



## Robinson's career path formed early in life

#### By Cathi Cox-Boniol community@rustonleader.com

Brooke Robinson's career instincts kicked in early in life.

"I was in a page ant around five years old and when asked what I wanted to be when I grew up, 'A nurse that doesn't give shots' was what I said," Robinson confessed.

Fast forward and you will find Robinson's early intuition was correct. A nurse since May of 1998, she currently serves as the instructor of the Certified Nurse Aide (CNA) class at Ruston High School along with the school's Introduction to Health Occupations course. She also practices as a weekend Registered Nurse at Alpine Skilled Nursing and Rehab.

When asked how she got there, she quickly points to her grandmother's influence and inspiration.

"My grandmother wanted to go to nursing school but with four children, one a special needs child, going back to school was not an option," Robinson recalled. "As I watched her care for her son, I observed in her the qualities I wanted others to see in me. She encouraged me to be a nurse saying, "You could never have a bad day helping people all day. As a nurse you are the hands and feet of Jesus."

Other people that influenced Robinson's career choice were her science teachers in high school. When they required her to do a deep dive into eight different careers, Robinson chose nursing as one and realized how many appealing aspects the career had. Once inside the career, the reward quickly became obvious.

"The best part of the profession is interacting with the patient," Robinson said. "I love the skills part but making somebody feel less pain, seeing them welcome their baby into the world, making them feel at ease before a surgery and just being there when they are at their worst is still my favorite part."

Robinson will tell you her move to



Brooke Robinson (center), Registered Nurse and Certified Nurse Aide Instructor at Ruston High School, works with RHS juniors Clemmiqua Hill (left) and Cherish Howard during their CNA class on the school campus.

teaching was absolutely a God thing. While going through a divorce, her nursing schedule was not conducive to being a single mom. Struggling with the balance of shift work and being a mom, she broke into tears with a friend while wondering aloud how she could make it all work. Her friend mentioned they were looking for a nurse to teach a CNA class. The rest, as they say, is history.

"I was very apprehensive at first but I reached out to my friends and mentors in nursing," Robinson continued. "I expressed how concerned I was with being able to teach after being at bedsides for 18 years. But I was reminded that nurses are inherently good teachers. I literally prayed and took the leap."

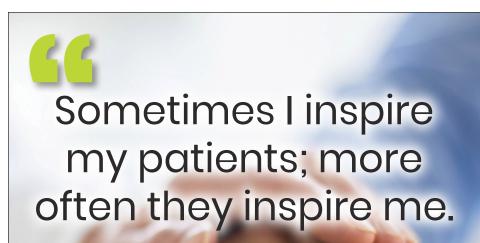
That leap has put Robinson in a situation she finds extremely valuable. With a shortage of CNAstoday, she knows she is equipping her students with job security.

Not only do they leave high school job ready as soon as they certify, the program and testing comes at no cost to the students. Furthermore, the program gives the students opportunities that provide stepping stones to other health care professions if they wish to advance to a higher degree. She just wants to be sure they are aware of the realities of the profession.

"Students come in thinking it will be like Grey's Anatomy or Chicago Med," Robinson said. "While you do have high adrenaline moments, the typical day is nothing like what TV makes it out to be. The reward in nursing is about caring for someone that cannot care for themselves. You need to be sure you have a heart for people. The job has so many components to it, and so many responsibilities.

"While nurses are paid well, oftentimes they are under paid for the amount of work they do and responsibility they have. You have to be doing it for the right reasons for it to be worth it," she said.





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#### NURSE APPRECIATION • 3C

### The many important roles of nursing assistants

Health profession- ous settings, notably qualities, as the job als are often unsung heroes. However, since the arrival of COVID-19, millions of people have had their eyes opened to the crucial role medical providers play in regard to helping patients and their families.

Nursing assistants are tireless health care workers who perform their tasks with professionalism and patience. Certified nursing assistants, or CNAs, help patients with their basic daily care.

long-term care facilities, doctors' offices, hospitals, and rehabilitation clinics. Nursing assistants often are the first responders when a patient calls for help. They traditionally work under the guidance of registered nurses, and the work of CNAs frees up nurses to provide care that requires a greater level of training, such as administering IV medication or alerting doctors to significant changes in health.

Nursing assistants CNAs work in vari- must possess certain

requires caregiving above all. The nursing resource All Nursing Schools says CNAs must be able to listen to patients' concerns and develop personal relationships. The care CNAs provide requires a certain level of intimacy, and CNAs must have demeanors that help patients feel comfortable. Some tasks may involve lifting or helping to move a patient, so some measure of physical strength is also needed. Most importantly, CNAs often provide

companionship and friendship, especially in home care settings. Providing comfort for patients who are scared, lonely or upset is greatly part of a CNA's job.

Nursing assistants are important health care professionals and often part of a team of caregivers that help patients enjoy improved quality of life.

Without these healthcare heroes, our healthcare system would not function as smoothly or as enjoyable as they currently do.

### CNA'S MAY ASSIST WITH:

- **#1** Making beds and changing bedding.
- **#2** Helping patients use toilets and tending to catheters.
- **#3** Helping patients to get dressed.
- #4 Monitoring vital signs and reporting on patients' health.
- **#5** Handling feeding and helping the patient drink.
- **#6** Turning bedridden patients according to schedule.

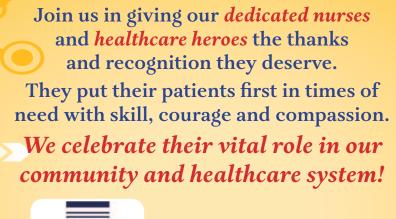
Thanks, Nurses! We appreciate healthcare heroes like you! We'd like to take this opportunity to show our appreciation to the hard working nurses who have saved countless lives and provided comfort beyond measure to patients and

families across our community and country.



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## How communities can recognize their nurses

their communities. Nurses interact with and assist their patients in many different ways.

Nurses are the foundation of most successful social healthcare programs, and they are often the powering force behind implementing private-or government-funded universal health plans. In addition, a 2015 report in the International Journal of Community Based Nursing and Midwifery found nurses are key players in community health awareness and promoting preventative health measures.

People who recognize the impact a great nurse can have may wonder how they can honor this special person. While nursing organizations offer prestigious awards for nursing excellence, a communitybased or individual recognition may be just as meaningful.

#### SCHOOL NURSES DAY

School administration can set aside a special day each year, whether it's in May on National School Nurses Day or another time of year, to pay homage to the school nurse. Children can be urged to draw thank-you cards, and parents can chip in for a special luncheon or gift.

#### DONATE IN TRIBUTE

Honor a special nurse by making individuals.

Nurses play essential roles in a donation in his or her name to a charitable healthcare organization. Honorees may receive a listing on a website, notification of the tribute, official certificates of honor, or a letter of honor sent to his or her place of employment.

#### VOLUNTEER SERVICES

Pitching in may be a big help to a dedicated yet overworked nurse. Volunteering at a hospital or health center can show a nurse how much he or she is appreciated.

#### OFFER GIFTS

People who want to thank a nurse who has provided exemplary service may want to offer a gift to the nurse directly or provide something for the entire medical office or hospital floor. Catered food, flowers, gift cards, candy, or similar gifts may be appreciated.

#### OFFER A PUBLIC THANKS

In an era of social media posts, someone can share with the community (and the world) how a nurse impacted his or her life for the better. Thanking a nurse online can be a way to start a positive pay-itforward movement.

Nurses work long hours for the benefit of their patients. Offering a word or gesture of thanks can mean the world to these dedicated



A huge thank you goes out to Debbie Coleman,RN



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### Newsom right where she wants to be

### By Nancy Bergeron nancy@rustonleader.com

For Robbi Newsom, dreams do come true. Ever since Newsom was a child, she wanted to be a nurse.

She'd watched nurses take care of her grandparents and aspired to give the same kind of compassionate help to others.

"It was my dream job," the Springhill native said. "I just have a passion for helping people."

Newsom's been doing that now for 14 years, all in the labor and delivery department at Ruston's Northern Louisiana Medical Center.

"In labor and delivery, I get to partake

in a woman's best or even worst days of her life. I get to help them through either situation. I can be a shoulder to cry on during loss, or I get to celebrate tears of joy with a new baby," Newsom said.

Every birth is a miracle, she said.

"I am blessed to be able to help women through the most vulnerable times in their life. I build relationships with my patients and most of them turn into lifelong friends," Newsom said.

Newsom earned her nursing degree from Louisiana Tech University, graduating in 2007.

She worked as a labor and delivery aide at NLMC while still

in a woman's best or a student in 2006 and even worst days of hiredon fulltime upon her life. I get to help graduation.

> "I consider my NLMC coworkers family. I am so blessed to have this job," Newsom said.

Despite the long hours and personal sacrifices that sometimes must be made like sometimes being away from her three sons on a holiday, or missing a school program — Newsom said she loves nursing and would recommend it as a career.

"Nursing as a career is an exciting, fast-paced profession that gives me the opportunity to have a positive impact on my patients and their families, which therefore has a positive impact on our community," she said.

"If you are considering nursing as a profession, I would highly recommend it. There is so much flexibility in nursing from clinic to hospital settings, and specialty areas. We witness miracles in life and miracles in death. But through these situations nurses become family. But no matter the area you work, the reward of helping others and supporting families is worth it," Newsom said.

On her days off, Newsom and her husband, Chad, are either watching their sons play baseball or soccer, or enjoying family time at nearby Lake Claiborne.



Submitted photo

Labor and Delivery nurse Robbi Newsom has worked at Northern Louisiana Medical Center since before she graduated college.

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## 'Everybody's mama'

### Mendy White cares for all at Ruston High

#### By Caleb Daniel caleb@rustonleader.com

Mendy White has been a nurse in school systems since 2001 after a five-year stint working in surgery.

Currently at Ruston High, White said she initially made the switch to school nursing to get better hours, but she soon grew to love working with children.

"It's a lot of hands on and getting to know the students," White said. "You develop those relationships."

As school nurse, White takes care of the day-today illnesses and injuries of the more than 1,200 students at Lincoln Parish's largest school.

She conducts vision and hearing tests on every ninth to 11th grader yearly. She develops health plans for students with diagnoses or who take medication. She helps the families of special education students develop their individualized plans.

"I'm just taking care of the kids while they're at school in every way their parents would," White said.

"I'm kind of like everybody's mama."

Finding out how best to help the students often encompasses more than their physical maladies.

"We have some great mental health counselors at the school I refer them to," White said. "You have to know how to talk with each student on their level, depending on what situation they're in. You have to be compassionate.

"Anxiety and depression are common issues. You have to recognize when that stomachache comes from something else other than physical."

A 1995 graduate of NortheastLouisianaUniversity (now the University of Louisiana at Monroe), White worked in surgery in Bastrop for five years before transitioning to the Morehouse Parish school system, where she worked until 2007.

She serviced Lincoln Parish as a special education nurse for about 10 years before moving strictly to Ruston High.

"A lot of it is day to day, but we do lifesaving things here to," White said. "I've done the Heimlich, I've given EpiPens —you never know what's going to happen."

The everyday routine for nurses at Ruston High and every other school changed drastically when COVID-19 arrived in the spring of 2020. After the initial shutdown, White said the fluctuating rules of COVID mitigation overpowered all other parts of the job.

"It was crazy," she said. "All of our regular duties were pushed to the

side because COVID was all-consuming. It takes over. It's all you do."

Tracking close contacts of students and their families, communicating with parents about the ever-changing protocols, keeping quarantine days straight and other challenges dominated everything.

"It was the bombardment of questions you had to ask," she said. "Extensive guidelines that would keep changing. You would tell a parent one thing in the morning, and then in the afternoon it would change. It was information overload."

After an Omicron variant-induced surge of cases over the Christmas holidays, COVID has crawled to a practical standstill at Ruston High and hasn't affected operations since February, White said.

"I'm back to doing my regular stuff, catching up," she said.

At the end of the day White said being adaptable and putting aside one's biases are two essentials to being a good schoolnurseforstudents.

"You can't bring any biases or your opinions to the plate," she said. "You have to be accepting and open to all. Regardless of your religious or moral beliefs, you have to be there and understand what a student is going through."

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