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### GWU Nursing Alumna One of Many Celebrating National Nurses Week

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# GWU Nursing Alumna One of Many Celebrating National Nurses Week

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Office of University Communications

May 3, 2013

## *National Nurses Week Observed May 6-13, 2013*

There is a decided twinkle in her eyes, and within moments, one is keenly aware of a caring and compassion that resides deep within the heart of this petite woman. She is authentic and kind, which speaks volumes about both her chosen profession and her continued commitment to the hospital in which she has built a career. Her name is Veronica Poole-Adams and she is a 30-year veteran of the nursing profession.

Poole-Adams graduated with her Associate of Arts in Nursing from Gardner-Webb in 1982. A native of Cleveland County, she was thrilled to find employment at Cleveland Memorial Hospital (now Cleveland Regional Medical Center) in Shelby, N.C., as she began her career as a registered nurse. Unlike many in her field who hopped from one post to another, Poole-Adams has remained planted at Cleveland Regional for more than 30 years, initially serving patients as a bedside nurse and now is the chief nursing executive and vice president of patient care services for both CRMC and Kings Mountain Hospital.

“I decided to be a nurse in high school,” she recalled. “I’m a person who believes in being connected to people. All I wanted to do was make a difference and build relationships with my patients. I never really thought about leadership.”

Early on, her work ethic and heart was undeniable, and within less than a decade, the vice president of nursing at the hospital began talking to her about opportunities to impact more people. At first, Poole-Adams said she wasn’t sure she wanted to take on the added responsibility, but she also could not deny the appeal of helping more patients along with the nurses who were charged with their care. “I’m so proud to be part of a system that really looks for internal growth and opportunity for their employees,” she said. “I certainly believe that some people have the heart and the skill to do more, and it just takes the right person to see that potential.”

She completed her bachelor’s degree and began working at CRMC as a nursing leader, initially helping to oversee one unit and eventually finding that more were added to her scope of leadership. Whether it was serendipity or providence or a combination of both, she was eventually asked to serve as the interim chief of nursing during a staff change. In early 2000, she was hand-picked by then-CEO John Young to be the permanent chief nurse for the hospital.

“I’ll never forget it, I was walking through the administrative offices and John motioned for me to come into his office,” she recalled. “He said he wanted me to be our next chief nurse, because he knew I had the heart and passion for it.”

While honored by the request and confident in her ability to handle the position, Poole-Adams initially hesitated to accept the post. She remembered a conversation she had years before with her mentor. “I told her that sometimes, when I saw the leaders, they didn’t look very happy,” she said. “I wasn’t sure if this opportunity was for me. Every day when I came to work as a bedside nurse, I looked forward to it, I loved it and I knew that I was going to do something exciting that day. I didn’t want to lose my passion.”

As a compromise, she asked Young to give her six months in the position to make sure it was a good fit for her and for the administrative team. She also began working on her Master of Business Administration at Gardner-Webb, so that she could strengthen her business and administrative skill set. Within six months she had transitioned from interim status to permanent chief nursing executive. In 2002, Poole-Adams earned her MBA, and within just a few years, she began serving as chief operating officer for the hospital until a restructuring of duties resulted in the assignment of her current post. She now oversees all of nursing for CRMC and KMH, as well as pharmacy, radiology, laboratory and other clinical service areas.

“I am a true believer that it takes every member of the team, everybody is so important to the outcome for the patient,” she shared. “People come to hospitals for nursing care. I believe nursing is the foundation on which other service areas are built.”

With a career spanning more than three decades, numerous promotions, awards, and accolades, Poole-Adams says that the driving force behind her passion remains the same. “Everybody has a story, and you have to get to know their story,” she reflected. “Nursing really looks at the patient in a holistic way. It’s more than their physical needs, it’s when you’re able to really build relationships and understand their emotional and spiritual needs. For me, that’s what it’s about.”