

A look at a career in healthcare

As a rule, the types of people who dedicate their lives to helping others are the types of people I like to spend time with. Luckily for me, as president of Ukiah Valley Medical Center, I am in a position to do so frequently.

If you're considering a career change, or planning a career for the first time, consider health care. It is one of the rare fields in which you can do well for yourself while doing well for others.

My associate Cathy Frey, Executive Director of Alliance for Rural Community Health, really described the situation well when she said, "Health care is among the local employment sectors projected to maintain strong growth. Those considering health care employment should recognize that it will continue to have a strong payoff in both wages and career potential. Those who pursue a clinical degree will, ultimately, have the immense satisfaction of knowing that they make a critical difference in the well being of their community. However, people who are not interested in a clinical degree have an equally crucial role to play in maintaining our local system of care: As medicine becomes more technology-oriented, competition for qualified computer technicians is growing. Right now, our community health centers have an array of opportunities for those seeking entry-level positions in reception, materials and medical records. These types of staff positions are the hidden backbone of health care."

Health care is separated into two basic categories: care givers and support personnel. The two groups depend on each other to care for patients and keep opera-



Local Health
By Terry Burns

tions running smoothly. Care givers are, as you might expect, the clinical professionals who care for patients directly: doctors, nurses, nurse practitioners, therapists, phlebotomists, technologists, etc. Support personnel are those who make sure care givers have what they need to do their jobs, and keep the business side of the institution healthy: admitting clerks, bio-medical engineers, medical records filers, nutritional services personnel, billers, coders, administrators, housekeepers, information technology professionals, etc.

Right here in Mendocino County, you can get the training you need to transition into health care. The Ukiah Adult School offers many classes to start you on your way, as does the Mendocino County Office of Education. Mendocino College is an extraordinary educational resource, with programs for those interested in becoming licensed vocational nurses and registered nurses, as well as other courses to help you launch your health care career.

On the care giver side, the first step on the nursing ladder is to become a certified nursing assistant, then a licensed vocational nurse,

and finally, a registered nurse. This whole educational path can be completed locally, and nurses are in high demand. Nurses can work in many settings: hospitals, doctors' offices, clinics, public health, etc.

Although nursing used to be a traditionally female career, it has changed. UVMC's Acute Care Services Director, Brad Morrison, RN, said, "Nursing a tremendous career opportunity for men and women, from the adrenaline rush and physical demands of caring for critically ill patients to the intellectual challenges associated with caring for those with many different diseases, to the constant learning opportunity associated with medical technology involved in patient care. After getting your feet wet as a bedside nurse, there are many other opportunities in nursing, including infection control, education, quality management, and nursing leadership." For those with the compassion and skill to be a nurse, I would applaud that

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<p>Tuesday March 11</p> <p>Chicken & dumplings Salad Biscuit Dessert</p>	<p>Wednesday March 12</p> <p>Spaghetti w/ meat sauce Green salad Roll Dessert</p>	<p>Thursday March 13 <i>Birthday lunch</i></p> <p>Ground sirloin steak w/ mushroom gravy Baked potatoes Vegetable Dessert</p>	<p>Friday March 14</p> <p>Ham & pinto beans Corn bread Dessert</p>	<p>Monday March 17</p> <p>Roast Turkey Mashed potatoes Gravy Salad Roll Dessert</p>
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choice. Nursing is an excellent field—rewarding, challenging, interesting... but it's not for everyone.

Another field that interests those who are considering health care is medical imaging, and Santa Rosa Junior College offers excellent education locally. Medical imaging encompasses the various modalities involved in getting pictures of a patient's insides: x-ray, computerized tomography, magnetic resonance imaging, mammography, ultrasound, etc.

For those of us who want to help others, but don't have clinical inclinations, there are positions for every education level and opportunity in many settings. Entry level positions require little more than a high school degree, a friendly

demeanor, and a willingness to learn. Other positions require college degrees in areas such as business, finance, marketing, and others. Being bilingual in Spanish and English is a wonderful attribute in any health care worker in our community because of the increasing Spanish-speaking population.

Health care offers positions in doctors' offices, hospitals, and clinics. For the outgoing types, positions that offer constant interaction with the public are available, like the front office staff in physician offices, or reception staff at clinics, or admitting staff at the hospital. For the less outgoing among us, there are back office positions to support the important operations of any health care organization.

There are so many wonderful options. I hope you will consider joining those of us who feel privileged to serve our friends and neighbors through our health care careers. For more information about local educational opportunities, see the resources listed below.

- Ukiah Adult School -- www.ukiahadultschool.net or 463-5217
 - Mendocino County Office of Education -- www.mcoe.usd/cte or 467-5000
 - Mendocino College Registered Nursing Program -- www.mendocino.edu/tc/pg/4011/nursing_program.html or 468-3000
 - Santa Rosa Junior College -- www.santarosajuniorcollege.edu or 527-4011
- Terry Burns is the president/CEO of the Ukiah Valley Medical Center.*

Living

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- Turkey spread with nonfat cream cheese and filled with sliced vegetables.
- Baked apple with cinnamon and 2 tablespoons of walnuts.
- One-half whole-wheat English muffin with apple butter.
- 1.4 ounces of mixed nuts and dried fruit
- A smoothie with yogurt or milk and fruit. Protein powder optional.

• A hard boiled egg with whole grain or rice crackers.

While many of your snacks will probably be eaten on the run, whenever possible nourish both your body and your spirit by taking a real break: find a comfortable chair, put on relaxing music, sip a cup of tea, and enjoy your delicious snack from a beautiful plate. Happy and healthy snacking to you!

Haven Logan, Ph.D., is a psychotherapist in private practice in Ukiah. She is the author of two books,

Choosing to Be Well: A Conscious Approach to a Healthier Lifestyle (Inner Ocean Publishing) and The California Wine Country Diet: The Indulgent Approach to Managing Your Weight (Quill Driver Books). You can download past Healthy Living columns at her website: www.californiawinecountrydiet.com.

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