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May 8, 2020

Lou Hipps, '20, Connects Vulnerable Patients to Healthcare

The World Health Assembly designated 2020 as the “Year of the Nurse” long before the Coronavirus pandemic began. The celebration recognizes the 200th anniversary of the birth of Florence Nightingale, the founder of nursing. Further, the American Nurses Association, which traditionally observes National Nurses Week May 6-12, has expanded the recognition to the entire month of May.

While the Gardner-Webb University Hunt School of Nursing recognizes the excellence of its students, faculty and staff on a daily basis, National Nurses Month is a time to highlight their dedication and commitment to the profession. One of those students is Lou Hipps, '20, who is enrolled in the RN to BSN program through Goal—The Degree Completion Program at Gardner-Webb.

Hipps, a resident of Candler, N.C., shares why she became a nurse and how she is helping patients navigate the uncertainties related to the coronavirus pandemic.

Q: Why did you choose nursing as a career?

Hipps: I followed in my Grandmother's path because she had such great stories. Now my son is a RN, BSN. After my son graduated with his BSN (without school loans), it became a personal goal for me to earn my bachelor's. I love to learn and would be learning something anyway. No knowledge is wasted.

Q: What is your current position and job responsibilities?



Hipps: I am a telephonic care manager for the Medicare/Medicaid population for Humana with the responsibility of connecting members with resources to improve their health. Because we work in insurance, the documentation is tedious and complicated, but I get to use my certifications as a Holistic Health and Wellness Nurse Coach to help members attempt healthier behaviors in the midst of many social determinants of health, which are the economic and social conditions that influence health status. For example, if you do not have transportation, you don't go to the doctor or pharmacy. If you don't have money for food or medicine, then your chronic condition is poorly managed. If you have a low literacy level, you cannot understand principles that promote a healthy lifestyle. Navigating insurance and the health care system is difficult and many people give up.

Q: How are your nursing professors and GWU classes preparing you for the next level of your profession?

Hipps: Classes keep me current with technology, and I am able to stay up-to-date in the ever-evolving nursing environment. Research, writing, and leadership classes have been helpful. Every class, even the ones that I wasn't fond of (Statistics) has taught me a great deal. If it wasn't for my advisor, I would have withdrawn from Statistics early in the semester, but with her encouragement I ended up with an A. In most classes and in nursing research, it is important to understand statistics in order to analyze data in a meaningful way. Also, every time I come upon something that is bigger than me, I remember, that I went through statistics and learned a new complicated, intricate job at the same time.



Q: How has your job changed since the pandemic began?

Hipps: I work with the most vulnerable population, trying to keep them informed and healthy at home. We have added a Proactive COVID survey to establish risk. We are

tracking members that have been tested. There are new processes in connecting resources for members. Patients are happy to have the telephonic and/or telemedicine appointments available at their doctors to keep from getting exposed. Each of my patients has at least one chronic condition and are Medicare/Medicaid. Many have a list of conditions and a list of social determinants of health. Patients are concerned about not having enough food, they are behind on their bills, many have mental health challenges, and really need assistance navigating the health system. Many of my patients need help with transportation and were socially isolated before the virus.

Q: In thinking about 2020 as the Year of the Nurse, what are your thoughts about your profession?

Hipps: I have never been more proud to be a nurse. Although I am not on the “frontline,” we all have a role to play and it takes all of us. During this COVID-19 time our local Healing Touch Association is giving us the opportunity to provide Healing Touch from a distance to Chicago (Ill.) nurses on the frontline, so I have two nurses in Chicago that I am connected to through prayer and healing. That is very special to me, and it gives me a chance to help those on the frontline.

[Learn more about the Hunt School of Nursing.](#)