset Alzheimer's should have a comprehensive medical evaluation, which may include a neurological exam and/or brain imaging, conducted by a physician who specializes in Alzheimer's disease



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Educating next generation of nurses at Midway University

BY BOB VLACH

WOODFORD SUN STAFF

Students at Midway University told the *Sun* they're pursuing degrees in nursing for many reasons. Most are motivated to help people, but also realize the challenges of the profession.

Sophomore Reagan Golden works in an emergency room for clinical experience, so she has seen firsthand – in her role as a certified nursing assistant – how the pandemic and an influx of COVID-19 patients in hospitals have been overwhelming for nurses. “Nurses are getting so burnt out from the capacity issues, the staffing issues,” she said.

“Even though I do see it,” she added, “I feel like I have way too big of a passion for this career field” to not become a nurse.

Sharon Humphrey, a non-traditional student, said she was working in a pediatric doctor's office and “already kind of thinking of going into nursing” when the pandemic hit.

Seeing nurses walk away from their jobs in the midst of a pandemic motivated her “to step up and do my part,” she said.

Studying to earn a Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) degree, Golden said she's the first in her family to pursue a career in a medical field, but she already has “a clear view of what exactly I'm going to do when I start my job as an RN.

“... I know that's what I want. I know what I'm getting myself into. And yeah, it's hard, but any job can be hard.”

Sophomore Madison Clayton said she began her studies at Midway University as a psychology major, but after learning about the health and mental disparities between Native Americans and white populations, she chose a different path.

A Native American herself, Clayton said she decided to pursue a career in nursing to help everyone, but more specifically this underserved population.

Kevin Tamariz, a sophomore whose parents work in agriculture, said he was drawn to nursing to help people like them who work really hard and need medical care for their job-related aches and pains.

For sophomore Joel Price, nursing has always been a part of family life, with his mom choosing that profession and his dad being a pharmacist. As he got older, he viewed nursing as a career that would “help him sleep at night (because) it's very fulfilling.”

He credits his parents for motivating him to choose a nursing career – not because they pushed him in that direction, but because he wanted to help people.

So he – like Jenna Duecker – is pursuing a BSN. “I feel called to help people and I think that really brings me joy,” she said.



MADISON CLAYTON, left and Jocelyn Spaulding, who are both sophomores pursuing Bachelor of Science in Nursing degrees, practiced doing a physical assessment on a “patient” in Midway University's skills lab. (Photo by Bob Vlach)

Golden cited the gratitude shown by families of a loved one receiving care. Something as simple as brushing a patient's hair can mean “the absolute world to them, and they clearly show that to you and it's very rewarding,” she said.

The reputation of Midway University's nursing program was a significant factor in Humphrey's decision to go there, but she also likes being in its smaller class settings where she's able to form connections with her peers – and professors.

“You can go to their office and ask uncomfortable questions and they'll give you answers,” said Jocelyn Spaulding, also a sophomore pursuing a BSN. “It might not be the answer you want to hear, but they're going to give you an answer and they're going help you.”

“I feel called to help people and I think that really brings me joy.”

Price appreciates having professors who've had careers in nursing and have seen firsthand how COVID has changed the profession.

"I have actually seen more students want to go into nursing during the pandemic because ... they want to help," said Lorra McCarty, an instructor in the nursing skills lab at Midway University.

"... So I think some are discouraged (by the pandemic), but I think some are encouraged as well."

Having spent most of her career as a bedside nurse, Keely Lowe has a passion for caring for patients and wants to foster that love of nursing in her students, she explained. "And we (the faculty at Midway University) all really have a passion for nursing or we wouldn't be here."

Teresa Vincent wants to use her 30 years of experience in operating rooms to nurture future nurse leaders, she said. Being coordinator of the Master of Science in Nursing program at Midway University gives her an opportunity to mentor students so they can become the next generation of nurse managers and change the way others view that role, she explained.

"The average career life of an operating room manager is three to five years, and then they're done. That's not good for patient care. That's not good for standard of care," Vincent said. So she embraces her opportuni-



KEVIN TAMARIZ and Hannah Pohl, sophomores at Midway University, are studying to become nurses. They are pictured in the skills lab. (Photo by Bob Vlach)



NURSING STUDENT Joel Price assesses pressure ulcers on the feet of a "patient," while being observed by classmate Jenna Dueker in the skills lab at Midway University. Both sophomores are pursuing Bachelor of Science in Nursing degrees. (Photo by Bob Vlach)

ties as an educator to reverse those burnout trends and "break that old mold" of what it means to be a nurse manager by being a resource for the future leaders, she said.

Students need guidance navigating the transition to being a practicing nurse and understanding the realities of nursing, especially in a COVID world, she added.

"We're preparing the next generation of nurses, so role-modeling is really important ... in the academic setting," Diane Chlebowy, dean of the school of health sciences at Midway University, said.

In the skills lab, McCarty said she and Michelle Sency "really try to foster" discussions with students about their real-world clinical experiences. "Tell us what you saw today. Tell us what you learned from that. Tell us what you would've improved. And they love it," she said.

Like other institutions of higher learning in Kentucky and across the country, Chlebowy acknowledged it's a challenge for Midway University to recruit more students into the nursing program.

In addition to the nursing shortage, there needs to be a focus on the shortage of nursing faculty, said Chlebowy. "Because if we don't have qualified people to teach in our programs, we won't exist," she said.

Fortunately, the faculty at Midway University has students who – like them – have always wanted to become a nurse, which gives them a variety of choices during their career.

Some nurses, for example, never want to work in labor and delivery. "I did that for five years, loved it," Tonya Stephens said, causing laughter to ripple among the nursing faculty at Midway University gathered around a table during a recent interview with the *Sun*.

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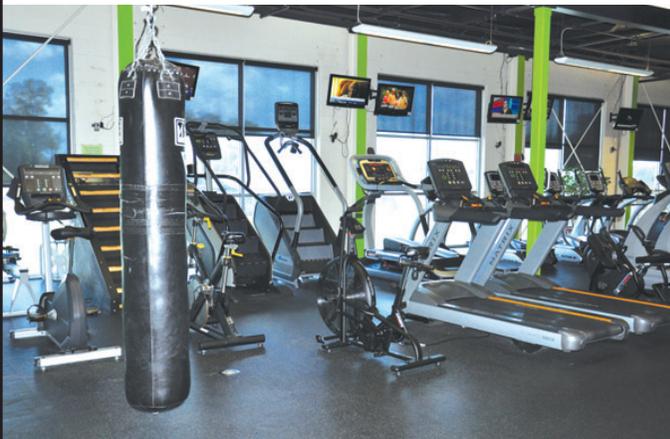
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