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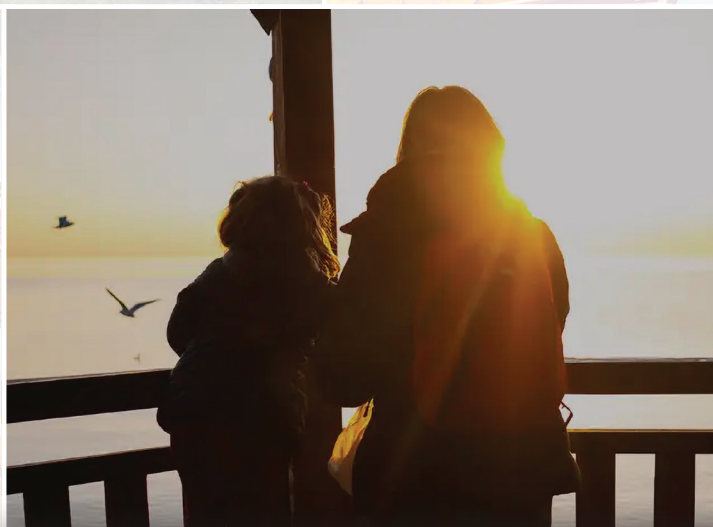
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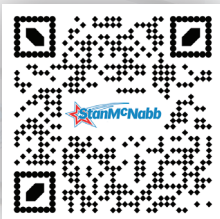


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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

## The future of healing

The love and care of the past make our health care heroes stronger.

A NURSE WALKED down the hallway his mother walked decades before he did. *Beep ... beep ...* he could hear the sounds from patients' rooms. He kept a small keepsake pinned to his scrubs, a pin his mother gave him when he graduated nursing school. She had once worn the same pin. He became a nurse to honor her and to care for others, just as she had done before him. Years from now, the nurse's son would fasten that same pin to his own scrubs as he healed others with love.

A paramedic raced to the scene of an accident, her movements swift and practiced. This was her calling — running toward danger when others ran away. Yesterday, she saved a family from never-ending heartbreak. Today, she knelt beside a young girl, steadying her voice with calm reassurance. That girl would one day wear the same uniform because of that interaction.

A doctor filled out a prescription in a quiet office, her hand steady and sure. The memory of her first patient came back to her — the blend of nerves and excitement she felt 10 years ago. Today, her experience and knowledge give another person a chance to live longer, to return home to their family, and to hold their loved ones close.

The health care workers of today stand on the shoulders of those who came before them. Their love moves from soul to soul. Their courage ensures that the love and care of the past are not only remembered but carried forward. The health care professionals around us make the world a better place not just today but also tomorrow. The future of healing will be in stronger hands as we pass the torch from the past.

This issue of Good News shares the stories that remind us that the future is one of health, love, and care. **GN**

Wesley Bryant,  
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

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Deanna  
Snell

"CHEESE!" THE photographer's voice resounded in the studio, but the young boy standing in front of the camera didn't move. His eyes were wide and apprehensive. He darted around the room, avoiding the lens that seemed too intrusive for his comfort. His parents shared anxious glances, hoping for a breakthrough. The photographer noticed and gently lowered her camera.

She knelt down to meet the child's eyes. She didn't ask for a smile or another stiff pose. Instead, she pulled out a colorful toy and shared a few reassuring words. Slowly, curiosity replaced the fear in his eyes. Before long, the room was filled with his contagious giggles, and when she raised the camera once more, the boy beamed with absolute joy.

Moments like these remind Deanna Snell that photography is about connection, building trust, and creating spaces where people feel seen and celebrated. In her hands, the camera becomes a bridge between her and her subjects and helps her see the world through a different lens.

From a young age, her eyes glistened while capturing the beauty in the world around her, documenting memories for her family and friends. But it wasn't until she became a professional photographer that she truly understood the power of this art form.

Snell's heart melted when she was assigned to a special session with a nervous young boy with Down syndrome. Setting aside her usual quest for the perfect shot, she focused on building a connection with the boy. The priceless results of that moment continue to inspire her today.

"I find immense fulfillment in photographing children, particularly those with special needs," Snell explained. "Countless clients have expressed their appreciation for the manner in which I engage with their children, telling me that I bring out the best in them and produce truly cherished portraits," she explained.

For Snell, photography is what she was made to do. She uses her talents to document weddings, family milestones, and com-

# SEEING LIFE *through a different lens*



Deanna Snell found renewed purpose in her photography journey through the adoption process.

By Jeriah Brumfield // Photography by Brooke Snyder



munity events, always with the intention of telling a story through her images. But her most profound work is often found in the faces of those who have faced adversity.

Snell's journey with adoption has impacted her photography even further. In 2000, while working as the foreign program director for an international adoption agency, Snell found herself unexpectedly drawn to two young girls whose photos appeared on her screen. Tears streamed down her face as she stared at their pictures — two beautiful sisters from Colombia who would soon become her daughters.

*"There was nothing about the picture that would make you feel sorry for them. They were beautiful little girls and looked like they were well taken care of. Nonetheless, I started crying and ended up crying for two days," she said.*

"Finally, after two days, I began to pray. I told the Lord that I didn't know what he wanted me to do about these two little girls. I didn't know if I was supposed to pray for them or if he wanted me to adopt them. I remember praying on a Wednesday morning around 10:00, and that evening, a friend I hadn't heard from in months called me. To my surprise, she told me that she had stock options in her company, and the options had jumped in value, resulting in a substantial amount of money for her. She told the Lord the money was His and asked what she should do with it, and He told her to call me. She responded by sending a check for \$16,000 a week later."

In just four months, Snell went from seeing their photo to bringing her daughters home. It was an extensive journey that tested her faith and filled her cup with moments of awe and confirmation that this was the path she was meant to take.

That first adoption experience shaped Snell's understanding of what it means to be a mother and how the bonds of family transcended biology.

*"I was concerned that they wouldn't be okay with a single mom. The girls were 8 and 11 at the time, and I was really uneasy about how they would accept me. When I finally got to meet them on Feb. 12, the girls came running to me, crying and throwing themselves around me, calling out 'Mommy, mommy, mommy.' My whole life changed at that moment."*

Over the years, Snell's family grew again. In 2013, after fostering for several years, she adopted two more children, Isaac and Kaydence, who, Snell believes, were also part of a vision God had shown her years before. Snell said she received a vivid, prophetic vision of a little boy — her future son — and the connection was instant when Isaac was placed into her arms.

"When Isaac and the caseworker were walking up to my front porch, Isaac jumped out of their arms and into mine, smiling. The social workers told me that was the first time they had seen him smile all day, and there was an instant connection between Isaac and me," she said. "I knew immediately that he was the little boy I had seen in my vision."

Through the lens of adoption, Snell saw both the depth of her children's pain and the immense healing the adoption

brought them. Her two oldest daughters experienced a great deal of hardship and loss, but they began to thrive under Snell and her family's love and security. Watching this transformation further reaffirmed Snell's desire to help others heal from their pasts.

"Being an adoptive mother has changed the way I think about a lot of things," Snell reflected. "My two oldest daughters' abuse story is one of the most horrific that I have ever heard, and I have heard a lot working with the adoption agency. Having gone through everything that they went through, I honestly do not know how they could overcome that. I have learned that people, more specifically children, are incredibly resilient. Knowing what people go through and how they are not only able to survive but also thrive and maintain the capacity to give and receive love is truly inspiring."

Inspired by her children's story and her faith, Snell plans to spearhead Goldfinch Ministries, an initiative that serves women and children in need. Through this ministry, she hopes to provide a safe space for them to heal, combining counseling, practical life skills training, and discipleship to help women transition to independent living.

The name "Goldfinch" came from a vision Snell had of birds seeking refuge in the middle of a storm. In this vision, the goldfinches found peace and safety in a tree, representing the kind of sanctuary Snell wants to offer women and children who have been through trauma.

Snell's life is all about faith, family, and the art of seeing beyond what's on the surface. Through photography and adoption, she has captured moments of beauty, joy, and transformation and witnessed immense healing in the process. Through her ministry, she offers that same healing to others who need it most.

As she continues her work behind the camera, Snell remains committed to helping people see the world — and themselves — through the lens of hope, healing, and boundless love. **GN**

*Stay connected with Snell's photography journey by visiting [dsnellphotography.com](http://dsnellphotography.com).*





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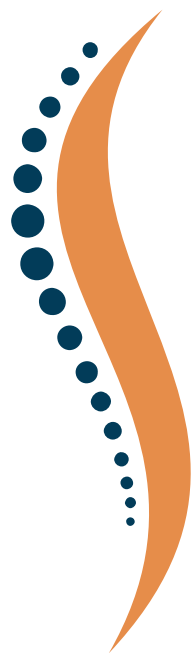


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# Aligning health and wellness

Dr. Amy Rudder helps patients reconnect with their body's natural rhythms and embrace a proactive approach to health.

By Jeriah Brumfield // Photography by Brooke Snyder

**T**HE BODY has its own language and innate wisdom that orchestrates every heartbeat, breath, and motion without conscious effort. Yet, with its persistent demands and often sedentary routines, the signals within that communication system can easily become tangled in the modern world. As people increasingly seek ways to reconnect with their natural rhythms, chiropractic care is carving out a larger space in holistic health care. Chiropractic care doesn't merely relieve pain but empowers the body to prevent it.

"There is an innate or inborn intelligence in every living thing," Dr. Amy Rudder, with Rudder Chiropractic, began.

Her voice was steady and deliberate, as though she had shared this a hundred times but spoke it with a new urgency each time.

"That's what drives every function of the body. It's what makes your heart beat without you having to consciously tell it to do so. It makes your lungs open up and take in oxygen, and it causes your digestive system to convert foods that you eat into energy. But sometimes there's an interference in that communication."

Rudder aims to identify and remove these interferences, allowing the body to communicate properly and function without disturbances.

Rudder didn't grow up dreaming of realigning vertebrae or helping patients maintain optimal health through spinal adjustments. That dream surfaced years after she graduated with a master's in education, following eight years in the classroom and a successful stint in massage therapy.

While working part-time as a massage therapist in a chiropractor's office, her mentor, Dr. Ed Smith, saw something in her that she hadn't recognized.

He posed a provocative question, "Amy, why aren't you the doctor?" With those words, her career trajectory shifted entirely.

At Rudder Chiropractic Center, Rudder combines her inner educator and chiropractic expertise to care for her patients and to educate the public about the positive effects of chiropractic care.

Knowledge is power, and Rudder educates and empowers her patients with the information they need to make informed decisions about their well-being. As Rudder explained, chiropractic care addresses vertebral subluxations — misalignments in the spine that interfere with the nervous system's communication.

While many traditional medicines focus on treating symptoms, Rudder seeks to uncover and address root causes.

For example, treating the pain alone is not enough if someone has a headache. It's important to ask why the headache is happening in the first place and what can be adjusted to prevent it from recurring.

This idea goes hand in hand with Rudder's belief that chiropractic care may be considered a form of preventative medicine. When the nervous system functions as it should, the body is better equipped to handle stress and maintain efficiency.

"When we don't have that interference in how the brain communicates with the body, our body functions as it was intended, and we don't encounter as many of those things that we have when we aren't properly coordinated," she explained.

She noted that while chiropractic care doesn't directly prevent disease, it helps the body's systems operate more harmoniously, naturally boosting resilience and overall well-being.

As people increasingly seek out alternatives to traditional medical treatments, Rudder sees chiropractic care playing a





*Dr. Amy Rudder*

part in transforming the future of health. The trend toward more natural, preventative health care options aligns perfectly with her principles, making chiropractic a natural choice for those looking to support their body's innate healing abilities. Chiropractic care can ultimately help individuals achieve physical, mental, and emotional well-being.

Technology has also played a role in how Rudder's practice has evolved. Rudder uses cutting-edge tools like digital X-rays, advanced scanning equipment, and a Class IV laser for therapy to assess and treat her patients. These technologies allow her to track patient progress more accurately and ensure that her treatments are as effective as possible.

While the fundamentals of chiropractic remain the same, the tools they have now help them make more informed decisions and, ultimately, provide better care. Despite the advances, Rudder faces an ongoing challenge in educating the public about chiropractic care. Only about 10% of the population has ever visited a chiropractor, and many have misconceptions about what chiropractic is and what it can offer.

"Some people think that once you see a chiropractor, you have to keep going forever, but that's simply not true," Rudder clarified.

"Most people continue care because they feel the benefits, but it's always a choice."

Another common misconception is that chiropractic care only addresses back and neck pain. Rudder has seen patients experi-

ence improvements in sleep, digestion, concentration, and more — all thanks to a well-coordinated nervous system.

One area where Rudder hopes to make a particularly lasting difference is in chiropractic care for children.

"The nervous system encounters so many challenges from birth through the toddler years into elementary school and beyond that. And kids who get adjusted regularly have a leg up on their peers in a lot of ways," she explained.

She noted that regular chiropractic care for kids can improve concentration, immune function, and even coordination.

Aside from her practice, Rudder is closely connected to her community in Franklin County. She hosts a semiannual Patient Appreciation Day to give back and raise funds for local causes. Uplifting others is at the forefront of everything she does, from patient care to community outreach.

When you reconnect with your body's natural rhythms and address the root causes of health issues, you can achieve a greater sense of well-being and vitality. Whether you're seeking relief from pain or looking to enhance your overall health, consider the benefits of chiropractic care. Take the first step toward a healthier, more balanced life — schedule an appointment with Rudder Chiropractic Center today and empower your body to heal itself naturally. Optimal health is closer than you think. **GN**

*For more information, visit [rudderchiropractic.com](http://rudderchiropractic.com) or call (931) 967-4199. Address: 25 Veterans Dr., Decherd*



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# Franklin County invests in its **FUTURE OF HEALING.**

STRHS Medical Student Program addresses physician shortages  
by training the next generation of doctors

By Jeriah Brumfield // Photography by Brooke Snyder

**H**EALTH CARE disparities continue to grow, particularly in rural America, and the stakes have never been higher. Approximately 20% of Americans reside in rural areas, yet fewer than one-tenth of physicians choose to practice there. The National Institutes of Health projects a shortage of over 20,000 primary care physicians in these communities by 2025. In light of these issues, the Southern TN Regional Health System (STRHS) has emerged to provide solutions by equipping the next generations of physicians through its innovative medical student program.

## Transforming the medical landscape

The COVID-19 pandemic illuminated the urgent need for quality medical care, particularly in underrepresented and rural areas. That's where the STRH Medical Student Program comes in. In this program, dedicated faculty like Dr. Timothy Crater work diligently to mentor and inspire the next generation of osteopathic physicians. They strive to train competent, caring, and compassionate doctors and ultimately transform the quality and accessibility of health care in Middle Tennessee.

Crater, the program's director, said, "We want to raise the bar in terms of medical care here in our community by bringing these

young folks in, giving them good training, and then hopefully getting them to come back after their residency."

Mentoring and inspiring the next generation of osteopathic physicians is especially important. These physicians tend to practice more frequently in rural and underserved areas, making their presence in communities like those in Southern Tennessee beneficial and vital.

### A robust partnership

One reason for the program's strength and sustainability is its fruitful collaboration with Lincoln Memorial University School of Medicine in Harrogate, Tennessee (LMU-DCOM). This relationship allows eight to 12 third-year osteopathic medical students from LMU-DCOM to complete rotations at STRHS each year. This arrangement provides students with valuable hands-on experience in a real health care setting, helping them apply theoretical knowledge to actual patient care scenarios.

Once students complete their undergraduate education and the foundational two years of medical school, they begin their clinical training — a monumental experience that begins their first real interaction with patients. Here, they engage in hands-on learning and apply their theoretical knowledge in a practical setting.

As Crater explained, "This is really the training ground where a lot of people learn what they love and decide to pursue that, be it pediatrics, internal medicine, or surgery."

The program leads with the idea that personal connections lead to growth. Students gain exposure to various medical fields, from internal medicine and general surgery to pediatrics and family medicine. They interact with patients, interview them, and even participate in surgeries to gain valuable insights that influence their career paths.

### A day in the life of a medical student

The daily rhythm of a medical student at STRHS combines rigorous studying with impactful patient interactions. Students arrive at the hospital early in the morning, textbooks in hand, ready to envelop themselves in a day of clinical rotations. They move through the busy hallways, wearing crisp white coats that signify their emerging medical careers.

As they rotate through departments, they learn about medical conditions, treatments, and the human aspects of patient care. They observe surgical procedures and conduct gynecological examinations, and every moment gives them an inside look into their future responsibilities.

In addition to interacting with patients, the students form strong relationships with faculty mentors like Crater, who provide guidance and encouragement.

"We've done a good job with recruiting capable physicians willing to spend time and instruction," he noted.

With fewer competing residents, STRHS's medical students receive focused attention, which is important for their development.

### Navigating challenges and embracing opportunities

While the STRHS Medical Student Program is a prime example of progress within the medical field, it is not without challenges. Recruiting and retaining faculty mentors in a rural setting is a continuous endeavor.

Crater said, "We have to try to recruit preceptors who will agree to take on a medical student for a month or two at a time."

The faculty members are volunteer physicians who balance their practices with teaching, making them the backbone of the program.

In addition to human resources, the rapid pace of technological advancements in medicine presents another hurdle. As students study various electronic medical records and learn to navigate the rise of telemedicine, adaptability is an even more critical skill.

Crater stressed the importance of flexibility. "There will still be a need for a physician to make the decisions that need to be made for patients. But this landscape is continually changing, and you have to be very flexible to practice medicine these days. Flexibility is key. You can't be rigid, and you've got to continually stay on top of the changes in medicine, the delivery of medicine, and the changes in the way that records and information are communicated."

Yet, with each challenge arises opportunity. Integrating artificial intelligence into health care is an evolving field that students will increasingly encounter. The program embraces these advancements, helping future physicians become practitioners and innovators in their field.

### A vision for the future

Crater looks optimistically to the future and the effect of the medical student program on the community.

"Our medical community is engaged in an intellectual enterprise that brings quality to the community's medical care. We're engaged in a process of continual improvement of our own practices and imparting the wisdom, the knowledge we have, to a new generation of physicians," he affirmed.

His vision is to nurture a community of empathetic, skilled physicians committed to serving rural Tennessee.

In the midst of impending shortages and systemic challenges, this program provides a transformative solution to medical education, connecting the students with the communities that desperately need them. Through education, mentorship, and community mobilization, the program helps make quality health care an attainable goal for all, especially in the rural areas that need it most. **GN**





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# COMMITMENT TO COMMUNITY HEALTH

---

Dr. Ethan Tindall came to Winchester with a vision for oral wellness and is now witnessing his dreams come to life.



BY JERIAH BRUMFIELD

PHOTOGRAPHY BY BROOKE SNYDER

**I**T'S A lively dental office. The soft conversations create a friendly and comfortable environment. Dr. Ethan Tindall, dressed in a crisp white coat, moves swiftly between patient rooms, his demeanor calm and collected. A brief montage of moments captures the essence of his work — a child giggling as he counts his teeth, an older patient sharing special memories, and a couple discussing their treatment plan, all reflecting the genuine connections Tindall builds at Winchester Family Dentistry.

Tindall grew up in a small lake town in Clear Lake, Iowa, where he found that local dentists were very well respected and heavily involved in the community. As a young boy, he dreamed of one day bringing the same qualities of community involvement to his future community through dentistry. He wanted to infuse that same down-home spirit from Iowa into his new practice in Tennessee.

He and his wife fell in love with Winchester as soon as they arrived. Tindall was drawn to the town for its beauty and focus on community health and wellness, demonstrated by its dental practitioners. He soon discovered Dr. Orr, a dentist known for his principles of ongoing education and exceptional patient care.

“When I met Dr. Orr, I realized we shared similar treatment philosophies and goals,” Tindall shared.

The two quickly connected, and when Orr remodeled his office, he invited Tindall to join his team.

Tindall practiced dentistry for five years before joining Winchester Family Dental. During that time, he quickly began to witness firsthand the fascinating connection between oral health and systemic conditions.

“It all starts with the oral cavity being the gateway to the rest of the body,” he began.

“Bacteria from the mouth can also be found in patients with respiratory issues like pneumonia, pregnancy complications



Dr. Tindall numbs a patient to provide care. ➤

including premature birth and low birth weight, chronic inflammation causing arthritis, and some research out there suggests a link to cognitive decline in conditions like Alzheimer's and dementia."

With each patient interaction, he became increasingly aware of how oral health impacts everything from heart disease to diabetes management.

"Gum disease can also make it harder to control blood sugar levels, leading to difficulty in diabetes management," he explained.

One of the most common challenges he encounters is the silent epidemic of obstructive sleep apnea (OSA).

"The negative implications of OSA affect the whole body and include symptoms like poor sleep, fatigue, high blood pressure,

weight gain, headaches, [attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder], bed wetting, and hormonal issues, just to name a few. It affects both adults and kids," he noted.

Cost and accessibility remain significant barriers for patients, often leading them to seek care only when pain becomes unbearable, making preventative care nearly impossible.

The faculty at Winchester Family Dentistry understands the pressing need for accessible dental services, which is why they participated in community events like the One Day event in Winchester, where they provide free extractions and dental education to those who need it.

As a dentist, Tindall is heavily committed to continuous education.

"As technology and research advances, so should the way we treat patients. We know so much more now than we did in the past, and it is more important than ever to stay up to date. The more we learn, the better treatments we can offer."

He attends workshops and classes to stay current with the latest research and techniques.

They are applying principles of continuous knowledge enhancement and superior patient care. They offer alternative fluoride-free toothpastes and products for those who prefer them. The practice also provides metal-free restorative options to meet the needs and preferences of their patients.

Every day in the office brings a new set of challenges but also moments of joy.







Dr. Tindall provides dental care to a patient. ➤



**Some of my favorite moments in dentistry are seeing the relief and joy on a patient's face when you are able to not only address but also fix a patient's problem.**

**- DR. ETHAN TINDALL**

"Some of my favorite moments in dentistry are seeing the relief and joy on a patient's face when you are able to not only address but also fix a patient's problem," he said.

"The most rewarding part of being a dentist for me is changing people's lives by identifying problems and solving them. Dentistry involves a lot of problem-solving skills and the ability to make decisions and think outside the box when needed."

Each interaction reminds him of the power of dentistry — an art that goes beyond fixing teeth to truly changing lives.

As he contemplates the future, Tindall sees a digital landscape transforming the field of dentistry.

"Regarding systemic health, I think we will see more research linking things in the mouth to the rest of the body," he said. "This could include anything from changes in dental materials and treatment techniques to even changes in ingredients in toothpaste."

His long-term goal as a dentist is to continue to improve every year, maintain a very high level of treatment, and provide exceptional dental care to the community. He also hopes to instill good oral hygiene habits in the younger generation by engaging in education in schools and with his patients.

"It is very important to engage with the younger population and youth to establish good oral hygiene habits early."

Tindall's story comes full circle in Winchester, where he's joined a practice that feels like home and embraces the latest in dental care. From his calm presence with patients to his relentless drive for learning, he brings passion and expertise to the community he loves. Dentistry, for Tindall, is a way to elevate the community's overall health and make a real difference in their lives.

He's excited to keep growing with his team, sharing what he learns, and inspiring young people to build healthy oral habits early on. At Winchester Family Dentistry, it's all about staying connected to the community and helping each person leave with a happier smile and a healthier life. **GN**



DIANE BOLIN

# A JOURNEY FORGED AND A DREAM FULFILLED

---

Diane Bolin overcomes setbacks and embraces new beginnings in the nursing field.



BY JERIAH BRUMFIELD  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY  
BROOKE SNYDER

**F**OR DIANE Bolin, nursing was a lifelong dream that survived detours, setbacks, and the weighty responsibilities of raising a family. Her road to nursing had many twists and turns, but her family's unending support carried her through. As a wife, mother, and grandmother, Bolin's family is her rock; they cheered her on through the late nights and early mornings of nursing school. Her husband and children rooted for her, lifted her up and made room for her ambition. They took pride in her dream as if it were their own.

"My family is my world, and I could not have become a registered nurse without their love and support."

After spending 16 years as a medical assistant, Bolin recently completed her nursing degree at 45, fulfilling a dream that began as far back as middle school anatomy class. Now, she's living that dream as a registered nurse at Southern Tennessee Regional Health System (STRHS), where she brings an abundance of empathy and perseverance to the hospital every day.

However, adjusting to such a rigorous nurse's schedule has been her greatest challenge.

"We meet every Wednesday morning and work three 12-hour shifts. The



▲ *Bolin evaluates a patient.*

meetings were not difficult at all, but just getting into the routine of working a nurse's schedule was my biggest challenge," Bolin explained.

The rewards of patient care made every effort worthwhile.

"The biggest reward has definitely been patient care and satisfaction. It is such a rewarding experience to know you have helped someone feel better or made a positive impact on their life."

The STRHS Nurse Residency Program has provided Bolin with structured, hands-on experiences that have helped her transition into professional practice with fresh insights and new experiences.



## The most valuable thing I learned pertains to practical skills, such as IV insertion and perfecting my assessment.

- DIANE BOLIN

The program is structured in four key parts. It begins with online courses that reinforce core nursing skills. Department leaders then share their expertise and practical tips for patient care in weekly meetings. Bolin said she appreciates these meetings, which often feature different types of equipment and essential nursing techniques.

“The most valuable thing I learned pertains to practical skills, such as IV insertion and perfecting my assessment,” Bolin said.

The real learning happens in those 12-hour shifts, where Bolin works shoulder-to-shoulder with her mentor, a seasoned nurse who’s shown her the ropes with patience and skill. Her mentor provided her with the sort of insight that only experience can bring.

“Working side-by-side with the more experienced nurse, we learn so much more than a textbook could ever provide. My mentor was great. She was always very patient and kind. I could, and still can, always go to her to ask any question, and she would be more than happy to answer it.”

The program culminates with a capstone project, during which nurses identify areas for improvement in patient care and present their findings to nurse leaders. According to Bolin, this hands-on learning is especially important because it bridges the gap between textbook knowledge and real-world nursing.

Regarding career ambitions, Bolin said she wants to leave an impact, not just on her patients but on the next generation of nurses. Bolin currently works in the medical-surgical unit but is intrigued by the possibility of transitioning to intensive care, where she can expand her skills even further and maybe even teach.

Teaching is a goal on her horizon because she enjoys mentoring nursing students who come to STRHS for clinical rotations.

“I have worked with some nursing students who come to the hospital for clinical rotations here and have really enjoyed showing them tips and tricks in nursing. It’s great to see them light up with excitement,” Bolin said.

She also believes that while health care technology may evolve, compassionate, human-centered care will always be at the forefront of nursing.

“When the nursing students come to the hospital for clinicals, their energy is contagious. There’s nothing like seeing that light in their eyes when they master a skill for the first time,” she said.

Her experiences in the program, such as learning how to insert IVs and perfecting her assessment, have vitalized this dream. These experiences have given her the confidence and skill set to pay forward what she’s learned.

At 45, Bolin is living proof of how life’s detours can lead to destinations that are all the more meaningful. She reminds us that it’s never too late to chase a dream — especially when that dream involves changing lives. Becoming a registered nurse helped Bolin realize the purpose she’s carried for decades. With her family by her side and a foundation of patient-centered care, she is ready to show the world what nursing is truly about — empathy, perseverance, and mentorship. **GN**



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GINA WEDDINGTON

# HEALING HEARTS, MENDING WOUNDS

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Gina Weddington combines her love for people and a keen eye for healing to transform patients' lives.



BY JERIAH BRUMFIELD  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY BROOKE SNYDER  
AND SUBMITTED BY GINA WEDDINGTON

**I**N THE stillness of early morning, Gina Weddington steps into her workplace — a treatment center at Elk River Health and Nursing Center of Winchester. Her arrival is humble and unassuming, but her presence and attentiveness reach into each hallway and patient room.

Weddington works as a wound-care nurse, a specialty she has always felt was meant for her. Though health care always intrigued her, a traumatic childhood experience awakened her drive to master the art and science of healing.

As a child, Weddington often stayed with her grandparents and enjoyed spending time with older generations. One day, when she was only in grade school, her grandmother suddenly stopped breathing in front of her. Paralyzed by shock and fear, young Weddington did the only thing she could — dialed 911 and watched helplessly as the emergency responders revived her grandmother.

“If I’d known what to do, maybe I wouldn’t have been so panicked,” Weddington recalled.

This experience inspired her to become someone who could help and who wouldn’t freeze during an emergency.

Years later, she landed her first job at a hospital — serving meals in the kitch-

en at just 16. However, as she moved around in different health care roles, it was clear that she enjoyed connecting with patients and comforting those in need. She earned her certified nursing assistant (CNA) license while still in high school, initiating a 20-year journey as a CNA. For Weddington, these were formative steps — years of enhancing her skills and truly understanding the people she cared for.

“My family always jokes, ‘What will Gina go to school for next?’” she laughed, recounting her random detour into cosmetology.

While she enjoyed the beauty industry, her fascination with health care pulled her in a different direction. Life’s circumstances filled her days, including raising two children and supporting her



*Weddington in nursing school in 2023 at TCAT in Winchester* ➤



▲ Nursing photo taken at June 2023 graduation

husband. However, as her children grew, she felt led to go further and decided, in her 30s, to tackle the tedious journey to becoming a nurse.

The challenges were numerous. Working full time while studying in nursing school meant sacrificing nearly every personal moment. For 16 months, Weddington juggled a relentless schedule. She spent nights in Licensed Practical Nurse classes, working during the day, and weekends with her family.

“I didn’t even get to hang a single picture in my new house until after I graduated,” she recalled.

But through every challenge, she had a strong support system — her husband, her family, and, most importantly, her own persistence.

Weddington was working in Central Supply at Elk River Health and Nursing Center when her supervisors approached her with an opportunity. They needed

someone reliable and passionate for a wound care position and saw her as a natural fit. She was intrigued by the science of wound healing and the chance to improve the quality of care for her patients. She accepted the position and stepped into the complex, challenging, and ultimately rewarding world of wound care.

Each day, Weddington connects with patients with wounds that share their stories. Some are the result of surgeries, others accidents, and many arise from the unavoidable effects of aging. She treats each wound carefully, with the skill of a nurse and the heart of someone who sees her patients as individuals. Watching the skin heal after weeks of care brings Weddington joy.

“Watching the process of healing, especially when you’ve been there from the beginning, is one of the most rewarding parts of my job,” she said.

One of her favorite advancements in wound care technology is a new ultrasound device that delivers misted water to the wound site while sending ultrasonic waves to stimulate tissue growth.

“It’s fascinating to watch,” Weddington shared.

This technology, combined with traditional methods and the attentive hands of experienced nurses, has helped many of her patients make remarkable recoveries. Weddington believes these technological innovations are less about the equipment and more about what they enable — improving lives, reducing suffering, and providing comfort to those who are often vulnerable and in pain.

Weddington also believes in treating each patient as though they were her own family, especially the older ones who remind her of her grandparents. She knows that small details matter.

“When I’m in their home, I’m on their schedule,” she said, explaining how she memorizes each patient’s preferences — who likes their morning medication before breakfast, who prefers their showers in the afternoon, and which of her residents feels comforted by a simple chat before bedtime.

One of the greatest challenges Weddington faces isn’t in patient care but in the larger health care environment. Since COVID-19, the field has struggled with nurse shortages. But, like many other health care professionals, Weddington remains hopeful as the facility shifts away from relying on agency nurses and focuses on building a stable, dedicated team.

Weddington is the embodiment of a true caregiver and an inspiration for many others. With each patient she serves, she infuses their lives with hope and healing. Her career journey beautifully demonstrates the positive effects of human connection and reminds us that even the simplest acts of kindness can create a meaningful difference in the world. **GN**



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# Cowan Christmas Market - Dec. 6-7



Photography by Brooke Snyder

The Cowan Christmas Market took place on Dec. 6 and 7 at Monterey Station, offering unforgettable experiences like photos with Santa, unique vendors, live music, and more.



1. Vickie and Kaitlyn Ables 2. Linda Parks and Stacie Vaughn 3. Paige Henshaw and Santa 4. Nancy Hibler  
5. Elaine and Michael Oliver 6. Donna Pickett and Amanda Wiseman



# Tims Ford Christmas Market - Dec. 14



Photography by Brooke Snyder

The Christmas Market took place at the Tims Ford Event Center on Dec. 14, from 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Vendors were set up with homemade gifts and direct sale items. Free Christmas crafts and hourly raffle drawings made this event much more special.



1. Jaiden and Angela Huber 2. Kirsten Johnson  
3. Audrina Colvin 4. Alicia Johnson and Ally Cheek

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