



Legacy Health Nursing Residency articles series

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New residency program boosts new nurses' confidence, competence

Last month marked the start of a new nursing residents' program at Legacy. Designed for new nursing school graduates, the R.N. Residency Program lasts 18 weeks and provides both classroom and on-the-job training. The residents have been assigned to specific units at all six Legacy hospitals.

According to Mary Lyn Feldt, project manager of the Legacy R.N. Residency Program, the response to the program from new graduate nurses has been tremendous — both locally and nationally. Nearly 700 nursing students applied for 61 residency positions.

For an insider's view of how the program works, *Insight* will follow some of the new residents while they're in the program:

Cynthia Olivares

Cynthia Olivares, R.N., is a recent graduate of Linfield Good Samaritan School of Nursing. She was "ecstatic" to learn that Legacy had invested in a program that was designed to nurture and support new nursing graduates. "It was one of the reasons why I chose to work at Legacy instead of at another health care system," she says. "That, and Legacy's commitment to the community."

Olivares' nursing specialty is mental health, and she's assigned as a float nurse between the behavioral health units at Legacy Good Samaritan and Legacy Emanuel medical centers. She believes the

program will provide her with the ability to navigate confidently through the organization and to provide health care in a safe, effective and competent manner.

Sally Senior

The operating rooms at Legacy Emanuel are where you'll find Sally Senior, R.N., during her residency. A graduate of Mt. Hood Community College, she chose Legacy because she has always been impressed with Legacy's world-renowned therapeutic horticulture program.



Sally Senior, R.N.

"It's something that is near and dear to my heart," she says.

Legacy's commitment to sustainability and recycling was another factor in her decision, as well as Legacy's willingness to support new nurses by offering a quality training program. "I knew I would learn an amazing amount here," she says.

"It can be overwhelming for a new nurse to directly enter the field," she adds, "but I knew the residency program would offer me an invaluable opportunity to develop my confidence, skills and competence as a surgical nurse — with the support and encouragement of mentors and preceptors."

Senior believes that the classroom and lab instruction offered in the residency program, along with patient care exposure, will serve to help her to develop an effective clinical skill set necessary to provide safe, quality care. "Any opportunity for gaining new ideas and skills

brings an additional knowledge base that serves to benefit our patients," she says.

Kelly Green

Kelly Green, R.N., received her nursing degree from Oklahoma City University and says the R.N. Residency Program was a big draw in her decision to join Legacy as a nurse in Surgical Specialties at Legacy Salmon Creek Medical Center.



Kelly Green, R.N.

"I like the idea of a program that will get me to a higher level of competency faster," Green says. "The residency program should get us to a level in 18 weeks that would normally take a year and a half."

"I also like that the residency program is backed throughout Legacy and from the top," Green adds. "This means that we are coming into a supportive environment as new grads."

As Green focuses on her career in medical-surgical nursing, she's confident that the residency program will help lay a solid foundation because it includes a cohort of residents who are all starting and learning together. "That will help to consolidate what we have learned and build a ready network of resources," she says. "And I realize that a large number of people in Legacy are also invested in our success. That kind of team effort will help me and all of the residents get off to a great start."

Insight will next check in with these nursing residents at the midpoint of their residencies. ■

Mid-term check-in with new nurse residents

This fall Legacy launched a program that gives new nursing school graduates 18 weeks of classroom and on-the-job training with nurse mentors. In the R.N. Residency Program, 61 registered nurses have been assigned to units at all six Legacy hospitals.

In September, *Insight* introduced a few of the nurses who were selected for the program from among nearly 700 applicants. We checked in with them recently to find out how things are going now that they're halfway through residencies.

Kelly Green

Kelly Green, R.N., who received her nursing degree from Oklahoma City University, works in Surgical Specialties at Legacy Salmon Creek Medical Center.

As Green focuses on a career in medical-surgical nursing, she's finding that the program is reinforcing what she learned in nursing school. "The time on the floor gives me the chance to bring together my nursing skills, organizational skills and people skills in caring for patients," she says.

Green says she's grateful for the high level of support she's received. "My colleagues on the floor are always available to provide a learning opportunity," she says. "They are committed to helping me get the best experience and to become a safe, effective and caring nurse."

Managing a crazy schedule has been Green's biggest challenge. Adapting to working different shifts is a big change, she says, but no more so for her than for other new nurses. "My mentor, preceptor and other nurses have offered advice on how to adjust to different schedules," she says. "It helped a lot, and I quite like it now."

Green credits the R.N. Residency Program with providing staff members who have strengthened her nursing skills because they're always available to answer questions. "They'll even call me if there is a learning opportunity," she says. "I feel like they 'look out' for me somewhat, and I really appreciate that."

Cynthia Olivares

Cynthia Olivares, R.N., recently graduated from Linfield Good Samaritan School of Nursing. She is a float nurse between the behavioral health units at Legacy Good Samaritan and Legacy Emanuel medical centers.

Olivares says the R.N. Residency Program is exactly what she had wished for. "At this point, I feel more confident and knowledgeable regarding unit-specific policies and guidelines compared to when I first started," she says. "Everyone is willing to answer any questions or concerns."

Working on two units and learning the differences between the units has given Olivares plenty of challenges. Perhaps the biggest hurdle has been to learn all of her co-workers' names. "Our team consists of day, evening and night shifts," she says. "It can be very difficult to remember names, especially when you work on two units."

Olivares says staff members have been there to help in any way possible as she learns her new career. "I feel very comfortable asking any questions," she says. "It's great to have someone there to happily support you. My mentor has also been an amazing force with fitting into the Legacy environment."

Sally Senior

Legacy Emanuel Medical Center's operating rooms are where you'll find Sally Senior, R.N., a recent graduate of Mt. Hood Community College.

Senior says the R.N. Residency Program is proving to be an asset to Legacy and its future nurses. "We are all very grateful to be so supported as we begin our careers here," she says.

The program's debriefing and mentoring sessions have boosted Senior's competence and confidence as she develops a career in surgical nursing. "I've found the sessions to be much more helpful than I expected at first," she says.

What has been Senior's biggest challenge? She says finding time to meet with her mentors is sometimes difficult. "It isn't easy, but we roll with it, and everything seems to work out," she says.

Preceptors and co-workers are a critical part of the program, and Senior says operating room staff members have been supportive in such a demanding and fast-paced field of nursing. "The kindness, patience and encouragement of everyone in my department have been invaluable," she says.

McKenzie Van Hoy

McKenzie Van Hoy, R.N., began working in the Family Birth Center at The Children's Hospital at Legacy Emanuel after graduating summa cum laude from the Oregon Health & Science University School of Nursing.

Van Hoy says the program has helped her become familiar with the Family Birth Center. "I've built solid relationships with the nurses and doctors who'll be my co-workers when the program ends," she says.

Van Hoy says it's taken a while to get used to working the night shift, but she's surprised at how well she's adapted to her new schedule. "It amazes me how well I can sleep during the day," she says.

One challenge in her new career has been getting medical staff used to the term "nurse resident." "To some people, it seems like an oxymoron," she says with a laugh.

Van Hoy applauds the R.N. Residency Program and says she's fortunate to have some amazing nurses as preceptors. "It's very valuable to learn different approaches to nursing in order to form my own practice," she says. "Not only have they been able to help me as a co-worker, but they have made me feel like part of the unit and like a friend." ■

New nurse residents reflect on completing residency program

Several months ago, a group of nurses

Part 1

embarked on a journey as the first cohort in Legacy's new R.N. Residency Program. Designed for new nursing school graduates, the program provided 18 weeks of classroom and on-the-job training. Nurses in the program were assigned to specific units at all six Legacy hospitals.

According to Mary Lyn Feldt, R.N., who manages the program, response to the program from recent nursing graduates was tremendous. Nearly 700 nursing students from throughout the United States applied for the program's first 61 residency positions.

During the program's maiden voyage, *Insight* tracked the progress of three nurses from start to completion of their programs. This week: Kelly Green, R.N., on her nursing residency in surgical specialties; and Cynthia Olivares, who completed her residency in behavioral health.

Green: 'Learn and enjoy'

Oklahoma City University graduate Kelly Green says the program was a big draw in her decision to move to Portland and to join Legacy as a nurse in Surgical Specialties at Legacy Salmon Creek Medical Center.

Looking back on the program's 18 weeks, Green says she learned a lot about teamwork and developed great respect for all members of the Legacy health care team. "We each have a role to play at different times in providing safe, effective patient care," she says. "We couldn't provide the care we do without



Kelly Green, R.N.

a team approach. One person cannot do it all."

Green credits the program with providing a better transition from nursing school to the "real world" of nursing. "More people have a vested interest in seeing the nursing residents succeed because they have invested time in us through teaching, precepting, mentoring, managing and looping experiences," she says. "This gives a much stronger network of support than I would have had otherwise."

As advice to future nursing residents, Green says to participate as fully as possible. "You get out of the program what you put into it," she says. "Having an 18-week preceptorship is a bit of a luxury, so make the most of it — learn and enjoy."

Green also puts a premium on getting adequate sleep: "It's easier to face a full work schedule and a day of classes if you are well rested."

Green says that as she progressed through the program, she developed an even greater respect for Legacy, her unit and nursing in general. "Legacy exceeded my expectations as an employer, and I continue to hear nothing but good things," she says. "Surgical Specialties staff supported me throughout the residency and were a very welcoming and professional team."

Nursing school prepared Green for a demanding job, but she says that nothing can fully prepare a new nurse for the work that lies ahead. "It's exciting and challenging, and it's an opportunity to make a difference in a patient's life," she says. "And still it's a little bit scary."

Olivares: 'Ask plenty of questions'

A recent graduate of Linfield Good Samaritan School of Nursing, Cynthia Olivares says she was "ecstatic" to learn

that Legacy had invested in a program that was designed to nurture and support new nursing graduates.



Cynthia Olivares, R.N.

"It was one of the reasons why I chose to work at Legacy instead of at another health care system," she says. "That, and Legacy's commitment to the community."

Olivares' nursing specialty is mental health, and she was assigned as a float nurse between the behavioral health units at Legacy Good Samaritan and Legacy Emanuel medical centers. She says that the R.N. Residency Program taught her that to be a nurse, one must be flexible, open to challenges and a team player.

"I learned that working in a hospital requires every employee to work efficiently in order to tend and care for each patient safely," Olivares says. "Working for Legacy I learned that Legacy values each and every employee."

Olivares says the program eased her into a fast-paced environment and allowed her to learn at her own pace. She adds that the program was beneficial compared to the standard four-week orientation, a more typical transition from school to a new job in nursing.

To future nurses entering the program, Olivares advises taking on as many new opportunities as possible and asking plenty of questions. She also values lessons learned from her colleagues in behavioral health. "I have a greater sense of respect for each and every nurse at Legacy," she says.

Next week in Insight, we'll check in with Sally Senior, R.N., who did her residency in the operating room. ■

Sustainability Tip

If your work area is near a south- or west-facing window — In the summer adjust the blinds to minimize the heat gain caused by direct sunlight. In the winter adjust them to allow the heat gain.

Seven Legacy Salmon Creek nurses receive national orthopedic certification

The national Orthopedic Nurses Certification Board recently certified seven nurses who work in the Legacy Total Joint Center–Salmon Creek. They join four others in the Center’s nursing staff members who had previously earned this honor.

“This speaks to our team’s commitment to pursuing the highest possible professional standards, which translates into best care practices for our patients,” said Tim Bock, nurse manager overseeing the Legacy Total Joint Center–Salmon Creek.

To qualify for the certification, each nurse passed an in-depth standardized test and agreed to complete 100 hours of continuing education during the next five years.

The seven newly certified orthopedic nurses are: Mineko Ball, Cecelia Blodgette, Julie Harrell, Kristin Headrick, Sunshine Jenkins, Erika Schroeter and Kate Williams. They join previously



Seven nurses in the Legacy Total Joint Center–Salmon Creek program were newly certified this fall by the national Orthopedic Nurses Certification Board.

certified nurses Jian Chen, Mike Fahey, Kim Feik and Heather Reynolds.

This follows on another recent honor for Legacy Total Joint Center–Salmon Creek. Four months ago, the center — in cooperation with Rebound, a regional orthopedic and neurosurgery clinic — earned disease-specific care certifications for knee, shoulder and hip joint

replacement surgery from the Joint Commission.

Nationally, only 120 programs have earned joint replacement certifications. Legacy Salmon Creek Medical Center was just the third program in the country to earn certifications in all three: knee, shoulder and hip replacement. ■

New nurse residents reflect on completing residency program

Several months ago, a group of nurses

Part 2

embarked on a journey as the first cohort in Legacy’s new R.N. Residency Program. Designed for new nursing school graduates, the program provided 18 weeks of classroom and on-the-job training for 61 nurse residents. Nurses in the program were assigned to units at all six Legacy hospitals.

During the program’s maiden voyage, *Insight* followed the progress of some of the nurses.

Last week (see *Insight*, Jan. 24, 2011), Kelly Green, R.N., and Cynthia Olivares, R.N., looked back on their experience in the program. This week, Sally Senior, R.N., reflects on her residency in the operating room.

‘Take advantage of every opportunity’

Senior spent her time in the residency working in the operating rooms at Legacy Emanuel Medical Center. A graduate of Mt. Hood Community College, she chose Legacy because she has always been impressed with Legacy’s

world-renowned therapeutic horticulture program.

Legacy’s commitment to sustainability was another factor in her decision, as well as Legacy’s willingness to support new nurses by offering a quality residency program. “I knew I would learn an amazing amount here,” she says.

Over the course of the program, Senior saw how Legacy is supportive of the communities it serves and of its staff members. “I’m impressed by how respectful everyone here is to each other and to the patients,” she says. “Every employee has the patient’s best interests in mind and works hard to provide the highest level of care possible.”

The R.N. Nurse Residency Program gave Senior a supportive atmosphere and a structured transition into her professional practice.

For the next group of nurses entering the program, she offers this advice: “Be



Sally Senior, R.N.

flexible and take advantage of every opportunity, especially the looping days,” she says. “Be willing to offer constructive suggestions to help Legacy continue to develop the program and create the most valuable nursing residency in the Northwest.”

Having completed the program, Senior now realizes how many different personalities must work together. She’s impressed at how well they do that on a daily basis.

“Everyone is a valuable employee in his or her own way, with unique talents with which to offer superior care to all our patients,” she noted.

What’s next?

The first cohort of the R.N. Residency program held their graduation in December. While the residents transition into their full-time roles, Legacy’s nursing team is preparing for a new group of nurse residents. The next group — 19 residents selected from 300 applicants — will start their program in late February. Another larger group will start in late summer. ■