

2024 Palmetto Gold Recipient Biographies

Ashley Albert, MSN, RN, NEA-BC, RNC-OB, CPPS
Prisma Health Baptist Easley Hospital

Ashley has devoted her career to advancing nursing practice and patient safety. Under her leadership, multidisciplinary committees addressing critical safety issues such as falls, pressure injuries, and sepsis have been spearheaded, resulting in evidence-based protocols and a significant reduction in hospital-acquired conditions. Ashley fosters a supportive environment for nurse growth through mentoring, teaching, and role-modeling, exemplifying extraordinary commitment to nurse development. Ashley's unwavering commitment to advancing the nursing profession is evident through her participation in initiatives like the SC Birth Outcomes Initiative, showcasing her dedication to improving healthcare outcomes beyond clinical practice.

Leanne Allard, MSN, RN
McLeod Health Dillon

As an Administrative Nursing Supervisor at McLeod Health Dillon, Leanne demonstrates exemplary leadership and clinical expertise. She actively mentors staff, particularly in skill development, and has made significant contributions to reducing CLABSIs and CAUTIs in the facility. Leanne's commitment to education and training has led to a 0.00 standard infection ratio for CLABSIs over the last 12 months and a 100% reduction in CAUTIs, showcasing her dedication to patient safety and satisfaction. In addition to her clinical role, Leanne volunteers extensively in her community, supporting local soup kitchens, organizing food and clothing drives, and sponsoring underprivileged children to attend summer camp. She is also known as a reliable mentor and educator. Leanne's positive communication skills and unwavering dedication make her an indispensable asset to both her hospital and her community.

Dwayne Alleyne, DNP, APRN, ACNP-C
University of South Carolina College of Nursing

Dwayne played a key role in developing simulation and immersive experiences for AGACNP students to improve their critical thinking and clinical decision-making skills. In his role as the DNP chair for AGACNP students, he provided guidance to DNP students. Dwayne is a facilitator at StandUP SC, an organization that helps prepare underrepresented, minoritized, and disadvantaged prospective and current nursing students. He also participates in the Lexington Medical Center Partners Program and serves on the Ridge View High School Business Partner Advisory Board. As an ACNP, he serves as a health ministry leader for a congregation of 250 members and coordinates an annual health fair which provides health promotion activities for over 75 underserved community members.

Jessica Altman, DNP, APRN, AGNP-C
SC DHEC – Low Country

Jessica serves as the Lead APRN in SC DHEC Low Country. Her passion is education and patient care. As a mentor, she oversees a team of 10 Nurse Practitioners (NP), having personally precepted 4 NPs upon their hiring. She has been instrumental in identifying processes to increase billing for services, restructuring STD clinics to allow for Walk-ins allowing 1445 clients to receive prompt services. Jessica liaised with the Urgent Care Facilities and established an effective referral system. She recently educated 15 attendees of the Abrazos Hispanic Family Literacy Program regarding contraceptives and sexually transmitted diseases and collaborated with 5 local school educators to inform them about state laws regarding teens and their ability to access

confidential Family Planning in the area. Additionally, she participates annually in fundraising events for her daughter's school, emphasizing her dedication both professionally and personally.

Susan Alvarado, MSN
Roper St. Francis Berkeley Hospital

Susan serves as a Patient Care Coordinator and has over 29 years of experience in the areas of the hospital. As the PCC, she has demonstrated excellent leadership skills in developing a staff that delivers competent and compassionate care to patients. With her support, multiple teammates have achieved a BSN or higher degree, and supports staff to get their certification. One example of how Susan goes above and beyond; there was a diabetic patient who expressed his frustration with lack of education on his new diagnosis. Susan completed getting the patient ready for his procedure, and when complete, while the patient was waiting for his procedure; she educated both him and his wife on diabetes. She printed out education materials for them and provided them with information on community classes and groups. Susan is also involved in the health ministry at her church by assisting with their monthly mobile health clinics on Saturdays. She is also an active member of the Faith Fighters support group that provides financial, emotional, and spiritual support to individuals undergoing cancer treatment or those in remission from the disease.

Crystal Arnette, RN, BSN
McLeod Health Dillon

As Director of Critical Care Services, Crystal implemented the Liberation Bundle for ICU patients, significantly reducing total vent days and increasing compliance with Sedation Vacation and Spontaneous Breathing Trials. She reorganized orientation and ongoing critical care education processes, developing annual critical care skills fairs and a 5-year education plan to enhance nurses' experience and expand areas of focus. Crystal fosters employee engagement through employee recognition opportunities and served as a speaker for Nurses Week. She has dedicated over 1250 hours to precepting students and staff and served as a Super User for electronic health record conversions. A military veteran, Crystal's commitment to service extends to her community involvement, educating on stroke awareness and volunteering at vaccine clinics, fundraisers for COVID-19 relief, food drives, and Operation Christmas Child. She mentors middle school students and volunteers as a certified Lactation Counselor, exemplifying dedication to nursing and community service.

Ashley Arrington, BSN, RN
HopeHealth

Ashley is a dedicated staff nurse with a focus on diabetic care. She has spearheaded efforts to promote patient access to glucose monitors at reduced rates and provides invaluable support to patients after hours, ensuring they receive necessary resources and support for managing their health. Ashley is a mentor and teacher at heart, having served as a nurse preceptor and teaching numerous nursing students and new graduate nurses. Her attributes include patience, clinical competence, effective communication, and a positive attitude, making her an invaluable asset in nurturing new talent in the field. As a patient advocate, Ashley ensures patients obtain necessary medications and equipment, including insulin pumps. She spends personal hours brainstorming ideas to improve patient care and community service, embodying a spirit of compassion and dedication to helping others beyond the typical working hours.

Stephanie E. Averette, DNP, APRN, FNP-BC
G. Werber Bryan Psychiatric Hospital

Stephanie is a nurse practitioner who serves as a primary care provider for a vulnerable patient population. She serves complex patients who have spent years institutionalized in the community. She is an adjunct

faculty and mentor for new nursing students at a state university and Clinical Faculty for a Family Nurse Practitioner Program. As a veteran, Stephanie voluntarily works with local veterans to improve access to veteran educational & medical benefits. She is a member of The Capital Nurse Practitioner Group and met with National leaders to discuss the role of the Nurse Practitioner and the healthcare workforce crisis.

Andrew Bacon, MSN, RN
Medical University of South Carolina

Andrew serves as a Clinical Outreach Coordinator in Telehealth, diligently connecting tertiary care services to underserved communities across South Carolina. He facilitates various telehealth services such as Telestroke, Teleneurology, Telepsychiatry, and more, at multiple hospital sites, fostering collaboration and sharing best practices. In addition to his role, Andrew chairs the nursing shared governance's New Knowledge and Innovation Council, promoting engagement in journal clubs, evidence-based practice initiatives, and nursing research. He actively develops telehealth training materials and teaches new graduate nurses, contributing to their professional development. He spearheaded the implementation of a neonatal rounding service, benefiting over 115 families and enhancing collaboration across departments. Andrew's leadership extends beyond his organization, as he arranges educational events and leads innovative initiatives, such as a virtual Nurse Hackathon, aiming to improve communication and reduce nursing turnover. His dedication to advancing telehealth and nursing practice exemplifies his commitment to improving healthcare delivery and outcomes.

Storm Beasley, RN
Carolina Pines Regional Medical Center

Storm is Charge Nurse in the emergency department at Carolina Pines Regional Medical Center. He led teams that revised and implemented process changes for stroke and chest pain patients. Through his efforts his organization improved door to tPA times as well as door to troponin times. He leads by example, having achieved his TNCC he then encouraged and mentored 5 of his peers to follow in his footsteps to become certified. Storm supports his community by volunteering with multiple organizations. One such group, Caring Hearts Camp helps area children have been involved in traumatic events. He is also a volunteer with his local volunteer rescue squad.

Samantha Beauford, BSN, RN
Self-Regional Healthcare

Samantha serves in the role of RN Educator. Her work as a clinical instructor on the dedicated education unit offers her the opportunity to teach the next generation of nurses how to manage a workload, keep patients safe and ensure the patients are engaged in their care. She is one of the reasons this unit has had an RN retention rate of 91.2% over the last 12 months. Her dedication to the growth of her peers is recognized by those nurses she trains as a resource and leader in improved patient outcomes. Starting as a unit representative for the hospital's executive led Nursing Town Council, she eagerly took on the role of Chair for the Nursing Practice Council when a shared governance model was introduced to the organization. In the community Samantha is a member of the First Aid Committee at her church. Outside of the hospital and local community she has served on medical mission trips with Volunteers in Medical Missions (VIMM) to Honduras. She assisted with setting up a medical clinic, pharmacy, and dental clinic in these villages and was able to serve over 1200 people during each trip. She is active in multiple community groups such as Blue Key Honor Society, Mu Zeta Chapter of Sigma Theta Tau International, and Legislative Director for SNA-SC Executive Board.

Amanda Bennett, MSN, RN
Prisma Health Laurens County Hospital

Amanda spearheaded a multidisciplinary effort to significantly reduce heparin infusion safety events from 22 in FY22 to 4 in FY23. Despite pursuing a PhD, working full-time, and managing a family, Amanda remains dedicated to enhancing nursing professionalism, encouraging certification pursuits, and mentoring nurses through their clinical ladder journey. Under her guidance, the hospital has seen a notable increase in clinical ladder submissions. Her commitment extends beyond hospital walls as she chairs the Night Shift Council, facilitating improvements in nightshift conditions, recognition events, and employee training. Furthermore, she actively engages with the local technical college, leading recruitment efforts, hosting hiring events, and volunteering her time with community organizations to promote health education and wellness initiatives, including coordinating a free drive-thru flu vaccine clinic. Amanda's multifaceted leadership has not only enhanced patient safety and nursing professionalism but also fostered community engagement and organizational growth.

Carolyn Birchmore, DNP, RN, APRN, FNP-BC
Columbia VA Health Care System

Carolyn is a Nurse Practitioner who is active on Dorn's local APRN council and a national APRN committee with over thirty years of experience. Carolyn has mentored more than 50 ARPNs and served as a preceptor/adjunct faculty for local universities for over 20 years. She is active in ANA, AANP and state nursing organizations. Carolyn has been awarded Nurse Practitioner of the Year for South Carolina and Who's Who in American Nursing. Most notably, Carolyn was the first Nurse Practitioner to work at the LMC ED and the LMC Urgent Care, and she was the first Nurse Practitioner to offer telehealth services in the state of South Carolina.

Christina Black, MSN, RN, MEDSURG-BC
Roper St. Francis Berkeley Hospital

Christina is an Acute Care RN Clinical Specialist that embraces leadership. Pressure injuries began increasing on a med-surg unit, so she partnered with wound care specialists to develop the "4 eyes" skin assessment with every change in caregiver to reduce HAPI. In 8 months, there have been zero pressure ulcers. She has also been instrumental in reducing CLABSI and CAUTI infections. In addition to unit activities, she serves at the system level by attending multiple shared governance and clinical committees. As part of those teams, she volunteered to provide education and rounding at sister facilities for both c diff and sepsis, served as the NDNQI coordinator for the hospital and provides quarterly education to new grad nurses in the residency program. She is a member of the local and national AACN. As the facilitator for unit shared governance, she assists in setting unit goals that impact the community we serve. She has volunteered with teammates to feed the homeless in a community shelter, stock the blessing box outside the hospital, provide Christmas for a needy family and gather school supplies for a local charitable organization.

Chris Bowers, RN, NRP
Prisma Health Baptist Easley Hospital

As the Manager of the Emergency Department at Prisma Health Baptist Easley Hospital, Chris showcased leadership in advancing nursing practice by attending the SAMHSA (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration) conference on Behavioral Health Crisis System Mapping in Baltimore, MD., resulting in the integration of the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline into patient After Visit Summary (AVS) across all 10 hospitals in the organization. By integrating 988 Lifeline Chat and Text into patient communication, individuals can now connect with crisis counselors for emotional support through web chat or texting, marking a pivotal step in

enhancing mental health services and accessibility. Chris's impact extended beyond hospital walls as he initiated educational programs in elementary schools to raise stroke awareness and increasing stroke care workflow in the ER. Chris's advocacy for the nursing profession is visible through his community service, leadership roles on the county council, representation at behavioral health task forces, and support for research projects on environmental factors in the ED.

Linda Branham-Kirkland, DNP, RN, CNOR
Columbia VA Health Care System

Linda is an Assistant Nurse Manager in the OR/PACU and currently part of the 2023-2024 Amy V. Cockcroft Fellowship class. She was part of a group who used music therapy to decrease anxiety in surgical patients. 90% of participants reported a reduction in anxiety. Linda assists students with making connections to resources to enhance their learning. As an officer of the Midlands Chapter of AORN, she plans and coordinates the annual winter conference for peri-operative nurses. Linda volunteers time to support Harvest Hope, Sistercare, and Transitions Homeless Center.

Austin Bren, BSN, RN, SCRNP, NRP
Roper Hospital

Austin works in the ICU and as a Nursing Supervisor and is the current System Quality and Practice Chair elect. In his current role, he has led efforts to improve patient outcomes at the system, hospital, and unit levels with outstanding results. As a leader, he petitioned our regional area health education center to bring a CCRN review course to a location within the community to encourage participation to increase the number of certified nurses as part of our Pathways journey. Austin is also a member of the newly formed Deterioration Index Team, which utilizes patient metrics and existing technology for early identification of distress to prevent adverse events during hospitalization. Austin is an active member of several professional organizations, to include AACN, ANA, SCNA, and Sigma Theta Tau. As a current active Firefighter & Paramedic he has organized community programs including fire safety and prevention, child safety seat installations, and CPR training.

Kasey Bustamante, DNP, FNP-BC, BSN, RN
McLeod Health Dillon

Kasey, while pursuing her Doctoral Nurse Practitioner (DNP) degree, assumed leadership roles and initiated significant improvements in nursing practice. Under her direction, the hospital's safety grade improved from a C to an A, demonstrating her commitment to quality and safety. She refined the orientation process for newly licensed RNs and implemented Appropriateness Guidelines for Intravenous Catheters, reducing Catheter Associated Blood Stream Infections (CLABSIs) and enhancing patient care. Kasey's dedication to continuous improvement is evident in her implementation of "Dashboard Day" during Quality and Safety meetings, engaging bedside staff in regulatory compliance and process improvement initiatives. Beyond her professional role, Kasey is deeply involved in community service, volunteering at COVID-19 vaccine clinics, serving as a scholar in social determinants and rural community needs assessment programs, and providing healthcare education at local events and farmers' markets.

Joni Butler, BSN, RN
McLeod Health Dillon

Joni is dedicated to ensuring safety and positive patient outcomes through leadership and collaboration. Over the last 3 years, Joni has assumed increasing leadership roles, motivating fellow nurses to prioritize patient care goals. Collaborating with different departments and physicians, Joni successfully reduced surgical site infections (SSIs) related to hysterectomies. Currently pursuing a Master's in Nursing, Joni is also implementing

processes with local EMS to enhance sepsis outcomes through early activation of interventions. Her involvement in community education and active participation in new hire orientation demonstrates her commitment to regulatory adherence and skills development. Additionally, Joni's focus on teaching evidence-based practices enhances staff morale and autonomy, ultimately contributing to increased staff satisfaction.

Karen Butler, BSN, RN, WCC, OMS, AIPC
Carolina Pines Regional Medical Center

In her duties as the Director of Infection Control at Carolina Pines Medical Center, Karen has led initiatives that achieved remarkable outcomes including 37 plus consecutive months free from central line associated blood stream infections and 19 plus consecutive months of no hospital acquired C-diff. Karen recently obtained her Associate-Infection Prevention and Control Certification. In recognizing a need for her community, Karen established an outpatient ostomy support group within her facility. This recipient supports the American Heart Association, Relay for Life, and the hospital's own 5K Heart Walk that raises money to supply community entities with needed AEDs.

Melissa Cardwell, MSN, APRN, WHNP-BC
SC DHEC – Lowcountry

Melissa is one of the highest performers in SC DHEC, Low Country. She has seen over 3,838 patients in the last three years. With her wealth of clinical knowledge and history of providing excellent patient care, Melissa is viewed as a mentor and role model among her peers. Additionally, she is actively involved in reviewing content used in the orientation program provided to new hire RNs to ensure accuracy of information and to identify areas of improvement. Most notably, she spearheaded the creation of educational cards to be provided to patients following Intrauterine Device or Implant procedure visits. Due to her passion for health, wellness, and education, she is involved in multiple community organizations and speaks to community groups of the benefits of the HPV vaccine. She volunteers at a local running store, instructing on injury prevention and proper nutrition during race training. She has run over 1,000 miles to support causes such as local food banks, Alzheimer's research, breast and ovarian cancer, and autism.

Leigh Anna Chambers, BSN, RN, CEN
Prisma Health Baptist Parkridge

Leigh Anna demonstrates a commitment to advancing practice, providing high-quality safe care, and supporting the growth and development of colleagues, particularly through fostering new graduates and inexperienced RNs. She is instrumental in improving unit morale, nursing retention, and integrating evidence-based practice in the emergency department. Serving as the current president for Central Chapter of SC Emergency Nurses Association (ENA), she actively recruits nurses and student nurses to association meetings, contributing to increased professional development and organizational participation. Under her leadership, the ED team has achieved record-setting throughput with median arrival-to-discharge times frequently below the national benchmark, and a decrease in left without being seen (LWBS) rates. Additionally, Leigh Anna has led initiatives to enrich current services and outreach, including developing a creative staffing model during staffing shortages and implementing a paramedic role in the ED to enhance patient experience and care delivery. Through mentorship and leadership, Leigh Anna supports the professional growth of new assistant nurse managers, charge nurses, and ED nurses, fostering a high-performing and highly engaged team culture.

Simone Chinnis, DNP, MBA, APRN, FNP-C
Medical University of South Carolina College of Nursing

Dr. Chinnis is a dedicated leader in nursing, with 18 years of experience as a bilingual nurse and nurse practitioner, focusing on serving underserved populations. Dr. Chinnis excels in her role, consistently exceeding teaching benchmarks while directing community engagement efforts and leading grants aimed at improving healthcare access for marginalized populations. As the primary investigator on a grant supporting residency training for novice Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioners in telehealth, she has developed a sustainable model of care, benefiting both patients and providers. Dr. Chinnis mentors undergraduate students through grants, contributing to improved outcomes and reduced attrition rates. Beyond academia, she actively serves on various boards and volunteers extensively, demonstrating her commitment to community service and healthcare equity. Dr. Chinnis's exemplary contributions have earned her recognition, including the distinguished alumni award, highlighting her significant impact on the nursing profession and underserved communities

Brittany Cole, MSN, RN
Spartanburg Medical Center Church Street Campus

Brittany excels as the EC Behavioral Health Nurse Manager at Spartanburg Medical Center, Church Street, where her innovative leadership has transformed psychiatric patient care. Leading the acute substance abuse treatment program, Brittany has forged invaluable partnerships with local facilities, offering comprehensive counseling, follow-up care, and medication-assisted therapy on-site. Her passionate commitment to advancing acute psychiatric nursing care has led to tangible improvements in patient outcomes across various psychiatric settings. Her collaborative initiatives underscore her commitment to excellence in psychiatric nursing, making a profound difference in the lives of patients and their families. Brittany's leadership serves as a beacon of innovation and compassion, setting a high standard for psychiatric nursing practice.

Allyson Colvin, MSN, RN, MEDSURG-BC
Roper Hospital

Allyson exemplifies outstanding leadership and dedication to advancing nursing practice within the hospital and the broader healthcare system. Notably, her contributions to the Quality and Practice Council have resulted in system-wide improvements including the successful implementation of bedside shift report practices aimed at reducing patient safety events, as evidenced by a decrease in the systemwide fall rate below the target. She has significantly contributed to increasing confidence levels and retention rates among new nurses and promoting excellence at the bedside. Moreover, Allyson's efforts extend beyond the hospital setting, as she actively engages in community outreach and philanthropic endeavors. Her involvement in fundraising activities for nursing scholarships, support for organizations like Habitat for Humanity and the ASPCA, and membership in professional nursing associations demonstrate her commitment to making a positive impact both within the healthcare community and the broader society.

Cynthia Corbett, PhD, RN, FAAN
University of South Carolina College of Nursing

Dr. Corbett is a Professor and Endowed Chair at the University of SC. She serves as the director of the College of Nursing's (CON) research center to promote care and outcomes for people with chronic conditions. She led the development of center-related infrastructure processes and provided significant leadership to facilitate research at the CON and throughout the state, particularly research that will improve care and outcomes for people with chronic conditions. An exemplar of a novel initiative is her work using smart home speakers (SMS, e.g., "Alexa"). Dr. Corbett promotes the nursing profession through her leadership roles, including Institutional Review Board (IRB) 2018-present, co-chair 2022-present and others throughout her tenure. Professional organization service includes membership on NIH review panels (2018), grant reviews for Ireland's lead research agency (2021), and membership on Sigma's International Research and Scholarship Council (2021-

present). Community service includes membership (2019-2021) and chairperson (2021-present) of the member committee for an organization that promotes older adults' abilities to live independently, and a member of the South Carolina Institute of Medicine and Public Health's Social Isolation in Older Adults Task Force (2022-23).

Jaime Cuff MSN, FNP-BC
Beaufort Memorial Hospital

Jaime works in the Pre-op Clinic at Beaufort Memorial Hospital. Her actions in the pre-screening process have led to better patient outcomes for surgical patients who visit her facility. Due to process improvement initiatives and enhanced screening techniques, readmissions for total knees have gone from 4% in 2020 to 1% in 2022. Jamie promotes the APRN profession by previously serving on the board of directors for the SCNA. She promotes the field of nursing by speaking at conferences both local and at the state level, including AANP. She freely gives her time to participate in charity walks for breast cancer and color run fundraisers.

Jennifer Davis, BSN, RN, CNOR
Prisma Health Baptist Easley Hospital

Jennifer is the Manager of Perioperative Services at Prisma Health Baptist Easley Hospital and Oconee Memorial Hospital, who has demonstrated exceptional leadership and commitment to advancing nursing practice in the perioperative arena. She has significantly elevated the standard of care by spearheading performance improvement activities, resulting in a remarkable 97% success rate for first case on-time starts and a substantial reduction in surgical site infections, including zero infections in over 1000 robotic surgical cases. She has fostered a culture of excellence within the nursing community and set a shining example for her peers. She has mentored clinical nurses into assistant nurse manager roles, leaving a lasting impact on the nursing community. Her transformative initiatives have positioned her programs among the top 10% nationwide. Jennifer actively promotes the nursing profession through her passion for service, volunteering, and participation in professional organizations, enriching the profession's knowledge base and exemplifying the spirit of nursing leadership and advocacy.

Misty Davis, MSN/HE, RN
Columbia VA Health Care System

Misty is a Nurse Manager who led her staff to a 1st place national ranking for colorectal cancer screening. She also led an Oral Care initiative to ensure veterans brush their teeth twice per day to decrease incidents of non-ventilator associated pneumonia. Her current unit consistently scores above 90% for patient satisfaction. Misty works with local groups (Orangeburg Rotary Club, Veterans Helping Vets, and Orangeburg Chamber of Commerce) to improve community health. Additionally, she volunteers with her church to serve as the Parish Nurse.

Renia Davis, DNP, MSN, RN
G. Werber Bryan Psychiatric Hospital

Renia is a Performance Improvement Resource Nurse. During a recent survey, seclusion and restraint data showed deficiencies. She created a simplified reminder tool that resulted in seclusion decreasing from 93.9 hours to 7.45 hours. As part of the Suicide Care Collaborative Improvement and Innovation Network (SC CoIIN) she works to improve outcomes for people experiencing suicidal thoughts. Renia is involved in the health ministry at her church by assisting with their monthly mobile health clinics on Saturdays. She is also a member of Faith Fighters, a nonprofit organization, that provides financial, emotional, and spiritual support to individuals in remission or undergoing cancer treatment.

Christina Estes, MTS, BSN, RN
Cherokee Medical Center

Christina fulfills the vital role of Nurse Educator/Informatics professional at Cherokee Medical Center, where she seamlessly integrates education, technology, and community service. Christina serves as the sole nurse educator, leading the charge in developing and implementing a comprehensive orientation and onboarding program. With a holistic approach, her orientation pathways delve deeply into patient care, emphasizing the importance of addressing physical, psychological, and social needs from a biopsychosocial perspective. In addition to her professional duties, Christina dedicates herself to serving her community through various church activities and volunteer work. Her Master's Degree in Divinity equips her with a unique perspective, allowing her to make meaningful contributions both within the healthcare setting and in the local community. Christina's commitment to service underscores her dedication to improving the lives of others, exemplifying the values of compassion and altruism.

Mildred T. Evans, DNP, MSN-Ed, RN, CCCTM, BC
Columbia VA Health Care System

Mildred is a staff nurse who identified a change in practice to transform a chronic disease monitoring program to a 3–6-month patient education program, teaching self-care modalities in the home. As result, the facility's monitoring score is rated 1st in the region and 4th nationally in program utilization. She developed a teaching module on implications of Opioid Overdose in Nursing Practice, teaching over 400 nurses regionally and locally. Mildred has mentored and precepted ADN, BSN, and MSN nursing students. In her community she serves meals to homeless persons and participates in Stand-down for the Homeless yearly.

Hsin Hsuan Fleming, BSN, RN
Prisma Health Baptist Parkridge

Hsin has demonstrated exceptional dedication to professional development and mentorship within the practice setting. She obtained her BSN this year and supported five nursing colleagues in enrolling and obtaining their BSN degrees. Serving as a charge nurse, preceptor, and mentor, she has been instrumental in leading the Charge Nurse Team of 2022 and the ED Preceptor Team 2023, both of which were awarded the Daisy Team Award by the organization. She advocated for the implementation of a structured preceptorship program, which resulted in 100% retention of 12 new grads from RN Residency. Through her leadership, the team has demonstrated improved collaboration, engagement, and commitment to continuous improvement. Hsin actively volunteers with her child's school, donates items to local women's shelters, and is developing a plan to support the local elderly community in partnership with the volunteer program and the Salvation Army for the holiday season. Her commitment to professional growth, mentorship, and community service has made a significant impact on both her colleagues and the community she serves.

Bambi Flowers, ADN, RN
McLeod Health Dillon

Bambi is a dedicated staff nurse on the medical-surgical unit and has played a crucial role in enhancing patient safety and quality of care. As a member of the local hospital Fall Committee, she has implemented various interventions to prevent falls. In her role as charge nurse, Bambi ensures adherence to CLABSI and CAUTI interventions, leading to zero instances of these infections in her unit for the past 3 years. She also serves on the hospital Trauma Committee. Bambi's commitment to nurse education and retention is evident through her role as a preceptor for new nursing graduates. She actively participated in the implementation of a new EMR

system as an EPIC superuser and serves on the Nursing Transformational committee, focusing on nurse retention strategies. Beyond her professional role, Bambi engages in community service through involvement in addiction ministry, church activities such as teaching Sunday School and participating in the choir, and humanitarian efforts such as collecting donations for children in Africa and advocating against human trafficking with Ushers group.

Michelle Flowers, BSN, RN, CCRN
Pelham Medical Center

Michelle excels as an ICU Nurse at Pelham Medical Center, embodying dedication, and excellence in patient care. Her steadfast commitment to enhancing care standards and fostering professional growth is evident through her collaborative initiatives, mentorship, and community service engagements.

Michelle's leadership shines through her involvement in initiatives aimed at reducing ventilator-associated events (VAE). Through effective teamwork with colleagues in respiratory therapy and infection prevention, she spearheaded the implementation of a ventilator bundle protocol. Beyond her professional duties, Michelle actively participates in community service endeavors, extending her impact beyond hospital walls. From delivering meals to homebound seniors to organizing food and clothing drives, she consistently demonstrates her commitment to promoting community health and well-being.

Mary Gaffney, EdD, RN
University of South Carolina Aiken

Mary undertook a national study exploring the impact of disrupted learning on academic success. It highlighted student needs during quarantine and was one of the first manuscripts to be published in the nursing education literature. As the Chair of the School of Nursing Curriculum Committee, Mary spent considerable time working with faculty to explore and update the curriculum to better prepare our graduates to meet current healthcare demands. At the professional level Mary serves as a manuscript reviewer for 2 professional nursing journals, presented more than 10 times at national/international nursing conferences in the last 5 years, and mentored 2 new nurse researchers in the School of Nursing. This mentorship resulted in 1 publication, 3 presentations, and another longitudinal project in progress.

Kristin Gonzalez, MSN, RN, C-EFM, IBCLC, RN
Prisma Health Oconee Memorial Hospital

Kristin's pivotal role in enhancing lactation support is evident through her active rounding alongside staff, providing coaching and education to empower nurses in assisting breastfeeding mothers. Her meticulous review of neonatal records and acknowledgment of team members' efforts has led to surpassing the national benchmark for exclusive breastfeeding. Beyond the hospital, Kristin's passion for growing professionals in lactation extends to pioneering a comprehensive lactation curriculum within the Family Medicine Residency Program. Their efforts extend to outpatient visits, immersing them in the patients' breastfeeding journeys. Through her dedication, a new generation is equipped not just with knowledge, but also with empathy and understanding, enhancing the care and support offered to mothers embarking on their breastfeeding journeys. Her establishment of a milk bank drop-off site at the hospital has resulted in the collection and donation of over 55 gallons of donor breastmilk that is dispersed to the most vulnerable neonates across the state. As a volunteer, Kristin transformed a monthly support group into a thriving weekly gathering, fostering enduring friendships and sustained breastfeeding success for mothers, while also significantly contributing to community events like the diaper bank. Kristin's unwavering dedication and transformative initiatives exemplify her profound impact on lactation support at both the hospital and community levels.

Christine Gordon, MSN/MHA, APRN, FNP-BC, AAHIVS
HopeHealth

Christine is an exceptional Nurse Practitioner specializing in serving individuals with HIV and AIDS. Her compassionate calling drives her commitment to advocate for this population and break down barriers associated with the disease. Christine serves as a Clinical Preceptor and mentor in collaboration with the American Nurses Association, and several colleges of nursing. She was awarded the 2022 Yvonne Van Camp QI award for excellence in patient advocacy and 2019-2022 served on the HIV Treatment Speaker Bureau for Gilead Sciences. Christine has served over 1000 hours in community service providing donated clothes and backpacks for homeless clients and blessing boxes for food access. Christine volunteers with outreach through Angel Tree, Operation Christmas Child, and the Children's Hope program.

Tammy Gottshalk, MSN, FNP-BC
SC DHEC – Lowcountry

Tammy has served in a wide variety of nursing roles over 37 years in practice. As COVID Case Investigator (CI) Program Coordinator for SC DHEC, Low Country she provides oversight and supervision of >200 CIs, hiring, training, scheduling, and providing technical assistance to this rapidly growing staff. Tammy recognized the vital importance of training and mentoring new nurses and experienced nurses in new roles during the COVID pandemic and demands it put on PH nursing staff. She championed this, helping develop and daily updating a training curriculum for COVID nurses during the pandemic. Tammy also works with Tuberculosis patients, and she has trained and mentored RNs to promote increased knowledge and competence among her colleagues. Tammy has served for 24 years on the US Board for The LAMB Institute, a ministry based in Honduras that serves the poorest of the poor through a school & daycare in the inner-city slums; an after-school program to inner-city youth at high risk for gang involvement; a children's home that houses, loves & cares for more than 65 children 0-18 yrs. old including a home for children with special needs. She travels to Honduras annually to support the ~100 Honduran staff there.

Morgan Gray, RN, PCS
McLeod Outpatient Surgery Center

Morgan promotes excellent patient care and teamwork in the Outpatient Surgery Center. She uses her skills and knowledge to improve the processes of care and expand the potential of those with whom she works. Morgan has made it her mission to ensure that every new employee has the same opportunity for growth by helping them become proficient in their tasks. She is recognized for her excellence in care by physicians and patients alike. She actively recruits her team and brings professionalism and compassion to every situation. Morgan brings a high level of compassion along with her clinical background that creates an environment of trust, and those she serves recognize this gift. Morgan is a member of the Barrineau PH church.

Jennifer Hajj, MHDS, BSN, RN
Medical University of South Carolina

As Program Manager for Cardiac Mechanical Support, Jennifer has brought expertise to the programs caring for this specialized patient population. She has developed and implemented training and competency programs across the state providing training to 8 separate facilities, 4 EMS teams and Life Flight. She was instrumental in establishing a sim lab on campus to train providers in the care of this patient population. Jennifer has presented at an international conference, mentors nursing leaders across the country, and trained multiple facilities across the state impacting the survival rate of this patient population Jennifer served as

president of an international consortium, has presented at local and international organizations, and is actively involved in the professional community. She was selected as the manager of the quarter in Ambulatory. Jennifer is also active in her children's school as leader on the PTO board.

Jay Hamm, RN, MHA, FACHE
Lexington Medical Center

As Vice President for Operations at Lexington Medical Center, Jay worked with ED triage nurses and the Medical Director to develop triage order sets decreasing the provider disposition from 139 minutes to 117 minutes. Jay is a mentor to healthcare students in nursing, healthcare administration and public health. He is an adjunct faculty member at USC School of Public Health and chairs the Masters in Health Administration Advisory Committee. He serves on several community and professional boards to include American Heart Association Midlands Board, Leukemia & Lymphoma Society Alpha Xi Sigma Board, and USC College of Nursing Dean's Committee.

Marisette Hasan, BSN, RN
SC Community Faith Nurses Association, Life Springs Consulting Group, LLC

As the Program Coordinator/Chair of the SC Coalition Care for the Seriously Ill, Marisette implemented a groundbreaking \$1.8 Million BCBS SC Foundation Advance Care Planning (ACP) Initiative from 2018 to 2023. This initiative significantly impacted underserved rural communities in South Carolina, with over 8,000 registered users on the consumer-facing website "www.mylifemychoices.org," more than 4,620 completed ACP conversations, and the execution of over 125 Advance Directives. She demonstrates a strong commitment to nurturing and growing nurses. She mentors medical students, nurses, and end-of-life care professionals. Her dedication extends to educating and supporting faith communities and laypersons on the benefits of advance care planning, palliative care, and hospice. Marisette is extensively engaged in professional organizations and activities at both the state and national levels. She holds leadership positions, serves as a speaker at conferences, and contributes to various committees focused on healthcare policy, ethics, and community engagement.

Rebecca Hayden, MSN, CMSRN, CPPS
Colleton Medical Center

Rebecca serves as the Director of Patient Safety at Colleton Medical Center, where her steadfast commitment to patient well-being has left an indelible mark on the organization's initiatives and outcomes. Under her leadership, Rebecca has spearheaded numerous successful endeavors aimed at enhancing patient safety and quality of care. In addition to her managerial duties, Rebecca actively fosters a culture of patient safety among staff members by providing comprehensive education on hospital protocols and safety initiatives to new hire nurses and leaders. Her dedication to nurturing a safe environment for both patients and staff is evident in her tireless efforts to uphold high standards of care. Beyond her professional responsibilities, Rebecca is deeply engaged in community service, volunteering her time to provide medical screenings and support charitable organizations like March of Dimes and Relay for Life. Her commitment to serving others extends beyond the hospital walls, reflecting her genuine passion for making a positive impact in the broader community.

Jamie S. Hepps, BS, RN, CCRN
Prisma Health Heart Hospital

Jamie serves as the Assistant Nurse Manager of the Cardiovascular Intensive Care Unit, demonstrating a commitment to continual learning, team engagement, and positive patient outcomes. She spearheaded the implementation of the Cardiothoracic Surgery Unit – Advanced Life Support (CSU-ALS) program, certifying

bedside nurses to recognize early distress symptoms after cardiac surgery, leading to a national certification for her facility and plans to expand the program across South Carolina. She took on the challenge of improving the Bar Code Medication Administration (BCMA) compliance rate, posting individual scores transparently and implementing strategies to achieve and maintain a compliance rate of over 95%. Active in professional organizations like the American Association of Critical-Care Nursing (AACN), she encourages her team's professional development and engagement, utilizing a scoring tool for participation incentives. Beyond her professional endeavors, Jamie is deeply involved in philanthropic activities, organizing blood drives, fundraising events, and community initiatives to support families affected by leukemia and other health challenges. Her dedication to nursing excellence, staff engagement, and community service exemplifies her commitment to serving with compassion and making a positive impact in healthcare and beyond.

Sarah Valdivia Herron, BSN, RN
Cannon Memorial Hospital

Sarah consistently seeks out best practice and is an advocate for change at her organization. She championed process improvement initiatives that promoted increased mobility for total joint patients thereby reducing LOS. She also promoted bedside shift report across the organization. She is engaged in supporting her community through various outreach programs that benefit those less fortunate. She also volunteers with Ripple of One, an organization that supports individuals or families using public assistance by mentoring, educating, and providing incentives to help them no longer need public assistance.

William Hobbs, Jr., MA, BSN, RN
McLeod Regional Medical Center

William has completely changed the culture of nursing on the unit under his leadership. He has worked tirelessly to build a foundation of professional nursing practice on this specialty unit. William has created a culture of empowerment to serve as patient advocates as well as team member advocates. Working with the local AHEC Director and nursing instructors from the local nursing colleges, he created a network that connected nursing students' interest areas with clinical units that matched those interests. William has served as a personal mentor, encourages professional growth among his staff and has led multiple quality improvement initiatives to improve care. He leads by example, serving on multiple organization-specific quality committees, and engages in community outreach fundraising for various charities in the community.

Casey Hopkins, PhD, APRN, WHNP-BC
Clemson University School of Nursing

Dr. Casey Hopkins serves as an Assistant Professor of Nursing at Clemson University. A trailblazer in nursing practice, she spearheads patient-centered, community-driven research initiatives aimed at enhancing the health-related quality of life for underserved populations, particularly women with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Dr. Hopkins' groundbreaking work delves into the experiences of caregivers navigating healthcare systems to secure resources and support, particularly concerning puberty and menstrual health for daughters with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Passionate about advancing the nursing profession, Dr. Hopkins actively engages in service activities at local and national levels. As a member of the editorial advisory board for her professional nurse practitioner organization's official journal, she collaborates with fellow clinicians to disseminate clinically relevant information to women's healthcare providers.

Mary Lois Huggins, RN
MUSC Health Black River Medical Center

Mary Lois exemplifies professionalism and passion in every aspect of her nursing career, continually striving to improve patient outcomes and address healthcare challenges. She played a pivotal role in establishing a nursing assistant/phlebotomy apprenticeship program, which boasts a remarkable 100% completion rate, benefiting aspiring nurses who are advancing in their careers. Her journey from a nursing assistant to obtaining an ADN after 28 years demonstrates her unwavering dedication and passion for nursing, evident in her commitment to patient care and mentorship of new nurses. During the COVID-19 pandemic, she selflessly volunteered her time to administer vaccines, ensuring access for those unable to attend vaccination events and providing follow-up care. Her contributions have earned her numerous awards, including Nurse of the Year recognition from both peers and the community. Her dedication to enhancing healthcare outcomes and exemplifying core values make her a truly outstanding healthcare professional.

Cameka Jackson, MSN, RN, SCRNP
Prisma Health Greenville Memorial Hospital

Cameka serves as the Stroke Coordinator where she has significantly expanded the scope of services for the stroke program over the last five years. Her leadership was instrumental in developing a pathway for disease-specific care center certification across multiple community hospitals, fostering collaboration among multidisciplinary teams and stroke experts to deliver certified stroke care locally. Her professionalism and empathy shine through her one-on-one interactions with stakeholders. Committed to advancing nursing in the community, she coaches and mentors nurses and physicians to assume stroke leadership roles, supporting their onboarding and integration into the stroke program. Cameka's dedication to nursing excellence extends to her involvement in regional conferences and in state and regional stroke councils, focusing on increasing stroke awareness and reducing disability and mortality. She organizes and volunteers in community stroke educational events, including weekend retreats for stroke survivors and caregivers, demonstrating her commitment to primary and secondary stroke prevention. Through her leadership and advocacy, Cameka continues to make a meaningful impact on stroke care delivery and community education.

Marissa Jamarik, DNP, RN, NEA-BC
Roper St. Francis Healthcare

Marissa is the Senior Vice President & System CNO Bon Secours St. Francis Hospital. In 2023, she served as executive sponsor of a Bedside Shift Report (BSR) task force. Through her leadership at the system level dramatic improvements were achieved in patient experience goals. As a result of her work, her organization hired 399 nurses (73 more than goal) in 2022 and is on track to hire over 500 nurses in 2023, surpassing our corporate goal of 419. Marissa is an active member of AONL, SCONL & SCHA. She passionately encourages others to join SCONL and offers financial support for them to do so. Marissa has maintained a 20+ year membership with AACN.

Eric Johnson, RN
McLeod Health Loris

As a Case Manager, Eric has made significant improvements to the Hospital Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems scores for Care Transitions. Those improvements have led to improved discharge plans for Behavioral Health patients and prenatal patients. Eric has mentored over 100 students per year regarding the role of case management in discharge planning as well as spending well over 1200 hours training new case managers in not only his facility but sister facilities as well. He has built relationships of trust with Skilled Nursing facilities, Home Health/Hospice agencies resulting in placement of difficult to place patients. Eric is currently pursuing a BSN while working full time and is active in his community and church. He was chosen by Senior Leadership to participate in an inaugural Emerging Leader Aspire program.

Shanetta Johnson, BSN, RN
Spartanburg Medical Center Mary Black

Shanetta serves as a Charge Nurse at Spartanburg Medical Center Mary Black Campus. Her dedication to patient care, mentorship, and leadership significantly influences the unit's success. Shanetta fosters a collaborative atmosphere, empowering colleagues through hands-on support and encouragement. Her compassion shines in patient interactions, where she consistently goes above and beyond to meet their needs. Shanetta's initiatives ensure high standards of care, evidenced by zero falls with injury, infections, or pressure injuries in the past year. She champions community involvement, leading initiatives like the "Handle with Care" program and participating in hospital committees. Her impact extends beyond the hospital, as she donates to nursing education and research through philanthropic efforts. Her unwavering commitment to nursing excellence and compassionate care makes her an asset, inspiring colleagues and positively impacting patient outcomes.

Dana Jones, FNP-BC
HopeHealth

Dana is a dedicated leader promoting quality, exploring new programs, and enhancing patient care for the underserved. She created an annual wellness program, conducted in-home visits for 48 vulnerable patients during the pandemic, and provided national training on HCC coding. Dana's commitment to excellence is evident in her extensive mentoring of nurses, spending over 370 hours precepting and creating educational materials. She initiated the effort for Age-Friendly Health System designation, empowering patients to age in place with tailored care plans. Professionally, Dana is active in training, mentoring, and advocating for underserved populations. She provided national training for United Health Care Centers and created HCC templates for organizational efficiency. Beyond her professional role, Dana volunteers tirelessly, engaging with nursing home residents, speaking at senior events, and coordinating community activities such as the Wellness Walk and driving seniors to their annual Christmas outing.

Donnel Jones, BSN, RN, CRRN, CBIS
Roper Hospital

Donnel serves as a dedicated Charge Nurse at Roper Hospital, demonstrating outstanding leadership and commitment to improving patient care and satisfaction. Her instrumental role in implementing the Agitated Behavior Scale (ABS) for brain injury patients led to a remarkable 35% reduction in falls and a 15% decrease in restraint use. Recognized for her expertise, Donnel was invited to present her achievements at multiple conferences, highlighting her impact on nursing practice. As a role model and mentor, Donnel actively supports the professional growth and education of her colleagues. She continuously seeks innovative solutions to improve outcomes, leading initiatives such as multidisciplinary huddles to enhance teamwork and reduce falls. Donnel's involvement in professional nursing organizations like the ARN and Brain Injury Association of America underscores her commitment to patient advocacy and education. Her leadership in patient and family education classes and support groups has significantly improved discharge readiness. Her engagement in community events like health screenings and fundraising walks reflects her dedication to promoting health and well-being beyond hospital walls, inspiring others to participate and contribute to meaningful causes.

Jennifer Jones, BSN, RN-CCRN
Carolina Pines Regional Medical Center

Through her involvement in her units Shared Governance council Jennifer initiated a change project to create a new sliding scale insulin order set adopted by the entire facility in 2022. This change led to a 19% reduction in patients with blood sugars greater than 180. Jennifer serves as the primary preceptor in the ICU and has dedicated over 600 hours mentoring the next generation of nurses. Jennifer is an ally for local causes, supporting the American Heart Association, works to provide weekend snack packs for area children, aides in providing meals to a children's home. She is a long-time member of AACN. Her commitment to professional growth is also evident through obtaining her CCRN in 2017 and BSN in 2020.

Laurie Jones, BSN, RN-BC
Carolina Pines Regional Medical Center

Laurie's hard work and leadership led to 30 plus consecutive months with zero catheter associated UTIs and 37 plus consecutive months free from central line associated blood stream infections. This nurse played a huge role in the hospital achieving heart failure accreditation for by actively being a participant of the Congestive Heart failure team where changes such as documentation related to disease specific plan of care was implemented. Laurie achieved her RN -BC and then guided six other RNs on the med/surg floor to acquire the same certification. Laurie is active in improving the quality of life for individuals in her community by supporting those who have experienced trauma, particularly in cases related to domestic violence.

Stefanie Keegan, BSN, RN
Medical University of South Carolina

Stefanie has been instrumental in addressing the specific needs of heart failure patients at MUSC, demonstrating exemplary dedication to the role. Collaborating with a diverse team including MDs, pharmacists, RNs, data analysts, and administrative leaders, she spearheaded the development of a comprehensive dashboard used to identify new heart failure patients institution wide. Leveraging this tool, she skillfully identifies patients at risk of readmission, ensuring timely referrals to resources and discharge education. Taking her commitment further, she partnered with the patient education team to revamp online resources, integrating them into the inpatient order set. Notably, she created a video education panel order in the EMR, enhancing education availability and lightening RNs' workload. Actively involved in community initiatives, she serves as a Neighborhood Captain for an Orphan Relief program, initiated the "Save the Socks" program, and volunteers at a church-based medical clinic while also being a "reading buddy" at a local elementary school.

Kevin Kremer, BSN, RN
Beauford Memorial Hospital

Kevin is currently the Emergency Department Director at Beauford Memorial Hospital. In this role he has proven himself to be an agent for change. Under his leadership the ED achieved reductions in length of stay for admitted as well as discharged patients, faster transport for admitted patients, while at the same time improving patient perception of the ER visit. Kevin gives back to his community in a variety of ways, providing education to seniors, organizing county resources on emergency preparedness for mass casualty events. He helped his hospital, and his staff prepare for the COVID pandemic, being a leader in a time of so much uncertainty.

Jordan Laird, BSN, RN
SC DHEC Upstate Region

Jordan is a Tuberculosis Program Manager. She identified a need to decrease current new TB RN training times and worked diligently to streamline the training process resulting in TB RNs working autonomously in half the

amount of time. Jordan was instrumental in developing new audit tools along with innovative staff training, helping to decrease errors and increase revenue for the agency overall. She has led efforts in identifying the need to make changes to the current partnership with community healthcare providers to implement an evidenced based referral system for a specific disease process allowing clients to be able to receive services within or closer to their own communities. Jordan also actively serves as a mentor to staff nurses and employees in other disciplines within the agency who aspire hold to leadership roles. She is active in her community serving on the community action board member for a local hospital foundation, working on a specific campaign to prevent or decrease teen pregnancy in her home county. She is currently active in program and state level work groups whose goals include identifying, locating, and assisting with access to care for immigrants and parolees.

Jennifer Lawson, MSN, APRN, FNP-C, CEN
McLeod Health Loris

Jennifer has significantly improved the patient satisfaction scores in the Emergency Department. She established a huddle board, rounds, and keeps patients abreast of the plan of care and monitors for discharge orders to get the patient discharged in a timely manner. She has mentored senior nursing students from local colleges and has encouraged her staff to seek certification. Jennifer role models continuing education and is heavily involved in the education of staff in her department and hosts an annual skills fair. She is a tier one leader in her facility. During COVID 19, she developed a process to test community members in their cars. She supports the local EMS volunteer rescue squads and volunteers at a local Christian school routinely.

Richard Lee, MSN, RN, CEN, CPEN, TCRN, NE-BC
Prisma Health Richland Hospital

Richard serves as the Associate Chief Nursing Officer at Prisma Health Richland Hospital, driving advancements in nursing practice and staff development. He drives policy changes, such as no foley insertions in the ED unless a trauma patient goes to surgery which led to zero CAUTIs house wide from a foley placed in the ED. His commitment to nurturing nursing talent is evident through initiatives like developing an EMT program in the ED to encourage EMTs to become RNs and coaching new leaders to improve communication styles, fostering professional growth within the team. He has been recognized for his service recovery, compassion, and advocacy for the patient, family, and community. Richard actively promotes the nursing profession through involvement in SC ENA and community wellness initiatives and participating in charitable activities like Toys for Tots and supporting indigent families during the holidays. His personal experience has deepened his commitment to community service and wellness, embodying gratitude and giving back to those he serves without seeking recognition. His leadership, compassion, and dedication to advancing healthcare underscore his profound impact on patient care and community well-being.

Kathleen Lindell, Ph.D., RN, ATSF, FAAN
Medical University of South Carolina College of Nursing

Dr. Lindell is an internationally recognized leader in end-of-life and palliative nursing care, driving nursing practice forward through initiatives like the annual Palliative Care Showcase, which convenes over 100 clinicians and researchers to advance the field. Her research focuses on addressing the critical gap in palliative care access, particularly for patients with progressive pulmonary fibrosis (PPF) and their caregivers. She serves as an Endowed Chair in Palliative Care Health, mentoring faculty, and students to advance scholarly work in palliative care education and research. Her multi-component nurse-led intervention, "A Program of SUPPORT™," has shown promise in improving disease-related knowledge and preparedness for patients and caregivers. She has played significant leadership roles in premier professional societies, including serving as the Executive Director of the SUPPORT Program at the University of Pittsburgh Simmons Center and holding

various positions within the American Thoracic Society (ATS), where she was the first nurse appointed to several key committees and editorial boards. Her dedication and impact in the field of palliative care nursing are internationally recognized and continue to shape the future of compassionate end-of-life care.

Caleb Loveless, MSML, BSN, RN, CCRN, CENP
McLeod Regional Medical Center

Beginning his career as a nurse extern, Caleb became an RN in an ICU unit and is now the Nursing Director of Cardiology. He has successfully decreased the vacancy rate and improved the employee satisfaction results in his unit. Caleb is a leader among his peers. He has been willing to mentor and assist other new Directors sharing staff when there is a need. He champions others' successes and sets an example of being kind, compassionate and genuine. Caleb volunteers to meet with nursing students, nurturing a welcoming culture for students and new employees. He has written a grant to provide free scales annually to unfunded patients in the community that suffer with Congestive Heart Failure. He leads the Heart Walk fundraising and planning for the hospital as well as volunteers to teach CPR classes in the community.

Lashonda Mayfield, BSN, RN
CM Tucker Stone Pavilion

Lashonda currently serves as the Admission Coordinator/Infection Control RN at CM Tucker Stone Pavilion, showcasing remarkable dedication and versatility in her role. She plays a pivotal role in managing all COVID-related information for both staff and residents of the facility. Her diligent efforts have ensured the efficient collection, tracking, and reporting of crucial data, contributing significantly to the safety and well-being of everyone under her care. As a proactive agent of change, Lashonda actively fosters leadership development among nursing staff and supports the facility's infection control efforts. She shares infection control updates and tactics with staff, conducts monitoring activities, and collaborates with community infection control teams to enhance awareness and promote wellness. Lashonda's exemplary communication skills enable her to effectively relay information to families, fostering transparency and trust.

Diana McIntyre, DNP, RN, NE-BC
Prisma Health Oconee Memorial Hospital

Diana has been a transformative force in advancing nursing practice within acute care settings, revolutionizing Models of Care by effectively integrating Licensed Practical Nurses (LPNs) into the workforce. Actively participating in the SCNA annual conference, she shared insights on cutting-edge models of care within the acute care setting, illuminating possibilities for improved patient outcomes, reduction of agency staff from 30% to 0% and decreasing her nurse turnover rate from 16% to 3.0%. Her commitment to patient safety is evident through successful initiatives like a staff rounding program, resulting in a reduction of falls with injury and implementing a standardized bedside shift report process (BSSR). In addition to her impact on the practice setting, Diana's innovative initiatives extend to the community, such as outreach seminars and orthopedic journal clubs that reduced patient average length of stay. As an advocate for the nursing profession, she speaks at local community colleges, participates in conferences, and volunteers her time for nursing research. Diana's dedication to Magnet recognition is evident through her voluntary contribution to writing the organization's Magnet document, showcasing her multifaceted advocacy for improved healthcare outcomes and professional development.

Wendi McLemore, BSN, RN
Cherokee Medical Center

Wendi serves on numerous committees within the hospital and even heads the Linen Usage committee. With her guidance, hospital linen loss has decreased 138%. She has helped pave the way for local nurses to obtain their BSN. She encourages staff to pursue higher education and/or certification. Wendi helped create a student lounge which creates an atmosphere that fosters learning. Students have their own storage lockers and conference table. This space makes Nursing Students and Instructors feel appreciated during their clinicals throughout the hospital. Wendi volunteers with Meals on Wheels, monthly with Cherokee County Food Share packing healthy food choices for the community and helps with her Church's "Kids Life" program each week. She also volunteers her time at county health fairs by completing health screenings and providing education.

Shelly McMillian, DNP, RN, NEA-BC
Spartanburg Medical Center Church Street

Dr. Mary (Shelly) McMillian, a distinguished nurse and Director of Nursing Operations at Spartanburg Medical Center, Church Street Campus, is a trailblazer in advancing the nursing profession. Under her visionary leadership, the Transition to Practice (TTP) Nurse Residency program was established, aiming to provide new nurses with tailored hands-on experiences. Shelly fosters critical thinking skills and professional growth among new nurses, leading to enhanced patient care outcomes. Notably, 230 new nurses graduated from the Nurse Residency TTP program in 2023, achieving an impressive 89% retention rate after one year of hire. Mary's unwavering dedication to advancing nursing education and workforce development exemplifies her commitment to excellence in patient care and professional growth. Her innovative programs and steadfast leadership are reshaping the nursing landscape, leaving a lasting impact on the future of healthcare.

Sarah Miles, MBA, BSN, RN, CEN, TCRN, SANE-A
Prisma Health Greenville Memorial Hospital

Sarah serves as the Manager of the emergency department at Prisma Health Greenville Memorial Hospital, where she has spearheaded a successful orientation process tailored for growth opportunities within the emergency department. She developed a pipeline program for succession planning, effectively reducing turnover rates and eliminating vacancy rates amidst nurse shortages. Her leadership fosters a culture where team members feel valued, respected, and invested in their growth and development. Passionate about trauma-informed care, she actively supports patients and has presented on various topics at state and national conferences. She builds trust with her team by understanding their goals and actively supports certifications, leading by example with her own four specialty certifications. Sarah's impact on patient outcomes is evident through initiatives that reduce wait times, decrease left without being seen rates, and lower fall rates in the emergency department. She volunteers and fundraises to raise awareness about sexual assault, domestic violence, and human trafficking, contributing to local child advocacy groups supporting victims of sexual abuse. She presents at national conferences to share best practices and has served as the secretary of her local chapter of her specialty nursing organization, furthering her commitment to advancing healthcare and supporting vulnerable populations.

Kristen Miller, MSN, RN, CLS
McLeod Health Corporate

Kristen has demonstrated significant leadership in the development and implementation of the facilities Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP) team in her role as Director of Population Health. She has grown this team to be the largest in both staff size and service territory serving over 9 counties. She and her team have completed over 54,577 patient visits, served over 1509 families, and had 1109 infant births and graduated over 500 mothers. The NFP team was recognized as the Network Partner of the Year in 2022 that is a national recognition. Kristen and her team are all mission driven with servant hearts to make change with the patients they touch, working to break the cycle of poverty in our state and nation. She is a member of several

organizations such as the SC Birth Outcomes Initiative, SC Perinatal Association, Dillon County Teen Pregnancy Task Force, and the Florence County First Steps Board of Directors.

Meggin Miller, RN, ADN
MUSC Health Black River Medical Center

Meggin's leadership qualities shine brightly in her role, where she is recognized as a natural leader by her peers for her professionalism, compassion, and advocacy for patients. Through her Just Culture Training, she has adeptly addressed provider practice issues, leading to improvements in patient safety protocols. Meggin's commitment to excellence extends to staff development, as she collaborates with the hospital nursing educator to streamline preceptorship programs. She serves as a mentor for new staff and nursing students, instilling evidence-based best practices, and professionalism. Meggin's impact is also felt in patient care outcomes, as she spearheaded initiatives to decrease the rate of patients leaving the facility without treatment, surpassing national benchmarks, and ensuring more patients receive timely care. Additionally, her dedication to safety led to the establishment of a partnership with local law enforcement, enhancing security measures and decreasing the potential for workplace violence.

Sarah Miller, PhD, RN
Medical University of South Carolina College of Nursing

Dr. Miller is a distinguished nurse scientist specializing in respiratory neurophysiology, dedicated to enhancing evidence-based nursing practice for patients with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD). Her current research focuses on alleviating respiratory symptoms and enhancing quality of life for COPD patients, particularly in rural and underserved areas of South Carolina. Dr. Miller is also a passionate educator, recognized for her innovative teaching methods and mentorship of aspiring nurse scientists. Dr. Miller is committed to community outreach, collaborating with free clinics, and advocating for respiratory health equity at both the local and national levels. Her leadership roles within organizations like the American Thoracic Society and the International Society for Advancement of Respiratory Psychophysiology underscore her dedication to advancing nursing's voice in respiratory care. Through her diverse contributions, including volunteer work and the establishment of recognition programs, Dr. Miller continues to make significant strides in improving respiratory health outcomes and promoting excellence in nursing practice.

Laureen T. Mitchell, MSN, RN, NCSN
SC DHEC- Central Office

Laureen is a Nurse Consultant for SC DHEC. She joined the organization six months before the pandemic began to become instrumental in developing and implementing a team-specific Performance Metric. The Metric, applied to over seventy reportable conditions, evaluates the provision of timely guidance to apply evidence-based practice to investigate, respond to and control communicable diseases. Laureen undertook the review and refinement of over 50 individual trainings/courses assigned to newly hired RNs to the organization. She improved a prior time-consuming process requiring each course to be assigned individually and eliminated missed/unassigned courses. Leading a multidisciplinary team across the state, Laureen reduced upwards of 13 steps in course assignment taking over 80 minutes to complete, to less than 10 minutes in 3-6 steps. This creative nurse enthusiastically commits to persistence in problem solving, finding the best solutions that are seemingly impossible to others and finding a solution.

Samantha Montague-Smith, BS, RN
Tideland Health

As a charge nurse Samantha led the SG team in a project to increase ambulation of total knee and total hip replacement patients the day of surgery. This project improved day of ambulation from 55 to 95%. The current focus is on decreasing length of stay and preventing readmissions. The unit has the lowest length of stay among medical surgical units, the lowest readmission rates and the highest patient satisfaction scores in nearly every category, especially discharge instructions. This nurse also participates in Santa for Seniors, to provide Christmas to local senior citizens in nursing homes. Last year we were able to provide needed gifts for more than 75 residents at a local nursing home.

Monica Moses, BSN, RN
MUSC Health Florence Medical Center

Monica is a driving force in advancing nursing practice on the General Surgery Unit, demonstrating exceptional leadership and dedication to excellence. Through her restructuring of Interdisciplinary Rounds and implementation of evidence-based interventions, she achieved remarkable outcomes, including a 10% reduction in omission errors, a significant 13% decrease in length of stay (LOS), and surpassing timely discharge metrics by 16%. Through her exceptional leadership rounding practices, her unit has seen elevated bedside shift report metrics, improved patient experience scores, and enhanced employee engagement. Inspired by her father's example of compassion and service, she actively supports nonprofit organizations and chairs the Health and Wellness Ministry, where she provides educational seminars and promotes healthy lifestyles and BLS training. Her altruistic efforts extend to quarterly donations to the food pantry and homeless shelter, reflecting her commitment to healing both bodies and hearts.

Cassie Mueller, MSN, RN, PCCN, CNML, SANE-A, TCRN, SANE-P
Prisma Health Greenville Memorial Hospital

Cassie serves as the Director of Nursing for Emergency Services at Prisma Health Greenville Memorial Hospital, overseeing a department with over 100,000 annual visits. She has sponsored nurse-driven process improvement projects aimed at enhancing patient outcomes and fostering the development of nursing leaders. She established a robust Unit Council within the organization's shared governance structure, promoting collaboration and shared decision-making among nursing staff. She actively supports nurses in advancing their clinical practice by facilitating access to outside educational opportunities and achieving specialty certifications at no cost to them. She contributed to the development of a comprehensive regional specialty nurse program serving seven hospitals across four counties. Cassie dedicates her time to teaching children and adolescents in her church's Sunday School program and volunteers with ambulance and pre-hospital treatment EMS services at large events on weekends, providing on-the-scene care. She volunteers her expertise to the State Board of Nursing and has served as the President of her local specialty nursing organization chapter.

Jennifer Neville, MSN, RN
Ralph H. Johnson VA Medical Center

Jennifer serves as the Chief of Patient Experience at the Ralph H. Johnson VA Medical Center, embodying exemplary leadership and dedication to enhancing patient satisfaction and trust within the healthcare system. The medical center was recognized as a 5-star facility for quality and patient satisfaction by CMS, distinguishing it as the only 5-star facility in safety and quality in South Carolina. She fosters a culture of recognition and positivity through initiatives like 'Everyday Hero cards' and 'Wednesday Kudos', celebrating outstanding work from employees and highlighting positive feedback from patient experiences. She leads initiatives to engage veterans and employees in health and fitness activities, promoting physical and mental well-being as well as fostering a compassionate and respectful environment. Her involvement in programs like "Leading Ladies"

empowers students to explore professional opportunities and develop leadership skills. Under Jennifer's leadership, patient experience improved, Specialty Care Satisfaction improved, and Inpatient Care has improved all above the benchmarks. Recognized for her achievements, Jennifer was selected to serve on the national planning committee for FY24's PX conference, underscoring her influence and leadership in patient-centered care.

Keila Pilgrim, MSN, RN, ONC, NE-BC
Prisma Health Oconee Memorial Hospital

Keila is the Nurse Manager of Surgical Specialty, The Joint Center, Dialysis, and Inpatient Wound Care at Prisma Health Oconee Memorial Hospital and Baptist Easley Hospital. She successfully introduced and implemented the Team Nursing Model, reducing fall rates by 20%, eliminating CLASBIs, CAUTIs, and HAPIs, and boosting patient experience scores by 10%, while reducing high-cost agency staff utilization by 50%. Her success story was presented at the 2022 SCNA State Convention and adopted across the hospital system. As a bedside nurse and leader, she excels by explaining not just 'how' but 'why,' emphasizing safe, high-quality patient care. She actively welcomes nursing students, creating a nurturing environment that supports newcomers and fosters a culture of continuous growth and excellence. Furthermore, she extends her impact beyond the workplace by sharing her insights at local colleges and universities. Her active leadership in local committees and system-wide initiatives highlights her dedication to improving patient safety and care outcomes. She actively promotes the nursing profession through engagement in professional organizations, community involvement, and volunteering efforts.

Ashlee Pritchett, BSN, RN, IBCLC
Tidelands Health

As a Board-Certified Lactation Consultant (IBCLC) Ashlee serves as an ongoing partner to our patients and community. She continues to prioritize servant leadership through modeling patient-centered nursing and care. She leads our Breastfeeding Multidisciplinary Committee. To improve outcomes, and through collaboration with the Perinatal Improvement Committee and nursing team, she used the PDSA model to find the opportunity to develop a cart with all items staff needed to take to the room for newborn screening and testing. Rooming-in rates improved leading to successful Baby-Friendly re-designation. She published an article in a community forum on "How to overcome breastfeeding challenges". Ashlee also volunteers and presents monthly breastfeeding education in pregnancy centering cohorts of non-affiliate community programs and personalized breast-feeding coaching. She actively promotes and mentors' other nurses who aspire to gain knowledge to support their own patients or those who wish to become certified in lactation & education. She played an integral role in our organization recently achieving Advanced Clinical Perinatal Certification, as only the 2nd hospital in the nation to achieve this honor.

Leslie Ravan, MS, RN, CHSE
Clemson University School of Nursing

Leslie currently holds the position of Director of the Undergraduate Nursing Program and Principal Lecturer at Clemson University. With a wealth of experience and dedication to the field, Leslie has been instrumental in advancing nursing practice and shaping the educational landscape since assuming the role of Director of Undergraduate Nursing Programs. Leslie has demonstrated exemplary leadership, notably in addressing student concerns, refining curricular frameworks, and enhancing educational standards. She has played a pivotal role in faculty and advisor recruitment, curriculum development, and the organization of NextGen NCLEX seminars, all while meticulously preparing detailed reports to inform program enhancements.

Leslie's dedication to the nursing profession extends to her involvement in professional organizations such as the SC Nursing Education Simulation Alliance and Sigma Theta Tau International Nursing Honor Society. She is also recognized for her community service, including participation in fundraising events and blood donation drives, as well as her volunteer work in local elementary schools.

**Dr. Shara Rhodes, DNP, RN, NEA-BC, NPDA-BC®, MEDSURG-BC, NPD-BC
HCA Healthcare | South Atlantic Division**

Dr. Rhodes is the Division VP of Nursing Operations. In this role she redesigned the organization's professional practice advisory board councils in 2022. Because of her leadership, her facility teams have sustained cesarean deliveries below national averages for three consecutive quarters. She created a 12-week program to expose new leaders to several different topics and methods of education, application in practice, and guidance through a program capstone project. In the first cohort, 64% of participants graduated. Active in her professional organization, she volunteers approximately 16-24 hours per month with SCNA.

**Anthony Richards, BSN, RN
Self-Regional Healthcare**

Anthony is a Nurse Manager. Over the past 8 years he has worked on multiple initiatives to improve patient safety and outcomes. He works with his team toward zero harm, no CAUTI events in the past 16 months, no CLBSI in the past 10 months, and no CDI in the past 12 months. He recently implemented Crisis Prevention Institute/De-escalation Training on his Unit to identify, prevent, improve interaction with aggressive/combatative patient's behaviors. Anthony is also committed to growing nurses and his nursing team as demonstrated by his active involvement in mentoring the students on their career paths. His motto is "create a better clinical environment for the student than he had" resulting in his unit's designation as the hospital's first dedicated educational unit (DEU), helping to foster a positive learning environment for university nursing leadership students. This nurse participates in multiple events to recruit new nurses. Anthony is a high energy, charismatic person, often speaking at events such as college Senior Nursing Leadership class and at the Student Nursing Association in 2022. He is a member of the South Carolina Nurses Association and a Graduate of South Carolina Hospital Association Management Academy.

**Kaiden Rigdon, MSN, RN, NPD-BC
Medical University of South Carolina**

Kaiden is a graduate of the Association of Nursing Professional Development (ANPD) Leadership Academy. Kaiden's project focused on streamlining education requests during which they developed a cloud-based tool. Kaiden hosted training for the PU nurse planners on how to utilize the tool and serve in the consultant role to plan NCPD hours. This increased the number of NCPD hours. Kaiden is the lead coordinator for the organization's nursing clinical ladder. She serves as a leader within national, state, and local organizations and has served as past-president and secretary of the local ANPD affiliate. Kaiden is active in the community through involvement with the local Pet Helpers and Parks Conservatory.

**Jennifer Rogers, BSN, RN
McLeod Health Dillon**

Jennifer, as an Infection Preventionist/Educator, demonstrates exceptional compassion and dedication to achieving the best patient outcomes, both within the hospital setting and in the community. She provides education to various community groups and is actively involved in professional organizations. Jennifer plays a

crucial role in decreasing hospital-acquired infections within the hospital system. She provides daily education to leaders, staff, patients, families, and community members, actively auditing central lines for MRSA decolonization and compliance with infection prevention measures. She collaborates with department leaders to determine educational needs and serves as a role model for all staff. Jennifer has established a comprehensive new hire orientation program for all staff, including introductions to leadership, department tours, and regulatory information dissemination. She extends her reach to the community by teaching choking prevention and stroke education classes and actively participates in collaborative efforts to decrease hospital-acquired infections.

Jaurie Russell, BSN, RN
Cherokee Medical Center

Jaurie plays a pivotal role as the Nursing Supervisor at Cherokee Medical Center, where her contributions as a code nurse in a rural community hospital setting are invaluable. Recognized for her proactive leadership style, Jaurie's hands-on approach is evident in her dedication to welcoming new hires, providing unit tours, and fostering open communication among staff. With proficiency in Critical Care, she seamlessly transitions to the ICU when necessary, offering critical assistance and mentorship to RNs and Nursing Supervisors alike. Beyond her duties at the hospital, Jaurie actively engages in community events like Relay for Life, the ReGenesis back-to-school fair, and the Donate for Life Dual Event/Race for Life. Her commitment to promoting health and wellness initiatives reflects her dedication to community welfare and underscores her role as a compassionate healthcare leader.

Jennifer Smith, MSN, RN
Cherokee Medical Center

Jennifer serves in a charge nurse position in the emergency department at Cherokee Medical Center. Jennifer has joined the quality team and has assisted in reducing LWOT's within her department by 1.3%. Jennifer has been an active nurse preceptor for nursing students, new graduate nurses, new nurses, and charge nurses within her organization. She has been observed contributing her own personal finances to assist a patient with medications they could not afford. Annually, she participates in providing "Bags of Love" for the elderly, donates clothes for patients who are victims of sexual assault, provides school supplies for underprivileged children in our community, and donates gifts for children through the "Angel Tree" organization.

Tracie Smith, MSN, RN, OCN
Prisma Health Oconee Memorial Hospital

Tracie has devoted her career to advancing nursing practice. She models professionalism, integrity, and ethical behavior. She supports nursing growth, research, and improved empirical outcomes. She pioneered the first nursing webpage, highlighting exemplars, and linking to the nursing fund for professional development. Collaborating with Campus Council, she shaped the initial nurse practice model. She created and is the editor for a nursing newsletter, highlighting exemplary nursing moments and current best practice. Her influence is seen in countless educational programs. Tracie has impacted the care of underserved populations in Oconee County. She supports an innovative interprofessional partnership between a local university and the hospital to increase the numbers of RNs with diverse backgrounds providing nursing services to diverse, rural and/or underserved populations. Through her tireless efforts, Tracie embodies compassionate nursing leadership, making a lasting difference in the lives of patients and the community.

Nicole Spencer, RN, BSN, MSN, (DNP candidate, January 2024)
McLeod Regional Medical Center

As Assistant Director of Oncology Services, Nicole has led the way with ensuring that the right team members were recruited, hiring the right fit for this patient population, including the right physician team. She ensured that orientation and training was appropriate for the task. Nicole demonstrates professional growth by her continuing education going from ADN to a Doctoral Candidate. She encourages professional certification for the staff and seeks grant funds to offset the cost for the staff. She is a champion for patient safety, patient advocacy, and patient centered care. Nicole possesses natural leadership skills and is an out-of-the-box thinker, always working to assess, plan, implement and evaluate outcomes. She is an active member of several community and professional organizations and organized and created a Cancer Comfort Tote outreach for newly diagnosed patients with cancer.

Renetha Stagers, RN
MUSC Health Florence Medical Center

Renetha is a standout leader, excelling in preceptorship, patient safety coaching, and advancing nursing practice to improve outcomes. Under her leadership, compliance with bedside shift report and rounding increased. Her coaching efforts have led to significant reductions in hospital-acquired conditions, earning the department "Zero Harm" safety awards and contributing to a Leapfrog A grade score for the facility. Her dedication to staff retention and recruitment has resulted in a remarkable decrease in turnover rates and vacancies on her shift. Renetha has demonstrated remarkable growth and perseverance, serving as a mentor to colleagues and volunteering her time to support nursing students and new graduates. Her passion for teaching and commitment to nursing excellence are evident in her outstanding preceptorship results, with 100% retention of nurses. Her impact extends beyond the hospital walls, as she has founded and organized city-wide youth teams and dance squads, positively impacting the lives of over 500 youth, and promoting community engagement and mentorship.

Brandi Strickland, MSN, RN, CLC
Self-Regional Healthcare

Brandi is the Director of Nursing for Women's Services, Pediatrics, NICU, and two surgical units. She has developed and implemented the Patient Experience Workgroup. Comprised of nursing directors and nursing managers, they collectively strategize and implement processes to increase patient engagement as evidenced by an increase in HCAHPS scores. She has worked closely with the Lactation Consultant developing policies for the organization and resources for the community to improve breastfeeding rates. Through her mentorship, her managers have developed a high level of collaboration; are able to identify issues and maintain a willingness to implement programs to enhance the nursing experience at SRH. Brandi serves as the 2022/2023 United Way chair for Self-Regional Healthcare. She led this organizational initiative that resulted in raising \$146,000.00 for the United Way and this past August, was recognized by the United Way as the Workplace Champion for our community.

Elizabeth Teague, MSN, RN, CIC
SC DHEC – Lowcountry

Elizabeth is an Ops Director. Her focus is to identify gaps in care and workflow for the SC DHEC Low Country Region. Elizabeth is inspired to improve her environment by promoting empathy, forward thinking, and innovation. She is a role model of professional practice and quality initiatives. She used her knowledge to advocate change and improve work culture, reducing turnover and vacancy rates by implementing a culture shift of information sharing, teaching just culture, decreasing blame, and encouraging appropriate reporting. To promote succession planning and retain valuable employees, she revamped the organizational structure of her sites. Elizabeth is certified in Just Culture, Team Steps, has served on Nursing Shared Governance Committees and unit-based practice councils, obtained Lean Six Sigma Yellow Belt, precepted nursing

students, recognized by hospital CNO for exceptional care, and won a shark tank innovation award for co-creating a patient safety avatar. She is board certified in infection prevention and control. She promotes empathy and care by organizing and participating in community meal trains, and guides decision making as a Board of Director member for the local private school. As PTAC President, she engages parents and the community by leading innovative fundraising, and fun events for students, and teacher recognition.

Alma Thaggard-Singleton, BSN, RN
G. Werber Bryan Psychiatric Hospital

Alma is a Nurse Manager who supports her team to maintain a less than 10% vacancy rate and a turnover rate below the national average. She is a leader who helps her staff take growth steps with many now in supervisor or manager roles. She worked with other nurse managers to identify overstaffing and balance schedules, resulting in a reduction of agency staff costs from \$139,728 per week to \$43,821. Alma is pursuing her MSN and with her newfound knowledge, she actively mentors others. She volunteers her services at a local Mission by feeding the homeless.

Lori Vick, PhD, M.A.T., RN
University of South Carolina College of Nursing

Dr. Vick serves as an Assistant Professor of Nursing at the University of SC. Her work focuses on improving health outcomes in persons with sickle cell disease (SCD). She has conducted and analyzed over 500 interviews with people with SCD. She believes what is learned from people with SCD may improve health outcomes in others experiencing pain disorders and health care disparities. She serves as president of the International Association of Sickle Cell Nurses and Professional Associates (IASCNAPA) whose goal is to improve the care of people with sickle cell disease. As the Vice-President of the Midlands of South Carolina Chapter of the National Black Nurses Association (NBNA), a "Mini Nurse Academy" (MNA) was initiated in 2023. The MNA is an experiential nursing program for elementary school children. The program aims to introduce students in grades 3 through 6 to the nursing profession. As students participate, they will have increased awareness of nursing as a career option, enjoy hands-on practice in health and nursing-related activities, and receive a nutritious snack at each meeting. Dr. Vick led this outreach in collaboration with leadership at Bradley Elementary School. One primary goal of the NBNA Mini Nurse Academy program is to expand a diverse nursing workforce.

Lynn Wellman, MS, APRN, WHNP-BC, C-EFM
Prisma Health Richland Children's Hospital

Lynn serves as the Regional Systems Developer for the Midlands Perinatal Region at Prisma Health Richland Children's Hospital. She has demonstrated exceptional professionalism and leadership in various nursing roles throughout her nursing career ranging from bedside staff nurse, nurse educator, transport nurse, editor of nursing materials for a national non-profit, clinical nurse specialist and in her current role encompassing care for the Midlands Perinatal Region. Lynn's dedication to supporting hospital clinical practices positively impacts outcomes throughout the region. Her involvement in crucial committees like AIM (Alliance for Innovation on Maternal Health), the Maternal Morbidity & Mortality Review Committee, and the Fetal and Infant Mortality Review Committee underscores her commitment to reducing South Carolina's high infant and maternal mortality rates. She fosters collaborative relationships with physicians, hospital staff, and perinatal organizations, contributing to improved patient outcomes through education, advocacy, and innovation. Her leadership exemplifies the transformative impact nurses can have in healthcare, driving initiatives that enhance the quality of care for mothers and babies across the region while embodying the values of professionalism, advocacy, and excellence.

La Tonya White, DNP, RN, MSN, APRN, FNP-BC, NP-C
Columbia VA Health Care System

La Tonya

Dr. White is a dynamic family nurse practitioner serving as an inpatient hospitalist provider at the WJB Dorn hospital. She graduated Summa Cum Laude in 2019 with her doctoral degree in nursing with a Nursing Administration Emphasis. She completed her yellow belt that resulted in the WJB Dorn VAMC Nurse's Research Week, team presentation entitled "Handoff: Standardized Safety for Postoperative Patients". This project was selected as a Shark Tank 100 contestant. She was a member of the 2021-2022 New Big Data Nurse of the Future Program's Virtual Cancer Genetic (VCG) Nurse Training Fellowship and presented her research findings at the 2020 Durham VA-Duke School of Nursing APP Symposium regarding ***CDC STEADI Toolkit To Reduce Falls in a Home Health Agency***. Dr. White also led her Green Belt certification project on documentation on life-sustaining treatment planning for the hospital to ensure the ethical wishes are outlined prior to a crisis. This initiative helped increase the number of LSTI completion from 65% to 85%. This project has an annual cost avoidance of \$3,369,340.80. The quarterly cost avoidance is projected at \$842,335.20. She is the Patient Safety Champion for the inpatient medicine team. She ensured 100% compliance among inpatient Medicine staff to promote patient safety reporting and awareness. Dr. White is a member of the Transfusion Utilization Committee, Interprofessional Pressure Injury Committee (IPIC), High Reliability Organization Committee, Columbia Psych Group, the Dorn Female Veteran's Group, and the CVAHCS APRN committee.

Dr. White's duties in the VA, have continued to leave a lasting mark on the health care of veterans. In 2011 she was sent to VISN7 Atlanta VAMC for a training that would introduce a new system called "I-Care Plan" in the extended care area. Dr. White has worked with the Clinical Informatics team to formulate a unique outline for the Community Living Center. This methodology is still used in all extended care areas at Dorn VAMC and saves millions of dollars to ensure quality care provided to extended care residents are allocated through their personalized assessments. She developed an exercise teaching guide recommended by the Surgeon General for various age groups with multiple comorbidities such as hypertension, coronary artery disease, and diabetes. Dr. White formulated her rendition of the "Step it Up" program and implemented it among veteran and family members to reinforce positive health behaviors while serving veterans in the primary care setting. Dr. White's is a 2023 Dr. Robert L. Jesse Award for Excellence in Innovation Nominee. She received the Good Catch Spotlight Award in 2022 and 2023 for her proactive patient safety efforts. Her relentless service has gone forth to be recognized as the 2023 Recipient of the Secretary's Award for Excellence in Nursing, Expanded RN Role Category.

Kayla Witthoeft, BSN, RN, ONC, CPAN
Prisma Health Oconee Memorial Hospital

Kayla is a dedicated nurse at Prisma Health Oconee Memorial Hospital, showcasing unwavering commitment to continuous growth and learning. She led a multi-disciplinary team to decrease emergence delirium in postop pediatric patients by 42% using Precedex. Kayla spearheaded efforts to pre-warm surgical patients, resulting in preventing postoperative hypothermia and infections. As a valuable member of the Recruitment and Retention Committee, and a clinical instructor at Tri-County Technical College, Kayla facilitated the seamless integration of Practical Nursing students into the hospital system, earning the prestigious CAPES scholarship for her contributions to bolstering the nursing workforce. Her professionalism and dedication to patient safety are evident through achievement of the highest-level clinical ladder portfolio (level IV) and conducting staff in-service/mock drill on LAST (Local Anesthetic Systemic Toxicity) to prepare and educate OR and OB teams. Kayla shares healthcare knowledge at events like Girl Scouts and sports camps and contributes to mission trips in Latin America. Her exceptional work extends globally, as she shares her nursing achievements at events such as the ICPAN 2023 Conference in Amsterdam and the upcoming 2024 ASPAN national conference in Orlando.

Pamela Worthy, MSN, RN, OCN
McLeod Regional Medical Center

Pam has worked tirelessly to advance nursing practice in so many ways. She is passionate about clinical research and has worked to grow research opportunities in the organization through education of patients, colleagues, and community. She has mentored 3 RNs new to clinical research and engaged 2 physicians as principal investigators for specialty clinical research. Pam role models professional nursing practice daily. She demonstrates an ongoing desire to continually educate not only herself but also everyone around her. Pam has been instrumental in developing and sustaining a lung cancer screening program that has screened over 4000 patients. She is an active leader in several professional nursing/clinical organization, served as President of the local ONS chapter, member of AONN, ACRP, and local chapter of the Nurses Honor Guard. Pam is active in her church and has participated in 2 international medical mission trips.

Tracey Yazvac, BSN, RN
SC DHEC Lowcountry

Tracey is a Nurse Epidemiologist who has performed countless case investigations often as the Outbreak Response Coordinator for SC DHEC Low Country. During a recent Mumps Outbreak at a local college this recipient served as the primary coordinator providing expert guidance through conducting interviews and contact tracing to mitigate spread. Based on her findings, the college RN in charge followed guidance and prevented further outbreaks from occurring. Her colleagues presented her with the 'Pump Handle Award' for her efforts. Tracey additionally gives back to the community. Tracey chooses volunteer opportunities consistent with her mantra "Community is what you make of it!" This nurse is a member of ANA, SCNA and APHN and is part of the APHN Climate Change Workgroup. This nurse's passion for her community is derived from what her mother taught her, "Politics only works at the local level". She volunteers for the League of Women voters, is a member of Lowcountry PRIDE and marches every year with We Are Family at Charleston Pride.

Ginger Yengel, ADN, RN
Carolina Pines Regional Medical Center

Ginger is a Patient Care Supervisor in Women and Children's Services. Her expertise in all areas of Women and Children's Services and many years of experience provides her with great decision-making skills. Ginger is our

primary preceptor in the Level II Nursery and frequently precepts new hires in Labor and Delivery. This candidate certified 27 individuals in NRP in 2022 and 15 individuals so far in 2023. Ginger established a partnership between Cribs for Kids and her facility to advance our practices in safe sleep for infants. This recipient achieved a Safe Sleep Designation for her facility. She frequently represents her facility at a community event named Gospel in the Park.

Taquella Young, BSN, RN
Prisma Health Baptist Easley Hospital

Taquella is the Nurse Manager of ICU and Progressive ICU at Prisma Health Baptist Easley Hospital. She has demonstrated transformative leadership in reshaping nursing practice, earning the prestigious Nursing Excellence Award for Nursing Leadership in 2023. She played a pivotal role in establishing vital hospital departments, resulting in a significant drop in the left without being seen rate and the elimination of ED boarders from 29 to zero. Her efforts also contributed to certifying the hospital as a Primary Stroke Center. Taquella is dedicated to mentoring aspiring healthcare professionals and fostering growth. Despite limited resources, she innovatively converted a med-surg area into an ICU with 19 additional beds amid the COVID pandemic. She actively promotes the nursing profession through community involvement, volunteering with the Young Women's Association, and educating the community on crucial health topics like stroke and breast cancer prevention. Taquella serves as an inspiring ambassador for nursing. Her leadership and innovative initiatives have profoundly impacted healthcare outcomes in her community, setting a standard for excellence and advocacy in nursing practice.