

Soundbite Script – Overcoming a potential nursing shortage

Heather Bomstad, Chief Nursing Officer, OSF Saint Elizabeth and OSF Saint Paul Medical Center

“The state of nursing right now is definitely gone through its challenges, especially since the pandemic started a couple of years ago. Early on we didn't know what to expect out of it and it was just a whole different vibe, but then going through it and seeing how our patients were struggling and the very, very sick, and the high volumes that we were having really took a toll on nurses, which then has really made some nurses want to leave health care in general, unfortunately. Some just needed to do something different maybe in healthcare, but just a different type of nursing, which has made shortages in various areas of nursing.”

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“Burnout I would say is probably the number one reason that people are thinking long and hard (about leaving). This is stressful work and it is, but yet very gratifying work, but many are wondering if they need to do something different. It breaks my heart to see nurses go into a whole different career path when you know, they set out to take care of people early on, but it's indeed happening.”

One way OSF HealthCare is bridging that gap is turning to graduating students from its two colleges of nursing, in Peoria and Rockford. The colleges offer students a variety of degrees and practical hands-on experience that has become more vital since the beginning of the COVID pandemic.

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“Years ago, you could say that when we had new graduate nurses they tended to go to more of our medical floor or surgical floors. We always wanted them to get that experience first before going to any specialty, to an ICU to an ER to a pediatric unit, OB – whatever the case may be. But coming out of this, we're thinking differently. If their heart is set and their passion is to be in a certain specialty area, we are now hiring them into those areas.”

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“I went into nursing to care for people and I would hope that every nurse that goes into it knows what they're getting into and that's the true reason – really caring for the patient, their families. They're coming to us in their most vulnerable time. They need that help, that communication, and it is still a very gratifying career to go into and I really hope and encourage young people to go into nursing. It is still a fabulous profession.”