



Nurse Force Receives 4 1/2 Star Rating

Sherri Lange, owner of Nurse Force, is proud to announce that Nurse Force received another prestigious recognition—a 4 1/2 star rating from the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS)!

Over the past several years, CMS has been working toward the development of a 5-star rating system for home health care agencies, which would help consumers quickly and easily assess the patient experience of care information provided on the CMS site, Home Health Compare. Similar to the 5 star rating used for hotels and restaurants, consumers can now use the same rating scale to more easily compare home health agencies—the more stars received by an agency, the better the quality of care.

As you can imagine, home health agencies differ in the quality of care and services they provide to patients. The star ratings are based on 9 of the 27 quality measures which include items such as: patient wait for a first visit, thoroughness of explanations of drugs to a patient or caretaker, administration of a flu shot, hospital stays, and improvements in walking, getting in and out of bed, breathing, and movement with less pain.

According to Home Health Compare, of 9,359 agencies rated, only 239 received 5 stars and 2,218 received 4 or 4.5 stars. Nearly half of all agencies—46%—landed somewhere in the middle, receiving 3 or 3.5 stars, with 28% receiving lower ratings of 1.5 to 2.5 stars. Six agencies received only a single star.

Our goal at Nurse Force has always been to provide quality care to our clients and this recent recognition is validation of our progress in this endeavor. Our success is a direct reflection of the dedication and commitment of not only our Administrative staff but that of our nurses and aides working in our clients homes.

Choose Nurse Force for your home health care needs. We truly are one of the best!

For more information or to establish services for a loved one, call us at 515-224-4566.

Nurse Force Welcomes New Neighbors

You may recall last summer we shared with you a story about Veterans and the service dogs utilized by some of them. We'd now like to share a follow-up story on that article.

This past fall move into our Iowa Catholic Radio moved into our building complex. One of the first things we noticed about our new neighbors was a member of their staff, Brian Sweeney, taking a beautiful golden retriever out for daily walks. But what really caught our attention was the service vest his dog was wearing. Being the animal lovers we are, we reached out to Brian to inquire about his dog, Ike, and discovered he is a service dog in training for the Puppy Jake Foundation (PJF) located here in Des Moines.

Brian began his association with PJF in February 2015 as a "puppy sitter". This is PJF's official title given to those who are helping raise and train their service dogs. After filling in for a few regular "sitters" who were away on personal business, Brian and his wife, Angie, received a recruitment call from PJF to become full-time puppy sitters. They were introduced to Ike when he was approximately 8 weeks old and he has been a "work in progress" ever since.



Service dogs are typically Golden Retrievers, Labs and German Shepherds. They must successfully complete five various stages of training before they graduate and are placed with a Veteran. As with any puppy, they start off learning basic commands such as sit, heel, etc. They are later introduced to more difficult commands such as "block" (keeping someone from approaching the handler by standing

crossways in front of them) and "watch" (standing next to the handler and looking behind them to warn of anyone approaching from that direction by giving the handler a nudge on the hip with their nose). Dogs are trained in a variety of scenarios that a Veteran may encounter from navigating through crowds; using elevators and escalators; riding on buses and airplanes; or picking items up from the floor, just to name a few.

The dogs also may need to receive additional training to desensitize them from various distractions. Ike's weakness was rabbits they would encounter on a daily walk. After Brian received specific instructions from the professional trainers with PJF, Ike was quickly taught to ignore those "waskally wabbits" and continued on with his training. When asked how that was accomplished, Brian smiled and said, "Food is a great motivator. Distract him with food and you get his attention real quick!" His favorite foods? Baby carrots and blueberries!

As far as specific difficulties encountered while training Ike, Brian listed one specific difficulty—getting the public to recognize that any dog with a red service vest on should be considered a medical device and not a pet to be approached for petting or to give treats.

Not all dogs who enter the training program at PJF are successful in reaching graduation. Out of eight potential service dogs who were originally a part of Ike's class, only six remain. Two of Ike's brothers, Kennedy and Reagan, were part of his class. Unfortunately of the two, only Reagan remains as a potential graduate. Some dogs may be eliminated from the program due to behavioral issues such as chasing other animals, some for possible health reasons, and others because they are unable to be taught a specific required skill. These dogs are then made available to be re-careered and placed up for adoption through PJF.

Ike has passed all training levels so far and has been evaluated on his various skills and temperament. He and other upcoming “graduates” recently met a number of Veterans who have applied for a service dog. After reviewing both dogs and Veterans, PJF assigned Ike to his new owner. Brian is currently fine-tuning specific skills Ike needs to assist his new master. After this final stage of training is complete, Brian will take Ike and his backpack filled with his toys, special blanket and other items to the PJF training center and say a final good-bye.

Ike’s graduation is set for March 30th. It will be a bittersweet time for Brian and Angie. They will be sad to see this loving dog who has become a part of their family leave their home. You see, once the training vest and halter come off, Ike is just a regular dog who enjoyed spending time with the Sweeney’s own dog, Jasper. However, this sadness will be tempered with the knowledge that Ike will be going to a Veteran and making a significant difference in that Vet’s life. Will they undertake the job of “puppy sitting” again? Brian’s reply was a definitive “Yes!” and cites the reason as the difference these dogs make in a Veteran’s life.

Brian shared a story with us about a Veteran who received a service dog and the difference this dog made the very first night with his new owner. After the Veteran had gone to bed with his new service dog by his side, he began to have an episode of night terrors. At the very beginning of this episode, the dog woke his new master up before the Veteran became fully engulfed in this night terror. This Veteran later told his friends that if the dog never did anything else but prevent him from encountering night terrors, it was well worth the investment of time and money to have the dog trained.



Veterans are not charged to obtain a service dog; however they are responsible for the food, vet bills and other normal pet costs once they receive their dog. To purchase and train a service dog is a costly endeavor, somewhere in the neighborhood of \$18,000 - \$20,000. Here is a breakdown of the expenses incurred for just one dog from the time of birth to placement:

- Purchase of purebred puppy - \$1,500
- Veterinary care for a year - \$1,500
- Training for a year - \$10,000
- Crate - \$75
- One month of food - \$48 (or \$576 for a year)
- Training vest, backpack and bandana - \$80
- Collar & leash - \$30

Each donation to the Puppy Jake Foundation matters. Show your support and help a Veteran who gave so much for our country. You can also make a donation to honor a loved one – whether it’s a friend, family member or fallen soldier.

For more information about the Puppy Jake Foundation, applications to obtain a service dog or a re-careered dog, how to donate toward the purchase and training of a dog or for stories of graduate teams of military veterans and their dogs, visit the PJF website at: www.puppyjakefoundation.org.

The staff at Nurse Force wish Brian and Ike well on their final phase of training and to Ike in his placement with his Veteran.

Then & Now

This month we'd like to shift focus for our Then & Now article to that of obtaining a detailed family medical history (Then) to help your doctor assist you and your family in maintaining good health (Now).

Knowing your family's health history can save your life and the lives of those you love. Tracing the illness suffered by your parents, grandparents and other relatives can help your doctor predict disorders for which you may be at risk and help them determine which tests and screenings are best for you. Remember, the earlier a disease is caught, the earlier it can be treated!

Having a close family member with a chronic disease increases your risk for developing the disease, but this is not a guarantee you will develop that disease. Chronic diseases such as heart disease, diabetes and cancer are caused by a combination of factors such as genes, behavior, lifestyle and environment. Since all of these factors can be shared by close family members, you all share the same developmental risk for these diseases.

Recording your family history is simple. Start by writing down a list of all your blood relatives on both sides of the family. The most important relatives to talk to are your parents, siblings, and your children. Next would be your grandparents, aunts and uncles, nieces and nephews and any half-brothers or half-sisters you may have.

It is best to interview each family member separately so you can focus on specific questions and their respective answers. In addition, be sensitive to any topics that may be difficult for them to discuss such as miscarriages, cancer, etc. You will want to ask the following questions:

- Do you have any chronic illnesses, such as heart disease, high blood pressure or diabetes?
- How old were you when you developed these illnesses?
- Find out the age and cause of death of any deceased family members.
- Ask female relatives if they had any difficulties with pregnancy, such as miscarriage.

Also, ask questions about your family ancestry. This can be important as three large minority groups - Hispanics, African Americans and Asian Americans—have a higher rate for specific diseases for which family history would be especially beneficial. In addition to the more general categories of heart disease, cancer, stroke and diabetes, these three groups are more prone to experience diseases such as asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), HIV/AIDs, obesity, suicide and liver disease, influenza and pneumonia, hepatitis B, and tuberculosis.

To help you organize your family's health information, the U.S. Surgeon General has developed an online tool called My Family's Health Portrait, which is available at <https://familyhistory.hhs.gov/>. Once you have collected your family medical history, update it whenever you learn of new family health history information.

In closing, share this collected family health information with your physician and other family members. Having access to this information can help ensure a healthy future for you and your family.

Article sources: cdc.gov; mayoclinic.org; and memorialcare.org

Creamy Crockpot Hash Brown Potatoes



- 1 pkg (32 oz) frozen cubed hash browns
- 1 can (10-3/4 oz) condensed cream of potato soup, undiluted
- 2 cups (8 oz) shredded Colby-Monterey Jack cheese
- 1 cup (8 oz) sour cream
- 1/4 tsp. pepper
- 1/8 tsp. salt
- 1 carton (8 oz) spreadable chive and onion cream cheese

Mix first 6 ingredients together in large bowl and place in a lightly greased 4-qt crockpot. Cover and cook on low for 3-1/2 to 4 hours or until potatoes are tender. Stir in cream cheese.

Makes approximately 12-14 servings.

Coping with Aging Parents

At Nurse Force, we are familiar with the challenges baby boomers may experience as their role in the lives of their parents changes from children to caregiver. You want what is best for them but may face some resistance. Here are some tips in dealing with aging parents:

Reassure them. Let them know you are supporting them and can be depended upon to help them when they need it.

Educate yourself in regards to upcoming situations—include legal matters such as wills and property ownership; health care resources and support services; knowledge of the aging process.

Share the work/responsibility with other family members, friends, and paid caregivers.

Help parents retain control. Respect their need to make their own decisions and remain in control of their lives. However, as health conditions fail, you may need to step in and assist.

Respect your own needs. Be honest with your parents about your time and energy limits. Make them aware of the necessity for your own time to relax. Allow yourself time to be their children and not their caregivers.

Then, there may be times when you may feel more comfortable leaving your parents health care needs and concerns with professionals. Remember, Nurse Force is always here to help—whether it is for several hours once a day or 24 hours a day / 7 days a week. Let us provide you and your loved ones peace of mind while providing the care they need when and where they need it—at home!

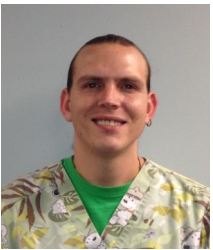
December & January Employees of the Month



Tammy, RN, is our nurse recipient for December Employee of the Month. She has been a faithful employee since 1999.

During her off hours, she enjoys spending time with her family and friends; being outdoors—especially hiking in the woods and boating; reading Danielle Steel novels or anything regarding military history; and shopping either for antiques or at Younkers. When given the opportunity, she loves to go to Florida to spend time with her dad and hanging out on the beach by the ocean.

Before becoming a nurse, Tammy considered getting into Mechanical Engineering. Fortunately for us, her love of people won out and she now enjoys making a positive impact in the lives of others.



Our December Home Health Aide Employee of the Month recipient is Frank. He has been employed with Nurse Force since 2014r.

Frank is an avid fan of multiplayer online role-playing games such as Final Fantasy 14 and Grandia II. While he hasn't had a lot of time for vacations lately, he does have fond memories of side pending time in his pre-teen years at his aunt's home in Branson and getting to use her garden tractor.

In addition to Frank being a dedicated family man who loves spending time with his family, he is also dedicated to the clients of Nurse Force. He enjoys working with our clients and finds satisfaction in knowing that, with help from himself and others from Nurse Force, they are able to stay in their home. His hard work shows and we, along with our clients, appreciate it!



Kathy, RN, is our nurse recipient for January Employee of the Month. She's been employed with Nurse Force since 2009.

Even though she claims work is "pretty much my life", Kathy loves hanging out with her kids and grandkids and considers herself a "softball grandma". She is expecting another grandchild in June and is anxious to find out later this month if she needs to start buying pink or blue clothes for the new arrival!

Her ambition when she got out of high school was to attend the Air Force Academy and become a pilot. Personally we're glad that didn't come about because she has been a valuable asset to us as a Registered Nurse!

Her favorite part of being a nurse has been the challenge she receives in keeping people in their home, which is where they want to be!



Leif is our Home Health Aide Employee of the Month recipient for January and has been with Nurse Force since 2011.

In his free time, Leif enjoys photography. He becomes an avid photographer during week-end trips or when he travels to Hawaii on vacation. While he prefers warmer weather, Leif does enjoy winter from the perspective of changing seasons. After all, he does live in Iowa!

When asked to share something with us that we might not know about him, he smiled and said he has been a fireman and has taken classes for EMT. This obvious desire to help people made his transition into the home health care field an easy one. He now enjoys meeting new clients and taking excellent care of them for Nurse Force.

WORD SEARCH

C E T W H Y U V D M I D X K Z A Z Y
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 P J A O Y M I L K Y W A Y N K X R R
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As we said last month on Facebook, Nurse Force is rarely without some type of chocolate in our office. So in recognition of our love for chocolate, we've hidden 30 types of chocolate candy bars in this month's puzzle. How many can you find?

- | | |
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| ALMOND JOY | MILK DUDS |
| BABY RUTH | MILKY WAY |
| BAR NONE | MOUNDS |
| BUTTERFINGER | NESTLE CRUNCH |
| CADBURY EGGS | PAYDAY |
| CARMELLO | PEPPERMINT PATTY |
| CHARLESTON CHEWS | REECES PIECES |
| DOVE BAR | ROLO |
| GOOBERS | SKOR |
| GRAND SLAM | SMORES |
| HERSHEYS | SNICKERS |
| JUNIOR MINTS | TURTLES |
| KIT KAT | TWIX |
| KRACKLE | WHATCHAMACALLIT |
| LINDOR | WHOPPERS |



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515-224-4566



Katie, our Physical Therapy Assistant, is scheduling Fall Risk Clinics at area Assisted Living Centers, Senior Centers, etc.

If you would like her to come visit with your residents or patrons, please give Katie a call at 515-224-4566 to set up a time for a free Fall Risk Clinic!



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Homefront

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If you'd like to be removed from our mailing list, please contact Garlynn by call 515-224-4566 or send her an e-mail at gar@nurseforce.com.